



Title: Meesha Makes Friends
Author & Illustrator: Tom Percival
Publisher: Bloomsbury

These notes have been written by the teachers at the CLPE to provide schools and settings with ideas to develop comprehension and extended provision around Oscar's Book Prize-shortlisted texts in Early Years settings. They build on our work supporting teachers to use picture books to enhance critical thinking and develop creative approaches in art and writing. We hope you find them useful.

Reading aloud and key talking points:

- Before you begin to read, look at the front cover and read the title of the book. Ask the children what they think they might already know about the girl. What might happen in her story?
- Read aloud from ***Meesha loved making things*** until ***Sometimes she made pictures out of both.*** Think together about the things that make Meesha happy. Would they like to have her as a friend?
- Continue to read aloud to ***...she wondered if she would ever be able to do it.*** What is happening? Do the children think Meesha will ever make a friend? Revisit what she is doing to make friends and why it isn't working yet. What could Meesha do instead? What advice would they give Meesha?
- Read on up to ***But Meesha felt comfortable with them and that was what mattered.*** Pause to consider this. Do the children have cuddlies or toy figures of their own that help them feel safe and comfortable? Do they agree that the friends Meesha has made will be enough for her?
- Continue reading on to ***For a while Meesha said nothing.*** How do they think Meesha feels when Josh asks to see what she is making? What do they think she might be thinking?
- Read to the end of the book. How did Meesha make friends in the end? What do you think she learnt about making friends? How did her feelings change throughout the story?
- After reading, encourage the children to talk about how the book made them feel and what it made them think about. Does it remind them of anything in real life or in stories?

Responding in more depth: Role on the Wall

- Re-read and revisit the book several times, allowing the children to become familiar with the key parts of the story and the character of Meesha. When do they think she feels most comfortable? When is she most worried? How do they know?
- Draw an outline of Meesha on a flipchart-sized piece of paper. Ask the children, 'How do you think Meesha is seen by others on the outside?' Write the words they say around the outside of the drawing of Meesha. Ask the children, 'What do you think she is really like on the inside?' Write these words on the inside of the drawing of Meesha.
- What interests does Meesha share with the other children? Does she only like to make things? What else does she like to do? What would the other children like about her?
- Make sure that you display your picture so that the children can see it and refer to it as they continue to think independently about the story.



Questions to promote deeper thinking around the text:

- Have the children ever felt disheartened or uncomfortable like Meesha in the story? What helps them to feel safe? Who would they talk to if they felt worried or lonely?
- Why did Meesha feel like 'the party was **noisy, chaotic and unpredictable**'? Do you agree with her? Is there anything that looks like fun to do there? What do you like to do at parties?
- Can we be friends with someone who likes doing different things from us? What makes a good friend?
- Meesha showed Josh what she likes to do and she made a friend. What do the children most like to do? What would they say about themselves? What interests would they share?
- What does it tell us about Meesha and her feelings that the other children and everything in the background are black, white and grey? Why are they all in colour at the end?

Ideas for extended provision:

Creative area:

This book is a wonderful way for children to explore characterisation and emotional expression through artwork. Children could look really closely at Meesha. Which direction is her gaze? How do her eyebrows or mouth help to express emotion? Provide mirrors so that children can copy her facial expressions, talking about words they might use to describe each emotion. They can draw Meesha for themselves doing and feeling different things. You can watch Tom Percival [from 05:15] in this Scottish Book Trust film, demonstrating how to draw facial expressions, using simple shapes:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OHR_zpkJLk. Look at the model friends that Meesha makes in the story. How has she made them look friendly? What does she worry Josh might get wrong? Children can work with materials to make a model friend of their own or for someone else that might need it. How would they introduce their new friend to others? Why would they make a good friend?

Personal, Social Emotional Development:

This book is perfect for exploring how to create and develop a sense of self with children in the Early Years. Create time for talk and activities that allow children to develop self-confidence in talking about themselves, their likes, families, things of immediate interest to them and significant personal memories and experiences. Display photos alongside children's scribed talk and their own writing.

Reading area:

Re-read the book aloud as the children wish and leave copies of the text in the reading area for individuals and groups of children to enjoy independently. Collect or borrow from the library other books by Tom Percival such as *Perfectly Norman* (Bloomsbury), *The See Saw* (Simon & Schuster) and *Ravi's Roar* (Bloomsbury) and *Ruby's Worry* (Bloomsbury)

This sequence of activities was designed by CLPE for the [Oscar's Book Prize](#) 2021 shortlist.

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