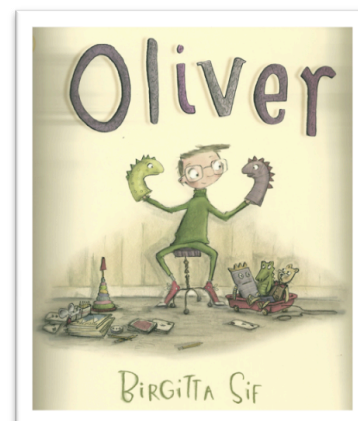


Title: **Oliver**

Author/Artist: **Birgitta Sif**

Publisher: **Walker Books**



First look

* Share the book with the whole group by reading it aloud to them. Give an uninterrupted read, without making comments and holding it up so that everyone can see the pictures as they listen.

* Go through the book again page by page concentrating on the visual text. Look closely at every picture and ask the group to point out to each other anything that strikes them as interesting.

* Chat in pairs or as a group about the first experience of the book. Did you like it? What did you like or dislike and why? What did you think about Oliver's character? Why is he described as different?

Look again

When you have discussed your first responses, return to the book; look, think and talk more about the artwork. In this book, most of the information you need to follow the story is in the pictures. The illustrations show us Oliver in the real world but completely caught up in his personal 'different' world.

- Look closely at the front cover and title page.

How is Oliver's world portrayed to us? Most of the important elements of his life are included on the cover. He is surrounded by toys, books and other inanimate objects; he is absorbed in a 'conversation' between his puppets, and he appears to be alone. Does he look lonely? Is there any other living creature with him?

- As you read the pictures through the book, notice how other characters in the pictures have companions (pets, friends, members of their family). When do we first meet Olivia? Is she with anyone else? How often do you see Olivia before Oliver notices her?
- On the pages after the family party, notice how the space around Oliver gradually increases from picture to picture. Is he becoming aware of how solitary he is? What happens to the pictures (colour, space etc.) from the page where 'Oliver set out on another adventure' to the end of the story?



Talk about any visual aspect of the book that interests you, i.e. end papers, font choices, title page and layout. Do these 'extras' to the story contribute to the overall impact of the book?

Interpreting the texts

It is always beneficial, when studying a book, to use tasks which require imaginative response to encourage students to engage fully with the text. The following suggestions may help the group of young readers to become engrossed in the book.

Take an eye test!

Look at the eyes of the people in the picture on the opening page of the story. Who or what are people looking at? Do the expressions faces tell us about their feelings? Where is Oliver looking?

Are the boy and his dog alarmed?



Are these two people 'in love'?



Art

What is Oliver looking at in the party scene? Look through the whole book at eyes in other places – on toys, animals, pictures on the walls, patterns on jumpers. Where does Oliver look when he begins to realise he may be a bit different? Where is Oliver looking in the penultimate page of the story?

Drama

Work out a mimed version of the end of the story from when *'the ball flew over his head'*.

Use only movement and facial expressions to indicate meanings.

Discussion

Do you ever feel different? What do you consider normal behaviour and what would be 'different'? Although Oliver is a solitary soul, he is not lacking in imagination and he enjoys reading. Talk about 'being alone' and being 'in a world of your own'. Doesn't everyone like being alone sometimes? Is there a difference between being alone and being lonely?

Soundscapes

Create a sound track using any method you wish (instruments, sound effects, voices, technology) to represent one of the bigger scenes:

- The street (busy traffic, conversations, animals etc.)
- The library (quietness, chatter, coughing etc.)
- Swimming pool (splashing, shrieking etc.)
- Christmas party (plates clattering, eating, polite conversation etc.)

