

Be Yourself *By Fleur Beale*

Introduction

In *Be Yourself*, Gila really wants to be like her friend. Eve's pretty, slim, kind, and funny – everything Gila thinks she herself isn't ... until she takes a drama class and learns she has talents that, believe it or not, Eve is envious of!

Reason for reading

You could use this book with your students to:

- explore the topic of identity and how your identity shapes your life
- explore how students see themselves in relation to others – how much do they try to emulate, or try to be like, someone else?
- learn that being yourself is important and that, when you are, others will respond better to *you*.

Setting the scene

Draw on your students' prior knowledge. If necessary, introduce concepts or vocabulary to help them access the story. Also communicate the reason for reading.

- Brainstorm ideas about self-identity. What does it mean? How does the way we look, talk, and act affect the way we view ourselves? How much does our view of ourselves affect our behaviour?
- Students explore the cover and determine what they think the story is about.
- Students think about situations where their understanding of themselves has changed because they have done something that has changed their view of themselves.
- Introduce vocabulary that the students may need to access the text. Refer to the vocabulary worksheets (3, 4a and 4b) for words that are unfamiliar.

Getting stuck in

Choose the prompts that you feel your students need. Remind them to note any unfamiliar words and check for clues to the meanings in the text or images.

- End of page 5 – “Why is Gila laughing on the outside and crying on the inside? Have you ever felt this way? What do you think Eve thinks of her?”
- End of page 10 – “Do you think Gila's mum is helpful? Is Gila the perfect friend to Eve? Why/ or why not? How would you describe Gila's feelings about Eve?”
- End of page 15 – “How would you describe Eve's feelings about Gila? Do you agree with the advice Gila's mum gives? Why/why not? What makes Gila and Eve's friendship so special?”
- End of page 18 – “Is Gila's brother older or younger than her? How do you know?”
- End of page 22 – “Why does Gila decide to join a drama class? Do you think it's a good idea? Why/why not? Would you join? What does Eve think of Gila's decision?”
- End of page 26 – “What do you think Gila learns from the drama class?”
- End of page 32 – “Why do you think Gila is feeling so much happier?”

Taking a closer look

Choose suggestions that suit your students and reason for reading.

Exploring ideas and opinions

- Ask for your students' opinions of this story. How did they feel about it and why? Did they enjoy it? Why do they think the author wrote it? Could they identify with Gila? Have they ever felt the way she feels about Eve? Ask them to list all the things they are good at, and the things they'd like to change about themselves. How important is it to them to make these changes? Encourage the students to make connections between the story and their own experiences.
- After the students complete the three-level thinking guide (Worksheet 1), they discuss their responses in pairs, in small groups, or as a class.
- Students discuss in pairs or small groups: "The things I have done that have made me feel good about myself; why these activities – sports, classes, skills – have made a difference; what I like about myself as I am."

Exploring character

- Students explore how Gila changes during the story. Think about how she is feeling at the beginning of the story. What is it that ultimately helps Gila like herself? Who are the important people in her life, and why are they important?
- Discuss: The author writes this story using the first person narrative. Does this approach help you identify with Gila better than if the author had used the third person narrative? Why/or why not?
- Discuss: Who are the other characters in this story? In what ways does Eve's character develop in the story? If you were Gila's mum, what would you say to Gila? Can you identify with Yannie?
- Discuss: How do the illustrations affect your perception of the characters?
- Working in pairs, students decide who will be Gila and who will be Eve, and they develop a conversation between these two characters that reflects their relationship after Gila goes out with Yannie.

Exploring structure

- Give the students the statements from Worksheet 2 to sequence correctly.
- or
- Students take a statement each from Worksheet 2 and arrange themselves into the correct story sequence. Then, taking turns based on this sequence, they retell their part of the story.
- or
- Students create a visual sequence of events from the story.

Exploring language

- Cut out the words and definitions from Worksheet 3 and mix them up. Hand them out to students, who then find their correct “partner”.
- As an alternative to the above, divide the class into two groups: one group fills in the second column of Worksheet 4a and the other fills in the second column of Worksheet 4b. This activity involves the students in creating definitions, which they then use to test the other group.
- Students complete Worksheet 5 – the cloze activity.

Moving beyond the text

Choose activities that suit your students and reason for reading.

Reading

- Read *Fab!*, the magazine from the GO for IT series that complements this book.

Writing

- Set this writing task: “Imagine you are Gila or Eve. Write a daily diary describing the events in your life and your feelings about them.”
- Set this writing task: “Imagine you are a reporter who has been asked to cover the show by Gila’s drama class. Write your review of the show for your newspaper.”

Debating

- Hold a class debate on a topic related to the story, such as: “You must love yourself before you can love others.”

Research

Students do research on:

- Gila looks for help in a magazine. Can magazines tell us how to live? How important are magazines in the lives of other students at your school?
- Prepare a questionnaire to find out what students look for in magazines. Rank the importance of: articles, gossip columns, horoscopes, advertisements, agony aunts, quizzes etc.
- Prepare an audio or video interview of students answering the questionnaires.

Art and design

- Students prepare a static image – a poster that advertises Gila’s drama class – or a book cover that sells *Be Yourself*.

WORKSHEET 1

Be Yourself – Three-level thinking guide

- Level 1 – Reading on the lines (interpreting what the text says on a literal level)
- Level 2 – Reading between the lines (inferring, or interpreting what the text might mean)
- Level 3 – Reading beyond the lines (evaluating ideas and information)

Students write “agree” or “disagree” beside each statement and then discuss their responses in pairs, in groups, or as a class. The value of this activity lies in the discussion it generates as students justify their views. The activity is not intended as a test for comprehension.

LEVEL 1	Agree/disagree
Gila and Eve have been friends for five years.	
Gila dreams of being an actress.	
A magazine has the answers to all Gila’s problems.	
Gila’s new earrings look much better on Eve.	
Gila walks home from the party alone.	
Eve and Gila get together and paint their nails pink.	
Gila decides to join a drama class.	
The drama teacher is tall and good-looking.	
There are 16 people in the drama class.	
Gila visits Eve to tell her all about the drama class.	
Gila goes to the drama class twice a week.	
Gila performs her own routine at the show that the drama class puts on.	
After the show, Franco rings Gila to ask her out.	
Eve is happy that Gila has a boyfriend.	
LEVEL 2	Agree/disagree
Eve thinks Gila’s dream of being an actress is silly.	
Gila’s brother and her mum share the same view of Gila’s problems.	
Gila gives Eve her earrings because she doesn’t like them.	
Gila feels angry and jealous when Eve and Sam slip away from the party.	
Sam and Eve make sure that Gila gets home safely because they care about her.	
Eve doesn’t talk about Sam because she doesn’t want to hurt Gila’s feelings.	

Gila is the perfect friend to Eve.	
Gila's brother is the perfect brother.	
Gila is more interested in the boys in her drama class than in drama.	
Through drama class, Gila learns that she has other talents.	
LEVEL 3	Agree/disagree
It is important to feel good about yourself.	
To be noticed by others, you have to be talented.	
Gila is a completely normal person.	
How a person looks is more important than what they can do.	
Actions speak louder than words.	

Sheet 2 of 2

Worksheet designed by Barbara Freeman, Wellington, New Zealand, 2007

WORKSHEET 2

Be Yourself – Restore the order

Cut out the statements and mix them up. Ask your students to place them in the correct order.

Gila wants to be as kind, funny, and pretty as Eve.
Gila dreams that, one day, she will be an actress.
Gila buys a magazine to find the answers to all her problems.
Gila's mum likes the old Gila but her brother definitely wants a new one!
On Saturday, Gila and Eve go to Sam's party.
Eve and Sam get together.
Gila tells her mum why she feels so unhappy.
Eve talks and talks and talks to Gila about Sam.
Gila's brother says, "What boy would want to go out with you?"
Gila tells Eve that she's going to join a drama class.
The drama teacher is tall and has a deep voice.
Gila is surprised when it's time to go home from the drama class.

Gila calls Eve and talks and talks about the drama class.

The drama teacher thinks the people in Gila's drama class are the best.

Gila performs a routine she has written herself.

Everyone loves Gila's performance.

The audience stands up and claps.

Eve wishes she was as talented as Gila.

Gila can't decide whether she likes Franco or Phil better.

In the morning, Yannie calls Gila and asks her to go to the movies with him.

Gila rings Eve and tells her all about Yannie.

Gila is happy that she has the best girlfriend and is going to the movies with a boy she really likes.

Sheet 2 of 2

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WORKSHEET 3

Be Yourself – Match the meaning

Cut out the words and their definitions, mix them up, and ask your students to match the pairs.

Word	Definition
advice	guidance
awesome	amazing, great
bash	hit
cute	good-looking, appealing
freak me out	scare me
gangly	ungainly, moving awkwardly
glamorous	attractive, exciting
nervous	feeling shy, uncomfortable
pose	stand in a particular way, usually to be photographed or drawn
routine	an acting sequence
stunning	taking your breath away
talented	able to do something well

Word	Definition
teeter	wobble
to-die-for	hugely desirable

Sheet 2 of 2

Note that some words above may have different meanings in other contexts.

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WORKSHEET 4a – GROUP A

Be Yourself – Vocab swap

- Divide the class into two groups, and give one group Worksheet 4a and the other group Worksheet 4b.
- In the second column of its own worksheet, each group writes a definition for each of the words listed in the first column. Where a word has more than one meaning, the group may need to check the page of the book that is listed.
- Each group then folds the first column out of sight and swaps worksheets with the other group.
- Each group guesses the original words, based on the definitions given in the other group's worksheet, and writes them in the third column of that worksheet. A group can go to the page in the book that is listed if it needs help. For an extra challenge, the groups can guess without referring to the page.
- You could make this a fun competition and give points for every correct word.

Word	Definition (Group A)	Word (Group B)
advice (p 2)	(p 2)	
awesome (p 30)	(p 30)	
freak me out (p 19)	(p 19)	
routine (p 24)	(p 24)	
stunning (p 8)	(p 8)	
talented (p 26)	(p 26)	
to-die-for (p 4)	(p 4)	

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WORKSHEET 4b – GROUP B

Be Yourself – Vocab swap

- Divide the class into two groups, and give one group Worksheet 4a and the other group Worksheet 4b.
- In the second column of its own worksheet, each group writes a definition for each of the words listed in the first column. Where a word has more than one meaning, the group may need to check the page of the book that is listed.
- Each group then folds the first column out of sight and swaps worksheets with the other group.
- Each group guesses the original words based on the definitions given in the other group's worksheet, and writes it in the third column of that worksheet. A group can go to the page in the book that is listed if it needs help. For an extra challenge, groups can guess without referring to the page.
- You could make this a fun competition and give points for every correct word.

Word	Definition (Group B)	Word (Group A)
bash (p 17)	(p 17)	
cute (p 20)	(p 20)	
gangly (p 30)	(p 30)	
glamorous (p 8)	(p 8)	
nervous (p 30)	(p 30)	
pose (p 2)	(p 2)	
teeter (p 25)	(p 25)	

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WORKSHEET 5

Be Yourself – Fill in the gaps

Add your own words in the spaces to make this passage come alive!

We on a performance. It's just our family and friends. Mum and so does my brother. Eve comes and Sam comes her.

I walk the stage. I do the I've written myself. It's about I want to be slim and and

I tell them I'm to be a film star and I'm going walk down the red

And then I how I will be the to find the only wrinkle in the carpet. I tell how I trip. I them that the crowd gasps – and I gasp I'm a whole crowd.

They laugh and They again when I teeter on my toes as if I'm falling my high heels. They laugh even when I just stand, with my hand to throat and say, "Oh no, not the diamonds."

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