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Billie B. Brown: The Copycat Kid

By Sally Rippin

Illustrated by Aki Fukuoka

Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- Consider the challenges of moving to a new country and a new school.
- Use a Venn diagram to establish the similarities and differences between themselves and a friend.
- Explore emotions.

About the Story:

When the new girl arrives in Billie's class, it's Billie's job to help her settle in at school. But Billie's excitement slowly turns to frustration when the new girl begins to copy everything Billie does. What she wears, the games she plays, even the pictures she draws – all this copying is making Billie furious! But with the help of her teacher, Billie slowly begins to understand why the new girl wants to do everything that Billie does. It's then that Billie realizes she needs to be more than a buddy to the new girl – she needs to be her friend.

Before You Read the Story:

Read the title of the story to the students and assist them to define the word "copycat." Ask students if they have ever used the word and if so, detail the circumstances under which it was used. Now turn to the back cover and read the blurb aloud. Ask the students to share their ideas on the responsibilities of a buddy and suggest what it might be like to be the new student at the school. Ask students to predict why the new girl might be copying everything Billie does and how Billie may feel about that.

Questions and Activities:

Chapter One

- Why is Billie all dressed up?
- How do you think Billie will help Mika settle in at school?
- How do you think Mika feels about starting a new school? Can you find examples in the chapter to support your answer?

Activity: Invite any students who have had the experience of changing schools or moving to a different country to share their experiences.

Chapter Two

- *It looks like you have a fan!* What is Ms. Walton talking about?
- Why do you think Mika has come to school dressed like Billie?
- How does Billie feel about Mika wearing clothes just like her own?

Activity: Observe that Billie likes to look different. Discuss the fact that friends have differences but also their similarities. Invite students to think of a close friend and consider their similarities and differences with respect to their appearance, dress sense, interests, likes and dislikes. Introduce students to the Venn diagram and explain its function. Model how to use the Venn



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diagram to organize information about the similarities and differences that exist between themselves and a friend before instructing students to complete an individual response.

Chapter Three

- *Billie's mouth drops open.* How does Billie feel at this moment and why?
- What does the word "unique" mean? Describe Billie's unique picture.
- *Billie looks over at Mika's drawing and gasps.* Explain what causes Billie to react this way.

Activity: Point out that the author describes Billie's angry feelings as a big angry ball growing inside her and feeling like she's going to explode. Note that the author also uses the word "furious" and writes of Billie stomping her foot, shouting and squeezing her mouth tight. Ask students to recall an incident that caused them to feel quite angry. Using this chapter as an example, model how to write a short descriptive piece about feeling angry. Give students time to discuss and brainstorm before completing their individual response. Close the session with a discussion about how to manage angry feelings.

Chapter Four

- Imagine what it must be like for Mika. What does Ms. Walton help Billie to understand about Mika's experience?
- Ms. Walton offers Billie an explanation for why Mika is copying her. What is it? Does this change the way Billie feels about Mika's actions?

Activity: Refer students to page 41 and direct students to the message that Billie wrote to Mika in Japanese. Ask students if they or their parents speak or write in another language and if so, identify what that language is. Send a note home to parents requesting that if another language is spoken and written, they, together with their child, write the word "friend" in that language on the large piece of paper supplied. Display and discuss.

Teacher Tips adapted from Hardie Grant Egmont.