

Talent Show (Amira Swift #1) & Fair Day Fun (Amira Swift #2)

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Mid Primary



SYNOPSIS

When her school holds a Talent Show, Amira can't wait to enter as a dance group with her BFFs Ellie and Naya. The girls go from having fun to having fights. Can they stay friends despite the pressure?

All of Amira's friends are bringing special foods that represent their cultures to sell and raise money at the school fair. But Amira comes from two cultures. What will she do?

THEMES

- Cultural diversity: Amira is proud of both her Irish-Australian and Lebanese heritage, and is part of a community which mirrors the diverse cultural backgrounds of many Australians.
- Friendship: Being and having good friends is important, but it can be hard. Amira and her friends reflect both the care and fun that comes with strong friendships, as well as how to resolve disagreements productively.
- Family: Amira Swift portrays many of the family structures that children will be familiar with, including the demands of working parents and time spent with extended family. Love and care is the most important thing, even when family members can't be physically present.

STUDY NOTES

QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

- "Making a mistake in class is no big deal. But in a real-life performance you don't get a do-over" (*Talent Show*, p 8).
 - What does Amira mean by this?
 - How does it impact on her trying to teach the besties a dance routine?
- Amira and her friends run into real difficulties as they try to come up with a dance routine for the talent show. Often when we are excited about something we forget to consider the other people involved, and that they may also have their own ideas. Sometimes we can get frustrated when things don't work out the way we had hoped or planned, and we can take it out on the other people in our group.
 - Why are Amira and her friends having so many problems practising their dance?
 - What makes their problems worse and causes the big argument?
 - Amira receives some advice from her dance teacher. How does this help the friends resolve the problem they are having?
 - What is the unexpected upside of Amira, Ellie and Naya not participating in the Talent Show?

- From what you've read in *Talent Show* (and *Fair Day Fun* if appropriate), what are some strategies that you could use when you and your friends have a problem you're struggling to solve?
- Learning to do something new is often hard.
 - What helps people learn new skills? Think about what Tayta tells Amira when she asks when she can start helping.
 - Ask students to discuss how they think they learn best, e.g. watching and doing, listening and then having a go, reading instructions. Focus on the fact that we are learning in different ways.
- Amira's visits to her two sets of grandparents are similar in some ways, and different in others. Create a visual compare and contrast, e.g. Venn diagram, on their similarities and differences.
 - Extension: Choose to compare with readers' own experience at their grandparents/ other relative.
- In *Talent Show* and *Fair Day Fun* we learn about Amira Swift's world, with a focus on school events, family and friends. What do students think the next Amira Swift book might be about?
 - Divide class into pairs.
 - Ask students to work together on:
 - Deciding the topic of the next Amira Swift book,
 - A title for their book,
 - An outline of the story in the book,
 - A cover for their book.
 - Have each group share their concepts with the rest of the class.
- Imagine your class is having a Fun Fair, and each students will need to bring a dish that represents their family. Discuss the different ways this could be done, e.g. a dish that reflects a student's cultural heritage, a favourite meal that your family eats, a dish that was/is used to commemorate important events.
 - Have each student identify a dish for the Fun Fair.
 - Ask students to create an advertisement/flyer for their dish that includes:
 - The name of the dish (if it doesn't have a name, they can come up with one),
 - A picture/ illustration of the dish,
 - A short description of the dish that would allow people unfamiliar with it to understand what it would be like to eat. This could include descriptions of ingredients, cooking methods, other dishes it's similar to and should emphasise what makes it so good to eat.
- Amira explains the meaning of her name, as well as her little brother's. Most names having a meaning that often comes from the language or culture that it comes from.
 - Ask students what their names mean. If they don't know they could ask parents or do some research.
 - What is the origin of their name? From which language or culture does it come?
 - Have students create artwork that incorporates their name, its meaning and aspects of themselves to illustrate.