

Crazy Hair
Written by Neil Gaiman and Illustrated by Dave McKean
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Use the double page spread depicting the character saying, "Miss, just be Aware This is really crazy hair."

Working in pairs, encourage children to explore the picture discussing their responses and working together to make meaning of what they see. Ask them to jot down words and phrases, which reflect their responses to looking.

The aims of this activity are:

- to increase the interaction with and enjoyment of picture books for children of all ages
- to develop children's confidence and vocabulary to respond to what they see - to observe and describe
- to encourage them to build on their previous experience, imagination and understanding to make sense of visual information - to interpret
- to consider a variety of graphic forms and their interaction with a text in order to convey layers of meaning - to appreciate
- to recognise different styles and techniques used and developed by a variety of illustrators - to analyse
- to begin to recognise and appreciate visual metaphor, irony, puns and jokes etc. - to participate

The following questions have been designed to help children to look more closely at the illustrative work of Dave McKean, moving from the whole picture to the smallest part and to search for and use all available clues given by the artist to make meaning. Please select and adapt the questions to make them appropriate for your setting.

TELL ME ABOUT DAVE McKEAN'S ILLUSTRATION...

Who do you think the character with the hair is?

How do you think they feel about their hair?

What do you notice about the perspective of this illustration?

From what point does the illustrator intend you to view this picture?

What do you notice about the proportions of the man's body?

Notice how his fingers go off the right hand side of the page, what is the effect of this?

Look at his facial expression, how would you describe them?

How do you think the illustrator has created this three dimensional face?

Consider the impact of the disc eyes and the presence of real eyeballs in the 'a's' in 'crazy' and 'hair'. What or whom might have plucked these eyes out?

The body and the arms are in a loose style, how does this contrast with the strength of the hair?

Notice the pattern on the clothing, what does this suggest to you?

How do you think the hair has been created and styled?

Why do you think that the illustrator has chosen to allow the top of the hair to continue beyond the top of the page?

Can you see anything in the hair?

The man says, "This is really crazy hair." What 'crazy' things can you imagine happening in the hair that you can't see?

What noises can you hear in this picture as the hair unfurls?

If you could smell anything in this picture what might it be?

How do you feel as you look at this picture?

Where has the artist made you be, in the action, a bystander or an outside observer?

Does where you are affect how you respond to the picture?

It appears that the hair is falling off the page and on to your lap-how does that make you feel?

The hair on the left hand side of the page seems to be trying to write something-what do you think its message might be? Who might this message be for?

The arms and the hair of this man go across the gutter of the page-what affect does this have on you?

How would you describe Bonnie's depiction and size in contrast to the man?

Why has Bonnie been drawn in the bottom left hand corner reaching up and across?
What is the impact of this?

Look at the colours chosen to depict Bonnie, what do you notice?

Why do you think we are unable to see Bonnie's facial expressions? What does the illustrator want you to focus on instead?

Bonnie is thrusting a comb towards the man, what is his response to the comb?

Look at the comb and describe how you think it would go through the hair.

The illustrator has packed a lot of movement into this picture. Consider how he has done this?

Look closely at the quality and textures in this picture, how would you describe them?

What do you notice about the illustrator's use of colour?

How has Dave McKean created this picture?

Is there anything that puzzles or surprises you about his techniques?

Can you imagine the rest of this scene beyond the hair and the fingertips - how has the illustrator helped you to do this?

How does your imagination of what is happening in the rest of the picture impact on your interpretation of this page?

How is the text integrated into the overall design of the page?

Notice the thread of a speech bubble and how it directs you as a reader.

How does the layout of the text influence how you read the words and pictures?

Why do you think that different size letters have been used?

What is the effect of using different colours and sizes for the fonts?

WRITE IT DOWN

Harvest children's responses and record their descriptions and comments on a flip chart. Are there any aspects of the picture that they find particularly interesting or puzzling? How do these pictures interact and work with the rest of the book?