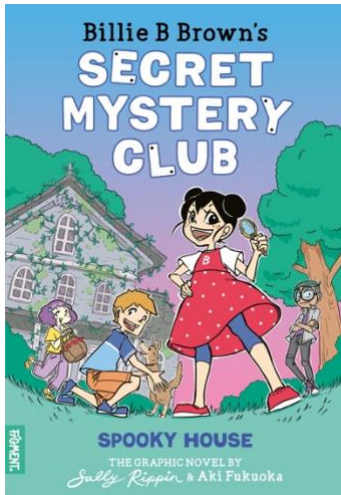


Teacher's Notes



**Billie B Brown's Secret Mystery Club:
Spooky House**
Written by Sally Rippin
Illustrated by Aki Fukuoka
Teacher's Notes by Bec Kavanagh

These notes may be reproduced for use within schools free of charge but not offered in any part for commercial sale.

Copyright © Hardie Grant Children's Publishing 2026.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

RECOMMENDED FOR

primary-aged readers (ages 7–12, grades 5+)

KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- Learning areas: English
- General capabilities:
 - Personal and Social capability – self awareness
 - Personal and Social capability – social awareness
 - Literacy – Reading and viewing

THEMES

- Rumours
- Fear
- Friendship
- Mysteries
- Imagination
- Storytelling

SYNOPSIS

Billie B Brown and her friends have started a new Secret Mystery Club – but can they follow the clues to solve their first case?

Find out in *Spooky House*, the exciting new graphic novel starring Billie B Brown, for fans of *The Baby-sitters Club* and *Paws*!

There's nothing Billie loves more than a good adventure with her best friends! So, she starts the Secret Mystery Club, and they take on their very first case: who lives in the spooky house at the end of the street? But when Billie discovers that a witch lives there, her friends don't believe her. Can she convince them she's telling the truth while keeping the club together?

Filled with friendship, fun and neighbourhood adventures, this graphic novel reimagining of the beloved and bestselling *Billie B Mysteries* series will surprise and delight readers aged 7+. Adapted by original creators Australian Children's Laureate Sally Rippin and illustrator Aki Fukuoka, *Billie B Brown's Secret Mystery Club* is bold, brilliant and better than ever!



ABOUT THE AUTHOR/ ILLUSTRATOR

Sally Rippin is a best-selling and beloved author for children, and the eighth Australian Children's Laureate. Her most popular series include *Billie B Brown*, *Hey Jack!* and *School of Monsters*, and she has over 10 million books in print worldwide. She has also written one book for adults: *Wild Things: How We Learn to Read and What Can Happen If We Don't*.

Illustrator **Aki Fukuoka** always tries to find the magic around her. Born in Japan, Aki moved to Auckland, New Zealand, at eight years old, where she has lived ever since. Aki graduated from the Elam School of Fine Arts and has illustrated over 80 books, including award-winning children's picture books, chapter books and educational titles. Her work has also featured in magazines, T-shirt designs, stationery, posters and murals.

THEMES

Starting a rumour:

According to the dictionary, a rumour is 'an unofficial interesting story or piece of news that might be true or invented, and quickly spreads from person to person'.

(https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/rumour#google_vignette)

- Why is a rumour considered unofficial?
- Are rumours positive or negative?
- Have you ever heard or shared a rumour?
- Why is it important to use official sources to check whether or not something is true? What kinds of official sources can we use?
- Is there a difference between a rumour and making up a story?

When Billie and her friends start their mystery club, one of the reasons they're interested in the spooky house is because of the interesting rumours they've heard about it. Alex says, 'Well, there are tons of rumours about [the spooky house]. Could be worth a look.'

- What are some of the rumours about the spooky house?
- Are they true or false?
- What is the impact of the rumours on the characters in the book?

WRITING STYLE

Because there's limited text in a graphic novel, the writing style here is sparse, and limited mostly to dialogue ('Count me in!'), sounds (*munch munch*), and necessary descriptions (Saturday morning ...).



Use this as an opportunity to talk about the other elements of a story that would usually be found in the text (what's happening, where it's happening, how everyone feels about it). How is this information conveyed in the graphic novel instead? What is the effect on the reader?

COMPREHENSION

- Who is Billie's best friend?
- Where is the 'worst possible place to lose your ball'? What's bad about it?
- What's the difference between Jack's response to the spooky house and Billie's response?
- What ingredients are in the Billie Special?
- What is Billie's great idea for a club? Which books inspire the idea?
- Who else does Billie invite to be in the club? What defining characteristics do you notice about them?
- Billie tries to make the club's first outing fun by making it as spooky as possible. How do her friends feel about her scary stories?
- How does Billie feel when she comes face to face with the witch on her own?
- Why does Billie have to go back to the spooky house? What does she discover when she gets there?
- What makes Billie feel brave enough to go into the house after Jack?
- What are some of the things that make Billie think Andrea is a witch? What kind of person is Andrea really?
- Why didn't Jack tell Billie who Andrea really was? Do you think Billie's learned her lesson?

WRITING EXERCISE

Imagine that you're one of the other characters from the story and rewrite one of the scenes in the book from their perspective, rather than Billie's.

ILLUSTRATION STYLE

Spooky House is the first of the Billie B Brown stories to be published as a graphic novel, which means the balance of storytelling shifts and more of the work of telling the story is done by images than in a chapter book. People used to dismiss comics and graphic novels as 'easier' because they have fewer words than a novel or chapter book, but the reality is that graphic novels require us to read the images to understand the story. In an interview for Folio (an incredible Australian website full of interviews with amazing comic makers), artist Aška talks about the value of comics, saying 'comics also combine things like emotive literacy, spatial literacy, written literacy. So you need to be able to read a lot of things at once, and manage the complexity of that information in real-time. I think it's very appropriate for today's world. And we are all hungry for it'. (You can read more of that interview here https://foliocomics.com/stories/story_76?folio%5Bquery%5D=teaching%20comics%20to%20kids)

There are some common elements to comics and graphic novels that students might recognise:



- Panels and gutters
- Description and word balloons
- Sound effects and motion lines

You can read more about these elements here

(<https://www.scholastic.com/content/dam/teachers/lesson-plans/18-19/Graphic-Novel-Discussion-Guide-2018.pdf>).

Can you find an example of each element in the book?

How does the illustrator use the shape of the word balloons to convey specific tones?

CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

1. Choose another book from the Billie B Brown or Hey Jack! series. Find a scene that you enjoy reading and follow these steps to turn it into a comic.
 - Write out any dialogue or necessary description into word balloons and/or caption boxes.
 - Draw the characters into the scene (you might want to work on one or two unique details to make them recognisable).
 - Fill in the setting using details from the book.
 - What other information needs to be conveyed? Can you include it as detail in the illustrations, or as sound effects/motion lines? Do you need to adapt the text? (You could also do this activity working in groups, and allocate each person a chapter to adapt an entire book!)
2. Think of someone you know well. How would you draw them as a character in a comic? How would other people recognise them? Make a list of 3–5 defining characteristics and see if you can capture all of these in an illustration. See if someone else can guess who you've drawn without any hints!
3. What mystery could Billie and her friends solve next? Come up with an idea for another book in the series. Write a short blurb for your story that includes the mystery or problem they'll have to solve, and at least two clues.
4. Read the extra section at the end of the book – 'Behind the Scenes with Aki'. In this section, the illustrator of Billie B Brown turns her own life into a graphic novel. How cool! Use this as inspiration to do a behind-the-scenes comic about something that you love doing.
5. Come up with your own club – what would you call it? Andrea gives Billie a special magnifying glass to solve her mysteries. What kind of special equipment would your club need? Create a poster advertising your club.

RELATED READING

The Baby-sitters Club

By Ann M Martin and Arley Nopra (illustrator)



Paws

By Michele Assarasakorn and Nathan Fairbairn

Lamington Left Behind

By Andrea Innocent

InvestiGators: Case Files

By John Patrick Green, Steve Behling and Chris Fenoglio

Supa Nova

By Chante Timothy

Witches of Brooklyn

By Sophie Escabasse

