

Parent

# Resources

*That Thing*

by Avital Balwit and Alexis Deacon



**10** stories to make a difference

Dear Parents and Carers,

We are delighted that you are interested in sharing ***That Thing*** with your child. ***That Thing*** is part of our **10 Stories to Make a Difference** collection, which has ten inspiring stories for young readers that celebrate difference and individuality.

Inside these pages you'll find activities inspired by ***That Thing***, for your child to do at home, together with information to help you support your child's wellbeing and learning.

A strong suggestion is to read the book aloud once for the story, then again to focus on particular aspects, passages or themes. The following activities are grouped by desired outcome and are aimed for a range of abilities and additional needs of a child. Some extension activities are included, but all the materials can be adapted beyond the target audience according to the interest and abilities of your child.

The following activities would be suitable for the allocated age group:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| • Reading independently or as group                               | <b>10+ years</b>                        |
| • Exploring through the creative learning activities in this pack | <b>10+ years /<br/>UKS2 and<br/>KS3</b> |

All the books in our **10 Stories to Make a Difference** collection are beautifully illustrated and perfect for children aged 5 and up. They reflect the need for greater inclusivity and more diversity in children's books with the stories including characters of colour, LGBTQ+ and disabled characters.

The **10 Stories to Make a Difference** collection is available to buy from [www.pop-up.org.uk/shop](http://www.pop-up.org.uk/shop). Teacher and Parent/Carer Resource packs are available to download from [www.pop-up.org.uk/shop](http://www.pop-up.org.uk/shop).

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Artwork © Alexis Deacon.

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# 1 About this resource pack

## There are six sections:

1. About this resource pack (includes insights from the writer and illustrator)
2. About this book (includes themes): Page 4
3. Arty Starter: can you hide by an octopus?: Page 5
4. Thinking and talking: studying animal behaviour: Page 7
5. Taking it further: imagining new creatures: Page 8
6. Word Search: Page 9

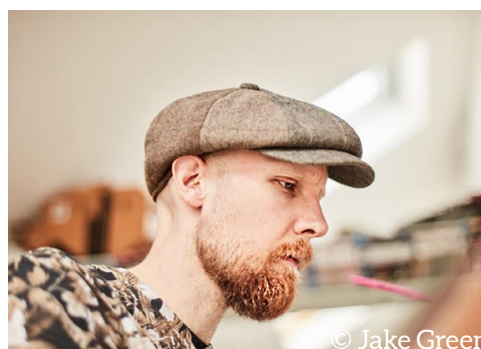
## This pack will help your child:

- talk about their own and other people's feelings
- value themselves and others
- express hopes and plans for the future

## About the author and illustrator



**Avital Balwit** was one of the winner's of Pop Up's Tenth Anniversary writing competition, and describes herself as 'writing to imagine better, brighter futures, and to delve into the mysteries of human and animal minds.'



**Alexis Deacon** is an award-winning illustrator, and octopuses were his favourite animals as a child. 'I was lucky enough to see one in an aquarium,' he says, 'and the experience really stuck with me. They are the most incredible creatures.'

His eyecatching illustrations for this book evoke the 'otherness' of Frazier's intelligence, and are printed on paper edged with an impressionistic pattern of watery bubbles that invites us into Frazier's world.

## 2 About this book

It can be difficult to understand how other people think, but listening and caring helps us see the world their way.

How do animals view things, though? How does a mouse think - or an octopus?

***“This story reminds us that things are not always what they seem, and if we take the time to look we may be surprised by what we find.”***

***Alexis Deacon***

Jayla never expected to get a summer research job at the aquarium, but winning a competition brings her an internship and the opportunity to study Frazier, a giant octopus.

Frazier can change colour and knows all sorts of other tricks. But is he intelligent? Jayla's co-intern, Gerald, thinks he knows the answer.

***“That Thing,”*** he says, is “blobby, slimy and gross,” and nothing more. Could this be true? Jayla senses a connection with Frazier's alien mind, but perhaps he simply wants more food.

When Gerald and Jayla are accidentally locked in Frazier's tank, Gerald expects the worst. But Frazier's response to the crisis is astonishing, and suggests there's more to him than anyone suspects.

### About this book's themes

This realistic story addresses important themes. It also encourages ambitious and constructive thinking about career possibilities, with an emphasis on women in science.

Themes include:

- Confronting prejudice and helping to create change
- The value of curiosity and kindness
- Seeking to understand 'the unknown, the strange or the different'
- The process and value of scientific research
- Knowing yourself and following your heart
- Understanding the world of work and planning for your future

## 3

## Arty stater: can you hide an octopus?

**For this activity, you will need:** one or more copies of the octopus template, scissors, colouring materials (plus watercolour paints and oil pastels/wax crayons, if you want to use them).

When we first meet him, Frazier's described as "vibrant-red" but later he starts turning grey. Octopuses change colour to match their surroundings, and mimic textures with their skin. Try this activity at home to explore the idea of camouflage!

Cut out the octopus template, and ask your child to find an interesting place to hide it. Can they colour it to match its location? Try to make the octopus look as though it's disappeared!

You can make this activity more challenging by:

- mixing water-and-oil based art materials, like Alexis: for example, wax crayons or oil pastels and watercolours;
- printing several templates and camouflaging them in different locations around the house.

Ask your child why they think octopuses behave this way. Do people camouflage themselves?



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*Octopus, p. 4*



### 3. continued



*Template 1: one A4-size figure taken from the octopus on p. 4*

## Thinking and talking: studying animal behaviour

***"I bet a mouse's mind is more interesting than you think..."*** page 7

Share this quote with your child and talk about when and why Jayla says this. How does she feel about her own research, and why is she frustrated by Gerald's lack of curiosity?

Challenge your child to forget everything they expect, and observe an animal with open-minded curiosity. What's it doing? Can you guess why it's behaving this way, or how it feels?

Encourage your child to 'behave like a scientist' by watching this animal carefully and keeping accurate notes. How does it move? What does it look at? Does it seem to be interacting with you in any way? If you like, you could use a phone timer or watch to record how long the animal spends on each activity, or suggest your child makes 'on the spot' drawings and marks the animal's position on a sketchmap.

***"There was so much life in that blue water, just begging to be understood and appreciated"*** page 10

Re-read the section of the book describing Jayla's first visit to the ocean on pages 9 - 10 and talk about the sea-creatures she observes. How does this experience make her feel?

Why does your child think Jayla wants to be a marine biologist?

**What animal would your child choose to study, if they were a scientist?**



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**Octopus, p. 8**

## 5

## Taking it further: imagining new creatures

*"She thought about the octopus brain, distributed throughout its body, not just in its head like ours..."* - page 13

Ask your child to imagine they're a scientist who's just discovered an unknown creature

- What does it look like?
- Where does it live?
- How does it move and experience its surroundings?

Ask your child to draw their creature and make notes, or tell the story of how they found their creature and what happens next.

- How will other people react to it?
- What problems will they face?



*Jayla and Gerald next to Frazier's tank, p. 24-25*



## 6 Word Search

Look for the following words and ideas from the story.

They're all about observing, imagining and discovering - kindly, and with intelligence.

### Support your child by

- discussing what each word means, and how these ideas are important in this book.

Navigate	Empathy	Biology	Problem	Tentacle
Curiosity	Conscious	Researcher	Difference	Personality
Observation	Respect	Prejudice	Mentor	
Marine	Habitat	Intelligence	Intern	

A	B	N	M	C	A	O	E	B	N	P	A	E	R
O	H	D	C	O	P	R	T	O	E	E	O	H	I
T	E	I	A	N	R	E	C	B	R	R	Y	O	A
M	Y	F	E	S	E	H	M	S	B	S	T	T	N
A	B	F	T	C	J	C	E	E	S	O	I	E	H
R	I	E	A	I	U	R	L	R	C	N	S	N	A
I	O	R	G	O	D	A	B	V	I	A	O	T	B
N	L	E	I	U	I	E	O	A	N	L	I	A	I
E	O	N	V	S	C	S	R	T	T	I	R	C	T
I	G	C	A	O	E	E	P	I	E	T	U	L	A
R	Y	E	N	E	E	R	L	O	R	Y	C	E	T
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R	E	S	P	E	C	T	R	O	T	N	E	M	I
A	I	N	T	E	L	L	I	G	E	N	C	E	T

# 10 stories to make a difference

*That Thing* is part of a collection of ten inspiring stories for young readers that celebrate difference and individuality.

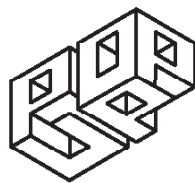
All the books in our **10 Stories to Make a Difference** collection are beautifully illustrated and perfect for children, aged 5 and up.



Each of the books is an exciting collaboration between well-known and emerging writers and illustrators, giving a platform to bold new voices.

We believe that all children should be able to find themselves, and discover others, through the stories they read. We therefore hope that these amazing stories will entertain and inspire the young readers in your lives.

Enjoy and feel free to get in touch with us at [info@pop-up.org.uk](mailto:info@pop-up.org.uk).  
We always love to hear from our readers!



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