



# EK BOOKS TEACHER NOTES & RESOURCES

**Title:** The Incredibly Busy Mind of Bowen Bartholomew Crisp

**Author:** Paul Russell

**Illustrator:** Nicky Johnston

**Publisher:** EK Books

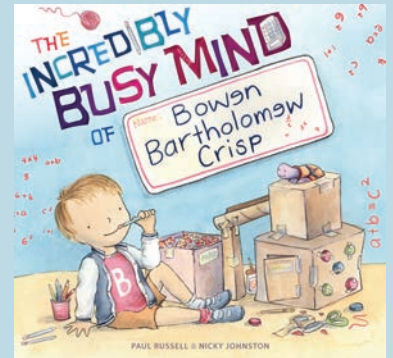
**Price:** ANZ \$24.99 | USA \$18.99 | CA \$24.99 | UK £10.99

**ISBN:** 9781925820881

**Publication date:** July 2021

**Audience age:** 4-8 years

**Key Curriculum Areas:** English, Mathematics, Science, Design and Technologies, Visual Arts



## SYNOPSIS:

Most children would say that the ocean is blue, but when Bowen looks at it, he sees white where the waves crash, deep black on the ocean floor, and green when there's a storm. He wonders whether fireflies are hot, and notices how the brushstrokes of a painting tell a story too. Bowen sees the world differently to other children and struggles to fit in. How will he find his place in the world?

*The Incredibly Busy Mind of Bowen Bartholomew Crisp* follows the life of Bowen through school and beyond. At every stage, he finds that he doesn't fit in with his peers, but this eventually becomes his greatest strength. Through thinking differently, he is able to solve problems that no one else could. After all, just because something can't be mended the same as it was, why shouldn't it be mended differently?

A very personal story, Bowen's tale is sensitively written and full of colourful, lively illustrations. It aims to offer hope to children who haven't yet found their place in life by showing them that being 'normal' might just be overrated, and that to find success in life we should be valuing our differences. Children, carers, teachers and psychologists alike will find inspiration in this tale of embracing diversity and engaging our full potential. It is a vital reminder that the strength and uniqueness of every child should be encouraged to help them find their place in the world and flourish!

## THEMES:

Valuing differences. Diversity. Uniqueness

## SELLING POINTS:

- A unique book that celebrates being different and encourages children to look at the world with curiosity.
- Will appeal to children, carers, teachers, psychologists, and others who work with children with learning difficulties, ADHD and other neurological differences.
- The story is very personal to both the author and illustrator and so is told sensitively, with beautiful, lively illustrations.



### AUTHOR MOTIVATION:

I wrote this book for a dear friend who has a son that reminds me so much of myself. I wanted to write something that told them both there was light at the end of the tunnel.

Although there remains so much of me in Bowen, there is plenty of room for others who don't quite know where they fit yet. Like all characters that you write from a place of honesty and openness, hopefully others will see themselves too.

### WRITING STYLE:

I find that honesty is the most important part of my writing. Although I don't believe you need to have lived something to be able to write it, I do believe when you write what you live, the truth within the story makes it so much more powerful. My fiction is never completely fiction, but it is never totally true either.

I think that what I love so much about picture books is that the finished story is always the joining of both the illustrator and the author.

### ILLUSTRATION STYLE:

Illustrating this book was extremely easy for me. In fact, the hardest part was culling my many ideas. The style is warm, heartfelt and authentic. I think this comes through as most of the inspiration was very close to home – especially Bowen's bedroom (exactly like my son's, right down to me debriefing the day's events on his bed).

### AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR BACKGROUND:

**Paul Russell** is a primary teacher, artist, playwright and children's author of *Grandma Forgets* and *My Storee*, among others, with *Grandma Forgets* making the CBCA list of notable picture books in 2018. Having been in classrooms for almost 20 years, it really isn't surprising that all of his heroes are teachers. He is passionate about children's literacy and building young appetites for the written word.

**Nicky Johnston** is an educator, speaker, and author/illustrator of children's books. She is passionate about promoting emotional resilience in children and raising awareness of mental health issues. As well as teaching, she works from home writing and illustrating and has contributed to 16 books including *The Fix-It Man* and *Saying Goodbye to Barkley*.

## INTERVIEW:

### AUTHOR

#### What was the most rewarding part of this project?

The most rewarding part of this project keeps changing. The first reward was when I showed Bowen's mum and she liked it. You never know when you are writing if other people will see the magic you think you found, so when it was well received by its initial audience I was over the moon. The second reward, as always when working with Nicky, was seeing the incredible illustrations bringing life to Bowen and the story. It actually made me cry when Nicky introduced the little girl in the final pages of the story, making me think of how my own children gave my life purpose, even though that wasn't necessarily a message within the story.

#### What is the inspiration for this story?

The inspiration for this story came from meeting a lovely boy whose name was Bowen (not Bartholomew Crisp, unfortunately). He was an incredibly creative child who looked at the world a little bit differently; where others saw plastic cups, he saw an opportunity to create a sculpture or a marble run across his entire house. I was mortified as a teacher when I heard that he was having a hard time at school and not enjoying learning. Such an incredible mind, but just didn't fit into his classroom. I have always thought a little bit differently too, and so I started writing this story a bit about Bowen and a bit about me. It was written to give him a bit of hope and also to reflect a little bit on myself and finding my own place in the world.

#### What was the most challenging part of this project?

I think the most challenging part of any picture book is the waiting. Being a picture book author often involves lots of waiting; there is always a long wait between your final full stop and the actual book emerging.

### ILLUSTRATOR

#### What media do you use to create your illustrations? Briefly describe your process.

The illustrations throughout this book are created in watercolour and pencil. My rough sketches are always in great detail with lots of shading to give a feel of the colours that will be used. I select a colour scheme that will be used throughout the book, then I begin painting some colour roughs. I like using lots of watercolour washes as well as fine layered paint to create the details – outlined in a sketchy pencil.

#### What was the most rewarding part of this project?

When Paul showed me the manuscript, I cried. He had absolutely captured my son's 'busy' mind perfectly and the most rewarding part was being the chosen illustrator! The first time I read it to my son, he blinked in disbelief... 'this is me', he said. He is like many children who think differently in their world and need to be understood!

#### What was the most challenging part of this project?

This book was such a pleasure to create that the only challenging part has been waiting for it to be released!



## TEACHER ACTIVITIES/NOTES:

### Before Reading

- Look at the cover of *The Incredibly Busy Mind of Bartholomew Crisp*. What do you see?
- How do you think the boy is feeling? What might he be doing, or thinking about?
- What does the title of the story make you wonder?
- Do you think everyone's minds work the same? Do you think it's possible for different people to see the same thing in a different way?

### During Reading

- What response would you have given the teacher for the colour of the ocean? How does your thinking compare with Bowen's?
- When Grandma caught Bowen strapping a home-made rocket to Gertrude the turtle, what did she mean when she asked, "Bowen, what are you thinking?" Do you think Bowen misunderstood her? How do you know? Do you think Grandma misunderstood Bowen?
- What do you think Bowen wants to do with the broken things?

### After Reading

- What was the story about? What do you think is the main message of the story?
- Do you think it's important to allow people time to think? Why?
- What is 'perspective'? Should we judge others for having a different perspective to us?
- How do the illustrations show Bowen's thoughts and perspectives? In what ways do the illustrations help you understand Bowen's world, the things he enjoys, and the way he interacts with other children?
- Do you agree with some of Bowen's thoughts? Do you disagree with any? Clarify the difference between an opinion and a fact.
- Do you think people express their thoughts and opinions in different ways? What are some ways that you could do this? For example, through speech, drawings, writing, sculpture, video, etc.
- What do you think Bowen's relationship with his mother is like? How does she relate to him?
- Do you think Bowen learned more about how to express his thoughts more clearly to others over time? Why or why not?
- What did you notice about the way Bowen, and his teachers, adjusted to his way of thinking as he grew older?
- How did the different way Bowen saw the world benefit him? How did it disadvantage him?
- What do you think Bowen meant at the end of the story, 'I still find the world hard to understand, but I may have just found my place in it.'? In what ways has he changed from the beginning of the story to the end? How did he stay the same?
- What kinds of things do you wonder about?
- Have you ever felt like you didn't 'fit in'? How does this make you feel?

## ENGLISH

### Vocabulary

([ACELA1437](#), [ACELY1650](#), [ACELA1460](#), [ACELY1660](#))

- Find and list words and phrases from the story that relate to the terms 'mind' and 'thinking'. Write the definitions of each.  
*understand, know, knew, not sure, thought, wonder, find solutions*

### Comprehension

([ACELT1575](#), [ACELT1783](#), [ACELT1578](#), [ACELY1646](#), [ACELY1650](#), [ACELA1787](#), [ACELT1587](#), [ACELT1582](#), [ACELT1591](#), [ACELY1660](#))

- Through writing and discussion, answer comprehension questions relating to the story, such as:
  - *Knowledge*: Who was in the story? What was the problem? Where does most of the story take place? When did Bowen's teacher ask about the colour of the ocean? When did Bowen make a home-made rocket for his turtle?
  - *Comprehension*: Retell the story in your own words. What was the main idea? What are the differences between Bowen and the other children? What are the similarities between Bowen and his mother?
  - *Application*: How does Bowen's thinking and behaviour make him 'different'? Why is working to your strengths important? How are the items found in and around Bowen's home significant to his 'incredibly busy mind'?
  - *Analysis*: What are the features of Bowen's 'trash' invention? How does the way Bowen responded to questions and tasks compare from when he was five to when he became an adult? Draw a diagram of one of Bowen's inventions or ideas.
  - *Synthesis*: Predict how Bowen might see the world in the future. What other ideas can you think of for the use of a chair, fan, nails and wheels? How would you design your own vehicle / mode of transport made from everyday items?
  - *Evaluation*: Do you think that Bowen should be treated differently to the other children? In what ways? What is the most important thing the story is teaching us? What do you think about the way Bowen's mind works? How do you think it affects his relationships with other people?

### Creative Writing

([ACELT1580](#), [ACELY1651](#), [ACELT1832](#), [ACELY1661](#), [ACELY1674](#))

*Descriptive language: 'The top of the ocean is green when there is a storm, but the waves crash white, while at the bottom of the ocean it is as black as night.' 'I could feel the warmth of the orange tones in the sky, but see it was getting late by the shadows of the trees.'*

- Encourage students to think about their favourite scenery or look at a spread from the book or another painting. Ask, what do you see? What can you infer or wonder about? How does it make you feel? What might be happening or what might happen next?
- Describe it using descriptive language. Illustrate.



### Narrative:

- Use descriptive language to create a narrative with the theme, 'I Wonder...'. What is the mood of the story? What is the problem and resolution? Include a beginning, middle and end.
- Write an entertaining text about Gertrude's trip into space. Who did she meet? Where did she go? Remember to use non-fiction to help create the world within your story – what do you already know about space that you can include in your entertaining text?

### Brainstorming / Information Report

([ACELA1437](#), [ACELT1783](#), [ACELT1578](#), [ACELY1651](#), [ACELT1582](#), [ACELT1832](#), [ACELT1832](#), [ACELY1661](#), [ACELY1674](#))

#### *'I Wonder...'* Thought Bubbles:

- Draw a small self-portrait in the bottom-centre of a page. Surround the portrait with several thought bubbles. Brainstorm and write down things you wonder about in the bubbles, such as 'I wonder if a fire fly is hot?'. (see BLM 1)

#### *Information Report:*

- Using a large thought bubble template, collate facts about one of the 'wonders' from the previous task. Be sure to include a title, interesting facts, diagrams or pictures, and captions. (see BLM 2)

### Recount / Reflective Writing

([ACELA1437](#), [ACELT1575](#), [ACELT1783](#), [ACELY1651](#), [ACELA1787](#), [ACELT1582](#))

- Think about a time when you felt like you didn't fit in, or an experience with a creative thinking/problem solving or 'out of comfort zone' task (perhaps this task can be conducted prior to the writing session). Include how you felt, how you managed the situation, and the challenges and outcomes.

### Script Writing / Movie Making

([ACELA1437](#), [ACELT1575](#), [ACELT1578](#), [ACELT1580](#), [ACELY1646](#), [ACELY1651](#), [ACELA1460](#), [ACELA1787](#), [ACELT1591](#), [ACELY1788](#), [ACELY1667](#), [ACELY1661](#), [ACELY1674](#))

#### *What do you think Bowen's movie would have been about?*

- Create a script and produce a movie trailer or short movie that might have been made by Bowen. Create a storyboard to help organise ideas in sequence. Consider elements including dialogue, props, equipment, and type of digital video editing program you will need.

### Thinking Tools

([ACELT1783](#), [ACELY1650](#), [ACELY1660](#))

#### *Mind Map:*

- Branch out a mind map to include sub-categories of a particular 'I wonder' topic, or different ways of thinking on how to 'fix' or find a solution to a broken object.





## Y-Chart:

- Imagine yourself, or Bowen, in one of the scenes in the book, such as Grandma taking Gertrude inside, or when the teacher doesn't give Bowen time to answer the question. Complete the graphic organiser with the headings: Looks Like, Sounds Like, Feels Like. (See BLM 3)

## De Bono's Six Thinking Hats:

- Think about the effects of Bowen's interactions with others and the world using the six hats: Red (fears, feelings, intuition), White (information, facts), Yellow (benefits, positive thinking), Blue (big picture, focus, learnings), Green (creative thinking, alternatives), Black (risks, problems, obstacles).

## NUMERACY

### Timelines

(ACMMG007, ACMMG021)

- Timelines mark special events over a period of time. Demonstrate Bowen's events at each stage of his life on a timeline. For example, at five he thought about the ocean, at seven he thought about red pandas, sloths and corn chips, at nine he made a cola-powered rocket for Gertrude, and so on.
- Create a timeline of your own life with special events from birth until now. Include dates or years and photographs or illustrations. [This could be scaffolded with a timeline from the teacher or a famous figure].

## SCIENCE

### Layers of the Ocean

(ACSSU031, ACSSU004, ACSSU019, ACSHE013, ACSHE035, ACSIS037, ACSIS038, ACSIS029)

- Explore the layers of the ocean with a liquid density tower experiment. Investigate the ocean zones and layers, and why different liquids don't mix. You will need a glass jar, vegetable oil, dish soap, corn syrup, water, rubbing alcohol, black and blue food colouring, paper cups and spoons. Read the full instructions at: <https://littlebinsforlittlehands.com/layers-of-the-ocean>
- Information and resources on the layers of the ocean can be found at: <https://www.teach-me-mommy.com/layers-of-the-ocean>

### Home-Made Rockets

(ACSSU031, ACSSU033, ACSHE013, ACSIS037, ACSIS038, ACSIS029)

- Discover the aerodynamics of Bowen's home-made rocket with this fun soda and vinegar experiment. The pressure of the carbon dioxide gas creates a thrust force, pushing the bottle upwards. You will need a bottle, vinegar or lemon juice, baking soda, cork, 3 straws, tape. Read the full instructions here: <https://www.science-sparks.com/baking-soda-rocket/>

## Molten Lava Volcanoes

(ACSSU031, ACSSU033, ACSHE013, ACSIS037, ACSIS038, ACSIS029)

- Investigate the chemistry behind mixing baking soda and vinegar to create carbon dioxide gas in this simple volcano project. You will need sand, baking soda, vinegar, water, water bottle, optional pink food colouring and dish soap. Read the full instructions at: <https://littlebinsforlittlehands.com/best-sandbox-volcano-eruption/>

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGIES

### STEM: Functional Trash

(ACTDEK001, ACTDEK002, ACTDEK004, ACTDEP006, ACTDEP007)

- Become an engineer and rethink the way we use things to be more efficient and to help the environment. Create a useful, functional product from recyclable 'landfill' items. Address the importance of reusing items to cut down on greenhouse gases, and the harmful effects of global warming. More information can be found at: [https://www.teachengineering.org/activities/view/cub\\_weather\\_lesson06\\_activity1](https://www.teachengineering.org/activities/view/cub_weather_lesson06_activity1)

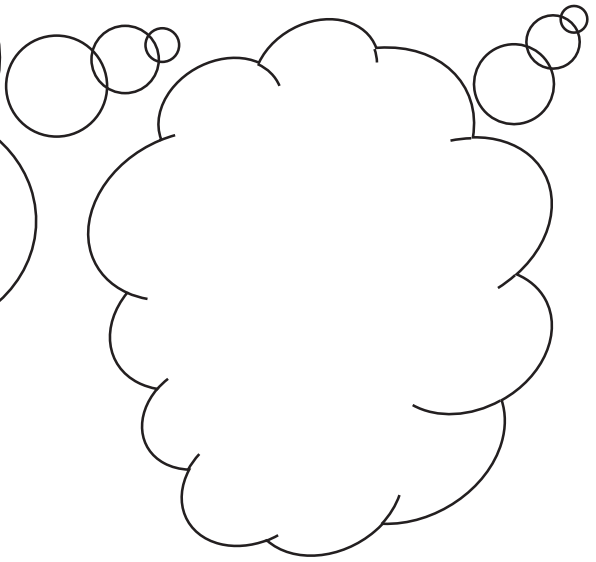
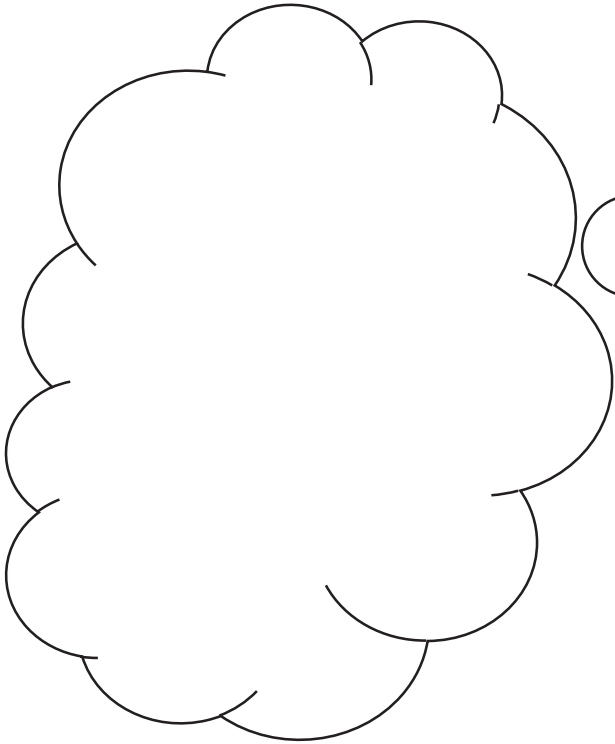
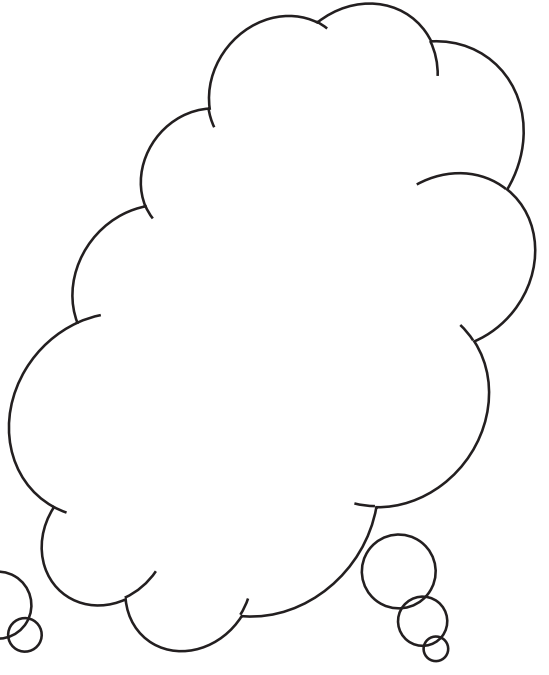
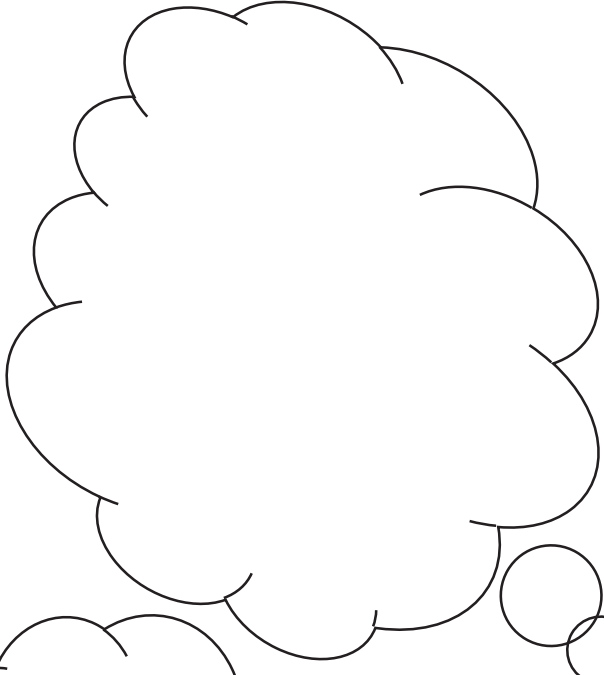
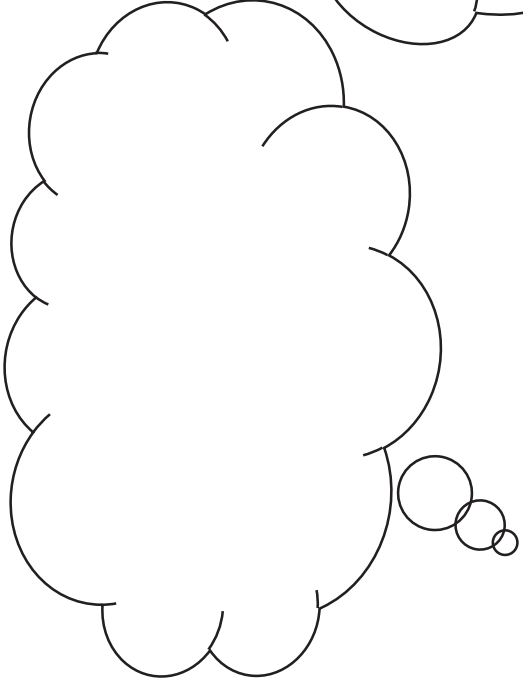
## VISUAL ART

### Art Appreciation

(ACAVAM106, ACAVAM107)

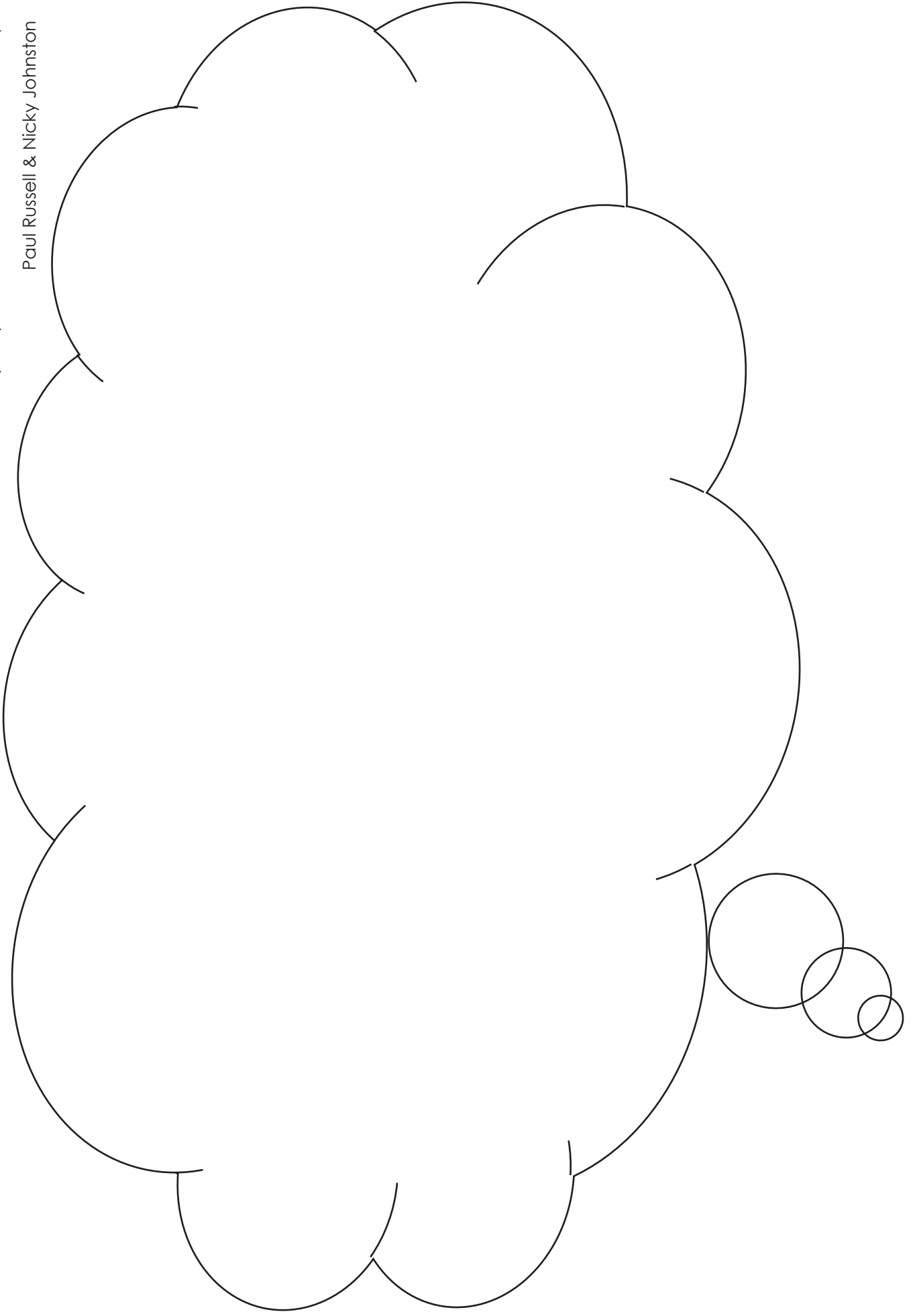
- Study a piece of art, considering the use of colours, textures, medium, technique, feeling or mood, shape and line work. Replicate this piece with your own thoughts on these elements and choice of materials.
- Consider classical impressionist works such as Vincent van Gogh's 'Starry Night', Claude Monet's 'Woman with a Parasol' or Camille Pissarro's 'The Boulevard Montmartre at Night', where artists have expressed mood and movement with texture, colour and brushstroke.

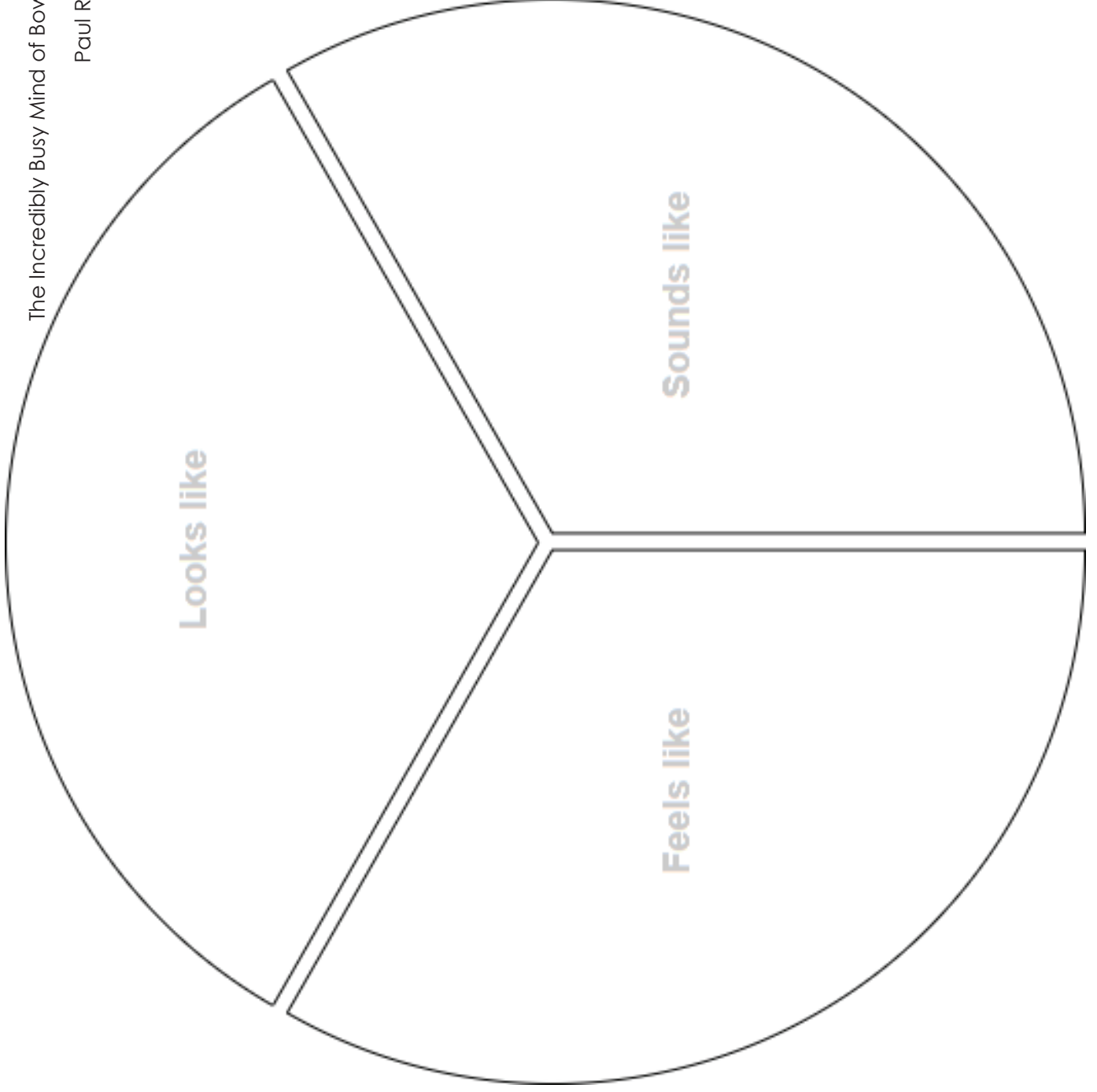




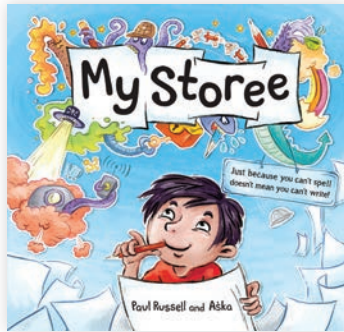
The Incredibly Busy Mind of Bowen Bartholomew Crisp

Paul Russell & Nicky Johnston





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