

## DISCUSSION GUIDE

HYPERION BOOKS

## ABOUT THIS BOOK

Madame says, “Always move with your head held high.”

That’s not so easy when you’ve spent your entire life dreaming of becoming a ballerina, and even your smile scares off the other dancers. But Vampirina is learning all the right moves. So it’s only a matter of time before this prima dreamer twirls her way into their hearts—and yours too!

## PRE-READING QUESTIONS

- 1 What is your best talent? Do you have to practice this talent, or does it come naturally? (Note that not all children will have a performance-oriented talent; some may be good at making friends or taking care of pets, for example.)
- 2 Tell about a time when you tried something that was hard for you. Did you keep trying, or did you give up?
- 3 What gives you “cold feet”? How do you react when you have to do something that you don’t want to do?
- 4 Do you ever get stage fright? What are some strategies that might help calm your nerves?

## VOCABULARY

The following words may be new for your students. Encourage them to use both text and picture clues to infer meaning.

dismayed      overshadow      backstage      debut      brava

# BALLET TERMS

plié relevé arabesque pirouettes on pointe grand jeté

Use the following Video Dictionary of Classical Ballet to introduce students to some of the ballet moves performed by Vampirina:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sWStlaBdxcg>.

As an alternative, invite a ballerina guest dancer to your classroom to demonstrate each move.



# DISCUSSION STARTERS

- 1 What does Vampirina like doing best? (*knowledge*)
- 2 How does Vampirina's family feel about her dancing? How do you know? (*comprehension*)
- 3 When Vampirina trips over her cape, what do the other ballerinas do? How could the other ballerinas have made Vampirina feel more welcome? (*application*)
- 4 What might the other dancers be thinking when Vampirina joins them for her first lesson? (*analysis*)
- 5 Is Vampirina a good ballerina? Explain your thinking. (*evaluation*)
- 6 Why do you think the audience in Vampirina's debut was just as nervous as she was? Who is not nervous? Create a list of tips that would help Vampirina to overcome her stage fright. (*synthesis*)



# ACTIVITIES

## Ballet Positions

The sight of Vampirina's fangs make the other dancers forget fifth position. Help students learn the five basic ballet positions with a tutorial such as this one, which includes the five feet and arm positions:  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pb\\_cjCXFtN8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pb_cjCXFtN8).

Let students practice the five positions using visual cues. You can find examples of the positions online and in books on ballet. Many resources can be found here: <http://danceteacherpress.com>. Reproduce each position on card stock, or take photos of children demonstrating each position.

## Math

Let students use several sets of cards to make patterns and then demonstrate the positions in the pattern.

## Technology

With an interactive whiteboard, enter an image of each of the five positions into a random image generator; let students take turns tapping the board to change positions and have the class pose accordingly.

## Listening

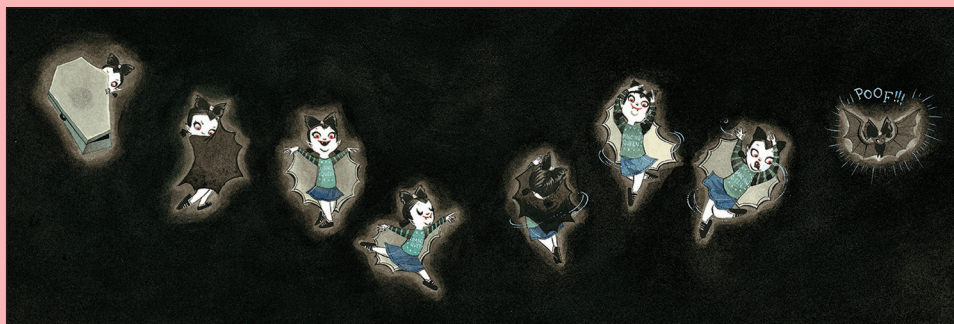
Play "Vampirina Says," a variation of Simon Says where the child acting as Vampirina (or "Vampirino" for boys) calls out ballet positions. Anyone who changes positions without first hearing "Vampirina says" must bow or curtsy and then sit down. The last dancer standing becomes the caller for the next game.

## Following Directions

When the class is waiting in line in the hallway, keep them occupied by choosing a volunteer to call out positions that the rest of the class then demonstrates. The volunteer calls on a quiet dancer to call out the next position.

## STOP-MOTION DANCE MOVES

Look at the series of movements on the end pages of the book where Vampirina emerges from her coffin, dances, then turns into a bat.



Create a stop-motion video with your class using a program such as iMovie (tutorial: <http://youtube.com/watch?v=ipE3nCjI0IU>) or Windows Movie Maker (tutorial: [http://teachertube.com/viewVideo.php?video\\_id=191949&ttitle=stop\\_motion\\_tutorial](http://teachertube.com/viewVideo.php?video_id=191949&ttitle=stop_motion_tutorial)). Take photos of students in different dance positions, then string them together in a stop-motion format. Discuss sequencing with students: What happens when the moves are strung together in reverse order? In random order? Why is sequence important in dance?

## PLASTIC FANGS

Integrate the story of *Vampirina Ballerina* into a lesson on dental health. Purchase a class set of plastic fangs for children to keep in individual plastic zip bags labeled with their names. Invite a dentist to the class, or ask a dentist's office to donate dental floss and toothbrushes to your students. Have students practice brushing and flossing their "fangs" before putting them in their mouths.

Give each student a fang template and have them write one tip for keeping their teeth clean. In place of the word "teeth," have them write "fangs," as in:

**Brush your fangs after each meal.**

Display a photo of the class sporting their clean fangs along with your students' dental health tips on a bulletin board labeled "Fang Tips."

## AMAZING ALLITERATION

Share the following examples of alliteration from the story:

"pirouettes practically perfect"

"A curtsy is customary"

Help students brainstorm a list of rules for games they like to play. Let them choose one of the rules to rewrite with alliteration. For example: "Dribble the basketball" might be changed to: "Bounce the basketball," or "Throw the T-ball" could become: "Toss the T-ball."

Have students reflect on the effect of alliteration. Why do authors use it? How does it make text more fun to read and hear?



## BALANCING ACT

One ballerina rule is to “always move with your head held high.” Discuss the double meaning of this phrase—both the literal and the figurative.

Explain that one way for students to keep their “heads held high” when they’re feeling discouraged is to remember something that they do well. Give each student a blue ribbon template (you can find these in clip art and online). Have each student illustrate or write something on the ribbon that he or she does well, which could be anything from swimming to drawing to being a good friend to others. Display the ribbons around the classroom as a reminder for your students about what they do best.

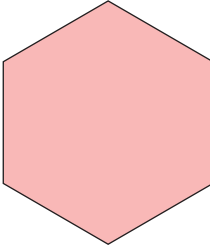
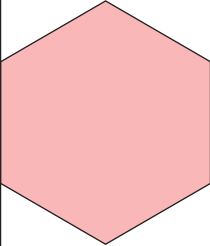
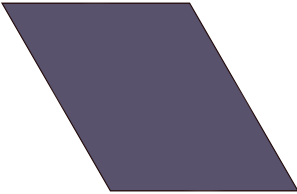
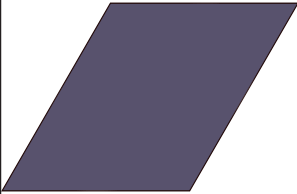
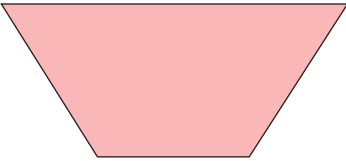
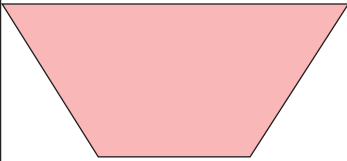
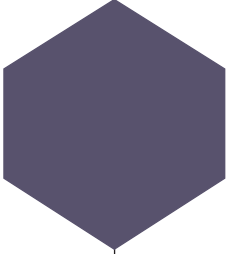
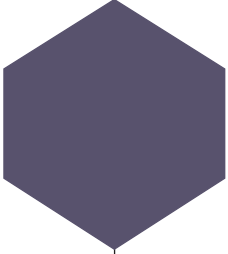


## MIRROR, MIRROR, IN MY HAND . . .

Vampirina is reassured that making mistakes is “. . . not a reflection on [her] talent.” As an alternative to the blue ribbon activity above, have students create mirrors using a template (you can find these in clip art and online). Let them decorate the handle with images that represent the things they like to do. On one side, cut a piece of aluminum foil and have students glue it to their mirrors. On the other side, students can illustrate a photo of themselves doing an activity that showcases one of their talents.

For a science and math extension activity, let students experiment with handheld student mirrors and pattern blocks. What happens when the blocks are held next to the mirrors? What shapes do they make? Have students keep track of what they find on a chart like the one on the following page, with the center line being the line of symmetry.



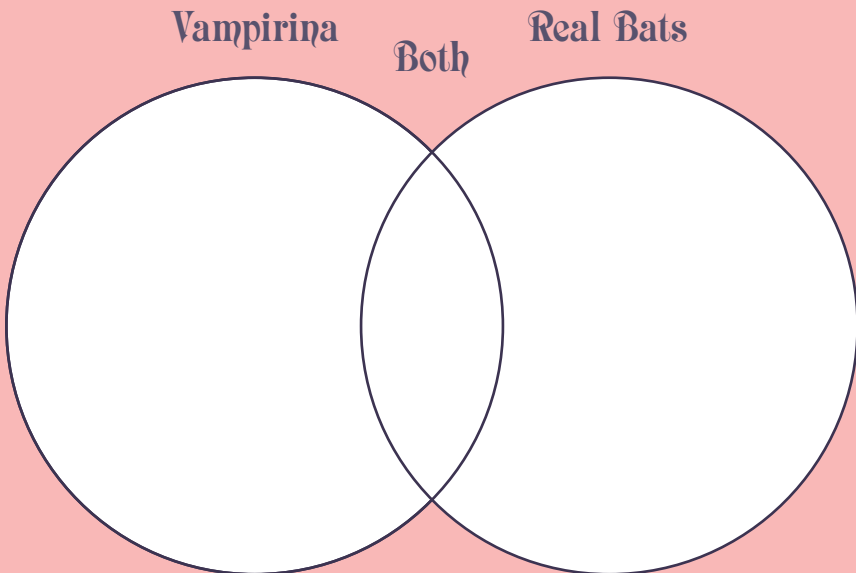
PATTERN BLOCK SHAPE	MIRROR IMAGE
	
	
	
	

## GOAL SETTING

Have students trace their foot on construction paper. Inside their footprint, students can write one goal they hope to accomplish this year and three specific things they can do to meet their goal. Display the footprints along the wall of your classroom and label the path with this quote from *Vampirina Ballerina*: “It doesn’t matter if you take one giant leap or many tiny steps, as long as you are moving toward your goal.”

## BATTY FOR BOOKS

Read other books about bats, both fiction and nonfiction. Suggested fiction titles include *Stellaluna* by Janell Cannon and the *Bats* series by Brian Lies. Generate a list of “bat facts” and then decide which characteristics *Vampirina* shares with real bats. Record students’ answers in a Venn diagram like the one shown on the following page. This Venn diagram may also be used to compare *Vampirina* with Angelina in *Angelina Ballerina* by Katherine Holabird and Helen Craig.



## TIP-TOP SHAPE

Vampirina knows that she needs to stay in “tip-top ballerina shape.” Help students to brainstorm ways to stay healthy, such as drinking lots of water, eating fresh fruits and veggies, and getting enough sleep each night. Have students choose one tip to write down for Vampirina on a prescription pad template (you can find them online or make one yourself) or piece of paper.

Come together as a whole group to categorize their prescriptions for good health (categories might include diet, exercise, rest, etc.). You can make a bulletin board of all the tips.



## HOUSE WITH ROOMS

Let students look closely at the illustration that shows all the rooms in Vampirina's house. How are the members of her family helping her reach her goal of becoming a dancer? Let students draw their own homes with rooms where each family member is helping them in some way. For example, one family member might be helping them put away the toys in their room, or another might be helping them to draw a picture at the kitchen table. Let students share their houses and explain how their family members help them.

## WHAT DRIVES US BATTY

When Vampirina is onstage, she must resist the temptation to turn into a bat. Ask your class which temptations drive them “batty” because they’re so hard to resist. List their answers on the left side of a T-chart. On the right side of the chart, help students brainstorm strategies to resist temptation. Give each student a bat template (you can find these in clip art and online). On one side, have them write or illustrate a temptation that drives them batty. On the other side, have them write or illustrate a strategy they can use to try to resist the temptation. After a week has passed, have students share how their strategies have been working.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Anne Marie Pace** ([www.annemariepace.com](http://www.annemariepace.com)) has had stories, poems, and articles for kids published in such magazines as *Highlights for Children*, *My Friend*, *Wee Ones*, and *On the Line*. A 2005 Grand Prize winner in the SmartWriters W.I.N. contest as well as a 2009 SCBWI Barbara Karlin Award Letter of Merit recipient, her first picture book, *Never Ever Talk to Strangers*, was published in September 2010 by Scholastic Book Clubs.



## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

**LeUyen Pham** ([www.leuyenpham.com](http://www.leuyenpham.com)) is the prolific and bestselling illustrator of many books for children, including *Grace for President* by Kelly DiPucchio, *Freckleface Strawberry* by Julianne Moore, and *God's Dream* by Archbishop Desmond Tutu. Pham has also written and illustrated her own works, including *All the Things I Love About You* and *Big Sister, Little Sister*. A former animator for Dreamworks, she lives with her husband and two sons in San Francisco.

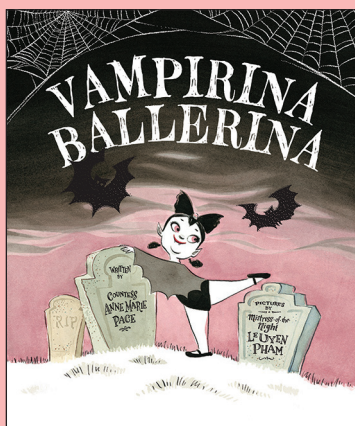


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This guide was created by Natalie Dias Lorenzi, a school librarian and middle-grade author.

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