

What's the Big Idea?

What's the Big Idea? (CBeebies, Salford, United Kingdom) is a 5-minute, animated series about philosophy for children ages 4 to 6. Hugo invites children to explore big questions (cf. illustration 1). In this episode, he asks, "What is sad?" Hugo sees a creature named Mr. Yeti, who is crying (cf. illustration 2). He thinks maybe Mr. Yeti is sad. Hugo speaks to off-screen characters Lilly and Felix, who tell him that sad is how you feel when things go wrong. A woman with baby in a stroller walks by Hugo. The baby loses a teddy. Hugo picks it up and returns it to the baby. The baby stops crying and starts laughing. Hugo sees his friend Oscar and his family leaving in a car (cf. illustration 3). They are going on holiday. Hugo is sad and says, "I'll miss him." An off screen voice suggests that Mr. Yeti misses someone. Hugo goes to Mr. Yeti and they exchange whispers. Hugo quietly says that Mr. Yeti's goldfish died (cf. illustration 4). Hugo asks, "Can we make sadness go away?" The reply is, "We can try." Next, Hugo and Mr. Yeti are in a circus ring where clowns are juggling (cf. illustration 5). An off screen voice says, "Sometimes we can make a sad person laugh." Hugo laughs, but Mr. Yeti cries. The voice explains that some people cry, some like hugs, some like sleeping (cf. illustration 6), others want to forget about being sad by doing other things. Mr. Yeti does acrobatics around the circus ring and at first it seems to be working, but then it is not. A phone rings and Hugo answers it. He takes the phone to Mr. Yeti and says, "It's your mommy!" Mr. Yeti is happy. Hugo wants to know if it is possible not to be sad in the first place. He tells Mr. Yeti that you can't stop sad things from happening, but you won't be sad forever (cf. illustration 7). Some people even like to be sad; for instance, when they watch soppy movies (cf. illustration 8). The program concludes with Hugo's question to viewers, "What do you think?"

What's the Big Idea? placed second in the PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONAL 2014 in the up to 6 nonfiction category.

INTERNATIONAL EXPERTS' OPINION

International experts shared their opinions about *What's the Big Idea?* during the discussion sessions at the PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONAL 2014. Experts acknowledged the importance of this program structure and content for preschoolers. All were impressed with the way this program offered tools for addressing difficult concepts. Asian and South American producers are making programs like *What's the Big Idea?* to address philosophical, emotional, and logical topics. Several experts questioned the approach with dialogue and the use of off screen voices. Many commented about the open ending and debated cultural traditions that favor happy endings. A Macedonian expert described the challenge of realizing sensitive emotions, such as grief, with young actors. Experts also wondered whether children would talk about the subject after watching the program.

"I like that they took an abstract idea and made it concrete. Not everyone is sad in the same way and deals with it in the same way." (female expert, Canada)

"I do agree with their concept, for preschoolers have to know how to



III. 1: Hugo explores philosophical questions



III. 2: Mr. Yeti might be sad because he is crying

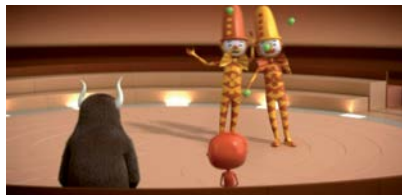
Screenshots from *What's the Big Idea?* © CBeebies



III. 3: Hugo's friend Oscar and his family go away in a car



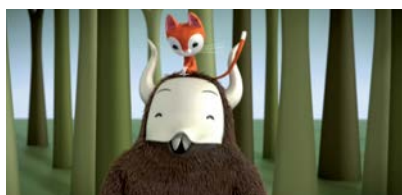
III. 4: Mr. Yeti's goldfish has died



III. 5: Jugglers make Hugo laugh but it doesn't work for Mr. Yeti



III. 6: Mr. Yeti's snoring makes the hat rise in the air



III. 7: A cat tries to cheer Mr. Yeti

think about something. They have to think about emotion and logic.... The dialogue is very good. (female expert, Japan)

"That is more of a traditional way we talk to preschoolers and we give them the space and time." (female expert, Taiwan)

"The off screen voice is similar to Pokoyo....I think it is a way to make dialogue possible without creating a lot of characters on the screen." (male expert, Argentina)

"There is something about the BBC legacy that the 'voice of God' talks about it. British kids are used to it. I think it is difficult to be realistic and the kid to talk too much, so it is a way to speed up the language and the production." (male expert, Italy)

"I liked that everything was just so clean. The other shows have graphics, children, animations, and it's very much. Here it's not. It's good." (female expert, Norway)

"I liked *What's the Big Idea?* because it is about sadness. Quickly and honestly dealt with it." (male expert, United States)

"Kids go to school and very, very quickly it always ends with the question 'What do you think?' It's great as an educational tool." (female expert, United Kingdom)

"It's cool that the question at the end was left unanswered." (female expert, United States)

"I absolutely love this show. They are taking the concept of emotional intelligence and breaking it down for 4 to 6 year olds. It was just perfect. It also cultivates a space for child-parent interaction." (female expert, Canada)

"It's empathy. When the fish dies, it is an interesting way to pull in the topic of sadness." (female expert, Chile)

"Makes children think. I saw my son and he said I just need five minutes. Just give me five minutes to cry!" (female expert, Taiwan)

"It doesn't leave the kid sad. It tells you it's okay to be sad....We would not make a kid sad on TV and leave the kid alone. This is not okay and we would not be there anymore to help them solve the emotion." (female expert, Germany)

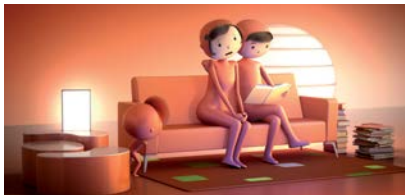
"This is real life....More important than happy ending is to have hope." (female expert, Slovenia)

"It is important to show progression or hope. With preschoolers it is so difficult to document conflict. For them it is way more strong." (male expert, Denmark)

"Which tools do you give them so that after the show they can resolve

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Screenshots from What's the Big Idea? © CBeebies



III. 8: Hugo sees adults watching sad movies

the conflict? It's not about happy or sad endings. It is how are they going to use the concept." (male expert, Chile)

Elizabeth Spezia, PhD student, Southern Illinois University, USA

Target Audience 8	Idea 8.28	Script 7.85	Realization 8.23
Average Score per Category by experts' voters at PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONAL 2014			