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Book Fairs

21
years

SCHOLASTIC

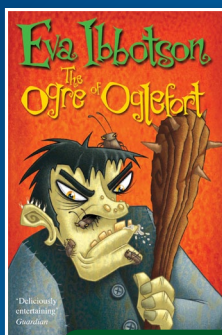
Book Talk



AGES 8+

Engage and inspire your
pupils with a Book Talk!

AGES 8+



Look out for this book at your Fair!

Price	£5.99
Case	Read On
Author	Eva Ibbotson
Publisher	Macmillan Children's Books

Using this book in your classroom

Themes

This funny and magical book deals with themes including **loyalty, courage, friendship** and **the importance of being true to yourself**.

Summary

Ivo is an orphan, and he lives at the horrible Riverdene Home for Children in Need. He is completely miserable there and would do anything to escape – the only person who is nice to him is a strange old lady who turns out to be the magical Hag of the Dribble. When the Hag's familiar, Gladys, walks out on her, Ivo begs to be allowed to take over the job. The Hag reluctantly agrees, and lets Ivo go along with her to the Summer Meeting of Unusual Creatures. But they both wonder if they have taken on more than they bargained for, when they are chosen to carry out this year's Summer Task – to kill the Ogre of Oglefort and rescue a princess from his castle.

Together with a troll and a hen-pecked wizard, they go in search of the terrifying ogre – and find that neither the ogre nor the princess are quite what they seem! The ogre turns out to be a kindly, though weary, soul who specializes in turning people into animals – and he is plagued by people who want to escape their life as humans for the relative simplicity of life as an animal. Princess Mirella is not being imprisoned against her will – she just wants the ogre to turn her into a white bird, so that she can escape from her boring life as a princess and from the unappealing Prince Umberto, who is threatening to marry her. After meeting the ogre and Mirella, Ivo and his magical friends discover that Oglefort is not the grim and threatening place they had imagined – in fact it's a sort of earthly paradise, with all the ingredients they need to live a happy life. Ivo and Mirella soon make friends and join forces to try to keep the ogre, and Oglefort itself, safe from all the forces that threaten them. This is easier said than done, when the threatening forces include the terrible Norns – the oldest beings in the world – a rather ill-assorted collection of ghosts, and the ogre's own terrifying aunts...

Did you know?

- Eva Ibbotson (1925-2010) began writing as a child, but she was nearly 50 when her first children's book was published. She then went on to write over 20 books for children and adults.
- *The Ogre of Oglefort* has been shortlisted for both the Guardian Children's Book Prize and the Roald Dahl Funny Prize.

The Story Session

1. Introducing the book

- Show the children the front cover picture. Ask: "What kind of creature do you think this is? What do you think he will be like?" Read the blurb, and ask the children for their predictions about what will happen in the story. Record their ideas so that you can refer back to them later.
- Read Chapters 1 and 2 (up to page 14) out loud. Ask the children to look out for clues that this might not be an 'ordinary' magical story – for example, the Hag and the other magical creatures seem to be quite nice, and clearly the magical world coexists alongside the 'normal' world, with non-magical characters like Mr Prendergast living alongside the magical characters.

2. Reading the story

- Read Chapter 3 (pages 15-20). Ask: "Why do you think Ivo is so keen to get out of the Riverdene Home? What would his life be like, if he became the Hag's familiar? Do you think Ivo has what it takes to be a good familiar?"
- Encourage the children to read the rest of the story independently or as a class. Pause occasionally to talk about the story, and encourage the children to revisit the predictions they made about the ogre before they started reading. At what point do they start to realise that the ogre is not as horrible as he looks on the cover? Who else in the story turns out to be different from the way they appear at first?
- At the end of the book, discuss the children's feelings about the ending. Is it a satisfying one? Is it a happy ending for all of the characters? (Perhaps not for Prince Umberto, for example.) Do the children feel that all the characters get what they deserve, at the end of the story? Is there anything about the story that they would change, if they could?

3. Follow-up

- One of the strong themes in this story is friendship. Encourage the children to draw a 'friendship web' to show which of the characters are friends by the end of the book. Which of the characters do the children feel is the best friend in the story (e.g. the most loyal, the best company, the most sympathetic, etc.)? You could ask the children to choose a character and explain to the rest of the group why they think this character is the best friend in the book. The group could then vote to choose an overall winner.
- Individually or in small groups, the children could invent their own Unusual Creature. Challenge them to describe their creature in terms of its appearance, character, habits etc. They could draw their creature and write a character profile for it, and you could create a class display.

YOU TELL US

- Did you use these notes to have a Book Talk in class?
- Were they helpful?
- Are there any changes you'd like to see to make them more useful?

We're always happy to hear your comments, so please email us at bookfairs@scholastic.co.uk