

Get writing

SECTION

6

Mood poetry

Objective: To use different narrative techniques to engage and entertain the reader.

What you need: Copies of *The Railway Children*, photocopiable page 28, writing materials.

Cross-curricular link: PSHE.

What to do

- After reading Chapter 1, comment on progression: early idyllic scenes; minor upset of the model Engine; surprise and concern at visitors; bewildering changes; a dramatic move.
- Suggest that the writer's narrative style also progresses: a happy, friendly tone in the early pages; humorous rhyme about the Engine; tense speech with the visit; harsh descriptions and unhappy dialogue for the changes (life is horrid and meals dull and dirty); strong, negative vocabulary for the move (*melancholy, unhappy, hammered*).
- Identify Mother's attempts at reassurance: *It'll*

all come right in the end and, on the evening before the move, she laughs at Peter's wish to move once a month. Suggest that Mother needs a new poem now to make Roberta less anxious.

- Propose that the children write Mother's poem. Ask: *What should the subject be?* (The move.) *What mood?* (Light-hearted and confident.) Read together Mother's earlier poem. Analyse content, construction and language. Point out: the storytelling style; rhyme pattern; accurate and perceptive vocabulary; light tone.
- Give out photocopiable page 28. Suggest first sharing ideas with a partner, trying out lines orally and making preliminary drafts.

Differentiation

For older/more confident learners: Suggest writing a second poem for their arrival at the new house.

For younger/less confident learners: Let partners collaborate on their poem.

Exchanging letters

Objective: To adapt sentence construction to different text types, purposes and readers.

What you need: Copies of *The Railway Children*, writing materials.

Cross-curricular link: History.

What to do

- After reading Chapter 3, remind the children that letters were a more important means of communication when this book was written. Examine the railway children's letter. Ask: *In what ways have they tried to be formal?* (The proper form of a letter; division into complete sentences; careful punctuation.) Suggest that modern children might write a less formal note. How does the writer still emphasise the childishness of the letter-writers? (Some of their expressions; spelling mistakes; ideas.)
- Re-read Peter's encounter with the Station Master on the road. Discuss Peter's embarrassment and the Station Master's kindness.

- Consider how the Station Master is presented. (His speech is grammatically correct, unlike that of the servants and the cart man.) Agree that he is in a position of authority and responsibility and so is educated.
- Suggest that, after writing to the old gentleman, Peter decides to write to the Station Master. What does he want to say? (Further apologies; pleasure that they are now friends.)
- Ask the children to write two letters: one from Peter to the Station Master and one as his reply. Emphasise thinking about what to say, and how these characters express it.

Differentiation

For older/more confident learners: Ask children to write Mother's letter to the Station Master when she learns about the coal mining.

For younger/less confident learners: Suggest content ideas and limit the letters' length.

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