

Plot, character and setting

SECTION

4

All about Norway

Objective: To infer writers' perspectives from what is written and from what is implied.

What you need: Copies of *The Witches*, flipchart, photocopiable page 16, writing materials.

Cross-curricular link: Geography.

What to do

- Tell the children that they are going to focus on Norway as a setting for part of the novel. Remind them that Roald Dahl's parents were Norwegian and that he spent his summer holidays in Norway, as the boy in the story had done before his parents died.
- Hand out photocopiable page 16 and ask the children to work in pairs to scan the novel for the information needed to complete it.
- Afterwards, bring the class back together to share what has been found. Consider what part Norway plays as a setting in the novel. Reflect on the facts that the climate seems harsh in

winter, the landscape is rugged or bleak, and Boy loses his parents while he is there. Ask the children how they think he feels about Norway nevertheless, and why. (He loves going there and is disappointed when he can't have the summer holidays there. He likes to hear his grandmother's stories about adventurous boat trips, fishing and shrimping, and eating mussels. When they return to Norway at the end of the book he says he has always loved brown Norwegian goats'-milk cheese.) Do the children think this reflects the author's own feelings about Norway?

Differentiation

For older/more confident learners: Challenge the pairs to research more about Norway to add to the photocopiable sheets.

For younger/less confident learners: Provide chapter or page references to help the children locate information about Norway.

An unconventional grandmother

Objective: To make notes on and use evidence from across a text to explain events or ideas.

What you need: Copies of *The Witches*, flipchart, photocopiable page 17, writing materials.

Cross-curricular link: PSHE.

What to do

- Explain to the children that, in this lesson, they are going to focus on the character of Grandmamma.
- Briefly share any details the children can recall about her, noting them on the flipchart. Encourage the children to think about what she looks like (old, wrinkled, fat, wears lace, for example) as well as her behaviour and characteristics (she enjoys smoking cigars, studying witches, storytelling; she is loving towards, and willing to give up everything for, her grandson).

- Ask the children to decide in which ways she is a stereotypical grandmother (such as her age and wrinkles) and in which ways she is unconventional or defies the stereotypes (for example, in smoking cigars).
- Organise the children into pairs to work on photocopiable page 17. Advise them to scan the book for details. They might be able to use direct quotes for the speech bubbles.

Differentiation

For older/more confident learners: Ask the pairs to list 'stereotypical' features about grandparents and discuss how far Boy's grandmother and their own grandparents (or older relatives) conform to them.

For younger/less confident learners: Ask the pairs to talk about their own grandmothers (or other older relatives) and how they are conventional/unconventional.