

Shared reading

SECTION

3

Extract 1

- Display an enlarged photocopy of Extract 1. Read the extract to the class.
- Ask the children to identify the narrator (Laura) and the other main character in this extract (Billy).
- Read the extract again and ask them what they know about Laura – her age, where she lives, what she does and if she has any brothers or sisters.
- Ask them what her hopes and dreams are, as she begins her diary.
- Draw an outline of Laura on the board. Ask the children to suggest words and phrases from the extract which give information about Laura

as a person. Write these inside the drawing of her outline.

- Now ask the children to tell you what they know about events, other people, places and actions in the story. Write these round the outside of the drawing.
- Discuss with the children how the writer has cleverly sewn all this information together without writing a list. Mention how the mirror reflects both Laura's own image, and her fantasy image (Lady Eugenia). Explain how she brings her brother Billy into her monologue through identifying her own hopes with his job as a member of the gig crew.

Extract 2

- Display an enlarged copy of Extract 2. Read the extract to the children.
- Ask the children to sequence the main events in the extract – Joseph Hannibal leaves, Billy and Laura have a row, Father and Billy have a row.
- Ask the children if they notice anything about the tense of the extract. (It changes from present to past.) Discuss the reasons for this. (A convention of the genre of diary writing – present thoughts followed by reflection.)

- Ask the children how the writer uses language to help build up the tension. (Short, simple sentences and verbs such as 'shrugged', 'grabbed', 'roared'.)
- Highlight the expressions 'split us apart', 'nose to nose' and 'eyes like steel'. Ask the class why the writer uses phrases like this. (Strong imagery to generate atmosphere.) What response does he hope to get from the reader? (To build tension and encourage feelings of empathy.)

Extract 3

- Display an enlarged copy of the extract and read it to the children. Ask them to imagine that they are Michael Morpurgo reading a draft of this extract, checking that the language used will evoke the images he wants the reader to picture.
- Re-read the text. Suggest words and phrases that have been used to create the scene. Circle these or write them on the board, for example, 'We hung over our oars'; 'tumbled over the side'; 'the gig groaned and cried'; 'A thunderous wave reared up'.
- Look for the use of alliteration, for example, 'a great green wall of water'; 'witches' brew of

wind'. How does this enhance the text? Do the children think these phrases are effective?

- Ask the children to make alternative suggestions for the words and phrases collected. Do they think Michael Morpurgo might have thought of these too? If he did, why do they think he rejected them?
- Discuss the way in which the Chief speaks to the crew. Are these orders? Are they spoken or shouted? Ask the children to imagine that they are the Chief 'lifting' with the crew, 'bellowing' at them and 'clearing the way ahead.' Why does he do this? (To urge the crew on.)

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