

Talk about it

SECTION

5

Cloud-Men

Objective: To identify the main characteristics of characters, drawing on the text to justify views.

What you need: Copies of *James and the Giant Peach*, cotton wool and small circular stickers (optional).

Cross-curricular links: Art and design; Drama.

What to do

- Ask the children to look carefully at the section of the book where the peach encounters the Cloud-Men (Chapters 27 to 32).
- Organise the children to work in groups of two or three. Ask the children to spend a bit of time discussing these two questions:
 - What were the Cloud-Men like?
 - How do we know what they were like?
- Encourage the children to form an opinion and find parts of the story that support their opinions. They can make brief notes to record these.
- Ask the children to think of other storylines

that could take place with the Cloud-Men, either as a variation on the book (for example, the Cloud-Men being helpful characters) or as an extension (for example, an incident where James helps the Cloud-Men and forms a friendship with them).

- As an optional addition to the activity, let the children make their own Cloud-Men from loosely rolled cotton-wool shapes with circular stickers as eyes. These could be used to role-play a retelling of their new story. Some children could demonstrate their storyline, using these models, for the class.

Differentiation

For older/more able children: Ask the children to devise a new story about the Cloud-Men.

For younger/less able children: Encourage the children to use their cotton-wool Cloud-Men to role-play any scene from the story or imaginative encounter.

Character voices

Objective: To identify main characteristics of characters.

What you need: Paper and pens, tape recorder (optional).

What to do

- Arrange the children into groups of three and four. Ask the children to make a shared list of the most memorable characters from the story – perhaps two each.
- In their groups, tell the children to think of different incidents in which each of these characters is involved.
- Ask them to think of the sorts of things these characters would say at those times – for example, what sort of thing would Aunt Spiker say as the peach starts to roll towards her? Stress that the children do not need to remember or quote the text – they need to think of the sort

of thing a character might say, based on known characteristics.

- Add the condition that the children must try saying their lines in the style of the character concerned, so they must adopt an appropriate voice and manner.
- Hand out the paper and pens and invite the children to work individually, writing down some of the quotes they have devised.
- Allow time for sharing and performing quotes.

Differentiation

For older/more able children: Record some of the performances to create 'a cinema trailer', in which characters are briefly encountered giving quick one-liners.

For younger/less able children: Ask the children to create just one or two quotes for the characters and share them with the group.

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