

Plot, character and setting

SECTION

4

Investigating dialogue

Objective: To observe how dialogue is presented to show characters' different voices.

What you need: Copies of *The Hodgeheg*, enlarged copy of Extract 1 on page 8, flipchart and pen.

Cross-curricular links: Drama.

What to do

- Read the first paragraph of Chapter 1 aloud. Elicit the meaning of 'copped it'. What might readers infer from Pa's use of slang to announce a tragedy? (Matter of fact – it happens frequently; keeping the tone light.)
- Ask the children what their first question might be if a relative had died. (How? What of?) Compare to Ma asking: 'Where?' What is the inference? (She can guess the rest from past experience.)
- Look at Pa's reply. Ask the children to count how many verbs he uses. (Only one.) Draw attention to how incomplete sentences (with no verb) create realistic dialogue.

- Together, turn each of Pa's answers into a full sentence. Jot these on the flipchart. Do they now sound stilted and unrealistic?
- Ask the children, in pairs, to read to the end of the chapter.
- Bring them together to discuss the text (see pages 7 and 8).
- Invite three confident children to read the conversation, from 'Sssshhhhh...' to the end, in the role of Ma, Pa and Max. Elicit how their different voices are revealed: Pa – brisk and decisive (actively trying to teach his children); Ma – reflective (considers other viewpoints); Max – intelligent, persistent and determined (uses logical reasoning).
- Invite the class to observe which character sounded the most convincing or persuasive.

Differentiation

Pair more confident with less confident children for shared reading.

Atmospheric language

Objective: To know how verbs, adverbs and metaphors are used in building up atmosphere and setting.

What you need: Copies of *The Hodgeheg*, pens or pencils, paper photocopiable page 15, one per group.

What to do

- Divide the children into groups of five or six.
- Ask the children to read Chapter 2, noting any vocabulary new to them. Check understanding of words such as 'nocturnal', 'ambled'.
- Briefly discuss as a class the style and content of this chapter, compared with Chapter 1. (No dialogue; much description; the beginning of Max's 'research'.)
- Elicit the variety of different verbs used to describe Max's progress. (Slipped, ambled, crept.)
- Explain that a 'sea of noise' is a metaphor.

Discuss how sea and waves envelop and can drown us.

- Working in their groups, ask the children to identify how Max's viewpoint of the busy street differs from a human perspective, reading the description closely and jotting down strong verbs and adjectives used.
- Appoint a scribe to each group and give out copies of the photocopiable sheet to facilitate their discussion. As they discuss their ideas, the scribe should record the group's answers.
- Compare observations as a class.

Differentiation

For older/more confident children: Ask the children to list all the adverbs in this chapter and discuss their effect.

For younger/less confident children: List the metaphors to aid children's search: 'thundered', 'hammering heart', 'monsters'.