



The Forever Whale

by Sarah Lean

Website Resources

Drama Activities

Furze Island: A guided Tour

Hannah tells us: *'Furze Island is in the middle of the harbour like a green roundabout in the motorway sea.'*

Working with a partner, one of you is to be taken around the island with your eyes closed, as though unable to see. The other partner should take your arm and act as a guide, describing vividly where you are and what can be seen as you walk around Furze Island. You might want to add more things to what you already know from the description of the island in the book. Change roles halfway around the island.

Oral Activity

Hannah tells Linus: *'I'm looking for a bright memory of Grandad's'*.

Linus points out that other people's memories are in their own heads not *'outside'*. This shows what a difficult quest Hannah is on as she tries to put all the pieces together, to reveal the story about a journey that Grandad wanted to tell her.

Think about a bright memory of your own. In a group of four all share your chosen memories. Decide between you which one will be the best to share with the class. Others then give guidance and tips to make sure the account of the chosen memory delights the audience.



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Effect of Language and Imagery

Sarah Lean works hard as a writer to try to help you understand the illness that Hannah's Grandad has, the illness 'you can't see'.

She leads us to imagine Alzheimer's as if it is personified. She tells us:

- 'Alzheimer's is a history thief'
- 'Alzheimer's usually picks on older people'
- 'Alzheimer is not fussy about how big or bold a person is'
- 'Smokey (the cat) is like Alzheimer's disease, creeping in and stealing things that don't belong to him'
- 'I see the unstoppable grey-green tide rushing away ... in the same way that Alzheimer's is dragging Grandad away from me'

Can you draw a picture of the Alzheimer's villain as you imagine the character? Use the writer's descriptive images to help you.



Look at some of Hannah's descriptions of her Grandad, or things related to him. The choice of language Hannah uses helps to make her seem a very individual character:

- 'His eyes are warm and brown like oiled wood'
- 'He shows me some small seeds ... seeds shaped like miniature rowing boats'
- 'His memory fades like a ship disappearing into a sea mist'
- 'Grandad's outside is familiar, his tall broad shoulders ... and his sandpaper hands'

She uses lots of very good similes. What makes these descriptions work so well?



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Inferring Character's Thoughts and Feelings: Conducting an Interview

To help prompt people's memories Hannah finds it really useful to do a pretend interview. She interviews her mum about a visit to Furze Island and her sister Jodie about the Furze Island project.

Role-play an interview between Hannah's mum and dad (Mr & Mrs Gray) and the manager of the East Harbour Care Home, as they answer questions on why they want Grandad to come to the home and what impact this will have on their family and details about Grandad himself. Design your questions to encourage Hannah's parents to reveal their own feelings, especially Hannah's mum, who is Grandad's daughter.



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Personal Writing

Celebrating Hannah and the Whale

We began our reading of this story with a focus on feeling sad but, as the story unfolds the miracle of Hannah meeting the whale adds a very different set of emotions.

Write a short piece telling the author, Sarah Lean, what you admired about Hannah on her journey to once again make contact with Grandad and to unravel his promised story. What effect did Hannah's encounter with the whale have on you? How did it make you feel? Also, you might want to comment on the excellent linking of the physical description of Grandad and the whale.

You might want to select or ask your teacher to choose some soft and appropriate music to play while some of the pieces of your personal writing are read out to the class.



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Recapping and Summarising Features of Characterisation

In groups of four, each of you take one of the character stars and recap all you can remember about him or her.

You have five minutes so work FAST.

Write brief notes around your star. There is no need for full sentences. Join with the other students who have worked on the same character as you feed back details to the whole class.

Jodie

Miss
Bennett

Hannah

Linus



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Warm up Activity

The main character in the book you are going to read feels really sad at times. Can you suggest any happenings that you or your friends would find upsetting?

Emotional events such as:

- the death of a pet
- a friend moving away
- a row with a parent
- a false accusation made against you
- being bullied
- having a nightmare
- failing to do well in a test at school

With a partner, look at the list we've developed, including your own suggestions as well as the list above, and decide which you think would be the worst experience for you. Give some feedback to the rest of the class, with a reason (or reasons) for your decision and expand on how you think you would feel.