

# **Pig-Heart Boy by Malorie Blackman**

## **Group and guided reading**

[Perhaps in a flash at the top:

- Year 6
- Average to higher ability groups
- Ideal for boys]

### **Book summary**

Cameron is 13 and has serious heart problems. Unless he gets a heart transplant soon, he will die. The problem is, there's a shortage of donor hearts. But then Cameron has the opportunity to be the first human ever to benefit from a new kind of heart transplant – with a heart taken from a pig. The book explores how Cameron faces up to the challenges of the operation itself, and it also explores some of the ethical dilemmas which the operation raises for Cameron, his family and the people around them.

### **Key learning objectives**

Year 6: Strand 7, Understanding and interpreting texts: understand underlying themes, causes and points of view

Year 6: Strand 8, Engaging with and responding to texts: sustain engagement with longer texts, using different techniques to make the text come alive

### **Session 1**

#### **Introduction**

- Introduce the book by reading Chapter 1 aloud to the group.
- Pause to discuss what the children have heard and share ideas. Ask: *What's happening in this chapter? Where is it set? What do you think is going on?*
- What questions does the chapter raise in children's minds? For example: *Who is Alex? What has the narrator been through? What's going to happen next?*

#### **Independent reading activity**

- Ask children to read Chapter 2 independently.
- Challenge them to think of three words to describe Cameron, based on what they have read. Bring the group back together to share descriptions.
- Share and record children's predictions for what might happen next in the story.

#### **Homework/follow-up**

- Ask children to read Chapters 3, 4 and 5.
- Tell them that at the start of the next session you want them to tell the group what Cameron has decided to do and how his parents and friends feel about it.

### **Session 2**

#### **Introduction**

- Discuss Chapters 3 to 5 and take children's feedback on the questions at the end of Session 1. Ask: *What would you do, if you were Cameron? Why?*
- Look back at children's predictions at the end of Session 1 – do any of these predictions need revising now?

#### **Independent reading activity**

- Ask children to read Chapter 6 independently, down to the end of page 57.

- Pause, and ask children for their thoughts about what is going on with Cameron's family. Ask: *How do they each feel about Mum's news about the baby?* Ask for volunteers to hot-seat each family member in turn.
- Ask children to read independently to the end of the chapter (page 61) and then briefly share further thoughts.

### **Homework/follow-up**

- Ask children to read Chapters 7 to 10.
- Tell them to make notes about how Cameron feels about his operation, and about people at school.

## **Session 3**

### **Introduction**

- Share children's response to the questions asked at the end of Session 2. Ask: *Why is Cameron using the camcorder to record some of his thoughts? Do you think he is enjoying doing this?*

### **Independent reading activity**

- Ask children to read Chapter 11 independently. Tell them to make notes as they read about how Cameron is feeling, then share these notes as a group.
- Read Chapter 12 aloud to the group, and then ask them to read Chapter 13 independently. (Do this in a subsequent session if you prefer.)
- Talk about why it's such bad news that the newspapers know about Cameron. Ask: *What do you think might go wrong now for Cameron and his family?*

### **Homework/follow-up**

- Ask children to read Chapters 14 to 17.
- Ask children to keep a note of the problems for Cameron and his family – *why do some people think the heart transplant was wrong? What is the problem with the newspapers offering the family lots of money?*

## **Session 4**

### **Introduction**

- Share children's notes in response to the questions asked at the end of Session 3. Ask: *Why do you think Cameron changed his mind about the newspapers' offer of money? Do you think he was right? Why, or why not?*

### **Independent reading activity**

- Ask children to read Chapter 18 independently, and then discuss the situation between Cameron and Marlon. Ask: *Would you forgive Marlon? Do you think Cameron should forgive him?*
- Ask children to read Chapter 19 independently. Then discuss what Julie says. Ask: *Do you think Julie's mum is right? Why, or why not?*

### **Homework/follow-up**

- In pairs, children could role-play conversations between Cameron and either Marlon or Julie, continuing the themes raised in the book.
- Ask children to read Chapters 20 to 22 and make notes on the main events.

## **Session 5**

### **Introduction**

- Share children's notes about the main events of Chapters 20 to 22. Ask: *Why are animal rights activists so angry with Cameron and his family?* Discuss the issues involved.

### **Independent reading activity**

- Ask children to read Chapter 23 independently. As they read, ask them to think about why Cameron feels and behaves like this. Bring the group together and ask: *Why does Cameron feel it's so important to touch the bottom of the pool? Do you think this is sensible?*
- Ask children to read Chapter 24 independently. Then share and record children's predictions about what will happen next.

### **Homework/follow-up**

- Ask children to read to the end of the book and make notes about how Cameron's feelings change in the last three chapters.

### **Session 6**

- Bring the group back together for a final session to discuss the ending of the book and share children's questions and thoughts about the issues raised.
- Reread Chapter 1 with the group. Does this chapter make better sense now?
- Talk about the ending of the book. Ask: *Is it satisfying? Is there anything else you still want to know? What would you ask Cameron, if you could talk to him?*