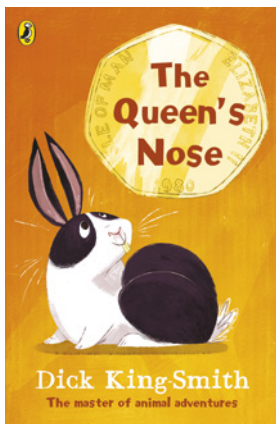


## Introduction

For Year 3 titles, I have arranged the books in a suggested order. *The Queen's Nose* offers a gentle start with a charming story about a girl who loves animals and is given a magical coin that means she can make seven wishes. This taps into a desire that almost every child harbours. The next book is *Ice Palace* which sounds rather like a Russian fairy tale. All of the stories that follow grow increasingly exciting with the text challenge steadily developing and the order has been carefully considered. I would certainly suggest that you do not start with *Podkin*, for example, because the challenge is greater than for *Beaver Towers*. Apart from the first story, the others are all based around the struggle between good and bad, with unlikely and vulnerable main characters struggling to win. As always, do read the books first in case there is an element that might not be appropriate for your class.

## The Queen's Nose

Dick King-Smith (*Puffin*)



Every class should have a range of books by Dick King-Smith. This book is unusual in that the main character is a girl, called Harmony. Most of his books are, of course, usually about animals. However, in this book Harmony likens most people to animals.

In the story, Uncle Ginger (looks like a gorilla) sends her on a treasure hunt. This

leads her to find a 50p piece (an essential piece of story equipment). The coin is magical and each time she rubs the coin, a wish comes true. It is worth exploring Dick's website ([www.dickkingsmith.com](http://www.dickkingsmith.com)) where you will find the first episode of the children's television version of the book. I think that I would watch this after reading the book and then compare to the book, discussing which the class feel is most effective and why.

It would be worthwhile making sure that you encourage the children to use a search engine to find out more about the various animals that get mentioned so that they have a clear picture of what is being referred to and can visualise the people who get likened to each animal. At the end of Chapter 1, it is made clear that Harmony's parents won't let her have a pet. Role play a scene in which Harmony tries to persuade her mum and dad to let her have a pet.

As the various clues in the treasure hunt are stumbled across, get the class to discuss what they think each clue means. This could lead into creating your own class

treasure hunt. Provide the riddle in Chapter 3 and let them think about it overnight. What does it mean?

Compare the two sisters Harmony and Melody. What are they like as characters and how do they get along at different points in the book? As Harmony sees everyone as an animal, it would be fun to write a simple list poem based on this idea, using couplets, for example:

*My teacher is a panther,  
stalking the class, eyeing her prey.*

At the end of the story, Harmony throws the coin onto Wimbledon Common and wonders whether the magic will work so that someone else can have seven wishes. Thinking about what happens in the story, if the children had only seven wishes would it be wise to spend them all immediately or would it be best to save a few up for unforeseen circumstances?

An obvious activity is to discuss or write about what the children would wish for if they found a magical coin, remembering that there are seven sides to the coin and therefore seven wishes. This can lead into an interesting discussion about values and what would be worth wishing for. Of Harmony's wishes, which do they think was the best for her and which would be best for the children in your class?

This story would go well with the traditional tale known as 'The Three Wishes'. In this story, a woodcutter is granted three wishes. However, the wishes get wasted. What other stories are built around a character wanting something at the start of the story? ■

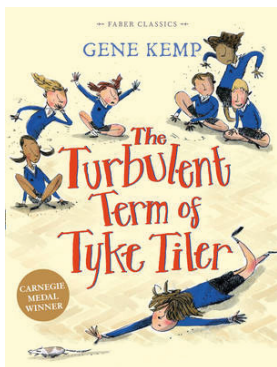
## Introduction

When older children are being read to or reading to themselves, develop the habit of 'reading as a writer'. This means reading with a writer's eye, noticing neat turns of phrase, interesting vocabulary or ideas for events, characters, settings or plot ideas. All writers read in this way; they cannot help it.

Develop this idea by modelling it yourself when you read to the class. Pause every so often and draw attention to the language or an interesting plot idea or event. Sometimes this can be immediately noted and displayed; sometimes the writing might trigger a memory of a new idea. 'Magpie' aspects of the book that might be useful for future reference. Notice places that could become handy reference points for key aspects of the narrative, so that you build up a small bank of suitable passages. These then act as models for writing, such as 'suspense paragraphs'. Get the children reading with their 'magpie books' to one hand, ready to jot down ideas and language that they stumble across. A word of warning: make sure you have read the Year 4 selection of books first as some deal with difficult issues.

## The Turbulent Term of Tyke Tiler

Gene Kemp (*Faber & Faber*)



I discovered this little gem over forty years ago. It was an immediate hit with primary teachers because Gene Kemp seemed to really understand what teaching was like; not surprisingly, she was a teacher. The story features Danny and Tyke, inseparable friends, in their final term at Cricklepit

Combined School. It is episodic in that the chapters can be read as mini-stories in themselves with the pair constantly in trouble and Tyke having to sort out the mess. It makes a good model for any child wanting to write a longer 'chapter story'. As ever, do read beforehand, especially as there are one or two bits of what my mother called 'language' that should be edited.

The title is an obvious invitation to create alliterative names and titles, such as *The Dreadful Disasters of Deidre Darby*. These could then be used for children to write a short story about one event, featuring their chosen character who gets into trouble. Some chapters you will just want to move on through and onto the next one. However, there may be possible pausing points for discussion. Each chapter starts with a joke so making a class joke book would be an obvious bit of fun. Here are some further suggested activities:

**End of Chapter 1:** in role as agony aunts, give advice to Tyke about what she should do about the £10 note.

**Chapter 2:** write the note/letter that the head sends home and role play the conversation between Dad, Mum and then bring in Tyke.

**Chapter 3:** in role as Lorraine Fairchild and Linda Stoatway (or two boys), role play the gossip that arises when they see Tyke covered in water.

**Chapter 4:** write a short article about your school's history.

**Chapter 5:** use the description of the Old Mill to write suspense stories set in dangerous places such as an abandoned warehouse.

**Chapter 7:** discuss whether Danny and Tyke should be separated and whether Tyke should have taken the test paper. Is it ever right to steal?

**Chapter 12:** explore what Dad means by not believing in 'privilege'.

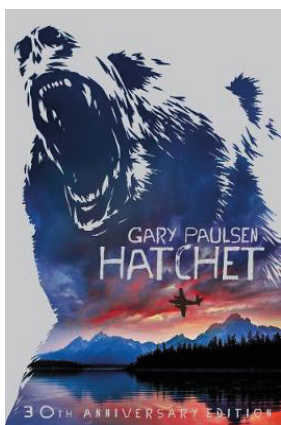
At the end of the story, there is an interesting shift of viewpoint in that the final part of the book is written in the voice of the teacher. Take any incident and rewrite it in the voice of a teacher or other character to change viewpoint. It would also be fun to write simple end-of-term reports for the main characters, as well as a news article in the local press about the ringing of the school bell. The children could be in role as journalists and could interview Tyke, some of the children and teachers to gather viewpoints, quotes and facts about the events of the book. ■

## Introduction

All of these books are cracking reads. These are books of which the class will definitely be demanding the next installment. If you have enough copies, you could get children to read key sections in pairs. You read a chapter but pause at a certain, key paragraph. The children read it through and then discuss, ready to feedback ideas. If you have confident readers then they could be asked to prepare a reading of a paragraph. Put the class in small groups to rehearse a 'reading performance' of a key paragraph, using character's voices and a narrator. It is one experience to listen to the words of a great story; it is different to read it silently in your head; it is very powerful to rehearse and read a performance aloud. Just in case, do make sure you read each book before sharing with a class. *Room 13* does feature a vampire!

## Hatchet

Gary Paulsen (*Macmillan*)



There is a series of books based around this story, so make sure that they are available for anyone who gets hooked – and they will! Gary Paulsen has been a trapper, archer, spent time in the wild and based much of the book around some gruelling experiences such as the 1150-mile Iditarod dog-sled race in Alaska. He draws on these experiences and it is that which makes the story so gripping and makes it feel real.

Brian Robeson is travelling in a small plane when the pilot dies. The plane crash lands in the Canadian wilderness. The books tracks how he survives. When I first read this to a class, they pestered me so much that we finished it within a week. They were desperate to know what happened next. This then led into class writing based on the same idea of a main character stranded on an island or in the wilderness: *Who is your main character? Where are they stranded? What piece of equipment do they have? What are the main problems and how are they overcome?*

This book would be ideal to read outside for the atmosphere. If not, make sure that they can visualise the landscape of the story. Use images or film clips of the Canadian wilderness. Include information about some of the key animals that feature in the book, almost like characters: black bear, moose, turtle, skunk, wolf, porcupine, sunfish and grouse, as well as the food he

eats such as choke cherries, raspberries and hazelnuts. Children could produce fact files about the key animals and plants mentioned in the book. It is also a key requirement that the children know something about tornadoes.

Brian has to make a shelter, learns how to shoot using a bow and arrow as well as a spear for fishing. If you can, build a shelter outside to deepen understanding of the challenges that Brian faced.

Gary Paulsen's written style is very direct. The focus is on the character and what happens. Discuss the notion of a plot-driven novel. This makes it a very accessible book and style for children's own writing. The key to this novel is entirely built around how Brian learns to cope. At the end, discuss how Brian has changed. What has he learned about himself? What will it be like for him when he returns to ordinary life? You might also want to pick up on the sections that concern the break-up of his parent's marriage though that will need sensitivity.

The rescue at the end happens very rapidly and if the class are enjoying the book then you could miss out the last few pages and read the follow-up novel, *Hatchet Winter*. A more recent book on the same theme that came out in 2017 is *The Explorer* by Katherine Rundell (Bloomsbury). Her story starts in a similar way, but there are four children in this story and they crash land in the Amazon. Reading both books offers an opportunity to discuss how novels are different but may share similar underlying patterns. ■

# Year 6

## Introduction

Selecting page-turners for Year 6 was a challenging task as there are so many great novels written for this age group. In the end, I alighted on six key books that your class will love. None of these books mess around; they get straight into powerful narrative. There are missing parents, evil villains, moving moments and some very scary events! There are strong female characters, airships, maps, secret codes and even a dog to accompany children on an adventure. I can see the footprint of Enid Blyton here, but these books are more powerful, the writing more elegant and the challenge greater. Do read the books before sharing, especially *Wolf Hollow* to decide whether it is suitable for your class.

## Cogheart

Peter Bunzl (*Usborne*)



This is a cracking adventure story, elegantly written and utterly gripping. A Victorian fantasy, the plot rips along and is packed with danger and dastardly deeds. There is a strong female lead, Lily, her best friend Robert, a clockmaker's son, and a wonderful mechanical fox called Malkin. Lily's father is missing and the story hinges

around her search for him as well as discovering how her mother died. Get the class to draw the map from the front of the book so that they can follow the adventure.

To set the context, some sense of Victorian times would be useful as well as some notion of how mechanical objects work. It is especially important that the children know that mechanical items have to be wound up! Children love drawing intricate cogs and wheels. Use images of the insides of a watch or clock and display. The story also features some splendid airships and again, background information would be handy so that the children can visualise what an airship looks like.

Pick up on opportunities for short burst writing, for example write a few entries from *Butterwick's Guide to Better Manners* or newspaper articles about key events for *The Daily Cog*. Challenge confident classes with inventing other word plays based on names. In the book, Jack Door features as a thief (myth has it that Jackdaws steal). Look at how the narrative shifts

between viewpoints. For instance Chapter 1 is from Lily's viewpoint. Chapter 2 shifts to Malkin's view. Experiment with writing stories that feature two characters that get split up and include different paragraphs from the different viewpoints.

Provide the children with the 'dictionary of curious words' found at the back of the book. Add to this, building a class glossary. Write diary entries about key events in role as Lily, Malkin or Robert, keeping in mind how the each character would feel. Write Anna's Quinn's story *The Zep Pirates versus the Kraken* and make it into a little book, complete with drawings. Who can complete the letter to Lily from her father? Check out [www.cogheart.com](http://www.cogheart.com) and make sure that you also have copies of the follow up, *Moonlocket*, which is another cracking yarn. I would start Year 6 with this book as it is so exciting that you will have the children on the edge of their seats, begging for reading time.

Match this book with Philip Pullman's *Clockwork* (Yearling). ■