

Lesson Plan: Year Five

Outcomes

- To become familiar with the setting and characters in Graveyard Riddle
- To discover the themes of a book by looking at evidence
- To think about the author's intent

Curriculum Links

Reading

- Identifying and discussing themes and conventions in and across a wide range of writing
- Predicting what may happen through details stated and implied

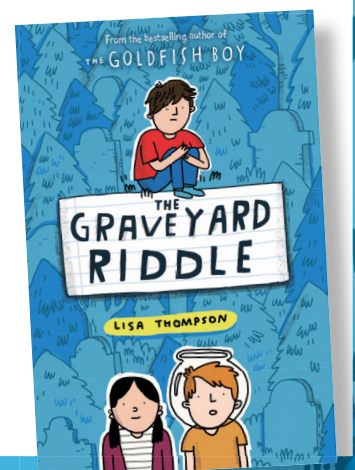
Resources

- Resource Sheet 1: Chapter One
- Resource Sheet 2: Possible Themes Voting Sheet
- Resource Sheet 3: Finding the Evidence

Lead in

Read chapter one of Graveyard Riddle to the class, and give out Resource Sheet 1: Chapter One for children to follow. Discuss any unfamiliar vocabulary and any questions the children may have about what they have read so far.

Ask children what they think a 'theme' is. They might think about theme parks or theme days in school. Invite children to think about what the theme of Graveyard Riddle might be. Share Resource Sheet 2: Possible Themes Voting Sheet with the children, reading out each idea to the class. They could take a blind vote to see which ones they agree with and which ones they disagree with. These results will be helpful after the children have completed their task.



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Task

Explain that authors are very careful about what they put into their writing. They always include things for a reason, and during the lesson the children are going to try to spot any clues that the author has put into the first chapter.

Using Resource Sheet 3: Finding the Evidence, children explore each of the ideas that they agree with by looking at copies of the text. They should highlight any sentences or phrases that support their ideas.

When the children have found as much evidence as possible, they can work with a partner or a small group to see if they all agree with the chosen themes and ideas.

Extension

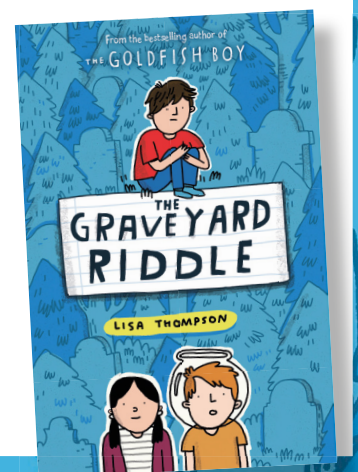
Invite the class to debate their points. After the children have sourced as much evidence as they can, choose a child or group to represent each theme on the resource sheets. Encourage children to listen to all of the arguments, before asking them to join in with any more supporting points or to argue against.

When they have finished listening to the debate for each theme, take another blind vote and collate the scores on Resource Sheet 2.

After the class has voted for each, show the results to the class. Why might some of us change our minds?

Continue reading the story to the class. Chapter Two may contain a surprise for some children – the main character is a girl rather than a boy. As the story continues, the theme of friendship becomes more obvious as Melody's best friend Matthew becomes cold towards her. The theme of her parents' divorce and changes that take place following that also becomes more prevalent.

Once the children have finished the book, they could return to their work on guessing the themes of the book and see which ones were correct and why.



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Resource Sheet One: Chapter One

Frankie is a conker-brown dachshund and a very wise little dog. For example, I took him for a walk every day after school and at weekends and he always turned left out of our driveway. He knew exactly where we were going: the graveyard.

This afternoon was like any other. We curved around the semicircle of houses at the bottom of Chestnut Close and came to an alleyway. Frankie stopped to sniff at a patch of weeds. Sometimes I wondered if he was actually smelling something good, or pretending so that he could have a rest. His legs were really little, after all.

“Come on, Frankie. Let’s go,” I said. He shook himself and we set off again.

Some people thought I was weird because I liked going to the graveyard. To them, a graveyard is creepy. It makes them think of spooky things like rotten corpses and wailing ghosts. I don’t feel like that at all. To me it’s full of colour and light and wildlife. In fact, it’s probably my favourite place in the world.

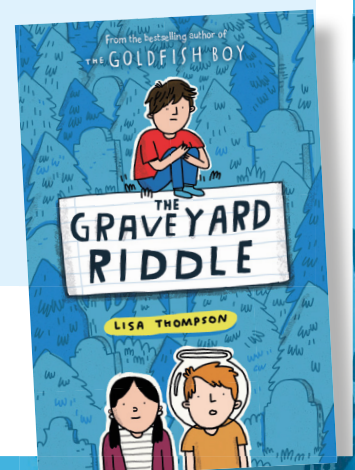
We came out of the alleyway and I took a long, deep breath. A gentle breeze moved through the trees making a soft shhh sound as warm, yellow dots of sunlight danced across the headstones. When Dad lived with us I used to go to the graveyard when he and Mum started arguing. There was no shouting there. It was always peaceful.

As we walked along the pathway Frankie stopped in mid-trot and began to sniff at the air. His long, brown ears flapped gently in the wind as he searched for the scent he’d picked up.

“What is it, Frankie?” I said. “Can you smell the souls of the dead people?” I looked down at the headstone beside us. It read:

*Benjamin Henry Brady
Born 31st July 1884
Died 27th January 1954*

Frankie’s wet, brown nose wriggled. I knew that a dog’s sense of smell was forty times stronger than ours. Could Frankie smell Benjamin Brady’s aftershave, still lingering in the air? He sniffed a few more times and then pulled on his lead. He was ready to carry on.



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Resource Sheet One: Chapter One (cont.)

We passed the large oak tree which had a circular bench around its trunk and the rusty tap where visitors could fill their watering cans. We usually stayed on the main pathway, headed towards the church and then took a loop back to where we started, but just past the tap I spotted a track we hadn't used for a while. It was overgrown with a tangle of ivy and brambles and led to the oldest part of the graveyard. No mourners visited that part any more. They were all dead and buried themselves.

"Let's go this way for a change, shall we, Frankie?" I said. My little dog sat down on the pathway, confused that we weren't going on our usual route.

"Come on, it's not far," I said.

The track soon became thick with weeds and I had to trample them down so that we could get through. Surrounding us were ancient headstones, peeking at us through the undergrowth like grey ships bobbing on a sea of green. Some were speckled with bright splashes of orange lichen, as though they'd been splattered with paint.

I carried on walking but a vicious looking bramble caught my ankle. It drew blood and I took a tissue out of my school blazer pocket and pressed it against the scratch. After a few seconds it stopped.

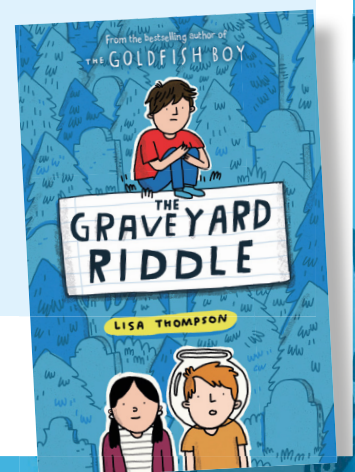
Frankie sneezed. He was almost buried in weeds.

"Maybe this wasn't such a good idea after all," I said. "Come on, let's head back."

I scooped Frankie under my arm, stood up and then stopped. Beyond the track was an old red-brick wall which circled the perimeter of the graveyard. Part of the wall had crumbled away and there was now a V-shaped gap in the middle. I didn't remember noticing it before.

"I wonder what's through there?" I said. I took a few careful steps, checking for more brambles and crushing any nettles under foot. The pathway stopped so I had to walk in between the actual graves where the ground was uneven. When we got to the crumbling wall I put Frankie down. He gave himself a shake and sniffed at the air. Through the gap I could make out some windows and a door.

"It's a house!" I said.



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Resource Sheet One: Chapter One (cont.)

We scrambled over the pile of bricks and found ourselves in knee-deep grass. In front of us was a cottage. It looked exactly like a toddler's painting of a house. There was a crooked doorway on one side with four small, black-framed windows, a wonky roof and a chimney. The once-white walls were now dirty-grey with patches of green, slimy moss. The roof had missing tiles and a deep overhang that almost hid the windows. It must be very dark inside. Beyond the house was another brick wall. It was as if it had been deliberately hidden from view.

"Isn't it incredible, Frankie?" I said. "I never knew this was here. A secret house!" Frankie was busy snuffling around at all the new smells. I waded through the grass and peered through the downstairs window. The glass was cracked in the corner and thick with dirt, as though a curtain had been drawn on the inside.

Frankie began to pull on his lead. A blackbird was stabbing at a patch of soil with its bright orange beak. It stopped to watch us for a few seconds, then carried on, deciding that we were not much of a threat. The door to the house was dark green and slightly ajar. I hesitated for a second, then gave the door a nudge with my knee. It didn't move. I leaned my shoulder against it and shoved hard a few times.

Very slowly the door inched open until there was enough space to squeeze through. I peered inside. There was no way anyone was living here. Surely there was no harm in taking a look?

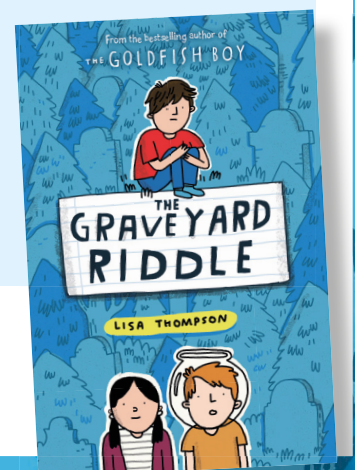
"Come on," I said to Frankie. "Let's go inside."

We walked into a small, square room with a low ceiling. It was dark and I had to wait for my eyes to adjust to the gloom before I looked around. The room was empty apart from an open fireplace filled with rubble, and a wooden chair covered with a thick layer of dust. It smelled musty and damp, a bit like the smell in the kitchen cupboard underneath the sink.

"Wow," I said, turning around. "I wonder how long it's been since anyone lived here?" Frankie sniffed at the dusty wooden floor and sneezed. Against a wall was a wooden staircase with no handrail and a lot of missing steps.

"I guess we won't be going up there anytime soon," I said. I could just make out two doorways at the top.

There was another room downstairs and Frankie pulled me towards it.



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Resource Sheet One: Chapter One (cont.)

This room was much the same: dusty, dark and very bare. I walked over to the window. On the windowsill was a round pebble. I picked it up. It was cold and smooth, like a tiny egg.

“I wonder where this came from?” I said. I put it back, then wiped a small, clean circle in the dirty glass with my hand. Through it I could see the gap in the crumbling wall, the tops of the headstones and the newer graves near the main pathway.

“I can’t wait to tell Matthew about this place!” I said to Frankie. “I bet he never knew this was here, either.” Matthew Corbin was my best friend and lived in the house opposite mine on Chestnut Close.

I checked my watch and decided to head home as Mum would have dinner ready soon. I turned to go, when I heard something. A slow, creaking noise coming from upstairs. It sounded like someone was moving very carefully across the floorboards. I looked up at the ceiling, listening hard.

“I think there’s somebody upstairs,” I whispered. I held tightly on to Frankie’s lead and we walked slowly back to the first room and towards the broken stairs. I peered up, terrified that a face might suddenly appear at the top. The creaking sound stopped.

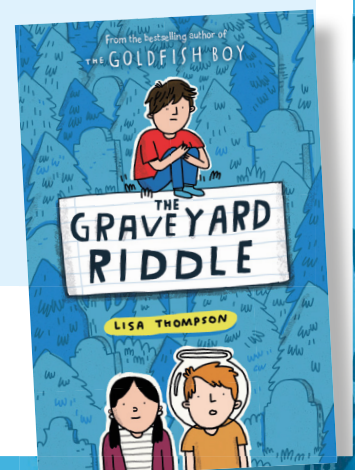
“H-hello?” I called. “Is someone there?” I listened, but there was no reply. All I could hear was the breeze rustling through the long grass outside. That must have been it – the wind blowing through the cracks in the windows, making the floorboards creak. Frankie growled.

“There’s nothing there, Frankie. It’s was just the wind,” I said. “Come on, let’s go.”

I hurried back to the door and we squeezed through the gap. When we were out in the long grass, I turned and tugged on the door to try and shut it. It wouldn’t budge.

That’s when I spotted something across the top of the doorframe. I took a step back. There were words scratched into the dark wood. I felt a shiver tingle down my spine to the soles of my feet as I read what it said.

“Lord, have mercy upon us.”

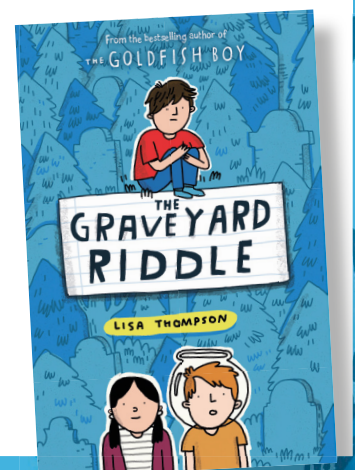


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Resource Sheet Two: Possible Themes Voting Sheet

Take a vote to see which themes the children agree with.
Will they change their mind after they have looked for evidence?

THEME	VOTE ONE	VOTE TWO
A mystery to solve		
Friends		
Family		
A boy as the main character		
Animals		
A frightening story		
A humorous story		
Good versus evil		



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Resource Sheet Three: Finding the Evidence

Which of these themes do you agree with?
Find the clues in the text and copy the words or phrases that support your ideas.

A mystery to solve

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Friends

.....

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Family

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.....

A boy as the main character

.....

Animals

.....

.....

A frightening story

.....

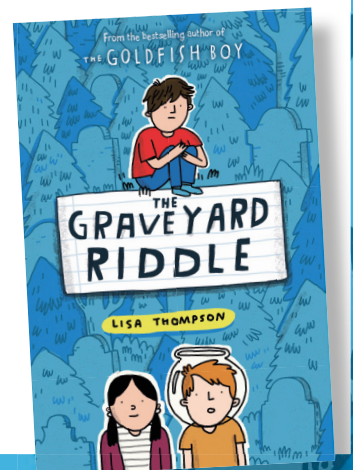
.....

A humorous story

.....

Good versus evil

.....



THE GRAVEYARD RIDDLE

LISA THOMPSON

Lesson Plan: Year Six

Outcomes

- To become familiar with a setting from Graveyard Riddle.
- To analyse an author's writing to determine how they create a particular atmosphere.
- To choose words and phrases carefully in order to create different atmospheres for their chosen setting.

Curriculum Links

Reading

- Discuss and evaluate how authors use language, including figurative language, considering the impact on the reader.

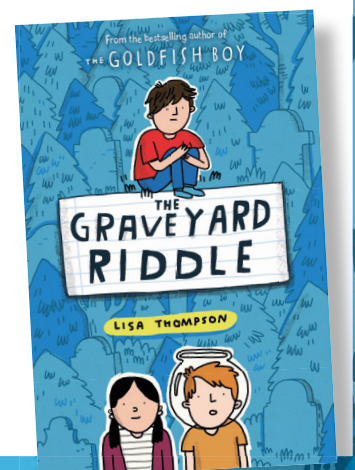
Writing

- In writing narratives, consider how authors have developed characters and settings in what pupils have read, listened to or seen performed
- In narratives, describing settings, characters and atmosphere and integrating dialogue to convey character and advance the action

Resources

- Resource Sheet 1: Graveyard Description 1
- Resource Sheet 2: Graveyard Description 2
- Resource Sheet 3: Over To You!

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THE GRAVEYARD RIDDLE

LISA THOMPSON

Lesson Plan: Year Six

Lead in

Ask the children to share ideas of what words they associate with 'graveyard'. Scribe them on the board, grouping them as you go into positive or negative associations (without explaining this to the children at the start). After scribing all the ideas, ask them to work out why you have put the ideas in two different groups. Do we have more negative associations with a graveyard, or more positive? Explain that in most stories a graveyard is seen as a frightening place, and to create the correct atmosphere, an author has to choose their descriptions carefully.

Task

Give children copies of Resource Sheet 1 and Resource Sheet 2, both showing descriptions of the graveyard from the first chapter of Graveyard Riddle. These extracts are about the same place, but the author has created a different atmosphere in each piece of text. Invite the children to highlight words or phrases that show the different atmosphere. When they have completed the task, discuss as a class to ensure that everyone has had a chance to give their view on the different atmospheres created and how the author achieved them.

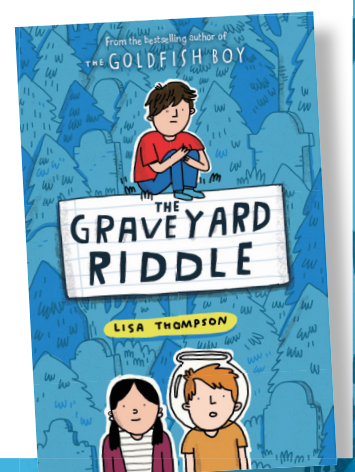
Extension

Give out Resource Sheet 3: Over To You! Each child should choose one of the settings from the pictures. Using what they have learnt from examining the writing from Graveyard Riddle, the children should now write two paragraphs that describe their chosen place. One should reflect a positive atmosphere and one a negative.

When finished, the children can share their separate paragraphs and then identify together any words or phrases that are successful in conveying the correct atmosphere.

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THE GRAVEYARD RIDDLE

LISA THOMPSON

Lesson Plan: Year Six

Resource Sheets 1

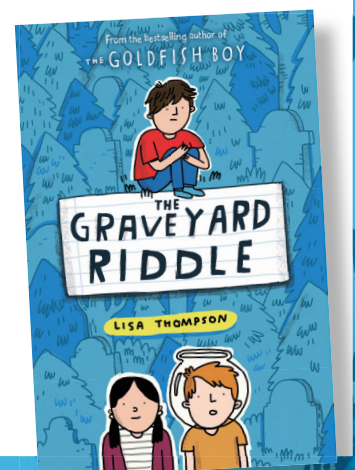
- Read this extract from Graveyard Riddle. Highlight any words or phrases which suggest the graveyard is a nice place to be.

Some people thought I was weird because I liked going to the graveyard. To them, a graveyard is creepy. It makes them think of spooky things like rotten corpses and wailing ghosts. I don't feel like that at all. To me it's full of colour and light and wildlife. In fact, it's probably my favourite place in the world.

We came out of the alleyway and I took a long, deep breath. A gentle breeze moved through the trees making a soft shhh sound as warm, yellow dots of sunlight danced across the headstones. When Dad lived with us I used to go to the graveyard when he and Mum started arguing. There was no shouting there. It was always peaceful.

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THE GRAVEYARD RIDDLE

LISA THOMPSON

Lesson Plan: Year Six

Resource Sheets 2

- Read this extract from Graveyard Riddle. Highlight any words or phrases which suggest the graveyard is a frightening place to be.

The track soon became thick with weeds and I had to trample them down so that we could get through. Surrounding us were ancient headstones, peeking at us through the undergrowth like grey ships bobbing on a sea of green. Some were speckled with bright splashes of orange lichen, as though they'd been splattered with paint.

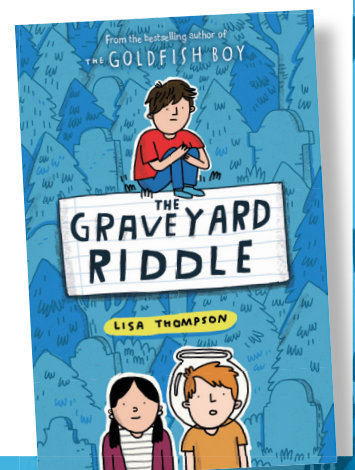
I carried on walking but a vicious looking bramble caught my ankle. It drew blood and I took a tissue out of my school blazer pocket and pressed it against the scratch. After a few seconds it stopped.

Frankie sneezed. He was almost buried in weeds.

"Maybe this wasn't such a good idea after all," I said.

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THE GRAVEYARD RIDDLE

LISA THOMPSON

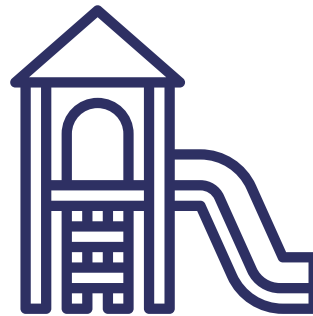
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Resource Sheets 3

- Choose one of the below settings to write about. Circle the image that matches your setting, and then write two paragraphs – one that creates a positive atmosphere, one negative.



Forest



Playground



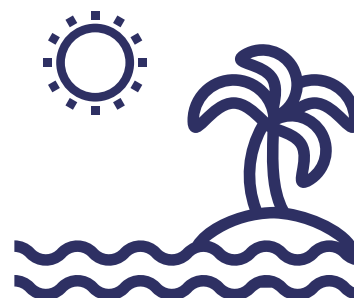
Frozen Lake



Sea



Castle



Desert Island

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