

atmosphere and implications of the poem. Compare other trees' attributes and how differently they would work in a spell recipe – such as the sap of an oak, in a potion to give someone strength, or the sap of a willow, to make someone weep. Share ideas to create a class 'spell' poem.

Respected relative (Level 4 text)

Contained in: Book 3 (page 30)

Genre: Letter


Author: Robert Louis Stevenson

Introduction This is a genuine letter that the Victorian children's poet and author Robert Louis Stevenson wrote to his father in 1866, when he was aged 15½. It will strike a chord with any child who has tried to sweet-talk a parent into giving them extra pocket money. Its formality is tongue-in-cheek but is nevertheless typical of the era. Use the pointer in the activity book to introduce the text to the children before they start reading.

Other texts by Robert Louis Stevenson appear in **Key Stage 2 Comprehension Book 2** (page 26, 'The arrival of a rugged seaman', which is an extract from *Treasure Island*), **Book 3** (page 24, the poem 'Keepsake Mill') and **Book 4** (page 24, 'Our toilsome journey', which is an extract from *Kidnapped*).

Answers 1. the address and the date 2. his father 3. doctor 4. one month/the next month 5. 'enormous', 'elephantine' 6. 'moderate' 7. strong winds, tempests 8. money 9. *to have stated his case; to have won sympathy* 10. 'My sense of generosity forbids the receipt of more – my sense of justice forbids the receipt of less than half-a-crown.'

Further activities

- Invite comments on the layout and content of the letter. What is and isn't there that the children would expect to find. (A specific date; the address aligned to one side; the absence of 'Dear' at the beginning.)
- Ensure that the children understand any unfamiliar vocabulary.
- Explain that Robert Louis Stevenson was a sickly youth and spent long periods confined to bed as a young child. Discuss the location of Torquay (on the Devon coast). His health was doubtless benefiting from the fresh sea air.
- Challenge the children to write a similarly tongue-in-cheek request to their parent for **money, but using twenty-first century formal parlance**, at the same time creating a fresh scenario, such as a school field trip or skiing holiday.
- Challenge the children to create a conversion table of old money (pounds, shillings and pence) to new decimal coinage, as introduced in 1971. Note: there were 12 **old pence** to a shilling and 20 shillings to a pound, so 2/6 – two shillings and sixpence (or 'half a crown', a crown being five shillings) – is 12.5 new pence; a crown is 25 new pence; a shilling is five new pence, and so on.
-  Read and discuss with the children any of Stevenson's poems that refer to his ill-health as a child – for example, 'The land of counterpane', or 'The sick child'. Ask them if they can identify with the feelings he expresses.


Toad learns a lesson? (Level 4 text)

Contained in: Book 3 (page 32)

Source: *The Wind in the Willows*



Genre: Classic fiction

Author: Kenneth Grahame

Introduction *The Wind in the Willows* was first published in 1908 (the same year as Mrs Emmeline Pankhurst gave her lecture – see page 38 of the same activity book). So strong is Toad's character that his part was developed into a play, 'Toad of Toad Hall', by another well-known children's writer, A. A. Milne. The children may have seen it on television. Use the pointer in the activity book to introduce the text.  Provide dictionaries.

Answers 1. 'disregarded' 2a. *wasting* 2b. *speech, lecture, sermon* 3. *he hopes Toad is sorry and will emerge a reformed character* 4. 45 mins 5. they sit in armchairs, wait patiently, and listen through the door 6. (one of:) he has 'seen the error of his ways'; he is 'truly sorry for his misguided conduct' 7. *Toad will break his promise and drive again; he will get into trouble again* 8. doubtfully 9. *the animal characters behave like humans*.

Further activities

- Check that the children understand any unfamiliar vocabulary: for example, 'contemptuously', 'drone', 'oratory', 'discourse'.
-  Explain that Toad's interests changed each time he discovered some new mode of transport. Discuss what forms of transport he might be interested in trying if he were a twenty-first century character. (Microlite flying? Ski-jumping? Space-flight? Jet-skiing? Paragliding?) Invite the children to describe a comical incident in which Toad's great-great-grandson, Toady, gets into trouble trying out a new sport without taking due care and attention. What other animal characters does he meet? What havoc does he cause?
- Invite the children to add new words to their personal dictionary: for example, 'squander', 'oratory', and 'discourse'.
- Challenge the children to find out some key facts about the early history of the motor-car or 'automobile', from 1886 onwards. (This was the year when the German engineer Karl Benz was awarded a patent for the first car to run on petrol.)
-  Start a class discussion on sustainable transport that will have only minimal impact on the environment. For example, you might cover: reducing the need to travel (by using local shops); cleaner alternative fuels; the promotion of initiatives such as car sharing, teleworking and public transport; more cycling and walking, which will also make us more **healthy**. Be specific and choose examples that the children will relate to.

How music made peace (Level 5 text)

Contained in: Book 3 (page 34)

Source: *Children's Encyclopaedia*

Genre: Myth

Author: Arthur Mee

Introduction Music without words is an international language, crossing barriers of nationality, creed, politics and tradition. Here, the special qualities of music are brought to life in one of many stories about Ancient Roman gods. Use the pointer in the activity book to introduce the text to the children before they start reading.