


Introduction In this age of celebrity, in which people are ‘famous for being famous’, a present-day example of true heroism cannot fail to impress and inspire respect. Learning of Simon Weston’s personal battle to recover from his appalling injuries will bring history to life and will also help the children to put their own troubles into perspective. Use the pointer in the activity book to introduce the text to the children before they start reading.

Answers 1. almost half 2. the Welsh Guards 3. four years 4. *most people would see his injuries as a painfully tragic disaster* 5. *he prefers to look forward rather than back and finds it pointless to try and apportion blame* 6. underprivileged youngsters 7. *inspiring others to positive attitudes and actions* 8. *it took courage and patience to fight a long and painful battle to overcome his injuries and disfigurement, come to terms with an end to his army career, and find purpose and joy in his life again* 9a. *similar to a journal, a story relating events in the order in which they occurred* 9b. *it is like following a path, a long slow progression towards an end goal (of being well and independent again).*

Further activities

- Touch briefly on the reasons for the Falklands War, as described. Avoid heavy discussions of the rights and wrongs of armed conflict, focusing instead on Simon Weston’s personal courage as he copes with the aftermath of his physical injuries.
- Check that the children understand any unfamiliar vocabulary: for example, ‘disfigured’, ‘magnified’, ‘fireball’, ‘engulfed’, ‘controversy’, ‘apportioning of blame’, ‘underprivileged’ and ‘broadcaster’.
- Point out that Simon Weston’s survival and recovery would not have been possible in the days of, say, Tudor sea battles. Ask the children if they know why this is, and discuss briefly a few of the obvious innovations of contemporary medicine (such as anaesthetics, X-rays, blood transfusions and skin grafts).
- Invite the children to write a poem entitled ‘To a Hero’. They might begin each line, ‘You are ...’ and use metaphors to describe Simon Weston or some other brave hero of their choice – preferably someone they know well.
-  Discuss the non-physical injuries that Simon Weston may have had to face. (Nightmares? Loss of confidence? Fear of rejection? Depression?) Discuss how and why he was himself helped by helping others. (He was able to avoid self-pity and to see something good coming from something bad. He had a new purpose and pride in life and a role in society – even though he was not fit enough to return to the army.)

Matilda joins Crunchem Hall (Level 4 text)

Contained in: Book 3 (page 12)

Genre: Fiction

Source: *Matilda*

Author: Roald Dahl


Introduction The ever-popular Roald Dahl never minces his words when it comes to describing characters, especially unpleasant ones! Use this extract to encourage the children to read *Matilda* for themselves, as well as finding more books by the same author. Use the pointer in the activity book to introduce the text to the children before they start reading.

Another text by Roald Dahl appears in **Key Stage 2 Comprehension Book 4** (page 10, ‘Chocolate’, which is an extract from *Boy, Tales of Childhood*).

Answers 1. oval 2. a porcelain figure 3. *she is gentle, warm, never shouts and is understanding* 4. *can be touched* 5. (two words such as:) *bewildered, afraid* 6. her snort 7. they bounced

out of her path as she ploughed through them 8. like ‘an enraged rhinoceros’ 9. climb up the nearest tree and stay there until they have gone away.

Further activities


- Ask the children to comment on the suitability of the names ‘Honey’ and ‘Trunchbull’ for the characters described in this text. Discuss how the names reflect the characters’ nature and personalities. Challenge the children to invent names for characters who are, respectively: mean, generous, moody, funny, irritable, quiet, bossy. Encourage them to write a scene in which two of these characters interact, such as ordering lunch in a café, catching a train or clearing out a garden shed.
- Invite the children to make up some similes to describe different characters from real life or fiction, television or film (such as, ‘Robin Hood jumped from the tree, as sprightly as a grasshopper’).
- Re-read the pointer, where an indication is given of the origin of Roald Dahl’s unusual name (it is Norwegian). Discuss any unusual names among class members, or any that are known to the children, and discuss their possible origins. Be sure to promote an unusual name as something positive and interesting rather than something odd or curious.
-  Divide the children into groups of three. Explain that they can take turns to be a narrator or a miming actor. First the narrator will read out the description of Miss Honey (the second paragraph) while the other two role-play Miss Honey and a child, using body language, stance and facial expression, to indicate each character’s demeanour and attitude. Next, the two actors will play Miss Trunchbull and a child, again through mime alone, responding to the words of the third paragraph, as the narrator reads the description of Miss Trunchbull. Encourage the children to use exaggeration and humour in their acting, to complement the author’s writing style.

Rats (Level 4 text)

Contained in: Book 3 (page 14)


Genre: Classic poem

Author: Robert Browning

Introduction The famous retelling of the traditional story of ‘The Pied Piper of Hamelin’ has delighted readers for over 100 years. It is well worth reading aloud, so that the children may enjoy its lyrical rhythm and rhyme before they begin to read it closely. Use the pointer in the activity book to introduce the text.  Provide dictionaries.

Answers 1. Hanover 2. to the north (as the river washes its south wall) 3. ‘vermin’ 4. a (lyrical/rhyming) poem 5. line 20: ‘In fifty different sharps and flats’ 6. cheeses and sprats 7. *they disapprove as the council appears to be doing nothing about the town’s problems* 8a. *simpleton, idiot, fool* 8b. *fur from a stoat’s winter coat, when it turns white* 9. line 32: ‘we’ll send you packing’.

Further activities

- Read the poem aloud so that the children are able to fully appreciate its features.
- Ask the children to use an atlas to locate the German town of Hamelin (Hameln) and the river Weser on which it lies (in Lower Saxony).
- Encourage the children to find and read the whole poem and then retell the story in their own words.
-  After reading the whole poem, hold a class discussion on the responsibilities of town and community leaders. How accountable should they be to the townsfolk