A Jack and Three Queens

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Synopsis

In *A Jack and Three Queens*, Kipper is called to the Control Chamber. Tyler has already sent Biff and Wilf back in time to London in 1601 and Kipper is sent to join them. They arrive on the banks of the River Thames just in time to see three Virans hail a boat to take them to the Globe Theatre. The children follow. At the theatre, they meet Shakespeare and take part in one of his plays. They also meet Queen Elizabeth 1 and get caught up in a Viran plot to kidnap the queen. Can the three children thwart the Viran’s plot themselves, or will they need help?

Mortlock’s historical notes

In this story, Kipper, Biff and Wilf visit Elizabethan London. London in Tudor times was much smaller than it is today, but it was teeming with people. The River Thames was the heart of the city and was used as a sewer and a source of drinking water as well as a main thoroughfare. The children arrived on one side of the river and had to cross the Thames using London Bridge (the only bridge across the Thames in London at this time). In Elizabethan times, the theatre was hugely popular and William Shakespeare was one of the most popular playwrights. His plays were performed in the Globe Theatre next to the River Thames, a circular building with a thatched roof, but open to the sky in the centre. Female roles were played by boys and young men. Elizabeth 1 was a great protector and patron of the theatre. For more information on Queen Elizabeth 1, William Shakespeare and their time, see the *Time Chronicles* website: www.oxfordprimary.com/timechronicles.

Group or guided reading

Introducing the book

- (Clarifying, Predicting) Read page 3, and talk about what has happened so far in the series. Ask the children to predict what will happen in this story. Ask: *Where do you think the Time Runners might go? What period of history might it be?*
- (Deducing, Clarifying) Flip through the book looking at the pictures. What evidence can the children find about the historical period? Ask them what they know about the Elizabethan period and William Shakespeare. Provide them with more information, using Mortlock’s historical notes if you wish.

During reading

- (Questioning, Imagining) Read pages 4 and 5 with the children. Ask: *What do you think Kipper thought when the alarm went off?*
- (Predicting) Pause at the end of Chapter 1. Ask: *How do you think Kipper feels about travelling back in time alone?*
- Read to the end of Chapter 2 with the children. Ask them to look out for words and phrases that give them a feeling of the atmosphere of London and what it was like in 1601 (for example, ‘cramped houses’, ‘putrid smell’ on page 9).
Assessment:
- Can the children pick out words and phrases that help them make deductions about the atmosphere of Elizabethan London?

Independent reading
- Ask the children to read from Chapter 3 to the end of Chapter 5 (pages 13 to 22).
- (Predicting) As they are reading, ask them to pause at the end of Chapter 3. Ask: What do you think Wilf's idea might be?
- (Deducing) As the children read Chapter 4, ask them to find out why Shakespeare only uses Wilf and Kipper as actors. ('A girl acting? Ridiculous!' page 19.)

Objective: Infer characters' feelings in fiction.
- (Clarifying, Questioning) Ask: How might the children feel when they realise the Virans could harm the queen? How might Biff feel when she sees the Virans whispering together?
- Ask the children to finish reading to the end of the story independently.

Assessment: Check that children:
- can empathise with the characters and draw sensible conclusions about how they might be feeling
- can find evidence in the text to support their views.

Returning and responding to the text
- (Summarising) When the children have finished the story, ask them to imagine that they have to write a new blurb to go on the cover of the book. Ask them to work in pairs to write a blurb as concisely and interestingly as possible.
- (Deducing) Ask the children to recall what Kipper was doing at the beginning of the story (studying the Link). Ask: How did this help him during the adventure?
- (Deducing) Ask the children what clue was given about the real Queen Elizabeth not being at the play (see page 22, ‘She gave a knowing smile’).

Speaking, listening and drama activities
Objective: Use some drama strategies to explore stories or issues.
- Ask the children to work in pairs and role-play walking across London Bridge in 1601. What do they see, hear, smell and feel? What do they say to each other? Ask them to perform the role-play for others to watch.
- Ask children to imagine they are Jack from the story and sit in the hot-seat. Ask ‘Jack’ to talk about what happened in the story from his point of view.

Writing activities
Objective: Select and use a range of technical and descriptive vocabulary. Group related material into paragraphs.
- After the children have role-played walking over London Bridge, ask them to write a paragraph describing London Bridge. Encourage them to use imaginative descriptive vocabulary to describe the sounds and sights.
Look through the book with the children and explore all the information they can find about the Globe Theatre. Encourage them to use the illustrations as well as the text, and to use other reference sources. Ask them to write a description of what it might have been like to see a play at the Globe in Elizabethan times.

Ask the children to write a diary entry for Queen Elizabeth for the day of the Virans’ plot.

Assessment:

- Can the children use imaginative vocabulary to evoke the sights, sounds and atmosphere of Elizabethan London?

Cross-curricular ideas: Mortlock’s Discussion Doorways

History

- Tyler was forced to fend for himself at a very young age. Together, research what life was like for children in the Elizabethan era. Encourage them to use reference books and the internet, as well as the story.

- Encourage the children to use the internet and reference books to research the life of William Shakespeare and/or Queen Elizabeth. Information is available on www.oxfordprimary.com/timechronicles.

Art and Design

- Provide the children with cardboard, straws and paint. Encourage them to make a model of London Bridge or the Globe Theatre.

Drama

- Introduce the children to some of Shakespeare’s writing, for example by:
  
  - watching a DVD of all or part of one of Shakespeare’s plays (e.g. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* or *Macbeth*)
  
  - taking the children to the theatre to see one of the plays
  
  - inviting actors into the school to give a performance
  
  - reading part of one of the plays with the children or giving a semi-staged performance as a class.