



Oxford Level 20

# The Lobster's Birthday and Other Stories

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## Synopsis

This collection features nine short stories by well-known authors:

- 'Harriet's Story' by Morris Gleitzman: Thirsty in the night, Harriet feels like a character in a story when she finds no water in the taps. She creates an opposite problem (a leak) when she widens a water pipe hole.
- 'Cuts' by Russell Hoban: Annoyed that bits of her dreams are missing, Clarence Higgins goes to the Town Hall to complain but is trapped there when the stairs and lift are cut from her dream.
- 'Aunt Arabelle in Charge' by Richmal Crompton: William and the Outlaws blackmail a spoilt child star, Anthony Martin, so he agrees to be interviewed by Ginger's Aunt Arabelle, who is looking after Ginger while his parents are away.
- 'The Eyes Have It' by Philip K. Dick: The narrator discovers an invasion of life forms from another planet in a book that describes an alien whose 'eyes moved from person to person', who 'removed' his arm, who had 'no guts', etc.
- 'Tom Tit Tot' retold by Alan Garner: An English traditional tale similar to 'Rumpelstiltskin'.
- 'The Molesworth Self-Adjusting Thank-You Letter' by Geoffrey Willans and Ronald Searle: A humorous multiple-choice thank you letter.
- 'Music the Food of Luv' by Geoffrey Willans and Ronald Searle: The narrator (who cannot spell) writes about when brothers Nigel and Molesworth 2 began to take piano lessons, and provides a quirky guide to the piano notes.
- 'Never Trust a Parrot' by Jeremy Strong: Jamie thought that having a talking parrot would be fun, but when his new pet starts biting people, strange things unfold.
- 'The Lobster's Birthday' by Joan Aiken: Gloria (a lobster) and Harold (a horse) go on a day trip by train to Brighton where Gloria ends up sitting on a hat that wins the Original Headgear Prize.

## Group or guided reading

### Introducing the book

- (*Questioning, Clarifying, Predicting*) Look at the front cover and read the title. Ask the children what kind of stories they expect to find in the book, and why.
- (*Questioning, Predicting*) Ask the children to look at the Contents page and predict what kinds of things might happen in each story. Are they already familiar with any of the stories or authors which may help with their predictions?



## Chucklers

### Strategy check

- Encourage the children to note spelling rules and exceptions, such as the 'i before e except after c' rule (e.g. 'received', page 24) and the exceptions (e.g. 'seized', page 46).
- Check that the children note the correct usage of homophones that are often confused (e.g. 'passed', page 21; 'past', page 5).

### During reading

- (*Predicting, Questioning*) During each story encourage the children to ask themselves questions about what might happen next.
- (*Summarising*) At the end of each story ask them to summarise the plot.

### Independent reading

**Objective:** Discuss and evaluate how authors use language.

(*Questioning, Clarifying, Imagining*)

- After reading 'Harriet's Story', ask which imagery they found most effective and why.
- After reading the first page of 'Cuts', ask the children to explain the context in which the terms 'first showing' and 'repeat' are usually used (films). Ask them what this tells us about Clarence's understanding of dreams (they are pre-made, like films.)
- Ask the children to compare how formal or informal the language is after reading each story, e.g. note the narrator's formal language in 'Aunt Arabelle in Charge'.

**Assessment:**

- Are the children able to evaluate the authors' use of language?

### Returning and responding to the text

**Objective:** Make comparisons within books.

(*Summarising, Questioning, Clarifying*)

- Ask the children to summarise the main ideas in the book and to identify common themes such as stories and storytellers.
- Discuss and identify the different types of stories such as adventure, fantasy and traditional tale.
- Compare the viewpoints in the stories, and why the authors may have chosen the specific viewpoints for the plot.
- Ask the children to explain which story they liked the most, and why.

**Assessment:** Check that the children:

- recognise both similarities and differences amongst the stories
- compare elements with reference to examples and quotations.

### Speaking and listening

**Objective:** Participate in discussions, presentations, performances and debates.

- Ask the children independently to prepare a reading of the opening of the story they found the funniest.
- Invite them to share their prepared readings with a partner and to offer each other advice on how to improve their performance.



## Chucklers

- Invite the children to present their readings to the class.

### Assessment:

- Do the children bring out the characters and humour in their performances?

## Writing activities

**Objective:** Pupils should be taught to use a thesaurus.

- Ask the children to rewrite the last two pages of 'Aunt Arabelle in Charge' using more informal and contemporary vocabulary.
- Challenge them to 'modernise' the piece as far as they can by finding alternative vocabulary using a thesaurus. They will need to find alternative words and phrases for vocabulary such as 'inordinately', 'restive' and 'splendid', plus as many other words as possible.
- Ask the children to read out their paragraphs and exchange ideas on choice of vocabulary.

### Assessment:

- Do the children use a thesaurus effectively?

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# The Lobster's Birthday and Other Stories (Oxford Level 20) curriculum coverage chart

## Links to Oxford Reading Criterion Scale:

- Can refer back to the text to support predictions, thoughts and opinions, being able to elaborate in order to provide reasoned justifications. (R/D) [ORCS Standard 7, 4]
- Can clearly identify and retrieve relevant points and key ideas from different points in a text and across a range of texts. (R) [ORCS Standard 7, 9]
- Can explain how the author has used different language features (e.g. figurative language, vocabulary choice, use of specific grammatical convention) and the effect of these on the reader. (E) [ORCS Standard 7, 21]

## Comprehension strategies

- Comprehension strategies are taught throughout the Teaching Notes to enable pupils to understand what they read, in books they can read independently. In these Teaching Notes the following strategies are taught: *Predicting, Questioning, Clarifying, Summarising, Imagining*

## ENGLAND The National Curriculum in England: Years 5 and 6

<b>Spoken language</b>	Pupils should be taught to participate in discussions, presentations, performances, role play, improvisations and debates (SpokLang.9)
<b>Reading:</b> Comprehension	Pupils should be taught to maintain positive attitudes to reading and understanding of what they read by making comparisons within and across books (Y5/6 ReadComp.1vi) Pupils should be taught to discuss and evaluate how authors use language, including figurative language, considering the impact on the reader (Y5/6 ReadComp.3)
<b>Writing:</b> Composition	Pupils should be taught to use a thesaurus (Y5/6 WritSpell.7)

## SCOTLAND Curriculum for Excellence: Literacy and English experiences and outcomes – Second level

<b>Listening and talking</b>	When I engage with others, I can respond in ways appropriate to my role, show that I value others' contributions and use these to build on thinking (LIT 2-02a) As I listen or watch, I can identify and discuss the purpose, main ideas and supporting detail contained within the text, and use this information for different purposes (LIT 2-04a)
<b>Reading</b>	Using what I know about the features of different types of texts, I can find, select and sort information from a variety of sources and use this for different purposes (LIT 2-14a) I discuss the writer's style and other features appropriate to genre (ENG 2-19a)
<b>Writing</b>	I am learning to use language and style in a way which engages and/or influences my reader (ENG 2-27a)

## WALES Programme of Study for English: Year 6

<b>Oracy</b>	Learners respond to others with questions and comments which focus on reasons, implications and next steps (Y6_OraList.2)
<b>Reading</b>	Learners show understanding of main ideas and significant details in different texts on the same topic (Y6_ReadComp.1) Learners consider whether a text is effective in conveying information and ideas (Y6_ReadResp.7)
<b>Writing</b>	Learners use language appropriate to writing, including standard forms of English (Y6_WritLang.1) Learners use varied and appropriate vocabulary, including subject-specific words and phrases (Y6_WritLang.2)

## NORTHERN IRELAND Levels of Progression in Communication across the curriculum: Primary Level 5

<b>Talking and listening</b>	Pupils make relevant contributions in different roles (L5_com_talk.1ii)
<b>Reading</b>	Pupils show understanding by identifying and summarising information, ideas and details (L5_com_read.1) Pupils make reference to text to support opinions and draw conclusions. (L5_com_read.4) Pupils describe language, structure and presentation (L5_com_read.3i)
<b>Writing</b>	Pupils use accurate grammar and spelling (L5_com_writ.4iii)