



Five Children and It

Author: Edith Nesbit (1858–1924)

Teaching Notes author: Jo Tregenza

Information about assessment and curriculum links can be found at the end of these Teaching Notes.

Synopsis

- Five children move to a house in the countryside for the summer. The house is situated by an old chalk quarry and a gravel pit. Their father is called away on business and their mother must leave to look after their grandmother, who is ill. The children amuse themselves in the gravel pit and whilst digging they discover a buried 'Psammead' – an ancient sand fairy, who can grant wishes.
- The children are allowed to make one wish a day but the results of their wishes cause mayhem and they are constantly in trouble with Martha, the housekeeper who looks after them.
- Following some hair-raising adventures, the children manage to undo the problems caused by their wishes and they promise never to make a wish again.

Social and historical context

- The story is set in Edwardian England at the beginning of the twentieth century. The family's main home is in London, at the time when the environment is bleak and smog-ridden. The term 'pea-souper' became the classic phrase to describe London at this time and the smog gave rise to many respiratory illnesses.
- The family is middle-class. The father is frequently away on business and a cook and housemaid help to run the house. The family are able to afford to spend long summer holidays in the countryside.

Group or guided reading

Introducing the book

- *(Clarifying, Deducing)* Read the title of the story. Ask the children: *What do you think 'It' is? Does it look friendly?*
- *(Predicting, Deducing)* Look at the picture of the house on the title page. Ask: *Can you guess when and where the book is set? Where do you think the house might be? Do you think it is a happy or a forbidding place? What makes you draw these conclusions?*

During reading

- *(Clarifying, Deducing)* Read up to the end of page 6 with the children, which includes the description of the garden and the surrounds of the house. Ask the children to draw what they imagine the scene looks like. Encourage them to think carefully about how they place things. For example, ask: *Where do you think the orchard might go?* Remind the children that visualising a scene helps the reader to understand and recall information and to engage with the story.
- Ask the children whether they know what a gravel pit is. If necessary, explain that it is a term that means an open pit used to extract gravel (round stones deposited in a river). Gravel pits normally lie in river valleys where the water table is high, so they fill naturally with water to form ponds or lakes.



Classics

Independent reading

- Ask the children to read the rest of Chapter 1 independently. Remind them to use a wide range of strategies to decode the text.
- (*Questioning, Deducing*) As they are reading ask the children to try to draw conclusions about the characteristics of each of the five children in the story. For example, ask: *Who is the dominant character? What do they all feel about 'the Lamb'?*

Assessment: Check that children:

- are able to describe the characters
- can identify the relationships between the characters.
- Ask the children to finish reading to the end of the story independently.

Returning and responding to the text

- (*Summarising, Imagining*) When the children have read the whole story ask them to summarise the story so that someone else can understand it. Ask: *What did you think about the megatherium? Can you draw what it might look like?*

Assessment:

- Can the children summarise the story adequately?
- (*Clarifying, Deducing*) Discuss Chapter 2 'Beautiful as the day' with the children. Are they able to deduce the meaning behind this chapter? (The author is suggesting that vanity is a weakness and that the children should be happier with their true selves.)
- (*Clarifying*) Ask the children if they are able to identify the meaning behind the rest of the chapters. Why do they think that the Psammead always says that nothing good will come of their wishes?

Assessment:

- Have the children been able to recognise and understand the author's message behind the chapters?

Speaking, listening and drama activities

Objective: Reflect on how working in role helps to explore complex issues.

- (*Imagining*) Go into role as the Psammead. What would children like to ask? What might they wish for? If children are confident, they might like to take the role of the Psammead.

Writing activities

Objective: Experiment with different narrative forms and styles to write their own stories.

- (*Imagining*) Discuss the concept of wishes with the children. What would they wish for if they met the Psammead? Can they think about what might go wrong if their wish came true? What moral could be threaded into a chapter, if they wrote about the wish? For example, greed is never a good thing, selfishness might lose you friends, etc.
- Unpick one of the chapters in the story with the children. Can they identify the structure?
- Ask the children to write a new chapter for the story imagining a wish of their own. They should think carefully about how to structure the story and what moral will be illustrated.

Assessment:

- Can the children follow the structure within the story to write their own chapter?



Classics

Whole class reads

Sequels:

- *The Phoenix and the Carpet and The Story of the Amulet* by Edith Nesbit

Books on a similar theme:

- *Stig of the Dump* by Clive King

Cross-curricular links

Art

- Children could create models or pictures of the Psammead based on the description on pages 10–11.

History

- Look at pictures that show how people and society have changed over time. In particular, discuss the impact of the Industrial Revolution.

Geography

- Identify why and how places have changed, e.g. how gravel pits were formed.

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Five Children and It (Oxford Level 15) curriculum coverage chart

Links to Oxford Reading Criterion Scale:

- Can refer to the text to support opinions and predictions. (R/D) [ORCS Standard 5, 7]
- Can use clues from action, description and dialogue to help establish meaning. (D) [ORCS Standard 5, 8]
- Can identify the effects of different words and phrases to create different images and atmosphere, e.g. powerful verbs, descriptive adjectives and adverbs. (E) [ORCS Standard 5, 17]
- Can sometimes explain different characters' points of view. (D) [ORCS Standard 5, 23]

Comprehension strategies

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

ENGLAND The National Curriculum in England: Years 3–4

Spoken language	Pupils should be taught to use spoken language to develop understanding through speculating, hypothesising, imagining and exploring ideas (SpokLang.7)
Reading: Word reading	Pupils should be taught to apply their growing knowledge of root words, prefixes and suffixes (morphology and etymology), as listed in Appendix 1, both to read aloud and to understand the meaning of new words that they meet (Y3/4 ReadWord.1)
Reading: Comprehension	<p>Pupils should be taught to develop positive attitudes to reading and understanding of what they read by increasing their familiarity with a wide range of books, including fairy stories, myths and legends, and retelling some of these orally (Y3/4 ReadComp.1iv)</p> <p>Pupils should be taught to understand what they read, in books they can read independently, by drawing inferences such as inferring characters' feelings, thoughts and motives from their actions, and justifying inferences with evidence (Y3/4 ReadComp.2iii)</p> <p>Pupils should be taught to understand what they read, in books they can read independently, by predicting what might happen from details stated and implied (Y3/4 ReadComp.2iv)</p> <p>Pupils should be taught to understand what they read, in books they can read independently, by identifying main ideas drawn from more than one paragraph and summarising these (Y3/4 ReadComp.2v)</p> <p>Pupils should be taught to participate in discussion about both books that are read to them and those they can read for themselves, taking turns and listening to what others say (Y3/4 ReadComp.4)</p>
Writing: Composition	<p>Pupils should be taught to draft and write by, in narratives, creating settings, characters and plot (Y3/4 WritComp.2iii)</p> <p>Pupils should be taught to draft and write by, in non-narrative material, using simple organisational devices [for example, headings and sub-headings] (Y3/4 WritComp.2iv)</p>

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

Listening and talking	I can show my understanding of what I listen to or watch by responding to literal, inferential, evaluative and other types of questions, and by asking different kinds of questions of my own (LIT 2-07a)
Reading	<p>I regularly select and read, listen to or watch texts which I enjoy and find interesting, and I can explain why I prefer certain texts and authors (LIT 2-11a)</p> <p>I can select and use a range of strategies and resources before I read, and as I read, to make meaning clear and give reasons for my selection (LIT 2-13a)</p> <p>To show my understanding across different areas of learning, I can identify and consider the purpose and main ideas of a text and use supporting detail (LIT 2-16a)</p> <p>To show my understanding, I can respond to literal, inferential and evaluative questions and other close reading tasks and can create different kinds of questions of my own (ENG 2-17a)</p> <p>I can discuss the writer's style and other features appropriate to genre (ENG 2-19a)</p>
Writing	<p>In both short and extended texts, I can use appropriate punctuation, vary my sentence structures and divide my work into paragraphs in a way that makes sense to my reader (LIT 2-22a)</p> <p>Having explored the elements which writers use in different genres, I can use what I learn to create stories, poems and plays with an interesting and appropriate structure, interesting characters and/or settings which come to life (ENG 2-31a)</p>

WALES Programme of Study for English: Year 4

Oracy	Learners are able to explore different situations through role play (Y4_OracSpea.6)
Reading	Learners are able to accurately identify the main points and supporting information in texts (Y4_ReadComp.1) Learners are able to deduce connections between information, e.g. sequence, importance (Y4_ReadComp.2) Learners are able to use a range of strategies to make meaning from words and sentences, including knowledge of phonics, word roots, word families, syntax, text organisation and prior knowledge of context (Y4_ReadStrat.1) Learners are able to read texts, including those with few visual clues, independently with concentration (Y4_ReadStrat.2)
Writing	Learners are able to write an introduction, develop a series of ideas and a conclusion (Y4_WritStru.2) Learners are able to organise writing into logical sequences or sections by beginning to use paragraphs (Y4_WritStru.3)

NORTHERN IRELAND Levels of Progression in Communication across the curriculum: Primary Level 3

Talking and listening	Pupils can ask and respond to questions to extend understanding (L3_com_talk.2ii)
Reading	Pupils can recognise, understand and sequence main points (L3_com_read.1i) Pupils can choose and use reading strategies independently (L3_com_read.2) Pupils can make deductions using information from the text (L3_com_read.4ii)
Writing	Pupils can structure and sequence their writing (L3_com_writ.2ii) Pupils can provide supporting detail using an expanding vocabulary (L3_com_writ.2iii)