The Golden Scarab

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Illustrator: Jason Loo

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

Synopsis

This is a detective story set in ancient Egypt. The Pharaoh has upset the priests of Amon by preferring to worship Aten. Meanwhile, Princess Meri and her rescued slave girl Layla don’t believe that the Pharaoh’s sudden illness is caused by bad fish, and they decide to investigate.

Group or guided reading

Introducing the book

• **(Imagining)** Look at the front cover together. Ask the children to describe the personalities of the main characters from this illustration.
• **(Predicting)** Read the blurb and predict which character is which.
• See page 45 for information on scarabs.
• Skim through Chapter 1 with the children to ensure they are familiar with the format.
• Look at the characters on page 2. Note real and fictional people.
• **(Imagining)** Stress the importance of ‘reading’ the pictures as well as the words: e.g. bottom of page 12, ask: Why is there a ‘close up’ of the Pharaoh and why might he have his eyes closed?
• Note the Time Out sections and explain their function as fact pages, informing the reader of the realities and context behind the story.

Strategy check

• Remind the children to use sounds, familiar words-within-words, sentence and story context and the illustrations to make sense of unfamiliar words or phrases.
• Note the glossary on page 48 and model how to use it.

During reading

• **(Deducing)** Ask the children to read Chapter 1, including the Time Out on page 13, and form an opinion about Princess Meri’s character.
• As the children read independently, listen to each of them in turn, noting and prompting decoding strategies.

Independent reading

**Objective:** Deduce characters’ reasons for behaviour from their actions. Infer writers’ perspectives from what is written and implied.
Deducing, Imagining

- Once the children have read Chapter 1, ask them to pair up and discuss briefly Meri’s character.
- As a group, discuss how the author and artist show us Meri’s confidence and strength.
- On page 9, how is the status of the two girls made clear in the sleeping arrangements?
- On page 12, what does Nefertiti mean by, ‘They just want to hang on to their power’?

Assessment: Check that the children:
- can see that young Meri is confident enough in her royal power to give orders to adults, and have her new friend sleep on the floor.
- can infer the background of battling religious sects.

Returning and responding to the text

Objective: Identify and summarise evidence from a text. Use evidence from across a text to explain events or ideas.

Deducing, Clarifying, Summarising

- When the children have read the whole story, ask them to explain why the priests wanted to kill the Pharaoh and his family.
- Ask the children to explain how the girls worked out the scarab’s secret.
- On page 44, why is the gift of land so important to Layla?
- Ask the children to evaluate the effectiveness of the Time Out information pages. Which of these was the most useful?

Assessment: Check that the children:
- can follow the detective work.
- understand the religious power struggle.
- can empathise with Layla’s grief and therefore her gratitude.
- understand that the story is fictitious, but is a fun way of teaching us about Ancient Egyptian life.

Speaking and listening activities

Objective: Create roles showing how behaviour can be interpreted from different viewpoints. Reflect on how working in role helps to explore complex issues.

- Hotseat a pair of children as Meri and Layla, asking them to explain how they worked out that the scarab was poisonous.

Assessment:
- Can the children sustain roles to explore ideas and issues?

Objective: Use and reflect on some ground rules for sustaining talk. Use and explore different ways words are used in formal contexts.

- Ask groups of children to prepare and deliver presentations on Ancient Egypt, based on the information (not the fiction) in this book.

Assessment:
- Can the children use standard English appropriately, adapted to purpose, audience and subject matter?
Writing activities

Objective: Summarise and shape material and ideas to write convincing non-narrative texts. Adapt non-narrative forms and styles to write texts.

- Ask the children to write two diary entries from Layla’s point of view at the end of Chapters 1 and 5.

Assessment:
- Can the children use a diary style, combining recount of events with thoughts, opinions and emotions?

Objective: Choose and combine words and images for particular effects. Reflect critically on their writing and improve it.

- Ask children to describe one scene from the story, focusing on precise nouns, adjectives and verbs.

Assessment:
- Can the children apply appropriate word choices to convey a scene in writing?

Cross-curricular links

History

- Research Egyptian gods or Pharaohs and create an extra Time Out page.

Drama/ICT

- Recreate key scenes via dramatic freeze-framing. Take photos of the freeze-frames, and have children add speech and thought bubbles using paper or on screen, creating photo-story versions of the graphic novel.
The Golden Scarab (Oxford Level 13) curriculum coverage chart

**Links to Oxford Reading Criterion Scale:**

- Can read independently using a range of strategies to decode unfamiliar words and to establish meaning (e.g. self-correcting, widening knowledge of vocabulary). (READ) [ORCS Standard 4, 1]
- Can read aloud with expression and intonation taking into account . , ! and ’ for contractions, as well as inverted commas (“ ”) for dialogue. (READ) [ORCS Standard 4, 2]
- Can explore some straightforward underlying themes and ideas (those that are not clearly signalled at a literal level). (R) [ORCS Standard 4, 4]
- Can explain how and why main characters act in certain ways, using evidence from the text. (D) [ORCS Standard 4, 6]
- Is able to quote directly from the text to answer questions. (R) [ORCS Standard 4, 12]
- Is beginning to scan texts to locate specific information. (R) [ORCS Standard 4, 14]
- Can identify reasons for actions and events based on evidence in the text. (D) [ORCS Standard 4, 16]
- Sometimes empathises with different characters’ point of view in order to explain what characters are thinking/feeling and the way they act. (D) [ORCS Standard 4, 18]
- Can identify language the author has chosen to create images and build mood and tension. (E) [ORCS Standard 4, 19]
- Can identify the differences between a wider range of non-fiction text types. (A) [ORCS Standard 4, 20]

**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, 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)
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<td>Pupils should be taught to speak audibly and fluently with an increasing command of Standard English (SpokLang.8)</td>
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| Reading: Comprehension | Pupils should be taught to develop positive attitudes to reading and understanding of what they read by reading books that are structured in different ways and reading for a range of purposes (Y3/4 ReadComp.1ii)
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                         | 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)
|                         | 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) |

| Writing: Composition | Pupils should be taught to draft and write by, in non-narrative material, using simple organisational devices (Y3/4 WritComp.2iv)
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<td>Pupils should be taught to evaluate and edit by assessing the effectiveness of their own and others’ writing and suggesting improvements (Y3/4 WritComp.3i)</td>
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**SCOTLAND Curriculum for Excellence: Literacy and English experiences and outcomes – First level**

| Listening and talking | As I listen or watch, I can identify and discuss the purpose, key words and main ideas of the text, and use this information for a specific purpose (LIT 1-04a)
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<td>I can communicate clearly when engaging with others within and beyond my place of learning, using selected resources as required (LIT 1-10a)</td>
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| Reading | I can use my knowledge of sight vocabulary, phonics, context clues, punctuation and grammar to read with understanding and expression (ENG 1-12a)
|---------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|         | To show my understanding, I can respond to different kinds of questions and other close reading tasks and I am learning to create some questions of my own (ENG 1-17a)
|         | To show my understanding across different areas of learning, I can identify and consider the purpose and main ideas of a text (LIT 1-16a)                                                                 |

| Writing | Throughout the writing process, I can check that my writing makes sense (LIT 1-23a)
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<td>By considering the type of text I am creating, I can select ideas and relevant information, organise these in a logical sequence and use words which will be interesting and/or useful for others (LIT 1-26a)</td>
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### WALES Programme of Study for English in Wales: Year 3

| **Oracy** | Learners are able to speak clearly varying expression to help listeners (Y3_OracSpea.3)  
Learners are able to keep in role and support others in role play (Y3_OracSpea.7) |
|---|---|
| **Reading** | Learners are able to deduce ideas and information by linking explicit statements, e.g. cause and effect (Y3_ReadComp.2)  
Learners are able to look for specific information in texts using contents, indexes, glossaries, dictionaries (Y3_ReadStrat.6)  
Learners are able to identify different purposes of texts, e.g. to inform, instruct, explain (Y3_ReadStrat.7) |
| **Writing** | Learners are able to review and improve sections of their work (Y3_WritMean.7)  
Learners are able to present processes, event or reports in a clear sequence (Y3_WritStru.3) |

### NORTHERN IRELAND Levels of Progression in Communication across the curriculum: Primary Level 2

| **Talking and listening** | Pupils can follow discussions, make contributions and observe conventions of conversation (L2_com_talk.2i)  
Pupils can use a general vocabulary to express thoughts, imaginings and opinions (L2_com_talk.3i)  
Pupils can speak clearly to be heard and understood (L2_com_talk.5) |
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<td><strong>Reading</strong></td>
<td>Pupils can recognise some forms and features of texts (L2_com_read.4i)</td>
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| **Writing** | Pupils can make changes in relation to agreed criteria (L2_com_writ.1ii)  
Pupils can show a sense of structure and organisation (L2_com_writ.2ii)  
Pupils can write using a given form (L2_com_writ.3) |