

Clockwork by Philip Pullman

This book is an exciting and scary ghost story which contains many elements of traditional fairy and horror stories. It deals with important themes of the triumph of good over evil, redemption through human love and kindness. The story is told from three perspectives, as 'nobody saw the whole of it', which overlap and interconnect together creating an intricate and powerful story in which characters are confronted with the inescapable consequences of their actions.

Key teaching approaches

'Tell Me'

Text marking

Word collections

Drawing and annotating

Drama and role-play

Storyboxes

Debate and argument

Writing in role

Book-making

Learning aims

To engage children with a powerful text that they will enjoy

To discuss the themes and issues that arise, enabling children to make connections to their own lives

To develop skills of storytelling and evaluate effect

To debate issues arising in the text and present an argument using evidence from the text

To develop creative responses to the text through discussion and role-play

To analyse the author's style and study how effects are achieved

To write in role, in order to explore character and to learn about writing in other voices

Suggested writing outcomes

This sequence has a number of group, paired and individual writing opportunities (including note taking and mind mapping) which build towards a final book making activity where children have the chance to write at length, retelling the story in role.

Other outcomes

ICT (digital recording or filming) could be used to record children story telling or debating. Recordings could then be used to review, evaluate and improve performance or to revisit later in the story to make comparisons.

Children could make an electronic version of their book using Photostory or Moviemaker, scanning in images of their artwork or photos of their storyboxes and recording their voices telling the story over the top.

Cross curricular links

The themes of clocks and clockwork mechanisms could be explored further through maths and DT.

Art opportunities include looking at and creating black and white polyblock prints in the mood of the original story.

See ICT outcomes above.

Session 1: Tell Me and text marking

Think about the title of the book together.

What sort of story do you think this is?

What sorts of things do you think this might be about?

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Read the preface out loud asking the children to shut their eyes as you read.
What pictures come into their mind's eye as they listen?
Which phrases and words help create those pictures for them?

Talk a little together around these questions before re-reading the passage on an enlarged version of the text or in pairs, marking and discussing the ways in which the author uses language to create these word pictures, and how they shape readers' expectations of the story. Write the most important images down and pin them up so that they can be returned to at the end of the book.

Read to them what Pullman himself has to say about his writing of the book.

'This took a lot of working out. I was looking at one of the old clocks in the Science Museum in London one day, and I thought it would be fun to try and write a story in which one part turning this way connected to another part and made it turn that way, like the cogwheels of a clock. And when it was all fitted closely together, I could wind it up and set it going...Of course it had to be spooky too, because all old clocks are, somehow.'

Session 2 Visualising and making story boxes

Read aloud to the point at which Fritz begins his story.
Make a list with the children of everything they now know about the town and its people. Put them in pairs to make this world, using shoeboxes to create the setting and filling it with storyprops of all the characters. They will need to add to this as the story progresses and they meet more characters. Encourage children to work with the storyboxes to retell and re-enact scenes from the book all the way through this unit.

Session 3: Drama, role-play and story telling

Read aloud to the part in Fritz's story where Karl is left behind on his own in the inn after everybody else has fled. Re-read from 'As he got to that point in his story' and ask children to act out the scene in the inn in role as one of the characters as you do so. Ask them to freeze-frame the moment when Dr Kalmenius enters the room. Read the description of him out loud as the cue for them to pause and then ask each character in turn to say what they are thinking out loud.

'Restart' the action and read to the end with each child leaving the inn in role until only Karl is left.

Now put children into pairs and ask them, still in role, to take turns to imagine that they have gone home and are telling the story of Dr Kalmenius's arrival to someone who wasn't present. Ask some children to tell their stories to the rest of the class. Children could also use digital recorders or video to record their story telling. This would enable children to review, evaluate and improve their performances and to revisit ideas later in the sequence.

Session 4?: Drawing and annotating

Children should draw and annotate this mysterious figure-in pairs or as individuals, and share them with another pair. As a class compare the finished drawings with the original text.

*How similar are the things you said?
Did anybody add or change anything?
Why do you think this is?*

Read the conversation between Karl and Dr Kalmenius out loud up to the point where Dr Kalmenius says. "You have wound up the future my boy. It has already begun to tick".

Put children into small groups of 2 or 3, and ask them to talk together to decide what that future will look like, quickly sketching it out between them on a storyboard.

What are their predictions based upon?

Read aloud to the end of part one.

Session 5: Mind mapping

You will need to have read aloud Part 2 The story of Otto and Mariposa before this session.

Put the class into small groups of four or five, and give them copies of either the first story or the second story to work with. Ask them to work together to map out the sequence of events in their story so that the relationship between what happens and why is clear.

Children will find it useful to use highlighters to help them mark significant parts first.

When they have finished bring all the groups back together and use shared writing to map out the two stories as flow charts on a flipchart. Talk with the children to establish the links between the two stories, drawing lines to show things that were taking place at the same time, or numbering the order in which things occurred. Mark these with phrases such as *meanwhile, at the same time...*

Session 6: Debate and argument

Read part 3 in which Karl 'is ticking his final tock' aloud until the point where Karl meets up with Sir Ironsoul.

As a class revisit and discuss some of their predictions.

How successful have these been?

Read the caption about Karl's end.

Do the children agree with the author that 'Karl 'deserved a bad end'?

Ask children to debate this working in small groups to collect the evidence for both sides of the argument onto big sheets of paper. They should then come together as a class to draw the arguments together and to present the final case for or against what happens to Karl. Are there any points in the story when they feel that Karl could have been saved or do they feel as Pullman says that 'tock' had to follow 'tick'?

Session 6,7,8

Writing in role and book-making

Read aloud to the end of the book.

Suggest children write the story in role, as one of the main characters such as Gretl or Sir Ironsoul, or, as Putzi the cat who plays a major role in the final workings out of the plot. Ask children to work with a writing partner, carefully re-reading sections of the book to help them identify the parts of this complicated story that their character would have been part of. Suggest children pinpoint the bones of their particular story with the help of storyboards, flow diagrams, or through a mixture of pictures and mind mapping.

They can then publish their work as a book, carefully illustrated with black and white polyblock prints in the mood of the original story. In addition children could scan their images and use them to make an electronic version of the book, recording their voices over the images using software such as Photostory or Moviemaker.