

## King of the Sky by Nicola Davies, illustrated by Laura Carlin (Walker Books)

Words and pictures combine to evoke a Welsh mining town where a boy feels excluded and misses his Italian home. He develops a bond with a retired miner who keeps racing pigeons and the boy comes to a fresh understanding of the meaning of belonging. This second collaboration between author Nicola Davies and illustrator Laura Carlin, following the successful *The Promise*, is another sensitive and subtle picture book.

### Overall aims of this teaching sequence:

- To engage children with a story with which they will empathise
- To explore themes and issues, and develop and sustain ideas through discussion
- To develop creative responses to the text through drama, storytelling and artwork
- To write in role in order to explore and develop empathy for characters
- To write with confidence for real purposes and audiences

**This teaching sequence is designed to be differentiated for a Key Stage 2 class. It forms part of CLPE's Inspiring Writing in KS2 course.**

### Overview of this teaching sequence

This teaching sequence is approximately 4 weeks long if spread out over 20 sessions.

The book supports the study of character development, encourages the deepening of reader response through the exploration of the issues expressed in the story. It provides an historical perspective on something very topical and is a fantastic stimulus to underpin personal, social and emotional development through the opportunities it provides for reflection on themes of friendship, loneliness and bravery, as well as migration and the meaning of home.

#### Teaching Approaches

- Visualisation
- Response to Illustration
- Role on the Wall
- Double Bubble
- Teacher in Role
- Writing in Role
- Book Making
- Debate
- Performing and Responding to Poetry
- Freeze Frame
- Thought Tracking
- Dictogloss
- Conscience Alley
- Readers Theatre

#### Writing Outcomes

- Description
- Greeting?
- Diary
- Free Writing
- Balanced Argument or Persuasive Text
- Free Verse Poetry
- Explanation
- Persuasive Letter
- Newspaper Report
- Narrative

### Cross Curricular Links:

#### Art and Design

- The study of great artists could take in many who have been fascinated by and painted many famous examples of birds. For example, Picasso, whose works include 'white pigeon on black background', 'boy with dove', and his famous drawings of doves, and Matisse's 'The Iridescence of Birds'.
- Children looking to expand their use of different techniques might explore, imitate or be inspired by Laura Carlin's mixed media approach, often using a combination of paints and pencils. They could also investigate her work with ceramics.

#### Geography

- The movement of different groups of humans through Europe during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century would provide many opportunities for children to develop their map skills, including, of course, plotting both the boy's journey and the pigeon's flight from Rome to Wales.
- Children could also undertake a comparison of the human and physical features of the book's two settings.
- Geographical knowledge could also be widened through the study of the environments over which the pigeon flies on his journey home.

#### History

- The story is set towards the end of a period in which many Italian families were emigrating to South Wales. There was a growing demand for labour in the South Wales coalfields in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. By 1911, many workers from Ireland, Italy and Spain had joined the industrial workforce. Many of whom were prepared to work for less pay. Some Italian families brought cultural traditions and business from home leading to many Welsh towns featuring pizzerias and gelaterias.
- Children could study the very specific impact of immigration in South Wales during this time, or might look more widely at various periods of human history which have included or led to mass migration. This may encompass many diverse events from world history from the expansion of the Roman Empire to the Californian Gold Rush. Mass migration study might also include forced migration such as the Atlantic slave trade which existed in some form or another from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. World War 1 and 2 both led to migration of large numbers of people, some through deportation while others attempted to escape imprisonment and/or persecution.
- Many high-quality British Pathe documentaries are now freely available online providing great insight into ways in which towns and cities in Britain (which may be a part of your school's locality) have changed over the past century. The documentary 'Song of Wales' (1954), although filmed after the period in which the book is set, will still provide some useful historical insights for the children, who may also consider how historians might use this particular type of primary source material: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LBrdFIKPDfg>
- The manner in which humans have used pigeons over the years might provide interest for the children as well as developing their understanding of world chronology. The use of pigeons to send messages during World War 1 is explicitly referenced in the text.

## PSHE

- Among other associations, Amnesty International produces a wide range of materials to support schools in promoting understanding of refugee issues linked with migration:  
<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/resources/activity-pack-seeking-safety>
- The themes of loneliness and friendship and the importance of feeling a sense of ‘home’ can all be explored further through discussion and circle time activities.

## Music

- One of the inspirations for the story was a song written about a real Sheffield racing pigeon ‘The King of Rome’ that won a race to the North of England all the way from Italy. The song, called ‘The King of Rome’ was written by Dave Sudbury and has since been recorded and performed by many different musicians. Children could listen to different versions, considering their similarities and differences, the choices made for instrumentation and different combinations of voices and decide which they prefer. They might also learn to sing the song themselves.
- Children could also write their own song, about the King of the Sky, inspired by the lyrical structure of the original Sudbury composition.
- Many versions of Sudbury’s song can be found online:
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y97SXJR8cVo> (performed by Dave Sudbury)
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ogXQm70S24M> (performed by The Unthanks, BBC Radio 2)
- The lyrics for the song have also previously been published as a picture book: *King of Rome* by Dave Sudbury, illustrated by Hans Saefkow (Simply Read Books, 2010).

## Links to other texts and resources.

### Books which explore similar themes:

- *The Quiet Place* by Sarah Stewart, illustrated by David Small (Farrar Straus Giroux)
- *Here I Am* by Patti Kim, illustrated by Sonia Sánchez (Curious Fox)
- *The Arrival* by Shaun Tan (Hodder Children’s Books)
- *The Colour of Home* by Mary Hoffman, illustrated by Karin Littlewood (Frances Lincoln)
- *When Jessie Came Across the Sea* by Amy Hest, illustrated by P.J. Lynch (Walker Books)
- *The Unforgotten Coat* by Frank Cottrell-Boyce (Walker Books)
- *Christophe’s Story* by Nicki Cornwell, illustrated by Karin Littlewood (Frances Lincoln)
- *Home* by Carson Ellis (Walker Books)
- *My Name is Not Refugee* by Kate Milner (The Bucket List)
- *Sweet Pizza* by G. R. Gemin (Nosy Crow)

### Non-Fiction Books

- *RSPB My First Book of Garden Birds* by Mike Unwin and Sarah Whittleby, illustrated by Rachel Lockwood (A&C Black)
- *Beautiful Birds* by Jean Roussen and Emmanuelle Walker (Flying Eye Books)
- *Brilliant Birds* (QED Publishing)
- *Atlas of Animal Adventures* by Rachel Williams and Lucy Letherland (Wide-Eyed Editions)
- *My Book of Birds* by Geraldo Valerio (Wren and Rook)
- *The Iridescence of Birds: A Book about Henri Matisse* by Patricia MacLachlan (Roaring Brook Press)

#### Other books by Nicola Davies

- *The Promise* by Nicola Davies, illustrated by Laura Carlin (Walker Books)
- *Perfect* by Nicola Davies, illustrated by Cathy Fisher (Graffeg)
- *The Pond* by Nicola Davies, illustrated by Cathy Fisher (Graffeg)
- *Elias Martin* by Nicola Davies, illustrated by Fran Shun (Graffeg)
- *Lots: The Diversity of Life on Earth* by Nicola Davies, illustrated by Emily Sutton (Walker Books)
- *The Variety of Life* by Nicola Davies, illustrated by Lorna Scobie (Hodder Children's Books)
- *Tiny* by Nicola Davies, illustrated by Emily Sutton (Walker Books)
- *Whale Boy* by Nicola Davies (Yearling)
- *A First Book of Nature* by Nicola Davies, illustrated by Mark Heard (Walker Books)
- *Just Ducks* by Nicola Davies, illustrated by Salvatore Rubbino (Walker Books)

#### Other books illustrated by Laura Carlin

- *The Promise* by Nicola Davies, illustrated by Laura Carlin (Walker Books)
- *The Iron Man* by Ted Hughes, illustrated by Laura Carlin (Walker Books)
- *A World of Your Own* by Laura Carlin (Phaidon)
- *The Kites Are Flying!* by Michael Morpurgo, illustrated by Laura Carlin (Walker Books)

#### **Links to other resources on the CLPE Website:**

- 'Tell Me' grid and Book Talk questions: <https://www.clpe.org.uk/powerofreading/teaching-approaches/tell-me-booktalk>
- Poetryline: Responding to Poetry grid: <https://www.clpe.org.uk/sites/default/files/Poetry%20Reflection%20Aidan%20Chambers.docx>

#### **Weblinks:**

- An interview with Nicola Davies and Laura Carlin: <http://www.foyles.co.uk/Author-Nicola-Davies-and-Laura-Carlin>
- Nicola Davies' website: <http://www.nicola-davies.com/>
- Laura Carlin's website: <http://www.lauracarlin.com/>
- An interview with Nicola Davies about writing *King of the Sky*: <http://www.walesonline.co.uk/whats-on/whats-on-news/skys-limit-new-play-welsh-9607135>
- This soundcloud recording, created by Tales Art Play, features Nicola Davies reading aloud the entire text and talking a little about the background to the book and the theatre production: <https://soundcloud.com/tales-art-play/nicola-davies>
- The Royal Pigeon Racing Association: <http://www.rpra.org/>
- The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds: <http://www.rspb.org.uk/>

## Teaching Sessions

### Before Reading:

Before starting work on the book, create a space in the classroom for a working wall to enable you to pin examples of responses, reflections, notes and language generated from each session. If you do not have the space for a working wall you could create a class 'reading journal' using large pieces of sugar paper and use the pages of the journal to capture responses.

Display related texts that children can independently read alongside this story to support them in developing language and making links.

### Session 1: Visualisation

*Asking children to picture or visualise a place from a story is a powerful way of encouraging them to move into a fictional world. Children can be asked to picture the scene in their mind's eye or walk round it in their imaginations. Finally, they can bring it to life by describing it in words or recreating it in drawing or painting.*

- Read aloud the opening paragraph:

*It rained and rained and rained.*

*Little houses huddled on the humpbacked hills.*

*Chimneys smoked and metal towers clanked.*

*The streets smelled of mutton soup and coal dust  
and no one spoke my language.*

- Ask the children what they like about this opening; what don't they like? Are there any memorable words or phrases? What makes them memorable?
- Read the paragraph again and ask children to close their eyes and try to visualise the scene. What do they picture? Provide them with a range of drawing materials and appropriate art paper and ask them to draw what they visualised, annotating it with any descriptive phrases (these might be a phrase that they heard being read aloud, or a phrase that has come to mind while they've been drawing).
- After drawing, children can discuss with a partner what they've drawn and why.
- Read aloud the opening paragraph for a third time and then display it so the children can revisit it and read it for themselves. Ask them to discuss it in small groups. You may wish to give them some prompts for their discussion, in addition to those already briefly discussed at the start of the session (for example: *Is there anything that you don't understand? Are there any questions that you'd like to ask?*).
- Display Laura Carlin's double spread illustration of the landscape which follows this quote.
  - *What can they see?* (also what can they not see – do children pick up on the lack of motor vehicles, TV antennae, etc.?)
  - *What sort of town might this be? Who might live there?*
  - *What aspects of the illustration do they like and are drawn to and why?*
  - *What aspects of the illustration do they dislike and why?*
  - *What puzzles them and what questions do the illustration prompts?*

- *What connections can they make, what does the illustration remind them of? They might reference previous experiences, other books, film, animation or art as part of their reflections.*
- *How does the illustrator use colour and what impact does this have on the reader?*
- *What effect does the layout and size of the composition have?*
- *Why might the author and illustrator have chosen to set the opening scene here? How might it be relevant to the story?*

### Session 2: Response to Illustration

*The children's books used by CLPE have been chosen because of the quality of the illustrations they contain and the ways in which the illustrations work with the text to create meaning for the reader. Children will need time and opportunities to enjoy and respond to the pictures, and to talk together about what the illustrations contribute to their understanding of the text.*

- Hand out A3 sheets with the landscape illustration discussed during the last session printed on the centre. Ask children to work in pairs to annotate it with phrases describing some of the things they can see – *what can they see? what are they/is it doing? how are they doing it?*
- Ask pupils to share some of their phrases and support them in honing and developing their phrases, including the use of figurative language where appropriate, particularly in relation to the impact they want to have on the reader. *How did the illustration make them feel when they looked at it? How might they form a sentence that evokes the same emotional response from a reader?*
- Initially, working collaboratively in a small group, children annotate their A3 sheet with descriptive and figurative phrases inspired by the illustration, the text, and possibly by video clips or sound clips that might help them evoke a 1920s Welsh mining town. For example:
  - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bgAoj\\_IM4Ss](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bgAoj_IM4Ss)
  - <https://freesound.org/people/felix.blume/sounds/147863/>
- Following their collaborative work, devising and developing language and ideas, the children can then work independently to use their phrases and any additional ideas to structure a short paragraph designed to accompany Laura Carlin's illustration.
- If possible, the illustration could be recreated as a large working wall – with plenty of space for the 'sky' which will be important as the class progresses through the text. This working wall could be annotated with the words and phrases that the children have developed throughout this session, enabling them to refer back to and utilise these throughout the sequence.
- They might record their descriptive paragraphs, using a simple editing program like MovieMaker or iMovie to add their narration to a photograph of Laura Carlin's painting or to footage of 1920s Welsh mining towns and villages. Performing their writing will support the children in finding sentences or phrases that need to be enhanced or corrected.

### Session 3: Response to Illustration, Role on the Wall

*Role on the wall is a technique that uses a displayed outline of the character to record feelings (inside the outline) and outward appearances (outside the outline) at various stopping points across the story. Using a different colour at each of the stopping points allows you to track changes in the character's emotional journey. You can include known facts such as physical appearance, age, gender, location and occupation, as well as subjective ideas such as likes/dislikes, friends/enemies, attitudes, motivations, secrets and dreams.*

- Share with the class the front cover of the text and ask them to discuss: *who do they think the two characters are? What could their relationship be? How might they know one another? What does their body language tell you? Do you notice anything unusual or surprising? Do you have any questions that you want to ask? What might the title refer to? Do they have any thoughts or theories about what the story might be about, based on the title and the cover illustration? How might this relate to the illustration and text that we have already explored?*
- Read aloud and share the first three double-page spreads (up to “*All of it told me this is not where you belong.*”) Provide children with a chance to share any thoughts or questions that have been stimulated by the book so far.
- *What do the combination of text and images tell us about the town where the boy has ended up living? What does it mean not to belong somewhere? Have any of us felt like this before?*
- In small groups, ask children to begin a ‘role on the wall’ poster for the boy, using the text and illustrations shared so far to guide any suppositions about his character. If children have not used ‘role on the wall’ before, it would be beneficial to model using ideas from the whole class prior to any collaborative small group work.
- Finish the session by handout out A5 pieces of card. Ask children to fold them in half and write a small note or card welcoming the boy into their community. What might they write to make him feel more as if he belonged?
- Ask children to put the cards inside envelopes when they are finished and post them (perhaps by simply handing them in to the teacher, or possibly by making use of a class post box). Hand the cards back out to different children and ask them to open the envelope in role as the boy. They can then read the card from the point of view of the boy, reacting in the manner in which they feel he might respond.
- The children’s writing and an example of your ‘role on the wall’ work can be added to the class display.

#### **Session 4: Double Bubble / Teacher in Role / Writing in Role**

*Teacher in role is an extremely useful classroom technique through which the class teacher takes on a role in relation to the pupils. During an activity, the teacher may ask questions of the pupils (often suggesting ideas or placing pupils into a specific role) or may themselves be asked questions in a ‘hot seating’ style activity. It can sometimes be helpful to have a prop or small piece of costume that helps to demonstrate for the class when the teacher is stepping in and out of their role.*

- Display the illustration of St Peter’s Square from the next double spread. What do children notice? How has the illustrative style changed? How does the illustration make them feel? Why do they think that is?
- Reread from the start of the text and on to the next double spread (“...as if they strutted in St Peter’s Square in Rome”). Children may wish to discuss what else they have learned about the boy and briefly return to their role on the wall to make further annotations.
- What do the children already know about Rome? This could be an opportunity for some extended cross-curricular learning about the Italian city. Alternatively, hand out a selection of photographs of Rome in the 1920s and provide groups with an opportunity to compare these with photographs of South Wales mining towns from the same period.

- Return to Laura Carlin's illustrations, displaying together and then comparing and contrasting the two spreads of the mining town and St Peter's Square. Use a double bubble resource sheet (see resources) to capture children's ideas. You might also compare the illustration of the boy here feeding the pigeons in comparison with the illustration of him on the previous page.
- *How has the mood shifted and how do the text and illustration work together to achieve this change?*
- Use Teacher in Role to allow children to interact with the boy and ask him any questions they might have about his journey from Italy as well as his feelings about, and early experiences of, arriving in this Welsh town. It is helpful to use 'teacher in role' rather than pupil at this point for a hot seating activity, as the children are unlikely to have sufficient knowledge and understanding of the situation to explore the situation as sensitively and deeply as you might like them to. Give children a chance to prepare questions in advance, working together to hone their questions to create those that are going to provide them with the most relevant information. You might also discuss the manner in which they might speak to the boy – how is he likely to be feeling? How does that effect our own speech and language choices?
- Reflect on what children have discovered from the 'teacher in role' activity. They may wish to add further to the 'role on the wall' posters in response to this. Now that children have a better understanding of the boy's situation, ask them to reflect on this by writing a short diary entry in role as that character, either echoing or expanding upon the information they have discovered from both the book and the hot seating about the transition from Italy to Wales, any fears and hopes that he has for the future, anything specific that he is missing from his past life and anything he has noticed about his new home.
- You may wish to create simple origami books for children to keep as the boy's diary for any further writing in role opportunities. Instructions for making these books can be found on various websites or in Paul Johnson's *Making Books* (A & C Black).

### Session 5: Free Writing

*Prior to this session, invite children to bring in a special object that reminds them of a family member, another place if they have also experienced moving home or simply a treasured memory. You may want to prepare a small box of additional objects for children who don't have anything (objects might include: a pebble, a seashell, a pressed flower or leaf, some foreign currency, a brass key, a collection of old photographs, a feather, a train ticket, a small toy, an acorn, etc.)*

- Reread the text from the previous session. Why might it be that the pigeons are able to bring back so many memories of the boy's home? Do the children have any special objects or souvenirs that instantly help them to recollect a different place or a different time?
- Introduce an object that evokes an important memory of a person, place or event for you. Share what comes to mind as you look at that object – how does it make the memory more vivid?
- Provide children with some time to work in small groups sharing and discussing the objects that they have brought in. If children haven't brought in an object, let them use one from your box commenting on: what it reminds them of (in terms of personal memories or perhaps of stories they've read), where it could have come from, why it appeals to them, what questions they might be wondering about it, etc.
- Once children have had the opportunity to discuss their objects, allow them time to write freely any thoughts, memories, questions and ideas that are inspired by the object. Discuss strategies

for what they might do if they get stuck for ideas – perhaps they could just list questions inspired by the object, or start describing it, until they are able to start down another creative path.

- After 10-15 minutes of writing, ask children to read back over what they've written. Is there an image, a phrase or a sentence that they particularly like? Why is that? Ask them to share something that they're proud of with a partner. Is there anything that could provide the spark for a longer piece of more structured writing, whether that be a recount of a memory or a fictional narrative inspired by the object? If children have their own free writing journals, they might jot down any ideas that have to continue to work on in future lessons, at home or in a writing workshop.

### Session 6: Debate

*Debating often calls for a formal and objective responses to the story or ideas raised through it. It helps children begin to analyse how a writer has made them feel a particular way. Teachers can structure debates inviting 'for' and 'against' arguments around particular statements arising from a book. The use of decision lines or conscience alley can be an effective way to share ideas and arguments from both sides of the debate.*

- On the board, display the image of a city or 'feral' pigeon, alongside a sign or sentence discouraging people from feeding them – some common messages on these type of signs might include some or all of the following: *Do not feed the pigeons – they are vermin, cause a nuisance and spread disease.* You may wish to find images of some actual town signs to share with the class.
- How do children feel about this statement? Do they think pigeons are a nuisance and disease carriers or do they feel that they should be welcomed in town centres and recreational areas?
- Do they have any direct experience of this? Are pigeons a problem in their own town, or are they welcomed?
- Display a decision line across the classroom (or in a larger space such as the hall or a playground). Tell children to position themselves on the line depending on how much they agree or disagree that pigeons are a nuisance or vermin. Extreme dislike of pigeons would lead to them standing at one end of the line, whereas an extremely positive reaction to pigeons would mean that they should stand at the other end, with all scales of emotional/intellectual response in between.
- Talk to children about their reasoning. Why have they chosen to stand there? After listening to a few of their peers' reasons, do any of the children want to change their positions? Why? What have they heard to change their mind?
- Divide the children into small groups and ask them to draw up some reasons why people might want to encourage or discourage pigeons from towns and cities. Allow them access to books and online resources (newspapers, articles) that might support them in their work. If online resources are difficult to access, you could print out a selection of appropriate articles for them to annotate or extract information from. For example:
  - <http://www.discoverwildlife.com/british-wildlife/feral-pigeon-flying-rat-or-urban-hero>
- After children have had sufficient opportunity to research both sides of the argument, ask them to continue to work collaboratively to prepare an oral presentation defending one chosen side of the argument. After groups have performed, discuss the class' response to each presentation. *What did they hear that was persuasive or convincing? What was it about the presentation that was convincing? Was it the language choices or the manner/style of the presentation?*
- Children could then be given a choice of written response; either showing both sides of a balanced argument (a report summarising what was heard in class, perhaps for the school newsletter or newspaper, a less formal response might be a poster 'Pigeon: Hero or Menace?' summarising the

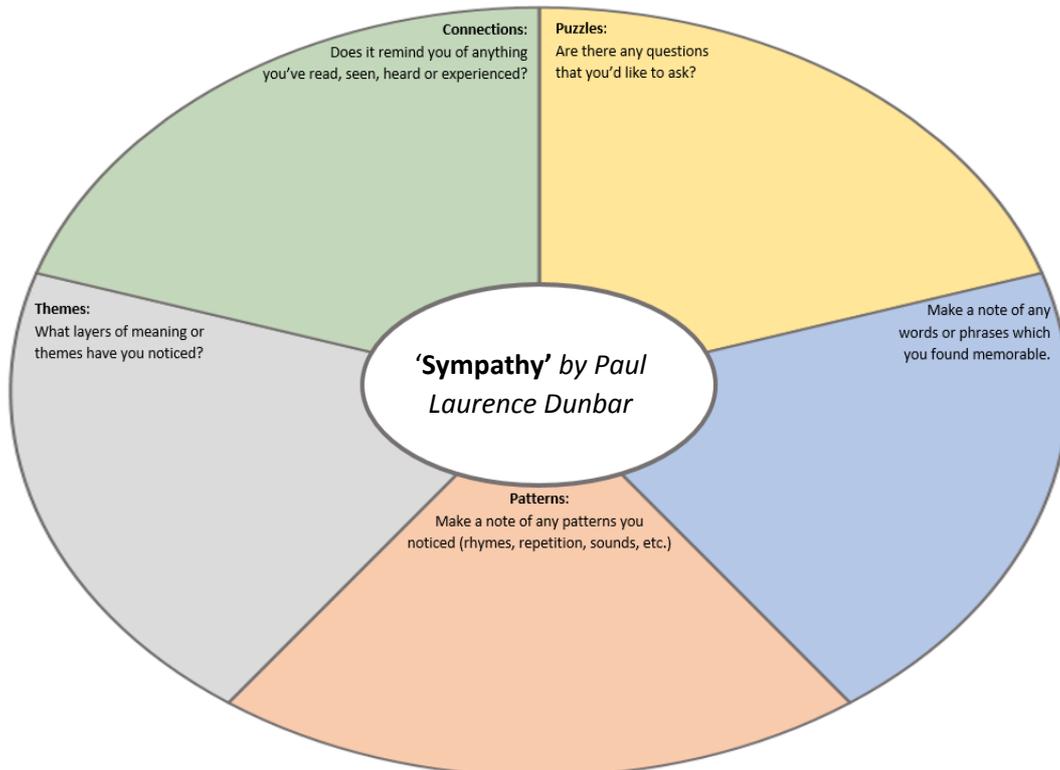
issues) or showing one side of the argument only (for example, a more formal persuasive letter to the town council complaining about the ill-treatment of pigeons in town or persuading the local authority to reduce the number of pigeons in the area).

- Revisit the decision line – you may want to display a large scale version above or under your working wall. Place the children’s names according to their opinions and feelings, allowing them to reconsider their position throughout the sequence.

**Session 7: Reading and Performing Poetry**

*It is through reading poetry aloud that the power of language can be explored and realised. In preparing for presenting poetry to an audience, and in the performance itself, children gain deeper understanding of vocabulary meanings, bring their own interpretations to the poem, begin to inhabit characters and reflect more thoughtfully on its message.*

- Read from the beginning of the book until the end of the next spread (up to “...where the sky stretched all the way to Italy.”). Allow the children to respond to the story so far. *How are their understandings of the characters informed by what they’ve read and seen? How are Mr Evans and the boy altered by the flight of the birds? Why might this be? What does it mean to them?*
- Share the illustration on double-spread on page 11-12. *How does this contrast to the initial images of the landscape? What do they notice in the illustration? Is there anything that surprises them?*
- Read aloud the poem ‘Sympathy’ by Paul Laurence Dunbar. Allow the children time to discuss their initial response. You may wish to use an adapted book talk grid to support these discussions. (‘Responding to Poetry’ on CLPE’s Poetryline website offers further resources to support this: <https://www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline/resources/key-teaching-approaches/responding-poetry>)



- Discuss how the children might go about preparing a performance of this poem. *How might they alter their voices? Which parts of the text might they divide between them? How might they use their voices in terms of pitch, tempo, dynamics? Would they incorporate aspects of movement, dance, freeze frame or mime to communicate or highlight any messages, themes or events in the poem?*
- Give out copies of the poem to groups to text mark and rehearse for performance. You might choose to allow children to select their own related poems to perform, or give them a range to choose from. In addition to Paul Laurence Dunbar's 'Sympathy', you might consider 'I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings' by Maya Angelou, 'Hope is the thing with feathers' by Emily Dickinson, or 'Answer to a Child's Question' by Samuel Taylor Coleridge.
- Allow the children an opportunity to perform for the class, review and hone those performances before performing for other members of the school community. You might choose to record or film each group's performance to allow for a wider sharing of their work.

### Session 8: Writing Poetry

*Poetry is a powerful way to support children digging more deeply into the detail of the texts they are engaging with. Key to children's success in the writing of poetry is being in an environment where poetry is shared regularly and where they have regular opportunities to hear and respond to high quality poetry.*

- Hand out copies of the double-spread illustration of the pigeons in flight. How does the illustration make them feel? How do they think Mr Evans and the boy feel in the moment that the birds take flight? What about the pigeons – how might they feel as their cage doors are opened and they take to the sky?
- Ask children to annotate the illustration with words and phrases inspired by the look, feel and movement of the birds. If they remember any words or phrases from the previous session's poetry performances that they feel are applicable, they may add those too.
- Support the children in working collaboratively to further develop their language in relation to describing the mass flight of these birds. You might share videos or photos found online, or even the sound of hundreds of pigeons taking flight. Shared videos could include some of the following:
  - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=15WwP\\_PQPk0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=15WwP_PQPk0)
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JGKbqLv8knE>
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kb2xQ3uIIEs>
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UFiYSHFh4qM>
- Once children have had a chance to note and develop their ideas, provide each pupil with a strip of paper upon which they can write a phrase that they think best describes the moment of the pigeons taking flight (including, if they wish, the emotional response of those watching).
- Working in small groups, have the children read aloud their line and work collaboratively to organise them to create a free verse. Children may choose to edit slightly their individual lines to support the flow of the verse, but should try to retain the integrity of their original thought.
- Have children prepare a performance reading of their poem, lifting the meaning from the page for their audience with appropriate intonation, actions or sound effects – vocal or instrumental.
- Through shared composition, support groups to refine and edit their compositions throughout to create their intended impact on their audience, drawing on what they have learned from Nicola Davies' language structures and grammar choices (e.g. alliteration, lists, figurative language: personification, onomatopoeia) or from the published poetry they have heard and performed during the previous session.

- Children may subsequently go on to compose their own poetry in whatever form they choose that best expresses the mood and emotion of Laura Carlin’s illustration.
- Provide children with opportunities to perform their own poetry, perhaps alongside the poems they worked on during Session 7, then share the published poems with a wider audience, in a class anthology or on the working wall.

### Session 9: Freeze Frame, Thought Tracking, Writing in Role

*Freeze frames are still images or tableaux. They can be used to enable groups of children to examine a key event or situation from a story and decide in detail how it could be represented. When presenting the freeze frame, one of the group could act as a commentator to talk through what is happening in their version of the scene, or individual characters can be asked to speak their thoughts out loud (thought tracking).*

- Read the next two double-spreads (from “A lifetime down the mine...” to “‘Re Del cielo!’ I replied. ‘King of the Sky!’”).
- How has the boy changed through his relationship with Mr Evans? Why do you think this is? Compare and contrast how Laura Carlin has illustrated the boy throughout the text so far – how has his character developed? Why do you think this is? Children may benefit from revisiting their role on the wall posters and adding any additional traits or characteristics that they have noticed.
- Revisit the text on the final double-spread that you read to the class:

*He put a pigeon in my hands.  
I felt its small heart racing underneath my finger,  
and the push and power of its wings.  
Its head was whiter than a splash of milk, its eye blazed fire.  
“Name him and he’s yours,” the old man said.*

- *How do we think he felt holding the pigeon? How might he feel about ‘owning’ the bird? Is it different to owning a pet? What responsibilities might it come with?*
- In pairs, ask children to freeze frame the moment when Mr Evans hands the pigeon to the boy. As mime can be difficult, some children might benefit from using an object, such as a small cushion, to give themselves something to hold. Some companies even produce plush pigeon toys that could add an extra element to any role play work.
- Before sharing their freeze frame images, hand children a strip of paper and ask them to create a title for the image; they might choose an extract from the text that we have explored together or else create their own caption.
- After sharing, ask children to extend their freeze frame backwards in time, showing the moments prior to the boy being given Re Del Cielo. First, the boy alone having arrived in the town; second, the boy first encountering Mr Evans and his pigeons and finally finishing with the frozen image that they have just shared with the class. After they’ve devised each still image, ask them to consider how they might transition smoothly from one scene to the next. They might benefit from some accompanying music to support them in achieving a particular mood and transitioning at the same time (a traditional Welsh hymn such as Gwahoddiad would have been sung by many male voice choirs, common in Welsh mining towns and might provide suitable accompaniment for their drama work, e.g. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hY1kNZYhjuo>).

- Ask children to recreate selected freeze frames and use thought tracking to allow them to share the inner thoughts of the characters at each of those moments, particularly the final image of the boy being given Re Del Cielo.
- Invite children to return to their 'origami book' diaries to write in role as the boy reflecting on how he feels about owning his own pigeon – has it begun to alter his feelings about the town and about being away from his home? If you feel children need more opportunities for talk before they write in role, you might also repeat a hot-seating activity as in session 4, this time allowing children to take on the role of the boy for the question and answer session.
- Children may wish to add a further annotation to their 'role on the wall' posters.

### Session 10 and 11: Dictogloss, Book Making

*Dictogloss is a useful way of modelling a specific type of text and the writing conventions associated with it. It also offers a source of information, clarifying content and providing the pupils with greater ownership of a more academic language.*

- Read the book from the beginning, stopping after the next double-spread (up to “All they want is a bit of practice.”).
- Based on what we’ve read so far, what do we know about pigeon racing and training homing pigeons? Some children may have personal experience of this which they might be able to bring to the discussion. Make a list on the board or flip chart of what we know.
- What do we think the boy knew before he befriended Mr Evans? Explain to the class that we’re going to produce our own short guide for the boy, explaining how to train Re Del Cielo to be a champion racing pigeon.
- To support the children in their research and recording, complete a dictogloss (from *Grammar Dictation* by Ruth Wajnryb, OUP, 1990). This is useful for providing models of the language of non-fiction. It gives the students opportunities to: listen, talk, read, write, make notes, reflect on language use, clarify content and use academic language for themselves. This is especially supportive to children learning English as an additional language.
- Use an extract from a non-fiction text about training homing pigeons, asking children to do the following:
  1. Listen to the text being read aloud.
  2. Listen to text being read aloud again.
  3. Listen to the text being read aloud and write down some key points and phrases that you hear.
  4. Share your notes with a partner. Work together to write a new version of your individual notes.
  5. One set of partners join with another set to form a group of four. Work collaboratively to improve what you produced in your pairs.
  6. Rewrite the text on a large sheet of paper.
- Ask the children to reflect on their writing and consider how the process aided their understanding and recollection of the text.
- Give the children time to complete further research to build up their knowledge of the topic. Model how to read and then summarise important information into notes. You could suggest sub-headings to help the children look for and categorise information found, e.g. what they look like (appearance), how they should be fed (diet), how they need to be cared for, etc.
- You might consider arranging a visit from an expert to further support the children’s knowledge prior to writing. Perhaps a member of the wider school community keeps, or has kept,

racing/homing pigeons. Alternatively, the Royal Pigeon Racing Association (<http://www.rpra.org/press-and-schools-info/>) is happy to put schools in contact with local experts.

- Discuss with the children what questions they are trying to answer with their explanatory book. Work with the children to craft a question and then adapt your own set of notes into sentences and paragraphs to answer this. Be explicit in the way in which you are reflecting on your own writing, considering its purpose and potential audience and judging how well it is meeting those criteria.
- Children can then work independently or in pairs to produce their own draft text for the questions that they aim to answer.
- Prior to book-making and publishing, provide children with the opportunity to edit their first draft. Working with a response partner with whom they can read and reflect on their writing can be very effective. They may need some simple prompts to support them in this process. For example:
  - Ask your partner to read their writing to you.
  - Tell your partner one thing you like about their writing
  - Ask them a question about it
  - Make a suggestion to improve it
  - Think about:
    - What makes it good to read?
    - Were any parts interesting, effective, or made you think?
    - Does it make sense?
    - Has anything been missed out?
    - Is there anything that you don't understand?
    - Is it written in the right sort of style?
- When children have annotated their draft copy with any changes that they would like to make, support them in creating a simple book in which to present their published text (for book making ideas, see the Power of Reading resources at <https://www.clpe.org.uk/powerofreading/teaching-approaches/bookmaking-journals> or refer to *Making Books* by Paul Johnson, A & C Black).
- Before the next session, read aloud the next two double spreads (from “*Back at the loft...*” up to “*Just you wait and see!*”) and allow them to update their ‘Role on the Wall’ posters. This point in the sequence would also be an ideal opportunity to introduce an exploration of how pigeons have been used by different civilisations over the past 2000 years, including (as referenced in the text) to carry messages during the First World War.

### Session 12: Conscience Alley, Persuasive Writing

*Conscience Alley is a useful technique for exploring any kind of dilemma faced by a character, providing an opportunity to analyse a decisive moment in greater detail. The class forms two lines facing each other. One person (the teacher or a participant) takes the role of the protagonist and walks between the lines as each member of the group speaks their advice. It can be organised so that those on one side give opposing advice to those on the other. When the protagonist reaches the end of the alley, they make their decision.*

- Read the next three double-spreads (from “*Every day Mr Evans grew a little weaker*” up to “*I wasn't sure it would come back*”).

- Discuss any reflections children have on the events in these pages, adding to their Role on the Wall posters for the boy. They may wish to produce a similar character study for Mr Evans based on their thoughts about how he is depicted in the text.
- Display the illustration of the boy standing by the railway line. *How does the boy feel about letting 'Re Del Cielo' go on the train to Rome? What might he mean by 'a part of me was going with him'? Why might he not be sure that the pigeon will return?*
- Look on a map of Europe or use an online mapping program. Locate Rome and Wales, plotting out and measuring the journey that the pigeons will need to take to return home. *How long would that journey take if it was driven or walked? What hazards might Re Del Cielo meet on the journey back to his home if the boy sends him away?*
- Ask the children to imagine the boy standing by the railway line with Re Del Cielo in a basket ready for the journey and trying to decide whether he should send him away. What do they think that he should do?
- Take the children to a large space where they can walk around easily, such as the hall or the playground. Ask children to walk around the space at a slow but steady pace (playing some music can help children find the right rhythm for their movement). On a given signal, they should stop and whisper to the person nearest to them as if he/she was the boy, telling him what he should do and why. Repeat several times so that children have had the opportunity to share and hear a number of different reasons.
- Use 'conscience alley' to help the class reach a consensus on what the boy should do. Ask the class to form two lines facing each other with a gap between the two lines. Ask one child to take on the role of the boy and slowly walk between the lines listening carefully as each member of the group speaks their advice – one line encouraging him to let Re Del Cielo go to Rome, the other encouraging him to keep the pigeon at home in Wales. When the child in role has heard all of the suggested reasons, they can make their decision, explaining what they heard that persuaded them.
- Having had the opportunity to reflect on the boy's options and the reasons for and against him letting his pigeon be sent hundreds of miles off to Italy without him, ask children to decide for themselves what they think he should do. Then, ask children to write a letter to the boy giving him advice. What do they think he should do and why? Discuss how they might sensitively address any worries he might have. Could they give him some different options that will support him in making his own mind up?
- When children have finished writing their letter of advice, ask them to fold their letter in half, put it into an envelope, seal and address it, before 'posting' it to the boy. Perhaps they could even place them into a wicker basket similar to the sort that would have been used for transporting homing pigeons. Once you have collected in all of the 'posted' letters, deliver them back to the class so that each child gets a letter that somebody else wrote. Explain that they are now all 'in role' as the boy who is receiving the letter. As the boy, ask them to read the letter that has been delivered to them, consider how he would respond to the advice he has been given and write a note back to the advice-giver, thanking them for the guidance and explaining why they will or will not be following it.
- *As they are writing letters, children may ask what the boy's name is at this point to allow them to address the letter. His name is never given in the text, but you could discuss some possibilities, perhaps even exploring the type of boys' names that would have been popular in Italy during the period in which the book takes place.*

### Session 13: Writing in Role

When children have explored a fictional situation through talk or role play, they may be ready to write in role as a character in the story. Taking the role of a particular character enables young writers to see events from a different view point and involves them writing in a different voice. In role, children can often access feelings and language that are not available to them when they write as themselves.

- Read without sharing illustrations:

*“The race day dawned. A storm blew up.*

*Lightning, wind and rain.*

*I waited for two whole days and nights, but the pigeon with the milk-white head did not return.”*

- Discuss with the children the impact of this short piece of text. *What skills/techniques has the writer used to create this impact?*
- Ask children to talk in small groups about what they think has happened and what might happen next.
- Share the double spread illustration of the boy waiting through the storm (with the text *“Lightning, wind and rain.”*). *How might the different characters be feeling - the boy, his mum with his baby sister, Mr Evans, the unseen Mrs Evans? What might each of them be hoping for? Why? What are they scared of? What do they want for themselves and for each other?*
- After some time for discussions, children could work in pairs to clarify their ideas by writing on the character diagram resource sheet. Using a different pen colour for each character, they can write on the arrows what they hope for each other, and in the box around their picture what they hope for themselves.
- Ask the children to choose one of the characters that they would like to explore further and write a short diary entry from their point of view expressing how they feel at this moment in the narrative. They might choose to continue the boy’s diary in their origami book, or they could write from the point of view of any of the other characters that they’ve met.
- Once children have written their diary, share with them the illustrations that accompany the text which reveal that as the boy frets for the pigeon’s safety, Re Del Cielo is battling homewards, over mountains and sea. Having explored the various characters’ points of view, children might be inspired to write a short text from the pigeon’s point of view, telling the story of his journey. This could be storymapped with the support of the illustrations and atlases of Europe.

### Session 14: Book Talk, Reader’s Theatre

Once they have heard a book read aloud, the class can begin to explore their responses to it with the help of what Aidan Chambers calls ‘the four basic questions’ in his seminal text *Tell Me, Children, Reading and Talk* (Thimble Press). These questions give children accessible starting points for discussion:

- *Tell me...was there anything you liked about this book?*
- *Was there anything that you particularly disliked...?*
- *Was there anything that puzzled you?*
- *Were there any patterns...any connections that you noticed...?*

*The openness of these questions unlike the more interrogative ‘Why?’ question encourages every child to feel that they have something to say. It allows everyone to take part in arriving at a shared view without the fear of the ‘wrong’ answer. You can then move on to questions which direct children’s*

*attention more closely to themes or ideas that are particularly important to an understanding of the story but which might otherwise be overlooked.*

*Reader's theatre is a valuable way for children to work in a group to perform the text. Children can begin marking or highlighting parts of the text, indicating the phrases or sections to be read by individuals or by several members of the group. This enables them to bring out the meanings, pattern and characterisation.*

- Tell the story from start to end, sharing all of the illustrations. Using the basic questions as a starting point, discuss how they feel about the conclusion of the story and the story as a whole.
- Discuss what questions or thoughts the book raises and what other stories the book reminds them of.
- *What was the most important, poignant or significant part of the book, why?*
- *Would they recommend the book, why/why not?*
- Record their responses to add to the class journal or to display on the working wall.
  
- Divide the book into 6 separate sections (see resources) and then split the class into groups, giving each group a different part. Ask the children to decide how to perform the text, annotating it with any directions that will support them in developing a creative performance. They might consider:
  - which parts could be read in unison
  - which could be read with one or two voices
  - which bits could be read loudly/softly/echoed
  - what expression or tone might be appropriate for different words or phrases
  - whether any specific words or phrases need to be emphasised and how they might do this
  - whether to include sound effects, movement, freeze frame images, etc.
- Following sufficient rehearsal time in their groups, the children can now perform the work as a whole class, putting their separate sections together.
- After the first performance, it would be valuable to ask the children what language was highlighted during the Reader's Theatre activity and how the activity developed their understanding of author intent and purpose.
- You may wish to develop the children's initial Reader's Theatre performance in order to produce a theatrical performance of the entire text. Strategies to support this development could include:
  - adding clear transitions to move smoothly between each performance group
  - adding further visual images (freeze frames or mimes) if children haven't done so already
  - using a small number of props or costumes to clarify characters (whichever child is 'being' the boy or Mr Evans could have a simple prop or piece of costume that signifies that character)
  - incorporating elements of music or song – either to underscore events, to open or close the story or as elements of your transition

### **Sessions 15-17: Newspaper Report**

*In preparation for this writing session, ensure the children have ample opportunity to tune in to the appropriate voice and writing style through reading aloud a range of newspapers as well as giving time for independent reading and revisiting. If children have little or no experience of newspapers, it would*

be beneficial for the school to subscribe to a children's newspaper such as First News as well as engaging them in current affairs programmes, such as BBC Newsround online or on television:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround>

- Revisit the illustration of the boy celebrating the return of Re Del Cielo with his family watching from behind the fence, in order to draw out discussion about how each character must feel following the pigeon's victorious flight. Recall the work that they did prior to writing their diary entries and the emotional journey of each of those characters.
- Set up the writing task: a local newspaper editor, hearing about this incredible accomplishment, decides they want to find out more and print the story in their newspaper. Ask the children to consider: *what would they report? What might they want to say? Who would the journalists need to speak to? What might they ask? What would they want their readers, who are all from the immediate area, to feel?*
- Organise the children in pairs. Ask them to select a character the journalist might want to speak to (Mr Evans, the boy, his mum, the neighbours) and role play a conversation/interview between them. Share some examples of these and explore what information they provide for the reporter and the story.
- Explain to the children that they are the journalists and you are the editor. Depending on children's experience in writing newspaper articles, you might need to engage the children in activities to explore examples of news reports: identifying structural and language features by text marking and investigation. Map the structure of simple news reports and identify component parts: the orientation, ordering chronologically, re-orientation including change of tense, use of eye-witness accounts, sensational language, analysis and opinions. You may wish to explore different styles of newspaper reports.
- Through modelled and shared writing, write newspaper reports. Model how to use eye-witness accounts and interviews, and language features of the text type. You may choose to do this over a series of sessions, giving children time to work independently on sections of their news report following shared writing and returning to writing regularly to edit and make changes. You might link this to the children's study of grammar, for example, the use of commas to clarify meaning or indicate parenthesis; use of passive verb forms; relative clauses; etc.
- Once children have had a chance to edit and proof their work, they can be published - potentially using a word processing package that will allow them to easily attain the 'look' of a newspaper article.

### Sessions 18-20: Narrative

- Display and discuss Nicola Davies' dedication in this book:

***"For all children who have to find home in a new place."***

Who might this dedication encompass?

- In what way does Nicola Davies encapsulate this dedication within the story of *King of the Sky*? Consider Nicola Davies' technique as providing an almost documentarian view of a situation or moment in time that aims to evoke sympathy for, say, refugees by focusing on the one bird out of the mass or the one child out of the mass.
- Discuss any other stories about children who are forced to be away from their homes. Children may be able to suggest books from their own reading, or from any additional reading or book displays that have been provided in class linked to this text. *Are there any patterns or*

*commonalities between them? Why have the characters become displaced? What challenges do they face?*

- Plan and write a story inspired by Nicola Davies' dedication – *who is your story about and why do they miss their home? Where are they from? Where are they now? Why are they not at home? Is it set now or in the past? what or who helps them to feel more at home? is there a problem to be overcome? How is their situation resolved, or isn't it?*
- When children have had the opportunity to consider the outlines of their story, allow them sufficient time to write it. Some children will be more comfortable planning out their story in detail prior to writing, others will prefer to 'discover' the character's journey during the writing process. Similarly, some writers will need support in structuring their story, a line on which they can hang their own ideas, whereas others will be stifled in trying to fit their ideas into too rigid a frame. Discuss different options with the class and alter support offered as required
- During the writing process, children will benefit from the opportunity to respond as a reader to their own work. *What impact are they hoping to have on the reader? How are they hoping to create that effect?* Adults and other children in the class will all be effective response partners by explaining the impact that the writing has on them and asking questions to clarify story points or character details.
- When children have had the opportunity to edit, revise and redraft their work, they could produce a published version, either typed or handwritten. Each completed story could be bound and added to the collection of linked texts in the class or placed in the school library where it can be read by other pupils. PDFs of the books could be shared more extensively to the wider school community or even with Nicola Davies herself.