Cosmic by Frank Cottrell Boyce

This humorous adventure is seen through the eyes of twelve year old Liam Digby a ‘gifted and talented’ child whose physical appearance ages him beyond his years. Follow Liam and his friend, Florida Kirby on this humorous, action packed adventure exploring the ups and downs of being a parent and the consequences of a ‘little white lie’.

Overall learning aims of this teaching sequence.
- To enjoy exciting stories with memorable characters
- To consider how particular situations make individuals behave as they do
- To explore dilemmas, empathising with characters
- To build an imaginative picture of a fantasy world, based on real life experiences

This teaching sequence is designed for a Year 5 or Year 6 class.

Overview of this teaching sequence.
This teaching sequence is approximately 3 weeks long if spread out over 15 sessions.
The book supports teachers to teach about emotional response to strong themes in narrative fiction. The narrative structure is carefully crafted to be thought-provoking and the characters and settings are well drawn, offering young readers a good model for their own persuasive writing, debate and to structure written arguments.

National Curriculum 2014

Reading: (Word reading / Comprehension)
Read aloud whole books to expose children to books and authors they may not choose;
Identify and discuss themes in reading;
Prepare and perform play scripts and poetry;
Show understanding through intonation, tone, volume and action so that meaning is clear to an audience;
Discuss and evaluate how authors use language;
Draw inferences about characters’ feelings, thoughts, emotions and actions;
Discuss opinions related to the themes in the text and present these as an argument.

Writing: (Transcription / Composition)
Plan writing by discussing writing similar to that which they are planning to write, learning from its structure, vocabulary and grammar.
Draft and write by composing and rehearsing sentences orally;
In narrative create characters and plot;
Draft and write arguments based on themes explored in a text.

Speaking and Listening:
Participate actively in discussion and debate;
Use spoken language to develop understanding through imagining and exploring ideas in role play drama and dance;
Select and use appropriate registers for effective communication.

Cross Curricular Links

Design and Technology:
- In Design and Technology, pupils can investigate the development of mobile phone technology to design their own smartphones such as the Draxphone Liam uses in space. Prototypes can be made of these using wood frames, paper and plastic sheeting for screens so that pupils can explore size, shape and usability. Children could then write their own user guides and might also think of apps that could be useful to their user and write descriptions for these.

Geography:
- Using the geographical content of the book, children can explore map locations, latitude, longitude, climate of the different settings in the book, exploring their human and physical geography, for example, comparing Liam’s home town of Waterloo, Liverpool with the Gobi desert. Pupils could research the locations, write descriptions of these places, use software such as Audacity to record weather reports or write a travel guide for one of the locations in the story.

Science:
- This text perfectly complements the NC Year 5 PoS on Earth and Space. Concepts in the text will help put into contexts the knowledge embodied in this topic. After further study, children can write reports on aspects of space using a range of technology, draw diagrams and write explanations about processes in Space.

History:
- To explore a historical aspect or theme in history to extend knowledge beyond 1066, pupils can explore technological advances including the charting of the space race and subsequent space missions, including British astronauts. This will extend pupils’ knowledge of themes explored in the texts, e.g. Laika the dog, Apollo 11, Apollo 13 and Challenger. After further research and reading, children could construct timelines, write a non-chronological report on an aspect of the topic, record a radio report of a scene in history, write profiles or biographies of important historical figures.
Teaching Approaches
Reading aloud and rereading
Writing in role
Visualising
Shared writing

Writing Outcomes
Note writing in role as a character
Composing an email from one character to another
Written argument
Visitor leaflet for a theme park
Writing a message to a character in the story
List Poetry
Newspaper Report

Teaching Sessions

Session 1: Tell Me – Discussion and note making
Learning Objective:
- Children will be able to participate in discussion about a text that is read to them;
- Children will learn to draw inferences, justifying these with evidence.

- Talk with children about the cover of the book and the newspaper cutting before the first chapter, encouraging them to share their predictions and ideas. Read the first two chapters. Allow children to respond to this powerful opening holding a ‘Tell me’ discussion; sharing anything they liked or disliked, anything that puzzled them or reminded them of something. Children’s comments could be scribed by the teacher or TA or noted by the children on post it notes. These comments can be kept in a whole class ‘Cosmic journal and referred to later in the sequence.
- What do we know so far? Ask children to work with a partner and brainstorm what they have found out, making notes in their journals. Share some of their comments and record them in the class journal.

Before the next session read chapter 3: ‘my favourite gravity’.

Session 2: Role on the wall – Exploring a character
Learning Objectives:
- Children will be able to draw inferences, such as inferring characters feelings, thoughts and motives from their actions, justifying these with evidence from the text;
- Children will be able to select appropriate vocabulary to describe a character, understanding how choices can enhance meaning.

- Revisit the last line from chapter 3: ‘my favourite gravity’; ‘I suppose that means I’m not a kid any more.’ And explore what this means. Read chapter 4: ‘I nearly shaved myself to death’, asking class to listen out for further clues about Liam’s character. Children discuss what they have learned or inferred about Liam so far, including what they have learned about his relationships with his dad and his peers, which will be important for later in the story.
- Begin role on the wall. Using a large outline of Liam (draw around a child on a long roll of paper), note down outside the shape what we know about him from the text, and inside of the shape, his feelings.
- Children write their own character profile of Liam.

Before the next session, read chapter 5: ‘my visible friend’.

Session 3: Acting / Writing in Role – Exploring relationships
Learning Objectives:
- Children will be able to adopt and sustain roles, responding appropriately to others in role;
- Children will be able to respond thoughtfully to drama performances.

- Discuss what the children think about Liam’s father’s view of Liam. Read chapter 6: ‘my planet panda pop’ and further explore this issue: Parents are likely to be concerned about their children, what do they think Liam’s dad is concerned about? Make notes or have post-its for children to reflect on to stick in class journal.
- Now Liam’s dad has spent time with him and found out more about his interests, role play him going back to the kitchen to speak to mum about his concerns. How will they tell Liam? On notepaper write a note in acting pairs from Liam’s parents to slip under Liam’s door to tell him what they are worried about and giving him their advice.

Before the next session, read chapter 7: ‘I am on hold’; focus on revisiting puzzles and connections; children may see the link with Roald Dahl’s Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, for example.

Session 4: Writing in Role – Exploring relationships, getting inside a character.
Learning Objectives:
- Children will be able to draw inferences, such as inferring characters feelings, thoughts and motives from their actions, justifying these with evidence from the text;
Children will be able to portray the perspective of a character in writing.
- Read chapter 8: ‘fathers have children’ and the first two paragraphs of chapter 9: ‘you’ll like it when you get there’. What do we already know about the character of Florida? What do we think we know? Complete the ‘Double Bubble’ sheet to compare and contrast the characters of Liam and Florida. What are their unique qualities or characteristics and which do they share?
- Think about how Liam can draw on the commonalities they share to persuade Florida to go along with his plan. As he cannot speak to her, compose an email in role as Liam to Florida to talk her into speaking to him again and to ‘coax her’ into agreeing to his idea.

Before the next session, read chapter 9: ‘you’ll like it when you get there’ and 10 ‘hello, lucky winners’.

Session 5: Charting information – exploring character’s feelings
- Children will be able to summarise ideas from a piece of text; identifying key details that support their main ideas;
- Children will be able to note and develop additional ideas, drawing on reading when necessary;
  - Read chapter 11: ‘competitive dadliness’.
  - What clues are given to their characters from what they have read? Text mark or note down key phrases that tell us about each character. What would the four ‘dads’ think of each other after their first meeting on the Drax flight?
  - Complete the grid to show what each of the characters thinks about the other characters:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Liam</th>
<th>Samson One</th>
<th>Monsieur Martinet</th>
<th>Eddie Xanadu</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liam</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sampson One</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monsieur Martinet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eddie Xanadu</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the end of the session, share and collate responses.

Read chapter 12: ‘in chinayouidiot’ and 13: ‘thrill ride of the century’ before the next session

Session 6: Visualisation and Drawing – Exploring Setting
Learning Objective:
- Children will be able to discuss and evaluate how authors use language, including figurative language, considering impact on the reader;
- Children are able to use art to visualise a setting after reading.
  - Using a large world map, find the Gobi Desert with the children. Then pick out words and phrases that describe the landscape in the book, such as:
    - ‘The building’s shadow stretched out into the desert, long and straight like a road made of ink.’
    - ‘It looked like a big, red cliff lit by banks and banks of spotlights.’
    - ‘A hundred-foot hill of slippery sand. You could see the wind stripping streamers of sand from the top of it’
  - Show video or images of the Gobi desert (see links). What would the Possibility Building look like in the landscape, either in the day or at night? Ask children to visualise the scene and draw a picture perhaps using pastels to create different effects. Music played may inspire children’s imagination, for example Strauss’ Also Sprach Zarathustra.

Links:
Blue Peak Travel Photography page on the Gobi Desert:
http://www.bluepeak.net/mongolia/gobi.html
Travel Mongolia Gobi Desert video:
Sessions 7 and 8: Information Writing – Exploring Setting

Learning Objective:
- Children will be able to recognise how an author has carefully chosen vocabulary that effectively describes a setting in order to persuade visitors;
- Children will be able to use appropriate vocabulary and structures to write a persuasive text.
  - Discuss, referring back to previous reading, what we already know about Infinity Park. Look at the map of the Epcot Center in Florida, what can you see and do there? How is this presented to visitors?  
  - Make own maps, detailing the attractions of Infinity Park.
  - Set the children up to think about how the theme park that Dr Drax wants to create would be marketed to visitors.
  - Watch the video in the link below to look at an example of how a technology based theme park is marketed: https://disneyworld.disney.go.com/parks/epcot/
  - Talk about how the filmmakers have made it a persuasive advert; you may comment on the visuals, choice of language, variety of things on offer and how this is presented. Either make playscripts for own video about Infinity Park or make a visitor leaflet about the park. You could use Moviemaker to set this to pictures to make own versions of the videos.

Read aloud to Chapter 20: ‘Last Chance to vote’ before the next session.

Session 9: Argument: Exploring characters in more detail

- Children will be able to consider how authors have developed characters in a text;
- Children will be able to use appropriate vocabulary and structures to present an argument.
  - Read aloud to Chapter 20: ‘Last Chance to vote’, “As long as the other two votes didn’t go to Eddie.”
  - Think about and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each of the ‘fathers’. Which ‘father’ would you vote to accompany you into space and why? Write a persuasive argument in favour of your chosen ‘father’.
  - Read to the end of the chapter – Do the children think the vote was fair and the right man won?

Read aloud to Chapter 23 ‘You don’t get extra lives in space’ before the next session.

Session 10: Conscience Alley – Exploring Issues and Dilemmas

- Children will be able to provide reasoned justifications for their opinions;
- Children will be able to use appropriate vocabulary and structures to write an email or text message.
  - Read aloud Chapter 23 ‘You don’t get extra lives in space’.
  - Think about whether, faced with the dilemma Liam is in he should go to space or confess.
  - Share responses in ‘conscience alley’ with children offering their advice to Liam as he walks towards the rocket. It is effective to have a picture of the rocket on the IWB to create atmosphere.
  - Write a text or email to send to Liam’s Draxphone to offer your advice on his situation and what he should do.

Read aloud to Chapter 29 ‘themoonyouidiot’ before the next session.

Session 11: Poetry - Exploring emotion

- Children can discuss and evaluate how authors use language, including figurative language, considering the impact on the reader;
- Children will use appropriate structure devices to structure a poem and guide the reader.
  - Read aloud to half way through Chapter 29 ‘themoonyouidiot’, “...and very, very scary”.
  - Reflect back on the passage:
    Then it stopped.
Then it shouted.
Then it stopped again.
The Earth vanished.
And then came back.
Then vanished.
And then came back.
And then we stopped rolling.
And Earth was gone.
No-one said a word.

- Look at how this is set out, more like a poem than prose.
- Get the children, in groups, to think of key events from just before take-off to this disaster and then emotions that can be connected to these events. This is effective if done on paper strips or post its.
- Match up the emotions with the events and then organise them to create a list poem chronicling the emotions of the journey from start to disaster.
- Perform as a group to the class, thinking how to convey the emotions in your poem. You could then create an anthology of the group poems.

Read aloud to most of the way through chapter 30: ‘an unscheduled diversion’, “but that would have been too weird.” before the next session.

Session 12: Playscripts – Acting in role
- Children will be learn to adopt and sustain roles, responding appropriately to others in role;
- Children will be able to use the form of a playscript to write an additional scene for the narrative.
  - Think back to what the children might have been thinking, feeling or doing while Liam was off on his spacewalk, searching for Hasan.
  - In groups of 3, role-play Florida, Samson Two and Max, exploring the events that occurred whilst Liam was away.
  - Write up as a playscript or in speech bubbles around a photograph of the role play in action.

Session 13-15: Writing – Drawing the book to a close
- Children will be able to summarise the main ideas from a text, identifying key details that support the main ideas;
- Children will be able to use features of layout, presentation and organisation effectively in written and on-screen media to structure a newspaper report.
  - Read aloud to the end of the book. Look at the reporting of Shenjian’s mission on the TV and radio. Imagine you are a reporter covering the story for the national press. Explore how this might be reported by a tabloid, compared with a broadsheet newspaper. Spend the next sessions taking notes for the article, think of the 5 w’s of journalism:
    - Who is it about?
    - What happened?
    - When did it take place?
    - Where did it take place?
    - Why did it happen?
  - Compare what we actually know with what people may speculate and think about how this would be used or presented in the context of your chosen newspaper.
  - Use hot-seating to conduct press conferences with Dr Drax and Shenjian and possibly Alan Bean to allow the children opportunities to collect quotes for their article. Ensure the children:
    - Think of an effective headline
    - Construct an effective orientation to draw the reader in
    - Expand on the story in the main body of the text
- Choose effective quotes from primary sources
- Draw the story together at the end
- Select and caption effective photographs/diagrams etc. to illustrate the story

- Use a desktop publishing program for children to present their front page reports.