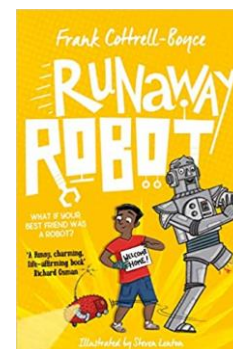


Take 5: Ideas for Independent/Home Learning

Runaway Robot by Frank Cottrell-Boyce (Macmillan)

1. Explore it

Read the extract from the book below, thinking about what is happening and the characters you meet.



Phones are going. There are announcements every couple of minutes. Lost Property, on the other hand, is seriously quiet. The only sound was of Happy to Help's heels on the ground. Tut tut tut, they went, as though they were disgusted at the whole idea of walking.

I followed her down a corridor of shelves – long shelves, stretching long in to the distance and high over our heads. Shelves crowded with plastic boxes labelled with words like 'Umbrellas', 'Phones' and 'Teeth'. Sometimes through a gap, I could see that there were other shelves. Shelves beyond shelves. Shelves stretching to the left and right – like lanes in an infinite bowling alley.

Everything here had been forgotten. Pushchairs, wheelchairs, luggage and laptops. Metre upon metre of lost dolls and teddy bears. Their brown eyes seemed to follow me as I passed, like they were saying, Come and stay with us in the land of forgotten toys. Forever.

'Stick close to me', said Happy to Help over her shoulder. 'The lights are activated by my presence. It can get very dark in the shelves when I'm not here. People have been known to get lost in Lost Property. I have an app that takes me to the selected item. See?'

There was a coffin on one of the shelves that we passed. I hoped that it was empty. Two aisles over, something that looked like a helmet from a suit of armour was lying on its side. She just breezed past it. I swear the head shifted on the shelf, watching us go by. OK, that could have been the light moving.

Her phone said, 'You selected item is on the left.'

Happy to Help stopped and looked.

What is happening? Where is this taking place? What do you picture in your mind as you read? How does it make you feel? Does it remind you of anything you know from stories or real life? Can you summarise what is happening in two or three sentences? Which parts interest you most or stick in your mind?

Who do you think the narrator is? What makes you think this? What do you know or think you know about them from this extract? What have they lost? Why might they be looking for this particular item?

Who or what do you think **Happy to Help** is? Why do you think the narrator refers to them as this? What do we know about the place where they are based? What role do you think the **WORLD'S MOST POLITE ROBOT** might play in the story moving forward?

'One hand,' said the phone.

'Happy to have helped.'

She motioned to me to pick up the hand and tutted quickly towards the exit.

There was a hand on the shelf all right but it wasn't my hand. It was huge. Three times the size of a human hand. It had long pointy fingers made of jointed steel. And when I picked it up, it was so heavy I could hardly lift it, let alone carry it. So I had to rest it on my shoulder like a soldier carrying a rifle and follow her back the way we came. I had to rush to catch up with her, or I would have been locked in there forever, lost as that long-lost coffin.

We passed the helmet thing again. It was looking at me. Again. Only this time it wasn't a trick of the light. Its eyes flickered blue. I tried to hurry past it. Happy to Help was way ahead now. The light followed her. I could see the cone of light ahead but everything around me was darkness –

Then out of the darkness, something grabbed me.

I didn't want to look but I had to.

A metal arm! But this one was attached to a metal arm. And the metal arm was attached to the shoulder of a massive body. The massive metal body was lying flat on the shelf. At one end of the body was the helmet with the flickering blue eyes. Armadillo-style plated steel fingers curled around my flesh. The hand moved my hand up and down.

I was nearly rigid with fear then something flashed across my brain. 'Are you,' I said, 'shaking hands with me?'

I AM THE WORLD'S MOST POLITE ROBOT.

2. Illustrate it

Re-read the extract. You might want to record it read aloud so you can revisit and pause it in your own time. You can also hear Frank Cottrell-Boyce reading much of this extract on BookTrust's YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/c/booktrust/search?query=runaway%20robot> What does this place feel like to be in? What do you picture in your mind as you read? What is special or interesting about this particular Lost Property office? Can you illustrate a particular moment in this scene? Draw anything that you think captures the place, action or mood in this extract. Think about what the characters look like and how to show their feelings. Think about the size and scale of objects in the setting and how these could enhance the feeling of being there. Add any words and phrases that have helped you make your picture, which might come from the passage or from your own imagination.

3. Talk about it

- Read the passage, ***I could see that there were other shelves. Shelves beyond shelves. Shelves stretching to the left and right.*** Why do you think the author has chosen to repeat the word shelves? What impression does it give us of the Lost Property office? Can you pick out any other words or phrases in this or the next paragraph that illustrate the sense of scale?
- How do we know that the character was affected by the sight of ***lost dolls and teddy bears*** in the Lost Property office? How does it make you feel? What comes to mind when you think of these lost toys?
- Consider the line, ***I'm used to that voice now but the first time I heard it, it was a bit of a shock.*** What does this tell us about where this extract sits in the storyline? What does the character know that we don't as he tells us this story?

4. Imagine it

Throughout the extract, the author talks about the lost property, some in boxes crowded on the shelves, others in more detail. Think about these objects– umbrellas, phones, teeth, dolls and teddies, a coffin and the huge robot. How does it make you feel that they have ended up in the Lost Property office; sad, amused, intrigued? Can you imagine who they belong to and how they got there? How do you think their owners feel? Have you ever lost something invaluable or sentimental? The extract begins by describing the noise in the wider setting before entering the Lost Property office. What kind of place is this? How does this help you to imagine the story behind each of these lost objects? What other stories does this place hold?

5. Create it

The character in this story is looking for an item in a lost property office. Have you ever lost something? How does it or might it feel to lose something important to you?

Think about something you own that you'd really want to find if it got lost. How would you describe it to people so that it could be easily found? Try and paint a really clear picture of the item in your mind – if it helps put the item in front of you, or draw a picture of it. Focus in on every detail. How will you convey these details to someone else? You might start with a really general description to tune the person in, then elaborate with finer details.

Draw and write an accurate description, checking you are using precise language to make sure that it couldn't possibly be mixed up with something else. Read your description to someone who knows you well. Can they guess what the item is from your description?