

Guided reading

SECTION

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Jack and the Beanstalk

Ask the children to describe the terrifying events that occur during the story. (Jack is beaten with a vacuum cleaner handle for half an hour; Jack meets a terrible giant; his mum is eaten by the giant.) Can they explain how Dahl makes us laugh rather than gasp in horror at these incidents? (The exaggerated nature of the events; the casual language and slang used to describe what happens; the inappropriate response to these events by the characters involved.)

How does Dahl show us what Jack thinks when his mother is eaten? (The use of comic language such as *by Christopher* and *by gum*.) What are the only words Jack says about his dead mum? (*I had a hunch that she was smelly*.) Discuss why Jack doesn't care about his mum.

Encourage the children to explain why the lesson being taught by this story makes us laugh. (Taking a daily bath in case a giant smells and eats you is an absurd idea.) Explore the reasons why it actually *is* a good idea to keep clean.

Snow-White and the Seven Dwarfs

Draw the children's attention to the section of the rhyme from *Now every day, week in week out to And you can bet your life she did*. Ask the children to report on examples of the modern language, the very relaxed vocabulary and the conversational style. (There are many examples, including *spoiled and stupid; you are the cat's pyjamas; silly Queen; yelled; I'll cook her flaming goose* and so on.) Ask: *What effect does this language have on us?* (We gasp in amazement; we gasp in horror; it makes us laugh.) Ask: *Why does it affect us in this way?* (We know what to expect of the language and style of fairy stories and it is the surprise of the modern slang that is amusing.)

Now point out the way in which the characters speak and the language they use. (For example, *scrag that child; slit her ribs apart; beat it, kid*.) Ask: *What sort of characters in films and books*

speak in this way? (Gangsters.)

Ask: *What is the moral of this tale?* (Gambling is acceptable, so long as you win.) Do the children agree with this? Is this another of Dahl's jokes?

Goldilocks and the Three Bears

Ask the children to identify the line in which the narrator says whose side he is on in the tale: *About a brazen little crook*. Can they see what narrator's tricks are used to pull us onto his side? (The narrator builds sympathy for the bears by describing in great detail what excellent creatures they are.) Draw the children's attention to the rhetorical questions (these do not have an answer but are used to persuade us): *How would you feel if...?* Can the children recognise how we are called upon to use our imagination? (*Now just imagine how you'd feel...*)

Challenge the children to identify some of the words used to describe Goldilocks (*toad, louse*). Explain that these are metaphors (figures of speech that say a person doesn't only look or behave like something else but actually *is* something else).

Focus on the scene in the bed and the build-up of the unpleasant description of Goldilocks' shoes. Can they identify the final horror? (Dog poo!) Ask the children to explain what effect this line has on us. (It makes us shudder and laugh out loud at the same time.)

Little Red Riding Hood

Encourage the children to explain why the opening scene is funny rather than horrific. (The conversational, matter-of-fact statements that describe the dramatic situation have an amusing effect; there is no terrifying imagery; she is eaten in *one big bite*.)

Draw the children's attention to the lines from *He quickly put on Grandma's clothes to Then sat himself in Grandma's chair*. Ask: *What effect does this detailed preparation have on the reader?* (It builds dramatic tension in anticipation of Little Red Riding Hood's visit.)

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