

The Wreck of the Zanzibar

SECTION

1

About the book

The Wreck of the Zanzibar is a story told in the first person by two narrators. This structure gives the story impact, immediacy and fictional authenticity. Michael is the first narrator. He is an adult, returning to his childhood holiday haunt of Bryher to attend his Great-aunt Laura's funeral. Back in her tiny cottage, the memories come flooding back. All her relatives gather together to celebrate her life. Michael is given Laura's diary, which reveals the events of one year, 1907, in the life of her family. It tells of their struggle for survival in an unforgiving climate. Her twin brother Billy runs away to sea, leaving a desolate void in their lives. When a terrible storm wrecks the family's livelihood, Laura's father is about to take them away from Bryher forever. However, just when it seems things could not get any worse, their fortunes change. A shipwreck brings hope for the future and, for Laura, an opportunity to realise a burning ambition.

The diary style makes the account accessible to the reader and very personal. Laura, through her description of family and events, unfolds a story of tragedy and eventual triumph but also reveals her own hopes, dreams and aspirations. Laura's indomitable spirit shines through every page.

The Wreck of the Zanzibar can be used to explore aspects of narrative structure (Year 6 Term 2 T1). It also provides an opportunity to look at stories based on historical events, such

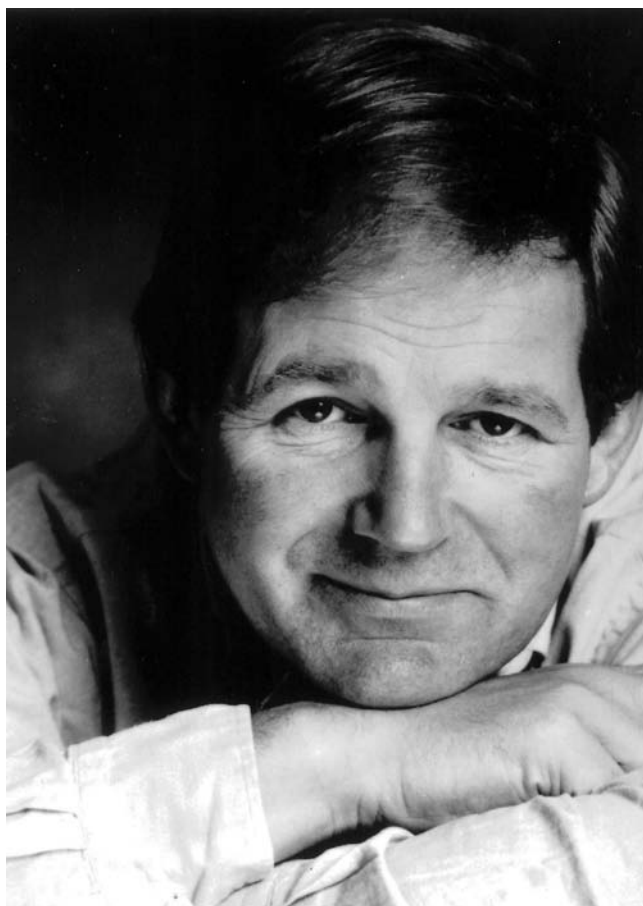
as that of Grace Darling, and also other diaries, such as *The Diary of Anne Frank* (factual) and *The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole aged 13¾* (fictional).

About the author

Michael Morpurgo is one of the most successful children's authors in the country. He has written

over 100 children's books, some of which have been adapted for film (*Why the Whales Came*) and stage (*Kensuke's Kingdom*). He discovered the magic of story-telling as a teacher. The children he taught were bored by the book he was reading to them, so he told them the kind of stories he told his own children. Although he is no longer a teacher, he is still involved in working with children. In 1976, he and his wife Clare started 'Farms for City Children'. This charity provides an opportunity for children from inner cities to experience life on a farm for one week.

Michael Morpurgo maintains that the idea for a book can come from anywhere. His best advice to budding writers is to be open-minded. In his own words: 'I keep my eyes and ears open, my heart fresh.'



Facts and figures

Michael Morpurgo was the Children's Laureate from 2003 to 2005.

The Wreck of the Zanzibar won the Whitbread Children's Novel Award in 1995 and has sold over 150,000 copies.

PAGE

3