

Shared reading

SECTION

3

Extract 1

- Focus on the sentence that begins 'If he...' Ask the children what sort of ideas that suggests? Work out how high 70 metres is and the sort of jump involved.
- Read part of the story preceding this and check that children are clear about the nature of the scenario and the danger involved. Is Alex really having a 'stupid idea'?
- Draw a line under the words 'Do it'. Ask the children what the difference is between the paragraph before these words, and the paragraph after them. A lot of time is spent weighing up the action. What effect does this have on us as?
- Ask the children to find the argument *against* jumping, and then the argument *for* jumping. What is the factor that makes Alex decide to go ahead with the jump? (The danger is in his mind, because he is afraid of the drop.) Can the children explain Alex's move from 'thinking' to 'not thinking'?
- Alex jumps and we switch to a camera. How does the delay in knowing what happened to Alex influence the reader? Point out that switching scenes can induce suspense – a tactic children may try later when they are writing their own secret agent stories.

Extract 2

- Read the first line and ask the children what sort of insight this gives us into the character of Herod Sayle? Children may eat fish and chips but what about the words he uses – why are they disturbing?
- Read through to Alex's dredged-up facts and ask the children to pick apart the gaffe Alex has made here. Why does this work as a joke? How does it contribute to the initial relationship the agent and the villain are building up?
- Underline and re-read the two different points of view regarding the jellyfish. How do they contrast?
- Here we have a secret agent being shown a deadly jellyfish by the villain. At this point, can the children guess what will happen somewhere later in the story? Why is it inevitable they'll end up in the same tank?
- Alex makes his near deadly mistake. What would the children have done if they were in that situation? How can Alex get out of this? And why did he make the mistake in the first place?

Extract 3

- What sort of dangers is Alex facing if he swims through a freezing, underground tunnel? Read through the first paragraph and list the ways this could go wrong.
- Throughout the book readers need to be reminded that this is not fun. Why might this be necessary? Do the children think there are times when Alex's life might come across as good fun? When and why might this be?
- At what point does Alex change and become resolved to swim the tunnel? What changes him?
- How does the description of the wet suit contribute to the feelings in this section? We've moved from excitement to fear and misery. How does the passage build up that feeling?
- Compare this passage with the first shared read. Is there a difference in the speed and attitude with which Alex embraces danger in one and not in the other? Why might this be?

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