

“Do you have a name?” he asked.

“Not yet,” she admitted.

“Better make sure that you really want one before you think any more about it. This life isn't for everyone.”

Skulduggery Pleasant

At a glance

Names are powerful in *Skulduggery Pleasant*. In fact, they are a matter of life and death. Explore the meanings and dramatic effects of names in the book, with the help of reference tools. Invite children to devise their own *Skulduggery*-style names, and explain why they've chosen them. Then play the *Skulduggery* name game.

Curriculum fit

The activities in *Investigating Names* can be used to meet the NC requirements in KS2 English to develop an understanding and appreciation of literary texts, including modern fiction by significant children's authors.

And in particular it can help children to:

- * recognise the choice, use and effect of figurative language, vocabulary and the effects of language
- * identify how character is created, and how plot, narrative structure and themes are developed
- * evaluate ideas and themes that broaden perspectives and extend thinking
- * respond imaginatively, drawing on the whole text.

Skulduggery Pleasant

Teacher's Resources

Investigating Names

Learning points

Through these activities, children will:

- * explore the use and significance of names in *Skulduggery Pleasant*
- * extend and enrich vocabulary and enjoy playing with words and their meanings
- * develop dictionary and research skills
- * demonstrate understanding of Landy's themes by creating a new name, and explaining its meaning
- * develop oral literacy through discussing and explaining choices.

Reading recap

In chapter 5, when Stephanie meets China Sorrows for the first time, Skulduggery cautions her,

“No matter how much you might want to, do not tell her your name.”

Skulduggery goes on to explain, “There are three names for everyone. The name you're born with, the name you are given and the name you take. Your taken name seals your given name and protects it.”

Re-read this section with the class to establish that everyone understands the differences between each of the names that Skulduggery describes.

You could also consider how this section links with the wider themes of the book, as seen in the game that Tanith plays with the troll in chapter 9, and in the centrality of the *Book of Names* to the plot.

Discussion points

- * What do the taken names that Derek Landy creates for each of the characters actually mean?
- * How do they affect the way we see them?

Skulduggery Pleasant

Teacher's Resources

Investigating Names

Ask children to work in pairs to explore the following characters' names - you could give each group a set of four names to analyse, and then ask them to share their findings with the class:

China Sorrows	Valkyrie Cain	Ghastly Bespoke
Skulduggery Pleasant	Tanith Low	Nefarian Serpine
Eachan Meritorious	Sagacious Tome	Morwenna Crow
Mr Bliss	Mr Fedgewick	Fergus Edgeley

Use a dictionary, a book of names and the Internet to look up original meanings of each word. If a word is not exactly in the dictionary, but is a variation of one like it, think about what Derek Landy is achieving by adapting it. E.g. Serpine isn't a word, but it is like a mixture of serpent and serpentine, so what qualities does it suggest? If a name, like Valkyrie, is taken from ancient mythology, look at where it comes from, and what it means.

If you have made a Skulduggery character display, add your notes about names to each character.

1. Your Skulduggery name

Reading recap

Chapter 16: Stephanie becomes Valkyrie

Earlier in the book Skulduggery tells Stephanie, "The name you take should fit you, define you and already be known to you." He also suggests that she avoids names like Razor, Phoenix and Jet that might suit a young person but not sound so good when they're older.

When Stephanie looks at the book *Three Names in China*'s library she reads that, "The name you take should fit you, define you, and already be known to you."

Look again at how Stephanie chooses her name, and how it liberates her to take action.

Discussion points

- * Do you think Stephanie's new name suits her?
- * Why/why not?
- * Do you think she has followed Skulduggery's advice?
- * Has she followed the advice in the book?

Skulduggery Pleasant

Teacher's Resources

Investigating Names

Ask children to:

- * Choose their own Skulduggery name. Use books of mythology, books of names, the Internet and your dictionary and thesaurus to find and check the meanings of suitable words.
- * Brainstorm as a group the kind of words that they could consider for this activity. e.g. names from myths and stories, powerful adjectives or names that are adaptations of other words.
- * Write an explanation of why they have chosen it, how it fits them, and the effect they want the name to have on other people.

2. Play the name game

Ask children to:

- * Each print their Skulduggery name on a piece of paper and fold it up and put it into a bag.
- * As groups or a whole class take turns to pick out the name, discuss what it means, decide what kind of character the name is for, then try to guess who created it.
- * Get the class to vote on their favourite boy's name and girl's name.