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Extract 3

- This extract is from Chapter 11 and relates the final effort, led by the Birdman, to prevent the pod of whales beaching themselves. Read the extract together and ask the children what the Birdman is desperate to do and why. (He wants to stop the whales from becoming beached, because he thinks it is the only way to lift the curse of Samson and prevent Bryher being cursed too.)
- Circle any words that may be unfamiliar to the children ('ashen', 'flailing', 'frenzy'). Can they suggest the meaning, identify the part of speech (noun, adjective, verb and so on) and offer replacements? Underline the phrase 'in a pack' and ask the children if they know the correct collective term for whales (a pod).
- Examine the language features that the author uses to convey a sense of urgency. Highlight the repetition of words and phrases and ask: *Why do you think the Birdman repeats the word 'fire' four times?* (He is registering what is driving the whales away, thinking aloud, and wants to convey this as fast and as powerfully as he can.) Focus on the sentence that begins with multiple nouns ('Flaming torches, oil lamps...') considering how the word order contributes to a sense of chaos and panic.
- Ask: *Why must the children now stay on the beach?* (It is now dark and the sea is rough.) How long do the children estimate this episode has lasted? Encourage them to cite evidence. (It is light when it begins and then night falls; the Birdman is exhausted from strenuous efforts, and so on.)
- Highlight poetic description that makes the scene more vivid, pointing out features such as assonance ('whales' flailing tails') and imagery ('the sea whipped up into a frenzy').

Extract 4

- This non-fiction extract is written in the style of a brochure aimed at visitors to the Isles of Scilly, explaining how they can reach Samson and other islands by sea kayak.
- Read the extract together and ask the children who they think the text is aimed at. (active or sporty visitors to the Isles of Scilly)
- Ask them to explain why the sea kayak would be the best way of exploring the islands. (It is small and easily manoeuvred and so can access shallow waters where bigger boats can't go.)
- Circle any unfamiliar vocabulary ('azure', 'isthmus', 'malnutrition', 'eviction', 'cairns') and ask the children if they can explain them and suggest alternative words or phrases to replace them.
- Challenge the children to find examples of similes ('shimmers like azure silk', 'gaping like missing teeth') and metaphor/imagery ('forests of seaweed', 'cottages that huddle', 'graves that stud the sacred hills', squawks that 'burst the air', graves 'cloaked with massive capstones'). Discuss how these help us to visualise the scene.
- Can the children find an idiom? ('off the beaten track') Ask them to explain its meaning and suggest another way of saying it (to more remote, or less visited, places).
- Focus on all the facts about the landscape or scenery. Challenge the children to cite evidence from the novel that echoes these facts, such as: the ruined cottages the children find; the names Woodcock and Webber; the bracken, rabbits, terns and gulls; the broken clay pipe and the mound of limpet shells. Ask: *What other features of the island do we learn about from this text?* (We are told about prehistoric cairns and burial chambers, wild flowers, cowrie shells and the deer park.)

7. Storyboard

Objective

To identify main ideas drawn from more than one paragraph and summarise these.

What you need

Copies of *Why the Whales Came*.

Cross-curricular link

Art & design

What to do

- Read Chapter 11 from 'Suddenly Mother was beside me...' to the end of the chapter. Ask the children to discuss the events described in this extract, summarising how the whales are saved and what happens to the Birdman.
- Tell the children that they are going to imagine that they are planning this extract for a film. Explain that filmmakers often make storyboards before filming – a sequence of pictures showing how the action develops.
- Arrange the children in pairs and let them re-read the passage. Encourage them to decide which scenes they are going to illustrate for their storyboard. Tell them to list six scenes and to write brief notes on what each scene should portray.
- Once they have done this, bring the class back together and write some of their suggestions on the board. Discuss some detail from each scene, for example, the Birdman and others wading into the sea in the dark toward the whales, waving torches.
- Let the children, in their pairs, draw the storyboards they have briefed.

Differentiation

Support: Model the first scene or two on the board before they begin.

Extension: Pairs could choose and storyboard another episode from the novel, or they could write a script to go with their storyboard.

8. Happy endings

Objective

To identify themes and conventions.

What you need

Copies of *Why the Whales Came*, photocopiable page 31 'Scilly tales'.

What to do

- Discuss superstition implicit in the main plot: that the islanders on Samson did a wrong by slaughtering the whales, and were punished with hunger and shipwreck. Encourage children to consider superstitions in the context of the time and setting: the novel is set in the early 1900s and the islanders live in a small, remote community where superstition might flourish.
- Challenge the children to explain how the ending of the story reinforces superstitious belief. (As the Birdman foretells, once the wrong is put right, everything comes good again.)
- Suggest that the happy ending is reminiscent of a folk or fairy tale. Can the children identify any other folk or fairytale features? (For example, the cyclical tale of the whales returning; the misunderstood 'monster' – the Birdman – who is really kind and gentle.)
- Hand out the photocopiable page 31 'Scilly tales' and ask the children to work in pairs to complete it.
- Bring the class back together to discuss ways that the novel differs from a fairy tale (for example, real-life setting, historical context, believable characters, first-person narrator). Ask: *Which other genre might it fit into? (an adventure story)*

Differentiation

Support: Work through the photocopiable sheet as a class before pairs begin to complete it themselves, checking that children understand the key aspects of plot.

Extension: Let pairs identify which aspects make the novel an adventure story, using the photocopiable sheet to frame their ideas.

Scilly tales

- Explain how the following fairytale elements feature in the novel.

1. A 'kind' monster



2. A wrong punished



3. A kindness rewarded



4. A circular or cyclical tale



5. A happy ending

