

Lesson 4: Themes, Ideas and Symbols

Teacher's Prompt Page

Objectives for the unit:

Word 14 – define and deploy words with precision, including their exact implication in context

S & L 17 – extend their spoken repertoire by experimenting with language in different roles and dramatic contexts

Reading 8 – infer and deduce meanings using evidence in the text, identifying where and how meanings are conveyed

Reading 15 – trace the way a writer structures a text to prepare the reader for the ending, and comment on the effectiveness of the ending

Objectives for the unit (cont):

Writing 5 – structure a story

Writing 7 – use a range of narrative devices

Writing 9 – make links between their reading of fiction, plays and poetry and the choices they make as writers

Learning objectives for the lesson:

- To study the way symbols are used in the novel.
- To develop empathy for the key character.

	Introductory activity/ integrated starter/ objectives explained	Development (incl. Guided seminars)	Plenary	Homework (if applicable)
Lesson outline	Plot, character, setting. The class are reminded of the meanings of these words. On small whiteboards or paper, each pupil writes down an important event from the three chapters read for homework, then something about a character, then an aspect of setting. Each is held up for the teacher to see, and individuals are asked to explain some of their choices.	The class are now asked to prepare the pages for their scrapbook entitled 'Themes, Ideas and Symbols'. Plain paper is used and the title added. The class are divided into mixed ability groups of three or four, gathered around a small table. Each group is given a different idea to trace through the book so far, and are asked for their ideas before being given some that could also be used: Birds and wings, bones and skeletons, evolution and change, pain and suffering, wonder and horror . . . see RS 10 (p.18). Plenary to summarise ideas. Read Ch.14–18 using volunteers to read the characters' voices.	Each pupil is asked to reflect quietly on the chapters just read. Michael's world has become a frightening place in so many ways, but who does he have to help him? Finally the lesson ends with a volunteer acting as Michael on a chair in the centre. Volunteers speak to him, trying to help him.	The class are asked to add to their 'Michael's World' pages by completing and adding RS 11 (p.19) to RS 2 (p.7).
Resource pages		RS 10 (p.18)		RS 11 (p.19) RS 2 (p.7)
Teaching and learning advice		Encourage everyone to find the recurring ideas. This helps pupils to develop new ideas of their own and to focus on key sections if they find the search through these chapters hard.	It is important to establish the atmosphere here – by rereading key extracts, perhaps, or asking pupils to close their eyes and think about this point in Michael's journey. It is also important that the pupil representing Michael does not speak.	

Chapters 14–18 summaries:

Ch.14: Michael upset. Doesn't go to school. Helps Dad in the garden. They go to the hospital. **Ch.15:** Talks to Mina, who is reading. Talk about owls. **Ch.16:** Goes to Skellig at dawn, talks about the baby, Mina and the owls. **Ch.17:** With Mina: William Blake, listening for birds, evolution. **Ch.18:** Hospital. Mina visits arthritis ward.

Themes, Ideas and Symbols

Look for the subject you have been asked to research, or add your idea to the ones below. Now search through the chapters you have read for any references to these ideas, or anything that you feel relates to your theme.

1. Each member of your group could search through a different chapter or section.
2. Use your scrapbook pages, too. Has anyone got anything written down that relates to your theme?
3. Copy down key quotations.
4. Sketch visual ideas as described in the text.
5. Discuss why you think these ideas are important in the novel. What do they add to your understanding of Michael and his world, and your own world?
6. Can you find any links between the various characters and the events in the novel?
7. Write down your ideas. You should be able to create some really interesting pages for your scrapbook.

Birds and Wings

Bones and Skeletons

Evolution and Change

Wonder and Horror

Pain and Suffering

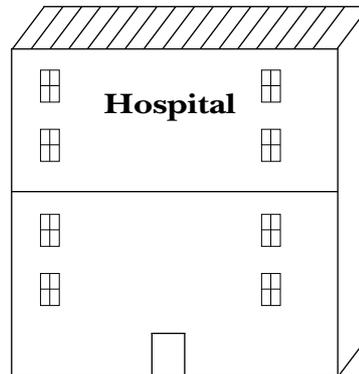
Other ideas

Michael's World: Hospital, Garage and Old House

Hospital

Who are the important characters here?

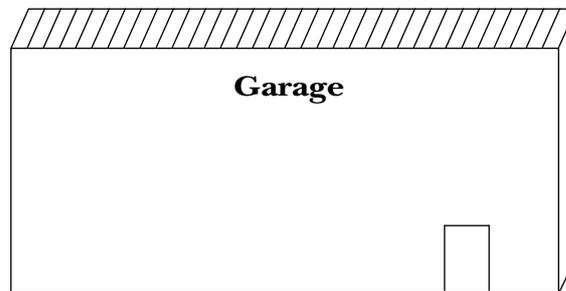
Look at the way this place is described on page 45 and then pages 62 and 63. How does it seem to you?



Does the description of the place and the people within it link with any other aspects of the book?

Garage

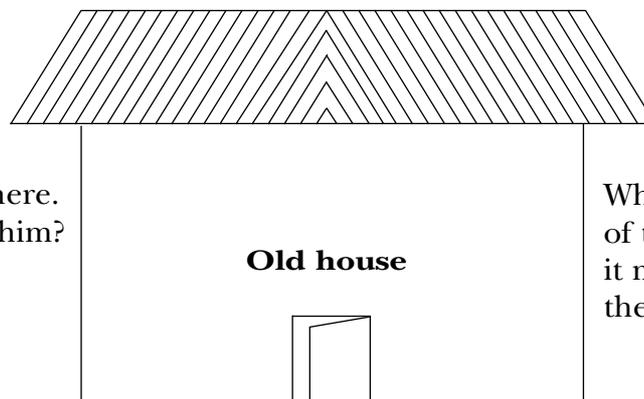
Look again at the description in Chapter 1. Write your own words here to sum up what it is like.



Now you know what is inside the garage, why do you think this is an important place in Michael's world?

Old house

Mina takes Michael here. What does she show him?



What are your impressions of this place? Why do think it might be important in the novel?

- For each of these places you could add to your scrapbook. Draw details from the description given in the novel.
- You could do a sketch, or add colour, or build up a picture by creating a collage with bits of paper, material, other pictures, etc.
- These extra pages could be added to the appropriate part of your scrapbook.

Lesson 5: Making Sense of the Surreal

Teacher's Prompt Page				
<p>Objectives for the unit: <i>Word 14</i> – define and deploy words with precision, including their exact implication in context <i>S & L 17</i> – extend their spoken repertoire by experimenting with language in different roles and dramatic contexts <i>Reading 8</i> – infer and deduce meanings using evidence in the text, identifying where and how meanings are conveyed <i>Reading 15</i> – trace the way a writer structures a text to prepare the reader for the ending, and comment on the effectiveness of the ending</p>		<p>Objectives for the unit (cont): <i>Writing 5</i> – structure a story <i>Writing 7</i> – use a range of narrative devices <i>Writing 9</i> – make links between their reading of fiction, plays and poetry and the choices they make as writers</p> <p>Learning objectives for the lesson:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To understand how language can be used to create the voice of a character. To practise active reading. To understand and convey ideas through discussion and active listening. 		
	Introductory activity/ integrated starter/ objectives explained	Development (incl. Guided seminars)	Plenary	Homework (if applicable)
Lesson outline	Who says this? A quick 'quiz' to remind the class of the speech of characters and the different voices. The teacher reads the quotes from RS 12 (p.21), asking the class who said it. Pupils come up and tick under the name on the board.	Teacher reminds the class of the points in the story when Michael spoke to the being in the garage. Some of RS 13 (p.22) is read aloud. The independent groups are set up and given their instructions. The 'rules' are explained again and outcomes made clear, so the teacher can work closely only with one group for 20 minutes. The groups will be studying these snippets of conversation and looking at the way the voices are created and feelings expressed. Teacher conducts Guided seminar with one middle ability group. After this session, Ch.19–22 are read aloud, using voices and asking pupils to stand or sit in appropriate places to represent the action in the novel.	A plenary will be held after the group work, to feed back the ideas in a formal way. Each group reports on their findings by putting a quotation on the board and writing around it.	The class are asked to add to their scrapbook pages, basing their comments and drawings on the chapters just read and using RS 16 (p.26).
Resource pages	RS 12 (p.21)	RS 13 (p.22) Conversations in the Garage; RS 14 (p.24) Guided seminar (middle ability group); RS 15 (p.25) Independent group work (for all groups)		RS 16 (p.26)
Teaching and learning advice	Put the names of the characters on the board, or prepare a page for the interactive whiteboard using RS 12 (p.21). This page could be used for further discussion or for an extension activity, asking pupils to comment on the significance of each quotation, and to point out any links with other events to ideas in the novel.	The Guided session needs to be carefully timed, as there are several chapters to read this lesson if possible. If time is short, ask the groups to complete just one of the sets of annotations on RS 13 (p.22). Allow each group plenty of space in the room, as there will be much discussion and reading aloud!	Encourage groups to present the conversations in varied ways, as suggested on RS 15 (p.25).	Go over RS 16 (p.26) to check understanding and to encourage them to experiment here. It is their interpretations of the phrases that matter.
<p>Chapters 19–22 summaries: Ch.19: Visits Mina's house, meets her mother, sees their clay birds. Ch.20: Takes Mina to see Skellig. She suggests taking him 'somewhere'. Ch.21: They plan to move him. Ch.22: Dreaming. Wakes, hears Mina and they go out and take Skellig to the old house.</p>				

Who Said It?

Be quiet.
Be very, very quiet.
Listen.

See? She's going to get better for us.
Aren't you, my little chick?

Nothing. Nothing, nothing,
and nothing.

You can't just sit there! You can't just sit like
you're waiting to die!

Pig? I'm not a pig.
I'm a gorilla.

Bring the street.
Bring the whole
damn town.

She will be fine. You'll
see. Babies so often bring worry with them into
the world, but you'll be wrestling with her before
you know where you are.

Will you think about her in hospital? Will you
think about her getting better?

They're where your
wings were, and where they'll
grow again.

I'm famished. Worked like a
bloomin' slave for you lot today.

Conversations in the Garage

1.

'git' – strong language	'That old git? Coughing his guts and spewing everywhere?'	'Coughing his guts', etc. – unpleasant words and detail, slang expression
'Nothing' and 'No' – short and abrupt answers from Michael	'Sorry,' I whispered. 'What do you want?' he said. 'Nothing.' 'You got an aspirin?'	'You got an aspirin?' – question with words missed out, conversational style
'Thanks very much' – sarcasm	'No.' 'Thanks very much.'	
'Nothing. Go away'. – interrupts Michael, sounds rude and bitter	'What will you do?' I said. 'They'll clear the place out. It'll all collapse. What'll . . .' 'Nothing. Go away.'	'What will you do', etc. – Michael worrying about him, panic in his voice

2.

'There's a doctor comes to see my sister,' I said. 'I could bring him here to see you.'

'No doctors. Nobody.'

'Who are you?'

'Nobody.'

'What can I do?'

'Nothing.'

'My baby sister's very ill.'

'Babies!'

'Is there anything you can do for her?'

'Babies! Spittle, muck, spew and tears.'

I sighed. It was hopeless.

'My name's Michael. I'm going now. Is there anything else I can bring you?'

'Nothing. 27 and 53.' . . .

'Who are you?' I said.

The blackbird sang and sang.

'I wouldn't tell anybody,' I said.

He lifted his hand and looked at it in the torchlight.

'I'm nearly nobody,' he said. 'Most of me is Arthur.'

He laughed but he didn't smile.

'Arthur Itis,' he squeaked. 'He's the one that's ruining me bones. Turns you to stone then crumbles you away.'

I touched his swollen knuckles.

'What's on your back?' I said.

'A jacket, then a bit of me, then lots and lots of Arthur.'

I tried to slip my hand beneath his shoulder again.

'No good,' he squeaked. 'Nothing there's no good no more.'

continued ...

3.

‘There’s someone I’d like to bring to see you,’ I said when he’d settled.

‘Someone to tell you I’m really here?’

‘She’s nice.’

‘No.’

‘She’s clever.’

‘Nobody.’

‘She’ll know how to help you.’

‘Ha!’

He laughed but he didn’t smile.

I didn’t know why, but I started to tremble again.

He clicked his tongue and his breath rattled and sighed.

‘I don’t know what to do,’ I said. ‘The garage is going to bloody collapse. You’re ill with bloody arthritis. You don’t eat properly. I wake up and think of you and there’s other things I need to think about. The baby’s ill and we hope she won’t die but she might. She really might.’

He tapped his fingers on the garage floor, ran his fingers through the furry balls that lay there.

‘She’s nice,’ I told him. ‘She’ll tell nobody else. She’s clever. She’ll know how to help you.’

He shook his head.

‘Damn kids,’ he said.

‘She’s called Mina,’ I said.

‘Bring the street,’ he said. ‘Bring the whole damn town.’

Checklist

Look out for:

- words omitted
- slang expressions
- short or long sentences
- questions
- unusual answers
- repetition
- changes to grammar
- the feelings expressed

Guided Seminar: Middle

Teaching sequence		Pupil activities	Further suggestions
Objectives Word 14 – define and deploy words with precision, including their exact implication in context		Rationale: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This guided seminar provides a structured opportunity to support the group in their analysis of speech, and in their reading methods. 	
1 Reiterate learning outcomes, and check understanding of task, using RS 13.	Pupils ask questions after reading RS 13 and RS 15.		
2 Introduce sections of text, and ask for two pupils to read the voices in the first one. Read through the annotations and discuss.	Pupils read aloud or listen, making comments on the reading, but also remembering to support each other and not be overly critical or hurtful.	There is an opportunity here to emphasise the methods by which speech is set out in novels, and the importance of punctuation to aid understanding.	
3 Strategy check – active reading, searching, inferring, responding.			
4 Using RS 15, teacher models an example of how to read one of the voices and how to start to analyse the language in the second extract. Teacher asks pupils to try this themselves, working from the same section of text and experimenting with different ways to read aloud. Teacher encourages discussion about the sounds of the voices and the feelings being expressed or hidden.	Pupils ask questions if necessary, and contribute ideas. Pupils work independently, and then together, to share their findings and check accuracy. They experiment with different readings.	Other methods might include: reading only certain words, in a random order, or reading the text backwards. Encourage them to study the individual words and the sounds of them, not the text as a whole.	
5 Teacher asks the group to prepare to share their work with the class.	Pupils rehearse this.		
6 Teacher sets targets for the next session.			

Independent Group Work

Remind yourselves of the rules you agreed last time you worked in these groups.

We agree to:	> Check we all understand the task before we start, so we don't have to disturb the teacher's group. > >
Each of us will:	> > >

Your task

Your mission, in these special group sessions, is to continue on your reading journey together as a group, helping each other by sharing the reading and discussing ideas. You will all need to follow the instructions below, and work as a team to present your findings to the class.

Instructions

- Look at the extracts on RS 13.
- Decide who is to read Michael's speech and who will read what the other character says.
- Read the first extract aloud, then the annotations. Check that everyone understands.
- Now read the other extracts aloud, at least twice. Advise one another on how they should be read.
- Practise and rehearse, experimenting with different people reading the voices.
- Experiment by reading only Michael's words all the way down, then only those of the other character.
- Now complete the annotations for the two extracts. Use the checklist to help you identify the way language is used, and the feelings suggested by the words and sounds.
- Get ready to present your findings to the rest of the class. Select part of one of the conversations and present it as a reading, with other members of the group adding comments about the language used.
- Add this page to your scrapbook.

Extraordinary Being

From the chapters you have just read (Chapters 20–22), select quotations that you feel fit into the boxes below. The categories may seem strange, and can be interpreted in different ways. Have a go! Some have been done for you.

Fears and worries

Two friends together

'She squeezed my hand.'

A mind turned to stone

'Take her away'

A sense of wonder

Mysteries and magic

'What are you?'

Beginning to understand

'Extraordinary, extraordinary being'

Comfort and hope

Lesson 6: Real Magic

Teacher's Prompt Page				
<p>Objectives for the unit: <i>Word 14</i> – define and deploy words with precision, including their exact implication in context <i>S & L 17</i> – extend their spoken repertoire by experimenting with language in different roles and dramatic contexts <i>Reading 8</i> – infer and deduce meanings using evidence in the text, identifying where and how meanings are conveyed <i>Reading 15</i> – trace the way a writer structures a text to prepare the reader for the ending, and comment on the effectiveness of the ending</p>		<p>Objectives for the unit (cont): <i>Writing 5</i> – structure a story <i>Writing 7</i> – use a range of narrative devices <i>Writing 9</i> – make links between their reading of fiction, plays and poetry and the choices they make as writers</p> <p>Learning objectives for the lesson:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To explore the idea of magic realism in this novel. • To understand how this has been used in other texts. • To plan ideas for writing their own fiction. 		
	Introductory activity/ integrated starter/ objectives explained	Development (incl. Guided seminars)	Plenary	Homework (if applicable)
Lesson outline	A quiet atmosphere needs to be established to aid reflective thought. Teacher asks for 1 minute's silence, when the class close their eyes and count their breaths or simply listen to as many faraway sounds as possible. They are then asked to find the 'Themes, Ideas and Symbols' page in their scrapbook and, using only one page of a chapter they have read recently, to add to this page.	Teacher reads Ch. 23–27, pausing after each chapter to ask pupils to reflect quietly before expressing their views about what is happening and how they feel about it. Focus the discussion on the categories used earlier in RS 16 (p.26). The phrase 'magic realism' is explained and RS 17 (p.28) used to explore the idea. RS 18 (p.29) is then used to help the pupils start to think of ideas for their own stories. They look at this in pairs, and help each other to formulate ideas.	Teacher selects six pupils to share their initial ideas, and decides on the order they will speak in. Each pupil then shares the first story ideas without interruption from the teacher.	Teacher asks the pupils to continue to complete the 'Three Journeys' pages in their scrapbooks for each of the three characters: Michael, Skellig and the baby.
Resource pages		RS 16 (p.26) again; RS 17 (p.28); RS 18 (p.29).		
Teaching and learning advice	Give each table or row a different page to study: pp.68, 73, 74, 76, 80 and 81 are particularly powerful.	Copy this page again, put the categories on the board or project the page onto an interactive whiteboard. Again, each table or row could be asked to comment on one category and how these aspects are being explored in the chapter just read. Use the Resource Sheets to explore the themes and structures further, relating these to other examples of fiction or media.		Probing questions need to be asked: Where are they now on their actual and spiritual 'journeys'?
<p>Chapters 23–27 summaries: Ch.23: Mrs Dando calls with homework. He shows Mina. Ch.24: They go to the old house, move Skellig further up, and they see his wings. Ch.25: Seeing the baby in hospital, Dad upset in the car. Ch.26: Mina shows him archaeopteryx. Leakey and Coot see them together. Ch.27: Michael tries to play football with his mates, and he talks to them. The Garage is near to disintegrating.</p>				

Magic Realism

In this story, the magic and the real are cleverly combined in Michael's world.

He exists in the 'real' world: he goes to school, he visits the hospital, he makes a new friend. But he also has very strange experiences that are hard to explain: he meets and talks to a curious being whose existence and nature is never fully explained. It seems as if he cannot be explained by ordinary scientific means, yet Michael and Mina accept him fully into their lives.

This mixture of the magical (the unexplained, the supernatural) and the real is sometimes called 'magic realism'.

Use the framework below to help you to explore this idea.

Which parts of the novel seem to you to belong to each column?

You might find that some aspects don't fit neatly into *either* column! You could put those in the middle.

The real	The magical
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The sounds in the house when Michael wakes up – page 25 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The physical appearance of Skellig
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playing football with his friends – page 95 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •

Can you think of any other novels or films where this idea is used?

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Your Own Stories

As you read the rest of *Skellig*, you will also be preparing the first parts of a story of your own. This will be based on similar ideas, themes or structures.

Use this sheet to help you gather many different ideas for a story of your own. You will need to add more ideas in each column.

Try to gather as many as possible, rather than choosing just one straight away. Use RS 17 (Magic Realism) as well to help you.

Skellig has:	My story could have:
A central character – Michael	
A magical creature or being, both horrifying and wonderful	
A modern-day setting	
A sudden change for the main character	

Other ideas I might use

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____