

SHORT DISCUSSION, DRAMA AND WRITING WORKSHOP ACTIVITIES USED DURING THE READING OF 'NIDAE'S PROMISE'.

When listening to the story, and responding, these activities all took place 'in the round'. The reading of this story was part of a unit of work lasting three weeks, where many literacy lessons focused upon different features of successful stories, and culminated in the children writing their own short story.

ACTIVITY ONE: **Nidae's Character**

Learning intention: To recognise how the author has utilised implicit characterisation techniques when introducing Nidae.

Success Criteria: (Remember to:)

- Think about how Nidae behaves and speaks.
- Think about how the author describes Nidae's appearance.
- Think about what clues are provided to help us to understand what Nidae is like.

After reading Chapter One – (and indeed throughout the novel!)

Ask the children to think really carefully for a minute or two about what they have heard and learned about Nidae, and what this tells the reader about his personality.

Ask the children to stand and walk slowly to a different seat in the circle. En route, they must tell at least two people what they think Nidae's personality is like.

Once seated, choose children to comment on what someone has said to them, and give evidence from the text.

e.g. He is respected among the group of swallows (*evidence: the others all listen intently to him during the meeting, and are willing to help*)

He is courageous (*evidence: He his prepared to accept a challenge that could risk his life, in order to fulfil his promise to Jamie*)

He is strong and handsome (*evidence: He 'dives' and 'flashes upwards' with expertise, he has an 'erect figure' that appears to have 'broad shoulders' and 'glows with health'*)

There are countless examples in the first chapter alone that implicitly present his character – plenty to build a really clear picture of the story's protagonist.

ACTIVITY TWO:

Settings from Different Viewpoints – Instant Writing

Learning Intention: To imagine and create settings from unusual perspectives.

Success Criteria: (Remember to:)

- Put yourself in the position of a bird, flying in the sky and looking down.
- Use powerful descriptive vocabulary to paint a picture of what you see.

At any point during Nidae's flight

THINK. PAIR. SHARE. Ask the children to jot down on whiteboards all the different types of landscape that Nidae and the other swallows fly over on their long migration to Africa.

As a group choose one type of landscape and brainstorm what the birds might see below them and in the distance – encourage the contributors to expand on their initial thoughts by adding adjectives, similes, metaphors, personification etc..

e.g. Landscape: RURAL COUNTRYSIDE OF FRANCE

Rolling fields of endless green, yellow, beige and brown like a giant quilt intricately stitched.

Ask the children to choose one landscape to describe in detail. Work independently for ten minutes.

Volunteers choose their favourite few sentences to share with the group, who comment on what impressed them, based upon the success criteria.

ACTIVITY THREE:

Freeze-framing Moments to Show Emotion & Reaction

Learning Aim: To empathise with characters and understand their thoughts, feelings and reactions.

Success Criteria: (Remember to:)

- Put yourself in the place of a character and imagine their thoughts and feelings.
- Use your facial expression and posture to clearly demonstrate your emotions.

At any point during the story where a character experiences an emotional response.

e.g. **When Hirin first hears of Nidae's promise to Jamie.**
When Ekenae's father first sees Nidae.
When Nidae leaves Ekenae & Karenno to return home.

Depending upon the number of characters involved in the scenario (usually two or three), group the children and ask them to create a freeze frame of the moment.

Other children comment on the visual representation of emotion.

Children could be given a choice of 'moments' and others in the group suggest which is being represented.

ACTIVITY FOUR:

Exploring Characters' Inner Thoughts and Feelings

Learning Intention: To empathise with characters and understand their motives, thoughts and feelings.

Success Criteria: (Remember to:)

- Put yourself in the position of that character at that moment and imagine what thoughts are running through their mind – about themselves and others around them.

At any point in the story – there are many, many opportunities to use this activity in order to highlight the dilemmas faced by characters, and their reactions to them.

e.g. **When Nidae leaves his family (Explore Hirin and Nidae's relationship)**

As Nidae struggles to keep flying

When Ekanae and Nidae say goodbye to Ekanae's mother and set off for the Island of Smoke.

When Ekanae leaves Kareno, after spending such happy times with her.

Etc etc...

Ask the children to think silently, putting themselves in the position of the chosen character, thinking about what has gone before, what is happening now, and what might happen to them in the future. How do they feel, what are they thinking and why?

In turn, the children stand and move across the circle towards another seat, talking as they do so about the thoughts and feelings within them. When they arrive, the child in that seat does the same, trying to add to what has been said.

(If the group is quite large, all children might not take part – or it might work best if two or three characters' feelings are involved in the scenario, so that the character can be switched when all thoughts and feelings are exhausted).

ACTIVITY FIVE:

Understanding & Exploring a Distant and Different Place

Learning Aim: To find evidence from the text that Ekenae lives a very different life to our own in a very different land. To empathise with her character and situation.

Success Criteria: (Remember to:)

- Find specific information that shows the differences between Ekenae's life, habitat and society to those of our own.

After Reading Chapter Six

Ask the children to discuss in pairs how they think Ekenae's life is different to their own, trying really hard to give specific evidence from what they have heard/read.

Pairs volunteer to share one piece of evidence, and another child is asked to explain and expand upon the evidence.

e.g. *She wears 'a shapeless tunic made from coarsely woven goat-hair material.*

She collects shells and shell fish.

Her friends think the swallow with a forked tail is 'evil'.

Ekenae and others refer to 'He Who Lives on the Island of Smoke....'

She uses a wooden bowl.

There are countless examples throughout the chapter.

Ask the children to choose one aspect of Ekenae's life that they would like, and one aspect that they wouldn't. Share and discuss reasoning.

ACTIVITY SIX:

Sketching a Setting based on Evidence in the Text.

Learning Aim: To visualise a setting using descriptions in a text.

Success Criteria: (Remember to:)

- Imagine you are in the boat sailing towards the Island of Smoke and draw what you can see.
- Use the descriptions from the story and add your own details.

After reading Chapter Seven

Re-read the paragraphs that describe the appearance of the Island of Smoke, asking the children to listen really carefully.

Individuals have ten minutes to sketch what they see as they sail towards the island.

Place sketches on the chairs and ask children to move slowly around the circle looking at what others in the group have 'seen'.

ACTIVITY SEVEN:

Describing a Setting Using Long Shot, Medium Shot and Close Up – as if through a camera lens.

Learning Aim: To write a detailed description of a chosen scene, zooming in from a distant view and focusing on a chosen object or character.

Success Criteria: (Remember to:)

- Imagine that you are looking through the lens of a camera and gradually zooming in.
- Use powerful descriptive language.

At any point in the story – works best when action takes place on the Island of Smoke

Brainstorm the different types of settings present on the Island of Smoke (beach, dense forest, rocky mountain, Kareno's home etc...)

Choose one setting, and ask the children to offer suggestions as to how it looks from a distance, how it looks closer up and what could be focused upon. Encourage contributors to extend their descriptions to include adjectives, similes, metaphors etc..

e.g. FOREST

The thick, dark canopy of trees sway restlessly in the breeze, allowing occasional beams of bright sunlight to pierce through like dancing lasers.....

The trunks stand tall and firm like a battalion of soldiers guarding the treasures of the forest, threatening all who enter.....

A delicate yellow and orange tinged flower, covered in droplets of water that sparkle like crystals, sits alone, nodding it's head and waiting for the evening sun.....

Ask the children to choose one setting to describe in detail, using the camera lens technique. Ten to fifteen minutes writing before sharing and commenting upon each other's ideas, based upon the success criteria.

Choose a couple of passages from the text that also use this technique – there are many!

ACTIVITY EIGHT

Describing Multi-Sensory Settings

Learning Aim: To use all the senses to describe a setting.

Success Criteria: (Remember to:)

- Imagine what you can hear, taste, smell, feel/touch as well as see as you walk through your chosen setting.
- Use powerful descriptive language.

Extension of previous activity - again can be used at any point, but works well during action on the Island of Smoke.

Either use a range of settings, as before, or select a setting (perhaps the forest once the volcano has erupted, or inside the network of caves) – Once they've heard the multi-sensory descriptions contained within the text, the children should have lots of ideas.

Ask the children to imagine themselves in a particular setting, and think for a few minutes about what they can hear, smell, taste and feel/touch.

In pairs, the children take it in turn to describe the setting to their partner (preferably with partner's eyes closed) – they may, if space allows, lead their partner through the setting, giving description as they go....

e.g. CAVE DURING VOLCANIC ERUPTION

There's a faint rumbling above us...can you hear it? It sounds like an army approaching, marching and beating their drums.

It's not as chilly now is it? Can you feel the warm air wrapping around your arms and legs like a blanket?

What's that? Can you smell it? It reminds me of my coal fire on a winter's night – a sweet, smoky smell.....

Ask the children to share one of their partner's descriptions – and to comment on how successful it was in appealing to and using the senses.

ACTIVITY NINE:

Comparing and Contrasting Characters

Learning Aim: To recognise similarities and differences between characters and to explore their relationships.

Success Criteria: (Remember to:)

- Think about how the characters behave in different situations.
- Think about how they react and interact with each other.
- Use specific evidence from the story.

Works very well after reading about Ekenae and Nidae's successful quest – requires children to think through events from their meeting to their parting.

Divide the children into two groups – one to focus on Ekenae and one to focus on Nidae.

Ask each group to brainstorm all the words that they can to describe their character's personality.

Feedback alternately, asking children to give an example of a point in the story when this was evident – as the ideas are shared, do the children notice any similarities between the two characters? Are there any notable differences?

Put the children in pairs, one member from each group, and ask them to discuss Nidae and Ekenae's relationship.

Volunteers feedback their ideas, supporting them with specific evidence from the story.

Can the children suggest why Ekenae and Nidae's friendship is so crucial to the story as a whole?

ACTIVITY TEN:

Predicting Beyond the Text

Learning Aim: To predict what might happen next and explaining using evidence and reasoning based upon the text.

Success Criteria: (Remember to:)

- Think carefully about what has happened so far, and any clues that might give an indication of what will happen.
- Use your imagination.

At any time in the story – it is full of cliff-hangers that lend themselves to this type of activity – works very well as Ekanae and Nidae part company in Chapter Fourteen.

As well as considering the thoughts of the characters as they part company, ask the children to think what might happen to each of them over the next day, week, month and year – Nidae? Eke-nae? Kareno?

Begin with THE NEXT DAY – Children take it in turn to stand in the centre of the circle and predict one thing that will happen to a chosen character. The child remains there and another joins him or her and adds to what they have said, or offers a totally different idea – continue until all ideas exhausted.

Continue activity in same way, using different characters and different time scales.

ACTIVITY ELEVEN:

Summing up 'Nidae's Promise'

Learning Aim: To recognise the key themes and aspects of the story that make it so successful, and write a brief comment about the text.

Success Criteria:

- Think about what other readers might like to know about the novel, and what might convince them that it is worth reading.

Read a selection of blurbs and comments from reading books in the classroom.

Ask the children for KEY WORDS that sum up the major themes and threads that run throughout the story. Scribe these onto large pieces of paper.

e.g. JOURNEYS, FRIENDSHIP, TRUST, LOYALTY, COURAGE, DETERMINATION, etc.

Ask the children for KEY WORDS that describe the style and genre of 'Nidae's Promise'. Scribe these onto large pieces of paper.

e.g. ADVENTURE, MYSTERY, QUEST, DESCRIPTIVE, etc.

Individuals have ten to write a sentence or two for the cover of 'Nidae's Promise'.