

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone by J.K Rowling, illustrated by Jim Kay: A Sequence of activities for Key Stage 2

Before beginning this sequence:

It would be incredibly useful to have a visualiser or some kind of camera projection device to be able to share the images from the text with the pupils on a large scale, to allow for close reading of the images. This text deals with the bereavement of close family members, so you will need to read the text before sharing with your class in case this brings up significant memories with children that they may not be ready to reflect on through a text such as this.

Session 1:

Without revealing the cover or the title of the book to the children, show the illustration of the castle on page 91 and ask the children to share their initial responses, asking them to express how it makes them feel. As Harry Potter is now such a well-known text, both through the book and the film series it is important that children aren't over-reliant on any pre-conceived ideas they have at this point. Would they like to be in or near this place? Why? Why not? Ask the children to consider whether they think we have been placed within the scene or as onlookers. How has the illustrator created this emotive response and sense of atmosphere in his choice of composition, painting technique and colour palette? A helpful guide to close reading of images can be found at:

<https://www.clpe.org.uk/powerofpictures/teaching-approaches/choosing-and-using-picture-books>

What clues does this scene provide of the story that might be told? Give the pupils time to discuss the narrative they think is being played out. What type of story is this? They may draw on clues in the images to predict that it is a fantasy story, an adventure. They may begin to draw on their knowledge of stories told to them or in books and films, giving examples that could include Harry Potter, but also tales like Sleeping Beauty, The Hobbit, The Worst Witch etc.

Provide a forum for discussion around reader response by introducing the four basic questions, from Aidan Chambers Tell Me approach from *Tell Me: Children, Reading & Talk with The Reading Environment* (Thimble Press 2011). These questions give children accessible starting points for discussion:

- Tell me ... is there anything you like about this illustration
- Is there anything that you particularly dislike...?
- Is there anything that puzzles you? Do you have any questions
- Are there any patterns...any connections that you notice...? Does it remind you of anything in real life or stories?

Provide time for the children to share, compare and contrast their viewpoints. You may wish to scribe or have the children scribe their responses around copies of the illustration on a working wall or in a Shared Journal as a record of the discussions.

Jim Kay's use of image is, at times cinematic; the pupils may link this to film terminology, e.g. wide shot, close up or mise en scene. This will be useful throughout this sequence as Jim Kay has stayed faithful to the film in many ways, deviating in others and comparisons can be drawn once the book is revealed. An example of this could be watching the film interpretation of Harry and his peers' first sighting of Hogwarts and revisiting the illustrated depiction on page 91, following reading aloud this moment in the book on page 92 *'The narrow path had opened suddenly on to the edge of a great black lake. Perched atop a high mountain on the other side, its windows sparkling in the starry sky,*

was a vast castle with many turrets and towers.'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SafKm0tsSOw> (0:00 – 1:25)

Ask the children to consider what they can observe and what they think is concealed in and around the castle. Share the contrasting depiction of the castle on page 247 and ask the children to explore this and respond. How does this change our perceptions of the story from the previous image?

Session 2:

Now share with the children the two end paper illustrations and explore the two spreads; how do the differing depictions of the same setting engage us emotionally? What do they tell us about the way the story might play out? What do we think is in store for the characters who live in this castle? What leads us to think this? Do we think this has a happy ending or resolution, looking at the final endpaper? What does the turbulent nature of this scene, directionality and perspective suggest compared to the beginning of the story?

Tell the children that the illustrator made models of the castle and its surroundings in order to draw it from a variety of perspectives and viewpoints as well as lighting it in different ways to create mood. The short video at: <https://www.pottermore.com/features/jim-kay-interview-with-pottermore-correspondent-illustrated-edition> gives a wonderful insight into his process.

Allow the children time to explore and be inspired by images of other castles such as photographs of those still standing across the British Isles and Europe, those in stories such as C.S. Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia* and those depicted by J.R.R. Tolkien, Robin Jacques. The papercraft of Su Blackwell (as demonstrated in *The Fairy-Tale Princess* collection) could further stimulate the children's ideas. Provide materials with which the children can collaborate to create their own models of the castle and wider landscape in which they imagine it sits.

Encourage the children to negotiate details such as the way they will depict the trees, given their significance in creating emotional response and clues to plotline. They might like to use materials so that they can be manipulated, allowing the children flexibility to shift the mood through positioning and directionality.

The children could go on to take photographs or draw the castle from a range of perspectives, lighting it in a variety of ways and exploring the way in which colour and light can shift a viewer's perception of a given moment in a story. Provide stimulus for the children's photography, such as the model of Hogwarts at Harry Potter world shown in different lighting as well as still images of castles in films shot from a variety of perspectives and in different lighting.

The children can go on to draw or paint their own versions of this castle and the wider scenery in which they think it stands, drawing on the clues provided in the illustrations that they have seen so far. Ask them to consider the time of day and year they wish to represent the castle and surrounding landscape, given the atmosphere they wish to create. Have the children conduct a gallery walk in which they can comment on each other's artwork and respond to the differing interpretations. Encourage the children to experiment further with the illustrator's watercolour technique themselves to recreate each scene and create mood, movement or intrigue for their viewer.

Session 3:

Explore the illustration on page 202 and invite the children to share their responses. The children will draw connections with the castle they have been exploring. What do they notice about this image? Given that the door is being represented as a mouth, the circular windows being eyes, would the children like to enter it themselves? Do they think it is welcoming them or posing a threat? Why?

Why not? Explore the image further, looking at the shapes of the yellow tones in the eyes. Do they remind the children of anything? Who has eyes like this? Why is there a cat in the doorway? Where is its gaze held? What effect does this have on us as readers? Of what do its eyes remind us? How has Jim Kay used scale, perspective and directionality to help us imagine the castle as a whole and perhaps the story being played out? Ask the children to consider the significance of the creatures in the image; the white owl against the dark wall (again gazing out of the page) and the silhouetted cat against the glowing interior. To whom might they belong?

Ask the children to imagine what or whom they might find in this castle were they to enter it through this vast door. Ask the children to draw on their knowledge of story and history to predict the kinds of characters or creatures they know live in places like this. The children can sketch their ideas in words or drawings around the image of the doorway to the castle. You might show them the spread of Hagrid's house and garden on pages 114-15 to stimulate the children's interest and ideas about possible creatures as well as discussing the way in which this scene contrasts with many of the dramatic depictions of the setting so far explored.

Discuss the children's ideas and reveal some of the creatures in this story, such as the spider on page 134, the moths on page 196, the owl on page 43, the dragon on the spread, pages 190-1, and eventually the Field Guide to the troll on the spread, pages 146-7 (explain to the children that we are going to focus on the people in the story next session). As you show these images, conceal the text that gives overt clues as to this being a Harry Potter story. The children may well have guessed, having seen the film or knowing about the books prior to this, but it is helpful to give the children opportunity to share in the wider literary context of this genre of story; folk stories and fantasy stories such as *The Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Worst Witch* by Jill Murphy, *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C.S. Lewis and T.H. White's saga *The Once and Future King*.

Invite the children to draw, paint or even create models of them with clay as the illustrator does (seen in the short film referenced in Session 2) to enable the children to play with scale and characterisation, adding them to their model setting. You might introduce them to *Arthur Spiderwick's Field Guide to the Fantastical World Around You* (Spiderwick Chronicles 2008) by Tony DiTerlizzi to support them in creating field guides for a chosen creature, eliciting from the children imagined facts about them and considerations around behaviour and temperament.

Once the book is revealed and as the story is being read aloud, return to the significance of animals such as the owls in the story and the impact they have on the reader and on the book as object; the way in which they interact with the reader through direct gaze (for example, in the spread on pages 4-5) or through the viewpoint that they offer us of a key moment in the story (such as the bird's eye view of Platform Nine and Three-quarters on pages 80-81) and the way in which they work with the text to convey meaning (as when the spiders seem to crawl into and out of a page and when the snake slithers across the spread on pages 24-25).

Session 4:

Now reveal the illustration of Harry Potter on page 16, concealing all text. What does the way he has been portrayed in the illustration make us think and feel about him? Have the pupils justify their responses in relation to the artistic techniques used, e.g. facial expression and body language, use of props, use of light and shade, ratio and perspective, scale, framing as seen in the document referenced in the first session. Jim Kay's portraiture throughout the book draws on 16th Century master Holbein's practice of realism whilst embedding symbolism through props and details within costumes, etc.

Compete a role on the wall for Harry, based purely on this image rather than what the children think they know from prior experiences of Harry Potter. Role on the wall is a technique that uses a

displayed outline of the character to record outward appearances or behaviour (outside the outline) and characteristics or feelings (inside the outline) at various stopping points across the story. Using a different colour at each of the stopping points allows you to track changes in the character's emotional journey. You can include known facts such as physical appearance, age, gender, location and occupation, as well as subjective ideas such as likes/dislikes, friends/enemies, attitudes, motivations, secrets and dreams which the children may infer from the characters behaviour or responses to a given situation. There are several more portraits of Harry Potter that the children can revisit and from which they can infer meaning as the story progresses.

After giving the children ample time to explore this image of Harry Potter and record their ideas on the Role on the Wall, reveal the image of him on page 22. What impact does this illustration make on us as readers? How do the different ways he has used scale and perspective draw us into this moment? Reflect back on the Role on the Wall from the previous image. Would you now think differently about this character? Why or why not? What do we think is in store for this character? What leads us to think this? If the children already know the story, you could ask them to discuss why this image is so significant.

Given that the children will now be in no doubt as to the identity of the protagonist and the book series, you could explore these portraits, starting with those of some of the other children such as Dudley on the first few pages and Draco Malfoy on page 67. What do the portraits tell us about their characteristics? Why do they think that Dudley's images are depicted as framed images alongside his parents or opposite a gorilla mirroring his body position or facial expression? What does this tell us about him? How does this make us feel about him? You could then move on to those of significant adults like Hagrid on page 39, Albus Dumbledore on page 84 and Severus Snape on page 110. Ask the children to look at the use of scale and perspective in the formal portraits as well as the less formal illustrations of them alongside other characters or places. You might wish to have the children complete Roles on the Wall for each of these characters, adding to them as the story progresses.

The children could engage in self-portraiture by looking in the mirror or create portraits of others using photographs or through first-hand observation in still-life sessions. They could explore ways in which character can be portrayed through attention to gaze and body position as well as colour choice, lighting, props and perspective.

Session 5:

Without revealing any text, share the header illustration of the lake on page 175 for Chapter Thirteen. Ask the children to share their observations and initial responses, supporting them with some prompts. To where is their attention drawn? How has this been achieved by Jim Kay? Draw their attention to the framing of the scene by the trees in the foreground and ask the children to consider where we are placed as readers in the scene. The illustration frames the hidden chapter title but our ground level viewpoint also sweeps our eye through the trees, across the luminous lake and is taken up by the mountains to the blazing red bird. What kind of landscape is this? How has it been depicted? How does it make them feel? Ask the children to consider the significance of the time of day and year and whether a different time or seasonal depiction of the lake view would affect our emotional response. How does the illustrator want us to feel? Look at the windswept nature of the trees and the direction in which the wind is blowing. How is this significant? What are we being encouraged to do as readers? Talk about the fact that this invitation to turn the page or find out more is at odds with the direction in which the bird is flying. This suggests conflict or a return to the past. Children could offer their predictions, based on clues in this illustration and

drawing on their knowledge and experience of Harry Potter and other stories set in places like this with creatures such as the mythical Phoenix.

Now share the Chapter Nine header illustration on page 118, again concealing all the text, and ask the children to respond. How does this view of the lake compare with the first image? How does it make us feel? Ask the children to reflect on the atmosphere created by the moonlight and the consequent shadows and contrast of light and dark. What might be the significance of these dramatic contrasts and the fairly monochrome palette used by Jim Kay this time? How has this image been framed and how does that influence where our eye is drawn? What is our perspective as readers this time? How does this compare to the ground level viewpoint in the first image? Where are we? How do you know? Ask the children to observe what they notice in this scene, encouraging them to reflect on the way in which the illustrator is using the turrets and then small dots of yellow light to have our gaze zig-zag across the lake, resonant of the path, road or river that winds up to the distance. However, the steady, solid shapes of the moonlit turrets seem to suggest an equal match with the dark mountainous frame and the full moon hanging in the centre, almost like a spotlight in a theatre. Ask the children to consider what is happening at different parts of the scene, including what they can't see.

Ask the children to suggest a title for each of the header illustrations, given the responses they elicited. Write these on tracing paper or acetate and lay them over the image in the spacing provided by Jim Kay. Agree on which work best and discuss how they shape the narrative given they are images to introduce and set the scene for Chapters Nine and Thirteen, well in to the story. Reveal the actual chapter titles with their illustration and elicit the children's responses, comparing them with their initial ideas. Is this what they expected? Why? Why not? What does the contrast suggest about the themes underpinning the Harry Potter saga, for instance light versus dark, good versus evil; overcoming the monster.

Reveal the book and allow the children to share their responses to it as an object, revisiting the end papers already explored. Read 'Chapter One. The Boy Who Lived', asking them to consider how this title relates to the images of Harry Potter, Dudley and Malfoy that they have already seen. Begin to read aloud the story to the children, allowing them time to explore the illustrations as you do so. As you progress through the story, elicit the children's responses to the illustrations using the prompts exemplified in these preparatory sessions. You might wish to draw comparisons with film shots or even clips from the film, drawing on the children's understanding of the impact of lighting, colour, sound, perspective, and symbolism to help them respond as readers and viewers.

This sequence of activities was designed by CLPE for the Greenaway shortlist. To access more free resources from CLPE, visit: www.clpe.org.uk/freeresources

In depth teaching sequences for over 175 other high quality texts can be found at: www.clpe.org.uk/powerofreading

Further resources to support children's understanding of picturebooks for all ages and research on the importance of using picturebooks across the primary years can be found at: <https://www.clpe.org.uk/powerofpictures>