

Puffin Peter
Written and Illustrated by Petr Horáček
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Use the double page spread depicting the puffins, Peter and Paul diving in the ocean as 'a storm blew up'.

Working in pairs, encourage children to explore the picture, discussing their responses and working together to make meaning of what they see. Ask them to jot down words and phrases which reflect their responses to looking.

The aims of this activity are:

- to increase the interaction with and enjoyment of picture books for children of all ages
- to develop children's confidence and vocabulary to respond to what they see – to observe and describe
- to encourage them to build on their previous experience, imagination and understanding to make sense of visual information – to interpret
- to consider a variety of graphic forms and their interaction with a text in order to convey layers of meaning – to appreciate
- to recognise different styles and techniques used and developed by a variety of illustrators – to analyse
- to begin to recognise and appreciate visual metaphor, irony, puns and jokes etc. – to participate
- to use drama and role play techniques to engage more fully with the picture – to comprehend

The following questions have been designed to help children to look more closely at the illustrative work of Petr Horáček, moving from the whole picture to the smallest part and to search for and use all available clues given by the artist to make meaning. Please select and adapt the questions to make them appropriate for your setting.

TELL ME ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATION...

How would you describe the way that these pictures have been presented, for example as a cartoon strip, a series of fragmented images, a freeze frame, a close up etc.?

The illustrator has used pencil lines to divide the frames. In places the colour has overlapped the lines. What is the effect of this, e.g. in suggesting the splashing of the waves?

Consider each frame. What emotions are being expressed – how do they change? How do they make you feel?

What do you notice about the use of colours in the illustration?

What do you notice about the varied use of materials and application of colour? Why has the illustrator chosen to use thick oil pastel over paint, for example?

How has he suggested the onset of the storm?

Look at the loose cross hatching of the clouds in the first two frames and the colour of the sea. How does it contrast with the sky and the sea in the final frame?

Does the use of light and dark affect your response to the picture?

What do you notice about the puffins in the illustration? For example: their facial expression, bodily gestures, emotions, position in the picture etc.

- what do you think their relationship is with one another?
- what are they doing?
- why are they there?
- how does their mood change?
- what do you notice about the scale of the puffins in relation to the water in each frame?

How would you describe the waves? Consider their size, shape and texture.

How do you read this picture – do you go from left to right, from the calm sea to the storm, or do you immediately get sucked into the centre of the wave that is carrying Peter away?

Look at the rain. How is it falling and how does it help you understand the weather conditions?

How do you think the artist has achieved the effect of this rain – how would it feel if you were able to touch it?

Can you hear anything in this series of pictures, if so how do the sounds change?

Where are the sounds coming from and how do these add to the atmosphere?

How do you feel as you look at this picture – does anything concern you?

The illustrator has packed a lot of movement into this picture. Consider how he has done this:

- The excitement and fun as the puffins flap and frolic in the first frame.
- The control and precision of the puffins as they dive in from the surface.
- The splashes and downward pull of the water as they dive deeper.
- The shape of the waves as they snatch control from the puffins.
- The changing direction of the waves as they pull the puffins under and toss Peter away.
- The quality and thickness of the strokes and the texture of the colour.
- The contrasts between light and dark.
- The angle of the rain.
- The movement of the clouds.

Look closely at the quality and texture of the waves – how has this been achieved? What do you notice about the textures created by the artist? What medium do you think the illustrator has chosen to use to create these effects?

What do you notice about the application of colour in each different frame and the texture of the sky in contrast to the sea and waves in the foreground?

Where is the darkest part of the picture – do you think that is significant?

What effects has the artist used white for? Do you think it is always applied in the same way?

How has the illustrator chosen to draw the puffins, to what extent are they a depiction of the real thing?

What do you think are the puffin's responses to their situation?

What do you think is going to happen next?

WRITE IT DOWN

Harvest children's responses and record their descriptions and comments on an IWB or flip chart. Are there any aspects of the picture that they find particularly interesting or puzzling? How do these pictures interact and work with the rest of the book?

PLAYING THE BOOK

Freeze Frame

A 'freeze frame' is a snapshot of a scene where the children are asked to prepare a tableau to show the characters involved and their behaviour.

- Ask the children to work in groups to recreate one of the frames from this double page spread.
- Explain that they do not necessarily have to be puffins but they could work together to create the rain and the waves etc.
- Encourage them to behave and think as that character or object, considering what they have witnessed and experienced before and during the scene they have studied.
- Ask them to think carefully about:
 - who they think they are.
 - why they are there.
 - what their relationship is with the other characters or objects in the picture.
 - how they are feeling

- Ask them to consider:
 - what their positioning in relation to other people or objects will imply about their feelings or relationships.
 - the ways in which their facial expression, body shape and body language will communicate their strength, thoughts and feelings.

The rest of the class observe each other's freeze frame and give critical feedback. The use of 'thought tracking' is an ideal way to bring the freeze frames to life. They can be modelled by the adult and then continued by different children observing.

Thought Tracking

An observer gently taps the shoulder of various characters/objects in the freeze frame and asks them what they are thinking. This can often create an opportunity for spontaneous improvisation, where the children's responses to the thought tracking develop into dialogue and action between others in the freeze frame.

Revisiting and recording the children's work

- Take photos of the children's freeze frames.
- Ask the children to annotate these with thought and speech bubbles to record what was said during the session.
- Ask children to compose a sound track to accompany each freeze frame and discuss the changes in mood and tempo.