

**Slog's Dad**  
**Written by David Almond and Illustrated by Dave McKean**  
**ISBN 9781406322903**

*Use the double page spread depicting Slog cutting up the paper cut-out of his dad.*

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 for responding 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 David McKean, 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 presentation of these illustrations: comic strip, fragments etc.?

How do your eyes travel across this page? Which frame do you notice first?

Why do you think that McKean has put a thick black line around the face of Slog's dad?

What do you notice about the way the head and shoulders are framed?

It is framed at an obscure angle – what effect does this have on your response?

How have these pictures been made? What has the illustrator used?

How do you think he has created these three dimensional effects?

How does the reader know that this is Slog's dad?

What is the focus of the second frame?

How would you describe the blades of the scissors in this frame?

Why has the illustrator chosen to create a freeze frame of Slog holding the scissors?

What do you notice about Slog's hands and nails?

How are his hands reminiscent of descriptions of his father in the story?

Looking at the bottom half of the left-hand page, what kind of camera shot has been used, e.g. wide shot, medium close-up, big close-up, cutaway etc.?

What is the significance of this image?

How do you imagine Slog is feeling and thinking as he makes the first cut?

Why do you think Slog has chosen to carry out this ritual dismembering of his father?

Is the setting of this illustration significant to any of the themes presented in the story?

How would you describe the way the scissors have been laid out?

What might the way they have been positioned suggest?

Slog was upset by the size of his father after the amputations. How has the illustrator portrayed this?

How has Slog laid out the body?

What role do the other artefacts play in this composition?

What might be the significance of the book on which he is laid?

What link might there be between the environment and what Slog is doing?

How might this relate to his father's promise to return in the spring?

What is the significance of this story created in pictures?

In what ways does it add further layers of meaning about Slog's bereavement?

What features of the illustrations does the lighting pick out and why?

## **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**

### **Monologue**

A monologue creates the opportunity for children to get into character and speak their thoughts aloud.

- Ask the pupils to draw the outline of Slog's dad, just as he did, and cut it out.
- Encourage children to draw on the man's features and clothes and as they do, think about all the descriptions that they can remember about the man, for example his earthy smell, the song he sang and the way that he hung off the back of the bin lorry.
- Then ask them to hold the cut out and start to remember the man as though they were Slog and this was a picture of their dad.
- Ask them to start at the toes and begin to cut. As they cut, encourage them to speak their thoughts aloud. For example, "They took your toes off first Dad. Did it hurt? What did they do with them? Did you get them back in heaven?" And so on.
- As the children monologue, the adult eavesdrops and selects a child for everyone to hear.
- The whole group freezes and listens to snippets of each other's monologues.
- Working in pairs, ask the children to discuss how the process has made them feel and think and the ways in which they are able to empathise with Slog.
- Using selected parts from each other's monologues they work together to write the monologue with stage directions linked to the scene that was set by Dave Mc Kean.