

The Graveyard Book
Written by Neil Gaiman and Illustrated by Chris Riddell
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Use the illustration on page 55 with the text 'Above them in the sour red skies, things were circling on huge black wings.'

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

The following questions have been designed to help children to look more closely at the illustrative work of Chris Riddell 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 CHRIS RIDDELL'S ILLUSTRATION...

What is the impact on you as a reader of finding an illustration such as this one in a longer read?

How do your eyes travel across this page, when do you notice the caption, is it significant in your interpretation of what you see?

Where is the sense of danger coming from?

This is a black and white line drawing, what do you notice about the illustrator's application of ink and where is it more intense?

Why has the illustrator chosen to place the attacking monsters above Bod rather than below?

Consider the layout of the page and the distance that Chris Riddell has created in order to give power to the attack of the winged beasts.

The illustration has a thin black line border which crops the picture. How does this affect your ability to imagine the rest of the scene beyond the border?

How are you involved with this illustration, are you in the action or an outside observer?

Look at the quality and shape of the beast's wings, how would you describe them?

How has the illustrator conveyed their size and shape?

If you were able to hear, what would be the sounds in this picture?

The beasts are heavily shaded, in contrast to them what do you notice about the detail of line given to the creatures transporting Bod?

Although savage and other worldly these creatures maintain elements of human kind, what are these and how do these symbols affect your attitude towards them?

Bod is perched aloft these formidable characters, what do you notice about the way he has been illustrated in terms of application of ink and density of line?

What do you notice about his facial expression?

How has the illustrator conveyed his youth and innocence?

What is the significance of the claw grasping for Bod's leg?

Look at the features of these creatures, what are the most striking?

Who is the creature in the foreground looking at, how does this make you feel?

There is a great sense of speed and escape in this illustration, how has this been created?

In what ways does the illustration interact with the text?

In what ways does the illustration inform the quality of the images in your minds eye?

WRITE IT DOWN

Harvest children's responses and record their descriptions and comments on a 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?

