



# LIFELINE 3 - Books for Sharing

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**Books for Sharing is a list of books compiled for use as class readers in Primary and Secondary classrooms by Joan Barker and David Bennett. They are avid sharers of books with their classes and both convinced of the enormous benefits of reading together. Part One appeared in July**

**Here are suggestions for titles for the first half of next term along with ideas for follow-up reading and activities. We hope that readers will try out books wherever they are appropriate to their own school situation and will explore and experiment with some of the follow-up work, ideas for which are not intended to be comprehensive but more to give a flavour of what might be done to further excite and engage the readers who share the texts.**

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## LOWER JUNIORS

### **Horse from Bridget and William**

Jane Gardam, Puffin, 0 14 03.1592 6, 95p

One of two stories about a child's love for a horse, first published separately in the Blackbird series (Julia MacRae Books). Although intended for the young reader tackling a longer read-alone Horse has a lot to offer as a book to share with a class.

Crossing a 200 year old white horse, cut out of the hillside is so much a part of Susan's journey to school from the hill farm above the village that she hardly notices it. Every day, though, she turns at the stile to wave to it. It isn't until old Mr Grandly points out that it is 'scarce there to wave at' that she sees that the outline is fading and Horse becoming overgrown. She tries to raise interest in saving Horse but it is only when its very existence is threatened that the village gets together to act.

### **Things to Do**

1. 'To get to school she could run down the hill ...' (p.55)

How do you come to school? Is there more than one way? Is one way quicker or more interesting? Draw a plan of your journey. Describe it in words. Can someone follow your directions?

2. Can you remember your first day at school? Was it the way you thought it would be?!

3. 'Bairns and attachments. It was hoops and kites first. Followed by crashing dolly carts. Followed by scooters ... Too

much pleasure, that's what bairns get.' (p.66) What are the playing seasons in our school.' Mime all the activities you could do with 'the attachments'.

4. Susan sniffs the wood shavings in the wood carver's shop. (p.70)

What are your favourite smells! Make up a class poem about them.

5. Make a large class collage or painting of the crowd in the village square looking at Horse. (p.90)

### **More to Read**

**Bridget and William** (in the same volume)

#### **Linda's Lie**

Bernard Ashley, Julia MacRae Books, 0 86203 099 4, £2.95 and in **Dinner Ladies Don't Count**, Puffin, 0 14 03.1593 4, 95p

#### **The Dead Letter Box**

Jan Mark, Puffin, 0 14 03.1619 1, 95p

### **MIDDLE JUNIORS**

#### **Revolting Rhymes**

Roald Dahl, ill. Quentin Blake, Puffin, 0 14 050.423 0, £1.50

No-one feels luke-warm about this book - you either love it or loathe it. Either way there is one thing certain, it is a hit in the classroom. It appeals to a very wide age-range but I have chosen middle juniors as the who will get the most enjoyment out of the fun Dahl has with six traditional tales. Each has a very clever twist; my particular favourite links up Red Riding Hood and the Three Little Pigs. Not great literature but a lot of fun and Quentin Blake's pictures complement and extend the text.

#### **Things to Do**

1. *'While darling little Cinderella*

*Was locked up in a slimy cellar*

*Where rats who wanted things to eat*

*Began to nibble at her feet.'* (p.5)

Tell this incident from the point of view of a) Cinderella b) the rat. What if she wore nail varnish or had smelly feet?

2. 'He wrote to every magazine

And said "I'm looking for a Queen."' (p.21)

Design the advertisement. Write letters to answer it. These to be read aloud (no names of course) and the queen selected by class vote.

3. 'Pigs are noble... Pigs are courteous.' (p.41)

Collect piggy sayings-pigs might fly. you're a pig. Try other animals - cats, dogs. Find out what the sayings mean.

4. Build model houses of straw, twigs and bricks. Gently test to destruction with a) 10 g weights b) huffing and puffing etc.

5. Write tombstone epitaphs for all the characters who meet their ends in the, rhymes.

### More to Read

Tony Ross's picture book versions of fairy tales, published by Andersen and Sparrow,

#### George's Marvellous Medicine,

Roald Dahl, Puffin, 06 14 03.1492 X, £ 1.25

#### A Pair of Sinners

Allan Ahlberg and John Lawrence, Granada, 0 246 11325 1, £3.25

#### The Tale of Thomas Mead

Pat Hutchins, Bodley Head, 0 370 30357 1, £3.50

### UPPER JUNIORS

#### The Stone Book

Alan Garner, Fontana Lions, 0 00 671600 8, 95p

Mary's stonemason father putting the finishing touches to the church steeple gives her a ride on the golden weathercock. As she spins round she wishes that she could read and have a prayer book to carry to chapel like the other girls. Her father takes her instead deep into the earth and shows her a secret handed down in the family for generations and she realises that what she has seen is of greater value than any book.

This is the first of the 'Stone Book Quartet'. Each book is rather like a very long chapter of a single book for, although complete in themselves, together they tell a linked story of four generations of a family of craftsmen. All four amply repay reading several times. Don't be put off by an apparent lack of action; comments from the children pay tribute to the excitement they arouse. After **The Stone Book** I read the other three to the class and let them work in groups on the book they like best.

### Things to Do

1. Read to page 27. Where is the story set? What does the text tell us? Are the place names on a map? When is it set? Find the evidence. Who is in Mary's family?

2. Mary was afraid of the climb up the spire. (P.17)

What are we afraid of? 'The baggin cloth kept her mouth wet but it felt dry.' What happens when we feel afraid? Write a poem about being afraid.

3. 'A church was only a bit of stone round a lot of air.' Write a similar description for a school, a bird cage, an aquarium, a hospital.

4. 'You'll remember this day my girl for the rest of your life.' (p.24) Plan a day you would remember for the rest of your life. Make a chart to show how you would spend it.

5. Make a rough plan of the area in the story to be added to as more information is revealed. Illustrate and people your plan. Start a family tree for the people in the story.

### More to Read

The rest of the quartet: **Granny Reardon** (0 00 671602 4, 75p) **The Aimer Gate** (0 00 671603 2, 75p) **Tom Fobble's Day** (0 00 671601, 95p) all published in Fontana Lions

**Elidor**, Alan Garner, Fontana Lions, 0 00 671674 1,£1.25

**A Strong and Willing Girl**, Dorothy Edwards, Magnet, 0 416 24590 0, £1.25

## SECONDARY

### Year 1

#### **Dragon Slayer**

Rosemary Sutcliff, Puffin, 0 14 03.0254 9, £1.00

This is the Beowulf story retold by one of our most skillful and adept historical writers. The reading needs to be as heroic as the theme, definitely a book for show-off, frustrated actor teachers who are prepared to swing from the lampshades if necessary in the cause of their storytelling art.

There are three distinct sections which could be spaced out throughout the half-term - Grendel, Grendel's Dam and the Fire-Drake and the amount of follow-up work that could ensue is infinite. The language and ideas are challenging but the story is so dramatic and heroic that I've yet to find a class that doesn't become immersed in it - most kids love a monster!

I do counsel deciding on how you're going to pronounce the names before you start and it is worth the effort to duplicate a "Who's who" which the class can have before them as you read, otherwise they can become fog-bound!

#### **Things to Do**

1. Cartoon-strip versions of action-packed episodes like the various fight sequences; an exercise that can be a kind of painless comprehension.
2. An English/Art collaboration might produce full sized portraits of the monsters or at least "Wanted" posters.
3. A discussion of the apt names devised for Grendel might be followed by the creation of the class's own monster, who terrorises your classroom with what results!
4. There has got to be drama. How about Beowulf-this was your life!
5. Collect together some of the details of everyday life at the time of Beowulf and use this to write a background commentary to accompany a new edition of the book.

#### **More to Read**

**Beowulf**, a version by Kevin Crossley-Holland, [ill. by](#) [4] Charles Keeping, Oxford, 0 19 279770 0. £4.50

Worth acquiring both for comparison and contrast and for its evocative illustrations, perhaps best shown afterwards.

## YEAR 2

#### **Grinny**

Nicholas Fisk, Puffin, 0 14 03.0745 1, 95p

Time for a bit of Sci-Fi. Nicholas Fisk has plenty on offer in this department but G.A.E. better known as Great Aunt Emma, or Grinny, takes a lot of beating. She is the decidedly queer old party who fetches up, unheralded on the doorstep of the Carpenters and stays.-Before long, Timothy, the boy whose diary this is, and his brattish sister become aware of the old girl's odd behaviour, which eventually points in only one direction - she is an alien!

Timothy's precocious charm and sharp sense of humour commends this book to readers at all levels and Grinny is so intriguingly sinister that she cannot fail to be a winner. The very macabre ending seldom fails to make a big impact and

in addition there is effectiveness in the fact that such goings on take place in so domestic and familiar a setting.

### **Things to Do**

1. How Would Mr Carpenter tell his version of the "Muscle Beach Scene" to his wife! Write the script.
2. Your own story beginning "The day uncle Arthur arrived we welcomed him. But then?"
3. Prediction exercise at February 10th... "And if she isn't the real G.A.F., what the hell is she instead:""
4. Newspaper reports of U.F.O. sightings and strange visitors in your own local area.
5. Drama. "They will punish me" - Grinny is back on board. Stage her trial and punishment.

### **More to Read**

There is a wealth of Sci-Fi Junior fiction worth introducing to the pupils. Particularly worth a mention are the **Galactic Warlord** (Piccolo, 0 0330 26186 X, £1.25) series by Douglas Hill and of course other titles by Nicholas Fisk himself.

### **YEAR 3**

#### **Nobody's Family Is Going to Change**

Louise Fitzhugh, Fontana Lions, 0 00 671351 3, £1.25

This Other Award winner is very relevant in its theme for this is the time of year when the pupils are usually in the throes of option choices. It examines very thoroughly parental expectation, a consciousness of self worth and the crucial responsibility of making decisions about one's future.

Emma, aged 13, is a mess, an obese shambles, but she has an analytical mind and she is very bright. Her brother Willie on the other hand is a fanatical dancer and, encouraged by black-sheep Uncle Dixie wants to join a summer stock company. None of this squares with their black middle-class father's conceptions of what his children should be. Willie should be a lawyer like him, and Emma? . . . Well, she's a girl!

The story is humorously told with comic touches, like the white maid named Martha, and the pace is lively, especially when Emma joins the children's army. Less able pupils might not find it straightforward enough and would need a hand through it.

### **Things to Do**

1. Some preliminary work on stereotyping would be helpful. A game can be devised matching nationalities with cards containing single images e.g. Australian - kangaroo, hats with corks, lager, koalas, Waltzing Matilda etc. Then making drawings of the final complete picture and discussing the erroneous nature of most stereotyping. This can be followed by explorations into old/young, boy/girl stereotyping, possibly involving careers teachers.
- 2 "site was aware of the unfairness of being a child, the blindness of parents, how hard it all was". A good quote to provoke group discussion of where your pupils feel that they stand in all this.
3. Group drama using the situations that arise when The Army Committee member visit the houses of Helen Mason, Charles Tyson and Lois Babson. Use the reports on Jack, Marv Ann and Jimmy as models.
4. After the night of the great confrontation over Willie's job each person in the family makes an entry in their diary. Write those entries. (pp 111-130).
5. Devise a chart to show the peaks and troughs of Emma's and Willie's emotions at specific times throughout the story.

### **More to Read**

Two novels by the same author:

**Harriet the Spy** Fontana Lions, 0 00 672175 3, £1.25

**The Long Secret** Fontana Lions, 0 00 672145 1, £1.25

A boy who wishes to be a ballet dancer is a central character in Jean Ure's **A Proper Little Nooryeff**, Puffin, 0 14 03.1614 0, £1.10

## YEARS 4/5

### **The Chocolate War**

Robert Cormier, Fontana Lions, 0 00 671765 9, £ 1.50

This is likely to create a bit of a stir, not least amongst the staff. It's a very tough and uncompromising expose of corruption and manipulation in which, as often in real life, the baddies win. Jerry Renault the steady, honest new boy in an American boys' public school is doomed as soon as he catches the eye of Archie Costello, the Machiavellian leader of the Mafia-like Vigils, who effectively control the school. When even the Staff enlist the aid of these thugs in a fund-raising event Jerry stands no chance

You need to be sure of your class and material before you attempt this but the themes that it forces them to face will more than repay your summoning up the courage to give it a try. A lively, aware class should thrive on it and learn from it.

### **Things to Do**

1. Create Archie's secret handbook on bribery and corruption.
2. Try debating "Jerry- hero, or victim:?"
3. Two years after the events a T V documentary is made on "The Vigils" interviewing participants, victims and observers - create as classroom drama or else as a radio programme.
4. A discussion on the maxim "Do I dare disturb the Universe". Then library research into characters that have tried e.g. Ghandi, William Wilberforce, Martin Luther King. Basically one is asking whether one can change systems that seem unfair and whether violence is a justified method for Change, which ought to bring in Current Affaires.
5. If you are strong enough and the class can take it play out Chapter 6 in class and explore the ideas of solidarity against authority and the fairness of grading people and their achievements.

### **More to Read**

Three other very tough books by Robert Cormier, all published by Fontana Lions.

**I Am the Cheese** 1 00 671766 7, £1.50

**After the First Death** 0 00 671705 5, £1.25

**The Bumblebee Flies Anyway** 0 00 672358 6, (out soon), in hardback from Gollancz. 0 575 03327 4, £5.75.

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