

Miss Fox, Our Teacher

Fiction

Content domain focus:

- 2b** retrieve and record information/identify key details from fiction and non-fiction
- 2d** make inferences from the text/explain and justify inferences with evidence from the text
- 2f** identify/explain how information/narrative content is related and contributes to meaning as a whole

Text summary

This complete short story was written by Gwen Grant for inclusion in an anthology called *WOW! 366: Speedy Stories in 366 Words*, a collection of short stories written in only 366 words. It was published to raise money for the children's charity NSPCC.

Unit summary

The story is deceptively simple, with some of the elements of a fable, and provides a good introduction to the way in which a writer can use small details to create an overall effect. The final question anticipates and models the more challenging questions that the children will encounter in Year 6.



Teaching prompts

- To alert the children to the techniques they are about to encounter, ask if they have ever met people who reminded them of particular birds or animals. If so, what was it about the person's behaviour, appearance or voice that reminded them?
- Alternatively, you may decide not to give the point of the story away, and tackle this after the test instead.

Revisiting the text

Ask the children to:

- give their thoughts about the story. Ask: *What do you think about the central character, Miss Fox? And what about the narrator who tells the story?*
- listen as you read the story aloud to them. What advice would they give you about reading the words of Miss Fox? How do they think the author, Gwen Grant, would like the story to be read? Listen to their ideas, then incorporate them into the reading of the story. Ask: *Did it work? Did it sound as you imagined it would?*
- hot-seat the narrator to explore her thoughts on the teacher, Miss Fox.

Having explored the story, return to the questions in the test. Check to see whether all children are now able to answer all the questions with confidence.

**Answers**

1. red hair; a loud voice [2b]
2. cardboard boxes [2b]
3. black paint [2b]
4. stars, three planets, a moon [2b]
5. the world at night [2d]
6. The room would make them feel safe. [2b]
7. a) It was very quiet after she finished speaking. [2d]
b) The narrator lies in bed that night thinking about what Miss Fox had said. [2d]
8. a red hair [2b]
9. That Miss Fox is actually a fox. [2d]
10. Something along the following lines:

At the beginning of the story, the author tells us that ... her name is Miss Fox, she has red hair, and a very loud voice.
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The author uses the following speech verbs to describe how Miss Fox speaks: barked, snapped, growled, yelped.
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At the end of the story, ... the narrator imagines her turning into a fox at night.

[2f]

**Assessment**

The opening questions help to establish the detail of the story and require straightforward retrieval of information, although details should be selected rather than copied. The questions shift into inferential comprehension from question 5 onwards, requiring a deeper response to the story, and culminate in the most challenging, question 10, which requires a wider understanding of the story as a whole. Because this is quite challenging for Year 5 students, the response is structured for them.

Next steps

Model correct responses for those children who are inclined to copy rather than select details in their retrieval answers.

Pay particular attention to the structure of the answer for question 10 so the children understand that it should read well as three separate sentences. Explain that, by the end of Year 6, they should be able to structure their answer without a framework.

You could follow up by reading chapters from Gwen Grant's *Private – Keep Out!*, which deals amusingly with the battles between a young girl and her older brothers.

Alternatively, ask the children to have a go themselves at introducing a character who resembles a particular animal: a Mr Badger, perhaps, or a Miss Heron. Observation and role-play first would help, prior to writing.