

The Tear Thief

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
- 2g** identify/explain how meaning is enhanced through choice of words and phrases

Text summary

This extract is taken from the beginning of the picture book *The Tear Thief* by Carol Ann Duffy.

The Tear Thief is an ethereal fairy-like character who flits around the streets and into houses collecting tears from crying children. At the beginning of the story, there is a slightly sinister side to her but, as the tale unfolds, it becomes evident that once she's stolen the children's tears they are no longer sad and don't need to cry any more.

Unit summary

The questions start with straightforward information retrieval to tune the children into the passage. They then move on to make inferences. Some questions explore the way in which the author has used language for effect.



Teaching prompts

- Ask the children to remind you of techniques they can use to quickly find key details in a passage, e.g. looking for clues and key words in the question, visualising words, looking for clues in the text such as capital letters, numbers, punctuation marks and particular word classes.
- Ask them to explain how they can make inferences, e.g. by thinking about their own experiences (real/read/visual) and making connections with what they are reading, and encourage them to consider why they should make them, e.g. to fully understand what they are reading.
- Encourage the children to make pictures in their heads when they read. Suggest that, as they read, they think about the language that is used in the passage as it is very descriptive. Introduce the expression 'show not tell', explaining that authors often give clues about their characters to show the reader what the character is like, rather than telling the reader everything.

Revisiting the text

Ask the children to:

- draw a picture of the Tear Thief based on evidence given in the passage
- role-play the Tear Thief moving through the town. Encourage the children to think about how she might move, e.g. quickly or slowly, crouched or upright
- carry out a hot-seating activity in which they question the Tear Thief about her behaviour and explore why she is called the 'Tear Thief'
- discuss what they think she might do with the tears that she collects

- highlight their favourite words and phrases in the passage and explain why they have chosen them
- prepare to read aloud the passage, using expression to portray the build up of tension as she tracks down the source of the crying.



Answers

Links to content domain requirements are in brackets after the answer.

1. grey [2b]
2. a handkerchief dress and silk slippers [2b]
3. invisible [2a]
4. Onions, because they make you cry and she is looking for tears. [2d]
5. silent as smoke [2g]
6. quick as a blink [2g]
7. down the chimney [2b]
8. Because she wanted to steal his tears. [2d]
9. Because he doesn't like having his hair washed./He might have shampoo in his eyes. [2d]
10. She is crafty/difficult to see/disappears like steam does. [2g]



Assessment

The children are secure in their ability to retrieve information efficiently and effectively if they use clues in the question to help them identify the key words they are looking for.

If the children have answered questions 4 and 9 correctly, they have drawn on their own experience and knowledge in order to make inferences. A correct answer to question 8 demonstrates an understanding of the main gist of the passage.

The children have shown that they understand how the author's choice of language has added to their understanding of the character of the Tear Thief if they have answered questions 5, 6 and 10 accurately.

Next steps

Use images to develop the children's scanning skills. Ask them to quickly find particular objects in a picture. Remind them to visualise the image they are looking for in terms of colour, size, shape, etc.

Develop inference by encouraging the children to visualise characters as they read, discuss with their reading buddies what they think the characters look like and then draw the characters.

Using short descriptive passages, ask the children to highlight words and phrases that they think help them to understand more about the character or the setting. If necessary, remind the children of the 'show not tell' technique. Discuss ways in which the author has given clues to show a reader what a character is like, rather than telling them directly.