Michael Morpurgo’s touching story of Aman and his mother’s journey from Afghanistan to the UK gives children the chance to explore the issues facing people seeking asylum due to war. In addition to enjoying this rich and multi-layered story, children following this teaching sequence will have the opportunity to consider how an author captures the voice of different characters, before writing their own interviews based on the story and recording these as podcasts.

**Discussion and booktalk**

1. Once you’ve read *Shadow* together as a class, you can use *PowerPoint slide 3* to discuss ideas and themes from the book together, using the following questions as prompts:
   - Why does Aman make the journey from Afghanistan to Britain?
   - At what point in the story is Aman happiest? Explain why you have chosen this moment.
• Who are the different people who help Aman and his mother in the story? What is the effect of so many of them coming together at the end of the story?
• What role does luck play in the story? Do you think Aman is a lucky character? Why / why not?
• What do you think will happen next to Aman and his mother?

Creative writing

1. Read the extract from p.256 of Shadow (see PowerPoint slide 4) to set the scene. Ask the children to explain why Grandpa asking Aman to tell his story is an important moment in the book. What do his questions lead to?

2. Tell the children that they are going to write an interview with one character from the book. Brainstorm a list of possible characters. It might include:
   • Aman
   • Matt
   • Grandpa
   • Sergeant Brodie
   • Aman’s mother
   • Uncle Mir
   • Auntie Morag
   • Members of the football team
   Of course, they’re welcome to interview Shadow, too. In creative writing we’re not bound by the constraints of the real world!

3. Next, share the extracts on PowerPoint slides 5, 6 and 7 which feature text written in different characters’ voices. Draw children’s attention to how Michael Morpurgo subtly captures how the different characters speak, focusing on:
   • Sentence length (longer, multi-clause sentences that capture how people speak)
   • Rhetorical questions where the characters reflect on their own thoughts
Use of vocabulary to match a character (“down in the dumps” from Grandpa; “we are the best!” from Aman)

4. Next, share PowerPoint slide 8 with the children, and discuss the difference between open and closed questions. Ask the children which type of questions are likely to lead to an interesting interview.

5. Working in pairs, ask the children to choose a character to interview. Once they have done this, they can brainstorm some questions the interviewer could ask, focusing on open questions. Then the pair can role play the interview, taking it in turns to be the interviewer and the interviewee. Some of these role plays could be shared with the whole class, with other children giving feedback about how well the children have captured the different characters.

6. Remind the children of the conventions for laying out an interview using PowerPoint slide 9. Then, working as a whole class, brainstorm the features that might make for an effective written interview. Compare these with the list on PowerPoint slide 10.

7. Ask the children to write an interview with one character from the story, drawing on their role plays and the ideas you have discussed in the session to make their writing as effective as possible.

8. Once they have finished, ask the children to share their interviews with a partner and identify strengths and possible areas for development. You could also share some examples of strong writing with the class by asking pairs to read some of the interviews aloud. Finally, give children an opportunity to return to their work and make changes in the light of feedback and other ideas they’ve seen from their classmates.

Creativity and arts

1. Tell the children they are going to make podcasts which feature interviews with a character from the story. This might be the same character they have used in their role play and written interview, or it might be another character.

2. Divide the children into groups of three. They can allocate themselves different roles: interviewer, interviewee and producer (the latter will organise
the recording itself, as well as listen to and make sure the recording is as good as it can be). Show the children how to use the podcasting software or app you have chosen for the project (depending on the technology you are using, there are a large number of free podcasting apps that can be found easily with a quick search online).

3. Next, tell the children they have a number of choices about how they want to work. They could:
   - Record themselves reading one or more of their written interviews
   - Write a new script for their podcast
   - Write their questions and then improvise the characters’ answers
   - Discuss the benefits and potential disadvantages of each of these as a class and then ask the children to decide which option they are going to follow.

4. Give the children time to write and record their podcasts. Once they have finished, the groups can share their work with each other, listening to each podcast as a whole class and commenting on parts they particularly like.

**Putting it all together**

Once everyone has finished their written and podcast interviews, they could be combined and shared online, either through a class shared area on the school’s website or through an online learning platform such as Google Classroom or Microsoft Teams. The podcasts could be presented alongside the children’s written work, allowing everyone to see the development of their ideas.

Finally, children can reflect on the differences between creating a written interview and a podcast by considering:

- How did the two formats differ? Were there any skills they needed for one approach that wasn’t as important for the other?
- Which approach did they prefer? Which would they like to do again?