Boy Giant: Son of Gulliver

Michael Morpurgo’s wonderful reimagining of Gulliver’s Travels gives children the chance to explore ideas around migration, hope and compassion. It also provides the perfect stimulus for journalistic writing, and learning to use photo-editing software for a creative purpose.

Discussion and booktalk

1. After reading Boy Giant together as a class (either in English lessons, whole-class reading sessions or as a class novel), use PowerPoint slide 3 to discuss ideas and themes from the book, using these questions as prompts:
   - The characters in Boy Giant make many different journeys. Which journey do you think is the most important? Why?
   - Why did the emperor of Lilliput release Gulliver from his chains? Was it out of kindness? Why / why not?
   - Why do the people of Mevagissey think Omar talks in “an old-fashioned way”?
   - Which place in the story makes Omar happiest? Explain your answer.
   - Does the story end happily for all of the characters? Do Omar, J.J., Zaya and Natoban all get the ending they deserve? Why / why not?

Subjects: English, art and ICT
Age range: KS2

What they’ll learn
- To discuss rich children’s literature, linking ideas in the text to contemporary issues
- To write creatively, crafting two newspaper articles from differing viewpoints
- To use photo-editing software to create a striking image

Subjects: English, art and ICT
Age range: KS2
2. Next, organise the class into an even number of small groups (with 4-6 children in each group). Remind pupils of the part in the story where Omar casts the Blufescuan warships out to sea and then breaks Bronar’s palace. Using *PowerPoint slide 4*, share the following statement with the children:

“*Omar was right to break the Blufescuan's property because it led to peace between the two islands*”

Ask the children whether they agree with this statement with a show of hands, then tell them they will be debating the statement. Tell half of the groups they will be supporting the statement and tell the other half they will be challenging it. Give the children time to work as a group to compose their arguments. The children can then debate the statement, either as a whole class or with two opposing groups debating against each other.

Once the debate is over, ask for another show of hands. Ask the children if they have changed their minds. If they have, can they explain which arguments persuaded them to think differently?

3. Finally, ask the children to think about what happened to the stones from Bronar’s palace. Ask:

- Why might creating a bridge have been a good use for the stones?
- As well as a physical bridge, what other type of bridge might have been built between Lilliput and Blufescu?
- Do you think that the peace between the two islands will last? Why / why not?
**Creative writing**

1. Tell the children they are going to write two newspaper articles based on the moment in the story where Omar destroys Bronar’s palace. The first is going to be from *The Lilliput Times* and the other from *The Blufescu Bugle*.

2. Read the two extracts from *Boy Giant* (see *PowerPoint slides 5 and 6*) and discuss how the inhabitants of the different islands might have reacted to the sight of Omar casting the warships out to sea and breaking the palace apart. If necessary, prompt the children’s thinking with the following questions:
   - Did the Lilliputians know what Omar was going to do? Would they be happy when they realised what he was up to?
   - Would any of the Lilliputians be worried about Omar? Why?
   - How might the Blufescuans feel when they saw Omar sending the warships out to sea? What about when he landed on their island? Did they know what he was going to do next?
   - Would all of the Blufescuans feel the same about Omar’s actions? Would Bronar have felt differently to some of the other people on the island?
   - What do you think the people of the two islands will be hoping for in the future?

3. Using *PowerPoint slide 7*, remind the children of the typical structure of a newspaper report, featuring:
   - A headline that captures the reader’s attention;
   - A lead paragraph which outlines the who, what, where, why and how of the event;
   - A second paragraph that goes into further detail, featuring supporting facts, interviews or quotes and a commentary or opinion on events;
   - A conclusion drawing the piece to a close and speculating about what might happen next.

4. Ask children to work in pairs to brainstorm how the Lilliputians and the Blufescuans might view Omar’s actions differently. Drawing on their ideas and the structure suggested on *PowerPoint slide 7*, ask the children to write two articles reporting on the events from this section of the story, one for *The Lilliput Times* and the other for *The Blufescu Bugle*.
5. Once they have finished, ask the children to share their writing with a partner, proofreading together and working to identify strengths and possible areas for development. You could also share some examples of great writing or good ideas with the class by reading aloud or sharing on the whiteboard. Then, give children an opportunity to return to their work and make changes in the light of feedback and other ideas they’ve seen.

**Creativity and arts**

1. Tell the children they are going to create an image of the scene where Omar destroys Bronar’s palace. Working with a partner or a small group, ask them to sketch what they think this scene might look like, including as much detail as possible.

2. Next, depending on the resources you have available, the children can work in small groups to create a photograph of their image by either:
   - Using models such as toy action figures, Lego characters or Playmobil figures for the Lilliputians and Blufescuans, with the children taking on the role of Omar. They could also make models of the palace or boats from Lego or junk modelling materials.
   - The children could take photographs of themselves as Omar, the Lilliputians and Blufescuans and use photo editing software (such as Photoshop or similar apps) to manipulate the images and shrink themselves down to the size of the small characters.

3. Once they have finished, the groups can share their work with each other, either on screen or by printing it out before they evaluate each other’s work.

**Putting it all together**

Finally, children can combine their articles and images to create newspapers, either as printed versions or as online news stories.