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TEACHERS' NOTES



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SAVING THE BUTTERFLY

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These notes have been written by the teachers at the [CLPE](#) to provide schools with ideas to develop comprehension and cross-curricular activities around this text. They build on our work supporting teachers to use quality texts throughout the reading curriculum. They encourage a deep reading of and reflection on the text, which may happen over a series of reading sessions, rather than in just one sitting. We hope you find them useful.

These notes have been written with children in KS2 in mind but you will need to differentiate discussions and activities alongside the age and experience of your own children.

Before Reading:

- This book explores themes of bereavement and loss and refugee experience. Teachers will need to read through this book and the notes carefully and decide if it is suitable to share with their own children in the ways suggested. It might be explored differently to support children who have suffered similar experiences, perhaps 1:1 or in smaller groups with trusted peers or in less depth. Children often find it less threatening to share their own experiences through those of a character in the fictional world.
- Before sharing the book with the children, gauge their knowledge about butterflies. Share some images of different coloured butterflies and/or some video clips of butterflies flying; resting on leaves and pollinating flowers. Give children a thought bubble and ask them to record as many words as they want that are associated with butterflies. Children can share these ideas and what it could suggest to them about what a butterfly symbolises. Encourage children to think of more abstract responses – butterfly as a symbol of new life, hope, beauty, freedom etc...



Reading aloud and key talking points:

- Share the front cover of the book with the children, **concealing the title**, and encourage them to focus on the illustration. What can you see happening on the front cover? Why do you think the children are holding hands? What might they be thinking or feeling? What do you think the title of the book might be? Explore the children's initial ideas and encourage them to support their ideas by referring to the images. What do you notice about the use of colour in this illustration? Who is looking at whom? Where is your eye led as you look at this illustration? How would you describe the movement and energy in the illustration? How does it make you feel? Encourage children to consider how much space the butterfly has on the book cover in comparison to the two children and the background scene. What do you think the illustrator is trying to do by giving the butterfly centre stage? What idea/impression do you think the author asked the illustrator to convey? Give children time to discuss their ideas with each other and invite them to share with the wider group. These ideas could be scribed by the adult in a class reading journal to be revisited later.

- Now reveal the title of the text, 'Saving the Butterfly'. Are you surprised by the title? Did you think the children needed to be saved or the butterfly? Explore the idea that the butterfly looks free, flying in the sky whereas the children are standing in front of a sombre, prison-like background. Why might the butterfly need to be saved? Depending on the age of the children pose the question, What does 'needing to be saved' actually mean?
- Look back again at the title and illustration together again. What type of story are you expecting now? Focus on the facial expressions of the two children. What expression has the illustrator conveyed? What has just happened? Where are the children? What are the children thinking? What do you think their next steps will be? These responses could be recorded on speech bubbles to be revisited later. Explore the details in the illustration that provide information about the story setting. Discuss with children whether they have seen anywhere like this before in real life or in other stories and how it would impact on the children in the illustration.
- If possible, take children into a large open space (hall or playground would be ideal) and group them in pairs. Ask the children to take the position of the two children from the front cover. Allow children time to think about their position, body language and facial expressions. Some children may wish to share their thoughts and feelings in role as the characters from the book cover. Explain to the children that you will represent the butterfly. As you move around the pairs of children, support the children to articulate their feelings and reactions. What is the connection between the children and the butterfly?
- Support children by recasting incomplete utterances and introducing some response stems such as:
 - We were just waiting when _____
 - We really need to _____
 - We don't understand why _____
 - We wonder if _____
 - We don't know why _____
 - Today is different because _____
- Open the book and look at the endpapers. What can you see here? How is this image related to the illustration on the front cover? Encourage children to focus on the barbed wire in the background on the front cover. What do you notice about the use of colour on the endpaper? Support children to make the link between the yellow flower on the endpaper and the yellow flowers around the children on the front cover. What might the yellow flower represent? Why has the illustrator chosen to repeat this on the endpaper?
- Turn to the publication page where we are introduced to another scene. How is this scene linked to the front cover? Focus on the image together. What type of scene has the illustrator created? What type of conditions have been portrayed by the use of colour? The illustrator has chosen to convey a night scene; how might this illustration look in a day scene? Would the same impression be created if the sky was bright? Who do you think is in the boat? How many passengers do you think there are? Why has the illustrator chosen a wide sea scene with a small boat? What do you think the author and illustrator want us to focus on? You might scribe children's thoughts around an image of the illustration.



- *Are you wondering anything else about this image?* Allow children some time to discuss the image with a talk partner or within a small group. Share the front cover again and encourage children to make links. *What might it suggest about the story inside the book?* Encourage the children to share their ideas about the narrative they think will unfold in this book.
- Turn to the first double page spread of the book. What do you notice about the size of the writing? Why has the author chosen to print the statement, **There were two of them left in the boat** in a larger size text? Read the first statement again. What does **of them** tell us about the passengers of the boat? Read the remainder of the text on this double page spread aloud and take time to reflect. What do we know about the two children now? Why do you think the writer chose to display the sentence **But they did** by itself? Focus the children on the illustrations across the double page spread. What do you notice about the use of colour? How many new characters can you see? What are they all doing? What is the lady with the dog doing? Is she travelling towards the children or away from them? How can you tell that the lady with the orange hat was prepared to help the children? Look at the girl who has the blanket around her. Why are her feet pointing inwards? Does this tell us more about how she might be feeling? Have you ever felt like this?
- Children may ask questions about why the children were travelling in a boat. You will know if it is appropriate to share information regarding refugees travelling to seek aid in other countries.
- Turn to the next double page spread. Before reading the text, ask children to look closely at the illustration. *What can you see? Do you think this is a safe place? What do you notice about the illustrator's use of colour on these pages?* Draw attention to the yellow flowers growing amongst the wired fence again. *What is the significance of the yellow flowers again? Could they represent something for the theme of this story? What do you notice about the relationship between the sister and brother on this page?* Read the text on the double page spread and focus on what new information we have about the children and their situation. *How does the text show us that the elder sister is taking the role of the protector?* The text tells us that the children have been rescued and helped. However, they have been given a broken house. *Have they really been rescued? Can you be rescued by something that is broken? Are there any links between the title of the book 'Saving the Butterfly' and the idea that the children have been rescued?*
- Turn to the next double spread. *Why does the bed look so huge? What do you notice about the children's belongings?* Encourage children to observe that the siblings have taken off their shoes, socks and hat and stored them tidily. There is only one cup, yet there are two children. *What does this tell us about the situation that the children are in?* Focus on the blanket – recap that the lady who rescued the children at the boat wrapped the eldest child in this blanket. *What feeling might this blanket represent?* Encourage children to relate the comfort a blanket brings to their personal experiences of things that bring them comfort so that they might begin to view the blanket as a loyal friend, company, protection and almost like a hug for the children. These ideas could be discussed as a class – *how could the blanket be a hug for the children?*
- Read the text aloud. Invite the children to reflect on the eldest child's assertion that they are **lucky**. What does she mean? Does she really think this? Do the children agree with her? What do they think the youngest thinks of this? How can they be lucky? Ask the children to consider what they would like to say to her. Arrange a hotseating activity in which you take on the role of the eldest children and the children are offered the opportunity to ask her questions or share their words of comfort, advice and hope. After the activity, ask the children to close their eyes and imagine what might be on the next double page spread.



- Turn to the next double page spread and read the text aloud, starting with **Months went on.** Display a large version of this page. Choose a coloured marker and ask children to identify all of the information that shows how **the little one** felt (**strong, laughed, hardly ever thought about the time before.**) Read aloud the text you have highlighted. *How does the illustration of the little one match these descriptions?* Repeat the activity for **the bigger one.** Focus on the text **Over her mind a shadow fell, while a squeezing in her chest made it sometimes hard to breathe.** Focus on the responsibility that the eldest child feels and the pressure that comes with this. Reflect on the illustration and how the children have tried to make their broken house a home. Yellow flowers are now featured in the children's room. *What does this mean to you as the reader?* The text tells us how the bigger one feels. *Why has the illustrator chosen to wrap her in the blanket holding the toy rabbit?* Remind children that the little one was carrying the toy rabbit when he was rescued from the boat on the first double spread. Discuss how the illustrator may be reminding us as the reader that she is still a child. *How does this make us feel about her?*
- Read the next double spread page to the children. Explore with the children that we are now introduced to the butterfly for the first time. *Why does the little one bring the butterfly inside? Discuss the body language of the bigger one. What does this tell us about what she is thinking, how she is feeling or her state of mind?* Recap the pages read so far and allow children time to piece together the relationship between the siblings. *Why do you think the author has not shared the children's names? What does this tell us about their identity? Does it make them less/more important because we do not know their names? What does having a name actually mean? Have the children somehow lost some of their identity? As a reader, do you want to know their names? Bring the children back to focus on the butterfly again. Do you think the butterfly will fix the broken home? The book is called **Saving the Butterfly**, what do you think will happen?* Display a large outline of a butterfly and scribe the children's predictions inside.
- Look at the next double page spread. Display the front cover again and ask the children to look for similarities and differences between the two illustrations. Display a Venn diagram where the first circle is labelled 'front cover' and the other 'double page spread.' Record the children's similarities and differences in the Venn diagram. Focus on the two siblings – they are wearing the same clothes but standing the opposite way round. They are not holding hands in this image, instead the little one is clinging to the bigger one's arm. *What does this change tell us about their relationship?* Contrast the butterfly too – on the front cover we can see the butterfly's eyes looking down towards the children yet on this illustration we cannot. *Has the butterfly turned away from the children on this page? What is this illustration telling us as the reader?* Read the text to the children. *Are you surprised by the butterfly's behaviour? What does the language used to describe the butterfly tell us about the butterfly?* Write the words **battered, smashed** and **panicking** on the board. *What do these three words have in common?* Revisit the thought bubbles that the children completed before starting the book where they recorded words to describe butterflies. *Did you imagine these three words?* Return to the text. Explore the bigger one's words "**Give it space. Give it time.**" and what the children think she means by this. *Do they think she is referring only to the butterfly?* Bring the children back together and ask them whether they think the butterfly will leave. Take a class vote and allow children to share their thoughts and opinions.
- Turn to the next double page spread and allow children time to digest the illustration. Without any discussion, read the text to the children. *What is the butterfly doing?* Allow the children to work in pairs or small groups to dissect the language and illustration. Encourage children to share their ideas with the rest of the class. Support children with prompts if necessary: *Is the butterfly their friend or foe? Is the butterfly really angry? Has the butterfly got a cunning plan? Does the butterfly need saving now? Will the butterfly save them?*





- Return to the text and identify that the butterfly is **tired and settled**. Explain that the butterfly reacts when the small one tries to capture it. *What will happen next? Will the bigger one go outside?*
- Turn to the next double page spread but this time **conceal the text**. Invite the children to share their responses to the illustration. *Do you think the bigger one has gone outside? What is your reaction to this illustration?* Discuss how the girl is the focus of the illustration and the butterfly is now small. Ask children to share their ideas. *What do you think the text on this page could be?* Give children time to talk about or write the missing text from this page to share with each other. After sharing their ideas, reveal the text and read it aloud to the class, inviting their reactions. Focus on the opening line, **“I can’t,” said the bigger one. “Not yet.”** Emphasise the reading of the words **“Not yet.”** *What does this tell us about her? Is she changing how she feels about going outside? Is the physical step of walking outside more than just going out? What will going outside mean to her? If his sister goes outside, what will it mean to the little one? Reread the text. Has your opinion of the butterfly changed? What role has the butterfly got in this scene?* Display some words on the board: loyal, protector, support, friend, mentor, lifeline, enemy, questioner, betrayer and comforter. Read the words and clarify the meaning of any unfamiliar words. Ask the children to choose some words and consider the role of the butterfly. Give the children time to feedback their reasons for the butterfly as a friend, for example, or even an enemy.
- Share and read the text from the next double page spread **without the illustration** from, **She wasn’t ready to go... up to ... from the dark safety of the broken house.** (display the original double page spread without the illustration so children can see where the text was positioned). Ask the children to summarise what happened in this part of the text. *Why has the author described the butterfly as ‘pesky?’ How does the mood change in this text? Are you satisfied as a reader?* If possible, give children an outline of the double spread page and allow them time to sketch/write the scene. Children could talk through their ideas and how they used clues from the written text to help them to decide what to draw. Share the original illustration and give children time to digest the images. *Why has the bigger one left the teddy on the bed? Does this tell us that she has confidence to go out alone? How is the blanket used in this image? She is no longer wrapped in it, instead she is dragging the blanket. Does this mean that she doesn’t need it fully now but is not ready to let it go? How is the bigger one standing? Remember her feet pointing inwards on the first double pages, now she stands differently. How would we describe her feelings now? Does this mean that she is stronger? What role might the butterfly have had? Why do you think that yellow flowers have been included again?*
- Read the last section from, **The butterfly didn’t look back...** to the end. *What does this section indicate about the mood of the story?* Support children to articulate that the bigger one needs to go back inside and deal with her shadows. Although she has made progress, she still needs to deal with her memories and broken home. You could hotseat the bigger one at this point in the story – choose a child to take on the role or an adult could do this again. Children could ask her questions or offer her advice, as before.
- Display the next two double spreads (**Just then the little one saw her** and the double page spread of the children hugging) for the children to reflect on and read the text, gathering their initial reactions to these pages? *What is the little one carrying? What is the significance of this? How does the rainbow join light and darkness/two siblings? What might the siblings be thinking as they hug? What is the significance of the abundance of yellow flowers in the background of the hug?* After collecting the children’s thoughts on these pages, ask them if they think this is the last page. *If this is the final page, are you satisfied with the ending?* Children may comment on the butterfly; they may want to know how its story also ends. Read the text again, **Just then the little one saw her. And he called her too. She didn’t know if she could reach him as the rainbow faded.**

- Share the final double page spread with the children and read the sentence, **But that day she did.** Invite the children to share how this makes them feel? How do they feel for the characters feel in this moment?
- Give the children an opportunity to explore the illustration in more detail and make a list of everything they can see in it. Encourage them to look for the little one; the bigger one; the blanket; the bunny; the yellow flowers and the butterfly. Support children to explain how there is now an abundance of colour and fun even though the grey buildings are present and the barbed wire fencing. Look back eight double page spreads where we see the small one in the tyre swing. Point out the tyre swing in this picture. *Was this huge array of fun the view the bigger one always had?* Explore how creative the children in this illustration have been with equipment. *Are all the children feeling the same way and having fun?* If the children haven't already noticed her, draw attention to the girl peering round from behind the tree on the left. *What do they think she is thinking and feeling? Why has the illustrator chosen to place her on the same page as the siblings with the other children playing on the right-hand side of the spread? What does this suggest about the siblings' relationship to each other as well as the role this girl could play in their lives to come?*
- Share the final end paper with the children. Remind children of the first end paper. Encourage children to make verbal comparisons and comment on why the illustrator has made those choices. *What is different at the end of the book? How has the illustrator managed to explain that without words?*

Revisiting the story as a whole

- Come back to the book and re-read the story again as a whole. Provide the children with time to reflect on the story throughout. Pose questions that will allow the children to explain and justify their opinions about the story, engaging them in books talk and deeper reader response:
 - What did you like about this story? What did you dislike? Why? Does it remind you of anything you know in real life or other stories? Do you have any questions? Does anything puzzle you?
 - Why do you think Helen Cooper wrote this story? What was she trying to do? Why do you think she chose the title 'Saving the Butterfly'?
 - What would you describe as the main themes of this story? Does the story have a message for us as readers?
 - From whose viewpoint was the story told? Where were we placed as readers in the story? Did our viewpoint remain the same or change at all? Who did you feel closer to – the bigger one, the little one or the butterfly? Why?
 - What was the purpose of the blanket? What was the main role of the butterfly? What else do you feel played a significant or symbolic role in this story?
- The children may talk more about some questions than others. If the children show a particular interest in a character or object – revisit the book and track the character or item throughout. For example, if you were tracking the blanket, you might complete a grid like that below as a shared activity, discussing the significance of the blanket throughout. Children may repeat this tracking process for the toy rabbit or yellow flowers.



1	Lady rescues the children – gives the bigger one the blanket.	Blanket is wrapped around the bigger one's shoulders.
2	Children are walking to their new broken home.	Blanket is now draped around both children as they walk.
3	Children are in bed.	Blanket is covering both of them.
4	Bigger one is looking out the broken window at her younger brother.	Blanket is draped around her shoulders.
5	Younger one runs inside with the butterfly.	Blanket is covering the bigger one-wrapped round her like a tent.
6	Bigger one goes outside for the first time.	She is dragging the blanket in one hand – it is trailing on the floor.
7	Younger one runs towards bigger one.	Blanket is covering one shoulder and she is holding a corner of it as it trails on the floor.
8	All of the children are playing.	The blanket is spread out on the floor for children to sit on.

- Recap the message about taking the first step to face your fear. Explore the view that the first step can often be the hardest. Children may want to share experiences where they have taken the first step to face their own fears. Be prepared to share your own in the first instance.

After reading, you could also:

- Provide an opportunity for children to debate if the girl saves herself or if it is a combination of her younger brother and the butterfly too?
- Provide opportunities for children to write the next part of the story.
- Children could create some artwork in the style of Gill Smith, exploring pen, ink and painterly techniques.
- Find out more about the work and motivations of both Helen Cooper and Gill Smith as author and illustrator on their websites www.helencooperbooks.co.uk and www.gillsmithillustration.com
- Create collages using different media including natural art that depict how to take steps to face your fears.
- Depending on the age and maturity of the children, support the children to write letters to their local MPs or to the Home Secretary regarding the laws and treatment of refugee children. You can support them to find out more about how a letter like this might look and sound, and even begin an awareness campaign, through materials produced by recognised charities, such as Save the Children - www.savethechildren.org/us/ways-to-help/become-a-fundraiser
- Invite the children to write about the significance of everyday items – blanket, a teddy and how they can be a link between the past and the present. Children could choose an object that is important in their lives and explain why.



Other titles by Helen Cooper:

- *The Bear under the Stairs* (Corgi)
- *The House Cat* (Scholastic)
- *Pumpkin Soup* (Corgi)
- *Delicious* (Corgi) — sequel to *Pumpkin Soup*
- *The Hippo at the End of the Hall* (David Fickling Books)

Other titles by Gill Smith:

- *My name is Not Refugee*, Kate Milner (The Bucket List)
- *The Journey*, Francesca Sanna (Flying Eye Books)
- *Me and My Fear*, Francesca Sanna (Flying Eye Books)
- *The Day War Came*, Nicola Davies and Rebecca Cobb (Walker Books)
- *Eric*, Shaun Tan (Templar)
- *The Island*, Armin Greder (Allen & Unwin)
- *Refugees and Migrants*, Ceri Roberts and Hanane Kai (Wayland)
- *The Invisible*, Tom Percival (Simon and Schuster)

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