

The Boy with Flowers in His Hair



JARVIS

ISBN: 9781406392517 • HARDBACK • £12.99 • FOR AGES 0-5

TEACHERS' NOTES



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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 Years 1 & 2 in mind but you will need to differentiate discussions and activities alongside the age and experience of your own children.

Before Reading:



As you read through the book it would be helpful to use a group journal to organise and store discussions and responses to the text. The journal can be a place to capture reflections on the plot, characters and themes, as well as how the writer uses language for effect.



Before reading, ask the children to each bring in a flower from home or from a walk they have been on. Either take pictures of the flowers to stick in the journal, or press the flowers using numerous heavy books. Then, ask each child to describe their flower using their senses, and note down their responses. In the group journal, create a double page spread of all of the children's flowers and words they have used to describe them. Finally, ask all of the children to complete the sentence 'Flowers make me feel...' and record their responses in the reading journal.



Before beginning, you could introduce or revisit the grammatical term *adjective* and their job in a sentence, as throughout your work on the book you will be discussing them. Explain to the children that adjectives are words used to describe nouns. Connect this to the words and phrases that the children have used to describe the flowers they each collected and pressed, explaining that 'flower' is a noun and that we came up with lots of different adjectives to describe this particular noun. You could practise writing *expanded noun phrases* with the children which relate to their flowers, using the adjectives they have already generated.

Reading aloud and key talking points:



Share the title of the book with the children, written in black pen on a white piece of paper (rather than sharing the front cover of the book). Ask the children to sketch a picture of what a boy with flowers in his hair might look like, using easily accessible drawing materials such as coloured pencils. The children can do this alone, or in a group, discussing their emerging ideas. When the children have finished their artwork, share the pictures with the wider group and discuss similarities and differences. Then ask the children to write down on a post it note one adjective they would use to describe this boy, e.g. kind, creative, messy.



Place all of the post it notes on one side of the page in the class journal. Explain to the children what an *antonym* is, and that we are now going to explore and discuss some antonyms for the adjectives we have used to describe the boy. To begin with, encourage the children to think of some on their own, then model how to use a thesaurus, app or word processing tools to look up different antonyms. Note them down next to their synonyms in the class journal.





Share the front cover of the book with the children, and compare the illustration of David with the pictures they have drawn. Again, discuss similarities and differences. *What surprises the children about the front cover? What do they like about the front cover? Does it tell them anything more about this character, and what might happen in his story? Which of the adjectives they noted down on post-it notes would they use to describe this character? How else might they describe him?*



Look closely at the flowers in David's hair on the front cover, and see if the children can see any that are similar to the flowers they picked or that they recognise. You could refer to books such as those listed at the end of these notes.



You could make some connections to the science curriculum, and discuss the basic things that flowers need to grow. Once you have made a note of these things, reflect on what children need to grow into strong, healthy humans, and discuss whether any of these things are the same. If you would like this to develop into a writing opportunity, you could create some basic instructions for how to look after a plant or flower as a group. You could then encourage children to write their own short set of instructions on how to look after a child, based on your discussions around the similarities between what all living things need to grow (food, water, light, rest, space).



Pause over the title page, with the picture of the red flower with bees buzzing around it. Ask the children why the author may have chosen to include this picture in the book. *What do the bees tell us about these flowers, and how they grow?* You could have a short session or discussion about the importance of bees when it comes to pollinating plants and, depending on the time of year, take a walk outside to look for bees busy at work in a local park.



Now share the first spread with the children, but conceal the text at this stage. Begin by inviting the pupils to explore their responses to the illustration with the help of what Aidan Chambers calls '**the four basic questions**'. These questions give children accessible starting points for discussion:

- Tell me...
- was there anything you liked about this text?
- was there anything that you particularly disliked?
- was there anything that puzzled you?
- were there any patterns, any connections that you noticed?



Encourage the children to talk about what is happening and to whom their eye is drawn and why. *How do they anticipate the story will open? What might be the first sentence?* Encourage the children to use their knowledge of how stories and picture books often start to compose an opening sentence. Ask the children to explain why they have chosen their sentences to each other, inviting them to comment on what is effective about each as well as comparing their different interpretations. Display the children's opening sentences around a photocopy of the first double page spread, in the class journal.



Reveal the text and read it aloud. Is this what the children expected? Why? Why not? Ask the children to reflect on who is telling the story; who that narrator might be. Why might the author have chosen for the best friend to tell the story? How does it make us feel about David?



Read on to the next double page spread, and pause over the words **sweet and gentle**. What does this tell us about the narrator's viewpoint? What would make David **sweet and gentle**? What does it mean to be sweet and gentle? How do you act? You might add this to the children's earlier descriptions if they haven't already thought of them.



Turn the page to the next spread and ask the children to consider where the children are; where this story is set. Turn back to the previous spreads to support discussion. *Do you recognise any of these places or activities?*





Now read aloud up to **It was really funny**. *How do David's classmates feel about his flowers? What tells us this and why might this be?* Encourage the children to draw on the evidence in the text and illustration to support their ideas and take the opportunity to model descriptive language, including a range of verbs that describe both action and emotion. You might need to mediate this discussion, modelling positive language and gently challenging views based on outdated stereotypes or prejudices.



Ask the children to consider which child they might like to be, and why? Invite small groups of children to form a silent tableau of their chosen scene by taking on and freezing in position as their favourite character. Invite the children to voice what their character might be thinking or feeling in this moment. Note the children's thoughts down in speech bubbles, and display them alongside a copy of the double page spread. You could use this role play and work around this double page spread as a writing opportunity for the children. The children might imagine that they are one of the children in David's class at school, and that they are writing a short letter or postcard to a family member they don't see very often. Using the double page spread, and the illustrations of all of the children in it, ask the children to write a letter describing some of the children in their class – and the activities they like to do together – to their family member. Encourage the children to draw on some of the descriptive language collected so far to support their descriptions.



You might begin to complete a Role on the Wall for David. Draw around a child in the class to represent the character. On the outside, note down all the things we know about what David looks like and things that he does; on the inside note down the things David might be thinking or feeling in different moments. Make explicit the links between what the children know for sure and what they are inferring from clues in the text and illustration.



Now read aloud the final sentence of this spread, **But one day, something happened**. Pause over this sentence with the children. *What might have happened?* Ask the children to make predictions about what might have happened and who it involved, encouraging them to infer meaning from the text so far as well as supporting them to draw on their understanding of personal relationships, this familiar school setting and other stories they know. Note the children's predictions, reflecting on how each would have an effect on:

- David
- His best friend – the narrator
- The other children at nursery/school



Encourage the children to sketch a series of images that help them to storymap what they think might happen over the next few pages. Encourage the children to share their story ideas with each other and the wider group, discussing the similarities and differences in each of their interpretations.



Re-read **But one day, something happened**. and continue to read on to the next spread. Pause to discuss what has happened and what this might mean for the two characters. *What will it mean for the story; what do the children predict will happen now?*



Turn the page to reveal the illustration spread strewn with petals along the floor and the sole figure of the narrator. How does this make the children feel? What has happened? Why do they think that **David doesn't want to play**? What do you think his friend is thinking and feeling? Encourage the children to look carefully at clues provided in his body position, facial expression and gaze. Invite the children to share a time when they may have felt like this – perhaps sad, regretful, guilty, worried – being prepared to use your own personal narrative to deepen understanding and empathy for this fictional character.



Turn the page, reading aloud the text and looking carefully at the illustration. *What is happening here? Can the children spot David? Why might he be being quiet? Why do they think he is wearing a hat?* Once again, invite the children to create a silent tableau of this scene, maybe outside your own classroom door as the children are doing so in the story, coming back in from playtime. This time, ask the children to act out what they might say or do, seeing such a change in their classmate



David. How might the narrator, or David, behave in this scene? How do we know how these key characters are feeling or what they might be thinking? Note these exchanges and actions, perhaps in the form of a short play script, inviting children to use the script to perform a short scene in a play.



Read on to the end of the spread in which we see that **David was twiggy, spiky and brittle**. Invite the children's initial reactions, noting down their responses around a copy of the image of David. *Is this what they expected? Why? Why not? How does it make them feel?* What do they think David has been thinking and feeling; what about his best friend, our narrator? Revisit the previous spreads following **But one day, something happened**.



Revisit the moment in which David takes his hat off and the author's description of how the **petals fluttered down like butterflies**. Ask the children to imagine how long it took for all the petals to reach the floor if they **fluttered**. *What do they imagine the rest of the class were thinking and saying in that time? What impact would this have had on David, and those around him? Why has he compared the falling petals to butterflies? How else might they describe the falling petals to convey their movement?* Invite the children to move in the way they think fluttering butterflies would and to think of other things that move in this way. You might create some different similes together that describes David's flowers gently falling to the ground.



Turn the page to reveal the two friends playing and on the other page of the spread other classmates playing together. At this stage, conceal the text and invite the children's response only to the illustration. *What do you think is happening here? How do they think David feels at the moment? Why? What are the other children thinking? Why are they staring at him?* Revisit other illustrations which show the children playing together. *What has changed? Why are they not playing with him now?* Now read the text aloud up to **but it wasn't David's fault**, inviting the children's immediate responses.



Ask the children to reflect on a time they have felt left out, like David might be feeling. They could share these experiences in a circle time format, with encouragement from you as the facilitating adult to consider what helped them to feel included. As an extension of this discussion, or perhaps with a more mature class, you could open up a conversation with the children about whether they have ever left anyone out of a game, why they did this and what were the consequences. The class might like to write a note to any of these characters offering them reassurance, comfort or even advice.



Read on to **Then I had an idea**. Invite the children to discuss the idea he might have and whether they think it involves supporting David practically or emotionally. *What would help David most?* Invite small groups to role play a scenario where one of their friends is sad or hurt, or has lost something very special to them. *Have they ever experienced a change that upset them? What would the children do to cheer their friend up, or offer them help? What helps when they feel like this?*



Read on to **to give David his colour back**. Is this what the children expected? Why? Why not? How does it make them feel? What does it tell us about the boys' relationship? What words would we use to describe each of them? Is David the only **sweet and gentle** child?



Read up to **Almost**, on page 14. Ask the children why they think David hasn't quite got back to **how he was before** yet. *What is different?* You might engage the children in creating paper flowers and comparing them to their real flowers. *How do they compare? What would mean that David will be the same as before; what would need to happen?* The children might suggest that he would need to grow real flowers again instead of decorating his branches with paper ones. Or they may feel that his mood would improve and he would return to his usual funny self again. Discuss all of the children's ideas. Some children may have had experience of physical changes such as hair loss in themselves or those around them for a range of reasons, including illness, and so you will need to be sensitive in deciding whether to engage in this discussion as a class or at all; and to mediate appropriate to the age and experience of your children.



Read right through to the end of the book, without stopping. Invite the children to share their responses to what has happened and how David has returned to the way he was before by growing



real flowers. Now read the whole story from start to finish again and invite the children to reflect on what they liked and disliked about it and any questions they still have or any connections they are making to other stories or real life. The children might reflect on why David's friend would make sure he has **lots of paper ones just in case he ever needs them**. *What makes him think he would need them again? Why might his flowers fall out again?* Depending on the age and experience of the children, they might relate this to seasonal change to plants or connect it to physical changes in the body like hair loss.



End by asking the children to think about what this story is really about. Why do they think the author, Jarvis, wanted to write it for children? What does he want to show them in this book about how we can treat each other? If you were to tell someone else about this book, what would you tell them? What would you want them to learn about it? Support the children to summarise the human themes that are addressed so beautifully in this story such as the power of friendship or kindness.



You might finish by asking the children to help David write a short thank you note to his best friend for helping him when he felt sad. Support the children to include details about how David was feeling at different points in the story, and why he appreciated his kindness and his help so much at a time of sudden change.

After reading, you could also:



Focus the children's attention to the narrator and best friend. You could create a role on the wall for this character. What do the children know and feel about this character? What do his actions tell us about the kind of person he is on the inside? What might his name be? Ask the children to consider what the story might have been like if David had been the narrator. What might the story have been called? Storyboard how the author might have told the story differently, and then ask the children to rewrite or dramatise key scenes or the whole story.



Think about the key theme of kindness and friendship with the children. You could create a display of books that explore these themes, inviting the children to share them with you or each other. You could instigate a project in which the children engage in planned or random acts of kindness and work to promote it within the school or even local community.



Show the children pictures or time lapse videos of summer turning to autumn, and then to winter, to show how nature evolves and changes throughout the year. Explain that one of the markers of the seasons changing is that trees lose their leaves, and flowers lose their petals. Use this to explore why David might have lost his petals, whether the children think it is connected to the seasons, or whether they think there is another explanation.



Invite the children to make their own paper flowers, and then compare them to the flowers they pressed (or some fresh flowers). What is different about these two types of flowers, and what is the same? Children could create floral headdresses for themselves and for their friends and family.

Other suggested titles by Jarvis or to further support the exploration of themes arising from the book:

Between Tick and Tock by Louise Greig and Ashling Lindsay (Egmont)

The Hospital Dog by Julia Donaldson and Sara Ogilvie (Macmillan)

Meesha Makes Friends by Tom Percival (Bloomsbury)

The Robot and the Bluebird by David Lucas (Anderson)

The Lost Homework by Richard O'Neil and Kirstu Beautiman (Child's Play)

On Sudden Hill by Linda Sarah and Benji Davies (Simon and Schuster)

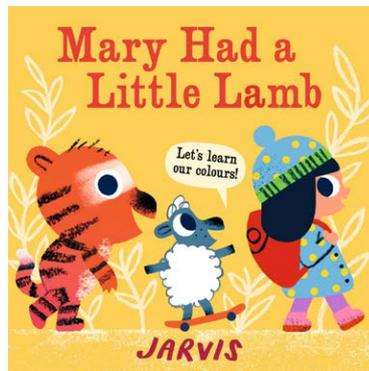
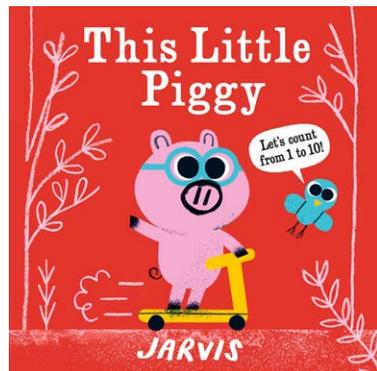
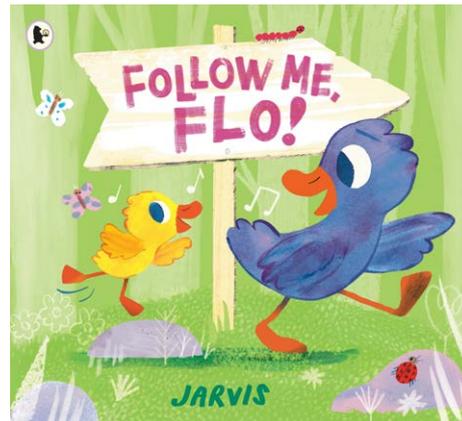
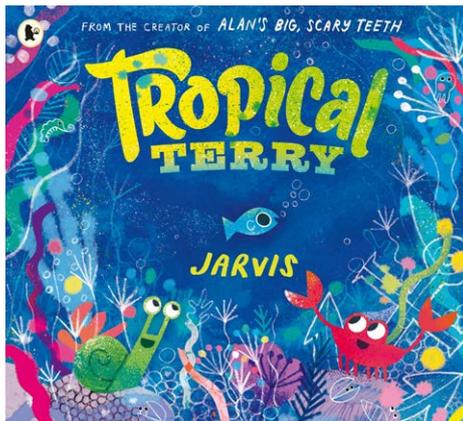
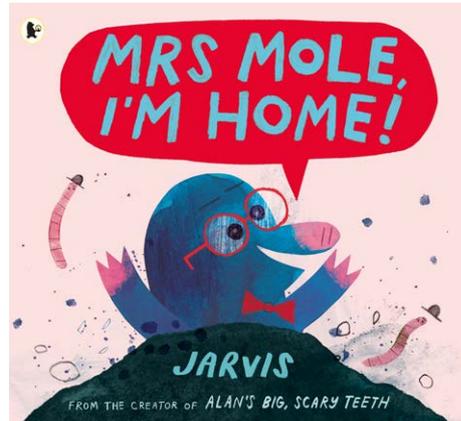
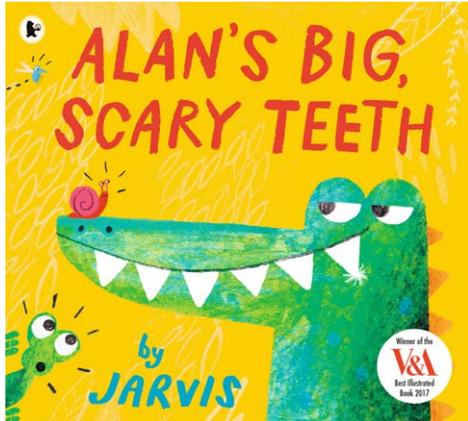


The Heart and the Bottle by Oliver Jeffers (Harper Collins)

How to Heal a Broken Wing by Bob Graham (Walker)

A Little Guide to Wild Flowers by Charlotte Voake (Eden)

Flowers to Spot, by Sam Smith and Kirsteen Robson, illustrated by Stephanie Fizer Coleman (Usborne Minis)



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