

WALKER BOOKS

# TEACHERS' NOTES



## *We're Going on a Bear Hunt*

CELEBRATING 30 YEARS

*Michael Rosen*

*Helen Oxenbury*



[Jointhebearhunt.com](http://Jointhebearhunt.com)

#bearhunt



# *We're Going on a Bear Hunt*

*Michael Rosen • Helen Oxenbury*

## ABOUT THE BOOK

### SYNOPSIS

*We're Going on a Bear Hunt*, the award winning adaptation of a folk song, is a modern classic. It tells the story of adventurous siblings who, accompanied by their pet dog, go on a search for a bear. Overcoming obstacles on the way the fun turns into something more sinister when they actually meet the bear. Is the bear really out to get them though or is he looking for a friend?

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



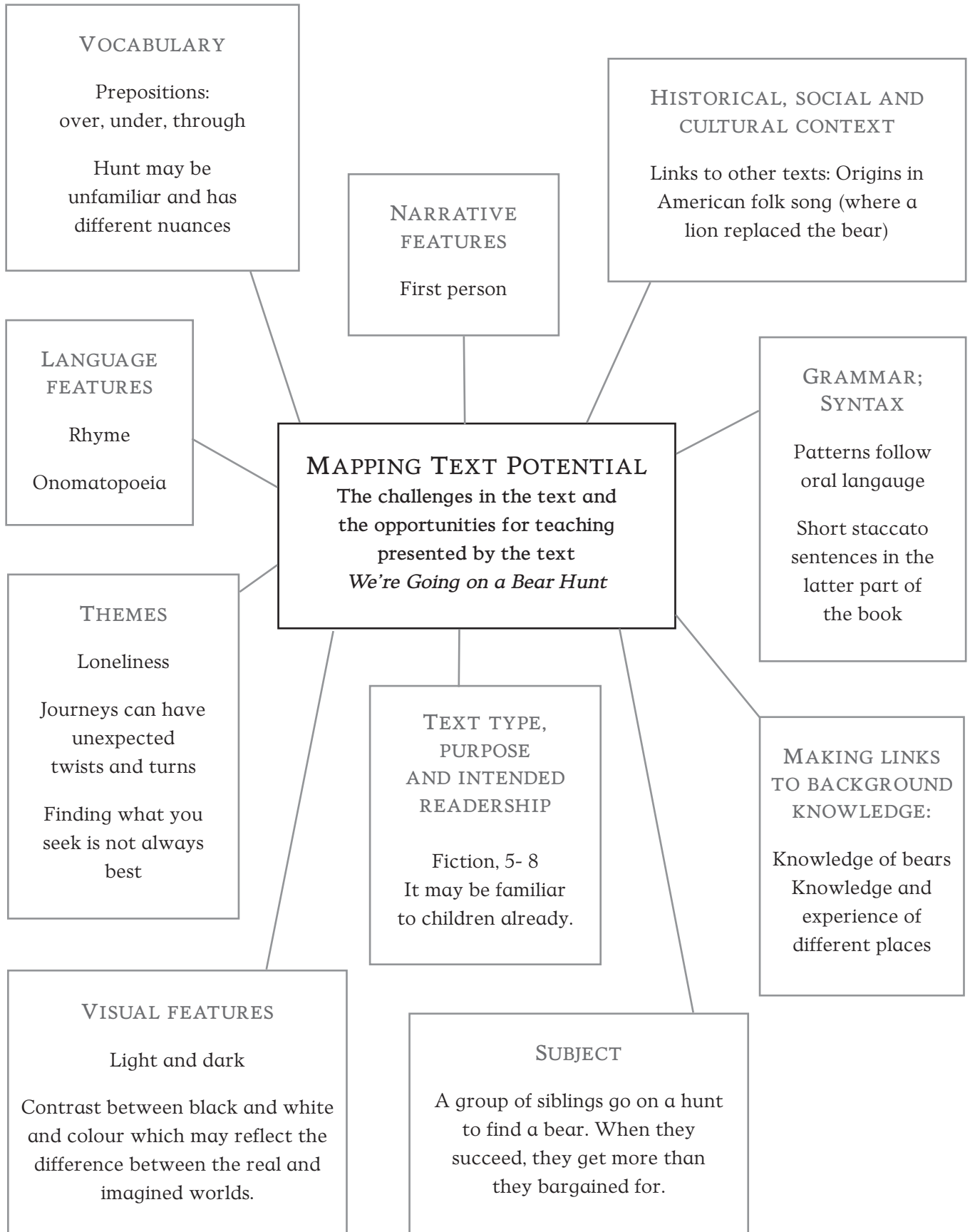
Michael Rosen is a prolific and hugely popular author, poet, lecturer and broadcaster. As one of the first poets to visit schools he has been captivating and enthusing children for many years. His style captures the way children really talk and holds wide appeal. His work has been recognised with many awards including the Signal Poetry Award and Smarties Book Prize.

### ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR



Helen Oxenbury always loved drawing as child and trained in theatre design. She began to illustrate children's books when she and her late husband John Burningham started a family. As well as the Kate Greenaway Medal and Smarties Book Prize she has been honoured with the BookTrust Lifetime Achievement Award.

# EXPLORING WHAT THE TEXT OFFERS



Tennent, W., Reedy, D., Gamble, N., and Hobsbaum, A. (2016) Guiding Readers: Layers of Meaning. London: UCL/ IOE.



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Written by Just Imagine Centre for Excellence in Reading.

# EXCITE / ORIENTATION

## WARM UP: PLAY 'GRANDMA'S FOOTSTEPS'

### Purpose

This is a game which introduces tension as it raises the heartbeat. It also introduces the idea of a hunt.

### Preparation

Choose someone to be Grandma and check the children know the rules.

### Process

One person is Grandma (or Grandpa) at the front of the room. The rest of the class has to creep up on Grandma. Grandma can turn around at any point and when she does, everyone has to freeze. Anyone caught moving is sent back to the start.

### Final Reflection

Ask the person at the front how they felt knowing that others were creeping up on them. 'What did it feel like when you were creeping up on Grandma?' Make a note of the different feelings expressed to refer back to later in the unit.

## SPOTLIGHT ON VOCABULARY

### Purpose

The word 'hunt' may be one children have heard used but they may not use it in their spoken vocabulary. It has a different meaning to going on an adventure or journey. This activity explores what the word means and how it is used in different contexts before relating it to the story.

### Preparation

Large sheet of sugar paper

### Process

Write the word 'hunt' in the centre of the sheet of paper. Ask the children if they have seen or heard this word before. Can they write a sentence or more than one sentence with the word in? This will give you the opportunity to assess their prior knowledge.

You may choose to share these two definitions of hunt with the class depending on their age and experiences:

- pursue and kill (a wild animal) for sport or food
- search determinedly for someone or something

### Final Reflection

Can you think of a time you have hunted for something?

## PREDICTION: EXPLORING THE TITLE

### Purpose

This activity encourages children to consider the role of the title in making predictions about the type of story they will read. It also offers the opportunity to look at word classes.

### Preparation

Write the following words to display to the children: mouse, chocolate, mysterious, jump.

### Process

Share the title with the children covering up the word 'bear'. Begin by asking them if they think this is a strange title and why. Hopefully they will comment on the lack of detail about the type of hunt it is. Share the following list of words with the children:

- Mouse
- Chocolate
- Mysterious
- Jump

Which word do they think works best to fill in the gap? Encourage them to justify their responses and talk about what type of story might follow the title.

Ask pairs of children to think of a word which could fit in the gap. This could be an opportunity for using the terms 'noun', 'adjective' and 'verb' with the children and considering why some words will fit better into this sentence.

### Final Reflection

Which type of hunt would the children rather go on and why?

## MAKING PREDICTIONS

### Purpose

Studies show how encouraging developing readers to predict the action and events of upcoming text can support the development of inference-making skills during reading (Palinscar and Brown, 1984). This activity requires the reader to activate prior knowledge and anticipate upcoming text in light of their existing knowledge.

### Preparation

Prepare the front cover image to be shared with the children.

### Process

Share the image without sharing the title. Encourage the children to ask questions. If they are reluctant you may need to model this process.

Some possible questions are:

- Who are the people?
- Do they know each other?
- Where are they going?

- Have they been somewhere or are they on their way home?

### Final Reflection

It is interesting that many readers have assumed that the male figure carrying the child is the father when in fact it is supposed to be the big brother. You may choose whether to share this with the children. It could make an interesting talking point later in the unit.

## FIRST ENCOUNTERS

### READ ALOUD

#### Resources

Copies of the book, preferably one each or one between two.

#### Purpose

When sharing a new book for the first time it is important to read aloud just for enjoyment. This allows children to build knowledge of story structure. Stopping too frequently with questions interferes with this process. Reading aloud also enables children to hear what text sounds like so that they can internalise the voice when they read to themselves.

Occasionally, you may want to stop at a key point to predict what might happen next, encouraging the children to use clues from what you have already read, but do this sparingly.

Reading a book or passage for a second time allows you to check understanding at both literal and inferential levels and to discuss themes and ideas.

#### Preparation

Copies of *We're Going on a Bear Hunt* or a visualiser for projection.

#### Process

Read the story the first time. Invite the children to tell you or each other what has happened in the story. This will enable you to assess their literal understanding and identify any areas of miscomprehension.

Asking a question which requires inference can help you assess understanding on a deeper level. You might ask:

- Why will they not want to go on a bear hunt again?

### Final Reflection

Read aloud again this time inviting the class to join in if they wish to. You could ask them to comment on the most memorable lines.

## READING FOR FLUENCY

### Purpose

Children at the earlier stages of reading need plenty of opportunities to practise reading aloud to support their developing fluency. Prosody, the patterns of stress and intonation, often needs more attention. The following process gives the opportunity to focus in on the rise and fall in pitch and patterns of pausing when reading which in turn supports a more nuanced reading of text.

### Preparation

Copies of *We're Going on a Bear Hunt* or a visualiser to project.

### Process

- Echo Reading: Read a short section of the story first then the children echo back the passage. The section needs to be long enough to make sure children are not relying on short term memory. Four lines at a time is ideal for this story. Read in this way from 'Tiptoe! Tiptoe! Tiptoe!' to the end of the story.
- Paired reading: Each child reads half of the selected text with the other child offering support. They should then swap roles. These pairings can be self selected or mixed ability.

### Final Reflection

If possible send copies of the book home for children to read aloud to an adult to give further opportunities for practise.

## PLAYING WITH WORDS

### Purpose

This is a playful look at rhyme and the way using different words can alter meanings.

### Preparation

Large sheet of paper.

Title with 'bear' removed.

### Process

Write the word 'bear' in the middle of the sheet of paper. Which words rhyme with bear?

You may generate a list with words like these:

- pear, square, air, care, dare, fair, fare, hair, lair, pair, rare

The different spelling patterns for these rhyming words can be noted and the words sorted. Following this you can discuss how each word would change the type of hunt that you would go on.

### Final Reflection

Encourage the children to find further examples of rhyming words to add to the collection.

## FOCUS ON SETTING: WOULD YOU RATHER?

### Purpose

Making connections between a text and real life helps make a story more relevant and therefore readers become more engaged and motivated.

### Preparation

Settings cards (a set of cards with the following written on them):

- a deep cold river
- thick oozy mud
- a big dark forest
- a swirling whirling snowstorm
- a narrow gloomy cave

See next page for Setting Cards to cut out.

### Process

Children may already be familiar with John Burningham's book *Would You Rather... ?* where the reader makes choices between various strange options. First choose two cards and ask:

- Would you rather go through a swirling whirling snowstorm or a narrow gloomy cave?

Children should make a choice with reasons. Once they have the idea they can play in small groups.

### Final Reflection

Invite the children to create additional settings to add to the game.





## Setting Cards



a deep cold river	a big dark forest
thick oozy mud	a swirling whirling snowstorm
a narrow gloomy cave	

# DIGGING DEEPER

## EXPLORING EMPHASIS

### Purpose

Making decisions about which words and syllables to place emphasis on supports the development of prosody which is vital for reading fluency.

### Preparation

Copies of the two sentences

### Process

Read the line putting the emphasis on a different word each time, e.g.

We've got to go through it.  
We've **got** to go through it.  
We've got **to** go through it.  
We've got to **go** through it.  
We've got to go **through** it.  
We've got to go through **it**.

Does this affect the meaning of the sentence? Which way of reading works best do you think? Some work better than others, but there is more than one answer. The important thing is to get the children listening, thinking and explaining their thinking.

Repeat with the second sentence but this time ask the children to read with a partner.

We're not going on a bear hunt again.  
We're **not** going on a bear hunt again.  
We're not **going** on a bear hunt again.  
We're not going **on** a bear hunt again.  
We're not going on **a** bear hunt again.  
We're not going on a **bear** hunt again.  
We're not going on a bear **hunt** again.  
We're not going on a bear hunt **again**.

Repeat the questions above.

### Final Reflection

Give time to re-read the book. First read aloud to the children asking them to listen out for the words you place greater emphasis on. Then give time to paired reading of the story. One child should begin reading while the other listens, follows and supports if necessary. Do they feel their reading has changed?

## EXPLORING CHARACTER: FIRST MEETING WITH THE BEAR

### Purpose

The bear appears at first to be a rather scary character especially when we see him through the eyes of the children. However there could be more to the bear than meets the eye and spending time exploring further will demonstrate that the way characters behave can be open to interpretation.

### Preparation

Copies of the picture of the bear when the dog enters the cave. Sticky notes or thought bubbles.

### Process

The illustration where the dog sees the bear for the first time is powerful and the body language of the two is depicted clearly. Begin by asking what the children notice about the characters of the dog and bear on this page. Working in pairs, imitate the pose using a freeze frame. Explain that when you tap someone on the shoulder, they will say what they are thinking at this moment. Try to encourage more sustained response by probing. Using 'tell me more' can be a helpful strategy here. Record responses and add to the illustration.

### Final Reflection

Encourage the children to relate this to people. Often we make quick judgements but when we get to know someone, we might discover new things about them. Is it a problem to make a judgement too quickly?

## EXPLORING THE BEAR'S CHARACTER: ROLE-ON-THE-WALL

### Purpose

Role on the wall is a technique which allows pupils to explore the inner feelings of a character as well as outward appearances.

### Preparation

Draw an enlarged outline of the bear on a large sheet of paper.

### Process

Begin by writing descriptions of the bear's appearance around the outline. Add examples of behaviour to the outline. Completing this requires a literal understanding of the story as the information can be retrieved from the text and illustrations.

The inside of the bear is used to show the bear's thoughts and feelings. To fill this in requires the children to make inferences from the text and illustrations. Make this point explicit to the children. What information did we use to make these inferences about the bears thoughts and feelings?

### Final Reflection

Did you agree about the bear's thoughts and feelings or were your interpretations different?

# REVIEW AND REFLECT

## EXPLORING CHARACTER: BEAR'S FEELINGS

### Purpose

Readers generally perceive that the bear is chasing the children to frighten them and is putting them in danger. However the final illustration makes the bear seem less dangerous.

### Preparation

Copies of the book or access to a visualiser.

### Process

Begin by asking the children why they think the bear chases the children. Record responses that you can reflect on later.

Share the final illustration of the bear from the endpapers. Give pairs of children a set of words to describe the bear. (aggressive, bold, calm, cheerful, curious, daring, friendly, gentle, lonely, lovable – see Character Traits cards on the next page.)

Ask the children, to choose the words which seem to describe the bear best in this particular illustration.

Now ask the children if this illustration has made them think differently about the bear's reaction to the children. What would they want to ask the bear? Record their suggestions. If necessary, you might want to extend the list of questions.

Questions might include:

How did you feel when you first saw the dog in your cave?

Why did you chase the children?

How often do people visit your cave?

Do you have any family or friends?

Do you live alone in your cave?

How do you feel about being on your own?


Hot seating can be used to explore the way the bear might respond to these questions.

### Final Reflection

Return to the first question and ask if anyone has changed their mind.



## Character Traits Cards

aggressive	bold	brave
curious	daring	carefree
friendly	gentle	strong
calm	cheerful	timid
lonely	lovable	

## EXPLORING ALTERNATIVES: WHAT IF...

### Purpose

Exploring alternative endings will enable children to demonstrate an understanding of the motives of the bear.

### Preparation

A large sheet of paper with two columns - one headed 'good thing' and one headed 'bad thing'.

### Process

Explain that you are going to think about how the story could have ended differently. Look at the page where the children run out of the cave. Ask what might have happened if the children had stayed in the cave?

Can the children think of any good things that could have happened (e.g. they stay and play together or the bear isn't lonely anymore). What about any bad things? (e.g. the bear might have eaten them or the bear might have roared at them until they went away).

### Final Reflection

Suggest the children choose a preferred alternative ending and write and illustrate their own double page spread.

## USING SOUND TO EXPLORE MOOD AND ATMOSPHERE

### Purpose

This story lends itself well to creating an accompanying soundtrack. Using sound is an excellent way to explore the mood and atmosphere of a story and this story has distinct mood changes.

### Preparation

A collection of musical instruments.  
A recording device.

### Process

Begin with the second double page spread, 'swishy swashy!' Say, 'I wonder which sounds would go best with this page'. Take suggestions from the children and invite them to talk to a partner and choose a sound to make. This could be with their voice, body or a musical instrument. Play the sounds then ask how they would write the sound down.

Go through the book again page by page sharing ideas about accompanying sounds. Agree on notation to go with the sounds. Divide the class into groups and allocate a spread to each group. Give time for the groups to practise their part. When preparing for the performance you will need to act as the conductor and agree signals for increasing volume, starting, stopping, picking up pace and slowing down.

This could be performed in front of the school with the accompanying text being read by either an adult or a group of narrators.

### Final reflection

Invite the children to consider how well they interpreted the story with their soundtrack. Which bits do they think worked best?

## VISUAL LITERACY

### Purpose

In a highly visual world it is important to teach children to be critical readers of images. Helen Oxenbury makes use of dark and light to great effect to convey the changing emotions and mood of the characters. The contrast between the colour and black and white pages is another interesting technique.

### Preparation

Copies of *We're Going on a Bear Hunt*

Emotion cards

### Process

Ask the children to look through the illustrations and look at the sky in each colour illustration. What do you notice? Their responses will be likely to refer to the darkening skies. Now ask them to look at the expressions on the faces of the children. How are they feeling in each illustration? Sometimes children find it difficult to come up with appropriate vocabulary so providing a range of emotion words for them to match is a way of supporting vocabulary development. The following words may be useful but encourage the children to add their own if they are more relevant:

- excited, nervous, happy, anxious, worried, joyful, confident, determined, hopeful, relieved, disappointed, terrified, petrified, furious, despairing

See next page for Emotion Cards to cut out.

### Final Reflection

Spend some time exploring light and dark in the final image of the bear in the endpapers.

The following questions may prompt deeper thinking:


Where is there light on this spread? (the light of the moon reflecting on the sea)

Which way is the bear moving? (towards the darkness)

Which emotion word would you choose to describe the bear's feelings at this time?

Where would you want to be on this page?

# Emotion Cards



excited	happy	nervous	anxious	worried
confident	joyful	bored	determined	frightened
hopeful	confused	disappointed	sad	despairing
relieved	angry	petrified	calm	thankful
gloomy	lonely	furious	terrified	weary



## VISUAL LITERACY: CHARACTER AND EMOTION

### Purpose

In *We're Going on a Bear Hunt* the illustrations reveal more about the feelings of the characters than the text. As the journey progresses, the body language and expressions on the characters' faces change while the text continues to repeat with only the settings changing. The following process is designed to support inference making through image.

### Preparation

A device to take photographs.

Copies of the book.

Sticky notes or large thought bubbles cut out.

### Process

Choose 4 or 5 children to come out to the front. Make sure everyone can see the first black and white spread. Ask the group at the front to create the same pose as the children in the picture. Other members of the class can offer help and suggestions. Draw a thought bubble on the board and ask the children what each member of the group may be feeling. Support this by asking them to give reasons for their thoughts. Encourage close looking at facial expressions and body language. Take a photograph and capture the thoughts either on the photo or the original illustration. Next groups of children will work together to create their own freeze frames of the other black and white spreads. They should also choose an emotion card or create their own to hold and reveal later in the session. Make sure the other groups do not know which scenes others have and they can share their freeze frames and guess which scene it is.

Invite each group to share their freeze frames and take a photograph. Each character can share their emotion card and explain why they picked it. At the end collect in the emotion cards for one character for each scene and display them on the board. Do the feelings change as the journey goes on?

### Final Reflection

The children could fill in a thought bubble which contains the words that the character is feeling, e.g. I don't really want to go in there. It looks too dark. I'm really frightened.

## WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

### WRITING IN ROLE: DIARY WRITING

#### Purpose

Writing a diary entry gives children the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of the key events of the story as well as their ability to empathise with characters and see things through their eyes.

### Preparation

It may be helpful to have a planning format available, e.g. a simple table with space for a drawing.

### Process

The simplest way to do this is to ask the children to capture key events in the story and write about them in role as one of the children. Offer support in the way you would normally by planning and modelling. Refer back to previous work on the emotions felt by the characters at different moments in the story to include some description of feelings.

For a more challenging writing task ask children to write in role as the bear. This involves beginning with a description of being in the cave on your own. The next event is when the group enter the cave then the journey back to the house. The diary entry should also give the bear's reasons for going after the children.

### Final Reflection

Invite the children to consider whether they could imagine themselves as one of the characters when they were writing. Did it make it easier or more difficult to write?

## ALTERNATIVE ENDINGS

### Purpose

Considering alternative endings will support the children's understanding of the bear's motives in going after the children.

### Process

Write an alternative ending which explores what happens if the children stopped in the cave instead of running away. Begin by getting the children to imagine this through play first before drawing ideas. You could even use small world play to do this.

### Final Reflection

Which ending do you prefer and why?

## LETTER WRITING

### Purpose

This writing task challenges the children to write in role as one of the characters reflecting on the way they ran from the bear.

### Preparation

Enlarged copy of the 'letter' from the bear or copies for children.

### Process

Share the letter with the children:

*Dear children*

*I am the bear who lives in the narrow gloomy cave. Yesterday you came to my cave but then you ran away. Why did you do that? I hope I didn't frighten you. At first when your dog ran in I was frightened and I suppose I might have looked angry and a bit scary. Then I was excited because I thought you had come to play. Please come back and visit me again and I will make some sandwiches and cakes for you to share.*

*Love from*

*The Bear*

Ask them how the letter makes them feel. Hopefully they will express sadness and perhaps regret that they ran away. What sort of things would you say to the bear if you wrote back? Collect ideas and model writing a reply. Use paper and envelopes to compose replies.

### **Final Reflection**

Give the finished letters out so that each child has a different letter to read. Ask: How do you think the bear will feel when he reads the letter?

## **CROSS CURRICULAR LINKS**

### **ART/DESIGN TECHNOLOGY: SCENE IN A SHOEBOX**

#### **Purpose**

Exploring a setting through different media allows for a different way to engage with a text and express understanding.

#### **Preparation**

A range of materials, e.g. paint, paper, junk modelling.  
Shoe boxes.

#### **Process**

This activity can be completed individually or in pairs. You may wish to allow the children to choose. They will choose one of the settings from the story to recreate using a small box, e.g. a shoe box. Once they have chosen, they can plan their design and list the materials they will need. This is an activity which could be enhanced by inviting parents and carers to join their child in making their scene. Once the scene is complete, add captions and display for others to admire.

#### **Final Reflection**

Evaluate the models by getting the children to ask each other questions about their work. e.g.

- How did you create that effect?
- Which part of your model are you proudest of?
- Is there anything you would change if you did it again?

## CREATING A 3D MAP OF THE JOURNEY

### Purpose

Using modelling to re create the journey allows children to express their understanding of key events and places in the story without needing to write it down.

### Preparation

Range of modelling materials, e.g. clay.

Paints.

Tissue paper.

### Process

This is an activity which can be completed on a large scale as a whole class or in small groups.

Explain that you are going to work together to create a 3D map of the journey in the story. Check that the children understand the term 3D before planning how you can create the different parts of the map. You may want to draw out a map to use as a guide or allow the groups complete freedom to map it out themselves.

### Final Reflection

Use the maps to orally retell the story.

## BEARS IN FICTION AND NON-FICTION

### Purpose

Bears feature in many works of fiction for children and are popular soft toys. Children are not always aware of how bears behave in the wild as they may not encounter many 'real' bears either in books or real life.

### Preparation

A range of books featuring bears, both fiction and non-fiction.

Toy bears.

### Process

Begin by asking what fictional bears the children know. List these and ask how bears usually behave in these stories. Next ask:

- Why are bears popular toys?
- Do you think the fictional bears and toy bears behave like bears in the wild?

The children may recognise that they don't know very much about bears and you could introduce information books to support them in finding out more, e.g.:

Where are bears found in the wild?

What types of habitat do they live in?

Do they live in family groups or alone?

How do they get food?



Draw a table with two headings:

- Bears in the wild
- Bears in stories

Use the information gathered to list the differences between the real bears and fictional.

### Final Reflection

Consider which bears the children would prefer to meet and whether the bear in *We're Going on a Bear Hunt* is more like a real bear or a fictional one.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

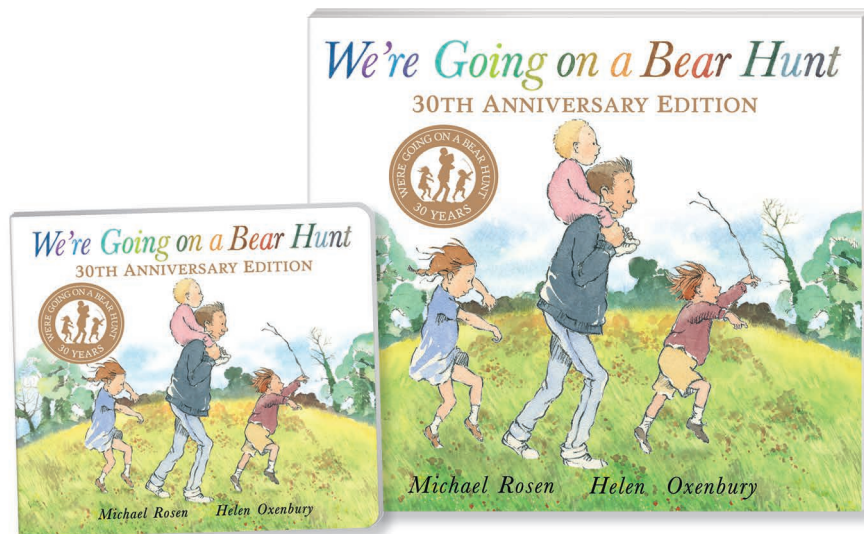
*The Lonely Giant* by Sophie Ambrose

The giant in this story is another lonely character and reading this book could lead to some interesting discussions and comparisons.

*Ice Bear* by Nicola Davies

A glorious read aloud packed full of information about polar bears.

## WE'RE GOING ON A BEAR HUNT BOOKS



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30th Anniversary Edition • 9781406386769 • Board Book • £6.99

Visit [jointhebearhunt.com](http://jointhebearhunt.com) for fun activities, games and to watch a video of Michael Rosen performing *We're Going on a Bear Hunt*.

Notes by Just Imagine

Just Imagine is a Centre for Excellence in Reading and runs reading programmes and training for teachers across the UK.

