

Harper and the Scarlet Umbrella
by Cerrie Burnell and Laura Ellen Anderson

Lesson 1 – The Mystery of the Missing Cats

Learning objective

In narratives, to create characters, settings and plot.

Outcomes

The children will have written the opening scene of a play based on events in the story.

Resources

- Activity Sheet 1 – The Mystery of the Missing Cats
- Activity Sheet 2 – Off to the Opera!

Task 1

In Chapter 5 of *Harper and the Scarlet Umbrella* Ferdie begins to think about writing a play based on the mystery of the missing cats and we learn that the cats have been enchanted away to be in a cat orchestra. Invite the children to write their own version of the opening scene of the play, where a group of children are searching for missing cats – they may have other ideas about why the cats are disappearing. Allow them to use Activity Sheet 1, *The Mystery of the Missing Cats*, to gather their ideas.

Task 2

Before the children write their opening scenes, look together at Activity Sheet 2 – *Off to the Opera!* Suggest the children act out the short scene in pairs, following the stage directions. Then invite some of the pairs to present their scenes to the rest of the class. Invite positive comments on their performances.



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Lesson 1 – The Mystery of the Missing Cats

Task 3

When the children are happy with how a simple play script is set out, ask them to use their plan from Task 1 to write their own short play script for the opening scene of their version of the mystery of the missing cats.

Extension

Invite the children to extend their opening scenes by writing further scenes to develop their story, maybe even solving the mystery! Some children may enjoy choosing friends to rehearse and act out their completed scenes.

Curriculum links

Y5/6 – English

- In narratives, describe settings, characters and atmosphere and integrate dialogue to convey character and advance the action.

All year groups – Spoken language

- To participate in discussions, presentations, performances, role play, improvisations and debates.



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Activity Sheet 1 – The Mystery of the Missing Cats

Make some notes about the opening scene of a play based on disappearing cats.

Who are your main characters?

The children looking for the cats are...

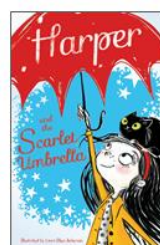
The person or people taking the cats are...

The names of some of the cats are...

The cats are disappearing because...

The setting of the opening scene is...

The opening scene begins with...



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Activity Sheet 2 – Off to the Opera!

Act out this scene with a partner.

Scene: In Great Aunt Sassy's living room in the Tall Apartment Block.

Great Aunt Sassy (*excitedly*) I'm going to the Dutch Opera in ten minutes exactly!

Harper And I suppose you're going in the usual way?

Great Aunt Sassy Of course! The helicopter will be here very soon!

Harper (*curious*) What will you be doing for them this time Great Aunt Sassy?

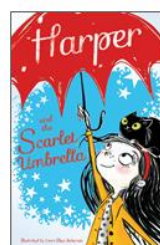
Great Aunt Sassy (*eagerly*) There's to be a new production set in Egypt and I am to design all the costumes! It's a challenge but very exciting!

Harper (*impressed*) Egypt! Oh how wonderful! Have you ever been there Sassy?

Great Aunt Sassy (*thinking*) Well now, let me think...I was in India many years ago and I also spent some time in Turkey and...yes! I did visit Egypt when I was very much younger.

Harper (*listening*) That's your helicopter coming now I think Sassy! Have a wonderful time!

Great Aunt Sassy (*kissing Harper*) I will my darling. I will. (*She waves and leaves*).



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Lesson 2 – Finding Your Way

Learning Objectives

(Science) To set up simple practical enquiries that demonstrate comparative and fair tests. To make systematic and careful observations.

Outcome

The children will have set up and conducted a fair test, recording their observations as it is carried out. They will have drawn conclusions and formulated a simple hypothesis.

Resources

- Activity sheet 3 – Our Route Plan

Task 1

Harper's friend Nate is visually impaired, but he turns out to be the best equipped person when the children are searching for the cats in the dark of the Unforgotten Concert Hall as he can find his way through the dark as easily as if it were day. Challenge the children to set up a simple enquiry to find out which senses others use when they are blindfolded and led around a route, just like Nate led the other children in *Harper and the Scarlet Umbrella*. The route can be inside or outside. Organise them into pairs and get each pair to plan their route using Activity Sheet 3, *Our Route Plan*, to jot down their ideas. They will probably need to check out their route as they work in order to complete the plan. They will then need to think about how they will record the reactions of the person following the route – perhaps using a simple tally chart and including space for recording any relevant comments made by the participants as they negotiate the route. They may have questions to prompt reactions such as 'Do you notice any sounds/smells/textures here?'



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Lesson 2 – Finding Your Way

Task 2

Invite the children to join up with another pair to test out their planned routes. One child from each pair accompanies a blindfolded child from the other pair along the route, whilst allowing them to find their own way and asking any questions they have planned. The second child observes and records the blindfolded child's reactions using the method they created in Task 1. The children then swap roles and repeat the route with the second child. Pairs then reverse roles, so that both children in each pair have followed the other pair's route. Ask the children to repeat the process with a second pair, giving them results from four children following their route.

Task 3

When the enquiries have been conducted, encourage the children to evaluate their results. Which senses were used the most? Did anything surprise them? Can they suggest which senses most people would use in place of sight?

Extension

Invite volunteers to be guided along a route, and then to attempt to follow the route again but blindfolded and without a guide. They should use the knowledge gained from using their other senses to help them.

Curriculum links

Y5/6 Science

- To plan different types of scientific enquiries to answer questions, including recognising and controlling variables where necessary.



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Activity Sheet 3 – Our Route Plan

Plan a route to lead a blindfolded person around. Make your route interesting and varied, considering how your volunteer will be able to use their other senses to help them negotiate the route.

Where will the route be? Inside or outside?

Where will it start and finish?

Start: _____

Finish: _____

Which objects will your volunteer have to negotiate?

Which different surfaces will they have to walk on?

Are there any scents or smells they might notice?

Are there any textures they can feel on the route?

Are there any sounds they might hear to help them?



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Lesson 3 - Instruments in the air!

Learning objective

To improve children's mastery of art and design techniques, including drawing, painting and sculpture with a range of materials.

Outcome

The children will have created mobiles of musical instruments.

Resources

- Images of a variety of musical instruments
- A collection of real musical instruments
- Card, scissors, pencil crayons and/or felt tip pens, thread
- Umbrellas or wire coat hangers for display

Task 1

Remind the children of the instruments mentioned in the story of *Harper and the Scarlet Umbrella*, listing them on the board. Maybe some of the children play an instrument that they could talk a little about? Invite the children to make a card cut-out of one or more instruments from those you have gathered. They should draw it, cut it out, fill in details and colour it on both sides. (You will need to decide on the size you want at the start, so that all the instruments are similar and the completed mobiles will balance).



Task 2

Organise the children into groups of 4-6, asking them to thread their instruments so that they can be suspended from a mobile. Challenge them to construct their mobiles either using two crossed wire coat hangers, or from umbrellas. Display the finished mobiles!

Curriculum links

Art and Design (all years)

- To use a range of materials creatively to design and make products.
- To develop a wide range of art and design technique in using colour, pattern, texture, line, shape, form and space.
- To improve their mastery of art and design techniques, including drawing, painting and sculpture with a range of materials.

