

LIVING THE DREAM

Exploring the Story: Teachers' Notes

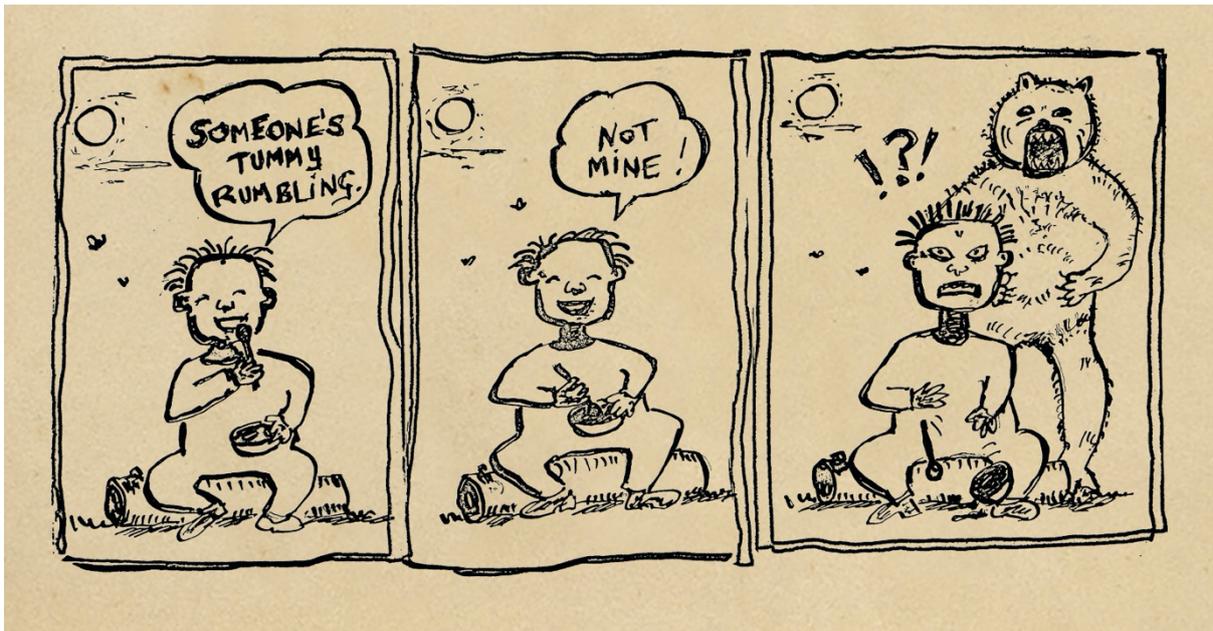
Hello teachers. Great to be working with you!

These are some notes to go with the video, *Exploring the Story*. If you haven't watched it, watch it now. It's less than 8 minutes.

Included in these notes are an overview: a summary of the story as far as we know, an explanation of the framing, the world of the story, when it's set, and some suggestions for how you might empower your pupils to be creative and do their own exploring and story making.

What we have provided is simply a framework, a skeleton of a story for them to flesh out – even take in a new direction. They don't have to do all of it. They could focus on a particular section. And there are many ways to go about it. Writing is only one way!

As mentioned in the video - we can draw cartoons that tell the story – maybe with speech bubbles.



We can show the whole story in one big painting, everyone helping.



There can be drama and music and painting and puppets.



And probably ways we haven't thought of.

Encourage the children to have fun, keep asking questions and help them to understand that a story works better if everything isn't too easy. It's always better if characters aren't too perfect, too clever or too strong. Even Superman had his Kryptonite problem!!

A story works best when it's just ordinary people with their own ordinary powers and problems, people like you and me, dealing with really difficult, sometimes dangerous situations – and finding a way through together.

An overview of the story

Living the Dream is an enrichment and continuation of the previous year's project: "Brave New World". It is a story of transition which can be understood on many levels - by children who have had to leave family, move into care, move home or school or perhaps had to find refuge in a new country.

Set in the distant past, before the age of machines and computers, it is an adventure story of a people whose home is under threat and who journey together to find a new place to live.

On their travels, by land and sea, they overcome many dangers and difficulties but arrive eventually at the island of their dreams, an extraordinary place, quite unlike anything they have ever known.

They set out to explore it but soon discover it is already inhabited. The islanders are very different from them and are not in any frame of mind to accept strangers: they are in crisis, with a huge problem of their own.

The newcomers offer to help and, in doing so, take on a task that tests all their courage and ingenuity. They are ultimately victorious but their greatest challenge will be to find a way for both peoples to live together in harmony on the island.

FRAMING:

The World of The Story

This story takes place at a time long ago, when there was no electricity, when people cooked on open fires, when there were no computers or phones, when they spoke or wrote letters, when there were no cars or aeroplanes, when the roads were made of mud and stone, when people travelled on foot or on horseback or on wagons or sailed in sailing ships, a time when tools were made of iron and steel and the only weapons were swords and spears and bows.

Exploring the World of The Story

The world described here is a historical time, yes, but it's not too specific and could also be described as the world of traditional and mythic story.

As a preliminary to interrogating the tale itself some time could be spent exploring the limits and possibilities of this world with some artwork, some research, some imaginative music and song making: a rowing, riding, sailing or marching song, telling or reading some adventurous stories set in this world at an appropriate level.

Exploring character

The "Travellers" in the story can be the schoolchildren themselves who create characters and personas for themselves, set in the world of the story, key fictional characters with appropriate skills, back-stories and roles within the community. But they may also wish to create "stand alone" characters with input from everyone.

Exploring the Three Acts of The Story

To help focus and strategic planning, each chapter of the adventure can be approached separately and thematically. Remember – these are just suggestions and questions. Answers are many and up to you!

Act 1. The Journey of Hope. What happened on the way!

The Travellers tell of what made them have to leave their home, the adventures they had on the way, over deserts and mountains, through woods and fens, across stormy seas. There was danger and loss, but what kept them going was their trust in each other and their hope of finding somewhere to live in peace.

Why we had to leave our home: *what happened that made it impossible to stay in our land? Was it a famine, a plague, a catastrophic event like an earthquake or a volcanic eruption, invaders? Could we draw or paint this moment? Could we use drama to explore the difficult moment of making the decision? Some want to hang on till the last moment – but will that be too late?*

Saying Goodbye - to the places, the world where we grew up, like saying goodbye to the house we grew up in, full of memories, to special places where special things happened, to the land of our ancestors, where they are buried, where our history is. We have regrets because we have to go but we will carry our memories with us. This is a great opportunity to examine with words, music, art – any kind of expression, what “home” means to us: people, place, memory, security.

Journeying – movement, steady as we go, one yard after another, a music of the travelling soul, maybe the song we sing to keep our spirits up, the hopes of where we are going, the dream of what we’ll find when we get there, our encouragement to each other, a song of following the star, the sun, eyes on the horizon. How to travel with children, with grandmothers and grandfathers, helping each other, those who can travel easily and those who need special assistance.

Landscapes – music of the mountains and valleys, the dark woods, the desert, the fens and swamps, a song of struggle and achievement: we climbed the mountain, survived the heat of the desert, forded the flooding river, crossed the stormy sea. Maybe a sea-chanty, a work song or rowing song?

Creatures – we met on our travels, related to the environments – the scorpions of the desert, the stinging insects of the jungle, the mountain lion, the whale, the shark ... N.B. This will include the “Monster” described musically in “Brave New World”. Now we can find out exactly what it was.

People and moments – helping each other along the way, encouraging each other not to give up, remembering what we’ve been through, affirming our strength together. Times of resting, sleeping and dreaming. Times when we nearly gave up and why we didn’t.

Act 2. Paradise Island? When a dream becomes reality!

When the Travellers arrive on their boat, they discover a place quite different from the land they left and people living there who are different from themselves. How will they get along? Will they be allowed to settle? They learn that the Islanders have a problem of their own.

The Anticipation – *our imagination works on what the new land will be* – perhaps wildly optimistic, a dream of what a wonderful and perfect place to live would be like, the weather, the food, the surroundings, what paradise or near paradise might be like. A chance to let imagination have free reign in art, in story, in words, in music.

The Reality – *what the island actually is*, its difference, its strangeness, its familiarities, its fun. What fauna and flora, what landscapes? The song of celebration that we are here, that we have survived, that we have a new home. Nothing is ever as we imagined, but some things might be. There will be dangers as well as delights, things we get wrong, what's good to eat, what's a threat and what isn't. Another chance for imagination and invention, tempered with knowledge of the actual variety of nature in different parts of our world.

The Islanders and us – *who are they*, what is their music and song, the song they sing to us, a song to greet strangers? What do we want? Our song which is a telling of our travels and hardships on the way, our asking for a place to live, a home to settle, to have a future here.

The Islanders' problem – *the ballad, the legend, the words and music that outline the special difficulty the islanders face* – is it climate, is it creatures, is it disease, crop failure, war, civil unrest? What is it that they face which makes it difficult for them to say yes to us. We have left one place with a problem and now we find that problems are everywhere but this time it should not be insolvable! The Islanders are in despair. They sing the song of locking down, that no one can be allowed in: they have enough troubles.

Act 3. Making the Best of it! Finding a way forward!

Can the Travellers find a way to help the Islanders deal with their problem? If they can, perhaps they will earn respect and a chance to begin a new life here. But there may still be differences to resolve: what is it that brings the Islanders and Travellers together?

Making our case – *we want a chance to help*. What is our plan for dealing with the Islanders problem? We make an appeal to allow us to, at least put our plan into operation, to give it a go, not to give up. We didn't give up on our way here. We are resilient and resourceful. We won't be a burden. We can help.

A "give us a chance" song. *Tackling the problem together* – nothing insurmountable if we don't panic, if we think and work in harmony, if we look after each other, take responsibility. But what is it that we face? This song will be different depending on what the problem is.

We overcome the problem. *The threat to the Islanders' is removed,* but, again, the detail of this will depend on what is decided about its nature. It shouldn't be too easy a job. There will be obstacles in the way and things that go wrong, emergencies, sacrifices to be made. If it had been that easy the Islanders would have sorted it already on their own. We should avoid the kind of instant "easy magic" that spoils a good story. Surprises, acts of heroism or leadership or intelligence from unexpected sources are always good.

Celebration: *victory over obstacles,* but has there been a cost? Is the victory celebration tinged with any sadness?

Dealing with difference – *the problem has been resolved* but there remains the question of if and how we can share the island, the Islanders and the Travellers together. This resolution will involve debate, compromise and different skills working together. We look forward to a future together.

Living the Dream – *the theme song, the theme music.* Life is never going to be like in a story book, a dream of a paradise, but two different peoples with different cultures can build a future together.

THE UNEXPECTED

Probably the most important section of all.

We have provided this detailed structure and framework because – well, because it would be impossible for everyone to work together without some idea of where we are going, and whereas some of us are happy swimming in open waters, others need to know where the banks are.

However – we know that the unexpected will arrive, from young people's imaginations and inspirations and we want to celebrate and be responsive to those surprises.

And so – when we come to create the performance from the exhibition of the creative work in response to this stimulus – it may not be exactly as we have imagined!

That's what makes it so exciting!!!

Looking forward to seeing what you do. And feel free to get in touch with any questions along the way!

Martin Riley

