

THIS OLD HOUSE

SUBJECT: ENGLISH. **NLS OBJECTIVES:** TO UNDERSTAND THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN LITERAL AND FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE E.G THROUGH DISCUSSING THE EFFECTS OF IMAGERY IN POETRY AND PROSE; TO UNDERSTAND ASPECTS OF NARRATIVE STRUCTURE E.G. HOW THE PASSING OF TIME IS CONVEYED TO THE READER.

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

To understand how one author conveys the passing of time to the reader.

THINKING OBJECTIVE

To hypothesise.

THINKING SKILLS

The children will consider the beginning of a story and, by comparing the descriptions of the setting, they will begin to hypothesise what the author is trying to convey regarding the passing of time. They will think about the imagery of the clock and how this is used as a practical clue to this concept.



WHAT YOU NEED

A copy of *Tom's Midnight Garden* by Philippa Pearce (Puffin); several large sheets of paper divided into four rectangles; writing materials; a photocopy of Chapter 3 for each group.

WHAT TO DO

In a previous lesson, read the first chapter of the book, and as a class discuss the characters and Tom's feelings about staying with his aunt and uncle during the holidays rather than at home. Note how much Tom likes gardens and that his aunt and uncle do not have one. Think about how Tom feels when he sees his new home. Review the description of the hallway, the cold flagstones, the dusty smell and the things that can be seen, such as the posters, milk bottles and laundry box. Pay particular attention to the description of the old grandfather clock and its owner, and the fact that it never strikes the right number of times. Ask, *Why do you think the author has included a grandfather clock in the hall? What is the purpose of this?* Draw out that it could be because the author wants to draw the reader's attention to the passing of time, to give them a clue as to what may be happening in the story.

Organise the children into groups and ask them to write down the salient points of the description in the top left-hand section of their large sheet of paper.

At the beginning of the next lesson, review these points and also summarise the first part of Chapter 2. Start reading to the class from the part when Tom is in bed and the clock begins to strike. Listen to how Tom reasons that there could be thirteen hours in the day and ask the children to infer what this could mean for Tom. Ask, *What is he thinking? Does he think that he can go out for one hour and not be missed because there will still be enough time to fit in ten hours sleep?*

Organise the children into groups and give each group a photocopy of Chapter 3. Ask them to read through Chapter 3 together, noting in the top right-hand box on their sheet of paper the description of the hall and the grandfather clock. They should also note any new characters.

In the bottom left-hand corner box, ask the children to refer closely to the text to note the description of the garden. In particular, they should note down any inferential comments such as the smell of the hyacinths and the texture of the tree trunks. Ask, *How is this garden making Tom feel about his home?*

When you have shared the descriptions as a class, ask the children, *Who could the maid be? Why did the clock strike thirteen? What could happen on the thirteenth hour? What happens in the house? What happens to the garden?* Encourage the children to refer closely to the text when sharing their ideas.

Ask the children to hypothesise the kind of things that could be happening to Tom in the house: he could be dreaming, the house could be haunted, the house could live in a different time warp. Note down the children's ideas for later comparison.

DIFFERENTIATION

Provide higher attaining children with the extract at the end of Chapter 13 which starts after Hatty sings the chorus of 'Sweet Molly Malone': *Suddenly Tom said – he blurted it out before he could help himself.* This is when he asks Hatty what it is like being a ghost. Discuss the conversation Tom and Hatty have and ask the children to hypothesise who is right.

Talk with lower attaining children about why the title of the book is *Tom's Midnight Garden* to give them clues and ideas for their hypotheses.

WHERE NEXT

Continue to read the story as a class, checking back to the children's hypotheses.

Dip into later chapters and identify with groups of children how the author is setting the time. Ask them to hypothesise what is happening in the story and how they know that Tom is moving from one time to another.