The Butty Boy.

This is a story set in the late 19th century about a girl who recalls the time that she ran away and worked with a canal working family. It is currently out of print, but there are many second-hand copies available. It is a very helpful book to use, as it is well written with rich language and characterisation and clearly describes the pressures of working the boats on canals.

It is also a book from which a lot of the forces and materials element of the science curriculum can be taken, along with the attitudes and ideas of the Victorian era.

The following notes concentrate on how the book can help to deliver narrative outcomes, but, clearly, additional punctuation and grammar work will have to be delivered according to the needs of the children.

Please also read ‘How to teach Fiction Writing at Key Stage 2’ by Pie Corbett.

**Teaching Sequence Phase 1**

Teachers might want to orientate the children before reading by displaying a series of pictures based around canals in the 19th century and asking children to discuss the pictures.

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**Opening.**

- How does the author reveal the characters? Why doesn’t she start with their names and what they look like?
- Find three ways that the author uses to grab the readers attention in the first paragraph. (*Harry is a girl. The hint of danger indicated by the word courage. Phrases such as ‘so bored I could hear my hair growing.’*)
- How does the reader know that this story is set in the past? *Language – frightfully, scrumptious. Convention- girls and boys not allowed to be alone together.*
- Start to map the story as an ongoing story map or feelings chart.
- Teacher to write up ‘I would never have had the courage for it myself’ and ‘Katy was visiting her cousin Harriet, and was terribly bored’. Ask children why the first is so much more interesting.
- In groups, children to sift through books to find opening sentences that are dull and ones that make the reader want to read on. Groups to report back to the class on the best opener and why.
- Take some of the favourites and categorise them. Some categories could be,
  - time, (*One warm summer’s day*)
  - name, (*Harriet Johnes bounced into the room*)
  - question, (*Are you going to come out for your tea?*)
  - dialogue, (*‘I told you we shouldn’t have done that’, whispered Billy.*)
  - warning, (*‘Never go into the room on the right’ wish, (*He wished he could have what other boys had.*)
  - traditional (*Once, when the World was new.*)etc.
- Children to use the categories to write their openers.

- Story triggers: Story triggers are very often small events that help get the story going.
  - What is the trigger at the start of 'The Butty Boy'?
  - Look for other story triggers.
  - What is the shape of a variety of plots: Openings introduce characters, the build up may include a story trigger, then a problem is presented and the next stage is the resolution and, finally the ending.
  - Story maps, timelines, flowcharts and stages of a story written on post its, which can be changed around to show how flashbacks can be achieved.

- Triangle scenes: three children sit in a triangle. One chooses a setting, the second decides on a scenario and the third chooses three characters. The children improvise a scene. Freeze frame when the action starts to flag and ask the rest of the class to suggest resolutions.

- Ask children to draw up a list of attributes for opening paragraphs, which could look like this:
  - Intrigue and tease the reader
  - Suggest that something is going to happen
  - Introduce the main character
  - Introduce the main problem
  - Create atmosphere.

- Teacher to teach children about character openings, setting openings and action openings. Can children distinguish between the types?

**Teaching Sequence Phase 2**

**Analysis, response and writing.**

Characterisation: Harriet from 'She hated being a girl.... to....And then when they got to a new house, it was not by the sea at all, but in deep country'.

- The children can play Role Swap in pairs. One child is in the role of Harriet and she is telling the partner (friend) about what is happening, and explaining how they feel. The friend is very sympathetic. After a few minutes the children swap roles.
- Or, as Harriet seems very friendless, children can play Agony Aunt, whereby one child is a character in difficulty and the other is an Agony Aunt.
is the character who has to explain the problem and the other child offers advice.

- The story is very much about how Harriet changes, so at this point in the story it would be a good idea to give Harriet a character rating. Explore antonyms first to pinpoint what she is like:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Antonym Pair</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brave - cowardly</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clever - stupid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guilty - innocent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tidy - messy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Honest - deceitful</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kind - unkind</td>
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<tr>
<td>Diligent - lazy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Good-natured - grumpy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active - passive</td>
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<tr>
<td>Careful - careless</td>
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<tr>
<td>Happy - sad</td>
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<td>Compassionate - cruel</td>
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Rating Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very</th>
<th>Quite</th>
<th>Neither</th>
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<th>Very</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brave</td>
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- to add further perspective the children could write how they think the governess feels about Harriet.
- Character profiles could also be written for Harriet, including the following headings; Name, Age, Family, Brief History, occupation, Interests, Likes, Dislikes,

**Style**

Good vocabulary will have

- Adjectives
- Adverbs
- Powerful verbs
- Specific nouns

The writers tool kit has

- Simile (is like a)
- Questions
- Exclamations
- Metaphor (it is)
- Personification- objects doing things that humans do
- Alliteration – at tense moments
- Onomatopoeia
- Complex sentences- the word ‘although’ forces you to use connectives. Add into sentences; add on; change the order of the sentence.
- Varied sentence openings; ‘Carefully, Harriet squeezed through the hedge.’
Analysis of description

From ‘It was a tall brick mansion............. slipping and sliding on the wet grass, and clinging with hands as well as feet, and gained the top.’
- How does the author use the description of the setting to show Harriet's disappointment?
- Children can underline words and phrases that suggest being shut in.
- Can they write a paragraph that shows disappointment?
- Children can work out where the turning point starts to happen for Harriet?
- How does the description start to change to show that Harriet is starting to feel better?

Analysis of dialogue.

‘Hey!’ cried Harry,.....................she caught sight of her own reflection in the glassy cloud-filled water
- What does this tell you about Harry?
- What is your first impression of the boy?
- What about the girl. How does Harry react to her?

Action paragraphs

How does the author contrast the gentle movement of the boats with the frantic movements of the people?
--Highlight short punchy sentences to create dramatic impact.
--dramatic sentence opening
--impact of exclamation marks
--questions to draw the reader in
--well chosen noun phrases
--powerful verbs indicating quality of movement
--alliteration
--specific nouns

The Build-Up of the story.

The build up of the story is the part of the story between the reader –catching opening and the complication or dilemma or problem of the story and concentrates on how the characters get to the place where the problem occurs. It is also an opportunity to give further evidence of characters as happens in Butty Boy and the way that Harriet is so unhappy with her family life.
Children can practise acting out the story and writing build -up’s of their own.

Suspense Paragraph

Clearly, a suspense paragraph can introduce the problem and it can be used at many points in a novel. Children could create a suspense graph for stories and certainly will need to unpick exactly how suspense is created. In the Butty Boy suspense is used to introduce the canal to Harriet and can be characterised by ;
- Lull the reader into a false sense of security
- Start to introduce a feeling of unease
• Authors use impersonal words to hide what the sight or sound, smell or touch could lead to
• Ominous words need to be used
• Questions will draw the reader in
• Short sentences contrasting with longer ones help
• Similes help to build a mental picture
• Describe the characters response through what is done and said.

**The Problem of the Story.**

Read from “Harry burst into tears.............Ned leaned on the great upturned multicoloured tiller and swung the butty boat out into mid channel behind the main boat.’

- Can the children predict how the problem will be resolved and then how will it end?
- Children can be hot-seated at this point as any one of the characters to reveal what they think about Harry or what Harry is thinking about the situation.
- Children can write a newspaper report of how the situation might look to Harry’s family or write the police statements from all the characters points of view.
- Conscience Alley- a character walks between two rows of children, each child in the row offers advice representing the conscience of the character. At the end of the alley Harry might have to make a decision about telling the truth about herself.
- Journalists interview the characters.

**Resolutions and endings**

The resolution resolves the problem i.e How does Harriet return to her family, but endings must tie up all the loose threads and can contain some sort of commentary on how life has changed. They must be planned from the beginning of the story as they dictate the course of the story.

Then,

• use the setting to calm everything down
• show that all is well
• show how people have changed
• perhaps get the character to think aloud.

It is useful to get children to investigate other endings in stories.