

Novel Quests

Introduction

Key Stage 3 English with Media Education

Novel Quests



We have chosen these novels because they tell exciting stories, have close links with STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) and offer opportunities for pupils to think about interesting issues relevant to their lives.

The novels all have teenage main characters and deal with a broad range of themes. Before deciding whether to present a novel to your pupils, please make sure to read it from start to finish. You need to be familiar with the content and language in order to decide whether you consider it suitable for your pupils.

We have designed this set of three units to support the teaching and learning of English with Media Education at Key Stage 3.

The units are based on the following novels:

- ***Cosmic*** by Frank Cottrell Boyce;
- ***Unique*** by Alison Allen-Gray; and
- ***Bog Child*** by Siobhan Dowd.

The content of the *Novel Quests* units supports the Northern Ireland Curriculum. (For further guidance, see the Key Stage 3 Curriculum Support and Implementation Box and the *Key Stage 3 Non Statutory Guidance for English with Media Education* booklet.) It allows you to make a range of cross-curricular links and there is a section in each unit outlining opportunities for connected learning. Some of the suggested activities could take place within other subjects or provide opportunities for departments to work together.

A number of our suggested activities suit more than one novel and appear in more than one booklet (particularly Media and Moving Image and Ongoing Reflection activities). For this reason, it is important to liaise with any other teachers using these booklets in your school at the planning stage. That way you can ensure that you provide your learners with a broad, coherent range of activities across the Key Stage that helps both to maximise their learning and to develop their enjoyment of reading.

Aims

The overall aims of these units of work are to engage pupils in reading for pleasure, inside and outside the classroom, and to enhance their appreciation of a writer's craft.

The units also fulfil the statutory requirements for English with Media Education, allowing opportunities for pupils to:

- express meaning, feelings and viewpoints;
- talk, to include debate, role play, interviews, presentations and group discussions;
- listen actively and report back;
- read and view for key ideas, enjoyment, engagement and empathy;
- write and present in different media and for different audiences and purposes;
- participate in a range of drama activities;
- interpret visual stimuli, including the moving image;
- develop an understanding of different forms, genres and methods of communication and an understanding of how meaning is created;
- develop their knowledge of how language works and their accuracy in using the conventions of language including spelling, punctuation and grammar;
- analyse critically their own and other texts; and
- use a range of techniques, forms and media to convey information creatively and appropriately.

Meeting Curriculum Objectives

The Northern Ireland Curriculum aims to empower pupils to achieve their potential and to make informed and responsible choices and decisions throughout their lives. It is about helping pupils to prepare for life and work:

- as individuals;
- as contributors to society; and
- as contributors to the economy and environment.

Each of these units of work outlines opportunities for developing pupils through the key elements of the curriculum for English with Media Education at Key Stage 3 – see 'Key Elements' at the beginning of each booklet.

Contexts for Learning

English with Media Education provides important contexts for the development of the Northern Ireland Curriculum skills and capabilities.

Cross-Curricular Skills

Communication is central to the whole curriculum. Pupils should be able to communicate in order to express themselves socially, emotionally and physically, to develop as individuals, engage with others and contribute as members of society.

Across the curriculum, at a level appropriate to their ability, pupils should be enabled to develop skills in:

Talking and Listening

Pupils should be enabled to:

- listen to and take part in discussions, explanations, role-plays and presentations;
- contribute comments, ask questions and respond to others' points of view;
- communicate information, ideas, opinions, feelings and imaginings, using an expanding vocabulary;
- structure their talk and speak clearly so that ideas can be understood by others;
- adapt ways of speaking to audience and situation; and
- use non-verbal methods to express ideas and engage with the listener.

Reading

Pupils should be enabled to:

- read a range of texts* for information, ideas and enjoyment;
- use a range of strategies to read with increasing independence;
- find, select and use information from a range of sources;
- understand and explore ideas, events and features in texts*; and
- use evidence from texts* to explain opinions.

Writing

Pupils should be enabled to:

- talk about, plan and edit work;
- communicate information, meaning, feelings, imaginings and ideas in a clear and organised way;
- develop, express and present ideas in a variety of forms and formats, using traditional and digital resources, for different audiences and purposes; and
- write with increasing accuracy and proficiency.

*Texts refer to ideas that are organised to communicate and present a message in written, spoken, visual and symbolic forms.



These units provide a wide range of opportunities for pupils to acquire, develop and demonstrate the Cross-Curricular Skill of Communication. They also highlight opportunities for teachers to assess pupils' performance in Communication.

The activities in these booklets also provide opportunities for pupils to develop and demonstrate the Cross-Curricular Skill of Using ICT.

Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities

Novel Quests provides relevant contexts for the development of pupils' Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities. (For more information, see *English – Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities Progression Maps at Key Stage 3*, available at www.nicurriculum.org.uk) Across the Key Stage, these units give pupils opportunities to progress towards:

Being Creative:

- regularly challenging conventions and assumptions;
- experimenting and building on different modes of thinking (for example role-play);
- making new connections between ideas and information;
- following intuition and taking risks for success and originality; and
- valuing the unexpected or surprising;

Managing Information:

- selecting, combining and synthesising information to meet the needs of the situation; and
- communicating confidently with a range of audiences and purposes and in a range of situations;

Thinking, Problem-Solving and Decision-Making:

- developing an argument and deciding to what extent conclusions support predictions or an idea;
- analysing a range of viewpoints;
- being able to examine the pros and cons of a situation, predicting likely consequences and evaluating the outcomes from a range of perspectives; and
- applying understanding and making connections across the curriculum;

Self-Management:

- seeking out and acting on guidance and feedback;
- identifying and prioritising their own learning needs;
- prioritising the most important things to do;
- using time effectively and persisting with tasks in the face of frustrations; and
- being prepared to comment on the originality and value of work; and

Working with Others:

- taking increasing responsibility for work assigned in teams;
- being willing to critically evaluate and change the approach in a group if necessary;
- being willing to take the lead in demonstrating learning to others;
- being able to give and respond to feedback from peers and adults and understanding its importance for learning; and
- being willing and able to reach agreement through compromise.

Many of the activities in these units incorporate various Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities.

Assessment for Learning

Assessment for Learning focuses on the learning process: not to prove learning, but to improve it. These units incorporate many examples of Assessment for Learning, enabling you to integrate it with your classroom practice.

Teachers have opportunities to:

- share learning outcomes, explaining what pupils will be learning and why;
- share and negotiate success criteria;
- develop pupils' reflection on learning through use of peer- and self-assessment;
- give feedback to pupils that shows them how to improve through specific prompts or strategies; and
- practise effective questioning, eliciting good quality feedback from pupils.

Pupils have opportunities to:

- take part in peer assessment, giving and receiving constructive feedback;
- take greater responsibility for their learning and for aspects of assessment; and
- reflect on their learning, showing awareness of their strengths and areas for improvement.

Exploring Controversial Issues in Class

These units cover issues that could be quite sensitive within a classroom setting. Exploring issues like these can cause difficulties during class or group discussions. You know your class, so you are best placed to judge which activities and topics are suitable for them. Below are some brief tips for exploring controversial issues.

- Be prepared. You may have a set of ground rules that highlight the importance of democracy in the classroom. These should include allowing everyone to have their say without being judged and stress the confidentiality of views aired in class.
- Be aware of any problems that individual pupils may be experiencing in school or at home. For example, these novels explore themes such as fatherhood, death, sectarianism and disability. You might need to handle some of these issues particularly sensitively, depending on your individual pupils.
- Make your pupils aware that during discussions the issues and themes should be the focus, not the pupils who are sharing their views. The discussions or arguments should not become personal.
- Use a variety of teaching strategies. This ensures that pupils develop their critical thinking skills, becoming more open to other ideas and viewpoints.
- Support your pupils in acknowledging that there are some questions with no correct answers. Guide them towards an understanding that, even if they explore all sides of an issue, there may never be consensus among the class because of this.

CCEA's *Active Learning and Teaching Methods at Key Stage 3*, available online at www.nicurriculum.org.uk, has a sub-section on the role of the teacher (in Section 1: How to get the most out of using the resource) that includes advice on dealing with controversial issues. It also gives many suggestions for approaching sensitive issues, some of which appear in these units.

Using Films

In support of the Media and Moving Image aspect of English at Key Stage 3, these units include references to films that could help your pupils explore issues raised in the novels. It is important that you watch any films you plan to use in advance to check that they are suitable. Particularly when we refer to films rated 15 (because they include themes that are especially relevant), be careful to show only extracts that are appropriate for your pupils' age-group.

Links to Key Stage 4

The framework at Key Stage 3 is flexible. It allows teachers to establish foundations for Key Stage 4 study by providing opportunities for pupils to demonstrate a deeper understanding. It also enables them to become more independent learners who are more adept and experienced in managing their own learning.

We have designed the suggested learning and teaching activities in these units to provide a good foundation for a range of subjects and qualifications at Key Stage 4. These include:

- English;
- English Literature;
- Key Skills Communication;
- Journalism;
- Moving Image Arts;
- Media Studies; and
- Drama.



Controversial issues are emotionally charged issues to which neither teachers nor pupils come with a value-free position.

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Rewarding Learning