

# Teaching plan for teachers in Years 3 and 4



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## King of the Sky by Nicola Davies, illustrated by Laura Carlin (Walker)

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## King of the Sky by Nicola Davies, illustrated by Laura Carlin

Walker Books 9781406348613

Words and pictures combine to evoke a Welsh mining town where a boy feels excluded and misses his Italian home. He develops a bond with a retired miner who keeps racing pigeons and the boy comes to a fresh understanding of the meaning of belonging. This second collaboration between author Nicola Davies and illustrator Laura Carlin, following the successful *The Promise*, is another sensitive and subtle picture book.

### Overall aims of this teaching sequence:

- To engage children with a story with which they will empathise
- To explore themes and issues, and develop and sustain ideas through discussion
- To develop creative responses to the text through drama, storytelling and artwork
- To write in role in order to explore and develop empathy for characters
- To write with confidence for real purposes and audiences

This teaching sequence is designed for a Year 3 or Year 4 class

### Overview of this teaching sequence

This teaching sequence is approximately 5 weeks long if spread out over 23 sessions.

The book supports the study of character development, encourages the deepening of reader response through the exploration of the issues expressed in the story. It provides an historical perspective on something very topical and is a fantastic stimulus to underpin personal, social and emotional development through the opportunities it provides for reflection on themes of friendship, loneliness and bravery, as well as migration and the meaning of home.

### National Curriculum Statutory Requirements

#### Reading: (Word reading / Comprehension)

#### Pupils will have the opportunity to be taught to:

- Develop positive attitudes to reading and understanding of what they read by:
  - Listening to and discussing a wide range of fiction, poetry, plays, on-fiction and reference books or textbooks

#### Writing: (Composition)

#### Pupils will have the opportunity to be taught to:

- plan their writing by:
  - discussing writing similar to that which they are planning to write in order to understand its structure, vocabulary and grammar
  - discussing and recording ideas
- Draft and write by:

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Reading books that are structured in different ways and reading for a range of purposes</li> <li>○ Identifying themes and conventions in a wide range of books</li> <li>○ Preparing poems and play scripts to read aloud and to perform, showing understanding through intonation, tone, volume and action</li> <li>○ Discussing words and phrases that capture the reader’s interest and imagination</li> <li>▪ Understand what they read by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ checking that the text makes sense to them, discussing their understanding and exploring the meaning of words in context</li> <li>○ asking questions to improve their understanding</li> <li>○ drawing inferences such as inferring characters’ feelings, thoughts and motives from their actions, and justifying inferences with evidence</li> <li>○ predicting what might happen from details stated and implied</li> <li>○ identifying main ideas drawn from more than one paragraph and summarising these</li> <li>○ identifying how language, structure and presentation contribute to meaning</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ retrieve and record information from non-fiction</li> <li>▪ participate in discussions about books that are read to them and those they can read for themselves, building on their own and others’ ideas and challenging views courteously</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Composing and rehearsing sentences orally (including dialogue), progressively building a varied and rich vocabulary and an increasing range of sentence structures</li> <li>○ Organising paragraphs around a theme</li> <li>○ In narrative, creating setting, characters and plot</li> <li>○ In non-narrative materials, using simple organisational devices (for example, headings and sub-headings)</li> <li>▪ Evaluate and edit by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ assessing the effectiveness of their own and others’ writing and suggesting improvements</li> <li>○ proposing changes to grammar and vocabulary to improve consistency, including the accurate use of pronouns in sentences</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ proof read for spelling and punctuation errors</li> <li>▪ read aloud their own writing, to a group or the whole class, using appropriate intonation and controlling the tone and volume so that the meaning is clear</li> </ul>
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### Speaking and Listening:

- Listen and respond appropriately to adults and their peers
- Ask relevant questions to extend their understanding and knowledge
- Use relevant strategies to build their vocabulary
- Articulate and justify answers, arguments and opinions
- Give well-structured descriptions, explanations and narratives for different purposes, including for expressing feelings
- Maintain attention and participate actively in collaborative conversations, staying on topic and initiating and responding to comments
- Use spoken language to develop understanding through speculating, hypothesising, imagining and exploring ideas
- Speak audibly and fluently with an increasing command of Standard English
- Participate constructively in discussions, performances, role play, improvisations and debates
- Select and use appropriate registers for effective communication
- Consider and evaluate different viewpoints, attending to and building on the contributions of others

### Cross Curricular Links:

#### Art and Design

- The study of great artists could take in many who have been fascinated by and painted many famous examples of birds. For example, Picasso, whose works include 'white pigeon on black background', 'boy with dove', and his famous drawings of doves, and Matisse's 'The Iridescence of Birds'.
- Children looking to expand their use of different techniques might explore, imitate or be inspired by Laura Carlin's mixed media approach, often using a combination of paints and pencils. They could also investigate her work with ceramics.

#### Geography

- The movement of different groups of humans through Europe during the 20th Century would provide many opportunities for children to develop their map skills, including, of course, plotting both the boy's journey and the pigeon's flight from Rome to Wales.
- Children could also undertake a comparison of the human and physical features of the book's two settings.
- Geographical knowledge could also be widened through the study of the environments over which the pigeon flies on his journey home.

#### History

- The story is set towards the end of a period in which many Italian families were emigrating to South Wales. There was a growing demand for labour in the South Wales coalfields in the 19th

and early 20th Century. By 1911, many workers from Ireland, Italy and Spain had joined the industrial workforce. Many of whom were prepared to work for less pay. Some Italian families brought cultural traditions and business from home leading to many Welsh towns featuring pizzerias and gelaterias.

- Children could study the contribution of immigrants in South Wales and the UK more widely. The aftermath of both World War 1 and 2 led to migration of large numbers of people to and from the UK, seeking safety or economic well-being or because invited to support post-war rebuilding. Children might look more widely at various periods of human history which have included or led to mass migration. This may encompass many diverse events from world history from the expansion of the Roman Empire to the Californian Gold Rush. Mass migration study might also include forced migration such as the Atlantic slave trade which existed from the 16th to the 19th Century.
- Many high-quality British Pathe documentaries are now freely available online providing great insight into ways in which towns and cities in Britain (which may be a part of your school's locality) have changed over the past century. The documentary 'Song of Wales' (1954), although filmed after the period in which the book is set, will still provide some useful historical insights for the children, who may also consider how historians might use this particular type of primary source material: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LBrdFKPDfg>
- The manner in which humans have used pigeons over the years might provide interest for the children as well as developing their understanding of world chronology. The use of pigeons to send messages during World War 1 is explicitly referenced in the text.

### PSHE

- Among other associations, Amnesty International produces a wide range of materials to support schools in promoting understanding of refugee issues linked with migration: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/resources/activity-pack-seeking-safety>
- The themes of loneliness and friendship and the importance of feeling a sense of 'home' can all be explored further through discussion and circle time activities.

### Music

- One of the inspirations for the story was a song written about a real Sheffield racing pigeon 'The King of Rome' that won a race to the North of England all the way from Italy. The song, called 'The King of Rome' was written by Dave Sudbury and has since been recorded and performed by many different musicians. Children could listen to different versions, considering their similarities and differences, the choices made for instrumentation and different combinations of voices and decide which they prefer. They might also learn to sing the song themselves.
- Children could also write their own song, about the King of the Sky, inspired by the lyrical structure of the original Sudbury composition. Many versions of Sudbury's song can be found online:
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y97SXJR8cVo> (performed by Dave Sudbury)
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ogXQm70S24M> (performed by The Unthanks, BBC Radio 2)

- The lyrics for the song have also previously been published as a picture book: *King of Rome* by Dave Sudbury, illustrated by Hans Saefkow (Simply Read Books, 2010).

### Teaching Approaches

- Visualisation
- Response to Illustration
- Role on the Wall
- Double Bubble
- Teacher in Role
- Writing in Role
- Book Making
- Debate
- Performing and Responding to Poetry
- Freeze Frame
- Thought Tracking
- Dictogloss
- Conscience Alley
- Readers Theatre

### Writing Outcomes

- Description
- Greeting
- Writing in Role: Diary
- Free Writing
- Balanced Argument or Persuasive Text
- Free Verse Poetry
- Explanation
- Persuasive Letter
- Newspaper Report
- Narrative

### Links to other texts and resources.

#### Books which explore similar themes:

- *The Quiet Place* by Sarah Stewart, illustrated by David Small (Farrar Straus Giroux)
- *When Mino Took the Bus*, by Simona Ciraolo (Flying Eye Books)
- *Sunny and the Birds*, by Wendy Meddour and Nabila Adani (Oxford University Press)
- *Word Trouble*, by Vyara Boyadjieva (Walker Books)
- *The Baker by the Sea*, by Paula White (Templar)
- *Here I Am* by Patti Kim, illustrated by Sonia Sánchez (Curious Fox)
- *The Arrival* by Shaun Tan (Hodder Children's Books)
- *The Colour of Home* by Mary Hoffman, illustrated by Karin Littlewood (Frances Lincoln)
- *When Jessie Came Across the Sea* by Amy Hest, illustrated by P.J. Lynch (Walker Books)
- *The Unforgotten Coat* by Frank Cottrell-Boyce (Walker Books)
- *Christophe's Story* by Nicki Cornwell, illustrated by Karin Littlewood (Frances Lincoln)
- *Home* by Carson Ellis (Walker Books)
- *Sweet Pizza* by G. R. Gemin (Nosy Crow)

#### Non-Fiction Books

- *A Wild Child's Book of Birds*, Dara McAnulty and Barry Falls (Macmillan)
- *Wild Child: A Journey Through Nature*, Dara McAnulty and Barry Falls (Macmillan)

- *There are Birds Everywhere*, Camilla De La Bedoyere and Britta Teckentrup (Big Picture Press)
- *The Big Book of Birds*, Yuval Zommer (Thames and Hudson)
- *The Extraordinary World of Birds*, David Lindo and Claire McElfatrick (Dorling Kindersley)
- *What it's Like to be a Bird*, Tim Birkhead and Catherine Rayner (Bloomsbury Children's Books)
- *Birds: Explore their extraordinary world*, Miranda Krestovnikoff and Angela Harding (Bloomsbury Children's Books)
- *RSPB My First Book of Garden Birds* by Mike Unwin and Sarah Whittley, illustrated by Rachel Lockwood (A&C Black)
- *Beautiful Birds* by Jean Roussen and Emmanuelle Walker (Flying Eye Books)
- *Atlas of Animal Adventures* by Rachel Williams and Lucy Letherland (Wide-Eyed Editions)
- *The Iridescence of Birds: A Book about Henri Matisse* by Patricia MacLachlan (Roaring Brook Press)

### Other books by Nicola Davies

- *The Promise* by Nicola Davies, illustrated by Laura Carlin (Walker Books)
- *Perfect* by Nicola Davies, illustrated by Cathy Fisher (Graffeg)
- *The Pond* by Nicola Davies, illustrated by Cathy Fisher (Graffeg)
- *Elias Martin* by Nicola Davies, illustrated by Fran Shun (Graffeg)
- *Lots: The Diversity of Life on Earth* by Nicola Davies, illustrated by Emily Sutton (Walker Books)
- *The Variety of Life* by Nicola Davies, illustrated by Lorna Scobie (Hodder Children's Books)
- *Tiny* by Nicola Davies, illustrated by Emily Sutton (Walker Books)
- *Whale Boy* by Nicola Davies (Yearling)
- *A First Book of Nature* by Nicola Davies, illustrated by Mark Heard (Walker Books)
- *The Day the War Came* by Nicola Davies, illustrated by Rebecca Cobb (Walker Books)
- *Ariki and the Giant Shark*, Nicola Davies, illustrated by Nicola Kinnear (Walker Books)
- *Hummingbird* by Nicola Davies, illustrated by Jane Ray (Walker Books)
- *Every Child a Song: A Celebration of Children's Rights* by Nicola Davies, illustrated by Marc Martin (Wren and Rook)
- *Ride the Wind* by Nicola Davies, illustrated by Salvatore Rubbino (Walker Books)
- *Protecting the Planet: The Season of Giraffes* by Nicola Davies, illustrated by Emily Sutton (Walker Books)

### Other books illustrated by Laura Carlin

- *The Promise* by Nicola Davies, illustrated by Laura Carlin (Walker Books)
- *The Iron Man* by Ted Hughes, illustrated by Laura Carlin (Walker Books)
- *A World of Your Own* by Laura Carlin (Phaidon)
- *The Kites Are Flying!* by Michael Morpurgo, illustrated by Laura Carlin (Walker Books)
- *The Woman Who Turned Children Into Birds* by David Almond, illustrated by Laura Carlin (Walker Studio)

### Weblinks:

- Nicola Davies' website: <http://www.nicola-davies.com/>
- Laura Carlin's website: <http://www.lauracarlin.com/>
- An interview with Nicola Davies about writing King of the Sky: <http://www.walesonline.co.uk/whats-on/whats-on-news/skys-limit-new-play-welsh-9607135>
- This soundcloud recording, created by Tales Art Play, features Nicola Davies reading aloud the entire text and talking a little about the background to the book and the theatre production: <https://soundcloud.com/tales-art-play/nicola-davies>
- The Royal Pigeon Racing Association: <http://www.rpra.org/>
- The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds: <http://www.rspb.org.uk/>

**Note:** We always recommend that teachers check websites and watch online videos in their entirety before sharing with the class, checking that they are appropriate for your children and the context within which you work, in line with your internet safety policy.

## Teaching sessions

### Before Reading:

- Before starting work on the book, create a space in the classroom for a working wall to enable you to pin examples of responses, reflections, notes and language generated from each session. If you do not have the space for a working wall you could create a class 'reading journal' using large pieces of sugar paper and use the pages of the journal to capture responses.
- In order for the sequence to work effectively you will need to 'keep back' the text from the children initially, including the cover of the book and title until the appropriate moment during the first session. Even after that point, the book will be unfolded slowly and it is best for the children not to know all of the book until you are at the culmination of the teaching sessions.
- It would be highly beneficial to create a display, as part of your class reading environment, of related texts that children can independently read alongside this story to support them in developing language and making links. A list of linked texts are included in this teaching sequence. You may find these books are available to borrow from the school library for the duration of the study of this title. Alternatively, you might contact your local or school library service to see if you are able to borrow some of the titles.

### Session 1: Visualisation

- Without sharing the book, read aloud the opening paragraph:

*It rained and rained and rained.*

*Little houses huddled on the humpbacked hills.*

*Chimneys smoked and metal towers clanked.  
The streets smelled of mutton soup and coal dust  
and no one spoke my language.*

- Invite the children to share their initial response to this opening. *What do they like about this opening? What don't they like? Are there any memorable words or phrases? What makes them memorable?*
- Read the paragraph again and ask children to close their eyes and try to visualise the scene. *What do they picture?* Provide them with a range of drawing materials and appropriate art paper and ask them to draw what they visualised, annotating it with any words or phrases that come to mind (these might be a phrase that they heard being read aloud, or a phrase that has come to mind while they've been drawing).
- After drawing, children can discuss with a partner what they've drawn and why.
- Read aloud the opening paragraph for a third time and then display it so the children can revisit it and read it for themselves. *Are there any words or phrases that you didn't understand? Are there any questions that you'd like to ask?*
- Now, in small groups, ask them to re-read and discuss the choices the author has made in that opening paragraph. *What did you picture as you read that paragraph? How did it make you feel? What has the author done to support that visualisation or to lead you to feel that way? Are there any words or phrases or language patterns that she has chosen that you found particularly impactful?* You might provide each group with a copy of the text to mark up and annotate with their responses.
- When children feed back to the class, they might draw out the deliberate repetition in the opening sentence, the verb choice and personification in 'huddled' as well as the alliteration in the second line. Encourage the children to experiment with the word order used here. For example, they might try moving the verb 'smoked' in front of the noun – 'smoking chimneys' – *Why have we had to change the suffix? How does our choice of switching the verbs to adjectives in this way affect the rhythm and meaning of the sentence? Do they prefer it or not?* They might also note the way in which the author engages different senses; the growing length of the sentences and how that affects that rhythm of the text; the relatively 'simple' word choices (no conjunctions other than 'and'; the adjective 'little'); the delayed 'reveal' of the narrator in the last two words, etc.
- Finish this session, by sharing Laura Carlin's double spread illustration of the landscape which follows this quote and discussing their initial response and how it relates to the paragraph they have been reading.
  - *What can they see? (Also, what can they not see – do children pick up on the lack of motor vehicles, TV antennae, etc.?)*
  - *What sort of town might this be? Who might live there?*
  - *What aspects of the illustration do they like and are drawn to and why?*
  - *What aspects of the illustration do they dislike and why?*
  - *What puzzles them and what questions do the illustration prompts?*

- *What connections can they make, what does the illustration remind them of? They might reference previous experiences, other books, film, animation or art as part of their reflections.*
- *How does the illustrator use colour and what impact does this have on the reader?*
- *What effect does the layout and size of the composition have?*
- *Why might the author and illustrator have chosen to set the opening scene here? How might it be relevant to the story?*
- Note down their initial responses to revisit in the following sessions.

## Session 2: Response to Illustration, Descriptive Writing

- Hand out A3 sheets with the landscape illustration discussed during the last session printed on the centre. Ask children to work in pairs to annotate it with phrases describing some of the things they can see – *what can they see? what are they/is it doing? how are they doing it?*
- Ask pupils to share some of their phrases and support them in honing and developing their phrases, including the use of figurative language where appropriate, particularly in relation to the impact they want to have on the reader. *How did the illustration make them feel when they looked at it? How might they form a sentence that evokes the same emotional response from a reader?*
- Initially, working collaboratively in a small group, children annotate their A3 sheet with descriptive and figurative phrases inspired by the illustration, the text, and possibly by video clips or sound clips that might help them evoke a 1920s Welsh mining town. For example:
  - British Pathe: Miners In Senghenydd, Wales (1920-1929)  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bgAoj\\_IM4Ss](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bgAoj_IM4Ss)
  - British Pathe: Sound Pictures of a British Coal Mine -  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s8\\_6Ma2cRTU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s8_6Ma2cRTU)
  - Sound File – Abandoned Factory -  
<https://freesound.org/people/felix.blume/sounds/147863/>
- Following their collaborative work, devising and developing language and ideas, the children can then work independently to use their phrases and any additional ideas to structure a short paragraph designed to accompany Laura Carlin’s illustration. The process of annotating the illustration, developing ideas and drafting their paragraph can provide useful opportunities to purposefully revisit and revise different aspects of language and grammar, including: expanded noun phrases, prepositional phrases, adverbial phrases, figurative language, etc. Children may wish to mimic some of the choices, tone and patterning of the opening paragraph that was read and discussed in the previous session. As they work on their text, encourage them to keep reading their work aloud to check for sense, cohesion, flow and tone, thinking about the impact that they intend to have on their reader.
- If possible, the illustration could be recreated as a large working wall – with plenty of space for the ‘sky’ which will be important as the class progresses through the text. This working wall could be

annotated with the words and phrases that the children have developed throughout this session, enabling them to refer back to and utilise these throughout the sequence.

- After responding to and refining their writing, they might choose to publish their work by recording their descriptive paragraphs, and then using a simple editing program like MovieMaker or iMovie to add their narration to a photograph of Laura Carlin’s painting or to footage of 1920s Welsh mining towns and villages. Performing their own writing will support the children’s reading fluency as well as helping them to identify sentences or phrases that could be enhanced or corrected.

### Session 3: Response to Illustration, Role on the Wall

- Share with the class the front cover of the text and ask them to discuss: *who do they think the two characters are? What could their relationship be? How might they know one another? What does their body language tell you? Do you notice anything unusual or surprising? Do you have any questions that you want to ask? What might the title refer to? Do they have any thoughts or theories about what the story might be about, based on the title and the cover illustration? How might this relate to the illustration and text that we have already explored?*
- Read aloud and share the first three double-page spreads (up to “*All of it told me this is not where you belong.*”) Provide children with a chance to share any thoughts or questions that have been stimulated by the book so far.
  - *What do the combination of text and images suggest to you about the town where the boy has ended up living? How do you think it feel to live there?*
  - *What does it mean to ‘not belong’ somewhere?*
  - *Have you ever felt similar to this before?*
  - *Have you read or seen anything where the character felt like this?*
- In small groups, ask children to begin a ‘role on the wall’ poster for the boy, using the text and illustrations shared so far to guide any suppositions about his character. If children have not used ‘role on the wall’ before, it would be beneficial to model using ideas from the whole class prior to any collaborative small group work.
- To undertake a Role on the Wall activity, on a large sheet of sugar paper or similar, draw a simple outline of the character. Explain that we are going to record our early impression of the boy narrating this story using this outline. In the space around the outside of the outline, they will write down words or phrases to describe his outer characteristics (words and phrases which relate to his appearance, his actions and behaviours). Inside the outline, write down any words and phrases to describe his inner characteristics, e.g. words to describe his character and personality as well as how he might be feeling and thinking. Give children the opportunity to make links between the external and the internal.
- As children work, you might need to reread the pages and share the illustrations again for the them to revisit. Depending on the experience of the class, they could produce a Role on the Wall in small groups, or they add Post-It notes or similar to a collaborative class Role on the Wall poster.

At this early stage, children might note around the outside of the outline facts from the text (no one speaks his language, he feels that he doesn't belong) as well as body language and posture from the illustrations (arms folded, looking down, on his own, sad or neutral facial expression), while inside the outline they might infer adjectives such as unhappy, nervous, apprehensive, lonely, isolated, vulnerable, observant, etc.

- Return to the Role on the Wall as the book is unfolded and the class have further insights into his character.
- Finish the session by handout out A5 pieces of card. Ask children to fold them in half and engage in a short piece of incident writing - a small note or card welcoming the boy into their community. *What might they write to make him feel more as if he belonged? What would they want to hear?*
- Ask children to put the cards inside envelopes when they are finished and post them (perhaps by simply handing them in to the teacher, or possibly by making use of a class post box). Hand the cards back out to different children and ask them to open the envelope in role as the boy. They can then read the card from the point of view of the boy, reacting in the manner in which they feel he might respond.
- The children's incidental writing and an example of the Role on the Wall work can be added to the working wall.

#### Session 4: Double Bubble, Teacher in Role, Writing in Role

- Display the illustration of St Peter's Square from the next double spread without reading aloud at this stage and invite the children to respond initially to what they see. *What do children notice? How has the illustrative style changed? How does the illustration make them feel? Why do they think that is?*
- Reread from the start of the text and on to the next double spread (up to "...as if they strutted in St Peter's Square in Rome"). Children may wish to discuss what else they have learned about the boy and briefly return to their role on the wall to make further annotations.
- Explore children's existing knowledge about Rome. *What do they already know about the city?* This could be an opportunity for some extended cross-curricular learning in Geography sessions. Alternatively, hand out a selection of photographs of Rome in the 1920s and provide groups with an opportunity to compare these images with photographs of South Wales mining towns from the same period. *What words or phrases would they use to capture and communicate what they can see in the photographs and how it would feel to be there?*
- Return to Laura Carlin's illustrations, displaying together and then comparing and contrasting the two spreads of the mining town and St Peter's Square. Use a double bubble resource sheet (see appendices) for children to record their observations and ideas.
- After they have had time to explore and discuss the illustration and the text, draw the class back together and give them time to share their observations. *How has the mood shifted? How do the text and illustration work together to achieve this change?*

- Use Teacher in Role to allow children to interact with the boy and ask him any questions they might have about his journey from Italy as well as his feelings about, and early experiences of, arriving in this Welsh town. It is helpful to use ‘teacher in role’ rather than pupil at this point for a hot seating activity, as the children are unlikely to have sufficient knowledge and understanding of the situation to explore the situation as sensitively and deeply as you might like them to. Give children a chance to prepare questions in advance, working together to hone their questions to create those that are going to provide them with the most relevant information. You might also discuss the manner in which they might speak to the boy – *how is he likely to be feeling? How does that affect our own speech and language choices?*
- Afterwards, reflect on what children have discovered from the ‘teacher in role’ activity. They may wish to add further to the Role on the Wall posters in response to this. Now that children have a better understanding of the boy’s situation, ask them to reflect on this by writing a short diary entry in role as that character, either echoing or expanding upon the information they have discovered from both the book and the in-role activity. Ask them to consider what might they share about this transition from Italy to Wales, his fears and hopes for the future, as well as anything specific that he is missing from his past life and anything he has noticed about his new home.
- It is likely that, at this stage, children are familiar with diary writing, so this might be a shorter incidental writing opportunity to support their empathy with the character and understanding of his situation. However, if children have little experience with this type of writing in role, you might benefit from clarifying the process and modelling the first-person narrative voice and informal tone. Clarify that a diary is written not for an external audience but for the writer themselves, it is where the writer might allow themselves to be honest about their feelings and therefore emotive language is likely to be included. It is a record of thoughts and feelings as well as events, therefore it might include past tense description of what has happened, as well as present and future tense of current feelings and hopes.
- You may wish to create simple origami books for children to keep as the boy’s diary for any further brief writing in role opportunities. Instructions for making these books can be found in Paul Johnson’s *Making Books* (A & C Black) and under the Teaching Approaches tab on the CLPE website: <https://clpe.org.uk/teaching-resources/teaching-approaches/book-making-teaching-approach>

### Session 5: Free Writing

***Prior to this session, invite children to bring in a special object that reminds them of a family member, another place if they have also experienced moving home or simply a treasured memory. You may want to prepare a small box of additional objects for children who don’t have anything (objects might include: a pebble, a seashell, a pressed flower or leaf, some foreign currency, a brass key, a collection of old photographs, a feather, a train ticket, a small toy, an acorn, etc.)***

- Reread and discuss the text from the previous session. *Why might it be that the pigeons are able to bring back so many memories of the boy's home? Do the children have any special objects or souvenirs that instantly help them to recollect a different place or a different time?*
- Introduce an object that evokes an important memory of a person, place or event for you. Share what comes to mind as you look at that object – how does it make the memory more vivid?
- Provide children with some time to work in small groups sharing and discussing the objects that they have brought in. If children haven't brought in an object, let them use one from your box commenting on: what it reminds them of (in terms of personal memories or perhaps of stories they've read), where it could have come from, why it appeals to them, what questions they might be wondering about it, etc.
- Once children have had the opportunity to discuss their objects, allow them time to write freely any thoughts, memories, questions and ideas that are inspired by the object. Discuss strategies for what they might do if they get stuck for ideas – perhaps they could just list questions inspired by the object, or start describing it, until they are able to start down another creative path.
- After ten to fifteen minutes of writing, ask children to read back over what they've written. *Is there an image, a phrase or a sentence that they particularly like? Why is that?* Ask them to share something that they're proud of with a partner. *Is there anything that could provide the spark for a longer piece of writing, whether that be a recount of a memory or a fictional narrative inspired by the object?* As well as personal narrative or recounts, children's initial free writing could inspire poetry or short biographic writing. If children have their own free writing journals, they might jot down any ideas that they are inspired by to continue to work on and develop in future lessons, at home or in writing workshops.

### Sessions 6-8: Debate and Discussion, Value Continuum, Persuasive Speech

- On the board, display the image of a city or 'feral' pigeon, alongside a sign or sentence discouraging people from feeding them – some common messages on these type of signs might include some or all of the following: **Do not feed the pigeons – they are vermin, cause a nuisance and spread disease.** You may wish to find images of some actual town signs to share with the class.
- *How do children feel about this statement? Do they think pigeons are a nuisance and disease carriers or do they feel that they should be welcomed in town centres and recreational areas?*
- *Do they have any direct experience of this? Are pigeons a problem in their own town, or are they welcomed?*
- After a brief discussion, use Value Continuum so that children can share their own point of view and listen to others. Display an imaginary decision line across the classroom (or in a larger space such as the hall or a playground). Tell children to position themselves on the line depending on how much they agree or disagree that pigeons are a nuisance or vermin. Extreme dislike of pigeons would lead to them standing at one end of the line, whereas an extremely positive

reaction to pigeons would mean that they should stand at the other end, with all scales of emotional/intellectual response in between.

- Talk to children about their reasoning. *Why have they chosen to stand there?* After listening to a few of their peers' reasons, ask whether any of the children want to change their positions. *Why? What have they heard to change their mind?*
- Divide the children into small groups and ask them to draw up some reasons why people might want to encourage or discourage pigeons from towns and cities. After writing up their initial lists, allow them access to books and online resources (newspapers, articles) that might support them to generate further opinions to add to their work. If online resources are difficult to access, you could print out a selection of appropriate articles for them to annotate or extract information from. For example:
  - <http://www.discoverwildlife.com/british-wildlife/feral-pigeon-flying-rat-or-urban-hero>
- After children have had sufficient opportunity to research both sides of the argument, prepare to hold a class debate. Divide them into two groups, arguing for and against pigeons. Explain that each group will have time to present their arguments. After that, if there are further counter arguments that they wish to present, time will be allowed for that as well. After the debate has been held, discuss the class' response to each other's presentations. *What did they hear that was persuasive or convincing? What was it about the presentation that was convincing? Was it the language choices or the manner/style of the presentation?*
- Explain to the class that they are now going to be given time to prepare a speech of their own. Tell them to imagine that the local village committee, in the place where the boy and Mr Evans live, are going to be meeting after receiving a number of complaints about the problems caused by the pigeon population. They will allow for some speeches to be made by the townsfolk before deciding what to do. *What would they want to say to that committee? What would be the purpose of their speech? How would they want the committee to feel? What would they want them to think about?* Give them a moment to think about and start jotting down some of the ideas that they might like to include, drawing on their earlier research and class debate for inspiration.
- Before children begin to draft their speeches in full, you might listen to someone give a persuasive speech (e.g. Kids Against Plastic TedX Talk: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XWxtlqHjxvo>). Alternatively, you could reread and text mark the 'Flying Rat or Urban Hero' article included at the end of this sequence for effective and persuasive language features.
- After listening/reading, talk about what was effective or persuasive about both the contents of the speech (the language, the ideas) and the way in which it was delivered (the pace, the tone, the structure). You might use this to work with the class to co-construct a list of the language features that they might find it useful to include in their speech. Ensure that those elements of language and grammar are discussed alongside their purpose within this context. For example, depending on the speech/article studied, you or the class might draw out the use of conjunctions which clarify when or why something should be done, and which can therefore strengthen an argument, such as *if, because, so, when, before*, etc. Rhetorical questions might encourage the committee to think about the wider picture, or feel a greater emotional connection to either side of the issue.

They might consider specific language choices which will play on the listener’s emotions or think about using repetition of key words or phrases to emphasise the main points that are being made. Depending on the tone of the speech, they might think about how they could deploy modal verbs and the difference between *maybe, might, perhaps*, compared with *will, should, must*. Both examples given above also wield facts effectively to make their point. *Will they need to engage in further research to make their factual information more effective?*

- Give children time to draft their speeches. As they work, they might find it useful to try reading their work aloud and checking that they are achieving their intended purpose, as well as checking it for fluency, tone and clarity. They might work with the person next to them as an ongoing response partner for support at the drafting stage.
- After they have finished their initial draft, give them time to work with a partner to try out their speeches. *How convincing were they? Did they achieve the right tone? Would you have been persuaded? Why/why not? Is there anything that could make it more persuasive? Was their argument clear and well presented? Was it logical and did it make sense?* Model this element of the writing process with your own draft.
- Give children time to revise their speeches in response to feedback. Finally, consider how they might publish or share their revised speeches. They could work up a performance of their speech and have them filmed, or present them in a class or year group assembly. You might set up a committee of adults or children role-playing as the town committee who could give a verdict after hearing a number of the speeches.
- At the end of the session, revisit the decision line – you may want to display a large scale version above or under your working wall. Place the children’s names according to their opinions and feelings, allowing them to reconsider their position throughout the sequence.
- Following their speeches, in additional sessions, children could use what they have learnt to move into different forms of writing. They could be allowed to choose the form and content that most interests them. For example, they could write a paper that shows both sides of a balanced argument (a report summarising what was heard in class, perhaps for the school newsletter or newspaper, or a less formal response might be a poster ‘Pigeon: Hero or Menace?’ summarising the issues). Alternatively, they could focus on the one side of the argument that they feel most strongly about (for example, a more formal persuasive letter to the town council complaining about the ill-treatment of pigeons in town or persuading the local authority to reduce the number of pigeons in the area).

### Session 9: Reading and Performing Poetry

- Read from the beginning of the book until the end of the next spread (up to “...where the sky stretched all the way to Italy.”). Allow the children to respond to the story so far. *How are their understandings of the characters informed by what they’ve read and seen? How are Mr Evans and the boy altered by the flight of the birds? Why might this be? What does it mean to them?*

- Share the illustration on double-spread on page 11-12. *How does this contrast to the initial images of the landscape? What do they notice in the illustration? Is there anything that surprises them?*
- Read aloud the poem '[Sympathy](#)' by Paul Laurence Dunbar. Allow the children time to discuss their initial response. You may wish to use an adapted book talk grid to support these discussions. CLPE's website offers further resources to support this. <https://clpe.org.uk/teaching-resources/teaching-approaches/responding-poetry-teaching-approach>)
- After sharing their initial response, discuss how the children might go about preparing a performance of this poem. *How might they alter their voices? Which parts of the text might they divide between them? How might they use their voices in terms of pitch, tempo, dynamics? Would they incorporate aspects of movement, dance, freeze frame or mime to communicate or highlight any messages, themes or events in the poem?*
- Give out copies of the poem to groups to text mark and rehearse for performance. You might choose to allow children to select their own related poems to perform – or give them a range to choose from. In addition to Paul Laurence Dunbar's 'Sympathy', some other poems you might select from include:
  - 'Hope is the thing with feathers' by Emily Dickinson (from *Everyone Sang*, edited by William Sieghart, illustrated by Emly Sutton, Walker Books)
  - 'Kingfisher' by Robert Macfarlane (from *Wonder*, edited by Ana Sampson, Macmillan)
  - 'Blackbird' by Liz Brownlee (from *Wonder*, edited by Ana Sampson, Macmillan)
  - 'Green Bee-Eater' by Pascale Petit (from *Wonder*, edited by Ana Sampson, Macmillan)
  - 'I Wish I Was A Bird' by Roger Stevens (from *The RSPB Anthology of Wildlife Poetry*, selected by Celia Warren, A&C Black)
  - 'Swallows' by Jean Kenward (from *Tiger, Tiger, Burning Bright*, selected by Fiona Waters, illustrated by Britta Teckentrup, Nosy Crow)
  - 'Welcoming the Birds' by Adrian Mitchell (from *Tiger, Tiger, Burning Bright*, selected by Fiona Waters, illustrated by Britta Teckentrup, Nosy Crow)
  - 'Answer to a Child's Question' by Samuel Taylor Coleridge (from *Tiger, Tiger, Burning Bright*, selected by Fiona Waters, illustrated by Britta Teckentrup, Nosy Crow)
  - 'Hummingbird' by Grace Nichols (from *Cosmic Disco*, illustrated by Alice Writing (Frances Lincoln Children's Books)
  - 'Morning Raven' by Nicola Davies (from *The Star Whale*, illustrated by Petr Horacek, Otter-Barry Books)
  - 'Isn't It Incredible' by James Carter (from *Out There in the Wild* by Nicola Davies, James Carter and Dom Conlon, illustrated by Diana Catchpole, Macmillan)
  - 'Choughs at Marloes' by Nicola Davies (from *Out There in the Wild* by Nicola Davies, James Carter and Dom Conlon, illustrated by Diana Catchpole, Macmillan)
  - 'Swan' by Dom Conlon (from *Out There in the Wild* by Nicola Davies, James Carter and Dom Conlon, illustrated by Diana Catchpole, Macmillan)

- Allow the children an opportunity to perform for the class, review and hone those performances before performing for other members of the school community. You might choose to record or film each group's performance to allow for a wider sharing of their work.

### Session 10: Writing Poetry

- Hand out copies of the double-spread illustration of the pigeons in flight. *How does the illustration make them feel? How do they think Mr Evans and the boy feel in the moment that the birds take flight? What about the pigeons – how might they feel as their cage doors are opened and they take to the sky?*
- Ask children to annotate the illustration with words and phrases inspired by the look, feel and movement of the birds. If they remember any words or phrases from the previous session's poetry performances that they feel are applicable, they may add those too.
- Support the children in working collaboratively to further develop their language in relation to describing the mass flight of these birds. You might share videos or photos found online, or even the sound of hundreds of pigeons taking flight. Shared videos could include some of the following:
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JGKbqLv8knE>
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UFiYSHFh4qM>
- Once children have had a chance to note and develop their ideas, provide each pupil with a strip of paper upon which they can write a phrase that they think best describes the moment of the pigeons taking flight (including, if they wish, the emotional response of those watching).
- Working in small groups, have the children read aloud their line and work collaboratively to organise them to create a free verse. Children may choose to edit slightly their individual lines to support the flow of the verse but should try to retain the integrity of their original thought. For example, after deciding the order of the lines, they might find that they need to make small alterations to person or tense, or to determiners to help the cohesion of the piece.
- Support groups to refine and edit their compositions throughout to create their intended impact on their audience, drawing on what they have learned from Nicola Davies' language structures and grammar choices (e.g. alliteration, lists, figurative language: personification, onomatopoeia) or from the published poetry they have heard and performed during the previous session.
- Once the group have decided on the structure of their verse and made refinements where necessary, tell the children that they will be preparing a performance of their own poem. As in the previous session, remind them to think about the feeling that they had watching the birds and how they might communicate that feeling to their audience through their choices in intonation, actions or sound effects – vocal or instrumental.
- Children could subsequently go on to compose their own poetry in whatever form they choose that best expresses the mood and emotion of Laura Carlin's illustration.

- Provide children with opportunities to perform their own poetry, perhaps alongside the poems they worked on during Session 7, then share the published poems with a wider audience, in a class anthology or on the working wall.

### Session 11: Freeze Frame, Thought Tracking, Writing in Role

- Read the next two double-spreads (from “A lifetime down the mine...” to “‘Re Del Cielo!’ I replied. ‘King of the Sky!’”).
- Give time for children to share their initial responses to these new pages and to discuss any further observations they have made about the boy. *How has the boy changed through his relationship with Mr Evans? Why do you think this is?* In addition to the text, compare and contrast how Laura Carlin has illustrated the boy throughout the text so far. *How has his character developed? Why do you think this is?* Children may benefit from revisiting their role on the wall posters and adding any additional traits or characteristics that they have noticed.
- Revisit the text on the final double-spread that you read to the class:

*He put a pigeon in my hands.  
I felt its small heart racing underneath my finger,  
and the push and power of its wings.  
Its head was whiter than a splash of milk, its eye blazed fire.  
“Name him and he’s yours,” the old man said.*

- Spend some time exploring this moment in which the boy is given his own pigeon. *How do we think he felt holding the pigeon? How might he feel about ‘owning’ the bird? Is it like having a pet? How might it be similar or different? What responsibilities might it come with?*
- In pairs, ask children to freeze frame the moment when Mr Evans hands the pigeon to the boy. A freeze frame is simply a still image (as if a photograph had been taken or as if someone had pressed the pause button during their scene). Remind the children taking on the roles of these two characters that they should try to use appropriate body language and facial expressions to indicate their emotions and potential thought processes. As mime can be difficult, some children might benefit from using an object, such as a small cushion, to give themselves something to hold. Some companies even produce plush pigeon toys that could add an extra element to any role play work.
- Before sharing their freeze frame images, hand children a strip of paper and ask them to create a title for the image; they might choose an extract from the text that we have explored together or else create their own caption. Invite pairs to share their Freeze Frames; or split the class in half, so that half share while the other half become the audience, then swap.
- After sharing, ask children to extend their freeze frame backwards in time, showing a series of moments prior to the boy being given Re Del Cielo. First, a still image of the boy alone having arrived in the town; second, the boy first encountering Mr Evans and his pigeons and finally finishing with the frozen image that they have just shared with the class. After they’ve devised each still image, ask them to consider how they might transition smoothly from one scene to the

next. They might benefit from some accompanying music to support them in achieving a particular mood and transitioning at the same time (a traditional Welsh hymn such as Gwahoddiad would have been sung by many male voice choirs at the time, a common feature in Welsh mining towns, and might provide suitable accompaniment for their drama work, e.g.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hY1kNZYhjuo>).

- Next, tell them that you would like to share what each of them is thinking. Use Thought Tracking to vocalise these thoughts. Explain that you are going to ask some of the groups to share one of their freeze frames, but when you tap a child on the shoulder that person will no longer be frozen but will come to life and explain exactly what they are thinking about in that moment. They should speak in first person as if they are that character. If children have not been involved in a thought tracking activity before, it might be helpful if this is modelled for them, e.g. *“I can feel its heart racing – it feels both delicate and strong. Wonderful. I hope that I can help him become a true champion. A king...”*
- At the end of the session, invite children to return to their ‘origami book’ diaries to write in role as the boy reflecting on how he feels about owning his own pigeon – *has it begun to alter his feelings about the town and about being away from his home?* If you feel children need more opportunities for talk before they write in role, you might also repeat a hot-seating activity as in session 4, this time allowing children to take on the role of the boy for a paired question and answer session.
- Children may also wish to add a further insight to their ‘role on the wall’ posters.

### Session 12 and 13: Dictogloss, Explanatory Writing, Book Making

- Read the book from the beginning, stopping after the next double-page spread (up to *“All they want is a bit of practice.”*).
- Based on what we’ve read so far, what do we know about pigeon racing and training homing pigeons? Some children may have personal experience of this which they might be able to bring to the discussion. Make a list on the board or flip chart of what we know.
- *What do we think the boy knew before he befriended Mr Evans?* Explain to the class that we’re going to produce our own short guide for the boy, explaining how to train Re Del Cielo to be a champion racing pigeon.
- To support the children in their research and recording, complete a Dictogloss (from Grammar Dictation by Ruth Wajnryb, OUP, 1990). This is useful for providing models of the language of non-fiction. It gives the students opportunities to: listen, talk, read, write, make notes, reflect on language use, clarify content and use academic language for themselves. This is especially supportive to children learning English as an additional language.
- Use an extract from a non-fiction text about training homing pigeons, asking children to do the following:
  1. Listen to the text being read aloud.
  2. Listen to text being read aloud again.

3. Listen to the text being read aloud and write down some key points and phrases that you hear.
  4. Share your notes with a partner. Work together to write a new version of your individual notes.
  5. One set of partners join with another set to form a group of four. Work collaboratively to improve what you produced in your pairs.
  6. Rewrite the text on a large sheet of paper.
- Ask the children to reflect on their writing and consider how the process aided their understanding and recollection of the text.
  - Discuss and summarise what further insights we now have regarding pigeon racing and the training of pigeons. *What more would we like to find out? What do we think would be most useful for the boy? What would you want to know if you were in his position?*
  - Give the children time to complete further research to build up their knowledge of the topic, using their questions to guide their research to make it more specific and directed. Model how to read and then summarise important information into notes. You could suggest sub-headings to help the children look for and categorise information found, e.g. what they look like (appearance), how they should be fed (diet), how they need to be cared for, etc.
  - You might consider arranging a visit from an expert to further support the children's knowledge prior to writing. Perhaps a member of the wider school community keeps, or has kept, racing/homing pigeons. Alternatively, the Royal Pigeon Racing Association (<http://www.rpra.org/press-and-schools-info/>) is happy to put schools in contact with local experts.
  - Prior to drafting their text, children will benefit from reading, responding to, and text marking real world examples of writing for a similar purpose. An explanation of how to care for a pet, or even look after plants, will provide a similar model of language structures for this purpose. A single double-page example is given at the end of this sequence (from *Adopt-A Dog* by Holly Maguire, Cicada Books), but you might collect leaflets or booklets from your local garden centre or animal rescue service. In whatever example you choose to draw on, discuss with the children the choices made by the author in selecting and shaping language to communicate the recommended advice to the reader. This will provide opportunities to revise or teach different aspects of language and grammar, including: adverbials which clarify when, how or where an action should/could take place, the use of imperative verbs to start statements of advice, sometimes modulated with adverbs or modal verbs, the use of conjunctions to extend, clarify or develop the advice being given, and the choice of determiners to move between the specific (*this* pigeon, *your* pigeon) and the general (*the* pigeon, *some* pigeons).
  - Discuss with the children what questions they are trying to answer with their explanatory book. Work with the children to craft a question and then adapt your own set of notes into sentences and paragraphs to answer this. Be explicit in the way in which you are reflecting on your own writing, considering its purpose and potential audience and judging how well it is meeting those criteria.

- Children can then work independently or in pairs to produce their own draft text for the questions about pigeon training and care that they aim to answer.
- Once they have completed their draft, prior to book-making and publishing, provide children with the opportunity to edit and refine their writing. Working with a response partner with whom they can read and reflect on their writing can be very effective. They may need some simple prompts to support them in this process. For example:
  - Ask your partner to read their writing to you.
  - Tell your partner one thing you like about their writing
  - Ask them a question about it
  - Make a suggestion to improve it
  - Think about:
    - *What makes it good to read?*
    - *Were any parts interesting, effective, or made you think?*
    - *Does it make sense?*
    - *Has anything been missed out?*
    - *Is there anything that you don't understand?*
    - *Is it written in the right sort of style?*
- When children have annotated their draft copy with any changes that they would like to make, support them in creating a simple book in which to present their published text (for book making ideas, see the Power of Reading resources at <https://clpe.org.uk/teaching-resources/teaching-approaches/book-making-teaching-approach> or refer to *Making Books* by Paul Johnson, A & C Black).
- Before the next session, read aloud the next two double spreads (from “*Back at the loft...*” up to “*Just you wait and see!*”) and allow them to update their ‘Role on the Wall’ posters. This point in the sequence would also be an ideal opportunity to introduce an exploration of how pigeons have been used by different civilisations over the past 2000 years, including (as referenced in the text) to carry messages during the First World War.

### Session 14: Conscience Alley, Persuasive Letter Writing

- Read the next three double-spreads (from “*Every day Mr Evans grew a little weaker*” up to “*I wasn't sure it would come back*”).
- Discuss any reflections children have on the events in these pages, adding to their Role on the Wall posters for the boy. They may wish to produce a similar character study for Mr Evans based on their thoughts about how he is depicted in the text.
- Display the illustration of the boy standing by the railway line. *How does the boy feel about letting ‘Re Del Cielo’ go on the train to Rome? What might he mean by ‘a part of me was going with him’? Why might he not be sure that the pigeon will return?*

- Look on a map of Europe or use an online mapping program. Locate Rome and Wales, plotting out and measuring the journey that the pigeons will need to take to return home. *How long would that journey take if it was driven or walked? What hazards might Re Del Cielo meet on the journey back to his home if the boy sends him away?*
- Ask the children to imagine the boy standing by the railway line with Re Del Cielo in a basket ready for the journey and trying to decide whether he should send him away. *What do they think that he should do?*
- Take the children to a large space where they can walk around easily, such as the hall or the playground. Ask children to walk around the space at a slow but steady pace (playing some music can help children find the right rhythm for their movement). On a given signal, they should stop and whisper to the person nearest to them as if he/she was the boy, telling him what he should do and why. Repeat several times so that children have had the opportunity to share and hear a number of different reasons.
- Now, use 'conscience alley' to help the class reach a consensus on what the boy should do. Ask the class to form two lines facing each other with a gap between the two lines. Ask one child to take on the role of the boy and slowly walk between the lines listening carefully as each member of the group speaks their advice – one line encouraging him to let Re Del Cielo go to Rome, the other encouraging him to keep the pigeon at home in Wales. When the child in role has heard all of the suggested reasons, they can make their decision, explaining what they heard that persuaded them.
- Having had the opportunity to reflect on the boy's options and the reasons for and against him letting his pigeon be sent hundreds of miles off to Italy without him, ask children to decide for themselves what they think he should do. Then, ask children to write a short letter to the boy giving him advice. *What do they think he should do and why?* Discuss what they might include in a note like this. They might think about how they could introduce themselves, how they might empathise with this difficult decision he has to make, before going on to make some suggestions as to what they think he should do. Encourage children to think about the tone and voice that might be most appropriate for this type of writing. *Although they are telling him what they think he should do, would it be appropriate to use imperative verbs to start the sentences? How might that sound?* Talk to the children about the use of adverbials, modal verbs, and conjunctions that could soften the tone and make the advice sound like reasoned suggestions rather than commands. Discuss how they might sensitively raise and address any worries that they imagine he might have. *Could they give him some different options that will support him in making his own mind up?*
- When children have finished writing their letter of advice, ask them to fold their letter in half, put it into an envelope, seal and address it, before 'posting' it to the boy. Perhaps they could even place them into a wicker basket similar to the sort that would have been used for transporting homing pigeons. Once you have collected in all the 'posted' letters, deliver them back to the class so that each child gets a letter that somebody else wrote. Explain that they are now all 'in role' as the boy who is receiving the letter. As the boy, ask them to read the letter that has been delivered

to them, consider how he would respond to the advice he has been given and write a note back to the advice-giver, thanking them for the guidance and explaining why they will or will not be following it.

- As they are writing letters, children may ask what the boy's name is at this point to allow them to address the letter. His name is never given in the text, but you could discuss some possibilities, perhaps even exploring the range of boys' names that would have been popular in Italy during the period in which the book takes place.

### Session 15: Writing in Role

- Read aloud the following text without yet sharing the accompanying illustrations:

*'The race day dawned. A storm blew up.*

*Lightning, wind and rain.*

*I waited for two whole days and nights, but the pigeon with the milk-white head did not return.'*

- Discuss with the children the impact of this short piece of text. *What choices has the author made to create this impact?* Children might note the use of the two short simple sentences. How would the impact be different if the author had connected them, e.g. *'As the race day dawned, a storm blew up.'* The use of the minor sentence on the second line: *how else could this have been expressed? After these shorter staccato sentences, what is the effect of the longer compound sentence, the addition of the adjective 'whole' and the noun phrase 'pigeon with the milk-white head'?* *What thoughts, feelings or connections might they prompt in the reader?*
- Ask children to talk in small groups about what they think has happened and what might happen next.
- Now, share the double spread illustration of the boy waiting through the storm (with the text 'Lightning, wind and rain.'). *How might the different characters be feeling - the boy, his mum with his baby sister, Mr Evans, the unseen Mrs Evans? What might each of them be hoping for? Why? What are they scared of? What do they want for themselves and for each other?*
- After some time for discussions, children could work in pairs to clarify their ideas by writing on the character diagram resource sheet (see appendices). Using a different pen colour for each character, they can write on the arrows what they hope for each other, and in the box around their picture what they hope for themselves.
- Ask the children to choose one of the characters that they would like to explore further and write a short diary entry from their point of view expressing how they feel at this moment in the narrative. They might choose to continue the boy's diary in their origami book, or they could write from the point of view of any of the other characters that they've met.
- Once children have written their diary, share with them the illustrations that accompany the text which reveal that as the boy frets for the pigeon's safety, Re Del Cielo is battling homewards, over mountains and sea. Having explored the various characters' points of view, children might be

inspired to write a short text from the pigeon's point of view in further sessions, telling the story of his journey. Children's ideation could be supported by using both the illustrations in the text, as well as atlases of Europe and digital birds-eye online resources.

### Session 16: Book Talk, Reader's Theatre

- Read aloud the book from start to end, sharing all of the illustrations. Using the basic [Book Talk](#) questions as a starting point, discuss how they feel about the conclusion of the story and the story as a whole. Include their response to Laura Carlin's illustrations as well as Nicola Davies' text.
- Discuss any questions or ideas that the book raises and what other stories the book reminds them of.
  - *Did you like how the book ended? Why?*
  - *What more would you like to know about any of the characters?*
  - *What did you feel was the most important, poignant or significant part of the book? Why?*
  - *Would they recommend the book? Why/why not? If so, who would you recommend it to?*
- Record their responses to add to the class journal or to the display on the working wall.
- Divide the text of the book into 6 separate sections and then split the class into groups, giving each group a different part. Ask the children to decide how to perform the text, annotating it with any directions that will support them in developing a creative performance. They might consider:
  - which parts could be read in unison;
  - which could be read with one or two voices;
  - which bits could be read loudly/softly/echoed;
  - what expression or tone might be appropriate for different words or phrases;
  - whether any specific words or phrases need to be emphasised and how they might do this;
  - whether to include sound effects, movement, freeze frame images, etc.
  - if there is dialogue, they might choose to allocate that to a child who will take on the role of the boy or Mr Evans. If so, they might remove speech tags.
- Following sufficient rehearsal time in their groups, the children can now perform the work as a whole class, putting their separate sections together.
- After the first performance, it would be valuable to ask the children what language was highlighted during the Reader's Theatre activity and how the activity developed their understanding of author intent and purpose.
- You may wish to develop the children's initial Reader's Theatre performance in order to produce a theatrical performance of the entire text. Strategies to support this development could include:
  - adding clear transitions to move smoothly between each performance group;

- adding further visual images (freeze frames or mimes) if children haven't done so already;
- using a small number of props or costumes to clarify characters (whichever child is 'being' the boy or Mr Evans could have a simple prop or piece of costume that signifies that character);
- incorporating elements of music or song – either to underscore events, to open or close the story or as elements of your transition.

### Sessions 17-19: Newspaper Report

***In preparation for this writing session, ensure the children have ample opportunity to tune in to the appropriate voice and writing style through reading aloud a range of newspapers as well as giving time for independent reading and revisiting. If children have little or no experience of newspapers, it would be beneficial for the school to subscribe to a children's newspaper such as First News or The Week Junior as well as engaging them in current affairs programmes, such as BBC Newsround online or on television: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround>***

- Revisit the illustration of the boy celebrating the return of Re Del Cielo with his family watching from behind the fence in order to draw out discussion about how each character must feel following the pigeon's victorious flight. Recall the work that they did prior to writing their diary entries and the emotional journey of each of those characters.
- Set up the purpose of this writing opportunity: a local newspaper editor, hearing about this incredible accomplishment, decides they want to find out more and print the story in their newspaper. Ask the children to consider: *what would they report? What might they want to say? Who would the journalists need to speak to? What might they ask? What would they want their readers, who are all from the immediate area, to feel?*
- Organise the children in pairs. Ask them to select a character the journalist might want to speak to (Mr Evans, the boy, his mum, the neighbours) and role play a conversation/interview between them. Share some examples of these and explore what information they provide for the reporter and the story.
- If children have not had much experience of reading and writing within this genre, then it would be useful for them to have experience of reading and text marking similar news reports – from local newspapers as well as online news reporting sites. One potential example is included at the end of the sequence but, if possible, look for local newspaper articles reporting on sports wins or other success stories. Identify structural and language features by text marking and investigation. Map the structure of simple news reports and identify component parts: the orientation, ordering chronologically, re-orientation including change of tense, use of eye-witness accounts, sensationalist language, analysis and opinions.
- Starting with modelled and shared writing, give the children time to draft the content for their newspaper reports. At this stage, encourage the children to focus on content rather than on layout

features; headlines, bylines, columns, etc. can all be added later in the process. Model how to use eye-witness accounts and interviews, and some of the language features identified in their reading. You may choose to do this over a series of sessions, giving children time to work independently on sections of their news report following shared writing and returning to writing regularly to edit and make changes. You might link this to the children's study of grammar, for example, the use of commas to clarify meaning or indicate parenthesis; use of passive verb forms; relative clauses; adverbial phrases, etc. The inclusion of quotes from the boy, Mr Evans, or a member of the racing pigeon association would provide meaningful opportunities to look at direct and reported speech and the punctuation of these.

- Once children have had a chance to edit and proof their work, they can be published - potentially using a word processing package that will allow them to easily attain the 'look' of a newspaper article.

### Sessions 20-23: Narrative

- Display and discuss Nicola Davies' dedication in this book:

***'For all children who have to find home in a new place.'***

*Who might this dedication encompass?*

- *In what way does Nicola Davies capture and reflect this dedication within the story of King of the Sky?*
- Discuss any other stories about children who are forced to be away from their homes or find new homes. Children may be able to suggest books from their own reading, or from any additional reading or book displays that have been provided in class linked to this text. *Are there any patterns or commonalities between them? Why have the characters become displaced? What challenges do they face?*
- Plan and write a story inspired by Nicola Davies' dedication – *who is your story about and why do they miss their home? Where are they from? Where are they now? Why are they not at home? Is it set now or in the past? what or who helps them to feel more at home? is there a problem to be overcome? How is their situation resolved, or isn't it?*
- When children have had the opportunity to consider the outlines of their story, allow them sufficient time to write it. Some children will be more comfortable planning out their story in detail prior to writing, others will prefer to 'discover' the character's journey during the writing process. Similarly, some writers will need support in structuring their story, a line on which they can hang their own ideas, whereas others will be stifled in trying to fit their ideas into too rigid a frame. Discuss different options with the class and alter support offered, as required.
- During the writing process, children will benefit from the opportunity to respond as a reader to their own work. What impact are they hoping to have on the reader? How are they hoping to create that effect? Adults and other children in the class will all be effective response partners by

explaining the impact that the writing has on them and asking questions to clarify story points or character details.

- When children have had the opportunity to edit, revise and redraft their work, they could produce a published version, either typed or handwritten. Each completed story could be bound and added to the collection of linked texts in the class or placed in the school library where it can be read by other pupils. PDFs of the books could be shared more extensively to the wider school community or even with Nicola Davies herself.

### Use and Application of Vocabulary, Grammar and Punctuation from the National Curriculum Year 3 and 4 programme of study:

There are opportunities to teach grammar, punctuation and spelling through this text – as well as drawing on other linked texts related to specific outcomes. Many suggestions to look at written language are made during the sessions described previously in deepening reader response and developing children’s writing competency and voice across a range of forms.

Further areas of grammar and punctuation that you may wish to draw upon when reading and responding to the text, relevant to the needs of the class:

- Consider the effect of specifically chosen verbs or noun phrases that might clarify action, or imply characterisation or emotion. For example, *“Little houses huddled on the humpbacked hills”, “the vanilla smell of ice cream”, “he spoke soft and slow, slow enough for me...”, “The race day dawned”, “I scoured the sky..”, “the pigeon with the milk-white head..” etc.*
- Nicola Davies’ writing has a sense of rhythm and pace due in part to the sequences of sentences – shorter simple sentences, longer complex sentences, and minor sentences. Sometimes she uses the pattern of three, more familiar to oral storytelling to convey sequences of action: *“I smoothed his feather, looked into his eye and put him in the basket...”*
- Conjunctions to explain, clarify or to compare and contrast: *“cooing as if they...”, “...but when his birds flew...”, “as his pigeons soared”, “...so I put the race rings...”*
- Figurative language supports the readers visualisation and understanding: e.g similes (*“he smiled like springtime”, “straight and fast as arrows”*), metaphor (*“Its eye blazed fire”*), personification
- The use of use conjunctions, adverbs and prepositions to express time and cause (*“all the way to Italy.”, “...underneath my finger”*), including in the fronted form (*“Every day I came to see..”, “Back at the loft, we waited..”, “By racing season...”*)
- The text contains a mixture of direct speech using standard punctuation (*“I like to see them fly,” he whispered, “after so long underground.”*) and reported speech (*“Still Mr Evans said he’d be a winner.”*). *How does the punctuation differ? What is the impact of the different formats? Why and when might the author choose to use one or the other?*

- The structures used through the text provide opportunities to explore different verb forms, e.g. *“had taken Mr Evans’ breath away”, “he spoke...”, “he could hardly walk”*
- Throughout the text, nouns or pronouns are used with care for clarity, cohesion, emphasis and to avoid repetition

Punctuation:

- The possessive apostrophe is seen demonstrate for both singular nouns (*Granny’s shop, friend’s bed*) and plural (*Mrs Evans’ Welsh Cakes, Mr Evans’ face*)
- Examples of the use and purpose of both exclamation marks and question marks can be considered within the direct speech
- Commas can be seen separating items in lists and demarcating clauses. They are not always used after fronted adverbial phrases, and the class might discuss why they think this might be. *How does it affect your reading of the text?*
- In addition to possession, the apostrophe can also be seen used for abbreviation: *don’t, they’re, he’d, wasn’t, here’s, couldn’t*
- Instead of commas to demarcate clauses or full stops to separate sentences, sometimes a dash is used or a colon, e.g. *“He handed me the entry form: King of the Sky would go...”*
- Ellipsis to show pauses in speech, to build tension, or show the passing of time: *“That will only tell him... this is not where you belong.”; “A speck... a blob...”*

### Opportunities to explore and contextualise spelling patterns, including phonics

The narrative of the book will naturally allow you to reference and explore the etymology, morphology, oral and visual patterns within the key words from the Year 3/4 National Curriculum list, such as: *appear, arrive, believe, breathe, breath, different, guide, heart, possible, surprise*

**Etymology:**

A wider study of the birds, and pigeons specifically, could support spelling investigations around the etymology of names for different species. As the pronunciation of the ‘g’ in **pigeon** unusually features a sound more akin to what might be heard in a word such as ‘bridge’, children might be interested to discuss and investigate why it is not spelt ‘pidgeon’, which is the spelling that is still sometimes used for the surname variation which has the same etymological source. Children might build collections of words which feature the /dʒ/ sound spelt either **-dge** (badge, bridge), **-ge** (charge, bulge), **g** (magic).

The introduction of the pigeon’s name, ‘Re Del Cielo’, could lead to further exploration of Italian words and phrases with which the boy might be familiar and could share with Mr Evan’s. These might be compared with the Welsh language equivalents.

### Morphology and word structure:

Words in the text provide further opportunities to instigate an investigation of spelling patterns, such as the letter 'c' making a /s/ sound in both **practice** and **distance**. They might investigate words which share a similar root (e.g. practice, practical, impractical, malpractice, etc.). With distance, they could explore the different meanings of the **prefix dis-** in for example, distant, disease, disqualify, disorder, disappear, disquiet discern. *In which of those words is the root easy to discern? In which might it be more challenging? Why might that be?*

You could also explore word structure by looking at the use of **compound words**, including: underground, sunlight, springtime, lifetime, humpbacked, somewhere, milk-white, railwayman, bedroom

There are plentiful opportunities to explore grammar structures and spelling variations associated with using past and present tense verbs in a third person narrative as well as there being a good deal of descriptive verbs exemplified on which children can draw when crafting their own narratives:

Suffix	-ed suffix					-ing suffix			
	Root word - verb	simply + '-ed'	double consonant then + '-ed'	-e then + '-ed'	change y to i then + '-ed'	Irregular	simply + '-ing'	double consonant then + '-ing'	-e then + '-ing'
	rain	rained					raining		
	huddle			huddled					huddling
	smoke			smoked					smoking
	climb	climbed					climbing		
	smell	smelled				smelt	smelling		
	remind	reminded					reminding		
	speak					spoke	speaking		
	strut		strutted					strutting	
	crumple			crumpled					crumpling
	smile			smiled					smiling
	stand					stood	standing		
	watch	watched					watching		
	soar	soared					soaring		
	stretch	stretched					stretching		
	fly					flew	flying		
	steer	steered					steering		
	find					found	finding		
	stop		stopped					stopping	
	blow					blew	blowing		
	win					won		winning	
	race			raced					racing

Capturing the children's oral rehearsals and outcomes will enable you to assess how secure the children are with common irregular past tense usage or whether they are attributing the rule of -ed

suffix for past tense to all root words, e.g. 'finded' instead of 'found'. Support children through a range of planned opportunities for talk in order to recast and model this language until the children come to possess it.

The word '**king**' in the title could lead children to explore other words that share the same 'rime' -ing. The text provides the reader with *thing, spring, wing* and *ring*. *How many other words can they think of that would fit this pattern?*

### **Phonics**

There are multiple examples of words that can be read and written using only GPCs from the basic code, including in many cases the use of adjacent consonants which some children may still need support in hearing and recognising: *rain, clank, hill, dust, it, this, not, just, thing, vanilla, smell, shop, in, Evan, loft, strut, and, soft, see, been, sun, speck, blob, sat, bed, tell, him, man, wind, smooth, bedroom*

Opportunities also exist to teach, revise and investigate spelling patterns linked with the complex code. For example, different spelling patterns appear in the text for the following sounds:

- /ay/ - *rained, face, way, taken, away, shape, stay, blazed, days, race, papered*
- /ee/ - *chimney, me, belong, cream, granny, Peter, hardly, Italy, been, needle, hero, journey*
- /igh/ - *reminded, sunlight, ice, my, behind, smiled, like, beside, lifetime, mine, fly, guides, white, eye*
- /oa/ - *no, spoke, coal, told, home, Rome, so, slow, flown, hero, old, whole*
- /oo/ - *soup, you, flew, blew, smoothed*
- /ow/ - *houses, fountains, out, clouds*
- /or/ - *walk, soared, force, dawned*
- /ur/ - *birds, journey*

## Potential text for reading and responding in Session 6

It is often said that feral pigeons are a real nuisance, but what exactly are the problems? The standard gripe is that there are too many of them and therefore they need to be controlled. It's a familiar refrain. The accusation is also levelled at rats, magpies, crows, squirrels, foxes, badgers and deer, to name but a few so-called 'pests'.

Of course, no one ever says what the ideal number of feral pigeons is, just that there are too many. However, there have been a handful of detailed population estimates, including one in Sheffield: 12,130 feral pigeons in a city of half a million people. This is likely to be typical of our cities.

The BTO's Garden BirdWatch survey listed the feral pigeon as the 25th most frequently recorded species in the first quarter of 2010, whereas the wood pigeon was number five and the collared dove number eight.

Feral pigeons are also said to be 'dirty' because they foul streets and buildings. Personally, I find pigeon droppings much less offensive than graffiti, the chewing gum stuck on pavements and bus seats, and the masses of litter everywhere.

Picking up all of the filth left by people costs vastly more than removing pigeon poo. Likewise, protecting buildings from pigeons costs considerably less than cleaning up after domestic dogs.

**Extract from *Flying Rat or Urban Hero?*, Steve Harris, BBC Wildlife Magazine**

<https://www.discoverwildlife.com/animal-facts/birds/feral-pigeon-flying-rat-or-urban-hero>

## Potential Dictogloss Text – Pigeon Racing

During a race, competing birds are taken far from their lofts and must race home. It is possible for a pigeon to compete from about 6 months old until they are over ten years of age. However, the average racing career rarely exceeds three years.

The traditional method of timing racing pigeons involves rubber rings with unique serial numbers and a specially-designed racing clock. The ring is attached around the bird's leg and the serial number recorded, then the clock is set and sealed so that the race may begin.

When the first bird returns, its trainer removes the ring and places it in a slot in the clock. The time that the ring was placed in the clock is recorded as the official time that the competing bird arrived home – this is called being 'clocked in'. Trainers must be very fast at removing the ring and recording the time on the clock – every second counts!

Young pigeons are usually trained for at least six months before being allowed to compete in a race event. The initial training involves familiarising the bird with the loft and its surroundings. It is also during this time that the birds learn commands, such as entering the loft when the trainer whistles. This is crucial as the pigeon can't be 'clocked in' until it has entered its home loft.

After a few weeks of initial training and "homing in", the young birds are allowed outside for the first time. As the birds grow older, they become stronger and are therefore allowed to fly further and further away from their home loft.

This extract for Dictogloss was adapted from  
[http://www.pigeonmad.com/beginners\\_guide\\_to\\_racing\\_pigeons.php](http://www.pigeonmad.com/beginners_guide_to_racing_pigeons.php)

## Leicester City and the greatest underdog story ever told

*Everything you need to know about the little team who find themselves one win from the biggest miracle in sports history*

**Tim Hill** (Sat 30 Apr 2016)

On Sunday morning, an unglamorous team from the unglamorous East Midlands, which has never won the title in its 132-year history, could find itself in a place it's never been before. If Leicester City beat Manchester United at Old Trafford, the Foxes, as they're known, will be crowned champions of England – and one of soccer's most astonishing underdog stories will be complete.

Leicester City. Not Chelsea, or Arsenal, or Manchester United, teams burnished with petro-dollars and star talent and years of accumulated knowhow; little Leicester, from the English provinces, with their genial old Italian coach Claudio Ranieri, and their motley crew of rejects, unknowns and never-weres. Twelve months ago they were certainties for relegation; now they're seven points clear with three games to go. It's so improbable that people are using the M-word. Gianluca Festa, a former player of Ranieri's, is in no doubt. "If you want it truly, and are prepared to work for it, then miracles can happen."

Has there been a more compelling story in soccer history? Wimbledon FC won the FA Cup in 1988, beating the mighty Liverpool 1-0 in the final just 11 years after entering the Football League. Nottingham Forest winning the European Cup in 1979 and 1980 takes some beating. But those were victories achieved over shorter periods, in a different era. Leicester have sustained their excellence over the course of a 38-game season, and to do it in the context of modern soccer, where big teams monopolize the talent, and where money talks ... well, it's surely unprecedented.

Last July, Leicester City hired Ranieri, a man whose best years, at 64, seemed to be behind him. He'd coached all over Europe, but his last job had ended disastrously. In truth, it seemed an unimaginative appointment, and Ranieri's principal aim was to keep Leicester in the division.

But his Leicester team beat Sunderland 4-2 on the opening day in August, and they just kept winning, and winning, and winning. What began as a mildly diverting tale morphed into something with an impact beyond soccer: a feel-good underdog story without compare. As the season has rolled through the winter into the spring, everyone in England, soccer fan or not, seemed to be rooting for Leicester. "It's very romantic – and I understand the whole country [being behind them]," Arsenal's manager Arsene Wenger said in February.

Every hurdle has been cleared, every setback overcome; they've barely even had a wobble. They've lost a mere three games – an incredible feat in such a competitive league. In February, Leicester went to Manchester City, the favourites for the title, and crushed them 3-1. It showed they were serious. "We were beaten by a better team," admitted Man City's coach, Manuel Pellegrini.

One more win, and the title is Leicester's. It's not in the city's nature to brag and boast, but this time they'll allow themselves a celebration. Everyone in Leicester is "backing the Blues". "If we win the league, you're going to see the biggest party you've ever seen in this country," James Ferrar, a Leicester supporter, told the Guardian.

In February, the former England striker Gary Lineker, arguably Leicester's most famous footballing son, wrote: "I don't think I have ever wanted something to happen more in sport in my entire life. Don't be afraid, my team. Make it yours." On Sunday, they can. Leicester, champions of England. Now, how about that for a story.

**Adapted for suitability and length for LKS2 from the original article:**

<https://www.theguardian.com/football/2016/apr/30/leicester-city-premier-league-champions-underdog-story>

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from *Adopt-A Dog: An illustrated guide to choosing and caring for a dog*, by Holly Maguire, Cicada Books Limited)

What do they hope for themselves and for each other?



