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Kensuke's Kingdom

This Michael Morpurgo classic won Teachers' Choice in our book awards and is packed with exciting cross-curricular themes

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"I heard the wind above me in the sails. I remember thinking, this is silly, you haven't got your safety harness on, you haven't got your lifejacket on. You shouldn't be doing this..."

Michael and his parents are sailing in tropical waters when Michael is swept overboard. Washed up on an island, he struggles to survive until a bowl of water and some food appear while

he's asleep. Michael isn't alone – there's an elderly Japanese man living on the island and he doesn't like strangers. But Kensuke's instinct is to care for those in need, and following an accident they become friends. There's only one problem – Michael's desperate to be reunited with his family and Kensuke doesn't want to contact anyone from the outside world.

Michael Morpurgo has written more than a hundred books and is one of the UK's best-loved children's writers. Kensuke's Kingdom won the Teachers' Choice category in this year's Teach Primary Book Awards – a category designed to celebrate stories that are enjoyable to teach and inspire new activities year upon year – and is packed with exciting themes to inspire creative cross-curricular work.



How to share the book

Begin by asking pupils which activities and hobbies they enjoy. Is there something they particularly love? Enough to do it every day? Could they turn their favourite activity into a job or lifestyle?

This book is about a family that loves sailing enough to sell their home and set off in a yacht around the world. Does anyone in your class sail, or know somebody who does? Talk about how it might feel to be out in the open air, in charge of a boat.

Show the book's cover and invite responses. Does this look fun? Does it look safe? How do you think the people are feeling? What might be going to happen next? Now share the story with your class. Give children a 'reading for pleasure' experience by setting aside quality storytime as often as possible, to ensure continuity and focus. You're going to take the story as a starting point for creative work, so it's important for children to experience the whole story and connect with it. Once you've finished, discuss the book and your responses to it, then go back in and focus on the elements you want to explore in more depth.

Practical activities Timelines and stories

Create a timeline for the events in this book, marking those that represent a crisis or turning point. How does Michael respond? Are there other decisions he could have made that would have changed the story's direction? How do you think Kensuke viewed Michael's decisions? Would he have acted differently? If he had, what might have happened?

Create a timeline for Kensuke's life from

the story he tells Michael, then add historical events that might have affected him. Create similar timelines for Michael's life, then your own. Could you make a story from the events of your life? Would it be factual, or a mixture of fact and fiction? How would you tell it? Have a go!

Where in the world?

Look at the world map in the book and use an atlas to locate the places Michael visited. Find out about them, then create a giant wall map and display. How far did the Peggy Sue travel?

Where have you been? Create a second map showing the places children in your class or school have visited – locally, in the UK or worldwide. The statistics you generate can be used to compile graphs, charts and infographics – how many different ways can we show this information? Which works best, and why?

Different perspectives

Michael and Kensuke have different points of view. Discuss what they think about fire, for example, or strangers coming to the island, and chart the changes in their attitudes.

Choose one episode in which Michael and Kensuke disagree. Pair children and explore the incident using body language and dialogue. One pair at a time, ask children to freeze frame a single moment,

then tap each child's shoulder as a signal to 'speak their thoughts'. Bring scenes to life by calling for action, then discuss.

Is it a good or bad thing when people disagree? How do Kensuke and Michael deal with their disagreements? How could you improve your own understanding of other people's perspectives?

Take a look at Kensuke's Kingdom through the eyes of the orangutans. What do they see and think? Act or tell the story from their point of view.

Kensuke's dictionary

Michael is writing his account retrospectively as an adult and uses lots of interesting and evocative words. Let children meet these challenging words in context as you share the story, then go

Take it further → → →

HEAPS OF BOATS

Research different types of boat, collect pictures and create a glossary of special sailing terms. Look at boats in a museum or at a marina. Take photographs, make notes and sketches and, if possible, interview someone who loves sailing and can tell you more about the experiences Michael's family would have had.

Ask children to design and build model boats that are capable of moving through the water when they blow on them.

When you're ready to

test prototypes, fill a paddling pool and launch your boats two at a time. If they float, challenge children to race them by

blowing them from one side of the pool to the other. How can you improve your designs? Reflect and learn then try again.

KENSUKE'S INK

Kensuke is more than a survivor. He thrives on the island by looking after his emotional and mental wellbeing as well as his physical needs: he keeps himself



back and collect them. Can you find a fun way of displaying them – by tying them to the branches of a jungle tree, perhaps, or putting them in a chest like Kensuke’s? Once you’ve finished, make a dictionary featuring your favourite words and decorate it with Japanese calligraphy or origami. Download our vocabulary list featuring 96 interesting words from the novel at teachwire.net/teaching-resources/kensukes-kingdom

Fact or fiction?

Look at the map of Kensuke’s island. What can we learn about it from the text? Using an atlas, make a list of small islands in the Pacific. What do you imagine they’re like? Find out about them. Can you match any of these islands to the one in this story? Make a case for your choice.

Many sailors have been shipwrecked on islands. Research true stories (eg Grace Darling and the wreck of the Forfarshire) and retell from a first person perspective.

Desert islands have long been thought of as places where anything can happen and fact has often been mixed with fiction. For example, St Brendan landed on a barren island only to find it was a whale, and Daniel Defoe’s 1719 classic *Robinson Crusoe* was a fictionalised account of the real-life adventures of Alexander Selkirk. Draw maps and make models of imaginary islands complete with imaginary fauna and flora, or blend fact and fiction to create something new. Use this to inspire your own stories.

Survival of the fittest

What do we need for survival? What do we like having in our lives? Talk about the things you own and use – what’s a necessity and what’s a luxury?

Kensuke is more than a survivor. List the ways he cares for himself and others,

the resources he’s acquired, the objects he’s made and the skills he’s utilising. Use the text to help you draw a picture of Kensuke’s cave. Frame with words and phrases to back up your interpretation. How would you survive on an island? Go to a wild place (or your school playground!) and have a go at making shelters or try some camp cookery.

“I promised, and because of that I had to live out a lie...”

What were the promises Kensuke wanted Michael to keep, and what were the reasons for those promises? Why does Michael break them? Should Kensuke have asked Michael to keep a secret? Is it always good to keep a secret if you’re asked to do so? Use P4C approaches to discussing these ‘bigger questions’.

Man overboard!

Read the description of the storm and Michael’s experience of being washed



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overboard. Collect words to describe the weather, ocean and Michael’s reactions. What would the sea have looked, smelt, sounded and tasted like?

Examine the book’s cover art. Describe what you can see and how it makes you feel. Why has Michael Foreman depicted the

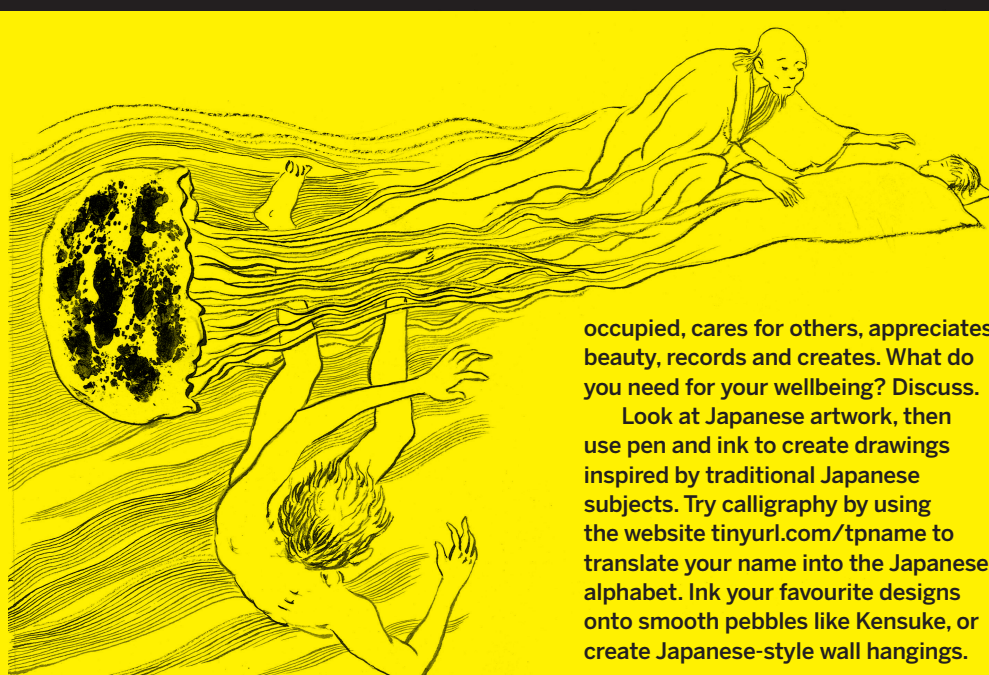
Kensuke makes his own ink. Investigate dyes and mordants using natural plants and make some too.

JELLYFISH STING

Look at the illustration of Michael and the jellyfish. How did it feel to be stung and what were the effects? Find out about different species of jellyfish and watch footage of them moving. Visit an aquarium to view real ones.

Using your bodies, create jellyfish-inspired movements. Can you compose some music to accompany your dance performance?

Make giant models of jellyfish using fabric, tissue and cellophane. Hang them from the ceiling or animate them as puppets using sticks. Write poetry inspired by jellyfish and display next to your models.



occupied, cares for others, appreciates beauty, records and creates. What do you need for your wellbeing? Discuss.

Look at Japanese artwork, then use pen and ink to create drawings inspired by traditional Japanese subjects. Try calligraphy by using the website tinyurl.com/tpname to translate your name into the Japanese alphabet. Ink your favourite designs onto smooth pebbles like Kensuke, or create Japanese-style wall hangings.