

Kaspar: Prince of cats

Much-loved author Michael Morpurgo's books are ideal for studying in the classroom. Packed with inspirational characters and incredible storylines Michael's stories are perfect for exploring with a class. In *Kaspar: Prince of Cats* readers are whisked back in time to 1912, where they will visit the famous Savoy hotel and board the Titanic for its maiden voyage.

There are many different themes and issues to explore within the text, but Puffin Book Club have come up with a selection of ideas for activities that you may choose to carry out with your class to supplement the main textual study.

cover analysis

Discussing the cover of a book with a class before you start is a great way to get an impression of your pupils' preconceptions. Ask them if they can guess what the book is about from the title and the front cover. Does it make them want to read the book? Why? They should write down their ideas and then refer to them when they have finished reading. Were they right?

diary entry

Ask the pupils to imagine what it would be like to be working at the Savoy Hotel now. Would a similar group of people be staying there? Discuss the type of people that they could potentially be looking after and how they would have to act towards them. Now ask them to pretend that they are a bellboy, like Johnny Trott, and to write a diary of their day. They should consider the following points:

- How did their day begin?
- Who did they meet?
- Were there any famous guests staying at the hotel?
- Did they get to speak to them or were they told to stay out of the way?
- What chores did they have to do?
- Was the day fun or just hard work?

illustrations

As you read through the book with your class stop to point out some of the illustrations. What has Michael Foreman chosen to concentrate on when illustrating a page? Do they alter the way that we might read the story? Ask your pupils to choose their favourite part of the book and draw their own illustration of this moment.



Research project – The Titanic

The sinking of the Titanic has been explored in newspapers and books and even on film and television, so there are lots of resources that children can draw on when researching the subject. Discuss all the different methods of finding out information with your class. Talk about which sources are often the best, and how some of the information that they find might be inaccurate. Together they should come up with information and pictures about the Titanic. You may want to split the pupils into groups and delegate smaller topics to each, so you know that each area is covered. Once everyone has gathered research, ask the children to type it up neatly and add it to a wall display dedicated to Kaspar: Prince of Cats and the Titanic.

Holiday leaflet

The ‘unsinkable’ Titanic was supposed to have been one of the most beautiful ships ever built, so people would have been very excited to see it for the first time as it went on its maiden voyage to New York. Discuss the interior of the ship and the entertainment that the passengers would have found on board with your class. Now ask them to write a leaflet persuading people to travel on the ship as it left port for the very first time.

The stimulus for a story

Michael Morpurgo came up with the idea for Kaspar: Prince of Cats when he was staying at the Savoy as the Writer-in-Residence. While he was there he was dining in the American Bar when he spotted a model of a cat called Kaspar sitting in a glass case. It was this statue that gave Michael the idea for his own book.

Ask the children to think about their hometown or somewhere they’ve been on holiday. Is there a statue that really sticks in their mind? Ask them to think about why it might be there. They don’t have to use the real reason, instead they should use their imaginations as Michael did, and compose a story of how this statue came to their town.

