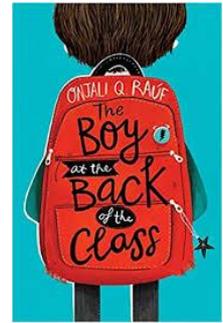


Take 5: Ideas for Independent/Home Learning

The Boy at the Back of the Class

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1. Explore it

Read the extract from the book below, thinking about what is happening and the characters you meet:

Chapter Two THE BOY WITH THE LION EYES

For the rest of the day I kept sneaking glances over my shoulder at the new boy and noticed that everyone else was doing the same.

Most of the time he kept his head down low but every so often I'd catch him staring right back at us. He had the strangest coloured eyes I'd ever seen - like a bright ocean but on a half-sunny, half-cloudy day. They were grey and silvery-blue with specks of golden-brown. They reminded me of a programme I saw about lions once. The camera operator had zoomed into a lion's face so much that its eyes had taken up the whole screen.

The new boy's eyes were like those lion's eyes. They made you want to never stop staring.

When Tom joined our class last year, I'd stared at him a lot too. I didn't mean to, but I kept imagining that he came from an American spy family – like the ones you see in the movies. He told me later that he had thought there was something wrong with me. The new boy probably thought there was something wrong with me too, but it's hard to stop staring at new people – especially when they have eyes like a lion's.

What do you think is happening in this extract? Who are the central characters? Can you summarise what you've read in a couple of sentences?

Re-read the extract to yourself and think about the character of the 'new boy'. What words and phrases stand out to you in the narrator's description? What do we know about the new boy from the text? What can we infer from what the narrator tells us? What do we know about the narrator's thoughts or feelings about him? What do the words used to describe him and his actions suggest to us? We see this situation through the eyes of the narrator, but what do you think the new boy might be thinking or feeling?

Now think about the narrator. What do you know about them from the text? What do you think about them from what you have read? Why do you think the author might have chosen to focus on the eyes of the new boy? Why do you think the narrator repeatedly compares them to a **lion's eyes**? Have you seen a lion's eyes before? See if you can find a picture to look at. What are a lion's eyes really like?

2. Illustrate it

Re-read the extract again. Circle, underline or note the words and phrases used to describe the boy's eyes. What do they make you think about? How would you draw these eyes? What colours would you use? How would you portray them in your drawing? Visualise the eyes in your mind as strongly as you can from the

description. It might help for someone else to read the extract to you as you focus. You might also want to look in a mirror to reference the shapes and features of your own eyes.

Using whatever materials you have available, create an artistic representation of the boy's eyes. How will you reference the colours described by the narrator? You could for example use colouring pencils, felt tips, watercolour paints or make your own colour pastes from different coloured spices and water, such as turmeric, paprika and black pepper.

3. Talk about it

- There is a common expression, which states that 'the eyes are the window to the soul.' What do you think this expression means?
- What might the eyes of the boy be telling us about who he is?
- What do we know about lions?
- How might some of the characteristics we associate with lions have a connection to the boy's character?
- What do you think the narrator should do next?

4. Imagine it

Try to recall the first time you joined a new class or your first time with a new group of children. Do you remember how you felt? Were you made to feel welcome? How? What did you find helpful? What did you find challenging?

Think about what you learnt from that experience. Knowing what you know now, what advice would you have given yourself to cope with your new environment and situation?

If you were to speak to the new boy, who is likely to be having similar thoughts and feelings as you will have had, what would you say? How would you reassure him when he is likely to feel nervous and lonely at times? What advice would you give him?

You could use your ideas to write a letter offering him advice, support and reassurance to support him with settling in.

5. Create it

Imagine that you have been tasked with supporting the new boy to settle in. What are the kinds of things you will need to consider to make this as easy for him as possible? Create your own personal guide to settling in to a new school. This can take any form of your choice, for example, it could be a poster, booklet or short video. When planning the guide, you will need to consider what information will be important for the new boy, such as:

- What does he need to know about routines of the school day?
- How will the guide help him to know where different rooms and places are around the school?
- Which pupils and members of staff is it important for him to know about?
- Are there any particular rules that it is important for him to understand?

How will you organise the information to make it easy to follow, understand and remember? Share this with someone else. Do they think the information is welcoming and clear?