



This Teaching Resource was created by Education Durham to support the Little Read, part of Durham Book Festival 2020 produced by New Writing North.

Greta and the Giants

by Zoë Tucker and Zoe Persico

This text is ideal for covering National Curriculum Requirements for Spoken Language and would be a superb vehicle for introducing younger children to the concepts of discussion and debate. Many of these statements can be covered specifically through the issues raised in this text and the possible drama activities that it presents.



Statutory requirements

Pupils should be taught to:

- 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 in discussions, presentations, performances, role play, improvisations and debates
- Gain, maintain and monitor the interest of the listener(s)
- Consider and evaluate different viewpoints, attending to and building on the contributions of others
- Select and use appropriate registers for effective communication

Specific teaching of these elements is often missing in our classrooms as many of the elements could and do often happen by default. However, educationalists are all unanimous in the belief that spoken language and oracy work will be crucial as we start to re-open schools following COVID 19. Specific teaching of skills in both speech and listening will be crucial.

There are also many elements of the reading requirements that can be explored using this text, and as with any good book, there are also opportunities for creative writing and using the text as a model for written language.



The vocabulary is simplistic and the story itself could be easily accessed by younger children. However, some of the discussions that it lends itself to are ones that would be appropriate for older primary children as well.

Rather than present the possibilities for activities in categories (Reading /Writing / Spoken language activities etc.) the suggestions here match the flow of the book. There is no expectation that you would follow each activity, but rather pick and choose those which would work best for your children and your needs.

The Front Cover

Look at the illustration:

- What type of book is this? Why do you think that?
- What can you see? – simple activity to develop vocabulary / descriptive language
- What puzzles you about this picture?
- What clues are there about the story?
- What do you predict this book might be about? Why do you think that?

Key to asking the question is following up the answer given with a more probing question, such as: why do you think that / can you explain why you think that? What gave you that idea? What makes you think that is the right answer?

Read the Title:

- Inspired by? What does this mean? Who inspires you? What sort of people inspire others?
- Do you know who Greta Thunberg is?
- Save the world? What does this mean? Why is the world in danger?
- Does the title help you think about what this story might be about? – revisit and develop predictions.



Key here is to ascertain the level of prior knowledge around climate issues and environmental activism. We can sometimes assume children are unaware of these larger issues when in actual fact they are quite able to surprise us with what they have picked up. Some children will come from homes where this is an important aspect of their lives and may well be very well informed. We need to share that knowledge in order to allow children to access this text.

The Back Cover

Read the blurb. How closely does it match predictions? Look again at the front cover and decide whether there are clues to support what the blurb says.

This encourages children to revisit early thinking and refine it in light of new knowledge. It also develops the idea that often there are clues in illustrations that help us build up expectations of stories.

- The word inspiring is used again, but this time about a book. How can a book be inspiring? Discussion.
- Do you think the author thinks it is important that we look after the environment? What clues are there to help us answer that question?

You may or may not want to explore what a Nobel Peace Prize is depending on the level of understanding of the children you are working with – however if they ask the question ‘What is it?’ then you need to be ready to give an age appropriate answer, there is nothing more frustrating to an enquiring learner than being told not to worry about that.

The Title Page

Look at the illustration.



Freeze frame activity – what is she thinking?

- What words describe Greta? What does she look like, what character attributes does the illustration suggest?

Re-read the title.

- What does 'stand to save the world' mean? Explore the term 'to take a stand'.
- What dangers face the world? (this might be a timely, if sensitive, discussion to have as many children may feel very uncertain about the dangers that the world faces)

You could list the dangers and then ask children to rank these – older children might be encouraged to justify their ranking.

This may well lead to some differences of opinion and the possibility of introducing a simple discussion, where ground rules are laid to explain the importance of having your own opinions and respecting the opinions of others.

Pages 1-2

Read the opening sentences, showing the illustration as you read.

- What other stories do the pictures remind you of?
- Does Greta look like any story characters you have met before?
- Do the words the author has used remind you of any stories you have heard / read before?

Again, the importance is to probe the answers that are given, encouraging children to explain their thinking in greater depth.

- Do you think this story is set in the past?



- Is this a true story?

This is a challenging question because the story is based on a real person, but is the story accurately telling us about Greta's life? Starting to understand the difference between factual writing and story writing can begin at a very young age. The fact that the illustration shows a deer and bear and wolf all standing side by side could be an opening for whether this is realistic or not, developing that critical reading that will help children as they move into disciplinary reading at a later point.

Pages 3-4

Read the text.

This is a lovely opportunity to read with expression and to model how, as a reader, you selected the volume, tone etc of your voice helped by clues in the text. Discuss the number of speakers (narrator and the wolf).

Look at the adjectives used to describe the wolf and discuss word choice. Consider whether these are factually accurate, you could look up some images of wolves and discuss whether word choice was good.

- What is the impact of the choice of words?
- How do we know this wolf is not threatening?
- What does 'the forest is broken' mean?

Revisit whether this page has added to our belief that this story is not based on facts – do animals really speak?

Pages 5-6

Actions (huge lumbering oafs): ask children to move around in this way, then go back



to opening illustration and create an action for Greta (a purposeful determined walk, for example) and then go to the wolf and how he greeted Greta (stepping forward, tail low to the ground, respectful).

- What type of story does this remind you of, where animals and humans work together to solve a problem caused by a monster / giant?
- What do the giants do?
- Do we not need homes, factories, cars, shops, planes?

Depending on age of the class you might like to consider whether building homes is a wicked / evil thing to do, to start to explore that this is not quite as black and white as good v. evil.

Pages 7-8

Lovely opportunity for some large display showing the two environments – the tranquil wood shown on the front cover and the opening two pages and the city scape shown on pg. 7.

Display ideas: city scape (made from recycled goods – rubbish, card, plastic, newspaper – all sharp shapes and angles, dark and dirty colours), forest (all soft materials, bright colours, rounded gentle shapes). This could lead to discussion around how materials and colours can show mood, energy, atmosphere etc... helping inference skills to be developed.

- Where would you prefer to live? Why?

Most children will opt for what they think is the right answer (the forest), but this then needs to be challenged – how has the author biased their thinking towards the forest? Are cities all bad? What is good about living in a city? Challenge the children to come up with a number of reasons why living in the city would be better. This is going to support later work around debates where sometimes you have to argue for



the side you do not agree with.

Pages 9-10

Read the pages.

- What is Greta's problem?
- How is she trying to solve it?

This is an opportunity to talk about strategies for problem solving:

- Listening to the problem from different viewpoints
- Looking around and seeing things with own eyes, making own opinion based on what you can see
- Finding out more and reading – this is what Greta is doing on page 10
- What is she reading?
- Why is she reading it?

Explore how we 'find out more'. How do we start? By asking questions!

- What questions might help Greta find out about her problem?

Pages 11-13

- What is the problem?
- Why is no one listening?
- Have you ever felt that people can't see you / are not listening to you?
- How does it make you feel?

Freeze frame: Greta. What is she thinking? Create thought bubbles exploring this.



Page 14

Freeze frame: the two children.

- What has happened – is this important? Why?
- Would you go and sit with Greta?
- What would you write on your sign?

Create signs.

Look back at the words you used to describe Greta at the beginning of the book. Which ones are not really that important? (those that link to her appearance / clothes etc...). The ones that tell us about her character and beliefs are the ones that matter. This is a very important message to start to give to children – what we look like is not important, what we do is what makes us us.

This could be developed into a role on the wall type activity, listing the important things about Greta.

Pages 15-18

Role play the demo.

1. Introduce the idea of debate. Set the statement:
It is wrong to destroy the forest to build houses and cities.
2. Children then need to vote as to whether they agree with the statement or not. Count the votes carefully and record them.

Many/possibly all will opt to agree with the statement. Some (due to the work done earlier about whether they would like to live in a city as opposed to the forest and



the discussion around whether it is wrong to build houses) might feel that whilst it is wrong it is not so black and white.

The point of a debate is to have two sides presenting an argument. If all the children are adamant that they agree with the statement allow them all to be on one side and the adults in the classroom will take the opposing view. The purpose of this is to introduce the idea of debate not to develop the ability to find and argue a point of view that is not your own – this will come later as children develop critical thinking and confidence. However, if appropriate and there are some children who could confidently argue something for both sides, split teams accordingly. It is quite challenging to ask younger children to present a viewpoint they do not believe in which is why you would not put them into a team they completely disagreed with at this early stage.

3. Both sides/teams prepare a presentation to outline why they agree/disagree with the statement.

Again, depending on the age of the child you may also like to introduce the idea of providing some counter arguments, which would involve thinking about what the other side might say and what you could say to show that it was wrong.

4. Both sides present their cases – and the other listens – no interruptions at this point.
5. The debate floor is opened and each side is allowed to comment on what they have heard. They can ask questions or contradict what the other side has said.

It might be helpful to have some sentence prompts here, such as: *You said... but I agree that... but... You said... Can I ask...*

At this point it is not about shouting the loudest or just repeating why your argument is right – it is about having listening to the other argument building on/



against what they said.

6. In a debate the chairperson will draw the discussion to a close and there will be a final vote. You put the same question:

It is wrong to destroy the forest to build houses and cities.

See if the numbers have changed by comparing to the first set of votes. If they have then you see which side has changed the greater number of opinions. That is the winning side – not necessarily the side that has the most votes.

This activity is well worth exploring. The chance to introduce debating as a way to develop oracy, listening and enquiry skills is misunderstood and because of this is massively underused in primary education.

Pages 19-20

- What does 'stopped in their tracks' mean?
- What would Greta say to the giants?

Write Greta's speech to the giants.

Read the speech aloud, thinking about voice volume, emotion, expression, actions etc.

Pages 20-23

Enact the scene on these pages (use information on pg. 22 to act as the giants). This is a good opportunity to look at body language, ways of expressing emotion, ways of feeling etc.

Ask groups to do this as opposed to whole class. Each group will be given a chance to perform. Each person in the group has to choose a role and an emotion to act out.



Explain the challenge will be that when you shout 'freeze' the group must freeze immediately and everyone else in the class should be able to see whether the individuals in the group are protestors / giants and they should be able to identify the feeling that individual is trying to show.

Pages 24-25

List the ways the behaviour of the giants changed throughout the book.

- Do you think the author is pleased that the giants have changed their behaviour? Why?

COVID questions:

- What have you done differently over the last few months?
- What did you stop doing? What did you start doing?
- Will you keep doing any of the things you started to do during COVID? Why?

The more that children can relate to stories the more deeply they engage and understand them. By bringing this back round to the COVID crisis we are allowing children time to reflect on the impact of this situation and to see the positives that have perhaps come out of it (again, this would need to be handled sensitively).

Final pages of story (pages 26-27)

Discuss the illustration.

- Do you like/dislike it?
- What puzzles you?
- What does it remind you of?



Revisit the predictions at the start of the book.

- What happened?
- What did not?

Return to the idea of Greta inspiring people.

- Was Greta an inspiration to others? How?
- Is this book an inspiration? How?

Information pages (pages 28-29)

This might not be something you would read to all children though again the language is not too challenging (there is more technical vocabulary) but you could talk about this as one of the key difference between fact and fiction.

Read each paragraph slowly on page 28.

Ask children in talk pairs to think about what they have found out having listened to each paragraph. Do this paragraph by paragraph so as not to overload.

Re-read individual sentences and unpick these to model to children how re-reading helps us get the main gist of a sentence.

- How is the information on this page different to the story?
- What have you found out about Greta that you did not know?
- In this story we have been given lots of information about Greta – which is true and which is made up?

Put up the statement:

No one is too small to make a difference.



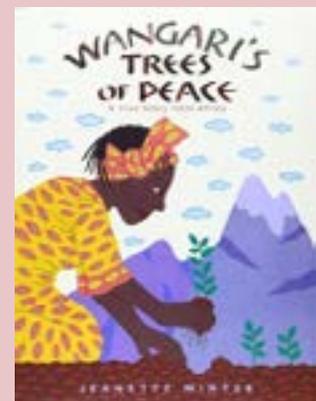
Ask children to work individually, in pairs / teams to create lists of what they could do to help look after the world, then compare to the suggestions made in the book.

What could they do to help the local community/ their families etc?

Look at the weblinks suggested and consider why the author thought these were good places to visit.

Further Reading

Having read this book you may like to read *Wangari's Tree of Peace* and compare the two. This book is the story of the Nobel Peace Prize Winner, Wangari Maathai. As a young girl she too took action to look after the environment so the similarities are huge



For older children you could raise the discussion that this story was written about actions taken in 1977 and Greta is taking action today – what does that tell us?

What can we do to make sure that 50 years from now there is not another young girl who is fighting exactly the same fight?

COMMISSIONED
BY



WRITTEN
BY



FESTIVAL
PARTNERS

NEW WRITING
NORTH



Supported using public funding by
ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND



County Durham
Community Foundation