**Lesson 1: Introducing Once**

**Lesson Objective:** This lesson aims to introduce *Once* to the students and consider the central themes and motifs used in the text. By the end of the lesson the students should:

1. Understand the context of *Once* and the effect it has on the book
2. Be able to name at least three central themes of the book and explain the way in which these themes are explored and developed
3. Be able to confidently compare the moral of *Once* with that of *Tom’s Midnight Garden, Wonder, Holes* and *War Horse*

**Plan:**

* Begin the class with a general discussion of the book. What did the students enjoy about the book? What did they not enjoy? What was interesting about the way the book was written? Ask the students to note down three things they liked and three things they did not and discuss this as a class
* Remind students of the concept of a semantic field. Brainstorm what would be in the semantic field encompassed within *Once,* what recurring symbols, themes and motifs can they find in the book (i.e. story-telling, hardship, anti-Semitism)?
* Discuss the context of *Once.* Watch the video of the stories of Holocaust survivors and discuss with the class why it is so important that we still learn about the Holocaust
* Introduce the poem *The Survivor* by Primo Levi. Read as a class and analyse the kind of language and images he uses. Introduce the class to some information about Primo Levi himself, and his experience of the Holocaust
* Now, ask the class to imagine that they are going to interview Morris Gleitzman. They should write down three questions that they would ask him if they could. One member of the class should ‘hotseat’ Gleitzman and answer the other students’ questions, thinking about how to infer author intent
* Watch a real interview with Gleitzman about why he wrote *Once*. Ask the class to consider how similar the questions and answers they came up with are to the real thing
* Open up a discussion about the theme of anti-Semitism in *Once*. How does Gleitzman develop this theme through the use of symbols? What symbols can they identify? Write a P.E.E. paragraph on this as a class
* Drawing on the past few lessons, what do the class think the moral of *Once* is? How does the moral of this book compare to the others we have read?

**Homework:** Why did Gleitzman choose to tell thisstory? OR Why is it still important that we learn and talk about the Holocaust? Explain your answer with reference to the text and the wider context of the book, remember to use quotations and language analysis.

**Lesson 2: Exploring Style and Narrative**

**Lesson Objective:** This lesson aims to enable to students to think more broadly about the way in which *Once* is written. By the end of the lesson the students should:

1. Be able to think about the symbolic importance of the themes Gleitzman explores, and how they interplay with the context of the book
2. Be able to identify how Gleitzman has created his characters and why he has written them in the way he has, using quotations to support any ideas on this subject
3. Be able to talk confidently about narration and perspective in *Once,* and to compare the narrative voice in *Once* with the narrative voice in *War Horse,* *Holes, Wonder* and *Tom’s Midnight Garden*

**Plan:**

* **Open the lesson by discussing the importance of the word ‘once’, which is both the title of the novel and also is used to open every chapter**
* **Introduce quotations from the book where the theme of story-telling, or of books more generally, is explored. Ask the class why they think this is such a big theme in *Once.***
* **Play the short video about the Nazi book burnings, and introduce the quote from Heinrich Heine’s 1821 play, “where they burn books, in the end they will burn people”. Re-open the question of the theme of story-telling, does this new information help bring it to light?**
* Returning to the brainstorm made in the previous lesson about themes, ask the students to pick one theme and find an examples within the book where this theme is explored or developed. Demonstrate an example of this with the theme of “story-telling”, using two extracts from the text to highlight the theme’s effect.
* **Discuss the narrative voice in *Once,* considering how the character of Felix in particular is used to explore the inhumanity of the Holocaust**
* **Consider the way in which Felix is presented in *Once.* Why might Gleitzman have chosen a character like him to be at the heart of his story? Why might he have chosen to tell the story through Felix’s eyes in the first person?**
* **They should now create a character profile for Felix, with four inferences they have made about his character and two pieces of evidence supporting every point**
* **Watch the video of the interview of Gleitzman talking about how he creates characters. Does this chime with what they have identified in how Felix’s character has been written?**
* **Ask the class which of the books we have studied they feel the narrative voice in *Once,* or the way perspective has been written and explored, is most similar to. Start with the most obvious comparison of *Wonder* and discuss how every book we have read (except *War Horse)* has been written from the perspective of a child’s view on life. What effect does this have on each of these books?**

**Homework:** What does *Once* tell us about human nature? **OR What does *Once* tell us about the importance of story-telling?** Explain your answer with reference to the text and the wider context of the book.

**Lesson 3: Comparing and Contrasting**

**Lesson Objective:** This lesson will aim to encourage the students to think analytically about how to compare and contrast books. By the end of the lesson the students should:

1. Be able to discuss the effectiveness of the themes and messages in *Once* and analyse author intent through this lens
2. Be able to compare and contrast all five books we have studied, thinking particularly about how the five authors explore similar themes (i.e. friendship)
3. Be able to ‘zoom out’ and see each book through a series of fundamental elements, such as genre, style, context, identifying how each of these elements has been used and comparing the five author’s approaches to them

**Plan:**

* Start the lesson with a wider discussion on what the students have learnt from *Once,* what they think is the most powerful theme or message and why, and what they ultimately feel that Gleitzman was trying to say with this book
* Did they prefer *Once, Tom’s Midnight Garden, Wonder, Holes* or *War Horse.* Why? They should write a P.E.E. paragraph on which book was their favourite and should present it to the class
* Now brainstorm with the class: are there any themes that all five books have in common? Or that any two of the books have in common?
* As a class, focus on the theme of friendship and, using a large comparison grid, compare and contrast the different ways in which all five authors explore the theme. There should be at least two examples for each book. Discuss which book explored the theme the most effectively, or had the most interesting things to say about friendship
* The students should select one theme of their own and fill out another compare and contrast grid on this theme.
* Discuss the question “how important is context in each of these five books” and open up a debate on this. Rank the books in order of how important the context was to the story
* Talk about the similarities and differences in each of the five author’s writing styles, the kind of language they used, and the emotions that each author played on
* Now discuss genre, what genre do they think each of the books falls into? Why? Is there a genre that they like in particular?
* For the last ten minutes of the lesson, each student should prepare a presentation comparing and contrasting the exploration of a theme in two of the texts (i.e. comparing the theme of bravery in *Once* and *Holes)* and they should present these to the rest of the class, making sure that they back up their points with evidence from the text. This should be based on an example passage that the class can emulate to help them think more deeply about comparing and contrasting themes.

**Homework:** Fill out the large comparison grid on all five books (or all the books the student was present for). The grid asks students to identify key themes, the moral, key quotations, key characters and the fundamentals of the story, along with evaluating the effectiveness of each story.