

Why the Whales Came - Michael Morpurgo

Lesson 1

Before reading...

Look at the front cover.

- What do you think the book will be about?
- What things can you see on the front cover?
- What sort of story will it be?
- Who might enjoy it?

Now read the blurb...

- Were any of your predictions correct?



The Opening Lines

Read the first lines of the book (below):

'YOU KEEP AWAY FROM THE BIRDMAN, GRACIE,' my father had warned me often enough. 'Keep well clear of him, you hear me now?' And we never would have gone anywhere near him, Daniel and I, had the swans not driven us away from the pool under Gweal Hill where we always went to sail our boats.

Daniel and I had built between us an entire fleet of little boats. Fourteen of them there were, each one light blue with a smart white stripe along the bulwarks. I remember well the warm spring day when we took them down to the pool in father's wheelbarrow. We had just the gentle, constant breeze we needed for a perfect day's sailing. We launched them one by one and then ran round to the far side of the pool to wait for them to come in. It was while we were waiting that a pair of swans came flying over, circled once and then landed in the middle of the pool, sending out great waves in their wake. Two of our boats keeled over and some were eventually washed back to the shore; but we had to wade in after the others to retrieve them. We tried shouting at the swans, we even threw sticks at them; but nothing we did would frighten them away. They simply ignored us, and cruised serenely around the pool, preening themselves. In the end it was we who had to leave, piling our boats into the wheelbarrow and trudging defeated and dejected home to tea.

For some days after that we tried to occupy our pool again, but the swans always seemed to be on the lookout for us and would come gliding towards us in a meaningful, menacing kind of way. They left us in no doubt that they did not want us there, and that they would not be prepared to share the pool with anyone.

Comprehension

Chapters 1-4

1. What colour stripe does every boat have on its bulwarks?
2. What bay did they take their boats to?
3. What animal is Birdman like?
4. What did the narrator always have for tea as a child?
5. Who is described as an 'inseparable pair' in Chapter 2?
6. What disease did Aunty Mildred nearly die of?
7. What do they name the boat they build together?
8. What message did they find at Rushy Bay?
9. Why did the narrator not like going to school?
10. Why had Daniel scarcely slept in Chapter 4?

Vocabulary

1. Tangle
2. Rattle
3. Ornate
4. Camouflage
5. Crescendo
6. Violent
7. Blight
8. Continuous
9. Exchange
10. Nuisance
11. Humming
12. Launch
13. Breeze
14. Honest
15. Sharply
16. Steer
17. Rumour
18. Platter
19. Crouch
20. Brayed
21. Limp
22. Rarely
23. Piles
24. Torment
25. Serene

HOMEWORK

How does Morpurgo **intrigue the reader** in the opening?

OR

Write a **short story** using **at least 5 new words** (above) that we learned from these chapters.