



Complete Comprehension

Schofield & Sims

Year 6

Comprehension texts



Contents

Unit 1	Who Let the Gods Out?	Unit 12	The Crooked Sixpence
Unit 2	To Asgard!	Unit 13	Cogheart
Unit 3	Hidden Figures	Unit 14	Alice's Adventures in Wonderland
Unit 4	The British (serves 60 million)	Progress check 2	The Hunting of the Snark
Unit 5	War Horse	Unit 15	What's So Special about Shakespeare?
Unit 6	For the Fallen	Unit 16	Macbeth
Unit 7	Sky Song	Unit 17	Deforestation for Palm Oil
Progress check 1	The Snow Queen	Unit 18	The Explorer
Unit 8	Tin	Unit 19	Pig-Heart Boy
Unit 9	The Wonderful Wizard of Oz	Unit 20	Marius the Giraffe Killed at Copenhagen Zoo
Unit 10	Welcome to Nowhere	Unit 21	Evolution Revolution
Unit 11	Malala Yousafzai: 'Nobel Award Is for All the Voiceless Children'	Progress check 3	Charles Darwin: History's Most Famous Biologist

Who Let the Gods Out?, by Maz Evans

This book tells the story of a boy named Elliot who has his life changed by a shooting star. In our extract, Elliot is coming to terms with meeting Virgo, a young goddess, whom he has just witnessed crash-landing on Earth inside the shooting star.

An hour later, the two strangers were in front of the cosy fire in a dark farmhouse. Elliot gave Virgo a pair of his old combats, trainers and a T-shirt to replace her ruined robes and offered her the bathroom to remove the worst of the dung from her long hair. He made them both a cup of tea on the gas stove and had spent the last half an hour trying to obtain any information that might explain where she came from. It wasn't going well.

"So let me get this straight," he sighed for the umpteenth time. "You're an immortal Goddess who lives in Ilium?"

"Elysium," corrected Virgo.

"Right, there," said Elliot, "and you travelled to Earth from the sky in your big star-ball?"

"Constellation," said Virgo, who was fascinated by how soggy she could make her biscuit before it plopped into her tea. "Constellation travel is one of the most sophisticated transport systems in the immortal world."

"So sophisticated it landed you in a pile of cow dung?"

"That was unfortunate," snapped Virgo defensively. "I haven't visited Earth before and got a little lost in all the pollution you humans have created. Your atmosphere is filthy."

"And now you have to go and give that flask to this Thermos bloke?"

"Thanatos."

"Yeah, him, and then you'll just turn back into stars and whizz back up to Elision?"

"Elysium," Virgo repeated impatiently.

"Yes, there. And you're like, a million years old?"

"Actually," said Virgo huffily, as the last of her biscuit fell into her tea. "I'm thirteen thousand, nine-hundred and seventy-four."

This was getting silly. Elliot knew girls were funny about their ages – his Maths teacher, Mrs Goodwinge, had been 38 for the past five birthdays – but this was ridiculous.

"Are you sure I can't call your parents?" he sighed yet again.

"How many times, child – I don't have parents. I am a Goddess of the Zodiac Council, sent here to deliver ambrosia to an imprisoned death daemon. But if that's too much for your feeble human brain to comprehend," she said matter-of-factly, rising to leave, "then I'll be on my way."

Elliot didn't know what to do. He really couldn't let this mad girl leave on her own, but if she wouldn't let him call anyone ... it was better if she stayed here tonight. At least that way she was safe and tomorrow he could take her into the village and find her some help.

"No, don't go," he said, "please stay. But it's late, we both need some sleep. We've got loads of rooms here, I'll find you a bed."

"Thank you kind Elliot, but immortals don't require sleep."

"Of course you don't," said Elliot, too tired to argue with this crazy girl anymore. "Well if you change your mind, there's a quilt on the sofa and you can sleep under that. Promise me you won't run off in the night?"

"I swear it on the River Styx," she said solemnly. "Immortals cannot break their oaths."

"Marvellous," said an exhausted Elliot. "I'll see you in the morning."

"Sleep well, human child," said Virgo.

"Stay awake, loony star girl," mumbled Elliot as he climbed the stairs and hauled his exhausted body off to his bed.

To Asgard!, by Rachel Piercey

This is a poem by Rachel Piercey that explores the exciting world of the Norse gods in the kingdom of Asgard. In the poem, the reader is introduced to some of the most famous gods. It describes the gods' lives and the adventures they have across the rainbow bridge that divides Asgard from Midgard (Earth).

*Come across the rainbow bridge
to Asgard, where the Norse gods live!*

Odin is the ruler here,
he strokes his beard, he shakes his spear,
he keeps a pair of wolves as pets
and flies a horse who has eight legs.

*Come across the rainbow bridge
to Asgard, where the Norse gods live!*

Frigg is queen, and she can see
what every person's fate will be,
and whether it will turn out well
or badly, though she'll never tell.

*Come across the rainbow bridge
to Asgard, where the Norse gods live!*

The strongest of them all is Thor
whose hammer causes thunderstorms.
He crushes mountains, likes to flirt,
has two goats pull his cart to work.

*Come across the rainbow bridge
to Asgard, where the Norse gods live!*

Freya's husband roams the worlds,
so she cries tears of solid gold.
In feathered cloak, boar at her side,
she goes to seek him far and wide.

*Come across the rainbow bridge
to Asgard, where the Norse gods live!*

Loki is the trickster god:
he causes trouble, then he's off,
and even Odin cannot make
this wily, wicked god behave.

*Come across the rainbow bridge
to Asgard, where the Norse gods live!*

Their world is full of beasts and swords,
serpents, giants, magic wars.
They feast and fight and feast again
but even Asgard has to end ...

*So while there's still a rainbow bridge:
to Asgard! where the Norse gods live ...*



Hidden Figures, by Margot Lee Shetterly

This text tells the true story of four remarkable African-American women who were key to America's success in the 'space race' during the 20th century.

Over the years, hundreds of women worked as mathematicians for the federal agency called the NACA – the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics – which researched and promoted the study of flight. But these women were among many who distinguished themselves with their talents and hard work.

Dorothy Vaughan was a pioneer. She joined the NACA in 1943, the first year the agency began hiring African-American women as computers, and she was the first to be promoted into a management position. She was a role model for other women, and she helped to steer the careers of many talented women who were joining the NACA.

Mary Jackson was the first African-American woman to move up the ranks and become an engineer at the NACA. She was a fighter, standing up for herself and for other women who deserved the chance to prove themselves. Her work helped to make supersonic aircraft fly higher and faster.

Katherine Johnson was an African-American woman who became an essential member of the team that put the first American in orbit around the Earth. She was a dreamer and an independent thinker who was unafraid to imagine what others considered to be impossible. She helped do the math that was required to send the first men into space – and to bring them home safely.

Christine Darden was an African-American woman who became one of the world's leading experts on supersonic flight. She became the face of the next generation of female space scientists. Her groundbreaking research on predicting sonic booms is still used today.

The accomplishments of these four women were remarkable. But their work was even more impressive because it was achieved while living and working in the South during a time when racial discrimination was commonplace, and when most women with an interest in math were expected to become math teachers.

In the 1800s, after the Civil War, the government passed laws that ended slavery and granted full citizenship and voting rights to African Americans. Later, however, many state and local governments passed other laws that legalised racial segregation. These regulations, which were most common in the South, kept black people and white people apart in many situations.

They could not eat in the same restaurants. They could not drink from the same water fountains. They could not use the same restrooms. They could not attend the same schools. They could not ride in the same parts of buses. They could not live in the same neighbourhoods. They could not receive care at the same hospitals. They could not visit the same beaches. They could not compete on the same sports teams. They could not sit in the same sections in movie theatres. They could not marry someone of a different race. They could not even be buried in the same cemeteries.

Technically, African Americans had the right to vote. However, many local laws made it impossible for them to do so. Some communities levied, or charged, poll taxes, or enforced literacy requirements or imposed other restrictions that made it difficult or impossible for black people to register and vote. And since people who were not registered to vote weren't allowed to sit on juries or run for political office, many African Americans were deprived of these civil rights as well.

During the 1930s, the United States experienced the Great Depression, a decade-long period of economic struggle. Jobs became difficult to find and wages decreased dramatically. All Americans suffered, but African Americans faced the most serious challenges in finding work.

For many African Americans, World War II was an opportunity to make a better life for themselves and their families. Black men enlisted in the military in large numbers. Even though they served in separate black infantry regiments, usually overseen by white officers, they believed that their loyalty and patriotism would help blacks to earn rights that white citizens had. Women also enlisted in the army, where they were called WACs (for Women's Army Corps), and they served in all-female units in the navy, too. And for women like Dorothy Vaughan, Mary Jackson, Katherine Johnson, and Christine Darden, World War II opened the door to a career as a professional mathematician. Each of them found their way to the Langley Laboratory, where they met one another, and women like them: smart, brave, confident, and good at math. The war was changing the world, and it would change their lives as well.

The British (serves 60 million), by Benjamin Zephaniah

This poem tells the story of the British people throughout history to the present day. It is presented in a light-hearted style, in the form of a recipe, but it has an important message at its heart.

Take some Picts, Celts and Silures
And let them settle,
Then overrun them with Roman conquerors.
Remove the Romans after approximately 400 years
Add lots of Norman French to some
Angles, Saxons, Jutes and Vikings, then stir vigorously.

Mix some hot Chileans, cool Jamaicans, Dominicans,
Trinidadians and Bajans with some Ethiopians, Chinese,
Vietnamese and Sudanese.

Then take a blend of Somalians, Sri Lankans, Nigerians
And Pakistanis,

Combine with some Guyanese

And turn up the heat.

Sprinkle some fresh Indians, Malaysians, Bosnians,

Iraqis and Bangladeshis together with some

Afghans, Spanish, Turkish, Kurdish, Japanese

And Palestinians

Then add to the melting pot.

Leave the ingredients to simmer.

As they mix and blend allow their languages to flourish

Binding them together with English.

Allow time to be cool.

Add some unity, understanding, and respect for the future,

Serve with justice

And enjoy.

Note: *All the ingredients are equally important. Treating one ingredient better than another will leave a bitter unpleasant taste.*

Warning: *An unequal spread of justice will damage the people and cause pain. Give justice and equality to all.*

War Horse, by Michael Morpurgo

This famous book tells the story of Joey, a young horse who is sent to work on the battlefields during World War I. In this extract, Joey arrives at a new home after being bought at a market. He overhears a conversation between a boy and his mother.

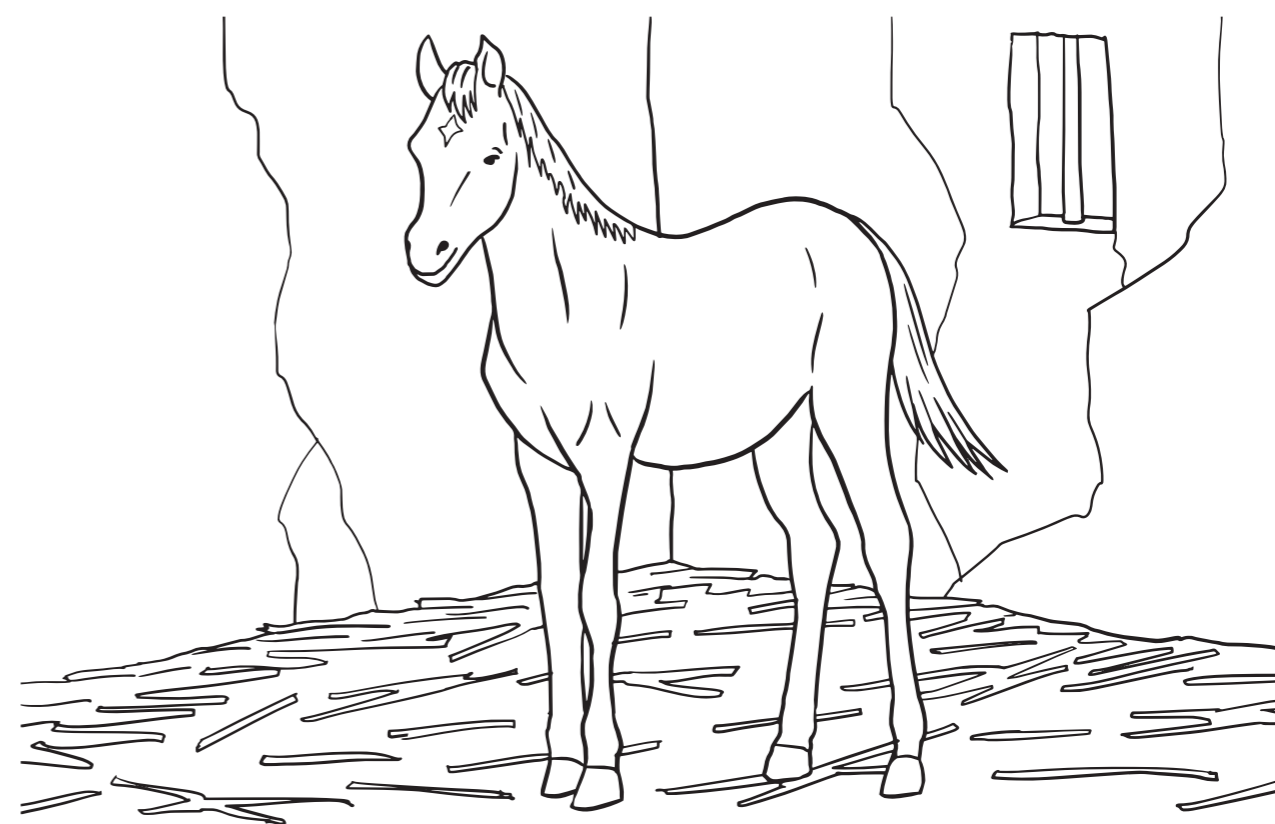
I was dragged along the lanes tied on a short rope to the tailboard of a farm cart so that every twist and turn wrenched at my neck. By the time we reached the farm lane and rumbled over the bridge into the stable yard that was to become my home, I was soaked with exhaustion and the halter had rubbed my face raw. My one consolation as I was hauled into the stables that first evening was the knowledge that I was not alone. The old horse that had been pulling the cart all the way back from market was led into the stable next to mine. As she went in she stopped to look over my door and nickered gently. I was about to venture away from the back of my stable when my new owner brought his crop down on her side with such a vicious blow that I recoiled once again and huddled into the corner against the wall. "Get in there you old ragbag," he bellowed. "Proper nuisance you are Zoey, and I don't want you teaching this young 'un your old tricks." But in that short moment I had caught a glimpse of kindness and sympathy from that old mare that cooled my panic and soothed my spirit.

I was left there with no water and no food while he stumbled off across the cobbles and up into the farmhouse beyond. There was the sound of slamming doors and raised voices before I heard footsteps running back across the yard and excited voices coming closer. Two heads appeared at my door. One was that of a young boy who looked at me for a long time, considering me carefully before his face broke into a beaming smile. "Mother," he said deliberately. "That will be a wonderful and brave horse. Look how he holds his head." And then, "Look at him, Mother, he's wet through to the skin. I'll have to rub him down."

"But your father said to leave him, Albert," said the boy's mother. "Said it'll do him good to be left alone. He told you not to touch him."

"Mother," said Albert, slipping back the bolts on the stable door. "When father's drunk he doesn't know what he's saying or what he's doing. He's always drunk on market days. You've told me often enough not to pay him any account when he's like that. You feed up old Zoey, Mother, while I see to him. Oh, isn't he grand, Mother? He's red almost, red-bay you'd call him, wouldn't you? And that cross down his nose is perfect. Have you ever seen a horse with a white cross like that? Have you ever seen such a thing? I shall ride this horse when he's ready. I shall ride him everywhere and there won't be a horse to touch him, not in the whole parish, not in the whole county."

"You're barely past thirteen, Albert," said his mother from the next stable. "He's too young and you're too young, and anyway father says you're not to touch him, so don't come crying to me if he catches you in there."



For the Fallen, by Laurence Binyon

This is a famous poem about World War I. The fourth verse is often recited at Remembrance Day services in November. The poet, Laurence Binyon, worked as a volunteer in hospitals during the war.

With proud thanksgiving, a mother for her children,
England mourns for her dead across the sea.
Flesh of her flesh they were, spirit of her spirit,
Fallen in the cause of the free.

Solemn the drums thrill: Death august and royal
Sings sorrow up into immortal spheres.
There is music in the midst of desolation
And a glory that shines upon our tears.

They went with songs to the battle, they were young,
Straight of limb, true of eye, steady and aglow.
They were staunch to the end against odds uncounted,
They fell with their faces to the foe.

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.

They mingle not with their laughing comrades again;
They sit no more at familiar tables of home;
They have no lot in our labour of the day-time;
They sleep beyond England's foam.

But where our desires are and our hopes profound,
Felt as a well-spring that is hidden from sight,
To the innermost heart of their own land they are known
As the stars are known to the Night;

As the stars that shall be bright when we are dust,
Moving in marches upon the heavenly plain,
As the stars that are starry in the time of our darkness,
To the end, to the end, they remain.



Sky Song, by Abi Elphinstone

Sky Song tells the story of Eska and Flint, who make the perilous journey to the Never Cliffs to find an ancient song with the power to defeat the evil Ice Queen and free the kingdom of Erkenwald. This extract introduces Erkenwald and explains how the Ice Queen came to power.

Because magic often lingers long after it has been used, the power of the Frost Horn hovered over Erkenwald, and as time went by the people learnt how to use it. They spun hammocks from moonlight which granted wonderful dreams; they trapped sunbeams in lanterns which burned through the winter months; they stored wind inside gemstones which granted their boats safe passage through the stormy seas. And the people knew all was well in their kingdom whenever they saw the northern lights. For those rippling colours were a sign that the Sky Gods were dancing – and that meant the world was as it should be. But darkness can come to any kingdom, and so it came to Erkenwald.

The smallest Sky God grew jealous of the North Star's power and, seeking to rule Erkenwald herself, she pulled away from the constellation one winter night and plunged towards Earth. The North Star acted swiftly and trapped her in a glacier before she could spread her evil across the land. But the Sky Gods stopped dancing then because they knew that it was only a matter of time before someone heard the whispers of the fallen star calling out behind the ice. And, before long, someone did.

One night, Slither, the shaman for the Tusk Tribe, was drawn to the glacier and he listened as the voice within promised him dark powers if he killed his chief and made it look like a plot brewed by the Fur and Feather Tribes using Erkenwald's trusted magic. Although the words were only whispers, they plucked at Slither's heart and, believing all they said, the shaman slew the Tusk Chief while he slept with an enchanted knife. In the weeks that followed, distrust between the tribes gave way to hatred and faith in Erkenwald's magic died. And it was then that Slither climbed back into his skin-boat and paddled beneath the cliffs towards the glacier.

The voice was still there, only it was louder now – as if the hatred between the tribes had given it fresh force – and this time Slither could make out the body of a woman behind the ice. She was tall and slim, with skin as white as marble and lips a cold pale blue. Her eyelashes were crusted with frost, her silver hair twisted through a crown of snowflakes and in her hand she held a staff of glittering black ice. Slither raised a palm towards the Ice Queen and, because this was a palm that had done a terrible thing, it melted the frozen wall before him and the woman stepped out from the glacier and into the skin-boat.

She held up her staff and thunder rumbled across the sky as every man, woman and child in the Tusk Tribe, now locked under the Ice Queen's hold, stepped out of their igloos. They watched in silence as she pointed her staff towards the glacier she had been trapped inside. An enormous chunk of ice broke free from its tip and slid into the sea, but it did not drift away. The Ice Queen waved her staff and a bridge snaked out between the cliff and the iceberg, tethering it in place. Then domes, turrets and towers formed, shooting out of the iceberg with ear-splitting cracks until, finally, there stood a shimmering fortress carved entirely from ice.

Winterfang Palace was born; the reign of the Ice Queen had begun. And to reward his loyalty, the Ice Queen gave Slither command of the Tusk Tribe and taught him how to wield the very darkest magic.



The Snow Queen, by Hans Christian Andersen

Even though *The Snow Queen* was published over one hundred and fifty years ago, the story is still loved by children all over the world. In the story, the heroine, Gerda, travels to the Snow Queen's palace to save her friend Kay, who has been kidnapped. In this extract, a reindeer takes Gerda to a woman to ask for her advice.

But the Reindeer begged so hard for little Gerda, and Gerda looked so imploringly with tearful eyes at the Finland woman, that she winked, and drew the Reindeer aside into a corner, where they whispered together, while the animal got some fresh ice put on his head.

"Tis true little Kay is at the Snow Queen's, and finds everything there quite to his taste; and he thinks it the very best place in the world; but the reason of that is, he has a splinter of glass in his eye, and in his heart. These must be got out first; otherwise he will never go back to mankind, and the Snow Queen will retain her power over him."

"But can you give little Gerda nothing to take which will endue her with power over the whole?"

"I can give her no more power than what she has already. Don't you see how great it is? Don't you see how men and animals are forced to serve her; how well she gets through the world barefooted? She must not hear of her power from us; that power lies in her heart, because she is a sweet and innocent child! If she cannot get to the Snow Queen by herself, and rid little Kay of the glass, we cannot help her. Two miles hence the garden of the Snow Queen begins; thither you may carry the little girl. Set her down by the large bush with red berries, standing in the snow; don't stay talking, but hasten back as fast as possible." And now the Finland woman placed little Gerda on the Reindeer's back, and off he ran with all imaginable speed.

"Oh! I have not got my boots! I have not brought my gloves!" cried little Gerda. She remarked she was without them from the cutting frost; but the Reindeer dared not stand still; on he ran till he came to the great bush with the red berries, and there he set Gerda down, kissed her mouth, while large bright tears flowed from the animal's eyes, and then back he went as fast as possible. There stood poor Gerda now, without shoes or gloves, in the very middle of dreadful icy Finland.

She ran on as fast as she could. There then came a whole regiment of snow-flakes, but they did not fall from above, and they were quite bright and shining from the Aurora Borealis. The flakes ran along the ground, and the nearer they came the larger they grew. Gerda well remembered how large and strange the snow-flakes appeared when she once saw them through a magnifying-glass; but now they were large and terrific in another manner – they were all alive. They were the outposts of the Snow Queen. They had the most wondrous shapes; some looked like large ugly porcupines; others like snakes knotted together, with their heads sticking out; and others, again, like small fat bears, with the hair standing on end: all were of dazzling whiteness – all were living snow-flakes.

Little Gerda repeated the Lord's Prayer. The cold was so intense that she could see her own breath, which came like smoke out of her mouth. It grew thicker and thicker, and took the form of little angels, that grew more and more when they touched the earth. All had helms on their heads, and lances and shields in their hands; they increased in numbers; and when Gerda had finished the Lord's Prayer, she was surrounded by a whole legion. They thrust at the horrid snow-flakes with their spears, so that they flew into a thousand pieces; and little Gerda walked on bravely and in security. The angels patted her hands and feet; and then she felt the cold less, and went on quickly towards the palace of the Snow Queen.

But now we shall see how Kay fared. He never thought of Gerda, and least of all that she was standing before the palace.



From 'The Snow Queen', from *Andersen's Fairy Tales*, by Hans Christian Andersen.

Tin, by Pádraig Kenny

This is an extract from a story about Christopher, a boy who works for an engineer called Absalom who makes mechanical children. At this point in the story, Absalom is trying to sell a mechanical boy called Jack.

Snow was falling from the night sky, and all the world was cold and hushed except for the regular metallic squeaking of Jack's joints. Christopher glanced at Jack, but the mechanical looked straight ahead, oblivious to the sound. Absalom was walking a few feet in front, his thin black coat billowing around him.

Squeak squeak.

Christopher willed the sound to stop.

Squeak squeak.

Absalom wheeled around, raising his tall spidery frame up to its full height.

"I thought I told you to oil him before we left the yard," he said, glaring down at Christopher.

"I did, Mr Absalom."

The truth was, in all the panic of their hurried departure, Christopher had completely forgotten to oil Jack's joints.

Absalom scowled at him.

"He did. He even checked me for loose rivets," said Jack.

"Fix your hair," said Absalom, flapping his hand at Jack, who pulled down the edges of his wig and grinned at Christopher. Christopher smiled weakly in response. Ever since Absalom had informed them that there might be the possibility of an actual sale in Aylesbury, he'd felt an awful, cold sinking sensation in his chest. Absalom hadn't made a real sale in quite a long time, except for his scarecrows, which were frankly embarrassing concoctions. The most recent had walked out of its field and was found three months later, ten miles away, face down in a river. But this time, Absalom had told them, 'the stars were aligning'. A sale was most definitely on the cards, and after a bit of gleeful capering around his office he told Jack to replace his regular red hair with a brown wig 'because nobody buys gingers, awful sickly-looking things'. Jack didn't mind. He was secretly delighted at the possibility of being sold, although Jack being Jack, he was too hard-headed to show it. Even so, Christopher had caught him grinning to himself on the way over in the truck.

Christopher stole another anxious glance at Jack as they walked along the street. He was grinning to himself again, but this time he noticed Christopher was watching. Christopher looked away quickly.

"What's wrong?" said Jack.

"Nothing," Christopher replied.

Absalom's mood was improving. He looked up in amazement at the falling snow. "Beautiful. I couldn't have planned it better if I'd arranged it myself."

He signalled them to stop halfway along a row of red-brick houses, clasped his hands together and grinned at the two boys.

"Here we are so. Number ten is the abode we require. Remember what we practised, Jack."

"Yes, Mr Absalom."

"Christopher."

"Yes, Mr Absalom?"

"Stand up straight, look smart. Remember, you're assistant to the greatest engineer in all of Britain."

"Yes, Mr Absalom."

The door they faced was dark green with a dull brass knocker. Absalom straightened himself up, took the knocker and gave it three confident raps. He spoke to the boys without looking at them:

"Smile, lads."

There were a few moments of silence broken only by the soft fizz of falling snow, then the sound of a bolt being thrown back. The door opened, and Absalom smiled his broadest smile.

A man in his thirties with a curly mop of hair poked his head out.

"Yes?" he said.

Absalom gave a small bow.

"Mr Chapman, allow me to introduce myself. I am Mr Gregory Absalom, a creator of rudimentaries, mannequins, mechanicals and machines of varying sentience, variety and vivacity."

He snapped his wrist and a business card appeared in his hand. Before Mr Chapman knew what was happening, he'd taken the card and was looking at it with a dazed expression. He looked up, his head bobbing, eyes blinking, as if he'd just been punched.

"I'm ... I'm sorry, what's this about?"

Absalom clasped his hands together in a gesture of prayer, and took on a sombre cast.

"Word has reached me, sir, of your personal tragedy. Please accept my sincerest condolences, late though they may be."

The man's face whitened. "Who told you? How is that any of your ... who told you?" he demanded.

Christopher felt suddenly nervous. He tried to catch Absalom's eye, but the engineer was too busy fixing the man with a look that was both sympathetic and predatory.

The Wonderful Wizard of Oz, by L. Frank Baum

This is an extract from a famous book called *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*; you may have seen the film version. The text tells the story of Dorothy, who is injured in a tornado and wakes up in another world. This extract is from later in the book, when Dorothy has arrived in the Emerald City and is awaiting her meeting with the all-powerful Wizard of Oz.

Even with eyes protected by the green spectacles, Dorothy and her friends were at first dazzled by the brilliancy of the wonderful City. The streets were lined with beautiful houses all built of green marble and studded everywhere with sparkling emeralds. They walked over a pavement of the same green marble, and where the blocks were joined together were rows of emeralds, set closely, and glittering in the brightness of the sun. The window panes were of green glass; even the sky above the City had a green tint, and the rays of the sun were green.

There were many people – men, women, and children – walking about, and these were all dressed in green clothes and had greenish skins. They looked at Dorothy and her strangely assorted company with wondering eyes, and the children all ran away and hid behind their mothers when they saw the Lion; but no one spoke to them. Many shops stood in the street, and Dorothy saw that everything in them was green. Green candy and green pop corn were offered for sale, as well as green shoes, green hats, and green clothes of all sorts. At one place a man was selling green lemonade, and when the children bought it Dorothy could see that they paid for it with green pennies.

There seemed to be no horses nor animals of any kind; the men carried things around in little green carts, which they pushed before them. Everyone seemed happy and contented and prosperous.

The Guardian of the Gates led them through the streets until they came to a big building, exactly in the middle of the City, which was the Palace of Oz, the Great Wizard. There was a soldier before the door, dressed in a green uniform and wearing a long green beard.

“Here are strangers,” said the Guardian of the Gates to him, “and they demand to see the Great Oz.”

“Step inside,” answered the soldier, “and I will carry your message to him.”

So they passed through the Palace Gates and were led into a big room with a green carpet and lovely green furniture set with emeralds. The soldier made them all wipe their feet upon a green mat before entering this room, and when they were seated he said politely:

“Please make yourselves comfortable while I go to the door of the Throne Room and tell Oz you are here.”

They had to wait a long time before the soldier returned. When, at last, he came back, Dorothy asked:

“Have you seen Oz?”

“Oh, no,” returned the soldier; “I have never seen him. But I spoke to him as he sat behind his screen and gave him your message. He said he will grant you an audience, if you so desire; but each one of you must enter his presence alone, and he will admit but one each day. Therefore, as you must remain in the Palace for several days, I will have you shown to rooms where you may rest in comfort after your journey.”

“Thank you,” replied the girl; “that is very kind of Oz.”

The soldier now blew upon a green whistle, and at once a young girl, dressed in a pretty green silk gown, entered the room. She had lovely green hair and green eyes, and she bowed low before Dorothy as she said, “Follow me and I will show you your room.”

So Dorothy said good-bye to all her friends except Toto, and taking the dog in her arms followed the green girl through seven passages and up three flights of stairs until they came to a room at the front of the Palace. It was the sweetest little room in the world, with a soft comfortable bed that had sheets of green silk and a green velvet counterpane. There was a tiny fountain in the middle of the room, that shot a spray of green perfume into the air, to fall back into a beautifully carved green marble basin. Beautiful green flowers stood in the windows, and there was a shelf with a row of little green books.

Welcome to Nowhere, by Elizabeth Laird

Welcome to Nowhere follows a young boy called Omar, his big brother Musa and their family as they experience the civil war in Syria. After school, Omar works in his cousin Rasoul's souvenir shop in the old city of Bosra. In this extract, Omar overhears Rasoul in conversation and realises that everything is about to change.

On ordinary days, the old city of Bosra was busy. There'd be coaches coming in full of tourists. The drivers would drop them off in the car park, and then everyone would head off into the ruins. There wasn't much point trying to sell things to people when they first arrived. It was after they'd tired themselves out wandering for miles up and down the dusty old streets and taking millions of photographs of each other in the theatre, that they might be up for buying things.

There was a nice, shady place with chairs under trees and stalls selling cold drinks, and that was where Rasoul had his souvenir shop. His wasn't the only one. There was a whole cluster of them. They looked pretty, with displays of rugs and painted china, strings of camel bells, old brass trays and woven scarves and bags.

That day, though, things were even quieter than usual. There wasn't even a single car in the car park. Half the stalls were closed, and the drinks place was shut up. The few shopkeepers who had opened were clustered round Rasoul, whose mobile phone was clamped to his ear. He was listening to something intently and repeating what he was hearing to the others. I could tell by the way they were standing that the news was bad.

"Egypt," I heard him say. "*Wallah!* Demonstrators shot? That's bad."

One man's shoulders were all hunched up. Another was half turned away, as if he didn't want to look anyone in the eye.

Even the postcard boys looked subdued. Usually, when no tourists were around, they set up targets and threw stones at them until the adults yelled at them for chipping bits off the Roman columns. Now they were looking from one serious face to another, trying to understand what was going on.

Rasoul nodded to me to come over. He finished his call and slid his phone into his pocket. "Tunisia, Egypt, Libya – trouble blowing up everywhere."

"It won't happen here," one of the men said. "This government ..." He looked quickly round at the group and went quiet, as if he was afraid he'd said too much. One by one the men grumbled goodbye, and a little later, all you could hear was the rattle of metal shutters coming down. Rasoul went to the back of his own shop and started rooting through the drawer where he kept papers and money. I followed him inside.

"Tell me," I begged. "What's happening?"

Rasoul looked grim. "Bad stuff, little cousin. All over the Middle East." He dropped his voice. "Security here's tight, but people are angry." He put his finger to his lips. "Pretend I didn't say that. You don't want to get me into trouble."

"Baba says our government's really strong," I said, trying to think of something comforting to say. "He says they won't allow any nonsense from troublemakers here."

Rasoul scowled. "Your baba ..." He stopped.

"What?"

"Let's just say that we don't agree on politics. He *works* for the government, after all."

"Not really. It's just the tourist office." I was just about to blurt out that Baba had accepted another job in Daraa when I remembered my promise to Musa.

"The tourist office *is* government," said Rasoul. "Anyway, he's going to be with the Ministry of Agriculture in Daraa soon."

I stared at him, a red tide of anger threatening to swamp me. "Everyone – *everyone* – knew about it before I did. I only found out just now, from Musa. It's so unfair. It's—"

Rasoul laughed. "Don't be like that. You look like an indignant little rooster. All red and furious." Being laughed at, especially by my hero, was the final straw. Tears spurted into my eyes.

"Sorry, *habibi*. Look, I didn't mean to laugh at you. I know because your dad asked me to sound out someone I know in the Ministry of Agriculture. He wanted to know if it was a good place to work. I was honest with him. I said he'd make more money, but everyone hates government people in Daraa, and he'd be very unpopular. He wouldn't listen to me. I expect he didn't tell you because he didn't want to upset you too soon."

I swallowed. "It's all right," I managed to say. "It's just that I want to stay here, and ... work with you, selling cards and stuff."

"You wouldn't be able to do that, anyway." Rasoul was rifling through his drawer again. He pulled out a business card, looked at it, and put it into his pocket. "I'm clearing out myself. Tourism's finished here. Look around you. See any buses? Chinese tour groups? German families? Not even a scruffy backpacker." He dropped his voice. "There's so much corruption in this country, repression, arrests – people are getting tired of it. Especially in Daraa. That's where the trouble will start. It'll be nasty, too. Anyway, I don't want any part of it. You can't run a decent business in this country. I'm getting out."

Malala Yousafzai: 'Nobel Award Is for All the Voiceless Children', by *The Guardian*

This text is an extract of a newspaper article. It informs us about Malala Yousafzai, a young Pakistani activist, who has been awarded the Nobel peace prize.

At 17, campaigner Malala, the schoolgirl the Taliban could not silence, became the youngest Nobel peace prize recipient.

Malala Yousafzai once wrote: "We realise the importance of our voices only when we are silenced. I was shot on a Tuesday at lunchtime, one bullet, one gunshot heard around the world."

Two years and a day after her attempted assassination by Taliban gunmen, that shot continued to reverberate with the Nobel committee's announcement that the 17-year-old Pakistani schoolgirl is to share the peace prize, its youngest recipient ever.

When the news broke, Malala was in a chemistry class at Edgbaston High School for Girls, Birmingham, far away from the mountain-fringed city of Mingora in the picturesque Swat Valley where she was born, and where she began her outspoken campaign for the right to education, and where she almost died on 9 October 2012.

Malala – a name now instantly recognisable worldwide – shares the 8m kronor (£690000) prize with Kailash Satyarthi, 60, an Indian child rights campaigner, as both are lauded for their "struggle against the suppression

of children and young people".

Malala's campaign, noted the Nobel committee, has been carried out "under the most dangerous circumstances", and it places her alongside previous recipients Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King and Aung San Suu Kyi.

She waited until school had finished before giving her reaction, saying a teacher had told her the news in chemistry, and she had celebrated by going on to a physics class, and then English.

The award, she said, "is for all those children who are voiceless and whose voices need to be heard".

She saw it as motivation to continue her campaign for equal rights to education. "I felt more powerful and more courageous because this award is not just a piece of metal or a medal you wear or an award you keep in your room. This is encouragement for me to go forward."

On the day she was shot in Pakistan she was in the middle of her school exams, "squashed between friends and teachers on the benches of the open-back truck used as a school bus".

The school, Khushal public school,

was founded by her father, Ziauddin Yousafzai, who, according to a profile in *Vanity Fair*, "encouraged Malala to speak freely and learn everything she could". By then, though only 15, she was an outspoken critic of the tactics of the Taliban, who overran the city in 2009, in denying education to girls.

Since the age of 11 she had been championing girls' education in Pakistan, speaking out in TV interviews and the subject of a documentary in 2009. Under the auspices of her father, also outspoken on education, she wrote a diary about life under Taliban rule which ran on BBC Urdu between January and March 2009.

Using the pseudonym Gul Makai, the name of a heroine from a Pashtun folk tale, she passionately expressed her desire to remain in education and documented her fear and those of her friends of being targeted by militants, and how they attended school in plain clothes rather than their uniforms to escape attention. In 2011 she was nominated for the international children's peace prize by the KidsRights Foundation.

She was one of the "clever girls", dreaming of becoming a doctor, decorating her hands with henna for holidays and weddings not with flowers or butterflies, but with calculus and chemical formulae. Then, on 9 October 2012, a masked Taliban gunman boarded her school vehicle, asked for

her by name, pointed a Colt .45 at her and shot at point-blank range. A bullet grazed her brain, travelling from above the back of her left eye, down the side of her jaw and into her neck.

A couple more inches, doctors said, and her injuries would have been fatal. Two classmates were also shot, and survived. Last month 10 Taliban fighters who tried to kill her were arrested, the Pakistan army said.

Initially treated by neurosurgeons at a Pakistani military hospital, Malala was flown to Britain for treatment at Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham, the city that has adopted her and her family, and where she has had several more operations.

She has been dismissive of the physical scars, telling her mother: "It doesn't matter if I can't smile or blink properly. I'm still me, Malala. The important thing is God has given me my life."

If Malala had been an outspoken advocate for equal education before the attack, she became an international force after it.

She has continued to campaign, meeting Barack Obama, being named one of *Time* magazine's 100 most influential people and last year publishing the memoir *I Am Malala*.

Addressing the UN on her 16th birthday, she said: "One child, one teacher, one book, one pen can change the world."

The Crooked Sixpence, by Jennifer Bell

This is an extract from a story about two siblings called Ivy and Seb who venture into a fantastical city that lies underneath London. Odd things have started happening to them. Their house has been broken into and a strange policeman is chasing them...

“Ivy!” Seb called breathlessly. “Are you OK?”

She tried to get to her feet. The boy helped her up. His skinny figure, slim-fitting jeans, black leather jacket and red high-top basketball shoes reminded her of the lead singer in The Ripz. “Easy,” he said. “You’re gonna feel like you’ve just had a sack of flour dumped on your head, but just try to breathe. Everything moving?”

Slowly, systematically, she wiggled her fingers and toes and tilted her head from side to side. She suspected there were probably a few cuts and grazes hiding beneath her coat but she wouldn’t need an ambulance. “I think so. Seb?” She focused on him as he approached. His gaze was fixed on the stranger in front of him.

“Who are you?” Seb asked. Now that they were next to each other, Ivy could see they were probably of a similar age. “Are you one of them?”

The boy arched an eyebrow. “One of the Ugs? Hell no. I’d rather be a ghoul.” His eyes went nervously to a spot by Ivy’s feet. “I’ve had my fair share of running from them, though – if you two want to get away, you don’t have much time.”

Ivy glanced down, wondering what he was looking at. Standing in the grass by her feet was a small leather suitcase with brass latches. A brown paper tag was tied around the handle. *Strange...* Ivy hadn’t glimpsed it in the field earlier.

She bent over and gripped the handle. “How did this get –?” The question caught in her mouth as a wave of tingly heat spread through her fingers. She gave a short gasp: the suitcase felt so much like a hot potato she struggled not to drop it. She’d had this sensation before, when she held the silver coin. The only difference was that touching the suitcase felt more intense.

The boy stiffened and threw a gloved hand towards the case. “That’s mine.”

Ivy held it out to him. “All right, I was just—”

Just then, she heard the rattle of a harness in the road.

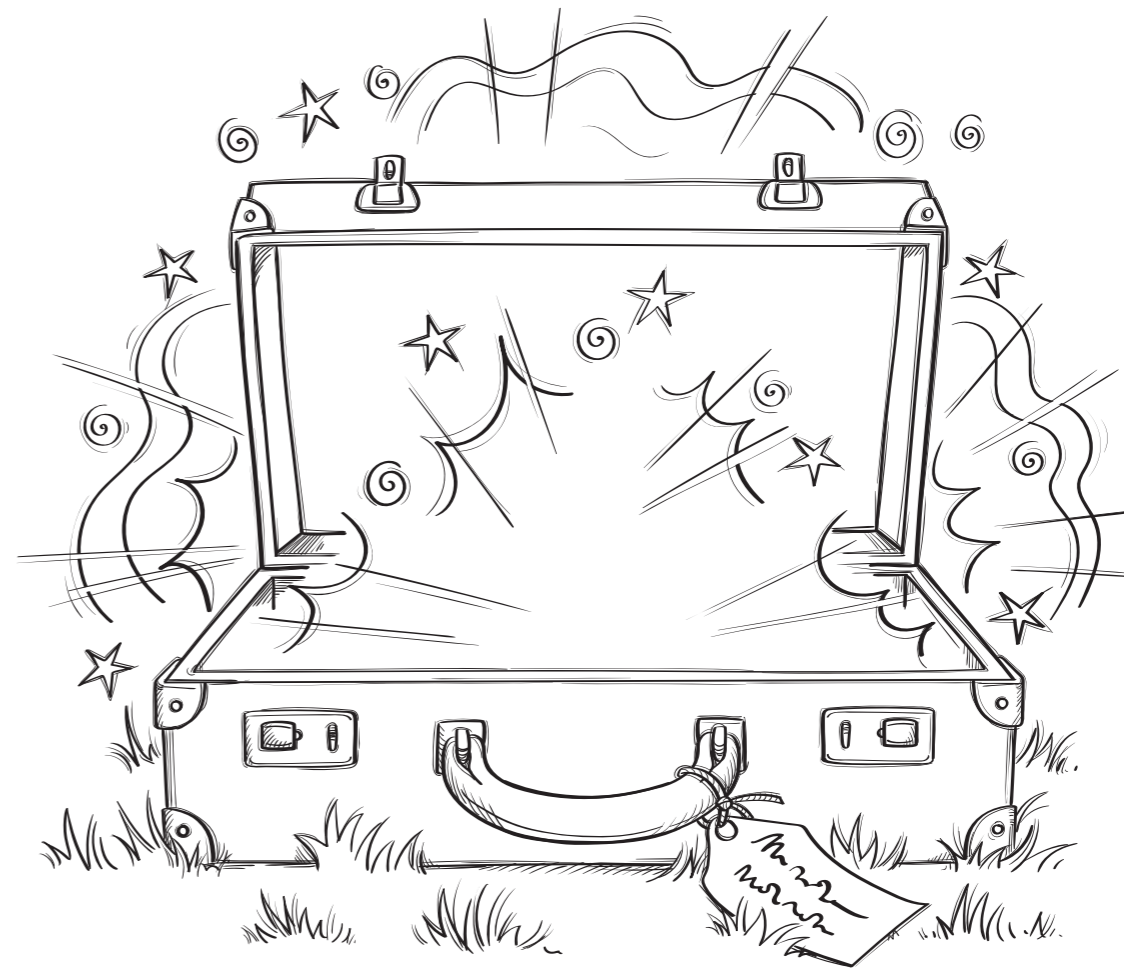
“The underguards,” the boy hissed. “There’s no time.” He snatched the case, unfastened the latches, opened it on the grass and dropped onto his knees beside it. “Are you coming?”

Ivy’s head was spinning. “Coming where?”

Seb dug his fingers into her shoulder. “Ivy, we need to do something – now!”

Too late.

The rapid fire of hoofbeats sounded on the other side of the hedgerow. A wild neigh followed the clatter of something loud and heavy, and then Officer Smokehart came tearing along towards them. He was moving impossibly fast, his arms pumping as his black cloak mushroomed up behind him.



Cogheart, by Peter Bunzl

This text is taken from the story of a girl called Lily whose life is changed by a message given by her father's housekeeper, Madame Verdigris.

Lily walked across the expansive room towards the two high-backed chairs facing the desk. A woman in a voluminous black dress occupied one, her bony hands clasped in her lap. Though her face was obscured by the chair's headrest, her unctuous perfume filled the room with its sharp overripe scent. Lily knew at once who she was.

"Madame Verdigris, what are you doing here?"

Her father's housekeeper leaned forward and gave Lily a wan smile, half-hidden under a black gauze veil which covered her face. "*Bonjour, chérie.*"

"Madame Verdigris has some news about your father," said Miss Scrimshaw.

Straight away, Lily sensed something bad. So much black taffeta and poised concern: it was like the months in London, after Mama's death. Surely it couldn't be that, could it? Not Papa too? She felt bile rising in her throat, and dug her nails into her palms.

"What's happened?" she asked.

Madame Verdigris shook her head sadly. "*Ma petite*, I'm sorry to have to tell you this, but your father is missing. His airship crashed yesterday, flying home."

"Perhaps you'd better take a seat?" Miss Scrimshaw suggested, but Lily ignored her, gasping for breath.

"*C'est terrible*," Madame's melodious voice continued. "The police, they have investigated the scene: but there was no body, only the remains of his ship. He has *disparu*, and we have now to presume he is ... dead."

"Oh, no ..." Lily grasped for the chair, but it seemed to slide sideways. The women's concerned faces swept away in a blur and the floor lurched up to meet her.

Silence.

A square wooden box.

A flash of white melting snow.

The crack of breaking glass.

A sharp, pungent smell, mixed with a brittle perfume.

Lily opened her eyes and the haze coagulated into Miss Scrimshaw's office. She must've fainted.

She was lying on the carpet, with Madame Verdigris kneeling over her, clutching a vial of smelling salts. She coughed and sat up, rubbing the sting from her eyes.

"*Bien, chérie*," Madame said. "Luckily, I had these." She wiped her hands on a lace handkerchief and stuffed the vial away in her clutch bag.

"Why you?" Lily asked woozily. They'd been halfway through some sort of conversation. "Why have you come?"

"We can discuss this on the journey."

"Journey? Where are we going?"

"Why, home to Brackenbridge, *bien sûr*," Madame said sniffily. She stood and brushed down the front of her dress.

"But I was to meet Papa," Lily said, "and Malkin." A sickening dizziness swirled around her once more, until she felt terribly confused. "Papa promised to take me flying ... on Dragonfly." Tears came to her eyes, and she pulled the oily hanky from her cuff to wipe her face. "At the end of term, they're coming ... he wants to fly me home."

"*Mais non*," Madame said, "obviously such things won't be happening. We are going home by public zep, *aujourd'hui* and we will have to hurry to catch the late one. And you will wait at the house with me until we receive news of your father, or until his body is discovered at the crash site."

"Good. That's settled then." Miss Scrimshaw took up the bell from her desk, and rang. Within moments the door opened and the Kraken appeared.

"Ah, Mrs McKracken," said the headmistress, "please could you ask Matron to help Lily and Madame Verdigris pack her things? I think her travelling trunks are in the storage room on the third floor."

Madame stood and adjusted the ruched sleeves of her dress. "*Ce n'est pas nécessaire*, Miss Scrimshaw. Lily has plenty of clothes at home, don't you, Lily? She can just take a case and what she's wearing." She glanced at Lily's dishevelled coal-covered dress. "Though perhaps something neat and black would not go amiss now, eh, *chérie*?"

As they left the room together Lily's mind was awash with fuzzy thoughts, but she couldn't help overhearing Madame tell the Kraken how, if the expense of forwarding Lily's things was too much, they should feel free to divide them up between the other girls.

"I'm not sure that they'd want that, Madame," the Kraken replied.

"Perhaps the poorhouse then," Madame muttered. "Or burn them."

And Lily had a sudden devastating inkling of what her new life without Papa would be like.

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, by Lewis Carroll

This text is another well-known children's classic and has been made into several films. It describes what happens to a girl called Alice when she follows a white rabbit into the world of Wonderland. At this point in the story, Alice has just fallen down a rabbit hole and finds herself trapped outside a tiny doorway.

Alice opened the door and found that it led into a small passage, not much larger than a rat-hole: she knelt down and looked along the passage into the loveliest garden you ever saw. How she longed to get out of that dark hall, and wander about among those beds of bright flowers and those cool fountains, but she could not even get her head through the doorway; "and even if my head would go through," thought poor Alice, "it would be of very little use without my shoulders. Oh, how I wish I could shut up like a telescope! I think I could, if I only knew how to begin." For, you see, so many out-of-the-way things had happened lately, that Alice had begun to think that very few things indeed were really impossible.

There seemed to be no use in waiting by the little door, so she went back to the table, half hoping she might find another key on it, or at any rate a book of rules for shutting people up like telescopes: this time she found a little bottle on it, ("which certainly was not here before," said Alice,) and round the neck of the bottle was a paper label, with the words 'DRINK ME' beautifully printed on it in large letters.

It was all very well to say 'Drink me,' but the wise little Alice was not going to do that in a hurry. "No, I'll look first," she said, "and see whether it's marked 'poison' or not"; for she had read several nice little histories about children who had got burnt, and eaten up by wild beasts and other unpleasant things, all because they would not remember the simple rules their friends had taught them: such as, that a red-hot poker will burn you if you hold it too long; and that if you cut your finger very deeply with a knife, it usually bleeds; and she had never forgotten that, if you drink much from a bottle marked 'poison,' it is almost certain to disagree with you, sooner or later.

However, this bottle was not marked 'poison,' so Alice ventured to taste it, and finding it very nice, (it had, in fact, a sort of mixed flavour of cherry-tart, custard, pine-apple, roast turkey, toffee, and hot buttered toast,) she very soon finished it off.

"What a curious feeling!" said Alice; "I must be shutting up like a telescope."

And so it was indeed: she was now only ten inches high, and her face brightened up at the thought that she was now the right size for going through the little door into that lovely garden. First, however, she waited for a few minutes to see if she was going to shrink any further: she felt a little nervous about this; "for it might end, you know," said Alice to herself, "in my going out altogether, like a candle. I wonder what I should be like then?" And she tried to fancy what the flame of a candle is like after the candle is blown out, for she could not remember ever having seen such a thing.

After a while, finding that nothing more happened, she decided on going into the garden at once; but, alas for poor Alice! when she got to the door, she found she had forgotten the little golden key, and when she went back to the table for it, she found she could not possibly reach it: she could see it quite plainly through the glass, and she tried her best to climb up one of the legs of the table, but it was too slippery; and when she had tired herself out with trying, the poor little thing sat down and cried.

"Come, there's no use in crying like that!" said Alice to herself, rather sharply; "I advise you to leave off this minute!" She generally gave herself very good advice (though she very seldom followed it), and sometimes she scolded herself so severely as to bring tears into her eyes; and once she remembered trying to box her own ears for having cheated herself in a game of croquet she was playing against herself, for this curious child was very fond of pretending to be two people. "But it's no use now," thought poor Alice, "to pretend to be two people! Why, there's hardly enough of me left to make one respectable person!"

Soon her eye fell on a little glass box that was lying under the table: she opened it, and found in it a very small cake, on which the words 'EAT ME' were beautifully marked in currants.

"Well, I'll eat it," said Alice, "and if it makes me grow larger, I can reach the key; and if it makes me grow smaller, I can creep under the door; so either way I'll get into the garden, and I don't care which happens!"



The Hunting of the Snark, by Lewis Carroll

The Hunting of the Snark was written by Lewis Carroll, who also wrote *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. The poem is an example of nonsense poetry and includes strange and unusual ideas, often with funny elements that sometimes do not make sense. It describes a voyage to hunt a dangerous creature called the Snark. In this extract, we are introduced to some of the crew.

“Just the place for a Snark!” the Bellman cried,
As he landed his crew with care;
Supporting each man on the top of the tide
By a finger entwined in his hair.

“Just the place for a Snark! I have said it twice:
That alone should encourage the crew.
Just the place for a Snark! I have said it thrice:
What I tell you three times is true.”

The crew was complete: it included a Boots –
A maker of Bonnets and Hoods –
A Barrister, brought to arrange their disputes –
And a Broker, to value their goods.

A Billiard-marker, whose skill was immense,
Might perhaps have won more than his share –
But a Banker, engaged at enormous expense,
Had the whole of their cash in his care.

There was also a Beaver, that paced on the deck,
Or would sit making lace in the bow:
And had often (the Bellman said) saved them from wreck,
Though none of the sailors knew how.

There was one who was famed for the number of things
He forgot when he entered the ship:
His umbrella, his watch, all his jewels and rings,
And the clothes he had bought for the trip.

He had forty-two boxes, all carefully packed,
With his name painted clearly on each:
But, since he omitted to mention the fact,
They were all left behind on the beach.

The loss of his clothes hardly mattered, because
He had seven coats on when he came,
With three pair of boots – but the worst of it was,
He had wholly forgotten his name.

He would answer to “Hi!” or to any loud cry,
Such as “Fry me!” or “Fritter my wig!”
To “What-you-may-call-um!” or “What-was-his-name!”
But especially “Thing-um-a-jig!”

While, for those who preferred a more forcible word,
He had different names from these:
His intimate friends called him “Candle-ends,”
And his enemies “Toasted-cheese.”

“His form is ungainly – his intellect small – ”
(So the Bellman would often remark)
“But his courage is perfect! And that, after all,
Is the thing that one needs with a Snark.”

What's So Special about Shakespeare?

by Michael Rosen

This text is from a book all about the famous English writer and playwright, William Shakespeare, who lived from 1564 to 1616. This extract tells the reader about what life was like in England while Shakespeare was writing his celebrated works.

So what was it like in England when Shakespeare was writing?

These were dangerous times – even for a writer! A few years earlier, one of the most famous playwrights of the day, Christopher Marlowe, had been stabbed to death during a fight. Another playwright, Ben Jonson, had killed someone and managed to get off with nothing more than having his left thumb branded, supposedly with a “T” for Tyburn – the place where he’d be executed if he was caught again.

And, strange as it may seem, these were especially dangerous times if you were the king or queen. Shakespeare lived under two monarchs: Elizabeth I and James I. Elizabeth was imprisoned in the Tower of London by her half-sister. Her father, Henry VIII, had her mother beheaded, and Elizabeth herself ordered the execution of her second cousin, Mary, Queen of Scots... When James was king, Guy Fawkes and his friends tried to blow him up in the Houses of Parliament.

Shakespeare lived at a time when ordinary people didn't choose who ruled over them. Countries were ruled by someone who claimed that he (or, very rarely, she) had a right to rule because they belonged to a particular family. The people in this family would say there was a “royal line” that went back and back which proved that they were the “true” rulers. Many ordinary people looked up to these monarchs as if they were almost gods. But in Britain several families claimed that they were the “true” rulers, and you have to remember that such families were rich enough to raise armies against each other. This meant that civil war – war between people in the same country – was always possible.

Every year there was news of plots and rebellions. There was also a big war with Spain, and bloody battles in Ireland and Holland. Shakespeare wrote plays about the powerful families – the lords and dukes and princes – who wanted to rule England. In these plays, and in others set in Ancient Rome, we watch exciting scenes of civil wars, battles, rebellions, poor people's riots, conspiracies and wars between countries. And while all this is going on, the characters often discuss what makes a good ruler. What if your ruler were no good? Would it be right to get rid of him or her and put someone else in their place? Who should decide that? Should that be an argument left to the great families who had always ruled?

Some of the people who thought they should have a say were people with no royal line but who had money and power. It was only thirty-three years after Shakespeare died that such people had the King's head chopped off and then chose a ruler, Oliver Cromwell, who had no royal line and who didn't even call himself a king!

Macbeth, by William Shakespeare

This text is a soliloquy (a speech about a character's own thoughts) by Macbeth, who is thinking about how he is planning to murder his friend Duncan. In it, Macbeth is haunted by a vision of his dagger, which he will use to commit the crime.

Macbeth: Is this a dagger which I see before me,
 The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee.
 I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.
 Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible
 To feeling as to sight? or art thou but
 A dagger of the mind, a false creation,
 Proceeding from the heat-oppresed brain?
 I see thee yet, in form as palpable
 As this which now I draw.
 Thou marshall'st me the way that I was going;
 And such an instrument I was to use.
 Mine eyes are made the fools o' the other senses,
 Or else worth all the rest; I see thee still,
 And on thy blade and dudgeon gouts of blood,
 Which was not so before. There's no such thing:
 It is the bloody business which informs
 Thus to mine eyes.

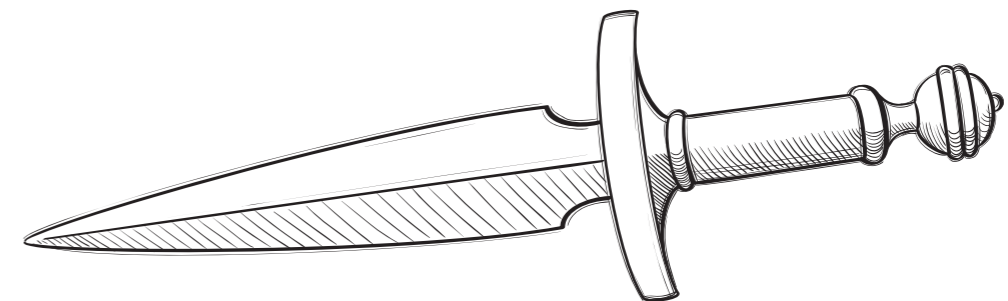
Now o'er the one halfworld

Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse
 The curtain'd sleep; witchcraft celebrates
 Pale Hecate's offerings, and wither'd murder,
 Alarum'd by his sentinel, the wolf,
 Whose howl's his watch, thus with his stealthy pace.

With Tarquin's ravishing strides, towards his design
 Moves like a ghost. Thou sure and firm-set earth,
 Hear not my steps, which way they walk, for fear
 Thy very stones prate of my whereabouts,
 And take the present horror from the time,
 Which now suits with it. Whiles I threat, he lives:
 Words to the heat of deeds too cold breath gives.

[a bell rings]

I go, and it is done; the bell invites me.
 Hear it not, Duncan; for it is a knell
 That summons thee to heaven or to hell.



Deforestation for Palm Oil, by Rainforest Rescue

This text is a leaflet by a non-profit organisation which is dedicated to preserving endangered wildlife. The leaflet explores the production of palm oil, which is a type of vegetable oil.

How demand for vegetable oil is destroying rainforests

Rainforest – so far away and yet so near

The rainforest is the most biodiverse ecosystem on Earth. And it is closely linked to our lives. Its ancient trees are being felled for us – to make furniture or paper, or to grow oil palms or livestock feed on the land. When a forest dies, thousands of animal and plant species disappear with it. People living in the forest lose their livelihoods.

Oil palms in place of ancient trees

Palm oil is pressed from the fruit of the oil palm tree. You may not notice it, but palm oil is almost everywhere. Because it is so cheap, industry has been using it in recent years in food, detergents and diesel fuel. Oil palm plantations are spreading as the demand for the oil rises.

Oil palms only grow in places that also suit the rainforest, and so to make room for plantations, countless giant trees are being felled – often illegally. According to the United Nations, oil palm plantations are the main reason why nature is being destroyed in countries like Malaysia and Indonesia. Worldwide, we are losing an area of rainforest as big as 35 football pitches every minute.

The problem

- **Uses:** About half the products in your supermarket contain palm oil – for example, processed foods, cosmetics, soaps and candles. More and more palm oil is also being added to diesel fuel.
- **Plantations:** Most palm oil is produced in Indonesia and Malaysia. The plantations need a lot of chemicals, and almost no animals or other plants live in them.
- **Deforestation:** Worldwide, palm oil plantations cover 170 000 sq. km – that's more than England and Wales combined. That area was once covered by rainforest.

The effects

- **Habitat:** As the forest shrinks, the number of endangered orang-utans, Borneo pygmy elephants and Sumatran tigers is also declining.
- **Land grabbing:** People are often brutally evicted from their land for plantations. If they resist, they are threatened and often arrested.
- **Climate change:** A huge amount of CO₂ – up to 6 000 tonnes per hectare – is released when a rainforest is destroyed. An average European would need 800 years to produce that much.

The solution

Shop with care

It's possible to live without palm oil – healthier too.

- Buy fresh food.
- Make your own pizza, cake and biscuits.
- Read product labels.
- Use traditional cleaning products like vinegar or baking soda.

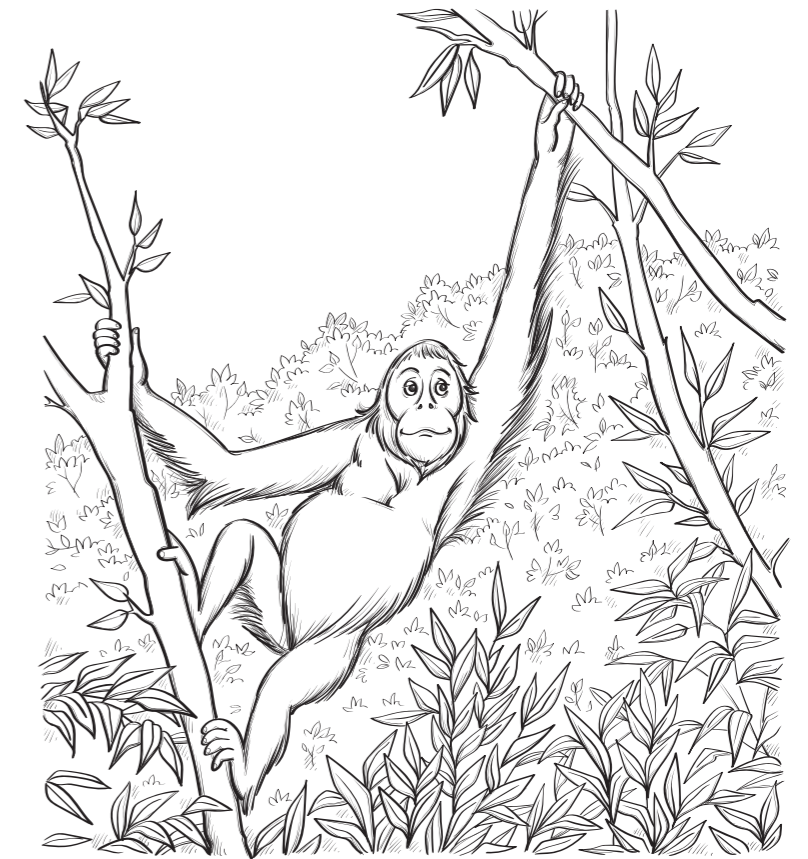
Check the contents

Palm oil can hide behind many names. When in doubt, ask the manufacturer.

- Palm oil / palm butter
- Vegetable oil
- Cetearyl / cetyl
- Lauryl / lauroyl / laurate
- Stearyl / stearate

Inform others

Share what you have learned about palm oil and its effects with others. Tell your friends and family about it, or give a report in class.



The Explorer, by Katherine Rundell

This text is an extract from a story about a group of children who find themselves in the Amazon rainforest. At this point in the story, Fred, one of the children, is reacting to a traumatic event.

Fred wondered, as he ran, if he was dead. *But*, he thought, *death would surely be quieter*. The roar of the flames and his own blood vibrated through his hands and feet.

The night was black. He tried to heave in breath to shout for help as he ran but his throat was too dry and ashy to yell. He jabbed his finger into the back of his tongue to summon up spit. "Is anybody there? Help! Fire!" he shouted.

The fire called back in response; a tree behind him sent up a fountain of flames. There was a rumble of thunder. Nothing else replied.

A burning branch cracked, spat red, and fell in a cascade of sparks. Fred leapt away, stumbling backwards into the dark and smacking his head against something hard. The branch landed exactly where he'd been standing seconds before. He swallowed the bile that rose in his throat and began to run again, faster and wilder.

Something landed on his chin, and he ducked, smacking at his face, but it was only a raindrop.

The rain came suddenly and hard. It turned the soot and sweat on his hands to something like tar, but it began to quench the fire. Fred slowed his run to a jog, then to a stop. Gasping, choking, he looked back the way he had come.

The little aeroplane was in the trees. It was smoking, sending up clouds of white and grey into the night sky.

He stared around, dizzy and desperate, but he couldn't see or hear a single human, only the fernlike plants growing around his ankles, and the trees reaching hundreds of feet up into the sky, and the panicked dive and shriek of birds. He shook his head, hard, trying to banish the shipwreck-roar in his ears.

The hair on his arms was singed and smelt of eggs. He put his hand to his forehead; his eyebrow had charred and part of it came away on his fingers. He wiped his eyebrow on the sleeve of his shirt.

Fred looked down at himself. One leg of his trousers was ripped all the way up to the pocket, but none of his bones felt broken. There was a vicious pain, though, in his back and neck, and it made his arms and legs feel far-off and foreign.

A voice came suddenly from the dark. "Who's there? Get away from us!"

Pig-Heart Boy, by Malorie Blackman

This text is the story of a boy called Cam who is seriously ill from heart disease. At this point in the story, Cam has missed out on two heart transplants and his dad has secretly contacted someone who he hopes can help.

“Cam,” began Dad as he sat down on the edge of my bed. “Cam, a few months ago I wrote to a man, a doctor, called Dr Richard Bryce.”

I looked across at Mum, who was leaning against the door. “Who’s he?”

“He was a surgeon, but now he’s an immunologist specializing in transgenics.”

“Huh? What’s that? What’s trans ... transgenics?”

“Transplanting the organs of one species of animal into another.”

“Why would anyone do that?”

“Because there aren’t enough human organ donors,” Dad explained carefully.

“So people like him are trying to find other ways of keeping people like you alive.”

People like me ... I winced at Dad’s phrase.

“I mean, people who need hearts or kidneys or livers to have a decent quality of life,” Dad added.

I said slowly, “So you want me to have a pig’s heart?”

“I want you to have a heart that will allow you to do all the things a boy of your age should do. And that’s where Dr Bryce comes in. Transplants are his area of expertise. I wrote to him via a newspaper to tell him about you and your case. I thought he might be able to do something to help you. I also sent him a letter of permission so that he could get your notes from our doctor and the hospital.”

“Why didn’t you tell me before?”

“I didn’t know if Dr Bryce would want to help you. I didn’t want to raise your hopes only to see them dashed again. We’ve been down this road twice before when we thought you’d be able to get a heart transplant from a human donor – remember?”

Yes, I did remember. How could I forget? Once, I’d even got as far as the hospital, only to be turned back. A greater emergency had required the heart. I had been pipped at the post. Mum and Dad were furious. They stood and ranted at the hospital staff for a good thirty minutes. It wasn’t their fault. The heart had been diverted to another hospital. There was nothing they could do about it. And then Mum had burst into tears. No, I wasn’t about to forget that little episode – not if I lived to be ninety.

I sighed, “Dad, I still wish you’d told me.”

“Don’t worry about it, Cam. He didn’t tell me either,” Mum piped up from the door.

I looked at her. She was so unhappy, so tired and unhappy. This was what I was doing to her. Doing to my family. Tearing them apart.

“So what’s happened? Has Dr Bryce agreed to do the heart transplant then?” I asked.

“It’s not that simple.” Dad shook his head. “Dr Bryce has agreed to come and see us to talk about it. I certainly wouldn’t agree to it without talking to you first.”

“So when does Dr Bryce want to see me?”

Dad looked from me to Mum and back again. “He’s coming to see you tonight.”



Marius the Giraffe Killed at Copenhagen Zoo, by *The Guardian*

This is an extract from a newspaper article. The article discusses the fate of Marius, a young giraffe who was killed despite being offered a new home.

In the chilly dawn of Sunday morning a healthy young giraffe in a Danish zoo was given its favourite meal of rye bread by a keeper – and then killed by a vet. The death of Marius, an 18-month-old giraffe considered useless for breeding because his genes were too common, was followed by his dissection in front of a large crowd, including fascinated-looking children, prompting outrage and protests around the world.

Copenhagen zoo carried out the killing despite a small group of protesters at the gates and an international petition which garnered more than 27 000 signatures, as well as offers from several zoos to rehouse the creature. Yorkshire Wildlife Park (YWP), near Doncaster, which offered to take Marius, said it was saddened to learn of his fate.

The zoo's decision to conduct the public dissection fanned the protests and provoked some calls for the zoo to be boycotted or closed. The controversy was fed further by startling images and video of the process.

Bengt Holst, the zoo's scientific director, said he had never considered cancelling the killing, despite the protests. "We have been very steadfast because we know we've made this decision on a factual and proper basis. We can't all of a sudden change to something we know is worse because of some emotional events happening around us.

"It's important that we try to explain why we do it and then hope people understand it. If we are serious about our breeding activities, including participation in breeding programmes, then we have to follow what we know is right. And this is right."

The dissection took almost three hours because of the numbers of spectators, and the zookeepers giving detailed explanations of the process.

Holst said they had previously had public dissections of zebras, snakes and goats, but the giraffe was a first.

"People are fascinated by it, both adults and children, and they would like to hear stories they normally don't

have access to. I think that's good. It helps increase the knowledge about animals but also the knowledge about life and death."

When a storm of protest broke over the news that the giraffe was to be killed – the small gene pool among European zoos meant there was a risk of inbreeding if it was allowed to reproduce – the zoo posted a detailed justification on its website. It explained that as part of an international programme, only unrelated animals were allowed to breed: "When breeding success increases, it is sometimes necessary to euthanise."

The zoo also said that giving Marius contraceptives would have had unwanted side-effects and represented poor animal welfare, and that there was no programme for releasing giraffes into the wild.

The European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA), which monitors international standards and of which Copenhagen is a member, said it fully supported the decision of the zoo. It added that zoo animals were very rarely killed for conservation management, but almost always because of ill health.

"Our aim is to safeguard for future generations a genetically diverse, healthy population of animals against their extinction," it said in a statement. "Copenhagen is highly involved in these programmes and took a transparent

decision that the young animal in question could not contribute to the future of its species further, and given the restraints of space and resources to hold an unlimited number of animals within our network and programme, should therefore be humanely euthanised."

However, Stine Jensen, from Denmark's Organisation against the Suffering of Animals, disagreed: "It shows that a zoo is not the ethical institution that it wants to portray itself as being, because here you have a waste product – that being Marius."

An online petition had argued: "Marius deserves to live and there must be somewhere for him to go. The zoo has raised him so it is their responsibility to find him a home, no matter how long it takes." It attracted 27 170 signatures before it was closed when news broke that the giraffe was dead.

The YWP was among several zoos that offered to rehouse Marius – a private individual apparently also offered to buy him for €50 000 (£41 000) – but received no response. In a statement, the park said without knowing the full details it would be inappropriate to comment further.

Copenhagen zoo's silence was more surprising because Yorkshire's head of hoofed animals is Danish, and the YWP has already taken a young male giraffe from the Danish zoo.

Evolution Revolution, by Robert Winston

This is an extract from a scientific book all about genes and evolution. The author of this text discusses how genes affect traits such as eye colour and even dimples!

One in a quintillion

Your parents would have to have another 1 000 000 000 000 000 babies before one possibly might have the same genes as you. This genetic variation between individuals is the key to how species have evolved.

Chip off the old block

Your appearance, your fingerprints, your voice, your health, and even how you clasp your hands have been coded by your genes. These genes have been passed down from your parents, who received their genes from their parents, who received their genes from their parents, and so on. You might have similar features to a family ancestor that have skipped a few generations. So how has this variation between us all happened?

Answer: Half of your chromosomes that contain the genes have come from your mother and the other half from your father. Which half of their chromosomes you get and how these two sets of chromosomes come together is what makes you so unique, even from any brothers and sisters (unless you have an identical twin).

Studying twins

Identical twins have the same genes. By studying their traits, scientists have been able to figure out which ones their genes have influenced and which their environment and upbringing have affected. Results have shown that genes affect appearance, eyesight, weight, IQ, and length of life, but have less influence on food preferences and sense of humour.

Boy or girl?

Two of your chromosomes contain a gene that determines what sex you will be. These sex chromosomes are shaped like the letters X and Y. If you are a girl you have received an X-chromosome from both your parents, but

if you are a boy you have one X-chromosome from your mother and one Y-chromosome from your father. For boys, all the genes on the X-chromosome are dominant since there is no matching pair, which means they might inherit genetic disorders from their mother. For example, colour blindness is a recessive gene that becomes dominant when passed on from mother to son.

Human genetics like those of many other living things is not as simple as one gene for each trait. Often one gene can affect several traits or several genes can affect one trait, such as height or eye colour.

You get a set of genes affecting eye colour from both parents and if they are different then one set gets priority over the other – this is called the dominant. Brown-eye genes are usually dominant over green-eye genes, which are dominant over blue-eye genes. The weaker of the set is called the recessive. To get the recessive feature, each parent must pass on a copy of the weaker genes. Often these features appear in grandparents and their grandchildren and skip their parents.

Now try this! Take the genes test to discover what you might have inherited.

- Can you roll your tongue into a U-shape?
- Does the top part of your little finger bend in toward the next finger?
- Does your earlobe hang free at the bottom?
- Do you have dimples in your cheeks when you smile?
- Can you bend your thumb back more than 30°?
- Does hair grow on the middle part of your toes?
- Do you have freckles?
- Does your nose tilt upwards?

Now test your family and relatives. Record their answers and trace the genes through your family tree.

Charles Darwin: History's Most Famous Biologist, by Kerry Lotzof

Charles Darwin is perhaps the world's most famous biologist. This text is taken from a biography of Darwin. It talks about Darwin's life up until the publication of his most important book, *On the Origin of Species*.

Charles Robert Darwin (1809–1882) transformed the way we understand the natural world with ideas that, in his day, were nothing short of revolutionary. He and his fellow pioneers in the field of biology gave us insight into the fantastic diversity of life on Earth and its origins, including our own as a species. He is celebrated as one of the greatest British scientists who ever lived, but in his time his radical theories brought him into conflict with members of the Church of England.

Young Charles Darwin

Born in 1809 in Shrewsbury, Shropshire, Darwin was fascinated by the natural world from a young age. Growing up he was an avid reader of nature books and devoted his spare time to exploring the fields and woodlands around his home, collecting plants and insects.

In 1825 Darwin enrolled in medical school at the University of Edinburgh, where he witnessed surgery on a child. Surgeries at the time would have been carried out without the use of anaesthetic or antiseptics, and fatalities were common. Watching this procedure left Darwin so traumatised that he gave up his studies without completing the course. He then went to Cambridge University to study theology.

The voyage of HMS Beagle

In no rush to take holy orders, in 1831 Darwin accepted an offer to embark on a five-year voyage aboard HMS Beagle. He was recommended by one of his Cambridge professors for the role as naturalist and companion to the ship's captain, Robert FitzRoy. The journey would change both his life and the trajectory of Western scientific thinking. Darwin explored remote regions and marvelled at a world so different from the one he knew. He encountered birds with bright blue feet, sharks with T-shaped heads and giant tortoises.

On his travels Darwin collected plants, animals and fossils, and took copious field notes. These collections and records provided the evidence he needed to develop his remarkable theory. Darwin returned to England in 1836. A highly methodical scholar, constantly collecting and observing, he spent many years comparing and analysing specimens before finally declaring that evolution occurs by a process of natural selection.

What is the theory of natural selection?

To this day the theory of evolution by natural selection is accepted by the scientific community as the best evidence-based explanation for the diversity and complexity of life on Earth. The theory proposes that the 'fittest' individual organisms – those with the characteristics best suited to their environment – are more likely to survive and reproduce. They pass on these desirable characteristics to their offspring. Gradually these features may become more common in a population, so species change over time. If the changes are great enough they could produce a new species altogether.

On his travels Darwin had collected finches from many of the Galápagos Islands (off the coast of Ecuador), which helped him to formulate his idea. Some of these finches had stout beaks for eating seeds, others were insect specialists. But Darwin realised that they were all descendants of a single ancestor. As they dispersed to different islands, the birds had adapted to eat the various foods available. Natural selection had produced 13 different species of finch.

In 1859 Darwin published the contentious but now-celebrated book, *On the Origin of Species*.

