

Grandad's Magic Gadgets Helen Everett-Camplin

Aims

- To make students interested in the book.
- To enable students to think about the genre of comedy.
- To allow students to reflect on what they find funny.
- To stimulate students' imagination.

NB You may find that many of the activities described below can be exploited better in your students' mother tongue, if you speak it. The mother tongue, if used carefully as a resource, can facilitate your students' progress in English and help them to understand the context of the story, thus preparing them to understand it better when they read it.

Pre-reading Activities

- 1 Ask students to look at Illustration 1 (the cover of the book). Ask *How would you describe what you see? How would you describe the characters?* Write any relevant adjectives and descriptive vocabulary on the board. Elicit or teach words like 'inventor' and 'eccentric'. Now ask *What type of book do you think this is? Which genre?* If necessary, write a range of genres on the board and ask students to choose.
Answer: Comedy.
- 2 Tell students that the title of the book is *Grandad's Magic Gadgets*. Teach 'gadgets', if necessary. Ask them to look at Grandad's hat in Illustration 1 and tell them it is one of his inventions. Ask *What is it for?*
Answer: Grandad needs to wear lots of different glasses for different activities and he just turns his hat round when he needs to change them.
- 3 Ask students to read Extract 1 and to look at Illustration 2, which give an example of Grandad's magic gadgets. Ask *What do you think Marvin thinks of this gadget?*
Possible answers: It is not comfortable. It causes him a lot of trouble. It's no help at all. It can hurt. In the extract Marvin describes what it feels like to be trapped in the bed gadget. Ask students to provide other examples of what it might feel like.
Possible answers: fish in a tin, a sandwich

- 4 Ask students to read Extract 2 (a list of chapter headings from later in the book). Tell them that they all refer to one of Grandad's magic gadgets. Working in pairs, ask students to guess what these gadgets might be. Then report back to the whole class. (NB Don't tell them the correct answers at this stage. Wait until they read the book themselves.)

Answers:

Marvin the rockstar – glasses that play music and make him dance.

What's cooking? – TV you can watch and smell at the same time.

Losing words and finding friends – a rubber that rubs out mistakes when you say 'rub it'.

- 5 Remind students that the book is a comedy. Then ask *After what you know about it so far, do you think it is funny or not?* If not, elicit what types of things do make them laugh.
- 6 Ask students to read Extract 3 and look at Illustration 3. Ask them to describe what is happening.
Answer: Tyson is bullying Marvin.
Ask *How do you think Marvin is feeling?*
Suggested answer: afraid, fed up (bored with something that you have done for too long), helpless (not able to do things for yourself or protect yourself).
Ask *Do you think this extract is funny or serious?*
Answer: Serious.
Why do you think something serious like this appears in a comedy story?
Suggested answers: Because, later, either Marvin one of Grandad's gadgets will do something to stop Tyson's bullying and it will be funny. Because the writer wants us to feel that Marvin is important.
- 7 Working in pairs, students role-play Extract 3, with one being Marvin and the other Tyson. Now swap roles. Ask *Was it easy to show how Marvin was feeling? How did it feel to be Tyson?*
- 8 Ask students to think a little deeper about Tyson. Then ask *Why do you think he is unkind to Marvin?*

Why is he a bully? Do you think he has any problems himself? Feedback and debate answers.

- 9 Ask students to read Extract 4 (a description of another of Grandad's gadgets). Then ask them to discuss with a partner what happens next. They can use Extract 5 (a list of people in the story) to give them ideas. Now ask them to share their suggestions with the whole class.
- 10 Divide the class into two teams, and give them 15 minutes to try to design an amazing gadget. Encourage them to use an element of magic in their design, as with Grandad's gadgets. Ask the teams to present their gadget to the other team. Hold a vote to find the most popular gadget. (NB Students are not allowed to vote for their own gadget.)

Post-reading Activities _____

- 1 Tell students that they are going to be journalists carrying out interviews with Marvin to write a magazine article. Divide the class into two. Group 1 is to interview Marvin about his experience of being bullied, and Group 2 is to interview Marvin about his experiences with Grandad's inventions. Students prepare questions. Then, working in pairs, they carry out their interviews. If time allows, students could then write the magazine article.
- 2 Write a list of genres on the board. Ask students to choose a different genre (e.g. *murder mystery*) and to make notes about how they could change *Grandad's Magic Gadgets* into a story in that genre. Feedback and discuss answers with the class.
- 3 Working in pairs, ask students to design two TV schedules: one that would make the most of Smelly Vision, and one that lists programmes it would be best to avoid watching in Smelly Vision.
- 4 Ask students to complete the sentence *If I could change anything about this book, I would ...*

Extract 1 _____

Marvin's bed was another of Grandad's mad gadgets. Every morning at eight o'clock, the bed woke up and tidied the blankets so Marvin didn't have to. The problem was that today Marvin woke up a quarter past eight, so the bed tried to tidy him up too.

The blanket on the bed didn't want to let him go, so he couldn't move his arms and legs. He was like a banana, waiting for someone to come and eat him or like toothpaste in a tube, waiting for someone to push him out.

Extract 2 _____

Marvin the rock star

What's cooking?

Losing words and finding friends

Extract 3 _____

'Hey, Marilyn. I'm talking to you,' Tyson said behind him.

Tyson pushed his finger into Marvin's back. Marvin turned to look at him. Tyson as smiling but it wasn't a nice smile.

'Didn't you hear me, Marilyn?'

'I thought you were talking to somebody else. My name's *Marvin*,' he replied. 'And anyway, I was listening to my music.'

Tyson took Marvin's MP3 player from him and listened.

'What's that? Classical music?' he laughed.

Marvin looked down at his feet and tried to think of something to say. Tyson looked down at the same time.

'Ah,' he said. 'Were you dancing in your little new trainers?'

Marvin found his voice. 'I wasn't dancing. I was doing my fighting practice.'

'Little Marilyn can fight?' Tyson laughed in Marvin's face. 'Don't talk to me about fighting. See this scar?'

He showed Marvin his arm. It had a big long line on it with lots of smaller lines across it.

'Yes,' said Marvin. He knew what Tyson was going to say next.

'I got this when I stopped five robbers from robbing a bank. I'm not afraid of anyone or anything.'

'You said there were three robbers last time,' Marvin said. He quickly took his MP3 player back from Tyson and started to run away.

My notes _____

Extract 4

'Push that button when you take your trainers off,' Grandad said. 'Then if someone else takes them, they will shout for help. See?'

Grandad pushed the red button on the second trainer. It shouted 'Stop! Help!'

Grandad smiled and gave the trainers back to Marvin.

'They won't talk while I'm wearing them, will they?' Marvin asked.

'Only if you push the buttons,' Grandad replied.

'These are great, Grandad. Thank you,' said Marvin. He kissed his granddad and his mum and left for school.

Before his swimming class Marvin put the trainers with his other clothes in the locker, but he couldn't find his locker key. 'Oh well,' he thought. 'They'll be safe now.' He pushed the red buttons, shut the locker door and went for his swim.

A few minutes later Tyson walked into the changing room. He still had Marvin's locker key in his pocket but he saw that the door was already open.

'This is too easy,' he smiled to himself, as he took the shoes from the locker. But he soon stopped smiling.

'Get off!' shouted one of the trainers.

'Help!' shouted the other trainer.

Tyson was so surprised that he dropped the trainers. He also dropped his water bottle and water went all over the trainers. He pushed them back into the locker and locked it with Marvin's key.

The trainers were very wet. They stopped shouting for a few seconds. Then something went very wrong.

'It's dark in here,' said one trainer, 'I'm afraid.'

'Me too,' said the other trainer.

'Let me out!' shouted the first trainer.

Extract 5

People in the story

Marvin: a thirteen-year-old boy

Tyson: a bully at Marvin's school

Grandad: Marvin's granddad

Mum: Marvin's mum

Headmaster: the man in charge of Marvin's school

Robert: a new student at Marvin's school

My notes

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