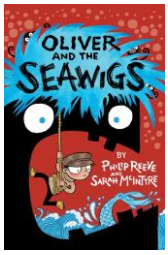
Power of Reading

CLPE
CENTRE FOR LITERACY IN PRIMARY EDUCATION

Take 5: Ideas for Independent/Home Learning



Oliver and the Seawigs by Philip Reeve and Sarah McIntyre (Oxford University Press)

1. Explore it

Read the extract from the book below, thinking about what is happening and the characters you meet:

The island was just as small as it had looked from the beach. Clumps of greyish grass sighed softly as the sea wind stirred them. There were snaggles of driftwood, festoons of weed, a length of old tarred rope. There was a ramshackle heap of twigs balanced on the pile of boulders which were the highest place on the island. That was all. It took Oliver less than a minute to walk right across the island to the far shore, where he stood looking out to sea. All his hopes of finding clues faded, like the foam which kept washing around his toes and melting into the wet sand.

'Mum!' he shouted. 'Dad!'

The echoes came back at him from the cliffs around the bay. Echoes, but no reply.

'Mum!' he shouted, louder still. 'Dad!'

'Oh, put a sock in it, won't you?' grumbled a creaky voice behind him. 'Some of us are trying to sleep!'

A pair of beady blue eyes were glaring at Oliver over the brim of that twig-heap on the island's crown. The heap was a nest, and the eyes belonged to the bird who owned it. But birds don't talk. protested Oliver.

'Parrots do,' the bird said.

'Not really, not properly,' Oliver protested. 'And anyway, you're not a parrot.'

'Indeed I'm not,' the bird sniffed. It stood up in its nest and spread its enormous, dirty-white wings. 'I am a Wandering Albatross. Diomedea exulans*. Though you may call me Mr Culpeper. And now you had best get back to shore, or you will be a wanderer too.'*

'What does that mean?' wondered Oliver.

'Tsk,' the bird said, 'don't they teach you youngsters anything these days? Not all islands stay where you put them. Some move about. Here one minute, gone the next. This is one of them. That's why I nested on it, of course. I'm not stupid. Why go flapping about the world when I can just roost here and let the island do the wandering?'

Oliver looked down at the island. Between his feet he saw rock, sand, grit, dune-grass and ground-down seashells. It didn't look as if it were going anywhere.

'How do they move?' he asked.

'Who cares?' said Mr Culpeper, shrugging his wings.

'Where are they going?'

'Who knows?' said Mr Culpeper. 'But all the others have gone already, so this One won't stay much longer.'

What is happening in this extract? Who are the central characters? Can you summarise what you've read in a couple of sentences?

If there are words you don't know or understand, like 'festoon', 'ramshackle' or 'albatross' you could look them up in a dictionary or online, e.g., https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/.

Now, think about how this extract makes you feel and what you like or dislike about it. Does it remind you of anything you know in stories or real life? How? Think about how it is written. Do any parts of the extract really stick in your mind? Which words and phrases do you like best? What do you like about them? Do they look or sound interesting? Do they help you make a picture in your mind?

Think about Oliver, talking to a bird on what he finds is a moving island. What do you think you know about him, his parents, the situation he finds himself in? What kind of personality do you think he might have?

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How would you describe him? What clues do you get to the time and place the story might be set? Are there things that suggest the way the story might develop?

2. Illustrate it

Re-read the passage, or ask someone to read it to you, or maybe record it for you so you can play it over again. After you have read the extract a few times, take a pen or pencil and a bit of scrap paper. You can use the back of an old envelope or cereal packet; whatever is to hand. Draw what you see in your imagination. It can be shapes or shading — anything that captures what you hear. It might be interesting to share the passage with a friend or family member and see what they draw, then compare it with what you have drawn: did you draw the island, Oliver, Mr Culpeper, or maybe the two talking to each other? Remember, everyone has their own ideas and imagines things their own way. This is a good thing!

3. Talk about it

Re-read the extract again, or have someone read it aloud to you. Think more about what you heard and read:

- Why do you think Oliver is on this island? What in the text tells you this?
- What words best describe what the island was like? Make a list of these as you find them in the text.
- Do you think this is an island that is visited often? What sort of people might want to go there? Why might they want to visit?
- Do you think an island can really move? What does this detail tell you about the kind of story this might be?

4. Imagine it

Think about Mr Culpeper's warning to Oliver:

'And now you had best get back to shore, or you will be a wanderer too…

…Not all islands stay where you put them. Some move about. Here one minute, gone the next. This is one of them.'

Imagine you are Oliver, with the rucksack of Useful Things you have packed, and Mr Culpeper for company and the island does start to wander. What do you think will happen next? Where do you think the island might be going? What do you think it might be like to travel on a moving island? Do you think you have any control over where you are heading? Write about what happens next, for someone else to read. You may choose to do this in drawing and writing, or on the computer if you have access to one.

5. Create it

In this extract and in the book, Oliver is looking for his missing parents. They are explorers. Just before the passage above, we are told *Oliver 'ran back to the explorermobile and packed a rucksack with Useful Things'*. What do you think might be in this rucksack?

Think about what you might pack if you were about to set off on an expedition, especially at short notice. You could look around your own room now and see what stands out that might be useful or comforting to have with you, but remember: you'll have to carry it! Write a list with reasons for taking each item, or you could sketch the bag and its contents and write notes next to each item.

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