

Talk about it

SECTION

5

Hidden messages

Objective: To identify typical story themes, for example, trial and forfeits, good over evil, weak over strong, wise over foolish.

What you need: Copies of *The Iron Man*.

Cross-curricular links: RE.

What to do

- Read Chapter 4 beginning: 'For a whole day...' to: 'Human weapons had no effect on it.'
- Discuss together why the people of the world felt they had to act, and what they did. (Attacked the space-bat-angel-dragon.) Was it a good plan? Why not?
- Challenge the children to recall how the farmers tried to get rid of the Iron Man. (They laid a trap.) What were they going to do if Hogarth's plan failed? (Call in the army.)
- Elicit from the children the message of the story. (War is not the way to solve problems.)
- Talk about what people and countries go to

war over. (Ownership of land or difference of religion.) Is war ever the only option or are there always alternatives? (Be sensitive to individual children's circumstances.)

- Read the end of the story (from: "Haven't you heard of the music of the spheres?" asked the dragon.'). How did people change when the space-bat-angel-dragon started singing? Remind the children of the 'angel' part of the dragon's name. Suggest that there are echoes of the Christian theme of angels singing of peace. How might things be different if Hogarth had not intervened? (The space-bat-angel-dragon may have acted upon his threat and licked civilisation off the planet.)

Differentiation

For older/more able children: Encourage groups to identify other themes in the book.

For younger/less able children: Ask groups to discuss what they think about the ending.

Reality or fantasy?

Objective: To understand how writers create imaginary worlds.

What you need: Copies of *The Iron Man*, photocopiable page 24, writing materials.

What to do

- Look together at the cover illustration of *The Iron Man*. What sort of story is suggested by the illustration and the title: realistic or imaginary?
- Ask the children what sort of world they think the Iron Man comes from. Can they imagine where he lived before the story begins?
- Can they remember where the space-bat-angel-dragon comes from, and how it describes itself? (A star spirit that flies in space or makes music.) What sort of story do dragons usually appear in? (Fairy tales and fantasy stories.)
- What genre do the children think *The Iron Man* belongs to – science fiction, realistic stories,

myth, fable or fairy story? Encourage them to give reasons.

- Hand out photocopiable page 24. Divide the class into two groups.
- Challenge one group to search for all the realistic elements relating to character, setting and plot (farming, picnics, astronomers), and the other to search for fantasy elements (the Iron Man, the space-bat-angel-dragon, trial by fire). Ask both groups to record their answers on the photocopiable sheet.
- Bring the class back together to discuss their findings. Let the children complete the other half of the sheet.

Differentiation

For older/more able children: Ask the children to discuss the mood created in the illustrations.

For younger/less able children: Encourage the children to explain which illustration they like best.