

Harper and the Circus of Dreams
by Cerrie Burnell and Laura Ellen Anderson

Lesson 1 - Storm-Stirrer

Learning objectives

To compose and rehearse sentences orally, progressively building a varied and rich vocabulary and an increasing range of sentence structures.

Outcomes

The children will have composed a non-rhyming poem based on the idea of a 'storm-stirrer', using vivid description and creating an appropriate atmosphere. More experienced writers may include dialogue to enhance their poem.

Resources

- Activity sheet 1 – The Storm-Stirrer
- Activity sheet 2 – The Queen of Wild Weather
- Activity sheet 3 – A Weather Witch
- Activity sheet 4 – Same or Opposite



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Lesson 1 - Storm-Stirrer

Introduction

Read the children Chapter 3 of *Harper and the Circus of Dreams*. Talk about the idea of a 'storm-stirrer', picking out descriptive words and phrases for the weather and the storm-stirrer herself.

Note the different types of weather mentioned in the chapter – mist, fog, cloud, wind, snow, storm, ice, thunder.

Task 1

Ask the children to complete the activity sheet, *The Storm-Stirrer*, thinking of descriptive words and phrases for each weather type on the sheet. If available, you could allow them to make use of thesauruses for this. Invite them to share their ideas with a partner. If they read their lists aloud, beginning with the name of each weather type, it should sound like a poem, without them even trying.

Task 2

When the children have completed *The Storm-Stirrer* activity sheet, invite them to create a more deliberately constructed poem using Activity Sheet 2 – *The Queen of Wild Weather*. Explain that non-rhyming poems allow a wider vocabulary choice. Talk together about how to construct the poem – perhaps one verse for each weather type the Queen of Wild Weather invokes. Encourage them to describe the Queen herself, using some of the ideas from Chapter 3 of *Harper and the Circus of Dreams*. Suggest that they could also include spoken commands she might give, in order to include dialogue.

Task 3

Invite the children to draw a picture of Skylar, the storm-stirrer, using Activity Sheet 3. This could be used as a differentiated activity for less-confident children, instead of the poem-writing activity in Task 2. Invite the children to try adding suitable descriptive words around the edges of their drawing.



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Lesson 1 - Storm-Stirrer

Extension

Objective

To investigate how words are related by meaning as synonyms and antonyms.

Invite the children to complete Activity Sheet 4, which has words taken from Chapter 3 of *Harper and the Circus of Dreams*. Ask them to see how many synonyms and antonyms they can find for each word on the sheet. They may use a thesaurus if you wish.

Curriculum links

Y3/4 Reading

- To discuss words and phrases that capture the reader's interest and imagination.

Y5/6 Reading

- To discuss and evaluate how authors use language, including figurative language, considering the impact on the reader.

Y5/6 Writing

- To select appropriate grammar and vocabulary, understanding how such choices can change and enhance meaning.

KS2 Art

To improve their mastery of art and design techniques, including drawing, painting and sculpture with a range of materials.



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Activity sheet 1 - The Storm-Stirrer

Write words and phrases to describe the type of weather each cloud brings.

THUNDER

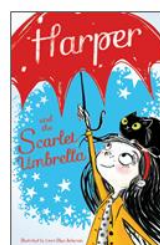
WIND

FOG

RAIN

SNOW

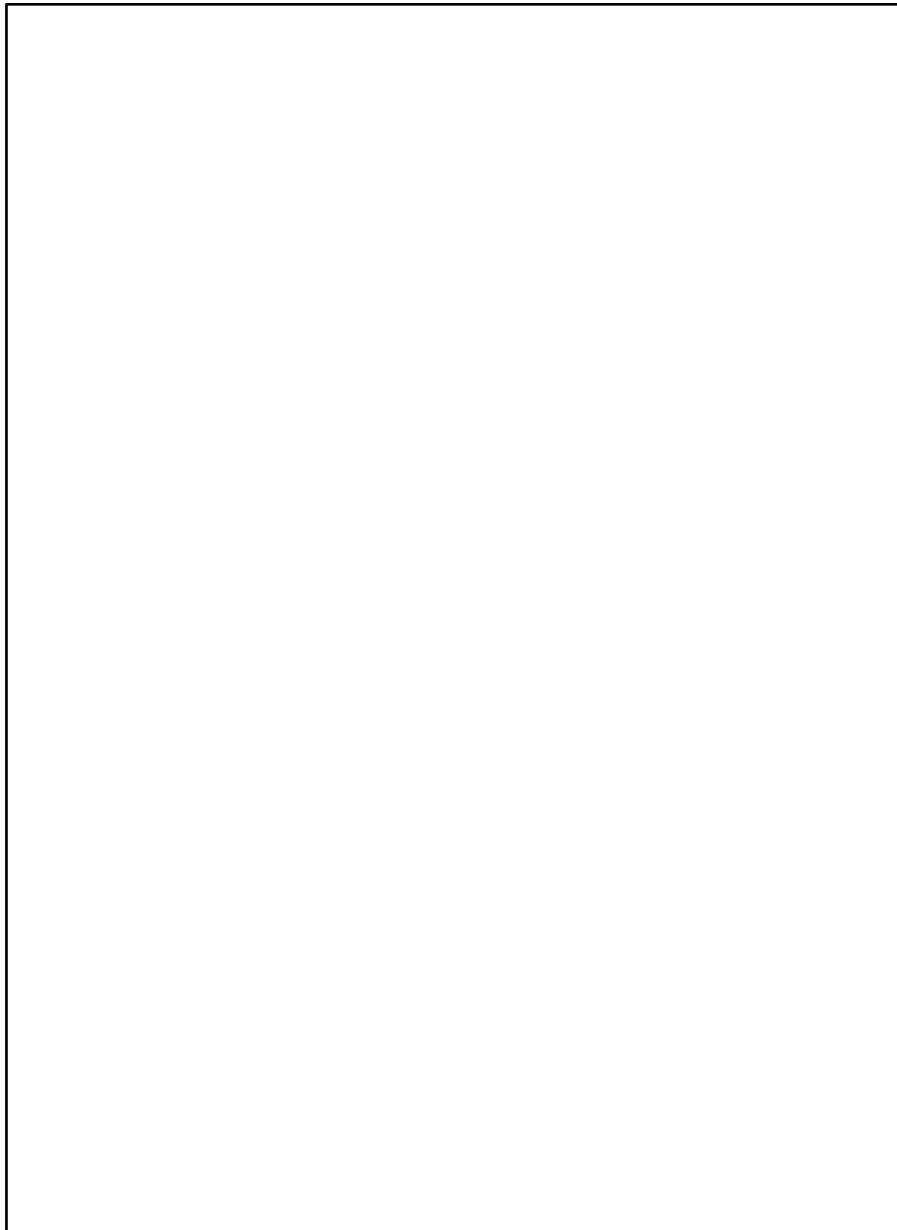
HAIL



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Activity sheet 3 – A Weather Witch

What do you think a storm-stirrer or weather witch might look like? Read Chapter 3 of *Harper and the Circus of Dreams* to get a picture of Skylar in your head. When you draw her, think about the shapes and colours you will use. What expression will she have on her face? What will her hair be like? Write some descriptive phrases of her around your drawing.



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Activity sheet 4 – Same or Opposite

All the words here are taken from Chapter 3 of *Harper and the Circus of Dreams*. Put on your word detective gear and see how many synonyms and antonyms you can find for each word. (An example is given to help you start).

	Synonyms	Antonyms
unusual	odd, strange, weird	usual, normal, everyday
favourite		
thin		
leaped		
vanished		
smiled		
proudly		
fierce		
soft		
mighty		



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Lesson 2 – The Tall Apartment Block

Objective

To improve their mastery of art and design techniques, including drawing, painting and sculpture with a range of materials.

Outcomes

Each child will have planned and created a shoebox room. All the rooms will be fixed together to form an apartment block.

Resources

- Activity sheet 5 – Floor plan
- Empty shoe boxes, all the same size
- Scissors, sticky tape, glue, thin card, felt tip pens, odds and ends of fabric, wallpaper and coloured paper, pipe cleaners



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Lesson 2 – The Tall Apartment Block

Task 1

Remind the children that Harper lives in the Tall Apartment Block, along with many other families, some of whom we know about. Ask them to imagine a living room or bedroom belonging to someone living in the block – either someone mentioned in the story or a character of their own invention. Using Activity Sheet 5, invite the children to draw a preparatory floor plan of their chosen room, considering the furniture and objects that their character would have in that room.

Task 2

Invite the children to use their floor plans from Task 1 to create a 3D version of the room they have designed using a shoe box as the room. The open top of the box forms the open front of the room. Several sessions will be needed. They should first decorate the walls and floor of the room before making all the objects they will place inside. They could make dressed pipe cleaner models of the people who live there. When all the rooms are finished, stack and tape them together to form your very own Tall Apartment Block.

Task 3

Challenge the children to use the completed Apartment Block as the basis for inventing their own stories about the families who live there. These could be written or told orally. Do the neighbours get on? Are there tensions? How well do they know each other? Are there any interesting stories to be told about individual families? The finished stories could be gathered together in a book or a recorded audio collection.



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Lesson 2 – The Tall Apartment Block

Curriculum links

Y2 Writing

- Writing narratives about personal experiences and those of others (real and fictional).

Y3/4 Writing

- In narratives, create settings, characters and plot.

Y5/6 Writing

- In narratives, describe settings, characters and atmosphere and integrate dialogue to convey character and advance the action.

All years – spoken language

- Give well-structured descriptions, explanations and narratives for different purposes, including for expressing feelings



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Activity sheet 5 – Floor Plan

Use this sheet to draw a birds-eye view plan of the room you are creating for the Tall Apartment Block. Think about how many people live there and who they are. What sort of furniture would they have? What else will be in the room? How will it be decorated?



What are the names of the people who live in your apartment?



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Lesson 3 – Exploring the Senses

Objective

To report on findings from enquiries, including oral and written explanations, displays or presentations of results and conclusions.

Outcomes

The children will have gained knowledge about our five senses.

Resources

- Activity sheet 6 – My five senses
- Activity sheet 7 – Senses investigation
- A 'feely bag' containing objects of different textures, shapes and sizes.

Task 1

Read the children the opening chapter of *Harper and the Circus of Dreams*, asking them to listen for references to any of the five senses – sight, sound, touch, taste and scent. They should find examples of the first three. Then read Chapter 7 from the start up to "...came a memory", where there are also examples of scent and taste. Invite them to complete Activity Sheet 6, *My Five Senses*, listing their favourite sights, smells etc, before comparing their choices with a partner. Are there any things on the lists that are particularly popular?

Task 2

Ask the children to complete Activity Sheet 7, *Senses investigation*, considering which senses they would use to identify various pairs of items. While they are completing their investigation, have a second activity running, inviting individual children to feel for one item in the 'feely bag'. Ask the children to identify the item using touch alone and to explain what helped them decide. When everyone has completed their investigation invite volunteers to present their findings orally to the class. Discuss the results. Are there any patterns? Are any senses mentioned more than others?



Extension

Challenge the children to construct their own fair test about the senses, testing participants' abilities to distinguish between items. They need only select two or three similar items, e.g. whole, semi-skimmed and skimmed milk. They may wish to isolate just one sense, e.g. scent. To do this they would need to blindfold participants and challenge them to identify products by smell alone, e.g. differently perfumed air fresheners, various scented candles, or different fruits.

Curriculum links

Y3/4 Reading

- To discuss words and phrases that capture the reader's interest and imagination. (How does Cerrie Burnell use the reader's senses to keep them engaged?)

Y5/6 Reading

- To explore the meaning of words in context. (How do different words relate to each of the five senses?)



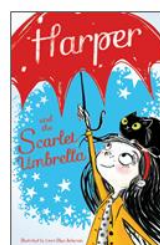
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Activity sheet 6 – My Five Senses

Think of all the best things your senses allow you to enjoy and write them down here.

SIGHT	
SMELL	
TOUCH	
HEARING	
TASTE	

Compare your lists with a friend. Did you choose similar things or are your choices completely different?



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Activity sheet 7 – Senses Investigation

Ask five people which senses they would use to tell the difference between each of these pairs. Keep a tally of their responses. They may choose more than one sense for each pair.

	Sight	Sound	Touch	Hearing	Taste
Salt and sugar					
Orange juice and orange squash					
A robin and a cuckoo					
A raw egg and a boiled egg					
Silk and sandpaper					
Clarinet and flute					
Tea with or without sugar					
A ripe or unripe melon					
A Scottish person and a French person					
Totals					

Rank the senses in order of importance for this test.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

