

Take 5: Ideas for Independent/Home Learning

Noah Barleywater Runs Away by John Boyne (Corgi)



1. Explore it

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

Stepping inside the toy shop had not been Noah's original intention. All he really wanted to do at first was take a look in the window and see what was on display. He didn't have any money to buy anything, of course, but it didn't do any harm to look at what he couldn't afford. He also wanted to make sure that there were not too many customers milling around in case they realised he didn't belong there and called the village police.

But somehow he felt as if he had been sucked inside the shop without his making any decision at all, as if the whole thing had all been entirely outside of his control. Of course, this was most unexpected, but he felt that now he was here, the best thing to do was simply take a look around and see what the shop was like.

The first thing he noticed was how quiet it was. This was nothing like the kind of quiet he heard when he woke up in the middle of the night after a bad dream.

When that happened, there were always strange, unidentifiable sounds seeping into his room from the tiny gaps where the windowpanes weren't sealed together correctly. At those moments he could always tell there was life outside, even if all that life was fast asleep. It was a silence that wasn't silence at all.

But here, inside the shop, things were very different. Here the quiet wasn't just quiet; it was a total absence of sound.

*Noah had been inside a lot of toy shops in his life. Whenever his family went shopping for the day he made a point of being on his best behaviour, because if he was good, then he knew that he would be taken to one before they went home again. And if he was **very** good, there was even a chance that his parents might buy him a special treat, even if he was eating them out of house and home and they had no money to spend on luxuries.*

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

Re-read the extract to yourself and think about the character of Noah. What do you learn about him as a character? What do you learn about his family? What makes you think these things? Now think about the setting. Where is Noah? What is it like there? Have you been to a toy shop before? Does this description fit with your idea of what a toy shop is like? Why or why not? How does the way this place is described make you feel about it? Do you think you would like to go there?

Re-read the extract and think about how this part of the story makes you feel. What do you like or dislike about it? Does it remind you of anything you know from stories or real life? How? Think about how it is written. Do any parts 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?

2. Illustrate it

Re-read the passage, or ask someone to read it to you, or maybe record it for yourself so you can play it over again. After you have read the extract a few times, think about what you can see in your imagination,

whatever stood out most to you. Then take a pen or pencil and a bit of scrap paper. You can use the back of an old envelope, letter or cereal packet; whatever is to hand if you don't have paper.

Draw what you see in your mind's eye; anything that captures the place and the mood of this extract. How did you represent the overwhelming silence in your drawing? Did you draw the toys in the shop? Noah? Did you draw him from the outside looking in, or inside the shop? Did you add anything else around the shop that helps you place it in a wider setting? Remember, everyone has their own ideas and imagines things their own way. This is a good thing! Add any words and phrases that have helped you make your picture, which might come from the passage or from your own imagination.

3. Talk about it

- What do you know about Noah and his family from the sentences, *'He didn't have any money to buy anything, of course, but it didn't do any harm to look at what he couldn't afford.'* and *'And if he was **very** good, there was even a chance that his parents might buy him a special treat, even if he was eating them out of house and home and they had no money to spend on luxuries.'*? Whose voice do you think might be echoed in this final sentence?
- Why do you think Noah was worried that people *'realised he didn't belong there'*? Why do you think he didn't belong? What does this mean to you? Why do you think he thinks the people would *'call the police'*? What might cause them to do this?
- What does the fact that Noah *'felt as if he had been sucked inside the shop without his making any decision at all, as if the whole thing had all been entirely outside of his control and the 'total absence of sound'* make you feel about this place and the wider story? What type of story do you think this will be? What do you think might happen next? Why do you think this?

4. Imagine it

Throughout the extract, the author talks about the toys and Noah wanting to *'see what was on display'*, but never talks about the toys. What do you think might be on display inside the shop? How are your choices influenced by the fact we know it is silent? Would there be some toys that you think aren't in the shop because of this? Why might that be?

Have you ever experienced total silence before? Is your home totally silent – even when everyone is still? Sit together and try to be as quiet as possible. Then listen. Can you still hear sounds *'seeping'* into the room as Noah describes in his home? What are the sounds? Can you tell or are they *'strange, unidentifiable sounds'*?

5. Create it

Can you think of a brand new toy that could be sold in a toy shop? Think carefully about the type of toys that you can currently buy. Will it be a soft toy? A doll? An electronic toy? A game? How would your toy be different? Who would want to buy it? Why? How much do you think it should cost?

Draw a design for your new toy and write an advert for it, telling your customers all about it and enticing them to buy it. Will your advert be for the TV, or a magazine? How will you use descriptive language to draw your customers in? How will you use persuasive language to get them to buy it? Write and design your advert, either as a page for a magazine or as a storyboard for a TV advert. Try it out on someone else in your house – would they buy your toy? Why or why not?