Overview

Learning objective
• To explore the elements of a plot.
• To explore Roald Dahl’s use of exaggeration to tell a good story.

Learning outcome
• Produce an account of an autobiographical event with exaggerated extracts.

Book reference
• Chapters 3 to 6: The Bicycle and the Sweet Shop, The Great Mouse Plot, Mrs Coombes and Mrs Pratchetts’s Revenge.

Cross-curricular link
• Literacy, History, Personal, Social, Health and Citizenship Education.

Starter

• Recap the story of The Great Mouse Plot
• Students discuss in groups the following questions:
  • Which parts from The Great Mouse Plot do you think Roald Dahl exaggerated?
  • What do you think Mrs Pratchett was like in real life?
  • Do you think the boys really thought they had killed her?
  • Did she watch them getting caned?
  • Could this actually have happened? (The children should understand this is still believable but just exaggerated)
  • Put the following quote on the board and discuss it with the children. What does this mean?

An autobiography is a book a person writes about his own life and it is usually full of all sorts of boring details. This is not an autobiography.

(Roald Dahl, Boy, page 7)
Main teaching activity

- Make a mindmap of the ingredients of a good story.
- Draw a cake on the board and ask students to imagine they are making a story cake. They must add all the ingredients they would need for a story: e.g. a beginning, middle and end, plot, good and bad characters, suspense, drama, comedy, a cunning plan, truth...

- Step by step, identify the basic structure of a plot: **START - PROBLEM - BUILD UP - CLIMAX - RESOLUTION.**
- They can write out the structure or create a storyboard.
- The children divide into groups.
- Each group has a sheet of paper on which they can map out the rise and fall of a plot.
- Each group must draw a line which indicates the ups and downs on the piece of paper.
- The children explain to each other the main events of the story of The Great Mouse Plot by pointing to different elements of the plot structure.
- They can also draw or write the events of the story on the paper.

Group or independent activity

- Ask the children to think about an event they would include in their autobiography - a birthday party, a discovery, meeting a new brother or sister for the first time, getting in trouble at school.
- The children need to exaggerate a part of their story to make it sound more interesting like Roald Dahl does.
- Explain it still needs to be something that could happen and is believable!
- The children create a storyboard of their autobiographical account.
Plenary

- Individuals read out their stories to the rest of the class. They can explain what was real and what was exaggerated.
- Other children can point out which elements of the story fit into the different parts of the plot structure.

Other activities

- Students consider the character Mrs Pratchett. Is she really just a victim in this story bullied by young boys? Was she being harassed by Roald Dahl and his friends? Students prepare questions they will ask each other as a reporter and some responses get into pairs for some role play. One student is a reporter; the other is Mrs Pratchett. The reporter wants to hear Mrs Pratchett’s story and find out what happened to her.