

Lark

Teacher Resource Pack

Contents

1. *Synopsis*
2. *Prepare, Read, Review Model – How to...*
3. *Prepare Read Review Grid – What to...*
4. *Vocabulary*
5. *Assessment Opportunities*

1. Synopsis

Blurb

Things are getting tense at home for Nicky and Kenny. As they wait for a visit from their mum. To escape, they go for a walk on the moors, taking their little Jack Russell terrier with them.

But what should have been a laugh, a lark, turns deadly when the weather changes and they are caught in a blizzard. Nothing will ever be quite the same again....

'Heart-rending but perfectly pitched...This life-affirming bittersweet quartet deserves to be widely read'

Winner of the 2020 CILIP Carnegie Medal

Context

This is the fourth book in a series but is equally stand-alone. Nicky and his brother, who has special needs, head to the moor as a 'lark' to see a lark. They go with their dog Tina, a packed lunch and inappropriate dress for bad weather. Things at home haven't been great but the relationship between the brothers is close. **They have a lot of banter and there is mild bad language such as *piss* and *shit*, but these are not used offensively or aggressively. The language needs to be prepared in the context of authenticity.**

The weather traps them dangerously. We learn more about their relationship and through this about their challenges at home. There is a running theme of loss and this plays out on the moor. The writer is particularly adept at painting pictures with words, especially of nature. The death of their dog is initially implied but beautifully described. The epilogue fast forwards 40 years later and is an echo and a continuation of the themes of sticking by each other and loss.. **Very sad! Students need preparation at times for the emotional content and need to pick up, sometimes implied, details.**

- Nature
- Loss
- Saving/Rescue
- Relationships
- Loyalty / Care
- Coming through adversity – but not unscathed: 'scars.

2. Prepare, Read, Review Model

Prepare

This initial step should warm up the text and facilitate comprehension. All activities are completed orally and high value should be placed on listening, speaking and engagement

- Identify new vocabulary and contextualize with learners (decoding and understanding)
- Identify and introduce essential contextual information and promote discussion of this
- *Ask questions to connect prior learning*
- *Encourage learners to make predictions, to activate prior learning*
- Motivate and enthuse learners so that they build relationships with the characters
- Prepare for emotional content
- Oral rehearsal - trying it out, pronunciation

Read




This step focuses active engagement with the text to construct meaning. Comprehension is not a passive process, but an active one.

- Build fluency – rhythm, tone, intonation, understanding
- Encourage learners to self-question as they read
- Provide a purpose for the reading
- Identify the reading behaviours learners will need to employ
- Encourage annotation or sensory images to secure comprehension
- Provide pit stops to pause, summarise and paraphrase
- Opportunity for learners to skim (*get the gist of text*) and scan (*locate specific details*)
- Immerse in the text: read on the run – enjoy the text
- Infer and deduce citing evidence from a text in support

Review

This step focuses on using comprehension to evaluate aspects of the text

- Explore themes and big ideas
- Explore conventions of genre
- Think about how the text will develop and ask questions
- Explore author's intent and the effects
- Compare and contrast
- Evaluate word choice
- Examine literal and inferential meanings – support with evidence and its location
- Form and express opinions

Ch.	<p style="text-align: center;">Prepare</p> 	<p style="text-align: center;">Read</p> 	<p style="text-align: center;">Review</p> 
Prologue	<p>Contextual Information: Introduce title 'Lark'. Two meanings – bird/ a joke or a bit of fun. Perhaps show an image of a lark. We will come back to the relevance of this title as the novel progresses.</p> <p>Discuss the use of bad language in the text and why it's there. Make the point that this is two teenage brothers talking – adds a sense of realism.</p> <p>Explain term 'Prologue' and its role in a text. The prologue opens in the middle of the action, while the boys are on their walk, then it flashes back to explain how they got there.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Why do you think the author chooses to start the story like this?</i> • <i>What are the benefits to the reader?</i> 	<p>Reading Purpose: the main characters are introduced in the prologue- Nicky and Kenny and they are brothers.</p> <p>As learners read, note down keywords to describe their relationship. Discuss.</p>	<p>Text Development/Analysis: Focus on the last 3 paragraphs of the chapter: <i>How does the writer create a feeling of danger here?</i></p> <p><i>What clues are there that things might go wrong?</i></p>
1	<p>Contextual Information: Look at images of North Yorkshire moors. Generate some words to describe the terrain and the surroundings.</p> <p>Discuss the 'setting'. <i>Additional resources slide 2</i></p>	<p>Reading Purpose- read to pg. 9 focussing on how the moors and the lark are presented. Focus on how the moors represents freedom/ nostalgia to the Nick's Dad.</p>	<p>Text Development /Ask Questions: <i>What do you learn in this chapter about Nicky and Kenny and their home life?</i></p> <p>Generate questions which these two chapters raise about them and how the novel will progress.</p> <p>Discuss questions. Keep or make a list of these questions for the next session</p>

2	<p>Connect Prior Knowledge: re-cap questions from last session and discuss</p>	<p>Reading Purpose: This chapter lays down the care Nicky takes over Kenny. Notice this as you read and identify examples</p>	<p>Inferential Meanings/ Author's Intent: Sum up the character Nicky in 3 words. Share as a class.</p> <p>Work on putting these 3 words into a carefully constructed sentence.</p> <p><i>McGowen presents Nicky as</i></p>
3	<p>Connect Prior Learning: Learners look at the retrieval grid provided and have to talk about the relevance of one of the words. The more difficult the word, the higher the score. <i>See additional resource pp slide 3</i></p>	<p>Build Fluency/ Reading Behaviour: Read the opening of Chapter 3 independently.</p> <p>Learners need to apply close reading/ analysis skills.</p> <p>Identify all the clues in this paragraph which suggest that something bad is going to happen/ feeling of foreboding.</p>	<p>Evaluate: Pg. 19. Notice the details about Kenny. He has special needs and we learn more about his personality. <i>How does Nicky deal with him here?</i></p>
4	<p>Connect Prior Learning: Give learners 2 minutes to draw an image to represent the relationship between Nicky and Kenny. Share and discuss.</p> <p>Link then to images highlighted- <i>See additional resource pp slide 4</i></p>	<p>Reading Purpose: The weather becomes more dangerous in this chapter and the boys are struggling. As you read, look for evidence of Nicky caring for Kenny. Note examples down on a post it and discuss.</p>	<p>Evaluate: Nicky clearly looks after Kenny and seems to enjoy it – <i>is the relationship one sided? Why does Nicky take such good care of him? Explore possible reasons</i></p>
5	<p>Contextualise Vocabulary: Warm up the words used in this chapter, particularly the effective words. Re-cap what a verb is and generate more verbs to describe how snow, wind and rain move.</p>	<p>Reading Fluency: Focus on the first paragraph on Pg. 25 (5 lines).</p> <p>Learners read independently. Then ask – <i>how does Nicky feel here?</i> Now learners read again, in pairs,</p>	<p>Evaluate: Focus on the flashback pg 28-29. A long part of this chapter describes Kenny's favourite activity of building a tower with blocks.</p> <p><i>What does this event show us about Kenny as a</i></p>

		using tone and intonation to highlight Nicky's feelings	<i>character? Why does the writer tell us about this? What is significant about the way he describes the joy of knocking it down – but only when the time is right?</i>
6 & 7	<p>Contextual Understanding: Focus on the first paragraph of Chapter 6. Discuss all the details which show that the weather is changing/ situation is worsening. Ask learners to predict:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) How will Nicky react to the worsening situation? 2) How will Kenny react? 3) Will Nicky show his fear to Kenny? 	<p>Reading Purpose: Find three examples of speech between the brothers and explain what it shows about the relationship between them.</p>	<p>Evaluate: <i>What is Nicky trying to do in these two chapters? How is he trying to protect Kenny?</i></p>
8	<p>Contextual Information: Look up Gytrash and Shagfoal: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gytrash</p> <p>You could show images of the Gytrash and ask learners to think of adjectives to describe it</p>	<p>Reading Purpose: Notice the vocabulary in this chapter: the words the writer has chosen carefully for a particular effect e.g. 'swallowed'. It is an ordinary word but it's used in an extraordinary way.</p> <p>Make a list as you read of all the powerful/ effective words the writer uses to highlight the danger of the situation</p>	<p>Summarising: A lot happens in this short chapter. Reduce this chapter down to 5 bullet key bullet points. Discuss different interpretations.</p> <p>Explore Big Ideas: At the bottom of page 40, Nicky explains that in his family, nobody says 'I love you' but they all know it by certain behaviours such as joking with each other while they eat cornflakes etc.</p> <p><i>Generate sentences of your own: In my family we know we love each other when we.....</i></p>
9	<p>Connect Prior Knowledge: use images to re-cap the key events in Chapter 8. <i>See additional resource pp slide 5</i></p>	<p>Reading Purpose: As you read, focus on Nicky and the sound of his voice.</p>	<p>Evaluate Themes and Big Ideas: <i>"Tell us a story," Kenny said. I always told stories to Kenny. [page 46]</i></p>

			<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) What role does storytelling play in the relationship between the brothers? 2) Is it an important part of their relationship? Why? 3) Nicky is the book's storyteller – how would you describe the voice with which he tells the story? <p>Further develop understanding of Nicky as a character. Perhaps complete a character map . See <i>additional resource pp slide 6</i></p>
10	<p>Contextual Information: Read the first paragraph of pg 49 independently. Work with a partner and then quickly sketch the scene</p> <p>Focus on the line: <i>“The trees were mainly bare, but if you looked closely you could see buds beginning to emerge-tight fists of life waiting to open out into a green hand.”</i></p> <p><i>What does it mean? What effect do the words have/why have those words been chosen?</i></p>	<p>Reading Behaviour-Inference: As you read focus on what we learn about Nicky's home life. Write down key details as you read.</p>	<p>Literal and inferential Readings: Using your key details, what have you learnt about Dad and Jenny in this chapter? It's illuminating in that it shines a light on what life has been like for Nicky and Kenny at times. Sum up their childhood so far in three words.</p> <p>Discuss the significance of the last paragraph of this chapter.</p>
11	<p>Connect Prior Knowledge: Focus on the final sentence of Chapter 10.</p> <p><i>“And then I was falling”</i></p> <p>Brain dump: around this line, ask learners to note down anything that springs to mind regarding what is happening and what will happen at this point in the novel. <i>Who has</i></p>	<p>Reading Purpose: As you read , focus on two key things:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) All the powerful words use to describe the pain. 2) Any details which suggest that this event happened a long time ago 	<p>Explore Themes: Loyalty is a key theme in this book. Mind map examples of this theme in this chapter and previously in the book.</p>

	<i>fallen? Why? Where are they?</i> ...	You could assign different questions to different learners. Share thoughts	
12	Make Predictions: Re-cap situation the brothers have found themselves in at the end of Chapter 11. 1) If you were Nicky, what would you do now? 2) If you were Kenny, how would you feel now?	Reading Purpose: In this chapter we get a real insight into the bond between the brothers. As you read, look out for all the things they do/say which shows their love/loyalty. Note these details down.	Explore Themes: Link back to the theme of loyalty. <i>What does this chapter show us about the loyalty between the brothers?</i> Further add to mind map. <i>How does the writer present this as a realistic brotherly relationship?</i>
13	Motivate and Enthuse: Are you enjoying the book? How do you feel about Nicky and Kenny?	Reading Purpose: <i>"I poured not just the pain and fear of now into my yells, but all the bad things that happened in my life"</i> Draw attention to this line from Nicky. As you read, look for all the things that have caused Nicky pain in his life.	Evaluate: Nicky explained more about why Mum left in this chapter. <i>Why did she leave? What happened to Dad and the boys after she went and how does Nicky feel about her now, as he thinks about her imminent visit?</i> Sum up how Nicky feels about himself/his life in three key words
14	Prepare Content: In the next chapter, Nicky admits to being very frightened and imagines how he may die.		Evaluate: Notice how Nicky's mind rambles a little from one topic to another as you read. <i>Why do you think this might be? What might the reader be trying to show?</i>
15	Prepare Vocabulary: Nicky calls Tina an 'omen' in this chapter. What is an omen? What 'mood' does the work create?	Reading Purpose: Nicky is in a lot of pain in this chapter. Note down all the words which show Nicky's pain	Analysis: Focus on pages 85-86. <i>How does the writer show Nicky's pain?</i> Zoom in on the language used and the images created
16	Prepare Content: The river is an important place in this		Analysis: Focus on the last paragraph, pg 89. <i>How does the</i>

	chapter. Think of all the ways you could describe a river? Use ambitious vocabulary. Think of how personification works. Can you give a river human attribute?		<p>writer create a sense of fear or intrigue here?</p> <p>Look at:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) “sick feeling” 2) the word “something” – an empty word 3) the writer withholds details 4) the use of the short sentences to slow the pace 5) Leeds United hat and implicit link to Kenny
17	<p>Make Predictions:</p> <p>Warm up these words below. These words all feature in the chapter. Re-cap prior events in novel, <i>what do these words suggest about what will happen next?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Drag</i> • <i>Paralysed</i> • <i>Stumbling</i> • <i>Shivering</i> • <i>Staggering</i> • <i>Flame</i> • <i>Darkness</i> 	<p>Reading Purpose: Nicky is in a very bad position in this chapter. Note down all the details which show how dangerous this situation is. .</p>	<p>Analysis: Analyse the last pg of the chapter. <i>How is a hopeless/ bleak mood created?</i> Encourage close analysis of language / textual details.</p> <p>Discuss the idea that as the flame dies, so does hope. Hope is often likened to a light which burns</p>
18	<p>Contextual Information: The lark is important here, particularly the lark in flight. Perhaps show learners an image or video of a lark flying and learners write a list of words to describe this.</p>	<p>Reading Purpose:</p> <p>Notice the effect of the words at the end of the chapter used to describe the lark and its movements. Re read the passage: “<i>And then I heard the sound... a beautiful thing had left this world.</i>” Read it fluently but not fast. Catch every detail.</p>	<p>Evaluate Key Ideas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What do you think the lark is symbolising in this chapter?</i> • <i>Why do you think the author chooses this moment in the book for the lark to appear?</i> • <i>What characteristics are shared between Nicky and the lark?</i> • <i>Do you think this image of the lark can tell us anything about Nicky’s life?</i>

			Discuss the end of the chapter. It isn't explicit what it means, Generate ideas about what it could signify.
19	Contextual Information: This is a touching chapter where Nicky is rescued. His relief is mixed with sadness.	Reading Purpose: Even though Nicky is badly injured he still protects Kenny. Look out for examples of this	<p>Evaluate Big Ideas: Discuss examples of how Nicky still protects Kenny.</p> <p>Further develop understanding of Nicky as a character.</p> <p>Write Nicky's name in the middle of a sheet and around it write the names of all the other characters in the book. Use arrows and write along the arrow the nature of his relationship with the other characters.</p> <p>Draw arrows between other characters where links exist. For example, between Mum and Dad, Jenny and Dad, Jenny and Mum. Write along the arrow the nature of their relationship, including. If possible, compare your ideas with other readers.</p>
20		Reading Purpose: As you read focus on the three characters as a family. What does this chapter show about their relationship?	<p>Evaluate: Discuss the part where Nicky tells Dad he loves him. What does Dad mean when he says that he did go away, and that it was Nicky who stayed?</p> <p>A key theme in this book is relationships. Nicky and his family are not sentimental characters – they don't express their feelings towards one another very often. Yet the book is still full of love and emotion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>How does the author convey this?</i>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Can you find three examples in the book where the characters convey their emotions in other ways?</i>
Epilogue	<p>Contextual Information: What is an epilogue?</p> <p>There is a jump in time to the Epilogue. <i>“And the years went by. Forty of them.”</i> The boys are now adults. The book could have ended after chapter 20. <i>What do you think will happen now?</i> Make a prediction about what the epilogue contains.</p>	Read the Epilogue carefully. Don't miss a thing!	<p>Evaluate Themes and Ideas: Questions for discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were you surprised by the ending of the book? • Why do you think the author decided to include the epilogue? • Do you think this provides a satisfying ending to Nicky's and Kenny's adventures? • Look at the final line of the book: <i>'Tell me a story.'</i> <i>Why do you think the author chose this as the final line? What effect does this line have on the context of this book and the rest of Nicky and Kenny's story?</i> <p>Discuss key themes in the book-rank ordering activity. <i>See additional resource pp slide 6.</i></p> <p>Encourage learners to sum up the main messages/ themes in the books. <i>See additional resource pp slide 8 and 9.</i></p>

4. Vocabulary to prepare and appreciate

Vocabulary		
Ch.	Tricky words to prepare <i>before</i> reading	Effective words
Prologue	splonger bozzle	scampered
1	Thirsk stick-whittling	shining soaring yapping crammed
2	digestives treeless	snow = rain with big ideas
3	sparrowhawk softies bribe	Thundering. The stone walls were like the remains of ruined castles, and the black trees were monsters frozen by the spells of a good wizard.
4	blizzard	shrugged
5	craftsmanship	trudging skirting drifts clunk
6	dragging (spelling rule?)	stumbling
7	Gytrash shagfoal	chewed
8	legend wheeze beck	clumped skittered swallowed marched
9	wilderness	drained smearing snaked
10	landscape saliva	shimmering
11	buggery	jutting scrabbling
12	downstream shit	raging slithered
13	Outer Mongolia	swarming scrunch
14	corgi	yapping
15	winching screwdriver omen	dreading
16	snowflakes	bellowed jarred jut
17	booze	staggering murmuring my fingers ate the warmth
18	ecstatic swallows swifts	hauling carefree swooping
19	gorge hypothermia Page 99: 'fucking'	herding
20	Escalators	My leg stuck out like a cannon tighten
Epilogue	chemo	fuzz

Assessment Opportunities (optional)

Writing Task

Step 1

- *What are the main messages in this book?*
- *What issues does the book make you think about?*
- *Why should people read this book? Apart from enjoying it, what else will they get from it?*

Step 2

- *Make a list of useful adjectives to describe the book*

Step 3

- *Write a letter you your Head of English or Head teacher, explaining why this book should be compulsory in Year 7 for all learners*

End of Novel Quiz

(This could be transferred to a Google Form)

1. What were the names of the brothers? **They were called Kenny and Nicky**
2. Why had their mum left them to go to Canada? **The book says mum left because she 'flipped' because dad was an alcoholic, and the boys especially Kenny were hard to cope with.**
3. Did Nicky love his dad? How do you know? **Yes, Nicky told his dad he loved him at the end of the book and thanked him for staying when his mum had left.**
4. Why had dad stopped drinking? **It seemed to be because of Jenny and the realisation of the damage he was doing to his family.**
5. What object of Kenny's did Nicky find floating in the water? **Leeds Untied hat**
6. Why Kenny does always wasn't Nicky to tell him a story? What do these stories symbolize? **To escape reality. Often the stories are told when things are difficult. The stories also comfort Kenny and show how Nicky is always protecting him- like a father figure**
7. When they meet in the hospital, where does Nicky tell Kenny that Tina has gone?_Why doesn't he tell him the truth? **To work on a farm and be trained as a sheepdog because Tina loved it on the moors and didn't want to come back. He tells him this lie to protect him.**
8. What is Kenny wearing when Nicky sees him in the hospital? **Spiderman pyjamas brought by Jenny**
9. In the epilogue, what does Kenny ask Nicky to do? **Write their adventures down into a book**
10. What do you think is the *main* theme or message of the book?

5. Contextual Extension Links

Additional resources from Carnegie	https://carnegiegreenaway.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/CKG-2020-Reading-Resources_Lark.pdf
Interview with the author	https://peters.co.uk/news-page/q-a-with-anthony-mcgowan-lark
Opening chapters of the first novel in the series – Brock	https://www.barringtonstoke.co.uk/books/brock/
Author reading extracts: Chapter 7	https://vimeo.com/399735067
Interview with the author – video	https://vimeo.com/399732058