

The Tear Thief



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Barefoot Books 2007

The Tear Thief is a beautifully illustrated, poetic story that makes wonderful use of figurative language. It provides a wide range of opportunities for rich thought, talk and discussion relating to its exploration of emotion, and its use of aspects of traditional story telling in accounting for the varying brightness of the moon. It's a story of awe and wonder in so many ways.

Alongside its scope for rich, thematic discussion, The Tear Thief also provides opportunities for exploration of its use of language, for example:

- how verbs are used to describe the Tear Thief's stealthy behaviour;
- how adverbials are used to describe the Tear Thief's progress and how adjectives add to the impression of a perfectly quiet, expert robber;
- how metaphor and idiomatic language are used to account for the different values of different tears.

Given its poetic language and its focus, it would make a very good pairing with the picture book Bob Robber and Dancing Jane by Andrew Matthews and Bee Willey (currently out of print, but used copies are available).

The DfE have used this book to exemplify Y2 reading at greater depth within the standard – and a commentary of a teacher-pupil discussion about the text can be found here:

<https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/26020/1/STA-Ex2016-KS1-ER-GD.pdf>

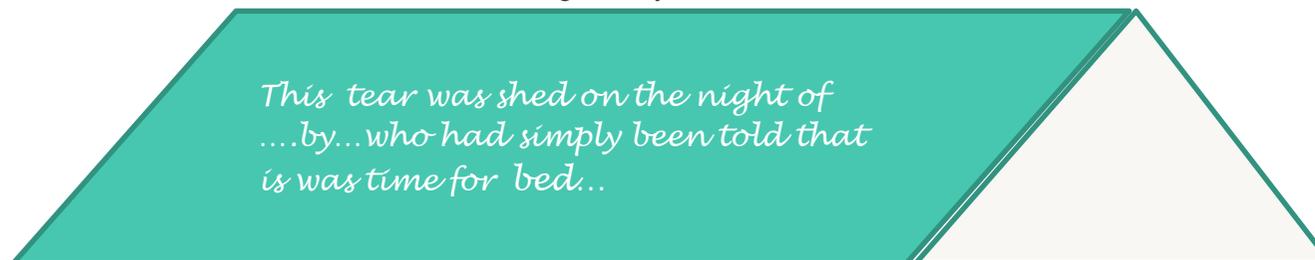
Suggested Focus	Activity
include story language and patterns	<p>Having heard, enjoyed and discussed the story, identify phrases that add a storytelling voice to the narrative. Collect (perhaps on tear-shaped paper or card cut-outs. Discuss meaning and what they add to the story e.g. only if you happened to look...slippers that made no sound as she walked... Down the stairs, sly as steam, she crept...</p> <p>Focus in particular on the following extract: They were tears of real sadness. The Tear Thief could tell that just one of these tears was worth a hundred cried over spilt milk or a thousand crocodile tears. Talk about the literal meaning here – what these phrases would mean if we were to take them literally, according to each word's meaning. Then support children to understand the idioms themselves through the use of real life scenarios – being upset over something that was perhaps a mistake, but is done and that we cannot change (spilt milk) or false tears of sympathy or regret (crocodile tears) – it may be interesting to explore the origin of this phrase https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crocodile_tears).</p>

Discuss the notion that different tears have different values. Present an array of differently coloured tears and match these to the book's account of the source of colouring. Consider setting this exploration out in a grid that will allow children to see the colour scheme set out in the book but to extend this to their own knowledge of the world and to consider what might lead such tears to come into existence :



Colour of tear	Type of tear	When this might happened
Red – glowing like rubies	Rage and anger	Angry at losing a football match
Green – green as emeralds	Envy and Jealousy	Wishing that you had the same toy as your friend.

From here, develop and extend the idea of tears having different values and this being determined by the source of the tears. Explain that we are going to set up our very own “Tear Gem” store – watch out for visiting Tear Thieves! Develop a series of presentation cards for an imaginary “tear shop” in which the gems are presented alongside a card that sets out their value and accounts for the tear’s “origin story”:



<p>explore characters' feelings and situations in stories, using role play and oral rehearsal</p> <p>use exclamatory sentences</p>	<p>Explore the scene where the Tear thief sits alone on the rooftop, contemplating her sack of tears. Building on the "Tear Shop" work, support children in devising brief monologues that describe the Tear thief's feelings as she contemplates her 'loot'. Model the following structure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make a statement about the personal value of the tear • Briefly describe the tear • Describe why it is/isn't precious/ a favourite/valued <p>For example:</p> <p>What a beautiful tear you are! This is one of the finest gems that I have ever collected. You are a tear of fear and so you glow bright white in the moonlight. You came from a child afraid of the dark. They cried and cried in the middle of the night.</p> <p>Oh you are a stunning tea – perhaps my very favourite! You are as red as a ruby but all the more beautiful. I remember how cross that boy was when he cried in pain and anger. He had fallen over and scratched his knee but he thought he had been pushed. He cried and cried for such a long time. Now look at how you glow!</p> <p>Support children to write their own brief monologues that build on previous work.</p>
<p>choose appropriate words and phrases to describe</p> <p>use appropriate adjectives and adverbs to give essential information</p> <p>use expanded noun phrases to describe and specify</p>	<p>Collect descriptive phrases for the movement and operation of the tear Thief and then use these to practise moving like a Tear Thief either as drama during English, perhaps as part of a PE lesson in the hall, or in moving around an outdoor space. The following selected prompts may be helpful:</p> <p>The Tear Thief crept... The Tear Thief was invisible and carried a silvery waterproof sack on her back...She wore a handkerchief dress and silk slippers that made no sound as she walked...the Tear Thief listened hard with sharp ears (<i>you may need to unpick this language – see the DFE exemplification above</i>). The Tear Thief jumped lightly from the top of the tree on to the roof of the first house. She crept along the rooftops, silent as smoke, listening, listening, until she heard the crying again.</p> <p>Use the above to develop children's understanding of the quiet and stealthy life of the Tear Thief:</p> <p>What would it feel like to be so quiet? If you could be this quiet, what could you/would you do? Is it good to be so quiet?</p> <p>Expand and develop descriptive language/figurative expressions for the stealthy movements of the Tear Thief.</p>

<p>use some multi-clause sentences using subordinating conjunctions</p>	<p>Use exemplar sentences to develop children’s ability to manage a range of information in a single sentence through the considered use of conjunctions. In order to plan, write a plausible sentence based on the book that is made up of three or more clauses. Turn this single, complex sentence into discrete, simple sentences. Provide these sentences, together with the associated conjunctions, so that children can practise putting the given information into a sentence using the provided conjunctions. An example starting sentence is given below:</p> <p><i>The Tear Thief crept along the rooftops as silent as smoke when all of a sudden she heard a faint sob that she knew was coming from a house at the end of the street.</i></p>
<p>use the present and past tenses correctly and consistently</p> <p>add –ed, –ing, –er and –est to a root word ending in –y with a consonant before it</p> <p>add –ing, –ed, –er, –est and –y to words of one syllable ending in a single consonant letter after a single vowel letter</p>	<p>Collect examples of different verbs and adverbs from the text that help to support the atmosphere of the story:</p> <div data-bbox="607 804 1919 1136" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin: 10px auto; width: fit-content;"> <p>crept jumped lightly listening, listening (note this effective repetition – why does it work?)</p> <p>slid pressed her ear sneaked perched pounced snatched popped</p> <p>flown shimmied slipped slithered hopped</p> </div> <p>These verbs may be used to complement and extend the movement/PE activity suggest above. Ask children to consider how these words suit the movement of a Tear Thief. Draw out the use or potential for alliteration. Ask: why do so many words begin with the /s/ sound, do you think? Collect examples of alternative verbs or phrases for movement.</p> <p>Analyse the use of past tense and progressive verbs:</p>

<p>use the present progressive and past progressive forms</p>	<p>She crept along the rooftops, silent as smoke, listening, listening until she heard the crying again.</p> <p>Down the stairs, sly as steam, sneaked the Tear Thief, on to the landing and into the bathroom. A boy was sitting in the bath crying his eyes out. His mother was kneeling by the side of the bathtub holding a pink bottle of strawberry shampoo.</p> <p>Consider whether it is appropriate to explore the use of progressive verbs, following the establishment of past activity through a simple (or irregular) past tense verb. We are placed in the past and then we can talk about what is happening or being. Children might mimic these structures: collect verbs and then model using an irregular or –ed past tense verb, followed by progressive verbs e.g. She leapt into the room. A boy was sitting on his bed. He was crying because he wanted to stay up and watch some more television with his mummy and daddy.</p>
<p>Suggested writing activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • describe the tear thief – create a wanted poster – the reward might be paid in tears! • diary entry for a tear thief, a victim of the tear thief, or perhaps someone trailing the tear thief. • instructions for tear thieves – how to find the most precious tears and never get caught • writing labels for tears in a “tears for all occasions” shop • using tears of different values in maths (e.g. create a bead string using beads that align with a class guide to tear values – to keep things simple you could ascribe a monetary value e.g. blue tears are worth 5p – calculate the value of your bead string, or you could explore lumens as a measure of brightness, in keeping with the book’s underlying concept) • a guide to protecting your bedroom from a sneaky tear thief • a sensory poem that lists the different types of tears that might be available • a retelling of the tear thief • a discussion of whether crying is a good or bad thing – based on careful class dialogue • a scene between the tear thief and the girl who lost her dog - early speech work • a guide to catching a tear thief (make creative use of puddles to help capture one) • a descriptive paragraph describing the act of looking into a puddle and seeing a tear thief • a brief recount that makes use of prepositional language to describe the movement of a tear thief from the street to an interior room • a beginner’s guide (non-chronological report) on different tears and or Tear thieves. <i>What other kinds of thieves might steal from us those things that we might not notice? Laughter thieves? Dream Thieves? Be prepared to innovate in creating your guides.</i>