

*** NEW ***

Lifeworlds Learning

info@lifeworldslearning.co.uk

Reading the world...

...to read ourselves

The Silence Seeker

There are many ways for young people to think and learn about deep issues, but there is something special about stories. Picture books are often only considered appropriate for younger children, but there are vivid, thought-provoking and sophisticated picture books for older children too.

Ben Morley's book *The Silence Seeker* tells the story of Joe and his quest to find a quiet place for his new neighbour. Joe's mum tells him the neighbour is an asylum seeker, but Joe mishears this as 'a silence seeker'. The story shows a friendship developing between the two boys, but also looks at the struggle Joe has to find a quiet place for his friend and so introduces learners to the threats or tensions that exist in our local environments.



This resource uses *The Silence Seeker* to support thinking and discussion around:

- belonging
- what makes a community
- refugee and asylum issues
- safety
- cities of the world
- language and non verbal communication

Questions provoked by the book and resource may include:

Do I feel welcome everywhere?

Who belongs in my city?

Where do I belong?

Does my local area feel peaceful?

Does my local area feel safe?

Why?

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Learning Activities

Explain that this story is about a boy who comes from another place, and makes friends with Joe, his new neighbour. Then you can show the cover and learners can consider which is Joe, and which the new boy. This may uncover assumptions about race and/or stereotypes, but is also a good media activity as observations about body language, expressions etc will make the answer clear.

Read the book once. Allow learners time to comment on things that they notice, and ask questions to check their understanding (make sure everyone understands the 'misunderstanding' that forms the basis of the book). At this point it may help to explore what an asylum seeker is (see web links). Another key point that may come up is the style of the images. An extension activity on page 3 (below) can help you explore these.

Ask volunteers from the class to lead a discussion by asking 'why?' questions to each other, such as 'why does Joe's friend disappear?' Learners then answer each other, but also think about what extra information may be needed in order to answer. Is there always a right answer? This book also works well as a stimulus for a Philosophy for Children enquiry.

Explore some of the themes in the story by asking learners what they think the author's message is. Themes that you might mention or explore could be: asylum; cities; safety and security; assumptions about race.

Ask learners to imagine that they are Joe's friend and don't speak English. Ask them to imagine what the boy might be thinking by adding speech bubbles to each page. To add thought and meaning to this, learners may need to do some research about asylum seekers and their experiences.

Use the idea of belonging to discuss whether the Silence Seeker is made to feel welcome by the community he has arrived in. Encourage the group to think about the different characters in the story, including Joe, Joe's mum, and the groups that make noise. Who, if anyone, has sent the boy away again on a plane? What community are they representing. You might like to provoke further debate and discussion by asking whether the government department that accepts or rejects asylum applications in the UK represents us, as part of the community, when it does this?

Explain that the story is going to be used to learn about word choice and word imagery. Share with the class the definition of **homonym**, and ask them to vote on whether 'silence seeker' and 'asylum seeker' are homonyms. Do the same for **synonym** – is the boy really seeking silence, and does silence mean the same as it usually does? Is peace the same as silence?

Use the story, now it is known to learners, to teach linguistic/persuasive writing techniques such as noun phrases (up-to-no-goods); onomatopoeia; repetition; alliteration; sentence structure. A match and sort activity sheet is provided on page 3 to support this work. *Teacher note: many of the examples match with more than one answer!*

Web Links

Information on Asylum and the UK - www.unhcr.org.uk/about-us/the-uk-and-asylum.html

Activities from publisher - [www.tamarindbooks.co.uk/activitysheets/TAMARIND ACTVTY 3.pdf](http://www.tamarindbooks.co.uk/activitysheets/TAMARIND_ACTVTY_3.pdf)

Activity Sheet

Match the examples from *The Silence Seeker* with the language technique that they show:

onomatopoeia	I hope he finds it.
alliteration	up-to-no-goods
repetition	Just for a moment the city stopped and took a breath and everything was quiet... but only for a moment.
short, powerful sentences	drip-dripping
long, descriptive sentences	biggies, banging and crashing
noun phrases	chink-chinking

Extension activity

Think about how the style of the images in *The Silence Seeker* adds to the storyline and discuss your thoughts with someone else. What is 'urban' about the images? Do you think that the images show noise? How?

How might we talk about noise that isn't to do with sound? Brainstorm the negative things about noise, and the positive things about silence. How do your ideas relate to those in the story?