BEFORE YOU START

Prepare a group journal to help you record group discussions and responses to the text as you work through the book.

Prepare an outline of the character Jack, ready to complete using the Role on the Wall technique.

You may want to briefly research different monarchies to help the discussion in Session 1.

Find pictures of sweet peas, poppies, cowslips, cornflowers, foxgloves, forget-me-nots, sunflowers, stocks, daisies, Busy Lizzies, marigolds and morning glories to use in Session 5.
**SESSION 1: CHAPTER ONE**

**Focus: Predicting, Clarifying and Questioning**

Begin by sharing the illustration of the king on page 3, and discuss.

- Who do you think the character in this illustration might be?
- What kind of a person do you think they are?
- Do they remind you of any characters in other books or films? Or even in real life?
- What stories do you know that feature characters like this? What kinds of things happen in those stories? What do you think might happen in this one?

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Read Chapter One and share the illustrations. Once the children have heard this read aloud, the class can begin to explore their responses to it with the help of the four **basic questions**. These questions can be used as a basis for discussion throughout the sessions.

- Tell me… was there anything you liked about this text?
- Was there anything that you particularly disliked…?
- Was there anything that puzzled you?
- Were there any patterns… any connections that you noticed…?

As children respond it can be useful to write down what they say under the headings ‘likes’, ‘dislikes’, ‘puzzles’ and ‘patterns’. Record the children’s responses in the **journal** and return to any queries as the sessions continue.
Consider the opening of the story and the situation that is set up.

- What do you think has happened so far in the story?
- What do you think usually happens when a king or queen gets old? Do you know what happens in the United Kingdom?

Countries which still have monarchies include the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Spain, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Japan and Lesotho. You could do a project after the session in which children research different monarchs with adult help.

- How does the illustration on pages 4–5 help you understand the story? Which details stand out for you?
- What do you think of the plan? Do you agree with the king that it is ‘silly’?
- How would you choose who takes your place if you were queen or king?
- What do you think the old woman whispers in the king’s ear?
- Why do you think the word ‘are’ is printed in italics? How does it make you read that word?

If the children have ideas for how the king could choose his successor, they could discuss their ideas, then each write a note of advice suggesting what he could do. They then exchange notes and reply to the note they have received, role-playing as the king.
**SESSION 2: CHAPTER TWO**

**Focus: Empathising, Questioning and Predicting**

Read Chapter Two, stopping at different points to clarify the children’s understanding and allow for discussion around the **four basic questions**.

Allow the children to discuss their responses to the story so far and to reflect on the events. Help them to discuss how the illustrations reinforce the message of the words.

Ask the children what they might do if they were in the same position.

- What do you think might be ‘very special’ about the seeds that the king has ordered?
- Do you know of any other stories where a king or queen sends out a message to the country? Children might mention traditional tales in which kings or queens seek cures for illnesses or need dragon slayers or advice from wise people, etc.
- How does the king’s message affect you as a reader? How would you feel to receive a letter and some seeds from a queen or king?
- What do the people think when they get the letter? How do you know?
- What do the illustrations tell you about what the people think of becoming king or queen? Encourage the children to look in detail at the people on pages 11 and 12.
- Based on the people’s ideas about becoming king or queen, what do you think the people believe the king does all day? Do you think they are right?
- What do you think the king or queen of a country does?
Children could try **role-playing** then **freeze-framing** the servants packing and delivering the seeds, and the people reading and reacting to the king’s message. They could then try **thought-tracking** to capture the characters’ emotions.

- What would you be thinking or feeling as a servant packing or delivering the seeds?
- What would you be thinking or feeling as a subject receiving the seeds and the king’s message?
- Do you think you would take part in the competition? How would you make your flowers the best?
- What do you think will happen next in the story?
Focus: Clarifying, Thinking Aloud and Empathising

Read Chapter Three, stopping at different points to clarify the children’s understanding and allow for discussion around the four basic questions. Support them as necessary in fitting the new character, Jack, into the story they already know.

- What kind of a person do you think Jack is?
- Does he remind you of any characters you know in other books or films? Or in real life? Children may mention Jack and the Beanstalk and the beans he sows.

Discuss the illustrations on pages 14-15, and what they add to what the children know about Jack and his life.

- Do you think Jack and his mother’s hut looks comfortable?
- How does it compare to the king’s palace?
- Would you like to live there? What details do you notice in the illustration that make you think this?
- What other details do you notice in the illustrations that tell you about Jack and his mother’s life?
- What do you think the phrase ‘the day the sun says hello to the moon’ means?
- Why do you think Jack thinks he doesn’t have a chance? What might you say to encourage him?

The children’s personal experience of struggling against the odds might be shared at this point. A discussion about the importance of persistence and resilience may be useful.
Introduce the outline of Jack to be added to using the **Role on the Wall** technique. Ask the children to come up with words or phrases to describe Jack’s feelings and personality or his outward appearance and behaviour. For example, they know Jack works hard and doesn’t have time for dreams.

- What do you know about Jack at this point in the story?
- What do the illustrations add to what you know?
- What do you think Jack’s mother thinks about him?

Revisit the **Role on the Wall** outline at key points in the story as the children find out more about Jack.
Focus: Empathising, Questioning and Predicting

Read Chapter Four, again stopping at different points to clarify the children’s understanding and allow for discussion. Consider how Jack might feel as his seeds fail to germinate.

- Why does Jack decide to plant the seeds even though he doesn’t think he will win? What does this tell you about Jack?
- How do you think Jack feels when his seeds don’t germinate?
- How do you think the author wants you as a reader to feel about Jack and his seeds? How do the illustrations support this?
- What do you think seeds need to germinate and then thrive? Children might mention warmth, moisture and light.
- Why do you think Jack’s seeds haven’t grown, even though he has given them warmth, light, water and even sung to them?
- Why is the word ‘yet’ in italics on page 25? How would you say the word when you read it aloud?
Revisit the Role on the Wall outline to reflect what the children know about Jack at this stage in the story. The children could again write a note of advice and reply through role-playing as Jack.

- What do you think Jack should do? Should he go to the court anyway and explain what has happened? How do you think the king and wise people might react?
- How do you think other people have got on with their seeds?
- How do you think Jack will feel if others have done better than him and their seeds have grown?
- What do you think will happen next?
Focus: Re-reading, Empathising and Summarising

Read Chapter Five, stopping at different points to clarify the children’s understanding and allow for discussion.

- How do you think Jack feels as he joins the end of the queue with his empty pot? How do you know this?
- How does the illustration on pages 26–27 help you guess Jack’s feelings?
- How many of the different flowers on pages 28–29 do you know? Provide pictures of sweet peas, poppies, cowslips, cornflowers, foxgloves, forget-me-nots, sunflowers, stocks, daisies, Busy Lizzies, marigolds and morning glories.
- Which are the ‘best’ flowers? What matters most: colour, scent, size?
- Did you expect the king to react to Jack’s pot in the way he does? How do you think the king reacted to the other flowers that were brought to him throughout the day?
- What is the effect on the story of Jack being at the very end of the queue?
- Remember the wise woman whispering in the king’s ear at the start of the story. What do you now think she whispered to the king?
- Why does the king choose Jack?
- Do you think his honesty will make Jack a good king? What other characteristics do you think he has that will make him a good ruler?
Having read to the end of the story, discuss the book as a whole using the **four basic questions**.

Review the story in chronological order and consider the different emotions that Jack has felt throughout the story, his high and low points, and how the illustrations support the text. Use **hot-seating** to explore him further.

Work collaboratively to choose words that describe Jack’s emotions at the different points of the story. Write these on post-it notes and then organise them to demonstrate shades of emotional intensity that Jack has felt and create a **graph of emotion**.

Through modelling, ask the children to describe their favourite part of the story. Provide the children with an oral scaffold, for example: **the most memorable part of the story was... because... ; my top moment in the story was... because...** and in pairs ask them to identify their favourite part of the narrative. Encourage children to give reasons for their choices and invite some children to share these.
IDEAS TO SUPPORT THE SESSIONS

These are areas you could further develop depending on your professional judgement of the children’s learning needs and their interests.

Developing wider reading experiences

Read and explore stories with similar themes involving honesty and / or rags to riches, such as Cinderella or Jack and the Beanstalk, or:

- *Odd Dog Out* by Rob Biddulph – HarperCollins
- *Madeline* by Ludwig Bemelmans – Scholastic

Supporting reading fluency

- While reading with the group, model skills and strategies such as predicting, sampling, confirming, self-monitoring, self-correcting, ‘thinking aloud’, interpreting things which are only implied, and the full range of cueing systems (semantic, syntactic and graphophonic).
- Occasionally, you could hide some words with a post-it note, asking the children to refer to the illustration for ideas. You could give another clue by revealing the first syllable or letter.
- You could make a pairs game to develop visual memory and book language, creating cards using laminated images from the book. Make pairs of cards, one card for an illustrated location or character and one for matching words from the story. Spread these out face down. Children take turns to turn over two cards. If they match, they can keep them. If not, they have to turn them back over again. The game proceeds until all the pairs have been found.
- You could create a simple jigsaw by writing questions with corresponding answers directly underneath on one side of a piece of paper, then printing an illustration on the reverse and cutting the sheet of paper up to separate the questions and answers. The children lay out the questions and answers in order. They can check their layout by turning them over to see if they have created the illustration correctly.
Vocabulary building

- Make **word collections** based on the text, e.g., whisper, thousand, million, clever, servant, bonkers, greedily grabbed, horses’ hooves, palace, cowslip, cornflower, foxglove, daisies, marigold, morning glories. Children could make **word collections** which describe a particular character and their feelings or a place, event or situation – or in this case, could describe the beautiful flowers.

- The text could also be used to investigate the structure, impact and placement of a wide number of prefixes and suffixes. For example, children could investigate any patterns in adding –ing (trying, talking, ordering, working, looking, coming, shaking, going, judging, carrying, holding, singing) to a verb; they could look at regular and irregular past tense verbs (called, whispered, smiled, ordered, landed, gathered, grabbed, planted, pushed, picked, pointed, asked, helped, filled, pushed, fetched, asked, placed, walked, stretched, watered, tried, handed, looked; was, had, could, sat, came, thought, said, put, were, rode, gone, began, heard, read, took, shook, found, made, went, sang, did, stood, told).

Opportunities to revisit the text independently

- With the children, make a set of magnetic or stick story props to use in a retelling of the story and to support children in their own independent retellings. If possible, provide extra copies of the book to support this.

- If the children have a good memory of the text through repeated readings, they can be given copies of the story to read to partners. This helps children to see themselves as readers.

- Allow the children to re-enact the story through play. Revisiting stories through a range of play-based experiences helps children to step into the world of the book and to explore it more completely.

- Encourage the children to take the book home to read alongside a parent or carer and suggest that they use the ‘Tips for grown-ups’ pages to support their discussions.
Experiences linked to the text

• Children could plant and care for seeds. Vegetable seeds that sprout quickly include parsley, lettuce, basil and salad cress; flowers include nasturtiums, marigolds, poppies and sunflowers. Use seed compost and recycled yoghurt pots, but be aware that some seeds and plants are poisonous, so care should be taken.

• Children could design their own seed packets, including instructions for how to grow them.

• Use recycled materials, papier mâché or clay to create your own plants and decorate them.


• Depending on the time of year children could look for seeds in their school grounds, see Going on a seed safari – RHS: https://schoolgardening.rhs.org.uk/Resources/Lesson-Plan/Going-on-a-seed-safari.

These resources were created by Bloomsbury and The Centre for Literacy in Primary Education (CLPE). For more teaching resources, visit:

www.bloomsburyguideredreading.com

www.clpe.org.uk