



I'll take you to Mrs Cole – discussion & drama activities

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| Start the book | <p>Hide the cover as it rather gives the game away! However, tell them the title and ask, <i>“What do you think the book might be about?”</i></p> <p>Revisit their ideas at the end. Discuss – <i>“How does the author/illustrator change your thinking?”</i></p> |
| Dive into the image | <p>Look at the two front piece images. Loiter on the second picture and ask what they notice – he’s running up modern stairs in a dingy block and in the background is a fantasy building. Think about ‘play’ and ‘fantasy’ during the book.</p> |
| Contrast and compare | <p>Compare the differences between the main settings – and study how the images and words contrast – the flat, the dungeon and the reality of Mrs Cole’s house.</p> |
| Rumours | <p><i>What do the school children say about Mrs Cole?</i></p> <p>Everyone in the playground has heard about Mrs Cole (or imagines they have). In role, the children move around, creating, gathering and sharing tales, gossip and rumours.</p> |
| Freeze frame | <p>The scene of children in the playground chatting is now frozen, (freeze frame) and the teacher passes through the scene. Whoever the teacher passes nearby, thaws and speaks aloud, so that all can hear snippets of the ‘overheard conversations’.</p> |
| Eavesdrop | <p>Once the teacher has passed by, the speakers stop talking and freeze again.</p> |
| Perhaps | <p>Stop on the image of the dungeon and invent with the children some more ‘perhaps’ sentences.</p> |
| Talking to Mrs Cole | <p>Stop on the image where they go to Mrs Cole’s house but do not go in. In pairs: <i>What would you say to Mrs Cole’s face? What would you say behind her back?</i></p> |
| Thoughts in the Head | <p>Freeze the scene with the dog, the boy and the Mum outside Mrs Cole’s house – what are they thinking might happen, what has happened, what hopes or regrets do they have?</p> |



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| Speaking picture | <p><i>What do we think Mrs Cole might be like?</i></p> <p>In turn, children enter the centre of a circle, adding themselves to a single, collective still image of Mrs Cole. As each person gets into position, they speak a descriptive sentence, (as the part of Mrs Cole), e.g. <i>"I am her skin, rough as sandpaper."</i></p> |
| Conscience alley | <p><i>Should he go into Mrs Cole's house?</i></p> <p>Stop at the image of the boy outside Mrs Cole's house when he has run away. The class makes two lines, facing each other. The teacher or a child in role walks between the lines. Those in one line try to persuade him to go in whereas those on the other line try to persuade him to go home.</p> |
| Feelings graph Tell me | <p>Now read all the way through to the end and then track the boy's feelings on a graph using visual and textual evidence. Discuss using oral comprehension: preferences, questions, inferences, etc.</p> |
| Speaking objects | <p><i>What can be/has been/will be seen inside the different homes?</i></p> <p>Contrast the two main rooms from the different houses. Work in two groups in 2 circles. Children individually enter the circle and place themselves as an inanimate object, e.g. <i>chair, table</i>, etc. They enter the space, stating what object they are and what they have seen or heard or what they think/feel about life in the house. This could be done using sentence stems such as, <i>'I can see ... I can hear ... I wonder...'</i>. Then the teacher moves around each room and the objects speak directly as she passes.</p> |
| Bus stop | <p>Create a bus stop and queue. Children come into the queue, one by one, each taking a different role – Mum, the boy, Mrs Cole or one of the children. Waiting for the bus, everyone gets chatting.</p> |
| Eyewitness | <p>In pairs, one child was an eyewitness of the day when the boy first visited Mrs Cole's house. The other was not present and wants to find out more, through questioning.</p> |



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| <p>Improvisation</p> <p>Writing-in-role</p> <p>Phone call</p> | <p><i>What is the conversation between the boy and his Mum after the story ends – and what is the conversation between both Mums?</i> Small groups improvise the scene when some of Mrs Cole’s children take the boy home and meet his mum.</p> <p>Write the boy’s diary entry about what happened when he ran away and went into Mrs Cole’s.</p> <p>In role as Mum or Mrs Cole, children sit back-to-back and ring a friend to gossip or improvise a phone call between the two mums.</p> |
| <p>Performance carousel</p> | <p>The children are now in groups of 4. They create a still image that matches a scene from the story. These are presented as dream images and may be symbolic rather than realistic representations. In turn, they rise up, move and speak before sinking back down and freezing. This is followed by the next group and so on. Work out with the children the main scenes, e.g. <i>1. The pirate ship game; 2. The bath game; 3. The awful house of Mrs Cole; 4. Running away; 5. Outside Mrs Cole’s; 6. Inside Mrs Cole’s house/Feeding the rabbits; 7 The end.</i></p> <p>These scenes can be presented in turn with no break between them, as a continuous performance sequence. A sentence is spoken aloud as a caption for the scene. Use music as a background to add an emotional impact.</p> |
| <p>Evaluation</p> | <p>Children discuss and write about the story – <i>what do they think the story is about? What is the main theme – support their ideas with evidence from the text? Which Mum is kind?</i></p> |