

A TEACHER'S GUIDE TO

CATSCAPE by Mike Nicholson



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Themes/issues addressed in this book

Friendship, family, gadgets, Edinburgh, disappearance, mystery, cats, ingenuity

Book Summary

Fergus is astonished when his brand new digital watch suddenly starts going backwards, and when he crashes, quite literally, into gadget-loving Murdo, they discover a second mystery right under their noses – cats are going missing all over their neighbourhood. They join forces with Jessie Jenkins, a pensioner with a penchant for martial arts and sleuthing, and their investigation leads them to Davidson Stein, a deranged scientist with a fiendish plot to make cats all over the country crazy about Nine Lives, the cat food he's developing. Stein imprisons Murdo and Fergus, but he is foiled by Jessie's abseiling skills, and the boys' own ingenuity, and they discover that some of the respectable businessmen of Stockbridge are not quite what they seem.

BEFORE READING

Group Activities

- Discussion: what does an inventor do? Can you name any inventions?
- Discussion: what different things do you give animals to eat? Do they eat the same food as humans? Are some animals vegetarian?
- Discussion: what is a mystery? Have you ever been involved in a mystery? Did you manage to solve it?

AFTER READING (note, contains spoilers!)

Individual Work

- Write a paragraph on the thoughts and feelings you had when:
 - a) Fergus's DataBoy starts going backwards (chapter 1)
 - b) Jessie Jenkins appears at Fergus's front door (chapter 4)
 - c) Fergus sees a cat in the window of the Fish Shop (chapter 9)
 - d) Murdo leaves Jock in the van (chapter 11)
 - e) Jessie abseils into the Chamber (chapter 15)
- Fergus literally crashes into Murdo when he first meets him, but they still become friends. Think about when you first met your best friend and write three paragraphs about how it happened and what you thought of him/her at the time.
- Cats love to eat fish. What do you like to eat best? Make a list of your ten favourite foods then compare your list with your classmates' to see if there is a favourite something you all like to eat.
- Teach a Grandparent or pensioner you know how to use a computer.

Group Activities

- Class discussion: on page 141, Fergus thinks about the phrase "going with their head or their heart". What does this mean to you? Can you think of times you go with your head more than your heart and vice versa? Do you think it is best to go with your head or your heart? Do you think it depends on the situation?
- Class activity: inventing. Think about some of the inventions that Mr Crockett mentions on page 89, then become inventors yourselves – invent a gadget that would help your teacher out every day in class. First of all, think about what he/she would like, write your 'concept' down, then draw your invention on paper, creating a 'blueprint'. Finally, present your invention to your class and decide whose invention would be the most useful.

(continued overleaf)

Kelpies Series Summary

The award-winning Kelpies series is Scotland's favourite collection of children's fiction. Floris Books took over the list in 2001, republishing classic works by authors such as Kathleen Fidler, Mollie Hunter, George Mackay Brown and Allan Campbell McLean. Since then, we have continued to add to the series with a range of highly successful new Scottish novels for children including books by Gill Arbutnott, Alex Nye, Lari Don, Anne Forbes, Annemarie Allan, Mike Nicholson and Margaret Forrester.

CURRICULUM REQUIREMENTS COVERED

5-14 Curriculum (Scotland)

Years: P4-P7

Listening:

Listening in Groups
Listening for Information, including instructions and directions

Reading:

Reading for Information
Reading to Reflect
Awareness of Genre

Talking:

Talking in Groups
Talking about Texts
Talking about Experiences, including feelings and opinions

Writing:

Functional
Imaginative

National Curriculum (England, Wales, Northern Ireland)

Key Stage 2

English: Reading

Reading Strategies
Response to Texts, including analysing and evaluating
Reading for Information

National Literacy Strategy:

Text-Level Reading
Text-Level Writing
Vocabulary

- Class discussion and activity: scientists. How many different types of scientist can you name? Do you know any? What do they do? How does their research help us on a daily basis? Invite a scientist to give a talk to your class, and each think of a different question to ask him/her? Discuss your perception of science after the talk based on the answers the scientist gave you.

Vocabulary

- Check you know what the following words mean (page numbers of example words in brackets):

abrupt (9)	credibility (101)	frenetic (58)	maudlin (76)	spectator (30)
activate (29)	crucial (32)	forlorn (42)	modifications (33)	stifled (24)
agitation (35)	delinquent (127)	futile (167)	oblivious (36)	subsiding (38)
anxiety (44)	delving (36)	haphazard (37)	onslaught (135)	synchronize (34)
apparent (61)	deranged (166)	humidity (155)	pendulum (47)	tactics (103)
appreciate (24)	diagnosis (86)	incident (15)	pistons (115)	tentative (154)
bemused (78)	enable (36)	insinuating (110)	pompously (32)	trepidation (141)
brandishing (30)	escapade (100)	jauntily (46)	preliminary (31)	understatement (43)
brusquely (118)	espionage (103)	jeopardize (58)	negotiate (14)	vague (31)
chaos (38)	exasperation (25)	intriguing (18)	remnants (147)	vivid (43)
composure (117)	expedition (33)	malevolent (162)	significant (48)	voluminous (42)
conclusion (12)	fad (177)	manoeuvred (45)	snag (33)	vortex (73)