

A TEACHER'S GUIDE TO

SIX LIVES OF FANKLE THE CAT

by George MacKay Brown



www.florisbooks.co.uk

Themes/issues addressed in this book

Goodness, bravery, cats, animals, deceit, friendship, Orkney, island-life, Egypt, China, pirates, revenge, wisdom, storytelling

Book Summary

Fankle, an extraordinary talking cat, goes to live with Jenny Thomson in Inquoy, Orkney. He tells Jenny about all the lives he has lived and the amazing adventures he has had, as a pirate's cat in the Caribbean, living along the banks of the Nile in Egypt, and in the emperor's palace in China. His storytelling give Jenny some release from the drudgery of farm life, and eventually – according to Jenny's own tale at the end – Fankle saves mankind from destruction. This is a fantastic and funny read full of George MacKay Brown's island wisdom and wit.

BEFORE READING

Group Activities

- Discussion: where is Orkney? What do you know about Orkney?
- Discussion: do cats have special status in any cultures? Try to find out about this.
- Discussion: cats are thought to have nine lives. Do you think this is true? Where do you think this idea came from?

AFTER READING (warning, contains spoilers!)

Individual Work

- Write a paragraph on the thoughts and feelings you had when:
 - a) Mr Strynd threatens to drown Fankle (chapter 1)
 - b) You learn that the minister appears to be 'cherry-caking' himself to death (chapter 4)
 - c) Fankle takes his revenge on Lieutenant-Colonel Stick (chapter 7)
 - d) Norman Fell fights back (chapter 9)
- Based on Fred Kringle's composition in chapter 8, choose one chapter in the book and do your own 'picture essay' on Fankle and the happenings of that chapter. Take turns showing it to your class and explain what each element means.
- Wisdom – look through the book again and try to find three examples of Fankle's wisdom. Write a paragraph on each, and explain why you think Fankle was a wise and clever cat.

Group Activities

- Class discussion: read Jenny's story in the last chapter again, then talk about whether you think the animals were right to give mankind one last chance.
- Class discussion: read chapter 9 again. On page 84 the author writes: "Which was purer or colder that afternoon, the snow or the children's laughter, it would be difficult to say." What do you think he means by this?
- Group activity: Fankle time line. Look carefully at each of Fankle's lives as they are described in the book. During which periods in history was he alive? See if you can give approximate dates for each of his lives and give reasons for your answers. There are many clues to be found in the book, for example, when did the first Europeans sail to China? You may use the internet and your library to help you. Compare your findings with other groups. (continued overleaf)

KELPIES

Imprint 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 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.

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 project: Egypt. Fankle spent one of his lives in Ancient Egypt. Find out all you can about this period in Egyptian history. Why are the Ancient Egyptians thought to be cultured and learned? What did they build? What is a 'pharaoh'? What are hieroglyphics? How did they live? How do we know all this? You may use the internet and your library to help you. Display your project on the walls of your classroom.

Vocabulary

- Check you know what the following words mean:

abstract (146)	acquiesce (49)	barbarian (118)	barque (36)	blunderbuss (63)
brackish (73)	buccaneer (39)	civilization (57)	concourse (57)	confederacy (39)
conscript (40)	delta (113)	despoil (144)	despondency (29)	diabolical (25)
diverse (119)	eccentric (67)	ecclesiastical (87)	egregious (79)	enigma (79)
enormity (19)	errant (79)	exquisite (79)	felicitous (79)	howk (47)
hypochondriac (48)	implement (59)	inclination (140)	infallible (15)	languorously (112)
legerdemain (79)	meander (25)	melancholy (148)	mercenary (39)	modest (12)
multitudinous (106)	nocturnal (79)	ordination (87)	peedie (131)	plenteous (55)
plunder (79)	prevaricator (40)	pyre (106)	sensuous (49)	serenity (119)
substance (12)	transistor (87)	twilight (135)	uncouth (119)	vagabond (37)
voracious (57)				