

A Boy Called CHRISTMAS

MATT HAIG

with illustrations by CHRIS MOULD

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#ABoyCalledChristmas

NOTES FOR TEACHERS & LIBRARIANS

AGES 7+

Explore Themes of: ✓ Christmas ✓ Belief and Hope ✓ Magic ✓ Spreading Happiness and Joy

Subject Checklist: ✓ Literacy ✓ Creative Writing ✓ R.E ✓ P.H.S.E ✓ Art, Design and Technology ✓ Drama

These festive activities have been created to prompt discussions around the true spirit of Christmas in Matt Haig's text, looking at the true story of Father Christmas – and encouraging students to develop their reading comprehension, inference, creative writing and film-making skills!

INTRODUCING . . . NIKOLAS!

You are about to read the TRUE STORY of FATHER CHRISTMAS. If you are one of those people who believe that some things are impossible, you should put this book down right away. (Because this book is FULL of impossible things.)

Are you still reading?

Good.

Then let us begin . . .

Take a few moments to look at the new film tie-in cover of *A Boy Called Christmas*. Discuss as a class:

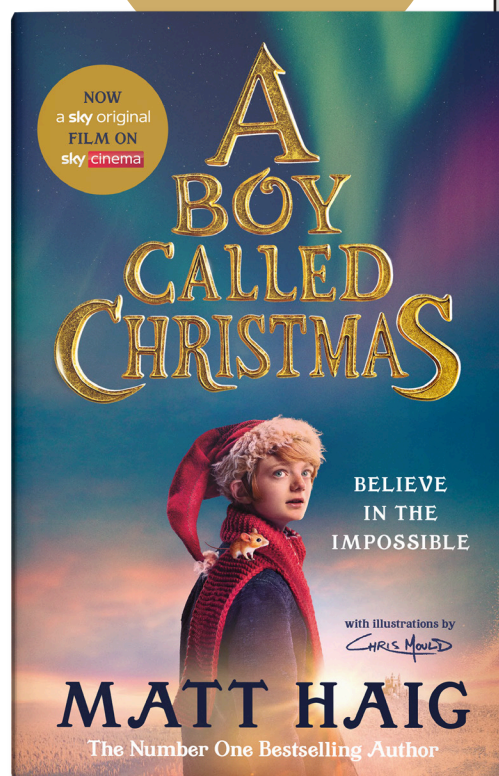
- Who is the 'Boy Called Christmas'? What other names might he have?
- What sorts of impossible things do you think might happen in the story?
- This book is now a film: how do you imagine the filmmakers brought Nikolas and his world to life?

On page 93, wise Father Topo states that:

'An impossibility is just a possibility you don't understand yet . . .'

Have a chat together about what you think this means. Can you think of a time that something impossible became possible? Why is it important to dream and have hope?

This magical story about believing in the impossible is coming to cinemas in November 2021! Imagine you are the director of the film. Consider how you would bring Matt Haig's story to life for the big screen. How can you recreate the magic of the story and the setting? Discuss your initial ideas with a friend or classmate.



MOVIE PLANNING SHEET

<p>CAST MEMBERS: Which characters do you need and who would you cast to play them?</p>	<p>WARDROBE: What initial ideas do you have for costumes and clothing?</p>	<p>STUNTS AND SPECIAL EFFECTS: How can you bring the magic of the story to life on the screen?</p>
<p>EXTRAS: Which additional characters do you need?</p>	<p>PROPS: What else do you need to create the perfect setting? For example what Christmas-themed objects or set details?</p>	<p>SOUNDS: What sort of mood and tone do you want to set? How can you use music and sound effects to do this?</p>

CHALLENGE:

When you have seen the film, write a film review!
How does it compare to the book?



WHAT DOES CHRISTMAS MEAN TO YOU?

A Woodcutter's Son

Now, Nikolas was a happy boy. Well, actually, no. He would have told you he was happy, if you asked him, and he certainly *tried* to be happy, but sometimes being happy is quite tricky. I suppose, what I am saying is that Nikolas was a boy who believed in happiness, the way he believed in elves and trolls and pixies, but he had never actually seen an elf or a troll or a pixie, and he hadn't really seen proper happiness either. At least, not for a very long time. He didn't have it that easy. Take Christmas.

This is the list of every present Nikolas had received for Christmas. In his entire life.

1. A wooden sleigh.
2. A doll carved out of a turnip.

That's it.

The truth is that Nikolas's life was hard. But he made the best of it.

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Extract taken from *A Boy Called Christmas*.

Q1. Who is Nikolas and what does he believe in? What do you believe in?

Q2. What else do we learn about Nikolas' character in the extract?

Q3. Do you agree that 'sometimes being happy is quite tricky?' Explain your ideas.



QUICK ACTIVITY!

It is interesting that as a boy, Father Christmas himself received very little for Christmas. With a partner, think about your own experiences of Christmas. Spend a few minutes discussing:

CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS AND FESTIVITIES

i.e. outfits, music, food, games

THE TRUE MEANING OF CHRISTMAS

i.e. the spirit of it; important messages

WHAT YOU WOULD LIKE FOR CHRISTMAS

i.e. things that money can and can't buy

Write a letter to Father Christmas, explaining what Christmas means to you. Include one paragraph for each of the points above. Start your letter using whichever name for Nikolas you prefer; a few of them are given below. Can you think of any more?

Dear Father Christmas

Dear Santa Claus

Dear Santa



A CHRISTMAS MIRACLE

THE DAILY SNOW!

It's time to create your own front-page spread for every elf's favourite newspaper the *Daily Snow*!



- First of all, let's plan your main article! This will be about a 'Christmas Miracle' in which the impossible becomes possible at Christmas! Perhaps there is a sighting of a magical occurrence or a creature? Maybe Father Christmas is somehow involved? There are no limits to what may happen!
- Discuss and note down ideas for these questions to help you write your article:
 - What happened? Who was there?
 - Where did it happen and when?
 - Why was it a 'miracle'?
 - How did the impossible become possible?
- Sketch a picture to include in your article, then read out some of your Daily Snows together!
- Consider: how could you bring your Christmas Miracle to life on the big screen? Create a storyboard to show how you might film each part of your story.



THIS SEASON'S LATEST CLOGS

PRICE
2
CHOCOLATE
COINS



The Daily Snow

EVERY ELF'S FAVOURITE NEWSPAPER



CREATE A CHRISTMAS CARD!

- Use the text and all the work you have done to inspire and design an awesome Christmas card! You could sketch some characters from *A Boy Called Christmas* or make it more traditional; the choice is yours.
- Once you have designed and coloured in the front and back of your card, write the inside of it choosing your words carefully. Then, show kindness by giving it to your chosen friend or family member and make them smile this Christmas.

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