

Reading comprehension

The Birthday Duck by Michael Morpurgo

Read the extracts from *The Birthday Duck* by Michael Morpurgo and then answer the questions that follow.

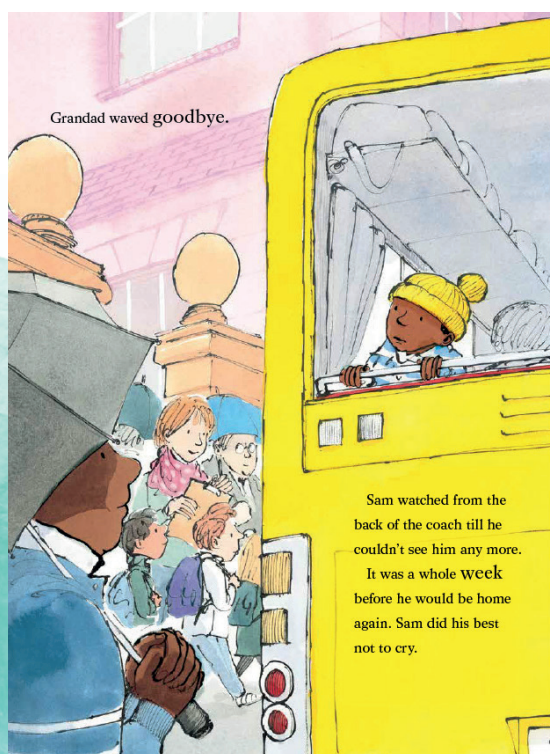
Retrieval

Grandad waved goodbye.

Sam watched from the back of the coach till he couldn't see him anymore. It was a whole week before he would be home again. Sam did his best not to cry.

It was a long way to Devon.

Motorways turned into roads, roads turned into lanes, narrow lanes with grass growing down the middle.



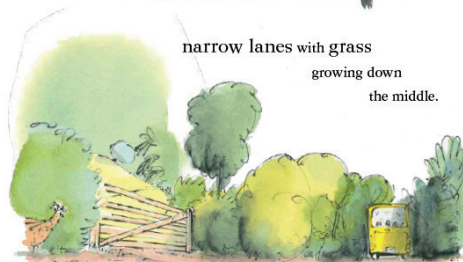
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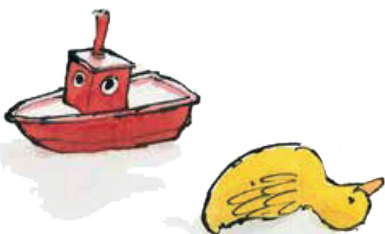
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2. How long was Sam going away for?

3. Where was Sam going on the coach?

4. What turned into roads?

5. What was growing down the middle of the narrow lanes?



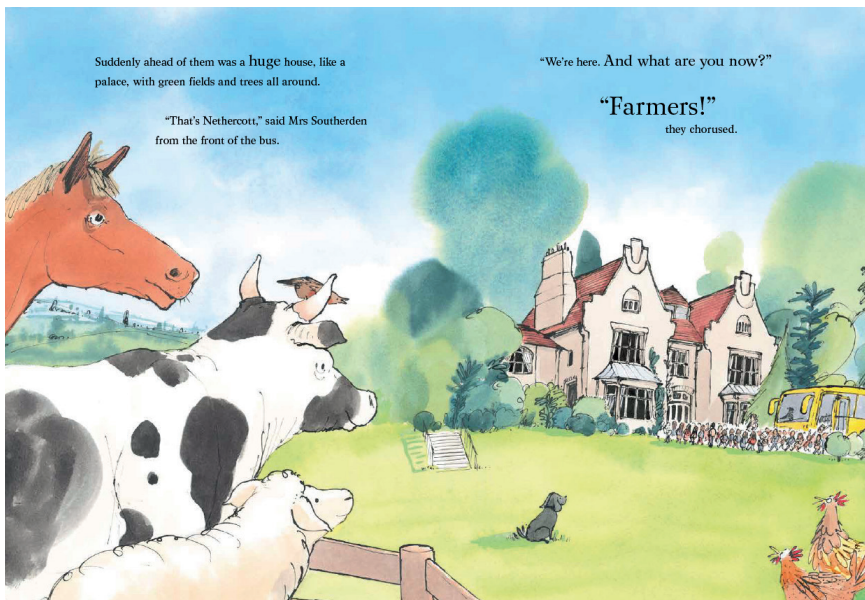
Vocabulary

Suddenly ahead of them was a huge house, like a palace, with green fields and trees all around.

“That’s Nethercott,” said Mrs Southerden from the front of the bus. “We’re here. And what are you now?”

“Farmers!” they chorused.

And so they were. Up with the dawn and out to work. Milking cows, feeding horses and pigs and calves. And the sheep had to be fed too. All before breakfast.



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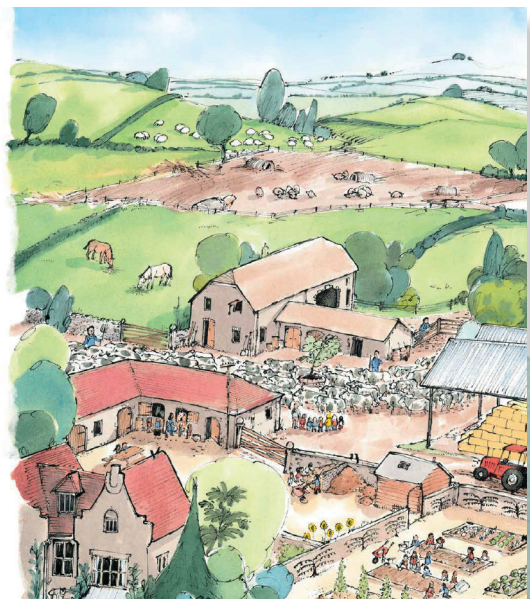
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Milking cows,
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1. *Sam went on a **coach**.*

Circle the word that is used instead of **coach**.

car

bus

tractor

taxi

2. *'Farmers!' they **chorused**.*

What does the word **chorused** mean? Tick one.

They sang.

They all spoke together.

They shouted.

They all sat down.

3. *Up with the **dawn** and out to work.*

What time of the day is **dawn**?



Inference

Then there were sheds to muck out, hens and ducks and geese to let out, eggs to collect. There was even a bull, but you weren't allowed in his field, just in case.

Sam didn't have time to miss Grandad.

They worked all afternoon too and even then it wasn't finished. In the evening the cows had to be milked again – and do cows make a mess!

The lambing sheep were brought into the barns for the night, the pigs fed, the horses groomed and the hens and ducks and geese shut up in case the fox came skulking up the lane.

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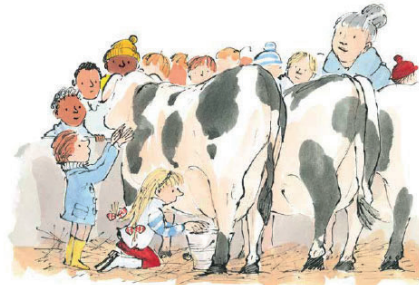
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1. *The children were not allowed in the field with the bull.*

What might happen if they entered the field?

2. *Sam didn't have time to miss Grandad.*

Why do you think he didn't have time?

3. ... *the cows had to be milked **again** ...*

What does the word **again** tell us?

4. Do you think it is hard working on a farm? Circle one answer.

Yes No

Explain why you think this using information from the story.

Sequencing

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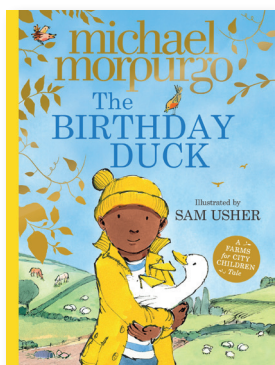
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1. List three things that were done in the morning and three that were done in the evening.

Things done in the morning	Things done in the evening
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.





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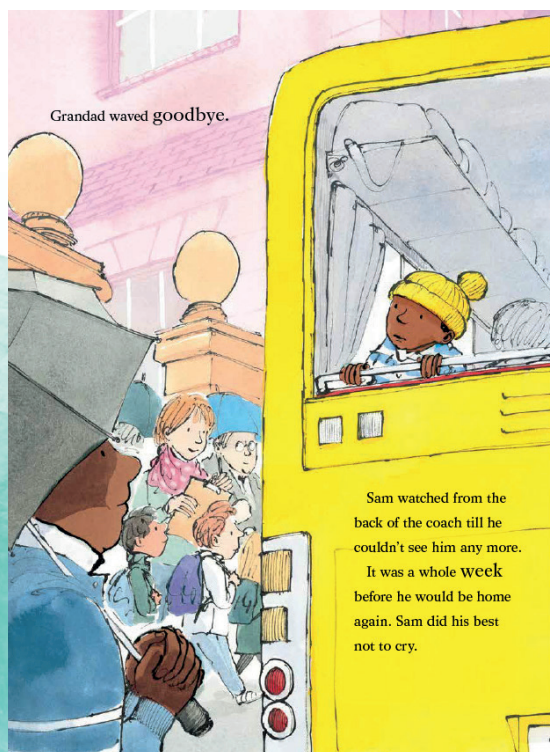
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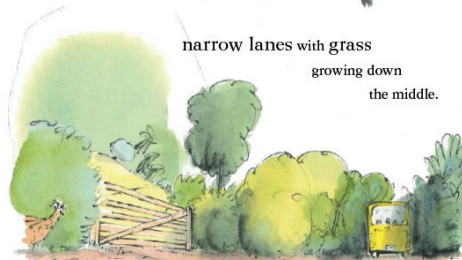
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1. Where was Sam as he watched his granddad?

At the back of the coach.

2. How long was Sam going away for?

A (whole) week.

3. Where was Sam going on the coach?

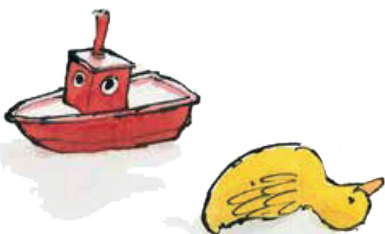
To Devon.

4. What turned into roads?

Motorways.

5. What was growing down the middle of the narrow lanes?

Grass.



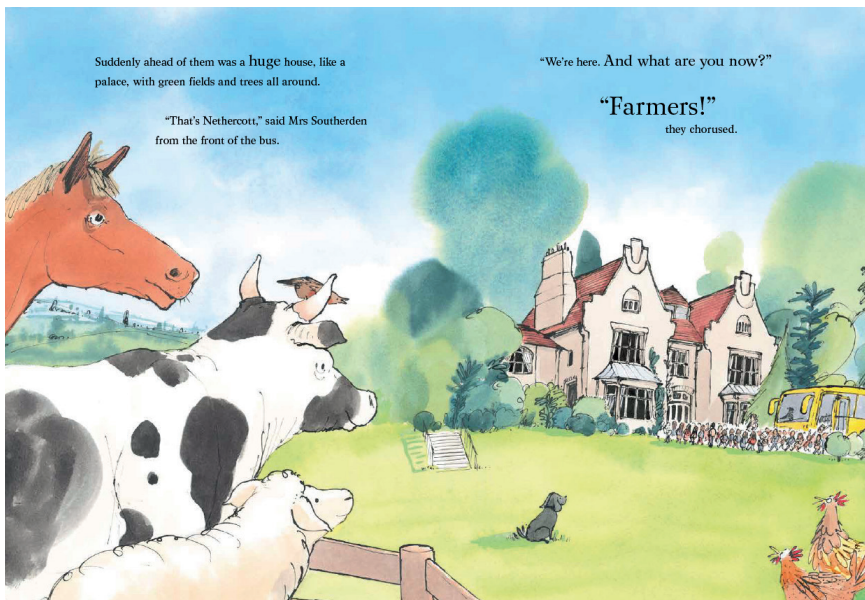
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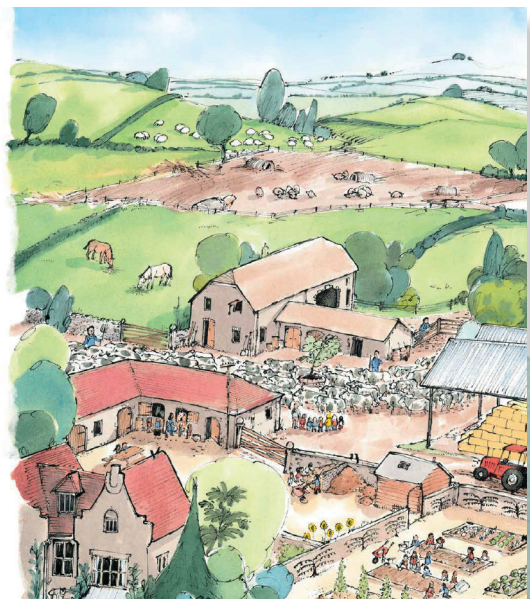
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They sang.

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They all sat down.

3. Up with the **dawn** and out to work.

What time of the day is dawn?

(First thing) in the morning when you first get up.

As the sun rises.



Inference

Then there were sheds to muck out, hens and ducks and geese to let out, eggs to collect. There was even a bull, but you weren't allowed in his field, just in case.

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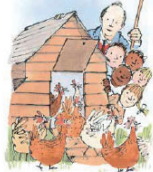
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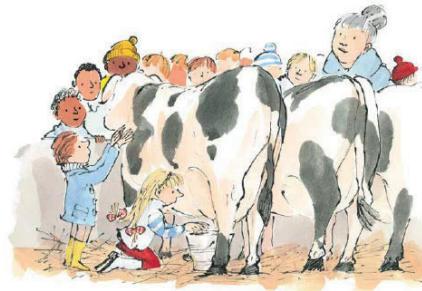
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1. *The children were not allowed in the field with the bull.*

What might happen if they entered the field?

It would be dangerous / the bull might chase (or charge) them.

2. *Sam didn't have time to miss Grandad.*

Why do you think he didn't have time?

He was so busy on the farm (mucking out, feeding animals, helping to milk cows, etc)

3. *... the cows had to be milked **again** ...*

What does the word **again** tell us?

That they had already been milked that day (in the morning).

4. Do you think it is hard working on a farm? Circle one answer.

Yes

No

Explain why you think this using information from the story.

Answers will vary but children must refer back to the story to explain their answer.

Possible answers might include:

- Yes – I think it is hard work because the children were working ALL day, including before breakfast and in the evening.
- Yes – because mucking out and feeding animals is hard work. You have to use a shovel and carry the muck away and the food bags are heavy.
- Yes – as my grandad is a farmer and he works really hard. I help him sometimes and do some of the jobs from the story
- No – I would love to do those jobs, especially feeding the animals. It sounds like fun!

Sequencing

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1. List three things that were done in the morning and three that were done in the evening.

Things done in the morning	Things done in the evening
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Muck out sheds2. Let out hens, ducks and geese3. Collect eggs <p>Other answers could also include: watch the bull; and from earlier in the story, milk cows, feed horses, pigs, calves and sheep (animals), eat breakfast.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Help milk the cows2. Bring the (lambing) sheep into the barns (for the night).3. Feed pigs <p>Other answers could also include: groomed (brushed) the horses, put hens, ducks and geese in sheds (shut them away).</p>



Prediction

Later in the story, Sam visits a market. He sees a lovely snowy white duck.

1. What do you think Sam might do next?



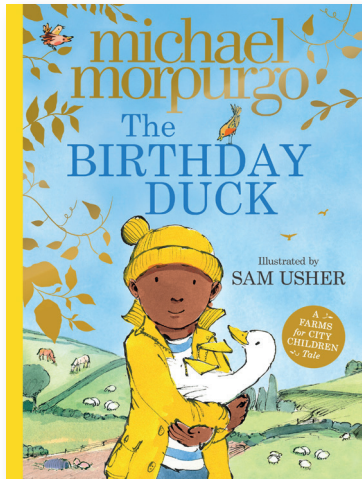
Answers should be plausible and refer to ideas in the extracts or from the title. For example:

- It might be Sam's birthday so he could buy the duck and take it home (back to Grandad).
- He might get the farmer to buy it so it can go back to the farm and live with the other hens and ducks and geese.

KS1 – Creative topic & comprehension pack

The Birthday Duck

by Michael Morpurgo



From Sir Michael Morpurgo comes a classic story of one small boy, and one very lucky duck...

Sam is a city boy through and through – and isn't looking forward to his school trip to Nethercott Farm at all. But busy days of farm work, animals and learning all about nature weave their magic – and when Sam finds a duck about to be dinner, he is determined to save him. But how?

The Birthday Duck is a warm and magical story by Michael Morpurgo and is gloriously brought to life by the incredible illustrative talent of Sam Usher. It is set on the real life Nethercott Farm – part of the Farms for City Children charity that offers urban children from all over the country the chance to live and work together in the English countryside.

This resource includes a creative topic map with engaging ideas for using the book as the focus for work across the curriculum, and a set of comprehension questions.

The topic map is designed to be printed out A3 so there's room for extra notes during a planning session.

The comprehension sheets use extracts from the book (pages 3 – 9 and 11 – 12) with each extract followed by questions focusing on a different reading domain. The questions develop pupils' comprehension skills of retrieval, vocabulary, inference, sequencing and prediction.

What's included

- A topic map
- PowerPoint slides with example comprehension questions focusing on: retrieval, vocabulary, inference and sequencing.
- Pupil worksheets with comprehension questions focusing on: retrieval, vocabulary, inference, sequencing and prediction.

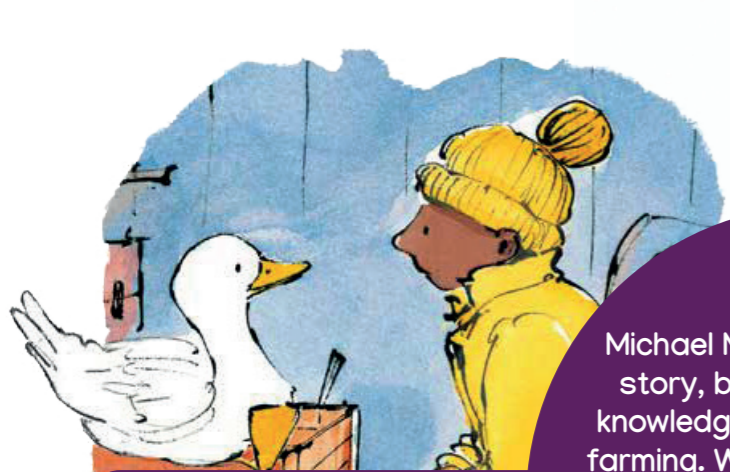
How to use the resource

The comprehension questions could be used to create a reading lesson for your pupils. Alternatively, you may wish to read the extracts and complete the questions for each content domain in shorter whole-class or guided reading sessions, focusing on the different skills needed when answering comprehension questions.

For each reading domain, an example question is provided on the PowerPoint. This can be used to teach and model comprehension skills. Pupils can then answer the questions provided on the pupil worksheets, either independently or as part of whole-class or guided work, discussing each question in turn.

The final section focuses on prediction. This question is displayed on the PowerPoint and is also on the pupil worksheets.





2. Investigate and explore

Michael Morpurgo is writing a story, but it draws on deep knowledge about the reality of farming. What kind of crops are grown on UK farms? How many types of livestock are kept, and for what purpose? Find out about city farms. Is there a farm near you that you could visit?

Look at the picture of Sam mucking out the shed. We can see the smell! How would you describe it? Design and run an investigation to test how well people can identify aromas (*coffee, bananas, vinegar, roses...*) Present your results as graphs and charts, and summarise what you've learned. Collect words to describe the aromas you investigated. Can you paint each smell?

Find out about the Farms for City Children charity set up by Michael Morpurgo and his wife Clare (farmsforcitychildren.org). Tell your school about it during an assembly. Why does the charity think city children should experience life on a farm? Why is it important for everyone to know how food is being produced?

3. Create and share

Talk about the way that words and pictures are presented in this book. How much text is on each page? Why do some spreads only have one illustration, while others have more? How does the book keep us interested? Use a storyboard to help you plan a picturebook about your daily life. You don't need to have a lot of text, but it will need careful thought to make it flow. Include a twist in your story, like Grandad's birthday present!



1. Discuss and reflect

Share memories of school visits. Where did you go? How did you feel when you set off? What happened, and what did you learn? Which aspects of Sam's story remind you of your own experiences?

Why did Sam buy Francis Drake and take him home? Would you have done the same thing? Was Grandad right to release Francis?

Look closely at the endpapers. What can you see? How do these pictures make you feel? Where do you think the artist was standing when he drew the cityscape? Is the rural scene drawn from a similar perspective? Which environment do you prefer, and why – the city or the countryside?

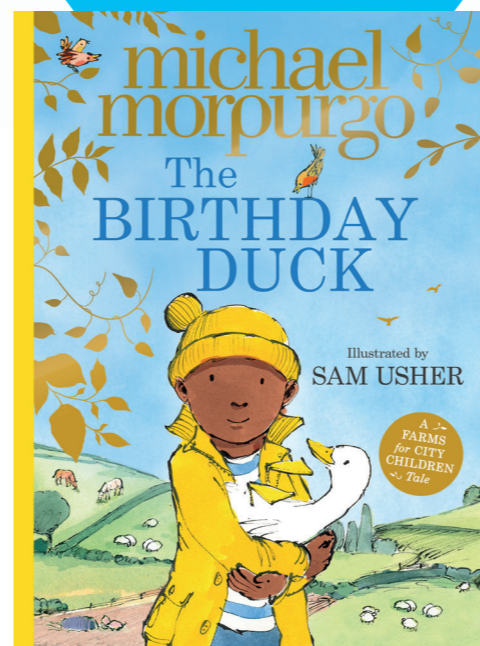
Create a timeline for a day at Nethercott, showing the tasks that must be done. Why do you think Sam enjoys the work? Add pictures to your timeline and use it to help you write an imaginary account of a day spent working on a farm. Have you ever tried these tasks? How do they compare with the work you do? Create a timeline for your day at school.



Does anyone in your school have first-hand experience of farm animals? Which farm animals do they like best, and why? Create a questionnaire to discover knowledge and opinions about the subject, then analyse and report on your results. Explore non-fiction books about farm animals. Can you design and make a class reference book? How will you include the learning from your survey?

5. Across the curriculum

Look at the picture of the duckpond, then paint your own pond scene with inks or watercolours. Draw accurate pictures of ducks using photos, reference books and – if you're able to visit a pond or river – on-the-spot sketches. Cut your ducks out and stick them on your pond. Write factual reports about ducks to display beside your artwork.



Compare Sam Usher's picture of the field of stones with photos of Antony Gormley's Field sculptures. Collect stones (maybe you could plant something in the ground you clear?) and arrange them in a way that pleases you, then photograph them from an angle that reminds you of the illustration. Or you could model stone-shaped people from clay and arrange them, Field-style. Organise a mini exhibition to share your work.

4. Writing challenges

"Sam worked like a Trojan, ate like a king and slept like a log..." Who were the Trojans? What does this phrase mean? How do similes help bring stories to life? How many other ways can you find to finish these sentences? Write more sentences about the things Sam did in this book, and add similes to bring them into sharper focus.

Imagine you're Sam. Today, you're on a school visit to the zoo. Which animal will you adopt this time? How will you smuggle it past Grandpa? How will you care for it? How will this animal respond? How – and why – will you return it to its proper home? Tell the story...

What was Francis thinking when he met Sam? How did he feel inside the backpack? Record your ideas on sticky notes and add them to the pictures. How would Francis tell this story? Write and perform a monologue 'in role', to give your audience a duck's eye view!

