

# THE SILVER ARROW

LEV GROSSMAN

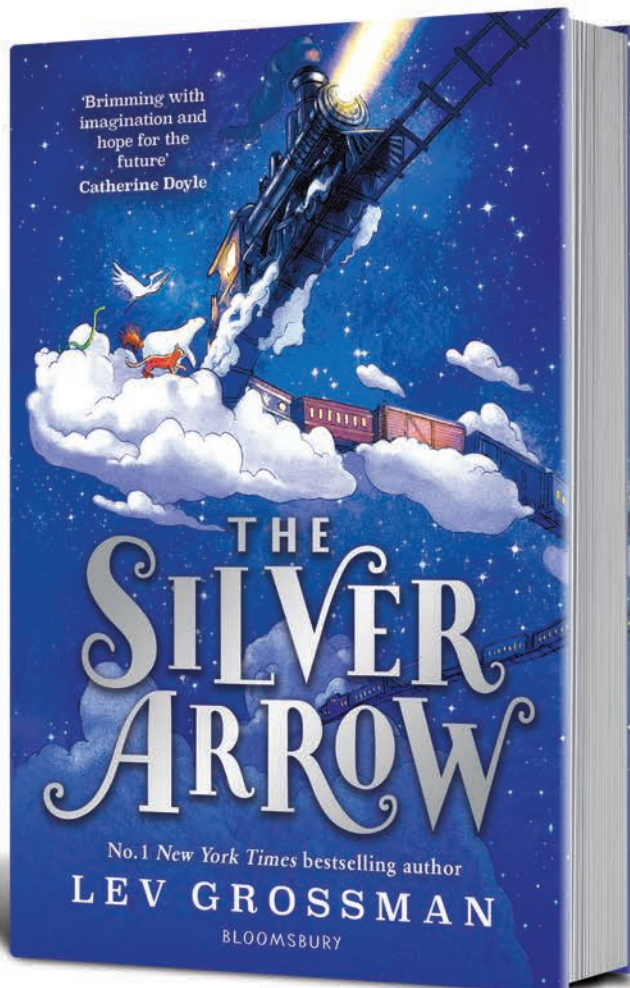
Educational resource pack



Dear reader,

This educational resource pack is based on Lev Grossman's *The Silver Arrow* and is an ideal learning resource for children in Key Stage 2. It includes sneak peeks from the text, with corresponding reflection questions and activities to keep children both engaged and excited to discuss this book. Featuring themes of 'Adventure Writing', 'Creating Animal Characters', 'Endangered Species' and 'Magic', this pack is perfect for use in the classroom or for online learning.

We hope you enjoy your journey aboard the Silver Arrow and working your way through this pack.



## ABOUT THE BOOK

Kate wasn't expecting much when she wrote to her wealthy estranged uncle to ask for a birthday present. Certainly she wasn't expecting a colossal steam train called the Silver Arrow to arrive on her doorstep.

Despite parental misgivings, curiosity overwhelms Kate and her brother Tom and they climb aboard – only for the train's engine to roar into life. Soon they reach a train station where an assortment of strange and beautiful creatures are waiting with tickets in their mouths, and Kate and Tom begin to understand that their job will be to see them safely home – if they can.

Lev Grossman's first children's book is a journey you'll never forget: a rip-roaring adventure from desert plains to snow-covered mountains and everything in between. Packed with exciting creatures from the indignant porcupine to the lost polar bear and the adorable baby pangolin, *The Silver Arrow* is a classic story about saving our endangered animals and the places they live.







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## CONTENTS

- **EXTRACT 1: Life is an Adventure (taken from Chapter One – Uncle Herbert is a Bad Person)**  
*Objectives:* Use an extract and illustration to analyse a character's feelings; write a letter to a relative asking for an adventure.  
*Subjects:* Literacy, RSHE, Citizenship
- **EXTRACT 2: Creating Animal Characters (taken from Chapter Six – Click-bing!)**  
*Objectives:* Discuss how the writer brings animal characters to life; create an Animal Travelcard for your own character.  
*Subjects:* Literacy, Art, Design and Technology, Drama, RSHE, Citizenship
- **EXTRACT 3: Endangered Species (taken from Chapter Twenty – Chins)**  
*Objectives:* Consider the negative impact of human beings upon animals and their habitats; identify how to protect endangered species.  
*Subjects:* Literacy, Geography, RSHE, Citizenship
- **EXTRACT 4: A Magical Journey (taken from Chapter Twenty-One – What Kate Could Do)**  
*Objectives:* Understand the power of magic in storytelling; describe your own magical journey on a train.  
*Subjects:* Literacy, RSHE, Citizenship



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## EXTRACT 1:

### LIFE IS AN ADVENTURE (taken from pages 3 – 4)

Kate had plenty of time for Kate, though. Sometimes it seemed like too much. She rode her bike, and played video games, and did her homework, and played with her friends, and once in a while she even played with Tom. She wasn't one of the kids in her class who had a special talent – like drawing, or juggling four beanbags at once, or identifying rare mushrooms and telling the difference between the ones you could eat and the ones that would kill you – though she often wished she was. She read a lot; she had to be told, with tiresome frequency, to close her book during dinner. Her parents sent her to piano lessons and tennis lessons. (They sent Tom to cello lessons and Judo lessons.)

But some days, as she pounded away at the mahogany upright in the living room or punished the garage door with her forehands and backhands, Kate found herself feeling restless. Impatient. What was the point? She was young enough that all she had to do was kid things, but she was also getting old enough that she wanted to do more than play games and pretend. She felt ready for something more exciting. More real. Something that actually mattered.



### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- How is Kate feeling in this extract? Underline key words the writer has used to express her emotions.
- What do you see in the illustration? What does this tell us about Kate?
- Do you ever feel 'restless' or 'impatient' with 'kid things'? Give examples and explain your ideas.
- What do you think the writer means by saying Kate wants something 'real' and 'that actually mattered'?
- What sorts of things are important and matter to you? Give examples.



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*Dear Uncle Herbert –*

*You've never met me but I'm your niece Kate, and since it is my birthday tomorrow and you are super rich do you think you could please send me a present?*

*Warmly,*

*Kate*

## ACTIVITY: A PERSONAL TRUTH

- Read over the letter that Kate sends her Uncle Herbert again. Kate describes this letter as containing 'her personal truth'. Discuss as a class: is this a phrase you've heard before? What does it mean? Why does Kate send this letter to Uncle Herbert if she has never met him? Do you think she gets the 'present' she expects?
- Now write your own letter to a relative or person you've not met before asking them for a present that will take you on an adventure. Take a few minutes to discuss with a partner what this present and adventure might be. Remember, just like the Silver Arrow, this won't be an ordinary present that can be bought in a shop!
- Plan and write your letter using the ideas below to help you:
  - Why you are writing to this person i.e. Who are they? What do you/don't you know about them? (You can make this up!)
  - What is your 'personal truth'? i.e. How are you feeling? What 'kid things' are you bored of?
  - What kind of present and adventure are you hoping for? i.e. Where will this present take you? What will it allow you to do?
- Take your letter home and show it to a family member or friend. Perhaps you can use this to plan your own adventure together soon!





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## EXTRACT 2:

### CREATING ANIMAL CHARACTERS (*Taken from pages 45 – 46*)

'Hi,' Kate said.

'Been a long time since a train came through here,' the fox said.

'Very long,' said the badger, transferring its ticket to its paws.

Kate thought of saying *Is that so?* or *How about that!* but rejected both ideas as fatally uncool.

'How long?' Tom said.

'About thirty years,' the badger said. 'Where have you been? You're very late.'

'Wait – just – how can you be talking?!' Kate said.

'Oh, I know,' the fox said. 'We do talk sometimes, just not around humans. Frankly, we don't meet a lot of humans who are worth talking to. No offence.'

Kate supposed that was fair.

'But you haven't been standing here waiting this whole time, have you?' she said. 'Like, the whole thirty years?'

'Oh, no. Of course not. We just look in here once in a while to check. I mean, we're animals, it's not like we have jobs.'

'I guess not.'



### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- What do you like about the illustration of the animals waiting for the train?
- How does the writer bring these characters to life in the extract? Give examples.
- Which is your favourite animal character in the story and why?
- How does the writer create humour with his animal characters? Can you give examples?
- Which other animal characters do you like from other books and stories you have read?



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## ACTIVITY: ANIMAL TRAVELCARD

- Using the template on the next page, create your own animal character and design a travelcard for them so that they can get the train without having to buy a ticket every time!
- First of all, try to choose a wild animal that you don't see every day. Think back to the characters in *The Silver Arrow* to give you some ideas, or you can do some research to help you decide. Then, think about the personality and characteristics your animal will possess. Which animals should they avoid sharing a carriage with? What will be their destination? E.g. the Arctic? The Amazon? Give them a name, then sketch their photo giving them an item or two of clothing if you like!
- Once everyone has created their cards, line up outside the classroom. Imagine that you are waiting for a train and act out your animal character holding on to your travelcard. When your teacher – who is now the conductor – gives the signal, you are going to pretend the classroom is the train that has just arrived. Your teacher will check your travelcard so that you can come on board!

# ANIMAL TRAVEL CARD

Name:

Age:

Animal:

Personality:

Avoid carriages with:

Destination:

Photo







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## EXTRACT 3:

### ENDANGERED SPECIES (*Taken from page 193*)

'They're not just an invasive species; they're the original invasive species that created all the other ones. We get mad at starlings, but if you think about it, it's not really their fault. They never asked to be released in North America. They don't care about Shakespeare. Without those hairless chinny apes, there might not be any invasive species at all.

'And that's just the beginning. They create all kinds of other problems, too. Building everywhere, cutting down trees, damming rivers, changing the atmosphere, heating up the oceans – I mean, forget about squirrels; those apes are making a dozen species extinct *every single day*. They're making pangolins extinct by catching them and grinding them up into medicine. And the medicine doesn't even work!'

'I get it.' Kate sat down in an armchair glumly. 'You're talking about humans.'

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- What does the phrase 'original invasive species' mean? What have they done? Why are they to blame?
- What does it mean if an animal is 'endangered'? What causes can you find in the extract?
- How many examples of endangered creatures can you remember from the text?
- What is Kate and Tom's job on the Silver Arrow? How are they supposed to help the animals?
- What can you do to try and protect animals where you live? What about endangered species across the world?





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## ACTIVITY: PROTECTING ANIMALS AND THEIR HABITATS

- As a class, discuss what is meant by the term 'human impact' and how this is an important issue in the text. Consider how humans have damaged and even destroyed the environment and the natural habitat of many animals. Why is this such a big problem?
- Using the text and the animal characters below, fill in the table exploring the negative impact that humans have had on animals and their habitats. Can you think of any other animals mentioned in the text that are affected? What about other habitats that you have learned or read about elsewhere? Try to fill in your table with as much detail as possible.
- When completed, go through these ideas as a class and add in any points you might have missed. Discuss together something small that you can do to raise awareness and help to protect animals.

### Animals you could consider from the text:

**FISHING CAT** from a **MANGROVE FOREST**

**PORCUPINE** from the **NORTH AMERICAN WOODS**

**ROSEATE TERN** from **BHUTAN**

**PANGOLIN** found in **TROPICAL FORESTS** and **DRY WOODLAND**

**MAMBA** from **MOZAMBIQUE**

**POLAR BEAR** from **THE NORTH POLE**



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Human Impact	What are the <b>negative effects</b> of this on animals and their habitats? <b>Who</b> is affected?	What can <b>be done to protect</b> animals and their habitats?
Deforestation		
Plastics and other non-biodegradable goods		
Poaching		
Moving animals out of their natural habitat		
Climate Change		





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## EXTRACT 4:

### A MAGICAL JOURNEY (Taken from pages 208 – 209)

The fields outside disappeared: The *Silver Arrow* had cleared the cliff. Now there was nothing but empty blue sky in the windows, and the train was still accelerating. Then it started tilting back, back and back and back as the track under it bent up toward the sky, back and further back till every nerve in Kate's body was screaming, *Stop! Stop! For the love of all that is good and reasonable, stop!*

But rockets don't come with brakes. These didn't even have an OFF button. One of the wooden bars gave way, and Kate was pelted with a shelf's worth of books. They kept going up and up, blasting up through the clouds, and then Kate could feel something even crazier happening: The track kept curving back past the vertical, back in the direction of upside-down – but the rockets were driving them so hard that centrifugal force kept them stuck to the track. The track kept curving till it did a complete roller-coaster loop, and for one delirious, transcendent moment they were completely upside down, with Kate's head pointed at the earth, and she went weightless, and in that moment all her fear suddenly evaporated into nothing and she laughed out loud with the awesomeness of it all.



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- How does the writer create suspense and tension in this extract?
- What is so special and unusual about the Silver Arrow?
- What other examples of magic are there in the story? Which one is your favourite and why?
- What do Kate and Tom learn on their magical journey?
- Why will this be an unforgettable adventure for them? Why is this only the beginning?



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## ACTIVITY: MY MAGICAL TRIP

- On pages 255–256, Kate is sad because her magical journey on the Silver Arrow has come to an end. However, Uncle Herbert tells her:  
*‘Even when you’re home, even when you’re standing still, going nowhere, you’re still travelling in time. For every second that goes by you’re travelling one second into the future. Every second of every day you’re going somewhere you’ve never been before. The adventure never ends!’*
- Discuss with a partner what Uncle Herbert means by this and why this is a positive note for the story to end on.
- You are now going to experience your own magical trip using your imagination! Imagine that, just like Kate, when you look out the window there is a magical train waiting to take you on an amazing journey. Write a description of your trip and who you meet along the way.
- Don’t forget to plan:
  - The name of your train and any other people or animals travelling with you
  - Where you are travelling to and your magical experiences along the way
  - Sensory and descriptive language you will use
  - Moments of suspense and tension when the train seems to be out of control
  - How you arrive safely back home
- Swap your story with a partner and read in silence for a few minutes. See how, even though you are sitting still, you are transported somewhere you’ve never been before through the power of your imagination! Even after you finish your lessons on *The Silver Arrow*, don’t forget, **‘The adventure never ends!’**





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## You've now reached the end of this resource pack for *The Silver Arrow*!

We hope these notes have proved to be a useful and fun introduction to the themes and ideas found within this book.

We would love to see examples of any work created as a result of this pack, so please do email them over to us on:

[childrensmarketing@bloomsbury.com](mailto:childrensmarketing@bloomsbury.com)

or share on Twitter tagging us at

[@BloomsburySyd](https://twitter.com/BloomsburySyd) [@leverus](https://twitter.com/leverus)

