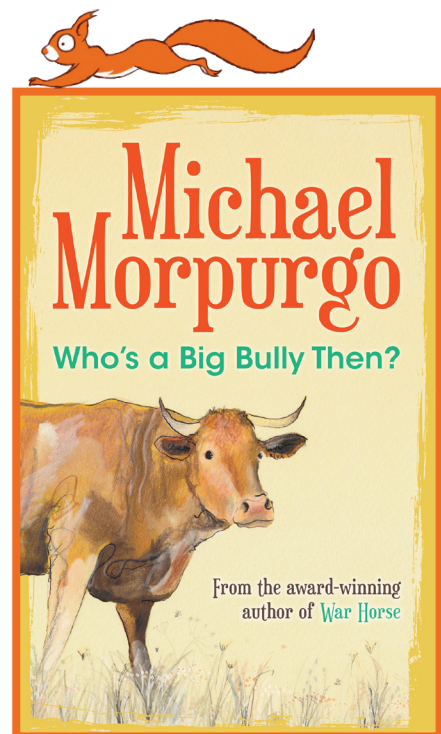


Barrington Stoke

CLASSROOM RESOURCES



MICHAEL MORPURGO

Who's a Big Bully Then?

- PART 1** Ideas for exploring the text
- PART 2** About Michael Morpurgo
- PART 3** Extension activities & other suggested books



PART 1 IDEAS FOR EXPLORING THE TEXT

Read and enjoy Michael Morpurgo's humorous **Who's a Big Bully Then?** a brilliant quick read accessible to mixed ability groups.

'We've got this bull...'

Darren Bishop is a bully, at whose hands the unnamed narrator suffers name-calling, shoving and other torments. When the narrator finally has a chance to get his own back, he grabs it with both hands. He lives on a farm and has known the old, gentle bull all of his life. But Darren Bishop is not to know that Olly isn't dangerous, and so the narrator sets up a dare. But when he gets home that night, his father has some surprising news...

Less dense and complex than Michael Morpurgo's longer novels, **Who's a Big Bully Then?** offers an ideal opportunity for mixed ability groups to explore the ways in which this beloved author weaves themes of life's challenges through a humorous tale of the countryside.

I. WHO AM I?

The narrator of a book is the person who tells the story.

The two most common types of narrator are:

- First-person narrators. These are usually the main character within the story. They tell the story from their own point-of-view and they can only 'see' inside their own heads. They use the words 'I' and 'me' to refer to themselves, e.g. 'It all started when I got up on Sunday morning.'
- Third-person narrators. It can be harder to say 'who' these narrators are! They tell the story from a different point-of-view to the point-of-view of the characters and they can 'see' inside the heads of many characters. They call the characters 'he', 'she', and so on, e.g. 'It all started when Catherine and John got up on Sunday morning.'



Read the first page of *Who's a Big Bully Then?*

Does *Who's a Big Bully Then?* have a first-person narrator, or a third-person narrator? How do you know?

Who is the narrator?

2. THE BIGGEST HEAD IN THE WHOLE WORLD

In **Chapter 1** we find out that Darren Bishop is the school bully. When there is a first-person narrator in a book, the book is told from the narrator's point-of-view – they tell us things as they see them. The narrator of *Who's a Big Bully Then?* says:

“Darren Bishop is big, very big. He is big everywhere – big neck, big arms, big head. He has the biggest head in the whole school, in the whole world probably, and I hate him. I hate him like poison.”

Which of these statements to the group agree with:

- The way the narrator describes Darren Bishop is very realistic. It is the sort of thing a stranger would say about Darren Bishop.

OR

- The way the narrator describes Darren Bishop is a bit exaggerated (extra bad). It is the sort of thing someone would say about Darren Bishop if that person disliked him.

Does the group think that Darren Bishop really has the biggest head in the whole world?

3. SPEEDY SIMILES

On Sports Day, the narrator beats Darren Bishop in a race. The narrator is good at running. His dad says he can ‘go like a whippet’. When we make an image by saying that something is like something else, we are using a simile. Can you make up some similes with the starters below?

- o George could leap like a _____
- o The swimmers were like a team of _____
- o The javelin flew through the air like a _____

Look for a simile on **P11** and another on **P19**.



4. FANTASTIC WRITING ABOUT FEELINGS

Good authors like Michael Morpurgo help their readers to feel like they are involved in the action of the story. On **P19** the narrator says:

“I tried to make out I wasn’t scared. But I was. I was scared rigid. I felt a warm tingle of fear creeping up the back of my neck.”

On a large piece of paper or on the board, draw lots of spider diagrams. Write different feelings inside the circles at the centre of the spiders. Now brainstorm the way those feelings can affect our bodies and link these to the feelings with the spider-leg lines. For example, when we are nervous our hands may feel sweaty and our hearts may seem to beat louder, or faster. We may even feel like we need to run to the loo!

5. A SHOWDOWN

Read **Chapter 4** together. Things change very much between the characters in this chapter. Try dramatising events from **P29** onwards to help the class track the changes in the characters. How would Darren’s body language change? How could an actor (or two actors) play Olly the bull?

6. A TWIST IN THE TALE

What do the class think of the ending of **Who’s a Big Bully Then?**

A twist in the tale is when something turns out to be very different from the way it has been presented so far. In this case, it turns out that the bull in the field is not Olly – it is Mr Weston’s mean, vicious bull Samson.

Does the class understand why the narrator is so shaken when he finds out about the bull-swap? What might have happened to him?

Does the class know of any other stories – in books or on film – with twists in the tale?



PART 2 ABOUT MICHAEL MORPURGO



Michael Morpurgo went to school in London, Sussex and Canterbury and then went to University in London. He has written over 100 books and has been named the UK Children's Laureate. This is an important honour for a writer who has made a huge difference to books for children and young people.

Michael Morpurgo often writes about animals, and also about farm life. Perhaps his most famous novel is *War Horse*, which was made into a famous stage play in the West End of London, and then a feature film by Steven Spielberg. *War Horse* is about a farm horse called Joey who is called up to fight in the First World War. Joey's owner, Albert, follows him to France to try to get him back.

Michael Morpurgo knows all about farm life, because he lives on a farm in Devon. He and his wife set up a charity called '**Farms for City Children**'. Many thousands of children from big cities have enjoyed a week of 'muck and magic' on a farm thanks to the charity.



You can read more about Michael Morpurgo on his own website:
WWW.MICHAELMORPURGO.CO.UK



PART 3 OTHER ACTIVITIES

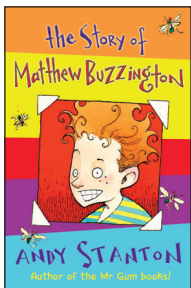
BATTLING THE BULLIES

Brainstorm ideas for ways that schools can tackle bullies and teasing. Think about:

- Things students can do – like standing up for each other
- Things teachers can do – like making special times when students can bring up issues
- Things the school as a whole can do – for example, having a ‘buddy’ system where younger students have an older student to turn to with any problems

Make anti-bullying posters to put up around school.

MORE GREAT SHORT READS ON THE SAME THEMES...



Read Andy Stanton's **The Story of Matthew Buzzington**, which combines comedy and elements of fantasy with a message about bullying.

