A fair beginning

Ages 8-11 | Shared reading | Belonging and unfair assumptions

Prepare

Use the two included story extracts and the pupil sheet. Offer the response method each learner prefers. Preview the story and identify your setting’s trusted-adult reporting route.

0-3 minutes: invite

Explain that the group will explore a fictional character’s new beginning. Learners can listen, look, draw, communicate in their usual way or pass.

3-9 minutes: read

Read “The Forgotten Skies” and “Meet Rufus”. Explain that these are two selected sections with a section between them in the full book. Pause for observations.

9-14 minutes: discuss

What do we learn about Rufus from the text? Which detail helps us know him as an individual? Accept different interpretations supported by a detail.

14-18 minutes: try

Use “A fair beginning”. Model an invitation that offers choice, such as “Would you like to join us, watch, or do something else?”

18-20 minutes: close

Invite one optional reflection. Note how learners used story evidence and offered choice. Follow up privately if anyone raises a concern.

The Forgotten Skies

At the end of the mountain road, Rufus stopped. Skyreach rose from the cliff ahead. Its oldest towers had been carved straight from the rock. Newer walls climbed the ridge above them, their windows catching the morning sun. Far below, a river cut through black pines. Dragons circled the battlements, riding the wind that swept up from the gorge. Rufus stood on a rocky ledge and watched. Somewhere among those towers was Skyreach Academy. Tomorrow, he would belong there. At least, that was what the letter said.

Meet Rufus

Rufus had never brought down a mountain. He had once brought down a kitchen shelf while reaching for a biscuit, but nobody had written a warning about that. He liked stones with stripes through them, difficult cloud shapes and the quiet before everyone else woke up. A sky owl swept over the garden path. A small blue pebble slipped from her claws, bounced once and rolled towards a crack. Rufus stopped it with one careful claw. The owl clicked her beak impatiently. “I'm helping,” Rufus told her. “You could try being grateful.” She swooped down to reclaim it.

A fair beginning

Rufus likes striped stones, difficult cloud shapes and quiet mornings. What could someone ask him to get to know him better?

A question I could ask Rufus

Something I learned from the extract

A safe and kind action a character could take

Speak, point, draw, write, sign, use AAC or ask someone to scribe. You can skip a question.

A little guidance for adults

Begin with a choice

Offer the activity and explain what it involves. Let the learner choose how to take part, take a break or stop.

Read and notice

Use the included extract or the real page previews on the book page. Invite observations before giving your interpretation.

Make space for a response

Allow processing time. Accept speech, gesture, pointing, drawing, signing, AAC or silence. Avoid turning a shared story into a test.

Try one small next step

Use the supplementary activity. Notice the learner’s ideas and adapt the materials, pace and response method.

Use fictional examples. Do not ask children to disclose bullying or confront anyone. Listen to concerns privately and follow your setting’s reporting and protection procedures.

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