



## Responding to *the Iron Man* by Ted Hughes

*This modern fairy tale by poet Ted Hughes is compelling reading and is great for reading aloud to spark children's imagination and inspire their writing.*

*Below are some suggestions for sharing the story with children.*

*Allow a full session, up to two hours, to complete the lesson.*

### Introduce the book

*When you introduce the book to children:*

- *Conceal it so they cannot see from which part you are reading.*
- *Do not show them the book or any of the artwork.*
- *Tell them the title of the book and explain that you want them to tell you whether you are reading from the beginning, the middle or the end of the book.*

### Read

*Read from the beginning **without interruption** the first two pages that describe the Iron Man and how he stepped off the top of a cliff into nothingness and crashed into pieces on the rocks below.*

*Stop reading at:*

*'Nobody knew the Iron Man had fallen.*

*Night passed.'*

*Expect the children to listen in awe, to be fascinated by the size of the Iron Man, incredulous that he would step off the cliff, and mesmerised by the explanation of each body part breaking off and crashing, bumping, clanging to lie scattered on the rocky beach.*

### Discuss

*When you have finished reading, ask children to tell you if the passage you read is from the beginning, the middle or the end of the story. They will probably suggest it is from the end of the story. Ask them to explain their thinking.*

*Tell them that it is the beginning of the story. Expect them to be surprised and willing to discuss how the story might continue. This could lead to **writing** if the children are keen, but there are other opportunities further into the story.*

### Reread and discuss

*When this initial discussion has run its course, go back to the beginning and read it again, stopping this time to encourage further discussion and to spark the children's imaginations.*

*Nobody knew where the Iron Man had come from, how far he had walked or how he was made, but children have many ideas to contribute to a discussion. It is great to allow their imaginations to contemplate possibilities. Nobody knows, so there is no right or wrong —another possible opportunity for **writing** if the children are keen, and we're only a few sentences into the story.*

The next two paragraphs describe the Iron Man. It is good to read and discuss each descriptive section so that children can imagine just how big he is. Remember, you haven't shown the children any artwork at this stage because it is important for them to form their own images.

Phrase by phrase, discuss the size and appearance of the Iron Man:

'taller than a house'

'head, shaped like a dustbin but as big as a bedroom'

'eyes, like headlamps'.

### Draw

The Iron Man takes some imagining, and children might like to draw a quick sketch of what they think he looks like.

### Continue reading

Read to the end of the section again:

'Nobody knew the Iron Man had fallen.

Night passed.'

As the children have already shared their ideas of what might happen next, continue reading to the end of the chapter.

### Chapter events

In the rest of the chapter, the Iron Man reassembles himself. First, an eye and a hand connect, and they go in search of other parts, collecting them one by one. The children will be mesmerised by the process, imagining the scene.

At the end of the chapter, the Iron Man disappears into the sea. Another end? No, just the end of Chapter 1. There are four more chapters. Author Ted Hughes described his story as 'A Children's Story in Five Nights'.

By the end of the chapter, the children's imaginations will be on fire, filled with ideas. They will have a sense of who the Iron Man is and what he can do. Now it is time for them to talk and then write.

### Write

Ask children to suggest what might happen next to the Iron Man — where he might go, what he might do.

Give the children time to write their own Iron Man stories.

Make time for children to share their stories, either in this or another session. They may even need another writing session in which to finish their stories.

These stories may be suitable for the children to polish for publication in a class book of Iron Man Stories.

## Ideas for other sessions

### Technology

- *Design and build a model of the Iron Man.*

### Creativity

- *Imagine your own 'monster'. Describe and draw it. Describe its special abilities. Write a story about it. Design and build a model of it. What would happen if it met the Iron Man? Would they be friends? Write a story.*

### Language skills

*Discuss techniques used by Ted Hughes in writing the story and encourage them to incorporate them into their own writing:*

- *Short sentences*
- *Metaphors and similes:*

*'The wind sang through his iron fingers.'*

*'head, shaped like a dustbin but as big as a bedroom'*

*'sea, chewing away at the edge of the rocky beach'*

*'like a crab on its back'*

*'While the stars went on wheeling through the sky and the wind went on tugging at the grass ... and the sea went on boiling and booming.'*

- *Onomatopoeia:*

*Crash! Crashing, bumping, clanging.*

*Other words also give a sense of the noise as he tumbled and crashed down the cliff.*

### Maths

#### *Measurement — exploring size*

*How tall is a house?*

*How big is a bedroom?*

*How tall would the Iron Man be?*

*How big would his head be?*

*How big would his feet be?*

#### *Digital Technology*

*Use a drawing program to make a picture of the Iron Man so that his size relative to other things is shown.*