

MATT HAIG



Dear Teachers and Librarians,

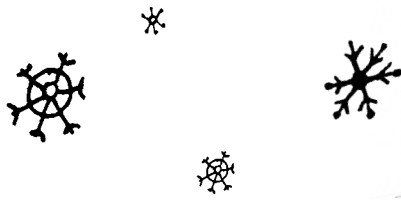
Matt Haig is the number one bestselling author of *A Boy Called Christmas*, an enchanting account of the *true* story of Father Christmas. This autumn we're inviting you to go on a magical journey into the adventures of Amelia Wishart and Father Christmas in Matt Haig's follow up title, *The Girl Who Saved Christmas*. Along the way we will meet Queen Victoria, Charles Dickens, pixies and trolls, and be taken on a very special adventure, led by a very special girl.

This resource pack is made up of five distinct lessons that explore the characters, events and magic in *The Girl Who Saved Christmas*, and an introduction to *A Boy Called Christmas*. These lessons have been designed as the perfect accompaniment to Matt Haig's promotional tour, but equally as a point of entry into the book for every classroom. Each lesson is made up of individual activities that can be taught sequentially as hour-long lessons, or dipped in and out of in class, the library or for homework. The lessons touch upon many different aspects of the national curriculum: Speaking and Listening, Literacy, Drama, and Art and Design. These lessons encourage teamwork and imagination, and have been designed to foster a creative exploration of the book.

Classrooms can tweet using the hashtag

#TheGirlWhoSavedChristmasClassroom. Send in photos, artwork and entries for the Fan Fiction Challenge!





Author Biography



As well as being a number one bestselling writer for adults, **Matt Haig** has won the Blue Peter Book Award, The Smarties Book Prize and been shortlisted three times for the Carnegie Medal for his stories for children and young adults. He lives in Brighton with his wife and two children.

Chris Mould went to art school at the age of sixteen. He has won the Nottingham Children's Book Award and been commended by the Sheffield Children's Book Award. He loves his work and likes to write and draw the kind of books that he would have liked to have had on his shelf as a boy. He is married with two children and lives in Yorkshire.





Synopsis

A Boy Called Christmas

Of course before everybody started calling him Santa Claus (the pixies started it, the mischievous things), Nikolas was just an ordinary boy.

But life was going to change for Nikolas, in ways he could never have imagined.

After his poor wood-chopping father sets out on an expedition to the Far North to find (for a large reward) the fabled home of the elves, Nikolas is left in the charge of Aunt Carlotta. Now Aunt Carlotta is so nasty she sleeps on two mattresses while he has none. So nasty that she banishes his only friend (Miika the mouse, whom she calls a rat!). So nasty that she serves up his turnip doll as soup. So nasty that, packing some of the stale bread from the table and placing Miika in his coat pocket, Nikolas decides to follow his father to the Far North and to Elfhelm, home of the elves.

Lead-in Questions:

1. Where do you think Father Christmas comes from?
2. What do you think might happen to this boy Nikolas, throughout the story?
3. What 'impossible things' do you think the narrator could be talking about?

Extract: *A Boy Called Christmas*

"But whatever you happen to call him, you know about him, and that's the main thing.

Can you believe there was a time when no one knew about him? A time when he was just an ordinary boy called Nikolas, living in the middle of nowhere, or the middle of Finland, doing nothing with magic except believing in it? A boy who knew very little about the world except the taste of mushroom soup, the feel of a cold north wind, and the stories he was told. And who only had a doll made out of a turnip to play with.

But life was going to change for Nikolas, in ways he could never have imagined. Things were going to happen to him.

Good things.

Bad things.

Impossible things.

But if you are one of those people who believe that some things are impossible, you should put this book down right away. It is most certainly not for you.

Because this book is full of impossible things."

A Boy Called Christmas, p4





Synopsis

The Girl Who Saved Christmas

When Amelia wants a wish to come true she knows just the man to ask – Father Christmas.

But the magic she wants to believe in is starting to fade, and Father Christmas has more than impossible wishes to worry about. Upset elves, reindeers dropping out of the sky, angry trolls and the chance that Christmas might be cancelled.

But Amelia isn't just any ordinary girl. And – as Father Christmas is going to find out – if Christmas is going to be saved, he might not be able to do it alone.

Lead-in Questions:

1. Do you believe in magic?
2. What is magical about Christmas or other religious holidays?
3. What is hope?
4. Why is hope important, and maybe a bit magical?

Extract: *The Girl Who Saved Christmas*

“Do you know how magic works?

The kind of magic that get reindeer to fly in the sky? The kind that helps Father Christmas travel around the world in a single night? The kind that can stop time and make dreams come true?

Hope.

That's how.

Without hope, there would be no magic.

It isn't Father Christmas or Blitzen or any of the other reindeer that make magic happen on the night before Christmas.

It's every child who wants and wishes for it to happen. If no one wished for magic to happen there would be no magic. And because we know Father Christmas comes every year we know now that magic – at least some kind of magic – is real.”

The Girl Who Saved Christmas, p1





Lesson 1

Predictions

Lesson objective

To make informed predictions using Chris Mould's illustrations

Lesson outcome

A creative trailer

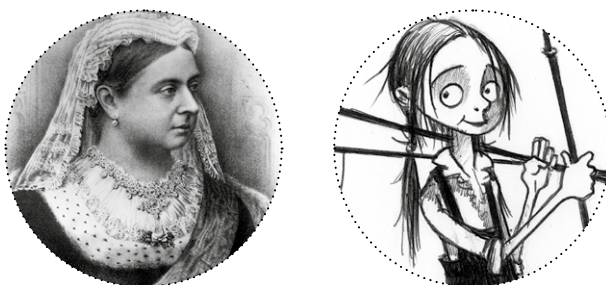
Activity one:

Organise your class into pairs, and give them a copy of the worksheet (on the next page). Each pair should brainstorm around the images, thinking about:

- Who might this character be?
- What strengths and/or weaknesses do you think they might have?
- What three words would you choose to best sum up what their personality might be like?

Activity two:

Using their worksheets, students should now match up the characters they think could be linked in the story. Students can be as creative as they like - there is no right or wrong! An example has been given below:



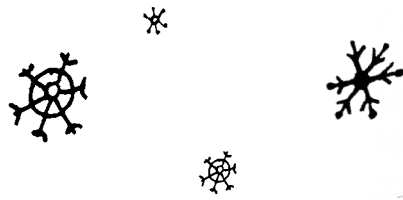
Amelia might want the Queen to help her in some way

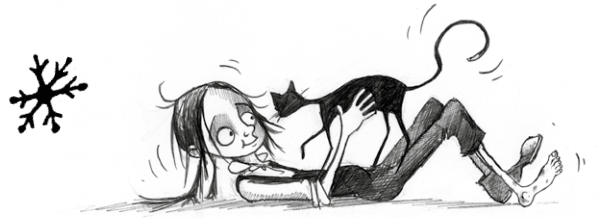
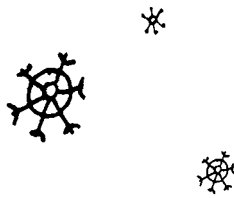
Once students have come up with their initial ideas, the pairs need to create a bullet point list of the main events they think will happen in the story.

Activity three:

Using all of their notes, students should now develop their ideas into fabulous trailers for what they think the story will entail! They could use storyboards, posters or even dramatise their ideas and film them!







Lesson two

Amelia

This lesson is designed to introduce students to the character of Amelia while giving them an understanding of what it would have been like to have lived in Victorian times.

Activity one:

Read the extract below and have a class discussion around the questions:

1. What job does Amelia have to do?
2. What words or phrases best show what it is like to work sweeping chimneys?
3. Why does Amelia have to do this job?
4. Do children still work in this way today?

Lesson objective

To understand the character of Amelia

Lesson outcome

A character profile for Amelia

Extract: *The Girl Who Saved Christmas*

"It was dark inside chimneys. That was the first thing she'd had to get used to. The darkness. Another thing was the size. Chimneys always tend to be a bit too small, even if you were still a child. But the worst thing about being a chimney sweep, Amelia had discovered, was the soot. The black dust got everywhere, once you started sweeping. In your hair, on your clothes, on your skin, in your eyes and mouth. It made you cough a horrid unstoppable cough, and made your eyes water. It was a horrible job but it was a job nonetheless. A job she needed. A job that could help her earn enough money to get medicine for mother.

And anyway, the thing about sweeping chimneys is that it made you appreciate daylight more. In fact, it made you appreciate being anywhere that wasn't a chimney. It made you hope. It made you dream, in the sooty darkness, of all the exotic and light places in the world."

The Girl Who Saved Christmas, p22-23



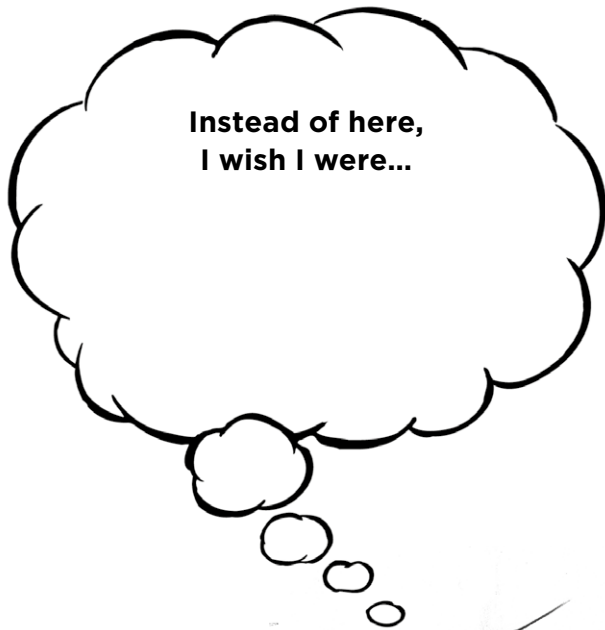


Lesson two

Amelia

Activity two:

Students should complete the cartoon and thought bubble below. On one side write down the **reality** of Amelia's life, and on the other side they need to imagine what she is dreaming **of**- the "exotic and light places in the world".



Things I have to deal with in my life:

1. Soot getting in my hair
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.



Lesson three

Victorian Characters



Lead-in Questions:

1. What do you know about Victorian times?
2. Have you ever heard of Queen Victoria? What do you think she was like?
3. Who is Charles Dickens?
4. Can you name any of his books?

Lesson objective

To investigate into the characters of Charles Dickens and Queen Victoria

Lesson outcome

A piece of improvisation drama

Activity one:

Working in pairs, students should read the following quotes and descriptions, and discuss:

What kinds of characters are these?

How are they similar?

How are they different?

Which do you like more? Why?



Queen Victoria

'Get the guards. And bring your gun! We have an intruder! ... One is most alarmed INDEED!'

'Auf wiedersehen, you kidnapping French hog,' she shouted, with a little grunting laugh in her voice."

'I'd have loved to have believed in magic. To know that some things can't be explained. To have some mystery".

Charles Dickens

The man was slim and smartly dressed, wearing a bright purple coat, a top hat, and smart winter gloves. He had a sharp but kind face and his eyes twinkled with intelligence.

'No child belongs at the workhouse, especially not at Christmas.'

Charles Dickens smiled a worried smile. 'We need never be ashamed of our tears.'

Activity two:

Working in the same pairs, students should create a piece of improvisation drama, exploring what would happen if Queen Victoria and Charles Dickens were to meet. It is up to students to decide where and how they meet - could they be standing next to each other in the queue at the supermarket? Could Queen Victoria go to a book signing? Could they be at the same party?

Extra points for groups who can use a quotation in their improvisation!



Lesson four

Dramatic Readings



Lead-in Questions:

1. What makes reading a book different from watching a film or listening to an audio book?
2. What kind of things can actors do to bring a character to life?

Lesson objective

To explore character through dramatic techniques

Lesson outcome

A dramatic reading and performance to the class

Activity one: Little Mim

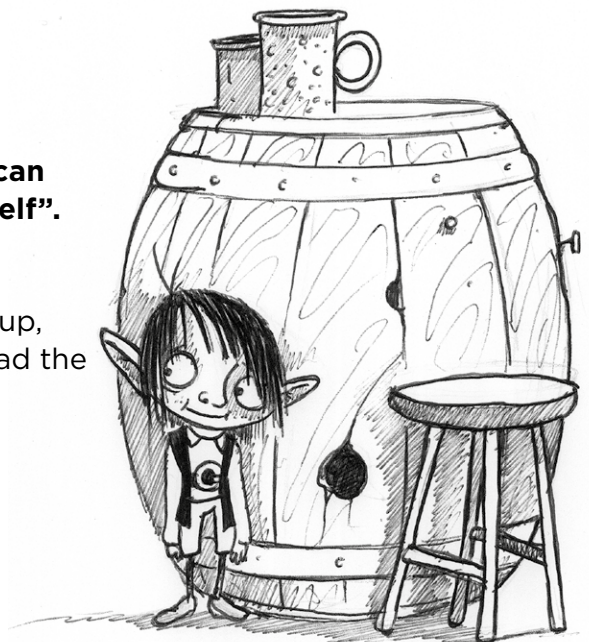
Little Mim is an elf who loves Christmas more than anything else in the world. Organise your class into groups of three. Each member of the group needs to practice reading Little Mim's line (below) in their best dramatic voice. They can choose to read it:

1. In an excited voice
2. In a wining voice
3. In an angry voice

“But Mummy! Come on. It’s nearly Christmas. We shouldn’t do any sleeping near Christmas. So we can make it last longer ... Come on. Let’s build a snowelf”.

The Girl Who Saved Christmas, p36

After performing their readings to the rest of their group, students should discuss: How did the way you each read the words change the way Little Mim came across?



Lesson four

Dramatic Readings



Activity two:

Now, each group should choose one passage of the book that they would like to create a dramatic reading for. They might choose nasty Mr Creeper, the fluttering Truth Pixie, Queen Victoria or even Father Christmas himself.

Each group should create a unique and dramatic reading by focusing on the **tone** of their voice, the **speed** they read at and the **emotions** they choose to say the words through. They can each take a part and take turns to deliver it, or help one member of the group to deliver it as well as they possibly can.

Students can perform their readings to the class and then take a vote - who read in the most interesting and dramatic way? What made their reading so successful?



Mr Creeper



Truth Pixie



Queen Victoria



Father Christmas



Lesson five

Trolls vs Elves



Lead-in Questions:

1. What is the scariest monster you can imagine?
2. Do you think trolls could really exist?
3. What do you think the main differences are between a pixie and a troll?

Lesson objective

To analyse the different characters in the book

Lesson outcome

Freeze frames

Activity one:

Students should read the passages below and circle all descriptions of the way the characters **look**. How has Haig presented the Trolls and the Pixies differently? How do you feel about these different characters?

TROLL DESCRIPTION	FLYING STORY PIXIE DESCRIPTION
<p>“They were untrotrolls, only three times the size of Father Christmas and nine times the size of an average elf. Well, technically there were four of them, because one of them had two heads. Another had only one eye. The third looked quite normal, by troll standards, except for the one large yellow tooth sticking out from the side of her mouth. But each had warty rough skin and rotten teeth and dirty rags made from goatskin for clothes.” <i>The Girl Who Saved Christmas</i>, p63</p>	<p>“Just at that moment she saw one, fluttering above her. A four-winged Flying Story Pixie. This pixie fluttered down and whispered something in the troll’s ear. Whatever it was, it wasn’t good.” <i>The Girl Who Saved Christmas</i>, p290</p>



Lesson five

Trolls vs Elves



Activity two:

Organise your class into pairs. Each pair should choose either the troll description or the pixie description to work with. One member of the pair needs to 'sculpt' their partner into this character, using all of the clues in the description to give them their creative ideas. Students should remember to use different **levels**, **facial expressions** and **body language** to best show their character's personality.

Activity three:

On the count of three all actors should take position and freeze into their roles. Sculptors should walk around the room and pick their favourite freeze frame from the class and feedback on what is so successful about it.



Lesson five

The Barometer of Hope



Lead-in Questions:

1. If you could wish for anything in the entire world, what would it be?
2. Can you think of one really kind thing you have recently done for someone else?
3. What is the kindest thing someone has done for you?

Lesson objective

to reflect on and understand the theme of 'hope'

Lesson outcome

a class barometer of hope

Father Christmas has made a 'barometer of hope' from all the good and hopeful magic in the world:

"The Barometer of Hope usually glowed with a dazzling display of multi-coloured, gently moving light. Green, purple, blue. These lights had been scooped up by Father Christmas from the northern lights in the sky above Finland. On Christmas Eve the light should almost be blinding, since it was fuelled by magic that grew out of hope and goodness of elves, humans and all creatures." *The Girl Who Saved Christmas*, p35.

Activity one:

Organise your class into five fabulous groups. Each group needs to design their very own barometer of hope. They might choose to draw it, or even make their barometer out of coloured card. Students should be as imaginative as possible - will their barometer have different levels of hope written along the side? Have arrows that move? Have pictures drawn inside it?

Activity two:

Students should present their creations to the rest of the class and explain exactly how it works, and what needs to happen for the barometer to glow brightly.

Barometers can be displayed in the classroom as a future reminder of all the things we have to be hopeful for!



The Girl Who Saved CHRISTMAS

FAN FICTION CHALLENGE

At the end of *The Girl Who Saved Christmas*, Amelia goes to live with Father Christmas and the elves:

“Home,’ said Amelia, softly, to herself. It was ridiculous, the idea that she could make a home living here, alongside elves and Father Christmas. She remembered what her mother had once told her, about how life was like a chimney. You sometimes needed to struggle through the dark to reach the light. As she looked around at the small snow-covered buildings she thought this might finally be it.

This was the light.

And so she gently took hold of Captain Soot, and stepped out of the sleigh and into the magical possibility of her future.” *The Girl Who Saved Christmas, p213*

But what happens next?

How will Amelia settle in to her new home full of magic and pixies?

Your task is to write the next chapter in Amelia’s story. It is up to you what her new challenges might be, who her best friends are and what her new life looks like. Use descriptive language and be imaginative! Drawings and sketches can accompany the writing.

