

THE EAGLE TREE

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ISBN: 0-86278-486-7 £3.99pb 144 pages



As a result of a previous disagreement with wizard Lucifer John McCracken, Prince Pugnax of Porzana is now a giant cockroach who spends his days wandering sadly around the forest, eating rubbish and associating with every low-life insect imaginable. Once he is declared officially dead, environmentally-unfriendly nephew Bembex, now Baron of Bollonia, will inherit the kingdom. He intends to cut down all of Porzana's forests and sell them to paper-mills. But when Pugnax steals some clothes and walks into the Flying Pig bar, he meets the only villager brave and kind enough to rescue him and save the forest. Freddie Fennifeather sets off immediately for the wizard's cottage and persuades him to tell her the spell that will restore Pugnax to his human self. But one of the ingredients for the magic charm is difficult to find and Freddie must venture deep into Porzana Forest in search of the shell of a hatched eagle's egg. Fortunately, the silent and mysterious Black Donald is at hand to help her and save the trees. Reinstated back at the castle, Pugnax keeps his promise to turn the forest into a nature reserve which Freddie and Black Donald can enjoy in each other's company.

LANGUAGE - ENGLISH

- ◆ Dictionary work: e.g. morosely, aversion, prestige, revellers, cavorted, infernal, calibre, succulent, minions, listlessly, lucre.
- ◆ Colourful writing: e.g. 'like rats leaving a sinking ship (p.9); like an aspen tree on a windy day (p.87); 'a faint smile flickered ... and eventually blossomed into an evil smile' (p.23).
- ◆ Word-games: analysing names of characters, e.g. Horace Catchfly, Bembex, Billy Stutter, Jacol Stobbins, and suggesting other descriptive and humorous names.
- ◆ Word-games: practise saying the tongue twister on p.30 and invent similar for your own name.
- ◆ Word-games: The lawyer explains that an oologist 'is a person who makes a study of birds' eggs' (p.81). List other professions that end in 'ologist' or write a job description for some profession not yet thought of, and invent a name for it.
- ◆ Proverbs and sayings: e.g. 'A good run would be better than a bad stand' (p.44); 'any port in a storm' (p.65). List and explain in your own words other examples of proverbs.
- ◆ Descriptive writing: Read those passages which describe the village (pp. 25–26) or the cottage of Lucifer John McCracken (pp. 46–47) and try to write a similarly evocative paragraph about your own home place.
- ◆ Creative: The wizard's spell needs three charms (p.55). Write the ingredients you would need for a spell to make the teacher forget about homework for a month, and say where you would get each charm.
- ◆ Creative: read the list of Lucifer's skills (p.5) and write your own humorous CV. Present it neatly and make sure you highlight your best points.
- ◆ Creative: consider the conclusions reached by Pugnax as he thinks about being a cockroach (p.16) and write a paragraph entitled 'Being a cockroach is definitely fun!'
- ◆ Creative: Pugnax is sorely disappointed when he opens the picnic basket and discovers that it contains clothes and not food (p.22). Write a passage detailing a major disappointment, real or imaginary, that you

have experienced, or write what you might include in your ideal picnic hamper.

SESE - SCIENCE

- ◆ Plant and animal life: The white-tailed sea eagle became extinct in Ireland in the early part of the twentieth century. Find out about the Eagle Reintroduction Programme, Fota Wildlife Park, Carrigtwohill, County Cork.
- ◆ Plant and animal life: activities with trees. Children could make bark rubbings, make a leaf print, press and preserve leaves, or look for insects and small creatures around the base of trees. Each child could choose a tree in his/her immediate locality and write up a daily or weekly diary of the changes that take place over a period of a month.
- ◆ Plant and animal life: variety and characteristics of living things. Sorting and grouping living things into sets according to observable features: eagles in eyrie (pp. 74–75, 128); work of the honeybee (p.106); wasps (p.120); life of the cockroach (pp. 16, 119).
- ◆ Environmental awareness and care: environmental awareness. Observing, discussing and recording colours, textures and shapes in rural areas; diversity of plant and animal life; places that people enjoy and the reasons for these preferences (pp. 46–47, 59).
- ◆ Environmental awareness and care: caring for the environment. Recognising how the actions of people may impact upon the environment: planting and felling trees (pp. 37, 54, 125).

SESE - GEOGRAPHY

- ◆ Weather, climate and atmosphere: weather observations. Using analysis of weather recordings to begin to associate simple descriptions of clouds, amount of cloud cover and other conditions with particular types of weather (pp. 64–65, 69).
- ◆ Planet Earth in space: recognising a few of the major star constellations (p.5).

SPHE

- ◆ Myself: self-identity. Recognising, describing and discussing personality traits, qualities, strengths, limitations and interests. Consider these characteristics in relation to each of the

main characters: Freddie, Black Donald, Pugnax and Lucifer McCracken.

- ◆ Myself: developing self-confidence. Expressing personal opinions, feelings, thoughts and ideas; taking into consideration the views, opinions and feelings of others. Which, if any, of the main characters is self-confident?
 - ◆ Myself: food and nutrition. Differentiating between a healthy and unhealthy diet and appreciating the role of balance and moderation. Discuss Pugnax's eating habits (pp. 33–37, 125).
 - ◆ Myself: growing and changing. Appreciating the need for space and privacy in life: the need for personal boundaries; having opportunities for uncluttered space. Lucifer moved to the forest 'to keep as far away as possible from visitors' (p.49), and Black Donald enjoyed the silence of the forest (pp. 89–93), as did Freddie later (p.127).
 - ◆ Myself: making decisions. Exploring the factors that influence choices and the different levels of thought involved in making a decision. Discuss how much Freddie was influenced in her decision to help save the forest by her personal wishes, by impulse, by values and beliefs and by parental wishes.
 - ◆ Myself and the wider world: developing citizenship. Examining the traditional roles that may be assigned to boys and girls because of sex and becoming aware of ways of counteracting this stereotyping, through an exploration of Freddie's personality and behaviour.
 - ◆ Myself and the wider world: environmental care. Appreciating and respecting the environment; learning that there is an individual and community responsibility in caring for the environment and protecting it for future generations.
- VISUAL ARTS**
- ◆ Eagle's nest: tear up shredded wheat and mix with melted chocolate, make into nest shapes and allow to set. Fill with small chocolate eggs.
 - ◆ Bird and nest: see *Busy Fingers 1*, p.3.
 - ◆ Russian egg: see *Busy Fingers 1*, p.10.
 - ◆ Wizard's magic: see *Busy Fingers 3*, p.11.