

ALBERT AND THE MAGICIAN



by Leon McAuley, illustrated by Martin Fagan

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Albert didn't like school and was looking forward to the holidays when he could concentrate on his interest in wildlife. When the headmaster announced that The Great Gazebo would be visiting the school as an end-of-term treat, Albert was not especially interested. But when his know-it-all sister, Fionnuala, explained that magicians turn themselves into dragons, people into frogs, kidnap small boys and take them to foreign lands crawling with snakes, scorpions and rats, he attempts to feign illness to avoid the magician. This fails and Albert eventually finds himself sitting in the assembly hall awaiting the show. Will the magician ignore him if he keeps his eyes shut, or will his worst fears be realised?

LANGUAGE – ENGLISH

- ◆ Vocabulary extension: Thaveless, frustrated, vazier, potential, elocution, guldered, chortle.
- ◆ Imaginative language: 'Sniffing and shuffling, whispering and snogging' (p.12), 'shaking like a whin bush in a hurricane' (p.10), 'AAAY YAMMINT TOO YOUNG!' (p.40).
- ◆ Creative: Jokes/puns, e.g., 'good gnus' (p. 63), 'Darjeeling has it to a T' and 'Don't forget your Baghdad' (p.79). Children suggest own puns.
- ◆ Creative: 'The Twins, the scourge of the household ...' (pp.44–45). Children suggest nicknames for siblings and list items that might be found in a D.D.M.M.O.D.C. cupboard.
- ◆ Discussion: 'wee-starving-children-in-the-Third-World' (pp.31, 46). Discuss distribution of the world's food supply and suggest ways of encouraging children not to waste food.

SPHE

- ◆ Myself: Becoming confident in unfamiliar situations, taking an active role in a project/event in school, becoming responsible and autonomous: Discuss Albert's fear of magicians.
- ◆ Myself: Food and nutrition. 'Horrible fresh good-for-you- food' versus 'beans-with-everything'. Discuss meals on pp.28, 62, and place ingredients into four main food groups.
- ◆ Myself and others: Understanding, love, respect, sharing, trust. Discuss with reference to Fionnuala's 'Get-at-Albert' policy (pp.20, 40–41), the suspicions of Albert's parents (pp.66–67) and Fionnuala's behaviour as she watched Albert and the magician (p.106).
- ◆ Myself: Taunting, name-calling, jeering (pp.8, 14, 16, 19). Discussing responses.
- ◆ Myself and the wider world: Identifying the people

in the school community, exploring ways in which school promotes a sense of belonging.

SESE – SCIENCE

- ◆ Plant and animal life: 'Wildlife was all the animals you didn't eat, plus cows' (p.8). Discuss Albert's definition of wildlife and list other, more accurate definitions.
 - ◆ Plant and animal life: Investigate some of the animals described by Albert as 'wildlife' (pp.12, 16, 23, 43), group according to features such as habitat, behaviour, foods, lifestyle.
 - ◆ Magic tricks: Super balloon. Stick a kebab skewer into a balloon without bursting it. (Place two pieces of masking tape on the balloon before sticking the skewer through the tape.)
 - ◆ Magic tricks: Magic loops. Take a long, thin strip of paper, twist once, stick ends together. With scissors, carefully cut along the centre of paper. See what happens! Try the same thing as before, but twist the paper twice before glueing the ends. What happens this time?
- ## VISUAL ARTS
- ◆ Soap-bubble pictures: Re-read pp.30–31 and create personal stationery using soap bubbles. Fill shallow container with water, paint and washing-up liquid, when bubbles rise above container, place sheet of paper over bubbles. Repeat using different colours. Allow to dry.
 - ◆ Rollerball: Trace around coffee-jar lid or similar on card, cut out and draw picture, then make three holes in card. Push card into bottom of lid, place three ball bearings on top of picture and cover with tightly wrapped clingfilm and secure with sticky tape. The aim is to get one ball bearing to sit in each of the holes.