

A world as vast and dark
as your imagination...

FURTHERMOOR

TEACHING NOTES

READING GROUP
QUESTIONS AND NOTES FOR
KS3 STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

FURTHERMOOR

DARREN SIMPSON

TEACHING NOTES

INTRODUCTION

Suitable for: Ages 10+

Explore themes of: ✓ Grief ✓ Bullying ✓ Truth ✓ Love ✓ Imagination ✓ Courage

Teaching note: Please be aware that this book and the resources that accompany it may affect children already dealing with grief or bullying.

CONTENTS

- READING GROUP QUESTIONS *Page 3*
Objectives: To show understanding of the text and express own opinions of the ideas, characters and themes.
- DISCUSSING KEY THEMES OF THE BOOK *Pages 4–9*
Objectives: To be able to identify examples of actions and interactions from the book that demonstrate its themes; to further explore themes of the book through art, mind-mapping and group discussion.
- FURTHER ACTIVITIES *Pages 10–12*
Objectives: To explore the line between the real and the imagined by designing an imaginary world using creative writing and illustration.



ABOUT THE BOOK

The real world is a hostile place for twelve-year-old Bren, his schooldays stalked by vicious bully, Shaun, and his family life fractured at home. Ever since his sister Evie died in an accident, Bren's only safe space is Furthermoor, an imagined world of mechanised trees and clockwork animals, where Evie is still alive. In Furthermoor, no one can hurt Bren...until the mysterious Featherly arrives.

Now Bren is forced to confront his deepest fears and decide if his place in the real world is worth fighting for.

Enter a world as vast and dark as your imagination, in this unforgettable coming-of-age story about courage, friendship and finding your voice.

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READING GROUP QUESTIONS

- p5 Why does the author choose to time travel forwards by two days for chapter 1?
- p11 Do you think the narrator is right when he says 'The trouble started with Cary?'
- p19 Why do you think Bren doesn't tell Mr Okorafor about Shaun's bullying?
- p39 What does Cary mean when he says '...someone like you...?'
- p66 Why did the pained cry of the broken peacock sound so foreign in Furthermoor?
- p71 If Bren didn't create Featherly, how did he end up in Furthermoor?
- p96 Why do you think Bren decided to follow Cary and Shaun into the house?
Was it sensible?
- p123 Why doesn't Bren tell Cary about Evie?
- p145 The author describes Bren's shame as 'cold and heavy as a padlock.' What do you think this simile means, or what does it make you think of?
- p168 Why did Featherly choose the tunnel tree to make his throne?
- p192 What were the first clues that the Furthermoor 'Dad' wasn't Bren's real Dad?
- p216 Why was Ballard Tower so symbolic when Bren was trapped in Furthermoor?
- p229 Why does Featherly appear to be delighted by Bren's anger?
- P255 What reasons did Bren have for agreeing to talk to Shaun and his dad in the hospital?

DISCUSSING KEY THEMES

Furthermoor explores several different themes: *Grief *Bullying *Truth *Love *Imagination *Courage

Re-read and think about the following examples of action or character interaction taken from the book. Which **theme** do you think each example is mainly demonstrating? Choose the **BEST** theme from the theme grid below for each one and write the corresponding letter in the box.

Note: you might have more than one letter in some boxes.

- A) p24–25 Bren finds Evie with the butterflies and talks to her about Shaun.
- B) p36 Cary confronts Shaun when he finds him picking on Bren.
- C) p54–55 Bren sees Mr Agarwal and the homeless girl.
- D) p70 Bren meets Featherly.
- E) p100 Bren rescues Cary from the house.
- F) p126 Dad is worried that Bren is late home.
- G) p144 Bren admits to Mrs Sendak that Shaun did lock Cary in the house.
- H) p193 Bren discovers the watch is a fake and he's trapped in Furthermoor.
- I) p229 Bren stands up to Featherly.
- J) p257–258 Shaun and his Dad visit the hospital and Bren gets angry.



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GRIEF	BULLYING	LOVE
TRUTH	IMAGINATION	COURAGE

Now share your thoughts in a small group.

- Were there times you chose a different box to others in your group?
What does this tell you about the themes?
- Discuss with your group why you chose to put each example where you did.
- Now write the corresponding letter for each example in ALL the theme boxes it fits into.
- Which scene fitted in the most boxes? Why?





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A CLOSER LOOK AT BULLYING

Bullying doesn't always look or sound the same – as Bren discovers both in the real world and in Furthermoor.

- Shaun was bullied by his father. Is being bullied ever a good excuse for becoming a bully?
- Cary made the decision to stand up to Shaun whereas Bren remained silent. Was either of these approaches successful? What other options were available to Cary, Bren or anyone else being bullied at school?
- Featherly was able to bully Bren within his own imagination. What do you think this type of bullying represents?

ACTIVITY

Create an anti-bullying poster that highlights the devastating effects of both mental and physical bullying.

- How are you going to make your poster eye-catching so people will stop and take a look?
- What are your key messages? Remember that text-heavy posters are less effective than catchy phrases.
- Who are you aiming your poster at? How are you going to make sure you resonate with your intended audience?

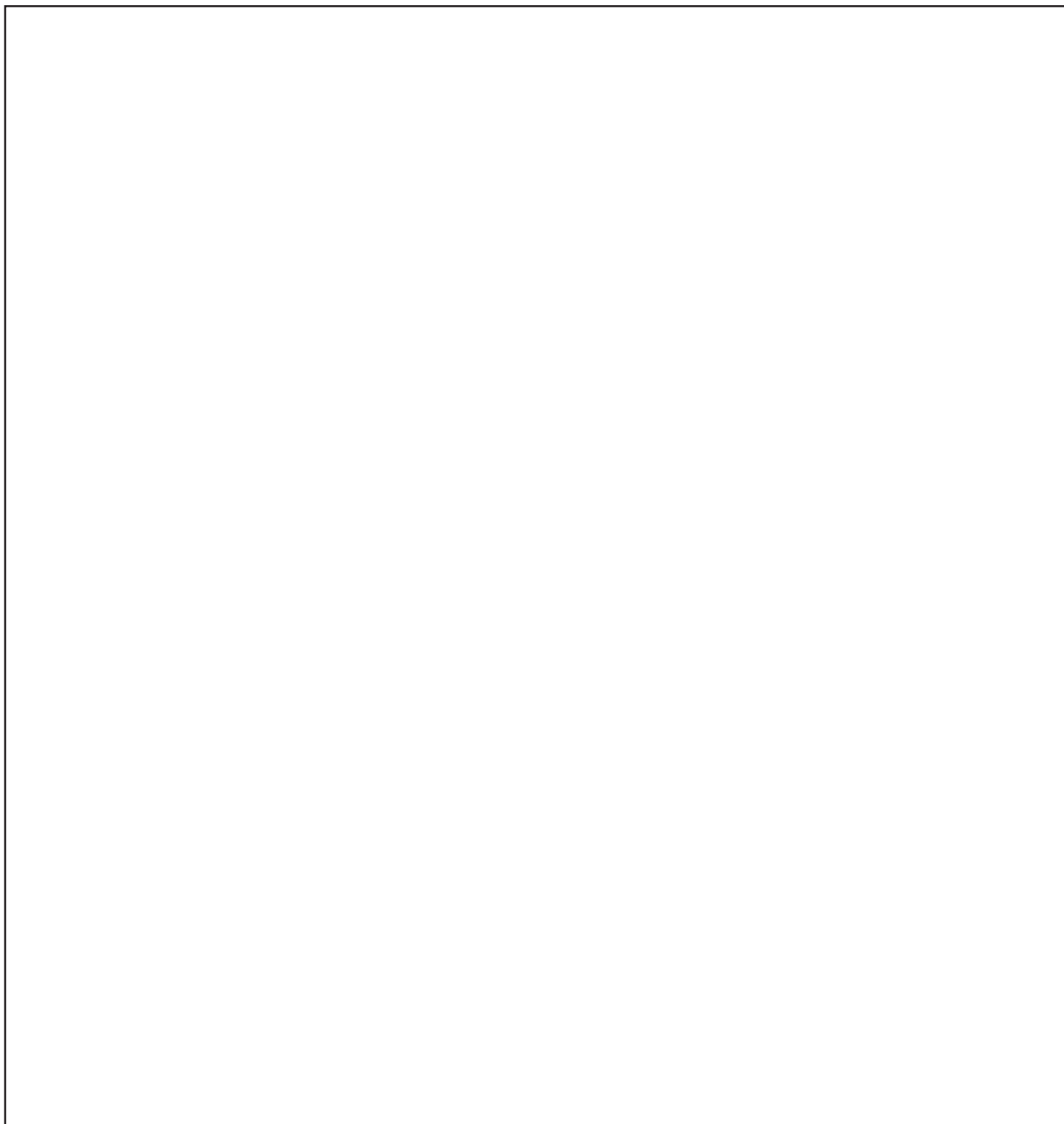




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A CLOSER LOOK AT GRIEF

Grief is a powerful emotion that has a huge impact on Bren's life as well as his parents' lives in the story.

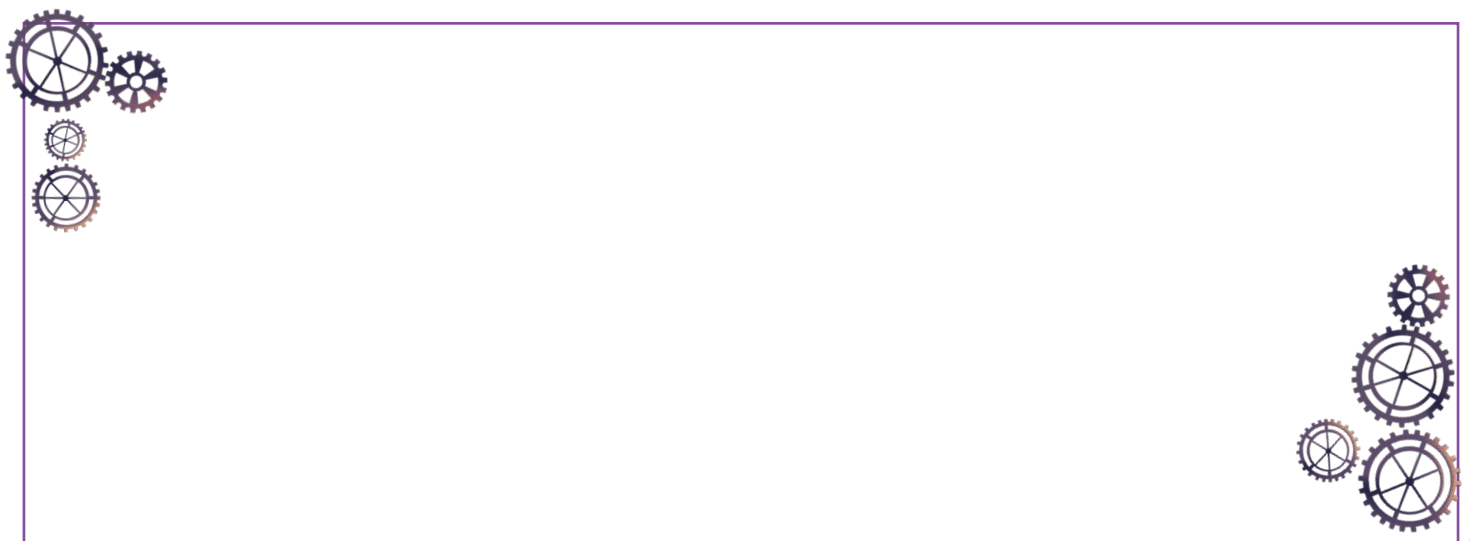
- Bren's parents seemed to have less time for him after Evie died.
Why do you think this might have been?
- Mr Okorafor suggested that Bren should talk to someone. Adults often suggest that this is the best thing to do when you are grieving. Why do you think this is good advice? Is it always the best choice?
- There are said to be five stages of grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance.
Which stage would you say Bren is in at the beginning of the book?
Does this change as the story progresses?

ACTIVITY

Put together a self-care toolbox of all the things that you could use to help you deal with grief.

- Think about the sorts of things you can do to help you remember someone you have loved.
This could be to watch their favourite film, listen to their favourite song or visit a place you have enjoyed together. Remember, it was Bren and Evie's shared love of their camping trip to the Peak District (p57) that built Furthermoor.
- Add some things that you love doing. It is absolutely fine to do things that make you happy when you are grieving. In fact, it is especially important to look for things that make you smile when you are feeling low.
- Is this toolbox useful for helping a friend who is grieving? Why or why not?

Q. Time plays an important role in Furthermoor. Why is time so important when dealing with grief?





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A CLOSER LOOK AT LOVE

There are many different types of love expressed in Furthermoor and there are many types of love in life: love for family, friends, pets or famous idols, romantic love, love of things or places, or self-love.

ACTIVITY

Create a mind-map to show the different types of love we experience.

- How do these types of love differ and what are the similarities between them?
Think about the physical and mental ways we feel and show love.
- Think about the relationships in Furthermoor. How does the love Bren feels for Evie differ from that of his parents or his new friend Cary?
- What about the love these people feel for Bren?
- Does Bren love himself in the beginning of the book? Does this change by the end of the story?
How or why?

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 **SHAPES**
for schools



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FURTHERACTIVITIES

Furthermoor is an incredible place created by Bren through his imagination when he needed it the most.

- Why do you think imagination can help people like Bren heal?
- Do you think Bren realised Furthermoor was in his imagination?
- Evie felt very real and alive to Bren when he was in Furthermoor. Can you think of reasons why this was a good thing? Why might it not have been ALL good?
- Everything in Furthermoor was made from cogs and controlled by Evie's broken, old watch. Why was the watch so important to Bren?

ACTIVITY 1: Create your own perfect imaginary world. Use imagery to write three paragraphs describing this world.

- What would you call your world?
- Try to use a mix of your senses when you are describing your world. What might you be able to see, feel or hear there? Perhaps there's even a special smell?
- Who else would you allow into your world?
- Bren uses Evie's watch as a portal into Furthermoor. What would your portal be? Why did you choose that particular object?



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ACTIVITY 2: Use junk collage to represent your imaginary world and the things in it.

Teaching note: Ask the children to bring in a variety of small bits of 'junk' from home. Supplement this with a variety of junk along with paints, markers and other basic art equipment.

- Evie's watch was important to Bren and Furthermoor. Think about what is important to you in your imaginary world.
- Look at the different junk and art media available to you. What best represents the important things in your imaginary world?
- Plan your world before you begin your collage.

<p>Is my world natural/man-made or a combination? How does this affect the things I choose for my collage?</p>	<p>What creatures/animals live in my world?</p>	<p>How would I access my world?</p>
<p>Are there any buildings in my world?</p>	<p>Bren and Evie's world started at the tunnel tree. What is the focal point of my world?</p>	<p>How would I keep my world safe from unwanted intruders such as Featherly?</p>