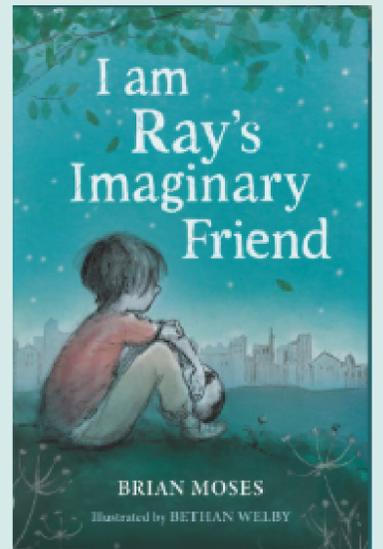


I am Ray's Imaginary Friend

Brian Moses

A moving verse-chapter book written by an imaginary friend.

Did you know there was a School For Imaginary Friends? Well, there is - and one of its star pupils is the narrator of Ray's story. Ray loves life in his village until one day he hears his parents talking about moving away. Traumatized by the idea, Ray invents an imaginary friend to talk to and even runs away. Eventually Ray is able to accept the move, and also the refugee mother and child who come to live with his family in the new house.



Discussion Prompts:

How does Ray's imaginary friend, Jacob, help him cope with his anxiety around moving house and starting at a new school?

Think about Jacob's question: can imaginary friends have their own imaginary friends?

In Chapter 4, Jacob gives Ray some advice which he doesn't like. Afterwards he reflects saying,

'Sometimes the right advice is the hardest advice to give and harder still to receive.'

Can you think of a time when you have been given some advice that you weren't ready to hear? How did you feel? Did it make you reflect or change your mind in any way?

Think about a time when you have started something new, e.g. a new school, a new club - what did people do to make you feel welcome?

The story highlights the importance of companionship, both in the form of Ray's imaginary friend and in real-life. Who offers you companionship and why are they so special to you?

In 'I am Ray's Imaginary Friend', the theme of refugees and forced displacement are explored through the lens of welcoming people, having empathy and facing anxiety over change. When talking about this book and talking to children about these themes it is important to plan what you want to say before you begin the discussion:

- Always consider what level of detail is appropriate for the age of the children.
- Listen and notice: what are children saying?
- Reassure: if children do feel worried or scared, then tell them that it is okay to feel that way.
- Do something practical - gathering donations for refugee charities might help children feel that they are doing something to help. It also helps to build a sense of social responsibility.

Activities linked to the book:

If you could interview, Ray's imaginary friend, what questions would you ask? Write a list of these. Could you write your own answers based on what you know from the text?

Tell the children they must leave home, with only 10 minutes warning, never to return. They can only take a small backpack. They don't know where they are going or for how long they will be travelling. They can only take 5 items. What have they chosen and why? Was it a difficult decision to choose only 5 items? What was hardest to leave behind?

Borscht is a sour soup common in Eastern Europe - what other Ukrainian recipes can you research and find out about. Perhaps you could make one of the recipes and try it!

'Book-talk' is all about the importance of talking about books, offering ideas and opinions about a text and listening to the ideas of others. It can help deepen your understanding about a book, it can help you to clarify or shift your ideas, your thinking and ultimately aid your comprehension.

Use the grid below to help you think about the important themes in 'Ray's Imaginary Friend'.

Book Talk Grid

<p>What did you like about the book? <i>What caught your attention and made you keep reading?</i></p>	<p>What did you dislike about the book? <i>What put you off reading?</i></p>
<p>Was there anything puzzling? <i>Did you find anything strange or surprising about the book?</i></p>	<p>Did you notice any patterns / connections? <i>Are there any patterns in the book? Did it remind you of anything e.g. a time in your life or another book or character?</i></p>

Exploring vocabulary:

In each chapter of this book written in verse, there is such a lot of wonderful language to unpick and explore. Below are suggested examples of vocabulary within each chapter that you might want to pre-teach and discuss. Teaching children about the important, useful and / or challenging words before they read the text can help them read more fluently and with greater comprehension.



Chapter 1
relevant, a quick laugh, 'the streets seemed to wear a frown', hustle and bustle, conjured, influence

Chapter 2
shallow, translate, banish
Chapter 3
exclusive, adventures

Chapter 4
'ticket to an adventure', scowls, enthusiasm
Chapter 5
'the treble' opinion, momentarily, abandoned

Chapter 6
darkening fields, daydreaming, determined, skilfully, illuminous

Chapter 6
darkening fields, daydreaming, determined, skilfully, illuminous

Chapter 7
reserve, boredom buster, job satisfaction, combat, empathy

Chapter 8
refusal, long periods of silence, refugees, fleeing
Chapter 9
blackened shell, filter, scuttle, frantic, commotion, rambling

Chapter 10
Hermit crab, discard, dimension
Chapter 11
devastated, the minutes drag, disorientated, coping, reassurances, anaesthetic

Chapter 12
nervous, adjust, the only way is forward, grudgingly, limbers you up
Chapter 13
Invasion, featured, finding his feet, cooped up, refugees

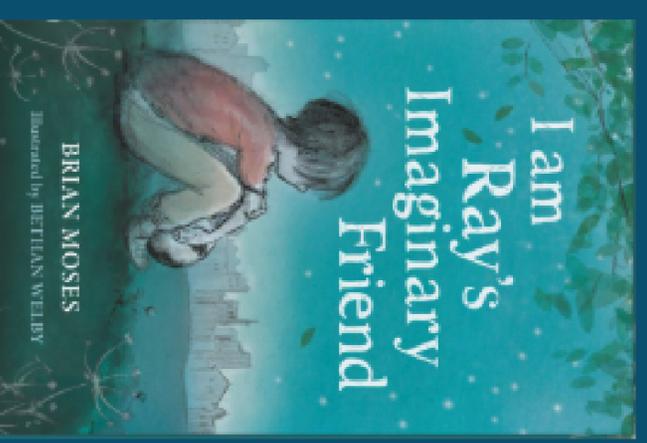
Chapter 14
apprehensive, trauma, exodus, he hangs back
Chapter 15
A language spoken everywhere, haltingly, apprehensive, gratitude, borscht

Chapter 16
Frantic, comrade, optimistic, summoned, empathy, 'crisis of identity', wistful

Chapter 17
Historical sites, laughter is infectious, pang of regret
Chapter 18
chasms of time

Strategies for exploring unfamiliar vocabulary:

- Look at the morphology of words. This is the study of word structure and meaningful parts such as prefixes, suffixes, and root words. Looking at morphology can help readers decode unfamiliar words, build vocabulary, understand spelling, and boost overall comprehension.
- Look at the etymology of words. This is a bit like being a word detective. You study the origin of words which can help to unlock a deeper meaning, and enhance comprehension by connecting unfamiliar words to known parts.
- Look at the orthography of words. The spelling of a word can sometimes give a useful clue as to the meaning of a word.



Jenny Guest is an independent educational consultant and writer alongside her role as an Assistant Headteacher in a large London primary school. She has been a primary school teacher for ages 3-11. Jenny is also an avid reader of children's literature and runs @bookishwaytoplay on Instagram, which aims to showcase and review the very best children's books, as well as create accompanying supportive learning activities for toddlers, preschool and primary school age children.

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