



## Year 8

### Content Focus Unit

#### Shared Reader

#### Skellig

In this content focus unit pupil will have the opportunity to:

- Read aloud to the teacher, a group of pupils or the class and learn how to highlight meaning in a sensitive way, as well as listening to the book being read aloud by others in the class and listening to a commercially produced recording of the text;
- Focus on a small part of the text in order to develop close reading and comprehension skills;
- Read and make use of a wide range of non-narrative reference books and a variety of computer reference materials, including CD-ROMs and the Internet when researching the topic of angels and education;
- Through role-play, explore the situations face by Michael and Mina in the book;
- Respond to the book in writing and to develop skills in using quotations from the text to support their ideas;
- Draw on their own experiences and discuss their experience and their views on education;
- Compare the surface meaning in the text with an implied sub-text in order to recognise clues about characters or actions, and to use the clues to reach conclusions, evaluate and predict what may happen next;
- Write to audiences that are unfamiliar to them;
- Develop their use of dialogue to convey character;



- Encourage wider independent reading during fiction room lessons by recommending books on similar themes or others written by David Almond;
- Write in a variety of forms;
- Use their knowledge of the distinctive ways of organising and expressing ideas and information in persuasive types of non-fiction writing.

With particular reference to NC

Speaking and listening    1a, 1c, 1d

Reading                    1a, 1b, 1c  
                                  2a, 2b

Writing                    1a, 1b, 1c,  
                                  2a, 2b

All pupils will:            Read “Skellig”  
                                  Write a creative story based on the book.  
                                  Write a letter in order to persuade the Headteacher to purchase more copies of the book.  
                                  Deliver a speech on the benefits of education at school or at home.



## Skellig

**Look at the book cover below and answer the following questions.**

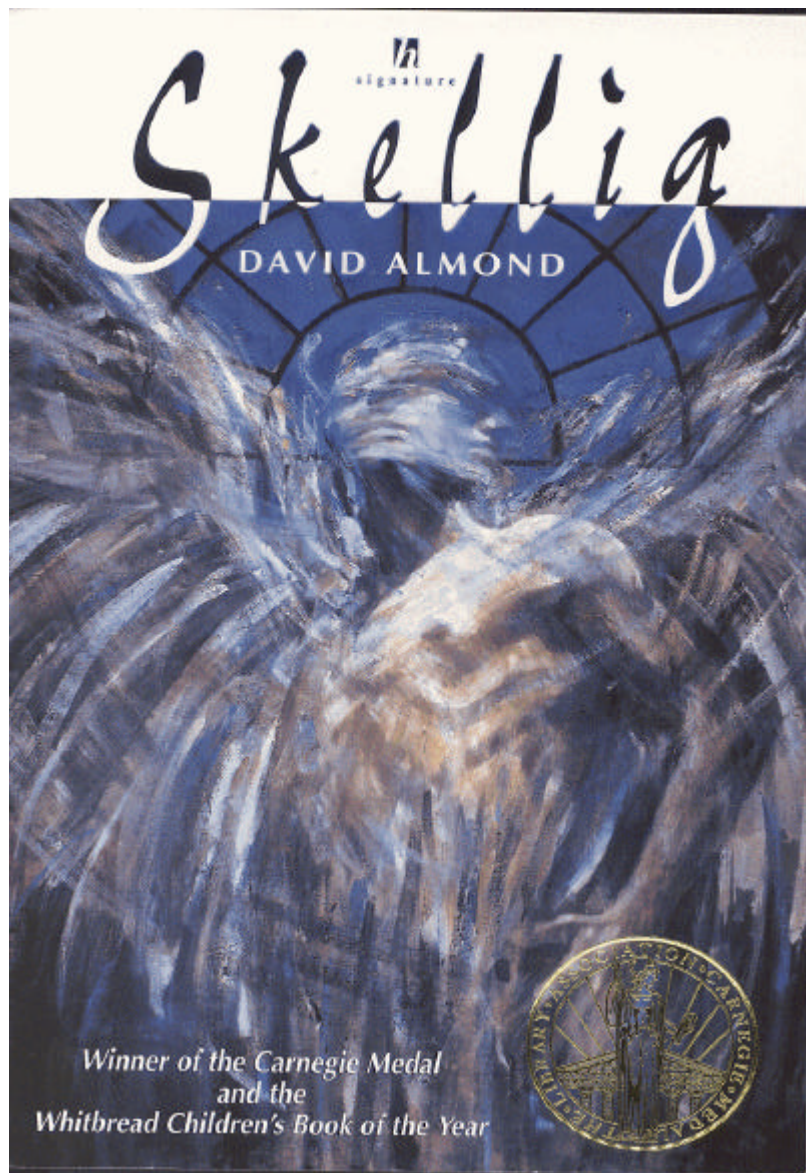
Describe the picture on the cover.

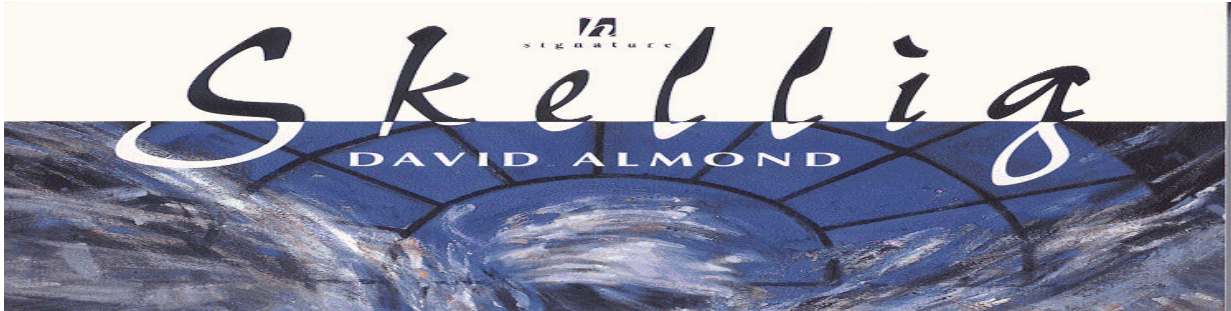
What do you think the title of the book means?

Why do you think the cover includes information about the awards that the book has won?

What do you think this book is going to be about?

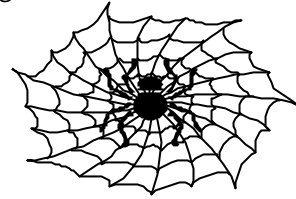
Do you think you are going to enjoy this book? Give reasons for your answer.





Read the first three paragraphs of the book and discuss the following questions.

1. What have you found out about the narrator? Try and think of at least three things.
2. How would you describe the garage? Think of some interesting words that would convey the state of the garage to the reader.
3. What do you think the narrator has found in the garage? What are the other possibilities?
4. What is the book going to be about? Remember it can be about more than one topic. What clues are we given in the first three chapters.
5. Do you think you are going to like or dislike this book?



## Skellig

### Chapter Three

What possible explanations are there for the “man” Michael finds in the garage?

- A tramp
- A burglar
- A ghost of the man who died in the house
- A vision
- A figment of Michael’s imagination
- A dream

Which is the most likely? Give reasons for your answer.

Find quotations from the chapter to support your response.

### Creative Writing Task

Imagine you are Michael. Write about your next encounter with the “man” in the garage. Your description should include paragraphs on the following:

- A description of the garage – remember to try and create a spooky atmosphere. Remember to describe the sights, sounds, smells and things you touch e.g. cobwebs. Look again at David Almond’s description:

“Something little and black scuttled across the floor. The door creaked and cracked for a moment before it was still. Dust poured through the torch beam. Something scratched and scratched in a corner. I tiptoed further in and felt spider webs breaking on my brow. Everything was packed in tight – ancient furniture, kitchen units, rolled-up carpets, pipes and creates and planks.....”

- A description of the “man” – what does he look like? What is he doing?
- A conversation between the two characters – revise how to set out speech. Convey Michael’s feelings about his discovery.
- An explanation – why is this “man” in Michael’s derelict garage. Perhaps the “man” won’t explain his presence.

**Once you have written your piece read chapter four. How does your version compare with the writer’s version? What are the similarities? What are the differences?**



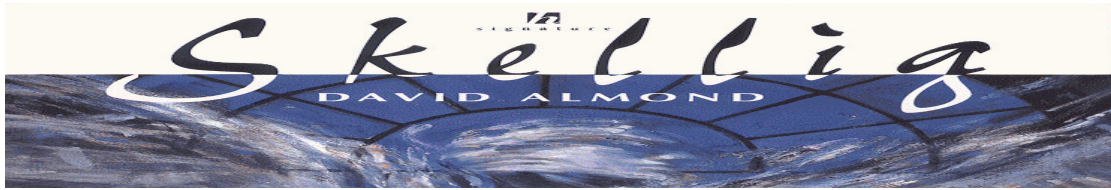


Through out the book many comparisons are made between Mina's education and Michael's education. This theme is highlighted in chapter 23.

In groups look back over what you have read so far copy out the chart into your exercise book and fill in the missing spaces.

Character's name	Page No.	Description of incident	What are they learning?	Quote to support	Positive or negative view?
Michael	12	He is told to behave in a certain way. He describes his day at school and how all the teacher teach in a different way.	To conform and do as they are told. They learn about fractions and about the story of Icarus. That teachers teach in lots of different ways.	"Miss Clarts got tears in her eyes when she told us the story of Icarus.."	Both positive and negative.
Mina	23	She is up in a tree and is drawing pictures of birds.	To look at the world around her more closely.		
	31		About man's earliest descendants		
Mina	48			How can a bird that is born for joy/sit in a cage and sing?	

Look for more examples on page 56, 68 and 84 and add these to your chart.



## Read chapter 23 and 24

Imagine a meeting between Mina and Michael the day after the events in chapter 24. Write their conversation. They will be discussing the events of the previous evening. You will have to think of an appropriate setting and show the different characters' attitudes, concerns and feelings towards Skellig. You will also want to convey what you know about the characters' personalities e.g. Michael is rather quiet and Mina is quite confident. Set it out as a script using the guidelines below.

**Setting (It is mid morning. Michael has not gone to school again and is tidying up the garden. He is in his old clothes with a large pair of gloves on. He is very hot and is surrounded by the weeds he has pulled out. Mina calls to him over the garden fence)**

**MINA:** (Shouting) Hey, Michael, how come you didn't go to school today?  
**MICHAEL:** (Continuing to pull weeds out) I couldn't be bothered.  
**MINA:** That homework didn't put you off?  
**MICHAEL:** No I was just a bit tired after last night...

Remember to:

- Put characters' names in margin, in capitals and follow name with a colon.
- Say how the words should be spoken in brackets
- Describe any stage directions in brackets
- Punctuate the end of sentences
- Do not use speech marks

Your script should be at least three sides long. When you have finished writing it pair up with another person and prepare a performance of the conversation.



# Skellig

## **Task:**

Write a letter to the Headteacher persuading him to buy another class set of the book “Skellig”.

## **Content:**

Remember that your letter should be set out as a letter and in paragraphs. Start a new paragraph for each part of your argument.

1. The purpose of your letter. Give title of book and author.
2. What the book is about - a brief summary of the story. What qualifies you to write the letter.
3. Describe favourite part of book and include a quotation to support what you are saying.
4. Give some information about the author and his other successes.
5. Discuss the characters. Include quotations. How are they like your. Mention things such as age, sex, situation.
6. Themes of the book. Life, death, friendship, families, coping with difficulties, we are not alone.
7. What other people have said about the book:
  - Other English teachers
  - General assistants
  - Other pupils
  - “The Times” newspaper
  - Chairman of the Whitbread judges
8. Awards and price.
9. How well written it is – include quotations and how different it is to other books you might have read.





## Methods of persuasion

Try and think about the ways you persuade your parents/friends when you want something or when you want to do something. It will be important to include these methods in your letter in order to persuade the Headteacher to do what you want. Therefore in your letter you should:

- Flatter the Headteacher – say how wonderful he is and how intelligent he is and assume that he will make the right decision about this matter.
- Exaggerate – exaggerate how good the book is and how much you enjoyed it – don't go too over the top as this would not be convincing.
- Repeat your demands – through out the letter remind the Headteacher what it is you want him to do.
- Other people have – twist the truth a little and claim that other schools are using the book.
- Rhetorical questions – “Should pupils at Brimsham be denied this wonderful opportunity?”
- Cheap – try and make the cost of the book sound excellent value.



## Tone

Remember that you are writing to the Headteacher and therefore it is important that you keep your tone formal. Be respectful and avoid using slang or abbreviations.

You should lay out your letter as shown in the example below:

Your Road  
Your Town  
Your County  
Your Post Code

Today's date in full

The Headteacher

School Name

Town

County

Post Code

Dear Mr .....,

I am writing to you about the book "Skellig" by David Almond that I have recently finished reading in my English lesson..... I have always believed you to be a wise and thoughtful person who, I am sure, will make the right decision regarding this matter...

Yours sincerely,



## Skellig

### DISCUSSION

**In the book Skellig one of the main characters, Mina, is educated at home. How does the book describe her education? Would you like to be educated at home? How does Mina's experience compare to Michael's? How does Mina's work compare to the sort of work you do?**

### TASK

In groups of three prepare a speech either persuading classmates and teachers that education at school is a good thing or prepare a speech persuading classmates and teachers that education at home is a good thing.

The first thing you will need to do is think about all the reasons for your side of the argument. In your groups brainstorm all the reasons why being educated at home or school is a good thing. Make sure that each person contributes to this discussion. You will also need to think of ways of developing your views. Can you think of examples from your own experience or from your reading that would support these reasons.

You will then have the basic structure for your speech. Compare your reasons and supporting evidence. Can you add any more reasons to your brainstorm?

You are now ready to start writing your speech. Do this by looking at the devices below and by developing the points you have made.

### HOMEWORK

Each member of the group will need to do some research. You can find out what parents think about the issue, what other members of the group think about the issue, what teachers and headteachers think about the issue. Someone in your group might like to go on the internet and find out about Education Otherwise a group that promotes education outside the school system. Their address is <http://easyweb.easynet.co.uk/~vanderzwan/>



## **DEVICES**

There are many devices you can use in order to persuade people to your point of view. Make sure you include the following:

- What qualifies you to talk about such a subject? You have been the victim or the beneficiary of the education system along with your audience.
- Stress the importance of the subject – education is vital to every individual therefore it is very important for everyone to get the best education possible, everyone needs to be educated, the livelihood of future generations depends on a well educated workforce.
- Use anecdotal evidence – give examples of positive or negative educational experiences supporting your viewpoint.
- Anticipate the other side of the argument so you can say why they are poor reasons.
- Use examples from the book from Mina's and Michael's experiences of education.
- Use lists to emphasise the good points about your argument.
- Exaggerate the benefits of your side of the argument.

## **REMEMBER**

Set your speech out in paragraphs. In each paragraph make a point and develop it.

Try and use as many of the devices suggested as possible, this will help you make your speech more convincing.

Make sure everyone in your group rehearses the speech so you can put lots of expression into what you say. This will make you sound more convincing.

