

PUFFIN SCHOOLS

**Ages
8+**

INSPIRATION PACK FOR...



Extracts and notes for KS2 teachers & librarians



Puffin Schools

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The Puffin Keeper

Explore themes of:

✓ Heroic Acts ✓ Loneliness ✓ Friendship ✓ Family

Subject Checklist:

✓ Literacy ✓ Creative Writing ✓ Art, Design & Technology ✓ PSHE ✓ Citizenship

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Objectives: Discuss the qualities that make someone a hero; paint a picture of an important person and memory.
- **EXTRACT 2: Loneliness** *(taken from Chapter Two)* **5**
Objectives: Consider the issue of loneliness and how it makes you feel; use the text to come up with Top Tips to combat loneliness in the future.
- **EXTRACT 3: Friendship** *(taken from Chapter Six)* **8**
Objectives: Reflect on the importance of friendship and which qualities make a good friend; create your own 'Building Blocks of Friendship.'
- **EXTRACT 4: Puffin Island** *(taken from Chapter Ten)* **11**
Objectives: Learn about the real-life origins of the text; write a story about an island inspired by *The Puffin Keeper*.

About the book

'One stormy night, a four-masted schooner was driven by angry seas on to the rocks. The sails were soon in tatters, three of her masts broken. She was helpless in the towering waves, and was sinking fast. From high in his lighthouse, Benjamin Postlethwaite saw it all. He knew what he had to do. This was the start of my adventure . . .'

This is a story of a life-changing friendship, a lost puffin, a small boy and a lonely artist. It's the story of an entire lifetime, and how one event can change a life forever. From masterful storyteller, Michael Morpurgo, and world-class illustrator, Benji Davies, comes a magical new story. This truly beautiful tale will enchant readers of all ages.





EXTRACT 1: The Lighthouse Hero *(taken from Chapter One)*

MICHAEL MORPURGO

From high in his lighthouse, Benjamin Postlethwaite saw it all. He heard her timbers grinding and groaning as she settled on the rocks, heard the cries of the people on board. He knew at once what he had to do.



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That night Benjamin Postlethwaite saved thirty lives, men, women and children – my own mother was one of them. And I was one of those children. Allen Williams. Five years old I was. Somehow, and I don't remember how, just before the ship sank, we were all able to clamber down, or jump over on to one of the rocks, where we found ourselves stranded, still at some distance from the shore, with barely room to stand, and at the mercy of huge waves crashing around us, every one of them threatening to wash us away. All Mother and I could do was cling to one another, and hope.

Then, when all hope seemed lost, we saw through the darkness a boat coming for us – one man in a tiny rowing boat that was riding mountainous seas.

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Discussion questions:

- What is the purpose of a lighthouse? Have you ever been to one or seen one?
- What do we learn about Benjamin Postlethwaite in the extract?
- Why might Ben be described as a hero? What qualities does he possess?
- How does this event change Allen's life forever?
- Who in your life would you describe as a hero and why?



Activity: My Hero



- On pages 12–13, Allen states that, ‘Wherever I went in my life after that I took his picture with me, if I could. The memories of that day and what he did for us were to stay with me all my life.’ As a class, discuss why this picture is so important to Allen. How do the illustrations in the book help to bring the story and its characters to life?
- Now it’s your turn to be an artist! Take a few moments to think about someone you see as a hero. Perhaps it is a stranger who performed a courageous act like Ben? Or someone you know very well that performed a small act or gesture at a time you really needed it. Paint an important memory you have of your hero.
- Take part in a ‘show and tell’ with the rest of your class describing your memory and hero. Think about what your heroes have in common and what makes them different. Use this task to remember that heroes come in all shapes and sizes!

EXTRACT 2: Loneliness (taken from Chapter Two)

MICHAEL MORPURGO

I lived in terror of Grandfather. But Grandmother was never nasty to me, mostly just sombre and silent, sitting by the window at her embroidery, at the beck and call of Grandfather. I think she hardly noticed I was there. She was nasty about Mother sometimes, though, they both were, and would call her 'that French woman', when they thought I wasn't listening. I think even as a child I knew that somehow they blamed her for what had happened to Father, who had been their only son.

Mother hated living in that house as much I did, but I knew she had nowhere else to go. When she was feeling better, she would slip softly into my room at night, sit on my bed and read to me; and we would often talk long into the early hours about Father and New York, and about the night the *Pelican* foundered on the rocks, and about Benjamin Postlethwaite,

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and his lighthouse, and his pictures. I would lift up the floorboard and show Mother the picture under the light of her lamp. With the flame flickering on it, the ship seemed to be moving through the waves, and clouds scudding across the skies. Just to look at the picture under that lamplight made me feel as if we were there again in the lighthouse with all the other survivors shivering away our cold in front of Benjamin Postlethwaite's fire.



Discussion questions:

- What does it mean to be lonely? How does loneliness feel?
- Who experiences loneliness in the story? What makes them feel this way?
- Who and what gives Allen comfort in the extract?
- How might you be able to spot if someone is feeling sad and lonely?
What clues could you look for?
- What can we do to be kinder to one another? How will this make the world a better place?

Activity: Top Tips for combating loneliness

- Loneliness isn't a very nice emotion but it is something everyone goes through! The good news is there are lots of things you can do and say to make yourselves and each other feel less lonely!
- To begin with, in pairs, come up with a list of Top Tips of what you can do to feel less lonely. Try to come up with as many as you can. For example, Allen finds reading and painting really helps him.
- Then, look over examples of loneliness from the book in the table. For each example, note down why the character feels this way, and who or what helps them feel less sad and lonely. What else could they try if they feel this way again in the future?
- Go through your ideas together as a class, adding in any nice points you might have missed.
- Whenever you feel lonely, remember your work today and try one of your Top Tips. You might find some help more than others but unless you try you won't know!

Character and quote:	What do they feel and why?	Who and what helps them feel less sad and lonely in the text?	Which Top Tip(s) could they try if they feel this way again in the future?
<p><i>'Mother was not well for much of the time, so there were many weeks when she stayed in her bedroom and I was not allowed to see her. The doctor came to visit her often. I asked how she was, and all he would say was "fragile."</i></p> <p>– Mother, p.18</p>			
<p><i>'How I missed her [Mother] at that boarding school, especially in my first years away, but I loved her letters. I kept them all in my tuck box in the basement of the school. And I kept my picture there too. I would sit for hours sometimes down there, reading her letters and looking at my picture.'</i></p> <p>– Allen, p.27</p>			
<p><i>'We became the best of friends. But Ben had sad days, sad times, when the smile left him, and a sombre silence descended on the lighthouse. I knew then he must be thinking of our puffin, missing him as I [Allen] was.'</i></p> <p>– Ben, p.65–66</p>			

EXTRACT 3: Friendship *(taken from Chapter Six)*

MICHAEL MORPURGO

We lived in a world apart on Puffin Island. We knew that well enough from our visits to the library, or to fetch in supplies. It was in town on St Mary's one day that we found out about the threat of war. It was all anyone was talking about. We didn't pay it much attention.

Back in the lighthouse we never talked about it. It was too troubling, part of a world we were very



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happy not to know, not to be part of.

Ben painted every evening, and I painted with him. I basked in his approval of my efforts. That was how he taught, never with instruction or advice, simply with a nod, or a smile of appreciation.

We talked, we fished, we read, we painted. We became the best of friends. But Ben had sad days, sad times, dark times, when the smile left him, and a sombre silence descended on the

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Discussion questions:

- Why are friendships so important? What do they give us?
- What do Allen and Ben have in common? How does this help them become friends?
- What threat do they try to avoid together on Puffin Island? What do you know about this historic period?
- How does the puffin become a friend to them both?
- What qualities do you look for in a friend? What makes you a good friend?

Activity: Building blocks of friendship

- No two friendships are exactly the same, but we tend to look for similar qualities in our friends. It might be personal traits like being kind or having hobbies or interests in common. We can think about these things as like building blocks that all come together to make a strong friendship.
- Together, discuss and note down what you look for in a friend. Think about which qualities and traits are the most important to you.
- In each block on the friendship wall, write an item from your list. The bigger the block, the more you value the quality! Colour in and add illustrations to your blocks, maybe even putting stars by the top three most important blocks of friendship.
- Take this home and put it on display (checking with a member of your family first!) Refer back to your building blocks of friendship and see if your thoughts and feelings about friendship change at all over time.



Activity: Building blocks of friendship



EXTRACT 4: Puffin Island (taken from Chapter Ten)

MICHAEL MORPURGO

We have more visitors on the island these days. But they don't go near the headland where all the puffins live, and neither do we. The Puffin Keeper's Law, we call it. We leave the puffins be.

The visitors buy my pictures, and sometimes the books that I write, and Clare illustrates. She grows vegetables too, the best potatoes in the world, and she keeps bees that make the best heather honey in the world. Often I tell the stories I'm writing to my children. At the moment they like best the one I've just written, called 'The Puffin Keeper'. The one you've just been reading.

I paint puffins more than ships these days. Ben used to tell me I was a fine artist. He was being kind. Ben was the real artist. You can find Ben's pictures in galleries everywhere, all over

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the world. No one paints as he did. He became quite famous before he died. But, as he said, he never cared for medals and the like. He wasn't like that. He always said he lived for his puffins and his lighthouse, his pictures, and his family. And we were his family. We are his family.



Discussion questions:

- How do each of the characters find happiness and peace on Puffin Island?
- What is special about this island? Why is it called *Puffin Island*?
- Who was Allen Williams Lane? What is he known for?
- What is special or magical about the text, *The Puffin Keeper*?
- What have you learnt from this story? Which story would you like to read next?

Activity: The Island

- On page 31, Allen reflects on the fact that the books he loved ‘were mostly about islands or lighthouses or ships – *Treasure Island*, *The Coral Island* and *Moby Dick*.’ With a partner, have a chat about if you have read any of these books? Have you read any other stories about an island, lighthouse, or a ship? If so, what did you like about them?
- Cut out each of the boxes below then fold them into squares so you can’t see what is written on them. Then place them into a box or pencil case. Take it in turns with your partner to pick out each of the pieces of paper blind until they are all gone. You now have five details each to help you plan your own story about an island!
- Making sure that you don’t just re-write *The Puffin Keeper*, plan the beginning, middle, and end of your story before you start writing it up in best. Think about your characters, setting, and the events that will unfold.
- Share your stories together and talk about what inspired them.



Activity: The Island

CUT along the **LINES!** 
Always get an adult to help when using scissors.

A ship gets
into trouble

A painting is an
important object

An animal or bird
becomes a friend

A stranger becomes
a hero

A lighthouse is an
important setting

A character
experiences
loneliness

You escape from
war or danger

A family member
finds happiness

An event or
experience changes
everything

The island
becomes a home