

Reading Thematic Overview

'The King who banned the dark' – Emily Haworth-Booth

The King Who Banned the Dark is a delightful story about a king who attempts to eradicate all darkness from his kingdom. Throughout his journey, he learns that both light and dark are essential for maintaining balance and helping us to better understand the world.

English

The book functions almost as a modern myth or fable, telling the story of a king who tries to ban the dark out of fear. Pupils can explore traditional features of myths: a central character with a flaw, an exaggerated premise (banning the dark), and a moral lesson (accepting what we fear). The king's campaign against the dark offers a rich opportunity for pupils to write formal reports. Pupils could write newspaper reports about the king's new law banning darkness or create non-chronological reports about "The Kingdom of Light," using subheadings, captions, and factual language.

Technology

The thematic focus on darkness and artificial light ties in seamlessly with building understanding of electrical circuits. Pupils can explore how torches work, including simple circuits with bulbs, batteries, switches, and conductors. Design and build their own working torch or nightlight and then evaluate the efficiency and safety of different designs, linking to the king's attempts to "light up" his world.

Geography

Although the book doesn't specifically mention rainforests, the concepts of light and dark relate to the significance of ecosystems like rainforests. These ecosystems rely on a combination of sunlight and shade to support the variety of plants and animals that inhabit them. This can lead to discussions about biodiversity, the crucial role of rainforests in our world, and how human activities impact these vital environments.

Science

Although not explicitly about plants, the setting shifts between natural day and artificial light, allowing pupils to explore the importance of light for plants to grow and investigations into how plants respond to changes in light (linking to photosynthesis at a basic level). The king uses various devices and tools to get rid of the dark, which could spark investigations into how torches work, and the forces involved in circuits and magnets and their use in fastening torches or light sources to different surfaces.

Art

The book's distinctive illustrations play with light and shadow, geometric shapes, and silhouettes. Pupils can explore creating abstract art using light/dark contrast. Investigate shapes, lines, and space to portray the transition from night to day. Inspired by the citizens' rebellion against constant light, pupils could design and make festival headdresses to celebrate the return of the dark.

History

This story can inspire engaging discussions about how early humans adapted to their surroundings. Pupils can reflect on how people lived with natural light and darkness, how they invented tools to alter their environments, and the significance of fire in their daily lives. The book features a king who makes the significant decision to eliminate darkness, which opens up conversations about the roles of kings and queens throughout history.

