

Reading Thematic Overview

'A Dangerous Crossing' – Jane Mitchell

A Dangerous Crossing by Jane Mitchell tells the gripping story of Joseph, a young boy who embarks on a perilous journey across the sea in search of a better life, confronting the harsh realities of migration, displacement, and the effects of colonialism during the turbulent period of the British Empire and the Industrial Revolution..

English

A Dangerous Crossing explores themes of power, identity, displacement, and the struggle for justice—making it a powerful lens through which to access Shakespeare's work. The idea of characters navigating oppressive systems and internal conflict mirrors the experiences of Shakespearean protagonists such as Macbeth or Caliban in *The Tempest*. Similarly, the novel's portrayal of dangerous, uncertain futures and controlled environments resonates with dystopian fiction, helping pupils grasp how writers use setting, tension, and character to critique society.

Technology

The novel's focus on survival and travel provides a creative springboard into design challenges such as creating functional products for people on the move (e.g. wearable items, compact shelters, or multifunctional bags). In the context of *Street Food & Bushtucker*, pupils can explore how displaced people adapt to new environments using local ingredients and survival knowledge—designing food products that are nutritious, portable, and culturally sensitive.

Geography

The idea of "what happens where land meets sea" is clear in Joseph's risky journey across the water, representing the difficulties and unknowns faced by people during the British Empire and the Industrial Revolution. The book's coastal locations show how important trade routes and transport were for the British Empire and its industrial growth. The coast acts as a place where different cultures come together and trade happens, emphasizing how land and sea are linked.

Science

The refugees' journey can be used to explore real-world science, such as energy transfer in survival contexts—keeping warm, staying cool, or using limited resources efficiently. The novel's vivid settings also create entry points into Earth & Space: pupils can examine geographical positioning, navigation by the stars, time zones, and the Earth's rotation in the context of travel across continents and seas. These links make abstract science concepts feel immediate and relevant.

Art

The cultural identities and histories of the characters in *A Dangerous Crossing* can inspire pupils to explore printmaking through tribal patterns and tattoo symbolism. Pupils can investigate how traditional and modern forms of body art are used for storytelling, status, belonging, and memory—then respond artistically by designing their own prints that reflect themes of migration, heritage, and identity.

History

Set during the rise of the British Empire, the story follows Joseph, whose life is shaped by colonial rule and the search for a better future. It explores how imperialism led to displacement, exploitation, and the loss of culture for many communities. The novel also reflects the impact of the Industrial Revolution, showing how economic changes caused hardship for the working class. Joseph's move from countryside to city highlights the struggles of those affected by poverty, inequality, and harsh working conditions.

