

## Toby and the Silver Blood Witches - A Unit of Work

### OVERVIEW OF UNIT

SESSION	TITLE	WRITING OPPORTUNITY	RESOURCE SHEET	SLIDES
1	BOOK INTRODUCTION		1	1, 2, 3, 4
2	GETTING TO KNOW TOBY			5, 6, 7
3	WHO'S IN THE ATTIC?			8, 9, 10, 11
4	THE NOTE	1		12
5	THE LANGUAGE OF WITCHES	2		13, 14
6	BUMBLE'S STORY		2	
7	A RESCUE MISSION		3	15
8	DACKER AND CO.	3	4, 5, 6	16, 17
9	LITTLE WITCHERY		7	18, 19
10	A TEST FOR TOBY	4		20, 21
11	THE KEY			22
12	HOW FUNNY IS THAT?		8	23
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## Toby and the Silver Blood Wizards - Unit of Work

### Session 1 – Book Introduction

Without revealing the illustration on the front cover, and showing **Slide 2**, read all the text from the back of the book to the class.

What effect does the wording have on the children, how does it make them feel?  
How has the author achieved this effect (e.g. layout, alliteration, questions, suspense)?

What questions does this text raise in the children's minds?  
Encourage the children to start their questions with, "I wonder", e.g. "I wonder who lives up in the sky", "I wonder what's beyond the garden hedge", "I wonder what is endangering a girl's life"?

Discuss possible answers and what the story might be about.

#### Activity

Children could be tasked with collaborating in small groups to record their questions.  
If time allows, groups could swap question sheets and create answers.

Without revealing the front cover, read aloud the phrase from the front cover, *'When adventure crash-lands in your attic'*.  
What might this mean?

Now reveal the front cover and inform the children of the names of the author and the illustrator.  
Teachers may wish to refer to the information about the author at the back of the book.

What is the overall impact on the children of the illustration on the cover?  
How does it make them feel about the book?  
How has the artist achieved this (e.g. colour, facial expression, the window)?

Has the illustration provided answers to some of their initial questions (i.e. those inspired earlier by the back cover)?  
Which ones?

Showing **Slide 3**, ask the children to use the phrases, 'I observe', 'I wonder', 'I infer' and 'I predict' to give a response to the illustration. Encourage the children to give reasons for their inferences and their predictions.

### Activity

Provide children individually, or as partners or small groups, with a copy of the illustration on the front cover (**Resource Sheet 1**) and ask them to record some of their observations, questions, inferences and predictions around the illustration.

Different coloured pens could be used for these four categories.

These could be displayed on the reading wall.

Showing **Slide 4**, the map, ask the children to share with their talk partners anything they see/notice.

As a class, take feedback and consider the labelling:

What might the initials 'SMI' stand for? Why might the author not be revealing this yet?

Where is the phrase 'No man's land' usually used? What atmosphere does the use of this phrase create?

What else is there in the image that adds to the threatening atmosphere?

Establish that the map in this book is a graphic representation of the setting. It is being used to evoke an atmosphere, just as an author might use a written description of a setting.

What is a map drawn from above usually called?

Why might the author have changed it to 'bat's eye view'?

Do you think the bat might be an important character in the story?

Does the change to 'bat's eye view' lighten the threatening atmosphere by introducing humour?

Does it look like your street?

Would you like to live here?

Encourage pupils to give reasons for their answers.

Do the pupils know of other stories where the author has used a map (e.g. Vashti Hardy's 'Wildspark', Michelle Harrison's 'A Pinch of Magic' – downloadable map at [www.michelleharrisonbooks.com/book/a-pinch-of-magic/](http://www.michelleharrisonbooks.com/book/a-pinch-of-magic/))?

What might be the purpose of the maps in other books (e.g. to provide clarity for the reader about a journey)?

**Outside the literacy sessions, read aloud Chapters 1 and 2 to the class.**

### Session 2 – Getting to know Toby

Referring back to the children's ideas in Session 1 about the initials SMI, identify whether their guesses were correct.

Remind the children that in Session 1 the author used graphics to describe the setting.

Show **Slide 5** and explain that the author has now used words as well to further describe the setting and develop the threatening atmosphere.

As a class, explore how the author's words help create the threatening atmosphere (e.g. 'loomed', 'what lay beyond', 'razor-sharp', 'silent silhouette').

Explain that the author has also used a description of the weather to evoke a threatening atmosphere. (This story opens in the middle of a heatwave which adds to Toby's feeling of claustrophobia. The thunderstorm too is menacing).

### **Activity**

Ask the children to sketch an image of Toby. The sketch should be in the middle of the paper, with space around the portrait and within it. Encourage them to share their sketches with one another and to comment on how they imagined Toby and why.

Together, draw out information about Toby from the text.

Discuss which information is an explicit fact and which information can be inferred from what the author shows us (e.g. from '*rickety bench and plant pots full of weeds*', we can infer that Toby is in a family where there is no one to take care of the garden).

Use **Slide 6** to collect information about Toby's character and the evidence children have for this.

### **Activity**

Ask children now to add to their sketches. They should write their ideas about Toby's physical appearance around the portraits (e.g. his white tuft of hair) and their ideas about his personality within the outline.

N.B. Children will meet more description of Toby's physical appearance on pages 36 and 37, which could then be added to their sketches.

Show **Slide 7** and explain that this is a brief character study written by the author for her website. Establish that in the story, we don't just hear about the appearance and personality of the characters but also their emotions.

Why does Toby feel that he doesn't want an adventure?

How else is Toby feeling in chapters one and two (e.g. on page eleven when he first scores a point against Dacker and Boz with his accurate throw, on page twelve when he realizes that he did nothing about the girl screaming at the window)?

## **Session 3 – Who's in the Attic?**

**Read pages 17-18 of Chapter 3, up to "or rats?"** and discuss with the children what might be living in the attic.

Do they ever hear sounds in their own houses?

How does that make them feel?

How does Toby feel?

What more do we now know about Toby from these pages?

Show **Slide 8** and explain that this is where the author is introducing another character. Establish that first impressions of a character can have a strong impact on the reader and so authors must keep this in mind and choose their words carefully.

What words do you think the author chose for the blanks?  
Generate words to fill the gaps.

Using **Slide 9**, reveal the original passage and compare with the children's ideas.  
Are the words they chose synonymous with the author's?

Discuss why the author made these choices.  
What has she conveyed to the reader about this character through her choice of words (e.g. *'bundle'*, *'brightly'*, *'peeked'*, *'horror'*, *'swivelled'*, *'black'*, *'lying'*)?

Remind the children that a new character is being introduced here so the author must grab the reader's attention.

How has the author achieved this? (e.g. By showing rather than telling – the author doesn't say, "She had squinting eyes and a button nose.").

### **Read aloud the rest of Chapter 3.**

What does this make the children feel about the character?  
Does she seem to be a villain or a friend? Why?  
Which words or phrases are contributing to your decision?

#### **Activity**

Designate one side of the classroom for those who think Bumble is a friend and the other for those who think she is a villain.

Ask the children to decide what they think and then to move to the appropriate side of the classroom.

Partner each child with one from the opposing side.

Ask the children to tell their partner what they think and to try to persuade their partner to their own point of view.

#### **Activity**

Showing **Slide 10** of some of the artist's draft sketches, ask the children to draw a sketch of Bumble's face entitled 'friend' or 'villain' for the reading wall.

The sketch should show the appropriate expression.

Show **Slide 11**, explaining that this is a brief character study from the author's website.

Through discussion, distinguish between what the children already knew about Bumble and what is added by this passage.

Explain that authors might choose to reveal a character's true nature when he/she is first introduced or might instead mislead the reader.

Which choice has Sally Doherty made in her first introduction of Bumble?

Can the children think of a why an author might mislead a reader (e.g. to keep the reader in suspense)?

Does Bumble fit with the children's idea of a witch?

How are witches represented in other books that the children know?

**Outside the literacy sessions, read Chapter 4 to the class.**

#### **Session 4 - The Note**

**Read the first paragraph of Chapter 5** to the class.

Provide a hand written, crumpled copy of the note to each group to replicate the message to Toby from Dacker on P. 29 and ask them to read the note.

As a class, discuss how Toby must have felt when he read the note.

Now **read aloud the three sentences following the note on page 29** (*"He didn't want...be even worse"*)

#### **Activity**

Ask the children to talk in their small groups about Toby's dilemma and what else he could do instead of going.

The group should decide whether Toby ought to go or not.

As a class, take feedback about what else Toby could do and whether he should go.

#### **Activity**

Hot seat a child to represent Toby.

The other children can now ask Toby questions about how he feels and what he is going to do. Prior to the hot seating, children could be tasked in their groups with preparing some questions for Toby (e.g. Are you worried about leaving your mum alone at night? What will you do if you get caught?)

If time, Jazz could also be hot seated to find out what she thinks about Toby going to meet Dacker.

#### **Writing opportunity 1**

Using **Slide 12**, discuss the fact that the tone of the note is threatening and identify the language techniques the author has used to achieve this.

What if Toby decided to meet Dacker and Boz but left a note for Bumble in case she is magical and can help him if he's in trouble?

What tone would he use?

Can the children achieve this in their writing?

What if Jazz were to write Toby a note persuading him not to go or to let her go with him.

What tone would she use?

Can the children achieve this in their writing?

Ask the children to choose one of these notes to write

Finish by **reading aloud the rest of Chapter 5.**

Outside the literacy sessions, read aloud Chapters 6, 7 and 8 to the class.

## Session 5 – The Language of Witches

Showing **Slide 13**, explain to the children that these are new words specifically created by the author for the world of the witches.

Which have already come up in the chapters read so far?

How appropriate do they think these are (e.g. 'bat' in German is 'Fledermaus' which means 'fluttermouse')?

Which words on the slide have they not met yet?

What might they mean?

Encourage the children to look at individual parts of the words to devise possible meanings.

### Activity

Share out the words they have not yet met between partners or groups and ask the children to brainstorm possible meanings around their allocated word, on large sheets of paper.

Take feedback of the children's ideas which could be displayed on the reading wall.

Explain that these will be returned to later in the story.

Do the children know of other authors who have made up words (e.g. Roald Dahl, particularly in 'The BFG' – *whizzpopper*, *figglers*, *rummytrot*, *frumpkin fry* and many more, some that have even made it into the OED)?

Establish that authors of fantasy worlds often create language to make their world more vivid and more believable.

Explain that authors also add other unusual aspects to their worlds for the same reason (e.g. rules, systems, history, food, buildings) and that the children will meet these later in the book.

Show **Slide 14** to remind children of some of the other forms of language that the author has created for the characters.

Establish that these are the spells Bumble has used.

Has Toby been convinced that magic exists now that he's seen these spells at work?

Encourage the children to have fun reading these aloud with the expression that Bumble might use.

Establish that these are actually a form of poetry.

Identify the rhyme schemes and rhythms (these may need clapping out).

Do all three poems have the same rhyme schemes and rhythms?

What examples of spells have children met in other books?

Establish that sometimes single words or phrases are used (e.g. in Harry Potter books – '*aberto*', '*evanesco*').

Why might Sally Doherty have chosen to write her spells in the way she has (they have a fairy tale quality to them, making it more difficult for Toby to work out whether the magic is real or a figment of his imagination)?

### Writing Opportunity 2

What other forms of poetry do children know that might work as a spell (e.g. rhyming couplets, haiku)?

Children could ask their partner to write a spell for them (maybe so that something they don't enjoy doing is done for them, or to gratify a wish of theirs)

Children could choose the format they use for the spell and these could be collected in a class book of spells.

Do the children want to read them aloud to the class/perform them?

Should they be chanted?

### Session 6 - Bumble's Story

**Read Chapter 9** to the class **as far as the bottom paragraph of page 66**, ending with the words, *"left out of a big secret."*

Using **Resource Sheet 2**, children could be involved in reading the text as a play script, with parts for the three witches, a narrator, Toby and his mother.

Encourage the children to read in character and with the appropriate expression.

Can the children identify any vocabulary or phraseology that is in keeping with each of the different characters (e.g. *"and so it was"* – Willow, *"having a bit of a sit down"* – Bumble)?

#### Activity

Children could write words or phrases they find that suit Bumble or Willow on post-its and stick them on the reading wall under the picture of the appropriate character.

Finish by **reading the rest of Chapter 9**.

**Outside the literacy sessions, read aloud Chapters 10 and 11 to the class.**

### Session 7 – A Rescue Mission

Tell children that in small groups, although Toby has not yet decided whether to help the witches or not, they are going to plan and prepare a possible rescue mission for him to undertake.

As a class, make a list of what they already know about the SMI to help them with their preparations.

#### Show Slide 15.

In their groups, children should list who the mission will involve, training required, key equipment, timings, a distress signal, any magic needed to be used, etc.

Children could jot their plans around enlarged copies of the SMI site (**Resource Sheet 3**) or maybe make their own designs/maps.

The groups will report back to the class and justify their plans based on information they have gathered from the story so far.

N.B. By the end of Chapter 12, the children will have learnt more about the SMI and could amend their plans accordingly.

Finally, as a class, discuss what Toby might find out about the SMI in Chapter 12 (e.g. will the SMI gun detect Toby just like it does the witches?).

**Outside the literacy sessions, read aloud Chapters 12 and 13.**

### **Session 8 – Dacker and Co.**

**Read Chapter 14** to the class as far as the last paragraph on page 107, *“a little easier”*

Explain to the class that in this session they are going to be thinking about the part of the story that involves Dacker and Boz. They will be considering what Dacker and Boz contribute to the plot and their characterisation.

#### **Activity**

Provide children with **Resource Sheet 4** which lists Toby’s encounters with the boys so far. Ask the children to sequence the sentences in the correct order.

Take feedback, organising the sentences correctly.

Establish with the class that despite the bullying, Toby has now scored points against Dacker and Boz three times.

Soon Toby has to meet Dacker and Boz again.

What do you think they want him to do at Mr. McClean’s house?

Do the children think that Toby is finally going to win against them? Why?

Does Toby fit with their idea of a hero? Compare and contrast with heroes in other stories that the children know.

Show **Slide 16**, the story mountain, and explain that Toby’s encounters with Dacker and Boz are not the main plot but a sub-plot. They are part of the build-up to the main climax. During the build-up, a character can struggle with a series of problems.

What are Toby’s other problems (e.g. a desperate woman at the SMI window, giving up his place in the football team, not knowing anything about his father)?

Teachers could scribe children’s ideas on the left-hand side of the story mountain.

How would the children feel in these situations?

The author told us early in the story that Toby deals with his emotions by suppressing them and not connecting with other people.

Do the children think that he is beginning to change?

What evidence do they have?

With the class, read the four questions on **Slide 17** and explain that these are some of the questions an author might ask herself when she wants to make up a character.

Ask the children what they can remember about Boz under each of the headings on the slide.

Establish that children who treat others meanly are sometimes described in other books as looking the same as Boz.

Why might an author choose to use a stereotype (e.g. to make the character instantly recognisable to the reader, particularly when the character is a secondary one)?

Teachers may wish to expand on the dangers of stereotyping – not everyone who looks like Boz is mean to others.

Provide children with **Resource Sheet 5** which has quotations about Dacker showing the way he moves, the way he speaks, his physical appearance and his facial expressions.

With the class, read through the descriptors and establish that Dacker is less stereotypical than Boz.

Now identify with the children the precise vocabulary that the author has used in her descriptions to paint a clear picture of Dacker.

### **Activity**

Remind the children that Dacker came to the park not just with Boz but with a group of other friends as well.

Working in pairs, children should now make up together what one of Dacker's other friends might be like and be ready to present their idea to the class.

They should decide on a name, how their imagined person moves and speaks, their physical appearance and facial expressions.

Encourage the children to choose precise vocabulary that accurately describes their person.

When they have practised their presentation, they can present their idea of Dacker's friend to the class.

Teachers could ask one of each pair to take on the role of the friend and one to provide the commentary.

Ask the other children to listen for the precise vocabulary that is being used.

Teachers may choose for these creations to be drawn, at another time, and added to the Reading Wall.

Remind the children that the narrative about Dacker and Boz is not the main plot.

**Read the last paragraph of Chapter 14** on page 107, asking the children to listen for a reason why the author may have included this subplot

Take feedback and establish that the subplot provides extra motivation for Toby to enter the SMI.

### Writing Opportunity 3

Teachers could explore Toby's voice with the children and then ask them to write a diary entry in his voice. Children could be given the choice of which event to write about. These could be put together to make a class diary for Toby.

If needed, **Resource Sheet 6** provides a brief overview of events up to the end of Chapter 14.

**Outside the literacy sessions read aloud Chapter 15.**

### Session 9 – Little Witchery

Explain to the class that you are going to **read Chapter 16** to them and you want them to consider how Toby is feeling as you read.

After reading, establish that Toby's emotions vary from one event to the next.

#### Activity

Ask the children to work in pairs, and provide each pair with some of the text of Chapter 16 so that all of it is covered (**Resource Sheet 7**). Children should highlight the text whenever they think Toby may be feeling emotional, using two different colours for positive and negative emotions.

They should annotate their highlighted text with words to describe Toby's emotions.

Showing **Slide 18**, take feedback, listing in one of two columns (positive or negative) the adjectives the children have used. Explore whether Toby is feeling more negative or more positive in this chapter.

Introduce the idea that some of the adjectives listed may have similar meanings but be different degrees of intensity.

With the children, pick out a few adjectives that are similar.

These could be written onto a zone of relevance (**Slide 19**), ordering them from weakest to strongest, with the most intense emotion in the middle.

Discuss as a class how the children would feel in Toby's situation.

Do they think he is safe?

Can he trust the witches?

Will he be able to get back home?

Point out to the children that the author has written a strong setting description of Little Witchery in this chapter to make it vivid and believable to the reader.

Together remind yourselves of some of the things Toby noticed there.

This is a fantasy world with its own rules, systems, food, weather ...

For a reader, fantasy worlds can provide an escape.

Introduce the idea that it is a great contrast to the world Toby normally inhabits.

Teachers may choose to remind children that there have been times in the book when Toby has been under a lot of pressure as a young carer and has felt very angry.

Do they consequently think that living in this world might appeal to Toby as a form of escape?

## Session 10 – A Test for Toby?

**Read Chapter 17** to the class.

Discuss whether the children think Willow was purposely testing Toby's trustworthiness in this chapter.

Why might she have done that?

Would she have been right to do so? (Reference could be made to Willow's position of responsibility in Little Witchery and to the use of her powers against Toby).

Read **Slide 20**, the author's character sketch of Willow.

Do the children think this is an accurate description?

Can they give examples of Willow's behaviour or speech which support their opinion?

Are there other characteristics that should be added?

### Slide 21

The children could try the author's character quiz

<https://quiz.tryinteract.com/#/618675f00ed91c00185d3f05>

Look at how the character quiz has been constructed to stream character traits to reach an appropriate outcome.

### Writing opportunity 4

Children could make their own character quiz for a book from class or individual reading and try it out on a partner.

**Outside the literacy sessions, read aloud Chapter 18 to the class.**

## Session 11 – The Key

**Read the start of Chapter 19** to the class, stopping near the top of page 144, immediately after the words, "*said the second voice.*"

### Activity

Showing **Slide 22**, ask the children to work in groups of three, with one of the group representing Toby and the other two representing the two voices.

Can they make up a short play scene where the two voices are trying to persuade Toby to turn the key, or not?

They could perform their scenes to the rest of the class.

**Read the rest of Chapter 19 and Chapter 20 as far as page 149**, "*strode out of the office.*"

Discuss with the children whether Toby should have turned the key and what he learnt from doing so.

Do they think this will influence how he sees the witches and the decision he must make about helping them?

Do they think Willow left the cupboard open on purpose?

Would the children like to go back in time? Why?

### Session 12 – How Funny is that?

**Read the rest of chapter 20** from page 149, “*strode out of the office*”, **and chapter 21 up to page 164**, “made the decision, haven’t you?”

Discuss what Toby’s decision might be.

Will he help the witches?

Why might he be reluctant?

Why might he think it would be right to help them?

Take a class vote on whether Toby is going to help the witches or not. Teachers may choose to make this a formalized procedure.

#### **Read on to the end of chapter 21**

Explain to the children that the story is now reaching its climax and this is where authors build in a lot of tension.

What techniques do authors use to relieve the tension at times?

#### **Activity**

Showing **Slide 23**, provide children with **Resource Sheet 8** of humorous sentences.

Ask them to work with a partner, or in a small group, and rate the sentences according to how funny they think they are.

Children can show their ratings by the number of laughing faces they attribute to each sentence or they could devise emojis that represent different levels of humour.

Take feedback as a class, comparing the children’s opinions.

Does the author help readers warm to Toby by making him funny at times?

#### **Outside the literacy sessions, read aloud Chapters 22-27**

### Session 13 – Figurative v. Literal

Begin by using **Slide 24** to consider the author’s use of figurative language.

Which sentence is a simile and which a metaphor?

Which contains personification?

These are tense moments.

How has the author used these images to heighten the tension (e.g. because Toby is likened to a rabbit, the reader is made to feel that he is weak and may not win, because the word ‘dead’ is

used, the reader is made to feel that Toby may not survive, the personification of the fire creates a stronger image and makes it feel more immediate and real)?

Showing **Slide 13**, remind the children that the author has created vocabulary specific to the world of the witches.

Have they now met all of these words and phrases?

Do they know what they all mean?

Introduce the idea that definitions should not be written in figurative but in literal language to show their meaning as clearly as possible.

#### **Activity**

Ask the children to write definitions for some of the witches' vocabulary.

The words could be split between the children and then collated to make a class glossary.

**Outside the literacy sessions, read aloud from Chapter 28 to the end of the book.**

### **Session 14 – Graphic Planning**

#### **Drawing and writing opportunity 5**

Ask the children to work with a talk partner to remind themselves of the story.

Discuss as a class the parts of the story which they enjoyed and which did not appeal so much.

Showing **Slide 25**, explain to the children that they are going to collaborate as a class to make a graphic plan which could be used by a director in making a film of the book.

Allocate different parts of the story to different individuals, taking into account their preferences. The children should work in two modes – drawings and writing. Speech and thought bubbles can be added and director notes.

The results could add to a display of Toby and the Silver Blood Witches

### **Further Reading Group Questions**

See **Slides 26 and 27**