

Jojo's Story

Aims:

- To introduce key themes of the book.
- To introduce students to key vocabulary.
- To stimulate students to read the book.

1 Ask students to think about a ten-year-old boy or girl, maybe one that they know. What kind of life do they have? What kind of decisions do they have to make every day?

Possible answers: Which friends they play with; which toys they play with; which shoes they wear; what time they do their homework.

2 Ask students to read the Blurb (see handout opposite). How is the life of this ten-year-old different? What kind of decisions will he now have to make?

Elicit ideas about what could have happened.

Possible answers: He can't get food from his parents; his school probably doesn't exist and the teachers are dead; he hasn't any friends to play with. Earthquake or some other natural disaster, or war. Where to go, how to eat, etc.

3 Tell the students that the boy is a victim of war. Start a class discussion on the effects of war on people. Use pictures if you have suitable ones.

4 Tell the students that they are going to read about the effects of war on Jojo. Ask the students to work in groups of three or four. Using the Blurb and the People in the story (see handout) as a starting point, ask them to think of some ideas about what happens to Jojo next. Take feedback.

Possible answers: Find people/relatives in another village; go to a home for children; wait for or find UN soldiers. Just take ideas for the moment. Tell students that they'll find out later.

5 Tell students that there are quite a few different animals in the story, as Jojo lived on a farm in a village. Ask students to work in small groups and describe the following animals in English. For any they can't, they can use their own language. Animals: chicken, snake, toad, mole, rat, fish, goat, mouse, duck, horse, fly, dog.

Elicit or give the meaning of 'stable'. Which of the animals would you usually find in a stable?

Answer: horse, though you might also find a mouse or even a rat

Alternatives: You can also ask students to look them up in a picture dictionary or (for younger students) ask them to draw the animals.

6 Ask students to read Extracts 1–4 (about what happens to Jojo) and say whether the following statements are true or false.

- a All Jojo's family is dead.
- b Jojo is a man.
- c Jojo hides in the stable.
- d There are mice in the stable.
- e Jojo's horse is dead.
- f UN soldiers come and find Jojo.
- g They come in a lorry.
- h Chris is also a soldier.
- i Jojo is not dead because he fought.
- j The soldiers give Jojo some food.

Answers:

- a T
- b F (he's only ten)
- c T
- d T
- e F
- f T (the blue hats are a clue for UN)
- g T
- h F (he's a photographer – 'the man with the cameras')
- i F (he's not dead because he was in the fields when the men came)
- j T (rice and beans)

7 Ask students what they think happens to Jojo in the story. Elicit ideas.

Possible answers: Jojo goes back to England with Chris; he stays at the Children's House; etc.

8 If you have the books, hand them out and start reading to find out.

Jojo's Story

Blurb

'There aren't any more days. There's just time. Time when it's dark and time when it's light. Everything is dead, so why not days too?'

Everyone in Jojo's village is dead, and ten-year-old Jojo is alone.

People in the story

Jojo: a ten-year-old boy

Chris: takes photographs and writes for an English newspaper

Doctor Nicky: the doctor at the Children's House

Duck: a UN soldier

Red: a boy

A friend of Jojo's brother

Extract 1

Everyone in the village is dead. There's only me now and I don't know what to do.

I'm not in our house. I went into our house after the men went away. So I saw my family. All of them on the floor. All the blood on the floor, too. They were all dead. My mother, my father, my sister, my brother. My family . . .

Perhaps the men are looking for me. Perhaps they will come back for me. Perhaps I want them to find me. Then I can be dead, too. I don't want to be the only one alive.

Come on, Jojo, I say to myself. You are the man of the family now. You must be a big boy. You must be strong. It's difficult to be strong when you're ten.

Extract 2

I sit at the back of the stable. The stable is where our horse slept at night. But the men took away all the horses. I heard them. I'm happy that our horse is alive. She was a good horse. I gave her nuts. She liked eating nuts.

I'm very hungry, but I don't want to look for food. I'm afraid one of the men will come back and see me.

I'll stay here and be very quiet. Then no-one will find me.

It's dark now. I can hear the mice. Or perhaps they're rats. I'm not afraid of them. They are probably hungry. I'm so hungry I can't sleep.

Extract 3

The sound of the lorry gets very loud. The men are here, outside our farm. I listen and wait.

I can hear lots of voices, but they sound different. They don't sound like the men in our village and they don't sound like the men who live across the river.

I look out through a hole in the wall and I see the men. They aren't the men from across the river. They are soldiers, and they look different. Their clothes and their boots look new, and some of them have red hair. One of them goes into our house. I see him coming out again. He is being sick on the ground. Another older soldier speaks to him. He puts his arm around him. I don't understand what he says, but I think he is nice to the young soldier.

Extract 4

'What's your name?' the man asks me.

'Jojo,' I tell him. And I tell him that I'm the only one here in the village. He says my words in the other language. He tells me that this is translating. He will tell the soldiers anything that I want to tell them.

I don't want to tell them anything, but the man says they are here to help.

'Are you hurt?' asks the man with the cameras. He tells me to call him Chris. I tell Chris that I'm not hurt. I was in the fields when the men came.

The soldiers smile at me. They have brown and green clothes, but their hats are blue. It's like a bit of the sky on the top of their heads.

'Are you hungry?' asks Chris.

'Yes,' I say, 'I'm very hungry.'

The soldiers make a small fire for cooking. I can hear it. It's a good sound. The fire in the village was different. It made a sound like the wind at night. A great big wind that makes you hide in your bed with the blanket over your head.

The soldiers give me some rice and beans. It's very good.