

Horrid Henry - Notes for Teachers



These teachers' notes are based on the 10 stories in the collection Horrid Henry's Evil Enemies, and the 10 stories in Horrid Henry Rules the World. The specific activities based on individual stories are followed by general activities, which can be carried out with any stories in these anthologies or the other Horrid Henry books.

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Horrid Henry series overview

This series of episodic stories feature the anti-hero Horrid Henry, who attracts trouble as surely as jam attracts wasps. Henry's character owes much to the tradition of the naughty child in children's literature and comics. There are echoes of Dennis the Menace and Minnie the Minx and some similarities with William Brown (Just William), though in the latter case chaos is caused by well-meaning but ill-conceived plans that end in disaster. Henry also has something in common with the likeable tricksters of folktales (Anansi, Brer Rabbit, Reynard) and like them he often comes out on top.... but not always. Henry's brother Perfect Peter is the ideal foil for Henry's antics and he too has his antecedents in characters like the Dennis the Menace's adversary, Cedric. Most readers will be attracted to Henry's lively personality in spite of his unacceptable behaviour.

Francesca Simon says, 'I often describe the Horrid Henry books as westerns for kids. Henry is an outlaw, who behaves dreadfully, yet often triumphs. Just as adults like reading about people who go against convention, so kids get a thrill from a child who always acts on impulse and never worries about the consequences. Henry is pure ego, while Perfect Peter is an exaggerated version of the impeccably behaved child parents think they want.' Love Reading for Kids

However, the roles Henry and Peter play in the stories are not entirely black and white. Peter is a self-satisfied sibling prone to smugness. Determined to look good in his parents' eyes, he frequently manipulates situations to his advantage. Henry's parents seem to be blind to Peter's underhand manipulation and Henry is sometimes the scapegoat: ironically this tends to happen when he's behaving well, fuelling a sense of injustice.

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Unsurprisingly, the books are very popular with young readers in the 6–9 age group. Henry's naughtiness is a yardstick against which children can get a sense of their own moral goodness and social justice: in measuring themselves against Henry they will fare well, increasing the sense of self-worth.

A gallery of supporting characters, such as Beefy Bert, Anxious Andrew, Moody Margaret, Jolly Josh and Fiery Fiona add further colour and humour to this highly entertaining series.

The series is illustrated by Tony Ross, whose dynamic line drawings emphasise character and emotion. He often depicts figures of speech literally, adding a layer of visual humour to the text.

The author: Francesca Simon

Francesca says: I was born in St Louis, Missouri, grew up in Los Angeles and attended both Yale and Oxford Universities, where I specialised in Medieval Studies. I then threw away a lucrative career as a medievalist and worked as a freelance journalist, writing for the Sunday Times, Guardian, Mail on Sunday, Telegraph and Vogue. After my son Joshua was born in 1989, I started writing children's books full time.

I have published over 40 books, including the immensely popular Horrid Henry series, which has now sold over four million copies. Horrid Henry is published in 23 languages and was made into an animated series for CITV in 2006.

I live in London with my husband, son, and Tibetan Spaniel called Shanti.

From www.francescasimon.com

The illustrator: Tony Ross

Tony Ross was born in London in 1938. He trained at the Liverpool School of Art and has worked as a cartoonist, a graphic designer, as the Art Director of an advertising agency, and as Senior Lecturer in Art at Manchester Polytechnic. He has illustrated books for many authors, including Francesca Simon, Roald Dahl, Paula Danziger and Michael Palin, but he also writes and illustrates his own books. His first title was *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* (1976), since when he has produced a whole series of reworked and updated fairy tales. His series of books about extra-terrestrial teacher Dr Xargle, written with Jeanne Willis, have become extremely popular, as has his much-loved Towser series. Some of his books have been animated on television and there are several videos featuring his work.

Curriculum context

Literacy: these books and teachers' notes are most suited to units of work on familiar stories, which may be taught in year 2 or year 3 (England). They provide an opportunity to read short, episodic stories in which the main features of character, plot and setting can be discussed. The stories provide a supportive model for children's writing, having straightforward plot lines and familiar subjects.

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Alternatively, the stories could be the focus of a unit 'stories by the same author', which is frequently taught in year 2. With over 40 books and spin-off material, there is ample opportunity for an author-focused display and comparative study of different stories. Francesca Simon's other books, such as Don't Cook Cinderella, can be read alongside the Horrid Henry stories. In addition to selecting a book to read aloud to the class, groups of children can read different stories, reporting back to the class on what they have read. The animated series offers scope for teaching visual literacy.

Speaking and Listening: Children should have plenty of opportunity for talking about books and stories in pairs, small groups and as a whole class. A range of questions and prompts need to be used, including open and closed questions as appropriate. When discussing books it is recommended that a variety of questions and prompts are used to encourage different types of thinking and reflection. These should include:

- Questions that invite a personal response (Did you like... What did you like...)
- Literal questions (What is the name of Henry's brother? What does Henry wish he was doing instead of dancing?)
- Deductive or inferential questions that require children to work out answers from partial information (Why do you think Henry...? What do you predict will happen next?)
- Evaluative questions (Is this a good example of a funny story? Why? Why not?)
- Comparative questions (In what ways is Henry like Dennis the Menace? Are there any similarities between the Horrid Henry stories we have read this week?)
- Supplementary prompts, statements and questions encourage pupils to think more deeply and to consider alternative viewpoints

A good vocabulary is essential for thinking and learning. Talk about and display new vocabulary from the stories.

- Encourage children to use new words in context.
- Use dictionaries for checking definitions.
- Use a thesaurus for finding synonyms.
- Display words in interesting ways e.g. a word of the week, word mobiles

Writing: short episodic stories provide good models for children's writing. The simple structure free from sub-plots and extraneous information makes the short story a good format that children are able to imitate and experiment with. The single idea with a twist is an accessible format that children can learn to use to structure their own stories.

As well as writing stories with familiar settings, Horrid Henry stories can be used as a stimulus for different forms of writing, such as instructional writing (year 2, year 3) which can be consolidated through activities such as writing Glop recipes. The story collections have a range of texts embedded in the narrative, which can be used as models for children's own writing, if appropriate. These include letters, posters, charts and diaries.

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PSHE: Henry's naughtiness provides scope for discussion of personal issues in PSHE. In Key Stage 2 children learn about themselves as individuals; they develop a sense of their place in society and a sense of justice and moral responsibility. In a similar way to using puppets and dolls with younger children, characters in books enable children to discuss relevant issues in a safe way. Difficult issues can be discussed from a safe distance when they are about a fictional character, and a thoughtful teacher can build a bridge from fiction to children's experience.

Teaching suggestions

The teaching suggestions are based on the 10 stories in the collection *Horrid Henry's Evil Enemies*, and the 10 stories in *Horrid Henry Rules the World*. These stories are anthologised from earlier *Horrid Henry* books.

The specific activities based on individual stories are followed by general activities, which can be carried out with any stories in these anthologies or the other *Horrid Henry* books.

To begin

A learning wall and book display

Set aside space for a learning wall. You will add to this display as the children complete work.

Set up a *Horrid Henry* book display. Encourage children to select books from the display to read independently. Build opportunities for them to share and talk about what they have read with each other.

What do we already know?

Many children will already be familiar with Henry from either books or the television series. Ascertain and activate prior knowledge by inviting them to talk about their favourite *Horrid Henry* stories.

- Who is the author?
- What can we find out about the author?
- Where might we look?
- Gather information and build a display in the book corner or another area of the classroom.
- Who is the illustrator?
- Do we know any other books by this illustrator?
- Choose 3 words that you think describe the way Tony Ross has drawn *Horrid Henry*.
- Make a collection of Tony Ross's books in the classroom or the school library.

Activities based on specific *Horrid Henry* stories

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The stories are taken from Horrid Henry's Evil Enemies and Horrid Henry Rules the World. Hereafter these books are referred to as HHRW and HHEE

- First responses
- Read and respond to selected stories.
- Start with personal responses.
- Which stories do the children enjoy? Re-read favourites.
- Have extra copies available in the class so that children can revisit the stories independently
- Encourage children to share stories in paired reading
- Invite children to raise questions about things they find puzzling, new vocabulary etc.
- Discuss what the children find funny. Talk to them about the things you find funny. Do you laugh at the same things or different things?
- Reading and responding: some suggestions for individual stories
- Use paired, small-group and whole-class discussion, as appropriate.

Horrid Henry and Moody Margaret

- Before finishing the story, read up to 'you will get your reward, Mr Smee' (p12). Ask the children to predict what the reward will be. How do they think the story will end? Read to the end of the story. After reading ask whether there were any surprises.
- Ask children to read the last line of the story as Henry would speak it. Why does he talk to Peter 'sweetly'?
- Which games do you most enjoy playing with your friends?
- Do your friends always play fairly? How can you resolve a problem when friends won't play fairly together?
- Which story does Captain Hook come from?

Horrid Henry and the Secret Club

- Have you ever had a secret club or a den?
- Read the rules for Henry's club and Margaret's club. Why do clubs have rules?
- What would be good rules for a secret club?
- Should anyone be allowed to join the club?
- Horrid Henry's Haunted House
- If children aren't too sensitive, they can be invited to tell each other stories about a time when they were frightened.
- Vocabulary – why does Henry follow Steve reluctantly (p62)? What does 'scowled' mean?
- Steve and Henry are both keen to have their revenge. What does that mean? Is it right to seek revenge? Why? Why not?

Moody Margaret moves in

- Is Henry's response to Moody Margaret's visit acceptable? Is it understandable? Why? Why not?

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- What should you do to make guests feel welcome when they stay with you?
- Do you think Mum and Dad respond appropriately to Moody Margaret's demands? Why? Why not?
- If you are a guest in someone's house how should you behave?

Horrid Henry Goes to Work

- Read up to... And then Horrid Henry had it. A perfectly brilliant, spectacularly evil plan. A plan to end all plans. A plan to go down in history. How do you think Horrid Henry will take his revenge?
- Read to the end of the story. Were there any surprises?
- Have you ever been blamed for something that you didn't do? Most children remember a miscarriage of justice: often these stories are school-related or about a sibling. Invite children to share their stories in pairs or small groups. This could lead to recount writing.

Horrid Henry and the Bogey Babysitter

- 'Horrid Henry hated babysitters. He wasn't a baby. He didn't want to be sat on.' Discuss the source of humour in this sentence. Children could draw the literal and true meanings of the sentence.
- Horrid Henry is afraid of nothing but injections. The fearsome babysitter Rabid Rebecca is fearful of spiders. After reading the story discuss fears with the children. 'What are you afraid of? What do you do to stop being afraid?'
- Sometimes hearing about other people's fears makes our own seem less terrifying. If you wish, share your own childhood fears with the class.

Horrid Henry's School Fair

- Have you ever received a disappointing present? This could be an inappropriate present as in the story. Perhaps you really wanted a particular toy but found it was not what you expected. What did you do? What should you do in these circumstances?
- What happens at a school fair? What are the reasons for holding a school fair (community, fundraising, home/school links, celebrating children's work). In pairs, invent a new stall for the school fair. These could be presented to the class and the best idea voted on. The stall could then be made for the next fete, Christmas fair or fundraising event.
- Treasure map – use the idea of a treasure map to organise a book swap to encourage adventurous reading. Ask children to bring books they have enjoyed but would like to exchange for another book. Number the books and produce a map with numbered squares and then follow the procedure as in this story.

Horrid Henry's Dance Class

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- Henry wishes that he was at a karate class rather than a ballet class. Discuss children's favourite pastimes. They could be invited to give two-minute presentations (e.g. at the end of the day) over a period of half a term.
- Vocabulary: Henry is described as galumphing around the dance floor. What do you think this means? Draw attention to the onomatopoeic qualities of the word. Check the definition in a dictionary. Make a list of words that describe different ways of moving. These could be explored further in a movement lesson. Pair contrasting movement words e.g. galumphing with floating.

Horrid Henry's Computer

- Most children will have favourite computer games. Take the opportunity to find out more about the games children are playing. Children who do not have computers or who are not allowed to play computer games can talk about other types of games.
- Conduct a survey about home computer use (this can be valuable information for making connections between home and school learning).
- Design a new computer game. You may want to provide a template of the things that should be included (e.g. characters, setting, game play).
- Reviewing computer games – children can write reviews of their favourite games (make sure they are age-appropriate).
- A recent advertisement for Mac computers shown on television and the cinema contrasts the different uses for computers (work and play). If the children have seen the advert use it to open a discussion about the different uses of computers.

Horrid Henry Meets the Queen

- Discuss what the children know about the royal family: where they live, different members of the royal family, protocols for meeting and greeting different members of the royal family.
- Would they like to meet the Queen? Why/not?
- Vocabulary: bouquet – investigate spelling using a dictionary of etymology. Though history of language and spelling is most usefully studied with older children, you can introduce the idea that some words have unusual sounds or spellings because they have been imported from other languages into English.

Horrid Henry and the Football Fiend

- Miss Battle-Axe is disgusted by the 'bad sportsmanship' (p129) witnessed on the football pitch. Take the opportunity to discuss what this means with the children. Have they seen examples of bad sportsmanship on televised sport? What should be included in a code of good sportsmanship? Write a set of class rules for sport, which you can refer to in games lessons.

Horrid Henry's Sick Day

- Ask pupils to recall a time when they were ill. Have they ever pretended to be ill in order to try and get out of doing something they didn't want to do? Do they have

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favourite comfort activities that help them feel better when they are under the weather?

Horrid Henry Peek's at Peter's Diary

- Ask if anyone in the class keeps a diary. Talk about different kinds of diaries: noting dates and appointments e.g. Mum's birthday, dentist appointment; a journal to record your secret thoughts; a record of what you have done and places you have visited.
- Ask the children what changes they think Horrid Henry would make to Perfect Peter's diary entries
- Why do Mum and Dad think, 'where was the trapdoor when you needed one?'
- If Horrid Henry kept a diary what sort of things do you think he would write? Write a week from Horrid Henry's diary.

General activities for use with all Horrid Henry stories

Thinking about characters

Horrid Henry and Perfect Peter

Invite the children to express their thoughts about Henry. Do they like him? Why? Why not?

- Do they like Peter? Why? Why not?
- From Henry's Point of View
- What is life like from Henry's point of view?
- Does he feel maligned?
- Is he always plotting and scheming?
- What does he think of his brother Peter? His parents? Other children?

Use 'hotseating' to explore Henry's motivations and feelings

- After reading a favourite Horrid Henry story, invite a volunteer to become Henry in the hotseat. Ask the other children to pose questions in order to explore the reasons for his behaviour.
- How does he feel about the way other characters behave towards him?
- What does he think of them?
- For deeper reflections, you may prefer to take the 'hotseat' yourself or ask another adult. Use appropriate and probing questions.

After exploring these ideas through 'hotseating', invite pupils to rewrite one of their favourite stories from Henry's point of view.

- Remind the children that they will need to write in the first person, using the pronoun 'I'.
- Model the opening of a story, taking suggestions from the children.

Alternatively, write a story from the point of view of another character e.g. Mum, Perfect Peter, Moody Margaret.

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Character profile

Use a 'role on the wall' technique to develop a character profile for Henry.

- Ask a volunteer to lie on a large piece of paper (a roll of lining paper used for wallpapering would be good)
- Draw around the volunteer to create the outline of a person. This is your Horrid Henry.
- Brainstorm ideas and annotate the outline e.g.
 - What does Henry look like? Add some distinctive details – hair, striped jumper – to make him recognisable.
 - What does he think about Pete? His parents? Moody Margaret etc... add thought bubbles.
 - How does he feel in different situations? Draw a heart on his body and add words to express these feelings.
 - What sort of things does he do? Annotate the drawing using arrows to indicate whether these are things he does with his feet (stomp, play football, karate) or with his hands.
 - What do others think about him? (Add an impressions box – you could include lines of dialogue).
 - Display the 'role on the wall' on the learning wall and add further information as you read new stories.

You could repeat this activity for Perfect Peter.

Familiar settings

Familiar settings in these collections include:

- The doctors' surgery
- The dance class
- The school fair
- Family home
- The football pitch
- School
- Dad's office

Check that the children know what the setting is.

What is a 'familiar setting'?

Identify some familiar settings from the stories in these collections.

Select a couple of extracts for display on the interactive whiteboard (these should be from stories that they know and have discussed). Possible extracts:

- The spare room p29–30 (rules the world)
- The football pitch p119–121 (rules the world)

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- The haunted house p63–64 (evil enemies)

Read the extract aloud and then discuss where the episode takes place. How do we know? What clues are there?

Setting can be built from description but also from the actions the characters are performing.

Ask the children to suggest three words to describe the mood associated with the setting of the story. Use a 'zones of relevance' board, perhaps using the interactive whiteboard (IWB) to select the most appropriate words.

In pairs, ask children to use the extract to imagine what they would see, hear and feel if they were in that place. Annotate the extract with their suggestions.

Study the illustrations. What aspect of setting is conveyed in the illustrations? How do they supplement the information provided in the text? Consider why it might not be necessary for an illustrated story to carry detailed descriptions of setting.

Select one of the stories set in school and re-read it to the class.

After reading, organise a photo walk around the school:

- Take digital photographs.
- Upload the images and display on the IWB.
- Ask the children to suggest words and phrases to describe the setting. Annotate the photographs.
- In shared writing, write a few sentences to describe the setting, modelling word choice, spelling strategies, punctuation, as appropriate.
- Children write their own descriptions independently.
- These settings might be used to stimulate storywriting.

Story writing

Re-read a favourite Horrid Henry story. Discuss the structure of the story using the story framework, or devise one of your own. Just write brief bullet points

- INTRODUCTION – Who? Where? When?
- INCITING MOMENT – What happens first?
- DEVELOPMENT – What happens next?
- CLIMAX – the most exciting moment
- RESOLUTION – how does it end?

Draw the children's attention to the surprise endings that Francesca Simon writes for the Horrid Henry stories. These endings make us laugh even when we anticipate them.

As a shared writing activity, brainstorm some ideas for your own Horrid Henry stories. Make a list of your ideas.

Which would make the most interesting story and why?

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Select an idea for oral story telling in pairs or small groups (oral rehearsal for writing).

Shared writing: Write an introduction for your story, taking suggestions from the class. Pupils can continue the story individually or in pairs.

Model writing a story ending, as children often have difficulties with endings.

Encourage children to reflect on their writing. They can begin to think about the following questions:

Have I created the setting so that readers can visualise it?

Are the characters memorable? Likeable? Unpleasant?

Does the story capture and keep the reader's interest?

Writing Dialogue

Francesca Simon's dialogue is closely observed and makes us laugh because it is convincing. Horrid Henry's parents often say, 'Don't be horrid, Henry!' and 'Go to your room.'

Make a list of parents' sayings e.g. what do they say when they are cross? When we are sad? Etc.

You could use these sayings to create a class or group poem. See for example Michael Rosen's poem, which starts:

My dad says

Never let me see you doing that again

Explore the things that people say in specific situations. For example:

Argument over what to watch on television (p45 HHEE)

What teachers say

The key here is to encourage children to listen carefully to everyday situations and to write exactly what is said.

Sound effects

The Horrid Henry stories are multi-modal: the stories are told through words, images and sound effects.

Make a class display of the different sound effects e.g. SPLAT! Tap tap tap

Discuss how these work visually as well as aurally in the story

Children can add sound effects to their own stories

More writing ideas

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There are numerous possibilities for children to produce different forms of writing based on the stories and texts. Here are a few suggestions:

Storyboard for a new episode of the Horrid Henry animated cartoon

- As an alternative to story writing, plan a new episode for the Horrid Henry cartoon series.
- View an episode, drawing attention to film conventions (see the BFI Story Shorts).
- Use a storyboard technique for planning the story.

Recipes

- Create your own Glop recipe.
- Ideas in the book include Wormy Glop, Toothpaste Glop and Rotten Glop (p21 HHEE).
- Try Glop Crumble, Breakfast Glop, Glop Stew.
- Reinforce the conventions for recipe writing.

Codes

Horrid Henry's Top Secret Unbreakable Code (p22 HHEE)

- Decode the messages in the book
- Write your own code message using Horrid Henry's code
- Devise your own code and write messages

Alliterative Alphabet

- Write the names of Horrid Henry's classmate on the whiteboard.
- What do the children notice about Sour Susan, Moody Margaret, Jolly Josh... etc.?
- If this is a new idea introduce the term alliteration.
- Create alliterative name alphabet:
 - Angry Alice
 - Bossy Ben
 - Cautious Chloe etc...
- Take suggestions from the children. Note: if using names of children in the class the alliterative adjectives should be positive, otherwise use fictitious names.
- Use the opportunity to extend vocabulary and have some ideas prepared for those tricky letters.... X and Z

Animal metaphors

Francesca Simon often uses animal metaphors to describe Henry:

- He was an octopus squeezing the life out of the helpless fish trapped in his tentacles (p41 HHEE)
- He was a fire-breathing dragon burning his prey to a crisp (p83 HHEE)
- He was a mad bull charging the matador (p 95 HHEE)

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- He was the Creature from the Black Lagoon, dragging the foolish mortal down to a watery grave (P170 HHEE)
- He was an elephant smashing his way through the jungle, trampling on everyone who stood in his way (p 41 HHRW)
- He was the Loch Ness monster gobbling up a thrashing duck (p 59 HHRW)

Talk about the effect created by this use of language. Discuss the appropriateness of the choice of animal/creature.

Write your own animal metaphors to describe yourself when you are feeling angry, sad, frustrated, happy etc.

Trading Cards

Create a set of trading cards (Top Trumps) featuring Horrid Henry's classmates.

Write a play

- In small groups create small-group improvisations of your favourite stories.
- Use these improvisations as the starting point for adapting a story
- Introduce the conventions for writing a script (whole class or group activity)
- Rehearse and perform your play to another class.

Poster for your play

A poster for the dance performance is reproduced on p54 HHRW

Children can design posters for their production of Horrid Henry (see above)

Discuss the main features of the poster:

- Capture interest
- Details of who, when where
- Pictures
- Layout
- Style – font style, size etc

Design a book jacket

- Design a book jacket for your favourite Horrid Henry story.

Tall tales

Horrid Henry writes bizarre excuses explaining his absence from school to Miss Battle-axe.

- Invent some more tall tales e.g. excuses for why you haven't done your homework
- Would a teacher believe these tall tales? Why? Why not?

Personal fact file

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Use 'King Henry the Horrible's Fact File' as model for creating personal fact files (p188 – 190 HHRW). You can include your own categories or use the same ones as Henry.

Recommending and reviewing

After reading the Horrid Henry stories, ask the children to write a review of their favourite story.

- Make a collection of reviews from magazines and websites. Read some of them and identify the features of a good review.
- Reviews could be printed in a school magazine, displayed in the school library or local library, or ask your local bookseller if they would like to make a display featuring the reviews.

Teaching notes by Nikki Gamble

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