



National 5 Literacy and English Unit

‘Nits’



SCREENING
SHORTS

SCREEN SCOTLAND
SGRÌN ALBA

Outcome 1: Reading

Read the passage carefully as
many times as you like.

Answer the questions in as
much detail as possible.



SCREEN SCOTLAND
SGRÌN ALBA

Why Mog had to die

Outcome
1: Reading

Read the passage carefully as
many times as you like.
Answer the questions in as
much detail as possible.

SCREENING
SHORTS

SCREEN SCOTLAND
SGRIN ALBA

Children's author Judith Kerr talks to Dina Rabinovitch about the demise of her much-loved feline heroine

1

Naturally, with all the biggest book news these days breaking in children's publishing, it is the world of five-eight years' fiction that this month sees a stroke so bold it has no precedent in children's writing at all. I heard it first in my local Waterstone's - a place immune to publishers' cries for attention. But this piece of inside gossip had two assistants buzzing: "Have you heard about the new Mog?"

2

While it may not surprise us now that children's literature can be radical, it is the nature of this innovation, given its market, that startles and shocks. For Mog's creator, the gentle, 80-year-old Judith Kerr, has killed off her much-loved, grey-and-black-striped tabby cat, subject of vivid felinity from Mog, the Forgetful Cat through Mog in the Dark to Mog and the Vee-Eee-Tee. The latest, shiniest Mog, its jacket white with a sparkling of gold stars, is called Goodbye Mog, and begins: "Mog was dead tired."

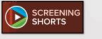
3

Inside, the pictures - as always, drawn by the author, each stripe in Mog's fur a multitude of carefully inked horizontal lines - have not aged. The 70s furniture is still in place, the Thomas family as fresh-minted as in the first Mog, which came out in 1970, two years after Kerr's other enduring classic, The Tiger Who Came to Tea. Nothing in this world has changed (Kerr says cats look the same when dying as they do all their adult lives). Except that this time round, Mog goes to heaven. It would be an unusual thing to do to an adult - like allowing Jeeves to succumb to cancer - but it is remarkable for it to be done to the age group just beginning to read.

Why Mog had to die

Outcome
1: Reading

Read the passage carefully as
many times as you like.
Answer the questions in as
much detail as possible.



SCREEN SCOTLAND
SGRIN ALGA

4

In Kerr's home in south London, there is light in all the stairwells. Her kitchen is the Thomases' kitchen. Her living-room furniture is white and green 70s, as expected, though the television is widescreen and expensive. The sun shines in on welcoming fresh coffee and fine biscuits. The author herself looks much younger than her age, and is impeccably dressed in short-sleeved wool jumper, tweed skirt, pearls and black patent shoes tipped with a bow. This is a calm and happy world.

5

So why banish Mog? "I don't think it was so much about killing off Mog, as rather doing something about dying. "I'm coming up to 80," says Kerr, in her soft, hesitant voice, "and you begin to think about those who are going to be left - the children, the grandchildren. I just wanted to say: Remember. Remember me. But do get on with your lives."

6

Perhaps it is the way Kerr says "remember" and the piles of books about Nazi Germany on her coffee table that remind me of her background, and explain, possibly, how she is the children's author most likely to confront the death of her main character. Kerr was just nine when she fled Nazi Germany with her parents and her brother Michael, in 1933 - 24 hours before the Nazis came for their passports. It is a story she told - lightly fictionalised - in the children's classic *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit*. The family were Jewish, though completely assimilated, and Kerr's father, Alfred, a famous theatre critic, wrote articles that were fiercely critical of the Nazis and were later burned by the SS.

Why Mog had to die



7

Escaping first to Switzerland, then Paris, the Kerrs finally landed in England, where Kerr's brother became a lauded appeal court judge. His death in April this year is a loss his sister feels keenly. She expresses it in almost childlike language, with the classic child's fear of having been the reason bad things come to pass: "It's all very weird. I started writing this book about the death of Mog about two years ago, and, uh, even the cat hadn't died, though he died soon after, then Michael - I feel I've brought it all on."

8

Her brother's illness coincided with the birth of her first grandchild. While Goodbye Mog is plainly a children's book, about the death of children's pets ("goodness, the funerals we've had of hamsters and cats, and it's always very sad," says Kerr), it was the human background that shaped the writing of it.

9

"I didn't think of it so much in terms of 'That's an end to Mog', though I think it is," says Kerr. "I've done enough Mog books - you know, drawing all those stripes became very tedious. I wished sometimes I'd made her a plain-coloured cat. But it wasn't so much that I wanted to kill her off, as that I wanted to say something about dying and being remembered."

10

With the birth of her son's son, says Kerr, came the realisation that - though she fiercely wants to live long - she may never see this boy go to university. The children in the Mog stories, Nicky and Debbie, carry the second names of Kerr's own children. Her daughter Tacy (Deborah) Kneale is a film designer, and her son, Matthew (Nicholas) Kneale, is the writer, who won the Whitbread prize for English Passengers. Mog's family are called Thomas because Kerr's husband, Nigel Kneale, is Tom to his family and friends. The drawings in the books, the first of which was published 30 years ago, feature various of the children's scattered toys.

Why Mog had to die



11

It was a cosy family set-up for the Kneale children to grow up in. Except that Dad was a writer, too. And while Mum was writing Mog, Dad was the inventor of Quatermass, the science-fiction horror story of the 50s, written in the wake of the atom bomb - "a sort of controlled paranoia," as Kneale has described his brand of fear. An original sculpture from the TV series, crouched and long of talon - a prototype ET - lives on the top floor of the house where Mog was drawn.

12

I tell Kerr that Nina, my eight-year-old daughter, and even Theo, my husband's 10-year-old-son, found reading Goodbye Mog upsetting. "Oh, I'm sorry," she says, visibly distressed. "I didn't want to do that." She has to stop talking for a moment to recover.

13

"I remember thinking about it," she says at last. "Because I so much wanted to do this book, and I thought, 'This is a book I must do.' I was signing some books at Harrods and a little child came up and said, 'I love Mog,' and I suddenly thought, 'Oh dear what am I doing to her?' But cats do die. And so do grandparents I had no idea I was doing anything odd, I just thought this was the right sort of book.

14

"Because people do die, and you don't lose them. You know, we have no religion, never have had. My parents didn't have either ..."

15

But Kerr works, of course, in a biblical tradition; the simplest stories bear the weight of the profoundest emotions.

Reading Questions

Outcome
1: Reading

Read the passage carefully as
many times as you like.
Answer the questions in as
much detail as possible.

SCREENING
SHORTS

SCREEN SCOTLAND
SGRIN ALBA

No.	Question	Marks
1	How does the writer use language in the first paragraph to convey how big and important the news is?	4
2	By referring to specific words or phrases, show how the first sentence in the second paragraph performs a linking function in the line of thought.	2
3	Using your own words as much as possible, explain how the writer conveys the care Judith Kerr takes in drawing Mog.	2
4	How does the writer use language in paragraph 4 to create a warm and comfortable tone?	4
5	How does the sentence structure in paragraph 5 highlight Kerr's thoughts about dying?	2
6	Using your own words as much as possible, list five facts we learn about Kerr's life in paragraph 6.	5
7	Explain in your own words what it is that "shaped the writing" of 'Goodbye Mog'.	2
8	Looking closely at paragraph 10, summarise five key similarities between the Mog books and Kerr's own family.	5
9	How does the writer establish the contrast within Kerr's home life in paragraph 11?	2
10	How does the final sentence serve as an effective conclusion to the article?	2

TOTAL MARKS: 30

Outcomes and Assessment Standards: N5 Literacy: Reading



The learner will:

1. Read and understand complex word-based texts by:

1.1 Selecting and using relevant information	PASS?	COMMENT
1.2 Explaining a range of aspects	PASS?	COMMENT
1.3 Evaluating effectiveness	PASS?	COMMENT

Outcomes and Assessment Standards: N5 English: Analysis and Evaluation



1. Understand, analyse and evaluate detailed written texts by:

1.1 Identifying and explaining the purpose and audience, as appropriate to genre	PASS?	COMMENT
1.2 Identifying and explaining the main ideas and supporting details	PASS?	COMMENT
1.3 Applying knowledge and understanding of language to explain meaning and effect, using appropriate critical terminology	PASS?	COMMENT

Outcome 2: Listening

Watch the film carefully as
many times as you like.
Answer the questions in as
much detail as possible.



SCREEN SCOTLAND
SGRÌN ALBA

'Nits'

(Harry Wootliff, 2003)

Outcome 2: Listening

Watch the film carefully as
many times as you like.
Answer the questions in as
much detail as possible.



SCREEN SCOTLAND
SGRIN ALBA

James is a seven-year-old boy with two problems: after a trip to hospital his mum is distracted and not looking after him the way she usually does; and nits. Even after James's father explains the cause of his mum's changed behaviour, James is confused by the situation.

Unable to fully grasp his mother's lack of consideration for him and irritated by his nit affliction, James grows increasingly angry and frustrated, but gradually gains understanding of his mother's behaviour and, by recognising the sadness she is feeling, learns about the way people grieve.



[Nits \(2003\) | Screening Shorts](#)

Listening Questions



No.	Question	Marks
1	Why does the film open with the scene of James and the mannequin head? What does this establish?	2
2	Rewatch the scene from 00:42 – 01:11. Comment on any technique used to convey the slow passage of time.	2
3	What is conveyed by the two camera shots at 03:06 - 03:16?	2
4	What do you notice about lighting at 04:12 – 04:40? What does the lighting suggest about James and his mum's relationship here?	2
5	Rewatch the scene from 06:21 – 07:21. What is the significance of the ladybird in this scene? What does it symbolise?	2
6	Rewatch the scene where James throws the toys and blankets out of the window (07:30 – 08:19). How does the filmmaker show the passage of time? Why does it take an unnatural time for the blanket to fall?	3
7	What is significant about the writing on the ice cream van?	1
8	Explore the scene where James' mum is talking to him through the net curtain (09:05 – 10:00). Comment on any two techniques that are used to convey their relationship here (editing, camera framing, sound...)	4
9	What colour is noticeably dominant throughout the film? Why do you think this colour has been used?	2

TOTAL MARKS: 20

Outcomes and Assessment Standards: N5 Literacy: Listening



The learner will:

1. Listen to and understand complex word-based texts by:

1.1 Selecting and using relevant information	PASS?	COMMENT
1.2 Explaining a range of aspects	PASS?	COMMENT
1.3 Evaluating effectiveness	PASS?	COMMENT

Outcomes and Assessment Standards: N5 English: Analysis and Evaluation



2. Understand, analyse and evaluate detailed spoken language by:

2.1 Identifying and explaining the purpose and audience	PASS?	COMMENT
2.2 Identifying and explaining the main ideas and supporting details	PASS?	COMMENT
2.3 Applying knowledge and understanding of language to explain meaning and effect	PASS?	COMMENT

Outcome 3: Writing

Read the instructions
carefully.

Write as much as you can.
Check your SPAG carefully.



SCREEN SCOTLAND
SGRÌN ALBA

Film Review Guide



Use this guide to help you write a film review of 'Nits'.

- **Watch the film again.** Be focused and conscious.
- **Take notes.** Look at the guide and use it to help.
- **Analyse the film.** Critically evaluate the film from beginning to end, noting every detail of what does and doesn't work.
- **Present evidence.** It is not enough to use general statements like "a fantastic movie," "beautiful set," "excellent acting," etc. Support any comment you make with evidence from the film.
- **Remove yourself.** The whole review is your opinion, so you don't need to keep saying "I". Instead of saying, "I think the film is good", say, "The film is good".
- **Proof-read.** Check your SPAG (Spelling, Punctuation, Paragraphing and Grammar). Edit for clarity and fluency - the golden rule is to omit unnecessary words.

Film Review Guide: Senior Level

Para 1: Introduction	<p>Make the opening engaging start.</p> <p>Include important info (e.g. title, director, year released, relevant background info, key cast members...)</p>
Para 2: Plot	<p>Give a concise summary of the story for people who have yet to watch the film.</p> <p>Analyse the plot:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• mention any original elements/twists, engaging use of conventions, glaring inconsistencies/illogical parts...
Para 3: Filmmaker	<p>Mention any important info about them - political stance, background, controversies...</p> <p>Connect this film to other movies the director has worked on, making comparisons.</p>
Para 4: Creative elements	<p>Choose two or three and state how effectively these are used to enrich the viewing experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• lighting, costume, hair/make-up, characterisation, camerawork, dialogue, colour, mood/tone, symbols, special effects, music, editing, sets, locations...
Para 5: Actors	<p>Do any stand out – for good or bad reasons? Have the actors been appropriately cast in the role? Does anyone surprise with their performance, steal scenes - or ruin them?</p>
Para 6: Significance	<p>Relate the content of the film to a social or historical issue. Does it help or hinder a current issue (racism, sexism, politics...)? Is it historically accurate? Does this help or hinder the film?</p> <p>Was it based on a book? What changes have been made? Is one better than the other?</p>
Para 7: Conclusion	<p>Comment on the originality – or lack thereof – of the film.</p> <p>If the film takes a conventional approach, does it feel fresh? Can the film still be enjoyed?</p>

Outcomes and Assessment Standards: N5 Literacy: Writing



The learner will:

3. Write complex, technically accurate texts by:

3.1 Selecting and using appropriate complex language	PASS?	COMMENT
3.2 Organising writing appropriately	PASS?	COMMENT
3.3 Using appropriate spelling, punctuation and grammar	PASS?	COMMENT

Outcomes and Assessment Standards: N5 English: Creation and Production



1. Create and produce detailed written texts by:

1.1 Selecting significant ideas and content, using a format and structure appropriate to purpose and audience	PASS?	COMMENT
1.2 Applying knowledge and understanding of language in terms of language choice and technical accuracy	PASS?	COMMENT
1.3 Communicating meaning at first reading	PASS?	COMMENT

Outcome 4: Talking

Take plenty of notes to help
you think of things to say.

Talk for as long as you can.



SCREEN SCOTLAND
SGRÌN ALBA

Group Discussion

- You will be given a list of topics for your group discussion. Think carefully before making your choice.
- Use the planning sheet to compile a list of potential points you might make, evidence to back up your points and potential counter-arguments others might make.

1. Parents should never lie to their children about anything.
2. Children have a right to be involved in the decisions made by adults in their lives.
3. Children should be taught about death from a very early age.
4. People should be allowed to grieve in any way they like for as long as they want.
5. Parents should always put their children before their own problems.

Points you might make	Supporting evidence	Potential counter-arguments

Group Discussion Vocabulary

<p>Introducing a Point I'm going to present three arguments: first... second... third I've just told you about... now I'm going to</p>	<p>Placing emphasis This issue/problem cannot simply be shrugged off/dismissed/ignored I'm convinced that It is vital/essential/important that we keep in mind</p>	<p>Strongly agreeing You're completely right I couldn't agree more Precisely Exactly Absolutely</p>	<p>Mildly agreeing You may be right there That's true, I suppose I suppose so</p>	<p>Proposing an agreement I think that you may share my opinion that Can I take it that we all agree on</p>
<p>Conceding There's quite a bit of merit in what you say You have convinced me that</p>	<p>Mild disagreement That's not really how I see it I don't really agree I think you're mistaken</p>	<p>Strong disagreement I think you're wrong Nothing I have heard has convinced me that I'm sorry I don't agree at all Of course not</p>	<p>Raising doubt It is all very well to say ..., but I can't help feeling that There is room for doubt whether</p>	<p>Countering opposing arguments I don't think it's a valid argument to say that I think it may be going too far to say that In spite of/Despite..., I still feel that</p>
<p>Hedging I take your point..., but I understand what you're saying ..., but I see/know what you mean, but</p>	<p>Checking understanding Are you saying that Are you suggesting that If I understand you correctly</p>	<p>Interrupting Can I come in here? I don't want to interrupt, but If I can just stop you for a moment Before you go any further, may I point out</p>	<p>Referring back As we were saying earlier To go back to what I was just saying To go back to what X was saying earlier</p>	<p>To round off a speech And that's why For the reasons given</p>

Outcomes and Assessment Standards: N5 Literacy: Talking



The learner will:

4. Talk to communicate, as appropriate to audience and purpose, by:

4.1 Selecting and using complex language	PASS?	COMMENT
4.2 Organising the communication	PASS?	COMMENT
4.3 Using a range of non-verbal conventions	PASS?	COMMENT

Outcomes and Assessment Standards: N5 English: Creation and Production



2. Take part in detailed spoken interactions by:

2.1 Selecting significant ideas and content, using a format and structure appropriate to purpose and audience	PASS?	COMMENT
2.2 Applying knowledge and understanding of language in terms of language choice	PASS?	COMMENT
2.3 Communicating meaning at first reading	PASS?	COMMENT
2.4 Using significant aspects of non-verbal communication	PASS?	COMMENT

Credits

Resource developed by Gail Robertson
on behalf of Screen Scotland.

Original material adapted from
Screening Shorts and Dina Rabinovitch
for *The Guardian* (4 Dec 2002)

For more information on Film
Education resources and opportunities,
go to Home | Screen Scotland.

