

CHILDREN'S
THEATRE
PARTNERSHIP
TOUR 2025

PIG HEART BOY

BASED ON THE NOVEL BY
MALORIE BLACKMAN
ADAPTED BY WINSOME PINNOCK

RESOURCE PACK FOR TEACHERS
for the study of
Pig Heart Boy by Malorie Blackman



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Introduction

This resource pack contains practical activity ideas for teachers, to be used alongside the study and viewing of the play, *Pig Heart Boy*, by Malorie Blackman. Our activities use creative, active approaches to explore different themes.

The activities can be used in any order and you do not have to use all of them. They can be adapted for use with different theme, character and plot exploration from the story.

Activity ideas are split into different sections, which can be found in the contents.



Digging Deeper into the Story

1. Writing the Blurb Activity

If you have a class set of books, ask pupils to look at the back of their copy. If not, provide the Pig-Heart Boy blurb:

'Cameron is thirteen, and all he wants is a 'normal' life - friends, swimming, school, family. But his life is far from normal. Not every thirteen-year-old desperately needs a new heart because theirs doesn't work properly. Finally, one doctor offers hope. Cameron could - if he and his parents agree - take part in a radical and controversial procedure involving the transplant of a pig's heart into his human body. It's risky. And it's never been done before. While Cameron comes to terms with the idea, he finds the world around him is much less accepting. But surely everyone will understand that it's better to have a pig's heart that works than a human heart that doesn't - won't they ...?'

Explain how a blurb is designed to entice you to read the story.

In groups, discuss:

- **What do we know from the blurb?**
 - **What do we want to find out?**
 - **What can we predict about the story from the blurb?**
-

2. Creating a story board from the blurb Activity

From the blurb alone, ask pupils to make predictions about the story. They could act these out, write them, create a storyboard, or just do this through class discussion. Consider the different branching narratives that have come up from the initial story predictions and compare with the one written by Malorie Blackman.

3. Creating a theme board Activity

Some Key Themes in Pig Heart Boy:

- **Family Dynamics**
- **Animal Rights**
- **Medical research**
- **Media intrusion**
- **Personal Agency**

In groups, pick a theme to research and discuss. When you have seen the play pick quotes and moments from the story as evidence to explain what the writer and the playwright are trying to say.

Then together in larger groups or a whole group, look at where your theme boards connect or clash. What is the writer trying to achieve here for the reader or audience?

Before starting this activity, note down your thoughts and opinions about the theme and then, after finishing the book or seeing the play, note down if anything has changed for you in your thinking.

Digging Deeper into the Story

4. Character Maps Creative Activity

List of Characters

Cameron Kelsey – the main character who needs a heart transplant

Catherine Kelsey - Cameron's mum

Michael Kelsey - Cameron's dad

Dr Bryce – the doctor who has researched xenotransplantation and works with Cameron and his family

Nan – Cameron's Nan

Marlon – Cameron's best friend

In groups, pupils draw round one of them on large paper (or just draw a big body outline) and write the character's name at the top. Pupils should record what they know about the character using evidence from the novel.

- What do others say about them?
- What do they do?
- What do they say about themselves?
- What can pupils infer about the characters? They should use quotes and their own words. This is done most effectively by starting when we first meet the character and revisiting it throughout the story (especially after key events/ changes or extra information).

Alternatives to filling this in:

- Use a different colour each time so they can see what has been added at different points
- Write their first impressions inside the body and new information outside
- Write what they know for definite inside and what they infer outside



Digging Deeper into the Story

5. Character Word Map Activity

Think of words to describe each character. Pupils can come up with their own words or use descriptions from the book.

Ask pupils to become different characters and walk around the space. Think about their posture, facial expression, place, balance etc. Provide different situations from the story – pupils should show their feelings physically as the character.

Ask different pupils how they are feeling, can they elaborate using different descriptive vocabulary?

How might the characters act differently in the presence of someone else, or when put into a different situation?

- **What about Cameron not being able to join his friends in the swimming pool?**
 - **How might Cameron's mum and dad be feeling about his illness?**
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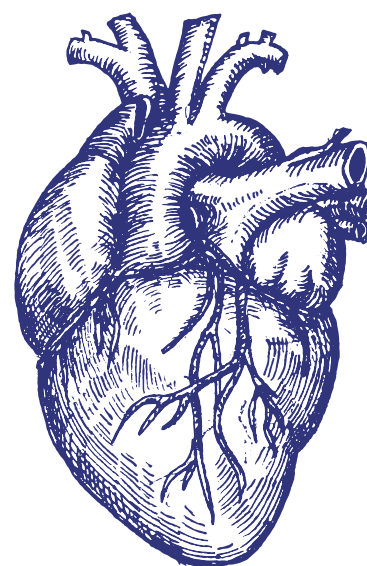
6. Plot Pointers Activity

This exercise is a great way of getting pupils to condense the story into 3 distinct “pictures” or key scenes that they best feel describes the story.

Split your group up into three. The size of each group is not important.

Instruct each group to come up with three still poses or “statues” which portray Cam's story. The three poses should represent the beginning, middle and end of his story. Give each group around 5 minutes to prepare. Get the class to reform and let each group perform. Then get the rest of the class to explain their story. Describe which scenes were being portrayed.

You can adapt this exercise to tell different stories for the groups to guess.



Digging Deeper through Debate

7. Area of debate - Ethics of medical research Activity

References from 'Pig Heart Boy'

In Chapter 4 (page 32)

Dr Bryce and Cameron are discussing the ethics of using animal organs for transplants.

On discussing animal rights groups, Dr Bryce says the groups;

'feel that we shouldn't be experimenting on animals. They believe it's wrong to sacrifice pigs and all the other animals we use in our research to help humans.'

Cameron is referred to as a guinea-pig throughout the book.

On Chapter 4 (page 38)

Cameron's mum says; 'So you want to use my son as a human guinea-pig. Is that it?'

Following Cameron's transplant, he is perceived differently by some of his class -mates.

In Chapter 19 (page 178), Julie argues;

'Look, Cam, I'm not being funny but Mum said you could have all kinds of germs and diseases in you now. Germs and diseases that are new to humans and dangerous. Mum said I wasn't to go anywhere near you... You've got a pig's heart inside you. Of course you've changed.'

In Chapter 21 (page 197),

Marlon tells Cameron why his dad sold the story to the papers:

'The bank was about to repossess our house 'cos Mum and Dad couldn't afford the mortgage anymore. Since Dad lost his job, things have been really hard for us'.

Framing the Debate

Here are some examples of questions raised in the book:

For	Against
It is right to experiment on animals to benefit humans.	It is never right to experiment on other creatures to benefit humans.
It is reasonable for the media to want to get a story on groundbreaking medical procedures.	It is wrong for the media to intrude on private family life to get any story.
It is right that a 13-year-old is able to make decisions concerning their health and well-being.	Adults should make all decisions relating to children until they reach legal adult age.

Digging Deeper through Debate

Step 1

Question for initial discussion.

Does your class agree or disagree with the above quotes?

Step 2

Split the class into groups to represent each side of the argument.

They should plan their opening arguments and be ready for questions.

Step 3

Conduct a debate by having each side present their opening arguments, then open the floor for each group to ask each other questions. You as the teacher could also ask questions to encourage deeper thinking.

Step 4

Use the 'Poll Everywhere' or 'Padlet' apps to share ideas and take a vote. Remember to encourage pupils to vote based on the arguments rather than their personal views.

Step 5

There are a few ways you could make the vote fair.

- i) Present the debate in front of another class and ask them to vote;
- ii) Choose a few pupils to be the judges, who could get on with a different task (e.g. writing questions to ask the teams) then have them judge (these could be pupils working at a greater depth, or those who work better in a small group);
- iii) Split the class in half, and have two debates happening simultaneously, which are being filmed.
- iv) Swap films and have the other half of the class vote on the other debate.



Digging Deeper – Drama for resilience

The characters show a lot of resilience throughout the story. Cam's journey explores his sense of belonging to his family, his school and his community. Whilst at the same time exploring his sense of self and identity as he comes to terms with his terminal illness. His acceptance of his 'living loss' of his heart and then how he adjusts to and experiences the prejudice of others demonstrates a remarkable story of someone's ups and downs.

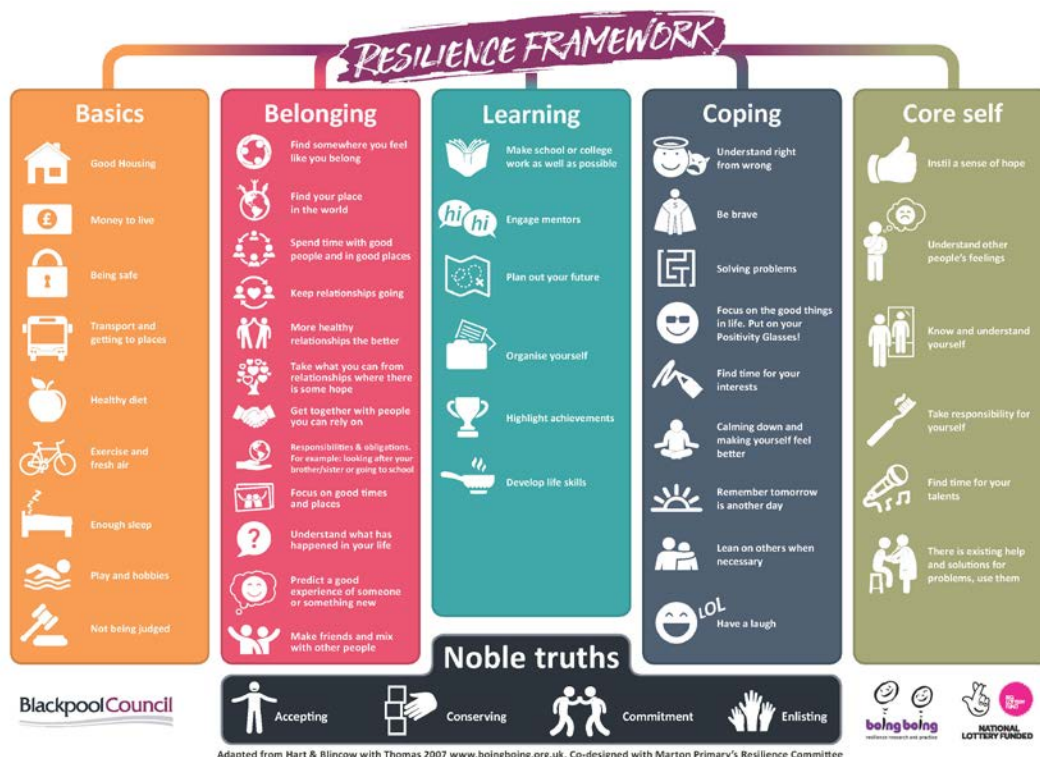
Chapter 1:

The story starts with Cam in a swimming pool desperate for breath, knowing he is about to drown. The rest of the story is told as a flashback which leads to this pivotal event in the swimming pool. We can look at Cam's story through a series of events which if handled differently may have led to a very different story with different outcomes for the characters...Consider the 5 basic areas from the Resilience Framework in your thinking

This story shows resilience in action.

8. Bringing resilience to life Activity

- In groups identify moments of resilience for Cam
- In groups identify moments of difficulty for Cam
- Choose another character and do the same.
- How do the characters strengthen their resilience?
- Look at the 'Resilience Framework and pick out 'resilient moves' that the characters make.
- When it is difficult in school what resilient moves might help you or your friends?
- Make 'freeze frames' of the resilient moves then bring to life.



Adapted from Hart & Blincow with Thomas 2007 www.boingboing.org.uk Co-designed with Marton Primary's Resilience Committee

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Looking at the story through a resilience lens

9. Connect these examples to the Resilience Framework Activity

Chapter 3:

Cam's dad is so desperate to find a suitable heart for his son that he has written to Dr Bryce to tell him about Cam. Mum and Cam knew nothing about this.

- Was Dad right to write to the doctor without discussing it with anyone?
- Why do you think he did it?
- How do you think Cam and Mum felt when they found out?
- How could this situation have been handled differently?
- Act out or write the conversation that could have taken place between the 3 family members.

Chapter 5:

Cam tells his best friend Marlon about the decision to have a pig heart transplant. Cam longs for someone to talk to. He really wants to talk to his Nan, but she lives 200 miles away, so he confides in his friend who promises to keep it a secret.

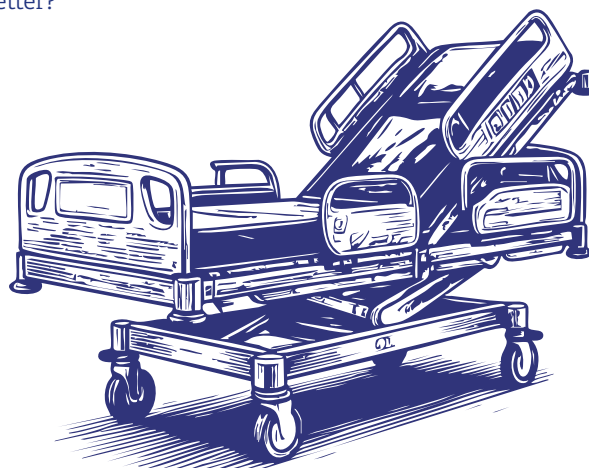
Chapter 15:

The family arrive home to a sea of press and media – someone has leaked their story!

Chapter 18:

Cam confronts Marlon about telling his secret to his mum and dad who have sold the story to the press because of money troubles at home.

- Was Cam right to tell Marlon his secret? Who else could he have spoken to?
- Marlon told his mum Cam's secret because she could see he was really upset about something. Was there anyone else that Marlon could have spoken to?
- Was Marlon's mum right to tell his dad? Was Marlon's dad right to sell the story?
- Think about the ethics of this section as well as the reasons for everyone's actions.
- Think about the consequences of each person's actions.
- How does Cam feel? How does Marlon feel?
- How could this whole situation have been handled better?



Looking at the story through a resilience lens

10. Trust – Fingertips Activity

This game is played in the whole drama space (which should be cleared) in pairs.

How to play this trust drama game:

Pupils lead a blindfolded partner around an obstacle course touching only fingertips to fingertips.

Swap partners.

Discuss how it felt to be the leader/to be guided round the room. Did you trust your partner? What were the positives or difficulties?

Chapter 7:

Cam and his mum and dad have just got home from the hospital after seeing Trudy the donor pig and meeting Dr Bryce and Dr Erlich. Mum has just told them she is pregnant too. When they get home, they struggle to talk to each other. Dad goes off to his garage, mum goes and watches TV and Cam is left alone. He has a chat with mum, then later finds his dad on his own. Everyone is struggling with their feelings alone.

- What could they do differently?
- Think about why they are all struggling with the idea of pig heart transplant – what are the things you think they should be talking about?
- Make a list of all the things each character is thinking about. How could they help each other with their worries?
- Write down ways to start a difficult conversation with someone.



Looking at the story through a resilience lens

11. Emotionally Torn Drama Activity

Get the pupils to form groups of 3 or 4. Ask them to sit in their groups while you distribute slips of paper upon which you have written 2 contrasting emotions – for example Excitement – Terror,

Fear – Joy

Eager – Anxious

Bored – Curious

Cowardly – Excited

Disappointed – Overjoyed, etc. Write some of your own!

Instruct the players to produce a scenario that will enable them to switch from one emotion to the other.

Point out that these are highly charged emotional states so their scenarios should reflect the full range of emotions of excitement/terror/joy/disappointment etc. in their pieces.

After each performance, ask the audience if they can identify the 2 emotional states. Were the emotions clear? Did the performers portray them truthfully?

Chapter 18

Cam goes back to school after his operation and recovery. Other pupils crowd around him and some even ask for his autograph. Cam enjoys the attention, but some people feel differently.

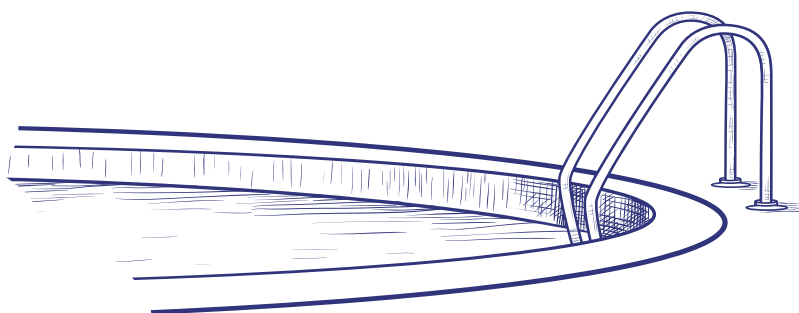
Chapter 19

Cam goes to talk to Julie, who he really likes and who has always been kind to him. Julie's mum believes that Cam is now somehow infected/dirty because of having a pig's heart and Julie makes this clear to him. Cam is very upset and behaves badly in front of Julie in.

Chapter 21

Which makes him feel bad afterwards.

- Why does Julie think that Cam is dirty?
- Why do you think Cam coughs in Julie's face – what is he trying to prove?
- Where do we get our ideas about what is right and wrong from?
- Do we always have all the information we need to understand a situation fully?
- Imagine a different conversation where Julie starts to see both sides of the situation with Cam.



Looking at the story through a resilience lens

12. Bullying Drama Activity

This activity enables pupils to explore their own opinions and understand how others feel about bullying. Set up two chairs with "Agree" and "Disagree" signs. Read out one statement at a time and ask the children to place themselves according to what they believe, stressing that there is not always a "right" answer.

Pupils standing near each other can discuss their decisions and random students can be picked out to explain why they have chosen their particular location. Following this, children can change position if they have formed a new opinion.

Suitable statements include:

- It's best to keep it a secret if you are bullied.
- If you see somebody in trouble you should try to stop the bullies.
- It's OK to call someone a name if you are only joking.
- It's better to tell a friend about bullying than to tell the teacher.
- If you ignore bullies they will go away.
- Anyone can be a bully.

<https://dramaresource.com/anti-bullying-key-stage-2>

Chapter 23

Cam starts to feel poorly again. Dr Bryce comes to the house to let the family know that Cam's body needs more drugs to support his body from rejecting his new heart. Cam goes to the swimming pool for one last Daredevil Dive in Chapter 24 (which takes us back to Chapter 1).

Chapter 25

Cam is told he needs another heart transplant or he won't live into the New Year. At this point he decides not to go ahead with another transplant. Nan understands, but mum, dad and Dr Bryce do not.

- Why has Cam made this difficult decision? Is he being brave or weak?
- What are mum and dad thinking? Why does Nan understand?
- Why does Dr Bryce want to go ahead with a transplant straight away?
- Do you think Cam will change his mind?
- What impact will this decision have on the characters in the story – think of everyone's feelings and how Cam influences their lives. Which resilient moves can help everyone through such a difficult situation?

Looking at the story through a resilience lens

13. Forum Theatre (alternative action) Drama Activity

Forum theatre is a theatre technique which comes under the umbrella term of "Theatre of the Oppressed".

This relates to the engagement of spectators influencing and engaging with the performance as both spectators and actors, termed "spect-actors", with the power to stop and change the performance. The issues dealt with in forum theatre are often related to areas of social justice, with the aim of exploring solutions to oppression featured in the performance.

Step 1

Think about how this relates to the themes you have explored in Pig Heart Boy. The audience is shown a short play in which a central character (protagonist) encounters a form of oppression or obstacle which s/he is unable to overcome.

Step 2

Encourage a small group of pupils to act out a short scene from the book for the rest of the class.

The teacher should lead this part of the activity.

Step 3

When the scene has been performed members of the wider group can take to the stage and suggest alternative options for how the protagonist could have acted.

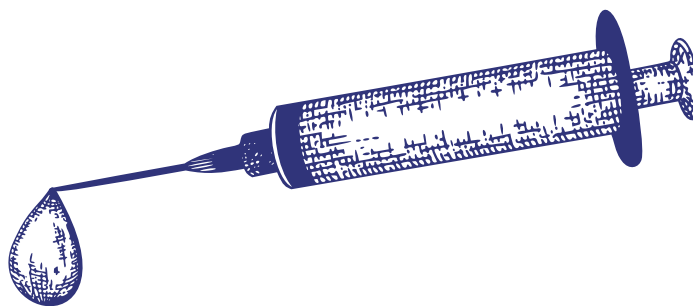
In this way, the event can be used to uncover and analyse alternatives in any situation, past, present or future.

Step 4

The actors explore the results of these choices with the audience creating a kind of theatrical debate, in which experiences and ideas are rehearsed and shared and tried out in safe space to explore characters, situations and alternative ways of engaging with the action.

Forum theatre - Wikipedia

Augusto Boal- Theatre of the Oppressed (1979)



Further Reading

<https://www.animalaid.org.uk>

<https://www.rspca.org.uk/adviceandwelfare/laboratory/replacinganimals>

<https://www.peta.org/issues/animals-used-for-experimentation>

<https://kids.kiddle.co/Xenotransplantation>

<https://www.sciencelearn.org.nz/resources/1213-xenotransplantation-introduction>



Appendices

The Children's Theatre Partnership (CTP) was established in 2010 to produce and tour bold, ambitious and imaginative theatre for young people. Our aim is to excite and engage new and diverse audiences, often introducing them to the theatre for the first time, bringing communities to their local theatres, inspiring a life-long love of theatre and supporting the UK's most talented artists.

The Pig-Heart Boy Resource Pack for Teachers was written and produced by

Celine Wyatt, Ruth Collinge, Hazel Challinor

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'Story-Led Resilient Practice'™ (Celine Wyatt, 2017, adapted 2021)

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'Story-Led Resilience Programme'

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Oracy Framework

<https://oracycambridge.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/The-Oracy-Skills-Framework-and-Glossary.pdf>

Resilience Framework What is the Resilience Framework? - Boingboing

Curriculum Links

KS3 CURRICULUM LINKS

Using Standard English confidently in a range of formal and informal contexts, including classroom discussion; studying setting, plot and characterisation, and the effects of these.

KS1 - KS4 CURRICULUM LINKS

Use discussion in order to learn; they should be able to elaborate and explain clearly their understanding and ideas; Develop comprehension skills through pupils' experience of high-quality discussion with the teacher.

Curriculum Links:

Key Stage 1 & 2 participate in discussions, presentations, performances, role play, improvisations and debates; explain and discuss their understanding of what they have read, including through formal presentations and debates, maintaining a focus on the topic and using notes where necessary; provide reasoned justifications for their views.

KS3 CURRICULUM LINKS

Learning new vocabulary, relating it explicitly to known vocabulary and understanding it with the help of context and dictionaries.

KS1 - KS4 CURRICULUM LINKS

Be able to adopt, create and sustain a range of roles, responding appropriately to others in role.

KS2 CURRICULUM LINKS

Drawing inferences such as inferring characters' feelings, thoughts and motives from their actions, and justifying inferences with evidence.

KS3 CURRICULUM LINKS

Making inferences and referring to evidence in the text; Studying setting, plot and characterization, and the effects of these.