

The Boat

Comprehension Activity



SBS has adapted the title short story in Nam Le's hugely acclaimed anthology The Boat for its first interactive graphic novel. The result is emotive and intriguing.

Take your class on an interactive journey aboard The Boat using the SBS Learn resources. For English students years 9 - 12.

Notes to teacher:

This teacher resource has been created using the framework of the Super Six Comprehension Strategies, a series of cognitive and metacognitive strategies to support students' comprehension. It is recommended that students engage with the activities in the order they are presented as this allows them to move from predicting what the narrative will be about, to connecting the content of the narrative to their own lives, other texts and, importantly, to the wider world.

Due to infrequent coarse language, this resource is not recommended for students under 15 years. SBS recommends reading the Classroom Guidelines before using this resource in schools.

Activities

1. Predicting

- a. Look at the first screen of The Boat. Write a paragraph predicting what you think the story will be about. Try to guess what the plot, characters and settings might be.
- b. After engaging with the story, write a paragraph reflecting on which of your predictions were confirmed and which were not. Try to make reference to the parts of the story that surprised you.

2. Monitoring

- a. As you read The Boat, write a list of any words you don't understand, or when more information is required to help you better appreciate the narrative. After you finish reading, create a glossary for the story based on your list.

3. Summarising

- a. Write a one- to two-sentence summary of each chapter.

4. Questioning

- a. Who is the protagonist of the story? What do we find out about her personality and her background?
- b. Who are the other main characters of the story? What do we find out about their personalities and backgrounds?
- c. Who are the side characters? What role do they play in the story of Mai?
- d. Identify the main settings of the story. How does the use of sound effects and images (moving and static) help develop each setting?
- e. The main themes of this story are: loneliness, fear, loss, family and resilience. Identify a scene from the story where each theme is powerfully communicated.

f. As an interactive graphic novel, *The Boat* uses a powerful combination of words, sounds, images and interactive features to tell its story. On your second reading of *The Boat*, identify examples of the following devices, and explain the effect they have on your emotions, imagination and thoughts.

- i. Figurative language
- ii. Interactive side stories
- iii. Sound effects
- iv. Music
- v. Contrast between light and dark
- vi. Movement of text/images
- vii. Speech bubbles
- viii. Background images
- ix. Framing

5. Visualising

a. *The Boat* is an interactive graphic novel that relies on both pictures and words to tell the story. Choose two similes from the story that you found particularly powerful and draw a picture to illustrate the image each conjures in your mind.

6. Making Connections

- a. How does the story of Mai's journey from Vietnam by boat connect to experiences you have had yourself? You might consider your own experience of being separated from your family from a period of time, the loss of a family member or friend, a time when you travelled alone, or
- b. What are some other texts you have encountered that tell a story similar to that of Mai's journey? Perhaps you have seen a documentary or read a novel about the experiences of asylum seekers from Vietnam or other countries.
- c. How does this story help you better appreciate the experiences of people seeking asylum today?