

**Harper and the Sea of Secrets**  
**by Cerrie Burnell and Laura Ellen Anderson**

**Lesson 1 - Simile Detectives**

**Learning objective**

To discuss words and phrases that capture the reader's interest and imagination.

**Outcome**

The children will have successfully identified similes.

**Resources**

- Activity sheet 1 – Hunt the Simile

**Task 1**

Explain that Cerrie Burnell uses many similes in her writing and give this example from the text: "...its eyes were as sharp as flint". Explain that this does not mean the gull being described has eyes that had a sharp edge like a piece of flinty stone, but that they were clear and bright – another meaning of the word 'sharp'. A simile is when we compare one thing to something else. Perhaps the children know some already – ask them to complete common similes such as '*as quiet as a mouse*' or '*as cold as ice*'. Invite the children to complete Activity Sheet 1, *Hunt the Simile*, as they read through the book *Harper and the Sea of Secrets*. Once they are finished, discuss the meanings of the similes as a class and get the children to explain why they think they are effective.

**Task 2**

When the children are familiar with similes, challenge them to devise some interesting ones of their own. They could start by taking ideas from the book, such as aspects of the weather, the birds, the sounds of various musical instruments, the way characters move, the moods of the sea etc. You could display ten everyday items and see if they can come up with an interesting simile for each. When they have finished, ask them to share their suggestions with the class and decide on a favourite simile for each item.

**Curriculum links**

**Y5/6 English**

- To discuss and evaluate how authors use language, including figurative language, considering the impact on the reader.



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**Activity Sheet 1 – Hunt the Simile**

As you read *Harper and the Sea of Secrets*, be a word detective, and look out for these similes. Note the page number you find them on. (They are listed in the order they appear in the book).

Simile	Page
...moved as silently as midnight...	
Sassy flapped her arms... and turned round and round like a confused duck.	
...fishermen...leaped like startled frogs.	
...moved as quickly as cats.	
Liesel curled up in the basket like a tired little mouse.	
...a song as mysterious as the moon...	
...tiny lanterns which flickered like fairy lights.	
...twirled around on its edge, like a marvellous midnight flamingo.	
...glowing flecks of light flared like fallen stars.	
...in the distance, like stars shrouded in mist, was a light.	
The children crept outside, then ran like the wind...	
...each clutching an instrument like a weapon of war.	
She was as fierce and as beautiful as a storm at sea.	
The sound was...like the rushing of water over stones.	
Liesel's eyes lit up like sparklers.	
...like a ghost beneath the moon, sailed a ship with white sails.	



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**Lesson 2 – The Smuggler’s Map**

**Learning objective**

To improve children’s mastery of art and design techniques, including drawing, painting and sculpture with a range of materials.

**Outcome**

The children will have created an annotated imaginary map of underground passageways.

**Resources**

- Activity Sheet 2 – The Smuggler’s Map
- Scissors
- Cold tea
- Paintbrushes

**Task 1**

Read the children Chapter 3 of *Harper and the Sea of Secrets* up to “...no-one knows where the entrance is”. Remind them that the map Harper and Ferdie found was of underground passageways leading to Gull Island, which lay off the coast. It is described as a ‘Smuggler’s Map’. Do the children know what smugglers were? Invite them to suggest what might be on the map apart from a plan of the tunnels. What landmarks might be there, or comments for things to beware of? How might the smugglers mark the secret entrance that no one else can find? Invite them to create their own version of the Smuggler’s Map using Activity sheet 2. Encourage them to annotate their maps with suitable guidance and warnings.

**Task 2**

When the children’s maps are complete, let them enjoy ageing their maps to look more authentic. We are told in the story that the map is created and old, so allow them to crumple their map up. They can then paint it with cold tea and leave it to dry to give the impression of age. Display the finished maps for everyone to enjoy.



## Curriculum links

### Y3/4 English

- To compose and rehearse sentences orally (including dialogue), progressively building a varied and rich vocabulary.

### Y5/6 English

- To select appropriate grammar and vocabulary, understanding how such choices can change and enhance meaning.



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**Activity Sheet 2 – The Smuggler’s Map**

Create your own Smuggler’s Map of underground tunnels leading to Gull Island. What landmarks and warnings will you include? How will you mark the secret entrance? Remember the tunnels lead under the sea to the island!

