

Teaching
Resource Pack
for KS2

THE MIDDLE



Kirsty Applebaum

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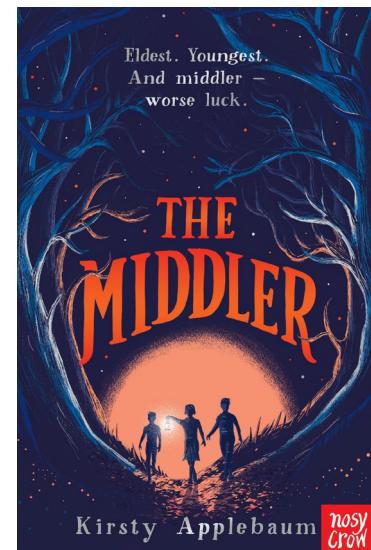
Introduction

The Middler by Kirsty Applebaum is suitable for teaching to children aged 9+. The four extracts included in this Teachers' Pack are linked to important themes in the story and accompanied by corresponding discussion questions and activities. Together, they provide the perfect resource for KS2 classes – developing literacy and writing skills, in particular, and stimulating PSHE debate around themes of self-doubt, belonging, lies and loyalty.

About the Book

The Middler is a gripping story of forbidden friendship, loyalty and betrayal set in a near-future world.

Eleven-year-old Maggie lives in Fennis Wick, enclosed and protected from the outside world by a boundary, beyond which the Quiet War rages and the dirty, dangerous wanderers roam. Her brother Jed is an eldest, revered and special. A hero. Her younger brother is Trig – everyone loves Trig. But Maggie's just a middler; invisible and left behind. Then, one hot September day, she meets Una, a hungry wanderer girl in need of help, and everything Maggie has ever known gets turned on its head.



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About the Author



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Kirsty Applebaum is an exciting new voice in children's fiction with lots of stories to tell. Kirsty was born in Essex and grew up in Hampshire. She has had a wide variety of jobs including bookselling, railway re-signalling, picking stones off conveyor belts, putting lids on perfume bottles and teaching Pilates. She now lives with her husband on top of a hill in Winchester. *The Middler* won the 2016 United Agents Prize for Most Promising Writing for Young People.

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Kirsty Applebaum

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Extract 1: Boundaries (Chapter 3)

Objectives: Discuss how boundaries can segregate people in society; create a poem entitled 'The Boundary', written from a character's perspective.

Subjects: Design Technology and Art, History, Literacy, Writing in Role, PSHE, Science

Extract 2: The Middle Child (Chapter 6)

Objectives: Consider what causes self-doubt and what we can do to conquer it; create an advice column for a newspaper; write a diary entry about a time you have doubted yourself.

Subjects: PSHE, Speaking and Listening, Design Technology and Art, Creative Writing: Diary Entry, Writing to Instruct and Inform

Extract 3: Lies (Chapter 28)

Objectives: Think about how easily lies can spread and how they influence people's views; write a speech encouraging others to be truthful and to question what they hear and read.

Subjects: PSHE, Speaking and Listening, Writing to Persuade

Extract 4: Loyalty (Chapter 34)

Objectives: Draw a picture of a friend labelling it with their qualities; describe a perfect day spent with your best friend detailing what makes it so special.

Subjects: Design Technology and Art, Literacy, Creative Writing

Lesson One: Boundaries

Extract One (Taken from Chapter 3, p. 22):

The jumper wasn't there.

I went round the tree. I went round William Whittington and Georgina Millicent Cruise. I went round the whole blooming graveyard. It wasn't there. Maybe he'd got mixed up. Maybe he'd left it somewhere else. Typical Trig. Just one last look behind the gravestones again.

"Hey!"

What was that?

"Hey!"

It wasn't a shout. More of a really loud whisper.

"Hey!"

Yes. A loud whisper. Like whoever was saying it half wanted to be heard and half didn't.

"Here! Over here!"

It was coming from the hawthorn hedge. The boundary.

Hedges don't whisper on their own. Hedges don't whisper unless someone's hiding on the other side of them.

A head peeped out through the thinnest part of the greenery. A girl's head. With hair the exact same yellow as a pound-cake mixture right before you bake it.

I knew all the kids in our town. Been at school with them since I was knee-high. None of us had hair that colour. And none of us would hide on the wrong side of a town boundary. Not ever.

She was a wanderer.

Lesson One: Boundaries

Discussion Questions:

- What is ‘the boundary’ and who lives beyond it?
- How does the writer use the setting to help create mystery and suspense surrounding the boundary?
- How is the wanderer described in this extract? Is she what you expected?
- Why is it significant that Maggie discovers a wanderer? Why might this surprise her family and the people of the town?
- Can you think of boundaries that exist in your town or city and across the world? Why do we have boundaries in society?

Lesson One: Boundaries

Activity 1: The Other Side

Subjects: Drama, PSHE, Speaking and Listening

- Using a piece of string or some chairs, split the classroom and class in two, doing your best to split up from groups of friends. Make sure one section of the room is smaller than the other and has no chairs. Half the class should stay in this smaller area and sit on the floor; they are going to imagine they are Una – the wanderer. Anyone in this half should make their uniform look untidy, to get into character!
- The other half of the class should sit in the other half of the room on chairs, with their school uniform tidy – they are Maggie.
- Using the boundary to keep the two groups apart, have a class discussion about how it might feel to be on either side of the boundary. Consider questions such as: how has your view of the classroom and your classmates changed? Why would it be difficult for you to make friends with someone from the other side? How might you feel about people on the other side? Why do we sometimes need boundaries in society? Are there any unnecessary boundaries you can think of? What are the dangers of boundaries (both real and imagined)?

Activity 2: The Boundary

Subjects: Creative Writing: Poetry, Writing in Role

- On an A3 sheet of paper, write a list of emotions that you experienced in Activity 1. Write the emotions that you felt most strongly in larger lettering, and the emotions you felt less strongly in smaller lettering, according to importance!
- Imagining you are still Una or Maggie after Activity 1, and using your A3 sheet of emotions, write a poem called ‘The Boundary’. In it, try to convey how it feels to be cut off from a whole other world and people. You might express your fear about what or who is on the other side of the boundary, as well as your curiosity to explore it for yourself. You should also include references to family members or other characters from the text.

Lesson Two: The Middle Child

Extract Two (Taken from Chapter 6, p. 40)

I took a deep breath in. It was right that Jed and Lindi won the prizes. Of course it was. They were eldests. They were going to camp, to keep the rest of us safe. Our eldests are heroes. Our eldests are special. Our eldests are brave.

I breathed out and joined in the clapping, properly this time. Louder than everyone else. “Now, I want you to remember that all of your diaries are wonderful.” Miss Conteh held back a yawn and pushed the remaining pile of summer diaries to the front of her desk. “Could someone give them back out? Maddie? Maddie Cruise? Could you give out the diaries, please?”

Maddie.

Maddie Cruise. Maddie-middler.

There’s no point even trying, really.

No point even trying.

Not unless you’re prepared to do something as brave as the eldests. Like go to camp.

Or catch a wanderer.

I put my chalk down on my slate. Pushed my chair out.

I was going to do it. For real. I’d start today. Get home as soon as possible after school and take those antibiotics from Dad’s bag.

Take them to the wanderer girl. Una.

Get her to trust me.

Catch her good and proper.

Discussion Questions:

- Which incident causes Maggie to feel that ‘there’s no point even trying’? Is she right to feel this way?
- What does this incident lead her to do? Why do you think she reacts like this?
- Why are Jed and other ‘eldests’ treated differently to Maggie? How does this affect Maggie’s self-confidence?
- Why does the writer choose to write from Maggie’s point of view? What is the effect of this?
- Can you relate to what Maggie feels in this extract? Can you give examples of when you have felt like her?

Lesson Two: The Middle Child

Activity 1: Self-doubt

Subjects: PSHE, Speaking and Listening, Writing to Instruct and Inform

- As a class, discuss what is meant by the term ‘self-doubt’. Why is this a natural emotion to feel at times? Why does Maggie feel this way in the extract?
- Consider the question: do you think being a middle child contributes to feelings of self-doubt? Or is this something that occurs regardless in life?
- In small groups, write down the top 5 things that you think cause self-doubt. Can you give examples of incidents or scenarios from the text or your own lives that may cause this emotion to arise? Feedback what you have written down as a class.
- Then, come up with 5 pieces of advice that you would give to anyone suffering from self-doubt. What might be reassuring to know? What can people do to try and conquer these negative feelings?
- Turn your advice tips into an ‘Advice Column’ for a newspaper.

Activity 2: Self-doubt Diaries

Subjects: Design Technology and Art, Creative Writing: A Diary Entry

- Making sure you leave generous space for a border, write a diary entry in which you describe a specific incident or a time when you have felt self-doubt. Try to recall: what led you to feel this way; who else was involved in this situation; how it affected your confidence.
- When you have finished your diary entry, use bright colours to fill in your border with positive advice as to what to do when you feel self-doubt again. Decorate it with drawings and symbols to remind you that you are important and to believe in yourself.

Lesson Three: Lies

Extract 3 (Taken from Chapter 28, p. 199)

“Una!” I knelt down beside her. “Are you OK?”

She turned her head. Her eyes were swollen with tears. “Go away,” she said.

“What? No – I can help you – I can –”

“I don’t want your help. I hate you, Maggie. I hate you.”

“But, Una –”

“Can’t you hear me? I hate you. You’re the worst person I’ve ever met in my whole life. I didn’t always believe my dad when he told me there were wicked people around, but I do now. Go away. Leave me alone.”

“I didn’t mean for –”

“Go away!”

I got up. Stepped back.

I looked at my hands, still stained with her dad’s blood.

She was right. I was dirty, dangerous, deceitful.

Just like Mayor Anderson.

I sat down. Una was there, right behind me. Only the back of the sofa divided us. I curled up, just like her. Knees to my chest.

A sob boiled up inside me and erupted out. And another. And another. And another.

I clutched my hands to my eyes and soaked them with tears.

Discussion Questions:

- Why does Una feel that she has been betrayed by Maggie? Do you think she is right to feel this way?
- Why does Maggie think of herself as ‘dirty, dangerous, deceitful’? Why is this an interesting choice of words?
- Who else is to blame for what happens to Una? How are they involved?
- Has Maggie been deceived or lied to in the build-up to this scene? Do you feel any sympathy for Maggie because of this?
- What other lies have been told in the text so far? Which is the biggest lie of all and why?

Lesson Three: Lies

Activity 1: Two Lies and a Truth

Subjects: PSHE, Speaking and Listening

- In pairs, pupils will tell their partner 2 lies and 1 truth. Their partner has to try and guess which of the 3 statements is true. Ask partners to reflect upon how they decided which statement was true, as well as why it can sometimes be difficult to tell a lie from the truth.
- To start with, make the lies about small things that are relatively insignificant, for example, about what you had for dinner last night. Then, make the lies about bigger and more important issues. If these bigger lies were spread around, what might the effect be? Why are all lies dangerous, no matter how small they might seem? Why is it important to question and challenge the information we hear and read? What happens if we don't?
- Create a collage showing your ideas around the theme of lies in society, and their effects.

Activity 2: The Truth

Subjects: Writing to Persuade, PSHE

- Early in the story, Mayor Anderson uses a school assembly to spread lies and fear about the wanderers. These lies then result in Maggie's betrayal of Una and much worse.
- Write your own speech for an assembly at your school entitled 'The Truth'. In it, emphasise the dangers of spreading false information, how fast lies can spread and the impact they can have, and our responsibility to question and challenge what we read and hear.

Lesson Four: Loyalty

Extract 4 (Taken from Chapter 34, p. 245)

“Her name’s Una,” I said.

“I will remove this wanderer girl and arsonist,” continued the mayor, “from our town immediately.”

The crowd bulged forwards. Arsonist. Wanderer. Murderer.

I stepped in front of Una. “No one’s taking her anywhere.” I said it loud and clear.

“It’s not true – Una didn’t set our house on fire – Mayor Anderson did. Una just helped me save Trig – you all saw it.”

“That’s absurd.” The mayor tapped her fingers on her leg. One, two, three, four, five. One, two, three, four, five. “Look, it’s been a long night. It’s time everyone went home. I’ve got the jeep waiting in the square to take the wanderer to camp and I’m sure none of you want to hold me up.”

“She’s lying,” I said. “About everything. Una’s not dangerous, and camp doesn’t exist anymore. The Quiet War finished years ago.”

“That’s ridiculous.” The spidery veins on Mayor Anderson’s face grew redder.

Discussion Questions:

- Why is Una an easy target to blame for the fire? How does this scene connect to another fire that occurred years earlier?
- Why is loyalty such an important quality in a friend? How does Maggie try to redeem herself in this passage?
- Which shocking truths does Maggie reveal to the crowd in this extract?
- Why might the crowd find it hard to believe Maggie at first? Who is to blame for this?
- Can you think of other examples of characters showing loyalty in the text?

Lesson Four: Loyalty

Activity 1: My Loyal Friend

Subjects: Design Technology and Art, Literacy

- Sketch a picture of your best friend. It might be someone in your class, outside of school, or even a family member.
- Think about what qualities your best friend possesses, why you love to spend time with them, and how they make you smile.
- Around your sketch, write down key words that you associate with your best friend. You could include the quality of ‘being loyal’ to start you off, then think about other qualities they possess. Your key words could also include places you go together and hobbies or interests you share.

Activity 2: A Perfect Day

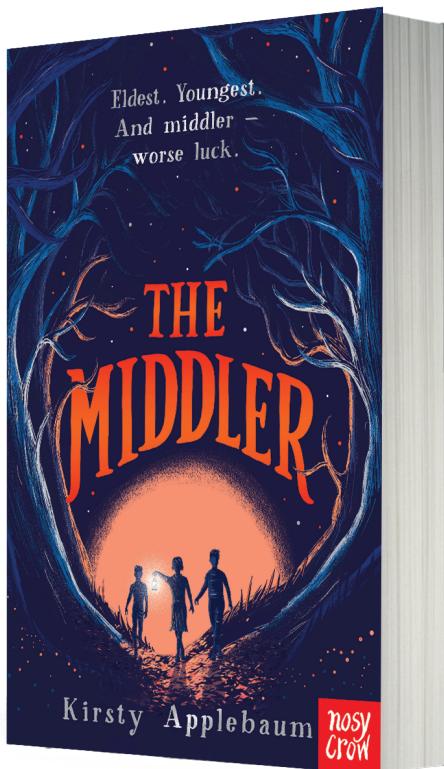
Subjects: Creative Writing, Literacy

- At the end of the story, Maggie and Una are best friends and go up to the Hawthorn to play together.
- Write a description of a perfect day with your best friend. It could be a day that you have spent together or a place you would love to go to together in the future. Make sure you include details such as: the setting of your perfect day; what makes this day so special; why you are so happy to share it with your best friend.
- As a twist, consider how you might make your description edgy or unusual, considering the author’s style in *The Middler*. Could you perhaps incorporate a strange or threatening setting and/or event? Make several drafts of your piece of writing until you think you have something drastically different to what you started with!

Thank you for using this resource pack!



We would love to see your work and hear your reviews of *The Middler*!
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