

SKELETON KEYS

WRITTEN BY
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ILLUSTRATED BY
PETE WILLIAMSON

Skeleton Keys Series Resources

Introduction



Suitable for: Children aged 7-9 years old in Years 2-4

Based on: The spooky, strange and darkly comic adventures of Skeleton Keys

Ideal for: Newly confident readers, and older reluctant readers

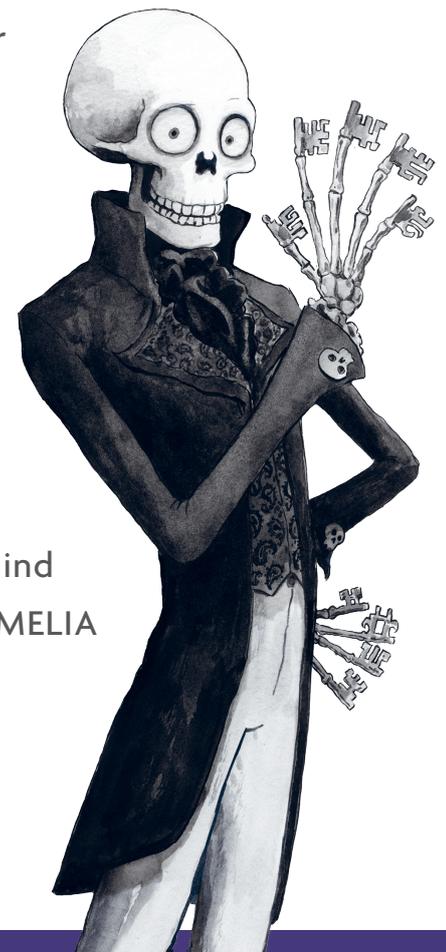
Includes: 4 x lessons that build towards children writing their own spooky story about an imaginary friend

Themes: Imagination; Illustration; Keys; Friendship; Humour; Spooky Stories

Greetings!

My name is Skeleton Keys and these fantabulant fingers of mine can open doors to hidden worlds...

This is a darkly comic series from the award-winning duo behind STITCH HEAD, which is perfect for fans of David Walliams, AMELIA FANG and THE NOTHING TO SEE HERE HOTEL.



SKELETON KEYS

Introduction



About Skeleton Keys: The Unimaginary Friend (Book 1)

Join me for the curious tale of Ben Bunsen, whose only friend is a figment of his imagination ... until now.

Ben can't believe it when his imaginary friend the Gorblimey becomes unimaginary. The Gorblimey is loyal and kind ... and real! But Skeleton Keys is far from convinced by the Gorblimey's friendly ways. He's got the twitch, which is (almost) never wrong, and it's telling him the Gorblimey is dangerous and needs banishing to the endless void of Oblivion. But as Ben battles to save his new friend, Skeleton Keys realises that the Gorblimey is the least of his worries. For there appears to be more than one unimaginary in town. And the other one is out for revenge...



About Skeleton Keys: The Haunting of Luna Moon (Book 2)

Join me for the strange tale of Luna Moon, whose family is disappearing before her very eyes...

Luna is the only one to mourn the death of her grandfather Old Man Moon – the rest of her family couldn't be happier to see the back of the bad-tempered old miser. But as they celebrate his demise with a giddy jig, Aunt Summer vanishes ... only to reappear as a painting. While Luna is convinced her grandfather has kept his word to haunt them from beyond the grave, Skeleton Keys is certain that this is the work of an unimaginary. Can he get to the bottom of the mystery before the whole of Luna's family disappears?

SKELETON KEYS

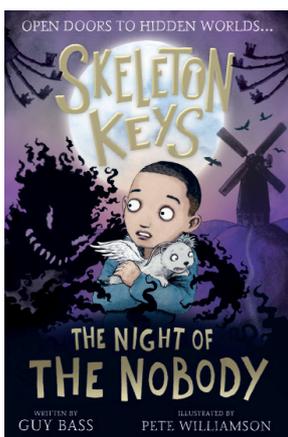
Introduction



About Skeleton Keys: The Legend of Gap-tooth Jack (Book 3)

Join me for the curious tale of Gap-tooth Jack – thief, adventurer and champion of imagining!

When Skeleton Keys banishes Wordy Gerdy from the present using his Key to Time, he thinks he's seen the last of the troublesome unimaginary. But Gerdy uses her ghostly pen to wreak her revenge, and before Skeleton Keys realises what she's up to, she's written his precious keys out of existence. Skeleton Keys and his partner Daisy must follow Gerdy into the past to retrieve her pen and make her restore his keys. But Skeleton Keys has unknowingly sent Gerdy back to his own past and her pen is now in the hands of notorious thief Gap-tooth Jack. As they set off to find Jack, Skeleton Keys can't help noticing that everything looks strangely familiar. Then he comes face to face with the thief – could it be that the two have met before?



About Skeleton Keys: The Night of the Nobody (Book 4)

Join me for the terrifying tale of the Nobody – a nightmarish unimaginary with a dark mission...

On the hunt for an unimaginary, Skeleton Keys meets young Flynn Twist, a boy with a wild imagination who tells of his encounter with a terrifying shadow calling itself the Nobody. Skeleton Keys suspects it could be a Shady Character, a shapeless unimaginary searching for a physical form. As night falls the Nobody roams the village of Matching Trousers turning everyone it meets into zombie-like nobodies. No one is safe – not even Skeleton Keys. Soon only Flynn is left. Can he become the brave hero of his imagination and free everybody from the Nobody?

SKELETON KEYS

Introduction



About the author – Guy Bass

Guy Bass is an award-winning author who has written more than 30 books, including the best-selling STITCH HEAD series, DINKIN DINGS, SPYNOSAUR and SKELETON KEYS. In 2010, *Dinkin Dings* and the *Frightening Things* won the Blue Peter Award for Most Fun Book with Pictures. He lives in London with his wife. Find out more about him at guybass.com | @GuyBassBooks



About the illustrator – Pete Williamson

Pete Williamson is a self-taught artist and illustrator. He is best known for the much-loved STITCH HEAD series and the award-winning THE RAVEN MYSTERIES. He has illustrated over 65 books written by authors including Francesca Simon, Steve Cole, Matt Haig and Charles Dickens. He lives in Kent with his family.



National Curriculum Objectives

English:

Reading: comprehension

Develop positive attitudes to reading, and an understanding of what they read, by:

- discussing words and phrases that capture the reader's interest and imagination

Understand both the books that they can already read accurately and fluently and those that they listen to by:

- drawing on what they already know or on background information and vocabulary provided by the teacher

Understand what they read, in books they can read independently, by

- identifying how language, structure, and presentation contribute to meaning
- drawing inferences such as inferring characters' feelings, thoughts and motives from their actions, and justifying inferences with evidence

English:

Writing: composition

Discuss writing similar to that which they are planning to write in order to understand and learn from its structure, vocabulary and grammar

Plan writing by discussing writing similar to that which they are planning to write in order to learn from its structure, vocabulary and grammar

Plan writing by noting and developing initial ideas, drawing on reading and research

Plan writing by considering how authors have developed characters and settings in what pupils have read, listened to or seen performed

Draft and write by creating characters, settings and plots

Draft and write by describing characters, settings and atmosphere.

SKELETON KEYS

National Curriculum Objectives



Design and technology

Generate, develop, model and communicate their ideas through discussion, annotated sketches, cross-sectional and exploded diagrams, prototypes, pattern pieces and computer-aided design

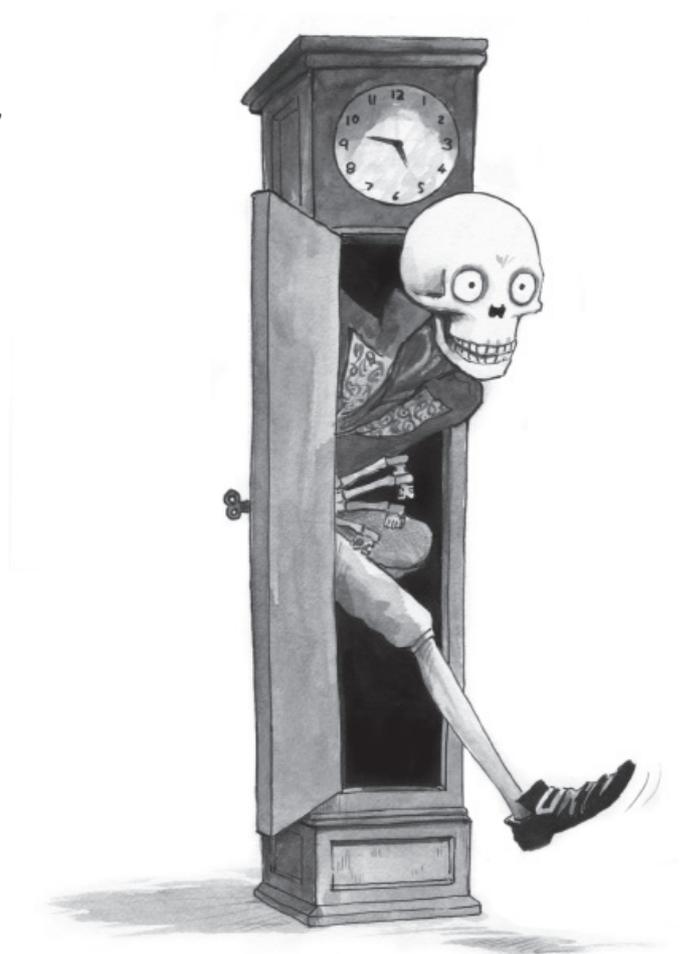
Explore and evaluate a range of existing products

Build structures and models, exploring how they can be made stronger, stiffer and more stable

Art and design

Develop a wide range of art and design techniques in using colour, pattern, texture, line, shape, form and space

Improve their mastery of art and design techniques, including drawing, painting and sculpture with a range of materials (for example, pencil, charcoal, paint, clay)





Lesson objectives and outcomes

Lesson 1: My (Un)Imaginary Friend

Objectives:

- To encourage children to embrace their imagination
- To explore the power of imagination through imaginary friends

Outcomes: A class discussion about what imagination is and how sometimes it can be used less as we get older; the creation of a fact-file about a person who achieved success later in life; and the 'hotseating' of an imaginary friend character through drama to get into role.

Lesson 2: Imaginative Illustrations

Objectives:

- To identify the similarities and differences in illustrations in books
- To draw an illustration in the style of Pete Williamson

Outcomes: A comparison of illustrations from books within the classroom; the exploration of different tones after understanding how to practise shading techniques; and the completion of an illustration of an imaginary character in the style of Pete Williamson.

Lesson 3: Skeleton Keys

Objectives:

- To know about the invention of keys throughout history and understand their role in modern technology
- To make a model of a key

Outcomes: A class discussion about what keys are and the importance they have in society, including within the development of modern technology; the creation of an illustration to help with the creation of a story and the construction of a model of a key from junk modelling materials.



Lesson 4: Unlocking Spooky Stories to Hidden Worlds

Objectives:

- To recognise the features of a spooky story
- To write a spooky story

Outcomes: A class discussion to learn more about the structural and language features of a spooky story; a completed character profile of an imaginary friend; a draft of a spooky story; and the writing of a spooky story.





Lesson One: My (Un)Imaginary Friend

Questions:

- What is our imagination?
- How do we use it?
- What is an imaginary friend? Do you have one?

Task 1: To get children thinking about their imaginations, talk about how having a vivid imagination can be a wonderful thing and how through activities like reading, dress-up, drama, art and craft, music, spending time outdoors, and even being bored can all help with developing imagination. Project images of a cardboard box, a tent and a stick on the board. Ask children to describe them. What do they see? After some initial discussion which will probably include a very literal and obvious description of the objects, discuss how for many children, a cardboard box could be a rocket zooming up into outer space like in *Rocket Boy* by Katie Jennings and Joe Lillington; a tent can be a castle and a stick can be a sword... Read picture books like *Stanley's Stick* by Neal Layton and John Hegley and *Not A Box* by Antoinette Portis to show this in a fictional context. Choose an everyday object in the classroom and talk about the endless possibilities that it could take on. List children's suggestions on the board to record them. Ask children to choose an everyday object in the classroom or at home and to list as many suggestions as they can of what it could possibly be. Encourage them to be as creative as they can and to talk to each other to share suggestions.

Task 2: Carrying on from the learning in Task 1, flip the discussion and explain how if you talk to most grown-ups, it seems like they have maybe forgotten how to use their imagination. For instance they might say for the things above that the 'cardboard box takes up too much room and needs to go for recycling'; 'the tent is



only for camping trips and needs to be put away' and 'you shouldn't touch the stick because it is dirty and should be left outside for the dog'... Discuss with children if they have ever heard older people in their families or teachers saying things like this. Why do you think that they do not use their imagination to the fullest anymore? Explain how things like work, home life and bringing up a family can all add pressures to the daily life of adults that children don't have and mean that as we get older, sometimes adults can be less creative. However, that doesn't mean that everyone stops being creative. Learn more about creative people who became successful later on in their lives like Stan Lee, who created his first hit comic, "The Fantastic Four," just shy of his 39th birthday and went on to create the legendary Marvel Universe; J. K. Rowling who published the first book in the Harry Potter series at the age of 32; and Viola Davis who got her first big break in 2008 when she received a role in a big film at the age of 43 and despite only having one scene in the film, it gained her her first Oscar nomination. Write a fact-file about an older successful person.

Task 3: As the Skeleton Keys books discuss 'unimaginary' characters (imaginary friends that come to life), talk about the concept of imaginary friends with the class. Do any of them have an imaginary friend now or when they were younger or do they know someone that does? Share what it feels like to have an imaginary friend, particularly if you had one when you were younger or what it would be like to be someone's imaginary friend. Linking back to Task 1 in Lesson 1, in pairs, ask children to 'hotseat' each other and take on the role of questioner and imaginary friend. One child is to ask the other questions about what it feels like to be someone's imaginary friend and record responses. Once complete, swap over roles. Record the interviews using a device to store them for use later on.



Lesson Two: Imaginative Illustrations

Questions:

- What are the illustrations in a book?
- Why do we have them and how do they make us feel?
- What is the effect on the reader of the black and white illustrations in Skeleton Keys?

Task 1: Pete Williamson's spectacular illustrations add strongly to the sense of strangeness and dramatic tension in the books with their monochrome style using black and white. Talk together about the illustrations that are used during the book, how they depict characters and why they are used in the way that they are, particularly at the start of each book and at the start of each chapter. Look at other illustrations in other books you have in the classroom. Can you find any that are similar in style to those by Pete Williamson or any that are different? Using two different books, compare and contrast the style of illustrations using a Venn diagram putting similarities in the middle of the conjoined circles and differences belonging to each book in their own part of the circle. These could include comments on style (i.e. funny, realistic), detail (i.e. sparse or busy), line (i.e. tone or line only), layout (i.e. boxed or integrated) and anything else the children notice.

Task 2: Gather a range of illustrations at the front of the classroom and encourage children to explore them closely. What do they see? If possible, project the same illustrations on to the board to investigate them in a larger perspective. Discuss the way that these illustrations have been created talking about the different materials used. Begin to explain what tone is (tone refers to how light or dark something is) and the use of tone in illustrations particularly



in two-tone or monochrome illustrations like those in the Skeleton Keys books that just use black and white. Elaborate on why tone is applied in order to create a particular atmosphere and to suggest depth and distance. Show children a range of techniques of how to create tone such as hatching, cross-hatching and stippling. Together using a pencil shading worksheet split into sections, help children to practise a variety of different tonal shading techniques by modelling them on the board and asking children to experiment with them to create different shades and tones. Compare which ones were easier or harder to achieve and discuss how different media like pencil and charcoal can result in different effects including that of blending and smudging.

Task 3: Using the unimaginary characters from the books as inspiration such as the Gorblimey, ask children to create their own 'unimaginary' character - an imaginary friend that comes to life. As a class, begin to create a whole-class character, taking ideas and suggestions from as many children as possible. They could think about the character's appearance, personality, emotions and other qualities it possesses. Think about everyday objects in the classroom that could be used to form the basis for your unique unimaginary character. What will they look like? What might they sound like? Using all the work they have done as a class, children can draw a sketch of their character in the style of Pete Williamson using a range of materials such as pencil or charcoal, labelling it with each of its qualities in readiness to write a story about it. You may want to display the sketches around the classroom as an 'unimaginary character gallery' and to inspire children as a speaking and listening activity to start to speculate how each others' characters will come to life.

SKELETON KEYS

Lesson Three: Skeleton Keys



Lesson Three: Skeleton Keys

Questions:

- What is a key? What is a skeleton key?
- If you could open a door to a hidden world, what would it be like?
- Are all keys made out of metal?

Task 1: Gather children on the carpet in the classroom and ask them to close their eyes. To create suspense, tell them that you have an object in your bag and you would like them to guess what it is based on a few clues. Share the clues one-by-one and give them points from 4, 3, 2 and 1 based on when they guess the object: 'Clue 1: They keep things safe. Clue 2: They allow me to do certain things. Clue 3: Without them, some things wouldn't even work! Clue 4: Jingle the bunch of keys to provide a sound clue.' Leave a short time for the children to guess, and then, if no one guesses the right answer, say that perhaps the word 'unlock' will help. This should bring the correct response. Show the children each key in turn and ask them what they think the key will open. For security, you might choose to show old keys that you don't actually use! Explain to children what type of keys they are, what they are made out of and how they belong to you. If possible, describe a personal experience of being locked out of somewhere. You may also want to highlight modern keys that come in the format of a smart card like new car keys and explain that it is an unusual type of key. Describe how inside the plastic, there is a microchip that is programmed to respond to a certain code, or information on a magnetic strip and that modern technology has created smart cards that can open doors, pay for our shopping or take money out of our bank accounts.

Extension: Emphasize that a key can be a physical thing, but it can also be an idea. We sometimes talk about the 'key to success' or the 'key to someone's

SKELETON KEYS

Lesson Three: Skeleton Keys



heart', which is the key to how they feel. Encourage children to think about what keys they have with them today. Suggest how we all hold the key to helping other people, the key to making the best of every opportunity and to being positive and trying our best and ask them to talk about how they will use their keys.

Task 2: Project a range of images of keys on the board. Discuss the different shapes of keys and watch a video of a key being cut. Learn more about the invention of keys and how they have changed throughout history. Explain that a skeleton key is a master key in which the serrated edge has been removed so that it can open numerous locks. Highlight how through the books, Skeleton Keys' fantabulant fingers open doors to hidden worlds. Using the illustrations of the different finger-shaped keys in the beginning of the books as inspiration such as The Key to the Kingdom or The Key to Imagination and the images of keys that they have looked at earlier in this task, ask children to create an annotated illustration of their own key to a hidden world of their choice in order to make a model of a key in Task 3. What kind of key will it be? What type of world will it open?

Task 3: Collect a range of art and craft materials to use in this lesson. Using the illustrations of keys created, ask children to use the materials such as papier-mâché to create a model of a key based on their illustration. Develop children's understanding of model-making by teaching them how to shape and structure the materials and how they can be made stronger, stiffer and more stable. Create a display of the keys in the classroom by hanging them from the ceiling.



Lesson Four: Unlocking Spooky Stories to Hidden Worlds

Questions:

- What is a spooky story? Do you know any?
- How can we write a spooky story?
- What is suspense? Why do we use it in a spooky story?

Task 1: Tell children that they are going to be writing a strangely spooky story. Ask children if they can describe what a spooky story is, or if they can give any examples of spooky stories that they have read or know. Explain how spooky stories often frighten the reader using a range of features such as suspense, atmosphere and shocks! Establish that the writer can also do this by: using the senses (sight, sound, touch, smell, taste); paying attention to the details; showing that the main character is scared; using strong verbs and adjectives and letting the reader use their imagination. Share with the children a particularly spooky extract from the Skeleton Keys series. As a class, highlight where Guy Bass uses many of these features to make the reader feel an emotional reaction. You may also want to identify how he combines humour effectively in his writing. Focus on the characters within the extract (e.g. Chapter Two: The Gorblimey), and ask the children how Guy uses the character of an imaginary friend to create suspense. Discuss the use of description, dialogue, the vocabulary and language used and punctuation such as ellipsis. Combining this task, with that of the illustrative Task 2 in Lesson Two, write a character profile of your unimaginary character to help you plot out the character of the imaginary friend. Use the 'Bringing the Characters to Life' pages at the back of the books in the series where Guy and Pete give tips to help you.

SKELETON KEYS

Lesson Four: Unlocking Spooky Stories to Hidden Worlds



Task 2: Ask children to plan out their spooky story thinking about the features from Task 1 and ask them to make notes on the following: What is their imaginary friend like? What is their key to a hidden world like? Which world will it open? How will it help you? Ask them to imagine that they have opened the door to this new world. Encourage them to describe what the world looks, smells and feels like and to be as creative and imaginative as possible. Support children by providing them with useful vocabulary words to help them with description, action and feelings and give children story writing ideas as well as sentence starters. Ensure that children know how to build anticipation using techniques such as ‘Show, Don’t Tell’ to sustain tension and reach a climax within their writing usually towards the end of it. Encourage them to share their plans together and use their ideas to create a whole class plan.

Task 3: Go back over the main features of writing a spooky story including anticipation, build-up, characters, climax, language, punctuation and imagery. Highlight how a good spooky story will leave readers feeling like they don’t know what is about to happen next. Can they keep the suspense going? Ask children to begin drafting their story, remembering to include good description and dialogue. As the teacher, spend time showing them how to do this effectively. When they have finished drafting, children can work on editing their initial drafts and re-write them accordingly. When the stories are completed, ask children if they would like to share their stories with the class. You may want to turn down the lights to add atmosphere when children are retelling their stories, and record them using a device to keep as a performance.



Further ideas and activities

- Read more books that feature imaginary friends such as *The Adventures of Beekle: The Unimaginary Friend* by Dan Santat and *Imaginary Fred* by Eoin Colfer and Oliver Jeffers and for older children, *The Imaginary* by A. F. Harrold and Emily Gravett and *Crenshaw* by Katherine Applegate.
- Write a letter to Guy Bass telling him all about your thoughts and feelings about the books and the series.
- Learn more about the properties of materials in making keys, and how materials have different properties that make them useful for different jobs. Discover how materials can be classified into different groups.
- Explore other books and series written by Guy Bass and illustrated by Pete Williamson such as *Stitch Head*.
- Design a cover for your story about an imaginary friend. Think about the colours you will use and how to create a spooky setting to entice people to want to read your story.

