

# Lesson Sequence for *The Knife of Never Letting Go* By Patrick Ness Year 9 Overview

1. To have students enjoy the novel and to have them engage with the themes and ideas in the novel.
2. To place the novel within a context of science fiction writing.
3. To savour and explore the way the novel uses language.
4. To encourage wider reading of connected literature.

## **Key Concepts**

### Cultural understanding

Literacy heritage of science fiction.  
Cross references to poetry and other novels.  
To explore links with drama and use some drama in lessons.

### Critical understanding

The significance of language.  
The significance of text and font.  
Dystopias and Utopias in literature.  
The invention of other worlds and creatures (link to Shakespeare's Caliban from *The Tempest*, Iain M Banks' Horza from *Consider Phlebas* and Ted Hughes' *Iron Man*).

### Competence

Understanding demonstrated verbally and on paper judgement.  
Independent thought.

2. Creativity  
Invention  
Role play  
Hot seating  
Design  
Writing

### Assessment FOCI

Reading: AF2, AF3, AF4, AF6 and AF7  
Writing: AF1, AF2, AF5, AF6, AF3 and AF7.

## Lesson Sequence

### **Week 1 - Discussion of Science Fiction Genre**

Sample openings from: George Orwell's *1984*, John Wyndham's *The Chrysalids*, Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* and *The Knife of Never Letting Go*  
Comparative work: unused numbers, Clock Striking 13 → *1984*,  
Sophie's Six Toes → *The Chrysalids*  
451 → *Fahrenheit*  
13 months in a year → *The Knife of Never Letting Go*

.Introduction of the Concepts of Utopia and Dystopia

Creative writing task inventing a dystopian society [group discussion work]

Writing own opening sentences for a utopian and for a dystopian novel.

### **Week 2 - 'The Noise'**

Exploring the concept of Telepathy

Small group dramas which are based on the consequences of thoughts being heard out loud.

Look at Petra's telepathy in *The Chrysalids* – Chapter 11.

Comparing extract from John Wyndham's *The Chrysalids*, Chapter 11 – (Petra's call) with the description of 'The Noise'.

In small groups finding the links between the above and the quotation Ness has chosen at the front of the novel (from *Middlemarch*). Whole class feed back.

Analysing the use of fonts to convey the noise.

In groups creating posters representing the thoughts of a student in a boring lesson.

### **Week 3 – Exploring language**

Looking closely at the different ways different characters use language.

Exploring the evolution of spelling in English.

Use a short (two lines) except from Chaucer.

Group work: Collecting 'misspellings' and discussing them. Exploring the term 'phonetic'.

Animals that talk ...

Manchee and his words – comparing Manchee's language with extracts from:

*Watership Down* by Richard Adams

*Fire Bed and Bone* by Henrietta Branford

Looking at Crocodile's voices and Singing Dinosaurs

Students create a voice for an animal. Then write a poem [dramatic monologue] in the voice of an animal.

#### **Week 4 – A World without Women**

Retrospective analysis of what really went on in Prentis Town.

Look at collective guilt and the threat of ‘the other’. Why are the women a threat to the men? Look at the word ‘misogyny’

Character studies of the main characters in Prentis Town and the way they interpret events.

Contrast with Hildy in New Elizabeth.

#### **Week 5 – Spackles and other Aliens**

Comparing Ness’ description of a Spackle with Ian M Banks’ description of Horza in *Consider Phelbas* and Shakespeare’s depiction of Caliban in *The Tempest*.

Examine different perspectives that Todd and Viola have of the Spackle.

Look at Craig Raine’s poem *A Martian sends a postcard home*.

Write postcards home from our invented aliens.

Hot seat own Alien.

Hot seat the Spackle.

Write a poem in the voice of an Alien.

Write a diary entry of a Spackle describing the coming of Humans to his other planet.

#### **Week 6 – Looking at the Towns**

Looking at three towns: Prentis Town, New Elizabeth and Farbranch.

Collaborate in group to devise charts which show the differences between these towns. Use the following as points to be discussed:

The noise  
Women

Children  
Violence

History and its telling  
Power

Create maps of the planet showing the different towns and the journey made by Todd and Viola.

#### Prediction exercise about Havell

#### Key Questions

1. Why is Aaron keen to get Todd to be violent?
2. How are the differences between men and women presented at the end of the novel?
3. Prediction exercise about the opening of second novel in the trilogy.