

Attivare strategie nella lettura estensiva

di Paolo Fantozzi

Testo: *The Old Boys*, cap. 1, da *Peter Pan in Scarlet*

Scuola: liceo scientifico Vallisneri, Lucca

Classe: 2^a SA

Numero studenti: 19

Lingua: inglese

Tempo complessivo: 5 ore

Motivazione

In questa classe, l'anno precedente avevamo letto alcuni capitoli di *Peter Pan* di James Matthew Barrie, per cui l'anno successivo ho deciso di presentare alcuni capitoli di *Peter Pan in Scarlet* di Geraldine McCaughrean, (Oxford University Press, 2006), che è il seguito della storia di Barrie, per sollecitare a fare inferenze, attivando quelle modalità di lettura emerse dal feedback sul *Q-Sort*, «leggere velocemente, imparare a cogliere le parole e i punti chiave di un testo, leggere tra le righe» (cfr. il contributo di Pieri, CAP. 3 #indichiamo par. 3.3?# in questo volume).

Il testo

Chapter one. The Old Boys

da *Peter Pan in Scarlet*

'I'm not going to bed,' said John—which startled his wife. Children are never ready for bed, but grown-ups like John are usually hankering for their pillows and eiderdowns from the moment they finish dinner. 'I'm not going to bed!' said John again, and so ferociously that his wife knew he was very frightened indeed.

'You have been dreaming again, haven't you?' she said tenderly. 'Such a trial.'

John scrubbed at his eyes with his knuckles. 'I told you. I never dream! What does a man have to do to be believed in his own house?'

His wife stroked his shiny head and went to turn down the bedclothes. And there on John's side of the bed, something bulged up through the coverlet. It wasn't a hot-water bottle or a teddy bear or a library book. Mrs John folded down the sheets. It was a cutlass.

With a sigh, she hung it on the hook behind the bedroom door, alongside the quiver of arrows and John's dressing gown. Both she and her husband liked to pretend it was not happening (because that's what grown-ups do when they are in trouble) but secretly they both knew: John was dreaming of Neverland again. After every dream, something was left behind in his bed next morning, like the stones around a dish after a serving of prunes. A sword here, a candle there, a bow, a medicine bottle, a top hat... The night after he dreamt of mermaids, a fishy smell hung about the stairs all day. The wardrobe was piled high with the dregs of dreams—an alarm clock, an Indian head-dress, an eye-patch, a pirate's tricorne hat. (The worst nights were when John dreamed of Captain Hook.)

Mrs John plumped up the pillows with a brisk blow of her hand—and a gunshot rang out through the whole house, waking the neighbours and terrifying the dog. The bullet shied about the room, bouncing off the lamp-stand and smashing a vase. Cautiously, with two fingers, Mrs John drew the pistol from under the pillow and dropped it into the bin, like a kipper found to be not quite fresh.

'They are so *real*!' whimpered her husband from the doorway. 'These wretched dreams are just so REAL!'

All over London and even as far afield as Fotheringdene and Grimswater, old boys were dreaming the same kind of dreams. Not young, silly boys hut boys grown-up: cheerful, stolid boys who worked in banks or drove trains or grew strawberries or wrote plays or stood for Parliament. Cosy at home, surrounded by family and friends, they thought themselves comfortable and safe... until the dreams began. Now each night they dreamed of Neverland and woke to find leftovers in their beds—daggers or coils of rope, a pile of leaves or a hook.

And what did they have in common, these dreamers? Just one thing. They had all once been Boys in Neverland.

'I have called you all together, because something must be done?' said Judge Tootles, twirling his big moustache. 'It is not good enough! Gone on far too long! Won't do! Enough is enough! We must act!' They were eating brown soup in the library of the Gentlemen's Club off Piccadilly—a brown room with brown portraits of gentlemen wearing brown suits. Smoke from the fireplace hung in the air like a brown fog. On the dining table lay an assortment of weapons, the sole of a shoe, a cap, a pair of giant bird's eggs.

The Honourable Slightly fingered them thoughtfully: 'The flotsam of Night washed up on the shores of Morning!' he said (but then the Honourable Slightly played the clarinet in a nightclub and was inclined to write poetry).

'Call Mrs Wendy! Mrs Wendy would know what to do!' said Judge Tootles. But of course Wendy had not been invited, because ladies are not allowed in the Gentlemen's Club.

'I say we should let sleeping dogs lie,' said Mr Nibs, but nobody thanked him, because dogs are not allowed in the Gentlemen's Club either.

'Mind over matter!' exclaimed Mr John. 'We must just *try harder* not to dream!'

'We tried that,' said the Twins mournfully. 'Stayed awake all night for a week.'

'And what happened?' asked Mr John, intrigued.

'We fell asleep on the London omnibus on the way to work, and dreamed all the way to Putney. When we got off, we were both wearing warpaint.'

'How perfectly charming,' said the Honourable Slightly.

'Last night we dreamed of the Lagoon,' added the second Twin.

There was a murmur of heartfelt sighs. Each of the Old Boys had dreamed lately of the Lagoon and woken with wet hair, and dazzle in his eyes.

'Is there a cure, Curly?' enquired Mr Nibs, but Doctor Curly knew of no cure for an outbreak of unwanted dreams.

'We should write a letter of complaint!' boomed Judge Tootles. But nobody knew of a Ministry for Dreams or whether there was a Minister of State for Nightmares.

In the end, with nothing solved and no plan of campaign, the Old Boys sank into silence and fell sleep in their armchairs, their brown coffee cups dropping brown drips on to the brown carpet. And they all dreamed the same dream.

They dreamed they were playing tag with the mermaids, while the reflections of rainbows twisted around and between them like water snakes. Then, from somewhere deeper down and darker, came a hugely slithering shape that brushed the soles of their feet with its knobbly, scaly hide...

When they woke, the Old Boys' clothes were sopping wet, and there on its back, in the middle of the Gentlemen's Library was a prodigious crocodile, lashing its tail and snapping its jaws in an effort to turn over and make supper of them.

The Gentlemen's Club emptied in the record time of forty-three seconds, and next day Members everywhere received a letter from the management.

The Gentlemen's Club
Brown Street
off Piccadilly
London W1
23 April 1926

We regret to inform you
that the Club will be
closed for redecoration
from 23rd April until
approximately 1999.
Your obedient servants
The Management

In the end course, it *was* Mrs. Wendy who explained it. 'Dreams are leaking out of Neverland,' she said, 'Something must be wrong. If we want the dreams to stop, we must find out what.'

Mrs Wendy was a grown woman, and as sensible as can be. She had a tidy mind. For six days in any week she strongly disapproved of dreams littering up the house. But on the seventh, she was not *quite* so sure. Recently she had begun hurrying to bed, eager for that twilight flicker that comes between waking and sleep. From behind closed eyelids she would watch for a dream to come floating towards her—just as once she had watched at her bedroom window, hoping against hope for a small figure to come swooping through the local stars. Each bedtime her heart beat faster at the thought of glimpsing the Lagoon again, or hearing the cry of the Neverbird. Above all, she longed to see Peter again: the friend she had left behind in Neverland all those years before.

Now Neverland was rubbing against the Here and Now, wearing holes in the fabric in between. Tendrils of dream were starting to poke through. All was not well. Somehow Mrs Wendy knew it.

'Perhaps the dreams are messages,' said one Twin. 'Perhaps they are warnings,' said the other.

'Perhaps they are symptoms,' said Dr Curly, putting his stethoscope to his own forehead and listening for the dreams inside.

'I'm awfully afraid they may be,' said Wendy. 'Something is wrong in Neverland, gentlemen...and that is why we must go back.'

Prima lezione
(2 ore consecutive)

Fase di pre-lettura

Obiettivi. Fare anticipazione e ipotesi.

Attività.

1. *Brainstorming* per richiamare alla memoria gli elementi principali della trama di *Peter Pan*, i personaggi, gli episodi più divertenti, il setting, ecc.
2. Domande sulle aspettative e previsioni sul seguito della storia di Peter Pan: *Quali avventure pensate che Peter Pan debba affrontare? Prevedete la presenza di nuovi personaggi? Prevedete un linguaggio e una ambientazione diversa?*

Alcune risposte degli studenti.

- Sfida con Capitano Uncino...
- Wendy e i fratelli sono cresciuti, Wendy si porterà dietro i figli per vivere la stessa avventura con loro.
- Sì, ci saranno nuovi personaggi e anche un'ambientazione differente.
- Sì, il linguaggio sarà diverso, da adulti.
- No, i personaggi di Neverland non invecchiano.

3. Anticipazioni sul titolo (*Peter Pan in Scarlet*) su cui sono state avanzate una serie di ipotesi.

Alcune risposte degli studenti.

- Scarlet mi fa pensare a rosso sangue.
- Scarlet mi dà l'idea di lotta e violenza.
- Mi fa pensare a qualcosa di diverso, di forte e anche di triste...
- A me fa pensare a un fiore...

4. Osservazione della copertina del libro per stimolare ulteriori ipotesi.

L'osservazione è stata guidata dalle seguenti domande: *What can you see in the image? Does the drawing give you a positive or a negative impression?*

Alcune risposte degli studenti.

- Peter Pan in primo piano è raggiante e anche l'isola in trasparenza.
- Peter con lo sguardo fiero e la sua isola.
- Positivissima, come se Peter Pan avesse vinto una battaglia.

Fase di lettura

Obiettivi.

- Sviluppare la lettura veloce.
- Fare inferenze e sviluppare la capacità di cogliere i punti chiave.
- Confrontarsi con i compagni.

5. Lettura della quarta di copertina per individuare i punti chiave.

Ai ragazzi viene suggerito di non fermarsi ad analizzare ogni singola parola, ma di leggere il testo in senso verticale anziché orizzontale per velocizzare la lettura.

Dati e osservazioni. La maggior parte degli studenti ha svolto questo compito entro i cinque minuti assegnati. Un piccolo gruppo di studenti, però, non è riuscito a cogliere i punti essenziali nel tempo stabilito. Sono ragazzi motivati e diligenti ma deboli in inglese, con ritmi di lavoro più lenti e bisognosi di supporto. Per colmare questo divario e per evitare il rischio di una caduta di interesse, ho sollecitato gli studenti che avevano terminato il compito a lavorare in modo cooperativo con chi ha mostrato difficoltà.

6. Lettura in classe del primo capitolo, *The Old Boys*, per cogliere i punti chiave; prima singolarmente per una rapida comprensione del contenuto, poi a coppie, per un confronto e un approfondimento dei risultati. Domande di comprensione generale:

- a) What did Mrs John find under the bedclothes?
- b) What kind of dreams did John dream?
- c) Who was in the library of the Gentlemen's Club?
- d) What was strange about the Old Boys' dreams?
- e) What did Wendy disapprove about?
- f) Why did the party want to go to Neverland again?

Ho utilizzato le domande per guidare la comprensione e nel contempo offrire l'opportunità per uno scambio di opinioni, punti di vista e significati.

7. Lavoro sul lessico per attivare inferenze sia riferite a singoli elementi lessicali, sia su porzioni più ampie del testo (vedi esercizi di seguito). Le attività sul lessico sono state svolte a casa singolarmente (tempo previsto 1 ora).

Attività sul lessico

1. Choose the meaning of the following words according to their use in the text.

- | | | | |
|-------------|---|---------------|--|
| 1. startled | a) surprised
b) annoyed
c) shocked | 2. hankering | a) feeling the need
b) avoiding
c) searching for |
| 3. scrubbed | a) touched with hands
b) clean
c) scratched | 4. bulged up | a) arose
b) emerged
c) stood out |
| 5. cutlass | a) large knife used by pirates
b) dagger
c) bow | 6. kipper | a) meat
b) fish
c) cake |
| 7. dazzle | a) sleep
b) haze
c) sense of being tired | 8. slithering | a) slimy
b) buggy
c) dirty |

2. Infer the meaning of the following words which are related to the world of Neverland.

Arrows – sword – bow – top hat – mermaids – alarm clock – Indian head dress – eye-patch – pirate's tricorne hat – gunshot.

3. Guess the meaning of the following expressions:

- brisk blow of her hand
- the bullet shied about the room
- twirling his big moustache
- let sleeping dogs lie

- playing tag with the mermaids
- dreams littering up the house
- swooping through the local stars

4. What do you associate these words with?

Don't check on dictionary now, but try to write down freely and draw as many associations as you can. Remember that only the context can help you:

Cosy

.....

Warpaint

.....

Lashing

.....

Flicker

.....

.....

Seconda lezione

(2 ore consecutive, la settimana successiva)

8. Gli esercizi sul lessico sono stati svolti a casa e quindi controllati in classe con un confronto tra compagni suddivisi in 5 gruppi di 3/4 studenti – gruppi spontanei, spesso organizzati sulla base della vicinanza, e successivamente discutendo le soluzioni adottate in plenaria.

Dati e osservazioni. Le associazioni più gettonate sono state:

Cosy: house – room

Warpaint: war suits – war shoes – green and black trousers

Lashing: moving – hitting

Flicker: light – sound – something that moves slowly.

9. Dopo la lettura del capitolo per cogliere il senso globale e il lavoro sul lessico, si è passati ad una comprensione più approfondita basata sul fare inferenze, in cui ognuno può procedere con risposte personali e creative.

Le domande di anticipazione che stimolano risposte personali e creative sono indicate con un asterisco (*).

a) Look at the picture at the top of page. What does it tell you about what happens in the chapter?

b) Do you recognize any of the objects that you found in the story of Peter Pan?

c) How do you imagine John in this new story?*

d) Are there any elements that can help you express your opinion?

e) Do you think dreams are going to be as important in this book as in *Peter Pan*?*

f) On page 3 you find the sentence «They had all once been Boys in Neverland». Who do you think the word “boys” is referred to?

g) What settings are evoked that you are already familiar with? Which fantastic creatures are evoked in the dreams? What was their role in Peter Pan?

h) In the chapter Captain Hook is briefly mentioned. Do you think he is still going to have a negative role in the story? Which word anticipates his position?*

- i) «Mrs Wendy was a grown woman» (page 6). How do you imagine her? Which role is she going to have? Which word reveals it?*
- l) In what way is Peter Pan introduced?

Dati e osservazioni. Le risposte individuali sono state confrontate in gruppi di tre/quattro studenti, e quelle ritenute particolarmente significative sono state comunicate a tutta la classe, trascritte alla lavagna dall'insegnante, ridiscusse e commentate. Due studenti hanno messo in evidenza l'uso ripetuto dell'aggettivo *brown* che sembra indicare un mondo triste e vecchio, contrapposto ai colori di *Neverland*. Altri hanno insistito sul tema generale del sogno:

Alessio: "I sogni fanno parte dell'infanzia, più un adulto rimane giovane, più sogna".

Leo: "Vedi anche il film sulla vita di Barrie, rimasto bambino..."

Carla: "Anche Alice in the Wonderland è un sogno... perché gli inglesi usano sempre queste cose strane sui sogni e su mondi fantastici?"

Mentre Lisa ha colto il valore della figura di Wendy: "Ma Wendy, invece, è una figura viva e materna, positiva nel decidere il da farsi".

Poiché la partecipazione attiva, specialmente in questa ultima parte, era di per sé dimostrazione di come il capitolo letto e il percorso svolto fossero stati compresi e apprezzati, non ho chiesto il feedback che avrebbe potuto risultare ridondante e forse noioso, ed essere vissuto come un compito prettamente scolastico.

Per l'insegnante il lavoro ha dato buoni risultati perché gli studenti hanno risposto positivamente agli stimoli offerti. Si tratta, infatti, di una classe nel suo complesso ricettiva e attiva, che partecipa, rischia e interiorizza, e che lavora volentieri sulle proprie sensazioni, emozioni e riflessioni.