

Year 8 English

Spoken Language

What do you know about the story of Dorothy and the Wizard of Oz? Discuss with a trusted adult:

- Who is Dorothy and where does she live? And with who? Who is her best friend?
- What happens to take her to the magical land of Oz?
- Who are the Tinman, the Scarecrow and the Lion?
- Who is the Wicked Witch of the West?
- How does Dorothy get back home? What do you know of the yellow brick road and Emerald City?
- Is there anything else you know about the story? E.g. Dorothy's red shoes!

Reading

The Wonderful Wizard of Oz by Frank L Baum

The children's novel 'The Wonderful Wizard of Oz' was published in 1900. It tells the story of Dorothy, a young farm girl from Kansas, USA, who is swept away in a cyclone and has magical adventures in the Land of Oz. In this extract from the opening of the novel, the reader is introduced to Dorothy and her family on their farm as the cyclone approaches. (As this is an American novel, the colour 'grey' has been spelled as 'gray'.) As you read this extract, make notes about how Dorothy seems to feel at this point in the text.

Dorothy lived in the midst of the great Kansas prairies, with Uncle Henry, who was a farmer, and Aunt Em, who was the farmer's wife. Their house was small, for the lumber to build it had to be carried by wagon many miles. There were four walls, a floor and a roof, which made one room; and this room contained a rusty looking cook stove, a cupboard for the dishes, a table, three or four chairs, and the beds. Uncle Henry and Aunt Em had a big bed in one corner, and Dorothy a little bed in another corner. There was no garret at all, and no cellar--except a small hole dug in the ground, called a cyclone cellar, where the family could go in case one of those great whirlwinds arose, mighty enough to crush any building in its path. It was reached by a trap door in the middle of the floor, from which a ladder led down into the small, dark hole.

When Dorothy stood in the doorway and looked around, she could see nothing but the great gray prairie on every side. Not a tree nor a house broke the broad sweep of flat country that reached to the edge of the sky in all directions. The sun had baked the plowed land into a gray mass, with little cracks running through it. Even the grass was not green, for the sun had burned the tops of the long blades until they were the same gray colour to be seen everywhere. Once the house had been painted, but the sun blistered the paint and the rains washed it away, and now the house was as dull and gray as everything else.

When Aunt Em came there to live she was a young, pretty wife. The sun and wind had changed her, too. They had taken the sparkle from her eyes and left them a sober gray; they had taken the red from her cheeks and lips, and they were gray also. She was thin and gaunt, and never smiled now. When Dorothy, who was an orphan, first came to her, Aunt Em had been so startled by the child's laughter that she would scream and press her hand upon her heart whenever Dorothy's merry voice reached her ears; and she still looked at the little girl with wonder that she could find anything to laugh at.

Uncle Henry never laughed. He worked hard from morning till night and did not know what joy was. He was gray also, from his long beard to his rough boots, and he looked stern and solemn, and rarely spoke.

It was Toto that made Dorothy laugh, and saved her from growing as gray as her other surroundings. Toto was not gray; he was a little black dog, with long silky hair and small black eyes that twinkled merrily on either side of his funny, wee nose. Toto played all day long, and Dorothy played with him, and loved him dearly.

Today, however, they were not playing. Uncle Henry sat upon the doorstep and looked anxiously at the sky, which was even grayer than usual. Dorothy stood in the door with Toto in her arms, and looked at the sky too. Aunt Em was washing the dishes.

From the far north they heard a low wail of the wind, and Uncle Henry and Dorothy could see where the long grass bowed in waves before the coming storm. There now came a sharp whistling in the air from the south, and as they turned their eyes that way they saw ripples in the grass coming from that direction also.

Suddenly Uncle Henry stood up.

"There's a cyclone coming, Em," he called to his wife. "I'll go look after the stock."

Then he ran toward the sheds where the cows and horses were kept.

The Wonderful Wizard of Oz: Text-focused questions

1. Baum writes that the house had 'no garret at all, and no cellar'. Using your knowledge of what a 'cellar' is, what might a 'garret' be? Write a definition.
2. Re-read the extract and find all of the references to the sun. Which verbs does Baum use to describe the sun's actions? What does this suggest about the relationship between the setting and the characters in this story?
3. Baum describes many things as 'gray'. Make a list of these items, in the order they are mentioned in the text. What does this suggest about the relationship between the setting and the characters in the story?
4. Baum deliberately makes Toto and Dorothy different from Aunt Em and Uncle Henry. How does he do this?
5. Towards the end of the extract, the cyclone approaches. Find seven pieces of evidence which help to build a sense of concern and tension about this event.
6. Uncle Henry is described as a 'farmer' and Aunt Em as 'the farmer's wife'. What does this, and the time of writing, suggest about the relationship between men and women?

Writing

Look at the image below.

- Label the nouns (the objects) – what can you see that you could describe? Trees, lake, rainbow etc.
- Recap CAMPERS – Colour, Adjectives, Metaphor, Personification, Emotive Language, Range of Verbs, Similes and Senses. Can you remember what each of these are?

- Write a description of the image. Imagine you have followed the yellow brick road and this is your first sight of the Emerald City.

