

“Wow,” Stephanie said, “The Sanctuary is here? I used to come here when I was little...”

“Never knowing that beneath your feet was a world of magic and wonder?”

“Exactly.”

He tilted his head slightly. “Better get used to that feeling.”

Skulduggery Pleasant

At a glance

Haggard, Stephanie's home town, is made up. But Dublin, where *Skulduggery Pleasant* is set, is very real. Invite children to become Dublin detectives to create a Fact File on the city. Then explore the way that Derek Landy uses place and setting creatively, and suggest a future location for a *Skulduggery* story.

Curriculum fit

The activities in *On Location* can be used to meet the NC requirements in KS2 English to develop an understanding and appreciation of literary texts, including modern fiction by significant authors.

And in particular it can help children to understand how setting is created.

It can also be used to meet the NC requirements in KS2 Geography to investigate a variety of people, places and environments in the UK and abroad, through using geographical questions, skills and resources. In particular, to:

- * identify and describe what places are like
- * understand the location of places and describe where they are
- * explain why places are like they are
- * identify how and why places change.

Skulduggery Pleasant

Teacher's Resources

On Location

Learning points

Through these activities children will:

- * develop an understanding of Dublin, using geographical questions and resources
- * present their findings in an illustrated Fact File
- * explore how Derek Landy makes imaginative use of Dublin, and some of the landmark places of the city, as settings in *Skulduggery Pleasant*
- * consider the effects created in the book by combining real and made-up places
- * research and recommend a new location for a future *Skulduggery* adventure.

Reading recap

To introduce the themes of setting and location, recap on the different locations in the book, and write them on the board.

Ask children whether this list can be put into groups or categories. The table below can be a helpful way to distinguish between places in and outside Dublin.

Haggard & the countryside

Dublin

London

Stephanie's House
(chapters 9-10)

Gordon's Estate
(chapters 1, 3 & 20-21)

Haggard Beach
(chapter 20)

Serpine's Castle
(chapter 17)

China's Library
(chapters 5, 14 & 16)

Ghastly's Shop
(chapter 8)

Waxwork Museum/Sanctuary
(chapter 10)

Municipal Art Gallery/Vault
(chapter 11)

Denholm Street Warehouse
(chapter 25)

Christ Church Cathedral
(chapter 26)

Westminster Bridge
(chapter 9)

1. Skulduggery locations

Once you have identified the key places in the book, ask children to work in small groups, to discuss each location. Each group should describe:

- * What the place is like.
- * What happens there.

Ask children to feed back to the group so that you can add key actions to the chart and together create a location-based summary of the major events of the book.

Discussion points

Now that you've established where the action in *Skulduggery Pleasant* takes place, look at how the choices and uses of location link to the themes of the book.

- * What does Stephanie's house and bedroom and home town represent? (Normality, her old life.)
- * What does her home town's name, Haggard, suggest? (A dull place with no excitement or potential; an unmagical place, old and weary.)
- * Why do you think that most of the magical locations are hidden within the City of Dublin?

(Making the familiar strange helps us to imagine and relate to the action. To think that the magical world and the 'real' world co-exist if only you know where to look increases our sense of wonder.)

- * The city in literature is a place of anonymity, where anything is possible. In the world of *Skulduggery Pleasant*, Dublin is somewhere that 'secret communities' can flourish unnoticed and unsuspected by the majority of people.

2. Dublin detectives

Discussion points

- * So, what's Dublin really like?
- * Has anyone in the class been?
- * If so, what did they do and see?
- * What are their impressions of the city?

Now we are going to balance our impressions of Dublin as a dramatic location for Derek Landy's work, with what the place is really like through a geographical investigation.

Discussion point

- * Do children think that there may be any differences between Derek Landy's account and their own?
- * If so, can they predict what these might be?

Individually or in pairs, ask children to become Dublin detectives and create a Fact File about the city. The purpose of the Fact File is not to 'sell' the city as a destination, or to creatively re-imagine it, like a novelist might, but simply to brief readers on the facts about the city, and let them give an accurate picture of the city today.

To research Dublin Fact Files ask children to use a range of different sources including maps, atlases, reference books and ICT to find out:

- * Which country Dublin is in.
- * Where it is within that country.
- * What kind of place it is.
- * Approximate population size.
- * Key geographical features.
- * Climate.
- * Industries.
- * Its role in the region.
- * When it was first noted as a place.
- * How it has evolved over time since then.
- * Three of its famous landmarks.
- * Three of its famous sons or daughters.
- * What it is famous for today.

Once research is completed, ask children to write and design their Dublin Fact Files.

Remind them to make sure that their work is:

- * Illustrated with maps and drawings and tables as necessary that help to develop readers' understanding.
- * Clearly structured, making good use of sub-headings.
- * Accessible and easy to read.
- * Accurate and reliable; if you have used websites as your sources, how can you check that the information you have discovered is correct and up-to-date?

Discussion points

- * Did anything that you discovered surprise you?
- * Did you notice anything different between your account of Dublin in your Fact File, and the way it appears in *Skulduggery Pleasant*?

3. New territory for Skulduggery

Compare and contrast the facts you have discovered about Dublin to the place that you live in.

- * Would your home town make a good location for a *Skulduggery* adventure?
- * If so, why? If not, do you know anywhere else that would?

Write a letter to Derek Landy to suggest a new location to him for one of his next books. Make sure that you explain why you think it would be good to include in a story. Such as, by telling him what qualities it has, key buildings and architecture, particularly special or famous places, aspects of its geography or climate, the customs or occupations of its people. Add maps or pictures if they help you to make your case.