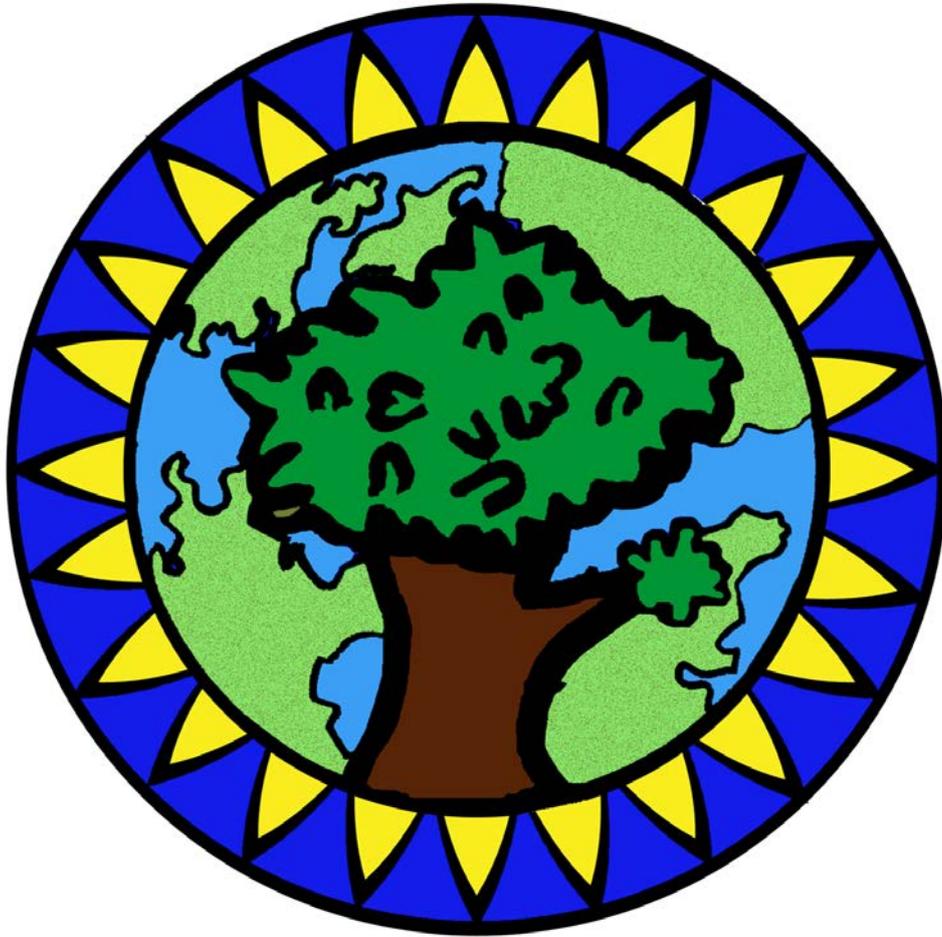


Branch Out World



Picture Book Explorers
The Best Christmas Present
in the World

The *Picture Book Explorers* series is written primarily for use by Home Educating families but it will be useful for any parent who wishes to support their child's learning whether they attend school or not. The intended age range is approximately 5 to 9 years but can easily be adapted for older or younger siblings accordingly. This helps to keep Home Education a truly family experience.

This PDF file refers to a single male child throughout. I use this convention because it is just a shorter and easier way to write this material. It by no means is meant to imply that this material is aimed at boys only, or at one child families. It's not. It's equally as relevant to girls as to boys and can be used in family groups of siblings of mixed ages and abilities with differing interests.

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This material is not endorsed either by the author or the publisher of the picture book being explored. This unit is put together in the hope that other families will enjoy the learning journey that the picture book inspires.

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Branch Out World's *'Picture Book Explorers'* are designed to encourage the love of learning in children by making use of one of the most treasured family times - sharing a book. Reading aloud to children brings a closeness between parent and child that helps to enhance the learning experience, making children more receptive and eager to learn. Learning then becomes something to look forward to and enjoy - hopefully, making beautiful memories for the future.

The premise is a simple one. A particular picture book is read every day for five days and then followed up by activities chosen from a suggested selection. There are five different sections of activities, one for each day you read the book. Preferably, this will take place on five consecutive days, but, if this is not possible, your child will still remain familiar with the story and get to know it in more depth because you read the book every time you sit down to explore together. You may find you have to extend the time frame for some reason, perhaps because of family commitments, or perhaps because your child has shown a particular interest in one, or more, aspects of the exploration. If this is the case, you may want to take a break from the book for a day or two while you look at certain topics in more detail, or, alternatively, you can make a note of your child's interests so that when you have finished the five sections, you and your child can Branch Out into further explorations of your own.

For a young child, one activity in each section may be enough, or if you have more than one child, they may each want to complete a different activity. An older child may want to do all the suggested activities in a section. Follow your child's lead in this, don't try to force him to do everything in each section if he doesn't want to. Remember, the aim is to maintain a love of learning. Don't worry if you don't do all the activities in your five days of reading the book, you can explore each book again and again, as long as you make sure you keep a copy of this file.

A word of warning - from personal experience, keep up the momentum as best as you can. Too long a break during an exploration can result in your child's loss of interest in that particular book. If this happens, it may be best to leave it for a few weeks then come back to it, starting by reviewing briefly any of the completed sections again.

Before you start exploring

- Read through the weeks suggested activities
- Decide which activities you want to do with your child and gather all the necessary materials
- Collect together any go-along books/CDs/DVDs
- Gather together any toys/games/go-alongs which may be relevant to the story and put them in a container that is kept just for explorations.

The Daily Sections

Each exploration is divided into five sections, each section covering different subject areas.

- **Day 1 - *Exploring the Setting*** - when and where

This section focuses on history and geography, as well as looking at the themes presented in the book.

- **Day 2 - *Exploring the Words***

This section looks at literary devices and sometimes grammar, as well as providing opportunities for creative writing.

- **Day 3 - *Exploring the Pictures***

This section looks at the illustrations in more detail and suggests ways for your child to create their own artwork.

- **Day 4 - *Exploring Science***

This section looks at scientific topics that come up in the book - from animal studies to hands-on experiments.

- **Day 5 - *Exploring Maths, Crafts and More***

Finally, in this section, your child will lightly touch on maths activities in a way that relates to the story, when applicable. Maths will also often come into the suggested craft activities and recipes intended to bring a fun ending to your exploration journey.

Let's Explore....

[*The Best Christmas Present in the World*](#) (2004) written by Michael Morpurgo, illustrated by Michael Foreman
ISBN: 978-1405215183

Optional Extras

Books:

[*War Game*](#) by Michael Foreman

[*The Christmas Truce*](#) by Carol Ann Duffy

[*The Christmas Truce: The Place Where Peace was Found*](#) by Hilary Robinson

Chapter books written by Michael Morpurgo that also feature World War 1:

[*War Horse*](#)

[*Private Peaceful*](#)

Films: **Please check suitability for your child**

Oh! What a Lovely War

Private Peaceful

Extra supplies you may need:

Day 1

1. Travel brochures of Dorset and Belgium

Day 2

Day 3

2. Watercolour paint and brush
3. Drawing materials

Day 4

4. small mirror
5. empty tin can, salt, ice
6. wax crayon

Day 5

7. small tin and enamel paints OR small cardboard box and means to decorate it
8. shoebox and tape
9. cooking ingredients

Story Summary:

A man finds an old letter in a secret drawer of a second-hand desk he has bought to refurbish. The letter is from Jim MacPherson and tells the story of the Christmas Day truce of 1914 in which British and German soldiers came together to share cigarettes, food and drink in no-man's land. The letter tells how the soldiers also played football. The man who found the letter decides to return it to the original recipient, the soldier's wife, Connie. She is now an elderly lady living in a nursing home. She is very happy to receive the letter, although a little confused as to who the man is.

Day 3 -Exploring the Pictures

About The Artist

Michael Foreman was born on 21st March 1938 near Lowestoft in Suffolk. He studied at Lowestoft School of Art and then the Royal College of Art in London. He has illustrated over a hundred books written by other people and he also illustrates books that he writes himself. He started illustrating children's books in 1961 when he was still a student. One of his previous jobs was drawing identikit pictures of female suspects for the police.

After leaving college, he travelled extensively making TV commercials and films. He made lots of sketches as he travelled, many of which have been used as inspiration from his books.

Michael travels widely to research his illustrations. He prefers to travel by himself and he thinks that drawing is very important. He uses luminous watercolours to paint his pictures which are often predominantly blue.

He is married with three sons and lives in London but likes to spend a lot of time at St Ives in Cornwall because he finds the sea very inspiring.

Picture Study

For this activity, turn to page 1 of the story and use the illustration immediately opposite which shows the desk in its dilapidated state in the second-hand shop.

In this activity, your child will look carefully at the picture for a set length of time, one or two minutes as you decide. Then you will close the book and ask him to describe the picture from memory. This can be done verbally, in which case, there should be no adult prompting and no correction of mistakes. When he has finished giving his description, show your child the illustration again. He will now be able to self-correct and make further observations. A written account of his description can be added to his Logbook.

To make this activity into a game, your child will need paper and pencil and a timer. Allow your child one minute to look at the illustration and then cover it. Give him one or two minutes (again, as you decide) to list or draw all that he can remember of the illustration. Uncover the picture and compare your child's answer with the actual illustration. Add his list/drawing to his Logbook.

Monochromatic Painting

Michael Foreman paints his pictures using a lot of blue. This is a recognisable feature of his personal style. In this picture book, there are illustrations painted entirely in shades of blue. When a picture is painted using shades of a single colour it is called a MONOCHROMATIC.

If you have studied with *Picture Book Explorers ~ The Tale of Jemima Puddleduck*, your child may remember exploring tints, shades and tones. In this project, your child will be working with tints (a single colour mixed with white) and shades (a single colour mixed with black or dark blue).

Look at the illustration that spreads over pages 22 and 23. Help your child to notice how the artist uses the white of the paper effectively to create lighter areas.

Also look at the illustration on page 38. What does it have in common with the other illustration? (They're both blue; they both depict night scenes.)

Can your child spot where tints and shades have been used in the illustration?

With monochromatic painting, your child will learn that colour value is as important as hue. Value is one of the seven elements of art. The appearance of different values is affected by the other values around it. Use the activity sheet on p. 60 to demonstrate this. If he uses the same colour as he will be using in his project, this activity will also help him to learn how to mix his paint to achieve the different tints and shades.

Your child can paint a picture of his own chosen subject or he may want to paint a picture of an item from the book in shades of a single colour. If using watercolour, put less paint and more water on the brush to get a lighter colour value and add more paint to get a darker colour value. If using poster paint or acrylics, white and black paint will have to be added to the colour to create different tints and shades.

Project

A seasonal option would be the painting of a snow-covered fir tree using simple shapes in shades of green. Encourage your child to mix his own green by using blue and yellow paint mixed together.

It is advisable to start painting with the lighter tints first and to add the darker shades needed for the detail later.

Add his painting to his Logbook.

Christmas Symbols To Draw

In the book, on page 2, the artist has painted a Christmas swag containing holly and mistletoe. If you have these things available in your home, let your child arrange them on the table so that he can make an observational drawing to add to his Logbook.

If not, he can use the illustration as his guide or follow the step by step instructions on p. 51 & 52. He can colour his drawings using media of his own choice.

Europe in 1914



Thank you for purchasing this unit of **Branch Out World's**
Picture Book Explorers.

I hope you and your child have enjoyed your exploration
and have learnt a few things along the way.

I am always looking to improve my products to give
customers what they want. Your feedback is most
welcome. My aim is to help you facilitate your child's
learning journey in a fun and positive way whilst creating
happy memories together.

If you have any questions, or suggestions for future units
please don't hesitate to contact me by email at

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