

ZAK MONROE IS (NOT) MY FRIEND CLASSROOM RESOURCES

USE FICTION TO START CONVERSATIONS



A good story can begin all sorts of conversations about what's worrying pupils, allowing them to explore their own feelings through those of the characters. The security of displacement onto a fictional personality may reveal what's going on beneath the surface of even the most hardened Y6. And what primary teacher doesn't enjoy reading aloud to their class? Whilst other titles are available, Zak Monroe Is (not) My Friend is a great place to start!

CASE STUDIES

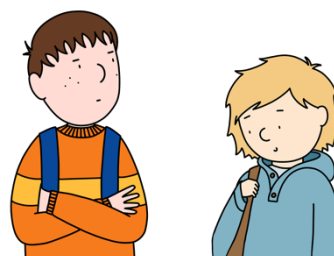
Present a variety of potential situations pupils may encounter (or perceive they may encounter) in secondary school and use these as a basis for discussion about ways to address them and the consequences these would bring about, perhaps exploring different outcomes from different approaches. Topics suggested by pupils could be particularly powerful – these could be contributed anonymously through a worry box.

ROLE PLAY

Rehearsing how to navigate some of the challenges of Y7 could equip pupils with some appropriate tools. Get them to enact asking for help with something they don't understand in class or telling their adult at home they've got Food Tech tomorrow and need a shed load of ingredients – exploring different ways of saying the same thing may help them choose an attitude most likely to bring about a positive outcome!

INDUCTION

Make the most of any transition visits. Encourage pupils to prepare questions in advance so they maximise the opportunity to speak with a member of staff from their new school – common concerns always include finding their way around, keeping up, homework, bullying and how lunchtime works. Check to see if the schools offer any enhanced induction programmes to support vulnerable pupils. If there are former pupils who would present a positive picture of their move to secondary school, it might be reassuring for your Y6s to hear from them.



WORRIES

Collect some anonymous worries (or use the ones here – they are real worries collected from some Y6 pupils) – distribute them and ask pupils to write a response with some good advice



FRIENDSHIP

1. Use a WAGOLL (What A Good One Looks Like) to allow pupils to think about the characteristics they'll be looking for in their new friends at secondary school. Many pupils fear their old friends will abandon them but fail to consider their own behaviour. Talk about how things change and develop as they move to a new setting, and what they'll need to do to maintain the old friendships as well as grow new ones.
2. Use the post it notes to create cards for a Diamond Nine activity. You might want to include some blank cards for pupils to write their own ideas. Each small group (or individual or pair) will need a set of cards. Ask them to select their top nine qualities and arrange them in a diamond shape to represent their importance

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      X
    X  X
  X  X  X
    X  X
      X

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Each group then shares their selection with another group and combines their priorities to create a new diamond – pupils should be able to argue why their chosen quality should be included. Repeat this process until the class has agreed a collective diamond.

There are no right or wrong answers here, but the task creates a good opportunity for discussion and encourages pupils to articulate what is important to them.

3. Using the results of the diamond nine activity, devise an advertisement for a friend (good opportunities for use of persuasive language here!)

loyal

kind

like the
same
things as
me

have lots
of stuff

be good
at sport

sensible

funny

make me
feel safe

always
agree
with me

respectful

a good
listener

forgiving

clever

not make
fun of me

like the
same
people as
me

do the
right
thing

like
animals

good at
gaming

not
judgemental

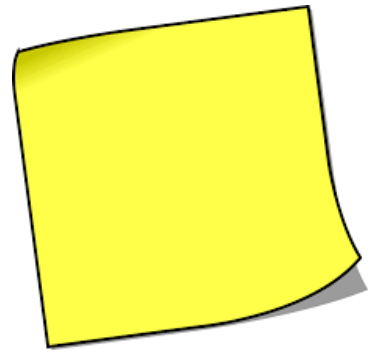
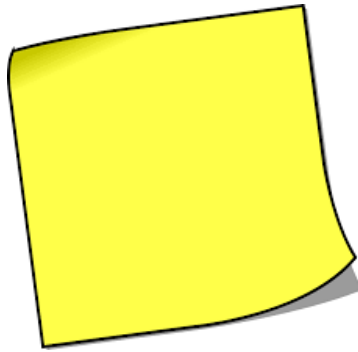
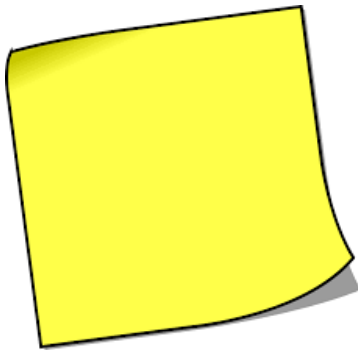
empathetic

supportive

encouraging

stand up
for me

accepting



4. Write a haiku (like Zak's sister River does) about friendship – the qualities the pupils prioritised are a good starting point.

Haiku originated in Japan. It's a seventeen syllable, three line poem, usually with this structure:

Line 1: five syllables
Line 2: seven syllables
Line 3: five syllables

It doesn't rhyme. Traditionally, it reflects a moment of realisation.

For example:

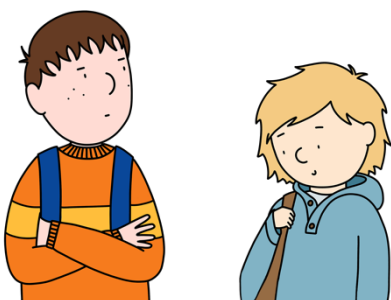
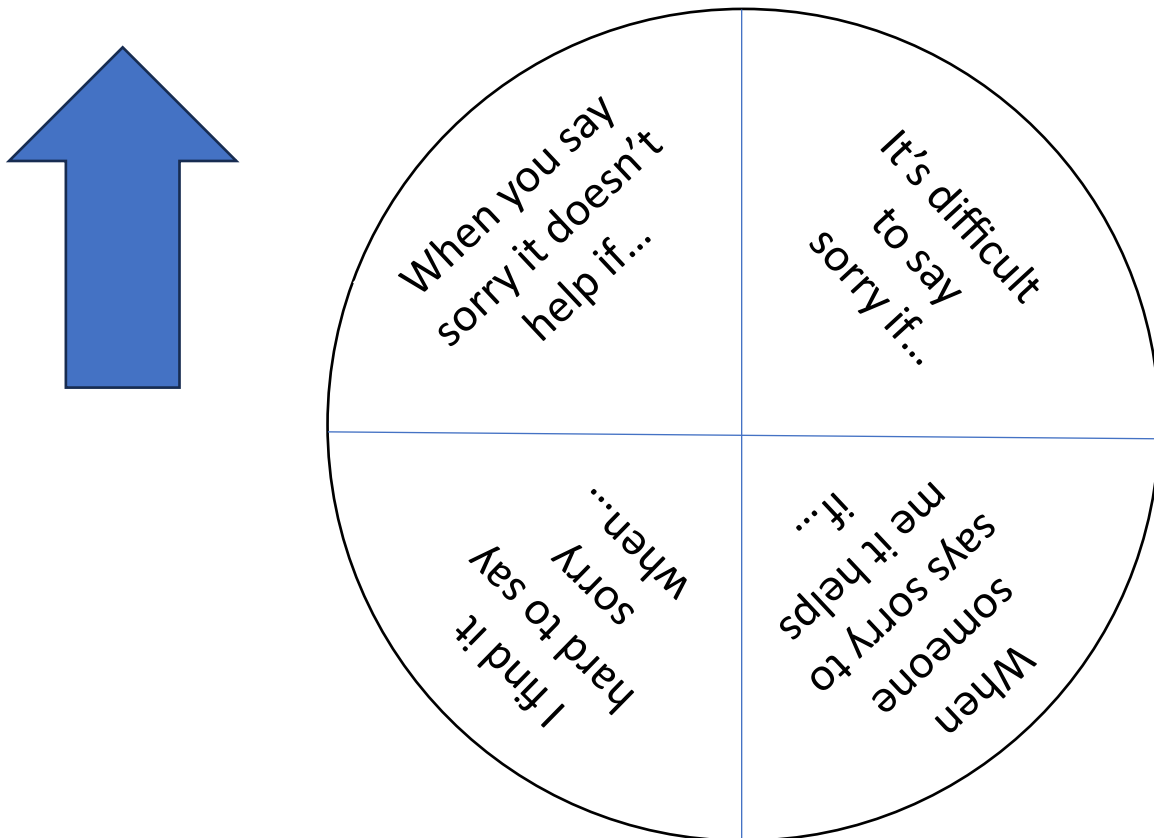
I'll say it again
Zak Monroe is NOT my friend
Or maybe he is



There are some other rules too for a 'proper' haiku, but let's be flexible as we're really focussing on pupils recognising what real friends are like

Despite this, you could encourage pupils to say their word choices aloud as they write to get the best flow

5. Ask pupils to think about a time when they have been let down by a friend – how did this make them feel? Is there a time when they have let someone down? How could they have behaved differently? Make and use the spinner to take it in turns to complete the sentence.



THIS IS ME

Spend some time talking with pupils about being comfortable with who they are, reminding them that trying to be someone you're not is exhausting and never makes us happy in the long term. Reflecting on their interests and hobbies as well as new things they'd like to try is a good way to encourage pupils to make the most of the many opportunities that lie ahead – joining a club will bring them into contact with those who enjoy similar pursuits and may spark friendships. It's also a great way of reminding pupils that secondary school is not all about the challenges, but offers an exciting new adventure too!

Try these activities:

1. Each pupil writes a list of ten positive things about themselves – this could be a combination of qualities, skills, talents and interests. This should boost confidence. If you're feeling brave, get them to do it for another pupil!
2. Pupils could design a shield with symbols representing their hobbies and interests – this could help them identify interests in others they may not be aware of.
3. Ask each pupil to write down a fact about themselves they think others won't know. Distribute these randomly so that each pupil has someone else's fact. They now need to devise some related questions they could ask to help them identify the owner (they can't just say "did you write this?") Pupils then move around asking their questions – a pause point could allow them to swap information with one or two other people – until they correctly match the fact with its owner. This activity will help them practise starting conversations and hopefully also develop their listening skills.
4. Ask each pupil to prepare a three minute presentation on something they love, with the objective of sparking interest in others, as well as getting used to talking about things they are interested in. Alternatively, they could choose an animal to talk about, like Zak does.

