



story explorer

The Weirdstone of Brisingamen Intro Week Activity Pack

Introduction for Adults

I first read *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen* when I was about 10 and I have reread it countless times since. I am still breathless when Susan and Colin evade pursuit deep underground. There are terrifying parts where I can hardly bear to carry on reading. Of course, I am compelled to continue by twists and turns and by the beauty of the writing.

I was introduced to Alan Garner's books via *Elidor*, which was read to my class by a bearded student-teacher in 1968. It was utterly unlike anything I had ever read before. It was set in terraced streets like mine, with characters who spoke like me, who experienced magical adventures I had never dreamed of. Authors like Philip Pullman, Neil Gaiman and Frank Cottrell-Boyce were similarly entranced.

Today's children can enjoy the story in many ways, such as via a printed book or an ebook. Of course, some people enjoy being read to; there is an audiobook which is widely available to buy and there is a free (abridged) radio drama on YouTube.

Sixty years after publication, Alan Garner's books still captivate readers today.

- Sandra Flitcroft (artist, workshop facilitator and creator of the Story Explorer Weirdstone pack)

How to use the packs

You might be a librarian looking to start your own Story Explorer group; a parent or carer navigating teaching for the first time, or a teacher looking for material to use in your classroom, whether that's at home, in school or online.

These packs are designed to be a reading accompaniment. You can use them to help children work through and get the most out of an exciting book for their age group.

There are 10 weeks of activities to complete. You can space them out or speed them up. **Each week you and the Story Explorers should read the chapter(s) written at the top of each pack before starting the activities.**

For each week, there will be two packs: one for adults with instructions and one for children with activities. You should read these packs before starting your sessions with the Story Explorers.

Each week, the children will be asked to read one, two or three chapters of *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen*. Children are then encouraged to explore the story further through the activities. These activities are designed to be fun and engaging, allowing each Story Explorer to develop their creativity (as well as vocabulary and skills) in their own way. Some of the activities include:

- Open-ended questions about characters, locations and plot
- Exploring and recording new vocabulary
- Illustrating characters and locations
- Creative writing

These packs may be completed online, or you may choose to print them out - choose whichever works best for you and your Story Explorers. If you are unable to print the activity sheets, you can copy or draw them directly onto paper.

The children should also keep the work from previous weeks as some activity sheets span several weeks.

Activity 1 – Finding Clues

Story Explorers can discover all sorts of information from book covers.

The first activity, before even handling or looking at your own copy of the book, is to gain inspiration from the illustrated front covers of some of the many editions, in many languages, since *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen* was first published in 1960. You can print this out or look at it on the computer. Zoom in or use a magnifying glass.

The document has four illustrations per page. Look at each cover and think about which aspects of the story the artist has featured. Children should record this in the table on page 3 in the children's activity pack; this will be used as the basis for an imaginative story. You should then ask the children to consider the questions on page 4 in the children's activity pack.

This could take 30-40 minutes. Of course, some children will want to spend less time, others more, on every activity.

The emphasis here is on imagination. Allow the children to use their own words and descriptions and to develop their own ideas as they complete the table. There are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers.

Activity 2 – Writing My Own Story

When it is time to write, it is important that the children feel free to follow their own imagination rather than to guess correctly what the story is actually about.

Allow up to 10 minutes of silent writing time. Some children will finish before this, but others will be keen to work at a slower pace.

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Funded by



Supported using public funding by
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