

The Caravan!



Read Pie Corbett's atmospheric warning story with your class and use the activities overleaf to sharpen children's literacy skills...

"Now Mitch, don't go playing up by the pylon," my Mum had warned me often enough. "It's dangerous. You'll get yourself electrocuted." Did I listen? Of course I didn't. Most days after school that was exactly where I went. Daft really, but she actually thought that I was doing my homework with Connor. Mum worries too much. I've still not forgotten how she used to tell me not to play under Hanger Bridge by the railway in case the troll snatched me. Of course, I was younger then.

The pylon she was talking about stood at the end of Muggie Moss Road. Red and brown rust fluttered from its lean body and it made odd creaking sounds when the wind blew. It was there we found the caravan. It had been empty for years. If you go past,

you'll just see a small patch of overgrown land under the pylon, a mess of brambles and nettles that smothered the van. It was damp inside and the windows were smeared with green grime. Moss clung to its wheels. It was a place of dead spiders and dust but it was our special place. Most days after school we went straight there. Just to muck about.

That afternoon, a storm raged. It had been brewing all morning. The trees were like crazed zombies thrashing wildly. Rain lashed down, drumming on the metal roof. Inside the caravan it felt safe, almost cosy really. We shoved newspaper into any cracks to keep out the wind. I'd found a bit of old carpet and Connor had brought along some cushions that his Mum had thrown out.

He'd also found a candle and in the semi-gloom its flame flickered with a cheerful glow. Outside dusk shadowed the bushes. Soon the streetlights would come on, casting orange pools of light.

We were arguing over whether the last goal in the Man United game was the best yet when we heard it: a clap of thunder so close that it sounded like an explosion. Connor wiped the condensation from the window and we peered out. At that very moment, there was another tremendous crack, and lightning struck the pylon. Sparks flew, the pylon shuddered and, as if in slow motion, it crashed down towards the caravan roof.

Instinctively, we both ducked down fast. There was an enormous crash and the caravan roof crumpled. The air

FREE RESOURCE

GET A WHITEBOARD-FRIENDLY VERSION OF PIE'S STORY...

If you would like to share this story with your class on the whiteboard, please email inbox@teachprimary.com with 'Pie Corbett's Story' in the subject bar. We will email a whiteboard-friendly version of the text back to you!

prickled with electricity and rain lashed through the opening in the roof. For a moment, I was certain that I was about to be fried alive. In the half-light, I could see Connor's face. His eyes were wide with fright and he gulped like a fish. "Come on," he hissed. We slithered like snakes across the floor with the rusted pylon creaking dangerously above us.

Luckily, the door had flown open when the pylon had struck. We slipped out onto the muddy ground and lay there with the thunder grumbling above us and the rain beating down. Then Connor started to laugh. He curled up into a ball and laughed so much that I thought he was crying. I couldn't help myself. The next thing I knew, I was laughing too. Inside, I just felt relief. On the outside, I was laughing crazily. Then we ran, through the brambles and out onto Muggie Moss Road.

Of course, Mum was furious. "I'm not made of money," she said, eyeing the state of my school clothes. "Still, maybe a good wash will sort them out." She glared at me suspiciously. "So, a tree nearly hit you?" I nodded, avoiding her icy stare. "You could have been killed," she said. Shamefaced, I nodded. She was right. She'd been right from the start.

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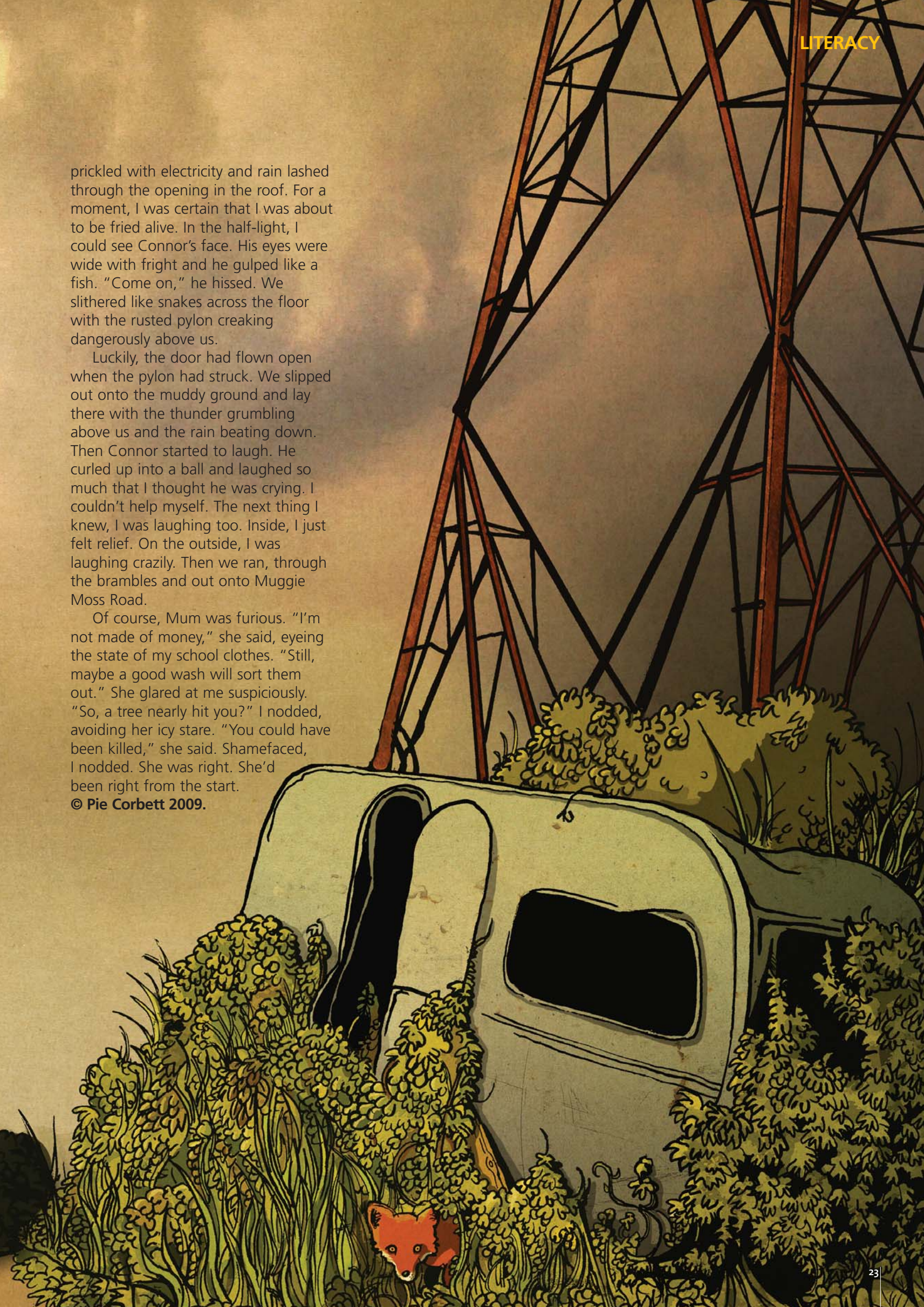


Fig. 1

THE CARAVAN	THE UNDERLYING PATTERN	IDEA FOR NEW STORY
Mitch is warned not to play by the pylon.	The main character is warned not to go to a dangerous place.	Tina is warned not to play by the old house.
Description of the pylon and the nearby caravan.	The dangerous place is described.	The old house is described.
They go to the caravan.	The main character and a friend go to the dangerous place.	Tina and Sophy go there.
In a storm, the pylon falls onto the caravan roof.	A disaster occurs, e.g. they are trapped.	They get locked in an attic room.
Trapped, they try to escape.	Rescue attempt, e.g. the characters try to escape.	They try to find a way out.
They manage to escape through the broken door.	The rescue succeeds, e.g. they escape.	They manage to escape over the rooftop.
Mitch's mum is furious.	The main character has to face the person who gave the original warning. A lesson is learned.	Tina's mum is furious!

Warning story

'Warning' stories are one of the simplest patterns that children should know about in order to create their own. Basically, the story line hinges around the main character being warned not to go somewhere or do something and disobeying what they are told. This leads to a disaster, rescue and in the end a lesson is learned. It can be used as a story pattern with any genre. For example, you could start a science-fiction adventure with the words, 'Do not land your spacepod on the sand dunes of Alpha Beta.' The rest of the story would be about how the main character disobeys the order, lands on the planet, is captured and then escapes from the grip of some terrible aliens.

Working with the story

Loiter with the story for at least two or three days, if not longer. This will help the less confident internalise the patterns. Make sure they have heard the story being read and read it to themselves as often as possible. Display it on the interactive whiteboard so that it can be seen by everyone. Deepen understanding with the following activities:

- hot seat both the boys and then Mum;
- put the children into pairs, back to back and then in role as any of the characters, they make a phone call to a friend about what happened;
- draw a graph showing the ups and downs of Mitch's feelings during the story – label with quotes from the text;
- write diary entries or letters to friends about what happened in role as either boy;
- discuss what might happen next – will they find another similar place?
- contrast the two boys – using quotes from the text to support viewpoints;
- find clues to explain how Mitch's view of his Mum changes during the course of the story;
- practice writing warning openings, punctuating the dialogue accurately;
- write short, descriptive paragraphs of dangerous settings. Log onto

derelictplaces.com to find photos of dangerous places that can be used as a stimulus;

Writing your own version

I would begin by 'boxing up' the story to show what is happening in each paragraph. This can then be used as a basis for a new version, (see Fig.1).

To help the children write a version of the story, try the following ideas:

- Make a list of possible local 'dangerous settings' that could be used. It helps if children either use a place they know well or use an image to look at.
- Begin by creating storyboards so everyone draws a cartoon version of their plot, with a box for each paragraph.
- Use the storyboards for an initial telling of the stories with children working in pairs.
- Plan a class version using a storyboard. Turn this into a simple planning grid that can be used to capture helpful words and phrases.
- Stage the writing each day so that you can use shared writing to model a paragraph before the children attempt their own version.
- Work from the reading into the shared writing before the children have a go themselves.
- Think about how the characters might feel and then decide how they would behave.
- Avoid too much dialogue.
- Pitch the shared writing just above the level that the children are working at.

READ THE STORY ON PAGES 22-23 AND THEN USE THE FOLLOWING ACTIVITIES

