



## A Home Learning Branch for

# The Invention of Hugo Cabret by Brian Selznick

### Spelling investigations

- *changeable, dependable, reliable, horrible, terrible, sensible.*  
Which words best describe Etienne? Can you spot any rules for using the suffixes **-able/-ible**? What other words can you find?
- *frequent, innocent, obedient, decent*  
Investigate whether these suffixes: **-ent, -ence, -ency** can be added to these root words? What groups of words (word families) can you create?

How many of the words above can you use in your writing?

### Discussion questions

- How was Hugo feeling at different points in the story?
- How does the dialogue help us understand more about a character?
- What does it mean to be inventive?
- What are the key themes in the book?
- Can our parents' dreams ever become our dreams?
- Is it ever acceptable to steal?
- What will George Méliès be remembered for?

### Writing opportunities

- Hugo's notebook has been destroyed by the old man! Imagine you were a journalist reporting for Le Monde newspaper. Write a report about the events that have occurred.
- Hugo's father is sadly killed in a fire. What would Hugo record in his diary in response to his father's death?
- In the book, we're introduced to Uncle Claude – what he looked like, how he behaved and how he treated Hugo. What was life like for Hugo living with his uncle in the station? Write a flashback scene to portray 'a typical day' in the life of Hugo when he still lived with his uncle.
- How can Hugo persuade Papa Georges to return the notebook to him? Write a persuasive speech, using a formal tone, to convince him to give it back - remember flattery to gain his trust!
- What might the automaton write? Could it be a piece of advice from Hugo's father? Record what you think the note might say.
- The character of Papa Georges was based on a real person! What can you find out about George Méliès? Can you write a biography of his life that will be shared in the programme at the ceremony taking place at the French Film Academy?

### Wider curriculum links

**Geography:** What geographical similarities and differences are there between where you live in the UK and Paris, France? Think about land use, transport, buildings, geographical features etc.

**History:** What can you find out about the life of the significant individual Georges Méliès? What did he achieve? How did he contribute to international society?

**Art:** Try using pencil and charcoal to recreate some of the illustrations from the book.



### Key vocabulary

How much do you know about cameras and photography? Can you find the meanings of these new words?

automaton  
clockwork  
silent movie  
director  
Paris  
Film Academy  
illusionist  
invention  
toymaker  
actor

### Further reading

#### Films

*Hugo* (2011) directed by Martin Scorsese

*The Arrival of a Train* (1896) by The Lumiere Brothers

*A Trip to the Moon* (1902) by George Méliès

#### Books

*The Steampunk Bible* by Jeff VanderMeer and S.J. Chambers

*Wonderstruck, The Marvels and The Houdini Box* all by Brian Selznick

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1

Think about all the things the old man did to the notebook.

Which verbs could you use to describe his actions? E.g. *snatched, folded, stared, held.*

Journalists often use the passive voice to write their news reports. Try switching some of your sentences to the passive - like this:

*The old man snatched the notebook.*

becomes:

*The notebook was snatched by the old man.*

Once you've got your bank of verbs and have practised using the passive voice, here's a sentence to get you started:

*A precious notebook, belonging to a young boy, appears to have been snatched and destroyed by a man working at a toyshop in Paris's main train station.*

2

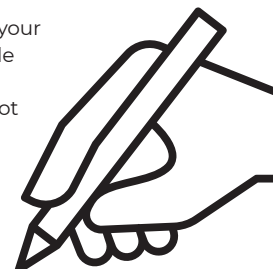
Hugo is likely to be feeling troubled and unsure about his father's death, especially now that he is all alone. What emotive words could you use to show this?

*disbelief, hopelessness, despair, grief*

Dear diary,

*He's gone - gone forever. Dead. Perished in a fire and it's all my fault. I feel so alone and helpless. A feeling of guilt has consumed me like the fire that took my father. If I hadn't found the automaton, if I hadn't asked him to fix it, then maybe he'd still be alive.*

Have a go at writing your own diary entry in role as Hugo at this point in the story, or why not continue this one?



3

Before you start writing your flashback, try to visualise and draw what Uncle Claude might look like from the clues we're given in the book. E.g. *tiny steel spectacles, blood shot eyes.*

What else can you infer about him? E.g. *unkept clothes, unshaven face.*

How might he speak? E.g. *"You should be thanking me."*

You might want to include some of these key events in your flashback:

- Hugo being forced to sleep on the floor
- Hugo sneaking off to repair the clocks
- Uncle Claude scolding Hugo
- Claude returning home drunk
- Hugo learning to steal food
- Hugo crying himself to sleep

4

Think about all the things you know about persuasive writing: *emotive language personal pronouns (you, your), factual evidence, noun phrases*

How could we flatter Papa Georges to gain his trust? Create a list of compound adjective that could be used to describe him e.g.

*well-respected, well-dressed, good-looking, open-minded, well-educated, level-headed, strong-minded*

*Monsieur Georges,*

*I believe you have possession of a notebook which is very dear to me. It belonged to my late father who tragically lost his life in a blazing fire.*

*Although it may seem an old-fashioned, battered notebook to you, the illustrations inside were hand-drawn by my beloved Papa.*

5

Before you start writing, think about these questions:

**Who is the audience?** *Hugo*

**What is the purpose of the letter?**

*To advise, warn...*

**Who is the note from?** *Who wrote it?*

Try using the subjunctive in your note to give advice or talk about something that might happen in the future:

*If I were you...*

*I suggest you...*

*It is vital you...*

Here's a sentence to get you started:

*Dear Hugo,*

*It has been a while since we have seen one another, but I have been taking a keen interest in what you have been doing. If I were you...*

6

It might be helpful to map out a grid to collect your research about Georges Méliès.

How can you group the information you find?

This will be help with paragraphing!

*Early Life*

*Path to fame*

*Major achievements*

*Current Life*

Here's a couple of sentences to get you started:

*Early Life*

*George Méliès was born in Paris in 1861. He parents were shoes makers and wanted him to join the family business. Although he found the machinery interesting, he was always thinking about magic and theatre.*

