

## **Lily Quench and the Lighthouse of Skellig Mor**

### **Teachers' Notes by Natalie Jane Prior**

In *The Lighthouse of Skellig Mor*, we concentrate on Lily and her friend, Queen Dragon as they fly to an archipelago of mysterious islands at the very end of the earth. I wanted to make this a much more magical and mysterious book than some of its predecessors. My favourite bit is the magical library Lily visits in the final chapter, that has been there from the beginning of the world. It's the sort of place I've always wanted to visit myself!

You might like to talk about this library in your classroom discussions. What are the books on the shelves in the big tree? Think of titles for them, and ask the children what books there might be about themselves. Ask them who they think the Librarian is, and what her story is. And what about the books that cannot be opened until the end of the world? What's in them?

There is plenty of scope for making maps and plans of the islands, the Drihtan's palace and the library, and the secret tunnels under the island of Skellig Mor. Think

about the skeleton Lily finds in the secret tunnel, and ask the children to write a story explaining who it is, and how it got there.

Another thing I often spend time on with children is the issue of names. No author of fiction names a character casually; names always means something and getting the right name for a character is often half the battle. A name is often the first thing we learn about a character, and it always leaves an impression. An understanding of this concept is extremely valuable and helps children with characterisation in their own stories. Ask the children what sort of person they would expect someone to be if they were called Daisy, or Otto, or Conrad (or any other names you might care to think of). It's quite interesting to see how standardised the replies can be. After talking around this topic look at the names of the characters in the books. Why is Lily Quench called Lily Quench? Why is Queen Dragon's name Sinhault Fierdaze? (I have to confess here, that the name Romina is an exception to the rule: I couldn't think of a name for this character, and ended up naming her after my editor!)