



## Grandpa's Great Escape

by David Walliams

2015 Harper Collins (461 pages)

## NOVEL STUDY

### *Grandpa's Great Escape by David Williams*

#### SUMMARY

This novel follows a boy called Jack Bunting as he comes to terms with his Grandpa's advancing age and illness. Jack and his Grandpa plan an escape from 'Twilight Towers' – the retirement home Jack's parents send his Grandpa to. This story explores the special relationship between a child and a grandparent and will offer an opportunity for discussion on topics such as feelings, friendships, empathy, respect for elders and what they have to offer, death and grief.

The book has 66 chapters, each between 7-15 pages long. The book also has a short prologue and epilogue.

#### CHARACTER REVIEW

Jack Bunting  
 Grandpa Bunting  
 Barbara Bunting (Jack's mum)  
 Barry Bunting (Jack's Dad)  
 Raj – newsagent  
 Miss Verity  
 Reverend Hogg  
 Miss Swine

#### *SEL THEMES IN THE BOOK*

- Feelings review: shy, lonely, love, sad, worried, scared, angry, happy, delighted, content, disappointed, guilty, confident, excited
- Love
- Friendship
- Goal setting and Problem Solving
- Empathy
- Different points of view

#### *OTHER NOTES*

The book has a glossary that explains key terms regarding WWII in an age appropriate way. E.g. The Gestapo, life in the 1940s. This could be the basis for an initial research activity on WWII.

## STUDY QUESTIONS

### Up, up and away/Prologue

- **Look at the pictures of the characters. Discuss facial expressions – what might they tell you about the characters?** *E.g. Jack has a smile so looks like a happy boy. Keep these first impressions as they will be revisited.*

### **Activity**

- **Discussion** – **What may be going on with Grandpa?** *Allow a very open ended/imaginative discussion to assess children's understanding/personal experience of ageing relative. Who likes to play and why?* *Discussion around 'losing yourself in play' and favourite games/toys.*

### Chapter 1

- **How would you describe Jack? Why?** *Quiet, shy, lonely, interested in WWII/planes. Loves his grandpa. Doesn't seem to have many friends.*

### Chapter 2

- **If discussed in the prologue address whether discussion was correct on Grandpa's condition or introduce discussion here.**
- **How do you think Jack's parents feel? Why?** *Sad, worried, scared. Worried he's not safe - Grandpa could put food on and leave it. They remember him before he was ill.*

### **Activity**

- **Prediction Activity** – **Record children's prediction of what may happen next.**

### Chapter 3

- **Revisit predictions and discuss if children's predications were correct.**

### Chapters 4-5

- **Jack's dad 'bottled his feelings up'. What does this mean?** *He doesn't share them with people.*
- **Does sharing your feelings help? Why?** *Yes – it makes you feel better; It 'let's air out of your balloon'; you might find someone else feels the same; saying the problem and how you feel helps you calm down.*
- **Who might you share your feelings with?** *Family, friends, teacher – someone you trust.*

### **Activity**

- **Letter activity** – **We have said that Jack's Dad has uncomfortable feelings (sad, worried, scared) about Grandpa's behaviour. Think about a time you have felt one of these feelings and write a letter to someone you trust expressing how you felt.**

### Chapter 6-7

- **How does Jack feel about his Grandpa going to Twilight Towers?** *Angry, worried, scared*
- **How do you know?** *He is shouting and shaking his head. Can lead onto discussion of how anger feels on the inside and looks on the outside.*

Chapter 8

- **Jack says he hasn't made any friends at his new school. How could he try to make friends?** *Ask to join in a game, give a compliment, listen and join in conversations.*

**Activity**

- **Role play activity** – In groups choose one of the ways we discussed Jack could make friends and create a role play.

Chapter 9-12

- **Discuss at the end of chapter 9 if bringing Grandpa to school will help Jack make friends. Revisit this discussion at the end of chapter 10.**
- **Miss Verity's feelings changed towards Grandpa. How did they change and why?** *Her feelings changed from admiration to disappointment because she realised he wasn't well.*
- **Jack now feels like the adult and his Grandpa is the child? Why?** *He had to put his Grandpa to bed for a nap and usually it would be the adult putting a child to bed for a nap. How do you think this makes Jack feel?* *Jack feels sad.*

Chapter 13-14

- **Jack has a plan. Think about the questions we ask ourselves at the yellow light of the Control Signals Poster.** *Is it safe? Does it break any rules? Will I treat others the way I want to be treated? Can you think of any reasons it may not be a good plan? Refer to the three questions and discuss whether the plan of Grandpa living with Jack and his family seems like a good plan. Yes – it is treating Grandpa as we would like to be treated; No – It might not be safe because Jack is at school all day and his parents at work and so Grandpa could still do something unsafe.*

Chapter 15-16

- **Jack says he had a 'warm fuzzy feeling in his tummy'. How was he feeling?** *Happy, delighted, content.*
- **Discuss with the class how they would describe how their bodies feel when they have these comfortable feelings.**

Chapter 17-18

- **Jack makes a plan to find his Grandpa. What was his plan?** *To check all high points; designed and put up a 'missing' poster.*
- **How was Jack feeling? Guilty, worried. How do you know?** *He's doing everything he can and forgot about his school trip.*

**Activity**

- **Poster Activity** – Design a 'missing' poster for Grandpa.

Chapter 19-21

- **How did Jack feel before he leapt on to the plane?** *Scared, shy, timid – uncomfortable feelings.*
- **What did he do before he jumped?** *Took a deep breath. Why?* *To calm down so he could think.*

Chapter 22-24

- **Discuss the phrase ‘a wave of love’.** How does love feel? *Warm, comfortable, a big hug, safe.* Why would it be described as a wave? *It washes over you, it envelopes you.*

**Activity**

- **Art Activity** – Draw a ‘wave of love’ picture using different colours and the words/images/phrases we have discussed. You could add the names of the people you feel a wave of love for.

Part 1 summary

- **Discuss each character’s feelings at this point.** *Jack – devastated, angry, scared; Grandpa – confident; Jack’s parent’s – worried/relieved, sad; Raj – happy.*
- **What kind of person would you say Jack is?** *Caring, kind, brave.* **Is this different from how he sees himself?** *Yes he doesn’t think he’s brave.*

**Activity**

- **Art Activity** – Choose a character and draw them to show their feelings at this point in the story. Compare to pictures and first impressions in prologue activity.
- **Compliment Activity** – Create a compliment list for Jack to help him see himself differently.

Chapter 31-33

- **Jack now has another problem- what is it?** *How to get into Twilight Towers.*
- **What is his plan?** *Get into the grounds by climbing a tree.* **Did it work?** *No he fell.*
- **What did he do next?** *Tried another plan – crawled along the grass and up a drainpipe.*

Chapter 34-36

- **What is Grandpa’s plan to get out of Twilight Towers?** *Dig out using a spoon each night.*

**Activity**

- **Writing Activity** – Create a diary entry as Grandpa explaining his plan to escape Twilight Towers/Colditz Castle.

Chapter 37-39

- **Are Jack’s parents showing their real feelings on the way to visit Grandpa?** *No. Dad is silent but has tears in his eyes; Mum is talking a lot and saying ‘it’s for the best’ but seems nervous.*

Chapter 40-41

- **How does Jack feel about his Grandpa’s plan now?** *Worried it will never work and take too long.*
- **Did his feelings change?** *Yes – he felt happy when he saw his Grandpa climb out; No – he was still worried when he saw how many people were trying to escape with Grandpa.*

**Activity**

- **Group Activity** – Create a plan to get Trifle out of the hatch using the co-operative learning roles.

Chapter 42-45

- **How did Trifle get out of the hatch? Using teamwork. Why is teamwork important?** *More ideas; more thinking; can get more done; everyone has different skills.*
- **What have we figured out about the nurses at Twilight Towers?** *They are men.*
- **Jack and Grandpa have had to make a new plan. What is it?** *To dress up as nurses.*

Chapter 46-48

- **Why did Grandpa choose to go back for Miss Swine?** *He believed it was the right thing to do and was living by the Golden Rule.*

**Activity**

- **Debate** – Have a class discussion or assign debate roles on the topic “We should always treat others the way we want to be treated even if they don’t treat us well”.

Chapter 49-52

- **Discuss at the end of chapter 49 what Jack’s plan is.** *Discuss the materials he has – coffin; roller skates; string.*
- **Revisit this discussion at the end of chapter 50. Did anyone predict the plan?**
- **Discuss if the plan was successful.**

Chapter 53-54

- **Why did Jack decide to take his Grandpa to the spitfire against his better judgement?** *He spoke to Raj who told him that his Grandpa was happiest when he was with him and thinking he was in WWII. Jack wanted to make his Grandpa happy.*

Chapter 55-56**Activity**

- **Research Activity 1** – Research the military vehicles at the Imperial War Museum. Choose from: Spitfire; Mark V tank; WWI cannon. For your chosen vehicle find out when it was used; what it was used for and an interesting fact. Create a factsheet including a diagram of your chosen vehicle.
- **Research Activity 2** – Research the RAF spitfire pilots during WWII. Find out why these members of the RAF are so famous; famous battles they were part of and any famous pilots. Create a factsheet including a diagram of their uniform.

Chapter 57-60

- **How did Jack feel while flying the Spitfire?** *Elated, excited. How do you know? He said nothing mattered now except this feeling. Discuss how we can ‘forget ourselves’ when we are really happy or excited.*

**Activity**

- **News Report** – Write or record a news report on Jack and his Grandpa flying the spitfire over London.

## Chapter 61

### Activity

- **Summarising Activity** – Research one of the famous landmarks mentioned in the story. Choose from: Buckingham Palace; Tower Bridge; Imperial War Museum; HMS Belfast; River Thames; St Paul’s Cathedral. For your chosen landmark create a bookmark that describes the landmark in no more than 50 words.

## Chapter 62

- Jack said “even in his deep sadness he was pleased they could attend Grandpa’s funeral too”? Discuss feeling two opposing feelings at the same time. *E.g. love and anger – you can love someone but be angry with them.*
- What has changed for Jack since the beginning of the book? *His grandpa is no longer here; he feels braver; he maybe has friends as his class have come to the funeral.*

### Activity

- **Prediction Activity** – Record children’s prediction of who the vicar may be.

## Chapter 62-65

- Revisit predictions and discuss if anyone was correct.

## Epilogue

- Discuss what the writer means by “As long as Jack loved him Grandpa could never die”. *People are always alive in our memories; love doesn’t die.*
- Revisit first impressions made from pictures in prologue and discuss if they were correct.