

Wheels

by Catherine MacPhail

Introduction

New Windmills titles are supported with student and teaching resource sheets to engage students with the novel and to help you with your planning. Each set of resources includes a series of self-contained lessons with photocopiable worksheets, teaching notes, and suggestions for guided reading. Each activity is mapped against the Framework for teaching English to help you with your planning. There are also suggestions for further study areas including speaking and listening, writing, and reading activities. If your students have enjoyed studying this novel there are suggestions of other New Windmills titles they may like to read for pleasure.

Resources for Wheels:

- Synopsis
- Activate prior learning
- Activities
 - Exploring first and third person perspective
 - James's speech to students at school
 - Making your school more wheelchair-friendly
- Guided reading
 - First and third person
 - Close reading
 - Inferential reading
- Further study areas
- Reading for pleasure

The following pages can be downloaded and printed out as required. This material may be freely copied for institutional use. However, this material is copyright and under no circumstances can copies be offered for sale. The publishers gratefully acknowledge permission to reproduce copyright material.

www.heinemann.co.uk

- ✓ Free online support
- ✓ Useful weblinks
- ✓ 24 hour online ordering

01865 888058

Heinemann
Inspiring generations

Synopsis

Teenager James Gordon is wheelchair bound after a traffic accident in which his father, Donald Gordon, died. It is believed that Sam Shearer was driving the van that crashed into Donald Gordon's car. Sam Shearer was also killed in the accident. However, during a hospital visit James is convinced that he sees the person who was actually driving the van.

James contacts Sam Shearer's sister, Kirsty, to tell her that he believes Sam was not driving the van that night, and the pair join ranks in order to investigate. James is devastated by his injuries and initially he avoids public life. However, in order to investigate the crash, he has to make trips outside of his house. Kirsty encourages him to visit a shopping centre where he is reacquainted with his best friends, and a youth club where he sees the driver of the van, Donny Scanlon. Unfortunately, nobody will believe James as Donny is such a popular person who is so willing to help anyone. However, Donny is guilty, and he even tries to kill James in order to keep his secret hidden. James is saved by Kirsty's father and Donny is arrested.

James can rest because he has revealed the name of the person who killed his father. However, more importantly, with Kirsty's help, James has started to come to terms with life in a wheelchair.

Activate prior learning

It would be helpful if the students had an understanding of some of the problems faced by people in wheelchairs. Ask the students to imagine how their lives would be different if they were confined to a wheelchair. For example, where could they not go? What could they not do? How would people treat them differently, particularly the opposite sex? Drama activities might help the students to empathise with James when they read the novel. Ask the students to work in groups to write a play script that considers teenage issues. Afterwards, ask one member of each group to remain seated in a chair and see how their engagement in the play is restricted.

Teaching notes

Activity 1 Exploring first and third person perspective

Framework Objectives

Year 7: S15 Vary the formality of language; **R8** Infer and deduce meanings; **R16** Distinguish between the attitudes of the characters and those of the author; **Wr6** Portray character.

Yr8: S12 Use different degrees of formality in written texts; **Wr6** Convey a sense of character; **Wr7** Establish the tone of a piece.

Yr9: S9 Write sustained standard English with the formality suited to reader and purpose; **Wr5** Explore different ways of opening, structuring and ending narratives, and experiment with narrative perspective.

Activity aims:

- To revisit the use of the first and third person.
- To write in the first person.

This activity reminds students of the pronouns used in first person and third person writing. The students are then asked to transform a piece of writing from the third person to the first person.

Provide the students with Resource Sheet 1. Ask the students to highlight the pronouns that indicate that a passage has been written in the third person. It might be necessary to point out to the students that pronouns that indicate that a text has been written in the first person include *me*, *I* and *we*. Pronouns that indicate that a text has been written in the third person include *they*, *he*, and *she*.

Provide the students with Resource Sheet 2. The students are asked to transform an extract about Kirsty from the third person to the first person. This will build on the work completed on Resource Sheet 1, and so will not require any additional teaching. However, if students find the activity difficult they should be reminded to think as though they are Kirsty. Ask the students to speak to you as though they are Kirsty.

Guided reading – First and third person

Select a small group of students who would benefit from exploring the differences between first and third person writing. Re-read pages 23–24 which deal with James's first telephone call to Kirsty. The extract starts in the first person and then moves into the third person. Ask the students to identify where the transition occurs, and ask them to explore the advantages and disadvantages of each perspective.

1

First and third person writing

Re-read the following extracts from *Wheels* and say whether they have been written in the first or third person. Identify pronouns from the extracts which tell you whether the writing is in the first or third person, and write them in the boxes around the extracts.

Extract A

Are you looking forward to going?' Mum asked.

I just grimaced and didn't answer. I didn't trust myself to say anything because, in fact, I was looking forward to it. Even if I had to go with the awful Kirsty. I *was* excited and apprehensive and frightened.

I never used to feel frightened. I had always been the one who stepped into trouble first. Hadn't Ash's dad once given me a terrible row for egging Ash on to join me too near a bonfire one Guy Fawkes night? We'd both ended up in hospital after a firework had exploded right by us. But I had always been the one to do what no one else dared. I did stuff first and thought later.

Now I was scared.

Page 33

Extract B

The first thing Kirsty did when she got home was check if her dad had taken the meal she had left in the microwave. He hadn't. So he hadn't been in all day. She flopped on to the sofa. James had been really nasty to his mum when they had arrived back at his place, and it was clear she had been dying for him to come home. Desperate to know how he had got on. And James had snapped at her, and hardly answered.

Page 44

2

Kirsty's point of view

You have seen that writing in the first person uses pronouns such as *I*, *me* and *we*, while writing in the third person uses pronouns such as *she*, *he* and *her*.

The following extract from *Wheels* is written in the third person. Imagine that you are Kirsty. Rewrite the extract from your own point of view, in the first person, explaining clearly how you feel about the events mentioned in the extract.

Kirsty sat by the phone for a long time. She could picture James and her friends laughing on the way to the centre, making plans about going to the precinct tomorrow. James was right. She was mollycoddling her dad, but he was her *father*. She loved him. He wasn't an ordinary drunk. He had his reasons for being the way he was. Her mum dying, and then Sam.

Maybe she could go. He would be all right. Wasn't he always? He'd be in soon and he'd just go to sleep on the couch.

But what if he didn't? What if he came in and decided to make himself some chips? He'd put on the pan and then he'd fall asleep on the couch and the fat would catch fire and the house would ... oh no! She couldn't risk that.

She sat back on the sofa and switched on the television.

He'd be in soon, she thought again.

Page 97

Remember

- Use pronouns such as *I*, *me* and *we*.
- Express the way you feel about the events mentioned in this passage.
- Use adverbs and adjectives to help you express the way you feel.

Teaching notes

Activity 2 James's speech to students at school

Framework Objectives

Year 7: R2 Use appropriate reading strategies to extract particular information; **Wr7** Use a range of narrative devices to involve the reader; **S&L3** Tailor the structure, vocabulary and delivery of a talk or presentation so that listeners can follow it.

Year 8: R7 Identify the ways implied and explicit meanings are conveyed in different texts; **Wr11** Explain complex ideas and information clearly; **S&L3** Make a formal presentation in standard English, using appropriate rhetorical devices.

Year 9: Wr10 Explain the precise connections between ideas with clarity and an appropriate degree of formality; **S&L2** Use standard English to explain, explore or justify an idea.

Activity aims:

- To consider the difficulties faced by people confined to wheelchairs.
- To write a speech to be delivered to teenagers.

This activity asks the students to consider the problems James faces, and then to write a speech to be delivered to the students at James's school.

Provide the students with Resource Sheet 3. The students identify some of the problems that James faces. Ask the students to consider the problems they would face if they were confined to a wheelchair. You might like to prompt them into considering mobility, access and confidence. Afterwards, ask the students to list the problems that James faces in the extract. Ask the students to compare their list of problems with the list of problems that James faces. How are the two lists different?

Provide the students with Resource Sheet 4. The resource sheet asks students to write James's speech about the problems of being wheelchair bound. The students are directed to specific sections of the novel to help them to list the problems that James faces. You might want to read these extracts together and identify the problems together. You might also want to generate a list of potential problems for James that are not identified in the novel, for example, going to a public toilet.

The students are reminded to use the following stylistic devices in a speech: write in the first person; use examples to illustrate their points; use adjectives, adverbs and powerful verbs for emotive effect; use connectives to link their ideas; use rhetorical questions. Each of these technical terms might need to be revised. You might wish the class to study a well known speech, such as Martin Luther King's 'I have a dream' speech, to identify these stylistic devices.

Guided reading – Close reading

Select a small group of students who would benefit from help with close reading. Re-read Chapter 2. Ask the students to identify the problems James faces in a wheelchair and discuss them as a group. More perceptive readers could be encouraged to consider the psychological as well as the physical problems.

3

What problems does James face?

Re-read this extract from Chapter 9 of *Wheels*. The extract highlights some of the problems that James faces because he is in a wheelchair. In your own words, record the problems James has, in the boxes that have been placed around the extract.

The disco was too loud, too noisy and too crowded. As the music hit her, Kirsty began to sway and strut to the rhythm. 'Lynn Mitchell might be in here,' she mouthed to me, then turned her head back to the crowd.

'I can't see a thing!' I yelled. But it was impossible to make myself heard. Impossible for me to see anyone above the crowd. I began to grow frustrated. As Kirsty moved forward, hypnotised by the beat, I stayed at the back. If only I could follow her. People kept stepping against me, looking down apologetically, then ignoring me. I was afraid. No. Not quite afraid. But I felt vulnerable.

Kirsty, caught up totally in the music by this time, was moving away from me, feet tapping, hips swaying. I wanted to call after her, but I knew she'd never hear.

Suddenly, a jacket landed on my lap. A moment later a coat joined it. I looked up. A boy and girl just coming into the disco had mistaken me for an empty chair. 'Do you mind?' I shouted at them but they didn't hear me.

4

James's speech to students at school

Imagine that you are James, and that you have been asked to give a speech at school about your experiences in a wheelchair.

You have decided to organise your speech into the following sections:

- the physical problems you have had
- what you dislike about the way people treat you
- how you would like to be treated.

The following page references will help you make notes for your speech.

Areas	Page references	Notes
Physical problems you have had.	4, 16–18, 38–40, 58	
What you dislike about the way people treat you.	8, 28, 38–40, 60	
How you would like to be treated.	43, 72, 73	

Remember, as you are trying to inform people about your own experiences, in a speech, you should:

- write in the first person
- use examples to illustrate your points
- use adjectives, adverbs and powerful verbs for emotive effect
- use connectives to link your ideas
- use rhetorical questions to engage the audience.

Teaching notes

Activity 3 Making your school more wheelchair-friendly

Framework Objectives

Year 7: S13 Revise the stylistic conventions of non-fiction; **S15** Vary the formality of language; **R2** Use appropriate reading strategies to extract particular information; **R4** Make brief, clearly-organised notes; **R10** Identify how media texts are tailored to suit their audience; **Wr11** Select and present information.

Year 8: S12 Use different degrees of formality in written texts; **R1** Combine information from various sources; **R3** Make notes; **R8** Investigate how meanings are changed when information is presented in different forms **Wr10** Organise and present information; **Wr12** Describe an event, process or situation, using language with an appropriate degree of formality.

Activity aims:

- To empathise with people confined to wheelchairs.
- To produce a report about wheelchair access to their own school.

This activity asks the students to consider some of the physical problems that James has the first time he goes out alone. Afterwards, the students are asked to produce a report which identifies how to make their own school more wheelchair-friendly.

Provide the students with Resource Sheet 5. The resource sheet asks students to record some of the physical problems James has when in a wheelchair. The lesson could be started by asking the students to predict the sorts of problems James would have. Afterwards, the passage from *Wheels* could be read together, and the problems mentioned in the passage identified. The students could then be asked to compare their list of problems with the problems mentioned in the passage. Are there any differences? If so, what are they?

Provide the students with Resource Sheet 6. The students are helped to produce a report which identifies how to make their own school more wheelchair-friendly. This series of lessons could be started with a brainstorm to identify the problems people would have moving around the students' school in a wheelchair. There are likely to be areas of the school that would be inaccessible. The students could then be asked to suggest solutions to the problems that they have identified.

It is important for the students to realise that there would not be a significant budget to solve these problems, and so expensive lifts can not be recommended. Ask the students to work in groups to produce their report for the Headteacher. You will need to consider organisational details such as (a) Do you want students to use ICT? (b) Can students use digital cameras? If so, how many photographs do you want to be used in the students' reports? (c) Will you provide the students with a deadline for their report?

Guided reading – Inferential reading

Select a small group of students who would benefit from some help with inferential reading. Re-read from the beginning of page 34 to 'What's she got to feel guilty about?' on page 35. In this extract Kirsty has arrived with the Youth Club van in order to pick up James. Ask the students to explain how they feel about James. Also, ask them to consider why Kirsty and the other characters respond to James's rudeness as they do.

5 James's first trip out

Re-read this extract from *Wheels*. In this extract, James experiences a number of problems when he goes out in his wheelchair, on his own, for the first time. In your own words, record what problems James faces and what fears he has. Boxes have been placed around the extract for you to complete.

The disco was too loud, too noisy and too crowded. As the music hit her, Kirsty began to sway and strut to the rhythm. 'Lynn Mitchell might be in here,' she mouthed to me, then turned her head back to the crowd.

'I can't see a thing!' I yelled. But it was impossible to make myself heard. Impossible for me to see anyone above the crowd. I began to grow frustrated. As Kirsty moved forward, hypnotised by the beat, I stayed at the back. If only I could follow her. People kept stepping against me, looking down apologetically, then ignoring me. I was afraid. No. Not quite afraid. But I felt vulnerable.

Kirsty, caught up totally in the music by this time, was moving away from me, feet tapping, hips swaying. I wanted to call after her, but I knew she'd never hear.

Suddenly, a jacket landed on my lap. A moment later a coat joined it. I looked up. A boy and girl just coming into the disco had mistaken me for an empty chair. 'Do you mind?' I shouted at them but they didn't hear me.

6

Making your school more wheelchair-friendly

James decides that he is ready to return to school. However, what problems would be faced by a student attending secondary school in a wheelchair?

Imagine that your school has decided to make changes in order to make access for wheelchair users easier. Your Headteacher has asked you to produce a report to:

- a** explain what problems there are at the moment
- b** how these problems could be overcome.

Unfortunately, there is not a big financial budget, so you will not be able to afford stair-lifts or other expensive devices.

In your report you should consider the following:

- 1** What are the main problems for wheelchair users?
- 2** Could people in wheelchairs visit the toilet?
- 3** Could students in wheelchairs have access to the whole curriculum?

You will also need to decide:

- 1** What will the title of your report be?
- 2** What sections will you have in your report?
- 3** Do you want to use ICT to present your report?
- 4** Are you able to use photographs?

Structuring your report

- 1** Your report will need to have an introduction, explaining the purpose of the report.
- 2** You will need to have a section that outlines the access problems in your school.
- 3** Another section of your report will contain your suggested solutions to these problems.
- 4** Your report should finish with a conclusion in which you argue your case for your suggested changes.

Further study areas

This novel explores the problems faced by a teenager who is seriously injured in a car crash. It considers the way he deals with life in a wheelchair, and how he deals with relationships.

The following study areas provide ideal opportunities for creating interesting and stimulating activities:

Diary Writing: Write a series of diary entries that explore Mrs Gordon's feelings about events.

(Writing to imagine: Yr7 Wr7; Yr8 Wr5; Yr9 Wr5)

Persuasive Letter: Write a letter to a local newspaper persuading them that your local town centre should be more accessible for people in wheelchairs.

(Writing to persuade: Yr7 Wr15; Yr8 Wr13; Yr9 Wr13)

Collaborative Drama: Act out any of the scenes in which James argues with someone because of the frustrations he feels.

(Drama: Yr7 S&L16; Yr8 S&L16; Yr9 S&L14)

Author's Craft: Explore the use of first and third person writing in this novel.

(Author's craft: Yr7 R12; Yr8 R10; Yr9 R9)

Writing to Entertain: Write a scene that we know has taken place in this narrative, but which does not appear in the novel:

- Mrs Gordon's discussion with the Headteacher about James returning to school
- Kirsty's father in the pub
- Paul and Ash talking about James

(Writing to entertain: Yr7 Wr5; Yr8 Wr6; Yr9 Wr5)

Independent research: James is physically restricted because he is wheelchair bound.

What sporting activities would be open to him?

(Independent research: Yr7 R1; Yr8 R2; Yr9 R2)

Reading for pleasure

This novel deals with the problems faced by a teenage boy who is wheelchair bound after a traffic accident. If students enjoyed this novel then they may also enjoy *Face* by Benjamin Zephaniah, in which a teenage boy has to come to terms with severe facial injuries caused by a crash in a stolen car.