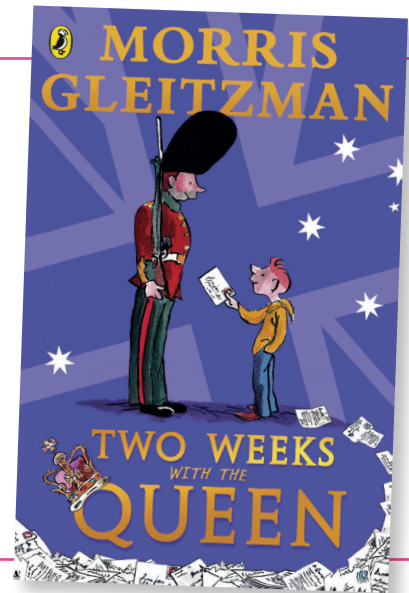


TWO WEEKS WITH THE QUEEN

by Morris Gleitzman

Penguin Group
(Upper primary/lower secondary)



Twelve year old Colin Mudford is on a quest. His younger brother, Luke, has cancer and the doctors in Australia don't know how to cure him. Sent to London to stay with relatives, Colin sets out to find the best doctor in the world. Who better to ask for help than the Queen of England..?

During his adventure, Colin meets a man named Ted who is also dealing with the illness of a loved one, Griff. They form an unlikely friendship and guide each other in a journey of humour, hope and acceptance.

BACKGROUND

In 1981, the Centre of Disease Control and Prevention (USA) reported an unexplained illness affecting gay men. By the end of that year, there had been 270 cases of severe immune deficiency in gay men; 121 of those individuals had died. In 1982 the disease was named Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (or AIDS) and it was later discovered that the disease is caused by the virus HIV.

Today, an estimated 34 million people are affected by HIV and AIDS but there is still a stigma which surrounds the issue due to misconceptions about the disease, who can contract it and how it is transmitted. This stigma is often attached to other forms of discrimination such as racism, misogyny and homophobia.

In *Two Weeks with the Queen*, Ted experiences homophobia. This is a hostility or fear of gay people and can manifest in many ways: from name-calling to isolation or physical assault. Although homosexuality was decriminalised in the UK in 1967, a significant proportion of gay people still face direct bullying in their everyday lives.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Imagine you are being bullied because of the colour of your eyes. How would you feel? How would you react? Who in our society might experience these feelings?
2. During the book, what does Colin learn and how does it change him? **Possible answers:** He learns about mortality, he learns what it means to be gay, he learns that family and friendship are the most important things to him, he learns to accept situations.
3. Explore the different connotations of the word "Queen". How could this be used to hurt people's feelings? What other language is not acceptable and why?
4. What are your thoughts on how this book ends? Do you see the ending as happy or sad?

ROLE PLAY & WRITING

1. In pairs, imagine what Ted would say to his attackers and how they would respond. Create a short role play.
2. In chapter 15, Colin has to say goodbye to Ted and Griff. Imagine what he might have said? Create a short role play.
3. Write a short dialogue piece exploring this the last role play.
4. Write an article for a local newspaper summarising the story.
5. Write an interview with Ted for a national newspaper

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Article 1: All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Article 12: No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, or to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

FOLLOW UP WORK

Research the work being done by Stonewall. Produce a display inspired by their “Some people are Gay. Get over it!” campaign. www.stonewall.org.uk

Increase awareness of AIDS in your school by performing an assembly or organising a fundraising event for World AIDS Day. www.worldaidsday.org

FIND OUT MORE

Further resources for teaching around human rights can be found at: www.amnesty.org.uk/education

With thanks to Fran Collins