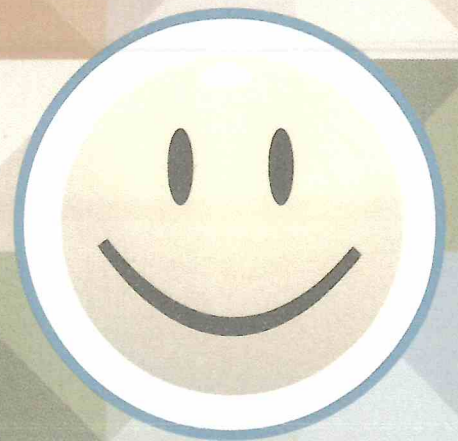




NFER

Classroom

year 4
autumn





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an extract from a novel

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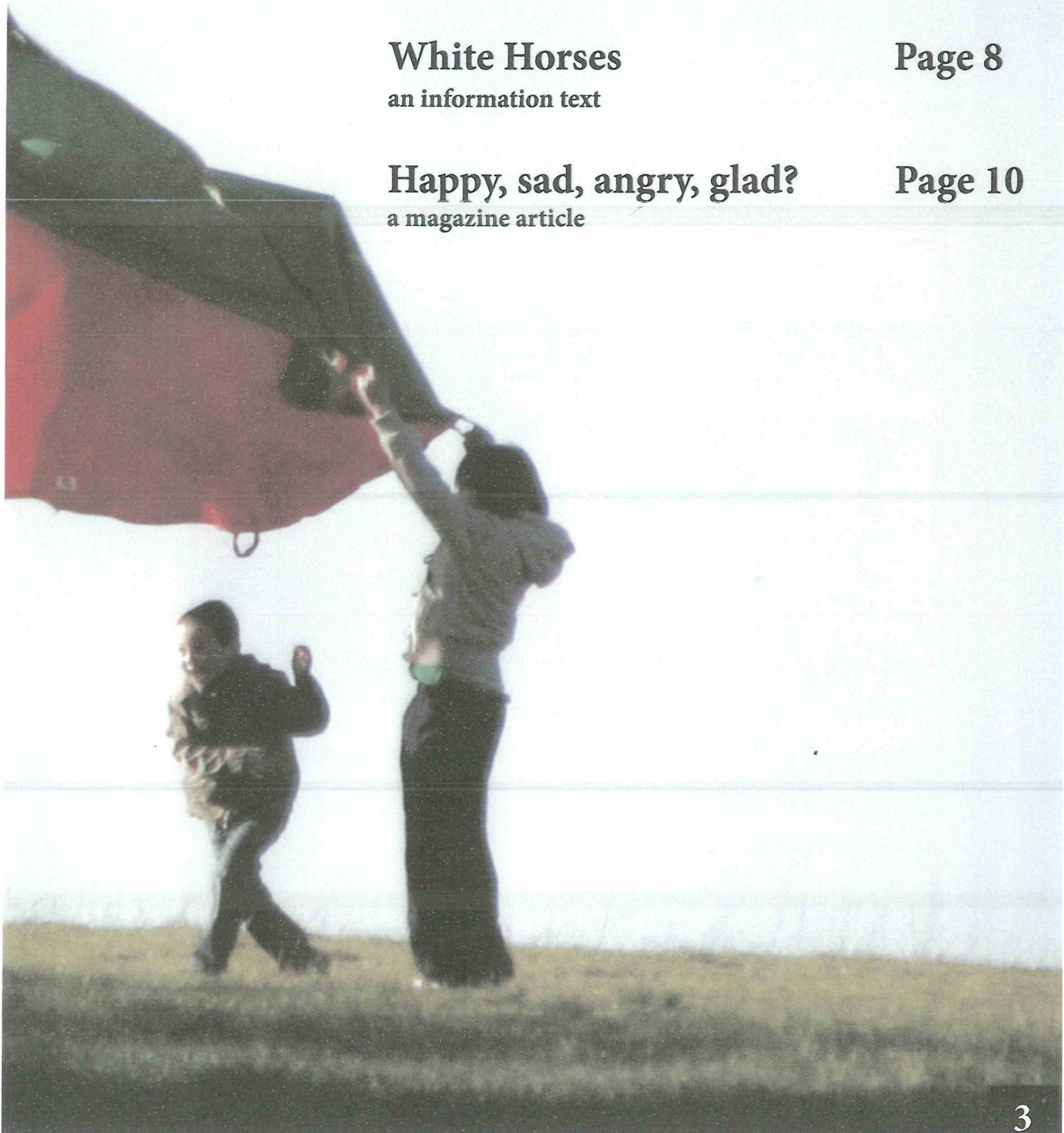
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The Eruption

Mandy sat at the kitchen table, elbows plonked on either side of her porridge bowl, eyes blazing slits behind her glasses, bottom lip stuck out, hair sending out electric sparks. Mandy was about to erupt like a volcano into one of the rages that made her famous throughout the school. Anger was growing inside her until her skin was tight and ready to burst. Chris, her brother, moved further away in case he got the porridge bowl emptied over his head, which had happened before. Fishy, the cat, hid under his chair.



Mandy glared at her father, who was still holding the letter, the cause of it all, and bellowed like a bull.

'I'm not leaving here. You listen to me, Dad. I'm not leaving *HERE!*'

She leapt up in the air, sat down again, crashed on her chair, then stirred her porridge so violently that most of it blobbed on to the table. Then she burst into tears and roared. Her brother wiped his forehead, which had been showered with flying porridge oats. Her mother wiped the table, which had been covered with flying oats. You can see why they had long ago given up using tablecloths. In his chair Baby Fred gurgled happily, waving his spoon. Nice Mandy, he thought, though he had no words as yet.

‘Now, just you listen to me, Mandy Phillips,’ her father addressed her patiently and wearily. Sometimes he thought her tantrums had aged him before his time.

‘No, I’m not going to listen, I don’t want to listen. I’m going to school. Nobody’s going to stop me being the dragon!’

She grabbed her coat, rushed through the door, fell over in the hall because she couldn’t see where she was going, knocked over a small table, broke a vase and ran sobbing into the morning. Nobody took any notice. The neighbours had seen her going to school before and it had never been a pretty sight. Down the road she sped like a cheetah trying to set a new world record for fast cats.

‘What is she talking about?’ Mr. Phillips asked Chris.

‘She’s the dragon in the school play. Everybody keeps laughing about it, but she’s pleased. She has to roar a lot.’



Chris put on his coat, then said:

‘Are we really going to leave, Dad? You see, I don’t want to leave the team.’

‘I know. Still, you go to school now, and we’ll talk about it this evening.’

All that day, at school, Mandy was good. When she arrived she washed her streaky face and tidied her hair, which she hadn’t combed that morning anyway. She worked hard, put up her hand for questions instead of shouting out as usual, waited patiently in line when she had to, instead of pushing to the front, didn’t take anyone else’s lunch, threw away some antique chewing gum stuck to the bottom of her desk, gave out exercise books quietly without shouting their owners’ names at the top of her voice, tidied the library without being asked, and returned Cindy Wright’s pencil case.

Mandy’s performance as the dragon in the afternoon rehearsal was brilliant.

Then she strode home, looking so ferocious that people moved out of her way, and one toddler began to cry. Her mind was made up. She was going to settle all this. She wasn’t going to be pushed around. She’d show them. Just let them wait and see. Who did they think she was, she’d like to know? Frowning, she worked her way through her food, chomping like a machine, gathering her power and energy together into a ball inside her. At last the table was cleared, the washing up done, and Baby Fred put into his cot for the night.

‘Now,’ said their father. They all pulled their chairs close, the others trying not to hear the grinding of Mandy’s teeth.



'I've got the chance of a job, an interesting one, in the clock tower that I've told you about, where my father used to wind up the clock when I was a little boy. The new owner wants to make it into a museum, and your mother and I have got the job of organising and looking after it. It's in a beautiful part of the country, and there's a school close by. We shall be going in a fortnight's time, so think about it, you two, and make up your minds to enjoy it.'



Mandy thought about it. Then she shrieked like a steam train letting off a head of steam, flung herself down on the floor, went rigid and drummed her heels up and down – thump, thump, thump.

'I don't think she wants to go,' shouted Chris above the din.

White Horses

Hill figures are huge carvings created across hillsides. People have been making them since ancient times, putting enormous lions, humans and maps on hillsides, but the most common figures are horses. These are usually known as 'white horses' due to the white chalk that is often used.

When making white horses the grass on a hill is usually cut away to reveal white chalk or limestone under the surface. The colour of the chalk or limestone then stands out well against the green grass that surrounds it. This, and the large size of most hill figures, means that they can be seen from far away.

Hill figures need to be looked after to make sure the growing grass does not hide the image. As well as problems with overgrown grass, rain can wash the chalk away or carry mud onto the figure. Many old hill figures have disappeared because they have not been cared for.

Uffington White Horse **114m long – Oxfordshire**



This is one of the oldest hill figures in the UK, as well as being the longest. Experts think that it may be as much as 3000 years old.

The shape of this white horse is quite abstract so it does not look exactly like a horse, especially compared to many others across the country. Some people have thought that the carving is actually another animal, not a horse! However, people have been calling it a 'horse' for many hundreds of years.



Osmington White Horse 98m long – Dorset



This white horse is unusual as it shows a rider on its back. It was created in Weymouth in 1808 and was made to celebrate King George III (the rider).

In the carving, King George is facing away from Weymouth. A local legend says that when King George visited he was upset by this. He thought it meant he was not welcome in Weymouth and so he never visited the town again. In reality, the horse and rider were not carved until **after** the King's visit.

Devizes Millennium White Horse 46m long – Wiltshire



A lot of hill figures have been made in Wiltshire. Around 150 years ago a white horse was made near the town of Devizes. This was carved by shoemakers and was called 'Snobs Horse' ('snob' was an old local word for a shoemaker). Slowly the horse became overgrown and almost vanished completely.

Recently, local people decided to re-create the horse figure, in the same design as the old one, to celebrate the new millennium in the year 2000. This horse was finished in 1999 and was named the 'Devizes Millennium White Horse'.

Happy, sad, angry, glad?

Everyone has feelings and these can change from one moment to the next. You might wake up feeling excited that it's sunny and you can play outside and then feel disappointed a few minutes later when it starts to rain.

Some people seem to be born smiling. They can see the best in every situation. Others always seem to get out of bed on the wrong side or easily lose their temper like Mandy Phillips in *The Eruption*.



Laughter is the best medicine

Happiness often leads to laughing. When you are happy you will probably laugh about 17 times a day and if you are with a friend you could laugh up to six times more!



What is laughter?

It is a response to something funny, such as seeing someone slip on a banana skin. It is made up of two parts: a movement which involves nearly all of your body and the production of a sound (chuckle, giggle, snigger).



Why do we laugh?

No one really knows, but it's one of the first things babies 'learn' to do. Smiles come first at about six weeks old, but by about 12 weeks old babies begin to laugh.



What does laughing do for you?

Laughing is really good for you:

- 15 minutes of laughter have the same benefits as two hours of sleep.
- It helps keep you healthy by boosting your immune system.
- It reduces stress and makes you less likely to worry.

Humans are not the only animals that laugh. It's an amazing fact – lots of animals laugh, just like we do. Scientists have discovered that chimps, dogs and even rats can laugh.



Primates

All primates, like monkeys and chimps, like to laugh as much as humans do. Usually this is because of physical contact, such as wrestling, playing chase or tickling. Orang-utans produce a short noisy call, whereas gorillas and chimps make longer laughs – which sound similar to grunting. Humans and chimps share similar ticklish areas of the body such as the armpits and stomach.

Rats

Scientists have discovered that rats are ticklish. However, their laughter is different from human laughter. Rats make a high-pitched chirping sound, like a whistle, but humans can't hear it without using special equipment. Young rats laugh a lot during rough-and-tumble play and laugh more than older rats when they are tickled.



Dogs

Have you ever heard a dog laugh? You probably have, but didn't realise it. A dog's laugh sounds more like a heavy, forced pant, which they often make when they are playing. When a dog hears other dogs making the sound, or even when they hear a recording of the sound, they jump around with excitement.



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