

**Erasmus James, King of Kid's Paradise**

**Teacher Notes & Student Activities**

**By teacher & author, Matt Porter**

## Activity Summaries

**Feelings** - Students list physical reactions they experience with different emotions. They then practise adding these subtly into sentences. As an extension, students could list more emotions and physical reactions and create a resource to use when writing.

**Advertisements** - Erasmus is inundated with emails from advertisers wanting him to plug their products. Students use their creativity to create the products. Students should create products that have something to do with the themes from the text.

**Homework Activity One** - Students take the place of Erasmus and invent different excuses for not doing their homework. This is a chance for students to show their creativity and also their comprehension of the text.

**Homework Activity Two** - Students are assigned a new homework task - designing a questionnaire to see if their classmates are suitable for zapp travel. Students' comprehension and their ability to infer qualities that a zapp traveller needs will be displayed.

**Chapter Titles** - Examines the role of chapter titles and their two main aims - to give an insight into what events will occur in the chapter and to entice the reader to read on. Students pick their favourite chapter title from the text and explain their choice. They also create new chapter titles for ten chapters of the text. An extension could be to encourage students to use chapter titles in their own stories.

**BIG Numbers** - Students play 'Are You Smarter than Erasmus?' They research how many zeroes in some large numbers and also find prime numbers.

Answers - 5, 7, 11, 83, 97, 101, 107, 701, 1733, 2207

Million - 6, Trillion - 12, Quadrillion - 15, Googol - 100

**Brain Map Activity One** - Students create their own zapp universe brain map. They name each planet and describe its features and inhabitants. They're then encouraged to write a story that is set on one of their zapp planets. Students could keep their map and use it for other stories. They could even make a book with the index page being their zapp universe and the book full of stories set there.

**Brain Map Activity Two** - Encourages students to think about their thinking. They map out their brain and label areas dedicated to specific skills/topics. It's a great chance for students to brag about what they're experts at.

**Hates** - Rats top Erasmus's Hate List. Students compile their own Hate List (no people allowed). They then write a descriptive passage explaining why they hate each thing so much.

**Improvements** - Kid's Paradise has self-combusting chooks. Students choose a farm animal and come up with ways to modify it to suit them. They sketch their newly created farm animal.

**Draw it!** - Using their comprehension skills, students read the passage describing the features of Erasmus's palace. They then sketch a bird's eye view of the palace. For the students who dream of their own palace, there's the option of designing their own to rival Erasmus's.

**Debate** - Explains the rules and format of debating. Also gives six debating topics that students can argue in teams. Learning to debate helps students see different sides of arguments and also practises public speaking.

**Action!** - Angry characters don't walk. They storm or march. The concept of using actions to convey characters' emotions is explored. Students create a table of words they can use to replace 'walked' or 'said' in their writing. Once again, students could think of more actions and create a table for class reference.

**Venn Diagrams** - Venn Diagrams are used to compare two objects, people or events. Students are given the example of Erasmus comparing himself to Ulysses. Students choose two characters from the text and compile a Venn Diagram comparing the ways they are different and the qualities they share.

**Explain Everything** - Erasmus declares that he explains everything he learnt to his subjects after his visit to Junior Island. Students use their comprehension skills to write what Erasmus might have said. As an extension, encourage the students to write like Erasmus does using words and descriptions he would use.

**Fireworks** - DC Green writes a detailed description of the fireworks display without directly mentioning fireworks. Students choose an event and write a descriptive passage describing what they would see during that event. However, they cannot directly mention the name of what they are writing about.

**Grat Books** - Students come up with titles for the books kept in the grats' bookcase. Students should use their knowledge of the grats to think of books that would interest them. Students are also encouraged to try some word play to change the titles of pre-existing books into ones that suit the grats.

**Dumb Teacher** - Students are put in charge of the Dumb School, a school specialising in dumb lessons. They create the curriculum and lessons to make people dumber.

## Feelings

When writing, it is important to convey how your characters feel. It helps readers connect with your characters and therefore care about their future. However, it's more interesting if you insert these feelings into the story subtly. Compare the two statements -

*'Nervous?' I scoffed. 'Nah, I always sweat and shake like this.'*

*I'm nervous. I'm sweating and shaking.*

Obviously, DC Green's example is much more entertaining than the second one.

Think about the physical reactions you experience with the following feelings and fill in the table -

Feeling	Physical Reactions
Frightened	
Sad	
Surprised	
Happy	
Dazed	

Write a sentence describing a character experiencing one of the feelings and physical reactions.

Now write sentences for the other four feelings and physical reactions.

## Advertisements

*'Has it ever!' Every day, I get hounded for interviews and autographs. Paparazzi hide in my air-vents. Advertisers clog my inbox, hoping I'll plug their dodgy products. Which reminds me: when zapping to other planets, drink lots of Garglo, with five % genuine artificial juice and 95%... other stuff.'*

Imagine you are Erasmus, opening your emails to discover an inbox full of junk from advertisers begging you to plug their products. Draw your inbox. Make sure each product has an explanation of what it is and reasons why you would want to endorse it.

## Homework! Activity One

*'And Trang's Vietnamese Restaurant serves the finest take-away in the Bayfield area. Ahem. So it's been hard to keep up with my homework. But such is the price of fame.'*

Homework! Erasmus uses the excuse of advertisers and paparazzi bothering him, since his zapp adventure, for not doing his homework.

Imagine you are Erasmus and list ten other excuses for not doing your homework. Be creative, it's homework you're trying to escape!

1.

2.

3.

4

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

## Homework Activity Two

*'And Trang's Vietnamese Restaurant serves the finest take-away in the Bayfield area. Ahem. So it's been hard to keep up with my homework. But such is the price of fame.'*

You are Erasmus. Your teacher has been generous. You don't have to hand in your homework. However, your teacher has set you a new homework task. Your job is to design a questionnaire, to administer to the rest of the class, to see if they are suited to their own zapp adventures. Before writing the questionnaire, think about what qualities and attributes zapp travellers might need.

Administer the questionnaire to your classmates. Collate your results to see who is most suited to zapp travelling.



# BIG NUMBERS!

*Dad flipped the light switch. The room fell black.*

*'Huh?'*

*A million lights flicked on!*

*I blinked.*

*A billion lights flickered!!*

*My eyeballs ping-ponged.*

*A trillion quadrillion lights flared!!!*

Erasmus certainly knows some big numbers. Do you? Time to play 'Are You Smarter than Erasmus?'

How many zeroes are in the following numbers?

Million -

Trillion -

Quadrillion -

Googol -

*'The rest of you kids and grats: stand on your heads. And write every prime number to three grillion!'*

Round Two! Circle the prime numbers (there are 10) -

99	101	226	97	49
5	6	275	2207	1336
150	701	1000	2	107
1733	10	7	735	12
83	698	721	11	57

## Brain Map Activity One

*I stepped back. Though the glowing dots filled most of the room, lighting me as I spun, the overall pattern was unmistakable. I danced inside a brain-shaped universe!*

*'Triple wooh and a woohoo! Is this... the zapp universe inside my head?'*  
*Dad clapped. 'Bravo.'*

According to Raz's dad, everyone has a zapp universe inside their brain. Imagine you could light up a map of your brain like Raz's dad has done. Sketch what you think your zapp universe would look like. While the planets are too tiny to be seen, name the stars they rotate around. Write the features and inhabitants of each one. Let your imagination run wild!

Look at the map you've created! You could write great stories about any star/planet you've named. Have a go!

## Brain Map Activity Two

*I stepped back. Though the glowing dots filled most of the room, lighting me as I spun, the overall pattern was unmistakable. I danced inside a brain-shaped universe!*

*'Triple wooh and a woohoo! Is this... the zapp universe inside my head?'*  
*Dad clapped. 'Bravo.'*

Instead of seeing your zapp universe, imagine if you could see a map of your brain. More specifically, what parts of your brain are devoted to what topics/skills? How much of your brain would be devoted to thinking about devouring donuts? How much to figuring fractions? What other specialty areas would parts of your brain be devoted to?

Sketch a brain shape below. Label areas of your brain and the topics/skills that area is devoted to. Remember, the more you think about something the larger the area of the brain devoted to it will be.

## Hates

*'A bit more speed would've been handy! Dad, those knights were giant rats! One surged so close, I could smell its rancid breath! Heh, that's probably why I... slightly froze. Rats topped my Hate List even before I saw those giant doom-rodents armed with their horrible doom-rodent weapons!'*

Rats top Erasmus's Hate List. What tops yours? List the top five things you hate (no people allowed) -

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Write a descriptive paragraph, explaining why each item is on your Hate List.

## Improvements!

*I smirked. Once again, my planet had proven superior. On Earth, chooks were boring, far from soundless and you had to cook them yourself.*

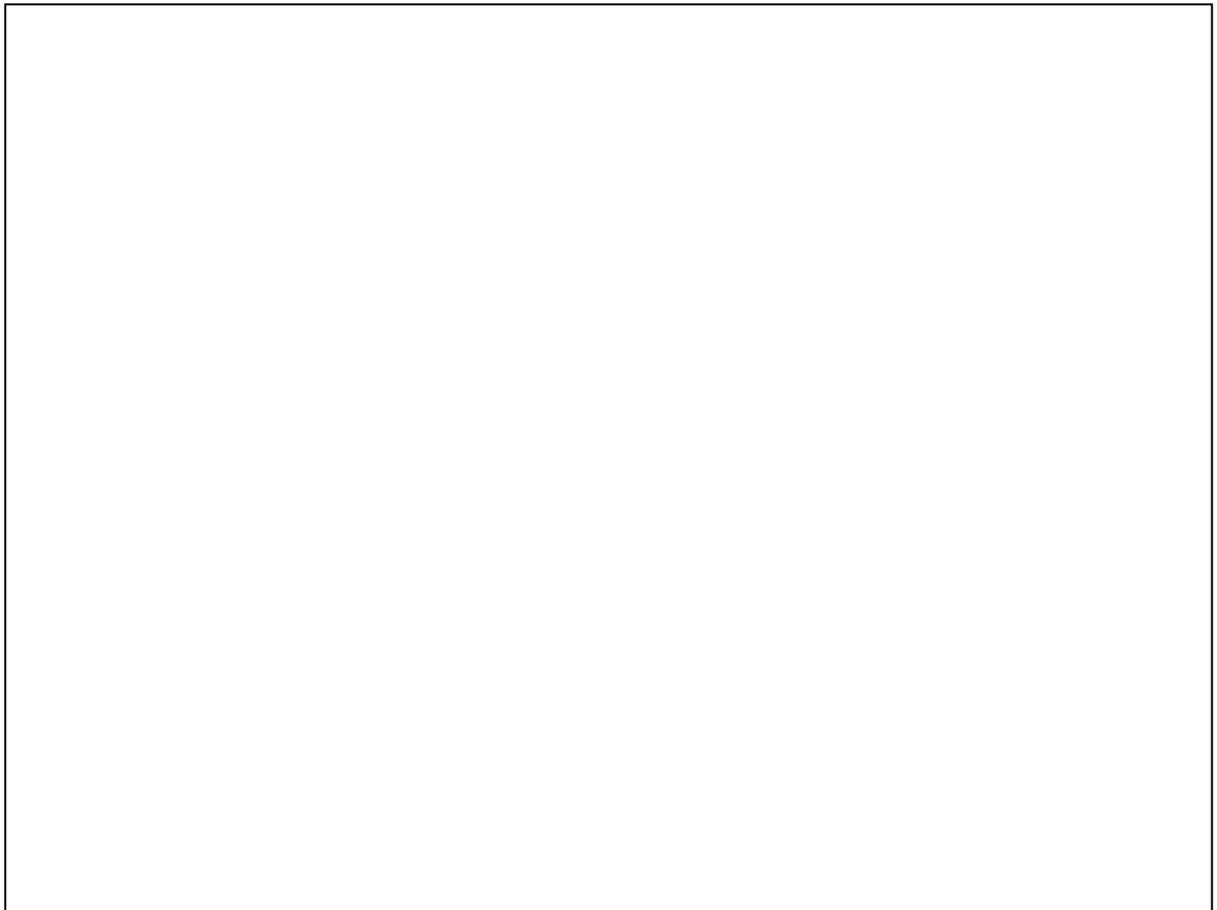
On Kid's Paradise the chickens self-combust and remain warm next to bowls of pre-prepared dip. What a treat! Pick a farm animal - \_\_\_\_\_

Along the lines of the self-combusting chook, plan improvements for your chosen farm animal. The improvements should benefit YOU!

E.g. A cow that milks itself. Each teat produces a different flavour of milk.

Your improvements are -

Sketch your animal and label the improvements -



## Draw it!

*There were rooms inside rooms inside rooms I'd never get round to exploring. Wall-screen TVs blared everywhere, including my paintball stadium. I owned everything a spoilt kid of the Twenty-first Century could possibly want, then a stack of stacks more!*

Wow! What a palace. For this activity, you have two choices. They are -

1. Re-read the description of Erasmus's palace on pages 56 and 57 (58 and 59 in the e-book version). Draw a bird's eye view of the mansion, including all the features Erasmus mentions.
2. Congratulations! You have won a zillion dollars. You must design a mansion to rival the Kid's Paradise palace where Erasmus lives.



## Debate

Debates are organised, civil arguments. Each team takes either the affirmative (agree with) or the negative (disagree with) side of the topic. There are three speakers on each team. The teams speak in alternate order. Each speaker argues for a few minutes with a pre-prepared speech. Arguments must be backed up with researched, truthful facts. As well as arguing the topic, the first speaker introduces their team mates and gives a brief outline of what they'll be saying. The second and third speakers can rebut, or say a few points on why the previous speaker from the opposition was incorrect. The third speaker sums up the team's arguments and says a final statement. An adjudicator listens to the debate and determines the winner. The winning team is the one who argues their side best.

Have a go at a debate. Here are some topics -

Kid's Paradise is the greatest place in the zapp universe.

Zapping is too dangerous and should be outlawed.

Sanders is the most intelligent being in all the universes.

At his worst, Erasmus was a meaner king than King Reginald from Uponia (in Erasmus James and the *Galactic Zapp Machine*).

Rats are the ugliest, most hideous animals that ever existed (even worse than history tests).

The grat queen is the scariest character in any book ever written.

## Action!

*I scowled from my podium. My 120 subjects (liars!) shuffled nervously. No doubt they'd heard of my humiliation. Luckily, I knew the best way to improve a stinky mood. Share it round!*

Emotions can be conveyed by describing a character's movements. The subjects were nervous, so they were shuffling. Similarly, an angry character wouldn't walk. They would storm or march.

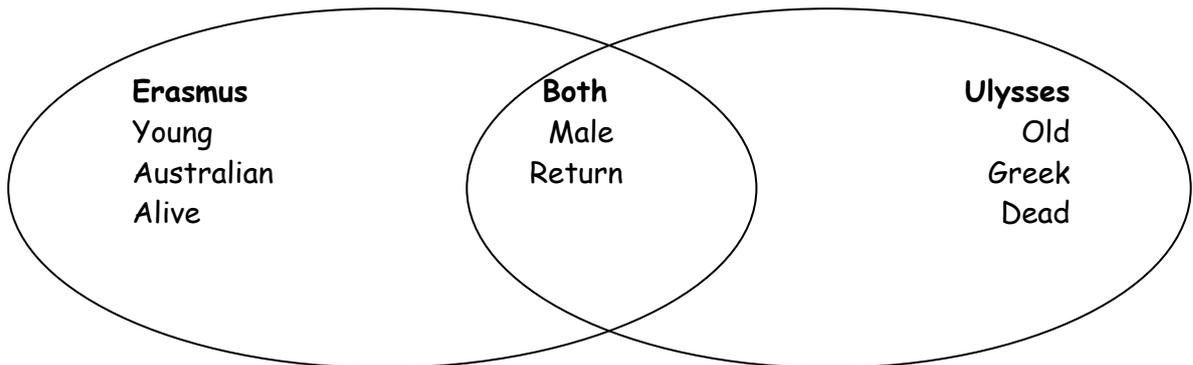
Fill in the table with words you can use in your stories to convey emotions (some have been started for you) -

	Walked	Said
Scared		
Frightened		
Nervous	Shuffled	Stuttered Stammered
Excited		
Happy		
Sad		
Mad		

## Venn Diagrams

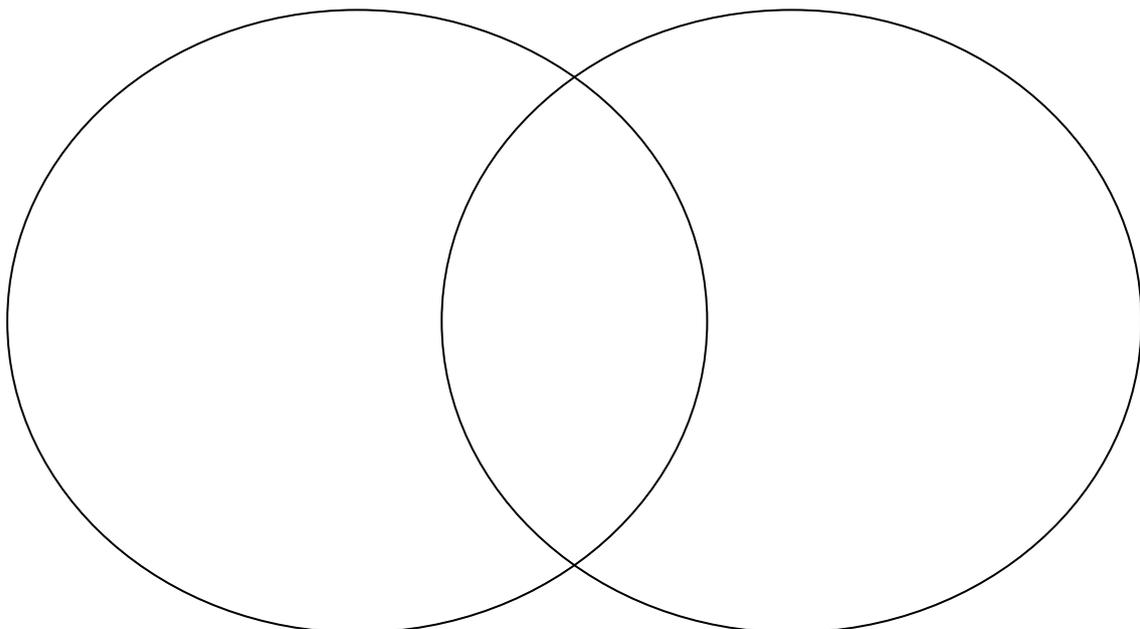
*I wobbled up the beach, feeling like Ulysses returning to his... home place. Except, I'd never been here before, and Ulysses was a Greek, and old, and dead, and... forget it.*

In this section Erasmus compares himself to Ulysses. The information could be presented in a Venn Diagram -



In the Venn diagram, as you can see, the information unique to Erasmus is in the left circle. The information unique to Ulysses is in the right circle. Common traits they both share are in the area where the circles overlap.

Create your own Venn Diagram comparing two characters from Erasmus James, King of Kid's Paradise.



## Explain Everything

*I explained everything I learned on Junior Island. When I got to the battle-grats bits, mutters of disbelief rose up. But I kept talking, on a novel truth roll, until I'd told all (or close enough). I concluded, 'So free children... who's going to escape with me from this grat-run slaughter-house? Raise your hands!'*

On page 128 (130 of the e-version), Erasmus declares he 'explained everything he learned on Junior Island.' Write what you think Erasmus said to his subjects -

## Fireworks

*PAFF!*

*A flower of gold exploded, sprinkling sparks upon the sea. Before anyone could breathe, twin fountains of blue and maroon erupted, wrestling each other to the stratosphere and leapfrog racing across the evening sky.*

In this passage, Erasmus is describing fireworks. He doesn't directly call them fireworks. Instead he paints a mental picture for you to imagine. Pick something from the table below and write a short passage describing it as if you are there watching.

<b>A washing machine on spin cycle</b>	<b>A building collapsing in an earthquake</b>	<b>A wave crashing on the beach</b>
<b>Lightning striking the ground</b>	<b>A soccer ball flying past the goalie</b>	<b>A roller-coaster shooting through a loop</b>
<b>A sprinter bursting from the blocks</b>	<b>A bonfire blazing on a dark night</b>	<b>An aeroplane taking off</b>

Read your passage to someone. Can they guess what you're describing?

Make up a new event to describe and write a passage about it.

## Grat Books

*'Peering through the window of a gloomy tunnel home, I could hardly believe my eyeballs. I saw comfortable chairs, a zapp TV, lots of island-invented stuff and even a few bookcases (Grats could read? Nah. The books must be for show).*

What types of books would the grats have on their bookcases? Would they be into adventure, or narRAtives? Write the names of some of the books you think the grats would read. You could be clever and try to change the names of pre-existing books into grat books. For example 'The Great Escape' could become 'The Grat Escape.'

## Dumb Teacher

*Clarissa licked rainbow ice cream off her chin. 'Are you naturally this dumb? Or did you take extra dumb classes on Earth?'*

Congratulations! Earth has opened up a Dumb School and you have been appointed Head Dumb Teacher. Your first job is to write the curriculum. Make a list of the units of work you will teach and write a brief summary explaining the content of each unit. Remember, you're teaching dumb, so the topics must help make students dumber!