

PSHE Lesson Plan

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Chapter 1 — The New Arrival

First impressions, fairness, and belonging

At a Glance

Chapter	Chapter 1 — The New Arrival
Fable	The Lion and the Mouse (Aesop)
Key Stage	KS1 / Lower KS2
Years	2–4
Age range	6–9
Duration	50 minutes (core) / 60 minutes (with extension)
Drama type	Hot-seating
Primary strand	Relationships
Secondary strand	Health and Wellbeing

What You Need

- Chapter 1 of Zoe and the Great Summer Jubilee (to read aloud)
- Whiteboard or flipchart
- One chair placed slightly apart from the class (the hot seat)
- Exit slip or plain paper — one per pupil
- Optional: emotion cards or feelings fan for lower-confidence pupils

No advance preparation required beyond familiarising yourself with Chapter 1.

Before You Start

Prior knowledge: None required. This lesson works as a standalone session or as the entry point to the full 12-lesson unit.

Key Vocabulary

First impression	What we think about someone the moment we meet them
Judge	Decide what someone is like before getting to know them
Fair	Treating people the right way, based on what they actually do
Excluded	Left out, made to feel you do not belong
Calm	Staying steady on the outside even when you feel a lot on the inside

Teacher note: Introduce these words at the start of the lesson. Return to them during discussion. Avoid pushing the word prejudice with younger pupils unless it is already established in class — the concept is present throughout the lesson without needing the label.

Chapter Context

The fable behind the chapter

In *The Lion and the Mouse*, a powerful lion dismisses a small mouse as worthless. Later, the mouse saves the lion's life by chewing through a net. The chapter does not name this fable — but its logic runs through every scene: the most intimidating-looking animal may be the gentlest.

Chapter summary

Zoe, a Rottweiler, arrives at Merevale Creek Farm to help prepare for the Great Summer Jubilee. Before she says a word, the animals are already afraid. Mayo the Horse stands at the front and announces the Jubilee does not require dogs. George the Rabbit hides behind the water trough. Only Mo the Goat watches without judgement.

Later that morning, George falls into the creek carrying a bucket too large for him. Zoe retrieves the bucket, fills it, carries it to the barn, and says nothing about how easy it was. She simply asks: "Where does this need to go?" That act — quiet, practical, asking nothing in return — is the moral centre of the chapter.

Reading aloud guidance

Read from	The opening: "The gate at Merevale Creek Farm had stood for a very long time..."
Stop at	"A silence settled over the farmyard; the particular kind of silence that is not peaceful at all, but full of unspoken things."
Use this moment	As the starter discussion point before continuing.
Resume reading	From "It was George who caused the trouble..." through to "Where does this need to go?" — the bucket scene is the most important moment for this lesson.
If time is short	Read the bucket scene only. It is the essential text for this lesson.

Companion resource: *Field Notes Teachers Guide (v9.1)* — available at www.merevalecreekfarm.com/teacherpack. The *Field Notes* guide provides the Guardian Moment, Blue Butterfly and Ladybird Hunt notes, Writing Response prompts, Tier 2 literary vocabulary, P4C questions, and the full Learning Ladder framework for all 12 chapters.

PSHE Curriculum Links

PSHE Association Programme of Study, 2026

Relationships

- Friendships — KS2 — #10 [CF1 CF3 CF4 GW6]: That healthy friendships make people feel included, safe and happy; how to recognise when they or others feel lonely or excluded; strategies to include others
- Respecting self and others — KS1 — #1 [RKR8 RKR10]: What makes them unique and special; how they are the same as, and different to, others; how this can contribute to a sense of belonging
- Respecting self and others — KS2 — #17 [RKR10]: What stereotypes are and how they can be unfair; how stereotypes can negatively influence behaviours and attitudes towards others
- Respecting self and others — KS2 — #18 [RKR5 RKR6 RKR10]: About prejudice and discrimination; to recognise behaviours that discriminate against others; ways of responding to discrimination

Health and Wellbeing

- Mental health and wellbeing — KS1 — #1 [GW3 GW4 GW5]: How to notice and name a range of feelings in themselves and others; that feelings can be felt more, or less, strongly
- Mental health and wellbeing — KS1 — #3 [GW5 RKR3]: That someone's feelings can affect how they behave; ways to manage strong feelings, reactions and responses
- Mental health and wellbeing — KS2 — #14 [GW1]: Self-regulation strategies and how to use them to manage feelings, thoughts, setbacks and responses in different situations

Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, pupils will be able to:

- Describe how Zoe feels when she arrives, using evidence from the chapter
- Explain why the farm animals judge Zoe before knowing her
- Say why first impressions can be unfair
- Suggest one concrete action that helps someone feel welcome

Success Criteria

Write on the board before the lesson.

- I can name how Zoe is feeling and say how I know
- I can explain why judging someone by how they look is unfair
- I can suggest something kind I could do if someone new arrived

Lesson Sequence

Starter — First Feelings (10 minutes)

Read aloud from the opening to the sentence ending "full of unspoken things."

Then ask the class:

"Imagine you walked into a new place and everyone moved away from you without speaking. How might you feel inside?"

- Talk partners: 1 minute
- Take responses and build a feelings bank on the board

Suggested words to prompt if pupils are hesitant:

nervous · lonely · confused · embarrassed · angry · scared · calm

Then ask:

"Zoe does not shout or leave. She stands still and waits. How is that different from how you might have felt?"

This question introduces the gap between inner feeling and outward action — the key idea for this lesson. Accept all honest responses.

Main Activity — Hot-Seating (30 minutes)

What is hot-seating?

One person sits in a chair facing the class and speaks as a character from the story. The class asks questions and the person answers in role. Explain this to the class in your own words. Demonstrate with one example question before beginning.

Round 1 — Zoe in the hot seat (15 minutes)

If you have read the George bucket scene, pupils will have seen Zoe act. If not, summarise: "After the animals reacted, Zoe helped George carry water to the barn and did not make him feel embarrassed about needing help."

Place the chair. Choose a pupil (or volunteer adult) to sit as Zoe.

Display or read aloud these questions:

"How did you feel when you walked through the gate?"	Naming feelings
"Why did you not shout or leave when everyone stepped back?"	Self-regulation
"What were you thinking but not saying?"	Inner life
"Did you think anyone would ever be kind to you here?"	Belonging
"Why did you help George even though the other animals did not trust you?"	Values / motivation

After each answer, ask the class: "Does that feel true for Zoe? What tells us that in the story?"

Key teaching point — say this clearly before moving on:

"Zoe knew exactly what the animals were thinking. She chose not to react. She decided to show them who she was through her actions — not her words. That is one of the hardest things a person — or animal — can do."

Round 2 — Mayo in the hot seat (10 minutes — extension, use if time allows)

"Why were you worried about Zoe before she had done anything?"	Unpacking assumption
"Was it fair to decide she was dangerous before she	Fairness

had spoken?"	
"Has anyone ever judged you before they knew you?"	Empathy bridge

This section is for exploration — not to blame Mayo. He represents a normal human response. Treat it with care: pupils may recognise themselves in his thinking.

Plenary — Circle Reflection (10 minutes)

Bring the class together. Use a circle and talking object if these are established routines.

- "What could the farm animals have done differently when Zoe arrived?"
- "Is it ever acceptable to be afraid of someone just because of how they look?"
- "What is one thing you could do this week if a new person arrived in our class?"

Keep this discussion brisk. These questions are meant to land and be carried away — not resolved completely within the lesson.

Exit Task (5 minutes)

Every pupil completes this before leaving. On a slip of paper or in their book, pupils write or draw:

One feeling Zoe had when she arrived — and one thing I would do if someone new joined our class.

Collect these. Use them as assessment evidence. For lower-confidence or EAL pupils: accept a drawing with a label, or a single word for each part.

Assessment

Look and listen for pupils who can:

- Name Zoe's feelings accurately and point to evidence in the story — not just "sad" but "lonely because no one would look at her"
- Explain why judging by appearance is unfair — not just that it is unfair
- Suggest a realistic and specific action — "I would ask them to sit with me" rather than "I would be nice"
- In Round 2: hold Mayo's perspective without simply agreeing with it or condemning him

Exit tasks showing empathy paired with a concrete action meet the success criteria.

Differentiation

Support

- Pre-teach vocabulary using the table above before the lesson begins
- Provide emotion cards during the starter so pupils can point rather than name
- Allow paired hot-seating — two pupils sit together and answer jointly
- Pre-share two or three questions before Round 1 so pupils can prepare
- Accept verbal responses for the exit task

Extension

- Write Zoe's diary entry from her first night at the farm
- Design a Welcome to Our School guide for a new pupil — what would actually help?
- Discuss: is prejudice always about appearance? Can you think of other examples from everyday life?
- Research: what do people commonly believe about Rottweilers, and where do those ideas come from?

For home educators

This lesson adapts easily to a one-to-one setting. Skip the talk-partner activity and run the discussion as a conversation. For hot-seating, the adult takes the character role and the child asks questions — or swap. The exit task works identically. The vocabulary table makes a useful display prompt to return to during subsequent chapters.

Sensitive Teaching Notes

- Some pupils will have direct experience of being new, excluded, or judged. Keep personal sharing optional. The character provides protective distance — use it.
- Some pupils will recognise themselves in Mayo's response. The lesson must not shame this. It is a normal reaction. The goal is to open thinking, not assign guilt.
- Rottweilers are a stereotyped breed in the UK. Pupils with dogs at home may engage strongly with this. Channel it — it is precisely the point of the series.
- Round 2 (Mayo hot-seat) surfaces more challenging thinking. Use it with older or more confident classes, or return to it in a follow-up session.

Cross-Curricular Links

- English: inference, character feelings, responding to text
- Drama: speaking in role, hot-seating technique
- Art: welcome posters, emotion drawings, character portraits
- RSHE (where applicable): belonging, new environments, managing feelings

Unit Context

This is Lesson 1 of 12 in the Zoe and the Great Summer Jubilee PSHE unit. It introduces Zoe, establishes the themes of prejudice and belonging that run through all twelve chapters, and sets up the question the whole series asks: what does true strength actually look like?

The full 12-lesson unit covers all three PSHE Association strands across one half-term or term. A unit overview is available at merevalecreekfarm.com/teacherpack

This resource accompanies Zoe and the Great Summer Jubilee (Book 1, Merevale Creek Farm series, Merevale Publishing, 2026).

Series logline: "True strength is gentle." | merevalecreekfarm.com | info@merevalecreekfarm.com