

## Esio Trot by Roald Dahl

### Teacher version

- In 'Esio Trot', Mrs Silver wishes that Alfie would grow.

"I do so wish he would *grow* a little faster," Mrs Silver was saying. "Every spring, when he wakes up from his winter sleep, I weigh him on the kitchen scales. And do you know that in all the eleven years I've had him he's not gained more than *three ounces!* That's almost *nothing!*"

- Why do you think Mrs Silver wishes that Alfie would grow faster?
- What does she mean by 'his winter sleep'?

"What does he weigh now?" Mr Hoppy asked her.

"Just thirteen ounces," Mrs Silver answered. "About as much as a grapefruit."

- Why does Mrs Silver say 'just' thirteen ounces?

"Yes, well, tortoises are very slow growers," Mr Hoppy said solemnly. "But they can live for a hundred years."

- What does 'solemnly' mean? Why did Mr Hoppy speak in this way?

"I know that," Mrs Silver said. "But I do so wish he would grow just a little bit bigger. He's such a tiny wee fellow."

"He seems fine as he is," Mr Hoppy said.

"No, he's *not* just fine!" Mrs Silver cried. "Try to think how miserable it must make him feel to be so titchy! Everyone wants to grow up!"

- Do you think Alfie really is miserable about being so small? Can tortoises feel misery? Are they aware of their size? How would Alfie know that he was small if he'd never met any other tortoises?

"You really *would* love him to grow bigger, wouldn't you?" Mr Hoppy said, and even as he said it his mind suddenly went *click* and an amazing idea came rushing into his head.

- What do you think Mr Hoppy's idea is? Talk/write/draw it.
- What do you predict will happen next in the story?
- Imagine that you're an inventor. What would you create to help Alfie grow faster? Is it a gadget, or a special potion, or perhaps a magic spell? Plan (and - if appropriate - make a model of) your invention and explain how it works.

Other teaching links:

- Speech punctuation and dialogue
- Information writing – tortoises – or an entry in the Guinness Book of World Records – the world's largest tortoise
- Speech verbs (e.g. said, asked, answered, cried) & verb form (e.g. said/was saying)
- Maths – conversion – ounces to g/kg; measures – creating potions

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## Questions and activities

- Why do you think Mrs Silver wishes that Alfie would grow faster?
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