



In the book, Weedy Barney Willow is picked on by horrible Gavin Needle and the evil headteacher Miss Whipmire. He dreams of being a cat as things would be easier.

To Be a Cat is published by Puffin.

Activity 1

Extract 1

"That was very odd, you falling asleep like that, " his mum commented. "I think we might need to take you to hospital to get you checked out."

"I'm all right now. I think I'm feeling better."

But then, while he sat on the sofa watching TV with his mum, his arms started itching and he began to rub them.

"Barney, don't do that. You'll make them sore," Mum said, switching from polar bears to a quiz show.

"I can't help it." He unbuttoned one of his cuffs, rolled up the sleeve and started to scratch the skin directly. "They're so itchy."

As he scratched he saw one, then two, then three thick black hairs on his right arm. They were pure jet-black, way darker than his normal mousy mid-brown hair colour, and were arranged like points in a neat line just below his wrist.

"Mum, look - these hairs."

"Oh yes, you're turning into a man. Well, now that you're nearly a teenager you'll be starting to get hairy all over the place."

"But they're weird. They're black. I don't have black hair. And they weren't there yesterday. They weren't even there this afternoon. I don't want to turn into a man that quickly."

She wasn't listening. She was too busy looking at his forehead. "What is it?" Barney asked her.

"Oh dear, I'll just get the tweezers," she said, before disappearing up to her bedroom. Meanwhile, Barney went to look in the hallway mirror to see what the matter was. There, right in the middle of his forehead, was another thick black hair.

Learn to explain how dialogue can convey character and move the action on

- Using Extract 1, point to, highlight or underline any dialogue (direct speech, what a character is saying). Say it aloud and use expression to show how the character is feeling when you are saying the words.

Think about the relationship between the writer (Matt Haig) and the reader (you).

- Which examples of dialogue had an impact on you?
- When you read the extract, which dialogue struck a chord with you as the reader?
- Think about how successful the dialogue is.

Make a table like the one below, write down the dialogue that you liked or found interesting. In the next column, write about how this helps you to understand the character or moves the action along (or both!). In the third column, explain what this combination shows to you, the reader.

Example Of Dialogue	Convey Character Or Move On The Action	Impact On The Reader
"Mum, look- these hairs."	Both – tells us about how Barney feels and makes Mum look.	The punctuation in this dialogue shows us how Barney speaks. He pauses at the comma and the dash. This is to show how nervous and scared he is. It is short too, showing Barney has no words - he is in shock!