



SPARK

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EXTRACTS AND NOTES FOR KS2 AND LIBRARIANS
SUITABLE FOR: AGES 9+

Explores themes of: ✓ The Environment ✓ Climate Change and Global Warming ✓ Ecosystems and Conservation ✓ Taking Action

Subject Checklist: ✓ Literacy ✓ Science ✓ Geography
✓ Art, Design & Technology ✓ PSHE



CONTENTS

Extract 1: Water is Holy (taken from Chapter 1)


Objectives: *Understand what climate change is and what causes it; identify the effects of climate change in the story and how this relates to our world today.*

Extract 2: Helena's Books (taken from Chapter 13)

Objectives: *Understand what different ecosystems need to survive and thrive; create a Conservation Action Plan identifying how to protect an ecosystem.*

Extract 3: Helena's Books (taken from Chapter 21)

Objectives: *Consider the significance of the book's title and its deeper meaning; write a descriptive paragraph about making positive change in the world.*



ABOUT THE BOOK



In a world struggling to exist, only the strongest will survive. The explosive, action-packed new adventure from the award-winning author of *Kick and Pop!*

Ash has always lived in Last Village, lonely since the day his father left and never came back.

The world is unbearably hot, water is drying up, and life is hard. After a vicious thunderstorm, Ash wakes to find that the village's water has completely run out, and all the other villagers have mysteriously disappeared.

Accompanied by the outcast Bronwyn, Ash sets off in search of water, for answers about what happened to the villagers, with hope they might find 'The Kingdom' – a rumoured land to the north where life still flourishes.

Ash and Bronwyn have to survive a journey across an arid landscape, discovering that other people out there are even more dangerous than the lightning strikes that follow them. Then they reach The Wall – beyond it, something impossible.

Lying in wait are the answers Ash is searching for, and maybe even the truth about what happened to his father. If only he could get past The Wall...

SOMETIMES ALL IT TAKES IS JUST ONE SPARK.



EXTRACT I

WATER IS HOLY

(Taken from Chapter 1)

The boy's lungs soon began to burn. Even here, in the cool gloom of the pool, the sensation was never far away. He reached out for a branch suspended in the water, grabbed it, and kicked for the surface. The heat hit him the moment he broke through; it was like being crushed beneath something vast and immovably heavy. The children's insults filled his ears again, but they dared not throw their stones just yet. Water was holy. They loved the water and they feared it, but above all they knew what happened to those who defiled it: exile.

And exile meant death.


The boy glided to the far bank, and his swimming was like an evil magic to them.

'Witchcraft!'

'Traitor!'

'Four Fathers curse you!'

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What is it like in the pool? Pick out key words and phrases.
 - What are the children nearby doing?
 - What metaphor is used to describe the boy's lungs? What does this suggest?
 - What is the weather like where the boy lives? How do you know?
 - What do you think 'water was holy' means? Why might water be thought of in this way?
 - How does the writer suggest that the story is not set in the present day? What clues are given?
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ACTIVITY 1

CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

- In *Spark*, Ash lives in a world that has been drastically affected by climate change, which is a shift in weather patterns over many years. Unfortunately, human beings are responsible for climate change but we are also the ones who can save our planet too.
- Begin by discussing and noting down different **CAUSES** of climate change. Try to think of human actions that cause an increase of greenhouse gases to be released and trapped in the Earth's atmosphere. See the example in the table to get you started. Discuss which causes have the biggest impact on **global warming** (the earth getting hotter) and why?
- Then, read over The Effects of Climate Change in Ash's World. For each quote taken from the text, write a sentence or two explaining the **EFFECT** of climate change and the **NEGATIVE IMPACT** this has on the environment.
- Think about how all of this relates to our world today and why we need to take action against climate change now.

CAUSES OF CLIMATE CHANGE
– AEROPLANES WHICH USE FOSSIL FUELS





THE EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE IN ASH'S WORLD

1) RISING TEMPERATURE OF THE ATMOSPHERE (*page 28*)

**'THE STREAM THAT RAN THROUGH THE VILLAGE AND FED THE POOL WAS DRY
... THE POOL WAS ALREADY BEING LOST TO THE AIR, STOLEN BY THE SUN'**



2) ENDANGERED PLANTS AND INHOSPITABLE LANDSCAPES (*page 29*)

**'THE HEAT SEEMED TO INTENSIFY THE HIGHER THEY GOT,
AND THE AIR FELT THICK ENOUGH TO CHEW'**



3) STORMS AND EXTREME WEATHER (*page 42*)

**'ASH STOOD AT THE BACK DOOR WATCHING THE STORM BUILD.
IT WOULD BRING RAIN, BUT IT WOULD ALSO BRING RUIN'**



4) DROUGHTS AND FOOD SHORTAGES (*page 66*)

**'THEY DID NOT FIND MUCH — A FEW DRIED HERBS,
SOME SHRIVELLED BERRIES, STRIPS OF CURED MUTTON'**



4) LOSS OF ANIMALS' HABITATS AND ENDANGERED ANIMALS (*page 167*)

**'SAMUEL STOPPED IN THE SHADE OF ONE OF THE FEW REMAINING TREES.
IT HAD LOST ALL ITS BRANCHES'**





EXTRACT 2

HELENA'S BOOKS

(Taken from Chapter 13)


Satisfied, Samuel listened as Ash tried to describe some of the creatures he had witnessed in the crinkly yellow pages of Helena's books – animals that soared and swam, scurried and stalked: eagles and parrots and bats and whales and dolphins and sharks and hedgehogs and deer and unicorns and wolves and lions and tigers. A thousand types of fish. Bears big enough to eat a man in one sitting. Slithery things that came without legs. Horses that came with four. Tiny critters that came with six, eight, a hundred.

It was too good to believe. It was too good to disbelieve.

'And they all used to be real?' Samuel asked. 'You're not joshing me?'

Ash nodded solemnly. Samuel whistled. Bronwyn held her tongue. They were quiet for a long time. Finally, Samuel spoke.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How many different creatures does Ash describe to Samuel from Helena's books?
 - What kinds of 'slithery things' and 'tiny critters' can you name?
 - What questions does Samuel ask Ash and why?
 - How do Ash and Bronwyn react to Samuel's questions? What can you infer from this?
 - Which of the animals listed are currently endangered? What can be done to protect them?
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ACTIVITY 2

CONSERVATION ACTION PLAN

- In the story, Ash, Bronwyn, and the rest of the gang fight to revive the dying **ecosystems** (an area where plants, animals, and other organisms live in a community with their physical environment) of the planet.
- Close your eyes for a moment and visualise a natural space with its own ecosystem. It could be somewhere you have been or would like to go, for instance, a forest, a meadow, or lake.
- Next, think about all the different animals, plants, and wildlife that might rely on this space and any potential human threats to it. Fill in your Conservation Action Plan on the next page in order to help protect ecosystems such as this in the future.
- Sketch your natural spaces and perform a 'show and tell' with your Action Plan, so that others can learn about how to better protect the Earth and different ecosystems.





CONSERVATION ACTION PLAN

What is your natural space or ecosystem? Where is it?

What creatures might you find here? Are they visiting? Or is this their home?

What other plants and wildlife are present? How might this change through the seasons?

What weather or climate does this space need to thrive?

How might climate change threaten this ecosystem?

How might other human activity pose a threat to this space?

For example, littering

What can be done to protect it?

How could you raise awareness about the need to protect this space?



EXTRACT 3


THE WALL

(Taken from Chapter 21)

The wind intensified: it jostled and pummelled and yanked and shoved. It came at Ash from all angles, launching him forwards, pushing him sideways, driving him back. But Ash kept going. All his life he had been forced to struggle, to resist hands bent on dragging him to the ground. But now it wasn't only his survival that he fought for: it was everyone's. Everyone who had been taken to the Wall and everyone who ever would be. And he was determined not to fail them.

He reached the cave and began his descent towards the Wall, just as he had all those weeks ago, escorted by the Warden and his guards. He took the slope at a run, knowing how little time he might have to reach the bell. He did not stop to check whether any of the guards sheltering in the gatehouse were on watch; instead, he flew past its glowing windows, on to the Wall, and fought to keep his balance as the wind made a final attempt to knock him down.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Which verbs are used to describe the Wall? What is the effect on the reader?
 - What does the phrase, 'it wasn't only his survival that he fought for' mean? Explain your ideas.
 - What doesn't Ash stop to do? What does this suggest about the time he has left?
 - Why is Ash so desperate to take down the Wall?
 - What qualities do you think Ash shows in this extract and why? Give examples.
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ACTIVITY 3

IT ONLY TAKES A SPARK!

• On pages 245–247, Mason and Ash discuss how to take down the Wall in order to supply water across the land once more. As Ash begins to have doubts about this mammoth task, Mason encourages him and says:

'IT ONLY TAKES A SPARK.'

• Spend a few minutes in pairs to discuss: what is the literal meaning of this in the story? What is the deeper meaning behind these words? Why do you think the writer has chosen *Spark* as the book's title? What message(s) is Mitch Johnson trying to communicate? Discuss your ideas together.

• Finally, write a descriptive paragraph about you taking action to make a positive impact in the world. For example, you might take action to:

- o protect a creature or ecosystem
- o help or support a friend
- o improve life for inhabitants of your community
- o stand up for something you believe in

• Use the word bank below to help you make your paragraph descriptive and powerful. Then, share your inspirational paragraphs together and discuss the power you have as young people, in changing the future for the better.

	DETERMINED		SHINING	
DAZZLING		THUMPING		WHISPERING
	SWELTERING		RAPIDLY	
EUPHORIC		STUMBLE		SHAKE
	COURAGEOUS		PROTECTION	
NERVOUSLY		UNCERTAIN		JAGGED
	OVERJOYED		FEROCIOUSLY	



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