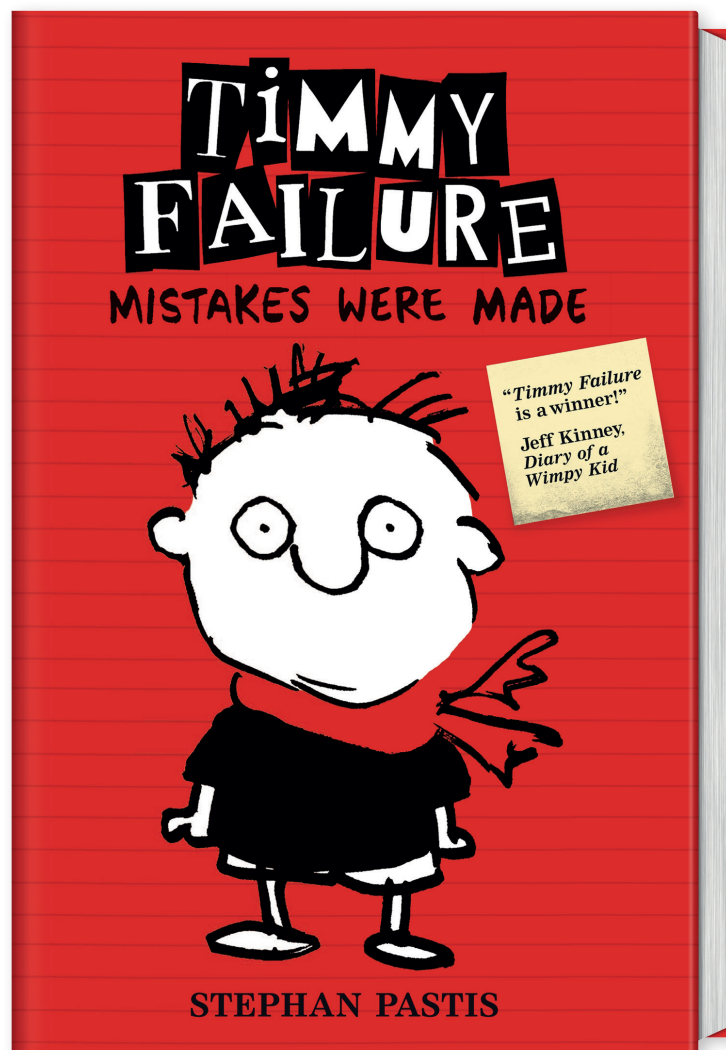


TIMMY FAILURE

MISTAKES WERE MADE

by STEPHAN PASTIS



A CROSS-CURRICULAR RESOURCE
FOR KEY STAGE 2 SCHOOLS

www.timmyfailure.com

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Timmy Failure: Mistakes Were Made

by Stephan Pastis

A CROSS-CURRICULAR RESOURCE FOR KEY STAGE 2 TEACHERS

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Introduction: Meet Timmy Failure

Hi there!



Welcome to the world of Timmy Failure, the founder, president and CEO of the “best” detective agency in town, probably the nation. Created by *New York Times* best-selling cartoonist Stephan Pastis, the hilarious and ever-optimistic Timmy and his sidekick polar bear, Total, create chaos as they attempt to make sense of the world. Riotously funny and essential reading for all ace detectives, the Timmy Failure series is sure to have readers in stitches.

WHAT TIMMY’S FANS SAY:

“For Timmy Failure, success is the only option!” Lincoln Peirce, creator of *Big Nate*

“One of those laugh your head off and try not to be sick books.” Charlie, aged 9, www.lovereading4kids.co.uk

“A fabulously fun read ... original and quirky with real heart.” Philip Ardagh, *Guardian*

“This ironic, knowing, inspired book will prompt constant laughter.” Nicolette Jones, *The Sunday Times*

“This will be the best ever book you will read – it will glue you to the page like cheese stuck to the carpet.” Adam, aged 9, www.lovereading4kids.co.uk

Winner of the Best Story Book at the Booktrust Best Book Awards 2013 *Timmy Failure: Mistakes Were Made*

We hope this resource is useful and inspires you with ideas and activities! Designed for Key Stage 2 teachers, it delves into the first book in the series, where we first meet Timmy.

So let’s start at the beginning. Book one, *Timmy Failure: Mistakes Were Made*, is an entertaining and ingenious journey that introduces Timmy Failure, the amiable yet unlikely young detective whose attempts at crime-solving will keep you entertained from start to finish. Furthermore, if it is the words which are this story’s apple pie, then it would surely not be complete without its custard, Stephan Pastis’s playful illustrations. For his pictures don’t just accompany the story, they also enhance it and, on occasion, tell the tale itself.

In short, this is a laugh-out-loud read. It also provides an excellent stimulus for your English lessons, as well as activities across the curriculum, which we hope this resource demonstrates. In its entirety it could be used to inspire and support the planning and delivery of a unit over a half term. However, if you are unable to dedicate as much curriculum time as this, the activities could be cherry-picked and delivered as standalone sessions in a one-off lesson/session.

The first section of this resource explores a range of overarching themes, as well as those which are specific to Timmy's ultimate goal: becoming the best detective in the world. Following this, there is a section for teachers and support staff, suggesting activities which are suitable for a Book Club. The remainder of the resource is dedicated to literacy-based activities across the curriculum: English; Art and Design & Technology; Digital Literacy; History and Geography; Mathematics; Science; and Physical Education.

We hope you and your pupils enjoy exploring the world of Timmy Failure. Timmy is confident that you will.

**"Invaluable to anyone
who ever wanted to be
a detective."**

— Anonymous

Themes to explore

Timmy's detective adventures provide an abundance of opportunities for a literacy focus on narrative and storytelling. However, as we delve deeper than the humour and mischievousness our protagonist provides, there are a number of themes to be explored relating to character and relationships, as well as the skills needed to be a successful world-class detective (maybe Timmy should read this section as well!). The activities proposed in this resource draw upon the overarching themes.

Overarching themes

You may like to take some of these themes and integrate them into your characterization activities in English. Alternatively, they may be suitable for discussion during circle time or a PSHE session.

Using your (detective) instincts

What are instincts? What do they feel like? Timmy talks about using his detective's instincts (page 141) – this is an interesting concept to explore with children.

First impressions count...

We all make split-second judgements about people within seconds of meeting them. Timmy appreciates that his clients need to have a good initial impression of him (page 8). You could explore with pupils how to make a good impression and when it is particularly important, as well as presenting film clips/images of people and discussing the children's first impressions of them.

But it's important to get to know people before making up your mind

If only Timmy had got to know Corrina Corrina, he would have realized they are more similar than he thinks (of course that wouldn't make for such a fun story). As well as exploring first impressions as a concept, you could integrate into this a discussion about the importance of getting to know people before deciding if you are going to get along. Could Corrina Corrina and Timmy be the perfect detective partners?

Reach for the sky ambition – the power of positive thinking

OK, so Timmy may not be the most successful detective in the world (shhh, we won't tell him that), but his trophy cabinet would be brimming if awards were judged on ambition and confidence. You could discuss the importance and power of positive thinking and how it can take you far in life. Why not take some Timmy quotes and put them up around your classroom?

Our relationships with animals

Total is Timmy's best friend, even though he is a polar bear. Their relationship could form the basis of a discussion or activities which consider the importance of the relationships your pupils have with animals. Do any of them consider their pets to be their friends? Why? What makes those friendships special/different to those they have with other children? This could extend to an activity around how to care for pets.



Group work at school

Timmy's approach to group work at school is certainly unique! Could your pupils help Timmy to understand how to work more effectively in a group at school?

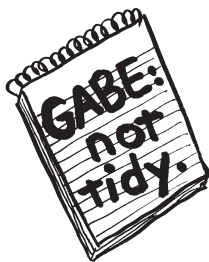
Independent study

Timmy seems to have a bit of a hard time focusing on his school work (who can blame him, he is a world-class detective after all). His captivity diary (pages 217–221) comically relates how he struggles to concentrate on his homework, something which some of your pupils may well be able to relate to. This is a good opportunity to think about independent study skills, all in the spirit of helping Timmy of course!

Detective skills

Using inference and deduction skills to think beyond the literal

How many times did you laugh out loud as Timmy clearly failed to read between the lines and infer the logical explanation from the evidence surrounding him? The story could provide an opportunity to revisit inference and deduction skills and their importance.



Recruiting the perfect partner

There couldn't be a Timmy without Total or a Total without Timmy. As a duo, they provide some of the most magical moments of the story. The partnership provides a good opportunity for children to think about who would be their ideal business partner – the qualities they would bring and those they would be looking for in their right-hand man/woman/polar bear.

The importance of a founding set of principles

Timmy's comical and charming philosophy about his founding set of principles (page 7) could provide the basis for an interesting discussion around values and what children think are the key ingredients one needs to succeed.



The importance of effective marketing

From a slogan, to a website, to posters and a mascot, all the best companies advertise with aplomb. Timmy knows this, as does Corrina Corrina (yes, Timmy, we said her name again). What do your pupils think about advertising? What makes a persuasive, effective advert? Are they aware of the power of marketing?

Note-taking is fundamental

Timmy doesn't leave home without his detective log, always ready to jot down an observation (page 162). Do your children write down notes at home, at school, when they are out and about? Why are they useful? Do they use a digital device or pen and paper? Why? If you don't do this already, you could provide each pupil with their own writing journal, to make notes of good words, phrases or sentences they read, or ideas they come up with.

Awash with witnesses

Timmy understands how important it is to find reliable witnesses (page 13). This could provide an interesting opportunity to talk about why the police need witnesses to solve crimes, and also why witnesses are useful in resolving everyday issues.

Last, but definitely not least ... the importance of reading

Timmy knows that to be the best detective in the world he needs to read voraciously, particularly his trade journals, in order to keep up to date with detective technology (page 39). He also values his local library and his unlikely friend Flo the Librarian. These themes provide a good opportunity to explore the importance of reading for enjoyment.

Book Club

The Timmy Failure website has lots of activities and games for children to have fun with. Visit: <http://www.timmyfailure.com/fun-stuff.html> to unlock a world of Timmy Failure treats.

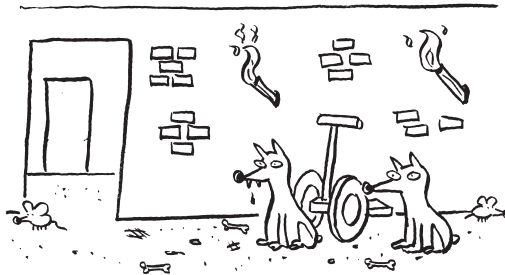
You may have already planned all of the texts that you are going to study this year as a class. If this is the case, you may like to make *Timmy Failure: Mistakes Were Made* the focal point of a session outside of curriculum time. If you run a Book Club, this story could be the next book to be read and discussed. Alternatively, Timmy would be honoured if his book were the catalyst for you setting up a new Book Club, or if he were the focus of an after-school or lunchtime club one week. In this section of the resource, there are lots of activities and discussion questions suggested. You may also like to dip into the other sections of the resource and adapt the ideas for your session.

Promoting your Timmy Failure Book Club session

Below are a handful of ideas to help raise the profile of your Timmy Failure event or Book Club.

- **Create a PowerPoint presentation** with quotes from the book and details of your session. Run it on a loop on a screen in the school (if you have one). Quotes might include:

- *"My name is Failure, Timmy Failure. I'd ask that you get your "failure" jokes out of the way now. I am anything but." (page 1)*
- *"I head downtown to do reconnaissance on CCIA headquarters. Because I am so well known and don't want to draw attention to myself, I go undercover. Under my bed cover." (page 94)*
- *"Deep in the rat-infested bowels of the earth. At the end of a maze of torchlit tunnels. Guarded by attack dogs. Is where the Failuremobile is. I don't know that for sure. But it's my detective's instinct. Which is rarely wrong." (page 141)*



- **Secret location.** For older pupils, hold the session in a secret location in school, giving children a clue to solve in advance of the day.
- **Posters.** Create posters which feature an image of Timmy and information about the Book Club session. Distribute them via registers.
- **Assembly.** Promote your Timmy Failure Book Club session in assembly, showing this book trailer: www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mcp8Sfx0aaA

Creating a positive environment

To add extra excitement to your session, you could try the following ideas:

- **Treats.** Bring in Rice Krispie cakes (as made by Dondi).



- **Icebreaker.** Ask children to bring an object with them which they think Timmy would consider invaluable. As an icebreaker activity, ask them to explain why they chose that object.
- **Display clues.** Display objects related to the book when setting up the space and see if children can spot them over the course of the session: one girl's shoe; a beach ball; an empty chocolate wrapper; Rice Krispie cakes; a tangerine; a Hawaiian shirt; toilet paper draped over furniture; a dead hamster.
- **Create a display** of famous fictitious detectives/spies such as Sherlock Holmes, Alex Rider, Ted from *The London Eye Mystery*, not forgetting Timmy himself.

Getting inside the book

Timmy's adventures lend themselves to a lively Book Club session. Below are some example questions for stimulating discussion. You may also like to look at the English section and the Themes section for further inspiration.

General

- Why is *Mistakes Were Made* an appropriate title for this text? Would you have given the book a different title? If yes, what would your title be?
- What type/style of book is this? How would you describe it to someone else?
- How does the author use illustrations to tell the story? Are they an essential part of the story? What difference would it make if there were no illustrations?
- Are there any books that you would compare this one to? How are they similar/different?
- Would you recommend this book to a friend? Why? What kind of person would most enjoy this book?
- Did the book keep you hooked? How?
- How does the author create humour in the book?
- If you were to talk with the author, Stephan Pastis, what would you want to ask him?
- If you could, would you make any changes to the book?

Characters

- Which characters do you particularly admire or dislike? Why?
- Who in this book would you most like to meet? What would you ask them – or say?
- If you could become a character in the book, what role would you play? You might be a new character or take the place of an existing one.
- Did any of the characters remind you of yourself or someone you know? How?
- What are Timmy's most positive and negative characteristics?
- Does the way Timmy sees himself differ from how others see him? How?
- Timmy loves his mum more than anything in the world. Is this true? If yes/no, which parts of the book show this?
- How does Rollo feel about Timmy? How does Timmy feel about Rollo? How do you know this?
- What impression does the writer and what impression does Timmy give of Corrina Corrina's character? Are they different? How?
- Timmy and Corrina Corrina are quite similar characters. Do you agree? Why?

The story

- Which scenes are the most important in the story? Why?
- Which was the most enjoyable part of the story? Why?

- Are there any parts of the story which you would like to change? Why?
- How does the first page make you want to read on?
- The book is fast paced. Are there any parts where you would have wanted the author to slow down and spend more time on a scene?
- Even though Timmy is the narrator, how/why does the reader have a better understanding about what is going on and about the characters than Timmy himself? For example, do you think you understand Corrina Corrina better than Timmy?
- Quite a few people are having a hard time in the story. Who do you think this applies to and why is life tough for them? How does the author make sure it is still a funny, entertaining book?

Setting

- Where do you think this story is set? What makes you think that?
- Where are the main places in which the story is set? Are they near each other? How would you describe each place?
- When is the story set? Over how long does the story take place? How do you know?
- What difference does the setting make to how the story develops? Would the story work as well if it were set in a small village, a big city, outer space?
- Do any of the surroundings remind you of where you live? How/why?
- If you were to visit Timmy's town, what words would you use to describe the atmosphere and mood of the place?
- If you picture the town in your mind, is it based on the illustrations or your own imagination? Why?

Creative activities

Design your own version of the book cover

Set children the task of designing their own book cover, based on their interpretation of the story. You could hold a competition where children "pitch" their book cover and then all vote for their preferred choice. Offer prizes and display as many of the entries as possible around the school.

Bookmark production

During your session, set pupils the task of designing a bookmark for them to keep or to tuck inside school library books when they are borrowed. Suggested themes could include:

- **'Timmy vs Corrina Corrina':** who is the best detective in the world?
- **'If you enjoyed this book, why not read...'** This would include suggestions for other books in the Timmy Failure series, as well as other similar series, such as the Tom Gates and Wimpy Kid series.
- **'Questions to make you think',** specifically related to *Timmy Failure: Mistakes Were Made* or other books in the series. Questions such as the examples given on the previous pages may help get the ball rolling.

Detective Club

If pupils are not enticed by the idea of a Book Club, why not set up a Detective Club and integrate reading the Timmy Failure books into your sessions. Children could create their own detective toolkit, design detective Top Trump cards or create some drama based on the stories.

Timeline of events

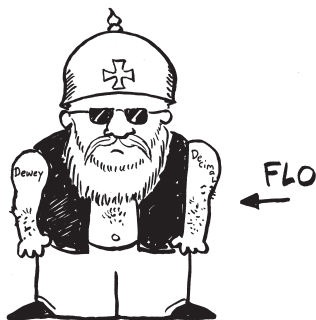
There is so much action and so many events that take place in this book. To help children get an overview of how the story unfolds, put them in pairs and set them the challenge of creating an illustrated timeline, with each pair responsible for a section of the story.

Timmy's town

We don't know exactly where Timmy lives, but we know about several important landmarks which are integral to the story, such as the bank and Timmy's school. Provide children with the resources to draw a map of Timmy's town, including all the essential locations featured in the book.

Flo's guide to using the school library

We'd all love a school librarian like Flo, wouldn't we?! Work with children to create "Flo's Guide to Using Our Library" or "Flo's Guide to Reading". Discuss the style which Flo might write in and which rules/ideas would be important to him. Display the guide in your school library or book corner.



Gadgets galore

As Timmy points out, it is very important for any committed detective to keep up to date with the latest gadgets by reading trade journals. Bring along gadget magazines and books to the session and ask children to create a poster/presentation about the essential gadgets needed in the profession – for example, Timmy's Top Five Gadgets, presented in the style of the Sunday evening radio music charts.

Book reviews and beyond

Encourage children to write a book review for *Timmy Failure: Mistakes Were Made*. To increase pupils' motivation for this activity, make sure there is a real audience who will engage with, and even comment on, their writing:

- Create a school blog specifically for book reviews, the link to which could be publicised on the school website and in the newsletter. If you know of any other schools that are focusing on the book too, why not create a more formal group and set up a system where each school in turn comments on the Timmy Failure blog entries of another school in the group.
- Encourage students to create shelf-talkers and belly bands for the Timmy Failure books you have in your library/classroom, with succinct catchy messages that will encourage others to borrow them.
- Encourage children to create their reviews in the format of tweets, allowing them a maximum of 140 characters to get their view across. Tweet the best reviews via your school's Twitter account (if you have one) and/or create a visual display of the tweets in the school.
- Give children the opportunity to write a fan letter to Stephan Pastis (via his publisher, Walker Books: marketing@walker.co.uk).
- Set children the task of creating a film, recording their views about *Timmy Failure: Mistakes Were Made*. This

could include their responses to the question “Can you describe Timmy Failure in three words?” They could then edit the footage to create a short film, of which the last frame would be an advert for the school library or your Book Club.

A detective-themed treasure hunt

Set your school library up as a crime scene, one that Timmy has been called to in order to solve a mystery, for example *The Case of the Missing Banana*. Through a treasure hunt, with clues placed around the school, pupils must solve the crime and work out where the infamous banana is.

Word play

Ask Timmy Failure fans to name three words to describe Timmy. Then help them to create a digital word cloud, where the most popular words will appear as the most prominent in the image. Display the word cloud as a poster in the library, with an eye-catching title such as: “Failure. I am anything but.”

Observation games

Timmy still has some way to go in improving his observation skills. Play a fun game with pupils to help them improve theirs. Ask children to study a section of a room or a tray of objects, and then to close their eyes. Change one (or more than one) thing and when they open their eyes, see if they can work out what has changed/been removed.

Creative writing activities

There are many different types of creative writing tasks and drama activities which this book inspires. Examples of these can be found below, in the English section of this resource.

English

Timmy Failure: Mistakes Were Made lends itself to an English unit of work. Below is the framework for a unit which could span several weeks. Alternatively, if time is limited, after your class has read the book, choose one or two activities to develop their comprehension of the text.

Reading the book

The first stage of the unit will be for your pupils to read and develop their understanding of the book itself. Of course, your approach will depend on the number of copies of the book you have, your children’s abilities and the time which you have available – guided reading, shared reading, independent reading or class story time. To support you in developing children’s comprehension of the book, suggested questions for your discussions can be found in the Book Club section, as well as the Themes section at the start of this resource.

An engaging start

Once your pupils have read and discussed the book, it is time to move on to the next stage of your English unit of work. Why not begin with an inspiring and exciting activity to set the scene? For example, you could:

- Create a Timmy Failure style “crime” scene in your classroom and set children the challenge of working out what happened
- Leave a strange object in the middle of the classroom and ask them to put their Timmy Failure “detective hats” on to work out what it is
- Invite a real police detective into the classroom to give advice to the children on solving mysteries

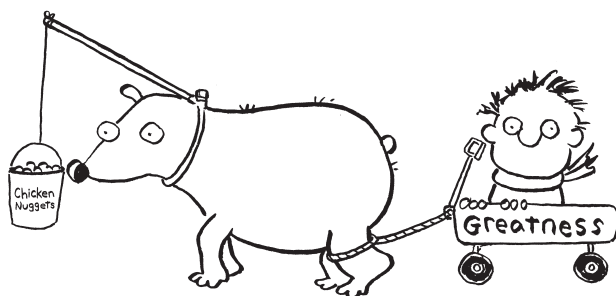
This will set the scene for the creative writing task which we suggest for this unit of work. The task is to

challenge pupils to write their own Timmy Failure story, based on a new detective case – and this time, it is one he is going to solve (with the help of Total, of course). We would suggest they have a free rein on the type of case they choose and that they are encouraged to introduce new characters to really spark their imaginations. The following stages will support them to write these stories with confidence and creativity.

Internalizing the structure

The structure of the story in *Timmy Failure: Mistakes Were Made* is one where a number of sub-plots evolve simultaneously – in fact Timmy seems to be trying to solve all his cases at the same time. Therefore to support children in understanding the structure of one detective case, you may prefer to rewrite one of Timmy's cases, as an exemplar text for them to explore. You should include all of the language features that you would like children to include in their own stories, at a level just beyond their current ability.

As well as internalizing the exemplar text, it is worth spending some time discussing the structure and language at a word, sentence and text level, creating a writer's toolkit for a Timmy Failure detective story. This will help your pupils to develop an understanding of what they need to include in their stories.



Developing characters, settings and a plot

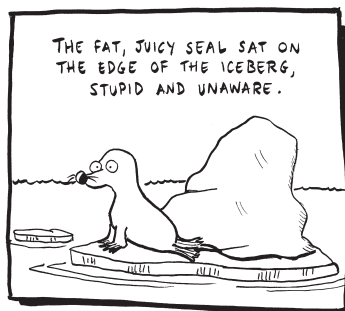
It is now time for your pupils to develop their ideas, language and structure for their stories. Before they embark upon writing their stories, we suggest you teach some of the following activities. We have suggested a series of starter, drama and creative writing activities to help children think about their characters, settings and plot.

Characters

The following activities will support pupils in understanding the characters in *Timmy Failure: Mistakes Were Made* in more depth, as well as giving them the opportunity to create new characters for their own stories.

- **Unlikely adverbs and adjectives.** Characters are most entertaining when they take us by surprise. Give children the name of a character from *Timmy Failure: Mistakes Were Made* and ask them to create a sentence, including adverbs or adjectives, where the character's actions will surprise the reader. For example, you give the children "Molly Moskins's poodle" and they might come back with "Molly Moskins's fluffy poodle Angel revealed its razor-sharp teeth and sank them into the new teacher's delicate ankles".
- **Character names.** Give children three descriptors for a character and ask them to come up with a suitable character name. Remind them that their story is going to be humorous, just like the Timmy Failure series, so they need to inject some comedy into their names. For example, a new boy at school with broad shoulders, a constant grimace and a uniform that is never in place could be "Barney Bruiser".
- **Emotion charts.** Ask children to plot an emotion graph charting how Timmy is feeling throughout the book. When is he feeling confident? When is he feeling frustrated? When is he feeling nervous? Discuss with children how Timmy will experience different emotions in their own stories.

- **Hot seating.** Invite some of the children to take on the role of characters in the book. Take some time to revisit some of the ideas about the characters that came out of your earlier discussions. In turn, ask the children to come to the front and sit in the hot seat. The other children should ask the child in the hot seat questions, for example: how they felt at certain points in the story; why they made certain decisions; and their feelings about other characters.
- **What's your excuse?** Children work in pairs and are given a list of scenarios of things that Timmy has failed to do/done whilst in the process of solving detective mysteries, for example: not doing his homework; breaking into the zoo at night; copying Rollo's answers in a test. Children must think of Timmy-style excuses to respond with. The more imaginative and outlandish they are, the more they will have got inside Timmy's mind!
- **Ingenious improvisation.** Create scenario flashcards, based on possible situations that could arise in Timmy's world. For example, Corrina Corrina asks Timmy if he would like to join forces and create the world's best detective agency. Hand out the cards, one per group. Groups must then discuss and role play what would happen next based on the scenario. This requires children to really think about how each of the characters would react and behave.
- **On the box.** A story has just hit the headlines – Timmy has solved his first case and he is going to be interviewed on TV! Ask the children to get into pairs and decide who is going to be the TV interviewer and who is going to be Timmy Failure. The interviewer needs to prepare questions and Timmy needs to think about how he will behave on TV, his body language and the kinds of responses he will give. If there is time, ask some pairs to present some of their role plays to the rest of the class.
- **New characters.** Children need to be encouraged to introduce new characters into their Timmy Failure stories. To help them imagine a new character, give children a sheet of paper with the outline of an adult/child on it, as well as colouring pencils, then ask them questions which prompt the children to explore and then draw their new character step by step. Encourage them to label their drawing with information about the physical characteristics and personality of the new character.
- **Another point of view.** Ask children to choose, or you choose a scene from the story, preferably one which features several characters. Ask children to rewrite the scene from the point of view of another character, for example Corrina Corrina or Total.
- **Total returns home.** Ask the children to imagine that Total has decided to return home to the Arctic because humans have solved global warming and new ice caps have formed. Timmy must advertise for a new business partner. Get your pupils to think about the qualities that Timmy would look for and then write a short job advert for a new business partner.



Settings

The following activities will support pupils to explore the different settings in *Timmy Failure: Mistakes Were*

Made and their effect on the characters. The aim of the activities is for children to be able to integrate these different settings into their own stories, as well as developing new locations.

- **Mixed-up settings in Timmy's town.** The magic of Stephan Pastis's writing is created through his description of the unusual next to the mundane, for example, the "monkey-throwing-chicken sculpture" next to Mr Crocus's house. Play a warm-up language game with children where they make a list of unusual sights in Timmy's town, as well as a second list with more mundane, everyday locations. Then ask them to come up with clauses where the two are joined by a preposition. For example, "The worm shop next to my school."
- **Exploring the everyday.** Show children pictures of everyday houses in a town, asking them to imagine that it is Timmy's town. Ask them to complete these sentences from Timmy's point of view, with an imaginative and humorous ending: "As I walked past the house I saw..." or "As I looked in the window I saw..."
- **A "monkey-throwing-chicken sculpture".** When Timmy looks at the sculpture, he sees something very unusual. Show children images of rock formations and ask them to come up with their own unusual Timmy-style interpretations.
- **Soundscapes in Timmy's town.** As well as children developing their understanding of what Timmy's town looks like, it is interesting for them to explore the sounds he might hear. Ask children to imagine they are Timmy walking to school and to discuss the sounds he will hear along the way. In groups, each child could produce a different sound, using their own voice and objects around them to create a soundscape – with different sounds coming in and out at different times. Record these soundscapes and play them back to the class. Finally, use these soundscapes to inspire a writing activity where children describe Timmy's journey to school.
- **Freeze-frames.** Read a section from the book *Timmy Failure: Mistakes Were Made* which includes a description of, or mentions, Timmy's surroundings, for example Timmy's version of the Segway rescue from the bank (pages 100–101). Read the extract a second time and ask children to create freeze frames of the scene in groups, using their imaginations to expand upon the description given. One pupil from each group can commentate on the scene they have created.
- **First on the scene.** Imagine you have discovered the Timmy Failure case archive and have a list of all his previous cases. Give each group the name of an invented case, for example, "The Case of the Squashed Jelly". Working in pairs, ask one child to imagine he/she is Timmy and has been called to the "crime scene" to interview the other pupil in the pair, a key witness who was first on the scene. To solve the crime, Timmy needs to know what the witness saw when he/she arrived on the scene. Ask children to role play this interview. As a class, brainstorm the types of questions Timmy would ask. Given the author's style of writing, encourage children to use their imaginations and sense of humour to full effect. They may want to write a script or notes. Ask some pairs to act out their interviews for the rest of the class.
- **Sky-high luxury offices.** Ask your class to imagine that Timmy has finally moved into his new office in the skyscraper next to the bank. Set them the task of writing a description of this setting, paying attention to the finer details that Timmy would want in place. Children may want to use the office plan which Timmy has drawn on page 136 for inspiration.
- **Timmy's travels.** Timmy embarks on a number of journeys as part of his detective work in the book: to the bank; rolling down the hill in the Bowling Turkey's Cadillac; and on the Segway. Explain to children that their stories will be more interesting if they include an exciting description of a journey that Timmy makes

in his attempt to solve his new case. Read an extract from the book which features a journey (for example the ones above) and ask the children to write a lively description of what he will see, hear and smell on his travels.

The plot thickens

To support pupils to create an interesting and entertaining story, below is a selection of starter language activities and drama activities, as well as creative writing ideas.

- **Fortunately ... Unfortunately.** This game will help children to develop their ideas for a plot with twists and turns. Give children an example with two sentences, one starting with “fortunately” and the other with “unfortunately”, for example:
 - Fortunately Timmy found some evidence – a banana skin. Unfortunately Total decided to eat it.
 - Fortunately the missing Chihuahua was returned safely. Unfortunately he had been dressed as a ballet dancer.
- Then ask the children to come up with their own “Fortunately and Unfortunately” sentences. Make a list of their sentences and encourage the children to use the ideas in their own stories.
- **What if...** Provide children with a starting point, for example “What if Timmy/Total/Corrina Corrina...” and then ask children to finish the sentence with imaginative endings.
 - What if Timmy became friends with Corrina Corrina?
 - What if Timmy were invited to meet the President?
 - What if Total lost weight and joined the Army?
 - What if Corrina Corrina fell in love with Timmy?



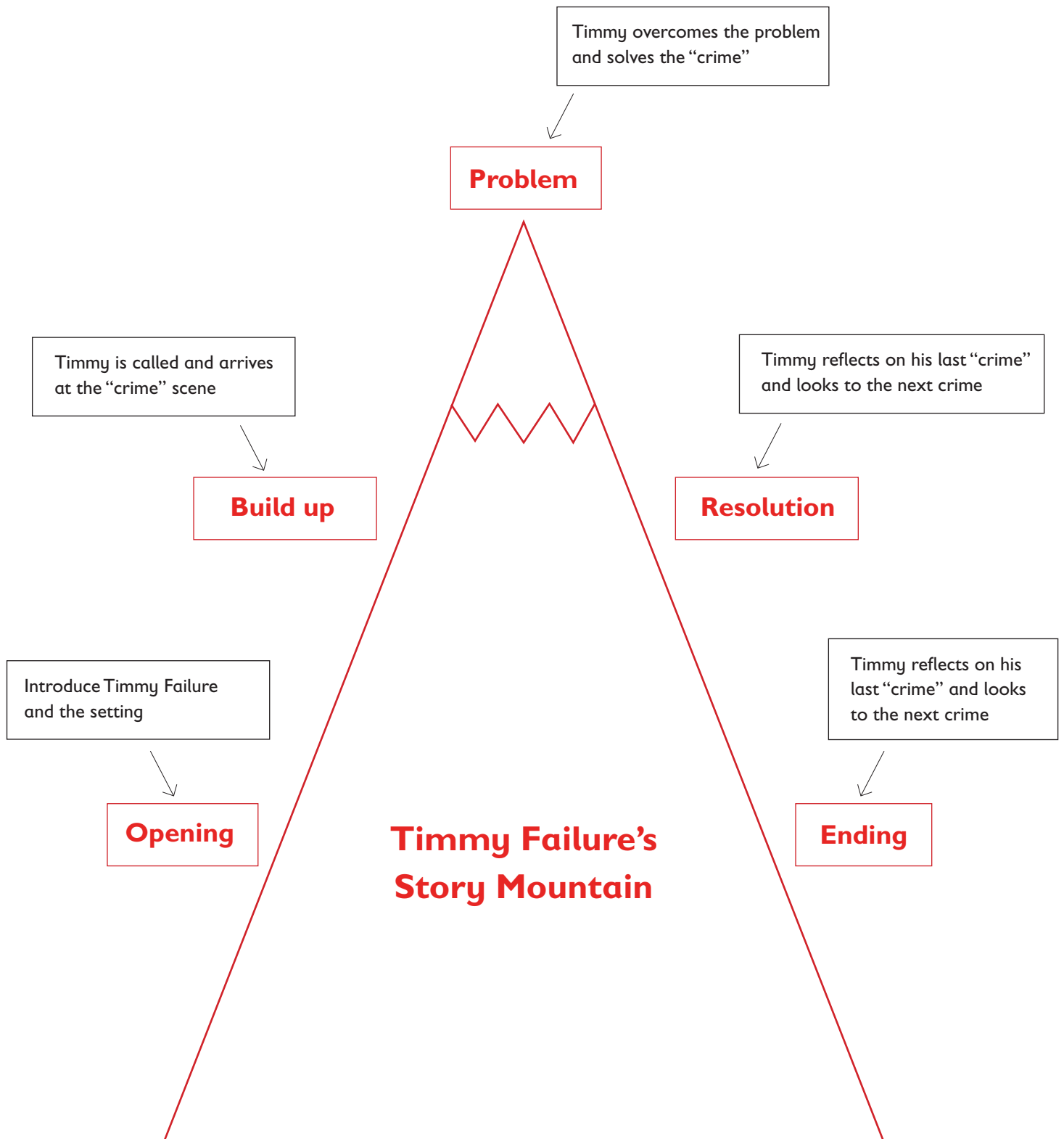
- **Improve the sentences.** Give children sentences and ask them to improve them, whilst keeping the humorous and entertaining style that Pastis adopts. A starting sentence might be, “Total looked into the bin and then fell in”.
- **Flashcard storytelling.** Sit the class in a circle and place a series of flashcards in the middle. The flashcards should include characters and settings, as well as objects from *Timmy Failure: Mistakes Were Made*. Choose a flashcard and then nominate one child to start the story with a sentence. They then nominate another pupil who chooses a flashcard and develops the story. This continues until the last flashcard and the end of the story. Encourage pupils to develop the story as if it were a Timmy Failure case being investigated, maybe using the story mountain structure for guidance (see story mountain activity).
- **Tell me more.** Collect three or four images of urban scenes (ideally featuring something unusual). In pairs, one child poses the questions about the image and the other invents imaginative responses.

Questions need to start with “Tell me”, for example: Tell me, why is there a shoe in the tree? Tell me, why isn’t the man smiling? This activity will hopefully give children ideas for a new case for Timmy to solve.

- **Object crimes.** Place a number of everyday objects on each group’s table and ask each pupil to choose one. Challenge them to think of and write a short description of a “crime” based on the object and how Timmy solves the case.
- **April Fool’s inspiration.** The types of pranks people play on each other on April Fool’s Day could inspire children to come up with their Timmy Failure “crime”. Jokes such as ‘salt in the sugar jar’ or the ‘toothpaste biscuit-filling’ could add a pinch of humour to their stories. Share some of the best April Fool’s Day examples and ask children to work in pairs to discuss which jokes they think Timmy or Total would like best and why.
- **Tips from Timmy.** Throughout *Timmy Failure: Mistakes Were Made*, Timmy points out many of his tips for becoming a world-class detective. Children might like to integrate some of these tips into their own stories. Following a class discussion, children could write a job description for a detective, describing the skills they think are the most crucial in this profession.
- **Solving their crimes.** Children may find it easy to think of their “crime”, but more challenging to imagine how Timmy is going to solve it and the problems he might face along the way. To support children with this aspect of their story, you might like to organize the following activity. As a class, brainstorm all the different evidence that detectives use to solve crimes, for example: fingerprints; CCTV footage; eavesdropping on someone’s conversation; a witness statement; objects left by the suspect at the scene; objects found at the suspect’s house. You can then brainstorm the problems and solutions that Timmy might encounter with this evidence, for example: he loses it and then finds it again; it gets stolen, but the thief feels guilty and gives it back. Once, as a class, you are happy with the ideas you have, you could play the “Fortunately, Unfortunately, Fortunately” game in groups of three. The first person describes the evidence which is discovered (fortunately), the second the problem with the evidence (unfortunately) and the third the resolution (fortunately).

Writing their stories

You will of course know how much more support your pupils will need before they start writing their stories, and will therefore decide how and when you teach a shared writing session or further planning sessions. In case it is useful, we have included a Timmy Failure story mountain planning resource below.



With such a creative build-up, we are sure that your children will enjoy writing, editing and illustrating their stories. When they have finished, allocate some time to publish, display and celebrate the children's work. You could:

- Compile a book of Timmy Failure short stories for the school library or reading corner
- Read extracts from the best stories in assembly
- Upload them to the school website
- Act out and film the best stories in groups
- Read them to younger children during a reading buddies session

References

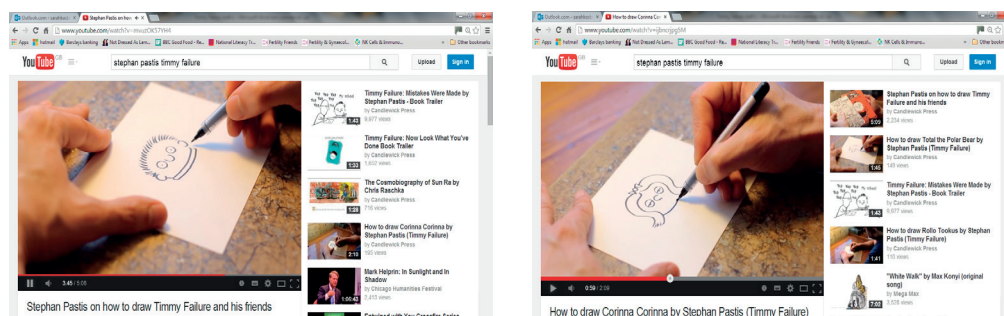
Some ideas in this section were adapted from or based on activities suggested to teachers in the following publications:

- *Jumpstart! Storymaking – Games and Activities for ages 7–12*, written by Pie Corbett
- *Drama in Action: A Handbook of Activities for use in Educational Drama*, contributed by JPCreton to TES Resources online

Art and Design & Technology

In the Timmy Failure series, the illustrations are without a doubt as important as the text. Not only do they complement the story, they also tell the story, which should come as no surprise given the author and illustrator, Stephan Pastis was already an acclaimed writer and comic strip creator before embarking on the Timmy Failure series. You may want to look up *Pearls Before Swine*, his acclaimed comic strip (for adults) that appears in more than seven hundred newspapers worldwide, including UK editions of the *Metro*.

The terrific illustrations in *Timmy Failure: Mistakes Were Made* will provide a great stimulus for your Art and Design & Technology lessons when undertaking this cross-curricular unit of work. The most obvious activity would be for pupils to create their own Timmy Failure illustrations to accompany their story. With this in mind, in this YouTube clip Stephan Pastis explains how he draws Timmy: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zjEnRiSFTf8>. In the following clip, he explains how to create Corrina Corrina: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TwejqVN-Nlk>. He also shows us how to draw Total the polar bear, Molly Moskins and Rollo Tookus. Why not show pupils these video clips to inspire them to create their own illustrations!



Looking for further activities? Pupils could also:

- Storyboard the plot for a new Timmy Failure mystery

- Design an advertising poster to help Timmy promote his services. Or if they dare, pupils could design an improved version for Corrina Corrina!



- Take fingerprints – a crucial detective skill. Pupils could then use their fingerprints to create a piece of artwork
- Design a new gadget for Timmy, labelling its different parts
- Design a new office space for Timmy and, if there's time, build a to-scale model of Timmy's new office
- Design and create a model of a new improved version of the Failuremobile
- Design and create their own sculpture, inspired by the “monkey-throwing-chicken” sculpture in Timmy's town
- Draw and paint portraits of the main characters – either in the style of the author's illustrations, or by using a completely different style, such as Andy Warhol's pop art technique
- Compare illustrations from a range of comics, books and graphic novels. In groups, children could discuss the ones they find most effective in telling the story and explain why. What advice would they give a new illustrator/author about what they like to see in an illustrated book?

Digital Literacy

The technology that you have in your school can be used in a myriad of ways as part of a Timmy Failure unit of work. The following ideas will hopefully inspire your pupils, enhance their writing and illustrations and give Timmy the chance to come alive on screen.

Digital storyboards and comics

When planning their new Timmy Failure mystery, pupils may like to map it out through creating a storyboard. They could use storyboarding software to sequence and present their work, adding sound effects. Alternatively, their final story could be presented in the form of a digital comic (again, using software available online), adding audio clips for the characters' voices.

Web page – advertising

As Timmy would endorse, a detective agency needs a strong advert to sell its services. Pupils could use website creation software/applications or PowerPoint to create an interactive presentation or Publisher for a static advert.

Stop-motion animation

This is similar to the comic idea above, except it involves the children's stories being created using 3D objects. Firstly children need to create the audio, reading out their story, with different children taking on the role of

different characters. They can then make models out of modelling clay or use objects from home or school to create their set and characters. Paying close attention to the pace of the story, they use these objects to act out their narrative, taking a series of pictures for every minute movement the characters or surrounding objects make. A combination of both the audio and visual animation will make for an entertaining and engaging presentation of their story.

Top Trump Detectives

Give pupils specific questions to research and answer about a famous detective (fictitious and/or real). Each pupil/pair needs to be given a different detective, but the same questions ... and of course don't forget Timmy! Following this research phase, provide a template and set them the task of creating a Top Trump card for their detective using Publisher or a similar program. Print each pupil's/pair's card and laminate them. The result will be a class Top Trumps detective game for all to enjoy playing!

Timmy "Gameified"

The new computing curriculum places emphasis on children acquiring programming skills. Therefore, why not get pupils to create their own Timmy computer game? Using game-building software/applications (such as Scratch), they can create a simple game, such as a race to see who can get from home to the bank quickest: Timmy or Rollo.



Book trailer creation

Using a simple presentation tool, such as PowerPoint, pupils can create a book trailer for *Timmy Failure: Mistakes Were Made*, as well as the other titles in the series. This is one example, available from YouTube, produced by the author's publisher: www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mcp8Sfx0aqA. Can your children do an even better job? To personalize the trailer, children could include quotes from their classmates about the book, or film them giving their reaction to the book(s) and include these in the presentation.

History and Geography

Timmy Failure's profession, and his aspiration to be the best detective in the world, provides an opportunity for children to learn about detectives from the past and present in History lessons, as well as how criminal investigations and forensic science have evolved significantly in recent decades. Furthermore, if you would like to link your focus on this text with Geography, you can use Timmy's quest for world domination as a foundation for developing children's knowledge about the specific countries/cities he wants to build his offices in: their location; population; currency; language spoken etc.

Below are some suggested ideas for lesson activities in History and Geography.

Detectives in Victorian times

Described by his colleagues as the "Prince of Detectives", Detective Inspector Jack Whicher was one of the

original members of the newly established Detective Branch in Scotland Yard in 1842. He influenced the creation of fictional detectives by a number of authors, including Charles Dickens. If you are studying/have studied the Victorians with your students, exploring the life of Whicher may be an interesting addition to lessons which focus on law and order during this period.

A comparison of old detective techniques and modern day technology

If possible, invite a detective into school to talk about how improvements in technology and forensic science have led to a higher number of crimes being solved. With older children, this could lead to an interesting discussion about the pros and cons of CCTV.

Unsolved mysteries

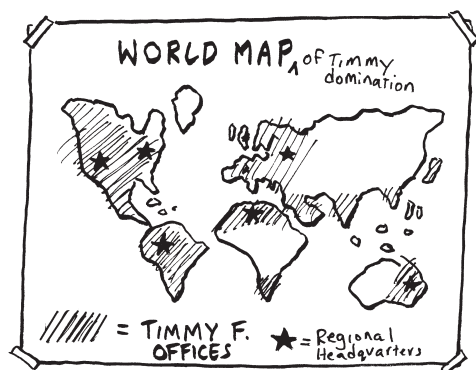
Just like most of Timmy's cases, there are many other famous unsolved mysteries that the children will be interested in learning about, such as the Loch Ness monster, Big Foot or the Marie Celeste. Children could get into the role of detective and write historical accounts of these mysteries, offering their own explanations as to what happened.

The Codebreakers in World War II

Although not detectives per se, children will be fascinated by the Bletchley Park codebreakers of World War II and their role in bringing the war to an end.

Timmy's World Map of Domination

Timmy explains to us that he is "building a detective agency empire". He uses the map on the wall in his classroom to chart his ambitious plans (page 17), with several offices in every continent. Recreate Timmy's map and set your pupils the task of labelling the countries and cities he has shaded, adding some key information about each country.



The melting of the polar ice caps

As Timmy informs us, Total had no choice but to go in search of food because his "arctic home is melting... He is now 3,101 miles from his former home." As part of a Geography lesson, you may like to explore why the polar ice caps are melting and the impact this is having on the species for which this is their habitat.

Mathematics

The book's plot provides the context for a range of mathematical questions and word problems for pupils to solve. Why not create a Timmy Failure activity sheet based on the suggestions below, focusing on the Mathematical areas you have covered this term/year. Please note, some of the suggestions are more suitable for upper Key Stage 2 children.

Rollo's score

Rollo's average grade seems to fluctuate throughout the story, depending on the extent to which he has to work with Timmy. Invent the scores that Rollo receives to reflect the ability of the pupils in your class.

- Addition/subtraction of decimals: How much does Rollo's score increase or decrease by? How much more does he need to reach his highest ever score?
- Handling data: Create a line graph plotting Rollo's scores over the course of the term/year.
- Calculating averages: Invent the scores Rollo receives in all of his subjects. What is his average score?

Chocolate heaven (page 285)

The Gunnar case sees a significant amount of chocolate go "missing".

- Addition/subtraction of weight: Make up a weight for each of the chocolate bars. How much do they weigh in total? Alternatively, provide the total weight. After one/multiple chocolate bar(s) goes missing, provide a new weight and ask children to work out how much the missing chocolate bar(s) weighs.
- Fractions of amount: Ask children to work out how many chocolate bars (or their weight) remain if a half or a quarter of them go missing.

The office of Timmy's dreams (page 98)

Timmy aspires to house his business within the skyscraper of greatness, even though it is next door to Corrina Corrina's business.

- Multiplication/division: The tower block has X floors, each floor has Y windows, how many windows are there in total? The tower block has a total of X windows, over Y floors, how many windows are there on each floor?

Timmy's division horror (page 105)

Doing division at school is just one of the places Timmy would rather be than having to explain to his mum where her Segway is. Ask pupils to show him how division is done and that he has no reason to think of it as "horrific"!

- Division: If your pupils are comfortable working with remainders and dividing by two-digit numbers, why not get them to solve Timmy's actual question: $4840 \div 16$. Or of course, you could provide more appropriate alternatives.

The Segway countdown (page 199)

The performance of Timmy's play is scheduled for Saturday at 13:00 (or is it 14:00 Timmy?) and he only has a limited amount of time to track down his mum's Segway.

- Addition/subtraction of time units: Provide pupils with different starting points in the week and ask them to calculate how many hours/days Timmy has left to find the Segway, for example Saturday at 09:30, or a more challenging example, such as Monday at 11:45.
- Alternatively, ask pupils to calculate the time between events on Rollo's mission to recover the Segway from the bank (page 128). For example, how long does it take him to walk to the bank?

Total's beach ball (page 289) or Dondi's football (page 262)

Both of these spherical objects provide a context for questions which require pupils to calculate fractions of an area:

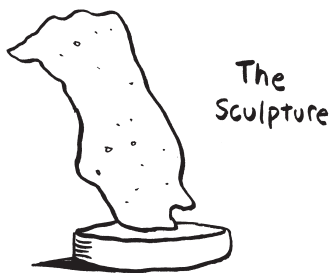
- Fractions (or percentages for upper Key Stage 2) of surface areas: Draw several examples of either the

beach ball/football, with a different number of sections shaded. Ask pupils to calculate the fraction (or percentage) of the areas shaded/which is a particular colour.

The “monkey-throwing a chicken” sculpture (page 235)

Is the sculpture outside Mr Crocus’ house really a monkey throwing a chicken? Or is it another animal throwing an unfortunate feathered friend? The sculpture could form the basis of a question about area and perimeter. Although remember that you will need to reproduce the drawing so that it has straight and parallel edges! Alternatively, you could ask pupils to base their calculations on the measurements of the skyscraper where Timmy hopes to rent his new office (page 98).

- Area: What is the area of one of the surfaces of the sculpture?
- Perimeter: What is the perimeter of one of the surfaces of the sculpture?
- Height (subtraction): What is the height of the sculpture (total height of sculpture minus the stand)?



Total soldiers on (page 116)

It looks like Total has got a long way to go before he could meet the army’s weight requirement. But how much weight would our furry friend have to lose?

- Subtraction (of units of mass): Total weighs 1,500 pounds and the army’s requirement is 185 pounds. How much would Total need to lose to make the cut?
- Conversion of units of mass (division): Imagine a new weight (in pounds) for Total after his polar diet, rounded to a multiple of 14 if needed. Ask pupils to convert the number from pounds to stone (and pounds).

Sky-high rent (page 28)

It doesn’t seem to deter Timmy that the rent for his dream skyscraper office is \$54,000 a month. Perhaps if he were to be presented with the annual or daily rates, he might reconsider!

- Multiplication: How much would Timmy’s rent be for two months? How much over one year or five years?
- Division: How much would Timmy pay per day?
- Percentages: How much would the monthly rent be if it increased by 10% or 20% in two years’ time?

Laptop funds (page 144)

Timmy doesn’t have anywhere near enough money to buy a laptop, despite his best efforts to convince the shopkeeper otherwise. Questions could be based on how much more money he would need.

- Subtraction: Timmy has X amount of money. The laptop costs \$1,200, how much more does he need?
- Multiplication: How much (more) would Timmy need if he were to buy a laptop for himself, Total and his mum.

Balancing the books (page 83)

Maybe it is not a good idea for Timmy to leave the accounts to Total. Could your pupils do a better job? As

well as focusing on calculation, this would also be an opportunity to discuss business terms such as revenue/income, expenditure and profit.

- Addition/subtraction of decimal numbers: Calculate the total revenue and total expenditure, then ask pupils to calculate the profit.
- Percentages: If Timmy decided to spend 10% of his profit on paying the fine for his mum's Segway, how much would he have left?

Science

Timmy's new teacher uses the age-old ruse of feigning ignorance about his subject matter in order to incentivise Timmy to take on the role of teacher and show off his knowledge. In order to revise their knowledge of the Science units you have covered so far in the year, your pupils could take on the role of "Timmy the Teacher" and teach other pupils what they have learnt.

More specifically, you could link your Science teaching to subject areas referenced within the text itself. As with other curriculum subjects, whilst all activities are suited to Key Stage 2, several ideas below refer to objectives covered in the upper Key Stage 2 Programmes of Study.

Constructing and interpreting a food chain

Total loves to eat seals (although there seems to be a distinct lack of them roaming around Timmy's home town). Ask pupils to draw the food chain with Total at one end (followed by seals) and then algae at the other end of the chain.

Identifying types of teeth, what damages teeth and how to look after them

Imagine that Gabe has just finished the last chocolate bar. Pair pupils up and ask one child to take on the role of Gabe and the other his dentist. Can his dentist explain to Gabe how his different types of teeth were involved in eating the chocolate bars and why the tasty treats aren't good for his teeth? The pupil playing the innocent Gabe needs to have lots of questions ready for his dentist.

Understanding the requirements of plants for growth and life

This was the first lesson Timmy is "taught". Following a unit on photosynthesis/plant growth, as with the example above, can one pupil (Timmy) explain the process to their partner ("new teacher")?

Animals and their habitats

Unfortunately Total had to leave his home because the Arctic ice caps are melting. The emigration of Timmy's "partner-in-detectiveness" from his natural habitat is an excellent focal point for pupils to learn about or revisit: the suitability of an animal to its natural habitat and the reasons why climate change is disrupting these habitats in some parts of the world.

The changing state of materials

Linked to the theme above, use the topic of the ice caps melting in Total's home continent, the Arctic, as an opportunity to understand how and why heat is causing the ice caps to melt, changing from a solid to a liquid state. This could be demonstrated through an investigation where children monitor and measure a melting ice cube, whilst being exposed to different temperatures.

The fall of unsupported objects

One of the main reasons that Timmy wants to move to the high-rise office building is to throw objects down at Corrina Corrina below. But does Timmy understand why the things he wants to throw fall to the ground

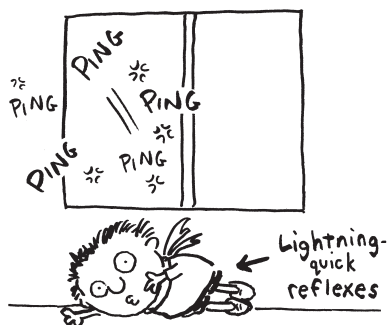
in the first place? And would the objects all fall at the same rate? Why/why not? This context could provide a link with a forces unit you might be planning or have taught your class earlier in the year. If this is a new unit, you could use the context of Timmy's skyscraper antics to teach children about the force of gravity and the effect of air resistance. At the end of the unit, or as a recap, ask pupils to prepare a presentation for Timmy that demonstrates their understanding of these scientific concepts.

The effect of air resistance, water resistance and friction

It is clear that if Timmy is going to arrive at a crime scene before you-know-who (just don't mention the Weber case), then he is going to need to understand why different surfaces and weather conditions will have an impact on his speed of travel. Why will the Segway be slowed down on a windy day, on a muddy surface, or if he chooses to drive through the puddles? You could use this context as a scenario to teach the effect of air resistance, water resistance and friction. At the end of the unit, you could ask pupils to design a "How to Guide" to teach Timmy how to achieve maximum efficiency whilst on his detective travels.

How sound travels and the impact of distance from the sound source on what we hear

Why does Molly Moskins throw a stone at Timmy's window to catch his attention (page 178)? The first answer is, of course, because she isn't too bright. But after consideration, we must ask ourselves, was it because she has an excellent understanding of how sound travels? Did she know that the sound source of the pebble on the windowpane was closer to Timmy than her mouth, therefore increasing her chance of getting his attention? Back in your classroom, this could be used as an example when teaching children about these scientific concepts. At the end of a unit, pupils could pretend to represent Molly in a court of law (where she is being tried for her crime), explaining why she threw the pebble instead of shouting.



Physical Education

Below are some ideas for PE activities based on events in the book. Timmy himself may well benefit from participating in these!

Learning to catch

Whether it is a frisbee (page 236) or a ball thrown by the new teacher (page 226), Timmy seems to keep getting hit by flying objects. This is a good opportunity to revisit throwing and catching skills. Pupils could come up with a set of tips for Timmy on how to get better at catching.



Dodgeball

Of course, the alternative to Timmy catching the ball is that he could participate in a game of dodgeball, so that he can avoid the ball altogether. Dodgeball is increasingly being played in primary schools and as with the idea above, pupils could create a list of tips to stop Timmy getting hit during the game.

Obstacle course

An outstanding detective needs to be agile, fast and have the ability to overcome obstacles. Why not set up an obstacle course for pupils to complete, making the final destination Timmy's home?

Conclusion: "Total victory"

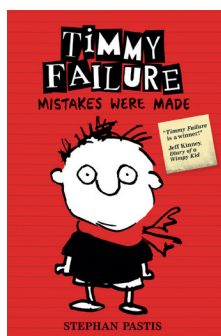
- Whether you are planning to run a half-term unit or a one-off activity, we hope that this resource has inspired you with a range of ideas to make it a success.
- After you have run your *Timmy Failure: Mistakes Were Made* activities, we suggest you review and reflect on your pupils' achievements and progress during these lessons, in order to support the development of future whole text cross-curricular approaches you embark upon.
- Finally, after your project, you will have a fantastic window of opportunity to build on your pupils' increased motivation for reading (which we are sure will be the result of your activities). Why not encourage them to read other books in the Timmy Failure series, as well as the genre more widely?
- **Failure is not an option!**

To delve even further into the world of Timmy Failure, visit www.timmyfailure.com and "like" the Timmy Failure Facebook page: www.facebook.com/TimmyFailure.

Timmy Failure: Mistakes Were Made is available in paperback (ISBN 9781406347876, £6.99) and eBook format.

Timmy Failure: Now Look What You've Done is available in hardback (9781406349962, £8.99) and eBook format.

Timmy Failure: We Meet Again will be released in hardback (ISBN 9781406356748, £8.99) and eBook format on 30 October 2014.



For Timmy Failure posters, please contact marketing@walker.co.uk.