

Dear teacher

Welcome to join the Moomin 80 celebrations together with your class, and thank you for bringing the Moomins and the values they live by to young world citizens.

This is a material developed for schools, where you dig deeper into the first Moomin story *The Moomins and the Great Flood*, and the themes of the story; courage, solidarity, hope and the feeling of belonging.

When working with this material you need the book. *The Moomins and the Great Flood* has been translated into over 35 languages, look for a copy in your language from a book store, or a library. It is an illustrated chapter book of 45 pages.

For younger pupils, the reading and reflecting takes approximately five sessions à 20-30 minutes, depending on the length of the discussions. You can take several sessions in a row if that suits you better.

The reading and the writing exercises for older pupils can be organized however you, as a teacher, find it best for your group.

The material is well-suited for the following classes and themes:

- Art
- Literature
- Environment
- Community
- Society



Background

Tove Jansson, creator of the Moomin stories, and much more

Tove Jansson (1914-2001) was a Finnish writer and artist whose illustrated books for children, and fiction for adults, have become loved around the world. She is best known as the creator of the Moomin stories – as well as the Moomin comic strips and picture books that followed – and for *The Summer Book*, a novel widely considered a classic of Nordic fiction. She excelled in many different literary and artistic forms, achieving early fame as a promising young painter and cartoonist, and, later as the author of novels and short stories, poems, and plays for radio and theatre.

In the 1960s Tove Jansson together with her partner Tuulikki Pietilä and their friend Pentti Eistola built a set of dioramas depicting different scenes from the Moomin stories as well as most famously a massive Moominhouse. These models embody the spirit of play and lifelong creativity that are hallmarks of Tove Jansson's life and work.

If you are interested in learning more about Tove Jansson's work and life, please visit tovejansson.com.



The first Moomin story and the anniversary

Tove Jansson wrote the first Moomin story, *The Moomins and the Great Flood*, during WWII to comfort herself in dark times, creating a world built on inclusivity and adventure. It is a tale about troubled times and a scattered family. It is also a story about hope, a story about the importance of belonging and having a safe place to call home.

The Moomins and the Great Flood follows Moominmamma and Moomintroll who are looking for the lost Moominpappa and a new home. They encounter countless dangers and meet other displaced creatures fleeing the rising flood. Finally reunited with Moominpappa, they come upon a house, tall as a tree, elegant and painted blue – the Moominhouse.

The year 2025 marks 80 years of Moomin stories. The central theme of the anniversary year is the Moominhouse and what it stands for – a sense of belonging, a place where the door is always open.

Standing as a beacon in the middle of Moominvalley, the Moominhouse is a place for respite and celebration. A place where you can be yourself. The Moominhouse offers shelter, comfort and security to all that seek it – and it is in essence this that enables the Moomins and their extended family to courageously venture out into the world on all of their adventures, to take risks and to be free – safe in the knowledge that at the end of the journey they have a place to return to, a place they can call home, a place where they belong and where the door is always open.

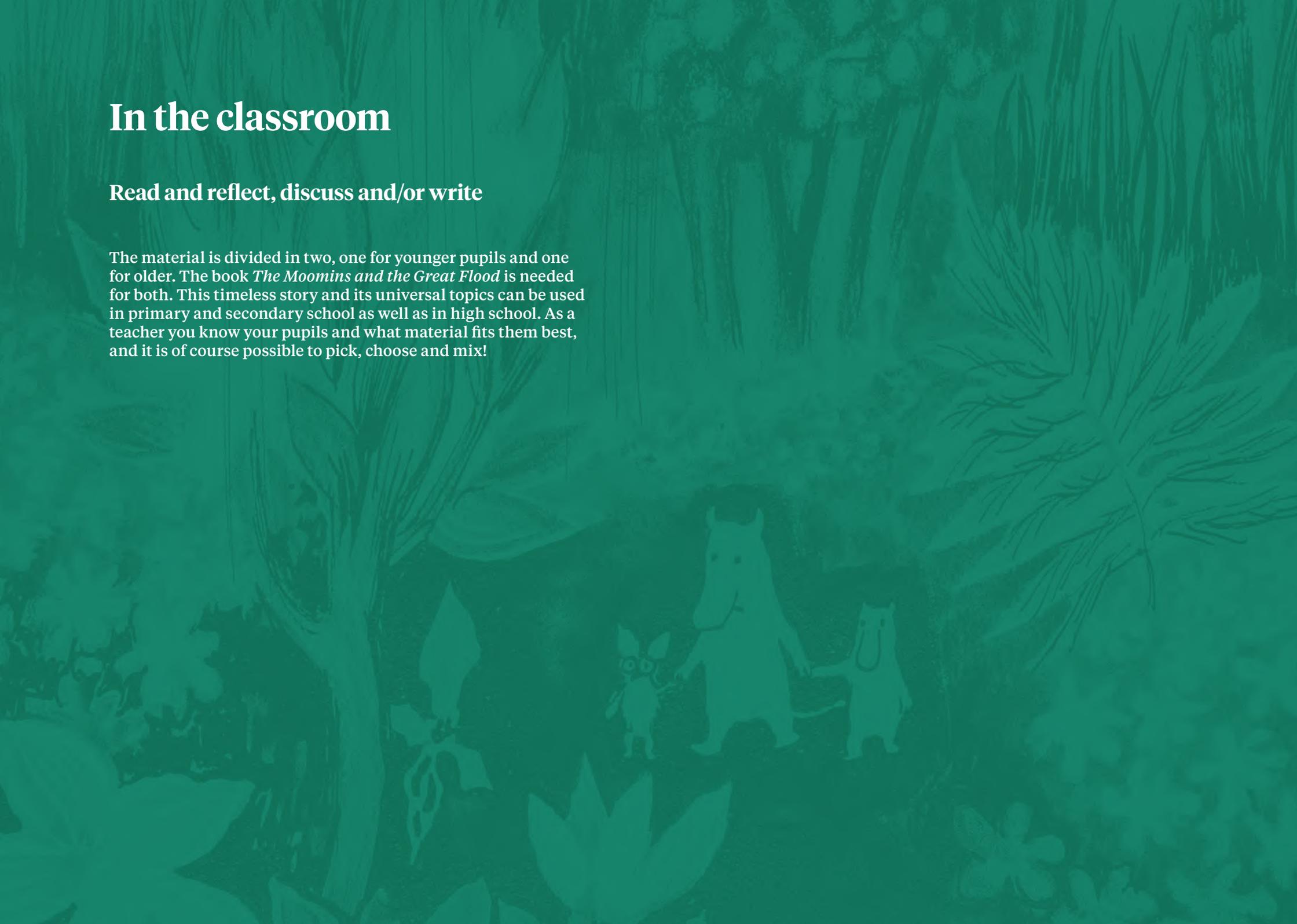
“Moomintroll’s mother and father always welcomed all their friends in the same quiet way, just adding another bed and putting another leaf in the dining-room table. And so the Moominhouse was rather full – a place where everyone did what they liked and seldom worried about tomorrow”

- Finn Family Moomintroll

In the classroom

Read and reflect, discuss and/or write

The material is divided in two, one for younger pupils and one for older. The book *The Moomins and the Great Flood* is needed for both. This timeless story and its universal topics can be used in primary and secondary school as well as in high school. As a teacher you know your pupils and what material fits them best, and it is of course possible to pick, choose and mix!



Material for younger pupils

Read *The Moomins and the Great Flood* aloud in the class. In this material, the story is divided into five sections with an invitation to reflection and discussion after each. Some sections are longer than others, and you can take several sections in one go if you want to.

Please open up for spontaneous thoughts after each section. And please note, there are no wrong answers to these questions.

Background for the pupils

The Moomins

The carefree and adventurous family with Moomintroll, Moomin-mamma, Moominpappa and all the creatures they invite, live in the Moominhouse in Moominvalley. They love going on adventures and thinking about all the big and small wonders of life. They are curious, kind and brave.

The Moomins and the Great Flood

This first story about the Moomins, *The Moomins and the Great Flood*, tells how the Moomins came to live in their house in the valley. It is a story about adventure and danger, but also about hope and finding a place to call home.



Section 1 - about being brave

Read from the beginning to “You may call me Tulippa”.

Questions to the pupils

1. Why do you think Moomintroll and Moominmamma go into the deeper part of the forest and across the swamp even though there might be something dangerous there?
2. Have you ever done something even though it felt scary or unsafe? Tell each other about moments like that.

Section 2 - about being away from home

Read onwards from the meeting with Tulippa to when Moominmamma had laid down under a chocolate bush.

Questions to the pupils

During their journey, they spend the night in several different places, both in the deep forest and in a candy land. Sleeping in a new place can be both fun and scary. Moomintroll and Moominmamma have lost their home in the flood, and they don't know if and where they will find a new home.

1. Have you ever spent the night away from home? What was it like?
2. Have you ever moved away from home and to a new place? How was that experience? If you haven't moved away from home, try to imagine what it would be like.
3. Can you imagine what it would be like to not have a home to return to? Have you experienced something like Moomintroll and Moominmamma, or heard about someone with that experience?

Section 3 - about receiving help

Read onwards from Moominmamma under the chocolate bush to when they have discovered a house of gold.

Questions to the pupils

The adventurous trio meets several people who come to their rescue; for example Tulippa, the gentleman in candy land and the sea troll.

1. Have you ever been helped by someone?
2. How did it feel to get help from someone else?

Section 4 - about hope

Read from when they knock on the door of the golden house to when they find a message in a bottle - but don't yet read the message.

Questions to the pupils

Throughout the story, hope is alive with Moominmamma and Moomintroll.

1. What is it that they hope for?
2. What are you hoping for right now?

Section 5 - about happiness and belonging

Read from when they read the message in the bottle to the end.

Questions to the pupils

After a lot of worries and a long journey Moomintroll and Moominmamma are reunited with Moominpappa and they find the house he built for them.

1. It is obvious that this makes them happy, but take a moment to think about why it makes them happy. What do you think?

Material for older pupils

Writing can serve as a safe outlet for experiences, feelings, memories and ideas, and preserves them. Writing fosters our ability to explain and refine our ideas to others and ourselves. Writing allows us to understand our lives.

Read *The Moomins and the Great Flood* aloud in the class, or individually. Divided into given sections as above, or each at their own pace.

Background for the pupils

Tove Jansson's words about writing *The Moomins and the Great Flood*:

“It was the winter of war, in 1939. One’s work stood still; it felt completely pointless to try to create pictures. Perhaps it was understandable that I suddenly felt an urge to write down something that was to begin with “Once upon a time.” What followed had to be a fairytale – that was inevitable – but I excused myself with avoiding princes, princesses and small children and chose instead my angry signature character from the cartoons), and called him the Moomintroll.”*

*) Tove Jansson's satirical comic strips were published in the Finnish political magazine *Garm*.



Writing exercises

Inspired by the themes in *The Moomins and the Great Flood*, choose one or several of the following writing exercises:

- **Write a story about an adventure with a happy ending**
 - What is the challenge in the story?
 - Why do/does the character(s) in your story need to go on a quest?
 - What problems do they meet on the way?
 - How do they find a solution to the problems and what makes the story finish in a happy way?

- **Write a poem about courage**
 - About a time that you were courageous.
 - About someone else showing courage.
 - About what courage means to you.
 - Or something else you want to picture in a poem about courage.

- **Write an essay about solidarity**

In *The Moomins and the Great Flood* we see solidarity in how Moomintroll and Moominmamma help others and are helped by others along the way. Solidarity is about supporting, sharing, helping and showing empathy. Why are these values important in the world today?

- **Write an essay about family**

Traditionally, 'family' has been quite a narrow concept, but nowadays we talk about not only nuclear families but also extended families, chosen families, step-families etc. In Moominvalley, family has always been a flexible concept, where friends become family and the door is always open.

What makes a family?
Who are members of a family?
How are families created?

A stylized illustration of a forest scene. The background is a dense forest of green trees. In the foreground, there are several pink flowers with white centers and green leaves. A small white animal, possibly a rabbit or a mouse, is visible in the lower center. The overall style is reminiscent of a children's book illustration.

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