THE GREAT RABBIT REVENGE PLAN
BY BURKHARD SPINNEN

- Funny story of family life, set in present-day Germany
- Recommended for fifth class, boys and girls with good reading skills
- Theme of divorce, handled with humour

About the book
This is a story about a boy called Konrad and — unfortunately, in Konrad’s opinion — a girl called Fridz. Konrad has a nice, normal life and a nice, normal family — a mother, a father, a younger brother. Fridz’s family is not so nice and normal. Her father has left home and gone to live with his new girlfriend, Kristine, and Fridz’s mother is sad and angry.

But not as angry as Fridz is. Fridz is so angry that she is out for revenge on Kristine, who has, in Fridz’s view, ‘stolen’ her father from her and her mum. But how does a kid get revenge on an adult? A secret weapon is clearly needed — and the giant pet rabbit that Fridz’s dad has left behind him in the garage at home is the obvious thing to use to get her own back on Kristine — who is highly allergic to rabbit fur.

Konrad is not so sure about this, though. And when Fridz tries to post the rabbit to Kristine, he really starts to panic. But it doesn’t stop there …

About the author
Burkhard Spinnen is well known in Germany as an author for adults. He has won many prizes and awards for his novels, including this one. The Great Rabbit Revenge Plan is his first book for children, and he has also written a book for teenagers. He lives in the city of Münster in the north of Germany, with his wife and two sons, and when he is not writing, he enjoys making music.

About these notes
The teachers’ notes for this book consist mostly of a set of pupil worksheets, which follow the story in large chunks. The last page, however, is a set of questions for discussion in class.
THE GREAT RABBIT REVENGE PLAN
WORKSHEET 1: CHECK OUT THE COVER

What does the picture on the cover tell you about the book? Write down one thing it tells you about the story and one question it makes you ask.

The cover illustration tells me

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

It makes me wonder

________________________________________________________________________

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Judging by the cover illustration, what kind of a story do you think this might be – serious or funny?

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Why do you think that?

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________________________________________________________________________
It says on the front cover that this book has been translated. Can you work out what language it was translated from? (There’s a clue on the back cover.)

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The translator is also an Irish author. Have you read any of her own books? Name a few of them.

Books I have heard of that were written by the translator of this book:
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________________________________________________________________________
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What do you think of the title — *The Great Rabbit Revenge Plan*?
________________________________________________________________________

Does it make you want to read the book? Why or why not?
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________________________________________________________________________
Can you work out from the title what the book might be about? (Have a guess — it doesn’t matter if you are wrong.)

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Who published this book?

________________________________________________________

Look at the spine of the book. See that little picture of a kid reading under a palm tree at the bottom of the spine? What do you think that is?

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This book is set in Germany. You can tell this immediately from the names of the characters. But apart from that, from reading the first chapter, would you say it feels very different from a book set in Ireland? What makes you say that?

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The second chapter is the beginning of a story told by Konrad’s dad to Konrad and his brother Peter. The next chapter goes back to the story of Konrad and his family, and then the fourth chapter picks up again on the story that Dad is telling.

Do you like the story that is being told by Konrad’s dad? ____________

Or do you prefer the main story? ____________

Do you like the way the author has ‘sandwiched’ the told story in between the main story chapters?

_____________
By the time you get to the end of the third or fourth chapter, you’ve read a fair bit about Konrad. Write down five words that describe his character.

Konrad Bantelmann is one of the main characters in The Great Rabbit Revenge Plan. He is

1. ____________
2. ____________
3. ____________
4. ____________
5. ____________

Imagine that a new person has come into your class and they haven’t read the first few chapters. Write down three sentences (or a few more if you like) to tell this person the story so far, so that they know enough to understand what is going on and can read the next chapter of the book without being confused.

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In the chapter ‘Friz with a D’, we meet the second main character in the story, and the next few chapters are about how Konrad and Fridz start to become friends (except, of course, the chapters that are part of the story that Konrad’s dad is telling).

Would you say Konrad is delighted to meet Fridz or not? What makes you think that?

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When would you say Konrad and Fridz really start to become friends? Why do you think that?

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Read as far as the end of the chapter ‘At the Canal’, and then write five words to describe Fridz’s character.

Fridz is one of the main characters in ‘The Great Rabbit Revenge Plan’. She is:

1. ____________
2. ____________
3. ____________
4. ____________
5. ____________

Suppose you moved house to a new area — would you rather have Konrad or Fridz as your new friend? Why? (Don’t just choose Konrad if you are a boy or Fridz if you are a girl. Try to think what they are like as people, and then choose the one you really think is the more interesting or fun person.)

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Write a short account of what happens when Fridz and Kondrad try out their first plan.

Fridz wants to get revenge on Kristine, her father’s new girlfriend, and this is how she sets about it:

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Do you think this was a good plan? Why or why not?

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After Fridz’s plan to post the rabbit to Kristine fails, she still wants to get back at Kristine, and in the chapter ‘Fridz’s next plan’, Kondrad finds himself suggesting a way he could help her. Do you think Konrad is happy with Fridz’s revenge plans? What makes you think that?

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And why do you think he offers to help her?

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Konrad has got himself into a situation where he is torn between his family and his friend. If you were in his situation, what would you do?

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Meanwhile, Dad is still telling the story about the professor and the forest snake and so on. As he tells the story, and as he talks to the boys, Konrad and Peter, we get to know him a bit better. What do you think of him as a character?

Herr Bantelmann is the father of Konrad in the story. He is:

1. __________
2. __________
3. __________
4. __________
5. __________

And what about Konrad’s mum?

Frau Bantelmann is Konrad’s mother in the story. She is:

1. __________
2. __________
3. __________
4. __________
5. __________
Before you get to the chapter ‘All Systems Go’ (where the second plan is set in motion), stop and think. Do you think Fridz’s new plan is going to work? Why or why not?

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And here’s a harder question. Do you want it to work? Why or why not?

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And before you read on, can you imagine what might happen next? (You’ll never guess, but that doesn’t really matter — the main thing is just to have a think.)

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The last few chapters of the book are about the children’s final attempt to get revenge on Kristine. Konrad’s dad agrees to give the children a lift to town, even though he knows they are up to something fishy. Why do you think he does this? (There is no right or wrong answer — just write what you think.)

It is not until very near the end of the story that the rabbit gets a name. Why do you think this is?

In the second-last chapter, Fridz finally gives up her revenge plan. Why do you think she does this?
When you have finished the book, write a letter to one of the two main characters.

Dear Konrad/Fridz
I have read about you in The Great Rabbit Revenge Plan.

Yours sincerely

______________________
THE GREAT RABBIT REVENGE PLAN
QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Would you say this story has a happy ending? Is it a good ending? Is it a suitable ending for the story?

Now that you have read the whole of the crazy story that Konrad’s dad has been telling right through the book, why do you think the author decided to include this story in the book? Was it a good idea? Why or why not? Does it help us to understand the main story better? Does it help us to understand the characters better? Does it help Konrad to understand how Fridz is feeling?

By the time you have got to the end of the book, you have probably got used to the German setting and the unusual names. Now think again: does the German setting make it a very foreign-feeling book, or does it feel much the same as a book set in Ireland would do (apart from the names, of course)?

Now that you have read this book, would you read another story that has been translated from a different language?

Look again at the chapter called ‘The Great Divorce Test’, where Fridz tells Konrad how you can tell if your parents are going to get divorced. Do you think the author has handled the theme of divorce well? Do you think it is OK to deal with a serious topic in a humorous way?

Did you enjoy the story? What were your favourite bits? Apart from Konrad and Fridz, who was your favourite character?