

Institut Pendidikan Guru Kampus Dato' Razali Ismail

# Stories for Young Learners

LGA3103





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# Stories for Young Learners

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## Introduction

This course focuses on an introduction to stories for young learners, an exploration of types of stories, stories and the teaching context in the primary English curriculum, selection of stories for young learners, stories in the ESL classroom, craft of storytelling, exploring language through stories, types of assessment and storytelling performance.

This module has been prepared by Ruth Wickham who is an English Language Training Fellow with Brighton Education LS in 2011-2013, part of Malaysia's Native Speaker Programme.

## Objectives

Students will:

1. Classify types of stories [1.5]
2. Determine unique features of the different types of stories [6.1]
3. Apply innovative teaching strategies, devices and relevant activities to elicit students' responses to stories [6.5]
4. Stage a storytelling performance incorporating appropriate elements/techniques of storytelling [5.6, 8.5]
5. Reflect on one's own strength and weaknesses as a storyteller [7.3]

## Materials

Lecturer and students need this module, a computer with access to the Internet, and access to a variety of children's books and stories.

## Timetable

The IPG course involves 3 hours of classes per week.

This module has not been designed to fit the course hour by hour, only to cover all topics in the Course Proforma. Lecturers are free to present materials in any way they choose.



## **Topic 1: Importance of Stories for Young Learners**

The importance of storytelling in education – especially for young learners - can hardly be overstated. A teacher who can tell stories well will surely capture the imaginations of the children and take them to wonderful places of learning.

*Here is a brief excerpt from “Storytelling with Children” by Andrew Wright. (Note that much of his writing is about using stories in an ESL context.)*

### **Who is this book for?**

#### **Children**

In this book, the activities described here have been used with children aged seven to fourteen with between six months and three years of English. This is a very wide range of experience and potential learning development. Furthermore, in my experience the difference between one class and another, even of the same age and in the same school, can be enormous. So much depends on whether English is part of the children’s lives in their society, how enthusiastic and informed their parents are about English, how naturally English is used by the teacher in the normal life of the class, and last but not least, how free the children feel to ‘have a go’ in English.

Children can be helped to understand quite complex stories in language well above their own active command. It is what we expect the children to do which determines the proficiency level required, not the story itself.

#### **Teachers**

This book is for teachers who believe in the enormous importance of stories in the daily lives of their children and in the English lesson, and who would like a few pointers and examples in order to make stories central to their teaching. Don’t worry if you are not very experienced in using stories or if you feel that your English is not very good – I have tried to make the explanations easy to follow.

(Wright, 1995, p. 3)

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*In the Language Arts text book Carole Cox writes this about storytelling:*

### **Storytelling**

Even with the large number of books available for children today and the variety of stories they are exposed to on television and videos, children never seem to lose their fascination with storytelling. As one first-grade child put it, as I was about to read a picture book of a favourite folktale, “Tell it with your face!”

The tools of the storyteller are so deceptively simple and so basically human that storytelling is often neglected as a way of teaching listening and talking. It is, however, a powerful way for children to listen to and use spoken language. It’s also a wonderful way to share traditional literature and



stories of the past, whether historical event or even personal life stories – perhaps yours or your students.

Here are some suggestions for storytelling by teachers and students:

1. **Finding Stories:** In addition to stories about personal experiences and those heard told by others, traditional folk literature is an excellent source for storytelling. Young children enjoy timeless tales, such as “The Three Billy Goats Gruff”, “The Three Pigs”, and other tales of three. Tales like “Jack and the Beanstalk” and “The Gingerbread Man” are sure winners, too.

2. **Telling Stories:** Storyteller Ramon Royal Ross advises that above all, the storyteller should know the story very well. In addition, he suggests the following approach for actually telling the story, which works well for him:

- a. Read the story aloud several times. Get a feel for its rhythm and style.
- b. Outline the major actions in the story, identifying where one ends and another starts.
- c. Picture the characters and setting in the story carefully. Describe them to yourself.
- d. Search for phrases in the story that you’d like to work into telling it.
- e. Practise gestures that add to the story.
- f. Prepare an introduction and conclusion before and after the actual telling.
- g. Practise telling the entire story – complete with intonation, colourful phrases, gestures, and sequence – in a smooth and natural fashion.
- h. Make an audio- or video-tape of yourself telling the story, and listen and look for areas in which you might improve. Also time yourself.

3. **Props:** Even though props aren’t necessary, some teachers like to use them for storytelling, especially with younger children. Props might be picture cards, flannel boards, puppets, or objects like a handful of beans for telling “Jack and the Beanstalk”. Mood makers like candles and incense and background music and noisemakers (e.g., rattles and tambourines) effectively enhance the telling, too.

4. **Costumes:** When used with props, costumes can create a dramatic impact. For instance, wearing a black cape and witch’s hat adds drama to telling scary stories in autumn. Even simple costumes, like hats and shawls, can be used in many creative ways.

(Cox, 2008, pp. 158-9)

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In her book on *Storytelling in Teaching*, Green writes the following:

### **Courses in Storytelling**

Courses in storytelling to children are generally a minor elective subject in Teacher Training, and yet for those who master this craft it quickly becomes their most valuable and well-used skill.

As an old Indian proverb says:





*“Tell me a fact and I’ll learn. Tell me the truth and I’ll believe. But tell me a story and it will live in my heart forever.”*

Some of the advantages of using stories in any part of the curriculum are that

- stories create interest and fuel curiosity,
  - stories provide a structure for remembering course material more so than isolated concepts,
  - stories are a familiar and accessible form of sharing information than abstract concepts,
  - telling a story from experience can create a more personal student-teacher connection.
- (Green, 2003)

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On the *Great Books to Read Aloud* website we find this list of the benefits of reading aloud to children. It is recommended that parents read books to their children from a very early age, and that this practice continues with regular and frequent stories from the teacher.

### **Top 10 Benefits of Reading Aloud to Children**

- 1** Reading aloud creates the perfect bond between parent and baby – it’s cosy, comforting and it’s fun.
  - 2** Listening to stories provides children with new ‘friends’ – characters whom they learn to love.
  - 3** Hearing new words gives children a richer vocabulary.
  - 4** Children can understand stories that are beyond their own reading ability.
  - 5** Hearing books read aloud improves a child’s ability to listen for periods of time and increases attention spans.
  - 6** Reading aloud allows children to interact by interrupting and asking questions about meaning.
  - 7** Hearing a story read aloud enables children to make connections with others’ personal experiences.
  - 8** Listening to more complex stories can help children to extend their knowledge and understanding.
  - 9** Listening to a story being read aloud shows beginner readers how fluent readers read.
  - 10** The words children hear in books give them a rich language when they begin their own writing.
- (Wilson, 2006)

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### **Features of children’s stories**

Everybody loves a story, and children will listen to any story if it is told well. However, obviously some stories are more suitable and beneficial to young children than others. Students need to learn to recognise the features of stories so that they can select and if necessary adapt them.

Here are some pointers from the *Story Arts* website:

#### **Getting Started - A Storyteller's Vocabulary List**

- **Plot:** The sequence of events from which a story, play, song, puppet show, song, etc. can be made
- **Retell:** To restate in one's own words
- **Version:** One of many possible presentations of the same plot
- **Character:** People, animals, or other communicating entities in the tale
- **Narrator:** The presenter of the tale



## Basic Creative Tools

- **Words:** Spoken text created by memorizing or improvising language of the tale
- **Nonverbal Communication:** Body language, gestures and facial expressions that contribute to the meaning of the communication
- **Imagination:** An interior creativity that generates language and physical expression in the storyteller

## Raw Material

**Learn a plot to tell as a story:** Find a folktale plot to retell in the folktale collections (Look in the 398.2 section in the library)

### Other possibilities:

- Tell a personal or family story
- Create an original plot
- Present a literary tale by memorizing the words of an author

## First Steps to Retelling a Plot

- **Beginning:** Picture the plot as a movie in your imagination. Start off retelling it by "chatting" it in your own words to make sure you remember what happens in the plot. Create your own version by retelling it over and over to different listeners until it starts to feel like a story. (**Story** is the art form; **plot** is the raw material from which it is made.)
- **Middle:** Have a strong beginning and end by creating an enticing first and last sentence. Improve the middle.  
Using descriptive language, add detail to your basic "chatting" of the plot. Try to help your listeners see what is in your mind. Pretend to be all the characters by letting some of the characters speak dialogue. When you are the narrator, make sincere eye contact with the audience.
- **End:** Stand up and tell the plot as a story. Let your imagination make your body and face respond to the tale as you imagine it. Tell the tale to a partner or a few people. Ask a friend to offer you some coaching (Ask them to listen to you and then give you some practical comments). Practice helps to reduce stage fright. As you gain confidence, try telling the story in front of a larger group.

## Have Fun!

(Story Arts, 2000)



## Story Elements

*Students need to be familiar with all of the terms listed here.*

### Character

**Definition:** A character is a person depicted in a narrative or drama. Characters may be flat, minor characters; or round, and major. The main character in a story is generally known as the protagonist; the character who opposes him or her is the antagonist. Character is revealed by how a character responds to conflict, by his or her dialogue, and through descriptions. (Wiehart, 2013)

Give an example of 3 well-known story characters:

.....

### Storyline

Well, the storyline is basically the plot.

The story create considers what event (problem) propels their main character's life from ordinary to extraordinary and shakes up their everyday existence. It could be:

- a goal he/she will work to achieve
- a problem or conflict he/she has to resolve
- an obstacle to his/her goal

Give an example of a storyline or plot in a traditional story:

.....

### Time sequence

The time sequence is built into the plot, as the main character / protagonist moves through the problems and obstacles to the final resolution.

Give an example of a time sequence in a fairytale:

.....

### Setting

The setting is obviously where the story takes place, and it can include not only the geographical location, but environmental factors, climate, and social factors. It can also include a time factor (such as historical era) and fantasy or science fiction elements. A traditional story is sometimes re-told in a changed setting for interest and fun.

What is the setting for the story *Little Red Riding Hood*?

.....



### **Diction**

Diction is about speaking clearly. Even though children may not fully understand every word they hear in a story, the storyteller needs to speak clearly and possibly more slowly than they usually would. There are also other aspects of voice use that can improve storytelling – such as change in the volume (loudness) and pitch of the voice to indicate different characters and their emotions.

Describe good diction by a storyteller in an ESL setting?

.....

### **Length**

No matter how well the storyteller is, young children only have a limited attention span. Also, a longer story is likely to contain a great many more twists and turns and complications. However, by interspersing movement and activities, even young children can remain interested for longer.

How long should your storytelling session go for with young children?

.....

### **Illustration**

When children look at a book (and likewise for many adults!) the first thing they look for is pictures. Story illustrations can be line drawings, colourful paintings, photographs, or even diagrams or maps. When telling a story aloud, the children look to the storyteller's face for illustration of emotions about the story. Sometimes the storyteller will also have pictures or photos to show, and/or realia, costumes, or puppets. Even the storyteller's movements, gestures and actions serve as an illustration to the listeners.

Give examples of 3 different kinds of illustrations for a story:

.....



## Works Cited in this Topic

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Wright, A. (1995). *Storytelling with Children*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.



## Topic 2: Exploration of Types of Stories

With some stories, classification by type is clear and simple. However in many cases different writers have varied ideas about what the categories are. Below are several articles on classifying stories.

From the *Australian Storytelling* website, here is a very traditional classification of stories:

### Types of Story

- by Helen McKay and Berice Dudley

**There are many different types of stories.** The most important consideration when choosing a tale to tell is whether you like it enough to tell it with enthusiasm. Stories should communicate to you a need to be told. Some of the different categories of stories available to storytellers are: --

**Fable** - a short moral story not based on fact, using animals as characters, such as, Aesop's Fables - The Fox and the Grapes, Lion and the mouse and others.

**Fairy tale** - The best-known would be Grimm's fairytales about imaginary folk, such as elves, giants, witches, gnomes, and fairies. Closer to home is Mary and the Leprechaun, by Irish-Australian writer John Kelly.

**Folk tale** - a traditional story, in which ordinary people gain special insight, transforming them and enabling them to overcome extraordinary obstacles. See *The Magic Orange Tree & other Haitian Folktales* by Diane Wolkstein.

**Legend** - a story based on the life of a real person in which events are depicted larger than life, for example, *The Stories of Robin Hood*, or *King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table*.

**Myth** - a story about gods and heroes, explaining the workings of nature and human nature. See *Psyche and Eros* or *Inanna* by Diane Wolkstein.

**Parable** - a fictitious story told to point to a moral, for example, *The Sower and the Seed* from the New Testament of the Bible.

**Personal story** - a life story from your own or your family's experience, such as, *Streets and Alleys* by Syd Lieberman.

**Religious story** - an historical and philosophical story based on a particular culture and religious persuasion, for example, *The Story of Lazarus* from the Bible.

**Tall tale** - an exaggerated story, often humorous. Fishing stories, Australian Bush stories, see *The Loaded Dog* by Henry Lawson.

**Traditional tale** - a story handed down orally from generation to generation, such as the Polynesian stories - Maui, and *The Coming of the Maori*.

(McKay & Dudley, 1996)



## Genres of Children's Literature

From Carole Cox's 'Teaching Language Arts' (Cox, 2008, pp. 72-3)

Teachers should be familiar with various types or categories of children's literature, which are *genres*. The following list identifies genres of children's literature along with examples of picture books for younger children and chapter books for older children (presented in that order):

- **Poetry:** Works of carefully chosen, condensed, and artfully arranged language that looks selectively at the world in unique and unusual ways.  
*Read-Aloud Rhymes for the Very Young* (Prelutsky, 1986)  
*A light in the Attic* (Silverstein, 1981)  
*Where the Sidewalk Ends* (Silverstein, 1986)
- **Picture Books:** Works in which illustrations and text combine equally to tell a story:  
*Tar Beach* (Ringgold, 1992)  
*Grandfather's Journey* (1994)
- **Traditional Literature:** Stories that have been told for many years, across many cultures, first orally and then written down:  
*Lon Po Po: A Red Riding Hood Story from China* (Young, 1990)  
*The People Could Fly: American Black Folktales* (Hamilton, 1993)
- **Fantasy:** Stories told in the real or an unreal world, with characters or events that probably don't really exist and events that may depend on magic or the supernatural:  
*The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales* (Scieszka, 1993)  
*Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (Rowling, 1997)
- **Science Fiction:** Stories that explore the possibilities of science in our lives through invention or extension of the laws of nature:  
*Tuesday* (Weisner, 1992)  
*The Giver* (Lowry, 1990)
- **Contemporary Realistic Fiction:** Stories of real people, living here and now:  
*Smoky Night* (Bunting, 1995)  
*Maniac Magee* (Spinelli, 1991)
- **Historical Fiction:** Stories set in real time and place in history but with some or all fictional characters:  
*Encounter* (Yolen 1992)  
*Eleanor Roosevelt: A Life of Discovery* (Freedman, 1994)
- **Nonfiction:** Books of information about a variety of topics in the real world:  
*Harem* (Myers, 1998)  
*The Way Things Work* (Macaulay, 1988)





## Classic Story Types

*Here is another story classification list from ChangingMinds.Org (NOTE: This is not especially for children's stories.)*

There are a number of classic types of story. Here are some of these.

- Action: Non-stop chasing, fighting, etc.
- Adventure: Heroes and incredible action in escapist fun.
- Biographic drama: A story of a real life.
- Body swap: Being someone else.
- Caper: Loveable rogues pull off big heist without hurting people.
- Chase: Pursuit, crashes, stunts and capture (perhaps).
- Chick Flick: Fun for women.
- Classroom drama: Emotional students and brilliant teachers.
- Comedy: Funny things happen to funny people.
- Courtroom drama: Lawyers save the day.
- Crime: Good guys catch bad guys.
- Disaster: Terrible things happen. People survive.
- Docu-drama: Documentary made interesting.
- Drama: Just everyday excitement.
- Escape: Good people captured by bad people. Escape themselves.
- Espionage: Spies, counterspies and political secrets.
- Fantasy: Wizards and heroes battle with monsters. Good guys win.
- Horror: Scary things trigger fear.
- Kitchen-sink drama: Mundane stuff at home.
- Mystery: Solving puzzles.
- Period drama: Rich people in costumes have petty problems.
- Pioneer: People go to strange places. Discover themselves.
- Psychological thriller: Scary and subtle excitement.
- Rescue: Saving people from harm.
- Romance: The path of true love is not smooth, but it is inevitable.
- Science fiction: One of the above, set in the future.
- Slapstick: Comedy with custard.
- Survival: Man vs. nature. Man wins. Just.
- Swashbuckler: Pirates and daring on the Spanish Main.
- Teen drama: Adolescence and high emotion.
- Thriller: Exciting things happen.
- Tragedy: Sad things happen. People die.
- War: Big battles. Good guys win in the end.
- Western: Cowboys, Indians and the wild west.
- Whodunnit: Detective detects who done it.

(Straker, 2008)



## Story Genres for Young Learners

When children are very young (maybe 3-5 years old) small, simple things are exciting, and they can be easily frightened. They really don't need a complicated plot and drawn-out suspense.

By the time our young learners are at school, they are more easily bored, and they enjoy a story that extends them a little bit. All the same, it is not acceptable to include violence and horror and adult themes.

Consider each of the 'Classic Story Types' (from above) listed in the table (below) and score each one on their suitability for stories for Young Learners (i.e. stage 1 especially).

Scores:

1 = This type of story is *very* suitable for young learners.

2 = This type of story *could* be suitable if it was specially written or adapted for young learners.

3 = There is *no* way this story would be suitable for young learners.

Action:		Classroom drama:		Escape:		Pioneer:		Swashbuckler:	
Adventure:		Comedy:		Espionage:		Psychological thriller:		Teen drama:	
Biographic drama:		Courtroom drama:		Fantasy:		Rescue:		Thriller:	
Body swap:		Crime:		Horror:		Romance:		Tragedy:	
Caper:		Disaster:		Kitchen-sink drama:		Science fiction:		War:	
Chase:		Docu-drama:		Mystery:		Slapstick:		Western:	
Chick Flick:		Drama		Period drama:		Survival:		Whodunnit:	



## Exploring Story Types

Some of the 'Classic story types' listed above are unlikely to be included in stories for children, especially for our young learners.

Carole Cox's classification includes Picture Books which are specifically for young learners. She is specifically writing about genres of Children's Literature books.

The first group of story types by Australian Storytelling is referring specifically to stories that are told orally.

### Exercise – 1. Categorise

1. Look at the books in the appendix of this module.

\* **Use:** Would you read it aloud, let the children read it, tell the story, ...?

Fill in the table below with reference to these stories. Add some that you find yourself.

Story	Genre / Type	Age / Level	Use *
The School Lunch Room			
The Gruffalo			
Little Red Riding Hood and the Wolf			
Beach Day			
Goosebumps Horrorland			
Things are Gonna Get Ugly			
The Dark of Knight			
Kalulu's Pumpkins			
Dangerous Work			
Mrs Mog's Cats			
Vroom			
Falling Boy			



### Exercise – 2. Explore and Select

- Search the Internet / Library / Bookshop
- Find stories of any 3 genres for a particular level.
- Answer the questions below

<b>1. Title of Book / Story</b>	
<b>Author</b>	
<b>Genre (why do you think so?)</b>	
<b>Level (why do you think so?)</b>	
Where did you find it?	
Why did you choose it?	
How would you use it?	
<b>2. Title of Book / Story</b>	
<b>Author</b>	
<b>Genre (why do you think so?)</b>	
<b>Level (why do you think so?)</b>	
Where did you find it?	
Why did you choose it?	
How would you use it?	
<b>3. Title of Book / Story</b>	
<b>Author</b>	
<b>Genre (why do you think so?)</b>	
<b>Level (why do you think so?)</b>	
Where did you find it?	
Why did you choose it?	
How would you use it?	



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## **Topic 3: Stories and the teaching contexts in the primary English curriculum**

As we saw in Topic 2, there are many types of stories, written, read and told. If you look up 'Storytelling' on the Internet, you will find that the 'Art' of storytelling has many uses beyond keeping children (or adults) entertained. Storytelling can also be used, for example, in business management, and psychological training and healing.

### **Modules, Topics, and Themes**

The KSSR is arranged in *modules* – Listening and Speaking, Reading, Writing, Grammar (from yr 3), and Language Arts – and it is expected that the teacher will move through them in sequence. Each series of modules is related under one particular *topic*. And each topic fits into one of the three *themes*.

The KSSR curriculum states:

In order to make learning more meaningful and purposeful, language input is presented under themes and topics which are appropriate for pupils. Three broad themes have been identified in the curriculum.

- World of Self, Family and Friends;
- World of Stories; and
- World of Knowledge.

(Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia, 2010)

This can be confusing for some teachers. It is important to notice that stories are not only part of the 'World of Stories', and they can (and should) appear in any and all topics. For example:

In the Year 2 Text Book, Unit 5:

- Theme: World of Knowledge
- Topic: *I am special*
- This unit includes a read aloud story *Burt and his Horse*. It also includes a read together story *Little Red Riding Hood*, and a Language Arts activity for the same story.

The 'knowledge' in this unit is about the five senses which the children explore in relation to fruits during the Listening and Speaking module.

While we are teaching English language to the pupils, we are also imparting knowledge, and helping them to grow and develop as they discover more about themselves and their surroundings.

It says in the Year One KSSR guidebook:

When planning lessons, topics for teaching are initially based on the immediate learning environment of the child. Later on, these are expanded to town, country and more distant foreign locations.



Let's consider the three themes, especially in relation to the stories we tell.

**World of Self**

As children grow they become more aware of the world further away from themselves and their mother, then father, and brothers and sisters. The home is the centre of their world, and then they discover the yard, and the car. When they start school they discover a whole new realm with school, and friends, and so on.

**Stories for young children centre on the family and home.**

In the story examples in the Appendix, can you think of any that would fit into this category?

.....

What genre / type would this story fit? .....

What genre(s) of stories would you expect to find in this theme? .....

.....

**World of Stories**

In a way, all stories could fit into the 'World of Stories' theme, but there are a great many that can *only* fit here.

Which genres / types of stories would you expect to find in this theme? .....

.....

Name some stories (from your memory or from the Appendix) which would fit this theme. ....

.....

**World of Knowledge**

Sometimes we tell stories to share knowledge. This would be a factual story, like a biography, or it could be a fictional story where someone discovers knowledge in the process of their journey.

Or it could simply be a nonfiction book such as the one in the Appendix, called:

.....





## Topics in the KSSR texts (year 1, 2, 3)

Here are the topics in the text books (Sekolah Kebangsaan) for the first 3 years.

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Unit 1: Sounds around us	Unit 1: Hooray! We are back	Unit 1: Things I do
Unit 2: All about me	Unit 2: Do the right thing	Unit 2: Being healthy
Unit 3: Let's be friends	Unit 3: Where am I?	Unit 3: My cousins, my neighbour
Unit 4: Listen to me	Unit 4: Read me a story	Unit 4: People around me
Unit 5: May I?	Unit 5: I am special	Unit 5: Having fun
Unit 6: Dilly Duck's Doughnut	Unit 6: Delicious food	Unit 6: Pet's world
Unit 7: Look at me	Unit 7: Hobbies	Unit 7: From the sea
Unit 8: Stay clean, be happy	Unit 8: Growing plants	Unit 8: It's story time!
Unit 9: Meet my family	Unit 9: When I grow up	Unit 9: The holidays
Unit 10: How many?	Unit 10: Caring and Sharing	Unit 10: A ride in the safari park
Unit 11: My happy days	Unit 11: Looking good	Unit 11: In school ...
Unit 12: When is your birthday?	Unit 12: On the farm	Unit 12: Fresh fruits
Unit 13: I see colours	Unit 13: Good deeds	Unit 13: I see numbers!
Unit 14: Say it nicely	Unit 14: Precious drops	Unit 14: Technology at home
Unit 15: My favourite toys	Unit 15: Save the sea creatures	Unit 15: Four friends
Unit 16: What is in my classroom?	Unit 16: Reuse, recycle	Unit 16: It's concert day!
Unit 17: Show me the way	Unit 17: Myths	
Unit 18: Let's eat	Unit 18: Feeling happy, feeling sad	
Unit 19: I wear ...		
Unit 20: My pet		
Unit 21: Fun with shapes		
Unit 22: In the garden		
Unit 23: Chad the milkman		
Unit 24: Let's go shopping		
Unit 25: How do you get around?		
Unit 26: the tiny thimble		
Unit 27: So hairy and scary		
Unit 28: Earth Detective		
Unit 29: Happy Holidays		
Unit 30: Goodbye, goodbye		



## Stories and development of personalities

Why do we tell children stories, and why do they love them so much? Why do we like to hear stories, read books and watch plays or movies?

### Why Children Need Stories

It's worth watching this video on the *Michael the Storyteller* website at

<http://michaelthestoryteller.com/home/why-children-need-stories/>

---

**Read this excellent short article by Janet Freemantle and answer the questions below.**

### Children need stories

Once upon a time ... and so the magic begins. Children need to hear stories, and love to hear stories. Stories that are read to them, or that they read themselves; sometimes, and best of all, stories told from direct experience or made up on the spot. "Tell us about the time when..." is often preferred to a story read from a book.

But why are stories so important for children? I asked Georgie, 10 years old and an avid reader. "Children need stories so that they can learn about the world and what life can be like. I like reading because it's like you are entering another world and you just want to read more and more and see what happens. It makes me feel nice."

"You can experience all the emotions that characters go through." Stories invite you into a world beyond your personal experience where you can vicariously try out different experiences without having to deal with the actual consequences in real life. I was asked once by a mother to meet with her daughter who she felt was being bullied. When I met with the girl I asked her what strategies she could think of to deal with some of the difficult situations she was facing. She came up with a variety of clever and appropriate ideas. I was impressed, and asked where she got such bright ideas. "From reading" she said. She noted how characters in stories dealt with situations and could apply this in her own life.

I asked my friend Sally, the only school principal I know who is often to be found reading to groups of spellbound children, why she considers reading so important. "Stories are about situations, real or imagined, featuring characters, calling out emotional responses from our minds. The richest thing in the world is LISTENING to stories, which is why children love to be told stories (and be read to), and have favourites which they can hear again and again. The story goes into the listener's very mind and heart complete with all its details, and with such emotional connection, often becomes beloved, like a personal treasure, shared with the storyteller/author."

Through stories a child is also helped to build a rich vocabulary which enables them to articulate their thoughts and feelings more clearly. As a school counsellor I am struck by how limited children's vocabularies often are. I can be told of any number of varied problem situations, and when I ask how the child is feeling about it all, the answer is invariably one word, "sad".



Reading allows a child to enter a safe private world. It is very nice not to be told what to do by adults all the time and instead, for an interlude, be free to learn from imaginary characters. So what is wrong with stories we hear via the electronic media - TV and the Internet? I can best answer this question with an example. I met once with a boy whose life was very difficult. His mother had died when he was very young, and he and his father and sister moved a lot between countries so that it was hard for him to settle and make friends. "I often feel lonely, sad, tired, grumpy," he said. I asked him what he did when he felt that way. "I play computer to stop feeling lonely, or watch TV, but the feeling comes back when the TV is turned off. I wonder what is worse - sad or lonely - I think lonely." I asked him if he ever read, and how that made him feel. "I feel normal when I read" he said. Stories nourish and feed the imagination. And if you can dream it you can do it. We can begin to see our own lives as a story or a play, where we are the lead character, and find ways to write the kind of "script" we would enjoy reading from.

Even Einstein said "When I examine myself and my methods of thought, I come to the conclusion that the gift of fantasy has meant more to me than any talent for abstract, positive thinking.

(Freemantle, 2010)

**Questions for Children need stories**

1. What stories are 'best of all'? .....
- .....
2. In the opinion of 10-year-old Georgie, why do children need stories? .....
- .....
3. What can you do in the world where stories invite you? .....
- .....
4. Where can children get bright ideas? .....
5. What is the richest thing in the world? .....
6. How can children build a rich vocabulary? .....
- .....
7. How can we teach children to articulate their feelings? .....
- .....
8. What is nice about the 'safe, private world' a child can enter when they read? .....
- .....



9. What do stories do to the imagination? .....

.....

10. And if you ..... it you can do it.

11. What can we begin to see our lives as? .....

12. What 'gift' meant more to Einstein than any talent? .....

Now consider what happens to children who are not told or read stories.

### **Examine a story**

1. Choose a story (from the samples in the Appendix, or one of your own).

.....

2. What topics could you use it in? (There is never just one possibility.) Consider the topics listed in the KSSR text books, but also your own ideas.

.....

.....

3. What theme could you use it for? (Again, there is more than one possibility.)

.....

4. Think about how this story could affect the children in terms of:

- Their hopes and dreams, what they could become. ....

.....

- Forming moral judgements.....

.....

- Stimulating mental processes.....

.....

- Affecting their personality.....

.....



If this seems a little overwhelming, have a look at the example below. (Scans of the book are included below.)

### **Example of Examining a Story**

1. Choose a story (from the samples in the Appendix, or one of your own).

*Rascal*, by Linda Strahan. [Scans included in following pages]

2. What topics could you use it in? (There is never just one possibility.) Consider the topics listed in the KSSR text books, but also your own ideas.

*The most obvious topic is (y3) 'Pet's World' (although it is not only about pets).*

*The list of topics is less than the number of weeks / lessons, so we can add others such as "Monsters" or "Not being afraid", or even "Going to the Doctor".*

3. What theme could you use it for? (Again, there is more than one possibility.)

*World of self, (or World of Knowledge).*

4. Think about how this story could affect the children in terms of:

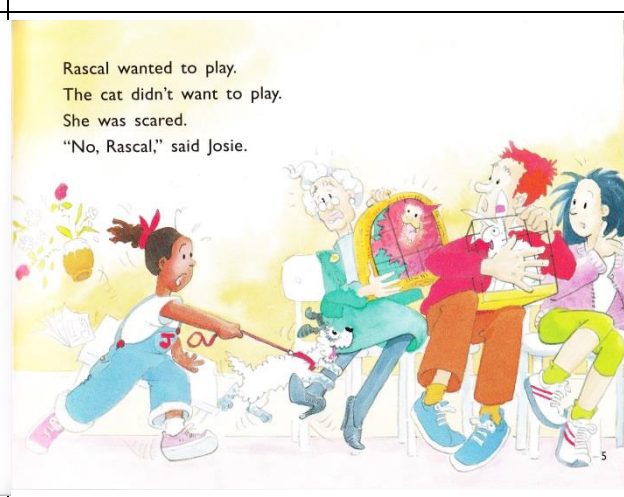
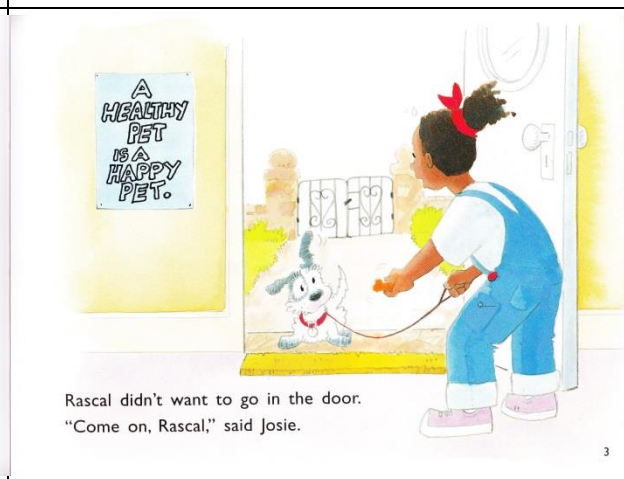
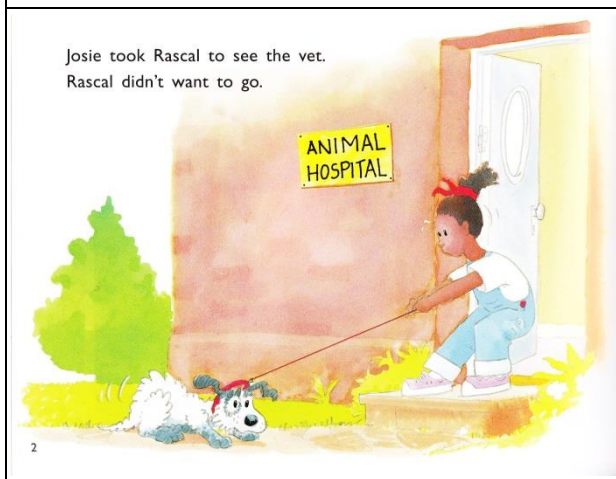
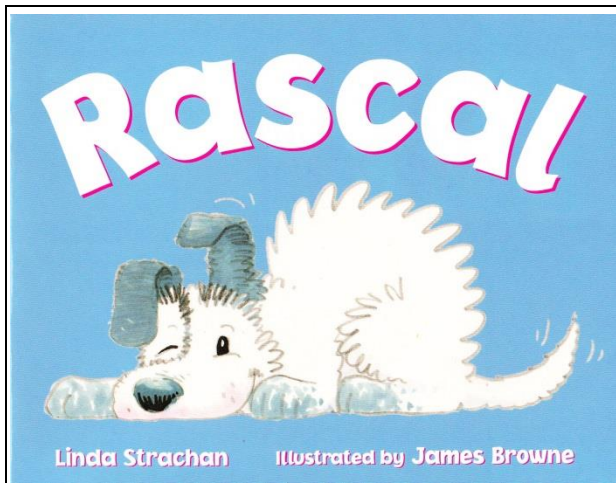
- Their hopes and dreams, what they could become. *Children could think about becoming a pet owner, or a vet as a career. Or they could just decide to be less afraid.*
- Forming moral judgements *Children should realise that they should consider the feelings of others who are smaller / larger than themselves.*
- Stimulating mental processes. *Young children are generally self-centred and naturally selfish. This story can help them to see things from someone else's point of view.*
- Affecting their personality *Help them to become more considerate, maybe also more obedient.*

*Initially this appears to be a book about keeping pets, with the child (who the listener relates to in hearing the story) as the pet owner. But very quickly the child falls into the role of carer or parent and the pet dog has become the 'child'. The emotions in the story are those of the dog as it relates to other animals, some of whom it wants to terrorise (or play with) and some it is terrified of. And in the end it realises that the vet (who it originally was not keen to see) is its best friend.*

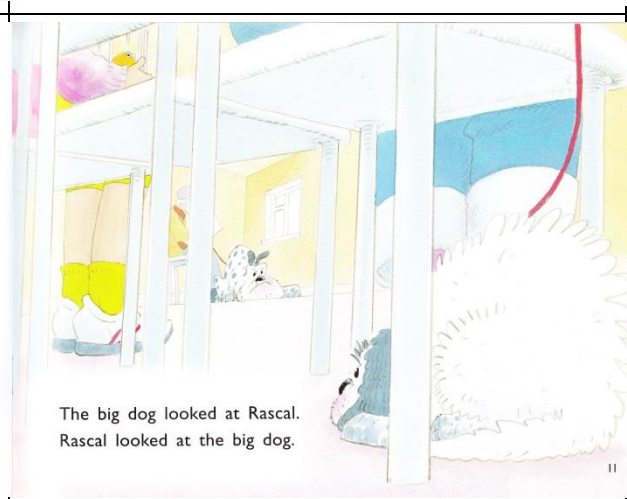
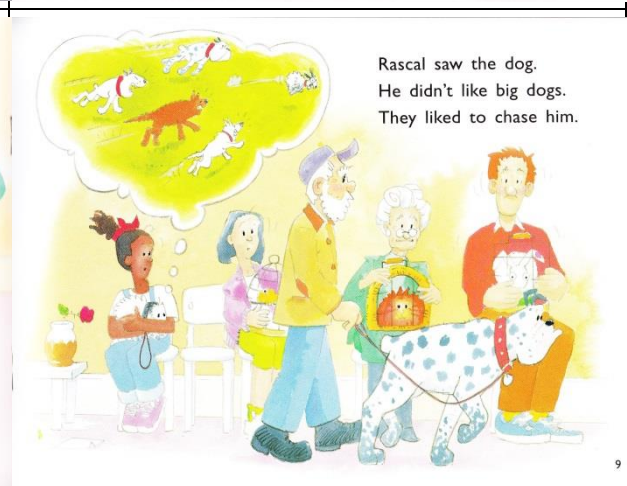
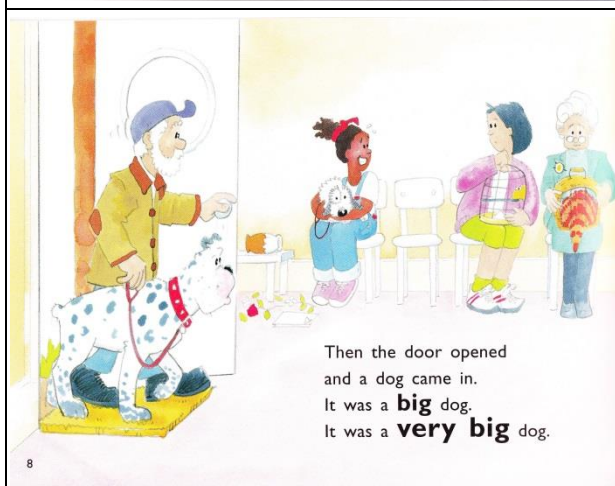
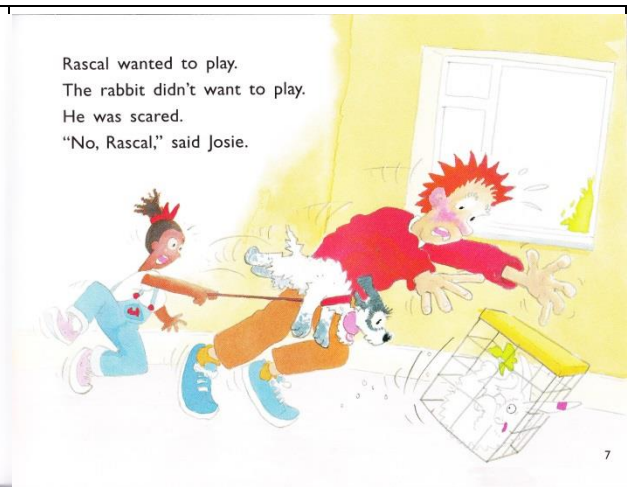
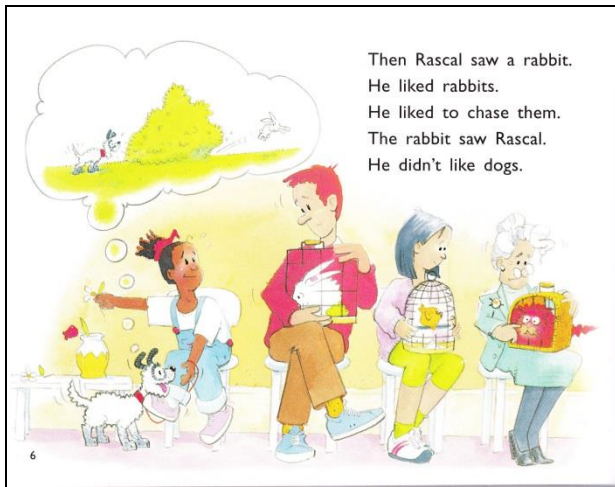
*So much to talk about ...*

**Discuss your books and your answers with your partner / group.**

**Together create a presentation for the class about your chosen book / story.**













## Social Development Theory (Vygotsky)

*You should already be familiar with various learning theories. Read these two articles and answer the questions below in relation to our specific topic.*

**Summary:** Social Development Theory argues that social interaction precedes development; consciousness and cognition are the end products of socialization and social behaviour.

**Originator:** Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934).

**Key terms:** Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), More Knowledgeable Other (MKO)

Vygotsky's Social Development Theory

Vygotsky's Social Development Theory is the work of Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934), who lived during Russian Revolution. Vygotsky's work was largely unknown to the West until it was published in 1962.

Vygotsky's theory is one of the foundations of **constructivism**. It asserts three major themes:

### Major themes:

Social interaction plays a fundamental role in the process of cognitive development. In contrast to Jean Piaget's understanding of child development (in which development necessarily precedes learning), Vygotsky felt social learning precedes development. He states: "Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological)." (Vygotsky, 1978).

**The More Knowledgeable Other (MKO).** The MKO refers to anyone who has a better understanding or a higher ability level than the learner, with respect to a particular task, process, or concept. The MKO is normally thought of as being a teacher, coach, or older adult, but the MKO could also be peers, a younger person, or even computers.

**The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).** The ZPD is the distance between a student's ability to perform a task under adult guidance and/or with peer collaboration and the student's ability solving the problem independently. According to Vygotsky, learning occurred in this zone.

Vygotsky focused on the connections between people and the sociocultural context in which they act and interact in shared experiences (Crawford, 1996). According to Vygotsky, humans use tools that develop from a culture, such as speech and writing, to mediate their social environments. Initially children develop these tools to serve solely as social functions, ways to communicate needs. Vygotsky believed that the internalization of these tools led to higher thinking skills.

### Applications of the Vygotsky's Social Development Theory

Many schools have traditionally held a transmissionist or instructionist model in which a teacher or lecturer 'transmits' information to students. In contrast, Vygotsky's theory promotes learning

contexts in which students play an active role in learning. Roles of the teacher and student are therefore shifted, as a teacher should collaborate with his or her students in order to help facilitate meaning construction in students. Learning therefore becomes a reciprocal experience for the students and teacher.

For more information, see:

Driscoll, M. P. (1994). *Psychology of Learning for Instruction*. Needham, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Crawford, K. (1996) Vygotskian approaches to human development in the information era. *Educational Studies in Mathematics*. (31) 43-62.

Vygotsky, L.S. (1978). *Mind and society: The development of higher mental processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Wertsch, James V. Sohmer, Richard. (1995). Vygotsky on learning and development. *Human Development*. (38 ) 332-37.

## Theories of Learning

### Social Constructivism

Social constructivism is a variety of cognitive constructivism that emphasizes the collaborative nature of much learning. Social constructivism was developed by post-revolutionary Soviet psychologist, Lev Vygotsky. Vygotsky was a cognitivist, but rejected the assumption made by cognitivists such as Piaget and Perry that it was possible to separate learning from its social context. He argued that all cognitive functions originate in, and must therefore be explained as products of social interactions and that learning was not simply the assimilation and accommodation of new knowledge by learners; it was the process by which learners were integrated into a knowledge community. According to Vygotsky (1978, 57),



Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level and, later on, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapyschological). This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals.

Vygotsky's theory of social learning has been expanded upon by contemporary psychologists such as Miller and Dollard, and A. Bandura.

### Knowledge

Cognitivists such as Piaget and Perry see knowledge as actively constructed by learners in response to interactions with environmental stimuli. Vygotsky emphasized the role of language and culture in



cognitive development. According to Vygotsky, language and culture play essential roles both in human intellectual development and in how humans perceive the worlds. Humans' linguistic abilities enable them to overcome the natural limitations of their perceptual field by imposing culturally defined sense and meaning on the world. Language and culture are the frameworks through which humans experience, communicate, and understand reality. Vygotsky states (39),

A special feature of human perception...is the perception of real objects ... I do not see the world simply in colour and shape but also as a world with sense and meaning. I do not merely see something round and black with two hands; I see a clock ...

Language and the conceptual schemes that are transmitted by means of language are essentially social phenomena. As a result, human cognitive structures are, Vygotsky believed, essentially socially constructed. Knowledge is not simply constructed, it is co-constructed.

### **Learning**

Vygotsky accepted Piaget's claim that learners respond not to external stimuli but to their interpretation of those stimuli. However, he argued that cognitivists such as Piaget had overlooked the essentially social nature of language. As a result, he claimed they had failed to understand that learning is a collaborative process. Vygotsky distinguished between two developmental levels (85): The level of **actual** development is the level of development that the learner has already reached, and is the level at which the learner is capable of solving problems independently. The level of **potential** development (the "zone of proximal development") is the level of development that the learner is capable of reaching under the guidance of teachers or in collaboration with peers. The learner is capable of solving problems and understanding material at this level that they are not capable of solving or understanding at their level of actual development. The level of potential development is the level at which learning takes place. It comprises cognitive structures that are still in the process of maturing, but which can only mature under the guidance of or in collaboration with others.

### **Motivation**

Behavioural motivation is essentially extrinsic--a reaction to positive and negative reinforcements. Cognitive motivation is essentially intrinsic--based on the learner's internal drive. Social constructivists see motivation as both extrinsic and intrinsic. Because learning is essentially a social phenomenon, learners are partially motivated by rewards provided by the knowledge community. However, because knowledge is actively constructed by the learner, learning also depends to a significant extent on the learner's internal drive to understand and promote the learning process.

### **Instruction**

Collaborative learning methods require learners to develop teamwork skills and to see individual learning as essentially related to the success of group learning. The optimal size for group learning is four or five people. Since the average section size is ten to fifteen people, collaborative learning methods often require GSIs to break students into smaller groups, although discussion sections are



essentially collaborative learning environments. For instance, in group investigations, students may be split into groups that are then required to choose and research a topic from a limited area. They are then held responsible for researching the topic and presenting their findings to the class. More generally, collaborative learning should be seen as a process of peer interaction that is mediated and structured by the teacher. Discussion can be promoted by the presentation of specific concepts, problems or scenarios, and is guided by means of effectively directed questions, the introduction and clarification of concepts and information, and references to previously learned material. Some more specific techniques are suggested in the Teaching Guide pages on Discussion Sections.

### Reference

Vygotsky, L. (1978). *Mind in Society*. London: Harvard University Press.

### Questions about Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory.

From the first article:

1. Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice:

first, .....  
and later, .....;  
first, between .....  
and then inside .....

2. What or who is the MKO? .....  
.....

3. What is the ZPD? .....  
.....

4. What do humans use tools such as speech and writing for? .....  
.....

5. What do children use these tools for initially? .....

6. How do the teacher and students' roles shift in the learning environment promoted by Vygotsky's theory? .....  
.....

7. In this environment, what kind of experience is learning? .....  
.....



*From the second article:*

1. "Social constructivism ... emphasizes the ..... nature of much learning."
2. What assumption by Piaget and Perry did Vygotsky reject? .....
3. According to Vygotsky, what two things "play essential roles both in human intellectual development and in how humans perceive the worlds"? .....
4. What had other theorist failed to understand about learning by overlooking "the essential social nature of language"? .....
5. If learning is a social phenomenon, what is the intrinsic motivation of learners? .....

**Applying to Storytelling**

If you apply Vygotsky's theory, how could this affect your teaching style? .....

Thinking particularly of the use of stories – storytelling, reading aloud, dramatizing a story etc. – how do these activities fit with Vygotsky's constructivist theory?

***Discuss with your partner / group.***





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## Topic 4: Selection of stories for young learners

Teachers need to be able to decide what stories to tell / read to their students. There are several obvious factors to consider:

### Appropriate language level

The language in the story needs to be *mostly* known or understood by the children. It's quite alright for there to be some new words – these can be introduced during the pre-reading or pre-telling part of the lesson.

It is also important to remember that children can (hear and) understand much more than they can say. So, for example, while they may only be able to say sentences in the present simple tense, they should be able to handle a story told in the past tense.

Some (educational) story books or readers come with information about the vocabulary count and the ability level the story was written for.

### What you can do

Let's presume that you are looking at a story book with a view to reading it aloud, or maybe retelling the story.

- Flip through the book and notice the commas and full stops – pay attention to the types of sentences. Are the sentences mostly simple and/or compound, or are there a lot of complex sentences which can be hard to follow (and even hard to read aloud).
- Look for the verbs – what tense are they? Are they mostly simple present and simple past? Present perfect is not too hard, but past perfect can start being difficult. Passive verbs could be a problem if there are a lot of them. Generally these more complex types of verbs tend to go along with complex sentences.
- Look at the nouns – are there a lot of different nouns that you are going to have to explain the meanings of? Are there some words that you have been teaching them? This could be a good way to reinforce their learning.

If the story has slightly difficult language but it's a really good story – you can tell it in slightly simplified language rather than reading it.

### Content

You probably need to select a story to fit a particular content theme (World of Self, World of Stories, World of Knowledge), or a particular topic, rather than simply a language concept. It is not vital to make a perfect match between the content and the story; it can help reinforce learning - such as vocabulary - if you can make a strong link.

As well as reinforcing vocabulary acquisition, a story can be used to reinforce learning about a natural or scientific phenomenon, to teach about culture or history, or to teach about morals and consequences.





## **How can you find content-related stories?**

### **On the Internet:**

Firstly, you could do an Internet search, such as Google. Make sure that you use words like “story” and “young learners” in your search string.

Generally a story website will have more than one good story, and links to others, and you can ‘follow the lead’ to other stories and websites. (One example is <http://www.regandlellow.com/> which has stories about a series of characters, and PowerPoint presentations.)

### **In the library:**

Searching library shelves is not as simple as searching on the Internet. However libraries generally have a referencing system – on cards or on the computer – and books should be categorised in useful ways.

### **In the bookshop:**

Sometimes bookshops categorise the books in more useful ways other than just by the author’s name – although not always with children’s books.

## **Visuals**

For young learners, this may be the most important issue when selecting a story! There must be something for them to look at and focus on or they will not be able to concentrate.

If you are *reading* the story aloud from a book, there need to be enough pictures, and big enough, for you to hold up and let everyone see them.

If you are *telling* the story, then you need to be the ‘visual’ with lots of facial expression, gestures, and movement. You could also use pictures (big enough), puppet(s), and/or realia.

### **What do you do if there are no visual aids in the book?**

So what can you do if you find a book with a great story in it but there are just not enough, or not big enough pictures? Some ideas are:

- Scan/photograph the (too small) pictures and create a PowerPoint from the pictures.
- Collect suitable clip-art or pictures (from Google Images, for example) and make a PowerPoint presentation.
- Use some of the children as the characters in the story, and get them to act out a little as you tell/read the story.

## **Language learning potential**

Any well-told story has language learning potential. How successful this is depends on how the teacher uses it. This includes the pre-reading/telling activity, while reading/telling visual aids for difficult vocabulary or concepts, pauses and questions (asked and answered by teacher and/or students), post-reading activities to clarify and reinforce learning.



However, when selecting a story the teacher will be thinking ahead to what could be learnt from it.

### **Looking for Language Learning Potential**

Read/think through the story and notice the language. *For example:*

- Notice the prepositions – are there lots of different prepositions, maybe some repeated ones too, that could be paid special attention to, along with actions or gestures, to help reinforce this difficult learning.
- Notice the adverbs of time and verb tenses – could the sequence of the plot be used to teach progress of time and how to express it?
- Look at the characters names, and the use of pronouns – could careful use of intonation and gestures along with the story telling/reading help to make this concept clear?
- Look at the nouns – are there a lot of related vocabulary items, such as animals, fruits, colours, family members, or transport?
- Look for numbers – does this story have times, dates, money or other numbers?
- Look for predictable patterns. Children love stories with predictable patterns, and they are great for language learning practice. These could be for example: Familiar sequences, repeated phrases, rhyming patterns, recurring patterns, or cumulative patterns (Cox, 2008).



**Read the following article and answer the questions below:**

## **Using Children's Literature with Young Learners**

by Eowyn Brown

The biggest practical challenges in using English language children's literature rather than readers created specifically for EFL/ESL students are:

- choosing an appropriate book
- preparing to teach, from writing lesson plans to developing supporting teaching materials
- brainstorming creative teaching ideas

This paper will serve as a guide for those who would like to use literature in the classroom with their young students, but aren't sure how to begin.

### **Introduction**

For some readers, the very word literature brings to mind dusty, difficult books stacked in a rarely frequented corner of the library. Typically, in an EFL/ESL context, literature is associated with advanced university students or other high level adults. However, children's literature is an important part of English language literature as a body of work, and using it for EFL/ESL teaching has many benefits for students.

Given a creative teaching approach and suitable supplemental activities, children's literature can be used successfully as the content base for an integrated-skills EFL/ESL classroom. Appropriate selections give students exposure to new, illustrated vocabulary in context, provide repetition of key words and phrases that students can master and learn to manipulate, and provide a sense of accomplishment at the completion of study that finishing a single unit in a textbook cannot provide. Turning to the last page of a well-read book is a pleasure, and students feel a sense of accomplishment when they have mastered a piece of literature written in English, regardless of whether it is *The Cat in the Hat* or *Ulysses*.

The suggestions here are based on my teaching experience with first, second, and third grade EFL learners from fairly low to intermediate levels of proficiency. Most of these students were still developing a vocabulary base with which to navigate their new language, and so were in the pre-production to early production stages of language acquisition (Haynes 2001). As such, every phase of this approach aims to increase students' exposure to English and to help them build their English vocabulary.

### **Choosing a Book**

Choosing the right book may be the most difficult, and most important, part of teaching literature. In a study of the increasing popularity of using literature in the second language classroom, Radhika O'Sullivan (1991, Selecting Literature section, para. 1) observed that, "It is all very well to point out the advantages of teaching literature but the key to success in using literature in the ESL classroom



depends primarily on the works selected." If the selection is too easy, students will feel bored and you will have difficulty designing enough activities. If the selection is too difficult, students will feel frustrated and you will be overwhelmed. The following guidelines may help you narrow down the field of choices.

When evaluating potential books, look at:

- The length and complexity of the story. Simple, short stories with repetitive language work best for young EFL learners.
- Does the book look overwhelming? Type that is too small, or too many words on a page, can intimidate young students.
- The level of vocabulary. How much of it will be review for your students? If students know less than 75% - 80% of the vocabulary, they may lose confidence in their ability to understand the story.
- Illustrations should be interesting and should help students understand both the vocabulary and the story.
- Finally, select a book that you think you will enjoy. It will be difficult to convince students to be enthusiastic about a story you don't like.

A selection of recommended titles is provided in the Appendix.

## **Preparing to Teach**

### *Lesson Planning*

Before you start designing worksheets and wordlists, make sure that you know where you're going. Think about your teaching objective, consider how much time you have to spend with the book, and then create a plan so that you have a systematic approach in mind as you design materials.

### *Allow Enough Time*

Spending enough time with the book is very important. In order for young students to fully absorb an English language book, they must interact with it extensively. Dr. Seuss's *The Foot Book* contains 131 words, 47 of which are the word feet or foot, yet spending five or six hours on a simple book like this is appropriate with young, beginning learners. Even more advanced young learners need plenty of time. *We're Going on a Bear Hunt*, a book based on a popular children's summer camp song, is very short and simple by adult standards, but my second grade EFL students spent over ten hours and sixteen class periods studying it. They were never bored, and, in fact, their enthusiasm for the book seemed to increase in proportion to the time they spent studying it. This observation is supported by Sabrina Peck (2003, p. 141), who advises teachers of young learners that, "Many children do not tire of practicing a repetitive and rhythmic text several times a day, many days a week."

### *Use What You Find*



Look for features of the book that you can highlight in the classroom. For example, *The Foot Book* uses opposites and counting. You can work these two concepts into your supplemental activities. *We're Going on a Bear Hunt* is a great springboard for teaching vocabulary about nature (forest, river, cave, mud, snowstorm) and prepositions (over, under, through). *Inside a Barn in the Country* provides an obvious focus on animal names and sounds.

### *Developing Materials*

Developing materials yourself, while challenging and time-consuming, can be very rewarding. Not only is it a good learning experience which may help give you insight into your teaching, it also allows you to target the types of activities that will be most valuable to your students, and to tailor them exactly to fit their needs. To go a step further, Brian Tomlinson (1999, Introduction section, para. 2), asserts that the most meaningful learning takes place when students are "involved intellectually, aesthetically, and emotionally" in their own education. When teachers choose to use student-created materials, instead of pre-fabricated, one-size fits all published ones, they can begin to accomplish goals like these.

### *Workbook*

Young students need hands-on activities. A teacher-created workbook can act as a basis for one of those types of activities.

Keep things simple. The workbook need be nothing more than a collection of papers stapled together. On the first day of teaching a new book, allow students to illustrate the covers of their own workbooks. This can provide a personal connection to the story at the outset of their study. You can use the pages as a place for students to draw artistic responses to the story. For example, if they've learned "house/mouse/train/rain" in class, then the lesson wrap-up may include time for them to draw a picture featuring the vocabulary words and labelled in English.

### *Flashcards*

Again, materials do not need to be professionally produced to be effective. Assign different key vocabulary words to different students and have them help make flashcards. You can collect and laminate the drawings and use them for various activities in follow up lessons. It is amazing to see the rapt attention students are willing to give materials they created themselves.

### *Cassette Tape*

Many books are available with a companion cassette tape, which often includes versions of the story set to music or with sound effects. These tapes are well worth the investment and, if possible, students will benefit from purchasing their own copy as well so they can listen at home. The story set to music is more entertaining for your students, who might express it by borrowing from Emma Goldman, and saying, "If I can't dance, I don't want to be in your EFL classroom."

If no tape is available, don't despair! If you are a virtuoso, you could set the story to music yourself and record it. If not, you could coerce your older, higher proficiency students to read the story and



record it as a class project. You could enlist precocious young ones to make drumming sounds at pre-determined intervals or, if you have truly musical students, you could find some way to use their talents. My sixth grade students particularly enjoyed noticing how "easy" the literature for first graders was as it gave them a real sense of their own progress.

## Teaching Ideas

### *Sequencing Activities*

Young learners in particular need a very active classroom and variety throughout the lesson. Ten minutes is probably the maximum length of time you can expect students of this age to focus their attention before you need to change gears. One guideline that works well with young learners is to assure that, in any given lesson, there is always a little enthusiastic singing, a little quiet listening, a little enthusiastic dancing, and a little quiet artwork.

The following approach is one that works very well:

- **Sing.** Students sing, recite, or read a passage from the story in teams.
- **Listen.** Students listen to the story from beginning to end.
- **Dance.** Students get out of their chairs for some physical activity. Often, this can be acting out the actions from the story, but there are unlimited possibilities.
- **Draw.** Students sit back down and illustrate new vocabulary.

While considering how you will allocate class time, don't underestimate the students' enthusiasm for listening to a story again and again. In fact, according to Anne Burns (2003, p. 22), a surprising result from her study of second-language learner attitudes toward literacy learning included the insight that "students were almost unanimous in their desire for teachers to read aloud to them." She credited the value of hearing fluent reading in English, listening to the written words, hearing correct stress and intonation patterns, as well as providing a model for imitation as possible reasons.

### *Types of Activities*

- Listen to the story on tape/as read by the teacher without looking at the text.
- Listen to the story and read along.
- Listen to the story and put illustrations depicting parts of the story in order.
- Read the book silently.
- Read the book to a partner, then switch.
- Write your favourite words/new words/words starting with A from the story in your notebook.
- Write a portion of the story in the workbook.
- Answer (or practice asking) simple who, what, when, where, and why questions about the story.
- Play "Pictionary". Divide students into teams. One member of the team draws a picture on the board while team members try to guess what it is within a limited time period.



- Speed reading game. Call out a word from the text, then let students race to find it. The first one to find it reads the sentence aloud. A word of caution: this game is rather hard on books.
- Have students display the flashcards they made, let them be the teacher and ask the class, "What is this?"
- Make up a dance or do actions to the words of the story. A good example of this kind of story is *The Foot Book*. The text repeats, "Left Foot/Left Foot/Right Foot/Right." Students can get out of their chairs and jump from left to right as suggested by the text.
- Do the opposite of dancing. Have students "freeze" a moment of the text by acting out exactly what is described in the text at some specific moment, and holding perfectly still. You could photograph these moments if you have a digital camera.
- Do a verbal fill-in-the-blank exercise. As you read, stop at random and have students shout out what word comes next.
- Check comprehension of key concepts by asking students to draw pictures. For example, students could demonstrate understanding of the difference between "I like *kimchi*."/"I don't like *kimchi*." by drawing two different pictures.
- A note about memorization. A lot of students really do enjoy memorizing the books. Allow them to recite what they've memorized in teams. Many students love to show off their English, and feel very proud of being able to produce a minute or so of non-stop English.

## Conclusion

Using children's literature can be an effective and enjoyable way to teach language. Students who are enthralled by a story forget their worries and anxieties about the new language. In an interview with Tova Ackerman (1994, para. 2), storyteller Dvora Shurman says that, "The best way to teach is not to impose teaching, but to allow the listener to become so involved in hearing a story that his 'defences' are no longer active." It is our sense of enjoyment, excitement, and emotional involvement that is a necessary condition for learning, and using literature in the classroom can provide the content base for the magic.

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## **Appendix**

### *Suggested Titles*

#### For Absolute Beginners:

These are very short stories with a few simple words that repeat over and over again. They will not overwhelm beginning students.

- I Like Books by Anthony Browne
- Brown Bear, Brown Bear What Do You See? by Bill Martin, Jr. and Eric Carle (Illustrator)

#### For Beginners:

These stories have more text, but still use simple vocabulary and a repetitive narrative structure.

- The Foot Book by Dr. Seuss
- Inside a Barn in the Country by Tedd Arnold (Illustrator) and Alyssa Satin Capucilli
- Silly Sally by Audrey Wood and Don Wood (Illustrator)

#### For Intermediate Students:

These books are well-suited for young learners with a full year of English study experience. Vocabulary is generally simple, but the stories are much longer. They do retain the features of repetitive passages and the first three on the list are set to music, which will help students absorb them.

- We're Going on a Bear Hunt by Michael Rosen and Helen Oxenbury (Illustrator)
- Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star Illustrated by Iza Trapani
- The Itsy-Bitsy Spider Illustrated by Iza Trapani
- Green Eggs and Ham by Dr. Seuss

#### Resources on the Internet for Finding More Titles:

The Children's Literature Web Guide (David K. Brown) <http://www.ucalgary.ca/~dkbrown>

(Brown, 2004)

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## **Questions for Using Children's Literature**

1. Appropriate selections (choosing the right books):





- give students exposure to .....
- provide .....
- and provide a sense of .....

2. What pleasure do students feel when they turn the last page of a book?

.....

3. The key to success in using literature in the ESL classroom depends primarily on.....

.....

4. What five things should you look at when evaluating potential books?

- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....

5. What would be an appropriate length of time to spend on a book like Dr Seuss's *The Foot Book*?

.....

6. What do young children never tire of doing 'several times a day, many days a week'?

.....

7. What Language Learning Potential does the writer find in:

*The Foot Book* .....

*We're going on a bear hunt* .....

*Inside a barn in the country* .....

8. What goals can be accomplished 'when teachers choose to use student-created materials, instead of pre-fabricated, one-size fits all published ones'?

.....

9. Give some examples of what could be included in a teacher-created workbook about a story.

.....

.....

10. What four possibilities are recommended for sequencing activities?



- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....

The article above is talking mostly about story reading rather than telling. The following excerpt from Carole Cox's text book *Teaching Language Arts: A student-centred classroom* includes a list of "Do's and Don'ts" for reading aloud, as well as some pointers for selecting books to read aloud.

Some of these points may be useful when you create your checklist at the end of this topic.

### **Do's and Don'ts of Reading Aloud**

Jim Trelease's (2006) book *The Read-Aloud Handbook* suggests the following do's and don'ts:

#### **Read Aloud Do's**

- Stop at a suspenseful spot each day.
- If reading a picture book, make sure the children can see the pictures easily.
- After reading, allow time for discussion and verbal, written or artistic expression. Don't turn discussions into quizzes or pry interpretations from children.
- Use plenty of expression in reading, and read slowly.
- Bring the author to life by adding a third dimension when possible – for example, eat blueberries while reading *Blueberries for Sal*, by Robert McCloskey (1948).

#### **Read Aloud Don'ts**

- Don't read stories that you don't like yourself.
- If it becomes obvious that a book was a poor choice, stop reading it.
- Don't feel that every book must be tied to something in the curriculum.
- Don't be unnerved by students' questions during the reading. Answer and discuss them.
- Don't use reading aloud as a threat or turn it into a weapon.

Trelease (2006) has also suggested selection criteria for a good read-aloud book. In sum, such a book should have these qualities:

- a fast-paced plot, which quickly hooks the children's interest
- clear, well-rounded characters
- crisp, easy-to-read dialogue
- minimal long, descriptive passages

(Cox, 2008, p. 272)

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The article below by Mart makes some excellent points about both choosing books and using stories in order to encourage young learners of English.

As always, the questions below are designed to help you focus on the important points in the article.

## Encouraging Young Learners to Learn English through Stories

Cagri Tugrul Mart

### Abstract

Reading is an important part of successful language acquisition. Motivating young learners to learn English through stories at an early age provides them the opportunity to widen their horizons and stimulate their early enthusiasm and enhance their awareness of the rich use of English. Stories are unquestionably a significant part of children's literacy development. When we read to our children, we do not confine them to academic excellence but extend into their emotional and behavioural learning (Ai Lian Kim, 2008). Reading at an early age is essential. Therefore, this article focuses on how to spark student's interest towards English through stories and how stories develop their language learning.

**Keywords:** Young learners, Reading, Learning English, Stories

### 1. Introduction

Storytelling is an accepted and widely used approach in the teaching of English language classroom. It represents a holistic approach to language teaching and learning founded on the understanding that learners need to interact with rich, authentic examples of the foreign language (Mourao, 2009). "In using stories in language teaching we are using something much bigger and more important than language teaching itself" (Wright, 2003: 7).

*Story in its widest sense is also the carrier of life's messages and has, I believe, a vital part to play in the education of the young child, particularly in the development of language. I suggest that the teacher, working from a story "bank" rich in all manner of literary genres and crossings a variety of cultures, can produce the kind of learning environment which not only stimulates and carries the children along on the crest of their interest and enjoyment, but offers meaning potential without which the learning of language is rigid (Garvie, 1991: 56).*

### 2. Why Story Books?

It is widely believed that literature-based instruction can positively influence the language development of primary school students (Morrow, 1992). Weinreich & Bartlett claim that in children's literature "the child ... must be regarded as a necessary condition which the author consciously or unconsciously relates to in the creative process" (2000:127). For McDowell (1973), the term "children's literature" is applicable to books written for, and read by, that group referred to as children by any particular society. For Oberstein (1996: 17) "children's literature" is "a category of books the existence of which absolutely depends on supposed relationships with a particular reading audience: children". Hollindale (1997:30) defines "children's literature" as a body of texts with certain common features of imaginative interest, which is activated as children's literature by a reading event: that of being read by a child". According to Ghosn (2002: 172) "children's literature is fiction written for children to read for pleasure, rather than for didactic purposes". Huck et al. (1997: 5) children's literature is "the imaginative shaping of life and thought into the forms and structures



of language". Galda and Cullinan (2002: 7) claim that literature "entertains and ... informs" and "it enables young people to explore and understand their world" and "enriches their lives and widens their horizons" and through literature children "learn about people and places on the other side of the world as well as ones down the street. They can travel back and forth in time to visit familiar places and people, to meet new friends, and to see new worlds. They can explore their own feelings, shape their own values, and imagine lives beyond the one they live". Tomlinson and Lynch-Brown (2002:2) define children literature as "good quality trade books written especially for children from birth to adolescence, covering topics of relevance and interest to children". Lewis (2001) states that there are good reasons for children reading picture-books:

*Consider the fact that children born into the first years of the twenty-first century are likely to possess a richer and more deft understanding of visual imagery and its modes of deployment than any other generation in the history of humankind. Their world is saturated with imagines, moving and still, alone and in all manner of hybrid combinations with texts and sounds. This is the world in which they must function (p.59).*

Ghosn (2002: 173) summarizes the reasons why authentic literature is valuable for children:

- Authentic literature provides a motivating, meaningful context for language learning, since children are naturally drawn to stories.
- Literature can contribute to language learning. It presents natural language, language at its finest, and can foster vocabulary development in context.
- Literature can promote academic literacy and thinking skills, and prepare children for the English-medium instruction.
- Literature can function as a change agent: good literature deals with some aspects of the human condition, can thus contribute to the emotional development of the child, and foster positive interpersonal and intercultural attitudes.

### **3. How to Select Story Books?**

Brown (2004) claims that appropriate selections of children's literature give students exposure to new, illustrated vocabulary in context, provide repetition of key words and phrases that students can master and learn to manipulate and provide a sense of accomplishment.

"Smallwood (1988:66) recommends that criteria for the selection of children's literature for language learners should include "age-appropriate theme; simple language; limited use of metaphor and unfamiliar experiences; use of rhyme; unambiguous plot; realistic but simple dialogue; potential for reading aloud; brevity; and good illustrations".

Smallwood adds these criteria some more:

- Does the book help meet curriculum objectives or enhance the thematic units being studied?
- Is the book's content appropriate to the children's age and intellectual level?
- Does the book use language that is at or slightly above the level of the learners?
- Does the book contain repeated, predictable language patterns?



- Are there clear illustrations that help the story?

In addition to these criteria Steinbeck (2008) lists the characteristics of using stories with young learners as:

- Stories should be action oriented
- Stories should be personal (the use of familiar characters, the pre- and post- activities should make use of the personalization technique.
- Stories should not be too detailed, both in terms of the story and the visuals used.
- Stories should allow for context extension.
- Stories should use comprehensible input (the language that is at the right cognitive and linguistic level) so that the output is more structured.

Heide Niemann (2002), when selecting a story book for young learners, states that the following questions will support parents to direct their ways.

- Are different types of storybooks (animal stories, fantasy stories ...) represented in the classroom?
- Are there differences in the style of the illustrations between the books?
- Are the main characters boys as well as girls?
- Is the book (psychologically) suitable for the age group?
- Can children identify with the main character or with any other character?
- Will there be links to their personal experiences?
- Is the book fun, has it got humour in it?
- How does the language match the children's language skills?
- Does the book match cross-curricular topics?
- Is it a book the children can read themselves?
- Is it a book they can read words or passages from?
- Is it a book they can understand without reading the text?

According to Vardel, Hadaway, and Young (2006: 735) the most important criteria in selecting books for learners of English as a second language is that they are appropriate in relation to age, interests, and maturity.

#### **4. Teaching Young Learners through Story Books**

Stories contribute to children's language development. According to Winch et al. (2004: 402), children's literature "provides a wonderful opportunity for children to see language in action", "a great resource for more formal learning about the structures of language", and "a locus for learning about these structures in meaningful contexts".

Children love stories. They ----

- are always eager to listen to stories
- know how stories work
- want to understand what is happening
- can enjoy hearing stories in English when they start English lessons.



- enjoy looking at storybooks by themselves
- can reread the stories they like when they read in English themselves.

(Slatterly & Willis, 2001)

Heide Niemann (2002) lists the importance of storybooks as:

- Storybooks are part of a country's culture and thus they combine language learning and cultural awareness.
- Storybooks are challenging the imagination.
- Storybooks help children expand their own world, sometimes they may even help them cope with their reality.
- Storybooks provide language in a meaningful context.
- Storybooks provide grammatical structures in an authentic context.
- Storybooks provide children with the possibility to browse, choose their own pace, look carefully at details.
- Storybooks introduce topics and language in a child oriented way.
- Storybooks help children develop creative powers.
- In picture books the combination of a text and illustration is supportive for the understanding and the interpretation of a story.

Stories are useful in language learning for young learners. "Young learners acquire language unconsciously. The activities you do in class should help this kind of acquisition. Stories are the most valuable resource you have. They offer children a world of supported meaning that they can relate to. Later on you can use stories to help children practise listening, speaking, reading, and writing" (Slatterly & Willis, 2001). Story telling can be effective for teaching English to young learners for the following reasons.

- The purpose of telling a story is genuinely communicative.
- Storytelling is linguistically honest (It is oral language, meant to be heard).
- Storytelling is real (people do it all the time).
- Storytelling appeals to the affective domain.
- Storytelling caters to the individual while forging a community in the classroom.
- Storytelling provides listening experiences with reduced anxiety.

(Curtain & Dahlberg, 2004)

Xu (2003) states that literature in English can provide language learners with opportunities to master structure through exposure to repeated and predictable linguistic patterns. Huck et al. (1997:12) claim that "literature plays an important role in all aspects of oral language development. When young children are read to their own phonological production- the number and range of sounds that they produce-increases significantly", and "reading aloud has significant effects on the complexity of children's sentence structure and expository text". Gambrell et al. (2000:2) lists the characteristics of their approach to literature-based instruction as:

- Literature is used as an important vehicle for language arts instruction



- High quality narrative and informational literature provides the basis for a consistent read-aloud program in which children read daily [www.ccsenet.org/elt](http://www.ccsenet.org/elt) English Language Teaching Vol. 5, No. 5; May 2012 104 ISSN 1916-4742 E-ISSN 1916-4750
- Literature is the sole or primary basis for initial reading instruction, or it is a significant supplement to a basal program.
- Opportunities are provided for students to listen to and read books of their own choosing.
- Students are provided with sustained time for both independent and collaborative book sharing, reading and writing activities.
- Discussions of literature among students and teachers are commonplace.

“Children delight in imagination and fantasy. It is more than simply a matter of enjoyment, however, in the language classroom this capacity for fantasy and imagination has a very constructive part to play” (Halliwell, 1993: 7).

“Stories may bridge the gap between language study and language use and also to link classroom learning with the world outside. Some of the activities do not always have a very large language element but are nevertheless important in creating a feeling among the pupils that learning English means fun, activity, creativity and enjoyment”.

(Ellis & Brewster 2002: 17)

Repetition of stories enables young learners master the language better. “Children enjoy listening to stories over and over again. This frequent repetition allows certain language items to be acquired while others are being overtly reinforced. Many stories contain natural repetition of key vocabulary and structures. This helps children to remember every detail, so they can gradually learn to anticipate what is about to happen next in the story. Repetition also encourages participation in the narrative” (Ellis & Brewster, 2002: 2).

Stories are motivating, challenging and great fun for young learners. They “can help develop positive attitudes towards the foreign language, culture and language learning”(Ellis and Brewster, 2002:1). Winch et al. (2004:401) states that through literature-based activities “guided discussion promotes many literate oracy behaviours: it improves vocabulary, offers opportunities for more sophisticated sentence constructions and syntax, and lets the children hear the sounds of words as their peers say them”. Fox (1993:185), about literature based instruction, writes “storytelling and hearing stories read aloud, expose children to linguistic and narrative conventions in the course of the power and pleasure they experience in the play”. Using “stories allows the teacher to introduce or revise new vocabulary and sentence structures by exposing the children to language in varied, memorable and familiar contexts, which will enrich their thinking and gradually enter their own speech” (Ellis & Brewster, 2002:2). “Listening to stories helps children become aware of the rhythm, intonation and pronunciation of language” (Ellis and Brewster, 2002:2). About literature for children Ferguson and Young (1996:598) claim that “(literature) provide language-rich illustrations of the uses of dialogue and often elicits a “chime in” response from students, thus providing a natural link to the give and take of conversation, vocabulary usage, and appropriate syntactical structure”.





Young learners exercise their imagination through stories. They “can become personally involved in a story as they identify with the characters and try to interpret the narrative and illustrations. This imaginative experience helps” (Ellis & Brewster, 2002:1) students develop their own creative potential.

Stories also “develop the different types of ‘intelligences’ that contribute to language learning, including emotional intelligence” (Ellis & Brewster, 2002:2). Stories “develop children’s learning strategies such as listening for general meaning, predicting, guessing meaning and hypothesizing” (Ellis & Brewster, 2002:2). “Learning English through stories can lay the foundations for secondary school in terms of learning basic language functions and structures, vocabulary and language learning skills” (Ellis & Brewster, 2002:2).

“It seems a pity to deprive learners of opportunities to hear authentic uses of past tense forms and contrast with the other tenses, in the meaningful contexts of stories, and I can see no intrinsic reason for supposing that use of past tense would prevent children understand a story. In fact, if they are familiar with stories in their first language, they will probably expect to hear past tense forms and may misconstrue the verbs” (Cameron, 2001: 166). According to Hsieh (2006), storytelling combined with total physical response can motivate young learners and is beneficial to their learning of English vocabulary, sentence patterns, and comprehension.

For teachers stories allow “to use an acquisition-based methodology by providing optimal input” (Ellis & Brewster, 2002:2). It is great to use real storybooks because they “add variety and provide a springboard for creating complete units of work that constitute mini-syllabuses and involve pupils personally, creatively and actively in an all-round whole curriculum approach. They thereby provide a novel alternative to the course book” (Ellis & Brewster, 2002:2).

A Canadian critic, Michele Landsberg (1987) writes:

*Good books can do so much for children. At their best, they expand horizons and instil in children a sense of the wonderful complexity of life. No other pastime available to children is so conducive to empathy and the enlargement of the human sympathies. No other pleasure can so richly furnish a child’s mind with the symbols, patterns, depths, and possibilities of civilisation (p.34).*

The following are some recommended storytelling techniques from Brewster, Ellis & Girard (2004).

- If students are unfamiliar are with storytelling, begin with short sessions which do not demand too much from them and over-extend their concentration span.
- Read slowly and clearly. Give your pupils time to relate what they hear to what they see in the pictures, to think, ask questions, make comment. However, do vary the pace when the story speeds up.
- Make comments about the illustrations and point to them to focus the pupils’ attention
- Encourage your pupils to take part in the storytelling by repeating key vocabulary items and phrases. You can invite them to do this by pausing and looking at them with a questioning expression and by putting your hand to your ear to indicate that you are waiting for them to





join in. Then repeat what they have said to confirm that they have predicted correctly, and if appropriate, expand by putting the word into a full phrase or sentence.

- Use gestures, mime, facial gestures to help convey the meaning.
- Vary the pace, tone, and volume of your voice. Are you going to whisper to build up suspense? Are you going to introduce an element of surprise by raising your voice?
- Pause where appropriate to add dramatic effect or to give children time to relate what they hear to what they see, and to assimilate details in the illustrations.
- Disguise your voice for the different characters as much as you can to signal when different characters are speaking and help convey meaning.
- Ask questions to involve children. What do you think is going to happen next? What would you do?
- Do not be afraid to repeat, expand and reformulate. This increases opportunities of exposure to the language and gives children a second chance to work out the meaning and have it confirmed.

(Shin)

## 5. Conclusion

Stories are motivating for young learners, and stories can create a happy and enjoyable learning environment.

Stories are the most ideal sources for young learners in effective language learning. Children like stories, and they find stories easy to access and understand. Stories provide an outstanding opportunity for young learners to master the foreign language.

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(Mart, 2012)

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**Answer the questions below. Work with a partner (or group).**



### Questions about Encouraging Young Learners to learn English through stories

1. "In .....  
we are using something much bigger and more important than language teaching itself".

2. Through literature children:

"learn .....  
....."

They can travel .....  
.....

They can explore .....  
....."

3. What criteria should be included when selecting books, according to Smallwood?

- "..... theme
- .....language
- limited use of .....
- and .....
- use of .....
- unambiguous .....
- .....dialogue
- potential for .....
- .....(short)
- good ....."

4. Smallwood gives 5 more criteria. Summarise them:

- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....



5. List Steinbeck's 5 characteristics of stories to use with young learners.

- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....

6. Summarise each of Niemann's 12 suggestions for parents selecting books for their children.

- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....

Now look at the criteria in 3, 4, 5 and 6 (above) and classify them into four groups:

- Age/ability/language level
- Suitable Content
- Appropriate Visuals
- Language Learning Potential

Place them in the table below. [Note: You may find that some items could potentially fit into more than one column.]



<b>Level</b>	<b>Content</b>	<b>Visuals</b>	<b>Language Learning Potential</b>



### **Exercise 1: Create an instrument**

1. Design a checklist for deciding the suitability of any given book or story.
  - Include questions within all four areas listed in the chart.
  - Include a statement about how to score a particular story – how many positive marks does a book need to have for you to use it?
2. Create a presentation for your checklist to share it with the rest of your class. (It could be a PowerPoint presentation, or some other format.)

### **Exercise 2: Apply your Instrument and Examine Language Learning Potential**

Choose a story – either from the Appendix, or one of your own.

1. Apply your checklist to the book or story. You may find you need to adjust or change or checklist (or its format) to make it more user-friendly.
2. Look specifically at the Language Learning Potential of your book or story.
  - What target language and/or language learning outcomes could you use it for?
  - What activities could you do with the children before, during, or after reading/telling the story to teach or reinforce these language learning aspects?
3. Present your assessment of the book/story and your activity ideas to your partner/group/class.

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## Topic 5: Stories in the ESL classroom

### Aesthetic and Efferent Responses

When we use stories in the ESL classroom, we are teaching more than just language. Besides the sense of fun and enjoyment of activities that provide the vital motivation that children need to keep them focussed, a growing appreciation of beauty and art is important for their personal development.

In the past, teachers sometimes thought that if students were having too much fun, then their teaching methods were not serious enough and true learning was not happening. Even enjoyable topics from literature were weighed down with questions demanding an efferent response.

Educators are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of children's valid aesthetic response to literature and art.

### Exploring Aesthetic Values

In her textbook *Teaching Language Arts: A student-centred classroom*, in the chapter on the reader's response to literature, Carole Cox talks about some research she did about the two types of questioning a teacher can use and the children's responses.

**Read the passage and answer the questions below:**

### Children's Stance toward Literature

A key to teaching literature is knowing about how children respond. This knowledge should provide the basis for asking questions and planning further teaching with literature. I have done research in this area: a nine-year longitudinal study of children's responses and the stances they take from a reader-response perspective (Cox C. , 1997, 2002). I have read to the same group of children as they moved from kindergarten through fifth grade. Here's what I have found:

1. Children took a predominantly aesthetic (71.6 per cent), rather than efferent (28.4 per cent), stance in their responses. Table 3.1 shows types of responses when they took a more aesthetic or more efferent stance and examples of what they said. Here is a list of the types in order from most to least with percentages (A = aesthetic and E = efferent):

Stance	Type of Response	Percentage of Responses
A	Questioning	19.0
A	Text part	17.4
A	Associating	15.0
A	Hypothesizing	13.6
E	Explanations	10.2
E	Print and language	8.0
E	Content	7.0
A	Performance	6.8
E	Analysis	4.1



2. There was a dynamic interplay between the two types of stances, but more efferent responses, such as understanding print and expanding a story, were always part of a broader aesthetic response.

3. Children most often asked questions about the text when they were puzzled or wondered about something they wanted to know about.

In their student-centred classrooms, teachers focus on students' responses, rather than their own predetermined ideas or those found in a teacher's guide to using literature. Children are encouraged to respond openly, drawing on their own experiences and funds of knowledge. In transactional teaching with literature, teachers begin by asking open questions – "So what did you think of it?" – and directing children to take an aesthetic stance toward literature.

(Cox, 2008, pp. 65-7)

Here are examples of both aesthetic and efferent questions and prompts:

**Aesthetic** (more open)

**Efferent** (more closed)

What do you think about the story?

What was the main idea of the story?

Tell anything you want about the story.

What did the author mean by -- ?

What was your favourite part? Tell about it

Retell your favourite part.  
Tell the order of the story events.

Has anything like this every happened to you?  
Tell about it.

Describe the main characters.  
Explain the characters' actions.

Does the story remind you of anything? Tell about it.

What other stories are like this one?  
Compare and contrast the stories.

What did you wonder about? Tell about it.

What was the problem in the story?  
How did the author solve the problem?

What would you change in the story?

How did the author make the story believable?

What else do you think might happen in the story?

Is it fact or fiction?

What would you say or do if you were a character in the story?

How do you think the characters felt?

(Cox C. , 2008, p. 151)





## Questions about Children's Stance toward Literature

1. What provides "the basis for asking questions and planning further teaching with literature"?

.....

2. Look at this statement:

"There was a dynamic interplay between the two types of stances, but more efferent responses, such as understanding print and expanding a story, were always part of a broader aesthetic response."

This is stating that even when children gave an 'efferent' response (to do with facts and information), it was still part of.....

3. When did children ask questions about the text? .....

.....

4. In student-centred classrooms, what do teachers focus on? .....

rather than .....

5. What are children encouraged to do? .....

6. In transactional teaching with literature, how do teachers ask questions?

.....

**Look carefully at the chart of efferent and aesthetic questions. Mark your favourites with a highlighter pen – you may need to refer back to this page when you do your assignment.**



## Strategies to Explore Aesthetic Values

From the articles that we read in Topic 4 (Selecting Stories) we can find many useful strategies to explore Aesthetic Values through the stories we teach. Refer back to:

### *Responding to visuals*

The pictures in the book – or your gestures/puppet/realia when you tell a story, evoke the first aesthetic responses from the children, even at the pre-reading/pre-telling stage. Right away they will be interested/fascinated/curious/puzzled ... Attraction to whatever visual aid is offered becomes the 'hook' – as discussed in the Hook, Book, Look, Took article below – to draw the children into the story.

During the reading/telling the children can simply enjoy the pictures or other visual offering - at the same time as benefitting by understanding the story vocabulary or concepts better. This is what Cox was talking about with the 'dynamic interplay': while the children may be responding to the factual information – "oh, so that's what a Gruffalo is!" – and they may be learning vocabulary or other information, they are also responding aesthetically.

As a post-telling/post-reading activity, children always enjoy creating their own visual representation of the story or something they liked about it using media such as pencils, crayons, paint or even play-dough.

## Performance

In topic 4, in the article by Brown (2004), we read about 'Sequencing Activities' to keep an active classroom and allow for variety in your lessons. As a reminder:

### *Sequencing Activities*

Young learners in particular need a very active classroom and variety throughout the lesson. Ten minutes is probably the maximum length of time you can expect students of this age to focus their attention before you need to change gears. One guideline that works well with young learners is to assure that, in any given lesson, there is always a little enthusiastic singing, a little quiet listening, a little enthusiastic dancing, and a little quiet artwork.

The following approach is one that works very well:

- **Sing.** Students sing, recite, or read a passage from the story in teams.
- **Listen.** Students listen to the story from beginning to end.
- **Dance.** Students get out of their chairs for some physical activity. Often, this can be acting out the actions from the story, but there are unlimited possibilities.
- **Draw.** Students sit back down and illustrate new vocabulary.

(Brown, 2004)



## Questioning

As mentioned earlier, we tend to think of questions as seeking information, and teachers ask questions to receive a 'correct' answer. With an aesthetic response there is no one right answer and children are encouraged to express their own responses to a poem, story, song, play or other piece of literature. Cox (2008, pp. 74-5) has this to say about Questioning:

### ***Questions: Aesthetic and Efferent***

The types of questions teachers ask direct children to take aesthetic or efferent stances toward any text. Ideally, teachers should first direct students to take aesthetic stances toward literature. Think about the analysis of children's response types described earlier. Their preferred types were aesthetic. They questioned, talked about favourite parts, hypothesized, and made associations. Out of these broad, rich, aesthetic responses (which were focussed on the development of personal meaning), more efferent concerns will emerge, such as developing explanations or attending to print and language, content, and analysis.

Focus first on aesthetic questions and prompts. Begin with an open question or prompt that has many possible responses:

#### **1. Questioning**

- What did you think of the story?
- Tell me anything you want about the story.

Many times, children will state a preference, such as "I liked it," "I didn't like it," or "It was okay." Follow up on this response by asking the children to tell why they did or didn't like the story. Next, ask questions or prompts that are based on the children's comments or that invite them to respond first aesthetically and then more efferently. The following questions and prompts are based on characteristic responses of children described in the earlier section on aesthetic and efferent stances.

#### **2. Focussing on a part**

- What was your favourite part of the story? Tell about it.

#### **3. Making associations**

- Has anything like this happened to you? Tell about it.
- Have you ever had feelings like a character in the story? Tell about them.
- Does this story remind you of other stories? Tell about them.

#### **4. Hypothesizing**

- Was there anything in the story you wondered about? Tell about it.
- Did something puzzle you? Tell about it.
- What else do you think might happen?
- Is there anything you would change in the story? What? How?

#### **5. Explaining**



- Explain a character's actions
- What did the author mean by \_\_\_\_\_?

#### 6. Considering print and language

- What does this word or letter say? What does it mean? How is it used in the story?
- Tell about how the author used language: words, sentences, rhyming patterns, and so on.

#### 7. Considering content

- What happened in the story? Tell the order of the story's events.
- What happened in the beginning, the middle, and the end?
- What was the main idea of the story?

#### 8. Performing

- If you were a character in the story, what would you say? Show how you would act.
- If you could talk to a character in the story, what would you say?
- What sounds would you like to hear in the story?

#### 9. Analysing

- Is the story true (factual) or made up (fictional)?
- Compare and contrast this story to other stories.
- What did you think of how the story was written or illustrated?

(Cox, 2008)

#### Questioning Exercise:

Did you notice how the questions (above) moved from aesthetic to efferent? The '*Considering Print and Language*' and '*Considering Content*' ones in the middle are clearly efferent. But the final question is once again aesthetic.

***Take two different highlighter pens and try to mark which is which. Compare with your partner/group.***

## Exploring Linguistic Features

The article above contains some aesthetic and some efferent questions. Obviously, in this case, 'efferent' refers generally to linguistic questions.

In the article by Brown (2004) in Topic 4 there is a list of possible activities to use in connection with a story telling/reading.

### *Types of Activities*

- Listen to the story on tape/as read by the teacher without looking at the text.
- Listen to the story and read along.
- Listen to the story and put illustrations depicting parts of the story in order.
- Read the book silently.
- Read the book to a partner, then switch.
- Write your favourite words/new words/words starting with A from the story in your notebook.
- Write a portion of the story in the workbook.
- Answer (or practice asking) simple who, what, when, where, and why questions about the story.
- Play "Pictionary". Divide students into teams. One member of the team draws a picture on the board while team members try to guess what it is within a limited time period.
- Speed reading game. Call out a word from the text, then let students race to find it. The first one to find it reads the sentence aloud. A word of caution: this game is rather hard on books.
- Have students display the flashcards they made, let them be the teacher and ask the class, "What is this?"
- Make up a dance or do actions to the words of the story. A good example of this kind of story is *The Foot Book*. The text repeats, "Left Foot/Left Foot/Right Foot/Right." Students can get out of their chairs and jump from left to right as suggested by the text.
- Do the opposite of dancing. Have students "freeze" a moment of the text by acting out exactly what is described in the text at some specific moment, and holding perfectly still. You could photograph these moments if you have a digital camera.
- Do a verbal fill-in-the-blank exercise. As you read, stop at random and have students shout out what word comes next.
- Check comprehension of key concepts by asking students to draw pictures. For example, students could demonstrate understanding of the difference between "I like *kimchi*."/"I don't like *kimchi*." by drawing two different pictures.
- A note about memorization. A lot of students really do enjoy memorizing the books. Allow them to recite what they've memorized in teams. Many students love to show off their English, and feel very proud of being able to produce a minute or so of non-stop English.

• (Brown, 2004)



**Using your highlighter pens, identify which activities reinforce linguistic learning.**

Carole Cox (Literature-based teaching: A student response-centred classroom, 1997, pp. 207-8) offers these suggestions for activities in a reading aloud session. **Take note of which are aesthetic and which are linguistic strategies:**

### **Reading Aloud**

Here are some suggestions for reading aloud:

1. **When to Read Aloud:** Teachers should read aloud to students several times every day, such as at the close of sharing time in the morning, before or after recess, to initiate a writing or drama activity, before or after lunch, or at the end of the day. In addition to serving a modelling purpose, reading aloud is one of the best ways to create a quiet, peaceful atmosphere in the classroom. Teachers who feel they need more control in the classroom should get out a good book and read it aloud to students.
2. **How to Read Aloud:** Teachers should share books they love. By doing so, they will be more likely to read dramatically and with enthusiasm. Others should be invited to read, too: principals, counsellors, parents, and community members. Likewise, children should be encouraged to read aloud to each other (i.e. buddy reading), perhaps favourite books they have brought to share and even their own stories read from the Author's Chair. Children learn to read by hearing stories read aloud and by reading aloud themselves. Time should be provided to do both often.
3. **Predictable Pattern Books:** Most predictable pattern books are based on familiar cultural sequences, like the alphabet, numbers, days of the week, and seasons. Other such books use repeated phrases that invite children to chime in. Remember "Sam I am, that Sam I am" from Dr Seuss's *Green Eggs and Ham?* (Seuss 1988). Some pattern books are cumulative tales, in which new parts of the story are continually added, as in the nursery rhyme "The House that Jack Built". Many pattern books are based on traditional rhymes, songs, or folktales; others are new and original. Predictable pattern books encourage children to participate in the reading experience by guessing what will happen next, by joining in a repeated phrase, or by repeating everything that's been said before. Books such as these should be read often with young children.
4. **"Big Books and Shared Reading":** New Zealand educator Don Holdaway (1979) introduced the idea of using "big books" (i.e. books with oversized pages and print) and shared reading in emergent literacy classrooms. The purpose for doing so is to replicate the bedtime story experience and the good feeling children have when a parent or caretaker sits close to them and reads aloud. Today, many publishers have enlarged popular children's books to the "big book" size. Teachers can also create "big books" by copying stories on paper large enough so that the children can see the words from up to 20 feet away. (7 metres)

(Cox C. , 1997, pp. 207-8)



**Questions for Reading Aloud**

1. How often should teachers read aloud to their students? .....
2. Why? .....
3. Who should/could read aloud to the students? .....
- .....
4. What are most predictable pattern books based on? .....
- .....
5. What do books with repeated phrases invite children to do? .....
6. How can children participate in the reading experience in a predictable pattern story?  
.....  
or .....  
or .....
7. What was the original purpose of the shared reading experience?  
.....
8. How big should a “big book” be? .....
9. When you were at school, did your teacher(s) read aloud to you (in any language)? And, if so, how did you feel about it? .....
10. What kind of question is number 9 (above)? .....

***Discuss with your partner / group.***



This article by Tedjaatmadja and Renandya suggests a lesson framework that they have tried and found useful. Whether or not you would consider following their example, pay particular attention to the right-hand column of their table which lists the principles behind what they are doing.

***Read, answer the questions below, and discuss with your partner / group.***

## **Hook, Book, Look, Took**

*by Herwindy M Tedjaatmadja and Willy A Renandya*

### **Introduction**

Are you teaching English to young children and looking for a simple lesson framework that you can use and reuse productively?

The Hook Book Look Took (HBLT) lesson structure might be the answer. Originally developed by Lawrence O Richards and Gary J Bredfeldt (1998), HBLT is a four-step strategy that is particularly popular with Sunday school teachers. The four-step lesson structure enables the teacher to introduce and prepare the children for the lesson through various fun activities (the Hook), to focus the children's attention on the contents of a section of the Bible (the Book), to guide the children to think about how to apply the message in life (the Look), and to summarize the lesson in such a way so that the children finish the lesson with a concrete takeaway (the Took).

We stumbled on this lesson structure quite accidentally when someone mentioned it casually to us and said that she fell in love with it the moment she learned about it and had since then tried it out with her Sunday-school children. It dawned on us almost immediately that this could be adapted for teaching English to young children. The structure is simple, which goes down well with teachers working with young learners, and is versatile enough to allow for creative interpretations and variations within each of the steps. The name is also quite catchy and easy to remember, which we think is another plus point.

### **The Hook Book Look Took lesson structure**

We describe in Table 1 below our version of the HBLT lesson framework. We have kept the terms the same but given different meanings to the four steps, in particular the Book and Look steps, so that they are more reflective of current theories of and principles for teaching English to young learners. We describe the four steps along with the language learning principles that underpin the steps in the table below.

<b>Step</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Principles</b>
<b>Hook</b>	All good teachers understand the importance of this step, especially when working with young learners. This is where we introduce and prepare the students affectively, cognitively and also linguistically for the main part of the lesson. With young children, the hook should be fun and enjoyable. Fun activities include, but	a. Learning is best facilitated when children are cognitively and affectively ready, when they can devote their full attention to what they are about to learn.





	<p>are not limited to, singing, playing games, dancing, drawing, or other activities that involve bodily movement. The use of a multi-sensory approach by appealing to the children's sense of sight, sound, touch, smell and taste is highly recommended to get their attention.</p> <p>Given that young learners have a short attention span, they will need to be hooked and rehooked as the main lesson progresses. In a 30-minute lesson, two or three hooking activities may need to be planned in order to keep the children engaged throughout the lesson.</p> <p>The best kind of hook should be related to the main objective of the lesson and also guide learners to the main activities of the lesson. This way, the hook provides a bridge between the aim of the lesson and the main activities of the lesson.</p>	<p>b. Learning is also best facilitated when children are in a happy state of mind. This state of mind can best be achieved through play or game-like activities.</p> <p>c. Schema theory is also at play here as the teacher tries to activate learners' prior knowledge and interest with the content of the lesson through fun activities.</p>
<p><b>Book</b></p>	<p>This is the main part of the lesson. The book here refers to any textual materials that appeal to young learners. Story books of various genres such as folklores, legends, fairy tales, fables and modern-day stories can be used to engage the learners. The key consideration when selecting stories is that they should be interesting, enjoyable and comprehensible to the learners. Materials of this type are likely to get the learners' full attention; while those that are uninteresting, unenjoyable and incomprehensible will just be noise to the children and will be filtered out.</p> <p>There are many book-based instructional procedures that teachers can use to explore the contents of the story. These procedures usually require the teacher to do some form of reading aloud; either reading to or with the children. The latter, reading with the children, is preferred because research has shown that this type of reading keeps the learners mentally engaged, which tends to result in deeper and durable learning (Blok, 1999).</p> <p>Teacher read-aloud techniques include the following: <i>Read and predict</i>. The teacher stops at interesting points in the story and encourages the children to predict what will happen next. This technique supports learner thinking and helps learners to think ahead and predict the contents of the next portion of the story. This is an important skill that good readers use to enhance their comprehension.</p>	<p>a. Books in general and stories in particular can provide a lot of comprehensible input to the children (Krashen, 2009), which is a necessary condition for language acquisition.</p> <p>b. Teacher read-aloud makes the language input more comprehensible, thus further enhancing language acquisition.</p> <p>c. This Book step reflects Paul Nation's (1996) first learning strand, i.e., learning through meaning focused input, where the learners' attention is primarily on the contents (meaning) of the stories, not on the form, thus promoting incidental learning.</p> <p>d. The teaching methods suggested for this step are geared towards developing learners' implicit knowledge of the English language, which is consistent with</p>



	<p><i>Tell and check.</i> The students are paired up and assigned as either a teller or a checker. The teacher reads a section of the story and asks the teller to retell that portion of the story to the checker. The checker checks if the teller has included all the relevant details. This technique keeps the students on task when listening to the story as they have to do the telling and checking afterward. The telling and checking can be done in either English or in the pupils' first language.</p> <p><i>Listen and draw.</i> The teacher can ask the students to draw pictures in response to what they are listening to to represent their understanding of the story. Listening and drawing keep them productively occupied throughout the lesson.</p> <p>A great book that contains a lot of practical tips and hundreds of recommended read-aloud titles is Jim Trealeas' now classic <i>The Read-aloud Handbook</i> (2006).</p> <p><i>Expressive reading.</i> Read with expression so that the story comes alive and the words become more vivid and meaningful. Use different voices when reading a dialogue. Bring a lot of excitement to your voice so that the children know that you are excited about the story. Slow down the speed to create suspense and read faster when the story gets exciting.</p> <p>Some teachers value student read-aloud and often ask pupils to do choral reading. While this activity can be useful (e.g., for fluency development), this can be a chore after a while and students may get bored.</p> <p>The benefits of reading aloud are many. Reading aloud, according to Kathleen Odean (2003), an expert on children's books, is most beneficial when it is done in a way that is enjoyable to both the teacher and the students. Her advice: "Just enjoy the books together; the increased vocabulary, understanding of story structure, exposure to correct grammar, and other benefits will follow naturally."</p>	<p>SLA theories (Ellis, 2005).</p>
<p><b>Look</b></p>	<p>The third step is to get the students to look more closely at the language features of the story. After receiving a lot of meaningful language input at the Book step, students should be made aware of which particular aspects of the input need to be attended to. These can be the meanings, spellings or pronunciation of words used to describe the characters in the story, the structure of the storyline (e.g. how the author builds up the climax of the story), certain grammatical</p>	<p>a. Noticing language features increases the chance of these features being incorporated into the learners' developing language system.</p> <p>b. The Look step reflects Paul Nation's (1996) second strand: language focused</p>



	<p>structures, etc.</p> <p>This step can be integrated with the second step in which the teacher can explain briefly certain language features that are worth highlighting. It can also be done as a separate activity after the second step. What is important for the teachers to remember is that they should not spend too much classroom time on it or turn this step into traditional discrete grammar exercises (e.g., turning statements into questions, which is not a meaningful activity for young children).</p>	<p>learning. Research has shown that deliberate attention to language features enhances learning. Noticing language features (e.g. certain grammatical features or vocabulary) from a meaningful text is more productive than learning these features out of context.</p>
<b>Took</b>	<p>The 'Took' is the conclusion of the whole lesson. It is the takeaway of the lesson. The questions to ask are: what is it that we want our students to remember most from the lesson? Is it the meanings of some new words? Is it the pronunciation of certain vowel sounds? Some grammar points? Is it some newly introduced comprehension skills?</p> <p>With young children, the take-away activities should be fun and enjoyable. For example, if the focus of the lesson is on the pronunciation of /ei/, the teacher can end the lesson by showing a YouTube video clip (<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c3v0rJqyCTM">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c3v0rJqyCTM</a>) entitled "Rain, Rain, Go Away!", which contains a lot of words with the /ei/ sound and get the children to sing along.</p> <p>If the objective of the lesson is on adjectives, the children can be shown the following poem (<a href="http://hrsbstaff.ednet.ns.ca/davidc/6c_files/Poem%20pics/cinquaindescrip.htm">http://hrsbstaff.ednet.ns.ca/davidc/6c_files/Poem%20pics/cinquaindescrip.htm</a>), and asked to replace the three adjectives (messy, spicy and delicious) with their own adjectives. This is a meaningful activity as the pupils get to practice using some adjectives and at the same time be involved in a creative text reconstruction activity.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Spaghetti</b> <b>Messy, spicy</b> <b>Slurping, sliding, falling</b> <b>Between my plate and mouth</b> <b>Delicious</b></p>	<p>a. Ending the lesson in this way increases the retention of the key points of the lesson.</p> <p>b. This step also enables the students to apply or transfer learning to a new situation.</p>

Table 1: HBLT Lesson Structure

## Conclusion

As is clear from the foregoing discussion, the HBLT lesson structure is simple but flexible. The four steps are easy to remember but flexible enough for teachers to carry out the steps according to their preferences, teaching styles and creativity. The language learning principles that underpin this lesson



structure are sound too and reflect what second language experts believe to be important for teaching young learners. The key steps of the HBLT lesson structure, the Book and the Look, reflect a balanced view of instructed language learning principles that promote both meaning-focused and language-focused learning (Ellis, 2005; Nation, 2007) through the use of high interest story books (Elley, 2001).

The teacher read-aloud methodology is also well-suited for young children before they can read independently and later benefit even more from engaging in extensive or pleasure reading (Renandya, 2007).

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(Tedjaatmadja & Renandya, 2012)

## Questions for Hook Book Took Look

1. When is learning best facilitated? .....
- .....
2. How can we make sure children are cognitively and affectively ready to learn? .....
- .....
3. How can we achieve the 'happy state of mind' that children need to be in to facilitate learning? .....
- .....
4. How is the 'schema theory' relevant in the 'Hook' part of the lesson? .....



- .....
5. Give some examples of activities to use in the 'Hook' stage of the lesson.
- .....
6. What is the multi-sensory approach and why is it useful?
- .....
7. How many hooking activities might be needed to keep children engaged in a 30-minute lesson?
- .....
8. What is the 'best kind of hook' and why? .....
- .....
9. What is a good way for teachers to provide 'comprehensible input? .....
- .....
10. How does teacher read-aloud affect language input? .....
- .....
11. What promotes 'incidental learning'? .....
- .....
12. What kind of materials are likely to get the young learners full attention? .....
- .....
13. What has research has shown about reading *with* children? .....
- .....
14. How does the *Read and Predict* technique help learners? .....
- .....
15. How does the *Tell and Check* technique assist students' learning? .....
- .....
16. How does the *Listen and Draw* technique help during a lesson? .....
- .....
17. What can be a problem with student read-aloud lessons? .....



.....

18. How can teachers increase the chance of language features being incorporated into the learners' developing language system? .....

19. What is a less productive way of learning language features? .....

.....

20. Give two reasons why the 'Took' method is a good way to end the lesson.

.....

.....

***Discuss with your partner / group which of the activities involve aesthetic values, and which are more concerned with linguistic features.***



## Applying Developmental Theories – Piaget and Kohlberg

Some people have said that children are just “little adults”. Teachers know that this is just not true, and there are many more differences between adults and children than just size! Theorists have examined how children grow and develop, and the fact that they all go through the same stages, in the same order. (You have hopefully already studied the theories in other courses.)

To help you understand (or remind you about) the theories and answer questions relating to the stages of development and moral development put forward by these two famous theorists, here are two short articles.

This article is from the Web MD website (Benarock, 2012):

### Piaget Stages of Development

The Piaget *Stages of Development* is a blueprint that describes the stages of normal intellectual development, from infancy through adulthood. This includes thought, judgment, and knowledge. The stages were named after psychologist and developmental biologist Jean Piaget, who recorded the intellectual development and abilities of infants, children, and teens.

Piaget's four stages of intellectual (or cognitive) development are:

- Sensorimotor. Birth through ages 18-24 months.
- Preoperational. Toddlerhood (18-24 months) through early childhood (age 7).
- Concrete operational. Ages 7 to 12.
- Formal operational. Adolescence through adulthood.

Piaget acknowledged that some children may pass through the stages at different ages than the averages noted above and that some children may show characteristics of more than one stage at a given time. But he insisted that cognitive development always follows this sequence, that stages cannot be skipped, and that each stage is marked by new intellectual abilities and a more complex understanding of the world.

### Sensorimotor Stage

During the early stages, infants are only aware of what is immediately in front of them. They focus on what they see, what they are doing, and physical interactions with their immediate environment.

Because they don't yet know how things react, they're constantly experimenting with activities such as shaking or throwing things, putting things in their mouths, and learning about the world through trial and error. The later stages include goal-oriented behaviour which brings about a desired result.

At about age 7 to 9 months, infants begin to realize that an object exists even if it can no longer be seen. This important milestone -- known as object permanence -- is a sign that memory is developing.

After infants start crawling, standing, and walking, their increased physical mobility leads to increased cognitive development. Near the end of the sensorimotor stage, infants reach another



important milestone -- early language development, a sign that they are developing some symbolic abilities.

### **Preoperational Stage**

During this stage, young children are able to think about things symbolically. Their language use becomes more mature. They also develop memory and imagination, which allows them to understand the difference between past and future, and engage in make-believe.

But their thinking is based on intuition and still not completely logical. They cannot yet grasp more complex concepts such as cause and effect, time, and comparison.

### **Concrete Operational Stage**

At this time, elementary-age and preadolescent children demonstrate logical, concrete reasoning.

Children's thinking becomes less egocentric and they are increasingly aware of external events. They begin to realize that one's own thoughts and feelings are unique and may not be shared by others or may not even be part of reality. Children also develop operational thinking -- the ability to perform reversible mental actions.

During this stage, however, most children still can't tackle a problem with several variables in a systematic way.

### **Formal Operational Stage**

Adolescents who reach this fourth stage of intellectual development are able to logically use symbols related to abstract concepts, such as algebra and science. They can think about multiple variables in systematic ways, formulate hypotheses, and consider possibilities. They also can ponder abstract relationships and concepts such as justice.

Although Piaget believed in lifelong intellectual development, he insisted that the formal operational stage is the final stage of cognitive development, and that continued intellectual development in adults depends on the accumulation of knowledge.

(Benarock, 2012)

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*The second article, about Kohlberg, is from the Simply Psychology website (McLeod, 2011):*

### **Kohlberg**

*by Saul McLeod, published 2011*

Lawrence Kohlberg (1958) agreed with Piaget's (1932) theory of moral development in principle but wanted to develop his ideas further.





He used Piaget's story-telling technique to tell people stories involving moral dilemmas. In each case he presented a choice to be considered for example between the rights of some authority and the needs of some deserving individual who is being unfairly treated.

One of the best known of Kohlberg's (1958) stories concerns a man called Heinz who lived somewhere in Europe.

Heinz's wife was dying from a particular type of cancer. Doctors said a new drug might save her. The drug had been discovered by a local chemist and Heinz tried desperately to buy some, but the chemist was charging ten times the money it cost to make the drug and this was much more than the Heinz could afford.

Heinz could only raise half the money, even after help from family and friends. He explained to the chemist that his wife was dying and asked if he could have the drug cheaper or pay the rest of the money later. The chemist refused saying that he had discovered the drug and was going to make money from it. The husband was desperate to save his wife, so later that night he broke into the chemist's and stole the drug.

Kohlberg asked a series of questions such as:

1. Should Heinz have stolen the drug?
2. Would it change anything if Heinz did not love his wife?
3. What if the person dying was a stranger, would it make any difference?
4. Should the police arrest the chemist for murder if the woman died?

By studying the answers from children of different ages to these questions Kohlberg hoped to discover the ways in which moral reasoning changed as people grew.

Kohlberg told several dilemma stories and asked many such questions to discover how people reasoned about moral issues. He identified three distinct levels of moral reasoning each with two sub stages. People can only pass through these levels in the order listed. Each new stage replaces the reasoning typical of the earlier stage. Not everyone achieves all the stages.

### ***Kohlberg Stages of Moral Development***

#### **Level 1 - Pre-conventional morality**

Authority is outside the individual and reasoning is based on the physical consequences of actions.

- Stage 1. Obedience and Punishment Orientation. The child/individual is good in order to avoid being punished. If a person is punished they must have done wrong.
- Stage 2. Individualism and Exchange. At this stage children recognize that there is not just one right view that is handed down by the authorities. Different individuals have different viewpoints.

#### **Level 2 - Conventional morality**

Authority is internalized but not questioned and reasoning is based on the norms of the group to which the person belongs.



- Stage 3. Good Interpersonal Relationships. The child/individual is good in order to be seen as being a good person by others. Therefore, answers are related to the approval of others.
- Stage 4. Maintaining the Social Order. The child/individual becomes aware of the wider rules of society so judgments concern obeying rules in order to uphold the law and to avoid guilt.

### **Level 3 - Post-conventional morality**

Individual judgment is based on self-chosen principles, and moral reasoning is based on individual rights and justice.

- Stage 5. Social Contract and Individual Rights. The child/individual becomes aware that while rules/laws might exist for the good of the greatest number, there are times when they will work against the interest of particular individuals. The issues are not always clear cut. For example, in Heinz's dilemma the protection of life is more important than breaking the law against stealing.
- Stage 6: Universal Principles. People at this stage have developed their own set of moral guidelines which may or may not fit the law. The principles apply to everyone. E.g. human rights, justice and equality. The person will be prepared to act to defend these principles even if it means going against the rest of society in the process and having to pay the consequences of disapproval and or imprisonment. Kohlberg doubted few people reached this stage.

### **Critical Evaluation**

Criticism of Kohlberg's theory comes from Gilligan, who argues that the theory is androcentric (male bias) after Kohlberg reporting that most men were at stage 4 while most women were at stage 3.

Gilligan (1982) claims that the female participants of Kohlberg's study were being judged using a male standard due to the gender bias of Kohlberg's original research, which was based solely on studying men. Gilligan reached the conclusion that Kohlberg's theory did not account for the fact that women approach moral problems from an 'ethics of care', rather than an 'ethics of justice' perspective, which challenges some of the fundamental assumptions of Kohlberg's theory.

The fact that Kohlberg's theory is heavily dependent on an individual's response to an artificial dilemma brings question to the validity of the results obtained through this research. People may respond very differently to real life situations that they find themselves in than they do to an artificial dilemma presented to them in the comfort of a research environment. Further, the gender bias issue raised by Gilligan is a reminded of the significant gender debate still present in psychology, which when ignored, can have a large impact on results obtained through psychological research.

The way in which Kohlberg carried out his research when constructing this theory may not have been the best way to test whether all children follow the same sequence of stage progression. His research was cross-sectional, meaning that he interviewed children of different ages to see what level of moral development they were at.

A better way to see if all children follow the same order through the stages would have been to carry out longitudinal research on the same children. However, longitudinal research on Kohlberg's theory has since been carried out by Colby et al. (1983) who tested 58 male participants of Kohlberg's



original study. He tested them 6 times in the span of 27 years and found support for Kohlberg's original conclusion, that we all pass through the stages of moral development in the same order.

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(McLeod, 2011)

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### **Discussion questions**

***Consider these questions with your group (or partner).***

According to Piaget's stages of development:

- What stage(s) do you expect the children you teach to be at?
- How will this affect your teaching – particularly considering story reading/telling and related activities?

Look at Kohlberg's theory and the story about Heinz. Discuss the questions.

- What level/stage are you at?
- What level/stage (s) do you expect the children you are teaching to be at?
- How will this affect your teaching – particularly considering story reading/telling and related activities?

***Write a summary statement about each to present back to the class.***



## Creating Activities and Materials

One of the first tasks a teacher - especially a new inexperienced teacher - faces when entering a classroom is gaining 'control' of the class. It may be a large, unruly class, and unfamiliar to the teacher. The most comfortable time in the classroom (for the teacher) is when the children are all sitting quietly at their desks, reading and/or writing, under control!

However, if you look back at the articles we have been reading in topic 4 and topic 5, you will notice that most of the activities surrounding story telling/reading are not reading and writing activities. After all, we are talking about 'young learners' for whom reading/writing may be a chore which detracts from the enjoyment of the story.

### A lot of the activities talked about use words such as:

listening, speaking, voice variations, intonation, whispering, moving, dancing, gestures, mime, freeze games, rhyming words, predictive patterns repeated, artistic response, setting stories to music, drama, singing, actions, reciting, drawing, enjoying illustrations, creating illustrations, Pictionary, flashcard games, photographing, verbal fill-in-the-banks, memorising, puppets, realia ...

These activities are mostly oral/aural active, and can be quite *noisy* and hard to control at first. That doesn't mean you can't use worksheets and other *quiet* reading/writing/drawing activities. Remember the sequencing activities from Brown (2004), where he talks about alternating activities:

One guideline that works well with young learners is to assure that, in any given lesson, there is always a little enthusiastic singing, a little quiet listening, a little enthusiastic dancing, and a little quiet artwork.

Keep this in mind as you attempt the exercises below:

## Assessment / Exercises

These exercises are designed to help you apply what you have been reading. Your lecturers may choose to use one or more of them as assessment tasks.

### 1. Turn a story into a drama activity

- Identify a story or story book you could use to develop a drama performance.
- Why is the book suitable?
- What are the benefits of such activities?
- Which of the activities / questions require an aesthetic response from the children, and which are strategies to teach linguistic features?
- Prepare a presentation (PowerPoint OR other) to tell the class about your ideas.

### 2. Create language focussed activities

Using the same book or a different one:

- Create 3 (different!) language focused activities or worksheets. (Refer to the notes above!)



### 3. Explore development

Choose a story / book that you could tell to children.

- Choose some questions and/or activities.
- Consider how the story / questions / activities could help to explore and develop
  - the children's intellectual development (Piaget's developmental stages)
  - the children's moral/personality development (Kohlberg's model)
- Prepare a presentation (PowerPoint or other) to share your ideas.

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## Topic 6: The Craft of Storytelling

From Scholastic Education *The Art of Storytelling* (Barbour, 2008)

### The art of storytelling

7 April 2008

By **Rona Barbour** – *professional storyteller*

Rona Barbour shares a few tricks of the trade to help you bring stories to life.

People have been telling stories to pass on values and information, and to make sense of life, as long as we have had language. Storytelling is effective in relaying information because it engages our imagination, hearts and minds. There is something in a storytelling experience for everyone.



Dry data is boring, and delivering a set of facts and figures using this method means it is likely to be forgotten as quickly as it is absorbed. Because story engages us on so many levels, we easily retain it in our memory to use it as needed. The natural form of story makes sense to human beings. It contains all that we care about: people, problems and solutions. A story is really just a mass of information organised in the form of a situation with characters who we can relate to; settings we can envisage; problems we want to know the answer to; and resolutions that give us hope. Stories are food for thought. They help us to discern right from wrong, and give us the heroes and heroines we wish to model ourselves on.

A well-developed and presented story can hold the interest of an entire audience, and it will reach out and touch them at any age. Knowing and applying the few simple basics of storytelling will help strengthen your stories.

### The storytelling persona

The most successful storytellers will tell you that they have a totally separate persona which they adopt when working. Many will also tell you that it was something they only realised later, and developed over time. In other words, they were not initially aware they needed this separate identity, but that it came with experience. So, with this valuable experience now shared, remember before you begin to tell a story to take on your storytelling persona.



- Choose your persona and act it out right from the start. For example, you could be the 'storytelling fairy' or the 'old woman of the woods'.
- Whatever you choose as your persona, think of yourself as that person, and act and dress accordingly – your storytelling performance will be better for it.
- If you wish, you can have more than one storytelling persona.

### **The confident storyteller**

Confidence is something that grows with experience, so do not expect to be perfect first time. Keep in the forefront of your mind that the audience do not know what to expect, and you are in control. Do not worry about mistakes – they are part of storytelling. Even the most experienced storytellers make mistakes or omissions, but the audience do not realise because they do not know what you were going to say... so don't tell them!

- Confidence comes with experience, so practise whenever you can.
- Be well organised. Know which story you are going to tell and rehearse it.
- Prepare well in advance, until you are completely confident that you can tell the story on demand.
- Do not worry about telling the story word for word. Tell the story how you remember it and this will make it different every time.

### **Finding stories**

There are many kinds of stories you can work with. Try starting with simple fairy tales or folk tales that you know, for example, choose your favourite Grimm's fairy tale, and then, as your experience grows, you can explore various different types and branch out.

With time, you will probably find many kinds of tales that will interest you personally. There are all sorts to choose from, including folk tales from other countries and cultures; humorous tales; traditional fairy tales in numerous versions; wish tales; trickster tales; scary tales; tall tales; myths and legends; and Bible stories. The list is endless, but do not let that put you off.

It is far best to work with traditional folklore or tales in public domain, than to plagiarise a living author or storyteller without their permission. With experience, you may want to try a variety of stories, and perhaps even go on to tell your own personal stories.

### **Prepare and practise**

Once you decide on a story, spend plenty of time with it. For some people it may take some time and a number of 'tellings' before a new story becomes their own. Others are naturals and can pick up a story and run with it almost immediately. However, this does not necessarily make them any better in the long run.

### **Preparation**

- Read the story several times, first for pleasure, then with concentration.
- Analyse the story's appeal – the word pictures you want your listeners to see, and the mood you wish to create.



- Live with your story until the characters and setting become as real to you as the people and places you know in real life.
- Visualise the story. Imagine the sounds, tastes, smells and colours. Only when you see the story vividly yourself, will you be able to paint the 'word pictures' to enable your audience to see it.

### **Delivery techniques**

- Use your voice to good effect when you are telling the story in a calm and relaxed way.
- If you are telling the story to very young children, maintain their attention by keeping it quite short (approximately ten minutes).
- Show enthusiasm and use hand and eye gestures to convey meaning – younger children love this.
- Demonstrate sincerity and whole heartedness – be earnest.
- Express animation and variety in your storytelling to make the story seem more interesting.

### **Presentation**

- Practise in front of a mirror, or a friend, and ask for their honest feedback.
- Remember that the words are only part of the package that includes body language, clothing, tone and other components.
- Unless you are an accomplished musician who is used to talking while you play, do not use music as it will take away from the storytelling performance. Instead, use props, such as small hand bells or pipes, to indicate certain noises.
- Use various puppets if you feel confident about doing this and talking at the same time.

### **Story setting**

Storytelling is best carried out in a relaxed atmosphere that is free from distractions. The audience should be comfortable and sitting close together. Make sure that the room is quiet, and empty except for your audience.

Ensure that all toilet trips are carried out beforehand and, in the case of adults, all mobile phones are switched off or put on silent. Give careful attention to the setting beforehand, and be prepared to rearrange the room to bring the listeners closer, or use a backdrop or hanging to create the correct atmosphere, especially in early years' settings.

Remember to give credit to sources, but above all, enjoy telling stories!

(Wright, 1995)





## **How to choose, tell, and read stories aloud**

Telling and reading stories to children is a central part of classroom life. This section of the book is about how to choose, tell, and read aloud as well as possible. Of course, some people are 'born' storytellers, but that applies to every ability that we have. The fact is that we can all improve our storytelling and story reading, and that is what matters.

### **Telling or reading aloud?**

We need both salt and pepper in our cooking. Why should we want to say that one is better than the other?

Telling and reading aloud both have their strong points.

### ***Reading aloud***

#### Good Points

1. You don't have to learn the story.
2. You don't have to worry about making mistakes in English.
3. If you read the story then the children will always hear exactly the same text and this will help them to predict what is to come.
4. It demonstrates that books are a source of interesting ideas and so encourages reading.
5. The children can, perhaps, borrow the book afterwards.
6. Pictures in the book can help the children's understanding.

#### Not so good points

1. You must be careful not to read too quickly.
2. It is easy to 'bury yourself' in a book and forget the listeners!

### ***Telling***

#### Good points

1. The children feel that you are giving them something very personal. The story is yours; it is not coming out of a book.
2. Children, these days, are rarely used to the experience of hearing someone tell a story and it can have a powerful effect on them.
3. It is often easier to understand a story being told than one which is read aloud:
  - it is natural to repeat oneself when speaking;
  - you can see the children's faces and bodies and respond to their lack of comprehension, their joy, and their immediate concerns more readily;
  - you can make use of your body more effectively to heighten meaning;
  - you can use the language you know the children know.

#### Not so good points

1. You must learn the story well enough to tell it without the book (see the tips on page 12).
2. You might make some mistakes in English.

## Your English and the telling of stories

One of the best ways of improving your English is to learn stories to internalise a ten-minute flow of English. Traditional teaching did not develop fluency. Oral fluency needs time, opportunity, and encouragement to develop, and that applies to you as well as to the children. If you learn a story you have a real purpose – to communicate it to the children. And how lucky you are because children are an appreciative and kindly audience!

So, if your English is not very fluent and accurate then that is an excellent reason for telling stories to children!

### Choose a story:

- which will engage the children within the first few lines (note that children often accept and like a story in the foreign language they might feel was childish in their own language)
- which you like
- which you feel is appropriate for the children
- which the children will understand well enough to enjoy
- which offers the children a rich experience of language
- which does not have long descriptive passages
- which is right for the occasion and in its relation with other things you are doing with the children
- which you feel you can tell well

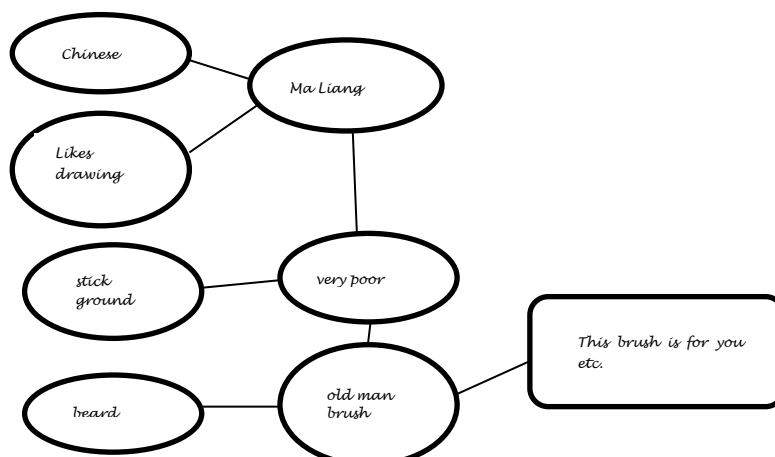
### Remembering a story

There are various ways of remembering stories, you must find the way most appropriate to you.

It is difficult to remember a written story word for word, like an actor – and in any case, it seems rather artificial when it is done like this. Why try to do it? Concentrate on learning the gist of the story rather than every detail of it.

Here are some techniques:

- read the story or listen to it a few times and then try to retell it on a tape or to a friend.
- explicitly select the key points, write them down, perhaps in bubbles as in the example here for 3.8, 'Ma Liang'.



*First part of my  
'bubbled' Ma Liang*



This is a technique that I use. Note how I have added extra details to the bubbles but if I forget them I know that I can still tell the story. It is important to make each bubbled story look different because it will then be easier to remember visually. It is the actual making of the bubbled story which helps me to get it into the memory. Later the bubbled story acts as a useful and rapid mnemonic.

- Instead of putting the key points in bubbles, you might prefer simply to write out the key points. This is called a story skeleton.
- See the story as a film in your imagination and let your telling of the story be guided by that inner vision.
- You could remember a dramatic or verbal rhythm in the story. (I think I am right in saying that the great West Indian storyteller, Grace Hallworth, learns her stories this way.)
- Remember the personalities of the characters and this will remind you of the story. (Duncan Williamson, one of whose many stories is 3.6, 'The little white cat', told me this is what he does.)

Whatever technique you use, it is probably best not to tell it dramatically the first time. Find a friend who will listen to you and try it on them. Warn them that you will just concentrate on getting the gist of the story right. Once you are confident that you can remember the basic story, you can concentrate on expressing what you feel about the story in future tellings. The more often you tell the story, the more you will feel 'at home' with it. Do not expect to tell it brilliantly the first time. Furthermore, the more stories you learn, the easier it is to learn new ones.

### **Just before you tell or read the story**

I am referring here to the craft of storytelling and story reading rather than to the pedagogical preparation, which is discussed in a later section (see pages 23-33 and 64). Half the success of a story depends on what you do before you begin! The children must be in the right 'frame of mind' for a story. If they think it is all part of the normal lesson they will be in their 'normal' frame of mind and not in their 'story' frame of mind, and you will probably not have much success.

So they must be in a story frame of mind!

- Try to get the children much nearer to you than is normally the case. This is partly because it is important for them to see you (and your book if you are using one), but it is also because it changes the relationship between you and them and each other. They know they are going to share something. Younger children can be asked to sit on the floor around your feet.
- If at all possible change the seating before the story is told. I always try to do this before the children come into the class. My preferred arrangement is a U-shape of chairs with a U-shape of table immediately behind. Some children sit on the chairs and some children sit on the edges of the tables.
- If you cannot change the arrangement of tables and chairs, then try to find some other way of helping the children to feel that something special is going to happen (rather than merely saying so). Children are so used to hearing you talk; they just assume it is going to be what they have had before. Some teachers always sit on their table or stand in a particular part of the room when they are going to tell a story and never do this at any other time.



- Some teachers have a 'story bag' (which might just be an ordinary plastic bag) which they have only to hold up for the children to get into their 'story frame of mind'. Other teachers often make use of a friendly puppet. Others might want to wear a particular hat or coat.
- You can put some music on – always use the same music and then the children will know and get themselves ready.
- Once, in a noisy class, I wrote on the board *I'd like to tell you a story*. Then I sat down on a chair in an open space in front of the children and waited. I didn't have to ask them to be quiet. You might write *A story for you* or just *Story time*.
- Perhaps have a regular time for your storytelling or story reading and the time will put them into the right frame of mind.
- For particular stories you might display a picture before you begin, or an object like an old umbrella, or a basket with food in it for 3.7, 'Little Red Riding Hood'. An antique doll can be used to tell the story of her times. A Cinderella puppet can tell the Cinderella story.

### **Different ways of beginning**

- Talk with the children about their experience of what you know will be a central topic of the story. For example, *Hairy Tree Man*, a story in my 'Spellbinders' series from Oxford University Press, is about brother and sister relationships. One way of beginning the story would be to ask the children about their relationships with brothers and sisters.
- Begin with an explicit introduction to the story: for example, 'I'm going to tell you a story about a little white cat'. Then you can tell them the 'Little white cat' story (3.6).
- Begin without any preparation at all, directly with the first line of the story, or with *Once upon a time ...*
- Don't begin until you have everyone's attention and total silence – unless you are confident that the sheer power of your own telling is going to quieten them down.

### **Your manner**

You must tell stories in your own way and that way must be a normal part of you. Grace Hallworth, the West Indian storyteller, is quiet and dignified as a person and as a storyteller she is just the same. Duncan Williamson, the Scottish storyteller, is full of fun in normal conversation and is just the same in his storytelling. I would say, heighten slightly what you are and see everything about yourself positively. If you are a quiet sort of person, then choose the stories you like and tell them quietly!

But I do think that, whatever kind of personality you have, you must give yourself totally to your story and to your listeners if you want to get back a strong quality of listening and appreciation from them. Many people who are not confident as storytellers don't want to risk failure, so they don't really give themselves and then they get a feeble response because of it.

### **Your voice**

The potential variety of the human voice includes: pitch, volume, rhythm, softness/harshness, pace and pause. Making use of this variety depends on the story, the personality of the teller, and the listeners. Of course, a dramatic use of the full variety of all these qualities would often be



inappropriate. On the other hand, many people do not make sufficient use of this potential richness, and produce a monotone.

You have probably not got the time to go on a course in voice training! On the other hand, there are some basic things that we can all do.

- Sit or stand so that you can breathe easily – don't be 'all hunched up'.
- Keep breathing while talking so you don't become breathless.
- Speak loudly enough for the children at the back to hear easily, but not by using a harsh 'teacher's voice' designed to cut through school corridors and across school playgrounds.
- Adopt a different voice for the narrator and for each of the characters. Make these voices different: high/low, soft/harsh. A simple experiment – try saying an ordinary sentence so that it sounds like the start of an amazing story. For example, *I got up this morning and opened the curtain.*

A second experiment – try saying the same sentence in several moods: happily, unhappily, wickedly, innocently, in a thoughtful way, in a casual way, in a frightened way.

- Pace and pause: the pause is one of the most powerful of all qualities in storytelling and reading. The listeners have to become active in order to fill it in – they try to predict what you will say next. It is one of the most vital elements in dramatic storytelling. Use it at key moments.
- Remember that in English we tend to stress the important words in a sentence. This helps to convey meaning.

### ***The language***

Be prepared to pre-teach important words and phrases which are an intrinsic part of the story. They might be important for the meaning of the story (for example, *chimney sweep* is an important pair of words in 3.6, 'The Little White Cat'), or they might be important for their play on words and sounds (for example, the repetition of *dark, dark*, in 3.2, 'In a dark, dark town').

Even simpler words can be spoken as if they are important. Speak slowly and enjoy the sound of the words you say. Of course, this is easier to do in one's mother tongue than in a foreign language. A feeling of rhythm and rhyme almost certainly helps people to learn and remember. Stories in verse are loved and effective.

Make sure you are confident of how to begin and finish the story. Many storytellers say that you should learn the first and the last lines by heart. Personally, I do this with some stories, but with others I like to slide the listeners into the story before they know they are in it.

Make the story yours and theirs. You might pause in the story to say to a child, if it is true, *You've been to China, haven't you, Hans?* Omit, add, change, and emphasise if you have a good reason. But be careful – the great traditional stories have stood the test of time.



### ***Your body and face***

It is probably true that we communicate as much or more through our bodily and facial movement than we do by the words we use. We can move quickly or slowly, jerkily or smoothly, with grand gestures, or with minor movements of our eyebrows. We can remain seated or we can move and act out not only the players within our story but even inanimate objects! The way we make use of this potential depends on our nature and on the nature of the story and the listeners.

Just as, in general, less experienced storytellers employ a monotonous voice, so they also fail to use the full potential of their body for communication. Indeed, they may use their body and face to communicate their primary concern, their own anxiety, rather than the quality of the story! Here are some tips.

- If you are telling a story rather than reading aloud from a book, you can easily move like Little Red Riding Hood as she picks the flowers (see 3.7), or you can hold up one of your hands in front of your face and slowly look around it with a wicked smile to represent the wolf. As you creep into the dark cave with the Little Indian Boy (3.4) you can hold out your hands and pretend to be putting them down on the ground very, very slowly and you can switch your eyes from side to side as if searching the darkness.
- Involve the children, for example, as you lift the axe off the paper in the 'Ma Liang' story (3.8), walk across to a child and pretend to give it to him or her.
- Very often I find that I begin to make the action with my body a split second before I refer to it. So, for example, I might hold up my hand to my ear and switch my eyes to and fro just a moment before I say, 'He listened'.
- Make your movements simple, slow, and never apologetic! I think body movements in storytelling should be just a little slower and bigger than you would do them in normal conversation. Give the children time to appreciate your movements and time to feel how they contribute to the meaning of the story. We are gripped by stories and storytellers because we feel they really know what they are doing and saying; your storytelling must be clear and simple and not fleeting and confusing like normal life. But I say, 'think', because we must all find our own way of telling.
- Look at people as you tell the story. Don't just scan their faces so that you can claim you were looking, but really look. (p18) It doesn't do any harm to look at one particular child for several moments as you tell the story. Other children feel that you are concentrating on them and not just the story.

### ***Interruptions***

One child might chatter to a neighbour. The school caretaker might knock at the door. Someone might drop a book. What do you do?

### **Children not paying attention**

- If it is several children, it may be that you are not being dramatic enough. Liven things up. Move around as you tell the story.



- Involve the children, for example, by asking them what they would do in the situation in the story.
- If one child is chattering then go and stand very near to him or her as you tell the story or even tell the story directly to him or her.

### **School caretaker knocking at the door**

Don't try to compete! Quietly ask someone to see who it is and deal with it in the normal way.

### **Dropping of a book**

- Pause, show no expression of annoyance, perhaps pick up the book yourself, and then carry on.
- Make a joke out of it, perhaps related to the story.

The important thing is not to break the magic spell. You have lifted the children off the ground and you are holding them there. Avoid returning, however momentarily, to your normal teaching voice and manner. That would jolt them off the magic carpet and out of their 'story frame of mind'.

Don't use the cancellation of a storytelling as a punishment.

### ***Extra tips on reading from a book***

- Read the story beforehand and get to know it and how to read it with some sense of drama. Also make sure you can pronounce all the words and know what they mean.
- Don't speak into the book. As general guidance, read the story to the children at the back of the group.
- Read slowly and with a more dramatic quality than in normal speech.
- Stop to comment, or to invite comments, quite often.
- Look up and try to make eye contact. Check that the whole group is with you.
- Stop to show the pictures and make sure all the children can see them.
- Have your finger ready to open the next page.
- Don't read for longer than about 10 minutes (less for younger children).

(Wright, 1995, pp. 10-19)



## **Important Practical Considerations**

No matter how good your story is and how well you have learnt to tell it, the following practical points also need your attention:

### **Voice projection**

The children need to be able to hear your voice no matter where they are in the room. This doesn't *necessarily* mean that you need to speak (more) loudly, and it certainly doesn't mean you should shout! You need to 'project' your voice – it's a bit like throwing it. Just like the LCD projector puts pictures up there on the screen.

Talk to the child who is furthest away from you. Look at them, and talk to them as if no one else is there – and then, of course, everyone else in between will be able to hear as well.

The key is often in your breathing – more air coming out generally creates more volume to your voice. Your poise (see below) will affect your ability to project your voice.

### **Diction**

No matter how loud your voice is, or how well you project your voice, if your diction is unclear then no one will understand your story.

The children may not understand every word in the story, but they will have a better idea of what you are saying if your speech is a little slower than usual, and if you enunciate your words clearly. Imagine they are trying to lip-read, and work your lips to show them the words.

Your face should be turned towards them – you should, of course, be endeavouring to establish eye-contact throughout the story – and you should keep your chin up, not looking down at your notes or the book – this is also part of your 'poise'.

### **Poise**

You can sit or stand to tell your story, but you should never slump. Some storytellers have a special chair that they sit in so that the children know when it is story time.

Your back should be straight, and your head should be held high. This is so that you can breathe well, project your voice, and demonstrate clear diction.

If you are using pictures, puppets, or realia, these need to be held up and out where the children can all see them. You may need to pause in your story to move around or move the picture/objects around for children to appreciate without being distracted from the actual story.

### **Gesture**

You can use gestures to help with understanding of vocabulary. Your gestures can also be used to build awareness of the different characters in the story.

You can gesture with your hands, better still make big gestures with your whole arm moving from the shoulder – make sure the children down the back can see your movements clearly, and maybe encourage them to follow or copy.





You can also make gestures by the movements of your head, hips, legs and feet. (Always be aware of safety, and especially if the children are moving around too.)

### **Facial expression**

Tell the story with your face! Your facial expression should depict the various characters, and their feelings, and your feelings in response to the events in the story. The children should be looking at your face and eyes and reading your lips. Don't be in a hurry. Allow the children to take in the expressions on your face, and even try copying them. Ask them to show with their faces how they feel, or how they think that a character feels. (And then, of course, they can try drawing this as a follow-up to the story.)

### **Body movement**

While you are being careful of your poise, and using gestures and facial expressions, your body can still do a lot of storytelling as well. For example, each of your important characters has a different way of standing, and walking. As you mention a character you can get into their special body shape, take a few steps the way they walk, use their particular gestures and facial expressions, and speak with their voice. (It is a lot to think about while you are nervously telling, but concentrate on one aspect the first time until it becomes natural.)

You can also use your body position in front of the children to make it obvious who is talking in the story, a bit like you are taking the place of two (or more!) different actors in a play. Stand on the left when the old man talks and on the right when the cat replies.

### **Time**

Young children, especially, cannot concentrate for more than 10 minutes at the most. Your story needs to be carefully planned so that you don't get too carried away on one particular point and then lose them before you get to the exciting ending. Write yourself a 'bubble' plan, or a series of pictures, or whatever works for you, and add the timing in minutes and/or seconds – and then practice. All of your brilliant work and preparation will go down the drain if you don't pay careful attention to your timing. (The opposite is bad, too, when the audience are ready and the story is all over in 30 seconds because you forgot parts of it!)

While you are keeping to a tight schedule, it is very important not to hurry – speaking too fast will simply mean no one gets what you are saying, and you will get into a muddle trying to do all your movements and gestures.

### **Intonation**

The English language has a very different 'tune' to Bahasa Malaysia. One of the (many) reasons for telling stories is to get the children used to this. So you need to make sure you are getting it right. Do not speak in a monotone. Make sure you emphasise the important words. Make sure you know when your voice should rise at the end of a sentence, and when it should fall. Practice.

### **Props**

Props are not essential, but can be very useful. This could include puppets to indicate the different characters, or even a puppet who pretends to be the storyteller, chatting with the teacher (you). You



can also use simple costumes – a hat, umbrella, shoes, jacket – to give clues as to the setting and characters and keep the children interested. And the children may also like to try using/wearing the costumes, become the characters ... leading on to a play or drama related to the story.

Other types of realia can be useful props – equipment, food, a toy, anything that relates to the story, gets the children interested, and even helps their understanding.

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## **An example of a Reading Aloud lesson**

(Cox, 2008, p. 216)

### **1:15-2:30 Reading Aloud and Story Dramatization**

Mauretta reads aloud Marcia Brown's (1957) picture book *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*. She reads dramatically, with a lot of facial expressions and gestures. When she's finished the children applaud and ask her to read it again. She does, using as much expression as she did the first time. During the second reading she encourages the children to fill in whatever words they remember from the first reading. Since this is a predictable pattern book, with a repeated phrase, many students join in, chanting with the troll, "Who's that tramping over my bridge?" The children begin to imitate Mauretta's gestures, such as making a long nose with her hand for the troll and patting the floor to make the "trip-trap" sound as the billy goats cross the bridge, one by one. The children make this noise softly for the first and smallest billy goat and loudly for the last and biggest one.

After reading, the class talks about what happened in the story. Mauretta asks open-ended, aesthetic questions:

"What did you think about the story?"

"What was your favourite part?"

"Who was your favourite character?"

Next, the class dramatizes the story. First, the children spread out around the room, and pretend to be the different character, imitating one at a time. Mauretta says she will take one volunteer to act out each character. The rest of the students have rhythm sticks and will make the "Trip-trap" sound effects. The scene is set with green carpet squares for grass and a bridge made of wooden blocks. A narrator is chosen to tell the story. The students dramatize the story this way several times. Mauretta promises she will read it again the next day, giving more children chances to play the characters.

(Cox, 2008, p. 216)



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## Topic 7: Exploring Language through Stories

As we have talked about in previous topics, as well as sheer enjoyment (for motivation) and allowing an aesthetic response from the children, the purpose of storytelling is for them to explore language and improve their proficiency in English.

### Developing Fluency and Cohesion

What are 'fluency' and 'cohesion'? And why are they important?

#### What is fluency?

*Here is a short definition of 'fluency':*

Fluency refers to the ability to produce rapid, flowing, natural speech, but not necessarily grammatically correct speech. This is often contrasted with accuracy.

(Bogglesworld ESL, 2013)

**Discuss with your partner/group:** Why is 'fluency' often contrasted with 'accuracy'?

Summarise: .....

.....  
.....

**Here is a short article explaining 'cohesion', which is slightly more complex. Read it and summarise below – discuss with your partner/group.**

### What teachers should know about cohesion

#### Introduction

Cohesion is the term for the quality of a text such that it appears as a single unit, not as a random sequence of thoughts or sentences. Cohesion is achieved by a number of devices or ties as explained below.

ESL students may have trouble understanding a text that seems to have easy words and concepts because they fail to identify the cohesive ties. Conversely, the teacher may fail to understand the ideas or arguments that the ESL student is trying to express because the student has not yet learned how to tie English sentences together clearly and naturally with the appropriate cohesive devices.

Mainstream teachers who have explicit knowledge of the following cohesive techniques will be in a better position a) to help their ESL students understand the difficult texts in their coursebooks or found on the internet, and b) to avoid problematic cohesion in their own worksheets and tests.



### ***Backward reference***

The most common cohesive device in texts is the backward reference to something that has been mentioned before. The technical term for this type of reference is *anaphora*. Three examples of anaphoric reference are:

1. Use of a pronoun to refer back to an already-mentioned noun.
2. Use of the definite article to qualify a noun that has been already been introduced with the indefinite article.
3. Substitution of an already mentioned noun by a synonym or hyponym.

Here are examples of each:

- My sister's on the phone. **She** says she needs the drill **that** she lent us.
- When I looked out of the window yesterday I saw a man and a woman standing by the gate. **The** man was wearing a hooded jacket and **the** woman was carrying a baseball bat.
- There was so much delicious **food** on display, but I'm on a diet so I had to stick to the **salad**.

### ***Forward reference***

Another common cohesive device is forward reference or cataphora. Here are two examples of cataphoric reference:

- Perhaps I shouldn't tell you **this**, but when I was young I had hair down to my waist!
- Please send your reply to the **following** address.

### ***Ellipsis***

Ellipsis is a third cohesive device. This is the omission of words on the assumption that the listener or reader will be able to supply them mentally. Examples:

- The horse (that was) injured in the road accident had to be put down.
- I would love to visit New Zealand but I can't afford to. ( .. visit New Zealand.)
- I'd rather talk to someone on the phone than send them an email. Wouldn't you? (.. rather talk to someone on the phone than send them an email?)

### ***Conjunctives***

A final and very important device that makes texts cohesive is the use of conjunctives or adjuncts. These are the words that show how ideas are connected. For example: *firstly, secondly, so, however, nevertheless, in conclusion, by contrast, on the other hand, etc.*

(Shoebottom, 2013)

### ***Summary – What is Cohesion?***

.....

.....

.....



***In his book *Storytelling with Children*, Wright explains some of the language benefits of storytelling, including various types of fluency. Read the section and answer the questions below.***

## **Why Stories?**

Stories, which rely so much on words, offer a major and constant source of language experience for children. Stories are motivating, rich in language experience, and inexpensive! Surely, stories should be a central part of the work of all primary teachers whether they are teaching the mother tongue or a foreign language.

Here are some of the most important reasons why stories should play a central role in teaching a foreign language to teaching.

### **Motivation**

Children have a constant need for stories and they will always be willing to listen or to read, if the right moment is chosen.

### **Meaning**

Children want to find meaning in stories, so they listen with a purpose. If they find meaning they are rewarded through their ability to understand, and are motivated to try to improve their ability to understand even more. This is in contrast to so many activities in foreign language learning, which have little or no intrinsic interest or value for the children.

### **Fluency**

#### ***Listening and reading fluency***

In conversations with native speakers the most important ability is to be able to understand a sustained flow of the foreign language in which there are words which are *new* to the listener. The ability to do this can only be built on practice.

Listening and reading fluency is based on:

- a positive attitude to not understanding everything
- the skills of searching for meaning, predicting and guessing.

Children are expert at doing this in their own language but it takes time and encouragement for them to build up these skills and attitudes in the foreign language. If you feel that you are not fluent in English that is partly because your teachers did not give you enough time and encouragement!

#### ***Speaking and writing fluency***

Fluency in speaking is not only essential in conversation but is, for many people, the spearhead of how they learn. Fluency is based on a positive attitude to 'having a go' with the language one knows and not being afraid of making mistakes. It is also based on the skill of constructing meaning with limited language. Some people learn best by 'having a go' when they have nothing to fear or be anxious about; all their intelligence and creativity is employed to the full. I am sure that for many children this is the natural way to learn. This means that the teacher must give more importance to what the child achieves than to the mistakes he or she might make. It also means that the teacher



must encourage situations in which the child can be fluent and can 'have a go'. Stories offer a perfect diet for the build-up of fluency in all four skills.

### ***Language Awareness***

Stories help children become aware of the general 'feel' and sound of the foreign language. Stories also introduce children to language items and sentence construction without their necessarily having to use them productively. They can build up a reservoir of language in this way. When the time comes to move the language items into their productive control, it is no great problem because the language is not new to them.

An obvious example of a language point introduced and made familiar through stories before the children are expected to use it fluently themselves is the simple past tense.

### ***Stimulus for speaking and writing***

The experience of the story encourages responses through speaking and writing. It is natural to express our likes and dislikes and to exchange ideas and associations related to stories we hear or read.

### ***Communication***

Listening to and reading stories and responding to them through speaking and writing, drama, music, and art develop a sense of being and having an audience and sharing and collaborating. Learning a language is useless if we do not know how to communicate – how to listen to others and how to speak and write so that listeners and reader will want to listen and read and be able to understand. Story sharing builds up this crucial sense of awareness of others.

### ***General Curriculum***

Most stories can be used to develop the children's powers of awareness, analysis, and expression, as well as relating to other aspects of the curriculum, such as cultural and social studies, geography, history, mathematics, and science. (See chapter 4).

### ***Danger! Story health warning!***

If the teacher uses stories merely to introduce and practise grammar or particular lexical areas or functions, the children may lose their faith in the teacher and what she or he means by the word 'story'. When focusing on features of the language be careful not to lose the magic of the story altogether!

(Wright, 1995, pp. 3-10)

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### **Questions for 'Why Stories?'**

1. Why should stories be a central part of the work of all primary teachers?

Stories are .....

rich in .....



and .....

2. Why will children always be willing to listen or read to stories?

.....

3. Why are children motivated to try to improve their ability to understand?

.....

4. What are listening and reading fluency based on?

• .....

• .....

5. What is, for many people, the 'spearhead' of how they learn?

.....

6. Fluency is based on a positive attitude to what?

.....

and not being afraid of .....

Also the skill of .....

7. What must the teacher do to encourage this positive attitude and lack of fear?

.....

8. What do stories help children to become aware of?

.....

9. What happens when children finally need to use language items heard in stories?

.....

10 How does listening to stories help in speaking and story writing?

.....

11. What do listening to and reading stories and responding to them through speaking and writing, drama, music, and art develop a sense of?

.....

12. What warning is given about focussing on features of the language?

.....





This much longer article talks about three strategies – all related to what is called ‘Repeated Reading’ - which are designed to improve fluency.

The author is talking about use of stories, but not only in the original read/tell by the teacher, more in the ongoing activities. Also note that the author is not talking about ‘young learners’ as such, and so not all of the strategies will necessarily be applicable in the Malaysian Primary School situation.

***Read the article quickly (skim) and answer the questions below:***

## **Building Fluency through the Repeated Reading Method**

If you have sympathized with students who stumble through reading passages or pore over every word in an expressionless manner while barely comprehending, this article is for you. For the last two years I have used Repeated Reading (RR) to teach reading fluency in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms in colleges and universities in Japan. RR is a method where the student reads and rereads a text silently or aloud from two to four times to reach a predetermined level of speed, accuracy, and comprehension. All my students made progress, many in relatively short periods of time. By practicing RR and the skills associated with it, students learn to read faster and more accurately and to apply gains made to more challenging texts.

Although using RR to develop fluency appears best suited for beginning readers who have difficulty with pacing, expression, or word recognition, I also have used the method successfully with mature readers. Providing opportunities to read age appropriate, authentic content such as prose, poetry, novels, and newspapers is excellent practice for learners with some ability to read because it gives them a chance to integrate skills they have already begun to acquire, such as flow, fluidity, and comprehension (Koskinen and Blum 1986; Dowhower 1989).

Providing second and foreign language (L2) learners with sufficient exposure to and experience with reading can be a challenging task. In particular, students who are not yet fluent readers seldom read when it is not required and tend not to enjoy the process when they do engage in it. The opposite, however, can be said of good readers—the more they read, the more they improve their reading abilities. It is probably safe to say that reading ability and reading confidence are very closely related. RR supports the learning of English by creating confident readers who enjoy reading, and the three techniques described in this article will illustrate how the method can be used to develop fluency, comprehension skills, and greater reading self-esteem.

### **Background of the Repeated Reading method**

First popularized by Samuels (1979), RR was initially designed for special needs students in first-language (L1) settings. The method was so successful that it is now used widely with developing L1 readers (Kuhn and Stahl 2000). For over 30 years it has been used extensively in L1 environments to help build fluency and is supported by research (LaBerge and Samuels 1974; Samuels 1979; Dowhower 1989).

RR works as a scaffold for struggling readers by providing them with short-term, achievable mini-goals such as completing a passage in faster time (speed), increasing words read correctly (accuracy), and reading for a better understanding of the text (comprehension). The resulting success learners



experience through RR builds their confidence and encourages them to invest more time and effort into achieving the skill of reading fluently (Dowhower 1994; Nuttall 1996).

However, RR has not received the same recognition in L2 classrooms, where the method has been slow to catch on. Its benefits have seemingly gone unnoticed, and very little research has been published in support of the method as a fluency-building tool for L2 learners (but see Taguchi 1997; Taguchi and Gorsuch 2002; and Taguchi, Takayasu-Maass, and Gorsuch 2004 for excellent coverage of RR's great potential in developing reading fluency among L2 learners).

One explanation for RR's relative absence from L2 classrooms may be that some educators feel fluency develops naturally over time. As other reading skills progress and gradually improve, so too does the ability to read fluently. Another possibility is that teachers faced with big class sizes, limited contact hours, and strenuous curriculum demands may not have the time to focus on fluency as an essential reading skill.

Fortunately, the RR method is firmly rooted in sound linguistic theory, and good theory often leads to practical outcomes. There are a variety of simple-to-implement techniques for using RR in the L2 context that require little preparation on the teacher's part, including:

- (1) Oral Repeated Reading,
- (2) Paired Repeated Reading, and
- (3) Reader's Theatre.

### **Technique 1: Classic Oral Repeated Reading**

Oral Repeated Reading (ORR) is a technique that is fun and easy to carry out and that provides a window into readers' ability to integrate the skills associated with reading fluently (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development 2000). Oral reading helps students associate printed language with spoken language, improves their reading rate and rhythm, and provides opportunities to experience the pleasure of reading with a real purpose (Rasinski 2003). It can also build confidence and strengthen learners' perceptions of themselves as readers (Greenberg, Buggey, and Bond 2002). Oral reading has also been shown to correlate with reading comprehension (August and Shanahan 2006) and to help learners acquire a greater understanding of how to comprehend material that is read silently (Opitz and Guccione 2009).

In the classic version of ORR, students read and reread short, meaningful passages of text aloud, typically four times. I find setting short-term goals, such as reading faster or reading with more appropriate phrasing, helps learners stay focused. Alternatively, you can set criteria for speed, accuracy, and comprehension.

After four readings or when the criteria are met, learners may proceed to the next section of the text. Other versions of ORR include using pre-recorded audio to provide a model and the use of computers to record, time, track, and chart learners' progress.



### **Oral Repeated Reading classroom suggestion: Chunk it**

Oral reading fluency is best developed when learners focus on reading sentences seamlessly, as opposed to word by word. A *chunk* (or *sense group*) is a meaningful part of a sentence, such as a phrase or a clause, and often corresponds to the places where an individual will naturally pause or use appropriate intonation when reading a text out loud. The following four steps will help your students begin to visualize sense groups.

#### ***Step 1: Begin with a compelling poem or story***

Most genres of writing work well as ORR activities, including prose, poetry, speeches, fables, short or serialized stories, recipes, radio/TV commercials, and public service announcements. For learners who can sight-read easily, but have not yet mastered reading with expression or good rhythm, find a poem or a short story with dialogue. I like Shel Silverstein's poetry, because it is often accompanied by pictures that serve as visual support for learners (e.g., Silverstein 1996). Graded readers (books divided into levels and written with controlled vocabulary), limericks, and simple speeches also work well.

#### ***Step 2: Break the text into chunks***

Write the poem or story's lines (on the blackboard or on an overhead transparency) in a narrow column with one sense group per line. Three- to four-word phrases work best; however, you can also break phrases into longer or shorter chunks depending on the skill level of your learners. Alternatively, you can write each sense group on cue cards. You can easily change the length of the chunk that readers work with.

By breaking the text into chunks you help introduce your learners to the notion of taking in increasingly longer chunks as they read.

#### ***Step 3: Model the reading of chunks***

Show students how good readers cluster portions of text together rather than saying words individually. If you have arranged the text into a column (as above), use a card guide or cardboard mask about the same width as the column to expose the text line by line. You can also create and display sentence strips and model reading the sense groups one at a time.

#### ***Step 4: Practice reading the text to build proficiency***

To build confidence with the text, have students read the lines together out loud as a group. Hold the cardboard mask just above the first line and then, as they read, move it down the column at the desired speed. Time and resources allowing, you can provide students with an individual copy of the text and their own cardboard mask. Once they gain proficiency and confidence reading the piece together, you can call on individual students to read for the class. Assigning the piece as homework the night before is one way of guaranteeing success for this type of task. Finally, you can reinforce the reading of sense groups in guided reading activities by using the same poem or story and pointing to the lines that were previously read as an ORR activity.

### **Technique 2: Paired Repeated Reading**

The objectives of Paired Repeated Reading (PRR) are similar to those of ORR. Both focus on pronunciation and prosody (the variation in loudness, pitch, and rhythm); however, PRR includes a



measure for self and peer-assessment. Research reports from L1 teaching environments indicate significant improvement in support of oral fluency and comprehension when teachers incorporate PRR regularly into their classrooms (Fuchs and Fuchs 2005; Koskinen and Blum 1986).

To use PRR, simply select an interesting reading passage and have your students work in pairs. I use novels serialized into instalments to maintain learner interest and enthusiasm; however, short stories, poetry, and fables work nicely too. If it is not possible to give each student a copy, make an overhead transparency or write the text where all students can see it. You can also pass out one handout per student pair to cut down on copy costs and encourage more teamwork and cooperation between learners.

Alternatively, you can ask students to self-select materials. Be sure the content is on their independent reading level and does not contain too many unknown words or difficult grammatical structures (e.g., relative clauses, passive phrasing, or ambiguous time references).

### **Paired Repeated Reading classroom suggestion: Free yourself**

The real beauty of PRR lies in its capacity to free up teachers, allowing them to monitor their students' progress with minimal management. Following is a three-step technique, adapted from Koskinen and Blum (1986), that I use to kick off PRR and help students collaborate in developing fluency.

#### ***Step 1: Teach the role of the reader***

Learners need opportunities to practice reading. Explain to students they will be reading and rereading a passage several times to improve their skills. An analogy such as soccer players taking corner kicks to improve their accuracy may help students realize the value of practicing repeatedly. You can also remind them that good readers keep their listeners engaged by reading with appropriate speed, rhythm, and intonation.




#### ***Step 2: Teach the role of the listener***

It is worthwhile for teachers to explain that listeners can help their partners improve their reading fluency in two big ways with PRR: first, by giving help where possible with unknown words or mispronounced phrases, and second, and perhaps more importantly, by providing feedback about how the reader has improved between readings. Do not worry about your students' inability to catch every word; listeners do not need to be high-level learners to appreciate and comment on good delivery and effort.

Teachers can encourage active listening and collaboration by calling on students to report how their partner read or by making a handout and collecting it after the activity. Something as simple as one or two sentences jotted on the board can provide students with positive things to say to one another. For example, in response to the question "How did your partner improve?" suggest answers such as "(name) read more smoothly," "(name) knew more words," or "(name) read with more expression." Another option is to develop a Likert scale for learners to give and receive feedback to each other while working together. The scale can be passed out (or written on the board). A single question such as "How well did your partner read today?" written two or three

times should suffice. Label the accompanying Likert scale ranges from “Nice job” to “Needs work” as in the example below and show learners how to respond to it.

First Reading: How did your partner read today?

	-----		-----	
Nice Job	Nearly perfect	OK	Nearly there	Needs work

### ***Step 3: Combine reading, listening, and assessment***

The final step offers learners an opportunity to combine the reading, listening, and assessment elements of the technique. It helps to begin PRR by reading to the class, and you may find it useful to model a poor, choppy reading of a few sentences and then model a fluent reading of the same sentences. Teachers should supervise the student pairs as they take turns reading and listening, and especially during the evaluation process. You can ask listeners to fill out the evaluations after the first and last readings, after the final two readings, or in any combination you like. In situations where both partners are lower proficiency readers, have them start with the easiest material you can find. As an alternative to providing feedback to each other, learners can complete a set of listening questions or tasks (e.g., a very easy worksheet) for which they need information from the text their partner is reading.

### **Technique 3: Reader’s Theatre**

Reader’s Theatre (RT) is the reading aloud of a written text to communicate a story. Although commonly confused with drama or acting, RT is actually quite different; there are no costumes, no props, and most importantly, no memorization. Instead, student groups are assigned to read different parts of a script. Adaptations of books, movies, fables, historical events, or even popular TV shows can all be scripted to create an RT presentation.

The goal of RT is simple: to increase reading self-confidence by practicing multiple readings of a text, thereby improving comprehension, fluency, and accuracy. Second language learners are thought to gain accuracy and improved fluency by the repetition of tasks (Bygate 2001), and the rereading required in RT presentations gives them valuable practice in moving from decoding printed words into sounds to fluid and automatic word recognition (Samuels, Schermer, and Reinking 1992).

Scripts can vary in length depending on the proficiency of your learners, but a good script will provide every student with at least two or three lines to read. Roles can include several characters, as well as a narrator who guides the story. More advanced, outgoing, or daring readers may choose bigger parts, whereas less-skilled or shy readers may choose fewer lines. Regardless of classroom size or dynamics, RT can be customized to fit a variety of learning environments.

If your RT groups are small, a script may have more roles than readers. In that case, assign individual readers more than one role. (But be sure they are not in the same scene reading two different

parts!) You can also cut characters out completely or combine two roles together. If your groups are large, use more than one narrator and split character roles into two or more parts. Very often a character can be divided to create two or more speaking parts. You can also assign silent characters to help with the storytelling or assign non-speaking roles. Crowd scenes can also incorporate groups of extra readers. Figure 1 contains an excerpt of a script I wrote to introduce my learners to a series of tasks revolving around life at sea.

**NARRATOR 1:** Bunglie was hungry. He quietly left his pen and looked down out of the window onto the deck below. Sparky was there, along with the sheep.  
**SPARKY:** Got any food?  
**LOXY:** No. Not a thing.  
**TRIXIE:** My heavens, no. We haven't had anything for almost two days. Whatever are we to do?  
**SPARKY:** Birds!!! How 'bout you? Have you got any food?  
**BUB AND CHUB:** *[together]* Sorry no.  
**SPARKY:** Cows... You have any food?  
**COWS 1, 2, 3, and 4:** *[singing]* No, no, no. We haven't got any food.  
**ZOOTIE:** *[looking at husband]* We're going to get some food. I know a safe place.  
**HUSBAND:** *[scared, in a whisper]* Are we going without asking a human? Won't it be dangerous?  
**SPARKY:** We'll be careful. *[creeping away]* Don't worry!  
**NARRATOR 2:** Then Sparky left with Zootie and her husband in search of something to eat.  
**NARRATOR 1:** But Bunglie could not stay in his pen. He had to eat something...  
*[in a louder voice]* ...now!!

**Figure 1: Excerpt of Reader's Theatre Script**

Scripts can be simple or detailed and complex. I prefer to keep the writing simple because I feel it leads to more authentic dialogue. For busy teachers who do not have time to write original material, the Internet can be a valuable resource, as there are dozens of adaptable RT scripts online. If your Internet access is limited, you can always have your students write their own RT scripts. This is a popular alternative to teacher-selected content because student-generated material provides teachers with a chance to observe what learning objectives have been internalized by their students. Teachers can encourage the inclusion of important dates, vocabulary, or grammar points to raise the complexity of the dialogue or the assignment. Regardless of where the script comes from, doing RT almost always leads to laughter and language learning. Following is a five-session plan for a Reader's Theatre presentation.

### **Reader's Theatre classroom suggestion: All the world's a stage**

#### ***Session 1:***

Model fluent and expressive reading by reading aloud from the script or the story on which your script is based. Time and interest allowing, consider focusing on some aspect of problematic pronunciation for students to keep in mind as they practice (e.g., reduced schwa sounds, consonant clusters, suprasegmentals). Pass out copies of the script and encourage students to read silently all the parts by themselves. If you lack the resources to give each student a script, you can create pairs or small groups and have students share. Once they have read over the dialogue fully, allow time to discuss the meaning and content.



**Session 2:**

Divide students into groups and hand out scripts. Students read through the scripts entirely, each time concentrating on a different role. For example, if there are four students and four roles, the script should be read four times with each student reading aloud a different role every time. In situations where there are more roles than readers, ask students to take on more than one character. Circulate among the groups, coaching and offering advice and support.

**Session 3:**

This is the same as the Session 2; however, toward the end of this session, have students divide up the parts. Alternatively, you can assign the roles for the final session. Students read their parts as homework and begin preparing for their performance.

**Session 4:**

Students read and rehearse their parts together with their group members. Toward the end of the session, students can make character nametags and plan any necessary movement or decide where groups will stand during their turn.

**Session 5:**

Each group performs the reading for the class or possibly in front of an audience. To set the stage for future endeavours, you may wish to have learners assess themselves and their group members' effort leading up to the reading. Ask learners to respond to statements like these: "Next time, to improve my reading fluency, I plan to ," or "To achieve my goal, I will " Another simple and effective way to encourage self- or peer-reflection is to provide students with a checklist of statements grouped into the following categories:

Put a check mark (✓) next to the areas you feel you/your partner did well:	
1. Phrasing/Fluency	
<input type="checkbox"/>	(I/My partner) paid attention to the author's language.
<input type="checkbox"/>	(I/My partner) read longer phrases.
<input type="checkbox"/>	(I/My partner) had good expression.
2. Pace	
<input type="checkbox"/>	(I/My partner) used good speed when reading.
<input type="checkbox"/>	(I/My partner) did not pause too much.
3. Accuracy	
<input type="checkbox"/>	(I/My partner) could read the words easily.
<input type="checkbox"/>	(I/My partner) read quickly, but
<input type="checkbox"/>	(my/my partner's) words sounded meaningful.

**Conclusion**

Readers who lack fluency often read in a plodding, word-by-word manner and are slower and less accurate than fluent readers. Moreover, because their reading is so laborious, their understanding of the text is often limited. With such ineffective reading patterns, non-fluent readers typically fall behind their peers and do not learn to enjoy the act of reading. In the past, fluency-building



techniques like oral reading have been neglected in the L2 reading classroom for a variety of reasons. Time constraints, teacher philosophy, and misuse of techniques like Round Robin Reading (taking turns reading aloud around the classroom) have eclipsed the benefits of fluency development and have cast a negative light on oral reading.

The method of RR was developed to help struggling readers improve their fluency, accuracy, and comprehension. In the L1 classroom, reading aloud to a teacher or to a peer is an important first step toward developing fluent decoding and comprehending skills; both are a necessary preparation for silent reading. The three techniques presented in this article are designed to help learners achieve reading fluency and have just as much value in the L2 classroom as in the L1 classroom. As L2 learners read aloud and convey the message of the text to sympathetic and interested listeners, they strengthen their skills and self-confidence. Most importantly, RR activities encourage L2 learners to enjoy reading and to practice the skill more frequently, which is critical to the development of advanced proficiency.

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JOSHUA COHEN is an instructor of English as a Foreign Language in the Business Department at Kinki University in Japan. This article is dedicated to his late mother, Diane, who introduced him to the value of repeated reading by reading (and rereading!) tirelessly to him when he was young.

(Cohen, 2011)

### Questions about Building Fluency through the Repeated Reading Method

1. What is RR? .....
2. What is RR best suited for? .....
3. What is ORR? .....
4. What happens in the classic version of ORR? .....
5. What do other versions of ORR include? .....
6. What is a chunk? .....
7. Where can you find a compelling poem or story for chunking? .....
8. Where can you write the chunks? .....
9. How can you practise until the students gain proficiency? .....



- 10. What is PRR? .....
- 11. What kind of assessment can PRR include? .....
- 12. How can you use PRR? .....  
.....
- 13. How can teachers encourage active listening and cooperation? .....  
.....
- 14. What is RT? .....
- 15. What is the goal of RT? .....  
.....
- 16. How can you raise the complexity of your RT script? .....  
.....



***The article below discusses several strategies and techniques for improving fluency. Read the article and make notes in the questions below.***

## **Fluency: Instructional Guidelines and Student Activities**

By: Texas Education Agency (2002)

The best strategy for developing reading fluency is to provide your students with many opportunities to read the same passage orally several times. To do this, you should first know what to have your students read. Second, you should know how to have your students read aloud repeatedly.

### **Guidelines for instruction**

- Provide children with opportunities to read and reread a range of stories and informational texts by reading on their own, partner reading, or choral reading.
- Introduce new or difficult words to children, and provide practice reading these words before they read on their own.
- Include opportunities for children to hear a range of texts read fluently and with expression.
- Suggest ideas for building home-school connections that encourage families to become involved actively in children's reading development.
- Encourage periodic timing of children's oral reading and recording of information about individual children's reading rate and accuracy.
- Model fluent reading, and then have students reread the text on their own.

### **What students should read**

Fluency develops as a result of many opportunities to practice reading with a high degree of success. Therefore, your students should practice rereading aloud texts that are reasonably easy for them – that is, texts containing mostly words that they know or can decode easily. In other words, the texts should be at the students' independent reading level.

A text is at students' independent reading level if they can read it with about 95% accuracy. If the text is more difficult, students will focus on word recognition and will not have an opportunity to develop fluency.

The text your students practice rereading orally should also be relatively short – probably 50-200 words, depending on the age of the students. You should also use a variety of reading materials, including stories, nonfiction, and poetry. Poetry is especially well suited to fluency practice because poems for children are often short and they contain rhythm, rhyme, and meaning, making practice easy, fun, and rewarding.

### **Model fluent reading**

By listening to good models of fluent reading, students learn how a reader's voice can help written text make sense. Read aloud daily to your students. By reading effortlessly and with expression, you are modelling for your students how a fluent reader sounds during reading.



### **Repeated reading**

After you model how to read the text, you must have the students reread it. By doing this, the students are engaging in repeated reading. Usually, having students read a text four times is sufficient to improve fluency. Remember, however, that instructional time is limited, and it is the actual time that students are actively engaged in reading that produces reading gains.

Have other adults read aloud to students. Encourage parents or other family members to read aloud to their children at home. The more models of fluent reading the children hear, the better. Of course, hearing a model of fluent reading is not the only benefit of reading aloud to children. Reading to children also increases their knowledge of the world, their vocabulary, their familiarity with written language ("book language"), and their interest in reading.

### **Activities for students to increase fluency**

There are several ways that your students can practice orally rereading text, including student-adult reading, choral (or unison) reading, tape-assisted reading, partner reading, and readers' theatre.

### **Student-adult reading**

In student-adult reading, the student reads one-on-one with an adult. The adult can be you, a parent, a classroom aide, or a tutor. The adult reads the text first, providing the students with a model of fluent reading. Then the student reads the same passage to the adult with the adult providing assistance and encouragement. The student rereads the passage until the reading is quite fluent. This should take approximately three to four re-readings.

### **Choral reading**

In choral, or unison, reading, students read along as a group with you (or another fluent adult reader). Of course, to do so, students must be able to see the same text that you are reading. They might follow along as you read from a big book, or they might read from their own copy of the book you are reading. For choral reading, choose a book that is not too long and that you think is at the independent reading level of most students. Patterned or predictable books are particularly useful for choral reading, because their repetitious style invites students to join in. Begin by reading the book aloud as you model fluent reading.

Then reread the book and invite students to join in as they recognize the words you are reading. Continue rereading the book, encouraging students to read along as they are able. Students should read the book with you three to five times total (though not necessarily on the same day). At this time, students should be able to read the text independently.

### **Tape-assisted reading**

In tape-assisted reading, students read along in their books as they hear a fluent reader read the book on an audiobook. For tape-assisted reading, you need a book at a student's independent reading level and a tape recording of the book read by a fluent reader at about 80-100 words per minute. The tape should not have sound effects or music. For the first reading, the student should follow along with the tape, pointing to each word in her or his book as the reader reads it. Next, the student should try to read aloud along with the tape. Reading along with the tape should continue until the student is able to read the book independently, without the support of the tape.



**Partner reading**

In partner reading, paired students take turns reading aloud to each other. For partner reading, more fluent readers can be paired with less fluent readers. The stronger reader reads a paragraph or page first, providing a model of fluent reading. Then the less fluent reader reads the same text aloud. The stronger student gives help with word recognition and provides feedback and encouragement to the less fluent partner. The less fluent partner rereads the passage until he or she can read it independently. Partner reading need not be done with a more and less fluent reader. In another form of partner reading, children who read at the same level are paired to reread a story that they have received instruction on during a teacher-guided part of the lesson. Two readers of equal ability can practice rereading after hearing the teacher read the passage.

**Readers' theatre**

In readers' theatre, students rehearse and perform a play for peers or others. They read from scripts that have been derived from books that are rich in dialogue. Students play characters who speak lines or a narrator who shares necessary background information. Readers' theatre provides readers with a legitimate reason to reread text and to practice fluency. Readers' theatre also promotes cooperative interaction with peers and makes the reading task appealing.

Excerpted from: Guidelines for Examining Phonics and Word Recognition Programs, Texas Reading Initiative, Texas Education Agency (2002)

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**Questions for 'Fluency: Instructional guidelines'**

1. What is the best strategy for developing reading fluency? .....
2. Your students should practice rereading aloud texts that are.....
3. How often should you read aloud to your students? .....
4. How many times should students repeat the reading? .....
5. Do you think you could arrange student-adult reading? .....
6. For choral reading, what must the students all be able to do? .....
7. What sort of books should Readers Theatre scripts be derived from? .....



## **Shared Reading and Round Robin Reading**

If you Google 'Round Robin Reading' (RRR) you will get a long list of articles about why you should NOT use RRR, and alternatives to using RRR.

What we want is a form of reading aloud where the children are all participating. The children need to be able to all see the words – as in a Big Book, or each having their own copy as in RRR.

If a 'Big Book' is not available for a (picture) book that you want to read aloud to, and do shared reading with, the children then you can always scan the book and create a set of PowerPoint slides.

### **Exercise: Reading aloud and shared reading**

Work with a partner / group.

- Choose a (picture) book.
- Plan 2 lessons:
  1. A shared reading lesson using a Big Book / projected version of the book. Describe activities page by page, questions you would ask.
  2. A lesson where the children read aloud – if it is 'Round Robin' then make sure you avoid the problems that can be there with this type of lesson (Google round Robin Reading first!). There are many other types such as Repeated Reading (in the articles you have read).

One of the things that children can learn through stories – whether reading them or listening to them – is critical thinking skills. Children do not necessarily just develop skills without guidance from the teacher. **Read the article and answer/discuss the questions below:**

## **Towards Developing Critical Thinking Skills in Young Learners**

*This is a summary of a webinar hosted by Cambridge English Teacher and presented by Herbert Puchta on October 10th, 2012.*

### **The 'attention-grabbing' approach to teaching**

Even very young children are able to think, attend and remember, but their thinking, attending and memory are very reactive. Children growing up today are subjected to sensory overload constantly. Television, for example, is fast-paced, loud, full of movement, and has colourful, constantly changing scenes. As a result, today's youngsters have very short attention spans.

'Reactive learners' need fast-paced, sensory bombardment to learn even very simple information. This leads to the teacher being an entertainer which is totally exhausting.

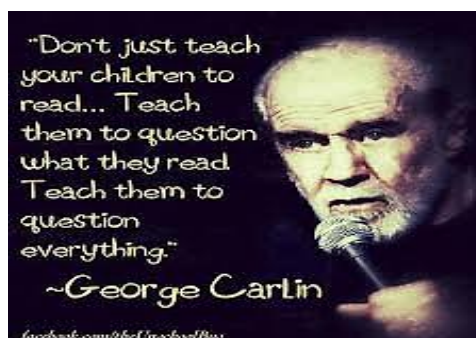


### **Learning as a 'self-directed activity'**

- Children increasingly learn to direct their attention, memory and problem-solving skills on their own.
- Children gradually take more and more responsibility for their own learning.
- Children acquire the mental tools to help them think better.

So,

- Tools of the mind (mental/cognitive tools) help to extend a child's cognitive capabilities.
- Tools of the mind reduce the workload for the teacher.



### Why teach thinking skills?

- Children need to face the challenges of a changing and unpredictable world.
- They need problem-solving and decision-making skills to meet unexpected problems and tackle them.
- School curricula tend to promote systematic, error-free learning - correct answers, assimilation of facts, teacher's assessment.

### The importance of divergent thinking

Divergent thinking (as opposed to convergent thinking) is extremely important - students need to learn that there is not necessarily one right answer. You can teach this by asking questions like:



*Write down as many different uses as you can think of for:*

- *a button*
- *a brick*
- *a blanket*

Here, you are encouraging children to think outside the box.

### What does critical thinking involve?

- Working out whether or not we believe what we see or hear.
- Finding out whether something is true.
- Arguing one's case.
- Identifying when we need more information.
- Selecting information for a specific purpose.

There is always a connection between critical thinking and creative thinking. Both are higher order thinking skills.

### Problem solving cycle

1. Gather and organise information
2. Define the problem
3. Generate approaches to solve the problem
4. Make an action plan
5. Monitor, check, evaluate
6. Communicate solutions
7. Transfer the problem solving skills learned to other problems

### What thinking skills can we teach at the same time as we are teaching language?

A typology of thinking skills areas to be taught with EFL for young learners



- Making comparisons
- Categorising
- Sequencing
- Focusing attention
- Memorising
- Exploring space
- Exploring time
- Exploring numbers
- Creating associations
- Cause and effect
- Making decisions
- Solving problems
- Creative thinking

### Practical examples

#### 1. Where's Tom?

**Exploring space**

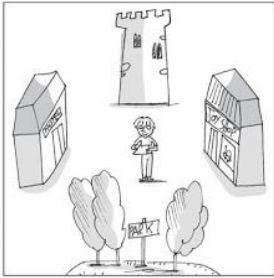
### Where's Tom? | Worksheet A

**1 A** Look at the picture of Tom. Write *in front of him, behind him, on his right, and on his left* in the blanks.

The tower is \_\_\_\_\_ him.  
 The hotel is \_\_\_\_\_.  
 The shop is \_\_\_\_\_.  
 The park is \_\_\_\_\_.

**B** Tom now turns right. Finish the sentences.

The tower is on his \_\_\_\_\_.  
 The hotel is \_\_\_\_\_.  
 The shop is \_\_\_\_\_.  
 The park is \_\_\_\_\_.



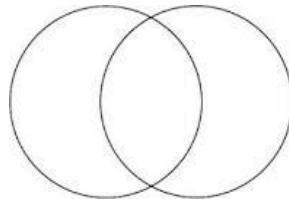
104 Puchta/Williams | Teaching Young Learners to Think | © Helbling Languages

This is an example from Herbert Puchta and Marion William's book 'Teaching Young Learners to Think'.

It focuses on the 'exploring space' skill. To develop this skill, students need:

- a reference system to understand and control the space they live in.
- a sense of position, distance, direction, proximity and dimensions.
- the ability to imagine a change in position. This is necessary for hypothetical thinking - the ability to imagine another viewpoint.

## **2. Cars and bicycles**



Draw a Venn diagram and ask the question:

*What is the same and what is different between this pair of objects?*

*Examples: car and bicycle  
tree and flower  
chair and table  
banana and pineapple*

The focus here is obviously on the skill of making comparisons, the basic building block of decision making. This kind of activity can be introduced at beginner level. Simply asking the question, 'What colour's my jacket?', for example, activates language, but it doesn't require any thinking on the part of the respondent. As teachers, we need to encourage thinking.

## **3. Missing information**

Give three texts - three party invitations, for example, - each one with a missing piece of information (time, place, date, etc.). Students have to work out what is missing rather than the more usual task of answering questions on what is there.

## **4. Listen and imagine**

Tell students to close their eyes and then play them a piece of music. Then ask them to draw a picture inspired by the music or write down a list of words they would associate with it. They then have to explain their picture or choice of words to a partner or small group.

Here, we are encouraging creative thinking, which, as we have already heard, is an integral part of critical thinking.

## **5. Cause and effect**

Give students a statement and ask them if there is a cause and effect relationship in it. For example,

*Jane doesn't play any musical instruments. Therefore, she isn't a musician.*

This kind of task is suitable for intermediate level students. They have to question whether or not



there is enough information to establish a cause and effect relationship. If not, what other information is needed? The attention to detail required here is a great exercise for students.

To conclude:

Quoting Vygotsky's model:

*Learning moves away from the goal of getting the answer correct to getting the answer correct because a specific process was used to get the answer.*

(Puchta, 2012)

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**Discuss and answer these questions with your partner / group:**

**Questions about 'Towards Developing Critical Thinking Skills in Young Learners'**

1. According to Punta, why do today's youngsters have a very short attention span? .....

2. Is it true?

- Do your younger siblings have a shorter attention span than you did at their age?
- Or are you one of 'today's youngsters'?
- Or has it always been this way?

**Discuss.**

3. What reduces the workload of the teacher? .....

4. What are the three reasons given for teaching reading skills?

- .....
- .....
- .....

Do you agree with them? (Don't just say 'yes'!)

**Discuss.**

5. What is a divergent thinker? .....

Are you a divergent thinker? Have you ever met anyone who is?

**Discuss**

6. With your partner/group do the button activity. How many ideas can you come up with? Try harder to think of some really 'crazy' ideas.



**Discuss**

7. Look at the list of 5 points under 'What does critical thinking involve?'

- Choose of a particular story you might be telling/reading.
- Think of questions for at least three of the critical thinking points.

**Discuss**

8. Look at this 'typology of thinking skills'.

• Making comparisons		• Exploring numbers	
• Categorising		• Creating associations	
• Sequencing		• Cause and effect	
• Focusing attention		• Making decisions	
• Memorising		• Solving problems	
• Exploring space		• Creative thinking	
• Exploring time		• Exploring numbers	

Mark the ones which you could apply to a story telling/reading session. **Discuss and share ideas.**



## Identifying the Conflict in a Story

Conflict is the basis of story, and the following article talks about four types of story conflicts. You need to be able to identify the conflict in a story, and also guide the children into recognising it too.

The article below briefly describes (with examples) four different types of story conflict. Even if you are not familiar with the specific examples, you should be able to think of your own examples.

**Read the article and discuss the questions below.**

### Four Types of Story Conflicts

January 6, 2012 by Pat Johnson

One of the standards listed in our district for fifth graders is to learn about the four types of story conflicts. Remember them? Person vs. person; person vs. nature; person vs. self; and person vs. society. I didn't learn about them until junior year in High School when we discussed *Huck Finn*, *Moby Dick*, and *The Scarlet Letter*. That difference, in when we teach certain literary elements, makes me wonder if we aren't pushing curriculum down too much too fast, but I'll save that argument for another day. Because kids may someday get "tested" on these conflicts, then teach them we must.

I like to start out just chatting with the students about some books that several kids in the class have read or ones that have been read aloud to the whole group in previous years. They easily realize that Harry Potter vs. Voldemort and the Narnia kids vs. the Ice Queen fall into the first category. Many students have heard about *Number the Stars* and realize that it falls into the last category because of the people who fought against the Nazi society. Any story of survival against the forces of nature, like *Hatchet* or *My Side of the Mountain*, is identified as a person vs. nature conflict. Then we discuss several picture books that have been read in the last few weeks and the kids decide that *Ish* is about the boy gaining confidence with his own artistic abilities, thus a person-vs-self text.

Over the next few weeks we read and discuss picture books in relation to these conflicts. Below are some ideas you may wish to use.

#### Person vs. Person:

*Dogzilla* (Dogzilla vs. the mice army of Mousopolis)  
*My Rotten Red-Headed Older Brother* (a Polacco favorite)  
*The Three Wolves and the Big Bad Pig* (a spoof on the 3 Pigs)  
*The Mysterious Giant of Barletta* (giant vs. advancing army)  
*Suddenly* (Preston the pig vs the menacing wolf)

#### Person vs. Self:

*Koala Lou* (realizes his mom loves him no matter what)  
*Owl Babies* (conquer their fear of being left without Mom)  
*Edward the Emu* (any story like this works – where the character is not comfortable being who he is and wants to be something else.)



**Person vs. Nature:**

*Brave Irene* (fights the blizzard in order to deliver the dress)

*Ghost Eye Tree* (the little boy fears the spooky tree)

**Person vs. Society:**

Holocaust books work well here (*Let the Celebrations Begin*, the picture book version of the *Diary of Anne Frank*, *The Lily Cupboard*.)

Books about racism towards African Americans: *Teammates*; *Freedom Summer*; *Freedom School, Yes!*

Books about the Japanese Internment camps during WWII: *The Bracelet*, *Baseball Saved Us*, *The Lucky Baseball*, *Journey Home*

I suppose even the issue of homelessness would be considered a societal issue: *Fly Away Home*, *Lady in the Box*.

Sometimes students get confused when the 'person' is actually many people. A few students thought that the army in *The Mysterious Giant of Barletta* represented 'society.' They eventually came to realize that 'person' can mean one, two, or a whole group of people, or even animal characters. Later when we discussed 'person vs. society' they realized that that type of conflict had more to do with 'societal issues.' Many students had read *The Giver* and we talked about how that future society was set up in a different way than what we are used to today. At first the main character was excited to receive his job on the day the assignments were given out. But as the story continued, we get a real sense of a 'person vs. society' type of conflict. In the end, Jonas is ready to separate himself totally from the society.

Oftentimes it's not really clear which category the book falls in. But those discussions with the students just take their thinking to a deeper level. In *Amazing Grace* the class is going to put on a Peter Pan play. When Grace wants to play the part of Peter, some class members point out that she can't be Peter because she is black or because she is a girl. Some students thought the text was a 'person vs self' text because Grace gains more confidence in her dancing ability and convinces her classmates that she is indeed the best person to play the role. But others felt it was Grace against those other classmates and therefore it was 'person vs. person.'

And what about *The Big Orange Splot?* Is that a conflict of one man against society because the community in which he lives believes that all houses should look exactly the same? Or is it a person vs person conflict of the main character against all his neighbours?

We found the 'person vs self' type of conflict to be the hardest to find examples of. We first saw *Owl Babies* as this type of conflict. The baby owls try to get over their fear by telling each other reasons why the mom has disappeared; then they gather together all on one branch to protect each other. Some argued that it was more of a person vs nature story because the owls are feeling scared because of many of the things in the dark woods.

In the book *Suddenly*, Preston is constantly *almost* being attacked by the Wolf. It seems obvious that it's the pig vs the wolf. But is it really a person vs. person conflict if Preston, the pig, never actually



realizes that the Wolf is about to attack him? He doesn't escape his conflict by his own strength or cleverness; it's always just a coincidence.

There were many books that the students examined during independent reading time —*Jumanji, Stega Nona, Big Anthony and the Magic Ring, Sylvester and the Magic Pebble, Caleb and Kate* – to name a few. Students will notice that the main character in each of these books has a problem; he is in conflict with something. But most of these books made us wonder if there shouldn't be a **fifth** story conflict of "person vs magic." And to that I say, "Why not?"

(Johnson, 2012)

### Discussion Questions for 'Four Types of Story Conflicts'

1. What are the four types of story conflict?

- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....

2. What kind of books are being used as examples of different conflicts? .....

3. What age are the children in the writer's class who are learning about story conflicts? .....

4. How was the 'person' confusion sorted? .....

.....

5. Which is the hardest type to find examples of? .....

6. What could the fifth type of conflict be? .....

7. Do you agree there should be a fifth type, or would you fit it into one of the others?

.....

**Discuss your answers with your partner / group.**

### Exercises

1. Work with a partner / group.

- Choose 3 books / stories – either your own or from the APPENDIX.
- Identify the conflict in each.
- Try to choose books / stories with different conflict types.
- Present your findings to the class.

2. Choose one story, and alter the point of conflict and/or the ending. Present your story to the class.



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## Topic 8: Types of Assessments

Before we decide *how* to go about assessing 'Stories', we need to be sure *what* it is that we are trying to assess. First of all, what are the learning outcomes? Language Arts:

4.2 By the end of the six year primary schooling, pupils will be able to <b>demonstrate understanding</b> of and <b>express personal response</b> to literary texts.	
Yr 1	4.2.1 Able to <b>demonstrate skills</b> in handling books appropriately.
	4.2.2 Able to <b>talk about</b> book covers, pictures in books with guidance.
Yr 2	4.2.1 Able to <b>respond to</b> book covers, pictures in books, characters, with guidance.
Yr 3	4.2.1 Able to <b>respond to</b> characters, place, in stories with guidance.
4.3 By the end of the six year primary programme, pupils will be able to <b>plan, organise</b> and <b>produce</b> creative works for enjoyment.	
Yr 1	4.3.1 Able to <b>produce</b> simple creative works with guidance based on nursery rhymes, action songs.
	4.3.2 Able to <b>take part</b> with guidance in a performance based on nursery rhymes, action songs, fables.
Yr 2	4.3.1 Able to <b>produce</b> simple creative works with guidance based on action songs, jazz chants, stories.
	4.3.2 Able to <b>take part</b> with guidance in a performance based on action songs, jazz chants, stories.
Yr 3	4.3.1 Able to <b>produce</b> simple creative works with guidance based on jazz chants, poems, action songs, stories.
	4.3.2 Able to <b>perform</b> with guidance based on jazz chants, poems, action songs, stories.

Take note of the **verbs** in the statements because this is what it is we are trying to assess. There are also stories-related standards in the other subjects too.

<b>Listening and speaking</b>	
1.1 By the end of the 6-year primary schooling, pupils will be able to pronounce words and speak confidently with the correct stress, rhythm and intonation.	
Yr 1, 2, and 3	1.1.2 Able to <b>listen to</b> and <b>enjoy</b> simple stories

<b>Reading</b>	
2.3 By the end of the 6-year primary schooling, pupils will be able to read independently for information and enjoyment.	
Yr 1 and 2	2.3.1 Able to <b>read</b> simple texts with guidance: fiction, non-fiction
Yr 3	2.3.1 Able to <b>read</b> for information and enjoyment with guidance: fiction, non-fiction

<b>Writing</b>	
3.3 By the end of the 6-year primary schooling, pupils will be able to <b>write</b> and <b>present ideas</b> through a variety of media using appropriate language, form and style.	
Yr 3	3.3.1 Able to <b>create</b> simple texts using a variety of media with guidance.



We are all familiar with the idea of a written exam to test knowledge, understanding (as long as the skill of writing has been mastered) and even some skills. But how can we assess children's aesthetic response, whether children are listening, and whether they can read?

The following article lists some types of 'alternative' assessments. **Read the article and answer the questions:**

## **Practical Ideas on Alternative Assessment for ESL Students**

*Jo-Ellen Tannenbaum, Montgomery County Public Schools (MD)*

Many educators have come to recognize that alternative assessments are an important means of gaining a dynamic picture of students' academic and linguistic development. "Alternative assessment refers to procedures and techniques which can be used within the context of instruction and can be easily incorporated into the daily activities of the school or classroom" (Hamayan, 1995, p. 213). It is particularly useful with English as a Second Language students because it employs strategies that ask students to show what they can do. In contrast to traditional testing, "students are evaluated on what they integrate and produce rather than on what they are able to recall and reproduce" (Huerta- Macias, 1995, p. 9). Although there is no single definition of alternative assessment, the main goal is to "gather evidence about how students are approaching, processing, and completing real-life tasks in a particular domain" (Huerta-Macias, 1995, p. 9). Alternative assessments generally meet the following criteria:

- Focus is on documenting individual student growth over time, rather than comparing students with one another.
- Emphasis is on students' strengths (what they know), rather than weaknesses (what they don't know).
- Consideration is given to the learning styles, language proficiencies, cultural and educational backgrounds, and grade levels of students.

Alternative assessment includes a variety of measures that can be adapted for different situations. This Digest provides examples of measures that are well suited for assessing ESL students.

### **Nonverbal Assessment Strategies**

#### ***Physical Demonstration.***

To express academic concepts without speech, students can point or use other gestures. They can also be asked to perform hands-on tasks or to act out vocabulary, concepts, or events. As a comprehension check in a unit on Native Americans, for example, teachers can ask students to respond with thumbs up, thumbs down, or other nonverbal signs to true or false statements or to indicate whether the teacher has grouped illustrations (of homes, food, environment, clothing, etc.) under the correct tribe name. The teacher can use a checklist to record student responses over time.

#### ***Pictorial Products.***

To elicit content knowledge without requiring students to speak or write, teachers can ask students to produce and manipulate drawings, dioramas, models, graphs, and charts. When studying Colonial America, for example, teachers can give students a map of the colonies and labels with the names of



the colonies. Students can then attempt to place the labels in the appropriate locations. This labelling activity can be used across the curriculum with diagrams, webs, and illustrations.

To culminate a unit on butterflies, teachers can ask beginning ESL students to illustrate, rather than explain, the life cycle of butterflies. Students can point to different parts of a butterfly on their own drawing or on a diagram as an assessment of vocabulary retention. Pictorial journals can be kept during the unit to record observations of the butterflies in the classroom or to illustrate comprehension of classroom material about types of butterflies, their habitats, and their characteristics.

### ***K-W-L Charts***

Many teachers have success using K-W-L charts (what I *know*/what I *want* to know/what I've *learned*) to begin and end a unit of study, particularly in social studies and science. Before the unit, this strategy enables teachers to gain an awareness of students' background knowledge and interests. Afterward, it helps teachers assess the content material learned. K-W-L charts can be developed as a class activity or on an individual basis. For students with limited English proficiency, the chart can be completed in the first language or with illustrations.

### **Sample K-W-L Chart**

K	W	L
Lincoln was important. His face is on a penny. He's dead now. I think Lincoln was a President. He was a tall person.	Why is Lincoln famous? Was he a good President? Why is he on a penny? Did he have a family? How did he die?	Lincoln was President of the U.S. He was the 16th President. There was a war in America when Lincoln was President. He let the slaves go free. Two of his sons died while he was still alive.

Before a unit of study, teachers can have students fill in the K and W columns by asking them what they know about the topic and what they would like to know by the end of the unit. This helps to keep students focused and interested during the unit and gives them a sense of accomplishment when they fill in the L column following the unit and realize that they have learned something.

### ***Oral Performances or Presentations***

Performance-based assessments include interviews, oral reports, role plays, describing, explaining, summarizing, retelling, paraphrasing stories or text material, and so on. Oral assessments should be conducted on an ongoing basis to monitor comprehension and thinking skills.

When conducting interviews in English with students in the early stages of language development to determine English proficiency and content knowledge, teachers are advised to use visual cues as much as possible and allow for a minimal amount of English in the responses. Pierce and O'Malley (1992) suggest having students choose one or two pictures they would like to talk about and leading the students by asking questions, especially ones that elicit the use of academic language (comparing, explaining, describing, analysing, hypothesizing, etc.) and vocabulary pertinent to the topic.



Role plays can be used across the curriculum with all grade levels and with any number of people. For example, a teacher can take on the role of a character who knows less than the students about a particular subject area. Students are motivated to convey facts or information prompted by questions from the character. This is a fun-filled way for a teacher to conduct informal assessments of students' knowledge in any subject (Kelner, 1993).

Teachers can also ask students to use role play to express mathematical concepts. For example, a group of students can become a numerator, a denominator, a fraction line, a proper fraction, an improper fraction, and an equivalent fraction. Speaking in the first person, students can introduce themselves and their functions in relationship to one another (Kelner, 1993). Role plays can also be used in science to demonstrate concepts such as the life cycle.

In addition, role plays can serve as an alternative to traditional book reports. Students can transform themselves into a character or object from the book (Kelner, 1993). For example, a student might become Christopher Columbus, one of his sailors, or a mouse on the ship, and tell the story from that character's point of view. The other students can write interview questions to pose to the various characters.

### ***Oral and Written Products***

Some of the oral and written products useful for assessing ESL students' progress are content area thinking and learning logs, reading response logs, writing assignments (both structured and creative), dialogue journals, and audio or video cassettes.

***Content area logs*** are designed to encourage the use of metacognitive strategies when students read expository text. Entries can be made on a form with these two headings: What I Understood/What I Didn't Understand (ideas or vocabulary).

***Reading response logs*** are used for students' written responses or reactions to a piece of literature. Students may respond to questions--some generic, some specific to the literature--that encourage critical thinking, or they may copy a brief text on one side of the page and write their reflections on the text on the other side.

Beginning ESL students often experience success when an expository *writing assignment* is controlled or structured. The teacher can guide students through a pre-writing stage, which includes discussion, brainstorming, webbing, outlining, and so on. The results of pre-writing, as well as the independently written product, can be assessed.

Student writing is often motivated by content themes. Narrative stories from characters' perspectives (e.g., a sailor accompanying Christopher Columbus, an Indian who met the Pilgrims, a drop of water in the water cycle, etc.) would be valuable inclusions in a student's writing portfolio.

***Dialogue journals*** provide a means of interactive, ongoing correspondence between students and teachers. Students determine the choice of topics and participate at their level of English language proficiency. Beginners can draw pictures that can be labelled by the teacher.



**Audio and video cassettes** can be made of student oral readings, presentations, dramatics, interviews, or conferences (with teacher or peers).

### **Portfolios**

Portfolios are used to collect samples of student work over time to track student development. Tierney, Carter, and Desai (1991) suggest that, among other things, teachers do the following: maintain anecdotal records from their reviews of portfolios and from regularly scheduled conferences with students about the work in their portfolios; keep checklists that link portfolio work with criteria that they consider integral to the type of work being collected; and devise continua of descriptors to plot student achievement. Whatever methods teachers choose, they should reflect with students on their work, to develop students' ability to critique their own progress.

The following types of materials can be included in a portfolio:

- Audio- and videotaped recordings of readings or oral presentations.
- Writing samples such as dialogue journal entries, book reports, writing assignments (drafts or final copies), reading log entries, or other writing projects.
- Art work such as pictures or drawings, and graphs and charts.
- Conference or interview notes and anecdotal records.
- Checklists (by teacher, peers, or student).
- Tests and quizzes.

To gain multiple perspectives on students' academic development, it is important for teachers to include more than one type of material in the portfolio.

### **Conclusion**

Alternative assessment holds great promise for ESL students. Although the challenge to modify existing methods of assessment and to develop new approaches is not an easy one, the benefits for both teachers and students are great. The ideas and models presented here are intended to be adaptable, practical, and realistic for teachers who are dedicated to creating meaningful and effective assessment experiences for ESL students.

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(Tannenbaum, 1996)



**Questions for Practical Ideas on Alternative Assessments**

1. When and how can 'alternative assessments' be used? .....

.....

2. Why is it particularly useful with ESL students? .....

.....

3. How is it different from traditional testing? .....

.....

4. What is the main goal of alternative assessment? .....

.....

5. Summarise the three criteria for alternative assessment.

- .....
- .....
- .....

6. What kind of physical demonstrations can students give for academic concepts?

.....

.....

.....

7. How is a record kept of student responses? .....

8. How can a teacher elicit content knowledge without asking students to write or speak?

.....

9. Give some examples of performance-based assessments. ....

.....

10. What five oral and written products are described in the article?

- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....



11. What are portfolios used for? .....

.....

12. What do teachers do? .....

.....

.....

.....

.....

13. What *should* teachers do? .....

14. What might a portfolio contain?

- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....

15. Why is it important to include more than one type of material?

.....

***The following anecdotal paper gives an example of using Oral Performances or Presentations as well as Portfolios with primary school students as an assessment.***



## **Assessment of Primary School Students in Performing Arts**

*by Ruth Wickham, Brighton Education Training Fellow, IPGKDRI*

### **Introduction**

Over a period of fifteen years I taught in several state primary schools in Western Australia as an 'Arts Specialist'. The Arts is one of eight learning areas in the Australian Curriculum Framework, which lists student learning outcomes without specifying content. The teacher is required to demonstrate progress of each child through the various levels of the framework.

While regular classroom teachers in West Australian schools have their own class in front of them every moment of the week except for three hours, as a specialist I saw every class in the school, K-7, once or twice a week and the size of the schools varied from 300 – 1000 pupils. My problem was to get to know the names *and* abilities of every single child.

Especially at the beginning, I needed to have each individual child present themselves before me, tell me their name, and then show me what they could do – while I recorded marks and comments.

### **Performances for Assessment**

Clearly what was needed was an opportunity to watch a performance or presentation by each child. However, a great many of the children suffered from varying degrees of shyness, and although a few of the children could sing, dance or play a musical instrument, many of them had little or nothing to offer by way of entertainment for the rest of the class – whom I needed to sit quietly while I observed and assessed.

Therefore I created a system of teaching and assessment that not only worked for me but was eagerly accepted by my students over the years and through several different schools.

#### ***1. Dealing with the shyness***

Firstly I had to deal with the shyness. I purchased a microphone and small speaker system, and every child (from K – 7) was required to first speak, and eventually sing, on the microphone. The first time with the little children I would sit with them in a circle and hand the microphone around, and each child said "Hello, I'm ....." This was my first chance to learn their names, and for many of the children the first time they heard their own voice clearly. (Normally we only hear our own voice through the thickness of the bones and muscles in our head, and it has a different sound.) Most children giggle when they do this, and an enjoyable time is had by all.

When it came time for the performance, this was the minimum requirement for all, especially shy children. If nothing else, they would stand up and say a greeting and their name. But they could only do this once – the next time they would have to add something.

Another way that I dealt with the shyness was with drums. The children lined up and took it in turns to play a rhythm on the drums. I had a full drum kit in the classroom, and they could try any of the drum sounds, so it was quite loud – and for the shy children to find themselves making that much noise was at first shocking and then therapeutic as they seemed to start feeling less powerless.





The third solution for shyness was using puppets. Some children respond well to a hand puppet and are happy to let the audience focus on the puppet speaking or singing rather than looking right at them. For the genuinely severely shy children I used marionette-type puppets, and the child would stand over them and make them dance to music. (They would be in full view of the audience, not behind a puppet theatre, and again, they had to improve on this performance the next time.)

## **2. Group Support**

Partly to be able to allow all of the children to be assessed in a reasonable time, and partly again to help with shyness and other limitations, I allowed the children to perform in pairs or groups. Obviously every child in the group had to play a specific part in the performance, however small, and every child had to show an improved level of involvement at the next performance.

I had to be quick at evaluating and assessing individuals within the group as they performed, and it helped if each child had a moment when they were 'front and centre'.

## **3. Zero Tolerance**

Naturally in the build-up to the twice-yearly performances some children would become quite stressed, and parents would even come to the school to complain that they weren't sleeping or eating well.

I insisted that all children must perform, there were no exceptions. As mentioned earlier, there were some very easy ways for them to do so. If we reached a crisis and they were still refusing then I would allow them to give a private performance to me, or their friends, alone during a break time – and then tell them it was great and I still want them to perform in front of the class.

The fact is that I saw so many success stories. Sometimes in class time when it came to a particular child's turn they would cry. I would send them to wash room to wash their face and return, and then insist that they go ahead and perform. *Every* single child that cried and then performed said afterwards: "Can I do it again?" Why? It gave them such a sense of being powerful, instead of weak and shy and powerless.

## **4. Types of Performances**

Over the years as the children progressed through primary school, especially the children that I had taught from the first year onward, the children came up with better and better performances of songs, dances, drama, and instrumental pieces. Children would spend extra time in my classroom during breaks practising hard so that they could then give a performance at a school assembly or a local competition. But the requirements for assessment performance were simple:

- Stand up in front of the class alone or with a partner or group
- Introduce yourself on the microphone
- Sing, or lip-sync (pretend to sing to a background song), or dance, or tell a story/joke, or do a skit/play, or use a puppet ... anything really.



### 5. Audience Participation

Generally there was no problem with student behaviour in my classes. However, if the students were getting restless because there were a lot of performances and they were going slowly, I would give them an evaluation task, with a rubric they could fill in about each group or performer. It was very important to make sure this was an opportunity for them to make positive and constructive evaluation and nothing derogatory.

#### Assessment Rubric

I would consider it unfair to try to assess students in something that has not been taught and/or practiced. This was not like the 'X Factor' where I was looking for perfectly in-tune singing. After all, the students were all at different levels, and all I really wanted was for them to show improvement since last time (which is called 'ipsative' assessment).

What I was trying to find out:

- Whether my teaching has been effective (if everyone 'fails' I should teach it again)
- Which of the children may be having difficulties and need help
- Which of the children have made good progress

If we had been having lessons about training your voice to sing 'in tune', then tunefulness would be a factor in the assessment – but again only in terms of whether they were improving.

Here is an example of a *possible* rubric:

Name	Class			Date
	Amazing!	Good	disappointing	Needs help
Preparation – evidence of planning				
Group cooperation				
Voice – acceptable volume and pitch				
Movement – expressive, in time				
Rhythm/Beat awareness				
Aware of Audience				
Attitude				
Comment				

There could be more, or less, or more specific points. With younger students there would also be fewer points. With one sheet per child and the names filled in ahead of time it was simply a matter of ticking boxes in the 5-10 minutes as the children perform. Once the marks were entered into my database, then the forms were included in the child's portfolio, along with photos, or children's drawings of the performance as their own response to the performance. With two assessments per year it was obvious in the portfolio how the child was progressing.



## **Conclusion**

By watching each and every student give some kind of performance twice a year, I was able to be fully aware of their abilities and progress throughout their primary school education. A record of their progress could be clearly seen in their Arts portfolio.

The following article talks about the educational background and purpose of Portfolios.

***Read it and discuss the questions below.***

## **Portfolios: Assessment in Language Arts. ERIC Digest.**

Portfolios are used in various professions to gather typical or exemplary samples of performance. Stockbrokers talk about a client's portfolio; art students assemble a portfolio for an art class or a job interview; people in advertising, publishing, or sales carry portfolios to business meetings. The general purpose is to collect and display an array of materials that has been gathered or produced (Farr, 1990; Olson, 1991).

The portfolios, if defined as collections of work stored in folders over a period of time, will have little value either to students or teachers. To be of use, careful consideration needs to be given to what goes into a portfolio, the process of selection, and how the information is to be used (Krest, 1990; Valencia, 1990). If this is not done, then the portfolio may become little more than a resource file.

### **Portfolios Serve Multiple Purposes**

Many approaches have been suggested for developing language arts portfolios. The one common element in all of the approaches is that portfolios are places to collect samples of a student's work. Whether these samples include typical or best work, whether they include reading and writing, and whether traditional assessments are added to the portfolios are all issues that need to be carefully considered. Other concerns have to do with the assessment of the materials that are collected, the ownership of the portfolios, and whether portfolios are used for both product and product assessment (Farr, 1990; Johns, 1990; Olson, 1991).

To serve the function of assessment, the language arts portfolio should be a record of a student's literacy development - a kind of window on the skills and strategies the student uses in reading and writing. A student's portfolio should be the basis for the teacher's constructive feedback. When portfolios are developed over an extended time period as an integral part of classroom instruction, they become valuable assets for planning both within the classroom and on a school-wide basis. When information is gathered consistently, the teacher is able to construct an organized, ongoing, and descriptive picture of the learning that is taking place. The portfolio draws on the everyday experiences of the students and reflects the reading and writing that a student has done in a variety of literacy contexts (Valencia, et al, 1990).

The best guides for selecting work to include in a language arts portfolio are these: What does this literacy activity tell me about this student as a reader and a writer? Will this information add to what is already known? How does this information demonstrate change?



Portfolio collections can form the foundation for teacher-student conferences, a vital component of portfolio assessment. A conference is an interaction between the teacher and the student, and it is through conferences that the students gain insights into how they operate as readers and writers. Conferences support learners in taking risks with, and responsibility for, their learning. Through conferencing, students are encouraged to share what they know and understand about the processes of reading and writing. It is also a time for them to reflect on their participation in literacy tasks. Portfolio assessment is an appropriate means of recognizing the connection between reading and writing.

### **Portfolios Address Language Arts Goals**

The use of portfolios for assessment is not a new concept. However, the idea has gained momentum as curriculum experts have called for assessments that include a variety of work samples and have asked that teachers confer with each student about his/her literacy development.

In the last few years, both the goals and instructional approaches to language arts have changed. New curriculum designs advocate instructional approaches that place an emphasis on:

- an integration of all aspects of language arts including reading, writing, listening, and speaking;
- a focus on the processes of constructing meaning;
- the use of literature that inspires and motivates readers;
- an emphasis on problem solving and higher-order thinking skills; and
- the use of collaboration and group work as an essential component of learning.

For example, integrated language arts instruction is now the accepted model in many schools in the country (Cal. Dept. of Education, 1987). Integrated language arts instruction for most of these schools means that there are no longer separate reading and language arts instructional periods--and often that language skills are also taught when students are learning science and social studies.

Integration also means that reading and writing are not broken into separate objectives to be taught, practiced, and mastered one at a time. Rather, it means that skills are taught as they are needed as part of a total behaviour. Discussion preceding the reading of a selection helps to bring a reader's knowledge to bear on what he/she is about to read. At the same time the verbal exchange of ideas fosters speaking and listening skills. Despite the discussions of the importance of integrating all aspects of language arts instruction, it is the teaching of reading and writing that has produced the most obvious integration. Thus, a portfolio containing integrated reading and writing work samples provides a valuable assessment tool.

### **Portfolios as Authentic Assessments**

One of the key issues in the development of portfolios concerns the kinds of structured assessment activities that should be included in them. Many curriculum and assessment specialists have been calling for the development of performance or authentic assessments (Stiggins, 1987; Wiggins, 1989). Performance assessments have been developed and used in the business world and in various professions for some time. Performance assessment is nothing more than the development of an



activity that actually represents the task to be performed on the job--or the total behaviour that is the goal of instruction.

Language arts portfolio assessments should:

- **Have value to both teachers and students beyond the assessment information provided by the test.**

The tests should be so much like good instruction that a teacher would want to administer the test for its instructional value even if there was no assessment information provided. Value beyond assessment means tests will take no instructional time since the test is good instruction.

- **Require students to construct responses rather than merely recognizing correct answers.**

Perhaps the greatest concern with multiple-choice tests is that students are not required to develop responses. Rather, they merely have to select an answer choice from several that have already been constructed for them. Educators have long recognized that it is a far different matter to write a complete sentence with correct punctuation than it is to answer a question that asks which of four punctuation marks should be placed at the end of a sentence.

- **Require students to apply their knowledge.**

Many tests provide students with a structure for the expected answers. Performance assessment is open-ended and allows students to apply their knowledge. Student responses to performance assessment should reveal ability to understand a problem and apply his/her knowledge and skills. This means, of course, that a variety of responses will be acceptable.

- **Pose problems for students for which they have to use multiple resources.**

The solution to real problems necessitates the use of multiple resources. The writing of a report, for example, is based on the use of various source materials, reference aids, and the writer's background knowledge. Assessments which attempt to replicate those situations will provide information about students' abilities to use multiple sources. Such assessments should also determine if students are able to select pertinent information from the available resources and put the selected information together in a way that solves the problem posed by the assessment.

- **Present students with tasks that have a realistic focus.**

Tests should look like the tasks that students have to perform in every-day life and should focus on developing responses to realistic situations. Tests often ask only for right answers. Even when tests ask for written responses, the questions posed are "teacher-type questions" that have as their goal an assessment as to whether students have a basic understanding of a story (e.g., main events, compare and contrast). A question with a more realistic focus might ask students to write a letter to a story character suggesting how that character might deal with a problem. This presents a realistic focus to which a student can respond, and the responses will reveal how the student has understood the materials on which the response is based.

Taken together, the general attributes of performance assessment and the specific goals of portfolios represent an integrated approach for language arts assessment. Since the contents of the portfolio are generated by the student, may be typical or exemplary examples, and require



continuous evaluation of reading and writing, students are actively engaged in their own growth and development as language users.

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(Farr, 1991)

**Questions about 'Portfolios: assessment in Language Arts'**

1. What needs to happen to make portfolios useful? .....

.....

2. What is the one common element in approaches to Language Arts portfolios? .....

.....

3. What three issues need to be carefully considered? Whether the sample include:

- .....
- .....
- .....

4. What is the teacher able to do "when information is gathered consistently"?

.....

5. What are "the best guides for selecting work to include in a language arts portfolio"?

.....

.....

.....



6. What is “a vital component of portfolio assessment”? .....

7. What emphases in instructional approaches are advocated by new curriculum designs?

- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....

8. Complete this statement:

“Performance assessment is nothing more than .....

.....

9. What five things should be true about a Language Arts portfolio assessments?

Language Arts portfolio assessments should:

- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....

10. How are “students are actively engaged in their own growth and development as language users”?

.....

.....



## Assessment through storytelling (or writing)

Getting children to retell a story, or create their own (maybe similar or related) story will give the teacher a fair idea of whether the children

- enjoyed the story (aesthetic)
- understood the language / plot / content of the story they have been told (efferent)

Children love stories. They love being told stories – stories read aloud to them and (even better) stories told aloud. ***So making up stories comes fairly naturally to children.*** Children are already creating stories in their heads.

The problem arises with:

- Language – having sufficient vocab and language structure to tell the story in an understandable form.
- Thinking skills and problem-solving ability to logically sequence the story in telling it.
- Limited writing skills to produce their story in written form.
- Shyness/fear about speaking aloud in front of others.
- Insufficient suitable practice time because of listeners (especially adults) getting bored with them and telling them to be quiet and/or to stop 'lying'.

As part of our storytelling – and language teaching – we need to encourage and assist children to become storytellers. Amongst other things, this will make it easier to assess their progress both by an aural/oral test such as Performance, and by getting them to create something to include in their portfolio.

### ***Assessing Children as Storytellers***

The teacher can encourage the children to respond to stories in a *variety* of ways so that they can visualize and experience the story, and to improve their language, sequencing, social awareness (listening and allowing others to listen).

Remember also that 'responding' to stories is one of the learning standards.

Ask them to:

- Create art work related to the story – including creating puppets to show particular characters.
- Dramatize all or part of the story
- Join in with rhymes and chants in the story
- Suggest variations or different endings to the story
- Retell the story
- Use puppets in the dramatization and/or telling of the story

Stimulate their imagination with ideas and suggestions. Notice the worthwhile parts of stories created by them, even if they only make a start (rather than picking up on errors) and provide encouragement and genuine constructive criticism.





**Firstly teach them to tell stories orally and avoid the difficulties involved in writing.** Their stories can be recorded in video form and they can create pictures to show their story sequence. Once they have the story well established and organised, then they can work on the written form.

### ***Activities to assist children as storytellers***

Here are some activities that are designed to help children develop their storytelling skills. Participating will both assist trainee teachers to improve their own storytelling skills, and provide them with strategies to use in the classroom.

Some of the ideas for these activities were taken from “Storytelling!” (Codell, 2012), “Storytelling in the Early Years” (Mynard, 2005), “Teacher’s Guide: Teaching Storytelling” (Storytelling Arts of Indiana, 2012), and “Early Years Starter Pack” (Ferguson, 2007). These are all available on the Internet, and are listed in the Bibliography. (Go look them up!)

#### **1. Story Sequence**

Firstly the student storytellers need to know the story sequence really well. We don’t want to necessarily memorise the story, but we need to remember what happened in exactly the right order. It sounds really simple, but for children this is a very important skill.

##### *Activity*

On index cards, ask the children to draw simple pictures (stick figures) to indicate the stages of their story. Lay them out in order like a “Story Map”.

- Do not write words!
- Do not write numbers!

They should have about 6 pictures. If they have more than 10 then either their story is too long, or they are being too detailed about the stages of their story.

The first time you do this activity with the children, they could do it about a story they have already heard and know – so essentially this is a **retell** activity.

NOW let them take their 6-10 cards in a stack and throw them up into the air! Then they gather them together, and see if they can rearrange them into the correct order. They can do this several times for practice.

Observing the children doing this (with a checklist in your hand) will give you a chance to assess their abilities, and the cards can be included in their portfolio (put in order by them).

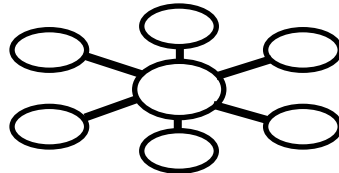
#### **2. Character Map**

A good storyteller needs to know the story characters (good and bad) and be able to talk about the freely as if they were friends.

### Activity

Ask the children to draw a character map for each of their characters.

They can start with a circle with the name of the character. Then they add lines, and put a characteristic or trait at the end of each line. When young children are doing this, we are trying to get away from the hassle of writing and spelling at this stage, so it could all be done with pictures.



Again, the character map can be looked at for an assessment (year 3 4.2.1) and then also entered into the portfolio.

### 3. Paired Storytelling

Children should practise their storytelling with a partner first. This does not necessarily mean that one tells and the other listens – that can come at a later stage. At this stage we just want them to tell the story together with each other, not strictly “taking turns”, but both adding parts of the story as they go along.

The teacher can observe the pairs, and take notes on a checklist. They could also take photos (and enter them into the portfolio) or video of the children working in pairs. The paired storytelling could be private with each pair working at the same time and ignoring the others, or it could become a paired performance (for assessment).

### 4. Character Voices

This is an easy activity to help your students practise using different character voices – without having to think of the words to say. Speaking with (interesting and) correct intonation is one of the learning standards for Language Arts. Teacher can observe and keep a checklist.

#### Activity – count to 10

Working with a partner, children take it in turns to try saying the numbers 1 to 10 in each of these different styles. (Can you think of any others - ?)

1. As an angry parent (or teacher?) – telling a child to obey right now.
2. As a young child learning to count – maybe making mistakes and repeating and correcting.
3. It's their party and they have a disappointing number of presents, count them.
4. They are the referee in a boxing match. One man is down, count him out.
5. It is a bad phone connection and they are trying to give someone their phone number (which is 1234 5678 9 10)



6. They are counting their coins that they have been saving up in their money-box.

### **5. Circle Stories**

'Circle time' is a great opportunity to share stories and snippets of stories in a non-threatening environment. There are a great many storytelling type games you can play such as "The Emperor's Cat" where each child repeats what the previous one says and adds a line.

#### *Activity – circle story*

Choose a story the students know (because you have told them) and divide it into 6-10 parts. Students sit in a circle (on a mat or on chairs), and each in turn around the circle tells one part of the story. After the last part of the story, the next student starts the story again. If the class is very big, there could be several smaller circles – but it is better if everyone gets to listen to everyone else. (You could use a set of story sequence cards to divide up the story.)

Teacher can observe, and keep a checklist.

### **6. Faces**

This is another circle activity but this time students practise the storytelling art of showing a face. Again the teacher can observe the students one by one as they have their turn.

#### *Activity – Pass the Face*

Students sit in a circle (on a mat, or on chairs) which includes the teacher.

1. The teacher makes a face at the first student. The student copies the face, and turns to show it to everyone in the circle.
2. The student then makes a different face at the second student.
3. The second student then copies the expression and shows everyone.
4. The second student then chooses a different facial expression to show to the third student.

### **7. Actions and Gestures**

This is another circle activity for students to practice using actions and gestures.

#### *Activity – Catch It*

Students stand in a circle which can include the teacher. (Once the game is underway the teacher can move away and start observing and using a checklist.)

1. The first student (or the teacher) looks as something imaginary in their hands - a spider; a cold, wet, slimy fish; a china teapot; a feather; a dinosaur; a balloon .... etc.
2. They call out another student's name across the circle, and what it is that they are throwing and call "Catch it!" For example: "Faris! An egg! Catch it!"
3. The catcher then thinks of a different object and throws it to someone else.



## 8. Walk the Walk

Children can have a lot of fun practicing walking in different conditions. This encourages them to visualize the situation, and can become an enjoyable part of a storytelling.

### *Activity - walking*

Students have turns at demonstrating walking in different ways:

- walking home from school knowing there are tons of chores waiting
- through heavy sand;
- barefoot from a very sticky and squishy swamp;
- through a blistering hot desert;
- through a scary place at midnight;
- with your right foot in a cast;
- through honey.

### **Storytelling Skill - Eye Contact**

Shy children especially often struggle with maintaining eye contact with those they are not totally comfortable with.

Model eye contact while you are talking to your students. Point out the eye contact you have modelled. Just for fun, stare at each person in the room, have the children do the same.

Tell them they must try to make each listener feel as if the story is being told just for him or her, and eye contact helps the listeners feel that way.

If the storytellers-in-training are too shy for eye contact, they can look at the tops of people's heads, and often the listeners cannot tell the difference.

### **Exercise 1:**

***With your partner or group, invent a fun circle game involving 'eye contact'.***

.....

.....

.....

.....

***Describe and demonstrate your game to the rest of the class.***

How could observing this game be useful for assessment?

.....



**Storytelling skill – Using Pauses**

When we are nervous it's easy to be in a hurry to get through telling a story before we forget it. Children also need to learn not to hurry, and to know the right moments to pause. These are good opportunities to make good use of actions, props, facial gestures and special voices.

**Exercise 2:**

***With your partner or group, invent a fun circle game involving 'pauses'.***

.....

.....

.....

.....

***Describe and demonstrate your game to the rest of the class.***

How could observing this game be useful for assessment?

.....



## How and where to create portfolios

Teachers can be hampered in their preparations for children's portfolios by decisions about the actual physical format of the portfolios. There are many different options, and teachers choose according to what they (or the school, or the students) can afford, as well as what is practical and efficient.

Many teachers use stationary items such as:

- Display books
- Scrap Books
- Loose leaf folders
- etc.

Some schools have gone digital and use a rewriteable CD, others use online ePortfolios.

Here is one online example to consider and explore.

### OpenSchool ePortfolio

Firstly, (most important!) Pricing:

Full-featured program for one teacher and unlimited students. – Free - Beta version is now available. Register now! - See more at: <http://www.openschooleportfolio.com/pricing/#sthash.d4KuYken.dpuf>

#### **This is what they say about their website/program:**

##### For authentic assessment and project-based learning

Interdisciplinary projects are the best way for students to really show what they know and how they make connections. However, project-based learning does not lend itself to standardized assessment. With our unique project and rubric creator, teachers can create and assess interdisciplinary projects using a standards-based approach or teacher-created criteria. Teachers can draw from a library of portfolio projects and publish their own best lessons for others to use and learn from.

##### For special education and ELL

Standardized assessments are inherently unfair to SPED and ELL students and may reinforce underachievement. OpenSchool ePortfolio lets these students show abilities they have that may not otherwise be measured by current standardized testing procedures. With the growing populations of both of these groups of students, OpenSchool ePortfolio can paint a better, more holistic picture of these students and their progress towards desired educational outcomes.

#### **Internet Exercise:**

- Investigate OpenSchool ePortfolio. Would it be useful in the Malaysian Primary School situation?
- Are there other / better online ePortfolios?
- Are there other ways you could create a digital portfolio for your students/
- Are hard-copy portfolios better, or digital? Why?



## Portfolio assessments

Portfolios are practical ways of assessing student work throughout the entire year. With this method, you can systematically collect descriptive records of a variety of student work over time that reflects growth toward the achievement of specific curricular objectives. Portfolios include information, sample work, and evaluations that serve as indicators for student performance. By documenting student performance over time, portfolios are a better way to crosscheck student progress than just one measure alone. Portfolios can include:

- Samples of written student work, such as stories, completed forms, exercise sheets, and descriptions
- Drawings representing student content knowledge and proficiencies
- Tapes of oral work, such as role-playing, presentations, or an oral account of a trip
- Teacher descriptions of student accomplishments, such as performance on oral tasks
- Formal test data, checklists, and rating sheets

Checklists or summary sheets of tasks and performances in the student's portfolio can help you make instructional decisions and report consistently and reliably. Checklists can also help you collect the same kind of data for each student. In this way you can assess both the progress of one student and of the class as a whole.

In addition, here are a few ways that your ELLs can have an active role in the portfolio process:

- Students can select samples of their work and reflect on their own growth over time.
- You can meet with ELLs to develop their goals and standards.
- Together with students, you can set tangible, realistic improvement goals for future projects.
- Students – as a class, in groups, or individually – can create their own rubrics.

(Colorado, 2007)

## Tasks

Work with a partner or group.

### 1. Discuss and create a set of criteria for portfolio assessment

- rationalize each criterion
- suggest suitable documentation.

### 2. Design aural-oral and written assessment using stories as a resource

- discuss how these resources can be documented in the portfolio

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## Topic 9: Storytelling Performance

### 1. Preparing to Present a Story



Some people can feel quite nervous before storytelling for the first time, even to children. Naturally they want to do a really good job and leave an ongoing good impression!

Here are some steps to walk through before making that first presentation.

*Credit is given to Jeff Gere and his "Tell Well" system in for some of the steps provided here. (Gere, Storytelling Tools for the Classroom, 2012)*

#### a) Getting Started – Visualisation

First we need to choose a story – as has been discussed in previous sections. We could think of a well-known folk-tale, or a story we have heard. We could choose a story we have read in a book. We could make up a story or tell a personal experience.

We need to KNOW the story really well. That does NOT mean memorise it as such. Only memorise the **sequence of events**.



And we need to be able to **visualise** it – the scenes, the characters, the actions. Visualise and be able to describe how each character moves and talks.

We need to use **imagination** to make the story real and complete.

#### b) Mime



Most people find mime a little awkward and even difficult. But *this is a very important step* in preparing the story for telling. As Gere says: "Bad storytelling is often static and word-based. Children respond to physical movement and it enlivens the tales. Mime forces the storyteller to start learning scenes and to visualize the story."

***The facilitator should model how to mime a story first.***

The storyteller needs to become the character and mime the action of the scenes.

After a demonstration by the facilitator, participants should go to a private spot nearby to mime and once there they should close their eyes and explore the scenes in their story. Allocate a specific amount of time (10 minutes should be enough) and tell participants to return promptly.

***NOTE to facilitator***

*Participants may be quite comfortable to work in the course room as everyone is concentrating with their eyes closed. This would make it possible to ring a bell or give some other signal for them to return to their places.*

**c) Sound Effects**



Hopefully by now no one is feeling embarrassed!

We want to add sound effects to the mime. NOT WORDS. And we don't want the whole story to be a series of noises! Select the parts of the story, the actions, that would benefit from having sound effects added.

***The facilitator should first model making sound effects. (yes, really!)***

Encourage participants to experiment with various sound effects. People will find some sounds more difficult than others. Work in groups to discuss the most suitable and recognisable sound effects to make. (Page 9 in participant's notes.)

**d) Words**



The important thing is not to lose the actions and sounds when we add the words.

***Facilitator should model this step.***

***Tell part of a story using actions, sound effects and words as well.***

***Putting it all together***

The participants should now work in pairs, telling each other their stories using actions, sound effects and words. The listener needs to give feedback. Facilitator should monitor.

### ***Listener Feedback***

The partner needs to ask questions about parts that are difficult to visualise, if it's not clear who is speaking or what is happening.

Participants should each pair up with another partner and try again.

## **2. Telling the Story**



Of course the following aspects of storytelling also need some practice, but by now everyone is beginning to feel the need to get on with telling the story.

### **a) Character Voices, Faces, and Placement**



We have already practised movements and sound effects, and had listener feedback to tell whether it was obvious who was doing what in the story.

Dialogue can really liven up a story, but when telling the story, it becomes tiresome for the narrator to be saying "Now the cat says ... and then the mouse says ... and then the cat says ..."

So to keep the audience informed about who is talking when, the storyteller needs to keep the characters clear in space and in relation to one another. Each character should have a position where the teller stands/sits/bends down, and each character should have specific facial expressions, gestures, and voice quality – pitch, gruffness, vocab range etc.

### ***Facilitator should demonstrate this with a segment of story!***

Participants consider a story with a couple of characters, and plan how to depict each one.

Discuss choices with their group / partner and if necessary adapt ideas.



## **Reflection**

Ideally you should watch yourself on video after presenting a story, and examine what went right as well as wrong.

The children who are listening will reflect back to you on their faces how well you are doing. But sometimes you can get so involved in the story and trying to remember all of the aspects of your performance that it's hard to even notice accurately what the children are feeling.

Naturally you should keep a reflections journal and write down the things you did notice. How you felt before you started, as you went along, and how you felt after, and what you noticed about how the children were feeling. This will only be useful to you later if you can pinpoint what might be causing these reactions, the things you should try again and the things you should avoid.

In the workshop / class situation (at the IPG) when you are practicing, you should be working with a partner. And then you should be able to be very honest with each other about how well your various strategies are working. Is your diction clear? (Are you speaking too fast?) Are your gestures meaningful or just silly? Are your voices distinct enough? Etc.

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## **Appendix – Stories and Samples**







The appendix contains scans of a variety of books and/or stories. These can be used as examples for considering various aspects of the course so that no student has the excuse that they lack the opportunity to look at examples.

To find more examples the students could:

- Search on the Internet using the names of authors seen here, as well as authors mentioned in other parts of the module.
- Go to the library – there is a room full of books to look through there.
- Search for children’s books in a particular genre, or for a particular age-group.
- Look in the primary school library.
- Flip through some books in a book shop, and then follow up by searching for those titles or authors.

## Appendix 1: The School Lunch Room

This is a printable story available from [www.learningpage.com](http://www.learningpage.com)

 <p><b>Tommy Tales are downloadable and printable books only available on the Internet from the following Web sites:</b> <a href="http://www.learningpage.com">www.learningpage.com</a> <a href="http://www.readinga-z.com">www.readinga-z.com</a></p> <p><b>Tommy Tales feature the lovable rascal Tommy Tomkins and his friends.</b></p> <p><b>You can see this book in color on the Learning Page Web site.</b></p> <p><b>Supporting material is available on the Learning Page Web site, including teaching notes, worksheets, and fact files.</b></p> <p><b>Look for the next Tommy Tales adventure—coming soon from Learning Page.</b></p>  <p>© 2000 Learningpage.com, Inc. <a href="http://www.learningpage.com">www.learningpage.com</a></p>	<p>BOOK 1</p>  <p><b>The School Lunch Room</b></p>  <p><b>Tommy Tales</b></p>
<p>2</p> <p>Thomas A. Tomkins is in third grade. His friends call him Tommy. Tommy has a dog. His name is Taffy. Taffy finds things and brings them to Tommy.</p> <p>Taffy found a hat and gave it to Tommy. Taffy found a box and gave it to Tommy. Taffy found a ball and gave it to Tommy.</p> 	<p>3</p> <p>One day, Tommy was playing with his friend Lucy. Taffy ran to them. He had found a TV remote control. It was not an ordinary remote control. It was purple with red stripes.</p> <p>“Where did you find this clicker?” asked Tommy. Taffy just wagged his tail. Tommy took the clicker and started playing with the buttons.</p> 



4

Suddenly, the clicker made a loud screeching noise. There was a flash of blue light and thick smoke. When the smoke cleared, Lucy and Taffy were gone!



5

Tommy was very surprised. He stood still for a moment with his mouth open.

He blinked his eyes and shouted,

“Where are you, Lucy?”

“Come here, Taffy!”



He looked for them behind the bushes. He looked for them under the bench. He looked for them on top of the wall. He could not find them anywhere.

6

“I think I made them disappear with the clicker,” he said to himself. He tried pressing the buttons on the clicker to get his friends back. Nothing happened.

“Perhaps the batteries are dead,” he thought.



But there was no place for batteries. He studied the numbers and words on the buttons of the clicker. One read “forward.” He pressed it. Nothing happened. Another read “back.” He pressed it. Nothing happened.

“Perhaps I should point the clicker at myself and press,” he thought.

7



He turned the clicker around and pressed “replay.” Suddenly, the clicker made a loud screeching noise.

There was a flash of blue light and thick smoke. He felt himself leave the ground. He turned upside down.



8

Everything went black. Tommy fell to the ground with a bump.

He slowly opened his eyes. He looked around. He saw Lucy smiling at him.

He heard Taffy barking at him.

"Where am I?" asked Tommy.



9

"We're in the school lunch room," answered Lucy. "But I don't know how we got here," she said.

Tommy told her that the magic clicker sent them there. "We shouldn't be here on a Saturday," said Tommy. "We'll be in big trouble if someone finds us."

They looked for a way to get out. They tried the doors. They were locked. They tried the windows. They were locked, too.

"What can we do?" cried Lucy. "We can't stay here until Monday."



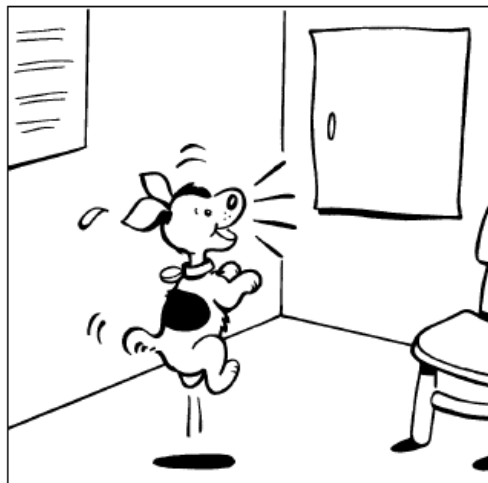
10

"We will not be hungry," said Tommy.

"We're in the lunch room. There must be lots of food here."

Taffy started barking loudly. He found a little door in the corner of the room.

"It's not locked," said Tommy. He opened the door.



11

They looked in, but it was as dark as night.

"Shall we try crawling in there?" asked Lucy.

Tommy picked up Taffy. "Let's go," he yelled. "It's the only way to get out of here."



12

Tommy and Taffy went through the door. They squeezed in. Lucy followed closely behind.

Suddenly, they were sliding down. It was like going down the playground slide, but faster.



13

At last, they reached the bottom. They landed in something soft and squishy. It was also stinky and smelly.

They looked around. They were in a big garbage bin. They were sitting in piles of smelly old food.

"Yuck, this is horrible. Let's get out of here," shouted Lucy.



14

They jumped out of the garbage bin and ran out of the school gates. After five minutes, they stopped to catch their breath.

"What are you going to do with the magic clicker? I think it makes trouble," said Lucy.

"I don't know," said Tommy.

They decided to ask their best friends. They would tell them about the clicker the next day, at the park.



15

"I'll show Andy and Kim what the clicker can do. I may even send them to the school lunch room," laughed Tommy.

They said "Good-bye" and both ran home.

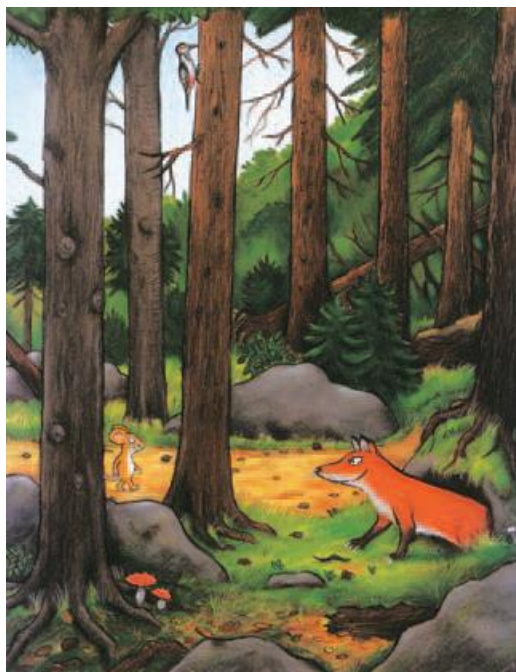
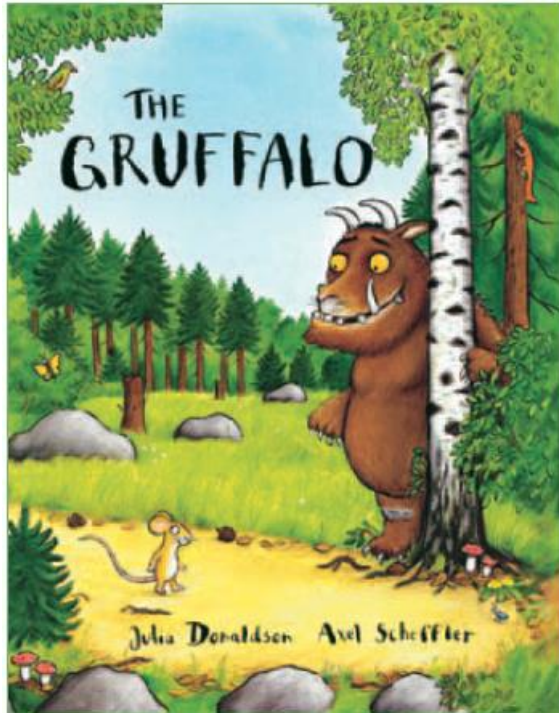
"What will I tell Mom about my stinky clothes?" he thought.

As he ran, he safely hid the magic clicker in his pocket.



## Appendix: 2. The Gruffalo

This is an excerpt from the famous book by Julia Donaldson, illustrated by Alex Scheffler.



A mouse took a stroll through the deep dark wood.  
A fox saw the mouse and the mouse looked good.  
*“Where are you going to, little brown mouse?  
Come and have lunch in my underground house.”*  
“It’s terribly kind of you, Fox, but no –  
I’m going to have lunch with a gruffalo.”



*“A gruffalo? What’s a gruffalo?”*  
*“A gruffalo! Why, didn’t you know?”*



*“He has terrible tusks,*



*and terrible claws,*



*And terrible teeth in his terrible jaws.”*

*“Where are you meeting him?”*



*“Here, by these rocks,  
And his favourite food is roasted fox.”*

*“Roasted fox! I’m off!”* Fox said.  
*“Goodbye, little mouse,”* and away he sped.





“Silly old Fox! Doesn’t he know,  
There’s no such thing as a gruffalo?”

...

*(This is only the first part of the story)*



(Wilson, 2006)

## Appendix: 3. Little Red Riding Hood and the Wolf

This is from Roald Dahl's *Revolting Rhymes*. (Wilson, 2006)

# Revolting Rhymes

## Little Red Riding Hood and the Wolf

As soon as Wolf began to feel  
That he would like a decent meal,  
He went and knocked on Grandma's door.  
When Grandma opened it, she saw  
The sharp white teeth, the horrid grin,  
And Wolfie said, 'May I come in?'  
Poor Grandmamma was terrified,  
'He's going to eat me up!' she cried.  
And she was absolutely right.  
He ate her up in one big bite.  
But Grandmamma was small and tough,  
And Wolfie wailed, 'That's not enough!  
'I haven't yet begun to feel  
'That I have had a decent meal'  
He ran around the kitchen yelping,  
'I've got to have a second helping!'

Then added with a frightful leer,  
'I'm therefore going to wait right here  
'Till Little Miss Red Riding Hood  
'Comes home from walking in the wood.'  
He quickly put on Grandma's clothes,  
(Of course he hadn't eaten those.)



He dressed himself  
in coat and hat.  
He put on shoes and  
after that  
He even brushed  
and curled his hair,  
Then sat himself in  
Grandma's chair.  
In came the little girl  
in red.

She stopped. She stared. And then she said,  
'What great big ears you have, Grandma.'  
'All the better to hear you with,' the Wolf  
replied.  
'What great big eyes you have, Grandma,'  
said Little Red Riding Hood.  
'All the better to see you with,' the Wolf  
replied.  
He sat there watching her and smiled.  
He thought, I'm going to eat this child.

## Revolting Rhymes



Compared with her old Grandmamma  
She's going to taste like caviare.

Then Little Red Riding Hood said, 'But  
Grandma, What a lovely great big  
furry coat you have on.'

'That's wrong!' cried Wolf.  
'Have you forgot

'To tell me what **BIG TEETH**  
I've got?

'Ah well, no matter what you say,

'I'm going to eat you anyway.'

The small girl smiles. One eyelid flickers.

She whips a pistol from her knickers.

She aims it at the creature's head

And bang bang bang, she shoots him dead.

A few weeks later in the wood,

I came across Miss Riding Hood.

But what a change! No cloak of red,

No silly hood  
upon her head.

She said, 'Hello, and  
do please note

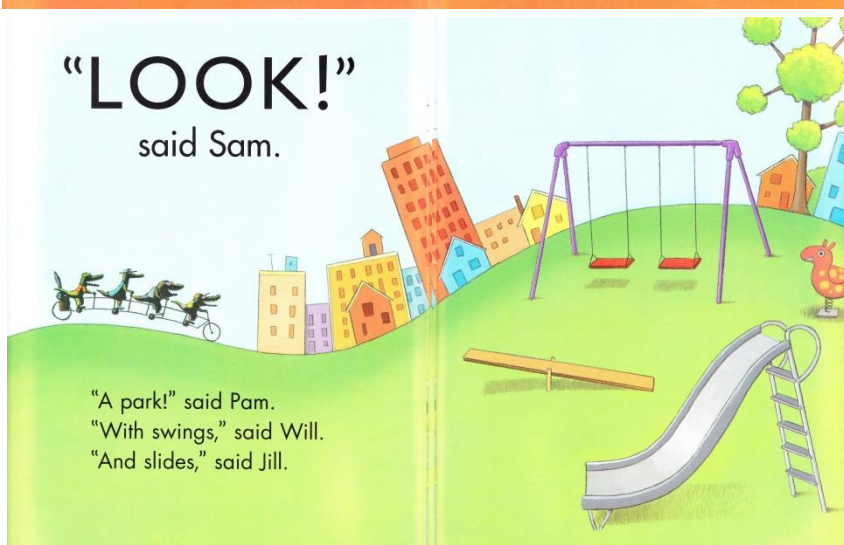
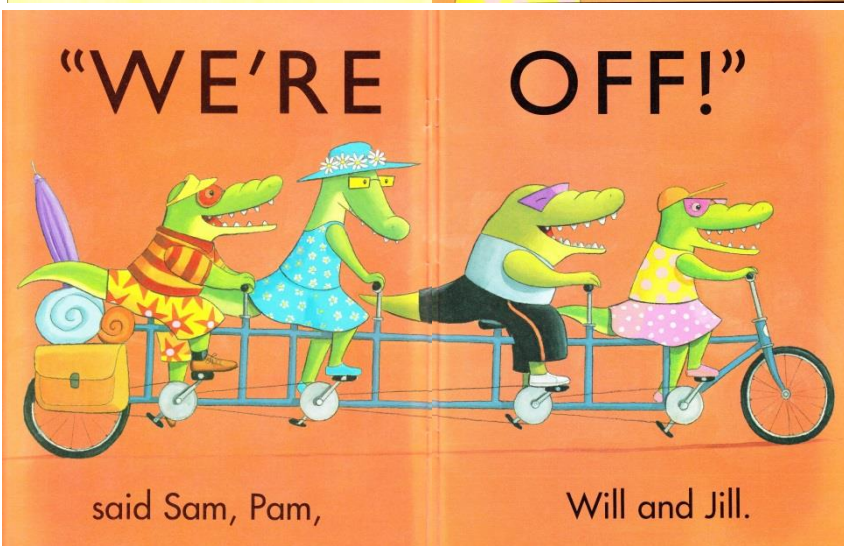
'My lovely furry  
**WOLFSKIN**  
**COAT!**

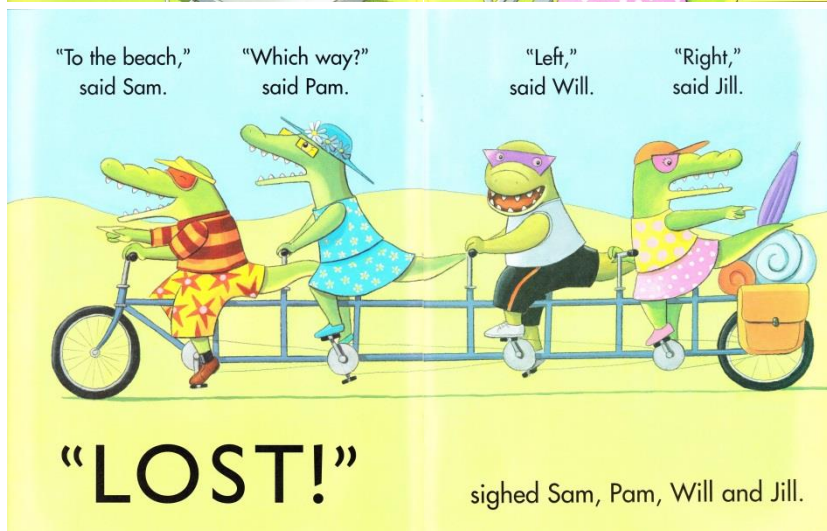


## Appendix: 4. Beach Day

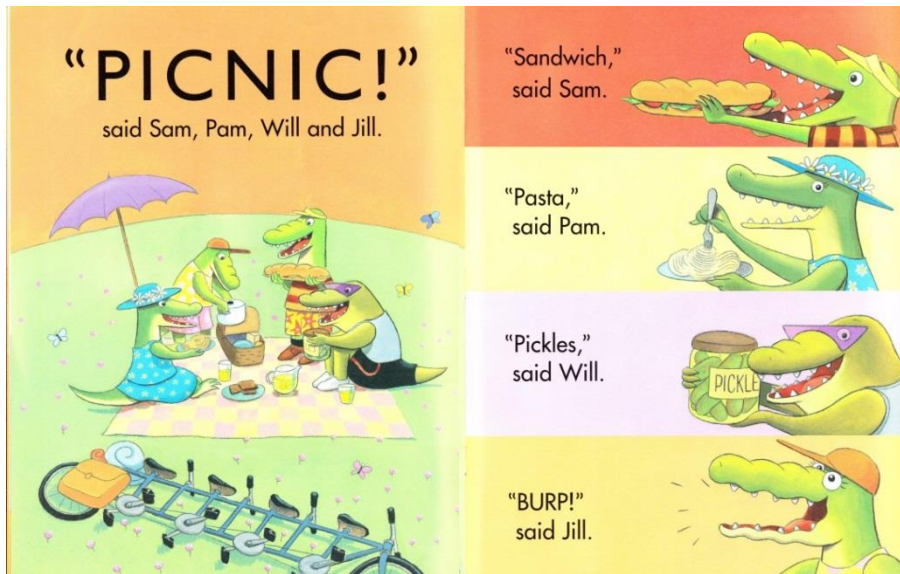


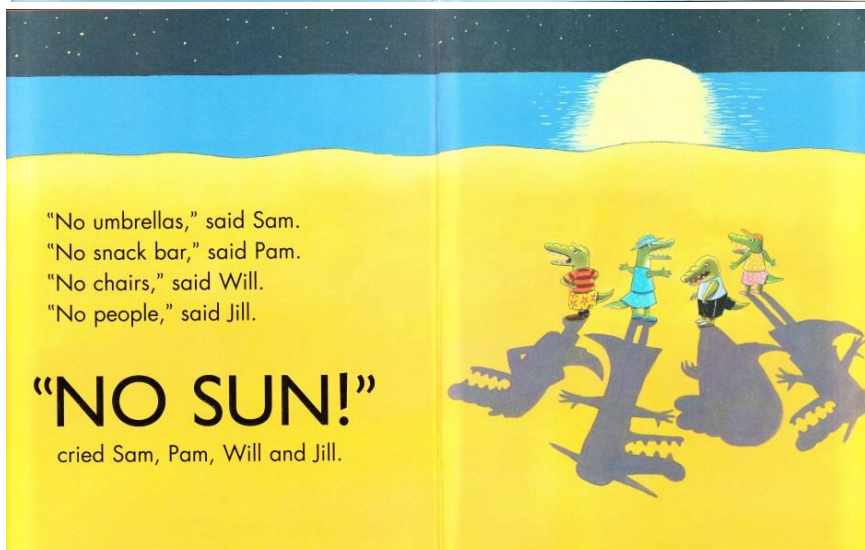
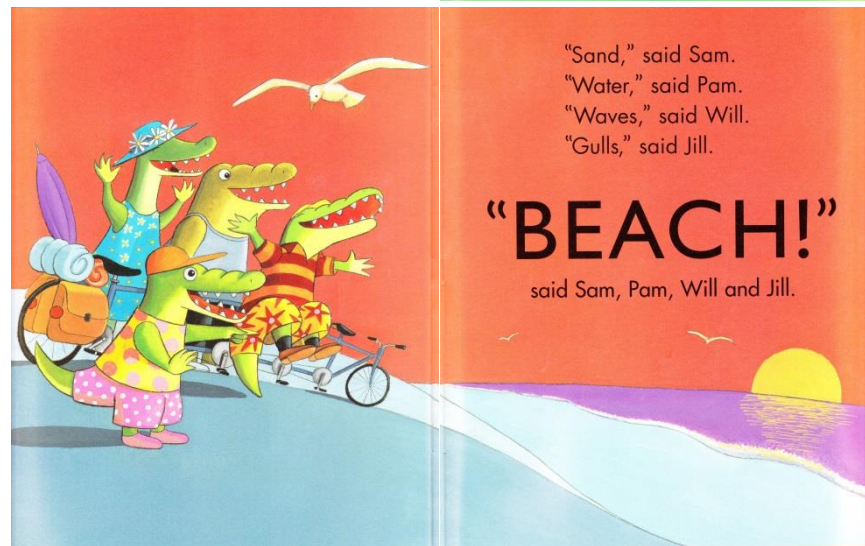
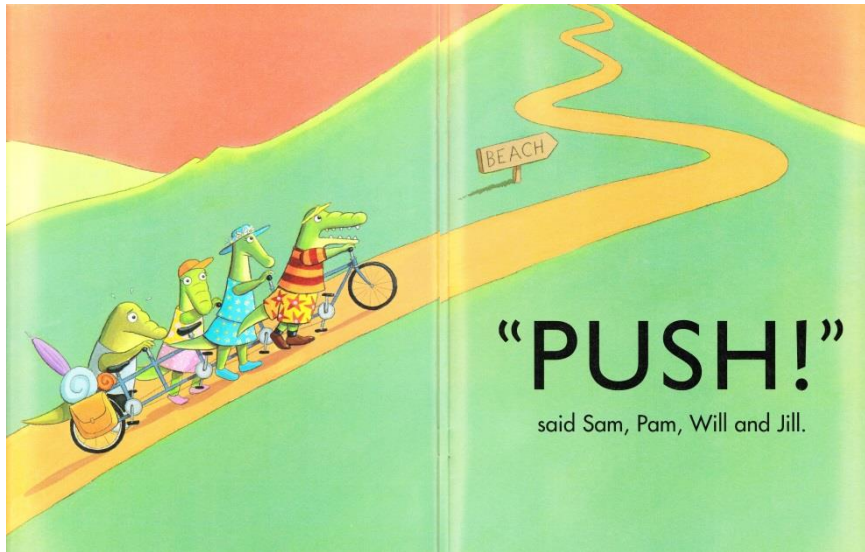




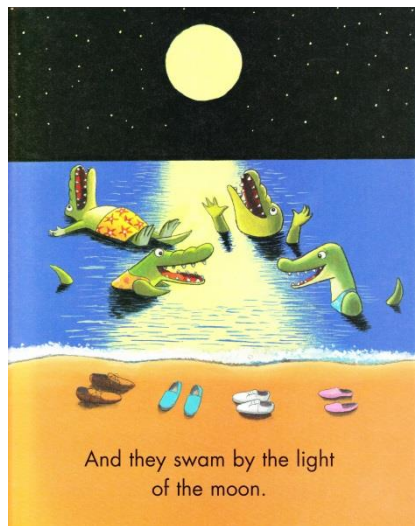
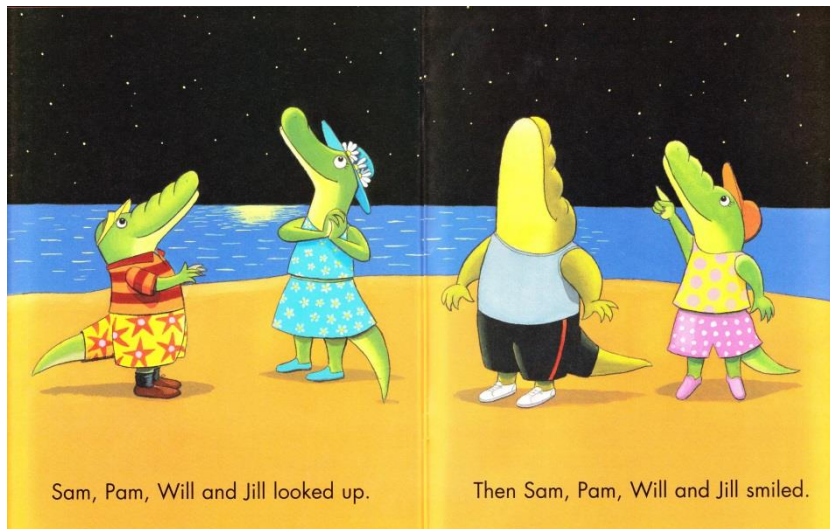












(Lakin, 2004)  
Look up other books by this writer.

## Appendix: 5. Goosebumps Horrorland



(Stine, 2009)

Search for other stories by this famous children's author.

No answer.

"AAAAAAAAAAGH!" A long, loud scream just ahead made me cover my ears. More shrieks and screams rang out, blaring louder... LOUDER.

I started to move again. Walking quickly now. I was desperate to get out of this creepy, dark tunnel. How long could it be?

The horrifying shrieks grew deafening. Painful. My ears throbbed. I could feel my heart racing in my chest.

The tunnel curved. Dim yellow light washed over me. I could see the shadows of people up ahead.

The deafening screams followed me.

And then I felt something sticky on my forehead. I pulled it off — a long, wet worm. I felt another one drop onto my shoulder. With a gasp, I pulled one out of my hair.

I looked up. I could see the worms dropping from the tunnel ceiling. Hundreds of them.

I tore them off my neck, out of my hair. A worm dropped into my mouth. I spit it out, gagging and choking.

*The kids weren't lying, I thought. There's something wrong with this park. Everything is too SCARY and too REAL to be fun!*

I started to run through the dim light, my shoes slapping the concrete tunnel floor. I slipped and slid on a thick puddle of worms on the floor.

102

Slapping at the worms with both hands, tearing them off my shoulders, my hair, I ran. Ran blindly through the long tunnel, the screams throbbing in my ears.

And then... a shrill scream over my head made me stop. Made me stop and gasp in horror. Because I recognized the voice.

It was MY SCREAM!

103



# 4

Panic shook my entire body. My breath caught in my throat.

Frozen in the darkness, I listened to my scream.

And then I remembered. The Horror in the entrance booth recorded me screaming when I first arrived at the park. He said it was so they could identify me later.

*So... it's a joke after all. This is all a HorrorLand joke, I decided.*

My legs were still trembling, but I started to walk again. A few seconds later, I saw bright daylight. The end of the tunnel!

"YAAAAAY!" I cheered as I stumbled out of the tunnel.

I blinked several times, waiting for my eyes to adjust to the bright light. I brushed a few more worms off my shoulders.

I shielded my eyes with one hand and searched for the other kids.

104

No sign of them.

*Maybe they went back to the hotel, I decided.* I was totally eager to catch up with them and find out what was really going on.

*Why did they seem so scared?*

*Why did they think we Very Special Guests were in danger?*

I took a few steps toward Stagger Inn — when a hand grasped my shoulder.

I let out a startled cry.

I turned to see a fierce-looking Horror. His shiny purple cape fluttered in the wind. He had short yellow horns curling up from his purple furry head.

I glimpsed the brass name tag on his chest. It read: BYRON.

"Let go of me!" I shouted.

But he squeezed my arm tighter. And jerked me off my feet.

He glanced all around. "Hurry!" he whispered. "I don't want them to see."

He started to pull me into the tunnel.

"Let go! What are you doing?" I screamed. "Why are you taking me back in there?"

105

# 5

"Let go of me!" I tried to swing out of his grasp. But he was too strong.

He pulled me into the darkness of the tunnel. I could hear the shrill screams echoing behind me. I felt like screaming, too!

"Don't be afraid," Byron whispered. "I came to help you."

"H-help me?" I stammered.

He let go of me. Then he shoved something into my hand.

"You can use this to escape," he said.

I blinked. "Escape? Escape from *what*?"

Byron's eyes darted to the tunnel entrance. He really did seem afraid of being caught.

"You've all got to get out of HorrorLand," he said. "You're not safe here."

"That's what those kids said," I told him. "But I don't understand —"

He raised a big hand to cut me off. "They

106

brought you here for a reason," he said. "You've got to get to the other park."

"Huh?" I squinted at him. "Other park? But I just got to *this* park!"

He shook his head. "Listen to me, Julie. You'll all be safe at the other park. Tell the others. Tell them I will try to help."

"I — I don't understand what you're talking about," I replied. "Why?"

He was staring past me, out into the light. I turned and saw two Horrors running toward us.

"You must hurry," Byron said. "The ones who brought you here are getting impatient!"

"But — but —" I sputtered.

"If they bring you to The Keeper," Byron said, "you are DOOMED!"

Then he took off, running hard.

The two Horrors spotted him. They began waving their arms and shouting for him to stop.

But Byron ducked and dodged his way through the crowd. After a short while, the two Horrors stopped and gave up the chase.

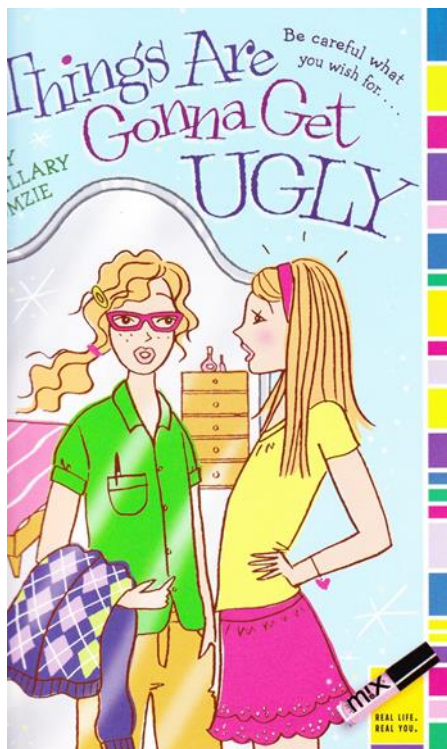
I stepped out of the tunnel. I began to follow the path that led to the hotel.

My head was spinning. I suddenly felt I was living in one of those underwater photos where everything is just a blue blur.

Byron's words kept repeating in my mind. But they didn't make any sense at all.

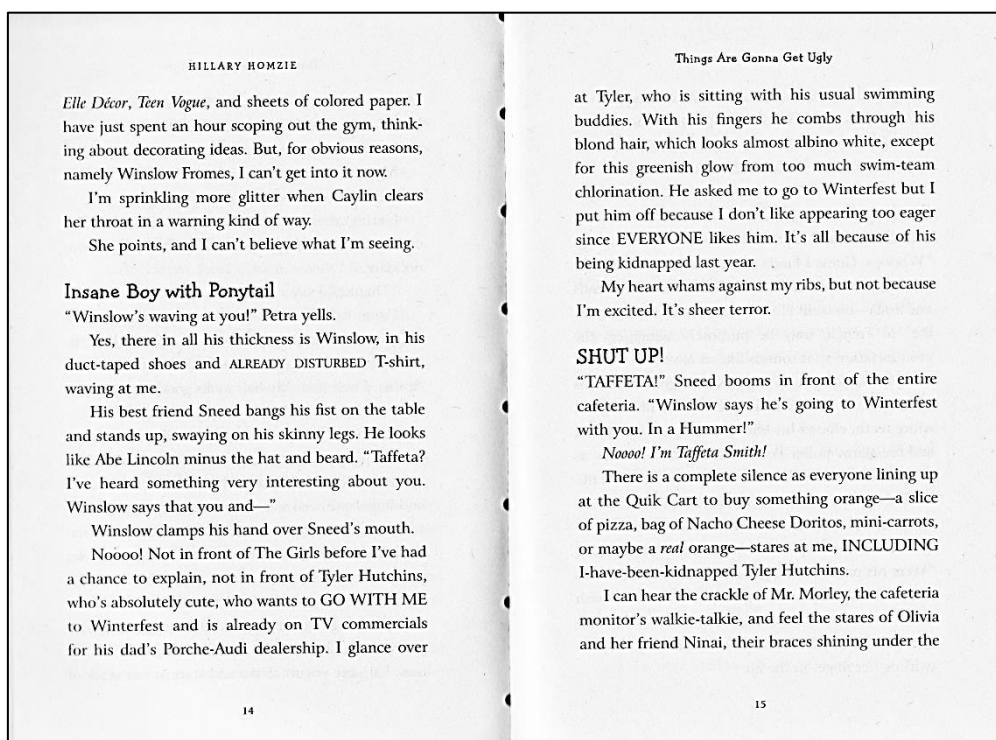
107

## Appendix: 6. Things are Gonna Get Ugly



(Homzie, 2009)

Find other books by this author on the Internet.



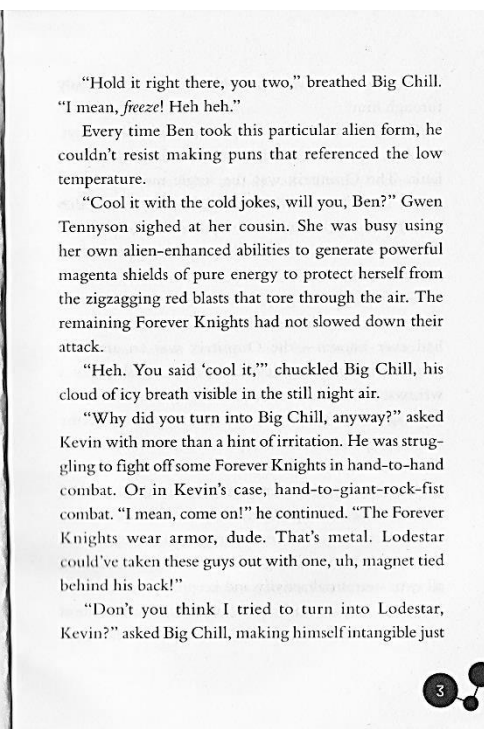
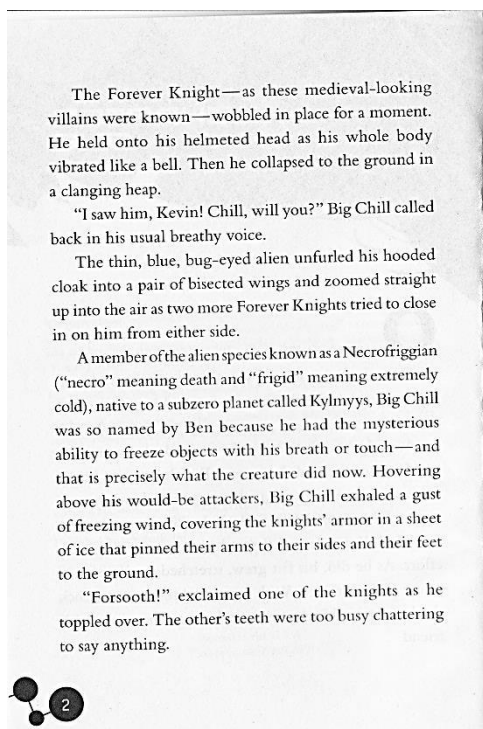
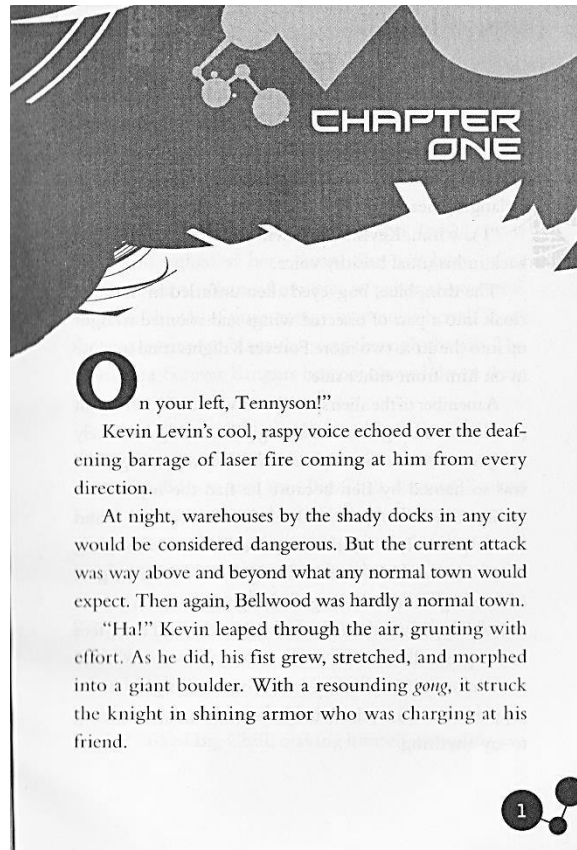
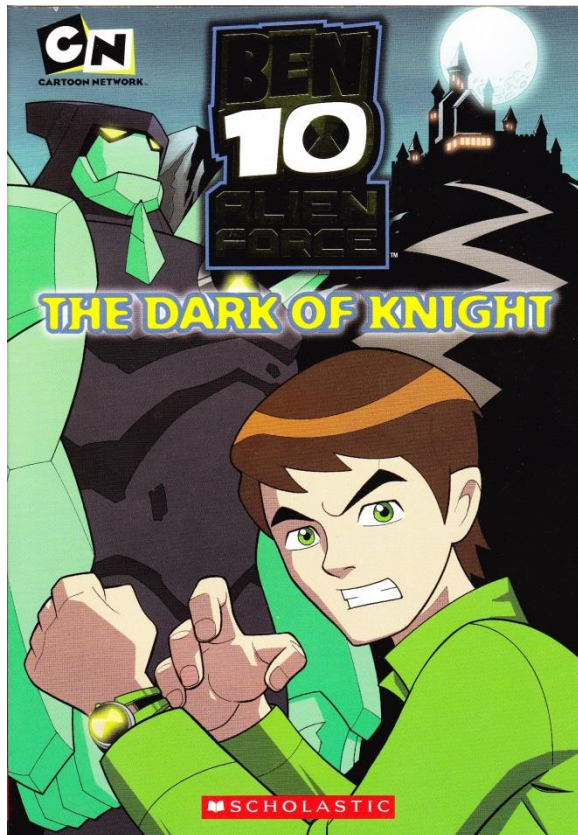




<p style="text-align: center;">HILLARY HOMZIE</p> <p>fluorescent lights. Caylin and Petra are bugging out their eyes and Tyler, who's sitting with Justin Grodin, pulls on his beautiful hair.</p> <p>My lips are <i>le</i> stuck. I can't take it anymore.</p> <p><b>Sending Out an SOS</b></p> <p>Winslow gets a wide grin on his wide face and shrugs. "Whoops. Guess I kinda told a few people and they told some friends and their friends told some friends and voilà—oh well! <i>C'est la vie!</i>" That means "that's life" in French, only he purposely slaughters the pronunciation so it sounds like <i>set la veeee</i>.</p> <p>Tyler, looking stunningly Nordic god-like in his white polo, with his white-green hair, flashing his white teeth, elbows his buddy, Justin, the bad kisser and fire-alarm-puller. Petra and Caylin stare at me as if I've broken all of the rules we've ever believed in.</p> <p>This is all much worse than I feared.</p> <p>I want to scream. But that would be uncouth.</p> <p>Petra throws up her arms in complete disgust. "Were his parents siblings? I can't believe he thinks <i>you'd</i> actually say yes to going to the dance with him."</p> <p>"Can you say <i>hallucination</i> or what?" says Caylin, twirling her finger in the air.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">16</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Things Are Gonna Get Ugly</p> <p>"So, Taf, what will you be wearing?" Winslow asks, his voice cracking with newly discovered hormones.</p> <p>I can't say anything. The truth is I don't know what I'm going to wear because Mom won't buy me the \$550 Max Heeder top I picked out. She says the price is obscene.</p> <p>I can tell you exactly what and who is obscene. . . .</p> <p><b>Winslow Fromes!</b></p> <p>To put a stop to catastrophe, I march up to Winslow, who's standing next to the Quik Food cart. Petra and Caylin shuffle after me. I stare at Winslow's freaky black notebook. He's actually flipping through the pages right now. What could possibly be in that thing? A lady elf in a bikini?</p> <p>"I see you looking," says Petra, like she can read my mind. "He intrigues you, doesn't he? Admit it."</p> <p>"No," I hiss, even though I know she's joking. He doesn't interest me at all. He wears a chain on his belt that clanks down the hall. Yesterday, he posted . . .</p> <p><b>A Lame Poem on MySpace</b></p> <p>Taffeta, U r so sophisticated. U make me want 2</p> <p style="text-align: center;">17</p>
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<p style="text-align: center;">HILLARY HOMZIE</p> <p>learn French. Here is how much French I've learned bcuz o my admiration 4 u:</p> <p>Éclair Soufflé Omelet Garbage French fries French kissing</p> <p>Just kidding. Hee hee. Winslow</p> <p>Why did I ever tell Winslow Fromes that my grandfather is French? Now he thinks this French thing is the key to unlocking me.</p> <p>Winslow reties his ponytail. It's like he's getting ready at all times to attend a Phish concert.</p> <p>Petra, her lips in full pout, wheels toward Winslow. "Look, eighties reject, Taffeta has a few other guys in mind for Winterfest." She narrows her eyes and nods over to The Guy table that Tyler lords over. "Does the name Tyler Hutchins ring a bell?"</p> <p>Of course Tyler Hutchins rings a bell. How many Nordic gods are there at one school with pearly</p> <p style="text-align: center;">18</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Things Are Gonna Get Ugly</p> <p>teeth, good manners, and junior-Olympic green hair, in car commercials, who have triumphed over kidnapers?</p> <p>Winslow moves his brows up and down like he's Groucho Marx and puts his drinking straws in his hair like antennae. "Guess Tyler will be <i>jalouse</i> since I'm so sophisticated. <i>Non?</i>" Would he stop trying to speak French? Would he please stop talking to me in front of everyone? Winslow reaches out a hand. It's approaching my shoulder. If I don't move out of the way soon it'll be a direct hit. I sway to the left but it's too slow. His large paw grazes my shoulder.</p> <p>Protocol breach!!</p> <p><b>No!!</b></p> <p>"Just get it out of your head, Winslow! This fantasy of me and you. Forget what I might have said. It's NEVER EVER happening!"</p> <p>Winslow's face goes pale, and his lips fold into this pathetic upside-down <i>u</i> shape. Then he growls, leans over to me, and utters, "I'm so over you." Pressing his fingers against his nose, he lopes away.</p> <p>Winslow actually looked really upset. He should have adhered to protocol.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">19</p>
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## Appendix: 7. The Dark of Knight





in time to allow several laser blasts to pass harmlessly through him.

The Omnitrix was malfunctioning a lot these days. Much as Ben hated to admit it, it was largely his own fault. The Omnitrix was the single most powerful device in the entire universe, and fifteen-year-old Ben Tennyson held the awesome responsibility of wielding it wisely. Some days he lived up to this responsibility better than others.

Created by a tiny, gray, froglike alien named Azmuth of the Galvan—the most brilliant mind the universe had ever known—the Omnitrix was an amazing genetic-manipulating device the size and shape of a wristwatch. It had arrived on Earth in grave distress five years ago, seeking the only being in the galaxy worthy to bear it: Ben and Gwen's paternal grandfather, Max Tennyson.

Back in those days, ten-year-old Ben and Gwen had no idea their Grandpa Max was part of a super-secret intergalactic law enforcement organization called the Plumbers, who were charged with the task of monitoring all extra-terrestrial activity and keeping peace both on Earth and in space. In fact, Max was the Plumbers' most honorable, decorated, skilled, and important member.

That's why the imperiled Omnitrix had sought him by coming to Earth.

However, it was ten-year-old Ben who had stumbled upon the incredible alien device during a summer camping trip with his grandpa and Gwen. Because he was related to Grandpa Max, Ben's DNA was a close enough genetic match to the human being the Omnitrix was actually seeking. On that fateful night, the powerful, one-of-a-kind contraption latched onto Ben's wrist instead of his grandfather's. And it would not come off.

Ever since then—with the notable exception of a five-year hiatus during which he was free from the device—Ben had used the Omnitrix to turn himself into a vast array of strange and powerful alien life forms.

Access to these creatures had originally been unlocked ten at a time—for simplicity's sake in cataloging them, according to Azmuth. Though the Omnitrix's creator had told Ben that a total of 1,000,903 genetic samples were theoretically available, and the Omnitrix had the capability of sampling many more.

Ben had gradually learned how to use each of his alien forms to fight super-powered evildoers of both human and alien origin, to protect the innocent, and even to defend the whole Earth itself from an all-out

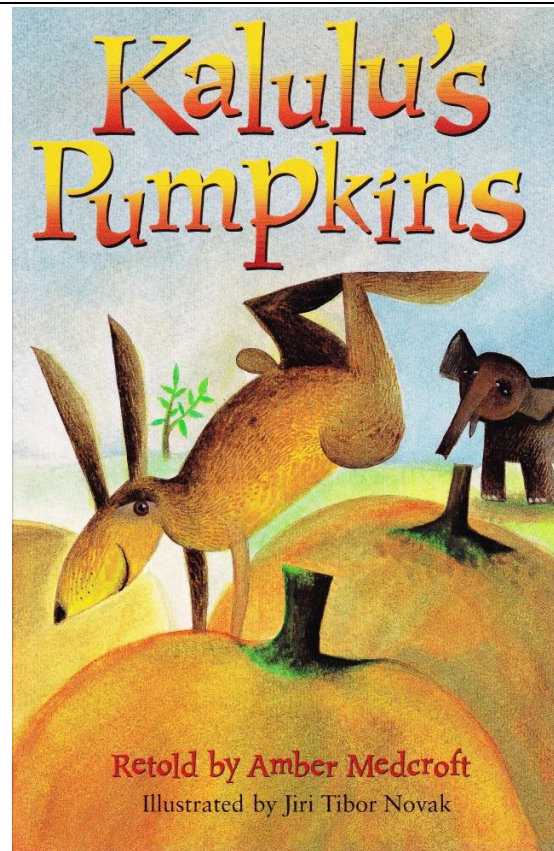
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5

(Fullerton, 2010)

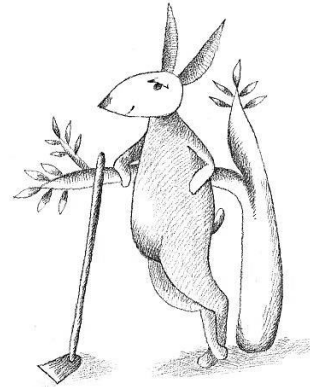
Can you find more books in this series, or more stories by this author?

## Appendix: 8. Kalulu's Pumpkins



### CHAPTER ONE

## Good Things to Eat



Kalulu the rabbit was very wise. He knew that the best way to get good things to eat was to grow them.

1

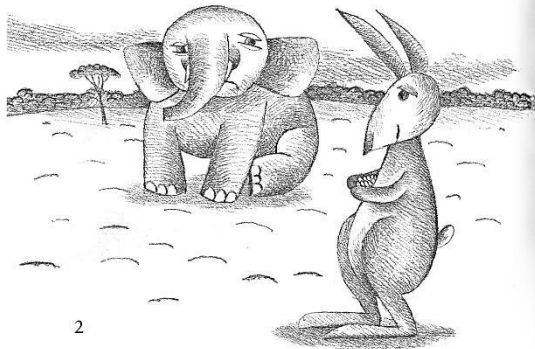
One day, Kalulu decided to grow some pumpkins.

"Hello, Buru," he said to his friend, the elephant. "I am going to grow some pumpkins."

The elephant smiled a big smile. "I like pumpkins," he said.

"Then why don't you grow some?" asked Kalulu.

"I haven't got any seeds," replied the elephant.



2

"Oh, dear," said Kalulu. "You can have some of mine." So Kalulu gave half of his seeds to the elephant.

"Is that all you're going to give me?" asked Buru. "I want more seeds than that!"

"I'm sorry," said Kalulu. "This is all I have."

"I suppose it will have to do then," grumbled the elephant. "How do I plant them?"

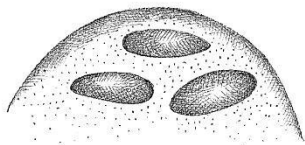
"Come to my garden early in the morning," said the rabbit. "I will show you what to do."

The elephant went away and Kalulu went to bed so that he would be ready to plant his seeds early in the morning.

3

CHAPTER TWO

## Selfish Kalulu!



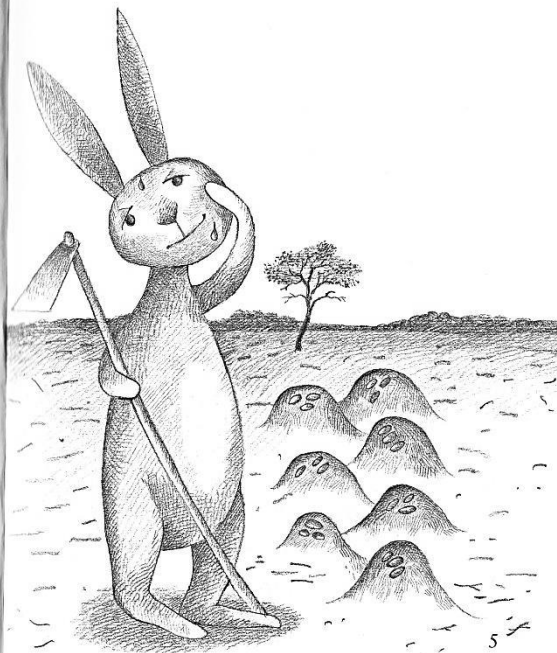
The next day, Kalulu got up bright and early. He carried his shiny new hoe to his garden. He hoed the ground until it was soft and crumbly, then he scooped the earth up into big mounds. In each mound, he planted three pumpkin seeds.

When the seeds were planted, Kalulu sprinkled them with water from the nearby river and covered

4

them with banana leaves to shade them from the hot sun.

“There!” said the rabbit. “Finished at last!”

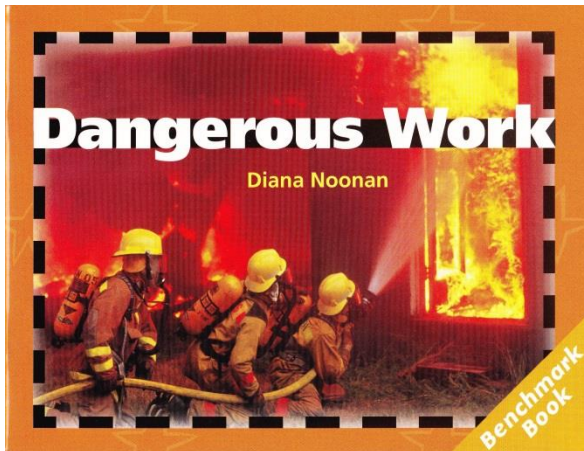


(Medcroft, 2008)

Notice that this author just ‘retold’ this story.

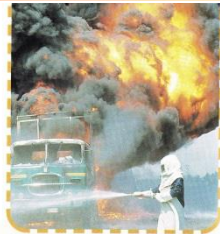


## Appendix: 9. Dangerous Work



### Introduction

Everyone should be careful when they are working. But people who have dangerous jobs must take special care.



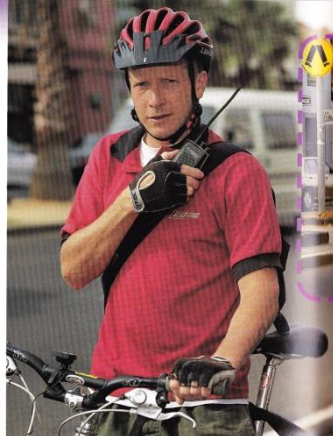
### Bicycle Courier

Bicycle couriers are paid to take parcels from one place to another. On busy streets, they can travel faster than a car.



### On the Road

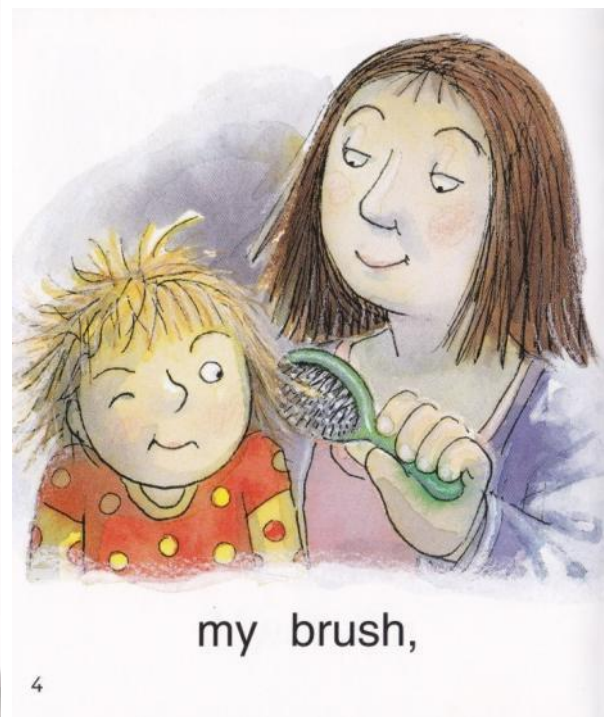
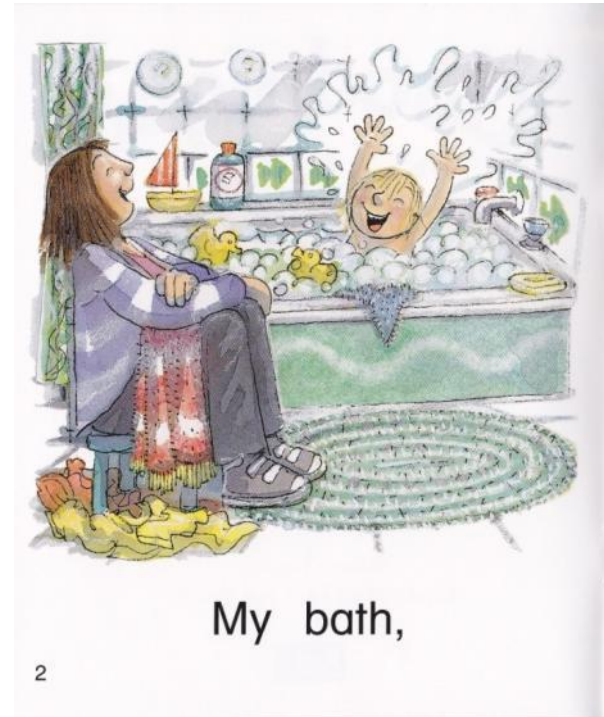
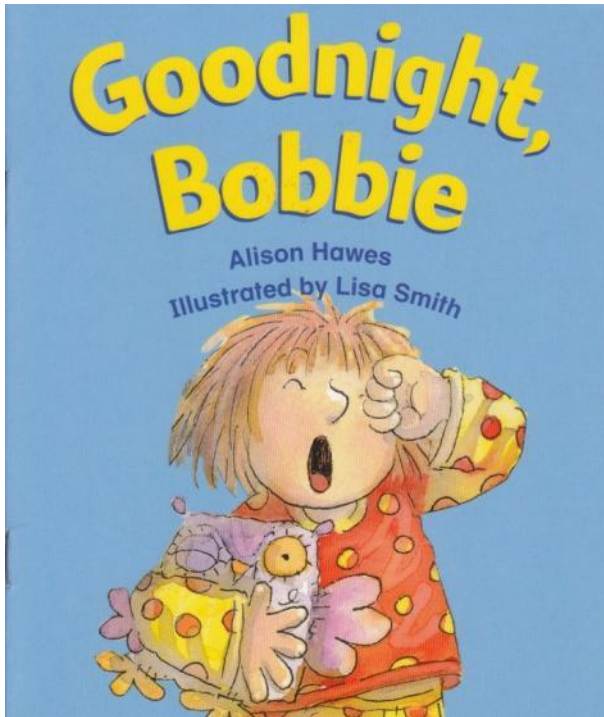
A call on the two-way radio tells the courier where to pick up a parcel. Bicycle couriers need to be fit and alert, and make sure that their bicycles are always working well.



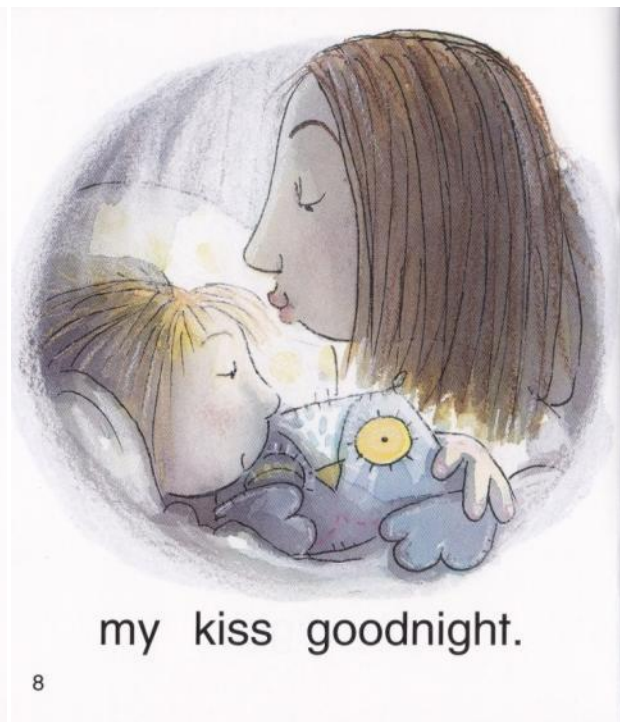
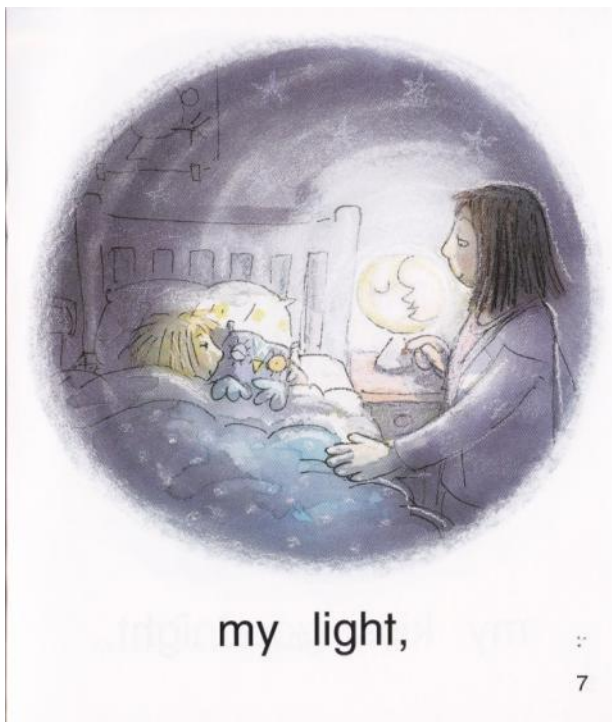
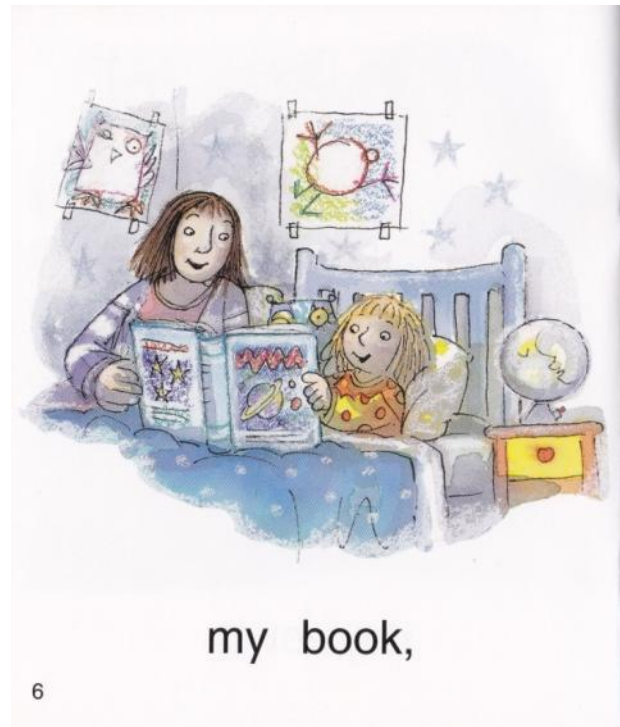
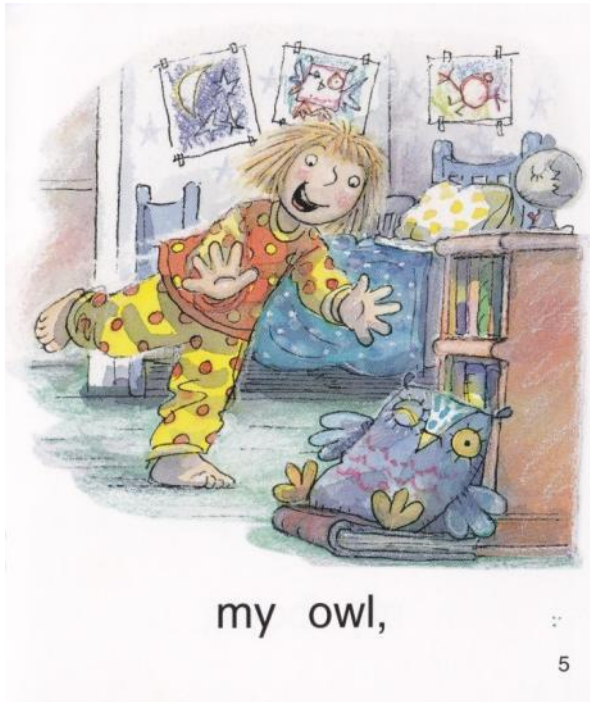
Bicycle couriers always need to be on the lookout for danger. They don't want to be hit by vehicles, or run into people crossing the road.

(Noonan, 2000)

## Appendix 10: Goodnight Bobbie

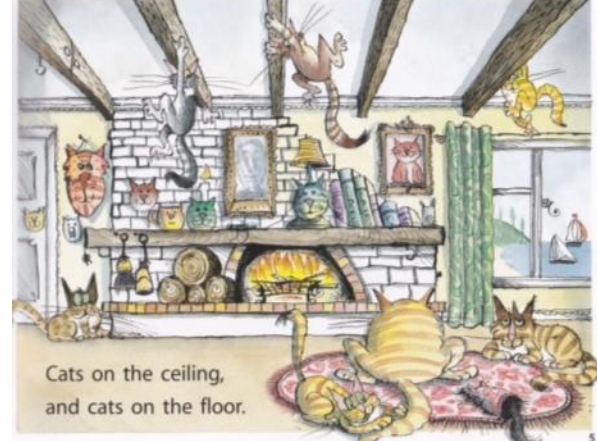
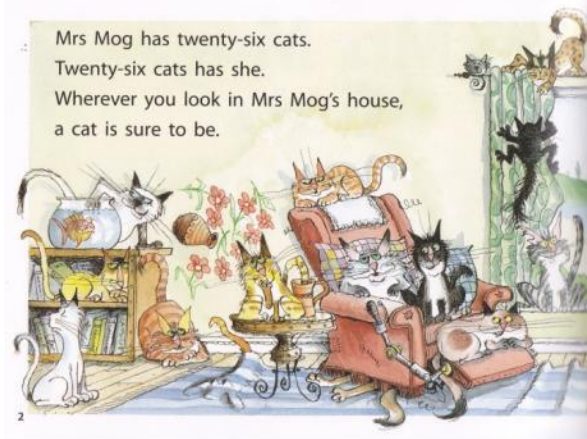
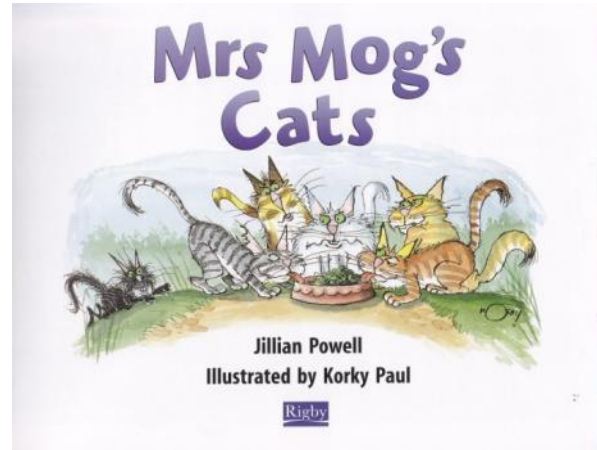
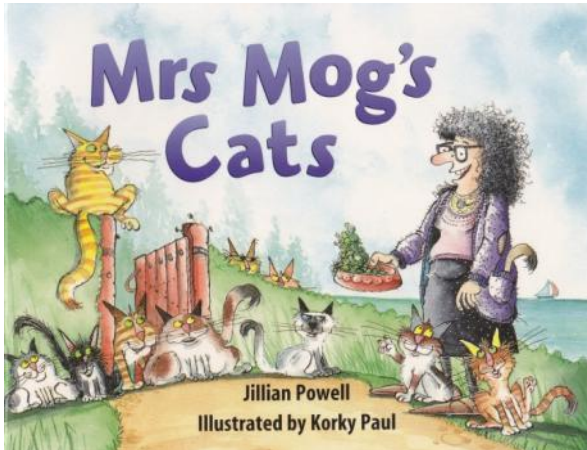




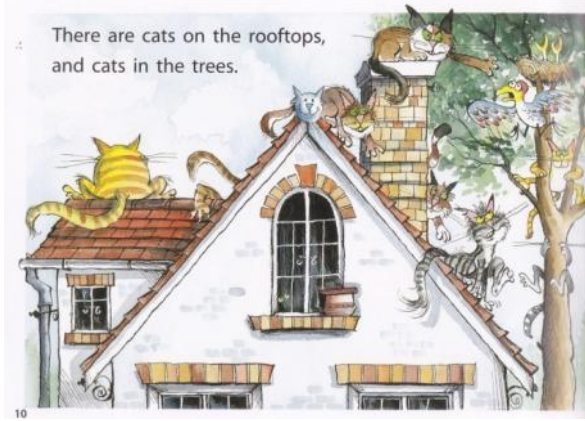
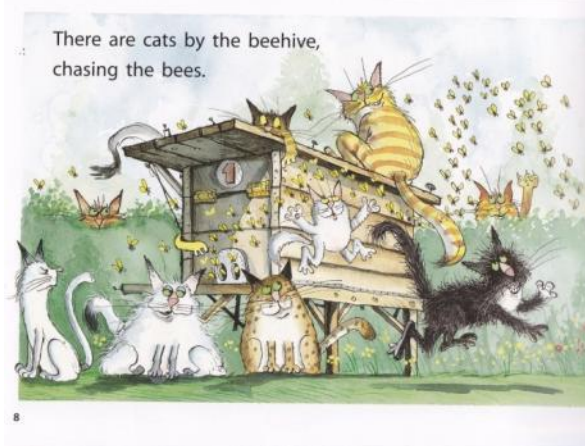
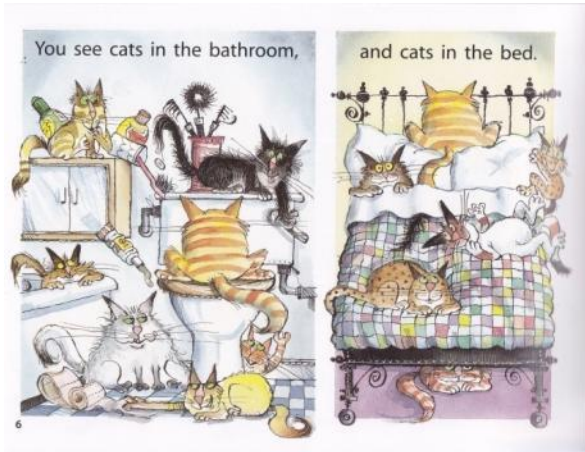


(Hawes, 1999)

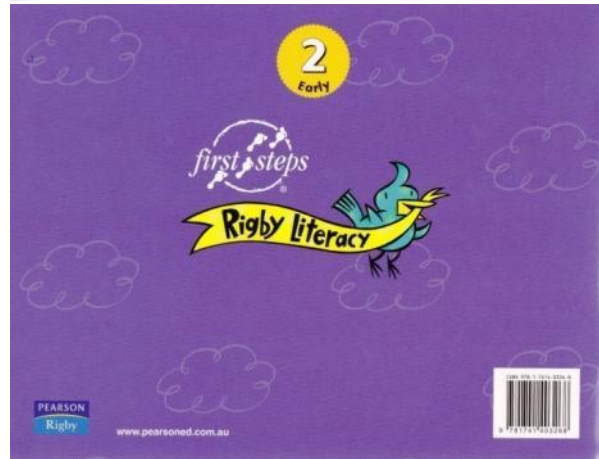
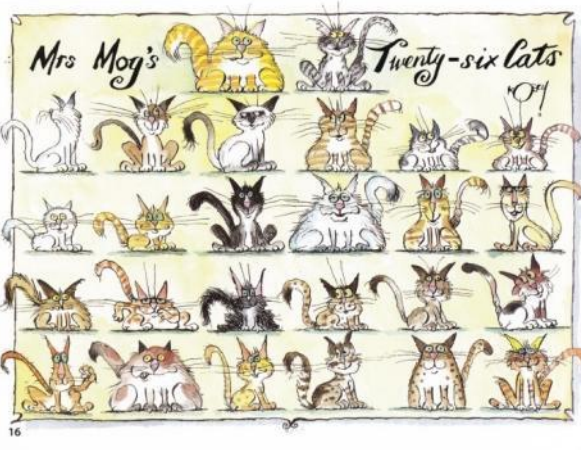
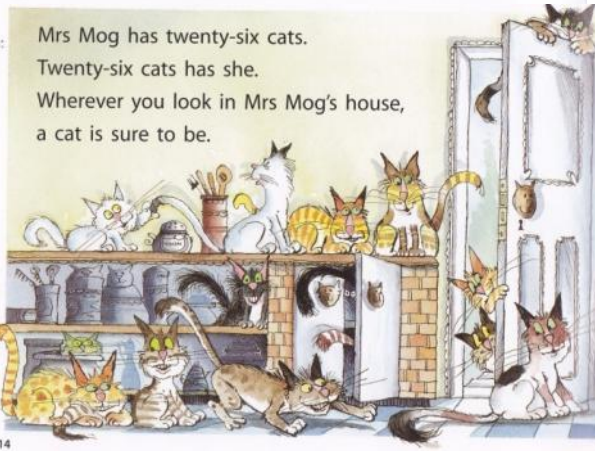
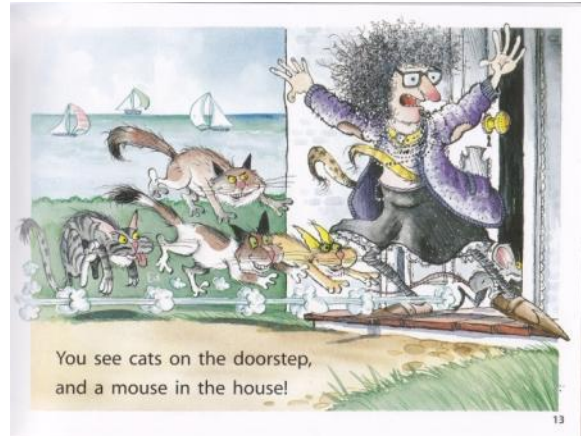
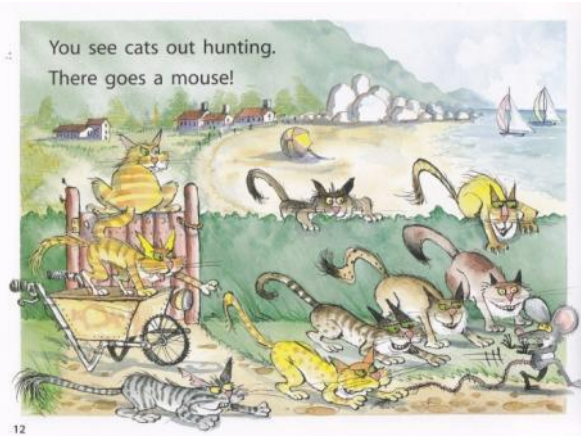
## Appendix 11: Mrs Mog's Cats







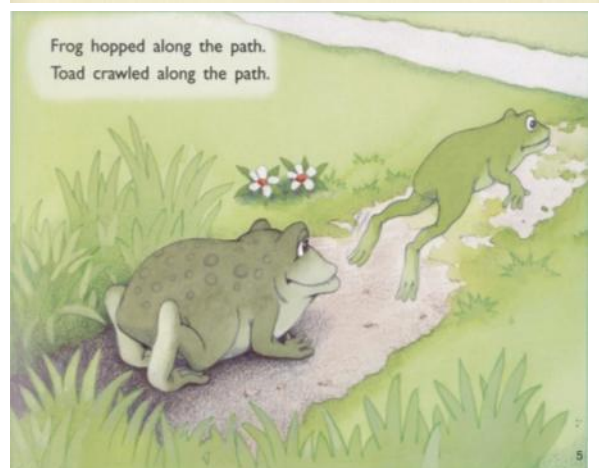
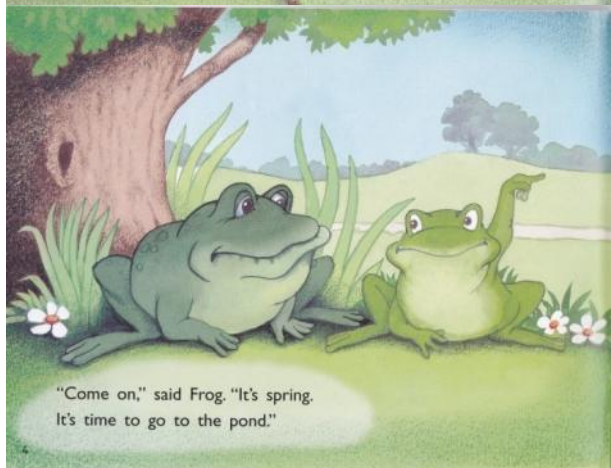
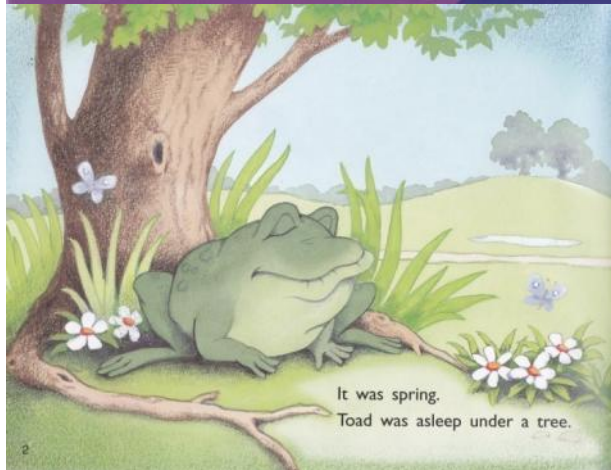
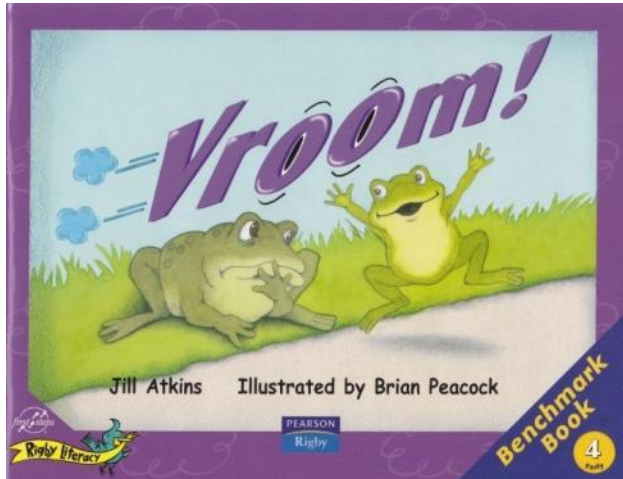


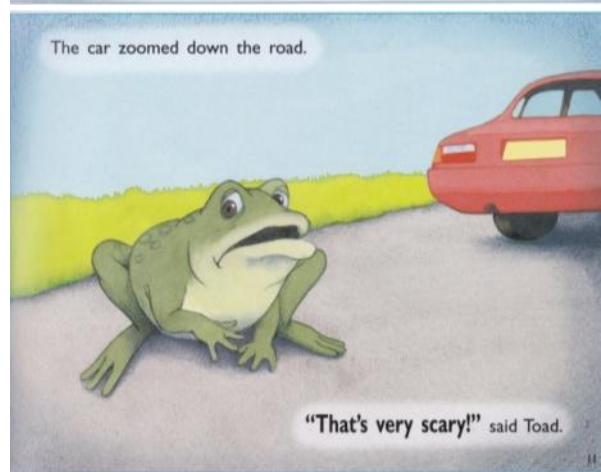
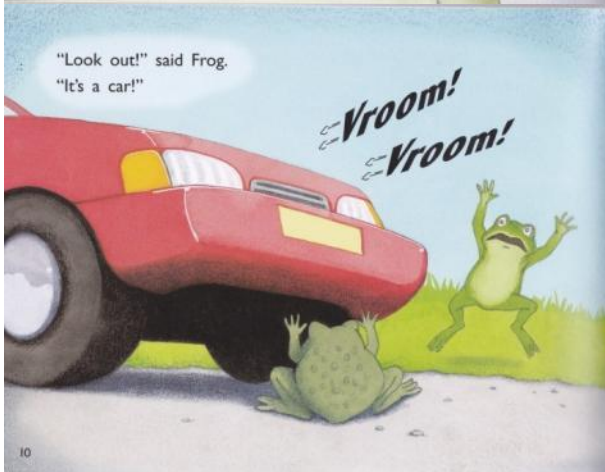
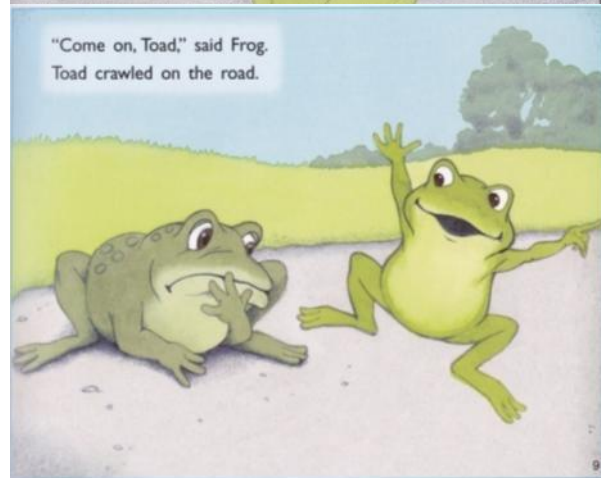
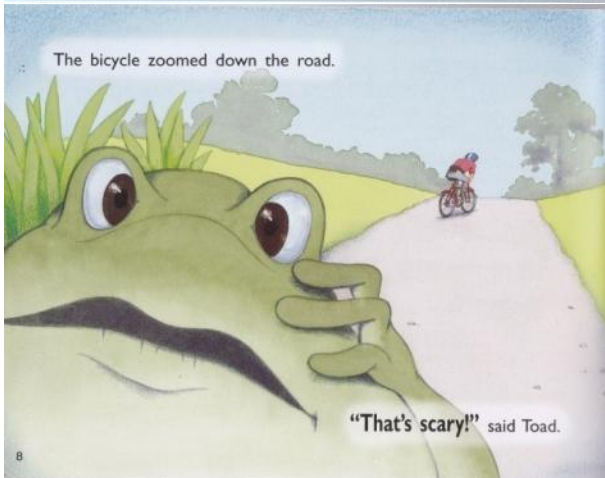
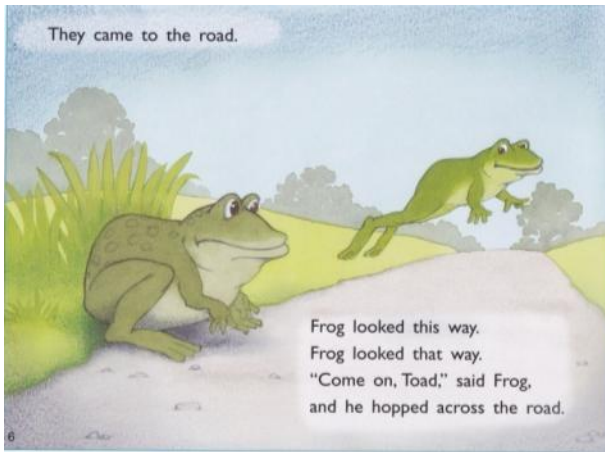


(Powell, 1999)

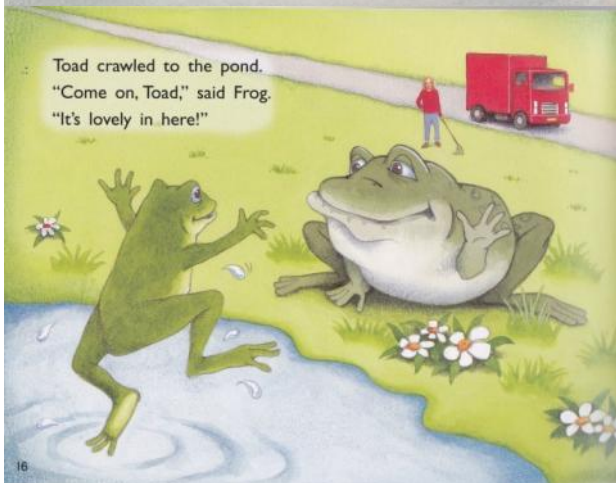
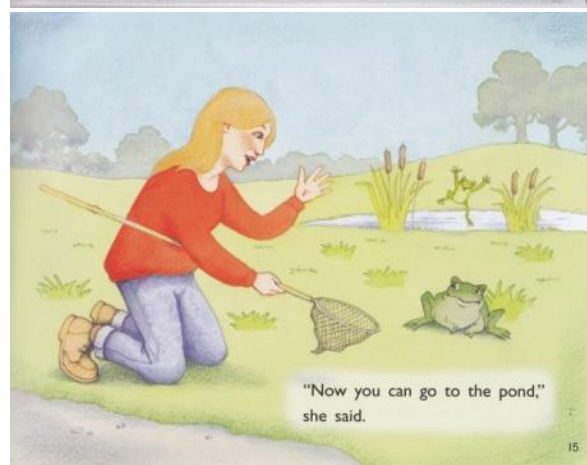
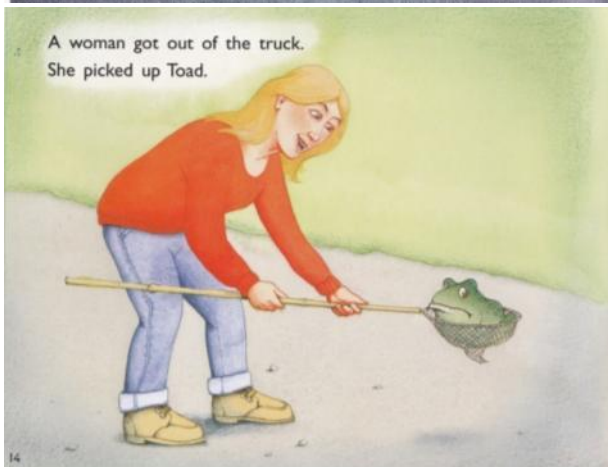
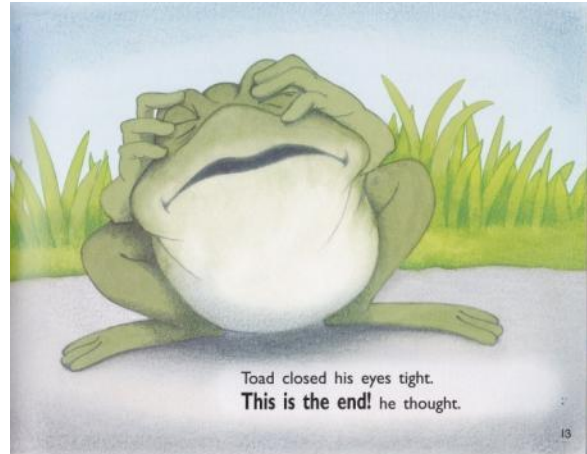
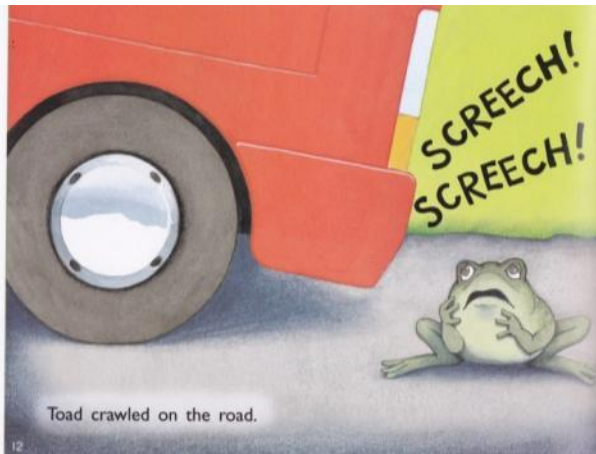


## Appendix 12: Vroom









(Atkins, 1999)

## Appendix 13: FALLING BOY by Paul Jennings

Here is a list of things I am good at. A cross means no good. A tick means excellent.

Running x
Football x
Maths x
English x
I.T. Studies x
Girls x
Looks x
Skateboarding x
Being a dork ✓
Bike Riding x
Drawing x
Washing Up x
Lawn Mowing x
Flying ✓

Being a dork gets a tick because that's what I am. People think I am weird. Even Mum (although she is nice about it). The kids at school basically avoid me. I spend most of the time at recess floating around on my own.

The other kids don't seem to see things the same way as me. For example - once, our teacher, Jenny took us all out onto the oval and told us to lie down on the grass.

'Look up at the clouds,' she said. 'Look for pictures and tell me what you see.'

We all looked up at the clouds in silence.

Straight away I could see a cloud that looked like the girl who answers the phones at the car-wash on Saturdays. I was crazy about her but she just turned away when I smiled at her through the window.

As we lay on our backs looking up I imagined lots of things. That bit of fluffy cloud up there was the car-wash girl's face. The white stuff was her hair flying out behind her. And the black cloud with the white edges was the outline of her body. She was hanging onto my back as we plunged down to earth. I was her parachute instructor and she was in love with me.

Just above that was a long stretch of thin cloud. That was a Concord jet with passengers staring out in amazement as I free-fell towards the earth with the car-wash girl on my back.

My outstretched hands were joined to a group of small clouds. In my mind they were monkeys. No one in the world had ever made a parachute ring with monkeys before. Especially the rare Chimpo-cricket monkeys with green tails and red bottoms that glowed in the dark. They communicated with chirping sounds which they made by rubbing their long ears together. Like crickets.

Jenny's voice interrupted my thoughts. 'Well,' class,' she said. 'What do you see in the clouds?'

After a bit, Sean Green spoke up. 'A duck,' he said.

'A car,' said Amanda Chow.



'A snake,' said Oliver Jones.

'They are all very good imaginings,' said Jenny. 'What about you, Ricky? What do you see?'

I made a big mistake. I told them. Everything. Even the bit about the car-wash girl.

When I had finished there was a long silence. 'That's very good,' said Jenny.

No one else thought so. Sean Green was circling his ear with one finger to show that I was crazy.

Amanda Chow just glared. This was especially hurtful. Girls didn't seem to like me. And I wanted them to. What was the trick to it? I didn't have a clue.

Oliver Jones stuck one finger in his mouth and pretended to vomit.

I just don't get it. I told them what I saw. But no one else saw it. They don't like me. I wish I was one of the crowd. But I am a loner.

I definitely get a tick for being a dork.

But there is one good thing on the list. Oh, yes, I also get a tick for flying. And that's because I can.

It all started when I was a little kid. I used to go leaping off small rocks. I would put my hands up in the air like Superman and jump up a few centimetres. I wanted to fly. Oh, how I wanted to fly. It wasn't so much for being up there with the birds or floating around in the clouds taking in the view.

I wanted everyone to see me. I wanted them to point up and say, 'Look at Ricky. He's flying.' I wanted their eyes to bug out. I wanted them to faint with surprise. I wanted to be the most famous person in the world.

Nothing ever happened though. Every time I jumped up I just landed back on my feet.

Once I tried it from the garage roof. I thought, 'Believe in yourself, Ricky'.

Dad was always telling me that. 'Go for it, Ricky' he used to say. 'Nothing ever happens unless you take a risk.'

So I climbed up the back fence and pulled myself onto the roof. It was a long way down. I closed my eyes, yelled out, 'Gigantor' at the top of my voice and leapt forward with outstretched hands.

After I got back from hospital I decided on a new approach.

From then on I tried using the power of my mind to lift myself up - levitation. I would screw up my eyes and try to fly just by thinking about it. I would imagine my feet slowly rising as I chanted. 'Fly, fly, fly.'

It didn't work. But I didn't give up. Every day I would try again. 'Fly, fly, fly.'

Once I was in the kitchen trying hard. I screwed up my eyes and concentrated. I tried to lift my feet off the floor. Just by brain power.

'Fly, fly, fly,' I said aloud.

At that very moment Mum walked in. 'Where?' she said.



'Anywhere,' I said. 'Just up.'

Mum looked at the ceiling. 'I can't see it,' she said.

'See what?' I said.

'The fly. There's a lot of them around this year.'

'No,' I yelled. 'Not that sort of fly. I'm trying to lift my feet off the ground. I want to fly. Up in the air.'

Mum looked worried. 'Have you talked to your father about this?' she said. I thought she was going to tell me to have a talk to the school counsellor.

'I'm not, strange,' I yelled. 'Dad said you can do anything if you try hard enough.'

'Well not everything,' said Mum.

'Is he a liar then?'

'No, he just gets carried away.'

'I believe him,' I said. 'I'm going to fly.'

'I don't think that's a good idea,' said Mum.

'I'll bet you fifty dollars,' I said.

'You haven't got fifty dollars,' said Mum.

She always has an answer for everything, does Mum. It's annoying.

I wagged my finger at her like she does sometimes. 'Dad always says, "Put your money where your mouth is."'

'No,' she said. 'I'm not going to bet. 'Instead of trying to fly, why don't you go up to your room and clean it up?'

'For ten dollars?' I said.

'For nothing,' said Mum. 'It's your room.'

'I'm saving up to go to Water World and have a ride on the Super Sucker Water Slide. Every kid in my class has been to Water World except me.'

Mum snorted. 'I've heard that one a million times before,' she said. 'But I tell you what. If you stop that silly business of trying to fly I'll take you to Water World.'

I thought about it. I thought about it real hard. I really, really wanted to go to Water World and ride the Super Sucker. But something inside me told me not to. I knew that one day I would fly.

'No thanks,' I said. Mum shook her head and looked at me in a worried way and walked out of the kitchen.

I decided to try again. I closed my eyes, clenched my teeth and concentrated on rising up into the air. I could feel my brain getting hot. I felt as if my skull was going to explode. My face was burning.



'Fly, fly, fly.' I made a picture in my mind of my feet lifting off the ground. Nothing happened. I tried even harder. I could just imagine my brains splattering on the walls if I didn't stop.

Harder, harder, harder. 'Fly, fly, fly.'

Slowly my feet started to lift off the floor. It was amazing. I had lifted about fifty centimetres in the air. It felt like walking on water. 'Whoo, hoo,' I yelled. 'Look at me. Look at me. I can fly.'

Mum rushed into the room followed quickly by Dad. I dropped to the floor like a stone.

'What? What? What?' she yelled.

'I flew. I flew. Did you see it?'

'I saw you give a little jump, Ricky.' Now she had a really worried look on her face. She must have thought I was losing my marbles.

'No, no, I flew.'

'Don't do it,' said Mum. 'Join the football team or something sensible.'

'I did, I did it, I flew,' I shouted. 'Watch this.'

I closed my eyes and concentrated. 'Fly, fly, fly,' I said to myself. 'Lift off the ground. Feet rise up.'

My brain was boiling. My skull felt like the shell of a hand grenade about to go off. But nothing happened. I gave it one last, desperate try. My toes tingled but I didn't move even a millimetre. I groaned with the effort of it. But it was no use.

'Stop, it,' said Mum. 'You will do yourself an injury.'

I opened my eyes. 'I did fly,' I yelled. But even as I said the words I started to doubt. Was it a dream? Was I going nuts? Did I really lift off the ground when she left me alone in the kitchen?

'I did fly,' I said. 'My feet ...' The words trailed away.

I turned to Dad. 'Did you want to fly when you were a kid?'

He nodded slowly.

Yes said Mum. 'But it didn't work for him, either.'

'What do you mean?' I said.

'Don't,' said Dad. But Mum tightened her lips and kept talking.

'It was when you were just a baby, Ricky. You know that old lady over the back fence?'

'Mrs Briggs?'

'Yes. Her kitten got stuck up the flag pole in the front yard. She was crying something terrible and there was no one there to help. Except Dad. She rushed inside to call the fire brigade and while she was gone he shinned up the pole like a monkey.'

I stared at Dad with pride. 'You climbed a flag pole to save a kitten? You are a hero, Dad.'



Dad blushed.

'Except,' said Mum. 'That when Mrs Briggs came outside, the kitten was down on the ground and your father was stuck up the top of the pole. He couldn't get down.'

'That's enough, Mary,' said Dad. 'He doesn't want to know all this.'

Mum kept going.

'Everyone in the street came to look. There he was – a grown man sitting on top of a flag pole and couldn't get down. By the time the fire brigade came to save him there were hundreds of people watching.'

'Wow,' I said.

Dad gave a little groan.

'It was on the television,' said Mum. 'We were a laughing stock. That cat had saved itself and climbed down. And your father got stuck. The whole country knew that he climbed a flag pole and couldn't get down. That's how well he could fly.'

She gave a little smile and then she added. 'But I still love him.'

'So do I,' I said.

'Believe in yourself, Ricky,' said Dad.

'I do, Dad,' I said. 'I believe in myself.'

I did fly. Just a bit. I lifted myself off the ground. But no one else knew.

No one at all.

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The next morning I put on my back pack and walked slowly to school. I went through the park so that I could try to lift myself off the ground with the power of thought. I didn't want anyone to see me going red in the face and groaning with the effort.

I stopped half way across the park and checked things out. There was no one around – only a spotted dog with its head inside a rubbish bin. It was sniffing around for scraps.

I stood still and concentrated. 'Fly, fly, fly,' I said under my breath. I could feel my ears growing hot. I could feel my eyes throbbing. I could feel ... my feet lifting. I was doing it. I was really, really flying. Not high, just a few centimetres off the ground.

Now I needed someone to see me. Now I needed someone to almost faint at the sight of my amazing powers.

'Look at me,' I shouted to the empty park.

The dog looked. It pulled its head out of the bin and stared at me. And I plopped straight down to the ground.





I closed my eyes and tried again. I strained and strained but nothing happened.

I walked away from the dog and along the winding path. One more try. I would give it one more go. There was nothing I wanted more than to get to school and demonstrate my flying ability.

I concentrated really hard. And once again it happened. Slowly I rose from the ground. I looked around but there was no one in sight.

The word, 'forward' sprung into mind. Slowly I began to move along the path floating just a few centimetres above the ground. 'Higher,' I said to myself. I rose about fifty centimetres more. I was skating along the path and my feet weren't even touching the ground.

This was amazing. This was fantastic. Incredible. It was like skidding along on ice except there was nothing under my feet but air.

I flew around a tree. There was a sign saying, DON'T WALK ON THE GRASS. I didn't. I flew out over it, standing upright and just shooting along as if my body was filled with helium.

A gardener appeared from behind a bush. He stared at me. I fell heavily and crumpled onto the grass.

'Hey,' he yelled. 'Can't you read? Get off there you little brat.'

I ran to the other side of the lawn and disappeared into the bushes. I tried to make sense of it. Sometimes I could fly and sometimes I couldn't. I needed to show someone. I needed someone to believe in me. Then everything would be okay.

A far off beeping noise floated through the trees. It was the school bell. I was going to be late. There would be big trouble if I was late.

'Up,' I said to myself.

Up I went. Not high. Just a little bit.

'Forward,' I said. I began to skid forward on nothing.

'Faster,' I said. I went faster.

I didn't say anything to myself, I didn't have to. I just thought it. Brain power was enough.

Faster and faster I sped through the park, standing straight up and skidding forward like a bishop on a chess board. It was fantastic. The feeling of speed and power and lightness filled my head. I was dizzy with happiness.

I sped along in silence. My heart was thumping. I was so excited. This was my big chance. Everyone was going to see me fly. The school gate came into view.

There were kids all gathered around staring at something on the ground. No one was looking at me.

Except one little girl. She gave a gasp. I fell straight down and landed with a small plop. The little girl shook her head and joined the other kids. They were all staring down into the ground. There was orange netting surrounding a deep hole where workers had been digging for several days.

But there were no workers. Only kids.



'What's going on?' I said.

No one answered me so I looked for myself.

It was the spotted dog. It had fallen down the hole and was unconscious at the bottom. The little girl started to cry. It was a very deep hole.

Suddenly a voice said, 'In to school everyone. Quick. We will call the fire brigade.'

It was our teacher, Jenny. She picked up the little girl and headed for the school office.

Everyone shuffled in. Everyone except me.

I was alone at the edge of the hole.

'Up,' I said.

I floated up.

'Forward.' I was hovering over the hole. It was a long way drop to the bottom. I would die if I fell.

'Down.' I began to descend. Down, down, down.

It was dark and cold. I landed gently on my feet at the bottom of the hole. The dog was lying on its side with its eyes closed. I gently picked it up and cradled it in my arms.

'Up,' I said.

Up I went. Up, up, up - nearly half way. The dog opened its eyes and stared at me.

Shoot. I began to fall. Crash. Smash. I hit the muddy bottom. Gees it hurt. My ankle was twisted and every bone in my body jarred. I groaned in agony.

The little dog was okay, still cradled in my arms. I could hear shouting and yelling from above.

'I get it,' I said to the dog. 'Now I see.'

I had to be quick.

I took off my back pack and tipped out my books. Then I put the empty pack over the little dog's head. There was muffled barking but I ignored it.

'Up,'

Slowly I floated up. I stopped when my head was just below the top. I closed my eyes and gave myself an instruction. Up, over the edge and down. That's just what happened. To the amazement of the teachers hurrying across the yard I seemed to just plop out of the hole with the dog.

Jenny took the dog from my arms. The other teachers peered down the hole.

'How did you do that?'

'It's five metres deep and smooth.'

'Impossible.'



'The kid's a mountain goat.'

'A monkey more like it.'

They were all patting me on the back.

'You should have waited,' said Jenny. 'It was dangerous.'

'How did you do it?'

'I flew,' I said.

The teachers laughed.

'He has a sense of humour too.'

So I was a hero. Sort of. They stood me on the platform at school assembly. I was told off for climbing down the hole because it was dangerous. And I was praised for bravery and climbing skills.

Everyone was nice to me. But no one believed I could fly.

Dad was waiting for me after school. As we walked home I told him the whole story. The true story. I knew he wouldn't believe it.

We sat down on a bench just over the road from the town hall. The Australian flag flew from a pole right up on the top. It was growing late and a man was just pulling the flag down. He wrapped it up and went inside.

'I know you don't believe me,' I said to Dad. 'But I can fly.'

'How do you feel about that?' he said.

Why did Dad say that? It's the sort of thing the school counsellor asks you. Why couldn't he just believe me? I mean, I was a hero.

I thought for a bit. 'It's lonely,' I said. 'No one else can do it. Not one person in the whole world. There's no one to talk to about it. No one to share the fun. Or the scary bits. No one to help or give advice.'

Dad nodded but didn't say anything. He didn't even seem to be listening but I went on with what I was saying.

'There are lots of people in the world who play violins or lay bricks or build houses or climb mountains and they can all talk to each other about it. But I am the only one who can fly in the air. The only one. And no one believes me. Not even Mum. Or you.'

Dad stared at the footpath. Finally he spoke.

'Close your eyes.'

'What?'

He looked along the empty street. 'Just do it. Close your eyes and count to ten.'



I did as he said. When I reached ten I opened my eyes. He was gone. I looked to the left. I looked to the right. Nothing. No one. Not a soul in sight.

'Up here,' came Dad's voice.

I looked above my head. Still nothing. Then I stared at the top of the town hall. And saw him. Perched on the flagpole way up above the clock. Sitting up there and not a cat in sight.

'How did you ... ?'

'Close your eyes and count again,' He yelled.

I did what he said but when I got to five and opened my eyes I could see that he was still coming down. Slowly, slowly like an upright soldier being lowered with invisible hands. He was about two metres above the ground. As soon as my eyes took in the sight he fell like garbage bag full of rocks.

'Ouch,' he screamed as he hit the footpath.

'Dad,' I shouted. 'Sorry, I looked too soon.'

He stood up and dusted himself down. There was a moment of silence. Then he smiled at me.

'I hate that bit of it,' he said.

I grinned.

'Me too,' I said. 'The flying is fantastic...'

We both finished the sentence together. '... but we have to smooth out the landings.'

Gees we laughed.

Life was great. Really great.

\*

PS Dad and Mum took me to Water World for saving the dog. The Super Sucker Water Slide was good.

But not nearly as good as flying.



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