

Institut Pendidikan Guru Kampus Dato' Razali Ismail

LGA3103 Stories for Young Learners

Topic 3: Stories and the Teaching Contexts in the Primary
English Curriculum



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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.

(Kementarian 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:

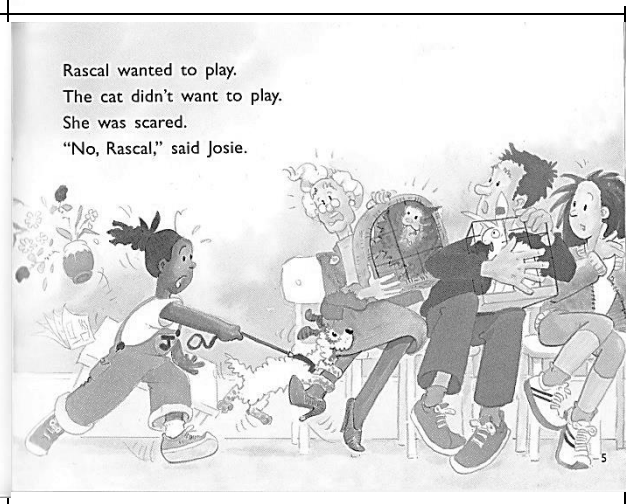
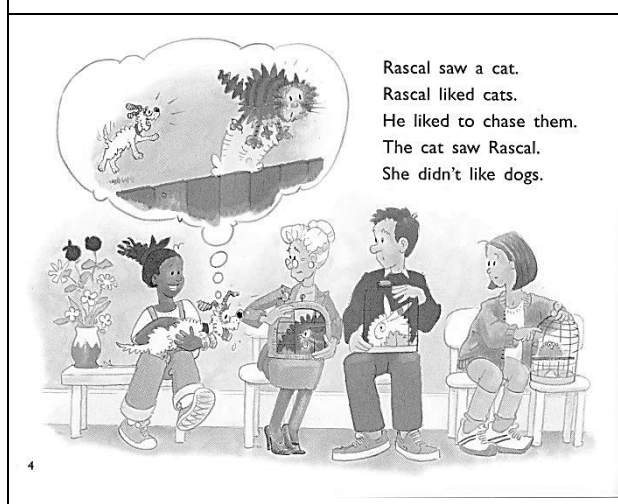
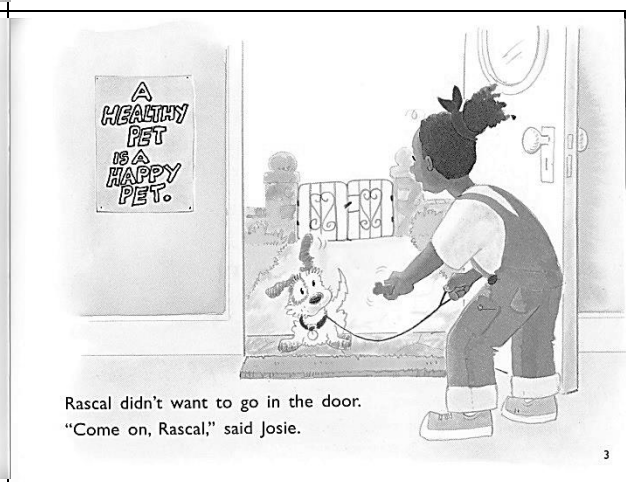
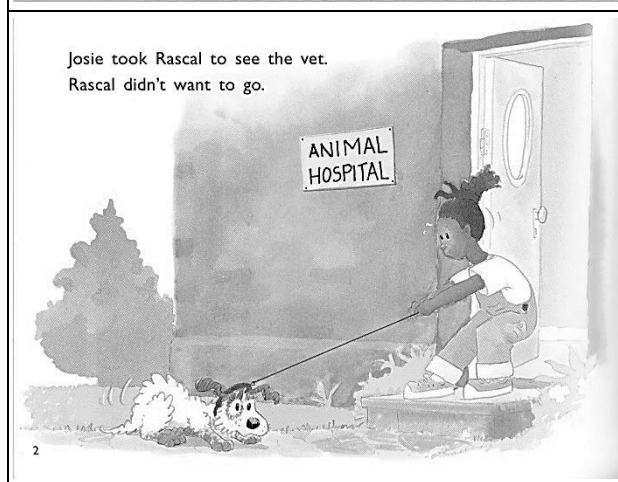
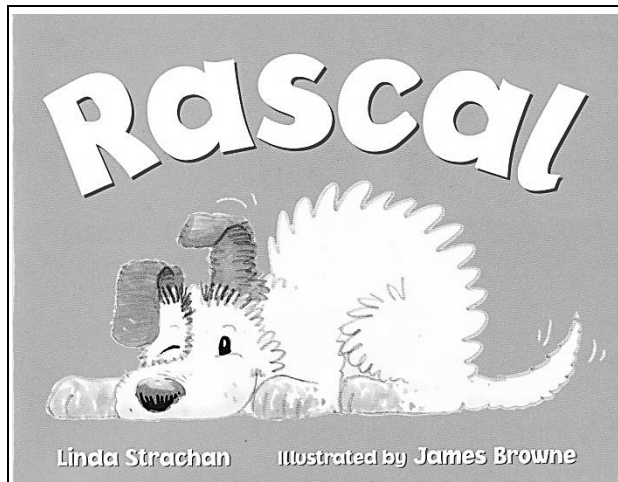
- Their hopes and dreams, what they could become. *Children could think about becoming a pet owner, or a vet as a career. Or they could just decide to be less afraid.*
- Forming moral judgements *Children should realise that they should consider the feelings of others who are smaller / larger than themselves.*
- 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.*

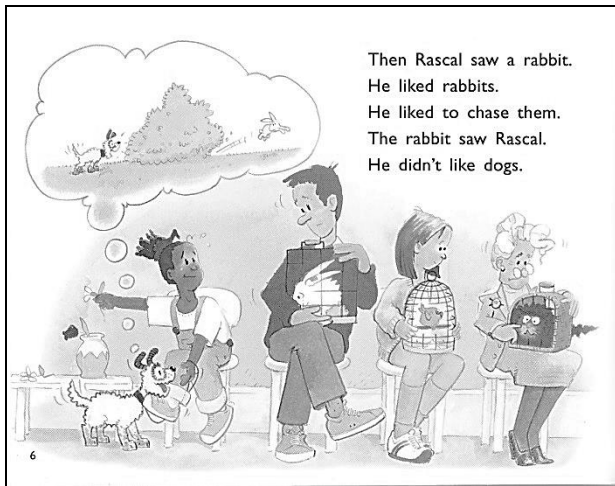
Initially this appears to be a book about keeping pets, with the child (who the listener relates to in hearing the story) as the pet owner. But very quickly the child falls into the role of carer or parent and the pet dog has become the 'child'. The emotions in the story are those of the dog as it relates 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 ...

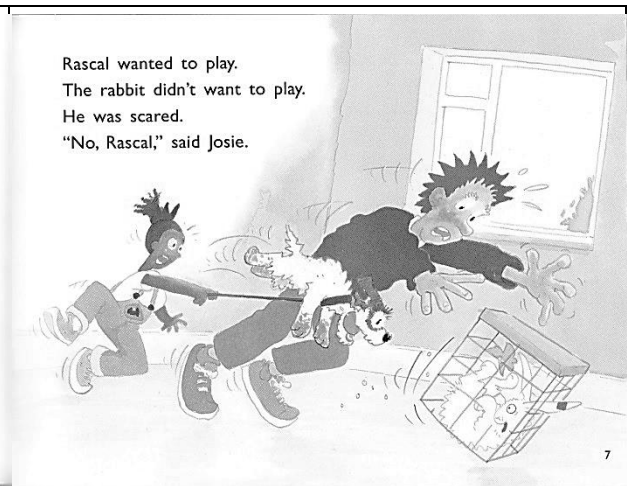
Discuss your books and your answers with your partner / group.

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

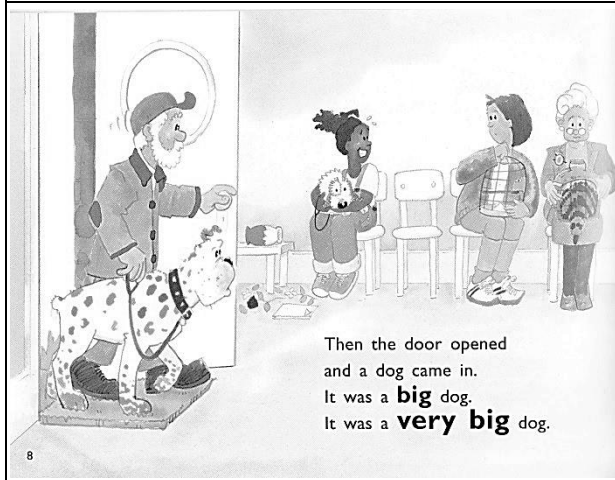




Then Rascal saw a rabbit.
He liked rabbits.
He liked to chase them.
The rabbit saw Rascal.
He didn't like dogs.



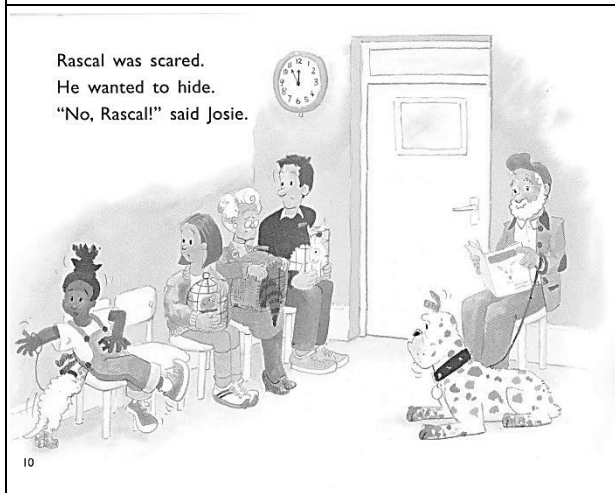
Rascal wanted to play.
The rabbit didn't want to play.
He was scared.
"No, Rascal," said Josie.



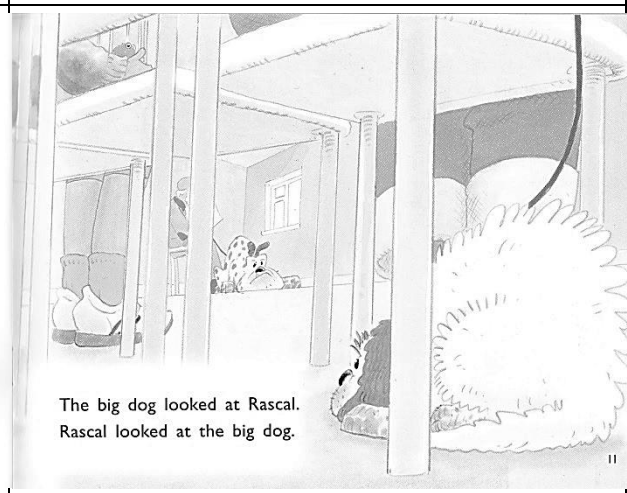
Then the door opened
and a dog came in.
It was a **big** dog.
It was a **very big** dog.



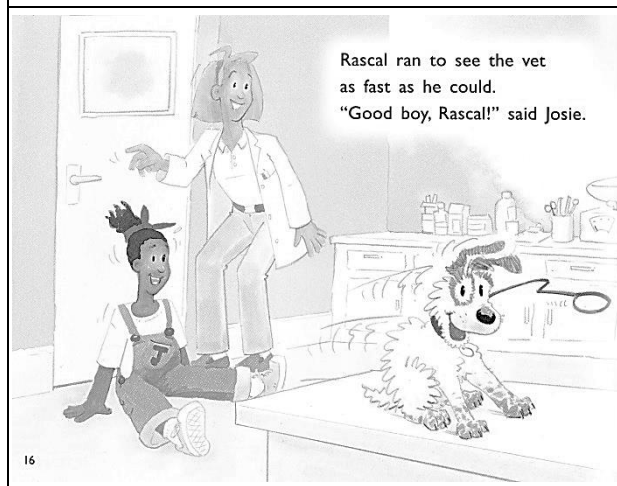
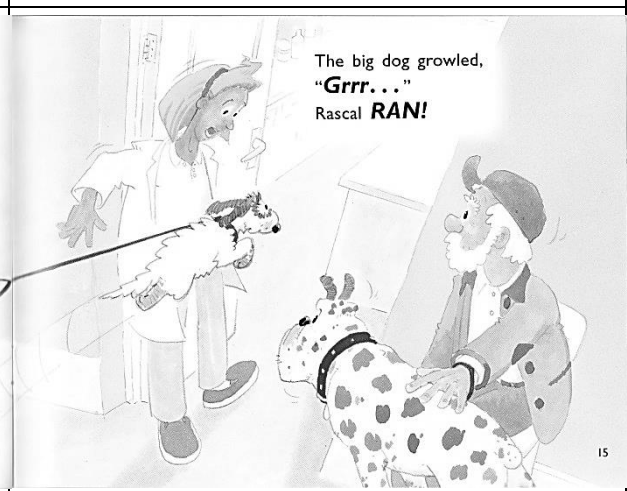
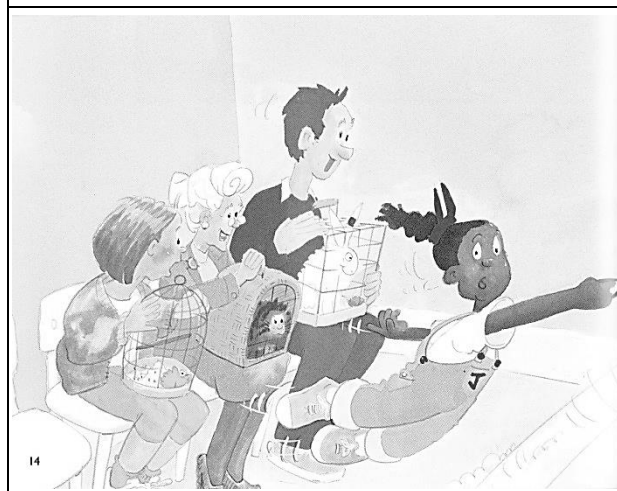
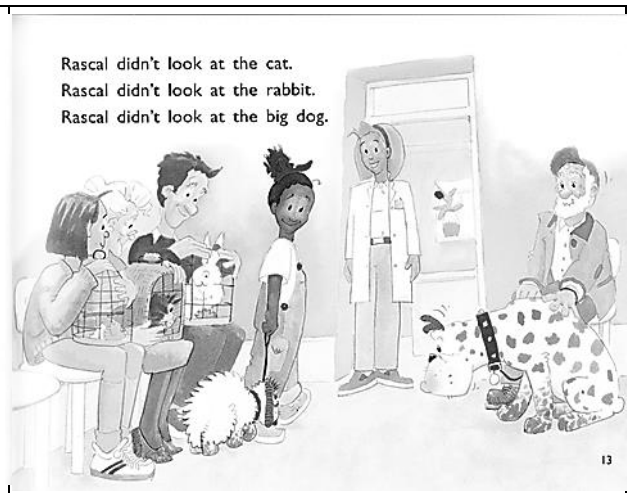
Rascal saw the dog.
He didn't like big dogs.
They liked to chase him.



Rascal was scared.
He wanted to hide.
"No, Rascal!" said Josie.



The big dog looked at Rascal.
Rascal looked at the big dog.



(Strachan, 1999)

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.

Works cited in this Topic

Berkeley. (2011). *Social Constructivism*. Retrieved July 2013, from Berkeley University - Teaching guide for Graduate Student Instructors :

<http://gsi.berkeley.edu/teachingguide/theories/social.html>

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