

## Chapter 2: Selecting storybooks

### Authentic storybooks

Until quite recently, many of the storybooks used in the primary ELT classroom were adapted and simplified versions of popular fairy tales and fables, or specifically written stories, often referred to as ‘readers’. During the 1990s, however, many teachers began using authentic storybooks. Since so-called ‘real’ books have not been written specifically for primary English language teaching, the language is not selected or graded. Many, however, contain examples of language traditionally found in syllabuses for children as well as ‘real’ language, thereby offering a rich source of authentic input and challenge. Children have the ability to grasp meaning even if they do not understand all the words; clues from intonation, mime, gestures, the context and visual support help them to decode the meaning of what they have heard. Authentic storybooks, then, can be very motivating for children as they experience a strong sense of achievement in having worked with a ‘real’ book.

### Types of storybooks

Teachers can select from a rich source of existing children’s literature: stories that children are already familiar with in their mother tongue, such as traditional stories and fairy tales; modern retellings of fairy tales with a humorous twist; picture stories with no text (where the children build up the story together); rhyming stories; cumulative stories with predictable endings; humorous stories; stories with infectious rhythms; everyday stories; fantasy stories; animal stories; stories from their own culture, and so on.

A criticism often aimed at using real books with foreign language learners is that the language may be too complex and the content too simplistic for the target age group. In a foreign language, however, children are often very happy to accept stories that they may reject in their mother tongue. Furthermore, carefully selected storybooks can be interpreted on many different levels based on the child’s age, their stage of conceptual and emotional development and their all-round experience, and can be exploited in many different ways. Teachers have used *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, quoted as being ‘an international superstar on the EFL front’ (Rixon, 1992: 83), with children in nursery, primary and secondary school. Storybooks need to be analysed carefully so they can be used to their full potential.

We have classified the storybooks included in this handbook by genre and topic. See Figure 4 on page 15. Most of the stories are humorous so this is not given as a separate genre. You will see that many of the stories can be classified in different ways according to the classification you have in mind.

### Developing visual literacy

It is very important to develop children’s visual literacy because providing information through visual images is an important means of communication in the global world. If you show pupils the pictures in a storybook, giving them time to ‘read’ the images, they will be able to give you a pretty accurate account of what the story is about. In addition, we can help children develop their observation skills and learn how to decode the various types of artwork by focusing their attention on specific detail or asking questions about the pictures. Encourage children to comment on the illustrative style, the different types of media used (collage, embroidery, oil, watercolours, crayon, photograph) and the use of colour (primary, pastel, white or black backgrounds). How do these features contribute to the story and the atmosphere created? How do the pictures help children understand the story? Which is their favourite illustration and why? Encouraging discussion in this way will help develop children’s visual literacy and appreciation of art.

### Criteria for selecting storybooks

Care needs to be taken to select storybooks that are accessible, useful and relevant for children learning English. What criteria, then, can a teacher use? Figure 5 on page 19 breaks down five major objectives of language teaching into criteria that are then expanded into questions that you can ask yourself. The objectives overlap to some extent as indicated by the arrows.

Figure 4: Stories classified by genre and topic

Topic	Genre						
	Narrative	Rhyme	Repeating structures/ cumulative content	Fantasy	Fairy tale/satire	Stories from other cultures	
<b>Science</b>	The Very Hungry Caterpillar			Funnybones			
<b>Animals</b>	The Clever Tortoise The Elephant and the Bad Baby	My Cat Likes to Hide in Boxes Brown Bear, Brown Bear ... The Kangaroo from Woolloomooloo	My Cat Likes to Hide in Boxes Brown Bear, Brown Bear... The Elephant and the Bad Baby The Kangaroo from Woolloomooloo			The Clever Tortoise The Kangaroo from Woolloomooloo	
<b>Food/shopping</b>	The Very Hungry Caterpillar The Elephant and the Bad Baby						
<b>Colours</b>		Brown Bear, Brown Bear... Mr McGee					
<b>Clothes</b>		Mr McGee					
<b>Dinosaurs</b>				Meg's Eggs			
<b>Witches and magic</b>				Meg's Eggs			
<b>Insects</b>	Meg's Eggs						
<b>Festivals</b>	The Very Hungry Caterpillar		The Very Hungry Caterpillar				
				Meg's Eggs			
<b>Friendship/helping people</b>	Something Else Funnybones				Jim and the Beanstalk		
<b>Sociable behaviour</b>	The Elephant and the Bad Baby Something Else Something Else						
<b>Tolerance</b>	Something Else						
<b>Equality</b>	The Clever Tortoise						
<b>Environment/ conservation</b>	The Elephant and the Bad Baby The Very Hungry Caterpillar	Brown Bear, Brown Bear ...			Princess Smartypants	The Clever Tortoise	
<b>People/families/ occupations</b>	The Elephant and the Bad Baby	Mr McGee					
				Funnybones			
					Jim and the Beanstalk Princess Smartypants		

## Stories and language

Some of the stories in this handbook are linguistically less complex than others. This is partly to do with the language used, the length of the story, the amount of repetition and the use of illustrations and layout.

A common feature of narrative is the simple past. Some teachers may feel that they do not wish to introduce their pupils to this tense in the early stages of their learning. However, the past tense is a natural feature of narrative and many stories would sound unnatural and distorted if this was changed. Furthermore, children will be concentrating on the meaning of the story, not on why and how the simple past is used. Their previous knowledge of narrative conventions in their mother tongue will have, to some extent, prepared them for its use in the target language. However, if you feel very strongly about this, you can often substitute the simple present instead.

Figure 6 on page 20 shows the main language areas referred to in the story notes.

## Authentic storybooks and age-level suitability

Teachers often find themselves with classes of children with a range of English language levels. This is due to a variety of factors such as the age children began learning English, the quality and quantity of teaching and the amount of out-of-class exposure they have had. There is also a considerable range in conceptual levels in the primary age span as well as varied interests. Different stories will appeal to different classes. Real success depends on having the right story for the linguistic and conceptual level of the children. You are the best to judge which stories are the most accessible and appropriate for your pupils.

Because authentic storybooks are not specifically written for foreign language learners, it is difficult to give definitive indications for the level of each book. The stories often contain a great deal in terms of concepts, language and opportunities for cross-curricular and project work. Many can be read with children of different ages and levels, depending on the way the storybooks are used, the amount of detail you wish to go into and the time you have available, as well as your pupils' conceptual level and concentration span. For example, language work with *Brown Bear, Brown Bear...* can range from basic vocabulary sets related to colours and animals or can act as a springboard to lead on to quite a sophisticated project on bears around the world.

You may find that you want to simplify the text of certain stories. Some of the story notes, such as *Princess Smartypants* give examples of language you can use to replace some of the more difficult original text. The section on 'Adapting stories' also provides detailed guidelines on how to do this. As well as adapting the text or input you can also simplify the pupils' response or output. Many of the story notes in this handbook suggest activities that have been carefully selected to cater for childrens' linguistic, cognitive and educational needs. Remember that the overall aim of using storybooks with children is to foster positive attitudes towards learning English and to encourage general comprehension.

To provide some guidance on levels of difficulty, we have organised the stories into two groups. The first grouping gives an indication of language level and is based on the length and linguistic complexity of the text: the second is based on the difficulty of the activities described in the notes for each story.

### Language level of stories

#### Easy

*Brown Bear, Brown Bear...*

#### More difficult

*The Kangaroo from Woolloomooloo*

*My Cat Likes to Hide in Boxes*

*Mr McGee*

*The Very Hungry Caterpillar*

*Meg's Eggs*

*The Clever Tortoise*

*The Elephant and the Bad Baby*

#### Most difficult

*Something Else*

*Funnybones*

*Princess Smartypants*

*Jim and the Beanstalk*

### Difficulty of activities

#### Easy

*Brown Bear, Brown Bear...*

*The Very Hungry Caterpillar*

*My Cat Likes to Hide in Boxes*

*The Elephant and the Bad Baby*

*Mr McGee*

*The Clever Tortoise*

*The Kangaroo from Woolloomooloo*

### More difficult

*Brown Bear, Brown Bear...*

*The Very Hungry Caterpillar*

*My Cat Likes to Hide in Boxes*

*The Elephant and the Bad Baby*

*Something Else*

*Meg's Eggs*

### Most difficult

*Jim and the Beanstalk*

*Princess Smartypants*

*Funnybones*

## Adapting stories

There are some features of stories specific to narrative; if we modify and simplify stories too much there is a danger of losing some of their magic. However, this magic may also be lost if the language is too advanced for children to follow. The following guidelines suggest what can be done to make a story more accessible:

### Vocabulary and general meaning

- **Check unfamiliar content or words.** Is it necessary to substitute familiar words for the more unfamiliar ones? For example, in *Jim and the Beanstalk* you could change 'pesky' to 'naughty' (more common) and 'oculist' to 'eye doctor' (easier) or 'optician' (more common).

Note that in some stories it is important to keep certain keywords, even if they are a little unfamiliar. In *Meg's Eggs*, for example, it is preferable to retain 'cauldron' for its stylistic impact. Here the use of pictures makes its meaning clear.

- **Check idioms.** Are there any idioms and ideas that need to be rephrased in clearer language? For example, in *Princess Smartypants* the sentence 'It's high time you smartened yourself up' could be replaced by 'You don't look like a princess, your clothes are so dirty', which changes the meaning slightly but emphasises the story's theme.
- **Check clarity.** Would more examples make the meaning of the story clearer?

### Grammar

- **Check tenses.** Are there too many tenses? Can they be simplified? Most stories use the simple present tense or simple past.
- **Check use of structures.** The story may use several structures but you may wish to emphasise one or reduce the number of structures.
- **Check word order.** In stories, the word order sometimes differs from everyday use to create a more dramatic effect. For example, in *Funnybones* the last line reverses the usual word order 'In the dark dark cellar some skeletons lived.' which has the effect of emphasising the word 'skeletons'. You will need to decide whether you think this is confusing for your pupils or whether the original effect should be kept.

### Organisation of ideas

- **Check sentence length and complexity.** A long sentence may need shortening by splitting it into two sentences. You may have to add other words or mime actions to make the meaning more explicit.
- **Check time references.** Is the sequence of events clear or does it need to be reinforced by time markers such as first, then, the next day, etc.?
- **Check the way ideas are linked.** Does the relationship between sentences need to be made clearer? For example, a story such as *The Elephant and the Bad Baby* could highlight the use of causes and their effects by using 'so' more frequently.
- **Check the way ideas are explained.** If there is a lot of narrative, would more direct speech make the story easier to follow?

### Story length

- **Check the number of ideas in the story.** In some cumulative stories, such as *The Elephant and the Bad Baby*, it is possible to leave out some of the characters or events to reduce the length of the story without spoiling the overall effect.

## Features to look for in storybooks

To summarise, the following questions should be addressed when considering a storybook for use in a primary ELT classroom:

Is the story...

- a story that you like and can convey enthusiasm for?
- a story that your pupils will like and enjoy?
- interesting in its content, motivating and capable of holding the children's concentration?
- an appropriate length or one that can be broken down into parts or chapters?
- familiar to the children (for example, a well-known fairy tale or a story from their own culture), enabling them to consider their prior knowledge and make predictions?

Does the story...

- have a clear, uncomplicated story line?
- make use of rich, expressive language but remain linguistically and cognitively accessible?
- have repeated grammatical structures that enable children to acquire useful phrases?
- contain onomatopoeia that will support understanding and that the children will enjoy imitating?
- feature rhyme and rhythm?
- contain elements of suspense, surprise and humour?
- feature repetition or cumulative content allowing for predictions and confirmations?

- provide opportunities for involvement and participation (thinking and interacting, predicting, guessing and repeating)?
- exercise the imagination?
- encourage children to learn how to learn?
- address universal themes?
- help support and extend children's knowledge of the world?
- have a moral or express values and beliefs that are acceptable to you and your pupils?
- provide opportunities for follow-up and extension work?

Are the illustrations ...

- clear and accessible and large enough to be seen by the whole class?
- strong, providing good visual support? Do they synchronise with the text to help clarify and support meaning?

Obviously, different storybooks contain different features, but all good books contain a number of the above features. If, however, after having selected a story and you realise that it does not appeal to your pupils in the way you had anticipated, it is advisable to adapt your plan of work or even abandon the story altogether. The most important objective is to develop children's appreciation and enjoyment of literature.

**Figure 5: Criteria for selecting storybooks**

<p>↑</p> <p>LINGUISTIC</p> <p>↓</p> <p>↑</p> <p>PSYCHOLOGICAL</p> <p>↓</p> <p>↑</p> <p>CULTURAL</p> <p>↓</p> <p>↑</p> <p>COGNITIVE</p> <p>↓</p> <p>↑</p> <p>SOCIAL</p> <p>↓</p>	<b>Level</b>	vocabulary structures/ functions	→	Is the level accessible? Does it provide an appropriate level of challenge? Does the story contain examples of rich vocabulary to provide comprehensible input?
	<b>Literary devices</b>	repetition/cumulative content rhythm/rhyme question/answer dialogue/narrative humour/suspense predictability/surprise onomatopoeia/alliteration contrast/duplicated words/hyperbole metaphor/simile	→	What literary devices does the story contain? How will these help children understand the story, participate in the storytelling, improve their pronunciation, encourage anticipation and memorisation, enrich their language, maintain their concentration and add to their enjoyment?
	<b>Content/subject matter</b>	relevant interesting amusing memorable length values	→	Will the story engage my pupils? Is it relevant to their interests? Is it amusing and memorable? Does it address universal themes? Is it possible to read the story in one go or can it be broken down into parts? Do we agree with the values and attitudes projected in the story?
	<b>Illustrations/layout</b>	use of illustrations/ layout attractive/colourful size target culture	→	Do the illustrations synchronise with the text and support children's understanding? Will they develop children's visual literacy? Are they appropriate to the age of my pupils? Are they attractive and colourful? Are they big enough for all the class to see? Do they depict life in the target culture? Does the layout (split page/lift the flap/cut-away pages, speech bubbles/no text) support children's understanding and maximise their interaction with the story?
	<b>Educational potential</b>	learning to learn cross-curricular links world/cultural knowledge conceptual development learning styles/intelligences	→	How does the story enable children to become aware of and develop their learning strategies? Can the story link in with other subjects across the curriculum? What can children learn about the world and other cultures? Does the story develop and reinforce any concepts? Does the story and related activities accommodate different learning styles and cater for different intelligences?
	<b>Motivation</b>	enjoyment positive attitudes arouse curiosity successful learning experiences confidence building desire to continue learning	→	Will the story motivate my pupils by drawing on their personal experience? Will it develop their imagination and appeal to their sense of humour? Will my pupils respond positively to the story and develop positive attitudes towards the target language, culture and language learning? Will the story arouse their curiosity and make them want to find out more about the target language, culture and language learning? Will the story provide a positive learning experience, build confidence and a desire to continue learning?
	<b>Values</b>	co-operation collaboration emotional development self-esteem	→	Will the story help children become aware of and question important values? Are they acceptable? Will it provide opportunities for children to work together, take turns, share? Does the story help children explore and share emotions? Does the story help children come to a better understanding of themselves and develop their self-esteem?
	<b>Global issues</b>	citizenship education multicultural education diversity/intercultural awareness	→	Does the story offer children a broader view of the world? Does it develop an awareness and understanding of environmental and ecological issues, gender, race, disability, human rights, health and safety, tolerance, etc? Does it foster intercultural understanding?
	<b>Language/content</b>	authentic appropriate	→	Is the language representative of the variety spoken in the target culture? Does the story provide any information about life in the target culture? Does it contain any obscure cultural references that may be difficult to understand? Is it too culture-specific?
	<p>↓</p> <p>↓</p> <p>↓</p> <p><b>Potential for follow-up work</b></p> <p>Does the story provide a starting point for related language activities and lead on to follow-up work in the form of concrete outcomes?</p>			

Figure 6: Stories and language

	Brown Bear, Brown Bear...	The Kangaroo from Woolloomooloo	My Cat Likes to Hide in Boxes	Mr McGee	The Very Hungry Caterpillar	Meg's Eggs	The Clever Tortoise	The Elephant and the Bad Baby	Something Else	Funnybones	Princess Smartypants	Jim and the Beanstalk
<b>Verbs</b>												
Imperative	X					X	X					
Simple present	X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	
Present continuous			X	X						X	X	
Simple past		X		X	X	X		X		X	X	X
Passive										X		
Future time using 'going to' or modals				X						X		X
Participles	X											
'Can'/'could'	X	X	X					X			X	
'Will'/'would'								X				
'May'/'might'											X	
<b>Interrogative forms</b>												
Yes/No questions		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
'Wh'- questions	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Prepositions</b>												
'On', 'off', 'in', 'out', 'outwards', 'into', 'inside'			X	X								
'Up', 'upwards', 'down', 'under', 'over'			X	X								
<b>Adjectives</b>												
Word order	X	X		X	X		X		X			
Comparative and superlative adjectives; too + adjective; 'as big as'							X				X	X
<b>Nouns</b>												
Countable and non-countable nouns; 'some'/'any'; Units e.g. a slice of...					X	X		X				

## Chapter 3: Using storybooks

‘These storybooks are beautiful but they are written for children who speak English as their mother tongue. I couldn’t use them with my pupils.’

This comment reflects the attitude of many primary English language teachers when they first look at authentic storybooks. It is sometimes difficult to imagine how a story can be exploited, or how the time required to plan story-based lessons, and to make all the necessary preparation, can be found. Teachers require a number of specific competencies to ensure the successful implementation of a story-based approach (Ellis 2006). The information in this chapter is designed to answer the most frequently asked questions related to these competencies.

### Does each pupil require a copy of the storybook?

For the preparatory work and for many of the activities related to the storytelling, only the teacher needs a copy of the storybook. This is because a majority of the tasks are based on the pupils predicting what comes next in the story or recapping it from memory. If they see the storybook at this stage much of the element of surprise and active involvement is lost. However, when you have completed work on a story, it is a good idea to put a copy or two of the book into the class library so that the children can look at them in their own time.

### How many times should a story be read to the pupils?

This may vary from reading the whole story once or twice each lesson, after appropriate preparation, to reading the whole story just a few times in the course of several lessons. Some story notes in this handbook suggest that you begin and finish each lesson by reading the story up to a certain point and that at each subsequent lesson you read a little more (see *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* for example). This repetition recycles language previously introduced and pupils learn to predict and to participate in the story and so build up confidence.

### Do children get bored if they hear the story over and over again?

Pupils positively enjoy hearing stories over and over again. Their confidence grows as they realise that they can remember more and more. It also presents them with the challenge of remembering new language. Participating in the storytelling becomes an enjoyable activity.

### What happens to any work children produce?

We suggest that pupils create their own story folder or A4-size envelope for each story in which any related work such as language exercises, drawings, game cards, masks and so on can be kept. These can be stored and organised in a folder. Each story envelope can be decorated with drawings inspired by the story and pupils can also write the title of the story on the envelope. In this way, children can build up a portfolio and a personal record of their story-based work that they can share with their parents.

### Will I need to use the children’s first language?

For some stories you may need to use the children’s first language from time to time. If your class shares a common language, this is quite natural. Switching between different languages is common in many everyday contexts for many people, and the classroom is no exception. Using the children’s first language can be used as a tool to help them learn the foreign language. In fact, you would be denying your pupils a very useful learning strategy if you insisted on always using English. However, you should consider carefully when and why you would use the children’s first language. Obviously, the more you use English, the more your pupils become familiar with the language.

Here are some occasions when you might decide to use the children’s first language.

- Setting the scene, contextualising a story and relating it to the child’s own personal experience by drawing upon their prior knowledge of a subject and of the language.
- Predicting what comes next in a story.
- Providing a gloss of the main storyline. This is important with more difficult stories.
- Eliciting vocabulary or phrases.
- Explaining vocabulary, a grammatical rule or cultural information.
- Reminding pupils what has happened so far in the story.
- Explaining how to do an activity such as pair work or a game.
- Discussing learning strategies.

You will know best how to support your children’s learning in the classroom.



## How can I help children to understand a story?

To make the most of a story’s potential and to increase the pupils’ enjoyment and ability to follow the story you will need to support your pupils’ understanding in several ways. The following eight steps provide a framework to make story-based lessons more accessible.

1. If necessary, modify the story to make it easier for your pupils to understand. You may need to substitute unfamiliar words with better-known ones or adapt the sentence structure to make the story easier to follow, and so on (see guidelines on ‘Adapting stories’ in Chapter 2 page 17.)
2. Provide visual/audio support: drawings on the blackboard, cut-out figures, speech bubbles, masks, puppets, real objects, flashcards, sound effects such as bells, tapping, etc.
3. Identify your language focus. Decide which language points your pupils need to recognise for comprehension when the story is told and which would be useful for them to produce. This language focus may include vocabulary sets, language functions and structures, pronunciation, etc.
4. Decide when you will read the story. Will you read a little each lesson – or all at once after appropriate preparation? Decide how long you will spend on the story. Will you use it once or twice or over a period of several lessons?
5. Provide a context for the story and introduce the main characters. Help your pupils feel involved and link their experience with that in the story to set the scene. Relate the story to relevant aspects of their own lives such as where they live, the animals they are familiar with, what they like or dislike, going shopping, having picnics, the people they know, etc.
6. Once the context has been understood and the children can identify with the characters, then elicit key vocabulary and phrases.
7. Decide in which order to introduce the language necessary for understanding and how much new language to present at a time. Check that each lesson provides variety and the opportunity for recycling language previously introduced.
8. Decide how much follow-up work you will do. For example, find out if there are any rhymes or songs that pupils can learn to reinforce the language or topic introduced. Decide which follow-up activities can provide opportunities for pupils to use language from the story in different areas of the curriculum, for example, drama, art or simple science (e.g. work on bones and skeletons after reading *Funnybones*).

## Is there a story-based methodology?

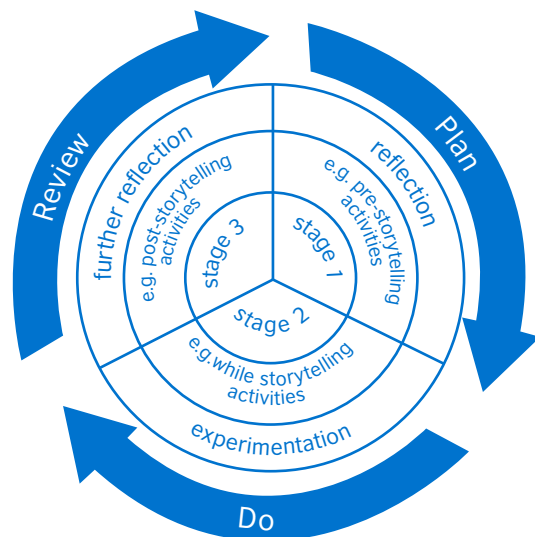
As we saw in Chapter 1, children’s literature offers an ideal context for developing children’s learning. It is possible to introduce a methodology for story-based work that can be applied to most classroom contexts with little disruption by applying a three-stage model (see Figure 7). This is similar to the familiar pre-, while- and post-stages usually associated with skills-based work, and incorporates opportunities for reflection, experimentation and further reflection in which children can plan, do and review as follows by: thinking about what they are going to do and why, and about what they already know in relation to the story and theme:

- experimenting, that is, listening to the story and participating as appropriate
- engaging in further reflection to extend, consolidate, and personalise language presented through the story, as well as reviewing and assessing what has been done and how it has been learned.

This model can be activated at three different levels to plan:

1. a programme of work constituting a mini syllabus which can include up to 6–10 hours of work around a storybook
2. individual lessons
3. activity cycles within lessons.

**Figure 7:** A framework for a story-based methodology – Plan-Do-Review model



Adapted from HighScope: [www.highscope.org](http://www.highscope.org)

The story notes in this handbook apply this model so that each set of notes includes pre-storytelling preparation. Some stories suggest three or four lessons of preparation before children actually listen to the story, others suggest one or two lessons. It is important, however, that children are introduced to the storybook from the start, to make them constantly aware of both the context and the purpose for their work. While storytelling activities are suggested as the story is told, and subsequent post-storytelling lessons focus on extending and consolidating the language and themes presented through the story and personalising work.

The Plan-Do-Review framework provides a structure that enables children to perceive a clear progression of work from pre- to post-storytelling activities in the form of a concrete outcome (see page 24 and main outcome(s) in the story notes). For example, when using *Brown Bear, Brown Bear...* with a class of eight year olds, colours and animals were pre-taught and revised in the planning stage, which allowed children to participate in the storytelling with ease at the 'do' stage.

The children were enchanted by the beautiful illustrations and highly motivated by their ability to predict the storyline and join in with the storytelling. The review stage involved them in the creation of their own class book based on the *Brown Bear, Brown Bear...* pattern by incorporating animals and colours of their own choice. Here are some of their replies to the question 'How well did you understand the story?' 'Why?' Pupils all gave themselves a *good* or quite good rating and the following reasons to justify their evaluation: 'Because we had learnt the colours and animals.' 'Because we had revised the key words.' 'Because the colours were on the pictures and I had learnt the names of the animals.' 'Because we had learnt the words that were in the story.'

## How can I plan story-based lessons?

The story notes in this handbook are broken down into lessons. The aims of each lesson are defined and suggested step-by-step guidelines are given. However, you may wish to modify these. Whether you follow the guidelines closely or not, it is useful now and again to write out a detailed lesson plan to help you define and clarify the aims of the lesson. Think carefully about the types of activities pupils will be involved in to achieve the aims and how they will do them.

It will also help you think about the classroom language to use both in the target language and in the mother tongue, and to see what materials (flashcards, real objects, etc.) to prepare or collect. Lesson plans also give you a written record of what you have done with your pupils. Not only does this allow you to see what language work you have covered but it is also a measure of whether you vary your lessons enough in terms of activity types and interaction.

There are many different ways of writing a lesson plan and of conducting a lesson. Below is a list of procedures based on the Plan-Do-Review model. For a lesson plan that applies to this model, see Brewster, Ellis and Girard 2002: 238.

**Plan: beginning the lesson.** This can include the following:

- Warm up: an informal chat aimed at building up and maintaining rapport with your pupils. This is especially important if you are a visiting teacher to the school. You could ask what the children did over the weekend, comment on work in the classroom, and so on. This could also include singing a song, chanting a rhyme and routine activities like writing the date or talking about the weather.
- Review of work covered in the previous lesson: Ask the question 'What did we do at the last lesson?' or 'What did you learn at the last lesson?' This encourages pupils to reflect on what they did and provides valuable information about what your pupils found memorable. A review may also be playing a game from the last lesson or acting out a role play to practise key structures and vocabulary.
- Inform pupils of your lesson aims. Explain what they are going to do in the lesson and why. You do not need to go into technical details here. Simply inform your pupils of the overall aim(s) and of how they are going to work.

**Do: activity cycle(s).** Depending on the length of your lessons, you may have one, two, three or even more activity cycles per lesson. It is useful if each activity cycle follows the Plan-Do-Review sequence so that pupils are properly prepared for an activity, know what they have got to do and why, and are involved in some form of review after the activity which will provide them with feedback and provide a natural transition to the next activity cycle. The sequence will involve the following stages:

- **Plan:** providing a context for the activity; familiarising pupils with the topic and activating pupils' prior knowledge to elicit key vocabulary and motivate them. Introducing and practising any new language. Explaining the purpose of the activity and possibly demonstrating it.
- **Do:** children carry out the activity that will involve them in experimenting with and using the target language presented in the previous stage. The teacher will circulate, monitor and help as necessary.
- **Review:** Children will consolidate language from the previous stage by extending and personalising it. The teacher will then run a reflective review to evaluate the activity and performance. For example, 'What did you do?' 'What did the activity get you to do?' 'Why did we do it?' 'How well did you do?' 'What was easy/difficult?' 'Why?' 'What did you find out?'

**Review: ending the lesson.** This can include the following:

- Rounding up, reviewing and summarising the lesson.
- Setting homework: for example, to complete an activity, to find something out, to collect, bring or prepare something for the next lesson.
- A routine, enjoyable activity.

This set of procedures is one of many ways to conduct a lesson. However, children do feel secure when there is some kind of routine and established framework in which to work. Your pupils will know where they are, as they are provided with clear signals for the different stages of a lesson and can see a clear progression from the beginning to the end of the lesson.

## What kind of outcomes does story-based work offer?

It is important that after several lessons working on a storybook pupils see that all their hard work has been leading somewhere. Informing pupils at the beginning of a plan of work of possible outcomes will make their work more meaningful, purposeful and motivating, and will provide them with an extra incentive. The story notes suggest a variety of outcomes as well as follow-up activities. Some can be chosen by the pupils themselves according to their own interests and linguistic level. Other activities, such as developing the story into a play, can be developed as a project for the whole class.

A main outcome provides the opportunity to 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 pupils that learning English means interest, creativity and enjoyment.

The essential characteristics of follow-up activities are:

### 1. Consolidation

Follow-up activities should provide opportunities to extend and consolidate language or topics introduced through a story. (See, for example, the Class Code of Conduct in the notes for *The Elephant and the Bad Baby*.)

### 2. Final product or collective event

The options include:

- **Making something:** for example, a frieze, book, greetings card, model, puppet, collage, display, recording of the story and so on.
- **Organising an event:** for example, a party or turning a story into a play. This can also involve pupils in some of the above activities such as making costumes and masks, posters, programmes, tickets, invitations and so on.

- **Researching a topic:** for example, pupils are invited to discover what caterpillars really eat (*The Very Hungry Caterpillar*) or to find out who the tallest man/woman is (*Jim and the Beanstalk*).

### 3. Integrated skills work

These involve pupils in skills such as writing, note-taking, interviewing and using reference materials – activities that give pupils integrated practice in all the language skills.

### 4. Independent learning

Very often pupils have the chance to pursue an area that interests them; to present their work in different ways: for example, a poster, a collage or a recording can be based on individual work, group work or a class project.

### 5. Short term or long term

The activities can be short term, such as a role play completed in one or two lessons, or they can be long term and spread over several lessons such as developing a story into a presentation or a book or dictionary-making project. The latter allows children to acquire and consolidate language in personally memorable ways.

### 6. Enjoyment

Follow-up activities provide enjoyment and satisfaction as they allow pupils to complete a piece of work in English. They can also gain self-confidence which, in turn, can create a more positive attitude to learning English.

### 7. Creativity

Many of the follow-up activities provide opportunities for pupils to express their own ideas. Creativity should be encouraged.

Some follow-up activities may necessitate moving classroom furniture around for more space or to allow pupils to work together in groups. It is also a good idea to have a supply of paper, scissors, glue, coloured pencils and old magazines for pupils to cut up. Creative activities may be done in collaboration with the art teacher to allow you to use facilities in the art room. End-products can be used to decorate the classroom or English corner. The follow-up activities you or your pupils choose will ultimately depend on your time and the resources available.

## How can I integrate language work across the curriculum?

If you are the children's main class teacher who teaches all subjects you have the ideal situation for integrating English with other subjects, as you will know exactly what your class has been studying.

If you are a visiting teacher to the school you will need to liaise with the appropriate class teacher to find out what the pupils have been studying and whether the teacher would be willing to collaborate with you. The ideal situation for you in this context is one where the main class teacher is interested in what you are doing, may observe or even participate in the class and knows when to follow up the activities that you have begun. Alternatively, some information about the children's work may be available from several other sources such as:

- the school syllabus, forecast or programme for different classes for a term or year
- the class record of work carried out in the previous week
- the textbooks used with the children.

Although the primary curriculum in most countries is usually very full it can be beneficial to integrate or link language work with other school learning for the following reasons.

- Integration may provide children with a broader perspective or world view. This increases their cultural knowledge and provides opportunities to develop aspects of citizenship, such as a multicultural or global view of the world (see notes for *Something Else*, *The Kangaroo from Woolloomooloo*, *The Clever Tortoise*), or stereotypes (*Princess Smartypants*).
- Integration reinforces certain key content areas and concepts that cross subject boundaries and underpins more general learning across the curriculum, for example, learning about dinosaurs (see notes for *Meg's Eggs*), skeletons (*Funnybones*), using maps (*My Cat Likes to Hide in Boxes*), animals from around the world (*The Clever Tortoise*, *Brown Bear, Brown Bear...*, *The Kangaroo from Woolloomooloo*), measuring (*Jim and the Beanstalk*).
- Integration can maximise the limited time often given to foreign language learning by offering opportunities briefly to revise or review relevant language as the opportunity arises, for example, taking two minutes to revise numbers in English in the maths class. However, you do need to be careful that this language integration is done in a way that does not take too much time from other subjects.

## What is storytelling?

Storytelling is telling a story to people who are willing to listen. This can be telling a story from a book by reading it aloud, telling a story without a book by word of mouth in the age-old oral tradition or telling an anecdote or even a joke. The challenge of any storyteller is to maintain the listener's interest and attention. Telling a story, whether reading it from a book or in the oral tradition, brings out a person's individuality and personality. Some people are natural storytellers. Most of us are not, but we can all become good storytellers through practice and rehearsal (see below) and by becoming aware of techniques we can use to bring a story alive.

## Reading or telling stories?

The stories referred to in this handbook are stories to be read aloud by the teacher from a book to his or her pupils. The beauty of a written story is that everything is provided, which saves a lot of time. The point is that you are using the story as a guide; after you have read it and used it in the classroom several times you will probably be able to remember it by heart. We feel that reading a story aloud for most teachers is probably less daunting than telling a story, which makes great demands on memory and linguistic skills. When reading a story aloud from a book the teacher has direct access to the text, which enables him or her to tell the story more confidently, and the accompanying illustrations play an important role in supporting the child's understanding. It also helps develop children's interest in books.

## How can I improve my storytelling skills?

Reading stories aloud is not an easy task and all teachers need to practise this skill. Here are some general guidelines to improve your storytelling skills and to prepare yourself:

### Prepare yourself

1. Familiarise yourself physically with the book and illustrations. Hold it, turn the pages, get a feel for it. Decide best how to sit so all your pupils can hear you and see you and the book clearly. Decide how you will hold the book and turn the pages. Decide which illustrations or details you will focus pupils' attention on. If it is not possible for your pupils to sit around you and they must remain seated at their desks, decide where you will stand and how you will walk around the class so all pupils can see the illustrations.
2. Read the story so you know the content well and know the meaning of any new words. Decide if you need to adapt it in any way. Check out any aspects you are not sure about so you can answer any questions.

3. Many storybooks are sold with an attached CD-ROM or DVD. If possible, listen to the story as an example of how it can be read aloud to boost your confidence. It will also serve as a guide for pronunciation of certain words as well as for sentence stress, intonation patterns and rhythm and storytelling techniques. Using the CD-ROM or DVD to introduce a story to children, however, runs the risk of becoming impersonal and may result in passive listening. It is best to read the story to the children to create a personal, shared rapport with them and to involve them actively in the story. Once children are familiar with the story you can use the CD-ROM or DVD so children can hear English spoken by someone other than their teacher – another voice, another variety of English. There are many story readings available on YouTube – you can watch Eric Carle reading his classic *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=eXHScpo\\_Vv8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eXHScpo_Vv8)
4. Decide where you will break up the story. The story notes provide guidance on this but you may decide to alter the length of some of the sections.
5. Decide where you wish to pause in the story to invite your pupils to join in (the story notes give specific guidance on this, but with experience you may decide to alter the length of sections).
6. Plan what you are going to say about the illustrations.
7. Read the story several times until you feel at ease and confident, and know the story well enough without having to read it word-for-word.

### Use storytelling techniques

Once you feel confident with the story text, consider the different techniques you can use to provide further support for your pupils' understanding, to bring the story alive and to make the experience more enjoyable and successful for your pupils.

- If they are unfamiliar with storytelling, begin with short sessions that neither demand too much from them nor over-extend their concentration span.
- If possible, have children sit on the floor around you when you read the story. Make sure all pupils are sitting so they can see you and the illustrations and can hear you clearly. This will make the storytelling session a special event where you and the children share the emotions, the humour, the action and the suspense, the anticipation and the surprise of the story. In this way, a natural communicative situation is provided where pupils interact with the story, the storyteller and each other.
- Read slowly and clearly. Give your pupils time to look at the pictures, to think, ask questions, make comments. However, do vary the pace of your voice when the story speeds up.
- Make comments about the illustrations and point to them to focus the pupils' attention. When you say a word, point to the illustration at the same time to focus their attention. Involve your pupils actively by asking them to point to the illustrations.
- Encourage your pupils to take part in the storytelling by giving them opportunities to repeat 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 and facial expressions to help convey the meaning of feelings and actions.
- 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? This technique will also signal to the children that something is going to happen.
- 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 as much as you can to signal when different characters are speaking and to help convey meaning. This will help keep your pupils' attention and they will love imitating the different voices.
- Make sound effects where possible.
- Make eye contact with the children. If you have done the necessary preparation and rehearsal before reading the story aloud to them then this will be possible. Do not keep your nose in the book, or strain your neck or keep your eyes down. Look at all the children and watch their reactions and be ready to respond to them. It is possible to fold some books in half so the pictures are facing the children and the text is facing you. See for example *The Elephant and the Bad Baby* and *My Cat Likes to Hide in Boxes*.
- Commentate on the story where appropriate and relate it to the children. For example, in *My Cat Likes to Hide in Boxes*, ask 'Has anyone got a cat?' 'Oh, you have Charles.' 'What's your cat called?' 'What colour is he?'
- Ask questions to involve the children: 'What do you think is going to happen next?' 'What would you do?' (See page 27 for further guidelines on questioning techniques.)
- Do not be afraid to repeat. This increases opportunities for exposure to the language and gives children a second (or third) chance to work out the meaning and have it confirmed. If you need to walk around the class to show children the pictures, repeat the text again.

As pupils enjoy hearing stories over and over again, do read a story, or part of it, as often as possible, so your pupils hear English frequently. Listening to the stories in this way will help to reinforce pupils' learning.

You might like to record or film yourself reading a story aloud and use the self-assessment questions suggested below.

## What questions can I ask in story-based lessons?

Teachers ask questions before, during and after storytelling for a variety of reasons. Depending on your pupils' level, it may be necessary to sometimes ask questions in the mother tongue. Here are some of the reasons and example questions:

- to involve pupils actively and to relate a story or topic to the pupils' own experience: 'Today we're going to read a story about a bear.' 'Who's seen a real bear?' 'Where?' 'What was it like?'
- to elicit language or information: 'So the Elephant and the Bad Baby went into town and visited some shops.' 'Which shops did they go to?'
- to find out what pupils already know about a topic: 'Can you tell me the names of any animals that come from Australia?'
- to arouse curiosity and motivate: 'We're going to find out about bears.' 'How many types of bears do you know?' 'What do they eat?'
- to focus pupils' attention: 'Look at the picture.' 'What can you see?'
- to encourage the pupils to predict what they think will happen next in the story: 'What day is it next?' 'And what do you think the caterpillar eats on Saturday?'
- to check pupils' understanding and learning: 'What did the elephant say at the grocer's shop?'
- to encourage pupils to think about and express their reactions to a story or character: 'Who was your favourite character?' 'Why?'
- to show that you are genuinely interested in what they think and have to say: 'That's interesting!' 'Does anyone else agree with Michel?'

To summarise, a good question must be probing and motivate thought so that it encourages children to justify their responses; it must focus their attention and encourage observation, invite enquiry and stimulate because it is open-ended; it should be productive and seek a response and generate more questions. (See Fisher 2005: 20).

## How can I assess my skills as a storyteller?

As mentioned earlier, storytelling needs rehearsing. We suggest you follow the steps below to help develop your confidence and identify areas for improvement.

1. Listen to a recording of the story if possible for an example of how to read it.
2. Rehearse reading the story aloud several times.
3. Record or film yourself. Imagine you are reading the story to your pupils or, if possible, film yourself with your class.
4. Listen to or view your recording and use the following questions to evaluate your performance and your talents as a storyteller.

### Self-assessment questions

1. **Pronunciation.** Did I pronounce vowels and consonants correctly?
2. **Stress.** Did I stress syllables in individual words or words in sentences correctly?
3. **Rhythm.** Did I read too slowly or too quickly? Did I pause in the right places?
4. **Intonation.** Did I sound interesting or boring and did I vary my intonation where appropriate? Did I use the appropriate intonation for questions, statements, lists, and so on?
5. **Variation.** How did I vary the speed and volume of my voice where appropriate? Did I adapt my voice enough for the different characters?
6. **Visual/audio clues.** How did I use visual/audio clues (facial expressions and gestures, sound effects) to support children's understanding?
7. **Eye contact.** Did I retain eye contact with all children during the storytelling to develop a shared rapport with the class?
8. **Pupil participation.** Did I pause in the correct places and use appropriate intonation to involve pupils actively in the story? Did I ask the appropriate questions so pupils can relate the story to their own experiences? Did I encourage pupils to join in or to predict what happens next?
9. **General impression.** How did I sound in general? Clear? Expressive? Lively?
10. **What do I need to improve?** What shall I focus on this week?

Although aimed at telling oral tales, David Heathfield (2014) describes many storytelling techniques that can be applied to reading a story aloud.

## How can I assess story-based work?

Whether you are using storybooks as a supplementary teaching aid or as your principal material you will, at some stage, need to account for what you are doing and show evidence of what pupils have been learning. Although it is relatively easy to assess pupils' progress in terms of linguistic outcomes, it is more difficult to assess cognitive, cultural, affective and social outcomes. However, below are some techniques that you may like to experiment with.

1. **Progress tests.** These will provide formal evaluations of learning. Many of the activity types described in Chapter 4 can be used for testing, for example, picture dictation, listen and number, matching words to pictures, sorting vocabulary into groups and gap filling, etc. Progress tests can easily be designed based on what you have been working on with a particular class. Try to design tests that show pupils what they can do rather than what they cannot do, in order to provide them with successful and positive learning experiences.
2. **Observation of individual children.** In addition to the more formal assessment described above, also try to keep an individualised record of each child's progress and performance based on informal observation during lessons. This will provide a useful basis for writing termly reports and for meetings with parents, as well as a way of assessing other aspects of a child's learning. An example of the kind of observation chart you could use with story-based work is provided on the following page.
3. **Individual profiles.** It is useful to build up a profile on each child by organising and storing information about their development and progress throughout the year. You will need a folder in which you can store progress tests, observation sheets, self-assessment and storybook evaluation sheets on each child. It is also useful to keep or make photocopies of pupil-produced work from time to time. Make sure you name and date any work. Keeping a profile is a way of bringing together both formal and informal assessments and enables you to give a coherent and global evaluation for each child.
4. **Self-assessment.** Children can be encouraged to assess their own learning and progress. This can be done by running review sessions at the end of each activity cycle and at the end of each lesson, completing self-assessment sheets at the end of a lesson, or storybook evaluations after a storytelling session or a programme of work on a storybook. See Chapter 4 for further details.

## How can I involve parents in story-based work?

A welcoming and inclusive school will encourage parental involvement and establish a partnership of mutual understanding between teachers and parents. What steps does your school take to encourage this involvement? For example, how are parents informed about a story-based approach? How effective is your system of written communication between school and home? How are parents encouraged to support their children's English language learning at home? The ELLiE research (Enever, 2011) highlighted the importance of enhancing pupils' awareness of the possibilities for out-of-school contact with English by incorporating tasks that bring the out-of-school context into the classroom. For example, children are asked to bring small objects to class that are representative of their culture/country to make time capsules in *My Cat Likes to Hide in Boxes*. It is also important that tasks are designed to take the at school experience into the home. Many of the main outcomes described in the story notes allow children to take their story-based experiences into the home and share them with their family, such as book- or dictionary-making projects or games. They can also show their parents records of their story-based work in their portfolios (see page 21).

Parents enjoy being invited to a school to see examples of work produced by their children such as a presentation of a story or project work. Give parents plenty of prior notice so they can organise themselves – children can be involved in making invitations for them. Find out if any parents can play a musical instrument, for example, as they may be able to provide musical accompaniment at a presentation. Some parents are also very willing to film a performance.

Finally, encourage parents to read stories to their children at home in order to review work and to maximise and consolidate their school work.

For further guidelines on encouraging parental involvement see Brewster et al. 2002.

## Observation sheet

Name of child: ..... Class: .....

Story:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
<b>Listening</b>								
• Shows global understanding when a story is read aloud								
• Listens for specific information								
• Predicts what comes next								
• Infers meaning								
• Uses audio and visual clues as aids to meaning								
• Recognises words in context								
• Follows instructions								
• Understands classroom language								
<b>Speaking</b>								
• Participates in storytelling sessions by repeating key vocabulary and phrases								
• Pronounces intelligibly								
• Participates in oral activities and tries to use new language								
• Uses communication strategies								
• Uses classroom language								
<b>Reading</b>								
• Shows global understanding of language in context								
• Reads for specific information								
• Predicts what comes next								
• Infers meaning								
• Uses contextual clues as aids to meaning								
• Recognises words in context								
• Follows simple written instructions								
• Matches simple dialogues with characters								
<b>Writing</b>								
• Copies words and labels pictures/diagrams								
• Uses a written model to create own simple text								
• Recognises rhyme and joins rhyming sentences								
• Completes charts with specific information								



## Observation sheet (continued)

Name of child: ..... Class: .....

Story:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
<b>Learning to learn</b>								
• Shows understanding of purpose of activities								
• Uses some metalanguage (words to describe language and language learning)								
• Participates actively and asks questions								
• Transfers strategies to new tasks								
• Works independently of teacher, either alone, in pairs or groups								
• Uses resources (dictionary, internet, etc.)								
• Keeps a vocabulary book								
• Reviews and reflects on own learning and progress								
• Shows motivation and eagerness to learn								
<b>Citizenship/diversity/intercultural awareness</b>								
• Shows curiosity about the world								
• Shows awareness of issues such as pollution, equality, stereotypes, conservation, tolerance, disability, etc.								
• Shows intercultural understanding								
<b>Cross-curricular learning</b>								
• Uses prior knowledge of topics to help predict								
• Uses English to learn about other things								
• Shows interest and curiosity in learning								
• Shows an awareness of different types of stories								
<b>Social skills</b>								
• Respects the teacher, other pupils and classroom rules								
• Shares materials								
• Helps other pupils								
• Co-operates in pair and group activities								
<b>Notes</b>								

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