


Reading Homework due Week 4 (March 22)

Task:

1. Read the attached text
2. Write one page reflection of what you think are the most important things to consider when choosing a storybook. You can use ideas from the reading but please explain in your own words why you think these are the most important considerations. the number of considerations you include in flexible. You can relate this to your experiences or future teaching, if possible.

Submission guidelines:

- Create a new text document for your answers
- Include your name and student number
- Use 12 point Arial font, single spaced
- Try to keep your answers to about one A4 page
- Save the file as a .doc or .pdf file before you submit - don't submit Hangul .hwp files
- **Submit your file using Edmodo.** Log in and go to our class page. Click 'Turn in' on the correct assignment post, click the small square file button (), upload your file, finally click the blue 'Turn in Assignment' button.

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	
Science	The Very Hungry Caterpillar			Funnybones			
Animals	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	
Food/shopping	The Very Hungry Caterpillar The Elephant and the Bad Baby						
Colours		Brown Bear, Brown Bear... Mr McGee					
Clothes		Mr McGee					
Dinosaurs				Meg's Eggs			
Witches and magic	Meg's Eggs			Meg's Eggs			
Insects	The Very Hungry Caterpillar		The Very Hungry Caterpillar				
Festivals				Meg's Eggs			
Friendship/helping people	Something Else Funnybones			Funnybones Meg's Eggs	Jim and the Beanstalk		
Sociable behaviour	The Elephant and the Bad Baby Something Else Something Else						
Tolerance							
Equality	The Clever Tortoise				Princess Smartypants	The Clever Tortoise	
Environment/ conservation	The Elephant and the Bad Baby The Very Hungry Caterpillar	Brown Bear, Brown Bear ...		Funnybones			
People/families/ occupations	The Elephant and the Bad Baby	Mr McGee			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 style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">LINGUISTIC</p> <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">PSYCHOLOGICAL</p> <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">COGNITIVE</p> <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">SOCIAL</p> <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">CULTURAL</p>	Level	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?
	Literary devices	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?
	Content/subject matter	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?
	Illustrations/layout	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?
	Educational potential	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?
	Motivation	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?
	Values	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?
	Global issues	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?
	Language/content	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?
	Potential for follow-up work			
Does the story provide a starting point for related language activities and lead on to follow-up work in the form of concrete outcomes?				

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
Verbs												
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	
Interrogative forms												
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
Prepositions												
'On', 'off', 'in', 'out', 'outwards', 'into', 'inside'			X	X								
'Up', 'upwards', 'down', 'under', 'over'			X	X								
Adjectives												
Word order	X	X		X	X		X		X			
Comparative and superlative adjectives; too + adjective; 'as big as'							X				X	X
Nouns												
Countable and non-countable nouns; 'some'/'any'; Units e.g. a slice of...					X	X		X				