

RESOURCE
BOOKS FOR
TEACHERS
series editor
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STORYTELLING WITH CHILDREN

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2 A store of activities for any story

This chapter offers a store of activities which can be used with any story. First find a story you want to use: traditional, a story book, or a personal life story. Then decide which activities you would like the children to do before telling or reading the story, during the story, or after the story. Don't try to use them all!

Purposes in activities

Each activity offers a different kind of benefit. What do the children need? What do they need before you tell the story, while you tell it, and after you have told it?

All the activities in this chapter are listed under broad purposes in order to help you to decide which is the best activity for your children.

Flexibility

Activities related to the story and categorized in one place can often be equally well used in another. For example, 2.26, 'Imagining: the five senses', can be used during or after the story.

Reading or telling the story more than once

It is extremely advantageous to read or tell the story many times: the plot can sink in, the details can be appreciated, and, as a by-product, the language itself can become the possession of the child.

Activities you might do before the first telling might be quite different from activities you would want to do before the second or additional telling.

Activities before the story

Purpose	Readiness, focusing, and predicting
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There are several possible purposes in using activities before the story: getting the children's attention; focusing their minds on the content; arousing their predictive skills; and giving them a task to fulfil.

Helping the children to predict what the story might be about helps them to have ready possible meanings and language, and this increases the likelihood of their understanding the gist of the story when they hear it.

Developing children's natural ability to predict is the development of a life skill and thus has importance beyond the individual story and indeed beyond language teaching.

2.1 Front cover

If you are using a book, show the front cover (or just the title of the story) and ask the children to guess what it might be about.

2.2 Topics from pictures

- 1 Show pictures from inside the book, or pictures you or the children have prepared, which illustrate the story or key parts of the story.
- 2 Ask the children to tell you as much as they can about the topic of the story (using single words and short phrases as well as longer sentences).

2.3 Discuss and share

Discuss with the children anything they may know or feel about the topic of the story, relating it to their own experience. For example, before introducing 3.3, 'The little duckling', you might ask the children to tell you about all the birds and animals they know and which are, for them, the most beautiful parts of each one. Before introducing, 3.12, 'Strange animal', you might ask the children what is scary (frightening) for them.

2.4 Give a story summary

You can give the children a summary of the story, perhaps in the mother tongue, before you tell it. The summary may be a single line, or may be a longer text summarizing the whole plot, perhaps omitting the final resolution.

2.5 Asking questions to focus on detail

Ask a question that can only be answered by the story. For example, before telling story 3.16, 'Elidor', say: *I am going to tell you a story about a boy who ran away from home. Why did he run away, do you think?*

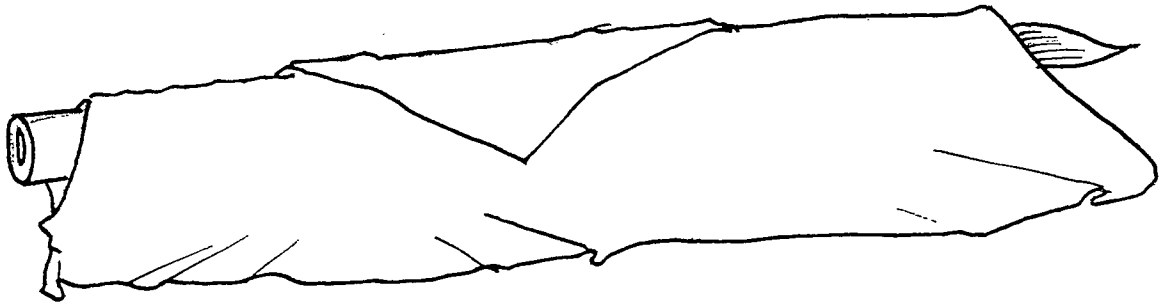
2.6 Guess the objects

PREPARATION

Wrap up objects related to the story, for example, a water-colour brush (preferably Chinese or Japanese) for 3.8, 'Ma Liang'.

IN CLASS

- 1 Get the children to guess what it might be. Then tell them it will be in the story and that they can ask questions about it.
- 2 Once they have guessed some things, tell them the story.



VARIATION 1

You can reveal the object bit by bit, each time asking the children to guess what it is.

VARIATION 2

Ask all the children to stand in a circle facing the centre, with their hands behind their backs. Then put a number of objects related to the story into their hands and ask them to feel the objects and pass them on to their neighbours. They can then identify the objects and predict what the story might be about.

2.7 Jumbled pictures

PREPARATION

Prepare a series of pictures of key moments in the story. You can photocopy and cut up the pictures for each pair of children, or display them on the board, each one with a letter or number.

IN CLASS

- 1 Display the pictures from the story out of order.
- 2 Ask the children to try to put them into the sequence they think the story will be in.
- 3 They listen to the story to see if they were correct.

2.8 Ten key words

IN CLASS

- 1 Write about ten key words or short phrases on the board in the order in which they occur in the story. Don't worry if there are a few words the children don't know.
- 2 Ask them if they can predict the story (they can use the present tense to do this).

- 3 Then tell the story. The children see the key words on the board and compare their prediction with the story you tell.

VARIATION

If the children have seen pictures from the story, or if they know the story in their mother tongue, ask them to write down all the English words they think they will hear on separate pieces of paper. When you tell the story, they should arrange the pieces of paper in the order in which they hear them.

FOLLOW-UP

You can ask higher-level learners to work in groups and to write down each word in a sentence which explains it.

2.9 First line or paragraph

Give the children the first line or paragraph of the story and ask them to write down or call out words they think they will hear in the rest of the story.

2.10 Telling a mother-tongue version

IN CLASS

If the children know the story in their own language, ask them to try to retell it.

VARIATION

You can tell a story they know in their mother tongue in English and ask them to compare their version with the English version.

Purpose Understanding key language

Pick out words and phrases that are important in the story but unknown to the children. Decide whether to teach them before telling the story or while you tell the story.

2.11 Meaning from pictures

PREPARATION

Prepare pictures that will help your children understand key words from the story. Many objects, qualities, and action verbs can be illustrated by pictures. The pictures must obviously be big enough and clear enough to be seen and recognized from the back of the classroom. The pictures can be:

- sketches by you on the board, or on prepared picture flashcards
- illustrations in books
- magazine pictures
- pictures by the children (see 'Children's pictures' on page 35).

IN CLASS

Use the pictures to teach or to recycle key words before and/or while you tell the story.

2.12 Children's pictures

MATERIALS

Paper or thin card for the children to draw on; thick pens or crayons to draw with

IN CLASS

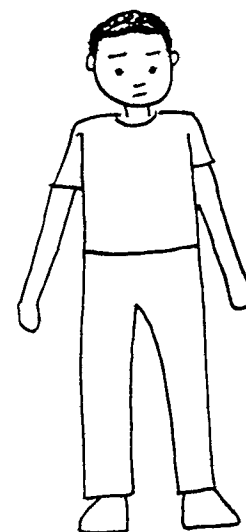
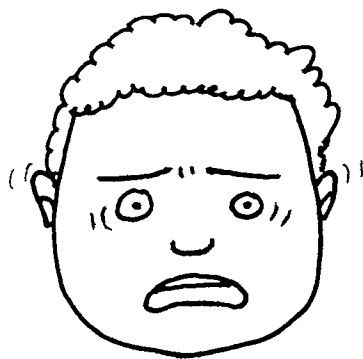
- 1 Announce that you want to tell a story but that you need some pictures for it.
- 2 Ask each child or pair of children to draw a picture of a key moment or of a key character or place in the story. The pictures should be big enough to see when displayed on the board and should not show any background setting. Say:

You: *I want a picture of a boy. He's about ten years old. He's an African boy. Who can draw him for me?*

Child: *I can.*

You: *Thank you. Now I need another picture of the boy but this time he's scared, really scared (frightened). Can you draw him for me?*

- 3 Tell the children that they have exactly 30 seconds to draw their pictures. It is a good idea to give each 'artist' a 'timekeeper' who counts slowly to 30.
- 4 Put the pictures on the wall. Get the children to predict the story. Then tell it.



Note To make a face young draw the eyes lower than halfway down.

COMMENTS

This activity achieves several purposes at the same time. It:

- creates story readiness
- focuses the children's minds on what the story is going to be about
- creates a special, personal interest
- recycles known language
- is a perfect opportunity to introduce new language

- offers a ‘task’ for the children during the telling of the story, as they hold up their picture at the right moment
- doesn’t require any preparation!

2.13 Meaning from objects

Show the children real objects connected with the story: for example, a drum and some fruit for 3.12, ‘Strange animal’. Let the children touch, hold, and perhaps use them, and teach their names.

2.14 Meaning from mime

IN CLASS

Use mime and actions to introduce new words before the story and while you are telling it.

COMMENTS

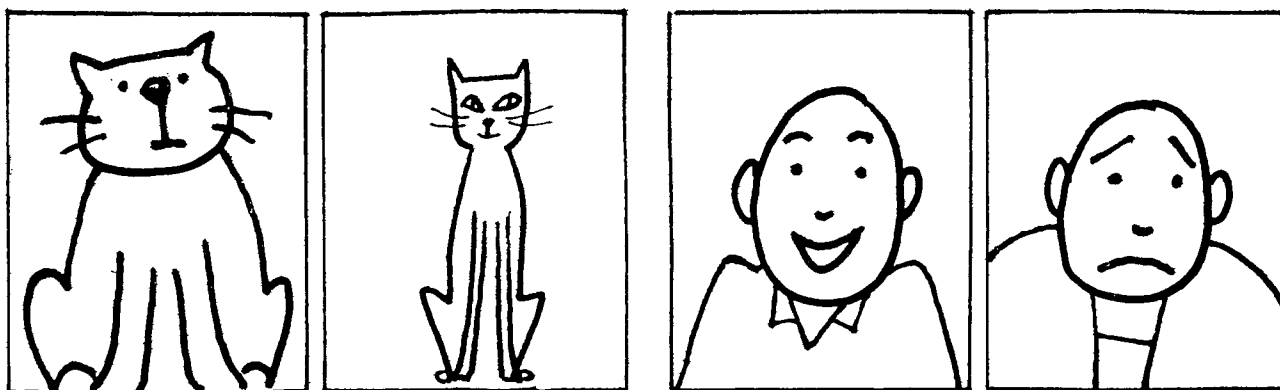
Many items of vocabulary, including actions, feelings of emotion, adjectives, and adverbs, can be communicated by mime. Mime is particularly relevant to storytelling as it helps keep the children’s attention and helps make the meaning much clearer.

2.15 Meaning from context

Some words are best understood in context. For example, a comparative form needs a comparison. Sometimes you can create contexts in the classroom to introduce a new word, but often the best context is the story itself. For example, in 3.12, ‘Strange animal’, *Sipo ran back home*. The story makes clear the idea of ‘back’ in ‘run back’.

2.16 Meaning from opposites

It is often easier to teach two words that are opposites than one word by itself: *big/small*, *rich/poor*. This principle also applies to words which are not strictly opposites but represent concepts which are significantly different, for example *love/hate*, *palace/cottage*. Draw or ask the children to draw contrasting pictures.



2.17 Meaning from translation

IN CLASS

As you tell the story, unobtrusively give the mother-tongue equivalent for a key word or phrase the children clearly don't understand, and which would entail considerable preparation to teach in any other way.

VARIATION

Tell the story partly in the learners' mother tongue and partly in English. Increase the amount of English each time you tell the story.

COMMENTS

Don't use translation all the time—children will wait for it and not listen to the English.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Mario Rinvoluti for this idea.

Activities during the story

You may decide that some of these activities should only be attempted during the second or third telling of the story.

Purpose Just enjoying the story

We must remember not to spoil the story in our eagerness to 'get a lot of useful work out of it'! Sometimes the best activity for the children is simply to sit and listen.

Purpose Checking understanding

These activities are not about 'testing' but, nevertheless, reveal to you whether the children are understanding the story. With low-proficiency listeners it is particularly important to keep on checking that they are still with you! One way of doing this is to divide the story into stages (in a picture book this might be each double-page spread) and then to stop and check on the children's understanding at the end of each stage before proceeding any further.

2.18 Miming

- 1 The children listen to you telling (not reading) the story twice, each time miming with you.
- 2 They listen and mime a third time, but now you only tell the story and don't mime with them.
- 3 They can mime at their desks or in a clear space in the classroom. For example, in 3.11, 'The little white cat', each child can use his

or her fingers to represent the cat. In 3.6, 'The lion', the children can move their bodies while sitting in their seats.

Acknowledgements

I adapted this idea from Jim Wingate.

2.19 Displaying pictures

If the children have drawn or been given pictures before the story (see 2.2), ask them to bring them to the front or hold them up at the appropriate moment in the story.

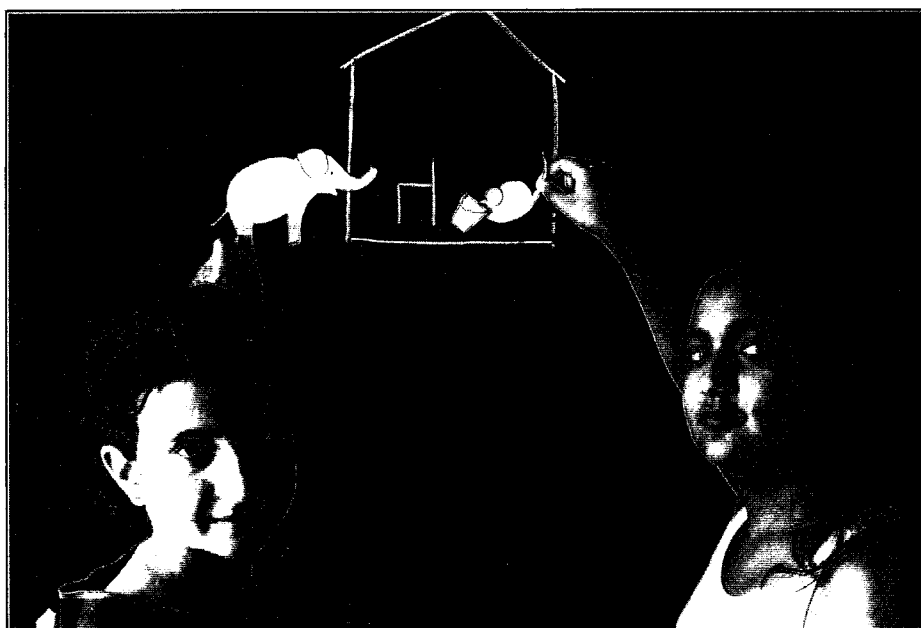
2.20 Figurines

PREPARATION

Prepare figures and scenes from the story on a magnet board, flannel board, overhead projector, or even just up on the board.

IN CLASS

The children can operate the figurines as you tell the story (or later if they retell the story themselves), which will show whether they understand.



2.21 Jump up word card

PREPARATION

Prepare word cards (phrases or pictures).

IN CLASS

- 1 Give each child a card before the story. You can either give each child a different word, or give the same word to several of them.
- 2 Ask them to jump up and sit down every time they hear their word as you tell the story.

VARIATION 1

- 1 Divide the class into As, Bs, and Cs. Do this by pointing to each child and saying first that he or she is an 'A', the second a 'B', and the third a 'C'. Leave them sitting in their normal positions. (In other words, you are not separating As from Bs from Cs.)
- 2 Ask the Bs and Cs to look away from you while you show a card with two or three words on it to the As, and then do the same for the Bs and Cs.
- 3 Tell the story. The children jump up and sit down if they hear their word.
- 4 You can ask the children to notice what their neighbour's word is according to when they jump up.

VARIATION 2

After the first telling, the children write down their favourite word and their least favourite word. During the next telling, they jump up every time they hear them. Their neighbour has to guess which two words they chose.

VARIATION 3

Ask them to jump up whenever they hear a certain kind of word, for example a number, a colour, or an animal. But make sure this is more like a game than a test!

2.22 Telling it wrongly**IN CLASS**

Retell a story the children know, but say you are tired and might get it wrong. The children put up their hands to correct you if you make a mistake.

You: *Once upon a time there were four little pigs ...*

Child: No, **three** little pigs.

VARIATION

(For more advanced children) Working in pairs, the children rewrite (or retell) the story with mistakes of content (not grammar!). Other children must find the mistakes. It is easier if they work from a copy of the correct text.

COMMENTS

You can also do this after a story, to check understanding.

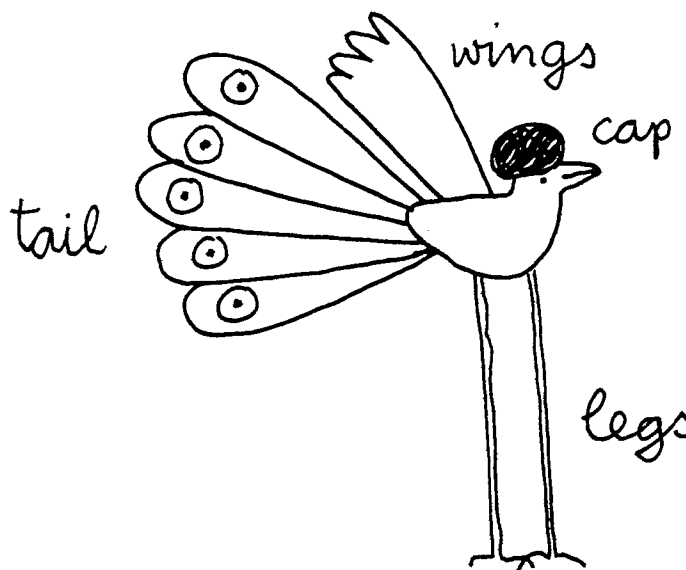
2.23 Labelling a picture**PREPARATION**

Draw or copy a story-based picture which illustrates all the things you want the children to name, or ask the children to draw one.

IN CLASS

- 1 Write key words from the story on the board before the story begins.
- 2 As the children listen, ask them to write the words on a picture next to the relevant object or action within the picture.

In the following example, the child made the drawing as she listened to the story of 3.3, 'The little duckling', and then during the second telling, she wrote the words next to the drawing.



COMMENTS

This is suitable for the second or third telling.

2.24 Whistling story

IN CLASS

- 1 Tell a story but, instead of saying a word, whistle (or make some other noise or gesture).
- 2 The children must tell you what the word is.

COMMENTS

You can make this easier for the children by writing the words on the board before you begin, or by telling the story several times before you use the technique.

Purpose **Analysing and predicting what is coming next**

Predicting helps the children to use their natural skills in preparing possible meanings for what you say next in the story. Predicting is a central part of the skill of listening fluency.

2.25 Stopping and asking

During the story, stop and ask the children what they think is going to happen next. At beginner level they reply in their mother tongue, and at higher levels they can reply with short phrases or sentences in English.

Purpose Reflecting, imagining, and creating

In each of the activities below, you stop the story and ask the children to respond to what they have just heard.

2.26 Imagining: the five senses

IN CLASS

Every now and again, stop and ask the children to close their eyes and see if they can see a picture of the story in their mind. Ask them to share this picture with other children—theirs will be different.

VARIATION

You can also ask them what they can hear, feel, taste, and smell.

FOLLOW-UP

Each time you retell the story, ask the children to concentrate on a different sense: seeing, hearing, feeling, smelling, or tasting.

In order for this activity to work well you must really tell the story with feeling!

COMMENTS

Beginners can use their mother tongue, and elementary and pre-intermediate learners can say short phrases and sentences in English.

2.27 Tell, stop, and draw

IN CLASS

- 1 Stop telling the story at a particular moment and ask the children to draw what they imagine. Set a precise time limit to ensure that all the children finish at the same time. Make it very short, say, one minute. In this way the children are freed of the responsibility of doing a 'beautiful' drawing and can concentrate just on sketching content.
- 2 Put the children into groups. Read or tell the relevant part of the story again and then ask the groups to comment on each child's picture, and perhaps to add to it or to change it.

COMMENTS

- 1 Jason Renshaw, a teacher in Korea, told me he has even asked the children to draw a new picture or add to a drawing after every line of the story! It stimulated the children to ask questions about the story and raised their comprehension to a high level.
- 2 See 4.3.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Jason Renshaw and Brian Tomlinson for their ideas on visualization.

2.28 Expressive lines

IN CLASS

- 1 First demonstrate an expressive line. Write three words on the board: *happy*, *angry*, *excited*. Tell the children that you are going to draw a line for one of these words in the air: an invisible line! The children must say which word it represents.



For example, begin by drawing an *angry* line: using your forefinger, quickly and jerkily draw the line above in the air. Stress its angularity and harshness. For *excited*, draw the line quickly but lightly in contrast to *angry*. For *happy*, draw the line flowingly, peacefully.

As you are drawing *angry* some children might call out *excited*. Agree that *excited* and *angry* are similar, but then draw a line for *excited* and show that it is lighter and less angular.

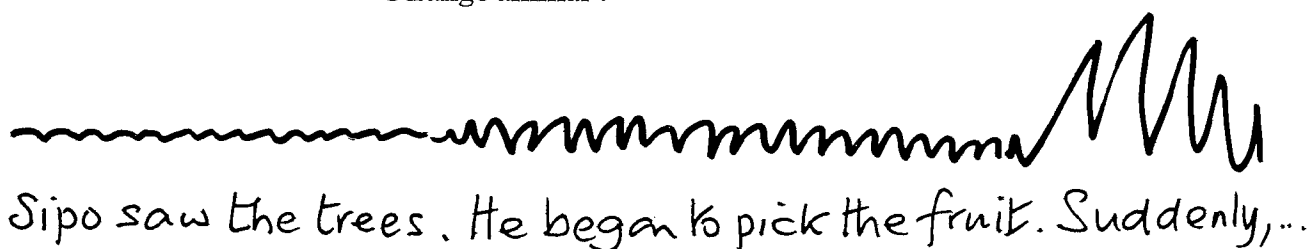
- 2 Explain that you will retell the story and that you will stop every so often during the story for them to draw an expressive line.

FOLLOW-UP

More advanced children can write a sentence under each line.

COMMENTS

This activity is best done at the second or third telling of the story. If a whole story is represented by an expressive line, the end result is very similar to a musical score. Here is an example, taken from 3.12, 'Strange animal'.



2.29 Imagine: how would you feel?

- 1 While telling a story stop now and again to ask the children how they would feel or what they would do in that situation. At beginner level they can reply in their mother tongue, and at higher levels with short phrases or sentences in English. Here is

an example from 3.17, 'Kormi'. The children close their eyes and put their heads in their hands. Say:

Imagine that you are the little black cat. She has just come out of the house into the snowy garden. What can she see? What can she hear? What can she feel? What does she think? What does she say to herself?

- 2 Walk around the room, touch a child on the shoulder, and ask, *What's Kormi doing/thinking/feeling?* Leave your hand there, while he or she tells the class. Then the child covers his or her face again. Ask someone else a question.

2.30 What can you add?

At intervals, stop and ask the children for more information about the story, for example what Ma Liang might draw in order to get away from the king and his soldiers (see 3.8, 'Ma Liang').

Even very young children can add details. Jason Renshaw, a teacher in Korea, told a basic version of the Old English epic *Beowulf* to a class of six-year-olds (who had learnt English for two years). He kept asking them to add details; for example, the dress of the princess or the appearance of Grendel, the monster. He and the class spent three 50-minute lessons producing and recording this version of the story enriched by the children. The children then spent a further three 50-minute sessions making big books of drawings and simple written captions for their *Beowulf* story.

2.31 Personal preferences: phrases you like

IN CLASS

- 1 The children listen to the story several times.
- 2 They note down the words and phrases they like (and some they don't like).
- 3 They write a poem or chant making use of the phrases they have noted down.

VARIATION

A simpler version of this activity is for the children just to repeat words they like (see 4.18).

2.32 Sound effects or background music

MATERIALS

Simple instruments such as cardboard boxes for drums

IN CLASS

Using their musical instruments, children experiment with creating simple rhythms and sounds to express characters, actions, and feelings (see 4.20 and *English Through Music* in 'Further Reading').

Activities after the story

Purpose Checking understanding through adapted traditional exercises

There are many well-known traditional exercises for showing understanding, such as true/false questions, comprehension questions, and jumbled sentences. We must remember that these exercises are rather different in spirit from a story and might spoil the story for the children. Here I suggest some more interesting variations on these traditional techniques.

2.33 Comprehension questions: written by the children

- 1 The children work in groups. Each group creates and writes five comprehension questions about the story. (These can be in the mother tongue.) Make sure that each child has a set of the five questions.
- 2 Divide the class into new groups so that each child is the only one from his or her original group.
- 3 Each child takes a turn to ask questions from his or her list.

2.34 Sequencing: jumbled sentences or words

PREPARATION

- 1 Choose key sentences from the story.
- 2 Then:
 - write or type the sentences on to paper, make one photocopy for each child, and cut them up into single sentences, or
 - write them on the board for the children to copy, or
 - write the sentences on large strips of paper (one metre approximately) which the children can hold up.

IN CLASS

- 1 If necessary, the children copy the sentences on to sheets of paper and cut them up.
- 2 They try to arrange the sentences into the correct sequence, or copy them in the correct order in their books.
- 3 Once the children have made their sequence, you can tell the story again and they can check if they have arranged their sentences correctly.

VARIATION 1

The children can arrange key words instead of sentences.

VARIATION 2

Instead of the children holding the word or sentence cards, they can clip them on to a clothes line tied across the room. This is a very useful technique for sequencing words, sentences, and pictures.

COMMENTS

- 1 Some teachers use this activity before the children hear the story and thus use it as a prediction exercise and a way of whetting the children's appetite for the story.
- 2 This technique is very useful for early readers because it relies on reading recognition of words or sentences they are familiar with aurally. For pre-readers the use of pictures instead of words allows them to show understanding without having to encounter the written text. For more on jumbled texts, see 4.2 in Chapter 4.

2.35 Restoring the text**PREPARATION**

Prepare a text of the story, or part of it, on a photocopy or on the board. Omit, erase, or white out some of the words. The number and type of words missing determine the difficulty of the task.

IN CLASS

- 1 Give out the gapped text or write it on the board.
- 2 The class fill in the gaps, either as you retell the story or on their own.

VARIATION 1

- 1 Put a short version of the story on the board.
- 2 Erase certain words.
- 3 The children try to remember them and call them out.
- 4 You can continue to erase words and they continue to try to remember what you have erased. In the end they are remembering and repeating the whole text.

VARIATION 2

- 1 Prepare two different versions of the same text, with gaps in different places.
- 2 The children work in pairs. Each partner has the same text but with different gaps. They help each other to complete the story.

VARIATION 3

In pairs, the children sit back to back. Child A can see a large, gapped text on the wall at one end of the room, and child B can see the same text but with different gaps at the other end of the room. They help each other to write out the complete story.

FOLLOW-UP

- 1 (For higher levels) Put the children in pairs and give them the complete text of a very short story they know well.
- 2 Ask the children to rewrite the text, leaving out ten words in different places. They should write their text in pen.
- 3 They then exchange their gapped text with another pair and try to complete their neighbours' gapped text, using a pencil so that it can be used again.

Purpose **Checking understanding through non-verbal activities**

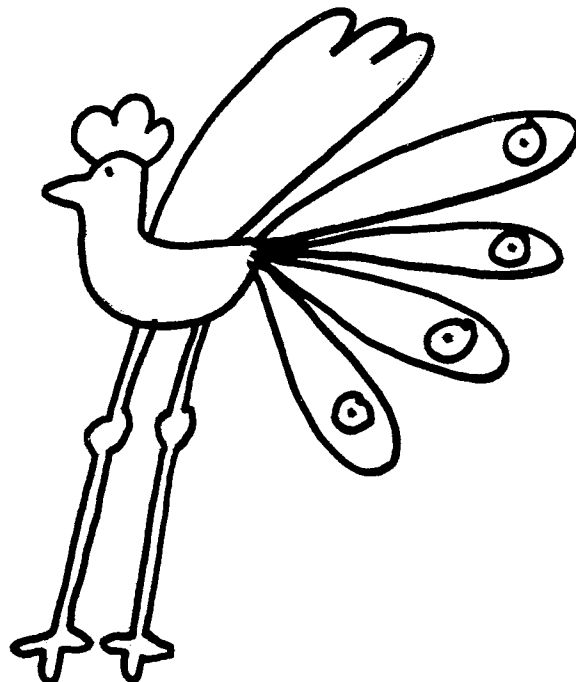
Several of the 'Checking understanding' activities in the 'During the story' section can also be done after the story.

2.36 Acting out

- 1 With the children's help, divide the story into scenes.
- 2 Discuss what you will need and allocate roles. Objects in the classroom, or the children themselves can represent, for example, a mountain, trees, doors, or objects in the story. This planning phase is a way of checking their understanding of the story.
- 3 Some of the children act the story as you retell it (see Chapter 4, 'Dramatizing stories').

2.37 Drawing and colouring

The children draw and/or colour a person, an animal, or an object based on what they heard in the story. See the illustration below in which the teacher drew the original little duckling and the children added parts (also see 3.3, 'The little duckling').



Purpose

Checking understanding through retelling

These activities are principally for checking understanding. However, the children also need to remember and put their ideas in sequence and in English. See Chapter 1, ‘Guidelines for working with lower-proficiency levels’, for how children with lower levels of English can contribute.

2.38

Children telling and retelling

Encourage the children to retell the story, if necessary using single words or short phrases. For example, *Ma Liang. Girl. Pictures. King angry*. Even with young children, the clusters of words will gradually grow into full sentences.

2.39

Retelling without changes: prompted by questions

IN CLASS

Ask the children to retell the story. The first time you do the activity help them, by means of questions, to include every detail.

- Who’s in the story?*
- Is it a boy or a girl?*
- Where does the story start?*
- When does the story start?*
- What’s happening at the beginning of the story?*
- What happens next?*
- What/How does he/she do/say/think/feel?*

Then challenge the children to summarize the whole story in only one sentence (or to use a total of no more than ten words).

COMMENTS

If the story is being guided by questions, then the present tense is appropriate.

2.40

Retelling without changes: throw the ball and continue the story

IN CLASS

A child begins the story and then throws a paper ball to another child, who must continue it.

COMMENTS

This is a challenging activity and is only for children you feel know the story very well and have enough English.

2.41 Removing pictures

PREPARATION

Prepare a series of pictures which tell the story. The children can draw these in a previous activity (see 2.12, 'Children's pictures'), or you can use ones you prepared for activities before the story such as 2.2, 'Topics from pictures', or 2.7, 'Jumbled pictures'.

IN CLASS

- 1 Display all the pictures. Go through the story again, eliciting as much of it as possible from the children, using the pictures as a memory aid.
- 2 The children close their eyes and you remove one picture.
- 3 The children then open their eyes and tell you which picture is missing and which part of the story it represents.
- 4 The children close their eyes again. You now remove another picture and they tell you which one is missing.
- 5 Gradually remove all the pictures and see if they can retell the story from memory.

2.42 Removing lines of text

PREPARATION

On long pieces of card, write ten lines of text which tell the essentials of the story. For the Follow-up, write out the same sentences on paper, photocopy and cut up into separate lines of text.

IN CLASS

Help the whole class to retell the story by putting the long cards into the correct order. Remove one strip and retell the story. Then remove another strip and retell the story. Carry on until the children can tell the whole story without the support of the written sentences.

FOLLOW-UP

(For more advanced children) Give pairs of children the photocopied lines of text and ask them to do the same exercise until they can retell the story without looking at the written version.

2.43 Mixing two stories

PREPARATION

Write out sentences from two stories on strips of paper and mix them up. Make a copy for each group.

IN CLASS

- 1 Put the children into groups.
- 2 Ask the children to sort the sentences into the two stories and then to sequence them properly.

COMMENTS

This is quite difficult and is for older children with higher levels of English.

2.44 Draw and guess

- 1 The children listen to the story. They draw one (or more) picture(s), then show it to their neighbour who should guess which part of the story the picture is from.
- 2 They listen to the story again and check their answers.

2.45 Pass the picture

IN CLASS

- 1 Stand in a circle with the children.
- 2 Hold up a picture and briefly tell the part of the story which goes with it (normally the beginning of the story). Repeat the gist in one sentence.
- 3 Give the picture to the child on your left, who must repeat the sentence.
- 4 That child then passes the picture and sentence to her or his neighbour, who does the same thing, repeating the sentence and passing it on to his or her neighbour.
- 5 When the class is confident, you can have several pictures moving at the same time. If a child cannot repeat a sentence, he or she must pass the picture back to you so that you can give the sentence again.

COMMENTS

The children may not understand all the words they say because they are just copying you. However, this is a first step in articulating a phrase or sentence of the story and a safe opportunity to begin to associate meanings by holding the picture.

2.46 Stepping stone

PREPARATION

Prepare, or ask the children to prepare, a series of pictures (photocopies or sketches) illustrating the story.

IN CLASS

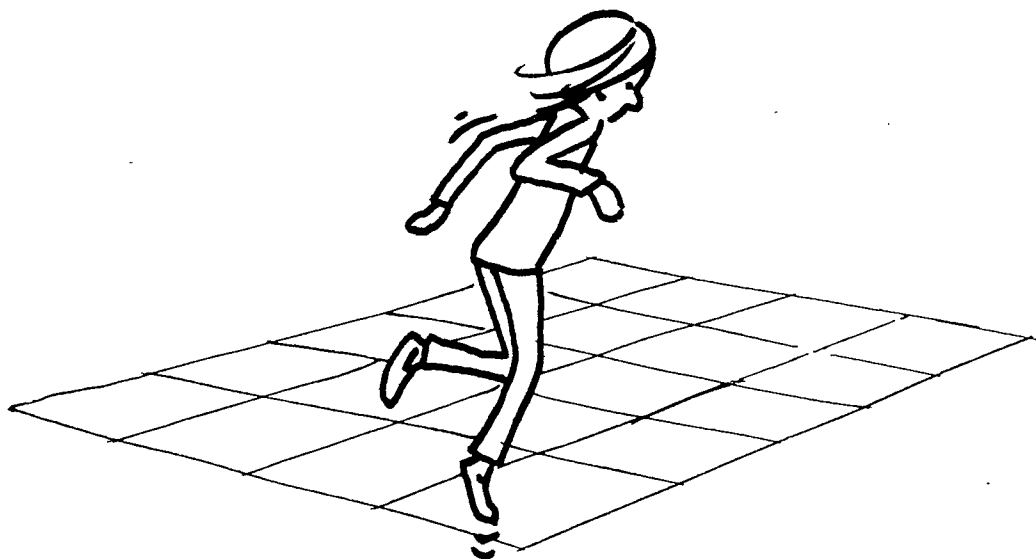
- 1 Arrange the pictures on the floor in a line.
- 2 Challenge the children to walk from picture to picture telling the story. If you say there are sharks in the river they will find it a double challenge to remember the story!

VARIATION 1

If you have a floor made up of large tiles, the children can move from one tile to another if they are able to add a sentence to the story. Their aim is to cross the floor.

VARIATION 2

The pictures can be drawn in frames on the school playground with chalk.

**VARIATION 3**

- 1 Stand the children in a circle. Put the pictures in the circle.
- 2 The children take it in turns to jump onto a picture and to say two or three words, phrases, or sentences about it.

COMMENTS

This activity is suitable for small classes or for groups working by themselves.

2.47 Story scrabble

- 1 Write a sentence from the story on the board. The children write it in their books or on sheets of paper.
- 2 The children write words from the story vertically, including one letter from the sentence you have written.

Here is an example from 3.11, 'The little white cat', done by a teacher and her class of elementary ten- and eleven-year-olds familiar with the story:

		H				D
S	H	B	S	A	B	T
T	H	E	I	S	A	L
E	R	O	X	N	S	H
	T		D	T	I	O
	W	H	I	T	E	
	E		R	K		
P	A	R	E	N	T	S
	S		S			

- 3 Then ask the children to write as many sentences as they can with the words they have created. The sentences should tell the story.

Here is a little white cat. She has six brothers and sisters. Her parents and her brothers are black. She doesn't know that she is white. She thinks she is black too.

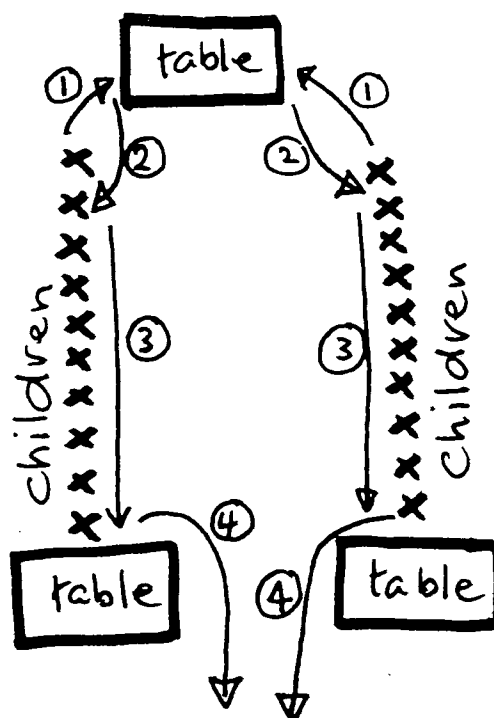
2.48 Whispering story

PREPARATION

Write out about ten sentences from a short story. Make two photocopies and cut these into strips.

IN CLASS

- 1 Display the sentences, in the correct sequence, on a table at the back of the classroom.
- 2 Place the strips of paper, out of order, on two desks near the front of the classroom. The desks should be about two metres apart.
- 3 Divide the class into two teams. Line them up behind the two desks.
- 4 One child from each team goes to the story text at the back of the classroom, reads the first line, and then runs to the nearest child in his or her team at the end of the line and whispers the sentence to him or her, who must whisper it to the child in front, and so on down the line.
- 5 The last child, at the front, goes to the desk, picks up the correct sentence, and displays it on the board.
- 6 This child now runs to the story text at the back of the class and whispers another sentence to the child at the end of the row in his or her team.
- 7 The first team to put the whole story in the right order wins.



Purpose **Analysing and evaluating**

'Analysing' and 'evaluating' are two big words and, on the surface, rather remote from the interests of most young children. However, there are interesting ways of helping children to begin to think analytically about the stories they hear.

2.49 **Evaluating the story**

IN CLASS

- 1 Ask the children to tell you what they thought of the story. Tell them you would like to know whether to use the story again with another class. If necessary use the children's mother tongue. Support the children by giving alternatives if you feel it would help them.

You: *Do/Did you like this story?*

Child: *Yes.*

You: *Do/Did you like this story because it's funny? Exciting? Interesting? Beautiful? Sad?*

- 2 You might like to write sentences on the board and ask the children to choose one to say what they think.

I like this story very much/a bit.

I like this story because it's funny/exciting/interesting/beautiful/sad.

I don't like this story very much/at all.

I don't like this story because it's boring/silly/childish/difficult.

I like Sipo because he's brave.

I don't like the strange animal because he's frightening.

VARIATION 1

The children can draw happy or sad faces to show how much they liked the story.

VARIATION 2

Beginners and elementary-level children can express their approval or lack of it by whispering *a little* or shouting *a lot* when you ask, *How much did you like the story?*

VARIATION 3

They can show the part of the story they liked best by standing next to a picture which illustrates it (if you have displayed them).

VARIATION 4

Older children can keep a statistical record and make a graph:

Give marks 1–5

- 1 How interesting is the story?
- 2 How clear is the story?
- 3 How good is the end of the story?
- 4 How good is the beginning of the story?

VARIATION 5

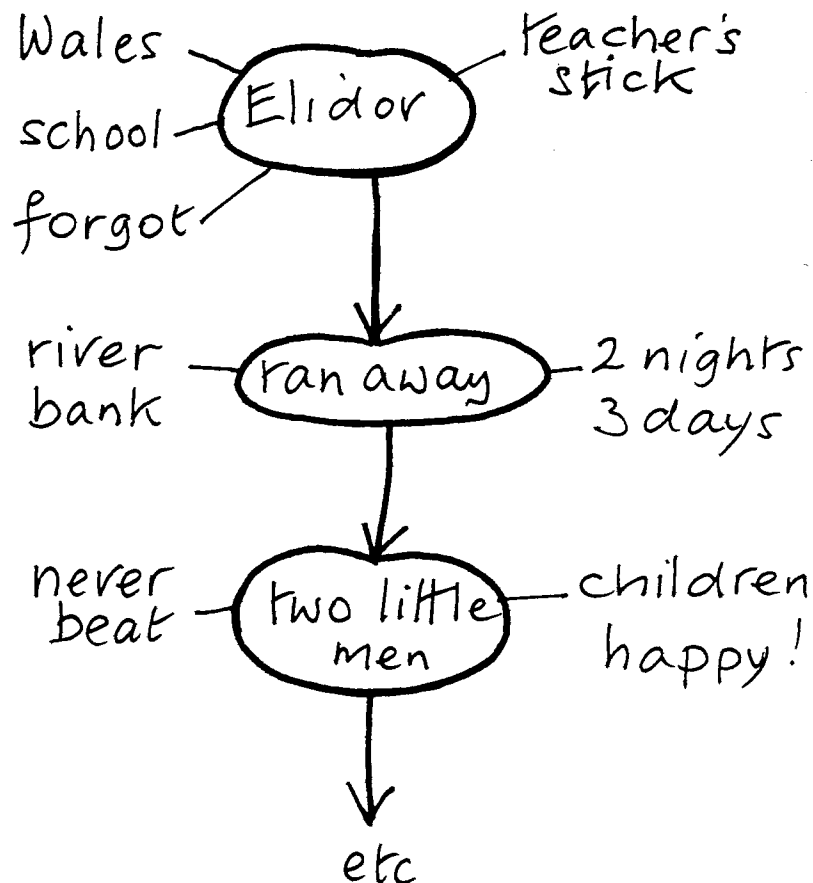
The children can make an 'I like/I don't like' poster, including pictures of characters and incidents.

COMMENTS

For more ideas on feedback from children, see *Young Learners* by Sarah Phillips in this series.

2.50 Story flowchart**IN CLASS**

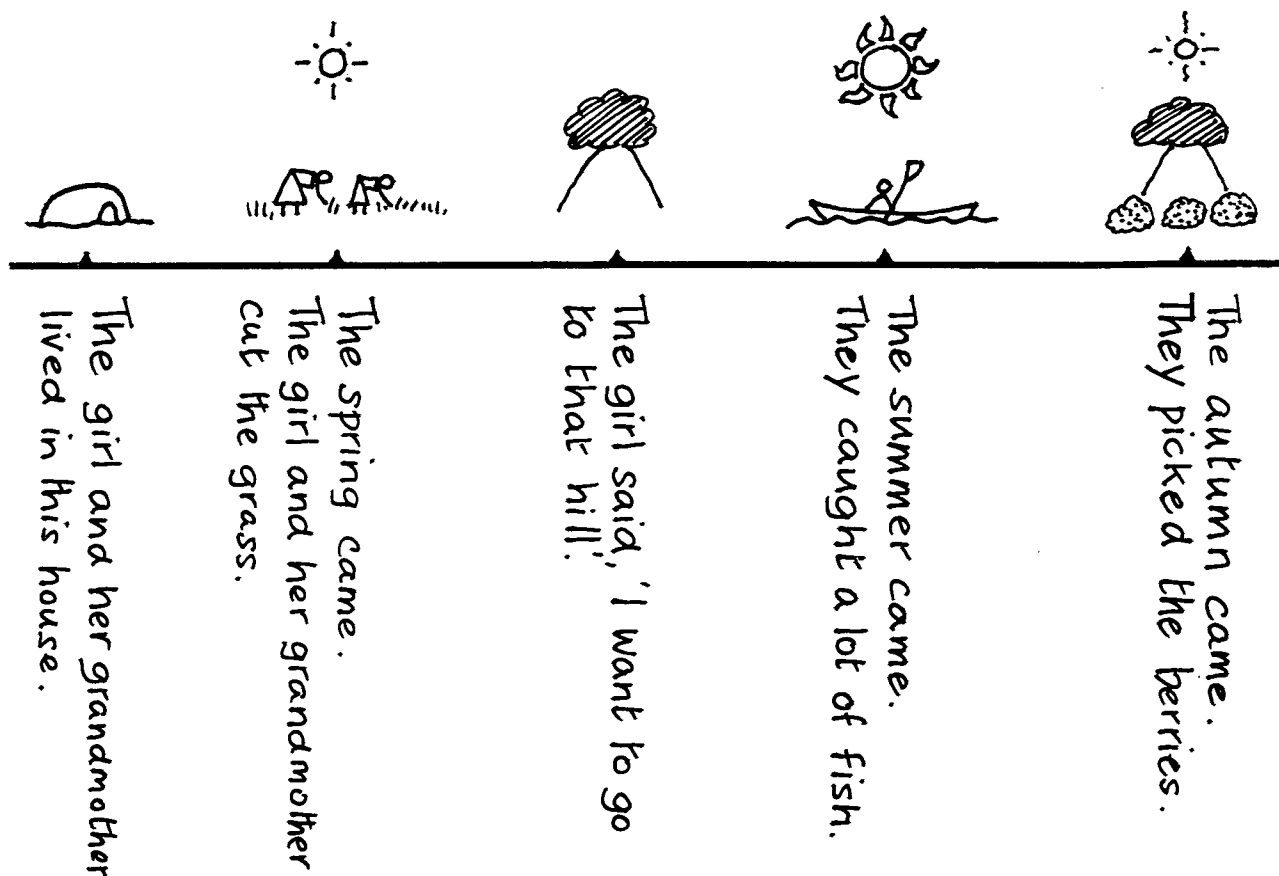
- 1 Show the children how to make a flowchart of the story they have been listening to.
- 2 In pairs or groups, the children make their own. Here is a story flowchart for 3.16, 'Elidor'.

**VARIATION**

Draw a timeline based on the plot of the story. On the timeline, mark the different events with a phrase or descriptive sentence for each event.

COMMENTS

Flowcharts help the children to become conscious of the way a story is structured. They also help the children to retell the story.



2.51 Chapter titles

IN CLASS

- 1 Divide the story into sections (chapters) with the children—this is possible even with very short stories.
- 2 The children work in groups and give each section a title.
- 3 The children decide which is the best title for each section.

VARIATION

You might give the children a list of possible titles and ask them to put them into their preferred order.

2.52 Drawing a map

IN CLASS

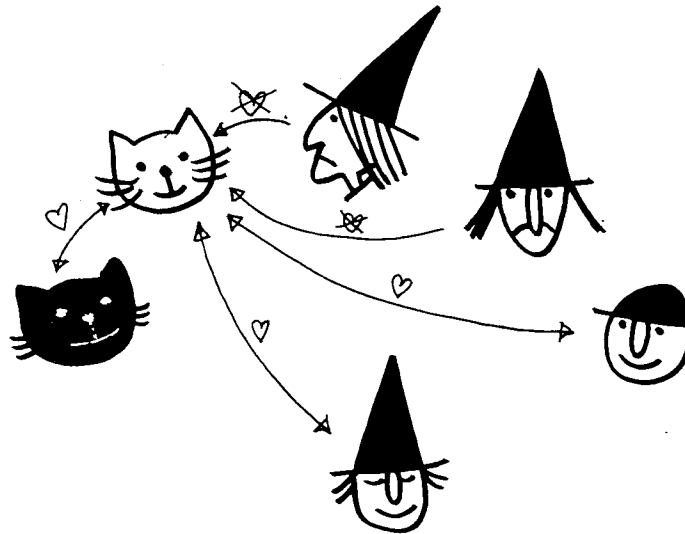
The children draw a map of the story and mark a route, numbering the key points.

COMMENTS

Stories appropriate for this include 3.6, 'The lion', and 3.16, 'Elidor'. The activity is described in more detail on page 119, using 'Elidor' as an example.

2.53 Likes and dislikes diagram

The children draw a diagram to show which characters in the story like or don't like each other, or who knows or does not know whom.



2.54 Words for characters

- 1 Give examples of words or short phrases which, in your opinion, describe one of the characters in the story. For example, in 3.12, 'Strange animal':

Auntie: not kind, not generous, unhappy

Father and mother: kind, generous, brave, good

Strange animal: bad, nasty, evil, unhappy

- 2 You might begin by brainstorming all the words and phrases that the children can say about people: *good, bad, happy, unhappy, nice, nasty, evil, generous, kind, intelligent, brave*, and so on.
- 3 Ask the children to say which word or words fit each character most appropriately. Be open to the children interpreting the characters quite differently from you—there cannot be a right or a wrong answer! Also encourage the idea that we can be many things at the same time. Furthermore, people change: *At the beginning Auntie is not kind, but at the end of the story she is kind.*

2.55 Every story has a problem

IN CLASS

Through questions, help the children to establish the problems of each of the protagonists. Emphasize that problems make stories interesting. Here is an example from 3.8, 'Ma Liang':

You: *What does Ma Liang want to do?*

Child: *She wants to make things and she wants to give them to people.*

You: *What's her main problem?*

Child: *The king wants a tree full of golden coins. She doesn't want to make things for him.*

You: *What does she do?*

Child: *She says, 'No, I won't make anything for you.'*

You: *What does the king do?*

Child: *He puts her in prison.*

COMMENTS

Every story has a problem, or often many problems. One of the most valuable aspects of stories for children is that they can experience how problems can be overcome through determination, hard work, and bravery, and with help from others.

2.56 Exploring personalities

Go through the story with the children and ask whether the people's actions are good or bad, or indeed neither good nor bad. Here are some useful adjectives: *good/bad, kind/cruel, brave/not brave, generous/mean.*

2.57 Inference

IN CLASS

Ask questions which help the children to reflect on why characters acted as they did.

You: *Why did Ma Liang say, 'No!' to the king?*

Child: *Because she wanted to give things to poor people and the king was rich.*

COMMENTS

Children learn from an early age to infer meaning beyond what is actually said. Stories can help develop this ability.

Purpose Helping children to reflect, imagine, and create

2.58 Three key moments

IN CLASS

- 1 The children choose and write down three sentences describing three key moments from the story.
- 2 They compare these with their neighbour's choice, and then with another pair's.

VARIATION 1

First collect from the class a whole range of favourite moments and write them on the board. Read them out and ask the children to select the ones which are true for them.

VARIATION 2

Younger children can draw key moments.

COMMENTS

There can be no right or wrong choice of key moments in this activity.

2.59 Children's experience

- 1 Ask the children to think about what happens in the story. Has anything similar happened to them?
- 2 The children talk about their experiences, in their mother tongue if they are beginners, or with English words and short phrases.

You: (after telling 'Elidor'): *Elidor took the prince's golden ball. That was wrong. When I was a little girl I took my friend's pen. I liked it. But I was wrong. I gave it back to her. But she didn't trust me again. Have you ever done anything wrong?*

2.60 Drawing pictures

IN CLASS

- 1 The children make a picture strip. Each child or pair of children is responsible for one picture.
- 2 Display all the pictures on the wall. The children can write captions if you think it is appropriate.

VARIATION

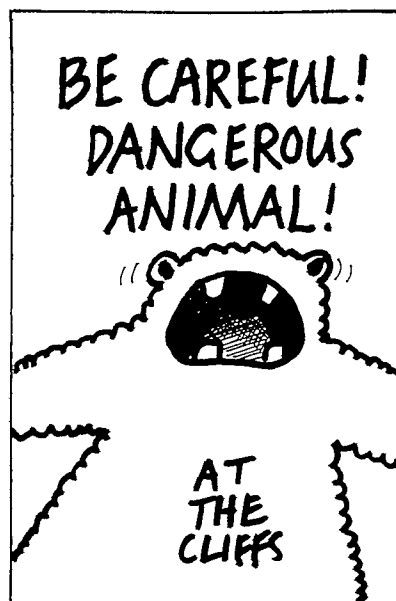
Instead of a strip you can draw a huge chequer-board pattern on a sheet of paper or cloth with thick pens, and then ask the children to take it in turns to fill in each square with a picture from the story.

COMMENTS

Picture strips are excellent for supporting retelling.

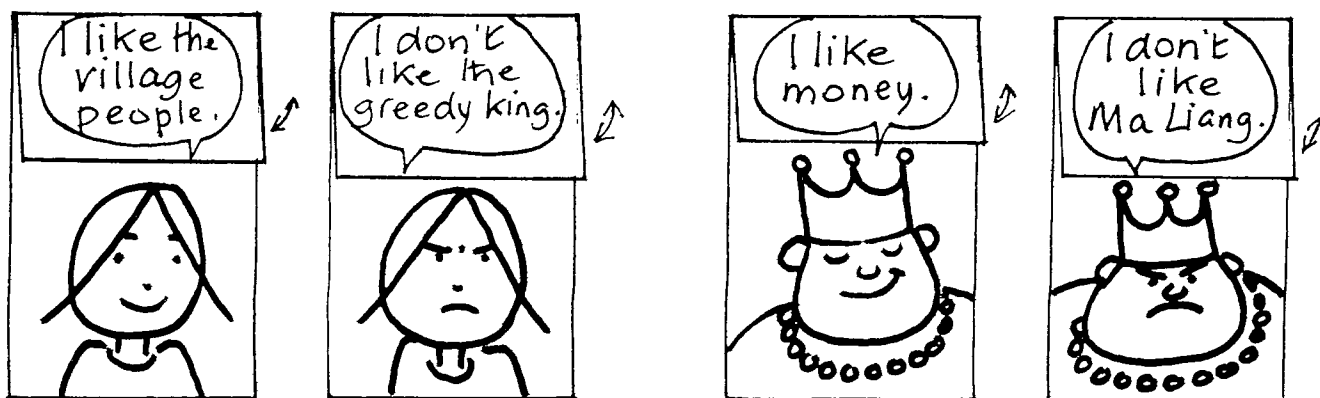
2.61 Designing a poster

Help the children to design a poster with a particular purpose; for example, for 3.12, 'Strange animal', warning people about the danger of the strange creature, and for 3.11, 'The little white cat', advertising a job as a witch's cat.



2.62 Draw and describe a character

- 1 The children choose a character from the story and draw a picture of what they think their character looks like.
- 2 They write on one side of the paper what he or she likes and on the other side what he or she doesn't like. The writing can be done on a fold of paper which can then be turned over so that both texts can be seen next to the picture.



Turn the card
over and then
turn the flap
over.

2.63 Expressing feelings

Invite the children to express their feelings about a character or a situation in a story. They can express their feelings through any of the arts:

- painting: choose colour, lines, textures, different sizes, shapes
- music: choose a sound, a rhythm, a pitch, a stress pattern
- dance/mime: choose a movement or sequence of movements
- poetry: choose words and put them together to create rhythms, etc.

For more details and suggestions see Chapter 4.

2.64 Making the ordinary special

Help the children to add atmosphere or detail to the characters of protagonists, places, and objects in the story, such as physical appearance, feelings, ideas, etc. They can use 'word stars' or mind maps to link ideas.

In the examples below I show how children, with a limited vocabulary, can begin to create a particular rather than a general

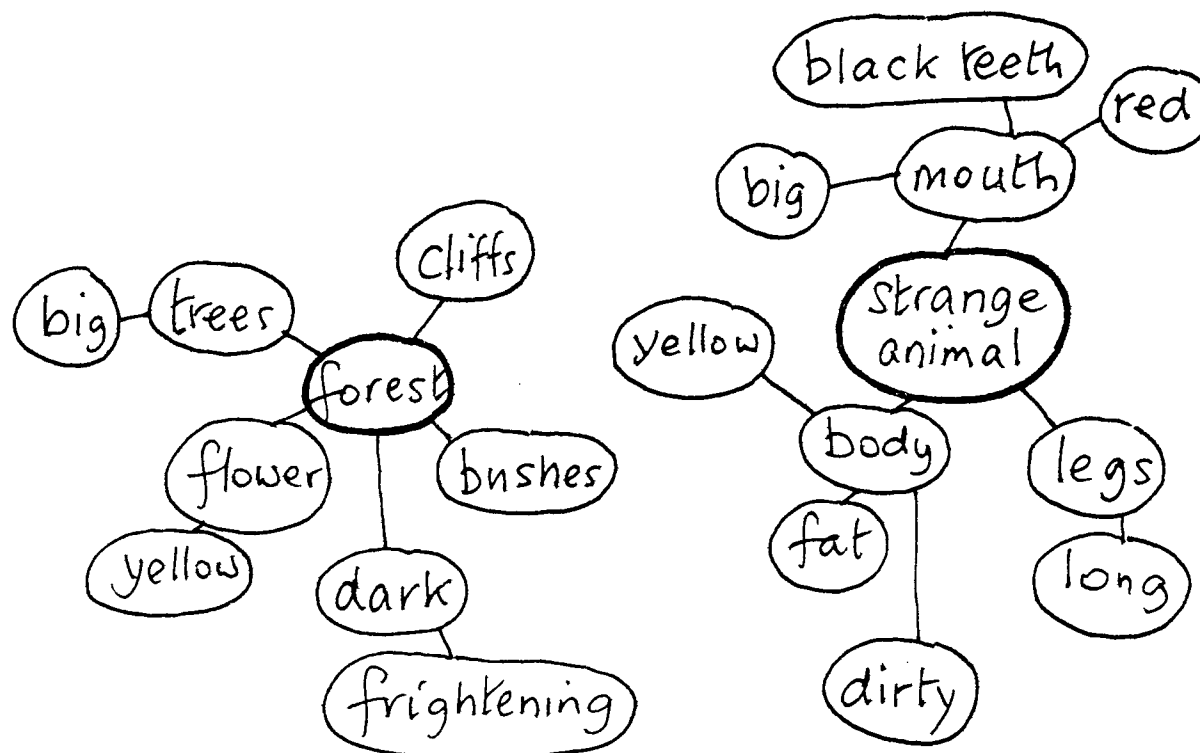
image. I have included metaphorical use of adjectives, for example, *a noisy flower*:

forest: *flower, trees, animals, light, dark, big, small, cold, warm*

trees: *big, thick, tall, frightening, dangerous*

flowers: *pink, dark blue, small, quiet, noisy*

animal: *long legs, fat body, black teeth, frightening shout*



2.65 Retelling with changes

IN CLASS

The children can retell the story but make changes to it, for example:

- geographical (put the story into a different setting)
- historical (put the story into a different historical period)
- roles (change the roles of the protagonists, so that the strange creature can be innocent and the humans its persecutors; protagonists can be male or female; the children can put themselves into the story)
- plot (retell the story but change some key events)
- medium (each medium requires the story to be retold in a different way: masks, drama, shadow theatre, audio recording, etc.).

VARIATION

The children retell the story but give the opposites of each noun, adjective, etc. For example, *It is not a little white cat but a big black dog*. If they cannot think of an opposite then they should change the word to something very different.

2.66 Retelling with geometrical shapes

PREPARATION

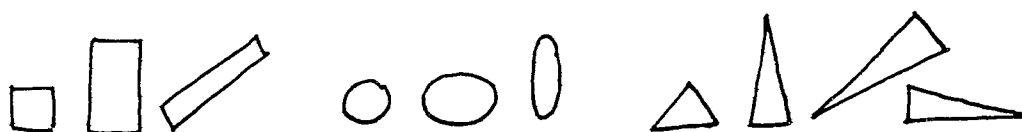
Prepare a set of geometrical shapes: circles, squares, triangles, etc. You can cut them out of card but you can also buy them from educational suppliers, or children can prepare them as cross-curricular work.

IN CLASS

- 1 Divide the class into groups of about five. Give each group a set of shapes.
- 2 Tell the children they must work out how to tell the story and illustrate it with the shapes.
- 3 Groups tell their stories for each other.

VARIATION

Use coloured wooden bricks of different sizes and shapes in a similar way.



COMMENTS

Children soon become imaginative with these geometric shapes.

2.67 Exploring emotions

- 1 Give six examples of emotions: *happy, sad, angry, surprised, frightened, greedy*.
- 2 Go through the story and ask the children how different people felt at different moments in the story.

You: *How did the auntie feel when she ran away from the strange animal?*

Child: *She was scared (frightened).*

You: *How did the auntie feel at the end of the story?*

Child: *She was happy. She liked Sipo.*

2.68 Writing letters

Ask the children to write letters from one character to another. This can be part of a wider topic on learning how to write letters.

2.69 Writing a journal

The children write a journal of a typical day in the life of one of the characters, for example, the little white cat when she is living with the third witch.

2.70 Continuing the story

The children invent a continuation of the story, in writing or orally. For example, 3.12, 'Strange animal', might be continued like this:

Sipo went to the cliffs every day. There was a lot of fruit. Nobody went to the cliffs. They were frightened of the strange animal. Sipo played his drum. His music was great. The strange animal liked Sipo. One day Sipo gave the strange animal a drum. The strange animal played new rhythms. Sipo learnt the new rhythms and became a famous drummer.

2.71 Making a story from within the story

The children invent a story or a poem (it doesn't have to rhyme!) which arises out of one of the incidents in the story and explains it. For example, a poem about Elidor as he hides by the river bank:

*Where's Elidor?
Where's Elidor?
Elidor's by the river.
He's hiding.
Where's Elidor?
Where's Elidor?
Elidor's angry and sad.
He's thinking.
Where's Elidor?
Where's Elidor?
All the teachers said
He's bad.
He's bad.*