

# 3

## Resources and activities for reading

### Activities

#### Making a reading game

##### Aim

To reflect on the reading process.

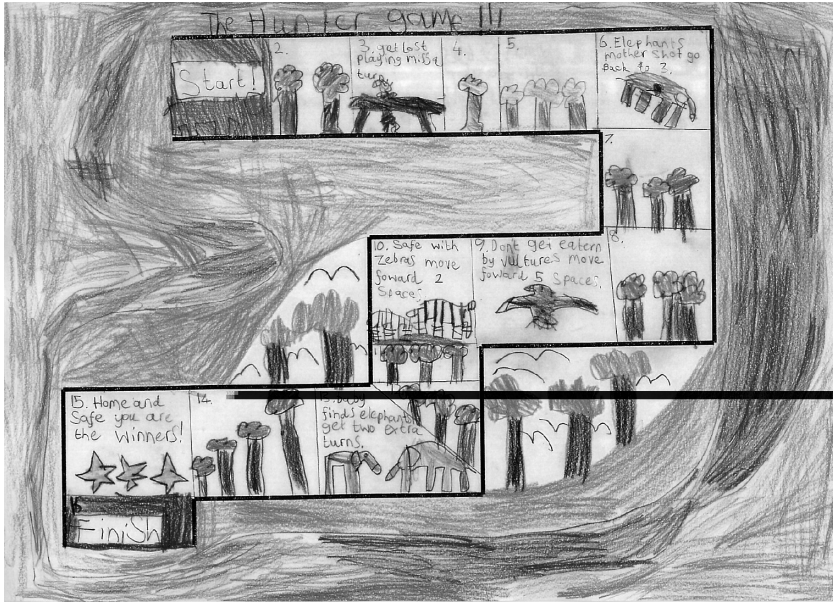
To find out about books for children.

To consider how to teach word recognition and comprehension.

##### What to do

In small groups students can be asked to look at Bromley, H. (2000) *Reading Games*. London: CLPE. In this book Helen Bromley describes a number of different reading games that are based on well-loved picture books. The students can then select a picture book of their choice and design a game that they could use in school.

They can consider how children can make similar games and what children learn both from making and playing book-based games. An example of a book-based game made by children is shown in Figure 3.1.



**Figure 3.1** Reading game

### Evaluating children’s books

**Aim**

To become familiar with children’s literature.  
 To consider what makes a quality book for children.

**What to do**

Select four picture books written for children and four books from a reading scheme. Evaluate the books using the criteria in the following table.

Title of book	My Family	Bear Hunt	Dear Zoo
Does the front cover stimulate interest?			
Is the subject matter interesting?			
Does the story relate to children’s interests?			
Does the story broaden children’s view of life?			
What is the author’s message?			

Is the language clear?			
Is there repeated or rhyming language?			
Are the illustrations stimulating and do they help the reader?			
Are there any other features to help the reader?			
Any comments about layout and organisation of the text?			

The thoughts of two students after undertaking this activity are given below:

Through the course of evaluating the books it became apparent that although a lot of effort had been put into the covers of the reading scheme books – they were generally bright and aroused interest – the stories were of limited depth and interest. They had very few words which constrained the narrative. They did have straightforward themes, clear language and included multicultural images.

The picture books all had interesting subject matter and were an enjoyable read even to an adult! There was more use of rhythm and rhyming language in the story books which would support beginning readers.

In one school I was in there were plenty of real books but they were never offered as reading books to take home. The reading scheme was followed without giving the children any choice. It is hard, after carrying out this task, to agree with this practice.

To help them with this task students might like to look at:

Solity, J. (2002) 'Reading schemes versus "real books" revisited', *Literacy Today*, 31. Available at: <http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/Pubs/solity.html>

Solity compared the language used in two reading schemes with that which occurred in a random selection of picture books. He found that the frequency of the 100 most commonly occurring words in written English was remarkably similar and accounted for approximately 50 per cent of all the words in both text types and that high frequency words occurred as often in real books as they did in the carefully structured reading schemes. Further analysis showed that the phonic structure of children's literature is remarkably similar to that of reading schemes. He concluded that there was no advantage to using reading schemes rather than picture books as both offer the same opportunities for children to acquire phonic skills and a sight vocabulary but that picture books provide the added bonus of a greater variety of structure and style.

## Working with traditional stories

### Aim

To explore different versions of stories.

### What to do

For this activity the students should read, watch or listen to several versions of a story and then complete a comparison chart. If they want to work with the example of 'Puss in Boots' in Chapter 3 they might also like to look at the Sur La Lune website <http://www.surlalunefairytales.com/pussboots/> which has the original traditional story by Perrault online. The site also gives links to other versions of the story including DVDs.

The students might like to try this activity in school. They could modify the on-line version of the story and use it on the IWB during shared reading.

The students should consider what children learn about books and which reading skills are being developed when children compare stories. They can link this to the literacy objectives in the DfES (2006) *Primary Framework for Literacy and Mathematics*. London: DfES.

## Creating a book blog

### Aim

To widen students' knowledge of books written for children.

To provide a forum for discussions about reading.

### What to do

Tutors and students can start a book blog on the university's virtual learning environment. Once this has been started tutors and students can add comments, pose questions or start another thread. This is a great way for students to share their reading and suggest books and authors for different age ranges. They also share their ideas about reading.

Below are some extracts from the book blog for primary students at the University of East Anglia, started by Jeni Smith.

**Picture books for children as listeners rather than readers?** - *edithistorydelete*  
Created on Monday, 10/01/2007 9:35 PM by John

My daughter hasn't learnt to read yet. I read lots of picture books to her. Some of them use quite advanced language in terms of reading age. I am wondering if these books are appropriate for her to return to once she is able to read them or will she want something different? Are some picture books intended for children as listeners rather than readers?

▼ *Comments (3)*

Definitely! Although sometimes I feel that a book is really good for a particular age group and then realise that that age group might not be able to read it. I then wonder if I have incredibly or inappropriately high expectation of children's reading abilities.

Monday, 10/01/2007 9:46 PM by Tim

*Delete*

I think it is really important for children to listen to stories. It helps them to appreciate the language and become familiar with how stories work. Obviously it is important that age is considered when they begin to read but I have read some fantastic books since beginning this course and feel that children can learn just as much from listening and sharing the pictures. After all reading is only part of it, what about the speaking and listening element? If there are books that you enjoy together the chances are your daughter will pick them up again once she can read as she will remember the enjoyment you shared together.

Monday, 10/01/2007 10:26 PM by Emily

*Delete*

I really agree. The more children hear books read, the more they get an idea of the sounds of the words on the page – expression, pronunciation, rhythms, emotion, style and on and on. Keep reading when the children in your class are in Years 5 and 6. It is a way of making sure some children do hear stories and it invites children to read different authors and subjects.

Tuesday, 10/02/2007 10:43 AM by Carol

*Delete*

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**Add Comment**

**I Believe in Unicorns - *edithistorydelete***

Created on Friday, 10/05/2007 11:10 PM by Mandy

Most people I have spoken to this year have read some Michael Morpurgo but not many mention this book and it is one of my favourites. *I Believe in Unicorns* is a very moving tale about a boy whose life is touched by both the atrocities of war and the magic of story. The illustrations are simply beautiful and I highly recommend it.

▼ *Comments (2)*

I have only managed to read a couple of Michael Morpurgo's books. I would strongly recommend *War Horse* which I found very moving and an excellent way of introducing younger readers to World War without it being too overpowering and factual.

Wednesday, 10/10/2007 8:28 PM by Paul

*Delete*

Just read 'I Believe in Unicorns' too. A magical and touching book with lovely illustrations. Very imaginative. Wide ranging themes: Noah's Ark, intolerance,

war and joy of reading. Also I read 'The Sleeping Sword', a story about a boy living on the Scilly Isles who loses his sight. This author seems very good at covering some quite difficult themes.

Friday, 10/19/2007 9:00 PM by Abbie

*Delete*

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### **Baggy Brown** - *edithistorydelete*

Created on Friday, 10/05/2007 3:36 PM by Tim

Have just read 'Baggy Brown' by Mick Inkpen. It's brand new and I would recommend it for children up to about six. Year 2s could read it for themselves. I love his simple but bold illustrations and it is just a nice story about a teddy bear, which is always popular.

For the same age range I'd also suggest the Preston Pig series by Colin McNaughton. I have seen Year 2 children enjoy them and laugh. The humour can sometimes go above some of their heads, so there's something for the grown ups too!



#### *Comments (4)*

There are so many stories about bears. I wonder how many titles can we think of collectively? Have you seen The Bear by Raymond Briggs? Or the Teddy Robber?

Wednesday, 10/10/2007 11:04 AM by Gill

*Delete*

There's also the Old Bear series by Jane Hissey (?) Paddington Bear books (though now he is endorsing Marmite, are we still as keen?!!) Winnie-the-Pooh of course, a classic which I still love. I still have the books I was bought about 25 years ago!!

Wednesday, 10/10/2007 8:26 PM by Tim

*Delete*

What about Jez Alborough – Where's My Teddy? etc? Young children love these books and will read them again and again. They have humour, suspense, excitement ... .

Friday, 10/12/2007 4:20 PM by Sarah

*Delete*

Martin Waddell's Little Bear books are lovely – gentle, warm. Or are we just thinking about teddy bears?

Monday, 10/15/2007 11.59 AM by Mark

## Sequencing

### Aim

To understand how sequencing activities can help children to read.  
To understand how sequencing activities can help children to learn about poetry.

The students should read the following lines which are taken from *Snake* by D. H. Lawrence. They should then try to arrange them into their original order.

*Snake* by D. H. Lawrence

On the day of Sicilian July, with Etna smoking.

He lifted his head from his drinking, as cattle do,

Someone was before me at my water-trough,

And looked at me vaguely, as drinking cattle do,

And I, like a second comer, waiting.

For in Sicily the black, black snakes are innocent, the gold are venomous.

And stooped and drank a little more,

Being earth-brown, earth-golden from the burning bowels of the earth

He must be killed,

And flickered his two-forked tongue from his lips, and mused a moment,

The voice of my education said to me

They should then think about how they pieced the text together. They might suggest:

Trying to match rhyming words at the end of each line

Grouping lines together that contain the same words

Thinking about meaning and trying to make sure that the poem makes sense

Trying to find a logical sequence to make the poem describe the snake

Identifying lines which suggest an opening and an ending

Looking for patterns in how the language is used

What have they learned about poetry from this exercise?

What do they think about this poem?

What have they learned about reading?

The correct order of the lines is given below.

*Snake* by D. H. Lawrence

Someone was before me at my water-trough,

And I, like a second comer, waiting.

He lifted his head from his drinking, as cattle do,

And looked at me vaguely, as drinking cattle do,

And flickered his two-forked tongue from his lips, and mused a moment,

And stooped and drank a little more,

Being earth-brown, earth-golden from the burning bowels of the earth

On the day of Sicilian July, with Etna smoking.

The voice of my education said to me

He must be killed,

For in Sicily the black, black snakes are innocent, the gold are venomous.

D. H. Lawrence (1994) *The Complete Poems* (Penguin Twentieth Century Classics). London: Penguin Books.



## Websites

### Sources of information about children's books

Achuka: <http://www.achuka.co.uk>

This website is dedicated to children's books in the UK. It contains interviews with authors, reviews of children's books and news about writers and books.

Book Trust: <http://www.booktrust.org.uk>

Book Trust is an independent national charity that encourages people of all ages and cultures to discover and enjoy reading. It provides online information about children's books and contains a searchable database of more than 2,500 children's books categorised by reading age and interest level. It also contains a regularly updated section of resources for teachers, an illustrators' gallery featuring the best artists currently working in children's books and interviews with authors and other children's book specialists. Book Trust provides a free resource pack to help schools run a successful Book Week.

Mem Fox: <http://www.memfox.com/welcome.html>

Mem Fox is a writer and ex-university lecturer. On her website there is some excellent advice about children's books and reading aloud to children.

The School Library Association: <http://www.sla.org.uk>

The SLA is committed to supporting everyone involved with school libraries, promoting high-quality reading and learning opportunities for all.

Seven Stories: <http://www.sevenstories.org.uk>

This is the website for the Centre for Children's Books in Newcastle, the UK. Seven Stories is the only exhibition space in the UK dedicated to the celebration of British children's literature. It is actively collecting original archive material by British writers and illustrators. The collection includes work by leading authors and illustrators, such as Philip Pullman and Shirley Hughes.

Write Away: <http://www.writeaway.org.uk>

This is a website about children's books. It contains book reviews, interviews with authors, resources for teachers and news about books and book-related events.

### Sources of information about poetry

The Poetry Library: <http://www.poetrylibrary.org.uk>

This website gives you access to the most comprehensive collection of poetry. The website has wide-ranging education and children's sections with many links to other poetry and literature websites

The Poetry Society: <http://www.poetrysociety.org.uk>

Education work is an important part of the Poetry Society's remit. They place poets in schools, provide teacher training and develop resources for pupils and teachers.

Poetry Book Society: <http://www.poetrybooks.co.uk>

The Poetry Book Society is the largest dedicated poetry bookseller in the UK. It runs the Children's Poetry Bookshelf, a poetry book club for young readers. This contains activities for children and a forum for publishing children's poems. There is also a Children's Poetry Book reading list which contains recommendations of poetry books and teaching resources for teachers.

## Selected author web sites

Jeannie Baker: <http://www.jeanniebaker.com>

Quentin Blake: <http://www.quentinblake.com>

Raymond Briggs: <http://www.thesnowman.co.uk>

Eric Carle: <http://www.eric-carle.com/home.html>

Lauren Child: <http://www.milkmonitor.com> [www.charlieandlola.com](http://www.charlieandlola.com)

Babette Cole: <http://www.babette-cole.com>

Julia Donaldson: <http://www.juliadonaldson.co.uk>

Joyce Dunbar: <http://www.joycedunbar.com>

Eric Hill: <http://www.funwithspot.com>

Mary Hoffman: <http://www.maryhoffman.co.uk>

Paul Jennings: <http://www.pauljennings.com.au>

Roger McGough: <http://www.rogermcgough.org.uk>

Korky Paul: <http://www.korkypaul.com>

Jan Pienkowski: <http://www.janpienkowski.com>

Shoo Rayner: <http://www.shoo-rayner.co.uk>

Michael Rosen: <http://www.michaelrosen.co.uk>

John Scieszka: <http://www.jsworldwide.com>

Jeremy Strong: <http://www.jeremystrong.co.uk>

Benjamin Zephaniah: <http://www.benjaminzephaniah.com>

Children's Laureate: <http://www.childrenslaureate.org.uk>

## Links to further reading

Literacy Trust (2005) 'Children's and young people's reading habits and preferences: The who, what, why, where and when'. Available: [http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/research/Reading\\_Connects\\_survey.pdf](http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/research/Reading_Connects_survey.pdf)

This report, published in December 2005, explores why some pupils choose to read for pleasure and others do not.

Gambrell, L. B., Morrow, L. M. and Pennington, C. (2002) 'Early childhood and elementary literature-based instruction: current perspectives and special issues', *Reading Online*, 5 (6). Available from: [http://www.readingonline.org/articles/art\\_index.asp?HREF=handbook/gambrell/index.html](http://www.readingonline.org/articles/art_index.asp?HREF=handbook/gambrell/index.html)

In this article the authors examine the case for using picture books rather than reading schemes to teach reading.

Poetry Pathways – see [http://www.literatureinlearning.org.uk/projects/projects\\_doc/poetrypathwayscpd.pdf](http://www.literatureinlearning.org.uk/projects/projects_doc/poetrypathwayscpd.pdf)

This is a poetry workshop for teachers in primary schools produced by West Lothian Council Arts and Cultural Services in association with the Scottish Poetry Library. It contains many practical ideas for poetry activities in school.