



## Using Stories With Young Learners 1 By Annie Hughes

### Why use stories in the EYL classroom?

- Stories can give excellent contextualisation for new or recycled language
- There are lots of opportunities for repetition in stories
- Stories are known to our students
- Stories offer opportunities for vocabulary building
- 'Real' stories can be used with real readers
- Stories can be used with different age and ability groups
- Good stories are highly motivating for learners (and teachers!)
- New and recycled language is supported
- Good stories are highly adaptable and can usually be linked to any syllabus
- Stories can sometimes link with children's own knowledge of life /other stories
- Stories are excellent for theme-based and activity based work
- Stories offer great opportunities for cultural input
- Stories can be presented in many ways
- Stories can be used to develop other subjects across the curriculum
- Stories can be used as a model for children's own writing
- Stories can meaningfully offer opportunities for repetition and use of language in activities
- Stories can help teachers develop all 4 language skills plus cognitive and developmental skills in their pupils

### How can we introduce stories in class?

- Teachers can present the story – read out loud, on a video/ audiotape, in pictures only etc.
- Teachers can read the book and show the pictures to the children.
- Children 'read' (look at) the book to themselves, then listen to the teacher reading it out loud.
- Children 'read' (look at) the book while they listen to a recording of it.

- Children put the pictures in order and then teacher/tape/other child reads it out loud.
- Buddy reading – when two children sit together and one (older/more able) reads out the story, as they both look at the pages.
- Split reading – when each child takes a page each usually LH/RH.

*Remember we can use stories in the EYL class at anytime in the lesson, term or year! And we can use any type of story as long as they are relevant, interesting and of the right cognitive and linguistic levels for our learners!*

### **Linking activities to carry out before, during or after reading a story**

- Try and guess what the story is about from the cover of the book/ pictures you have
- Teach the children some key words and then ask them to guess what a story using all these words might be about
- Children join in with repetitive parts of story
- Ask the children to change the end or middle of story
- Children order the pictures of a story as they listen
- Mime/role-play the story after the children know it
- Make puppets and then have a puppet show of the story
- Draw and colour/paint the characters or scenes
- Draw and colour/paint the objects in the story
- Use the story as a model for children's own writing
- Sing a song, or introduce a rhyme or poem that has links with the story
- Carry-out surveys and questionnaires that are linked to the story
- Play a game that has links with the story
- Use the story to develop subjects across the curriculum e.g. maths, science, history, geography, environmental studies, music, art and craft

### **Extend different aspects of the story**

e.g. *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*:

- Days of the week - children keep a diary of the food they eat

- Healthy v unhealthy food
  - exhibition of pictures
  - realia to taste
  - likes and dislikes survey
  - balanced diets
  - keep a food diary
  - design a healthy menu
  - cooking
  
- Changes and growth
  - grow some plants from seed (e.g. cress)
  - look at the life cycle of frogs
  - look at how children become adults
  
- Illnesses wrong with
  - talk about parts of the body and what can go them
  - going to the doctor
  
- Colours painting
  - in fruit and all foods and create a food collage or

### Evaluating books for the EFL classroom – ask yourself these questions

- Is the language level suitable for your learners?
- Is the cognitive level suitable for your learners?
- Is the content suitable for your learners?
- Is the story interesting and relevant?
- Is the book attractive?
- Is the story entertaining?
- Is there any opportunity for prediction in the story?
- Is the book too small to use with the whole class/or group?
- Do the illustrations support the language?
- Does the story offer opportunities for different follow-up activities?
- Does the story offer opportunities for activities across the curriculum?
- Does the story recycle language?
- Does the story introduce new language? If so how much?
- Do **you** like it?

### Helping yourself to use stories – some tips

- Get to know the material very well
- Use the stages of the story to help you memorise it
- Check the language in the story
- Give yourself cues for memorising the story
- Use eye to eye contact with the class as you tell the story
- Use the whole of your body to express the story as you read it
- Use realia, gestures and pictures whenever you can to support understanding
- Don't expect the children to read stories aloud until they know them very well and are confident enough to do this
- Point to the text as you read and encourage students to do this too
- Check that there is a clear sequence in the story with about 6 -10 key events which can be recalled
- Use drawings / photographs from books, newspapers etc to support the story
- Vary your pace / intonation / voice / and 'over support' the language with your gestures and movements
- Allow the children to join in recycled phrases or add sound effects
- Reflect on the story through discussion, interviews with each other
- Alternative parts for the story e.g. different ending/beginning/middle

### Activities that can be linked with stories in the classroom:

- Telling the story
- Listening to lots of different types of stories
- Playing games linked to the story
- Talking about children's likes and dislikes raised in the story
- Describing what they have been doing and linking it with the story
- Sharing / swapping comics, toys, jokes etc
- Speaking to each other on the telephone about the story
- Telling jokes/riddles about the story topic
- Listening to music/songs linked to the story
- Singing & writing songs linked to the story
- Collecting interesting information on the topic
- Asking questions about the topic
- Writing notes about the topic
- Playing word games / board games / card games / commercial games linked to the story
- Designing things – tee-shirts designs / posters / adverts around the story
- Acting and role-play

## References and Bibliography

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- Ellis, G. Brewster, J. (1991) ***The Storytelling Handbook for Primary Teachers***. Penguin Longman
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- Mourao, S (2003) ***Realbooks in the Primary Classroom*** London : Mary Glasgow  
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**Some story books you may like to buy in UK for use in the classroom:**

Ahlberg, J & A	1980	<i>Mrs Wobble the Waitress</i>	Puffin Books
Ahlberg, J & A	1980	<i>Miss Brick the Builders' Baby</i>	Puffin Books
Ahlberg, J & A	1980	<i>Mrs Plug the Plumber</i>	Puffin Books
Ahlberg, A	1980	<i>Please Mrs Butler</i>	Puffin Books
Ahlberg, J & A	1981	<i>Peepo</i>	Puffin Books
Burningham, J	1970	<i>Mr Gumpy's Outing</i>	Puffin Books
Campbell, R	1982	<i>Dear Zoo</i>	Puffin Books
Cole, B	1985	<i>The Trouble with Dad</i>	Picture Lions
Carle, B	1970	<i>The Very Hungry Caterpillar</i>	Puffin Books
Carle, B	1977	<i>The Bad-Tempered Ladybird</i>	Puffin Books
Garland, S	1984	<i>Having a Picnic</i>	Puffin Books
Garland, S	1982	<i>Going Shopping</i>	Puffin Books
Gordon, M	1984	<i>The Supermarket Mice</i>	Puffin Books
Hood, T	1993	<i>Ghost Stories</i>	Penguin English
Hill, E	1984	<i>Spot goes to School</i>	Puffin Books
Hill, E	1985	<i>Spot goes on Holiday</i>	Puffin Books
Hughes, S	1978	<i>Moving Molly</i>	Picture Lions
Hughes, S	1981	<i>Lucy &amp; Tom's Christmas</i>	Puffin Books
Hutchins, P	1976	<i>Don't Forget the Bacon</i>	Puffin Books
Hutchins, P	1983	<i>You'll Soon Grow Into Them Titch</i>	Puffin Books
Hutchins, P	1968	<i>Rosie's Walk</i>	Puffin Books
Kent, J	1975	<i>There's no such thing as a Dragon</i>	Blackie
Kipling, R & others	1993	<i>Ghost Stories</i>	Penguin English
McKee, D Book	1980	<i>Not Now, Bernard</i>	Red Fox Picture
Nicoll & Plenkowski	1972	<i>Meg's Eggs</i>	Puffin Books
Nicoll & Plenkowski	1975	<i>Meg's Castle</i>	Puffin Books
Nicoll & Plenkowski	1982	<i>Mog at the Zoo</i>	Puffin Books
Ross, T	1984	<i>I'm Coming To Get You</i>	Puffin Books

