

ACTIVITIES FOR USING STORIES

We've found short activities an interesting and stimulating way into using stories to look at global issues. They can be fun and generate 'quality talk.' The following shares some tried and tested activities which both KS1 and 2 teachers have used with a wide variety of texts.

Titles

This draws on children's experiences to generate interest in a new text. It creates a 'baseline' for the theme or story – what do children already know or think they know? Choose a suitable title [eg *The Paperbag Prince*]. Ask children – what does the title mean to you? What do the words in the title mean to you? Ask them to talk about experiences they have had which the title brings to mind.

Speech bubbles and retelling

Speech bubbles can help children to identify with characters. They help children understand that people have different perceptions of the same events, and can provide an excellent way in to role play.

❑ Give the children a photocopy of a book illustration, with speech or thought bubbles superimposed. It works well with a couple of characters on the page. The children then write what the people are saying or thinking, and explain why. Why do two characters in the same situation view things differently?

❑ Ask children to imagine themselves in that situation, and draw themselves there with their own speech bubble [eg on a post it note]. What would they say and think? Might it be different from the characters in the story?

❑ You could retell the story from different characters' perspectives [*The true story of the three little pigs* by Jon Scieszka is a great way into this]. Parts of a story could also be retold in another genre: poem, conversation, postcard.

Window by Jeannie Baker
Draw the view from the window at the beginning of the book.



Write down some ways that the view changed

There were more people and more cars and more buildings. Trees were chopped down. The animals were...
What do you think will happen next at the end of the book?
There's going to be flats. Trees are going to be chopped down.

Prediction

Prediction activities draw on the child's existing knowledge and concepts, and apply these to new situations. They can be used to begin to imagine what the [real or fictional] future might be.

❑ For example, the teacher reads the story, keeping the pictures covered. She asks the children to draw their own illustrations. On completion, they compare these with the original pictures. What differs and why?

❑ Children could also be invited to predict what happens after the story's ending. This works well with stories which are sequential, such as *Window* by Jeannie Baker. They could draw, write, role-play or paint what happens to different characters after the ending, using the evidence in the story.

Reading pictures

These activities use images as a focus for discussion about issues raised in the text, and children's personal responses. They help pinpoint what children find most important in a text.

- ❑ When the children know a story well, ask them to draw their favourite, or least favourite part. The children can then explain their choice, and what they had decided to draw as a result. Ask children about experiences they have had which relate to the story [eg visits to zoos formed a common discussion point around *Oi! get off our train* by John Burningham].
- ❑ Photocopy a page from the text, place it on a large sheet of sugar paper, and invite children to extend the picture beyond its edge. They then talk about what they have drawn and why.
- ❑ Make a copy of a page and cut it in half, inviting children to complete the image. This works best when the image is not already known to the children. They then compare what they have drawn with the original.
- ❑ Ask a child to describe an image from the story to a child or children who are not familiar with it. These children then draw what is described. They then compare their drawing with the original to focus discussion. This activity helps children to use words precisely, and develop focused listening skills.

Story sacks

Making a collection of items mentioned in a story or related to it can help increase children's knowledge and vocabulary, as well as their understanding of a story. It makes connections between stories and real life. While some story sacks can be purchased commercially, we have always asked children to add their own items to the collections.

- ❑ Let children observe and handle these objects, raising questions about them.
- ❑ The objects could become props in retelling the story, or exhibits for display.

“I'd like to ask”

This is an excellent activity for developing questioning skills. A group of children decide on questions that they would like to ask one of the characters in the story. They put them to a child or a teacher, who takes a 'hot seat', playing the part of that character and answering the questions. We have found that the questions can often lead to a real interest in finding out answers from other sources.

“Putting yourself in the picture”

Children draw a picture of themselves on a 'post-it.' They then choose where they want to be in the story and stick their 'post-it' on the picture. How do they feel? What do they see? What can they smell and hear? Why?

These ideas are based on *A different story* and *Start with a story*, published by Tide~