

REALBOOK NEWS

for adults helping children
learn English as a foreign language
or additional language

May and November

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21 Titles - **10 GOOD BOOKS** for **BOYS**

From the Editor - Opal Dunn

Issue 11 opens the discussion on the differences between boys and girls as language learners and foreign language learners. This is an important subject as many boys are under achieving in communicating, as well as in reading and writing in both their home-language and foreign language. The Feature Article discusses gender differences and makes suggestions on how to select the type of REALBOOKS that match boys' interests and learning skills and strategies. The Book selection includes **10 GOOD BOOKS for BOYS** (see Front Cover). These include stories based on boys' robust-humour as well as non-fiction books, which help to satisfy boys' search for information about the world and how it works. It takes time to encourage boys to use non-fiction books and share what they have learned from them, but as they do, their self-esteem will develop as will their confidence in using English.

We often overlook that YL boys' school environment may be too feminine for them to feel comfortable. Are the boys in your schools surrounded by female teachers, who quite naturally create a feminine environment in their classrooms? Many boys find difficulty in functioning fully in such circumstances. In the world of REALpictureBOOKS for YLs, there is space for both boys and girls. A more masculine atmosphere is created by the male illustrator-authors like David Melling, Colin McNaughton, David McKee, Colin West. Their storybooks books often appeal more to boys than girls. Many may help boys to overcome their frustrations in learning English and to realise that they can do it and it can be fun! (See **Issue 9 Reading about Feelings**).

If boys are to feel-good about learning a foreign language they need access to the type of REALpictureBOOKS that satisfy and stimulate their interests and emotions. These should include not only the more masculine fiction books, but also illustrated factual non-fiction books. Some boys are bored, and even turned-off, by stories with sugary-sweet illustrations that they feel are for 'girly-girls'. As women we should not fall into the trap of making judgements as to what is right and interesting for boys without listening to their reactions and comments about REALpictureBOOKS and their related activities. We need to check regularly to see if our book selection is balanced and broad enough to cater for both genders?

The **IATEFL-APPI YLs Conference** last November in Lisbon was well attended. Plenary sessions introduced work with REALBOOKS and gave suggestions for starting research projects with children already using REALpictureBOOKS as part of their curriculum. **IATEFL-APPI** are to publish the Conference papers this Autumn. The book will provide an interesting insight into current teaching of YLs and should be a useful addition to Teacher Training Centre libraries. (Further details in **Issue 12**).

Published in 1991 **The Story Telling Handbook** written by Gail Ellis and Jean Brewster in collaboration with teachers experienced in using REALBOOKS in YLs' classrooms has made a considerable impact. Eleven years later **Tell it again! The New Story Telling Handbook** is to be published in June by Penguin Longman. A new format and a bigger book **Tell it again!** reflects these years of experience. **Tell it again!** is divided into 2 sections; the first provides a comprehensive methodology including exploring the theory and benefits of using REALpicture-storyBOOKS, the second is based on 12 stories, 10 of them published by Puffin. As well as including ready-made story plans and photocopyable activity sheets, a cassette features many of the stories and accompanying rhymes and songs. For more details see www.penguinenglish.com.

ISBN 0-7475-3966-9 £12.

Feature Article -Do BOYS need different learning opportunities?

In the late 1970s and 1980s UK education policy was based on the equality of the sexes. British teachers in YL classrooms were expected to see that they gave the same learning opportunities to both girls and boys. Textbooks were edited to reflect this policy showing boys in the kitchen and girls in the garden. Since the 1990's it has been acknowledged that in the UK boys are underachieving in reading and writing and seem to have more difficulty in communicating and learning language than girls. It is now accepted that there are fundamental differences between the sexes' learning skills and interests. These differences show-up from the very first months in the way babies develop (nature), but also in the way that adults mould them to fit the cultural stereotypes that individual societies expect of male and female behaviour (nurture). In most western societies boys are spoken to differently from girls from birth and are treated to more vigorous 'rough and tumble' play, especially by fathers.

Some Physical Differences which influence learning?

- The Brain

The role of the brain is complex and through research we are gradually getting closer to understanding the brain's role in both nature and nurture. Newberger* explains that although the adult male brain is 15% larger than the female, the actual size is not as important as the different methods of functioning of the male and female brains. The lobes of the female brain are connected by a greater number of nerves, which appears to create marked functional differences like, for example, the females' ability to cope with more than one task at a time. Some of these same nerves in boys' brains actually enrich the right lobe and develop life-long spatial relationships. This affects boys' ways of thinking; for example they find Maths and Science more enjoyable and easier than most girls. Their play tends to be different, too; they enjoy building in the playground and many later become architects designing buildings! Young boys are generally more restless than girls. They seem to need space in which to move around. They also enjoy large-scale games like football. Many boys around 6 and 7 years old find more difficulty in sitting still and concentrating on one activity than girls. As reading appears to use both sides of the brain simultaneously, it is therefore not surprising that girls have better literacy skills than boys. Research data in UK shows that many more young boys than girls have reading difficulties in their home-language (dyslexia) and stammer. This could be the case in speakers of other languages.

- Intelligence

Previously it was thought that IQ was innate, could not be altered and could be measured in one type of test. Any classroom teacher who does different activities with the same group of children knows that boys and girls show evidence of different types of intelligence and have preferred ways of learning. However many methods of assessing give little value to these different strategies and skills. Dr Howard Gardner's Theory* of Multiple Intelligence identifies 8 types of intelligence - Linguistic, Logical/Mathematical, Musical, Spatial, Bodily, Interpersonal and Intra-personal intelligence and naturalistic. This broader view of Intelligence may help teachers to assess young children and especially boys as they develop holistically at their own rate. It may also help to identify the very different interests and learning needs of boys.

- Developmental Differences

Development disparity is greater in the early years of development and it is generally accepted that most young girls reach the accepted 'developmental milestones' before boys. However where some boys may have difficulty in reading at the age of six and write slowly and laboriously, by the age of 8 most boys have caught up with expected levels. Toddler girls generally talk before boys so they have a 'Headstart' in using language and learning through dialogue. In fact girls seem to process language more easily than boys and their constant desire to chatter gives them more practice and opportunities to acquire different levels of language and vocabulary. This is especially so in the period just before they become fluent readers.

- Hearing

Newberger* points out that girls' senses of hearing, touch and smell are better developed and this advantage remains throughout life. Boys appear to have less sensitive hearing at all ages, which may

reflect on their ability to imitate and pick-up language and songs. Girls tend to be better listeners than boys and this could be linked with their hearing as well as their ability to concentrate for longer periods than boys. In Western Societies boys are frequently talked to differently from girls so some of the language they hear and use as a model on which they base their learning is different. This may result in boys using language differently and possibly not as fluently in some situations as girls.

- Voice

Boys tend to speak more loudly than most girls and many appear to have less control of their voice than girls. Young girls' voices tend to be softer and girls appear to find it easier to modulate their voice, which makes dramatic reading easier for them.

- Muscular control and eye coordination

Boys generally read later than girls and reach fluency later. Many boys have difficulty with handwriting and take longer to reach the same standard of co-ordination as girls. This could well be due to later and different types of muscular development.

- Concentration and Perseverance

Concentration spans seem to be shorter as young boys manifest a need to move. Young girls seem to have an ability to persevere and finish off an activity from an early age. They generally finish off a piece of work, like colouring, neatly and rarely give up even if they find something is a bit difficult.

- Frustration

Young boys find comparison by teachers of their school-skills with that of girls' difficult to accept. Many feel that girls are more successful at school subjects than they are which can lead to loss of self-esteem and confidence in using language. **(Issue 8 – Reading about Feelings)**

How can REALBOOKS help?

- Selection This should be balanced to include books to interest both genders. Books for boys should include:

-Boys' interests in transport, animals, football, space etc, -Boys' special robust and joke-type humorous stories -Shorter text stories supported by easy-to-read-speech bubbles, simple comic-style stories -Information books with facts, figures, maps,

- Illustrations to include humour and vigour, photographs and maps. **(Issue 6 Reading pictures).**

- Classroom Environment

The home, school and classroom environment, including language, tends to be feminine as carers and teachers are generally female in the early years. This feminine environment may be more difficult for some boys to relate to than we appreciate. It is important to try to balance the environment and include some special things for boys if they are to feel comfortable and thus enthusiastic to learn.

- Language to use with the books and related activities

It is important to include the type of vocabulary and phrases that stimulate boys' minds. To help learning, boys can benefit from more 'teacherese' language techniques and scaffolding of language in dialogues. Boys also need praise and encouragement for individual effort or achievement if they are to feel successful and thus motivated.

- Parent involvement

Parents need to appreciate the differences in the ways boys and girls learn language if they want to motivate their children. Parent participation in sharing REALpictureBOOKS can contribute to enjoying and learning English if attitudes are positive.

Differences in learning skills in a co-ed classroom exist between boys and girls. Where teachers are aware of these and manage to provide a balanced programme of activities for boys as well as girls, both should progress at their own speed developing self-esteem and enthusiasm for learning English.

Further Reading

Making gender work Judith Baxter Reading and Language Information Centre The University of Reading UK www.ralic.rdg.ac.uk

***The men they will become - the nature and nurture of male character** Eli H Newberger M.D Bloomsbury 99

Book Selection

10 BOOKS for BOYS (front cover)

Come for a Ride on the GHOST TRAIN

Level 1a

Author-Illustrator Colin and Jacqui Hawkins

Walker Books

Paperback

ISBN 0-7445-7794-2

£4.99

Boys, and brave girls, may want to *go for a ride on the Ghost Train*. This book brings a Theme Park adventure into the classroom or the home. A great book for reading aloud as children participate with screams and shrieks as each page is turned. To add to the thrill, a half page adds extra suspense to each spread's different experience.

Come for a ride on the Ghost Train. In the dark dark tunnel you willSCREAM!

Deep in the scary forest you will HHOWWL!

In the gruesome graveyard you will... WWAAIL!

In the dark dark crypt you will.....STOP DEAD!

In the creepy casket, in the dark dark crypt you will find.... GUESS WHAT?

Gruesome creatures and frightening skeletons accompany you on your way along the train track.

Cleverly you only see the train track, so every reader can relate directly to make his own scary, spooky ghost train! The language is brief and quickly absorbed including the unusual words. Some children like to make a list of the places passed on the ride and decorate it with the scary objects found in each place; others like to make an illustrated map of the gruesome train ride. A great book that will change your relationship with many of the boys in your class! Caution - not for very young learners!

Tusk Tusk

Author-Illustrator David McKee

Level 2

Red Fox

Paperback

ISBN 0-09-930650-6

£4.50

This ingeniously illustrated book carries, through its humour, a hidden message of tolerance, which can easily be appreciated by older children. First published in 1978, this story is about elephants.

Once, all the elephants in the world were black or white. They loved all creatures, ..., but they hated each other, and each kept to his own side of the jungle. One day the black elephants decided to kill all the white elephants, and the white elephants decided to kill the black. The detailed, colourful illustrations portray the elephants' hatred for each other. They all went to live in the darkest jungle. A battle began. It went on ...and on, and on, until all the elephants were dead. For years no elephants were seen in the world. Then, one day, they had grandchildren ...and what colour were they?

George Shrinks

Author-Illustrator William Joyce

Level 1a

Collins Children's Books

Hardback

ISBN 0-00-711894-5

£9.99

www.fireandwater.com

One day when his parents were out, George falls asleep and dreams that he is very small. He wakes up to find that it is true! He had in fact shrunk. His parents had left him a note telling him all the things he should do whilst they were away. *please make your bed, brush your teeth and take a bath. Then tidy up your room and fetch your little brother....Eat a good breakfast, and don't forget to wash the dishes, dear .Try to stay out of trouble and we'll be home soon.*

All jobs which are extremely difficult to do when you are very small and even smaller than your little brother and your cat! Just imagine what may happen when you try to wash the dishes! The simple text is made up of the list of instructions that have been left for George by his mother and father. One short phrase of text at the bottom of a detailed illustration per page makes this an easy to read storybook. The retro-style illustrations carry the humour and make you realise all the chaos that can result from being too tiny for your world! A fun book to which boys can relate as they, like George, must sometimes be asked to do some of the same chores. Imagine what George's parents find when

they come home! Most girls I know would manage things differently! What would you do if you were so small? A great book that sparks comments and quick sketches of life from a different perspective.

An island in the Sun	Auth: Stella Blackstone Illus: Nicoletta Ceccoli	Level 1b
Barefoot Books	Hardback	ISBN 1-84148-192-0
www.barefootbooks.com		£9.99

This beautifully illustrated book with colours that evoke the oceans is based on the game 'I spy with my little eye'. The rhyming, cumulative text takes you on a journey with a young boy, who sets sail for a distant island with only a fishing rod and a telescope. As he makes his way across the ocean, he uses his telescope. *I spy with my little eye an island far from me and a dolphin jumping free and the sun in the sky and a bird flying by.* And on the island *someone is waiting for me on the beach beside the sea. Together we laugh, together we play. Together we fish 'til the end of the day.*

What did I spy with my little eye? And shall we sail home now, just you and I?

His newly found friend was a little dog. Many boys will relate to this story and others may dream of having their own pet dog that goes everywhere with them. The language of this adventure is soon picked-up and some boys might like to act the story solo, borrowing a soft toy dog from a sibling. Reciting this story-poem could be a deep and lasting experience for some boys. A lovely book - 'this is the stuff that dreams are made of'.

Goal!	Author – Illustrator Colin McNaughton	Level 1b
Collins Picture Lions	Paperback	ISBN 0-00-664654-9
		£4.99

Another football book for boys and their fathers, too! A good follow on to **Give it to Joe - Walker Books Paperback (Issue 10)** Very appropriate to catch the growing excitement as The World Cup gets closer. With a little mime, boys, and girls as well, will enjoy this amusing story and the references to world famous footballers!

Colin McNaughton's famous Preston Pig shows the reader his skills as *a brilliant football player.*

He beats one player, then another, goes round the goal keeper and shoots ... It's a goal!

And the fans go wild .He scores three goals to nil and the crowd chants

Preston,Preston, He's the best 'un.

But he hasn't finished yet! *He dribbles past the great Pele, swerves past the magical Maradona, sweeps past Shearer, puts the ball through the legs of Ronaldo and shoots ...It's a goal!*

BUT all this time Preston's enemy, Mister Wolf was watching him and finally he takes his revenge.

But was he successful? Don't miss the comic illustrations and speech bubbles that add an extra insight to the story text. A great *warm-up* for getting into football fever!

See Preston Pig and Mister Wolf in **SHH! A Preston Pig Lift-the-Flap Book (Issue 10 VYL's Supplement).**

The story of the Little Mole who knew it was None of his Business	
Author Werner Holzwarth Illustrator Wolf Erlbruch	Level 2
David Bennett Books	Paperback
ISBN 1-85602-101-7	£3.99

Most children, and especially boys, seem to be fascinated by going to the 'loo', the bathroom or the toilet and doing what is called their 'poos' or big jobs or business. The title of this book is a play on words – the meaning of *None of his Business* will come clear to you as you read on! Only recently found on bookshop shelves in UK, this story, translated from the German in 1989, has become a world best seller in English! Different cultures react differently, so read the story carefully and judge if it is right for your classroom and parents, before you introduce it! Certainly boys will love it and you'll get to know them better as you watch them react and make comments about the story!

Begin by reading the main text; this will be sufficient as the pictures are clear and descriptive, too!

One day, the little Mole poked his head out from underground to see whether the sun had already risen. Then it happened! How mean! cried the little mole. Who has done this on my head?

Off Mole goes to ask dove, horse, hare, goat etc. if they had done it and each replied

Me? How could I? I do it like this! and each picture shows the animal actually doing his 'business'. Children are amazed by the different shapes of 'business' and this leads to vibrant discussions! Finally thanks to the help of *two, big, fat, black flies* Mole found the culprit and he got his own back by *pling* – *a tiny black sausage landed right on top of the animal's head*. Guess what animal it was?

Good News! Bad News! Author – Illustrator Colin McNaughton
Collins Picture Lions Paperback ISBN 0-00-664772-3

Level 1b
 £4.99

Great fun conveyed through the text and the pictures. Sure to make most boys, and some girls too, have a big giggle This story is about the adventures of a young boy's day off school to visit the dentist. Through the story we learn how the boy divides his life into what he considers to be *good* and *bad* experiences! .

Good news! It's a beautiful day. Hooray! Bad news! It's a school day. Boo!

Good news! You've got the day off. Hooray! Bad news! To go to the dentist. Boo!

Throughout the book the simple phrases of the main text are supported by speech bubbles. These help to clarify the meaning and add atmosphere to the vibrant, fun, comic-style illustrations. The bad news is, in fact, all about the fears and worries of young boys. This skilfully told adventure provides a disguised way of finding out what boys think about their life and the people around them. All ends well,

Good news! You escape and reach home safely. Hooray! (Did you have a nice day, son?)

Bad News! There is no more bad news. Hooray! (Absolutely fantastic!)

After reading this classroom life may get divided by the children into *Good News!* And *Bad News!* And phrases like *Absolutely fantastic!* may even become the basis of boys' first dialogues in English!

(See **Don't Step on the Crack Issue 9**)

In the Attic Author Hiawyn Oram Illustrator Satoshi Kitamura
Red Fox Paperback ISBN 0-09-938300-4

Level 1b
 £4.99

www.randomhouse.co.uk

The story of a little boy who *had a million toys and was bored*. Could this be familiar? But this little boy did something about it and *climbed into the attic. The attic was empty. Or was it?*

I found families of mice and a colony of bees and a cool, quiet place to rest and think.

But he did not stay still for long! *I found an old engine and I made it work* and off he flew over the town *and he found a friend*, a tiger and they played a game. The attic was a marvellous make-believe world and with pride the boy told his mother where he had been all day.

But we don't have an attic she said Well, she wouldn't know, would she? She hasn't found the ladder.

Children will soon understand the simple text although the first time you tell the story you will need to translate some, but not all, of the phrases. The detailed pictures fascinate children and help many, especially boys, escape into their own individual and private world. Don't be tempted to elaborate the text with your own explanations of the pictures; let children interpret the little boy's experiences themselves, as you could spoil some of their magic. For boys who find difficulty in joining-in lessons this book may relieve frustrations and help them feel there is something special in English picture books for them. (See **Issue 8 Reading about Feelings**)

Big J The Story of Julius Caesar Auth: Stewart Ross Illus: Sue Shields
Hodder Children's Books Hardback ISBN 0-7502-2850-4

Level 1b
 £8.99

True stories retold in simple text supported by speech bubbles make these books attractive to boys who may still be emergent readers. The comic-style illustrations of people and the necessary props for the story shown against a plain white background help to make understanding quick and clear.

The *Do you Know?* section at the back includes a photo of Julius Caesar and details of interest to boys who collect facts *Big J was called Julius Caesar. He was a Roman. He died in 44BC.*

If children have already studied the Romans in their History lessons, this makes an interesting cross-curricular activity. This series is based on historical personalities. Other books in the series include: Clever Cleo (Cleopatra) The Little Queen (Queen Victoria) Hal the Hero (Henry VIII).

Is A Blue Whale The Biggest Thing There is?	Auth-Illus: Robert E Wells	Level 1b
Franklin Watts	Paperback	ISBN 0-7496-2751-4
Wonderwise Series		£4.99

This is a book about the UNIVERSE and other Very BIG things in the world. For this reason you will find it uses Very Big Numbers – even Millions and Billions – the sort of numbers that fascinate fact gathering boys! This interesting journey of discovery starts from the Blue Whale.

The Blue Whale *is the biggest animal that ever lived. But of course, the blue whale is NOT The Biggest Thing There Is. If you put a 100 blue whales in a really big jar, and then put two of those whale jars on an enormously large platform, and then made a tremendously tall tower out of 10 platforms of whale jars, that tower of whale jars would look quite small balanced on top of Mount Everest!*

However Mount Everest is small in comparison to our earth. *But more than one million of our earths would fit inside our sun and so on and on until we discover that the*

Universe is the biggest thing we know..... and it is a lot bigger than a blue whale.

The clear, explicit illustrations supporting the text make understanding easy and interesting, too.

This book presents readers with an original, child-centred, easy approach to topic research. The Wonderwise Series provide readers with an opportunity to extend their knowledge in a way that we, and especially boys, will enjoy and remember. Good material for a Classroom quiz and for family reading at home. A must for School or Classroom Libraries.

11 BOOKS for different ages

(see back cover)

What I like	Author Laurence Anholt Illus Catherine Anholt	Level 1a
Walker Books	Paperback	ISBN 0-7445-4070-5
		£4.99

Children always like to talk about their likes and dislikes. This book introduces different children so that most children will have someone to compare with and relate to. First a girl, *What I like is time to play, a holiday, toys and (some) boys*, then a boy *I don't like getting lost*, then twins *What we like is jumping about, having a shout, going out. Sometimes we don't like being a pair, people who stare, having to share.* The story also takes us on to *I love whales and snails... I hate thunder and lightening and ends by What we all like is watching TV, a happy end and making a friend.* The soft detailed illustrations make understanding the different likes and dislikes easy-to-understand; the rhyming text provides a natural and easy way for children to pick up new words and phrases as well as how to use the verb like. An enjoyable book experience that can easily be transferred to a classroom activity or game of 'I like and I don't like?'

Bear at Home	Author Stella Blackstone Illus: Debbie Harter	Level 1a
Barefoot Books	Paperback	ISBN 1-84148-435-0
www.barefootbooks.com		£4.99

This is bear's house, and this is the key. Open the door, and what do you see?

Go with bear on a guided tour right through his home listening to his easy-to-pick-up rhyming commentary, which is very similar to child's language.

This is the hallway where bear climbs the stairs. And this is the library with big, cosy chairs. Lucky bear! And this is the bedroom, where bear says goodnight.

A plan at the back of the rooms on the ground floor and first floor helps children work out their own plan of their house or apartment. A good cross-curricular activity, and something that is easy to do with the family at home.

Cleo and Caspar	Author Stella Blackstone Illus: Caroline Monkford	Level 1b
A Barefoot Paper Back	ISBN 1-84148-439-3	£9.99p
www.barefoot-books.com		

A follow on to **Cleo the Cat** (see Issue 8) and **Come Here Cleo** (see Issue 10) this cat story, in easy-to-remember rhyming text, uses some of the simple language from the previous stories to tell how Cleo has a surprise. There is a stranger in the house, a dog! Find out how Cleo manages to make friends with Caspar, the dog!

Cleo, this is Caspar. Come and say hello? Cleo sniffs, Caspar barks. Cleo hisses, NO!

The bold, easy-to-copy illustrations create the atmosphere between the two animals. But all ends well!

I'll drink my milk whist you're asleep. Then you and I can play.

A wonderful series to mime or act out with very young and young learners either letting them use their own cuddly toy. Make an end of term show using the three stories titled 'The Adventures of Cleo'.

Cleo is so life-like that she can easily fulfil the role of the longed-for pet that flat dwellers and many others never manage to possess. A wonderful series, to which children can easily relate.

Here come Poppy and Max	Author-Illustrator Lindsey Gardner	Level 1a
Orchard Picture Books Paperback	ISBN 1-84121-600-3	£4.99

Poppy, a little girl, accompanied by her faithful black and white dog decides that she wants to be like her favourite, cuddly toys. So *she*, copied by Max, *walks tall like giraffe, waddles like a penguin, leaps like a leopard, stands on one leg like a flamingo, bounces like a kangaroo*, and after all that she decides that *her favourite animal of all is Max, her dog. And he loves Poppy just the way she is.*

The clear, bold illustrations show how Polly copies the animals and how Max tries his best adding fun to the activity. The repetition makes the language easy to pick-up. Ideal to use with children at the bottom of the Primary School, who are beginners. Act the story out substituting Polly for a boy and let the boys select a different animal - may be a dinosaur or a tiger? For those who want more, questions inside the front cover ask:

Can you walk on tiptoe, as softly as a cat? Can you stamp like elephants, STAMP, STAMP, just like that? Can you splash in water like a great big whale? Or curl up oh so tight, like a little garden snail.

The rhyme gives something extra to the book and can be used separately as an additional activity.

Do Donkeys Dance?	Author-Illustrator Melanie Walsh	Level 1a
Egmont	Paperback ISBN 0-7497-4430-8	£4.99

Challenging funny questions for both boys and girls that are sure to get a laugh and even interesting comments from both! Fortunately the bold illustrations will help children understand immediately and so help them to pick-up the phrases rapidly. The author gives a *No* answer to her silly questions and follows it with a *but* and the correct real-life answer.

Can a cat hang upside down in a tree? No, but bats can.

Do hippos hop? No, but fleas do. Can ladybirds stand on one leg? No, but flamingos can.

The final question *Can you fly high in the sky?* has the simple positive reply *Yes!* Ask the children to suggest how? The final picture shows how 5 different children manage to fly. May be your class would enjoy making other final illustrations! The repetition of the question and answer form makes the language easy to pick-up and after a brief explanation children are no longer worried, like some adults, by the random use of singular and plural animals not matching the illustrations. Join the fashion for QUIZ games and extend the guessing game in this book into your own classroom quiz. Get children to think out a question at home with the family for fun homework. Swap questions at

school so that each child has their own bank of questions and can organise their own Quiz in English at home! An original way to get the family involved.

What shall we do with BOO HOO BABY?

Author Cressida Cowell Illustrator Ingrid Godon

Level 1a

Macmillan Paperback ISBN 0-333-73593-5

£4.99

The cutest little boy or girl baby said, *Boo-hoo-hoo!* and the cow, horse, cat and duck looked at the baby wondering *what shall we do with the Boo Hoo Baby?* The noise was terrible and baby seemed to have no intention of stopping!

Quack said the duck handing it a toy baby duck, but although baby stopped crying for a moment, that was all. *Feed him said the dog* and so they all offered the baby something delicious to eat.

Baby looked surprised and soon started crying again. *What shall we do with the boo-hoo baby?*

The animals asked each other once again. *Bath him said the cat*, so they did, but this didn't stop the crying. Eventually they found a way to stop the baby crying and they all had fun for a little while until the baby started once again to *Boo-hoo-hoo*. Finally the duck had a great idea that worked and all seemed well, but was it? Full of repetition this simple hilarious text is easy to pick-up and older brothers and sisters quickly relate to their own family situations. The simple plan of the story provides children with an adaptable base on which to make up their own stories about their pet puppies or even own baby siblings! The gentle illustrations convey humour as well as feelings of despair! The final two spreads are delightful and easy for children experimenting in copying illustrations.

I wish I could count to a Million Auth Joyce Dunbar Illus C Thompson Level 1b

Hodder Children's Books Paperback ISBN 0-340-79677-4 £4.99

Great for children who love figures and long to count to a million! This attractively illustrated book lists all the things a young child wishes he could do and can't as well as all the things he can do.

I wish I could count to a million, write in straight lines, read scary comics BUT I CAN'T!

But I CAN paint a lovely funny picture

I wish I could whistle a tune, spin a web like a spider, catch a tooth fairy. BUT I CAN'T!

Although the book lists things that the boy can and can't do many of them also apply to girls. This book can stimulate a lot of questions from both girls and boys around the ages of 7, 8 or 9 years. It provides a good base to start making a class list of things children wish they could do. Maria wishes she could fly to the moon. Arno wishes he could fly to New York. For homework ask children to complete the following - Mother wishes she could Father wishes he could And I wish I could It would be nice to give children an opportunity to dream and to find out about other people's dreams!

Book of Letters Author Ken Wilson-Max Illus Manya Stojic Level 2

David Bennett Books Hardback ISBN 1-85602-424-5 £9.99

Twenty-six different children and some adults from Abigail Anderson to Zuzu all send letters or rather short easy-to-read notes to each other.

Dear Bunny,

The letter A is for me, the B is for you. Now this is what I want you to do; send it on to someone new!

Love, Abigail X

Bunny Bernstein decided to send a message to her boyfriend, Carlton Cavendish, for Valentine's Day.

What was his message?

And so the message goes on - from Darryl to Emil to Ferdinand to Georgia, to Miss Irma, the air stewardess, to her long-lost cousin Jimmy, each one passing it on until 26 people have received it.

Some messages are in envelopes, which involves lifting the flap to read the message. The final message can be taken out of the envelope to make a small alphabetical poster of all the faces of the people who received a message and passed it on. Full of colourful portraits and interest, this book is easy-to-read. A great idea, which is easy for classes to copy as all you need is paper and envelopes. A novel way of looking at the alphabet and collecting different names.

Alice and Aldo Author-Illustrator Alison Lester

Level 1a

Ragged Bears

Paperback ISBN 1-86373-943-2

£4.99

An Alphabet Book with a difference and ideal for slightly older children who are learning the Alphabet in English. Alice, and her cuddly toy Aldo, take you through an action packed Alphabet. Instead of introducing just a single word or list of words beginning with a letter, they also introduce a phrase using words beginning with the letters.

Ah ha! Alice and Aldo are awake and there they are sitting up in bed together.

On the next page *they have breakfast in bed, then get their clothes from the cupboard, help Dad with the dishes and so on.* Each activity is supported by a framed picture of busy Alice, who is watched by Aldo! Round each picture frame a series of pictures introduce other things, which begin with the same letter. By the time you get to *visit the vegetable (in the vegetable garden), wallow with the whales (in the bath) mark the spot with an x, yawn in the yoghurt* you will be ready for the *z z z z z z* as you *sleep all night long.* A unique Alphabet book, which at the same time provides the basis of a first picture dictionary. A pity Alice could not have had a twin brother as Aldo does not have a strong enough male image for some older boys. Girls of any age will love it.

River Story Author Meredith Hooper Illustrator Bee Willey

Level 2

Walker Books Paperback

ISBN 0-7445-8240-5

£4.99

Read and Wonder Series

This innovative and versatile resource book won the Non-Fiction Book Award for the Best Illustrated Book in 2000. River Story encourages children to reflect, feel and imagine and become involved as they learn about their world. Set in a temperate climate the book asks us to join a river on its mysterious journey from the mountains down to the sea.

All rivers have a beginning ... High in the mountainsand every river has an end.

A small shining stream... Fed by a waterfallThe river races ... The river swirls busily under a bridge... and on the river goes until the river reaches the end of the land.

The text is in two levels – the first level (above) is easy to understand and sufficient for the reader in the initial stages of joining the river on its journey. A 3-D map at the end of the book traces the river's journey, which helps in understanding words like *upriver, downriver, tributary, meander etc.* A memorable book experience and a good cross curricular activity.

Spain Author Henry Pluckrose

Level 2

Franklin Watts

Paperback

ISBN 0-7496-4283-1

£5.99

Picture A Country Series

This series helps children discover the countries of the world through top-quality pictures. The book begins by introducing the country with a map situating the country. Headings include information on *The Landscape, The people, The Capital City, the work and farming, Family Life, The Food and Festivals etc.* The text is in easy-to-read language. Many photographs have simple captions, which provide emergent readers in English with easy-to read and understand text – a way into the longer paragraphs. Ideal for finding out what other people know about your country! Titles in the series include Germany, France, Italy, Russia, Czech Republic. A good basis for making your own Guide Book to send to friendship schools or even to pen-friends.

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