

REALBOOK NEWS

for adults helping children
learn English as a foreign language

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REALBOOKS

reviewed in this issue

- a resource for parents, teachers, teacher trainers and administrators interested in introducing **REAL** picture **BOOKS** to children learning English as a foreign or additional language.
- published twice a year in May and November.
- distributed free.
- Download your copy from our website www.realbooks.co.uk or add your name to the mailing list by contacting **the Editor, Opal Dunn**

REAL picture **BOOKS** are written for children's enjoyment and enrichment with no specific language teaching aim. The language that accompanies the pictures is authentic to native English speaking children.

REAL picture **BOOKS** reflect the culture of their authors, artists or photographers. Many stretch naturally across the curriculum. They can be used to introduce new language and ideas or to consolidate language introducing a new aspect and giving rise to creative ideas and activities

REALBOOKS leave life-long impressions; they are what reading is really about.

Website: www.realbooks.co.uk

Editorial

Getting the **right REALBOOKs** into the hands of young foreign learners of English continues to be a problem. In response to **REALBOOK NEWS** I have received letters from Italy, India, Pakistan and Japan, to mention a few countries, asking where books, which I have reviewed, can be obtained.

Local bookshops don't stock them or if they do they are far too expensive, a German teacher complained to me. *My local bookshop only stocks children's books from certain publishers and says they can't order others, even if I give them an ISBN number*, a teacher in Austria told me.

Success in using **REALBOOKs** depends on the books having suitable text for the spoken language learning level of the children. That means the text shouldn't be too long, nor too descriptive and should include plenty of spoken language which is likely to be useful for children just beginning to speak English. Many texts repeat language naturally throughout the story, which is an advantage for young learners as they pick it up quickly and soon join in.

Recently I was visiting British Kindergarten Training Centres with a group of Japanese Nursery School owners, many of whom were considering teaching English in their Nursery School; some had even started. After a stop at a motorway services, they returned from the shop with bags of picture books they had bought for their schools. They proudly showed me their purchases; books with attractive fluffy animals or squeaky plastic trains or cars on the front cover. Alas, they had forgotten to look inside at the text. When they started to read, they found they couldn't; the structures and vocabulary were too difficult - so what about the toddlers in their schools? No doubt these charming books will become English toys in their classrooms; they won't be the story books they were hoping for, unless their English teacher happens to be a native speaker who is capable of making up her own simple text to match the pictures

It is possible to start off using **REALBOOKs** with as few as 4 books - 4 books are sufficient for a term's work. If you add at least 4 each term, you will have the basis of an English Book Corner. Ideally it would be nice if children could have at least one copy of their own. *Too expensive*, I hear you saying. Well, thanks to Random House's Mini Treasures - Mini children's full colour picture books at less than £1 a copy - a dream can be turned into a reality. Yes, a book as cheap as or even cheaper than a greeting card! What an opportunity!

To try and match the language content of **REALBOOKs** to the language learning level of children beginning English as a foreign language, I classify books into 3 levels. I also include a Reference section which is suitable for Early Readers - Level 2.

Beginners 1a

Post Beginners 1b

Early Readers 2

Reference

Announcements

REALBOOKs own **WEBSITE** <http://www.realbooks.co.uk> features back issues of **REALBOOK NEWS**. Download issues or any material you need for workshops on using **REALBOOKs** as part of the curriculum in your school.

On October 1 Frances Lincoln published **Cats Sleep Anywhere** (reviewed in **ISUUE 3**) in paper back **ISBN 0-7112-12864** at **£4.99** - a more affordable price for those of you who want to add it to your Reading Corners.

Feature Article

MINI TREASURES or BIG BOOKS - *which shall I use? - which shall I buy?*

MINI-TREASURES and **BIG BOOKS** are both exciting, major publishing innovations. They are the small and big reproductions of the standard children's hard or paper back book. As a result of these innovations the same story or rhyme book can be bought in 3 different sizes.

BIG BOOKS are big - 44cms x 35cms. They are full-colour large reproductions of children's classic story and rhyme books. Price approximately £11.99
Published by various publishers.

MINI-TREASURES are hand-size -14cms x 10.6 cms. They are full-colour, mini-editions of children's classic story rhyme books. Price £0.99pence
Published by Red Fox - part of Random House Children's Books.

Both innovations provide their own special opportunities:

BIG BOOKS are ideal for presentation to a group of children. Every child, wherever they are sitting, can see the enlarged picture and text. Being able to see both picture and text as the teacher reads helps them link different strategies to make meaning, which is important for children learning to read. Thus, in the year of National Literacy in UK, Big Books have an important role to play in the daily Literacy Hour. However, the needs of Young Foreign Learners are different from native speaker children learning to read. When I work with Young Foreign Learners, my aim is to tell the story and help the children pick-up some of the language orally. Reading comes much later; once the children know the language of the story. Although I don't use Story or Rhyme Books to teach reading formally - they are for pleasure and all round satisfaction - I find some children who already read in their own language quite naturally pick-up how to read the text in English. In fact they are often surprised themselves that they can read the book.

BIG BOOKS are difficult to store well; they take up a lot of space. Their size makes them far too big to fit into a school bag or into a child's bookcase at home. They are awkward for handling in either a Book Corner or Mini Library.

MINI-TREASURES are the right size for children and easy to store either at home or school. The small size has not been a difficulty for me in telling the stories to children. An alternative is to use a Standard size book initially and, once the children know the story, give them their own **MINI TREASURE** copies.

The cheap price has enabled me, on several occasions, to buy each child their own copy of the **MINI TREASURE** story. I remember their faces when they asked *for me?* clutching their own copy of **Not now, Bernard**. They knew the story off by heart and took their books home to read to their parents. Parents' enthusiastic response to their child's ability to read a whole book in English, did much to increase motivation. For some children, it was their first book in what was to become a collection of English **MINI TREASURES**. After all, you can buy twelve **MINI TREASURES** for the price of one **BIG BOOK**. And the postage on a **MINI TREASURE** is much less than on a **BIG BOOK**.

For me **BIG BOOKS** are great, but I regard them as a luxury. I want to get as many good **REAL BOOKS** into the hands of children as I can. To do this I have to spend my small resources wisely so that they can stretch as far as possible. What about you?

Book Reviews

Mini Treasures - an exciting publishing innovation for children?

Full-colour mini editions of classic children's tales at a size right for children's hands and a price right for adult buyers.

Pass the Jam, Jim Kaye Umansky Ill Margaret Chamberlain Level 1b
Random House - RED FOX Mini Treasure ISBN 0-09-926344-0 **£0.99p**

Also by **Random House**

Pass the Jam, Jim Standard paper back ISBN 0-09-918571-7 **£4.50**

Pass the Jam, Jim GIANT (= big)Picture Book (BIG BOOK) 0-09-926614-8 **£11.99**

Party time! Get ready to help 19 children prepare and enjoy a party feast. The mouth-watering illustrations of delicious food will help you to get into the mood. Thanks to global food chains and their advertising campaigns, much of the food will be familiar to your children although you will need to give some cultural explanations.

The story, told in rhyme, is full of useful expressions. These are said by the children whose first names conveniently rhyme with the last word of many of the phrases, so making them easier to remember. It always amazes me how quickly children pick up phrases as blocks of language without bothering about their word or grammar content. If they pick them up orally first, later when they come to read they are often surprised to see how many words some of the blocks comprise.

It's party time and every child has their job, either to help

*Hurry Mabel, lay that table! Cut the cake, Kate.
 Pour the tea, Lee. Pass the pot, Dot. Is it hot, Dot?*

or simply to eat the goodies.

*Drink your juice, Bruce.
 Slice of pie, Guy?
 Sip your soup up slowly, Sam.
 Charles wants chips and so does Pam.*

Jim, however, has a special job. He is asked to:

Pass the Jam, Jim

This is where the trouble begins. It takes Jim rather a long time and being still a toddler and very young, he makes an awful mess.

***Thanks a lot, Jim Oh! You've NOT, Jim!
 JIM YOU'VE EATEN ALL THE JAM!***

A wonderful story to read aloud! Children will soon join in and if you begin to transfer some of the phrases to use in the classroom, the children will soon copy you and do the same! At any rate that's what I found; and these phrases certainly livened up the lesson, too!

Preparation for this story is important if you are going to get the humour across. Practise reading it aloud to yourself, so that you get the right stresses and pauses to convey the mood of the simple language, which is supported by the amusing pictures.

Talk about first names of world celebrities - the children may know a lot like Charles, Bill and Kate. Include the other names you need for the story. Also make a list of favourite food, include the sandwiches and don't forget the JAM!

End up by having a great party yourselves - all in English! Some schools in England have FRENCH LUNCH once a week when the Menu is written in French and everyone, teacher and children speak only French! It works and it's fun, too!

Not now, Bernard David McKee Level 1a
 Random House - Red Fox- Mini Treasure ISBN 0-09-97772541 X £0.99p

Also by Random House
 Red Fox - Standard Paper Back ISBN 0-09-924050-5 £4.99
 Red Fox - Big Book £11.99

A classic story with little easy-to-understand text about a little boy, Bernard, whose parents are always too busy to listen to him.

Hello, Mum, said Bernard.
No, not now, Bernard, said his mother
Hello, Dad, said Bernard.
Not now Bernard, said his father

Little did they know that there was a monster in the garden ready to eat him. And it did and then went indoors. The monster carried on with Bernard's day without saying a word until the climax, when he went upstairs to bed and got into Bernard's bed. The end of the story is powerful and I've found both adults and children need some silence in which to reflect on it, before you bring them back to the classroom. The simple language describing Bernard or the monster's everyday activities in a home is useful. Backed by explicit illustrations, the drama of the story is easy to understand.

Harry the Dirty Dog Gene Zion Ill Margaret Bloy Graham Level 2
 Random House - Red Fox Mini Treasures ISBN 0-09-972601-7 £0.99p

Also by Random House
 Red Fox Standard Paper Back ISBN 0-09-997870-9 £4.50

Harry hates baths and runs away from his bath and home. As he wanders around he gets dirtier and dirtier. Eventually he gets homesick and goes home but no body recognises the white dog with black spots who is now black with white spots. However, thanks to the scrubbing brush and a soapy bath, Harry returns to his normal colour and is welcomed back home.

A SONG Picture BOOK - see Issue 3 for other suggestions

Amazing Anthony Ant Lorna Philpot Ill Graham Philpot
Orion Children's Books ISBN 0-185881-284-4 £4.99

Level 1b

The Anthony Ant Song is sung to the tune of **When Johnny Comes Marching Home**. The music is inside the front cover for those not familiar with it.

This is more than just a Song Book. On the right of each spread, there are 4 small lift up flaps each with a picture and phrase. As you sing, lift one flap at a time to complete the verse. Before deciding which is the correct phrase, search for Anthony Ant in the maze. One of the phrases gives you the right clue to his whereabouts. The phrases are essential to the game of taking Anthony Ant through the underground maze where he is just one of the many, many ants who is busy in the underground passages of the ant's nest.

The ants came marching one by one, hurrah, hurrah
The ants came marchin
The ants came marching one by one, Anthony stopped

To eat a plum
To suck his thumb
To blow bubble gum
To beat a drum

And they all went marching on and on and on.

Pictures of Anthony Ant eating a plum, sucking his thumb, etc. on the underside of the flap help the reader to find Anthony in the maze. Anthony always enters the maze on the left, exits on the right and there is to be no cheating! If there is something blocking Anthony's way, turn back and start again.

The song continues up to -

The ants came marching ten by ten, hurrah, hurrah (x3)
Anthony stopped

To read in his den
To write with a pen
To feed the hen
To sing it again!

And they all went marching on and on and on.

The sophisticated visual detail, above and below the ground in each spread, provides a great deal to talk about, especially with older children. Some teachers have found it best to introduce two spreads each session so building up the complete song. The new language for each verse is easily picked up as it rhymes and is also supported by pictures. The language includes many interesting phrases to transfer and use in other situations. Some teachers leave the language hidden in the maze until after the children have learned the complete song, as it is not essential for tracing Anthony Ant's way through the maze.

What Do I Look Like? Nick Sharratt
Walker ISBN 0-7445-66311-9 £3.99

Level 1b

A novelty book A FLIP-FLAP BOOK which asks,

What do you look like? I look like this.

When I'm having fun?

When I bang my thumb?

When I'm ready for bed?

These simple questions and the rather basic illustrations make for quick understanding. They lead on very easily to expression - dramatically or artistically - of feelings using very limited English. Some children I know copied the book format for making their own books and I was interested to see the very different feelings they expressed. For example -

What do I look like when I watch football on TV?

Another class I know made up their own class book copying the lay-out with each member of the class, teacher included, asking and answering their own question and illustrating it.

What does Ewa look like when she is feeling angry?

What does Mrs Brown look like when she is feeling happy?

What does Mari look like when she is in bed?

Making this book provided an opportunity for deeper bonding and resulted in the children and teacher feeling they knew and understood each other better.

I Spy - Numbers in Art Devised and selected by Lucy Micklethwait
HarperCollins ISBN 0-00-664298-5 £6.99

Level 1a

This is not an ordinary counting book - many of these are aimed at very young children. This book takes us through numbers 1 to 20 at the same time as looking at great works of international art. This book is ideal for an end of term prize or even a birthday, as the enjoyment of looking at the masterpieces of art will not fade with time.

I spy eight boats 8 (numbers are written as numerals and also as words)

8 Boats - Boats on the Beach (1888) by Vincent Van Gogh from the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam

I spy four goldfish 4

4 fish - Goldfish (1911) by Henri Matisse from the Pushkin Museum, Moscow

I spy nineteen stars 19

19 stars - The American Dream 1 (1961) by Robert Indiana from the Museum of Modern Art, New York

Other books in the same series include:

I spy - Transport in Art ISBN 000-664-5801

Level 1a

Where Are You? Francesca Simon Ill David Melling
 Hodder Children's Books ISBN 0-340-71457-3

Level 1a

£4.99

Grandpa and Harry, his mischievous little dog, went to the Supermarket together. Once Harry smelt the delicious smell of cake, he jumped off Grandpa's trolley and ran away in search of the cakes.

'Yumcake!' said Harry. ZIP! Off he went.

At first grandpa did not realise he had gone and continued checking his shopping list.

'We need apples,'

We need pizza.

We need'

Then suddenly he noticed and shouted,

'Harry? Harry? Where are you?'

Well Grandpa looked everywhere for Harry and Harry looked everywhere for the cakes! Once Harry had found the cakes, Harry then went looking for Grandpa to tell him his good news. Eventually they bumped into each other.

'You were lost, Grandpa.'

'You were lost, Harry.'

'But now we're found.'

And with an affectionate cuddle, all ends well. The easy-to-understand pictures are culturally loaded which gives plenty of opportunity to compare your own local Supermarket with the one Grandpa and Harry visited. The story, which is told with many simple spoken phrases, makes a good story for acting.

Look out for **What's that noise?** ISBN 0-340-656735 .also about Grandpa and Harry. Level 1a

World Explorer Atlas Ill Tim Hutchinson

Dorling Kindersley ISBN 0-7513-5669-7 £9.99

Reference/ Level 2

A fun-filled way for older children to learn countries, continents and a few selected town names in English. Children are asked to help Jack on his travels round the world following a mystery creature who he tries to save from the clutches of Cynthia Sneaker. Jack Tracker flies in a red and blue helicopter; Cynthia flies in a plane.

Jack takes photos - Travel Snaps -of the places he visits and it is fun to check them out on the unusual 3D maps. Jack also draws some pictures in his Sketch Book which you are asked to match on the maps.

Once you have explained how to trail the mystery creature and use the Travel Snaps and Sketch Books, children enjoy dipping into this Atlas at their own level. The different challenges and the fresh way of presenting maps provide excellent and unusual cross-curricular challenges. Older boys love it!