

REALBOOK NEWS

for adults helping children
learn English as a foreign language

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- a resource for parents, teachers, teacher trainers and administrators introducing **REAL** picture **BOOKS** to children learning English as a foreign or additional language.
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- distributed free.
- Download Issues from our website 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. **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

From the Editor

The use of REALBOOKs in the classroom continues to spread. Leonora Frohlich-Ward's Centre for training teachers working in State Primary Schools in Munich, Germany has recently decided that 10 of their teachers working in local Primary Schools will set up their own Classroom Libraries. Funding for the small Libraries comes from the different Parents Teacher Associations and The Centre. This enthusiasm to use REALBOOKs has been quick to grow. In March 1998, when I lectured to MELTA (Munich Language Teacher's Association) most of the teachers had never even thought of using REALBOOKs in their lessons. Towards the end of 1998 I received a copy of a REALBOOK made by one of the classes based on Eric Carle's **Brown bear, brown bear. What can you see?**. Now just 12 months later Leonora is using REALBOOK NEWS as a guide to buying picture books for these Classroom Libraries.

However, a word of warning! It is important to get the right books for children. Any books that are too difficult for beginners can easily de-motivate enthusiasm to learn. So, in the initial stages of using REALBOOKs it's essential to make the right choice and present most of the vocabulary before reading the story.

Recently some people told me that they were very disappointed with the booklists put out by chain bookshops or organisations in the UK suggesting for example 'The best 100 books for children'. They found that most of the books listed were unsuitable for their classrooms. This is not surprising, as these lists are compiled for the parents or carers of native speaker children, who have little or no problem in understanding the English text. A different situation from our classrooms!

The choice of books for children learning English as a foreign is based on the linguistic content of the text as well as the length of the text. Although the linguistic choice is not restricted to the old type of syllabus, where children were kept on the present continuous tense during their first year of learning, choice has to be within the limits of children's needs and ability. A few books with slightly advanced language are included in Level 1b as I feel that children need more language in order to communicate at their interest level. In these cases, care is taken in selection to see that the story text includes sufficient repetition (This repetition is natural pattern practice!) Don't under estimate children! Most children pick-up the phrase as a block of language and use it without being concerned with its grammatical composition. As they become more fluent speakers, they find it interesting to analyse a block of language that they already know well and use.

Each classroom situation is different and the choice of what book is right for your classroom depends on many aspects including age, emotional development and all round experience, Based on my many years of using REALBOOKs with children, I classify books into 3 levels as a guide. I also include a Reference section which is suitable for Early Readers - Level 2. Once children can read books at the Level 2 the choice of suitable books is much easier.

Beginners 1a

Post Beginners 1b

Early Readers 2

Reference- Level 2

Announcements

A new WEBSITE for teachers who love reading children's fiction!

Funded by the Library and Information Commission, this website makes available fiction suitable for fluent reader children aged 8 -11. <http://hosted.ukoln.ac.uk/stories/>

REALBOOK NEWS back issues can be downloaded from <http://www.realbooks.co.uk/>

Feature Article

Shall I ask QUESTIONS when I read a story?

Hearing a story is a very personal experience. The relationship between the words and pictures is different for each child. For us, as teachers or parents, the most important thing is not to break the magic the story creates for each child by questioning too much and too soon. Given time, children often tell you what they feel about a story. If you have a sympathetic atmosphere in your classroom, children will often enlarge on a story relating it to their own experiences. So be patient! From my experience in sharing stories, I learned a lot about how individual children think and feel. They often disclosed amazing details about their home life and in some cases went as far as to share secrets with me.

So don't use stories as an opportunity to ask questions in order to practice language skills. Stories are for fun, for firing the imagination and feeding the emotions. They help children to make sense of their own life and find some meaning in it. Please don't think of REAL story BOOKs as direct teaching tools.

What questions shall I ask? What are good questions?

A good question can include:

- an invitation to help the child think. For example before you turn a page you can ask children to guess what is next. A simple word for beginners like **And then?** or **What next?** with a pause is sufficient to get a response. If, in their excitement, they answer in their own language, re-cast it in simple English for them. Don't ask them to repeat it in English, just say it once or twice yourself in English. When you re-read the story in the next lesson, the same child may answer in English; children are quick to pick-up language.
- an opportunity to help the child focus attention.
- to encourage a closer look at the picture

Look at the What's he doing? I can't see, can you?

Where is the? I can't find theCan you? What does he look like? Is he sad?

- to encourage more careful listening to the language

Then what did he say? Can you tell me what he said? Did he say he was?

- an opportunity to give an opinion and reply with more than a 'yes' or 'no' answer.

Do you think? How does he?

If you really want to know how children feel about a story, ask them to make their own illustration for one episode in the story or their own ending to the story. Young native speakers put more details into their pictures than they write; children learning a foreign language will do the same. And again don't question them too much about their pictures. They will tell you as much as they can or want about them. If they tell you in their own language, rephrase some of it in English. Later use the same English phrases to tell the rest of the class about the picture. Like this the child who drew the picture has had the opportunity to hear the same language at least twice. Mount the pictures onto paper, then write the spoken text under the picture and display it on the classroom wall. If you are not allowed to display material in the classroom, stick it into a book, which children can read in the class book corner.

This leads on to making class stories and eventually children writing their own stories. Remember that, to begin with, the pictures will tell more of the story than the text. However, as fluency increases so does the length of the text.

Book Reviews

One Moose, Twenty Mice Author-Illustrator **Clare Beaton** Level 1a
Barefoot Books (Beginner) **Hardback** **ISBN 1-902283-10-4** **£9.99**

Counting books usually go up to 10. This takes you to 20 which is useful for older Primary children as they only need to learn the English names for numbers since they already know the number concepts. As well as counting animals, each spread asks children to find the cat.

Fifteen dolphins, but where's the cat?

The last spread ends the counting story in a surprise way. The clear felt-art textile illustrations are an ingenious way of illustrating and may well have a cross curricular influence within in the school..

Cat and Mouse and something to do Author-Illustrator **Fulvio Testa** Level
1b
Anderson Press . London **Hardback** **ISBN 0-86264-799-1** **£9.99**

A Hide and Seek game in a picture book for older children. No flaps to lift or tabs to pull; the clues are there in the finely detailed illustrations. No words accompany some spreads so the reader can lose himself looking for clues and following the tracks of the nine year old boy, his cat and the mouse. The simple but thought provoking text makes this an ideal story to tell to older Primary School children who need something to challenge them. The story begins with a boy, aged nine, sitting at his dining table, his hand on his cheek gazing vacantly into space.

Why are you bored? Is there nothing to do?
What are you thinking? Give us a clue

The simple rhyming text of eighteen lines on eight pages includes some useful phrases, which I find children soon pick-up as blocks of language from my story reading. You can transfer some of the phrases like *You'd better take care.* *What do you need?* to other situations and you'll soon be copied.

Fur **Jan Mark** **Illustrator** **Charlotte Voake** Level 1a
Walker Books **Paperback** **ISBN 0-7445-5245-L** **£4.99**

Thin Kitty grew fat. She made a nest in my hatAnd

A very minimal text, easily picked-up, takes us through a common experience in a delightful way. Charlotte Voake's illustrations are charming. Kitty's eyes follow you from page to page creating a haunting relationship. Everyone can relate to this story. Why not try writing your own class story about a dog and puppies.

Goodnight Moon Margaret Wise Brown **Illustrator Clement Hurd** Level 1b
Mammoth Paperback ISBN 0-7497-3007-2 **£4.50**

50 years old but still enjoyed by children. This bedtime classic tells about a little rabbit getting ready for bed and saying goodnight to everything around.

Goodnight comb
And goodnight brush
Good night stars
Goodnight air
Goodnight noises everywhere

I found the simple drawings inspired children's own illustrations and the simple text stimulated interesting discussion, especially the lines *Goodnight nobody* and *Goodnight noises everywhere*.

Inside outside upside down Stan and Jan Berenstain Level 1a
Bright and Early Books for Beginning beginners
Collins Paperback ISBN 0-00-171286-1 **£3.99**

Full of humour this economic text, with explicit illustrations, is just right for older Primary beginners. In 15 short phrases (23 words in all) the bear's adventure in, on and out of the box is slowly revealed.

Going to town
On a truck
Outside
Inside a box
Upside down Falling off Coming out Right side up

Play a game with a cardboard box and telling the children to put something inside, then outside the box. Then turn the box upside down and let it fall off the table. Do all this before you introduce the book, so that the children are familiar with most of the language. The rhythm and rhyme of the language makes it easier for children to pick-up.

I went to town. Inside, Outside, Upside down!

Some children I worked with made their own books telling the story of different animals who got inside a box and had an adventure. The practical experience of actually playing with a box before hand seemed to help children to write and illustrate their own stories. This story is great for prepositions of place. Once the phrases are well known enlarge them when you are talking to the children

Inside Put it inside the box, please.
Going to town Are you going to the toilet?
I went to town I went to the supermarket on Monday.

From Head to Toe **Author-Illustrator Eric Carle** Level 1a

Puffin **Paperback** **ISBN 0-14-0563778-4** **£4.99p**

Eric Carle is 70 this year. His first book was **Brown bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?** He later created **The Very Hungry Caterpillar**, a classic, which has been translated into 30 languages.

From Head to Toe is an interactive experience. Through stunning art work, Carle introduces animals doing various amusing activities.

I am a giraffe and I bend my neck. The giraffe then asks the child who is hiding under his neck *Can you do it?* And the child, who is bending his neck, replies *I can do it.*

I am a cat and I arch my back. Can you do it? The girl, in the yoga cat position, replies *I can do it.*

The crocodile wriggles his hips, the camel bends his knees, and the elephant stomps his foot until finally a boy says, *I am I and I wiggle my toe. Can you do it?* Whom does he ask and does he get a reply?

Before you introduce the book play a simple game to teach the parts of the body. Touch your shoulders and say, 'I can touch my shoulders. Can you do it?' The children reply, 'Yes, I can.' Then move onto the book. Later act out the movements without the book, adding some of your favourite animals.

Can you spot THE Spotty Dog? **Author-Illustrator John Rowe** Level 1a

Red Fox **Paperback** **ISBN 0-09-949751-4** **£4.99**

Spot, the spotty dog - a white dog with endearing black spots can be identified on the back cover. This is a hide and seek animal game. The challenge comes in each picture starting by the first.

Can you spot the spotty dog? and
at the bottom of the page *If you can, turn over.*

Each spread adds one more animal hiding in the picture.

Can you spot the spotty dog And the little white owl

And the jet black cat And the tiny grey mouse?

If you can, turn over.

Before you begin to play make sure
the children can name all or most of
the 10 animal friends playing the game.

Also prepare them for the surprise on the last page

where they look into a mirror and see

the cheeky monkey - themselves!

The illustrations are stunning. This animal game book might encourage children to make their own books.

If I had a dog **Author-Illustrator Bernice Lum** Level 2

Bloomsbury Children's Books **Paperback** **ISBN 0-7475-3066-1** **£3.99**

If I had a dog I would call him Stanley.

I would teach him to talk and to read.

I would teach him to and to dance.

That's difficult you might think, but children soon pick-up
the phrases and love using them. They are the sort of boasts
that children like to say to each other. The same phrase

Horatio Happened Author **Kathryn Cave** Illustrator **Chris Riddell** Level 2
Hodder Children's Books ISBN **0-340-71515-4** **£4.99**

Jack went to sleep. While he slept, something happened under his bed.

It was Horatio. Horatio made his home there - under the bed. Rhyming text and exciting illustrations take children through Horatio's world *under the bed*. One day Jack's mother decided to clean and tidy Jack's bedroom. She looked under the bed pulled out the football, the train set, the socks and the sandwich from under the bed.

*Then she saw HORATIO under the bed.
 AAAUUUUUGGGHHH!*

And Horatio ran away. Everyone missed Horatio terribly. But he hadn't gone. They forgot to look under the wardrobe instead! A modern-day classic created by the winners of the UNESCO Award. Full of humour right for older Primary children. For some, it might reflect the muddle under their own beds!

SONG Picture BOOKS - see Issues 3 and 4 for other Song Books

Row Your Boat Anthony Lishak Illustrator **Graham Percy** Level 1b
Dorling Kindersley **Hardback novelty** ISBN **0-7513-7108-4** **£9.99**

A pull out and push tab book that takes you way beyond the 4 line traditional song of *Row, row, row your boat* sung in many young learners' classrooms world wide. *Row Row* is a-one-verse fun action-song with language that isn't very useful to young children, especially those learning English as a foreign language. This book offers much more! The song is adapted to take animals on a journey. In the second verse the *row* becomes *drive your car, gently down the street*. This is followed by *fly your plane, gently in the sky*, and, after floating in the sky, you end up at Bear's birthday watching him blow out the candles on his cake, closing his eyes, making a wish and then lifting the flaps to have a wonderful surprise! The detailed pictures, all with pop-up and pull-tabs, make it possible to activate each animal as you read or sing the rhyme. This is more than just a Song Book. Use the last verse, changing the third line, as an additional song for Birthdays.

fiddle-i-fee Illustrator **Jacki Wood** Level 1a
Frances Lincoln **Paperback** ISBN **0-7112-0860-3** **£4.99**

A song book which can be read or used for singing. Easy-to-play music for both piano and guitar is included. A noisy nursery rhyme fiddle-i-fee gives children of all ages an opportunity to let off steam by making the noises of the animals. The clear, pleasing illustrations, based on farm life in the English countryside support each verse making for easy understanding. Once children know the names of the animals and their noises, start singing. Good for an end of term concert. Children can make masks for the animals and write their own programmes.