

REALBOOK NEWS

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

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20 Titles

Developing visual literacy - page 3

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REALBOOK NEWS BOOK LIST

BOOK selection from Issue 1 to Issue 6 now available from the Editor.

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From the Editor

At last I managed to take up IATEFL - Hungary's kind invitation to give a Plenary at their Conference in Győr in October. It was a stimulating visit for me as I met many teacher trainers who knew about REALBOOKS. A group of 8 have just successfully completed MEd degrees at Leeds University and within the programme had learned about the place of REALBOOKS in a children's foreign language programme. I was pleased to leave sufficient selected REALBOOKS in 4 centres in Hungary for work in classrooms. At the JPTE in the University of Pécs, we plan to start some research running over the next two years on the use of REALBOOKS in beginner and post beginner classrooms.

Recently I attended a lecture at the London School of Economics in London given by members of the National Inquiry undertaken by the Nuffield Foundation looking into Foreign Language Learning over the next 20 years and assessing whether the present picture represents a firm foundation for the future. Although the Report will not be published until April 2000, the speakers dropped a few hints about their findings on early foreign language learning. They had taken evidence from various schemes within Europe as well as Great Britain and again reiterated fears that an early start, as in Scotland, was not successful. Some of the reasons for this, they suggested, was the lack of sufficient capable, well-trained teachers as well as the problem of continuity.

More in April 2000, but in the meantime I would like to comment on continuity. Once you have started off a child learning a foreign language, you have to keep on with it in some form or another. If you start and then drop it completely, I have found from experience that it is difficult to re-motivate many children to start again, even in adolescence. However, if children have experienced the fun of REALBOOKS in their programme, the stories, rhymes and songs, will probably remain in deep memory for life. If these children have their own copy of a favourite REALBOOK, it most likely will become a treasure. It will be read and re-read, and probably will be sitting on the child's bookshelf, even after he has moved on to secondary school or University.

I like to feel that this might be the case with the selection of books suggested in REALBOOK NEWS as it is based on the simplicity and easy-to-acquire content of the text. Children soon pick-up easy, short texts orally and this leads, quite rapidly, to being able to read the text. Like this the REALBOOK becomes a complete experience; the child can understand the language and read it, as well as 'read' the matching picture. What a satisfying and meaningful achievement for the child! Compare this with a text book experience, where a lot of classrooms never complete the whole text book and have not even made sure that each child can read every page they have completed together.

REALBOOK NEWS selection is based on my belief that children should be able to read the REALBOOKS teachers have presented to them by themselves. With careful Pre-presentation, Presentation and Post-presentation these books should become part of children's English experience. And something to which they can relate to and use with confidence feeling, 'I understand it.' 'I can read it.' 'It's fun.' What impact it will have at a deeper level is difficult to evaluate as what happens immediately will not necessarily reflect the longer lasting impact.

To help teachers match the needs of the children they teach, I classify books into 3 levels

Beginners 1a

Post Beginners 1b

Early Readers 2

Reference- Level 2

Once children can read books at the Level 2, it is much easier to select suitable books. However, if you introduce children to the pictures in a REALBOOK and re-phrase the long difficult text, you may disappoint them as, when they look at the book by themselves, they will be surprised to find the text is different and also too difficult to read. This type of experience can de-motivate.

Feature Article

'Reading' pictures as well as text - developing visual literacy

Have you ever introduced a new picture book to a young child and watched how, in silence, he concentrates as he scrutinises the picture, his eyes gliding from top to bottom, side to side? Suddenly, when he has made sense of it and absorbed all he wants, he looks up at you to show he is ready for you to turn the page. If you don't rush him, he will focus on the picture far longer than you would. Unlike most adults, he hasn't yet developed scanning skills by which his eyes scan a picture to pick-up relevant detail disregarding what is so far irrelevant. Scanning skills in 'reading' pictures, as in reading text, develop through experience and at a child's own speed. However, through picture book experiences, we can contribute to the development of both these skills.

Providing information through pictures is an important and fast developing method of communication in the global world. Not only do adults need to be text literate - capable of decoding different print forms of letters and reading to getting meaning from the various styles or genre of their own language, they also need to be visually literate. The better adults or children are in decoding and reading text or pictures, the more successful their gathering of information is likely to be.

Through picture book experiences, we can help children develop their personal skills in 'reading' pictures and getting meaning from them. Gradually, as we expose children to different types of illustrated books - pictures and photographs - we can guide and encourage them to develop their skills in looking (observing) and decoding the various types of art work we introduce to them.

In the same way as a child's drawing usually carries more detail than his verbal explanation, so picture books with simple texts (like the REALBOOK NEWS selection), often carry more sophisticated narrative in the details of the illustration or photographs, than in the accompanying text.

Teachers sometimes worry that some illustrations are too sophisticated for their children, who may have a diet of only cartoons or very soft fairy-tale illustrations. It is up to us to act as mediators helping children to enjoy the richness in:

- styles of illustration - see **The Alphabet Gallery- An ABC of Contemporary Illustrators Picture Mammoth ISBN 0-7497-4045-0 £14.99**
- types of media including collage, embroidery, oil, watercolours, crayon or photograph, which can be discussed and even tried as art forms in the classroom. Many picture books include details about the artist and his other published books.
- colour. Many children have never played with paints seeing how the addition of a new colour can change the original colour. Some only know one shade of purple - the one in their box of 24 crayons!

Some classrooms make their own small ART GALLERY of 4 or 5 picture books, opening each book at a special picture. Children enjoy looking at picture books over and over again and, if given an opportunity, like to discuss pictures amongst themselves or even copy pictures from books.

In the same way as you talk about a story (REALBOOK NEWS Issue 5), talk about the pictures. Ask children which is their favourite picture and tell them yours, and why. Enthusiasm is infectious and contributes to influencing life-long attitudes to enjoying art. These experiences with real picture books contribute to developing character and creativity. However, don't forget that each child sees pictures through his own eyes involving his own emotions and feelings. *'Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.'* Yeats

Book Selection

Where's my egg? Author Tony Mitton Illustrator Jane Chapman Level 1a
Walker Books Paperback ISBN 0-7745-6312-7 **£3.99**

Mama Hen has lost her egg. The rhyming easy-to-pick-up text takes Mama on a clearly illustrated search for her egg. Flaps divide spreads hiding the reply to each of Mama Hen's questions. Introduce the characters Mama hen, big dog Ben, Puss, Donkey, Mrs Mouse and Mother Duck before you begin and try to use some of their expressions in the classroom, too.
Is it hidden in your house? 'No, it's not!' squeaks Mrs Mouse.
Is my egg here, Mother Duck? These are mine, she quacks. Bad luck.
 In despair Mother Hen sheds a tear.
Oh dear, clucks Hen. Where can it be? and you turn the final flap for the surprise answer. This story needs no text changes to make it into a class play or puppet show.

Number One, Tickle your Tum Author/Illus John Prater Level 1a
The Bodley Head Hardback ISBN 0-370-32378-5 **£6.99**

'Shall we play the counting game?' Mother Bear invites baby bear, or the reader, to do all sorts of activities to numbers. *Number two just say 'BOO!'*
Number three touch your knee.
Number four touch the floor up to
Number ten start again. Begin by introducing the rhyme with the activities. Once the children know the rhyme, introduce the book. Children find it easier to read rhymes, which they already know by heart, than narrative.

Buzz, Buzz, Buzz went BUMBLEBEE Author/Illus Colin West Level 1a
Walker Books Paperback ISBN 0-7445-5463-2 **£1.99**

Buzz, Buzz, Buzz, went Bumble-bee as he stopped on Donkey's head, Rabbit's ear, Fox's tail looking for a friend. Five animals replied *'Buzz off'* until finally Butterfly asked, *'won't you buzz around with me?'* and to the surprise of the other five animals, off they went together! Repetition of the same language in most of the story makes this a success with children just beginning English, providing you introduce the animal names before you begin. I also played a Buzz, Buzz, Buzz game with a Bumble-bee puppet on a string. When the Bumble-bee landed on a child's head, nose, hair etc they had to say *'Buzz off'*. If they said it right, it was their turn to make the Bumble-bee fly saying *'Buzz, Buzz, Buzz, went Bumble-bee. I've landed on ...nose'* adding the child's name.

Things I like Author/Illus Anthony Browne Level 1a
Walker Books Paperback ISBN 0-7445-5442-X **£4.99**

Prize winning Anthony Browne's drawings of a cuddly monkey and what he likes doing, provides an ideal opportunity to find out what children in your class like doing best of all.
This is me and this is what I like: Painting and riding my bike,
Making a cake and watching TV.
Going to birthday parties and being with my friends.
 Maybe some, to your surprise, will tell you that, like the monkey, they also like *dreaming*.

I think my Mum's a witch Author-Illustrator **Amanda Loverseed** Level 1a
Walker Books Paperback ISBN 0-7445-6318-b **£3.99**

A spooky, spell-binding story with realistic illustrations! A good follow-up to Halloween. Nearly every page starts with the refrain *I think my mum's a witch* followed by things *she has, she likes* or *she rides*. *She has a flat hat BUT ...* and turn the flap... *she has a pointed hat too*. *She has a saucepan for cooking BUT ...she has a cauldron too*. The final spread changes dramatically to *I know my mum's a witch*

BECAUSEI'M ONE TOO!

What about you? Are you one too?

Fred and Ted's Treasure Hunt Author/Illus **Hilda Offen** Level 1b
Random House Hardback ISBN 0-09-176803-9 **£9.99**

Have you ever thought of putting a message in a bottle?

Fred and Ted found a map in a bottle with instructions on how to find the treasure in rhyming easy-to-pick-up text.

Take eight steps forward and five back again.

Whirl round and round while you count up to ten.

A chest full of treasure lies under the beach

Introduce the physically active language before you introduce the story. If the children have not already

made maps, make one and put it in a bottle. Then

they will be ready for the book and should soon

find the way to the hidden treasure. This is an interesting

cross curricular experience. Why not suggest children write their

own messages with or without maps and put them in empty

plastic water bottles and give them to classmates. It could be fun!

Night-time Number Author/Illus **Susan L. Roth** Level 1b
A Barefoot Beginner Hardback ISBN 1-84148-000-2 **£9.99**

Have you got a restless class? Well, this scary counting book to ten will catch their attention and probably open up new areas of discussion. As you read, let them make comments; you may hear about some of their inner fears. Don't worry if, as a result, you only get half way through the numbers the

first time you read the book. The language consists of two constructions repeated throughout the book:

Who can you see plus phrase of place

and the reply

I can see plus object *in the pale moonlight*.

If you give children opportunities to pick-up these pre-fabricated phrases in classroom activities and they already know the names of parts of the house like window, staircase, bath-tub, rooftops, you are ready to present the book. Children may take some time to decode the collage pictures if it is a new style for them, so be sure to give them time to look carefully and reflect. Night is creepy and can be frighteningly spooky. Why not make a class scary night-time book with a comforting ending. Listen to their suggestions as to what they feel could be a comforting, consoling ending to a scary experience. You may have some shivering surprises!

Well, a Crocodile Can! Author **Malachy Doyle** Illus **Britta Teckentrup** Level 1b
Frances Lincoln Hardback ISBN 0-7112-1354-2 **£8.99**

A book with lots of amusing challenges. Start off by a classroom game in which you challenge children with *Can you jump twenty times?* *Can you drink a basin of coffee?* *Can you eat ten ice creams in an hour?* And gradually expand to *Can you stand on one foot while you're singing a song?* To fit with the book, suggest that the reply is either *Yes, I can* or *No. I can't* or *Not likely!*

Once children are familiar with the game and the language to go with it, introduce the book. They most likely already know the names of the animals, except perhaps gibbon and chameleon. As the text says '*Go for it!*', and enjoy the superb paper sculpture and humorous pictures that match the fun text.

Over the Steamy Swamp **Author-Illustrator Paul Geraghty** Level 2
Red Fox **Paperback** **ISBN 0-09-962830-9** **£4.99p**

Published in 1998, this cumulative story line set in Africa, with vibrant illustrations depicting a steamy swamp, tells the story of a mosquito. The mosquito and many other animals did not notice who was watching them until a hunter with a gun came along. Alas, the hunter did not notice that a lion was about to pounce on him, when he was saved by guess what? This story will fascinate Disney Lion King fans. It will help them think more deeply about African wild life and its environment as well as some of the dangers facing sightseers, especially in swampy areas.

Animal Hide and Seek **Author Barbara Taylor Illus John Francis** Level 2 Reference
Dorling Kindersley **Hardback** **ISBN 0-7513-5533-X** **£10.99**

Over 400 animals to find in the fold out pictures of 10 habitats including the Arctic, an Amazon Rainforest and a Coral Reef. Each habitat is situated on the globe and general notes on animal and flowers help the reader to decode the detailed pictures. A great follow-up to other stories and an excellent book with which to begin teaching skills in using reference books - skills which are essential for learning how to learn. A useful addition to any classroom book corner

Titch **Author-Illus Pat Hutchins** Level 1b
Red Fox **ISBN 0-09-926253-3** **£4.99**

Tidy Titch **Author-Illus Pat Hutchins** Level 1b
Red Fox **ISBN 0-09-920741-9** **£4.50**

Two books about Titch (the endearing name for the Smallest child or animal in a group) and his big sister, Mary, and even bigger brother, Pete. Both are stories to which children can relate easily. The text is short and repetitive, so easy to understand; most of the narrative is told in the excellent illustrations by the now world famous illustrator and writer, Pat Hutchins. For enthusiasts there are others in the Titch series including recently made videos and books illustrated with photos taken from the videos. For those classes setting up exchanges by internet it may be a good idea to read these classics as they could be something to share with English speaking children since Pat Hutchin's books are sold world-wide.

Shhh! Author Sally Grindley Illus Peter Utton Level 2
Hodder Children's Books Paperback ISBN 0-340-74662-9 £5.99

Shhh! Come inside. If you are quiet, the guide will take you on a conducted tour inside the giant's castle. *Now, you must be QUIET. The giant will cook you for his tea if he catches you! Let's look on the next page. SHHH!* As if the guide is talking to you, you follow his instructions and creep quietly from room to room hoping not to wake any of the inhabitants of the castle, as they could tell the giant. Finally, *there he is. He's awake. Quick, turn the page before he comes after us.* The realistic illustrations and flap-up peep holes enable you to check what's happening. *Quick. He's coming.* but luckily there is a safe means of escape, as I felt I had really *entered a giant's castle.* The clever use of commentary-style language creates real atmosphere. A great fairy-tale experience, not to be missed by children who are into fairy tales and can take a fright!

The Gigantic Turnip Author A Tolstoy Illus Niamh Sharkey

Level 2

A Barefoot Beginner Paperback ISBN 1-902283-29-5 £4.99

Winner of the famous Mother Goose Award 1999

Niamh Sharkey's powerful and stylised illustrations are a feast for any child's eyes. Each spread has its own atmosphere and the layout of text adds to the fun of this adaptation of Aleski Tolstoy's well-loved story. The repetition in the language, some reminiscent of the Carol, The Twelve Days of Christmas

Six yellow canaries, five white geese, four speckled hens, three black cats, two-pot bellied pigs and one big brown cow make it easy to pick-up and turn into an end of term play. Look out for the hungry little mouse. He adds something especially delightful to this version of the story.

And do you know? The hungry little mouse ate the most of all.

The Teddy Robber Author/Illus Ian Beck Level 2
Picture Corgi Paperback ISBN 0-552-52593-6 £4.99

Ian Beck's style is individual and easily recognisable. He is, without doubt, one of the best children's book illustrators working today. The Teddy Robber, written in 1989, is about a sad giant who became a Teddy Robber and went around stealing teddies, because he has lost his own. One night he steals Tom's teddy and things change. Tom chases after him and finds himself in the giant's castle, but Tom's experience is quite different from **Shhh!** The giant confesses in tears to Tom the reason why he is a Teddy Robber and Tom feels sorry for him and offers to help him find his Teddy. This beautifully illustrated story ends well for everyone including *all the lost Teddies in the world,* who were stored *in a huge cupboard.* Children are fascinated by the double page picture of *all the lost Teddies* stored inside the cupboard. There are so many Teddies in the cupboard that some children want to count them, but they generally give up before they get the answer. The illustrations are magic and it is a change to find a superbly illustrated story about a kind giant.

Mission Zifford Author Michael Rosen Illustrator Arthur Robins

Level 2

Walker Books Paperback**ISBN 0-7445-6942-7****£1.99**

Michael Rosen's clever text with a vigorous chorus of remarks like *Gosh! That's bad. Is that good.* is ideal for lively 9- 10 year olds.

My brother's got a space ship. He crash-landed on Zifford, a weird planet zillions of miles away, and ...

The story continues with things that were good and others that were bad until

Guess what?

The final double page illustration tells all. The cheap price may make it possible to have at least two class books - one for the reader and another for the chorus.

What! Author Kate Lum Illustrator Adrian Johnson

Level 2

Bloomsbury Paperbacks**ISBN 0-7475-4178-7****£4.99**

Granny invited Patrick to stay for the night, but what a long night! This clever story helps children think about where things come from and how they are made - ideal for cross curricular studies.

Granny has a self-help answer to every problem; a change for children who think that anything that is needed can be bought in a shop. But Granny, who is portrayed as a frumpy stereotype, is being manipulated by Patrick's delaying tactics, as he doesn't want to go to bed. Plenty of repetition in a text designed in a fun layout. Detailed illustrations with insets make the story narrative richer and more easily understood.

Where the forest meets the sea Author-Illustrator Jeannie Baker

Level 2

Walker Books Paperback**ISBN 0-7445-1305-7****£4.99**

This prize winning Australian book takes you visually on the excursion made by a young boy who goes with his father by boat into a tropical rain forest. The collage illustrations, using many natural materials, create remarkable three-dimensional effects, which take you into the past, present and the possible future environments. The simple text and striking pictures create an unforgettable and unique book experience that leaves lasting real impressions. You feel that you have been there, in North Queensland, with the boy and his father.

Kid's first COOK Book Helen Drew and Angela Wilkes

Level Reference

Dorling Kindersley Hardback**ISBN 0-7513-6633-1****£9.99**

For those wanting cultural input via cooking, here's an excellent answer. The easy-to-follow, step-by-step recipes are mostly for party goodies like biscuits, scones, shortbread, pastries and brownies, though there is a Christmas and Easter recipe, too. The life-size photographs of the ingredients, how to use them as well as how to achieve the final goodie should help you make a success of a cross curricular activity. The photographs will help children understand most of the text. Why not have a try or let some of the children borrow the book and try with their family at home?

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