

### ***Promoting diversity through children's literature***

At the British Council's Teaching Centre in Paris, as part of our holiday programme for children, we are using carefully selected storybooks from the rich world of authentic children's literature to raise awareness of diversity. Children attend these week long, 15 hour story-based courses for three hours each afternoon.

A storybook acts as a springboard for a wide variety of activities designed to develop children's English language skills as well as opportunities to develop the theme or content of the book. In this way, the stories link to children's learning across the curriculum and develop their general knowledge. Most important, the stories we select contain values which allow children to think about issues which are important and relevant to them. Storybooks are also very motivating as they exercise children's imagination and cater to different interests and learning styles. Storytelling is a shared social experience and provokes a response of laughter, sadness, empathy, excitement and anticipation which encourages social and emotional development. The excellent illustrations support children's understanding and help them relate what they hear to what they see and therefore decode meaning. Children develop their visual literacy and appreciation of art and discover the different styles of illustration and culture of the illustrator. These are just some of the many reasons for using children's literature. Our main aim is to develop positive attitudes in children towards language learning and towards their appreciation of literature.

The storybook is introduced on day one of the course in order to provide a context for the children's work. Children are informed that the week will end with a presentation of the story to their parents. This provides them with a concrete objective to work towards. The presentation also provides an ideal opportunity for us to showcase our methodology based around children's literature and to make contact with parents. Both children and parents are very proud of the performance as it values their work and allows them to build their confidence in English.

We are very pleased to share with you a small selection of stories we have used recently in our centre to address different aspects of diversity. We have created story notes to provide suggestions on how to exploit the storybooks which can be used as they are or can be adapted to your own context as per your time available, your course aims and structure as well as your children's needs and interests. We hope you and your children enjoy the storybooks and we would love to hear about your own favourite titles, especially those that help raise children's awareness of diversity.

Gail Ellis  
Teaching Centre Manager

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Teaching Centre, Paris

Age group	Level	Title/Description	Main language areas	Diversity themes	Main outcomes
5/6	A1	<p><b>Peas</b> is a story which helps young children understand how a pea gets from a peapod onto a plate. The story shows how peas are grown and what happens to them once they are picked. Peas are processed and transported all over the world via different forms of transport: trucks, trains, boats and planes until they arrive in shops, are bought and cooked for supper. The two main characters, Pete and Penelope Pea, finally arrive in a home to feed a family but the children don't want peas! A story that evokes questions about ecology, the environment and nutrition.</p> <p><b>Peas!</b> Andrew Cullen (author), Simon Rickerty (Illustrator) Puffin Books ISBN 978-0-141-50258-8 Story notes by Nicky Francis</p>	<p>Life cycle of plants</p> <p>Vegetables</p> <p>Numbers</p> <p>Colours</p> <p>Transport</p> <p>Likes/dislikes</p>	<p>Developing awareness about healthy food</p> <p>Developing awareness of differences in culinary traditions around the world</p>	<p>Conducting a seed growth project</p> <p>Singing a song "10 little green peas"</p> <p>Giving a presentation of the story</p>
5/6	A1	<p><b>The Very Busy Spider</b> is a story which describes a spider's day. A spider is flown onto a farmyard fence and she starts to spin a web. The other animals ask if she wants to play but in every case "<i>The spider didn't answer. She was very busy spinning her web</i>". The book is touchable and the strands of the spider's web are embossed onto the page so children can follow them with their fingertips. The book allows for work on raising awareness about children who are visually impaired. Beautifully illustrated by Eric Carle.</p> <p><b>The Very Busy Spider</b>, Eric Carle, Hamish Hamilton ISBN 0241 11430 6 Story notes by Nicky Francis</p>	<p>Farmyard animals and places</p> <p>Spider-related vocabulary</p> <p>Animal body parts</p> <p>The senses</p> <p>Traditional games using a blindfold</p>	<p>Raising awareness of visual impairment</p> <p>Finding out about Braille</p>	<p>Making a touchy feely book</p> <p>Making a spider and a web</p> <p>Singing a song "Spider in the web"</p> <p>Giving a presentation of the story</p>

7/8	A1	<p><b>Rain</b> tells the story of the rain cycle in the African savannah from scorching drought to frenzied rainfall. The story begins as the dry season is ending. Each animal reacts to a sensory perception to predict the change of weather and the coming rainy season. They smell, hear, see, feel and taste the approach of rain. Each animal passes on its prediction of rain in a cumulative text. After the rain comes, they enjoy the benefits it brings. Then the cycle repeats. The story gives a sense of what life is like in the hot, dry African savanna and the effect rain has on the landscape. This is done with minimal text via onomatopoeia and action verbs. The predictive and repetitive text encourages group participation and discussion of weather patterns, seasons and the five senses. Manya Stojic blends big bold type and illustrations painted with bold, thick colourful brush strokes to depict the dry heat and the pleasure of the downpour.</p> <p><b>Rain</b>, Manya Stojic, David Bennett Books ISBN 1-85602-413-X Story notes by Sam Deans</p>	<p>Colours</p> <p>African animals</p> <p>Weather and seasons</p> <p>The senses</p> <p>Abilities</p>	<p>Developing awareness and knowledge of differences in climatic cycles throughout the world</p> <p>Developing awareness and knowledge of differences in animals and the environment throughout the world</p> <p>Valuing different abilities within the class</p>	<p>Making an African animal booklet</p> <p>Participating in sensory experiments</p> <p>Producing a flip book to demonstrate seasonal transitions</p> <p>Giving a presentation of the story</p>
7/8	A1	<p><b>Little Beauty</b> is a sophisticated multi-level and multi-dimensional exploration into the depths of friendship, inner and aesthetic beauty and the complexities of communication. Based on a true story of a gorilla who has learnt how to use the ASL (American Sign Language), and inspired by the traditional tale of Beauty and the Beast, <i>Little Beauty</i> takes its readers on an artistic journey of self-discovery and self-expression. Browne expertly uses colour to express emotions as he explores the challenges of expressing yourself when you don't speak the same language as the people around you. He ultimately illustrates how communication can transcend barriers and how friendship always overcomes.</p>	<p>Friendship-related vocabulary</p> <p>Emotions</p> <p>Colours</p> <p>Verbs related to communication</p> <p>Art-related vocabulary through developing visual</p>	<p>Raising awareness of sign language</p> <p>Evoking challenges of communicating with other people and expressing difficult emotions</p> <p>Raising awareness of differences</p>	<p>Making a colour emotion wheel</p> <p>Making a class poster based on friendship and differences</p> <p>Creating a picture in the style of a famous artist</p> <p>Writing a poem based on a picture</p>

		<p><b>Little Beauty</b>, Anthony Browne, Walker Books ISBN 978-1406319309 Story notes by Jo Bertrand</p>	<p>literacy</p>	<p>between people and valuing those differences</p> <p>Building friendships</p>	<p>Giving a presentation of the story</p>
9/10	A1	<p><b>Tusk Tusk</b> is excellent book to introduce racism, prejudice and tolerance to children. It is a story about a time when elephants came in two colours: black or white. They loved all other creatures - but each set wanted to exterminate the elephants that were not the same as themselves. Peace-loving elephants ran and hid in the deepest jungle, and battle commenced. The war-mongers succeeded in annihilating each other. For a long time it seemed that there were no elephants in the world at all, not of any colour. But then the descendants of the peace-loving ones emerged from the jungle, who were now all grey.</p> <p><b>Tusk Tusk</b>, David McKee, Andersen Press ISBN 978 184 270 579 7 Story notes by Nayr Ibrahim</p>	<p>Numbers</p> <p>African and Asian elephants</p> <p>Adjectives and opposites</p> <p>Comparatives</p>	<p>Developing awareness of similarities and differences</p> <p>Developing tolerance</p> <p>Becoming aware of racism and prejudice Developing curiosity</p>	<p>Doing a project using Internet and producing a poster on elephants</p> <p>Singing a song: 'Peace loving song' based on 'We are the world'</p> <p>Giving a presentation of the story</p>
9/10	A1	<p><b>Susan Laughs</b> is a short story told in rhyming couplets using the simple present. The story describes a range of common emotions and activities experienced by a little girl, Susan. She swims with her father, works hard in school, plays with her friends, rides a horse. It is not until the end of the story that we discover that Susan is a wheelchair user. When looking back through the book, we notice that Susan is never unassisted but we do not realise any of this until it is brought to our attention in the final illustration. There are only a few words in this plotless story which is told with great warmth but without sentimentality. It delivers a powerful</p>	<p>Action verbs</p> <p>Adjectives for emotions and feelings</p> <p>Abilities</p> <p>The senses</p>	<p>Raising awareness of disability</p> <p>Accepting differences in a positive light</p>	<p>Making a personalised or class book based on the story</p> <p>Singing a traditional song "If you're happy ..."</p> <p>Carrying out a project: our</p>

	<p>message and provides a positive image of children with a disability. It focuses on Susan's abilities rather than on the things by which she is limited and shows that she is like all children, she is good, she is bad, she is strong, she is weak. Susan is an active, feisty little girl whose physical disability is never seen as a handicap.</p> <p>This story can be used as an excellent classroom tool to facilitate conversations and explore questions and concerns about disability. The book could also be easily tailored to talk specifically about a particular child by simply changing the name as you read the story.</p> <p>Susan Laughs was winner of the NASEN Special Educational Needs Book Awards in 2000.</p> <p><b>Illustrative style and cultural information</b>  The story is illustrated by the British illustrator, Tony Ross, who uses pastel crayon and pencil to create expressive pictures. There are two words a page so the book relies on the illustrations. The illustrations are lively and thoughtful and help children recognize their own feelings and experiences by identifying with Susan's emotions, feelings and achievements. Children are quickly engaged by the rhythm of the text and the interest created by the illustrations.</p> <p>On closer inspection the illustrations contain abundant details such as patterned wallpaper and curtains, funny portraits on walls and rural, industrial and seaside landscapes plus home and classroom scenes from England.</p> <p><b>Susan Laughs</b>, by Jeanne Willis and Tony Ross, Red Fox, ISBN 0-09-940756-6</p>			<p>senses</p> <p>Making a collage of famous people with disabilities</p> <p>Giving a presentation of the story</p>
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		Story notes by Gail Ellis with additional worksheets by Jo Bertrand			
9/10	A2	<p><b>Is it because?</b> skilfully addresses the issue of bullying. It tells an objective story that succeeds in engaging sympathy for both the bully's victim and the bully himself.</p> <p>The story is structured around the question, <i>Is it because?</i> and told in rhyme, <i>Is it because he's got silly names? Is it because he's no good at games?</i> A small boy asks his pet dog why a bully is picking on him. After many, <i>Is it because</i> questions, the little boy comes to the conclusion that Peregrine Ffrogg is unhappy, has no friends and is jealous of him, <i>Is it because he'd rather be me!</i> The questions he asks make him think and lead him to a greater understanding of himself and of the bully. Is it because the bully is a victim, too?</p> <p><b>Is it because?</b> Tony Ross, Andersen Press ISBN 1-84270-296-3 Story notes by Gail Ellis and piloted by Julia Diallo</p>	Personal descriptions Abilities Cause and effect, problems and solutions Friendship Similes	Becoming aware of similarities and differences  Understanding the behaviour of a bully and the reasons for bullying  Valuing friendship	Giving a presentation of the story  Singing a Friendship song  Making a friendship tree and display  Making an anti-bullying poster and display
9/10	A1	<p><b>What if?</b> Is a story about recycling and is structured around the question <i>What if ....?</i> Children follow the journey of a thrown-away bottle and are encouraged to think about several different scenarios: "<i>What if, you found the bottle and put a message inside?</i>" The book is also an information book and each page is full of fascinating items to discuss and think about. Children are made aware of things that can be recycled and made into other useful goods and there is a recipe for making paper at the back of the book. This book provides an ideal starting point for working on the theme of recycling.</p> <p><b>What if?</b> Mick Manning and Brita Granström, Franklin Watts ISBN 0 7496 3292 5</p>	The environment  Beach-related vocabulary  Recycling  Prepositions of place  Imperatives	Raising awareness of the journey of a piece of litter  Raising awareness of products which can and can't be recycled.  Learning about the erosion process	Singing a song about recycling  Singing a traditional song  Carrying out a scientific experiment  Making a leaflet on beach safety  Giving a

		Story notes by Julia Diallo		Considering safety on beaches	presentation of the story
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Other titles we have used to promote different aspects of diversity:

- **The Kangaroo from Woolloomooloo** – to develop awareness of other countries where English is spoken and of animals which are indigenous to a specific country.
- **My Cat Likes to Hide in Boxes** – to develop awareness of other cultures and to break down stereotypes and value national identities
- **The Clever Tortoise** – to develop awareness of world cultures and to focus on equality and respect for people who are different
- **Something Else** – to develop respect for and acceptance of people who are different to oneself and to develop an ability to empathize with others
- **Princess Smartypants** – to promote equal opportunities by questioning gender stereotypes
- **Jim and the Beanstalk** – to develop awareness that certain faculties weaken with age and of ways to improve quality of life, to understand the importance of helping people

Story notes on the above titles can be found in *Tell it Again! The New Storytelling Handbook for Primary Teachers*, Longman