

Top tips for using picture books (1)

Of course, any teacher could come up with an activity linked to a book. The key is to think about activities that will illuminate the meaning, help children engage at a deeper level and enter the world of the story. Here is a whole alphabet of activities that should spark your children's imagination:

- A** Show the front/back cover. Ask: *What sort of story is this? What might happen? Tell the story to a partner based on the cover image or start from the title.*
- B** Read through and pause every so often. Ask: *What is going to happen next? Write, tell or draw the next page, then discuss.*
- C** Invite the children to discuss what they enjoyed about the book or what it reminded them of or meant to them.
- D** Explore links and connections. Ask: *Can you find where the story repeats itself? Are there links between this story and our lives, or between this story and other stories?*
- E** As a class list possible questions, such as things we are not sure about and would like to discuss. List the questions and then choose the ones that would be most fruitful to talk about.
- F** Role-play a scene immediately after the book has finished or before the story starts. Alternatively, select an image from the middle of the book. Ask: *What is happening? What might happen immediately before and after?*
- G** Ask children to draw a map of the story and retell in their own words. Change the nature of a

character or alter a key event.

- H** Cover the dialogue with a sticky note before inviting the children to draw a speech bubble and to write, then dramatise the conversation.
- I** Pause the reading and 'freeze-frame' the page, then interview each character that appears on it. Ask: *What are you thinking/feeling/hoping will happen next? What are you regretting?* Alternatively, use thought bubbles to explore the above.
- J** Initiate a group performance using expression.
- K** Use 'what if' statements to raise different possibilities in the narrative.
- L** Re-enact the story by creating a whole-class physical map, using children to represent parts of the story. Then interview bystanders or even objects in role as observers of the story – what did they see happen?



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Top tips for using picture books (2)

- M** Use percussive instruments and ask children to work in groups to set the story to simple rhythms and musical patterns.
- N** With the whole class create a dance to accompany a story, such as the 'rumpus' in *Where the Wild Things Are* (HarperCollins).
- O** Invite the children to illustrate or create a wall map (using lining paper). Use print-making or patterning to accompany a tale, picking up on an aspect in the story or images.
- P** Let the children choose how they will respond to a text – and add to your own repertoire of possibilities from their ideas.
- Q** Use a shoebox to create a diorama of a key scene.
- R** Fill a story bag with objects or puppets and a map linked to a story, so that children can take the book home and explore the story through play.
- S** Retell the story in small groups with some children playing a role and others providing the narrator's voice.
- T** Display selected images and ask them if they can work out what might happen on the pages before and after. Alternatively, each group is given a picture and develops a telling of the story for that page as they see it. Then, the whole class performs their section of the story in order to see how well the story flows. Another option is to show three images from different parts of the story. Ask: *In which order should the images be placed – and why?*
- U** In role as a character, encourage children to step out of the tale and interact in a different environment or scene. For example, join in with 'tea-time' at the three bears' cottage.
- V** On the first reading use sticky notes to cover key words in a story. Let the children discuss what they think the words might be, or what the effect on the reader will be for their choice.
- W** Rewrite a page but add extra description to compensate for withdrawing a picture. With the class compare the original page with the rewritten page.
- X** Show the class just the pictures in the story. Can the children tell the story using only the images?
- Y** With the children make a 3D model of something from a story, such as objects or settings.
- Z** Provide costumes or hats for the children to use in a role play.

