

in the classroom



Most children were able to follow the journey across the continent along the Silk Road as they listened to the stories, and the pictorial element helped them understand. The presence of children from Afghanistan in the class enriched the discussion and gave these children a special authority.

Getting started

The teaching sequences give detailed lesson plans, each focusing on a particular book. They demonstrate how children can investigate the meaning of a text through whole-class, group and paired reading as well as through drama and work in other parts of the curriculum.

Each teaching sequence describes the book, gives relevant national curriculum and primary national strategy references, and lists useful resources. The sequences are designed to last for several sessions and include detailed descriptions of possible activities and ways of talking about the book. All the sequences have been tried out with children in years 3 and 4.

After the first reading of the book, a Spanish-speaking child in the class volunteered, something she had never done before, saying 'I speak Spanish!'

Tales Told in Tents (Sally Pomme Clayton) is based on the storytelling traditions and ways of life of Central Asia. The tales relate to other traditional tales about trickery and courage, with emphasis falling strongly on characterisation and theme.

The Village that Vanished (Ann Grifalconi) narrates a group's escape from capture from slavers, conveying the story as much through the pictures as through the words.

La Mariposa (Francisco Jiménez) is a contemporary story about a Mexican boy starting a new school where nobody speaks his language. The main character's development is paralleled by the emergence of a butterfly.

Finding out more

The following materials from the Reading Differences project are available to download from the QCA website (www.qca.org.uk/english):

- introductory leaflets for years 3 to 4 and years 5 to 6
- teaching sequences for some of the books on the booklist (the years 3 and 4 books are *La Mariposa*, *Tales Told in Tents*, *The Village that Vanished* and *A Nest Full of Stars*).
- an annotated booklist recommending novels, poems, traditional tales and picture books from around the world
- Teaching world literature in the primary school: a discussion paper. This explains the background to the Reading Differences project.

The teaching sequences can be adapted for use with other books.

More information about the English 21 project can be found at www.qca.org.uk/english21.

The Reading Differences materials have been developed in collaboration with the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education (CLPE).

Acknowledgements:

A Nest Full of Stars by James Berry, illustrated by Rachel Merriman. Published by Macmillan Children's Books 2002. Reproduced by permission of the author.

La Mariposa by Francisco Jiménez, illustrated by Simón Silva. Text © Francisco Jiménez 1998, illustrations © Simón Silva 1998. Published by Houghton Mifflin Company. Reproduced by permission of Houghton Mifflin Company. Parents' Choice Recommended Award 1999, Americas Commended List in 1999 (National Consortium of Latin American Studies Programs, USA).

Tales Told in Tents by Sally Pomme Clayton, illustrated by Sophie Herxheimer. Published by Frances Lincoln Ltd © 2004. Illustrations © Sophie Herxheimer 2004. Reproduced by permission of Frances Lincoln Ltd.

The Village that Vanished by Anna Grifalconi, illustrated by Kadir Nelson. Published by Ragged Bears Ltd. Reproduced by permission of Ragged Bears Ltd. English 4-11 award for the best children's picture book for 2002 for key stage 2 fiction (English Association), Notable Books for a Global Society 2003 (International Reading Association), Parents' Choice Award 2003 (Parents' Choice Foundation), NCS-CBC Notable Children's Book, Jane Adams Peace Award 2003.

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Reading Differences: Introducing children to world literature

Years
3-4



The Reading Differences project is about introducing children to a broader range of literature from around the world. It is about reading different books and about reading them differently.

Many teachers feel that the books children read should reflect the culturally diverse world we live in. In English 21, the recent national conversation about English in the 21st century, most people said that the literary heritage presented in schools should be broadened. The national curriculum already requires all children to study texts from a variety of cultures and traditions, and the primary national strategy recommends studying myths, legends, stories and poems from a range of cultures. QCA's Reading Differences project explored ways of choosing a wider range of texts and introducing them to children in key stage 2.

We still need to extend the range of books we read with children which present a cultural context that is unfamiliar. In this way we not only reduce the unfamiliarity but also make what is familiar less stable, more inclusive of difference.

Margaret Meek Spencer

Teachers working on the project devised eight teaching sequences, or book studies, for a series of lessons with children in years 3 to 6. The project also includes a booklist of high-quality international children's literature and a discussion paper about the broader issues around reading differences.

This leaflet is about working with children in years 3 and 4, and explains how teachers can introduce reading differences to the classroom.



Reading differences

Choosing different books

Reading different books – stories, poems, picture books and traditional tales set in different cultural contexts – opens windows on to other worlds, showing how other children grow up, get along with family and friends and cope with everyday life and extraordinary events. The Reading Differences booklist contains many suggestions to choose from.

When choosing a book from a different part of the world for study, it is important to look for authors who are so familiar with a particular culture or country that they can represent it accurately and with understanding. High-quality books that speak with an authentic voice and have themes that offer scope for discussion and reflection repay reading over a sustained period of time. The book chosen should help children learn about the literature and culture of another country as well as reflect on their own experiences. Reading one text gains from links to other reading, so the ideal book collection in a 21st-century classroom will have international literature alongside the well-loved classics of English children's literature.

Each book in this leaflet presents a different challenge, raises different issues for teachers and children and offers different ways in for readers.

- Identifying with characters.** The main character in *La Mariposa* starts a new school, something that all children have experienced.
- Looking at maps or pictures of the country.** The illustrated map in *Tales Told in Tents* helps children follow the journey of the story.
- Reading aloud and choral reading.** James Berry's poetry can be brought alive in this way and gives children access to new kinds of writing.
- Interpreting pictures.** The strong images in *The Village that Vanished* promote talk that highlights key points in the narrative for children.

Books for years 3 and 4 featured in this leaflet



A Nest Full of Stars (James Berry) uses standard English and Jamaican dialect in poems spanning experiences from rural Caribbean life to multicultural British playgrounds.

Reading books differently: teaching approaches

These activities are all important for developing children's knowledge of the book and discussing its language, themes and characters.

- Children should engage in depth with these books so that they can:
- respond to specific cultural and linguistic qualities
 - learn something about the book's country of origin
 - develop insights into different styles of presentation

Reading aloud

Reading aloud brings the text alive and helps children to hear characteristic rhythms and patterns. One class read James Berry's dialect poems and translated 'Smooth Skippin' into standard English, comparing and contrasting the effect.

Standard English	Jamaican dialect
It's much more understandable	You're learning the language
It's lost the accent	The words are different
It's lost the flow	It's got humour
It's not as funny	It's more exciting
It's duller	It's got more rhythm when it's read

Reading in pairs

Reading in pairs allows children to explore their joint understanding of a text and formulate questions about things they don't understand

There were fascinating questions that the children came up with themselves... children need to have time to speak their questions aloud, to get questions clearer for themselves, to think through ideas.

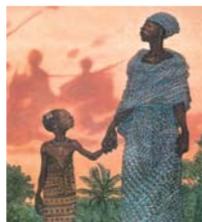


Reading images

Developing an ability to read images is important. Children should think about:

- how colour is used to create atmosphere
- how character is shown through facial expression
- how images are placed on the page to draw attention to ideas or themes
- repeated images and their effects on the narrative structure
- how the words and images create meaning together.

In *The Village that Vanished* the pictures tell the reader more than the words alone. Children discussed how the pictures of Njemile and Chimwala conveyed changing moods and dynamic shifts within the community as well as how the parallel images at the beginning and end of the story set the tale in its historical context



Talking about the book

As they read, children will have many ideas to discuss. Different activities will help them engage with structure, themes and characterisation, and explore their opinions about the book

Putting the book in context

Tales Told in Tents is set in a part of the world that is rarely visited and little understood. For this book a good way in is finding out where the stories come from and how they live in an oral culture.

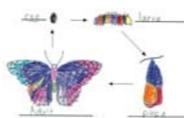


Another way of putting the book in context is to research the background of the writer. The author and illustrator of *La Mariposa* were both children of Mexican families working in the fields of California. Children made use of this knowledge in their reading and responses, as shown by their annotation of the picture of Francisco, suggesting what his thoughts were and the relevance of his home surroundings.

Graphical representation

Children's responses and interpretations can be represented through mind maps, diagrams or comparison charts. This kind of activity crystallises ideas and helps children see what they mean.

The children reading *La Mariposa* drew the *La Mariposa* and annotated it as they followed the development of Francisco's story.



Drama and work in role

These are active ways of learning and of understanding and interpreting texts. Bringing a text to life involves thinking about characters, dialogue, narration and atmosphere. Children reading *The Village that Vanished* thought about the viewpoints in the story and what the effect would be if it was told from a different viewpoint. They then staged a debate that foregrounded the moral issues in the story.

Girl (as Njemile): Do you really want to die before you've lived? I think not. We must take the huts apart - we can escape across the river. If we don't go there there's no future for us here, we shall all be taken.

A woman: I'm leaving because the children need to be protected, we can always come back here. If we stay here the slavers will kill us with their long guns.

Child: We were brought up here, how can we go? I'm scared to leave, I can't cross the river.

Boy (as Chimwala): I am like a stone, I'll stay. The crocodile doesn't eat a withered snake.

Teachers can use different ways of reading to get to know the book with the whole class, including reading aloud, reading in pairs and reading images.

Using pictures

Drawing a storyboard or story map helps children see how a story is put together and how one episode follows from another.



When reading a book in which illustrations are a prominent feature, as in *The Village that Vanished*, children can base their retellings on pictures - either the ones from the book or ones they have drawn themselves.

Thinking about language and oral storytelling

Considering specific choices of words, sentences of different lengths or particular rhyming patterns enables children to reflect on the meanings these

create. A group discussing *A Nest Full of Stars* and other poetry made a chart of the words and phrases that conveyed a vivid impression of village life. Oral retelling in a story circle is another way of understanding the structure of a story and something that arises naturally from reading a book like *Tales Told in Tents*. Discussion before, during and after reading included:

- how these texts show the traces of oral storytelling, for example by asking whether characters are instantly recognisable for their good or bad qualities
- how easy it is to make predictions about what might happen next
- what we gain from reading more than one of the tales
- the ways the tales end with a moral and the importance of this in context.

I found it amazing to see exactly how many common themes and patterns children found. They were able to brainstorm a good number of things to share, but almost as many came out again as the groups fed back what they had done. It brought home the importance of having the opportunity to think and revisit.

Finding out what children have learnt

Reflecting on and evaluating what they have read develops children's thinking. The teaching sequences end with children summing up what they have learnt about a text and its background, or expressing their interpretation through performing parts of the text. This evaluation period is also an opportunity to relate the new reading to more familiar texts.



I've learnt more about how to look for a wider range of texts. The teaching sequence involved things that I might not have done if left to myself and I've enjoyed trying them out. It's been very good for speaking and listening and for getting a sense of cultural traditions. It's helped their writing too - new words and phrases keep coming out. When they did the story mapping they were pulling out phrases from the text. They wanted to show the place where Abikanile danced across the stones. We had big discussions about the ancestors: what does it mean when 'god is all around'?

Reading journals

Keeping reading journals or notebooks can give children space to respond to texts independently and develop their responses over time. *La Mariposa*, or any book in which different languages are used, can prompt children to use notebooks to record examples of new and intriguing words, expressions and scripts. Where teachers write back, a reading journal provides opportunities for other forms of dialogue around the text. The class reading *A Nest Full of Stars* used small notebooks over one week to record 'secret' observations based on the section 'From My Sister's Secret Notebook'. They used these observations to write poems of their own.

