

Over in the meadow

This is a story some children may be familiar with. Liz Rhodes, a primary school consultant from Exeter, discusses how to teach this version of it with its new twists and details

You will need

- A copy of *Over in the Meadow*.
- Also small copies or the verses printed on individual pages.
- List of animals and habitats from the text.
- Copies of 'the dog' passage.
- 'Magic e' display heading.

This week's topics will include: Habitats; verbs and past tenses; magic 'e'; adjectives and adverbs; onomatopoeia; performance.

DAY ONE

Shared reading

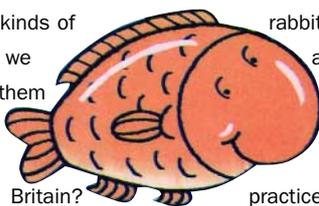
Show the cover of the book to the class and ask whether anyone knows the story.

Explain that it is a traditional story, and therefore no author has been named. The illustrator has had the responsibility of putting the book together and has drawn the different creatures in his own way.

Talk about the style of the drawings. Are they realistic or cartoony? Do the children think the meadow would be in our country, or somewhere else?

Look at the kinds of animals. Do we

- have them all in Great Britain?
- What do the



children think a meadow is? Is there one anywhere near the school? If not, where do they think is the nearest place where you might find at least some of the wild creatures (in a park, maybe)?

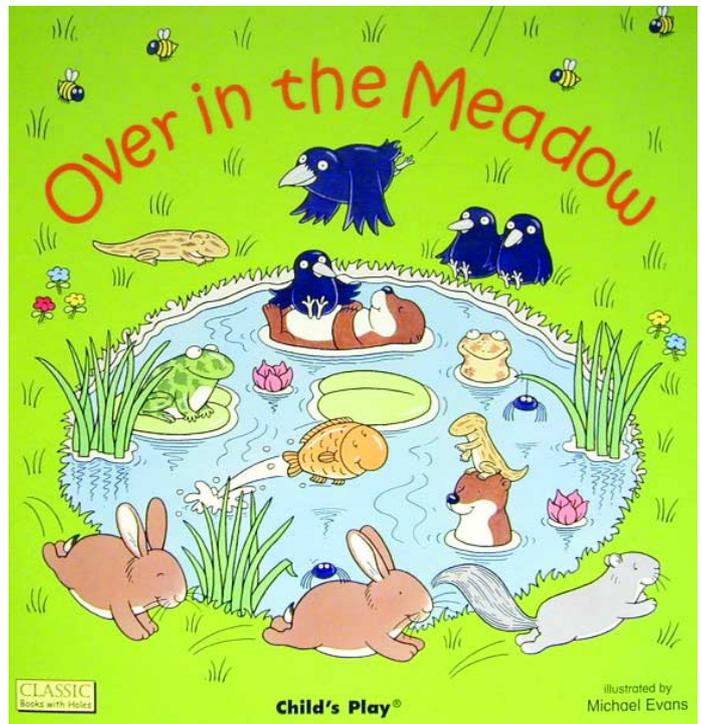
Some schools have conservation areas, and you might find some of these creatures in there.

Look at the inside title page and explain that the name of the publisher is there, together with the ISBN number, which is the way of finding out where the book comes from. Now read the whole book through with the children.

They are sure to want to join in; the first line of each verse is always the same (*Over in the Meadow*) and the third line describes the mother and what kind of animal is featured.

On the page opposite each verse is a picture of the meadow with a hole showing the baby animal(s), and this works cumulatively until eight, nine and 10, which are all on one page.

When we get to seven little rabbits, they are displayed with all the preceding animals and their mothers, who appear for the first time. Plenty of opportunity for practice with counting and adding on one.



Word level

Concentrate on spreads one and two (toads and fish). Ask the children to tell you what they know about where toads and fish live.

How are toads different from frogs? (They are both amphibians – can live in water or on land – but frogs have smooth, moist skin, while most toads have dried, warty skins.)

What is the difference between winking and blinking (one or two eyes, blinking is involuntary). Practice doing both and when you are looking at the fish talk about different kinds of swimming strokes that we can do. What does a fish use for swimming? (Fins, tail and gills.)

Independent activity

Have prepared on the whiteboard random lists of the animals and their habitats (toad, sand, fish, water, squirrel, tree, otter, reeds, bee, hive, crow, nest, rabbit, burrow, lizard, wall, frog, pond, spider, web).

Ask the children to draw four animals in their habitats and write a sentence about them. You could make a writing frame: 'The

... lives in a ...' for those who need it.

Plenary

Discuss the children's work. Ask what our habitat is. What do we need from a habitat?

DAY TWO

Shared reading

Read through the book again, encouraging the children to join in, showing the appropriate numbers with their fingers. Ask them to think about the doing words as they are reading. What do the doing words tell us about the creatures? (How they move, eat, sound.)

Word level

Have a prepared column of the verbs used in the story (live, wink, blink, say, run, swim, leap, nibble, hide, dive, burrow, buzz, hum, caw, call, taste, hop, bounce, bask, croak, splash, shine, spin). Ask the children if they can explain how they can change a verb to say that something has happened. Yes, you usually add 'd' or 'ed'.

Go through the list, with the children's help, adding 'd' and

'ed' as appropriate. They may notice that it doesn't always work, so at the end come back to the ones that are so far unchanged (say, run, swim, leap, hide, hop, shine, spin). Find out how many of these they automatically know and fill in the gaps with them. Note that with words that end with a vowel and then a single consonant, the consonant is doubled before 'ed' (hum, hop).

Independent activity

Ask the children to rewrite the following passage to show that the events happened in the past.

'The dog wags his tail and barks as he goes into the garden. He sees the cat and chases it up the tree. The cat is stuck on a branch and cannot get down. The fire brigade arrives and uses a long ladder to rescue the cat.'

Plenary

Go through the above passage with the children, asking them whether they noticed any unusual changes (went, saw, was, couldn't). Explain that these past tenses don't follow a special rule, but they are learned naturally through talking, listening and reading.

DAY THREE

Shared reading

Read through the text again, encouraging the children to fill in

the numbers before you say them.

Word level

Make a list of the vowels and the words 'man', 'pin', 'con', 'fin', 'wad', 'hid', 'hop' and 'rat' on your whiteboard.

Ask the children to say the vowel names with you as you point to each one. Tell them that all words have to have a vowel in them ('y' is sometimes counted as a vowel in 'my' and 'by', for example). Explain that 'e' is special because it can make the other vowels change from their usual sound to their name sound.

Read the words with the children and then add an 'e' to each one in a different coloured ink. Read the words again and explain that not only has the sound changed, but the word now means something else.

Independent activity

Tell the children that you need their help to make a 'magic e' display. The heading on it will be 'magic e makes a vowel say its name' and you want the children to find more pairs of words to go with the ones you have already looked at. Encourage them to hunt for words in their reading books, in the book corner and on displays round the room.

Plenary

Share the words that the children

have found and prepare them for display. You could type them out boldly on the computer as the findings are discussed, and have an instant display.



think again about what each creature does. Think about describing words, phrases and verbs.

DAY FOUR

Shared reading

Tell the children that as you read the text through again, you want them to look for describing words. They should be able to read most of the book with you by now.

Word level

Ask the children which describing words they noticed. Make two headings on the whiteboard: 'things' and 'doing and being', and put the words offered under the appropriate heading.

Explain that these words are important because they help you to make pictures in your head, to understand more fully what is happening and what it is like. Show them that there are also describing phrases such as 'in the sand in the sun' and 'where the stream runs blue'.

Independent activity

Working in twos or threes, ask the children to make lists of as many words and phrases as they can to describe each kind of creature and habitat in *Over in the Meadow*.

Plenary

Using the children's work as models, write together as full a description as you can of the school grounds, using adverbs, adjectives and adverbial and adjectival phrases.

DAY FIVE

Shared reading

Read the text through for a final time, and ask the children to

Word level

Look at the 'sound' words this time (croak, caw, buzz). Do these words sound like the noise they are expressing? Think of some other words which describe animal sounds.

Have a quick game of animal families, in which each child is given an animal sound and has to make that sound until s/he finds the other members of the family – noisy, but fun and a novel way of grouping children.

Independent activity

When the groups have all found each other, explain that you want each group to take one of the verses in the story (or select verses if you don't have enough groups). One child is to be the narrator, while the other two enact the verse with actions and sound effects.

Plenary

Assemble the groups in order for a performance. Remind the children of the importance of speaking up and facing their audience. When the performances have been delivered, discuss the merits of presenting a poem in this way and find out how the children feel about acting. **5to7**



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