

Teacher Information for Collaboration Comprehension Play-Reading Worksheets

A Project Book with quality paper is needed, ideally with a lined page on the right and a blank page on the left. The printed-out worksheets are pasted on the left side page. Each story therefore has a double spread.

The lined page is on the right is for written answers. Drawing tasks can be done on blank paper, cut out and then pasted on the lined page. An index page can be written 'on the go' on the inside front cover.

Most of the worksheets and marking are done by the children at their own pace. Any one worksheet can be completed in a single lesson, or be spread over several days.

The teacher is available for advice, to encourage, teach missing areas of understanding on the spot, and monitor all buddy partners while they work. The teacher initials each completed page and then records the quality and standard of the work for each member of the class, noting those who need reinforcement or extension work.

Stories for Partners are read out-loud in turn and spoken in voices that change to suit each character.

Partner discussions are recommended for the worksheets rather than cluster classroom groups for these reasons:

1. Discussions are less likely to be ridiculed in a partnership because by definition, collaborative group dynamics are very different to those of partners. Groups invariably set up a hierarchy of power of who takes over the job as leader, who sits back and leaves the work to others, who feels physically at risk of verbal attack by an aggressive member of the group, and who is too afraid to say anything because they cannot read or understand what they have to do and so have to surreptitiously copy, knowing that someone is going to pounce on their 'dumbness' immediately. Serious bullying can start from such beginnings such as these.
2. Collaboration skills are rarely taught or monitored closely by the teacher. Young children are too young psychologically to be able to collaborate effectively with others. (Many adults cannot collaborate even for an hour-long meeting, let alone all day, every day).
3. Having to defend a viewpoint does not fit well with most young children. It requires emotional stamina, the vocabulary and the background knowledge to defend a viewpoint. They will quickly become more worried about being ridiculed than in learning. This is especially pertinent for the less secure child.
4. The bossy know-all child will be less likely to take over all conversations because there is no wider audience to impress, while in a partnership setting, the shyer child, once trust has been established, will feel safer and more willing to participate because they are on the same side, contributing to the same tasks to the greater benefit of each other.
5. It is recommended that the buddy partner pairs sit apart from other buddy partners, (but facing the watchful teacher), so that speaking to each other can be done in normal voices. (Group collaboration in a roomful of other groups will be a noisier place because speaking across a wider space requires louder voices. For children uncomfortable with noise or who have even a slight hearing problem, group seating of more than two will add unnecessary and distressing learning obstacles.)
6. Partnerships can change for each worksheet, so that by getting to know class colleagues in many one-to-one teams of two, current or potential irritations can melt away because of the closer physical sitting positions - and the dependence on each other to do the set tasks. Friendship instead of friction is the result.
7. A quieter room is good for everyone.