


The pool of possibilities ...

The sample lessons below show the wide range of creative teaching ideas that can spring from just two mini-story sentences. The teacher using the Reading Works Series has the freedom to devise their own content and methods to best suit the children in their class –much of it oral and oral, because reading is all about sound.

<p>b</p> <p>balloon</p>		<p>'At last a breeze has begun to blow our beautiful big balloon.'</p> <p>'Wow! Look at the number of baby-sized people down below!'</p>
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Ideas to try: *The first person technique is used for ease of explanation only. Teachers/parents would use their own words.*

- It looks to me that some letters are tall and others are small in the word *balloon*. Can you measure with your eyes the height difference between the tall letters and the small letters? What have you noticed?

- Look at my mouth and listen carefully to hear what I do. [Say *buh* – *balloon*, *buh* – *baby*, *buh* - *big* etc together several times. Did you hear something interesting?
- I'll read the sentences to you and then you read them back to me. Follow my hand because I might go slowly or I might go quickly ... or I might even suddenly stop.
- What does your mouth look like when you say the letter *bee* and the sound *buh*? Is there much difference? Look at the person beside you as you say them slowly. [Small mirrors or a large wall mirror can be used if available.]
- I think the shape of the letter *bee* is a bit like a bat and a ball – like this ... [Draw the letter slowly and correctly to demonstrate its correct formation.]
- There are other letters in the alphabet that look a bit the same. Can you see any other letters in the prose that also have a stick and circle shape? (p as in *people* and d as in *down*.)
- Follow my hand and read these sentences in your mind. Watch closely because I'm going to suddenly stop and then take my hand away. Hold the word in your brain, but when I give you a silent signal, [head nod or similar], call out the word.
- Is there someone who would like to come out now and be the leader for this Stop on a Word game?
- I'm going to read the sentences again, but this time I'm going to change one word. Wait until I've finished and then tell me the different word. Does this new word have a *buh* in it? Did the *buh* come at the beginning, middle or end of the word?
- How many people do you think are speaking in this little story? [Read the text as two groups, then as two individuals and then as one person using different voices like an actor playing two parts.]
- How would the speakers say the same words if the picture had unhappy faces and there were dark clouds building up in the sky?

- Look at the word *balloon*. Has anyone noticed some double letters? Does anyone know their letter names or sounds? [Explore the answers.]
- Are there other words in the text that also have double letters side by side? Are the two *bee* letters in the word *baby* doubles?
- Is there another word which has two of the same letter not together but there nevertheless? (*Wow*).
- One of the w letters is a capital letter and the other one a small w. Why would that be?
- What do you think these marks mean? (Inverted commas, exclamation marks, hyphen, full stops). [Teach and explore.]
- How many capital letters are on this whole page?
- Hand up if your name starts with a capital letter. Why?
- What would happen if I wrote the first few words of the first sentence without the space between them?
- I'll write it again, but tell me where I need to put a space between the words. Also check to see if I make any other mistakes (such as no capital letter, short letters too tall, tall letters too short, spaces missing or in the wrong place). [This teaches observation and an understanding of detail.]
- Let's read the sentences again. Find a word you really like and tell me what it is. (Individuals.) Come out and point to it.
- Let's stand up and sing the Alphabet Song while we look at our Alphabet Strip with all the letters on it in order.

Further ideas for *b for balloon* in later lessons

- Can anyone read the sentences backwards? Let's all have a go in a low voice like a grizzly bear.

- Let's do it again in two groups, one word each, one group using a low voice and the other in a high voice. Slowly/quickly/alternately silently and vocalised etc
- What are some fancy ways we can read the sentences in their correct order? [Different voices, pace, pitch, tempi etc.]
- Watch me write the sentences. I'll do my very best not to make a mistake. However, I may write the words in a slightly different order (such as *A breeze has at last begun to blow out beautiful big blue balloon.*) Can anyone work out what I've written?
- The word *breeze* rhymes with *sneeze*. Aha! I can feel a poem coming on ... Mmmm ...

As I sat down on a hill in the breeze,
 I felt a cool chill, and then had to sneeze!
 Achoo!

- I'll say it again so that you can learn it as well. Oh – I keep forgetting it, so I'd better write it down to help me remember ... Say it back to me so that I write it correctly. I'm going to do my best writing, so say it slowly to give me enough time to form each letter well.
- Are there other words that you can think up that also rhyme with breeze? (trees, please, knees, wheeze, keys, fleas, sees, seas, bees, he's, she's, ease, these, tease, grease etc) [Write them on whiteboard as children think of them. Give clues to elicit more answers if necessary. Discuss variations in the spelling of the *eeze* sound but don't dwell on this aspect for too long.]

- Have a think while you look at these words, and perhaps you can choose two and then think up a sentence or even a poem using them. [Give quiet non-talking thinking time. Teacher should also think up more, and show via body language that thinking is being done.]
- Come out and render your sentence or poem like a famous actor with a loud voice if you think you've got a goodie. [Accolades and applause for each writer or poet who volunteers to perform their creation.]
- Talking of rhyming words, what about the word *look*? When you are out at Recess, think up some more and when you come in again, we'll see how many we have in our collection. (book, took, shook, hook, nook, cook, brook, rook, shook) [Write them on the board with much discussion on the initial sounds.]

More ideas for another if you want to go further:

- The word *last* is an interesting one, because if I change the middle vowel sound, I can make some entirely new words, such as: last, least, lost, list, lest, lust (for chocolate or a new computer ...).
- Have you ever had a numb hand when you sleep on it? What does *numb* mean? It's also a small word in the bigger word *number*. Something happens to the *buh* sound when I say *numb*. [No longer heard, so it has become a silent letter. This establishes that there are such things as silent letters without going any deeper at this stage.]
- Make up some different endings in your head to this sentence beginning: *At last the breeze has begun to blow our -*. I think mine is going to involve a ship of some sort ... [Teacher also participates in this exercise to model what is required. Go around the circle so that everyone has a chance to say their sentence. Best one gets a clap and a cheer.]
- When Year 6 comes in to visit us for shared story reading this afternoon, you can say your sentences to your Reading Buddy, so don't lose it but keep it in a safe spot in your head!

- Let's have a chat about hyphens. A hyphen, as in *baby-sized*, joins two words that need to go together so that they make sense. Both are needed to describe the next word, *people*. You can't have *baby people* or *faced people*, so they need the hyphen to join them so they function as one word. A dash, on the other hand, is a like quick run, as in *I must dash to the shop*, but it is also a punctuation mark that looks like this – to let the reader know to pause for a bit longer than a comma but not as long as a full stop. Keep an eye open for dashes and hyphens in books, and let me see your discoveries. [A hyphen is written so that it is as close as possible to the words on each side of it, but a dash must have a space on either side – like this.]
- At home tonight, draft in your mind a short true story describing a balloon experience you have had. Make it as entertaining as possible by using vivid descriptive words. Make every word count, avoid ums and ahs, and test it out loud on your family or your dog or a soft toy - and be ready to tell it tomorrow to your class buddy/around the circle [whatever suits].
- Look at the picture and the design on the balloon. This is called a harlequin pattern. In Handwriting today, copy the shape of the balloon and make a similar harlequin pattern but use your own choice of colours. Put the basket underneath and the sandbag weights hanging over the side. Clowns often wear a ...*what was that word again?* ... pattern.
- Why is there a rope ladder dangling off the basket?
- How does this sort of balloon work to be able to carry heavy people?
- Why are the people and the trees down below so small?

Care would need to be taken, of course, that the learners don't merely memorise the text from too many repetitions. To avoid this, different types of explorations would be used for the following pictures and their story sentences to avoid predictability. The aim is to stay interesting by adding novelty, keeping discussions vibrant and to the point.

Good teaching involves providing a balanced mixture of the visual, the auditory, the spoken and the written to build on the familiar before venturing onto the new.

That being said, it is also a feasible suggestion to say that children love repetition and the security of knowing what comes next, so this aspect should not be overlooked.

Enjoy!