Robert Hill

The BLACK CAT
Graded Readers Handbook

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GRADED READERS HANDBOOK

1 EXPANSIVE READING

It is [the Expansive Reading approach] that sets this series apart from the others and makes it in my view the best for developing appreciation of literature and instructing students in the culture and history of the English-speaking world.

David R. Hill, "Survey review: Graded readers"
in the ELT Journal 67/1 (1 January 2013)

Black Cat readers adopt an exciting approach which we call 'expansive reading' and which has earned critical praise in recent years.

Our objectives include expanding students' learning in all kinds of directions and in all kinds of ways and expanding their cultural horizons, as well as expanding the range of activities that teachers can do with their students. The term 'expansive reading' also distinguishes our approach from both intensive reading and extensive reading, and indicates that teachers have another choice than that of the stark 'either/or' suggested by the two poles of intensive and extensive reading.

Expansive reading aims to use the text that the students read as a springboard to explore all kinds of areas – linguistic, cultural and other – as we will now demonstrate. Activities which surround reading texts can focus on any of the ten areas listed below, and in the expansive reading approach all of them will receive attention during the course of a complete reader.

Ten areas that a reading text can explore:

1 Comprehension
2 Interpretation and evaluation
3 Listening, speaking and writing
4 Grammar
5 Vocabulary
6 CLIL
7 Culture and interculturality
8 Intertextuality
9 External certification practice
10 Using the Internet

1 & 2 Comprehension, interpretation and evaluation

Some people claim that comprehension tasks are of little use and/or unrealistic because we do not answer comprehension questions 'in real life'. We maintain, however, that before proceeding to more 'exciting' after-reading activities it is only sensible to check that everyone in class has no problems with the

'surface meaning' of a text and that any misunderstanding of explicit meaning has been cleared up. And it is certainly the case that in the 'real life' of the school or university student there are reading comprehension exams to be taken, so any practice is surely a good thing!

Interpretation (e.g. 'I think he/she did that because…') and evaluation (e.g. 'I liked/didn't like that part/character because…') activities involve productive skills as well as reading skills, and the importance of these is discussed immediately below.

3 Listening, speaking and writing

Reading leads quite naturally to the practice of the other language skills, and the presence of all four skills in our readers means that teachers in some parts of the world have opted to use Black Cat readers throughout the school year instead of a course book.

As all the texts are recorded, listening activities abound **[see page → 55]**. Regarding the skills of speaking and writing, it may seem obvious but it is still worth pointing out this fact: in order to practise speaking and writing one must have something to speak and write *about* – and good reading texts provide this in a way that is difficult to better.

4 & 5 Grammar and vocabulary

The grammatical structures and lexical items that are chosen for practice in Black Cat readers are always suggested by exponents in the text. The grammar activities generally attempt to practise the structures either in tasks that are to do with the events of the story or that involve the students' own world. Vocabulary is generally practised by encouraging the students to create relationships such as antonyms or word fields or through tasks such as word formation or gap filling. Games-based activities are common, too: just one example among many is crosswords, found at all levels, which check and recycle new vocabulary.

6 CLIL

'CLIL' or 'Content and Language Integrated Learning' (a term coined in 1994 by David Marsh and Anne Maljers) has given a significant new emphasis to ELT over the last 10 years or so: no longer should the contents of an ELT course be bland and unremarkable; students should learn about something interesting at the same time as learning English. In its 'strongest' form CLIL involves teaching a subject for a school year in a foreign language, although in 'weaker' forms it is also used to refer to short-term projects conducted in the foreign language.

The expansive reading approach means that information and activities which connect with subjects such as history, geography, science, art, social studies and so on will naturally feature in each reader. Opportunities for cross-curricular connections are regularly suggested by fictional texts, particularly in the case of history and geography: stories are *always* set in time and place, so history and geography are *always* subjects that we can explore. Indeed, giving students information about the setting of a story and the social background against which it was written might well be seen as necessary rather than just optional: why should we assume that a learner not from Britain who is about to read, say, *A Christmas Carol* already knows where and when the story is set, and what Victorian London was like? Furthermore, the learner might be interested in learning about Dickens's role as a social campaigner.

Information and activities relating to background and cross-curricular connections are found in four places in Black Cat readers:

- in the **introductions** to each reader
- in the **dossiers** – the factual, informative chapters in the fictional readers (between two and four per reader is the usual number) which explore settings, background or any topic which is interestingly related to the story
- in the **Internet projects**
- during the **pre-**, **while-** and **after-reading** activities.

As we have seen, connections with history and geography are always present. Connections with other subjects – science, social studies, art, music and so on – depend on the contents of the reader in question. One example among many must suffice! In *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* by Jules Verne (Reading & Training, Step Two) information and activities include: dinosaurs; geological time; fossils; volcanoes; runes and the runic alphabet; stories and films about fantastic journeys.

By presenting information clearly and attractively, Black Cats widen learners' horizons. ...

Black Cat have led the way ... in increasing [graded readers'] educational value by providing extensive background material.

David R. Hill, "Survey review: Graded readers" in the ELT Journal Volume 67/1 (April, 2008).

7 Culture and intercultural awareness

As we said above, a story always has a setting – a place and a time – and this already constitutes part of the **cultural background** contained in a text. But the cultural background of a text also contains all kinds of sociocultural features, knowledge of which is called **sociocultural knowledge**. According to the Common European Framework of Reference:

'... knowledge of the society and culture of the community or communities in which a language is spoken ... is of sufficient importance to the language learner to merit special attention, especially since ... it is likely to lie outside the learner's previous experience and may well be distorted by stereotypes.'

(CEFR: 5.1.1.2)

The CEFR then goes on to list some examples of features characteristic of societies and their cultures. The list is worth quoting in full, as it is a very useful checklist.

1 **Everyday living**, such as: food & drink; meal times; table manners; public holidays; working hours and practices; leisure activities (such as hobbies, sports, reading habits, the media).

2 **Living conditions**, such as: living standards (with regional, class & ethnic variations); housing conditions; welfare arrangements.

3 **Interpersonal relations** (including relations of power and society), for example with respect to: class structure of society; relations between sexes; family structures; relations between generations; relations in work situations; relations between public and police, officials, etc.; race and community relations; relations among political and religious groupings.

4 **Values, beliefs & attitudes**, in relation to such factors as: social class; occupational groups; wealth; regional cultures; security; institutions; tradition and social change; history (especially iconic people and events); minorities; national identity; foreign countries, states people; politics; arts; religion; humour.

5 **Body language** (knowledge of such behaviour is an example of sociocultural competence).

6 **Social conventions**, for example with regard to giving and receiving hospitality, such as: punctuality; presents, dress, refreshments, drinks, meals; behavioural conventions and taboos; length of stay; leave-taking.

7 **Ritual behaviour** in such areas as: religious observances and rites; birth, marriage, death; audience and spectator activity at performances; celebrations, festivals, dances, discos, etc.

It is interesting to observe how many of these features occur *naturally* in fiction: quite apart from its setting, which may be more or less prominent, a work of fiction will embody the behaviour and values of the culture it comes from. Indeed, it would be difficult to imagine a work of fiction that was *not* culturally specific in any way!

Of course, we do not point out or teach *all* the cultural features in a work of fiction to learners. That would be impractical, dull and often unnecessary: learners will *acquire* some knowledge of a foreign culture simply by reading.

But, we should bear in mind that:

• learners will sometimes *need* cultural information to understand the plot of a story;

• parts of a story can occasionally give us the opportunity to teach some sociocultural knowledge, a valid aim in itself;

• we can develop the learners' attitudes to 'otherness', the *awareness of and appreciation for* differences among human beings and human groups, as Howard Gardner defines 'the respectful mind' in his *Five Minds for the Future* (2007). Indeed, cultural features of the society in a story can usefully be compared with the culture(s) represented by the class. As the CEFR puts it:

> 'Knowledge, awareness and understanding of the relation (similarities and distinctive differences) between the 'world of origin' and the 'world of the target community' produce an intercultural awareness. [...]

> In addition to objective knowledge, intercultural awareness covers an awareness of how each community appears from the perspective of the other, often in the form of national stereotypes.'

(CEFR 5.1.1.3)

Both sociocultural knowledge and intercultural awareness are catered for in information and activities in the dossiers and the Internet projects, and are often also found during the pre-, while and after-reading activities.

8 Intertextuality

The academic term 'intertextuality' – the relationship between texts – was introduced into literary theory in 1966 by Julia Kristeva. The term is used in many ways. It can refer to deliberate allusions to a previous text by an author (as T. S. Eliot does in *The Waste Land*, or in the 'sampling' in modern pop songs which contain 'quotes' from previous songs). Whether a person reading a text recognises the allusions or not is a question of his/her knowledge (often literary knowledge) and this meaning of intertextuality is not really relevant to us in the language classroom.

Intertextuality also refers to the connection to other texts made by reader her/himself while reading the text in question, and it is this kind of intertextuality which is very useful in the language classroom. By other texts we mean other works of fiction, but also other genres such as films, musicals, poetry, songs, drama, artworks, and so on, and the texts can be many and various according to the culture of the reader who is reading the text.

Encouraging and enabling learners to make these connections is clearly useful for wider educational aims, and the usefulness of these connections as the basis for language activities lies in the fact that they automatically provide something – and almost always something *motivating* – to talk and/or write about. Just one example is how often film versions of classic stories are exploited .

Intertextuality, under the name 'text-to-text

connection', is one of the three kinds of connection-making identified by the American experts on reading comprehension Susan Zimmermann and Ellin Keene, authors of *Mosaic of Thought* (2007):

- **Text-to-Self Connection**: readers make personal connections with events or characters in the text; people they know, things they have done, places they have been, experiences they have had, etc.
- **Text-to-Text Connection**: readers connect events, characters or plot in the text with other texts and other genres of text (this can be considered as intertextuality).
- **Text-to-World Connection**: readers connect events, characters or themes in the text with real-life events, people or issues.

In Black Cat readers, learners are sometimes told what the text-to-text and text-to-world connections of a story are: this is done mainly in the introductions and dossiers. Sometimes the approach is inductive, and students are guided into discovering text-to-text and text-to-world connections by themselves: this kind of activity can be found in Internet projects, in activities following the dossiers, in the after-reading activities at the end of the readers, and occasionally during the reading activities in each chapter.

9 External certification practice

Activities in the pre- and while-reading phases are often in the style of the tasks in the Cambridge English and Trinity exams. So learners make predictions, check comprehension, practice structures and vocabulary and skills and so on, and at the same time become familiar with exam-style tasks: language improvement and exam practice are catered for simultaneously. A third element is also catered for, fundamental to the 'expansive reading' approach: the content of the activities may well be sociocultural background, a cross-curricular extension, details of the author's life or even a summary of an extra story by the author. So learners are intellectually stimulated and also *learn* something about the world. And if learners are not going to take Cambridge English or Trinity exams, the task-types in any case provide perfectly valid and common language activities.

10 Internet projects

Internet projects are ideal for mini-CLIL projects, researching sociocultural knowledge, facilitating intercultural comparisons, and exploring text-to-text and text-to-world connections. They are described in detail on .

The Tempest by W. Shakespeare, Reading & Training. Illustrated by Paolo D'Altan.

2 THE BLACK CAT SERIES OF READERS

It is the 24ᵗʰ of December — Christmas Eve — in Nuremberg and it is cold. There is a lot of snow on the houses and in the streets. There are Christmas markets everywhere with toys, decorations and Christmas sweets.

Black Cat readers range from very simple stories for young learners right up to authentic texts for high school and university students, and cover all points in between. Here are the main features of each series **[for grading criteria, see pages ➜ 15-23]**.

earlyreads

The **Earlyreads** series is for young learners from about 4 to 12 years of age. The series consists of a mixture of classic, traditional tales and original stories. Graded over 5 levels, they range from very elementary to A1 competence. All the readers are beautifully illustrated and include games and entertaining activities. All the stories are recorded **[for more on Earlyreads, see pages ➜ 69-71]**.

🌱 GREEN APPLE

The **Green Apple** series is intended for older young learners from about 7 to 14 years of age and is graded over 3 levels, from A1 to strong A2/early B1. Most of the readers are adaptations of classic stories, but there are also specially written original stories and a few non-fiction readers. All are lavishly illustrated and include: introductions; a wide variety of interesting activities to help comprehension and improve all the language skills; CLIL-style dossiers that focus on factual background material; multi-voiced, dramatized recordings in British or American English.

READING & TRAINING

The **Reading & Training** series follows on from Green Apple and is intended for young teenagers up to adult. There are 6 steps, ranging from A2 to early C1, with a substantial number of readers at steps 2 to 5 (which cover the popular B1 and B2 levels). Most of the readers are adaptations of classic stories, but there are also specially written original stories at levels A2 and B1. All the readers are beautifully illustrated and they are structured like Green Apple readers, though at a more sophisticated level, including: introductions; a wide variety of interesting activities to help comprehension and improve all the language skills; CLIL-style dossiers that focus on factual background material; multi-voiced, dramatized recordings in British or American English.

Using the Expansive reading approach [...] the thrust of the series is to make the classics of English literature available to learners and the background material is governed by that aim. Great care has been taken to provide accessible text and to source appropriate artwork, often famous works of art. I have learned much and found myself turning to the dossiers before reading the story.

The activities spread throughout each book are much the most interesting and enlightening

available. Modelled on exercises set in examinations, they draw for content on topics related to the theme and background of the story and help students both understand and appreciate the text.

David R. Hill, "Survey review: Graded readers" in the ELT Journal 67/1 (1 January 2013)

R&T Discovery

This series of factual readers at A1 and B1 levels covers a range of interesting subject matter, including famous people, cities, countries, and natural wonders. They follow the same structure as the **Reading & Training** readers, and the dossiers focus on the treatment of the subject in the arts.

READING SHAKESPEARE

This series, dedicated to presenting simplified versions of Shakespeare's plays, boasts more than 15 titles. They follow the same structure as the Reading & Training readers, and may also contain activities related to staging the plays. Play scripts for dramatization are included at the end of the readers.

This series is much the best attempt [at making graded readers of Shakespeare's plays] so far and the readers that have resulted from their approach are on a new and much higher level than anything previously attempted. In fact, they would assist English medium students at secondary and even university level.

The editor calls their approach Expansive Reading 'where the text becomes a springboard to improve language skills and to explore historical background, cultural connections and other topics suggested by the text'. Reading is informed by dossiers and Internet projects, while language exercises introduce new subject matter that aids understanding and appreciation. The text itself is well written, making meaning explicit often with the help of recapitulations. A short play script (fewer than ten pages) is provided which does not mimic the original words but concentrates on the main incidents and gives a voice to the initial text.

David R. Hill, "Survey review: Graded readers" in the ELT Journal 67/1 (1 January 2013)

INTERACT WITH LITERATURE

This series is a kind of 'Reading & Training plus', in that it moves students on to reading unsimplified texts. These books contain original literary texts from intermediate level upwards: unabridged short stories or extracts from novels, as well as complete unabridged plays, from English-speaking countries, designed to introduce students to the world of literature. Each volume concentrates on a particular theme or genre, and contains an introduction and a range of stimulating activities. Selected extracts are recorded in British or American English, and teacher's guides are available.

READING CLASSICS

This series of 19th and 20th century classics of British and American literature has a literary focus. Complete unabridged texts are accompanied by extensive introductions and a wide variety of activities encouraging students to respond to the text and explain their reactions. Selected extracts are recorded in British or American English, and teacher's guides are available.

The LIFE SKILLS series

What are Life Skills?

Life Skills can be found everywhere: from self development and life coaching books, to staff recruitment processes, and even in the classroom. They are transferable competences, recognised as essential for growth (initially personal and eventually professional), with the capability to instil positivity, versatility and readiness to face life's challenges. **Life Skills** have been defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as "abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life".

The core of **Life Skills** is made up of 10 competences, grouped in 3 macro-areas.

EMOTIONAL:
Self awareness
Coping with emotion
Coping with stress

SOCIAL:
Empathy
Effective communication
Interpersonal relationship skills

COGNITIVE:
Problem solving
Decision making
Critical thinking
Creative thinking

The Prince and the Pauper by M. Twain, Green Apple Life Skills. Illustrated by Roberto Tomei.
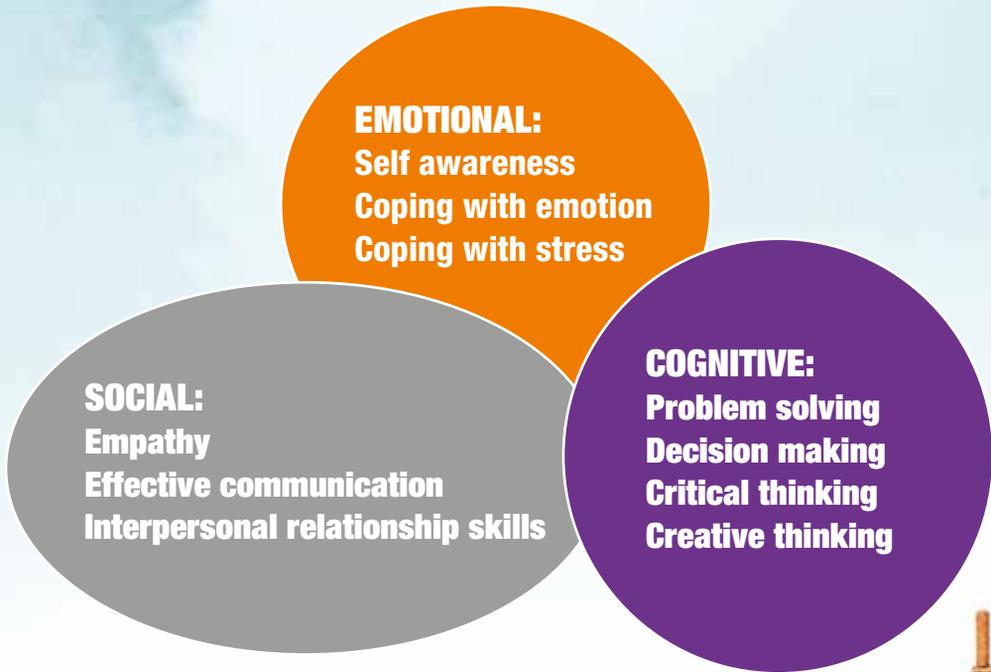
Life Skills can be taught to young people with the aim of **improving self-esteem** and **confidence**, and as indicated by the World Health Organization, the school is the ideal environment for such training. It is also recommended that in order for student's to develop these competences, they should be actively involved in the teaching-learning dynamic.

Methods used to facilitate this active involvement include working in small groups or pairs, brainstorming, role playing and debating. A lesson in Life Skills may begin from the need to explore specify situations where transversal skills are required.

Reading is also considered an excellent tool to introduce the concept of Life Skills. By identifying with the characters' stories, young readers increase their empathy and capacity to relate the experiences of others to their own personal lives.

R EADING & T RAINING | **LIFE SKILLS**

G REEN A PPLE | **LIFE SKILLS**

Through the study of foreign language, the Green Apple Life Skills and Reading & Training Life Skills series **stimulate personal reflection by drawing on the values evoked in literature**. The story unfolds uninterrupted, with illustrations that facilitate the understanding of the text. A moment of reflection is found at the end of each chapter: *Think!* exercises which invite students to consider the messages and values found in the story. These questions are designed to help students build a vocabulary of Life Skills, encouraging them to understand the most difficult words and stimulating confrontation with their own experience. A *Values and Feelings* **mind map** at the end of the book, asks the reader to conclude the morals and emotions that emerged in the story and compare them to their own personal experiences.

The series respects the target language levels of Green Apple and Reading & Training, and the following further activities enhance language learning:

- Before you read exercises for the complete story;
- CLIL style dossiers;
- chapter-by-chapter activities at the end of the story, which include comprehension, vocabulary building, grammar, writing and speaking;
- a section dedicated to listening comprehension;
- Surfing the Net activities for the realisation of small web quests;
- a section for the preparation of Cambridge English and Trinity Graded Examinations in Spoken English certifications.

Gulliver's Travels by J. Swift,
Reading & Training Life Skills.
Illustrated by Franco Rivolli.

3 THE LEVELS OF BLACK CAT READERS

One day I found a small bag from the ship with seeds in it. I decided to use it for my gunpowder so I emptied it outside my house. It rained a lot and about a month later I saw some young plants growing there.

Black Cat readers are aligned with the levels of the Common European Framework of Reference (often abbreviated to the 'Framework' or the 'CEFR') and to the levels required by internationally accredited examination boards, particularly the Cambridge English exams and Trinity Graded Examinations in Spoken English.

In the table on the next page, the descriptions in the Cambridge English exams column mean the following: **exam level** means that the level of the text and activities is at the level required by the exam indicated; **exam preparation** means that the text and activities are at a level which is below the level of the exam indicated (some more study is required) but the activities are in the style of the Cambridge English exams indicated, and so provide valuable exam preparation.

The alignment of the levels with the exam scores of **IELTS**, the Internet-based **TOEFL** exam (TOEFL iBT) and the **TOEIC** exam are indicative and purely for guidance: they do not attempt to represent an exact equivalence, only a very approximate one.

Robinson Crusoe by D. Defoe, Green Apple. Illustrated by Paolo D'Altan.

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Black Cat readers	CEFR	External Examination Boards	
		Cambridge Exams	Cambridge English Scale
EARLYREADS			
Levels 1-5	Below and up to A1	Starters and Movers	/
GREEN APPLE			
Starter	A1	Exam preparation: Flyers and/or Key	100-119
Step 1	A2	Exam level: Flyers and/or Key	120-139
Step 2	A2 / early B1	Exam level: Preliminary	130-145
READING & TRAINING; READING SHAKESPEARE and READING AND TRAINING DISCOVERY			
Step 1	A2	Exam level: Key	120-139
Step 2	B1	Exam preparation: Preliminary	140-150
Step 3	B1	Exam level: Preliminary	151-160
Step 4	B2	Exam preparation: First	161-170
Step 5	B2	Exam level: First	171-180
Step 6	C1	Exam preparation: Advanced	181-190
AUTHENTIC TEXT (i.e. texts with unsimplified language)			
Interact with Literature; Reading Classics	B2 / C1 / C2	Exam levels: First; Advanced; Proficiency	170-230

	IELTS	Trinity	TOEFL iBT	TOEIC
	/	1, 2	/	/
		1, 2		
		3, 4		
	3.0	4, 5		
	3.5	3, 4	30-56	Up to 325
	4.5	5	57-66	Up to 450
	5.0	6	67-86	Up to 550
	5.5	7	87-97	Up to 650
	6.0 to 6.5	8, 9	98-109	Up to 700
	6.5 to 7.0	10, 11	110-120	Up to 780
	6.5 up to 9.0	8, 9, 10, 11, 12	110 and above	850 and above

Heart of Darkness by J. Conrad, Reading & Training. Illustrated by Gianni de Conno.

4 HOW BLACK CAT READERS ARE GRADED

He smiled at me and said,
'I'm not as good as you are, David. I hate myself sometimes.'
'Steerforth, what are you saying!' I exclaimed. 'You're the best and the most
intelligent man I know! I've always admired you and I still do.'

The main criteria used for grading readers involve **grammatical structures** and **vocabulary**.

Structures

The grammar in graded readers is controlled and limited to structures that will be familiar to learners at each level. Grammatical structures at each level – in particular verb tenses – correspond to the syllabuses of most major course books and the CEFR. This enables teachers, when choosing a reader, to compare the levels of readers with their course books. It also makes comparison with the syllabuses of examining boards more obvious.

The grading also takes into account sentence structure; short simple sentences are used at lower levels to longer, while more complex sentences are introduced as students move further up the levels.

A detailed list of structures for the Green Apple and Reading and Training series is given below. For detailed information about **Earlyreads** grading, .

Green Apple: Starter

Verb tenses: Present Simple; Present Continuous; Future reference: Present Continuous; *going to*; Present Simple
Verb forms and patterns: Affirmative, negative, interrogative; Short answers; Imperative: 2nd person; *let's*; Infinitives after some very common verbs (e.g. *want*); Gerunds (verb + *-ing*) after some very common verbs (e.g. *like*, *hate*)
Modal verbs: *Can*: ability; requests; permission; *Would... like*: offers, requests; *Shall*: suggestions; offers; *Must*: personal obligation; *Need*: necessity
Types of clause: Co-ordination: *but*, *and*, *or*, and *then*; Subordination (in the Present Simple or Present Continuous) after verbs such as: *to be sure*, *to know*, *to think*, *to believe*, *to hope*, *to say*, *to tell*; Subordination after: *because*, *when*
Other: Zero, definite and indefinite articles; Possessive *'s* and *s'*; Countable and uncountable nouns; *Some*, *any*; *much*, *many*, *a lot*; *(a) little*, *(a) few*; *all*, *every*; etc.; Order of adjectives

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David Copperfield by C. Dickens, Green Apple. Illustrated by Paolo D'Altan.

Green Apple: Step 1

All the structures used in the previous step, plus the following:

Verb tenses: Past Simple; Past Continuous; Future reference: *will*

Verb forms and patterns: Regular and common irregular verbs; Passive forms: Present Simple and Past Simple with very common verbs (e.g. *made*, *called*, *born*)

Modal verbs: *Could*: ability, requests; *Will*: future reference, offers, promises, predictions; *May* (present and future reference): possibility; *Mustn't*: prohibition; *Have (got) to*: external obligation

Types of clause: Subordination after *if* (zero and 1st conditionals); Defining relative clauses with: *who*, *where*

Other: Comparative and superlative of adjectives (regular and irregular); Formation of adverbs (regular and irregular)

Green Apple: Step 2

All the structures used in the previous steps, plus the following:

Verb tenses: Present Perfect Simple: indefinite past with *ever*, *never* (for experience); indefinite past with *yet*, *already*, *still*; recent past with *just*; past action leading to present situation; unfinished past with *for* or *since* (duration form)

Verb forms and patterns: *So* / *neither* / *nor* + auxiliaries in short answers; Question tags (in verb tenses used so far); Gerunds (verb + *-ing*) as subjects; Verb + object + full infinitive (e.g. *I want you to help*)

Modal verbs: *Should* (present and future reference): advice; *Might* (present and future reference): possibility; permission; *Don't have to* / *haven't got to*: lack of obligation; *Don't need to* / *needn't*: lack of necessity

Types of clause: Defining relative clauses with: *which*, *that*, *zero pronoun*; Time clauses introduced by *when*, *while*, *until*, *before*, *after*, *as soon as*; Clauses of purpose: (*in order*) *to* (infinitive of purpose)

Other: Comparative and superlative of adverbs (regular and irregular)

Reading & Training: Step One

Verb tenses: Present Simple; Present Continuous; Past Simple; Past Continuous; Future reference: Present Continuous; *going to*; *will*; Present Simple; Present Perfect Simple: indefinite past with *ever*, *never* (for experience)

Verb forms and patterns: Regular and common irregular verbs; Affirmative, negative, interrogative; Imperative: 2nd person; *let's*; Passive forms: Present Simple; Past Simple; Short answers; Infinitives after verbs and adjectives; Gerunds (verb + *-ing*) after prepositions and common verbs; Gerunds (verb + *-ing*) as subjects and objects

Modal verbs: *Can*: ability; requests; permission; *Could*: ability; requests; *Will*: future reference; offers; promises; predictions; *Would … like*: offers, requests; *Shall*: suggestions; offers; *Should* (present and future reference): advice; *May* (present and future reference): possibility; *Must*: personal obligation; *Mustn't*: prohibition; *Have (got) to*: external obligation; *Need*: necessity

Types of clause: Co-ordination: *but*; *and*; *or*; and *then*; Subordination (in the Present Simple or Present Continuous) after verbs such as: *to be sure*, *to know*, *to think*, *to believe*, *to hope*, *to say*, *to tell*; Subordination after: *because*, *when*, *if* (zero and 1st conditionals); Defining relative clauses with: *who*, *which*, *that*, *zero pronoun*, *where*

Other: Zero, definite and indefinite articles; Possessive *'s* and *s'*; Countable and uncountable nouns; *Some*, *any*, *much*, *many*, *a lot*, *(a) little*, *(a) few*, *all*, *every*, etc.; Order of adjectives; Comparative and superlative of adjectives (regular and irregular); Formation and comparative/superlative of adverbs (regular and irregular)

Reading & Training: Step Two

All the structures used in the previous step, plus the following:

Verb tenses: Present Perfect Simple: indefinite past with *yet*, *already*, *still*; recent past with *just*; past action leading to present situation; Past Perfect Simple: in reported speech

Verb forms and patterns: Regular verbs and most irregular verbs; Passive forms with *going to* and *will*; *So*; *neither*; *nor* + auxiliaries in short answers; Question tags (in verb tenses used so far); Verb + object + full infinitive (e.g. *I want you to help*); Reported statements with *say* and *tell*

Modal verbs: *Can't*: logical necessity; *Could*: possibility; *May*: permission; *Might* (present and future reference): possibility; permission; *Must*: logical necessity; *Don't have to*, *haven't got to*: lack of obligation; *Don't need to*, *needn't*: lack of necessity

Types of clause: Time clauses introduced by *when*, *while*, *until*, *before*, *after*, *as soon as;* Clauses of purpose: *so that*; *(in order) to* (infinitive of purpose)

Reading & Training: Step Three

All the structures used in the previous steps, plus the following:

Verb tenses: Present Perfect Simple: unfinished past with *for* or *since* (duration form); Past Perfect Simple: narrative

Verb forms and patterns: Regular verbs and all irregular verbs in current English

Causative: *have / get* + object + past participle

Reported questions and orders with *ask* and *tell*

Modal verbs: *Would*: hypothesis; *Would rather*: preference; *Should* (present and future reference): moral obligation; *Ought to* (present and future reference): moral obligation; *Used to*: past habits and states

Types of clause: 2nd Conditional: *if + past, would(n't)*; Zero, 1st and 2nd conditionals with *unless*; Non-defining relative clauses with *who* and *where*; Clauses of result: *so*; *so... that*; *such... that*; Clauses of concession: *although*, *though*

Other: Comparison: *(not) as*; *so... as*; *(not)... enough to*; *too... to*

Reading & Training: Step Four

All the structures used in the previous steps, plus the following:

Verb tenses: Present Perfect Simple: *the first*; *second* etc. *time that...*; Present Perfect Continuous: unfinished past with *for* or *since* (duration form)

Verb forms and patterns: Passive forms: Present Perfect Simple; Reported speech introduced by precise reporting verbs (e.g. *suggest*, *promise*, *apologise*)

Modal verbs: *Be*; *get used to* + *-ing*: habit formation; *Had better*: duty and warning

Types of clause: 3rd Conditional: if + Past Perfect, *would(n't) have*; Conditionals with *may*, *might*; Non-defining relative clauses with: *which*, *whose*; Clauses of concession: *even though*, *in spite of*, *despite*

Reading & Training: Step Five

All the structures used in the previous steps, plus the following:

Verb tenses: Present Perfect and Past Perfect Simple: negative duration (*haven't/hadn't... for ages*); Present Perfect Continuous: recent activities leading to present situation; Past Perfect Continuous

Verb forms and patterns: Passive forms: Past Perfect Simple; with modal verbs

Reported speech introduced by more examples of precise reporting verbs (e.g. *threaten*, *insist*, *complain*)

Wish and *if only* + past tense; *It's time* + past tense

Modal verbs: *Should(n't) have*, *ought (not) to have*: duty in the past

Must have, *can't have*, *may have*, *might have*, *could have*: deduction and probability in the past

Types of clause: 3rd conditionals with *unless*; Mixed conditional sentences; Complex sentences with more than one subordinate clause

Reading & Training: Step Six

All the structures used in the previous steps, plus the following:

Verb tenses: Present Continuous: criticism

Future reference: Future Continuous; Future Perfect

Verb forms and patterns: Passive in continuous forms; *Wish* and *if only* + Past Perfect; + *would*

Modal verbs: *Will* to describe characteristic behaviour

Would: past habits; *Didn't need to* v. *needn't have*

Types of clause: Inversion of *had* in 2nd and 3rd conditional sentences without *if* / Inversion of word order after initial negative adverbs (*No sooner...*; *Hardly...*; etc.); Non-finite *-ing* clauses; Complex sentences with no restriction on the number of subordinate clauses

Vocabulary

In the Green Apple and Reading & Training series our attitude to lexis is flexible; we do not stipulate a fixed number of headwords, chosen according to criteria of frequency, for each level.

One reason for flexibility is that many of our readers are versions of classics, texts that are rooted in historical periods – or are even fantasy – and these texts will naturally require words which are essential and frequent in the context of the story but which would be low frequency outside the story. For example, in *Tales from the Thousand and One Nights* (Reading & Training, Step One) we include words like *vizier*, *enchanted*, *sword*, *sesame*, *merchant*, *voyage*, *turban*, *magic spell*, *potion*, and so on, which are certainly not common lexis! Yet they are an integral part of the texture and fascination of the story, and we need to include them.

But we temper flexibility with common sense: we find it useful to check words against the vocabulary syllabuses of external examination boards and against resources such as *English Vocabulary Profile*. When we feel we need to use lexical items that would be beyond the level of the learner, help is always given through one or more of these strategies:

- **before you read activities** before each chapter **[see page ➔ 39]**, which pre-teach vocabulary;

- simple **monolingual glosses** at the foot of the page, which are sometimes accompanied by an illustration;

- **high-quality illustrations** in the chapter: the learner naturally 'reads' the illustration before reading or listening to the text, so comprehension is facilitated.

A last reflection on vocabulary in reading material for language learners: guessing the meaning of unknown words in context is a valuable subskill of reading, which should be encouraged. The importance of this subskill is stressed continuously throughout the Common European Framework of Reference, as the following quotations show:

- '*...learners will have to use interpretation strategies such as... making use of clues such as titles, illustrations, paragraphing...*' (A2 and B1 levels of the CEFR)

- *'When a learner can use "compensation strategies" there is no point in trying to specify the limits of the vocabulary content that the learners may be supposed to be able to deal with.'* (A2 and B1 levels)

- *'The learners are aware of the potential of learning through exposure to foreign language use and know how various compensation strategies may enable them to cope with texts containing unknown words.'* (a 'learning-to-learn' objective from the B1 level)

5 HOW TO CHOOSE A READER

"Oh, this smells so good!" said Carol.
"And it tastes even better," said Halim. The three friends enjoyed their hot
drink and then Carol called Jim to their table.
"Excuse me," said Carol, "do you know the story of the statue of Dorothy
Merriwether? My dad said that late at night people can hear a woman
crying in this square. Is that true?"

There are three important things to bear in mind: the level, age and interests of the learners. The following comments refer principally to choosing a class reader.

The level of the learners

To help choose an appropriate level of reader use the chart on **page ➔ 16** of this guide. Maybe you already know what the level of your class is according to the CEFR, or perhaps you know what external exam your students might be potential candidates for. And/or you can compare the structural syllabus of your course book with the structural contents of the level of the reader you are thinking of adopting **[see pages ➔ 15-23]**.

However, the best way to judge whether the level of a book is suitable for a class is for you, the teacher, to read the first pages and then browse through the rest of the book – after all, the teacher knows their class and is the person best able to judge the appropriateness of the level!

If you are hesitating between two levels, choose the lower one: it is discouraging to read a book which is too difficult. On the other hand, if the book seems rather easy it can be read more quickly, and more attention can be given to the activities, which can be done in a more challenging way (more quickly, or by requiring more output from students). Then choose your next reader from the higher level.

After finishing the reader you can ask your learners their opinion, maybe giving them a 5-level multiple choice questionnaire, and seeing what the average class response is.

- ☐ Too easy
- ☐ A little below my level
- ☐ Right for my level
- ☐ A little above my level
- ☐ Too difficult

This will help the teacher choose the next reader, and will also help individual learners in establishing their own level for eventual autonomous reading.

The age of the learners

It is important not to choose a reader which does not seem sophisticated enough for the age of the learners, both in content and appearance. It is true that Green Apple readers are intended for older young learners and Reading & Training readers for young adolescents to young adults, but levels of sophistication among teenagers vary. Ultimately it is the teacher who knows the class best.

Peter Pan by J. M.Barrie, Green Apple Starter. Illustrated by Alida Massari.

The interests of the learners

1 Learner-based choice

Interests can be defined in terms of content (what is in the book) and genre (is it a thriller? a love story? a mystery? non-fiction?).

You might consider asking your learners what their interests are, but this may not be very useful: the responses might be too disparate, too vague, or too ambitious for you to use. It is often useful for the teacher to make a shortlist (but not necessarily too short!) and ask the class to choose. This can be done by bringing into class the Black Cat catalogue and/or copies of the books on the teacher's shortlist. Ask your book distributor to give or lend you extra copies of the catalogue. The catalogue, written with both teachers and learners in mind, is a pleasure to browse through. It is illustrated in full colour, and the descriptions of the readers are both accurate and 'appetising'. If you have copies of the readers themselves (perhaps copies used on previous courses, or from a school library), lay them down on a table and let the learners browse through them. Let them behave like customers in a bookshop: let them look at the covers (the designs will surely attract them), read the blurb on the back covers (translate any words if asked), and browse through the books (the illustrations are bound to excite curiosity and interest).

While learners are doing this, encourage questions from them, such as: 'Has there been a film version?' 'Have you read it?' 'What is it about?' If you are enthusiastic yourself, you will transmit enthusiasm to your learners. After this, the class can vote on the reader they want to adopt.

2 Teacher-based choice or curriculum-based choice

Perhaps the teacher wants to explore a particular historical period, or a particular theme in her/his teaching, or has an idea for a project: perhaps the 19th century, or young people, or travel, or drama, and so on. Or there may be an idea for collaboration between the English teacher and the teacher of another school subject. In these cases the teacher can certainly take responsibility for making the choice.

Whether the choice is made by learners or the teacher, one factor that might be important is whether there is a film version (this is very likely in the case of classic fiction). An indispensable tool to research this is the International Movie Database (www.imdb.com), where you will find lists of all the film versions of all classic titles.

Peter Pan by J. M.Barrie, Green Apple Starter. Illustrated by Alida Massari.

6 HOW TO FIT READERS INTO YOUR TEACHING

Holmes put the lamp on the floor and took out a magnifying glass from his pocket. He carefully looked at the cracks between the large stones of the floor. 'We probably have one more hour,' said Holmes. 'The thieves can't do anything until Mr Wilson is in bed. Then they'll work very quickly.'

In this section you will find a description of a standard way of fitting readers into your teaching, followed by variations. Only general procedures are described: subsequent sections of this guide will deal with particular kinds of activities.

The 'standard' model: class readers

The most common use of readers is when all the learners have the same reader (known as a 'class reader') and the reading is done mostly in class (but not necessarily: see below). The teacher will probably find it best to present the reader in 'episodes', in different reading sessions. So, if the reader is a narrative (a novel or a long story) at a lower level it will be done one chapter at a time, like a serial. This creates interest and suspense. At higher levels, where the chapters might sometimes seem too long, it is easy enough to find a convenient break somewhere near the middle of a chapter. In the case of collections of short stories or non-fiction, it will be done one story or one chapter at a time (or breaking at a convenient mid-way point).

Timing

- Set a **time limit** on how long you want to use a reader. A maximum time would be one school term: any longer would lose the learners' interest.

- It is possible to insert a reading session at the end of every lesson, although teachers who have 2-4 lessons a week often have their **reading session** once a week. If once a week, a good time is during the last lesson of the week, which gives a 'special' feeling to the reading session. Or, indeed, an entire lesson can be dedicated to reading.

- The time needed for a reading session can range **from about 10 minutes to the entire lesson**, depending on how many of the activities are done in class. After a few sessions the teacher will have an idea of the amount of time the class is comfortable with. However, as the class becomes more used to reading, the learners will be able to handle more time spent on reading.

Procedure

After a **brief warm-up [see page ➜ 35]** the reading starts. A common procedure is that learners listen while they follow the texts in their readers. The teacher can pause at intervals and ask a few very simple factual WH- questions or true/false questions to make sure that everybody in class understands what is happening. Without interrupting the momentum, the teacher might also ask what the learners think might happen next (but if no answers are forthcoming, go on with the reading). However, if the class seems absorbed by the reading and/or irritated by the pauses and questions, then allow the class to read the entire chapter uninterrupted.

Two possibilities for presenting the text for reading are:

- **The teacher reads**, expressively and dramatically. An advantage is that the learners know the teacher's voice, and the teacher can adjust the speed of reading to suit the language level of the class.

- **The teacher plays the recording**. An advantage is that it is recorded by professional actors who read very expressively, and it may have special sound effects. **[For further information on using recordings see page ➜ 55]**

Both procedures ensure that all the learners are exposed to a good model of pronunciation and read at the same speed. They cannot pause at words they do not know, and so reading fluency is fostered. In addition, the expressivity of the reading aids comprehension.

To shift the emphasis a little more onto listening, the class can listen once with their books closed, and only afterwards open their books and read (with or without listening the second time). Only do this if you know that the language level of the class is high in comparison with the reader you are using (perhaps the class finds the reader rather easy), otherwise you might discourage your learners.

Two things not to do

- **Do not have learners take it in turn to read aloud**. The student who is reading becomes anxious, the others are either preparing their passage to read or not listening any more if they have already read. Furthermore, any imperfect pronunciation might be transmitted to the class. Eventual reading aloud or dramatization **[see pages ➜ 73-75]** should come later: at this stage learners are focusing on understanding meaning, not producing language.

- **Do not let learners use dictionaries**. Using dictionaries discourages two vital subskills of fluent reading: ignoring unknown words and guessing meaning in context. Learners should only use dictionaries later (during the activities, or during rereading at home), and then only if they are in real difficulty. Encourage learners to use the glosses, the illustrations, and to make guesses in context, using knowledge of what comes before and after. At higher levels learners may want to use dictionaries during interpretative activities to refine meaning (e.g. to find connotations of words) but they should not use them when reading a chapter for the first time.

Activities

Each chapter is followed by **activities of different types**. The first is always a **comprehension check**, although the format might vary (true/false, multiple choice, matching, WH- questions, etc). The subsequent activities include language activities, various ways of reacting to the text – involving various skills – and 'expansive reading' activities. After reading a chapter, the teacher has two main options:

- **Do all or most of the activities in class** (with the class working individually, in pairs or groups). If pressed for time, any activities not done can be set as homework.

- **Do just the first activity in class** (the comprehension check), **and perhaps one or two others**. Then look through the rest of the activities with the class and explain them. Set some or all of them as homework.

Note that in both cases the teacher does not need to do all of the activities, although the comprehension check is always advisable: this activity enables the teacher to ensure that everyone has the same basic understanding of what has been read, and to discuss and clear up eventual misunderstandings. As for the subsequent activities, it is perfectly possible to leave some of them out. For example, the teacher might only want to focus on the language activities, or limit the work to just a creative writing task. Treat the activities as a 'menu' of possible tasks. But you can always remind the learners that they themselves can do the activities as self-study – although you should bear in mind that you would need to check/correct what they do.

Variations on the 'standard' model

- If the learners keep their readers in class, now and again you can change the moment when you have your reading session. You might want to do a chapter as a **surprise change of activity** (for example, when the learners are finding their text book rather heavy going, or they are bored, or whenever you think it might be appreciated!).

- You might sometimes **ask the class to read and/or listen to a chapter at home** (after about 5-10 minutes of pre-reading activities in class). Then, in the subsequent session in class, you can focus on the activities (for example, at higher levels, an extended interpretation-type activity involving debate and discussion).

- Instead of listening to the recording or the teacher, you might occasionally ask the learners to **read a chapter silently**, to encourage learning autonomy and good reading habits outside the classroom.

- You might occasionally **ask learners which of the activities they would like to do**. Ask them, for example, to choose one, two or three from the activities in the book. The debate in class might be interesting!

The dossier sections

There are generally between two and four 'dossier' sections in each Black Cat reader. This **stimulating background material** – exploring social, historical and cultural perspectives – is inserted into the readers at moments when it is suggested by events or developments in the texts. To enhance a **CLIL/cross-curricular approach**, you can tell your colleagues who teach other subjects about the dossiers: they might give some related input in their classes. There are different ways of fitting the dossiers into your teaching.

- When:
  - read them in the order in which they occur in the reader;
  - defer them until a moment you choose, which might be after finishing the reader. In this option, you might even ask groups of students to read different dossiers and then deliver a report to the rest of the class.

- How:
  - read them in class, in the order in which they occur, just as if they were a chapter of the book;
  - ask learners to read them as homework;
  - ask learners to read them during school holidays.

The Canterville Ghost by O. Wilde, Green Apple.
Illustrated by Paolo D'Altan.

Holiday reading

Readers are a great idea for study and pleasure **during school holidays**. During holidays, the class can be asked to:

- read the same book (or maybe the same two or three books if your summer holidays are long);
- read books of their own individual choice. In this case the teacher should establish a list of readers at the appropriate level, and then follow the procedure described in the section on learner-based choice. [see page → 25]

The recommended procedures are:

- if the class is going to read the same book, then the teacher can set a number of activities from the reader that all the class should do. The teacher can also set the learners one or more post-reading activities for feedback and comparison in class. [see page → 47]
- if the class is going to read different books, then the teacher might only set the learners one or more after-reading activities for feedback and comparison in class.

In both cases:

- encourage learners to listen to the recording as often as possible, even without reading. Stress that all the situations in which they would normally listen to music are possible, useful and enjoyable!
- encourage them to exchange their reading experiences when they meet friends from their class. Reading itself is a 'solitary' pleasure, but talking about our reading with others is a natural human activity.

Autonomous reading: the class library

Ideally, books should be available for learners to take away and read whenever they want. This can be entirely voluntary and unmonitored, or as part of an **individual reading programme**, where the teacher requires that each learner reads a certain number of books during a school year. In both cases the ideal resource is a class library.
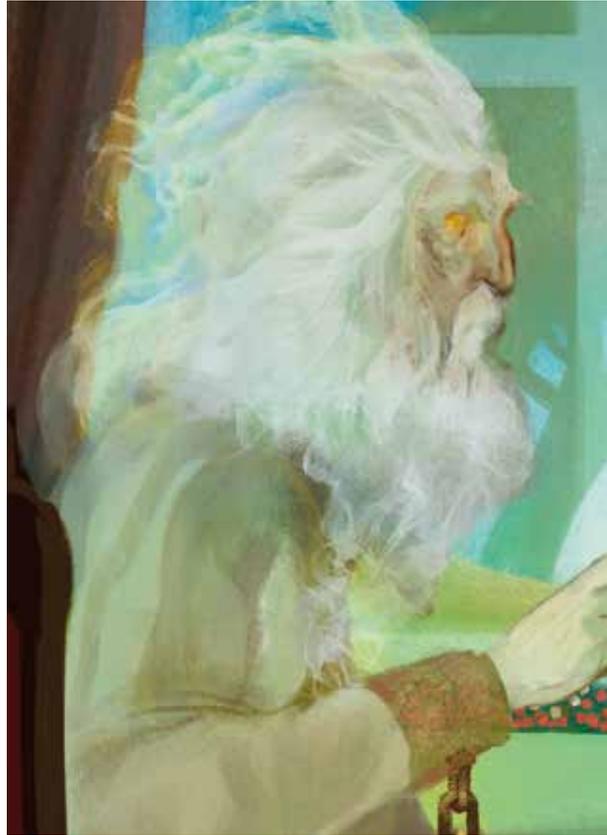
The **class library** could be an entire shelf or more, or simply a box of books. The books can come from a variety of sources: those used on previous courses; bought by the school; donated by learners or their parents (if the parents of each student buy just one book and donate it to the class library, then there will already be 20+ books in the library!). In any case, it should grow over time. It will possibly contain some readers one level below and above the average level of the class, to cater for individual needs/levels.

Regarding organisation, to encourage learner involvement it is a good idea if a student is appointed as librarian, who should keep a record of who has borrowed a book. This responsibility can rotate, and a new librarian can be appointed each term.

For this autonomous use of readers, the aim is extensive reading and/or self-study, so the teacher should not insist on any activities for the learners to do: they simply borrow the books and

read them in any way they like. Younger learners can even involve their parents, if they know English, and talk to them about what they read.

In addition, the teacher might suggest using one or more of the following:

- **Review cards**. Put a card inside each reader, on which learners can write a comment – a word, a phrase or at most a sentence – which can be anonymous or signed, as the learner prefers. Alternatively, the teacher can create an online forum, such as a Facebook page. In this way learners can recommend books to other learners.

- The **reading board**. Put a board on the wall near the books. The board has the same function and is used in the same way as the review card: it is a table with names of the students down the side and names of the books across the top. This could also be done online. The reading board will also show who has read books and who hasn't: the teacher must decide whether she/he thinks this is a good or bad idea.

- **Personal reading cards**. Learners can be encouraged to keep their own reading cards. On these they write down the title, author, plot, themes, and their own comments. They can keep these cards in a file or online. It may be useful in some state exams for learners to be able to list and talk about all the books they have read. If you teach in a European context, such a record would also be useful for the 'biography' section of a European Language Portfolio (ELP).

- **Reading diaries**. These are more extended pieces of work than reading cards. They are described on , and photocopiable (and downloadable) pages are found on . A well-kept reading diary could be used in the 'dossier' section of an ELP.

The Canterville Ghost by O. Wilde, Green Apple. Illustrated by Paolo D'Altan.

7 HOW TO BEGIN A CLASS READER

There were people from all over the world in San Francisco and Passepartout thought it was a beautiful place with its hills and views. On their way back they went past a square where a large crowd of people were waving banners and shouting.

Having chosen a reader it is worth doing some **preparatory activities** before beginning. The aims are:

1 to raise **awareness** of the contents and **activate** what the learners already know;

2 to motivate reading by providing **reasons to read**;

3 to elicit or pre-teach a few items of **key vocabulary**.

The first two aims are fundamental: the first activates what students (think they) know about the subject matter of the book, and the second encourages learners to make predictions. Here are some common 'start up' activities, but if the learners are obviously keen to begin reading, don't make them wait too long!

Covers and characters

The covers of Black Cat readers are beautifully illustrated, so asking learners to make predictions about the contents based on the cover is both easy and productive. Our readers usually have a single or double page just after the introduction called **The Characters**, where the major characters and most of the minor characters are illustrated. Focus attention on this page, and ask learners to suggest adjectives to describe each character. You can also ask them to group them into 'positive', 'negative' and 'neutral' characters, and to guess which characters might be related/ connected to other characters and in what way.

Illustrations

The illustrations in each chapter are as 'appetising' as the covers. Some suggestions for exploiting them are:

- the teacher chooses some of the most **intriguing full-page illustrations** (between 4 and 6 is a good number). Then the class turns to the relevant pages, one at a time, and the teacher asks questions such as 'What can you see here?' 'What is happening?' 'Who are these people?' etc. As you progress through the illustrations, encourage learners to predict how the plot might develop.

- **photocopy some illustrations** that show key moments and give them to the learners out of order. Ask them to put them in the order they think they will occur in the text (and explain their reasons);

- ask learners to look through the books, **choose their favourite picture** and describe it to each other in pairs or groups (this is also good practice for the speaking parts of many exams);

- the teacher says 'Find a picture containing / which shows...' and the learners race through the book to **find the illustration described**.

Chapter titles

Open the reader at the contents page and look at the chapter titles: what predictions can the class make about each chapter? Alternatively, write the chapter titles out of order on the board and ask students to suggest the order they think they will occur (and explain their reasons). However, the success of this procedure depends on the nature of the chapter titles: if the titles are not very explicit, then the prediction might just be guesswork, so you might find this activity unsatisfactory.

Book trailers

Film trailers never include the beginnings of films! They always include the most exciting parts. Similarly, the teacher can present a key scene (which may be as short as a sentence, or as long as a page) from any part of the book (by reading it or playing the recording) in order to stimulate interest. With more preparation the teacher can make a **poster**, a collage of some of the most intriguing illustrations and some key moments from the text (sentences, brief exchanges of dialogue). Encourage the learners to make predictions. Ideally, such posters should have been made not by the teacher, but by learners who have read the book on a previous course.

What do you (think you) know?

If the learners have heard of the book – which is likely with well-known titles such as *Peter Pan*, *Robin Hood*, *Oliver Twist*, *Dracula*, *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Frankenstein*, etc. – ask the class to write down, individually:

- 3 things they are sure they know about the story/topic;

- 3 things they think they know about the story/topic;

- 3 things they want to find out about the story/topic.

(You can stipulate 1 thing or 2 things instead of 3.)

Learners then compare their lists in groups, and then the teacher conducts feedback, collecting ideas and writing them on the board. It will be interesting to see what the most common points are! Tell the learners that during their reading they will be able to confirm – or not! – their ideas.

Introductions

All adapted classics have an introduction about the **author**. Original readers have an initial chapter about the setting or another element of interest. The teacher can decide to do this chapter before reading the book or defer it till later. Before reading the introduction it might be useful to use the *What do you know?* procedure described above, but only if the teacher thinks that students might have some idea of the contents.

The Canterville Ghost by O. Wilde, Green Apple. Illustrated by Paolo D'Altan.
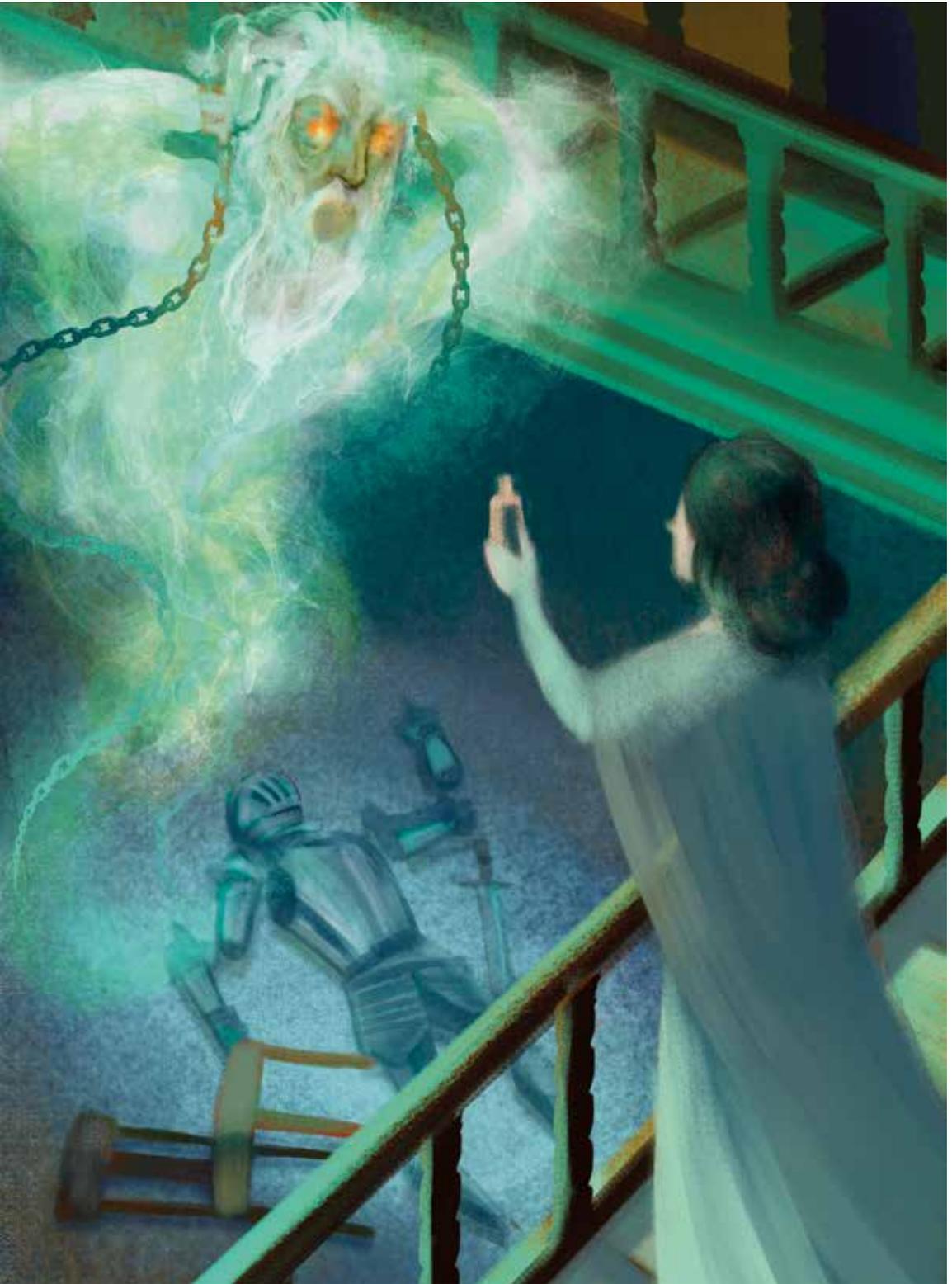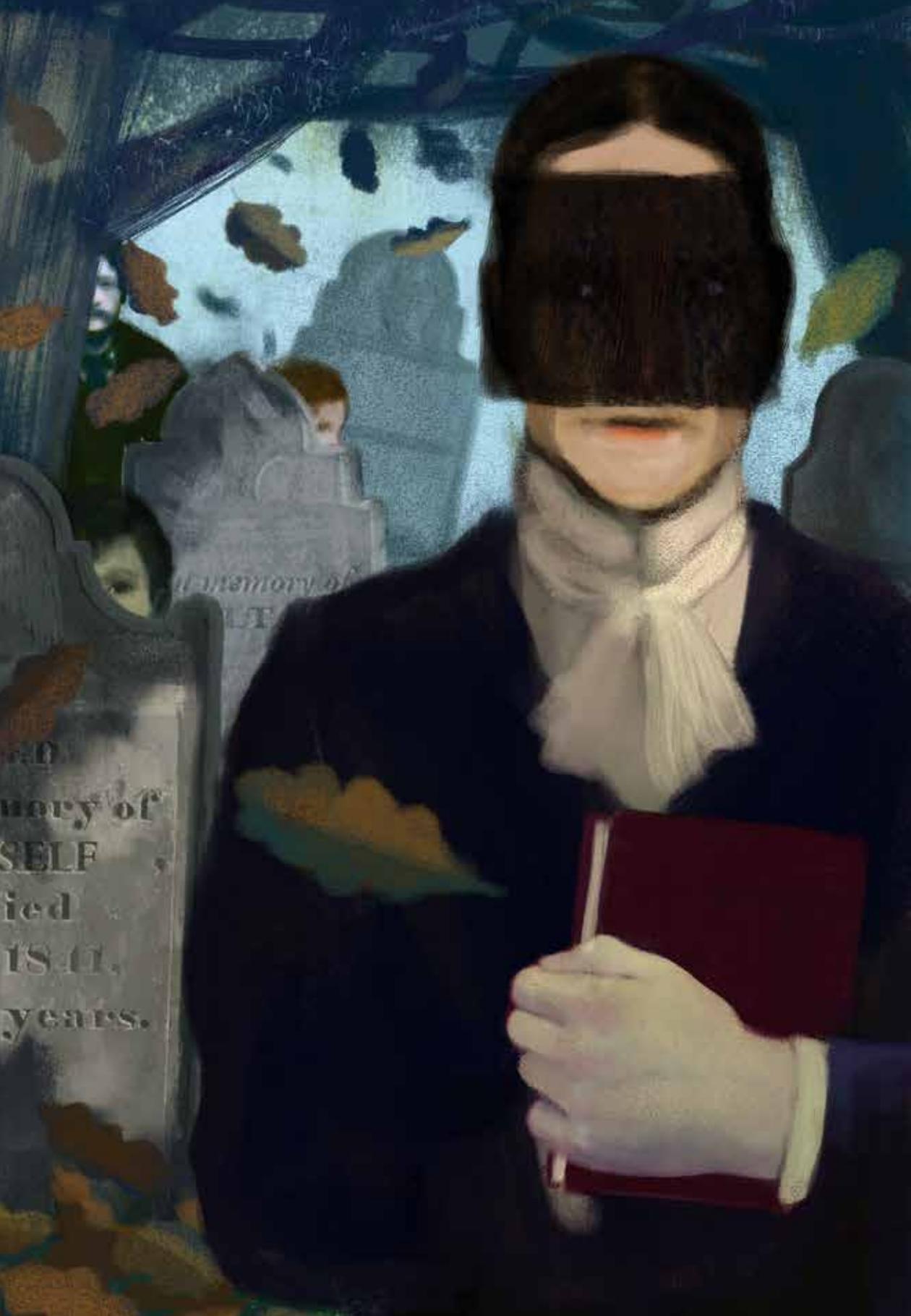
8 PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

During the years no one could understand why the Reverend wore the veil. [...] He could not take his usual walk to the cemetery at sunset, because there were people behind the tombstones who wanted to see his black veil.

Teachers usually do a pre-reading activity of some kind before every reading session. The aims are:

1 to **check comprehension** so far, and make sure that everyone is following the story;

2 to **elicit or pre-teach vocabulary** that will be important;

3 to get learners to **predict what might happen next**.

Green Apple and Reading & Training readers already contain pre-reading activities before each chapter which pre-teach vocabulary and encourage prediction, but here are some more techniques to realise the three aims stated above.

1 To check comprehension so far:

– simply ask the class some **WH- questions**;

– **true/false**: the teacher makes statements about the previous chapter, some of which are true and some of which are false. Learners call out 'true' or 'false': in the case of false statements the teacher can invite students to correct them;

– similar to the above: the teacher gives a brief oral summary of the previous chapter, but includes some deliberate mistakes. Younger learners **enjoy spotting the mistakes** and calling out the correct words or phrases;

– invite the class to narrate the previous chapter as a **chain story**: one learner makes up and says the first sentence, another learner is asked to make up the second sentence, another the third, and so on.

2 Activities in our readers to **pre-teach vocabulary** often involve matching words with pictures or definitions, with learners encouraged to use their dictionaries if necessary. After the matching activity, ask students to use the words in some way (e.g. by making up sentences using them).

3 Everyone agrees that good readers **make predictions** about what they are going to read, and the following activities all encourage learners to make predictions.

Phantom Art Thief Strikes Again!
The National Gallery loses another
important masterpiece

Project Vampire by V. Heward, Green Apple. Illustrated by Alberto Stefani.
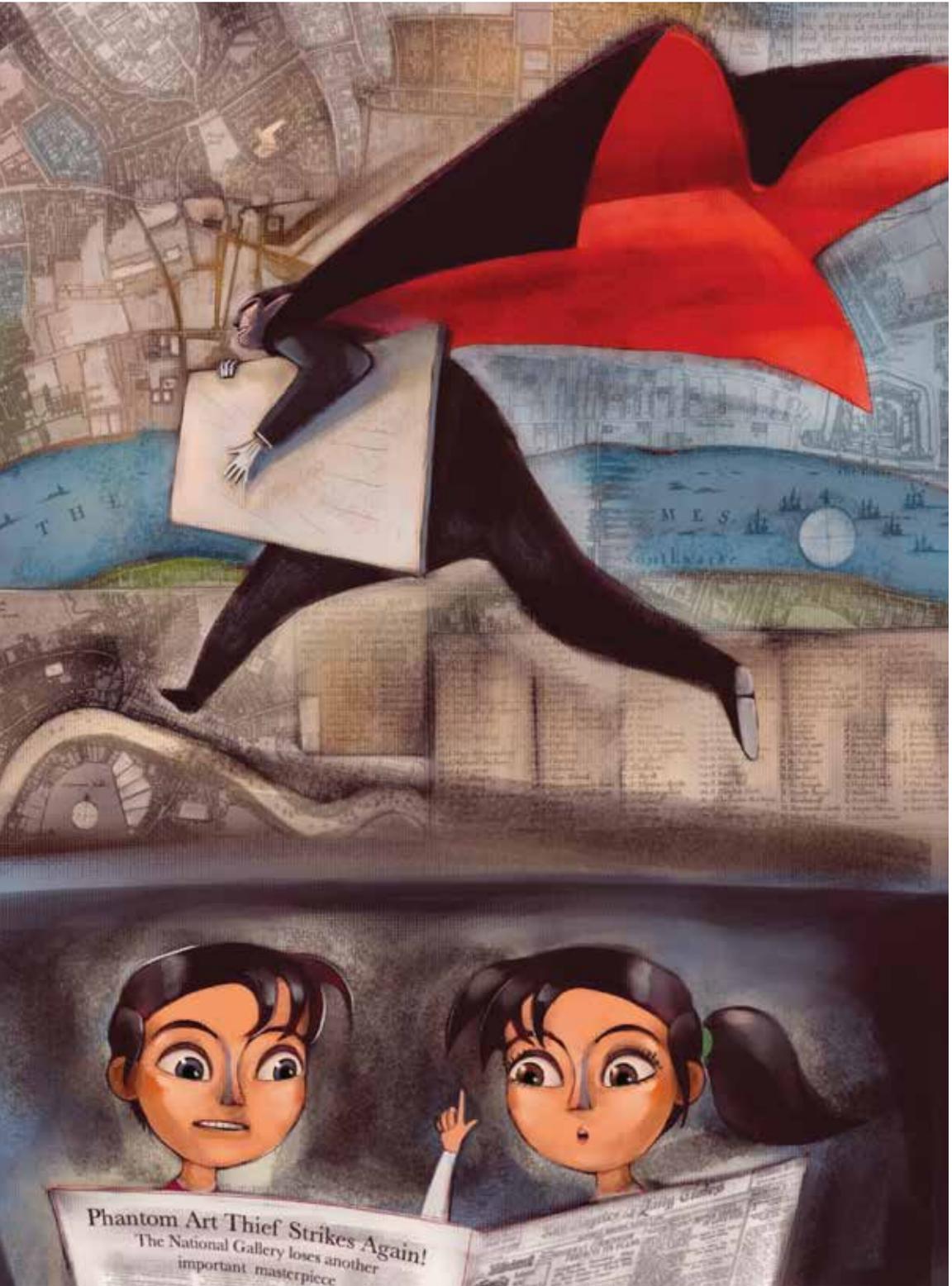
- Simply ask 'What do you think is going to happen next?' The class can brainstorm ideas in pairs or small groups, and then vote on the most likely.

- Make some **explicit predictions** about what will happen. Do the learners agree or disagree?

- Encourage **predictions from the chapter title**.

- Encourage **predictions from the first sentence(s) of the chapter**.

- Take a **significant sentence** from anywhere in the chapter (even the end) and ask learners 'What do you think happens to lead up to this?'

- Extract some significant sentences (from 3 to 6) from the chapter, write them on the board in scrambled order, and ask the class to **suggest the order** in which they will occur. (This obliges students to think about plot.)

- Write some **key words** from the chapter on the board. Learners predict in what context they will occur, e.g. in relation to which character, or to what possible event. (This is also a good opportunity to pre-teach any unknown lexis.)

- Extract a passage and eliminate 2 or 3 **key words**. This is a prediction activity, not a language test, so eliminate words to do with the plot development, not grammar words. Learners suggest words for the gaps and will be keen to check their ideas when they read.

- **Use the illustrations** in the chapter to **stimulate prediction**. Standard questions such as 'Who can you see?', 'What are they doing/saying?', 'How are they feeling?', 'What do you think has just happened?' are all useful. Learners can also think of questions themselves in pairs or groups to ask each other.

Pre-reading activities in our readers often involve **listening**: learners answer multiple choice or true/false questions or complete sentences with notes while listening to the recording of the first few paragraphs of a chapter. They then read to check their answers.

If there are no explicit listening activities the teacher can always play the recording of the opening paragraphs and ask a good class how much they have understood, or ask a weaker class what words they have heard that they think are important.

9 WHILE-READING ACTIVITIES

'Cesario,' Olivia was very serious now. 'I must tell you something.'
Viola waited for her to speak.
'Cesario!' Olivia said softly. 'Don't you understand? I love you! I fell in love
with you the moment I first saw you.'

These are the activities found after each chapter. The wide range of subject matter that they contain and the different activity types exemplify perfectly the expansive reading approach **[see pages ➜ 3-7]**. The aims of our while-reading activities are:

- to check comprehension of the chapter just read;
- in fiction, to reflect on character and plot, and respond to the story so far;
- in non-fiction, to respond to the events, facts or ideas presented;
- to practise language recently encountered (structures and lexis), and practise the skills of speaking, writing and listening;
- to extend exploration of themes/issues into the learners' own world;
- to provide stimulating sociocultural and historical background.

The activities are so wide and so numerous that teachers will rarely need to invent further activities – indeed, it is perfectly acceptable *not* to do some activities. No fixed kinds of activity are applied to every chapter: 'whatever kinds of exercise are suggested by the chapter' is our criterion. The resulting variety both exploits each chapter to the best and keeps learners interested. The following list shows some of the main activity-types:

- Objective questions for comprehension such as:
  - true/false
  - multiple choice
  - matching
  - ordering
  - WH- questions
- 'Who said what?' questions (matching characters to quotations) for comprehension
- Matching halves of sentences (a 'why' half with a 'because' half) for comprehension
- Gap-filling for comprehension and language practice (e.g. gapped summaries)

- Sentence completion and transformation for language practice
- Game-based methodology for language practice (e.g. word squares, anagrams, crosswords, puzzles, etc.)
- Guided and free writing tasks
- Discussion/debate topics for speaking skill
- Cambridge English and Trinity exam-style tasks
- Internet projects [see page ➜ 59]

To supplement the above, the following activities can be used at any level, with any reader.

The word box

This is a way of **facilitating vocabulary acquisition**. For each reader, the teacher keeps a box in class (you can cover it with pictures from the reader) or just a bag. After each chapter individual learners, or pairs or groups, can write down new expressions (words or phrases) on slips of paper and put them in the box. The teacher stipulates how many words (from 1 to 5 per chapter) but the choice of words is up to the learners. Alternatively, the teacher does this, and puts in about 10 words after each chapter. Every now and again vocabulary from the box can be revised. This can be done in any lesson, not just the reading sessions, and need not last more than a few minutes. The teacher fishes some slips of paper out of the box one at a time (not all of them, only a few) and asks questions to the whole class or individuals. The teacher can:

- say the word and ask for a translation into the mother tongue;
- give a translation in the mother tongue and ask what the English word is;
- give a definition – in the mother tongue or English – and ask students what the word is;
- make up and say a sentence which involves the word, but leaving a gap (or saying a nonsense word) instead of saying the word (n.b. this is an easy way of improvising questions);
- say the word and ask for an explanation/ paraphrase;
- say the word and ask for a synonym or opposite;
- give the spelling of the word, either very quickly or very slowly;

- ask for the spelling of the word;
- write the word, with the letters scrambled, on the board;
- ask students to make a sentence using the word;
- ask students in what context the expression occurred (e.g. when? who said it?);
- the teacher writes 3, 4 or 5 words from the box on the board, and asks groups to invent a sentence or simple narrative of about 25-30 words using all of them.

The activity can be organized as a competition between two or more teams, with teacher as quizmaster. Younger learners enjoy taking it in turns to fish out the slips of paper, older learners can invent questions.

Pictures and balloons

This is a way of **exploiting our readers' lavish illustrations**. From a chapter the students have read choose a picture with one or more characters. Invent a sentence that one character might be saying or thinking, or for two characters invent two sentences (maybe a spoken exchange between them, or their different thoughts). This must not be from the text; it should be invented by the teacher. Do not tell the class the sentence(s). Make a photocopy of the illustration and draw the speech balloon(s) and/or thought cloud(s) emanating from the character(s), and inside of them put a number of lines equal to the number of words in the sentence(s) you have invented. Show any apostrophes for possession or contraction, full stops, question or exclamation marks. Divide the class into two teams, and appoint a spokesperson for each. Ask each team in turn to suggest a word – though the spokesperson – that might be in the balloon(s)/ cloud(s). They can guess the words in any order. When a team suggests a word that is there (it must be in the correct form, e.g. plural, with a 3rd person singular 's', etc.), write in the word and award a point to the team. If a word occurs more than once, write it in for all occurrences, but award only one point. The winning team is the team that gets most points, not that gets the last word. If the teams get stuck during the game and for many turns no word is guessed, write in

the first or last letters of a word they are stuck on, and/or indicate the number of letters in the word. This activity is a powerful and fun way of getting students to practise – unconsciously – their knowledge of syntax and text cohesion. At higher levels you can focus more on vocabulary. With a big class, divide students into 4 teams: 2 teams compete to guess the sentence said/thought by one character, the 2 other teams compete to guess the sentence said/thought by another character.

Hot seating: 'Questioning in Role'

This speaking activity derives from drama training, but does not require drama skills. A chair is placed at the front of the class, and the class is told that whoever sits in that chair 'becomes', as long as she/he is sitting there, a character in the story. A learner is invited to sit in the chair, and is told that she/he is a certain character. The rest of the class interviews her/him. At lower levels the questions can simply be about facts, and have the function of comprehension questions (e.g. 'Where do you live, Hamlet?'). At higher levels the questions can involve interpretation (e.g. 'What are your feelings for Ophelia, Hamlet?') and imaginative response (e.g. 'What is your favourite music, Hamlet?').

Students at all levels can be reluctant to start questioning, or might even ask silly questions, so the teacher can provide some initial questions and/or invite students to first brainstorm some questions in groups before a student is nominated for the **hot seat**.

This activity works just as well with minor characters in the 'hot seat'. The author hasn't given them much to say in the story, but they will certainly have something to say if they are allowed to speak! Like many activities, hot seating becomes more successful when the class has done it a few times and got used to it.

Diaries and letters: 'Writing in Role'

Writing in role combines writing with interpretation. At many points in a one of the characters might write a note or letter either to someone else in the story, or to a character outside the story (a relative or friend). In addition, any of the characters might keep a diary for their own private use. The teacher can simply ask the learners to write a diary entry for certain characters, or a letter to another person (specify who it is). The results can be very interesting as learners 'get under the skin' of a character, and explain motivations and feelings not explicit in the text. Assess such work as examples of writing for fluency, not writing for correctness. If your students are going to take an exam, ask them to write the same number of words as required for a creative writing task in the exam.

Reading diaries

Keeping a reading diary is an individual, outside class activity. It is not intended as a written record of class-work. Rather, it encourages learners to record what happens in a story and how they feel about it. For each chapter, learners note down factual information, such as the answers to the following:

- Who are the characters?
- Where are they?
- What happens?

In addition to the facts, learners also record their own reactions and feelings, such as the answers to the following:

- How do I feel about what has happened?
- What do I think will happen next?
- Which character(s) do I sympathise with?
- What do I imagine about a character (apart from what is explicit in the book)?

Learners can show their completed reading diaries to the teacher (or to other learners).

Some teachers might want to formally assess the reading diaries.

Photocopiable pages for a reading diary can be found on **pages ➜ 78-80**. Make as many copies of the second page as are necessary to cover all the chapters in the reader that is being used.

These pages can also be downloaded from our website. On the website there is also an extra page for recording new vocabulary: students will need several copies of this.

10 AFTER-READING ACTIVITIES

Miss Tilney seemed pleased to talk to Catherine. Although nothing very important or original was said by either of the two women, the conversation was pleasant. 'Your brother is such a good dancer!' said Catherine towards the end of their conversation. Miss Tilney was surprised and amused.

These activities can be done when a reader has been finished. The aims include:

- to give learners a sense of achievement;
- in fiction, to respond to the story as a whole;
- in non-fiction, to respond to the events, facts or ideas in the book;
- to use new language acquired (structures and lexis) in the skills of speaking and writing;
- to explore further the themes and issues of the reader;
- to explore intertextuality by comparing the content, themes and issues of the reader with other texts such as stories, films, artworks, etc.

All Black Cat readers have after-reading activities at the end of the book. Recent readers have a section entitled 'After Reading' with a menu of stimulating activities and in addition an 'Exit Test' on the website, which has tasks in the format of items from the Cambridge English and Trinity exams. Such activities can be done in class or as autonomous study with feedback in class (the **Exit Test** could also be holiday work).

In addition there are other activities a teacher can create. They involve speaking, writing and artistic creativity, and include the following.

The word box

This activity was described on , and all of the variations of it described there are also useful after-reading activities. Intermediate learners can also be challenged to take out a number of words (between 5 and 10) and **write a mini-saga** (exactly 50 words) incorporating them; the mini-saga could be connected to the plot of the reader, or could be completely different.

Hot seating

This activity was described on . An after-reading version is a **press conference**. All the characters of a fiction reader – even the most minor – are in the hot seats. All the other class members are journalists. A variation on this is a **trial or enquiry**: often in a work of fiction one of the characters (or more) can be 'accused' of something (e.g. was Hamlet responsible for the death of

Ophelia?). Apart from the 'accused' in the hot seat, the rest of the class can be groups of prosecution and defence lawyers, witnesses (other characters from the story) and a judge and jury.

Diaries and letters

This activity was described on **page ➜ 45**. In the after-reading phase, writing tasks will involve final diary entries, or letters summing up the events of a book, from the point of view of different characters, maybe including a justification of actions. In some cases the writing task can even be a last will and testament!

Graphic novels

The activity Pictures and balloons, described on **page ➜ 44**, involved using one illustration. In the after-reading phase, learners can photocopy all the illustrations in a reader and add speech bubbles, thought clouds and captions in order to make a graphic novel. Note that the bubbles and clouds will contain 1st, 2nd and 3rd person references, while the captions will be exclusively in the 3rd person. It is the convention in English that the captions are written in the present tense, although the teacher can request the use of the past tense.

Posters

Posters can be created by individuals or groups and **displayed on the classroom walls**. Encourage the learners to view them as if they were in an art gallery. The teacher may choose:

• to stipulate the size of the poster (a constraint can be a challenge);

• to tell learners to either 'Design a poster showing how you felt about the book' or 'Design a poster to interest someone who hasn't read the book'.

The posters can be collages of illustrations (from the book and other sources), quotations (phrases, sentences, brief exchanges of dialogue), comments, realia, hypertextual links, etc. Variations are designing a new cover for the book or a poster for a film version.

Quizzes

The teacher can make up a **quiz based on WH-questions** about any of the contents of the reader. Set a short time limit and let groups of learners compete against each other. Alternatively, learners can make up quizzes to 'test' each other (but be aware there is the risk that they might ask about the most trivial of things in order to beat the other team!).

Character building

Learners decide what a character's preferences would be in the following categories. Learners need not be restricted to the story's historical setting: they can imagine the characters are alive today.

• **Food and drink**. What does she/he like? For breakfast? For dinner? What does she/he drink?

• **Music**. What does she/he like listening to? What instrument does she/he play?

• **Clothes**. What does she/he wear every day? On special occasions?

Robin Hood, Green Apple. Illustrated by Giovanni Manna.

- **House and furniture**. What kind of house does she/he live in? How is it decorated? What is her/his favourite room?
- **Sports**. What does she/he like playing? What does she/he like watching?
- **Hobbies**. What does she/he do in her/his free time?
- **Transport**. How does she/he like to travel? If she/he has a car, what kind?

This activity can also be used as a while-reading activity.

Alternatives

In these writing or speaking activities learners can suggest:

- **alternative titles**. Pairs or groups brainstorm new titles for the story and/or new chapter titles. The class can vote on the best new title(s);
- **alternative moments**. Learners identify moments in the story where the plot might have developed differently. More advanced learners can make hypotheses about these moments like this 'If X had(n't) happened, then would/might have happened';
- **alternative endings**. For example, by
  - changing a happy ending into a sad ending, or vice-versa;
  - adding an extra chapter;
  - inventing the beginning of a sequel (learners also decide when the sequel takes place).

For more advanced learners, key episodes can be rewritten:

- from the point of view of a character in the story;
- from the point of view of an uninvolved bystander;
- by a police officer;
- by a journalist (for either a sober or sensational newspaper);
- to make it sadder, happier, comic, more mysterious, etc.

Haikus

Writing a **haiku** can be a response to a character or a whole story. A haiku is a 3-line poem: the first line has 5 syllables, the second has 7, and the third has 5. As the lines do not rhyme, a haiku is easy enough to produce. This example is inspired by *Romeo and Juliet*:

Impossible dream.
Their love ended in death, but
They live forever.

Learners' haikus can then be displayed on a wall. Note that haikus can also be one of the elements of a poster.

Dramatisation

In the Reading Shakespeare readers a **playscript** is provided at the end of the book, and playscripts are found at the end of a few other readers, too, such as *The Canterville Ghost* (Reading & Training, Step 3). To dramatise all or parts of other readers, learners can work in groups on writing mini-playscripts for key episodes and then act them out. The ideas for creating playscripts and performing on are as useful for older learners as they are for younger learners.

Robin Hood, Green Apple. Illustrated by Giovanni Manna.

11 HOW TO USE FILMS

Across the bleak moors, Grendel's mother, holding her son's arm,
was disappearing into the dark waters of a lake...

To encourage intertextuality dossiers and Internet projects often focus on film versions. And, as Black Cat readers are usually adaptations of classic fiction, many film versions exist. (Use the *International Movie Database* **www.imdb.com** to find out about the film versions of classic stories.)

Films are authentic texts, so there is a difference between the language of a reader and the language of a film. But DVDs offer choices: the film in English only; the film in English with subtitles in English or in the learners' language; the film dubbed in the learners' language. The last choice is certainly a possibility if:

- the learners' level is low;
- the task involves reading or speaking in English;
- the main aim is purely enjoyment and motivation.

Films of stories

Three standard techniques for using short clips are:

- **silent viewing** (turn the volume down completely). Learners describe what they can see and/or predict what the characters are saying;

- **sound only** (face learners away from the screen, or turn the brightness or contrast down completely). Learners guess what is happening (who, where and what?) from what they hear;

- **freeze frame** (press the pause button). Learners describe what they see and make hypotheses about what has just happened and what is going to happen next. These three techniques do not really involve 'watching for pleasure' but they can be used as stimulating pre-reading activities to elicit prediction and vocabulary (make sure that the clip represents a scene in the reader!).

Beowulf, Reading & Training. Illustrated by Anna and Elena Balbusso.

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Alice's Adventures in Wonderland by L. Carroll, Reading & Training. Illustrated by Giovanni Manna.

There are other while-reading and after-reading uses.

For **while-reading**, choose film clips of about 5-10 minutes which represent what happens in a chapter/part of a chapter of the reader. Focus learners' attention with questions like these:

- Is the setting of this scene/these scenes as you imagined when you read the chapter?
- Is character X in this scene as you imagined? Think of: his/her appearance; what he/she does and says.
- Is the action in this scene/these scenes the same as in the chapter or different?
- Was there anything in the film that wasn't in the chapter? Was there anything in the chapter that wasn't in the film?

For **after-reading**, you can use the whole film. (Some teachers show the film in the learners' language if learners find it enjoyable and motivating. But learners can still be asked to talk about it in English.)

You can ask questions like these:

- What was your favourite/least favourite scene and why?
- Which characters did you like most and least?
- Did you like the beginning and ending? Were they the same as in the reader?
- What was in the film that wasn't in the reader? What was in the reader that wasn't in the film?
- How could the film be improved?
- Write a review of the film.

You can also use just a **trailer**. Ask learners to say what they would definitely put in a trailer for the film of the story, then watch the trailer to see if the learners' choices are included or not.

Planning new film versions

Activities which are not about a film already seen, but about making a new film version are:

- invent another **setting** in time and place. Filmmakers regularly create different settings for Shakespeare's plays, and resetting can be done for all classic stories. Students should think of how major details will be adapted (e.g. places, accommodation, transport, clothes, etc.) and suggest locations. It is often interesting to focus on just the opening scene(s) of a film;
- suggest a **cast** for a new film version. Learners can search for pictures on the Internet and then debate and vote in class for the best cast;
- suggest the **soundtrack** for all the film or for key scenes. Famous film directors have used classical music (e.g. Stanley Kubrick) and popular music (e.g. Martin Scorsese, Quentin Tarantino), so learners can suggest any kind of music they think is suitable;
- suggest changes to a film **script**: what episodes and/or characters would be cut from or reduced in a film of the story? What might be added or increased?
- plan a **trailer** or design a **poster** for a new film.
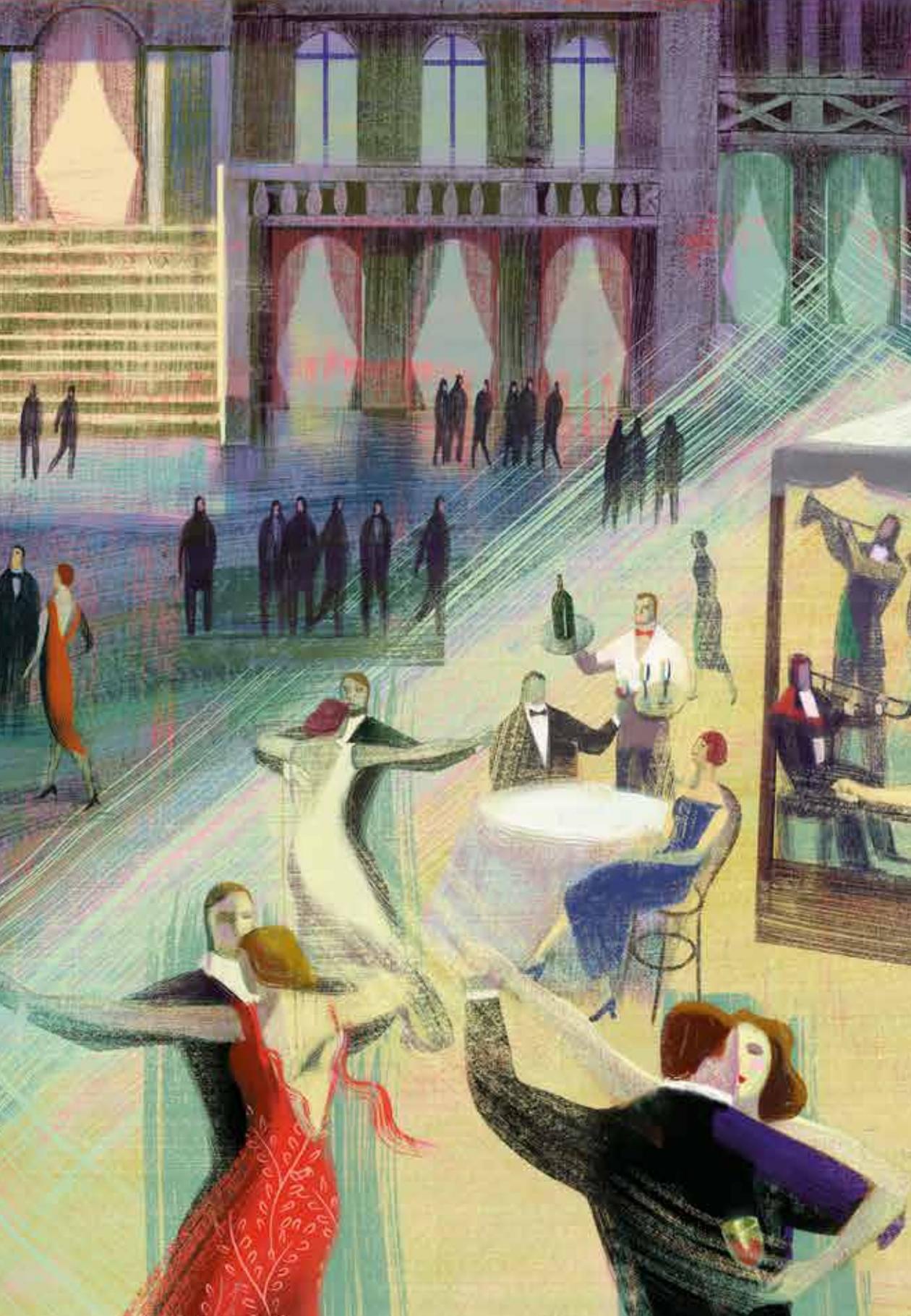
12 HOW TO USE THE RECORDINGS

I believe that on the first night I went to Gatsby's house I was one of the few guests who had received an invitation. People were not invited — they just went to his parties. They got into automobiles that took them to Long Island and somehow they arrived at Gatsby's door. Sometimes they were introduced to Gatsby and sometimes they came and went and never met Gatsby.

All our readers are accompanied by recordings. **Earlyreads** are read by a single voice, in the same expressive way that an adult – teacher or parent – reads aloud to a child. All **Green Apple** and **Reading & Training** readers are performed dramatically, often with sound effects. Texts by British authors are recorded by British actors, texts by American authors by American actors. Some recordings, e.g. *The Canterville Ghost*, even contain both British and American accents.

How recordings help learners

Recordings support comprehension in several ways. First, when the words on the page are spoken aloud they are naturally broken down into syntactic units (a process sometimes known as 'chunking' or 'parsing'), making the meaning of sentences clearer. So, what might appear to the learner as a 'sea' of words on the page, e.g. "Once upon a time there was a little boy called Jamie who lived with his mum and dad and cat and dog on a farm in England by the sea", is easier to understand when heard, e.g. "Once

upon a time / there was a little boy / called Jamie / who lived / with his mum and dad / and cat and dog / on a farm / in England / by the sea".

Secondly, in the dramatised recording we can hear **intonation**, which makes meaning clearer: we realise if the speaker is affirming, questioning, expressing doubt/surprise and so on.

Furthermore, **emotions** such as anger, sorrow, fear, and so on become explicit, and this makes meaning clearer, too.

In addition, **recognition of the written form** is helped when the text is seen and heard at the same time. There are only 26 letters in the English alphabet to represent the 44 sounds (phonemes) of the English language, so this means that the pronunciation of a word is often not obvious from its spelling. So, it is a great help to learners to hear the words at the same time as they see them on the written page.

For less able learners, **reading fluency** is practised: when learners follow the written text at the same time as they listen they are obliged to read at the speed of the recording and cannot

stop at unknown words or go back in the text. If they weren't listening to the recording, they might be tempted to stop at unknown words, and/or to read too slowly and without fluency: if this happens, it means that comprehension suffers (e.g. learners cannot understand the total meaning of a sentence) and the fluency skill of ignoring unknown words is not practised.

Many teachers prefer to **read aloud** the texts themselves – after all, they know their students best! However, the recording is valuable support for teachers who are not confident about their pronunciation. In any case the recording brings different native-speaker accents into the classroom: **exposure to different varieties of English** (principally British and American varieties) gives learners a taste of the range of 'Englishes' in the world.

How to use recordings

There are frequently **listening comprehension** activities as a **pre-reading task**: learners listen to the beginning of the chapter, do the task, and then read to check their answers. But apart from these ready-made activities already in the book, playing some of the recording before reading is

The Eigthth Sister by V. Heward, Reading & Training. Illustrated by Rodolfo Brocchini.

always an optional activity for the teacher: it can be used to encourage prediction; to get learners to listen for gist (ask WH- questions like 'Who is speaking?', Where/When does this take place?', 'What happens?'); or just as a change of procedure.

If the class is finding a reader rather easy, get them to listen to a complete chapter and try the following comprehension task that follows the chapter before they do any reading; this is a more demanding procedure.

To help with reading speed some teachers do **shadowing**. All the learners look at the text and listen to the recording; they read aloud at the same time as the recording, maintaining the same speed as the recording. This activity should be done only when the teacher is sure that the class have understood the text (otherwise they might simply be repeating without understanding).

Listening outside the class is beneficial. When learners are familiar with the text encourage them to listen again, several times, outside the classroom – after each chapter or at the end of the book – to practise **extensive listening**: this will help them unconsciously acquire language.

The Eigthth Sister by V. Heward, Reading & Training. Illustrated by Rodolfo Brocchini.

13 HOW TO USE THE INTERNET

*Portia took a gold ring off her finger and put it on Bassanio's.
'If you ever give it away or lose it,' she said, 'it will mean that our love is
finished and that I have a right to be angry with you.'*

Projects on the web (as they are called in the Green Apple series) and **Internet projects** (the name in the Reading & Training series) direct learners to websites where they will find further information, artworks and so on related to the contents of a reader. These projects exemplify the **'expansive reading' approach** very well: learners will explore sociocultural background, CLIL connections, details of the author's life, artworks and films inspired by the contents of the reader, and so on. There are many directions that learners are invited to take, and the Internet makes available the world's museums, art galleries, film archives, national media, information banks and so on.

Contents of Internet projects

A teacher might ask: "My learners are using a graded reader, so how can they deal with websites? They're authentic, unsimplified texts".

The answer is an old one, but still very valid: "Grade the task, not the text". So, learners are given tasks that involve looking for specific information, practising the major reading skill of **scanning** (always a vital skill, and nowadays more than ever as we have to cope with the huge amount of information on the Internet). Many of the questions ask students WH-questions to find out who, what, when, how and so on, and this kind of question means that even lower level learners can take something from a website.

Learners might also be asked to find some images they like on a website, download them and describe them to the class. This **personal reaction** task can be used at all levels, too.

The projects can be done in class, in the computer lab or at home. Learners might work alone, but they might well work in pairs or small groups, so that cooperative learning and **interaction** will take place. Learners are usually invited to tell the class about their findings, so skills of **summarising/synthesising** are involved in what is usually an **oral presentation** rather than written output.

Should a teacher want to **create a new Internet project**, the procedure is not so difficult. Finding a website which is relevant, interesting and accessible is the most demanding step. Then create the tasks, e.g.:

- create some WH-questions referring to the content;
- extract some (e.g. 3 to 8) information-bearing sentences. Some of these sentences the teacher 'disturbs' by changing the facts or making affirmative into negative or vice-versa, so that the teacher creates a set of sentences some of which are false (the 'disturbed' sentences) and some of which are true (the sentences left 'undisturbed'). Ask learners to decide if the sentences are true or false *before* they go to the website.
- ask learners to find an image they like most;
- ask learners to tell the class a fact which most surprised them.

14 HOW TO USE 'SUMMARY-BASED ACTIVITIES'

After we had eaten our lunch, we went out into the garden. It was very cold and our brown school dresses were too thin to keep us warm in the winter weather. Nearly all of the girls looked cold and unhappy. Some of them looked very ill. I walked around the garden and hoped that someone would speak to me, but no one did.

Some Black Cat readers are accompanied by **summary-based activities**, which are accessed on the website pages dedicated to individual readers. These consist of 3 or 4 summaries corresponding to different parts of the reader; each summary is used *both* to check comprehension and to practise language skills. Summaries can lead to lots of **language practice**, and below we will describe different activities that can all be based on a summary.

If the reader you have chosen does not come with 'summary-based activities', then the teacher can invent a summary for a part of the reader (e.g. 2 or 3 chapters) or all of the reader after finishing it – and follow the instructions below for how to create the activities.

Gap filling

This procedure is based on creating gaps in a summary which learners must fill in with single words. In the classic 'cloze' procedure words are removed from a text at regular intervals (for example, every 7th or 8th word), but we use the 'modified cloze procedure' (often called 'gap filling') where the choice of the words to remove depends on the language skills we want to practise.

- **Vocabulary control** and **range** are practised when we remove 'content' words (sometimes called 'lexical' words) such as nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs.

- **Grammatical control** and **syntax** are practised when we remove 'function' words (sometimes called 'structure' or 'grammatical' words) such as pronouns, articles, conjunctions, prepositions, auxiliary verbs and modal verbs.

- **Lexico-grammar** is practised when, for example, the gap represents the particle that follows a verb in a phrasal verb.

- **Text coherence** and **cohesion**, which go beyond the sentence, are practised when we remove discourse markers (words like *secondly*, *eventually*, *however*, *nevertheless*, etc.).

The way the gapped summary is presented affects how demanding the activity is. The procedures 1-5 below are ordered from less demanding to more demanding. Procedure 5 is more demanding the more verb tenses the students know.

1 **Scrambled words**. The words removed are put above or below the gapped summary (often in a box) in scrambled order.

2 **Scrambled words with extra words**. As in *1*, but some extra words that need not be used are added to the words that have been removed (e.g. if there are 10 spaces to fill in, there might be 15 words in the box, or more).

3 **Multiple-choice cloze**. The words removed are presented in the form of multiple choice: the correct answer plus 2 or 3 distracters ('Choose A, B or C' or 'Choose A, B, C or D'). This format is used in Cambridge English exams: Key, Reading and Writing Paper, Part 5; Preliminary, Reading and Writing Paper, Part 5; First, Reading and Use of English Paper, Part 1.

4 **Open cloze**. Students fill in the spaces without any choice of words being given. (So, unlike for *1-3*, more than one answer might be possible). This format is used in Cambridge English exams: Key, Reading and Writing Paper, Part 7; First, Reading and Use of English Paper, Part 2.

5 **Scrambled verbs**. The words removed are all verbs and are put in the infinitive form above or below the gapped summary (often in a box) in scrambled order. For each gap, learners must choose the right verb and put it in the right tense or form.

Put the sentences in order

In this classic activity, the order of the sentences in the summary is scrambled, and students must put them in the right order. Both comprehension and the subskill of identifying text coherence and cohesion (e.g. the use of discourse markers and pronouns) are involved.

Correct the mistakes!

The teacher reads the summary, regularly **making deliberate mistakes** in the content (not in the language, which must remain correct). The students call out corrections as the teacher is reading. This fun activity is particularly successful with younger learners. At lower levels the deliberate mistakes can be words (nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs) while at higher levels the mistakes can be about phrases.

Dictogloss

The students sit in groups of 2 to 5. At normal speed, the teacher reads out the summary (or just some sentences of it) while students take notes, writing down key words. The teacher reads the same text again, and again students take notes. Then students then work in their groups to write a text which is correct but not necessarily the same as what the teacher read (**the aim is grammatical and lexical correctness,** not memory). Students then compare what they have written with the work of other groups, trying to edit eventual errors. Finally, students' texts are compared with the original summary, and differences pointed out and discussed.

Cut it down!

Students must cut a fixed number of words from the summary. This involves both **language skills** (the text must still be grammatically correct after the words have been cut) **and interpretation** (the students must decide which are the least important details to cut from the summary).

As a rule of thumb, the teacher can ask students to cut 10% of the summary (e.g. they must cut 15 words from a 150-word summary). Students can change punctuation, but they mustn't add any words. Each student (or pair, or group) works on the summary with a red pen or highlighter or on an electronic copy of the summary. When they have finished, they compare their shortened versions and decide which are the best cuts, and why.

Students can then be asked to cut a further 10% of the summary (and then to cut yet another 10% of it!).

Build it up!

This is **the opposite of the previous activity**; here, students are asked to add details to the summary. This involves both **language skills** (the text must still be grammatically correct after the additions) **and interpretation** (the students must decide which is/are the *most important* detail(s) missing from the summary).

Each student (or pair, or group) must add one or two details to the summary; the additions can be words, phrases or even sentences. If the teacher wants to specify a number of words, a minimum would be 5 and a maximum 20% of the summary.

When they have finished, learners compare their versions and decide which are the most interesting additions and why.

Rewrite it!

This activity, for learners at higher levels, encourages **creative writing and an awareness of elements of narrative technique** such as point of view and tone.

Each student (or pair, or group) must rewrite the summary – making whatever changes they think necessary – in order to do one of the following:

- narrate the summary from the point of view of a character in the story (including his/her attitudes, sympathies, feelings and his/her knowledge/interpretation of the events). The character chosen could be a major or a minor character, or even just a bystander or eyewitness who is not even in the story;
- make the tone of the summary more sad, happy, funny, dramatic, suspenseful, mysterious, etc.
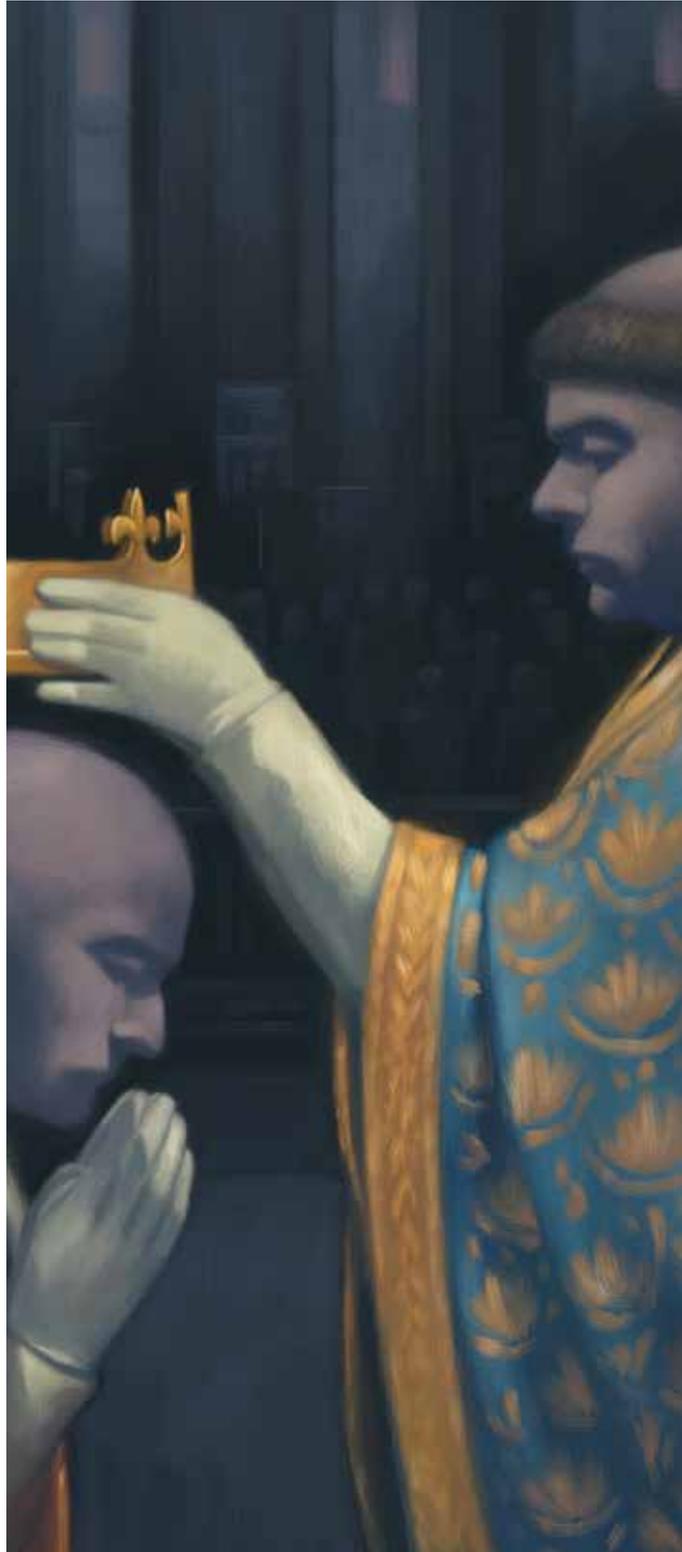
15 HOW EARLYREADS ARE GRADED

Snow White was alone and sad, but she made friends with some rabbits and a deer. Then she fell asleep. Early in the morning the birds woke her up and she saw a small cottage.

There are five levels of **Earlyreads**, graded according to the suitability of subject matter to age group as well as with structural and lexical criteria. Level 1 can be used with children who have already started English, while level 5 represents a good elementary ability (comparable to level A1 of the Common European Framework of Reference). The best way, of course, to judge whether a book's level is suitable for learners is for the teacher to read through the book – after all, teachers know their learners' levels best.

In addition, Earlyreads can be aligned to the levels of international examination boards (as shown in the table on the next page) although it must be stressed that external examinations for young learners should be used as motivation, not for formal testing. Many young learners are stimulated by measuring their abilities against an external exam as long as the exam is presented in a non-threatening, fun format.

Note that the indications of suitability for age groups are necessarily approximate: much depends on how many hours per week exposure to English the learners have.

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, Earlyreads. Illustrated by Alida Massari.

Earlyread level	Suitable for age group	Cambridge English: Young Learners	Trinity Spoken English
1	4-6 years	Exam preparation: Starters	1
2	6-8 years	Exam preparation: Starters	1
3	7-9 years	Exam level: Starters Exam preparation: Movers	2
4	8-10 years	Exam preparation: Movers	2
5	9-12 years	Exam level: Movers	2, 3

Structures

Simple sentence structure is fundamental for young learners. Words which are normally considered 'advanced' can be perfectly comprehensible in context, where the story and the illustrations help, but complex syntax will always pose problems. Consequently, sentences at level 1 are simple, following the subject-verb-object form. Only at level 2 is elementary co-ordination introduced to make compound sentences, while subordination only appears at levels 4 and 5.

Verb forms and other significant structures for each level are shown in the table below. Note that only at level 5 is the past simple introduced.

LEVEL 1
to be
have got
Present Simple
Imperatives
Questions with WH- words
Subject and object pronouns
Prepositions of place

LEVEL 2
All the structures of the previous level, plus:
Present Continuous
can/can't
Sentence connectors *and*, *or*, *but*
Possessive forms *'s* and *s'*

LEVEL 3
All the structures of previous levels, plus:
must/mustn't
shall in interrogatives
would/wouldn't like
Adverbs of manner
Adverbs of frequency
Sentence connector *because*

LEVEL 4
All the structures of previous levels, plus:
going to for future reference
Comparison of adjectives
Comparison of adverbs
Sentence connector *to* for purpose

LEVEL 5
All the structures of previous levels, plus:
Past Simple of *to be*
Past Simple of common verbs
will for future reference
Defining relative clauses with *who*, *which*, *that*

Vocabulary

What was said about grading vocabulary in the Green Apple and Reading & Training series **[see page ➔ 23]** is also true of Earlyreads: that is, common sense leads to the use of restricted vocabulary, while still allowing some language which is the most colourful choice in the context of a certain reader – and which is fun because children will enjoy the expression. Examples are 'spell' (as in 'magic spell') and 'wicked' in *Bugaboo the Wicked Witch*, and 'fang' instead of the everyday word 'tooth' in *Dracula and his Family*. Furthermore, some words in classic tales are so essential to tradition that they should not be changed, even though they are low frequency in everyday English: obvious examples are 'duckling' in *The Ugly Duckling* and 'riding hood',

an expression hardly ever used outside of *Little Red Riding Hood*!

The meaning of vocabulary is often made clear by the beautiful full-colour illustrations. Apart from captivating young readers, they also support comprehension of the text that is on the same double page: the young learner naturally 'reads' the illustration before listening to or reading the text, and much of the meaning of the text will already become clear.

In all the Earlyreads published since 2006, the numbers of headwords used in each reader as well as the numbers of words per volume and the numbers of words per double page have been controlled, as is shown in the table below.

LEVEL	HEADWORDS in the complete story	WORDS in the complete story	WORDS per DOUBLE PAGE of the story
Level 1	Up to 100 headwords	Up to 550	Up to 50
Level 2	Up to 150 headwords	Up to 700	Up to 70
Level 3	Up to 200 headwords	Up to 850	Up to 85
Level 4	Up to 250 headwords	Up to 1000	Up to 100
Level 5	Up to 300 headwords	Up to 1250	Up to 125

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, Earlyreads. Illustrated by Alida Massari.

16 HOW TO USE EARLYREADS

The fairies dance a new dance:
'Arms up, arms out, arms down!
To-whit to-whoo, to-whit to-whoo!
Turn around, touch the ground and up!
To-whit to-whoo, to-whit to-whoo!
Stamp your feet, clap your hands and fly!
To-whit to-whoo, to-whit to-whoo!'

Timing

Much of the advice in **How To Fit Readers Into Your Teaching** **[see pages ➔ 29-33]** is also valid for young learners, although there are specific considerations for this age group.

There are no rules about how many lessons a reader should take. The most important factor is the attention span of the learners – how long they will be interested in and enjoy the moments of reading. Of course, this will be longer if their language level is at, or higher than, the level of the reader, or shorter if their language level is lower than the reader. However, not too much time (no more than a week) should pass between using a reader, or learners will forget the plot.

Many teachers allocate about 15-20 minutes of a lesson to a reader. Either they dedicate a regular appointment to a reader in one lesson per week, or dedicate a period of *every* lesson to the reader until it is finished. It is even possible to have the children listen to a complete story in one lesson if they are at a suitable language level. The performances on the recordings from Level 1 to 4 last about 8 to 10 minutes; at Level 5 they last from 10 to 15 minutes.

Methodology

The three phases of activities – **pre-reading** **[see pages ➔ 39-41]**, **while-reading [see pages ➔ 43-45]** and **after-reading [see pages ➔ 47-49]** – still apply to Earlyreads, although the types of activities and amount of time dedicated to them differ.

Pre-reading activities are essential for arousing young learners' interest and making them want to read/listen to the story. It is simple but effective to elicit ideas from the cover illustration and to use it to teach some key vocabulary. Other illustrations from inside the reader can be used in this way, too. The teacher can, indeed, look through all of the illustrations in the reader with the children, asking questions and encouraging suggestions; this procedure is sometimes called 'taking a picture walk'.

The first telling of the story can be done in two main ways. In the first, learners follow the illustrations in the readers while they listen to the text: the focus is on understanding meaning (not on production or language work). Playing the recordings to the children while they follow the illustrations is an attractive option, as the recordings are dramatic readings of the story, often with sound effects. Some teachers, however, may prefer to read the story aloud, as they can adjust the reading speed perfectly to the children's level. In this case, teachers can use different voices for different characters and a normal voice for the narrative, and use gestures to emphasise meaning. Monitor that learners look at the right illustrations and turn over the pages when necessary.

In the second way, teachers with dramatic ability opt *not* to use the book for the first telling. They dramatises the story using different voices for different characters, gestures to emphasise meaning and mime to act out events in the story. As the story progresses, children are encouraged to imitate the gestures.

While-reading activities should be short and simple with young learners: we do not want to interrupt an exciting story for too long.

Some Earlyreads are divided into chapters; after each chapter there are while-reading activities – generally a brief comprehension check on what has happened – as well as presentation of vocabulary for the next chapter.

Most Earlyreads are not divided into chapters. In these readers a double page is a complete narrative unit and the teacher can stop on any double page. Should teachers want any while-reading questions then a few questions about the illustrations and/or 1 or 2 prediction questions invented spontaneously by the teacher are enough.

After-reading activities are important because they allow children to react to what they have read and to practise using new language. All Earlyreads have a wide range of activities at the back of the book, all of which are lavishly illustrated. The first 1 or 2 activities check comprehension, but the following are game-based activities featuring characters or elements in the story. Popular activity types:

- crosswords with visual and/or verbal clues
- word squares
- word snakes
- reordering scrambled letters, words and sentences
- matching words to words and words to pictures
- gap filling
- picture clozes
- decoding hidden messages
- finding characters and/or things in pictures
- spotting the differences between pictures
- illustrations to label
- joining the dots to reveal a picture
- colouring by numbers
- songs, chants and rhymes
- board games
- following instructions to make things

The last two types in the list are important. Each reader has either a double-page board game or an arts/craft activity; some readers contain both. Games can be played again and again, and are particularly useful as they entice children to 'revisit' the story and to use English in the real communicative context of a game. The arts/craft activities, which involve making puppets, models, displays, objects etc. from card, paper bags, toilet roll containers, etc., are necessary ingredients in the primary classroom as they practise fine motor skills. Furthermore, the objects made also provide a reason for learners to talk about the story, and some can be used during oral reading, readers' theatre or full scale dramatisations **[see pages ✦ 73-75]**.

Earlyreads generally have **picture dictionaries** on the last three pages. These are *not* dictionaries for learners to look words up while reading the story – do not allow this to happen. They are for revising/practising key vocabulary in the story. Words are not listed in alphabetical order; they are grouped in word fields, which are mostly semantic (parts of the body, members of the family, animals, etc.) but also grammatical (adjectives, verbs, prepositions – although

grammatical terminology is not used).

Picture dictionaries can be used in two ways. Children or teachers (or parents) can simply put their fingers over the words (in the left-hand column) and use the pictures (in the right-hand column) as a prompt to remember and say the words. The picture dictionary pages can also be photocopied, stuck on card, and cut up so that separate tiles for words and pictures are created. Children can then use the tiles to play the vocabulary game of 'memory': matching the words to the pictures.

Extra activities

As well as activities already provided in the readers, learners enjoy **making a drawing** of an event or favourite character and labelling it/her/him, or making a larger illustration or poster representing the whole story. This can be done after finishing any reader, and such personal reactions involve creativity and artistic skills.

If the teacher wants the pupils to express a **personal opinion** of the readers use **smiley faces** ☺ ☹. Each pupil can assign from between 1 to 5 'smiley faces' to each reader. Pupils can draw the faces themselves or use stickers prepared by the teacher. The faces can be put next to the title of each reader either on individual record cards kept by each pupil, or on a wall chart that shows the opinion of whole class. The wall chart should have the names of the children down the left-hand vertical axis and the names of the readers along the top horizontal axis.

Rereading stories

After the first (or second) reading, learners will have understood the story. Further readings increase the linguistic benefits of using readers, as children subconsciously *acquire* (rather than consciously *learn*) the new language in the stories. Further readings can take place: in class, with the teacher; in class, individually; outside the class, individually; outside the class, with parents.

- An effective way of rereading books with the

teacher is **oral reading**, which aims to improve reading fluency. The teacher reads a part of the story aloud, expressively and not too slowly. Following the teacher's model, the learners then read the same passage aloud. The teacher elicits correct pronunciation of any mispronunciations, and then the procedure is repeated: teacher reads aloud, learners read aloud. This can then be repeated.

- Quiet periods when the pupils all read silently and individually (sometimes known as ERIC, **everyone reading in class**) mean that each child can read at her/his own pace, and this procedure also varies the rhythm of the class, providing a quiet moment.

- **Children should be encouraged to read books on their own**, outside school time. They can simply listen to the recordings while they follow the story simply or they can speak along with the recording; this choice can be left to each individual.

- Perhaps children want to **share their reading experiences with parents**? This should be encouraged! Where one or both parents know English the situation is ideal (a parent fluent in English can do oral reading with the learner). Parents who do not know English should express interest if their children want to tell them a story, and praise them. What parents should *not* do – even though it is a great temptation – is to ask the children to translate the story *word by word*. This is a bad idea for several reasons: it is counter productive to the communicative approach promoted by the readers; it seems like 'testing'; translation is a different, higher order skill. However, children can certainly tell their parents about a story in their mother tongue in the form of a summary or paraphrase.

17 HOW TO DRAMATISE STORIES

The small fish are coming.
They swim slowly to the green flower. They stop.
'Look! She's wonderful!' they say. 'Wow! Is she a dancer? Is she a princess?
Is she a sea-princess?'

The suggestions in this section refer to dramatisation at primary school, but they can be applied to secondary and higher contexts, too.

For drama activities you need a **playscript** which shows what lines the learners speak. Some readers are already in the form of scripts: *The Canterville Ghost*, *Dracula and his Family*, *Frankenstein at School*, *Freddy Finds the Thief* and *The Jungle Book*. In other readers the lines of direct speech can be used for the parts of characters, while the narrative can be distributed among various narrators. In any case, all Earlyreads published after 2006 are accompanied by playscripts downloadable free from the Black Cat website. These playscripts are in Word format, so that teachers can edit them if they want, and customise them for their classes. Should there not be enough roles for everyone, ask yourself if any roles could be spoken by a chorus of children, or if the numbers of minor characters could be increased.

As an alternative to dramatisation (described below) or as preparation for it, teachers can get the class to do **readers' theatre** in groups. Each learner is given a playscript and is told what role he/she is to read. (This can be the whole story or – more likely – part of a story. If there are too many characters in the playscript, minor characters can be eliminated.) Learners practise reading their parts expressively and fluently – while the teacher goes around monitoring them – and then perform for the other groups. It is different from dramatisation because learners read from playscripts rather than memorising their lines. Costumes and props are not required and there is no stage; learners sit or stand in a semi-circle.

By **dramatisation** we mean learners speaking lines from the story from memory, taking on the role of a character (or being a narrator). Dramatisation, however, can range from a 10-minute activity in class to a full-scale performance of the whole story on stage before an audience of other pupils and parents. Many teachers will be happy with just doing short drama activities, as a performance requires

Miss Grace Green and the Clown Brothers, Earlyreads. Illustrated by Daniele Fabbri.

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considerably more preparation. However, as the preparation for a performance involves a lot of cross-curricular work (art and handicraft, music, motor activities) and is gratifying for parents it can be a very satisfying project.

Stories and parts of stories can be dramatised using **puppets**. Children can easily make finger puppets with washable felt-tip pens, strips of paper, scissors and sticky tape: they draw the face of a character on their forefingers, and with the strips of paper they can add a hat or a skirt. With a little more work, puppets can be made out of materials such as toilet roll tubes or empty drink cartons. The use of puppets makes it easy for the class to split into groups and do their dramatisation while the teacher moves around monitoring them.

More often than not, however, the pupils themselves act the characters, rather than puppets, and in this case more support might be needed for a full-scale performance on stage.

Masks and **costumes** add an entertaining theatrical touch. Masks are easily made: a simple strip of paper around the head with the addition of paper ears is often enough to create animals or monsters. A false nose can be added: cardboard and a strip of elastic to go around the back of the head. A full face mask involves only a piece of face-shaped cardboard, appropriately coloured and with holes for the mouth and eyes, held in place by a strip of elastic going around the back of the head. Costumes do not need to be elaborate or complete: a scarf, a hat, a piece of material that represents a cloak or a skirt or some such garment is often enough to distinguish a character.

Props are the objects that characters in the drama use. They could be everyday objects (e.g. a pen, a knife and fork, etc.) or unusual objects (e.g. a magic wand, a sword, etc.), but all of them can be found either at home or school or can easily be made.

The **scenery** helps represent the environment that we imagine on the stage area. Scenery may not be necessary at all – sometimes an empty space is the most suitable option. Or, at its very simplest, it will probably be some classroom chairs and desks, which may just be somewhere to sit or put things on, or might represent houses, trees, river banks, and so on. Only in elaborate performances might it be necessary to create a backdrop (a painted background); doing this would be a long-term art and handicraft project.

Sound effects both make a performance more dramatic and are a way of involving all the learners. There are five kinds.

- Sounds we make to **express feelings and reactions**, such as:
  – gasps of surprise (*Oh!*) or horror (*Aagh!*);
  – sighs expressing sadness or 'romance';
  – cheers (*Hurray!*) expressing exultation or approval;
  – the sound *Boo!* expressing disapproval;
  – the sounds *yum yum!* or *mmmmm!* to express appreciation of food;
  – the sound *ha ha ha!* for laughter.

    Sounds such as these can be made by individuals or by a chorus.

- Sounds we make with our mouths to **imitate noises in the world**, which are written down as **onomatopoeic words**, such as:
  – *bang*, *boom*, *crash*, *pop*, *splash*, *glug glug* (liquid pouring, or greedy drinking!);
  – *slurp* (drinking noisily);
  – *screech* (e.g. the sudden application of brakes);
  – *swish* (e.g. the noise grass makes in the wind);
  – *squelch* (e.g. walking in mud);
  – *crunch* (e.g. biting, or breaking biscuits or crisps, or walking on crisp snow... or even breaking bones!).

    Noises made by animals:
  – *bow wow!* or *woof woof!* (dog);
  – *miaow!* (cat);
  – *moo* (cow);
  – *oink!* (pig);
  – *baa*, *baa!* (sheep);
  – *tweet! tweet!* (birds);
  – *quack!* (duck);
  – *cock-a-doodle do!* (cockerel).

Children are attracted by onomatopoeic words (they find them all the time in comics!), and the different representations of animal noises from language to language arouse curiosity.

- Sounds we can make with objects or parts of our bodies to **imitate other sounds**, e.g. shaking a sheet of metal imitates thunder, or drumming our fingers rhythmically imitates a horse galloping.
- **Real sounds** that we can make, for example a door slamming or a plate breaking. Even though these are the most realistic, they are possibly the ones we use least – both for practical reasons and because the other ways are more 'fun'!
- **Music**, either played live by the children or recorded.

This **checklist** will be useful when planning a full-scale performance:

- Is the script suitable? (Not too long, not too short; not too difficult, not too easy.)
- Who is going to play which part?
- Are there enough parts (characters, narrators, non-speaking extras) for everyone? If not, can other non-speaking roles be created? (Often there can be extra characters – children, animals, passers-by, etc. – who do not speak but are either involved in the action or stand to the side observing the action.)
- Define the stage and audience area. Can all the audience see and hear?
- Where do actors come in and go out?
- Where do the actors wait when they are not on stage?
- Where is the audience? Are they sitting or standing? Can they all see and hear?
- Is a there a prompt? (i.e. Someone with the playscript who will read out words if actors forget their lines. It might be the teacher.)
- What costumes (and masks) and props are needed? Who will make them?
- What scenery is needed? Will some things have to be made? Who will make them?
- Will there be any sound effects? Who will make them and how?
- Is it possible to include singing or dancing? This gives everybody on stage something to do. Songs and dances can also be appreciated by any non-English speakers in the audience (e.g. parents).
- Do you want to advertise the performance? If so, design posters, invitations, etc.
- Do you want to record the performance? If so, who will do this?
- If you are going to record the performance, do you want to post it anywhere (e.g. on the school website or on a social networking site)?

If there are any non-English speakers in the audience (e.g. parents, other teachers) you may want to create a short 'prologue' in the learners' mother tongue explaining the plot, so that everyone can follow the action. (In a multilingual context, there could be several prologues in different languages.)

Always

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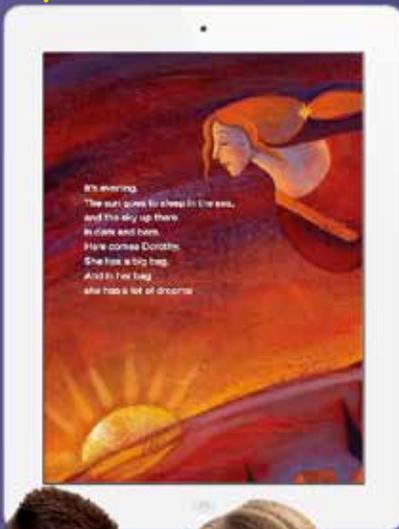
Auto correct **activities** with progress monitoring

ACTIVITIES

READING DIARY

Title of book: .... Series: ....

Author: .... Level: ....

Opening: Chapter / Part 1

- What is the setting: where and when do the events take place?

  ....

- Who seems to be the main character? What can you say about him/her? For example, age, job, position in society, character, etc.

  ....

- Are there any other characters? What can you say about them? What is the relationship between the characters? For example, are they family, friends, enemies, etc.?

  ....

- What happens? And, why and how does it happen? For example, do the characters choose to do something, or does something happen outside the control of the characters?

  ....

- What is your reaction so far? For example, are you interested, surprised, bored, intrigued? Do you like or dislike the character(s)?

  ....

- What do you think will happen next?

  ....

Chapter / Part 2

- Is the setting the same, or has it changed?

  ....

- Are any other characters introduced? If so, who are they, and what are they like? Do they seem more important than the previous character(s)?

  ....

- Have the previous characters changed in any way? Do we learn anything new about them?

  ....

- What happens? And, why and how does it happen?
- ....

- What is your reaction so far? For example, are you interested, surprised, bored, intrigued? Do you still have the same opinion about the main character and other characters?

  ....

- What do you think will happen next?

  ....

Chapter / Part ....

- What happens? Is the setting the same, or has it changed? Has/have the character(s) changed in any way? Are any other characters introduced?

  ....

  ....

- What is your reaction? Have your opinions about the characters and events changed in any way?

  ....

  ....

- What do you think will happen next?

  ....

  ....

Chapter / Part ....

- What happens? Is the setting the same, or has it changed? Has/have the character(s) changed in any way? Are any other characters introduced?

  ....

  ....

- What is your reaction? Have your opinions about the characters and events changed in any way?

  ....

  ....

- What do you think will happen next?

  ....

  ....

Chapter / Part ....

- What happens? Is the setting the same, or has it changed? Has/have the character(s) changed in any way? Are any other characters introduced?

  ....

  ....

- What is your reaction? Have your opinions about the characters and events changed in any way?

  ....

  ....

- What do you think will happen next?

  ....

  ....

Ending: Chapter / Part ....

- How does the book end? What happens to bring about the ending?
  ....

- What is your reaction? Do you think the ending is satisfactory, surprising, exciting, predictable, disappointing, etc.?
  ....

- Have your opinions about the characters and events changed in any way?
  ....

- Can you think of an alternative ending?
  ....

Review

- What happens in the book? Write a short summary in about 50 words.
  ....
  ....

- Which character(s) did you like best? Why?
  ....
  ....

- Which part of the book (a chapter or a short episode) did you like best? Why?
  ....
  ....

- Which illustration in the book did you like best? Why?
  ....
  ....

- For a film version of this book, which actors would you choose?
  ....
  ....

- Is the book similar to any other books you have read, or films you have seen?
  ....
  ....

- Were there dossier sections in the book? What is the most interesting thing you learnt?
  ....
  ....

- I would / wouldn't recommend this book to a friend because…
  ....