

Timo's Shorts

by Marie Langley

illustrated by Andrew Burdan

Overview

In this lively narrative, Timo can't wait to show off his hot new swimming shorts. But when it's swimming time, they've disappeared. Timo anxiously retraces his movements from the school pool back to the cloak bay, where he solves the mystery. There is an audio version on the Ready to Read CD *Readalong 2005*.

Suggested purposes

This is an excellent text for exploring ways of facing and solving a problem. It supports the comprehension strategies of making connections, identifying main ideas, forming hypotheses, inferring, and analysing and synthesising. It encourages expressive reading, provides mileage, and is useful for monitoring children's integration of reading strategies at the end of the Turquoise level.

Text features

(Focus on only one or two per session.)

- the clear narrative structure, with its highs and lows and repeated incidents
- Timo's feelings as the events unfold
- the way Timo solves his own problem
- the pace of the narrative, which is influenced by:
 - the lively verbs — "bumped", "burning", "crashed", "dropped", "grabbed", "hurried", "leaping", "rush", "shoved", "snatched", "spun", "stopped", "swinging", "swung", "waving"
 - the use of adverbs — "quickly", "superfast"
 - the expressive dialogue, including colloquial language, exclamations, imperatives, and contractions
 - the use of upper-case letters, italics, exclamation marks, and dashes for effect
- the revealing of Timo's character through his actions and dialogue and through the responses of other characters
- the use of imagery — "flames leaping up", "Timo's face fell"
- the humour in the extended metaphor and double meaning of the word "HOT!"
- the dramatic visual language, including a split picture, a thought bubble, colour contrast, facial expressions, movement lines, and flashes
- the past-tense contractions — "couldn't", "didn't", "hadn't", "he'd", "they'd", "wasn't", "weren't"
- the irregular past-tense verbs — "did", "fell", "got", "hit", "lost", "put", "ran", "said", "sat", "saw", "set off", "spun", "stood", "swung", "thought", "told", "was", "went", "were"
- the possessive apostrophes — "Timo's", "Penny's"
- the words ending in "le" — "circle", "prickle", "trouble".

Possible challenges

- the names of the characters
- the past participle “fallen” on page 11
- the past-tense contractions.

Introducing the text

Wear a favourite piece of clothing and talk to the children about why you like it. *Do you have favourite clothes that you love to wear? How do you feel when you get new clothes?* Make it clear that “new” means new to the wearer and not necessarily a shop-bought item. Look at the cover illustration. *What does Timo think of his shorts? How do you know? What do **you** think of them?*

If you have ESOL children in the group, you could take some time here to talk explicitly about words that Timo might use to describe his shorts. Ask the children to suggest words and list them on the whiteboard. Make sure the word “hot” is included. Explain that words often have more than one meaning and clarify that “hot” can mean that something is really good.

Share the purpose for the reading with the children. Note that you could reread this text a number of times with a different purpose each time, depending on the needs of your children. Here are some examples of purposes for reading:

- *Timo has a problem in this story. As you read, I want you to think about what the problem was and how Timo tried to solve it.*
- *I want you to practise the strategy of inferring while you read — to look for clues about what sort of person Timo is.*
- *While you’re reading, I want you to think about how the writer has made this story seem exciting.*
- *Thinking about what might happen next helps your understanding when you read. As we read this text, I’ll be asking you to share your ideas about what you think is going to happen.*

During the reading

Read the title and the names of the author and the illustrator. Ask the children to read the text silently, pausing at various points for discussion or to clarify any difficulties. If necessary, help the children with the characters’ names.

Page 2 — *What are the ideas on this page?* You may want to record these on a chart. Enjoy the joke with the word “HOT” referring both to the flames on the shorts and to Timo’s opinion of them.

Page 3 — *What advice does Mum give Timo? Why? I wonder what might be going to happen?* Observe whether the children are able to chunk the word “remember”. If necessary, clarify that “set off” is a more poetic way of saying “went”.

Pages 4 and 5 — Review what the children have found out about Timo. *How do you know? Where does it tell you?*

Pages 6 and 7 — *What else have we just found out about Timo?* If necessary, reassure the children about the sound for “le” at the end of “prickle”.

Page 8 — *How do we know that Timo is feeling excited?* Note the “le” ending for “circle”. If necessary, support the children with the less common irregular verbs “spun” and “swung”.

Page 9 — Focus on the dramatic climax. *Did you predict this? How would you feel if*

this happened to you? How could Timo solve this problem?

Page 10 — Check that the children understand the meaning of “Timo’s face fell.” *How is Timo feeling now?*

Page 11 — *Why is Timo standing by the gate? What is he trying to do?* Draw out the idea that Timo is thinking his way back through the problem. *Where will he look next?* If necessary, reassure the children about the verb “fallen”.

Pages 12 — The split picture and the thought bubble confirm Timo’s strategy — he is thinking hard and checking carefully. *Will he find his shorts?*

Page 14 — *Were you right?*

Page 15 — Enjoy Piripi’s joke together.

Page 16 — *How does Ms Jones feel about Timo? How does she join in the joke?*

Reflect on the ideas in the story. Ask the children to talk with a partner about what Timo’s problem was and how it was solved. Use this as an opportunity to monitor their understanding of the main ideas in the text. *What have we learnt about Timo?*

After the reading

(Choose only one or two per session.)

Listen to the children reread the text with a partner, observing their integration of reading strategies and their ability to read expressively, using the punctuation appropriately. Those children who are managing well and showing a good understanding of the story are probably ready to move on to the Purple level. A running record will help to confirm this.

Talk about the narrative structure. You could identify the high points, the complications, the dramatic climax with the introduction of the problem, the low points as each incident is revisited unsuccessfully, and the happy resolution.

Track Timo’s emotions as the story unfolds. *What clues can you find in the text (or illustrations) that help you work this out?*

Focus on the author’s style. *What helps this story sound so exciting?* You could focus on one or more of the following aspects:

- Explore the pace of the narrative. Identify some sentences that use lively verbs, for example, on page 4. Replace the verb with a less lively example (“Timo *got* his swimming bag”) and talk about the difference this makes. Find the adverbs (on pages 4, 8, 13, and 14) and talk about how they add to the impact of the verbs.
- Discuss the dramatic nature of the dialogue. Talk about the use of exclamations, the expressive punctuation, Ms Jones’ imperative language, the contractions, the colloquial language, and the use of upper-case letters for emphasis.
- Focus on the use of punctuation. Find examples of the use of italics and exclamation marks for effect. Look at the sentences where a dash is used (on pages 9, 11, 12, and 14). Talk about how the dash indicates a pause and how it gives the next part of the sentence greater impact.
- Track the references to the flames on Timo’s shorts and talk about the humorous effect of the extended metaphor.
- Focus on characterisation. Draw out the idea that Timo’s character is portrayed through his dialogue and actions and through the responses of the characters around him rather than through direct description. You could also talk about how the author portrays Ms Jones.

Focus on the illustration on page 15 and speculate together about what some of the characters are thinking. *Why do you think that?* Encourage the children to reflect on the sources of information they've drawn on to make these inferences, for example, the text on page 15, the illustration, the previous events in the narrative, the ideas they've already developed about Timo, and their own experiences. Explain that they've used the comprehension strategies of making connections and inferring.

Focus on the way the illustrations complement the text. *How does the illustrator help to make the story exciting?* Compare the illustrations on page 4 and page 13 and look at the different ways in which Timo is portrayed when he is hurrying and when he is thinking.

Write the past-tense contractions on the whiteboard. *What would these words sound like if they were all written out in full?* Talk about how contractions make talking and writing sound more natural.

Compare the irregular past-tense verbs with their present-tense forms. Remind the children that not all verbs can have "ed" added to them and that they need to use their knowledge of spoken English to help them decide what sounds right. *Would we say "swinged"? Or "thought"?* For ESOL children, who are less likely to be able to draw on this knowledge, try to use these words often in subsequent conversations to consolidate the children's understanding of their meaning and use.

Review the use of the possessive apostrophe in "Timo's shorts" (or "Penny's legs"). *The apostrophe is there because the shorts belong to Timo.* Create new examples using the names of the children in the group.

Write the words "circle", "prickle", and "trouble" on the whiteboard and talk about how the "le" ending of these words is pronounced. Think of other examples, such as "bicycle", "apple", or "table".

Suggestions for further tasks

Listen to the audio version on the CD *Readalong 2005*.

Create a character description with a central picture of Timo and labels or descriptors around the outside.

Enlarge page 15 and add thought bubbles for a selection of the characters.

Make a sequence chart of the steps Timo needed to retrace in order to find his shorts.

Create a story map showing the school. You could use the map on the inside back cover of *Hoiho's Chicks* (Red) as a model. Annotate it with labels, for example "Crashed into Ally", "Helped Max", "Swung his bag". Show on the map how Timo retraced his steps.

Read *Dimitri's Lunch* (Turquoise) in a subsequent guided reading lesson or make *Finding Mum* (Green) available for independent reading. These books both feature children who solve their own problems.