

Me and My Dog

by Margaret Mahy

illustrated by Philip Webb

Overview

In this poetic text, perfect for reading aloud, a young girl and her dog greet the morning with joy and enthusiasm. Alliterative, lively verbs bounce the text along and provide many opportunities for exploring language. This text supports the comprehension strategies of inferring, analysing and synthesising, and identifying the author's purpose. It's also useful for monitoring children's decoding skills. This text is available as a big book, and an audio version is on the Ready to Read CD *Readalong 2005*.

Curriculum links: health and physical education, science

Text features

(Focus on only one or two per session.)

- the poetic text features (alliteration, repetition, the multiple verbs on pages 13 and 15, the poetic phrases “eyes wide open”, “into the morning sunshine”, “into the new day”)
- the first-person narrator
- the use of the present tense
- the build-up of excitement and expectation
- the humour and vitality in the illustrations
- the relationship between the girl and the dog
- the structure of the text with the girl's actions mirrored by the dog's
- the lively verbs
- the variety of verb forms – “barks”, “barking”; “bounces”, “bouncing”; “scratches”, “scratching”; “stretches”, “stretching”; “wags”, “wagging”; “wave”, “waves”, “waving”
- the use of commas to support phrasing
- the author photograph and information inside the back cover
- the “hairy” font for the word “Dog” in the title
- the variety of initial consonant blends
- the “sh” digraph in “shoes”, “sunshine”, and “T-shirt”
- the “es” endings in “scratches”, “stretches”, and “watches”.

Setting the scene

Encourage the children to share their experiences of owning a dog. *What does your dog do when it sees you first thing in the morning?* Read the title and the names of the author and the illustrator. *Why is the word “Dog” written like that?*

Talk briefly about other books by Margaret Mahy. Draw out the idea that her books

often include unusual language, humour, and alliteration. *What does the cover illustration tell you about this girl and her dog?*

Alternatively, you could tell the children that this is a fun book about a girl and her dog getting ready for the day.

The first reading

Title page – *What do you think this dog likes to do?*

Listen to the children read the text themselves, offering support as necessary. If you are using the big book for shared reading, encourage the children to read along with you and increase the level of support.

Pages 2 and 3 – Help the children discover the pattern of the text. *What does the girl do? What does the dog do? What is Baxter thinking on page 3?*

Page 4 – *Who is telling this story? Why is she saying “Soon!”?*

Pages 5 to 8 – Observe the children’s use of strategies, intervening only if necessary.

Page 9 – Prompt the children to attend to the “ou” digraph when decoding “bounces”. *Can a dog “bounce”?* Confirm this using the illustration. *Does your dog “bark and bounce”?*

Page 10 – You may need to reassure the children about the unusual spelling of “tongue”.

Page 11 – *What word gives you a big clue about how Baxter is feeling?*

Page 12 – *Why does the writer say their eyes are “wide open”?* Note the link back to pages 2 and 3.

Pages 13 to 16 – If necessary, tell the children that they’ve already read many of these words in the text, but now they have different endings. If they need further support with page 13, have them work with a partner to match the illustrations with the words. They could also refer to earlier illustrations. *Where do you think they’re going?*

Read the information on the inside back cover together. *Why do you think Margaret Mahy wrote this story?* Check that the children understand that the Baxter in the story is Margaret’s real dog Baxter and that the girl she’s writing about is herself!

Ideas for revisiting the text

(Choose only one or two per session.)

Listen to the children reread the text, observing their use of strategies, their attention to punctuation, and their ability to read expressively. If necessary, reread the text chorally, modelling the use of commas to support phrasing.

Focus on the relationship between the characters. *What does the girl think about her dog? How does the dog feel about the girl? How do you know?*

Talk about all the things that Baxter does. Have the children role-play the verbs to clarify their meanings. *Is Baxter like other dogs you know?*

Find examples of alliteration in the text. Talk about how alliteration adds interest and pace to writing – and is fun to read aloud. Have fun generating some new examples.

If you have ESOL children in the group, track the pronoun/verb pattern – “I open/My dog, Baxter, opens”. Create a reference chart together using verbs from the text, for example, “I open”/“He opens”; “I watch”/“He watches”. Use the phrases on the chart as sentence starters and have fun creating oral sentences together.

Why do you think Margaret Mahy has used the phrase “in the morning” so many times? Talk about the use of repetition for rhythmic and poetic effect and the fun of anticipating the phrase on each page.

Focus on any initial consonant blends or digraphs that the children may have been unsure of. Look at the use of “sh” as both an initial and medial sound.

Write “barks” and “barking” on the whiteboard. Identify the root word. *Show me how you would spell “barked”*. Identify other verbs in the text and practise adding “s”, “ed”, and “ing” endings to the root words. You could talk about the need to delete the final “e”, double the final consonant (in “wag”), and add “es” to verbs ending with “ch”.

Suggestions for further tasks

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

Reread other Ready to Read books about dogs, such as the Skipper stories, *Training Ruby*, or *Walking the Dog*.

Read *A Summery Saturday Morning*, *Dashing Dog*, or other Margaret Mahy picture books, looking out for examples of poetic text features such as alliteration and repetition.

Compare the relationship between the girl and Baxter with the relationship between Katie and Greedy Cat.

Have the children draw a picture of Baxter and add verbs that describe the dog’s actions. This could be a group or paired activity and you could direct the children to use present-tense or past-tense verbs, depending on your teaching focus.

Add thought bubbles to Baxter on any of the pages where he is looking at the girl.