

Number One

by Joy Cowley

pictures by Jill McDonald

Overview

This humorous, imaginative narrative features a mischievous ghost who likes to frighten people. The story is supported by striking black and white illustrations. Repetitive elements in the text provide support for less confident readers. There is a big book version of this text and an audiotape.

Suggested purposes

This is an ideal text for practising expressive reading and for developing the comprehension strategies of hypothesising, asking questions, and analysing.

Text features

(Focus on only one or two per session.)

- the clear narrative structure
- the dramatic nature of the text
- the use of repetition, exclamations, onomatopoeia, and humour for effect
- the detailed, expressive illustrations
- the adjectives “horrible”, “old”, “terrible”
- the large proportion of direct speech
- the present-tense verbs “comes”, “jumps”, “runs”, “says”, “shuts”, “stops”
- the use of commas to support phrasing
- the contractions “He’ll”, “She’ll”, “It’s”
- the silent letters in “cupboard”, “ghost”, “two”, “who”, and “witch”
- the “ou” digraph in “house” and “out”
- the “ash” rime in “crash” and “splash”.

Possible challenges

- the use of the present tense
- the word “cupboard”
- the contractions “He’ll” and “She’ll”
- the meaning of the phrase “He’ll do”.

Introducing the text

Be aware that the inclusion of a ghost and a witch in this book means it may not be considered appropriate for all children.

Open the book right out so that the children can see the illustration over the front and back covers. *Who can you see? What do you know about ghosts and witches? Read the title. Why do you think the writer chose this title? Let’s read and find out.*

For less confident readers, you might like to give a more explicit introduction – *This is a story about a ghost who likes to frighten people, but then something happens to him.*

During the reading

(The following notes are suggestions for using this book for guided reading. If you are using the big book for shared reading, encourage the children to read along with you and increase the level of support.)

Ask the children to read the text silently, pausing at various points for discussion or to clarify any difficulties with the reading.

Page 2 – Note the dramatic short opening sentence that sets the scene. *Where do you think this ghost lives?* Provide support for the present-tense syntax by asking *What is the ghost planning to do?*

Pages 4 to 6 – *What does the ghost mean when he says “He’ll do”?* *What does the man say when he runs away?*

Page 8 – You may need to explain what a milkman is. Discuss his reaction. *What will the ghost say now?*

Page 11 – *Who is the new character on this page? Find me the part that tells you exactly where she was. What do you think will happen next?*

Pages 12 to 14 – Savour the humorous ending together. Note the link to the title of the book.

After the reading

(Choose only one or two per session.)

Listen to the children reread the text with a partner, noting their fluency and phrasing and their use of expression.

Summarise the story together on the whiteboard, highlighting the main events. Identify the beginning, middle, and end. Talk about the circular structure of this story. *What do you think will happen next?*

What makes this such a good story? Focus on the writer’s style. Draw attention to the structure and examples of repetition, exclamations, and onomatopoeia.

Focus on the adjectives in the story. Encourage the children to think about the story and to examine the illustrations closely to help them think of more words to describe the ghost. *How would you describe the witch?*

Why do writers like to use ghosts and witches as characters in their stories?

Ask the children to look closely at the illustration on page 10. *How many clues can you find that tell you this person is a witch?*

Focus on page 8. *When the milkman drops the milk bottles, what noise do they make?* Talk about the writer’s use of onomatopoeia. Think of other examples.

Help the children identify the verbs in the story. *What does the ghost do at the beginning of the story? What does the taxi do on page 4?* List the verbs on the whiteboard. *What is the same about all of these verbs?* Draw out the idea that the “s” endings tell you that things are happening right now and help create a feeling of anticipation.

Focus on the use of commas in the text. Ask the children to read page 2 out loud. *How do the commas help you read this page?* Draw out the idea that the commas are there to help the children to know when to pause when they are reading sentences with more than one idea.

Focus on the “ble” endings in the adjectives “horrible” and “terrible”. Explain that these endings sound different from the way they are written. Help the children to list other examples of words that end in “ble” (“rumble”, “table”, “trouble”).

Focus on the contractions “He’ll” and “She’ll” (on pages 4 and 11). Try reading page 4 using “He will” instead of “He’ll”. Draw out the idea that contractions make speech sound more natural. Ask the children to find a contraction on page 8. *What is “It’s” short for?*

Write the words “cupboard”, “ghost”, “two”, “who”, and “witch” on the whiteboard. Tell the children there are words that have letters we don’t hear when we say them. Read the words on the whiteboard together. Ask them to identify the silent letter in each word.

Write the words “crash” and “splash” on the whiteboard. *What is the same about these words?* Create other rhyming words by substituting other initial letters or consonant blends.

Write the words “house” and “out” on the whiteboard and ask the children to read them out loud. *What is the same about these words?* Ask the children to work with a buddy to list other words that have the “ou” sound (“our”, “shout”, “mouse”, “round”).

Suggestions for further tasks

Reread the big book and listen to the audiotape.

Dramatise the story, adding sound effects and/or using puppets.

Design a poster advertising the book.

Write a letter of protest from the milkman or the man in a taxi to the ghost.

Photocopy or draw a picture from the story and add speech bubbles for the characters.

Write character descriptions using some of the adjectives generated in the discussion after the reading.

Write the next part of the story.