

The Safe Place

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Overview

This story, set on a Pacific island, tells of a hen's search for a safe place to hatch her chicks. The strong narrative structure can be used as a model for writing, and the repetitive aspect of the text provides support for the reader. There is a big book version of this text (item 23052). Teachers' notes with information about the island setting and related Pacific Islands resources are available (item 92/425).

Uncle Timi's Sleep is another book at the Green level that has a Pacific Islands setting.

Curriculum link: science

Text features

(Focus on only one or two per session.)

- the initial consonant blends "fr", "kn", "pl", "sm"
- the digraphs "ch" – "cheeky", "children"; "sh" – "she", "bushes"; "th" – "the", "this", "that", "Then"
- the silent "s" in "island"
- the contraction "isn't"
- the words ending in "ed" – "looked", "wondered"
- the compound words – "everyone", "herself", "inside", "coconut"
- the question-and-answer format on pages 4 to 7
- the repetitive structure of pages 8 to 10
- the use of adjectives – "small", "cheeky", "brown", "old", "big", "fat"
- the phrases used to denote time – "Once upon a time", "After a long time", "One day"
- the time shift on page 11
- the traditional story beginning – "Once upon a time"
- the strong narrative structure with a distinct beginning, middle, and end.

Setting the scene

Show the children the cover of the book and talk about what they can see in the illustration – the coconut palm, the hen, and the pigs. Draw out the idea of the Pacific Islands setting. Include some of the interest vocabulary of the book into this discussion (hen, rooster, and coconut). You could talk about how animals prepare for the birth of their young.

The first reading

(For a shared reading, it may be more convenient to use the enlarged version.)

Look at the cover to establish the idea that this is a Pacific Islands setting. *What is the hen doing?*

Read the title and the names of the author and the illustrator.

Write the name of the island on the whiteboard. Split it into short chunks and help the children to pronounce it.

Page 2 – You may need to explain to the children that a rooster is a male and the hen is female. *Why does the hen need a safe place?*

Listen to the children read the text themselves, offering support as necessary. Throughout the story, encourage the children to predict whether each place is safe or not.

Pages 4 to 7 – *Where is the hen looking?* Some children may need support with “canoe”. The illustrations on pages 3 and 5 may help, but you may need to confirm the end sound of the word.

Draw attention to the question-and-answer format. Observe children’s self-monitoring skills when “No” changes to “Yes”.

Page 11 – Notice the implied passing of time from page 10. *What will happen next?*

Page 12 – Some children may need support with “everyone”. *How does the hen feel now?*

Ideas for revisiting the text

(Choose only one or two per session.)

Listen to the children reread the text, observing their use of cross-checking and self-monitoring strategies. Note those who are reading expressively.

Focus on any of the initial consonant blends or digraphs that the children may have been unsure of. Locate the words in context and make a list of other words that start the same way.

Write the words “bush” and “she” on the whiteboard. *What is the same about these two words?* Discuss with the children how they can use their knowledge of digraphs to check the end sounds of words as well as the initial sounds. You could repeat this activity for the digraph “ch”. Write up the word “children”. Isolate the initial sound and ask the children to suggest words that end with this sound.

Study the compound words in the story. Ask the children to give examples of other compound words they know.

Draw attention to the internal dialogue on pages 4 to 7. Let the children role-play these conversations to help reinforce the concept of “wonder”.

Study the narrative structure of the story. Locate the beginning, middle, and end sections of the story.

Discuss the picture on pages 8 and 9, drawing attention to the “eggs”.

Study the contrasting adjectives used to describe the hen and rooster on page 2. The children could locate other adjectives in the story.

Discuss the time change on page 11. Find the other phrases in the story that are used to denote time (“Once upon a time”, “One day”).

Suggestions for further activities

Read other books about birds. Some Ready to Read books are *Wibble, Wobble Albatross!*, *Pukeko Morning*, *The Shag Goes Fishing*, and *Snap! Splash!*

Reread the big book.

As a group, construct a diagram showing the life cycle of the hen.

During shared writing, innovate on the structure of the story.

Make a problem-solving chart about safe places for hatching eggs.

Read *Uncle Timi’s Sleep*, another story with a Pacific Islands setting.

Read *The Little Red Hen*.