

Mum's Octopus

by Don Long

illustrated by Gus Sinaumea Hunter

Overview

This dramatic personal experience narrative features Sione, the boy in *Finding Mum* (Green). Sione's family are collecting mussels at the beach when Mum inadvertently catches an octopus! Mum and Dad strongly disagree about what to do with the unexpected catch. The superb illustrations and lively dialogue help the reader to empathise with the characters. Short profiles of the author and the illustrator on the inside back cover give readers an insight into how authors and illustrators sometimes get their ideas. There is an audio version on the Ready to Read CD *Readalong 2000*.

Suggested purposes

The story supports the comprehension strategies of making connections, hypothesising, inferring, and identifying points of view.

Text features

(Focus on only one or two per session.)

- the characters' different points of view
- the lively descriptive verbs – “backed”, “hunted”, “shouted”, “splashed”, “twisted”, “yelled”
- the expressive dialogue
- the alternatives to “said”
- the use of bold print for effect on page 4
- the expressive illustrations
- the unusual perspective of the illustration on page 8
- the author and illustrator profiles on the inside back cover
- the irregular verbs “caught”, “felt”, “held”, “threw”
- the use of the conjunctions “as” and “while”
- the possessive apostrophe in the title
- the homophones “threw” and “through”
- the verbs that involve doubling the final consonant – “dropped”, “grabbed”, “tipped”, “wrapped”.

Possible challenges

- the name “Sione”
- the words “tentacles” and “sighed”
- the complex sentences using “while” and “as” on pages 2 and 3.

Introducing the text

Discuss with the children any experiences they may have had scrabbling around in rock pools at the beach. *What might you find?* Introduce the word “mussels” if the children don’t mention them. Study the cover. *What else might you find?* Briefly review what the children know about octopuses. Make sure the word “tentacles” is included in the discussion.

During the reading

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

Look at the title page. Have a copy of *Finding Mum* handy. *Where have you seen this character before? His name is Sione.*

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

Page 2 – Draw attention to the setting. *What are they doing?*

Page 3 – *How does Dad get the mussels off the rocks? Why does Sione say “That makes nine”?*

Pages 4 and 5 – *What tells us that Mum wasn’t expecting to find the octopus? What would you say if this happened to you?* If necessary, support the children with decoding “tentacles” by encouraging them to read the first one or two syllables and referring back to the introductory discussion.

Page 6 – *What does Mum think about the octopus? Does Dad agree? What about Sione?* Discuss the meaning of the phrase “backed out”. Clarify what Dad means by “a good feed”.

Page 8 – Study the unusual perspective of the illustration on page 8. *What are they thinking?* Draw out the idea that they all have very different ideas!

Page 9 – The children may need support with the irregular verb “caught”. Encourage them to predict what is going to happen next. Note Sione’s expression. *What is he thinking?*

Page 11 – *Do you think Mum’s Octopus is a good title for this book? Should Mum have let the octopus go? What would you have done?*

Discuss the picture on page 12. Draw out the idea that everyone is looking cheerful and that Dad isn’t too bothered about losing his chance of octopus for dinner.

After the reading

(Choose only one or two per session.)

Listen while the children reread the text with a partner, observing their use of expression and how they manage the more complex sentences.

Examine the illustration on page 8. Encourage the children to think critically and discuss the story from the points of view of Mum, Dad, and the octopus.

Talk about the feelings of the characters. Encourage the children to read the direct speech with expression.

Focus on some of the descriptive verbs in the text, including the alternatives to “said”. Ask the children to explain or act out what they mean. Read the sentences that include the verbs. Draw out the idea that the writer has used these verbs to make the story sound more exciting.

Talk about the author and illustrator profiles inside the back cover. Discuss how the author developed ideas in the story from real-life incidents.

Ask the children to reread the second sentence on page 2. *What two things are happening in this sentence? What word has the writer used to join these two ideas? What conjunction has the writer used in the last sentence on page 3?*

Focus on the irregular past-tense verbs. Talk about how most past-tense verbs end in “ed” but that there are some that don’t and that the best way to check is to think about what “sounds right”. *Would “feeled” sound right? What about “threwed”?* For ESOL children, who are less likely to be able to draw on their knowledge of English syntax, it would be helpful to use the irregular verbs frequently in conversation so that they have many opportunities to hear them used appropriately.

Draw attention to the words “threw” and “through” (pages 3 and 10). Check that the children understand what they mean. Explain that words that sound exactly the same but have different meanings are called homophones. Ask the children to think of other homophones and record them on a chart. The children could add other examples as they come across them.

List the verbs “dropped”, “grabbed”, “tipped”, and “wrapped” on the whiteboard. Identify the root words. Talk about how you need to double the final consonant before adding “ed” (or “ing”) to verbs that have a short vowel before the final consonant. Have the children practise adding “ing” to these root words.

Suggestions for further tasks

Listen to the audio version on the CD *Readalong 2000*.

Ask the children to retell the story as if they were Sione and give the news he would tell in class the next day.

Reread the Ready to Read book *Finding Mum* and the poem card *Octopus*.

Read other stories and songs about fish and fishing.

Find out more about octopuses. Create a chart of octopus facts to share with the class.