

Two Tiger Tales Stories from China

retold by Barbara Beveridge

illustrated by Caroline Campbell and Ali Teo

Overview

This book contains two folk tales in which tigers are outwitted by smaller animals. In “The Clumsy Tiger”, a tiger asks a cat to teach him to become quick and clever. The tiger learns fast, but there is one thing the clever cat realises he shouldn’t teach him! “The Competition” describes how a small but clever frog is able to scare away a tiger. An audiotope accompanies this text.

Suggested purposes

The storylines, illustration styles, and features of traditional tales provide opportunities for making connections between the two texts (and with tales from other cultures). Both tales support the comprehension strategies of forming hypotheses, identifying main ideas, and analysing and synthesising. They provide excellent opportunities for expressive reading and retelling. “The Competition” also supports the comprehension strategies of visualising and inferring and is particularly suited to readers’ theatre or performing as a puppet play.

Text features (both tales)

(Focus on only one or two per session.)

- the contents page
- the clear narrative structure
- the features of traditional tales:
- the contrasting illustration styles
- the way the illustrations support and extend the ideas in each tale
- the direct address of the reader at the end of both stories and the layout features (text placement, size variation, italics, and bold print) that add emphasis.
- the traditional opening that sets the tales in a distant time
- the talking animals
- the battle of wits between the characters
- the humorous endings
- the clear narrative structure

“The Clumsy Tiger”

- the lively verbs – “climb”, “hide”, “jump”, “pounce”, “prowl”, “run”
- the adjectives “big”, “clever”, “clumsy”, “quick”, “slow”, “strong”, “tall”
- the use of commas to support phrasing
- the indicators of time – “Once”, “One day”, “every day”, “Soon”, “Then, one day”
- the use of idiom on pages 7 and 8
- the opposites “slow” and “quick”
- the silent letters in “climb”, “climbed”, “could”, “know”, “right”, “taught”, “through”, “who”
- the different sounds for “ou” in “could”, “enough”, “pounce”, and “through”.

Possible challenges

- the irregular verb “taught”
- ESOL children may need support with the idiom “That’s it!” (meaning “That’s the end”) on page 7 and “just as well” (meaning “that’s a good thing”) on page 8.

“The Competition”

- the tricky nature of the frog
- the adjectives “angry”, “busy”, “loud”, “small”, “tiny”, “yellow”
- the comparative and superlative adjectives “higher” and “highest”, “farther” and “farthest”
- the confrontational dialogue
- the colloquial language – “Right?”
- the use of ellipses on page 12 to indicate a pause
- the use of italics for “could” on page 16
- the “tion” ending in “competition”
- the homophones “One” and “won”, “there” and “They’re”.

Possible challenges

- the words “farther” and “farthest”
- the “air” sound for “ar” in “scaring”
- the colloquial language (for ESOL children)
- visualising how the frog tricks the tiger.

Introducing the text

Tell the children you have a book for them to read that has two traditional tales from China in it. Find out what the children know about China. You could help them locate China on a world map. Remind the children that traditional tales are a way of explaining why things are as they are. Talk about the features they might expect to find in a traditional tale, such as the inclusion of talking animals, a familiar opening phrase, a setting that's distant in time and/or place, repetition, humour, tricky or unlikely things happening, and often a surprise ending. Look at the cover of the book. *What do you know about tigers?*

Talk about the information on the contents page. *Why is a contents page helpful? What does this contents page tell you?* Tell the children which tale you would like them to read first. *What page does it start on?*

“The Clumsy Tiger”

Introducing the text

Read the title of the story and find out what the children know about tigers. *What does “clumsy” mean? Does this fit with what you know about tigers? What do you think this story will tell us about the tiger?*

During the reading

Read 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.

Page 3 – Clarify the setting and the main ideas. *What was the tiger’s problem?*

Page 5 – *What does the tiger like about the cat? Would you trust the tiger?*

Page 6 – You may need to reassure the children about the irregular verb “taught”. *How do you know the cat was a good teacher?*

Page 7 – *Why does the cat say “That’s it!” What is he thinking? How do you think the story might end?*

Ask the children to read to the end of the tale and check their predictions. If necessary, clarify the meaning of the idiomatic phrase “it’s just as well” on page 8.

Page 9 – *Who is the writer talking to here? Draw out the idea that the direct address of the reader makes the writer seem more like a storyteller. How does she want you to read this page? Did this tale finish the way you thought it would? What is the main message of this tale?*

Depending on your purpose for the reading, you may choose to read the second tale right away or to revisit this tale in more detail before moving on.

After the reading

(Choose only one or two per session.)

Listen in while the children reread the text to a partner, observing their use of phrasing and expression, particularly in the sections of dialogue and on page 9. If necessary, model and talk about the use of commas to support phrasing.

Recall the introductory discussion and ask the children to think, pair, and share about the features of a traditional tale in this text. Also talk about how the writer makes herself seem more like a storyteller by addressing the reader directly on page 9 and by using idiom on pages 7 and 8.

Analyse the narrative structure. Identify the problem, the complication, and the resolution.

Ask the children to act out the meanings of some of the descriptive language in the text, such as the verbs “pounce” and “prowl” or the adjectives “clumsy”, “quick”, “slow”, and “strong”.

Focus on the illustrations. *How do they support the ideas in the story?* You could look at how the illustrations convey the menacing nature of the tiger (the close-up of his face and teeth on the cover, the claws on page 2, and his frightening appearance in the wild forest setting on page 2). You could also discuss the changing relationship between the characters (the quick, clever cat in the foreground on pages 4 and 5; the cooperative, cheerful tiger following the cat on page 6 but dominating him on page 7; and the cat dominating the illustrations, safely and wisely out of reach, on pages 8 and 9).

Talk about how the tiger changes over the course of the story. Compare the adjectives used in the story to describe the tiger at the beginning and at the end of the tale. Using the illustrations for inspiration, think of other adjectives to describe both characters.

Talk about the similarities and differences between the cat and the tiger. You could record this as a Venn diagram.

Have the children retell the tale to the group.

If necessary, briefly remind the children how the verb “teach” changes to “taught” in the past tense. Together, think of other similar examples, such as “catch”/“caught” or “buy”/“bought”.

Focus on the silent “b” in “climb” and “climbed”. Remind the children that there are many words in English that have silent letters and can be tricky to spell. Write other examples from the story on the whiteboard and have the children identify the silent letters.

Write the words “could”, “enough”, “pounce”, and “through” on the whiteboard and discuss the different sounds of the “ou” digraph in these words. Explain that the children need to be aware that letters and digraphs can have many sounds so that they can draw on this awareness when they are decoding unfamiliar words.

“The Competition”

Introducing the text

Briefly discuss the ideas about tigers from the previous story. *What do you know about frogs?* Look at the title and help the children chunk the word “Com-pe-ti-tion”. Encourage the children to share their experiences of being in a competition. *What kind of competition could a tiger and a frog have?*

During the reading

Read 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.

Page 11 – *How do you think the frog would say this? What does this page tell you about the frog?*

Page 12 – *Why is the frog talking like this?* Draw out the idea that the ellipses indicate a pause (while the frog is thinking). Check that the children understand the meaning of “farther”. *Do you believe what the frog says? Does the tiger believe him? What does the tiger mean when he says “Right”?*

Page 13 – Ask the children to talk with a partner about how the frog has managed to jump so high. Share the explanations with the group, drawing a sketch on the whiteboard if necessary. Encourage the children to predict what will happen next.

Page 15 – Note the effort on the tiger’s face!

Page 16 – Talk about the use of italics for “could”. *How would you read that sentence?* You may need to support the children in their decoding of “scaring”. If necessary, write the word “scare” on the whiteboard and show how it loses its “e” when “ing” is added. *What does this page tell you about the tiger? What is the main message of this tale?*

After the reading

Listen in while the children reread the text to a partner, observing their use of expression, particularly for the dialogue.

Identify the features of a traditional tale in this text. *Were there any features in “The Competition” that weren’t in “The Clumsy Tiger”?*

Analyse the narrative structure of this story. Compare the characters, setting, and problems with those of “The Clumsy Tiger”.

Talk about the characters in this story. *How has the writer described them? What do the illustrations tell you? Can you think of other adjectives to describe them? Which character do you prefer? Why?*

Compare the character of the frog with Caterpillar in “The Most Terrible Creature” (A Cardboard Box) or Flea in *I’m the King of the Mountain*.

Focus on the illustrations. *How do they support the ideas in the story?* The cartoon style suggests a more light-hearted tale with a foolish, easily duped tiger and a clever, tricky frog.

- On page 10, the frog's eyes are wide open and he looks alert and calculating while the tiger has his eyes shut.
- On page 11, the tiger has a bemused expression and the frog is making an imperious, controlling gesture.
- On pages 12 and 13, the tiger is physically larger but the frog is very much in control.
- On pages 14 and 15, the frog is quite relaxed but the tiger is straining.
- On page 16, the tiger is moving out of the picture while the frog is in the foreground, large and triumphant.

Compare the illustration styles in the two tales. *Which illustrations do you prefer? Why?*

Encourage the children to reread the text in small groups (two characters and a narrator), as readers' theatre. Encourage them to think of suitable voices to make the reading more interesting and to prepare a performance to share with other groups.

Focus on the comparative and superlative adjectives, "higher" and "highest", "farther" and "farthest". Create a chart showing the root word and the "er" and "est" endings. Build comparative and superlative adjectives from other root words relevant to the story, such as "clever", "smart", "tricky", or "silly". Note that in some cases, the final "y" will need to be changed to "i".

Examine the "tion" ending in the word "competition". Think of other examples, such as "addition", "collection", "fiction", "information", or "station". Write the words on the whiteboard and ask the children to underline the "tion" in each word. Talk about how an awareness of the "tion" ending can help the children to chunk unfamiliar words.

Find the homophones in the text and talk about how some words sound the same but are spelt differently. Check that the children understand the meaning of each word. Start a class collection of homophones, with sentences that support their meaning. Remind the children to draw on their growing knowledge of homophones when they're writing.

If necessary, return to the word "scaring" and revise the rule about dropping the final "e" when adding "ing". Encourage the children to think of this possibility when they come across unfamiliar "ing" words. Other potentially confusing examples that you could practise with include "biting", "hoping" ("hopping"), "using", "shining", and "writing".

Suggestions for further tasks

Listen to the audiotape.

Compare the characters of the tigers in the two tales.

Create thought bubbles for what the tiger may be thinking on pages 13 and 15 of “The Competition”.

Look out for other examples of “trickster” characters, such as the fox in “Why the Crocodile Has No Tongue” in *Junior Journal 24* or Flea in *I’m the King of the Mountain*.

Read other traditional tales, such as *Māui and the Sun*, “The Rice Balls” in *Junior Journal 19*, or “Why the Crocodile Has No Tongue” in *Junior Journal 24* (all at Purple) and compare their traditional tale features with those in the tiger tales.

Act out the stories or turn them into puppet plays.

Retell one of the tales to the group.

Read other folk tales about tigers.

Look out for other examples of illustrations by Caroline Campbell or Ali Teo.