

My Brother

by Sally Sutton

illustrated by Fifi Colston

Overview

Big brother is impatient to get to school and doesn't realise that his schoolbag has fallen open and things are falling out. Little brother rescues the fallen items and tries to get his brother to slow down. This text supports the comprehension strategies of making connections, identifying main ideas, and analysing and synthesising. It's also useful for monitoring children's decoding skills. There is an audio version on the Ready to Read CD *Readalong 2005*.

Curriculum links: social studies (family life)

Text features

(Focus on only one or two per session.)

- the large amount of decodable text, including repeated rimes
- the variety of initial consonant blends
- the digraphs "ch" in "lunch", "lunchbox"; "sh" in "shops", "shouted"; "th" in "brother", "footpath", "path", "they", "through", "thump"
- the use of dialogue
- the use of imperative verbs
- the lively verbs – "bounced", "called", "fell", "ran", "shouted"
- the irregular verbs – "fell", "gave", "ran"
- the alternatives to "said" – "called", "shouted"
- the prepositions "along", "down", "out", "past", "through"
- the use of onomatopoeia – "bump", "clunk", "flop", "huff", "pop", "puff", "thump"
- the compound words "footpath", "homework", "lunchbox", "schoolbag"
- the contractions "didn't", "we'll", "we're", "where's", "Where's"
- the repetition of words for effect
- the use of rhetorical questions
- the relationship between the brothers
- the multiple illustrations on page 11
- the visual subplot.

Setting the scene

Encourage the children to share their experiences of getting to school. *How do you get to school? Who do you go with? Does your brother/sister walk with you?* Tell the children you have a story to read about two boys on their way to school. You could tell them that big brother has not done his bag up properly, and so things fall out. Have the children read the story to find out how little brother tries to help.

The first reading

Look at the cover of the book and read the title. *Who might be telling the story?* Clarify that these boys are brothers. Read the names of the author and the illustrator.

Title page – *What’s in this schoolbag?*

Listen to the children read the text themselves, offering support as necessary.

Page 2 – *What’s the problem here? Who’s telling the story? How do you know?*

Page 3 – *Why didn’t big brother wait?*

Page 4 – If necessary, support the children with the prepositions “through” and “along” by prompting them to attend to the initial sounds and the illustration.

Page 5 – Clarify that little brother’s rhetorical question is addressed to the reader. Reread it together expressively. Review the story so far. *What’s the problem? What will little brother do?*

Pages 6 and 7 – Review the children’s predictions from page 5. Observe their use of decoding skills and their attention to the punctuation.

Page 8 – If necessary, support the children with “bounced”. Prompt them to read on to the end of the line. *What do balls do? If the word was “bounced”, what letters would you expect to see?* Use the illustration to clarify that little brother is collecting the dropped items.

Pages 9 and 10 – *How would big brother say this? Why does his face turn red?*

Page 11 – Discuss the illustrations before reading. Ask the children to predict the answer to the question.

Page 12 – *How did big brother say thank you? What else might he say?*

Ideas for revisiting the text

(Choose only one or two per session.)

Listen to the children reread the text. Observe the strategies they use to attempt the interest words and their ability to read fluently and expressively.

Focus on any initial consonant blends or digraphs that the children may have been unsure of. Find examples in the text and list other words that start the same way. Look at the use of the digraphs as medial or final sounds.

Locate examples of rhyming words in the text. Identify the rime and generate other rhyming words by adding new initial consonants or consonant blends.

Focus on the writer’s style, using pages 6 and 7 as an example. *How does the writer make this story sound exciting?* You could talk about the use of imperatives, the lively verbs, the alternatives to “said”, the repeated onomatopoeia, the rhetorical questions, the use of dialogue, and the punctuation. *What would it sound like without the onomatopoeia? The repetition?* Rewrite these pages onto a large reference chart, highlighting the text features.

If you have ESOL children in the group, you could review the prepositions in the text by drawing a map of the brothers’ walk to school. Follow up by rereading other books that feature prepositions, such as *My Bike* or *The Race* (Red) or *Walking the Dog* (Yellow).

Compare the irregular past-tense verbs “fell”, “gave”, and “ran” with their present-tense forms. Remind the children that not all verbs can have “ed” added to them. For ESOL children, try to use these words often in subsequent conversations.

Reread some of the dialogue that includes contractions. Draw out the idea that contractions make speech sound more natural. You could extend this by looking at the final sentences on pages 5, 6, and 7. *Why has the writer decided not to use contractions here?*

Talk about how the children worked out the compound words in the text. Remind them of the strategy of looking for the biggest familiar part of a word they know when they are working out new words.

Track the subplot of the cat in the illustrations. Talk about the role of the illustrator in bringing the story to life and (often) adding extra detail.

Focus on the relationship between the brothers. *What have you found out about them? Do you think this story could be true? Would your brother be like that?* Encourage the children to share their experiences of having done something nice for someone in their family. *What did your brother/mum/koro say? How did you feel?*

Suggestions for further tasks

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

Have fun using rhetorical questions, then illustrating them. “But did I go to the park? No, I did not. It was raining!”

Add thought bubbles for both brothers to the illustrations on page 8.

Draw and label the contents of a schoolbag or draw a picture of items falling out and add appropriate “sound” words.

Start a class collection of alternatives to “said” and encourage the children to try them in their writing.