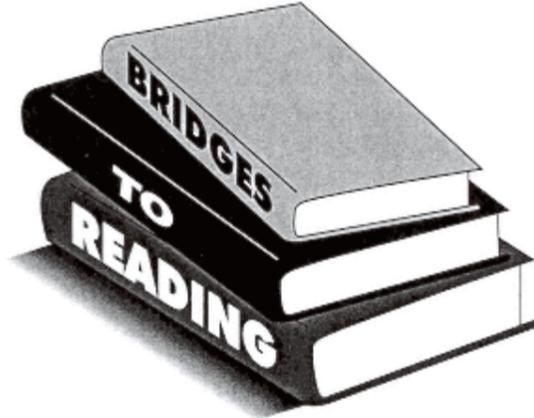


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Bridges to Reading
Grades 3-6
Teaching Reading Skills with Children's Literature



Suzanne L. Barchers

1999
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Dedicated to Cynthia Wysocki Selman with appreciation for our enduring friendship.

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Introduction

How to Use this Book

Teaching reading requires a variety of strategies and interventions, and teachers often struggle to reconcile the mandates of those who advocate direct instruction on basic skills with those who prefer teaching with children's literature. *Bridges to Reading, Grades 3-6: Teaching Reading Skills with Children's Literature* bridges those teaching preferences. Drawing on the skills activities found in a variety of basal readers, I compiled a list of skills that are usually included in the third through six grade curriculum. Using this list of basic skills, I developed activities that use a variety of teaching strategies and discussion options. Many of the activities integrate other subjects such as writing, geography, and oral delivery.

Each lesson is set up in a similar format. A book is identified and summarized for use in teaching a particular skill. A lesson follows that may involve creating a chart to analyze elements of the skill, leading a discussion, or pursuing further research in the library. A list of related books provides titles that may be used to replace the featured title or may be used for further exploration; most of the activities can be easily adapted to another book.

Every effort has been made to ensure that all featured books are still in print. Most of the books were published in the 1990s and are award-winning titles or classics that stay in print. Use your interlibrary loan services to obtain books that are out of print.

The organization of the book is an arbitrary alphabetical listing of the skills. Most skills have activities for both grades 3-4 and grades 5-6. Teachers of remedial reading might find grades 3-4 activities ideal for older students. Conversely, teachers of younger gifted students might find activities for grades 5-6 to be appropriate.

An underlying motivation for compiling this resource is to encourage the use of children's literature for instruction. Therefore, teachers should not dissect a book so much that the beauty of it is lost for the sake of teaching a skill. Short books can stand up to repeated readings for a variety of purposes. Longer activities can be stretched out over several days to ensure that the students do not tire of the material.

Be absolutely certain that you are comfortable with the content of the book before you read it aloud to the class. I have noted a few instances where a book, such as one that includes death, may be questionable in some environments. Only you can determine the suitability of a selection, however.

As you use the activities, you will undoubtedly recall your own favorites that might better suit the skill lesson. Be sure to record any substitutions or lesson enhancements for later use. I hope you enjoy integrating reading skills with children's literature.

Alphabet

Bayer, Jane. *A My Name Is Alice*. Illustrated by Steven Kellogg. New York: Trumpet, 1984.

Grade levels: 3-4.

This familiar patterned rhyme begins with Alice (an ape) and her husband Alex (an anteater) coming from Alaska and selling ants. Each letter of the alphabet features an animal and follows the same pattern, inviting readers to predict the verses.

Activities

1. Read the book aloud, letting the students chime in with the lines as much as possible. Students enjoy chanting the verses once they have learned them. After the first reading, reread the book and create a chart listing the elements as shown in the partial chart below.
2. Find all the locations of the characters' homes on a map. Place sticky notes with the name of the character on the corresponding country.
3. Have the students create new verses, following the same pattern, from A to Z. Assign each student one or more letters. Create a big book with the new verses. Read them aloud as a class.

Wife	Husband	Home	Product
Alice/Ape	Alex/Anteater	Alaska	Ants
Barbara/Bear	Bob/Baboon	Brazil	Balloons
Clara/Cow	Claude/Condor	Calcutta	Cakes

Related Books

Gustafson, Scott. *Alphabet Soup: A Feast of Letters*. Shelton, Conn.: The Greenwich Workshop, 1990.

Shannon, George. *Tomorrow's Alphabet*. Illustrated by Donald Crews. New York: Greenwillow, 1996.

Walker, John. *Ridiculous Rhymes from A to Z*. Illustrated by David Catrow. New York: Holt, 1995.

Yates, Gene. *The Elephant Alphabet Book*. Chicago: Kidsbooks, 1995.

Shirley, Gayle Corbett. *C Is for Colorado*. Illustrated by Constance Rummel Bergum. Helena, Mont.: ABC Press, 1989.

Grade levels: 5-6.

Accompanying each letter of the alphabet is a short poem about an aspect of Colorado. From aspen to bison to yucca to zoo, the book provides a colorful portrait of the Rocky Mountain state. A section at the end of the book gives an additional paragraph on each of the entries.

Activities

1. Share this alphabet book or any informational alphabet book with the students. Explain that the alphabet format serves as a way to share information on a particular topic.
2. Have the class brainstorm words related to either their city or state in preparation for creating an alphabet book about their state. Assign one letter to each student to research.
3. Read the acknowledgments for *C Is for Colorado*. Encourage the students to identify similar organizations to use as information sources.
4. Bring together the information and compile an alphabet book for your state.
5. Consider using this process when the class is studying other states or countries. Students could work in pairs or in small groups to prepare the alphabet books.
6. Use the Internet to obtain photographs, maps, or other illustrations that could be used in compiling the alphabet books.
7. Have the students create an alphabet book for their school. This could serve as a memory book for graduating students.

Related Books

Isadora, Rachel. *City Seen from A to Z*. New York: Trumpet, 1983.

Musgrove, Margaret. *Ashanti to Zulu: African Traditions*. Illustrated by Leo and Diane Dillon. New York: Dial, 1976.

Pratt, Kristin Joy. *A Walk in the Rainforest*. Nevada City, Calif.: Dawn, 1992.

Roache, Gordon. *A Halifax ABC*. Montreal, Quebec: Tundra Books, 1987.

Updike, John. *A Helpful Alphabet of Friendly Objects*. Photographs by David Updike. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995.

Alphabetization

Henkes, Kevin. *Chrysanthemum*. New York: Trumpet, 1991.

Grade levels: 3-4.

Chrysanthemum, a delightful little mouse, loves her name. She loves the way it looks and sounds. But when she starts school, the children have plain names such as Max, Kay, and Pat. They tease her until she decides her name is dreadful. But a music teacher named Delphinium sets everything right, and Chrysanthemum once again enjoys her special name.

Activities

1. At the beginning of the year use the names of the students to teach a variety of skills, beginning with alphabetization. Print each student's name on a strip of tagboard. Place the strips in a box or hat. Have each student draw out a name and match it to its owner. Once each student is holding the correct name, have the students arrange themselves in alphabetical order.
2. Put the names back in the box or hat and repeat the process, this time having the students arrange themselves in reverse alphabetical order.
3. Create a graph that compares the frequency of beginning letters of the students' names. Place the letters of the alphabet across the top of the graph and write the names below each letter. Which letter has the most names?
4. Repeat the above steps with the students' last names.
5. Incorporate the students' names in spelling tests.
6. Take the opportunity to teach phonemic awareness using students' first and last names. Ask students with names from other countries to share any information they can learn from their parents regarding the origins of the names.

Related Books

Goffstein, M. B. *School of Names*. New York: Harper & Row, 1986.

Henkes, Kevin. *Jessica*. New York: Greenwillow, 1989.

Gustafson, Scott. *Alphabet Soup: A Feast of Letters*. Shelton, Conn.: The Greenwich Workshop, 1994.

Grade levels: 5-6.

Otter has just moved into his house and decides to have a housewarming party. He asks each of his friends to bring one item for a potluck soup. Each friend arrives, from A to Z, bearing food related to the first letter of his name. For example, dragon brings delicious desserts. Alliteration is used throughout.

Activities

1. Write each of the names of Otter's 26 friends on a card. Read the book aloud. Then place the cards in a hat or box. Have each student draw out a card. Over the course of the next few days, give the students access to the book. Each should find the corresponding page and copy the sentence about the animal. Next, each student should alphabetize the words from the sentence that start with the letter. For example, for *D* the list would be *delicious, delivered, desserts, didn't, dinner, do, dozens, dragon*.
2. To narrow the process further and to reinforce the meaning of nouns, consider having the students alphabetize only the nouns. Therefore, the list for *D* would be *desserts, dinner, dozens, dragon*.
3. Have the students create lists of additional foods that would go with their letter. For example, *dragon* could also bring *dates*.
4. To add more variation, have the students choose cities that start with the same letter. For example, *dragon* could come from *Denver* with *dates*.

Related Books

Ehlert, Lois. *Eating the Alphabet: Fruits and Vegetables from A to Z*. New York: Trumpet, 1989.

Walker, John. *Ridiculous Rhymes from A to Z*. Illustrated by David Catrow. New York: Holt, 1995.

Yates, Gene. *The Elephant Alphabet Book*. Chicago: Kidsbooks, 1995.

Auditory Discrimination

Moss, Jeff. *The Other Side of the Door*. Illustrated by Chris Demarest. New York: Bantam, 1991.

Grade levels: 3-4.

This collection of poems reflects a wide variety of emotions and events, from the humor of "The Splinter," in which a splinter when removed is used as a baseball bat, to a serious poem about crying. The style ranges from rhythmic rhymes to prose.

Activities

1. Choose several poems containing made-up words, such as "The Skorse" and "The Twelve-Nosed Gazunk," to read aloud. Tell the students that they are to listen for unusual words. Ask the students how they think these words would be spelled. Then compare their ideas with those of the author.
2. Choose a particularly rhythmic poem and read it aloud several times. (Consider using "Stuart McGroo," "Another Day," or "Wally's Rhyme.") Ask the students if they can think of a tune that they could sing the poem to. Make up a simple tune, even if you aren't musically talented. Let the students sing it aloud with you.
3. Locate in the library audiocassettes of poets reading their poetry aloud. Have the students listen to a variety of readings. Discuss what makes the poetry interesting and what brings it alive for the listener.
4. Have each student choose one poem to memorize and act out. Let the students rehearse their poems in small groups, eliciting help from their classmates in adding gestures and inflection. After they have had ample time to polish their selections, have a sharing time.

Related Books

Moss, Jeff. *The Butterfly Jar*. Illustrated by Chris Demarest. New York: Bantam, 1989.

Nye, Naomi Shihab. *This Same Sky: A Collection of Poems from around the World*. New York: Macmillan, 1992.

Prelutsky, Jack. *The Headless Horseman Rides Tonight: More Poems to Trouble Your Sleep*. Illustrated by Arnold Lobel. New York: Greenwillow, 1980.

Grade levels: 5-6.

Older students will enjoy the gruesome nature of the poems in this collection. Choose from among poems about a mummy, a spectre, a giant, a zombie, the kraken, the elves, a sorceress, the abominable snowman, and more. The equally haunting illustrations enhance the mood of each piece.

Activities

1. This is a good collection to use during the month of October, if Halloween is observed in your school. Turn down the lights, light a few candles, and read several selections from the book. Then choose a poem, such as "The Spectre on the Moor." Read one verse at a time, asking the students to give you examples of alliteration. Discuss how Prelutsky uses words such as *tendrils*, *writhing*, and *misty moor* to create a mood. Without showing them the illustration, ask them to describe the image that the poem evokes. Then show the illustration. How does it compare with their imaginings?
2. Use "The Headless Horseman" to teach the students choral reading. Begin by writing the refrain on chart paper. Next, practice reading it aloud as a group. Then read the alternating verses aloud while the students read the refrain. Then ask for volunteers to read the other verses, perhaps assigning each verse to a different volunteer.
3. Ask the students to consider which other poems in the book might be presented as choral readings. For example, "The Poltergeist" would work well with two groups of students reading alternating verses. Encourage the students to be dramatic with their oral delivery. Perform the readings for other students.

Related Books

Merriam, Eve. *Halloween ABC*. Illustrated by Lane Smith. New York: Trumpet, 1987.

Prelutsky, Jack. *Nightmares: Poems to Trouble Your Sleep*. Illustrated by Arnold Lobel. New York: Greenwillow, 1976.

Wallace, Daisy. *Witch Poems*. Illustrated by Trina Schart Hyman. New York: Holiday House, 1976.

Classification

Aliki. *My Visit to the Zoo*. New York: HarperCollins, 1997.

Grade levels: 3-4.

Tour a zoological conservation park in this colorful, detailed book. Beginning with a bird's-eye view of the park, the reader can sample a variety of settings, such as the primate house, rain forest, and reptile house. An abundance of labels and a world map of the animals make this a rich resource.

Activities

1. Read the book aloud, discussing the characteristics of the animals in the various illustrations. Discuss the kinds of animals found on each of the double-page spreads, classifying them (e.g., reptiles, birds, cats). Make a chart that lists the classifications and the animals that fit within the classification.
2. During a subsequent reading, list the countries from which the animals originate, using the information provided below each animal's name. Classify the animals by country. Write the animals' names on sticky notes. Then place the sticky notes on a large world map.
3. Classify the animals found in the book by a variety of categories, for example, number of legs, land animal, water animal, meat eating. Confirm the classification through a dictionary or encyclopedia.

Related Books

Aliki. *My Visit to the Aquarium*. New York: HarperCollins, 1993.

Duncan, Beverly K. *Explore the Wild: A Nature Search-and-Find Book*. New York: HarperCollins, 1996.

George, Jean Craighead. *Everglades*. Illustrated by Wendell Minor. New York: HarperCollins, 1995.

Mullins, Patricia. *V for Vanishing: An Alphabet of Endangered Animals*. New York: HarperCollins, 1993.

Simon, Seymour. *The Universe*. New York: Morrow, 1998.

Grade levels: 5-6.

Beginning with the big bang theory, Simon discusses how galaxies explode and how the universe continues to expand. He then describes the birth of the sun and the planets, other solar systems in the making, stars, and black holes. Brilliant color photographs provide exciting opportunities to study outer space.

Activities

1. Read the book aloud, taking one or two class periods to share it in full. Set aside time to study the photographs.
2. The information in this book is quite dense. Through classification of manageable amounts of information, however, students can begin to understand the characteristics of the universe. Choose a section to analyze to create a classification chart. For example, the first paragraph on the page about galaxies could be organized as follows:

Types of Galaxies	Descriptions
Spirals	Disk-shaped, older stars in the center, newer stars in the arms
Ellipticals	Most common, shaped like balls or eggs, containing mostly old stars
Barred Spirals	Spirals whose central stars form a bar
Irregular	Rarest form, with no known pattern

3. After creating classification charts on several small topics, work with the class to create a large classification chart that compares a variety of features of the universe. If necessary, consult additional books to complete the chart.

Related Books

Ressmeyer, Roger. *Astronaut to Zodiac: A Young Stargazer's Alphabet*. New York: Crown, 1992.

Simon, Seymour. *Comets, Meteors, and Asteroids*. New York: Morrow, 1994.

Destination: Jupiter. New York: Morrow, 1998.

Comparison

Reiser, Lynn. *Cherry Pies and Lullabies*. New York: Greenwillow, 1998.

Four generations of women share how they bake a cherry pie, use flowers, make quilts, and sing lullabies.

Reiser, Lynn. *Tortillas and Lullabies (Tortillas y canciones)*. Translated by Rebecca Hart. Illustrated by Corazones Valientes. New York: Greenwillow, 1998.

Four generations of women share how they make tortillas, use flowers, wash a dress, and sing lullabies. The illustrations come from artists in Costa Rica.

Grade levels: 3-4.

Activities

1. Read the first section of *Cherry Pies and Lullabies* aloud. Ask students to compare how the four generations bake pies. How have things changed? How have they stayed the same?
2. Continue reading through each section, taking time to compare the likenesses and differences of the four generations.
3. Read aloud *Tortillas and Lullabies* and discuss each section in the same fashion, comparing the likenesses and differences of the four generations.
4. Then compare the two books. Which sections are alike? How are the people alike and different in the two cultures?
5. Lynn Reiser 1 discusses how the artists from Costa Rica did not feel comfortable drawing women with smiling faces. They believed that their portrayals were typical of a relaxed expression. Obtain the *Hornbook* article cited in the "Note" section below from the library and share appropriate information from it, giving students insights into the challenges Reiser faced as she produced these books. Find Costa Rica on a world map and compare the two cultures.

Related Books

Garza, Carmen Lomas. *Family Pictures (Cuadro defamilia)*. San Francisco: Children's Book Press, 1990.

Paulsen, Gary. *The Tortilla Factory*. Illustrated by Ruth Wright Paulsen. San Diego, Calif.: Harcourt Brace, 1995.

Note

1. Reiser, Lynn. "Going from *But* to *And*: Challenges in Creating a Pair of Picture Books from Different Cultures." *Hornbook* (September/October 1998): 578-86.

Comparison

Fleischman, Sid. *Bandit's Moon*. Illustrated by Jos. A. Smith. New York: Greenwillow, 1998.

Annyrose has been left with O.O. Mary to recuperate while her brother goes on to the gold fields. When bandits arrive to avenge a wrong, O. O. Mary escapes, but Annyrose joins up with them. Annyrose discovers great strengths as she faces an uncertain future.

Karr, Kathleen. *Gold-Rush Phoebe*. New York: HarperCollins, 1998.

Phoebe, disguised as a boy, and her friend Robbie head to California to pan for gold. After many adventures, they give up the gold fields and return to San Francisco. They use their ingenuity and energy to start a successful restaurant and then continue to invest. Grade levels: 5-6.

Activities

1. Read *Gold-Rush Phoebe* aloud, following the suggested activities on page 39. Then read aloud *Bandit's Moon*. In both stories, a strong girl disguises herself as a boy to survive in the difficult times of the gold rush.
2. Create a chart that compares the elements of the two novels. Use the following example as a starting point.

	Bandit's Moon	Gold-Rush Phoebe
Setting	California	California
Time period	Gold rush	Gold rush
Characters		
Problems		
Resolution		

3. Consider additional categories, including relationships, emotions problem-solving strategies, successes, failures, action, events, writing style, and historical elements.
4. After completing the chart, discuss the similarities and differences between the two books. Which book do the students prefer?

Related Book

Klein, James. *Gold Rush! The Young Prospector's Guide to Striking It Rich*. Illustrated by Michael Rohani. Berkeley, Calif.: Tricycle Press, 1998.

Comprehension: Creative

Creech, Sharon. *Pleasing the Ghost*. New York: HarperCollins, 1996.

Grade levels: 3-4.

Dennis's life becomes quite unusual after his father dies and ghosts begin appearing in his room. When the ghost of Uncle Arvie arrives, demanding Dennis's help, Dennis finds that he must figure out exactly what Uncle Arvie means by such phrases as "Pin needle a heartfoot."

Activities

1. Have the students either read this book in small groups or listen to it being read aloud. Challenge them to guess what the nonsense words mean as Uncle Arvie utters them. Discuss Dennis's frustration as he tries to determine what Uncle Arvie wants.
2. Have the students create new phrases that could be used in place of those Uncle Arvie uses. Then have them create their own ghost language.
3. Teach the students to speak Pig Latin. The initial consonant sound is moved to the end of the word, with the sound of *ay* added. For words that start with vowels, just add the *ay* syllable to the end of the word. For example, the words "Pig Latin" would be spoken as "Igpay Atinlay." Try reading these commonly heard sentences: "It'say imetay otay aysay ethay Edgeplay ofay Allegianceay." "Eahyay! Imetay otay ogay omehay!" "Atwhay's orfay innerday?" ("It's time to say the Pledge of Allegiance." "Yeah! Time to go home!" "What's for dinner?")
4. Have the students create picture dictionaries using their new language. Challenge them to communicate for an hour in their language.

Related Books

Conrad, Pam. *Stonewords: A Ghost Story*. New York: HarperCollins, 1990.

Winthrop, Elizabeth. *The Castle in the Attic*. New York: Bantam Books, 1986.

Yep, Laurence. *The Imp That Ate My Homework*. Illustrated by Benrei Huang. New York: HarperCollins, 1998.

Ray, Delia. *A Nation Torn: The Story of How the Civil War Began*. New York: Penguin, 1996.

Grade levels: 5-6.

Beginning with a letter from Major Robert Anderson to his wife at Christmas, this informational book provides an intimate look at the beginnings of the Civil War. Topics include the early rumblings of war, the controversy over slavery, Lincoln's struggles with determining how best to preserve the nation, and the firing on Fort Sumter.

Activities

1. Choose one of the chapters and photocopy it for use on an overhead projector. Divide it into segments so that the chapter will be better understood by the students.
2. Read the segment aloud while displaying it on the overhead project. Then allow the students to ask questions about the segment, ideally questions beyond the literal level. Try to answer the questions as thoroughly as possible.
3. Then read another segment aloud. This time ask the students questions, modeling more creative questioning. Questions could focus on motivations of the historical figures, the meanings of unfamiliar words, and how the people of the North or South felt.
4. Repeat this process with more reading and questioning of text, taking turns with the questions. Work toward improving the level of questioning to encourage creativity both in the questions and in thinking beyond the information stated in the text.

Related Books

Chang, Ina. *A Separate Battle: Women and the Civil War*. New York: Dutton, 1991.

Damon, Duane. *When This Cruel War Is Over: The Civil War Home Front*. Minneapolis, Minn.: Lerner, 1996.

Murphy, Jim. *The Boys' War: Confederate and Union Soldiers Talk About the Civil War*. New York: Clarion, 1990.

Ray, Delia. *Behind the Blue and Gray: The Soldier's Life in the Civil War*. New York: Dutton, 1991.

Sandler, Martin W. *Civil War*. New York: HarperCollins, 1996.

Comprehension: Inferential

MacDonald, Margaret Read. *Peace Tales: World Folktales to Talk About*. Hamden, Conn.: Linnet Press, 1992.

Grade levels: 3-4.

This fascinating collection of stories is organized by themes within the broad topics of war and peace: pathways to war, the folly of fighting, one war, an end to war, pathways to peace, peacemaking techniques, peacemakers, the never-ending work, and choices. The stories come from around the world.

Activities

1. Read aloud "Two Goats on the Bridge." What is the message for listeners? What did the goats learn from the experience? Discuss the proverb. Does it accurately sum up the gist of the story?
2. Read aloud the proverb that accompanies "The Neighbor's Shifty Son." Discuss the meaning of the proverb. Then read aloud the story. What is its message? Did the proverb help the students understand the lesson of the story?
3. Read aloud "Halving the Cookie" and "The Argument Sticks." Can the students think of other techniques for making peace? Did both of these stories promote fairness? Can the students think of other stories with similar lessons? Read other examples in this section. What techniques could be used in the classroom?
4. Create a list of peacekeeping messages gained from reading the stories. Then create a list of techniques for keeping peace that the students can agree on for use in the classroom.

Related Books

Caduto, Michael J. *The Crimson Elf: Italian Tales of Wisdom*. Illustrated by Tom Sarmo. Golden, Colo.: Fulcrum Publishing, 1997.

Earth Tales from Around the World. Illustrated by Adelaide Murphy Tyrol. Golden, Colo.: Fulcrum Publishing, 1997.

MacDonald, Margaret Read. *Twenty Tellable Tales: Audience Participation Folktales for the Beginning Storyteller*. Illustrated by Roxane Murphy. New York: H. W. Wilson, 1986.