

Exemplar 1

Using a children's book as a focus for talk between the teacher and small groups of children

In this book the narrative is created through a combination of written and visual messages. The text consists of a series of rhyming couplets introducing or linking familiar story and nursery rhyme characters. This is accompanied by illustrations that provide visual clues. These extend the possibilities for the interpretation of meaning to a level of complexity far beyond anything suggested by the words. Taken at its simplest level the book is a rich source through which children's understanding of sounds, words, rhyme, rhythm and sentence structure can be developed. It also has a direct link to early literacy, through simple phrasing, through support for the text from illustrations, and through the use of repetition. These serve to give shape to the narrative and to emphasise its meaning rather than to control vocabulary.

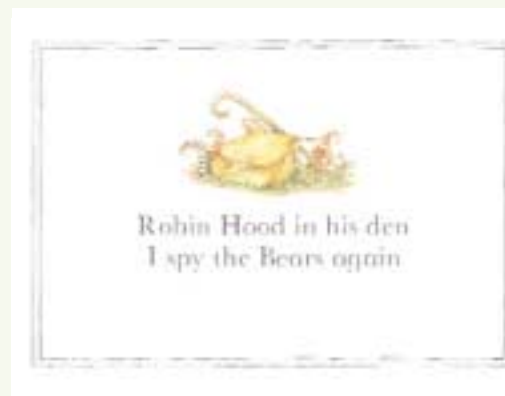
In common with many picture books its great strength lies in a capacity for provoking imaginative response and in requiring the child to explain, to construe and to construct meaning that is richly layered in the illustrations but not made explicit in the text.

Within the loosely connected narrative provided by the text the storyteller has complete responsibility for the plot development suggested in the illustrations.

The most important characteristic of the book, from which its value as a learning resource comes, is that, even when text and illustration are taken together, gaps in meaning remain that must be filled in by the reader and the listener.

To make the connections and to give the explanations the child must engage in language uses that require him/her to

- describe characters, behaviours and events
- order and sequence events
- reflect upon behaviours and emotions
- explain cause-effect relationships between events in the story
- extract central meaning in any one illustration and relate this to background and foreground events
- predict outcomes in relation to behaviours and events
- project wishes, feelings and motivations in relation to characters.



'Each Peach Pear Plum' by J. and A. Ahlberg (Picture Puffins)