

# Book Reviews

## Support Information

### Background

This Example is from a **multi-grade classroom** where the mainstream teacher teaches Junior Infants, Senior Infants and First Class. As a result, children were at different stages in their language learning trajectories and the teacher expressed the opinion that using learning outcomes has enabled her to plan appropriately across class levels.

All teachers in this school identified **oral language** as an area for improvement, with **listening skills** being an area of focus. They felt that the development of listening skills were vital for all learning and recognised a need to explicitly teach the children specific rules for good listening. These included keeping eye contact, listening and attending while others were speaking, and using appropriate body language. Much time was invested in explicitly teaching and practising these skills and teachers displayed a chart in the classroom with a list of rules for good listening which children referred to regularly.

The Example presents the process of children developing their **book reviews** and presenting them to their peers. The teacher has spent time building up a **positive attitude to reading** in the classroom and there is a broad range of books available in the class library which is used in meaningful ways during learning experiences. The children visit the class library on a regular basis and choose books that they want to read. The element of **choice** is very important, and children pick books that they are interested in and motivated to read. In this Example, they bring their book home and complete a book review worksheet for each book they read. This involves recording the following:

- the name of the book
- their feelings about the book
- their favourite part of the book
- descriptions of characters
- rating/evaluation of the book.

Individual children then get an opportunity to **present** their book review to the whole class. In doing so, they use their completed book review as a guide for what to include in their presentation to the class. They describe their feelings towards the book and discuss their favourite part of the book. They invite questions based on the book from their peers and they answer these questions. As the audience, the children in the class demonstrate the skills associated with good listening and ask questions about the book being reviewed. The teacher continues to model and explicitly teach the skills associated with effective questioning in the classroom.

As the video from this Example demonstrates, the progression from class to class is apparent, with the **varying levels of questioning and interpretations** of the texts evident from the children. Over time, the teacher has noticed that children's questioning has moved from **lower order to more higher order questioning**. The children have also started to draw on a range of **comprehension strategies** when reading and presenting their book reviews and they have become accustomed to rating and evaluating the books and giving reasons for these ratings. This has been a process and the children have their own criteria for choosing a particular book. The teacher expressed that this practice has many benefits in a multi-grade setting, especially for the children in Junior Infants in the initial stages of literacy learning who are scaffolded and guided by children in the older classes.

# Book Reviews

## Support Information

### Preparation for Teaching and Learning

The **interconnectivity between strands** was very apparent for this teacher as she began to prepare for teaching with the Primary Language Curriculum. Many of the learning experiences planned for in the class incorporate learning across a number of strands.

For this particular learning experience, the teacher planned with learning outcomes from both the reading and oral language strands. She described her planning documentation as purposeful and practical, and recorded annotations in the document. For each learning outcome, she had a focus for learning as outlined below. Within the **Reading strand**, the following learning outcomes and focus of new learning were planned for:

Learning Outcome (LO)	Focus of new learning
LO1: Engagement	Take part in and enjoy listening to reading. Recognise themselves as readers.
LO2: Motivation and choice	Choose, read and communicate about their chosen books within the class setting.
LO8: Response and author's intent	Discuss and share their thoughts and opinions on their chosen books.
LO9: Comprehension	Recall, discuss and sequence details from the book. Use a range of comprehension strategies to make sense of and create meaning from the books.



The teacher also planned for a number of learning outcomes from the **Oral Language strand** because the children are presenting their book reviews orally to the class.

Learning Outcome (LO)	Focus of new learning
LO1: Engagement, listening and attention	Show interest in and actively listen to other children's book reviews.
LO3: Social conventions and awareness of others	Communicate and interact with each other, speak audibly and respond appropriately to questions from their peers.



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### Assessment

The teacher described assessment as an **integral part of the process** and also conveyed the need to assess children on an **ongoing basis**. Considering that children were at different stages with their language learning and development, they were scaffolded to

- orally present book reviews to their peers
- answer questions from their peers by drawing on a range of comprehension strategies
- actively listen to and pose questions to peers presenting book reviews.

In this Example, children engaged as speakers and listeners. The teacher provided examples of **intuitive assessment** whereby the teacher posed questions to the children about the books they read, their favourite characters, their feelings about the book etc. In this way, and over time, the teacher scaffolded children to reflect on the books and to complete their own book reviews. More visible forms of assessment are also evident including **planned interactions**. These included the children completing an activity-sheet to record the following details and reflections based on their books:

- the name of the book
- their feelings about the book
- their favourite part of the book
- descriptions of characters
- rating/evaluation of the book.

Children discussed their book reviews within **small conference groups** led by the teacher. They posed questions to each other about their books. This provided children with an opportunity to convey their understanding of and feelings towards the books within a smaller, supportive group. This small group work provided opportunities for **peer-assessment**.



Following this, the children orally presented their book reviews to the class and were provided with **regular feedback from the teacher** on the skills demonstrated. Opportunities were also provided for **self-assessment** as children were asked to **reflect on their own demonstrations of skills for speaking and listening**. This involved engaging children in conversations, posing questions and conferencing with children about their oral book review presentations. A varied range of questions which encouraged children to reflect, wonder and speculate supported the children's creativity and **higher-order thinking**.





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## Support Information

### Reflective Questions

- The notion of choice is important in this Example? How do you feel about providing children with opportunities to make choices in their learning? Consider other learning experiences where choice is important for children?
- What aspects of the pedagogical approach used by the teacher do you find most interesting? What practices do you think of when considering how best to support positive reading attitudes for children?
- How might oral book reviews enable the teacher to assess children's development of reading comprehension strategies?
- Consider children's engagement with books in Irish? What skills, as demonstrated in this Example, might transfer to children's learning of Irish? How might the teacher prepare for this learning in Irish?

**To view the videos related to this support information click here.**

