

Who doesn't love a story?

In this podcast we consider how to read stories well. Whether a practitioner, teacher, librarian, parent, carer, there is a skill to reading stories well to young children.

This podcast was inspired by recent experiences, including listening to *The Velveteen Rabbit*, written by Margery Williams and charmingly narrated by Helena Bonham Carter.

Choosing books well...

Recently invited to a local Tots group, I took a selection of 3 or 4 books, 'classics' that I knew well. Children love repetition and would be choosing, so I made sure I liked them all!

Setting the scene well...

The Tots group had some 'sit spots' arranged in an cosy alcove. Sit Spot mats help children to own their space for the story. They are movable to ensure that all children can see well.

I also brought two props - Monkey and a large piece of stretchy Lycra. Monkey helps draw children together (in this case, seeing him jump about on the Lycra 'trampoline'). Monkey also models to the children how to be still and listen to the story.

I arranged the four books on the floor and asked the children to choose their favourite. Once decided, I removed all other distractions.

I then pointed out the name of the author *and* the illustrator. Turning each page slowly, I came to the last page and explained that this page is the end of the story.

I then asked the children if they thought they could stay and listen to the last page. If they chose not to, they could leave the group and do something else. (It is interesting to see where the leavers go – often close enough to watch and listen!) The remaining children *want* to listen and *want* to join in.

Reading well...

I know the story very well, which allowed me to hold the book so that the children could have the best view as I needed to simply glance at the words. Similarly, I know the illustrations well enabling me to use my finger to relevant parts of the illustrations without interrupting the flow of the story.

As each page is slowly turned, I used my voice and body language to create a sense of anticipation and wonder.

Maintaining the flow of the story is important as is reading slowly and with expression. *Owl Babies* is a story designed to allow children to experience a little bit of fear through the safety of a story. I used intonation to communicate the fear *and* the reassurance of the returning owl mother. This reassurance is important.

I invited the children to join in the refrain without interrupting the flow. I also used different expression and voices for the different characters.



Ending well...

At the end of the story, I celebrated how well the children (& monkey) had listened and invited them to choose their favourite part (by slowly flicking through the pages as a visual reminder). They can talk about their thoughts and ideas.

Family carers attended the Tots group, but knowing your audience is important. This story may prompt discussion or follow on activities dealing with inclusion, fear, nocturnal animals, working parents...

It maybe that the children want to hear it again or hear a different story of their choice.

Other considerations & 'take homes'

Considering where and when to enjoy stories is important. Children will not fall in love with stories if they feel controlled, herded, tired, hungry or distracted.

Being comfortable and in a cosy space is important.

Knowing the story well and loving it will communicate much to the children.

Book ending story time by setting the scene, drawing the children in and ending well make such a difference.

And finally...

Books referred to in the podcast

A Squash and a Squeeze by Julia Donaldson ISBN: 978-1509804788

Owl Babies by Martin Wadell & Patrick Benson ISBN: 978-0744531671

Can't You Sleep Little Bear? by Martin Wadell & Barbara Firth ISBN: 978-1406353037

We're going on a Bear Hunt by Michael Rosen ISBN: 978-0744555721

The Velveteen Rabbit by Margery Williams ISBN: 978-1405285346 (Audiobook by Apple books)

Further information, practical guidance and advice are available through
Turning Little Stones Podcasts www.turninglittlestones.co.uk (Episodes relating to books are
Season 2; episode 1 & Season 1; episodes 17 & 19)

A Year of Nature Craft & Play by Catherine Hughes & Becky Goddard-Hill ISBN: 978-0-00-846794-4

A Year of Nature Walks & Games Catherine Hughes & Becky Goddard-Hill ISBN: 978-0-00-859496-1

I can't have that, I've Allergies by Katie Kinsella ISBN: 978-1-913615-92-2

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