

Using the transitional reading books

Each Alphakids book is supported with teacher's notes to assist in conducting guided reading sessions with children.

Sooty

Written by Shelley Jones
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Level 12

Getting ready for reading
Talk about any pet cats the children have or know. Ask: *What things do they do? What games do they play? Do they do any naughty things?*

Talking through the book
Give each child a copy of the book. Ask them to read the title and predict what the book will be about. You may like to have children read page 2 and then further discuss their prediction. You might say: *John, you thought the book would be about a cat's adventure. Do you still think this? What part of what you read makes you think that? What do you think will happen next?* Repeat with other children. You could then ask the children to read to another designated point and repeat the discussion.

Reading the book
Children read the book individually while the teacher observes each child's reading behaviours and prompts children to use cues to read unfamiliar words. The teacher may select an additional teaching focus based on these observations.

Returning to the text
Select the most appropriate teaching focus for the learning needs of the group. Choose one or more of the following.

Being a meaning maker
Encourage the children to support their answers with evidence from the book as they discuss these questions.
What games does Sooty like to play?
Why does Sooty snarl by the window every afternoon?
Is Sooty a naughty cat? Why?
How does Emma feel about Sooty?

Being a code breaker
Children could explore the following features:
• spelling of compound words in the book: *sometimes, backward, inside, back door, paper bag*
• the use of a comma before *but* on pages 2, 4 and 12



TEXT FEATURES

- This book is about the daily behaviour of a cat called Sooty. It features Emma from the 'E' alphabet book and *Glosses* (level 2).
- It is written in the form of a recount.
- The text is supported and enhanced by colour photographs.
- There are up to six lines of text per page.
- The text is not repetitive but provides opportunity for revisiting phrases and new words throughout (mileage).

Being a text user

Discuss:
What kind of book is this? Fiction? Factual?
What information does it give about how to look after cats?
Would it be a useful book for learning about how cats behave? Why? Why not?

Being a text critic

Discuss:
Do all children have cats for pets?
Are all cats like Sooty? What other kinds of cats are there?
Does the author of this book like cats? What makes you think this?

Literacy learning centres – follow-up activities

WRITING CENTRE 1
Children could write use Sooty as a model for writing a book about their own pet, focusing on how the animal is looked after, what they do to play, and any naughty or interesting things they do.

WRITING CENTRE 2
Children could carry out a class survey about who has pets and what type of pet the children have. They could then make a short report on what they found, using words and pictures.

Name of person	Name of pet	Kind of pet

BOOK BROWSING CENTRE

Provide other books and poems about cats for children to read: *A Pit for Mr* (Alphakids, level 8); *John Brown Rose and the Midnight Cat* by Jenny Wagner – a beautiful book of jealousy and friendship, featuring a very large dog and a very black cat; *Millions of Cats* by Wanda Gág (first published in 1928) – the story of hundreds of cats, thousands of cats, millions and billions and trillions of cats.

A. A. Milne's poem 'Pinkle Purr' in *New We Are Six* is about a delightful black kitten who grows up to be a dad himself.

WORD CENTRE
Children could read familiar texts to list a range of compound words according to their spelling patterns.

Single word	Hyphenated word	Spaces between words
inside	ice-cream	hot air balloon

Keeping track

When taking a record of reading behaviours it is important to carefully analyse the child's behaviour. Do they search the text to help with decoding? Do they stop when errors cause meaning to become lost or confused?

INTRODUCTION

Getting ready for reading

This sets the scene for the reading and provides a context for children to think about the book. It is usually a 2 to 3 minute activity but in some cases will involve a longer time. When it is likely that children do not have experiences related to the book, these need to be provided through talking, making things, viewing videos, reading other books or conducting experiments. Such activities are indicated, and may require that this part of the guided reading lesson is undertaken the day before the lesson itself.

Talking through the book

This indicates the conversation you might have while guiding children into the book. Aspects of the text that are likely to challenge all children are discussed. You will need to use your knowledge of each child to tailor the book conversation to their needs.

READING THE BOOK

As children are reading the text individually, the teacher observes and listens to each child. This may be where the teacher decides on ways to combine a teaching focus specific to the book with the needs of the child. Errors are usually observed and used in the teaching session as a focus for careful instruction. Records of reading behaviours can be taken during this time.

RETURNING TO THE TEXT

This highlights many of the teaching opportunities that are available in the book. It is not intended that every teaching opportunity be taken up with every child. Instead, teachers can use this section to tailor the guided reading and teaching session to each child's need, or to select books with teaching opportunities that are relevant for a particular group. For example, for children needing to develop their awareness of the use of speech marks you might select *Sebastian's Special Present* or *Enjoy! Enjoy!*

Meaning maker

This section provides a number of discussion points that children can consider and respond to using evidence from the text to support their point of view. It focuses on reading on the lines, between the lines and beyond the lines in the pursuit of meaning.

Code breaker

Selecting the most appropriate aspect of code breaking enables teachers to tailor their teaching to the needs of children. Choose from the following:

- the vocabulary used in the text, focusing on high-frequency words and word awareness.
- analogy with onset and rime
- the writing conventions, focusing on punctuation and grammar

Text user

The questions focus on how and why children might use this book. Text users explore the form or genre of the text, as this affects the way they will read the book.

Text critic

These questions are designed to enable children to develop and demonstrate their critical-thinking skills. They focus on reading like writers. Here children need to refer to the book and to their own experience to justify and explain their answers.

Questions from each section can be posed for the guided reading group to generate discussion, or for individual children. Whichever way the questions are used, children should be encouraged to refer to the book to justify and explain their answers

LITERACY LEARNING CENTRES – FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

Several learning centres are described for each book, providing ideas to enable children to practise and consolidate the skills and concepts they have begun to develop in the guided reading session. Providing activities directly related to the book allows children to engage with the same book for a number of lessons.

POSSIBLE ASSESSMENT FOCUS

Assessment opportunities are indicated by a  symbol. They enable teachers to collect writing samples, observe reading and writing behaviours and monitor children's development. All are possible within the guided reading and literacy learning centre activities.

KEEPING TRACK

These notes provide ideas for observing children's reading behaviours. A range of assessment strategies and ways of collecting data about children's learning is included. These suggestions are not an exhaustive list and are not specific to each book. Teachers need to consider the data they wish to collect and their purpose for collecting it when they are selecting assessment strategies and record-keeping procedures.