

Promoting Critical Thinking, Creativity and Cultural Awareness through Language Arts in Primary Schools

Introduction

In the CDC English Language Curriculum Guide (Primary 1-6) (2004), teachers are encouraged to make use of language arts materials of a wide variety of text types to help pupils develop their critical thinking skills, creativity and cultural awareness.

This resource package, comprising 4 modules of teaching materials: (1) Critical Thinking, Creativity and Cultural Awareness through Language Arts; (2) Learning and Teaching of Short Stories; (3) Learning and Teaching of Nursery Rhymes and Songs; and (4) Learning and Teaching of Poetry, is developed with the following objectives:

- a) introducing what language arts is and the rationale for promoting language arts in the primary English Language curriculum;
- b) enhancing the knowledge, skills, strategies and confidence of English teachers in using a wide variety of literary texts/language arts resource materials (e.g. poems, rhymes, plays, short stories, cartoon, songs, jokes and advertisements) to promote critical thinking, creativity and cultural awareness in a pleasurable language learning environment;
- c) developing teachers' knowledge, skills and confidence in selecting, adapting and developing language arts resource materials and learning activities to suit the interests, needs and abilities of their pupils; and
- d) increasing teachers' ability in developing innovative teaching strategies and practices conducive to effective language learning, including promoting creativity and critical thinking in their pupils.

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<http://www.hendersonville-pd.org/hpdnursery.html>

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Module 1

Critical Thinking, Creativity and Cultural Awareness through Language Arts

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Objectives
- 1.3 What is language arts?
- 1.4 Role of language arts in the primary English Language Education curriculum in Hong Kong
- 1.5 Promoting critical thinking, creativity and cultural awareness through language arts activities
- 1.6 Assessing pupils' performance
- 1.7 Summary
- 1.8 Useful reading materials

1.1 Introduction

The materials in this module aim to:

1. provide you with some pedagogical ideas for teaching language arts in the classroom;
2. examine the role of language arts in the primary English Language curriculum and the extent to which language arts can be integrated with other subjects in the school curriculum;
3. discuss the ways in which critical thinking, creativity and cultural awareness can be promoted through language arts activities; and
4. familiarize you with relevant assessment measures to gauge pupils' performance in formative assessment.

Quotations from some published sources and documents are extracted for study and illustration. Tasks and questions are included for you to work on and think about. You are also encouraged to discuss the teaching ideas and lesson plans you learn from this resource package with your panel members in school.

1.2 Objectives

By the end of the module, you should be able to:

- state what language arts is
- state what critical thinking, creativity and cultural awareness are
- understand the role of language arts in the primary English Language Education curriculum in Hong Kong
- describe some ways to integrate language arts into the primary English Language Education curriculum
- describe some ways to use language arts activities to promote critical thinking, creativity and cultural awareness
- list some ways to assess and evaluate pupils' performance

1.3 What is language arts?

1.3.1 What do I think about language arts?

Task 1.1 A self-evaluation questionnaire

You may not be familiar with the term "language arts", and may wonder what it is and how to incorporate it into your teaching. The **questionnaire** helps you reflect on what you think language arts is, by rating 12 questions on a five-point scale, from 1 (do not agree) to 5 (strongly agree). The items listed in the questionnaire are by no means exhaustive. You can click to find comments on each question.



Bromley (1998, p.3) defines language arts as "effective and creative execution of a symbolic system of communication. Language arts includes all the various ways that learners make and share meaning". The symbolic system of communication that Bromley states in the book refers to the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. It is felt that an important connection exists among the four language skills. According to the literature, these four language skills should be connected with other content areas such as General Studies, Mathematics and Music. Language arts materials such as poems, nursery rhymes, short stories and songs provide useful resources for connecting the four language skills for children, foster language enrichment, develop cultural awareness and enable children/learners to use the language for emotional expression.

Task 1.1

A self-evaluation questionnaire

Question	Scale				
	← Do not agree				Strongly agree →
	1	2	3	4	5
1. Language arts is a new subject and should be separated from regular General English lessons.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Language arts has no connection with other content subjects (such as General Studies and Maths).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Language arts focuses on the learning and teaching of the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Language arts is about teaching literature, poetry and stories only.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Teachers should be provided with a prescribed curriculum for teaching language arts.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Teachers should have the right to select the topics and content in teaching language arts.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. Teachers should have the right to decide how to teach language arts.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. Teachers can enhance pupils' critical thinking skills through language arts activities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. Teachers can enhance pupils' creativity through language arts activities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. Teachers can increase pupils' awareness of different cultural values and attitudes through language arts activities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. It is best for teachers to assess pupils' ongoing performance in language arts activities in the classroom.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. It is best for teachers to grade pupils' performance in language arts activities such as telling short stories.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Task 1.1

Comments:

Question 1 - Language arts is not a new subject and should not be separated from the school English programme. We can integrate language arts activities into existing English language learning modules.

Question 2 - It is advisable for teachers of English to collaborate with teachers of other KLAs to promote language learning through a cross-curricular approach. When effectively used, this approach is capable of motivating learners to learn English through exposing them to a wide range of themes/topics as well as reinforcing what they have learnt in other KLAs. Teachers can enrich pupils' learning experiences through language arts activities, such as poetry reading and story writing when these are related to one or more of the other KLAs.

Question 3 - Language arts activities can provide opportunities for pupils to practise listening, speaking, reading and writing skills in a richer language environment.

Question 4 - We should not equate language arts with literature. Any imaginative and creative texts, such as poems, short stories, dramas, films, songs, radio and television programmes, posters, advertisements and cartoons can be the learning and teaching resources for language arts.

Questions 5 to 7 - Schools are encouraged to develop their own school-based curriculum based on the general direction for the learning and teaching of English language, as highlighted in the English Language Education curriculum framework. Teachers can select suitable learning and teaching materials and adopt appropriate teaching strategies to suit pupils' needs, interests and abilities.

Questions 8 to 10 - The English Language Education KLA seeks to develop learners' English proficiency, provide them with opportunities for personal and intellectual development, and extend their knowledge and experience of other cultures in the English medium. In the CDC Report, Learning to Learn - The Way Forward in Curriculum Development (2001), teachers are further encouraged to make greater use of literary/imaginative texts to develop critical thinking and promote free expression and creativity.

Questions 11 and 12 concern your perception of assessment and how it is applied to language arts. It is helpful for teachers to assess pupils' ongoing performance and give timely feedback and support to enable pupils to identify their own strengths and areas for improvement. It is not always necessary to give a grade to pupils' work. Instead, the teacher should look for evidence of pupils' ability to make intelligent choices, think creatively, solve problems, cooperate with others, and express themselves throughout the process and in the end product.

1.4 Role of language arts in the primary English Language Education curriculum in Hong Kong

The Subject Target of English Language is for learners to develop an ever-improving capability to use English to think and communicate; to acquire, develop and apply knowledge; and to respond and give expression to experience. When planning and designing the English Language curriculum, we need to expose pupils to a good variety of text types so that they can experience the use of language and enjoy using the language. In the CDC Report, Learning to Learn - The Way Forward in Curriculum Development (2001), teachers are encouraged to make greater use of literary/imaginative texts to develop critical thinking and encourage free expression and creativity.

In the CDC English Language Curriculum Guide (Primary 1-6) (2004), different text types are suggested with a view to providing a richer language environment, in which critical thinking skills, creativity and cultural awareness can be particularly nurtured and developed. It should be noted that language arts is not restricted to the learning and teaching of literary texts such as short stories, poems and plays. Any imaginative and creative texts such as posters, advertisements and even cartoons can be the learning and teaching sources for language arts. In short, language arts materials include a wide range of texts, covering every aspect of literary, imaginative and information texts.



More Information

Language arts activities

In the implementation of the English Language curriculum, the use of a wide range of language arts materials such as songs, rhymes, poems, stories, tongue twisters and plays is advocated. Language arts materials can be organised under categories such as narrative, persuasive and information. Exposure to a variety of text types provides opportunities for the development of cultural awareness and generic skills, in particular, critical thinking skills and creativity.

When young learners are engaged in language arts activities such as singing songs and making up rhymes, English becomes a source of pleasure and entertainment. This helps young learners develop interest and a positive attitude towards learning a second language.

As far as possible, language arts activities should be integrated into learning modules to stimulate learners' thinking and creativity, to help them make connections to the knowledge they have acquired and to guide them to express their observations, thoughts, feelings and communicate their emotions and personal experiences.

(Source: CDC English Language Curriculum Guide (Primary 1-6) (2004), pp.178-179)

Task 1.2

The following text types are selected and extracted from the CDC English Language Curriculum Guide (Primary 1-6) (2004). Which **examples of text types**, do you think, can be put under the term "language arts"? Express your opinion by ticking the appropriate box(es).



As it is previously mentioned, any types of narrative and information texts can be used for the learning and teaching of language arts. Click and see **how teachers could use the pictures on a leaflet** to help pupils develop critical thinking and creativity. You can adopt similar steps when you use other narrative and information texts.

Poetry, short stories, rhymes and songs are good resources to practise the four language skills and help pupils develop their generic skills and cultural awareness, for example, by recognizing sounds and patterns of rhymes and songs, reciting poems, talking about cultural factors and alerting pupils to the values, beliefs and attitudes of different cultures. We can read a poem or nursery rhyme to pupils, introduce some cultural specific features mentioned in the poem or rhyme, and encourage them to find similar features in their own culture and express their feelings about those features.

More ideas about using poetry, short stories, rhymes and songs to promote critical thinking, creativity and cultural awareness will be discussed in greater detail in subsequent modules.

Categories of Text Types*	Examples of Text Types for Key Stage 1	Additional Examples of Text Types for Key Stage 2
Narrative Texts	<input type="checkbox"/> Cartoons and comics <input type="checkbox"/> Diaries <input type="checkbox"/> Fables and fairy tales <input type="checkbox"/> Personal recounts <input type="checkbox"/> Poems <input type="checkbox"/> Rhymes <input type="checkbox"/> Songs <input type="checkbox"/> Stories	<input type="checkbox"/> Accounts <input type="checkbox"/> Autobiographies <input type="checkbox"/> Biographies <input type="checkbox"/> Jokes and riddles <input type="checkbox"/> Journals <input type="checkbox"/> Myths <input type="checkbox"/> Plays <input type="checkbox"/> Tongue twisters
Information Texts	<input type="checkbox"/> Charts <input type="checkbox"/> Coupons <input type="checkbox"/> Expositions <input type="checkbox"/> Labels <input type="checkbox"/> Leaflets <input type="checkbox"/> Lists <input type="checkbox"/> Menus <input type="checkbox"/> Notices <input type="checkbox"/> Personal descriptions <input type="checkbox"/> Picture dictionaries <input type="checkbox"/> Product information <input type="checkbox"/> Rules <input type="checkbox"/> Signs <input type="checkbox"/> Tables <input type="checkbox"/> Time-tables	<input type="checkbox"/> Announcements <input type="checkbox"/> Catalogues <input type="checkbox"/> Children's Encyclopaedia <input type="checkbox"/> Dictionaries <input type="checkbox"/> Directories <input type="checkbox"/> Information reports <input type="checkbox"/> Maps and legends <input type="checkbox"/> News reports <input type="checkbox"/> Pamphlets <input type="checkbox"/> Questionnaires <input type="checkbox"/> Weather reports
Exchanges	<input type="checkbox"/> Cards <input type="checkbox"/> Conversations <input type="checkbox"/> Notes and messages <input type="checkbox"/> Personal letters <input type="checkbox"/> Postcards	<input type="checkbox"/> E-mails <input type="checkbox"/> Formal letters <input type="checkbox"/> Telephone conversations
Procedural Texts	<input type="checkbox"/> Directions <input type="checkbox"/> Instructions	<input type="checkbox"/> Procedures <input type="checkbox"/> Recipes
Explanatory Texts	<input type="checkbox"/> Captions <input type="checkbox"/> Illustrations	<input type="checkbox"/> Explanations of how and why
Persuasive Texts	<input type="checkbox"/> Advertisements <input type="checkbox"/> Posters	<input type="checkbox"/> Brochures <input type="checkbox"/> Discussions <input type="checkbox"/> Expositions

*The sequence of the categories of text types presented here is **not** a prescriptive one to be followed strictly for learning and teaching.

(Source: [CDC English Language Curriculum Guide \(Primary 1-6\)](#) (2004), p.17)

Task 1.2

Comments:

Traditionally, poems, rhymes, songs and plays have more relevance to language arts than other text types do. However, this does not necessarily mean that other text types are not suitable for language arts activities. We can also make full use of other text types such as cartoons, comics, jokes and riddles, leaflets, rules, signs and advertisements for teaching the four language skills, promoting critical thinking, creativity and cultural awareness (particularly for jokes) in the classroom. Providing a wide variety of text types can enrich the language environment. It is our job to select the appropriate language arts materials to consolidate learning.

Pictures on the Leaflet

(Pictures are taken from the cover of Fire Safety Guide, designed by the Information Services Department, printed by the Printing Department, Hong Kong SAR Government)



Suggested ideas and steps:

1. Show the pictures to pupils, and ask them to suggest the major fire risks in buildings, e.g. leaving fire doors open, putting unwanted things in the corridors or staircases, children playing with fire.

2. Introduce some common fire service installations in Hong Kong that appear in the pictures, such as fire extinguishers (pictures 1 & 2), fire alarms, fire detection systems, hose reels/fire hydrants (picture 2), exit signs (picture 3).
3. Teach pupils how to pronounce the vocabulary items.
4. Ask pupils to say something about the fire service installations in their buildings or estates.
5. Go through the pictures with pupils and describe them one by one. For instance, the guard is advising the man to put out the fire with a fire extinguisher in picture 1; the men are checking the fire detection system and hose reel in picture 2; and the man with a tag on his shirt is telling the workman not to leave unwanted things at the exit in picture 3. An alternative method is to invite pupils to study the three pictures one by one and describe them in groups or individually, if the pupils are able to do so.
6. To promote critical thinking skills, ask pupils why the men check the smoke detection system and the hose reel (picture 2), and what the workman should do if water comes out from the hose reel. For instance,

Question: Why do the men check the smoke detection system (picture 2)?
Possible answer: To make sure it works.
7. To promote creativity, ask pupils to write a dialogue for each picture. For instance, for picture 2, ask pupils what he/she will say to the workman if he/she is the man checking the fire detection system. Or ask pupils to guess how the workman will respond. You can also ask pupils to suggest some ways to prevent fire based on their daily experience. For more able learners, you can ask them to re-arrange the sequence of the pictures and tell a story based on the pictures. They are free to make up some details for their story.

1.4.1 Integrating language arts into daily teaching

Language arts is neither a discrete skill separate from our daily teaching of listening, speaking, reading and writing, nor a subject which requires special time allocation in the English Language curriculum. It is something that can be incorporated into our daily teaching activities and can stimulate critical thinking and creativity at any time in the classroom, whenever we present audio or visual images, ask pupils to listen to a story or respond to a poem that describes another culture. The four language skills, in Bromley's view (1998, p.7), actually "share the common cognitive process of thinking and are basic to learning". Integrating literary work with the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) makes a lot of sense for learning, with one reinforcing the other. The **diagram** here will help you better understand and see the relationship between language arts and the four language skills.

Relationship between language arts and the four language skills

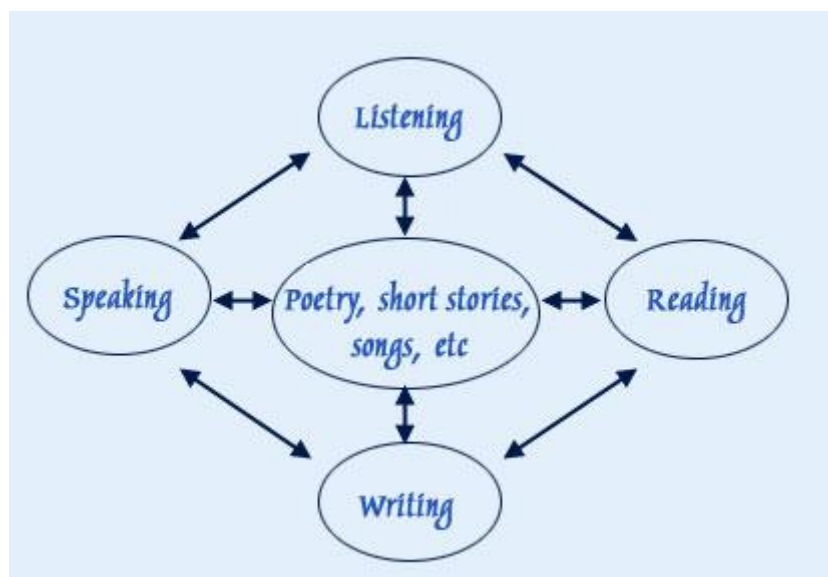


Diagram 1

While we are using poems, short stories and songs to enhance our pupils' knowledge and skills, we can encourage them to think critically and creatively by asking them to respond to a poem or to re-write the ending of a story. Our teaching, therefore, is expanded to a wider scope and a new horizon.

Language arts can also be integrated with other subjects in the curriculum. This helps pupils see the relationship between English and other subjects, or English and their daily lives. For instance, when we teach a poem about fruit, we can follow **these suggested steps**.

The suggested steps will encourage pupils not only to learn more about the poem, but also to see the links between English Language and other subjects in the school curriculum.

Suggested steps for teaching a poem about fruit

1. Ask pupils some general questions about fruit.
For example: *What is your favourite fruit?*
Why do you like this kind of fruit?
2. Invite pupils to think of some words that best describe their favourite fruit, and the benefits of eating fruit. Pupils may make use of some information they have learnt from General Studies in order to answer the questions.
3. Introduce the poem, background information about the poet (if any), vocabulary and pronunciation of individual words.
4. Tell pupils to recommend their favourite fruit to one of their friends/pen-pals who does not like to eat fruit.

1.4.2 Critical thinking and language arts

A. What is critical thinking?

Critical thinking is a skill that has attracted a lot of study and has gained an important role in learning and teaching. Critical thinking is applicable to pupils at all Key Stages.

For example, in Key Stage 1, pupils will learn to identify main ideas in simple spoken and written texts and state opinions. In Key Stage 2, pupils will learn to make predictions, inferences and evaluative comments about characters and events in simple narrative texts (e.g. expressing their own ideas to complete a story with illustrations or providing a different ending to a story). In other words, pupils can apply critical thinking skills to help them reason the information, pose questions and solve problems.

Similar to the definition put forward in the CDC English Language Curriculum Guide (Primary 1-6) (2004), Nosich (2001) states that critical thinking requires a person to (1) think about a question arising from a specific task rather than simply solving a question posed by other people; (2) reason something out based on sufficient information; and (3) reflect upon his or her thinking within a reasonable time frame. Critical thinking, according to Nosich (2001), can also be termed "effective thinking". To be critical or effective in our thinking, we need to think about a question clearly, accurately, deeply, widely and precisely; see its importance and relevance to the context; and have sufficient time to reason out a solution. Critical thinking may result in a decision, a belief or a solution to a problem. When we critically think about a question or an issue, we might retrieve relevant personal experiences and knowledge, seek relevant information and advice from various sources such as books, teachers or friends, and classify, synthesize and carefully consider the divergent views and arguments before reasoning out a solution or making a decision. The entire thinking process has simultaneously exposed us to listening, speaking, reading and writing.



More Information

Critical Thinking Skills

Critical thinking is drawing out meaning from given data or statements. It is concerned with the accuracy of given statements. It aims at generating and evaluating arguments. Critical thinking is the questioning and enquiry we engage in to judge what to believe and what not to.

Descriptors of expected achievements across the school curriculum	Exemplars of implementation in English Language Education
<p>Key Stage 1 (P1-3)</p> <p>Learners will learn to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • extract, classify and organize information from a source • identify and express main ideas, problems or central issues • understand straightforward cause-and-effect relationships • distinguish between obvious fact and opinion • recognize obvious stereotypes, assumptions, inconsistencies and contradictions • formulate questions, make predictions/ estimations and hypotheses • draw simple but logical conclusions not contradictory to given evidence and data 	<p>Learners</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. provide, use, find out, interpret and present simple information on familiar topics (e.g. preparing a simple class project on animals) 2. identify main ideas in simple spoken and written texts and state opinions (e.g. listening to a conversation about what children are doing at recess in the playground and expressing opinions towards their behaviour) 3. understand cause-and-effect relationships conveyed in simple texts (e.g. cause and consequence in stories) 4. distinguish between positive and negative values and recognize inconsistencies in behaviour (e.g. recognizing the moral of a simple story with teacher support) 5. ask questions, make predictions and draw logical conclusions with the aid of objects, pictures or other visual devices about development of events and characters based on information given in simple narrative texts

Descriptors of expected achievements across the school curriculum	Exemplars of implementation in English Language Education
<p>Key Stage 2 (P4-6)</p> <p>Learners will learn to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand and make deductions/ inferences from sources • cross reference other sources to determine the reliability of a source • understand the concepts of relevance and irrelevance • distinguish fact and opinion as well as source and evidence • question obvious bias, propaganda, omissions, and less obvious fallacies • formulate appropriate questions, make reasonable predictions and hypotheses • draw logical conclusions based on adequate data and evidence, and make predictions about consequences 	<p>Learners</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. interpret and use information in spoken and written texts, and make deductions and inferences from different sources (e.g. listening to a telephone conversation about arrangements of activities and reading about the likes and dislikes of the people involved to decide on the best activity for the group) 2. understand different versions (spoken or written) of a news story (e.g. an accident or a theft), identify main ideas, decide on relevance, distinguish fact from opinion, compare and contrast ideas to find similarities and differences and re-construct the event or form views about its cause or who the suspect is 3. make predictions, inferences and evaluative comments about characters and events in simple narrative texts (e.g. expressing their own ideas to complete a story with illustrations or providing a different ending to a story) 4. identify values, attitudes and beliefs expressed in texts (e.g. reading an article about shoplifting and expressing personal views with teacher support) 5. identify and question bias and omissions in texts such as posters and advertisements 6. formulate hypotheses, and develop simple reasoning as a basis for action (e.g. suggesting measures to prevent pollution) 7. review and revise ideas in the light of new information or evidence (e.g. revising one's writing after discussing with classmates and/or the teacher)

(Source: CDC English Language Curriculum Guide (Primary 1-6) (2004), pp.78-79)

Task 1.3

Have you ever asked your pupils to critically think about an issue or a question that is related to the resource materials you are using? For instance, when you teach the poem "The Bluebirds" (See the lesson plan in Section 1.5), you might want to introduce where bluebirds can be found, and then provide some general information about the bluebirds and their habitat. In addition to the provision of information, will you relate bluebirds to other endangered species and raise pupils' awareness of the Chinese attitude towards endangered species and animals? Will you ask **these questions**?

Questions related to the poem "The Bluebirds"

- How do Chinese people keep birds? In nests? Or in cages?
- Do Chinese people watch birds like Westerners?
- What is the name of the street where people can see birds in cages in Hong Kong?
- Why do Chinese people keep birds in cages?

The questions require pupils to think about the Chinese attitude towards endangered species and animals, and compare it with Westerners' attitudes.

Could you think of similar questions that you have asked before to enhance the critical thinking skills of your pupils? How did you go about it?

B . Using language arts activities to develop critical thinking skills

Task 1.4

Language arts activities provide a rich environment for pupils to practise critical thinking skills by reading, listening to, writing and talking about some literary work such as poems, stories and songs. For instance, when we teach a fairy tale, we can help pupils develop their critical thinking skills by asking some open-ended questions.

Think of the reason(s) for posing the following questions.

- (1) Do you think the story is true? Why?
- (2) Which character(s) do you like the most/least? Why?
- (3) Do you think the ending is a good one? Why?
- (4) Could you suggest another ending for the story?
- (5) If you do not like something that the main character did in the story, suggest what he/she should do instead.
- (6) What do you learn from the fairy tale?
- (7) To what extent do you believe in what the characters did in the story?

Task 1.4

Comments:

If we look at the questions carefully, we will find that they provoke critical thinking by asking pupils not to take the fairy tale as it is presented but to go further. We can encourage pupils to go beyond the story plot and think about its truth, differentiate between the mentality of the characters in the tale and those encountered in the real world, evaluate other possibilities for the same issue (e.g. another way to end the tale), express agreement or disagreement with an issue, make judgment on the characters' actions, and reflect on learning (e.g. what they learn from the tale).

1.4.3 Creativity and language arts

A. What is creativity?

When we talk about creativity, we might associate this word with some domains such as painting, music, writing, thinking; and we might equate something that is new and remarkable as creativity. It is correct to say that creativity results in something new or remarkable or that has not been experienced before. It is also true to say that creativity takes place everywhere - at home and in the classroom. In Cantonese, creativity (創造力) seems to be closer to invention. Having said that, something that is new or remarkable might not only be a product of invention of new ideas but also an outcome of the integration or combination of several ideas. Creativity is essential when we write, read, speak, respond to an idea, recognize a problem and solve it (Johnson 2000).

According to Johnson, creativity can be promoted in the classroom. He points out three basic conditions for pupils to be creative: knowledge, time and personal freedom. Pupils should be given sufficient knowledge of the domain or task, adequate time, and respect for their choices and ideas. Given that we, as teachers, follow the conditions, we might find some pupils to be more creative than others, and some might outperform others in certain creative tasks because of intelligence (Johnson 2000, Hennessy & Amabile 1993). Individual difference is expected, and we should prepare for it and give constructive feedback on the creative work of each pupil. The extrinsic encouraging learning environment is important to nurture pupils' intrinsic language learning motivation.

To develop pupils' creativity, it is suggested in the CDC English Language Curriculum Guide (Primary 1-6) (2004) that we can ask them to go beyond the given information, allow them time to think, strengthen their creative abilities, reward their creative efforts, value their creative attributes, teach them creative thinking techniques and the Creative Problem Solving model, and create a climate conducive to creativity. For instance, pupils are asked to respond and give expression to experiences, events, characters or issues through creative writing (e.g. writing a poem or a play about the effects of TV on children), or express freely ideas, views or feelings about a range of topics (e.g. giving one's personal response to a certain news event in class discussion).



More Information

Creativity

Creativity is an important but elusive concept. It has been defined in a variety of ways. Some people define it as an ability to produce original ideas and solve problems, others see it as a process, and yet others take it as certain personal qualities. In brief, creativity is a complex and multifaceted construct. Within the individual, creative behaviour is the result of a complex of cognitive skills/abilities, personality factors, motivation, strategies, and metacognitive skills. A person's creative performance may not correspond to his/her developmental stage.

Although the demanding process of teaching for creativity is hard to make routine, some principles apply in general. To develop learners' creativity, we ask them to go beyond the given information, allow them time to think, strengthen their creative abilities, reward their creative efforts, value their creative attributes, teach them creative thinking techniques and the Creative Problem Solving model, and create a climate conducive to creativity¹. These principles can be employed in all KLAS.

(The expected achievements of learners in this type of generic skill cannot be suitably classified according to key stages.)

Descriptors of expected achievements across the school curriculum	Exemplars of implementation in English Language Education
<p>Learners will learn to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strengthen creative abilities: fluency², flexibility³, originality⁴, elaboration⁵, sensitivity to problems⁶, problem defining⁷, visualization⁸, imagination, analogical thinking⁹, analysis, synthesis, evaluation, transformation¹⁰, intuition, logical thinking, etc. • develop creative attitudes and attributes: imagination, curiosity, self-confidence, independent judgement, persistence and commitment, tolerance for ambiguity, openness to new and unusual ideas/methods/approaches, deferment of judgement, adaptability, willingness to take sensible risks, etc. • use and apply the Creative Problem Solving (CPS) Model and creative thinking techniques: brainstorming, 6W thinking technique, 6 hats method, attribute listing¹¹, idea checklists, synectics¹², mind mapping, etc. 	<p>Learners</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. respond and give expression to experiences, events, characters or issues through creative writing (e.g. writing a poem or a play about the effects of TV on children) 2. express freely ideas, views or feelings about a range of topics (e.g. giving a personal response to a certain news event in class discussion) 3. strengthen their creative abilities through reading and listening to a broad range of imaginative texts including poems, novels, short stories, plays, films, jokes, advertisements, songs, radio and television programmes, etc., and demonstrate sensitivity in their critical appreciation of these texts 4. cultivate and demonstrate free and open attitudes towards different opinions, ideas, values and cultures 5. use and apply different creative thinking and problem-solving techniques to explore alternatives and speculate on consequences before deciding on the best approach to undertaking an activity or resolving a problem (e.g. discussing the pros and cons of different proposed ways of celebrating the last day of the school term) 6. exercise their creative imagination and independent judgement to set their own learning agenda (e.g. proposing their own topic for a language learning project, and when approved, they plan, research and carry out the project)

Notes:

1. Climate conducive to creativity: Respecting the novel and unusual, providing challenges, appreciating individuality and openness, encouraging open discussion, rewarding imaginative ideas, absence of conflict, allowing time for thinking, encouraging confidence and a willingness to take risks, appreciating and supporting new ideas, etc.
2. Fluency: The ability to produce many ideas in response to an open-ended problem, question or task.
3. Flexibility: The ability to take different approaches to a task or problem, to think of ideas in different categories, or to view a situation from several perspectives.
4. Originality: Uniqueness, nonconformity in thought and action.
5. Elaboration: The ability to add details to a given idea, e.g. to develop and embellish the idea.
6. Sensitivity to problems: The ability to identify problems, list out difficulties, detect missing information, and ask good questions.
7. Problem defining: The capability to 1) identify the "real" problem, 2) isolate the important aspects of a problem, 3) clarify and simplify a problem, 4) identify sub-problems, 5) propose alternative problem definitions, and 6) define a problem broadly.
8. Visualization: The ability to fantasize and imagine, "see" things in the "mind's eye" and mentally manipulate images and ideas.
9. Analogical thinking: The ability to borrow ideas from one context and use them in another; or the ability to borrow the solution to a problem and transfer it to another.
10. Transformation: The ability to adapt something to a new use, to "see" new meanings, implications, and applications, or to change an object or idea into another creatively.
11. Attribute listing: A creative thinking technique that involves listing out all the important characteristics of an item and suggesting possible changes or improvements to the various attributes.
12. Synectics: The joining together of apparently unrelated elements. This technique gives rise to analogies and metaphors to help the thinker analyze problems and form different viewpoints.

(Source: CDC English Language Curriculum Guide (Primary 1-6) (2004), pp.75-77)

B. Using language arts activities to enhance creativity

Creativity will be more effectively promoted if it is integrated into the English Language Education curriculum through language arts. Poetry and short stories, for instance, provide a richer thematic learning environment to encourage pupils to think about an idea and do something creatively in groups or individually. As previously mentioned, being creative does not necessarily mean being inventive. Pupils can react or respond to an idea by sharing their opinions or combining related subject knowledge.

Let us study the following example. When we teach a rhyme/poem/song/story to pupils, we can promote creativity by asking them to take part in the following activities in addition to reading the rhyme/poem/song/story aloud and explaining vocabulary items:

- a. Present the work in pictorial form.
- b. Create and share a new rhyme/poem/song/story by changing or repeating some key words of the original piece. For instance, you can underline the key words and ask your pupils to fill in the blanks with other words. Here is an **example** showing how teachers can use a rhyme to enhance creativity.
- c. Search for and compile some information about the theme of the rhyme/poem/song/story (e.g. "spring").
- d. Read aloud the rhyme/poem/song/story through an imaginary object or person.
- e. Respond to the new rhyme/poem/song/story. For instance, for **the new version** (see the New Version in b), you can ask pupils to think whether there are any witches/wizards in the world, or describe what witches/wizards are like (e.g. with a long hooked nose, always wears a black hat) if they have read some stories about witches/wizards before.

Pupils' creative work is a good indicator of effective learning, and we can assess their learning progress by referring to their work throughout the school year. Our assessment should not solely focus on accuracy, rather we should emphasise different things such as originality and creativity. Whatever we wish to do with creative work, we should carefully guide pupils and help them understand the rhyme/poem/song/story before stimulating creativity. Activities (a) through (e) can be done in groups or individually, depending on our pupils' interests, proficiency level, time available and the teaching context.

An example of using a rhyme to enhance creativity

Original version

To get to school faster,
I rode my bicycle.
I pricked it so hard with my comb,
I arrived before the clock struck eight.

New version

To get to school faster,
I sat on the witch's broom.
I pricked it so hard with my comb,
I arrived just before my teacher entered the classroom.

Task 1.5

Evaluate the usefulness of the activities, from (a) to (e), in enhancing creativity by indicating your response on a 6-point scale (1= not useful, 6 = very useful). Give reasons why you think the activities are useful or not useful to your pupils. Try to share your opinions with other panel members in school.

Activities	Degree of Usefulness	Reason(s) for the choice
	not useful ←————→ very useful 1 2 3 4 5 6	
a) Present the work in pictorial form	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	
b) Create and share a new rhyme/poem/song/story by changing some key words and sounds of the original piece	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	
c) Search for and compile some information about the theme of the rhyme/poem/song/story	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	
d) Read aloud the rhyme/poem/song/story through an imaginary object or person	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	
e) Respond to the rhyme/poem/song/story	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	

1.4.4 Cultural awareness and language arts

A. What is cultural awareness?

When we talk about culture, we usually mean the values, attitudes, behaviour and beliefs of a specific group of people. The group could be a community such as Hong Kong people, or a smaller number of people such as teachers. In other words, Hong Kong has its own culture, and teachers have their own culture and the cultures of different groups will then form the culture of a community. Being aware of one's culture is important in developing cultural and intercultural awareness. Gaston (1984) suggests four stages for the development of cultural awareness:

- (1) recognition of the existence and consciousness of one's own culture in a non-judgmental way;
- (2) acceptance or rejection of culture and cultural differences by coping with the ambiguities of various cultures;
- (3) integration of different cultures and developing the ability to empathize; and
- (4) transcendence by developing the ability to respect the values, attitudes, behaviour and beliefs of another culture.

B. Using language arts activities to increase cultural awareness

We need to increase pupils' cultural awareness step-by-step. In other words, we begin by helping them to be aware of their own culture, and then seeing the similarities or differences between their culture and other cultures before accepting or rejecting other cultures. For instance, when we teach a fairy tale such as Cinderella, besides teaching vocabulary and reading skills, we can show them the concept of family through the fairy tale. We can draw the family tree of Cinderella, and ask pupils to draw their own family trees and compare the two. Or we can invite pupils to introduce their family members to other classmates, and discuss the differences between their family trees and Cinderella's. Or we can compare the names that show relationships (e.g. stepmother) in the two cultures. Or we can introduce to pupils the lives of the kings and queens of the West, and ask them to collect some pictures and stories of kings and queens in ancient China. The reasons for drawing, describing, comparing and conducting discussions are to help pupils recognize their own culture, starting from the basic family unit in Hong Kong and in mainland China, as well as empathizing with and respecting other cultures.

Task 1.6

Imagine that you are going to teach a song about a baby panda called "**In a Cottage in a Wood**". How would you increase your pupils' cultural awareness? You need to identify the culture you would like to focus on in this song before suggesting any activities. Try to share your opinions with other panel members in school.

In a Cottage in a Wood

In a cottage in a wood,
Little boy at the window stood,
Saw a baby panda come,
Knocking at his door.
'SAVE ME! SAVE ME! SAVE ME!' he said,
'Or the hunter will shoot me dead!'
'Come, baby panda, stay with me,
Happy we shall be!'

Anon.

(Source: Poems, Songs and Games for the Primary English Classroom (1994), p.59)

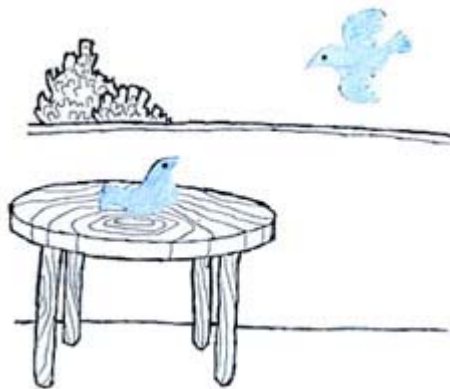
1.5 Promoting critical thinking, creativity and cultural awareness through language arts activities: A lesson plan

Sections 1.4.2-1.4.4 mention the basic teaching principles and suggest some ideas for promoting critical thinking, creativity and cultural awareness through language arts. In this section, we examine how the three elements can be threaded into one language arts lesson.

Imagine that you are going to teach a poem entitled "**Two Little Bluebirds**" to your primary two pupils, and aim to promote their critical thinking, creativity and cultural awareness through the poem. How will you go about achieving the objective?

Two Little Bluebirds

Two little bluebirds,
Sitting on a table,
One called Jack.
One called Mabel.
Fly away, Jack!
Fly away, Mabel!
Come back, Jack.
Come back, Mabel.



(Source: Poems, Songs and Games for the Primary English Classroom (1994), p.26)

The suggested lesson plan on the next page is for reference only, and you are welcome to adapt or modify the steps and questions to best suit your pupils. Some ideas of the lesson plan are taken from pages 20-26 of Poems, Songs and Games for the Primary English Classroom (Education Department, 1994).

A Suggested Lesson Plan

a. Key Stage Targets and Learning Objectives

b. Task Description

Pupils are required to read, think and talk about the scenario described in the poem, to relate the topic of birds to daily life experience, and to understand the different cultural values towards birds or animals. Each pupil then writes a poem based on the original lyrics.

c. Materials

- A picture of two little bluebirds, one sitting on a table and one flying
- Activity sheets for creating one's own poem

d. Lesson Plan: Steps

1. Show a **picture** of two little bluebirds.
2. Ask pupils to describe the picture through some guiding questions such as:
 - *How many birds are there?*
 - *What colour are they?*
 - *Where is this bird sitting?*
 - *What about the other one?*
3. Read the poem aloud to pupils. Ask pupils to pay attention to pronunciation, rhythm and intonation while reading.
4. Post the lyrics on the board.
5. Teach the vocabulary items (e.g. bluebirds, sitting, fly away, come back, Jack, Mabel) and their pronunciation through **actions**.
6. Recite the poem and do the actions together.

7. Invite individual pupils to recite the poem, or recite it in groups. Ask pupils to think about the following questions:
- *Why does the writer ask one bird to fly away?*
 - *Why does the writer ask one bird to come back?*
 - *When Jack flies, where does he go?*
 - *When Mabel flies, where does she go?*
 - *Is it possible to have two birds sitting on the table at the same time?*

To facilitate interaction in the class, pupils can discuss the questions in groups or pairs, write down the answers and tell the class.

8. Ask pupils to **create their own poems** based on the lyrics.
9. Read their poems to the class.
10. Tell pupils where bluebirds can be found, and provide some general information about bluebirds and their habitat. Relate bluebirds to other endangered species and raise pupils' awareness of the Chinese attitude towards endangered species and animals. For instance:
- *How do Chinese people keep birds? In nests? Or in cages?*
 - *Do Chinese people watch birds like Westerners?*
 - *What is the name of the street where people can see birds in cages in Hong Kong?*
 - *Why do Chinese people keep birds in cages?*
11. Introduce Bird Garden - a place where pupils can easily find different kinds of birds (Information available at <http://www.discoverhongkong.com/eng/shop/market/index.jhtml>). Ask pupils what they know about the street (e.g. whether they have been to the street before). Point out to pupils that the birds they can see in Bird Street are kept in cages.
12. Ask pupils to write down whether or not they like to keep birds in cages or watch birds in the wilderness, and give reasons for their choice.
13. Introduce some bird species that can be found in Hong Kong, for instance, sparrows and swallows.

Two Little Bluebirds

Key Stage Targets:

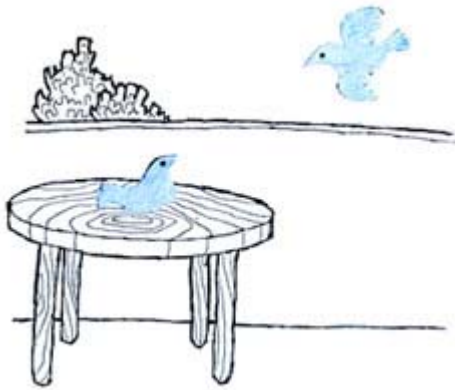
- To converse about feelings, interests and experiences (ISb)
- To recognize some obvious features of the English Language in simple spoken and written texts such as the direction of writing in English, the characteristics of an alphabetic script and the sound patterns of English; and apply this awareness to one's initial learning and use of the language (KSf)
- To develop an awareness and an enjoyment of the basic sound patterns of English in imaginative texts through activities such as participating in action rhymes (ESa)
- To respond to characters and events in simple imaginative and other narrative texts through oral, written and performative means such as making predictions (ESb)
- To give expression to imaginative ideas through oral, written and performative means such as experimenting with simple sound and word patterns in creating rhymes and poems based on given models (ESc)

Two Little Bluebirds

Learning Objectives:

Text Type	Vocabulary	Language Items & Communicative Functions	Language Skills	Developing Critical Thinking, Creativity and Cultural Awareness	Attitudes
Poems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> use words describing actions, e.g. fly away 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> use imperatives to give instructions and directions, e.g. Fly away, Jack! 	<p>Listening</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> identify key words in an utterance by recognizing the stress, e.g. Fly away, Jack! Come back, Jack. <p>Speaking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> pronounce correctly words in isolation, e.g. bluebirds /bluːbɜːdz/ <p>Reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> identify main ideas from a text with teacher support identify key words in a sentence confirm meaning by re-reading a sentence or paragraph <p>Writing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop written texts by adding personal ideas and information when a model or framework is provided, such as filling gaps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop critical thinking skills develop creative writing skills alert pupils to the different attitudes towards endangered species in the Chinese and Western cultures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop confidence in using English show appreciation of the beauty of the language

Two Little Bluebirds



(Source: Poems, Songs and Games for the Primary English Classroom. (1994), p.26)

Two Little Bluebirds

Words	Actions
Two little bluebirds, Sitting on a table.	Tap index fingers gently on the table edge.
One called Jack.	Tap the right index finger only.
One called Mabel.	Tap the left index finger.
Fly away, Jack!	Raise the right hand rapidly above the head and bring it quickly to the back. (This gives pupils the impression that Jack has flown away!)
Fly away, Mabel!	Raise the left hand rapidly above the head and bring it quickly to the back.
Come back, Jack.	Raise and bring the right hand back to the front. Tap the index finger gently on the table.
Come back, Mabel.	Repeat with the left hand.

Pupils listen and watch, then recite and do the actions themselves.

(Source: Poems, Songs and Games for the Primary English Classroom. (1994), pp. 20-21)

Creating own poem

The following versions follow the lyrics and are graded. You are free to choose the one that best suits your pupils.

(1) Two little _____,
 Sitting on a _____,
 One called _____.
 One called _____.
 Fly away, _____!
 Fly away, _____!
 Come back, _____.
 Come back, _____.

OR

(2) Two _____ bluebirds,
 _____ on a table.
 One called _____.
 One called _____.
 Fly away, _____!
 Fly away, _____.
 Come back, _____.
 Come back, _____.

OR

(3) _____
 _____ on a _____.
 One called _____.
 One called _____.
 (Optional: one called _____.)
 _____,
 _____,
 _____,
 _____.

(Source: Adapted from Poems, Songs and Games for the Primary English Classroom (1994), p.26)

1.6 Assessing pupils' performance

1.6.1 What is assessment?

Assessment is an integral part of the learning-teaching-assessment cycle. It is the practice of collecting and interpreting information about pupils' learning, and serves a variety of purposes. In the context of the English Language curriculum, assessment serves the overall purpose of providing information about learners' progress and achievements in relation to the Learning Targets and Objectives, thereby helping learners, teachers and parents understand learners' strengths and weaknesses, and plan for further improvement. Assessment may serve formative or summative purposes:

- Formative assessment is on-going assessment which teachers conduct continuously on a daily basis to look for specific information about learners' progress to inform learning and teaching. It is usually informal and carried out during the learning and teaching process.
- Summative assessment is more formal overall assessment that happens only periodically (e.g. at the end of a school year or a school term) to measure attainment and provide a comprehensive summary of learners' achievements at that particular point of time. It is usually carried out through a test or an examination.

(Source: CDC English Language Curriculum Guide (Primary 1-6) (2004), p.191)

Task 1.7

Read the phrases in the **table** and tick the boxes that best describe the functions of assessment.

- | | |
|------------|--|
| Assessment | <input type="checkbox"/> A. concerns what is happening to pupils while learning. |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> B. concerns what pupils have achieved at the end of the school year. |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> C. gives judgmental statements (e.g. weak/fair/good) at the end of the learning process. |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> D. is conducted by teachers only. |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> E. helps teachers diagnose pupils' strengths and learning difficulties. |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> F. is about teachers' continuous feedback to pupils' work throughout their learning process. |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> G. concerns the achievement of learning targets and objectives. |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> H. improves learning and teaching. |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> I. covers different aspects, from knowledge and skills of the language to learning attitudes and behaviour. |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> J. can be conducted by pupils. |

Task 1.7

Comments:

Assessment:

- A. concerns what is happening to pupils while learning.
- B. concerns what pupils have achieved at the end of the school year.
- C. gives judgmental statements (e.g. weak/fair/good) at the end of the learning process.
- E. helps teachers diagnose pupils' strengths and learning difficulties.
- F. is about teachers' continuous feedback to pupils' work throughout their learning process.
- G. concerns the achievement of learning targets and objectives.
- H. improves learning and teaching.
- I. covers different aspects, from knowledge and skills of the language to learning attitudes and behaviour.
- J. can be conducted by pupils.

1.6.2 Assessment for learning

Task 1.8

Read the **texts** taken from the CDC English Language Curriculum Guide (Primary 1-6) (2004) and answer the following questions.

1. Which type(s) of assessment can promote assessment for learning?
2. What are some possible ways to assess pupils' learning progress?



Assessment for Learning

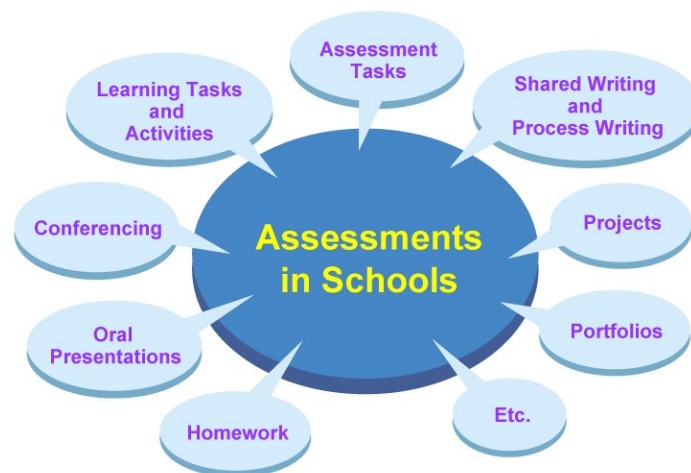
Through assessment, teachers identify learners' strengths and weaknesses and try to diagnose their learning problems. Assessment benefits learners, when information is collected and interpreted for the purpose of providing quality feedback on how to improve performance. This is assessment for learning. It is also assessment for learning when teachers seek and interpret evidence in the process of conducting assessment to help review their expectations of pupils' learning, the content of learning, and their teaching strategies to enhance learning and teaching.

As formative assessment is conducted more informally and on a continual daily basis, it lends itself more to assessment for learning. As for summative assessment, it does not necessarily have to end up merely as a tool for reporting the results of learning using grades or marks. It can also generate information for providing useful quality feedback to learners for further improvement. This is assessment for learning in a rather broad sense.

Effective modes of assessment for learning

Different assessment activities provide appropriate contexts for carrying out assessment for learning through observation, effective questioning and quality feedback in the learning and teaching process. The following figure illustrates some

assessment activities that provide appropriate contexts for carrying out assessment for learning.



Evidence gathered provides invaluable information for teachers to identify learners' strengths and weaknesses and to give quality feedback to learners for improving their own learning.

(Source: CDC English Language Curriculum Guide (Primary 1-6) (2004), pp. 191-192 & 194-195)



Task 1.8

Comments:

1. Both formative and summative assessments can promote assessment for learning. As formative assessment is conducted more informally and on a continual daily basis, it lends itself more to assessment for learning. As for summative assessment, when teachers make use of the learning evidence collected to provide useful quality feedback to learners, it is also assessment for learning in a broad sense.
2. Projects, portfolios, oral presentation, conferencing, learning tasks and activities, assessment tasks, shared writing and process writing, etc.

1.6.3 Suggested ideas for formative assessment

In assessing pupils' performance, teachers may make use of a feedback sheet listing the areas to be assessed. Below are three examples of what feedback sheets may look like. The areas to be assessed listed here are not exhaustive in nature. Teachers are encouraged to adapt and develop their own feedback sheets according to their pupils' needs and abilities. For more examples of feedback sheets, teachers can refer to Appendices 10-17, pp. A49-A58, in the [CDC English Language Curriculum Guide \(Primary 1-6\)](#) (2004).

Feedback Sheet 1

Feedback Sheet 2

Feedback Sheet 3



As mentioned in the [CDC English Language Curriculum Guide \(Primary 1-6\)](#) (2004), many ways are available to collect learning evidence through formative assessment such as portfolios, projects, oral presentation and conferencing. More importantly, pupils should play a role in formative assessment by keeping their own learning records. This, on the one hand, enables pupils to learn to be responsible learners, and on the other, allows them to keep regular track of their progress and to reflect on their own learning. Teachers can ask pupils to put all their work in portfolios. Pupils can prepare different portfolios for different language activities, for example, a writing portfolio for keeping and showing written work, and a reading portfolio for keeping and showing the number of books they have read.

- A . Using portfolios**
- B . Using mini-tasks for formative assessment**
- C . Using project work for formative assessment**

Feedback Sheet 1

Speaking: Oral Presentation (Generic)

1. Teachers CHOOSE and agree with the learners on some criteria from the areas and items below regarding feedback to be given as appropriate to the specific task.
2. They then prepare a feedback sheet or an assessment form for each learner with the selected criteria on it.
3. With teacher's guidance, learners read and understand the assessment criteria on the feedback sheet or assessment form for assessing learners' performance in the oral presentation.
4. Both the teacher and the learners can use the individual task-specific feedback sheet to enhance learning and teaching through conferencing, class discussion, self assessment, peer assessment, etc.

Circle the right icons.

	Well done	Good	Satisfactory	Needs improvement
1. Overall impression				
■ Interest in giving the presentation	☹	☹	☹	☹
■ Confidence	☹	☹	☹	☹
■ Good preparation	☹	☹	☹	☹
2. Presentation Techniques				
■ Audibility/Loudness of voice	☹	☹	☹	☹
■ Clarity of speech/Clear articulation	☹	☹	☹	☹
■ Eye contact	☹	☹	☹	☹
■ Facial expression	☹	☹	☹	☹
■ Gesture	☹	☹	☹	☹
■ Fluency	☹	☹	☹	☹
■ Pronunciation	☹	☹	☹	☹
■ Pace	☹	☹	☹	☹
■ Pause	☹	☹	☹	☹
■ Intonation	☹	☹	☹	☹
3. Organization				
■ Introduction (announcing the topic/setting the scene to gain interest)	☹	☹	☹	☹
■ Body (details & explanations)	☹	☹	☹	☹
■ Conclusion (summary & closing statements)	☹	☹	☹	☹
4. Content				
■ Relevance to the topic	☹	☹	☹	☹
■ Clarity of ideas	☹	☹	☹	☹
■ Original & creative ideas	☹	☹	☹	☹
5. Language				
■ Complete sentences	☹	☹	☹	☹
■ Correct grammar	☹	☹	☹	☹
■ Choice of words, including connectives	☹	☹	☹	☹

(Source: CDC English Language Curriculum Guide (Primary 1-6) (2004), Appendix 10, p. A49)

Feedback Sheet 2 Group Project (Generic) Teacher Assessment Form

1. Teachers CHOOSE and agree with the learners on some criteria from the areas and items below regarding feedback to be given as appropriate to the specific task.
2. They then prepare a feedback sheet or an assessment form for each learner with the selected criteria on it.
3. With teacher’s guidance, learners read and understand the assessment criteria on the feedback sheet or assessment form for assessing their performance in the group project.
4. Both the teacher and the learners can use the individual task-specific feedback sheet to enhance learning and teaching through conferencing, class discussion, self assessment, peer assessment, etc.

Title of the project: _____

A. Project as a whole

Circle the right icons.

		Well done	Good	Satisfactory	Needs improvement
1. You have worked hard.		★	★	★	★
2. Your project/brochure/game is good because: e.g.					
Content	➤ it has a lot of interesting and useful information	★	★	★	★
	➤ you have written at least three thoughtful ideas or explanations	★	★	★	★
Organization and design	➤ you have given your project an interesting name	★	★	★	★
	➤ the table of contents and headings are clear	★	★	★	★
	➤ each paragraph has one main idea	★	★	★	★
	➤ you have explained the topic with interesting and clear pictures, tables, photos, diagrams, etc.	★	★	★	★
	➤ you have labelled the pictures, photos, diagrams, etc. clearly	★	★	★	★
	➤ it is neat, colourful and attractive	★	★	★	★

		Well done	Good	Satisfactory	Needs improvement
Language	➤ the spelling, punctuation, and grammar are correct	★	★	★	★
	➤ it has a good choice of words	★	★	★	★
	➤ your writing is neat and easy for others to read	★	★	★	★
3.	You are good at: e.g.				
	➤ performing your duties as a group member by				
	- listening to your group members	★	★	★	★
	- working well with your group members	★	★	★	★
	➤ taking part in collecting information	★	★	★	★
	➤ sharing ideas or information with group members	★	★	★	★
	➤ sharing your work with your group members	★	★	★	★
	➤ producing a product	★	★	★	★
	➤ presenting your work to other classmates	★	★	★	★

B. Process in doing the project

Circle the right icons.

		Well done	Good	Satisfactory	Needs improvement
I think:					
1.	All group members were punctual.	★	★	★	★
2.	The group worked well together.	★	★	★	★
3.	All group members had opportunities to share their ideas.	★	★	★	★
4.	All group members listened to one another.	★	★	★	★
5.	The group considered a number of ideas before coming to a decision.	★	★	★	★

(Source: CDC English Language Curriculum Guide (Primary 1-6) (2004), Appendix 16, pp. A56-57)

Feedback Sheet 3
Writing
Teacher Assessment Form

Areas to be assessed	Needs improvement*	Satisfactory*	Well done*
Content			
- ideas related to the title of the poem			
- original and creative ideas			
- others			
Organization			
- proper sequence of events			
- appropriate layout of the poem			
- others			
Language use			
- meaning clearly conveyed			
- appropriate use of rhyming words			
- appropriate use of similes			
- others			
Generic skills			
- communication			
- creativity			
- critical thinking			
- collaboration			
- others			
Attitudes			
- confidence in using English			
- keenness to participate in activities			
- respect for others			
- others			
Comments:			

**To decide on the level of pupils' performance, teachers can agree upon a set of common marking criteria.*

A. Using portfolios

There are many tools for formative assessment. One of the commonly used tools that can be used for assessing pupils' performance in language arts activities is the "portfolio". Generally speaking, a portfolio is a folder that contains different kinds of work (e.g. creative poems, pictures drawn in the class, or stories read to classmates) completed by a pupil throughout the whole school year. In the following section, we are going to find out more about this kind of assessment tool.

a . What is a portfolio?

b. What can pupils put in a portfolio?

a . What is a portfolio?

A portfolio is a systematic and organized collection of evidence used by the teacher and the students to monitor the growth of the students' knowledge, skills, and attitudes in a specific subject area.

(Varnus, 1990:48, quoted in Farris 2001:353)

According to Farris (2001), pupils can keep their finished assignments or work in any kind of plastic folder or envelope. For instance, a pupil can put his or her writing about the ending of "Humpty Dumpty" and his or her reading of the nursery rhyme into a folder. The folder is evidence of how much the pupil has achieved, how the learning goals have been achieved, and is a reference when we need to assess pupils' performance. All kinds of writing (e.g. drafts and revised work and teacher's comments on the drafts), speaking (e.g. recital, reading aloud), and reading (e.g. number of books read) evidence can be shown in portfolios.

We can ask pupils to prepare portfolios for different kinds of work. For instance, a pupil can prepare a portfolio for all writing tasks, or a portfolio for the poems he or she has learnt in the first term and so on. The former type of portfolio is language skills-based, whereas the latter type is content- or area-focused. However, the two types are not categorical, and very often, we assess both language and content at the same time because they are interdependent. Language skills can be assessed out of context, but a context helps pupils to use the language and the skills in a meaningful way. We can use portfolios as a tool to diagnose and assess pupils' learning, their progress, strengths and weaknesses, as well as teaching effectiveness. Portfolios also enable pupils to view and reflect on their work, and can be displayed during parents' day or the school open day.

b. What can pupils put in a portfolio?

The content of the portfolio shows us how much the pupils have improved or learned throughout their school year. The collected materials also act as evidence of what they like or can do best and what they have learned. The following are some suggestions, and they are not exhaustive. You can advise your pupils what to put in the portfolio, or you can let your pupils decide on the content.

Work to be included:

- Illustrations of the work, e.g. poems/stories written by the pupil
- List of favourite characters they have come across in poems, short stories or songs
- List of new words, or "favourite" words they have learnt
- Collection of other art work related to the theme/focus of the portfolio
- Teacher's comments
- Pupils' own journal, diary, or any writing that they have used to express their feelings towards the story/characters/activity
- Audio/video materials produced by the pupil himself or herself (e.g. a pupil records/reads his or her story)
- Awards, etc.

B. Using mini-tasks for formative assessment

Another way is to assign some mini-tasks in the classrooms to review pupils' learning and their learning progress. The tasks that we assign should be relevant to the topic we are teaching (or in other words, they should be in context), and should have a learning purpose. For instance, Task 2.7 in Section 2.10.2 of Module 2 asks pupils to write either the story of Little Red Riding Hood again or a modern version of it. The task is relevant to the topic - Little Red Riding Hood, and it requires pupils to practise creative thinking and writing. Other examples of mini-tasks to promote critical thinking, creativity and cultural awareness include:

- writing captions or labels for the story
- writing simple sentences describing some of the characters in the story
- giving responses/suggestions/advice to the characters in the story
- creating a new poem
- predicting the plot of the story

C. Using project work for formative assessment

Project work is a useful tool to observe and review pupils' learning. We usually adopt the thematic approach for project work. For instance, after teaching some poems about food, we can ask pupils to do a project on food by compiling some information about their favourite food, or seeking different types of poems that are related to this theme. In Section 1.5 of Module 1, **steps 11 and 13** in the lesson plan are useful for project work.

You can ask pupils to collect some pictures about Bird Garden or some bird species that can be found in Hong Kong. Pupils can either show the class what they have collected from various sources, or write down the information. Sometimes group work is more preferable than individual work because it enables pupils to learn from and collaborate with one another. Moreover, it provides teachers with opportunities to observe the behaviour of pupils while they are discussing the information and solving the problems.

The following are some suggested **ideas and steps** for the conduct of project work in the classroom. Similar steps will be presented again in Section 4.7.2 of Module 4, with particular reference to the learning and teaching of poetry.

To assess pupils' work, you can make use of the feedback sheet and/or give some verbal or written comments on their projects such as:

"You have done well, but what can you do to improve ..."

"I hope you will enjoy collecting and compiling information about ..."

"The pictures you have collected are really nice and interesting. The description of ... is clear and appropriate. Have you thought of...?"

Two Little Bluebirds

A Suggested Lesson Plan

Steps

11. Introduce Bird Garden - a place where pupils can easily find different kinds of birds (Information available at www.discoverhongkong.com/eng/shop/market/index.jhtml). Ask pupils what they know about the street (e.g. whether they have been to the street before). Point out to pupils that the birds they can see in Bird Street are kept in cages.

13. Introduce some bird species that can be found in Hong Kong, for instance, sparrows and swallows.

Suggested ideas and steps for conducting project work in the classroom:

1. Tell pupils that they can decide on the focus of their work. For instance, they can collect some information about bluebirds or their favourite food.
2. Divide pupils into groups. Try to keep the size to 4-5 in one group in order to maximize interaction and collaboration among pupils.
3. Tell pupils the marking criteria and when they should submit their work. Give pupils sufficient time to do the project. You can discuss the marking criteria with pupils, if you prefer to do so.
4. Suggest where pupils might look for the information.
5. Show some sample work completed by other pupils so as to help them better understand your expectations and what project work is like.
6. Spare some time in your lessons for guiding and checking pupils' progress, and answering their problems whenever necessary. Some pupils may not know how much effort they should put into a project.

"

1.7 Summary

To conclude, this module discusses the following points:

- Definition of language arts
- Role of language arts and relevant activities in the English Language Education curriculum for primary schools
- Definitions of critical thinking, creativity and cultural awareness
- Relationship between critical thinking, creativity, cultural awareness and language arts
- Assessing pupils' performance in language arts activities

1.8 Useful reading materials

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Module 2

Learning and Teaching of Short Stories

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Objectives
- 2.3 Elements of story structure
- 2.4 Choosing a story
- 2.5 Different kinds of short stories
- 2.6 Dos and don'ts for using short stories as a teaching tool
- 2.7 Ten reasons for reading aloud
- 2.8 Strategies for reading and responding to short stories
- 2.9 Responding to short stories in the classroom: More ideas
- 2.10 How to use a short story more than once (or in more than one way) to promote critical thinking, creativity and cultural awareness
- 2.11 Using short stories across the curriculum
- 2.12 Assessment
- 2.13 A story written by a teacher and how we can use it
- 2.14 Writing a lesson plan
- 2.15 Useful reading materials
- 2.16 References

2.1 Introduction

Apart from the development of different language skills, one major goal of a language arts programme is to help pupils gain knowledge and respect for other cultures and values, and to provide room for them to develop their creativity. Storytelling is a perfect tool to achieve these goals.

Well-written stories provide significant content and a "what happens next" sequence allows children and beginning readers of any age to attend to the continuous building of meaning in a story. Studies over the years indicate that most children, including the learning-handicapped, seem to learn to listen, read, and respond better from interesting narratives.

There is a bit of magic in every good story. Good stories, no matter how long or short, can enchant listeners/readers and stretch their imaginations. A short story, when used in the classroom, can serve many purposes, e.g. as a discussion starter, rounding off a special unit or topic, as an interesting practice in reading aloud and predicting, or just as pure entertainment. You can use short stories in the classroom as "stepping stones" to help pupils think critically, to increase their awareness of another culture, to offer opportunities for them to use the language in role plays, and eventually, to encourage them to develop their creativity by writing their own short stories.

2.2 Objectives

By the end of the module, you should be able to:

- tell the different components of a short story
- state the criteria in the selection of short stories for your primary pupils
- use short stories in the classroom to develop pupils' language skills
- use short stories in the classroom to develop pupils' critical thinking skills, creativity and awareness of another culture
- develop different activities to teach short stories to primary pupils
- use short stories to develop various skills across the curriculum
- write short stories for the use of classroom teaching for primary pupils
- use various methods to assess pupils' performance in activities related to short stories

2.3 Elements of story structure

Task 2.1

You must have read thousands of stories, long or short. However, there are some common basic components. What are they? Try to think of three basic components before you read on.

2.3.1 Components of a story

Plot

This is the "skeleton" of the story. It may include a problem to be solved, a roadblock/an obstacle for the central characters, its solution, a conflict, a climax, etc. It has a beginning, a middle and an end which show the sequence of events that occurs to the characters of the story.

Setting

This is the "where and when" of the story, or the time and place and situation in which the story occurs. This can be real or imaginary. The setting can be an integral part to the story, or just a backdrop that is relatively unimportant.

Characters

Characters are usually people or personified animals/objects. They may take the form of heroes and villains. Main characters are usually "round" characters because they are well-developed and they grow and change during the story. They are usually active participants in the actions of the story. Secondary/supporting characters are rather "flat" since they are not well-developed and readers know and care little about them.

Theme

The theme is the "heart" of the story or the "knot" that ties the events together. It can be the underlying meaning of the story or the moral lesson to be taught (if any). Themes can be explicit or implicit, so younger children may not be able to grasp the theme of the story readily.

Style

The style is the form an author uses, or "how" things are said. It can involve word choice and language usage that convey the writer's ideas in a particular way: imagery, metaphor, symbol and sound devices such as alliteration, rhyme, rhythm, etc, may be used.

Task 2.2

Select a children's story, and answer the following questions to build an understanding of the above literary elements.

<i>Setting</i>	Where and when does the story take place? Can the setting be changed to another time and place and still work?
<i>Plot</i>	What are the two most significant events in the story? What is the conflict or problem? Is the solution appropriate? Can you come up with a better one?
<i>Characters</i>	Who are the major characters? Describe them in a few sentences. Have they grown or changed in the story? If yes, how?
<i>Theme</i>	Is there a message in the story? What is it? Summarize it in 1-2 sentences.
<i>Style</i>	Is the writing appropriate to your pupils' level? Is the language too flowery or figurative for your pupils? Can you rewrite it in simpler language if the answer to the above question is YES?

2.4 Choosing a story

There is one trick to the magic of storytelling: Find the right story for the right pupils and the right occasions.

Task 2.3

What are some of the things that we have to consider when choosing a story for our pupils?

Task 2.3

Comments:

Some considerations for choosing stories:

1. Age of pupils
2. Interests of pupils
3. Experience of pupils
4. Maturity of pupils
5. Language ability of pupils
6. Length of the story
7. Degree of difficulty of the story (in ideas and/or in language)

Hints:

For KS1 pupils:

- Choose stories with simple storylines, simple settings, and few or no subplots.
- Choose stories with a lot of repetitions which train memory and offer young children a sense of familiarity and security.
- Choose stories with simple characters.
- Books with big pictures and many illustrations are popular with younger pupils.

For KS2 pupils:

- Choose stories with more complicated storylines, and with one or more subplots.
- Choose stories with more descriptions of setting and character development. Major characters must be 3-dimensional, i.e. fully-developed.
- Some illustrations are preferable but they are comparatively secondary for older pupils. Pupils in KS2 are capable of using their imaginations to visualize the story (to stretch their imagination a bit or a lot).
- Not only stories with local/familiar backgrounds can be chosen. Stories with various ethnic backdrops can be appreciated by older pupils, too.

Things to watch out:

- Some families or religions disapprove of the use of fairies, witchcraft, ghosts and violence as the themes of stories.
- Beware of copyright issues.
- Stories which are about real life tragedies should be handled with care or simply avoided if a pupil in the class is experiencing a similar emotion or tragedy in his/her life (e.g. divorce of parents, death of a family member, death of pets, loss of property in a fire, personal injury).

2.5 Different kinds of short stories

There are many kinds of stories and they can be categorized into the following types. Can you think of an example for each category?

1. Biographies of Special/Famous People, Heroes -
2. Holidays, Seasons and Special Days -
3. Places around the World -
4. Fables -
5. Fairy Tales -
6. Mythology -
7. Science Fiction -
8. Anecdotes -
9. Special Themes -
10. Exploration and Adventure -
11. Religious Stories -
12. Detective Stories -

1. Biographies of Special/Famous People, Heroes -
See examples : Benjamin Franklin, Florence Nightingale
2. Holidays, Seasons and Special Days -
See examples : Halloween, Father's Day
3. Places around the World -
See examples : Egypt, Japan
4. Fables -
See examples : The Rabbit and the Tortoise, The Boy who Cried Wolf
5. Fairy Tales -
See examples : The Little Mermaid, The Happy Prince
6. Mythology -
See examples : The Golden Fleece
7. Science Fiction -
See examples : Journey to the Centre of the Earth
8. Anecdotes -
See examples : The Story of Rosa Parks
9. Special Themes -
See examples : Friendship, Honesty
10. Exploration and Adventure -
See examples : Tom Sawyer
11. Religious Stories -
See examples : The Story of Moses
12. Detective Stories -
See examples : The Nancy Drew Mystery

Task 2.4

- Can you suggest some more categories?
- Can you give one more example for each of the above-mentioned categories?
- Which type is more suitable for KS1 pupils, and which is more appealing to KS2 pupils?
- Where can we find good stories?
- Can you recommend any good stories?

Please make a list and share it with other teachers in your school.

	Name of book	Author	Publisher	Comments
1				
2				
3				

2.6 Dos and don'ts for using short stories as a teaching tool

Here are some suggestions for reading that will help you and your pupils experience a pleasant and productive time.

✓ <i>Dos</i>	✗ <i>Don'ts</i>
<p>1. Follow through with the reading. If you start a story, finish it unless it is a book that does not interest your pupils. If you skip the story for a few days, the pupils will not be able to sustain their interest.</p> <p>2. If you don't have time to finish reading a story, stop at a point of suspense so that the pupils will look forward eagerly to the remainder of the story.</p> <p>3. Occasionally select stories slightly above pupils' intellectual or academic level to challenge them, but do not select one that is above their emotional level.</p> <p>4. Allow time for discussion after each story to develop pupils' critical thinking skills, but don't insist on turning it into a quiz or serious interpretation exercise which will take away the enjoyment of the experience.</p> <p>5. Provide a special time for silent reading of stories. This helps pupils develop a reading habit and can be used as a cool down activity after recess or lunch break.</p>	<p>1. Don't continue reading a story once it is obvious that it is a poor choice: too boring, too difficult in the use of language etc.</p> <p>2. Don't feel that you have to tie every book to homework or classwork.</p> <p>3. It is sometimes not advisable to select a story that your pupils have already seen on TV or in cinemas. Once the plot of the story is known, much of the interest is lost. However, you can let them read the story before it is televised. Help them see that more of the story can be portrayed in print than on the screen. Discussion can be done afterward to compare the two versions.</p> <p>4. Don't start a story if you don't have time to finish it. Stopping half way can be frustrating rather than stimulating for young pupils.</p> <p>5. Don't be upset if your pupils interrupt the telling/reading of a story with questions. There is no time limit on reading a story but there is a time limit on children's curiosity. Foster their curiosity!</p> <p>6. Never use a story as a threat: "Sit properly or there will be no story today!" The story is then perceived by your pupils as a weapon of the teacher, not as a tool of learning and an instrument of fun.</p>

2.7 Ten reasons for reading aloud

When using short stories in the classroom, we can either read the story to our pupils, or let them read the story silently. There are benefits in both approaches. The latter requires pupils to use their reading skills, and each pupil will need a copy of the story. Pupils with more advanced language skills and patience can read a story on their own. However, for KS1 pupils, (but we shouldn't exclude KS2 pupils), reading aloud to them furnishes a lot of academic advantages. **See the ten reasons.**

Ten reasons for reading aloud

1. **Provide pupils with enjoyable classroom experience:** To many pupils, school is a place of work and stress. Yet in storytime, pupils are provided with a genuine period of pleasure. They may look forward to this time each day.
2. **Introduce new words to pupils:** Pupils learn new words by hearing them spoken in a meaningful context, and stories provide such a context. We need to prepare ahead for words that are new to pupils (and words that are important to the understanding of the story), and guide them to use contextual clues to work out the meaning. But note that not all new words have to be taught.
3. **Introduce new sentence structures to pupils:** Pupils learn new sentence structures by imitating what they hear. Yet, much of the classroom language used is simple and managerial in nature: "Please line up for lunch." "Please raise your hand." etc. By contrast, the language used in stories is richer and more varied (e.g. dialogues, exclamation) and it provides lots of opportunities for pupils to learn new sentence structures.
4. **Introduce pupils to various styles of writing:** Listening to stories written in different styles by different writers helps pupils learn about the varieties in language. They can practise using different styles when they do their own writing of stories or poems. Silent reading doesn't have such an impact on pupils.
5. **Provide pupils with a good model:** In reading aloud, teachers demonstrate not only how to read words and sentences, but also how to pause to reflect different punctuations. With a good model, pupils can imitate how to read aloud with appropriate stress, rhythm and intonation.

6. **Motivate pupils to refine their reading skills:** A good reader will awaken pupils to the joy of reading and motivate them to learn to read on their own. Slowly pupils will not be intimidated or shy when reading aloud/speaking in English.
7. **Develop a sense of story in children:** Reading aloud helps pupils familiarize themselves with the plots of stories, and different reading skills such as predicting, guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words with the help of contextual clues, etc.
8. **Provide structures and motivation for creative writing:** After familiarizing themselves with the story structure, pupils may be eager to write their own. They can first borrow, then create characters and plots for their own stories.
9. **Provide a springboard for classroom discussion and other activities:** This shared experience is an excellent lead-in for pupils to express their feelings and opinions. It can also be extended to other art projects, making use of pupils' interests and talents.
10. **Enrich pupils' general knowledge:** Literature allows pupils to explore realms and settings they could not experience in person. Reading stories aloud to them lets them enjoy situations outside the confines of their school curriculum and real life. It is also a good way for pupils to explore their ability to imagine, to create, or to deal with real or imaginary problems by thinking critically.

Task 2.5

Here is a list of strategies for reading aloud. Click the ones that you think are good practices and compare your answers to the suggested answers afterward.

- Use a variety of tones and facial expressions when reading a story.
- Adjust your pace of reading according to the plot of the story.
- Pronounce each word distinctly to indicate the consonant and vowel sounds clearly.
- Have pupils take notes while you are reading.
- Pupils must sit still and be very quiet before you start reading.
- Start your reading programme with short selections that involve interesting characters and strong action.
- KS2 pupils can be exposed to classics such as Oliver Twist or Little Women.
- Read the story as naturally as possible.
- You must read the story in advance in order to provide a smooth, comfortable presentation.
- Stories filled with descriptive passages, intricate characters and complicated plots are good reading materials because they can attract pupils' attention easily.
- Big picture books are good choices for young children only.
- We should only select stories which have familiar backgrounds or are of the same culture as our pupils.
- All selected stories for reading aloud should have some moral lessons.
- Dramatization can be used to a certain extent to arouse the interest of children.
- It is important that we finish a story in one sitting.

Suggested answers:

- Use a variety of tones and facial expressions when reading a story.
- Adjust your pace of reading according to the plot of the story.
- Pronounce each word distinctly to indicate the consonant and vowel sounds clearly.
(This will make reading too artificial.)
- Have pupils take notes while you are reading.
(This is unnecessary and inappropriate because this will take away the fun and enjoyment.)
- Pupils must sit still and be very quiet before you start reading.
(Can pupils really enjoy your reading if they are under stress? If they are interested in the activity, they will automatically quieten down and concentrate. Sitting in a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere will enhance their enjoyment.)
- Start your reading programme with short selections that involve interesting characters and strong action.
- KS2 pupils can be exposed to classics such as Oliver Twist or Little Women.
(Not necessarily! A lot of these classics have very unfamiliar settings with heavy moods and themes. Primary pupils may not be interested in them, or not be able to understand, or identify themselves with the characters. Choose stories of the present time, with more familiar settings, or with lighter moods and themes.)
- Read the story as naturally as possible.
- You must read the story in advance in order to provide a smooth, comfortable presentation.
- Stories filled with descriptive passages, intricate characters and complicated plots are good reading materials because they can attract pupils' attention easily.
(Primary pupils may not have the language proficiency to understand and appreciate stories which have flowery language and complicated plots.)
- Big picture books are good choices for young children only.
(If the pictures are beautiful and colourful, and the story is interesting, KS2 pupils will enjoy them too.)
- We should only select stories which have familiar backgrounds or are of the same culture as our pupils'.
(As discussed above, familiar backgrounds or cultures are better for KS1 pupils who have little experience and exposure, but for KS2 pupils, this may not be so. They can be exposed to various cultures or backgrounds.)
- All selected stories for reading aloud should have some moral lessons.
(No. Some stories are just for enjoyment. As long as the story does not teach or preach misconduct and perverted ideas, it is acceptable.)
- Dramatization can be used to a certain extent to arouse the interest of children.
- It is important that we finish a story in one sitting.
(Whether we finish a story in one sitting depends on several things, and we have already discussed this in the Dos and Don'ts section.)

2.7.1 Other tips for reading aloud (Before, during and after reading):

- **Pre-reading**

- Choose well-written stories that you enjoy. By sharing your enthusiasm and love of the story and through good oral reading, you act as a perfect role model for your pupils.
- Review and practise beforehand. If you find there are parts of the story that are difficult for your pupils in terms of concept or language, you can modify the language, omit that particular section, or simply choose another story. Ample practice allows you to read fluently, comfortably and effectively. Furthermore, practice in front of a mirror allows you to discover how to use your eyes, gestures and facial expressions to enhance your reading of the story.

- **While-reading**

- Be sure the pupils can see and hear you. You will then become the focus of their attention. The pictures (if any) of the story you are reading should also be seen by all pupils.
- Watch for pupils' responses. Be attuned to the audience and watch for signs of restlessness and lack of understanding. Also look for spontaneous responses such as smiles, giggles, grimaces, or other facial expressions which indicate that your children are identifying themselves with the characters of the story. Other verbal responses should be noted and they can be extended for further discussion later.
- An interactive strategy can be used while you are reading. Pupils can be asked to supply sound effects or extra dialogues. This will get them more involved with the story and give them confidence to read aloud later. When used creatively and carefully, interactive storytelling is appropriate not only for younger pupils but also for upper primary pupils.

- **Post-reading**

- Review the story. Following (and sometimes during) the story reading, be sure to allow time for pupils to comment, respond or raise questions. Questions can be asked not only to check understanding, but also to prompt pupils into further thinking of the story. Discussion can help clarify concepts and issues that your pupils are not familiar or cannot identify with.
- Retell the story. This can be done by you or your pupils. Retelling the story by you broadens and deepens pupils' insight and helps them consolidate the style and language used in the story. Pupils can be given chances to retell the story too. They can either use their own words or read from the text. In this way, pupils are given the chance to recall the storyline, repeat the language, and practise their oral English.

Although these are given as tips for the teaching of language through stories by reading aloud, some of them can, actually, be used when pupils read their storybooks silently.

Task 2.6

Choose a story that you enjoyed as a child. Use the guidelines and strategies given above, prepare the story and read/tell it to a group of pupils for whom it is appropriate. Evaluate yourself against the following criteria:

- 1) Were you comfortable and confident?
- 2) Did your pupils enjoy listening to the story?
- 3) Did your pupils understand the story?
- 4) Was the language of an appropriate level for your pupils?
- 5) Were they attentive and responsive?
- 6) Would you do anything different next time?
- 7) Did you do any related activities afterwards?
- 8) Is there any element in the story that has to do with different cultures? Have you explored them with your pupils?
- 9) Have you developed your pupils' critical thinking in various ways and at various levels?

Try to share your experience with other teachers in your school.

2.8 Strategies for reading and responding to short stories

1. **Visualizing** - help pupils "see" the scenes, characters and actions of the story
2. **Predicting** - help pupils make logical guesses about what will happen next
3. **Engaging** - get pupils involved in the plot, action and characters in the story
4. **Empathizing** - help pupils identify with the feelings of the characters in the story
5. **Elaborating** - enable pupils to enrich the setting, plot, characters as well as the details of the story
6. **Relating to real life** - place the story in the real world so that pupils can relate the storyline to the incidents and people in their everyday lives



So far, we have been dealing with the reading and listening aspects of using short stories in language teaching in the classroom. In the following sections, we will be talking about how we can use short stories to facilitate creative speaking and writing, and to promote critical thinking skills and cultural awareness. We will also take a brief look at how we can use short stories to work across the curriculum.

2.9 Responding to short stories in the classroom: More ideas

Not only should pupils be able to enjoy, appreciate and learn from literary works such as short stories, but they should also be able to respond to them, or even to create their own literary work by applying what they have learnt from reading or listening to short stories. Although some primary pupils in Hong Kong may not have the proficiency in English or the experience to create their own artwork, it does not mean that they can't or they won't.

All we need to do is to provide them with proper guidance, encouragement and motivation. Impressive artwork can be accomplished by our pupils. Here in this section, a list of various activities will be introduced. However, this list is not exhaustive. With your creativity and experience, you can come up with more.

2.9.1 Activities that can be used in the classroom to promote critical thinking, creativity, and cultural awareness

Now take a look back at Module 1 Task 1.2, which sets out a list of text types. Some of them are activities that can be used to respond to literature. Which one of these can be used with short stories to teach English in the primary classroom? What kinds of language skills or other skills can you integrate into those activities? Can critical thinking and creativity as well as cultural awareness be promoted through these activities? Think before you read on.

- (A) Writing activities
- (B) Speaking activities
- (C) Other related classroom activities
- (D) Other related school activities
- (E) A summary of suggested classroom activities

(A) Writing activities

1. Writing captions for the story

Younger pupils can be asked to write captions or simple labels for illustrations (provided by the teacher, selected from books, or drawn by pupils themselves).

- Critical Thinking: Select proper dialogues or labels to be used in the captions.
- Creativity: Write captions in pupils' own words.

2. Writing simple sentences describing some of the characters in the story

Pupils are given (or they can select) names of different characters in the story. They need to write a few sentences to describe each character,

e.g. "The Frog Prince"

1. The Frog Prince is green.
 2. It is very fat and ugly.
 3. It has two big round eyes.
 4. The princess kisses him and he becomes a prince again.
- Critical Thinking: Identify the characteristics of the characters.
 - Creativity: Describe the characters in pupils' own words.

3. Giving responses/suggestions/advice to the characters of the story

After the story is finished, the teacher can ask pupils to give responses to the action of the characters or write the ending of the story.

For example, after reading “The Happy Prince”, pupils may respond to the character by writing *“I think you are a very good prince. You are very kind and give everything to the poor people.”*

Another activity is to ask pupils to give suggestions or advice to a certain character in the story to solve a problem or deal with difficulty.

For example, after reading “The Hare and the Tortoise”, pupils may suggest to the hare, *“You should not sleep. You should sit and rest for only 5 minutes but no more.”*

- Critical Thinking and Creativity: Solve problems, make suggestions and comment on behaviour, actions and attitudes of the characters.
- Cultural Awareness: Depends on the nature of the story.

4. Writing letters to the main character or the author of the story

Ask pupils to write simple letters to a chosen character in the story. Pupils can comment on the character, praise or condemn the deed, or introduce himself/herself as a pen-pal. They can ask the author questions about the book/story.

- Critical Thinking: Select a particular character they are interested in and express their opinions or judgment on his/her actions.
- Creativity: Create a situation where they have a real need to write a letter, etc.
- Cultural Awareness: Ask and learn about others' cultures.

5. Writing simple comments on the story (Book report)

This needs no introduction but primary pupils may find it difficult to write a complicated book report. Therefore, the English teacher may help them structure their writing by providing a form.

See example

- Critical Thinking and Creativity: Choose the part of the story that they like best.
- Cultural Awareness: Understand why the story is written in such a way, what behaviour is unacceptable in the original story but acceptable if the cultural background is changed, etc. For example, little girls in Hong Kong can go to school while their counterparts in Ethiopia may not be able to do so; young men and women holding hands is acceptable in Western countries but this may not be the case in conservative Middle East countries.

Book report

Name of Pupil: _____

Title of Story: _____

Name two main characters in the story. Tell us something about them. *(To offer an opportunity for pupils to summarize in a few words the appearance and/or personality traits of the main characters in the story)*

--

Where/When did the story take place? *(For pupils to identify the time and location of the story)*

--

Which part of the story do you like best? *(To encourage pupils to think critically about what they like or regard as good storytelling technique/plot)*

--

Copy a few words/sentences that you like from the story. *(To encourage pupils to think critically about what they like or regard as good language/description)*

--

Tell us the ending of the story. *(To let pupils practise their paraphrasing skills)*

--

Do you like the story? Why or why not? *(To allow pupils to comment on the story and express their feelings)* *Younger pupils who cannot write long sentences may choose from given pictures such as a laughing face for "Like the story very much" and a frowning face for "not like the story".

--

6. Rewriting conversations/dialogues

Some lengthy dialogues can be shortened or simplified by the teacher as well as by the pupils. This can be a good exercise in paraphrasing. The teacher, for sure, must offer help in the process. Moreover, a dialogue in the story can be rewritten if we want to change the ending, or the whole story itself. This will be explained below.

- **Critical Thinking and Creativity:** Suggest reasons for changing or improving the conversations/dialogues, identify other parts that need to be changed as well after the conversations/dialogues have been rewritten, create a different scenario, explore different solutions for the same problem, etc.
- **Cultural Awareness:** Understand why the conversations/dialogues should be changed if the ethnic background of the story is changed, what behaviour is unacceptable in the original story but acceptable if the cultural background is changed, etc.

7. Rewriting the ending of the story

After pupils finish reading a story (or the teacher finishes reading a story to the class), pupils can be asked to rewrite the ending of the story, i.e. happy to sad, sad to happy, or with a totally different ending. It is unavoidable that some other parts of the story may have to be changed as well. Of course this writing activity has to be preceded by some class discussion first. New vocabulary may have to be introduced to enable pupils to do a satisfactory job. An example using the story of "Little Red Riding Hood" will be given in the latter part of this unit. The abridged or changed version of the story can be read by pupils themselves later.

- **Critical Thinking and Creativity:** Suggest reasons for changing or improving the ending, identify other parts that need to be changed as well after the ending has been rewritten, create a different scenario, explore different solutions for the same problem, etc.
- **Cultural Awareness:** Understand why the ending can be changed if the ethnic background of the story is changed, what behaviour is unacceptable in the original story but is acceptable if the cultural background is changed, etc.

8. Rewriting the story with different characters or setting

This can be a fun activity. In “Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs”, we can substitute Snow White with Prince Charming, so Prince Charming has to live with the Seven Dwarfs and Snow White ends up rescuing him from the wicked Queen. The time or place of the story can be changed too. Imagine that the story of Snow White happened in the year 2000 in Hong Kong. She used a washing machine to wash clothes for the Seven Dwarfs, the Prince drove around in an expensive car and the Queen put on tons of make-up to make herself look younger.

- Critical Thinking and Creativity: Create a different scenario, explore different solutions for the same problem, etc.
- Cultural Awareness: Understand why the ending can be changed if the ethnic background of the story is changed, what behaviour is unacceptable in the original story but acceptable if the cultural background is changed, etc.

9. Rewriting the story on children's play in script form

It can be in the form of a puppet show or radio play. Children should be taught or shown the genre of play-script before they can take part in this activity. They can either transcribe the story word for word into a play, or they can rewrite it with additional dialogues. It would be a bit difficult for them to write the whole play with actions and sets, but it is definitely possible for more able pupils to write a radio play which requires less elaboration.

- **Critical Thinking:** Identify different genres of stories and scripts, decide on the plausibility of the storyline, appropriateness of the dialogues, and credibility of the characters, etc. (Can a telephone appear in a story that took place in ancient China? Does it make sense when a little pig says, "My favourite food is pork."?)
- **Creativity:** Create new dialogues in a play.
- **Cultural Awareness:** Identify and empathize with the characters (of a different ethnic background or of another animal species) and their deeds in the story, etc.

10. Writing their own stories with "Story Starters"

Pupils with better language skills can try this activity. They are given a phrase, a sentence, or a few sentences to start their own stories. The length of the story can vary from 10 sentences to a much longer one depending on pupils' ability and motivation. Here are a few story starters:

- I have a pair of magic shoes...
- If I were invisible, ...
- My sister looked out of the window. Suddenly she screamed loudly, "FIRE! ... "
- Aladdin flew on his magic carpet and he landed at the airport in Hong Kong...

Can you come up with more?

- Critical Thinking: Decide on the sequence of events, cause-effect relationships, conflicts and solutions, character motives, etc.
- Creativity: Create a new story with originality in the plot, characters and setting based on pupils' own ideas and experiences.
- Cultural Awareness: If the story starter is about a culture/characters of another country, can pupils develop the storyline and themes according to the particular culture and/or taboos?

11. Completing a story

The first half of the story is given. Pupils complete the rest of the story. This activity is again for more able pupils. Notice that simple vocabulary and sentence structures are used.

See examples

- a. Complete the rest of the story.

This is the first day of school. Mary walked into the school. She looked around and saw that everyone was looking at her. At first, they were just looking. Then one student started laughing, and the others joined in and laughed very loudly. Mary...

- b. Fill in the space with words that make this passage a meaningful story.

Once upon a _____, there was an ugly _____ witch. Her name was _____. She lived in a _____. Every morning, she _____ up early and went to the _____. She had _____ and _____ for breakfast...

- **Critical Thinking:** Decide on the sequence of events, cause-effect relationships, conflicts and solutions, character motives, etc.
- **Creativity:** Create a new story with originality in the plot, characters and setting based on pupils' own ideas and experiences.
- **Cultural Awareness:** If the story starter is about the culture/characters of another country, can pupils develop the storyline and themes according to the particular culture and/or taboos?

12. Group work - Story writing

Upper primary pupils are divided into groups of 5-6. Each starts his/her own beginning of a story. Then the paper is circulated among the group members and each takes turns to add another line to the story passed on by the other pupils until a certain number of sentences have been written, or when the allocated time is up. Finally the original owner of the story writes the ending for his/her own story. All these student-created stories can be used for subsequent lessons.

- Critical Thinking: Continue the storyline given by others in a logical way, identify mistakes or illogical aspects in others' work, negotiate meaning, decide what narrative elements to be put into the story, etc.
- Creativity: Brainstorm original ideas and use them in a story.
- Cultural Awareness: Depends on the nature and the theme of the story.

(B) Speaking activities**1. Predicting the plot of the story**

This is an impromptu speaking activity. At a certain point of interest in the story, pupils will be asked what would happen next. If pupils respond in Chinese for lack of the required language, teacher can rephrase their ideas and pupils can then repeat. The predictions can also be written on the board for pupils to see and repeat. They can vote on the most likely or unlikely prediction and tell why.

- Critical Thinking: Reason, make predictions based on facts, evaluate predictions, etc.
- Creativity: Encourage children to use their imagination to make predictions.

2. Telling the character(s) what to do

This is similar to the writing activity *Giving suggestions/advice to characters of the story*. This time it is only verbal. This activity is best done at the most critical point of the story. Pupils can be asked to offer solutions to the problem in the story. This activity promotes and challenges pupils to think critically about how to help the characters in the story and to distinguish what is right from wrong, and what can be done within one's power in a certain situation.

- Critical thinking and Creativity: Think of the ways to help the characters in the story and give creative suggestions.
- Cultural Awareness: Depends on the nature of the story.

3. Role-playing different characters of the story

Pupils play different roles in the story. By role-playing, they can better identify with the characters and cultures of the story. This activity can also be developed into a more elaborate play as a class project.

- Creativity: Depend on the teacher's demand.
- Cultural Awareness: Depends on the nature of the story.

4. Storytelling with the help of pictures

Any pictures (or sequence of pictures) or illustrations of a story can be used for pupils to tell a story. This stretches pupils' imagination and creativity and gives them the opportunity to express themselves freely. However, they may need practice and demonstration before they can do a good job.

- Creativity: Use pupils' imagination and language to give interesting descriptions to the pictures.
- Cultural Awareness: Depends on the nature of the story.

5. Retelling the story (in their own words)

After the teacher has finished reading the story to the pupils, or after pupils have read it several times, individual pupils can be asked to retell the story (or part of the story) to the class or to a small group of pupils without looking at the text. Upper primary pupils (good readers) can tell the story to lower primary pupils as Big Brothers/Sisters. This brings fun to the younger ones, and a sense of pride and accomplishment to the Big Brothers/Sisters.

- Creativity: Retell the story by using language creatively in summarizing or paraphrasing the story.
- Cultural Awareness: Depends on the nature of the story.

6. Guessing the character(s)

This is a guessing game which involves comprehension, selection of relevant points and critical thinking. Pupils are asked to select a character from one of his/her favourite stories. They can prepare some hints (pre-written in a certain order to make guessing more interesting and not too easy), and present them to the class. The other pupils will guess the characters with the help of the hints.

e.g. Who am I?

I am a brave man.

I am good at shooting arrows.

My best friend is Little John.

I lived in Sherwood Forest.

Answer: I am Robin Hood!

- Critical Thinking: Deduce, reason logically, connect clues to characters, etc.
- Creativity: Depends on the task instructions and the teacher's demand.
- Cultural Awareness: Depends on the nature and the theme of the story.

7. Acting out (an episode of) the play

The story can be acted out as (1) a radio play which requires only voices (and sound effects), (2) a puppet show which involves not only voices but the making and controlling of puppets, and (3) a real play with or without sets and costumes. An episode of the play or the whole play can be acted out depending on the time and resources available, and pupils'/teacher's preferences.

- Critical Thinking: Select materials for the script, etc.
- Creativity: Design props, sets and sound effects, etc.
- Cultural Awareness: When designing the above and when acting out the play, pupils will be able to identify and appreciate other cultures, customs and traditions better.

8. Telling stories that they wrote

This is an extension of the writing task of *Rewriting the stories* mentioned above. Pupils will read their own stories to each other. They can then comment on each other's story verbally or in writing.

- Critical Thinking: Evaluate others' stories in various aspects.
- Creativity: Write a story using their imagination.
- Cultural Awareness: Depends on the nature and the theme of the story.

(C) Other related classroom activities**1. Drawing illustrations**

Pupils can choose their favourite scene or character and draw pictures. They can write some simple captions for their own pictures. The illustration(s) can be kept in their own portfolios or be compiled to form a story/picture book. Even very young pupils can do this.

- Critical Thinking: Select pictures, scenes and characters, and write appropriate captions.
- Creativity: Visualize the story, draw pictures, and write captions for their pictures.

2. Drawing cartoons/comics for the story

This requires a bit more work as well as advanced comprehension and sequencing skills. Pupils can work individually or in groups. They have to divide the story into sequential sections/episodes. They have to design the appearance of the characters as well as the setting. Captions or dialogue bubbles have to be written. However, this can be done in a simple way (just a few pictures for a section of the story) or in an elaborate way (a whole-class project, showing the whole story), depending on the age, skills and commitment of the children.

- Critical Thinking: Sequence pictures and carry out minor rewriting of dialogues.
- Creativity: Visualize and design characters and their costumes.
- Cultural Awareness: Design foreign costumes.

3. Designing and drawing posters

Unlike illustrations, a poster requires more thought. Pupils have to choose the characters they want to show in the poster, their postures, costumes, their positions in the poster, the background, etc. They have to select wording, font size and types to make the poster attractive. They also have to know the purpose of the poster - to attract others to read the story, see the movie, or attend the event. This has to be a group project and may not be suitable for younger pupils.

- Critical Thinking: Sequence pictures, carry out minor rewriting or condensing of dialogues.
- Creativity: Visualize and design characters and their costumes.
- Cultural Awareness: Design foreign costumes.

4. Making models for the setting of the story

Pupils can make models of a particular setting of the story. Together with the above activities, the teachers (especially if one is the Art teacher of the same class) can seek to introduce literature across the curriculum. Or they can work with the Art teacher to achieve this purpose.

- Critical Thinking: Decide the use of materials and measurement of the ratio of the model, etc.
- Creativity: Visualize and reproduce reality from a mental image.

5. Adding music and songs to the story

The English teacher, together with the Music teacher, can introduce pieces of music or songs to pupils and ask them to select appropriate one(s) as background music or theme song(s). This can be done as part of their puppet/radio play. More advanced pupils can be guided by the teachers to rewrite the lyrics of the songs according to the lines/plot of the story.

- Critical Thinking: Decide on the choice of songs or music according to the mood and action of the story.
- Creativity: Create their own "music" with various instruments.
- Cultural Awareness: Appreciate music and musical instruments from another culture.

6. Designing classroom game(s)

Using the language, plot, and/or characters of the story, pupils can design crossword puzzles using names or places in the story. This means they have to write the clues as well. They may also work in pairs or groups to compete in trying to find all the words (nouns, verbs, descriptive words) that start with a certain letter (R, S, A, etc.) and to see who gets all the words of the right category first. Another puzzle is for pupils to rearrange sentence strips placing events of the story in the right order; or to find out and correct wrong words in the sentence strips (e.g. Cinderella has two wicked stepmothers). These can be in the form of contests.

- Critical Thinking: Sequence, categorize, decide on the rules of the games, etc.
- Creativity: Design new games.

7. Designing outdoor game(s) using the plot/characters of the story

In P.E. lessons or during recess, a hide-and-seek game can be modified using characters like the Wolf and the Three Little Pigs or a game called Haunted House (after the reading of ghost stories such as "Casper, the Friendly Ghost"). Several pupils are picked to be the ghosts and stay on one side of the playground (the Haunted House). The rest of the pupils try to reach the house from the other end before "Midnight". The teacher (or a selected pupil) can call out "3 o'clock", "9 o'clock" etc. randomly and pupils take the number of steps towards the house accordingly. When the teacher/pupil shouts "MIDNIGHT", the ghosts will come out from the "Haunted House" and try to catch the pupils who try their best to run back to their safe house before they are caught. Those caught will become ghosts.

- Critical Thinking: Sequence, categorize, and decide on the rules of the games, etc.
- Creativity: Design new games.

8. Designing costumes for the characters of the story

Girls may like this activity better than boys but it doesn't mean that boys won't do it if the major character(s) in the story are brave heroes whom they can identify with. Harry Potter may be a good example. This can also be incorporated into the Visual Arts class, or as a preparation for the class play, puppet play, etc.

- Creativity and Cultural Awareness: Design costumes and puppets of different ethnic backgrounds with different materials.

9. Designing and writing recipes

The teacher can teach pupils how to make gingerbread after reading "Hansel and Gretel", or "The Gingerbread Man". Creative pupils can be asked to write their own recipes for various dishes from the story after the recipes have been taught. An enthusiastic class of pupils once even created a cookbook of recipes using earthworms as the main ingredient (of course not to be eaten). These were earthworm soup, earthworm spaghetti, earthworm noodles, deep-fried earthworm, and earthworm hotdogs, etc.

- Critical Thinking: Decide on the cost, quantity and availability of ingredients, and cooking methods.
- Creativity: Design new recipes.
- Cultural Awareness: Appreciate different kinds of ethnic foods.

(D) Other related school activities**1. Super Reader Award**

Upper primary pupils are encouraged to read as many stories as they can (from the school library, public libraries or other sources). They keep a record of their own reading. The record form can be designed by asking pupils to list simple facts or events from the book they read. The pupil who reads the most, or over a certain number of books, will receive a Super Reader Award.

2. Vote for the Favourite Story of the Month/Term/School Year

Pupils can vote for their favourite story after a certain period of time. They have to write a few sentences explaining why they like the story. The most favourite story will be recommended to other classes or pupils. The teacher can compile all the reasons given and write a letter of recommendation for the book. Or some pupils can be selected to have this "honour" as the class representatives and write this recommendation, or present the book orally to other classes.

3. Vote for the Most Favourite Character/Most Hated Character of the Month/Year

This is similar to the previous vote, but this time the pupils vote for the characters of different stories. You can come up with various categories, such as: the Most Favourite Character, the Most Hated Character, the Most Stupid Character, the Funniest Character, the Character that I Want to Be, or the Bravest Character.

4. Storytelling Contest

Pupils can choose a story they like and then join a Story-telling/Reading Contest. This can be a school-wide contest or just within a class/grade contest. You will be amazed by what they can do!

(E) A summary of suggested classroom activities

The following is a summary of all the activities suggested and they are grouped under the headings of critical thinking, creativity and cultural awareness. The asterisk in the brackets means that it depends on the learning and teaching situation.

Writing activity	Critical thinking	Creativity (Creative writing)	Cultural awareness
Writing captions for the story	*	*	
Writing simple sentences describing some of the characters in the story	*	*	
Giving responses/suggestions/advice to the characters in the story	*	*	(*)
Writing letters to the main characters or the author of the story	*	*	*
Writing simple comments on the story (book report)	*	*	*
Rewriting conversations/dialogues	*	*	*
Rewriting the ending of the story	*	*	*
Rewriting the story with different characters or setting	*	*	*
Rewriting the story on children's play in script form	*	*	*
Writing their own stories with "Story Starters"	*	*	*
Completing a story	*	*	*
Group work - story writing	*	*	(*)

Speaking activity	Critical thinking	Creativity (Creative writing)	Cultural awareness
Predicting the plot of the story	*	*	
Telling the character(s) what to do	*	*	(*)
Role-playing the different characters in the story		(*)	(*)
Storytelling with the help of pictures		*	(*)
Retelling the story		*	(*)
Guessing the character(s)	*	(*)	(*)
Acting out (an episode of) the play	*	*	*
Telling stories that they wrote	*	*	(*)

Other related activities	Critical thinking	Creativity (Creative writing)	Cultural awareness
Drawing illustrations	*	*	
Drawing cartoons/comics for the story	*	*	*
Designing and drawing posters	*	*	*
Making models for the setting of the story	*	*	
Adding music and songs to the story	*	*	*
Designing classroom game(s)	*	*	
Designing outdoor games using the plot/characters of the story	*	*	
Designing costumes for the characters of the story		*	*
Designing and writing recipes	*	*	*

2.10 How to use a short story more than once (or in more than one way) to promote critical thinking, creativity and cultural awareness

Sometimes, a story can be told more than once, each time with slight modifications. In this way, pupils will be able to familiarize themselves with the plot, the characters and the language. Moreover, with these changes, pupils feel that they are not listening to the same story over and over again, and thus, will not be bored.

2.10.1 An example

Two versions of "Little Red Riding Hood"

Version 1

Version 2

Little Red Riding Hood (Version 1)

Once upon a time there was a little girl who lived in a village with her mother. She was very pretty and her mother loved her very much. The mother made a little red hood for the girl and she wore it all the time so she was called Little Red Riding Hood wherever she went.



One day, the mother baked some cakes and tarts and she said to Little Red Riding Hood, "Go and see your grandmother. I've heard that she's sick. Take the cakes and tarts to her."

Little Red Riding Hood left at once with the cakes and tarts. Grandma lived in another village. In passing through a forest she saw the Big Bad Wolf who wanted to eat her. But he could not because some hunters were around. He asked her where she was going, and the girl told him, not knowing that it was dangerous to talk to a wolf.

The wolf took a shortcut through the forest. When he reached the house of Grandma, he knocked at the door. "Toc-toc. Anybody home?" Grandma, who was sick in bed, cried out loudly, "Come in. The door isn't locked." The wolf jumped on the poor old woman and ate her quicker than a wink. He then closed the door and lay down in Grandmother's bed to wait for Little Red Riding Hood.

Little Red Riding Hood, who took her time playing and picking flowers in the forest, finally arrived at the house. "Toc-toc. Anybody home?"

The wolf, pretending to be Grandma, said, "Come in. The door isn't locked."

The little girl walked into the room which was dark. The wolf was hiding under the bed-cover. He said to her, "Dear girl, please come and sit by me!"

Little Red Riding Hood asked, "What big arms you have, Grandmother."

"The better to hug you with," said the wolf.

"What big ears you have, Grandmother."

The wolf answered, "The better to hear you with, my child."

"What big eyes you have, Grandmother."

The wolf answered, "The better to see you with, my child."

"What a big mouth you have, Grandmother."

The wolf answered, "The better to eat you with, my child."

Upon saying these words, the Big Bad Wolf jumped on Little Red Riding Hood and ate her up.

Little Red Riding Hood (Version 2)

Once upon a time there was a little girl who lived in a village with her mother. She was very pretty and her mother loved her very much. The mother made a little red hood for the girl and she wore it all the time so she was called Little Red Riding Hood wherever she went.



One day, the mother baked some cakes and tarts and she said to Little Red Riding Hood, "Go and see your grandmother. I've heard that she's sick. Take the cakes and tarts to her."

Little Red Riding Hood left at once with the cakes and tarts. Grandma lived in another village. In passing through a forest she saw the Big Bad Wolf who wanted to eat her. But he could not because some woodcutters were around. He asked her where she was going, and the girl told him, not knowing that it was dangerous to talk to a wolf.

The wolf took a shortcut through the forest. When he reached the house of Grandma, he knocked at the door. "Toc-toc. Anybody home?" Grandma, who was sick in bed, cried out loudly, "Come in. The door isn't locked." The wolf jumped into the house and locked the poor old woman in a cupboard. He then closed the door and lay down in Grandmother's bed to wait for Little Red Riding Hood.

Little Red Riding Hood, who took her time playing and picking flowers in the forest, finally arrived at the house. "Toc-toc. Anybody home?"

The wolf, pretending to be Grandma, said, "Come in. The door isn't locked."

The little girl walked into the room which was dark. The wolf was hiding under the bed-cover. He said to her, "Dear girl, please come and sit by me!"

Little Red Riding Hood asked, "What big arms you have, Granny."

"The better to hug you with, my child," said the wolf.

"What big ears you have, Granny."

The wolf answered, "The better to hear you with, my child."

"What big eyes you have, Granny."

The wolf answered, "The better to see you with, my child."

"What a big mouth you have, Granny."

The wolf answered, "The better to eat you with, my child."

"But I have to go to the toilet. I have to go now," said Little Red Riding Hood.

"Alright, but hurry up. I'm hungry!"

The wolf tied a rope to her hands and let her go. When the girl was outside, she ran to get help.

The wolf became angry and cried, "What is taking you so long?" When no one answered him, he went outside but found the girl was gone. Just at that time, Little Red Riding Hood came back with some woodcutters. They killed the wolf and saved the old woman and the brave little girl. They shared the cakes and tarts happily.

2.10.2 Questions to Ponder

- How can you make use of these two different versions?
- What can you anticipate as the responses of your pupils when they hear the two versions?
- What could you (as a pupil) do to save yourself if you were the little girl?
- Now that you can see a story can be used more than once, think about how you would use the same story in other ways.

Task 2.7

Write the story again, using either Little Red Riding Hood or the Wolf as the narrator. Or write a modern version if you want to. Limit it to about 300 words.

2.11 Using short stories across the curriculum

Like other language arts materials, stories can be used to teach other subjects and serve other purposes as well.

History: History (though not present in our primary syllabus) includes a lot of wonderful, memorable past incidents that can be narrated in the form of stories. Chinese historical characters like Ngauk Fei (岳飛) in the Sung Dynasty provide pupils with exciting stories of heroic deeds. Famous people from different periods in history or various parts of the world can be compared and contrasted through reading stories and post-reading discussions.

General Studies: The teaching of General Studies can also benefit from the help of animated characters and real life anecdotes, making this subject something memorable and interesting because pupils can identify with the events or topics being studied. Plots help tie facts together and make them more vivid and substantial. Proper behaviour and positive attitudes can be fostered through reading stories and post-reading discussions (e.g. Why do you think this behaviour is proper/improper? Is this behaviour acceptable at home/in class/in public?).

Another advantage of using short stories in this subject is that stories, especially science fiction, provide pupils with excellent opportunities to develop skills to observe, predict and inquire. Biographies of famous scientists like Edison can be a strong motivating factor for pupils to take an interest in science research or gain a better understanding of science principles and theories. They can raise questions and explore possible solutions. They can also learn how to hypothesize (similar to prediction to a certain extent).

Mathematics: Mathematical problems are in themselves little stories that require solutions. Listening to or reading stories enhances sequencing, numbering, spatial relationships and problem solving. H. Mason in her book The Power of Storytelling (1996) gives **two examples**.

Learning Mathematics through stories

- (1) Exponential progression: A merchant who was told his price was too high made a counter offer: The customer could put one coin on the first square of a checker board and double the amount on each succeeding square. By figuring out how much the customers had to pay, pupils have fun learning the concept of exponential progression.
- (2) Decimals: Two opposing armies could choose their own number of soldiers and weapons. One group chose a huge arsenal and a large number of soldiers while the other side had only one weapon: a gun that could fire decimal points one at a time. The pupils are to guess which side is the eventual winner. Of course they will be surprised to learn that each time a decimal point is fired, the enemy's resources are decimated, reduced by 10%. By the time the enemy is totally decimated, pupils understand the base 10 number system and the relationship of decimals to percentages.

**These examples are for reference only and they may not be applicable for your primary syllabus. However, they may shed light on how stories can be incorporated into the Mathematics curriculum.*

Culture: Stories are perfect ways to facilitate group acceptance of outsiders or minority groups. They also teach values and perpetuate culture and heritage. Stories can be generated about an adventure to a foreign land where the minority pupils are the only ones who know the language and culture, and are able to solve problems for the rest. Stories of holidays, mythology and cultures of other countries are wonderful tools to broaden pupils' views and help them visualize, feel and explore.

2.12 Assessment

In using language arts in Hong Kong primary classrooms, we hope to see pupils' collaborative, meaningful acquisition of knowledge and language skills, creative methods of teaching, and the promotion of critical thinking, creativity and cultural awareness.

Teachers, when using stories in the classroom, are actually adopting a thematic approach. In this model, the process is as important as the product. The assessment could be done by teachers, by pupils themselves, or even by observers or parents. Self-assessment should be encouraged throughout the process to promote critical thinking as well as the ability to self-reflect. At the same time, the teacher can look for evidence of pupils' ability to make intelligent choices, think creatively, solve problems, cooperate with others and express themselves throughout the process and in the end product.

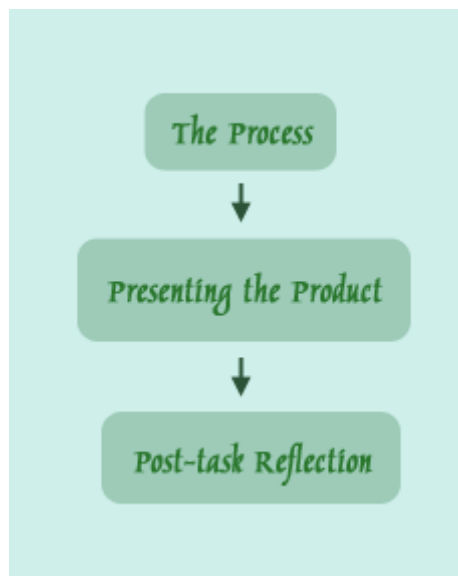
The assessment also enables teachers to evaluate themselves: their creativity in using activities in class to teach language, their sense in choosing the right story, their ability to monitor the learning process, their ability to integrate language arts with other subjects, their effort in promoting pupils' critical thinking and creativity, as well as their attempts in using different kinds of media and assessment tools in class.

Portfolios, mini-tasks, final projects, etc. can be used to assess pupils' performance. These modes of formative assessment have been discussed in Module 1 Section 1.6.3, and they are suggested for your consideration. The following is a three-stage model that provides you with more ideas about what assessment is, and how we can assess our pupils' performance.

2.12.1 A flow chart to show a three-stage model for assessment

(The following flow chart is adapted from a booklet Integrated Assessment Tasks: The Shared Experience published by the California Assessment Program of the California State Department of Education)

Assessment, in general, involves Process, Product and Reflection. The following diagram further illustrates the three stages, and it is hoped that the diagram can provide you with more ideas about assessment.



The Process includes:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Brainstorming ideas ● Discussing ideas ● Expressing ideas ● Negotiating ideas ● Organizing ideas ● Using language ● Willingness to participate ● Cooperating with others ● Strategies in learning, etc.

Presenting the Product	
<p>Media Presentations: Videotapes, Power-point Slides, Audiotapes, Photo Album, etc.</p> <p>Oral Presentations: Monologues, Dialogues, Interviews, Discussions, Storytelling, Reading Aloud, Poetry Reading, Radio Plays, etc.</p>	<p>Performances: Role Playing, Dance, Music/Song, Readers' Theatre, Mime, Drama, etc.</p> <p>Written Presentations: Reports, Diaries, Letters, Stories, Scripts, Poems, etc.</p> <p>Visual Arts: Posters, Paintings, Cartoons, etc.</p>

Post-task Reflection	
Teacher's self reflection	Student's self reflection
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Have I picked the story of the right level of difficulty? ● Have I helped pupils develop their reading skills? ● Have I been able to arouse pupils' interest? ● Have I been able to help pupils understand and appreciate different cultures? ● How can I improve the participation of pupils in class? ● What did the pupils like most in this story/lesson and what did they like least? ● How can I improve the flow of the lesson? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Have I enjoyed the activity? ● Have I learned any new words/expressions? ● Have I learned anything from the story? ● Have I read the story with expression? ● Have I tried my best in the task? ● Have I been cooperative and helpful during group activities? ● Will I recommend the story to others? Why?

2.12.2 Some hints for the assessment of short stories

- Tangible products such as radio playscripts, rewriting of the ending, or retelling of the story can provide teachers with evidence to see if pupils have applied the learnt vocabulary, expressions and language structures to their own work. Constructive comments can be given accordingly.
- In the learning and teaching of short stories, formative assessment is more important than summative assessment. The process of learning should be our paramount concern. A grade of A, B, or C for their tangible products, though able to satisfy some concerned parents' demands, may not be the best way to reflect pupils' achievements in the learning process.
- Teachers can make use of a feedback sheet to enhance learning and teaching as mentioned in Section 1.6.3 of Module 1. Click on this to see an **example of a feedback sheet**. It can be used to assess the writing of short stories. It is not meant to be prescriptive and teachers can adapt and develop their own feedback sheets according to the specific task, pupils' needs and abilities.
- By observing the degree of pupils' participation, their involvement in the task, the originality of their work, and/or the fun they are having, teachers can give them oral or written feedback with short **comments**.

Feedback sheet

Areas to be assessed	Needs improvement*	Satisfactory*	Well done*
Content			
- ideas related to the title of the story			
- original and creative ideas			
- others			
Organization			
- proper sequence of events			
- others			
Language use			
- meaning clearly conveyed			
- appropriate use of words			
- others			
Generic skills			
- communication			
- creativity			
- critical thinking			
- collaboration			
- others			
Attitudes			
- confidence in using English			
- keenness to participate in activities			
- respect for others			
- others			
Comments:			

**To decide on the level of pupils' performance, teachers can agree upon a set of common marking criteria.*

Some useful comments that teachers may use

- "Clever story, interesting characters, but what happens to XXX at the end of the story?"
- "I think you have enjoyed the story very much since you have been laughing and chuckling all along. I would like to see you give more of your opinions in the small group discussion."
- "Others may want to hear from you. They want to share with you what they have learnt."
- "You have done well in rewriting the ending of the story but you may use another word such as 'YYY' instead of 'xxx'? You have used this word too many times."
- "The character you made up for the new story is very funny. Can you show us how that character talks? Can you give him a name?"
- "Your reading is very good. You have a very clear and expressive voice and I think you are the best choice for the role of Snow White in the class play."

2.13 A story written by a teacher and how we can use it

The Little Rainbow Fish

Part 1

Little Rainbow Fish lived with his parents among beautiful corals. Father Fish and Mother Fish went to look for food every day.

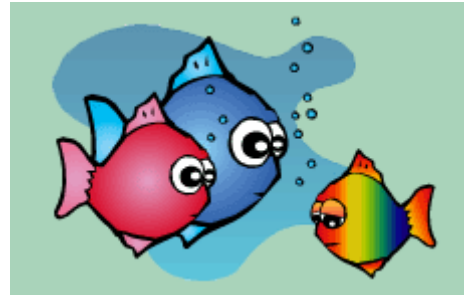
"Mommy, can I go with you?"

"No, dear. Stay home and be a good boy!"

"Daddy, can I go with you?"

"No, dear. It is dangerous out there. There are many big monsters in the Black Kelp Sea over there."

They swam away but Little Rainbow Fish stayed at home. He was bored and lonely.



Questions for Part 1: Try to think carefully before you refer to the suggestions.

- Which is better for you and your pupils? Reading aloud the story by the teacher or silent reading by the pupils themselves? Why?
- What skills can pupils practise using the above method?
- What questions can be given to pupils up to this point of the story to help them predict the story?
- What vocabulary must be taught to your pupils in order to make them understand the story?

(Bear in mind that teachers may not need to teach pupils the vocabulary in the book as pupils can try to guess the meaning from the picture or contextual clues.)

Suggestions:

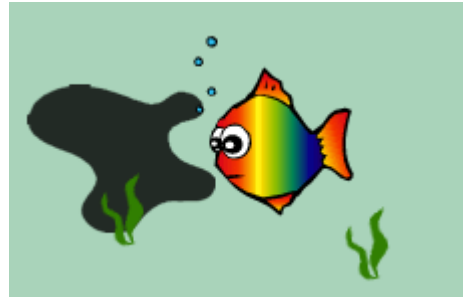
- It does not really matter which way you use. If your pupils are younger, you may read the story aloud to them. The reading can be dramatized by pictures and gestures. If your pupils are older, or with higher language proficiency, you may ask them to read the story silently.
- When you read to the pupils, they will practise their listening skills. If they read the story on their own, reading skills will be the focus. They can also practise critical thinking skills but it all depends on the ages of the pupils.
- What will happen to Little Rainbow Fish? What will he do? What will happen to the parents? (These questions are to promote pupils' critical thinking skills such as prediction, evaluation of the situation, or decision-making and problem-solving)
- Colours: rainbow (and the seven colours), black
Relatives: father, mother, parents, mommy, daddy
Marine life-forms: kelp, fish, coral
New/difficult/unfamiliar words: monsters, dangerous, forest
Descriptive words: bored, lonely, beautiful
Others...

(Remember that teachers should not explain or translate these words themselves. Instead, they should encourage pupils to guess the meaning from the clues first.)

Part 2

Little Rainbow Fish swam towards the Black Kelp Sea. He looked here and there.

He could not see his parents. All he could see were long fearful-looking kelps which moved around him slowly. Suddenly, he found himself in front of a big black hole.



"Hello! Anybody home?" he shouted loudly.

Questions for Part 2: Try to think carefully before you refer to the suggestions.

- What questions can you ask your pupils to help them predict the story content and/or develop their critical thinking skills?



Suggestions

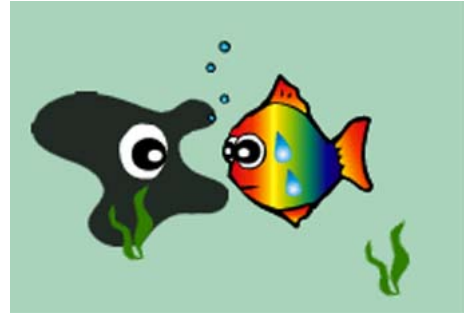
- Is it smart or safe to shout loudly in a place like this? Why or why not? (No, ...)
- What was inside the cave? (big fish, big monster...)
- What would the monster/fish/... look like? (big, ugly, large mouth with sharp teeth, 10 metres long...)
- What would happen to Little Rainbow Fish?
- What could he do?

Part 3

No one answered!

"Hello! Anybody home?" he shouted again!

Suddenly, a round eye as big as Rainbow itself appeared in the dark hole. It moved towards Little Rainbow Fish. He could see not only the big eye, but also eight long legs!



The monster was coming out from the cave!

Questions for Part 3: Try to think carefully before you refer to the suggestions.

- *What writing activities can you give to your pupils now?*
- *What other activities can be given to your pupils to enhance their interest and to practise their speaking skills?*
- *What discussion questions can you ask your pupils to develop their critical thinking or arouse their cultural awareness?*

Suggestions:

- They can write the ending of the story.
- They can add extra dialogues to the story.
- They can rewrite the story into a radio play with the guidance of the teacher.
- They can draw cartoons/illustrations and write the captions.
- They can make hand puppets for the characters in the story/play.
- They can act out the radio/puppet play by playing different roles. They may also add their own music and/or sound effects.
- Discussion questions: Little Rainbow Fish was left home alone without any adult supervision. Do you think this is right? Has this happened to you? What would you do if you were left alone at home?

2.14 Writing a lesson plan

Select, adapt or write a short story (you can choose from the stories provided or you can write one) which is suitable in terms of language level and degree of interest for your pupils. Then develop a unit integrating at least 2 of the strands, 3 of the required language skills, namely, listening, reading, speaking and writing, and design activities for developing critical thinking skills, creativity and cultural awareness.

Here are the **questions** for you to ponder before the task.

Questions to ponder before writing a lesson plan

- Can you write your own story for your pupils?
 - If YES, what kind of story do you think is the most appropriate? A story with a local background, foreign background/culture, real or imaginary...?
 - If NO, what are your concerns?
- If you are selecting a story, what are some of the criteria you would consider? (Check the notes in Section 4 of this module)
- If you are adapting a story, what would you change? Language, plot, characters or ending?
- Using "The Little Rainbow Fish" as an example, what other language or related activities can you think of to integrate this experience with other curricula?
- What kinds of activities allow pupils to develop their critical thinking skills?
- Are there any elements of cultural awareness in your story? If YES, how are you going to approach these concepts? How do you ensure that the experience your pupils gain from the story is positive?
- How are you going to assess your pupils? How will you give feedback to pupils? Is there any mechanism for you to evaluate your own teaching?

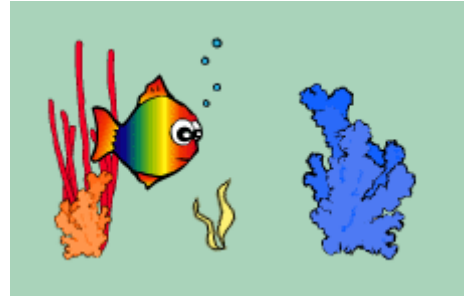
A sample lesson plan is provided in the following section for your reference.

2.14.1 A short story and a sample lesson plan

The Bored Little Rainbow Fish

Little Rainbow Fish lived with his father and mother at the bottom of the sea.

Every day, Father Fish and Mother Fish went out to get food. Little Rainbow Fish was bored at home. He had nothing to do!



"Father, I am bored," he said to his father.

"Go out and have a swim," said Father Fish.

"Mother, I am bored," he said to his mother.

"Go and play with the water," said Mother Fish.

Little Rainbow Fish said, "Let's play football."

"But we don't have legs!" cried Father Fish.

Little Rainbow Fish said, "Let's play basketball."

"But we don't have hands," cried Mother Fish.

Little Rainbow Fish said, "Let's go cycling!"

"But we don't have bicycles!" cried Father Fish.

Little Rainbow Fish said, "Let's have a barbecue."

"But we cannot build a fire in the sea!" cried Mother Fish.

Little Rainbow Fish was very unhappy.

"I want to have some fun, something that we can do together."

His parents said, "Let's think together."

Finally, Little Rainbow Fish said, "Let's go fishing!"

Father and Mother cried out together, "But we are fish!"

(Boys and girls, what can Little Rainbow Fish and his parents do?)

At that time, his friend Little Red Lobster came in.

"Hello, Little Rainbow Fish, how are you?" he said.

"I'm unhappy and bored. I have nothing to do and nothing to play with," he said.

"Oh! I know what we can do! We can play hide-and-seek in the beautiful corals over there!"

Little Red Lobster said cheerfully.

Little Rainbow Fish and his parents shouted, "What a good idea!"

They all played hide-and-seek happily among the corals. Little Rainbow Fish was bored no more!

- This story is recommended for KS2 pupils.
- The lesson plan is just to give you a brief example and it is for reference only. You may not find all the details in this lesson plan.

A Sample Lesson Plan

a. Key Stage Targets and Learning Objectives

b. Task Description

Pupils read or listen to a story. They respond to the story context and give suggestions. They then create their own stories of similar nature. They can also practise their speaking skills by reading, role-playing or acting out the story (or their own stories).

c. Materials

Short story "The Bored Little Rainbow Fish"

d. Procedures

1. Teacher asks pupils what they do in their free time. Some of the vocabulary in the story can then be introduced.
2. Teacher introduces the main character, namely, Little Rainbow Fish and his parents, and his friend Little Red Lobster.
3. Pupils are asked to predict what the story is about after they are shown the title of the story.
4. Teacher reads the story to the pupils or pupils can read the story silently on their own.
5. Teacher can discuss with pupils why all the activities in the story are no good for Rainbow Fish. Also, they may be asked to tell how they would solve the problem if they were Little Rainbow Fish.
6. Pupils are then asked to complete the story by supplying an ending to the story by suggesting an activity that the Fish family can do together. They can do this as a whole class activity when teacher solicits suggestions or they can work in small groups of 4 when they come up with a few activities. Teacher puts all these suggestions on the board.
7. Teacher, together with the whole class, can decide on the best activity for the Fish family.

8. After that, pupils can practise reading/role playing the story with expression in groups of 4 or 5: Little Rainbow Fish, Father, Mother, Lobster & Narrator.
9. Pupils are then asked to rewrite the story using another animal instead of Rainbow Fish as the central character. The vocabulary and the language patterns used in this story can be re-used with some modifications. This can be done as a class activity or as homework.
10. Some good samples of pupils' work are selected for reading aloud in the next lesson.
11. They may use their own stories to produce radio plays as a follow-up oral activity.

e. Assessment:

Pupils may be assessed on

- their participation in the discussion in large and small group work *{observation, checklist, comments}*
- the suggestions they made (workable? logical? creative?) *{teacher's observation and judgment, comments}*
- the quality of their oral reading/role playing (audibility, appropriate use of the language, accuracy, fluency) *{observation/listening, comments}*
- the quality and originality of the story content they wrote *{checklist, comments, written work to be placed in pupil's portfolio}*
- the use of language and new vocabulary in the stories they wrote *{checklist}*
- the quality of the radio play *{checklist, comments, work to be placed in pupil's portfolio}*

The Bored Little Rainbow Fish

Key Stage Targets:

- To participate with others in making choices and decisions for carrying events (ISd, KS2)
- To interpret and use given information through activities such as predicting, and drawing conclusions (KSb, KS2)
- To recognize and solve simple problems in given situations and describe the solutions (KSd, KS2)
- To respond to characters and events in imaginative and other narrative texts through oral, written and performative means such as making predictions (ESb, KS2)
- To give expression to imaginative ideas through oral, written and performative means such as constructing with appropriate support simple stories that show some understanding of setting and events (ESc, KS2)

The Bored Little Rainbow Fish

Learning Objectives:

Text Type	Vocabulary	Language Items & Communicative Functions	Language Skills	Developing Critical Thinking, Creativity and Cultural Awareness	Attitude
Short Stories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> activities, e.g. play football, go cycling feelings, e.g. bored, unhappy, cheerful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> use formulaic expressions to make simple suggestions, e.g. <u>Let's</u> play football. use connectives to link contrasting ideas, e.g. Let's go cycling. <u>But</u> we don't have bicycles. 	<p>Listening</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> use visual and contextual clues to work out the meaning of an unknown word and a complete expression identify main and supporting ideas <p>Speaking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> use appropriate intonation and stress, and vary volume, tone of voice and speed to convey meanings and feelings in reading and role-playing the story <p>Writing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop short written texts by using narrative structure that comprises setting, characters, problems, events and solutions about real and imaginary experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop pupils' creativity by asking pupils to create their own stories develop pupils' critical thinking skills: to solve a problem and to provide alternatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop confidence in using English develop keenness to participate in activities leading to improvement of knowledge and skills in language enjoy reading stories

2.15 Useful reading materials

For more ideas on language activities, you may read the book Reading activities & resources that work by Phyllis J. Perry (1997, Publisher: Highsmith Press). It provides methods and hands-on activities that require little preparation for teachers. Also, a resource bibliography is given after each chapter.

Also in the book Story time sampler, compiled by Paula Gaj Sitarz, titles of Read Aloud books, excerpts of longer stories, as well as poems and songs together with their related teaching activities, are provided. (1997, Publisher: Libraries Unlimited, Inc.)

For other assessment ideas and criteria, teachers are encouraged to refer to the CDC English Language Curriculum Guide (Primary 1-6) (2004). This document offers a lot of suggestions and guidelines for teachers to assess their pupils.

2.16 References

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Module 3

Learning and Teaching of Nursery Rhymes and Songs

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Objectives
- 3.3 The value of teaching nursery rhymes and songs
- 3.4 Some types of nursery rhymes and songs
- 3.5 Criteria for selecting songs
- 3.6 Strategies for using nursery rhymes and songs in the primary classroom
- 3.7 Keys to being a critical and creative teacher with cultural awareness
- 3.8 Activities that can be used in the classroom to promote critical thinking, creativity and cultural awareness
- 3.9 Using nursery rhymes and songs across the curriculum
- 3.10 A suggested lesson plan
- 3.11 Assessment
- 3.12 Writing a lesson plan
- 3.13 Useful reading materials

Task 3.1

Comments:

Agree (Do not quit so easily! If you have survived till now working as a teacher in the primary school, you must have the heart to offer something more enjoyable and fun to your pupils. Please read on and you may find something new here.)

Disagree (I know you will disagree. You must be a very optimistic and responsible teacher always ready to try out new ideas. Nursery rhymes and songs are real fun! Please read on.)



The benefits of using nursery rhymes and songs in the primary classroom are many and indeed outweigh the potential discipline problems, and one can always find solutions to the latter. This module intends to (1) introduce different types of nursery rhymes and songs that are suitable for teaching in the primary classroom, and (2) provide ideas for teachers on how to use them to promote critical thinking, creativity and cultural awareness. The tasks are designed in such a way that teachers have a chance to actually go through the processes which their pupils will go through and at the same time, reflect on their own teaching and suggest modifications, whenever necessary.

3.2 Objectives

By the end of the module, you should be able to:

- understand the value of teaching rhymes and songs
- identify the different types of rhymes and songs and their characteristics
- develop suitable activities (based on rhymes and songs) for your pupils to enhance their critical thinking, creativity and cultural awareness

3.3 The value of teaching nursery rhymes and songs

Some primary school teachers in Hong Kong have introduced a lot of language arts activities (with rhymes and songs being the major component) and have come up with very encouraging results. Both parents and teachers find that there is a big leap in children's language proficiency and their desire to learn. Above all, pupils involved find English lessons more enjoyable as the activities are interesting and enable them to express their ideas in creative ways.

3.3.1 Characteristics of nursery rhymes and songs

Task 3.2

Listen to the following nursery rhymes and take a look at the lyrics. Can you identify some characteristics of nursery rhymes and children's songs in general?

Oh Where Has My Little Dog Gone

(<http://www.hendersonville-pd.org/hpdnursery.html>)

Mary Had a Little Lamb

(<http://www.hendersonville-pd.org/hpdnursery.html>)

Old McDonald Had a Farm

(<http://www.hendersonville-pd.org/hpdnursery.html>)

Task 3.2

Comments:

Characteristics of nursery rhymes and songs

- 1) Some nursery rhymes and children's songs are simple poems set to music, and therefore they share a lot of characteristics of poems. In Module 4 – Learning and Teaching of Poetry, the various characteristics of poems will be discussed in greater detail.
- 2) Children's songs usually have simple melodies and therefore are not difficult to sing.
- 3) The theme of a rhyme or a song can be very loose or focused. A song can have very little meaning, or it can have funny words or an elaborate story.
- 4) Children's songs, like many other songs, may take different forms. Some are monologues while some are exchanges between two people; some are sung by a group while others are in story form, best sung by a single "narrator".

3.3.2 Some benefits of using nursery rhymes and songs

All children take great delight in the rhythms and melodies of tunes. It has been found that even very young children will imitate songs and have their favourite songs. Besides entertaining children's natural liking for music, can you think of any benefits of using this type of language arts materials in the classroom? Here are some of them.

- a. **Exposure to rhymes and word families**
- b. **Exposure to patterned language - repetition of certain language forms**
- c. **Learning of vocabulary and rhythm**
- d. **Exposure to language used in more creative ways**
- e. **Exposure to cultural phenomena**



a. **Exposure to rhymes and word families**

Rhyming words are very common in nursery rhymes and children's songs. They help to introduce children to common word families in English. When pupils get to learn these letter combinations and how they are spelled and spoken, they will have a sense of the general sound patterns of English and the spelling system.

b. **Exposure to patterned language - repetition of certain language forms**

Children's songs are full of patterned language. The same language forms are repeated a few times in the song. This is very helpful for pupils in their learning of the language as they can acquire the language form unconsciously while singing the song. The changes in word choice in different verses also help pupils build up their vocabulary and see the possibilities of the language.

c. Learning of vocabulary and rhythm

Dylan Thomas (1971) once mentioned that he was fascinated by the "colours of the words" and "sounds of the words" in children's recitations of nursery rhymes. Nursery rhymes and songs are in fact very natural sources of vocabulary and examples of how rhythm works. In an enjoyable manner, pupils build up their vocabulary banks and learn to appreciate the rhythmic pattern of English. In this way, they equip themselves with the necessary tools for creative writing while enjoying the music of the language.

d. Exposure to language used in more creative ways

Nursery rhymes and children's songs are often composed using very creative and humorous language. There is practically no limit to what can be included in a song. Very often the contents of rhymes and songs deal with very light matters related to food, toys, animals, relatives, and friends and a lot of funny things or even nonsense. This shows pupils the wide range of possibilities they can have and hence stimulates their creativity.

e. Exposure to cultural phenomena

Most nursery rhymes and songs are composed to express one's experience and/or feelings towards a particular thing, person or incident. They are vivid expressions of the traditions, cultural phenomena and values of the countries from which they come. By highlighting these aspects for pupils, teachers can expose them to the cultures of different countries and encourage them to compare other cultures with their own.

Both language and customs are part of culture. Rhymes and songs can be used to introduce children to the idea that languages and customs change over time. Many of the words used in rhymes are slightly archaic but have modern-day equivalents. Also, rhymes can introduce children to some of the differences in the way we live now and how people lived long ago. For example, the boys in the rhyme "Jack and Jill" were fetching water, and the teacher can start a discussion about where we get water from now and how people used to go to wells for water and carry the water home. Rhymes and songs can lead to discussions about the differences between now and then.

Task 3.3

Can you think of one song which is particularly good for each of the following aspects?

(Please select a different song for each aspect so that you start building up your own bank of songs. You can refer to the following website for some of the examples:

<http://www.hendersonville-pd.org/hpdnursery.html>)

Benefits of using rhymes and songs	Examples (e.g. <i>Three Blind Mice</i>)
1. Exposure to rhymes and word families	
2. Exposure to patterned language-repetition of certain language forms	
3. Learning of vocabulary and rhythm	
4. Exposure to language used in more creative ways	
5. Exposure to different cultures	

Task 3.3

Comments:

Benefits of using rhymes and songs	Examples (e.g. <i>Three blind mice</i>)
1. Exposure to rhymes and word families	This Old Man (http://www.hendersonville-pd.org/hpdnursery.html) Humpty Dumpty Twinkle Twinkle Little Star Bobby Shaftoe
2. Exposure to patterned language-repetition of certain language forms	She'll Be Coming Round the Mountain (http://www.hendersonville-pd.org/hpdnursery.html) Polly Put the Kettle on (http://www.hendersonville-pd.org/hpdnursery.html) Old MacDonald Had a Farm The Bear Went over the Mountain
3. Learning of vocabulary and rhythm	I'm a Little Teapot (http://www.hendersonville-pd.org/hpdnursery.html) My Bonnie (http://www.hendersonville-pd.org/hpdnursery.html) Row, Row, Row Your Boat Head and Shoulders, Knees and Toes
4. Exposure to language used in more creative ways	Old MacDonald Had a Farm (http://www.hendersonville-pd.org/hpdnursery.html) Hickory Dickory Dock I'm a Little Teapot
5. Exposure to different cultural phenomena	Jack and Jill

3.4 Some types of nursery rhymes and songs

John M. Feierabend (2000) has characterized children's songs under seven categories based on their content, rhythm and function. They are:

Songtales:

Simple stories set to music. There is always a simple plot and at least one character

e.g. Jack and Jill

Lullabies:

Songs sung for babies or young children to make them sleep

e.g. All the Pretty Little Horses

Call and Response:

Songs that involve at least two parties who interchange in singing as in a dialogue

e.g. Did You Feed My Cow?

Wiggles and Tickles:

Songs that allow the singer to tickle a child's fingers or toes, usually sung for very young children/babies

e.g. The Little Mice Go Creeping

Tapping and Clapping:

Songs that allow the singer to tap or touch different parts of his/her body and/or clap his/her hands following the rhythm of the song

e.g. Hickory Dickory Dock

Head and Shoulders, Knees and Toes

Simple Songs and Circles:

Simple songs are songs with a very limited melodic range, extremely easy for young children to learn. Circles are simple songs with a "surprise" ending. Most of these songs are sung while children are walking around in a circle. The excitement comes as the song progresses to a climatic moment when the anticipated motion occurs.

e.g. The Mulberry Bush

Bounces:

Songs that adults sing with young children while bouncing them on their legs. These songs usually include some actions on the part of the character(s) which the bouncing action may resemble.

e.g. Humpty Dumpty

Hey, Diddle, Diddle!

3.5 Criteria for selecting songs

It is obvious that not all songs are suitable for teaching in the primary classroom. Teachers, therefore, have to carefully select the song(s) that is/are applicable to their specific teaching context.

Task 3.4

With a view to using songs to promote critical thinking, creativity and cultural awareness, what do you think are the criteria for selecting an appropriate song for use in the primary classroom?



Suggestions:

Criteria for selecting an appropriate song for use in the classroom:

- 1) Degree of difficulty in language (e.g. vocabulary)
- 2) Length of the song
- 3) Melody
- 4) Content/subject matter
- 5) Cultural relevance

Task 3.5

There are at least two versions of the nursery rhyme "I'm a Little Teapot". In one version the third line reads

" when I get all steamed up, hear me shout" while another version reads

" when the water's boiling hear me shout"

1. Which one will you choose to use? Why?

2. In what circumstances will you choose the other version? Why?



Comments:

Version 2 is easier in terms of language as it involves a simpler verb "boil" and the present continuous tense. It may be more suitable for pupils in Key Stage 1.

Version 1 involves the more difficult expression "steam up" in its passive form. Pupils have to understand not only its literal meaning - "with steam rising up", but also its deeper meaning - "to make angry or excited" or "to arouse". Therefore, whether teachers choose Version 1 or 2 depends largely on the levels of pupils and the objectives of the lesson.

Task 3.6

1. Choose two nursery rhymes or songs (from the **resource file** in Section 3.13.1) which are suitable for your pupils. Explain why they are suitable.

2. Choose two nursery rhymes or songs which are NOT suitable for your pupils. Explain why they are unsuitable.

Try to share your ideas with other teachers in your school.

3.7 Keys to being a critical and creative teacher with cultural awareness

Your experience is important in helping you judge CRITICALLY what is suggested in all resource materials available and to what extent the suggestions or teaching ideas are workable with your pupils, in your school environment and classroom context.

And your CREATIVITY helps you invent many other tasks more suitable for your pupils based on the suggestions or inspirations we attempt to provide you with.

Your ability to identify and explore the culture of your students, the classroom culture at your school and the cultural implications behind certain songs is one of the key factors that help you stimulate CULTURAL AWARENESS among your pupils.

For revision on the definitions of critical thinking, creativity and cultural awareness, please refer to Module 1.

3.7.1 Critically evaluate your own experience

"'Three Blind Mice' will never work. It didn't work last year. The pupils just didn't like the rhyme."

Do not be discouraged by your negative experience. Find out why the rhyme "Three Blind Mice" did not work. The following questions might help you reflect on your teaching.

1. Was the rhyme too easy for your P.5 pupils?
2. Was the melody of the last line too difficult to learn?
3. Did you give enough time for pupils to learn the song?
4. Do you need some props for teaching the song?
5. How about asking pupils to make their own masks?

"This will surely work. All pupils love "Mary Had a Little Lamb". They really enjoyed it last year!

A positive experience is often very encouraging. Learn from your experience and evaluate critically how and why it works. Identify the keys to success and replicate or improve your lesson plans accordingly. The same rhyme/song can be introduced and used in many different ways for different purposes. What works for your colleague may not work for you and what works in one class does not necessarily work in another. A critical teacher should be able to evaluate teaching plans and make necessary modifications.



Task 3.7

Choose an activity suggested in pages 35-60 of Poems, Songs and Games for the Primary English Classroom (1994) published by the Education Department and evaluate its practicality in your own teaching context. Discuss with other teachers in your school and suggest ways to modify the activity to suit the interests and abilities of your class.

3.7.2 Go through the steps you want your pupils to go through

To help our pupils to be creative and critical, one important step is to go through the processes you want them to go through yourselves. Do you know why?



Comments:

- You know what difficulties they may encounter.
- You can estimate the time needed for each task. (Of course you work much faster than they do, but at least you have a rough idea.)
- You equip yourself with examples so you are well prepared to throw some at them on the spot. (You know, to think of examples can be a very demanding task! But examples are very important elements to help your pupils understand a point and they are usually what pupils will take home and ultimately remember.)



For these reasons, you are encouraged to answer some of the questions and complete the tasks in the following section as if you were a pupil. Going through the processes, you are indeed training yourself to be more critical, creative and culturally aware. Read the suggested answers only after you have completed the tasks.

3.8 Activities that can be used in the classroom to promote critical thinking, creativity and cultural awareness

Before pupils are able to perform any creative tasks, they need to possess the necessary tools. In the case of nursery rhymes and songs, it is necessary for teachers to make sure that pupils are familiar with the nursery rhyme or song before they are requested to begin any task(s) that require(s) creativity on their part. When a pupil feels that he/she has mastered a particular nursery rhyme or song, he/she will have confidence to go beyond the text and try something new.

3.8.1 Writing activities

Many writing activities introduced in Module 2 – Learning and Teaching of Short Stories can be used with rhymes and songs with little modification. Examples of these are listed below:

- Writing captions for illustrations of the song
- Writing simple sentences to describe the main characters of the song
- Giving responses/suggestions/advice to the characters in the song
- Writing letters to the characters or composer of the song
- Writing slogans for posters relating to the song
- Composing new verses for the song
- Rewriting the rhyme/song in prose form
- Rewriting the rhyme/song with different characters, objects and/or setting
- Writing their own song

Task 3.8

Take the famous nursery rhyme "I'm a Little Teapot" as an example. Let's see what kind of writing activities we may ask pupils to do to enhance their critical thinking and creativity.

I'm a Little Teapot

*I'm a little teapot, short and stout
Here is my handle, here is my spout
When I get all steamed up, hear me shout
Just tip me over and pour me out!*

Click here <http://www.hendersonville-pd.org/nurseryteapot.html> to listen to the nursery rhyme.

The following writing tasks can be introduced to pupils when they are already familiar with the rhyme. They can be introduced in the module "Food and Drink" in Key Stage 2.

Please try to do the tasks yourself. After answering these questions and completing these writing tasks yourselves, you should be able to know their levels of difficulty. This is very important because your knowledge will help you decide which writing tasks are suitable for your pupils.

Task 3.8***Equipping pupils with the skills for creative writing**

- a. Can you identify the words you have not learnt before in this song?

- b. Can you think of 5 words that rhyme with the word "stout"?

- c. Can you think of 5 words that can be used to describe the body shape of something/somebody?

- d. Can you think of 5 utensils one uses on a breakfast table/dinner table?

*** Writing creatively**

- e. Can you write a few sentences to thank the teapot for her nice work?
 - *Critical thinking: Deciding on what to appreciate*
 - *Creativity: Addressing a personified subject*
 - *Cultural awareness: Identifying the cultural and social conventions of showing appreciation*

- f. Can you write a request to the teapot?
 - *Critical thinking: Deciding on what to request*
 - *Creativity: Addressing a personified subject*
 - *Cultural awareness: Identifying the cultural and social conventions of making requests*

- g. Can you rewrite the song in a paragraph?
- *Critical thinking: Identifying the linkage between ideas and showing comprehension*
- h. Can you draw a picture for the rhyme and write a sentence to describe your picture?
- *Critical thinking: Trying to think of an appropriate caption*
 - *Creativity: Drawing and writing the caption*
 - *Cultural awareness: Teacher commenting on the drawing and highlighting any cultural elements*
- i. Can you write a song with the same melody but change the lyrics so that it describes something else, for example, a toaster, a knife, a dish, an oven or a TV set?
- *Creativity: Using new vocabulary*
- j. Can you make a poster for your new song and write a slogan for it?
- *Critical thinking: Deciding on what to promote with the poster*
 - *Creativity: Creating the content and the slogan for the poster*

Task 3.8**Suggestions:**

- a. stout, spout, handle, tip, pour
- b. spout, shout, out, bout, pout
- c. thin, fat, tall, skinny, slim
- d. knife, fork, spoon, saucer, tray
- e. "Dear teapot,
You are very useful. You boil water for us so my mom can make tea and coffee. You shout loudly to let us know that hot water is ready. You quietly sit on the table and never disturb us. Thank you for your kindness."
- f. "Dear teapot,
Could you please shout a bit louder because my grandma cannot hear very well? Thank you."
- g. I am a little teapot that is short and stout. You can see my handle on my right and my spout on my left. When the water is boiled, I will shout loudly. When you hear me shout, please tip me over and pour the water out.
- h. Look at my beautiful handle.
- i. "I'm a little TV square.
Here are my switches, here is my screen.
When I start to sing, you'll come to me,
All come around me to watch TV."
- j. Come and watch!

Task 3.9

Which of the questions of Task 3.8 can be assigned to KS1 and KS2 pupils?

Level	KS1	KS2
Question a		
Question b		
Question c		
Question d		
Question e		
Question f		
Question g		
Question h		
Question i		
Question j		

Task 3.9

Comments:

There are actually no definite answers to these as the level of pupils in different schools may be different. You know best the level of your pupils.

3.8.2 Speaking and singing activities

Many speaking activities based on rhymes and songs can be introduced. Some of them are similar to those introduced in Module 2 – Learning and Teaching of Short Stories, with some modifications. They are listed as follows:

- Predicting the content of the song (esp. in songtales)
- Reading/singing the rhyme/song aloud
- Telling the character(s) what to do
- Role-playing different characters in the song
- Singing while showing pictures or puppets
- Retelling the content of the song
- Commenting on the characters
- Acting out the rhyme/song
- Singing the new song they have composed
- Sharing pupils' related experiences

To stimulate creative and critical response, the teacher can ask pupils some relevant questions related to the song. For lower primary pupils, it is best to conduct a class discussion. Remember to acknowledge and respond to all pupils' answers. For upper primary pupils, questions can be given to pupils and they can be asked to discuss in groups and jointly produce a simple oral report.

Different kinds of questions will elicit different kinds of responses. Some questions function to check pupils' comprehension of the rhyme/song while others serve to stimulate critical thinking and critical responses.

Task 3.10

- 1) Based on the song "I'm a Little Teapot", can you think of **FIVE** questions which you can ask your pupils to check their comprehension of the song?
- 2) Can you now think of **FIVE** questions which you can ask your pupils to enhance their critical thinking?

You may counter check your last 5 questions against the questions we suggest. If your questions are different from the ones here, then you are already quite a critical person.



Comments:

- 1) What is the shape of the teapot?
- 2) What is the teapot for?
- 3) When will the teapot shout?
- 4) What does "when I get all steamed up" mean?
- 5) What are the handle and spout for?

(For suggestions on questions to enhance critical thinking, please refer to the questions in Task 3.11)

Task 3.11

Assuming that you are asking your pupils these questions.

What do you think their answers will be?

- 1) Are all teapots short and stout? If not, how do they look?

- 2) Why are most teapots short and stout?

- 3) Have you ever heard a teapot shout? How does it sound?

- 4) Do you think it is good for a teapot to "shout"? Why?

- 5) Do you think it's good for you to shout?

- 6) When should you shout, and when should you not shout?

Task 3.11

Suggestions:

- 1) No. Some are tall and slim.
- 2) It is because it is safer to use. They are more stable when put on the table and will not fall down so easily.
- 3) Yes. It has a very high pitch.
- 4) Yes. People get to know that the water is boiling and can remove the teapot from the stove or unplug it.
- 5) No. I will disturb others and I may sound rude.
- 6) Normally we should not shout, unless we (or somebody else) are in danger and we need to seek urgent help.

Task 3.12

Here is a song that can be used in the module "Connecting with the natural world" in Key Stage 1. Please listen to it and complete the tasks that follow.

Little Birdie

(Lyrics: Anonymous, Music: Angela Ng)

click to listen 

(dddmsss, lldllss, ffsffmm, rfmrddd)

*Little birdie flies up high,
Sends a message from the sky,
When you wipe it from your eye,
Thank the Lord that cows don't fly!*

Could you think of 4 questions that you can ask your pupils in order to stimulate their critical thinking and/or cultural awareness?

Task 3.12

Suggestions:

- 1) Do you know where the writer of this song is?
- 2) Is it probable for you to have the same experience in Hong Kong as the speaker/singer? If yes, where? If not, why?
- 3) What other things may drop from the sky in Hong Kong?
- 4) What may drop from the sky in other places of the world?
- 5) What should we do if we wish to have only nice things dropping from the sky?

Possible Answers

- 1) In a park, in the countryside.
- 2) Yes, but seldom. This happens when we are in a park, sitting under a tree or when we are in some rural area. But we really have to stay there for a long time to have a chance to experience this. Here in Hong Kong, there is just too little land in the countryside and we have few chances to go there.
- 3) Rubbish, cans, bottles, paper, pieces of cement, leaves from domestic plants, neon lights, rain.
- 4) Coconuts, fruits, snow, rain, leaves, branches, droppings of birds, etc.
- 5) We should not throw any rubbish/unwanted things out of our windows.

3.8.3 Other related classroom activities

- Drawing illustrations for the rhyme/song
- Drawing cartoons/comics for the rhyme/song
- Designing and drawing posters
- Making puppets and models for the rhyme/song
- Inventing actions for the rhyme/song
- Making masks and/or costumes for the character(s) in the rhyme/song
- Designing outdoor games using the plot and/or characters of the rhyme/song

Task 3.13

Actions and gestures are important elements while singing a song, especially in the lower primary classroom. They add a lot of fun to the activity and enhance the motor skills and coordination of the pupils.

Here are some suggested gestures you may ask your pupils to do for the nursery rhyme "I'm a Little Teapot".

I'm a little teapot, short and stout (knees bent and put hands on head)



Here is my handle (hand on hip), ***here is my spout*** (other arm out straight)



When I get all steamed up, hear me SHOUT (turn around)



Just tip me over and pour me out! (lean over in direction of spout)



You may also ask pupils to suggest other gestures for the rhyme.

Could you now suggest a set of gestures for the rhyme "My Bonnie"?

My Bonnie

My Bonnie lies over the ocean, (_____)

My Bonnie lies over the sea. (_____)

My Bonnie lies over the ocean, (_____)

Oh, bring back my Bonnie to me. (_____)

Bring back, (_____)

Bring back, (_____)

Oh bring back my Bonnie to me, to me. (_____)

Bring back, (_____)

Bring back, (_____)

Oh, bring back my Bonnie to me. (_____)

3.8.4 A summary of the suggested classroom activities

The following is a summary of all the activities suggested in this Section, and they are grouped under the headings of critical thinking, creativity and cultural awareness. The asterisk in the brackets means that it depends on the teaching and learning context.

Writing activity	Critical thinking	Creativity	Cultural awareness
Writing captions for the illustrations of the song	*	*	*
Writing simple sentences to describe the main characters of the song	*	*	(*)
Giving responses/suggestions/advice to the characters of the song	*	*	(*)
Writing letters to the characters or composer of the song	*	*	*
Writing slogans for the posters for the song	*	*	*
Composing new verses for the song	*	*	*
Rewriting the rhyme/song in prose form	*	*	(*)
Rewriting the rhyme/song with different characters, objects and/or setting	*	*	*
Writing their own song	*	*	*

Speaking/singing activity	Critical thinking	Creativity	Cultural awareness
Predicting the content of the song (esp. in songtales)	*	*	(*)
Reading/singing the rhyme/song aloud		*	(*)
Telling the character(s) what to do	*	*	(*)
Role-playing different characters in the song		(*)	(*)
Singing while showing pictures or puppets		*	(*)
Retelling the content of the song		*	(*)
Commenting on the characters	*	(*)	(*)
Acting out the rhyme/song	(*)	*	*
Singing the new song they have composed		*	(*)
Sharing pupils' related experiences	*	*	*

Other related activity	Critical thinking	Creativity	Cultural awareness
Drawing illustrations for the rhyme/song	*	*	*
Drawing cartoons/comics for the rhyme/song	*	*	*
Designing and drawing posters	*	*	*
Making puppets and models for the rhyme/song	*	*	*
Inventing actions for the rhyme/song	*	*	*
Making masks and/or costumes for the character(s) in the rhyme/song	*	*	*
Designing outdoor games using the plot and/or characters of the rhyme/song	*	*	(*)

3.9 Using nursery rhymes and songs across the curriculum

The primary schools that have been successful in incorporating language arts activities into their curriculum are usually schools which encourage collaboration among several parties. In other words, their success is due to the collaborative effort of more than one teacher and the fervent support of the principal and parents. The use of language arts across the curriculum not only fully utilizes both human and material resources but also helps pupils see the relevance and connection between different activities in school.

Music

An English teacher can collaborate with the Music teacher of the school to allow pupils learn the song in their Music lessons. Music teachers are often better-equipped with the skills of helping pupils learn the song and where best to learn a song than in the music class. If this does not work initially (as collaboration is not yet the climate in your school, which is understandable), you can always ask the Music teacher at your school which songs the students have learnt or will learn and you can design activities accordingly. In this way, you do not appear to be intruding on your colleagues' work, and yet pupils benefit.

Physical Education

Songs and dances are definitely good physical activities. All the gestures and actions like clapping, jumping, hopping, turning around and many others are very healthy physical exercises that help children develop necessary motor skills and coordination. If some songs can be introduced in PE classes, pupils' knowledge of the songs can be consolidated. When the same song is used again in other lessons for other purposes, pupils will not find them unfamiliar. Creativity can also be promoted if pupils are encouraged to think of gestures or actions related to the song.

Mathematics

Rhymes such as "Hickory Dickory Dock" can be used in a unit in Mathematics lessons about telling time. We can ask pupils to make a simple cardboard clock with movable cardboard hands. "Ten green bottles sitting on the wall" can be used with a unit on numbers and subtraction.

3.10 A suggested lesson plan

This lesson can be integrated into the module "Connecting with the natural world" in Key Stage 1.

a. Key Stage Targets and Learning Objectives

b. Task Description

Pupils will sing the song, think and respond to questions related to the song. Then they will choose an object to describe and draw, and write a short letter to it.

c. Materials

1. A picture/drawing of a girl looking at a star in the sky
2. Activity sheets: **Sheet 1** and **Sheet 2**

d. Procedures

1. Introduce the song "Twinkle, twinkle, little star" and sing it aloud to pupils. Ask pupils to pay attention to the melody and the lyrics of the song.
2. Post the lyrics and picture/drawing on the board.
3. Teach the vocabulary items and their pronunciation, e.g. twinkle, little, star, world, high, diamond, sky. Introduce the **actions**.
4. Ask all pupils to sing the song and do the actions.
5. Ask pupils the following questions.
 - *What is a star?*
 - *Have you ever seen a star?*
 - *Where were you?*
 - *Do you like stars?*
 - *Why do you like them?*
 - *Is it easy for you to see stars in Hong Kong? Where are they?*
 - *Can you think of things which are like stars?*

6. Ask pupils what else they can see when they look up the sky. e.g. the sun, the moon, rain, clouds, rainbow.
7. Ask pupils to describe the object they have chosen by asking questions such as:
 - *What colour is it?*
 - *What shape is it?*
 - *What does it look like?*
 - *Do you like it (e.g. the sun)?*
 - *Why do/don't you like it?*
 - *What will happen if it does not exist?*
8. Ask pupils to write down some adjectives to describe the object they have chosen using **Activity Sheet 1**.
9. Ask pupils to write a short letter to the object by using **Activity Sheet 2**.
10. Ask pupils to draw a picture of their chosen object at the bottom of their letter.
11. Ask some pupils to sing the songs they have composed or read their letters to the class.

Key Stage Targets

- To converse about feelings, interests and experiences (ISb)
- To develop an awareness and an enjoyment of the basic sound patterns of English in imaginative texts through activities such as participating in action rhymes and singing songs (ESa)
- To respond to characters and events in simple imaginative texts through oral, written and performative means such as making predictions and simple evaluative remarks, drawing pictures and describing one's related experiences (ESb)
- To give expression to imaginative ideas through oral, written and performative means such as writing a letter to an object (ESc)

Learning Objectives

Text Type	Vocabulary	Language Items & Communicative Functions	Language Skills	Developing Critical Thinking Skills, Creativity and Cultural Awareness	Attitudes
Songs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> objects in nature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> use nouns to identify objects in nature, e.g. star and moon use adjectives to describe objects, e.g. yellow and round use the simple present tense to express interests, feelings, opinions, e.g. I like stars. use formulaic expressions to begin and end a letter, e.g. Dear Moon, and Love 	<p>Listening</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> recognise language patterns and vocabulary items previously encountered in the song identify main ideas <p>Speaking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> pronounce correctly words in connected speech by linking words together and using appropriate stress imitate appropriate stress, rhythm and intonation use gestures and facial expression to convey meaning <p>Reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> recognize familiar words in the song identify main ideas from the song with teacher support <p>Writing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop written texts by: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> adding personal ideas and information when a model or framework is provided putting words in a logical order to make meaningful sentences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop pupils' critical thinking skills and cultural awareness by stimulating them to appreciate the beauty of nature and relating themselves to nature develop pupils' creativity by asking them to describe objects in nature and draw a picture of their chosen object 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop confidence in using English develop keenness to participate in activities leading to improvement of knowledge and skills in the language appreciate the beauty of language

Activity Sheet 1

Object	What is it like?	Description (adjectives)
star	diamond	shiny
sun		
moon		
rain		
rainbow		
cloud		

Activity Sheet 2

Version 1

(For average learners)

Dear _____,

_____, _____, _____,

How I wonder what you are.

_____.

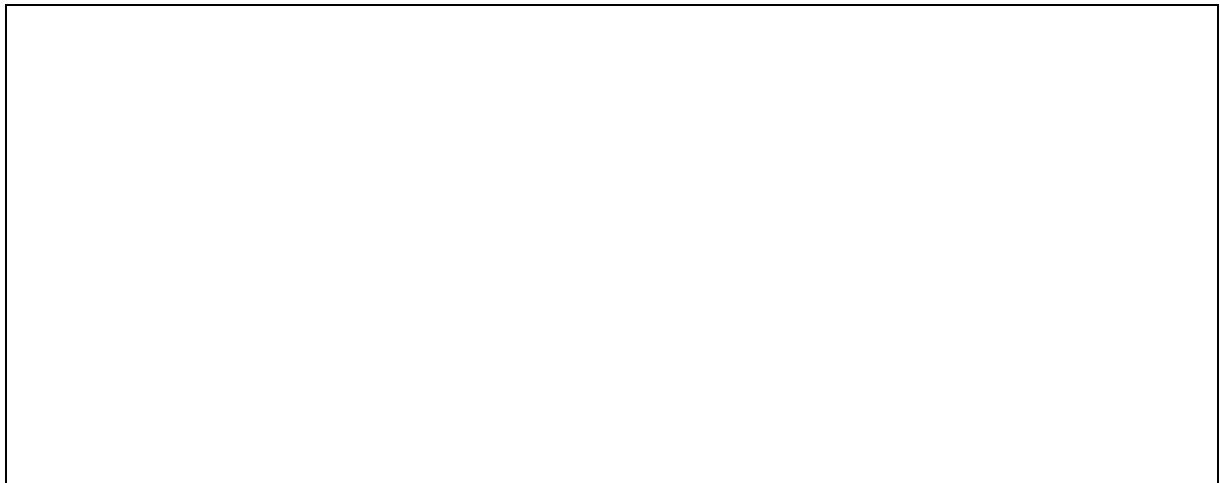
Like a _____ in _____.

_____, _____, _____,

How I wonder what you are.

Love,

Draw your picture here.



Activity Sheet 2

Version 2

(For more able learners)

Dear _____,

Love,

Draw your picture in the box below.



Actions

Lyrics	Suggested Actions
Twinkle Twinkle little star	Raise arms and use fingers to imitate the blinking of stars
How I wonder what you are	Scratch the head and frown
Up above the world so high	Point to the sky
Like a diamond in the sky	Make the shape of a diamond by using hands
Twinkle Twinkle little star	Raise arms and use fingers to imitate the blinking of stars
How I wonder what you are	Scratch the head and frown

3.11 Assessment

3.11.1 Criteria for assessing pupils' performance in the classroom

- 1) Participation in reciting the rhyme/singing the song with actions
- 2) Confidence in reciting the rhyme /singing the song with actions
- 3) Eye contact and facial expressions
- 4) Mastery of pronunciation and rhythm
- 5) Participation in responding to questions posed by the teacher
- 6) Originality/Creativity in their response
- 7) Awareness of cultural phenomena (if applicable)

3.11.2 Criteria for assessing pupils' creative work

- 1) Originality in the ideas presented
- 2) Ability to express thoughts in writing
- 3) Creativity in the choice of vocabulary
- 4) Exhibition of their awareness of cultural phenomena

(Teachers may also evaluate pupils' creativity in the choice of colour in their drawings, but this may not be given too much weighting.)

3.11.3 Feedback on performance

When assessing pupils' performance, teachers have to remember that their primary tasks are to stimulate pupils' interest in learning and to enhance improvement. Teachers, therefore, have to provide encouraging feedback as far as possible. Apart from the language, teachers should focus on pupils' ability to convey creative ideas and originality in their thoughts. When giving feedback, teachers also have to try to foster positive values and attitudes among pupils.

Here are some examples of how teachers may comment on activities or creative work done by pupils.

"You were great, Peter. Your voice was clear enough and you really looked like a duck in a pond."

"Alice, you did a good job. You sang very well and your pronunciation was clear. You can sing a bit louder next time so your friends at the back can hear you."

"Cherry, you really sounded like a mouse, but you were a bit too timid."

"Yes, the moon does look like a banana in the sky! Well done, Nancy."

"Tom, can you tell me why you coloured the sun blue?" (*Instead of telling Tom that the sun is not blue, he is stimulated to justify his own choice of colour. He may have a good reason.*)

3.12 Writing a lesson plan

Task 3.14

Choose a suitable rhyme/song from the resource list in Section 3.13.1 and develop a lesson plan for a 35-minute English class for pupils either in Key Stage 1 or Key Stage 2. You can always refer to Section 3.10 while developing your lesson plan.

Make sure you consider the situations in your own school and plan a lesson which can really be implemented in your own class.

3.13 Useful reading materials

3.13.1 Useful resources related to rhymes and songs on the web

Websites	Remarks
http://www.hendersonville-pd.org/hpdnursery.html	Lyrics with music background
http://www.niteowl.org/kids/hpdcolour.html	Colouring pages with lyrics
http://www.mamalisa.com/world/	Rhymes from all over the world, some with music
http://www.2020site.org/baby_opera/	Lyrics with musical accompaniment; no actual music
http://www.ga.k12.pa.us/academics/LS/PreK/MotherGoose/	Nice photos of children performing plays related to rhymes and creative works by children; a good source of teaching ideas
http://www-personal.umich.edu/~pfa/dreamhouse/nursery/	List of resources with rhymes grouped by theme
http://www.niehs.nih.gov/kids/musicchild.htm	Many songs with music background and lyrics; many songs suitable for upper primary pupils

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Module 4

Learning and Teaching of Poetry

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Objectives
- 4.3 What is poetry?
- 4.4 Characteristics of poetry
- 4.5 Strategies for teaching poetry in the primary classroom
- 4.6 Responding to poetry in the classroom: More ideas
- 4.7 How to use a poem more than once (or in more than one way) to promote critical thinking, creativity and cultural awareness
- 4.8 Using poetry across the curriculum
- 4.9 Assessment
- 4.10 Writing a lesson plan
- 4.11 Useful reading materials

4.1 Introduction

The value of poetry is that it can create an interesting learning situation. Learning is more effective for everyone when it is pleasurable and enjoyable, especially for young children. Pupils in primary schools need to learn the ways to appreciate the sounds, words and patterns of the English language, develop their critical thinking skills and creativity, as well as increase their awareness of other cultures. Poetry is a source to encourage experimentation, innovation and flexibility with language and thoughts. The teacher's job is to permit, allow, react and appreciate, and "stopping" should be kept to an absolute minimum.

In this module, we will focus on using poetry to facilitate the learning of English. You will know about the methods of teaching poetry and ways of promoting critical thinking, creativity and cultural awareness through poetry in the primary classroom.

4.2 Objectives

By the end of the module, you should be able to:

- understand the value of teaching poetry
- state the characteristics of poetry
- suggest some ways to promote critical thinking, creativity and cultural awareness through poetry
- apply the tasks you have studied in this module in your own classrooms
- develop a lesson plan based on the knowledge you have acquired

4.3 What is poetry?

Poetry uses a patterned language and puts together words and images to create an effect that is emotional, intellectual and musical. Looking through the eyes of the poet who sees things beyond the ordinary, readers can gain access to the world of imagination and share the marvels that language can convey. Various activities incorporating the elements of fun and interest, such as drawing pictures, re-writing poems, writing one's own poems or making one's own poetry booklets can provide the spark to ignite imagination, critical thinking skills and creativity.

4.3.1 What is the value of teaching poetry?

Poetry helps pupils to:

- a. **get a feel of English - a "stress-timed" language**
- b. **enhance confidence in using English**
- c. **practise clear articulation of sounds**
- d. **experience life**
- e. **develop phonics skills**
- f. **learn how to express their own ideas and imagination creatively**

a. Get a feel of English - a "stress-timed" language

English is a "stress-timed" language. This means that the time between each stressed syllable is the same. If there are a lot of unstressed syllables in between stressed syllables, they are simply spoken quicker, or "squashed up". If there are not many, they are stretched. We do not need to teach children this - most native speakers do not know it (unless they are ESL teachers), but they can all **do** it. Poetry is an excellent way to teach children the skill, without knowing it.

b. Enhance confidence in using English

Learning and performing poetry enhances confidence, and most of us (teachers) know what confidence can do. It is essential for pupils to establish a positive attitude towards learning English. Reciting poems aloud will help pupils develop an appreciation for the beauty of the English language, and an ever-increasing understanding of how language is used and organized. In all circumstances, teachers have to make sure that there is no pressure exerted on the children to learn the poems by heart. Poems can be introduced to learners as language enhancement activities or extra-curricular activities. Learners are encouraged to read poems on their own or to an audience, including their parents. They may take part in the solo/choral verse-speaking activities in their schools, or in the Hong Kong Schools Speech Festival.

c. Practise clear articulation of sounds

One reason that Scots, Australians, South Africans, Canadians and even the Americans and English can all understand each other so easily is the stress-timing mentioned. Accent is relatively unimportant. The tendency for Chinese speakers of English to miss final consonants and inflectional endings (want instead of **wanted** and li instead of **lip**), irreverently known as Chinglish, causes many misunderstandings. The rhythm of poems that cannot be easily distorted helps to prevent this by maintaining the correct stress and intonation while they are reading or reciting. This is an effective way to help pupils develop sensitivity towards the letter-sound relationships.

d. Experience life

Life experience - sometimes treated as culture, is frequently introduced by poems and rhymes. For instance, there are **poems about Hong Kong** or **life in Hong Kong**.

Hong Kong

It is the harbour, it is so sweet,
Over the nullah where the concrete is thick,
Next is the peak, so delightful and posh,
Ghosts just love it when the mist sets in thick
K is for Kai Tak, the airport we lost,
Order a new one, said the people at once,
No one will count how much it will cost,
Get out the concrete and let the mist pass

By Bernice Cheng, Monica Leung, Whitney Tso and Louisa Zhang (F.1A)
(Source: Poetry for Pleasure: An Anthology of Students' Poems by St. Paul's Convent School. Also available at www.spcs.edu.hk)

Hong Kong, My Home

In Hong Kong, the lights shine bright
Oh! What a pretty sight
The cars whiz by
Like they could fly
The magnificent sea
Which always enchants me
The delicious food
Puts you in a good mood
That's why when tourists come to Hong Kong,
They always stay long!

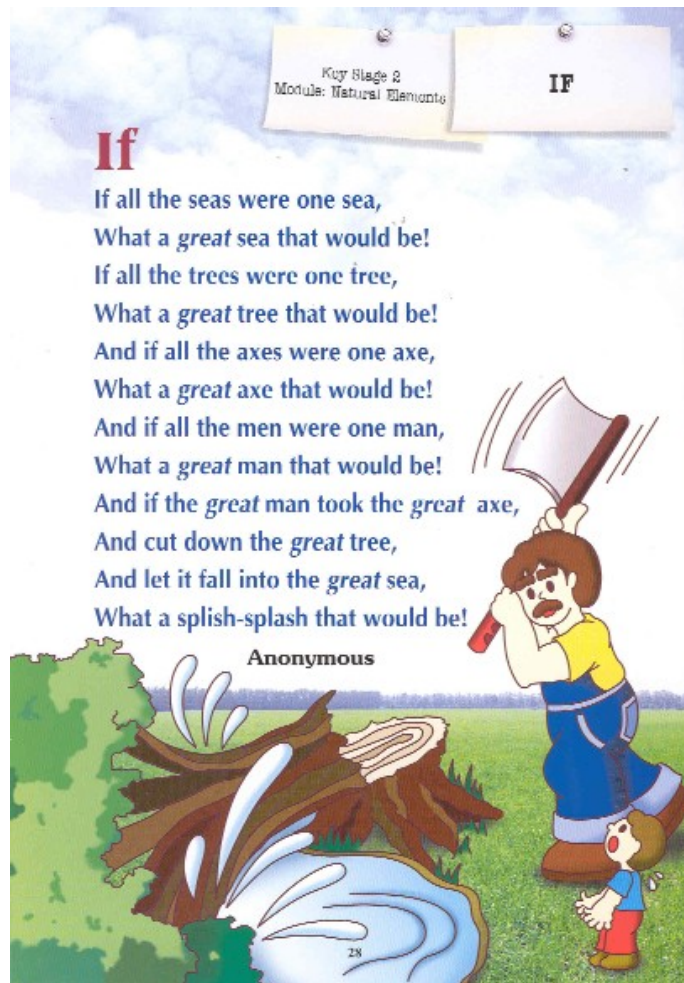
By Enid Li (F.1A)
(Source: Poetry for Pleasure: An Anthology of Students' Poems by St. Paul's Convent School. Also available at www.spcs.edu.hk)

e. Develop phonics skills

Letter-sound relationship (sometimes called "phonics") is another very important part of learning English for all of us, but even more so when it is a second or foreign language where so much learning is done with the eyes rather than the ears. English is not a pure "phonetic" language, but understanding the relationship between letters and sounds is crucial to the speed of language acquisition. For instance, pupils need to distinguish the spelling of "cheque" and "check", though the pronunciation of the two words is the same.

f. Learn how to express their own ideas and imagination creatively

Learners are encouraged to express themselves, use imagination and develop different talents through action rhymes, drama, work displays or publication of their own poetry. Inviting learners to read aloud the poems they have written will provide them with a sense of achievement, help them improve their self-esteem and build up their confidence in learning. For instance, in the last line of the poem "If", the poet expresses his feeling about the great tree falling into the great sea. Teachers can help pupils stretch their imagination by encouraging them to explore what other things would happen if the great tree fell into the great sea.



(Source: Let's Experience and Appreciate Poetry (Key Stage 1) (2000), p.28)

4.4 Characteristics of poetry

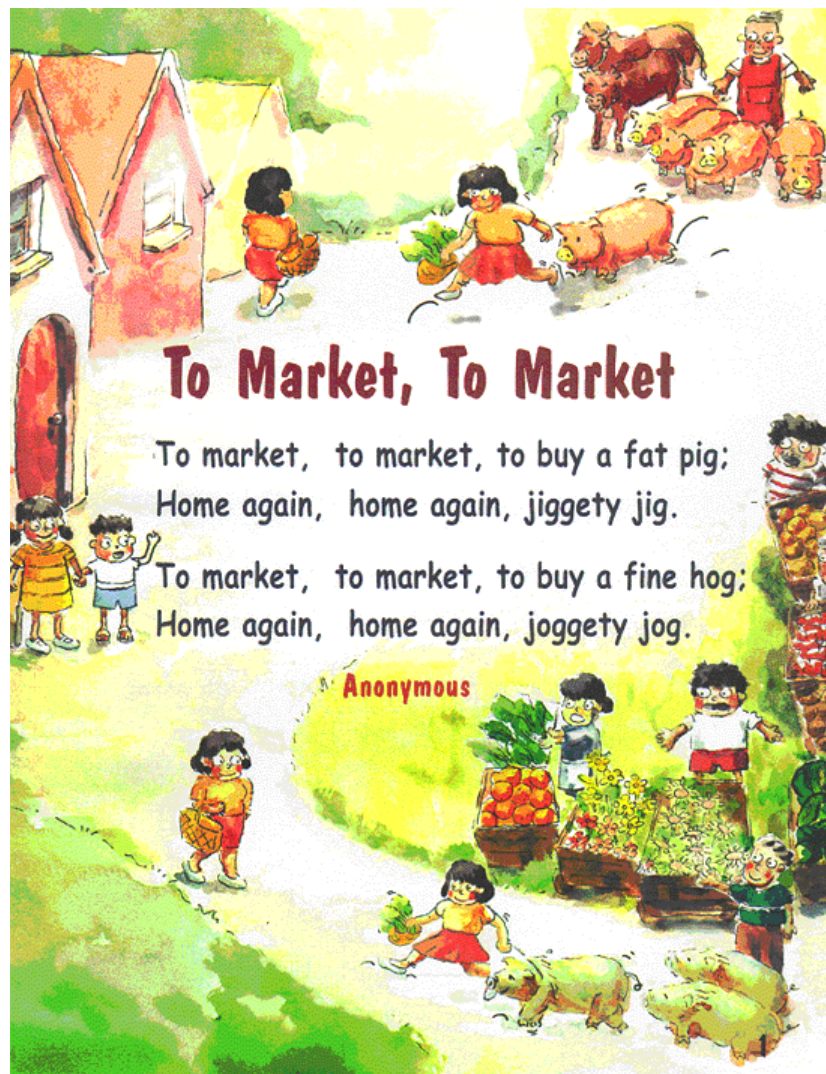
From the language point of view, poems of various kinds have the following characteristics:

- a. **Strong repetitive element**
- b. **Rhythm that cannot be easily distorted**



a. **Strong repetitive element**

Many poems, especially those popular with children, contain a strong repetitive element, enabling the learners to sing or say the lines over and over again but in an enjoyable and natural manner. The strong repetitive element of poems also helps young second language learners work out unfamiliar target language structures. Click and see the two poems "**To Market, To Market**" and "**I Love To Row**" taken from Let's Experience and Appreciate Poetry (Key Stage 1) (2000). These poems contain a strong repetitive element in terms of structure and rhyme. For instance, in the poem of "To Market, To Market", the phrases "to market" and "home again" are repeated four times, and the structure "to buy a..." is used twice. In terms of rhyme, there are "pig and jig", "hog and jog" and "jiggety jig and joggety jog". Similarly, in the poem "I Love To Row", the sentences of "I love to row in my big blue boat", "The big blue boat has two red sails", "So come and row in my big blue boat" and "Out on the deep blue sea" are repeated twice. Pupils are exposed to the structures "I love to row in... boat", "The... boat has..." and "So come and row in..." on the one hand, and the prepositional phrases "in a boat" and "on the sea" on the other. The poem also has a strong repetitive rhyme - "boat" in the first and the third parts, and "sails" in the second part. Children enjoy repetition, and reciting poems aloud will help learners of different abilities and interests to build up confidence which is essential for establishing a positive attitude towards learning English.



To Market, To Market

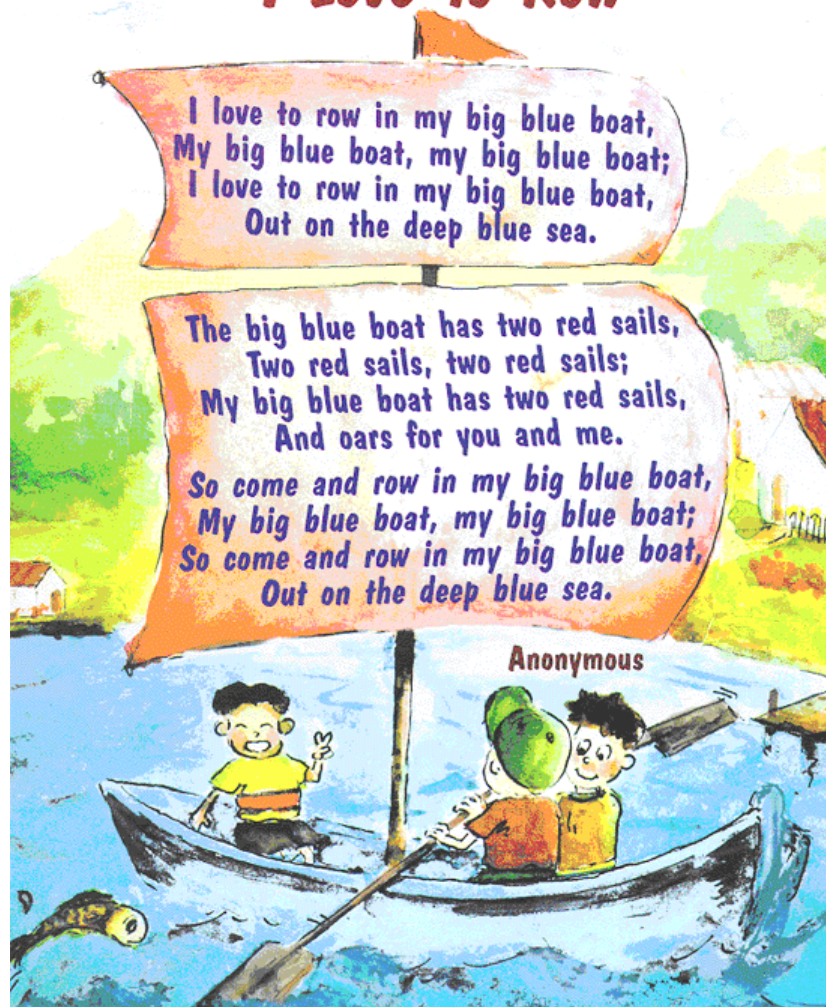
To market, to market, to buy a fat pig;
Home again, home again, jiggety jig.

To market, to market, to buy a fine hog;
Home again, home again, joggety jog.

Anonymous

(Source: Let's Experience and Appreciate Poetry (Key Stage 1) (2000), p.14)

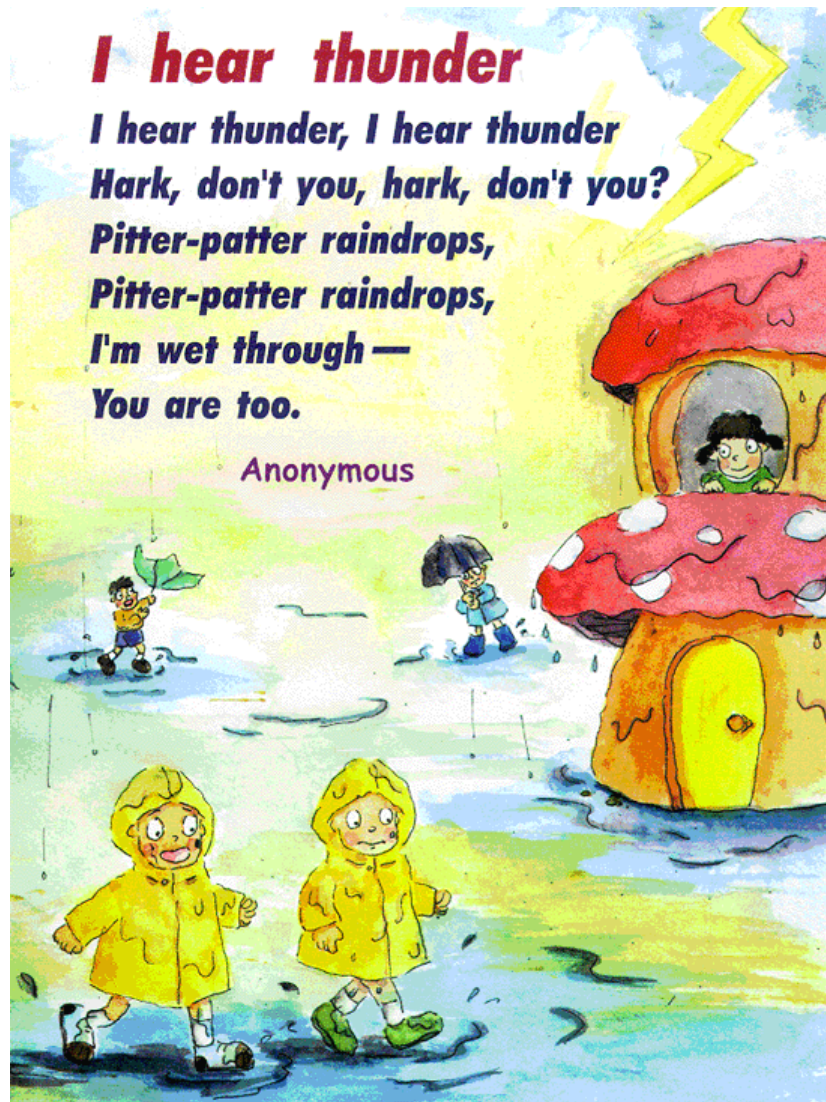
I Love To Row



(Source: Let's Experience and Appreciate Poetry (Key Stage 1) (2000), p.8)

b. Rhythm that cannot be easily distorted

The rhythm of poems that cannot be easily distorted helps learners maintain correct stress and intonation when they are reading or reciting. This is an effective way to develop sensitivity towards the rhythm of the English language. Click and see the poem "**I hear thunder**" taken from Let's Experience and Appreciate Poetry. (Key Stage 1) (2000).



(Source: Let's Experience and Appreciate Poetry (Key Stage 1) (2000), p.35)

4.5 Strategies for teaching poetry in the primary classroom

4.5.1 Points to note when teaching poetry

About poetry:

- **Poetry is not *abstract*. It is actually rather concrete.**
e.g. "*Homelessness*" is abstract; "*the dirty man lying on the sidewalk covered only by newspaper*" is concrete.
"*Pretty*" is abstract; "*the girl with emerald eyes and rosy cheeks*" is concrete.
- **A poem does not have a "correct" way or formula, especially for beginners.** Unlike linguistics, poetic expressions do not have a fixed rule or a set formula. Sometimes "mistakes" bring forth originality and beauty.
- **Poetry writing is not drilling.** Blank-filling is good for practice and getting familiar with forms, but it is not the best way to promote expressiveness, originality and creativity.
- **Poetry is an oral art.** Almost all poems are meant to be read aloud. Thus, pupils should be encouraged to read poems out loud so they can indulge themselves in the beauty of rhythm, rhymes and other poetic devices.
- **Poems are not only about beauty.** Don't be afraid to explore the "dark" or sad sides of poems with your pupils because illness, fear, darkness, or even death are part of our everyday lives. Children should be able to feel comfortable hearing, talking or writing about them in the context of poems.
- **Poetry can be introduced and taught thematically.** We can teach children poems on themes that concern their daily lives or feelings, e.g. food, things I love, happiness. For more information about possible themes, you may visit the website at www.spcs.edu.hk.

About poetry appreciation and writing:

- **Give suggestions, not mandatory assignments.** Poetry writing should allow some freedom or side-tracking from the teacher's original plan. Pupils' instincts sometimes produce surprising poems and thus should be encouraged. However, there is a distinction between taking an easy way out by always doing the things that are familiar, and taking a different path using one's own imagination and poetic instinct to write something different from what the teacher has expected.
- **Spelling is not the main concern during the first draft of poetry writing.** It is hard even for an adult to focus on expressions, feelings, language mechanics and spelling at the same time. Thus, pupils' valiant spontaneous effort in writing poems should be the main concern. Any "creative" spelling can be dealt with later.
- **Share and help with ideas and vocabulary.** Beginning poetry writers can get stuck easily and they need the teachers' help, encouragement and suggestions. Give plenty of hints, prompts and encouragement but never take over their work for them.
- **Help pupils with line breaks.** Since line breaks are essential to poetry writing, one of the foci in their writing is thus where to "break" the line. The simplest way is to ask them to break the line where they pause when reading. Ask the pupil to read his/her poem. When you hear a pause, put a slash mark and tell them that is where he/she should break. Unless it is really ungrammatical, this practice usually works.
- **After reading a poem, always ask pupils what they notice: a word, an expression, the pace, the rhyming words, the humour, the shape of the subject (e.g. a snake) described in the poem, the number of syllables in each line, etc.** Any significant specifics they have failed to notice can be supplemented later by the teacher by saying, "I also notice....". By drawing pupils' attention to the subject described in the poem, teachers can encourage pupils to write 'Shape Poems'. Pupils can also try to write 'Haikus', a kind of very short Japanese poem consisting of just 3 lines, with a fixed number of syllables in each line.

4.5.2 How to prepare your pupils for poetry

- **Ask pupils to share what they already know about poems.**

These may include:

Line/stanza

Feeling expressed

Things/people/events described (Make readers visualize them)

Something about the poem

The use of imagination

- **Validate and exemplify their observations as necessary:**

Read/show poems that rhyme/do not rhyme

Show pupils the form of the poems to show lines and stanzas

Read/show poems which express emotions

Read/show poems which are descriptive

Read story poems

- **Play imagination games:** "The weather outside" (describe a weather different from what they are having now); "Happy activities" (tell what they will do/how they will behave if they are happy), etc.
- **Play comparison games:** See how many comparisons pupils can come up with when they are asked to describe common objects like: Mary's curly hair (pig's tail, horse's tail, cloud, winding road...); my red shirt (fire, fire engine, rose, sun...), etc.
- **Use the student-generated materials to form simple poems:** Read aloud to them and tell them that they are now the poets.

The above suggestions are adapted from Judith Tannenbaum's book Teeth, Wiggly as Earthquakes (Stenhouse Publishers, 2000).

4.5.3 A few more points for a conscientious teacher

- Multiculturalism can also be achieved by asking pupils to present nursery rhymes and songs in their own culture(s) and compare them to those of another culture. Also, their poems and nursery rhymes can be rewritten in English with the help of the teacher. These days, more and more multicultural literature is becoming available in libraries. Teachers can expose their pupils to the diversity of the world through the use of poetry. "Food" is a good cross-cultural theme to start with. For example, **wonton** is a typical example of Hong Kong food while **pizza** is a good example of European food.
- Using Poetry across the Curriculum by Barbara Chatton (Oryx Press, 1993) is a book that shows you how to integrate poetry into all areas of studies such as General Studies, Maths, Science and other disciplines by exploiting their interconnections. It is arranged in major subject areas for reading convenience.



Task 4.1

Poetry can be introduced and taught thematically. Think of the theme(s) you would like to explore and share your ideas with other English teachers in your school.

Wonton

Oh Wonton! Oh Wonton!
You're wonderful stuff
I love you, cute wonton
I can't get enough
You float in the soup
Looking very Chinese
Shrimp wonton! Pork wonton!
Oh, give me some please

Oh wonton! Oh wonton!
Like milky white maids,
You're yummy, you're chewy
Your tastiness never fades
There are wonderful wontons
Floating in my dish
Fried wonton! Boiled wonton!
You look like white fish

Oh wonton! Oh wonton!
I love you a lot
You're slippery, you're slithery, delicious and hot.
I gobble you down
Oh, I can't get enough
Big wonton! Small wonton!
You're wonderful stuff

By Phoebe Lo, Denise Law, Florentina Chan and Winnie Ng (F.1P)
(Source: Poetry for Pleasure: An Anthology of Students' Poems by St. Paul's
Convent School. Also available at www.spcs.edu.hk.)

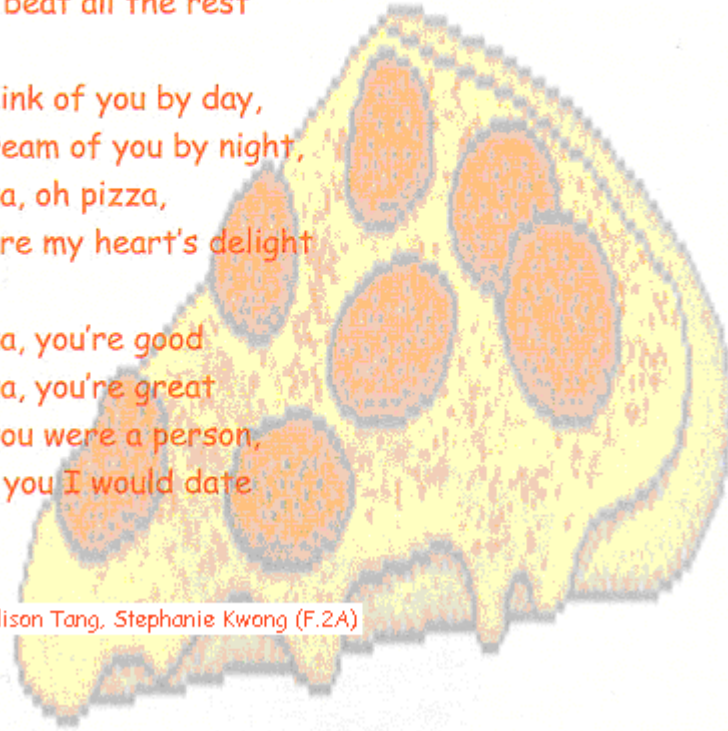
Pizza

Pizza, Pizza,
We love you the best
Among all foods,
You beat all the rest

I think of you by day,
I dream of you by night,
Pizza, oh pizza,
You're my heart's delight

Pizza, you're good
Pizza, you're great
If you were a person,
It's you I would date

By Allison Tang, Stephanie Kwong (F.2A)



(Source: Poetry for Pleasure: An Anthology of Students' Poems by St. Paul's Convent School. Also available at www.spcs.edu.hk.)

4.6 Responding to poetry in the classroom: More ideas

4.6.1 Activities that can be used in the classroom to promote critical thinking, creativity and cultural awareness

- (A) Writing activities
- (B) Speaking activities
- (C) Other related classroom activities
- (D) Other related school activities
- (E) A summary of the suggested classroom activities

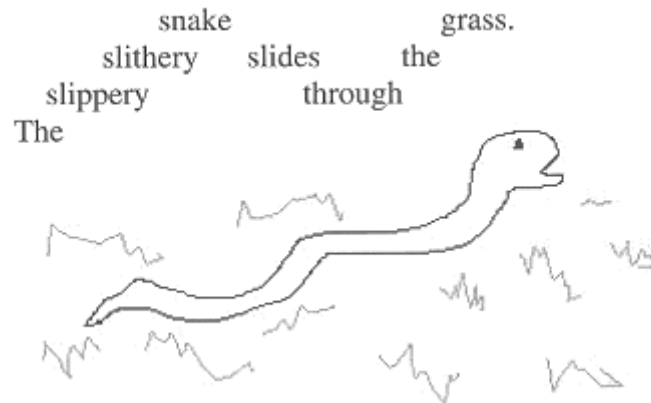
(A) Writing activities**1. Composing a new rhyme or poem**

You can encourage pupils to write their own poems. They can be poets, too. For less able pupils, they may experience difficulty in finding suitable words and ideas, and reading the poem aloud in front of the class. To help these pupils write their own poems, you can underline some words from the poem you have previously taught, and ask them to suggest some words to replace the underlined words (Please refer to the lesson plan in Module 1, Section 1.5). For more able pupils, we can form them into pairs or groups to write a poem. To prepare pupils for the writing activity, brainstorm some relevant vocabulary connected with the topic of the poem. They can then choose from the vocabulary list when they compose a new rhyme or poem. Composing a poem involves the processes of writing, revising and editing. Although the writing process may be lengthy, pupils can exercise their imagination and creativity, possibly ending up with the invention of words.

To make learning more fun for pupils, they can be asked to write:

- **shape poems relevant to the subject described;**
 - **acrostics;** and/or
 - **Haikus.**
- **Critical thinking:** Encourage pupils to search for and decide on the most appropriate words that make sense in the poem from their limited English knowledge.
 - **Creativity:** Encourage pupils to use language creatively to present the poem when they are making suggestions.
 - **Cultural awareness:** Ask pupils to study the words of the poem. The words might indicate some cultural elements. For instance, in Hong Kong, most pupils do not ride bicycles to school. However, most pupils in China do.

1) Shape poems relevant to the subject described



(Source: Poetry for Pleasure: A Teachers' Guide to Poetry Writing for Junior Students by St. Paul's Convent School, p.5)

2) Acrostics

Red is
Or Red, the colour of

Or they might like to write an *Acrostic*:

Red, the colour of

Amber,

Indigo,

Navy blue,

Brown,

Orange,

White,

(Source: Poetry for Pleasure: A Teachers' Guide to Poetry Writing for Junior Students by St. Paul's Convent School, p.9)

3) Haikus



Summer

The warm summer breeze
Blows as I sit on the beach,
Warm waves cover my feet

By Beatrice Leung (F.2A)



Winter

The white, freezing snow
Falls through all the silent night
Carols fill the air

By Karen Hui (F.1P)

Spring

On a warm spring day
Umbrellas are everywhere
Spoiling everything

By Maggie Fung (F.2A)



Autumn

Red and yellow leaves
Being blown down to the ground
Later to be found

By Melissa Mak (F.2A)



(Source: Poetry for Pleasure: An Anthology of Students' Poems by St. Paul's Convent School.
Also available at www.spcs.edu.hk)

2. Presenting the character(s) or key object(s) in pictorial form

Ask your pupils to draw the character(s) mentioned in the poem, or present the same character(s) or object(s) in different ways. All this requires imagination. The following nonsense rhyme has an imaginary word. Ask your pupils to draw a plogisled, and see what they have in mind. Try to guess which pupils will draw a cuddly one, an ugly one, a fierce one and so on.

I have a pet plogisled
I feed it on bread
And after I've fed it
I take it to bed

- Critical thinking: Ask pupils to point out the characteristic features of their plogisleds, and describe the differences if any.
- Creativity: Require pupils to use their imagination while drawing a plogisled.
- Cultural awareness: Depend on the nature of the poem. For the nonsense rhyme above, you can introduce what a plogisled is and give some information (e.g. a picture) about it. Ask pupils to find out if it is a common pet kept by children in Hong Kong.

3. Searching for and compiling information about the theme of the poem

This activity requires more vigorous effort from pupils because they need to search for information from various sources such as books, magazines and even the Internet, and compile everything about the theme of the poem. While pupils are searching for and compiling information, they are involved in critical thinking (searching for and selecting useful information), creativity (compiling information from various sources) and even cultural matters (if the theme bears a strong cultural element). For instance, in Module 1, you have studied the poem "Two Little Bluebirds". The focus of the search can be on the pupils' favourite birds.

- Critical thinking: Require pupils to search for and select information
- Creativity: Require pupils to put together information and re-arrange it.
- Cultural awareness: Depends on the theme of the poem.

4. Responding to the poem

Write a personal response to the theme, a particular stanza or line, or the object mentioned in the poem. The response does not need to be long. A short paragraph (30 words) or a few lines will do.

- Critical thinking: Require pupils to think seriously and critically about certain matters mentioned in the poem. For instance, in "Two Little Bluebirds", pupils might discuss the endangered species.
- Creativity: Enables pupils to explore the use of language.
- Cultural awareness: Depends on the theme of the poem and requirements set by the teacher.

(B) Speaking activities**1. Reading favourite poems aloud**

Ask pupils to select the poems they like and share them with the class. Each pupil needs to tell the class why he/she chooses that particular poem. This allows them to think more carefully about their decision, practise articulation, experience rhyme (though poetry does not have to rhyme all the time), and see the relationship between sounds and letters. According to Tompkins (1998), reading can be very creative by varying their tones, emphasizing the rhythm and feel of the words and where to pause. Reading can be done individually, in pairs or groups (choral speaking). You can schedule a regular time each week for reading favourite poems aloud.

- Critical thinking: Ask pupils to explain why they choose to read such poems and tell the class the reasons.
- Creativity: Encourage pupils to practise reading aloud by varying their tones. But it depends a lot on individual pupils' imagination and ability.
- Cultural awareness: Depends on the nature of the poem.

2. Acting out poems

Ask pupils to imagine that they are the characters (can be animals, insects or human beings) mentioned in the poem, write the dialogues and act them out. This activity involves not only writing but also speaking, particularly when pupils have to dramatise the dialogues.

- Critical thinking: Require pupils to use their reasoning to write a logical piece of dialogue before acting it out.
- Creativity: Require pupils to use their imagination to write the dialogues and act them out. The extent to which the activity is creative also depends a lot on individual pupils' imagination.
- Cultural awareness: Depends on the nature of the poem.

3. Retelling or recording the poem through an imaginary object or person

Ask pupils to retell the poem as if they were the characters or objects mentioned in the poem. Retelling can be recorded or done in front of the class. You can use your discretion according to your pupils' level of proficiency, confidence, personality and classroom atmosphere. Give your pupils sufficient time to re-organise the information in the poem.

- Critical thinking: Require pupils to present the information in a logical manner.
- Creativity: Encourage pupils to pay attention to stress, rhythm and intonation, and to vary their tone for different characters or parts of the poem whenever necessary.
- Cultural awareness: Depends on the nature of the poem.

(C) Other related classroom activities

1. Project work

Pupils can be asked to compile information about the theme of the poem, different types of poems that belong to the same theme, or information about the poet. Sometimes group work is more preferable to individual work because it enables pupils to learn from one another through discussion and sharing of ideas and experience. You can follow **the procedures** suggested when you ask your pupils to do project work.

Procedures

1. Tell pupils that they can decide on the focus of their work. For instance, they can collect some information about the theme of the poem.
 2. Divide pupils into groups. Try to keep the size to 4-5 in one group in order to maximize interaction and collaboration among pupils.
 3. Tell pupils when they should submit their work and the marking criteria. Give pupils sufficient time to do the project. You can discuss the marking criteria with pupils if you prefer to do so.
 4. Suggest to pupils where they might look for the information.
 5. Show some sample work completed by other pupils so as to help them better understand your expectation and what project work is like.
 6. Spare some time in your lessons guiding and checking pupils' progress, and answering their problems whenever necessary. Some pupils may not know how much they should put into the project file.
- Critical thinking: Develop analytical and logical thinking when pupils collect, select, discuss, share and compile information for the project.
 - Creativity: Develop pupils' creativity, writing and speaking skills when they present ideas, comments and information either in written or verbal form. The extent of creativity depends on the project requirement and teacher's demand.
 - Cultural awareness: Depends on the theme of the poem.

2. Reading corner for poetry books

Set up a reading corner for poetry books in the classroom. Encourage pupils to read poetry books during recess or lunch time, or after school as a self-learning activity. Pupils can record what poetry books they have read and the reason for their choices in their portfolios.

- Critical thinking: Develop critical thinking skills when pupils select poetry books and justify the choice.
- Cultural awareness: Depends on the poetry books.

(D) Other related school activities

1. Reading and writing club

Form a reading and writing club for poetry in the school. Choose some easy-to-read poetry books to start with, and proceed to creative writing (e.g. composing a new poem). Encourage pupils, particularly senior level pupils, to participate in the activities.

- Critical thinking, creativity and cultural awareness: Depends on the mission of the club.

2. Solo/choral-speaking activities in the school or in the Hong Kong Schools Speech Festival

Encourage pupils to participate in such activities so as to help them become aware of what they have achieved, and this will provide them with a lot of excitement and fun.

- Critical thinking, creativity and cultural awareness: Depends on the poem and the teacher's instructions.

(E) A summary of the suggested classroom activities

The following is a summary of all the activities suggested and they are grouped under the headings of critical thinking, creativity and cultural awareness. The asterisk in the brackets means that it depends on the learning and teaching contexts.

Writing activity	Critical thinking	Creativity	Cultural awareness
Composing a new rhyme or poem	*	*	*
Presenting the character(s) or key object(s) in pictorial form	*	*	(*)
Searching for and compiling information about the theme of the poem	*	*	(*)
Responding to the poem	*	*	(*)

Speaking activity	Critical thinking	Creativity	Cultural awareness
Reading favourite poems aloud	*	*	(*)
Acting out poems	*	*	(*)
Retelling or recording the poem through an imaginary object or person	*	*	(*)

Other related classroom activities	Critical thinking	Creativity	Cultural awareness
Project work	*	*	(*)
Reading corner for poetry books	*		(*)

Other related school activities	Critical thinking	Creativity	Cultural awareness
Reading and writing club	(*)	(*)	(*)
Solo/choral-speaking activities in the school or in the Hong Kong Schools Speech Festival	(*)	(*)	(*)

4.7 How to use a poem more than once (or in more than one way) to promote critical thinking, creativity and cultural awareness

4.7.1 Example 1

There is a **lesson plan in Module 1** on how to teach a poem entitled "Two Little Bluebirds" to primary school pupils, and how to promote their critical thinking, creativity and cultural awareness through it.

4.7.2 Example 2

Click here for the **Teacher's Notes** on how to teach and appreciate a poem entitled "**Me and You**", and the related teaching materials. Relevant activities that are conducive to the development of critical thinking, creativity and cultural awareness will be highlighted, and explained in greater detail.

Promoting critical thinking and creativity

(Refer to points 4 and 5 of "Follow-up activities" in the Teacher's Notes.)

Suggested steps

1. Divide the class into different groups. Each group should represent one type of animal/reptile/insect. You can prepare the names of the groups in advance and let your pupils choose. For instance, the first group will write "Me and you for frogs"; the second group will write "Me and you for giraffes"; the third group will write "Me and you for cats" and the fourth group will write "Me and you for elephants". Or you can invite your pupils to suggest the types of animals/reptiles/insects they would like to write about.
2. Brainstorm the characteristic features and the vocabulary items that best describe the kind of animals/reptiles/insects chosen by your pupils. Write the features and the vocabulary list on the blackboard.
3. For less able pupils, you can ask them to fill in some key words of the poem.
4. For more able pupils, you can ask them to follow the pattern of the poem and compose a new poem.
5. After composing a new poem, ask the pupils to role-play the animals/reptiles/insects while reading the poem together.

Teacher's Notes

ME AND YOU

Suggested Module and Unit
Me, My Family and Friends
Introducing Myself and Family

Working with the poem

1. This poem provides an interesting way to practise saying the different parts of the body.
2. Learners can point to their own body parts as they say the rhyme.
3. As a variation, ask the learners to say the poem in pairs facing each other. At each "And so have you", ask the learners to do some actions together. For example, in line 4, they touch each other on the chin. In line 8, they raise their arms as if in a fist fight. Their thumbs can meet in the last line.
4. Alternatively, the teacher can read the poem or play the tape as the learners perform the action. In this poem, they don't have to recite the poem by heart.
5. Don't worry about the learners not knowing the inversion in the structure "And so have you." or the present perfect tense in "I've got". The poem is intended for exposure and fun. There is no need to explain every language point.

Follow-up activities

A. Me and other animals

1. The worksheets show pictures of three animals. Learners join the dots to find out what each animal is.
2. Animals and their body parts can then be introduced.
3. Learners can then colour the pictures.
4. Then ask the learners to complete the poems by filling in the blanks.
5. Ask the learners to role-play the animals while reading the poem together.

Me and you for frogs

Oh, I've got big eyes,
And a big mouth too,
Green skin and wet hands
And so have you.

Me and you for giraffes

Oh, I've got long legs,
And a long neck too,
Small ears and a long tail,
And so have you.

Me and you for cats

Oh, I've got bright eyes,
And sharp teeth too,
Soft fur and a long tail,
And so have you.

B. On my chest, ...

1. The purpose of this activity is for learners to have some fun and action while practising saying different body parts and the structure "there is".
2. Learners in groups are given two sets of cards. The first set of cards contains the names of body parts. The second set contains names of things or animals that will be placed on that body part.

(Two sets of picture cards for the game are on Pages 4-8)

3. Each learner takes turns to get one card from each set and then say the line.
4. The whole group can then join in to make a poem with each learner saying one line. The result may be something silly like this:

On my chest,
There is a chicken.
On my toe,
There is a telephone.

5. The teacher can use plastic objects or animals instead of cards to make the game more fun.

Related Poems

KS1

KS2

(Source: Let's Experience and Appreciate Poetry (Key Stage 1) (2000))

Me and you



Oh, I've got one head,
And one nose too,
One mouth and one chin
And so have you.



Oh, I've got two eyes,
And two ears too,
Two legs, two arms
And so have you.



Oh, I've got two thumbs
And so have you.



Anonymous



(Source: Let's Experience and Appreciate Poetry (Key Stage 1) (2000), p.6)

4.8 Using poetry across the curriculum

Like other language arts materials, poetry can be used to teach other subjects and serve other purposes as well.

Art and Craft: As suggested in the Writing Activities, poems enable pupils to use their imagination to show the characters or objects in a creative way through pictures or cartoons. Instead of asking your pupils to draw it in the English lesson, you can collaborate with the Art teacher and make it a common theme of the week for the two subjects. The pictures or cartoons will be graded by the Art teacher. For more ideas on how to integrate Art with poetry teaching, **click here**.

Where Are You Going?

Where are you going
My little cat?

I am going to town
To get a hat.

What? A hat for a cat!
A cat with a hat?

Who ever sees a cat in a hat?

Anon.

(Source: Poems, Songs and Games for the Primary English Classroom (1994), p.10)

Pupils can do the following in an Art and Craft lesson:

1. Draw a mask (head of a cat).
2. Glue it onto a piece of card or paper plate.
3. Colour the mask.
4. Attach the mask to a ruler.
5. Hold the mask in front of their faces when saying the poem.

(Source: *ibid*, p.9, with slight modification)

General Studies: The teaching of General Studies can also benefit from the help of animated characters and real life anecdotes, making this subject something memorable and interesting because pupils can identify with the events or topics being studied. Proper behaviour and positive attitudes can be fostered through stories and post-reading discussion. For more ideas, **click here**.

Two Little Bluebirds

Two little bluebirds,
Sitting on a table,
One called Jack,
One called Mabel.
Fly away, Jack!
Fly away, Mabel!
Come back, Jack.
Come back, Mabel.

(Source: Poems, Songs and Games for the Primary English Classroom (1994), p.26)

You have seen this poem in Module 1. The same poem can be used to talk about the extinction of endangered species. You can ask your pupils to find more information about this kind of bird. Or the General Studies teacher can search for more information about bluebirds, and incorporate this topic in his/her General Studies lesson. The teacher can also help pupils develop a correct and proper attitude towards birds, insects and animals, particularly endangered or rare species. Any reports on how humans treat endangered or rare species are useful for teaching. For more able pupils, the attitudes of Chinese people towards endangered or rare species can also be a discussion topic.

Social Studies and Mathematics: Poems that are related to Social Studies and Mathematics such as weather or numbers provide excellent opportunities for pupils to develop skills to observe, predict and inquire. Biography of famous scientists like Edison can be a strong motivating factor for pupils who have an interest in science. You can raise questions, explore possible scientific solutions and link poetry with other subjects in the school curriculum. For more ideas, click here for **Example 1** and **Example 2**.

Example 1: Social Studies

Rain

Rain on the green grass
 And rain on the tree
 And rain on the house-top
 But not on me.

Anon.

This poem is useful for the teaching of Social Studies. Pupils can record the weather of the subsequent week after learning the poem, and study some more information about the sun, rain, wind, cloud and snow etc.

Day	Weather	Temperature
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		

(Source: Poems, Songs and Games for the Primary English Classroom (1994), pp.14-15)

Example 2: Mathematics

Key Stage 1
Module: Connecting with the Natural World

The Surprising Number 37

THE SURPRISING NUMBER 37

The number 37 has a special magic to it.
 If you multiply 37×3 , you get 111.
 If you multiply 37×6 , you get 222.
 If you multiply 37×9 , you get 333.
 If you multiply 37×12 , you get 444.
 If you multiply 37×15 , you get 555.
 If you multiply 37×18 , you get 666.
 If you multiply 37×21 , you get 777.
 If you multiply 37×24 , you get 888.
 If you multiply 37×27 , you get 999.

Anonymous

31

(Source: Let's Experience and Appreciate Poetry (Key Stage 1) (2000), p.31)

This poem is useful for the teaching of Mathematics. It brings fun and enjoyment while giving pupils practice in talking about numbers in English. Pupils may be challenged to think of some ways to give the answers without memorizing the answers or multiplying the numbers. For example, 7 multiplied by 9 is 63. So, the last digit of the answer of 37 multiplied by 9 is 3.

4.9 Assessment

Teachers can make use of a feedback sheet to enhance the learning and teaching of English as mentioned in Section 1.6.3 of Module 1. Here is an example of a **feedback sheet** to assess the writing of poetry. It is not meant to be prescriptive and teachers are encouraged to adapt and develop their own feedback sheets according to the specific task, pupils' needs and abilities.

Feedback sheet

Areas to be assessed	Needs improvement*	Satisfactory*	Well done*
Content			
- ideas related to the title of the poem			
- original and creative ideas			
- others			
Organization			
- logical development of ideas			
- appropriate layout of the poem			
- others			
Language use			
- meaning clearly conveyed			
- appropriate use of rhyming words			
- appropriate use of similes			
- others			
Generic skills			
- communication			
- creativity			
- critical thinking			
- collaboration			
- others			
Attitudes			
- confidence in using English			
- keenness to participate in activities			
- respect for others			
- others			
Comments:			

**To decide on the level of pupils' performance, teachers can agree upon a set of common marking criteria.*

4.9.1 Using portfolios to assess pupils' creativity, critical thinking and cultural awareness

Project work, poems written by the pupil, drawing, response to the poem and other creative work can be put into the portfolio. Assessment can be made simply in relation to one type of work. For instance, to assess creativity, you can ask your pupils to select a few poems that are written by them. Or to assess critical thinking or cultural awareness, you can focus on the response to the poem. For details about what portfolios are and how to use them, please refer to Module 1 – **Section 1.6.3 A. Using portfolios for formative assessment.**

4.9.2 Using project work for formative assessment

You can assess individual areas such as language, creativity, critical thinking, cultural awareness or application of study skills in project work. Modules 1 and 2 have presented a **three-stage model of assessment** and some practical ideas and steps for formative assessment.

4.10 Writing a lesson plan

Study the poem "**In a Dark, Dark Wood**". Based on what you have learnt, write a lesson plan. Click and see some examples (**Two Little Blue Birds** and **Animal Poems**) before you write. Try to integrate activities that promote critical thinking, creativity and cultural awareness in the lesson plan.

In a Dark, Dark Wood

In a dark, dark wood, there is a dark, dark house.
And in that dark, dark house, there is a dark, dark room.
And in that dark, dark room, there is a dark, dark cupboard.
And in that dark, dark cupboard, there is a dark, dark shelf.
And on that dark, dark shelf, there is a dark, dark box.
And in that dark, dark box, there is a GHOST!

Anon.

(Source: Poems, Songs and Games for the Primary English Classroom (1994), p.18)

Animal Poems

Step One

Introduce the topic of animals by asking the students if they have a pet or if they would like to have one. Students can describe their pet or list qualities of a pet which would be suitable for a Hong Kong home.

Step Two

Next read one or two simple poems about animals with the students. Suggested ones are 'My Puppy' by *Aileen Fisher* or 'Cats' by *Eleanor Farjeon*, but many others are available.

Step Three

After reading, the teacher can ask the class simple questions on the poems to check comprehension and draw the attention of the students towards the form of the poems and any rhyming techniques.

Step Four

The teacher then gets the class to think of as many different animals as they can and also to think about words and images connected with each animal. For example:

SNAKE - slithery, slimy, long, poisonous.....

FISH - colourful, darting, scales, gills.....

This bank of vocabulary is collected on the blackboard and added to as new words are thought of.

4.11 Useful reading materials

- Chatton, B. (1993). Using Poetry across the Curriculum. Phoenix, AZ: Oryx Press.
- Curriculum Development Council. (2004). CDC English Language Curriculum Guide (Primary 1-6). HKSAR: Education and Manpower Bureau.
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- Education Department & Institute of Language in Education. (1994). Poems, Songs and Games for the Primary English Classroom. Hong Kong: Education Department.
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- St. Paul's Convent School. (2001). A Teachers' Guide to Poetry Writing for Junior Students. Hong Kong: St. Paul's Convent School.
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- Tannenbaum, J. (2000). Teeth, Wiggly as Earthquakes. York, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.
- Tompkins, G. E. (1998). Language Arts: Contents and Teaching Strategies. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Merrill, Prentice Hall.