

LPF Reading Exemplar

The Trouble with Oatmeal

Task Description

In this reading activity, students read a story which is made up of a series of letters between two good neighbours, Lucy and Tree. They talked about their trouble after Tree had moved to a different place bringing with her the family pet, Oatmeal. Students then responded to the related questions.

Preparation

Before the reading activity, the teacher revised the text structure of personal letters with students. To arouse students' interest in the story, the teacher invited them to share their experiences when leaving their good friends by asking the following questions:

- Have you ever had the experience of moving house and leaving your good friends?
- How will good friends feel if they have to say goodbye to one another?
- How do you keep in touch with friends you can only see once or twice a year?
- What will you tell your old friends if you have moved to a new place?

Learning Outcomes: ATMs 3-4

ATM 3

Understanding and inferring information, ideas and feelings in a small range of simple texts, using and integrating a small range of reading strategies as appropriate

ATM 4

Understanding and inferring information, ideas and feelings in a range of simple texts, using and integrating a small range of reading strategies as appropriate

Questions	When students respond to the questions appropriately, they can:
Read up to Chapter 2 for Questions 1 to 5.	
<p>1. To Lucy, Tree was: (Write down one sentence that tells you the answer.)</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> a. <i>a friend</i> <u>'... we'd shared our "special" things...'</u></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> b. a teacher</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> c. <i>a neighbour</i> <u>'We'd lived next door...'</u></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> d. <i>a classmate</i> <u>'We'd always sat together at school ...'</u></p>	<p>ATM 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> deduce the ideas that Lucy and Tree are friends, neighbours and classmates by using semantic and syntactic clues, e.g. '... we'd shared our "special" things...', 'We'd lived next door...', 'We'd always sat together at school...'
<p>2. After Tree had gone, Lucy felt that she had nothing inside like <u>the house next door.</u></p>	<p>ATM 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> identify simple stylistic features e.g. similes in 'I felt as empty inside as the house next door.'
<p>3. Was it easy for Tree to put everything into their car? Why / why not?</p> <p><u>No. Tree and her mum crammed the rest of their belongings, including Oatmeal, into their car. / Tree had to squeeze herself into the car.</u></p>	<p>ATM 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> work out the meaning of the word 'crammed' by using semantic and syntactic clues, e.g. '... the rest of their belongings, including Oatmeal...', 'Tree was about to squeeze herself into the car...'

<p>4. a) How did Lucy feel about the gift her mum gave Tree? Which line tells you this?</p> <p><u><i>Lucy felt surprised / pleased. 'And guess what — all the envelopes were addressed to me!'</i></u></p> <p>b) Why did Lucy have this feeling?</p> <p><u><i>Lucy felt surprised because her mother put her name and address on Tree's envelopes. / Lucy felt happy as she would receive lots of letters from Tree.</i></u></p>	<p>ATM 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> infer Lucy's feelings by using clues in close proximity, e.g. 'And guess what — all the envelopes were addressed to me!' infer the idea that Lucy would receive letters from Tree by using semantic clues, e.g. '... all the envelopes were addressed to me!'
<p>5. The title of Chapter 2 is 'A Great Idea'. What is the 'great idea'?</p> <p><u><i>The great idea is using the writing pads and envelopes from Lucy's mum to write letters to each other.</i></u></p>	<p>ATM 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> identify some supporting details, e.g. 'a big writing pad and a bundle of envelopes which were already stamped and addressed to Tree's new address', explicitly stated in the text to support the main idea that writing letters to each other is a great idea
<p>6. Read up to Chapter 4. Has Oatmeal settled in yet? Which sentence in Tree's letter to Lucy tells you this?</p> <p><u><i>No, Oatmeal has not settled in. 'Oatmeal is acting strangely, so we've had to keep her locked inside.'</i></u></p>	<p>ATM 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> work out the meaning of the phrase 'settle in' by using semantic and syntactic clues, e.g. 'Oatmeal is acting strangely...', 'Mum put butter on her paws... help her settle into her new home.'

Read up to Chapter 6 for Questions 7 and 8.

7. a) How did Tree first feel before starting school in Steepleton?

- a. excited
- b. *frightened*
- c. pleased

b) How did she feel about her school later?

It was _____ what she thought.

- a. *better than*
- b. worse than
- c. the same as

ATM 4

- infer Tree's feelings about school from pieces of information in the narrative text, e.g. 'I start school... I'm scared stiff!', 'School isn't nearly as bad as I thought it would be.'

8. What caused the trouble with Oatmeal?

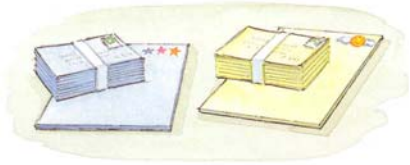
Leaving the old place / being moved from her surroundings/feeling homesick caused the trouble.

ATM 4

- follow the idea about Oatmeal's trouble in Lucy's reply by
 - recognising the simple text structure of a reply letter, e.g. 'About Oatmeal...' to describe how she felt about leaving her old place
 - understanding the use of cohesive devices, e.g. the connective 'also' in 'He also said she could be homesick.'

Chapter 2

A Great Idea



The next two weeks went past too fast.

I dreaded saying goodbye to Tree. We'd lived next door to each other and played together all our lives. We'd always sat together at school, and we'd shared our 'special' things — like her cat, and my little brother.

My brother, Brady, loves Tree's cat, Oatmeal, and I knew he would miss Oatmeal as much as I was going to miss Tree.

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After the moving van left, Tree and her mum crammed the rest of their belongings, including Oatmeal, into their car, and came to say goodbye.

Just as Tree was about to squeeze herself into the car, Mum handed her a big pad of writing paper and a bundle of envelopes, already stamped. And guess what — all the envelopes were addressed to me!



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(Materials adapted from **The Trouble with Oatmeal** – Text by **Janet Slater Bottin** and **Illustrations** by **Pat Reynolds** and **Rae Dale** with the permission of **Cengage Learning**)

I waved until their car was a faraway speck. I felt as empty inside as the house next door.

Then Mum handed *me* a big writing pad and a bundle of envelopes, which were already stamped and addressed to Tree's new address.

I said, "Thanks, Mum. Great idea!" and ran inside to start my first letter to Tree.



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Chapter 4

The Answers

I waited a whole week for Tree's letter ...

Dear Lucy,

I was so happy when your letter came. I wanted to write back straight away, but we've been so busy unpacking.

Here are your answers!!!

- 1. Our home is an apartment in a high-rise building. It's okay, but there's no garden. There's a park nearby, but Mum won't let me play there alone.



- 2. My bedroom's not bad, now that I've put up my posters.
- 3. Our neighbours seem friendly — but there are no kids.
- 4. Oatmeal is acting strangely, so we've had to keep her locked inside. Mum put batter on her paws — that's supposed to help her settle into her new home. No, she wasn't car-sick.

- 5. As IF!!! (Even if I were, would I tell anyone? Would YOU?)
- 6. I start school on Monday. I'm scared stiff!

Okay, so — where's my prize?
 miss U! Write again SOON,
 Tree

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Chapter 6

The Trouble with Oatmeal

Dear Lucy,

Thanks for the stickers! I showed them to Billie and told her all about you. She thinks you sound cool — she wants to meet you.

Billie lives two floors down with her dad. I met her yesterday when she nearly ran me over in her wheelchair! She calls her wheelchair 'Harley', and she drives it around like one! (If you don't know what a 'Harley' is, ask that boy next door!)



Oatmeal is still behaving strangely. All day she prowls and miaows around the apartment, as if she's lost something. And she climbs up on the windowsill and stares out the window. We have to watch that she doesn't slip out through the door when we go in and out. Mum said if Oatmeal got lost in Steepleton we'd probably never find her.

School isn't nearly as bad as I thought it would be.

Anyway, how old is THAT BOY, and have you seen any other kids next door?

miss U more!
 Tree

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Chapter 7
All Sorts



Dear Tree,

Billie sounds nice. I'd like to meet her too, and I wish I could see YOU ...

About Oatmeal: Dad said she might be freaked out about leaving her old place. What he actually said was: "She could be traumatised about being moved from her familiar surroundings."

PARENTS!!

He also said she could be homesick.



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