CREATING AN INTERACTIVE STORY A PRIMARY RESOURCE BY CLPE

NATIONAL **Writing Day**

24 JUNE 2020

CLPE

CENTRE FOR **LITERACY** IN PRIMARY EDUCATION

Create an interactive story!

This resource supports teachers, parents and pupils to explore and follow the authentic process that an author/illustrator goes through when developing a picturebook. The resource is designed to run over the course of a whole day, but could be broken down into the constituent parts over several days.

Using the resource and accompanying free materials from CLPE's Power of Pictures website, you will explore how to develop characters, dialogue and plot through drawing and writing, looking at how a book can develop reader engagement through directly involving them with the story.

Part 1: Exploring the job of an author/illustrator

- Begin by talking about the job of authors and illustrators. What do they do? How do they work? What authors and illustrators of children's books do you already know?
- Watch the video: 'An introduction to the author and illustrator Viviane Schwarz' on the Power of Pictures website:
  https://clpe.org.uk/powerofpictures/schwarz-viviane
- Reflect on your previous ideas, has anything they thought been confirmed? What else have you learnt from watching this?
- Now talk together about the author/illustrator in more depth:
  - Do you know any of her books? Have you read anything by her before?
  - What interested you in the video? Did anything surprise you?
  - What do you think her life is like as an author/illustrator? What have you learnt about how and why she writes?
  - What questions would you like to ask her about her job and how she works?
- You might want to write some of your ideas down to record your thinking.
- After seeing the video, what are you now expecting from a book written by Viviane Schwarz?

Part 2: Engaging with and responding to a picturebook
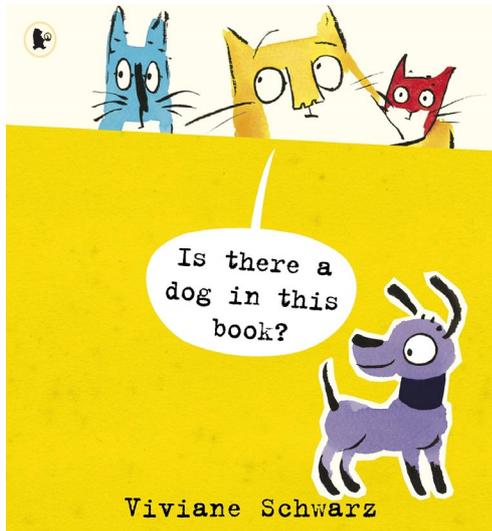
- Watch Viviane Schwarz read aloud her book *Is there a dog in this book?* on the Power of Pictures website: https://clpe.org.uk/powerofpictures/schwarz-viviane
- Allow time to reflect on the story they have seen and heard. Talk about your responses to the story and to the illustrations. What did you like and/or dislike? How did the style of the illustrations support the telling of the story? What questions might you like to ask the author after reading? What connections do they make with other picturebooks or other things you have read or experienced?
- Reflecting on the book as a whole, who do you think the book is for? What might a younger child get from the story? What might older children and adults get from the book that a younger child may not? Can people of different ages engage with this book in different ways?
- Talk about the book in more depth. What do you think the purpose of the book is? What does it do to engage the reader? What messages might it give the reader? What have you learnt about picturebooks from engaging with this text?
- Begin to explore with the pupils how the illustrations and text are working together to tell the story and engage the reader. Start by looking at the second spread in the book – pause the video at 00:50 to look at this in more detail. What is the mood created in this spread? How can we tell?
- Look at what the words and illustrations in this spread do to convey the action and involve the reader. Talk about this together, focussing on:
    - The characterisation of the three cats and their role in the story
    - The body position, facial expression and gaze of the characters
    - Use of language and tone of voice to persuade the reader
    - Use of props
    - The use of dialogue – how do the words and punctuation chosen engage and invite the reader into the storytelling?
- Now, look at a spread from later in the text, for example the spread where Moonpie exclaims: *'We must find our dog!* Re-watch the video from 4.40-5.09 to investigate this. How is the mood of this spread different? How can we tell through the way the characters and action are shown? Pay particular attention to the heavily interactive elements in this spread, the flap mechanisms. How do these add another layer of engagement for the reader? What does this add to our understanding of the mood of the cats? Think about examples of these techniques in other parts of the book and reflect on their effectiveness.
- Last of all, look at a contrasting spread like the one at 03.54. How does this spread position us differently as a reader? Are we directly involved or are we outside, looking in? This is the only example of the reader not being directly involved. Why do you think the author has chosen a different stance for the reader to take in this particular spread?

Part 3: Developing own ideas for writing: Creating characters through illustration

- Before beginning this session, you will need to have available some basic art materials; felt tips, paper and a black fine pen. If you have these available, you may also wish to use more sophisticated materials like watercolour paints or inks and suitable paper.

- Look back at the first double page spread of the book, pausing the video of Viviane reading it aloud at 00.31 to look at this more closely:
    - How do you think she has created the pictures? What materials has she used?
    - How has she used body shapes to tell us more about the characters? e.g. Tiny's wide arms and legs make him look excitable, the fact André's arms are hugged around his body show he is cautious, Moonpie's waving arm makes him look friendly.
    - How do their facial expression enhance this further? e.g. Tiny's wide eyes and wide smile, André's crinkled nose, squinting stare and closed lips, Moonpie's open eyed smiling face.

- Watch the video 'Illustrating a character from *Is there a dog in this book?*' on the Power of Pictures website: https://clpe.org.uk/powerofpictures/schwarz-viviane Look at the materials she uses to create the cat, and the techniques she uses to create the shapes for the characters and how she puts these together to form the character. Look carefully at how the character comes out over the process, as more detail is added. There is a further video of Viviane painting the cats on her Picturebook Makers blog (towards the end of the blog) at:
http://blog.picturebookmakers.com/post/116986873251/viviane-schwarz

- Have a go at following Viviane Schwarz's process to create one of the characters using felt pens, watercolours or drawing inks to first build up the head, body, arms and legs. Start with the coloured shapes that will form the head (leaving gaps for eyes), body, arms, legs and tail. How will you shape it to add expression? What does this make us think about the character and its behaviour as well as its appearance?

- Have a go at creating lots of examples, until you find one you are happy with. Viviane Schwarz filled a sketchbook up with different cats before she chose the three for her stories and that she has drawn all three of the chosen cats in hundreds of different positions.

- When the initial coloured shapes have dried, look at how to add details and facial expression using a black fineline pen. Think about how different eye and eyebrow shapes can create different expressions and different mouth shapes, and how even the way the whiskers are pointing can add to the expression in the illustration.

- When you have finished your illustration, step back and look at the character you have created. Write your thoughts about them as words and phrases around the picture or as a character description to accompany it.

- If this character was to think or say something, what would they say? Record in a thought or speech bubble to put on your illustration. When doing this it is important to write the words first, and then shape the bubble around it, so everything you want to say fits in.

Part 4: Developing a scene that tells a story and engages the reader

- Using the characters created, think about a wider scene that could involve this character. Drawing on what you've learnt from Viviane Schwarz's work, think about how you will tell a story and invite the reader into this scene. Take time to close your eyes and visualise this, thinking about:
    - What will be happening to your character in this scene?
    - Will you involve other characters for your character to interact with?
    - Will you give a sense of place using backgrounds and props?
    - What will characters be saying or doing?
    - How will you make sure the action and emotion of the scene is clear and spreads are not too cluttered with too much happening?
    - How will you engage the reader through the illustration, text (including punctuation) and interactive elements such as folds or flaps?
- When you have a good idea of what you want to do, collect paper, pens, glue and other materials together to make your spread.
- When you are finished, share your idea with someone else. How did they react to your scene? Could they see the story that was taking place clearly? Did they feel involved in the story through the dialogue or by having to do something with the scene, like lift a flap?

Developing this work further:

- You could go on to work on a larger picturebook unit, where pupils use inspiration from this text and activity to make books of their own. Ideas for how to do this can be found in longer teaching sequences at: https://clpe.org.uk/powerofpictures/books-and-teaching-sequences-0/there-dog-book

The Centre for Literacy in Primary Education is a UK based children's literacy charity working with primary schools. Our work raises the achievement of children's reading and writing by helping schools to teach literacy creatively and effectively, putting quality children's books at the heart of all learning.

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