



CFE Levels Early – Senior phase (Ages 3-16)

Running a shared reading project

A scheme of activities to help older children share picture books with younger ones

Resource created by Scottish Book Trust

Contents

About this resource	2
What is shared reading?	2
A very handy resource – the Bookbug Primary 1 Family Pack	3
Exploring picture books with older pupils	3
Practising reading aloud	4
Developing questioning skills	5
After shared reading: re-telling activities	7
Further resources and case studies	7
Appendix – Using Picture Books with Older Readers	10

About this resource

If you are looking to promote reading for pleasure and improve literacy skills, a shared reading project is a wonderful way to achieve these aims. This resource provides a step by step guide to setting up and carrying out a shared reading project in your school or library, whether you are working in a primary, secondary or community setting.

What is shared reading?

Here's what you need to know:

- Shared reading involves older pupils reading picture books to younger pupils;
- The older pupils will spend some time preparing, developing their skills in reading aloud so they can bring picture books to life for the younger pupils;
- The year groups involved are up to you – the older pupils are normally P6 upwards, and younger groups P1 and below.

So why do it? Here's a list of what we've found works about shared reading projects:

- **Improves confidence** in older pupils, who learn to act as role models;
- Older pupils develop their skills in **reading aloud** and **questioning**;
- **Reluctant readers** have changed their attitudes to reading, seeing it as a fun and meaningful pastime;
- Younger pupils discover books in a fun way and have the chance to form relationships with older pupils;
- Younger pupils and older pupils have the chance to participate in learning activities together after shared reading has taken place, again strengthening relationships and giving responsibility to older pupils.

A very handy resource – the Bookbug Primary 1 Family Pack

If you want to do a shared reading project, you might find it handy to use the three books in the Bookbug Primary 1 Family Pack.

This pack is given out to every P1 child in Scotland every year. The packs arrive in your school around November, but each school is sent an advance copy of the pack so you know which books are going to be in it.

Here's the major perk. Each pack will contain the three picture books shortlisted for the Scottish Children's Book Awards. After your older pupils have read the books to the younger ones, they can encourage them to vote for their favourite. This gives a real sense of purpose to the discussions about the books, and participating in the awards is always great fun.

See this page for more information about the P1 pack:

www.scottishbooktrust.com/bookbug/bookbug-packs/bookbug-primary-1-family-pack

And click on this one for more information about the Scottish Children's Book Awards: www.scottishbooktrust.com/scba

Exploring picture books with older pupils

Aims of these activities:

1. Older pupils will understand the importance of reading with younger children
2. Older pupils will be able to identify ways in which picture books appeal to their readers

Discussing the importance of reading

One of the ways in which we can develop our reading skills while having fun is to read books for pleasure in our spare time, and one thing that really helps us to become readers is if we enjoy books from a young age – once your pupils see that the project gives them responsibility for a P1's enjoyment of a book, they're much more likely to be invested fully.

Explain to pupils that we all have to do a lot of reading. Whether we are reading novels or looking at bus timetables, we all need to do some reading every day. Give some examples from your own day if you want to, and ask the pupils for other examples. After this, get the pupils to quickly jot down all the things they have read over the last week – websites, text messages, cereal packets, anything that qualifies as reading. Ask them to

share some of their examples with the class. Once the pupils see what a wide range of reading they do, this will hopefully show how important it is to be able to read well!

Exploring how picture books appeal to their readers

Provide pupils with a large selection of picture books and ask them to browse through the books. After you have allowed them some time to do this, ask your group to feed back about the books they have read, focusing on the following questions:

- Which books did you particularly like?
- Do you think P1 pupils would like them?
- Which aspects of the book do you think P1 pupils would enjoy – colours, illustration style, jokes, storyline, characters, setting etc?
- How do you think a P1 would feel after reading the book?
- Which books would you feel most confident reading out loud to a P1?

Practising reading aloud

Aims of these activities:

1. Older pupils will understand that different picture books should be read aloud in different ways
2. Older pupils will develop their ability to perform an engaging reading of a book

Exploring different picture books

This activity involves reading and discussing two picture books which are clearly different in terms of style, content and tone. This should help pupils to think actively about how different picture books should be read aloud in different ways, depending on the tone and content of the book. We've suggested two books to use, but of course you're free to choose whichever books you think will work best.

Get your pupils to read Chae Strathie's *Jumblebum* and ask them for their thoughts. Did they like it? What words would they use to describe it? What kind of reaction do they think the author might have been going for? Do they think younger children would like it?

Now, ask them to read Katie Cleminson's *Otto the Book Bear* and again ask them for their thoughts.¹

After this, ask the pupils if they think both books should be read aloud in the same way, or if they would take a different approach to reading each book aloud. Put pupils into pairs and give them different sections of the books, then ask them to prepare a reading, thinking about the following: tone of voice, pace, pitch, volume and any character voices they might put on.

¹ You can find a video of Chae reading *Jumblebum* at <http://bit.ly/JumblebumVideo>, and you can find a reading of *Otto the Book Bear* at <http://bit.ly/OttoBookBearVideo>

After this, turn pupils' attention to the book(s) they will be reading to the P1s. Ask them to prepare a reading of a short section of the book, again focusing on using their voice to best effect.

Developing questioning skills

Aims of these activities:

1. Older pupils will develop their ability to fully engage younger pupils with books
2. Older pupils will develop their questioning skills

Once your older pupils have become more confident in their ability to read aloud, the next step is to develop their ability to ask a younger child questions and help them respond to a book. The best way to do this is to put themselves in a younger child's shoes – the following activities should help them to do this.

Prediction – 1

This activity will help the older pupils see the amount of questions which can be raised by a book's cover, and will help them decide on some questions they might like to ask the younger pupils before they read the book to them.

- Make a photocopy of a picture book cover and ask older pupils to annotate it with their observations (I can see), their thoughts (I think, I want to know) and their questions (I wonder why?).
- Try a few random picture book covers if you like to give them more practice.
- If everyone is working on the same book, come back together and share the questions and observations everyone has made. If working on different books, pupils can swap and add anything extra to their peers' observations and questions.

Now, ask them to come up with two or three questions they might ask the younger pupils before they read the book with them. For instance, they might ask them what they can see on the cover, why they think the characters on the cover are doing certain things or dressed in a certain way and what they think might happen in the story.

Prediction – 2

This is a nice activity if you want to show pupils the extent of possibilities raised by a book's cover and opening pages.

- Select a picture book that relies on visual storytelling more than text.²
- Put your class into pairs – ask each pair to sit facing each other with their knees almost touching. You should now have two rows of pupils facing each other.

² Wordless picture books are particularly good for this. Our top recommendations are *Journey* by Aaron Becker and *The Arrival* by Shaun Tan.

- Stand behind one row so that all of the facing row can see you and show them the cover of the book for a few seconds. Ask the pupil in each pair who can see to describe the cover to their partner.
- Swap sides and stand behind the other row – and show the first double page spread – again ask those who can see to describe to those who can't.
- Once you have completed the book in this way – ask the pairs to go away and storyboard the book, including details of what they think it was about.
- Compare all the storyboards to see the different directions everyone's narrative has gone in.

From – <http://www.carolhurst.com/subjects/criticalpicture.html>

Pausing during reading

Ask older pupils to look through the book they have chosen to read and identify a point where it would be good to stop and ask the younger pupil what they think will happen next, or how they think a character is going to solve a problem or perhaps how they think a character feels at that point of the story.

After reading

Ask older pupils to come up with some questions they would like to ask the younger pupils after they have read the book.

The aim for most teachers will be to get the older pupils asking some higher order questions, but it can also be a nice experience for older pupils simply to ask some basic understanding questions too, asking younger pupils what they remember about the story, what a character was doing at a certain point, what was happening at the start etc. This can be especially helpful if older pupils want to do some retelling activities with younger ones (see the next section of this resource).

Older pupils can come up with some higher order questions by encouraging younger children to connect with the book in some way. Questions of this nature might include:

- Connect with a character: Would you have done the same thing? Which character are you most like?
- Connect with an emotion: How do you think (character) felt? Have you ever felt like that?
- Connect with a place: What do you think it's like to live there? Would you want to visit this place?
- Connect with another story: This reminds me of another story we have read...

After shared reading: re-telling activities

After the older pupils have read to the P1s, why not take things a step further and get them doing some learning activities together? One of the most effective and simple activities to do is to work on re-telling the story without the book. After the younger pupil hears a good story, it can be a great confidence boost for them to be able to tell it to someone else! Older pupils can help them with this in a number of ways:

- **Make a story map together** – older pupils can help younger pupils draw a map of the key things they need to remember to re-tell the story without the book.
- **Make a story stick together** – older pupils help younger pupils decorate a stick with objects which represent key moments in the story. The stick then acts as a prompt to help the younger pupil re-tell the story.
- **Model the use of connectives for retelling:** you could use David Maytham's suggested words for modelling in this lesson plan (perhaps substituting more difficult words like 'unfortunately' with easier ones like 'however'): <http://bit.ly/StorytellingWithConnectives>. Older pupils could perhaps model re-telling one book, and then get the younger pupil to try re-telling another one.

For more activities to help with re-telling, see the Level 1 section of our Reading Activities resource: www.scottishbooktrust.com/reading-activities

Further resources and case studies

You can find a range of resources designed to help with shared reading here: www.scottishbooktrust.com/learning/teachers-librarians/scottish-childrens-book-awards/shared-reading

Below is one of the case studies featured on this page. We hope you find it to be a helpful introduction to the practicalities of running a shared reading project

Case study from Craighdu Primary School

Craighdu Primary took part in the Scottish Children's Book Awards 2013 through a shared reading project. Their main aim behind the project was to increase pupils' enjoyment in reading. Teacher Eilidh MacLean tells us how they got on...

The set-up:

Our 28 Primary 7 children paired up with their Primary 1 buddies. They enjoy anything that involves working together as they are all very fond of

their buddy so this ensured the project started off on the right note.

Time frame:

Preparation began in September but the actual project lasted for the month of November to coincide with Book Week Scotland³. At the end of the month the P1s took home the shortlisted books to share at home with their families after an intense month working on picture books.

Getting started:

It all began when East Dunbartonshire hosted a training session which was delivered by Scottish Book Trust. Teachers were shown a variety of picture books including the ones to be voted on. Our teachers who attended the training session were so enthusiastic about the potential of working with picture books that the head teacher decided to buy in some new titles for the school.

Drama – an added extra:

In October a drama specialist from Love Drama visited the school to encourage the P7s to think carefully about how to read a picture book aloud when reading to younger children and to help them bring the stories to life. The P7s enjoyed working with the specialist and trying out different voices and expressions as well as reacting in different ways to scripts of the three story books that would be voted on later on.

Preparing the P7s for their shared reading responsibilities:

In November, the different titles that were bought in were shared with P7 with the focus being on how to read aloud. The school was keen to take some time to explore picture books with the older children before introducing the specific shortlisted books. Questioning skills were taught along with predicting and summarising. They also worked on trying to relate the books to real life experience which would enable them to draw the younger children into a discussion and help spark their interest even more. The P7s and their teacher worked hard on this. The children then read the picture books to themselves and then to each other and then to their primary one buddy before the process was repeated with the shortlisted books. The selection of books bought was varied and included titles like *I Want My Hat Back* and *This is Not My Hat* both by Jon Klassen and *There's a Bird on my Head* by Mo Willems.

The pupils' perspective:

Ross in P7 was enthusiastic about the shared reading project because he doesn't normally read aloud to an audience. He hasn't read a picture book in a long time so enjoyed the experience. He was paired with Andy and Harris in P1. He asked them questions about the story and enjoyed the responses he got which led on to a deeper discussion. They were able to relate the books to their own life experiences. Ross's favourite was

³ Find out more about Book Week Scotland here: www.scottishbooktrust.com/book-week-scotland

Jumblebum by Chae Strathie and Ben Cort because, “It was one of those books I didn’t get bored of. I could read it again and again.”

Max in P7 says, “I enjoyed spending time with my P1 buddy Noah and sharing stories with him.”

Calum in P7 feels the project has changed his view of books – “I think it has made me more confident reading picture books” – and Tom from P7 says, “I didn’t realise picture books could be so funny.”

When P1 children were asked about reading the picture books with their buddies, they said they had great fun. Kara from P1 said, “I liked it because my buddy read carefully to me,” and Mark from P1 said, “My favourite book was *Jumblebum* because Jumblebum goes into the washing machine and comes out as clean clothes. That was funny and my buddy used a funny voice.”

The staff perspective & project legacy:

This project has changed the view of staff regarding picture books. They are no longer seen as a resource only for the younger classes but are also useful tools for teaching punctuation and grammar as well as development of plot and character. P7 have continued to explore picture books since the project ended. We have invested a lot into building up our picture books and will continue to develop this resource in the future.

Appendix – Using Picture Books with Older Readers

A shared reading project involves older pupils investigating picture books with the goal of bringing them alive for younger pupils. However, doing a project where older pupils engage critically with picture books can be a hugely worthwhile thing in itself, because:

- A vast range of picture books for older readers exists, comprising visually striking and thought provoking stories intended for an older age group;
- These books provide great opportunities to analyse the writer’s craft, due to the complexity of the interplay between pictures and words;
- The themes in these books can engage pupils in higher order thinking;
- For reluctant or less able readers, these books provide access to fantastic stories and weighty themes without the obstacle of too much text.

Resources

If you want to find some great picture books for older readers, the following resources will be helpful:

- Our book list: www.scottishbooktrust.com/reading/book-lists/10-picture-books-for-older-children-8-11
- A blog on our website about using picture books with older children: www.scottishbooktrust.com/blog/teachers-librarians/2013/04/picture-books-in-the-secondary-classroom