

Development of Core Texts for the Reflective Practitioner.

What are core texts?

Core texts are high quality children's books which have stood the test of time and are generally regarded as a building block for later school experience. We have list below of ones which we hold in high esteem but within your setting there may be others. These books will often have been in print for a long time because they are enduringly popular with children, parents and teachers. What makes a book move into this elevated category - a superbook?

*They are books which children want to hear read more often than teachers or parents want to read them.

* a strong story line

* repetitive catchy text

* memorable or colourful characters

* often the use of rhyme and/or alliteration

*quality illustrations which are often drawn by the writer or by close association with the writer.

* books which schools are often buying, because after constant repair, they fall apart.

* books for one reason or another generations of children have read and loved and continue to love.

How Core Texts are Used

We buy as many copies of the book as we can afford in different formats and in different languages. We create a core text themed area in our setting which contains:

storyprops (cut out characters, laminated and with a means of positioning and repositioning e.g. magnets, velcro fuzzy felt)

puppets

large pictures of scenes from the story laminated but without words

copies of the book in all possible versions and sizes

physical things from the stories in child size and small world size

character masks

the means for children to record themselves reading or telling the story. e.g. Talking Pens

opportunities to make finger puppets and mini books to take home for retelling the story in different language

opportunities to make things related to the story or using the story as a spin off (e.g. hen house for Rosie)

During the first couple of weeks with a new story, practitioners read the story in large or small groups several times across the period. Practitioners should ask questions encouraging children to think about the story and encourage children to ask questions of characters in the story and these questions could be collected in a question box for later discussion. We also make games that are related to the story to greater or lesser degree but in each case interest in the themes of the story drives the activity.

Benefits of core texts:

provide encouragement for children to retell stories to each other and to their parents and teachers in their own words and in their own language

provide more opportunities for speaking and listening.

provide motivating contexts for work with number, mathematical skills, reading and writing.

provide motivating contexts for exploring other aspects of the curriculum

raise self esteem of children and their confidence to approach texts independently.

raise self esteem of parents who may not be able to read or speak English and consequently feel less able to be partners in their children's literacy development.

provide children learning English with the opportunity to revisit and practice language structures without using repetitive drilling or boring worksheet activities.

A List of Core Texts..

You may think of others you would like to include:

Aahh Said Stork.
All in One Piece.
Bad Tempered Ladybird.
Bet You Can't.
Better Move On Frog.
Bringing the Rain to Kapiti Plain
Brown Bear, Brown Bear. What do you See?
Dark Dark Tale.
Each Peach Pear Plum
Elephant and the Bad Baby.
Goodnight Owl.
Grandpa's Handkerchief.
Great Big Bullfrog.
Handa's Surprise.
Have You Seen the Crocodile?
Hello. Great Big Bullfrog.
Hullabylullabaloo.
Mixed up Chameleon.
Mr Gumpy's Motorcar.
Mr Gumpy's Outing.
Mrs Mopple's Washing Line
My Cat Likes to Hide in Boxes.
Not Me Said the Monkey!
On the Way Home.
Owl Babies
Pardon Said the Giraffe.
Peace at Last.
Rosie's Walk.
Shopping Basket
Ten in a Bed.
Ten Nine Eight!
This is the Bear
Through My Window.
Titch.
Very Hungry Caterpillar.
Whatever Next.
Where's my Teddy.
Whistle for Willie
Who Sank the Boat?
The Wind Blew.

An example of a core text

Let us take an example with *Peace at Last*. This book has been in print for over twenty years and is available in large format, mini versions and in a wide range of languages. Many schools have made up puppet versions (knitted or sewn) of the characters and this project holds a range of games connected to the story.

When a school plans the year's work core texts can be chosen to fit into themes. Any work on sound can use *Peace at Last* as a trigger. A core text may be read at story time at any time during the year, but while it is core (for a week or two) it is read every day and it is accessible for children to read to each other all the time. There may be a display related to the text, a quiz or treasure hunt on the wall. The characters from the story are available in puppet form maybe together with other 3D props such as cuckoo and alarm clocks, flying planes on a mobile, dressing gowns, hair nets and maybe stuffed versions of animals that are lively at night. Sounds of dripping taps, humming refrigerators and snuffling hedgehogs can be on tape. Cut out laminated characters with magnets sit with a set of the books near a radiator so that teachers and/or children can tell the story together to each other in large or small groups. The games available are designed to teach skills and are designed to be open ended enough to encourage children to make their own rules and engage in lots of speaking and listening. The track game has a circular track with alternative routes. Players have to decide where to begin, whether to only go in one direction or whether they can choose. If they throw two dice do they add them, subtract them or choose the number that works best. Do they have to collect the things that kept Father Bear awake in the order of the story or in any order? With the bingo game again there are choices to be made and rules to be agreed to plus of course the all important opportunity to cheat and maybe not to be found out.