

Time for a story:

using stories in the Early Years and Foundation Stage

Sue Temple

Stories are an important part of a young child's way of making sense of their world. Hilary Cooper's excellent article 'Why Stories?' explores some of the reasons why stories are important to young children and their growing 'understanding of the world'. This article is going to explore some recommended stories and how we might use them in a slightly more focussed way to ensure the historical element of the area of learning is strengthened and developed. If we did not have enough justification the Listening and Attention aspect of Communication in the Early Years Framework supports the use of stories explaining that children should 'listen to stories, accurately anticipating key events and respond to what they hear with relevant comments, questions or actions'.
www.history.org.uk/resources/primary_resource_7478.html

Fiction/non fiction

Children need to understand the differences between fact and fiction so reading stories like *Where the Wild Things are* (Sendak 1963) and then discussing where Max's imagination takes over from reality helps young children to begin to grasp this important concept. Reading non-fiction books about real people as well as fairy stories and making this distinction in your discussions helps children separate fact from fiction. 'They answer "how" and "why" questions about their experiences and in response to stories or events.' (EYFS)

Grandparents

Family members, especially grandparents, are a wonderful resource to help young children understand that as time passes we all grow up and the changes this brings in our abilities and how we look. In stories this is a particularly rich seam which authors explore:

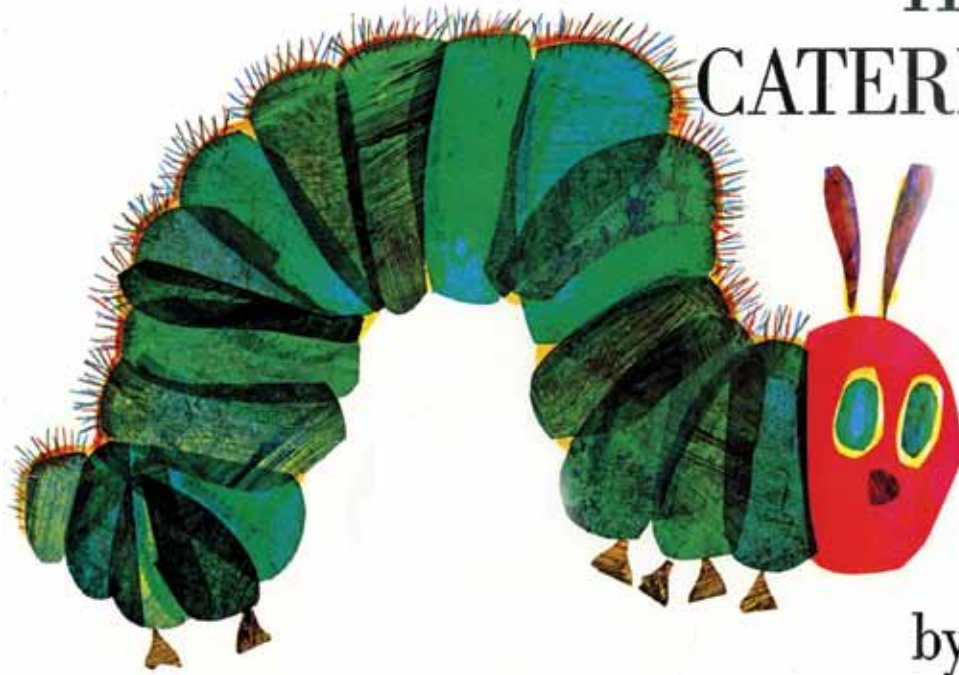
The Toymaker (Waddell and Milne, 1993) is a delightful book in two parts – in the first section a grandmother is looking back at her childhood with her toymaker father and in the second half, as a grandmother, she meets her friends and tells her grandchild about her past self, making a toy representing her father.



In *Grandpa Bodley and the Photographs* (Castle and Bowman, 1993) the grandson finds a box of photographs which the pair talk through together – including the coronation of Elizabeth! The death of *Granpa* at the end of John Burningham's 2003 book of the same name became a bit of a talking point among my trainees, wondering whether they could actually read this book with their children – but children have to cope with death too and the remainder of this book explores the relationship between Granpa and his granddaughter in a realistic and informative way. Not a book to pick up immediately after a child loses a family member but useful to explore relationships and memories of relations who have died.



THE VERY HUNGRY CATERPILLAR



by Eric Carle

A sense of time

The Very Hungry Caterpillar (Carle, 1969) does not perhaps spring to mind when thinking of discussing history but it is very useful to introduce and reinforce the days of the week and the concept of the passage of time. Several other more science-based stories do this very well, for example *Life Cycles: Acorn to Oak Tree* (de le Bédoyère, 2012) and *The Tiny Seed* (Carle, 2005) create opportunities to use time words like first, last, next etc and develop an early understanding of sequencing.

Other perspectives

All children struggle to understand the concept of different points of view so exploring this through a familiar basic story like *The Three Little Pigs* but from the perspective of the wolf as told in *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs!* (Scieszka and Smith, 1991) can help children to begin to understand this important concept.

There are many stories which support discussions about 'Ourselves' or 'Myself', a common theme in EY classrooms, so in this article I have focused on other rather more tricky aspects. It is not always easy to find stories with a 'history' focus suitable for Early Years children but actually once you begin to see the potential in stories like the ones described here it becomes easier to develop and focus on those important ideas and concepts. The Early Years Framework expects 'children [to] talk about past and present events in their own lives and in the lives of family members ... They know about similarities and differences between themselves and others, and among families, communities and traditions' and

'children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas' – these stories and others like them will help you to do this with the children in your care.

Sue Temple is senior lecturer in primary history at the University of Cumbria. She is a member of the *Primary History* editorial team.

