

## KS1 Talk for Reading unit overview

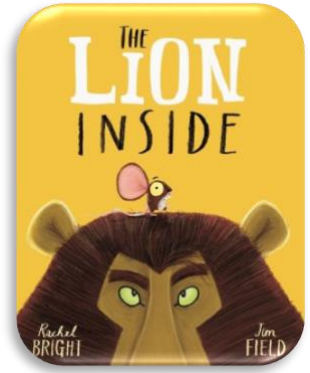


Talk for Reading

### *The Lion Inside* by Rachel Bright

#### Background context notes

Rachel Bright is an English author and illustrator, whose books have sold well over 3 million copies and have been translated into over 40 languages. *The Lion Inside* is one of her bestselling stories and explores the journey of a shy little mouse, setting out on a journey of self-discovery.



#### The initial brainstorm around literary concepts:

One of the absolute joys of reading is that many texts mean slightly different things to different readers. This means that there is often not a single, 'correct' meaning – there are many shades of meaning for different readers. When asking ourselves what is at the heart of the text, or what it is really about, it helps to consider the literary concepts that underpin it. These might include:

- **Role of characters/issues/information**
- **Role of setting/mood/tone**
- **Structure of text – how the text works**
- **Use of language, including figurative language**
- **Perspective/viewpoint – writer/narrator/character/reader**
- **Main themes/ideas/arguments**

It is through the exploration of some or all of these elements that we are able to get to the real purpose of what we are reading. Here are some notes on the story linked to the literary concepts above:

#### **Role of characters/issues/information**

There are two main characters in the story: the mouse and the lion. Children should be given the opportunity to explore each character's personality and behaviours. Comparing and contrasting the two characters would be a key discussion as the story looks at characteristics such as confidence and self-esteem. It also explores issues such as how characters are perceived based on their appearance, as well as introducing the principle of stereotyping.

#### **Role of setting/mood/tone**

The illustrations by Jim Field are used to intensify the importance of the setting in the story. Similar to the contrast in characters, the settings are used to demonstrate their importance of perceived insignificance. In addition, the use of colour and tone reflects the feelings and emotions of the characters at different points in the story. The illustrations also zoom in to demonstrate different viewpoints, adding intensity to the messaging in the story.

#### **Structure of text – how the text works**

The story explores different viewpoints through the illustrations. This is often by positioning the reader behind the character so that we can see their perspective. Whilst the story is told through words, the images are used to convey emotion. Parts of the text are told through speech bubbles that are contextualised within the illustrations. In addition, the author uses different fonts to add emphasis to the messages in the text. In addition, some lines are split as the page turns, presenting opportunity for prediction.

### **Use of language, including figurative language**

The story is written in rhyming pairs, making it enjoyable to read aloud and perform. The use of spoken language helps the reader to connect with the characters once they meet.

### **Perspective/viewpoint – writer/narrator/character/reader**

The story follows the journey of a shy mouse on his quest to find his roar. Although it is told in the third person, the illustrations help the reader to see the journey through the eyes of the mouse. As the two main characters meet, we are introduced to the lion's perspective, which adds an unexpected twist to the tale. By considering the perspective of both characters, children will be able to draw out some of the morals that lie at the heart of the text, such as forming stereotypes of people based on their appearance.

### **Main themes/ideas/arguments**

The story explores themes such as confidence, self-esteem, bravery, loneliness and friendship. It encourages us to think about the importance of being proud of who we are and what we stand for, as well as how we should treat others.

As you can see, the initial brainstorming opens up the vast potential of the picture book. Before exploring the story with the children, clarify what you want the children to have learned by the end of the unit. This will involve deciding which of the literary concepts will be the main focus. Having done this, craft your unit synopsis; this captures the overarching objectives for the unit – the core elements of reading that we hope the children will be able to demonstrate with increasing independence over time.

#### **The unit synopsis**

By the end of the unit, children may be able to:

- talk about how characters see each other;
- talk about why we should not judge people before we know them;
- celebrate what makes a character special or different.

### **Planning the unit of work**

The *Talk for Reading* teaching sequence **introduces** children to a text in order to achieve a basic understanding. It then **investigates** the text through oral comprehension and strategic reading so that children develop a deeper, richer understanding of the literary concepts that lie at the heart of it. The final phase then provides opportunity to demonstrate their **independent understanding**.

The following overview explores the thinking that takes place when preparing a Talk for Reading unit. Please note that planning does not always fit neatly into a grid; sometimes elements get left out or are minimal as the text does not require them. Avoid filling in boxes because they are there and focus on how to teach the text to get the most out of it and move children towards understanding it at a deeper level.

## Phase 1: Introduction to the text

**Hook** the children into the story by showing them the front cover (you may also like to show them a photograph of a mouse and a lion). Talk about what we know about each animal, **activating prior knowledge** and enabling any links to other stories or texts. This is likely to draw out stereotypical responses that can later be challenged as the children read the book. Children could discuss which animals they would choose to be and why, thinking about the qualities they associate with different animals, e.g. brave, strong, wise, etc.

You may like to initiate discussions with the class to tune them into themes that are at the heart of the story, such as:

- *What does it mean to have a voice and be heard?*
- *What does it mean to be brave?*

**Model reading** the story to the children with fluency, focussing on expression and intonation. Use your voice to demonstrate the different characters, adjusting these to portray different emotions as they unfold. Consider where you may like to pause for a **prediction**, encouraging the children to draw upon what they know so far to support their thinking. You may like to pose a question, such as: *how do you think the characters are going to act and why?* Remember to choose the pivotal points in the story where prediction is possible; you do not want to encourage wild predictions that lack relevance, nor do you want to destroy the experience of listening to the story for the first time.

Having read the story to the children, pause and ask them to talk about what happened. You may like to ask them who they have met in the story and what we like or dislike about the characters. Gather some **initial responses** with the class. Remember to try to link these back to the unit synopsis where possible; for example, you may like to discuss how the characters see each other in the story and whether there is anything that surprised them. This could be captured on a flipchart in an initial response grid.

This line of enquiry promotes genuine intrigue and exploration into the text. It is important that there is no perceived right or wrong – all ideas are welcomed and are captured through the shared discussion.

**Re-read** the story, pausing to discuss any unfamiliar **vocabulary**, such as ‘quietest, meekest, ignored, tough, shouty’, etc. Support children with visual aids and child-friendly definitions to clarify meaning. You may also like to add actions to represent the words and plan for opportunities for the children to perform these words in context through drama. Embed the initial understanding of the story through art, drawing and labelling scenes or characters in the text. Encourage children to **retrieve** words and phrases from the text to support their artistic choices.

## Introduction

### Achieve basic understanding:

#### Before reading

- hook
- context
- activate prior knowledge

#### While reading

- teacher models reading with fluency
- prediction
- initial responses
- re-reading
- initial vocabulary
- literal retrieval
- establish focus

<b>How does the mouse see the lion?</b>	<b>How does the lion see the mouse?</b>
<b>What surprised you in the story?</b>	

## Phase 2: Investigation of the text

Deepen the children's understanding of the story by exploring some of the literary concepts related to it – in particular, viewpoint. Through **oral comprehension**, explore various lines of enquiry with the children, teaching them how to listen and respond as readers. Children may benefit from some sentence stems that encourage tentative exploration, such as:

- *I'm wondering if ...*
- *I'm not sure, but ...*
- *We think that ...*
- *Perhaps, ...*

Choose key moments in the story where our perception of the characters changes. You may need to clarify thinking along the way, asking what we thought the character was going to be like and what we now think about them in light of their actions. You may like to explore a **response activity**, such as 'role-on-the-wall', to explore the way the characters look or are seen on the outside compared to the way they feel on the inside.

Talk through how the mouse and the lion feel at different points in the story and how we know. You may like to pose questions to explore, such as:

- *What might the mouse think about the lion?*
- *What might the lion think about the mouse?*
- *What might the characters be thinking and feeling?*

Again, further develop the learning through a variety of **response activities**. This could include drama, performance, the arts or talking/writing in role. Here are some possible ideas:

### **Drama**

- Freeze frame the key scenes in the story. Interview the characters in the freeze frame or get them to reveal what they are thinking.
- Invite children to retell what happened in the story as if they were an eyewitness to the key events, e.g. an eagle watching the encounter from above.
- Hot-seat and interview the different characters. Focus on how they were feeling and how their feelings changed.

### **The arts**

- Draw, paint or make scenes from the story.
- Either make models or draw the characters before and after their meeting to show how they have grown.
- Create murals or collages that represent bravery or friendship.
- Retell the story whilst adding sound effects to capture the mood and emotions of the characters. This could be through the use of percussion or other musical instruments.

### **Talking or writing in role**

- Write one of the characters' diaries at the end of the day, capturing their feelings.
- Write in role as the mouse, giving advice to other shy creatures.
- Write in role as the lion, giving advice to other creatures with fears.
- Create speech or thought bubbles linked to key images in the text.

## **Investigation**

**Deepen understanding of the focus through:**

- oral comprehension
- strategic reading
- response activities
- exploring structure and effect
- summarising
- evaluating
- reading fluently

As the children begin to think deeply about the literary concepts that are at the heart of the text, you may like to model how to **summarise** the collective learning. This may be through a discursive response to a question such as, *how do the characters see each other at the start of the story and does this change by the end?* Co-construct a written response, providing key sentence stems to help the children structure their thoughts. For example:

***At the start, the mouse thinks that the lion is better than him. I know this because he wishes he could be more like him. Also, he goes to see the lion to learn how to roar. However, in the end, the mouse discovers that the lion is not as brave as he seems. I know this because the lion screams and whimpers and says he is scared of mice.***

Some children could have a go at writing their own response to the question, describing how the lion first perceives the mouse and how these perceptions change by the end of the story.

By the end of the **Investigation Phase**, children should be able to demonstrate a rich understanding of the text by reading it fluently. Rehearse reading parts of the story as a class, exploring intonation and expression that clarifies meaning. You may like to initially encourage the children to imitate your own reading, copying your voice and expression. Children may also benefit from marking the text to identify where you add emphasis to words, or where you change the pitch or volume.

Having practised reading the text, consider how children could perform the text. This could be through a class assembly to the rest of the school.

### **Phase 3: Independent Understanding**

When considering independent understanding, ask yourself:

- Can children demonstrate understanding through talking or writing as a reader about the core text?
- Can children demonstrate understanding through identifying the key focus in another text and responding?
- Can children demonstrate understanding through applying what they have learned in their own writing?

Remember to revisit your unit synopsis and reflect on what the children have learned. Use this synopsis to guide how they will demonstrate understanding in this phase.

#### **The unit synopsis**

By the end of the unit, children may be able to:

- talk about how characters see each other;
- talk about why we should not judge people before we know them;
- celebrate what makes a character special or different.

### **Independent understanding**

**Demonstrate understanding through either:**

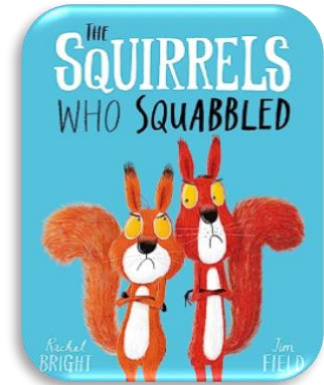
- talking or writing as a reader about the core text; or
- identifying the key focus in another text and responding; or
- applying what they have learned in their own writing.

**Demonstrate understanding through talking or writing as a reader about the core text?**

Children could talk or write in role as one of the characters in *The Lion Inside*, explaining the different feelings they felt throughout the story. This could be captured as a short recount, such as a diary. Children could also create short character profiles or 'Top Trump' cards for the characters, identifying their qualities.

**Demonstrate understanding through identifying the key focus in another text and responding?**

Children could look at other texts by the author, such as *The Koala Who Could* or *The Squirrels Who Squabbled* and talk about the way the characters see each other in the story. This could be explored through guided groups to aid oral assessment.



**Demonstrate understanding through applying what they have learned in their own writing?**

Children could write a story of their own about two contrasting characters that meet and become friends.

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