

The Goldilocks Story

by Joy Cowley

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Noun frequency level: 7.5–8.5
Year 4



Overview

This hilarious, fast-paced story mixes up characters and events from fairy tales and nursery rhymes that will be very familiar to many students. The lively illustrations provide additional clues to the events and add to the fun. Readers need a good knowledge of the tales the story draws on so that they can make inferences in order to understand the action and to predict what might happen next. Although the noun frequency level for this text is low, the mixed

nature of the story adds to its complexity. This complexity provides opportunities for students to develop their critical thinking.

If the students are not familiar with the tales and rhymes that are the basis of this story, you will need to provide enough background experience to enable them to understand the story and the humour.

Texts related by theme "It's Only a Fairy Tale" SJ 1.5.04 | "Missing" SJ 2.2.06

Text characteristics from the year 4 reading standard

a straightforward text structure, such as a structure that follows a recognisable and clear text form

some places where information and ideas are implicit and where students need to make inferences based on information that is easy to find because it is nearby in the text and there is little or no competing information

some compound and complex sentences, which may consist of two or three clauses

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Once upon a time, three bears went for a walk in the forest. There was Pa Bear and Ma Bear and little Baa Baa Bear. Little Baa Baa Bear was a lamb. Pa and Ma Bear, who loved him dearly, had adopted him.

The Bear family came to a house in the forest. "We've done it again," said Pa Bear. "We've walked slap-bang into the Goldilocks story."

"Same old house," said Ma Bear. "Same old table. Same old porridge." "Yum, yum!" cried Baa Baa Bear when he saw the porridge, and he ate the lot.

"That's not the way the story goes," Pa Bear told him.

There were three chairs in the living room. Pa Bear sat in the first chair. "This chair is too big," he said.

Ma Bear sat in the second chair. "This chair is too small," she said.

Baa Baa Bear didn't sit in a chair. He sat on the couch and watched T.V.

some abstract ideas that are clearly supported by concrete examples in the text or easily linked to the students' prior knowledge

some words and phrases that are ambiguous or unfamiliar to the students, the meaning of which is supported by the context or clarified by photographs, illustrations, diagrams, and/or written explanations

figurative language, such as metaphors, similes, or personification

Reading standard: by the end of year 4

Possible curriculum contexts

ENGLISH (Reading)

LEVEL 2 – Purposes and audiences:
Show some understanding of how texts are shaped for different purposes and audiences.

ENGLISH (Writing)

LEVEL 2 – Purposes and audiences:
Show some understanding of how to shape texts for different purposes and audiences.

Possible reading purposes

- To explore and enjoy a humorous text
- To find out how the author has mixed up several tales and rhymes to write a funny story
- To identify how the author has created the humour in her story.

See Instructional focus – Reading for illustrations of some of these reading purposes.

Possible writing purposes

- To retell a fairy tale in a humorous way
- To chart the tales and rhymes in the story and the relationships between the characters
- To write a story that combines two or more fairy tales or nursery rhymes.

See Instructional focus – Writing for illustrations of some of these writing purposes.

Text and language challenges

VOCABULARY:

- Possible unfamiliar words and concepts, including “dearly”, “adopted”, “slap-bang”, “porridge”, “living room”, “couch”, “mint sauce”, “flinging”, “wig”, “sly”
- Use of the metaphor “the door flew open”.

Possible supporting strategies

Identify any words or phrases that may be unfamiliar. Discuss and explain them briefly as they arise, prompting students to draw on strategies such as context, prior knowledge, or word families where possible.

Ensure the students have multiple opportunities to encounter and practise vocabulary that they need to learn. For students who need extra support with the vocabulary (including the names of the characters), ensure that you spend time on key vocabulary during pre-reading discussions and activities, providing definitions and examples. You could create word maps (exploring collocations such as “slap-bang”, “living room”, or “mint sauce”) or concept maps (exploring connections between words) and start or add to vocabulary lists.

Note that “Baa Baa” may be unfamiliar to English language learners.

The English Language Learning Progressions: Introduction, pages 39–46, has useful information about learning vocabulary.

SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED:

- Fairy tales and nursery rhymes, in particular, the storylines and characters in Goldilocks and the Three Bears, Baa Baa Black Sheep, Little Bo Peep, Little Red Riding Hood and the Little Red Hen
- The use of mint sauce to accompany roast lamb
- The meaning of the body language “She put her hands on her hips”.

Possible supporting strategies

If the base tales and rhymes are unfamiliar to students, discuss the kinds of storytelling they grew up with. Spend time reading, retelling, and acting out the tales on which this story is based.

Students who know stories in languages other than English and/or from other cultures could make comparisons between the base tales and others they know. Students who are familiar with the same languages and/or cultures could work together to do this. They could think about narrative structure, themes, types of characters, and language features.

Draw on what you know of students’ familiarity with oral storytelling, including in languages other than English, to help them make connections with these kinds of tales.

Gather and share some variations on fairy tales and rhymes, in particular those in which characters and events are changed for humorous effect.

TEXT FEATURES AND STRUCTURE:

- The features and conventions of fairy tales, including “once upon a time”, “happily ever after”, talking animals, the use of trickery
- The rapid succession of confusions and events, each linked to a different nursery rhyme or fairy tale
- The way the story ends, with a link to yet another familiar tale
- The use of rhetorical questions, including “Do I look like Goldilocks?” and “Bo who?”
- Inversion of the usual word order for dramatic effect, for example, “In came a girl ...”, “and in came Goldilocks”, “Off came the long black hair”.

Possible supporting strategies

If students are familiar with these fairy tales and nursery rhymes, review the way they usually start and finish. Compare these with stories from other cultures or traditions.

Review the kinds of characters and events that they contain, and if you’ve used examples of variations, talk about the ways in which some authors play with familiar concepts to make a story funny for the readers.

Some students may need the support of a story map to help them follow the plot and the connections with other stories.

Instructional focus – Reading

English (Level 2, purposes and audiences – Show some understanding of how texts are shaped for different purposes and audiences.)

Text excerpts from “The Goldilocks Story”

Students (what they might do)

Teacher (possible deliberate acts of teaching)

There was Pa Bear and Ma Bear and little Baa Baa Bear.

Students identify the familiar characters by using their prior knowledge of the “real” Goldilocks story. They cross-check the baby’s name with the illustration to see that he is indeed a lamb, not a bear. Reading on, they confirm from the text that he is a lamb and that he is adopted.

ASK QUESTIONS to help students clarify the purpose for reading. Ask them to identify the familiar aspects of the story and to notice each time something unexpected is introduced.

- What does the author think the reader expects here? Why do you think she’s changed that?
- What did you think when you first read the name of the baby? How did you check what you’d read?

Note that “Baa Baa” may be unfamiliar to English language learners.

“We’ve done it again,” said Pa Bear. “We’ve walked slap-bang into the Goldilocks story.”

Students use their prior knowledge, word meanings, the context, and the use of a hyphen to work out the meaning of “slap-bang”.

MODEL

- I wonder what “slap-bang” means? It sounds like the noise you’d hear if you hit something solid. What do we know that will help us work it out?

Introduce the term onomatopoeia if students do not already know it.

- What can you infer about the audience the author has in mind for this story?
- What do you think her purpose is?

“That’s not the way the story goes,” Pa Bear told him.

Students use their prior knowledge of the original story to locate and evaluate the differences in this text. From this, they infer that the author is playing with the story for fun.

EXPLAIN

that when we make inferences, we combine what we already know about the setting, context, or characters, with our understanding of the words on the page to figure out what the author really means – but hasn’t said directly. This is sometimes called “reading between the lines”. Tell the students we can do this to determine an author’s purpose as well as to work out what’s happening in a story.

- What evidence and prior knowledge did you use to confirm that the author is playing around with the story?
- Do you think she’s meeting her purpose?

“The story has gone wrong!” sobbed poor Pa Bear.

Most students will have already used the illustrations on page 4–5 to infer that Bo Peep is not who she seems. They hypothesise what might happen next, using their prior knowledge of fairy tales and the illustrations on pages 6–7.

PROMPT

If students are confused or need support to clarify the characters and their relationships to the original stories, use a story map to chart the plot and show the connections. Prompt them to use these connections and the text to predict what could happen next.

Students who are less familiar with these base stories can read them before engaging with this story. They could create story maps (perhaps as a jigsaw activity, with each student reading only one story and then sharing the basic outline with others in the group). They could then compare these story maps with what’s happening in this story.

He thought for a long moment, and then he smiled a sly smile. “I know,” he said. “I’ll go and find the story of the Little Red Hen.”

Students infer the meaning of “sly” using what they know (from tales) about the Big Bad Wolf. To infer the wolf’s intentions, they read the end of the story and add this to what they know about the story of the Little Red Hen and to their experience of reading “The Goldilocks Story”.

ASK QUESTIONS about the word “sly” and what it might mean.

- What might a sly smile look like? Show me.
- What does “sly” tell you about his plans for the Little Red Hen?
- When else might you say someone was “sly”?

GIVE FEEDBACK

- I could tell from your faces that you found this story funny. That shows me you’ve been using what you already knew about the characters and their stories to understand what was happening in this text. That helped you to enjoy this great story.
- When you weren’t sure about the meaning, you used the illustrations and what you knew about tales to help work it out. That’s a good strategy.

METACOGNITION

ASK QUESTIONS to make the students’ strategies explicit for them.

- Which strategies helped you most as you read the story? Can you explain how you used them and why?
- How does thinking about the writer’s purpose and audience help you to understand a story? Would that work for regular stories and non-fiction too? Why do you think that?
- How did making connections with other tales you know help you understand the twists in this story?

Reading standard: by the end of year 4

The Literacy Learning Progressions

Assessment Resource Banks

Instructional focus – Writing

English (Level 2, purposes and audiences – Show some understanding of how to shape texts for different purposes and audiences.)

Text excerpts from “The Goldilocks Story”

Once upon a time, three bears went for a walk in the forest.

“Same old house,” said Ma Bear.
“Same old table. Same old porridge.”

“Yum, yum!” cried Baa Baa Bear when he saw the porridge, and he ate the lot.

“That’s not the way the story goes,” Pa Bear told him.

“You’re not Goldilocks!” cried Pa and Ma Bear.

“Do I look like Goldilocks?” asked the girl. “No! I’m Bo Peep, and I’m looking for my sheep. Who are you?”

“See?” said Goldilocks. “Your Miss Bo Peep is really the Big Bad Wolf! If you look in that red bag, you’ll find a bottle of mint sauce.”

Examples of text characteristics

TEXT STRUCTURE

Fairy tales (both oral and written) have familiar characters and begin in familiar ways. The author wants her readers to feel that they are going to read a familiar story they might have heard when they were very young children.

DIALOGUE

Dialogue enables a writer to show characters and their thoughts quickly. It can also help readers feel they have something in common with a character. This helps readers make connections and build expectations of the story.

IMPLICATION

The writer implies information that readers will have about Goldilocks. The use of a question prompts readers to make inferences about who she really is.

ADDING DETAILS

Details can add humour to a funny story, especially when they help to clue the reader in on the “joke”. Details can also prompt the reader to make further inferences.

Teacher

(possible deliberate acts of teaching)

ASK QUESTIONS to help the students think about the effect that the start of a story can have on the audience.

- How does the start of a story give the reader clues about the kind of story it will be?
- What impact do you want your first sentences to have on your readers?

Point out that the first sentences often set the scene and help tune the reader in to the writing. Also note the common narrative structure of beginning with an orientation that tells the reader who, when, and where.

EXPLAIN to the students that dialogue is a good way for an author to connect with their audience.

- When readers feel they share some common knowledge with the characters in your story, you won’t have to explain so much.
- How can the words you give your characters be used to connect with your readers? What do your characters know that your readers will also know?

EXPLAIN that the *time* of the dialogue is “when the story is happening” so it’s all in the present (as opposed to the rest of the narrative, which is in the past).

TELL the students how, as readers, they have to infer meaning from the text.

- The author expects us to use our own knowledge of a story or topic to follow what’s happening. Let’s look at what she expects us to know here, and how that helps her to “show not tell” important information to us.
- How can you do the same in your own writing?

ASK QUESTIONS to prompt students’ thinking about the way details can be added to their writing.

- How can you use dialogue to add details?
- What kinds of details add information or humour, and what details might slow the story down?
- Look at your own writing to see if you need to add or take away any details. What words or groups of words do you need to add?

GIVE FEEDBACK to affirm students’ writing decisions and guide their learning.

- I can see that you’re thinking about the audience for your story. You’ve shown that you are thinking about what they will already know by ...
- This part shows me that you’ve used dialogue to show us what the character feels. You didn’t need to tell me he was scared, I could tell from the words you gave him to speak. I feel like that sometimes too.
- I laughed when I read that part about ... That showed me you understand how to use a small detail to add humour to the story.

METACOGNITION

ASK QUESTIONS to help the students think more deeply about purpose and audience when they write.

- What do you think your audience already knows about ...? What do you need to write to help your audience make connections to what they know?
- How do you want your readers to feel when they read this story? How can you help them feel that way?
- Why did you choose that detail to show the character of ...? What effect do you want it to have?

Writing standard: by the end of year 4
The Literacy Learning Progressions