

My Sister

by Sally Sutton

illustrated by Jennifer Cooper

Overview

Little sister, who has just started school, is too scared to go down the slide. Her older sister describes how they finally solve this problem. There is an audio version of this text on the Ready to Read CD *Readalong 2006*.

Suggested purposes

This book supports the comprehension strategies of making connections, forming hypotheses, summarising, and analysing and synthesising. The high-frequency words repeated in different sentence structures provide opportunities to practise rapid word recognition and develop fluency. The lively dialogue supports expressive reading. This text is a good model of personal experience writing and links well with other books about family relationships, including *My Brother* (Blue).

Text features

(Focus on only one or two per session.)

- the theme of overcoming fear and the idea that people can help when you're feeling scared
- the sisters' relationship
- the way that big sister solves the problem
- the feelings of the characters conveyed through the expressive dialogue and illustrations
- the large amount of dialogue, including some that isn't explicitly attributed to a particular character
- the first-person narrator
- the high-frequency vocabulary
- the initial consonant blends "cl", "cr", "pl", "sl", "st"
- the digraphs "th" – "the", "They", "Thanks"; "ch" – "teacher"; and "sh" – "shouted"
- the verbs ending in "ed" – "played", "started", "shouted"
- the imperative verbs – "Come", "Help", "Jump", "Don't", "Hurry"
- the use of the adverb "too" for emphasis
- the contractions "can't", "It's", "I'm", "I'll", "Don't"
- the rimes "y" in "my" and "cry" and "ound" in "ground" and "around"
- the use of exclamation marks and uppercase letters for emphasis.

Setting the scene

Introduce the cover. *I'm wondering why these two girls are sitting together ... Draw out the idea that they are sisters, and have the children read the title to confirm that. If the word were "sister", what letters would you expect to see? Which sister is older? How do you know?*

The first reading

As this story unfolds, the children may like to share their own similar experiences. Encourage them to use these connections to reflect upon what is happening, evaluate big sister's ideas, predict whether they will work, and suggest solutions.

Read the names of the author and the illustrator.

Title page – *What are the sisters doing now?* Draw out the idea that big sister is helping little sister by pushing her on the swing.

Listen to the children read the text, offering support as necessary.

Page 2 – Help the children to set the scene. *When is this happening? What's the problem? I'm wondering who's telling the story ...*

Page 3 – Briefly discuss little sister's predicament. *Has this ever happened to you?* Encourage the children to predict what big sister might say.

Pages 4 and 5 – Have the children review their predictions. *Did big sister's ideas work?* That they realise that the last line of dialogue on each page is spoken by little sister. *Show me the words that tell you big sister's ideas are not working.*

Pages 6 and 7 – If the children need support with "bell", prompt them with a meaning cue (*What happens at the end of playtime?*) and have them cross-check using visual information. *If that word were "bell", what letters would you expect to see?*

Review the situation – now, not only is little sister stuck, but there is also pressure of time. *I wonder how big sister is feeling ...* Encourage the children to predict what might happen next.

Pages 8 and 9 – *How does the author want you to read the words in capitals?* Encourage expressive reading of the dialogue to help the children feel the increasing tension. Pause to recap the full extent of the problem. *They have to go back to class. What are they going to do?* Think, pair, and share possible solutions.

Pages 10 to 12 – *Is this what you thought would happen? Will little sister go back on the slide again?*

Ideas for revisiting the text

(Choose only one or two per session.)

Listen to the children reread the text, observing their integration of strategies and use of expression, especially when reading the dialogue.

Encourage the children to share their experiences of a time when they felt scared. *Who helped you?* Talk about the characters' feelings and their relationship. The children could suggest thought bubbles for big sister on page 8 or for both sisters on page 10.

Explore the writer's style. *How does the writer make this story exciting?* You could talk about the structure, with the climax on page 9; the short, punchy sentences; the imperative verbs; the dialogue that shows the sisters' feelings; the use of contractions to make the dialogue sound natural; the use of the word "shouted" to create tension; the use of the adverb "too"; and the use of exclamation marks and uppercase letters for impact.

Focus on the narrative structure. Identify the introduction, the problem, the added complication of time from page 6, and the ending. Talk about how the dialogue and the illustrations reflect the characters' feelings and build tension.

Review the purpose of the speech marks. Focus on the dialogue and draw out the idea that “said” or “shouted” do not always come at the beginning or end of a section of dialogue. You could discuss further alternatives to “said”, for example, “cried”, “whispered”, or “whimpered”.

Focus on any initial consonant blends or digraphs that caused difficulty. Locate examples in the text and list other words that start the same way or contain the same digraph.

List the verbs that end in “ed”. Experiment with adding other endings to the root verbs (“shout”, “shouts”, “shouting”, “shouted”) and use the words orally in sentences.

Focus on the contractions “can’t” and “Don’t”. Identify their opposites and list others that are formed the same way, for example, “is” and “isn’t”, “was” and “wasn’t”.

Generate a list of words using the “y” and “ound” rimes. Encourage the children to substitute initial blends as well as single consonants.

Suggestions for further tasks

Listen to the audio version on the CD *Readalong 2006*.

Read or reread other examples of personal experience writing about family relationships, for example, *My Brother*, *The School Band* (both at Blue), or *Keep Trying* (Yellow).

Use the text for Readers’ Theatre.

Use this text as a model for shared personal experience writing. Include dialogue, using features like the contractions and punctuation for emphasis.

Add thought bubbles to the illustrations on pages 8 and 10.

Take digital photos of the children helping each other and add speech bubbles or captions with dialogue.