

Don't Forget Grandma

by Barbara Beveridge

illustrated by Jennifer Cooper

Overview

This simple play has a cast of four characters and a reader. Grandma is coming to dinner, and the children have a lively, entertaining time preparing for her arrival. This text introduces children to the conventions involved with reading and performing plays. Instructions for folding paper napkins are included. They could be used as a follow-up activity to the play reading rather than as a guided reading text at this level. A tape accompanies this book (item 98169).

Curriculum links: health and physical education, social studies (social organisation)

Text features

(Focus on only one or two per session.)

- the initial consonant blends “Gr”, “sp”, “pl”
- the contractions “don’t”, “let’s”, “didn’t”, “I’ll”
- the compound words “forget”, “Grandma”
- the silent “k” in “knife”
- the use of repetition
- the use of exclamation marks
- the use of questions
- the play-writing conventions of a list of characters and of the use of capital letters and bold type to indicate when each character is speaking
- the use of italics for the stage directions
- the humour in the illustrations
- the visual subplots involving a spider and the family cat
- the diagram and instructions for folding napkins.

Setting the scene

Talk about having visitors to your house or to the marae for a meal. *What special things do you need to do before they come?* Be aware that there may be cultural differences between members of the group.

Watch a group of children performing a play. Talk about the conventions of plays.

The children could listen to the audiotape before the reading so that they are familiar with the idea of the characters taking turns to speak.

The first reading

Look at the cover illustration. *Who do you think this visitor might be? What can you see on the table?* Draw out the idea that a lot of care has gone into the table setting. *Can you read the title?* Draw the children's attention to the words "A play" under the title. Talk about what a play is. Read the names of the author and the illustrator.

Title page – Look at the illustration. *Does the house look ready for a visitor? What do you think Mum might ask the children to do?* Read the title again.

Page 2 – Introduce the idea that a play starts with a list of characters. Explain that the group will read the whole play together before choosing people to be particular characters. Read the character list.

Explain the use of the word "scene" at the beginning of a play and the convention of using italics for stage directions. *Can you read and find out what the scene is for this play?* Explain the convention of using upper-case letters and bold print for the names of the characters. *Who is the speaker on this page? What is Mum asking the children to do?*

Page 3 – *Who is speaking now?* Listen to the children read the text for themselves, supporting them as necessary. You may need to remind the children that the names of the characters in bold print are for information only and not for reading aloud. Note that, on pages 3 to 6, George and Rosanna speak the refrain together.

Page 4 – *What are the children doing now?* The children may need support with the word "knives". Remind them that "k" in front of an "n" is silent.

Page 5 – Observe the children's strategies for working out the word "spoons".

Page 6 – Some children may be unfamiliar with the word "napkins". Explain that they are serviettes and discuss what they are for.

Page 7 – Note the stage direction on this page.

When the children have read the play together, consolidate their new learning about the conventions of plays by rereading it with the children taking on individual roles. Ensure that when one child is reading their part, the other children are following the text so that they know when it is their turn to speak.

Ideas for revisiting the text

(Choose only one or two per session.)

Plays are very popular with children, and this play is very short, so the children may read through it many times taking on different roles. Listen to them as they reread the text, observing their ability to cope with the format of the play, to track the text when another character is speaking, and to read expressively.

Focus on any of the initial consonant blends that the children may have been unsure of. Locate the words in the text and make a list of other words that start the same way.

Focus on the silent "k" in "knives". List other words that start with "kn".

Locate the contractions in the text and read the lines where they occur. Talk about what the contractions are short for and read the lines again without using contractions. *How does that sound?* Draw out the idea that contractions are used to make speech sound more natural.

Focus on the compound words “forget” and “Grandma”. List other examples of compound words.

You could talk about the use of the words “grand” or “great” to denote family relationships. Ask the children in the group to talk about other names for grandparents.

Look closely at the illustrations. Discuss the humorous elements, such as Rosanna juggling the spoons on page 4.

Follow the visual sub-plot of the cat or the spider and tell their stories.

Suggestions for further activities

Listen to the audiotape.

Perform the play for an audience.

As a group, write instructions on how to set the table.

Make an invitation for a grandparent.

Help the children to fold paper napkins using the instructions inside the back cover.