

The Great Car Clean-out

by Margaret Mahy

illustrated by Philip Webb

Overview

In this humorous story, a somewhat disorganised family pitches in, at Mum's insistence, to clean out the car. They gleefully discover lost items amongst the clutter. Lively dialogue and a spirited outburst from Mum are just right for encouraging fluent, expressive reading. The wide variety of text features make this a particularly useful text for monitoring the children's use of a range of reading strategies. There is an audio version of this text on the Ready to Read CD *Readalong* 2003.

Curriculum links: social science

Text features

(Focus on only one or two per session.)

- the variety of initial consonant blends
- the digraphs "ph" – "phone"; and "sh" – "she", "shook", "should", "shouted"
- the soft "c" in "cellphone"
- the "oo" sound in "book", "floor", "good", "look", "looked", "looking", "shook"
- the words ending in "ed" – "picked", "started", "tangled"; and in "er" – "paper", "under"
- the "y" ending in "busy" and "tidy"
- the prefix "un" in "untidy"
- the irregular past-tense verbs "meant", "said", "shook", "swept"
- the contractions "I'm" and "I've"
- the compound words "cellphone", "everyone", "today"
- the use of upper-case letters and exclamation marks for emphasis
- the lively, colloquial dialogue
- the humorous storyline
- the characterisation.

Setting the scene

What happens when your house gets untidy? Who tidies it up? Do you help?
Encourage the children to share their experiences of tidying up at home. *What about your car? Does it ever need cleaning out?*

The first reading

Look at the cover of the book. *Why is Mum looking worried?* Ask the children to read the title. Read the names of the author and the illustrator.

Turn to the title page. *What is Mum going to do?*

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

Page 2 – *Who do you think will help Mum?*

Pages 3 to 5 – Talk about how the writer makes the conversation sound more like real talking by missing out the word “I’m”.

Note that there are no picture cues for the items that are lost. If the children need help to read the nouns, encourage them to draw on what they know and can do. For example, ask “*What other sound can the letter “c” have?* (in “cellphone”) or write “cell” and “phone” on the whiteboard so that the children can practise their decoding on smaller, less daunting chunks of text.

Pages 6 and 7– The drama is building! Draw attention to the exclamation marks on page 6 and the use of repetition to show how Mum is feeling. Encourage the children to read these pages expressively.

Page 8 – On this page, Mum’s stance, her eyebrows, her positioning in the foreground of the illustration, the word “shouted”, the imperative verb “Listen!”, and the use of upper-case letters and exclamation marks, reflect her growing irritation. Have fun encouraging the children to put their hands on their hips, too, and to be very expressive!

Page 9 – Review the situation with the children. *Why is Mum so cross? What are the rest of the family thinking now?*

Page 10 – *How do they feel about helping? How can you tell?*

Pages 11 to 15 – Share the humour together as the family members discover their lost items.

Page 13 – The children may need support with “tangled”. Encourage them to focus on the first syllable. *This is a word that means caught up inside something.* Reread the sentence with the children and pause after “tan ...” to enable them to come in with the word.

Page 14 – If the children have difficulty with the irregular verb “swept”, direct them to the illustration to clarify that David is sweeping. *What did David do?* Explain (if necessary) that the correct form of “sweeped” is “swept”.

Page 16 – Make sure that the children realise that it’s Dad who says “We should do this more often.” The children may not have come across the phrase “Yeah, right” in print before. *Why does Mum say, “Yeah, right”?*

Ideas for revisiting the text

(Choose only one or two per session.)

Listen to the children reread the text to themselves, observing their use of strategies and their ability to read expressively.

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

Revise the “ed” verb endings. Compare them with some of the irregular verbs. *Would “sweeped” sound right? What word do we say instead of “shaked”*

Listen to the sound of the “c” in “cellphone”. Remind the children that when they come across unfamiliar words, they need to remember that letters can have more than one sound.

Write the words “busy” and “tidy” on the whiteboard and read them with the children. *What do you notice about the end sounds of these words?* List some other familiar words that have “y” as an “e” sound.

List the words “book”, “floor”, “good”, “look”, “looked”, “looking”, and “shook” and read them together. *What is the same about all of these words? What letters make that sound in these words?*

Talk about how you can make words mean the opposite by adding the prefix “un”, for example, “tidy” to “untidy” and “do” to “undo”.

Revise the meanings of the contractions “I’m” and “I’ve”. Talk about how contractions make conversations sound more natural.

Find the compound words in the text. Talk about how it’s easier to work them out when they’re split into two shorter words. Remind the children about the strategy of looking for the biggest part of a word they know, when they are faced with unfamiliar words.

Ask the children to describe the characters in the story and their feelings, drawing on information in the text and illustrations. *Why do you think that?*

Engage the children in a discussion about how they tidy their bedrooms. *Have you ever found things that you thought you had lost when you tidied up?*

Suggestions for further activities

Enjoy the book and the CD at the listening post.

Read other books written by Margaret Mahy or illustrated by Philip Webb.

Do some tidying together! Sort out an untidy tote tray, drawer, or cupboard with the children, then write captions: “Oh look!” said Tom. “The stapler! It was under the paper!”

Innovate on the text, for example, *The Great Classroom Clean-up*.

Do “before” and “after” pictures of the car.

Write captions with illustrations showing ways that the children clean up at home.