

My Extraordinary, Entertaining, Synchronised Swimming Bunny

Teachers' Guide

Building blocks

Children should already have been enabled to:

- 'Communicate information, meaning, feelings, imaginings and ideas in a clear and organised way' (The Northern Ireland Curriculum, 2007, p.6)
- 'Experiment with rhymes, rhythms, verse structure and all kinds of word play and dialect' (The Northern Ireland Curriculum, 2007, p.56)

Children should be familiar with traditional styles of poetry, describing non-fiction events using figurative language, such as 'The Lake Isle of Innisfree' by W.B. Yeats.

<http://poetryclass.poetrysociety.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Yeats-Innisfree.pdf>

Children will therefore be exposed to the contrasting style of poetry in 'My Extraordinary, Entertaining, Synchronised Swimming Bunny' which features nonsense verse, which is whimsical in nature and humorous in tone, with a strong focus on rhyme.

You may also choose to introduce the children to other examples of nonsense poetry, for instance 'Jabberwocky' by Lewis Carroll. This poem is a good example of rhyme featured in nonsense poetry and demonstrates to the children that poetry styles do not all fit into one box.

<http://poetryclass.poetrysociety.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Imaginary-words-Eva-Salzman.pdf>

Key aspects of learning

Nonsense verse

'My Extraordinary, Entertaining, Synchronised Swimming Bunny' features nonsense verse throughout. The poem features an AABB rhyme scheme, typical of nonsense poetry. The rabbit in the poem gives it a humorous tone as she is personified. The poem is therefore useful for showing children that poetry does not always have to be sombre and earnest but can be light-hearted instead.

Activity: Children could make up their own imaginary verbs to describe what an animal or an element of nature is doing and make up definitions for the words.



Personification

Personification in poetry is helpful for developing children's creativity as it echoes the thoughts of children's imaginings about the secret lives of their toys and pets. 'My Extraordinary, Entertaining, Synchronised Swimming Bunny' illustrates this very effectively and encourages children to think outside of traditional poetry writing and delve into a more interesting selection of language.



Activity: Children could go around the classroom or their house and find inanimate objects or animals and describe them using personification. For example, they could describe what happens on Christmas Day from start to end, personifying elements of the day, such as 'the presents smiled back at us' or 'the oven opened its doors and welcomed the food to its home'. Personification could also be taught by describing weather and the environment as being human-like. <http://poetryclass.poetrysociety.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Cat-in-the-window-Brian-Morse.pdf>

Rhyme

The use of rhyme throughout the poem is useful for children to develop their skills in recognising which words rhyme and putting these together to form rhyming couplets. The nonsense style of the poem means the children are not as restricted to find rhyming words that are real, and they are encouraged to develop their own imaginary words if they desire to do so.

Activity: The children go outside and find objects that rhyme and make a list. The class then collectively make a poem consisting of a series of rhyming couplets, with everyone in the class contributing to the whole class poem. Students could start with rhyming words that are provided that they have to match and put into rhyming couplets. Children who are more confident with writing poetry could then individually create their own poems using an AABB rhyme scheme.

<https://www.booklife.co.uk/products/rhyming-couplets>

Additional Activities

Performance Poetry activity: The students will be able to go a step further than reading and writing poetry and will gain experience in performing it. Children should perform their poems orally in groups, integrating gestures, sounds and facial expressions into their performances. Characters in the poem can be taken on by confident and struggling pupils alike as there will be different roles in the presentation, such as the narrator and main and less prominent characters. This will help all children become engaged in poetry due to its interactive nature.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/clips/zp9b4wx>

