

A Collection of Rudyard Kipling’s Just So Stories, illustrated by Christopher Corr, Cathie Felstead, Jeff Fisher, Satoshi Kitamura, Clare Melinsky, Jane Ray, Peter Sís and Louise Voce, Walker Books

On the one hand dated by their views on Empire and their Victorian values, and on the other full of rich and playful language, Kipling’s *Just So Stories* are whimsical and inventive and have captivated generations of children with their fantastical explanations of why things are the way they are.

Illustrated by eight prominent artists, readers of this collection of these classic children’s stories are offered a new perspective on the tales, some of which may already be known. The stories within this collection lend themselves to retelling, to debate and argument, and to emulation and imitation.

Overall learning aims of this teaching sequence:

- To appreciate how narrative texts can give us insight into the attitudes and values of the period in which they were written.
- To appreciate how language changes and evolves over time.
- To identify and enjoy imaginative use of language.
- To analyse narrative structure of a series of origin stories.
- To compose and illustrate narratives based on a given model.

This teaching sequence is designed for a Year 5 or Year 6 class.

Overview of this teaching sequence.	
This teaching sequence is approximately 2 weeks long if spread over 10 sessions.	
Teaching Approaches Reading Aloud and Rereading Storytelling Bookmaking Drama and Role Play Visual Approaches Shared Writing Responding to Illustration Debate and Argument Poetry Story Mapping	Writing Outcomes Longer narratives Annotated Story Maps Notes for debate Poems Notes for poetry writing Shared narratives
Resources Story stones (plain stones the children are able to paint on)	

Teaching Sessions

Session 1: Reading Aloud, ‘Tell Me’ - Booktalk

Reading aloud - Reading aloud is one of the most important ways that children are motivated and supported to become readers. It is essential that children experience hearing texts read aloud in the classroom as a regular part of each school day.

‘Tell Me’ – Booktalk is an approach to discussing texts that supports all readers and writers and is particularly useful for those children who find literacy difficult, developed by the author and educationalist Aidan Chambers. In its simplest form, the approach is based around asking children ‘Tell me’ about four key elements of a text, likes and dislikes, puzzles they have, and connections they make, both within the text and from other sources.

- Explain to the children they are going to be reading a collection of stories written over a hundred years ago by a writer who was a celebrity of the time.
- Ask the children to discuss in groups of three or four what they already know about this period of time, about the late Victorian period, and from where they have gained this knowledge.
- Hold a whole class discussion on the children’s perceptions of how spoken and written English might have been different from the way it is today.

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- Read aloud *The Elephant's Child*.
- Ask the children the 'Tell Me' questions: *What did you like about this story? What did you dislike? What puzzled you? What connections were there (with any other texts, films, stories)?*
- Reread the story, this time asking the children to note, as you go along, examples of language that sounds dated or unusual, or memorable, and secondly, for any evidence of attitudes and values that seem out of place with the world today.
- Discuss the language and attitudes within the story as a whole class, drawing out the more puzzling aspects of the story, the dated language and attitudes or behaviour.
- Create a grid on one of your class walls which has columns for made up words, words which are no longer used, memorable language (for example, 'satiated curiosity') and attitudes, and fill this in for *The Elephant's Child*. As you go on throughout the sequence, remember to update this chart with more examples from different stories.

NOTE: You should find time to read through the stories that are not referred to within the sequence at other times around this teaching sequence, to give the children the opportunity to hear the other stories in the collection and also to discuss these stories, in particular their structure, language and attitudes.

Sessions 2 and 3: Story Mapping, Storytelling, Reading Aloud

Story Mapping - Mapping a story and its setting helps to develop a sense of the story world.

Story Telling - Retelling a story orally is a powerful way for children to make a story their own. Storytelling helps children to concentrate on the best way to tell the story, and to make choices about the words and phrases they use in the telling. All of this will help them greatly when they come to writing.

- Read aloud *How the Whale Got His Throat*.
- Demonstrate retelling the story without the text in front of you using pre-prepared story stones you have painted with prompts to help you retell the story.
- Prepare copies of *How the Camel Got His Hump*, *How the Rhinoceros Got His Skin* and *How the Leopard Got His Spots*.
- Split the class into groups of four and give each of the groups copies of one of the four stories (some groups may be working on the same story as a result of this).
- Ask one child in each group to read their story aloud to the rest of the group (or for the children to read a couple of paragraphs each and pass the story on).
- Ask the children to reread their story and then to work as a group to create a story map for the story, picking out eight key points within the story to illustrate and annotate.
- Following this, ask each of the children to choose two of the scenes in the story and, taking two blank story stones, to paint on their stone an image that will help them remember the scene they are depicting.
- In Session 3, ask the groups to rehearse telling their story using the story stones and find an opportunity for them to perform their stories to a larger audience, perhaps to another class, or video record the children's retellings and share them on your school or class blog.
- Following this session, fill in your grid of language and attitudes, based on the children's reading of these stories and picking out the language that is no longer in common use (for example, 'comestible' in *How the Rhinoceros Got His Skin*).

Session 4: Performing poetry, Reading aloud

Performing Poetry - Mark up a poem (lines/verses/refrain) to support a choral performance. Decide how you can mark it to emphasise the meanings and patterns in the poem. You can use coloured post-it tabs on the big book or highlight on an OHT or Whiteboard.

- Read aloud the poem that accompanies *How the Camel Got His Hump*.
- Reread the poem and display the poem for the whole class to see.
- Explain you are going to be creating a whole class performance of the poem and discuss with the children how we could read the poem as an ensemble to bring this poem to life.
- Ask the children to pick out specific words from the poem they would like to emphasise in some way and highlight these words on your displayed copy of the poem.
- Discuss with the class the different techniques you could use (for example, choral reading, individual reading,

altering the volume, dynamics, adding sound effects and actions to enhance the performance).

- Explore with the children what would be appropriate for a performance of this poem, and mark up the poem with the different techniques you are going to use.
- Rehearse and refine your whole class performance before performing it to a broader audience or recording it.

Session 5: 'Tell Me' – Booktalk, Writing Poetry, Drama and Role Play – Dance, Performing Poetry

- Read aloud *The Cat That Walked By Himself*.
- Ask the children the 'Tell Me' questions for this story.
- Reread the story and ask the children to note down, in pairs, memorable words and phrases about the way cats behave from the story on a large sheet of paper.
- Watch a couple of minutes of the National Geographic video on cats (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-fkmH9rlwtE>) which shows many aspects of cat behaviour. Ask the children, in their pairs again, to write down words and phrases about how cats move, act and behave from the video they have just watched (perhaps focusing on the different behaviours the cat adopts in different circumstances).
- Ask each of the pairs to form a group with another two pairs and share the words and phrases they have gathered so far, adding to each other's phrases and developing them further.
- Play a piece of music and explain that each of the groups is going to create a short cat dance, based on the movement and behaviour of cats (you could use a piece of music such as <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VT2J1Ot9N5c> or an orchestral instrumental piece).
- Following practising and performing their cat dances, ask each of the groups to add further words and phrases to their sheet of paper and then to write a group poem titled *The Cat*, which they will then perform to the rest of the class. Encourage each of the groups to consider how they will perform their poem, building in elements of their dance as well as considering the dynamics of their reading itself.

Session 6: Debate and Argument

Debate - debating ideas calls for a more formal and objective response to the story and helps children begin to analyse how the writer has made us feel this way. Teachers can structure debates inviting 'for' and 'against' arguments around particular statements arising from a book.

- Refer back to your grid of language and attitudes, which, by now, should be full of examples.
- Highlight the column in which you've noted attitudes which are no longer considered acceptable (this may contain items such as attitudes towards women, ideas of Empire, racial attitudes and how children are treated within the narratives).
- Explain you are going to be holding a debate about the place of the *Just So Stories* in today's world, and whether they still have a place. Split the class into two groups, one arguing for the stories and one group arguing against. Give each group time to consider their arguments (encourage the children to use examples and evidence from within the text to support their arguments) before holding a formal class debate on the subject.

Sessions 7, 8, 9 and 10: Shared Writing, Bookmaking, Responding to Illustration, Visual Approaches - Illustration

Shared Writing - Shared writing is one of the most important ways a teacher can show children how writing works and what it's like to be a writer. Acting as scribe, the teacher works with a small or large group of children to create a text together, enabling them to concentrate on their ideas and composition.

Bookmaking - Publishing their work for an audience helps children to write more purposefully. Bookmaking provides a motivating context within which children can bring together their developing understanding of what written language is like; making written language meaningful as they construct their own texts.

Responding to Illustration - The children's books featured have been chosen because of the quality of the illustrations they contain and the ways in which the illustrations work with the text to create meaning for the reader. Children need time and opportunities to enjoy and respond to pictures and to talk together about what the illustrations contribute to their understanding of the text.

- In Session 7, explain to the children they are going to be composing their own *Just So Stories* along the lines of the way the 'How the...' stories were composed.
- As a class, discuss the structure of the stories and map the key elements of these stories out on a flip chart (as a

mind map, a story map or a storyboard).

- Choose an animal (a snail, perhaps) and a title for a story you will start to share writing with the class (How the Snail Got His Shell). Model starting the story, referring back to Kipling's text and modelling his use of language (in particular his use of exaggeration, repetition and rich, often archaic language) and use your storymap to help you structure the opening of this story.
- In Session 8, display images of a range of animals with distinctive features for the children to compose their own stories about (for example, a millipede for How the Millipede Got Her Legs).
- Discuss with the children the kind of language they are going to use to support their story, or whether they will use Kipling's rich, archaic language or bring the stories up to date. Discuss with the children whether they will bring the attitudes within the stories up to date for a modern readership and whether there would be a danger or alienating readers if you did not do this.
- In Session 9, display illustrations from each of the eight illustrators in the text and ask the children to respond to these illustrations, explaining their preferences and choosing a style and medium in which they will create an illustration for their story.
- In Session 10 (and any further sessions – this element may well take longer than a single session), the children will edit and refine their stories, testing them out on each other for their effectiveness, and helping each other with the story structure.
- Collect the children's stories and illustrations together in a class collection, which can be read aloud, shared with other classes and with visitors to the class, used in the class reading corner for children within the class to read to themselves or others, or published in the school library.