

White Sunday in Sāmoa

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photographs by Jill MacGregor

Overview

This factual recount describes how a young Sāmoan boy, with the support of his family, gets ready to celebrate White Sunday. There is a glossary of Sāmoan terms and extra information about White Sunday at the end of the book. The audio version on the Ready to Read CD *Readalong 2005* includes an interview with two children about their experiences of White Sunday. This book is also available in five Pasifika languages in the Tupu series.

Suggested purposes

This text provides an opportunity for Sāmoan children to share their experiences and for other children to increase their awareness of celebrations in other cultures. It supports the comprehension strategies of making connections, forming hypotheses, asking questions, and identifying the author's purpose.

Text features

(Focus on only one or two per session.)

- the way Tafu's family helps him prepare for his special day
- the Sāmoan setting
- the feelings expressed in the text and the photographs
- the combination of present tense and future tense on pages 2 to 14
- the extra information on page 16
- the use of subject-specific language and Sāmoan words
- the glossary and the pronunciation guide on the inside front cover
- the use of macrons to denote long vowels
- the indicators of time – "After dinner", "Afterwards", "On Saturday", "Soon", "Then", "Today", "When"
- the inclusion of dialogue
- the use of exclamation marks for emphasis on pages 5 and 8
- the use of short sentences on page 8 to create a sense of pace and excitement
- the use of questions on pages 7 and 9 to demonstrate Tafu's nervousness
- the use of repetition ("eat and eat") for effect on page 13
- the Pasifika design elements (the authentic photographs, the Sāmoan setting, and the use of siapo borders and palm-leaf backgrounds).

Possible challenges

- the Sāmoan words and names
- the subject-specific vocabulary – "Bible", "hymns", "prayers", "verse".

Introducing the text

Tell the children you have a book for them to read about a boy called Tafu who is getting ready for White Sunday in Sāmoa. If you have Sāmoan children in the group, encourage them to share their experiences (but be aware that not all Sāmoan children celebrate White Sunday). You could draw the children into the reading by having them listen to the interview about White Sunday on the CD *Readalong 2005*. If the children are not familiar with this celebration, it may be helpful to read page 16 at this point. Draw out the idea that White Sunday is a “children’s day”. Look at the photographs on the cover or page 8 and talk about the special clothes the children are wearing. Introduce the term “pale”. Depending on the children’s experiences of church, you might also want to talk about aspects such as hymns, prayers, and Bible verses. Explain that White Sunday in New Zealand may look a bit different to some of the photographs in this book.

You could encourage the children’s use of the comprehension strategy of asking questions by asking them what they would like to find out from this book, or you could ask them what they think Tafu will need to do to get ready (forming hypotheses). Record their questions (or ideas) on the whiteboard to refer to during the reading.

During the reading

Clarify the purpose for the reading with the children. Read the title and the names of the author and the photographer. Briefly explain the purpose of the macron in the word “Sāmoa”. Explain to the children that this is a true story and that the book has some extra features to help them while they’re reading. Explain the use of the pronunciation guide on the inside front cover and the glossary on page 16. Make sure you’re familiar with the words in these so that you can support the children in their use of them.

Title page – *Where is Tafu now? How is he feeling? What might he be thinking?*

Ask the children to read the text silently, pausing at various points for discussion or to clarify any difficulties. As they come across the answers to their questions or information relevant to their hypotheses, record these on the whiteboard. Note that these notes include many examples of questions that you may like to feed in as well.

Page 2 – *What does Tafu need to do first? Who will help him?*

Page 3 – Check that the children know what a lāvalava is. *What is the problem here? How is it solved?*

Pages 4 and 5 – *Why did the boys fall asleep?* Encourage the children to draw on their own experiences of having to practise hard for a performance and of having to wait for their turn.

Page 6 – You may need to support the children with the names on this page and explain what an umu is. If necessary, help the children chunk the word “decorate”. Have the children think, pair, and share about how Tafu’s family are helping.

Page 7 – *How is Tafu feeling? How is Dad helping?* Draw out the idea that the question shows what Tafu is thinking. *Have you ever felt like that?*

Pages 8 and 9 – Refer to the glossary to check the children’s predictions of what a

pale is. *How does the writer want you to read the first sentence?* Note that the short sentences on page 8 create a sense of haste and excitement. *How is Tafu feeling? How is Mum feeling? Do you think Tafu will be OK?*

Pages 10 and 11 – If necessary, show the children how to use the pronunciation guide to help them with “Laumua”. *How will Tafu be feeling now?*

Pages 12 and 13 – If necessary, use the glossary to clarify the meaning of “fale”. *What makes the lunch so special? Why do the children “eat and eat”?*

Page 14 – *Why do you think Tafu feels sad?*

Page 16 – Explain to the children that this page is like a summary of what happens in the rest of the book. If the children didn’t use the glossary while they were reading, read the glossary together now, talking about the words and their meanings.

Refer to the children’s list on the whiteboard. *Did the text answer all your questions? What else would you like to find out about White Sunday? Or: Did Tafu do all the things you thought he would? Was there anything he did that wasn’t on your list?*

Why do you think the author wrote this book?

After the reading

(Choose only one or two per session.)

Many of the aspects first raised in During the Reading are revisited in more depth in this section. As always, choose the activities according to the needs of your children.

Listen in while the children reread the text with a partner, noting their strategies for managing the unfamiliar vocabulary and their use of expression.

Talk about the people who helped Tafu. Create a graphic organiser of who did what. Ask the children to compare this with their own experiences of preparing for a special occasion.

Encourage the children to share any experiences they have had of giving a performance. *How did you feel? How did you get ready? Who helped you?* You could use the interview that accompanies this text on the CD *Readalong 2005* as a stimulus for this discussion.

Ask the children to look through the book and then think, pair, and share their ideas about the ways the book lets the reader know about Tafu’s feelings, for example, through the photographs, direct description, dialogue, and Tafu’s questions. There’s also a more subtle indicator on page 8, where the use of short sentences creates a sense of pace that suggests the idea of time going very fast when you don’t want something to happen! *What do you think Tafu liked/didn’t like about White Sunday? How would you have felt?*

Focus on the special clothing Tafu wore. Ask the children to share their own experiences of wearing special clothes.

Talk about how the design of the book emphasises the Sāmoan setting. You could focus on the information in the photographs (people, clothing, housing, and landscape), the use of “siapo” borders, and the palm-leaf backgrounds.

Identify the indicators of time in the text and draw out the idea that they help the reader to follow the sequence of events. Together, construct a timeline of events. You could also talk about how the use of a variety of alternatives to “and then” makes writing sound more interesting. Give the children some examples of interesting sequence indicators and have fun practising using them in oral sentences.

Talk about the writer’s decision to use the present and future tenses for this recount. Talk about how this makes readers feel as if they are sharing Tafu’s experiences, finding out how he feels before and during the event. For ESOL children, it may be helpful to identify some of the present-tense verbs and talk about how they often end with “s”, for example, “Mum goes”, “Tafu tries”, “Dad prays”. You could talk about how the text would be different if it was written in the past tense and rewrite page 5 together as an example.

Talk about the purpose of the glossary and/or the pronunciation guide. Model the reading of a section of the text that includes glossed words and talk about what you’re doing (and why) as you refer to the glossary (or pronunciation guide). Explain that the words in the lists are in alphabetical order to make them easier to find quickly. Remind the children of other times when words are listed in alphabetical order, for example, in a dictionary or an index.

Suggestions for further tasks

Listen to the audio version and the interview about White Sunday on the CD *Readalong 2005*.

Read other books or articles about White Sunday or other Pasifika celebrations. You could read the article “White Sunday in Sāmoa” (*School Journal*, Part 4 Number 2, 1996) to the children. It’s written in quite a sophisticated style, but it reinforces many of the ideas in this text.

Read “The Umu” in *Crinkum Crankum*.

Make the Tupu versions of the text available for the children to take home or invite speakers of the various languages to read the books to the children.

Write an account of White Sunday from Tafu’s point of view.

Have the children use their graphic organisers (developed after the reading) to write a recount about their experiences of preparing for a celebration or special event.

Invite an expert in to show the children how to make a pale.

Have the children create their own siapo designs.

Have the children learn and practise a short poem to present to others. Talk afterwards about the process of preparing for the performance and how they felt about it.