

# The Hissing Bush

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## Overview

Two children come across a bush that makes hissing sounds, and they gradually get close enough to discover a goose guarding her nest. This text is also available as a big book, and there is an audio version on the Ready to Read CD *Readalong 2006*.

## Suggested purposes

This narrative supports the comprehension strategies of forming hypotheses and analysing and synthesising. The big book is useful for modelling a variety of processing and comprehension strategies. Dynamic illustrations, lively dialogue, and the anticipation of solving the mystery encourage expressive reading. This is a good text to use for monitoring the integration of children's reading strategies at the end of the Blue level.

## Text features

(Focus on only one or two per session.)

- the framework of high-frequency words
- the initial consonant blends “cl”, “fl”, “pl”, “sn”, “st”
- the digraphs “ch” — “children”, “each”; “sh” — “bush”, “she”, “show”; and “th” — “feathers”, “that”, “the”, “They”, “This”
- the words ending in “ed” — “asked”, “fluffed”, “hissed”, “jumped”, “laughed”, “looked”, “walked”, “whispered”, “yelled”; in “ing” — “hissing”, “playing”; and in “er” — “closer”, “feather(s)”, “other”
- the irregular past-tense verbs — “heard”, “ran”, “said”, “took”, “went”
- the strong narrative structure and the dramatic climax
- the lively dialogue that includes colloquial language — “Don’t be silly”, “so weird”
- the contractions — “didn’t”, “doesn’t”, “Don’t”, “I’ll”, “it’s”
- the alternatives to “said” — “asked”, “whispered”, “yelled”
- the use of the dash and the ellipsis to build anticipation on page 9
- the use of italics and exclamation marks to support expressive reading
- the use of onomatopoeia — “Hiss”, “Hissss”
- the visual language features — the thought bubble on page 8, the question mark on page 5, text in the illustrations, the “noise” lines on page 6, and the increasing text size on page 11.

## Setting the scene

Focus on the title, using the cover illustration as a support for “bush”. Clarify that the word “bush” in this text means just one bush, not a whole forest. *Do bushes hiss?* Build a sense of anticipation and give a purpose for reading by asking the children why a bush might hiss (forming hypotheses). *Let’s read and find out if we’re right.* Consider using a paper clip to attach page 9 to the back cover to ensure that the ending stays a surprise.

## The first reading

These notes are suggestions for using this book for guided reading. If you're using the big book for shared reading, encourage the children to read along with you and increase the level of support, for example, by thinking aloud about your reading strategies.

Read the names of the author and the illustrator.

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

Page 2 — *Where are they? What are the children doing?* If necessary, help the children decode the characters' names.

Page 3 — All through this book, keep asking: *What could it be?*

Page 4 — *How would James say that? What's Nicola going to do?*

Page 5 — *Why did she walk past the bush again? What is she thinking?*

Page 6 — The children are likely to use meaning to predict the word "weird". Prompt them to cross-check using the initial and final letters.

Page 7 — If necessary, support the children with decoding "snake". There is no picture clue here so remind the children of ways of cross-checking: *Do those letters look right? Does that make sense? Do snakes hiss? Is Nicola right?* Review the children's hypotheses.

Page 8 — *What is James thinking? Could it be a cat?*

Page 9 — *How are the children feeling? How does the author want you to read this page?* Draw out the feeling of anticipation. *What might happen?* Remove the paper clips.

Pages 10 and 11 — Enjoy the revelation! Encourage expressive reading.

Page 12 — *Remember how the bird fluffed up his feathers in Purr-fect? I think the goose is doing this for another reason ...*

Encourage the children to review their hypotheses: *Were you right? Could this be a true story?* (The story is based on a real incident.)

## Ideas for revisiting the text

(Choose only one or two per session.)

Listen to the children reread the text, observing their integration of strategies and their confidence. If they are managing well and show a good understanding of the text, they are probably ready to move on to the Green level. A running record will confirm this.

Focus on any initial consonant blends or digraphs that the children had difficulty with. List other words that start the same way. Look at the use of the digraphs as medial or final sounds.

Locate the verbs in the text that end in "ed" or "ing". Using the whiteboard, experiment with adding other endings to the root verbs ("walks", "walking", "walked") and use the words orally in sentences.

Compare the irregular past-tense verbs with their present-tense forms. Remind the children that not all verbs can have "ed" added to them and that they need to draw on their knowledge of spoken English to decide what sounds right. For ESOL children,

who are less likely to be able to draw on this knowledge, try to use these words often in subsequent conversations.

Talk about the purpose of the speech marks. Reread some of the dialogue that includes contractions. Draw out the idea that contractions make speech sound more natural.

Focus on the narrative structure. Have the children act the story out as a way of identifying the introduction, the problem (and the children's attempts to solve it), and the dramatic ending.

Explore the writer's style. *How does the writer make this story sound exciting?* You could talk about the structure of the story, the dialogue, the alternatives to "said", the repetition that creates suspense, the onomatopoeia, and the punctuation. Suggest that the children could use these ideas in their own writing.

Focus on the illustrations. You could talk about the expressions on the children's faces, the close-up on page 10, the thought bubble, and the text in the illustrations.

### Suggestions for further tasks

Listen to the audio version on the CD *Readalong 2006*.

Share-read *The Safe Place* (Green), which is also about a bird that is protecting her nest.

Have the children find out more about geese, especially about why they hiss and how they protect their young.

Use the text as a model for constructing a narrative together or for practising writing realistic dialogue.