

Stuck!

by Jack Gabolinscy
illustrated by Denise Durkin

Overview

Isabella has lost her tennis ball down a hole, and no one seems to be able to help – so Isabella comes up with her own clever solution. There is an audio version on the Ready to Read CD *Readalong 2007*.

Suggested purposes

This text supports a wide range of comprehension strategies, including making connections, forming and testing hypotheses, summarising, inferring, identifying the author's purpose, and evaluating.

Text features

(Focus on only one or two per session.)

- the ideas about determination, perseverance, and creative thinking
- the links to science and technology
- the clear narrative structure and the strong links between the beginning and the end
- the clues to Isabella's character
- the expressive dialogue
- the colloquial language – “Gotcha!”, “Hey”, “Sure”
- the alternatives to “said” – “asked”, “called”, “yelled” the use of adverbs for emphasis or for clarity – “carefully”, “really”, “too”, “very”
- the use of the conjunction “as” on page 2 to indicate simultaneous actions
- the unusual perspectives of the illustrations on pages 7, 9, and 10 and the cross-section views on the title page and page 4
- the forms of the verb “bounce” (“bounce”, “bounced”, “bounces”, “bouncing”) and the “bouncy” text layout on pages 2 and 16
- the “ou” sound in the various forms of “bounce” and “counted”, “found”, “playground”
- the possessive apostrophe in “Mr Campbell's”.

Introducing the text

Have the children read the title, then ask them to share their predictions (hypotheses) about what might be stuck. Have them sort the hypotheses into “likely” and “unlikely” according to how well they fit with the information in the illustration.
Let's read to find out.

During the reading

Read the names of the author and the illustrator.

Title page – You may need to explain that this is a cross-sectional view of a hole. *OK, now we know what was stuck, I want you to think, pair, and share about how the girl might get the ball out.* Record the children’s hypotheses and discuss their likely effectiveness.

Ask the children to read the text silently, pausing at various points for discussion or clarification.

Pages 2 and 3 – The court markings suggest that the hole is for a netball pole. Prompt the children to use grapho-phonetic (print) information to decode “bounced” and to cross-check by using the “bouncy” text layout and the illustration. Clarify the use of “as” to show that Isabella is bouncing, counting, and walking all at the same time.

Pages 4 and 5 – Review Isabella’s attempts at solving the problem and why they haven’t worked. Note that the children will have to draw on their own experiences or visualise to infer why the stick didn’t work. Review the children’s predictions. *What else did we think she could try?*

Pages 6 and 7 – You may need to model the pronunciation of Tāne (the macron lengthens the vowel). *You suggested she would ask for help. I wonder what she’ll do next ...*

Pages 8 to 10 – If necessary, explain the use of the titles “Ms” and “Mr”. If the children aren’t familiar with the term “caretaker”, support them to infer that a caretaker “takes care” of a school. Discuss the unusual perspective of the illustration on page 10. *I’m thinking about why the author might have written this story. I’m getting a pretty strong message about Isabella ...*

Page 11 – Review the situation. Draw out the idea that Isabella is refusing to give up.

Page 12 – If necessary, support the children with “Sure” by writing “sugar” to show another example of a word where “su” has a “sh” sound. Briefly explain that the possessive apostrophe shows that the workshop belongs to Mr Campbell.

Pages 13 to 16 – Have the children review their hypotheses and share their responses to Isabella’s solution. If necessary, explain the derivation of “Gotcha”.

Review (summarise) the other attempts to retrieve the ball and why they failed. Use this information to make inferences about Isabella’s character, then move on to discuss the author’s purpose. *What do you suppose he wanted you to think about as a result of reading this story?* Draw out the idea that the author has used Isabella as an example of important characteristics such as determination, perseverance, and resourcefulness.

After the reading

(Choose only one or two per session.)

Listen to the children reread the text with a partner, observing their fluency and confidence and how expressively they manage the sections of dialogue.

Focus on the narrative structure. Identify the introduction, the problem (the ball in the hole), the complications (the unsuccessful attempts), and the satisfying, clever resolution.

Encourage the children to evaluate the text. *Do you think this could really happen? Does it fit with what you know about this sort of problem?* (You could try out Isabella's solution at this point to see if it really works or save this for a follow-up activity.) *Do the characters seem convincing to you?* Have the children take on the roles of the characters and read the dialogue out loud, noting the use of the alternatives to "said". Draw out the idea that the writer has made the dialogue sound natural, for example, by using contractions and colloquial language, and that he seems to have an authentic knowledge of Isabella's problem!

Reread some of the sentences that include adverbs, on pages 4, 6, 9, 11, and 13. Explain that they "add" more information about the verbs or adjectives and that the writer has used them here to add impact ("too far", "really stuck", "very cross") or to clarify ("carried it carefully").

Write the verb "bounce" in the group reading book. Ask the children to locate the other forms of this verb on pages 2 and 3. *What do you notice about the word "bouncing"?* Review the conventions for adding "s", "ed", or "ing" to verbs ending with "e".

List the words that contain the "ou" sound on pages 2 and 3. Prompt the children to draw on their visual memories of other words that have this sound. Discuss how "ow" can have the same sound.

Suggestions for further tasks

Listen to the audio version on the CD *Readalong 2007*.

Reread *I Want to be the Fox* (Green) or share-read *Timo's Shorts* (Turquoise), which are stories about children solving their own problems at school.

Try out Isabella's solution. The children could take a tennis ball and bucket of water out to a netball-pole hole in the playground, or they could experiment with containers and balls in a water tray or sink. Note that this solution won't work in a drain hole because the water will flow away.