

The Hole in the King's Sock

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illustrated by Philip Webb

Overview

In this humorous fairy tale, the King commands his servants to mend a hole in his sock. Nothing works until, at last, the Queen comes up with a solution that means the King will never have to put up with cold feet again. Repetition in the text provides support for less confident readers. The text is available as a big book, and there is an audio version on the Ready to Read CD *Readalong 2002*.

Suggested purposes

This text supports the comprehension strategies of hypothesising, analysing, and evaluating.

Text features

(Focus on only one or two per session.)

- the clear narrative structure
- the fairy tale elements
- the characterisation of the King and Queen
- the use of imperative language by the King
- the humour in the text and in the inclusion of modern elements in the medieval illustrations
- the visual subplot involving the mouse
- the use of exclamation marks for emphasis
- the possessive apostrophe in the title
- the irregular verbs “came”, “gave”, “made”, and “wove”
- the verbs that involve doubling the final consonant – “knitted”, “knitting”, “running”
- the words with silent letters – “dough”, “knit”, “knitted”, “knitting”, “stitched”, “wiggled”
- the “old” rime in “cold” and “gold”.

Possible challenges

- the words “learned” and “thread”
- the concept of knitting.

Introducing the text

Ask the children to study the illustrations on the front and back covers of the book and read the title. *Who is this person? Where does he live? What might you expect to see in a book about a king?* Don't introduce the idea of knitting at this point, even if you think the children might not know what it is, in case you give away the ending

of the story.

If you want to focus on the fairy tale aspects of this text, ensure that the children have had lots of opportunities to hear and read other more traditional examples.

During the reading

The following notes are suggestions for using this book for guided reading. If you are using the big book for shared reading, encourage the children to read along with you, and increase the level of support.

Read the title and the names of the writer and the illustrator. Talk about the use of the possessive apostrophe in “King’s”.

Ask the children to read the text silently, pausing at various points for discussion or to clarify any difficulties with the reading.

Page 2 – *What is the King’s problem? Who does he send for?*

Page 3 – *What did the Royal Menders do?*

Page 4 – *Did that solve the problem? What do you think the Royal Cooks will do?* Draw on the children’s knowledge about fairy tales (events happening three times) and encourage them to predict what might happen next.

Have the children read page 8. *Did things happen as you thought they would? What else has the King tried? Why didn’t that work?* You may need to explain that “wove” (page 7) is the past tense of “weave”. *What could he try next?*

Page 9 – *What does the Queen suggest?* Draw attention to the exclamation mark and encourage the children to read the King’s response expressively. If necessary, explain what knitting is. The illustrations on pages 10 and 11 will help.

Page 12 – Encourage the children to think critically. *How is the Queen feeling? How do you know? How is the King feeling?*

After the reading

(Choose only one or two per session.)

Listen while the children reread the text with a partner, observing their use of expression and how they deal with challenges in the vocabulary.

Explore the narrative structure of the story. Identify the problem, complication, and resolution.

Look at the characters of the King and the Queen. Use a simple character continuum to plot how clever they are.

Study the imperative language the King uses. *Why does he speak this way?*

Make a list of the fairy tale elements in the text (the characters, the setting, the task attempted three times, the imperative language of the king, and the happy ending). *How is this story different to other fairy tales you have read?*

Focus on the detail in the illustrations. Discuss the humorous elements, such as the expressions on the servants’ faces on pages 3 to 7, the silliness of their ideas, or the incongruity of the modern elements in the fairy tale setting. *What things can you see that wouldn’t have been around in the olden days?*

Track the visual subplot of the mouse and discuss the story from his viewpoint.

Focus on the irregular verbs “came”, “gave”, “made”, and “wove”. Talk about how most verbs can have “ed” added to them (like “stitched” on page 3) but that some can’t. Explain that the children need to think about what sounds right to help them when they’re reading. For ESOL children, who are less likely to be able to draw on their knowledge of oral language as a guide to the correct syntax, it would be helpful to use the irregular verbs frequently in conversation so that they have many opportunities to hear them used appropriately.

Write the words “dough”, “knit”, “knitted”, “knitting”, “stitched”, and “wriggled” on the whiteboard. Tell the children there are words that have letters we don’t hear when we say them. Read the words on the whiteboard together. Ask them to identify the silent letter in each word.

Write the verbs “knitting” and “running” on the whiteboard. Identify the root words. Talk about how you need to double the final consonant before adding “ing” to some verbs.

How were the King’s feet feeling? Find a word on page 3 that rhymes with “cold”. Ask the children to think of other words that include the “old” rime and list them on the whiteboard.

Suggestions for further tasks

Listen to the audio version on the CD *Readalong 2002*. Listen to the sounds of the servants’ footsteps echoing on the castle flagstones.

Encourage creative thinking: the children could design some socks for the King or invent other ways of mending his sock.

Innovate on the text, using a title like “The Crack in the King’s Crown”.

Make the story into a song based on “There’s a hole in my bucket ...”

Make a wall story and add speech bubbles.

Dramatise the text. Have the children make props and costumes and present the play to the class.

Read other fairy tales and talk about the elements they have in common.