



My Gran the Gorilla

Author Jackie French / Illustrations Stephen Michael King / 112 pages / Book Series Wacky Families

Objectives

- To enjoy reading and understanding the main ideas of a story in English.
- To demonstrate understanding of a variety of words and expressions used throughout the story by using them in related activities.
- To be able to read and understand parts of the story at both the word level and the sentence level of the text.
- To appreciate social and cultural references in the context of a humorous story.
- To be able to use imagination and creativity to demonstrate deeper understanding of the story.

Word bank

Key vocabulary

Nouns: poacher, droppings, track

Verbs: to sign, to gulp, to track, to trap, to dig, to spot, to sniff

Adjectives: slimy, cool, striped

Key structures

Making deductions from evidence: clues, proof, secrets, suppositions

Understanding meaning from context: unknown lexis and Gran's language



Tips and ideas

Before reading

- Encourage higher level thinking by getting students to predict the theme of the book from the cover picture and blurb.
- Elicit what the class knows (for sure or vaguely) about Australia and what life might be like there.

During reading

- Quick and frequent concept-checking questions.
- Eliciting mini summaries from volunteers: different students each time and after each chapter. Give a structure for students to follow: "First..., then..., and in the end..."

- Lower order thinking skill activity: application. Ask students to apply their knowledge of Australia - its geography (sparsely populated areas), flora and fauna (autochthonous animals in the Bush) - to conundrum of keeping Gran a secret in the small town.

After reading

- Higher order thinking skill activity: creativity. How could they escape from the wombat trap?
Small groups draw up an escape plan and present it to the class.
Students vote on best plan.
- Apply the knowledge of new vocabulary and structures by re-telling the story in small groups.

Teacher support activities

Great Games: My Gran in Gobbledegook

- The teacher begins the game and invites students to join in and say things about Gran. The teacher then tells them if they are right or not, and the students have to find the pattern and work out why some utterances are acceptable while others are not.
- For example, here the key is that, like the name of the town, Gobbledegook, my Gran only likes things with double letters (gorilla; sleeps; tree; smoothies; kangaroos; droppings):

T: "My Gran in Gobbledegook is a gorilla."

S1: "My Gran in Gobbledegook likes bananas."

T: "No, sorry. My Gran in Gobbledegook sleeps in a tree."

S2: "My Gran in Gobbledegook likes smoothies."

T: "Yes! Great. My Gran in Gobbledegook likes kangaroos."

S1: "My Gran in Gobbledegook likes droppings."

T: "Yes!!"

CLIL LINK: Society, Animal Rights

Before reading

- Brainstorm what students know about animal rights and their feelings about their importance.
- Elicit vocabulary from the story and other related lexis (traps, net, tranquilliser gun, etc.)
- Small groups find out (using webquests) about various connected themes:

e.g. Animals are not objects: https://politica.elpais.com/politica/2017/12/12/actualidad/1513093146_926377.html

e.g. Poaching - Save the Rhino: https://www.savetherhino.org/rhino_info/poaching_statistics

e.g. For & Against Zoos: <https://www.thoughtco.com/arguments-for-and-against-zoos-127639>

- Groups prepare 2 or 3 visuals to illustrate their theme.
- Class share their stories.
- Final plenary where the whole class draws up a 5-point resolution about animal rights.

English Theatre: Telephone

A lot of the story is based around secrets and hearsay, so what better opportunity to play Chinese Whispers.

The aim of the activity is to pass a message via a line of people who will inevitably mishear or mispronounce and therefore change the original utterance. Although the fun element resides in making (unintentional) slips, it is a good opportunity to work on clarity of pronunciation of individual sounds and connected speech. It is also a great chance to encourage careful, directed peer listening.

Method:

Students sit in a circle of max. 10. Choose who begins (the first child to tell you Gran's favourite food).

The first student chooses a short phrase from the story and whispers it to their neighbour who passes it on around the circle.

When the message gets back to the beginning of the circle, the last student says it out loud. The first student repeats the original phrase to see how much it has changed.

Variations:

1. Students stand in two (or more) lines (max. 10) facing the whiteboard. The last students have pens in their hands. A volunteer (not in either line) or the teacher, chooses the phrase and, on the count of three, it is passed along the lines. The last students write what they hear on the board - the team writing the message closest to the original is the winner.

2. As in Variation 1, but the volunteer only chooses a word which the students have to write (with their index finger) on the back of the person in front of them in the line.