

Hypothesis: Cued use of the RIDER visual imagery strategy improves the text engagement and comprehension levels of below average Year 2 students.

Abstract:

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of the cued use of visual imagery training on the comprehension levels for Year 2 students. Visual imagery training is used to promote comprehension monitoring during the reading process. The study uses the R.I.D.E.R. strategy with the Collins, Brown & Newman teaching and learning methodology.

The results indicated that use of the R.I.D.E.R. strategy increased student engagement with the text and provided an impact on the comprehension levels for some of the research group .

The results emphasized the need for teachers to be models and facilitators of the process and work towards the students' independent use of the strategy when reading. The use of a pictorial cue for the steps of the strategy proved an important scaffolding element and the involvement of the students in articulating the steps helped embed the process for them.

The results of this research project were fairly inconclusive and there is an indication that, due to the age and reading abilities of the students, the period required to embed the processes in their practice needs to be longer than the 10 sessions undertaken in the research. The most positive gain was not really evident in the analysis data but was very evident in the sessions as they progressed – the students became much more engaged with the text and derived real enjoyment out of the reading process, something that they seemed surprised was an outcome.

Introduction

Effective reading is reliant on the development of knowledge and skills at the letter and word level with the student building an understanding of letter- sound relationships and a phonemic understanding of language, it is also reliant on an engagement with the text that conveys concepts and meaning and allows the student to break open the context and content of the text. A proficient reader needs to simultaneously decode and abstract meaning from the text (Freeman, Robinson & Outhred, 1999)

Students in their third year of schooling have developed a range of decoding skills, the texts they are reading are becoming longer and the language a little more complex. The demands on their concentration as they read can become totally focused on the decoding, the phrased and fluent 'reading', to the exclusion of a comprehension of the content. The tasks they undertake as learners however, are relying on their comprehension of the text and their ability to translate what is read into effective feedback in the form of a range of tasks. According to research (Chan, Cole and Morris, 1990) reading difficulties are often related to the students inability to

participate actively in the reading process – once read (decoded) it is forgotten – task is achieved.

Year 2 students are at the transition stage of the reading process, they are moving from learning to read to reading to learn and the focus on literal and inferential understanding of what they read is an important part of the process. (Harvey & Goudvis P9.) wrote of the complex nature of comprehension as the reader actively constructing meaning and building their store of knowledge so that they can reach a level of understanding.

Much research has been undertaken to identify strategies which will support the learner and scaffold their emergence as a reader who interacts strategically with the text (Baker & Brown 1984). The process of Visualising and verbalizing developed by Bell in 1987 has been the subject of research (Dixon, Joffe and Bench 2001) and there is evidence of its positive impact on children with comprehension difficulties. Harvey & Goudris advocate a visualization process that focuses on the readers schema or background knowledge. The model suggests the gradual removing of scaffolding and moving towards the independent use of the strategy when reading. In 1984, (Clark, Deshler, Schumaker, Gordon, Alley and Walker) used visual imagery -RIDER - and self questioning as a research strategy to improve students' reading comprehension. The Rider process involved a step by step process – Reading, Imagining, Discussing, Evaluating and Reading on. The student read the text or it was read to them. They created an image in their mind of what had been read. This image was then discussed and evaluated for accuracy and followed by reading the text further. The process was taught explicitly and with scaffolding support from the teacher.

Our Year 2 students are working towards benchmark levels in their reading and are showing strengths in their decoding skills. This strength is not however assisting their comprehension of the text. The students do not consistently focus on the meaning when reading and as a result they come to the end of the text and are unable to recall many details from their reading. They will often continue to read even when they have lost meaning and are not showing signs of bringing their prior knowledge to their understanding of the text.

Reading comprehension is vital to their ability to interact with the text for enjoyment and to use information gained in the completion of research and regular tasks in their learning.

The reader must continually make meaning from the text, problem solve and revisit text if the meaning is lost. It is this problem solving process that is missing from their reading.

These Year 2 readers have a positive sense of achievement due to their decoding ability. This could quickly be lost as the texts become more complex and the follow-up tasks rely on their literal and inferential comprehension. Students who have high self-efficacy are likely to lose confidence in their own abilities if they do not build strategies for breaking open and

understanding the texts they read. It was considered important to provide our students with these strategies so that they had access to reading strategies for both decoding and comprehension.

(Oakhill and Patel, 1991) believed that students generally do not induce images that support comprehension but they need to receive explicit instruction to develop the skill.

The focus of the study then became supporting our Year 2 students to develop imagery skills that would enhance their comprehension of texts. The strategy chosen for the research is RIDER. Much of the research that has been undertaken in this area (visual imagery) has been conducted with students in Year 3 through to secondary level with learning difficulties (Clark, Donald, Deshler, Schumaker, Alley & Warner 1984; Chan, Cole and Morris 1990; Dixon Joffe and Bench 2001, Nelson 2005). Experiences of the Maitland-Newcastle Catholic school research (Smith, C. 2001) have supported the focus on comprehension from the Year 2 level as the students move into the transition phase from learning to read to reading to learn.

The research hypothesis is : Cued use of the RIDER visual imagery strategy improves the text engagement and comprehension levels of below average Year 2 students.

Methodology

The students selected for the study were the Year 2 students with a text level from 9 to 21 in their initial literacy testing for 2008. These students are in the mid to lower reading level in their class but are not currently involved in any structured intervention programs to support their reading. Two of the group participated in the Reading Recovery intervention program in Year 1. This group was chosen because they were moving forward very slowly with their reading and were labouring over each word as they read. Their main focus was decoding and there was little evidence of comprehension of the text at the end of reading particularly if the text posed some decoding challenges. The students measured their success by speed and fluency of their reading. They did not use a re-read strategy to check for meaning or correct decoding even when they were losing the sense of the story. They did not call on their prior knowledge of the content or their understanding of grammar to assist them in the reading process. The class teacher identified their emphasis on decoding as one of the inhibitors to their reading accuracy and effective comprehension.

A control group was chosen from the other Year 2 class with text levels within the same range (in this instance 15 – 21)

	Background as of April 2008				
Research group	Age -Year	Age-mths	Earlier Intervention	EMA	ESL
ResearchK	7.7	92	Reading Recovery	Y	Y
ResearchJ	8.0	97		Y	Y
ResearchZ	7.11	96			
ResearchG	8.2	99	Reading Recovery	Y	Y
ResearchD	7.10	95			
ResearchJ2	7.9	94			
Mean age	7.9	95.5			
Control Group					
ControlC	7.9	94		Y	
ControlS	7.8	93			
ControlL	7.11	96			
ControlE	7.4	89		Y	
ControlS2	7.6	91			
ControlA	7.7	92		Y	Y
Mean age	7.7	92.5			

Table 1

The research and control groups were as closely matched as possible but some anomalies were evident. The research group had 2 students who had participated in the Reading Recovery program in Year 1, the control group had none. Each group had 3 EMA eligible students however there was an imbalance in the ESL students and in the age cohort with the research group having 2 students who were already 8 in April. This was as close as the group matching could be.

The Neale Analysis of reading ability was administered as a pretest and post test. This was an assessment process outside the students' experience. None of the students had previously seen the texts and they were unfamiliar with the timing process and the comprehension component at the end of each text.

The Collins, Brown & Newman "Model of Teaching and Learning" was used as the underlying process with the teacher taking on the roles and responsibilities of :

- Modeling
- Coaching
- Scaffolding and then fading the scaffolding

while the students were encouraged to:

- Articulate their processes and thinking
- Reflect on what they were learning and how it was assisting them
- Explore ways of using this skill in other contexts

The RIDER process Read, Imagine, Describe, Evaluate and Read On formed the basis of the instructional process. A bookmark of images was used to cue the students to each step of the process. This was used explicitly in the modeling sessions. (Refer to Appendix)

The program was conducted over 10 sessions with the students as a group. Students were withdrawn to a meeting space with each session taking between 30-40 minutes.

The books used for the session were from the Reading Recovery selection and had not been used generally in class sessions. They were narratives with clear image building possibilities and covered a range of situation that could be familiar to the students.

The students worked as a group in the sessions – listening to the teacher read and then rereading the section in the first 2 sessions; reading sections together and gaining support from each other for the decoding of unknown words (sessions 3-7); reading around the group with each students taking a section, the support of the group was offered during reading if unknown words were encountered.

This process took the emphasis off the decoding process and allowed the students to build their capacity for creating images and engaging in the text. This engagement was then reflected in the sharing of descriptions and in the general feedback about the story.

Oral feedback processes during the reading sessions provided an indication of learning, visual imaging and engagement. Comprehension sheets given during the last few sessions allowed the opportunity for each child's response to be identified and provided insight into their levels of confidence, self-efficacy and ability to produce 'images' and retain detail.

Results

The Neale analysis was conducted away from the classroom, in a meeting room. None of the students had previously seen the texts and they were unfamiliar with the timing process and the comprehension component at the end of each text. For both research and control group it was their first time completing an assessment task for me. The table below gives a comparison of results for the research and control groups. 3 key items have been selected for this comparison – the class teachers running record text level and the accuracy and comprehension results from the Neale Analysis. The rate score was not included but was completed as part of the assessment. ResearchG students stands out in the table below. She has the highest score for accuracy in both the research and control group and the lowest score for comprehension in both group for the pretest. This student has participated in the Reading Recovery program and learnt the skills of decoding well. She is an ESL student who has a limited range of experience due to the socioeconomic constraints in which she lives. She finds it hard to draw on past experience when reading unless the topic is school based or part of a language experience model.

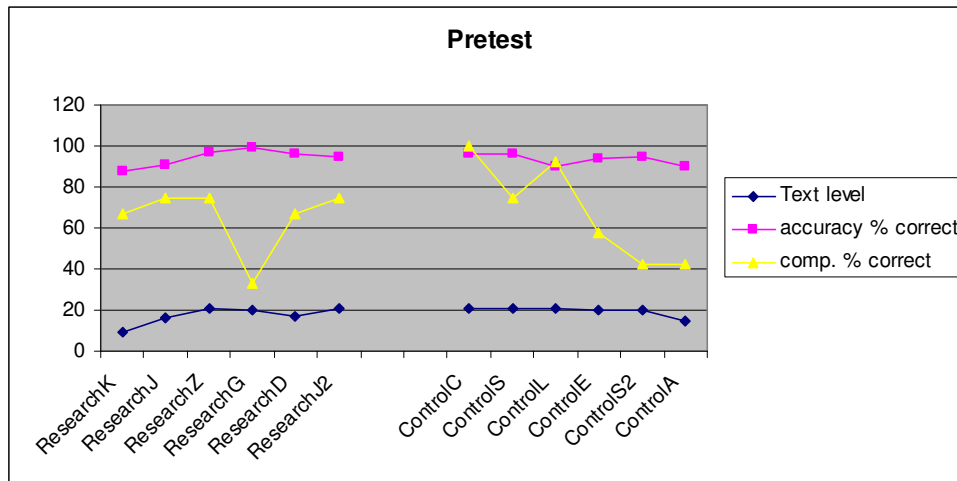


Table 2.

The Neale analysis and the teacher running record text levels were repeated again at the end of the instructional sessions. The results for both pre and post assessments appear on the table below.

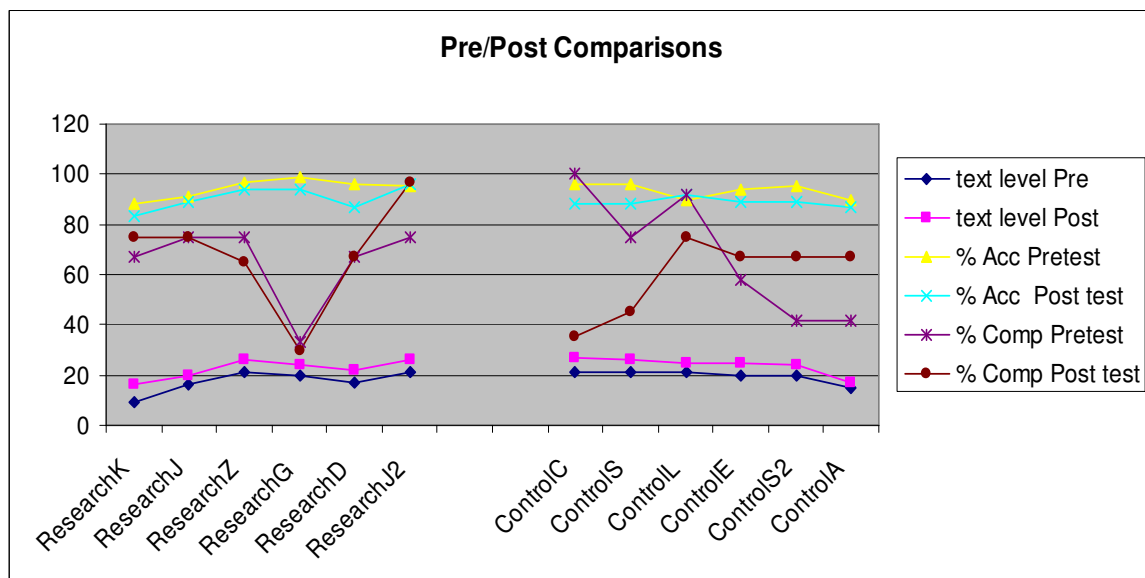


Table 3

It can be seen that both groups have shown improvements in their text level as identified by the class teachers running record result. This assessment focuses entirely on decoding and is a familiar assessment for the students as they have experienced these regularly since Prep.

The Neale Analysis results show a similar pattern of results for accuracy but the comprehension results show a marked difference.

The first group to be tested was the control group and for the first 3 students (Control C, S & L) I did not use a stop watch but relied on a clock on the wall behind them to time their reading. I

found this difficult to do and changed to the stop watch for the remainder of the assessments. I believe the impact of this change is reflected in the results. The students did not feel under pressure of time and were much more relaxed however my time keeping was not as accurate. In the post test all assessments were timed with the stop watch.

Even though the students were told the time was not to influence their reading I believe it had a negative impact. They perceived it as important that they not take too long to read the passage.

The students were not asked to use visual imagery before the assessment but I think that the inclusion of the bookmark for the research group in the second instance would have consolidated the expectation that they use the strategies we had been working on in the session during the test.

ResearchG student still shows the same tendencies in her reading as was evident in the pretest results. Her post test results went to level 3 text and her accuracy raw score has placed her at a Stanine 5 and a reading level of 8 years while her comprehension is at Stanine 3 with a reading age of 6.8 years. (Her age at post test was 8.3 years). Both her accuracy and comprehension levels have shown a one point improvement between pretest and post test. ResearchG is building on her skills but needs more time to embed the RIDER strategy that will provide her with the comprehension support she needs.

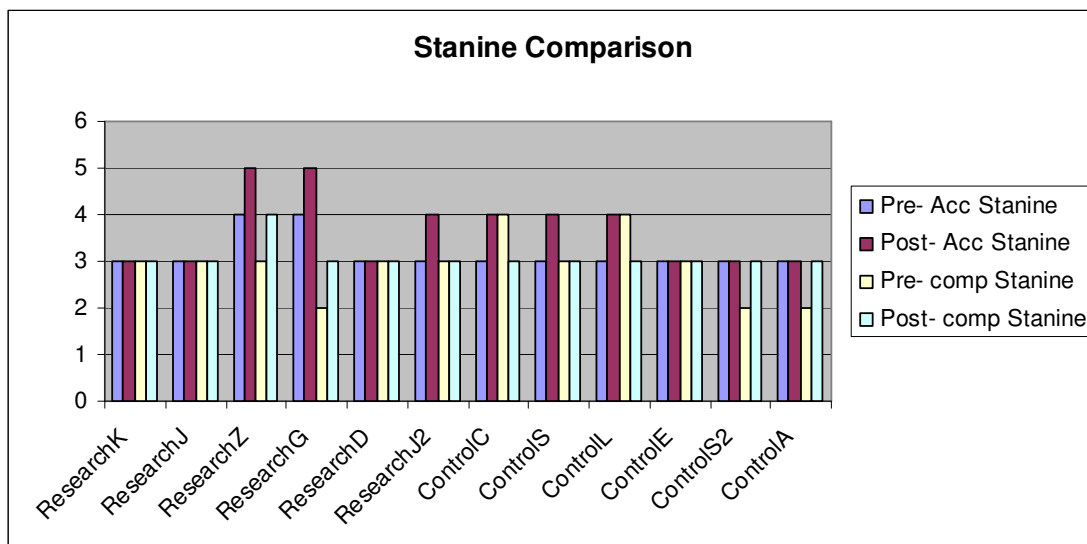


Table 4

ResearchZ is the other student who has shown improvement in both the accuracy and comprehension areas. She engaged readily with the text and showed improved confidence during the testing procedure. She was the student who cued others into the next step as we

negotiated the RIDER strategy during reading so it is my belief she is on her way to embedding the process for her reading benefit.

The Control group showed every variation in the difference between their pre and post comprehension scores – 2 students remained at the same level, 2 improved and 2 had a loss of comprehension level.

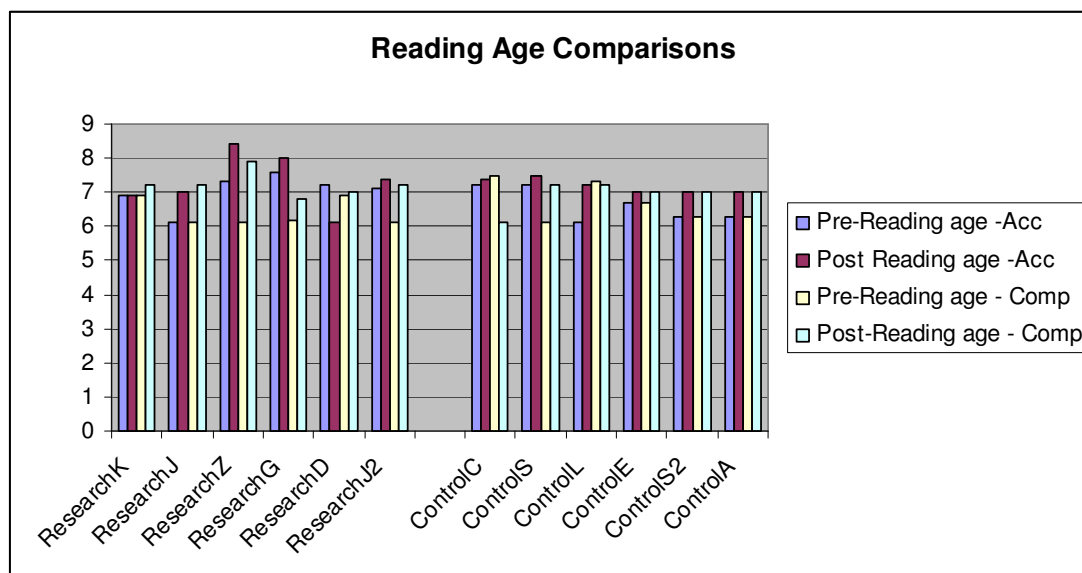


Table 5

Discussion

Looking at the comparison between the research group and the control group results are not conclusive. Both groups have, on balance, shown improvement in their comprehension levels. It would be advantageous to continue the program for a further 5-6 weeks and gauge whether this further allocation of time and focused teaching develops the required skills of visual imaging to build their comprehension levels.

If the students are unable to consolidate this process and take advantage of the skill then we may need to concede to Oakhill and Patel 1991, that they cannot induce imagery but are only able to use the skill within the instructional framework.

This would be consistent with the fact that as we moved from one phrase to another reading the story the students were able to stop and draw on the image they had created, sharing their ideas enthusiastically with their peers and making comparisons with their image and the pictures in the book when it was read at the end of the session (Text was presented without pictures for the session) It is possible that the group process and the stop start reading with gaps for description allowed them the time they needed to fulfill the task whereas in a normal reading situation everything is happening too fast and they are unable to fulfill both tasks – decoding and imaging.

In the initial contact with the student, their reading of the pre assessment text and also the first session text was very monotone and quite flat. They completed the task but did not seem to enjoy the experience. An observable change took place over the reading sessions which may be attributed to becoming more relaxed with me and a working rapport developing or, and I believe a more likely explanation, their engagement with the text, having the opportunity to build the images and break open the authors meaning, provided a different level of enjoyment. They actually understood the story better and therefore could enter into the experience rather than just reading the words.

The images they created became more detailed over time and this could be attributed to the description phase of the strategy – as each student shared they expanded the other students ideas of what an image could look like. The final reading of the story with the illustrations before them became another experience of describing as they made comparisons between their image and that presented by the illustrator, comments like:

“ That’s what my ghost looked like too!” ; “I pictured them all hiding under blankets as well!”
 “ I saw Tom as a boy with red, curly hair!” ; “The cat in my image was very fat and had longer hair!”

At first the students felt deprived as we read the text from an A4 sheet but as they developed their pictures they were eager to get on to the next group of sentences to find out what happened next. The picture story book became a celebration of all their imagining and a revisit with a story that they had thoroughly enjoyed.

The research may not have delivered the results that I had expected but given the students age and their stage of development I may have been expecting too much. The process however has shown that there is great advantage in developing this strategy as a group process to build an understanding that meaning of the reading is as important as saying the words correctly and that reading is enjoyable and a unique experience for each reader. Even though we all read the same book there are things we can share about what we have gleaned from the story that are different for each of us and we can learn a lot about the story by sharing our images and what we know about the situation described.

The process helped the research group understand that reading was “really fun” and that it was “great to talk about our pictures before we saw the real ones.” I believe the process, if allowed to continue, would develop positive reading habits and perhaps some avid readers who enjoy a book for its own sake. Perhaps a junior book club on the horizon!

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Appendix 1: RIDER Teaching Process Outline

Due to the age of the group this process will be an oral on rather than a combination of oral and written process.

Session 1 'Dart that Cat' Part 1

- Teacher welcomes students and gives an overview of the process for the 10 sessions
- Introduce the RIDER process using the image bookmark as a prompt
 - Read** – read a section of the story
 - Imagine** – create a picture in your mind of what you are reading
 - Describe** – describe your picture to others in the group
 - Evaluate**- Is this what you read about? Could this be what it looks like? Make any changes after feedback
 - Read On** – Read the next part of the story
- Refer again to bookmark for the step sequence
- Teacher shows the front cover of the book and asks students what they think it will be about – who might be the main characters?
- Teacher reads aloud the first 3 sentences of the story – both teacher have copies on A4 paper with no illustrations.
- Teacher tells students she has made an image in her head.
- Teacher describes the image to the students
- Teacher and students evaluate the image and check against what was read
- Teacher reads on – students read the next section after the teacher
- Process continues until the end of Part 1 of book
- Teacher asks students to retell the story in their own words.
- Sessions finishes with teacher reading the picture story book up to end of Part 1.

Session 2 "Drat that Cat' Part 2

- Teacher reintroduces the RIDER strategy using the bookmark of images to remind about the sequence
- Teacher asks students what has happened in the story so far.
- Teacher reads first 3 sentences. Students read after her.
- Teacher creates image in head, asks students to do the same.
- Teacher describes her image and asks for student images
- Teacher and students evaluate their images and make any adjustments
- Teacher reads on, students read section after her.
- Sequence repeated until book finished.
- Students retell story in own words
- Teacher reads the second half of the picture story book



Session 3 & 4**Book – ‘Cutting & Sticking’ in 2 parts**

- Teacher reintroduces the RIDER strategy using the bookmark of images to remind about the sequence
- Session 4 only Teacher asks students what has happened in the story so far.
- Teacher & students read first 3 sentences.
- Teacher & students creates image in head.
- Teacher describes her image and asks for student images
- Teacher and students evaluate their images and make any adjustments
- Teacher and students reads on, students read section after her.
- Sequence repeated until book finished.
- Students retell story in own words
- Teacher reads the second half of the picture story book

Session 5, 6 & 7**Book – Don’t Eat with your Mouth Full
Great Aunt Druscilla
Jake the Grumpy Cat**

- Teacher reintroduces the RIDER strategy using the bookmark of images to remind about the sequence
- Teacher & students read first 3 sentences.
- Teacher & students creates image in head.
- Teacher describes her image and asks for student images
- Teacher and students evaluate their images and make any adjustments
- Teacher and students reads on, students read section after her.
- Sequence repeated until book finished.
- Students retell story in own words
- Teacher reads the picture story book

Sessions 8, 9 & 10**Book – ‘Pyjama Party’ in 3 parts**

- Sessions 9 & 10 – Teacher asks students to recap on story to date.
- 1 student reads the first section – others read silently
- Students create image in their heads.
- Students describes their images
- Students evaluate their images and make any adjustments
- Students reads on, different student reads next section, others read silently
- Sequence repeated until book or part finished.
- Students retell story in own words
- Teacher reads the second half of the picture story book

Appendix 2: Drat That Cat

Gerald Rose

One day, Gran made a big blackberry pie. “Look what I’ve made, she said to Dan and Vicky. Curly the cat came to have a look too.

Gran didn’t see Curly. “Look out!” cried Vicky. But it was too late. Gran fell over the cat.

SPLAT went the blackberry pie. “What a mess,” said Vicky. There was blackberry juice everywhere. “Drat that cat!” said Gran.

“Never mind,” said Dan. “Let’s clear up.” They washed the walls. They washed the floor. But they couldn’t get rid of the blackberry juice.

“Drat that cat!” cried Gran again. “It’s all her fault.” But Curly didn’t care. She just licked her paws, and she didn’t like what she tasted.

“I know,” said Vicky. “Let’s *paint* over the stains.” Gran thought that was a good idea. She got some paints from the shed.

They painted and painted and painted. Soon all the walls were a nice, bright blue. “Lovely,” said Dan and Vicky.

Curly came to have a look. She still had blackberry juice on her paws. “Go away,” said Vicky. “We’re cross with you.”

But Curly didn’t care. She left blackberry paw prints all over the floor. “Drat that cat!” cried Gran. “We’ll have to paint the floor now.”

“Shoo, Curly!” said Dan. Curly jumped onto the sofa. She left blackberry paw prints all over that too. “Catch that cat!” said Gran. Curly flew into the air. And then – SPLAT! She hit the wall and slid down.

“Poor Curly,” said Dan. But Curly didn’t care. She just licked her paws, and she didn’t like what she tasted.

“Look,” said Vicky. Curly’s left stripes on the wall. Let’s add some more. Gran tried to wash Curly’s paw prints off the sofa. She washed and washed, but she couldn’t get rid of the paw prints. “Drat that cat!” said Gran.

Curly jumped onto a chair and then onto the table. She left paw prints wherever she went. “SHOO!” yelled Gran, and Curly ran out of the room.

“We’ll have to paint the table and chairs now,” said Dan with a laugh. “And the sofa!” cried Gran. “Whatever next!”

They painted the chairs, the table, the sofa and then the floor. Then Gran said, “Hurry up. Mum and Dad will be back soon. We’d better clean up.”

They put the paint pots in the hall. Then they all went upstairs to have a wash.

Curly was licking her paws outside. Suddenly she saw Bonzo – big, noisy Bonzo, the dog that always chased her.

Curly was so scared that she ran back inside and . . . SPLAT!
She kicked over a pot of red paint.

Gran, Dan and Vicky came downstairs. There were red paw prints everywhere. Over the table, the chairs, the floor *and* the sofa. Everywhere!
“Drat that cat!” said Gran.

Just then Mum and Dad came home.
“Oh no!” said Vicky. “Help!” said Dan. “I smell paint,” said Dad.

“What’s going on here?” asked Mum.
“We’ve painted the living room,” said Gran. “Do you like it?”

Mum and Dad stared and stared. Then they smiled. “Like it?” they cried. “We love it!”
“And do you know what I like the best?” said Mum. “I like these pretty red patterns. They look just like flowers.”

“Whose idea was that?” Dad asked.
“Curley’s!” said Dan and Vicky, grinning.

“What a clever cat!” said Mum. “You can have cream and chicken for dinner.”
Later, Curly sat by her bowl, licking her paws. This time, she liked what she tasted.

Cutting and Sticking

Jane Crebbin

Alice pushed open the door of her sister's bedroom and stepped inside. Jess and Dad were putting up new wallpaper. Jess was cutting.

"I can cut," said Alice, watching. "I can cut as straight as that. Can I help?"

"Not really," said Dad. "I thought you were downstairs, cutting out pictures."

"I was," said Alice. She watched Dad slapping paste onto a piece of wallpaper.

"I can stick," she said. "I'm good at sticking."

"I know you are," said Dad. "I thought you were downstairs, sticking in pictures."

"I was," said Alice. "But I want to help here."

Dad carried on pasting.

"It's not fair. Jess is helping," said Alice.

"That's because it's her bedroom," said Dad. He picked up the piece of wallpaper. He climbed the ladder and began to stick the paper to the wall. But the paper kept falling off.

Alice followed him. "I want to *help*," she said. Dad climbed down the ladder and stepped back onto Alice's foot.

"Ouch!" said Alice. "If you really want to help," said Dad, "go downstairs and do your pictures."

Alice stamped out of the room. She stamped loudly all the way down the stairs.

"It's not fair," she told Spike in the kitchen. She sat at the table.

On the table there was a big scrap book. On the front, Alice had written; 'Horses, ponies and Dogs.' Beside the book was a pile of pictures. She picked out one, carefully cut around the edge.

Then she brushed lots of glue – but not too much – onto the back of the picture, and well into the corners. She stuck it on a clean page in the scrap-book.

Then she sat back and looked at it. Yes, she was very good at cutting and sticking.

Soon, she had stuck in four dogs, two ponies and a shire-horse. But her hand hurt. There was a sore bit on one of her fingers from the scissors.

She started cutting out a picture of a puppy, but the sore bit on her fingers hurt so much that the scissors kept wobbling. When she put the picture in front of her it looked awful.

Suddenly Alice picked up the picture and tore it right across the middle. Then she tore and tore and tore, until there was no picture at all.

Then she grabbed the sticky sheets of newspaper and tore them up too. She tore them into tiny pieces and threw them all over the kitchen. It was like a snowstorm.

Spike jumped out of his basket. He jumped up and down as Alice threw the scraps of paper into the air. He began to bark. Alice stopped.

“Don’t!” she said. She threw herself on top of him. Spike barked even louder.

Alice sat on the floor. She looked at Spike. He did look funny with bits of paper stuck all over him. She heard voices coming from upstairs.

That meant the bedroom door was open. That meant someone would be coming downstairs. Alice looked around her. The kitchen was a mess.

Quick as a flash she raced around pushing handfuls of newspaper into the bin.

Spike grabbed handfuls and chewed them.

“No, Spike, you’re not helping. Get into your basket,” ordered Alice, still racing around. Spike went. Alice pushed the last scraps into the bin and rushed to the table.

Just as she sat down, in came Dad. ‘Hello,” he said. “How are you getting on?” “Fine,” said Alice. She showed him all the pictures she had cut out and stuck in.

Dad was impressed. “You’ve made a really good job of that,” he said. “Would you like to come upstairs now? We could do with a bit of extra help.”

Alice jumped up from her chair. Spike jumped out of his basket. “Yes, please,” said Alice.

Dad looked at Spike.

There were bits of paper stuck all over him. Behind him was a trail of paper. His basket was full of paper.

“Goodness,” said Dad. “What a mess!” Alice didn’t know what to say. Dad looked at her.

“I went a bit wrong,” said Alice. “Then I got a bit cross and ...” “Then you made a bit of a mess,” said Dad. Alice nodded. “But can I still help?” she said.

Dad looked around the kitchen. “Well,” he said, “you’re quite good at cleaning up, and we shall have to do that upstairs too...” Alice waited.

“And there’s lots more wallpaper to put up,” said Dad. “Would you like to cut or stick?” “I like sticking best.”

Don't Talk With Your Mouth Full – John Parsons & Lloyd Foye

Mum had gone out to have lunch with her friends. That bossy old Mrs. Crockle was looking after me while Mum was out. I didn't like Mrs Crockle. She was always telling me off.

Mrs. Crockle had made us monstrous salad sandwiches for lunch. We were just starting to eat our sandwiches when the phone rang.

She went into the kitchen to answer the phone. Just then, a horrible black fly landed on Mrs. Crockle's sandwich. It buzzed off noisily when she came back.

I started to warn her.

"Mrs. Crockle, a horrible black fly was..."

"Jack, please don't talk with your mouth full!" said Mrs. Crockle.

She took a huge bite of her sandwich.

"Mmm, what a delicious sandwich!" she said.

Well, it was too late to say anything now.

I started eating my sandwich again, when the doorbell rang. Mrs. Crockle went to the front door.

Just then, a sneaky, fat spider dropped onto Mrs Crockle's plate. It crawled inside Mrs. Crockle's sandwich! "Yuk!" I thought.

I started to tell her about the spider.

"Mrs. Crockle, a sneaky fat spider just..."

Jack, I told you not to talk with your mouth full!" Mrs. Crockle said loudly. My eyes widened as she took another bite of her sandwich.

Well, it was too late to say anything now.

"Mmm, what a delicious sandwich!" said Mrs. Crockle

I did feel sorry for the spider.

I took another bite of my sandwich, and just then, the phone rang gain. Mrs. Crockle got up and left the table once more.

Mrs Crockle's awful dog jumped up on the chair and *licked* the top of her sandwich. When he heard Mrs. Crockle coming back, he jumped off the chair.

"Mrs. Crockle, I wouldn't eat that..." I started to say.

"Jack, this is the last time that I will tell you. Please don't talk with your mouth full!" said Mrs. Crockle angrily.

She took one last, huge bite, and finished her sandwich. Well, it was definitely too late now!

"Well, that was a super lunch!" said Mrs. Crockle, leaning back and patting her tummy. "Did you enjoy your sandwich?" she said.

I nodded and grinned. I was going to say I enjoyed watching her eat *her* sandwich much more, but I couldn't. My mouth was full.

Great Aunty Drusilla's Kiss Sharon New & Sharon Murdoch

Great Aunt Drusilla is stomping up the path. She'll want to kiss me, I just know it!

Great Aunt Drusilla has huge round arms that wobble like jelly.
She'll want to squash me *flat* when she kisses me. I just know it!

(She's getting closer...)

Her breathe smells like old licorice and black jellybeans.
She'll say "H-h-h-h-ow you've grown!" when she kisses me. I just know it.

(She's getting closer...)

She has crinkly, wrinkly skin. It's covered in smelly pink face powder. There'll be a cloud of powder up my nose when she kisses me. I just know it.

(She's getting closer...)

She wears a dusty old hat. It's full of feathers and plastic fruit. I'll have to do a HUGE sneeze when she kisses me. I just know it!

(She's getting closer...)

She wears slimy red lipstick. It won't scrub off my face for a week.
Great Aunt Drusilla's kiss will be slippery, like an old wet football.

She's really close now!

At least that's over!

What did you say?
Great Aunties Camilla, Frutilla and Salmonilla are coming as well?

Oh NO, not more kisses!

Jake, The Grumpy Cat

Quentin Flynn & Peter Campbell

Jake, the Grumpy Cat, snorted loudly and woke himself up. He opened one eye, and looked around.

"Where's one of those silly humans?" he said to himself. "I want some food."

Jake stretched out four huge claws. They looked like sharp fish hooks!
Jake swivelled his open eye.

"There's one," he said, spying a human in the bedroom. He dragged himself off the floor and walked over to the human.

"I'm hungry" said Jake. "Please be a good human and open a can of cat food."

"Hello puss, do you want a nice pat, do you?"

"No! I want you to open a can of cat food," said Jake.

"Oh, pussy-wussy *does* want a pat!" said the human. Down came a hand.

"Pussy-wussy?" said Jake. "Pussy-wussy?"

Out came Jake's huge claws, and the human jumped back.

Jake stalked away.

"*That* human was no use to me," he snorted grumpily.

He slumped down on the floor and swiveled his open eye.

"There's another one," he said, spying a human in the bathroom.

He dragged himself off the floor, and walked over to the human.

"I'm starving!" said Jake. "*Please* be a good human and open a can of cat food."

"Oh, *kitty*, do you want to play with some string?" said the human.

Jake narrowed his eyes.

"No, I want *you* to open a can of cat food," he said. "And hurry up!"

"Oh, kitty katty *does* want to play!" said the human.

A piece of string dangled down in front of Jake.

"Kitty katty?" said Jake. "Kitty, katty?"

He swiped his huge claws at the human's hand. The hand shot back.

Jake stalked away. "You should have been quicker than that," he yawned lazily.

He slumped to the floor again, and swiveled his open eye.

"There's always another human," he said, spying one in the kitchen. He dragged himself off the floor and stalked over to the human.

"I'm *really* starving now," said Jake. "Have you ever heard of a can opener? If you have, and you know how to use it, save yourself a lot of pain right now."

"Oh, *little furball*, do you want something to eat?" said the human.

Jake narrowed his eyes. "Food. F – O – O – D," he said. "Now. N – O – W!"

"Oh, little furball *does* want something to eat!" said the human.

Jake heard the sound of a can opener opening a can of cat food.

A bowl of cat food was plopped on the floor. Jake sniffed at it.

"Chicken jellimeat?" said Jake, screwing up his nose. "Chicken jellimeat?"

He bit the human's ankle and stalked away.

"I want extra stinky sardines," he said wearily. "I don't like chicken jellimeat! Yuck!"

He slumped to the floor again and closed his eyes.

"Living with humans is so tiring," said Jake wearily. "Why don't they ever listen to me?"

The Pyjama Party

June Crebbin & Peter Kavanagh

In two weeks' time Emma would be eight.

"Time to make plans," said Mum. "Plans for a party."

"Oh good," said Emma. "What kind of party?"

"How about a swimming party, like I had?" said Tom.

But Emma didn't want a swimming party. She wanted something different.

"How about a garden party?" said Dad. "I could do with some help weeding the garden."

"You play games at parties," said Emma. "You don't weed gardens."

"Oh," said Dad. They all thought hard.

"How about a pyjama party?" said Mum. "That would be different. Jess and Alice are sleeping here anyway that night."

Emma liked the sound of a pyjama party.

Mum said that everyone could wear pyjamas and bring a teddy and a torch. Then they could have flash lights, like a disco.

Dad said everyone could bring a pillow and have a pillow fight.

"I like it," said Emma.

"Only Jess and Alice can sleep here," said Mum, but everyone else can stay until it gets dark."

Emma still liked the idea. She invited six fiends and asked them to bring a teddy, a torch and a pillow. Everyone was excited.

Emma's birthday was on a Saturday. In the morning, she opened her cards and presents. Grandma popped in with a fat parcel and a tin.

In the parcel there was a new jumper she had made for Emma. In the tin there were some jam tarts she had made for the party.

In the afternoon, Emma played with her presents, but she kept looking at the clock, wishing it was time for the party.

At five o'clock, she went to find Tom. He was in the kitchen, playing with his farm animals.

"Time to get ready," said Emma.

"I *am* ready," said Tom.

"No you're not," said Emma. "You have to wear pyjamas."

"No I don't," said Tom. He looked at Mum.

Mum said, "He only wants to watch, Emma. He doesn't want to join in."

"He'd better not join in," said Emma. She stamped up stairs.

At half past five, everyone arrived. Dad put some music on so that they could dance. He drew the curtains so that it was dark. Everyone flashed their torches round and round, and up and down. It was like a disco.

After the disco, they played some games.

Then Dad said, "Now for the pillow fights." He put everyone in twos, but Alice didn't have a partner.

"Tom could join in," said Dad.

"He can't," said Emma. "Tom only wants to watch."

Alice said she would like to watch too.

"Now," said Dad, "put your teddies on your heads and when I say GO, hit your partner with the pillow. Not too hard, and not on the head. You have to make your partners teddy fall off. Then you have won."

Two at a time, everyone had a pillow fight. When they had all had three turns each, Dad said that was enough. But Emma didn't want to stop.

"Just one more go," she said. She bashed her pillow at Jess, but Jess jumped out of the way. The pillow knocked a jug of flowers.

Emma tried to catch the jug. But she couldn't. Flowers and water went all over the carpet.

"I'm sorry," said Emma.

Dad picked up the jug. "Lucky it's not broken," he said.

Emma helped pick up the flowers and mop up the water.

"Time for tea, I think," said Dad. "And after tea, it'll be time for the ghost story."

Everyone enjoyed tea. They were hungry after the pillow fights. At the end, only jam tarts were left.

"Never mind," said Mum, popping them back into the tin. "They'll keep till tomorrow."

After tea, everyone except Tom went upstairs and sat on their pillows in Emma's bedroom. Outside it was beginning to get dark.

"Once upon a time," said Dad, "there was a house on a hill. A haunted house. Every night a ghost flew round and round the house."

At that moment, Jess saw something fly past the window.

"Look!" she cried. "A ghost!"

But everyone looked, there was nothing to see. Dad went on with the story.

"Every night the ghost tapped on the window, trying to get in."

"There it is again!" cried Jess. This time, everyone saw the white face floating by. Alice screamed.

The ghost stopped. It tapped on the window. Everyone screamed.

Suddenly there was a face at the window – Mum’s face.

“It’s only me,” she said, laughing. Dad was laughing too. Everyone rushed to the window.

There was Mum, standing on a ladder, holding up a broom with a white sheet wrapped around the top.

“It’s only Mum,” said Emma. Then everyone laughed.

Dad said he’d tell them a different story, but everyone except Alice wanted to know what happened to the ghost.

“I don’t like ghost stories,” she said.

But it turned out to be a funny story too, because the ghost flew round and round the house so much that it got dizzy.

“So it stopped flying round the house,” said Dad, “and it flew far away, as far as the moon, and was never seen again.”

Everyone clapped, and then it was time for the party to end.

“And now it’s time for bed,” said Mum. “You too, Tom.”

Alice fell asleep straight away. Emma and Jess talked quietly.

They heard Mum and Dad come to bed.

Then everything was quiet. But still they couldn’t sleep.

“I’m hungry,” said Emma. “Let’s have a midnight feast. Let’s fetch those jam tarts.”

Jess sat up. “Good idea,” she said.

They crept along the landing to the top of the stairs. Then Emma saw something moving in Tom’s room – a wisp of something. She grabbed Jess and pointed.

Together they crept to Tom’s door and looked round the edge.

There sat Tom, in bed, flashing his torch round the room. In front of him was the tin of jam tarts.

“Hello,” he said. “I’m having a pyjama party. Would you like to join me?”

The Pyjama Party

1

Name:

.....

Who are the characters in the story so far?

.....
.....

What type of parties were suggested?

.....
.....

What was going to happen at the pyjama party?

.....
.....
.....

How many friends were invited to the party? Who was sleeping over?

.....
.....

Who was the visitor that came on Emma's birthday and what did she bring?

.....
.....

How was Emma feeling?

.....
.....

The Pyjama Party

2

Name:

.....

Tell me what Tom was doing before the party started?

.....
.....

What was the first activity at the party?

.....
.....

Describe the pillow fight and how it worked.

.....
.....
.....

What happened at the end of the pillow fight?

.....
.....

Describe the picture you made in your head about how everyone looked.

.....
.....
.....

How was Emma feeling?

.....
.....

The Pyjama Party

3

Name:

.....

What was left over after tea?

.....
.....

What did they do after tea?

.....
.....

Who played a trick and how did they do it?

.....
.....
.....

What happened at the end of the party?

.....
.....

Do you think this was a good party? Why?

.....
.....
.....