

Sample Read-Aloud Strategy

The Story of Ferdinand



Say: Today I'm going to read a story called The Story of Ferdinand by Munro Leaf. Let's look at the pictures and see if you can tell me what the story is going to be about.

Do: Encourage the children to respond as you turn the pages of the book from beginning to end. This activity is sometimes called a "picture walk." After the children have offered their ideas, say:

Say: This story is about a little bull who instead of being fierce and fighting in the ring with a matador would rather sit quietly under his favorite shade tree and just smell the flowers. One day, a bee stings Ferdinand and he jumps and snorts like crazy. The matadors see this and think Ferdinand must be the fiercest bull of all and they take him to fight in the ring. As I read, try and decide if Ferdinand will fight when he gets in the ring or if he won't. Also, try to remember what happened first, second, third, and at the end of the story.

Do: Ask questions that build additional background knowledge and set a purpose for listening. Are there things that your friends like to do that you don't? If your friends like to play tag and you don't, do you play it anyway? Is it OK to do something because someone else is doing it? How do you decide? Once the children are familiar with this questioning technique, you can ask them to think of their own questions.

Say: Now that I've told you a little bit about the story, let's read it.

Do: Show the children the pictures as you read. Stop occasionally for reactions, comments, and questions. To engage the children, you can ask the following discussion questions: "What did Ferdinand's mother worry would happen to Ferdinand? Why do you think Ferdinand would rather sit under the tree than jump and butt heads with the other bulls? Do you think Ferdinand is happy?" If the children don't respond, you can model a response by saying, "Running and jumping in the field could be fun. Relaxing under the tree could be fun, too."

Say: Now that we've read the story, who can tell me what kind of tree Ferdinand's favorite tree was? What made Ferdinand jump and snort and paw the ground like he was crazy? What happened when the men saw Ferdinand acting this way? What happened when Ferdinand got in the ring?

Do: Let the children respond and ask them to retell the story using the pictures in the book to help them recall the story sequence. Finally focus on the second goal, making inferences and ask:

Say: If you were Ferdinand, would you have fought the matador and his men? Why do you think sitting under the tree and smelling the flowers made Ferdinand happy? What lesson can we learn from this story?

Adapted from Mandel Morrow, Lesley & Gambrell, Linda B. (2004). Using Children's Literature in Preschool. Supporting Reading Comprehension: Responding to Books, 3, 37-47.

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