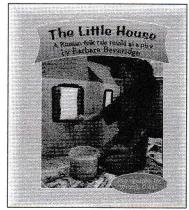


The Little House

a Russian folktale retold as a play by Barbara Beveridge
photographs by Winton Cleal



Book Summary

In this play, retold from a Russian folktale, various animals find an empty house that they all want to live in – until Mr Bear comes along, sits on it, and squashes it flat!

Features of the Book

- The character list and introduction.
- Repetition as a support for the reader.
- The stage directions.
- The frequent use of question marks, exclamation marks, and commas.
- The high-frequency contraction “I’m”.
- The use of capitals for characters’ names.
- The use of parentheses and/or italics for stage directions.
- The photographs of the children preparing for the play.
- The interviews with the actors.

Purpose

The Little House can be used in a guided reading setting to introduce and reinforce the following skills and strategies:

- identifying the plot and characters within the story;
- understanding the punctuation cues and their meanings;
- discussing the organisational structure of the text;
- writing a recount of the story using own words.

Introducing the text

Discuss any plays the children have watched.

- *What happens in a play?*
- *Have you ever been in a play?*

Tell the children that this is a play about four small animals finding a house to live in until a big bear comes along. Show them a page in the book and talk about how dialogue and stage directions are laid out. Discuss the main differences between reading a play and reading a story.

Reading the text

- Identifying the plot and characters within the story.
- Understanding the punctuation cues and their meanings.
- Discussing the organisational structure of the text.

Title page – Read the title and note that the little house prop is finished.

Page 2 – Read the list of characters and the initial stage directions together.

Pages 3 to 15 – As with *The Most Terrible Creature in the World*, the photographs in the play offer only limited support for the readers, so the children need to be fully aware of the conventions in the text before they read the play for themselves. When a character has to do something, there is an instruction, for example, “*He goes off, stamping his feet.*”

The children now read the book independently.

Revisiting the text

Identify the stage directions in capitals and italics. Discuss how these are usually read silently by the actors.

Identify all the questions in the play. The children could take turns reading these aloud, with appropriate expression. They could do the same with the exclamation marks.

Point out the high-frequency contraction “I’m”.

- *Can you find any other contractions in the play?*

Following Up

- Writing a recount of the story using own words.
☞ The children could rewrite the story as a narrative.
- Complete the blackline master opposite.