

The Picnic

by Margaret Schroder

illustrated by Fraser Williamson



Overview

This story describes how Mum and two children prepare for a picnic. A closer reading of the story reveals that the children and Mum have quite different ideas about the best kinds of food to pack!

Suggested purposes

This book supports the comprehension strategies of using prior knowledge, making and confirming predictions, using illustrations to understand text, making connections to real-life experiences, and inferring. It provides opportunities for recognising high-frequency words and for practising directionality and one-to-one word matching.

Text features (Focus on only one or two per session.)

- the high-frequency words – *in, the, we*
- the use of the pronoun “we” to refer to the two children
- the repetitive sentence structure
- the plural nouns – *apples, chips, cookies, picnics, sandwiches*
- the shift of focus from Mum to the children on alternate pages
- the contrast between the food choices of Mum and the children
- the use of an exclamation mark for emphasis on page 8
- the visual sub-plot featuring the family cat and dog who appear on most pages
- the quirky style of the illustrations

Setting the scene

Discuss the sort of food that you might take on a picnic. *What kind of food do you like on picnics? Who gets it ready? Where do you put the food? When do you have a picnic? Where do you go?* Note that you may need to explain or clarify the concept of a picnic for students who are unfamiliar with them.

The first reading

Discuss the the front cover. *What food can you see? Who is at the picnic?* List the food that can be seen (apple, drink, sandwiches). *What else could you take on a picnic?* Ensure that the other food and drink mentioned in the text (juice, lemonade, chips) is included in the discussion. Listen as the students read the title, pointing to each word as they do so. Read the names of the author and illustrator.

Back cover – Read aloud the preview question. Lead a discussion to build or expand the students’ background knowledge.

Title page – Listen to the students read the title again. *What’s the dog doing? Is he enjoying the picnic?* The image of the dog reinforces the underlying exuberance and fun of the text. Remind the students of the strategies you’d like them to focus on during the reading. Listen as they read the text, supporting them as necessary.

Page 2 – *What is Mum doing? Where will she put the sandwiches?* Some students may attempt to read it as “Mum put in the ...” instead of “Mum put the ... in”. If so, direct them to read the sentence again, pointing to each word. *Does that say “in”? No, you’re right, “in” is at the end. Try that sentence again.*

Page 3 – *Who can you see on this page? What are they getting?* The fact that the girl needs to stand on a stool to get the chips reinforces the idea that the chips are not an everyday food item. Observe how the students manage the change from “Mum” to the pronoun “we”.

Pages 4 to 7 – Encourage the students to look at the illustration on each page, then confirm the name of the food item by cross-checking the initial letter as they read. Some students may realise that there is a bit of competition going on between Mum and the children regarding their choice of food. If not, don’t tell them during this first reading.

Page 8 – *Where is the family now? They look as though they are enjoying themselves. I wonder what they might be telling us about picnics ...* Draw the students’ attention to the exclamation mark. *How does the author want us to read this?* Practise spirited, expressive reading!

Encourage the students to infer the different opinions about what to take on the picnic. On the board, make two lists – the food Mum puts in and the food the children put in. Read the lists with the students. *What do you notice about these lists? What food would you like to take on a picnic?*

Ideas for revisiting the text (Choose only one or two per session.)

- Listen to the students reread the text. Observe their attempts to maintain one-to-one word matching, to cross-check using the initial consonant, and to read expressively, especially on page 8.
- Ask the students to locate some of the high-frequency words in the text. *Find the word “the” on page 2. Can you find “the” on the next page? Tell me the letters in the word. Now find “in”? Can you write it on the board?*
- Ask the students to use their word and letter knowledge to locate some of the food words. *Can you find the word “sandwiches”? How did you know that word was “lemonade”?* Talk about the initial letters, the word length, or the similarities to other known words.
- List the plural nouns. Discuss the function of the “s” on the end of each word. *How does it sound?* Practise saying the words with and without the plural ending.
- Using the words and punctuation cards for this book, reassemble the sentences with the students.
- Explore the humour in the illustrations, for example, the antics of the cat and the dog and Mum holding a biscuit on page 8. Encourage the students to comment on the quirky style of the illustrations.

Suggestions for further activities

- Read or reread *Bubbles*, another Dragonflies emergent title illustrated by Fraser Williamson.
- Have a picnic at school. Involve the students in the planning.
- Create a group mural about packing for a picnic. Add captions such as “Anna put in the chocolate cake.” “Cody put in the fruit.”
- Make a three-dimensional picnic display using containers, models, play dough, and a picnic cloth and add labels such as “We like biscuits because ...”, “Apples are good because ...”
- Create alternative endings for a picnic story, for example, it might rain, the dog could eat the food, or the car might break down.
- Ask the children to draw pictures of things they love. Add captions such as “I love ...” or “We love ...”

- BLM word activity: make words plural

The students can look at the words listed and decide on the appropriate ending to make each word plural. They can add “s” or “es” to make the words plural.

- BLM comprehension activity: record the main points from the story

The students need to recall the items Mum put in the picnic bag and the items the children put in. They can then cut out the items and stick them in the appropriate bags.