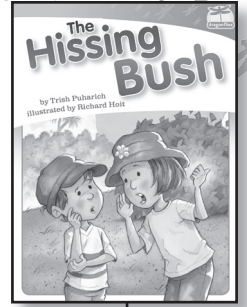# The Hissing Bush

by Trish Puharich
illustrated by Richard Hoit

Overview

Two children come across a bush that makes hissing sounds, and they gradually get close enough to discover a goose guarding her nest.

Suggested purposes

This text supports the comprehension strategies of making and confirming predictions, noting details in illustrations, and summarising the main ideas. Dynamic illustrations, lively dialogue, and the anticipation of solving the mystery encourage expressive reading. This is a good text to use for monitoring the integration of children's reading strategies at the end of the Blue level.

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

- the framework of high-frequency words
- the initial consonant blends – *cl, fl, pl, sn, st*
- the digraphs -ch – *children, each*; -sh – *bush, she, show*; -th – *feathers, that, the, they, this*
- the words ending in -ed – *asked, fluffed, hissed, jumped, laughed, looked, walked, whispered, yelled*; -ing – *hissing, playing*; -er – *closer, feather(s), other*
- the irregular past-tense verbs – *heard, ran, said, took, went*
- the strong narrative structure and the dramatic climax
- the lively dialogue that includes colloquial language – *don't be silly, so weird*
- the contractions – *didn't, doesn't, don't, I'll, it's*
- the alternatives to "said" – *asked, whispered, yelled*
- the use of the ellipsis to build anticipation on page 9
- the use of italics and exclamation marks to support expressive reading
- the use of onomatopoeia – *hiss, hissss*
- the visual language features – the thought bubble on page 8, text in the illustrations, and the "noise" lines on page 6

Setting the scene

Focus on the title, using the cover illustration as a support for "bush". Clarify that the word "bush" in this text means just one bush, not a whole forest. *Do bushes hiss?* Build a sense of anticipation and give a purpose for reading by asking the students why a bush might hiss. *Let's read and find out if we're right.* Consider using a paper clip to attach page 9 to the back cover to ensure that the ending stays a surprise.

The first reading

Back cover – read aloud the preview question. Discuss the students' predictions.
Read the names of the author and the illustrator.

Listen to the students read the text themselves, offering support as necessary.

Page 2 – *Where are they? What are the children doing?* If necessary, help the students decode the characters' names.

Page 3 – All through this book, keep asking: *What could it be?*

Page 4 – *How would James say that? What's Nicola going to do?*

Page 5 – *Why did Nicola walk past the bush again? What is she thinking?*

Page 6 – The students are likely to use meaning to predict the word "weird". Prompt them to cross-check using the initial and final letters.

Page 7 – If necessary, support the students' with decoding "snake". There is no picture clue here so remind the students of ways of cross-checking. *Do those letters look right? Does that make sense? Do snakes hiss? Is Nicola right?*

Page 8 – *What is James thinking? Could it be a cat?*

Page 9 – *How are the children feeling? How does the author want you to read this page?* Draw out the feeling of anticipation. *What might happen?* Remove the paper clips.

Pages 10 and 11 – Enjoy the revelation! Encourage expressive reading.

Page 12 – *Remember how the bird fluffed up his feathers in* Purr-fect!*? I think the goose is doing this for another reason …*

Encourage the students to review their predictions. *Were you right? Could this be a true story?* (The story is based on a real incident.)

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

- Listen to the students reread the text, observing their integration of strategies and their confidence. If they are managing well and show a good understanding of the text, they are probably ready to move on to the Green level.

- Focus on any initial consonant blends or digraphs that the students had difficulty with. List other words that start the same way. Look at the use of the digraphs as medial or final sounds.

- Locate the verbs in the text that end in "ed" or "ing". Using the board, experiment with adding other endings to the root verbs ("walks", "walking", "walked") and use the words orally in sentences.

- Compare the irregular past-tense verbs with their present-tense forms. Remind the students that not all verbs can have "ed" added to them and that they need to draw on their knowledge of spoken English to decide what sounds right. For students whom English is a second language, who are less likely to be able to draw on this knowledge, try to use these words in subsequent conversations.

- Talk about the purpose of the speech marks. Reread some of the dialogue that includes contractions. Draw out the idea that contractions make speech sound more natural.

- Focus on the narrative structure. Have the students act the story out as a way of identifying the introduction, the problem (and the children's attempts to solve it), and the dramatic ending.

- Explore the author's style. *How does the author make this story sound exciting?* You could talk about the structure of the story, the dialogue, the alternatives to "said", the repetition that creates suspense, the onomatopoeia, and the punctuation. Suggest that the students could use these ideas in their own writing.

- Focus on the illustrations. You could talk about the expressions on the students' faces, the close-up on page 10, the thought bubble, and the text in the illustrations.

Suggestions for further activities

- Have the students find out more about geese, especially about why they hiss and how they protect their young.

- Use the text as a model for constructing a narrative together or for practising writing realistic dialogue.

- BLM word activity: make words plural

  The students can say the words aloud. They can then write the plural form of each word in the spaces provided.

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

  The students can identify the main points from the story. They can then draw pictures and write what happened.