

A Guide for Classroom – Stage 1

Oxford Reading Tree is the most popular reading programme in the UK, and used in approximately 14,000 primary schools. Its balanced approach, which provides a range of skills and strategies for reading, has proved highly successful at teaching children to read.

Oxford Reading Tree is divided into stages. Stage 1 teaches children important pre-reading skills; Stages 2-5 introduce specific reading skills which are developed as children progress through Stages 6-11. When Stage 11 is reached, children should be fluent and confident at reading stories, information texts, and poetry. For those children that would still benefit from structured readers, TreeTops extends the tree for 711 year olds.

Most children take a year to complete Stages 1-5. Reading at these early stages is taught through a wide range of resources, including storybooks, language activities and games, software, extended stories, workbooks, phonic material, big books, and a flopover book. These components have been specifically devised to develop:

- Oral language skills
 - prediction and sequencing skills
 - the ability to relate text to pictures
 - an understanding of story structure
 - a sight vocabulary
 - phonological awareness

Reading for meaning

Oxford Reading Tree recognizes that young children can understand and remember a simple story before they are able to interpret the individual words and letters used to make up the story. It builds on this ability by using a story-based approach to reading, tackling reading skills in the order meaning → sentences → words/letters.

Every Oxford Reading Tree storybook tells a complete story in natural-sounding language. The teacher prepares the children for reading each storybook by reading a more detailed version of the story (Extended Story), asking the children questions about it, and encouraging their response to the story.

The stories focus on child-centred situations and experiences which are instantly recognizable, e.g. a wobbly tooth, losing a favourite toy. This makes children eager to talk about similar experiences of their own. Talking about the stories is essential for developing oral language skills and enriching vocabulary.

Vocabulary and sentence structure are carefully controlled. 'Key' words are repeated throughout the storybooks and are introduced at each stage to build up a bank of sight vocabulary. 'Context' words, such as 'tomato sauce' and 'cornflakes' are used when needed for the storyline, ensuring that the language remains as natural as possible.

Trialling in schools

Schools throughout the UK are involved in the trialling of all new material before it is published to ensure it achieves its purpose in the classroom.

Parental involvement

Oxford Reading Tree is an ideal reading programme for involving parents - and one that parents enjoy as much as the children.

Stage 1

Stage 1 is particularly important because it concentrates on the language and pre-reading skills children need to become competent readers. The Stage 1 resources are essential for:

- encouraging children to talk about themselves and their experiences, in relation to the stories
- developing listening skills
- enabling children to make the link between stories and pictures
- introducing the main characters
- introducing the first key words
- developing an awareness of letters, sounds, and rhyme
- developing a positive attitude towards reading
- teaching initial book handling skills

Children need to experience the stories and to become familiar with characters before moving on to their first storybooks with words at Stage 2.

The National Literacy Strategy at the beginning of Stage 1:

By using the Flopover book and the story books as described in the Teacher's Guide, teachers will find that they cover most of the Word, Sentence, and Text level objectives for Year R. While developing a range of skills children begin to:

- recognise print in a variety of settings
- understand and use correctly terms about books and print
- understand how story book language works
- be aware of story structure Through suggestions for shared writing children begin to:
 - understand that print can be used for a range of purposes
 - understand that writing remains constant
 - distinguish between writing and drawing in books
 - understand how writing is formed
 - understand how letters are formed
 - apply knowledge of letter/sound correspondence

Flopover Book

The Flopover Book is an essential tool for talking about the stories, the main characters, and for introducing the first key words.

This large, self-standing book is full of colourful pictures featuring the characters and their adventures. A wipeable plastic overlay is provided to write words over the pictures.

Each picture is accompanied by a short story in the Teacher's Guide which should be read to a group of children. For example, page 1 of the Flopover Book shows a picture of Kipper. The teacher should use the plastic overlay to write 'Kipper' above the picture and use the Teacher's Guide to read the short story about Kipper which explains why he has this unusual name.

The story is followed by questions - 'discussion pointers' - which encourage children to talk about names, Kipper, and his toys. In this way, children start to identify with Kipper, learn to express their ideas about him and, having listened to the story, look more closely at his picture.

After working through pages 1-4 of the Flopover Book, using the stories and discussion pointers in the Teacher's Guide, the teacher should try some of the games suggested in the Teacher's Guide to reinforce reading of the characters' names, e.g. Pass the Parcel and Deliver the Letter.

The teacher will use the pictures in the Flopover Book to introduce gradually all the Stage 1 key words, for example, and, Floppy, Mum, and Dad. The words are always introduced within the context of the picture and reinforced by games and language activities in the Teacher's Guide.

Introducing the alphabet

The Rhyme and Analogy resources introduce children to the alphabet, making them aware of letter sounds and shapes from the early stages of learning to read. The Alphabet Frieze shows both upper and lower case letters in cursive script, four digraphs (ch, sh, th, and wh), and the initial letter sounds of the characters' names. The alphabet, digraphs, and illustrations from the Frieze are available in a tabletop format for class or group work on letter sounds and formation, and dictionary skills. The Alphabet Photocopy Masters provide activities for further practice and reinforcement.

Developing an awareness of rhyme

The Rhyme and Analogy Card Games and Story Rhymes can be used from Stage 1 onwards to develop children's ability to distinguish letter sounds and rhymes. These skills will help children recognize spelling patterns and with decoding unfamiliar words. The Teacher's Guides which accompany the Card Games and Story Rhymes include ideas for developing phonological awareness throughout Stages 1-5.

Stage 1 Picture Storybooks

The twelve Picture Storybooks at Stage 1 tell a story through eight pages of lively, humorous illustrations, without any text. This allows children to learn how stories work, and the order in which the pages are read. The absence of any text encourages the children to focus on the illustrations to search out clues about what is happening in the story. By telling the story in their own words they will be learning to use the information they derive from the illustrations, and develop their oral skills. Six of the stories are about Kipper, and a further six feature Biff and Chip. The stories reflect children's own experiences—first day at nursery school, playing games, losing a favourite toy. The children quickly identify with the characters and their experiences, and are motivated to find out more about them at Stage 2.

Extended Stories

Each Picture Storybook is accompanied by an Extended Story - a written version of the Picture Storybook for a teacher or parent to read. The child listens, and follows the story in his/her own Picture Storybook. The Extended Stories* include questions about each page of the Picture Storybook, to encourage children to talk about the story. The questions draw the children into the illustrations and the events of the story, asking them to predict what might happen next, and to relate events to their own experiences. The child begins to think about how the characters may be feeling, and why situations developed in a particular way. The Extended Stories Photocopy Masters for Stages 1-4 may be photocopied so that children may take the relevant Extended Story home, with the storybook, for their parents to read with them.

* Also available in the Teacher's Guide

First Storytapes

The Extended Stories have been recorded onto cassettes, read by well-known actors and personalities. The cassettes should be used in conjunction with the Picture Storybooks to enhance listening skills and to reinforce children's ability to relate the story to the illustrations.

Big Books

The Picture Storybooks are all available in a large format, for use with a group of children. This allows the teacher to talk about the story and the pictures with several children, encouraging everyone to share their interpretation of the pictures.

Understanding the story

The Sequencing Card Photocopy Masters are story cards for Stages 1-4. When photocopied and cut into cards, the teacher can use them to assess children's understanding of the story. By asking them to put the cards in the right order to tell the story, the teacher can monitor children's understanding of narrative order, and their ability to predict what happens next.

Learning the key words

The key words taught at Stage 1 are the names of the family, 'and', 'a', and 'the'. They are introduced through the Flopover Book and reinforced by using the word games in the Teacher's Guide. 'And' is introduced through 'Biff and Chip', and 'Mum and Dad'.

'The Handy And' game (see the Teacher's Guide) reinforces recognition of this word within the context of children's own names and pairs of familiar words e.g. fish and chips.

First Words stories

Six stories using the Stage 1 key words and characters' names. There are a few simple words to each spread which are closely linked to the illustrations. The books are wonderfully humorous and provide a satisfying ending. These stories are also introduced through an extended story and are supported by Big Books and tapes.

Word Cards

The Teacher's Guide provides ideas for word games using the Stage 1 word cards e.g. 'And's down'.

Workbook 1

Workbook 1 should be used with the Flopover Book to practise pre-reading skills. The workbook uses the characters to illustrate the activities which focus on, for example, recognizing familiar shapes, finding the odd one out. The final pages involve recognizing Stage 1 key words.

Games Box Stages 1-3

These colourful and varied games provide over 100 activities for reinforcing word, sentence and text level reading skills at Stages 1-3. Easily understood rules are designed for children to play with or without adult support.

Rubber Stamps

Rubber stamps, depicting all the main characters, are ideal for teachers when making their own worksheets and for children to illustrate their own Picture Storybooks.

The National Literacy Strategy Framework as Stage 1 develops.

Using the First Words stories enables teachers to develop children's knowledge about books and print in accordance with the requirements for year R. In particular children are taught:

- *to read on sight a range of familiar words*
- *to recognise some of the high frequency words to be taught in year R*
- *to read on sight words from texts of appropriate difficulty*
- *to recognise critical features of words e.g. shape, length*
- *to understand and use new words*
- *to expect written text to make sense*
- *to use awareness of grammar*
- *to predict words*
- *that words are ordered left to right*
- *that names begin with capital letters*

Reading success with Oxford Reading Tree

By the end of Year 1, children using the varied resources of the Oxford Reading Tree will have acquired the broad range of skills and knowledge essential to becoming confident and fluent readers. The children share many of the experiences of the characters in the stories and this guarantees involvement right from the beginning. The introduction of the magic key at Stage 5 enables the stories to broaden their range and include fantasy worlds.

The requirements for the National Literacy Strategy Framework for Year R and Year 1 are met by the stories and by activities described in Teacher's Guides 1 and 2. Phonological awareness is extended by the Woodpeckers workbooks, Rhyme and Analogy stories and resources, and the Acorns and Catkins poetry anthologies. Non-fiction skills are developed by the Fact Finders Topic starters and Units A-C.

Branching out from the Storybooks

Many of the Storybooks make an excellent start for cross-curricular activities. Ideas for further activities are provided for each stage in the Teacher's Guide. Other ideas include science topics about water from The water

fight and By the stream; technology projects centred around Biff's aeroplane; mapping skills using the aerial picture on page 27 of the Flopover Book, and weighing and measuring from The toy's party.

Resources for emergent and fluent readers

Children continue their reading with Owls and More Owls at Stages 6 and 7 and Magpies at Stages 8 and 9. The Robins and Jackdaws branches provide stories and anthologies for competent readers who need to progress at a faster rate. Teachers should continue to use the relevant Woodpeckers anthologies and Workbooks to develop phonological skills, alongside the other Oxford Reading Tree Storybooks at Stages 5-11.

Oxford Reading Tree Treetops, a series of structured fiction, has been specially written for 7-11 year olds who need the support of carefully controlled language and built-in progression. The Treetops take children from Stage 10 to 14 with stories that reflect the interests and humour of older readers. Playscripts at Stages 5, 6 and 7 and Oxford Reading Tree Poetry for Stages 3-11 develop speaking and listening skills, and phonological awareness, while providing further opportunities for reading. Oxford Reading Tree Fact Finders develop non-fiction and referencing skills, providing a firm foundation for work at Key Stage 2.