

A Guide for Classroom – Stage 4

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 4

At Stage 4, children progress to slightly longer stories with more words. Teachers are recommended to introduce Stage 4 More Stories featuring Wilf and Wilma first. The other six Stage 4 Storybooks are numbered to indicate the order in which they should be read, with Book 6 leading to the Magic Key adventures at Stage 5.

Storybooks 1-6 have a narrative link, and are also graded in difficulty. The number of sentences and pages increases: Storybooks 1-3 have 22 sentences and 16 pages; Storybooks 4-6 have 40 sentences and 24 pages.

All the Storybooks are accompanied by Extended Stories. Each Storybook should be introduced in the same way as Stage 2 and 3, with the emphasis on talking and questioning. Big Books may be used as part of the preparation for reading, to encourage a group of children to talk about the stories.

The stories tell of Biff, Chip, and their family moving house, and their discovery of a secret room, a dolls' house, and a Magic Key. Page 27 of the Flopover Book is an excellent focus for discussion, showing an aerial view of the neighbourhood with the children's new house, their previous house, and the settings for their adventures in earlier books.

Sparrows and More Sparrows

Further reading practice for children who are not quite ready to progress to Stage 5 is provided by four Sparrows Storybooks and six More Sparrows Storybooks. More Sparrows feature two Muslim children, Adam and Yasmin.

Playscripts

Six playscripts based on Stage 4 stories encourage children to follow the text closely, read with expression, become more involved with the characters' and co-operate in a group. They also provide an ideal opportunity for children to present their reading to the rest of the class.

Language activities

Many of the activities and word games used at earlier stages can be adapted for Stage 4. 'Story bingo', which reinforces sight vocabulary and sentence structure, is explained in the Teacher's Guide.

Context Cards at Stage 4 no longer underline the key word. Teachers should continue to use the cards for reinforcing words in and out of context.

Workbooks

The sections in Workbooks 4a and 4b relate to Storybooks 1-6, and should be worked through in order. The activities concentrate on word recognition by using words, especially key words, in context. Each section ends with a cloze exercise to encourage the children to write in the word themselves.

Phonological skills

Rhyme and Analogy and Acorns Poetry continue to develop these important skills. Use as for Stage 3.

Using Woodpeckers Introductory Workbooks C and D

Stage 4 continues to work on initial consonants, with more involved activities and progression, to final consonants. Workbook D introduces related phonics, using the key words and letter sounds already familiar to children for creating new words and to increase their phonological awareness. (See word lists in the Teacher's Guide) e.g. it → pit, sit, hit Work on final consonants is continued, with particular emphasis on g, c, d, k, f, s, x.

Monitoring progress

Sequencing Cards Photocopy Masters, as the Storybooks, have more sentences at Stage 4 for children to read.

The National Literacy Strategy Framework at Stage 4.

Year 1 term 2 teaching objectives are broadly met by the stories, playscripts, and activities at Stage 4. In particular children are taught to:

- *increase the range of words they recognise on sight*
- *increase their personal vocabulary*
- *read aloud with pace and expression*
- *reinforce knowledge of the term 'sentence'*
- *use a variety of clues to read unfamiliar words*
- *read with concentration and attention*
- *retell stories, giving the main points in sequence*
- *become aware of character and dialogue (through playscripts)*

Phonological skills continue to be developed through the Woodpeckers workbooks, Rhyme and Analogy resources and Acorns poetry. Non-fiction texts are introduced through the Fact Finders Topic Starters and Fact Finders Units A and B.

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 *Flopper 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.