

Our Teacher, Miss Pool

by Joy Cowley

illustrated by Trevor Pye

Overview

Miss Pool is a resourceful teacher who finds unusual ways of getting to school when her car breaks down. This story has a delightful mix of fantasy and reality. There is an audio version on the Ready to Read CD *Readalong 2003*. There are two other books about Miss Pool, *Where Is Miss Pool?* (Red) and *Miss Pool Is Cool* (Yellow).

Suggested purposes

This book supports the comprehension strategies of making connections, forming hypotheses, and evaluating. It provides opportunities to practise one-to-one matching across two or more lines of text, cross-checking, and recognising high-frequency words. Subtle text changes make this an ideal text for monitoring children's attention to print at the end of the Magenta level.

Text features

(Focus on only one or two per session.)

- the high-frequency words “can”, “I”, “on”, “said”, “to”, “went”
- the rhyming words “Pool” and “school”, “by” and “my”
- the use of capital letters for the days of the week
- the days of the week, providing a sequential structure for the story
- the repeated sentence structure on pages 3 to 7
- the clear narrative structure with a distinct beginning, middle, and end
- the two or more lines of text on each page
- the use of the pronoun “she”
- the use of the honorific “Miss” and upper-case “P” for “Pool”
- the question mark on page 2
- the mix of fantasy and reality.

Introducing the text

Talk about how the children come to school. *If your car broke down, what other ways could you come to school?* Encourage unusual and humorous responses. Offer some ideas of your own, introducing the language and syntax of the text. For example, the children may not have seen a hot-air balloon or they may be unfamiliar with the word “by” used in this way.

Tell the children that this story happens over a week. You could refer to the class chart and revise the names of the days together.

The CD that accompanies this text could be used as an introduction, a follow-up activity, or both.

The first reading

The first and last pages of this text are relatively complex, so be prepared to vary the reading approach as you monitor the children's responses. Also, the days of the week could be a structural support for some children but a challenge to those who do not yet know the correct sequence of the days.

Look at the cover illustration. Draw out the ideas that this is a school setting and Miss Pool is the teacher. Read the title and the names of the author and the illustrator. *How did Miss Pool get to school?* Some children may notice the "POOL" number plate.

Title page – Listen to the children read the title. *I can see that Miss Pool has a problem ...*

Page 2 – Guide the children into the syntax by asking *What happened to Miss Pool's car?* Read the first sentence together. *How will she go to school? What do you think she's saying?* Draw attention to the question mark.

Page 3 – *How did Miss Pool get to school? What day is it? How do you know?* If there are ESOL children in the group, you may need to clarify that the pronoun "she" refers to Miss Pool.

Remind the children of the strategies you want them to focus on. Listen to them read pages 4 to 7 themselves, noting those who pick up on the repetitive pattern of the text. They may need some initial reassurance with the syntax.

Before turning to page 8, ask the children what the next day will be. Draw out the idea that there will be no school and encourage them to predict what Miss Pool will do on Saturday.

Page 8 – Ask the children to check their predictions. *I wonder what she's saying ... Could this story be true?* Evaluate the forms of transport used in the story. The children could share ideas about the most/least sensible or fastest/slowest ways for Miss Pool to get to school. *I wonder where she got the elephant! Where would she park it when she got to school?*

Ideas for revisiting the text

(Choose only one or two per session.)

Listen to the children as they reread the text. Observe their control over one-to-one word matching and their use of a return sweep. Listen for instances of cross-checking using initial letters. Those children who are managing confidently and have a good understanding of the story are probably ready to move on to the Red level. Take a running record to confirm this.

Ask the children to retell the story, one child retelling the beginning, another the middle, and another the ending.

Locate some of the high-frequency words in the text. *Find the word "went" on page 3.*

Can you find it again on the next page? Tell me the letters in the word.

Make the words "school" and "Pool" or "by" and "my" with magnetic letters. *What is the same about these words? If we changed the first letter, what other words could we make?* Have the children practise creating rhyming words by substituting initial letters.

Identify the places in the classroom where the children can find the days of the week, in English or Māori. Reinforce the idea that the days of the week have capital letters.

Discuss the use of the word “Miss” and the convention of using upper-case letters for names.

Look closely at the illustrations and talk about the equipment, including safety equipment, for all the modes of transport.

Suggestions for further tasks

Have the children listen to and read along with the story on the CD *Readalong 2003*.

Create a wall story by innovating on the text. Think of different modes of transport and add captions using the children’s or the teachers’ names, for example, “On Monday, Kim went to school by tractor.” You could use the Māori names for the days of the week.

Cut up photocopies of the book and have the children match the text and illustrations and put them in sequence.

Add speech or thought bubbles to other characters in the story, for example, the birds on page 5, the child pointing on page 7, or the cat on page 8.

Practise sequencing and chanting the days of the week.

Construct a graph of how the children come to school.