

- My Best Bear
- by Dot Meharry
illustrated by Christine Ross
- Overview
- A boy shows the reader his collection of bears and then snuggles into bed with his “best” bear. There is an audio version on the Ready to Read CD *Readalong 2001*.
- Suggested purposes
- This book supports the comprehension strategies of making connections, forming and testing hypotheses, and inferring. It provides opportunities to practise one-to-one word matching, directionality, and recognising high-frequency words. The illustrations provide opportunities for developing children's oral language.
- Text features
- (Focus on only one or two per session.)
 - the high-frequency words “But”, “is”, “my”, “This”
 - the repeated initial consonant “b” – “bear”, “best”, “big”, “blue”, “But”
 - the upper-case and lower-case forms of initial letters – “bear”, “Bear”, “best”, “Best”; “my”, “My”; “this”, “This”
 - the digraph “th” in “this”
 - the high proportion of single-syllable words (which supports one-to-one matching)
 - the opposites “big” and “little”, “old” and “new”
 - the adjectives used to describe the bears
 - the title as a support for reading the last page
 - the use of “But” and the exclamation mark for emphasis on page 8
 - the child's evaluation of the bears, suggested by the word “best”
 - the extra information provided in the illustrations.
- Introducing the text
- Bring a teddy bear or a collection of bears to school to talk about. Encourage the children to help you to describe each bear, using the structure of the text. *This is my soft bear. This is my little bear. Which bear do you like best?* Encourage the children to talk about their own favourite bears or soft toys. *Why do you like it best?*
- You could refer to *All Kinds of Things* and tell the children that this is another book about a collection. The boy in this book is telling us about his collection of bears.
- Note that ESOL children may be confused by the use of opposites in this book if both aspects of the opposites are new to them. For example, try to ensure that they're familiar with the meaning of “big” (or “old”) before you introduce the concept of “little” (or “new”).
- The first reading
- Discuss the collection of bears in the cover illustration. Check that the children understand that the concept of best here means “favourite”. *I think I can work out which bear the boy likes best ...* Ask the children to read the title, providing support as necessary. Read the names of the author and the illustrator.
- Title page – Listen to the children read the title again.
- Page 2 – Encourage the children to use the clues in the illustration to clarify the setting. *I wonder what the boy is telling us about this bear ...*
- Remind the children of the strategies you want them to focus on during the reading. Listen to them read the text themselves, providing support and feedback as necessary. Observe their one-to-one word matching and the strategies they use to work out the adjective on each page.
- Page 5 – Note the “enlarged” hands that emphasise the small size of the bear. If the children read “small” for “little”, point out the initial consonant and prompt them to cross-check. *Could that word be “small”? Why not?*
- Pages 6 and 7 – The concepts of “old” and “new” may be challenging for some children. Discuss the pictures in detail. Talk about the decrepit state of the old bear, as opposed to the pristine new bear that still has its shop tag. *What can you tell me about these bears? How are they*
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different? As the children read page 6, assist them to cross-check the illustration with the initial letter of the word. *How do you know that that word is "old"?*

- Page 8 – Observe which children notice the change in the text pattern. *This is the end of the story. Which bear do you think he will finish with?* If necessary, refer to the introductory discussion about the cover illustration. Discuss the use of the exclamation mark. *How does the writer want you to read this page?* Practise reading the sentence together expressively.
 - Review the children's earlier predictions about the boy's "best" bear. Encourage them to infer why he likes this bear best, making connections to their own experience and using information from the illustration.
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 - Ideas for revisiting the text
 - (Choose only one or two per session.)
 - Listen to the children reread the text, observing their one-to-one word matching and how they manage the change in the text pattern on the last page.
 - Locate some of the high-frequency words in the text. Find the word "is" on page 2. Can you find "is" on the next page? Tell me the letters in the word. Now find "my". How do you know that that word says "my"?
 - Find all of the words in the text that start with "B" or "b". List more words that start this way.
 - Ask the children to practise articulating the sound of the digraph "th" in "This". "Th" can be a difficult sound for young children to articulate. *Put your tongue out as you say it.* Draw out the similarity in sound of the word "the".
 - Discuss the two sets of opposites – "big" and "little", "old" and "new". Extend the children's thinking by asking them to complete others, for example, "off and ...", "open and ...".
 - Talk about other adjectives that could be used to describe the bears, for example, "furry", "cuddly", and "soft".
 - Extend the children's use of descriptive language by discussing one or two illustrations in greater detail. Model the use of new vocabulary as needed. You could talk about the illustrator's use of pattern, for example, the striped chair, the starry pyjamas, or the big bear's checked trousers and zigzag cardigan, or you could focus on a particular picture. For example, you could ask the children to speculate about what the boy is thinking on page 4 or have them compare his room with their own bedrooms. *How is the boy's room the same/different? Which illustration do you like best? Why?*
 - Suggestions for further tasks
 - Have the children listen to the text on the CD *Readalong 2001* and read along with the book.
 - Make a teddy bear mural and add a caption for each bear, using the text as a model and adding other adjectives.
 - Have a Teddy Bear's Picnic (and learn the song).
 - Make an "opposites" book.
 - Read other books or poems about bears.
 - Construct a list together of the "essential" characteristics for a teddy bear.
 - Read or reread *All Kinds of Things* (Magenta).
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