

Finding Tibs

by Sian Burling-Claridge
illustrated by Fifi Colston

Overview

When Zara's cat, Tibs, doesn't appear one morning, Zara doesn't let her blindness stop her from finding him. There is an audio version on the Ready to Read CD *Readalong 2007*.

Suggested purposes

This text supports the comprehension strategies of visualising, forming and testing hypotheses, inferring, and identifying the main idea.

Text features

(Focus on only one or two per session.)

- the strong narrative structure
- Zara's resourcefulness
- the implied messages (in the text and illustrations) about living with a disability
- the discrepancy between the text ("dark and fuzzy") that conveys Zara's viewpoint and the illustrations on pages 6 and 9
- the focus on senses other than sight, evoked by the descriptive language, for example, "fuzzy", "nudged", "rough", "rubbed", "soft and silky"
- the simile "rough like sandpaper"
- the use of commas to support phrasing
- the irregular past-tense verbs "felt", "found", "heard".

Introducing the text

Have the children share their predictions about the story based on the cover illustration and title and encourage them to share any of their experiences with lost pets. Don't look through the book or introduce the ideas of cats or blindness at this point, or you will lose valuable opportunities for the children to infer. Discuss the implications of the word "Finding". *What does that tell you? Let's read to find out how this person finds Tibs.*

During the reading

Read the names of the author and the illustrator.

Title page – Encourage the children to predict how this fits with the cover illustration, or you could model your own thinking: *I wonder who this girl is – she isn't the person on the cover. I think the cat must be Tibs. I wonder if they've found him (or her) already, or maybe this is before he went missing ...*

Pages 2 and 3 – Ask the children to read these pages silently then share what they've found out about Zara and Tibs. Briefly discuss any difficulties with the reading. You may need to explain the meaning of "nudged". If some children read "liked" for "licked" on page 2, draw attention to the "ick" rime. Briefly make

connections to any experiences the children have had of being licked by tongues “like sandpaper”. Ask the children to review their predictions about the story.

Have the children carry on reading the text silently, pausing at various points for discussion or clarification.

Pages 4 and 5 – Prompt the children to make connections to their knowledge of narrative structure. Together, clarify that pages 2 to 3 were the introduction and now this is the problem. *I wonder what Zara’s going to do while Mum’s checking the garden ...*

Page 6 – Prompt the children to imagine (visualise) how Zara might cope with this situation. *How could she help?*

Page 7 – You could prompt the children to refer to the “sound lines” emanating from the radio on page 6 (and page 4) to help them cross-check their attempts at “switched the radio off”. *I wonder why she’s switched it off ...*

Page 8 – Note the large amount of white space around the text to suggest time passing and Zara’s concentration while she waits and listens.

Page 9 – Draw out the idea that the kitchen table is described as being “dark” and “fuzzy” because this is what it looks like from Zara’s point of view. Focus on the way Zara is walking. Prompt the children to infer that she is following the sounds she’s heard and has her hands out to check for things in her way. Encourage them to predict the outcome of the story.

Pages 10 and 11 – You may need to support the children with decoding “silky”. If necessary, explain what silk is and make connections to the children’s experiences of cats’ silky fur. Prompt them to use their knowledge of “again” to help them work out “against”.

Page 12 – Compare Zara’s and Mum’s feelings with how they were feeling on page 5. *Show me the sentence on page 5 that suggests that they were worried.*

What have you found out about being blind from this book? Have the children reread the book with a partner, focusing on the illustrations. Draw attention to: the fact that there is no music on the piano, the distinctive shape of Zara’s mug, the stools that have been placed out of the way under the table (page 9), and Zara’s use of her hands to feel her way (pages 9 to 11). Draw out the idea of Zara’s resourcefulness: using her other senses (hearing and touch) to solve a problem and her ability to live a life much like other children’s (having a pet, playing the piano, and taking an active part in the household).

After the reading

(Choose only one or two per session.)

Listen to the children reread the text with a partner, observing their use of the commas to support fluent, phrased reading. If necessary, lead a shared rereading of the text to model this.

Discuss the writer’s use of descriptive language. Reread the story, finding and discussing examples that evoke the senses, including the simile on page 2. Explore how the writer conveys information and ideas by “showing” rather than “telling” (so that the children need to infer). For example, when Tibs nudges Zara and licks her hand, it shows that he likes Zara; his full bowl shows that he’s been missing since the previous night; the words “dark and fuzzy” convey Zara’s

viewpoint; and Zara switched the radio off so she could hear better.

Discuss the narrative structure. Identify the introduction, the problem (the missing cat), the complication (Zara's blindness), and the happy ending.

Focus on the sentences that include irregular verbs. Remind the children that some verbs can't have "ed" added to them and that they need to use their knowledge of spoken English to help them when they are reading. *Does "fined" sound right?* For ESOL children, who are less likely to be able to draw on their knowledge of English, model the use of these verbs in subsequent conversations and provide opportunities for practice.

Suggestions for further tasks

Listen to the audio version on the CD *Readalong 2007*.

Make *The School Band* (Blue), which features a boy with Down Syndrome, available for rereading.

List the ways to make the classroom a safe place for a blind person to visit.

Look at examples of Braille writing and discuss why this is useful to a blind person.

Practise using different senses. For example, have the children close their eyes and identify noises they can hear, items they can feel, or food they can smell.