

# Dimitri's Lunch

by Dina Viatos

illustrated by Philip Webb

## Overview

This personal experience narrative describes Dimitri's dilemma when his friend Kit makes rude comments about Dimitri's feta cheese sandwiches. Dimitri thinks long and hard about the problem, and ultimately, with support from Mum and a little help from circumstances, he resolves the problem. There is an audio version on the Ready to Read CD *Readalong 2000*.

## Suggested purposes

This is an excellent text for exploring ideas and feelings about relationships, about cultural difference, and about facing and solving problems. It supports the comprehension strategies of questioning, inferring, identifying main ideas, and evaluating. This text also encourages expressive reading and is useful for monitoring children's integration of reading strategies at the end of the Turquoise level.

## Text features

(Focus on only one or two per session.)

- the clear narrative structure
- the way that Mum gives Dimitri the opportunity to solve the problem himself
- the characterisation of Dimitri, Mum, and Kit
- the expressive illustrations
- the inclusion of dialogue
- the repetition of the phrase "You won't know unless you try"
- the use of exclamation marks and dashes for effect
- the adjectives "big", "different", "empty", "huge", "hungry", "smelly", "tasty"
- the irregular past-tense verbs – "ate", "brought", "burst", "came", "left", "made", "met", "sat", "shook", "shut", "took"
- the polysyllabic words – "decided", "different", "remembered", "tomato", and "tomorrow" (which provide good opportunities to practise decoding skills).

## Possible challenges

- the name "Dimitri" and the words "tasty" and "feta"
- understanding that feta has a strong smell.

## Introducing the text

Talk about the foods the children bring in their lunch boxes. *What's your favourite lunch food? Are there any lunch foods you don't like?* Tell the children this story is about a Greek boy called Dimitri. Look at the cover together and ask the children what they think Dimitri likes in his sandwiches. If necessary, explain what feta cheese is. You could have some feta cheese available for the children to try. Focus on the illustration of Dimitri and draw out the idea that he has a problem. Encourage the children to predict what the problem might be.

## During the reading

Read the names of the author and the illustrator. In order for the children to engage with Dimitri's dilemma, it would be good to stop quite often during the reading to review the main ideas.

Pages 2 and 3 – *Were you right about what Dimitri likes in his sandwiches? Ask the children to read to the end of page 3 and to think about what Dimitri's problem is. How does the writer let you know how Dimitri is feeling?*

Page 4 – *What's Mum's idea for solving the problem? Does Dimitri like that idea? What would you do if you were Dimitri?*

Page 5 – *Were you right? Do you think this will work?*

Pages 6 and 7 – *What happened? How is Dimitri feeling now? How do you know?*

Page 8 – *How would Dimitri say that?* Encourage the children to read expressively.

Page 9 – *What's Dimitri's next idea? What's the problem with it?*

Pages 10 and 11 – *What did Dimitri decide to do?* Draw out the idea that Mum is leaving him to sort out the problem himself.

Page 12 – *What is Mum's idea? Is it a good idea?*

Page 13 – *How is Dimitri feeling now? How do you know?*

Page 14 – *What is the problem now? What is Dimitri thinking?* Encourage the children to predict what might happen next and then to read pages 15 and 16 to find out. *What did Kit think of the sandwiches? How do you know? How is Dimitri feeling now? What do you notice about what Dimitri says to Kit on page 15?*

Reflect on the ideas in the text. *What sort of person is Dimitri? What will he say to his mum? What do you think will happen tomorrow? Why do you think Dina Viatos wrote this story?*

## After the reading

(Choose only one or two per session.)

Listen to the children reread the text with a partner, observing their integration of reading strategies and their use of expression, especially during the sections of dialogue. Those children who are managing well and who show a good understanding of the story are probably ready to move on to the Purple level. A running record will help to confirm this.

Ask the children to find parts of the text where the writer lets the reader know how Dimitri and Kit are feeling. Draw out the idea that their feelings are not actually mentioned but are conveyed indirectly through their actions and dialogue and through the illustrations.

Find examples of adjectives in the story. Talk about how adjectives create a more interesting picture. Link this to a discussion of characterisation by asking the children to think of adjectives to describe Dimitri, Kit, or Dimitri's mother.

Discuss the narrative structure. Have the children work in pairs to identify Dimitri's problem, his actions, and the resolution. Encourage the children to make links to their own experiences. *If you were Dimitri, what would you have done? What else could Kit have done? Have you ever had a problem like this with a friend? What did you do?*

Find the sentences where a dash is used (on pages 14 and 16). Talk about how the dash is used to indicate a pause and how it gives the next part of the sentence greater impact.

Focus on the irregular past-tense verbs. Explain that there are some verbs that can't have "ed" added to them and that the children need to use their knowledge of spoken English to help them decide what sounds right. *Do we say "bringed"? Or "shutted"?* For ESOL children, who are less likely to be able to draw on their knowledge of English syntax, try to use these irregular verbs often in subsequent conversations.

If necessary, review the decoding strategy of "chunking" the polysyllabic words in the text.

## Suggestions for further tasks

Role-play some of the situations that Dimitri and Kit found themselves in. Ask the children how they felt during and after the role play.

Use this text for readers' theatre, encouraging expressive reading.

Photocopy some of the illustrations and have the children write thought bubbles for the characters.

Talk about other food combinations the children like, especially unusual ones!

Ask the children to bring their favourite food for a shared lunch. This is an ideal opportunity to encourage ESOL children to share their cultural background.

Locate Greece on a world map or globe. Use the Internet or the library to find out about other foods that are special to Greece.