

Whitebait Season

by Tracey Cormack
illustrated by Elspeth Alix Batt

Overview

In this realistic narrative, Nathan goes whitebaiting with his dad in the hope their catch will be a lot better than in the past. There is an audio version on the Ready to Read CD *Readalong 2010*.

Suggested purposes

This book has strong links to science and supports the comprehension strategies of making connections, asking questions, inferring, and identifying the main idea.

Text features

(This information is intended as a prompt for teachers rather than a list of teaching points.)

- the information about whitebaiting and whitebait, in particular, the main idea about the scarcity of whitebait, conveyed both directly and indirectly, through:
 - the implied messages, for example, “everyone had to stop fishing by nine o’clock”, “only one, lonely whitebait”, “I’d like to have a whole fritter to myself”, Dad’s humorous question “Do you think we’ll have enough?”, and the decision not to feed any to the cat
 - the illustrations showing the equipment and whitebaiting process
 - the information on page 12
 - the topic-specific vocabulary, for example, “fritter”, “net”, “running”, “scoop”, “whitebait season”
- the informal style, including phrases such as “Come on”, “kept a close eye on”, and “OK” and the use of contractions
- the irregular verbs “caught”, “knew”, “swam”
- the alternatives to said – “asked”, “called”, “exclaimed”, “laughed”, “replied”
- the descriptive verbs – “gathered”, “grinned”, “looked”, “peered”, “scooped”, “stayed”, “wandered”
- the “f” sound for the “gh” digraph in “enough” and “laughed”.

Introducing the text

Show the children the cover and encourage them to share what they know about whitebait and whitebaiting. If necessary, clarify that whitebait are fish. *There is a lot of information about whitebait in this book, but this is a fiction text, so it isn’t all stated directly. What information does the cover give us?* Discuss the word “season” to mean a time of year, such as the rugby season, rather than just the “four seasons”. Start a KWL chart to record what the children know (or think they know) about whitebait, any questions they have, and any other new information they may find out as they read the text. *As we read this book, I want you to be looking for clues that we can use to infer information about whitebait to add to our chart.*

During the reading

Read the names of the author and the illustrator.

Title page – Reread the title. *What information is this page giving us?*

Ask the children to read the text silently, pausing at various points for discussion or to clarify any difficulties. Add new information or questions to the chart as you discuss the text together.

Page 2 – *Is there anything that puzzles you about this page? Discuss the concept of fish “running”. I wonder why they have to stop fishing at nine o’clock ...*

Page 3 – You may need to clarify the children’s understanding of what a fritter is. *What clues tell us if Nathan and Dad have been successful so far this season? Check that the children understand that the inset illustration refers to a previous time. Discuss what the children have learned about whitebait from these two pages. What helped you infer that? Does it answer any of our questions? Add any new information to the chart.*

Page 4 – Support the children to infer (from the last line) that the weather has been stormy yesterday (because on page 2, Dad said that the whitebait are running now) and that this is likely to increase their chances of getting a good catch.

Page 5 – Note the beach setting and make connections to the children’s experiences of fishing. *Why do you think that Nathan knows it will be a long wait? Draw out the idea that he is basing it on previous experience. If children say “wondered” for “wandered”, clarify the pronunciation and meaning of both words (in case the children don’t realise they are different), then prompt them to cross-check with the illustration and consider what makes sense. If necessary, clarify that the “a” in “wan” has the same sound as in “was” and “what”. What is the most important idea you’ve noticed about whitebait so far? What makes you think that?*

Page 6 – If necessary, explain that “caught” is the past-tense form of “catch”. *What clues can you find that tell you whether they have caught any whitebait?*

Page 7 – Discuss Nathan’s reaction. His excitement, even though there’s only a handful, reinforces the main idea.

Page 8 – If necessary, demonstrate the meaning of “scooped”. ESOL children may need support with the colloquial phrase “kept a close eye on it”.

Page 9 – *What do you think Pickle is waiting for? Do you think they will give her some?*

Pages 10 and 11 – Draw out the humour in Dad’s teasing.

Page 12 – Read the information and rules about whitebait and discuss these in relation to the main idea. Add any new ideas to the chart.

After the reading

(Choose only one or two per session.)

Listen to the children reread the text with a partner, observing the strategies they use to manage the challenges in the text.

Have the children talk with a partner about a word or phrase they found difficult and the strategies they used to work it out. Listen in to the discussions to see if there are any particular aspects that you may need to follow up on. For example, you could explore the meanings of words that have multiple meanings, such as “running” or “season”, or provide a mini-lesson on the irregular past-tense verbs or the “gh” digraph in “enough” and “laughed”. With ESOL students, you could reread the text together

to track the use of pronouns to refer to the characters or explore the idiomatic phrases, such as “kept a close eye on”.

Use the KWL chart and refer back to the text to track the evidence that helped the children identify information and make inferences to identify the main idea about the scarcity of whitebait.

Identify some of the descriptive language in the text, for example, the vivid verbs, the alternatives to “said”, or the idiomatic phrases, and discuss how these help the reader to visualise more vividly the way something looks, sounds, or is done.

Suggestions for further tasks

Have the children listen to the audio version on the CD *Readalong 2010* and read along (silently) with the book.

Have the children create a poster about whitebait and whitebaiting, using the information chart and referring back to the text.

Read “Whitebaiting” in *School Journal*, Part 1 Number 4, 2004, which includes a diagram of the life cycle of whitebait. This may help to provide answers to any remaining questions on the chart.