



Issue 3, 2007/08

Teacher's Resource

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COMET

Issue 3, 2007/08
Teacher's Resource

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Introduction



Many classroom teachers are now using small-group classroom organization to enhance student learning. There are many benefits to this style of teaching:

- it gives students greater opportunities to talk to one another and check that ideas and understandings are clear;
- it supports theories of learning as social practice;
- it provides purposeful and practical contexts in which students can use and develop a range of skills;
- it provides a supportive environment in which students can tackle challenging activities;
- it provides an opportunity for the teacher to develop differentiated activities within the whole-class group;
- it provides the teacher with a “focus group” for manageable teaching and assessment purposes.

This model of teaching has led to the need for a wider range of activities that can be used for explicit teaching purposes, independent and practice work, and extension.

The purpose of this resource is to introduce a range of strategies that can be used in this small-group context.

The aim of these strategies is to provide a starting point for you. They have been chosen because they are generic in nature and with a little adaptation can be applied to any number of texts.

Using *Comet*

Comet is an invaluable resource in the classroom because:

- an exciting, new issue arrives at the school every term;
- each edition is based on a central theme (in this issue the theme is “Green”) and easily used to support cross-curricular units;
- it contains a range of genres, making it useful in many ways, and in many contexts;
- it is colourful, motivational, and attractive to students;
- it contains short, “snappy” articles that are appealing and inviting—even to less confident readers;
- it provides fresh ideas for practical classroom activities.

Establishing Learning Groups

There are many different ways to organize a classroom into small groups. Young students are commonly grouped according to literacy ability, but this is not always necessary or even advantageous. Mixed-ability groups ensure that students who can work independently and those who require support can work together to enhance interaction and to make groups more independent. This gives the teacher more time to work intensively with students that need additional support.

The ability to be a cooperative and engaged member of a group is not an inborn skill. The skills of cooperation and effective group membership must be taught and regularly reinforced with all students.

Similarly, if you have not used small-group learning in your classroom before, it is unrealistic to introduce the model of four or five groups working simultaneously and expect everything to go smoothly. It takes time, explicit instruction, and practice to have a number of groups working effectively without close teacher supervision.

Introducing Strategies to Students

The strategies presented here are ideal for use in literacy learning centres. There are several different ways to organize and teach using learning centres. Many teachers are familiar with classroom-practice models that involve the use of rotational group activities. The activities in the *Comet* teacher's resource include a label to be used on the board to indicate which groups are scheduled to do which activities.

You will need to explain each of the strategies to the students before they are implemented and then debrief students once they are completed. It is a good idea to develop multiple groups that work with little direction before introducing strategies that will take too much thought and hard work. Once groups are working, introduce one strategy to the teacher-group and support students as they learn the activity. In later activities, this strategy can be expected of groups which are not the teacher-group.

Alternatively, each strategy can be introduced to the whole class and modelled with them before becoming a teacher-group task and then an independent activity. Students will need more support and more time to master some of the strategies than for others.

Organization of the Teacher's Resource

On pages 6–11, reading notes are provided for the selections in *Comet*, Issue 3. Included with the notes for each selection are:

- broad-based curriculum connections
- general teaching support
- links to resources on the Internet and to Scholastic Canada resources

Strategies, selected specifically for selections in *Comet*, Issue 3, are provided beginning on page 12.

For each strategy the following are provided:

- an explanation
- instructions
- teaching tips
- student worksheets on Blackline Masters

Depending on the type of strategy, each has a worksheet that provides activities directly related to the text of one of the selections.

Reading Notes



Down on the Farm by Carrol Baker pages 4–5

Text type: Non-fiction: Narrative—Personal Account

Curriculum connections: Language arts/social science

Summary

Seven-year-old Will describes life on his family's avocado farm.

Notes

Ask students if they have ever eaten avocados. Do they like them? Discuss with students the health benefits of avocados, and of fruits and vegetables in general.

Links to Further Inquiry

🔗 **California Avocado Commission information for children**

A site with information about avocados, including games, child-friendly recipes, and instructions for growing an avocado plant.

<http://www.avocado.org/kids/kids-only/>

Green is for Greenhouse by Liz Flaherty pages 6–7

Text type: Non-fiction: Narrative—Personal Account

Curriculum connections: Science, language arts

Summary

Siblings Molly and Riley help their grandmother tend to her greenhouse.

Notes

Time and resources permitting, you may want arrange for a class visit to a greenhouse or have a greenhouse keeper speak to the class. Many botanical gardens and gardening centres offer tours of their greenhouse facilities.

Links to Further Inquiry

🔗 **National Gardening Association's School Greenhouse Guide (U. S.)**

Includes activities and details about what a greenhouse and how to set one up at school.

<http://www.kidsgardening.com/greenhouseguide/>

🔗 **Mini Greenhouse**

A simple activity for making a greenhouse in a bottle.

<http://www.copper-tree.ca/garden/minigree.html>

What is Green?
by Catriona Hoy
pages 8–9

Text type: Non-fiction: Explanation—Labelled Illustrations

Curriculum connections: Science


Summary

Students learn about the properties of colour.

Notes

Discuss with students the properties of colour. Ask students if they know how certain colours are made; i. e., orange is made from combining red and yellow, green is made from the combination of blue and yellow. Discuss with students the properties of primary and secondary colours.

Links to Further Inquiry

 *Colour* (DK Eye Know series, Dorling Kindersley Publishers Ltd., ISBN 978-1-40532-161-7)

Tadpole Magic
by Jo Horsburgh
pages 10–11

Text type: Non-fiction: Description/Procedure—Instructions

Curriculum connections: Science

Summary

Students are shown how to care for tadpoles.

Notes

In this reading, students are given instructions for maintaining a tank of tadpoles. If it is not possible for your class to do, lead students on a discussion about tadpoles. What do students know about them? Compare and contrast tadpoles to other animal babies. How are they the same? How are they different?

Links to Further Inquiry

 *Make a Frog!* in Scholastic Canada's *Literacy Place for the Early Years* series (Grade 3, guided reading level K, ISBN 978-0-7791-6633-6)

 *Lifecycles: From Tadpole to Frog* by Dr. Gerald Legg (Franklin Watts, ISBN 978-0-531-14491-6)

My Coat of Many Colours
by Margaret Etherton
pages 12–13

Text type: Info-fiction: Narrative—Report

Curriculum connections: Science


Summary

A chameleon describes why and how it changes colours in this informative selection.

Notes

Ask students if they have ever seen a chameleon before. Have students write and illustrate a short story about chameleons and share them with the class.

Links to Further Inquiry

 *Chameleons Are Cool* by Martin Jenkins, illustrated by Sue Shields (Candlewick Press, ISBN 978-0-7636-1139-2; it can also be ordered as part of Scholastic Canada's *Literacy Place for the Early Years* series, Grade 2 Read Aloud Package, ISBN 978-0-7791-6506-3)

Garbage-free Lunch Day
by Sheree Gleeson
pages 14–15

Text type: Non-fiction: Personal Account

Curriculum connections: Social studies, science

Summary

Students are shown how Rachel and Matthew's class reduced the amount of garbage they produce at lunchtime. Students are also given useful recycling tips.

Notes


If students eat lunch at school, you may want to organize your own Garbage-free lunch day. If your school has a lunch room, you can coordinate with other classes to reduce the amount of garbage produced at lunch-time.

Links to Further Inquiry

 **Recycle Zone**

While this Web site is from the United Kingdom, it provides a number of useful recycling tips for students and teachers, as well as games and activities.

<http://www.recyclezone.org.uk/>

 *Why Recycle?* (ISBN 978-0-7791-4325-2, guided-reading level H), in Scholastic Canada's *Go Facts* series is a non-fiction book about the benefits of recycling.

Lean Green Painting Machine
by Sheree Gleeson
pages 16–17


Text type: Poem (Shared reading)

Curriculum connections: Language arts

Summary

A playful poem about a child who paints a colourful scene.

Links to Further Inquiry

 *The Magic Paintbrush* by Robin Muller (Scholastic Canada, ISBN 978-0-439-97432-1) is about a young orphan boy who wishes to be a painter.

Green Thumbs
by Joanne Sinclair
pages 18–19

Text type: Non-fiction: Description—Report (Guided reading)

Curriculum connection: Science

Summary

A description of how an Australian school has maintained a sustainable garden.

Notes

Ask students if they have ever gardened with their family. What do they like about gardening? Although it is a big project, your school may be interested in starting its own sustainable garden, like the one in the article. The Australian Web site “Schools for a Sustainable Future” (<http://www.sfsf.com.au>) has relevant information.

Links to Further Inquiry

 **Kids' Valley Garden - A Gardening Resource for Kids**
<http://www.copper-tree.ca/garden/index.html>

My Special Place
by Cooper Wyett
page 20

Text type: Poem

Curriculum connections: Language arts

Summary

A poem about seven-year-old's favourite tree.

Notes

Ask students what their favourite place is and to write and illustrate a story about. Ask, “Why is this place your favourite place?”

The Hungry Dragons
by Raphael Gandouin
page 21


Text type: Fiction—Short Story

Curriculum connections: Language arts

Summary

A seven-year-old's story about three baby dragons' quest for food.

Links to Further Inquiry

 *Caring for a Pet Dragon* (ISBN 978-0-7791-6647-3, Grade 3 guided-reading level N) in Scholastic Canada's *Literacy Place for the Early Years* series.

Who's the Boss?
by Alison Lloyd
pages 22–23

Text type: Fiction—Poetry

Curriculum connections: Language arts

Summary

This playful poem asks the question, “Who’s the ‘boss’ of the pond?” Is it the fly? The frog? The snake? Or someone else?

Make and Do: Make Your Own Green Slime
by Catriona Hoy
pages 24–25

Text type: Non-fiction—procedure

Curriculum connections: Visual arts


Summary

A hands-on activity in which students make gooey green slime using household items.

Notes

If done at home, send a letter home with the students informing parents of the materials needed, and the expected outcome.

Links to Further Inquiry

 *Make Electrostatic Slime* (ISBN 978-0-7791-6635-0, Grade 3 guided-reading level L) in Scholastic Canada's *Literacy Place for the Early Years* series.

Fun Pages/Your Pages **pages 26–29**

Text type: Non-fiction: Games, puzzles

Curriculum connections: Visual arts, language arts, science

Summary

A collection of games and puzzles.

Notes

The answers to the puzzles are on page 29 of the magazine. These puzzles are great for visual learners. Students can create their own puzzles, based on the content of the magazine, and challenge classmates to solve them.

“Your Pages” include a collection of student-submitted artwork, letters, and jokes, as well as the answers to the puzzles on the “Fun Pages.”

Links to Further Inquiry

 **Scholastic Canada: Kids - Stuff to Do**

Scholastic Canada’s Web site includes games and activities for children of all ages.

<http://www.scholastic.ca/kids/stufftodo/>

Book Reviews **pages 30–31**

Text type: Non-fiction: Book reviews

Curriculum connections: Language arts

Summary

Students review their favourite books.

Notes

Students can write their own reviews of books they have read and submit them to the magazine. Ask students what they think makes a good review.

Boss and the Chameleon **by Carol Jones and Kelvin Hucker** **page 32**

Text type: Fiction: Comic

Curriculum connections: Language arts, social studies

Summary

Boss encounters a chameleon and wishes he could change colours, too.

Strategy 1: Jigsaw Words



Use with “Down on the Farm” by Carrol Baker (*Comet*, Issue 3, 2007/08, pages 4–5).

Explanation

This activity develops students’ knowledge of syllables.

Breaking words into smaller chunks is a spelling strategy that should be explicitly taught to young students. To become good spellers, students need to understand that the sounds heard in words can be spelt in different ways—even when they sound the same.

Jigsaw Words is a fun activity which enables students to play with chunks of letters and experiment with sounds to make words that make sense. A blank worksheet (“Student Worksheet B,” p. 14) is provided for use with other reading selections.

Instructions

- 1 Enlarge “Student Worksheet A” (page 13) to display to the class and cut along the marked sections of each word.
- 2 Read “Down on the Farm” with the class.
- 3 Discuss the text, ensuring students have understood what has been read.
- 4 Display several of the jigsaw words intact.
- 5 Ask students to find the words in the text, then clap out the syllables of the first word on the list.
- 6 Ask students which of the words you have clapped and repeat for the other words displayed.
- 7 Separate the words into their syllables and mix them up.
- 8 Ask students to correctly match up mixed-up syllables.
- 9 If students are primarily using the shapes of each jigsaw piece to piece the word together, draw their attention to the letter chunks. Have them say the syllables and clap them out with you.

Tip



Make a chart of the words used in the Jigsaw Words activity and display it in your classroom. The students can use this chart for spelling support during their writing activities.

A label for your task-management board is provided here:

Jigsaw Words

Jigsaw Words



Student Worksheet A

“Down on the Farm” by Carrol Baker (*Comet*, Issue 3, 2007/08, pages 4–5)

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av o ca do

in to

re jec ted

brush es

fam i ly

pol ish

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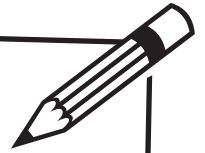
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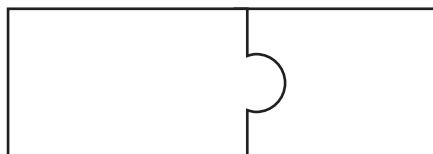
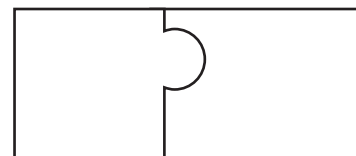
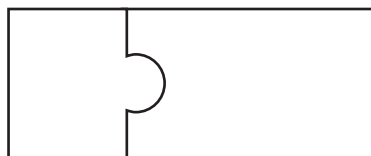
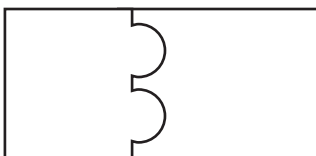
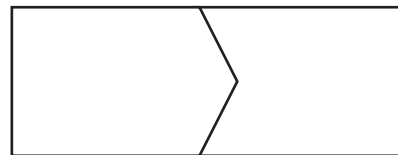
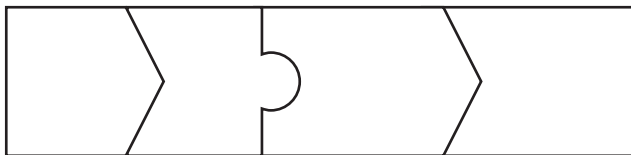
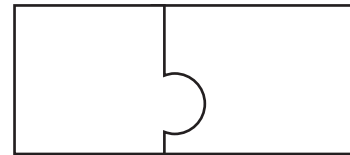
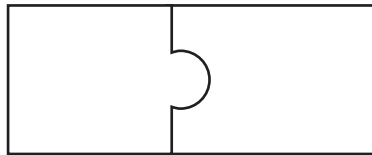
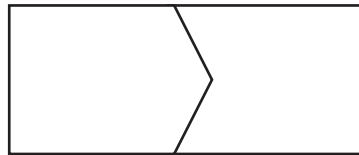
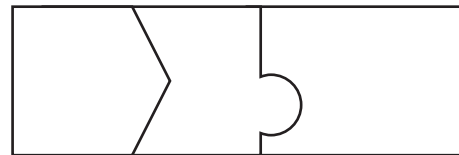
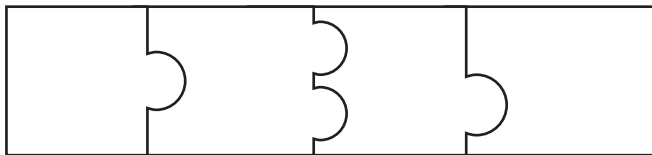
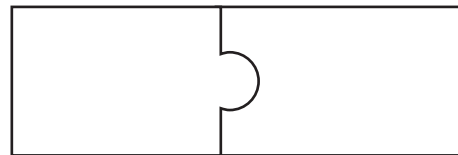
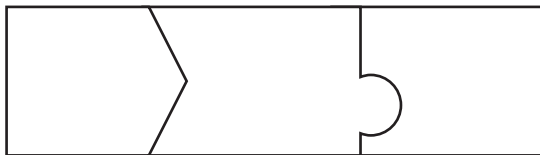
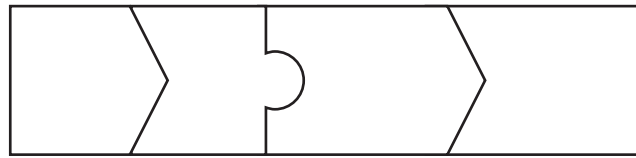
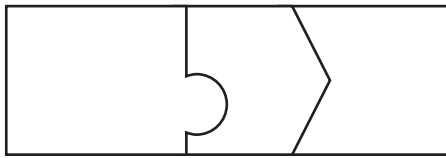
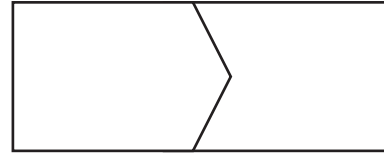
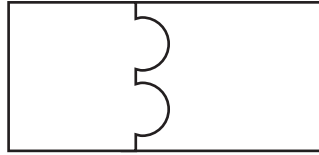
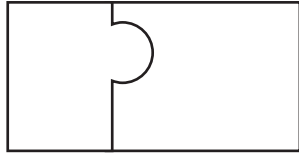
a cross

pick er

Jigsaw Words



Student Worksheet B



Strategy 2: Bingo



Use with “What is Green?” by Catriona Hoy (*Comet*, Issue 3, 2007/08, pages 8–9).

Explanation

Bingo is a fun way for students to develop their word knowledge.

Words selected for the game should relate to the interests of the grade and be relevant to the students’ world. The words should be placed in a supportive way on the cards, for example, words together, initial letter similarity, and so on. They should also be supported for early readers with accompanying pictures.

The words included here for the Bingo game have been selected from “What is Green?” by Catriona Hoy. In this instance, the words selected will support students in developing their knowledge of a range of different spelling patterns. This activity also encourages the development of cooperative group skills.

Instructions

- 1 Enlarge “Student Worksheet A” (page 16) to display to the class.
- 2 Collect counters for students to use to cover the words on the bingo game cards.
- 3 After reading the article, read the individual word cards to the students.
- 4 Distribute the bingo game cards and counters.
- 5 Explain the game to students:
As individual word cards are shown and read, students look for that word on their game card and cover it with a counter if they find it. A student wins when they have:
a) covered three words in a row either vertically, horizontally, or diagonally; or
b) have every word on the card covered. The rules must be made clear before the game begins.
- 6 Demonstrate a game with students to show how Bingo is played.

Tip

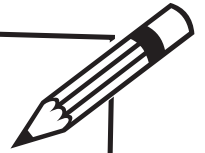


Make a poster of interesting words from the article “What is Green?” by Catriona Hoy, including the words used in the Bingo game. This resource can be used by the students for support during their writing activities.

A label for your task management board is included here:

Bingo

Bingo



Student Worksheet A

“What is Green?” by Carrol Baker (*Comet*, Issue 3, 2006/07, pages 18–19)

Word cards

normal
stained
because
blue
absorb
light
rainbow
sock
hello
red
grass
clothes
white
parts
wearing
hot
green
reflect
black
colour

Bingo game cards

normal	blue	rainbow
stained	absorb	hello
because	black	colour

light	hello	white
rainbow	red	blue
sock	grass	clothes

parts	hot	stained
normal	green	because
wearing	blue	colour

reflect	hello	red
blue	white	clothes
green	rainbow	normal

normal	rainbow	hot
light	hello	blue
parts	green	sock

