

# Big Bad Bertha

Written by Sheree Fitch

Illustrated by Alisa Baldwin



**Text Type:** Fiction: Narrative — Rhyming Play

**Summary:** *Big Bad Bertha* is a play about exaggeration. It tells how one student works up the rest of the class by creating a tall tale about a new student at the school.

PDFs and Audio  
 Available Online  
[www.lpey.ca](http://www.lpey.ca)  
 Password: bb3g6h

See the Planning Charts in the Grade Three *Reading Guide* to find Guided Reading texts that use these comprehension focuses.

## Text Features

- ▶ stage directions
- ▶ play format
- ▶ exclamation marks

## Print Concepts

- ▶ ellipses
- ▶ italics
- ▶ text divided into two columns on page

## First Reading (pages 2-6)

### Reading Strategies

#### Comprehension

- ▶ predicting
- ▶ synthesizing
- ▶ inferring

#### Working with Words

- ▶ spelling patterns
- ▶ word meanings and concepts

### Assessment Opportunities

Note each student's ability to:

- ▶ make predictions based on the text and illustrations
- ▶ infer based on text and illustrations
- ▶ synthesize information in the text
- ▶ use rhyming patterns to read new words
- ▶ use context to work out word meanings
- ▶ participate in discussion

### Oral Language Opportunities

- ▶ teacher self-talking and prompts
- ▶ dramatic retelling of text

**Teaching Tip:** The play is provided as a PDF online. A black-and-white reproducible is also available to make copies for students to read the play Readers' Theatre style or for use in the Literacy Centre.



## BEFORE READING

### Making connections: text to self

#### **Activating and Building Prior Knowledge**

Say, *Today we are going to read a play. Ask, What do you know about plays? Share with a partner.* Take a few points for group discussion, being sure to include ideas about the following: format on a page, stage directions for performers, parts for characters, information about characters, how to read parts.

### Text features/language predictability

The title of this rhyming play is *Big Bad Bertha*, the author is Sheree Fitch, and the illustrator is Alisa Baldwin. Ask, *What does rhyming mean? How might words that rhyme help us when we read?*

### Predicting/text features

Say, *Let's look at the cover. What do you think this play might be about? Take several suggestions from students. Point to the list of characters. Say, Here it shows us who the characters will be. Chorally read the characters' names and the description for each character.*

### Word solving and building/ language predictability

Stop to discuss the meaning of *Giggle Gaggle* and how that group might act, or the word *bossy* and how we would expect Ella May to act. Take a few suggestions as to how Ella May might say "You do it" or "Listen to me."

**ESL Note:** Have students use context cues to solve the meaning of some of the words they may have never heard before. For example, *kerfuffle*, *scribbles*, *dribbles*, *gory*, *humdrum*, *cruel*, *scoop*, and *spun*.

### High-frequency words

Create a Word Wall using the high-frequency words found in the play.

### Self-monitoring

Say, *The title of this play is Big Bad Bertha, but she is not listed as a character. Why would it be called Big Bad Bertha if she is not a character? Who do you think she is? What do you wonder about her? Share your responses with a partner.*

#### **Setting a Purpose**

### Inferring

Say, *Let's read the book together to find out why Ella May is considered bossy.*

**Teaching Tip:** All students will take part in the reading of the play. No student will be assigned an individual part. However, after the first day, groups of students can take a specific role, chorally reading the part. During Literacy Centres, individual students can take a role as in Readers' Theatre. If it wishes, the group can decide to perform the play.



## DURING READING

**Tracking print/  
building confidence**

Say, *We are going to read through the play with everyone reading all of the parts. This will give us time to practise how we should say the words for all the characters.*

**Text features/visual literacy**

On page 2, we can see how a play is set up, with the characters' names down the left side and their speech following on the right side. Ask, *When we see William and then the colon, do we read William or just what he says? Why does the author put the characters' names on this side?*

**Print concepts**

Ask, *Why are there exclamation marks after you, kerfuffle, and awful? How do we read these words?* Read a few lines to show emphasis and excitement in your voice. Continue to share-read the next characters' parts, reminding students to read with emphasis.

**Word solving and building**

After reading the first stanza of William's next part, ask, *What words rhyme? How did this help you read these words?* Locate the rhyming words on several pages and discuss how the first word can help students work out the second one. For example, turn to page 2 and say, *If you know scribbles, you can work out the word that rhymes with it (dribbles). Can you find that word on the page?*

**Print concepts**

After share-reading Scrubbles's part on page 3, stop to ask, *Why do we have these three dots? What do we do when we come to them?* Explain that these are called ellipses and that some words are needed to complete the thought. Say, *Watch for these as we continue reading. We must pause at each ellipsis to take time to reflect. Think about what might be missing or that we need to fill in our thinking.*

**Print concepts/  
self-monitoring**

On page 3, stop after reading Ella May's part and focus on the directions beside her name. Ask, *Why would the author write slyly here? What do we know about Ella May? How would she say this part? What does it tell us about her character? What do you think about her? Share your response with a partner.*

**Inferring**

After reading Peter's part, which comes next, ask, *Why does he say this? What does it tell us about his character? Share your response with a partner.*

Continue the Shared Reading, stopping the lesson after Bubbles's part on page 6.



## AFTER READING

**Synthesizing**

Ask, *Why was Ella May considered bossy? What did she do? How did she stir up trouble?*

**Sequencing**

Ask, *What is happening at the school? Retell to a partner what has happened so far.*

# Second Reading (pages 6-11)

## Reading Strategies

### Comprehension

- ▶ synthesizing
- ▶ evaluating
- ▶ analyzing

### Working with Words

- ▶ obtaining meaning from context

## Assessment Opportunities

Note each student's ability to:

- ▶ analyze information in the text
- ▶ evaluate characters through their speech
- ▶ retell main points of tale
- ▶ use context to work out word meanings
- ▶ participate in oral discussion

## Oral Language Opportunities

- ▶ teacher self-talking and prompts
- ▶ oral re-enacting with group
- ▶ dramatic retelling of part of the text



## BEFORE READING

### Synthesizing

#### **Activating and Building Prior Knowledge**

Say, *Remind me what has happened in the play so far. Who are the characters and what do we know about them? How do we read Ella May's part? How do we read Peter's part?*

### Print concepts/ building confidence

Say, *Today during the reading, we are going to have groups take the part of each of the characters. Remember what your character is like so you can bring that into your voice. Remember to read with expression, taking into account the exclamation marks we have seen in this play.* Divide the class into six groups for the six parts. Make sure there are strong readers in each of the groups. As with all Shared Reading, your voice will be there for support.

### Analyzing

#### **Setting a Purpose**

Say, *Let's read to find out if the roles of Ella May and Peter stay the same or if there are changes.*



## DURING READING

### Analyzing

Continue to share-read, stopping to check for comprehension and for a discussion of how Big Bad Bertha is described. You may wish to pose some of these questions during the stops for comprehension.

Ask, *What does Ella May say Big Bad Bertha will do? How is Big Bad Bertha described? How does the Giggle Gaggle group respond? What does Peter say about Big Bad Bertha?*

### Evaluating

Ask, *In your opinion, what is Peter trying to do?*

<b>Synthesizing</b>	Say, <i>Tell me about Big Bad Bertha in one sentence.</i>
<b>Language predictability</b>	On page 8, discuss the meaning from context of such terms/concepts as <i>meaner than a wildcat</i> or <i>nasty as a sting</i> . Ask, <i>What picture do you form in your mind from these phrases? Share your responses with a partner.</i>
<b>Evaluating</b>	On page 8 and 9, assist with the understanding of the points of view of the two characters, Peter and Ella May. Ask, <i>What does Peter try to do in the discussion? Does he succeed? Does he calm the students? What are his suggestions? Do you agree with Peter? Does Ella May change?</i>
<b>Making connections: text to self</b>	Ask, <i>If you were one of the Giggle Gaggle group, how would you feel? What might make you feel that way?</i>
<b>Predicting</b>	After reading what Scrubbles and Bubbles say on page 10, ask, <i>What do you think might happen? What might Ella May's plan be? What in the illustrations might give us a clue? Share your responses with a partner.</i>
	Continue share-reading up to the end of page 11, just before Bubbles's part. Stop and ask, <i>What do you think will happen next?</i>



## AFTER READING

<b>Evaluating</b>	Ask, <i>Has Ella May swayed the group? How did she do it?</i>
	Discuss Scrubbles and Bubbles. Have students decide what they think their roles are and how they feel about Ella May and the play taking place.
<b>Evaluating</b>	Ask, <i>Do you think things are exaggerated in this play? Why or why not? If so, what do you think is exaggerated?</i>

## Third Reading (pages 11-14)

### Reading Strategies

#### Comprehension

- ▶ synthesizing
- ▶ evaluating

#### Working with Words

- ▶ obtaining meaning from context

### Assessment Opportunities

Note each student's ability to:

- ▶ evaluate characters through their speech
- ▶ synthesize: retell main points of the tale
- ▶ use context to work out word meanings
- ▶ participate in oral discussion

### Oral Language Opportunities

- ▶ teacher self-talking and prompts
- ▶ oral re-enacting with a group
- ▶ dramatic retelling of part of the text



## BEFORE READING

**Synthesizing**

### **Activating and Building Prior Knowledge**

Have students retell what has taken place in the play so far. You may need to remind them to think of the plan put forth by Ella May. Ask them to share their responses with a partner.

**Synthesizing/print concepts**

Say, *Today we are going to do group parts again, but we will change parts so your group has a chance to be a different character.* Assign the six parts to different groups from the last day, but keep the groups' members intact. Remind students to read with emphasis, looking carefully at exclamation marks.

**Synthesizing**

### **Setting a Purpose**

Say, *Let's read to find out what message Scrubbles and Bubbles have for the group.*



## DURING READING

**Predicting/infering**

Share-read to the middle of page 12, stopping after Bubbles says, "Then we had a little fun." Ask, *What do you think that might be? What could they be proposing? Who would they be trying to make understand the situation? What do you think they will suggest?*

**Word solving and building**

Stop the reading at any point at which the class might have difficulty understanding. Check context to assist with meaning. Reread when necessary.

**Evaluating**

Share-read to the end of page 12. Ask, *What do you think of the plan that Scrubbles and Bubbles have for Ella May and the others? Share your responses with a partner.*

**Synthesizing**

Share-read to the end of page 13. Ask, *What do we find out about Big Bad Bertha? Share-read Scrubbles's part on page 14. Ask, What should they not have done? Share your responses with a partner.* Finish reading the page.



## AFTER READING

**Evaluating**

Centre the discussion around the following questions:

1. What message does Bubbles give us in his last speech?
2. Should you base your opinions on what somebody tells you?
3. How can you tell if their opinion is correct or if you can believe them?
4. Should Ella May have spread gossip?

**Synthesizing**

Ask, *What is the most important thing you learned at the end?*

**Making connections:  
text to self**

Ask, *Have you ever been in a new situation? How did you feel? What about the situation made you feel that way?*

**Synthesizing**

Ask, *What is the most important thing you learned from the whole play? Some of this discussion can be through partner sharing, but the majority of the discussion will need to be whole-class sharing.*





## FURTHER READINGS

Many texts benefit from being reread with students. The readings suggested in this plan can be expanded to include further readings. For each rereading, we recommend that you select a balance of Print Concepts, Comprehension, and Working with Words strategies from the following suggestions. Make your selections based on the needs of your students.

### **Print Concepts, Book Handling, and Text Features**

**Text features/print concepts**

Because the reading of a play may be new to your class, you may wish to spend more time on stage directions. Reread the first 4 or 5 pages, stopping to discuss the stage directions after they have been read. Model the acting of a few of these. Explain that these can be used if a group wishes to perform the play in a Literacy Centre.

**Print concepts**

Since this is a play of exaggerations, the use of voice in reading the exclamations is crucial. Reread several of these sentences, practising various ways of reading and using emphasis in the voice. The teacher may model this before the class tries some sample sentences together.

**Synthesizing**

### **Focus on Comprehension**

During the reading of the play, the role of William as narrator will need to be brought out. This can be done during further readings of the play. You may wish to pose questions such as the following: *When do we get an idea of the role of William? Does that view change? When?*

**Evaluating/language predictability**

Discussion of the parts of Peter and Ella May can bring out the following: *In your opinion how does one play the “cool” part? What does being “bossy” entail and how does one say a “gossipy” part? How should the Giggle Gaggle act? Scared? What does a gaggle refer to? How does a gaggle act? Is the name appropriate?*

**High-frequency words**

### **Working with Words**

During rereadings of the play, you may wish to focus on some of the high-frequency words you may have already taught for your Word Wall, including *new, someone, enough, next, around, heard, thought, and themselves.*

**Print concepts**

The play contains many contractions that could be used as review or teaching material. You may wish to review how contractions are made and to write some of them in their two-word forms. Some contractions in the play are: *I’m, I’ve, don’t, they’ve, she’s, that’s, here’s, and she’ll.* Others that students may be less familiar with are *Bertha’s* and *wondering’s.*



## RESOURCE LINKS

You may wish to do some of these optional follow-up activities. Choose those that best meet the needs and interests of your students.

### Writing

During the play, Bertha was described as a monster and given many details to make up that character. Reread pages 6–8 and have students add other terms that could be added to this exaggeration of her. You may wish to model some first before you have students work in partners or have a whole-class discussion. For example, you might say, *How could we give Bertha other characteristics of a monster? What could we say if we wanted to say she were large? Large as a . . . ? What if it were her looks we wanted to discuss? What might we say?* See the narrative text-type study for writing a script in the *Writing Guide*.

The two main characters could be analyzed in a chart that would identify what they say and do that makes their character as it is. You may wish to use a chart to assist with this character analysis.

### Independent Reading

Make the Shared Reading text and online audio available for students. Invite students to use these materials to read the play independently. Students may wish to perform the play in Readers' Theatre style.

**Teaching Tip:** The online audio for this book includes a fluent reading of the play.

### Working with Words

Once concepts have been introduced in context, see the focused lessons in the *Working with Words Guide* for more direct instruction for those students who need it. For example, see “Using Consonant Blends in Reading,” “Using Rime Patterns for Reading,” and “Verbs: What Action?” under Language Predictability in the *Working With Words Guide*.

See also the specific Building Words lessons (“Characters” and “Monster”) under Word Solving and Building in the *Working with Words Guide*.

### Read Aloud

Select and read short stories, poems, or plays to students on a regular basis, such as: *Town Mouse and Country Mouse*, *Seven Foolish Fishermen*, and other stories from *Traditional Tales and Plays* by Scholastic.

Choose books on exaggeration from the library to continue with the tone of this book. Some of the work of Shel Silverstein and Robert Munsch falls into this category.



### Home Links

Invite students to discuss with family members what happens when people tell stories about others or exaggerate what people are like.

Send home some simple plays for families to read together. Examples can include *Traditional Tales and Plays* by Scholastic, including *Sly Fox and Little Red Hen*, *The Gingerbread Man*, and *The Little Red Hen*.