

Building a course around picture books: Why? How? WOW!

Webinar handout

by Fiona Hunter

In this handout you'll find a summary of the secret **SAUCE** stages for building your syllabus: **S**elect, **A**nalyse, **U**npack the order, **C**urate and create, **E**dit for progression.

SELECT

1. Topics

Select the topics you want to cover with your young learners. You can use the topics covered in international young learner exams as a guide and also use them later to decide on language functions and structures you want to include.

2. Picture books

Select the picture books you want to use. Start with books you know and like, then ask for recommendations. After that, turn to the internet. <https://pepelt21.com/pepelt-themes-from-a-z/> is a good source of inspiration. YouTube storytelling videos can also help you decide on potential books.

Evaluate whether the picture books you have chosen are suitable. Think about the concepts covered, the visual support, repetition of patterns and sequences, and whether you will need to adapt the text to make the linguistic level appropriate.

ANALYSE

Go through your picture books and note useful language, topics and story types. Use a spreadsheet so you can use the find and sort functions later. It's a good idea to do this for ALL language so you can use it to plan courses for several different levels. Here is an example based on the popular book *The Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle. Find a full sample unit here:

https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/2024-04/SAMPLEunit_webinar_FionaHunterPictureBooks_240424.pdf and a section below:

Story	Topics/ seasons	Concepts/ themes	Vocabulary (add examples)	Structures/ Language points	Useful phrases
Hungry Caterpillar	Spring Food Days	Lifecycles Sometimes and often foods	Food Days Story vocab	Time expressions Present simple 3 rd person Expressing likes/dislikes	Story phrases (see recording)

UNPACK the order

Decide which order the stories should go in across your school year. Some things to consider:

- Relevance of concepts (connections to seasons, festivals, things in the children's lives)
- Language focus (familiar to new, possibilities for consolidation and building on previous knowledge)
- Mix of story types (avoid having too many of the same type together, e.g., 3 song picture books in a row)

COLLATE and CREATE

Collate your activity ideas and links for each picture book. You may have ideas of materials you want to create at this stage too. Get them all down in a spreadsheet. I recommend adding them to your story analysis spreadsheet. Again, you can use this as a master document to build courses for different age groups and levels with the same books.

Some categories you can use are songs, games, crafts, drama, and projects/inquiries.

EDIT for progression

1. Decide how many lessons you will have with each picture book in your course.
2. Decide on your explicit and implicit language focuses (use your analysis doc).
3. Select appropriate activities (use your activities doc).

Songs and games may be used across several lessons, but make sure you order your main activities so they progress from receptive to productive skills practice and from teacher-led to more child-led activities.

A recording of Fiona Hunter's webinar can be watched here:

<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/news-and-events/webinars/webinars-teachers/stories-classroom-mini-event>