

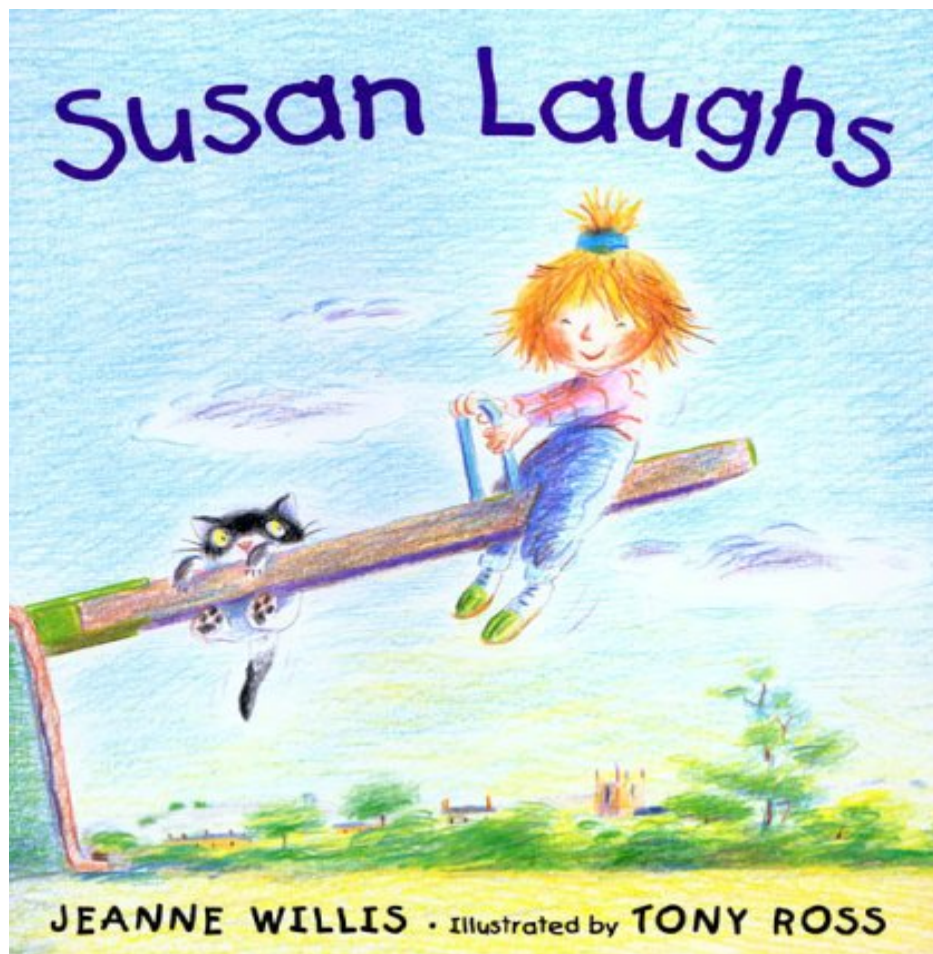


Equal Opportunity and Diversity Learner Materials: Primary Learners

Authentic Material: *Susan Laughs* by Jeanne Willis and illustrated by Tony Ross
(Henry Holt 2000, ISBN 0805065016, 9780805065015)

EO+D Theme: Disability

Language Level: Mixed



Story summary by Gail Ellis

Susan Laughs is a short story told in rhyme. The story describes a range of common emotions and activities experienced by a little girl, Susan. She swims with her father, works hard in school, plays with her friends, rides a horse.

It is not until the end of the story that we discover that Susan is a wheelchair user. When looking back through the book, we notice that Susan is never unassisted but we do not realise any of this until it is brought to our attention in the final illustration. The story is told with great warmth but without sentimentality and addresses an important issue that is relevant to us all – becoming aware of disability. It focuses on Susan's abilities rather than on the things by which she is limited and shows that she is like all children, she is good, she is bad, she is strong, she is weak. Susan is an active, feisty little girl whose physical disability is never seen as a handicap.

This story can be used as an excellent classroom tool to facilitate conversations and explore questions and concerns about disability. The book could also be easily tailored to talk specifically about a particular child by simply changing the name as you read the story.

The story is told in simple rhyming couplets using the simple present and can be used to develop vocabulary around everyday activities and emotions. There are only a few words in this plotless story but it delivers a powerful message and provides a positive image of children with a disability.

Jeanne Willis is an internationally acclaimed author and illustrator of many best-selling books for young readers. She lives in North London with her family of creatures that features two children, a couple of cats and some pet rats.

Susan Laughs was winner of the NASEN Special Educational Needs Book Awards in 2000.

Possible syllabus fit

This lesson series could be thematically and linguistically linked to *'Incredible English Class Book 3'* by Phillips and Morgan (OUP, 2007). It recycles the theme of *'Being positive about ourselves and others'* and recycles and extends the sports and hobbies lexis presented and practised on page 23 as well as the adjectives on pages 24 - 25.

The disability aspects attended to in the lesson are embedded within the language and skills focus and are presented within the scope of the learners - given their ages and language levels.

Suggested Procedures

1. Lesson Orientation / Context Setting – to set context for storytelling

Show Ls cover of storybook, point and say *This is Susan*. Say *tell me about Susan e.g. she's happy*. Elicit other comments re context and setting. Tell Ls you will read them a story about Susan but first they need to learn some verbs for actions and adjectives to describe feelings and emotions.

2. Pre-teaching Lexis – to provide Ls with vocabulary to understand the story

Use flashcards to introduce sports and hobbies and have Ls mime the actions to clarify and check their understanding. Then show a picture of a park and personalise by asking what parks are in their village / town / city. Now use flashcards to introduce actions in the park and Ls mime. Model and drill the new lexis.

Introduce the emotions and feelings verbs using flashcards and have Ls mime to clarify and then play *What's missing?* to aid retention via a disappearing drill.

3. 'Susan Says ...' – to engage Ls in a revision activity and stirrer

Play 'Susan says' e.g. *Susan says swim! Susan says wave!* Ls perform the corresponding action. If you say *Laugh* and a L performs the action, they are out. After a few minutes, invite a L to act as caller.

4. Labelling Task – to provide Ls with a written record and attend to form of the lexis

Set up labelling task using Worksheet A (see over).

Show answers on board and have Ls check.

5. Picture Dictation – to establish and clarify meaning of lexis of emotions and feelings

Show flashcards of feelings and emotions and personalise by asking *when do you feel happy, sad, shy, angry, proud?* Ls mime action when you say *I'm happy / angry / proud / sad / shy.*

Set up the picture dictation using Worksheet B (see over). Call out the emotions using the script below and Ls draw the corresponding expression on Susan's face:

Picture 1: Susan's happy! Picture 2: Susan's angry! Picture 3: Susan's proud! Picture 4: Susan's sad!
Picture 5: Susan's shy!

Now, review the remaining adjectives by setting up a matching task where Ls match antonyms on cards in groups. Ls then complete Worksheet C (see over).

6. Storytelling – to enable Ls to listen for gist and specific information as well as review the target lexis in a meaningful context

Read the story aloud to the class. Point to the illustrations and encourage the Ls to predict the verbs and adjectives throughout.

On the final spread with Susan in her wheelchair, give Ls time to reflect on this illustration.

7. Post-Story Discussion – to enable Ls to gain a deeper understanding of disability

Ask Ls if they were surprised to discover that Susan uses a wheelchair. Ask them why. Ask if they know any other people with a disability. For example, in their school or family? What things are they good at? What do they find difficult? Ask, *What are you good at? What do you find difficult? What things to you need help with?*

Next Lesson

8. Recapping the Story – to enable Ls to retell the story

Showing children the cover of the storybook, recap by asking them to tell you some of the things Susan can do: *What can Susan do? Susan can sing, Susan can swing, Susan can dance, Susan can paint, Susan can row, etc.* Next ask the children questions: *Can you sing? Can you swing? Can you dance? Etc.* Depending on the level of your class, use this activity as an opportunity to revise other actions, e.g. *play the piano, ski, play the guitar, etc.* Drill questions and answers.

9. Class Survey – Find someone who can... - to enable Ls to use the target language in a personalised manner

Distribute Worksheet D (see over) and ask Ls to complete the survey by mingling and asking their classmates the questions and writing down their names.

Bring class together and collate findings from the class survey, *Who can ride a bike?* and record findings on the board. Children then complete part 2 of their worksheet and record the results of the survey, for example, *6 children in my class can play the guitar.*

10. Classroom Olympics – to review the target language in a kinaesthetic manner

Divide the class into three or four teams (depending on the size of your class). Elicit team names.

Ask simple ‘*can you*’ questions and Ls compete to be the first to carry out the action. One L from each team should come to the front of the class. Demonstrate by asking the first question, *Can you wave your hand?* Ask the class who was first, second, etc? Different Ls should compete each time a new question is asked. Award points for first, second and third places.

11. Thinking about Disability – to enable Ls to gain a deeper understanding of disability

Show Ls the last illustration of Susan in her wheelchair and read the end of the story again, *That is Susan through and through – just like me, just like you.* Ask Ls to say all the things that are the same about Susan as other children using *Susan can ...*

For example, *Susan can paint, Susan can dance, Susan can go to school, Susan can do maths, etc* Now ask Ls to talk to their partners and complete grids about all the things they can do and things they need help with:

Things my partner can do	Things s/he needs help with

Now ask Ls to work in groups to think about some other disabilities that their friends or other people they know may have.

Give groups cards with the following headings. Have the Ls make posters by sticking photos and words of aids under the suitable heading:

(e.g. *a hearing aid, sign language, a pair of glasses, a wheelchair, a helper*)

- Friends who can't hear
- Friends who can't see
- Friends who can't walk
- Friends who can't learn as fast as others
- Friends who can't concentrate

Feedback by having the Ls stick posters around the room and compare each others.

12. Reflective Review – to develop Ls' metacognitive awareness

Ask Ls a series of questions about what they did in the two lessons. Direct their responses to focus on *Susan* and positive images of children with disabilities. Use L1 as a resource to scaffold their thinking via the sandwich technique as appropriate: English->L1->English.

Adapted from Lesson Outline developed by Jo Bertrand, Teacher and Gail Ellis, Manager, British Council Paris

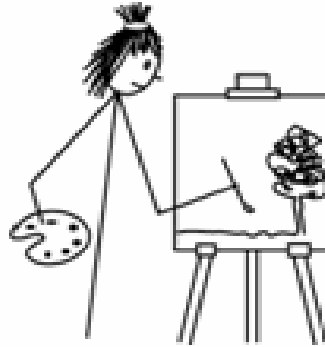
Sports and hobbies – action verbs

Worksheet A

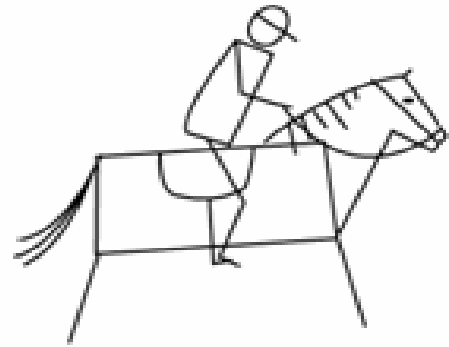
Label the pictures



1. _____



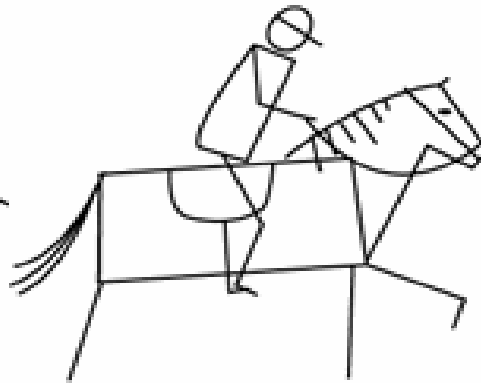
2. _____



3. _____



4. _____



5. _____



6. _____



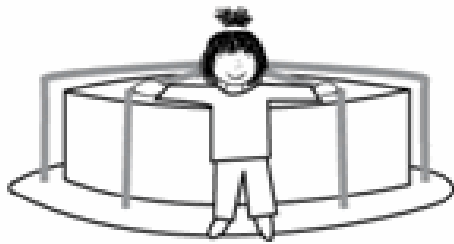
7. _____

swim	paint	dance
row	ride	sing
trot		

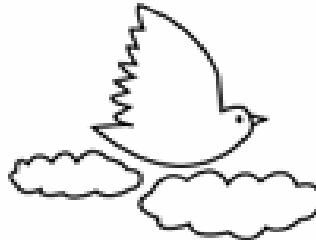
In the park – action verbs

Worksheet A

Label the picture :



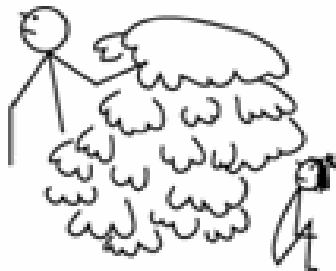
1. _____



2. _____



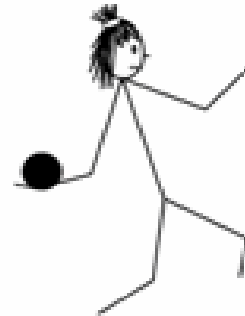
3. _____



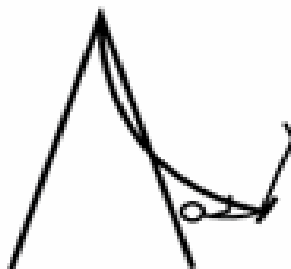
4. _____



5. _____



6. _____



7. _____

hide	spin	swing
splash	wave	fly
throw		

Feelings and emotions – action verbs

Worksheet A

Label the pictures:



1. _____



2. _____



3. _____



4. _____



5. _____



6. _____

feel

grin

fear

hug

hear

laugh



Picture dictation – emotions

Worksheet B

1. Listen and draw Susan's expressions.
2. Label the pictures.

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

4. _____ 5. _____

Susan's sad

Susan's proud

Susan's shy

Susan's happy

Susan's angry

Class survey – Find someone who can

Worksheet D

1. Ask your classmates the questions and write their name

Question	Classmate's name
Can you swim?
Can you dance?
Can you row?
Can you sing?
Can you paint?
Can you ride a horse?
Can you ski?
Can you the play the guitar?
Can you ride a bicycle?
Can you rollerblade?