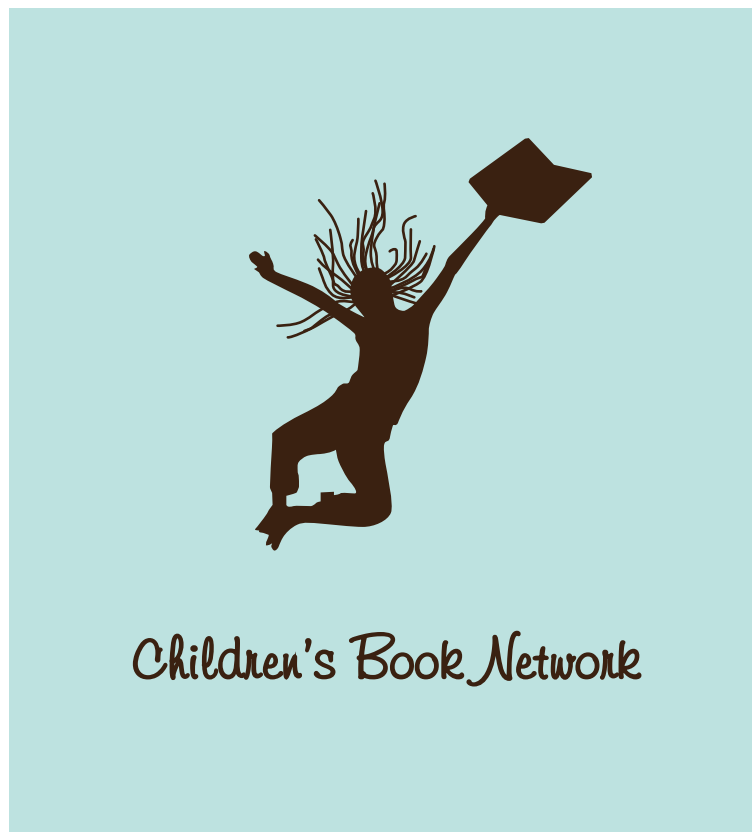


# Children's Book Network



## The Reading Toolbox Project

## Children's Book Network (CBN)

Our name says what is important to us. First Children, then Books, then a Network of friends – and that includes the children we work with (and for). And now you.

Our mission is to make reading fun – to make reading cool. We do this through working with children who *can* read, but don't, children who don't have much - or any - exposure to exciting books.

Our toolboxes have been developed to help librarians, teachers and community members give mini workshops as fun Saturday or after-school activities, or at Saturday morning book club. Welcome.

\*\*\*

Written for Children's Book Network

By Lesley Beake

2016 to 2019

## **How this manual works**

We hope that more and more people – teachers, teacher-librarians, librarians and community members – will be able to use our methods and our Reading Toolboxes to help spread the word that reading is not only good for us – it’s fun as well.

### **Part One**

The first section explains how we work and what drives us.

### **Part Two**

Is a practical outline of how a Children’s Book Network workshop works, and how to plan one.

### **Part Three**

Takes you through the process of starting to work with the toolbox – and how to use it to inspire your own ideas.

### **Part Four**

A possible schedule of workshops for a school year

### **Part Five**

Some practical help with games and ice-breakers that help build your group into a team.

## PART ONE

Books and Stories are among the most critical influences on children. Everything, from their own sense of self-worth to their future career opportunities, depends on being able to read for meaning and to listen to stories. Just as important, reading can bring an enormous amount of pleasure and enrichment; reading is cool, reading is fun.

Children's Book Network (CBN) has been working with children in upper primary school (children aged between nine and twelve), for nearly a decade now to reinforce these concepts. We hold reading workshops for children in under-resourced communities, workshops that demonstrate clearly each time how desperate children are for books, for stories, for reading.

It is not hard to inspire children to read. The following pages offer a step-by-step guide about using the books and activities in the CBN Reading Toolboxes to give workshops that will interest and excite children about story, reading and books. Your input – ideas, criticism, suggestions for change based on your experience – will be appreciated.

Please read more about CBN on: [www.childrensbook.co.za](http://www.childrensbook.co.za)

Contact CBN on: [info@childrensbook.co.za](mailto:info@childrensbook.co.za)

Contact Lesley on: [lesley@lesleybeake.co.za](mailto:lesley@lesleybeake.co.za)

## CONTENTS OF PART ONE

1. The passion
2. How reading happens
3. The big reading jump
4. CBN Books
5. A library
6. How does CBN help to make this jump into reading happen
7. Different children – different workshop

### 1 THE PASSION

Excellence in anything begins with passion – whatever it is. A passion for books is essential if we want to excite children about reading.

They catch it from us. *Nothing* can replace the example of a parent, teacher, librarian ... a friend ... who reads with enjoyment, with joy.

This means time, time away from family and work responsibilities, time away (perhaps most difficult of all) from television and other screens. The plus side is that it means time spent *reading*. A necessary change in perception is that books for young people will be boring or childish. Not true, adults get as much fun from children's books as children do.

If we had to sum CBN up in one line, it is about *passion* for reading and for bringing this intense love to children. It is actually not that difficult (really). It requires a bit of effort, a bit of preparation and some skill in finding the right books.

Hopefully our toolboxes will be a start. But think out of the (tool) box as well. Anything - from a magazine article to a picture book - can spark the light in the eyes of a child. That's what we aim to do.

## 2 HOW READING HAPPENS

Miss Frazer pushed the wooden letters around the floor with her long, wooden pointer. There was a green letter C. The A was red. The T was blue. The class chanted the sounds out loud, but it all meant very little. Until, one day, she pushed the letters into a pattern – CAT. It was still a long time before CAT earned the meaning of small furry pet.

But suddenly – without warning - CAT brought to mind the picture of a real animal. There was drawing of cat and telling of stories of cat. There was thinking of cat – and when the children touched one, the letters CAT appeared in their minds. It takes a lot of that kind of activity to make a reader. And then, if they are lucky, one day they relate to the story of cat that a writer is telling.

‘I love my cat. But one day she went away and didn’t come back.’  
If the story is well written, the reader might feel the pain in those words – and keep reading until the next part of the story. ‘I cried many tears. I called for my cat all over the neighbourhood. I thought she was lost forever. But one day, she came back - and this is the story of where she had been.’ And the reader reads on ...

For too many children that jump into an imaginary world never happens. They know what CAT is, but they never experience how cat can be part of their *imagination* and, more than that, part of a connection to a writer. If we can help them to make that leap into the universe of reading, they can go anywhere in the known worlds – and incidentally find out what happened to CAT.

### 3 THE BIG READING JUMP

We get some of our children this far in the school system. We lose most of them around this point. The imaginative jump to allow reading with understanding, with ease ... with joy ... is a huge leap forward that many children cannot make - and they sometimes get little help on the way.

In order to read with ease, they have to read more. In order to read more, they have to have challenging and interesting books to read from - many of them. If they read more books, they read with more

skill ... and with more understanding. Getting through that phase is what CBN aims to help our children to do.

We work with children who are between 9-12 years-old. They should be able to read in their own languages, at least a little. But this stage in their lives is complicated by the simultaneous change into learning some subjects in English. It is a huge ask – and one that some teachers, as well as children, find it almost impossible to cope with.

CBN chose this age group because we saw that these children needed help. They needed someone to *listen to them*. Currently, very little is done for this level – and that needs to change.

More on the reading process

To continue the CAT story, here is a short example. It is taken from a book called *Able Seaman Simon*, by Lynne Barret-Lee.

*The rain will come, kitten, that's what my mother always told me. It will come in spring and it will fill the air and drench us. It will drip from your whiskers, and it will plop from your eyelashes, and it will get in your ears – you wait and see. It will come down so hard that it will dance before your eyes, kitten, and you'll be wet through. And, trust me, you won't like that one bit!*



*I had never seen rain, not one single, shining drop of it. I trusted my mother and I believed every word she told me, but I couldn't imagine what rain would be like. Since I'd lost her, I had found out that there were still a lot of everyday things I didn't know.*

If our children can break through to being able to read a story like this for pleasure, to be able to lose themselves in a book, we will have done our work.

#### 4 CBN BOOKS

How do we get them?

How do we choose them?

How can you find more?

This has been a big learning curve for CBN. We now have our own book collection – after a very long and difficult process. We have to say thank you to the people who gave us books, and money to buy special books. Most of all we have to say thank you to Jay Heale, who has been the Book Editor on our website and has given us many review books over the years. Thank you Jay!

The book collection is in the CBN office (also known as Lesley's garage and spare room), and is the valuable resource from which the toolboxes come. It will, we hope, continue to grow.

BUT

It won't – and can't grow from books nobody else wants. We have had offers of books that somebody's children once had or that a school no longer needs. If a book is old and tattered, old-fashioned and difficult, in fact if it is anything other than excellent, we don't want it.

We believe that our children deserve the best. We can't give them each a library, but we can expose them to exciting books that will make them want to read. This includes non-fiction as well as story. Easy to read picture books (even wordless books), graphic novels, comics, starter chapter books and fiction for young adults. It can include texts from other sources – like carefully chosen National Geographic magazine articles that fit with a theme.

Just throwing out a pile of books doesn't work. We work with quality, not quantity. The only reason a book, or text, makes it into a toolbox is that it is excellent.

What does this include?

- In an ideal reading world, children begin with stories told and read to them by adults (so we do that).
- They are challenged by picture books that stimulate their imaginations and make them want to read the words. (We do that too.)
- They proceed to easy books that they learn to read themselves (so, we do that too.)
- They hear stories read from books that are too difficult for them to read for themselves, but that they are able to understand. (Guess what?)
- If their imagination is caught, and held, by books, they begin to read with curiosity, interest and affection. (We really try to get them to that stage.)

Everything we choose for you to use with CBN children is chosen because it is *excellent*. This can include books from all the categories above – and also short extracts from much more difficult reading. Reading aloud gives you the chance to push reading boundaries if you keep it short.

*Note: There is plenty of space in this handbook for you to write notes, criticisms and add ideas. We hope to be able to have regular contact with our facilitators where we can introduce new ideas and listen to what you have to say.*

How can you find out more?

CBN has a Book section on our web page and there are hundreds of books reviewed on it, mostly by Jay Heale. Who was our much-loved Book Editor for several years.

<https://www.childrensbook.co.za/books/book-choices>

Browse your local library. Make a friend of the librarians. Tell them what you are doing. Invite them to be part of the process. You have to read and read and read ... and then read some more.

Look in bookshops. What is available is often disappointingly commercial (products related to films and such-like). Often bookshops really only give you an overview of what books are *selling*, not necessarily the best in the world that is available. Very few of us (none of us, really) can afford to buy new books in any case, but looking is free, if you are able to take an hour to browse.

Use the internet, Google and YouTube to find recent titles and read about them. In the long view, hardly any of the new releases in the rest of the world will be either available to us or accessible to our

children. But there are always exceptions – and the exceptions are the ones whose excellence cuts across geographical and cultural borders.

*Note: reading is difficult enough. If the setting of the story is just one jump too far, children won't read it.*

A small child warms to familiar things – even babies can relate to repetitive words, identify colours and remember what is going to happen next (after the twentieth reading, as many parents wearily testify).

Ideally, they should then begin to expand their experience through books. Rural children could explore a city and vice versa. But jump too soon into New York or London, and you will lose them. Too many unfamiliar names, places and emotions are just *too* big a great leap forward for a new reader.

You do have to challenge them – but challenge them too much and you will lose them. Be aware that all readers, even very good adult ones, skip over a surprisingly large number of words because they guess their meaning. Children can do that too – but only to a certain extent. Then they get bored and switch off.

When you look around in a bookshop or library, watch yourself to see how you pick books. Children are quite good at estimating what they

will be *able* to read. Too often, they choose books that are too easy – and therefor quite boring; no challenge.

Try pretending that you are a child looking for a book. What puts you off? Maybe when the type is too small, or there are no pictures?

Maybe the colour is dull – or the pages are dirty. Choose three books that YOU would like to read and then read them. Think about why you chose that book. Did your reasons for choosing it work out?

This will take time, but the experience you will gain is really worthwhile. A huge part of teaching children to love books is to love and understand them yourself.

Children's Book Network

## **A LIBRARY by Nikki Giovanni**

a Library Is:

a place to be free  
to be in space  
to be in cave times  
to be a cook  
to be a crook  
to be in love  
to be unhappy  
to be quick and smart  
to be contained and cautious  
to surf the rainbow  
to sail the dreams  
to be blue  
to be jazz  
to be wonderful  
to be you  
a place to be  
yeah... to be

Quoted with thanks from the website Brain Pickings:

[www.brainpickings.org](http://www.brainpickings.org)

## 5 HOW DOES CBN HELP A CHILD JUMP INTO READING?

We have never found a better word than ‘workshop’ but that is what we do – and that is what children ask for when they see any of us around our local workshop venues. ‘CBN!’ they say. ‘Workshop?’ It is these workshops – hundreds now, over many years of experience – that have led to the Reading Toolbox Project.

A workshop varies in length. We have held some that lasted four days (and achieved excellent results, more along the lines of a reading camp). Mostly, though, we find that shorter, more regular workshops have better results.

When possible, we add the idea of a Book Club or a Reading Club on Friday afternoons, or Saturday mornings. If you are working with a school or library, these ideas can be incorporated into after-school or other community activities. But this handbook shows how we begin the engagement between children and reading. The books in the Reading Toolbox give you the materials to get going. And workshops are the method we like most.

There will be three Reading Toolboxes:

- The Red Reading Toolbox (Books and Stories)
- The Green Reading Toolbox (Environment)
- The Blue Reading Toolbox (Time and Landscape)



In each Reading Toolbox there will be five themes stored in five themed book-bags with a minimum of three books in each, dealing with an aspect of the theme.

There will also be a handbook of ideas relating specifically to that theme. If the theme is Bravery, for example, (Blue Reading Toolbox), there will be three carefully chosen books on brave people, animals – brave ideas - for you to read with the children. Extracts from more difficult books around the theme of bravery, ideas from magazines and brochures and other sources will be photocopied for you. There will be a lot to work with.

This is your basic kit to get started and to begin encouraging the children you work with to give reading a chance.

We have provided a workshop schedule to start with so that you can follow a logical pattern throughout a term and even a year. You can work at your own pace and the pace that the children are happy with.

This programme works for children who are not exposed to books in their home and even school environments, or children who are, but have not been interested. It is for children (to repeat the important bit) who *can* read, but don't.

The children we have worked with (and that includes thousands of them now, in rural as well as urban environments) have surprised us with their understanding of English. (Astounded us might be a better word.) We always have translators on hand, and the children help each other as well, but they follow programmes in English on television and are keen to write in English, even when given a choice – as they always are. We are often amazed at how much they will write – and how detailed their stories are.

*Speaking* English is more problematic. They are shy to speak out until they get interested in a topic. Once they have read, and been read to around a theme, children often manage to overcome their shyness.

No group of children is the same as another. You have to assess the reaction to the book or story you have chosen. If they lose interest, lose the book and choose another one. Watch their eyes. When they are genuinely disinterested, it is not worth struggling on.

But when their eyes sparkle and they lean forward ... you have them!

## PART TWO

### Contents of Part Two

- 1 How do we find the children?
- 2 How a workshop works
- 3 What are we aiming at?

#### 1 How do we find the children?

We work with communities (not schools) and spread the word through libraries and community leaders. Parents and others are invited to come to our workshops to see what their children are doing – and they have to give permission for the children to be there. (An example of a permission slip is included under the Administration section.)

The best number of children is 25. That makes it easy to include each child in the stories and activities and for them all to be able to hear the stories being read. A workshop is not a classroom activity. It is not teaching, with its curriculum, structure and school discipline. It works because we can focus on every child present without committing to a fixed result. For this reason, it is also important to have enough help. Two facilitators is best for a day-workshop. We also try to include three community helpers to assist with supervision and play-times,

take part and lead the games – and gradually become enabled to give workshops themselves.

## 2 How a workshop works

We engage with children in their free time – and they *choose* to come to our workshops. The programme has to be snappy. It has to be fun. We devise projects that relate to any subject – from astronomy to zebras – and then introduce a wealth of cultural stimulation into the mix of books and stories. A typical one-day workshop might look like this:

- Welcome with introductions
- Open with drumming by community (or child) drummers
- Shake-down with lively games
- Sharing a book that makes us all laugh
- Reading from a book related to the theme (multiple times)
- Music related to the theme
- Books and stories to share (from the theme again)
- Divide into groups for one of several activities, including:
  - CBN Reading game (if included)
  - Writing, discussion and thinking
  - Art or craft relating to the theme
  - Sport activity for any extra children
- Another game involving movement

- Books and stories
- Introducing an expert on the topic or a visiting performer, puppeteer, dramatist, artist, poet or magician.
- Quiet own-reading throughout the day as activities finish. This is the most critical activity of all and one that we work towards all the time.

All these activities are backed by books. If the theme is Whales, all the stories and non-fiction, the artwork and craft, all the discussions and writing will be related to whales

*Note: A workshop programme might start off looking like this! And it is a good thing to have a general programme and an outline of what might happen – particularly for people who may be coming in to help for only part of the day. The times allocated for LUNCH and VISITING EXPERT (usually right after lunch) are pretty much fixed.*

*But the emphasis in our workshops is on play and reading. If children become involved in some aspects of the planned programme, let them run. Conversely, if they look bored, give it up. Remember the important words:*

THIS IS NOT SCHOOL

## PLAY!

With every suggestion we have given in this manual, we hope that you will use your own imagination – and let the children use theirs. We always have too many activities planned – always. It means we have flexibility. (It also means there is never a horrible moment with nothing to do.)

Children are even more easily bored than ever before, now that we have the instant gratification of screen. Keeping them engaged is hard work. If the book we have suggested isn't working, give it up. Watch their eyes. (And allow for a few children at the back who will always give you a hard time.) Adapt.

### 3 What are we aiming at?

Miracles take a little longer! We hope to engage children with the idea of reading and books being fun – and something that they can DO. There are no right or wrong answers, no competition or 'best in the group'. Every answer is valid.

By using books that genuinely interest children (as opposed to basic readers and textbooks) we hope to grab their attention to the extent that they read without thinking about it. It is a slow process, but we see impressive results. Some we can measure (more of that

in the admin section), most, we see in the eyes of the children when they are interested, engaged – excited.

### PART THREE – WHAT’S IN THE READING TOOLBOX?

You are now looking at a toolbox full of books and ideas. This handbook will give you ways of using the books to encourage children to love books and reading. That is the main aim and goal of CBN – to bring books to children and children to books.

Research and development of the contents of the toolboxes has been an *enormous* task – much more difficult than it probably looks! We have had to keep several aspects in mind:

- Using African and South African books where possible
- Adding a few outstanding books from the rest of the world
- Covering a representative sample of authors and illustrators
- Considering the cost of the books
- Availability of the books

The last one was unexpectedly difficult. Even very popular and appropriate books go out of print suddenly and overseas books are also not always available here, even if in print.

Cost was a tricky factor too. We have included some excellent, but less costly South African books from reading schemes and a few more expensive books that you just *had* to have.

After much research, we have divided the books into themes. There are, on average, three or four books *possible* for each of the five themes in each of the two boxes. These can be added to as new books appear. The material in this manual about how to use the books applies to the *themes* and not specific books. The books are listed in a separate handbook because we will need to update fairly regularly.

In the handbooks that go with each theme, there are extracts from books we feel will be helpful, but which are too expensive, too long or not available. *Home of the brave*, for example, by Katherine Applegate, has been used in our workshops for five or six years with great success (Theme: Bravery), but is an American hard-back that we are simply not able to afford. You will find an extract in the Bravery handbook that will catch the children's attention – as it always does.

This could mean that, over time, the books will not be the same in each toolbox – but the *themes* will be. Most importantly, this gives you freedom to add from your own books or library books, magazine or newspaper articles or poetry you come across – it gives total flexibility about the reading inspirations you use. But always a place to start.



## Themes for Red Box (1) BOOKS AND STORIES

1. BOOKS AND READING
2. IMAGINATION
3. HEROES
4. THE ARTS
5. FUN!

## Themes for Blue Box (2) OUR WORLD & ENVIRONMENT

1. AFRICA
2. SOUTH AFRICA
3. CHILDREN'S RIGHTS
4. BRAVERY
5. PROBLEMS

## Themes for Green Box (3) Time and landscape

1. LANDSCAPE
2. TIME
3. CHANGE
4. EARLY PEOPLE
5. POPULATIONS

CBN BOOKLIST

The toolbox Project. Books

# Children's Book Network

## BOOKS

Children's Book Network

## ZEB SUPER-BOOK HERO

Here is the beginning of a story we will be developing further. Zeb is a Super-Book-Hero! who leads our readers into reading. We find him reading by torchlight under his starry duvet in his starry pyjamas:

*'Zeb? Are you still reading?*

*Put that torch off now and GET TO SLEEP!'*

*Zeb sighed. He wanted to finish his book. He was just getting to the exciting bit!*

*'Zeb?'*

*He sighed again. But he knew his Mom would come through to check. He switched off his torch. It was dark and warm under his duvet. The book slid off the bed and landed on the mat. He could always finish it tomorrow.*

*Slowly, Zeb's eyes closed. He yawned. Yes, he'd finish the book tomorrow. Tomo... rr ...rrr ...*

*Zeb was asleep.*

\*

*Zeb was suddenly awake. It was the wind. Where had the wind come from?*

*He looked up – and above his head was a glitter of cold and frosty stars.*

*He looked down – and wished he hadn't. Down was far away below him. He was above the houses, above the wires bringing electricity to the houses, above the treetops ... and still going up!*

*He was also, he realized, travelling very fast! Ahead of him was something that looked a lot like a door – a door with a word on it. The word was 'Library' – but it didn't look like any library that Zeb ...*

*Whoooooosh! He was through the door! He was in ... he was in an exciting new world where everything was white and cold ... and strange, very strange.*

Zeb has flown into the glorious galaxy of books and stories.

\*

## **What are we aiming to do?**

At our workshops – in all the many and varied activities, we want to lead children gently into the world of books and stories.

## **Why do we feel this is so important?**

Reading brings us closer to understanding – of people, of situations, of cultures different from our own. Through books we can begin to feel what others feel. This works just as much for a Jamela story by Niki Daly, an African legend by Gcina Mhlophe, a story about a teenager in Soweto or a child in Australia. Books extend our imagination and help us to understand other worlds.

## **How are the books selected?**

We have several readers who identify books that fit with CBN themes. These are tested with children in different situations. One of the main methods we use - the most important - is to ask the children. We constantly test books with them by reading aloud, providing copies of the books for quiet reading and stocking our book club with copies that they can take home. Only books that the children enjoy are put into the book bags inside the toolboxes. It is critically important that their opinions are *listened to*.

## **What problems are there in bringing you the books?**

**Price.** Books are expensive. We try to offer you a variety – fiction and non-fiction, local and overseas. We buy only the best, economising where we can, but never compromising on quality. Excellence is the only measure.

**Going out of print:** Even the best of books by popular, well-known authors, become unavailable. (In other words, all the copies printed by the publisher have been sold.) Sometimes a really best-selling book will be re-printed. Sometimes they just disappear. Then we have to find another, just as good.

**Finding books that are appropriate:** Not all children have the same basic education or knowledge. If a book is too difficult (or too easy) it won't work. We have to give you a range of books in your reading toolkit, and offer the children some choice.

**Language:** Children's Book Network works with children who are already learning in English at school (Grade 4 and upwards). It is of benefit to them to read for pleasure in English and to hear English spoken well. We always have translators available.

## **WHAT BOOKS WILL YOU FIND IN YOUR RED TOOLBOX**

### **SUPER BOOKS**

In each toolbox, there are five themes. Each theme should have three (sometimes four) Super-books. The books will be in a zippered book bag and clearly labelled with the theme. The Red Toolbox is called Books and Stories. There will be extra material about each of the Super-books in the zip-bags.

### Themes for Red Box (1) BOOKS AND STORIES

6. BOOKS AND READING

7. IMAGINATION

8. BRAVERY

9. THE ARTS

10. FUN!

Each bag will contain a selection of 3 or 4 Super-Books from books that are appropriate and available (and that we can afford!).

## Theme 1 Super-Books

### BOOKS AND READING (A choice from:)

- *Ouma Ruby's Secret*, by Chris van Wyk
- *Do NOT open this book!* By Andy Lee
- *Libraries: Let's find books* by Mary Novak Walsh

## Theme 2 Super-Books

### IMAGINATION (A choice from:)

- *Into the Forest* by Anthony Brown
- *Where the wild things are* by Maurice Sendak
- *One book from the Journey trilogy (Quest)*

## Theme 3 Super-books

### BRAVERY (A choice from:)

- *Kwezi – superhero 1-2*
- *My name is Honore*
- *Street-child, beggar, Rose*



## Theme 4 Super-books

### THE ARTS (A choice from:)

- *Puppets by Janni Younge*
- *Sekoto by Jeanne Maclay-Meyers*
- *Materials for making art by Janet Ranson*

## Theme 5 Super-books

### FUN (A choice from:)

- *Oh no! George by Chris Houghton*
- *The Matatu, by Eric Walters*
- *Hooray Thoko, by Niki Daly*

New books are published from time to time. When something wonderful appears, we may add it to this list.

## READING BOOKS IN YOUR KIT FOR THE CHILDREN

(25 Books)

### RED TOOLBOX:

#### THEMED RED BOOKS FOR QUIET READING

A mixture of fiction and non-fiction dealing with books and stories, how they are made - and how important they are

A selection from:

- *Storytellers by Gilly Southwood*
- *Alphabets by Lauren Roderick and Fiona Moodie*
- *Going to the library by Ruth Skosana*
- *From thought to book by Reviva Shermbrucker*
- *Media Stories by Karoline Hanks*
- *Communication by Dorothy Dyer*
- *Stories from far and wide by retold by Ros Haden*
- *What's the Plot? by Jay Heale*
- *Scribblings by various writers*
- *Granny's stories by Ros Herbert*

## RED STORY BOOKS

- *Email Rescue by Emma Attwell*
- *The trader and the farmer by Ros Hadden*
- *Weather myths by Jane Diesel*
- *The magic horns by Gcina Mhlophe*
- *Sipho's star by Jaqueline Harvey*
- *Thunder and lightning by Daphne Paizee*
- *The great watermelon Competition by Helen Brain*
- *The guessing game by Aparna Jacob*
- *Snake! A neighbours story (10 Books)*
- *The rains came by Kerry Sadien-Raad*

\*\*\*

## APPENDIX 1: SOME GAMES TO PLAY

### Welcoming games

The idea behind these games is to get everyone settled down (and shaken down). Many involve some physical activity that the children can share. Most are some form of introduction and getting to know each other. The facilitator should take part and become part of the group too. The games can be played at any time during a workshop when the children need to move about.

Another important factor is noise. Let them let rip now and again. You can ask for quiet afterwards, but a good roar does everybody good now and again. Practice ways of calming them down again afterwards with clear signals that say that it is quiet time again. A drum or a whistle is quite useful, and letting the children do something like putting both hands on their heads to indicate time for quiet.

You have to be in control – but confident enough to let them loose from time to time. Getting them moving and shouting in between concentrating is good.

## **Icebreaker 1**

For this icebreaker game, you'll need to set up your chairs in a circle facing inwards. Make sure there is one less chair than there are players.

Select one player to start off in the middle. They must begin by calling out "Blow wind blow". The rest of the group must respond "blow what?" Then the middle player can say some kind of conditional statement like "everyone with red hair" or "everyone not wearing shoes". All the players that fit into that category must get up and switch chairs with another player. This allows a chance for the middle player to steal a chair also.

Once everyone has finished switching as quickly as possible, there will be one player left stuck in the middle. Then the process repeats!

## **Icebreaker 2: How to Play Teeth**

Everyone sits in a circle. Each player chooses a fruit or vegetable. Player A says their fruit/veggie, then the player's fruit/vegie that they want to pass it on to... ie Player A says, 'Strawberry strawberry, broccoli broccoli' player B says, 'broccoli broccoli, carrot carrot'... and so on.

What makes this game interesting is that you can't show your teeth at any point (which you do by pulling your lips over your teeth). If you do happen to show your teeth and get caught by anyone, you alert the group by screaming 'teeth teeth' and flapping your arms at the player like wings (making sure you don't show your teeth in the process!). Depending on how you want to play, you can do elimination or points lost when teeth are shown.

### **Icebreaker 3: How to Play The Tangled Chain**

Get everyone to huddle in a group in the middle of the room and join each hand with someone across the circle. Once everyone has joined hands, let them know their task is now to untangle themselves.

To make the game interesting, make sure there are some chaotic hand joins going on - get players to weave their hands up and over other arms.

This ice breaker game can work really well as a team competition - split the group into a few different even-sized teams and get each group to tangle themselves then make it a race to get completely untangled. It might help to have a leader watching each team so there is no cheating going on!

These three games all from a useful website at:

<https://youthgroupgames.com.au/games/136/the-tangled-chain/>

## **Shake-it-up**

The facilitator leads from the middle of a circle. Shake hands, feet, whole body to the count of One-two-three-four-five-six! This can be varied by playing fast and slow and reversing the count to Six-five-four-three-two-one! All the children join in the counting.

## **Buttons and questions**

Different coloured buttons are hidden inside a bag. Each child chooses a button and then reads aloud, and answers the question for that colour on a card.

Red            Say a sentence beginning with yesterday

Blue           What do you do well?

Yellow        Remember something from when you were small

Brown         What can't you live without?

Orange        What music do you like best?

Green         What is your favourite food?

Encourage complete sentences as answers and draw the children out to interesting responses.



## Questions to think about

Writing questions on cards and letting children choose (as in a card trick) is really effective. First they read the question, think and then give their answer. Don't force anyone – some are just too shy to speak out.

- Who would you like to meet most in the world?
- If you could be any animal, what would it be?
- If you were a flavour of ice-cream, what would it be?
- What is your favourite funny story?
- Who is your favourite super-hero?
- If you could talk in your sleep, what would you say?
- Where would you like to go in the world, and why?
- What is your dream job?
- If you could buy anything, what would you buy?
- What is the thing that annoys you most?

The added advantage of cards is that each child has a different question. This prevents copying by less confident children.

## Would you rather?

- Be the smartest in class or the best sports player?
- Eat a giant bug or be stung by a bee?
- Live in a big house or on a farm?
- Be able to fly, or be invisible?
- Be too hot or too cold?
- Eat chocolate or strawberries?
- Play at the beach or in the snow?
- Be a famous singer or a famous actor?
- Have ten brothers – or ten sisters
- Have a robot or a helper monkey?

In this game, the children are thinking about reactions that they can incorporate in their writing and look for in their reading.

## SHOUTING GAME (Popular!) The Yeah-Boo Game

This game teaches children to look for story clues to help them decipher reading. The facilitator reads the sentences and the group decides if they should shout Yeah! Or Boo! (and sometimes struggle to agree)

A

- It was Saturday morning!
- Dad said we could go to the beach!
- But it was raining!
- We couldn't go!
- Then the rain stopped!
- Dad brought his taxi round!
- Mom made egg sandwiches.
- Ouma said she was coming too.
- With all her friends.
- Ouma made liver spread sandwiches.
- Mom left them behind.
- We got in the taxi.
- The rain started again.
- Dad said we were going anyway.
- My brother got car sick.

- We went back to get the liver spread sandwiches.
- The rain stopped.
- We got to the beach.
- My brother got lost.
- Dad found him.
- Ouma ate all the liver sandwiches.
- Dad bought us ice-cream.
- Ouma's friends wanted to go home.
- The rain started again.
- We took the old ladies home.
- Then Dad took us for Kentucky Fried Chicken!

In this game, the children learn to value of predicting what might happen and also reading the clues in a story. When you make your own versions of this game, keep changing the answers so that they have to keep thinking. Some questions could have more than one answer – pause and discuss.

## B

- We went to town!
- To get boring shopping
- My mum gave me R50
- But the shops were shut!
- Only one shop was open
- But it sold vacuum cleaners
- Mom was interested
- But we were bored
- A man came past with some keys
- And opened a shop
- We all rushed over
- But he shook his head
- I only sell books, he said
- We didn't mind
- Some of the books were difficult
- But I found one I liked
- It cost sixty rand
- I'll give you a special, the man said
- I love my book!

More prediction (and the fun of shouting! A good shout is pretty much obligatory in any workshop. It does them good.)

## WRITING GAMES

What do you like? (This could be written or spoken.)

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

Places you don't like to go!

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

Things you like?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

Children's Book Network

Things you don't like!

1

2

3

4

My dream for my future

1

2

3

4

5

My best memory ever

1

2

3

4

5

Children's Book Network

## PICTURE GAMES

National Geographic is a prime source for pictures that really stimulate the imagination – and promote real curiosity about what they ARE. There are about 100 million National Geographics floating about. We have provided a set of 25 images that really stimulate thought, discussion and writing.

We find that children love to write – and love to be challenged beyond the ‘Write about your life’ format. They need to be able to do this – but they do it every year in numbing succession at school. We do need some information about them, but are trying to come up with better ways of finding it.

Children's Book Network



## MUSICAL GAMES

Get a volunteer! These really have to be demonstrated – and there is always somebody in your community who knows clapping games and songs. They are universal. All over the world there are similar games that involve clapping in a group, or with a partner. Here are some web links to some examples, but this is an area where asking for help can bring the best results.

### Clapping Games (All on You Tube)

#### LONG-LEGGED SAILOR

This traditional song has fun movements that correspond to each verse: long-legged, short-legged, one-legged, etc. See the movements in action in [this video](#).

#### BOOM, SNAP, CLAP

This game, this game works well with pairs. Try having half your group sing a familiar song (duple meter with 4-bar phrases) and half accompanying with the boom, snap, clap sequence. [See a video demonstration here](#).

JOHN KANAKANAKA

Clapping, patting, stepping, and partner-changing make this a fun movement activity for older children Watch a group singing and doing the movement in [this video](#).

DOWN, DOWN, BABY

This clapping game (from *Sesame Street!*) includes clapping, stomping, and wiggling and can be done with several children standing in a circle. [I love this video](#).

It would be wonderful if we can begin to collect some CBN music, songs and games.

\*\*\*

Children's Book N