

Story-based Reading Materials to Enhance 21st-Century Skills

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Introduction

With the advent of the globalized world, English is becoming increasingly important as a means to facilitate communication between people throughout the world. Educators have a responsibility to enable students to learn language for their future use; there is also an emphasis on helping learners to acquire 21st-century skills. However, children learning English as foreign language do not always see an immediate purpose for the language; this leads to difficulties in the learning process. The priority for materials developers is to develop materials which can motivate learners to become engaged with the target language. One possible solution is through the use of stories. To this end, I provide here a lesson plan to be used with story-based reading material; this lesson is designed to help learners acquire language and 21st-century skills at the same time.

Story-based text

Children's stories have a positive impact on emotional development as well as language learning. As Ghosn (2013) points out, well-written stories help young learners to develop emotionally, especially to develop empathy, which is considered a key element of being a global citizen. In particular, stories are able to present universal emotions that such as happiness, courage or fear, and this naturally encourages children to feel empathy toward other people. With this in mind, I have created an original story as a reading text for children to connect with characters based on the universal feeling of fear of the dark.

21st-century skills

In 2015 the World Economic Forum attempted to define exactly what is meant by '21st-century skills'. Four key competencies were identified.

Competency	Definition
Critical thinking	ability to identify, analyze and evaluate situations, ideas and information to formulate responses
Creativity	ability to imagine and devise new, innovative ways of addressing problems, answering questions or expressing meaning through the application, synthesis or repurposing of knowledge
Communication	Communication: ability to listen to, understand, convey and contextualize information through verbal, nonverbal, visual and written means
Collaboration	ability to work in a team towards a common goal, including the ability to manage conflict.

I found a high correlation between these competencies and language learning and adapted the four competencies – critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration – into the lesson and material.

Key features of the material

- An original story provoking universal emotions such as fear that children would have empathy.
- Division of the story into two parts gives enough time for learners to think and increases curiosity.
- The development of the four competencies is balanced with language learning within each task.
- The context of real-life situations provides a link to learners' own experiences.
- Vocabulary is learned through the context of stories to facilitate understanding.

References

- Ghosn, I.-K. (2013). Developing motivating materials for refugee children: From theory to practice. In B. Tomlinson (Ed.), *Developing materials for language teaching* (2nd ed., pp. 247-268). London: Bloomsbury.
- World Economic Forum. (2015). Appendix 1: Definitions of 21st-century skills. In *New Vision for Education Unlocking the Potential of Technology*. Retrieved from http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEFUSA_NewVisionforEducation_Report2015.pdf

Target Learners	Level	A1	Age	8~10	Context	EFL (English as Foreign Language)
Learning Objectives	Language [L] At the end of the lesson, students will be (better) able to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> read to understand the themes of stories. recognise the meaning of unknown words within the context of stories. 					
	Competencies [C] At the end of the lesson, students will be (better) able to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> find out similarities and differences between the character and themselves. (Critical thinking) create a drawing with information gathered from stories. (Creativity) listen to peers talking and understand the opinions of others. (Communication) share their ideas to give advice to characters in stories. (Collaboration) 					
	Emotion [E] At the end of the lesson, students will be (better) able to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> understand feelings of characters in stories. have empathy toward other people through stories. 					

Procedure	Stage Aims	Teaching–Learning Activities	Time & Interaction	Materials
Introduction [pre-reading]	Linking with learner's experience	[C] Think and communicate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask a question related to today's topic to a friend. What are you afraid of? Why? 	5' (S↔S)	Worksheet
	Checking learners' previous knowledge and introduce new vocabulary	[L] Words <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students check individually if they know the given words. Teacher and students talk about the meaning of new vocabulary through pictures. Students listen and fill in the blanks to understand the words within the context. 	5' (T↔Ss)	Audio
Development [while-reading]	Providing engaging reading text	[Part1] Time to read <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students read the text while they listen to the teacher or an audio recording. 	5' (T↔Ss)	Worksheet Audio
	[After-reading] Enhancing reading skill Provoking communication skill Enhancing 21 st century skills through story	[L] Time to understand <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students choose the right answers through reading. Students can go back to <i>Today's Words</i> if they forget some words. [C,E] Time to think critically <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students find similarities and differences between characters and themselves. 	15' (Ss↔Ss)	
[while-reading]	Providing engaging reading text	[Part 2] Time to read <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students read the text while they listen to teacher or an audio recording. Teacher makes sure that the story continues from part 1. 	5' (T↔Ss)	Worksheet Audio
	Enhancing 21 st century skills through story	[C] Time to be creative <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students imagine the black triangle with three given clues. Students draw it with their own ideas. [C,E] Time to collaborate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students solve shadow quiz with group members. Challenge: Students make their own quiz together. 	10' (S) 10' (Ss↔Ss)	
Closing	Reflecting what they have learned	[C,E] Reflection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher asks students about the feelings from the lesson. 	5' (T↔Ss)	

What are you afraid of?



Think and communicate

Let's talk with a friend like Bory and Tory. What are you afraid of? Why?



Bory: **What are you afraid of?**

Tory: **I am afraid of** the dark.

Bory: **Why?**

Tory: **Because** I can't see anything.



What are you afraid of?

I am afraid of...
Because..



dark



ghost



window



triangle



monster

Words Listen and complete Tory's journal with words.

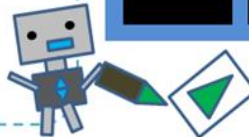
It was a dark night.

I draw a green triangle for my math class.

I looked outside the window.

I saw a ghost and a monster.

It was scary.



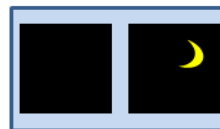
Time to read Listen while you read.

Part 1: A black Triangle

Today is a big day. Ju-won will sleep alone in his room. "Are you ready?" said mom. "Yes, I'm ready. I can sleep alone." said Ju-won. "Are you sure? I can go to bed with you." said mom. Ju-won said, "It's okay, mom. I can sleep alone. I am not afraid of anything." Mom said, "Then, good night." Ju-won asked, "Can you open the door a little?" "Okay, honey." said mom. Then she turned off the light and left the room. Now he was all alone in his dark room.

Suddenly, he saw a black triangle on the wall. Ju-won asked, "Are you a ghost?" It was quiet. Too quiet. Ju-won said, "Actually, I am afraid of a ghost. I can't sleep alone. Who are you?"

Then he saw the black triangle with five round ears. No! ten round ears! Now it was next to the window. He asked, "Are you a monster?" It was quiet. Too quiet. He said, "Actually I am afraid of a ghost. And a monster! I can't sleep alone. Who are you?"



Time to understand

A. Choose the correct answer.

- There are two characters: mom and A. Ju-won.
A. Ju-won B. Harry C. Sana
- Where are the two characters?
A. In the kitchen B. In the living room C. In Ju-won's bedroom

B. Choose Yes or No.

- Ju-won saw a black **triangle** in his room. Yes No
- The black triangle with ten round ears was under the **window**.
 Yes No
- Ju-won was afraid of a **ghost**.
 Yes No

Tip! Go back to *words* when you forget the words.

Time to think critically

What are similar and different between you and Ju-won?
Complete the diagram.



Time to read Listen while you read.

Part 2: A black Triangle

Still he saw the black triangle with ten round ears on the wall. He said, "I can't sleep alone. Actually, I am afraid of the dark, a ghost and a monster. And a black triangle with ten round ears! I can't sleep until it goes away."

He waited and waited. But he still saw a black triangle with ten round ears. He looked closer. Then, he saw a black star on top of the black triangle.

He said with a big smile, "Oh, I know what it is. It is a/an Christmas tree." Suddenly, colorful lights were on the Christmas tree. He said with his eyes closed, "Now I can go to bed alone."

Time to be creative

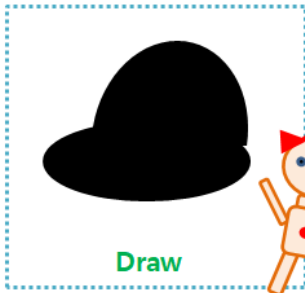
- Clue 1: A black triangle with ten round ears.
- Clue 2: A black star on top of the black triangle.
- Clue 3: Colorful lights were on the black triangle.

What do you think it is? Draw it and fill in the blanks of the story.



Time to collaborate

Solve the shadow quiz with friends. Work in small groups.



Bory saw a black half circle.
And she saw a black oval shape under the half circle.
What is it?

Draw

It is a hat.



Half circle



An oval



Challenge: Make your own shadow quiz with friends.
It would be fun!