

The vowels-only books which the teacher makes from the creative writing efforts of the children can be, and in some cases are, taken home by the students who authored them. Unlike the tiny writing cards which are used to produce materials to be taken home at both the phrase and transition levels, the creative writing activities are primarily intended to be used at school.

The creative writing in which students engage at the final level of the reading program is meant to produce an abundance of vowels-only books for children at this same level to read. Most of the books initially produced through creative writing activities have multiple authors and aren't really appropriate to send to only one student's home. As the children become more proficient writers they begin authoring their own separate books. These books may eventually be sent home, but they are first added to the library station so that they may be read by everyone in class.

#### **WHOLE CLASS ACTIVITIES (AFTER THE INTRODUCTION OF STATIONS)**

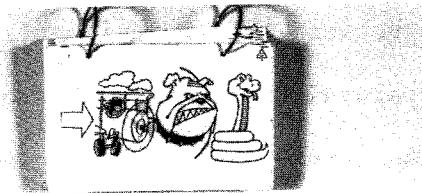
Three-Sound Flip Book

Class Experience Stories - Stamped Only

Class Experience Stories - Stamped and Written

Reading to Students - Storybook Time

#### **Three-Sound Flip Book**



The earlier section on whole class activities (see page 234) discussed the activities and experiences presented to all the students to prepare them specifically for work at the learning stations. Lessons for the whole class do not stop, however, when work at the station begins. The three-sound flip book is

introduced as soon as any students have mastered two-sound blending at the learning stations and are ready to move on to the three-sound level.

The faster learners control the pace of the whole class lessons. The activities which make up the learning stations do allow all of the children to learn to read. But, for some children, this learning takes place at an accelerated rate when they are exposed to knowledge which is supposedly beyond their level of readiness. We can be surprised at these bursts of unexpected comprehension, but we can also foster our own surprise by allowing all of our students an opportunity at least once each day to experience reading at a level beyond where we think they should be. Whole class lessons allow our students to be exposed to more difficult concepts without actually having to understand what is being presented. The comfort of being surrounded by a room full of classmates and never being asked to blend any words or read any phrases by oneself takes the fear out of facing lessons which may be too difficult. With the harm gone, all that is left is the good.

The flip book at the three-sound level is much the same as the flip book used for two-sounds. In both cases, the flip books double as vocabulary builders, so the children who are to make use of the learning station activities will be able to assign meaning to the words they read. Once the first students are ready for it, the three-sound flip book is simply substituted for the two-sound flip book.

The only difference between the two unique flip books (apart from the words and illustration, naturally) is that the two-sound book is used to model two-sound blending and the three-sound book is used to model three-sound blending. This is, of course, obvious, but it is an important distinction to make nonetheless. The main purpose of both flip books is to model for children how they are to go about blending sounds into words. When the two-sound flip book was introduced, none of the children knew how to blend, so it was easy for the teacher to remember to stress the correct form and procedure for blending. When the three-sound book is introduced, however, many students will already be



"Has anybody been to a nurse?"

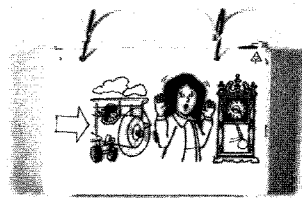
"What for?"

"Does anybody know any nurses?"

"Are any of your relatives nurses?"

The word blended must be related to a word known. If there is anyone in class who doesn't know what a nurse is, the post blending discussion is meant to add 'nurse' to that person's vocabulary.

The three-sound method of blending is, in essence, the same method employed at the two-sound level. The teacher points to the arrow, slides his or her finger beneath the individual sounds as the children join in saying them, and the sounds are then said fast to get the word to pop out. For some three-sound words, however, a different techniques can be employed.



Teacher: "Where do I start?"

Children: "At the arrow."

Teacher: "Okay. Sounding out note...This time let's just read the first two sounds together."

All: "nnnnnnnoooooooooo."

Teacher: "Again."

All: "nnnnnnnnnnnoooooooooo."

Teacher: "Say it fast."

All: "No."

Teacher: "Again."

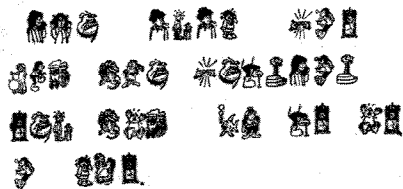
All: "No."

Teacher: "Let's add the last sound. Say it with me."

All: "No... 't'."  
Teacher: "Again."  
All: "Note."  
Teacher: "What's a note?..."

Initially the technique of blending two sounds together and then adding the third sound to the word formed by the first two should only be employed for words in which the first two sounds blend into a word with which the children are already familiar. In most cases, the process of saying and blending all three sounds at once should be used. For the majority of students saying all three sounds at once is quite manageable. There are some students, however, for whom remembering three sounds in succession is beyond their present capacity. These students need to be taught how to break each three-sound word into a two-sound word with another sound to be added. By presenting both methods, children are given a choice. If necessary, we can assist our children in deciding which method is better for them.

#### Class Experience Stories (Stamped)



The three-sound flip book is used as the basis for the whole class lessons until the first few students are ready to begin the phrase level of the program at the stations. When this point is reached that portion of the day previously devoted to the flip book becomes the time for experience stories instead.

Many primary grade classrooms already make use of the concept of experience stories to introduce children to reading. The only difference between the techniques teachers might already have used to create such stories in their

classrooms and what is now to take place is that the words are stamped out as opposed to written out. What follows is a suggested method for approaching the creation of experience stories. It is only meant to be a suggestion and not a mandated process of teaching. Any successful method which you might already be employing is quite satisfactory. All you have to do is substitute stamping for handwriting. The stamps used for the experience stories are the large stamps already in use at the stamping station.

An experience story is a story written about an experience. A class experience story is often a story written about something the whole class has done together. The subjects to be written about can be anything from, "How we baked cookies today" to "Our trip to the zoo". Experiences which the whole class has shared together are preferable, because everyone in class has the potential of being able to contribute to the story. It isn't necessary, however, to wait until the whole class has had a common adventure before writing a story. If everyone together hasn't cooked or gone to the zoo, the story can, instead, be about favorite foods to eat or animals that live in a zoo.

Topics of writing can be whatever the imagination and/or the interests of the teacher and the children can invent. Any kind of story the class chooses to invent is perfectly acceptable. Actual experiences are the easiest with which to start, because the story itself can be composed by asking the children what they did at the zoo or how they baked their cookies. As the students catch on to the process they should be allowed and encouraged to invent any kind of story or stories their minds can conjure.

For teachers who have never made use of experience stories and who have not seen the technique employed, the following suggestions are offered:

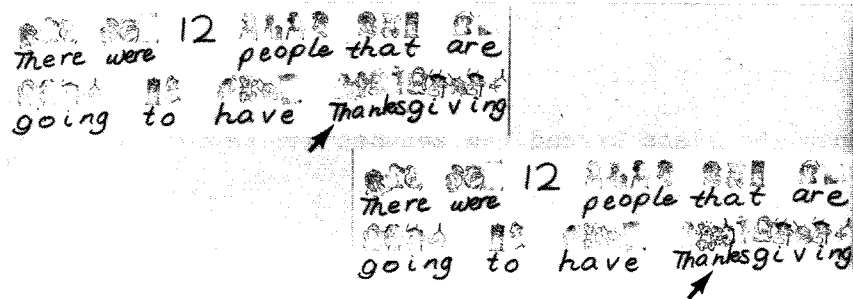
- 1) Decide upon a topic. (Eventually, the students will suggest topics about which they would like the class to write.)
- 2) Equip yourself with a big piece of paper and a complete set of large stamps. The paper might be masking taped to an equally big

piece of cardboard so you can prop it up for everyone to see and still stamp on it.

- 3) Gather the class around you so that all can see the paper upon which you will be stamping.
- 4) Tell the children that you and they are going to write a story together. (This is only done the first time. For each subsequent time the children will already know the purpose of the gathering.)
- 5) Discuss the topic with the class. Ask for suggestions of what to write.
- 6) Stamp out the phrases or sentences the students contribute to the story. Say each sound as you stamp it. Blend each word as you complete it. Read the sentence as you complete it.
- 7) Stamp until you are out of stamping time or out of paper or the children are out of suggestions. (The first two 'out of's' are much more likely occurrences than the third).
- 8) At the close of the experience story time read aloud what has been stamped as the whole class reads along.

Although the only difference between traditional experience stories and those the teacher is now expected to stamp out is the stamping itself, this difference is a big one. Writing words in their traditional form is second nature to us. But the traditional form is not to be used here. Now, the teacher is expected to listen for and recognize the individual sounds which make up each word of the story. Rarely do teachers find this to be an easy task at the start. As the teacher learns how to listen for the sounds in words, sounds will be stamped out incorrectly or, sometimes, not stamped out at all. Since mistakes are an inevitable part of the learning process, it is best to relax and accept the new understanding each discovered error brings with it.

Sounds or words which have been misstamped may be covered over with a self-adhesive label and restamped.



When experience stories first begin, the teacher may be the only person in class responsible for deciding which sounds are to be heard in each word. As the class gains in experience, however, this responsibility will be a shared one.

The first day's time period is devoted to stamping out the story. If the story isn't finished yet (meaning the children have more they want to say and there's still plenty of room on the paper) then it can be continued on the following day, and the following, if necessary.

On the day after the first story is completely written the experience story time is devoted to reading what has been created. The teacher and the class together read the sounds in the words, blend the words, read the phrases or sentences and make any corrections to the stamping which this reading may indicate to be necessary. Not many of the students will be truly adept at reading many of the words, since there will be words in the story which will be composed of more sounds than are common in the words which the children have been studying at their learning stations. It isn't important that the words may be too difficult for most students. The experience stories are to be read by the whole class together with the ever-present help of the teacher. What some can't read individually, all can read collectively, especially when the 'all' includes the teacher.

A suggested pattern for experience stories would be to spend as many days as necessary writing the story and then spend the first day after the writing is completed, reading it. When a second story has been written and then read, the first story should be read again. Depending on the class time available,

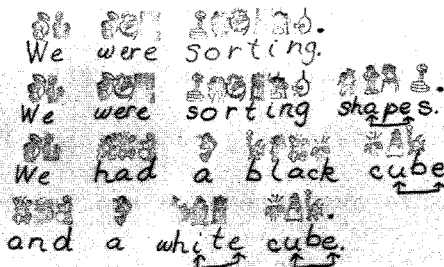


it can be read on the same day as story number two, or read on the following day.

The plan is simply to write and then read, write and then read, and so on. After each new story is written, the new and then the old stories are read or re-read before the next new story is written. As more and more stories are added to the classes recorded experiences, it becomes impractical to reread each of the stories already written. When this point is reached, the children themselves may be asked to select the story or stories they would like to have the class reread.

One purpose of spending a few minutes of class time each day writing and reading experience stories is to prepare children for reading the longer and longer words they will be facing as they advance through the levels of the reading program. In addition, all of the children in class benefit both from the steady exposure to words of all lengths and from the almost daily process of watching their teacher record their words on paper with the stamps. Many children who have difficulty learning to read come to school with no understanding of what reading is. Experience stories allow these children to become active participants in creating what is to be read.

#### Class Experience Stories (Stamped and Written)



The image shows four lines of handwritten text, each preceded by a stamp. The stamps appear to be small, rectangular marks, possibly representing the words or sounds of the text. The text is written in a simple, childlike script. The first line is "We were sorting." The second line is "We were sorting shapes." The third line is "We had a black cube" and the fourth line is "and a white cube." The stamps are placed above the words, and some have arrows pointing to the letters, suggesting a focus on phonics or sound recognition.

When the first students in class are ready to begin linking the sounds to traditional letters and written words, the experience stories are used to allow all of the students in class to take part in the transition process within the comfortable confines of the whole class lessons.

The experience stories at this level are both stamped and written. It isn't important exactly which method or methods are used to put letters with the sounds. A word may be stamped out and its letters recorded beneath it before the next word is stamped. The whole sentence may be stamped out before any letters are written in. The entire story may be stamped completely and the writing added in by the teacher after the children have gone home for the day. Any of these methods may be used or all of them may be used interchangeably. The important element is to link the letters to the sounds.

The only difference between the actual stamping which the teacher does for the experience stories at this level and that which was done at the earlier level is that silent letter stamp may now be added to the words as appropriate.

The class experience stories which involve both stamping and writing are the highest level of whole class lessons associated with this program. They are introduced as the first children begin work at the transition level. When these same children are ready for the vowels-only level, there is no new level of experience story introduced. The stamped and written stories include elements of value to everyone in class, regardless of level.

Even though the fastest learners are usually the determiners for the level of activities presented in the whole class lessons, the activities themselves always have within them a range that permitted everyone, regardless of level, to gain something from the experience. The next logical level of experience story would be stories written in letters with only the vowel stamps added over the words. This would be good practice for the most advanced students, but it would leave everyone else too far behind. Experience stories which are stamped and written leave no one behind, and that, after all, is the object of this reading program.

#### **Reading to the Class - Storybook Time**

To understand what reading is, children need to be read to. Many children come from homes where parents or other relatives have read to them constantly.

However, many others come from homes where this kind of reading is not common at all. Children who haven't been read to, may receive particular benefit from being read to at school, but all children, regardless of background, gain from being read to on a daily basis.

Books are filled with excitement and fascination. Children need to be allowed to experience the joy that can be found within books on a constant basis. When they can read, they will be able to use their reading power to find their own joy in books. When they can't read, we must be their vehicle for learning what books have to share with them.

The books we select to read to our students should as often as possible be books which are also available to our students at the library station. When the book we have read from is returned to the library station, it gains instant celebrity status. Everyone will want to read it. It is important to cater to this desire to see and hold the book the teacher has been reading, for it allows the children to see themselves and their classmates in the role of people who can be excited about books. If the books we select to read are simply placed on some special shelf reserved only for the teacher, or are returned to some distant library never to be seen again, the cause of the excitement remains remote from the children.

If we must risk wearing out our books by letting our children handle them again and again, the risk is worth it. The purpose of this program is to allow children to learn to read. The activities at the five learning stations allow children to become readers. But, knowing how to read isn't the same as wanting to read. The time spent reading to children and then letting them have access to the books which they have heard read, helps our children know that reading is something they want to do.

The reading of DEKODIPHUKAN takes place during storybook time. When DEKODIPHUKAN is completed, 'storybook time' continues throughout the year.