

Supporting Children's Reading

A complete short course for teaching assistants,
volunteer helpers and parents

Second Edition

The principles
of reading clearly
explained

Off-the-shelf
presentations

'Snapshots'
of children
tackling problem
words

Tried and
tested
approaches

Supporting Children's Reading

A complete short course for
teaching assistants, volunteer
helpers and parents

Margaret Hughes
and

Peter Guppy



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Supporting Children's Reading

Being able to read is one of the most important skills in life and something we all want our children to achieve – for learning and for pleasure. *Supporting Children's Reading* gives you the understanding you need of the reading process to ensure that children are effectively supported in their reading journeys.

This practical programme draws on the authors' wealth of experience in delivering this kind of training and is an invaluable point of reference for anyone working with children to improve their reading. With the supporting downloadable material, it provides everything you need to deliver a bespoke training course tailored to meet your particular audience, including:

- succinct and clear explanations of how reading works
- time-saving resources such as photocopiable handouts and professionally designed visual display screens
- advice on helping children to improve both their decoding and comprehension skills
- guidance on strategies for helping a child deal with a problem word.

Supporting Children's Reading is an accessible, ready-to-use resource to support teachers working with teaching assistants, volunteer 'reading buddies' and parents, providing training on how to share books and listen to readers effectively. It will be especially useful for adults working with children who, for whatever reason, need extra support in developing reading skills.

Supporting material is downloadable from:

<http://www.routledge teachers.com/resources/fulton>

Margaret Hughes taught for many years in a variety of mainstream and special, primary and secondary schools, later joining Warwickshire's reading support service. She is co-author of the widely used spelling program, *Starspell*.

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nasen is a professional membership association which supports all those who work with or care for children and young people with special and additional educational needs. Members include teachers, teaching assistants, support workers, other educationalists, students and parents.

nasen supports its members through policy documents, journals, its magazine *Special!*, publications, professional development courses, regional networks and newsletters. Its website contains more current information such as responses to government consultations. **nasen's** published documents are held in very high regard both in the UK and internationally.

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Introduction

Reading is one of the most important skills in life. It enables us to find out almost anything, discover new worlds and adventures, and lose ourselves between the covers of a book. No wonder we want it for our children; no wonder so many hours are spent hearing children read. How essential it is, then, that these hours be well spent.

The support children receive on their journey into reading can come from a range of people, both in school and at home – the child's 'reading team'. The more information and guidance this team has, the more secure its members will feel and the more effective they will be. High-quality training is invaluable.

Supporting Children's Reading is a course for teaching assistants and volunteer helpers ('reading buddies'); it is equally valuable as a resource for parents' evenings. There are eight workshops, each about 40 minutes long; some have extra reading to take away. After the sessions, we believe people will feel more confident about answering questions such as:

- How does reading work?
- How do I help a child who is stuck on a word?
- How do I best use phonics?
- How do I know when a book's too hard? And what do I do when it is?
- How exactly does reading *to* a child help?
- Can a book ever be too easy for a child?

Trends in teaching reading come and go, often highlighting one element of reading at the expense of others. However, in *Supporting Children's Reading* we demonstrate that all the elements of reading are necessary, equal and complementary.

Presenter's Guide

How the workshops are set out

- Each workshop comprises a number of screens to be shown to course participants, with accompanying Presenter's Notes.
- These Notes are to support you, the course presenter, in talking through whatever is shown on the screen.
- The Notes for each workshop appear together on the pages following the workshop's screens. Each screen's set of Notes carries the number of the screen to which it refers.

Getting the best out of your presentation

- The Presenter's Notes are *not* verbatim scripts. Rather, they give you the information you need to convey but allow you the freedom to relay it in your own words . . . by far the most convincing manner of presentation. (This is why the notes are written as 'Explain this' or 'Point out that', etc.)¹
- To this end, we recommend that you familiarise yourself with the whole course prior to presentation, and 'make it your own'. You will want to shape it to suit the particular experience and needs of your audience and there is generous space on the notes pages for you to annotate.
- It's a good idea to use variety in the way you present the screens – sometimes read out the screen, sometimes allow time for your group to read it for themselves.
- Although the workshops include opportunities for group interaction and discussion (signalled by the icon), you may choose to invite comments, questions and suggestions at any time.



¹ We use 'adult' as the term for the person supporting the child, as covering teacher, classroom assistant, parent, etc., and as being non-gender-specific. We try to avoid any gender-specificity for the children, too (which sometimes results in tortuous uses of 'the child' or 'children').

Photocopying

- You are free to copy, as an *aide-mémoire*, some or all of the screens for distribution to your groups. *Permission to photocopy and distribute applies to screens only, not to the Presenter's Notes. (For single use only, Presenter's Notes may be copied for ease of workshop delivery.)*
- In the case of certain workshops (e.g. Workshops 3 and 4) some screens are more legible as individual photocopies.
- Additional photocopiable material is listed below.

Additional material

- Screens are also available as PowerPoint slides, downloadable from:
<http://www.routledge teachers.com/resources/fulton>
- In Workshops 3, 4 and 5 there are handouts to be photocopied for your group to take away:
Workshops 3 and 4 each have two 'teaching tips'.
Workshop 5 has a reference sheet.
- There is an optional Reading Observation Sheet (ROS), with sample comments (Appendix).
Note: While available for school use, this ROS could also form the basis of a revision workshop, as an extra to the course.

Diplomacy alert

It is advisable to agree with your course members that they come to you first if they have any questions/issues about your school's policy, organisation and approaches, arising from either the workshops or from their own observations around the school.

WORKSHOP 1

Basics of reading

The balance of clues – Seen and Unseen

Screen 1/1

Workshop 1

OUTLINE OF COURSE

Workshop 1 Basics of reading: the balance of clues – Seen and Unseen

Workshop 2 More about clues

Workshop 3 Teaching tips 1–5: phonics backs up meaning

Workshop 4 Teaching tips 6–10: meaning backs up phonics

Workshop 5 Three levels of reading

Workshop 6 Frustration and Independent levels in action

Workshop 7 Instructional level in action

Workshop 8 It's a team game: teaching assistant and teacher

PRESENTER'S NOTES FOR WORKSHOP 1

Screen 1/1: Outline of course

- Have Screen 1/1 on display as the group arrives and settles in.
- There may be various 'housekeeping' points to make about fire exits, toilets etc.
- Explain the rationale for providing this course – making the most of their time and energies in ensuring that children are supported effectively and helped to make good progress with their reading.
- Continue with the following points:
 - As presenter, having had a close look through the entire course, you can promise that it is based on close scrutiny of what children do when they meet a problem word, and how they can be helped.
 - It does this very realistically, examining numerous 'snapshots' of children reading.
 - Although each workshop is very full, this should not prevent the group from having an input, asking questions, making observations and discussing points along the way.
- Supplement these opening remarks by distributing to each participant a copy of the Introduction, page 1, backed with a copy of Screen 1/1. (It may be useful to put out the copies beforehand, one on each seat.) Allow time for the group to read the Introduction.
- Draw attention to the titles of the eight workshops, as displayed on the screen. You will probably be able to add dates for each session at this point.
- After that, you are ready to begin this first workshop, by displaying Screen 1/2.

Screen 1/2

BASICS OF READING

The balance of clues – Seen and Unseen

This workshop will show you that:

- we use a range of clues to read a word
- there are two types of clue
 - on the page (Seen)
 - in your head (Unseen)
- reading a word involves a balance of these two types of clue
- listening to a child read involves
 - being aware of clues
 - observing the child's use of them.

Screen 1/2: Workshop aims

- Explain that each workshop will begin by setting out its aims.

Here are the aims for this session:

- Allow enough time for the group to read these aims.
- There will be explanation of what is meant by 'Seen' and 'Unseen' as we go on.

Screen 1/3

BEN'S BALANCING ACT

Let's watch nine-year-old Ben tackling
the problem word: *phantom*

1. Because I know this is a ghost story, I'm expecting a word to do with ghosts.

2. Because the previous word is 'the', I'm expecting the word to be a noun (the 'something-or-other').

The night was dark, without a moon and given to swirling fog, but he was not afraid as he entered the graveyard, feeling his way from headstone to headstone. As he reached the old chapel, it went colder. Then he saw it – the *phantom*; white and shadowy, with a faint green glow about it.

3. OK. It can't be 'ghost' or 'spirit' because it starts with a 'p'; it looks like *p-han-tom*. P-hantom? Pantom? Ah! Ph like in Philip or photo. It's *ph-ant-om*.

5. Yes. It's phantom all right. These next few words clinch it.

4. *Phantom!*
Like on my DVD!

Screen 1/3: Ben's balancing act

- Introduce this example as a demonstration of good independent reading.
- Mention that Ben is nine, and through early support has become a confident reader, ready to have a go at new words. Good support is what these workshops are about.
- Ask the group to read the central box only (Ben's text), pointing out that the problem word is *phantom*.
- Read out the surrounding boxes that show Ben's thoughts (in numerical order).
- Explain:
 - the fact that his thinking is happening at speed
 - that we can't know the exact order of his thoughts.

Screen 1/4

WHAT BEN DID

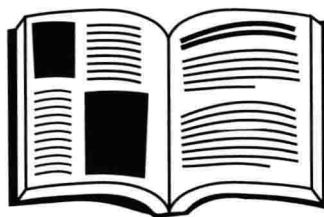
Ben combined his knowledge of stories, language and ghosts with his knowledge of phonics to complete the puzzle.

Background knowledge told him to expect a noun – a ghostly noun, and phonic knowledge of 'ph' clinched it for him.

Ben was successful in solving that problem word, *phantom*, because he made good use of a range of clues:

On the page

SEEN



In his head

UNSEEN



Screen 1/4: What Ben did

- Read the summary of Ben's reasoning, in the box.
- Point out that Ben's range of clues includes:
 - general knowledge
 - knowledge of stories
 - knowledge of language
 - phonics
- Introduce the concept of Seen and Unseen clues – those on the page and those in the head.

A possible question

Q. What if Ben had actually never heard of 'phantom'?

A.● Your support strategy would be to:

- praise his phonic attempt
- ensure proper pronunciation of *phantom*
- His phonic knowledge plus his use of background knowledge would actually have *added* this new word to his vocabulary (make sure he understands it).
- This session focuses on watching how a good reader works. Other workshops will look at ways to help a child develop the strategies Ben employs.