

BILINGUAL LANGUAGE ARTS IN ACTION ACTIVITY KITS

“MODAL VERBS”

Children’s Literature Sources:

1. “Mr. Brown Can Moo, Can You?” by Dr. Seuss
2. “Big Trucks, Big Wheels” by Petrina Gentile and Bobbie Kalman (photographs by Marc Crabtree)
3. “I Can Do It” by Jana Novotny Hunter (illustrated by Lucy Richards)
4. “From Head to Toe” by Eric Carle
5. “The Polar Bear’s Gift” by Jeanne Bushey (illustrated by Vladyana Langer Krykorka)

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GENERAL TEACHING PRINCIPLES:

- The basic principle behind these activities is to use **children's literature** to teach the grammatical structures of written language (English).
- Children learn best when they **discover** the rule themselves, rather than being told the rule and then practicing it in meaningless drills.
- Our role as teachers is to make sure children have lots of **exposure** to the target structure in different contexts, and to **direct** their attention to how it is used.
- We also need to make sure students have lots of opportunities to try to **use the structure** in their own writing – this means **accepting approximations** and gradually **shaping** them into correct productions.
- **Repetition** is important for learning – reading and writing must be done over and over – but it is also important to keep it **fun** and **interesting**.
- It is not enough to simply read the books in this activity kit to children during story time – the books must be the focus of **extended and repeated study** and this difference should be emphasized and made clear to both teachers and students right from the outset.

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TEACHING “MODAL VERBS”

1. Modal verbs include **can, could, may, might, shall, should, will, would, must, and ought**.
2. Modal verbs are “auxiliary” verbs so they are used **before other verbs**, and also in tag questions (e.g., “He can’t go tonight, **can** you?”) and short answers (e.g., “Yes, I **can**.”)
3. We use **must** when we are **certain**; **may** when something is **possible**; and **might** to suggest a **weaker possibility** (“She **must** be hungry”, “She **may** be hungry”, “She **might** be hungry”).
4. **Must** is used for **orders and strong suggestions** (advice and opinions), and **should** is used for **less strong suggestions** (advice and opinions). E.g., “I **must** quit smoking”, or “I **should** quit smoking”.
5. We often use **should** in **questions** when we are **wondering what to do** (“**Should** I change my shoes?”).
6. **Can, could, and may** are used to ask for and give **permission**.
7. **Will** is used to express **intentions** and make **threats** or **promises** (“I **will** not pay you if you don’t finish the work”).
8. **Would** is used to talk about the **past**.

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SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES FOR: “MR. BROWN CAN MOO, CAN YOU?” (DR. SEUSS)

Vocabulary: wonderful, can go like, cork, squeaky, rooster, owl, whisper, ought, horn, blurp, slurp, sizzle, hippopotamus, thunder, lightening.

1. This book is very sound-based, so you will need to make the various sound words meaningful to the students by developing visual equivalents.
2. Keep the rhythm of the story and have the students learn the list of “sounds” and present it as a “signing chant”.
3. There are multiple examples of the modal verb “can” throughout the story – both in statements and questions. Have the students look for these examples and then develop their own statements about the things they “can” do.

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SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES FOR: “BIG TRUCKS, BIG WHEELS” (GENTILE, KALMAN, & CRABTREE)

Vocabulary: tough, factories, dangerous, big rig, powerful, engine, instead, cab, owner, careful, dumper, pouring, hopper, landfill, recycling, wreckers, station, scene, hydrant, controls, aerial-ladder, outrigger legs, tractor trailer, flatbed, bulkhead, carriers, tanker, liquid, code.

1. This is a non-fiction book – it contains all kinds of information about trucks. This book may interest some reluctant readers in your class.
2. The book uses a variety of verbs with and without modal verbs, so it will be challenging for students to find the modals.
3. Have the students re-write sentences from the book using different modal verbs – discuss how this changes the meaning. For example, “You **can** load it with camping gear” or “You **must** load it with camping gear”.

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SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES FOR: “I CAN DO IT!” (NOVOTNY HUNTER & RICHARDS)

Vocabulary: everybody, different, especially, nursery, whatever, choose, careful, noisy, clever, helpful.

1. This story is repetitive with familiar content so it should be good for independent reading.
2. Have the students identify the modal verbs used in the story – can do, can be, can roll, can choose, won't be.
3. Use the pattern of the book as a model for the students to create their own stories about the things that they **can** be and do. You can start by having the children brainstorm lists of characteristics about each other. This is also a good way to learn more about each other.

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SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES FOR: “FROM HEAD TO TOE” (CARLE)

Vocabulary: penguin, giraffe, buffalo, shoulders, seal, gorilla, thump, chest, arch, crocodile, wriggle, camel.

1. This is a good book for students to read independently.
2. This story is very repetitive and lends itself to being acted out – make sure all the students get a chance to take turns being the various animals.
3. Use the models in this book to teach about both the question and answer forms of modal verbs – show how the modals move to the beginning of questions.
4. Have the students create their own stories with other animals and the actions they can do.

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SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES FOR: **“THE POLAR BEAR’S GIFT”** **(BUSHEY & LANGER KRYKORKA)**

Vocabulary: begged, exclaimed, plenty, parka, content, Nanook, fondly, igloo, harness, trotted, swiftly, slush, caribou, ivory, lure, pouch, pale, Netsirq, harpoon, harmless, peered, cautiously, wound, oozed, injury, squirted, anxiously, return, fiercely, replied, gasped, invite, fortune.

1. This is an excellent story to include in a study of Inuit people.
2. Background information will be needed for students to understand the story – hunting, parents dying, Inuit words for animals, etc.
3. Find the modal verbs in the story – may come, would rather hunt, would have, would make, must be, will hunt, will learn, will come, will catch, will take good care, can’t be, could bring, would laugh, should run, would think, might not be, could almost hear, will take care, will want, could have let, would have shown, will never be, will never forget, will meet, must invite.
4. Have students create water colour pictures of tundra and sunset scenes to accompany some of the key sentences (including modal verbs) in the story.