

BILINGUAL LANGUAGE ARTS IN ACTION ACTIVITY KITS

“PROGRESSIVE VERBS”

Children’s Literature Sources:

1. “Captain Abdul’s Pirate School” by Colin McNaughton
2. “Canoe Days” by Gary Paulsen (illustrated by Ruth Wright Paulsen)
3. “Avocado Baby” by John Burningham
4. “Tacky, the Penguin” by Helen Lester (illustrated by Lynn Munsinger)

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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 “PROGRESSIVE VERBS”

1. We use the **present progressive tense** for **background** – things that are already happening when the story starts or that continue through part of the story.
2. We use **present progressive** for **changing** and **developing** situations. E.g., “The weather **is getting** warmer” and “Mary’s baby **is growing** every day”.
3. The main identifier of progressive verbs is the “**-ing**” ending. E.g., “working, building, living, jumping”.
4. Progressive verbs often include a “**be**” verb (is, are, am, was, were) + a verb with the “**-ing**” ending. E.g., “is running”, “are sleeping”, or “was sitting”. It is important to show how these two parts of the verb work together.

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SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES FOR: “CAPTAIN ABDUL’S PIRATE SCHOOL” (MCNAUGHTON)

Vocabulary: diary, softie, grateful, smuggled, buccaneers, stowed away, uniforms, miserable, hammock, confiscated, West Indies, admitted, scolded, possession, rampaging, bellowed, harbor, betrayed, duped, kidnap, double-crossing, mutiny, quayside, raid, scoundrel

1. Background information about pirates will be needed to understand this story.
2. There are a variety of verb tenses throughout the story, so have the students search for the progressive forms (writing, painting, becoming, meeting, was brushing, were lining up, was cutting in, were doing, copying, coming up, saying, having, rampaging, looking, telling, thinking).
3. This book has some good examples of both progressive verbs and description words using the “-ing” ending – “stinking day”, “missing parts”, “exciting story”, “teaching plan”. Use these to make comparisons of the two grammar structures.

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SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES FOR: “CANOE DAYS” (PAULSEN)

Vocabulary: swish, canoe, stroke, paddle, glides, disappears, airwater, skylake, lily pads, cold slash, northern pike, arrow, fiercely, depths, mallard, skittering, soft laps, slips away, raccoon, wavy ripple, invisible, perfect, doe.

1. This book includes lots of Canadian wildlife and beautiful descriptions of a lake landscape – build on these themes in other subject areas.
2. Discuss the pictures and how they create a calm and peaceful mood.
3. Have the students write poems using progressive verbs to describe the actions of animals – use the examples in this book as models: living in cool green rooms, watching for water bugs/frogs, fiercely searching for something to eat, floating in the sun, ears flopping the flies away, looking for worms to eat, making it invisible.

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SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES FOR: “AVOCADO BABY” (BURNINGHAM)

Vocabulary: avocado, strong, weak, expecting another baby, hoped, mashed, amazing, straps, uphill, wrench, burglar, notice, bullies, nasty.

1. Be sure to help the children understand the humour in this story and it's unrealistic events!
2. Have the students identify the progressive verbs (feeding, eating, was getting, hearing, moving, eating).
3. Eat an avocado pear together – save the pit and plant it. Compare the growth stages to those illustrated at the beginning of the book. Draw pictures/write descriptions.
4. Have children create their own stories about babies that only eat one kind of food and the special powers or talents it gives them, i.e., “The Applesauce Baby” or “The Kiwi Baby”.

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SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES FOR: “TACKY THE PENGUIN” (LESTER & MUNSINGER)

Vocabulary: penguin, companions, tacky, odd, politely, marched, graceful, cannonballs, distance, hunters, rough, tough, chanting, switch, blared, especially, growled, dreadfully, wonder, horrible, clasped.

1. There is some real humour in this story, but also a good lesson about people who are different – take advantage of using this story to get the children thinking about how to treat others.
2. Have the students look for the progressive verbs – what’s happening, chanting, hunting, singing, leaving, looking.
3. Read other books or view movies involving penguins and have the children write about the actions and activities of penguins using progressive verbs.