

Thematically Related Text Sets - Solving Problems

Titles of paired texts	List three important actions of one character	Why did the character act this way?	Was it right or wrong for the character to act this way?	What did the character get from acting this way?	How am I like the characters in this story?	What is the lesson learned from this story?	How has this lesson learned changed the way I think?
<p>Elmer</p> <p>By: David McKee</p> <p>Character: Elmer</p>	<p>Elmer ran away.</p> <p>Elmer rolled in the berries.</p> <p>Elmer yelled, "BOO!"</p>	<p>He thought they were laughing at him because he was different.</p> <p>He wanted to be elephant colored.</p> <p>The elephants were bored and standing still.</p>	<p>Wrong-because running away doesn't solve problems.</p> <p>Right-because he wanted to fit in. OR</p> <p>Wrong-because he pretended to be something he wasn't.</p> <p>Right-because it made the elephants laugh.</p>	<p>He got an idea.</p> <p>He looked like the rest of the elephants.</p> <p>Happy; Self-respect; Comfortable with himself</p>		<p>Always try to solve your problem.</p>	
<p>The Little Engine That Could</p> <p>By: Watty Piper</p> <p>Character: The Toys on the Little Train</p>	<p>They stopped.</p> <p>They asked other engines to help.</p> <p>They cheered.</p>	<p>Their little engine broke down.</p> <p>They wanted to get to the little boys and girls on the other side of the mountain.</p> <p>Little Blue Engine tried to pull them over the mountain.</p>	<p>Right-because they had no choice.</p> <p>Right-because it is good to ask for help when needed.</p> <p>Right-because they were happy that Little Blue Engine tried.</p>	<p>Upset; worried</p> <p>Disappointed; sad; discouraged; and then happy</p> <p>Hope; excited</p>		<p>You can solve most problems if you keep trying.</p>	

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CROSS TEXT QUESTIONS FOR “ELMER” AND “THE LITTLE ENGINE THAT COULD”

Q. Did Elmer and the toys from *The Little Engine That Could* do the same kinds of things? How were their actions similar or different?

A. They both had problems and figured out ways to solve their problems.

Q. How are their reasons for acting the way they did similar or different?

A. They were different because the toys got help solving their problem from the little blue train. Elmer figured out a way to solve his problem on his own.

Q. Did you agree more with how Elmer acted or how the toys acted? Why?

A. We agree with the toys more because they showed persistence in their problem solving. They could have given up after the first train said, “No!” but instead they kept trying to find help to get over the mountain.

Q. Did Elmer and the toys get the same thing for their actions? Why or why not?

A. No they did not get the same thing. Elmer got more comfortable with himself and the way he looked. The toys got happiness because they were over the mountain and they could make the boys and girls happy.

Q. If both of the characters learned the same lesson what was the lesson?

A. Believing you can solve a problem.

Q. If each of the characters learned a different lesson what were the lessons learned?

A. Both learned the same lesson.

Q. Do you agree or disagree that the theme of these two stories is “You can solve a problem?” Why?

A. We agree, because both characters had problems and figured out ways to solve them.

OR

A. We disagree, because Elmer learned that being different from the others is okay. He found out the other elephants were laughing at him because he was funny, not because he was different colors. In the book, *The Little Engine That Could* the theme was believing in yourself. The blue train thought he could get up the mountain and he did.

Using the House Organizer – Solving Problems

Reading and Writing: Applying Ideas to a Task (Part 2b)

Students will write a response to a position question relating to a theme. The position taken by a student must be supported with clear examples from two texts that have been read. The House Organizer is a tool to help students think about their responses.

In Part 2a the stories *Elmer* and *The Little Engine that Could* were read. As students worked through profundity they did some in depth thinking about the stories and the related theme.

Below are examples of questions that could be used with these two texts:

Do you agree that every problem can be solved if you try hard enough?

Are there some problems that cannot be solved, even with help?

Do you agree that it is better to solve problems by yourself?

Each response should include: A yes or no answer. Tell why you agree or disagree. Use examples from both texts to support your thinking. Make a connection between the two texts, to your own life, or to another text.

Teaching tips:

- Show me: Model using the house organizer for the students. Using an overhead transparency or large chart the teacher writes responses while thinking aloud for the students.
- Help me: Students supply responses and support in a group setting as the teacher guides and encourages them. Use a large chart to record responses.
- Let me: Students work independently, using individual organizers. The teacher might check student work in progress.

Solving Problems

Question: Do you agree that it is better to solve problems by yourself?

State Your Position	
I do not agree that it is better to solve problems by yourself. Sometimes you need help. The toys asked for help in solving their problem, but Elmer solved his problem by himself.	
Support from <i>Elmer</i> Elmer thought the others laughed at him because of his colors. He solved his problem by himself, but if he had shared his problem he might not have had to roll in the berries and get messy.	Support from <i>The Little Engine that Could</i> The clown and toys knew that they could not get over the mountain alone. They asked for help and finally found someone to help solve their problem.
Make a Connection	
Some problems might be easier to solve if you share them with others. Some problems can't be solved alone. Elmer felt happy when he solved his problem. When the clown and toys shared their problem with the Little Blue Engine, he had a chance to feel good about helping someone else. Solving problems together can make everyone involved feel good.	

House Organizer

Name _____

Date _____

**State
Your Position**

Support from Selection 1

Support from Selection 2

Make a Connection

**Related
Language Arts
Activities
to do
Before, During and After
Prototypes**

Listening For Understanding (Part 3)

Solving Problems

(Keep the theme of problem solving in your mind as you listen to the story.)

Think about what the story has to do with solving problems.

Concentrate on listening to *The Little Red Hen*, by Paul Galdone. As you listen think about the actions of the Little Red Hen and what you could learn from them. Do Little Red Hen's actions remind you of something you or someone you know have done?

After listening to the story you will have a few minutes to make some notes on the next page.

If you wish, you may also make a few notes while you are listening the second time. You will be able to use your notes when you answer questions about *The Little Red Hen*.

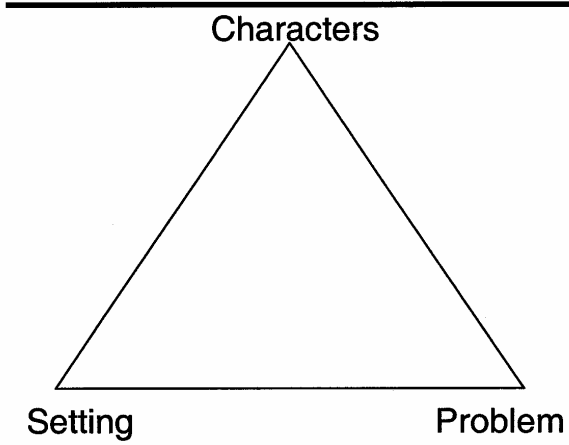
Teacher note:

The next page will help your children organize the story elements. It is also a guide to early note taking. They must first be familiarized with the meaning of the shapes.

Name _____

Date _____

Note-Taking



4
Important
Events

Solution

①

②

③

④

Retelling Steps Using the GO! Chart

Adapted from : *The Power of Retelling ~ Developmental Steps for Building Comprehension* by Vicki Benson and Carrice Cummins

Standard Retelling Steps:

Day 1 1. **Predictions / Vocabulary**

Before reading have students make predictions based on title and the cover of the book.

Give children vocabulary that is used in the story to help guide predictions.

A prediction should be logical, derived from the given information. The teacher should always ask the child why and refer to story structure i.e. setting, characters, problem and solution.

Then children should be able to add vocabulary words that they think they may see in the text. (READ STORY)

Day 2 2. **Confirm or disconfirm predictions based on the reading.**

3. **Understandings / Interpretations / Connections**

In these two columns the students will be analyzing and organizing the story.

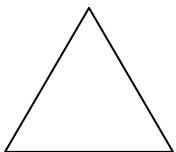
Understandings: The teacher should challenge the students to support their understandings from the story and continually refer back to the book

Interpretations: When interpreting the story the children will reach a deeper understanding by questioning the story. Some questions will be what they were wondering during reading but others will extend beyond the story.

Connections: In this column children will relate the text to a personal experience, another text or a worldview.

Day 3 4. **Retelling**

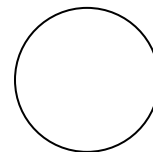
Now it is time to put the story back together. The shapes will help guide the students in analysis and organization of the story (Teacher may have to work with the shapes prior to this story).



The triangle symbolizes the beginning, because we usually find the characters, the setting, and the problem there. Each point represents one of the story elements.



The rectangle symbolizes the middle, because we usually find the events that take place that lead to the resolution of the problem. One event for each corner.




The circle symbolizes the end and the idea, "what goes around comes around." This is where the solution to the problem is discovered.

Whistle For Willie

Name _____

Date _____

Title
Ezra Keats
Author


Predictions	Vocabulary	Understandings	Interpretations	Connections	Retelling
<p><i>I think this story is going to be about...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ A boy that loses his dog because the dog is walking away from him in the picture ~ A boy that is teaching his dog to come when he whistles because the title has whistle in it ~ A dog named Willie because people whistle for dogs sometimes 	<p><i>I might find these words in the story...</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">given whistle dog hid funny whirled</p> <p>(list vocab. kids think they may see)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">joke fall lost hide-and-go-seek fly scream yell</p>	<p><i>I noticed...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ Willie was the dog because Peter was the boy. ~ Peter didn't know how to whistle and wanted to because he saw another boy whistle for his dog and he thought it was cool. ~ Peter wanted to play a joke on his dog, by hiding and having Willie look for him because he hid in the empty carton on the sidewalk. ~ Peter practiced a lot because everywhere he went he kept trying to whistle. ~ Willie came to Peter when he finally whistled and he loved it. 	<p><i>I wonder...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ if my dog will ever learn to come to me when I whistle? ~ what Peter was doing differently when he finally got a whistle out? ~ I was wondering before I got to the end if all the practice Peter was doing was going to pay off? ~ if Peter got to go to the grocery store by himself all the time. ~ if this is the same author that wrote <i>Peter's Chair</i>? 	<p><i>This reminds me of... because...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ This reminds me of my old dog that used to come when you whistled because Willie listened to Peter's whistle in the book. ~ This reminds me of the book we read about <i>Peter's Chair</i> because they both have the same characters. ~ This reminds me of a time I played a trick on my sister and jumped out at her because Peter was hiding from his dog and when he came around the corner he jumped out of the box. 	<div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <p>Peter was outside when he saw a boy whistle for his dog. Peter wished he could whistle, but he tried and tried and nothing came out. Peter saw his dog Willie coming when he got an idea to play a trick on him. He would hide and whistle for him, but again nothing came out. Peter kept trying to whistle wherever he went. He even tried a hat to make him feel older and practiced whistling. Peter was playing outside again when he saw Willie coming. He decided to try the trick again. It worked! Peter was so happy he ran home to tell his parents. He whistled wherever he went.</p>

Name _____

Title

Date _____

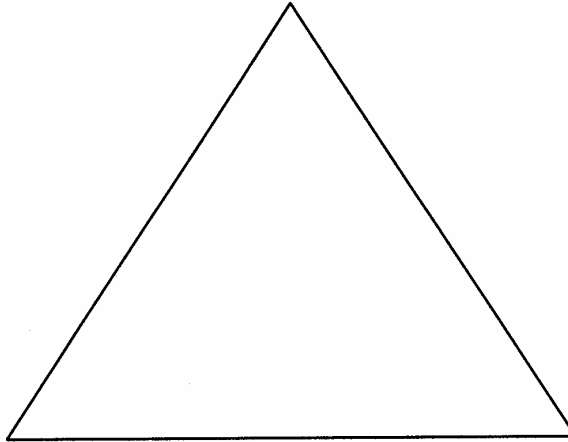
Author

Predictions	Vocabulary	Understandings	Interpretations	Connections	Retelling
<i>I think this story is going to be about...</i>	<i>I might find these words in the story...</i>	<i>I noticed...</i>	<i>I wonder...</i>	<i>This reminds me of... because...</i>	

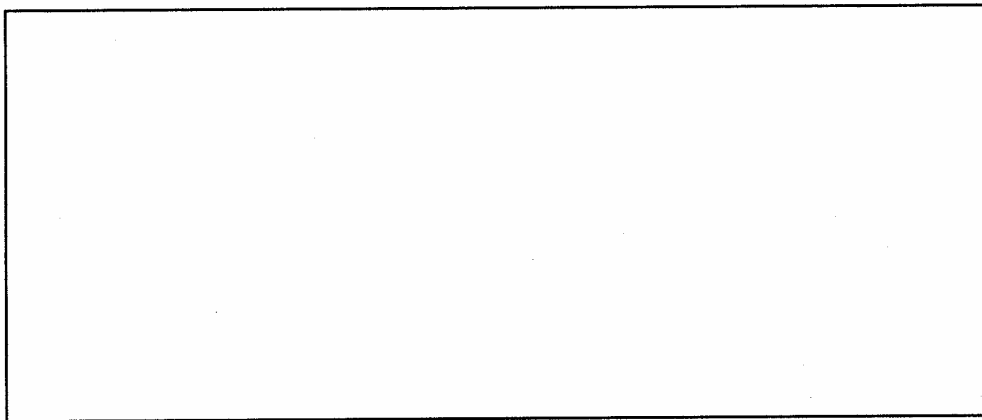
Go Map

Name _____

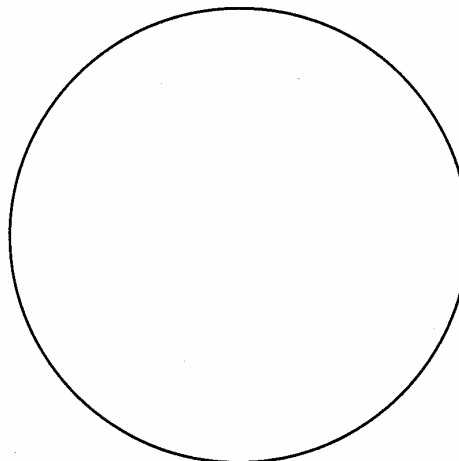
Story _____



Beginning



Middle

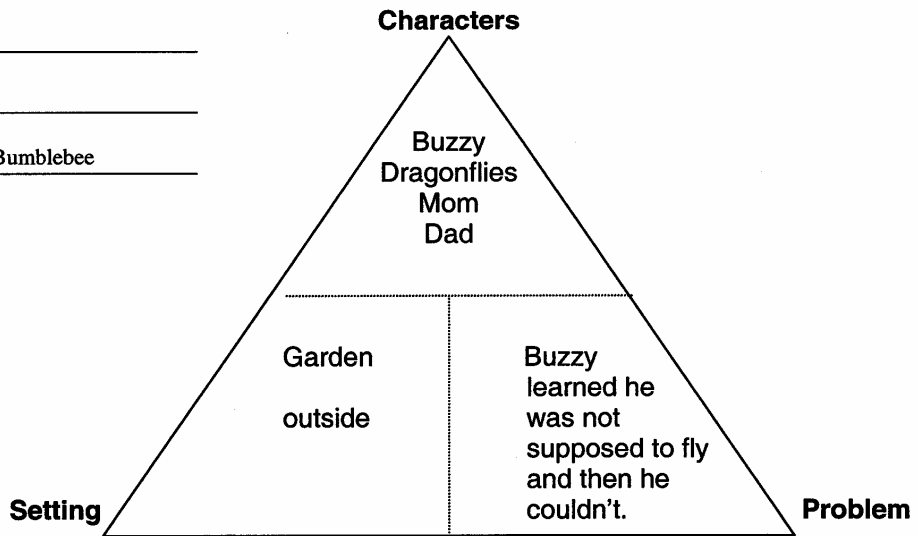


End

Name _____

Date _____

Title Buzzy the Bumblebee



4
3
2
1

① Buzzy decided to walk home.	② Buzzy asked the dragonflies to walk with him.
③ Buzzy got an idea to help him cross the stream.	④ Buzzy got home full of tears.

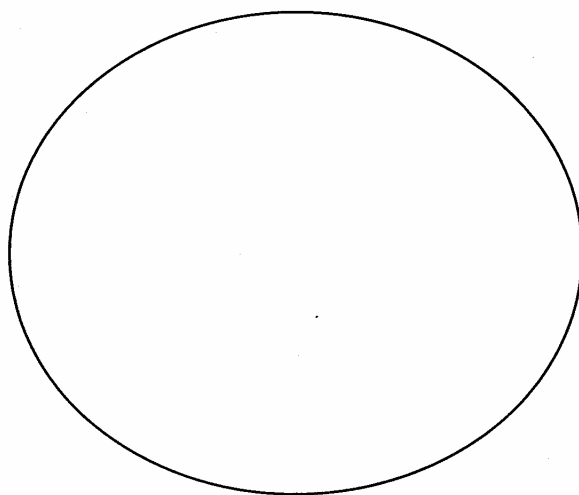
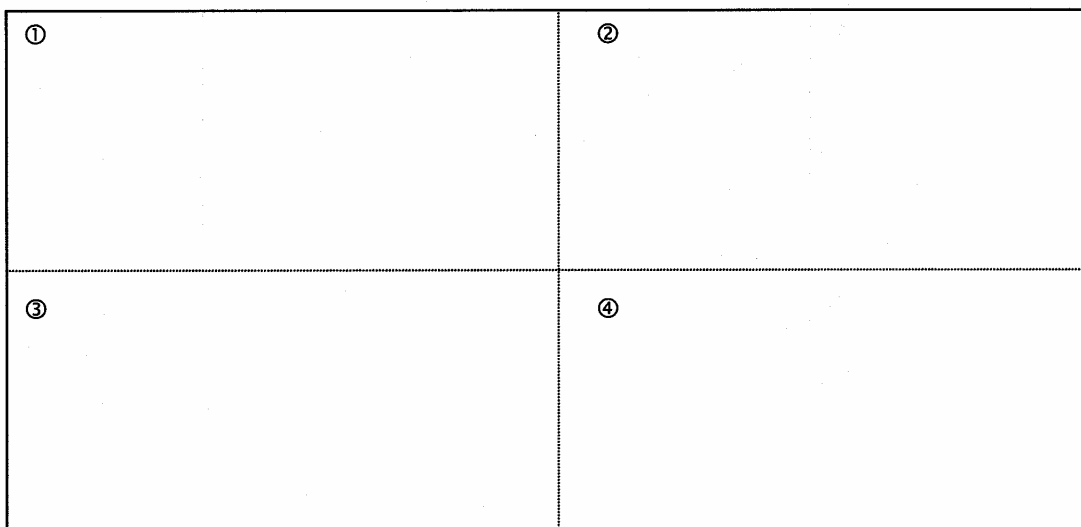
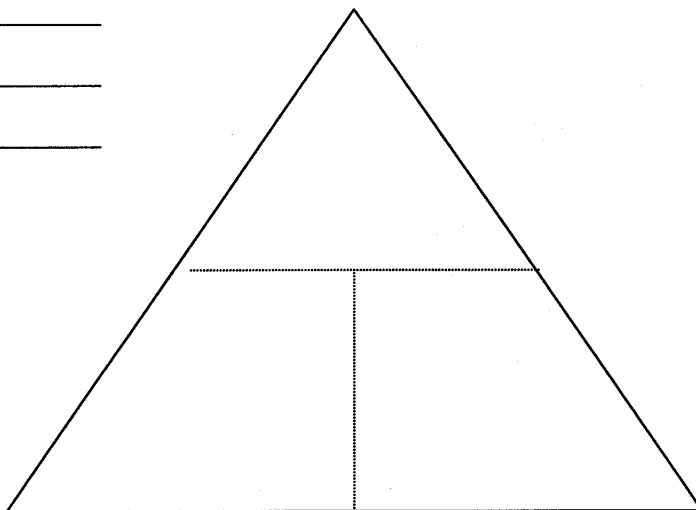
Solution

Buzzy's parents helped him see that he was still able to fly. They gave him his confidence and desire back and he quickly took flight.

Name _____

Date _____

Title _____



What is Reader's Theater?

Reader's Theater is minimal theater in support of literature and reading. There are many styles of reader's theater, but nearly all share these traits:

No full memorization. Scripts are held during performance.

No full costume. If used at all, costumes are partial and suggestive, or neutral and uniform.

No full stage sets. If used at all, sets are simple and suggestive. Narration provides the framework for dramatic action. Reader's Theater was developed as a convenient and effective means to present literary works in dramatic form. This is still its primary use, though many scripts now published are original dramatic works rather than literary adaptations.

Originally popular on college campuses, Reader's Theater has now moved to the lower grades, where it is seen as a key tool for creating interest in reading. Kids love to do it, and they give it their all – more so because it's a team effort, and they don't want to let down their friends! And if the script is based on an available book, they will definitely want to read it. What's more, reader's theater is a simple activity for the teacher, since it requires no setup apart from the reproduction of scripts.

Reader's Theater has been found effective not only for language arts, but for social studies as well. Performing multicultural literature is one of the best ways for students to become interested in and familiar with other cultures.

Internet Resources:

www.lisablau.com

www.aaronshp.com

Jack and the Beanstalk

An English Folktale

A Reader's Theatre Script

Adapted by Lisa Blau

Reader #1
Mother

Reader #2
Giant

Reader #3
Little Man

Jack
Giant's Wife

Reader #1: Once upon a time long, long ago there lived a young boy named Jack.

Reader #2: Jack lived in a small cottage with his mother. They were very poor.

Reader #3: One day Jack's mother said to him...

Mother: Oh, Jack. Whatever will we do? We haven't any money for food. You will have to go to town and sell our cow. It is the only way that we'll be able to eat.

Jack: Very well, mother.

Reader #1: So, Jack took the cow and walked toward the town.

Reader #2: He hadn't gone far when he met a strange little man.

Little Man: Say...young lad...where are you going with that cow?

Jack: I'm going to town to sell the cow so we can buy some food.

Little Man: Ah...but the town is so very far away...I will gladly buy the cow from you.

Jack: What price will you pay me for my cow?

Little Man: I have no coins, but I have something far better than money. If you give me your cow, I shall give you some magic beans!

Jack: Well, I don't know if I should. My mother told me to go to town and sell the cow.

Little Man: But, lad! Think how proud your mother will be when she learns that you have some magic beans!

Jack: Very well then. Here is the cow. Please let me have your magic beans.

Reader #3: So, the deal was made. Jack walked home with his sack of magic beans. His mother would be so proud of him for making such a good deal.

Mother: Well, Jack. Did you get a good price for our cow?

Jack: Yes, I did. I got this sack of magic beans!

Mother: What? You foolish, foolish boy! How could you have done such a thing? Now we have no food to eat, whatever will we do?

Reader #1: Jack's mother sent him to bed without any supper and she threw the bag of magic beans out the window.

Reader #2: In the morning when Jack awoke there was a huge beanstalk growing outside his window.

Jack: Wow! Look at this beanstalk! Why it seems to touch the clouds!

Reader #1: Jack decided to climb up the beanstalk.

Reader #2: He climbed and climbed and climbed.

Reader #1: At last he reached the top. He was in a magical land.

Reader #2: Jack found a large, beautiful castle. He knocked on the door. A woman opened the huge door.

Giant's Wife: Who are you? What do you want, boy?

Jack: I'm Jack. I've just climbed up the beanstalk. I'm very hungry. Could you spare some food for me, kind woman?

Giant's Wife: Very well, come in...but be careful. My husband is a mean and grumpy giant. He will not be happy to see you.

Reader #3: Jack went into the kitchen and the Giant's wife fed him a good meal.

Reader #2: All at once the floor began to shake and a loud voice roared...

Giant: FE-FI-FO-FUM! I smell the blood of an Englishman! Be he alive or be he dead, I'll grind his bones to make my bread!

Giant's Wife: Oh, heavens! The giant has returned! Quick, hide here in the cupboard.

Reader #2: Jack hid in the cupboard and watched what the giant did next.

Giant: Wife! Wife! Bring me some food, my gold, my magic hen, and golden harp! Hurry, hurry! Do as I say.

Reader #1: The giant ate and ate and ate. He counted his many bags of gold.

Reader #2: Then the giant roared at the magic hen...

Giant: Lay me ten golden eggs at once!

Reader #1: And the magic hen did as the giant had ordered.

Giant: Play magic harp, play!

Reader #2: The Magic Harp began to play the sweetest music that Jack had ever heard.

Reader #1: Soon the giant fell asleep. His loud snores shook the castle.

Reader #2: Jack saw his chance to run away.

Reader #1: But before he left, Jack grabbed the giant's sack of gold, his hen, and the magic harp.

Reader #2: But as Jack picked up the magic hen, the hen cried out and woke the giant up.

Reader #1: Jack ran as fast as he could out of the castle and across the clouds to the beanstalk.

Reader #2: The giant ran after Jack. His great steps shook the ground.

Reader #1: Jack scurried down the beanstalk. The giant was not far behind him.

Reader #2: When Jack reached the ground he grabbed an axe and began to chop down the beanstalk.

Reader #3: Hack! Hack! Hack! The axe flew across the beanstalk. At last the beanstalk fell to

**the ground and the mean and grumpy
giant crashed down with it.**

**Reader #1: That was the end of the magic beanstalk
and the mean and grumpy giant. But it
does not mean the end of our tale.**

**Reader #2: Oh no! Our tale has the happiest of
endings, for Jack and his mother now had
all the money they needed.**

**Reader #3: They also had a hen that laid golden
eggs...**

**Reader #1: And a harp to play the world's sweetest
music...**

Reader #2: And they lived happily ever after.

All: The end.

A Problem Solving Circle

Learning to identify, discuss, and resolve problems

Materials:

- *The Berenstain Bears' Trouble at School*, by Stan Berenstain
- Chalkboard

Objectives (The children will):

- Listen to a story about admitting a problem.
- Discuss the character's problem, suggest solutions and discuss outcomes.
- Talk about how and why kids should communicate problems
- Form a problem-solving circle in which school concerns are addressed.

Lesson:

- Read the beginning of the book aloud, pausing right after the character encounters the problem but doesn't tell anyone about it.
- Ask children: "What has happened? What might happen because the character hasn't told an adult about the problem he is having? How could the problem be solved? Who might the character turn to for help? What do you think he should do?"
- Conclude the story and discuss its outcomes: "How was the problem solved? Which adult did the character turn to for help? Who else could the character have gone to? How and why should problems be dealt with right away instead of waiting? What might happen if we hide problems instead of getting help with them?"

(Chart responses on board)

- Ask children if they have ever had a problem to solve, how they got help and who helped them with it?
- Tell the class that today they will practice helping each other with problems by forming a "Problem-Solving Circle."
- Sitting in the circle, encourage children to discuss any real or "made-up" school-related problems. **(Generate some problematic scenarios to get them started – i.e., with homework, arguments on the playground during recess, teasing, bullying, etc.)**
- As each problem is described, go around the circle and ask children to identify who they might turn to for help and how, specifically, the problem could be solved. Allow for open conversation and debate.

- As the mediator, come up with two or three potential solutions to the problems.
- Ask the child with the concern to describe which person they would turn to for help, which solution they think would work best and why.

Teacher tip: In mediating and coming up with potential solutions for problems, be sure to stress personal responsibility and honest discussion.

Making Words

Making Words is an active, hands-on manipulative activity in which children discover sound-letter relationships and learn how to look for patterns in words. They also learn that changing just one letter or even the sequence of the letters changes the whole word. As the teacher spells words at the pocket chart, students play along at their desks.

1. Use the word list (or make up your own letters and words).
 - a. words that you can sort for the pattern(s) you want to emphasize
 - b. little words and big words so that the lesson is a multilevel lesson
 - c. words that can be made with the same letters in different places (e.g., *ten*, *net*) so children are reminded that when spelling words, the order of the letter is crucial
 - d. a proper name or two to remind them where we use capital letters
 - e. words that most of the students have in their listening vocabularies
2. Write all the words on index cards and order them from shortest to longest.
3. Place your set of large letter cards in a pocket chart.
4. Make sure every child has a set of letters.
5. Hold up and name the letters on the large letter cards, and have the children hold up their matching small letter cards.
6. Write the numeral 2 (or 3, if there are no two-letter words in your lesson) on the board. Tell them to take two letters and make the first word. Use the word in a sentence after you say it.
7. Have a child who has the first word made correctly make the same word with the large letter cards in the pocket chart. Encourage anyone who did not make the word correctly at first to fix the word when they see it made correctly.
8. Continue having them make words, erasing and changing the number on the board to indicate the number of letters needed. Use the words in simple sentences to make sure the children understand their meanings. Remember to cue them as to whether they are just changing one letter, changing letters around, or taking all their letters out to make a word from scratch. Cue them when the word you want them to make is a proper name, and send a child who has started that name with a capital letter to make the word with the big letters.
9. Before telling them the last word, ask, "Has anyone figured out what word we can make with all our letters?" If so, congratulate them and have one of them make it with the big letters. If not, say something like, "I love it when I can stump you. Use all your letters and make **mother**."
10. Once all the words have been made, take the index cards on which you have written the words, and place them one at a time (in the same order children made them) in the pocket chart. Have children say and spell the words with you as you do this. Use these words for sorting and pointing out patterns. Pick a word and point out a particular spelling pattern, and ask children to find the others with that same pattern. Line these words up so that the pattern is visible.
11. To get maximum transfer to reading and writing, have the children use the patterns they have sorted to spell a few new words that you say.

mother

Letters needed:

e o h m r t

**Three letter words:
Final word:**

Tom
hot
rot
the

Four letter words:

them
home
more
tore

Five letter word:

other mother

More words can be made, these are just the ones that aid in doing the word sort.

hot
got

more
tore

other
mother

Transfer:

pot

core

brother

Discuss how this is related to the theme "Solving Problems"

i.e. Who might you go to that would help you solve a problem?