



Oxford Level 5

The Strange Beast

Written by Paul Shipton, based on the original characters created by Roderick Hunt and Alex Brychta. Illustrated by Alex Brychta.
Teaching notes written by Karra McFarlane.

Text type: fiction

Topic: carnivores, herbivores and omnivores

Synopsis

The magic key takes the children back in time to a huge castle. A crowd is stood outside the castle waiting for the arrival of a strange beast that is to live in the king's zoo. When an elephant appears, the children are surprised that the people have never seen one before. The elephant is frightened by all the people and noise but Wilma manages to calm it down with an apple. Soon everyone loves the elephant!

There is a topic-linked non-fiction book to partner this title, which is called *Beast Feasts*.

Group/Guided reading

Introducing the story

- ➔ Look at the cover together. Ask the children to talk about the different expressions of the characters in the cover picture. Ask: *How are the children's expressions different from the people stood behind them?*
- ➔ (*Predicting*) Read the title together and ask: *What do you think the strange beast might be?*
- ➔ Ask the children to think of a time that they have visited a zoo or a wildlife park. Ask: *Did you see any animals that you would describe as 'strange beasts'? What was the biggest animal you saw?*

Vocabulary check

- ➔ As they read, encourage the children to sound out and blend new words, for example *c-r-ow-d*, *ea-g-er-l-y*.
- ➔ This story includes many decodable words, providing lots of opportunities for children to practise the skill of sounding out and blending new words. There are also some high frequency tricky words used in the book. These words are common but may not conform to the phonic teaching that children will have learned at this point. Support the children with reading these words, explaining that they are tricky but common and useful. If necessary, simply read the word for them:

asked people

- ➔ There are a number of story words used in this book. These include words that may be familiar but do not conform to the phonic teaching that children will have learned at this point, and subject-specific vocabulary that may be unfamiliar to children. You can look together at the inside front cover for a list and their definitions. Explain to the children that these words may be challenging but they are important for the topic.

Read these words for the children if necessary, to help build familiarity before they read the story.

more eagerly strange woman before

Reading the story

- ➔ Ask the children to read the story aloud and help where necessary. Praise and encourage them as they read. Where necessary, encourage the children to re-read sentences to focus on meaning.
- ➔ *(Predicting)* After reading p2–3, ask: *What animal do you think Wilma is thinking of?*
- ➔ *(Clarifying)* After reading p11, ask: *What do you think the strange beast is?* Encourage the children to consider how the crowd described the beast as ‘bigger and stronger than twenty adults’ when making their predictions.
- ➔ On p13, ask: *Why are the people in the crowd afraid of the elephant?*
- ➔ On p14, draw children’s attention to the exclamation marks and encourage them to read the man’s speech with appropriate intonation and expression.
- ➔ *(Predicting)* On p18, say: *I wonder why Wilma gives the elephant an apple.* Ask the children to make predictions.
- ➔ *(Summarizing)* After reading p19, ask the children to explain how the feelings of the crowd have changed throughout the story.
- ➔ *(Clarifying)* After reading p21, ask: *What animal is Wilma is thinking of?*

Returning to the story

- ➔ Re-read p9 together, and ask: *What other animals do you think might live in the king’s zoo?* Encourage the children to think about animals they have seen in zoos and wildlife parks, in books, or on television.
- ➔ *(Clarifying)* Re-read p12 together. Ask: *Why you do think the people in the crowd have never seen an elephant before?*
- ➔ *(Clarifying)* Re-read p15 together, and ask: *Why does the elephant rear up onto its back legs?*
- ➔ *(Questioning)* Ask the children to share anything they already know about elephants. Encourage them to think of any questions they have about elephants that they would like to find the answers to.
- ➔ *(Summarizing)* Look together at the story map on p22. Ask the children to use the story map to retell the story and discuss how the different characters feel at certain points. Ask: *How do you think the children feel about the way the crowd reacted when they first saw the elephant?*

Independent reading

- ➔ Introduce the story as in the Introducing the story section above.
- ➔ Encourage the children to read the story as independently as possible. Remember to give them lots of encouragement and praise.
- ➔ As they read, encourage the children to sound out and blend new words, for example *f-r-igh-t-e-n-e-d*, *e-x-c-i-t-e-d*, *a-f-r-ai-d*.
- ➔ Support the children with reading high frequency tricky words.
- ➔ This book also contains a number of story words, which children may need more support with at this stage, but which enrich the story. You can look together at the inside front cover for a list and their definitions. If a word is too difficult, simply read the word for them.

- ➔ Remind the children to use the pictures to support them when reading the text.
- ➔ For suggestions of questions to ask the children after they have read the story to check comprehension, please refer to the Look Back, Explorers page in the book.

Speaking, listening and drama activities

- ➔ Ask the children to role-play the moment the elephant is brought out in front of the crowd.
- ➔ Assign some children the role of either Biff, Chip, Wilf or Wilma, and other children the role of someone in the crowd.
- ➔ Encourage the children to use facial expressions and body language, as well as speech, to show how they feel.
- ➔ Ask the children to compare the differences between the characters' reactions.

Writing activities

- ➔ Ask the children to design a leaflet for the king's zoo.
- ➔ Encourage them to think about some of the other animals they think might live in the zoo.
- ➔ Ask the children to write a short description for each of the animals.
- ➔ Encourage the children to rehearse what they are going to write orally before writing anything down.
- ➔ Prompt the children to re-read what they have written to check it makes sense, and to check for any spelling errors.

Cross-curricular activity

Science

- ➔ Support the children to use books and child-friendly sites on the Internet to find out more about where elephants live in the wild.

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A Strange Beast

Curriculum links and assessment

Links to Oxford Reading Criterion Scale

- Can make plausible predictions about the plot of an unknown story, using the text and other book features. (D) (ORCS Standard 2, 9)
- With support, can answer simple questions/find information in response to a direct question. (R) (ORCS Standard 2, 12)
- Can use phonic strategies when reading unknown words, however may need support when reading long vowel phonemes that have several representations (e.g. raid, play, plate) or graphemes that have more than one sound (e.g. bread, beach; shower, flowing; crib, rice). (READ) (ORCS Standard 2, 13)
- Can retell an unknown story (unfamiliar before first reading) using beginning, middle and end; retelling may only be in simple terms because of its unfamiliarity but children have got the general gist of the story and its sequence. (R) (ORCS Standard 2, 16)

Letters and Sounds: Phase 5

Explore with Biff, Chip and Kipper titles are designed to support children with the transition from phonic readers to richer reading with highly decodable fiction and non-fiction. These titles tell a complete story or cover a non-fiction topic using natural language, with a high proportion of phonically decodable words and a selection of high frequency tricky words. Each book also has a limited number of non-decodable but achievable words to enrich the language and expand children's vocabularies and knowledge.

ENGLAND The National Curriculum in England: English Programme of Study, Year 1

	National Curriculum objectives	Book-related assessment pointers
Spoken language	participate in discussions, presentations, performances, role play, improvisations and debates (SpokLang.9)	Check the children take on the role of either one of the children or someone in the crowd. Encourage them to use facial expressions and body language as well as speech to show their feelings.
Reading: Word reading	apply phonic knowledge and skills as the route to decode words (Y1 ReadWord.1)	Check the children use their phonic knowledge to decode new and unfamiliar words, e.g. crowd, eagerly, strange.
Reading: Comprehension	being encouraged to link what they read or hear read to their own experiences (Y1 ReadComp.1ii)	Check the children are able to draw on what they already know about elephants, as well as the information in the book, to suggest why the people in the crowd are afraid of the elephant.
	making inferences on the basis of what is being said and done (Y1 ReadComp.2iv)	Check the children are able to infer that Wilma gives the elephant an apple to calm it down.
	predicting what might happen on the basis of what has been read so far (Y1 ReadComp.2v)	Check the children make predictions about what the strange beast might be.
Writing: Composition	saying out loud what they are going to write about (Y1 WritComp.1i)	Check the children rehearse what they are going to write orally before writing their leaflets.

SCOTLAND Curriculum for Excellence: Literacy and English experiences and outcomes, First Level

	Experiences and outcomes	Book-related assessment pointers
Listening and talking	I am exploring how pace, gesture, expression, emphasis and choice of words are used to engage others, and I can use what I learn. (ENG 1-03a)	Check the children take on the role of either one of the children or someone in the crowd. Encourage them to use facial expressions and body language as well as speech to show their feelings.
Reading	I can use my knowledge of sight vocabulary, phonics, context clues, punctuation and grammar to read with understanding and expression. (ENG 1-12a)	Check the children use their phonic knowledge to decode new and unfamiliar words, e.g. crowd, eagerly, strange.
	I can share my thoughts about structure, characters and/or setting, recognise the writer's message and relate it to my own experiences, and comment on the effective choice of words and other features. (ENG 1-19a)	Check the children are able to draw on what they already know about elephants, as well as the information in the book, to suggest why the people in the crowd are afraid of the elephant. Check the children are able to infer that Wilma gives the elephant an apple to calm it down. Check the children make predictions about what the strange beast might be.
Writing	Throughout the writing process, I can check that my writing makes sense. (LIT 1-23a)	Check the children re-read their leaflets to check that their writing makes sense.

WALES Curriculum for Wales: Foundation Phase Framework, Year 1

	Framework objectives	Book-related assessment pointers
Oracy	adopt a role using appropriate language (Y1_OracSpea.7)	Check the children take on the role of either one of the children or someone in the crowd. Encourage them to use facial expressions and body language as well as speech to show their feelings.
Reading	apply the following reading strategies with increasing independence – phonic strategies to decode words (Y1_ReadStrat.5i)	Check the children use their phonic knowledge to decode new and unfamiliar words, e.g. crowd, eagerly, strange.
	use personal experience to support understanding of texts (Y1_ReadComp.4)	Check the children are able to draw on what they already know about elephants, as well as the information in the book, to suggest why the people in the crowd are afraid of the elephant.
	look for clues in the text to understand information (Y1_ReadStrat.12) explore language, information and events in texts (Y1_ReadResp.2)	Check the children are able to infer that Wilma gives the elephant an apple to calm it down.
	use prediction in stories, adding more detail (Y1_ReadComp.5)	Check the children make predictions about what the strange beast might be.
Writing	talk about what they are going to write (Y1_WritMean.4)	Check the children rehearse what they are going to write orally before writing their leaflets.

NORTHERN IRELAND Levels of Progression in Communication across the curriculum:
Primary Level 1/2

	Levels of progression	Book-related assessment pointers
Talking and listening	follow discussions, make contributions and observe conventions of conversation (L2_com_talk.2i) use vocabulary from within their experience to describe thoughts and feelings (L1_com_talk.3)	Check the children take on the role of either one of the children or someone in the crowd. Encourage them to use facial expressions and body language as well as speech to show their feelings.
Reading	understand that words are made up of sounds and syllables and that sounds are represented by letters (L1_com_read.2i) use a range of reading strategies (L2_com_read.2)	Check the children use their phonic knowledge to decode new and unfamiliar words, e.g. crowd, eagerly, strange.
	talk about what they read and answer questions (L1_com_read.5)	Check the children are able to draw on what they already know about elephants, as well as the information in the book, to suggest why the people in the crowd are afraid of the elephant. Check the children are able to infer that Wilma gives the elephant an apple to calm it down.
	express opinions and make predictions (L2_com_read.5ii)	Check the children make predictions about what the strange beast might be.
Writing	talk about what they are going to write (L1_com_writ.1)	Check the children rehearse what they are going to write orally before writing their leaflets.

CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL Primary English Curriculum Framework: Level 1

	Learning objectives	Book-related assessment pointers
Speaking and listening	Engage in imaginative play, enacting simple characters or situations. (1SL9) Note that people speak in different ways for different purposes and meanings. (1SL10)	Check the children take on the role of either one of the children or someone in the crowd. Encourage them to use facial expressions and body language as well as speech to show their feelings.
Reading	Use phonic knowledge to read decodable words and to attempt to sound out some elements of unfamiliar words. (1R06)	Check the children use their phonic knowledge to decode new and unfamiliar words, e.g. crowd, eagerly, strange.
	Enjoy reading and listening to a range of books, drawing on background information and vocabulary provided. (1R11) Make links to own experiences. (1R12)	Check the children are able to draw on what they already know about elephants, as well as the information in the book, to suggest why the people in the crowd are afraid of the elephant.
	Talk about events in a story and make simple inferences about characters and events to show understanding. (1Ri2)	Check the children are able to infer that Wilma gives the elephant an apple to calm it down.
	Anticipate what happens next in a story. (1Ri1)	Check the children make predictions about what the strange beast might be.
Writing	Use knowledge of sounds to write simple regular words, and to attempt other words including when writing simple sentences, dictated by the teacher, from memory. (1W04)	Check the children make phonically plausible attempts to spell any new or unfamiliar words when writing their leaflets.