Highland Games

Written by Roderick Hunt and Annemarie Young. Illustrated by Nick Schon, based on the original characters created by Roderick Hunt and Alex Brychta.

Teaching notes written by Liz Miles.

Group/Guided reading

Introducing the story

- Discuss the cover illustration. Ask: What is Dad wearing? Where do you think he is?
- Read the title and then the back cover blurb. Encourage the children to sound out and blend any unfamiliar words from left to right. Draw their attention to Highland, and tell the children that it is a compound word, where two words create a bigger word. Ask: What do you think might happen in this story?
- 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 a number of high frequency tricky words used in the book. These words are common but may not conform to the phonics teaching that children will have learned at this point. Read these words for the children if necessary, to help build familiarity before they read the story independently.

Reading the story

- Ask the children to read the story aloud and help where necessary. Praise and encourage them as they read. Remind the children to sound out and blend new words, for example th-r-ow, ph-o-t-o.
- Pause at the end of page 3 and talk about where the family are. Talk about the mountainous landscape and ensure that the children understand that the family are on holiday in Scotland. Ask: Why might Chip think this part of Scotland is fantastic? Can you think of activities the family might do on holiday in a place like this?
- On pages 10 and 11, draw the children’s attention to the caber. Help them to sound out and blend the word caber, c-a-b-er and to identify that the caber is the wooden pole that the man is carrying and then throwing. Talk about tossing the caber and explain that it is a traditional Scottish athletic event in the Highland Games.
- On page 12, help the children to sound out and blend the word enormous, e-n-or-m-ou-s. Talk about what the word means and ask them to think about other words that can be used to mean ‘big’.
- On page 18, ask the children to explain why Dad says “I’ll show you”. Talk about what the other characters have said about Dad on previous pages.

Returning to the story

- Look again at pages 6 and 7. Ask: What do you think the family think about the band of pipers? Do you think they are enjoying the music? What do you think Floppy is thinking?
- Ask the children to list the events that the family saw in the Highland Games. Then ask: What events did the family members take part in?
• Look again at page 23. Ask: How do you think Dad is feeling after his attempt to throw the hammer went wrong? Look at page 24 and ask: Do you think he feels differently at the end of the story?

• Ask the children to look through the book and find words that use the /ai/ phoneme, spelled in different ways. For example: holiday (page 1), they (page 7), caber (page 10) and race (page 16).

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-a-m-i-l-y, p-l-a-y-i-n-g.

• Support children with reading tricky words.

• This book also contains a number of challenge words, which children may need more support with at this stage, but which enrich the story:

  mountains enormous caber

  If a word is too difficult, simply read the word for them.

• Remind the children that the text in speech marks shows that characters are speaking. Model for the children how to read speech with lots of expression and encourage them to do the same.

• For suggestions of questions to ask the children and discussion points for after they have read the story, please refer to the notes on the inside covers of the pupil book.

Speaking, listening and drama activities

• Talk about what happened in the story. Ask the children to work in groups and take it in turns to work in role as Dad, Mum, Biff, Chip or Kipper.

• Encourage the other children to ask the child in character questions about their day at the Highland Games. Encourage them to begin their questions with How, What and Why. Help the children to ask questions about the events in the story, what happened to the individual characters and how they felt.

• When all the children in each group have had a chance to work in role as one for the characters from the story, encourage the groups to discuss who might have enjoyed the day most. You may want to gather the groups back together and discuss this as a class.

Writing activities

• Look at page 4 of the book and draw the children’s attention to the sign advertising the Highland Games. Tell the children that you want them to make a poster to advertise the Highland Games. Provide the children with paper and craft resources or computer access to design their poster.

• Ask them to think about the information they will need to put on their poster for the Highland Games (e.g. date, time, place). Write some example sentences from the story to advertise the events, with blanks for the children to fill in, for example Tossing the _____ (caber), Throwing the _____ (hammer).

• Children could add drawings of the events to their posters, encourage them to make their posters as eye-catching as possible.

Cross-curricular suggestion

Physical Education – In the story the family visit the Highland Games. Ask the children to help you to plan a school/class games event. Encourage them to think of different activities that could be included in the games. If they want to invent new activities, help them to write instructions for people taking part.
The Orchid Thief

Written by Roderick Hunt and Annemarie Young. Illustrated by Alex Brychta.
Teaching notes written by Liz Miles.

Group/Guided reading

Introducing the story

- Discuss the cover illustration. Ask the children: Where do you think the children are? What are they looking at? Draw attention to the children’s expressions, ask: How do you think the children are feeling?
- Read the title together, if appropriate help the children to sound out and blend the word orchid, or-ch-i-d. Ask the children if they know what an orchid is and explain that an orchid growing in the wild is a rare flower that has to be protected. Ask: Why do you think someone might want to steal an orchid?
- 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 a number of high frequency tricky words used in the book. These words are common but may not conform to the phonics teaching that children will have learned at this point. Read these words for the children if necessary, to help build familiarity before they read the story independently.

Reading the story

- Ask the children to read the story aloud and help where necessary. Praise and encourage them as they read. Remind the children to sound out and blend new words, for example th-ie-f, c-ou-n-t.
- Pause at the end of page 3 and talk about where the children are. Ask: What do you think a Nature Reserve is for? What might Sally the Nature Ranger do? Can you think why orchids might be found in the Nature Reserve?
- On page 16 help the children to read the word botanist, b-o-t-a-n-i-s-t. Ask: What does a botanist do? Explain that a botanist is a person who studies plants. Ask: What do you think Alex, the botanist, might do at the Nature Reserve?
- On page 17 help the children to sound out and blend the word thought, th-ough-t. Ask the children if they can think of any other words that include the grapheme ough.
- At the end of page 19, talk about Wilf and Chip’s conversation. Ask: Why does Wilf say “Don’t start that again?” when Chip points out the lady in the Nature Reserve? What do you think the lady is doing? Should they listen to Chip?

Returning to the story

- Ask the children to look through the book and find words that use the /ee/ phoneme, spelled in different ways. For example: Holly (page 1), three (page 5), these (page 5), we (page 6), thief (page 17).
- Look again at pages 4 and 5 and discuss what activity the children are doing. Ask: Why do you think the children are counting butterflies?
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 *w-o-r-r-y*, *b-i-k-e*.
- Support children with reading tricky words.
- This book also contains a number of challenge words, which children may need more support with at this stage, but which enrich the story:
  - **thought**
  
If a word is too difficult, simply read the word for them.
- Remind the children that the text in speech marks shows that characters are speaking. Model for the children how to read speech with lots of expression and encourage them to do the same.
- For suggestions of questions to ask the children and discussion points for after they have read the story, please refer to the notes on the inside covers of the pupil books.

Speaking, listening and drama activities

- Talk about the events that occurred in the story. Ask the children to work in pairs with one child role-playing a newspaper reporter and another Alex or Sally. The reporter asks questions about the events in the story for a newspaper report about the orchid theft.
- Encourage the children to ask questions about the events and establish what happened, and also to ask how the characters felt.
- When the reporters have asked a number of questions, tell the children to swap roles so that the other child can ask the questions.

Writing activities

- Tell the children that they are going to write a report for a newspaper about the orchid theft. Start by having a brief discussion about the features of a newspaper report and encourage the children to think of an exciting headline for their story, for example *Orchids stolen in Nature Reserve!*
- On the board, write the following sentences:
  - A boy saw a lady digging in the Nature Reserve.
  - They got the orchids back!
  - They ran after the woman.
  - He told Sally, the Nature Ranger.
  - Orchids stolen in Nature Reserve! (or your chosen headline)

Ask the children to help you to put the sentences in the correct order (including your headline).
- Instruct the children to use the sentences on the board as the basis for their own story. Encourage the children to work individually to create their own newspaper report including as much detail as appropriate to their writing level.

Cross-curricular suggestion

Science – Talk about orchids. Help the children to research plants and orchids. Encourage them to draw a plant and then label all the different parts.
Rats!

Written by Roderick Hunt and Annemarie Young. Illustrated by Alex Brychta.
Teaching notes written by Liz Miles.

Group/Guided reading

Introducing the story

- Read the title to the children using emphasis and expression. Draw attention to the exclamation mark and discuss how punctuation such as exclamation marks affects how you say something. Look at the cover picture. Ask: What might the children be thinking? What musical instrument can you see?

- Read the back cover blurb and ask: Does the picture on the front cover remind you of a story that you know? What story do you think the children will be taken into? (The Pied Piper of Hamelin) Discuss the story of the Pied Piper of Hamelin and encourage the children to tell you what happens, if necessary briefly explain who the Pied Piper of Hamelin is and what happened in the original tale. Encourage the children to talk about other stories they have read about the magic key and ask: What might happen in this magic key adventure?

- 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 a number of high frequency tricky words used in the book. These words are common but may not conform to the phonics teaching that children will have learned at this point. Read these words for the children if necessary, to help build familiarity before they read the story independently.

people looked called asked

Reading the story

- Ask the children to read the story aloud and help where necessary. Praise and encourage them as they read. Remind the children to sound out and blend new words, for example m-a-g- i- c, t-u-n-e.

- Pause at the end of page 9 and talk about where the children are. Ask: How did the children get here? What is different about the town? Where do you think the children might be?

- On page 12, help the children to sound out and blend the word mayor, m-a-y-o-r. Ask: Why do you think the people of the town go to see the Mayor? Do you think the Mayor can rid the town of rats?

- On page 15, help the children to read the word once, help them to sound out and blend the word o-n-c-e. Talk about what this word means and explain that here it is used in the phrase ‘At once...’. Ask the children to think about other words or phrases that can be used to mean ‘straight away’.

- On page 19, ask: What does the Piper mean when he says “You will be sorry”? What do you think the Piper will do now?

Returning to the story

- Look again at page 18, ask the children to look at the people in the background. Ask: Do you think the people in the town approve of how the Mayor treats the Piper? What do you think Biff, Chip and Kipper think?
Ask the children to explain how the Piper punishes the Mayor for not paying him for getting rid of the rats. Ask: *Why do the children follow the Piper? What was special about the Piper’s music?*

Ask: *What might have happened to Chip and Kipper if Biff had not pulled them back? Where do you think the Piper is taking the children?*

Ask the children to look through the book and find words that use the /igh/ phoneme, spelled in different ways. For example: *exciting* (page 1), *might* (page 2), *time* (page 7) and *I* (page 11).

**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 *p-i-p-e, k-e-y*.
- Support children with reading tricky words.
- This book also contains a number of challenge words, which children may need more support with at this stage, but which enrich the story:
  - *once* *mayor*
    
    If a word is too difficult, simply read the word for them.
- Remind the children that the text in speech marks shows that characters are speaking. Model for the children how to read all the speech with lots of expression and encourage them to do the same.
- For suggestions of questions to ask the children and discussion points for after they have read the story, please refer to the notes on the inside covers of the pupil book.

**Speaking, listening and drama activities**

- Ask the children to gather in small groups to discuss which character they thought behaved the worst – the Mayor or the Piper – and why. Explain that one person from each group will give their decision to the rest of the class.
- Share the ideas with representatives from each group reporting their decision and reasons.
- Hold a class vote at the end.

**Writing activities**

- Put the children into pairs. Ask them to think of a new, happy ending for the story about the Piper. Ask: *Where does he take the children? What will the children do?*
- Ask the children to write a few sentences for their new story using vocabulary from the story, and words they have learnt from other stories they have read. If necessary, suggest a first sentence for their new ending, e.g. *The Piper took the children to the snow at the top of the mountain*.
- Support the children as they create their new narratives and help them to use their phonics skills to sound out and spell the words where appropriate.

**Cross-curricular suggestion**

Music – Talk about the music that the Piper plays in the story. Ask the children to think about what the tune the Piper played might have sounded like. Encourage them to use a variety of musical instruments to create their own version of the Piper’s magical tune.
A Pet Called Cucumber

Written by Roderick Hunt and Annemarie Young. Illustrated by Nick Schon, based on the original characters created by Roderick Hunt and Alex Brychta.

Group/Guided reading

Introducing the story

- Read the title to the children and look at the cover picture. Ask: What do you think is in the bag? Why do you think a pet would be called Cucumber?
- Read the back cover blurb. Ask: What sort of help might the family need? What do you need to do to look after a pet?
- 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 a number of high frequency tricky words used in the book. These words are common but may not conform to the phonics teaching that children will have learned at this point. Read these words for the children if necessary, to help build familiarity before they read the story independently.

Reading the story

- Ask the children to read the story aloud and help where necessary. Praise and encourage them as they read. Remind the children to sound out and blend new words, for example ph-o-t-o-g-r-a-ph-s, s-n-a-k-e.
- Pause at the end of page 5 and talk about Uncle Max’s pet. Look at the suggestions given by Biff, Chip, Kipper and Dad. Ask: What do you think Cucumber is? Do you think any of the family has guessed correctly?
- On page 8, draw the children’s attention to the word gently. Help them to sound out and blend the word and, if necessary, explain that this word uses the grapheme g as code for the /j/ sound.
- On page 13, help the children to sound out and blend the word beautiful, b-e-a-u-t-i-f-u-l. Talk about what the word means and ask the children to think of other descriptive words that Anneena could have used to describe Cucumber.
- On page 19, ask: Why do you think Dad doesn’t like Cucumber? Why do you think he says “I like snakes, but not in my house!”?

Returning to the story

- Look again at pages 8 and 9 and ask: How do you think the family feel when they discover that Cucumber is a snake? Do you think that Mum and Dad are pleased? What do you think Biff, Chip and Kipper think about Cucumber?
- Ask: How does Anneena help the Robinson family to look after Cucumber? What does she teach them to do?
- Turn to page 18 and talk about how Mum feels about Cucumber. Ask: Has Mum’s opinion of Cucumber changed during the story? How has it changed?
Look at the words *read* (page 2), *eats* (page 10) and *beautiful* (page 13) and draw attention to the alternative pronunciations of the *ea* grapheme. Ask the children to find other words in the book that contain the *ea* grapheme.

**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 *w-a-t-er*, *sh-a-m-e*.
- Support children with reading tricky words.
- This book also contains a number of challenge words, which children may need more support with at this stage, but which enrich the story:
  - **beautiful gorilla**
    If a word is too difficult, simply read the word for them.
- Remind the children that the text in speech marks shows that characters are speaking. Model for the children how to read all the speech with lots of expression and encourage them to do the same.
- For suggestions of questions to ask the children and discussion points for after they have read the story, please refer to the notes on the inside covers of the pupil book.

**Speaking, listening and drama activities**
- Talk about what happened in the story; discuss as a class whether the Robinson’s enjoyed having Cucumber as a pet.
- Ask the children to take turns to be Uncle Max or Anneena. Encourage the other children to ask the character if they think a snake is a good pet and why.
- You may also want to encourage some children to act in role as Dad, who was less keen to have a snake as a pet, in order to get both sides of the argument.
- Hold a class vote at the end to decide if a snake is a good pet.

**Writing activities**
- Ask the children to write about what happened in the story as if they were writing Cucumber’s diary. Suggest a title, e.g. *My diary* and prompt with a first sentence, e.g. *Uncle Max went on holiday*.
- Scribe some words on the board to help with the narrative: *That day, Then, Next*.
- Remind the children to plan their story first by looking at the pictures to see what happened to Cucumber.
- Help the children to write their diary as Cucumber, and encourage them to add details about what happened to Cucumber during the story and how she might have felt at each point.

**Cross-curricular suggestion**
Science – Talk about Cucumber, the snake, and Anneena’s presentation about snakes. Help the children to use books and the Internet to research snakes. Encourage them to research different types of snakes, what habitats they live in, what they eat and how they move.
Bush Fire!

Written by Roderick Hunt and Annemarie Young. Illustrated by Alex Brychta.
Teaching notes written by Liz Miles.

Group/Guided reading

Introducing the story

- Read the title to the children with emphasis. Draw attention to the exclamation mark and discuss how punctuation such as exclamation marks affects how you say something. Look at the cover picture. Ask: What is happening in the picture? What do you think a bush fire is?
- Read the cover blurb and talk about how wild, wooded areas are called ‘the bush’ in Australia. Explain that fires spread quickly there because the climate is so hot and dry. Encourage the children to talk about other stories they have read about the magic key and ask: What might happen in this magic key adventure?
- 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 a number of high frequency tricky words used in the book. These words are common but may not conform to the phonics teaching that children will have learned at this point. Read these words for the children if necessary, to help build familiarity before they read the story independently.

oh Mrs asked could

Reading the story

- Ask the children to read the story aloud and help where necessary. Praise and encourage them as they read. Remind the children to sound out and blend new words, for example f-i-r-e, s-p-r-a-y.
- Pause at the end of page 1 and help the children to sound out and blend the word Australia, Au-s-t-r-a-l-i-a. Talk about the country of Australia, ask the children if they have heard of it and what they know about it.
- On page 7, ask: Why do they need to spray water on the roof and walls of Ben’s house? How will this help?
- On page 8, help the children to sound out and blend the word koalas, k-o-a-l-a-s. Ask the children if they know what a koala is, turn back to page 2 and point out the toy koala on Biff’s bed. Talk about koalas, explaining that they are native to Australia; they live in trees and eat Eucalyptus leaves.
- Pause at the end of page 14 and ask the children to explain where Mrs Wilson was and what she was doing. Ask: Why would Mrs Wilson have been looking for Bunyip?

Returning to the story

- Turn to page 9 again and ask: How do you think the children are feeling?
- Talk about the koalas in the story, ask the children to explain why the koalas might be in danger from the bush fire. Turn to pages 20 and 21, and ask: Why do you think the koalas leave the bush? What do you think they are looking for?
• Turn to page 24. At the end of the story Biff says “What a scary adventure!” Ask: Why was it a scary adventure? Where do you think Nan and Ben will go to stay safe?

• Ask the children to look through the book and find words that use the /oa/ phoneme, spelled in different ways. For example: glow (page 3), smoke (page 4) and go (page 5).

**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-l-y, h-o-s-e.

• Support children with reading tricky words.

• This book also contains a number of challenge words, which children may need more support with at this stage, but which enrich the story:

  **Australia koalas should**

  If a word is too difficult, simply read the word for them.

• Remind the children that the text in speech marks shows that characters are speaking. Model for the children how to read all the speech with lots of expression and encourage them to do the same.

• For suggestions of questions to ask the children and discussion points for after they have read the story, please refer to the notes on the inside covers of the pupil books.

**Speaking, listening and drama activities**

• Ask the children to take turns to read a page from the story, adding emphasis and different voices for different characters.

• Alternatively, you could ask the children to work in groups to read the story – with the children each taking the role of a character and one reading the part of the narrator.

• Encourage the children to add emphasis and use lots of expression as they read. Draw attention to punctuation that adds expression to the story as it is read aloud, such as question marks, commas and exclamation marks.

**Writing activities**

• Ask the children to imagine they see a fire in the distance. Ask for ideas on what they would do and how they would feel. Ask: What would you be worried about?

• Ask them to write down what they would do and how they would feel using ideas from the discussion.

• Remind them to put what they would do in chronological order. For example, would they tell their parents first? What would they do next?

**Cross-curricular suggestion**

Geography – In the story, Biff, Anneena and Nadim visit Australia. Help the children to use books and the internet to find out about Australia. Encourage them to think about where it is in the world compared to Great Britain, what the climate is like and what animals are native to Australia.
**Stage 5**

Bessie’s Flying Circus

Written by Roderick Hunt and Annemarie Young. Illustrated by Nick Schon, based on the original characters created by Roderick Hunt and Alex Brychta.

Teaching notes written by Liz Miles.

**Group/Guided reading**

**Introducing the story**

- Look at the cover illustration and read the title together. If necessary, help the children to sound out and blend the word *circus*, *c-i-r-c-u-s*. Ask the children to identify the two different sounds the grapheme *c* makes in circus. Draw their attention to *c* as /s/ and *c* as /k/.

- Look at the cover again and ask the children: *What do you think happens at this type of circus?*

- 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 a number of high frequency tricky words used in the book. These words are common but may not conform to the phonics teaching that children will have learned at this point. Read these words for the children if necessary, to help build familiarity before they read the story independently.

  people  looked  called  asked

**Reading the story**

- Ask the children to read the story aloud and help where necessary. Praise and encourage them as they read. Remind the children to sound out and blend new words, for example *p-l-a-n-e*, *c-o-l-d*.

- Pause at the end of page 1, if necessary help the children to sound out and blend the word *museum*, *m-u-s-e-u-m*. Talk about museums and ask the children to give examples of any museums they have visited.

- On pages 8 and 9, draw attention to the wing walkers in the picture. Talk about the wing walkers and ask the children why they think Wilf says “*They must be brave!*”.

- On page 15, ask: *Can you think why the woman might have changed over the petrol cans? Do you think she is trying to help Bessie?*

- On page 19, help the children to sound out and blend the word *passengers*, *p-a-s-s-e-n-g-er-s*. Ask the children to explain what a passenger is. Ask: *Why do you think the people looked surprised by the passenger plane?*

**Returning to the story**

- Turn to pages 12 and 13 and ask the children: *What made Wilf suspect that the woman was up to something? Was Wilf right?*

- Look at page 16 and ask: *How do you think Bessie felt when she realised the plane had water in it instead of petrol? Why did the woman want to stop Bessie from flying?*

- Compare the planes on pages 2 to 3 and 18 to 19. Ask: *What can Bessie’s second plane do that the first can’t?*
Look at the words fly (page 2), heavy (page 12) and you (page 19) and draw attention to the alternative pronunciations of the y grapheme. Ask the children to find other words in the book that contain the y grapheme. Do they know how the grapheme is pronounced in each word?

**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 p-i-l-o-t, f-ir-s-t.
- Support children with reading tricky words.
- This book also contains a number of challenge words, which children may need more support with at this stage, but which enrich the story:
  - museum would
  If a word is too difficult, simply read the word for them.
- Remind the children that the text in speech marks shows that characters are speaking. Model for the children how to read all the speech with lots of expression and encourage them to do the same.
- For suggestions of questions to ask the children and discussion points for after they have read the story, please refer to the notes on the inside covers of the pupil book.

**Speaking, listening and drama activities**
- Ask the children to read the story. Some children take the parts of the children and Bessie, and others take turns to narrate.
- Encourage the children to use lots of expression as they read. Draw attention to punctuation that adds expression to the story as it is read aloud, such as question marks, commas and exclamation marks.
- Draw attention to words which describe how a character says something. For example turn to page 12. Ask the children to suggest what snapped means by reading the woman’s words in a way that fits their interpretation.

**Writing activities**
- Look together at the picture on page 20. Ask the children to imagine they are a passenger on a plane. Talk about what you might be able to see from the window of a plane in the sky.
- Ask the children to write a list of what they might see, starting their list with, I can see …
- Can they change the list into a sentence by adding commas, the word ‘and’ and by remembering the full stop?

**Cross-curricular suggestion**
History – Talk about the different types of planes that appear in the story, in particular bi-planes. Help the children to use books and the internet to research the history of aviation and how aeroplanes have developed.