

Introduction

Using stories

As teachers we often struggle to be inspiring when teaching the basic rules of punctuation and sentence construction. How could teaching this area be made more interesting for both children and teachers? After much discussion we came up with the idea of using exciting stories to grab and hold children's attention.

These, however, were not just going to be one-off stories. They would all be linked by two central characters, named Emily and Jack. There is a scene-setter which is relevant to both the Ages 5–6 book and the Ages 6–7 book. In this story Emily and Jack discover an old chest in Emily's loft. The label on it says DO NOT OPEN – KEEP OUT. Of course, being inquisitive children, they open the chest and thus the adventures begin. Each new story begins with them taking an object out of the chest, at which point a mist swirls round and they are taken on a different adventure. You will need to read the scene-setter to the children the first time you use these books in class and return to it frequently.

We wanted the adventures to work on two levels: firstly as a gripping story for the readers; secondly for each story to contain one main learning objective as its central focus, with lots of strong visual cues.

For example, for Emily and Jack (and the children listening to the story) to find out about question marks, we created a story called *The dark tunnel*. In this story Emily and Jack discover that the only way to escape from the tunnel is to use question marks after questions. Each time they do, they activate one of a series of question mark-shaped lights, which show them the way out.

About the books in this series

We have highlighted the 12 Literacy Strategy Learning Objectives that are central to Key Stage 1 children's understanding and progress in this area of literacy. The Ages 5–6 book contains six objectives from the Year 1 objectives. The Ages 6–7 book contains six objectives from the Year 2 objectives. They are as follows:

Year 1 (ages 5–6) learning objectives

- Know that a sentence needs a beginning and an end.
- Use a question mark at the end of a question.
- Use a capital letter when writing I.
- Use capitals for emphasis.
- Put a full stop at the end of a sentence.

- Use a capital at the start of a sentence, names, place names, days of the week and months.

Year 2 (ages 6–7) learning objectives

- Know that exclamation marks make words strong and powerful.
- Use speech marks to catch spoken words.
- Know that there are many different ways to ask questions.
- Use commas in lists and with speech marks.
- Know that organisational devices get things organised.
- Know that speech and thought can be written in bubbles.

For each learning objective there is a 12-page unit of work. Each unit comprises:

- a four-page Emily and Jack story (maximum 600 words in the Ages 5–6 book, maximum 800 words in the Ages 6–7 book);
- two pages of teachers' notes;
- six pages of activities relating to the stories.

Within the six activity pages are two core activities that have been differentiated for three ability levels. 1A and 2A are for emergent readers and those who need support. 1B and 2B are for more confident readers. 1C and 2C are for able and more able readers.

A teacher who works through all twelve units will have covered the most essential components of Key Stage 1 sentence formation and punctuation.

On the facing page are synopses of all the stories and on page 6 the scene-setter which introduces the children to Emily and Jack's adventures.

The 'Memory joggers' on the last page of the book list the learning objectives of each story.

The teachers' notes

These are set out using the following headings:

Intended learning

Explains the learning objective for the story.

Preparation and resources

Lists necessary resources and suggests useful preparation for the lesson.

Starting point

Sets the story's scene for the whole class.

Read the story

Suggestions to help you read the story with maximum emphasis to underpin the key learning objective.

Lower order questions

Examples of simple questions that require short answers.

Higher order questions

Examples of open-ended questions to challenge able and more able children.

Points to note

Specific points relating to key aspects of the learning objective.

Group oral work

Interactive questions to reinforce the learning objective.

The activity sheets

Tips for introducing the six differentiated activity sheets.

Plenary

Suggestions for whole class opportunities to reinforce the learning objective and its link to the story.

Cross-curricular activities

Suggested activities where the main idea of the story and its learning objective can be revisited within a different framework. These are particularly beneficial for those children who may be reluctant learners during specified literacy lessons but willing participants in other subject areas.

Story synopses

Exclamation marks – *Polta and the space war*

Year 2 Term 1

Emily and Jack are involved in a space war. Enemy Pintons are attacking their craft. The giant woman Polta shows them how exclamation marks will defeat the enemy. After winning the battle they are in for a shock when they can't see their own planet – Earth.

Speech marks – *Diving in the deep*

Year 2 Term 2

Dressed in diving suits, Emily and Jack collect fishing hooks from the ocean bed. They need the hooks to catch phrases from Noisy Beach to return the power of speech to the crowds on Silent Beach. Can Emily and Jack succeed or will the people be under the pirates' curse of silence for ever?

Question words – *Escape from the tower*

Year 2 Term 3

Emily and Jack are trapped in the Tower of Questions. A huge beast bars their escape. Emily and Jack find 'question words' to feed to it. If the beast eats enough and falls asleep, will Emily and Jack have enough courage to escape past the sleeping beast?

Commas – *The Queen's banquet*

Year 2 Term 1

Emily and Jack are in the dining room of a castle. Emily has to write the menu but the chalk won't write commas. Jack has to trim the royal wigs but things go wrong. Will Emily and Jack find a solution?

Organisation devices – *The wild zoo*

Year 2 Term 2

Emily and Jack are in a chaotic zoo. All the visitors have ended up in the wrong places. Emily and Jack restore order by using a bulleted list to organise the rescue of all the people.

Speech and thought bubbles – *Bubble up*

Year 2 Term 3

Emily and Jack are in a canyon; the sides are too steep to climb. They are hungry, thirsty and frightened. With only a packet of bubblegum each, is there any hope of escape?

Exclamation marks

Intended learning

- To understand how an exclamation mark affects the power of the preceding words.
- To know how to form exclamation marks.

Preparation and resources

- On the board write the words and symbols:

Full stop .

Exclamation mark !

- Write the following words and phrases, as large as possible, on half sheets of A4:

<i>Sit down.</i>	<i>Sit down!</i>
<i>Come in.</i>	<i>Come in!</i>
<i>Yes.</i>	<i>Yes!</i>
<i>No.</i>	<i>No!</i>
<i>Line up.</i>	<i>Line up!</i>
<i>I will.</i>	<i>I will!</i>
<i>Be quiet.</i>	<i>Be quiet!</i>
<i>Your go.</i>	<i>Your go!</i>
<i>Now.</i>	<i>Now!</i>
<i>Give up.</i>	<i>Give up!</i>
<i>Wait.</i>	<i>Wait!</i>

Starting point

Briefly talk about science fiction films the children have seen and the inevitable battles between spaceships.

Read the story

Emphasise the words preceding an exclamation mark to draw attention to it.

Lower order questions

What did Polta look like?
How did Jack and Emily help Polta?
What did the Pintons use as weapons?
What happened to planet Earth?

Higher order questions

Why are exclamation marks important?
How could you use words as weapons?
Can words hurt?
When Emily and Jack were on the spaceship, what could they see?

Points to note

- An exclamation mark is used instead of a full stop.
- Exclamation marks to emphasise what somebody said go inside the speech marks.

Group oral work

Choose one pair of children at a time. Give them a pair of the prepared sheets of words (see Resources). Let each child read their words quietly or in a forceful manner, depending on the punctuation. The rest of the class decides which reader has the full stop and which has the exclamation mark.

Brainstorm words to indicate joy, anger, fear, surprise, shock, pain and so on.

Ask the children to scan their reading books for exclamation marks. Ask them to read out any sentence, word or phrase that precedes an exclamation mark. Remind them to read with expression.

The activity sheets

Sheets 1A, 1B and 1C

- 1A** This is aimed at children who are emergent readers and need support. They should identify some exclamations and write them inside the exclamation marks. Extension – the children use the dots around the page to make a repeating pattern of question marks, exclamation marks and full stops, paying attention to the uniformity of the ? and ! size.
- 1B** This is aimed at children who are more confident readers. They should complete four exclamatory phrases (or sentences). Extension – they choose a full stop or exclamation mark to put after the words and phrases in the rocket at the bottom of the sheet.
- 1C** This is aimed at able and more able readers. The children have to choose a minimum of five exclamations and exclamation marks and write them in rocket A, then choose four further exclamation phrases for rocket B. Extension – they complete eight phrases with either ? or !

Sheets 2A, 2B and 2C

- 2A** This is aimed at children who are emergent readers and need support. In each shape there are two phrases. The children have to choose the phrase that is more likely to be an exclamation, then write

Exclamation marks

it on the line, adding an exclamation mark.

Extension – they complete the rows of exclamation marks, paying attention to the size.

2B This is aimed at children who are more confident readers. There are nine exclamation marks behind the stars. Around the page are isolated words. The children should find the exclamatory words and write them in the stars. Extension – the children fill the flying saucer with as many exclamatory phrases as possible, remembering to put an exclamation mark after each one.

2C This is aimed at the able and more able readers. They select the five phrases that are more likely to be exclamations and write them in the rocket. Extension – they write three exciting thoughts, each followed by an exclamation mark. For example, *Wow! Help! Yippee! Fantastic! Great! Look! Oh no!*

Plenary

- Ask what an exclamation mark looks like.
- Ask the children to explain the purpose of an exclamation mark.
- Ask the children to read (with expression) some of the exclamatory words and phrases they have written on their activity sheets.

Cross-curricular activities

Art

Paint a picture of Polta, an intergalactic battle or a starry sky.

History

Look at the history of flight, including ballooning, the Wright brothers, jet engines and space travel.

Maths

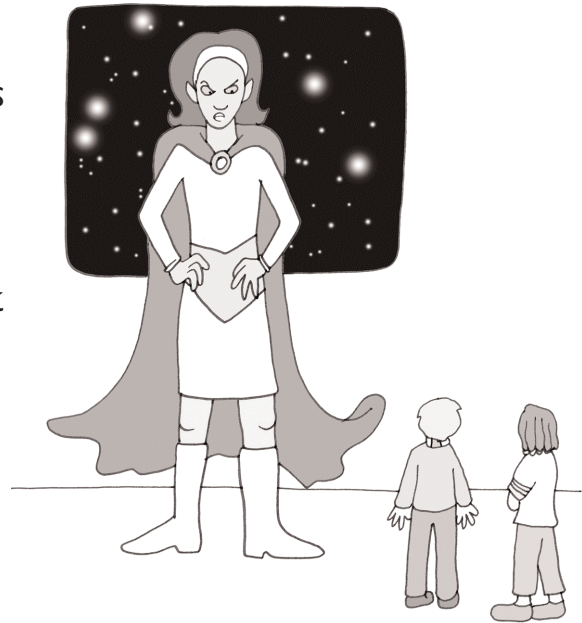
Compare the distance an A4 sheet will fly when folded into a darts, with the distance it will fly when crunched into a ball.

Polta and the space war

“Duck, you idiots!”

Jack and Emily ducked. A beam of white light whizzed overhead. They looked up and saw a gigantic woman beside them.

She was three metres tall! Her jet black eyes glared out of her pink and orange face. She had long silver hair and she was wearing golden robes. Emily and Jack were standing next to this giant woman, on a narrow platform. In front of them there was a rail. Beyond the rail the black sky was lit up by millions of stars and hundreds of different coloured planets: red, blue, yellow, orange and purple.



“Wow!” exclaimed Jack. “Where are we?”

“You don’t know?” asked the giant woman.

The children shook their heads.

“I am POLTA – the space warrior! You are on MY spaceship!”

“Why did you shout at us to duck?” asked Emily.

“We’re in the middle of a Pinton exclamation attack,” replied Polta.

“A what?” asked Emily.

“Look over there,” said Polta, pointing into the dark sky. “See that grey triangle? It’s a Pinton Destroyer Spaceship! Pintons want to destroy my spaceship because they want to control space. They use exclamations for weapons!”

“What’s an exclamation?” asked Emily.

“Exclamations are fantastic!” cried Polta. “They make ordinary words powerful and strong. ‘Go away’ becomes ‘GO AWAY!’”

Polta and the space war

She shouted this so loudly the children nearly fell off the platform.

“Sorry,” said Polta. “I didn’t mean to scare you.”

“It’s OK,” whispered Jack.

“As I was saying,” Polta continued, “the Pintons are firing at us. Those powerful bolts of light are exclamations. If they hit us we’ll be destroyed!”

Cluttering up the narrow platform were piles of metal rods. They were long and thin with a circle at the end.

“Hey, Emily!” gasped Jack pointing at the rods. “Those are like that thing we found in the chest!”

“What are they?” asked Emily.

Polta picked one up. “They’re exclamation marks. When the Pintons fire their next exclamation at us, we’ll get them back with one of ours.”

Just then a beam of white light headed straight for them. Polta aimed her exclamation mark straight towards the beam of light. She scored a direct hit. Seconds later the words...



We hate you!

appeared in the sky.

“There!” shouted Polta. “I’ve hit their exclamation mark with mine!”

Suddenly there was a gigantic explosion and the words disappeared.

“Watch out! Here comes another one,” shouted Jack.

Another beam of white light was heading straight for them.

“Your turn!” Polta shouted at Jack.

Polta and the space war



Grabbing an exclamation mark from the pile, Jack threw it as hard as he could towards the oncoming light. He scored a direct hit! As the words...

We will completely destroy you, Polta!

blazed across the sky, there was an enormous bang and the words disappeared.

Immediately, another beam of light came flying towards them.

“Your turn, Emily!” yelled Jack.

Emily snatched up an exclamation mark. She flung it with all her might into space and as it reached its target, the words...

You will never beat Pintons!

appeared across the sky. A split second later there was a gigantic explosion and the words disappeared, just like the others.

Emily and Jack grabbed armfuls of exclamation marks. As more enemy white lights came hurtling towards them, they flung their exclamation weapons back in counter-attack. Their aim was fantastic!

The words...

**Fighting us is pointless!
We will smash Polta to bits!**

lit up the sky.

And, like before, there was a deafening explosion and the words disappeared. The fearsome attacks carried on.

The end is near for you, Polta! Give up!

Polta and the space war

But Polta, Emily and Jack would not give up. They were fantastic shots. They destroyed every attacking exclamation mark with one of their own.

Suddenly, Polta shouted, “STOP! LOOK! The Pinton Spaceship is flying away. You two have helped me win this space war!”

The three of them looked out into space.

“You used the exclamation marks like experts,” smiled Polta.

The children felt proud, but something was worrying Emily.

“Polta,” she began, “you know Earth – the planet we come from? I can’t see it out there in space. Where is it?”

Polta looked down at Emily and started laughing.

“What’s so funny?” asked Jack.

Polta stopped laughing. “A space giant ate planet Earth 60,000 years ago.”


“ATE IT?” cried Emily and Jack together.

“Yes,” nodded Polta. “He was feeling extremely hungry.”

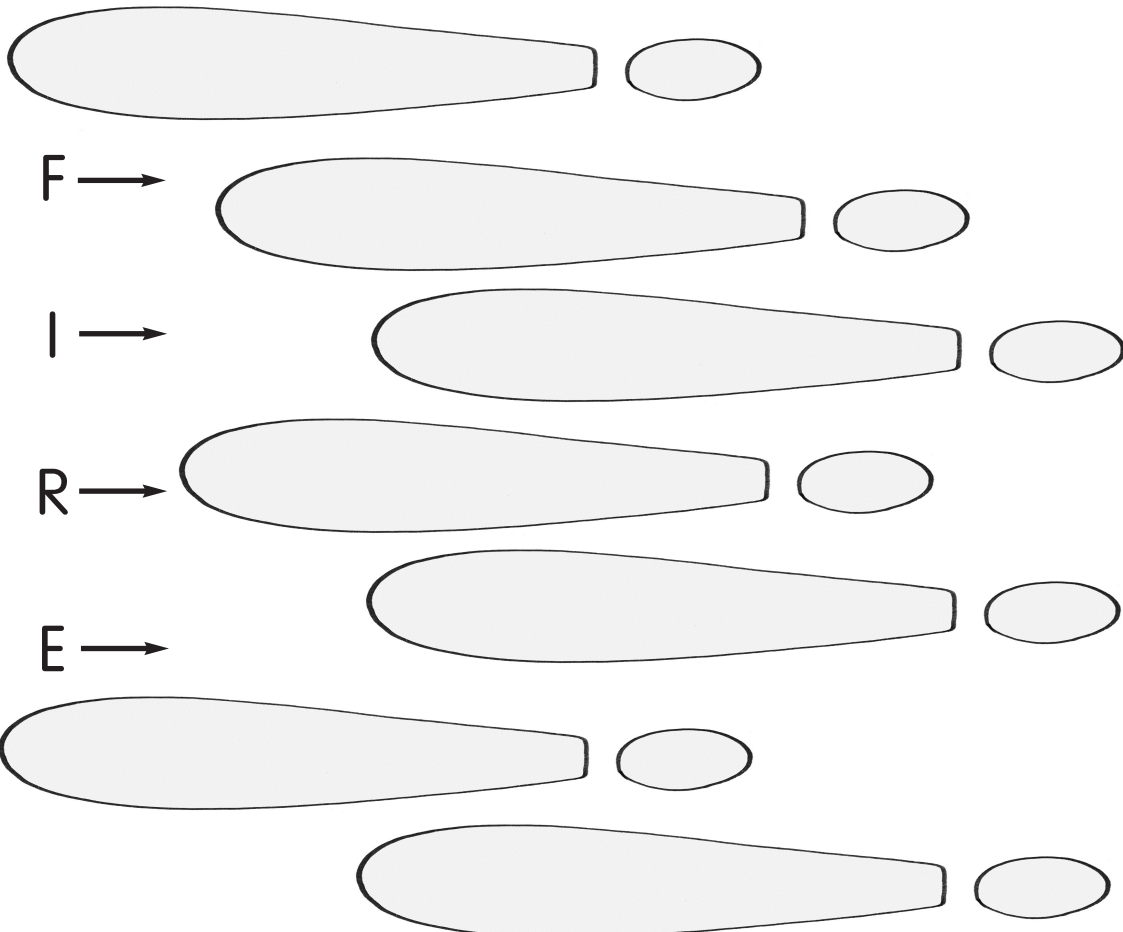
“What about the people, the things ... our school ... what happened to everything?” asked Emily.


But Polta had no time to answer. A loud hissing noise was heard as a blue mist surrounded the children. They were pulled down at an incredible speed. Seconds later they found themselves back in Emily’s loft.



 Fire the exclamation marks by writing a different exclamation in each one. Choose from these.


Get out! What's the time? Wow!
When shall we go? We'll beat you! A red bus.
Are you six? Is it raining? There's a pig. Ouch!
The end is near! The battle begins! Help! Stop!
Mind out!

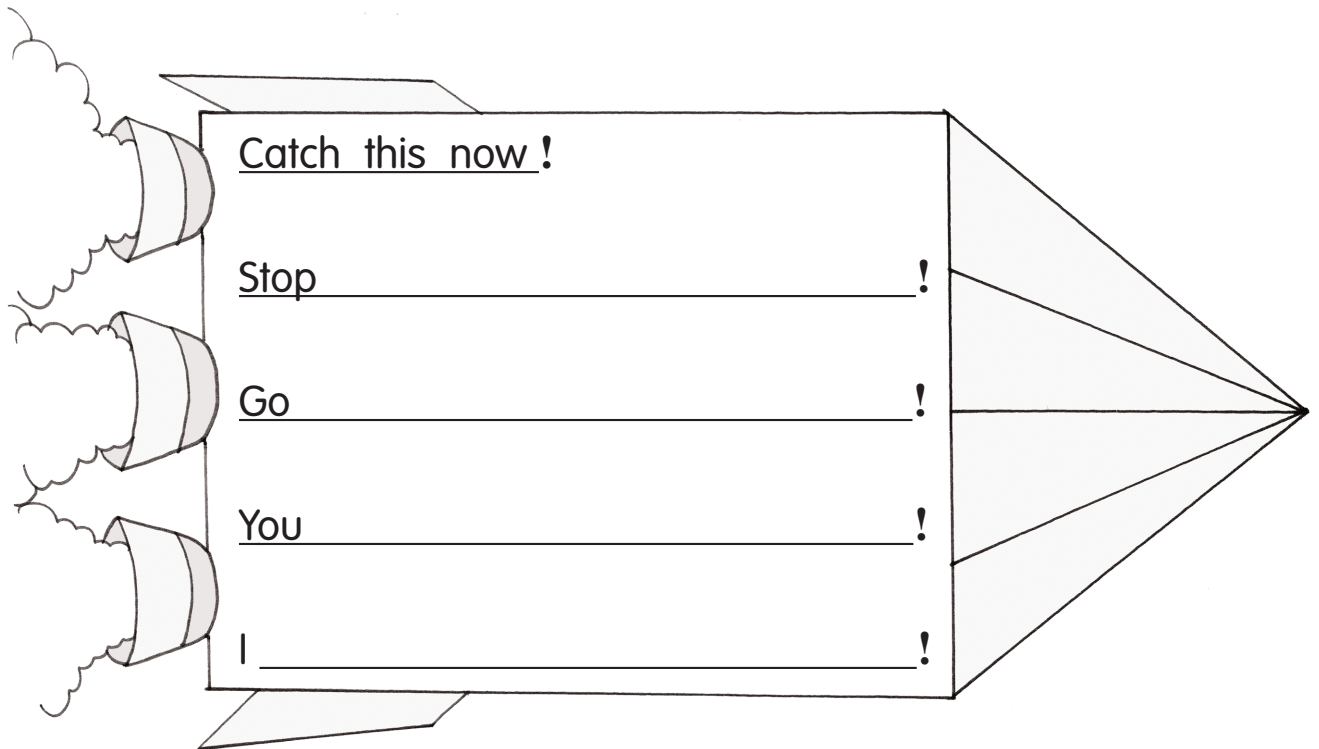



 Use the dots around this page to make a repeating pattern of full stops, question marks and exclamation marks.

Name _____

Activity sheet 1B

-  The rocket will launch when all the exclamations are complete. The first one has been done for you.



-  Here are six full stops
and seven exclamation marks ! ! ! ! ! ! !
Put each one in the correct place in the sentences below.

