Reading Activities
Karen Slikas Barber

Beginner Readers
Family/school life series
Bad Hair Day
A Snag - Free Barbie
A Day to Remember
Reading activities

Introduction

While I dream of small libraries full of books that beginning and even non-reading adult learners can read or at least begin to read for pleasure with the help of a teacher or friend, at present, these books seem to fill the bottom shelf of a bookshelf at language bookshops and libraries. Bad Hair Day, A Snag-free Barbie and A Day to Remember were created for classes that consisted of non-readers, emergent readers and beginning level learners with high oracy and limited or no previous formal education.

With Pauline Gibbons by my side in the form of her books, “Learning to learn in a second language” and “Scaffolding language, scaffolding learning”, I wrote a three-reader series with her “how to choose a text” criteria in mind. She advises teachers to choose a text with:

- Authentic language
- Good models of language
- Useful cultural content
- Repetitive language
- Predictable content
- Clear pictures for predicting content
- Rich linguistic input
- Language which might not be immediately accessible but which can be ‘bridged’ for ESL learners
- Universal themes or experiences

And perhaps most importantly, a text that compels the reader to ‘turn the page’.

I also had in mind creating a set of readers with some similar lexical items and content, so that learners could use the language they learned, perhaps in part through the reading of the first reader, to more easily read the next reader in the series.

In teaching some low level literacy classes I noted that even my ‘good readers’ were not understanding the beginning level readers they were reading. The pre-, during and post-reading activities I was doing seemed insufficient to help them interact fully with the text.

Therefore, I sought to create activities to go with the set of readers to help learners understand and interact with the text. Activities that would provide strong support for understanding the text. I also wanted to create activities to help learners develop good reading strategies. I found that while some learners were familiar with each word in the beginning level texts, they were unable to interact with and understand the text because they were reading word by word.
Reading strategies to foster included:

- Predict content through use of title and illustrations
- Skim to get an idea of content
- Use of known to understand unknown
- Read for meaning, reading in meaningful chunks
- Scan text to find specific information
- Keep reading rather than stopping whenever there is an unfamiliar word
- Reread text for detail and for fuller understanding
- Guess meaning of unknown words by reading to the end of a sentence and by looking at surrounding text

As Gibbons suggests, I wanted to create activities that would compel the learner to keep going back to the text.

I also wanted to use a reader and reader-based activities to help learners develop awareness, knowledge and use of the semantic, syntactic and graphophonic systems. By exploring these systems in the context of a known reader, I thought the learner would have cognitive hooks to help learn and acquire various aspects of language in the text. I wanted to explore and exploit readers, as per Fran Murray, as a means of learning how to read, understanding the text and increasing knowledge of the three systems.

The Activities (Worksheets)

For each text, Bad Hair Day, A Snag-Free Barbie and A Day to Remember, there are 8 worksheets that are a sampling of the activities that can be used to explore and exploit the readers. Some of the activities are designed for students with no reading experience while others are designed for beginning readers. Many of the activities can be completed by new readers provided there is the required support. The illustrations for each reader are also included to facilitate use in pre, during or post-reading activities.

With any reader I use in class, I read the reader aloud with pausing and expression, do shadow reading (with learners as the shadow), and use a large screen or overhead to facilitate choral reading of the text and to highlight how to read in meaningful chunks of language.

In a ten-week term I use a reader based activity each day and as a class we reread the reader throughout the term many times and in many ways. By the end of the term some of the learners can read the text unaided and others can read the text with varying degrees of assistance.

Learners often share a reader so they can help each other as they read. When I use ‘cut up’ texts I photocopy class sets on different coloured paper and laminate the cut-up sentences so they are easy to sort if they get mixed up.

I hope you and your learners enjoy the readers and find the worksheets useful.
Thanks go to:

Francoise Grellet and Pauline Gibbons for their books on reading
My Chinese colleagues in Wuhan, PRChina of 20 years ago who first taught me the
meaning of exploring and exploiting a text in their intensive reading classes
Clare Harris, ‘reader’ mentor extraordinaire
Barbara Liliom, artist and former AMEP student
The Western Australian Department of Education and Training
Colleague, Richard Flack
Jean Evans
Activity: Put the sentences into the correct order.

1. My older sister made me some hot chocolate.
2. Then I had breakfast.
3. It was Monday morning.
4. I wasn’t very hungry, so I had a piece of toast with jam.
5. I woke up at 7 am.
6. It was a cold morning, so I quickly put on my school uniform.

Activity: Now write about your morning.

It was ________________ morning.  I woke up at _____________________________.
____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________.

Bad Hair Day 1
Activity: Write down the words that begin with the letter ‘s’ on pages 2, 3 and 4. (11 different words) Page 2 had been done.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>s</th>
<th>sch</th>
<th>st</th>
<th>sh</th>
<th>sm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>so</td>
<td>school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sister</td>
<td></td>
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<td>some</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

What sound do the letters ‘sch’ make in ‘school’?

What sound do the letters ‘sh’ make in ‘shampoo’?

Now look at page 4. Write down the 2 words on page 4 that end with the letters ‘sh’.

____________        _____________

Fill in the chart above with other ‘s’ words you know.
(Your teacher can help you spell the words.)
Activity: ‘Concentration’ Game (Match same words.)

Before you play: What words rhyme with ‘lice’?
For example: mice // slice // dice

_______   _______   _______   _______

Poem Hint:
I love to eat __________.
It’s so very very __________.
That sometimes in one day,
I’ll eat it ________.
And on a very hot day,
I’ll it eat on ________.

Now you are ready to play. Cut out the cards. Place them face down. Turn a card over. Turn over another card. If they match, you can keep them. If they don’t match, turn them over. Now it’s your partner’s turn. Try to remember what word is on each card.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>lice</th>
<th>lice</th>
<th>ice</th>
<th>ice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mice</td>
<td>mice</td>
<td>slice</td>
<td>slice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rice</td>
<td>rice</td>
<td>nice</td>
<td>nice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>twice</td>
<td>twice</td>
<td>dice</td>
<td>dice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Friday 13 March

Dear Sis,

Hello. How are you? It’s been a beautiful cold and sunny day here in Perth. How’s Melbourne? Cold and rainy?! I hope you and the family are fine.

I had a bad hair day today! I found lice in Kim’s hair this morning. And then we found lice in her sister’s hairbrush!

All of us had itchy heads, so we all had to wash our hair. I hate that smelly lice shampoo! Of course, I was late for work and I had an important meeting. Kim’s brother and sisters were so angry. They wouldn’t talk to her.

Anyway, the kids finally went to school and I went to work. I was really late, but my boss never came to work. She was having a bad hair day too. Can you believe it? Her family also had lice!

Life is full of surprises! I’ll say goodbye for now. I want to wash my hair again!

Love
?

XXOO
Activity: Write sentences using the words below.

1. washed My with lice special mum shampoo. hair my
____________________________________________________.

2. was smelly. It very
______________________________________________.

3. washed Then hair. sisters’ she my
______________________________________________.

4. washed my hair. brother’s She
______________________________________________.

5. my washed hair. mother’s Finally, my father
______________________________________________.

6. my brushed hair. my mum Then
______________________________________________.

7. father’s, sisters’, brother’s Then checked she my hair. and
______________________________________________.

8. forgot hair. to her check She own
______________________________________________.
Activity: Put the sentences in order.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When my mum got off the phone she had a big smile on her face.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Her boss wasn’t at work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Why are you smiling, mum?” I asked.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My mum telephoned her boss.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So my mum telephoned her boss at home.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now write the past tense verbs in the sentences.

_____________     _______________   _______________
_____________  __________________
_____________  ________________

Now write your own sentences using these verbs.

1. ______________________________________________________________________
2. ______________________________________________________________________
3. ______________________________________________________________________
4. ______________________________________________________________________
5. ______________________________________________________________________
Activity: Use the words below to complete the noun groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>school</th>
<th>cold</th>
<th>hot</th>
<th>important</th>
<th>smelly</th>
<th>younger</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>older</td>
<td>lice</td>
<td>family</td>
<td>bad</td>
<td>big</td>
<td>car</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

my _________ keys

a _________ morning

a _________ smile

my _________ sister

a very _________ meeting

some ___________ ___________ shampoo

a _________ emergency

my _________ brother

some _________ chocolate

a _________ hair day

__________ shampoo

__________ principal

(Now try to use each word to complete each noun group.)

my school keys  (Does that sound OK?)

a school morning (Does that sound OK?)

a school smile (Does that sound OK?)
Activity: Match the picture with the sentence.

A. Kim put on her school uniform.

B. Her mother put her hair up.

C. There were lice in the hairbrush.

D. Their heads were itchy.

E. Kim’s father washed her mother’s hair.

F. Kim’s mum phoned her boss.

G. They had a family emergency
Activity: Vanishing Cloze: Write a past tense verb on each line.

It ___________ Monday morning. I __________ up at 7 am. Then I ____________. I was on holiday from work, so I __________ back to sleep.

I ___________ up again at 10 am. Then I __________ breakfast. I was really hungry, so I __________ three pieces of toast with jam and a large bowl of cereal. I also ____ a nice cup of tea.

Hint: Verb choices:

woke  remembered  had  was  went  had  woke  had

After filling in the text above, read the text. Read it again. Try to remember the text.

Now try to fill in the blank spaces below. If you need to, have a quick look back at the above text.

It was ___________________________. I woke up _________. Then I remembered __________________________________ from work, so I went ___________________________.

I woke up again ______________. Then I had _______________________. I was _______ ______________, so I had three ________________________________ and a ___________________________. I also had __________________________ _________.

Now do you want to try to write the whole text from memory?!
Activity: **Underline** the words that mean ‘to cook on a grill outside’ and **circle** the words that mean ‘meat to grill’.

```
1 “I have a great idea,” said my son. Let’s have a BBQ lunch.”

2 “Yes, a barbecue by the river,” said Kim.

3 “Good idea,” said my oldest daughter.

4 “Great,” said my youngest daughter.

5 “Wonderful. We’ll have a barbie by the river,” I said. “I’ll take some sausages out of the freezer.”

6 “Oh, great,” said my son. “I love snags on the barbie.”

7 “Me too,” said my oldest daughter. “Barbecue sausages are my favourite food.”

8 “I’m getting hungry just thinking about them,” said Kim.

9 So we quickly put everything we needed for the barbecue into a big bag.
```

Now write the different words down.

_________________________  ____________________________  _______________________
_________________________  ____________________________

Find a word that means ‘great’ in line 5. _______________________

What is ‘them’ in line 8? __________________________
Activity: Notice the sounds the letters in words make. 
(Listen to your teacher read the text.)

Initial sounds: / s /      / sh /

It was Monday morning. I woke up at 7 am. Then I remembered I was on holiday from work, so I went back to sleep.

I woke up again at 10 am. Then I had breakfast. I was really hungry, so I had three pieces of toast with jam and a large bowl of cereal. I also had a nice cup of tea.

“Mum, are you finally up?” shouted my four children.

“Yes,” I said. “I’m just finishing my breakfast.”

Write down the words in the text that have an / s / sound at the beginning of the word.

______        _______        ________        ________        ________

Write down the word in the text that has a / sh / sound at the beginning of the word.

_____________

Now write down all the words that have an / s / sound in the middle or at the end of the word. Ex: breakfast (Hint: the letter ‘c’ sometimes make an / s / sound)

________________________________________________________________________

Write down the word that has a / z / sound at the end of the word.

________(Hint: the word has 3 letters)

Write down the word that has a / sh / sound in the middle of the word.

_____________
Activity: Put the sentences into the correct order.

“Quick, mum. Let’s start cooking,” said my son. “I’m so hungry.”

We drove to the picnic area where there were gas barbecues.

We took out the cooking oil, the tongs and the tomato sauce.

We got out of the car and spread the blanket under a shady tree.

Then we put the cups and plates on the blanket.

We could smell other people cooking their sausages.

We also put the bottles of drink and the food on the blanket.
Activity: Label the pictures. Look at the picture below and label them. Go back to the story to find the answers.

a large bowl of cereal
a large blanket
some barbecue tongs
a big bag
a packet of chips
a packet of biscuits
Activity: **Underline the past tense verbs**

It was Monday morning. I woke up at 7 am. Then I remembered I was on holiday from work, so I went back to sleep.

I woke up again at 10 am. Then I had breakfast. I was really hungry, so I had three pieces of toast with jam and a large bowl of cereal. I also had a nice cup of tea.

We put in some cooking oil, some barbecue tongs and some tomato sauce into the bag. We put cups and plates into the bag. We put in a big bottle of water and a big bottle of soft drink.

Then we put in the food. We put in some bread, a packet of chips, a packet of chocolate biscuits and some fruit.

We could smell other people cooking their sausages.

**Now write the 2 sentences that have the word ‘at’.**

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

**Write the 2 sentences that have the word ‘so’.**

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________
Activity: Write a word from the story on the line.

1. “It’s empty,” said Kim. There are no ______________ in the bag.”

2. “But where are the ______________?” cried my son.

3. “I think we forgot to put the ______________ in the bag, mum,” said Kim.

4. “What, no ______________?” cried my son. “How are we going to have a barbecue lunch without ______________?”

5. “I don’t know,” I said. “I think we’re having another bad hair day. Maybe we should just go __________.”

6. “No, mum. We can’t go __________,” said my oldest daughter. “We can still have a nice ______________ by the river.”

7. “Yeah, “ Kim said. “We’ll just have a vegetarian __________.”

8. “Great idea,” said my children. So we did have a very nice __________ by the river.

And our tomato sauce and bread sandwiches were ____________________.
Activity: Concentration - Cut out cards. Match words that go together. Then mix up cards and turn cards face down. Pick up one card and try to match with another. Read words on cards. (There is more than one possible match.)

Ex: school + holiday = school holiday

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>morning</th>
<th>chocolate</th>
<th>biscuits</th>
<th>art</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>museum</td>
<td>great</td>
<td>idea</td>
<td>younger</td>
<td>sister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cooking</td>
<td>oil</td>
<td>older</td>
<td>sister</td>
<td>gas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBQ</td>
<td>swimming</td>
<td>pool</td>
<td>big</td>
<td>breakfast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>picnic</td>
<td>area</td>
<td>big</td>
<td>bag</td>
<td>vegetarian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lunch</td>
<td>oldest</td>
<td>daughter</td>
<td>soft</td>
<td>drink</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shady</td>
<td>tree</td>
<td>nice</td>
<td>lunch</td>
<td>barbecue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sausages</td>
<td>tomato</td>
<td>sauce</td>
<td>school</td>
<td>holiday</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Activity: Put the events from the story in the order in which they happened (1-12).

_____ Kim walked home with her brother and younger sister.
_____ Kim felt sick because she forgot her homework.
_____ A clever classmate helped Kim do her maths problems.
_____ Kim’s best friend gave Kim her spare hat.
_____ Kim woke up very late.
_____ Kim wrote herself a long list.
_____ Kim’s classmate shared her lunch with Kim.
_____ Kim came to school late.
_____ Kim and her brother and younger sister waited for their mum to pick them up from school.
_____ Kim’s teacher reminded her to bring her homework to school the next day.
_____ Kim grabbed a chocolate biscuit.
_____ Kim’s teacher just smiled at Kim when she was late.

*Remember to look at the story again to check your answers.*
Activity: Write a note like Kim’s for your forgetful teacher

Situation: Your teacher is very forgetful. He must be getting old! He always forgets which classroom to go to. He forgets to bring a whiteboard pen. He also forgets to correct students’ homework. He even forgets students’ names. Sometimes he forgets morning break. And he forgets to wear his watch, so he is always late!

Things to remember for tomorrow

* *
* *
* *
* *
* *

!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Are you sometimes forgetful too? Do you find it difficult to remember to do things? Sometimes it helps to write yourself a list.

Now write a list for yourself for the things you want to remember to do this week. Write your list in your writing book.
Activity: Use the past tense verbs in the box to complete the sentences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>grabbed</th>
<th>played</th>
<th>walked</th>
<th>went</th>
<th>tapped</th>
<th>met</th>
<th>waited</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>weren’t</td>
<td>was</td>
<td>felt</td>
<td>forgot</td>
<td>ran</td>
<td>left</td>
<td>smiled</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I woke up late. I got dressed quickly and I __________ a biscuit to eat. I _________ to the bus stop. I ____________ for the bus for 10 minutes. I __________ very tired from running. The bus finally came. I got on the bus and sat down. Someone __________ me on the shoulder. I turned around. It was one of my classmates. We talked and then we got off the bus together. We ______________ from the bus stop to school. On the way we __________ another classmate. We ______________ to our classroom. I __________ happy because we __________ late for class. The teacher wasn’t in the classroom. I __________ a game on my mobile phone. After 20 minutes the teacher finally arrived. He walked quickly into the classroom. “I’m so sorry I’m late. I ____________ to wear my watch,” _______ the teacher. We just ____________ at him.

Now put the ‘ed’ past tense verbs into the correct sound group.

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>/ t /</th>
<th>/ id /</th>
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</table>
Activity: Go back to the story to find out why Kim described the people in her school life in this way. Discuss with a classmate.

*Kim had:*

- a kind teacher
- an understanding teacher
- a great best friend
- a thoughtful classmate
- a clever classmate
- a reasonable teacher
- helpful classmates

Activity: Find these sentences in the story.

I was lucky to have such an understanding teacher. Page _____
I was lucky to have such a great best friend. Page _____

Find 2 other sentences like this in the story and write them down below.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Now write your own sentences about people or situations in your life now. (You will use the present tense, not the past tense.)

Ex: I am lucky to have such a great daughter.
    I am lucky to have such a beautiful flat.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
**Activity: Noticing the sounds that a letter makes.**

I met my younger sister and brother at the school gate. We waited for our mum to pick us up.

After ten minutes she didn’t come. We waited 10 more minutes and she still didn’t come. Finally, we decided to walk home.

My sister and my brother were angry. But I wasn’t. I felt happy. I was happy because I was thinking about my nice teacher, my great best friend and my helpful classmates.

---

**Write down all the words that have the letter ‘y’. (at the beginning, in the middle or at the end of a word)**

| / / | / / | / / | / / |

Say the words and below each word write the sound that the letter ‘y’ makes. The sound could be: / e / / i / / y /

Now think of ‘y’ words you know and put them in the chart below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>/ e /</th>
<th>/ i /</th>
<th>/ y /</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tbody>
</table>
Activity: Question/Answer concentration

Match the question word with the phrase that goes with it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who</th>
<th>What</th>
<th>When</th>
<th>Where</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Why</td>
<td>Who</td>
<td>What</td>
<td>When</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where</td>
<td>Why</td>
<td>smiled at Kim?</td>
<td>did Kim eat for lunch?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>did Kim write a list?</td>
<td>did Kim write a list?</td>
<td>did Kim write a list?</td>
<td>is your teacher?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is your surname?</td>
<td>is your birthday?</td>
<td>are you from?</td>
<td>do you study English?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Put the question word with the phrase that goes with it. Then answer the questions.

Listen to the 5 question words. Which word has a different beginning sound?

Who  What  When  Where  Why
Activity: Pretend you are Kim. Write a short letter to a friend telling your friend what a funny day you had. You don’t have to tell your friend everything that happened.

Dear ______________

Hello. How are you? I’m OK, but I had a really funny day today. Let me tell you about it.

It all started when I woke up late for school. ____________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

What a funny day! I’ll say goodbye for now. Don’t forget to write to me!

Your friend

__________________
Activity: Look at the picture below of the front cover of the book. Label each person in the picture.

1. ___________________________  2. __________ 3.__________________________

4. ________________________________  5. __________________________________

Write 1 sentence about each person.

1. ______________________________________________________________________

2. ______________________________________________________________________

3. ______________________________________________________________________

4. ______________________________________________________________________

5. ______________________________________________________________________