

Telling Tales in English

by Wendy Superfine and Megan James
DELTA Publishing 2003
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Cassette 1-900783-50-9

'Children hear stories from an early age in their own culture and by using a tale which is familiar to the child in their mother tongue, they will be able to understand the pattern of events and guess the meaning of unknown language.'

This is the foundation on which the authors have based this book of stories for children. Stories constitute a vital part of language instruction for any age group. *Telling Tales in English*, which is designed for teachers of pupils aged 8-11, suggests new ways of presenting stories and practising target language items. What makes the book different from classical collections of tales is that it includes brand-new stories as well as those which students will already be familiar with, although these new stories often have a simple and familiar moral. The language used in the stories is recycled in various ways and in different contexts throughout the book.

Each of the five stories is supported by material for several lessons, with each lesson practising a different language item. The material is all photocopiable and includes many fun-filled activities. For each lesson, teachers are provided with a

step-by-step classroom procedure together with information on the stories, the language syllabus, lists of key vocabulary and structures, guidance on preparing and using the photocopiable pages and guidelines on how to move on with the story. Flexibility is evident everywhere: teachers can expand or reduce the lessons as they wish. Students have the opportunity both to prepare their own materials to use in class and to produce various types of artwork while doing the activities. Several well-known games, such as *Bingo*, along with a range of new ones, teach children about the importance of taking turns, following rules, sharing, winning and losing.

There is also a cassette accompanying the book, which contains all the stories, listening texts, songs and chants. Given the age-group this is intended for, I would have expected the cassette to appeal a little more to the students. In this respect, I found it rather



disappointing. I felt that there needed to be more special effects. When the shoemaker was making the shoes, for example, we could only hear the voice. The narration could have been more dramatised, with different voices reflecting the personalities of the various characters. Nevertheless, the cassette is clear and easy to understand.

Apart from this small point, I think the book is a considerable success. It differs from traditional collections of stories because of its unique procedures and layout. It adds fun and interest to well-known stories as well, creating the illusion that you're hearing them for the first time in your life!

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Top-Up Listening 1

by Chris Cleary, Bill Holden
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Finding a text that actually teaches students *how* to listen is not an easy task. Many listening texts simply test students' comprehension or provide too much recording script and turn a listening activity into a reading activity.

Although *Top-Up Listening*, a three-book skills-based series, provides a lot of scripts and students can end up reading what they hear, the exercises are designed to show students the difference between the written and spoken forms of the language.

Each unit in *Top-Up Listening 1* includes a 'Listening Clinic', which highlights frequently occurring phonological points, described by the authors as 'Lost Sounds', 'Joined Sounds', 'Helping Sounds', 'Changing Sounds', 'Mixed Sounds' and 'Weak Forms'. These features are successfully described in simplified terms without using technical jargon, and the authors guide students through activities that will assist them in hearing and seeing the difference between spoken and written English. The audio CD that accompanies

