



Fiction

Oxford Level 12 Pack B

Doohickey and the Robot

Author: Jonathan Emmett

Range: Fantasy story

Theme: Mistakes

Teaching Notes authors: Thelma Page and Gill Howell

Synopsis

Doohickey answers an advertisement for a professor's assistant. When the professor leaves him with a boring list of jobs to do, Doohickey decides to get help from the professor's newest invention, a robot.

Group or guided reading

Introducing the book

- Read the title and the blurb on the back cover. Ask: *What do you think might go wrong? What seems to be going wrong in the picture on the front?*
- Read the name of the main character. Explain that the word 'doohickey' is used, like 'thingummy', for something that is unknown or forgotten. *Why do you think the author might have chosen this name for a character?*

Strategy check

- On page 8, find a question. *Who is asking the question? Who is supposed to answer it?*
- Ask the children to change the word order to make this into a statement. *How would this change the meaning of the story?*
- Find a question on page 29. *Who was supposed to answer this question? How could you change it into a statement? Which word for 'said' would you use?*
- Find another question that doesn't expect an answer on page 32. Change it into a statement that Doohickey might have made instead.

Independent reading

Focus: Explain that you want the children to think about this question while reading:

What was the main event in each chapter?

- Ask the children to read the story independently while individuals read aloud to you.
- If children are aware of the humour in the story, can they explain why something is funny?
- Ask questions to make sure that children are following the sequence of events in the story.

Returning and responding to the text

- Ask one of the children to tell you the main event of Chapter 1.
- Make a list of chapters and main events.
- Look at the list and ask:
 - *Which chapters introduced the characters and the setting?*
 - *Which chapter has the beginning of the build-up?*



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- Which chapters extend the build-up?
- Which chapter has the climax and resolution?
- Which chapters all describe the mistakes the robot made? (Chapters 4, 5 and 6)
- Do you think they could all have been in one chapter?
- Discuss the way the author breaks up the long list of robot mistakes.
- Look at the list of chapters and events. *Would this give you enough information to tell or write the story? Have we left anything out?*

Speaking and listening activities

- Use the list on page 53 to remind the group of the mistakes the robot made in following instructions. Have the list available as a prompt.
- Ask the children to choose one of the jobs the robot did.
- Ask them to recount what happened to the group, using their voice to make it interesting.
- As soon as one child completes retelling one task, ask another to continue, choosing a different job from the list and explaining what happened.
- Encourage the children to use their own ideas and phrases to describe what happened.
- Praise children for retelling the event in an entertaining manner.

Further reading activities

- Ask the children to scan Chapter 2 of the book to find all the sayings that the professor had tried to make into inventions. Ask them to find the two sayings on page 18. They should choose one of the sayings and explain what it means to the class or group.
- Suggest they read another story about a robot: *Scrapman*, *Scrapman and Scrapcat*, or *Scrapman and the Incredible Flying Machine*, all by Carolyn Bear (TreeTops Level 12, Level 12 Pack B and Level 12 Pack C). *What is similar to this story? What is different?*

Suggestions for using ICT

- Search the Internet to find out the story of *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*. Ensure that the children only have access to child-friendly sites. Notice the similarities and differences with this story.
- Encourage the children to use the computer to write a description of one of the inventions described in the first two chapters of the book. They could use a drawing program to draw the invention.

Writing activities

- Look at the list of chapters and main events made during the reading session. *How might this story have had a different ending?*
- Brainstorm ideas and make a list of possibilities, e.g.
 - the list was put together correctly and all the jobs were done well by the robot;
 - the robot's controls malfunctioned and it did the same job over and over again;
 - the dog, Newton, altered the instructions to get Doohickey into trouble;
 - the cat reprogrammed the robot and put things right.



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- Ask each child to rewrite the chapters list, changing the events to create their own new ending.
- Ask everyone to rewrite the final chapters of the story.

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