

Baby Possum's Blackberries

This resource was produced in partnership with Oxygen for The Story Exchange project (focusing on *how oral storytelling can support teachers to improve emotional literacy in the classroom*). Funded by Paul Hamlyn Foundation.

A story from Australia

Recommended Key Stage: EYFS

Synopsis: A baby possum longs to eat delicious blackberries. When he sneaks out late at night he encounters a terrible, scary monster who is always one step ahead, until his mother gives the baby possum some valuable advice – smile at the monster.

Part 1: Share the Story

Begin by looking at a world map. Identify where the UK is and then show where Australia is. Ask children to suggest ways to travel there. Get everyone to climb aboard a plane and let the pilot fly the class to Australia – children form a line behind the teacher, the pilot, and then everyone moves around the classroom, journeying to Australia. You could also to share images of Australia and weather conditions.

Watch the video **Stories from the Whispering Wood: Baby Possum's Blackberries**

If it is possible – share blackberries with the class so everyone knows what they taste like.

Part 2: Discuss the story

Use the questions below to begin a discussion about the story

Questions

- Did you enjoy the story? Why/not?
- Which was your favourite part? Why?
- Which part(s) didn't you like? Why?
- How do you think Baby Possum felt when his mum wouldn't let him go to the blackberry bush?
Show how the Baby Possum felt (spend some time looking at the children's responses)
How did Baby Possum feel at the end of the story? Show how Baby Possum felt – contrast this to the previous response.

Part 3: Play the Story

Activities	
Story Walk Students stand in their own space around the room. They have each become the baby possum in their own story worlds. Read out Resource A line by line. As you read, the students use the space to mime the story.	
Would you rather...? <i>This could be built into the Story Walk or be carried out after.</i> • <u>Would you rather...</u> eat blackberries or broccoli? <i>Children move to one side of the room or the other. Ask a couple to explain why they've chosen their side.</i> • <u>Would you rather...</u> keep thinking about the blackberries or begin to feel a little nervous about the forest? <i>Children move to one side of the room or the other. Ask a couple to explain why they've chosen their side.</i> • <u>Would you rather...</u> keep going to the blackberries or go home? <i>Children move to one side of the room or the other. Ask a couple to explain why they've chosen their side.</i> • <u>Would you rather...</u> go back all by yourself or go back with your mum? <i>Children move to one side of the room or the other. Ask a couple to explain why they've chosen their side.</i>	Freeze Frames Tell the story. Stop at different points and encourage the children to freeze showing the emotions of the character. Eg. Creeping through the forest Looking in the lake Hearing the owl hoot in the forest Showing how brave you are Making faces Sit the children in pairs and label them A and B Ask A to pull a face and B to try to copy it. Try the other way round Provide mirrors and let the children look at themselves as they make different faces: smiling, frowning, wide eyes...

Part 4: Story Stimulus

Activities	
Freeze Frames Tell the story. Stop at different points and encourage the children to freeze showing the emotions of the character. • Focus on one of the characters – Baby Possum or Mum • Ask the children to freeze frame (working independently) when Baby Possum was happy/scared/determined – encourage the children to draw on both the 'Story Walk' activity to help them. • Repeat for Mum – happy/surprised/comforting • Try to introduce one of the tangential characters. e.g. the snake or owl, – how might they be feeling when they see Baby Possum on his way to the lake and on his way back from the lake. • Each time the children show, spend some time looking at each other's choices as they may not have all chosen the same point in the story. Can the children explain their story section and why they've chosen it? • Introduce working in a small group - 4 at the most. • Each group chooses their favourite part of the story to freeze frame. Each child taking on a character and thinking about the feelings of that character. • E.g. When the owl and snake watch Baby Possum running home and Mum is there at home to comfort him. Baby Possum is scared, owl and snake may be worried and Mum is caring and comforting. • Can the others in the class recognise the story section and/or feelings being shown?	Physical Emotion Graph Introduce the simple emotion wheel to the class. Discuss the emotions Baby Possum feels through the story happy-determined-scared using vocabulary suited to your class. Draw a shape in the air to trace the emotional journey of Baby Possum through the story. Agree what we mean when our hands are low near the carpet and as they move high. Banishing your Monsters Children talk about or draw something they find scary. Work together to think of ways to banish the monster – smiling at it, reading it a story, turning it into something silly

Part 5: Taking it Further

Similar Stories

Cat and Mouse (Europe)

Quackling (Europe)

The Winter Cabin (Europe/Asia)

The Empty Pot (Asia)

EYFS Framework Links

As well as the ELG for communication and literacy, this story also supports PSHE:

PSHE –

ELG: Self-Regulation

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Show an understanding of their own feelings and those of others and begin to regulate their behaviour accordingly.
- Set and work towards simple goals, being able to wait for what they want and control their immediate impulses when appropriate.
- Give focused attention to what the teacher says, responding appropriately even when engaged in activity, and show an ability to follow instructions involving several ideas or actions.

The Story Exchange was a Paul Hamlyn funded project run in partnership between Oxygen and the Story Museum focusing on the inquiry question: *how can oral storytelling support teachers to improve emotional literacy in the classroom?* Storytellers from the Story Museum worked with class teachers in seven Oxfordshire schools to co-teach sessions which have been distilled into these resources to share with the wider community.



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Baby Possum's Blackberries

Resource A: Story Walk Prompts

- You are Baby Possum and you love blackberries. Lick your lips and look excited to eat some.
- Your mum tells you the nearest blackberry bush is on an island, through the forest and it is too dangerous. "Wait until you're older." Show how disappointed you feel.
- One night you wait until your mum is asleep, keep quiet and sneak up to your mum, check she is asleep.
- Tip toe out of your house in the tree, down the lane and towards the forest.
- As you get closer to the forest show how you feel.
- A snake has appears and makes you jump in fright. All jump and show you are scared. The snake tells you about the monster in the lake.
- You feel very scared, but you keep going.
- An owl hoots at you and makes you jump in fright. All jump and show you are scared. The owl tells you about the monster in the lake.
- You feel very scared, but you keep going.
- When you reach the lake you can see the shape of the blackberry bushes in the dark. Lip your lips as you think about the juicy berries.
- Look down to the edge of the lake. There's a monster and it looks angry. Make your fiercest face to show you are not scared!
- Oh no! The monster makes a fierce face, you get scared and hurry home.
- The next night you decide to try again. Show how brave you are. Tip toe out of your tree house and down the lane.
- Pick up a big stick to take with you. You feel so brave. Keep going through the forest. Ignore the snake and the owl.
- When you reach the lake, lip your lips as you think about the juicy blackberries. Peer into the water and raise your stick.
- Ahh! The monster has a big stick as well!
- Drop your stick and hurry home, show how you are feeling.
- Mum is awake when you get home. Tell your mum what you have been doing.
- Mum wants you to go back again. Shake your head, you are too scared.
- Mum tells you to smile at the monster instead. Practise smiling at the monster.

Learning Resource

- Set off down the lane and through the forest. You feel very scared but you are trying to be brave.
- Peer into the water and smile at the monster. Look it is smiling back!
- Point to the blackberries. Look the monster is pointing back. You are amazed Mum's idea is working.
- Step carefully into the water and wade across to the island. Pick some blackberries and eat them, Yummy!