



**Book Title: The Bear Under the Stairs (2008) Helen Cooper**

**Learning and Development**

**Creating the language-learning environment.**

Why? To acknowledge and extend children's experiences and develop their vocabulary.

**A Unique Child**

Who is valued and listened to:

- Contributes to discussion
- Relates the story content to their own experiences
- Develops their own ideas
- Initiates conversations with adults and children

**Positive Relationships**

That build and support communication by:

- Sharing experiences
- Gaining insight into the feelings of others
- Learning to interpret the behaviour of others
- Listening to and empathising with others
- Developing the ability to converse with peers and adults

**Enabling Environments**

**1. Prepare**

Choose a picture book that will appeal to the group of children. If you want to read the whole story, make sure the written text is brief. The main objective is to get the children talking and having conversations with you and each other.

- Make sure you are very familiar with the story.
- Think about the kinds of prompts and questions you will use to think and talk about the story.
- Remember the golden rules: ask open-ended questions; recast and expand what children say.
- Before you start, ensure you have thought about: the ways in which children might be able to relate the story to their own lives; the new vocabulary that you will introduce in reading and talking about the story; follow-up experiences and activities to consolidate this vocabulary.

**2. Story prompts** – including open-ended questions and enabling statements

Prompts and open ended questions might include:

- I wonder why William thought he's seen a bear under the stairs?
- (prompt) What did he really see under the stairs? Why did he think it was a bear?
- I don't think I'd like a bear under my stairs ....
- Why did William decide to give the bear some food?
- (prompt) What did he think a hungry bear could do?
- Why was there a bad smell coming from under the stairs?

**3. Relate the story to the children's experiences**

Prompts might include:

- I wonder if you're scared of bears, like William?
- When I was little, I was scared of .....

It is important to end the discussion on a reassuring note – like William, we can learn there's really nothing to be scared of.

**4. Extend the children's vocabulary**

Focus on some of the vocabulary introduced in the book and discussion:

- The book is rich in verbs – scared, wondered, noticed, slammed, threw
- It contained nouns children might not know: lair, hazelnuts, haddock
- Discussion could include descriptive words: huge, enormous, gigantic, terrifying, fierce
- You could explore positional language – 'under' and 'near'

**5. Design follow-up experiences/activities to consolidate new vocabulary**

Consolidate understanding and use of some of the vocabulary introduced in the book:

- Go on a 'noticing' walk in the outside area or nearby park – get the children to tell what they notice during the walk e.g. bird singing, a worm in the mud, a pretty flower, a police siren. Talk about what each child notices.
- Set up a game of 'under' and 'over' with spoken instructions e.g. crawl under the bench; step over the stick; jump over the cushion; wriggle under the blanket
- Make a collection of teddy bears in a pillowcase and take turns to pull one out and describe it.