

These notes are for:

- 2+ years
- Pre-primary/Early Primary

Key Learning Areas:

- English
- Art
- ICT
- HSIE/SOSE
- PDHPE

Example of:

- Picture Book
- Onomatopoeic Language
- First Person Narrative

Experience of:

- Imaginary Play
- School Environment

Values addressed:

- Doing Your Best
- Responsibility
- Safety
- Helping

Resources Required:

- Multiple copies of the PB edition
- Big Book for class reading
- Paper, pens and scissors

*Notes may be downloaded and printed for regular classroom use only.

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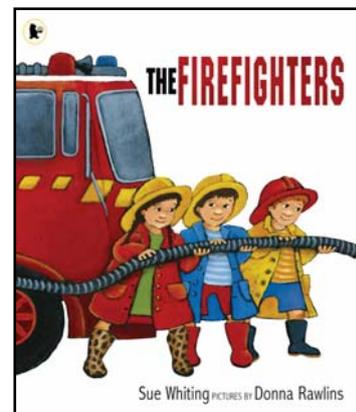
The Firefighters - Overview

The Firefighters (pb)

By: Sue Whiting
 Illustrated By: Donna Rawlins
 ISBN: 9781921529498
 ARRP: \$15.95
 NZRRP: \$17.99
 No. of Pages: 32
 April 2010

The Firefighters Big Book

By: Sue Whiting
 Illustrated By: Donna Rawlins
 ISBN: 9781921529702
 ARRP: \$39.95
 NZRRP: \$44.99
 No. of Pages: 32
 April 2010



Outline:

Jack, Mia, the narrator and their teacher, Mrs Iverson, are pretending to be firefighters. They zoom through the playground in their pretend fire engines and save the imaginary Lulu's Ice-Creamery from destruction. Just when they think their adventure is over, a real fire engine with real firefighters on board arrives for a surprise visit.

A lively picture book about firefighters that is relevant to both primary and pre-primary settings. It taps into the child's world of imaginary play and explores the concept of play-centred learning. This book captures both boys' and girls' intrigue with fire engines and firefighters.

Author Information: Sue Whiting

After developing a passion for children's literature as a primary school teacher, **Sue Whiting** now works full-time in the field she loves, dividing her time between working as a children's book editor and writing stories for young people. Sue has over sixty children's books published, ranging from rhyming romping verse for the very young to novels for pre-teens.

Illustrator Information: Donna Rawlins

Donna Rawlins was born in Melbourne, Australia. She has worked in Publishing (in-house and freelance) as a designer, editor, illustrator and writer since 1979 and has taught (part-time) illustration and graphic design in tertiary and TAFE since 1983. Donna tours and lectures regularly in Australia and internationally, running workshops for students, teachers, librarians and is actively involved in voluntary work dedicated to children's literature and early childhood intervention for children with special needs.

How to use these notes:

This story works on many levels. The suggested activities are therefore for a wide age and ability range. Please select accordingly.

Sue Whiting on writing *The Firefighters*:

“Many months after a conversation in the office about the need for a book about a fire truck visiting a school, I awoke early one morning with the voices of the narrator, Mia and Jack in my head, screaming through a classroom pretending to be firefighters. The story continued to “haunt” me until I wrote it down. It was then that I realised that the characters and the story had been inspired by the last class I taught as a Primary School Teacher and that I was drawing on their boundless enthusiasm for learning and imaginative play.”

Donna Rawlins on illustrating *The Firefighters*:

“Drawing and painting children at play is probably my favourite part of being an illustrator because it takes me back to the happiest times in my childhood. I was the youngest (by several years) of three kids and spent much of my time in imaginative play by myself. I also followed a boy in birth order and so, many of my toys were hand-me-down trains and lorries, bulldozers and Meccano. So, *The Firefighters* was a very nostalgic text for me to illustrate. The pictures are painted with dry brush acrylics on a black background. Painting this way makes the colours very saturated and brilliant because they contrast radically with the black paint showing through from beneath. Children will get the same result using oil pastels on black paper.”

Listening and Speaking Activities:

- Prior to listening to a reading of *The Firefighters*, examine the cover, title and back cover blurb. What do you think the book is about and why?
- Class discussion: Was there really a fire? How do you know? Why were the children being firefighters, if there wasn't a fire?
- What imaginary objects did the children use for their fire engine, uniforms, fire hose, oxygen masks, the fire? Is it fun using your imagination in this way? Why/why not?
- Does the narrator in the story enjoy pretending to be a firefighter? How can you tell?
- Have you ever pretended to be a firefighter? Have you pretended to be something else? For example, a rock star, a ballerina, or maybe a racing car driver? Invite children to describe similar games of pretend they have played.
- Why do you think the real firefighters came to school? Who do you think organised this?
- What do you think Jack, Mia and the narrator were thinking when the fire engine drove into the playground?

Reading Activities:

- Some of the text is in large black capitals. Why? What does this tell you to do when you are reading it? Re-read the text, emphasising these parts.
- List the features of the “pretend” fire engines. Then list the features that the children might have been imagining their fire engines had.
- Discuss the use and purpose of speech or quotation marks. Read the book again, clapping each time a speech mark is used.
- Divide the class into four groups: Jack, Mia, Mrs Iverson and the narrator. Read the book together, with each group only reading the part that belongs to the name of their group.
- Some parts of the story are imagined, some really happen. Create a chart showing the real parts and the imagined parts.

Example:

Pretend fire engine	How the children might have imagined it
cardboard box brown no bottom	red, shiny huge wheels siren

Writing Activities:

- The narrator describes the (imagined) fire as:

“The fire is hot. Flames crack and pop and tickle the sky. The smoke is really stinky.”

As a class develop a word bank of words that describe fire. Use all the senses – what it looks like, how it smells, the noises it makes etc. Then jointly write a short description.
- Look at the illustration of the real fire engine. Discuss its features. View photos of other fire engines. List features, equipment and write a description. Draw a picture of a fire engine and label its features and equipment.
- How do you think the children made their fire engine? Could you make a better one? Draw a plan of the fire engine you would like to make, then write a procedure on how to make it.
- The siren makes a loud noise. The author has written it as EEE-ORR. In America, they write the siren noise as WEE-OOO. In the UK, it is NEE-NAH. Make a list of other loud noises (helicopter, car, telephone, washing machine etc). How would you spell these noises?
- Research firefighters. Write an information report about the role of a firefighter. [See HSIE section]
- View safety posters. Make a fire safety poster that tells people what to do if there is a fire. [See Health section]

Cross-curricular Activities

HSIE/SOSE: Workers in the Community

- Discuss the role of firefighters in the community. What are their roles and responsibilities? What do they do? Why do we need them? What special equipment do they need? What situations do they sometimes find themselves in?
- Search for pictures of firefighters and their equipment. Research firefighters and their roles and responsibilities. Organise information into a retrieval chart. Research other community workers and compare.
- Locate local fire stations on a map.
- In the story, the firefighters visit the school. Why is this important? Organise a visit from a firefighter (or an email interview). Prior to the visit/interview compile a list of questions. E.g. What do you do? Why do you do it? How can the community help?
- Make an appreciation award and present it to local firefighters.
- Investigate the rural bushfire service. Why do we need it? Why are so many of the rural firefighters volunteers? Why is this important? What special equipment is needed for fighting bushfires?

HEALTH/PE/PD: Safe Living – what to do in an emergency

- When the fire engine visits the school, the firefighters tell the children to “get down low and go, go go”. What does this mean? Why is it important?
- What other things should you do in case of a fire? Discuss other safety measures such as: “It’s cool to know 000”, “Stop, drop and roll”, evacuation plans, importance of smoke alarms etc. Role play various fire safety measures.

Art:

- The illustrator, Donna Rawlins, has used a technique called dry brush. She painted the figures with black paint then painted over the top with bright colours to create the rich colours in the illustrations. Try to experiment with this technique by painting a black picture, then going over the top with bright crayons, or by drawing and colouring on black card.
- Look at Sue Whiting’s website:

www.suewhiting.com

What other books has Sue Whiting written?
What interesting facts can you find out about her?
- For further information about fire safety, visit the NSW Fire Brigade website:

www.fire.nsw.gov.au

Big Book Literacy Activities:

1. Developing Sight Vocabulary and Word Knowledge

- Prior to reading the book, ask the class to think of words you might expect to find in a book titled *The Firefighters*. Record each word on a card and give the card to the child who thought of it. Read the book. Have children hold up their card when/if their word is used. Discuss which words were used most often and why. (This activity can also be done by recording the words on the board and keeping a tally.)
- Put the word cards along the board edge. Now read the book page by page and invite children to find and match words on the cards with words in the book.
- Use the words from the cards to create a word bank display.
- The children in the story are pretending that the boxes are fire engines. What else could the boxes be? Make a list on the board. Beside each suggestion, record words that could describe it. Example:
BUS: big/slow/bumpy/double-decker/noisy
BILLYCART: wooden/brown/fast/rattly
- Have children complete the following sentence modelled on the text: "Our fire engines are fast and noisy – just like the real ones".

My _____ is _____ and _____ – just like _____.

Ask children to illustrate their sentences and then staple sheets together to form a class big book for sharing and for vocabulary development.

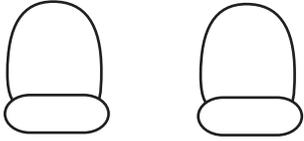
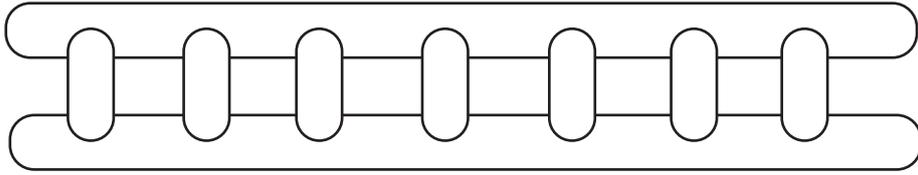
- Read the book to the class and ask children to clap every time a particular high frequency word is read (and/is/the/our /we etc).
- Ask children to locate words on the page that have specific characteristics. Eg: rhymes with shop, ends with 'ing', starts with 'sh', has two syllables etc.

2. Developing Reading Strategies

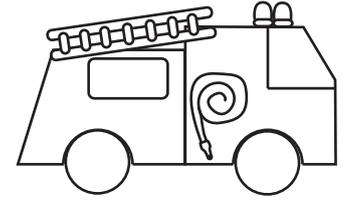
- Use Blu Tack to secure blank strips of paper over targeted words in the text to create a cloze type passage. Eg: The fire engine drives into the BLANK and stops right outside the classroom.
Read the sentence and ask children to predict what word might be behind the paper. Ask questions to prompt use of semantic and syntactic cues as a strategy. Eg: Could it be "water", "run", "house"? Why / why not?
- When children offer a possible suggestion that makes sense, eg "school", "playground", "yard", reveal first letter "y". Can it be "school"? Why not? Can it be "yard" etc. Reveal the word to confirm prediction.
- Cover a complete line of text and ask children to create a substitute line that would make sense. Discuss which makes the most sense and why.

3. Developing Fluency and Confidence

- Have the class participate in repeated shared/choral readings where intonation, phrasing and expression is modelled and practised.
- Divide the class into groups and have them read specific parts. Eg: dialogue only/narration only/words in bold only/specific character dialogue only etc.
- Substitute character names for names of children in the class. Read together.
- Select children to dramatise the story while the class reads.
- Create a reader's theatre script from the text and perform it for another class.



Worksheet:



**Create your own fire engine!
Colour, cut and paste the
shapes.**

