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AUTÓNOMA DE
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MANAGUA
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Facultad Regional Multidisciplinaria, FAREM-Estelí

Topic:

The use of storybooks to enhance the reading comprehension ability in the English Language.

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Estelí, Saturday, January 29th, 2022.





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Facultad Regional Multidisciplinaria de Estelí FAREM – Estelí

“2022: Vamos por más victorias educativas”

Endorsement Letter of Approval

Hereby it is stated that the students: **DIONMER IVÁN GÓMEZ HERNÁNDEZ**, **JAKSON OTONIEL CENTENO** and **JOSUÉ ALEXANDER BETANCO ESPINOZA**, in compliance with scientific, technical and methodological requirements, have completed their undergraduate program in English Language. They have presented the work *The use of storybooks to enhance the reading comprehension ability in the English Language* in accordance with the stipulated guidelines for undergraduate studies at the National Autonomous University of Nicaragua, UNAN – MANAGUA; in order to qualify for the Bachelor of Arts Degree in Educational Sciences, with a major in English Language Teaching.

Therefore, the aforementioned students are authorized to make the presentation and public defense of the undergraduate research project before any examining board that is deemed appropriate.

This letter is issued in the city of Estelí, on the twentieth day of the month of January of the year two thousand and twenty-two.

Sincerely,

Dr. Marjorie N. Gomez
Advisor
FAREM -Estelí

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Abstract

“The book is strength, it is courage, it is power, it is food; torch of thought and source of love”.

Rubén Darío.

The present project has the main objective to strengthen reading comprehension in English language, focused on the students of high school. We intent to propose a guideline with strategies to improve reading comprehension with the help of reading materials. In order to carry out this project it was necessary to do a literature review. There are different findings and we stand out some aspects, such as: In Nicaragua almost all people do not have the habit for reading books, because they show disinterest to read. Many of them consider the reading like boring or unnecessary. Another aspect addressed in this project is the kind of method, it is qualitative with an interpretative approach to the objective study. The method was necessary to research the natural setting of the school, the environment of teacher and students, in order to know the context. We selected the National Institute Augusto Salinas Pinell, from Somoto-Madriz, one group of students: seventh grade B, and one of the best teachers of this school. Finally, the project is focused on strengthen reading comprehension, and it is important to explain that the project is not the storybooks that we are going to give to the school, but it is to create a guideline with methodological activities, for students along with the teacher, who will carry out the effectiveness of the project.

Resumen

El libro es fuerza, es coraje, es poder, es alimento; antorcha de pensamiento y fuente de amor”.

Rubén Darío.

El presente proyecto tiene como objetivo principal fortalecer la comprensión lectora en el idioma inglés, enfocado en los estudiantes de secundaria. Pretendemos proponer una guía con estrategias para mejorar la comprensión lectora con la ayuda de materiales de lectura. Para llevar a cabo este proyecto fue necesario hacer una revisión bibliográfica. Hay diferentes hallazgos y destacamos algunos aspectos, como: En Nicaragua casi todas las personas no tienen el hábito de leer libros, porque muestran desinterés por leer. Muchos de ellos consideran la lectura como aburrida o innecesaria. Otro aspecto abordado en este proyecto es el tipo de método, es cualitativo con un enfoque interpretativo del estudio objetivo. El método fue necesario para investigar el escenario natural de la escuela, el entorno del profesor y los estudiantes, con el fin de conocer el contexto. Seleccionamos del Instituto Nacional Augusto Salinas Pinell, de Somoto-Madriz, un grupo de alumnos: séptimo grado B, y uno de los mejores docentes de esta escuela. Finalmente el proyecto está enfocado en fortalecer la comprensión lectora, y es importante explicar que el proyecto no son los cuentos que le vamos a dar al colegio, sino que es crear una guía con actividades metodológicas, para los estudiantes junto con el docente, quienes llevarán a cabo la efectividad del proyecto.

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1. Introduction

English language has four main skills: Writing, Reading, Listening, and Speaking. All of them are of utmost importance when learning English as a foreign language. Every single English learner needs to develop those skills in order to successfully become an English language speaker. That's why in every school, English teachers have to make sure that their students are improving the four skills at the same time.

As mentioned above the four skills are very important. Notwithstanding, we will address mainly the reading skill. Thus, in this project we pretend to strengthen the reading comprehension in English language of seventh-grade students at the National Institute Augusto Salinas Pinell of Somoto, Madriz. Firstly, identifying reading material that can support high school students to develop reading comprehension in the English language. Subsequently, providing a guideline to use reading material, as storybooks, to develop reading comprehension in the English language at high school level.

1.1. Problem Statement.

Reading comprehension in the English language in Nicaraguan high schools is something that in most of the cases is not implemented. There are no specific strategies to strengthen students' reading comprehension in the English language, nor is there material specifically focused on improving the reading comprehension ability. Students do not use material that would help to successfully enhance their reading comprehension ability. That kind of material targeted on upgrading the reading comprehension ability allowing them to analyze, to develop critical thinking, and to decode the message on what they read, storybooks is a good choice. There is not a focus on reading comprehension in the English language in Nicaraguan high schools. It is

important to note that although The Ministry of Education (2019) aims at the development of basic skills of skimming and scanning for reading comprehension in English, reading comprehension goes beyond those basic skills in the teaching of the English language.

There should be a more in-depth approach to reading comprehension, since it will help students in many ways. When reading, the brain cells are stimulated and cognitive thinking develops better, that is, it increases the capacity of the mind so that students can increase their ability of reading comprehension, as well as they can acquire new vocabulary and interpret the author's message. Therefore, this will help students to improve not only reading comprehension, but also English learning in general (Vital Carrillo, 2017).

Knowing how to read is not only being able to decode a set of spellings and pronounce them correctly, but fundamentally, it is about understanding what is read, that is, being able to reconstruct the global meaning of a text; this implies identifying the main idea that the author wants to communicate to us, the purpose that leads him to develop the text, the structures he uses, and so on.

1.2. Background of the Study.

Based on our experience as former high schoolers, when we were in high school, we never read any storybook in the English class. Most of the time, in the English class, we were copying from the workbook, then repeating after the teacher, and finally translating. The same happened when we carried out our specialization practices on high schools¹ two years ago. Eventually that does not help to upgrade the reading comprehension ability at all.

¹ Specialization practices on high schools refers to a required process carried out by students of the education majors in the UNAN Managua in which they have to go to public schools to specialize in the teaching profession. It is carried out during the third year of the major

Most of the public schools in Nicaragua use storybooks written by Ruben Dario to enhance reading comprehension in Spanish. Storybooks like *El Rubí*, *El Perro del Ciego*, *Betún y Sangre*, and *Las Albondigas del Coronel* are the storybooks that students read in public schools as well as the novel *Cosmapa*, and, the universal literary work known for everyone, *Don Quijote de la Mancha*. These books are provided by the MINED², they can be found in the most of public schools around the country and they remain in the principal's office. They are used whenever they are needed.

In English, there is no indication that storybooks are used in public schools in Nicaragua. The only book commonly used is the workbook which has many listening, speaking and grammar activities, and also some reading activities, but no stories like the ones used in Spanish. If in Spanish storybooks are used for reading, why not to implement its use in English as well? Its use could bring positive outcomes in the reading comprehension enhancement.

1.3. Justification.

Reading comprehension is an important skill that should be mastered by students. In teaching reading, students should have the ability of finding out main ideas, specific information, and recognize key words and the explicit meaning of the text. Students can comprehend the text properly if they have that ability. It should be noted that completing a reading comprehension task, having enough prior knowledge is very significant as well as having a clear understanding about the whole meaning of the text to be able to answer and express their ideas about the topic based on the text. However, teaching reading comprehension is not an easy task. It needs hard work and enthusiasm to make the teaching-reading process interesting.

² Ministerio de Educación (Ministry of Education)

To cope with the problem statement stated in this study; as researchers, it is a big challenge to find or create some materials that can make reading comprehension more interesting for students. After finding that material it is necessary to use it properly in order to have positive outcomes. Teachers also have to find a way to motivate students to improve their reading skills using the material.

A great reading material that can make the teaching-reading process is called storybooks. This reading material gives students the opportunity to create their ideas freely on the main theme of the text as well as give solutions to the given exercises. Storybooks also give students the opportunity to discuss and share ideas among themselves, developing in this way their critical thinking.

In the application of reading activities, storybooks are useful material in improving reading comprehension. By giving some exercises to the students, they will be focused on expressing their ideas about the main topic and trying to find out the answer, they will directly know some words that they did not know before. Besides, students can develop the ability of thinking, motivating them to learn and storybooks also can be used to improve the interaction and communicative skills. By interacting with each other, the students will be able to discover the content of the passage being discussed. It is believed that by using storybooks the interaction with the readings and finally the comprehension of the student can be improved.

1.4. Objectives.

General Objective:

- To propose a guideline targeted on strengthening reading comprehension in English language in seventh grade students of the National Institute Augusto Salinas Pinell of Somoto.

Specific Objectives:

- Identify reading material that can support high school students to develop reading comprehension in the English Language.
- Create a guideline to use reading material, as storybooks, to develop reading comprehension in the English language at high school level.

1.5. Key Terms.

- *Reading comprehension*

Reading comprehension is the ability to understand, to interpret, and to process written information. According to the chapter of (Assessment of Reading Comprehension: The RAND Reading Study Group Vision, 2005), reading comprehension is the process of eliciting and making meaning through interaction and involvement with written language. Reading comprehension is the interpretation of the sense of text, it is about conceptualization.

Walter Kintsch defined reading comprehension as the process of creating meaning from text. The purpose is to get an understanding of the text rather than to acquire meaning from individual words or sentences. The outcomes of reading comprehension are the mental representation of a text meaning that is combined with the readers' previous knowledge (Gabriel

Herrada-Valverde, 2017). Reading comprehension is a mental process and it involves the cognitive processes.

- ***Storybooks***

Storybooks are kind of collection of stories intended for children. They influence in the acquisition of the reading ability. Through reading children develop the imagination and the capacity of thinking. According to Parker & Ackerman picture storybooks are indispensable guides that transport readers to the real world by passing him from the mazes of an imaginary world. Storybooks create an acquisition of ideas and information, so that, they can be interpreted, and readers can develop the capacity of reading comprehension (Using Storybooks as a Character Education Tools , 2016).

- ***Skimming***

Skimming refers to the action which is carried out with the aim of obtaining the semantic key. It is usually developed when one is pressed for time. It is carried out by reading the first and last paragraph in short texts; in long texts, the first and last sentences of the middle paragraph must also be read (Góngora Mena, 2021). Skimming is helpful when readers want to find out quickly about the writer, what he thinks about some ideas, and for this technique readers do not read everything, they only need to read a few important words. (Beatrice S. Mikilecky, 2003)

- ***Scanning***

Scanning reading is when the reader performs in order to search for any specific information (Góngora Mena, 2021). The scanning technique helps the readers to increase their

reading comprehension. The use of this technique can minimize comprehending the words in the text based on the meaning in the dictionary (Azizah Husda, 2019).

1.6. Organization of the Manuscript.

This project is distributed in different chapters. The Introduction contains descriptive information on what the project is about, conceptualizing our topic. We set off one general objective and two specific objectives, they work as a guide for us to develop and achieve the purpose of this project.

The document contains an argued justification giving reasons why this project is being taken. In addition, the justification demonstrates the initiative that motivated us to start the project. We stated a problematic which is the main reason why we decided to carry out this significant project as well as the background information closely related to the problem stated.

Academic information is evidenced through the Literature Review. In this chapter of our project, we demonstrate with previous studies the relationship that exists with our topic and problematic. This project contains contextualized concepts with evidences and arguments.

In the chapter three, titled Body of the Project, we describe important aspects regarding the methodology we used during the elaboration of the project as well as the context in which the project will be developed, it implies the school and the participants that will be directly benefited with this project. We also aboard the ethic during the gathering of information process. Finally, we show and analyze piece by piece all the data that directly helped us to create the guideline targeted on strengthening the reading comprehension ability in the English language.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Reading Literacy in Nicaragua.

Research carried out by Grigsby Vergara in 2008 reveals how low is the level of reading literacy in Nicaragua as well as the factors that cause Nicaraguan's lack of reading, especially young people. Grigsby started his research at the Central American University (UCA). He targeted directly to its library; there he discovered some shocking figures. There are six thousand books in the library and only two books are borrowed per student every four months. The aforementioned says a lot about the willingness about reading that students have. There may be many reasons why students do read a little number of books.

One of those reasons could be that students read only when it is ordered by their professors. They do not feel pleasure when reading, so that, when it is obligatory in order to complete an assignment, they have to do it forcedly. That involves they do not read the whole book and just scan that book looking for specific details they need to successfully complete a task. Evidently, that does not help to develop their reading comprehension ability because they are just focus on finishing their homework, after that they will likely forget about the book.

Another reason is that the Internet has taken the place of books. Nowadays most of students who do research or simply feel willingness for reading do not use books. Instead of using books they prefer to use the internet, which is good, but it will not be the same as read a hard paper book. There are many factors that affect reading using the internet. When you read in your cell phone you are prone to being distracted by social media or any other function your phone has. On the other side, when you are reading using a book and you really want to read and comprehend, there is no way you can be distracted unless something extraordinary happens.

An important data that Grigsby found in his case study is that professors do not visit the library either. “You hardly see any lecturers in the library” affirms Wendy Bellanger, the UCA’s Research Department coordinator, as quoted in (Grigsby Vergara, 2008). There may be many reasons why professors do not visit the library. Probably they have their own books at home, or they likely use the internet and create the booklets they use when teaching.

2.1.1. Reading at school in Nicaragua.

“Books for Children is an NGO³ dreamed up by Mary Jo Amani, a US citizen who came to Nicaragua in the early 1990s and found the national libraries bereft of children’s literature (...). She founded Books for Children in 1993 and handed the project over three Nicaraguan educators in 1995” (Grigsby Vergara, 2008). The organization’s current director, Eduardo Báez, believes that “in a population with Nicaragua’s poverty levels it is illusory to think a family is going to put a book for the children in the shopping list” as quoted in (Grigsby Vergara, 2008).

Eduardo also points out that the main problem raises from school and the education system, which somehow vaccinates students against reading. That is, a student is not willing and able to read a book for pleasure after doing so many tasks at school. “School does not help form readers; quite the contrary, unintentionally its work gets all students at all levels to see reading as a necessary evil” reflects Eduardo Báez as quoted in (Grigsby Vergara, 2008). That explains why most college students in Nicaragua only read what they have to for their profession and do not consider reading something else just for pleasure and acquisition of new knowledge not directly related to their major in order to develop other competencies that makes them wholeness people.

³ Non-Governmental Organization.

In summary, this study case makes us aware of what we have in terms of reading literacy. It is necessary to really upgrade the low level we have due to many different factors. Education system should look for a way to make students feel that reading is not always a task they have to do for mandatory. There are libraries in most of the campus in Nicaragua, hence, students and teachers must take advantage of that fact. Reading needs to be promoted in schools, otherwise the reading literacy in Nicaragua will remain stuck and the outcomes in the classroom when putting into scene the reading comprehension ability will be always the same; students do not read properly, they are always just scanning what is pretty necessary in order to complete their tasks. The comprehension, critical thinking and other cognitive functions will be always stuck if we keep thinking the internet is the solution for everything in the educational field.

Taking into account that the research Grigsby carried out studies reading literacy in our mother tongue, Spanish, and even though the reading literacy level is low. That makes us infer that in English the reading literacy of Nicaraguans is almost null. English is not our mother tongue; although there are many students who study English they might have some basic skills, but if they usually do not read in Spanish, it is illusory to think they do it in a foreign language. English teachers should promote reading in English with the finality of enhance not only the pronunciation, intonation or boost the vocabulary of students, but also to develop the comprehension and train professionals capable of analyze deeply and think critically.

2.2. Reading Comprehension.

Reading comprehension is a linguistic competence that exerts relevant influence on the cognitive development of students. Reading properly is not a simple task. Many of us believe that we are able to read properly, but reading well does not consist only in recognizing and

putting together meanings of the words in a text, but it implies a more complex visual and mental process that is not carried out just by perceiving superficial information.

Reading comprehension involves the ability to understand and interpret a wide variety of types of texts as well as making sense of what is read by relating it to the contexts in which it appears (Salas Navarro, 2012). In other words, it trains students with extensive knowledge capable of interpreting the realities and the implicit message behind each text.

From our perspective, generally, reading comprehension is aimed at obtaining meaningful learning. It has a highly degree of importance for every English language learner. It not only helps them to pronounce well or to acquire new vocabulary, but also to develop critical thinking, to identify main ideas in a given text, to infer by context and to make predictions according to the situations that arise in the text.

2.3. Levels of Reading Comprehension.

In obedience to Ramos Chagoya (2008) the levels of reading comprehension must be understood as thought processes that take place in the reading process, which are generated progressively; to the extent that the readers can make use of their prior knowledge. For the teaching-learning process of reading, it is necessary to mention some existing levels: literal, inferential and critical.

2.3.1. Literal

Literal comprehension level: at this level the reader recognizes the phrases and key words in the text. It captures what the text says without a very active intervention of the cognitive and intellectual structure of the reader. It corresponds to a reconstruction of the text that is not to be

considered mechanical, it includes the recognition of the basic structure of the text (Gordillo Alfonso & Flórez, 2009).

Reading literally is doing it according to text. It just focusses on the explicit components in a text. Identify names, characters, the setting or context of a story, recognize the most important idea of a paragraph or text, as well as identify the order of events or actions that take place in a story and the explicit reasons for certain events. The aforementioned are examples of what literal reading is.

It is necessary to point out that in literal reading the student does not require an active intervention of cognitive skills. It is an initial interaction between the student and the text where he/she reconstructs its structure, questions and identifies key data referenced literally or explicitly. The students ask themselves: What does the author say? What does the author talk about? At the same time students identifies places, dates and significant events in the story.

2.3.2. Inferential

This level requires greater participation from the student; it is the process of understanding or assimilating explicit terms and ideas in the text. Connotative meanings are inferred and semiotic relationships are established. In other words, it is a more specific or complete comprehension about the text, it goes beyond of what is read literally in the text. Therefore, it refers to the mental acuity of the reader to deduce ideas that are implicit in the text.

Mozombite Tenazoa (2017) expresses that “the complexity of cognitive processes is increasing with respect to the literal level, since the processes that are activated are organization, interpretation, synthesis and abstraction” (p. 23). So that, it consists of analyzing and interpreting the content of a text and for this a greater interest in what is read is necessary; it is also to be able to comment or add reasonable and logic ideas about the subject matter.

2.3.3. *Critical*

The readers make judgments about the text read, they accept or reject it, but with logical foundation. Critical reading has an evaluative character where the competencies of the readers, their criteria and knowledge of what is read intervenes. It allows the readers to issue their own opinion from the text read and its relationships with other topics or texts.

“It occurs when the reader is able to judge and value the text he or she reads, either in the formal aspect or in the content. The student critically understands when he or she issues personal appreciations about the use of spelling and grammar elements, about the cohesion and coherence of the text, about the language used, when he or she questions the ideas presented, or the arguments that supports the author’s ideas, when he or she gives his or her opinion on the behavior of the characters or on the presentation of the characters or on the presentation of the text” (Gamboa Pulido, 2017, p. 21).

This level, the third in the reading comprehension process, ensures the holistic analysis of the text, starting from literalness to interpretation and assessment to finally create a critical and deep analysis of the text. At this level, relationships that allow to issue critical evaluations are established. Therefore, at the indicated level, the author’s ideas are questioned, the student is able to make criticisms against or in favor depending upon the text and the context in which the processed topic is developed. That is, the student has the power to criticize from the grammar of the text to the ideas of the author by having previously applied the two previous levels of reading comprehension.

2.4. Reading Comprehension Skills.

Reading comprehension skills, in accordance with Salazar (2014), are those that the reader should apply when reading. Now, Lee (n.d.) pointed out that there are six essential skills for reading comprehension, these are: decoding, fluency, vocabulary, sentence building & cohesion, reasoning & prior knowledge, and functional memory & attention. Hence, their development ensures the improvement of the reading comprehension competencies of individuals because by developing them, they will fully understand what they read.

2.4.1. Decoding

The decoding is a fundamental step in the process of reading. Readers use this ability to pronounce words that they have heard before, but have not seen written. The capacity to do this is the foundation of other reading skills (Lee, n.d.). In other words, it has to do with the assimilation of phonetic sounds previously heard but never before seen in its written form.

2.4.2. Fluency

Fluency increases the speed at which readers can read and understand a text. To read fluently, readers need to instantly recognize words. The word recognition is the ability to recognize complete words instantly and naked eye, without spelling them phonetically (Lee, n.d.).

When a person can read quickly and without making too many mistakes, he or she is a fluent reader. Fluent readers are able to read smoothly and at a good pace. They understand meaning of what they read and use the appropriate tone of voice when they read aloud. The fluency in reading is an essential skill for achieving good reading comprehension.

2.4.3. Vocabulary

To understand what is being read, readers need to understand most of the words in the text. Having a large vocabulary is essential for a better reading comprehension (Lee, n.d.). So that, the most words you know the more understanding you will have about what you are reading. Vocabulary can be taught to students, but its meaning is generally learnt through daily experience and mostly through reading.

2.4.4. Sentence building & cohesion

To understand how sentences are constructed might seem like a writing skill. It would also appear to connect ideas within and between sentences, which is known as cohesion. However, these skills are also of paramount importance for reading comprehension. (Lee, n.d.)

To know how ideas are related at the sentence level will help readers comprehend the meaning of paragraphs and whole texts. It will also lead to something called coherence, which is basically the ability to connect ideas within a text, in this case in an oral way.

2.4.5. Reasoning & prior knowledge

Most readers relate what they read to what they know. That's why it is important that readers have some previous experience or knowledge of the subject matter they read. They also need to be capable of "read between lines," that is, extract meaning when it is not expressed literally in the text (Lee, n.d.). This is when the inferential level of reading takes place. Through this, readers will make inferences and finally fully understand the implicit content of the text.

2.4.6. Functional memory & attention

These two skills are part of a group of skills known as executive function⁴. They are different but closely related.

When people read, their attention enables them to pick up information from the text. Functional memory allows them to retain that information and use it to understand meaning, and thus, acquire knowledge from what they read. (Lee, n.d.)

The capacity of monitoring oneself while reading is also linked to it. Readers need to be able to recognize when they do not understand something. It is necessary for them to stop and reread in order to clear up any confusion they are struggling with.

2.5. Storybooks.

Storybooks are kind of collection of stories intended for children. They influence in the acquisition of the reading ability. Through reading children develop the imagination and the capacity of thinking. According to Parker & Ackerman picture storybooks are indispensable guides that transport readers to the real world by passing him from the mazes of an imaginary world. Storybooks create an acquisition of ideas and information, so that, they can be interpreted, and readers can develop the capacity of reading comprehension (Using Storybooks as a Character Education Tools , 2016).

⁴ According to Bauermeister (2008) as cited in Méndez Romero & Sánchez Molina (2019) executive functions are complex mental activities, necessary to plan, organize, guide, review, regularize and evaluate the behavior necessary to adapt effectively to the environment and to achieve goals.

2.6. Storybooks to Improve Reading Comprehension for English Learners.

From the point of view of representation, the resources of an image allow us, among other things, to represent participants while involved in actions and events. For instance, Svenn's feelings and emotions are the central focus in the picture book; those feelings and emotions manifest themselves in relation to others and in the new environment which he is part of. The value of this representation in the book lies in the importance of highlighting and understanding social systems, and the role of participants, their characteristics, identity, feelings or any other special attribute.

As for the function of interaction, typical features such as gaze are adopted to describe the type of relationship developed between the represented participants and the reader. By interacting with picture books, we can denote different degrees of interpellation between the reader and visual literacies. Also, the reader can sympathize with the participant (Svenn) in his discovery of objects and becoming familiar with his surroundings. Moreover, the reader is given an opportunity to react to some events in the story, e.g., to show compassion towards Svenn when he gets confused (Gómez & Torrez, 2021)

Images accompanied by verbal text can help language learners understand the organization of the printed word in picture books. Each community or social group has its own written language conventions, or grammar conventions. The verbal language can help ELT learners understand how language varies according to context, and how language is organized in order to meet specific purposes and specific audiences. For instance, teachers can help children become aware of different elements in the text that can help them build meaning. Teachers can point to linguistic grammar conventions that children are familiar with, and they can use those conventions to either convey or retell Svenn's actions – or feelings – in the story.

Storybooks bring tremendous benefits to readers who are in the early stages of developing their comprehension skills. Illustrations shown alongside text offer invaluable tools to help readers build understanding, fluency, vocabulary and other foundational literacy skills. The imagery in a picture book brings the pages to life, serving as a visual roadmap for the story.

Using storybooks successfully in the classroom needs careful planning. Simply telling a story to a class without preparation can be disastrous with the loss of pupil attention, motivation and self-confidence. Although children are used to listening to stories in their mother tongue, understanding a story in a foreign language is hard work. Pupil's enjoyment will increase enormously if the teacher ensures that their understanding is supported in several ways.

The followings are studies that were carried out to prove the effectiveness of storybooks to improve the reading comprehensions skills:

- ***Storybook Read-Aloud to enhance students' comprehension skills in ESL classrooms: A Case Study.***

One of the techniques that English language teachers have been trained to implement in the English language classroom is the read-aloud technique. The read-aloud technique allows teachers to interact with their pupils when reading stories and provide opportunities to the pupils to respond as well as to comprehend the story using the English language. As the teachers interact with them, the teachers provide ample opportunities for their students to learn vocabulary, varied sentence structures and story structures in order to enhance their second language performance and at the same time to enhance their reading comprehension skill.

When students respond, they use the language and their responses show that they have understood the story. Clearly, if the reading aloud technique is properly conducted by the teachers in the second language classroom, students as early as primary two level should be able

to acquire the English language and scaffold the English language learning experiences right up to year six. This would undoubtedly help to improve the pupils' performance in learning the English language. (Ainon & Maizatulliza Mohd, 2015).

A case study approach as the researcher observed the teachers and their students in real-life classroom setting. Detailed descriptions and in-depth study of the read-aloud technique used during the storybook reading sessions are highlighted and discussed. This was an appropriate design for the study as the goal of the study was to explore and describe whether the teachers implemented the best practices of the read-aloud technique when reading stories to their pupils. Field observations provided by the researcher with an opportunity to explore the read-aloud techniques that the teachers used in the classroom while interviews with the teachers provided information on their understanding and reasons for using the read-aloud technique during their English language lessons. Analysis of data from observation field notes, interviews, and the researchers' personal reflections allowed for a thick description of the read-aloud technique that English language teachers used with their pupils.

This study was conducted in two classrooms selected from three schools which are situated in the rural area of Tanjung Malim town in the state of Perak, Malaysia. Participants for the study were three teachers selected using purposeful sampling. The participants in this study were selected based on their willingness to cooperate and participate in the research as well as the location of the schools.

Based on the findings of the teachers' use of the different prompt types during the read-aloud sessions, the teachers only used three prompt types which were completion, recall and open-ended prompt types. These three prompt types were used after the pupils had done several repeated readings of the story. Research has demonstrated that the most effective read-aloud

strategies were those in which the students were actively involved in asking and answering questions, giving comments and making predictions through the guidance of the teacher.

Teachers' prompts allowed students to engage in analytical thinking when they provided answers or made comments about the story heard. Analytic talk during read-aloud involved the teacher encouraging students to make predictions and inferences that explained a character's motivation as well as connected events in different parts of the story. Such analytic talk would have to involve the teachers using the distancing prompt type which was not utilized during their read-aloud sessions. When students are able to engage in analytical thinking, the teacher is actually tapping into their cognitive skills and eventually assisting in accelerating their literacy development. Thus, the pupils in the second language classroom would be able to develop their English language learning and academic performance if teachers engage them in analytical thinking through the use of the different prompt types.

- *Using Short Story to improve students' reading comprehension.*

English is a purely foreign language in Indonesia. That is why, Indonesian students especially Junior High School, find difficulties in learning English. There is no way for them except trying to learn English if they want to adapt themselves in this era. The success of someone in learning is often supported by his willingness to read a lot. It does not matter whether he reads scientific writing (journal or books on social or natural sciences) or popular writing (magazines, newspaper, or novels). All of that gives a lot of advantages to the reader when increasing his knowledge. The student's interest in reading is very important for improving their achievement, because if the students do not have interest in it, they will not be eager to read. (Frimasary, 2015)

The Researcher has done a pre-survey in the place that will be used as target of population in this research. In SMPN2 Kota Bengkulu especially in class VIII, they always read English materials lazily in the classroom. They said the materials or the topics were not interesting to read. They bored of the monotonous topic. That makes one reason for researcher to introduce a new way to encourage the reading willingness in student itself using short stories. The researcher used short stories because in teenagers' level, short stories are the most interesting literary works to read. It is because short stories are not too long to read and have various interesting topics. So, hopefully through this way, they can improve their comprehension in reading without boredom.

The design of this research was a quasi-experiment that there are two classes that will be observed, they are class I and J and using two material that must be taught in the class. Class I as experimental is using the material of literary work while the class J is using the book as control class. In this experiment, the materials will be taught in the two classes. Each group will be treated by use a different technique whether in short stories and handbook.

It was found that short stories can improve reading comprehension of the students. Short story made students interested and encouraged their willingness for read the text of English. After the researcher used this way for the students it was successful to increase the score of the students. The suggestions that might be beneficial in this research are:

1. The teacher should teach reading by using short stories, by using simple English and not always using monotonous text or handbook. Because not all of the students take a course and also, they have different abilities and background.

2. The control class could use reading materials delivered by the teacher in order to make the students feel not bored and monotonous while reading. Short stories can make them fresh and

also make them know about variation of reading, and lastly, they know about the contents as they said that to the researcher.

- *The effectiveness of Storybook on Students' reading comprehension on first grade students of SMPN 2 Padang Panjang.*

Storybook is a book used for students to improve reading comprehension through pictures and interaction with the hard-paper books. The purpose of this research was to find out whether a storybook is effective or not on students' reading comprehension. This research also aimed to know students' opinions on storybooks for reading comprehension. This research was pre-experimental to evaluate the influence of a variable on one group by pre-test and post-test design. The population and sample of this research were 23 students of first year students of SMPN 2 Padang Panjang. This research used two instruments; reading comprehension test and student's opinion on storybooks for the reading comprehension questionnaire. (Putri, n.d.)

This research used a pre-experimental design to evaluate the influence of a variable on one group. This pre-experimental research was designed to find out the effectiveness of storybook treatment on student's reading comprehension through pre-test and post-test. For the collection of data this research used two instruments those were reading comprehension test and student's opinions on storybook for reading comprehension questionnaire.

Teachers can use storybooks to teach reading comprehension for some reasons. First, it is effective to increase students' reading comprehension. The hypothesis was calculated by using SPSS 22 with the significant value was 0.05. The significant value of this research was 0.00 that can be interpreted that the null hypothesis (H0) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H1) was accepted. Second, a storybook can benefit students' reading comprehension. The data questionnaire was analyzed by using the Pearson Product formula. The mean score between 3.20

up to 4.00 indicated that a storybook is very good for reading comprehension. The totals mean score was 3.37 that can be interpreted as very good. In conclusion, this research proved that storybook is effective on students' reading comprehension.

Based on the outcomes of these studies it is valid to point out that there are several reasons to use storybooks for improving reading comprehension of students. The primary reason to recommend reading storybooks in the ESL classroom is that not only are the stories motivating and extremely interesting, but they can attract listeners as well as they promote interaction. Reading stories provide the excitement and drama in a context that hold students' attention. It provides meaningful contexts that “not only stimulate imagination, it inspires talk”. Storybooks are a massive language treasure as thousands of stories have been created and passed down from one generation to another. Children from different language levels and age groups can find interesting and suitable stories to read or tell. The teacher's role is then to promote thoughtful response, to allow and encourage students to make all kinds of meaningful connections based on the words heard or read in the stories.

3. Body of the Project

3.1. Methodology

The methodology presented in our project falls within the framework of qualitative research, which involves an interpretive approach to the object of study. As researchers, we studied the initial situation of 7th grade students in their natural environment, the teacher background, and the accessibilities that exist in the National Institute Augusto Salinas Pinell of Somoto, Madriz. With this qualitative approach we intend to help students to improve reading comprehension through storybooks.

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of informational, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (Creswell, 2007)

From the above definition it can be deduced that our project complies with the parameters postulated by the qualitative approach, since we took into account the context in which we intend to develop our project in order to use appropriate material, with the purpose of generating data that are significant in the context of the research topic.

3.2. Objectives of the project.

General Objective:

- To propose a guideline targeted on strengthening reading comprehension in English language in seventh grade students of the National Institute Augusto Salinas Pinell of Somoto.

Specific Objective:

- Identify reading material that can support high school students to develop reading comprehension in the English Language.
- Create a guideline to use reading material, as storybooks, to develop reading comprehension in the English language at high school level.

3.3. Context and Participants.

3.3.1. Setting

National Institute Augusto Salinas Pinell is a public high school located in the Municipality of Somoto, Department of Madriz. It is a big school with a great number of enrollments. There are around 1,500 students and 25 teachers for every subject. The institute counts with around eight teachers of English language. This institute is divided into two sessions: morning and afternoon. Most of students are studying in the morning session. The National Institute Augusto Salinas Pinell has participated in different educative activities; from departmental up to national level and it has been a winner in the most of challenges.

The institute counts with didactic resources to support the teaching-learning process. There is an ICT⁵ classroom and a library with many books for looking information and any other purpose. Teachers and students carry out researches and homework in the bookstore of the institute. They have an easy accessibility for reading books of different topics such as: literature, mathematics, science, history and so on. Students and teachers use books in the classroom for the developing of their class, but most English books are only practiced for grammatical purpose. For that reason, we considered it is necessary that the library has storybooks in order to develop the reading comprehension ability in English. Additionally, we also considered it is important to implement this project that will allow to strengthen the reading comprehension in English language. Thus, we are going to create and proportionate a guideline for professors in order for them to apply reading comprehension activities using storybooks as teaching-reading material.

3.3.2. Participants

National institute Augusto Salinas Pinell has excellent English professors with competences and capacities. We have relied on and selected one teacher with enough experience and abilities to get this project started, his name is Ramon Garcia, with a Master Degree in English Language. Mr. Ramon learned English when he was ten years old and he has been a teacher during fifteen years, teaching English in high school. Also, he currently teaches English in the National Autonomous University of Leon, UNAN-LEON from Somoto. During his trajectory he has been recognized, by the Ministry of Education (MINED), as one of the best teachers with capacity for teaching English. He has travelled to United States to share and improve his English skills. In 2019, he participated in the contest of the best teacher of Nicaragua

⁵ Information & Communication Technologies. It is a classroom equipped with technological devices, as computers, tablets and internet connection, with the finality of use that means to enhance the teaching-learning process.

and he got the first place, showing effective methods for teaching English. Mr. Ramón created his own academy: English Academic Mielky, in memory of his mentor, Mielky, and many students have developed their abilities in English there.

Our project is aimed to students of seventh grade, afternoon shift, because we consider it is a good grade in which students can strengthen their reading comprehension. Therefore, in this learning phase they have the capacity to develop other English skills since once they have finished elementary school they would have learned and achieved English language level A2. We have selected one group, seventh grade B, around 25 students. They will be the participants of this project along with the teacher who will be in charge of executing the project using the guideline accordingly to get positive outcomes and achieve the main objective of this project. All participants will be directly involved and they will be benefited once the project gets underway.

In addition, we hope this project will have a great impact in 2024, because according to the English program in primary school, that year the new students of seventh grade will have achieved the A1 and A2 English Levels, and they will be the first generation of children which will have abilities developed in order to high school. In this way, the students will continue improving their English skills. For that reason, we consider the activities created in the guideline are designed regarding their capacity and English level. In the meantime (2022-2023), the activities developed in the guideline that was created can be used as extracurricular activities in order to reinforce what students learn in the classroom with the current curriculum that the MINED has.

3.3.3. Ethics in the project design.

As researchers, it is important to practice the ethic in order to make the project dependable. We asked the formal authorization to the principal of the school we worked with in

order to use the name of National Institute Augusto Salinas Pinell in our project. Therefore, we presented to the Ministry of Education MINED-Somoto one letter from the University and we explained what the project is about. However, it was necessary to ask the permission of the principal to take photos of the school and the library. This helped us to show evidence in our project and described what resources the school has. It was necessary to research information about the teacher who will get this project underway. Firstly, we researched information about the teacher in the school and we explained to him why we chose to make this project with him. Afterwards, we asked him the authorization to use his name and write about his educational trajectory.

We asked him some questions, for instant: What have been his goals as English teacher? How much time has he been teaching English? And so on. Another aspect to get information from was to know what the teacher thought about our project, whether he agreed or disagreed to use information about him in our project. The teacher gave us the permission to write his teaching trajectory and he agreed with the continuity of this project. In this way we took into account the ethics to use information of the school and the teacher since they are the main protagonists of this project.

3.4.Data Collection.

The data that was gathered in this process will help to the elaboration of a guideline to use reading material, as storybooks, to develop reading comprehension in the English language at high school level.

Firstly, we identified reading material that can support high school students to develop reading comprehension in the English Language.

The following are the books we decided to choose:

Table 1. Data Collection of relevant information.

Book	Category	Author
The Absent Author	Storybook, Mystery	Ron Roy
The Bald Bandit	Storybook, Mystery	Ron Roy
The Canary Caper	Storybook, Mystery	Ron Roy
The Deadly Dungeon	Storybook, Mystery	Ron Roy

Source: The Authors.

We opted for four books that can be used in seventh grade of high school. All of them are storybooks about mystery. Originally, Ron Roy wrote them for children whose mother tongue is English. Notwithstanding, we read and analyzed them carefully and we decided that they can be perfectly used with teenagers, especially in our context, since English in Nicaragua is a foreign language. That is why a considerable amount of the vocabulary in those books will likely result unknown for seventh graders.

We also established some criteria before choosing these books. First, we looked for books written in English. Additionally, we made an intense search, reading different kinds of books in order to find the storybooks that are more suitable for our purposes, which means, we needed books that are able to successfully captivate the reader. After that, we discussed with category would be the best to achieve what we are aiming with this project. Finally, we managed to reach an agreement, we decided to pick the mystery storybooks. Also, we decided to pick four

books from a same series of books, in that way the reading will follow a sequence and it will be more coherent when the students are reading.

Wallace Ronald Roy (Ron Roy) is an American writer who was born on April 29th, 1940 in Hartford, Connecticut, US. He writes children fiction, primarily mysteries. He is better known for the series of books, he wrote in 1997, *A to Z Mysteries*. Ron grew up in East Hartford, and has lived in Connecticut most of his life. He earned his Bachelor of Arts degree in English from the University of Connecticut and his master's degree in early childhood education from the University of Hartford. The books we selected to carry out our project are the first four of the famous series, from A to D.

Other data that directly helped us to develop the project, we set out, is the levels of reading comprehension, which was of utmost importance when designing the guideline.

As stated above in the literature review, there are three levels of reading comprehension: literal, inferential and critical. It was necessary to take them into account in order to elaborate a proper guideline that fulfills the gaps students have when bringing their comprehension on stage.

3.5. Analysis of Data.

For the elaboration of the guideline, many factors influencing the context were taken into account. The guideline was created for one month, so we asked how many hours per month the English teacher goes to the classroom. The answer to our inquiry was twelve hours per month. We divided the schedule into weeks, that is, three hours per week.

To create the activities, we decided to select different excerpts from different chapters of each book. We always tried to have a sequence when choosing the chapters, one at the beginning of the book for day 1, one at the middle for day 2, and one at the ending for day 3. In that way,

they will be able to finish working one book per week, and eventually the four books in one month.

The Absent Author, pages 8-12, were used to develop a matching activity. It is targeted on character description and it will help students to analyze and develop their literal level of reading comprehension by identifying the characteristics of the main characters of the book which are stated in the excerpt of the first chapter that was chosen.

Comprehension questions also arose from this excerpt. The first is a question regarding what is explicit in the text, so that it has to do with the literal level of reading comprehension. The other two questions are more inferential questions. They ask the students to infer according to what is being read and at the same time to give reasons of what they infer.

The Absent Author, pages 24-28. With this excerpt of the third chapter of the book it was decided to create an activity that put students' imagination into stage. While they are reading, they need to imagine how a character could look and draw it. This will directly help their inferential level of reading comprehension by representing what they understand through a picture. Also, two literal questions came up from this excerpt.

The Absent Author, pages 70-74, were used to create an ordering exercise. It consists on ordering the sequence of a series of events that took place in the excerpt of the chapter nine that was selected. With this exercise students will learn some connectors that help to join sentences and create paragraphs as well as scan the text.

The last activity with this excerpt is a scanning activity in which students will scan and categorize the required info into four categories. This activity regards the literal and inferential level of the reading comprehension.

These three different excerpts are designated for the first week using the guideline. All of them were taken out from the same book with the finality of having a sequence when reading the story.

The Bald Bandit, pages 15-19. This is an excerpt of chapter two and after reading it two activities emerged. The first is an ordering exercise in which students will read and then scan and order a series of events according to the sequence they have in the reading. The second activity consists of three literal questions that will make students to analyze the text they read.

The Bald Bandit, pages 21-22. This short excerpt was used to develop a multiple-choice exercise in which students will read to look for the gist and circle the correct option. The second activity that emerged from this excerpt is one in which they need to read carefully and scan a series of sentences that we provided disordered. So that, when they manage to find them, they will order each one properly. A third exercise came up from this excerpt. It regards the critical level of reading comprehension. It asks the students to set a setting that they would like instead of the setting that the author established.

The Bald Bandit, pages 50-54. The first activity that arose from this excerpt are a kind of questions. The first, is a question that asks students to skim info and underline in a given color. The second asks them to scan and underline in another color. The last asks them to scan also, and underline what is being required in another color.

A second exercise came up. It consists of multiple choice in this exercise they will look for specific info and check only the correct answers. Finally, the last exercise with this last excerpt selected from this book they will bring into stage the critical level of reading comprehension and develop directly their cognitive thinking by answering three question that demand the students to answer in hypothetical situations.

With this the second week and the second book of the guideline will be fulfilled. The sequence with this book was chapter two, chapter three and chapter seven.

The Canary Caper, pages 7-11. The first exercise emerged from this excerpt of the chapter one is a vocabulary activity which will help students to acquire some new words. They need to identify the words in the given text and try to infer their meaning by contextualizing them with the rest of the sentence in which they are. The second activity arisen from this excerpt is a true or false activity which involves the literal and inferential level of reading comprehension.

The Canary Caper, pages 35-40. A series of literal and inferential questions came up from this excerpt in which students have to look for the gist in order to succeed when answering the questions.

The Canary Caper, pages 70-75, were used to develop a multiple-choice activity that tries to enhance the comprehension based on its literal and inferential level. The last activity using this book regards the critical level of reading comprehension with a couple of questions that will develop the capacity of the mind of students.

So far, three weeks of the guideline using the chosen material are covered with full reading and a variety of activities that will keep students working, learning and growing. The sequence remains the same, chapter 1, chapter 4, and chapter 9 in this case.

The Deadly Dungeon, pages 8-12. The first activity that arose from this excerpt is a vocabulary exercise in which students have available a word bank with seven words from the text and below they have seven meanings, one per word. They will select a word and place it next to its meaning by inferring the meaning from the text. The second activity emerged from the selected text is a fill in the blank activity. In that activity they will read carefully, scan the text and then complete each sentence.

The Deadly Dungeon, pages 22-27. A series of literal, inferential and a critical question were designed using this excerpt of chapter 3. The second exercise is one that will bring students' imagination into stage. It asks them to draw and color a picture about something that is in the text and gives the features of what they are asked to draw and color.

The Deadly Dungeon, pages 76-79. A multiple-choice exercise was developed with this excerpt which tests the literal level of students. They will select the correct option based on what happens on the text. The last activity of the guideline consists of three critical questions that will develop their thinking contextualizing the events in the given text with the Nicaraguan context.

An important aspect to highlight is that at the beginning of each book we elaborated pre-reading questions. So that students can get familiarized with the new reading they will start as well as to share and ask their teacher something related to the questions.

Pedagogical Proposal

General Data.

Course's name: English as a Foreign Language.

School's name: National Institute Augusto Salinas Pinell.

Location: Somoto, Madriz:

Objective of the project: To strengthen Reading comprehension in English language in seventh grade students of the National Institute Augusto Salinas Pinell of Somoto.

Guideline format:

The guideline will last one month.

One different storybook will be used each week.

A different chapter of the same storybook will be used for day in the three class days of each week.

The guideline has an everyday sequence to have cohesion and do not make students confused while reading different excerpts of the storybook.

The guideline will be used as an extracurricular tool.

DAY 1

The Absent Author

Chapter 1

Pre Reading questions (5 minutes)

- Have you ever read books about mysteries?
- Do you know about famous writers? What is your favorite?
- What books do you know about mysteries?

While Reading (15 minutes)

Read the following excerpt of chapter one of the storybook titled The Absent Author by Ron Roy. (P. 8-12)

“Please, Josh,” Dink said. “If you come with me today, I’ll owe you one. Just name it. Anything!”

Dink’s full name was Donald David Duncan. But no one in Green Lawn ever called him that. Except his mother, when she meant business.

Josh Pinto grinned at his best friend. “Anything?” He raised his mischievous green eyes toward the ceiling of Dink’s bedroom. “Let’s see, what do you have that I want?” He scratched his head. “I know, I’ll take Loretta!”

Dink tossed a pillow at Josh. “When I said anything, I meant anything but my guinea pig! Are you coming with me or not? I have to be at the Book Nook in fifteen minutes!”

Dink rushed into the bathroom, tucking his shirt into his jeans at the same time. Josh followed him.

Standing in front of the mirror, Dink yanked a brush through his thick blond hair. “Well?” he asked. “Are you coming with me?”

“What’s so important about this writer guy?” Josh asked, sitting on the edge of the bathtub.

Dink turned around and pointed his hairbrush. “Wallis Wallace isn’t just some writer guy, Josh. He’s the most famous mystery writer in the world! All the kids read his books. Except for you.”

“If he’s so famous, why’s he coming to dinky little Green Lawn?”

Dink charged back into his bedroom. “I told you! He’s coming because I invited him. I’m scared to death to meet someone so famous. I don’t even know what you’re supposed to say to an author!”

Dink dived under his bed and backed out again with his sneakers. “Please come with me?”

Josh leaned in the bedroom doorway. “Sure, I’ll come, you dope. I’m just trying to make you sweat. Usually you’re so calm!”

Dink stared at his friend. “You will? Thanks! I can’t believe Wallis Wallace is really coming. When I wrote and asked him, I never thought he’d say yes.”

Dink yanked his backpack out of his closet.

“Pack my books, okay? I’m getting Wallis Wallace to sign them all!”

Josh began pulling Wallis Wallace books off Dink’s bookshelf. “Geez, how many do you have?”

“Everyone he’s written.” Dink sat on the floor to tie his sneakers. “Twenty-three so far. You should read some of them, Josh.”

Josh picked out *The Poisoned Pond* and read the back cover. “Hey, cool! It says here that Wallis Wallace lives in a castle in Maine! Wouldn’t that be neat?”

Dink grinned. “When I’m a famous writer you can live in my castle, Josh.”

“No way. When I’m a famous artist, you can live in my castle. Down in the basement!”

Josh picked up *The Riddle in the River*. “What’s this guy look like?” he asked. “And how come his picture isn’t on any of these books?”

“I wondered about that, too,” Dink said. “I sent him one of my school pictures and asked for one of him. But when I got his letter, there was no picture.”

He finished tying his laces. “Maybe Wallis Wallace just doesn’t like having his picture taken.”

Josh squeezed all twenty-three books into Dink’s pack. He grinned at Dink. “Or maybe he’s just too ugly.”

Dink laughed. “Gee, Josh, you’re ugly and you love having your picture taken.”

“Haw, haw.” Josh picked up his drawing pad. “But just because you’re my best friend, I’ll draw his picture at the bookstore.”

Dink looked at his watch. “Yikes!” he said. “We have to pick up Ruth Rose in one minute!” He tore into the bathroom and started brushing his teeth.

“How’d you get her to come?” Josh called.

Dink rushed back into his room, wiping toothpaste from his mouth. “You kidding? Ruth Rose loves Wallis Wallace’s books.” Dink slung his backpack over his shoulder. He and Josh hurried next door to 24 Woody Street. Tiger, Ruth Rose’s orange cat, was sitting in the sun on the steps.

Dink pressed the doorbell.

Ruth Rose showed up at the door.

As usual, she was dressed all in one color. Today it was purple. She wore purple coveralls over a purple shirt and had on purple running shoes. A purple baseball cap kept her black curls out of her face.

“Hey,” she said. Then she turned around and screamed into the house. “THE GUYS ARE HERE, MOM. I’M LEAVING!”

After Reading activities (10 minutes)

I. Match each one of the characters with their description about him or her. (5 minutes)

- | | |
|-----------------|---|
| -Dink | Dressed all in purple. |
| -Josh | Best friend to Dink wants to become a famous artist. |
| -Ruth Rose | Famous writer, wrote a letter to Dink. |
| -Wallis Wallace | Wrote to Wallis Wallace, wants to be a famous writer. |

II. Answer the following questions (5 minutes)

1. Why was Wallis Wallace so important to Dink?
2. What do you think Wallis Wallace looks like? Why do you think he does not have a picture on his books?
3. Do you think Wallis Wallace will really come? Why or why not?

DAY 2

The Absent Author

Chapter 3

While reading (15 minutes)

Read the following excerpt of the third chapter of the story book titled **The Absent Author**

(P. 24-28)

“KIDNAPPED?” Ruth Rose shrieked. Her blue eyes were huge.

Josh and Dink covered their ears.

“Shh!” said Josh. He handed the letter back to Dink and gave a quick gesture with his head.

“Some strange woman is watching us!”

Dink had noticed the woman earlier. She’d been sitting in the back of the Book Nook.

“She’s coming over here!” Ruth Rose said.

The woman had brown hair up in a neat bun. Half-glasses perched on her nose. She was wearing a brown dress and brown shoes, and carried a book bag with a picture of a moose on the side.

Around her neck she wore a red scarf covered with tiny black letters.

“Excuse me,” she said in a soft, trembly voice. “Did you say Wallis Wallace has been kidnapped?” The woman poked her glasses nervously.

Dink wasn’t sure what to say. He thought Wallis Wallace had been kidnapped, but he couldn’t be sure. Finally, he said, “Well, he might have been.”

“My goodness!” gasped the woman.

“Who are you?” Josh asked her.

“Oh, pardon me!” The woman blushed. “My name is Mavis Green,” she mumbled. “I’m a writer, and I came to meet Mr. Wallace.”

Dink said, “I’m Dink Duncan. These are my friends Ruth Rose and Josh.”

Mavis shook hands shyly.

Then she reached into her book bag and pulled out a folded paper.

“Wallis Wallace wrote to me last week. He said something very peculiar in his letter. I didn’t think much of it at the time. But when he didn’t show up today and then I heard you mention kidnapping…”

She handed the letter to Dink. Josh and Ruth Rose read it over his shoulder.

“Wow!” said Ruth Rose. “First, he says he’s being followed, and then he winds up missing!”

Dink told Mavis about his letter from Wallis Wallace. “He said the only thing that would keep him from coming today was if he was kidnapped!”

“Oh, dear!” said Mavis. “I just don’t understand. Why would anyone want to kidnap Wallis Wallace?”

“If he’s the most famous mystery writer in the world, he must be rich, right?” Josh said. “Maybe someone kidnapped him for a ransom!”

Suddenly Josh grabbed Dink and spun him around, pointing toward the street. “Look! The cops are coming! They must have heard about the kid-napping!”

A police officer was walking toward them.

“Josh, that’s just Officer Fallon, Jimmy Fallon’s grandfather,” said Dink. “Jimmy came to get a book signed. I saw him inside the Book Nook.”

“Maybe we should show Officer Fallon these letters,” Ruth Rose suggested. “They could be clues if Wallis Wallace has really been kidnapped!”

“Who’s been kidnapped?” asked Officer Fallon, who was now standing near them. “Not my grandson, I hope,” he added, grinning.

Dink showed Officer Fallon the two letters. “We think Wallis Wallace might have been kidnapped,” he said. “He promised he’d come to sign books, but he isn’t here.”

Officer Fallon read Mavis’s letter first, then Dink’s. He scratched his chin, then handed the letters back.

“The letters do sound a bit suspicious,” he said. “But it’s more likely that Mr. Wallace just missed his flight.”

Jimmy Fallon ran out of the Book Nook, waving a Wallis Wallace book at his grandfather. “Grampa, he never came! Can we go for ice cream anyway?”

Officer Fallon put a big hand on Jimmy’s head. “In a minute, son.” To Dink he said, “I wouldn’t worry. Mr. Wallace will turn up. Call me tomorrow if there’s no news, okay?”

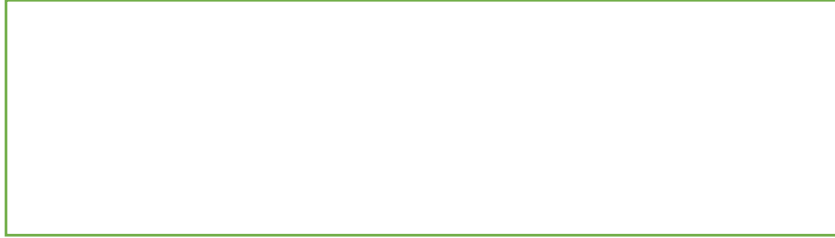
They watched Jimmy and his grandfather walk away.

Dink handed Mavis’s letter back to her. He folded his and slid it into his pocket. Crazy thoughts were bouncing around in his head. What if Wallis Wallace really has been kidnapped? It happened because I invited him to Green Lawn. I’m practically an accomplice!

“I don’t want to wait till tomorrow,” he said finally. “I say we start looking for Wallis Wallace now!”

After Reading activities (15 minutes)

I. Draw an illustration for what the woman may have looked like (10 minutes)



II. Answer the following questions (5 minutes)

-Who was the lady who was watching the kids?

- What does Officer Fallon think may happen to Wallis Wallace?

DAY 3

The Absent Author

Chapter 9

While reading (10 minutes)

Read the chapter nine of the storybook *The Absent Author* by Ron Roy. (P. 70-74)

Mr. Linkletter unlocked the door and shoved it open.

A man with curly blond hair stared back at them. He was sitting in a chair with his feet tied in front of him. His arms were tied behind his back. A towel was wrapped around his mouth.

“Oh, my goodness!” Mr. Linkletter cried.

Everyone rushed into the room.

Dink ran behind the chair to untie the man’s hands while Josh untied his feet.

Mavis unwrapped the towel from around his face.

“Thank goodness you got here!” the man said. “I’m Wallis Wallace. Someone knocked on my door last night. A voice said he was from room service. When I opened the door, two men dragged me in here and tied me up.”

He looked at Dink. “You’re Dink Duncan! I recognize you from the picture you sent. How did you find me?”

“We followed your itinerary” Dink said. He showed Mr. Wallace the sheet of paper. “We got it from Mr. Paskey and used it as a trail. The trail led us to this room!”

“I’m so sorry I missed the book signing,” Wallis Wallace said. “As you can see, I was a bit tied up.”

He smiled. Then he rubbed his jaw. “My mouth is sore from that towel. I can’t believe I was kidnapped! And I can’t wait to get back to my safe little cottage in Maine.”

“Can you describe the two guys who kidnapped you?” Dink asked. “We should tell Officer Fallon so he can try to find them.”

Wallis Wallace stared at Dink. “The two guys? Oh...well, urn, I don’t think I’ll-”

“HEY!” Ruth Rose suddenly yelled.

Everyone looked at her.

“What’s the matter?” asked Dink. “You look funny, Ruth Rose.”

Ruth Rose was staring at the red scarf draped around Mavis's neck. She pointed at the man who'd been tied up. "You're not Wallis Wallace!"

Then she looked at Mavis Green. "You are," she said quietly.

After Reading activities (30 minutes)

I. Read the events and order them following the sequence in which they happened.

(10 minutes)

- They got into the room and found a man tied up.
- When Dink asked him about the two men who kidnapped, he was nervous.
- Ruth Rose thinks Mavis is Wallis Wallace.
- This man says he is Wallis Wallace.
- The man says someone knocked and says it was a room service person, two men came in and kidnapped him.
- Ruth Rose thinks that everyone should look at Mavis's scarf.

First,	
Next,	
Then,	
After,	
After that,	
Finally,	

II. Make a Story Map about this chapter. (10 minutes)

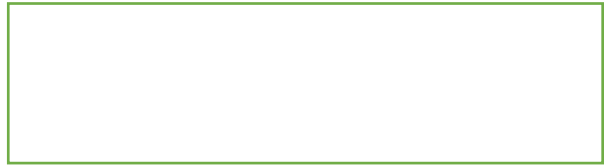
Setting

characters



Theme

Conflict



DAY 4

The Bald Bandit

Chapter 1

Pre-Reading Questions (5 Minutes)

- ❖ What is the most heroic thing you have done in your life?
- ❖ What do you think about the police officers' job?
- ❖ Would you like to solve investigative cases?

While reading (15 Minutes)

Read carefully the chapter two of the storybook “The Bald Bandit”, Page 15-19. Then practice your reading comprehension.

“Here’s the plan,” Dink said.

It was almost three o’clock the next afternoon. Dink, Josh, and Ruth Rose were headed for the high school, a few blocks away from Green Lawn Elementary.

“Josh, you cover the back door. Ruth Rose, your station is the bike rack. But keep an eye on the parking lot, too.”

“How can I watch the bike rack and the parking lot?” asked Ruth Rose.

“Watch one with each eye,” Josh said, grinning.

“What’s your station?” Ruth Rose asked Dink.

“I’ll be watching the front door. If anyone sees a skinny redhead, stop him and yell.”

Ruth Rose laughed. “Stop him and yell? He’ll think we’re crazy and run away.”

“She’s right,” Josh said.

Dink scratched his thick blond hair. “Hmm. Okay, don’t yell. Just get his name and tell him he may have won some money.”

They cut through the park next to the high school.

“What money?” Josh asked.

“Well, if Detective Reddy is going to pay us a hundred dollars each to find the video, I figure we can give the kid half the money. But only if he gives us the video.”

At the high school, they split up. Josh ran around to the back of the school. Ruth Rose sat on the lawn next to the bike rack.

Dink sat on a bench where he had a good view of the front door.

Suddenly, he heard a loud bell. Ten seconds later, the front door burst open. A million high school kids shoved through the door and scrambled down the front steps.

Dink stood on the bench so he wouldn't get trampled. He was looking for red hair, but it wasn't easy to spot. Some of the kids had hats on. Some wore jackets or sweatshirts with the hoods pulled up. Sometimes Dink couldn't tell if a kid was a boy or a girl!

Finally, he spotted a tall guy with red hair. Dink jumped off the bench and ran after him.

“Excuse me,” Dink said, trying to catch his breath.

“Who are you?” the redhead asked.

“Dink Duncan.” Dink tried to remember his plan. “You may have won some money!”

The redhead stared down at Dink. “Money? Me? Why? How much money?”

“Were you near the bank when the robbery happened last week?” he asked.

The kid kept staring at Dink. “Robbery? What robbery?”

“You didn't hear about it? It was on the news, on TV. Some guy robbed Green Lawn Savings Bank.”

“So, what’s it to you?”

“A kid with red hair got the robber on tape,” Dink said. “I’m helping to find him. There’s going to be a reward.”

“Rats, I wish I did tape the guy,” the redhead said, shaking his head. “I could use a reward. But I wasn’t anywhere near the bank last week.” He waved and headed for the park. “Good luck!”

Dink looked around for another redhead, but everyone had disappeared.

He walked toward the bike rack. Ruth Rose was sitting on the lawn, weaving grass blades together.

“Did you see any redheads?” Dink asked, plopping down beside her.

“Three,” Ruth Rose said. “One was a short, fat boy. One was a girl. One was a teacher.”

Josh came running up.

“Any luck?” he asked.

“Nope,” Dink said. “How’d you do?”

“I talked to two guys with red hair. One of them told me to take a hike. The other one was an exchange student from Ireland. He told me he doesn’t even know where the bank is.”

“Great,” Dink said. “We all struck out. Now what do we do?”

Josh tossed a pine cone at a tree. “Beats me.”

After reading Activities. Now practice the comprehension. (10 Minutes)

I. List the order in which the events occurred according to the chapter read (5 minutes)

Dink jumped off the bench and ran after him.

Suddenly, he heard a loud bell.

He told me he doesn't even know where the bank is.

Ruth Rose sat on the lawn next to the bike rack.

II. Answer the Questions (5 Minutes)

- ❖ What was the plan of Dink, Josh and Ruth?
- ❖ What was the problem when identifying the redhead child?
- ❖ What did motivate the Children to do this?

DAY 5

The Bald Bandit

Chapter 3

While Reading (8 Minutes)

Read the following excerpt of the third chapter of the storybook *The Bald Bandit*, Pages 21-22

With black shoe polish in his hair and plastic fangs in his mouth, Dink looked like Dracula.

His mom had made him a cape from an old black raincoat. He tied the cape around his neck just as the doorbell rang.

A strange creature stood on his porch. The thing was wrapped in green cloth. Tufts of red hair poked out at the top. Large black high-tops stuck out at the bottom.

“How do I look?” the thing asked.

Dink took out his fangs and grinned. “Like some weird vegetable. Half carrot and half asparagus.”

Josh shuffled inside the house.

“You look pretty good, Dink. I like the blood dripping down your chin.”

The bell dinged again. This time it was a miniature Elvis. Ruth Rose was wearing a white suit with sequins everywhere. She even carried a little guitar. Her Elvis wig made her look about two inches taller.

Ruth Rose strummed her guitar and wiggled her hips.

“Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen,” she said, taking a bow.

“Come on in, Elvis,” Dink said. “We have to talk about Operation Redhead before we go trick-or-treating.”

They sat at Dink's kitchen table. A basket of candy stood waiting for the neighborhood kids.

After Reading Activities (20 Minutes)

I. According to the reading, circle the correct answer. (5 minutes)

- ❖ With black shoe polish in his hair and plastic fangs in his mouth, he looked like Dracula.
 - a) Dink
 - b) Ruth Rose
 - c) Josh
- ❖ A strange creature, the thing was wrapped in green cloth, he was dressed half carrot and half asparagus.
 - a) Dink
 - b) Ruth Rose
 - c) Josh
- ❖ Someone was wearing a white suit with sequins everywhere and had a little guitar and wig.
 - a) Dink
 - b) Ruth Rose
 - c) Josh

II. Based on the reading, order the following sentences (5 Minutes)

- ❖ Chin./ down/blood/ I/ Your/ dripping/the/like

- ❖ Operation/ we/ Redhead./about/have/talk/to

- ❖ And/ lips/Ruth Rose/guitar/her/strummed/wiggled/her

- ❖ Dink's/ at/table./they/sat/kitchen

III. Draw how would you like that was the setting of this chapter? (10 minutes)

DAY 6

The Bald Bandit.

Chapter 7

While reading (10 minutes)

Read the chapter number seven of the storybook *The Bald Bandit*, Page 50-54.

The kids hurried back to Dink's house. There was no one home. Dink opened the front door with his key.

He saw a note on the kitchen table.

Dink was glad his folks were out. He knew they wouldn't like him playing detective.

When this was all over, he'd tell them how he earned the hundred bucks.

Josh opened Dink's refrigerator. "What do you have to eat?" he asked.

Dink set the tape on the counter. "There should be some doughnuts on the counter."

He pulled the paper with the detective's number on it out of his pocket. He called the number.

"Hello, is this Detective Reddy? This is Dink Duncan. Me and my friends found that video for you. What? No, we haven't looked at it. Okay. Bye."

Dink hung up smiling. "He'll be right over. He said we were good detectives. He told us not to look at the video."

Josh was eating a doughnut. "Why not?" he said with his mouth full.

"He said it was top secret."

They all looked at each other.

"Come on!" Dink said, grabbing the video.

They ran into the living room. Dink turned on the TV and slid the tape into the VCR.

The first part of the video showed a big dog chewing on a rubber bone. Then they saw a girl in a bathing suit. She was laughing and running away from the camera. Next came a birthday party. Most of the people in the picture looked like Lucky O'Leary. Dink recognized little Josephine.

Finally, they saw the front of the Green Lawn Savings Bank. The door opened and a man came running out. He was pulling off a ski mask.

"That must be the robber!" Dink said. He pressed the pause button.

The man on the tape was completely bald. His head was shiny in the sunlight. He was wearing sweatpants and a sweatshirt, and he was carrying a gym bag. He had a surprised look on his face.

"That must be when he noticed Lucky taping him," Josh said.

Ruth Rose moved closer to the TV. "Look, he's got a dimple on his chin."

Suddenly, Ruth Rose gasped. She ran across the room and out of the house. The door slammed behind her.

Dink looked at Josh. "What's going on?"

Josh shrugged. "Maybe she doesn't like guys with dimples."

A minute later, the door burst open and Ruth Rose ran back in. She was carrying her Elvis wig and her fake eyebrows.

Ruth Rose stuck one eyebrow on the TV screen, under the bandit's nose. It looked like a mustache. She held the wig over the bandit's bald head.

"Who does that look like?" she demanded.

Josh jumped into the air. "Oh, my gosh! The bank robber looks exactly like Detective Reddy!"

Just then the doorbell rang. Dink peeked through the front window.

“Who is it?” Josh asked.

Dink’s eyes were bugging out when he turned around. “It’s Detective Reddy!”

After Reading Activities (25 minutes)

I. Underline the fragments with colors indicated (10 Minutes)

- ❖ What is the chapter about? (**red**)
- ❖ Where did the events happen? (**Green**)
- ❖ What characters appear in this chapter? (**Yellow**)

II. Observe the drawings and write a check only to the objects that appear in the text.

(5 minutes)



III. According your opinions, answer the questions. (10 Minutes)

- ❖ What do you think about the situation of children?
- ❖ What would you do if you was the dad or mom of these children?
- ❖ What would you do if you was Dink?

DAY 7

The Canary Caper

Chapter 1.

Pre-Reading questions. (8 minutes)

- Do you have any pet?
- Have you ever been to a circus?
- What can we find in a circus?

While Reading. (12 minutes)

Read the following excerpt of the first chapter of the storybook titled The Canary Caper by Ron Roy. (P. 7-11)

Dink Duncan opened his front door. His best friend, Josh Pinto, was standing on the steps. “Hi, Josh. C’mon in,” said Dink. “I just finished lunch.”

Josh hurried past Dink, wiping his forehead. “We sure picked the hottest day of the summer to go to the circus,” he said. “I just took a shower, and I’m still hot.”

Dink grinned. “You took a shower? Let’s see, that’s two showers this month, right?”

“Haw haw, very funny,” Josh said. He opened the refrigerator door and pulled up his shirt. “Ahh, that feels good!”

“It won’t feel so good if my mom catches you,” Dink said.

Josh grabbed the apple juice and flopped into a chair. “You’re funny, but it’s too hot to laugh,” he said, pouring himself a glass. “Where’s Ruth Rose? It’s almost time to leave.”

“She’s waiting next door.” Dink put his plate in the sink. “I have to run up and brush my teeth.”

“Forget your teeth—the circus is waiting!”

Dink grinned and pointed to a clown-faced cookie jar on the counter. “Grab a cookie. I’ll be right down.”

Josh made a beeline for the cookie jar. "Take your time brushing," he said.

"Don't eat all of them!" Dink said, leaping up the stairs.

"Dink," his mother called, "are you running?"

"Sorry, Mom," he called back. "We're in a hurry. Thursday is half-price admission if we get to the circus by one o'clock."

Dink brushed his teeth, yanked a comb through his blond hair, and then charged back down the stairs.

"Donald David Duncan!" his mother yelled. "No running in the house!"

The phone rang in the kitchen.

"Got it, Mom!" Dink grabbed the phone, watching Josh stuff a whole cookie into his mouth.

"Hello, Duncan residence."

Dink listened, then said, "We'll be over in five minutes." He hung up.

"We'll be over where in five minutes?" Josh asked.

"Mrs. Davis's house. You know her canary, Mozart? He's escaped."

"What about the circus?", asked Josh. "Half price, remember?"

Dink shrugged. "So we pay full price. Mrs. Davis needs our help."

They walked next door to Ruth Rose's house and rang the bell. Four-year-old Nate Hathaway opened the door. He stared up at Dink with huge blue eyes.

"Hi, Natie," said Dink. "Is Ruth Rose ready?" Nate's lips, cheeks, and T-shirt were smeared with chocolate. He was holding a raggedy stuffed dinosaur.

"Sheef ungt fruz," Nate said with a full mouth.

Dink laughed. "She's what?"

Ruth Rose showed up behind Nate. "MOM, WE'RE LEAVING NOW!" she screamed into the house.

Josh clapped both hands over his ears. "Ruth Rose, you should get a job as a car salesman. Then you could yell all day and get paid for it."

Ruth Rose stepped outside and closed the door. "You know perfectly well that I'm going to be President," she said sweetly. "And it's saleswoman, Josh."

Ruth Rose liked to dress in one color. Today it was purple, from her sneakers to the headband holding back her black curls.

While they walked down Woody Street, Dink told Ruth Rose about Mrs. Davis's missing canary.

"Mozart got out of his cage?" Ruth Rose said. "I hope he doesn't fly over here. Tiger could swallow a canary in one bite."

"Your fat cat could swallow a turkey in one bite," Josh said.

Ruth Rose rolled her eyes. "Tiger is plump," she said, "not fat. Race you!"

Mrs. Davis was standing in the doorway of her large yellow house when they arrived. "Thank you for coming right over," she said.

Mrs. Davis held a handkerchief, and her eyes were red. "I didn't know who else to call."

"We don't mind," Dink said. "What happened to Mozart?"

"After breakfast, I hung his cage out back so he could have some fresh air. But when I went to give him his lunch, his cage was empty!"

"I'm sure he's somewhere nearby. Don't worry!" Dink said.

Dink, Josh, and Ruth Rose ran around to the backyard. Mozart's cage was hanging in an apple tree.

After reading activities. (10 minutes)

I. Vocabulary: Match each word to its definition. (5 minutes)

____ Fat; large

____ Old and torn; scruffy

____ A straight line between two places

____ Raise the shoulders slightly to express
doubt

____ A square of cotton or other finely
woven material intended for blowing or
wiping one's nose

a. Raggedy

b. Beeline

c. Plump

d. Handkerchief

e. **Shrugged**

II. Write T for True, F for False or NM for No Mentioned. (5 minutes)

Dink & Josh were planning to go to the circus _____

It was a windy day _____

The cookies were delicious _____

They were in a hurry because the tickets were half-price before one o'clock _____

Nate Hathaway is Ruth Rose's brother _____

Tiger is Ruth Rose's cat _____

DAY 8

The Canary Caper

Chapter 4

While Reading. (12 minutes)

Read the excerpt of the chapter four of the storybook titled The Canary Caper by Ron Roy. (P. 35-40)

Just then Josh came running down Woody Street, carrying his sketch pad. He jogged across Dink's lawn.

"Did Tiger come back yet?" he asked.

"No," Ruth Rose said, standing up. "Come on, let's go see who brings Mozart back."

A few minutes later, they were ringing Mrs. Davis's doorbell. Ruth Rose had a determined look in her eye. "If this guy has cat scratches on his hands, I'm calling Officer Fallon."

Mrs. Davis opened her door dressed for the occasion. The green gem in her necklace sparkled in the evening sunlight.

"I hope you've brought your appetites," she said. "To help us celebrate Mozart's return, I've made some shortcake."

Josh grinned. "I might be able to eat a small helping."

Mrs. Davis laughed. "Oh, pooh, Joshua Pinto. I've seen what you can do to a batch of my cookies."

They walked into the living room. Mozart's empty cage sat on the piano.

"It will be so good to hear Mozart sing again," Mrs. Davis said.

The doorbell chimed. "He's here!" Mrs. Davis hurried to the door.

A thin young man stood smiling on the front porch. He was dressed neatly in a white shirt, dark pants, and blue suspenders.

The man held a small box with holes poked in the sides. "I'm Fred Little," he said. "Here's your canary." Dink looked at the man's hands as he passed the box to Mrs. Davis. Not a single claw mark. He shot a look at Ruth Rose.

"Thank you, Mr. Little," said Mrs. Davis. "Won't you step inside?"

Mrs. Davis introduced him to Dink, Josh, and Ruth Rose. Then she opened the box and lifted out her canary.

"Well, Mozart, how was your vacation?" She gave the canary a quick kiss and placed him in his cage.

Everyone paused to watch Mozart hop around, then settle down to preen his feathers.

"Mr. Little, I can't tell you how grateful I am," Mrs. Davis said. "But how did you know where to bring him?"

Ruth Rose kicked Dink in the ankle.

Fred Little smiled. "I had to do some detective work," he said. "I called the pet shop today and asked who in town owned a canary. A nice woman told me your name, so I looked you up in the phone book."

"That must have been Mrs. Wong," Dink said. "We talked to her today, too. About Ruth Rose's missing cat. When did you call her?"

The man stared at Dink. "I don't remember exactly," he said. "It was right after I caught the canary."

Mrs. Davis clapped her hands. "How thoughtful of you to go to so much trouble! Will you accept a reward?"

Ruth Rose glanced at Dink with a smirk on her face.

The man smiled at Mrs. Davis. "You're very kind," he said. "But no thanks. It's reward enough seeing your little bird back home again."

Dink snuck a quick look at Ruth Rose. She looked confused, and Dink could understand why.

If he won't take a reward, then he didn't steal Mozart. And if Mozart didn't get kidnapped, maybe Tiger didn't either, Dink thought.

"Then will you at least have a cup of tea and a cookie?" Mrs. Davis asked.

"That'll be fine," he said. "May I use your bathroom?"

"Down the hall on the right," Mrs. Davis said. "Kids, will you help me in the kitchen?"

While Mrs. Davis boiled water and arranged her silver tea service, the kids put cookies on a tray.

He didn't take the reward," Ruth Rose whispered, frowning. "I can't believe I was wrong!"

"I don't know, Ruth Rose," Dink said. "There's something fishy about this guy. Why didn't Mrs. Wong tell us he called her?"

"We saw Mrs. Wong in the morning," Josh reminded them. "Fred Little must have called her later."

"Yeah, I suppose," Dink said.

"But I have this weird feeling I've seen Fred Little somewhere before," Josh said.

"Around here?" Ruth Rose asked.

Josh shrugged. "I'm not sure. I can't remember."

"What are you three whispering about?" Mrs. Davis called. "I'll need some helping hands in a minute."

When they were all seated around the card table, Mrs. Davis poured five cups of tea. “Are you just passing through, Mr. Little? I haven’t seen you in town before.”

“I’m here looking for a job,” Fred Little said.

“So you might settle in Green Lawn? Wouldn’t that be wonderful?”

Fred Little smiled. “It’s a nice town.” He glanced around the living room. “You sure have a lovely home, Mrs. Davis.”

“Why, thank you. When my husband was alive, we traveled a great deal,” Mrs. Davis said. “We brought back something special from each country we visited.”

Fred Little left a few minutes later, and the kids helped Mrs. Davis clean up. “Still have room for shortcake?” she asked, grinning at Josh.

“Sure do!” he answered, picking up his sketch pad.

Josh began to draw a picture of Fred Little’s face. “I just wish I could remember where I’ve seen this guy before.”

After reading (13 minutes)

I. Answer the following questions.

Where do Dink and his friends go and what they are going to do?

Why did Mrs. Davis make some shortcake?

What is the name of the young man who bring Mozart back?

Who is Mrs. Wong?

Why did Ruth Rose look confused when the man did not accept the reward?

What did Josh do when the man left Mrs. Davis’s house?

DAY 9

The Canary Caper

Chapter 9

While reading (12 minutes)

Read the excerpt of the chapter nine of the storybook titled *The Canary Caper* by Ron Roy. (P. 70-75)

Ruth Rose stomped up to Fred Little and glared at him. “Where’s my Tiger?” she demanded.

Fred Little backed away. “What tiger?”

“Tiger is my cat. Did you steal her? Where is she?”

“I didn’t take any cat,” he muttered. “I’m allergic to cats.”

“What’re you kids doing here?” Officer Fallon asked with a frown.

“We thought someone might try to break in tonight,” Ruth Rose said, pointing at the prisoner.

“We wanted to get proof so you could arrest him.”

“This is Fred Little,” Josh said. “The guy who returned Mrs. Davis’s canary. He’s also a clown in the circus.”

“It certainly looks that way,” Officer Fallon said. He gave instructions to Officer Keene, who locked Fred Little in the cruiser and drove away.

Officer Fallon looked sternly at Dink. “We’ll talk tomorrow,” he said. “You kids better skedaddle home and get some sleep.”

“Fiddlesticks!” Mrs. Davis said. “These children won’t perish if they stay up a little longer. And I won’t sleep a wink! Come inside for cookies and cocoa, all of you.”

Officer Fallon just smiled and shook his head as they followed Mrs. Davis into her kitchen. Dink noticed Mozart's cage sitting on the counter.

Mrs. Davis put water on to boil and took mugs from a cupboard. Then she pulled the cover off the birdcage. Mozart twittered and blinked his tiny black eyes.

"You've certainly put everyone through a lot of trouble," she told her canary.

"Actually, Leona, your canary helped us to solve a string of burglaries," Officer Fallon said. "I did some snooping and found out a lot about Fred Little and his girlfriend. They've been traveling with the circus, and robbing houses in the towns they visit, for quite some time. And they always do it the same way. First they steal pets. Then they return the pets to get a peek inside the houses. Later, they rob the same houses."

Mrs. Davis shook her head. "You should have seen that creepy man's face when I turned on the light. But how did he know I left my upstairs bathroom window open?"

"He probably saw that it was open when he took your canary," Officer Fallon said.

"Or maybe he left it open," Dink said. "He might have snuck upstairs when he used the bathroom."

"You could be right, Dink," Officer Fallon said. "On stilts, he could get into upstairs windows that most people leave unlocked. In the robbery business, he's known as a second-story man."

"After tonight," Mrs. Davis said, "that window will be locked!"

"How did you know that Fred Little would try to break in tonight?" Dink asked.

"We were parked right around the corner," Officer Fallon continued. "We figured the burglary had to be tonight or never, since the circus leaves town tomorrow."

Suddenly there was a knock at the door. Officer Fallon stood up and stretched. "That'll be Officer Keene back with the car. We'll drive you kids home now. I hope we didn't wreck your yard, Leona."

“Oh, pooh. You saved my jewelry and caught a pair of criminals,” she said. “Besides, I know three children who might like to earn some money raking and planting grass seed.” Officer Fallon laughed. “You could have caught Fred Little all by yourself. Where’d that sword come from, Leona?”

“My husband brought it back from one of our trips,” she said, smiling. “It’s been under my bed for years, in case I ever needed it.”

“Did you see that guy’s face?” Josh asked. “I think he was glad to go to jail!”

Officer Fallon and Officer Keene dropped the kids off at Dink’s house. “Good night, kids,” Officer Fallon said. “No more sneaking around, okay?”

The kids promised they’d go right to bed and watched the cruiser drive away.

“I wonder if Fred Little was telling the truth about Tiger,” Ruth Rose said. “All the pets got returned except mine.”

“Tomorrow we’ll help you search, right, Josh?” Dink said.

“Right,” Josh said. “We’ll ring every doorbell in Green Lawn if we have to.”

Ruth Rose nodded, looking sad. “Thanks, guys.”

The boys said good night to Ruth Rose, then walked around back and crawled into their tent.

Josh giggled in the dark. “Did you see Mrs. Davis come flying out her door with all that goop on her face? I thought she was a ghost!”

Dink grinned. “Yeah, and old Fred Little came shooting out the window like a rocket. I bet he burned his hands sliding down that rope.”

Dink rolled over and closed his eyes.

Thirty seconds later, Ruth Rose burst through the tent flap. She shined a flashlight into Dink's face.

"GUYS, WAKE UP!" she yelled.

Josh bolted straight up. "Geez, Ruth Rose, my heart can't take any more surprises tonight."

"What's wrong?" Dink asked, blinking.

"TIGER CAME HOME!" Ruth Rose said, flopping down next to Dink's feet. "She was on my bed when I snuck upstairs. When I went to pick her up, she hopped down and crawled under the bed."

Ruth Rose grinned. "And guess what I found under there with her?"

"A sword?" Dink guessed.

"Nope!"

"A burglar?" Josh asked, blinking into the flashlight.

"No! I found three kittens. I'M A GRANDMOTHER!"

After reading activities (13 minutes)

I. Choose and circle the correct option. (5 minutes)

1. The burglar tried to break into:

- a) Mr. Jones house
- b) Mrs. O'Leary house
- c) Mrs. Davis house

2. After seeing Dink, Josh & Ruth Rose in Mrs. Davis's yard, officer Fallon was:

- a) Pleased
- b) Displeasured
- c) Sad

3. Mrs. Davis keeps under her bed a:

- a) Sword
- b) Gun
- c) Knife

II. Answer the following questions. (8 minutes)

What would you do if you find kittens under your bed? Why?

Would you recommend this book to someone else? Why or why not?

DAY 10

The Deadly Dungeon

Chapter 1.

Pre-reading questions. (5 minutes)

Do you know what a dungeon is?

What does usually happen in a castle?

What comes to your mind when you read the topic?

While Reading. (13 minutes)

Read the following excerpt of the first chapter of the storybook titled The Deadly Dungeon by Ron Roy. (P. 8-12)

Dink squirmed in his seat. He, Josh, and Ruth Rose had been riding the bus since seven that morning.

They were on their way to Maine to visit their friend Wallis Wallace, a famous mystery writer. The three of them had met her when she came to Green Lawn. Dink smiled when he remembered how they had rescued Wallis from a “kidnapper.”

Dink glanced over at Josh, asleep in his seat. His sketch pad was open on his lap.

Behind Josh, Ruth Rose was looking at a map. She liked to dress in one color. Today it was green, from her T-shirt to her high-tops.

Dink moved into the seat next to Ruth Rose. “Where are we?” he asked.

“Almost there.” She pointed to Belfast, Maine, on her map. “We just passed a Welcome to Belfast sign.”

Dink nodded. That was where Wallis was picking them up.

Ruth Rose tucked her map into her pack. “I’m so excited!” she said. “Do you think her castle has a moat and a dungeon?”

“I just hope it has food,” Dink said. “I’m starving!”

Josh’s head popped up in front of them. “Me too! Are we there yet?”

Just then the bus driver called out, “Belfast!”

“All right!” Josh said, leaping into the aisle.

The bus stopped in front of a small gray-shingled building. Through the window, Dink could see the water.

“Do you see Wallis?” Ruth Rose asked.

Dink grabbed his pack. “No, but let’s get off. I think I’m allergic to buses!”

The kids headed for the front. They followed an elderly couple down the steps.

They were squinting into the blinding sunlight when they heard someone say, “Hi, kids!” A tall man with curly blond hair was walking toward them. His face was tanned and smiling.

“I remember you. You’re Wallis’s brother!” Ruth Rose said.

“Call me Walker, okay?” said the man. “Wallis is buying groceries, so she asked me to get you.”

Walker Wallace picked up Dink’s pack. It clunked heavily against his leg.

“What’s in here, your rock collection?” he asked.

Dink grinned. “Books. My mom said it rains a lot in Maine, so I came prepared.”

Walker laughed. “We’ve planned perfect weather for you guys. Sun every day! Come on, that’s my Jeep over there.”

Walker's dusty brown Jeep had no top. The leather seats were worn and split in places.

He swept a pair of boots and a tool belt onto the floor, making room in the backseat. "Pile in!"

The boys climbed into the back. Ruth Rose sat next to Walker. "How far is the castle?" she asked.

"Not far." Walker pointed. "About a mile past those trees."

He drove up the coast. "You guys hungry? Sis is buying everything in the store for you."

"I'm always hungry," Josh said, leaning back and crossing his legs. He took a deep breath of the ocean air. "What a smell!"

"I'll say," Dink said. "Get your smelly foot out of my face!"

"It's not smelly," Josh said, wiggling his sneaker under Dink's nose.

"What's this?" Dink plucked a bright green feather off the sole of Josh's sneaker.

Josh shrugged. "I must've picked it up on the bus."

Dink slipped the feather into his pocket.

"There's Moose Manor!" Walker called. He pointed through the trees.

Dink stared at the tall castle. It was built of huge gray stones. Its small dark windows looked like watching eyes. An iron fence surrounded the building.

"Cool," Dink said softly.

"Look, guys, a moat!" Ruth Rose said.

"And a drawbridge!" cried Josh.

Walker pulled up in front of the gate. The kids hopped out with their packs.

“I have to get back to my boat,” Walker said.

“Sis should be here soon. Have fun!” He waved and sped back through the trees.

After reading activities (12 minutes)

Vocabulary

I. Fill in the blanks with the appropriate word from the box. (6 minutes)

High-tops Moat Dungeon Aisle Elderly
--

_____ is a pair of high-top sneakers.

_____ refers to a passage between rows of seats in a building such as a church or theater, an airplane, a train, or a bus.

_____ are supplies, goods that you can buy in a store.

_____ is a deep, wide ditch surrounding a castle, fort, or town, typically filled with water and intended as a defense against attack.

_____ refers to a person old or aging

_____ is any of the flat appendages growing from a bird’s skin and forming its plumage.

_____ is a strong underground prison cell, especially in a castle.

II. Complete the following sentences according to the reading. (6 minutes)

Dink, Josh and Ruth Rose were going to _____.

They were going there because their friend _____ lives there.

Ruth Rose likes to dress in one color, this time it was _____.

Josh found a bright green _____ in the bottom of his sneaker.

_____ is Wallis Wallace’s brother.

To get to Maine, where Wallis’s castle is located, they took a _____.

DAY 11

The Deadly Dungeon.

Chapter 3

While reading. (12 minutes)

Read the following excerpt of the chapter three of the storybook titled The Deadly Dungeon by Ron Roy. (P.22-27)

The kids glanced at each other, then followed Wallis down the wooden stairs. At the bottom they found a small, sandy beach.

Dink and Josh set the basket in the shade of some boulders while Wallis and Ruth Rose spread the blanket.

“Look! A cave!” Josh said, pointing at a tunnel at the bottom of the cliff. The sea snaked into the dark hole, making a narrow river.

“How far does it go in?” Josh asked, peering into the black space.

“I don’t know,” Wallis said. “Walker told me that it’s full of bats.”

They picnicked on chicken sandwiches, apples, chocolate chip cookies, and cold lemonade. Wallis pointed down the shoreline. “Walker’s house is beyond those trees.”

“Where is he?” asked Dink.

“Out on his boat,” Wallis said, waving a cookie at the ocean. “His lobster pots are scattered over about a half mile of very deep water.”

“How does he find them?” Josh asked.

Wallis wiped her fingers on a paper napkin. “Well, he has a good compass aboard Lady Luck — that’s his boat—and he knows the water.”

After their picnic, Wallis put everything back into the basket. "Ready for a walk?"

They hiked along the rocky beach. Ruth Rose poked into tide pools and picked up shells. Josh hung his sneakers around his neck and waded along the shore.

"Better watch out for lobsters," Dink teased.

"They like smelly toes."

Josh grinned and splashed Dink.

Rounding a curve in the shoreline, Wallis pointed. "There's Walker's place."

It was a gray cottage with a red roof, surrounded by dune grass and sand.

Just then they heard a shout. Dink looked around and saw someone waving from the end of a dock.

Wallis waved back. "Kids, come and meet our friend Ripley Pearce."

They walked out on the dock toward a long green boat tied at the end. The boat's brass and wood trim gleamed in the sunlight.

A man stood next to the boat, holding a dripping sponge. He had dark slicked-back hair and blue eyes.

"Hi, Rip," Wallis said. "Meet Dink Duncan, Josh Pinto, and Ruth Rose Hathaway."

The man smiled and stuck out a hand. He had dazzling white teeth and a deep tan. "You're fans of this lady's books, right?"

"I've got all of them!" Dink announced.

"I met these three in Connecticut," Wallis explained. "They're spending a week up at the castle. Why don't you come for supper with us tonight?"

“I like your boat,” Ruth Rose said. “It’s so shiny and clean!”

Rip flashed her a grin. “Thank you very much, little lady. I’ll see you tonight at dinner.” Then he looked at Josh. “Want to untie me?” he asked, pointing to a rope tied to the end of the dock.

Josh untied the rope and handed it to Rip.

“Nice meeting you kids,” he said, stepping aboard his boat. He started the engine, and the boat pulled smoothly away from the dock.

Dink watched the boat cut through the water. “Maybe I won’t be a writer when I grow up. Maybe I’ll get a lobster boat.”

Wallis grinned at Dink. “Better stick to writing, Dink. Lobsters are getting scarce in Maine.”

“I can’t wait to go out on Walker’s boat,” Ruth Rose said. “My brother’s boat is nothing like Rip’s,” Wallis said. She shook her head. “I don’t know how Rip keeps his so clean. Walker’s boat looks and smells like a lobster boat.”

They walked back toward their picnic spot. Josh kicked water on Ruth Rose, and she chased him down the beach, yelling all the way.

Dink walked quietly along with Wallis. Overhead, a sea gull cried out.

Dink looked up at Wallis. “Do you really think that scream we heard was the ghost of Emory Scott?”

Wallis laughed. “All I know is I’ve been hearing those screams since I moved in. The first time, I searched the castle. But I never found a thing.”

Dink shivered. “Do you hear the noises a lot?” he asked.

Wallis shrugged. “Sometimes weeks go by and there’s not a peep. Then I’ll hear them for a few days in a row.”

Wallis smiled down at Dink. “To tell you the truth, Dink, this is one mystery that’s got me stumped. If those screams aren’t the ghost of Emory Scott, I don’t know what they are!”

After reading activities. (13 minutes)

I. Answer the following questions. (5 minutes)

Why did they have a basket?

What Lady Luck is?

Who was Ripley Pearce?

Do you think Ripley is good person?

II. Draw and color a picture that describe Walker’s place. (8 minutes)

DAY 12

The Deadly Dungeon

Chapter 12

While reading. (10 minutes)

Read the following excerpt from the chapter twelve of the storybook titled The Deadly Dungeon by Ron Roy. (P. 76-79)

No one had gotten much sleep. After locking the trapdoor, Dink, Josh, and Ruth Rose had run back to wake up Wallis. She'd called 911 and reported poachers on her property.

The police had come and arrested Rip. The officers gave Wallis the Operation Game Thief phone number.

Wallis had then driven Walker's Jeep to his house and brought him back to the castle.

"The Maine Fish and Game Department will have plenty of questions for Rip," Walker said.

"Trading in endangered animals is a federal crime."

"How did Rip get the parrots?" Josh asked.

"He must have contacts in the countries where they were captured," Walker said. "The police will be checking his phone bills to see whom he called."

"He probably used his own lobster boat," Wallis said, shaking her head. "No wonder it always looked so clean."

"Why did he have your Jeep?" Josh asked.

Walker speared another pancake. "Rip's car conked out a few days ago, so I let him borrow mine."

"It was a perfect set-up," Wallis said. "Rip needed money, and he had contacts who would pay a lot for rare parrots."

“I wonder if he sold any other animals,” Josh said, “like monkeys or snakes.”

“We may find out yet,” Walker said. He winked at Josh. “What made you decide to shut the trapdoor on Rip?”

“I got mad!” Josh said. “I wanted him to see how it felt to be in a cage.”

“So that green feather on Josh’s sneaker came from Rip, right?” Dink asked.

Walker nodded. “He probably brought it into the Jeep on his foot. And the one you found on my boat got there the same way.”

Josh blushed. “For a while we thought you were the poacher,” he told Walker.

“Well, I never did!” Ruth Rose said.

Walker grinned at Ruth Rose. “Thanks! What made you so sure?”

“You’re too busy,” she answered. “And you wouldn’t be mean to parrots. You threw those little crabs back in the water yesterday.”

“What will happen to the parrots?” Dink asked.

“I assume they’ll go back to where they came from,” Walker said. “And Rip will most likely go to jail.”

“And thanks to you kids, I won’t have to hear any more strange noises,” Wallis said.

She grinned shyly “But to tell the truth, I think I’ll miss the ghost of Emory Scott. I kind of liked living in a haunted castle!”

Just then a loud screech came from the mud room.

After reading activities. (15 minutes)

I. Choose and circle the correct option (7 minutes)

1. Operation Game Thief is:

- a) A video game
- b) A fiction movie
- c) A number to report poachers in Maine.

2. Who was arrested?

- a) Wallis Wallace
- b) Ripley Pearce
- c) Walker Wallace

3. What animals were planned to be traded?

- a) Snakes
- b) Monkeys
- c) Parrots

4. Josh decided to shut the trapdoor and get Rip trapped because...

- a) He was scared and acted out spontaneously.
- b) He wanted Rip to see how it felt to be in a cage.
- c) He is evil.

II. Answer the following questions. (8 minutes)

1. Why didn't Ruth Rose think Walker was the poacher?
2. A poacher is a person who trades endangered animals. Do you think poaching is something that happens regularly in Nicaragua?
3. What do you think of poachers?

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Appendix



Photograph 1. University's letter.



Photograph 2. Institute's main pavilion.



Photograph 3. Institute's Library.



Photograph 4. Institute's Library.