



Fiction

Oxford Level 9

Robo-Vac

Author: Susan Gates

Range: Family/Fantasy story

Theme: Solving problems

Teaching Notes authors: Gill Howell and Vicki Yates

Synopsis

When Gran doesn't want her new robot cleaner, Connor takes it home. He thinks it is cute, but when it insists on cleaning up his room, he changes his mind. Even his tidy sister doesn't want it. The robot sees the lawn mower and the problem of what to do with it is solved.

Group or guided reading

Introducing the book

- Look together at the cover. Ask the children to suggest what sort of story this is. Ask: *Is this going to be funny, exciting, scary?*
- Read the title and blurb on the back cover. Were the children right about the kind of story it is?
- Ask the children to speculate about what they think will happen.
- Read the author's name and ask the children if they have read other books by this author.

Strategy check

- Ask the children to tell you which strategies they can use to work out new words.
- Remind the children to look for familiar spelling patterns to help them work out words, e.g. on page 4 line 2 find the word 'rushed'. Ask a child to read the word, then turn to page 7. Ask another child to find the same 'rush' string in 'brushed' on line 5.
- Remind the children to break words into syllables to help them read it, e.g. 'understood' on page 8 line 4.
- Ask the children to read the dialogue on page 9. Remind them to take notice of punctuation and print effects to help them read expressively.

Independent reading

Focus: Explain to the children that you want them to think about this question while they are reading: *Why do you think Connor kept the robot, even when he no longer wanted it?*

- Observe the strategies the children use when they meet new vocabulary, and prompt them as needed.
- At the end of a chapter ensure the children can recount the main points of the chapter.

Returning and responding to the text

- When the children have read the whole story, ask them to describe what Connor thought of the robot when he first saw it.
- *What did the robot do that made Connor want to get rid of it?*
- Ask the children to describe why Connor kept the robot, showing evidence from the text.

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- Ask them to find an example of how punctuation is used to give expression to the dialogue, e.g. exclamation marks on page 10.
- *Where is italic print used in the dialogue to emphasize certain words?*
- *Can you think of a word to describe the style of the story? Is it sad, funny, exciting?*
- Ask the children to say what they liked about the story.

Speaking and listening activities

- Discuss the functions of the robot with the children.
- Ask the children to work with a partner and discuss what sort of personal robot they would like and what it would do to make things easier for them.
- Allow the children some time to collaborate and agree about their robot's functions.
- Ask some of the pairs to describe their robot for the others.
- Ask the children to vote on which robot would be most useful.

Further reading activities

- Ask the children to reread the story with a partner, taking turns to read the dialogue in an expressive tone.
- Ask them to look through the text and find verbs used instead of 'said' to describe speech, e.g. 'shouted', 'sighed', 'grumbled', 'begged'.
- Ask the children to work with a partner and suggest and discuss other verbs to use from their own knowledge or their word banks.

Suggestions for using ICT

- Prepare a page of text from the story, e.g. page 21, as a text file on a word processor, omitting the punctuation. Ask the children to add punctuation to make sense of the passage, then check their work with the text in the story.
- Ask the children to use a word-processing package to write their robot descriptions from the writing activity.
- Use a search engine to research Susan Gates' writing on the Internet. Ensure that the children only have access to child-friendly sites.

Writing activities

- Remind the children of the robots they described in the speaking and listening activity.
- Ask them to reread pages 4 to 7 of the story, paying close attention to how the author describes Robo-Vac.
- Ask the children to write their own descriptions of their robot, including what it looks like, what it does and how it does it.

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