How to Get to School in Sixty Seconds

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Illustrator: Steve May
Teaching notes author: Liz Miles

Synopsis

Hector, his inventor Mum, and his sister Agnes — along with her troupe of imaginary monkey friends — are always late for school, despite only living half an hour away. During a playground argument, Hector and his friend Khoi challenge each other to get to school in 60 seconds. As Hector’s mum’s time-saving inventions get more and more extreme and extraordinary, Hector tells the reader of the chaotic story of their efforts to win the challenge through a series of lists (Hector really likes lists).

Group or guided reading

Introducing the book

(Prediction) Look at the cover and discuss what the story might be about. Ask: What do you think the characters on the front cover are trying to do?

(Predicting) Read the back cover blurb and discuss what sort of books usually have lists and why.

(Summarizing) Read the preface and ask the children to summarize it. Does it give away the end of the story? How?

Strategy check

Remind the children to use the context to work out the meaning of words, e.g. lightbulbing (page 14). Note how this word is made up by adding –ing to a noun, which changes the word into a verb.

Identify the different spellings of words such as conference (page 23), disturbance (page 29), transference (page 91), and note how the –ence and –ance endings sound the same.

Ask the children to identify prefixes and suffixes in the text and break words down into their root words.

During reading

Ask the children to read Chapters 1–3 independently, listen to them in turn and prompt as necessary. Encourage them to ask questions about the plot and characters’ motives to check their understanding.

(Clarifying) After reading Chapter 1, ask the children to describe the character of Hector. Ask: What do we already know about Hector?
Independent reading

**Objective:** Pupils should be taught to understand what they read by drawing inferences such as inferring characters’ feelings, thoughts and motives from their actions, and justifying inferences with evidence.

- **(Summarizing, Clarifying)** After reading up to page 45, discuss Hector’s role in the family. Ask the children to summarize the relationship between Hector and Mum, and Hector and Dad. How do they compare?

- **(Summarizing, Clarifying)** After reading Chapter 8, summarize Mum’s feelings about Khoi’s dad, and then explain why she does not want to work for him.

- **(Clarifying, Questioning)** After reading Chapter 12, ask the children to describe and explain Mum and Dad’s relationship. Encourage them to think of questions they would like to ask Dad, for example: *What job would you rather have? What do you think of Sally’s inventions?*

**Assessment:**
- Check that the children consider both given and inferred details about characters’ relationships.

Returning and responding to the book

**Objective:** Pupils should be taught to understand what they read by identifying how language, structure and presentation contribute to meaning.

- **(Summarizing)** Look at Chapter 11 and ask the children to summarize each section of running text and each list.

- **(Clarifying)** Ask the children to explain why the author chose to use so many lists in Chapter 12. If necessary, point out how a lot has happened in a short space of time, and how the author has used lists to order and make sense of everything. Ask: *Have you ever used lists to sort out your thoughts, plans or events?*

- **(Clarifying)** Look at the dialogue in Chapter 13. Ask the children what we learn about Dad from the dialogue. Encourage the children to consider if lists could have been used instead, and why.

**Assessment:**
- Do the children notice how Hector achieves order in chaos through making lists?

Speaking and listening activities

**Objective:** Pupils should be taught to articulate and justify answers, arguments and opinions.

- Ask the children to take turns to role-play Kara May, while the rest of the class ask her opinions about Hector’s book. Model some questions they could ask Kara May, such as: *Has Hector portrayed his mother fairly? Is it possible his mother was just anxious at the police station, in Chapter 12, rather than irritated? Is there enough suspense in the story? Could the description of the burst pipe on page 66 be more dramatic?*

- Encourage the children to ask detailed questions about the use of lists. Would the book, or sections of the book, have worked better without lists?

- Open the discussion to a class debate, asking the children to consider the following statement: *Lists are an important part of this book.*
Writing activities

Objective: Pupils should be taught to evaluate and edit: assessing the effectiveness of their own and others’ writing.

- As a class agree on a list that could be brought to life by rewriting the text as dialogue, e.g. the list on page 115.
- Ask the children to write the dialogue, ensuring correct punctuation and using appropriate vocabulary suited to the relevant characters and their feelings.
- Ask the children to swap their work with a partner so that they can assess the effectiveness of each other’s work and offer ideas to include during editing.

Assessment:

- Do the children offer constructive feedback on their partner’s work, referring to both details and the overall effect?
How to Get to School in Sixty Seconds
(Oxford Level 19) Curriculum coverage chart

**Links to Oxford Reading Criterion Scale:**
- Can work out the meaning of unknown words and phrases by relating to known vocabulary as well as from the way they are used in context. (D) [ORCS Standard 7, 1]
- Can refer back to the text to support predictions, thoughts and opinions, being able to elaborate in order to provide reasoned justifications. (R/D) [ORCS Standard 7, 4]
- Can use quotations and text references to support ideas and arguments. (R/D) [ORCS Standard 7, 10]
- Can identify and discuss implicit and explicit points of view in texts, referring back to the text to support thoughts and ideas. (D) [ORCS Standard 7, 14]
- Can comment on the success of a text providing evidence that refers to language, theme and style. (E) [ORCS Standard 7, 15]
- Can explain how the structural choices support the writer’s theme or purpose (e.g. in fiction, decisions about plot structure, character development or flash backs/flash forwards; in non-fiction, looking at how a writer organizes information so that the reader can compare/contrast ideas, and devices and decisions the writer has made in multi-genre texts). (A) [ORCS Standard 7, 19]
- Can evaluate relationships between characters, (e.g. how characters behave in different ways as they interact with different people and/or different settings and consider the relative importance of these instances when evaluating a character’s actions) referring back to the text to support thoughts and judgements. (D) [ORCS Standard 7, 20]

**Comprehension strategies**
- Comprehension strategies are taught throughout the Teaching Notes to enable pupils to understand what they read, in books they can read independently. In these Teaching Notes the following strategies are taught:
  - Predicting, Questioning, Clarifying, Summarizing

**ENGLAND The National Curriculum in England: Years 5–6**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spoken language</th>
<th>Pupils should be taught to articulate and justify answers, arguments and opinions (SpokLang.4)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading:</td>
<td>Pupils should be taught to understand what they read by drawing inferences such as inferring characters’ feelings, thoughts and motives from their actions, and justifying inferences with evidence (Y5/6 ReadComp.2iii)</td>
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<td>Pupils should be taught to understand what they read by identifying how language, structure and presentation contribute to meaning (Yr5/6 ReadComp.2vi)</td>
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<td>Writing:</td>
<td>Pupils should be taught to evaluate and edit: assessing the effectiveness of their own and others’ writing (Y5/6WriteComp.3i)</td>
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**SCOTLAND Curriculum for Excellence: Literacy and English experiences and outcomes, Second Level**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Listening and talking</th>
<th>I can show my understanding of what I listen to or watch by responding to literal, inferential, evaluative and other types of questions, and by asking different kinds of questions of my own (LIT 2-07a)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>To show my understanding, I can respond to literal, inferential and evaluative questions and other close reading tasks and can create different kinds of questions of my own (ENG 2-17a)</td>
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<td>I can discuss structure, characterisation and/or setting; discuss the writer’s style and other features appropriate to genre (ENG 2-19a)</td>
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<td>Writing</td>
<td>Throughout the writing process, I can check that my writing makes sense and meets its purpose (LIT 2-23a)</td>
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### WALES Programme of Study for English in Wales: Year 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Oracy</th>
<th>Learners are able to follow up points in group discussions, showing agreement or disagreement giving reasons (Y6_OracColl.3)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Learners are able to infer ideas which are not explicitly stated, e.g. writers’ viewpoints or attitudes (Y6_ReadComp.2)</td>
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<td>Learners are able to confidently recognise and understand the characteristics of a range of different texts (continuous and non-continuous) in terms of language, theme, structure and presentation (Y6_ReadStrat.3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>Learners are able to reflect on, edit and redraft to improve their writing (Y6_WritMean.7)</td>
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### NORTHERN IRELAND Levels of Progression in Communication across the curriculum: Primary Level 5

<table>
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<th>Talking and listening</th>
<th>Pupils can discuss their own and others’ ideas (L5_com_talk.2i)</th>
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<td>Reading</td>
<td>Pupils can understand some implicit meanings and attitudes (L5_com_read.3ii)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pupils can describe language, structure and presentation (L5_com_read.3i)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>Pupils can redraft to improve accuracy and meaning (L5_com_writ.1)</td>
</tr>
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