



Oxford Reading Level 18

Stage Fright

Author: Jane Lawes

Illustrator: Giovanni Pota

Teaching notes author: Sasha Morton



Synopsis

Alice in Wonderland is to be the final school production for Parnita's Year 6 class, and the last play she'll perform in with her best friend Nadira before they move on to different secondary schools. Parnita is initially disappointed to be given the role of the narrator instead of a proper acting part. However, as the term progresses, Parnita comes up with ways to make her role more exciting – despite feeling like she is being sidelined by Nadira's growing friendship with Ruby, who is playing Alice. When the play is finally performed, on a stormy day, all the issues that have been building up come to a head. Thanks to everyone working as a team, the show is a triumph and Parnita and Nadira re-establish their friendship.

Reflect books at Oxford Reading Level 18 are linked by the theme of **resilience**.

Group, guided or whole-class reading

Introducing the book

- (*Predicting*) Ask the children to read the title and look at the front cover illustration. Have they ever heard the expression 'stage fright' before? What do they think it means and have they ever experienced it for themselves?
- Ask the children to read the back cover blurb. Ask: *What does a narrator do? Do you think this is a good role for someone who likes acting? Can good things come from disappointment?*

Strategy check

- Remind the children to use the context to work out the meaning of words then check them in a dictionary, e.g. *obsequiously* (page 6), *outlandish* (page 27) and *momentum* (page 45).
- Prompt the children to look for different pronunciations of the same grapheme to read and spell words, e.g. 'sc' which appears in *school* (page 8), *self-conscious* (page 17) and *scenery* (page 26).
- Explore spelling rules through words encountered in the story, such as the difference between words which end -cial and -tial (*special*, *potentially*) and the rules regarding which ending is used (-cial is common after a vowel letter, -tial after a consonant letter), as well as some exceptions to these rules.

During reading

Ask the children to read pages 3–7 independently, listen to them in turn and prompt as necessary. Encourage them to pause at appropriate points in the text to reflect on what they have read. If they begin to rush, prompt them to recap what has happened so far, or to consider what the start of the book has told them about characters, setting or backstory.

- *(Clarifying)* Have the children come across a prologue in a book before? Can they use the narrative below it to work out what the purpose of a prologue is? (It gives the reader background information and context, and is written in the same style as the main text.)
- *(Clarifying)* Explore the format of the text on page 3 as a group. Did the children recognize this as a play script? Discuss why this format is appropriate to the theme of the book.
- *(Clarifying, Predicting)* Read the line of narrative text on page 3 out loud. How does this line identify the author of the prologue for the reader? What is Parnita's wish and do the children think it will come true? Prompt them to consider the ellipsis. Does this influence their opinion?
- *(Summarizing, Clarifying)* After reading page 7, ask the children to explain what has happened so far in the story and to pick out some words and phrases which describe the excitement levels in the classroom that afternoon, such as *hubbub, excited, escalated*.

Independent reading

Ask the children to continue to read the book independently. Encourage them to think about whether they understand what they are reading, and to reread or ask about any sentences they find difficult.

Objective: Continuing to read and discuss an increasingly wide range of fiction, poetry, plays, non-fiction and reference books or textbooks.

- *(Clarifying)* After reading to the end of Chapter 1, ask the children to find examples of other stories which are referenced in the book. Parnita mentions the play, *Twelfth Night*, by William Shakespeare. Have any of the class heard of either the play or this playwright? Can they name any other Shakespeare plays and tell you anything about them?
- *(Questioning)* Ask the children if they are familiar with the story of *Alice in Wonderland*. Encourage them to share their knowledge of the story and to question each other, such as: *Which character from the story would you like to be in the play? Do you think Alice is a more interesting character than the White Rabbit or the Queen of Hearts?*
- *(Summarizing)* After they have read to the end of Chapter 2, ask the children to explain why Parnita is so unhappy about being cast as the narrator. Do they agree with her mum that 'it takes a special kind of person to be the narrator'? What would the children say to Parnita to encourage her to be resilient in the situation?

Assessment pointer: Check that the children understand that the diary/play script sections of the story are by Parnita and that these also recount her version of events.

Ask the children to finish reading to the end of the story independently.

Returning and responding to the book

Objective: Discuss and evaluate how authors use language, including figurative language, considering the impact on the reader.

- *(Clarifying)* As a group, discuss how effective it is to read the story through different viewpoints. Do they gain a better understanding of how Parnita is feeling when they read her diary? Talk about how Parnita's actions impact on other people and whether she notices this.
- *(Summarizing)* Ask the children to pick one or two examples of figurative language from the story to explore further. For example, the dancing hippos in Parnita's stomach in Chapter 1 or Parnita feeling as if she were 'stranded on a raft' in the lunch hall in Chapter 2. Why are these effective examples of figurative language? What effect do they have on the reader's understanding?
- *(Questioning)* Do the children think Parnita should have talked to Mrs Sharma before improvising her new dialogue on page 46? How could they tell that Mrs Sharma was annoyed with her? What questions would the children ask Nadira or Mrs Sharma about Parnita's decision to change the script?

Assessment pointer: Prompt the children to explain whether the author's choice of language helps them to understand why characters are acting in a particular way.

Speaking and listening activities

Objective: Select and use appropriate registers for effective communication.

- Explain to the children that they are going to work in groups of three to prepare a short role play between Ruby, Robbie and Parnita based on the following scenario: Parnita wants to give Ruby advice about improving her performance as Alice, Robbie realizes that Ruby isn't very happy about this and she doesn't want to hear what Parnita has to say.
- Encourage the children to use what they have read about the different characters to inform how they develop the role play and how they express themselves through words, tone and action.
- Ask the groups to make sure the characters have resolved their differences by the end of their scene. Compare the different outcomes once each group has performed their role play.

Assessment pointer: Remind the children to speak clearly so that their audience can hear and understand their performances.

Writing activities

Objective: Identifying the audience for and purpose of the writing, selecting the appropriate form and using other similar writing as models for their own.

- Tell the children that they are going to write a letter from Nadira to Parnita which explains how worried she has been about playing the part of the White Rabbit in the school play.
- Ask the children to look back in the book and find examples of times when Nadira seemed to lack confidence or acted oddly. Encourage them to refer to specific incidences from the story in their letter, as well as emulating how the author wrote Nadira's voice.
- Discuss the conventions of writing a letter and how it should be presented before the children start to write, showing examples as needed. They should plan what they want to say first and use some figurative language and a broad range of vocabulary to share Nadira's feelings.

Assessment pointer: Remind the children to use evidence from the text to support their written work.

Cross-curricular links

Relationships education

- Ask the children to discuss Parnita and Nadira's friendship. Can they explain how the difficulties in their friendship happened? Do they think Parnita will be more sensitive to Nadira now that she realizes how her stage fright affected her mental wellbeing? Come up with some ideas for how becoming part of a wider friendship group (e.g. with Robbie and Ruby) might benefit their relationship and help prepare them for the move to secondary school. Prompt the children to share their own experiences during the discussion, and talk about how trustworthiness, loyalty and empathy are essential characteristics if friendships are to become resilient.

Drama

- Ask the children work in pairs to choose a favourite book, poem, film or play and to retell it in an abridged performance in two minutes. The children could use music, dance and drama to retell their story. Can the rest of the group guess which story is being acted out?

Stage Fright (Oxford Reading Level I8)

Assessment

Mapping charts for UK Literacy curricula are available on Oxford Owl.

Links to Oxford Reading Criterion Scale:

- Can read aloud with pace, fluency and expression, taking punctuation, presentation and author's intent into account. (RCS Standard 7, 2)
- Can refer back to the text to support predictions, thoughts and opinions, being able to elaborate in order to provide reasoned justifications. (RCS Standard 7, 4)
- Can recognize text features within mixed-genre texts. (RCS Standard 7, 5)
- Can identify the point of view of some texts and how this impacts on the reader. (RCS Standard 7,7)
- Can use quotations and text references to support ideas and arguments. (RCS Standard 7,10)
- Can explain a character's motives throughout a text and use evidence from the text to back up opinions. (RCS Standard, 7 11)
- Can explain how the author has used different language features (e.g. figurative language, vocabulary choice, use of specific grammatical convention) and the affect of these on the reader. (RCS Standard 7, 21)
- 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). (RCS Standard 7,19)