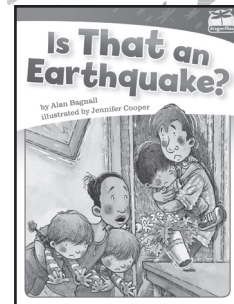


Is That an Earthquake?

by Alan Bagnall

illustrated by Jennifer Cooper



Overview

A young boy wonders anxiously whether the movements around his home could be an earthquake. Suddenly there is an earthquake, and the family act quickly. The story incorporates a recount and an explanation and is told through dialogue.

Suggested purposes

This text supports the comprehension strategies of making connections with real-life experiences and using illustrations to understand text. It includes a high number of descriptive verbs that encourage attention to initial blends, onomatopoeia, and rhyme

Text features (Focus on only one or two per session.)

- the use of dialogue to tell the story
- the portrayal of the characters' feelings through the text and the illustrations
- the repetitive text structure and the dramatic change on pages 8 to 11
- the change in tense on page 11
- the lively, descriptive verbs
- the imperative verbs on page 9
- the italics and exclamation marks for emphasis
- the rhyme
- the personification on pages 3 and 6
- the inclusion of the family dog in most of the illustrations
- the examples of verbs that involve dropping the final "e" before adding "ing"

Possible challenges

- the use of dialogue to tell the story
- the poetic language
- the terms "logging truck" and "goods train" on pages 3 and 5

Setting the scene

Talk about the students' experiences of earthquakes. *What would you do if there was an earthquake now? This book is about a boy who is worried about earthquakes. Have you ever heard a noise and thought it was an earthquake?* Draw out the students' ideas of things that could sound or feel like an earthquake.

The first reading

Front cover – Read the title and the names of the writer and the illustrator.

Back cover – Read aloud the preview question. Help the students to make connections with the preview question and their own experiences. Ask them to read the text silently, pausing for discussion or to clarify any difficulties.

Page 2 – *What is the problem? Who is speaking? Is Mum worried? Why is the house shaking?*

Page 3 – You may need to explain what a logging truck is.

Page 5 – You may need to clarify what a goods train is and explain "trundling".

Pages 6 and 7 – Check that the students realise it’s always the boy asking the question. *Who answers on page 7? How do you know?* Note that the rhyme changes slightly on page 7.

Page 8 – *What has changed on this page? What should they do?*

Page 9 – *How do you think Mum would say this? Why is Mum telling the twins what to do?*

Draw out the idea that this is an emergency and people have to act quickly. *What has the author done to make pages 8 and 9 sound exciting?*

Page 10 – *How does the author want you to read this page?* Encourage the students to speculate who is speaking. (There is no right answer.)

Page 11 – Note the change from “is” to “was” now that the earthquake is over. Clarify that the boy is speaking to his little sister. *How do the rest of the family feel?*

Page 12 – *Have you ever felt like this after a frightening experience?*

Ideas for revisiting the text (Choose only one or two per session.)

- Listen as the students reread the text with a partner, observing how they manage the challenges of the poetic language. Note how they use expression and appropriate phrasing.
- Focus on the feelings of the characters, especially the boy and the dog. *How can you tell how they’re feeling?* The illustrations convey the idea that the boy is nervous and that there is a strong bond between the boy and the dog. Study the illustrations on pages 8 to 11. *How are the children feeling? What are Mum and Dad thinking? How would you feel?*
- Talk about how the family kept safe during the earthquake. *What would you do if there was an earthquake at your house?*
- Read pages 3 to 7 together, savouring the poetic language. Draw out the idea that the rhyme is fun to read aloud and adds impact and excitement. Talk about the words that almost rhyme. *What makes “trundling” and “rumbling” (or “rattling” and “chattering”) sound similar?*
- Talk about the personification. *Find the word that makes the truck sound like a person on page 3. What is the wind doing on page 6?* Draw out the idea that personification adds life and interest.
- Write “shake” on the board. *How would you write “shaking”?* Remind the students that they need to drop the final “e”. Ask them to find the words in the text that end with “ing” and identify the root words. Sort them into words that end in “e” and those that don’t. You could extend this activity by talking about “ed” endings. Draw out the idea that if the root word ends in “e”, they only need to add “d”. They are likely to notice that some verbs, such as “shaking” and “blowing”, change to a completely different form in the past tense.

Suggestions for further activities

- Read other stories or poems about earthquakes.
- Write some earthquake safety rules and have an earthquake drill.
- Create thought bubbles for each character on pages 8, 9, or 11 or for the dog on page 12.
- Use the text as a model for poetic writing about noises that sound like an earthquake.

- BLM word activity: use descriptive language

The students can match the descriptive words to events in the story. They can then write descriptions of other events.

- BLM comprehension activity: make connections

The students can describe what the family did in the earthquake. They can then describe what they would do if there was an earthquake when they were at home.