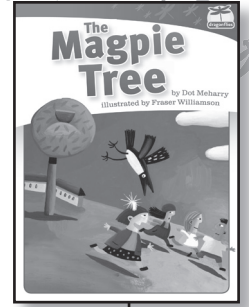


The Magpie Tree

by Dot Meharry

illustrated by Fraser Williamson



Overview

Maddy and her friends are having trouble with a pesky magpie that seems to like their shiny possessions. Using some clever problem solving, Maddy works out a way to keep her friends, and the magpie, happy.

Suggested purposes

This text supports the comprehension strategies of determining cause and effect, forming and supporting opinions, and retrieving relevant information from a text. It is a lively narrative that holds the readers' attention through suspense and prediction and has a positive and satisfying ending.

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

- the themes of problem solving and co-operation
- the way Maddy resolves the situation successfully thinking of everyone involved
- the complex narrative structure
- the use of dialogue to reveal information slowly and keep the readers' interest
- the indicators of time – *the next day, that night, next morning, at playtime, the next day*
- the variety of word endings – *ed, ing*
- the large number of lively verbs – *swooped, twinkled, warbled*
- the doubled consonants – *swoop, swooped*
- the commas for phrasing
- the bright, colourful, and lively illustrations
- the adjectives – *shiny, silver, silvery*
- the replacement of an “e” with a “y” – *shine, shiny*
- the compound words – *hairclip, playtime, classroom, earrings, teapot*
- the possessive apostrophes – *Dan's, children's, Maddy's*
- the blends – *fl, br, ch, sh*
- the digraph – *bl*
- the use of hyperbole – *good idea!*

Setting the scene

This is a story about a magpie. *What is a magpie?* Discuss the students' ideas or prior knowledge.

The first reading

Front cover – Ask the students to read the title. Look carefully at the illustration. *Where do you think this story might be set? What does the magpie want? What might the magpie tree be?*

Read the names of the author and illustrator.

Back cover – Read aloud the preview question. Lead a discussion to build the students' background knowledge.

Title page – Read the names of the author and illustrator.

Page 2 – *How do you think Maddy and her friends feel about the magpie? Why did Maddy scream?*

The students may need help with “shiny”. Write “shine” on the board and show the students how removing the “e” and adding a “y” creates the word “shiny”. Discuss other examples of this.

Page 3 – *Why did the children run to Dan’s house? What words tells us what the magpie is doing? How do you think the magpie is feeling?*

Write “warbled” on the board. Break down the word and look at the “bl” digraph and the syllables. Lead the students to the conclusion that breaking down this word and looking at the text helps them to understand an unknown word. *What sound might a magpie make that looks like this word?*

Page 4 – *Why do you think Maddy left her hairclip at home? Ask the students to make predictions for the rest of the story.*

Page 5 – *Why did the magpie “swoop”?*

Page 6 – Look carefully at the illustration. *How has the illustrator shown us what the magpie might be attracted to? How do you think the children are feeling? What do you think Maddy might be thinking about? Do you think there is a way to prevent the magpie from swooping and chasing the children?*

Pages 7 and 8 – *Do we know what the plan is? How has the author avoided telling us? Discuss how the author’s use of dialogue conveys only some information. Discuss why the author may have decided to do this (to keep the reader hooked)*

Page 9 – *What do you think Maddy and the other children are going to do?*

Page 10 – Write “silver”, “silvery”, “shiny” and “twinkled” on the board. *What do the children’s items have in common?*

Pages 11 and 12 – *Why do you think Maddy put her hairclip on the tree? What do you think the magpie might have been thinking when it saw the tree?*

Look at the exclamation marks and discuss why the author has used them in the dialogue and at the end of the story.

Why was Maddy’s plan good for everyone? Encourage the students to conclude that no one was harmed or hurt and that Maddy’s plan meant that the magpie didn’t bother them any more.

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

- Listen to the students reread the text, observing their ability to read expressively and fluently and their confidence with the content words. If necessary, review the use of commas to support phrasing and pace.
- Discuss the narrative structure. Identify the introduction, the problem, the climax, and the satisfying ending. Look at the way the author introduced the idea of the plan, but didn’t reveal any details in order to keep the readers’ interest. *How did the author achieve this?* Draw the students’ attention to the use of dialogue.

- Focus on the descriptive verbs. Draw out the idea that the verbs add clarity and interest and help the reader imagine how the children are feeling and the reasons for the magpie's behaviour. Write the verbs "twinkled", "chasing", "swooping", and "flashed" on the board. Ask the students to think of alternatives that aren't as interesting to show the effect of descriptive verbs.
- Turn to page 10 and look at the sentence "the classroom was buzzing with excitement". Discuss what "buzzing" means here. *Why has the author used this word instead of "full of"?* Give the students some simple sentences and ask them to add more interesting words to them.
- Turn to page 3 and look at the sentence that contains the words "swooping" and "chasing". Discuss the rhythmic and poetic nature of these words. Look at why the author may have chosen them. Encourage the students to draw the conclusion that they reflect the bird's movements.

Suggestions for further activities

- Have the students design their own magpie tree. Encourage them to think about what they learnt about magpies in the story. This could be done through collage, a model, or detailed drawings.
- Study the adjectives. Provide examples from the story. Create a class list of adjectives.
- Rewrite the story from the magpie's point of view.
- BLM word activity: use compound words

The students can find the compound words in the text. They can write each word in the spaces provided and use each one in a sentence. They can then make compound words from "play" and "tea".

- BLM comprehension activity: chart the sequence of events

The students can describe the events in the story on the numbered timeline.