

Through the Forest by Yijing Li (Lantana)

Lost and alone, a young boy enters the forest not knowing the path that lies before him. He meets a figure called Emptiness who guides him on his way. Together they find keepsakes deep in the forest that trigger memories, both good and bad. As he moves closer to the sun-filled meadow on the other side of the forest, the boy learns that to be truly happy, he must embrace his past.

A powerful and moving tale about the importance of memories in the winding journey of life.

Overall learning aims of this teaching sequence:

- To explore a high quality picturebook which allows children to put themselves inside the story and empathise with characters and their issues and dilemmas
- To engage with illustrations throughout a picturebook to explore and recognise the added layers of meaning these can give to our interpretation of a text
- To explore how to use drawing as an approach to enhance thinking for writing and developing vocabulary
- To explore and follow the authentic process that an author/illustrator goes through when developing a picturebook
- To create a picturebook based on children's own creative story ideas

This teaching sequence is designed for a Nursery or Reception class.

Overview of this teaching sequence.

This teaching sequence is designed to take place over 2-4 weeks. All of the Power of Pictures teaching sequences are aimed to develop an appreciation of art and picturebooks across age ranges.

The sequence will have a strong emphasis on spending time exploring and responding to illustrations, drawing and illustrating as part of the writing process and will exemplify the process of picturebook making, allowing children to gain an understanding of how ideas are developed and carried through for impact on the reader.

There is much to draw on in this emotive and thought-provoking text that will link to Personal, Social and Emotional Development. Adults working with children should be prepared to have conversations with children about their thoughts, feelings and emotions, sensitively navigating and handling themes and issues which may arise as a result of the themes explored in the text.

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The work done in the sequence will be further enhanced by the suite of video resources on the Power of Pictures website, where children can be introduced to Yijing Li as an author/illustrator, see her read the book aloud, illustrate a character and learn and talk about how she wrote and illustrated the text.

Teaching Approaches

- Response to illustration
- Illustration
- Reading aloud and revisiting texts
- Looking at Language
- Debate and discussion
- Close reading of picturebook spreads
- Modelled drawing
- Storymapping
- Booktalk
- Sketching ideas
- Storyboarding
- Responding to writing
- Bookmaking

Writing Outcomes

- Annotations to share children’s thinking around a text
- Children’s own illustrations of story characters and events
- Own ideas for a picturebook spread
- Story predictions
- Writing in Role as a character
- Storymaps
- Book reviews
- Annotations
- Sketches of characters and scenarios
- Storyboard
- Sample picturebook spreads
- Published picturebook

Links to other texts and resources.

- The *Through the Forest* book page on the CLPE website with access to Yijing Li’s video resources: <https://clpe.org.uk/books/book/through-forest>
- Find out more about the author/illustrator Yijing Li and see other examples of her work on her website: <https://yijing-li.com/about>

Through the Forest is Yijing Li’s debut picturebook. The book will be unfolded slowly over the series of sessions, so it is important not to put the book on display until the whole book has been revealed and read. When you have read the whole book, place a copy or copies in the class reading area for children to re-read, revisit, talk about together and enjoy.

Other books to support children in understanding and exploring emotions:

- *Barbara Throws a Wobbler* by Nadia Shireen (Puffin)
- *Geoffrey Gets the Jitters* by Nadia Shireen (Puffin)
- *Sweep*, Louise Greig and Júlia Sardà (Egmont)
- *Silly Billy*, Anthony Browne (Walker)
- *Owl Babies*, Martin Waddell and Patrick Benson (Walker)
- *A Book of Feelings*, Amanda McCardie and Salvatore Rubbino (Walker)
- *Happy*, Mies Van Hout (Leminscaat)

- *Feelings: Inside my heart and in my head*, Libby Walden and Richard Jones (Caterpillar Books)
- *Lost and Found*, Oliver Jeffers (HarperCollins)
- *The Girl With a Parrot on her Head*, Daisy Hirst (Walker)
- *Little Mouse's Big Book of Fears*, Emily Gravett (Macmillan)
- *Grumpy Frog*, Ed Vere (Puffin)
- *Glad Monster, Sad Monster*, Ed Emberley (Little, Brown)
- *Pom Pom Gets the Grumps*, Sophy Henn (Puffin)
- *The New Small Person*, Lauren Child (Puffin)
- *A Great Big Cuddle*, Michael Rosen and Chris Riddell (Walker)
- *Ruby's Worry*, Tom Percival (Bloomsbury)
- *Ravi's Roar*, Tom Percival (Bloomsbury)

Other high quality picturebooks to support ideation:

- *Jabari Jumps*, Gaia Cornwall (Walker)
- *How to Be a Lion*, Ed Vere (Puffin)
- *A Mouse Called Julian*, Joe Todd-Stanton (Flying Eye)
- *Is there a dog in this book?* by Viviane Schwarz (Walker)
- *Croc and Bird* by Alexis Deacon (Red Fox)
- *Here Comes Frankie!* by Tim Hopgood (Macmillan)
- *Shh! We Have a Plan* by Chris Haughton (Walker)
- *The Story Machine* by Tom McLaughlin (Bloomsbury)
- *Grandad's Island* by Benji Davies
- *Wild* by Emily Hughes (Flying Eye)
- *Grendel* by David Lucas (Walker)
- *The New Small Person*, Lauren Child (Puffin)
- *Meesha Makes Friends*, Tom Percival (Bloomsbury)

Other high quality picturebooks can be found on CLPE's Core Books online at:

<https://clpe.org.uk/corebooks>

Bookmaking and Paper Technology

Paul Johnson - <http://www.bookart.co.uk/>

Get Writing 7-11 by Paul Johnson (A&C Black)

Websites to support understanding around picturebook creation:

The Picturebook Makers blog gives lots of useful insights into the creative processes of a great number of author illustrators, including Power of Pictures partners Benji Davies, Chris Haughton, Emily Hughes, Viviane Schwarz and Mini Grey: <https://blog.picturebookmakers.com/>

The Art of the Picture Book website contains interviews from a range of children's illustrators: <https://www.artofthepicturebook.com/>

Cross Curricular Links:

Personal, Social and Emotional Development:

- The text offers rich opportunities for children to think and talk about their behaviours, feelings and emotions. Through exploring story events and situations faced by characters, children will be able to develop their understanding of how to recognise and name emotions, how to manage and deal with emotions and behaviour independently.
- Sharing both personal narratives and making wider connections with real life events alongside the text will enrich children's ability to make personal connections with the text, empathise with characters and story events and understand why characters think and behave in the way they do.
- The PSHE Association provide resources for their school members to explore feelings and emotions in more depth, see: <https://pshe-association.org.uk/resource/mental-health-emotional-wellbeing-ks1-2>

Reading:

- Make a display of books that support children to understand and explore emotions from the suggested booklist above. Share a photograph of the author/illustrator so that children gain a sense of the creator of the book.
- Talk regularly with children about books they read and enjoyed when they were younger and why this was. Make a display of titles the children reference for them to share and come back to throughout this sequence.
- Make a display of favourite picturebooks that children know of and have enjoyed at home or in school now.
- Use the school library, schools library service or local library to broaden text selections where necessary and introduce children to a wide range of picturebooks. CLPE's Corebooks has a wealth of recommendations to explore and can also be shared with parents and carers: <https://clpe.org.uk/corebooks>. This site is free to access once registered with an email.

Understanding the World:

- The story takes place in a forest setting. Allow opportunities for children to explore an area such as this in their local area, comparing and contrasting the features and the feelings associated with being there with the forest and feelings experienced in the story.
- You could take art materials with you so that the children could create illustrations of the forest in situ, or collect objects from the forest to make art with.
- Set up a treasure hunt, allowing opportunities to find 'memories' – objects associated with shared experiences from your setting to be able to recall special events or times together. Sit together to describe each object and the memories and feelings associated with it to develop

children's language, vocabulary and oral composition, using the language models in the book for inspiration.

Creative and Expressive Arts:

- Look at the marks, patterns and colours that Yijing Li uses throughout the book and the materials she may have used to make these. Provide children with access to watercolour paints, water, brushes of different sizes, crayons, pastels, charcoal and soft drawing pencils and allow them to explore how to make marks to create different effects for themselves.
- Look at the different parts of the forest she shares in the illustration, and the feelings she gives us about each space with the colours, marks and patterns she uses. Take the children to a local natural space to take photographs to capture the setting. Back at school, use these photographs to create your own atmospheric illustrations of the setting, drawing on the techniques explored.

Teaching Sessions:

Before beginning the sequence:

- Activities in this sequence open up opportunities for children to talk about their own lives and emotions. You will need to set this up very carefully with the pupils beforehand, emphasising a trust approach to talking about their own feelings and experiences.
- You may also want to create masks of the two key characters to enable children to role play elements of the story, or character hats – bands of card stapled to fit the children's heads, with an illustration of the character stuck to the front.
- Collect together examples of other high quality picturebooks that can be used as an example of the kinds of characters, themes, storylines, text and image presentation that will inspire the children's own writing in this part of the sequence. Suggestions are made in the list above or can be sourced throughout the collections on CLPE's Corebooks website:
<https://clpe.org.uk/corebooks>
- Collect together different kinds of art materials, e.g. coloured pencils, watercolour paints, acrylic paints, colouring pencils, charcoal pencils, brush pens, pencils, tracing paper, drafting paper, publication paper and card for the children to use to plan and create their picturebooks. If you have stock, providing each child with a sketchbook would be useful, or they could hand make these themselves.
- Create a Working Wall or shared journal that can become a place to in which you can collect children's responses and examples of work that is produced alongside the sequence and to share ideas, inspirations and working process as you move through the process of creating and shaping a text.

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- Throughout the sequence, take of photographs of children's engagement in the tasks, their responses to the text through annotations around illustrations, examples of work and note significant comments or quotes from the children and note your own reflections on children's engagement as the enabling adult in your reflective journal.

Responding to illustration and entering the world of the story

The children's books featured on the Power of Pictures have been chosen because of the quality of the illustrations they contain and the ways in which the illustrations work with the text to create meaning for the reader. Children will need time and opportunities to enjoy and respond to the pictures and to talk together about what the illustrations contribute to their understanding of the text.

- Share the front cover of the text with the children. *What do they see here? What does it make them think about? How do they feel when they look at this image? What makes them feel this way?* Note their responses around a copy of the front cover to add to the working wall or the shared journal.
- Now, read the title; **Through the Forest**. *What is a forest? Have they ever visited a forest before? What did they see there? What was it like to be there?*
- Encourage the children to consider what a story with this title might involve. *Who is going Through the Forest? Is anyone else with them? What might this forest be like? Why might they be going Through the Forest? What might they see or do there?*
- Allow time and space for the children to discuss their initial thoughts and responses to the cover, while the adult observes, encouraging them to extend and deepen their thinking and responses where necessary, so that the children's ideas are recorded and can be referred back to in subsequent sessions.
- Now open the book to look at the opening endpapers. Allow time for the children look closely at what's there and then discuss these together. *What do you see here? What else does it make you think about the story?*
- Next, look at the publication details, dedication and inside title page spread. Encourage the children to look closely at the child's facial expression and body language. *How do you think they are feeling here? Why do you think they might be feeling this way? What do you think might happen next?*
- Invite the children to think about the story which might lie ahead. *What do you think might happen in this story? How might the story begin? What might happen in the middle? How might it end?*
- Encourage the children to share their ideas, ensuring that enabling adults make a note of these to come back to and take time to compare their ideas. You could also record these on an appropriate device as a record of their thoughts, ideas and oral composition. Dictation software (even simply on Microsoft Word) could be used to transcribe these. *What were the similarities in their predictions? What were the differences?*

Exploring characterisation in illustration and text.

Children should be given time and space to look deeper at the text and illustrations in a picturebook to take them a step beyond what pictures literally represent to having an idea of how pictures are able to express and metaphorically display what cannot be pictured directly; ideas, moods, abstract notions and qualities.

- Re-read the title of the book and the opening page, before turning to the next double page spread, which begins, 'I was lost in a deep, dark forest.' Give time and space for children to explore and take in the illustration. *What do you learn about the child here? Where is this happening? What do you notice about this place? What do you think the child is feeling in this space? What tells or shows you this? Why do you think they feel this way?*
- Re-read the text for a second time. Talk about the impact of the last word: 'Until...' *What does this leave you thinking about what might happen next?* Collect the children's predictions around a copy of the illustration.
- On the classroom screen, bring up a large image of a deep, dark forest, or a video of a live walk through one, such as: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DhsKd0Ln0M8> similar to the one described in the book.
- Encourage the children to get up and, while watching the video, to pretend that they are the child walking in the forest. Encourage them to share ideas about the forest as they watch and walk, scribing these around a copy of the illustration. *What can they see? What can they hear? What does it feel like to be there? What might they be searching for? What might they find?*
- Afterwards, in the creative area of the continuous provision, leave white wax crayons, charcoal, soft drawing pencils and watercolour paper, paints, brushes and water, alongside copies of the forest illustrations so far and encourage the children to create their own representations of the deep, dark forest.
- Alongside the children, look carefully at the marks and patterns Yijing Li has made in her work and the materials she has used to create these.
- Keep the video playing for the children to refer to, or to continue to watch and walk to, exploring and expanding their experience of this place.
- As an enabling adult, work alongside the children, using pole-bridging talk to model and encourage children to articulate their thoughts, feelings, ideas and process as they work.
- Scribe the children's talk about their art or about the forest as a record of their expressions and communications to display alongside these in a gallery space, along with copies of Yijing's illustration in this spread and from the front endpapers.

Developing ideas for writing through close reading of illustrations and text and engaging in role play and drama

Authors of picturebooks make deliberate choices about what they will show in the words and what will be viewed in the illustrations. In the best picturebooks, the illustrations will not merely complement the

text on the page, they may also elaborate and extend it, contradict the text or be used to show feelings that the words may only imply. Children should be given experiences that allow them to tune into the function of both the text and illustrations and how they work together to bring the story to the reader.

- Prepare for the next session by ensuring that you cover the second half of the next spread in the book, which begins: 'The giant figure turned to me slowly.' It is important that the children see only the first half of this spread and this is not revealed before the point indicated in the activity below.
- Begin by re-reading the book so far, including the cover and front matter, up until '**Until...**' Now, turn the page to reveal **only the first half of the next double spread** up to "**Who are you?**" Consider together the children's reaction to the page turn. *Is this what you expected to see? Why or why not? How does the text you see compare to the predictions you made? Did anyone predict that another character might be introduced?*
- Take time to look at this spread carefully, ideally projecting this large onto a screen so the children can all clearly see it. Look at how we are looking down at the child. *What do you think they might be looking up at? What do the facial expression and body position of the character suggest about the 'someone' that is being introduced?*
- Encourage the children to stand and take up the pose of the character they see on the page. Give them time to get the body position and facial expression of the character right before getting them to freeze in the pose for a couple of minutes, using their imagination to visualise who this 'someone' might be.
- When they have had time to focus their mind and generate an idea, ask the children to share what they each visualised, comparing and contrasting ideas and discussing what might have led them to their predictions.
- Now, slowly reveal the next page in the double spread. Again, it would be good to project this large onto a screen so that all the children can see this clearly as well as giving a copy of the full spread to mixed groups of children to share and discuss. Read the accompanying text aloud and take time to look at and closely observe the illustration and to discuss what they see, noting their thoughts, ideas, observations and questions around their copy of the illustration, using key questions to open up discussions: *What are their first impressions of this character? What do they know or think they know about them? What tells them this? What do they understand about their name, Emptiness? What does this word mean to them?*
- Turn to look the next double page spread, **but keep the accompanying text hidden and do not read it aloud yet**. Give time and space for children to explore and take in the illustration, annotating the spread with their thoughts, ideas, observations and questions, using key questions to open up discussions: *What do you see here? How do you think they feel about each other? What tells you this? What do you think they might say to each other? What do you think they are doing or will do next?*
- Invite the children to work in pairs to re-enact the scene they see here, stepping into role as one of the two characters. Give time and space for them to improvise the scene together –

trying out a few ideas, giving time to work towards a very short scene to accompany the image.

- Invite some of the children to play out their scenes for the rest of the class. If they used speech, record some of the ideas in speech bubbles around a copy of the illustration. If they had ideas about what the characters did, scribe these on sentence strips to display alongside.
- Now, reveal and read aloud the text that Yijing chose to accompany the spread, exploring the similarities and differences between the text and the ideas from their performances. *How do you think the characters feel about each other? How do you know? What might happen next in the story?*

Exploring and illustrating a character

Illustrating characters alongside an illustrator or enabling adult gives children a starting point into the process of how to bring characters to life through illustration. Children who are less confident to begin this process can see where starting points are, the shapes that are used to build up characters and how detail such as proportion, facial expression, clothing and props can add layers of understanding about character and emotion.

Drawing characters focuses attention on them: how they look; what they say; how they behave. To build their ideas of what a character is like, children have to refer to the text. They can also be encouraged to draw on the language of the text in making annotations around the drawings.

- Prepare for this session by providing drawing paper and soft drawing pencils. You may also wish to provide paintbrushes, water and paints to more closely match the materials used in the original illustrations.
- Look at the front cover of the book again. Ask the children where they think the words and pictures in a book like this come from. *Do they know what an author and illustrator are? Do they know what these people do?* Look back at the title page and share Yijing Li's name at the top of the page and explain that in this book, Yijing Li is the person who wrote the words and drew the pictures to tell this story. Share a photograph of Yijing, which can be displayed on the Working Wall or in the book area. *What do they think it would be like to be an author or an illustrator? What would they need to be able to do? What would they need to help them?*
- Re-read the story so far, paying close attention to how the child and Emptiness have been drawn in the illustrations and what this might tell us about them.
- Think about how we can tell the child is a child from the way Yijing Li has drawn this character. Has she made the character a photographic likeness of an actual child? What features do they have that tells us they are a child?
- Consider how Yijing Li has simplified the child to enhance the character, looking at the simple shapes for the eyes, nose and mouth, the body parts and the simple clothes she's given them.
- Explain that in this session, they will be seeing Yijing Li on a video and will be learning how to draw the character of the child and Emptiness. Watch the video 'Illustrating a character from

'Through the Forest' on the CLPE website: <https://clpe.org.uk/books/book/through-forest>.

Have they seen someone drawing like this before? Does it look like an easy thing to do? What do they think they would need to think about to do a drawing like this themselves?

- Now give each child a piece of drawing paper and a choice of drawing implements. Soft drawing pencils, Ferby coloured pencils or charcoal pencils are ideal for this. Cheap but quality cartridge paper for drawing can be sourced from Budget paper supplies: <http://www.budget-paper.co.uk/>
- Watch the video for a second time, pausing at appropriate points, and model to the children how to draw the character of the child. Start in the same way Yijing does, by drawing the eyes. Encourage the children to work alongside you – it will therefore be important to work on a large scale on a flip chart or under a visualiser, so that the children can clearly see what you are doing at each step and follow the process. Talk carefully about shapes, and patterns as you work and what you are focusing on, to allow the children to see the process of creating this character live. *Where will you start? What body part will you move to next?* Think about how Yijing simplifies the drawing from the detail of a real-life child with simple shapes and lines, but still creates the character and essence of a child in her drawing, then moves on to Emptiness and the scene around them, looking at the different marks she makes and how she makes these. Think about some of the key vocabulary she uses as she works and how to communicate this to the children.
- Now, encourage the children to step back and take a look at their own drawings of the child and Emptiness. *What did doing the drawing make them think about the character of the child; their characteristics and behaviour as well as their appearance?* Encourage the children to annotate their drawing with their initial thoughts, observations and questions about the characters.
- Display the artwork prominently in the classroom environment and allow the children to revisit and talk about their work.
- The children could go on to write character descriptions to accompany their illustrations, drawing on the text and illustrations to justify the opinions they have gleaned about the characters, the relationship between them and the possible story that may lie ahead for them.
- You could follow this up in a linked art session by looking at how they might use the simplification techniques used by Yijing Li, to create illustrations of themselves as children in a similar way.

Exploring how text and illustration work together to tell a story and express and convey emotion

The brevity of picturebooks allows children to learn much about narrative writing and how it is structured. In a picturebook, children see a complete narrative in a very accessible way, and can

investigate important elements like character design and development, how stories are shaped and how they are paced to maintain the engagement of the reader. This knowledge can then be used to enrich and extend children's ideas for all kinds of narrative writing.

- Re-read the book from the beginning and on to: **“Let me keep it safe for you.” *Emptiness held out its hand.* “Thank you!”** *What is happening here? How are the characters feeling? How do you know?*
- Focus on the pinwheel the child finds. Have they seen one of these before? What do they do? If you have a pinwheel to hand, you could demonstrate how it works. *What do you notice about the pinwheel they find? How would you describe it? How does the colour used for it, yellow, make you feel? Where else can you see this colour?*
- Re-read and get the children to think about the text. *What do you learn about the pinwheel? How does the child feel about finding the pinwheel? Why do you think this might be? What does Emptiness do with the pinwheel? How do you think it makes Emptiness feel? What makes you think this?*
- Now, turn to and read the next double spread. *How does this memory compare to the last one? How do you feel as you hear the story of the kite? Have they ever lost something that was special to them? How did it make them feel?*
- As they closely read the illustration, the children may notice that this is the first time in the illustration that we don't see the child's face. Look carefully at this part of the illustration, their body position, their gaze towards Emptiness, how Emptiness is looking back at them, to predict how they might be feeling as the kite is handed to them and see if you can imagine what their face might look like from the front. Ask the children to act out the facial expression that they think the child is making, giving them small safety mirrors so that they can see the effects they are creating with their facial movements.
- Provide the children with some clipboards, drawing paper and sketching pencils and encourage them to sketch this out for themselves, remembering the techniques they learnt from Yijing about how to draw the child.
- In the continuous provision provide children with resources, equipment and demonstrations to make yellow pinwheels: <https://www.firstpalette.com/craft/pinwheel.html> or red kites: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w0VXajWKNic> and play with these in the wind in the outdoor environment. Demonstrate to small groups, encouraging them to pass their learning and skills onto others.

Developing understanding of picturebook techniques – learning how to create emotion to develop empathy in the reader

- Prepare for the next session by ensuring that you cover the second half of the next spread in the book, which begins: ‘This is a piece of Dada's special vase.’ It is important that the children

see only the first half of this spread and this is not revealed before the point indicated in the activity below.

- Begin by re-reading the book so far, including the cover and front matter, up until 'Until...'
Now, turn the page to reveal **only the first half of the next double spread**. This should be projected large enough for the children to see, or you may wish to provide mixed pairs or groups of children with a copy of the spread to discuss.
- Read the accompanying text aloud: 'Emptiness pointed towards it.'
- Take time to closely look at this illustration. *What do you notice first? Why do you think his might be?*
- Give children time and space to explore the new spread, talking about what they see, what it makes them think about and feel and what makes them feel this way, and what they think the two characters might be being guided towards.
- Discuss the fact that this is one half of a double page spread. *What do you think might be shown on the next page?*
- Encourage the children to take a final look at the first half of the spread, before closing their eyes and taking time to visualise what they think they might see on the next spread. By now they should have picked up the pattern of collecting special objects so may have many different ideas as to what the next special object might be for the child, perhaps directly based on their own lives and things that are special to them. If they have multiple ideas, encourage them to pick the one they think is strongest. Encourage them to focus on the image, rather than any accompanying text.
- Share these ideas together exploring the similarities and differences between them, and what might have inspired their ideas.
- Complete the session by revealing, reading aloud and discussing the next spread in the book. **Before sharing this spread, be aware of any children who have experienced familial break-up, particularly between their parents, and any kind of domestic violence. The next spread may contain imagery and language which may reflect their experiences and you will need to carefully consider how to introduce and discuss this spread with the knowledge you have of the children in mind.** Sometimes reflective experiences in texts can be hugely beneficial in making sense of children's experiences and emotions, at other times these may trigger feelings that they are not yet ready to explore. You will need to use your professional knowledge and judgement to decide accordingly how best to proceed with the rest of the activity explored below.
- Take some time to explore the children's initial reactions to what they have seen and heard. *What does this new spread make them think about? How does it make them feel? What makes them feel this way? What might it tell us about the child and their life?*
- Encourage them to talk about what they hear and read in the text, as well as what they see in the illustration. *What do you notice about the piece of the vase the child is holding? Does it remind them of anything they've already seen in the story?*

- Reflect on the memories that the two characters have collected so far – of the pinwheel, the kite and the vase. *What feelings describe each memory?* Use this to open up a wider conversations about memories and emotions; how sometimes memories are connected to joyful emotions, but at other times they may be connected to times of sadness, anger or disappointment. Ensure that children know and are clear that it is healthy for us to explore a wide range of emotions, but that it is how we deal with and manage our emotions that is important. *Why is it important to talk about our experiences and emotions, even those that might be sad, frustrating or scary? What should we do if we are feeling this way?*
- Open this out into a wider exploration of how to explore and manage emotions, enabling the children to develop strategies for recognising, dealing with and managing emotions with a greater depth of shared understanding for each other.

Exploring and pacing events in a narrative

Sometimes author/illustrators will use specific techniques to specifically pace events in a narrative – to speed things up, or to slow them down, to introduce multiple ideas or to focus the reader’s attention on something specific. This will also affect our emotional engagement with the narrative.

- Re-read the book up to now and on to the next spread, up to: ‘He said. ‘You are a big boy now’.” *What do you learn about the child and their life here? What do they notice about the objects and how these appear in the illustrations?* Visually astute children might notice how the colours of each new object echo in each of the following illustrations, expanding the colour palette used - the pinwheel in the yellow leaves, the kite in the red sky, the book in the green leaves, the harmonica in the purple flowers and the frame for the drawing in the orange butterflies.
- Invite the children to connect the child’s experience in the story with their own. *What objects are special to you? Why is this? What memories are linked to these?* Encourage the children to picture something that is special to them, and why this is, linking it to who gave it to them, or where they found it, or who made it special for them. Model this first with a special object of your own, following the sentence structures you’ve seen in the book.
- Come back together to talk about what we now know about the child. You may wish to do this by completing a Role on the Wall. On a large sheet of sugar paper or similar, draw a simple outline of the character. Explain that we are going to record our impressions of the child using this outline. In the space outside of the outline, write down words or phrases to describe their outer characteristics (words and phrases which relate to their appearance, and the things we have seen them doing – their actions and behaviours). Inside the outline, write down any words and phrases to describe their inner characteristics, e.g. adjectives to describe their character and personality as well as how they might be feeling and what they might be thinking – on the inside, unseen by others. Give children the opportunity to make links between the external and the internal, encouraging them to consider what something a

character says or does might tell us about what they think or feel, or what they are really like inside. Encourage them to justify their thoughts and opinions by drawing on things they have seen in the text or illustrations.

- Come back to summarise what has happened in the story so far and to explore how the character of the child has developed as the story moves on. *What has happened in this story so far? What changes have you noticed in the child as the story has moved on?*
- Encourage the children to discuss their thoughts and reflections using shared writing to record their thoughts and observations about the child. You might want to provide sentence starters as a scaffold their talk, such as:
 - At the beginning of the story...***
 - When they met Emptiness...***
 - As they walked through the forest...***
 - When they found the pinwheel...***
 - When Emptiness gave them the kite...***
 - As they held the piece of vase...***
 - When they discovered all the objects in the clearing...***
- In the continuous provision, provide children with the opportunity to draw their special object or them with it and to orally compose a sentence about it for an adult to scribe, to record and transcribe with dictation software or to write themselves, depending on their age and stage of development. Display their compositions prominently for them to share and talk to each other about.

Understanding and expressing emotion in a drawing

Through studying how picturebook spreads are constructed to offer additional layers of meaning beyond the text on the page and being aware of the techniques that authors and illustrators use to communicate meaning, children are able to see how to do this in illustration for themselves.

- Re-read the book so far, and on up to, up to ***“But we haven’t found what we’re looking for yet!”*** *What is happening here? What do you notice about the child, about Emptiness and about the forest in these spreads? How have these things changed since the start of the story?*
- Look closely at the illustrations of the child in this spread. *How do you think they are feeling in the illustration in the first half of the spread? How do you know this? What might be making them feel this way?*
- Now, look at the illustration on the second half of the spread. *How do you think the child is feeling now? What might be making them feel this way?* In the accompanying illustration, we do not see the child’s face. Give the children some time to consider what they think the child’s expression might be at this point. They should look at and consider how they looked in the previous image, how Emptiness looks and what we might be able to tell from the text to

inform their decision. Tell the children that you are going to count to three, and after that time, they should hold the facial expression that they think the child has. Once again, give the children small safety mirrors to see the results of their experimentations. If you have tablets or cameras, you could also encourage the children to capture these in a photograph.

- Now, give each child a clipboard and a soft drawing pencil, and, drawing on the illustration techniques they learned from the modelled drawing activity, they should draw what they think the scene looks like from Emptiness' perspective. Encourage them to include the scenery around the child as well as their body and facial expression. Refer back to the previous spread for an idea of what this might look like, but to think about the change in the child from one spread to the next.
- Model a similar sketch, on a flipchart or, ideally, under a visualiser, which translates your own or one of the children's ideas for the next spread on to paper.
- Now allow children time and space to compose their own ideas. Display the finished ideas prominently for the children to see and discuss, reflecting on the choices they made in their own illustrations and why they made them. Look at and talk about the similarities and differences in the children's responses, talking to them about what informed their choices.

Exploring the journey of a story – finding the resolution

Discussion about books forms the foundations for working with books. Children need frequent, regular and sustained opportunities to talk together about the books that they are reading as a whole class. The more experience they have of talking together like this, the better they get at making explicit the meaning that a text holds for them.

This booktalk is supportive to all readers and writers, but it is especially empowering for children who find literacy difficult. It helps the class as a whole to reach shared understandings and move towards a more dispassionate and informed debate of ideas and issues.

- Re-read the book so far and on to the next double page spread, up to: ***They've led us through the forest, and they will guide you so you won't feel lost anymore.***, Take time to look at the different objects inside Emptiness, remembering what these were and where these came from and the memories connected with them.
- Encourage the children to reflect on the ending, connecting this with their own real-life experiences. *Have there even been times when you have felt lost, lonely or empty? What helps you if you are feeling this way?* If children are happy to open up and discuss their personal feelings and ideas, open up a safe and supportive context for this. Ensure that the class share a common understanding that there is no expectation that they have to share their responses or personal connections, but that if they choose to do so this is a safe and secure forum. Ensure time and space can be built in to pick up on themes and topics that need greater exploration.
- Now, give every child a soft drawing pencil and sheet of drawing paper and encourage them to draw the outline of Emptiness's body, as they see on the spread here. Flick back through

the text to reflect on the memories collected by the child, discussing what these were, what feelings they evoked in the child and considering why each of these might have been particularly significant for the child. Allow the children time and space to think about what objects or items might hold significant memories for them and to draw these inside their outline of emptiness.

- Give time for the children to share and talk about their drawings, talking about these, drawing on the language and descriptive sentences explored in the text.
- Now, read on to the end of the book and talk about the end of the story together.
 - *Is this the ending they expected? Did anything surprise them?*
 - *What does the ending make them think about? How do they feel at the end of the story?*
 - *What questions do they have about the ending?*
- Look at the final spread together again. *Through whose eyes do they see this final image? How do you think the child feels at the end of the story? How about Emptiness? What makes them think this?*
- Consider carefully what the child may be thinking or feeling at the end of the story and engage the children in a piece of writing in role to reflect on the child's thoughts, feelings and experiences as they reach the end of this particular journey. You could lead them into this by asking them to write thought or speech bubbles to share what they might think or say as they say goodbye to Emptiness, before completing a wider piece of writing in role.
- Turn to the final endpapers in the text. *What feeling(s) are you left with at the end of the story? How do these endpapers compare with the front endpapers? Look at the difference in colour, the lines used for the trees, the shapes and patterns used. What do they leave you thinking or feeling? How does this compare to what you thought or felt when we looked at the front endpapers?*

Understanding story structure - Summarising and mapping the story

Mapping a story and its setting helps to develop a sense of the story world. Making a story map is a way of retelling the story. It is a graphic means of breaking a story down into episodes and sequencing its events. This kind of graphic representation helps children to hold on to the shape of the story more confidently so they can re-tell it orally or in writing.

- Now, listen to the author, Yijing Li, read the story all the way through: <https://clpe.org.uk/books/book/through-forest>. *How did it feel to hear the story read by the author? Did it make you think or feel anything different about the story? If so, what?*
- Make time for the children to reflect on the book as a whole:
 - *What did you like about the book? What was most memorable for you about it?*
 - *Was there anything you disliked? What was this and why was this?*
 - *Are you left with any questions after reading the story?*

- *What connections did you make with your own life or with other things you've seen or read?*
- Make notes of the children's responses to come back to as they construct their own picturebooks.
- Talk with the children about their responses to the story and to the illustrations. *What did they like and/or dislike? What questions might they like to ask the author after reading? What connections do they make with other picturebooks or other texts they have read?* Make notes of the children's responses to come back to as they construct their own picturebooks.
- Together, work on how to summarise the big shapes of the story in no more than 5 or 6 parts. Really encourage the children not to think about tiny details, like where they went or what they said, but the main structural features of the story, e.g.
 - The child was lost in the forest.
 - They meet the character, Emptiness.
 - The child and Emptiness journey through the forest together.
 - They find a series of objects linked to specific memories for the child.
 - Emptiness becomes full with these objects and their connected memories and can't move any more.
 - The child leaves Emptiness to continue their journey alone, knowing Emptiness will be waiting if they need them.
- Support the children in mapping the story in words and/or pictures so that they can use the map to retell the story to another person.
- You can extend this further by completing a representation of the emotional journey of the story on a graph of emotion looking at where the high and low points fit with the events. *What does the variation between high and low points offer us as readers?*
- Allow the children to respond to the text as a *reader*. *What would they want to tell other people about this book? What might they not choose to share as it might spoil the story for them?* Allow children to write their responses to the story and display these around a copy of the text in the book corner. Have copies of the text available for children to re-read and explore at their leisure, individually and in social groups.
- Open up a conversation about picturebooks more generally. *What other picturebooks do they know? Do they have favourites from at home or in school?* Collect together examples of the children's favourite texts in the class reading corner, making use of the school library, schools library service or local library to broaden the range of choices.
- Collect photographs of the children reading picturebooks they enjoy and scribe their thoughts about these to make a display in the reading area.

Ideation - Building inspiration from known picturebooks

The children's books featured on the Power of Pictures have been chosen because of the quality of the illustrations they contain and the ways in which the illustrations work with the text to create meaning

for the reader. Children will need time and opportunities to enjoy and respond to the pictures and to talk together about what the illustrations contribute to their understanding of the text and how the words and pictures work together to tell the story. When creating a picturebook, the author must consider the relationship between words and images. The roles of the text and the pictures need to be carefully considered, rather than one being a duplication of the other. As Perry Nodelman (1990) states, 'The words tell us what the pictures do not show, and the pictures show us what the words do not tell us.'

- Re-read *Through the Forest*. Provide opportunities for children to replay the story in various ways:
 - Making story maps to share the big shapes of the story;
 - Orally retelling the story in groups;
 - Playing out the story in small world play;
 - Using role-play with character signifiers, such as character hats, masks, tails, costumes or props;
 - Making puppets to retell the story.
- Ask the children to reflect on the main characters in the book. *Who were they? What did you learn about them? Which character did they like best? Why?*
- Now ask the children to describe their reactions to the book in their own words. Have enabling adults on hand to capture these responses. *Did they have any personal connections with the book – did it make them think of experiences or feelings they've had, other books they have read or films or TV programmes they've seen?*
- In large or small groups, during regular read aloud sessions, spend some time reading aloud other high quality picturebooks, or returning to favourite picturebooks you've shared as a class previously. Ensure these showcase a range of characters, themes and types of story. You might choose books that are funny and immediately engage the reader, such as: *Is there a dog in this book?* or *Bedtime for Monsters*, books that have a deeper message and make us think, such as: *Wild, Shh! We Have a Plan*, *Grandad's Island* or *Croc and Bird*, books that are based on known experiences, such as: *Barbara Throws a Wobbler*, *Geoffrey Gets the Jitters*, *Jabari Jumps*, *Ravi's Roar*, *The New Small Person*, *Here Comes Frankie* or *The Story Machine*, or books that are drawn from other known stories, such as: *Grendel*.
- Allow time for the children to discuss the stories, drawing attention to characters, themes and summarising the big shapes of the story in order to retell the main events. Ensure all children have ample opportunities to hear a range of picturebooks read aloud, especially those children who may not be read to as often as others.

Thinking about own story ideas

When planning and developing ideas for picturebook narratives, children may wish to approach the process in different ways and should be supported to do so. Some children, like some authors, may

think of the words in writing first and then the images that will accompany them. Others may think of the pictures first before composing accompanying text and others will work with a combination of the two.

- Talk with the children about where they think picturebooks come from. *Who makes them?* Encourage them to get to know Yijing Li by sharing a photograph of her on a display, next to the book cover and re-watching her reading *Through the Forest* aloud: <https://clpe.org.uk/books/book/through-forest>.
- Talk together to think about and discuss all the jobs an author/illustrator might have to do to make a finished book. Think about how to explain this process clearly so that the very young children you are working with can understand, e.g.
 - Have an idea for a story.
 - Share your ideas with other people.
 - Write it down and draw the pictures to see the story on the page.
- Explain to the children that they are going to create their own picturebooks. Talk about the things they might want to write about. Focus first on characters and think together of the kinds of characters they may want to create. These may revolve around:
 - Another story featuring the child or Emptiness from *Through the Forest*.
 - Stories about emotions, as inspired by *Through the Forest*.
 - Favourite characters they already have from books or popular culture.
 - Characters related to particular current interests such as dinosaurs, robots, fairies.
 - Themselves – to retell a personal narrative or a fantasy story involving themselves.
 - People around them, family, people who help us etc.
- Share how an illustrator like Yijing explores and experiments with characters to come up with and develop their ideas, drawing lots of different versions of characters.
- Ask the children if they have any ideas for their own potential characters, inspired by their own lives, or from other things they have read, seen or experienced. Allow time and space for the children to use drawing and writing to come up with some initial ideas for their own characters, making their thought processes visible on the page.
- Create alongside the children, so they can see your process as you work. Explore and experiment with adding props, or drawing different facial expressions and body positions. If they are struggling to come up with ideas, you could start with drawing a circle, square or triangle and making it into a character, as in the picturebooks *Circle*, *Square* and *Triangle* by Mac Barnett and Jon Klassen, or come back to drawing the child and Emptiness, thinking of different scenarios they could be in, in a new story.
- As they work, encourage the children to talk about the character in more detail, to gain a picture of what they are like and their ideas of a story that might involve this character. You may wish to record this by helping to scribe some of these ideas down for them. Depending on their age and experience, you could invite them to start giving them a voice by recording

possible pieces of speech in speech bubbles to put on your drawing, or to place them in a setting or scenario that suggests a story event.

Planning ideas for a story

When planning a picturebook, it is important to work out how the story will develop. The simplest way in which to do this is using a storymap to break a story down into episodes and sequence events. This kind of graphic representation helps children to hold on to the shape of the story more confidently so they can re-tell it orally or in writing.

- Encourage the children to look at and talk about the characters they created. Through these discussions children will be able to explore and experiment with their own ideas for a story.
- Model this with ideas for your own character for the children to demonstrate how to sequence story events in a storymap for your own story. Focus on how to introduce a character and setting at the start, 3 or 4 key events that move the story on. This might include the introduction of a problem and an exploration of how this is resolved and how the story might end.
- Give time for the children to create their own storymaps for their own ideas, based on the storymaps they created for *Through the Forest*.
- Allow time for the children to share their storymaps with a friend, or an enabling adult, or a reading buddy from another class. This will allow them an opportunity to test their ideas on an engaged partner and to become more secure in the structure of their story.

Bookmaking (NB: This will require periods of sustained time for children to complete)

Publishing their work for an audience helps children to write more purposefully. Bookmaking provides a motivating context within which children can bring together their developing understanding of what written language is like; making written language meaningful as they construct their own texts. The decisions that all writers have to take and the processes of redrafting, editing and punctuation can be demonstrated and discussed as teachers and children write together in shared writing.

- Demonstrate to the children how to make an origami book with the children. You could also pre-prepare handmade stapled books for children or support them in making these themselves, using a long-armed stapler to place the staple(s) in the centre of the text and using card for the front cover to provide durability and a quality finish.
- Using your own storymap, model how to transfer the ideas from your storymap into text and illustrations for a book.
- Give plenty of time for the children to complete the publication of the inside of their books. Allow them to choose and use from a variety of materials, exploring and experimenting with these first to test these and explore their effects. If the children want to make watercolour

illustrations, model how to sketch, paint, dry, then add pen detail on each spread before moving on.

- Go back to the original book to explore and work on adding features of published texts on the front and back covers. *What will they call their book? What illustration will they place on the front cover to give the reader an idea of the story? Where will they place their name as the author/illustrator?* This is a fantastic opportunity to demonstrate more complex book language in action, such as publisher logo/name (this could be agreed as a school or class name publishing house), dedication, publication details, blurb, barcode and price.
- Give lots of time for them to swap with a number of different people. You may wish to arrange reading partner sessions where children can share their books with children in other classes in the school.
- Display the books prominently in the class reading area, library or an appropriate communal space so that they can be shared with and enjoyed by a wider audience.
- Give time for the children to reflect on the process of making their books. *How do they feel about their finished book? What was successful? What was challenging?* Share these reflections alongside the display of the children's finished books.