

Wild Dreams and Mysterious Words: Using Children's Books with Bilingual Students

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INTRODUCTION

This curriculum unit will consist of a first part about the main concepts I would like to implement and the importance of teaching them in our classrooms. The second part will consist of three thematic units about three different books. In the first thematic unit, I have included a complete set of lesson plans to deal with this kind of book. In the second one, I have only included objectives and activities specific to my purpose for choosing this book (the use of figurative language). The third one is only about the most special aspect I want to consider through this book (the thin border between the imagination and the oneiric). If a teacher wants to focus on more aspects of these two books, I think that he/she can easily adapt most of the lesson plans for the first book or any other aspect he/she wants.

I like to consider only certain aspects, or just one, with each book. I do not like the sensation of breaking a book into pieces. In addition, I think that it is much better to teach each aspect with a different book because some of the students read all the books we discuss or read in the class, but only those books: so it is important to present as many books as possible. If we do not uncover every secret together, we allow our students to discover them when they apply by themselves what we cover in class with other books. I think routines are important for children, but in my opinion, there are some subjects that we should not base on routines. One of them is art. Literature is a form of art, and the reader is making the book alive while he is reading it. Routines are not challenging, and I strongly believe that art in general must be challenging, always different and new depending on the person or on the situation. That is why I think that it is important to make a special plan for each book.

The main objective of these units is to go deeper than the meaning of the words written and to understand what is not written. For this purpose I have chosen books whose language and plot have been carefully selected to reveal deeper content and offer the thoughtful reader something to think about. I like books that make the reader remain active and engaged while reading. I like those books in which you discover something new with each reading.

This unit is to be used in the third grade. I have prepared these materials having in mind TEKS and CLEAR objectives for third grade reading. Students in English/Spanish bilingual programs take the state exams in Spanish. It is an HISD requirement that all third graders pass the reading test in order to be promoted to fourth grade. In addition, the state status recognition for schools is based on the results of third graders' math and

reading tests. I mention this because I would like to point out the enormous pressure upon all third grade teachers and students.

If you are a third grade teacher, you are to spend all available time teaching reading and math. You can teach social studies and natural science using reading techniques. Nothing in ESL books and workbooks allows us to practice for the reading test, but we need to work hard in ESL because in fourth grade, students must take all the exams (reading, math and writing) in English. I have prepared some materials to work on third grade reading concepts and skills in ESL classes. This unit will be based on various fiction books for children. We will use short books or stories because most of the students in third grade bilingual do not have a high enough English level to read and understand chapter books. The final objective is that students read for pleasure, which will be impossible if they do not feel comfortable during the process of learning.

This unit is meant to be realistic, useful classroom material that all third grade teachers in bilingual classes can use in their ESL lessons. My unit will assist children in reading texts in English using critical thinking skills and improving the mechanics of reading and comprehension. This unit is about narrative. We work on expository text through social studies and natural science, but this is not the purpose of this essay. Though this unit I want to work on fantasy and fiction, and on the games you can play with them though the use of words. I would like to help students learn how to read between the lines.

MOTIVATION

There are a lot of factors that can affect the student during the learning process. One of them is stress. Stress can be caused by a variety of personal or environmental situations. In school we should provide a good balance between working and recess periods, have good lightning and ventilation, and create a good atmosphere in which children can stay, grow up and learn.

One of the factors that can cause stress is the lack of motivation. Without motivation an individual becomes passive, and a passive individual makes fewer neuronal connections. Too often, the lack of motivation leads to behavioral problems that badly disrupt the whole group. On the contrary, an active individual engages in all topics and activities, works with his/her whole brain, makes more neuronal connections, and learns much more easily. In those conditions, the individual is probably able to establish good personal interactions and relations, concentrate, and show initiative and flexibility. The result is a good learner who meets school requirements and gets a good background to learn more in the future. All of these conditions help a given student grow to be a person with good self-esteem.

We need to provide a great deal of variety as well as something unexpected every day. One day that may be the way we introduce a topic, and another day the way we read a story, the news we speak about, or the color, size or shape of the paper. . . . We do not need to say everything: we ought to drive students to discover or to deduce it. Boredom and tedium are very stressful, and we need to avoid them in our classes. It is important to engage the children in what we want them to do. Good motivation makes it unnecessary to compel students to do their assignments and reduces behavior problems.

WORD

*After all, what's a life, anyway? We're born, we live a little while, and we die. A spider's life can't help being something of a mess, with all this trapping and eating flies. By helping you, perhaps I was trying to lift up my life a trifle. Heaven knows anyone's life can stand a little of that. (E. B. White, *Charlotte's Web*)*

That is why the human being has gone further and further. The feeling that life is a mess of biological needs—despite “the glory of everything” (White 183)—has pushed people to develop an escape: the imagination. Imagination and ingenuity have reached the maximum level with the development of the most powerful tool that has been given to any creature—the word. The word is the vehicle of our thoughts, and our thoughts develop through the word.

At the very beginning the word was probably used to cover the need of basic communication between individuals. Then, they discovered the versatility of the word and the power of speech to aid in communication within the communities. People began to express their feelings by words, and emotions began to model the language. Language enabled people to manipulate ideas, time and feelings while entertaining an audience. The word was used to preserve memories for later generations, softening the harshness of death. Initially, the word was only a means, but its power became so obvious—as in E. B. White's spider, *Charlotte*—that people realized the importance of literature. The word is so powerful that it has frightened influential governors throughout the history of most countries, but the word also has proven to be the hardest enemy: the more you fight it, the stronger it becomes. Words are so powerful that they remain meaningful even when they are not said:

*We watched silently with heat in our mouths, the heat of all those words we had not spoken. (Yolen/ Schoenherr, *Owl Moon*)*

The authors whose works we shall explore in these units use language in some special way or another. In the first book, *Where the Wild Things Are*, the words explain the situation as if it were fact, but what happens is not fact. In the second book, *The Boxer and the Princess*, the words do not mean exactly what they say; mostly, the author uses figurative sense and double meaning. Our third book, *The Dream Shop*, does not say

everything and works with ambiguity to get a variety of interpretations. The reader must suppose what is not said in order to gain a complete sense of the story.

LISTENING

Listening is the key to successful communication...Listening first opened our ability to read, write and speak... (J. Igwebuike, "The Key to Listening")

Adults appreciate art and literature because they have achieved maturity and obtained certain skills: they have been initiated in literature. Children enjoy literature from the time they are very young and they appreciate good storytellers: "Tell me a story about Mother Bear, when she was a little cub. About Mother Bear and the robin. I like that story" (Minarik 22). Listening to stories, they improve their comprehension and vocabulary, becoming ready to learn and understand more difficult texts. Through these experiences, children begin to become initiated, too. Children enjoy listening to the same stories again and again without changes. The more they listen to a story the better they understand it.

The school should also provide many opportunities for listening in both Spanish and English and in all subjects. All teachers know that for most of the struggling readers, comprehension improves when a teacher reads to them. It does not matter if it is a story, a science text or a mathematics problem. If a student is not making any progress with his assignment and the teacher approaches him and offers to read the text or the problem for him, immediately the student gets started.

Of course, our expectation is that students will become independent readers, so we should not read everything for them. We can give them clues to understand or we can make them paraphrase for us the text or the problem. We can read and then ask them to paraphrase what we read. I think it is important that a child finishes a task feeling that he/she has succeeded, even if there are mistakes or it is unfinished. The point is that the student feels he has learned something and faces the next activity with more confidence.

READING

... if you are part of the picture it is always difficult to see what has been left out or hidden. That is why we need writers, to discover and reveal such secrets, often in a form that deliberately disguises their revelations. After a little time the picture becomes clear, and we can see what has happened. (Lurie, Don't Tell the Grown-Ups)

I think reading is very important, and not only because of state tests and school rankings; in my opinion, reading is the main thing in a student's education. Good readers, sooner or later, perform much better than poor readers in their careers. But most of all, I think that reading and writing are matters of life. Reading is an open window to infinity. The main objective is to get the students to read with interest so they might discover

something new, something hidden in a book they are reading. Reading informs, educates and gives pleasure. Reading provides knowledge, background, flexibility and a wider and deeper point of view.

Schools receive some children who have been very stimulated and motivated at home. They have been provided lots of opportunities to listen, to speak and to learn about the environment. Other children arrive at school with a rather poor background, but all of them offer the school the possibility to open the great world of reading to them. It is a great moment for the school. It is in school that children learn to read independently. If the school succeeds, children grow to be good readers. I know that there are other factors that can influence the teaching/learning process, but for the most part, it is the school's responsibility. Parents must be considered initializers and facilitators. Parents can motivate, prepare and enrich the process by speaking with and reading to their children, but teachers should not expect that children will have learned to read at home. Parents can reinforce reading fluency at home, but it is the school and the teacher who must teach reading. I know that in some cases parents are perfectly prepared to teach their children to read, but most parents cannot teach their children to read because they have not been trained to do so. We can ask parents for some assistance, but we ought to direct the process so that we can detect or correct possible problems.

The main purpose for our students is reading. Good reading opens all sorts of doors to their future. To build good readers we have to work on a very high level, teaching the mechanics, listening comprehension, reading comprehension and the ability to discover the world hidden among the words, between the lines. The human being has the capacity to work with the abstract and then put it in writing; let us have the pleasure of reading it.

These units work using real books, most of them with illustrations. In order to reinforce correct pronunciation and adequate English prosody, I can use audiotapes and videotapes of the same stories, when available. It is important that students have a good model for reading; therefore, if a book is read aloud for the first time and there is not a good audiotape with which to model reading, the bilingual teacher ought to prepare this part of the lesson very carefully. We can compare and contrast the textual and non-textual models. We can create a number of exercises, questions, answers, guides for listening, and videotapes that help students develop better comprehension. Usually, a few lines on the overhead are enough to smoothly drive the process of the class.

FANTASY

One of the gifts an artist may have is the ability to create what J.R.R. Tolkien called a secondary world—a fully imagined alternate universe, as consistent as our own or possibly more so. Such a secondary world may make visible some aspects of the primary one... (Lurie, Don't Tell the Grown-Ups)

Frequently, fantasy has been associated with childhood. It is true that children have a great deal of imagination, but, as I see it, authors have used the children's world of fiction to create a style of literature that could not have been created by the children themselves. Children have been the pretext for a new kind of literature, for a new kind of artistic expression. The result is a great number of masterpieces that adults enjoy with the same, or more, delight than children do.

Educational programs require that students identify what is fantasy and what is reality. Almost every third grader can distinguish between *non-real* (what can not happen in real life) and what could be *real* (what could happen in real life even if it never occurs), so we can discuss this distinction just as a reminder to help students identify fiction, nonfiction and realistic fiction. However, the reality is that we do have imagination to create and understand fantasy. And we need it. Our fantasy is real and it is the main element for all human creations. So, the priority of this unit will be the fantasy and the oneiric as a metaphor of real life or as a way to live in reality. What I would like to express is that fantasy is a reality for the human being. Without fantasy our entire most significant world would disappear swallowed by the "nothing," as it happens in Michael Ende's *The Neverending Story*. We shall work on the introduction of fantastic elements through words. We shall discuss the way words carry us to the unknown and make us visualize what we have never seen.

CORRELATION WITH TEKS AND CLEAR

I will prepare my lessons having in mind CLEAR and TEKS objectives and preparing a number of assignments through which students can develop reading and writing strategies using literary devices. We shall work on characterization, summarizing, sequencing, prediction, generalizations, drawing conclusions, and vocabulary. We shall encourage use of the dictionary for word meaning, synonyms and antonyms, but most of all, we will teach students to use context clues. See TEKS Reading objectives, just as a reminder:

Reading Objective 1:

- Basic understanding in reading a variety of texts for different purposes in varied sources (3.5, 3.7).
- Vocabulary development (3.8).
- Reading comprehension: produce summaries of the paragraphs and summarize the information (3.9).

Reading Objective 2:

- Analyze characters (personalities) and situations (3.11).

Reading Objective 3:

- Distinguish different forms of texts. Recognize the distinguishing features of familiar genres, including stories, poems and informational texts (3.11).

Reading Objective 4:

- Distinguish fact from opinion, causes and effects. Determine important ideas and draw conclusions (3.9).

WORKING WITH THE INTERNET

Everything related to computers provides a great deal of motivation to young students. All schools have the necessary equipment, and we can work in agreement with the ancillary teacher for computers. Students remember much better the information they get for themselves than they remember information that we provide them.

- At first it is best to make children work in pairs because some of them cannot get to the bottom of it. The teacher can help, but it is impossible to help twenty-four individuals in one session, so it is much simpler to help heterogeneous pairs, where, usually, one of them gets it quickly. For partners of weak students it is important to choose children who know how to help, because there are some students who work but ignore classmates.
- These activities must be accurately prepared and programmed, and the teacher must have previously visited all web pages suggested to students.
- Usually, it is best to give to the students some kind of activity where they need to fill in the gaps, complete some ideas and answer a number of questions. If students do not have a guide, they do not elaborate on the information; they simply print or copy, and when they get tired, they consider the assignment finished.
- It is also interesting when students have to go through more than one web page to get all the information needed. The teacher should suggest one or two more web pages than necessary in order to get the students used to dealing with non-relevant information, but teacher must make sure that all the questions are answered in the pages they provide to students.
- Give detailed and clear directions. Supervise all students very closely while working on the Internet.

THEMATIC UNIT 1: WILD THING!

Objective

This unit is about Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*. The main objective of this thematic unit is to understand fantasy, imagination and dreams. We will see the interaction between illustrations and text and we will work on the text organization, so

we will be achieving TEKS Reading objectives in a quite different way. The structure of the language in this book is quite simple, but it uses a rich vocabulary, so it is going to be useful to bring correct grammar into general use and to acquire new vocabulary.

Introduction

This thematic unit will consist of some information about the book and the author, some ideas to work on in the classroom and five concrete lesson plans.

Where the Wild Things Are is a picture storybook written and illustrated by Maurice Sendak. The story is told through the use of both text and pictures. It can be read in about thirty-five lines of text distributed throughout the book, but, mostly, it is understood through the pictures. All descriptions are given in the illustrations.

The main character is Max, a child in a kind of beast costume. The plot is simple: the child is fooling around and his mother sends him to bed *without eating anything*. But, *that very night*... his imagination, or, perhaps a dream, takes him on a long journey to *where the wild things are*.

The trip and what happens in the wild things' place is narrated with a few concise words, and it is shown through pictures. The time is set with a few symmetric words, and an omniscient narrator briefly narrates the back and forth symmetric actions. The sharp change in Max's feelings and the symmetry are the oneiric elements that make the reader think in a dream rather than in an awakened fantasy. Everything in the book is somewhat innocent, explicit in the shortness of the words, and thoughtfully meaningful even in the smallest detail. It is written in rich, simple language.

Plot

Max, a naughty child dressed in a beast costume, is acting kind of wild because of his outfit. He is getting on his mother's nerves, so she sends him to bed without dinner. Once in the bedroom, Max begins to imagine or dream an adventure. A forest grows in his room, the room becomes *the world all around*, and Max sails to the place where the wild things are. There he, a tiny beast, tames all the huge frightening wild things. They make him their king. They, altogether, act out a kind of sabbat in the moonlight. This sort of ritual leads Max to discover that what he needs is love, so *he gives up being king of where the wild things are* and sails back to his room, where he finds *his supper. . . still hot*.

Dream or Fantasy

Whether what happens is dream or fantasy is a good point to discuss in the classroom. We know that children have a great deal of imagination and can easily make up this kind

of fantasy, especially when they are alone and shut in their rooms being punished. All our pupils recognize that kind of situation. But perhaps Max is dreaming. Perhaps, at the very beginning it is a game, but later he falls asleep and the game turns into a dream. As teachers, we do not need to directly suggest this, but we can lead the students to this conclusion. We can introduce doubt by asking a question (Who brought him the supper? Did he not notice it? ...). Another interesting point is the time spent in the adventure and its relation to imagination. This kind of discussions makes children look for clues and details in both the text and the illustrations to support their opinions. This ability helps them understand more complicated texts. We do not need to make them decide that what happens is either dream or fantasy, but it is a good exercise for them to find details supporting one thing or another.

When the forest begins to grow in his room, Max is standing, but he has his eyes closed. A child who is awake could easily imagine the scenery of the forest and the private boat, but later he is afraid of a marine monster and does not look very happy when he sees the wild things. All that happens where the wild things live is quite oneiric, and even the rhythm of the events is closer to dream than to reality: the adjectives used to describe the actions of the monsters, the physical appearance of the wild things, the rumpus itself, the Moon, the end of his stay in the wild things' kingdom, and his trip back home. When everything is over, Max looks like a person recently awakened, and he is not wearing the costume's hood anymore. His room is tidy and clean. He is standing in the same place where he was at the very beginning, but his eyes are half opened and he is looking toward the door. In almost every nighttime picture, there is a big moon (see "Some tips about the author" or the recommended web page to know more about the meaning of this moon).

Some tips about the author

Maurice Sendak was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1928. He is the youngest of three children. His parents were Polish immigrants who came to the United States before World War I. Many of the family's relatives in Poland died in the Holocaust during World War II. Maurice himself was sickly as a child. His mother worried constantly about his health and safety. In most of his books there is "a moon somewhere in the picture watching over the scene" which represents his mother making sure he is all right.

When he was a child, he loved to have his father read aloud or tell him a story at night before bedtime. He didn't like school much, but he loved to read and often asked his sister to get him books from the library. As a child he had many favorite books. His sister gave him his first book, Mark Twain's *The Prince and the Pauper*. He loved that book and still has it today. Other favorites were Robert Louis Stevenson's *A Child's Garden of Verses*. As a young adult, he liked adventure stories by authors such as Herman Melville, especially his books *Typee* and *Moby Dick*.

He was in high school when he began his work as an illustrator. “When he was nineteen he co-authored his very first published book, *Atomics for the Millions*, in 1947. Since then he has given us many, many wonderful books” (Gregory et. al). All the information about Sendak’s life is taken from Gregory and Ramsey’s web page, *Maurice Sendak*.

Comprehension activities

- Retell a piece of information: ask the students to write the text with their own words using synonyms and a structure similar to that of the text. Use the dictionary.
- Relate the word *wild* with actions, characters and illustrations.
- Is Max playing, or is he dreaming? Invite students to work in pairs, studying the text and the pictures closely in order to discover details that support the identification of the experience as either a fantasy or a dream. We can classify textual and non-textual aspects that reinforce either of these conclusions.
- The teacher can provide a graphic organizer with the word “fantasy” in the middle of a child’s head and a number of bulbs around it standing for the supporting ideas. Another graphic organizer will help students to look for the supporting ideas that the whole thing is a dream: the word “dream” would be on a pillow, and students could write the ideas they find in the text or in the pictures.
- How long does Max stay away? Encourage students to discuss this. Once again they should look for clues in the text and in the pictures to support their opinions. The teacher can lead the discussion to the conclusion that time is subjective, or different from reality, when we are speaking about dreams or fantasy.

Connection with investigation and new technologies

This activity is highly engaging for children, and they can work on a variety of TEKS objectives. Suggested activities:

- Look for information about the author on a web page: provide a graphic organizer to students. Fill in some of the spaces of a sequence and ask the students to look for the missing information.
- Look for information about Sendak’s life. Select some information and print it. Then find the main idea of each paragraph and make a summary of the whole text. Discuss and decide on certain details that children consider important or relevant. Depending on the level of the students and the amount of time available, each group of students can summarize only a paragraph or the whole text.
- Usually, it is best to give the students some kind of guided activity where they need to fill in the gaps, complete some ideas and answer a number of questions. If students do not have a guide, they will not read and understand the information.

Rather, they will simply print or copy, and when they get tired, they will consider the task finished.

- See “Working with the Internet” section above for general guidelines.

The teacher must make sure that answers to all the questions can be found in the pages they provide to students. The teacher must delineate what they need to find and provide clear directions to students; otherwise, they will get lost in the huge quantity of information that they find on the web, losing time and forgetting the objectives of the assignment. Here are some suggested pages to use with *Where the Wild Things Are*:

www.edupaperback.org/authorbios/Sendak_Maurice.html

www.decordova.org/decordova/exhibit/stories/sendak.html

<http://falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/sendak.htm>

<http://falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/sendakbib.htm>

Assessment

- Evaluate the levels of interest and participation.
- Evaluate the students’ ability to pull out new ideas and draw conclusions.
- Evaluate their ability to deduce what is not said.
- Evaluate their accuracy in reading: pronunciation (not including mispronunciations due to speech problems) and prosody.
- Evaluate global comprehension: tested through multiple-choice questions organized like the real test.
- Evaluate the students’ accuracy in writing with the proper orthography when copying information.
- Evaluate their accuracy when writing their original texts with the correct structure, syntax and grammar (at their level). Correct spelling errors in vocabulary.
- Evaluate the use of the new vocabulary and structures to create new pieces of writing.

LESSON PLANS FOR *WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE*

Sequence: This unit is to be done in a five-day format (one week). Sessions last for 45 minutes/day.

Topics for writing: (Drop Everything and Write). The topics for writing in the journal every day in the morning will cover these subjects: “the adventures you imagine,” “the day you meet a wild thing,” “wild things you find at home,” “a rumpus,” “Max’s Mom,” “when you are wearing a costume,” or any other topic that the teacher finds interesting or that the students suggest.

Connection with art: create your own wild thing. Cut from magazines or catalogues all desired parts and stick them together to get a new creature. You can also combine magazine pictures and your own paintings. Be creative: introduce something really new. (Dedicate a class session to art.)

Connection with natural science: Try to classify Sendak's wild things scientifically: we realize that we should cut them into pieces. It is a good excuse to reinforce the characteristics of each group of animals. (Do this in a natural science session).

Day One

Objectives:

- Oral expression: speaking correctly and finding the right words. Ensure correct pronunciation by listening to the native speaker version of the book (video).
- Reinforce prosody.
- Discuss what a wild thing is for students.
- Make predictions.
- Build up definitions for the word "wild."

Materials:

- Maurice Sendak's *Where The Wild Things Are*. We will need one book for each student or at least one book for every two students.
- Videotape (the same version as the book).

Activity 1:

- Before showing the book in class and before saying anything about it, ask students to write down in their journals what a "wild thing" is for them—any kind of wild thing.
- Once every student has written at least one thing, ask all students to put down their pencils and brainstorm. Allow new ideas, not only the ones they have written.
- Have the students briefly discuss in pairs the meaning of the word "wild" and write in their journals the best definitions they can come up with.
- Discuss definitions with the whole class, agree on one for each possible meaning, and write them all on the blackboard (this can be a new one, an agreement among the whole class). Then, look it up in the dictionary and find out if the dictionary definitions agree with the class definitions.

Activity 2:

- Show to students the front cover of the book and ask them to guess which meaning of the word "wild" is probably going to be used in this case.
- Have them guess about what the story might possibly be. Ask the children who already know this book to speak at the end. It is much better that students find an answer by themselves when they read the book.

After the movie, those students who already knew the story can lead the discussion.

- Activity 3:**
- After the previous activity is complete, watch the video together. It is an exact reproduction of the book. Ask students to pay attention to pronunciation and prosody.
 - Give a book to each student and ask him/her to read while the video is playing again.

Day Two

- Objectives:**
- Classify words in alphabetical order.
 - Discover the meaning through context clues.
 - Use the dictionary: chose the best definition given in the entry.
 - Summarize.

- Materials:**
- The book, *Where The Wild Things Are*.
 - Videotape of the book.
 - English Dictionaries: one for every one or two students.
 - Sentence strips and markers.

- Activity 1:**
- Play the movie again while reading the book. They should read aloud along with the movie. Afterwards, have the class track with their fingers and read aloud together, but without the movie (it goes faster than we need to go).

- Activity 2:**
- Copy in the journal any unknown words.
 - Classify them in alphabetical order.
 - Guess a possible meaning by looking for context clues in the sentences around the word or in the pictures.
 - Look up the words in the dictionary.
 - Homework: Write a sentence for each word (We will revise them the day after at DOL—daily oral language—time).

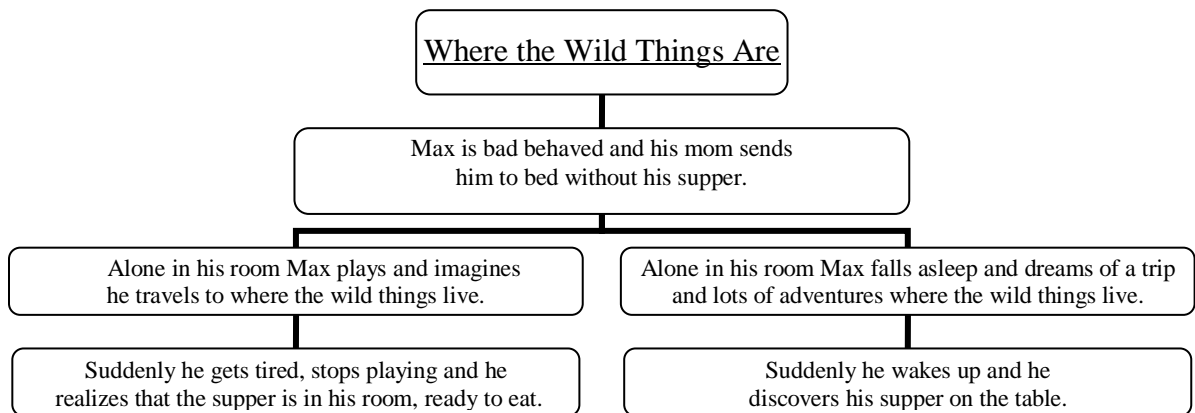
- Activity 3:**
- Ask students to write a summary in groups of four.
 - Do a summary of the whole story with the entire class. Use the format they need to know for TAKS: explain the whole story in three sentences. (Students will come up with a variety of interpretations. If the summary is technically correct, the summary will be considered right.) Be careful to keep all versions because they will be the main point to discuss the book with the class. Display the summaries in a visible place or write them in a big notebook.

Day Three

Objectives: → Reading: prosody and pronunciation.
→ TEKS objectives: Summarization, fact and opinion.

Activity 1: → Have the students read the book in pairs. The first child to read in each pair should be the one with better English reading abilities (good intonation and pronunciation), and then a struggling reader or a beginner. Depending on individual needs, one child can read the whole book and the second one repeat it, or it can be done by page, paragraph, sentence or even by word.
→ Monitor all groups to make sure they read correctly.

Activity 2: → Present all summaries to the class and decide which ones are the same. They are going to be alike, but some groups will have decided that Max is imagining and others that he is dreaming:



→ Then, ask the children to explain their point:

Activity 3: → In groups, or with the entire class, ask students to point out which clues on the book (text or pictures) support the idea that what happens is a dream or that it is Max's imagination. At this time, encourage the children to reinforce their ideas with their experiences in similar situations. We should not agree definitively on one opinion or the other. State that all opinions are good.

Day Four

Objectives: → TEKS objective: Analyze the structure of the text and sequencing.

→ Represent the structure of the text in a graphic organizer.

Materials: → Sentence strips, markers and the tape.

Activity 1: → In groups of four, discuss the possible parts of the book.
→ Have the students write a sentence for each part in a sentence strip.
→ Place the sentence strips in order and post in them the class.

Activity 2: → Discuss the time elapsed between each part. It is interesting that both children who said Max was dreaming and children who said that Max was playing will have to decide whether he has been abroad for a year, a week, a day, etc. When they finally agree that everything happened during the evening, they still say whether Max's trip lasted for a year, a week, etc. Agree with them that the time in the story inside the story is subjective.
→ At this point make students think about a variety of resources they have seen in other books or movies to make the reader understand how time passes and how often time passes without speaking directly about it.

Day Five

Objectives: → TEKS objective: Author's study.
→ Assessment.

Materials: → *Where the Wild Things Are*. (The book)

Activity 1: → Have the students share what they have learned about M. Sendak from the World Wide Web. (Students have worked on this during the ancillary time in computer labs.)
→ Have the students realize that something very personal to the author appears in the story (the moon). They should know about it because it is on one of the web pages I have proposed to use, and they were asked to look for that information in their guidelines.

Assessment: → We should evaluate the attitude and the efficiency during the week.
→ Participation: the willingness of sharing work and opinions, and their initiative in finding new interpretations and ideas.
→ We will evaluate the quality of reading, pronunciation and prosody (do not consider a mistake mispronunciations due to language disorders).
→ Written productions (creativity, grammar and spelling). We should evaluate all the aspects of the writing process and mechanics of writing that you have already worked on in the classroom when you do this unit.
→ We will evaluate the knowledge and use of the new vocabulary in their own productions.

- Ask students to write about a wild thing or about a situation that this book reminds them. They must be creative.
- Make a picture. These two last points are to be accomplished with their own contributions, not only rewriting or copying from the illustrations.

THEMATIC UNIT 2: UNLOCK YOUR HEART!

Objective

This unit is about Helme Heines's *The Boxer and the Princess*. The main objective of this thematic unit is to encourage the comprehension of the "other" meaning of words by making inferences and drawing conclusions as well as understanding literary devices (such as metaphor). We will see the interaction between illustrations and written text and we will work on the text organization, so we will be achieving TEKS reading objectives in a quite different way. Students are supposed to use a higher level of critical thinking, so we need to provide opportunities for them to learn how to do it. *The Boxer and the Princess* is a perfect book (text and pictures) to practice.

Introduction

This thematic unit will consist of some information about the book and about the author, some ideas to work out in the classroom and some suggested activities. Because of space constraints, I will not include concrete lesson plans for this book. Below, I suggest some activities for the aspects of this book I find especially interesting. For the general aspects, like use of the dictionary, vocabulary, summary, sequence and other objectives, I think that we can re-use those from the *Where the Wild Things Are* section with a few changes.

The Boxer and the Princess is a short story written and illustrated by Helme Heine. The story is told in 32 pages of text and pictures. It contains about sixty-five lines of large printed text distributed throughout the book. The text and the illustrations are complementary because the text says things in one way and the pictures show a different interpretation (more literal or more allusive, more direct or more metaphoric). Although this book could be fully understood without the illustrations, they are very important because they furnish a lot of new ideas, show a fine sense of humor, and make very interesting allusions. The illustrations are delicate, clear and very beautiful. The fact that what is said has different interpretations allows a lot of room for discussion and for practice of critical thinking skills.

The main character is Max, a young rhinoceros who is sensible and has very "thin skin," as opposed to his congeners who have very thick skin. Since everything affects him, he has to develop "protections" against the world.

Plot

Max, a gentle and sensitive baby rhino, listens to the advice of his father (represented as a business-rhino) and he does everything possible to become stronger and less sensible. He becomes really hard, rude, cheeky and insensible. His parents send him to see the world, expecting the life will soften him. He grows stronger and stronger until he falls in love... We can see the process of becoming insensible represented by the armor and the boxer gloves (all against his nature) and, once he falls in love, we see how he allows perceptions and feelings through his natural thin skin. Then the power of love and feelings becomes explicit: "Each kiss made Max stronger than ten suits of armor" (Helme 27).

Literal meaning and metaphor

This is a great book to use to explore the difference between what is actually written and the real meaning of those words. In the book, there are metaphors expressed with words, and there are metaphoric pictures. Each of them gives us the opportunity to work in several different ways. In this essay, I cannot furnish the detailed lesson plans because they would be too long, but here is a list of possible things to work on and some possible activities:

METAPHORIC WORDS

Page 1: "You need a thick skin."
Page 3: He trades the pony for a pair of boxing gloves.
Page 7: "The farmer could see right through him."
Page 7: "He got a suit of armor."
Page 7: "Then the cherries could not be seen."
Page 16: "His feelings were locked up tight."
Page 17: "There was no key to open him."
Page 18: "We'll always be around when you need us."
Page 21: "He never hid from a single dragon."
Page 27: "He unlocked his armor. The princess could see his heart."
Pages 26-27: The kiss much nicer without the helmet. Each kiss made Max stronger than ten suits of armor.
Page 28: "They lived happily ever after in a palace made of glass..."
Page 30: "Just in case of need."

METAPHORIC PICTURES

Page 2: Business-rhino.
Page 4: Mosquitoes and syringe.
Pages 16-17: What does the picture represent?
Pages 8-19: The clouds and the rain over his parents, not over him.
Pages 24-25: The pieces that he is leaving behind.
Pages 26-27: The wheat almost ready for the harvest: spring time.
Page 28: The couple wears skates.
Pages 28-29: There are clouds in the sky.
Page 30: The armor is now a scarecrow.

Some tips about the author

Helme Heine was born in Berlin, Germany in 1941. He studied economics and fine arts. He traveled through Europe and Asia and he sojourned in South Africa, where he set up a cabaret, published a satiric journal and performed in theater plays. Now he is a very well known author of books for children. He has received international awards. He also writes for adults, works on cartoons, makes sculptures and designs (Goethe Institute).

For more information about this author or to learn more about his books, you can visit:
www.goethe.de/fr/nan/nancykjl/expos.htm#helme

Comprehension activities

- As a pre-test, make the students write about the illustration on the first page of the book (where the title and the author are). Before reading the book, they must explain the meaning of the picture: a stone that is lifted by a rose (or a rose that supports a heavy stone). Collect the papers and do not say anything else about that topic. Ask them to write again after reading the book independently. Finally, they can do it again once we finish working with this book (one of the parts of the final test, or the final test itself). Afterwards, we can give the students all their papers and ask them to explain how they have changed their minds.
- Idioms: “To be a tough nut to crack.” Have the students brainstorm about the meaning of this idiom and find the same meaning in a Spanish idiom: “*ser un hueso duro de roer.*”
- Figurative sense: “thick/thin skin,” “to find a way through his armor,” and the majority of expressions on the first column.
- Retell a piece of the book: ask the students to rewrite the text with their own words using synonyms and quite the same structure of the text. Use the dictionary.
- Why do they live ever after in a palace made of glass? Why glass? Is it a real possibility or a metaphor? If a metaphor, what does it stand for?
- Work in groups on the pictures and compare the solutions or explanations. All groups give their opinion, and perhaps some of them change their point, but the teacher should never say that an opinion or solution is wrong.
- Some of the pictures relate to topics we use in everyday life: Max’s father is represented like a business man while he is telling Max that he should be stronger. Speak about it and find other similarities based on topics: grinds always wear glasses, naughty boys always hide frogs in their pockets, etc. Try to establish the necessity of these kinds of *conventions* to make the illustrations explicit and meaningful. Speak about the differences between illustrations and writing and the strategies the author uses to make them understandable. Observe what is expressed through words and what is expressed through pictures.
- Write in the journal about a picture, a piece of text or an idea.

Connection with investigation and new technologies

- It is not easy to find information about this author in English, so I suggest that we implement other kinds of techniques such as: writing something about this story and illustrating it with scanned images from the book. Scan them and insert them in the student’s writing. It is a good excuse to teach children that when we use

somebody else's works or part of their work, we must note the source. Make them do it.

Assessment

- We will evaluate the interest, participation and creativity (drawing conclusions).
- The accuracy in reading: pronunciation and prosody (do not count as mistakes mispronunciations due to language disorders).
- Global comprehension: tested formally through multiple-choice questions organized like the real test.
- Evaluate and reinforce the accuracy in writing with the correct spelling when copying information or when using words from the text.
- The capacity to create their own metaphors when writing. Some students cannot create metaphors at this age: evaluate it as good work if they use similes and comparisons.
- Answer questions or complete a graphic organizer about sequencing.
- Depending on the moment of the school year or on the maturity level of the students, complete a graphic organizer for the summary or make a complete summary without the help of the graphic organizer.
- The use of the new vocabulary and structures to create new pieces of writing.

THEMATIC UNIT 3: LUCKILY, DREAMS ARE NOT ON SALE!

Objective

This unit is about *The Dream Shop*, written by Katharine Kenah and illustrated by Peter Catalanotto. The main objective of this thematic unit is to implement on the strategies used by the author to make transitions between the real and the oneiric.

Introduction

This thematic unit will consist of some information about the book and about the author. It will provide some ideas to use in the classroom. I will only include the activities to discuss some aspects of this book: those that made me consider this book especially interesting. For the general aspects, like use of the dictionary, vocabulary, summary, sequence and other objectives, I think that we can use the ones for *Where the Wild Things Are* with a few changes with all necessary adaptations.

The Dream Shop is a short story written by Katharine Kenah and illustrated by Peter Catalanotto. The story is told in about 30 pages of text and pictures. It contains about hundred lines of large printed text distributed throughout the book. Colorful illustrations

describe what is said in the text and complement the global sense giving a certain mystery. Pictures are beautiful and contribute to a certain ambiguity in some points of the story, especially at the end.

The main character is Pip, a young girl, whose cousin tells her fantastic stories that she can hardly believe. He has a lot of influence upon her and upon her opinions, so she trusts him *just in case...*

Plot

Pip, a restless young girl, is trying to sleep on a very hot summer night. Too warm to sleep, she spends the time thinking about the words her cousin Joseph told her: “Once upon a while, on an island above the ice and below the stars, there is a small shop made of wood where one can purchase dreams.” She is skeptical about it, but she follows his directions and gets there. One can buy all sorts of dreams in the shop. There she meets with Joseph and they find a dragon that is in trouble. They save the dragon and come back home. The day after, Joseph brings her a present—something Pip had wanted to buy in the dream shop, but had relinquished because of Joseph’s opinion. This is one of the more interesting points of the book.

Transitions

It is interesting because the story never says when characters are awake and when they are dreaming. It is not difficult to see when Pip goes to sleep, but the most interesting thing is the transition from the dream to the awakened state. In that summer night, there are some signals before she goes to sleep that we can recognize at the end of the dream, before she wakes up. It is a storm. The storm is approaching when she goes to sleep, and at the end of the dream it is in its maximum strength. The violence of the storm goes along with the effect of the dragon getting by itself around the shop. Pip, in her subconscious, is hearing the storm, but the noise does not wake her up. There is a mix between the reality and the dream that suddenly becomes quick and noisy, even dangerous. We can easily recognize this situation because it happens to us very often, especially when we go to sleep in a noisy place.

However, one *could* think that all the previous events have been fantasy because Pip comes back, reversing the system she has used to go to the shop. Then she is “back on her cot, listening to the summer... when Joseph rode his bike out of the ocean of wheat and down the pebbly drive to her house.” He is carrying the little pig. We could say that now begins the dream, that she falls asleep again and continues dreaming or that she sleeps the whole night and Joseph arrives the morning after. Now it is daylight and Joseph is dressed with street clothes, but she is still wearing the same pajamas. Perhaps it is reality because during the night, Joseph, looking at the little pig, told Pip not to take things they had at home. Today, perhaps, he is bringing her one of the little pigs he has at home.

Some tips about the authors

Katharine Kenah enjoyed reading since she was a child, because she grew up surrounded by adults in an oceanographic observatory. She only could play with cats, so she read a lot, looking inside the books for some friends and company. Now, she creates characters and enjoys thinking that they are going to be good company for other children. *The Dream Shop* is her second book for young readers (Author Tracker). You can find this information in the book itself and at www.authortracker.com.

Peter Catalanotto studied in the Pratt Institute, an art college in Brooklyn, New York. He loves New York because it affects him in some way or another. He feels about New York the same way he feels about art. He thinks that art in general must affect people however you like this concrete piece of art or not: “I don’t have to like what I see or hear, but I want to be affected.” He expects from his books to leave the reader with something to think about. He likes to introduce new ideas but he does not want to say, to explain or to illustrate every thing: “I think a good book doesn’t explain everything. It is a springboard, an open door. It gives readers some space to make their own choices and connections.” Peter Catalanotto illustrates other author’s books, but also writes and illustrates his own books (Visiting Authors). To learn more about Peter Catalanotto and his books visit: www.visitingauthors.com.

Activities (prior to reading the book)

- Of course, we are going to discuss dreams in our class. We will do it before speaking about the book. We can speak about our most significant dreams, about those that we repeat sometimes (recurring dreams), about the perception of the scenery, about the ones we like and the ones we dislike and even the ones we are afraid of.
- We shall try to find out absurdities in our dreams, things that never could happen in the “real” world, but do happen during dreams.
- Ask students to do research: have them explore at home, in the library, and in the school, looking for picture books where dreams are represented. Ask them to find out what means the illustrators have used to drive the reader to the oneiric world.
- Compare the means used in books to the ones used in films. The cinema has largely used dreams and the oneiric world as metaphors and ideal representations. We can try to discuss it in our class, but a serious work would take the space of another essay at least as long as this one.
- If we want a story to appear like a dream, what kind of things are we going to introduce? We want the reader to know that we are symbolizing a dream, but we do not want to explain that fact: we want our reader to deduce it. We can do this activity at the end of the thematic unit, after all the work with this book.
- Journal topic: If I could purchase a dream...

- Give the first four lines to a small group and ask students to finish the story.
- Give the first page to another group of students and ask them to finish the story.
- Give another group the first three pages and ask the children to continue the tale.

Activities after reading the book

- Journal topic: When I cannot sleep...
- What is the oneiric characteristic of the shop? Students, probably, will observe very soon that the shop is a little shack, but very big in the inside. If children do not realize that fact, invite them to reread carefully everything about the description of the shop.
- We can observe another oneiric situation when the dragon escapes. The twister and the movements of the people and things... Our students will probably recognize an allusion to the movie *Twister*, where a cow flies.
- Characteristics of a “good dream,” characteristics of a “bad dream.” Could a good dream turn out to be a nightmare? Explain why there is a section on the Dream Shop where good dreams and bad dreams are mixed up together?
- Characters: What kind of relationship is there between Pip and Joseph? Support your opinion with what is said in the text. Later, if students do not establish a relationship between the characters and these facts of the text, ask: Why does Pip put the little pig back on the shelf? Why did Pip not get a ball of secrets? Why does Joseph bring a little pig to her the day after? We can do this activity with the big group or do a previous discussion in small groups and then discuss with the whole class, just to draw some conclusions.
- Why does Pip say to Joseph: “You won’t really find them; you’ll just be dreaming”? During the dream itself, could she be aware that she is dreaming? Or perhaps she is not dreaming?
- Why does Joseph bring a little pig to her the day after? Can two people dream the same thing at the same time? We will try to explain that what we dream about is sometimes simply what we want, and that Pip should have been speaking about it to Joseph.
- See the fourth point of this thematic unit, “transitions,” and evaluate the situation, trying to decide what is happening at the end of the book. It is impossible to know it because the author knowingly gave this ambiguity to the book, but students can say what kind of solution they would like to the story, just in case they need one. We do not need to make a decision; we just want to speak and think about books and stories.
- Why is this part of the book written with such a short sentences separated in different lines? What is the author’s purpose in the following section:

Pip looked at Joseph.
Joseph looked at Pip.
“He’s mine,” she said.
“I saw him first,” said Joseph.

(Kenah, date unknown)

Connection with investigation and new technologies

- See what is said in the previous thematic units about working with new technologies. We can do the same kind of activities here. There is more information about the illustrator than about the writer. We can find information about other books of Katharine Kenah. We can read interesting opinions and observations and points of view about art and books from Peter Catalanotto. We can learn more about his books and about his activities.
- Here are two web sites where we can find some useful information about these authors:
www.authortracker.com
www.visitingauthors.com

Assessment

- We shall evaluate the levels of interest, participation and creativity.
- The accuracy in reading: pronunciation and prosody.
- Global comprehension: tested formally through multiple-choice questions organized like the real test.
- We shall evaluate and reinforce the accuracy in writing with the correct spelling when copying information or when using words from the text.
- The use of the new vocabulary and structures to create new pieces of writing.
- We shall consider the capacity to draw conclusions.
- We shall evaluate the oral expression. The use of grammar, structure and vocabulary when speaking.
- We shall evaluate the skills of working in pairs and in small group.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books for Children

I have included here the three books I have discussed in my essay, along with other books that I consider very important to use in third grade. I think they furnish a great deal of culture and background and aid in understanding other great books.

Heine, Helme. *The Boxer and the Princess*. New York: Margaret K. McElderry Books, 1998.

It is a metaphor about feelings. It is a good book to work on the deep meaning of the words.

Kenah, Katharine and Catalanotto, Peter. *The Dream Shop*. HarperCollins Publishers.

This book is a mix between reality and dream. It is interesting the transition from reality to the oneiric and how everything relates.

Randall, Ronne and Howells, Graham. *The Children's Book of Myths and Legends*. Barnes and Noble Books, 2001.

This book is just an approach to the myths. The stories are retold in a very simple way, but it is an easy book for some of our struggling readers. It allows us to work on fantasy and the way the human being has used imagination to explain what could not be understood.

Sendak, Maurice. *Where the Wild Things Are*. HarperCollins Publishers, 1991.

It is interesting because of the clear distinction between fantasy and reality inside the book and because of the symmetry of the sequence. Text and pictures complement each other perfectly. In addition, the videotape is fantastic.

Yolen, Jane/Schoenherr, John. *Owl Moon*. New York: Philomel Books, 1988.

It is very poetic, all about feelings in non-extreme situations. Wonderful illustrations and there is a very accurate version on videotape. This book is about the magic of some moments in life.

The Arabian Nights.

It is another indispensable piece for my unit. The power of the word and of the imagination turns death into love and life. Shahrazad, real or not, is the most famous storyteller. There are a lot of beautiful versions for children.

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"Author Tracker." 14 May 2003. <<http://www.authortracker.com/author.asp?a=authored&b=19713>>

- Boone, E. and Mignolo, W.D. *Writing Without Words*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1996.
When we write we are recording our speech, but before the invention of the alphabet, people made up a variety of systems to “write” without words. I am interested in what it is “said” without words.
- D’Ottavi, Francesca. *World Myths*. McRae Books.
Fantasy and imagination in stories of the whole world. Children love these tales. It is an easy way to explain to children that, since the beginning, men have used the word and the imagination to justify what challenges our reason.
- Duane, O. B. *Native American Myths and Legends*. London: Brockhampton Press, 1998.
There are a lot of magic elements in Native American legends and fantasy is always present. I think it is part of the history of this country and our students should know them, although these stories are not as popular as Celtic, Greek and Latin Myths.
- Ende, Michael. *The Neverending Story*. New York: Puffin Books, 1997.
Essential book when the main thing is fantasy. All devastation is possible when imagination does not take part in human live. It touches on the importance of childhood to grownups. My students are too young to read this book, but they can see the movie and discuss the idea.
- Gregory, Carol and Ramsey, Inez, *Maurice Sendak*. All the information about Sendak’s biography comes from this page. <<http://falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/sendak.htm>>.
- Igwebuike, J. “The Key to Listening.” *The Toastmaster*. April 2002.
It is an interesting and funny article about the different needs in the way we, men and women, communicate.
- Islas, Delgado, Alegría, and others. *Neurobiological Aspects of Oneiric Activity During Diurnal Sleep. Influence of the awakening moment in dreams evocations*. 14 May 2003.<www.imbiomed.com.mx/Sanidad/SMv55n2/english/Zsm012-01.htm>.
This is a scientific study about dream during the sleeping time and during the day or the awakening moments. I think it is especially interesting because the authors clarify the difference between dream and oneiric.
- Jensen, E. *Teaching With the Brain in Mind*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1998.
I think that we need to understand how the learning works to teach according to the necessities of our students. It is important too, to detect some possible problems students may have.

“Litterature pour la jeunesse en langue allemande.” Goethe-Institut Nancy. 14 May 2003. <<http://www.goethe.de/fr/nan/nancykjl/helme>>

Lurie, Alison. *Don't Tell the Grown-Ups. The Subversive Power of Children's Literature*. Boston: Back Bay, 1998.

This book is a comment on the diversity of books for children and young adults. The author points out the quality and carefully written circumstances (politics, ideas, social concerns, etc.) that the stories or the books are about. I think it is very interesting to work on concrete books.

Minarik, Elsa Holmelund. *Little Bear's Visit*. HarperCollins, 1961.
A delightful tale of Little Bear's visit with his grandparents.

“Peter Catalanotto's Biography.” Visiting Authors Website. 14 May 2003. <http://www.visitingauthors.com/authors/catalanotto_peter/catalanotto_presentation.html>

Rascaroli, Laura. *Like a Dream: A Critical History of the Oneiric Metaphor in Film Theory*. 14 May 2003. <www.arts.uwaterloo.ca/FINE/juhde/rasc022.htm>. This is a good, easy to read work to know more about this topic. Especially interesting if we want to work with books and cinema.

White, E. B. *Charlotte's Web*. HarperTrophy, 1961.
It is a beautiful book about friendship and tolerance.