

Teaching Notes - "Talking is not my thing!"

Talking is Not My Thing! is a unique picture book that highlights the variety of communication methods outside of verbal communication. The protagonist herself is non-verbal, and we follow the narrative from her perspective, allowing readers to empathise with her unique experience of the world. A rarely seen example of a positive portrait of non-verbal disabled children.

"With speech bubbles, bright colours and characters so lively they leap off the page, this is a vibrant and happy book. It's refreshing to see a picture book recognise non-verbal communication, and this example is particularly rare in the fact that it's the narrator who is non-verbal." - BookTrust

Ages 2 to 6 (Early Years/EarlyKS1)

The areas of learning are:

- Communication and language.
- Alternative communication techniques.
- Developing empathy for those who behave differently.
- Personal, social and emotional development.



Spread 1:

We see that the sister is using words to tell the story through thought bubbles, and the brother talks to her normally through speech bubbles. The sister seems to be having a tea party with her orange rabbit, while the brother is holding a football. *Question: Why do you think the brother is speaking to his sister, when he knows she can't reply?*

Spread 2:

The siblings are heading inside, it seems that the sister can understand what her brother says. *Question: do you think the brother can read the words in the sister's thought bubble? How much do you think the sister understands?*

Spread 3:

The sister explains why she does not speak. *Question: Do you ever have trouble knowing what to say? Or pronouncing words correctly? Potential discussion about how some children find it harder than others to use words.*

Spread 4:

The sister is overwhelmed by the environmental sounds at dinner, but emphasises that she still enjoys being included in the social activity. *Question: What could be done at the dinner table to help her feel more comfortable? (e.g. Plastic cutlery and bowls/plates, not shouting, include her in the conversation).*

Spread 5:

The siblings are watching a gardening program with Grandma. The sister looks uncomfortable and is thinking about using her flashcards. *Question: Why do you think the sister is uncomfortable? What are flashcards?*

Spread 6:

The flashcard is a picture of a toilet, which she can use to show others that she needs to go. She needs help to go to the loo sometimes, but that is ok. *Question: What else could flashcards be used for?*

Spread 7:

The children are playing a drawing game, the brother has to guess what the sister is drawing! *Question: Cover up the brother's response with a piece of paper and see if anyone can guess correctly. Can you think of any other games that could be played with someone who does not talk?*

Spread 8:

The brother is reading to the sister, until the clock strikes 7! *Question: who's idea is it to share a book? How do the siblings*

know it is 7 o' clock?

Spread 9:

Tooth brushing scene. Potential for in depth discussion about dental hygiene and personal habits.

Spread 10:

The sister has lost her bunny! Question: how do you think the sister feels? Remember the orange rabbit toy from spread 1? Can the children remember where it is?

Spread 11:

The sister has run off, the brother and grandma look worried! Question: does the brother understand what is wrong? After all, the sister cannot tell him what is going on.

Spread 12:

Bunny has been found! Question: were you right about where she lost it? How do you think the sister feels now?

Spread 13:

The sister is wearing her pyjamas and getting ready for bed, but what is that shape under the covers? Discussion: Bedtime routines.

Spread 14:

The funny shape was a toy car! It looks as if the brother had lost a toy too. Question: How does the brother show his relief?

Spread 15:

The siblings high-five goodnight. Question: What kind of communication is a high five? Physical, gestural, verbal? Has anyone used a high-five before?

Quiz Questions for after the reading:

How many different kinds of communication (imparting and receiving information between persons) were used in the book? Look back and count them if unsure.

- *speaking*
- *reactions: turning to look at someone when they speak to you, or following instructions (the sister turns to listen and follows the brother inside)*
- *facial expressions*
- *tone of your voice: you can say the same word or make the same noise in different ways to communicate different moods*
- *body language: putting your fingers in your ears, crossing your legs and looking worried, dancing*
- *listening, making time to listen - to show you want to receive information*
- *flashcards*
- *writing words or drawing pictures*
- *suggesting ideas (picking a book to read)*
- *gestures (pointing at the clock, high fives)*

The spaghetti is covered in sauce and some gets on the siblings, what colour is it?

What time do the siblings brush their teeth?

What kind of toothbrush has the sister got?

What is a flashcard?

What does the sister call her favourite toy?

Suggested Activities:

- **Drama:** Challenge the children to have a conversation without using speech. Give prompts and provide different communication aids if available.
- **Art:** Play the sister's drawing game! One child draws a picture while the group or partner has to guess what it is.
- **Hide and seek with Orange Bunny:** make a paper bunny out of orange sugar paper/card, and hide somewhere in the room, the person who finds Orange Bunny first gets a sticker/prize.
- **Drama/P.E:** Dancing to Relax. Have the class invent different dances to relaxing music.
- **Guess the expression:** The teacher pulls different faces and the class guesses what the emotion might be. Could also use images.