

How to Make Your Own Reading Programme

A primer for educators: principals, teachers, heads of department, center heads, curriculum designers, curriculum coordinators, homeschooling parents, edtech CxO, and edtech PMs.



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Introduction

I am Employee #1 at Multistory Learning (MSL), the company that I co-founded with Naresh (Employee Id #2). Multistory is the company behind the hugely successful Book Lovers' Program for Schools (BLPS).

My co-author Deepti is #54. It took us 50+ employees and 10+ years to build BLPS: complete with the methodology, the book lists, workshops, activity books, and the nuances.

In our decade-long journey, we've seen that each child is unique. So is each teacher, school, book, and of course, every author.

To preserve each thread of independent thought, to allow each school, and teacher the freedom to be themselves, and yet, to build a structured reading programme, which has a strong scaffold and is simultaneously flexible: This is what BLPS has achieved over time.

In our 10th year, we want to share our secret recipe with you so that you won't have to take as long as we did to build a reading programme that is loved. Do take our learnings to get a headstart on your path.

Things to do after reading this book:

1. Check out additional resources
2. Join the discussion

Go to multistory.in/ebook to do both!



Why is Reading Important?

We read for pleasure, for work, and for routine transactional purposes. We read books, instruction manuals, newspapers, emails, presentations, signboards, maps, messages, advertisements, ledgers, and so on. From small text (Mutual-Funds red herrings) to huge text (billboards with one word) and from illegible scribbles (doctors, kids) to the Sans-Serif Roboto typeface (the very easy-to-read default typeface for Android), our brains are on reading mode all the time: decoding characters, sentences, and paragraphs into meaning.

Modern life revolves around the written word. I can't really imagine life today without text. So it's especially confusing when educators ask, "Why is reading important?"

You and I believe that reading is like breathing. But, there are non-believers amongst us. If reading were a kind of magic, then non-believers would be muggles, kind of. And everybody knows that we have to be nice to muggles.

So, when asked, we give educators the Top 5 Reasons to Read.

Top 5 Reasons to Read

1

Reading **improves language**.

It is one of the key LSRW skills that forms the foundation of language education and curriculum development.

2

Reading is an **independent** solitary activity. One doesn't need to be dependent on another person. This is especially useful when no one else is around.

3

A reader can choose their **own pace**. Some read fast, some read slow, some pause to think. This control of the "rate of information flow" lets the brain assimilate new material at a comfortable pace.

4

Written materials provide lesser visual detail than pictures, videos, and live action. This "information gap" forces the reader to **think and imagine**. This develops the language processing parts of the brain.

5

The parts of the brain that are used when reading are the same parts associated with creativity. Because readers are imagining while reading, they are **building on their creativity** each time.

Confident readers do better in all phases of life and in all professions. A student with good language skills does better in college. A creative engineer is valued more. An imaginative doctor can arrive at a better differential diagnosis. A teacher who can learn herself/himself teaches better.

If, like us, you're tired of answering the question, just download this poster and put it up in your classroom!

To download the Top 5 Reasons to Read poster, go to multistory.in/ebook.



Language, Stories, and Storybooks

In the 1970s, the teachers at the Melania Morales special school in Nicaragua were willing to teach only lip reading to the deaf and hard-of-hearing students in their fold. The teachers believed this would be good for the children. The kids found lip reading too hard. But they wanted to communicate with each other, especially in the playground.

So, they invented an entire language. The language that they created went on to be called Nicaraguan Sign Language. According to the famous linguist Noam Chomsky, language is innate to human beings. It is an instinct so strong that if we didn't teach children any language, they would invent one, with vocabulary, grammar, and syntax, as proven in Nicaragua.

Exposure / Immersion

Recent research further suggests that the language learning instinct is very strong for children under the age of 7 and relatively strong for those under 15. For these ages, sufficient exposure to conversations and narratives are enough for language learning.

If they're immersed in a world where they're exposed to new language continuously, then they will learn language instinctively.

Using Stories

Stories are fun and immersive. They provide exposure to a wide range of human interactions, narratives, and emotions. And language.

For example, think of the Aesop fable *The Fox and The Crow*. The clever fox praised the gullible crow so much that she let her guard down, and also let go of the piece of cheese in her mouth. The fox's words "You sing so well," could mean praise, flattery, or maybe even sarcasm.

Stories are very powerful tools to teach language. Recent research suggests that children whose parents read them stories before they entered kindergarten have much better vocabulary and reading skills. On average, they have already processed 1.4 million more words than other children. It falls on us to introduce our children to as many stories as possible.

Using Storybooks

The term "story" is very generic. "Introduce a story" to children may mean -

- Give them a storybook
- Tell them a story (maybe a folk tale)
- Tell them a real story (maybe from the newspaper)
- Show them a video / movie
- Take them to a theatre for a live play

All of these have a role to play in a language curriculum.

A generic reading programme is typically designed to get children to love to read and to improve language skills, through the use of storybooks and storytelling.

At BLPS, when we use the word "story", we always mean a story from a storybook. Whenever we talk about storytelling, it's always telling a story from a book. This is because BLPS is a reading programme and we never lose sight of the goal: to get children to read.

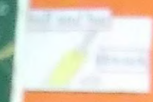


Talk Less, Listen More

No	of you	65
	Present	40
	Absent	5



Time
One day



What Exactly is a Reading Programme?

A reading programme is a structured approach to build reading capabilities among students. It helps students become comfortable with large amounts of written text.

Goals vary from age to age. In the lower ages, the focus is on the ability to read. In the higher ages, the focus is on the ability to understand complex text.

Why Do You Need a Reading Programme?

I graduated from IIT Madras in 2008 as a mechanical engineer. I joined Unilever and was working in a factory when I was asked to commission an imported chlorination unit. For a year, engineers had been trying and failing. I opened the commissioning manual and got to it. It took me a week to get it running. It was a very well-written and easy-to-follow manual. I had no trouble with it at all. But all those engineers who had tried earlier just couldn't do it.

Perhaps they didn't have the patience to read the manual in the first place.

Imagine the country, and the world, we would have if everyone could read. If farmers would read *Silent Spring*, on the effects of DDT on ecosystems. If politicians would read *An Inconvenient Truth*, on global warming. If Brexiters would read *Room on the Broom*, on sharing, ironically illustrated by a German settled in the UK.

By the age of 15, a year's worth of textbooks (across Science, Math, Language, and Social Sciences) contain a million words.

A good early years and middle years reading programme will ensure that children are comfortable with such a large volume of text.

Who Should Own/Run the Reading Programme?

Theoretically, in a school setup, a robust reading programme should be co-owned by all departments, and centered around the library. However, this is possible only in a handful of schools.

Two important things have to align for this to happen:

- The school curricular setup should depend on reading. This is easier to achieve in Montessori and IB schools where the school has more flexibility than in CBSE/ICSE.

- The school management must believe in reading. For example, Bangalore-based Neev Academy (IB) and Pep School V2 (Montessori) have managed to integrate reading into their academic framework in a really big way. In both schools the owners are bibliophiles.

In most schools, the librarian is the custodian of reading. This works only if she is well-read. A better custodian is the English department (and the other language departments). In our partner schools, the English department owns/runs BLPS.

What Should the Goals of Your Reading Programme Be?

In 2009, I had quit Unilever and was setting up a library in Chennai. I visited P S Senior Secondary School, Mylapore to talk to my senior school English teacher who had just become the principal.

It had a good library with 6:1 book:student ratio. In a “good” school like this, only 15% of students voluntarily borrow from the library.

The principal urged me to figure out how to make this better. Over the next 15 months, through the pilot run of the Book Lovers' Program for Schools (BLPS), we were able to increase this to 80%.

Voluntary library book rentals is a good measure of success for a reading programme. However, this requires the use of a library software that can measure the correlation between the programme and book rentals. To facilitate this, we have developed our own library rental software.

Language improvement is a good goal post for a reading program. This could be measured quantitatively through English grades or qualitatively through conversations. Dipstick surveys or tests could also be used.

Improving reading habits can take months or years, and thus any form of measurement will be only partly accurate.

You could also decide not to have a goal in the initial stages of your programme. This will give you the freedom to figure things out.



Getting Ready

Just to recap, by age 15, children are expected to climb Mount Textbook, which towers at a height of a million-plus words.

A well-designed pre-primary, primary, and middle years reading programme will prepare children for this trek. And for the long haul of life, in general, which is full of written text.

So, you've decided to design and run a reading programme for your children. At this point, you should ponder over and answer these questions:

- **Do I need a reading programme? Why?**
- **Which ages will be covered?**
- **Who will own/run the programme?**
- **What will the goal of the programme be at each age level?**
- **How will I measure whether I achieved my goal?**

For the Book Lovers' Program for Schools, these are the answers to the questions above:

- **Do I need a reading programme? Why?**

To get children to love to read.
To strengthen their language skills.

- **Which ages will be covered?**

Ages 2-15 (classes LKG to 10)

- **Who will own/run the programme?**

The English teachers

- **What will the goal of the programme be at each age level?**

Lower classes - ability to read.

Higher classes - ability to understand and discuss; create a love for reading

- **How will I measure whether I achieved my goal?**

- Through student work submitted in the BLPS activity book.

- Through qualitative opinion of external resource who visits the classroom once a term.

Okay, so now that we have pondered over these existential questions, we can start!



LITTLE BOOK LOVERS'

READING SERIES



Grab your shopping basket!
It's time to step into a busy market.

It's Frank's first trip to the market and he is thrilled! He RUNS towards a sea of tomatoes. He HOPS towards a cart of potatoes. Finally he TURNS around to look at his mother. But, much to his dismay, she isn't there.

Watch a crowded marketplace come to life in this vibrant story as we follow the adventures of one unforgettable little boy.

The Little Book Lovers' Reading Series employs strategies to reinforce pre-reading skills. The stories, set in recognisable Indian environments, aim to engage a child and make reading fun. Look for:

- ✓ Rhythm and Rhyme
- ✓ Picture to text correspondence
- ✓ Easy words
- ✓ Activities

Has your child read the entire series yet?



MS MOOCHIE

Fiction
Rs. 200
Ages 2 and up

ISBN - 978-93-85290-19-0



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Step 1: Storybook Evaluation Framework

Award-winning author Neil Gaiman says that “there is no such thing as a bad children’s book.” He hates it when adults (like us) criticize children’s books. “It’s tosh. It’s snobbery and it’s foolishness.” His suggestion is to let children pick their books. In an ideal world, that would be awesome.

But, we do have a reading programme to design, and it has to start with a recommended booklist, for which we have to pick books. And so, let’s keep aside the morality of whether or not to judge books as good and bad, for now.

Let’s instead focus on what framework to use to decide whether a book makes it to our list or not.

Language

The very basic requirement is good language. Contemporary language is good but slang is not. Breezy language is acceptable, but grammatical errors are not.

Classical language is okay but if it’s too dense then it’s a no-go. Further, some books are great for improving language, for e.g. *Amelia Bedelia*.

The “Moral”

Some educators love moral stories in the classroom. Some hate it. The argument against moral stories is that — if the book spells out the moral, then children don’t get a chance to think for themselves.

In Shel Silverstein’s all-time classic *The Giving Tree*, The Boy takes and takes from The Tree. The book opens the door for children to wonder who do we indiscriminately take from—our parents, our country, mother nature—and how do they feel about it? The author does not end the story by saying, “and so children, that is why we should not take from mother nature.”

While the book doesn’t have a stated “moral,” it does have a lesson, a theme or a learning objective. As educators, we shouldn’t shy away from admitting that we like to offer books with learning objectives to our children. For example, in BLPS, one of our recommended books in kindergarten is *Ramya’s Snack Box*, and it’s about sharing.

Moral of the story? Pick books with great learning objectives, but not those which sermonize or summarize the moral on the last page. Let it be subtle.

Difficult Topics

A good children’s book can take a serious subject and wrap it up in an interesting story and deliver it in an engaging way. With a little effort, you can find a book on any topic.

Talking about difficult subjects like death, caste, sexuality and various other ‘taboo topics’ can become relatively easy with the help of a children’s book.

Years ago, when Deepti narrated *The Bridge to Terabithia* to her 6th-grade class, they reacted with sadness and empathy. A few boys even admitted that they cried while reading the ending.

The BLPS storytellers talk about an incident when a group of students refused to pick up *Kali and the Rat Snake*, a story about a boy from the Irula tribe: a community whose members are traditionally snake-catchers. Why? The boy on the cover was dark-skinned and looked “weird.”

The storytellers used this opportunity to facilitate a conversation about beauty norms, caste, and exclusion. Perceptions changed, the students read the book, and loved it. The world changed for the better, albeit just a little bit.

Engagement Quotient

How would you feel if your mother gave you a copy of *How to Win Friends and Influence People*? Not too good? It’s the same with children.

Storybooks need to be fun and engaging. In *George’s Marvellous Medicine*, George makes a magic potion that does terrible things to his awful grandma. The plot line is absurd and there’s no moral in sight, but the kids love it.

Storybooks can be engaging for many reasons – lovable characters, gorgeous settings, thrilling action, fast-paced plot, humour, romance, nostalgia, beautiful pictures... the list is endless.

The tell of an engaging book is simple. Do you feel like turning the page? Or do you find yourself thinking about your next meal instead?

Reading Levels

Ideally, you would want to pick a book that’s just a little hard for the reader. However, it’s not easy to estimate the reading level of a class.

Plus, different children are at different reading levels within every class.

One option is to take a set of books to class and let the children decide what they want to read individually.

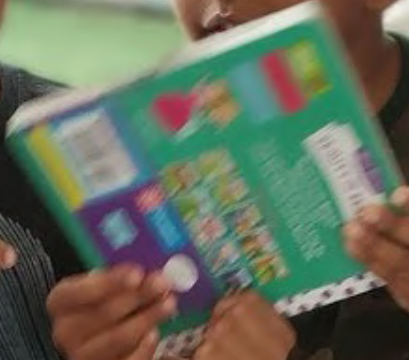
The other option is to take multiple copies of the same book and allow for peer learning to work its magic.

In the Book Lovers' Program for Schools' (BLPS) pilot, back in 2010, we had taken 40 copies of a book to a class of 200 children across 5 sections. The advanced readers helped the slow readers and the book got read by 160 children – 80% of the class!

Storybook Evaluation Framework

Name of the Book _____		
Name of the Author _____		
Parameter	What I Like	What I Don't Like
Language	_____	_____
Central Theme	_____	_____
Engagement	_____	_____
Reading Level	_____	_____

To download a template for your classroom, go to multistory.in/ebook.



Step 2: Making the Book List

The core of any reading program is the recommended book list. The BLPS book list, for example, has 350+ books on it, and it changes every year. How does one go about building such a list?

We always start by making a table for each level. In a year, we recommend 6 themes. And for each theme, we want to offer 6 options for each chapter. So for each level, we have to recommend 36 books.

Level 1	Theme 1	Theme 2	Theme 3	Theme 4	Theme 5	Theme 6
Theme name	Home	Family	Friends	...	...	...
Book 1	<i>Where is Amma?</i>	<i>Minu and Her Hair</i>	<i>Ramya's Snack Box</i>	...	...	...
Book 2	...	...	...	...	...	...
Book 3	...	...	...	...	...	...
Book 4	...	...	...	...	...	...
Book 5	...	...	...	...	...	...
Book 6	...	...	...	...	...	...

To download a sample theme from our activity book (Friends from Level 1), go to multistory.in/ebook.

Finding Books

Finding books for the book list can take some effort. We have over 10,000 children's books in our office and we add more every year.

We're lucky. If you don't have access like we do, here are a few suggestions to help you find books -

Amazon.in: They have a curated Children's Bookshelf section, which is a good starting place. You can also search for books, of course. The "Customers who bought this item also bought" feature at the bottom of the page is a great way to discover new books. A classic benefit of using Amazon is that you are always aware of the price of a book, and let's admit it: sometimes there are budget constraints.

1

There are a lot of online Facebook pages and groups that talk about children's literature. If you're looking for a specific book on a specific theme for a specific age group, then the community can help you find it. Reading Raccoons is one such group.

2

There are libraries which offer book lists like iloveread.in in Delhi and Chennai. There are book shops that carry books theme-wise, like Funky Rainbow in Bangalore.

3

Book award winners and shortlists are a good place to find titles for your book list as well. The Best of Indian Children's Writing (BICW) Award list is a list of 30+ great modern Indian children's books. There's also the Neev Book Award and The Hindu-Young World GoodBooks Award. Internationally the Newbery, Caldecott, and the Carnegie Medals are the most important.

4

Lastly, you could just ask us for our book list. We help schools across India find books for classrooms, and reaching us is as simple as sending an email to contact@multistory.in. Our book list might just suit your purpose.

PLAY
AREA

LET'S READ
ANYTIME! ANYWHERE!



dear

Eric
Carle!



Self
knowing

Read
to all!

Handwritten note

Step 3: Introducing the Books to Your Children

The next step after making a recommended book list is to plan how to introduce the book in class. If your introduction is good, then the children will love to read the book.

Therefore it's worth spending some time planning this session. Here are some ways to introduce a chosen book to your children:

Reading

- **Read aloud:** Just read from the book. This works particularly well for books written in rhyme and rhythm like *The Gruffalo* or our very own Ramu and Ramya series. If you know how to do it well, read aloud can work for any book. The author Mem Fox goes deep into the power of reading aloud in her book *Reading Magic*.
- **Read along:** Get your children to read with you.
- **Read in turn:** Ask your children to read the storybook out in turns, one paragraph at a time.

Using AV

- **Audiobooks/podcasts:** You could use an audio clip to hook your children onto your book. Karadi Tales has a lovely collection of audiobooks, and there's always the internet.
- **Videos / Movies:** YouTube is a rich source of material you can use in the classroom to introduce a book. For example, go to the additional resources section to watch a lovely video of author BJ Novak reading out his book in a school.

Creative Ideas

- **Context-setting:** You could start a conversation around the book by introducing students to the theme or the story via writing / art-based activities, or a game, or a discussion.
- **Picture walk:** With very young children, you could take them on a journey by showing them each illustration and talking to them about each item in the visual. For more information, go to the additional resources section and check out a very informative pdf on picture walks.
- **Activity:** A fun activity that's related to the storybook can get everyone excited to see what's coming up.
- **Songs / Rhymes:** Tell the story as a song, and your class will never forget it. I still remember the "Singing the Sun flower" rhyme I learnt in preschool!
- **Narrative storytelling:** At BLPS, we believe that there's nothing more effective in getting children excited about a book than good old storytelling. With no book in hand, no digital distractions – just the storyteller and a bunch of kids.
- **Role Play:** One way of getting all the children engaged with a book is to ask some (maybe all) children to act out a few scenes from a book. This gets everyone off their desks and works great for some books, like those by Roald Dahl.

Narrative Storytelling

At the Book Lovers' Program for Schools (BLPS), we typically introduce a book using a storytelling. We also spend a lot of time working with teachers to make them better storytellers. In a year, we typically conduct 50-75 teacher workshops in storytelling. In our workshops, we cover the dominant techniques that one must master.

The first thing we talk about in our workshops is "The Hook" – the first two minutes of the storytelling. You have to have a great opening in order to pique your class' interest and keep them invested for the rest of the session.

You could ask a weird question, make an unusual sound, a funny expression, an exaggerated action, etc.

After the hook, comes the hold. This is the long middle of the story, where emotions go up and down, where events change the plot, and also the section which is the hardest to tell.

Nobody is a born storyteller. People learn to tell stories through training and practice. Like any art form, practising storytelling involves practising individual skills, such as:

Voice Modulation

Modulating your voice as per changes in the mood in the story is a very basic storytelling technique. You could even try different voices for the characters – an old woman could have a warbly voice while a 5-year-old could have a squeaky high-pitched voice. Go to the additional resources section to listen to how Craig Jenkins uses his voice, for example.

Body Language

The most common use of body language is to differentiate between characters. A simple change in posture can denote who's talking. For an 80-year-old man, you could hunch down and pretend to hold a walking stick! If you're a child talking to an adult, you could look up.

Movement

Because of the association with bedtime storytelling and grandparents' tales, a lot of people imagine that storytelling must be done sitting down. No! You could use all the space available to you. Jump, run, or move. Walk to the back of the class and notice how the children crane their heads to follow you (It's fun to make them work for it!).

Props (Puppets, Masks, Costumes)

Storytellers who are good with arts and craft often use puppets, masks, and even costumes. Watch a lovely stick-puppet rendition of one of our favourite stories, *Gajapati Kulapathi* in the additional resources section. You could also improvise and be minimal. Perhaps you could use a dupatta for a superhero cape?

Exaggeration

Kids love funny faces. They love it when an adult bawls like a baby or screams in frustration (while acting, of course). Push past your comfort zone and magnify your actions as much as possible.

“Show, Don't Tell”

If your character has just entered the jungle, then take a moment to describe the jungle – possibly the air is still, the earth smells musty, and there is a gentle sound of rustling leaves.

Audience Interaction

Involve your audience! Ask them questions. Get them to repeat a phrase or an action. Make the storytelling come alive, like how Janaki Sabesh does. Watch her do a lively storytelling session in the additional resources section.

Mime / Non-verbal

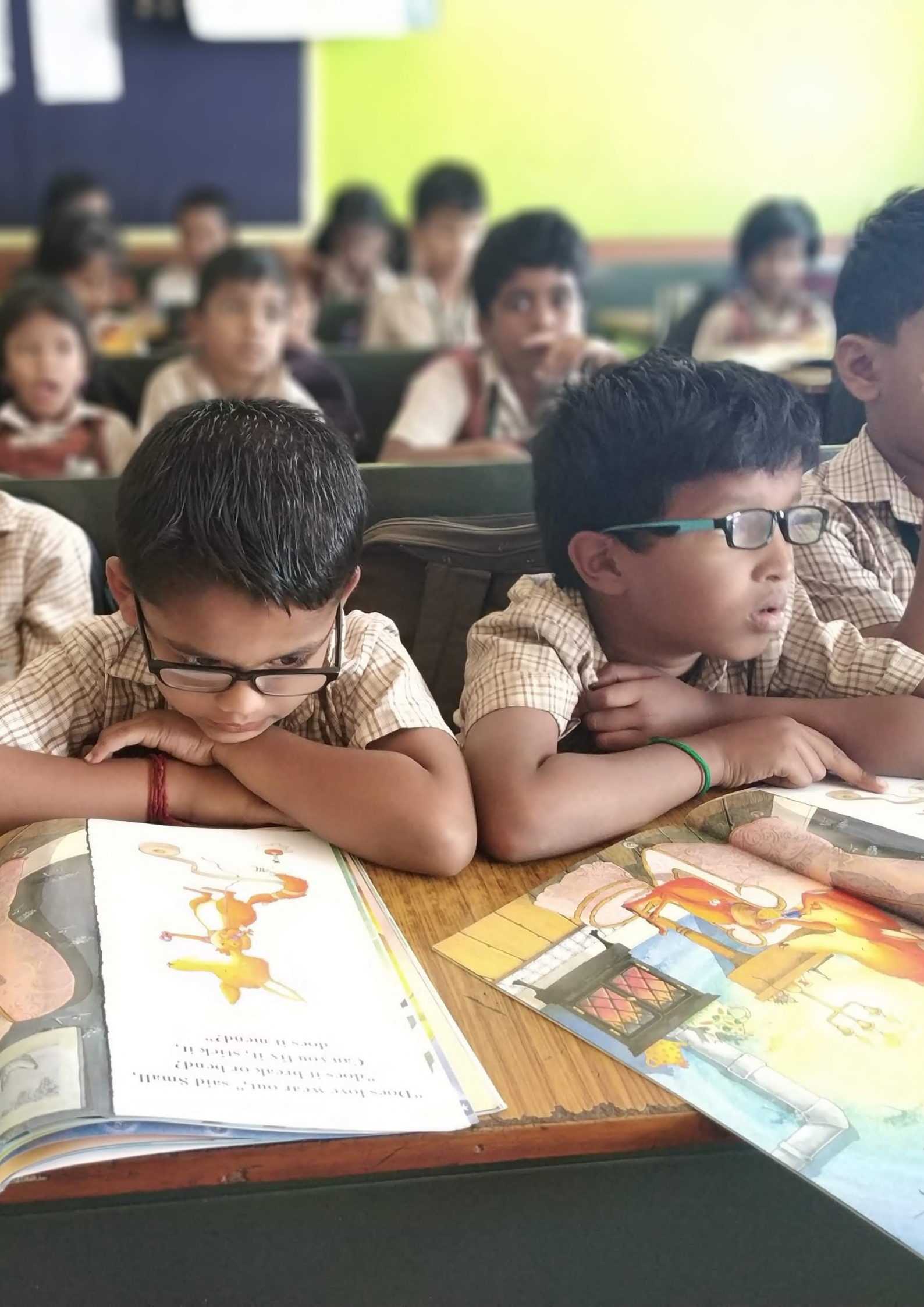
This is a tricky technique to master, but a very effective one. While you may or may not choose to paint your face white, you could always establish imaginary objects in your space like how a mime does.

Your Unique Strengths

It's not easy to master all of these skills. It's easier to pick one or two that you think you'll be comfortable with and hone those to perfection. Deepti grew up dancing, so movements, actions and body language came naturally to her, but she struggled with voice modulation.

Your journey to becoming a great storyteller could start with a workshop. Some of the country's best storytelling workshops are conducted by the BLPS team (500+ workshops since 2012). There's also Kathalaya (100+ workshops since 1998) and Your Story Bag (20+ workshops since 2016). All of these workshops are good.

The key difference among these is that while most of them are generic storytelling workshops, the BLPS workshops are specifically meant for educators intending to use storybooks in the classroom.



"Does love wear out," said Small,
"does it break or bend?
Can you fix it, stick it,
does it mend?"

Step 4: The Actual Reading

We've discussed that the first step in setting up a reading programme is to come up with a framework on how you're going to decide which books make it to your programme.

The second step is to make a booklist of recommended books. Then you have to take the books to your class - one book at a time. In this step, you have to think about how you will introduce each book to your class.

The next logical thing to do is to give your class access to the book. The guiding principle we work with is - if you've done your job well so far then the children will read the book by themselves. In our decade long experience, this works.

What If the Children Don't Read?

Sometimes, some children, or maybe even the entire class won't read. They may come back and say, "this book is boring." This could mean that they found the book difficult and are not willing to admit the same, hence the generic complaint "it's boring."

Try to investigate what they found boring and you might uncover that they found it hard to understand. If this is the case then you might have to read out sections and explain it to them.

We call these “reading interventions” - we take one child, or a group of children, or the entire class through the entire book, one page at a time.

Another method of handling this is to pair weak readers with strong readers and encourage the latter to help the former. Peer influence works wonders, especially in the ages of 6-12.

If your children read the book and still found it “boring,” then you can consider changing the way you introduced the book, or maybe even replacing the book from your booklist. The BLPS booklist, for e.g., changes by 30% every year.

Lastly, it’s perfectly okay for some children not to like a specific book. They might like a different book. Give your children the freedom to dislike a book. If they want to stop reading it half-way, maybe that’s okay. If we force them to read and like every book, then your reading programme will become a forced activity and that will harm the success of your programme, and lower the impact.

Do monitor who is reading what, and try to record it in a systematic way. Reading programmes take months and years to show full impact. Systematic recording of reading logs will help you assess long term success of your programme.

Step 5: Closing the Loop

Now that your students have read the book, what next?

At the Book Lovers' Program for Schools (BLPS), we recommend that you do a few activities.

BLPS is designed to get children to love to read and to strengthen their language skills. So therefore, after reading, we need to look at language development as well.

Activity Design Objectives

There are 4 key language skills – LSRW: Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing.

They can be expressed as part of two main cognitive skills – Comprehension (decoding meaning from sentences) and Expression (coding meaning into sentences).

Clearly L, R are used in comprehension skills. S, W are used in expression.

Keeping the above framework in mind, at BLPS, we design activities as per the 3Cs: Comprehension, Communication, and Creativity.

Comprehension

Comprehension is a reflection of how well your children extract meaning from language. This is a very important skill. You would want to know: did your children understand the story or was the language too complicated? Were there ideas that they needed help with? Was the story interesting? Try these activities and find out for yourself!

- **Quiz:** Transform your classroom into a quiz show! Have multiple rounds, buzzer questions and of course, an interesting prize (could be a hand-made card or a mini-stamp).
- **Story Map:** This is a great way for your students to recall the story. Rather than asking them a general question such as “What was the story about?” ask them to complete sentences such as –

- The main person in the story is ____
- The story takes place in a _____
- The main character’s problem is ____
- My favourite part in the story is ____

To download your own story map template, go to multistory.in/ebook.

- **Guessing Games:** Use clues from the story and ask your kids to guess what/ who you’re talking about.
- **Picture Walk:** While this can be used as a storytelling method in itself, it can also be used to talk about the details that fill the story.
- **Crosswords / Word Searches:** Turn things from your story into a game and it’s a guarantee that your students will go to any lengths to find the answer. There are multiple online tools such as Crossword Maker and Word Search that you could use.
- **Explore and Research:** If your students are hooked onto the story or the theme, then they will always want to know more, even if the class is over. Give them the chance to explore the topic on their own, find out interesting facts and present it in the next class.
- **Listening Activities:** Ask your students to listen to an audio recording related to your story and answer questions based on it. If your story is about Indian Independence, you can play Jawaharlal Nehru’s famous speech, for example.

Communication

Expression / communication is the neurological opposite of comprehension. In this, your children have to use language to form meaningful interactions. Try these speaking and writing activities for students to practice their communication.

- **Debates:** Take key decision points from your story and use them in classroom debates. This works really well with classes 6+.
- **Vocabulary Activities:** You probably have vocabulary exercises in your regular English class, but do consider using the context of the story to do more. Make it fun! Games like Word on the Street or Contact could get your students thinking about different words.
- **Writing Prompts:** Use ideas from the story to give writing exercises. If your story is about friendship, for example, ask your students to write a few sentences about their own friends – “Write the name of your best friend and write 3 things you both enjoy doing together.”
- **Speaking Prompts:** Ask your children to recall the story in their own words. Let them come up with their own stories using the same characters.
- **Book Reviews:** Let your children review the books they read. Give them a time limit and a structure they can follow to express their opinions about the book.

Creativity

No activity is one-dimensional in the sense that it's only about L or S or ... It's always a combination.

The human brain does all of LSRW and coding/decoding at the same time. To this mix of 6 broad directions, the BLPS method adds creativity. It's this direction that binds interest.

We believe that all activities must have some degree of creativity in them. In addition, we recommend activities that allow children to express themselves in ways other than R and W.

For example:

- **Origami:** There are thousands of tutorials and articles online. It's easy to pick one that suits your story and your students' skill level.
- **Colouring:** Pick out images from the story and create colouring sheets. You can include comprehension activities by asking them to colour in response to a question.
- **Theatre:** Role-play is a great way to get into the minds of the characters and move beyond the story. Ask your students to enact a scene from the story. You can also pick a couple of students to act as the characters while the rest of the class asks them questions.
- **Drawing:** Make comprehension activities even more fun by asking students to draw the answer! Get your kids to draw their own monsters, fantasy lands, mythical creatures, comic strips... This list is truly endless.

Conclusion

Try out a few of the activities and see which ones your children like the best! You can look online if you want activities for a particular book. Most big publishing houses like Penguin and HarperCollins have a set of activities for their books. The official Roald Dahl website also has a huge number of lesson plans and activities. Picking one or two activities is easy, but picking 200 of them, one for each day of the class is hard.

One has to balance the various learning objectives. One has to avoid being repetitive. And most importantly, one has to be consistently interesting. Otherwise, the children will get bored. This is where the BLPS Activity Book comes in, preset with activities for each theme.

Want to see what our activity books look like?
Email us at contact@multistory.in and we'll send you a sample book.



Summary

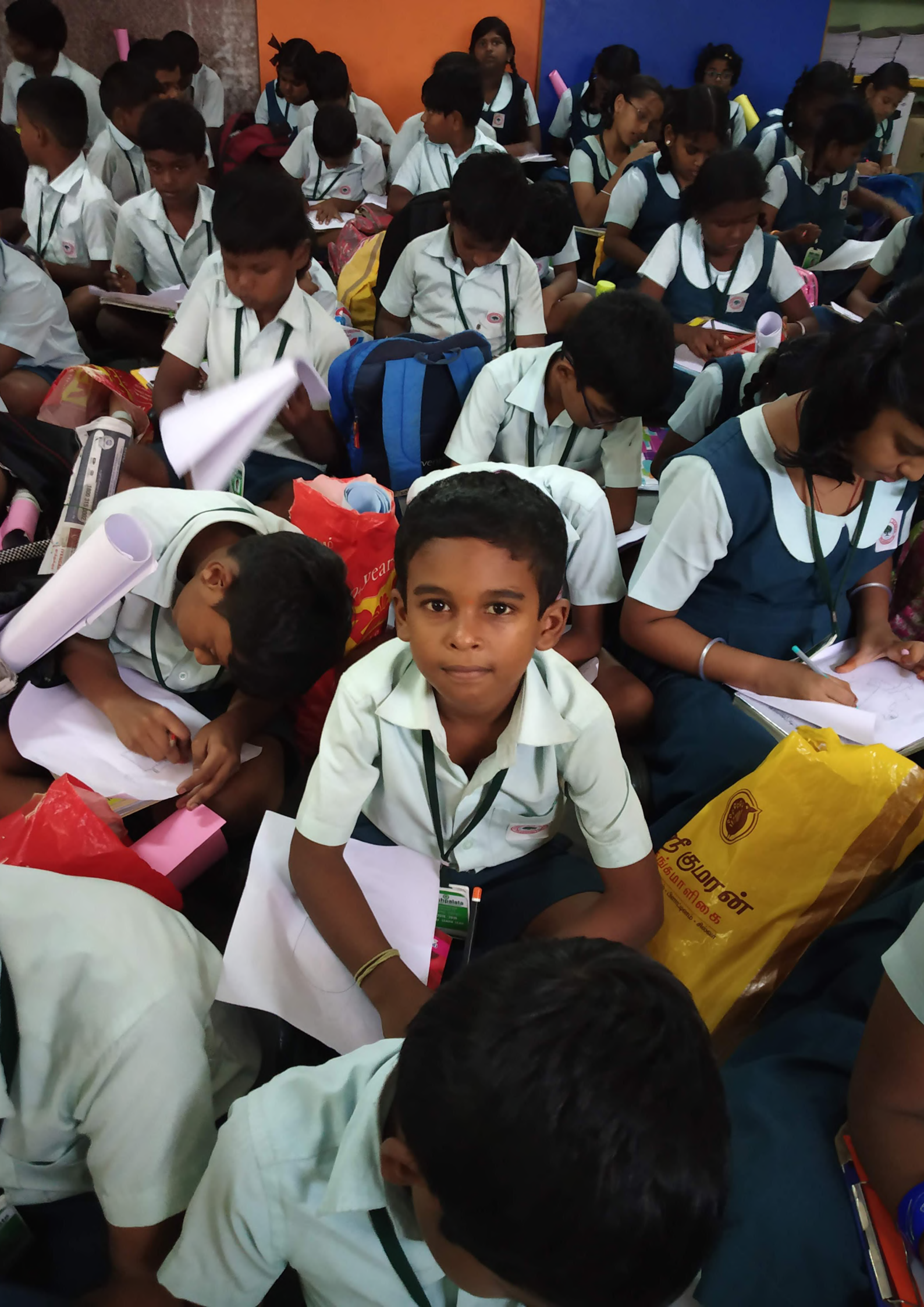
It is a joy to be with children who are well-read. My daughter is one such child. She started reading books early. Now in class 1, she can comfortably read a 100-pg chapter book on her own. She is very comfortable with fiction - all genres, including mythology. She's just started reading *The Mahabharata*. On the other hand, she has 2 giant books on simple machines and the human body and is constantly trying to understand the world around her from those. She has read that *The Mahabharata* was a war between brothers. She can recognize that the see-saw is a first class lever, and she remembers that stomach acids need to be fed regularly otherwise they will cause her to vomit. When she's gifted a new board game, she learns the rules by herself from reading the manual.

Isn't that the point of reading? To enable our children to navigate the world around them on their own?

We wish you luck in creating your own reading programme. We hope that your children, your class, your school benefit from it. And if you have any trouble, contact us. We can help as consultants. You could benefit from our workshops. Or book lists. We could source books for you. Or, you could just use the Book Lovers' Program for Schools.

Contact us: contact@multistory.in | amrut@multistory.in | 8122074425 (Prateek)

Do you have thoughts or comments you would like to share? Visit our additional resources section - multistory.in/ebook - to join the discussion with your fellow educators.



P. S. : For Grammar Lovers

If you love grammar like we do, then you would have noticed two little oddities in the BLPS brand name.

Both of them provide some insight into the way we think about the English language, and we are happy to share these little nuggets with you.

Why is it Book Lovers' Program for Schools and not Book Lovers' Programme for Schools?

The word program is accepted in American English for all cases and in British English for some cases, especially in the case of computer programs. With the growth of computers and the influence of IT-speak on British English, it's our view that program will eventually be acceptable for all uses.

English is a descriptive language and not a prescriptive language, and we think that it's only a matter of time before the OED accepts program for all uses. Till then, the way we address this issue is by using Program in the brand name and programme in sentences. So, "The Book Lovers' Program for Schools is a reading programme," is how we write it. It's our way of saying, we are eager to accept the future, and we respect the past.

Is it Book Lovers' Program or Book Lover's Program?

The position of the apostrophe here makes a lot of difference. The symbol is used here to imply possession. The programme belongs to someone. To who? Book Lover's Program would mean that the programme is meant for a single book lover.

But Book Lovers' Program implies that it's meant for book lovers. Since BLPS relies on peer-effect, and is designed for group use / classroom use, it's clear that the programme is for book lovers. So, both book lovers and schools are in their plural form.

What did you think of this ebook? Visit our additional resources section - multistory.in/ebook - to join the discussion with your fellow educators. Interested in BLPS? Email us : amrut@multistory.in

