Unit overview

This three-week unit of work looks at *Bee & Me* – a wordless picture book that was inspired by the author’s encounter with a bee as she worked in her studio one day. *Bee & Me* tells the story of a little girl's friendship with a bee. An exhausted bee flies through an open window into a room where a little girl is reading a book about flowers. At first, the little girl is frightened and doesn’t know what to do, but she feeds the bee sugary water and as she helps the bee, a friendship develops. Together they fly out into the countryside where they collect seeds, scattering them over the city as they return. When autumn comes the bee leaves, but when she returns in the summer, the city has been transformed. This is a story about friendship, but also about the importance of bees for our environment and what we can do to help halt their decline. Alison Jay's book is beautifully illustrated, and it is strongly recommended that children have access to a book of their own when working in a small group. All resources, session planning and teaching slides are included within this unit.

Themes and cross-curricular links

- **British Values**: Activities that involve turn taking, sharing and collaboration through participation in games, drama work, music making and simple investigations.
- **PSED**: Opportunities for children to talk in a range of groupings and situations, and talk confidently about their thoughts and ideas. Provision of open-ended activities for the children to explore a range of materials and to independently make decisions about their use.
- **Physical Development**: Dance activities to promote control and coordination skills.
- **Mathematics**: Explore and investigate 2D shapes and patterns in the natural environment. Counting, estimation and simple addition and subtraction activities. Cooking activities to support measurement skills.
- **Understanding the World**: Nature surveys and observations linked to bees, insects and flowers. Simple introduction to environmental issues and the decline in the bee population and the implications for our planet. Use of non-fiction books to find information linked to bees and the decline in the bee population.
- **Expressive Arts and Design**: Opportunities to play co-operatively in small world play activities using new vocabulary from the unit. Role play to support exploration of events, characters and feelings. Use a variety of different media to create pictures and models related to the themes of the text. Choreograph a simple bee dance, and listen to and create music using a variety of percussion instruments.

Curriculum coverage

**Communication and language:**
- **Listening and attention:**
  - listen attentively
  - accurately anticipate key events and respond to what they hear with relevant comments, questions or actions
  - give their attention to what others say and respond appropriately
  - express views about events or characters in the story and answer questions about why things happened (exceeding Early Learning Goal)
- **Understanding:**
  - answer ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions about their experiences and in response to the story, events and discussions with others
  - follow instructions involving several ideas or actions
- **Speaking:**
  - express themselves effectively, showing awareness of listeners' needs
  - use past, present and future forms accurately when talking about events.
  - develop their own narratives and explanations by connecting ideas or events
  - recount experiences and imagine possibilities, often using a range of vocabulary in imaginative ways to add information, express ideas or to explain or justify actions or events (exceeding ELG)

**Reading:**
- read and understand simple sentences using phonic knowledge to decode regular words and some common irregular words
- read aloud simple sentences
- demonstrate understanding when talking with others about what they have read
- read phonically regular words of more than one syllable as well as many irregular but high frequency words, use phonic, semantic and syntactic knowledge to understand unfamiliar vocabulary and describe the main events in the simple stories they have read (exceeding ELG)

**Writing:**
- use their phonic knowledge to write words in ways which match their spoken sounds
- write irregular common words
- write simple sentences which can be read by themselves and others – some words are spelled correctly, and others are phonetically plausible
- spell phonically regular words of more than one syllable as well as many irregular but high frequency words. Use key features of narrative in their own writing (spaces between words, beginning to punctuate sentences and use a capital letter), and begin to join words and clauses using ‘and’ (exceeding ELG)

**Physical Development:**
- use a pencil and hold it effectively to form recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed

Key questions

- Can you spot the difference?
- What clues are there in the picture?
- How do you know?
- What has happened?
- What has changed?
- What is the author trying to tell us?
- What is the message of the story?
- Where does the story take place?
- How does the author show that time has passed?

Writing outcomes

- Non-narrative facts about bees
- Predictions
- Story captions
- A recount of an imaginary journey
- Questions
- A story sequel
- A poster
- Sentence editing

Essential teaching guidance

- **Bee & Me** is a wordless picture book, but there is detail and depth in the illustrations. Children will need time to return to the text over several occasions so that the layers of meaning that are encapsulated in the illustrations can be unpacked and understood.
- Spoken language lays the foundation for all aspects of the work covered in the unit. Quality time needs to be spent explaining, exploring, discussing and using new vocabulary.
- Explicit modelling is a key component of effective teaching. Skilful practitioners will support modelling using talk or ‘think-alouds’ to help children become aware of the often-implicit processes and decisions encountered in all areas of learning.
- All resources, session planning and teaching slides are included within this unit. Some activities may appropriate for whole class sessions, but it is for the class teacher to decide if activities are best used in adult led sessions with smaller groups of children.
- Activities in this unit of work should also be offered as independent reading and writing opportunities within the continuous provision. This enables children to practise their reading and writing skills independently and to explore the book further through role play and within the creative area.

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**Recommended Year Group:** Reception

**Recommended Edition:** 9781910646199

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Week 1

Objectives and outcomes summary:
This week the children will:
• talk to share ideas, information and opinions
• begin to use vocabulary inspired by the text
• make predictions
• sequence and retell part of a story
• understand characters’ viewpoints
• compare illustrations and talk about how they are the same and different

Resources provided:
• Pupil resource – Bee facts
• Pupil resource – Spot the difference
• Pupil resource – Making a prediction
• Pupil resource – Tell the story
• Pupil resource – Sentence strips
• Teaching slides to aid discussion

Links to continuous provision:
• Provide a selection of bee themed information books to share, read and talk about in the reading area, and audiobooks of simple texts that the children can listen to and follow independently.
• Use the bee theme to teach about patterns – use the text to highlight how the author has illustrated this, share other examples of patterns in nature and challenge the children to use interlocking cubes to create different patterns.
• On a tuff tray, provide a honeycomb, magnifying glasses, clip boards, paper and pencils for the children to examine and make sketches of the honeycomb.
• Investigating tessellating shapes – fit as many shapes as possible onto an A3 piece of paper. How many shapes fit into the space? How can you fit more? Record answers.
• Set up a beekeeper role play. Provide large cardboard boxes to represent the hives, beekeeper’s hats, nets, plastic bees, a selection of tools such as trowels, watering cans, flowerpots, gloves, boots, etc. Include information books in the area so that the children are encouraged to refer to these in context.
• Provide a set of laminated pictures of objects or creatures in the environment that have spots or stripes and a selection of sorting rings. Ask the children to sort into sets.
• Make wax resist pictures using beeswax crayons and water coloured paints.
• Provide yellow/honey-scented playdough and lilac/lavender-scented playdough to make flowers and to promote pinching, squeezing, stretching, pulling, kneading and twisting with malleable materials.
• Play bee snap or pairs to encourage observation and memory skills. Prepare a set of laminated cards with two copies of different species of bees.
• Use a bee decorated floor robot and either a floor type alphabet mat or number tiles to make the robot move to a specified letter or numeral.
• Provide heart templates for the children to record a simple sentence about what the bee or girl might be feeling at different points in the story.
• Provide materials for the children to draw and write about a time they have felt happy, excited, upset or anxious.

Week 2

Objectives and outcomes summary:
This week the children will:
• explore the relationship of the main characters through collaborative role play
• use drama to explore story setting
• describe a journey
• write a recount of an imaginary journey
• begin to use adverbials of time to retell part of a story

Resources provided:
• Pupil resource – Write a caption
• Pupil resource – Using emojis
• Pupil resource – Bee journey
• Pupil resource – Sequence the pictures
• Teaching slides to aid discussion

Links to continuous provision:
• Provide a selection of other wordless picture books to share, read and talk about in the reading area.
• Challenge the children to spot the different characters in the book. Provide a recording sheet with space for a picture of a character and a space to record the page number.
• Provide speech and thought bubbles for the children to record what they think the additional characters we glimpse through the windows in Bee & Me might be saying or thinking.
• Provide postcard templates in the writing area so that the children can write a message from the characters during the time the bee was absent.
• Provide a picture of a bee for the children to label. Encourage the children to refer to information books for support. Keep vocabulary age appropriate, e.g. wing, leg, stinger, head, body and antenna.
• Provide play binoculars, clipboards and sketching materials. What sights and landmarks do you think the bee would see if it travelled in your local area or environment?
• Display examples of famous paintings that depict flowers, e.g. Flower Garden by Gustav Klimt, Water Lilies by Claude Monet, Amaryllis by Piet Mondrian, Sunflowers by Vincent Van Gogh. Ask the children to draw and paint their own flower pictures.
• Add black and yellow shredded paper to a tuff spot. Hide a selection of bee-related words. Extract the words with large tweezers or tongs. Can the children find all the words that rhyme with the word ‘bee’?
• Estimation activities – using honeycombed-shaped cereal, ask the children to guess how many honeycombs there are in a jar. Record estimations and then count/compare to estimates.
• Order different numbered bees.
• Provide simple booklets with blank picture frames for the children to create their own wordless picture books.
• Play ‘Roll a Bee’. Each child takes it in turns to roll the dice and to try and build a bee depending on the number they roll, e.g. 6 to start/draw the body, 5 for the head, 4 for the six legs, 3 for the two wings, 2 for the two eyes, 1 for the two antennae. The first to complete a bee shouts ‘Buzz’ and wins the game.
Week 3

Objectives and outcomes summary:
This week the children will:
• know that good readers ask questions as they read
• begin to know how to write and punctuate a question
• explore story meanings and characters through illustrations
• recognise that illustrations can add many layers of meaning to understanding
• use language to create new roles and experiences
• make connections with the text and their own experiences
• reimagine and plan a new story based on the bird and the boy
• write a sequel to the story of Bee & Me
• talk about the key messages of the story
• design a new ‘Bee Aware’ poster

Resources provided:
• Pupil resource – Write a question
• Pupil resource – Poster template
• Teaching slides to aid discussion

Links to continuous provision:
• Set up a garden centre or flower shop role play area.
• Can the children cut out and put the different stages of a honeybee life cycle in the correct order? Encourage the children to refer to information books to check their answers.
• Give the children an outline of a window. Ask the children to imagine and draw a new character and show what they are doing.
• Provide shallow sand or glitter trays for the children to practise writing a question mark using a paintbrush. Ensure the children are given a question mark card to use as support.
• Place question sticks in a sand tray about bees, e.g. What do bees make? What is honey like? How many legs does a bee have? Have you ever been stung by a bee? Where have you seen a bee? What colour are bees? What is a hive? How can we help bees? Encourage the children to refer to simple information books about bees if they are unsure of any facts.
• Make a set of numbered hexagonal shapes to create ordering, counting and other number activities.
• Investigate which other insects live in the school environment. Provide a thematic box with bug hunting equipment for the children to use. Fill a box with items such as a net for catching insects, clear plastic containers, tweezers, magnifying glasses, plastic insects, a microscope, binoculars, insect identification chart, etc.
• Provide a gardening area for the children to explore planting and creating a bee friendly area.
• Provide honeybee word searches based on the vocabulary used in the unit of work.
• Carry out a plant survey in the school grounds.
• Make a set of insect picture cards. Can the children sort according to different criteria, e.g. insects that fly, crawl, sting, are of the same colour etc.? Ask the children to invent a ‘waggle dance’ and perform it for others.
• Provide sets of story seed templates for the children to make up further stories.

Related books for wider reading

Other wordless picture books:
• While You are Sleeping by Mariana Ruiz Johnson
• Umbrella by Ingrid & Dieter Schubert
• Owl Bat Bat Owl by Marie-Louise Fitzpatrick
• Museum Trip by Barbara Lehman
• Foxy’s Feast by Owen Davey
• The Chicken Thief by Béatrice Rodriguez
• Where’s the Elephant? by Barroux

Other picture books where the story is predominantly told through pictures:
• Yes by Jez Alborough
• Hug by Jez Alborough
• Play by Jez Alborough
• Where’s Bear? by Emily Gravett
• Rosie’s Walk by Pat Hutchins
• Mr Wuffles! by David Wiesner

Information books about bees:
• Honey Bees by Jill Esbaum
• Buzz Bees by Sally Morgan
• Buzzing Bees by Melissa Higgins
• Bees by Rebecca Rissman
• Thank You, Bees by Toni Yuly

Other picture books:
• Where’s the Starfish? by Barroux
• Monster Book by Alice Hoogstad
• Flashlight by Lizi Boyd
• Inside Outside by Lizi Boyd
• Red Sled by Lita Judge
• Good Night Gorilla by Peggy Rathmann
• The Snowman by Raymond Briggs
• A Ball for Daisy by Chris Raschka
• Tuesday by David Wiesner

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