Fill-in-the-Blank Stories

PHONICS

50 Cloze-Format Practice Pages
That Target and Teach Key Phonics Skills

by Linda B. Ross
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Introduction

This book features 50 engaging cloze-format stories that provide the repeated practice children need to master essential phonics skills, including sound-spelling relationships and structural analysis. For each story, children use a word bank along with text and picture clues to fill in missing words. Each story offers opportunities for reading decodable words in context, letting young readers apply their growing knowledge of sound-spelling relationships and word parts to new words, while improving fluency and comprehension. A word search provides further practice in reading and spelling all target words.

What the Research Says

Phonics knowledge has a positive effect on a reader’s ability to decode words and is a reliable predictor of later skill in reading comprehension. “Skilled readers recognize the majority of words they encounter in text quickly and accurately, independently of context.” (Cunningham, 1975–76; Stanovich, 1984; as cited in Phonics From A to Z by Wiley Blevins; Scholastic, 2006)

What’s Inside?

From a bird named Twinkle to a frog and a dog that are friends, the characters in these charming stories will bring children back again and again to build essential reading skills. Each student page follows a format that children will quickly learn to recognize, allowing them to focus their energies on using the words rather than figuring out what to do. Here’s a look at the components for each page.

Phonics Skill: The heading at the top of each story page identifies the target phonics skill.

Fill-In Story: A cloze format invites children to fill in words to complete each story. Stories are carefully structured to meet the needs of early readers.

Word Bank: This list provides students with all the word choices they need to complete the story.

Illustration: An illustration accompanies each story, and supports early readers in understanding the text.

Word Search: This puzzle invites children to locate the target story words, reinforcing word recognition skills and building vocabulary.
Teaching With the Stories

Each story page focuses on one of the following areas: consonants and vowels (short and long), r-controlled vowels, variant vowels and diphthongs, consonant blends and digraphs, plurals, inflected endings, and contractions. You can use the stories in any order that best supports your goals for whole-class, small-group, and individual instruction. Model for children how to complete a page before having them do so on their own.

1. Display a story page so all children can see it (for example, by using an overhead).

2. Read the directions aloud, and then direct children’s attention to the Word Bank. Point to each word in order as you read it. Think aloud about how words are similar—for example, pointing out those with the same vowel sound.

3. Direct children’s attention to the title of the story. Read aloud the title, again noticing words that are similar in some way. You might take a moment to notice the illustration, and think aloud about what the story might be about.

4. As you read the story, model concepts of print, including where to begin, going from left to right, and the return sweep to the next line. Pause at each blank to think aloud about which word belongs in the blank. (It may be helpful for children to read on past a blank to finish a sentence, as the end of the sentence might provide clues to the missing word.) This is a good opportunity to teach strategies for figuring out the correct word choice, including through context. For example, in “Little Cub” (page 24), the last sentence reads “Get into the ______ and take a bath!” Point out that children can read past the blank to the word bath, and ask themselves, “Where do people take a bath? What word makes sense here?” This can help them recognize that tub is the word that best completes the sentence. Write in the word, and continue. (As another strategy, you might show children how to lightly draw a line through each word in the Word Bank as they use it.)

5. When you have filled in all of the blanks, read the story, modeling characteristics of fluency, such as using appropriate expression and pausing at punctuation.

6. Complete the Word Search, showing children how to look across, down, and diagonally—but not backward—for the words in the Word Bank. Place a check next to each word as you find it. Once you find all of the words, read them aloud.

After modeling how to use a story page, you might invite students to take turns at the overhead, modeling for you how to complete the same page (use a fresh copy). This will encourage independence as they complete story pages on their own.
Connections to the Language Arts Standards

The story pages and extension activities in this book are designed to support you in meeting the following standards as outlined by Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL), an organization that collects and synthesizes national and state curriculum standards—and proposes what teachers should provide for their students to become proficient in language arts, among other curriculum areas.

Reading
- Understands how print is organized and read
- Uses mental images based on pictures and print to aid in comprehension of text
- Uses meaning clues to aid comprehension and make predictions
- Uses phonetic and structural analysis to decode unknown words
- Understands level-appropriate sight words and vocabulary
- Knows main ideas or theme, setting, main characters, main events, sequence, and problems in stories
- Summarizes information found in texts (retells in own words)
- Makes simple inferences regarding the order of events and possible outcomes
- Relates stories to personal experiences


Classroom Management Tips

Whether you photocopy each story page at the time of use, or prepare class sets of the stories in advance, a simple storage system will make it easy to build a collection that you can keep on hand for later use or repeated practice.

- Place each set of stories in a file folder. Tape or glue a sample page to the front for reference, or label the tab with the target phonics skill and title.
- To encourage self-checking, create an answer key, filling in the words to each story and circling the words in the Word Search. Attach to the back of the envelope or file folder. Or, place answer keys in a binder. (For a complete set of answers, see pages 10–14.)

Teaching Tip

The activity pages in this book also support components of the Reading First program (U.S. Department of Education): phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, reading fluency, and reading comprehension strategies.
Activities to Use With Any Story

The activities here are designed to extend what students learn with the story pages. Use them to provide additional practice with phonics skills, to improve fluency and comprehension, and as springboards for students’ own writing.

Word Wall Builders

Extend learning by creating word walls or charts based on target words from the stories.

1. Copy target words from a story on chart paper or a whiteboard.

2. Read the words with children and invite them to suggest other words that could go on the chart. Guide them to recognize the particular skill area and to match that in their suggestions. For example, for a word wall based on “A Bug on a Rug” (page 23) children can add new CVC words with the short u sound—for example, fun, hug, run, bus, cup, and mud.

3. Copy the words on large index cards or sheets of paper. Create pictures to go with as many words as possible (enlarge the illustration from the story page to illustrate words from the story, using an arrow to point out the corresponding area of the art). Display pictures and words as a word wall. Use removable adhesive to create a portable word wall that children can take to their desk and then return to the wall when finished.

4. Play word wall games to reinforce word recognition and spelling. For example, using a word wall based on “A Bug on a Rug,” direct students’ attention to the word rug. Then say, “I’m thinking of a word that rhymes with rug. What is it?” (bug) or “I see two words that begin with h. What are they?” (hum, hug)

Pocket Chart Practice

The short stories in this book lend themselves well to pocket chart activities. Suggestions for creating these activities follow.

Who Has the Word? Write each line of a story on a sentence strip, leaving spaces for the target words. Cut sentence strips to fit the spaces and write a target word on each. Distribute the word cards to different children. In the pocket chart, place sentence strips in order. Read aloud the story. When you come to a missing word ask, “Who has the word that goes here?” Have that child place the word in the correct space. Continue in this way to complete the story, and then read it aloud together.
**Scrambled Stories:** Write each sentence of a story on a sentence strip, filling in any missing words. Mix up the strips and place them in a pocket chart. Invite children to help you sequence the sentences to unscramble the story. Number the backs of the sentence strips so children can work independently or in pairs to place the sentences in order, and then check their work. As a variation, cut apart sentences into individual words. Challenge children to arrange the words in order.

**Story Hunt**

Use any story for an interactive experience that encourages children to take a closer look at the text.

1. Copy a story on chart paper, leaving spaces for the missing words. Copy the Word Bank to the side.
2. Have children help you fill in the missing words, and read the story together.
3. Then invite children to take turns hunting for something in the story, using a highlighter to mark it when they find it. Children can locate rhyming words, hunt for commas, or highlight words that name people, places, and things, as well as action words. The possibilities are endless. For example, in “Things I Like” (page 30), you might ask children to find the following:
   - a word with a double o (good)
   - a sentence that ends with “!” (and then discuss what this punctuation mark tells readers)
   - a word that rhymes with game (name)
   - a word that names something to eat (pizza)
   - a word that ends with th (with)

**Encouraging Comprehension**

The stories in this book are short but provide many opportunities to practice comprehension strategies. After children complete a story, revisit it together. Ask questions to help children explore their understanding of the story. For example, after reading “My Pet Mule” (page 35), ask:

- Who is this story about? *(a pet mule)*
- What is the mule’s name? *(Luke)*
- What can this mule do? *(hum a tune, play the flute, use a computer)*
- Do you think this mule is real or make-believe? How do you know? *(make-believe; mules can’t do those things)*
**Fluency Practice**

The brevity of the stories makes them just right for fluency practice.

1. Copy a story on chart paper. Have children help you fill in the missing words.

2. Read the story aloud, modeling good reading behaviors for pacing, expression, punctuation, and inflection. For example, use stories with more than one character (and dialogue) to model how to use a different voice for each character. Model how question marks and exclamation points give you clues about expression.

3. Read the story together, using an echo-reading approach. You read one line and children repeat it, echoing your pacing, phrasing, and intonation.

4. Read the story as a group, again encouraging children to follow along with pacing, phrasing, and intonation.

**Story Switcheroo**

Have some fun with the stories, using the characters, settings, and events to create new stories.

1. Write characters' names on slips of paper. Place them in a bag and label it “Characters.” Do the same with story settings (such as “a bear’s cave”), events (such as “camping”), and problems (such as “being homesick”).

2. Let children take turns choosing a slip from each bag. Use the elements to tell a new story. Write it on chart paper and let children illustrate to create a new set of stories to read.
### Answer Key

#### Page 15
**Sad Bab!**

**Answers:**
Bab, sad, ran, rag, nap, Dad, wag

#### Page 16
**Nan’s Shopping Bag**

**Answers:**
Nan, had, bag, jam, ham, pan, can

#### Page 17
**Pep Goes to the Vet**

**Answers:**
pet, Pep, ten, leg, vet, get

#### Page 18
**Jen Helps Grandpa**

**Answers:**
hen, fed, Jen, let, Yes, yet, wet

#### Page 19
**Does It Fit?**

**Answers:**
Min, zip, fit, big, fix, did

#### Page 20
**Hit the Ball!**

**Answers:**
Tim, hit, win, him, kid, did

#### Page 21
**Dot the Frog**

**Answers:**
Dot, not, log, sob, dog, lot

#### Page 22
**Corn on the Cob**

**Answers:**
Bob, pot, top, hot, got, cob

#### Page 23
**A Bug on a Rug**

**Answers:**
bug, Bud, rug, but, sun, hum

#### Page 24
**Little Cub**

**Answers:**
cub, fun, hug, mud, dug, tub
Look at the Word Bank. Use the words to fill in the blanks. Then read the story!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word Bank</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>rag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bab</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nap</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sad Bab!**

_______________ was a ________________ pup.

She was home alone.

First, she ________________ around the house.

Next, she played with a ________________ doll.

Then Bab took a ________________.

Soon Mom and ________________ came home.

Look at Bab ________________ her tail!

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**Word Search**

Look at the Word Bank. Circle the words here. Then read them!

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>k</th>
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</tbody>
</table>
Nan’s Shopping Bag

__________ went shopping.

She __________ a big shopping ______________.

Nan bought a jar of ________________.

She bought a ________________ for dinner.

Then she bought a pot and a ________________.

“Now my bag is full,” said Nan.

“I ________________ go home!”

Word Bank

- can
- Nan
- pan
- jam
- ham
- bag
- had

Word Search

Look at the Word Bank.
Circle the words here.
Then read them!
Pep Goes to the Vet

I have a ___________ cat.

His name is ___________.

He is more than ___________ years old!

One day, Pep hurt his ___________.

So Mom and I took him to the ___________.

“Will Pep ___________ better?” I asked.

“He will be just fine!” said the vet.