



Oliver JEFFERS • SAM WINSTON

TEACHER NOTES

Teacher Notes by Romi Sharp

WALKER BOOKS



THE DICTIONARY STORY

CREATORS: OLIVER JEFFERS & SAM WINSTON

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About the Book

The much-anticipated new picture book from Oliver Jeffers and Sam Winston, the bestselling and award-winning creators of *A Child of Books*.

Dictionary wishes she could tell a story just like the other books. So one day she decides to bring her words to life. How exciting it is, she thinks, that an adventure is finally happening on her very own pages! But what will she do when everything gets out of control, all in a jumble, and her characters collide causing the most enormous tantrum to explode. This isn't what she wanted at all! How on earth will she find sense in all this chaos? Her friend Alphabet knows exactly what to do and sings a song that brings calm and order to Dictionary's pages once again.

About the Creators

Oliver Jeffers is an artist whose work ranges from figurative painting and installation to illustration. His picture books include *Lost and Found*, *How to Catch a Star*, *This Moose Belongs to Me* and *The Day the Crayons Quit*, all of which have been translated into over 30 languages worldwide. Oliver's talent has been recognized by several high-profile awards, including the Irish Book of the Year and the Blue Peter Book of the Year; as well as shortlists for the British Book of the Year, the Roald Dahl Prize and the Kate Greenaway Medal. He was winner of *Time Magazine's* Best Book of the Year for *Here We Are: Notes for Living on Planet Earth*, and awarded an MBE in 2022 for services to the arts. Find him online at oliverjeffers.com and on Twitter and Instagram as @OliverJeffers.

Sam Winston is a fine artist who exhibits internationally and whose books can be found in many special collections worldwide, including New York's Museum of Modern Art, the Getty Research Institute, the Tate Gallery London, and the V&A Museum. His work is also collected by the Library of Congress and commissioned by *The New York Times*. He is also the author and illustrator of *One & Everything*. Find him online at samwinston.com and on Instagram as @samwinston.

About the Teacher Notes Author

Romi Sharp is a qualified Early Childhood and Primary School educator based in Melbourne, with a passion for art and children's literature. She currently works as a freelance publicist and digital marketer, copywriter, curriculum writer, video animator, book reviewer and picture book writer. Romi is the founder and director of the Australian support community for children's authors and illustrators, Just Write For Kids (est. 2014) and its subsidiary promotional service, Books On Tour PR & Marketing.

Curriculum Links

English (Language; Literature and Literacy) • Mathematics (Measurement; Space) • Science/STEM (Chemical Science; Physical Science) • The Arts (Drama; Visual Arts)

Themes

Animals • Imagination • Friendship • Adventure • Alphabet • Phonetic Knowledge



Teacher Notes

BEFORE READING

Tuning in: Take students on a ‘Library Hunt’ in their classroom or library. Ask them to find texts based on different categories or genres, including: Picture Books, Chapter Books, Fairy Tales, Magazines, Dictionaries, Encyclopaedias, Non-Fiction Texts, Decodable Readers, Audiobooks, Newspapers, Comics, Cookbooks, Travel Guides, and so on.

Name some similarities and differences between a few of the above texts. Ask students if any two (or three) categories could be combined into one? For example, have they seen a non-fiction narrative picture book? Have they seen a picture book in novel form (graphic novels)? Have they seen a narrative in a dictionary?

Look at the cover of *The Dictionary Story*. What genre/s or categories do they think this might include? What is the purpose of a dictionary? What is the purpose of a story?

- Read the title and ask if this is possible. Can the dictionary tell a story?
- What do you see on the cover? What do you think this book might be about? What does it make you wonder? How does the cover make you feel?
- Do you think this book will be helpful? How?

DURING READING

Upon opening, what can you tell about the pictures/illustrations in this book? How does the opening line remind us about what we know about stories? Why might this one be different?

- Can books decide how they want to be read? Can books change their purpose? What do you think about Dictionary ‘bringing her words to life’?
- What is happening to Dictionary’s words when the characters come to life?
- Use the illustrations to infer what is happening.
- What might happen next?
- Who do you think is creating the story – the Dictionary or the characters?
- What might happen if all the letters and words get mixed up in the dictionary?
- How will calm be restored?
- What did you think of the ending?

AFTER READING

What is the story about? What is the main idea? How did it make you feel? Do you have a part that you relate to or enjoyed the most?

What are the main themes or messages in the story?

Dictionary has been ‘anthropomorphised’ in this story. What does that mean? What did you learn about Dictionary? How is Dictionary like a human? What are some of her character traits, thoughts and feelings? What are the important aspects about what she believes to be good and correct? Create a character profile of Dictionary.

What did you learn about the other characters in the story? Make a list of the characters and their attributes. Were they well-intentioned, mischievous or unaware? Do you think they agreed with Dictionary’s decisions?

Make a list of all the feelings and emotions identified in the story. (See The Arts: Drama below for a list). Match the feeling to the correct character.

Did Dictionary’s purpose change from the beginning to the end of the story? What was different and what stayed the same?

What are the relationships like between different characters in the book? Alligator and Donut? Cloud and Moon? Ghost and Puddle? Tornado and all the characters? Are they positive or negative? How do you know?

How can you describe the language used by the author? What is the intention of the story? Can you find both fictional and informative information in the text? How does the author use humour to make the story engaging?

What do you like about the illustrations? What kinds of media has been used? What do you notice about the styling/design, colours, textures, perspectives, placement of text, and facial expressions and body language of characters that the illustrator has used to express the different emotions, actions and focal points of the story?

Does this story follow a typical story arc? Briefly plot the introduction (setting), problem, events (in order), resolution and conclusion.

Create a Venn Diagram showing the similarities and differences between a Dictionary and a Story Book.

What is your favourite word in the dictionary? Write its definition and use it in a sentence.

ACTIVITIES

English

Vocabulary: Alphabet Knowledge

Students can familiarise themselves with the alphabet with the following ideas:

- Sing the Alphabet Song.
- Write the alphabet in order (both upper and lower case).
- Make the alphabet with materials, like letter magnets or tiles, magazine letters, playdough letters, etc.
- Focus on a letter a day. Say the sound/s, letter name, words that begin with the letter, pictures that represent the words, alliterations, etc.
- Write the list of words for the focus letter in alphabetical order.
- Play alphabet matching games.

Vocabulary: Spelling 'tion' as in Dictionary

Make a list, say and practise spelling words with the pattern 'tion', in varying techniques and formats. Some examples might include: dictionary, definition, explanation, description, mention, completion, characterisation, animation, qualification, question, illustration, imagination, invitation, etc. How many can you find in the text?

Students can:

- Say the words out loud.
- Clap the syllables in each word.
- Write the words broken up by syllables.
Eg. D/ic/tion/a/ry
- Write the spelling words in alphabetical order.
- Write the spelling words with different media (pencils, crayons, letter stamps, ink, typed, magazine cut-outs, etc).
- Search for the spelling words in your dictionary and write their definitions.

Vocabulary: Nouns, Verbs, Adjectives

Locate in the book the nouns, verbs and adjectives relating to the actions and feelings occurring in *The Dictionary's Story*. Sort and make lists of the following, and other terms from the book.

Nouns: Dictionary, book, pages, alligator, donut/doughnut, ghost, moon, fright, cloud, Queen, collision, soap, puddle, tornado, viking, umbrella, walrus, tantrum, zebra, alphabet, song, rendezvous, etc.

Verbs: wondering, appeared, rolled, surprised, floated, cry, ruling, splat, popped, sang, etc.

Adjectives: hungry, delicious, exciting, confused, awful, messy, terrible, proper, etc.

Students can:

- How many of these terms can be found in the dictionary?
- Add to these lists and create sentences including some of these terms.
- Illustrate their sentences with pictures of Dictionary's characters or they can put themselves into a scene.
- Use some of these terms to create their own Wordsearch or Crossword puzzles.

Vocabulary: Literary Devices

The Dictionary Story includes some literary devices in the text for engagement and for literary purposes (because it's a book about words!). These include alliteration, onomatopoeia, metaphors and puns, and rhyme/near rhyme.

Alliteration: '*delicious on the D pages... Donut*', '*slip on some soap*', '*top of Tornado*', '*Tornado's Terrible Tantrum*'.

Onomatopoeia: '*Oh sprinkles*', '*SPLAT*', '*BOLT*'.

Metaphors/Puns: '*Bring her words to life*', '*...with Alligator in hot pursuit*', '*Moon hid behind Cloud*', '*But Queen - who was too busy ruling...*', '*...get swept up in Tornado's Terrible Tantrum*'.

Rhyme: '*read / said*', '*confused / pursuit*' (near rhyme).

- Find and list the examples of each. Can you add your own to these?
- What do you notice about the patterns of the words or language?
- Discuss and write the meanings of various terms and phrases.
- Write a favourite metaphor or pun and illustrate your own way.

Comprehension: Story Sequencing

Discuss how the narrative of *The Dictionary Story* follows 'cause and effect' or 'butterfly effect' actions, where something sets off a chain of events into motion.

Here, Alligator sets off the donut, which rolls through the dictionary causing more and more chaos.

Complete a story sequence comic strip or paper chain showing the events that happened in the book. Use the following sentences or your own, with pictures, to complete your sequence.

- Dictionary decided she would bring her words to life.
- Alligator walked off in search of a snack.
- Donut did not want to be eaten and rolled away into the Dictionary.
- Donut tumbled through Ghost.
- Ghost gave everyone an awful fright.
- Cloud started to cry.
- Queen got in the way and this caused a collision.
- Soap landed on top of Tornado, who swept everything into its tantrum.
- Alphabet helped everyone sing the song to put them back into place.

Students could also make stick puppets of the characters to retell the main points in the story in their own words.

Creative Narrative Writing: Innovation on Text

Students can write narrative pieces, short stories, or poems about either of the following lines with their own innovative descriptions. Include interesting or funny words or phrases to add humour / emotion and literary devices and strategies.

Students write an innovative piece beginning with either, *'Dictionary decided she would bring her words to life'*, or *'When Alligator appeared, and being hungry he...'*

TIPS: Ask students to think about who their characters are, and what might be the conflict or problem to solve (ie. Why is Dictionary unhappy? How does Alligator's hunger cause problems?, etc). What consequential events or situations might be experienced? What is the tone of the story? What personal emotional or physical challenges might need to be overcome? How will they be resolved?

- Students use a storyboard to plot out the characters, setting and events.
- Set it out with a beginning, middle and end.
- Begin the narrative with a sizzling start, such as dialogue, onomatopoeia, action or scene setting.

Alternative idea: Write a short story using all of the terms found on one of the pages in *The Dictionary Story*. For example, on the D page, you will find: chaos, cloud, crayon, dancer, dawn, dictionary, disappear, disco, doctor, donut, dream, dang.

Instructional Texts: How to Use a Dictionary

Read the 'How to Use This Dictionary' page at the beginning of *The Dictionary Story*. Note how the author has used humour to write this piece. Students could write a procedural text with their own humorous method for using a dictionary. Include a title, introduction on what the piece is about, materials needed, steps in order, and a conclusion.

Mathematics

Measurement: Too Busy Ruling

Like Queen, be a 'ruler' and use both formal and informal tools to measure the lengths, widths and distances of various objects and events.

Measuring materials could include: rulers, metre rulers, measuring wheels, blocks, books, bars of soap, etc.

Things to measure could include: stacks or lines of books, the distance a donut can roll, the length of a puddle, the height of a dictionary (or list of words), the width and length of other objects, and so on. For example, how many books are the length of a puddle?

Estimate and record the findings.

Space: Prepositional Language

Replicate a large piece of paper from Dictionary by writing your list of focus letter words (eg. all your 'Dd' words) down the side. Using figurines, small objects or paper characters, in partners, students take turns to instruct the book characters in and around the scene. Students need to ensure they are using prepositional language.

Examples of terms to include: on the D pages, into the Dictionary, tumbled through Ghost, below the Moon, stand beside Cloud, Moon hid behind Cloud, in front of Queen, fly across the page, etc. Other terms might include: up, down, under, next to, inside, outside, over, before, above, among, left, right, between.

Extension: Grid Maps

Draw a smaller map of your Dictionary scene on grid paper using grid references / coordinates, a key and instructions for the characters.

Science / STEM

Tornado in a Jar Experiment

Find out more about Tornado in this hands-on weather experiment (including Soap!). Students can record their predictions, findings and learnings in a table using the headings: What I think will happen, What I observed and What I learned.

Materials needed include: a large jar, vinegar, dish soap, glitter, water, spoon, food colouring (optional).

Fill the jar $\frac{3}{4}$ full with water and add a teaspoon of vinegar. Drop a few squirts of liquid soap and mix in some glitter (and optional food colouring). Stir carefully. Place the lid on the jar and swirl. Observe what is happening.

- Ask, where does the swirl start?
- What other ways can you create a swirling tornado?
- How are real tornados formed?

Science involved: When you mix the liquid it creates a force like a vortex. The outer fluids slow down, but the inner fluid keeps moving.

Instructions for this experiment can be found at: <https://lifeovercs.com/tornado-in-a-jar-science/>.

The Arts: Visual Arts

Mixed Media Book Art

Read a bit about how the art was created for this book in the foreword. Look closely at the images and discuss the techniques applied.

Students can re-create their favourite page from *The Dictionary Story* as a mixed media piece, including a combination of photography (of books or the inside of a book) and hand-drawn (and cut out or scanned) characters. Materials could include their choice of paint, pencils, crayons, pastels, markers, fabric or coloured paper / magazine collage.

Students should include and identify their choice of background and art elements including colour, composition, perspective, shapes and textures, as well as mood (photo lighting, angle, etc).

The Arts: Drama

Students can familiarise with the story through dramatic role play and theatre through the following:

- Recreate *The Dictionary Story* through dramatization, either by improvising or retelling the story. Students might like to make and use character stick puppets (made from their Visual Arts cut outs) to act out their play.
- Identifying Feelings – The book explores many feelings, including: self-assurance, hunger, curiosity, fear, excitement, confusion, surprise, uncertainty, sadness, exasperation, displeasure, irritability / hostility / anger, shock, calm and contentment. Can students use body language and facial expressions only to act these out? For example, covering ears when it's noisy, scratching head in confusion, rubbing tummy for hunger, stomping feet in anger, smiling when calm, etc. A partner or the class can guess what they're expressing.





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