

THE POWER OF PUPPETS



Social Stories To Help Children
Develop Empathy (KS1 & KS2)

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Positive Press

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Introduction

For the past five years I have worked in many schools, supporting staff and children in developing the Quality Circle Time Model. My passion for puppets began when I attended a storytelling and puppet workshop delivered by Ros Bayley, a wonderfully talented woman. I can remember walking into the room where a group of 12 early years practitioners were sitting in a circle. I felt very self-conscious at the thought of having to 'perform' with the puppets and I was worried about looking silly. I just wanted to sit quietly, listen to Ros and go away with the handouts and try things out in the privacy of my home or in a class where no other adults were present.

Fortunately, my fears were quickly dispelled and soon enough every adult in the room had a puppet sitting on their lap. There was something so powerful and real about the puppets which enabled all of us to believe and empathise with their characters. There were even some sad goodbyes when people parted with their puppets at the end of the day.

The following day, I was speaking to a Headteacher in a school that I worked in. I told her about the workshop with such enthusiasm that when I had finished, she looked at her watch and said, 'Right, can you come into nursery with me and tell the children one of the stories? Their teacher has just phoned in sick and I'm waiting for a supply teacher to arrive'. To be honest, I felt a bit sick. I just wanted to talk about the workshop, I wasn't ready to try it! What if it didn't work and I looked stupid?

The school had a large puppet called Molly which sat in the Headteacher's office but was very rarely used. I looked at Molly and felt scared. I wasn't ready to risk it. In my bag I had a finger puppet and I decided to use that. I walked into the nursery. The children were sitting on the carpet. I took the finger puppet out and put it on my trembling finger and started to tell one of the stories that I had heard the day before. To my relief and delight, the children were keen to hear the story and the little finger puppet held their attention. They answered the questions at the end of the story and they were interested and engaged. This was all I needed to confirm my belief in the power of using puppets for telling a story and it gave me the confidence to continue. I have never looked back.

About the book

This book contains fifteen stories about two fictional characters, Sam and Gloria, who are best friends. Their stories have been developed in Circle Time sessions over the past year and reflect everyday situations to which children can relate. The stories have themes about friendships, feelings, sharing, getting on with others, low self-esteem, school routines and safety.

They are aimed at Early Years/Key Stage 1 and 2 and can be told as part of a Circle Time session or at story time. Each story stands alone; they can be read in any order or chosen to suit a particular situation and they are perfect for telling with puppets.

When young children start to listen to stories, they are taking their first steps towards becoming successful readers. It is by listening that they first become aware that they can become immersed in lives that are not their own and they quickly learn that stories are filled with all sorts of tensions that are sorted out one way or another in the end.

As they are read more and more stories, children learn to anticipate what will happen next. But they often need to learn to check for evidence and build on what they already know. When they are told stories in which the characters encounter problems, they also learn how decisions are made and then they can think about the consequences of actions and apply them to their own lives.

Sam and Gloria face problems that will be familiar to young children. Sometimes the characters make decisions that create problems and then they have to find a way of making things right. In other stories, the problems stem from the behaviour of other people and the character has to work out what to do about it. Often they need help so they have to find someone who will put things right and they have to know how to ask for the help they need.

The questions posed during and at the end of each story are designed to make these skills easier for young children to grasp. The questions can also act as a guide for class discussions about the issues that each story raises. At the end of each story, there are some key phrases which can be used as prompts if you prefer to tell the story without the script and want to focus more on the actions and movements of your puppet. Ideas for follow-on work are also included.



Sam goes to the farm

Sam was very excited. It was a lovely warm day. The sun was shining and he was going on a trip to the local city farm with his mum. This was Sam's favourite place to visit. He had been to the farm lots of times. He loved seeing all the farm animals.

Sam and his mum were going to take a picnic. He helped his mum make some peanut butter sandwiches and some cheese sandwiches and then he chose some fruit from the fruit bowl on the kitchen table.

Which fruit do you think he might have chosen?

Sam chose a banana and a big green apple. Bananas and apples were his favourite fruit.

What drinks might they have taken?

They packed a bottle of water and a carton of orange juice.

The last things they packed were two big slices of chocolate fudge cake. Sam loved chocolate fudge cake. They put all the food and drink into two rucksacks, a big one for his mum and a little one for Sam to carry, and off they went. Sam held his mum's hand very tightly as they walked to the bus stop to wait for the bus.

When the bus came, they got on and paid the bus driver. He gave them a ticket from his machine and they climbed up the stairs and sat right at the front and looked out of the window.

What do you think they could see out of the window?

They could see people and cars, lorries, shops and more people.

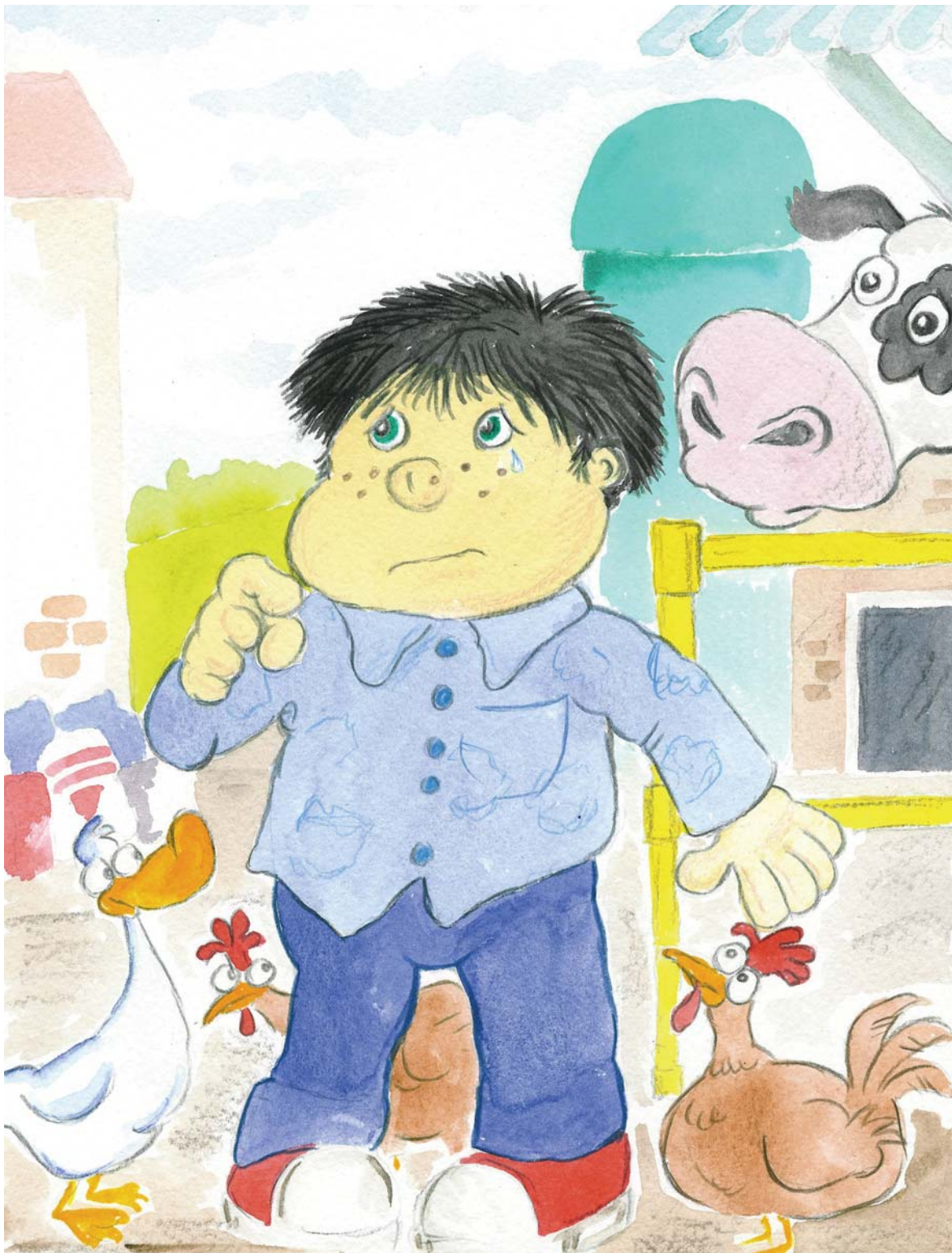
After a while, Sam said, "Are we there yet?"

His mum said, "It won't be long."

A little later, Sam said, "I'm hungry, can we have our picnic now?"

His mum said, "Sam, you have only just had breakfast. We are nearly there. I think this is our stop."

Sam rang the bell and they waited for the bus to stop. They climbed down the stairs carefully and got off the bus. Sam held his mum's hand very tightly while they crossed the road and went into the farm. There were lots of animals at the farm.



What animals do you think they saw?

They saw pigs and sheep and a cow and ducks and chickens.

Sam was having a great time wandering around the farm looking at all the animals with his mum.

What sounds do you think they could hear?

They could hear the sheep baa-ing and the chickens clucking and the pigs snorting. They could hear children laughing and people talking.

What do you think they could smell on the farm?

They could smell the hay and the chickens.

When they had walked all around the farm, they found a bench in the shade and took out their picnic.

Can you remember what they had taken with them?

They had some peanut butter sandwiches and some cheese sandwiches, a banana and a big green apple. They also had a bottle of water, a carton of orange juice and some chocolate cake.

As Sam was eating his peanut butter sandwich, a chicken came up to him. Sam gave the chicken a little piece of his sandwich. Just then, his mum's mobile phone rang and she answered it. It was his Auntie Androulla. That meant his mum was going to be talking for a very long time.

He gave the chicken another piece of his sandwich and the chicken ate it and then started to walk off. Sam's mum was still on the phone and Sam felt bored, so he got up and started to follow the chicken. The chicken started to run and Sam started to run after it and he chased it all around the farm. Sam got a bit tired and turned around to go back but... oh no! He couldn't remember which way to go and he couldn't see his mum anywhere. He started to panic and shouted, "Mum, Mum," and people turned and looked at him. Just then, he saw his mum running towards him. She threw her arms around him and Sam tried to explain what had happened.

What do you think his mum said?

She said, "Remember Sam, you must never, ever wander off on your own" and she hugged him very tightly.

Sam had learned his lesson and he was never going to wander off again.

Questions and ideas for follow-on work

Comprehension

1. What animals did they see at the farm?
2. What did Sam have for lunch?

Finding evidence

1. Why did Sam chase the chicken?
2. Do you think that Sam had a good day or a bad day?

Identifying feelings

1. How did Sam feel when he thought he was lost?
2. How did his mum feel?

Problem solving

1. What did Sam do when he realised that he was lost?
2. If Sam wanted to go somewhere, what should he have said?
3. Could his mum have done anything to stop him wandering off?

Sharing experiences and feelings

1. Have you ever been lost?
2. What happened?
3. How did you feel?

Follow-on work

1. Draw or write about a time when you were lost.

Key phrases for retelling the story in your own words

- It was a hot day. Sam was going to the farm with his mum.
- They made a picnic and took a rucksack.
- Sam held his mum's hand when they went to the bus stop.
- They got on the bus.
- They arrived at the farm and saw the animals.
- They heard and smelled different things.
- They ate the picnic.
- The mobile phone rang.
- Chicken came over to Sam.
- Sam fed the chicken and followed it.
- Turned around and couldn't see his mum.
- Started to panic and shouted "Mum, Mum".
- Mum came running over.
- Sam never wandered off again.

