



the magazine for  
the contemporary teacher

# TEACHER PLUS

February 2020  
₹ 50



## Editorial

5

## Primary Pack

### Word problems – from foe to friend

*Anjana A.R.*

What is the role of language in a math class? Most children may not have any difficulty when it comes to numbers, but they begin to falter when trying to understand the words in a problem. The math teacher needs to ensure that children not only understand numbers but also the words. A math teacher thus becomes an English or language teacher to some extent. Here are some techniques to help children understand 'word' problems.

6

## Cover Story

### Like a tree in the forest

*Anandhi Abhi*

How do teachers work as a team at different levels - within the classroom and outside or even through the life cycle of the children? When a group of teachers works pedagogically, the real learning for students lies in the nature and quality of relationships among the teachers themselves.

Children learn more from observation and can see if teachers are truly coming together to serve a larger interest or otherwise. Our Cover Story this month seeks to explore how well teachers are teaming up for the sake of students.



8

## Support and strength in networks

*Ardra Balachandran*

## Cogitations

### Carrying meaning through language

*Prakash Iyer*

Is experience essential for children to learn concepts or trigger fresh ideas? Can teachers create appropriate experiences that can act as stimuli for children? How does language contribute to this process? This interesting article tackles this topic in the form of a fictional conversation between two teachers.

15

## Activity

### Triggering creative expression

*Arundhati Dolas, Adithi Muralidhar and Sugra Chunawala*

18

## Things to Think About

### English, English and English!

*Dr Pooja Birwatkar*

*Schools insist that their students speak only in English during school hours and even informal communication between students is scrutinized. Students are forbidden to use Hindi or any mother tongue in school. Isn't language a unique feature of Indian culture and shouldn't the diversity in languages also be given a serious thought when we proclaim education systems to be all inclusive?*

20

## Finding My Own Path

### Reaching head, heart and body

*P. Ajitha*

The process of teaching and learning becomes more engaging when the teacher decides to meld a classroom experience into a lived experience. Here is how a teacher turned a letter-writing activity in the classroom into an experience where the students learned to value the essential worth of a letter.

22

### Leave it to the children

*K. Gayathri*

## Worksheet

### Math without tears

*S.N. Gananath*

Our worksheet this time is more of a fun sheet and is an attempt to bring back the pleasure of working with mathematical ideas at the school level. The content, form and flavor are all diverse and teachers teaching and children learning math are sure to find the activities engaging and insightful.

25

## Took Kit

### Meeting the challenge of task-based assessment

*Sajit M Mathews*

36

## Focus

### Flexibility in assessment: the way ahead

*Divya Kapoor*

Can a flexible assessment system help students to be more engaged and also benefit from the teaching-learning process? This article focuses on effective flexible assessment strategies that can be implemented in the curriculum and the role of the teacher in giving students the autonomy to choose their mode of assessment.

39

## Action Research

### A 'smart' way to assess projects

*Tenzing Rapgyal*

A reflective teacher shares his thoughts on how he went about assessing students' work when they were asked to work on an English project.

42

## Book Review

### Reflections on language pedagogy

*Chintan Girish Modi*

46

## A Step Ahead

### It's time... to talk about it!

*Neerja Singh*

How can parents keep pace with their growing children? With reference to sexual assault, the author lists a few steps that parents can take to engage with their children and to keep the lines of communication open at all times.

50

## Time Out

### Taking a path less travelled

*Mohit K. Sharma and Gaurav Sikka*

52

## Comment

### Taking play seriously

*Indira Subramanian*

In the Indian school context, play has been relegated to the sidelines, as a pedagogy of learning. So how can the principles of play be given a more central role in schooling? This article gives a few tips on how teachers can foster playful learning in their classroom.

56

## Question of the Week

*Dr B R Sitaram*

58

**Editor**  
Usha Raman

**Editorial Team**  
M Nirmala  
Shalini B  
Sushma Rana

**Layout & Graphics**  
Rajendra Kumar S

**Social Media**  
Jamuna Inamdar

**Circulation**  
N Srinivas

**RNI Publications Consultant**  
K Raghurama Raju

Teacher Plus is supported by  
Azim Premji University

The views expressed in the magazine are  
those of the authors and not necessarily  
those of Teacher Plus.

Similarly, mention of products and services  
by writers in the magazine does not  
constitute an endorsement by Teacher Plus.

Registered with the Registrar of  
Newspapers of India under RNI No:  
APENG/2003/09403

Unsolicited submissions are  
welcome. Please address all  
correspondence to

**Teacher Plus**  
A 15, Vikrampur,  
Secunderabad 500 009.  
Telangana, India.  
Tel: 040 2780 7039.  
[editorial@teacherplus.org](mailto:editorial@teacherplus.org)  
[www.teacherplus.org](http://www.teacherplus.org)

ISSN No 0973-778

Vol. 18, No. 2; Pages 60

**Cover Illustration**  
**Vibha Suryanarayanan**

She is an independent illustrator  
based in Chennai, having a master's  
degree in Children's Literature  
& Illustration from Goldsmiths,  
University of London. She loves to  
bring new characters to the world.  
Her work is inspired by the people  
and places around her. She can be  
reached at  
< [vibhasurya17@gmail.com](mailto:vibhasurya17@gmail.com) > .



## English translation of the poem:

I feel like becoming a cook  
Sometimes in the hotel or sometimes in the kitchen  
I feel like becoming a cook.  
I feel like becoming a photographer  
Sometimes of butterflies and sometimes of peacocks  
I feel like becoming a photographer.  
Sometimes I feel like going to a shopping mall  
To bring some vegetables and get some chocolates  
Sometimes I feel like going to a shopping mall.  
Sometimes I feel like having coffee  
Sometimes I feel like having tea  
Sometimes I feel like having coffee.

## Story writing

Story writing involves using imagination, building a coherent picture and introducing a logical flow that leaves readers with something to think about. Students in groups were initially asked to state five words with some constraints. For example, one word necessarily had to be a person's name. After finalizing their set of words (थवा, रवी, नथ, यज्ञ, नरेंद्र) students wrote a narrative weaving these words into a story, which reflected their cultural connections.

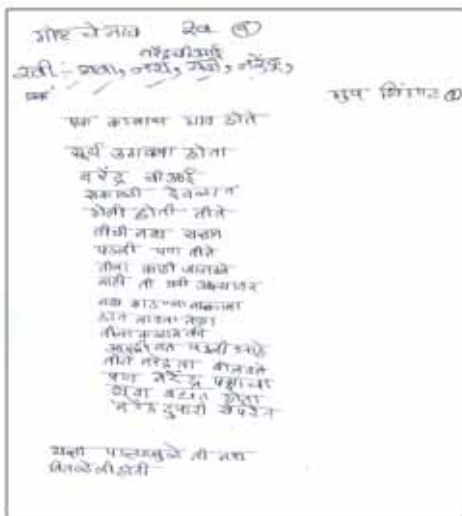


Image 2: Story composed by 2 boys.

## English translation of the story:

Narendra's Mother  
(Words in English: flock of birds, sun, nose-ring, sacred fire, Narendra)

*There was a village called 'Kadlas'. The sun had risen. Narendra's mother had gone to the temple in the morning. There, her nose ring fell into the sacred fire. But she does not realize this. When she came back home, she touched her nose to remove the nose ring and realized that it had fallen somewhere. She called Narendra but he was seeing*

*a flock of birds. By the time Narendra returned in the afternoon, the nose ring had melted in the sacred fire.*

This story-writing activity gave students a free rein to play with words, use new words, express emotions and feelings with words and be imaginative. Students also sequenced the events culminating in a dramatic ending! Simple language tasks like this can help students become familiar with grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and spellings.

## Parting thoughts

Poetry and story composition offer several opportunities to write and express oneself creatively (see references). Though we have showcased only two activities, our preliminary look at students' works indicate that they made connections, sequenced events efficiently, used new vocabulary, brought in dramatics and humour in their writings and conveyed emotions when writing the poems and stories. While research has emphasized links between language-based activities and development of vocabulary, as well as, fostering creativity and building self-esteem, confidence and self-awareness, it also touches upon the need to connect with students' interests and enhance their literature appreciation. We have attempted to do the same via these activities with children and are currently exploring ways to assess students' works more effectively. While in general it is a good exercise to get students to write and draw about their experiences, it is well worth the effort to add some twists and challenges in the activity which itself can be a creative task.

**Acknowledgments:** We are grateful to Dr. Rohini Karandikar and Rupali Shinde for their feedback. A special thanks to the students who were part of the summer camp. We also acknowledge the support of the Government of India, Department of Atomic Energy, under Project No. 12-R&D-TFR-6.04-0600.

## References

- Cubukcu, F. (2010). Creative thinking and poetry in ELT Classes. *International Conference on New Trends in Education and their Implications*, 786-791.
- Dust, K. (1999). Motive, means and opportunity: Creativity research review. London: NESTA.
- Le, P. (2018). Using six-word stories to trigger EFL learners' creative writing skills. *Indonesian Journal of English Language Teaching* 13(2), 175-188.
- Maley, A. & Peachey, N. (Eds.) (2015). *Creativity in the English language classroom*. London: The British Council.
- Spendlove, D. (2008). Creativity in Education: A Review. *Design and Technology: An International Journal* 10(2), 9-18.

All the three authors work at Homi Bhabha Centre for Science Education, TIFR, Mumbai. The corresponding author can be reached at < [darundhati@hbcse.tifr.res.in](mailto:darundhati@hbcse.tifr.res.in) > .