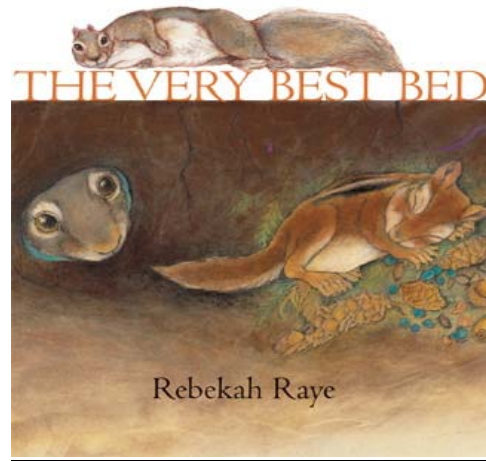# Retelling a Picture Book to Enhance Oral Fluency

A Book Extension Activity by Carol V. Null

Students in first grade listened to Rebekah Raye's book, The Very Best Bed. The read aloud was followed by a conversation about the characters and setting. We noticed all the animals in the story were animals that were native of Maine. We agreed this book would be a quality mentor text to use for practice with retelling, using transitional words, and enhancing our oral fluency. The transitional words would be key in providing a coherent story that forms a bridge between ideas, as well as providing listeners with a signal of what might be next.
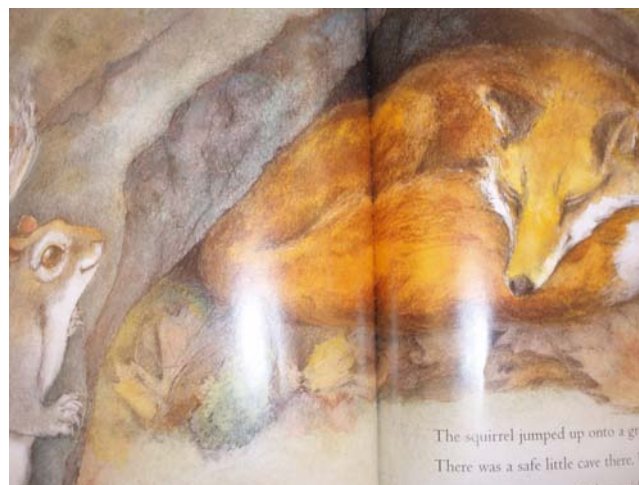
Students were asked to retell and adapt The Very Best Bed, by illustrating their own pictures. They will use the main character, "A bushy gray squirrel", to scamper his way through the pages of their book, in search for the very best bed.

Students used sticky notes to plan their story. They were to pick three Maine animals, one for each page, and like the read aloud, they would not be the very best bed for squirrel.

The squirrel is the main character of the story. Tied to a string, squirrel is able to move through the pages of the book while the story is being told. With each retelling, students practice their oral fluency, by applying transitional words and using a variety of vocabulary and voices. This is a meaningful way to revisit the story and build comprehension. During the retell, the listener is able to hear the student's word choice, use of transitional words, and the rhythm of the storyteller's voice. The sequence and idea of the story hold the structure of the retell, but are guided by the storyteller's unique perspective.

Using their illustrated book, students are ready to give a retell and adaptation of The Very Best Bed.

An example of a student's retell:

	The Very Best Bed… adapted and retold by Logan.
	One day a little squirrel was so busy gathering up nuts for the winter, he forgot that he needed a warm nice bed. He lived in a forest, near a crab apple tree- and he loved to eat the crab apples.
	First, he came to the water. He saw two seals, but he did not want to get his feet wet, so he went away.

	Next he found a fallen log, but when he looked underneath, it was already taken.
	Then he peeked inside a little hole in a tree, but a chipmunk already took it.
	But then he saw a fallen log with a huge hole inside. Quickly he gathered sticks, twigs, and all sorts of stuff and snuggled in for the long, long, nights.

Students had the opportunity to share a retelling with their peers. We talked about the transitional words used (First, Next, Then) and other word choice (crab apple tree, fallen log, snuggled, peeked) that enhanced the story. Students were encouraged to share their books and practice adding a variety of words and rhythms. With each retell, the text structure remained the same, but the word choice and transitional words varied.

While this book extension activity enhanced student's oral fluency, it also supported their grade level standard in sharing information using different formats. This activity deepens the student' schema and relationship to the author and illustrator.

This particular project was followed by a visit from Rebekah Raye!

MDIRSS k-2 Standards addressed

Standard B: A student should understand and use research processes necessary to locate, evaluate, and communicate information and ideas.

Benchmark 5: Organize and use information to create a product

Performance Indicators

1. Uses sequencing and prediction
2. Retells a story or information

Benchmark 6: Evaluates the effectiveness of the product to communicate the intended message

Performance Indicators:

1. Identifies different formats that share information (pictures, videos, puppets, skits, books, etc.)

Standard C: A student should recognize that being an independent reader, listener, and viewer of material in print, non-print, and electronic formats will contribute to personal enjoyment and lifelong learning.

Benchmark 1: read for pleasure and information

Performance Indicators:

1. Recognizes a variety of authors
2. Listens to a story
3. Retells a story