A Fishy Business

The story

Uncle Ted gives Jack a fishing rod for his birthday, and gives his sister Mary a fishing net. He takes them to a nearby stream, where he teaches them about fishing. Mary thinks she sees someone spying on them. Uncle Ted thinks it's strange that there seem to be no fish in the stream.

Mary and Jack look around an old pump house which is now being used as a small factory where material is hand-dyed. They overhear a conversation between the two owners of the factory, Sid and Harry Scrub, which makes them very suspicious. They tell Uncle Ted about the dead fish, but when he goes to look, the fish have gone. Sid Scrub and his dog are not pleased to find Uncle Ted and the children snooping around the factory.

The children are determined to solve the mystery and they persuade Uncle Ted to return with them at night. They see Sid and Harry pouring waste dye into the stream and polluting it.

Jack, Mary and Uncle Ted decide to hold a meeting at the village hall to tell everyone what is happening. Unfortunately, things don’t turn out well since they have no evidence and many of the villagers who work at the factory know nothing about polluting the stream. (This is being done at night after the workers have gone home.) Undeterred, Uncle Ted and the children visit the environmental inspector at the local council offices. He agrees to visit the factory, but can find no evidence of wrongdoing.

Jack has a plan and they return the following weekend in the early hours. Sid and Harry tipping waste into the stream – but this time Jack videos the evidence using his mobile phone. The factory is closed down – but this means many local people also lose their jobs.

Once again, Jack and Mary and Uncle Ted come to the rescue. They draw up plans to convert the old pump house into a nature reserve and environmental learning centre. Their plans are accepted. Many local people are able to use their skills and are employed at the centre, which becomes a great success.

Notes on fly fishing

Fishing is one of the world’s most popular sports. Fly fishing, the type of fishing referred to in the story, is a method of fishing using a rod, a reel and a fishing line. An artificial fly is used as bait. Usually, anglers use a ‘dry fly’. A dry fly is a small hook disguised to look like an insect. The hook has feathers attached to it. These attract the fish. Sometimes, anglers use small objects called ‘nymphs’ which sink below the surface of the water. Nymphs imitate the tiny creatures found deeper down in the water that fish such as trout like to eat. Making artificial flies for fly-fishing takes a long time. Each fly involves a lot of work to make.
Introducing the book

The cover

- Hold up the cover. Read the book's title to and with the class. Discuss what they think the book might be about. (As the title suggests, the book is about fish. However the title also has another meaning. When anything is called fishy it can mean something that is not completely right, honest or legal.)

- Discuss briefly the picture on the front cover. Ask the class Where do you think the children are? Why do they think they are looking horrified? What do they think they have seen?

The title page

- Now look together at the title page.
- Ask if any of the children have ever been fishing. If they have, get them to recount their experiences to the class.
- Talk about the picture. Ask the children to describe what they see. On the left is a landing net, which is used to lift the fish out of the water, when it has been caught by a fisherman (or woman) with a fishing rod. Next to it, on the right, is a fishing rod in three pieces. These fit together to make one long rod. At one end is a handle to hold and a round reel. The fishing line is wound around the reel. The line is threaded through the metal rings on the rod. A hook is attached to the end of the line. Bait, (food that is used for attracting and catching fish, for example worms) is attached to the hook. The angler (the fisherman or woman) casts (throws) the fishing line and hook into the water and tries to catch fish. Next to the fishing line is a box containing the bait.

- Who is the author of the book? Have the children read any other books in the series by this author?

The contents page

- Ask the children to turn to the contents page. Explain that the contents list tells us what is in the book. Explain that the story is divided into chapters.
- Ask How many chapters are there? Read the chapter titles to and with the class. Ask What page does each chapter start on? Point out that at the end of the book there is a poem called ‘Stream Story’ (on page 74) and various pieces of information (from page 76).
Read the title of each chapter to and with the class. Explain briefly any unfamiliar words. (Most of the unknown words will be covered in the specific chapters.)

Ask a question about different chapters to get the children interested in the book.

Read the title of Chapter 1. Ask Whose birthday do you think it is? What present does this person receive? (Tell the children to look at the picture – this gives a clue. The boy, Jack, and his Uncle Ted are fishing in a river. Jack’s sister, Mary, is holding the landing net, ready to help.) Ask the children to describe what else they can see in the picture. The building in the background is an old pump house, which was used in the past to pump water out of the river.

Read the title of Chapter 3. Ask What do you think it is about?

Chapter 5 is called ‘The night watch’. Ask Who do you think is watching whom? Why? Why is it at night?

We can tell the book is about a mystery by the title of Chapter 7. Ask Who is getting evidence? Of what? Why?

Point out the title of Chapter 9. Something has obviously upset some people in the village. Ask What could this be? Does it have anything to do with fishing?

Tell the children to do the related activity on page 1 of their Workbook.

You can play the story on the audio cassette/CD at any time you choose.
Chapter 1
The birthday present
Pages 3 to 9

Active vocabulary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>birthday</td>
<td>a compound word: birth + day = birthday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>early</td>
<td>the ‘ear’ is pronounced ‘er’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exciting</td>
<td>note the ‘c’ after the ‘x’, which sounds like ‘s’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grown-up</td>
<td>note the hyphen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>important</td>
<td>there’s an ant at the end of this word!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parcel</td>
<td>the ‘c’ is a soft ‘c’ and is pronounced ‘s’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>present</td>
<td>note this word and pretty both begin with ‘pr’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pretty</td>
<td>(see note above)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rainbow</td>
<td>another compound word: rain + bow = rainbow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>smooth</td>
<td>in the middle of this word there’s the sound a cow makes! (moo!)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Passive vocabulary

- 6 o'clock sharp
- angler
- born and bred
- flexed
- flicked
- landing net
- native
- swishing
- trout
- trout season

Before reading

- Pre-teach the active vocabulary (see the Teacher’s Notes Introduction page 13 and the Glossary). Use the notes in the table to discuss any interesting features of the words.
- Ask the children to do the activities on page 2 of their Workbook to practise the new vocabulary.
- Read the title of Chapter 1. Ask Why do we give people presents on their birthdays? What was your favourite birthday present on your last birthday?
Tell the children to look at the picture on pages 4 and 5. Ask Whose birthday do you think it is? (The boy’s name is Jack.) What has Jack been given? How can we tell Jack likes his present? Who gave the fishing rod to him? (The man is actually Jack’s uncle, Ted.) Describe him. Note the look on Jack’s sister’s face! Does Mary look unhappy? disappointed? jealous? Why do you think she looks like that? What about Mum, who is sitting on the sofa? How does she look? Can you describe what else you can see in the room?

Tell the children to look at the picture on pages 6 and 7. Ask What are Jack and Mary doing now? (They are lying on the floor, looking at a book about fish, with their uncle.) Which fish are shown in the book? Where is Jack’s new fishing rod? Between Jack and Mary there is a fishing net. Who do you think this belongs to? Ask the children to suggest what a fishing net is used for. Ask Does everyone look interested in the book? What are they each drinking?

Optional suggestion: you may wish to give the children an appropriate amount of time, for example five minutes, to look quickly through the chapter to find (and perhaps underline) the active vocabulary they have been introduced to.

During reading

Tell the children to look at the picture on pages 4 and 5. Ask Whose birthday do you think it is? (The boy’s name is Jack.) What has Jack been given? How can we tell Jack likes his present? Who gave the fishing rod to him? (The man is actually Jack’s uncle, Ted.) Describe him. Note the look on Jack’s sister’s face! Does Mary look unhappy? disappointed? jealous? Why do you think she looks like that? What about Mum, who is sitting on the sofa? How does she look? Can you describe what else you can see in the room?

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During reading

Read the chapter expressively to the class (or play the audio cassette/CD). Do not stop to explain anything or to ask questions. Ensure the children are following in their books.

Choose whichever of the following options is most appropriate for your class:

- Read the chapter again and encourage the class to read it with you.
- Read the chapter again, a paragraph at a time, and ask the class (or individuals) to read each paragraph aloud after you.
- Do not read again to the class. Ask groups or individuals to read the chapter aloud, a paragraph at a time.
- Read (or play) the chapter again, a paragraph at a time. Explain the meaning and pronunciation of the words listed as passive vocabulary, and any other unfamiliar words.
- Discuss how the pictures can help the reader guess the meaning of the text.

Stage 1 comprehension (literal)

Ask these questions orally, or set them as a written activity. You can also ask the children to do the activity on page 3 of their Workbook.

1. How old was Jack?
2. Who was coming to see him?
3. Was Jack older or younger than his sister, Mary?
4. What shape was the parcel that Uncle Ted gave Jack?
5. What was Jack’s present?
6. What do you call someone who fishes?
7. Where did Uncle Ted love to fish?
8. How did the fishing rod feel in Jack’s hands?
9. What did Jack ask Uncle Ted to teach him?
10. How did Mary feel?
11. Why couldn’t Mary learn how to fish?
12. What surprise did Uncle Ted give Mary?
13. Did Mary like her landing net?
14. What sort of fish did Uncle Ted usually try to catch?
15. Who gave Uncle Ted the book with pictures of fish in it?
16. Why did Mary say that rainbow trout don’t look like rainbows?
17. Which trout are native to America?
18. Why was the first of May an important date for anglers? (Explain that the people are only allowed to fish for trout at a certain time of the year – the trout season.)
19. When did Uncle Ted say he would take the two children fishing?
20. What time did he say he would pick them up?

- Ask the children to find examples of speech marks in the chapter. Explain their function. Ask How do we know who is speaking? How do we know what words each person is saying? Notice that the first word inside the speech marks always starts with a capital letter.

- It is interesting that the word fish can be used as a noun and as a verb (to fish). Fishing can also be an adjective (a fishing rod) and a gerund (I like fishing.)

- Ask the children to find and read aloud examples of words containing double vowels or double consonants.

- Ask the children to find and read any two-syllable words in the chapter.

- Finally, ask individuals to re-read short sections of the text aloud. Encourage them to read expressively and with appropriate intonation. (You might like to ask the children to play the role of particular characters and read their parts.)

After reading

Stage 2 comprehension (extension)
Ask these questions orally, or set them as a written activity for the more able. Answers will vary. Encourage the children to give reasons for their suggestions, and accept any answer they can justify.
1. Why do you think Jack felt very grown-up on his birthday?
2. How do you know Jack was excited about Uncle Ted coming?
3. Why did Jack’s eyes ‘widen’ when he saw his present?
4. How do you know Uncle Ted loved fishing?
5. How can you tell Jack did not already know how to fish?
6. How can you tell Mary felt sad?
7. Why do you think Uncle Ted did not bring in Mary’s present at the same time as Jack’s?
8. What are some of the differences between brown trout and rainbow trout?
9. a) What day of the week was Jack’s birthday on?
   b) What was the date of Jack’s birthday?
10. What was the name of Uncle Ted’s wife?
11. What time did the children have to be ready to leave on Saturday morning?
12. Why do you think Jack and Mary didn’t want to stay up late on Friday?

Stage 2 comprehension (extra)
Characterisation Ask the children to write a paragraph about Uncle Ted. Use the pictures to describe how he looked. Explain what relation he was to Jack and Mary’s mum. Who was he married to? Talk about some things he liked to do. Why did the children like him? What else can you discover about him in the chapter?

- Say the word watch and write wa_ _ _ on the board. Ask the children to fill in the missing letters. Now write these words on the board: ma_ _ _, scr_ _ _, ki_ _ _ en, ca_ _ _, swi_ _ _, stre_ _ _. Ask the children to complete each word with ‘tch’, to read the words they have made and explain their meanings.
The words parcel and excitement both contain a soft ‘c’ which sounds like ‘s’. (When ‘c’ is followed by ‘e’, ‘i’ or ‘y’ it has a soft sound like ‘s’.) Ask the children to complete these words with ‘c’ and read them: _ity, _entre, _ircle, _entury, _ycle, dan_e, i_y, prin_e, senten_e.

We can often tell from people’s faces how they feel. Jack was excited, Mary was sad. Ask the children to make excited and sad faces. Ask them to show these expressions on their faces – happiness, fear, doubt, surprise, boredom, tiredness, hatred, anger.

The word rainbow is a compound word. Write it on the board as a sum: rain + bow = rainbow. (Other ‘rain’ words are raindrop, rainstorm, raincoat, rainfall, rainforest, rainwater.)

Ted was Jack’s uncle. Brainstorm and list as many ‘family relationship’ words as possible, for example sister, uncle, grandfather, cousin. Divide them into two groups – masculine and feminine.

Jack wanted to learn how to fish. Ask the children what sort of things they would love to learn to do.

Talk about the joy of giving and receiving presents. Talk about trying to guess what presents are from their feel before unwrapping them. Play the ‘feelie’ game. Have several everyday objects in a box. Blindfold one child and ask him or her to try and guess what each object is, simply by its feel.

If appropriate, try some Extension Activities (see the Teacher’s Notes Introduction page 19).

Ask What do you think will happen next in the story?