

The Competition

retold by Barbara Beveridge

illustrated by Ali Teo



Overview

This text is a folk tale in which a tiger is outwitted by a frog. It describes how the small but clever frog is able to scare away a tiger.

Suggested purposes

This text supports the comprehension strategies of using illustrations to understand text and comparing and contrasting. The storyline, illustration style, and features of a traditional tale provide opportunities for making connections between this text and *The Clumsy Tiger* (and with tales from other cultures). It provides excellent opportunities for expressive reading and retelling.

Text features (Focus on only one or two per session.)

- the clear narrative structure
- the features of a traditional tale
- the way the illustrations support and extend the ideas
- the direct address to the reader and the layout features (text placement, italics, and bold print) that add emphasis
- the traditional opening that sets the tale in a distant time
- the talking animals
- the battle of wits between the characters
- the humorous ending
- the tricky nature of the frog
- the adjectives – *busy, loud, small, tiny, yellow*
- the comparative and superlative adjectives – *higher, highest; farther, farthest*
- the confrontational dialogue
- the colloquial language – *right*
- the use of ellipses on page 5 to indicate a pause
- the “tion” ending in “competition”

Possible challenges

- the words – *farther, farthest*
- the “air” sound for “ar” in “scaring”
- the colloquial language (for the students whom English is a second language)
- visualising how the frog tricks the tiger

Setting the scene

If the students have read *The Clumsy Tiger*, tell them that they are going to read a similar tale. If they haven't read it, tell them that they are going to read a traditional tale from China. Remind the students that traditional tales are a way of explaining things. Talk about the features they might expect to find in a traditional tale, such as talking animals, a familiar opening phrase, a distant setting, repetition, humour, tricky or unlikely things happening, and often a surprise ending.

Find out what the students know about China. You could help them locate it on a world map.

Look at the cover of the book. *What do you know about tigers?*

Briefly discuss the tiger in the Dragonflies book *The Clumsy Tiger*. *What do you know about frogs?* Look at the title and help the students to chunk the word “com-pe-ti-tion”. Encourage the students to share their experiences of being in a competition. *What kind of competition could a tiger and a frog have?*

Back cover – Read aloud the preview question. Discuss the students’ predictions.

The first reading

Read the names of the author and the illustrator. Ask the students to read the text silently, pausing at various points for discussion or to clarify any difficulties.

Page 3 – *How do you think the frog would say this? What does this page tell you about the frog?*

Page 5 – *Why is the frog talking like this?* Draw out the idea that the ellipses indicate a pause (while the frog is thinking). Check that the students understand the meaning of “farther”. *Do you believe what the frog says? Does the tiger believe him?*

Pages 7 and 8 – *What does the tiger mean when he says “Right”?* Note the effort on the tiger’s face! Ask the students to talk with a partner about how the frog jumped so high. Share the explanations with the group, drawing a sketch on the board if necessary. Encourage the students to predict what will happen next.

Pages 10 to 12 – You may need to support the students to decode “scaring”. If necessary, write the word “scare” on the board and show them how it loses its “e” when “ing” is added. *What do these pages tell you about the tiger? What is the main message of this tale?*

Ideas for revisiting the text (Choose only one or two per session.)

- Listen to the students reread the text to a partner, observing their use of expression, particularly for the dialogue.
- Identify the features of a traditional tale. *Were there any features in The Competition that weren’t in The Clumsy Tiger?*
- Analyse the narrative structure. Compare the characters, setting, and problems with those of *The Clumsy Tiger*.
- Talk about the characters. *How has the writer described them? What do the illustrations tell you? Can you think of other adjectives to describe them? Which character do you prefer? Why?*
- Focus on the illustrations. *How do they support the ideas in the story?* The cartoon style suggests a light-hearted tale with a foolish tiger and a clever, frog.
 1. On the front cover, the frog’s eyes are wide open and he looks alert and calculating while the tiger has his eyes shut.
 2. On pages 2 and 3, the tiger has a bemused expression and the frog is making an imperious, controlling gesture.
 3. On pages 4 to 7, the tiger is physically larger but the frog is very much in control.
 4. On page 9, the frog is quite relaxed but the tiger is straining.
 5. On page 12, the tiger is moving out of the picture while the frog is in the foreground, large and triumphant.

- Compare the illustration styles in the two tales. *Which do you prefer? Why?*
- Encourage the students to reread the text in small groups (two characters and a narrator) as readers' theatre. Encourage them to think of suitable voices to make the reading more interesting and to prepare a performance.
- Focus on the comparative and superlative adjectives, "higher" and "highest", "farther" and "farthest". Create a chart showing the root word and the "er" and "est" endings. Build comparative and superlative adjectives from other root words, such as "clever", "smart", "tricky", or "silly". Note that in some cases, the final "y" will need to be changed to "i".
- Examine the "tion" ending in the word "competition". Think of other examples, such as "addition", "collection", "fiction", "information", or "station". Write the words on the board and ask the students to underline the "tion" in each word. Talk about how an awareness of the "tion" ending can help the students to chunk unfamiliar words.
- If necessary, return to the word "scaring" and revise the rule about dropping the final "e" when adding "ing". Encourage the students to do this when they come across unfamiliar "ing" words. Other potentially confusing examples that you could practise include "biting", "hoping" ("hopping"), "using", "shining", and "writing".

Suggestions for further activities

- Compare the tiger characters in the two tales.
- Create thought bubbles for the tiger on pages 7 and 9.
- Read other examples of "trickster" characters.
- Read other traditional tales and compare their features with those in the tiger tales.
- Act out the story or turn it into a puppet play.
- Retell the tale to the group.
- Read other folk tales about tigers.
- BLM word activity: use descriptive language
The students can identify the comparative adjectives in the story. They can practice writing them and check the spelling rules for each one. They can then write each word in a sentence.
- BLM comprehension activity: compare characters
The students can discuss the actions of the characters. They can then use the BLM to compare what they do in the story.