

Herbert Peabody and The Incredible Beehive

These teaching activities are based on the national curriculum for ages 5 years and upwards, and cover the following key learning areas:

1. English and fiction
2. Science
3. Sustainability and the environment themes

Themes/Ideas

- Cooperation
- Kindness
- Managing emotions

I. English and fiction activities

Before reading:

1. Based on the cover, what do you think *Herbert Peabody and The Incredible Beehive* will be about?
2. How do you think that it will start and end?
3. Where and when do you think it is set?
4. Who do you think is the main character?

Identify the title of the book, the author, the illustrator and the publisher.

1. Discuss the different roles involved in creating a published text.
2. What is the role of the author and the illustrator?
3. What is the role of the publisher?

Activity 1

- i) Provide students with a simple handout that will scaffold their study of genre. It should be in a table form and contain headings such as purpose of the text, characters, settings and plot.
- ii) Arrange a trip to the school library. Ask the teacher-librarian to set up five tables containing age-appropriate books (preferably picture books) belonging to five popular genres (e.g. mystery, science fiction, fantasy, historical fiction and realistic fiction).
- iii) The librarian or teacher should read a story to the students that belongs to a genre that is not on one of the five tables e.g. traditional fiction (e.g. fairy tales, myths and legends).
- iv) The teacher should model how to complete the handout using the story as a springboard for discussion.
- v) Ask the students to break into groups. Get them to read through at least one book on their table. If they are unable to read unassisted, ask students to look for

genre clues on the cover of the book (e.g. illustrations, title, colours, font, settings and characters).

vi) In their groups, ask the students to conduct a round robin. After this, they should fill in their handouts noting the conventions that appear in their most of the books read by the students sitting at their table.

vii) At the end of the session, students are to nominate a spokesperson for their group and they are to share their findings with the rest of the class. The other students should fill in their own handouts using the information provided by the other groups.

Activity 2

Herbert Peabody and the Incredible Beehive is a mystery story. Create a clearly visible space in the classroom to allow students to list the central conventions of the mystery genre as they encounter them in the story. An alternative approach is that teachers could provide the evidence from the text for the students, allowing them to explain how it is an example of a mystery convention.

Activity 3

Students should already be familiar with the concept of a narrative, but the teacher should refamiliarise students with the basics (orientation, complication, rising action, climax and resolution). Use a graphic organiser such as this one called Story Mountain from Scholastic to give students a chance to see how plot is constructed within narrative texts.

<https://www.scholastic.com/content/dam/teachers/blogs/beth-newingham/migrated-files/story-mountain.pdf>

As the students work their way through the story, they should plot key events on the graphic organiser.

During reading

Questions/comprehension by chapter

Chapter 1: A New Neighbour

1. Who is Herbert Peabody?
2. Where does he live?
3. What is his occupation?
4. Who is the new visitor Herbie meets at his vegetable patch?
5. What information does the visitor share with Herbie regarding what makes Herbie's farm so attractive?
6. At the end of this chapter, the writer uses a special literary technique called foreshadowing. This means that the writer is dropping clues about what is to come in the narrative. Find evidence of foreshadowing. What is the effect of this technique?
7. Based on this first chapter, is Herbert Peabody and the Incredible Beehive an informative, persuasive or imaginative text? How can you tell?
8. Students should summarise their findings about the orientation of the story on their narrative charts.

Chapter 2: The Empty Garden

1. What is the big problem that is introduced in chapter 2? Another word for a problem in a narrative is a complication. Add information about the complication to the narrative chart.
2. The writer uses lots of descriptive language to introduce 'Haunted Huffelton House'. Find examples of words and phrases that make the reader believe that this is a very spooky house. Work out whether these are naming words (nouns) or describing words (adjectives).
3. Using the description provided, draw a picture of the house.

Chapter 3: The Voice that Belongs to Nobody

1. As a class, make predictions about who belongs to 'The Voice that Belongs to Nobody'.

Chapter 4: The Garden the Disappeared

1. What important information about Huffelton House and its once-beautiful gardens do Herbie's friends, Bee and Ladybug, reveal?
2. Using the cooperative learning technique of a timed pair share, students are to draw a T chart in their notebooks and make a list of antonyms (words with opposite meanings) to enable them to compare how the garden appears now, with how it used to be. Students may like to use their imaginations and add some additional words that are not in the book. Encourage them to include lots of sensory detail (see, smell, hear, taste, touch).
3. As a class, speculate on what could have happened to the Huffeltons. The results of this activity will be useful if students pursue the post-reading narrative writing task.

Chapter 5: Too Mean for Magic

1. What important clue do Herbie and Bee discover outside the front door to Huffelton House?
2. The Voice that Belongs to Nobody sounds very cross when it addresses Herbie and Bee. It says, "GO AWAY NOW...OR ELSE!". Sometimes people act in an angry way to cover up other feelings they may be experiencing. Why do people get angry? How do people behave when they are angry? How can we manage our anger? How should we deal with other people when they are angry around us?
3. At the end of this chapter, the writer builds up lots of tension. The final sentence is "things were not looking good". Students should add this to their narrative chart as part of the rising action, as the story is steadily building to its climax.

Chapter 6: Theo's Clue

1. At the start of this chapter, there is an emphasis on showing the reader Herbie's emotions, rather than simply telling us how he is feeling. The author uses lots of different interesting verbs to describe the actions of Herbie and the other animals on his farm. A verb is a doing word. Ask the students to try to identify at least five different verbs in this chapter that are particularly striking and effective (e.g. crowed, buzzed, shuffled, stomping and jumping). Using thesauruses, ask students to experiment with replacing these verbs with synonyms to see how the meaning of the passage alters, if at all.
2. Who is Miss Tidy?
3. What do you think may have happened to Miss Tidy after the Huffeltons left Huffelton House?

Chapter 7: The Missing Piece

1. Herbie starts singing about the possibility of restoring the grounds at Huffelton House. What does the word 'restore' mean? Why do communities sometimes choose to take on restoration projects? Students could conduct some research into restored buildings and other restoration projects in their local town. Following on from this, there is scope for them to respond with a short informational text about a particular project.
2. Mayor Veronica Busy is the town's mayor. What is a mayor? What does their job involve? What is the name of the local mayor of the students' town?
3. Another problem is introduced near the end of this chapter. What is it? Students will need to add this to their narrative chart. How does Herbie plan to solve this dilemma?

Chapter 8: The Big Plan: Part One

1. In this chapter, the story reaches almost reaches its climax. Make a note of this on the narrative chart. How does the author build tension and suspense immediately prior to readers discovering who belongs to ‘The Voice that Belongs to Nobody’? Is this character what students expected? How is she made to appear harmless?
2. What is the truth about what happened to the garden?
3. Why did Miss Tidy pretend to be cross?
4. At the end of the chapter, Herbie tells Miss Tidy that he thinks she may become a hero in Huffleton. What is a hero? What are the qualities of a heroic person?
5. Rewrite this part of the narrative from Miss Tidy’s point of view. What might she be thinking and feeling? What new information and insights will she be able to provide at this point in the story? What is motivating her actions?

Chapter 9: The Big Plan: Part Two

1. In this chapter, Herbie and Miss Tidy spend some time in The History of Huffleton Room which contains the archives of the town’s plans. Ask students if they know why it is important to keep hold of records like these? If they had to locate similar records within their local community, where would they go?

Chapter 10: A Secret

1. Herbie's friends are acting a little strangely in this chapter. Where is the evidence that they are planning a surprise for Herbie? Ask the students to make predictions about why they are acting this way.

Chapter 11: Ready ... Set ...

1. What is the big surprise that is revealed in this chapter?
2. During this chapter, it is Herbie's turn to be labelled a hero. Why are his actions deemed to be heroic by his friends?

Chapter 12: Yo, GROW!

1. What is the moral or message of the story as it is revealed by Miss Tidy in this chapter?
2. Make a final note on the narrative chart about how the story is resolved.

After reading

Checking for understanding

1. Break students into pairs and allocate one chapter to each pair. Without labelling the chapter number, ask each pair to write a brief summary what happens in their chapter on a large piece of card. They are to draw a simple picture that represents their chapter and include this on the bottom of their card.
2. Stick these posters at the front of the room and ask the class to sequence the narrative events in the correct order.

Written responses

Activity 1

In chapter 8 we learn that the Huffeltons moved away many years ago and left the house to Miss Tidy. We do not find out why they abandoned such a beautiful house and their beloved gardens. Ask the students to write a short narrative during which they solve the mystery of the missing Huffeltons. Like all stories, this text should have the following elements: a beginning, in which the student introduces the setting (time and place), character/s and situation; a middle, where the student will explain what happened using transition words to show time and order; and an ending, during which the reader will learn both how the problem is solved and what happens to the character/s. Advanced writers may be able to include conventions from the mystery genre in their narrative responses.

Younger children may like to write a simple narrative that features a bee as the central character.

Activity 2

What did you think of the story? Write a letter to Bianca C. Ross letting her know your thoughts on her book.

Alternatively, write a review of the book and post it on a class blog for other students to read.

2. Science activities

“Herbie put on some beekeeping gloves and a mask and carefully collected the honey that Bee had prepared.”

This text provides an excellent springboard into a short unit on the importance of bees and other helpful insects in our environment, particularly in relation to food production.

Key vocabulary

bees, insects, pollen, honey, colony, hive, queen, worker, scout, nurse, larvae, hexagon, life cycle, drone, nectar, wax, swarm, egg

Create a word wall that features the key vocabulary for the unit.

- Begin the unit by completing a KWL chart (what we **know**, what we **want** know and what we have **learned**) focussing on the importance of bees in our environment. Then show the students a simple video which elaborates on the significance of bees, for example: [Why do we need bees?](#) As a class, discuss what might happen if bees disappeared from the environment. Connect this discussion to the first chapter of the novel, when Bee says to Herbie that she and her family are looking for a new home. Why is it becoming so difficult for bees to find places to live?
- Conduct an inquiry research project into why honey bees are disappearing. As part of the project, students should provide a range of possible solutions to the problem. Students could display their findings either via a simple

poster or a more complex Powerpoint-style presentation. Alternatives to PowerPoint include [Prezi](#), [Project](#), [Haiku Deck](#) and [Powtoon](#).

- Introduce the anatomy of a honey bee to the class. Provide students with a diagram of a bee. Using the definitions, label the different parts of the honey bee.
- Watch a video that provides an overview of the life cycle of a honey bee, such as this one: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ePic3dtykk>
Use a cycle-style graphic organiser to allow students to summarise the information provided in the video.

In chapter 1, Herbie sings about the important work that bees do in our gardens. *“Busy bees come visiting, buzzing through the flowers, the pollen on the stamen, has special magic powers! The bees help spread the pollen, as they fly around, and this helps fruit and veggies grow, up out of the ground!”*. He is describing the pollination process.

- As a class, make a list of your favourite fruits and vegetables. Then, using the internet and non-fiction books from the school library, work out which of these plants can pollinate themselves, and which require the assistance of bees.

Define the word ‘pheromone’.

- Explain that bees rely on pheromones to communicate with one another. Describe the different types of pheromones emitted by different bees at specific times (e.g. alarm or attractant pheromones). As a way of simulating the effect of pheromones, set up a maze in the classroom for the students to work their way through using only their sense of smell. Students should be divided into small groups which will be their ‘colony’.

- The teacher will provide a variety of different scented jars, such as vanilla, eucalyptus, cinnamon and so on. Before starting the activity, different instructions will be attributed to the different smells. For example, eucalyptus could mean 'go straight ahead', while vanilla might mean 'turn right'.
- Place a jar of honey at the end of the maze. Each group will take it in turns to nominate a team member to blindfold. This person will then work their way through the maze until they reach the honey pot. Their team mates will be responsible for ensuring that the participant is safe from hurting themselves, but they are not allowed to give away any hints.
- To add an element of competitiveness, the teacher could time each group to determine a winner. At the conclusion of the activity, students should discuss their experiences with others in the class.

Arrange an excursion to a local bee apiary (honey farm), or invite a beekeeper to the school to talk to the children about what is involved in maintaining a beehive and collecting honey.

- This way, children will have an opportunity to view a hive up close, along with the special equipment used by beekeepers when collecting honey.

Conduct a short field study experiment into honey bees at your school.

- Encourage students to develop their own research questions and hypotheses. For example, they may like to investigate the number of bees that are present in their school gardens at different times of day, during different types of weather or at different times of year.
- Another possibility is that they could focus on the type of flowers that honey bees prefer. Students must appropriate equipment to record formal observations.
- As a motivating tool, teachers could share this inspirational story about a group of students who had their original scientific experiment published in a peer-reviewed journal: [8-Year-Olds Publish Scientific Bee Study](#).

- At the conclusion of their investigation, students will write a scientific report which summarises their findings under these headings: title, material, hypothesis (predictions), steps, results and conclusion. The students should compare their findings with others in the class.

Ask the students to write and perform a short drama presentation for a younger group of students during which they showcase what they have learned about the life cycle and general importance of bees.

Plant a bee-friendly garden at school (or at home).

- This site has many excellent tips on the right plants to use:
<https://www.abc.net.au/gardening/factsheets/bring-in-the-bees/9440530>

3. Sustainability activities

The biosphere is a dynamic system providing conditions that sustain life on Earth.

All life forms, including human life, are connected through ecosystems on which they depend for their wellbeing and survival.

Sustainable patterns of living rely in the interdependence of healthy social, economic and ecological systems.

Actions for a more sustainable future reflect values of care, respect and responsibility, and require us to explore and understand environments.

Sustainable futures result from actions designed to preserve and/or restore the quality and uniqueness of environments.

See <https://www.plt.org/educator-tips/ecosystem-activities-elementary-students>

These sources were helpful when compiling this resource

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