

TRABAJO DE FIN DE GRADO

Teaching Trough Stories

Where the Wild Things are

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Teaching Unit

My TFG is a proposal about a different way to work and practice English in the class through reading and learning. Picturebooks offer lots of possibilities in education and second language learning. Thus, this teaching unit is based on the use of picturebooks as the main tool to guide the process of second language learning.

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1. Introduction

This teaching unit is based on the use of picturebooks as the main tool to guide the process of second language learning. As Cameron (2001:159) suggests, when working with stories in the English class, children can enjoy while learning through the language contained in a story and the imaginary world that it presents.

I intend to show that there is another way to teach the second language, without a text book that imposes certain limits which seem to restrict the teacher's freedom when deciding how to teach English.

Thus, this teaching unit gives the opportunity to have a more natural learning for the children, which will be able to use imagination and stories as a motivational way to learn English.

2. Definition of Picturebooks

In this teaching unit I follow the approach defended by Pérez (2004: 385-408), who analyses the possibilities offered by stories in order to develop communicative competence, highlighting in particular the discourse competence, as it involves the understanding of different forms of language, how these forms are internally constructed and how text relate to the different factors as context or situation.

To continue with the discourse competence and how it is developed in children, Nunan (1993: 79-84) argued that readers have two types of mental processes used to process the discourse and create relationship between it and their background knowledge. In the bottom-up approach the understanding comes from the smallest units to the highest, from letters, words, phrases and sentences. This model, for Hudson (2007: 33) stands for the "lexical meaning", so children are able to construct meaning from that in a linear way. On the other hand, in the top-down processing understanding comes from the highest units to the lowest (Pérez Valverde, 2004: 406). In Hudson's words (2007: 33), "a reader approaches a text with conceptualizations above the textual level already in operation and then works down to the text itself". Furthermore, this reader create his own and personal meaning applying background knowledge to the text.

In this teaching unit the process promoted is the top-down one, because the strategies that can be taught with it are a must-have in a good reader. Some of them are: using background knowledge, identifying the genre, scanning the text and discriminating important information (Nunan 1993: 82).

Attempting to determine what a picturebook is, Nikolajeva (2006: 1) defined it as “an art form based on the combination of two levels of communication, the visual and the verbal” or, using a semiotic terminology, “picturebooks communicate by means of two separate sets of signs, the iconic and the conventional”. In broad terms, iconic signs are those where “the sign is a direct representation of its signified” (Nikolajeva, 2006: 1); this gives to the iconic signs the characteristic of being universal; there is no need of any especial information to understand them. On the other hand, conventional signs have “no direct relationship with the object signified” (Nikolajeva, 2006: 1). In contrast with the iconic signs, these are meaningful only for people who know the code, who is into a given community. In a picturebook, both signs create a “synergy”, in which the text and the illustrations sequence cannot be complete without the other (Sipe, 1998: 98).

3. Relationship between picturebooks and the teaching of English

According to Evans (2013: 14), visual narratives can be a useful tool in the hard task of encouraging children to read. Picturebooks, due to their format, make children to be interested in more complex stories, easier than if it was a usual book. This is one of the reasons why picturebooks are so interesting in the teaching of English.

Moreover, picturebooks are considered multimodal texts, as they combine two types of communication: the visual and the verbal (Nikolajeva, 2006: 1). As Hasset and Curwood (2009: 271) pointed, the written language is no longer a central element in children’s books, because pictures or graphics have being given more importance; the teacher and students face the necessity of focus on many textual elements.

Siegel (2006) showed that “Children have always been multimodal; their social and cultural resources for making meaning include talk, gesture, drama, drawing, and ways of incorporating, integrating, and extending linguistic signs.” This proves that picturebooks offer to children a more natural way of understanding while reading.

Finally, one of the biggest advantages that the use of picturebooks entails on the teaching of English is the unlimited possibilities for interaction, provoked by the tension created between the iconic and conventional signs that appear in picturebooks (Nikolajeva, 2006: 2)

This tension is described by Sipe (1998: 101) as “the impulse to be recursive an reflexive in our reading of a picture book: to go backward and forward in order to relate an illustration to the one before or after it, and to relate the text on one page to an illustration on a previous or successive page”; in other words, “to understand new ways in which the combination of the text and picture on one page relate to preceding or succeeding pages”.

As Hasset and Curwood (2009: 272) explained, there is not a unique meaning, many meanings can be made because it depends on who the reader is and how he relates and connects the visual elements with the textual ones. Nodelman (cited on Sipe, 1998: 99) suggests that each sign has different capacities to convey dimensions of the meaning; words are better for temporal information while pictures are better for spatial information. That is the special thing about picturebook, each type of sign is able to complete the other one, fulfilling the possible lack of understanding between them. That is why picturebooks are such an excellent tool for teaching, because they offer lots of possibilities and facilitates the interaction between students and the practice of many mental processes characteristic of advanced readers.

4. Where the Wild things are

As shown by Pérez Valverde (2004: 395), one of the most interesting activities that can be used in the primary stage is storytelling. However, it is necessary to be careful with some aspects, for example, the lesson planning or the presentation of the story; but, the main thing to take into account is the book selection. In Cameron’s point of view (2001: 166) “children need to be able to enter the imaginative world that the story creates”. The characters must be close to the child so he or she can understand what happens in the story and the reasons for the characters’ actions.

Cameron (2001: 168-169) pointed out several criteria in order to select a picturebook in Primary. I have applied such criteria in my selection of Maurice Sendak's picturebook "Where the Wild Things are", and it fulfils all of them. These criteria are:

- Will the content engage the learners?: In my opinion, it will engage them because they can empathise with the characters and the plot is clear and interesting.
- Are the values and attitudes embodied in the story acceptable?: The book deals with childhood fears.
- "How is the discourse organised?": The discourse is organized with the prototypical format: Introduction, body that exposes a problem or adventure and a conclusion with the resolution of the problem or end of the adventure and a happy ending. In this case, the ending is not so prototypical as the "they all lived happily ever after"; the closing invites to the children's reflection about nightmares and childhood fears.
- "What is the balance of dialogue and narrative?": This book uses primarily the narrative. As Cameron (2001:168) suggests, narrative offers patterns of language useful for the grammar skills.
- "How is language used?": It is appropriate because it has lots of repetitive phrases and words that make the language learning easier.
- "What new language is used?": It contains the three groups of language proposed by Cameron (2001:169): "language that children already met, new language that will be useful for all children to learn from the story and new language that may or may not be learnt, depending on the individual children's interest".

Furthermore, it is a classic of English children's literature, winner of the Caldecott Medal for the most distinguished picturebook of the year, and globally recognized as one of the best picturebooks ever written.

5. Context

The school where we will implement our lesson planning is called “Virgen de Gracia”, a Catholic school located in an urban environment, in Granada’s city centre.

The students to whom the planning is addressed are in the fourth year of Primary. There are twenty students in this class, most of them with a faultless attitude and behaviour. However, there are a few pupils who need specific attention. Thus, we find:

- Two girls with a really low IQ. Both accumulate deficiency from previous courses in all of the curricular areas. They do not receive any special support out of the classroom, so the attention to diversity must be done in the classroom. Furthermore, one of them is part of a large family (eleven children) and she does not seem to have the attention she needs at home. She usually comes to school without the necessary material and does not normally prepare her homework.
- One student with attention problems. Although he has not been identified as a boy with attention deficit, he has some of the symptoms.

6. Lesson Plan

a) Unit objectives

1. To develop a positive attitude towards reading and stories
2. To get used to reading literature in English.
3. To improve the students’ pronunciation through the reading of “Where the wild things are”.
4. To develop communicative competence through the use of English in class.
5. To differentiate the parts that make up a story: introduction, body, and conclusion.
6. To fathom the intention of the book of treating and reflecting on childhood nightmares and fears.

In relation with the RD (1513/2006, 7th of December) all the objectives of the stage are represented in this teaching unit, those which are more related to it are number one, two, three, four, six and nine.

Related to the Common European Framework (CEF,2001), there are some objectives as:

- To meet the needs of a multilingual and multicultural Europe by appreciably developing the ability of Europeans to communicate with each other across linguistic and cultural boundaries, which requires a sustained, lifelong effort to be encouraged, put on an organised footing and financed at all levels of education by the competent bodies.
- To promote methods of modern language teaching which will strengthen independence of thought, judgement and action, combined with social skills and responsibility.

b) Contributions to the development of the basic competences

As it is exposed on the RD (1513/2006, 7th of December) the basic competences that can be developed within the Second Language Learning and, specifically in this teaching unit are:

- Linguistic competence: The contributions to this competence are direct; this teaching unit contributes to several skills (reading skills, writing skills, speaking skills...) and all of them improve the communicative ability, essential part of this competence.
- Learning to learn competence: The self-reflection on the language learning is a powerful tool and it also contributes to this competence. In this teaching unit it can be seen at the last lesson where the children are able to see the differences between their opinions at the beginning of the teaching unit and at the end of it; so they have to reflect on the processes that made them change their minds.
- Autonomy and personal initiative: The decisions made within the development of the learning to learn competence require the use of autonomy and personal initiative. Thus, this competence is linked to the previous one.
- Social and civic competence: This competence, due to its communicative nature, is related to the language learning, but also with this teaching unit in an important aspect. The pictures are used as a main tool and they are part of English literature so, it is a part of the English culture. This competence is related to be able to know and value different cultures.

- Artistic and cultural competence: Although this competence is very limited within the English teaching, it gains importance in this teaching unit due to the importance of the illustrations of the book. Moreover, this teaching unit tries to create a taste for the aesthetic and artistic elements of literature.

c) Contents

All of these contents have been designed following the contents proposed by the RD (1513/2006, 7th of December).

Conceptual

1. Characters
2. Parts of the story
 - a. Introduction
 - b. Body
 - c. Conclusion
3. Vocabulary (this concept depends of each child previous knowledge):
 - a. Active: ceiling, blinking, mischief...
 - b. Passive: Gnashed, sailed, tamed...

Procedural:

1. Describing the characters and elements appearing in the story
2. Classifying text and pictures into the three parts of the story.
3. Pronouncing properly the words appearing in the story
4. Using a clear intonation and speech when reciting the story or speaking about it.
5. Developing listening comprehension in communicative situations referring to the story.
6. Showing the meaning and intention of the story has been understood.
7. Developing creative and imaginative skills through writing and speaking and listening.

Attitudinal:

1. Empathize with the characters of the story.
2. Relate the story to personal experiences.
3. Express opinions and justify them.
4. Show interest in the reading process.

d) Evaluation Criteria

1. Be able to describe a character, their appearance and psychological features.
2. Be able to define each part in which a story can be divided.
3. Be able to classify different pictures with the part of the story to which they belongs.
4. Be able to use and understand the words appeared in the story.
5. Be able to express opinions about the experience of reading this book and its meaning both orally and in written form.
6. Be able to answer questions about the story and related them to personal experiences.

All of them have been selected from the information that is showed in the RD (1513/2006, 7th of December).

c) Attention to diversity

This teaching unit has been made with the purpose of helping each child in his or her language learning, so it is necessary to take into account the learning differences between them.

In this class the level of English is, more or less, balanced. However, as it was commented before, there is a boy characterized for being a fast-learner while two girls are slow-learners. Those special necessities will be treated in the class in an inclusive way to integrate the children. There will be the opportunity for the high-achiever to get more activities or to rise the difficulty of them one step. For the girls that are slower the teacher will have an special attention to be sure they are understanding each lesson, the contents will be explained slowly and several times for them and, if it is necessary, the activities can be adapted to their level, moreover they can have complementary activities and they can take the book home so they can read it more times.

In general, the materials of the teaching unit provide learning frameworks that take into account the participation and success at different levels.

d) Unit of evaluation and grading criteria

- Initial evaluation: The first activity in lesson 1 serves both to activate knowledge to know each child's initial level of oral expression.

7. Timing, activities in full and didactic suggestions

The teaching unit is going to last six sessions, each one of one hour with the exception of the fifth session that will last one hour and a half.

Every child needs a copy of the activity book that appear on the Annexe I. Some of the tasks of the activity book are for homework and all of them will be corrected at the end of the teaching unit. The reason of doing that is because the level of meaning that the children could achieve will be increased with the lessons as they pass and they will realise how their thoughts have evolved, and their opinions have changed. Moreover to read the book the class will have two big books and a presentation that can be projected in the whiteboard.

7.1 Session 1

It could be appropriate to explain to the children that in this book it is important to read and to look at the pictures.

SESSION 1	Description	Didactic suggestions	Contents	Objectives
Activity 1: Introducing the book	Look at the book cover and try to anticipate possible information about what is going to happen in the story.	The teacher role at this moment is to guide the children's observations and conclusions about the topic of the story.	P: 7,1,4 Att:3	1
Activity 2: Knowing the story	Listen to the teacher and pay attention to the book.	The teacher acts as a storyteller and has to ensure that every child is paying attention to both pictures and text.	C: 3 P: 5, 7	1, 2 ,3 ,4

Activity 3 (homework): The characters	Think about the characters of the book and describe them.	An important thing to explain before they go home is that there are some characters that appear only in the text or only in the pictures but they are part of the story too.	C: 1 P: 1, 7 Att: 1	4
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7.2 Session 2

This session must start with an explanation about the parts in which a story is divided: Introduction, body and conclusion and the characteristics of the introduction.

SESSION 2	<i>Description</i>	<i>Didactic suggestions</i>	<i>Contents</i>	<i>Objectives</i>
Activity 1: The introduction	Read and debate with your partner which pages correspond to the introduction of this story. Share your opinion when both of you agree.	The teacher should watch over the class and guide their opinions.	C: 2 (a), 3 P: 2, 4, 5, 6 Att: 3	1, 2, 4, 5
Activity 2: Imaginative writing	Answer the following questions in groups: 1. What happened to Max's room? Do you think he was scared when that happened? 2. How is the boat called?	The reason why this activity begins with group work is to give the opportunity to each child to show his or her opinion through speaking with their	P: 4, 6, 7 Att: 1, 3	3, 4, 6

	3. What do you think that happened in the way to where the wild things are?	classmates, after that the teacher will open a turn to share the opinions with all the class if there is enough time.		
Activity 3: Imaginative writing (homework)	As it is said in the introduction, Max made “mischief of one kind and another” What kind of mischiefs could Max do apart from the ones seen in the pictures?	Before the children go home the teacher has to activate the knowledge by asking the mischiefs that already appear in the book.	P: 7 Att: 1, 4	1, 4

7.3 Session 3

The lesson begins explaining the characteristics of the body of a story.

SESSION 3	<i>Description</i>	<i>Didactic suggestions</i>	<i>Contents</i>	<i>Objectives</i>
Activity 1: Storytelling, the body.	Listen to the teacher and look at the book.	The teacher will act the same as in lesson one telling the body of the story.	C: 2 (b), 3 P: 2, 5 Att: 4	1, 2, 4, 5
Activity 2: Imagining through the pictures.	Look at the pictures about the actions that Max and the wild things do when he is the king of all the wild things. What do	The teacher role is to guide children interventions. He or she must let the children talk actively about their	C: 3 P:1, 3, 4, 7 Att: 1	4

	<p>you think they are doing?</p> <p>Let's imagine some more things that they could do.</p>	<p>thoughts and correct gently the mistakes that can appear during the oral production.</p>		
<p>Activity 3:</p> <p>Party with the wild things (homework)</p>	<p>Do you think that Max is afraid of the wild things?</p> <p>Imagine that you are where the wild things are, what would you do? Draw yourself.</p>	<p>This activity treats on one of the objectives of this book: childhood fears.</p>		4, 6

7.4 Session 4

The session will start with the explanation of the conclusion of a story. Now that the three parts have been explained it would be good to summarise the entire characteristics and recall the pages of the book that integrate each part.

SESSION 4	<i>Description</i>	<i>Didactic suggestions</i>	<i>Contents</i>	<i>Objectives</i>
<p>Activity 1:</p> <p>Conclusion</p>	<p>Now is the child's turn to do storytelling.</p>	<p>By turns each child has to read aloud a part of the conclusion. This will improve the oral abilities and their confidence about speaking in English.</p>	<p>C: 2 (c), 3</p> <p>P: 2, 3, 4</p> <p>Att: 4</p>	<p>1, 2, 3, 4, 5</p>

Activity 2: Reflecting in the end	Do you think that Max was afraid when he was coming back home? What do you think that having his supper hot when he came back mean?	The teacher must ensure every child understand the ending and what really happened while Max were where the wild things are.	P: 6 Att: 1	1, 6
Activity 3: Personal experiences (homework)	Try to remember if you have ever experienced something similar to what the story tells about Max.		P: 6, 7 Att: 2, 4	4, 6

7.5 Session 5

SESSION 5	<i>Description</i>	<i>Didactic suggestions</i>	<i>Contents</i>	<i>Objectives</i>
Activity 1: The movie.	The children will see the movie <i>Where the wild things</i> are in their mother tongue.	At the end of the movie the teacher should encourage the students to speak about their opinions about the movie and its relation with the book.	P: 5, 6 Att: 3	1, 6

7.6 Session 6

The final session has two main parts:

1. To correct the entire tasks that were for homework and to see the differences between what the children answered and what they think now.
2. To do the final activities, designed to value the child's final improvement (final assessment). Due to it these activities will be related to the evaluation criteria

The final activities are:

SESSION 6 <i>Final activities</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Didactic suggestions</i>	<i>Evaluation criteria</i>
Activity 1:	Classify these pictures in the following boxes: Introduction, body and conclusion. Explain what information should include each part.		2, 3
Activity 2:	Fill in the following gaps with the words that appear in the book.		4
Activity 3:	Choose your favourite or favourites characters of the story. Describe them.	It has to be in written form.	1, 5
Activity 4:	What is your opinion about the story and its ending? Can you relate it to any personal experience?	This activity does not appear in the activity book. The teacher will call each child to pick the activity book and at that moment he or she will ask individually these questions to the children.	5, 6

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9. Webgraphy

<http://applefortheteach.blogspot.com.es/2012/07/reading-assessment.html>

(Continuous assessment chart taken from here)

Madrid, D.

<http://www.ugr.es/~dmadrid/Tefl/Common%20European%20Framework%20for%20Languages.pdf>

10. Annexes

a) Activity book

WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE



STORY AND PICTURES BY MAURICE SENDAK

ACTIVITY BOOK

Name: |

LESSON 1

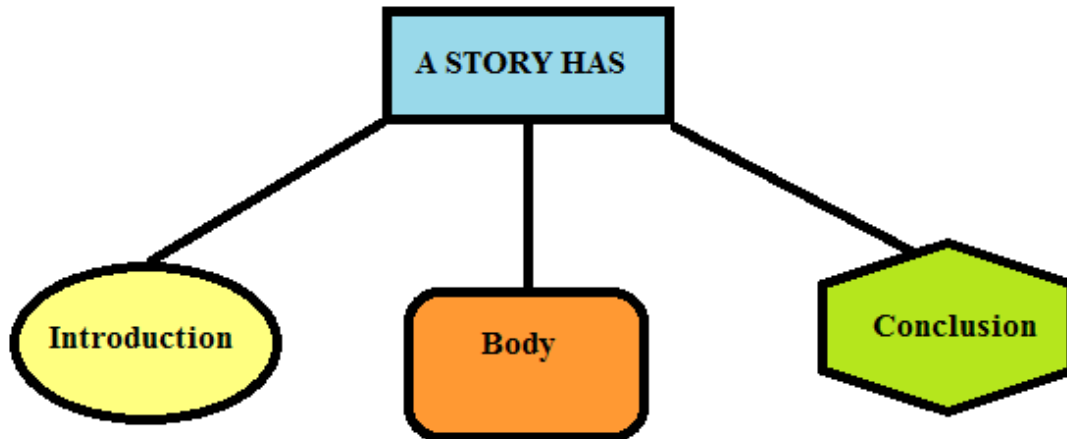
1. Look at the book cover and describe what you see. Speak with your partners about what you think that is going to happen in the story.

2. Now that you have listened to the story, think about the characters of the book and describe them.

Descriptions

Drawing

LESSON 2



Is the first part of the story. This part shows where and when the story will take place and the main characters (one or more protagonists).

- 1. Read and debate with your partner which pages correspond to the introduction of this story. Share your opinion with the rest of the class when both of you agree.**

The introduction goes from page _____ to page _____.

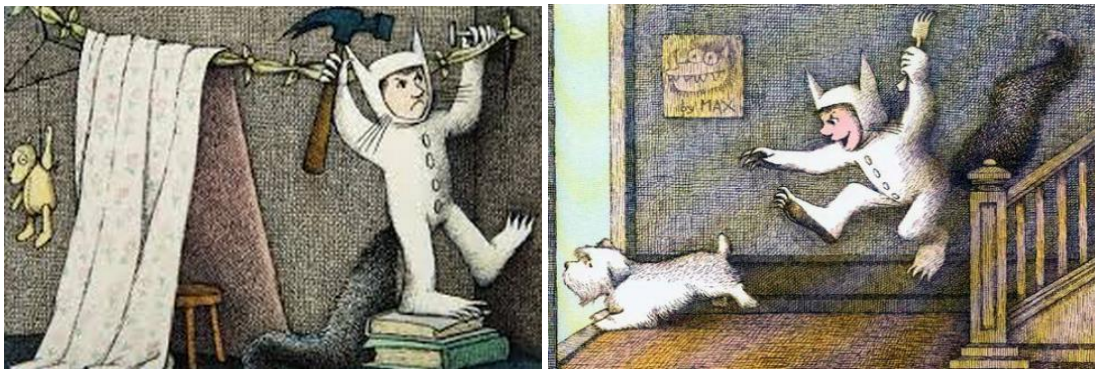
- 2. Answer the following questions in groups:**

1. What happened to Max's room? Do you think he was scared when that happened?

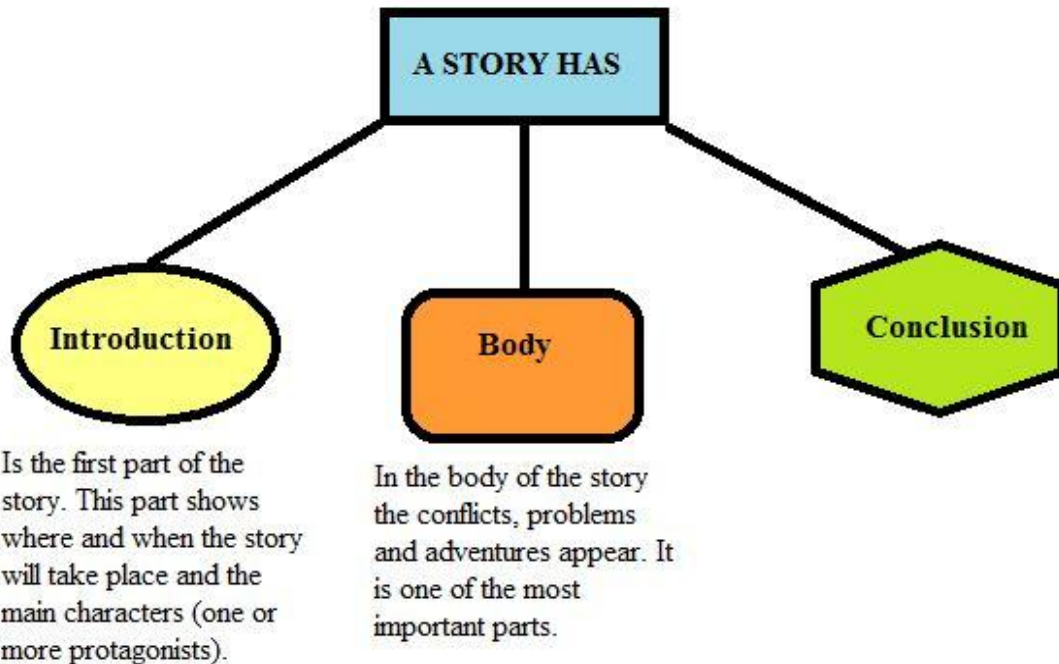
2. How is the boat called?

3. What do you think that happened in the way to where the wild things are?

3. As it is said in the introduction, Max made “mischief of one kind and another” What kind of mischiefs could Max do apart from the ones seen in the pictures?



LESSON 3



- 1. Listen to the teacher and look at the book. Where is the body of the story?**

The body of the story goes from page _____ to page _____.

- 2. Look at the pictures about actions that Max and the wild things do when he is the king of all the wild things. What do you think they are doing?**

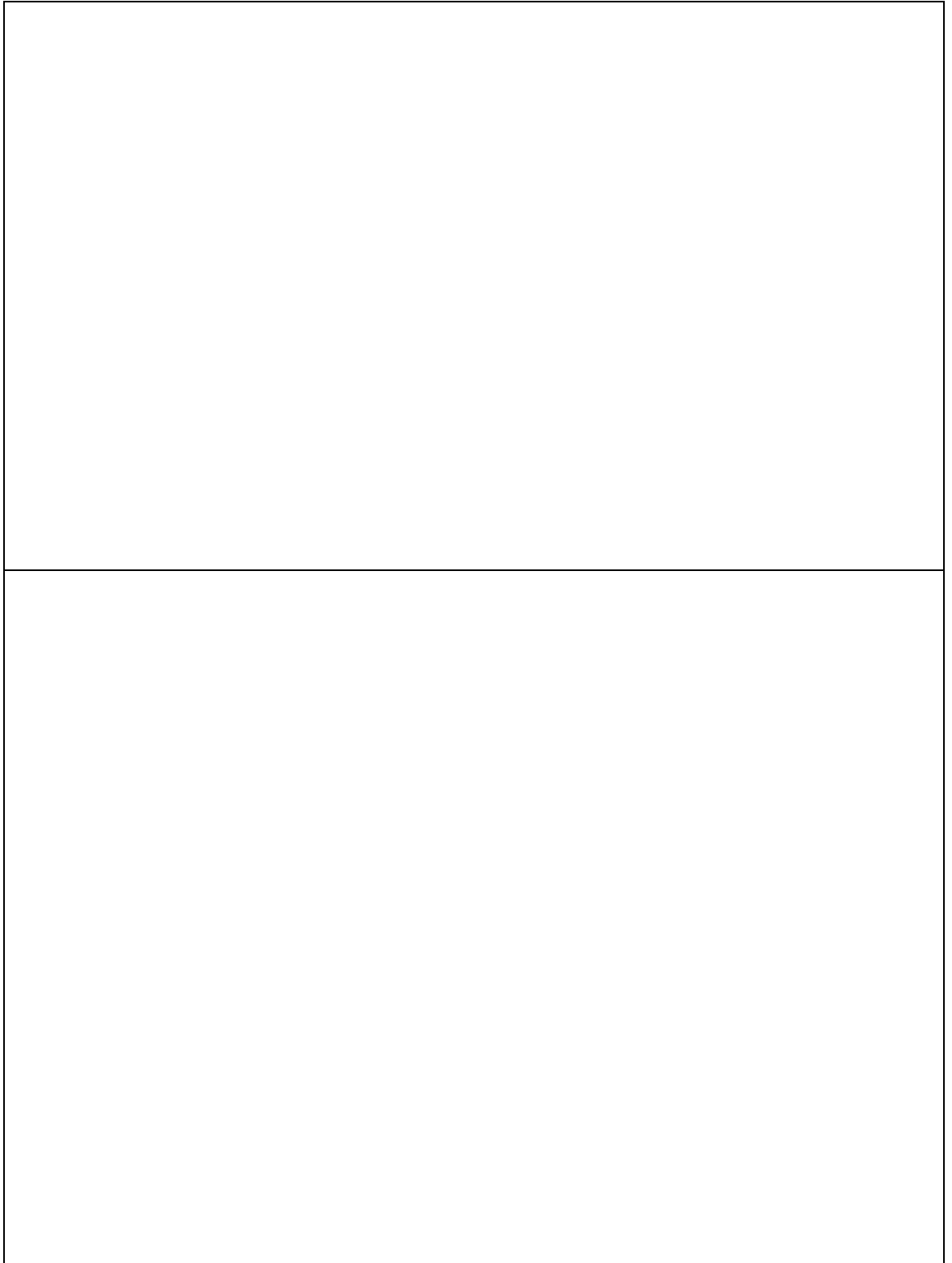


Let's imagine some other things that they could do.

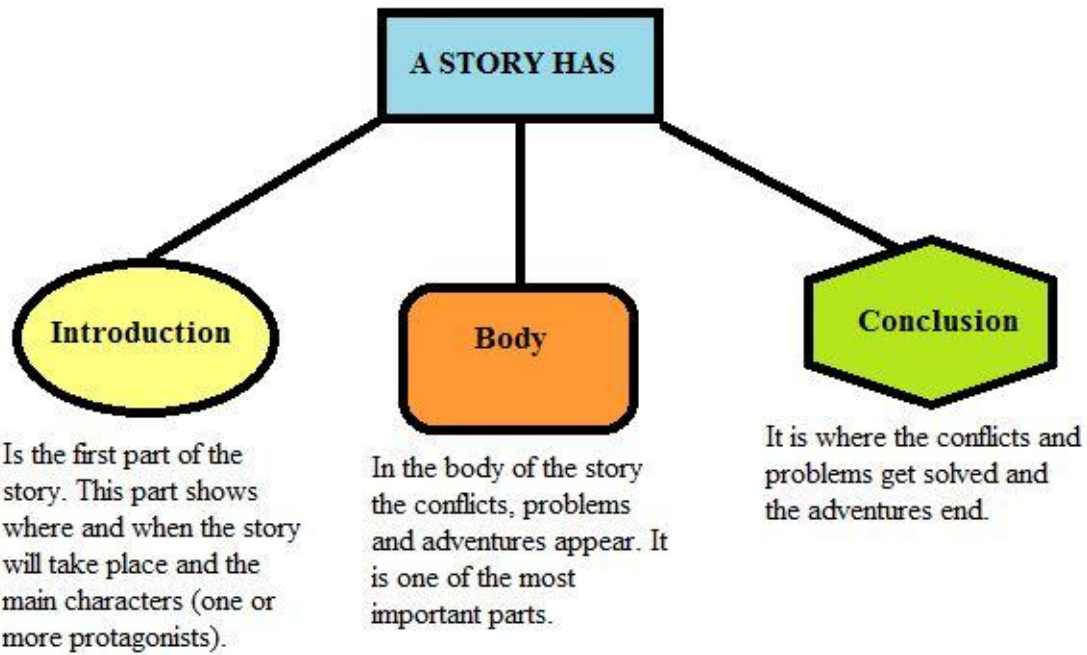
3. Do you think that Max is afraid of the wild things? Why?

Imagine that you are where the wild things are, what would you do? Draw yourself.

I would _____ and _____.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a drawing. It is divided into two horizontal sections by a single line across the middle.

LESSON 4



1. Do you think that Max was afraid when he was coming back home?



What do you think that having his supper hot when he came back mean?



2. Try to remember if you have ever experienced something similar to what the story tells about Max.

LESSON 6: Final activities

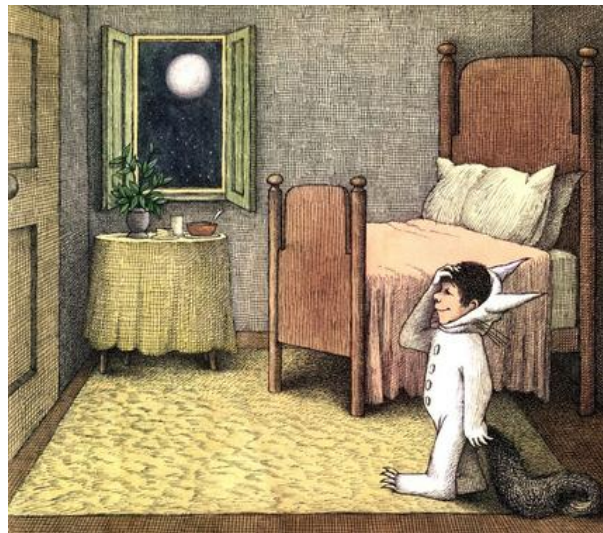
1. Classify these pictures in the following boxes:

Introduction, body and conclusion. Explain what information should include each part.

Introduction

Body

Conclusion



The introduction _____

The body _____

The conclusion _____

2. Fill in the following gaps with the words that appear in the book.



And when he came to the place where the _____ are
they roared their terrible _____ and _____ their terrible
teeth and rolled _____ their terrible eyes and showed their
_____.

3. Choose your favourite or favourites characters in the story. Describe them.

My favourite character is/ are _____.

He/ She/ They _____
