

Week 1 at a Glance

Book for the week: *Max's Words* by Kate Banks

In *Winnie-the-Pooh*: The first half of chapter 1, "In Which We Are Introduced to Winnie-the-Pooh and Some Bees, and the Stories Begin"

Optional Materials:

More books by Kate Banks

A collection of stamps or coins, or something similar

Grammar and Mechanics:

Alphabetical order

Word order in a sentence

Composition: Write a short story or start a word collection



Week 1: Max's Words

Day One

Literature

Read *Max's Words* with your student, ask the following questions, and record the responses in the space to the right:

What does Max's brother Benjamin collect? (stamps)	
What does Max's brother Karl collect? (coins)	
Can you name at least three types of words that Max collects? (Any three or more of the following: small words, bigger words, words that make him feel good, things he likes to eat, words spoken to him, favorite colors, and words he did not know.)	
Max puts his words together and gets what? (There are two correct answers: a thought (sentence) and a story.)	
What is Max's story about? (It is about a worm who wishes he were a snake.)	

Grammar and Mechanics

This week I introduce two topics: alphabetical order and sentence structure. Most children pick up the idea of alphabetical order fairly quickly (though it's common for children at this age—and older—to mentally run through the alphabet to find out if *M* is before or after *L*, etc.—so don't let that worry you). The important thing about alphabetical order here is not to automatically know where each letter falls in the alphabet, but to understand you start with the first letter of the word, then if they're the same you look at the second letter, etc.

Sentence structure, on the other hand, is a complex subject that the dedicated grammar student could still be working on in college. Here I'm only concerned with a gentle introduction, free of technical terms. (The idea of subject and predicate was introduced in Level Cloud, and I teach on it again in this guide.) But for this lesson, I'm simply imparting the idea that word order in English matters. (This can be especially challenging for students who have a different language as their first language because many languages have much looser rules for word order, having other ways to impart the necessary meanings.)

Today's page is alphabetizing words by their first letter.

Gently introduce the concept by looking through a child's dictionary together, noting the alphabetical order. (This can also help reinforce the concept.)

Reinforce the concept by finding more words to alphabetize. You could use some of the words Max collects, or you could ask your student to name three things they like to eat, three colors, etc. Write the words on notecards (one per card) then have your student alphabetize them. For some real-world, hands-on reinforcement, ask your student to look up a word in the dictionary and/or go to the library together and let them find a favorite author's books in the fiction section (alphabetized by author's last name).

Answers to Workbook Page

1. Ben
Karl
Max
2. coins
stamps
words
3. boat
car
plane
train

Composition

This week you and your student have a choice. In Lightning Literature Level Cloud, an optional activity for students was to start their own list of words, entering five to ten words each week in their dictionary pages. This continues to be an option this year. I detail this more in the introduction to this guide.

However, children who are not interested in this approach might wish to start a word collection that is similar to Max's. If they choose this option, they will start the collection this week, rather than writing a composition, and add to the collection all year. This will involve finding words each week that they want to add to their collection. They won't need to cut them out, just write them down. Instead of putting them on alphabet pages, they will come up with their own categories just as Max did. (I give sample categories for you later this week.)

If your student is uninterested in a word collection, they can write a short story that starts with the line at the end of this book: *Once there was a big brown dog.*

Today they pick which of these activities they want to do.

Day Two

Literature

When discussing the book with your student, use these guidelines to help you:

A boy’s two brothers have collections which they will not share with him. So he begins his own collection of words. They make fun of him at first, but when he starts a story with his words they join in.

Story

Max is the main character. He is creative and he’s independent enough to collect what he wants even though his brothers make fun of him. His brothers are the supporting characters and they are alike. Although the book never says, Max seems to be the youngest. In the beginning, his brothers won’t share with him and are unhelpful. By the end of the book, Max has become their equal because he has a collection they also find interesting.

Character

This is set in Max’s home. We don’t know how much time passes, but it doesn’t appear to be more than a few months at most.

Setting

The brothers collect stamps, coins, and words. A fun aspect of the art is the cut-out words of Max’s which make groups and sentences.

External Details

Most of the internal details have to be inferred. Max probably feels left out when his brothers have collections (that they won’t share) and he doesn’t have one. He may be starting a collection just to be like his brothers, but it’s clear that he comes to love his word collection by the amount of work he puts into it. In the end, the pictures make clear that all the boys are happy.

Internal Details

Max wants to be part of his brothers’ collections and they won’t let him. This conflict is overcome when Max has a collection they want to share, so they also let him share theirs.

Conflict

Grammar and Mechanics

Today I move on from alphabetizing by first letter to alphabetizing by the second letter when words start with the same letter.

Introduce the idea more gently by completing this page with your student. If necessary, cover the first letter of each word, to help your student to focus on the second letter.

Reinforce the concept by finding more words to alphabetize. Have your student think of three animals (foods, whatever) that begin with **B** (**R**, **S**, you choose the letter). Write each one on its own notecard, then have the child alphabetize them.

Provide more challenge by asking your student what they would do if the first two letters were the same. Write three words that fit that criteria (baby, ball, bat) on notecards and ask them to alphabetize them.

Answers to Workbook Page

1. rat
river
rope
2. ball
brown
bug
3. salt
sheep
sleep
step

Composition

If your student chose to write the story about the dog:

Reread the story Max and his brothers wrote about the worm. Discuss with your student that there are two characters (the worm and the alligator) and a conflict that is resolved (the alligator wants to eat the worm, but the worm goes back in his hole). Today, your student will think of a second character for the story, a conflict between the dog and this other character, and how this conflict is resolved. Make notes about these things they can refer to tomorrow when they write their rough draft.

If your student chose the word collection:

Today your student picks at least five categories for the words. They can pick more categories (but I wouldn't go above ten for now). As they continue throughout the year, they can always add new categories.

Here are some sample categories, in addition to those Max used:

Funny words
Long words
Words that sound beautiful
Words that sound mean
Favorite animals
Favorite things to do
Words that are hot
Words that are cold
Words that are hard to pronounce
Words that are hard to spell
Words that say how something tastes
Words that say how something smells
Moving words
Still words
Loud words
Quiet words

The categories are endless. Also, the words that go in the categories don’t have to be obvious. They can be from various parts of speech and address the category in different ways, as long as they make sense to your student. For example, “Words that are hot” could include adjectives that are similar to hot (fiery), nouns that are hot (sun), verbs that your student gets hot doing (run), the word hot in a familiar second language (caliente), or even words that you don’t necessarily associate with the idea of hot but do have a connection when you think about it (embarrassed (your face gets hot)).

If your student is stressed about the idea of choosing categories, let them know that they can always add more later or they may even combine some if they find that works better. This is a flexible process.

Reading Journal

Turn to the appropriate page in your reading journal for the week’s book. Have your student write or dictate a brief summary of the story then a sentence expressing something they felt about the book. Finally, have your student choose one sentence from the book to copy down, at least in part, for handwriting practice.

Day Three

Literature

Read *Max's Words* with your student, ask the following questions, and record the responses in the space to the right:

Do you collect anything, or is there something you would like to collect?	
Why do you think people like collecting things?	
Why does it make a difference which order Max puts his words in? (What is shown in the book is that a sentence made from Max's words will have a different meaning depending on the words' order. An equally good answer is that you might not get a sentence at all depending on the order.)	
Even though Max chooses to collect words, how do we know that he's still interested in his brothers' collections? (Max offers to trade some words to his brothers for a stamp and a coin.)	
When do his brothers finally get very interested in Max's word collection? (when Max writes a story)	
What might be the moral of Max's story about the worm? (“Be happy with who you are.” “Don't wish to be something you aren't.” “Like what your are and your own special features.” Anything along those lines.)	

Grammar and Mechanics

Today, have your student choose five to ten words to put in the dictionary pages (if they are not doing the word collection). They can be words from this week's reading, from daily life, etc. For extra challenge, aim for ten words and require that one or more be from the book, preferably ones the student didn't know before reading the book.

Day Three's Sentences

1. Max wanted to collect something, but he wasn't sure what.
2. Max opened the dictionary and found words he did not know.
3. Max's collection grew too big for his desk.

Composition

If your student chose the story about the dog:

Your student will write the rough draft of their paper. Do not do this in the composition book but instead on scratch paper or on a computer. Focus on the dog and the other character, the conflict, and the resolution.

If your student chose the word collection:

Together, review the categories your student came up with yesterday. Are they still happy with them? Do they want to add, remove, or change any? Ask them to explain any to you that you don't understand clearly, for example, "What are 'Words that are underground?'" or "What's the difference between, 'Words that make me happy' and 'Words I want to play with?'"

When you're both content with their initial category choices, they should add between one and three words to each category. These could be taken from their reading for this class, outside reading, or simply words they choose on their own.

Day Four

Literature

Begin reading chapter 1 of *Winnie the Pooh* ("In Which We Are Introduced . . ."), stopping with the sentence "And the first person he thought of was Christopher Robin."

Ask your student these questions: *Why do you think Pooh wants Christopher Robin? How else might Pooh try to get to the honey?*

Grammar and Mechanics

Today is the introduction to sentence structure. Students are to put an X by the sentences that could happen in real life and cross out the groups of words that don't make a sentence (realistic or fanciful).

Answers to Workbook Pages

1.
The lock fit perfectly into the key.
~~Into lock perfectly the the key fit.~~
The key fit perfectly into the lock. **X**
2.
~~Ride to love children horses.~~
Children love to ride horses. **X**
Horses love to ride children.
3.
The dog played with the ball. **X**
The ball played with the dog.
~~Played ball dog with the the.~~

Composition

If your student chose the story about the dog:

Today your student completes their final draft. (If there is still a lot to do and it would be too stressful to complete the composition today, use tomorrow for this as well.)

Review the rough draft together:

1. Is there a second character in addition to the dog?
2. Do the dog and other character have a conflict? Is that conflict resolved?
3. Review for any capitalization and punctuation rules your student already knows.

If your student wants to, they can illustrate this story as well.

If your student chose the word collection:

Today they add at least five more words to each group.

Day Five

Today is a free day to use however you choose. Finish any unfinished work from the week, review, reread the book and/or story, explore some of the ideas below, or simply take a day off language arts.

Extending the Lesson

Read more books by Kate Banks.

Introduce your student to two more fun words: *philately* (the study of stamps) and *numismatics* (the study of coins).

If you know someone who collects stamps or coins, ask them to show you their collection. Or, if you know someone who collects anything, talk with them about their collection and why they enjoy collecting.

Week 2 at a Glance

Book for the week: *The Old Woman Who Named Things* by Cynthia Rylant

In *Winnie-the-Pooh*: The last half of chapter 1, "In Which We Are Introduced to Winnie-the-Pooh and Some Bees, and the Stories Begin"

Optional Materials:

More books by Cynthia Rylant

Grammar and Mechanics:

Nouns/proper nouns review

Regular plurals

Composition: Report on an interview



Week 2: *The Old Woman Who Named Things*

Day One

Literature

Read *The Old Woman Who Named Things* with your student, ask the following questions, and record the responses in the space to the right:

Why does the old woman name things? (She has outlived all her friends, but she wants something around her she can call by name. So she decides to name things she won't outlive.)	
Does the old woman like her life? (Yes, she is happy.)	
Why hasn't the old woman named her gate? (Two of the hinges have rusted off, so she knows it will be gone soon.)	
Who keeps coming to see the old woman? (a puppy)	
How long does the puppy keep coming? (many months)	
The old woman felt if she didn't name the puppy she would never worry about him. Is that true? How do you know? (No, we know she worries about him because when he stops coming she goes looking for him.)	
What problem does the dog's lack of name cause? (When the old woman calls the dog catcher, she can't identify the dog by its name.)	
Why does the dog respond to the name Lucky even though she's never called him that before? (The dog recognizes her voice.)	

Grammar and Mechanics

This week is devoted to nouns. Today is a review of what I covered in Level Cloud on common and proper nouns. If your student has not yet been introduced to one or both of these, you may want to take today's work slowly, doing the page together and reinforcing it with additional work.

Answers to Workbook Page

1. She had an old chair named fred.
2. The puppy came to her house every day.
3. The house was called franklin.
4. Her dog lucky slept with her in the bed named roxanne.

Introduce the idea more gently by doing the workbook page together.

Reinforce the concept by reading through the book again, identifying the nouns together and distinguishing between the common and proper nouns. If your student started a word collection last week, they could add some common and proper nouns to it this week.

Provide more challenge by playing a game where you give a proper noun and the student has to provide an equivalent common noun ("**Hawaii**:" "state" [or "island"])). Then reverse it by providing a common noun and requiring the student to give a proper noun that is an appropriate example ("**language**:" "French").

Composition

This week your student will interview an older person (family member, friend, etc.) about one of their friends. Judging by the pictures in *The Old Woman Who Named Things*, and by the fact that she has outlived all her friends, the old woman is probably in her 80s. Try to find someone in their 70s or 80s who would make a good interview subject. If you can't, someone younger is fine.

Today choose the person to interview and write out a list of at least three questions to ask. The more questions your student asks, the longer the final paper will (probably) be, hence the more challenge, so adapt the number according to your student's ability and interest. Brainstorm as many questions as you wish, then choose three or more of those. Here are some sample questions, but feel free to come up with others of your own. I recommend letting your student brainstorm first, then add any of these if you wish:

Who is your best friend/was your best friend in college/was your most memorable friend?

Is there a friend you haven't seen for many years who you would love to see again?

What's your favorite story about something you did with your friend?

What does/did your friend look like?

What is/was the thing you love(d) most about your friend?

What's a special place you remember being with that friend?

Tell me about the time you first met your friend.

When did you last see your friend?

Once you and your student have decided on the list of questions they will be asking, put them in a reasonable order. Tomorrow you will do the interview. The interview can be done in person, on the phone, or via email.

Day Two

Literature

When discussing the book with your student, use these guidelines to help you:

An old woman who has outlived all her friends now only names the things in her life that she knows she won't outlive. For months, a puppy comes to her house, and she feeds it, but refuses to name it. Even though she doesn't name it, she is sad when he stops coming, so she finds him, names him, and brings him home with her.

.....

The old woman is kind and generous and is doing her best to remain happy even though her friends are dead. She is clever in choosing to name her things in order not to be lonely, but later she is wise in realizing how lucky she has been to know her friends. She realizes that the joy of companionship is worth the risk of losing that companion.

.....

This is set in and around the woman's home (and briefly at the dog-catcher's) over the course of about a year.

.....

The puppy/dog and dog-catcher are the only other living characters. The puppy is sweet but unremarkable. Even though some of the woman's things have names and provide her comfort, they are still just things.

.....

The woman starts happy, but without living companionship her life is incomplete. We can infer that at the end of the story she is happier and more fulfilled.

.....

There is no external conflict here, but the woman has an internal conflict between the natural human drive for companionship (which she gives into by feeding the dog) and her equally natural need to prevent the pain of loss (which she satisfies by refusing to name the puppy). Eventually the first of these wins out, and she names and adopts the dog.

.....

Story

Character

Setting

External Details

Internal Details

Conflict

Grammar and Mechanics

Today is an introduction to plural nouns.

Introduce the idea more gently by doing the workbook page together.

Reinforce the concept by looking for other plural nouns (made plural by adding s to the end) in your reading.

Answers to Workbook Page

1. cars, bikes
2. friends, llamas
3. tables, chairs
4. dogs, cats, books

Composition

Today you should have your subject and the questions you decided on. Conduct the interview. If the interview is in person or via phone, you will probably have to take some notes for your student. That's fine. (It's also great if your student is a quick enough writer to take the notes themselves.) If it's via email, your subject will be typing out the notes for you. Sometimes the subject may say something in the interview that inspires your student to ask a question not on the list from yesterday. That's great—let them explore wherever the interview takes them. It's always better to have more material than you will use than too little material.

Reading Journal

Turn to the appropriate pages in the Student Workbook. Have your student write or dictate a brief summary of the story, then a sentence expressing something they felt about the book. Finally, have your student choose one sentence from the book to copy, at least in part, for handwriting practice.

Day Three

Literature

Read the book with your student, ask the following questions, and record the responses in the space to the right:

Have you ever named anything you owned (besides a doll or stuffed animal)? Does anyone else in your family have names for any of their things?	
What is the real reason the old woman keeps sending the puppy away? (She knows she might outlive the puppy and doesn't want to lose someone else.)	
Even though the woman tells the puppy to go away, she also feeds it. Why? (She sees it looks hungry and likes it.)	
Why does the woman name the dog Lucky? (She thinks about how lucky she has been to have had so many lovely friends.)	
Even though the woman is happy at the beginning of the book, do you think she's happier at the end?	

Grammar and Mechanics

Today, have your student choose five to ten words to put in the dictionary pages or to add to the word collection. They can be words from this week's reading, from daily life, etc. For extra challenge, aim for ten words and require that one or more be from the book, preferably ones the student didn't know before reading the book. Reinforce this week's grammar by having the child choose some common nouns and proper nouns.

Day Three's Sentences

Once there was an old woman who loved to name things.

The old woman gave the ham to the hungry puppy and told it to go home.

The old woman was sitting in Fred reading a book on everlasting flowers when she saw the puppy through her window.

Composition

Your student will write the rough draft of their paper. Do not do this in the composition book but instead on scratch paper or on a computer.

The main focus on this rough draft will be taking all the information from someone else and deciding which are the parts your student wants to write about. If your subject told a story that would take five pages to write in full, your student needs to figure out how to condense that story into something manageable. Focus on the crucial questions: **Who? What? Where? When? Why? and How?**

For example, a long, beautifully-told story with lots of wonderful detail on how the subject met their best friend, may have to be shortened to

Josh and I met back in 1951 on my first day at college. He bumped into me and spilled food all over me.

Notice that I've written this in first person, as if the subject were writing it. It's up to you and your student whether to do it this way or do it with your student reporting on the subject in third person.

My grandfather met his best friend Josh on Granddad's first day of college. [Etc.]

If your student becomes confused or overwhelmed by any of these decisions, feel free to step in and help as much as necessary. The finished rough draft should be between one and three paragraphs long for most students.

Day Four

Literature

Read the rest of the first chapter of *Winnie the Pooh* ("In Which We Are Introduced to Winnie-the-Pooh and Some Bees, and the Stories Begin"). Before you start, review your student's answers from last week. How well did they predict the rest of the story? If their answers were different, can they imagine a different story with Pooh and Christopher Robin using the ideas they came up with? (They need not write this out, you can just talk about it if they want.)

Grammar and Mechanics

Today I introduce singular possessive nouns (adding 's).

Introduce the idea more gently by doing the workbook page together.

Reinforce the concept by looking for more examples of possessive singular nouns in your reading.

Answers to Workbook Page

1. the cat's dish
2. the girl's dress
3. Sam's book

Composition

Today your student completes their final draft. (If there is still a lot to do and it would be too stressful to complete the composition today, use tomorrow for this as well.)

Review the rough draft together:

1. Is there sufficient information from the interview?
2. Is the information in a reasonable order (e.g., if you tell when the friends met and something fun they did together, that information should not be in reverse order)?
3. Do all proper nouns start with capital letters?

The final draft of the paper should be in the composition book.

Day Five

Today is a free day to use however you choose. Finish any unfinished work from the week, review, reread the book and/or story, explore some of the ideas below, or simply take a day off language arts.

Extending the Lesson

Read more books by Cynthia Rylant.

Discuss whether there are any possessions that your student would like to name. Which ones? Why? What would they name them?