

“HANDA'S SURPRISE” – A story sack

Making a story sack for Ruishton Primary School was a lovely project which wasn't too challenging. We had asked for ideas from the teaching staff, of items which we could make for the school. This was their suggestion.

A story sack is an aid to reading. It generates enjoyment of the story and encourages a desire to read. The sack, rather like a large “shoe bag” is specific to an individual book. It contains the book and each of the characters and components of that story. When the sack is used the teacher holds the book and leads reading the story. Each child can be given a character or item from the sack ready to take their part in the story.

We were asked to work on “Handa's Surprise”, a reading book which the children were going to be using during the following term. The story was engaging but simple. It involved a little girl taking a basket of fruit as a gift for her friend. As she carries the fruit on her head, various animals steal a piece of fruit each from the basket. Handa is completely unaware, but by the time she arrives at her friend's home her basket is empty. Standing under a mandarin tree she asks her friend “what is your favourite fruit?” A goat makes a timely entrance, butting the tree with his head. As the basket is filled with falling fruit her friend laughingly answers “mandarins”.

There were a lot of separate pieces to be knitted for the story. Many patterns were simply not available so that in many instances we needed to be creative. The size of individual pieces didn't matter too much although storage space at the school is of course limited. We felt that it was important to make each item look as much as possible as it does in the book to enable children to easily identify their particular little piece of the story without confusion.

- The bag was a metre square remnant of strong cotton cord folded over, with a single seam and a draw string fastening.
- The two little girls were knitted. They were given dresses and hairstyles as similar as possible to the book.
- The basket was crotchet and was large enough to carry all the pieces of fruit.
- The fruit consisted of a mango, banana, orange, pineapple, avacado, guava, passion fruit and several mandarins.
- The animals were a goat, elephant, monkey, parrot, ostrich, zebra, giraffe and an impala
- For fun and as a little extra, a member knitted a little tree with tiny mandarins which would fall off when the tree was shaken.

We ensured that all the items were robust and fitted easily into the sack, with a strong cord drawstring.

