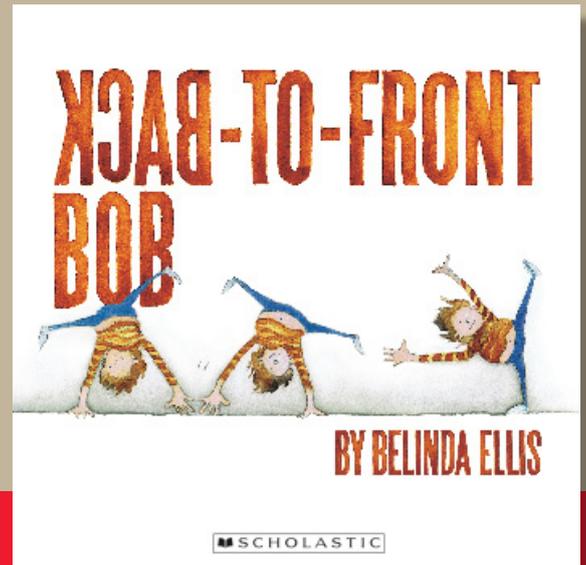


Back-to-Front Bob

Text and Illustrations

by Belinda Ellis



- Reading • Writing
- Listening • Vocabulary

About the Book

Back-to-Front Bob is an enjoyable exploration of many of the aspects of language that children find most intriguing. It stars Bob, a boy who adores words and loves to explore them with his family. He likes big words, such as juggernaut and gargantuan, but his favourite words are palindromes – words that read the same way forwards and backwards. His name, Bob, is a palindrome, and so are the names of Bob’s family members: Mum, Dad, Nan, Pop and Pip the pup. In *Back-to-Front Bob*, the text frequently moves out of the body copy and into the illustrations, weaving the words and pictures together in a clever manner that children will find both fun and fascinating. This sophisticated picture book makes an ideal introduction to the topic of palindromes and can be adapted for use with primary school children of any age or level. Readers will learn more about vocabulary without noticing it.

About the Author and Illustrator

Belinda Ellis has 25 years’ experience working as a graphic designer in New Zealand and London. She also has a passion for painting and illustrating. Recently, Belinda worked as a lead designer at Wellington’s Designworks studio – one of Australasia’s leading brand agencies. Her design work has won her a number of awards both in New Zealand and overseas. Currently she is working on a ‘pure’ design project of her own that will culminate in a coffee-table book and complementary merchandise, all to be launched in October 2014.

Back-to-Front Bob is Belinda’s first book with Scholastic NZ. Her second, *Punctuation Mark*, is another playful book in the same series. It cleverly combines words and visuals for a delightful dose of wordplay and fabulous fun with punctuation.

Writing Style

Back-to-Front Bob is a work of fiction based on fact, written in the form of a past-tense narrative. The sentences are short, snappy and easy to understand, and large doses of child-friendly humour bring the information to life. The character of Bob is seen interacting with the written words in the illustrations. He sits on and points out words. He also literally does cartwheels and spins about to demonstrate how he ‘flipped out’ and did a ‘full about-turn’ as he made further exciting discoveries. This interweaving of text and illustration provides a perfect opportunity to discuss different aspects of language, such as literal and figurative meanings. The vocabulary that is the focus of attention, such as ‘bombastic’, appears in capital letters allowing readers to easily locate it, and a glossary on the last page explains many of the terms and larger words used in the book.

Shared Learning and Discussion Points

ASK YOUR STUDENTS:

- Looking at the cover, can you see anything strange about the words in the title? Can you read the first word more or less easily in a mirror? Why?
- What's the difference between 'back-to-front' and 'front-to-back'? Is there any difference?
- What do you like about small words, such as 'at' or 'on'?
- What's Bob sitting on? (p.5)
- Can you say supercalafragilisticexpialidocious? Where does it come from? (see glossary) What do you like about it?
- What do these big words mean? (p.8) (Use the glossary on the last page to confirm students' answers.) What do you like about them? What other big words do you know?
- Is 'big' a big word? (p.9) What about these words: huge, enormous, massive, gigantic, gargantuan, elephantine?
- What does 'abbreviation' mean? Why did Bob think it was funny that it was such a long word? (p.9)
- If 'dog' becomes 'god' when read backwards, what do these words spell when read backwards: tool, parts, rats, sleep and paws? (p.10)
- Does 'palindrome' make sense backwards? (p.11)
- Read 'Bob' forwards. Now read it backwards. Why is this name a palindrome? Is your name a palindrome?
- How many palindromes can you find hidden in the picture on these pages? (pp.14–15)
- How are the pictures on these pages like palindromes? (pp.16–17)
- 'Eye' is a palindrome, but what about 'I'? Is it one, too?
- What do you notice about the spaces between the words in these two-word palindromes? (p.20)
- How do the pictures of Bob match the phrases 'full about turn' on page 20 and 'flipped out' on page 22?
- Why are the phrases 'full about turn' on page 20 and 'flipped out' on page 22 fun to use with palindromes?
- What is Bob's favourite dessert? Why is the word 'ice cream' magnificent even if it isn't a palindrome?
- What does the word 'superfluous' mean? There's a big hint in what Dad says next.
- What do 'bombastic', 'ostentatious' and 'rambunctious' mean? Can you use these words in sentences?
- Why do you think the author, Belinda Ellis, put the word 'Wow!' on the last page? How does it fit the book?

Activities

ACTIVITY 1: BIG WORD CHALLENGE

Compile a list of long words so that there are enough for all the children doing the activity. You could include the words in this book, such as juggernaut and rambunctious, as well as other fun words, such as pandemonium, infinitesimal, pterodactyl and voracious. Include words that suit the abilities and interests of your students.

Instruct the students in the use of the dictionary. Then, assign a big word to each child. The students must first guess and then find out the actual meaning of their word. They then write a glossary-type entry for it on a sheet of paper and illustrate it. If appropriate, you could also ask them to write a sentence using their word.

When they have finished, the students should present their words to the class. Then, together, arrange the entries in alphabetical order and collate them into a book or wall frieze.

ACTIVITY 2: FUN PALINDROME QUIZ

Create a palindrome quiz. Tell your students that all the answers are palindromes. Include questions such as:

- What noise does a bursting balloon make?
- What time of day is the sun the highest in the sky?
- What do you call songs that you perform on your own?
- What device uses radio waves to locate ships and planes?
- What is the proper name for a female sheep?
- What word is an abbreviation, or short form, of 'statistics'?
- Builders check if a surface is flat using a spirit _____?
- Which of these is a palindrome: *Madam, I'm Adam* or *Madam, I'm Bob*. Why?
- Can you write a palindromic number with 9 digits?
- How many palindromic names can you think of?

ACTIVITY 3: MIRROR WRITING

Talk about how the word 'back' in on the cover of *Back-to-Front Bob* is in mirror writing. Demonstrate how it looks normal and the other words look odd when the book is viewed in a mirror.

Tell the students they are going to do some mirror writing of their own. Instruct them to write a message (nothing rude or unkind). Then, if the students are able, allow them to rewrite their note in mirror-writing. They will need small mirrors and time to practise.

Alternatively, let them write the note using Microsoft Word. The text needs to be typed inside a text box. They then select the text, and choose Shape from the Format menu. Next, they choose 3-D rotation in the left pane and set the X setting to 180°. This will turn their text into mirror writing. It can then be printed and given to others to decipher.



teacher toolkit

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