



## Sharing books...

# You Can't take an Elephant on the Bus

by **Patricia Cleveland-Peck** (Bloomsbury, 2015)

**C**hildren will love the ridiculous nature of this book with its array of animals riding all sorts of unsuitable vehicles. There are monkeys in a shopping trolley, a tiger scaring passengers on a train and even a pig on a skateboard until, finally, they find a form of transport that can accommodate all of them.

### A GOOD CHOICE

Two-year-olds may enjoy seeing some of the animals portrayed in this book, but the language level is better suited to slightly older children. Three-year-olds will enjoy the story, while four- and five-year-olds will love the rhyming text and quirky humour.

This book could appeal to six- and seven-year-olds, who might enjoy reading it independently.

### SHARING THIS BOOK

This is a book that you should read by yourself first so that you can really emphasise the wonderful rhyming text when you come to share it with children. It is also worth taking your time as you read it aloud, as some of the sentences contain descriptive words that will be unfamiliar to some children. By slowing down, children will be able to process the meaning of words such as 'capsize' and 'trotters', as well as enjoying the rhymes.

This is also a book that is worth sharing several times. As children become more familiar with the text, they are then likely to start noticing the detail in the illustrations, including a cameo appearance of a lady who looks uncannily like the queen.

### SUPPORTING LEARNING

#### Personal, social and emotional development

A close look at the illustrations will provide plenty of opportunities for talk about the feelings and intentions of others. You could, for example, encourage children to look at the facial expressions of the creatures who are watching the centipede on roller-skates. Are the bees laughing at the centipede? And what is the other centipede feeling?

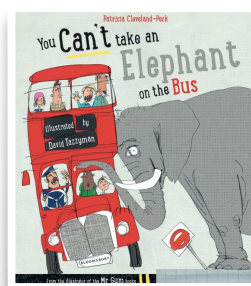
#### Language development

This is a wonderful book to stimulate children's language. First, there are many questions and discussions to be had about the illustrations which will encourage children to use language for speculation – for example, 'Why is the man in the bowler hat queuing for the bus looking at his watch?'

In addition, the text provides plenty of opportunity to encourage children to hear rhythm and rhyme, but also alliteration. It is also worth dwelling on words that may be unfamiliar to some children such as 'swerve' and 'vehicle', with the aim of helping children understand their meanings.

#### Early writing

Children may be interested in writing letters to some of the animals – tips to the pig on the skateboard, a word of warning to the monkeys in the shopping trolley, or suggestions for the tiger or seal on how to behave. As many children from the age of four years love rules, this could also be an opportunity for them to write some of their own on how to behave when we are with others.



#### ABOUT THIS SERIES

Over the course of this monthly series on sharing books with children, **Penny Tassoni** will look at a range of fiction and non-fiction titles, from rhyming books for babies to picture books that adults and children can explore together.

#### Role play

You could create role-play opportunities linked to some of the types of transport in the story – and issue tickets like those on the inside front and back covers of the book.

#### Mathematics

The story presents lots of opportunities to explore measure, as the animals' shape, size or weight is often what makes a means of transport unsuitable for them. The giraffe, for example, is too tall to go into the aeroplane, while the hippo is too big for the basket of the hot-air balloon.

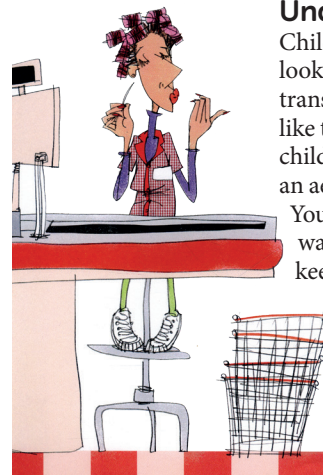
As well as focusing children on the vocabulary of measure, you could encourage them to:

- order the animals by size
- count the animals that feature in the story and see if this tallies with the number of animals on the roller coaster
- count all animals in the book, as in addition to the main animals some of the illustrations have some animal onlookers such as birds, pigeons and seagulls.

#### Understanding the world

Children may be interested in looking at different forms of transport in the local area. You may like to talk about what transport children have experienced, such as an aeroplane, bus or train.

You could also make boats for the water tray and see if you could keep a toy hippo afloat! ■



#### More information

Some children may also be interested in the 'Crazy colouring activity pack' at: <https://bit.ly/2FQnNgT>