



# In the loop

Evan Croker

## Focus phonics

ch written as tch as in watched, watch, twitchy, catch, fetched, sketched

r written as wr as in wrote, written, wrecked

## Tricky words

anything, could, move, somewhere, their, there, thought, through, tomorrow, two, where, worked, would

## Book summary

Two best friends who live in opposite houses try to communicate without technology one weekend. Their best effort involves putting a loop of string between their bedroom windows and attaching a note to it. All is going well until a squirrel jumps onto the string and wrecks their invention.

## Learning intention

**Phonics:** To decode words with the focus phonemes of /ch/ spelt tch and /r/ spelt wr, to work on this group of grapheme-phoneme correspondences that feature in the book and to extend to other known words containing them.

### Comprehension:

- Retrieve and record information/key details from the text
- Explain the meaning of words in context
- Summarise main ideas
- Make inferences from the text
- Make predictions that fit with information given in the text
- Make connections (text to self, text to text, text to world)
- Ask questions
- Visualise

### Fluency:

- Read at a natural speaking pace with minimal sounding out
- Pay attention to punctuation when reading, pausing and changing tone as appropriate
- Read with appropriate emphasis and intonation to support the meaning of the text

## Before reading

**Story discussion:** Look at and discuss the front cover and read the title together. Ask: What do you see? What could the title mean? What's a loop? (a circle) "In the loop" is a saying that means keeping each other informed. Who wrote the story? Have you read any other books by Evan

Crocker and what did you think of them? (in the Reading Road series, Evan has written Pie in the sky, Ducks in a row, Living room beach) Do you think this text is fiction or non-fiction and why? Look at the illustration on the title page. Point out that it is in black and white. What do you see? Could this be the girls' way of keeping each other "in the loop"? Read and discuss the blurb on the back cover and notice the illustration. What is happening? Flip through the book to get a sense of the contents. Invite students to share any prior knowledge of the topic of the book, and make predictions about what might happen in the story. Keep a note of predictions and return to them later.

**Quick phonics warm-up:** Read the words on the inside front cover together, with the focus phonemes of /ch/ written as tch and /r/ written as wr and find these words in the text. Think of other words that start with wr and list them, e.g. write, wrong, wreck, wring, wrap. Look at the words *watch* and *watched*, *fetch* and *fetches*. What is the past tense of *catch*? (caught – this is an exception to the pattern)

**Vocabulary check:**

brainwave p 8 sudden clever idea

fetches p 10 went and collected

**Morphology:** below p 24 – the root word is low; the prefix be- means by, near, next to, around or close: other words with the be- prefix are beside, behind. These words are adverbs showing where something is situated.

**Etymology:** p 4 communicate – to share information with others. 1520s, "to impart (information, etc); to give or transmit (a quality, feeling, etc) to another" from Latin *communicatus*, past participle of *communicare* "to share, communicate, impart, inform".

**Tricky word practice:** Display the tricky words *somewhere* and *anything*. Ask: What are the tricky parts of these words?

somewhere – the tricky part is ere which says /air/.

anything – the tricky part is a which says /e/.

Practise reading and spelling these tricky words.

## During reading

**Read the story:** This book may not fit into a single reading session. The end of Chapter 2 on p 15 is a good point to break the reading. Students can finish the book in a second group session or for homework.

Reading could follow one or more of the following approaches:

- Start by reading the text to students, then invite them to take over the reading. On p 4, ask: Why did the girls need a different way to communicate at home at night? (because they weren't allowed on phones or screens) Is this the rule in your house? What was the school project about? (they had to communicate without modern technology) Students carry on with the reading in a natural speaking pace with minimal sounding out.
- Students read silently at their own pace; listen to each student in turn as they read a brief passage.
- Divide the book up between students; they read a section each and then summarise the main ideas to report back on.

**Phonics support:** Remind students to sound out and blend the letters as necessary to read any unfamiliar words, but encourage them to read words with familiar letters and sounds fluently on sight if they can, without sounding out. If students get stuck on a word, model how to sound out and blend the sounds in the word. Encourage students to help each other with sounding out and blending and praise good use of this strategy, especially words with the focus phonemes of /ch/ written as tch and /r/ written as wr.

**Comprehension support:** Pause occasionally to talk about the story and encourage students to find and retrieve key details from the text, e.g. at the end of p 7, ask: What was the first idea the girls had? (flashing torches in morse code) On p 8, what was their next idea? (a paper plane). On p 13, what was the next idea? (a note on a string) Ask: Can you think of any other ideas?

## After reading

**Apply learning:** Discuss the story. What can you say about Cora and Yasmin? What can you say about the ideas the girls were trying? What was your favourite part of the story?

**Comprehension:** Review the predictions made earlier. Were they correct? Were there any surprises? Encourage students to retell events in the right order, chapter by chapter. What happened first, next, and then? Discuss the questions on the inside back cover.

On p 16, how did the girls plan to improve on their last idea? (make the string move not just the note by putting the string round wheels) Where did they get the wheels from? (doll's pram) Did this plan work? (yes, at first) What wrecked it? (a squirrel) How did Mum come to the rescue for the project? (she had a video on her phone of the girls sending notes across the street)

Make a list of the challenges the girls met. What can you say about their personalities? (they didn't give up)

**Fluency:** Choose a passage from the book and model how to read it fluently, paying attention to punctuation when reading, pausing and changing tone as appropriate. Students read the same passage, copying your reading. (echo-reading) Students then choose another brief passage and read it fluently/with expression to their partner and then swap over. Read parts of the text together (choral-reading) to build fluency and self-confidence. Students practise speed-reading the focus words from the inside front cover to encourage automatic recall (words that can be recalled automatically have been orthographically mapped to students' long-term memory).

**Spelling and writing through dictation:** Read out the following passage for students to write. It uses words and sentences from the text as these are decodable. The focus is on encoding (spelling) rather than creating content.

(page 7)

Yasmin found a torch when she got home. She ran up to her bedroom and flashed the torch on and off at Cora's window. Cora saw the flashes, but did not know what Yasmin was trying to say! She shook her head and shrugged at Yasmin.

(page 8)

Then, Cora had a plan. Yasmin watched as Cora wrote a note on a paper plane. Cora threw the plane as hard as she could, but it did not go far. It hit a pole and fell onto the footpath. A dog ran off with it.

"Come back here, dog!" Cora shouted.

Yasmin looked at the pole. It had wires on it. They went all along the street. She had a brainwave.

"What we need is string!" Yasmin said to herself.

## Follow-up activities

Students complete the follow-up activities:

### **Worksheet 1: Phonics**

/ch/ spelt tch. /r/ spelt wr.

Read and write words, write sentences.

Write dictated sentences.

### **Worksheet 2: Comprehension**

Fill in a story planner and retell the story.

Complete sentences with correct punctuation.

Adjectives.

Write a book review.

### **Worksheet 3: Science and Technology**

Make string telephones.

### **Worksheet 4: Maths**

Write a code and write a coded note.