

A STICKY PROBLEM

Frank had no idea why the words moved. All he knew was that they did. Not all the time. But whenever his teacher, Miss Strawberry, asked him to read out loud in class, the words leapt around the page in front of him.

It didn't make any difference how close he got to the book. It didn't make any difference if Miss Strawberry asked him at random. And it didn't make any difference if she went round the class in order so that he could see his turn coming. If anything, that was worse. As he waited for his turn, the words on the page became more confused than ever.

Frank tried to grab each word one at a time. If he was lucky, he could sometimes manage to tie two or three together before the others zoomed off. It was especially hard to find the start of the next line. He often ended up reading a line twice or missing one out completely.

The strange thing was that once his turn was past, the words slowed down and sorted themselves back into neat, orderly rows. As each of his classmates read, he followed them easily. He almost wanted another go to show that he could read properly. But he knew it wouldn't work. He knew that as soon as he tried, the words would jumble themselves up again.

This really annoyed Frank, because when he read stories to Northwick at home, the words stayed right where they were on the page. The bear enjoyed it when Frank read to him and said it was almost as good as eating a jar of honey.

But that didn't stop words hurtling around when Frank had to read in school, so Northwick had an idea. He suggested covering the page with honey to stick the words down and keep them still. Frank thanked

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Northwick for his idea, but said he didn't think the teacher would be too happy about that.

Word perfect

Of course, reading aloud wasn't the only problem Frank had at school. Because his eyes didn't work very well, he often couldn't see what teachers wrote on the board. And catching a ball was almost impossible.

So, one day, a special teacher arrived to help Frank. His name was Mr Vine and he worked with lots of children who had problems seeing. He talked to the other teachers about Frank's eyes. He tried to make sure they all remembered that Frank must sit at the front of the class and have things in clear, large print.

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He also sat with Frank and talked to him about what they could do to make things better. A few weeks later, after Frank had struggled through a lesson reading aloud, Mr Vine said: "I think we may be able to stop those words jumping about like they do."

This really surprised Frank, because he hadn't said anything about the words zigzagging around the page. Mr Vine gave him a long explanation about why words jumped about and said it was all to do with nerves. Frank nodded, even though he didn't understand and had no idea that words had nerves.

The trick, said Mr Vine, was to stop the words being nervous so that they didn't panic and leap about. To start with Mr Vine showed Frank how to keep his place on the page with a ruler or a piece of card with a hole in it. He got Frank to practice reading aloud to show that it worked. Much to Frank's surprise, he was soon reading as well as he did to Northwick at home.



Later on, when he told Northwick about his day at school, the bear gave a big sigh of relief. He reached under his bed, pulled out a jar of honey, unscrewed the lid and started eating. "I'm ever so pleased the words have stopped moving," said Northwick. "I know you thought my idea wasn't very good, but I saved this honey just in case. Now you won't need it."

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