

Case Study: Little Red Hen triumphs in the United Arab Emirates



I am a 4th Grade teacher in a government-run school in Abu Dhabi. I teach English, maths and science, in English, to two classes of girls. This is their second year of being taught in English and, as you would expect, their language acquisition is at varying stages, depending on their interest, their opportunities to practise out of school, their confidence and the importance given to education at home. Some students and their parents do not read or write Arabic, their home language.

The school is old and has very few resources, although there is a library with some English and some dual language books. There is no internet connection so most of my resources are produced on my printer at home. I use the 'Communicate in Print' program to make pictorial vocabulary charts and reading books. I have taught story telling and writing by using lots of story maps and drama, gradually building basic skills in grammar and sentence construction.

It is now nearing the end of the school year and the school was involved in 'Abu Dhabi Reads' a government-led project to inspire an interest in reading. I produced a simplified pictorial book of the Little Red Hen story, using a cat, a goat and a camel as the characters. The students read and then retold the story in the traditional Pie Corbett way, in English and Arabic, using actions and expressive voices to bring the story to life. They wanted to perform to other students and some made basic props to help with understanding. Their enthusiasm resulted in a mass performance by 120 students!

As a result, students have been enthusiastic and successful in writing poetry about water after studying images and building up their own word banks. The English language suddenly seems to have gained status!

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