

Rhyming Stories



practice with the sounds
and spelling of English

Susan Boyer

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Published in Australia by Boyer Educational Resources
for worldwide distribution.
www.boyereducation.com.au
Phone/fax: + 61 2 4739 1538

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National Library of Australia Cataloguing-in-Publication

Boyer, Susan Elizabeth

Rhyming stories – practice with the sounds and spelling of English

ISBN: 978 1 877074 066

421.52 English language – Spelling – Pronunciation

First print 2014

Second print 2015

See accompanying workbook & audio CD for English language and literacy practice:

Rhyming stories – language workbook ISBN 978 1 877074 370

Rhyming stories – audio CD ISBN 978 1 877074 387

Cover design by Susan Boyer

Acknowledgments and permissions– see pages 95 -97

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Introduction - the rationale behind ‘Rhyming Stories’:

The connection between the spelling and pronunciation of English words can be confusing. However, the spelling of most English words follows limited and, to some degree, predictable patterns. The ‘Rhyming Stories’ in this book provide a fun way to make connections between the sounds and spelling of English.

Some central points to know about English spelling and pronunciation:

- Twenty-six letters are used to write English.
- Forty sounds are used in spoken English.
- Since there are **more sounds** in spoken English than **letters** in written English, some **letters represent ‘more than one sound’**.

For example, each English vowel letter (a, e, i, o, u) makes a short sound, **as well as** one, or more, longer sounds when combined with other letters. For example, the letter ‘o’ is pronounced differently in each of the following four words:

‘Don’t stop work now!’

Also, different letter combinations can make the same sound. For example, the following four words all have the same vowel sound although the spelling for that sound is different:

‘She’s seen each piece.’

Many written English words fit into spelling patterns that you can learn. However, some words do not fit into any easily recognisable format and you will have to memorise them.

Therefore it’s important to understand how English spelling works and that, though there are always a few exceptions, the letter combinations of English are limited.

‘Rhyming Stories’ has been specifically designed to demonstrate the link between the spelling and sounds of English.

The learning approach used in ‘Rhyming Stories’

The rhyming stories in this book range from 150 to 250 words and each contains a simple narrative that focuses on a specific sound of English. Every story is illustrated with visual cues and colours which also help to demonstrate the link between the sounds and spelling of English words.

When learning any new skill it is important to realise that there is more than one method that can be helpful. This book uses a ‘multi-sensory’ approach to learning English spelling and pronunciation patterns.

A ‘multi-sensory’ approach means using various ways to learn and remember something. For example, this book encourages the use of all the following skills and senses:

- visual – seeing and identifying the spelling patterns and their relationship to pronunciation by reading the ‘Rhyming Stories’
- auditory – hearing and recognising words with the same sound in each ‘Rhyming Story’ on the audio recording
- physical – writing words with the focus sound with its spelling combinations (using ‘Rhyming Stories Language Workbook’ and/or ‘English Vowel Sound Spelling Charts’)
- logical – understanding the limited spelling patterns of English, such as which letter combinations are possible and which combinations never occur in English

The approach used in this book also recognises that **repetition** is central to learning, particularly with improving spelling. Most importantly, the approach takes into account that successful learning happens best when we **enjoy what we are doing**. Therefore, my aim with this book is to provide stories that are varied, interesting and fun.

I hope the following stories **make you laugh** (or at least smile) as well as **help you learn**.

How to use ‘**Rhyming Stories**’:

Reading and listening to stories at the same time is a very effective way to bring spelling and pronunciation into focus.

As each rhyming story is read and listened to on the audio recording, words in the story with the same sound can be identified and highlighted. It will become apparent that the accompanying illustrations for each story also provide visual cues to words with the same sound. For example, the illustrations for the story about ‘**Prue’s Blue Music School**’ include pictures of blue boots, a stool, a flute, noodle soup, etc. Word lists are provided for each story as spelling reference guides at the back of this book.

The accompanying resource book ‘**Rhyming Stories Language Workbook**’ contains various language activities which will aid in recalling spelling patterns: these include crosswords, matching words from the stories to their corresponding meaning, word-find and word-gap activities.

As an additional learning aid, ‘**English Vowel Sound Spelling Charts**’ (coloured charts with visual imagery which correlate with the focus sound of each story) can be utilised as a useful visual cue to each sound. Displayed in the classroom, they are helpful written record of each sound’s spelling variations.

PDF versions of ‘**English Vowel Sound Spelling Charts**’ (colour and/or illustrated) can be purchased, downloaded and printed to any size appropriate for your classroom or learning space.

See: www.englishbooks.com

The charts can be laminated and re-used multiple times for students to write words according to their spelling variations on the matching coloured chart as a lasting visual ‘ready-reckoner’.

A4 size laminated ‘**English Vowel Sound Spelling Charts**’ can be bought at:

www.boyereducation.com.au

'Rhyming Stories' will benefit English speakers who want to improve their spelling, as well as those learning English as a second language.

This resource can be used in a number of ways and for different levels of reading and learning.

- Each story can be simply enjoyed as a short illustrated narrative.
- The stories can be used to expand vocabulary and practise reading comprehension using the activities in the accompanying 'Rhyming Stories Language Workbook'.
- The stories can be read and listened to at the same time to become familiar with the pronunciation and rhythm of English. See the rhythm marked for each story from page 44.
- The stories can be used to practise a specific English sound using the audio recording to listen to the relevant story. Activities in the 'Rhyming Stories Language Workbook' focus on the link between English sounds and their spelling variations.
- Words with the same focus sound in each rhyming story can be identified and written by students individually before being checked against the Spelling Reference Lists provided from page 78. Additional practice for this is provided in the 'Rhyming Stories Language Workbook'.
- Used in conjunction with '**English Vowel Sound Spelling Charts**', 'Rhyming Stories' provides a motivating and relevant method of analysing the spelling variations of English sounds in a very 'hands-on' approach. (See previous page.)

I feel confident that once you start using '**Rhyming Stories**', the benefits will become apparent! I hope you enjoy using this resource as much as I enjoyed writing it.

Susan Boyer, March 2014

A glossary of words relating to spelling and pronunciation

alphabet: A set of letters used for writing language.

The English alphabet consists of **twenty six letters**:

a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, j, k, l, m, n, o, p, q, r, s, t, u, v, w, x, y, z

These 26 letters are categorised into five **vowels**:

a, e, i, o, u,

and 21 **consonants**:

b, c, d, f, g, h, j, k, l, m, n, p, q, r, s, t, v, w, x, y, z
(‘y’ makes a vowel sound in some words, e.g. ‘gym’)

rhyme: Words that ‘rhyme’ contain the same sound. For example, the words, ‘high’ ‘fly’ and ‘buy’ contain the same sound so we say that they ‘rhyme’.

(Note: The word ‘rhyme’ rhymes with the word ‘time’.)

syllables: Spoken words are formed with **syllables** or units of sound. In English, each syllable usually contains a vowel sound but may contain several consonant sounds. A word may contain one or more syllables. See page 42.

word stress: In English words with two or more syllables, one syllable is usually stronger (spoken more clearly and loudly) than the other(s). This is referred to as ‘**word stress**’. The term ‘stressed syllable’ refers to the primary (strongest) syllable in words of more than one syllable. See examples, page 42.

sentence stress: In spoken English sentences, words which carry the main message of a sentence contain *stressed* syllables. Stressing only the important words helps the listener to hear the message of the speaker. eg. I **want** to go **home**.

rhythm The beat (as in music) created by loud and soft, short and long sounds creates the rhythm of spoken language.

schwa: A frequent English sound that occurs in many words is a short, soft, **unstressed** sound represented in dictionaries by the symbol /ə/. The dictionary symbol /ə/ and its sound is called ‘**schwa**’. See more information on page 42.

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As you read the following stories, you can also listen to them on the accompanying audio recording. Before you begin, please read the information below about English accents.

A note on models of English

As there are many different English accents used worldwide, it is impossible to provide one model which represents them all.

It is important to realise that no two people (even speakers of the same area or family) pronounce sounds *exactly* the same way. That is why you can recognise a friend's voice on the phone even when you can't see them!

With models of pronunciation, it is also important to realise that the pronunciation of a word spoken slowly or separately will be different to the same word spoken within the context of naturally flowing conversation. Sounds can change slightly depending on other sounds around it in a word. This principle applies to all languages, not only English.

The important issue and aim for successful communication is for speakers to produce sounds and words that can be easily recognised and correctly understood by listeners.