

PICTURE BOOKS AS A BRIDGE TO ENQUIRY-BASED LEARNING: suggestions to support critical information and digital literacy in primary education


BRIDGE



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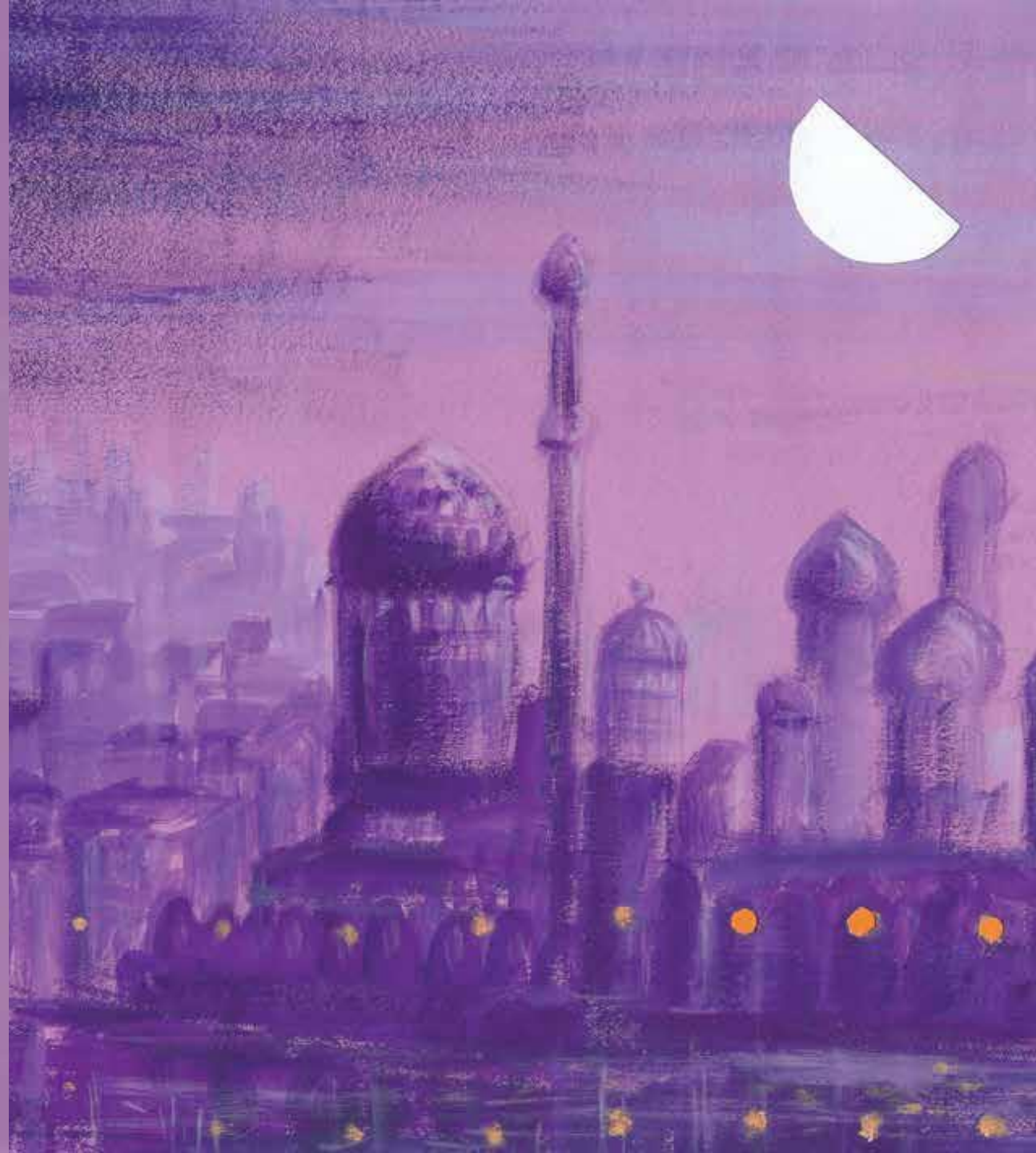
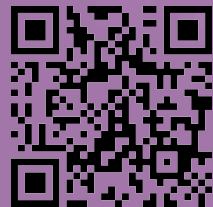
This booklet has been prepared as part of the BRIDGE project.

BRIDGE endeavours to foster critical information literacy and digital literacy as a vital basis for educating an informed citizenry that will stand up to dis/misinformation and hate speech, enhancing the relevance of curiosity, empathy, enquiry-based learning, critical thinking, and equality values, starting from childhood.

In this booklet, we will offer ideas for teachers, librarians, and other educators working with children aged 8-11 years to support their critical information literacy and digital literacy development by using picture books as a starting point.

BRIDGE also offers an open access portal with descriptions of selected children's literature and teaching resources that can be used as tools for information and digital literacy activities to help foster inquisitiveness, equality, informed, enquiry-based learning, and critical thinking.

<https://bridgeinfoliteracy.eu/>

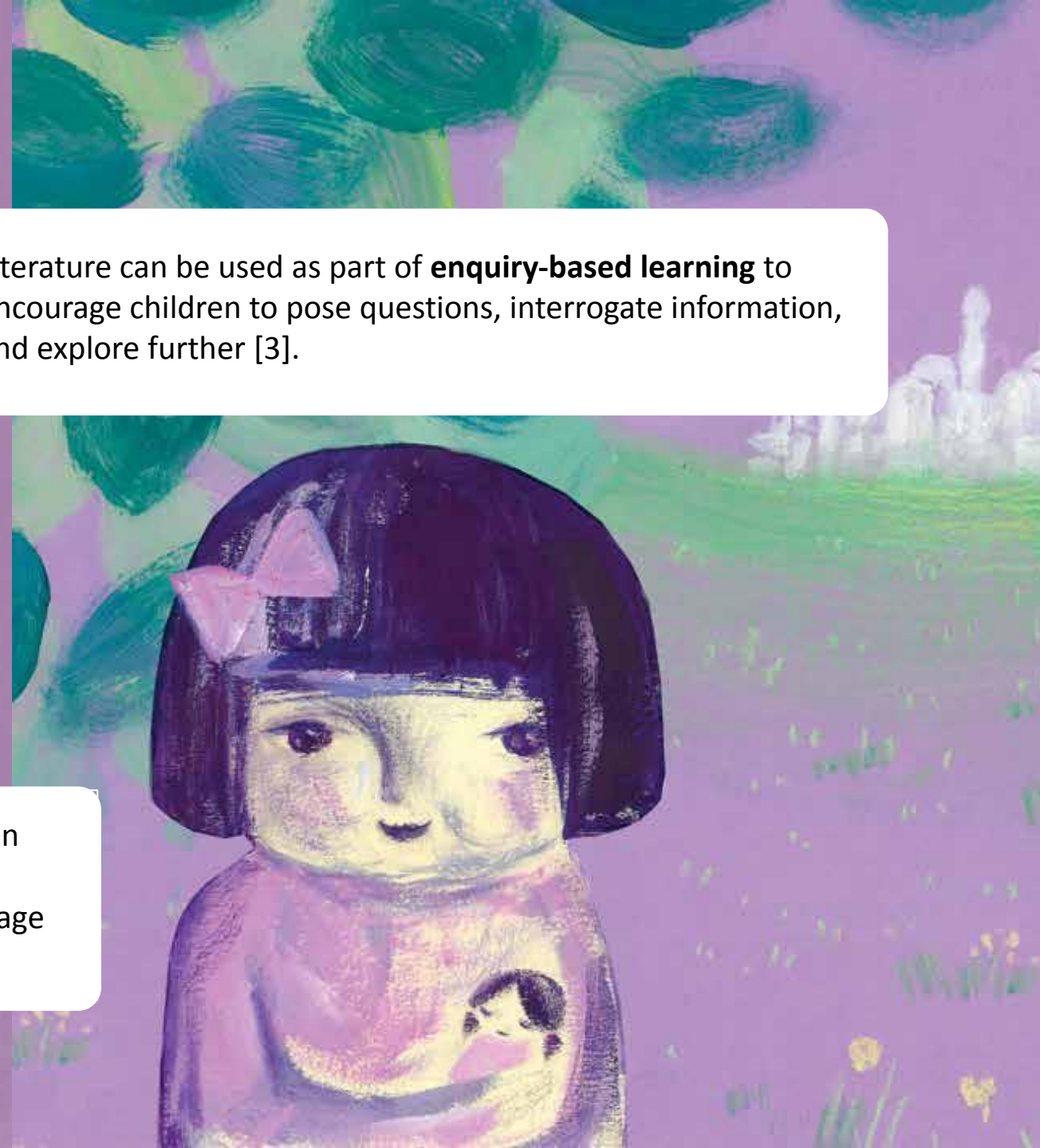


We can both support children's joy of reading and foster their critical information and digital literacy by encouraging their engagement with books that help them view the world from new perspectives, observe their environment closely, and explore further.

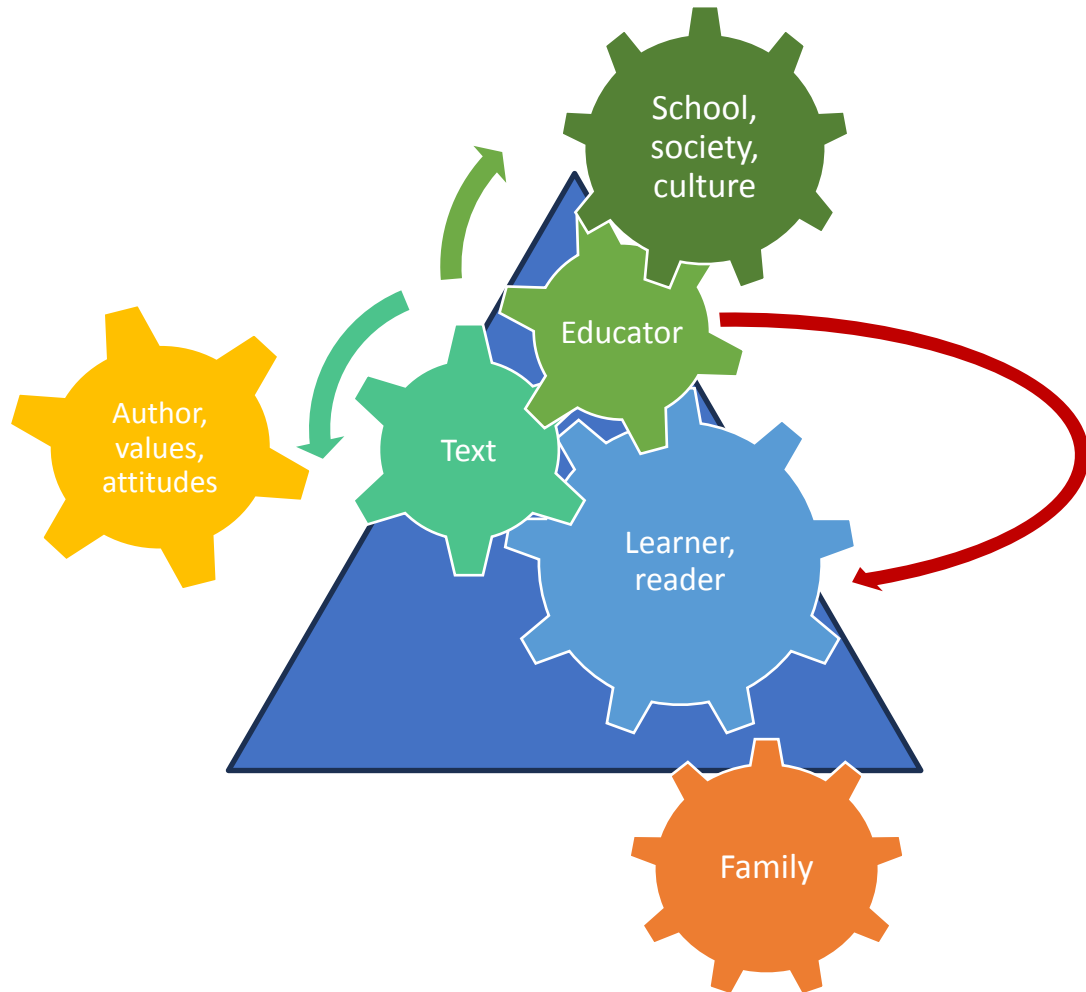
Children's literature provides **opportunities for reflection** and **learning** about complex phenomena [1].

As such, literature is a source of knowledge and can enhance children's literary awareness and critical information literacy. It has the potential to encourage readerly **empathy** [2].

Literature can be used as part of **enquiry-based learning** to encourage children to pose questions, interrogate information, and explore further [3].



Pedagogical background



In the ideas we offer in this booklet are inspired by critical literacy [1, 4] and critical information literacy pedagogies [5] as well as process models of dialogic reading [6, 7] and information literacy [8, 9, 10]

In our thinking, we extend the didactic triangle [11] consisting of the educator, the learner, and the content (text) to be taught, to include the learner's family; school, society, and culture; as well as the author and the values and attitudes of the text.

Critical literacy [1] and critical information literacy [5] pedagogies

- emphasise the development of critical consciousness with which children can learn to take control of their lives and their own learning, and
- encourage children to become active agents, asking and answering questions that matter to them and to the world around them, exploring, and interrogating information.

Process models of dialogic reading and information literacy [6-10] can further help to model, phase, and structure teaching and are suitable for supporting the development of self-direction.

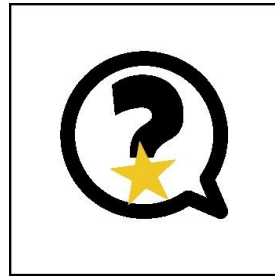
Pedagogical background

Dialogic Reading [6, 7] is an interactive shared picture book reading practice designed to enhance young children's language and literacy skills. During the shared reading practice, the adult and the child switch roles so that the child learns to become the storyteller with the assistance of the adult who functions as an active listener and questioner.

You probably have employed some dialogic reading strategies without even realising in! Dialogic reading is a form of active reading, so it helps children to increase their engagement with texts. It focuses on comprehension and story elements rather than reading fluency and accuracy – therefore it is suitable also for silent books.

Information literacy models often describe the inquiry process as a sequence of steps such as opening, immersing, exploring, identifying, gathering, creating, sharing, and evaluating [8] or connecting, wondering, investigating, constructing, expressing, and reflecting [9, 10]. Here, we have simplified these steps into four: wonder, explore, communicate, and reflect.

These steps can be taken to support the process of enquiry-based learning before, during, and after the joint reading of a book.



WONDER

This step emphasises the importance of stimulating curiosity and deliberating on both the questions we want to ask and the ways we can find answers to those questions.

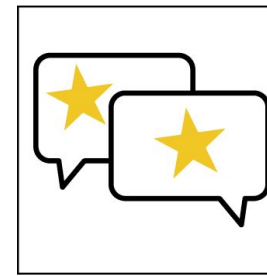
Key question: *What do we want to know?*



EXPLORE

This step points to information seeking including locating and accessing appropriate information sources and examining them carefully. This may involve organising information; reading, listening, and watching; and making notes.

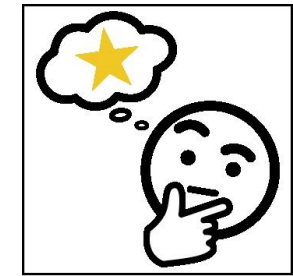
Key question: *What can we find out, where, and how?*



COMMUNICATE

This step refers to using the found information in suitable ways. This includes synthesizing the information in the selected format and genre to respond to the questions asked and to communicate it to others.

Key question: *How can we share what we learned?*



REFLECT

This step is central to all the other ones. It highlights the need to think about what we did, what did it result to, what does it mean to us, and how could we have done things differently. This applies to the ways we have sought and used information but also to the whole learning process.

Key question: *What did we learn?*

Selecting resources

Next, we offer concrete examples on how to support the process of enquiry-based learning by **Wondering, exploring, communicating, and reflecting** before, during, and after the joint reading of a book.



The logo for the BRIDGE PORTAL. It features the word "BRIDGE" in a large, purple, sans-serif font, with a small yellow star above the letter "I". Below "BRIDGE" is the word "PORTAL" in a smaller, orange, sans-serif font.

The ideas presented in this booklet can be applied to many different kinds of books and topics. However, in BRIDGE, we particularly recommend selecting resources that deal with equality, diversity, inclusiveness, and global citizenship and that are, if possible, freely available. These have been the criteria followed in selecting resources to BRIDGE portal that contains:

- information on selected children's picture books with special potential for the development of activities for information and digital literacy hand in hand with education in equality values, and
- a selection of educational resources and good practices to promote information and digital literacy in primary education.

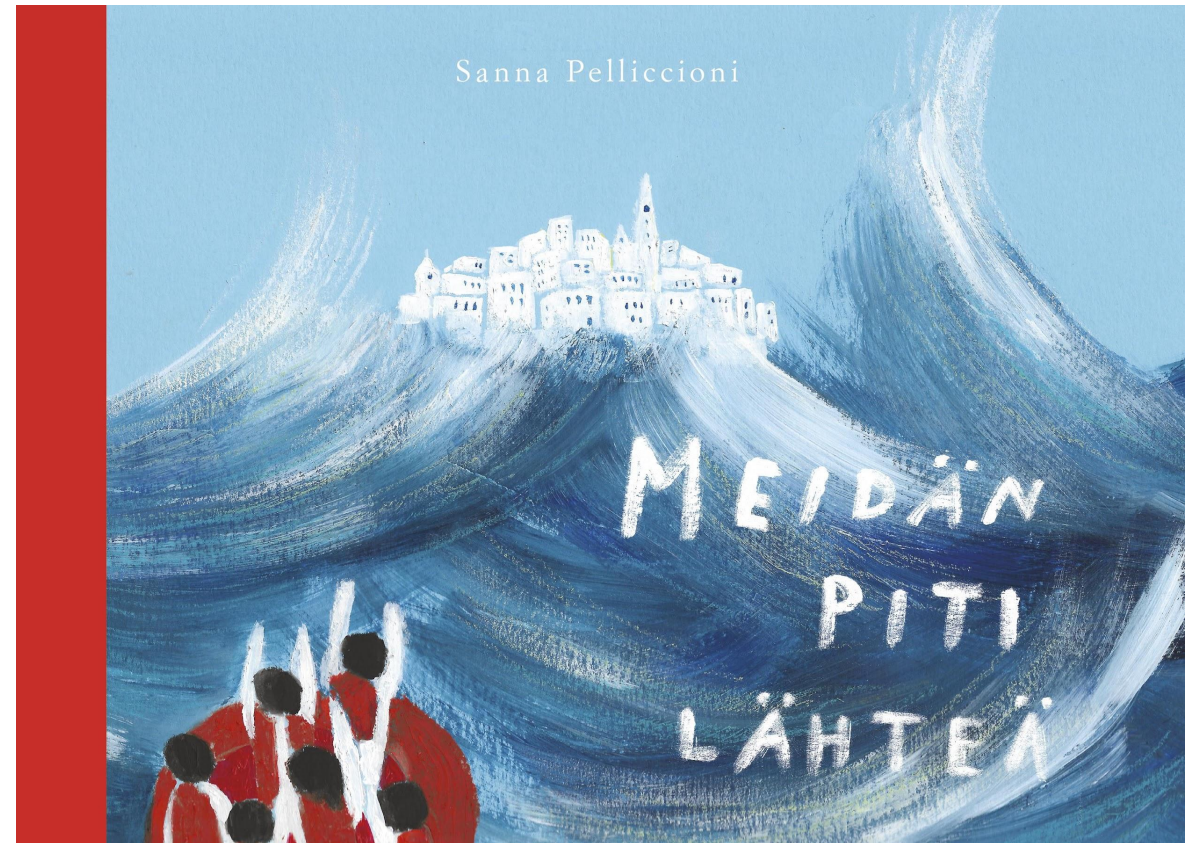
The portal is open access and multilingual, including the languages of the project countries (Spanish, English, Italian, Turkish, Finnish and Greek): <https://bridgeinfoliteracy.eu/portal>

Consider working together with the school librarian or public librarian to select resources or collaborate otherwise!

The silent book *Meidän piti lähteä* [We Had to Leave] by the Finnish author Sanna Pelliccioni is hereby used as an example to illustrate how critical information literacy and digital literacy might be taught using a picture book as a starting point.

As part of the equality values education that BRIDGE proposes to encourage, this book is a good starting point for connecting with the experiences of a family that flees their home because of war.

This is a silent book meaning that the story is told with pictures and there are no words at all, allowing one's own interpretations.



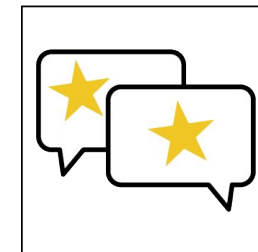
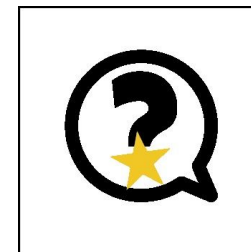
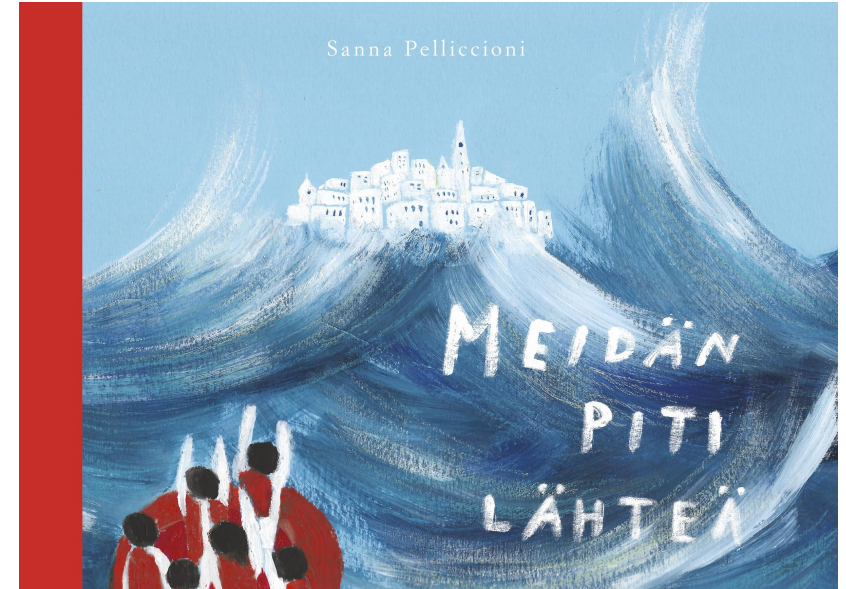
NOTE: We have selected this book only as an example. The story is about a family fleeing from the war and includes visual information that may be sensitive to some readers.

Beginning the book: invitation to joint reading

You can start reading the book by looking at the title and the cover and anticipating what the story is about.

Anticipation can be supported with questions that are first simple and concrete and then become more challenging and abstract. Instead of expecting answers that are right or wrong, invite dialogue with questions, listen, and expand the conversation further:

- *What do you see in this picture? (e.g., the red boat on the cover, the white city, the sea)*
- *What do you think is happening?*
- *Where could this be?*
- *What do you think the title might mean?*
- *Why do you think so?*



Beginning the book: inside covers

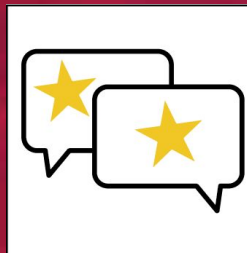
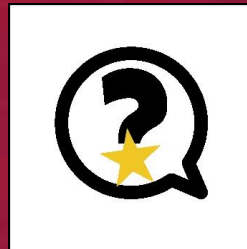


The inside covers of picture books are an interesting place to stop to discuss.

In the book *We Had to Leave*, the inside cover is red and shows one bright star that can also be found later in the book.

Invite the learners to interpret the picture and where it seems to lead them by asking questions such as:

- *What do you see in this picture?*
- *What does it remind you of?*



Open-ended questions

These prompts work best for books that have rich, detailed illustrations as they focus on the pictures. Open-ended prompts help children increase their expressive fluency and attention to detail.

Moreover, they can encourage readers to consider what they know already, what do they need or want to know, and to identify questions for further inquiry.

“Tell me what’s happening in this picture.”

Wh- prompts

These prompts begin with what, where, when, why, and how questions. Similar to open-ended prompts, they focus on the illustrations. These prompts can be used in introducing new vocabulary.

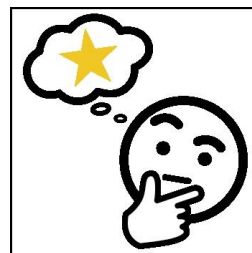
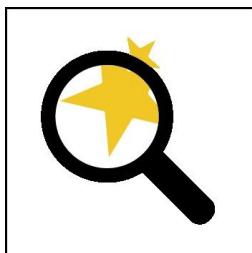
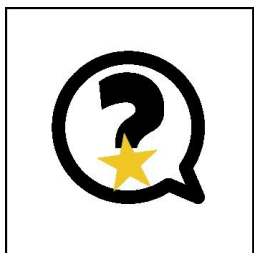
“What is this called?” (while pointing to an object in a picture)

While reading

Read the book one picture at a time. You can try different approaches with different pages and use *open-ended questions*, *Wh- prompts*, and *distancing prompts*.

You can ask the learners what do they see in the pictures, for example:

- *What do you think happens in this picture?*
- *Who and what is in the picture?*
- *What place could look like this?*
- *What do you think the colours tell?*
- *What about people's postures and facial expressions?*
- *How do the pictures on the opposite sides of the page affect each other (e.g., if there is a picture of bomber planes on the left side, what are the lights in the picture on the right side)?*
- *What things are repeated on the pages of the book?*
- *What would you do in a certain character's situation?*

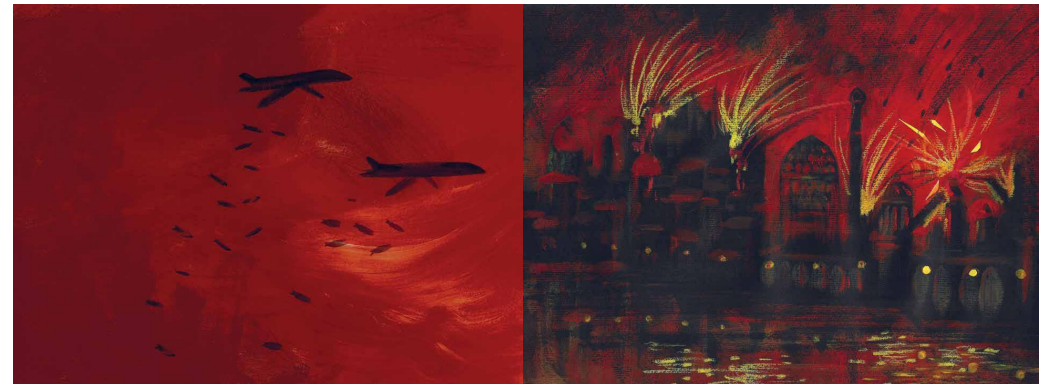


Distancing prompts:

These prompts ask children to relate the pictures or words in the book they are reading to experiences outside the book. Distancing prompts help children form a bridge between books and the real world, as well as helping with verbal fluency, conversational abilities, and narrative skills.

"What would you do in this situation?"

"Have you ever had a similar experience (e.g., have you ever moved house, been in a boat)?"



After reading

Connect the tasks to the aims of the curriculum!

Continue working on the book you have read by dealing with the topic(s) of the book.

Challenge the learners to think about what the story is about instead of defining it for them.

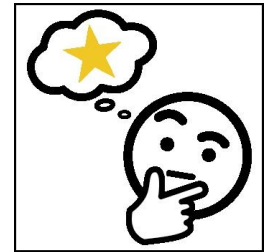
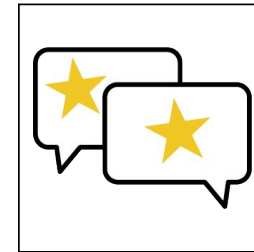
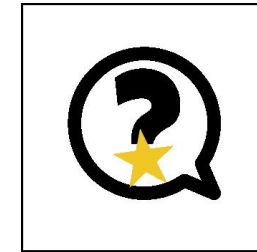
You can move from *recall* or *completion prompts* to *distancing prompts* that may help learners connect the book to broader issues.

Support learners to write or discuss together by asking, for example

- *What can you remember from the book? Let's list five things!*
- *What do you think the book was about?*
- *What do you already know about the topic?*
- *What more would you like to know about it?*

This can be done as dialogue teaching with the whole class, in small groups, or in pairs.

Decide collectively on a couple of important questions to explore further!



Recall prompts

These are questions about what happened in the book that was read. They can help children in understanding the plot and themes of the story.
"What happened to the girl in this story?"

Completion prompts

If the book includes rhymes or repetitive phrases, you can also use completion prompts by beginning a sentence and asking the child to fill it in. These prompts can help children in understanding the structure of language - and they are fun!

*"Five little monkeys jumping on the bed
One fell off and bumped his _____"*

After reading

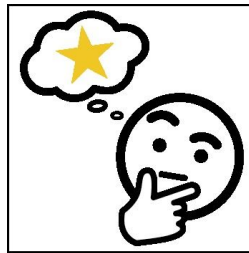
Discuss, where and how you can find information to respond to the questions you decided to explore further (oral, written, audiovisual, graphic, online, at home, in the school library, in a public library). Encourage discussion on

- what kind of information different sources may provide, and
- what sources might be more or less reliable or appropriate in response to the questions asked.

Locate and access suitable information sources.

- Guide learners in selecting appropriate information access tools such as library catalogs or search engines and discuss potential search terms.
- With young learners, we recommend limiting the information environment so that perspectives on the topic come from selected sources.

See potentially relevant materials in the BRIDGE portal →



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After reading



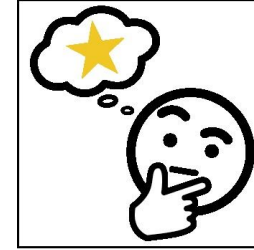
Support learners in making sense of the sources and constructing understanding based on them.

Working in pairs or in small groups, you can support

- organizing information (e.g., saving sources into a digital or paper file)
- making notes
- recognising the nature, format, and genre of the selected sources (e.g., an opinion piece, news, fiction)

Encourage communicating or presenting the information in a selected format (e.g, a poster, a website, an exhibition, a PowerPoint/Canva presentation) and genre (e.g., news, opinion piece, art).

Regardless of format and genre, you can encourage creating a *synthesis* on the sources and *citing* them.



Support reflection and continuous wondering by asking, for example

- *What did we learn from the different information sources?*
- *What does it mean to us?*
- *What more would we like to know?*

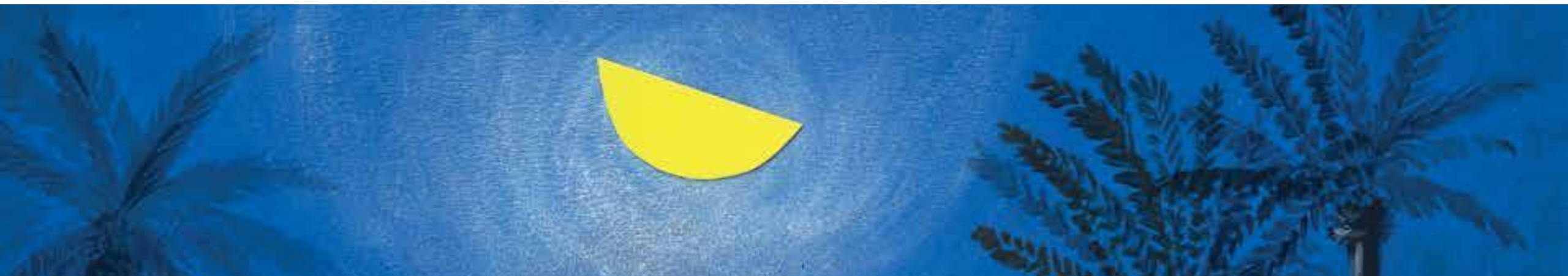
Connect the tasks to the aims of the curriculum!

What do you think?

- Could you apply these ideas in your own work in some ways? How?
- What new might it bring to your work?
- What do you find challenging?
- How might this approach impact the learners' learning outcomes?

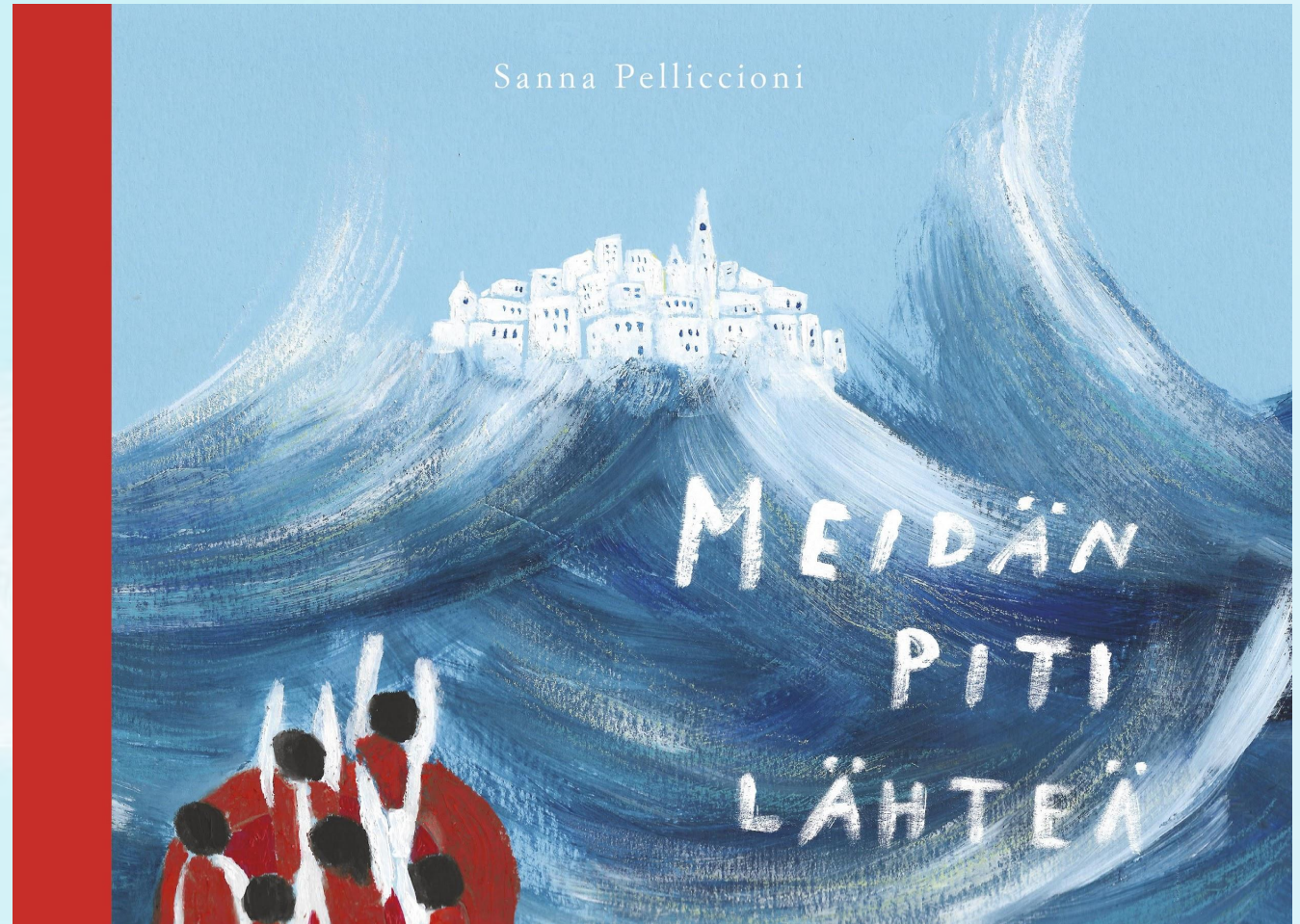
You can think about these questions or let us know what you think on the feedback form [here](#).

You can also write a short description of how you have used BRIDGE in your practice. With your approval, this description can be included in the BRIDGE portal as an example of best practices.



The colourful illustrations in this booklet are from the book *Meidän piti lähteä* [We Had to Leave], written and illustrated by awarded Finnish illustrator, children's book author, and graphic designer Sanna Pelliccioni. In her illustrations, she uses variable techniques from aquarells to collage and form computer to coal. As themes she is interested in equality, original peoples, species interaction, nature protection, and taboos like death. She illustrates her own stories and works with other authors.

The book *Meidän piti lähteä* is one of the first silent books published in Finland. The wordless form of the book opens possibilities to both young and older readers to invent and share the story with their own words.



Key resources

[1] Pesonen, Jaana (2019). Children's stories supporting the development of critical literacy and intercultural understanding. In: Kerry-Moran, Kelli Jo, Aerila, Juli-Anna (eds) *Story in Children's Lives: Contributions of the Narrative Mode to Early Childhood Development, Literacy, and Learning*. Educating the Young Child, vol 16. Springer, Cham.
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[2] Mallan, Kerry M. (2017) Children's literature in education. En: Noblit, George (ed.) *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education*. New York: Oxford University Press.
<http://oxfordre.com/education/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.001.0001/acrefore-9780190264093-e-157>

[3] Haynes, Joanna & Murriss, Karin (2012) *Picturebooks, Pedagogy and Philosophy*. Routledge.

[4] Freire, Paulo (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Herder and Herder.

[5] Elmborg, James (2006) Critical information literacy: implications for instructional practice, *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* 32(2), 192-199, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2005.12.004>.

[6] Whitehurst, Grover J. (n.d.) Dialogic reading: an effective way to read aloud with young children, <https://www.readingrockets.org/topics/early-literacy-development/articles/dialogic-reading-effective-way-read-aloud-young-children>

[7] Pillinger, Claire & Vardy, Emma J. (2022). The story so far: a systematic review of the dialogic reading literature. *Journal of Research in Reading*, 45(4), 533-548.

[8] Kuhlthau, Carol C., Maniotes, Leslie K., & Caspari, Ann K. (2007). *Guided Inquiry: Learning in the 21st Century*. Wesport, CT and London: Libraries Unlimited

[9] The FOSIL Group (2023) *Framework of Skills for Inquiry Learning*. Available at: <https://fossil.org.uk/fossil-cycle/>

[10] Toerien, Darryl (2023) IFLA and global action for school libraries, *School Libraries in View* 47, <https://fossil.org.uk/newsroom/article-school-libraries-in-view/>

[11] Willbergh, Ilmi (2021, March 25). Bildung-centered general didactics. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education*, <https://oxfordre.com/education/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.001.0001/acrefore-9780190264093-e-1554>



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This booklet was coordinated and prepared by Noora Hirvonen, Teija Mursula and Heidi Enwald in collaboration with BRIDGE project members (Buket Akkoyunlu, Anna Antoniazzi, Christina Banou, Stéphane Goldstein, Petros Kostagiolas, Serap Kurbanoglu, Konstantina Martzoukou, Mara Morelli, Sarah Pavey, Dora Sales, Murat Saran and İpek Şencan)



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