



Pelli Can!

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Illustrator: Joanna Cooke

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The Otto Foundation Children's Book Award

Picture Book Shortlist

In *Pelli Can!* meet Pelli, Melli, Ziggi, and Trish, four hardworking pelicans tasked with catching fish for Finn's Frozen Fish Factory. Their demanding boss, Mr. Finn, constantly pushes them to work harder - until one fateful day when their overloaded beaks split, and they are fired on the spot! Faced with sudden unemployment, the Pelicans must find a way to survive. How will they catch fish now? What creative solutions will they come up with?

This humorous and heartwarming tale explores themes that resonate with many South African children: resilience, self-reliance, and entrepreneurship. *Pelli Can!* introduces young readers to the importance of a "can-do" attitude, teaching them that setbacks are not the end, but the beginning of thinking outside the box.

Teaching notes

These notes have been written by the Otto Foundation to provide teachers and caregivers with ideas to develop reading comprehension and support literacy skills. They encourage deep reading of the text and illustrations, which may happen over a series of reading sessions, not just one sitting.

These notes have been written with Grade R, 1, 2 and 3 readers in mind, but teachers and caregivers will need to adapt them to the age and experience of their readers.

Themes

- Perseverance
- Resilience
- Self-reliance
- Entrepreneurship
- Positivity
- Innovation

Before reading the story

- Open up the discussion by allowing the children to share their initial responses to the front cover of the book. Encourage them to discuss what they see and their responses to it.
 - What do you notice about the cover illustration?
 - What does the cover illustration make you think about?

- How does the cover illustration make you feel?
 - What do you like most about the cover illustration?
 - What type of bird is on the cover? (Pelican)
 - What is special about the beak this type of bird has? (It can store fish)
- Explain that the title of the book is **Pelli Can!** Ask the children to share their thoughts about the title.
 - Explain the difference between **Pelican** and **Pelli Can!**
 - Why do you think the word **Can** is underlined in the title?
 - Where do you think this story takes place?
 - Who do you think the characters in this story might be?
 - What do you think might happen in this story?
- Read the back cover blurb aloud. Explore how your children may change their ideas about the story now that they have more information.
 - How does reading the back cover blurb change what you thought might happen in the story?
 - Why is **Mr Finn** a **mean** boss?
 - What would happen if a pelican's beak **split**?
 - What does it mean to be **fired**?
 - What plan do you think the pelicans will come up with?

Reading aloud discussion points

- On pages 1 – 2 we meet the pelicans and Mr Finn.
 - What is the name of **Mr Finn's** business?
 - Do you think **Finn's Frozen Fish** is a good place to work? Why or why not?
 - What time of day is **dawn**? Morning, afternoon or evening?
 - What time of day is **dusk**? Morning afternoon or evening?
 - Where do the pelicans collect the fish for Mr Finn from?
 - Look at the illustration on page 2. How many pelicans can you count? What type of car do you think **Mr Finn** Drives?
 - What are the names of the four pelicans?
- On pages 3 – 4 Mr Finn weighs the fish the pelicans catch.
 - Look at the illustration on pages 3 – 4. How do you think Mr Finn feels about how many fish the pelicans have caught? Why do you think this?
 - What is the name of the machine that weighs the fish? (a scale)
 - A sea creature that is not a fish is being weighed with the fish. What is the name of this sea creature? (A crab)
 - Do you think it is fair of Mr Finn to tell the pelicans to catch more fish? Why or why not?
- On pages 5 – 6 Mr Finn demands the pelican's catch more fish.
 - What does **bulging** mean? Why would the pelicans beaks be **bulging**? Why does this make it hard for them to fly?
 - The pelicans feel **worn-out**. What does it mean to feel **worn-out**?
 - Do you think the pelicans have tried their best to catch as much fish as they can? Why or why not?

- Look at the illustration on page 6. Mr Finn has an **angry scowl**. Turn to your friend and show them your best **angry scowl**.
- The pelicans beak pouches split and they get fired on pages 7 – 10.
 - What is happening in the illustration on pages 7 – 8?
 - How do you think **Trish** felt when her pouch split?
 - Why do you think all the pelicans pouches split?
 - The pelicans are **shocked, fearful and tearful**. Why do you think they are feeling **shocked**? Why do you think they are feeling **fearful**? Why do you think they are feeling **tearful**?
 - What did Mr Finn shout at the pelicans?
 - What does it mean to be **fired**?
- On pages 11 – 14 the pelicans are worried about having no jobs, but Pelli comes up with a plan.
 - What do you think the pelicans could catch if they cannot catch fish?
 - What other places could the pelicans work if they cannot work in the sea?
 - Pelli is **deep in thought**. What does it mean to be **deep in thought**?
 - If you had been fired do you think you would feel worried like Melli, Ziggi and Trish, or do you think you would come up with a plan like Pelli?
 - What advice does Pelli give the pelicans? (Let's not say can't, let's say we can!)
 - What do you think the plan that Pelli has come up with is?
- On pages 15 – 16 Peli puts the plan into action.
 - What happens at a **tailor shop**?
 - What does it mean to march in **single file**? March in **single file** across the room with a group of 5 friends.
 - What does the tailor do to the pelicans beaks? How will this help them?
 - What colour is Pelli's zip?
 - What colour is Melli's zip?
 - What colour is Ziggi's zip?
 - What colour is Trish's zip?
 - If you could choose any zip colour for a pelican, what colour would you choose?
 - Look at the illustration on pages 15 – 16. How did the pelicans feel going into the **tailor shop**? How did the pelicans feel when they left the **tailor shop**? Why do you think there was such a big change in how they felt?
- The pelicans start a new business on pages 17 – 20.
 - What new work do the pelicans start doing? Do you think this is a good job for the pelicans? Why or why not?
 - What do you think the pelicans should name their new business?
 - The pelicans **grin with glee**. What does it mean to **grin with glee**?
 - Why are there **no more leaks** when the pelicans fill their beaks with fish?
 - Look at the illustration on page 19. How do the pelicans deliver the fish they catch?
 - Why is fresh fish better than frozen fish?
 - What do the customers use to carry their fish?
 - How do the customers feel about buying fish from the pelicans? Why do you think they feel this way?

- On pages 21 – 24 we meet Mr Finn again.
 - Why is Mr Finn unhappy?
 - Look at the illustration on page 21. What does the sign on the door of Finn's Frozen Fish say?
 - Why do you think Finn's Frozen Fish has closed down?
 - Do you feel sorry for Mr Finn? Why or why not?
 - Why do you think the pelicans agree that they will never catch fish for Mr Finn again?
 - What is the important message the pelicans remind us of on the last page of the story? (Let's not say can't, let's say we can!)

Topics for discussion after reading the story

- Ask your children:
 - If you could start your own business, what would it be?
 - What did you like most about this story?
 - What is something you have learnt from reading this story?
 - If you were writing this story, what would happen to the pelicans next?
 - Who do you think should read this story next and why would you recommend it to them?

Activity ideas for after reading the story

- Share a selection of non-fiction books or information about other usual birds with your class. For example: flamingo, toucan, ground hornbill, hoopoe and secretary bird
 - Show your class illustrations of these birds and discuss them
 - Ask you class to draw a picture of their favourite unusual bird and share one interesting fact about them
- Create a *Let's not say can't, let's say we can!* affirmation list with your class. Ask each child to complete a **we can ...** affirmation. Display the **we can** affirmations and read them together as a class.
- Ask your class to draw, decorate and cut out some fish. Create a display to promote **Pelli Can!** in your library using their illustrations with the illustration of Pelli from page 24 as the centrepiece.

Please see the following pages for Grade specific CAPS aligned skills covered in these teaching notes.

CAPS skills covered in teaching notes

Listening and speaking

Grade R

- Listen to stories
- Listen and respond to simple questions
- Listen without interrupting
- Talk about pictures
- Participate in discussion and asks questions
- Ask questions
- Give explanations

Reading

Grade R

- Use pictures to predict what a story is about
- Predict what will happen in a story through pictures
- Recognise and point out common objects in pictures
- Interpret pictures
- Make up own story by 'reading' pictures
- Pretend to read
- Make links to own experience when reading with teacher
- Discuss and describe characters in a story
- Describe characters in stories and give opinion
- Answer questions based on the story read

Listening and speaking

Grade 1

- Listen to and express feelings about a story
- Listen without interrupting, taking turns to speak and asking questions of clarification
- Respond to pictures
- Listen to stories with interest and enjoyment, drawing on a picture to show understanding
- Listens for the detail in stories
- Talk about personal experiences and feelings
- Answer closed and open-ended questions
- Participate in discussions

Reading

Grade 1

- Develop book handling skills (holding the book and turning pages correctly)
- Uses book cover to predict what a story is about
- Use pictures in the book for understanding
- Make up own story by 'reading' pictures
- Discuss a story identifying main idea and characters
- Ask questions related to a story told and read
- Recognise cause and effect in a story
- Give an opinion on what was read
- Answer open-ended questions based on text read
- Interpret information from pictures

Listening and speaking

Grade 2

- Listen to stories and answer higher-order questions
- Listen to a story with enjoyment and answer questions related to the story
- Listen to stories for a longer period with enjoyment
- Listen without interrupting showing respect for the speaker
- Use ever increasing vocabulary when answering questions
- Understand and use appropriate language in context
- Ask questions and comments on what was heard
- Talk about personal experience
- Express feelings about a story

Reading

Grade 2

- Read books as a class with teacher
- Use the cover of a book to predict what a story is about
- Use pictures in the book for understanding
- Identify key details in what was read, such as main characters and setting
- Express whether a story was liked and justify response
- Express personal response to a text read
- Give opinion on what was read
- Answer open ended questions based on text
- Answer higher order questions based on text read
- Recognise cause and effect in a story
- Describe main ideas in a text
- Identify key details in what was read

- Answer closed and open-ended questions and justify answers
- Participate in discussions, asking and answering questions and suggesting ideas

- Discuss different cultures represented in a story

Listening and speaking

Grade 3

- Listen for main ideas and detail in stories
- Listen to story for cause and effect
- Ask questions for clarification
- Express feelings and opinions about text and gives reasons
- Talk about personal experiences
- Answer open-ended questions and justify answer
- Answer higher order questions based on text
- Participate in discussion
- Engage in conversation as a social skill, accepting and respecting the way others speak
- Listen without interrupting

Reading

Grade 3

- Read books as a class with teacher
- Discuss main idea, characters, plot and 'problem' in a text
- Answer a range of higher order questions based on text
- Express whether a story was liked and justify answer
- Interpret information from pictures
- Use illustrations in text to increase understanding