

Teachers' Notes by Scott Anderson

Minton Goes!

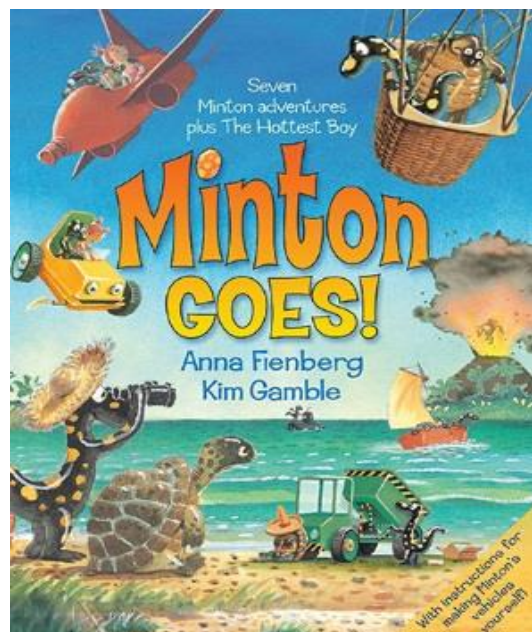
Anna Fienberg & Kim Gamble

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Recommended for ages 4-8

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Minton's Learning Springboards

The language features and themes that recur in *Minton Goes!* make it an excellent resource for teaching in the primary classroom. The book can act as a "springboard" for exploring the key concepts in activities that link to all learning areas.

Organised by subject, these notes demonstrate how to use *Minton Goes!* to teach an integrated unit, using themes such as transport, recycling and problem solving to link each of the learning areas. These suggestions can be developed to suit each stage.

If you are not teaching an integrated unit, *Minton Goes!* will be a resource for selecting activities that link appropriately to the curriculum.

Activities for English

Story map Wall

As a focal point throughout the unit, create a Minton Map on the wall or display board where you and the class can keep track of Minton's travels and exploits.

A story map is a pictorial representation of movement, changes and events through a story. As the stories can stand alone or connect to form one overarching story, they are easily used for such an activity.

Starting with Minton and Hector staring out at the volcano at the beginning of 'The Hottest Boy Who Every Lived', create a display using pictures and key words that represent Minton and Turtle's adventures throughout the six books. The more you involve the students in the creation of the display, the more they will feel ownership of the unit of work as a whole. Discuss what to include in the Minton Map after reading each book. This will also help you assess student's recall of the story and their ability to use the language from the text.

Language Features

Minton Goes! contains vocabulary which may be new for your students. You can make links to your Spelling and Grammar programs by exploring these words and including them in your spelling lists and activities.

Activity:

Engage the children in finding, learning and understanding these new words by keeping categorized word lists around the room. The children can add to the lists as they explore the series. You might have categories such as Object Words (hammock, telescope), Action Words (somersault, bumbled), interesting Words (jaunty, mosquito) and Transport Words (aerodynamic, supersonic).

These lists can become source lists for the students' personal spelling and writing. They will assist the students in learning the roles that different types of words play in sentences.

Extension:

You can select other language features from *Minton Goes!* to provide extension tasks. For example, in 'Minton Goes Sailing', turtle tells Minton that he needs anti-monster armour. Explore prefixes such as *anti-* and find other words that start with this prefix. Able students might search for other prefixes and find their meanings.

Writing Links- Procedural Texts

Minton creates and designs in *Minton Goes!* This is an excellent way to explore Procedural Texts.

In the stories based around sailing, flying, driving, trucking and underwater, each ends with a set of instructions for making the featured vehicle. (The activities are explored in the Science section.) To introduce Procedural Texts, you might produce a joint construction of a procedure for making one of the vehicles, such as Minton's plane. This lesson could be strategically timed before older students have completed one of the designs and serve as the explanation for the task. For younger students, plan this lesson after the Design and Make activity, below, so they can understand the process and it is fresh in their minds.

Activity:

Using a large sheet of butcher's paper to record ideas, brainstorm with the children the text features needed to create instructions for making the vehicle. Include a heading that explains what is being made (Goal), a list of supplies needed (Materials) and a set of steps for completing the task (Procedure). From this point, the features of a Procedural Text can be explained and the language for discussing Procedural Texts can be introduced.

Once the joint text construction is complete, give students an opportunity to develop their skills and creativity by designing their own procedures. Keeping in the theme, choose other aspects of the Minton texts as springboards for ideas. For example, in 'Minton Goes Sailing', Minton enjoys a dinner of centipede stew. Let your students' imaginations run wild as they dream up the ingredients and process for making this a diabolical dish!

About the Author

Your class can find out about Anna Fienberg and the other books that she wrote by looking up her author page on the Allen & Unwin website.

<https://www.allenandunwin.com/authors/f/anna-fienberg>

You may want to branch out and study other books by Anna Fienberg, in particular, for this age-group, the Tashi books. See *The Amazing Tashi Activity Book* (A&U 2009) and activities are also suggested at <http://tashibooks.com/Classroom.html>.

Activities for Human Society and Its Environment

People in Transport

Activity 1:

Minton Goes! provides a springboard for exploring different types of transport. As each form of transport is introduced, explore the roles of people who work with that particular mode of travel. For example, after 'Minton Goes Flying', the roles of pilots, navigators, cabin crew, ground support crew, etc. can be identified and discussed. Include some of these names as vocabulary words when taking an integrated approach to using the series.

Activity 2:

Identify people known to your school community who work in the various aspects of the transport industry and invite them to speak to the class. Keep a concept web of People Who Help Us Travel in the classroom and add to it as the unit progresses.

Changing our environment

Use Minton's creative approach to his problems to explore the ways in which people modify their environment to meet their needs. Have students create a timeline of the ways people have changed and modified their environment, identifying the different needs that have brought these changes about.

The human desire to travel farther and get there faster means new methods of travel are constantly being developed. Ask any student to identify the positive and negative impacts that travel has on our environment.

Transport and Other Cultures

Explore the main means of transport in countries across the world. Compare countries where people largely rely on cars (Australia, U.S.A) to countries where more people travel by other means (Japan, Singapore) and explore the reasons for these differences.

Activities for Science and Technology

Design and Make Activities

Minton adventures often include a set of instructions for designing the vehicle used in that particular story (see the link between these activities and teaching Procedural Texts in the English section, above). Use these activities to help students develop an understanding of the Design and Make process.

Make each task gradually more challenging by asking students to contribute more to the design process. Allow students to develop hypotheses and trial ideas for their designs.

As you engage students in Design and Make tasks, encourage group work wherever possible. Have different roles with the groups such as Manager, Resource Person, Designer, etc. and have students swap roles for each task. Develop a healthy classroom culture where students feel free to make mistakes and accept constructive criticism of their designs.

For a more open-ended Design and Make task, see the Culminating Activity at the end of these notes.

Recycling to Save Our World

Minton is a fantastic recycler, finding practical uses for things other people might call rubbish. Use this as a springboard for exploring recycling and its positive impact on our environment.

Visit a recycling plant or invite someone from a plant or from the local council to visit the class and explain your local area's recycling system. Have students work in groups to devise an advertising campaign to educate people in your area about how to use their recycling system properly.

As you consider our environment, link with 'Changing Our Environment' in the Human Society and Its Environment section, above, and consider how different forms of transport impact on our surroundings.

Activities for Personal Development & Health

Solving Problems

Minton and Turtle have very different approaches to the problems they face. Whether finding a way home for Bouncer in 'Minton Goes Flying' or getting a job at the building site in 'Minton Goes Trucking', Minton enthusiastically spins creative solutions to his problems while Turtle takes a more pessimistic view.

Activity 1:

Place the students in six groups and give each group a different chapter from the book, such as sailing, flying driving, trucking, underwater and going home. Ask the groups to compare Minton's approach to the problems faced in their chapter with Turtle's approach. This could be used as a platform of the best ways to approach difficult situations, using Minton's positive, creative approach as a model.

Activity 2:

Brainstorm, with the students, problems they might face, such as an argument in the playground or a dispute over sharing with a sibling. Have different groups role-play responses to these problems, using a 'Minton approach' and a 'Turtle approach' and then discuss which approach helped resolve the problem.

Friendships

Minton and Turtle are firm friends, but when Minton is reunited with his old friend Hector in 'Minton Goes Underwater' and 'Minton Goes Home', Turtle begins to feel jealous of Minton and Hector's friendship.

Activity 1:

For discussion, this situation could be used to explore ways of managing friendships. Ask the students about a time when they felt jealous about something, and what they did to resolve the problem. Discuss ways that Turtle could be friends with both Minton and Hector.

Activity 2:

For a written activity, present an 'Agony Aunt' letter from Turtle about his problem with Minton and Hector, and ask the students to write a response which gives Turtle advice on how to handle the problem.

Activities for Visual Arts

Recycled Art Portraits

Minton's unique talent is taking odd objects and finding a practical use for them. For this activity, present the students with a wide range of odd objects such as corks, straws, fabric scraps, paper cups, toilet rolls, beads, buttons etc. For younger children, draw the outline of the characters and get the children to decorate the figure with the objects. Allow older children to experiment with different arrangements of the objects on a large piece of art paper to create a portrait of their favourite character from the series.

The Illustrator

Sadly, Kim Gamble died in February 2016. The class can look up the internet to read about Kim and his work. His last work with Anna Fienberg, published posthumously with the help of his friend and fellow illustrator, Stephen Axelsen, was *Monsters* (A&U 2018).

<http://www.encyclopedia.com/children/scholarly-magazines/gamble-kim-1952>

<http://readingtime.com.au/vale-kim-gamble-13-july-1952-19-february-2016/>

<https://cbca.org.au/in-memorium>

Culminating Activity – Transport Day

Giving students an opportunity to share the products of their learning with a 'real audience' is a great way to wrap up a successful and engaging unit of work. Following are ideas for a Transport Day, involving students and parents, that I have used myself with great success.

Preparation for Transport Day

Activity 1:

Assign each student, or small groups of students, the task of designing and making a model of their own vehicle. It can be a vehicle that exists, such as a hot air balloon or a tractor, or an imaginary vehicle of their own creation. Allow students to show their growing understanding of the 'Design and Make' process as they develop their creation. Materials and support from home may be required, but try to keep as much of the process in the classroom as possible so that the students produce their own product.

Activity 2:

Have the students develop their own Transport Day invitations and distribute them to parents, grandparents and school staff members. Ask parents to bring transport-themed nibbles such as Wagon Wheels for snacks.

On the day

Activity 1:

Arrange tables around the classroom (or a larger area, if possible) and give each student a spot to display their vehicle. Encourage students to dress up as the kind of person who might use the vehicle they have designed, such as an alien for a spaceship, a pilot for a jet plane or a pirate for a pirate ship. As your guests mill about the room, students demonstrate their model and explain the design process. Your students will take a great deal of pride showing off their designs to their parents and grandparents!

Activity 2:

After the demonstration, gather your guests together and involve them in appropriately themed games such as Transport Celebrity Heads. The students love seeing their parents involved. Present each student or group with an award such as Excellent Costume or Great Explanation of Your Design.

I finished off one of my Transport Days with a visit from a large fire engine with a working hose! The students had a tour and explanation of the truck and hose, and the parents had a ball taking photos of their children in their costumes in the fire engine. A special event like this helps reinforce the ideas taught in the unit in the minds of your students for a long time to come.