

The role of Usborne Phonics Readers in learning to read

In order to decode using phonics children need to develop what is known as phonemic awareness. All this means is that they should be able to detect the individual sounds (phonemes) in a word, for example c/a/t. Phonemic awareness is part of a wider tuning into sounds known as phonological awareness. Phonological awareness means children can distinguish between a broad range of sounds (e.g. musical, environmental etc). Hearing and spotting rhymes is a crucial element in developing phonological awareness. Research shows that tuning into rhymes is an important precursor for reading success.

In the early stages of learning to read using phonics, children need to practise their blending skills with known letters and sounds on texts that are completely decodable i.e. they just use the letters and sounds that the children have learnt. Usborne's *Very First Reading* series offer a set of graded readers that map completely on to the *Letters and Sounds* phonics scheme.

The *Phonics Readers* are not decodable and were never intended to be used as part of a graded programme. What they do offer however, is a strong, humorous, rhyming text that uses a limited number of rhyming patterns. Books like these are excellent for developing children's phonological awareness. Therefore, we would see these books as sitting alongside structured decodable texts as part of the language rich curriculum which the Rose Review saw as essential. They are books that the teacher could be sharing at story or rhyme time but are also ideal to be sent home with a reminder for children in the first stages of decoding that they are to be read to or with the child.

