The Snowman

Age group: 3 - 7
English level: zero to intermediate
Resources: ‘The snowman’ by Raymond Briggs, retelling materials.
Preparation time: Lunch break/night before.
Skills used: Vocabulary, simple past tense, simple present tense, present continuous tense, speaking, writing.
Lesson objective: Understand and retell a story.

Pre-lesson preparation
Find a copy of The Snowman, by Raymond Briggs.
Optional:
-Print snowman vocabulary cards
-Print snowman retelling frames
-Print materials for ‘design your own snowman’
-Print materials for ‘pass the noses’ game

Lesson plan

Introduce the topic of The Snowman.
For young learners with no English, show the cover of the book, describe some of the details you can see, mime building a snowman, and mime being cold. For learners with some English, show a picture of a snowy scene and ask the students to tell or mime what they would do in the snow. Mime building a snowman and ask the students to guess what you are doing.

Pre-teach vocabulary.
Introduce three key words that students will need for this activity: snowman, fly, and alive. Introduce snowman by showing a picture and asking students to repeat the word. Mime flying and ask encourage students to join in. To explain alive to students with very limited English, point to each student in the room and say ‘alive, alive, alive’. Then point to an inanimate object, shake your head, and say ‘No. Not alive’. Repeat and ask students to help you to label things as ‘alive’ or ‘not alive’.

Read or watch The Snowman.
The text version of the snowman is wordless, so I find it useful to draw the students’ attention to each page in turn, using minimal language. This enables students to mentally tell the story to themselves. Use the key words whenever possible. If you’re using the video just pull up a comfy chair, dim the lights, and enjoy the magic!

Retell The Snowman.
For very young students or those with very limited English:
-Collaboratively use vocabulary cards to retell what happened at the beginning, middle, and end of the story. Students can draw their own images using the retelling frames and write words with reference to the vocabulary cards.
For students with some English:
- Use vocabulary cards to collaboratively retell the story as a whole class. Encourage students to contribute and remind each other what happened in the story. Display the vocabulary cards for students’ reference in later activities.
- Model how students should retell the story using in their own words and pictures.

Design your own snowman

Model how students can design their own snowman figure by drawing a face and adding clothing. Students with limited English literacy can take turns to describe their finished snowmen orally. Students with more proficient writing skills can write about their snowman. Give all students the opportunity to share their finished work. Focus on correct use of the present simple and present continuous tenses to describe the snowman’s features and what he is wearing.

Have a snowman party

Once students have finished their snowmen, ‘find’ the invitation to the snowman party and read it to the students. Have everyone bring their snowmen to the snowman party. If possible, hold the snowman party outside of your normal learning space, and include some music and decorations.

Snowman party games:
- ‘Snowman Says’. Use the same rules as ‘Simon says’. Use this to practice the verbs introduced in the snowman. For example, ‘Snowman says’ dance, creep, fly, play piano, play violin, play cello, ride a motorbike, shiver, or sneeze.

- ‘Pass the nose’. Seat the students in a circle and give each student a fruit card. Give one student a completely different object, such as a pen. As you play music, students should pass the objects around the circle. When the music stops, each student with a fruit card should pretend to be a silly snowman by holding the fruit in front of their nose. The student with the pen gets to be in charge of stopping the music for the next round.

- ‘Snow, snow, snowman’. This game works the same as ‘duck duck goose’ but has different words. Seat the students in a circle on the floor. One student should walk around the edge of the circle, tapping each student on the head and saying ‘snow...snow...snow’. When the student chooses, they can say ‘snowman!’ The student who has been tapped chases the first student around the circle, and then becomes the next person walk around and say ‘snow...snow....snow...’.