

Raindrops

Book 2

Textbook in English for Class II
(Special Series)



राष्ट्रीय शैक्षिक अनुसंधान और प्रशिक्षण परिषद्
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Foreword

The National Curriculum Framework (NCF), 2005, recommends that children's life at school must be linked to their life outside the school. This principle marks a departure from the legacy of pedagogic practices which overlook the children's own efforts to learn by observing their natural and social environment and by finding meaning in their everyday experience. The consequences of this legacy have been especially grim for rural children. Their everyday life experiences are either ignored or represented in a patronising manner in conventional textbooks. The new syllabi and textbooks brought out by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) in the wake of NCF-2005 attempt to provide a somewhat equitable share of representation to rural and urban content, themes and images. In the context of English at the primary level, rural children deserve an altogether distinctive series of textbooks. *Raindrops* marks an unprecedented attempt of this kind. The textbooks in this series not only privilege the rural child's world and life, they also utilise the insights of modern theories in linguistics to make the experience of learning English an experience of joy and confidence-building for boys and girls studying in village schools.

The success of this effort now depends on the steps that school authorities and teachers will take to motivate children to reflect on their own learning and to pursue imaginative activities and questions. We must recognise that children are born with the capacity and skills to learn languages. These inborn capacities grow spontaneously in a positive environment in which children are encouraged to speak and write without the fear of being caught for making common mistakes. Teachers can create such an environment in the classroom by giving children frequent opportunities to participate. Easy access to attractive reading material is another positive factor. The NCF-2005 emphasises the importance of pursuing a multilingual approach in the teaching of any particular language. What ultimately matters in language learning is the child's confidence to articulate and interpret. *Raindrops* exemplifies the kind of relationship that a teacher should form with children in order to get the best out of them in terms of motivation and participation.

These objectives imply considerable change in school routines and mode of functioning. Flexibility in the daily time-table is as necessary as rigour in implementing the annual calendar so that the

required number of teaching days are actually devoted to teaching. The methods used for teaching and evaluation will also determine how effective the textbook proves for making children's life at school a happy experience, rather than a source of stress or boredom. NCERT has prepared a series of sourcebooks on assessment in the primary classes. This series marks a major shift away from conventional tests and English is one of the subjects covered in this assessment series, and we hope that schools will use the English source book in conjunction with *Raindrops*. All the textbooks in this series attempt to provide opportunities for fantasy and wondering, interaction in small groups, and activities requiring hands-on experience.

NCERT appreciates the hard work done by the Textbook Development Committee responsible for this book. We wish to thank the Chief Advisor for this book, Professor Malathy Krishnan of The English and Foreign Languages University (EFL-U), Hyderabad, for guiding the work of this committee. Several teachers contributed to the development of this textbook; we are grateful to their principals for making this possible. We are indebted to the institutions and organisations which have generously permitted us to draw upon their resources, material and personnel. The Council acknowledges with appreciation the dedicated and creative work put in by Dr. Varada Mohan Nikalje, Department of Languages, NCERT, in coordinating the preparation of this textbook, and also the support and encouragement provided by Professor R. J. Sharma, Head of the Department of Languages. We are especially grateful to the members of the National Monitoring Committee, appointed by the Ministry of Human Resource Development under the Chairpersonship of Professor Mrinal Miri and Professor G. P. Deshpande, for their valuable time and contribution, and to Professor M. L. Tickoo, of EFL-U (formerly known as the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages), Hyderabad, and Professor S. C. Dubey, Department of English, University of Allahabad, Allahabad, for going through this book and offering valuable suggestions.

As an organisation committed to systemic reform and continuous improvement in the quality of its products, NCERT welcomes comments and suggestions which will enable us to undertake further revision and refinement.

New Delhi
1 March 2010

Director
National Council of Educational
Research and Training

About the Book

The National Curriculum Framework (NCF), 2005, suggests that plurality of textbooks is a necessary requirement for curricular freedom. A single textbook does not meet the expectations and aspirations of teachers and learners uniformly. The same idea has been reinforced in the *Focus Group Position Paper on the Teaching of English* which suggests that the earlier practice of choosing from a range of available texts can be revived. It would be reasonable to expect that with a multiplicity of English textbooks, the diversity of English language environments in the country would be addressed better.

A series of textbooks in English, *Raindrops*, for the primary stage (Classes I to V) has been developed, keeping in mind first-generation school-goers as well as children whose only exposure to English is in school (and even within the school, usually, with limited time duration and constraints in quality).

The criterion that we must meet is people's aspirations for their children: the spontaneous and appropriate use of English for at least everyday purposes; in other words, to speak English, as against merely passing examinations in it, or knowing its grammar. The aim, therefore, is learners' exposure to the language (in this case, English) in meaning-making situations so as to trigger the formation of a language system by the mind.

The concept of phonological awareness introduced in *Raindrops 1* is continued in this book. The focus in *Raindrops 1* and *2* is predominantly aural-oral. Listening as a skill is usually neglected in schools. Children are generally not encouraged to speak in the classroom, unless it is to answer questions put by the teacher. *Raindrops 2* has activities that consciously focus on these skills: in one particular activity, children listen to the teacher and tick the word that they hear her say, in another, focus on pronunciation of vowel sounds is done by using 'minimal pairs', on page 12. In yet another activity, the teacher is asked to make children clap according to the number of sounds they hear. This helps make children aware that syllables make up words.

The book contains activities that focus on rhyming, alliteration, consonant clusters, and so on.

Themes such as environment, peace and gender sensitivity figure prominently in *Raindrops 2* as in the others in the series. The poem 'The Mango Tree' is related to environment, along with a strong element of awareness of the number of creatures that the tree gives shelter to.

Illustrations are of primary importance and more so in a second-language textbook. Illustrations are not mere add-ons to the lesson, but form an integral part of the textbook. For instance, a dimension of inclusiveness is added to the illustration on page 13. The text of the lesson is a simple description of a scene. The illustration shows a group of children playing carom, with one child in a wheelchair participating in the game. The child is portrayed as being at par with the others, and the idea is brought out indirectly that what matters is her skill at the game; moreover, the others have accepted her as one of themselves.

Multilingualism as a concept prevails throughout this book, and in the series as well. This is especially true of *Raindrops 1* and *2*, wherein the teachers have been advised to encourage children to speak, by making them participate in classroom discussion and group work; and to also encourage them to use English words, but not reprimand them for using non-English ones.

Above all, it is hoped that children would begin to not only use words, but play with them. The present book is one step in this direction.

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