Ways to use the Maria books for primary teachers

The Maria books are dual language books. They are meant to be read simultaneously in English and Pidgin. Research shows that when multilingual education is adopted children engage more in class, achieve better academic results, dropout less and have higher fluency levels in both their first language and other official languages. Dual language books help readers become literate in 2\textsuperscript{nd} or 3\textsuperscript{rd} languages by allowing them to use higher-order vocabulary skills from their first language. We encourage teachers and students to translate the books into their local language and to use their first language to help them understand the Maria books. The stronger your literacy skills are in your first language, the stronger your literacy skills will be in other languages.

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**Literacy**

The Maria books can be used as you would use any text to teach punctuation (full stops, capital letters, commas, question marks, speech marks) and grammar (sentence types, verbs, adjectives, nouns, pronouns, adverbs). You can teach vocabulary and spelling words from the books. Similarly you can teach the format (orientation, complication, resolution and coda) and features (use of verbs and adjectives, time connectives, dialogue, first or third person) of a narrative.

You can ask comprehension questions about the text (on, between and beyond the lines). You can also ask students to predict what will happen, retell, sequence events, as well as compare and contrast the story with their lives and experiences.

Students can create their own Maria books (ones where they substitute Maria and her family with themselves and their families or create new stories about Maria and her family – mango grafting, pest control, goes to school etc.). These new books should also be dual language books. The new books could be shared with children in younger grades before being sent home to families. They can write diary entries or letters as one of the characters. Students can pretend to be one of the characters and answer other student’s questions. Students can write book reviews about the Maria books.

**Mathematics**

Teachers and/or students can create word problems related crops and livestock. For example

- Maria has 9 hens. How many eggs did she collect if each hen lays 2 eggs
- Maria’s mother planted six rows of corn. In each row she planted five seeds. How many seeds did she plant altogether?

Other word problems can relate to budgeting and saving. For example

- How much money did Maria’s family make in one week if her father made 90 kina, her mother made 65 kina and her grandmother made 40 kina?
- How many weeks will it take Maria to save for a new spade that costs 25 kina if she saves 5 kina a week?
For younger grades, teachers and/or children can create simple counting books. For example *Maria’s counting book* – 1 hoe, 2 spades, 3 bilums, 4 corn ears, 5 kaukau etc.

**Science**

You can teach life cycles of different plants and animals that feature in the Maria books. Students could draw and label animals and food crops.

You can investigate what plants and animals need to grow.

**Agriculture**

Students can create posters or brochures about growing crops, raising animals and livelihoods. These posters and brochures could be for younger grades, students’ families or the community. Topics could include:

- How to raise chickens
- How to work as a family team
- How to grow kaukau
- How to save money
- How to stop cocoa pod borers
**Studies of society and the environment/social studies**

You can discuss with students different ways of earning money, as well as roles and responsibilities of different family members. You can teach goal setting (long, medium and short term goals) and budgeting (knowing what your expenses are and how to make sure you have enough money for your needs). You can teach students about saving. You could arrange for a bank agent to visit the school and set up accounts for the children. Children could write their own goals and ways they can earn and save money. You could teach the importance of working as a family team to achieve your goals.

**Art, drama and music**

Students could draw still life pictures of vegetables and fruit. Students could draw pictures of families working in the garden. Students can act out or dramatise the Maria stories. Students could create songs about happy families, growing food and selling it at the market or saving money.