



## **Improving English Language Skills with Scholastic Books**

**By: Julia Tarquinio**

Students in Julia Tarquinio's English class at Educarte School in Tamarindo, Costa Rica are improving their English language skills with the help of Scholastic's authentic, engaging titles. When Julia began teaching English classes, she quickly realized the challenge in teaching English to a group of students with lots of energy and no knowledge of the language. Faced with this obstacle, a limited budget for classroom materials, and being located four hours from a major city, she knew she had a lot of work on her hands. Despite these challenges, Julia realized that she needed to find a way to bring more English language books into the classroom. With her students reading English at different levels, Julia was ecstatic to learn about [Scholastic's 50 books for \\$50 for grades K-2](#). She wanted to get the children excited about reading and tempt them with beautiful, new books.

When Julia and her students received their books, they were so excited! The children sat looking through the pictures, previewing the books and reading the words they knew. Julia started refining her lessons to incorporate read alouds into daily activities. At first, the students would stare blankly at her when she would ask them to make a prediction about the plot of a book or a motive of one of the characters. She would feel so disappointed after saying something like, "Ok boys and girls! What do you think will happen when Fox walks outside and sees the kids flying into the sky!?" and the kids would just look at her, some of them not even realizing she had just asked a question. She decided then that their job would be to enjoy listening to the stories and a discussion would have to come later.

To help her students to read more words in English, Julia restructured her reading lessons so that she was modeling how to "stretch" words by each phoneme and then "slide" them together while also using pictures to help understand the meaning of the words. Afterwards, her students used their leveled readers to practice the strategies Julia was teaching. During the time that they were reading independently, she would take her 2<sup>nd</sup> grade level book around the room and work one-on-one with her lower level students as well as her on-level students. She would model again what she did in the lesson and the students would work with her to master this technique. Because Scholastic provided

Julia with such a variety of authentic titles, she was always able to find a book that fit each of her students' interests and learning needs.

Now, seven months later, most of Julia's students are reading on grade level and she can now read a story to the class, incorporating comprehension questions throughout the reading. Her students are now recognizing common English word patterns, learning new vocabulary words, picking up connections between books without her prompting, and, most importantly, they can read to themselves and to each other. Julia says, "It is incredible how much my students have grown... There is absolutely no way I could have gotten my students interested in reading English without Scholastic books. They love the familiar characters like Clifford and Scooby Doo but also love to meet new characters like Biscuit and Little Bear. The colorful pictures and the fact that there are books suitable for all of them, tells me that this was the best purchase I have made all year for my students! I sincerely believe that without the magic of reading, these kids would not have learned so quickly and have such an interest in English. Thank you Scholastic!"