7. FIRST DICTATIONS
ACTIVITY - READING - WRITING

7.1 Dictation

In the earlier pages often reference was done to small classical techniques of the dictation or auto-dictation by which the child practises. Hereafter two distinct ways of short dictation are shown: in the first one we use the visual recall, in the second one we use the sound recall instead.
This distinction is useful because it allows to better understand the cause of some common errors and thus where and how to intervene.

<div align="center">

The goldfishes = visual recall

</div>

Each child receives a small, preferably coloured sheet of paper. The teacher writes on the blackboard words well apart, a <u>sentence that the topic considered allows to compose</u>.

Example:

<div align="center">

Today   we   have   spoken   about   grapes.

</div>

Words are counted by hand beat.
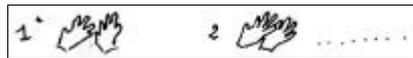
Words are read by hand beat.
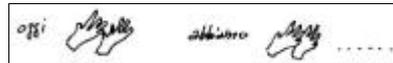
Each word will correspond to a fish which will be healthy (correct) or ill (wrong).
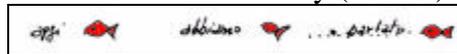
The attention goes particularly onto the first two words.
The teacher reads them by beating the hands twice and erase them.

The children can now write them on the sheet.

The teacher goes on like this to the last word, then a check is done. The sentence is written again on the blackboard and the child checks and attributes a goldfish to each correct word.
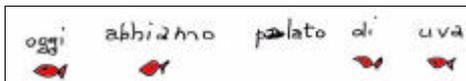
The mistakes (ill fishes) are corrected below with a H sign (hospital).


The paper sheet can eventually be glued on the exercise book or thrown away.

oggi abbiamo parlato di uva

H =
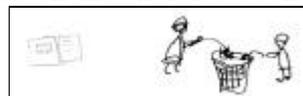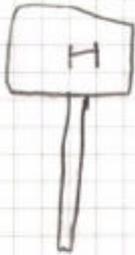
oggi abbiamo parlato di uva

uva

Today we have spoken about grapes

The green fishes (sound recall)
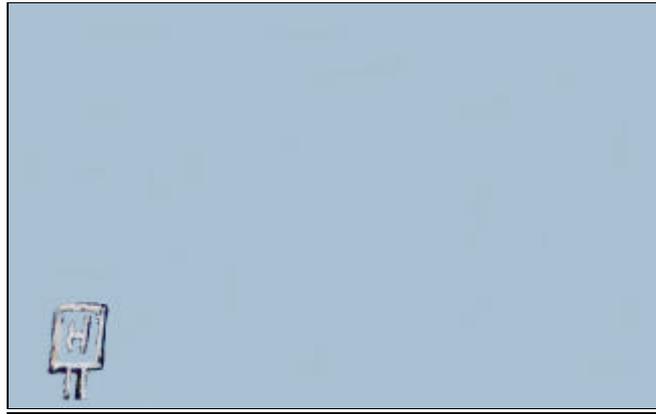
Each child receives a small, preferably coloured sheet of paper. At the bottom he/she prepares the H (hospital) abbreviation.

The teacher announces the sentence to be written and counts the words by hand beating.
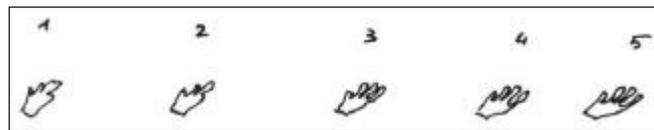
He/she pronounces the first word, repeats it and invites the children to write it by themselves on the sheet and then to set the pencil aside.

uva = grapes
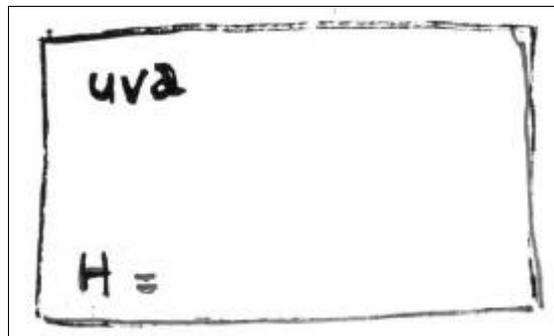
Each word is written on the blackboard by the teacher; the child checks and, if the word corresponds to it, a green fish is drawn. If the word is wrong, the child will have to write it correctly near the H abbreviation.
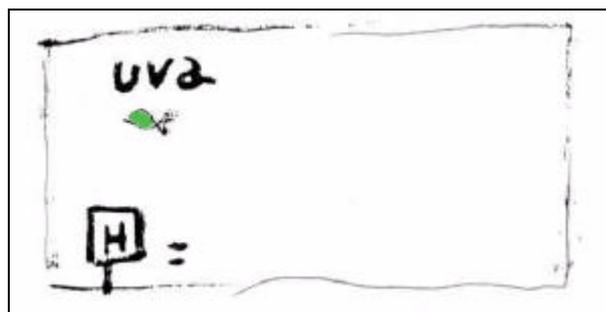
The work goes on and eventually the healthy fishes are counted.

uva
nera di di prima
sera,

H = —
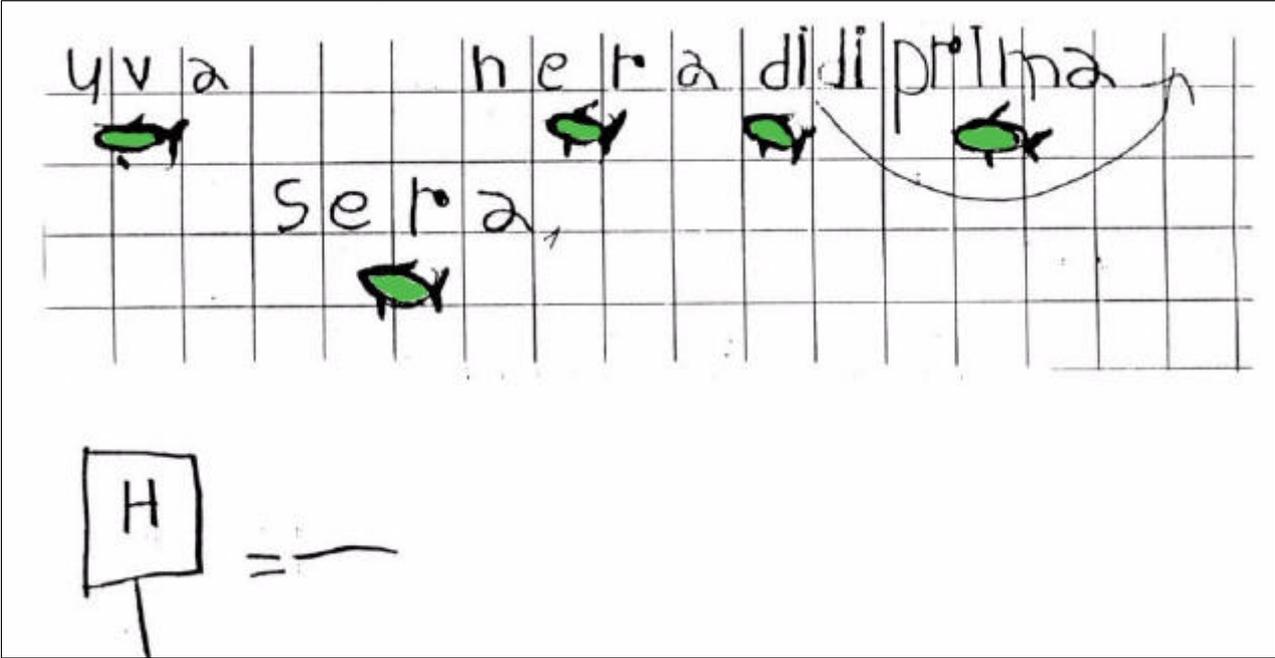
"Someone fishes well and someone doesn't: it's real fishing!"

uva regina per la
bambinana

H   bambina
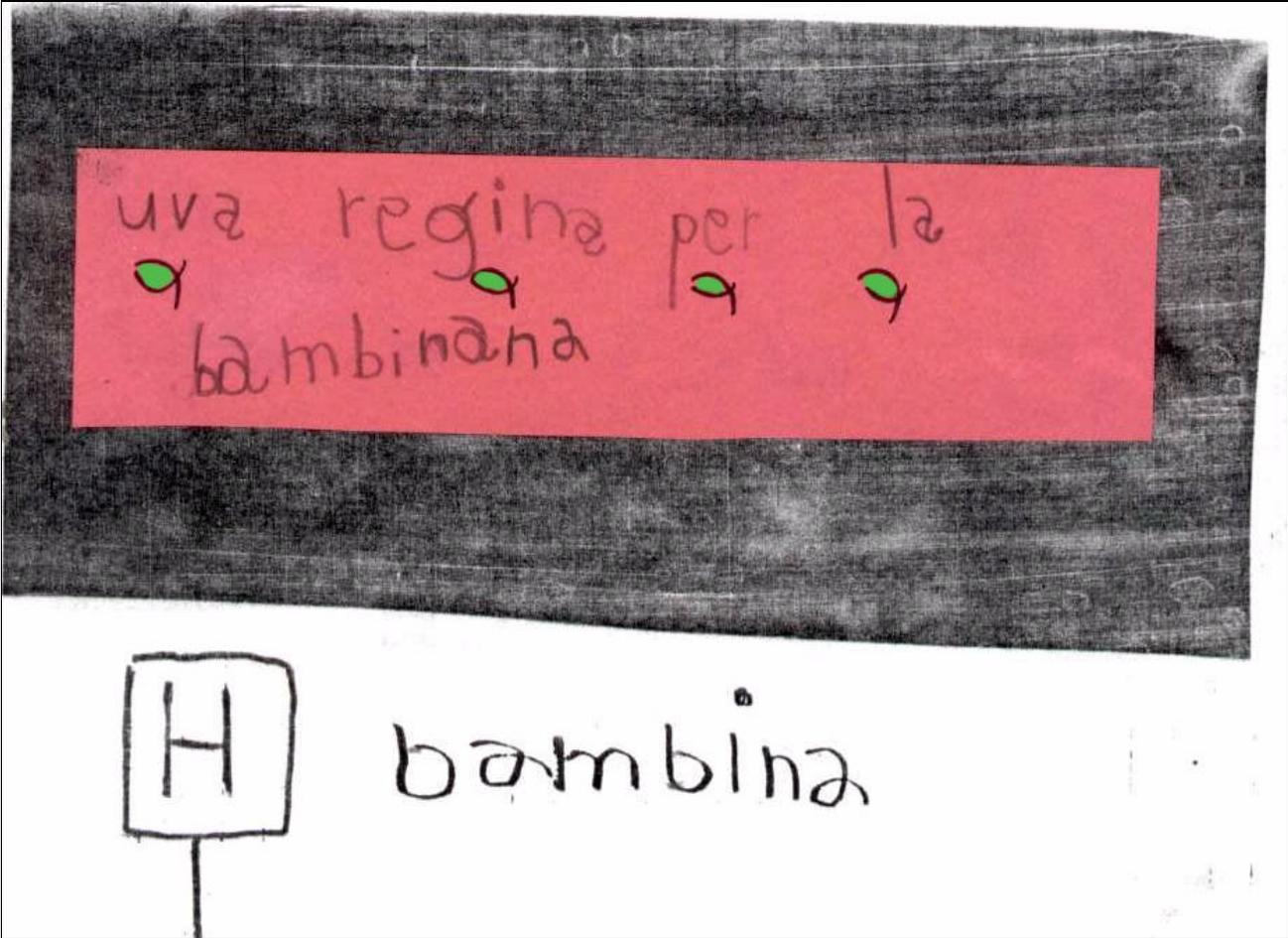
Reading of images
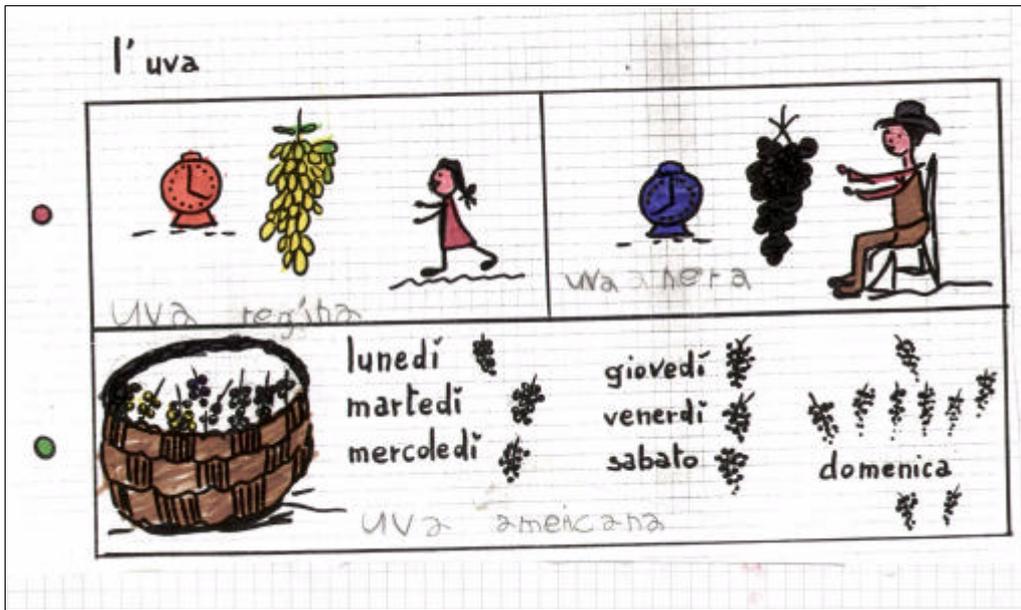
l'uva = the grapes   uva regina = golden grape   uva nera =red grapes
lunedì = Monday   martedì = Tuesday   mercoledì = Wednesday
giovedì = Thursday   venerdì = Friday   sabato = Saturday domenica =
Sunday   uva americana = American grapes

Common reading
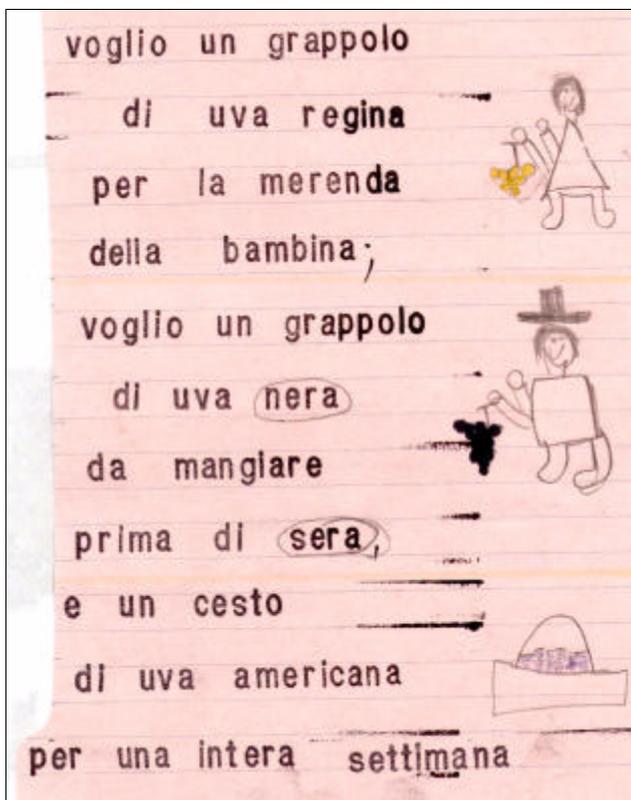
Voglio un grappolo = I want a handful

di uva regina = of golden grape

per la merenda della bambina = for the child's snack

Voglio un grappolo = I want a handful

di uva nera = of red grape

da mangiare prima della sera = to be eaten before night

e un cesto di uva americana = and a basket full of American grape

per un'intera settimana = for a whole week.

7.2 Various activities on short stories

In this chapter we consider reading in a more extended way and propose several ways.

1- reading by the teacher
>the teacher reads, the children listen; the reading is done aloud, expressively and brigthened up by sketches on the blackboard.

2- image reading
>the child receives the page with a sequence of images subdivided in stripes distinguished by coloured dots; these are read one by one and then the whole story is read from the start to the end.

3- reading of the stripes
>the story is represented on stripes with sentences and words; these are detached one by one, illustrated to the child, ordered and read. The conclusion is a common reading.

4- quick reading
>the story is offered in bigger types than usual. The child reads by him-/herself without dividing into syllables. He/she repeats the reading until he/she believes to be quick enough.

5- "blind" reading
>the story, still in bigger types, is introduced with a hidden section on the left or on the right. The child reads by evoking the missing part. The title will be taken away and will be replaced by another one chosen by the child himself/herself.

6- expressive reading
>the story is written in types of a common printed page or even smaller. By now the text is known and thus the child will have to read with special care on expressiveness.

7- reconstruction of the story in colours and bi-tri-dimensional shapes
>the story is reconstructed by drawing, painting, glueing, clipping and clay moulding.

8- reconstruction of the story by dramatization
>we try to recreate the scene by means of movement, words, sounds. Some costumes, distribution of the parts, organization of the verbal and sound contributions.

9- reconstruction of the story by episodes
>the text is presented in episodes which should be illustrated by sentences to be read and copied. Recalling of sensations of movement, sound, shape, colour, position, etc. Recalling of similar situations experienced.

10- understanding of the structure of the text
>through the drawing, the action illustrated is focalized in a space and is developed in a space-time succession. The compositional scheme obtained can be transferred to the individual written expression.

The following pages illustrate some examples of the work done on two short stories, freely adapted from a fairy tale and a poem.

7.3 The fox and the dog

Sequence of images

la volpe e il cane = the fox and the dog

lascialo subito = leave it at once

fine = the end
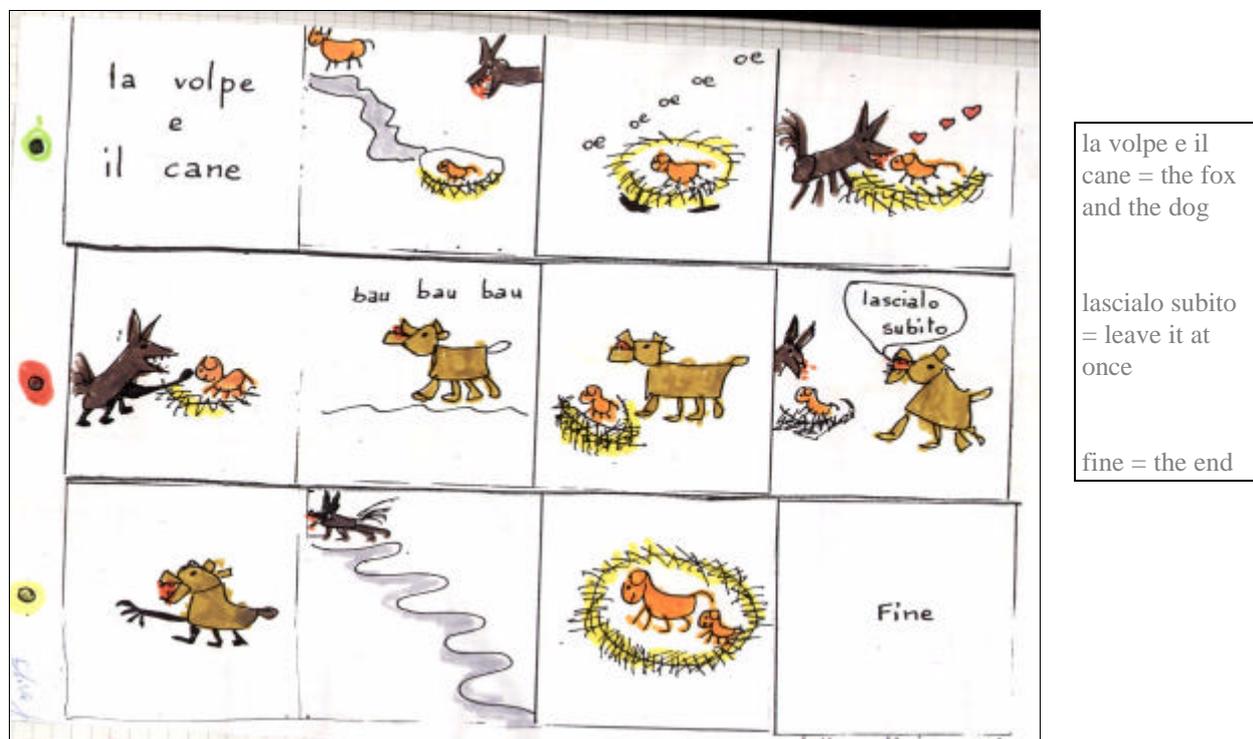
Reading of the images and colouring of the drawings

The drawings with which the tale is illustrated are done rough on purpose so that it is clear that the teacher must not necessarily possess peculiar artistic skills.

The sequence can be planned on the blackboard while discussing with the children.

For example, in this case for the second image there was the problem of choosing the cry of the lamb. "beeee beeeeee" was not adequate because more compatible with an adult sheep. The "oee oee" cry was decided because it recalled precisely a baby's cry.

In the first image the problem was to distinguish motherly caresses in a paw from caresses by a dog. It was decided that the nails were the discriminant element.

Also the characteristics of the fox and of the dog were discussed with the children while focalising the attention on three elements: tail, snout and ears. The love of the fox was represented by means of small hearts, the strength of the dog with the bark and the words in the baloon, and the departure of the fox with a long oblique line. Also the word "the end" alone in the last frame was proposed by the children. The drawing composed by the teacher reflects these choices and, as xerox copy, is distributed among the children.

Reconstruction of the piece by dramatization

After having made some basic costumes, the parts are distributed. We discuss all together the sound accomplishment of the story. We decide when to use the voice or produce sounds by hands or by the feet or which musical instruments to use. Movements, gestures, spatial disposition, succession of acts are focalized.
Shyness is overcome and all learn how to express orally with fluency and skill. All are involved in a complete way.

Gli alberi = the trees
il vento = the wind
il branco di pecore = the herd of sheep

cane = dog
volpe = fox
agnellino = little lamb
pecora = sheep

filo di ferro plastificato e carta crespata = coated iron wire and crinkled paper

Narratore = story teller
(prima l'insegnante) = first the teacher
(poi un bambino) = then a child

Reconstruction of the piece in 3D shapes

We work in group. Clay and plasteline are used. Clipping activity is done.

Clipping cardboard: the body and the paws do not change, only the head and the tail are different.


dog

fox

sheep

legs

Reconstruction of the story by episodes

Earlier considered in a whole, the story is now subdivided in some parts necessary to better characterize a situation or a character.

Similar situations, experiences, visual, tactile, movement sensations are evoked ...

The child draws and then makes practical exercise on reading and writing on the sentences, on words and on letters in the different printed and italics, capital and small case types.
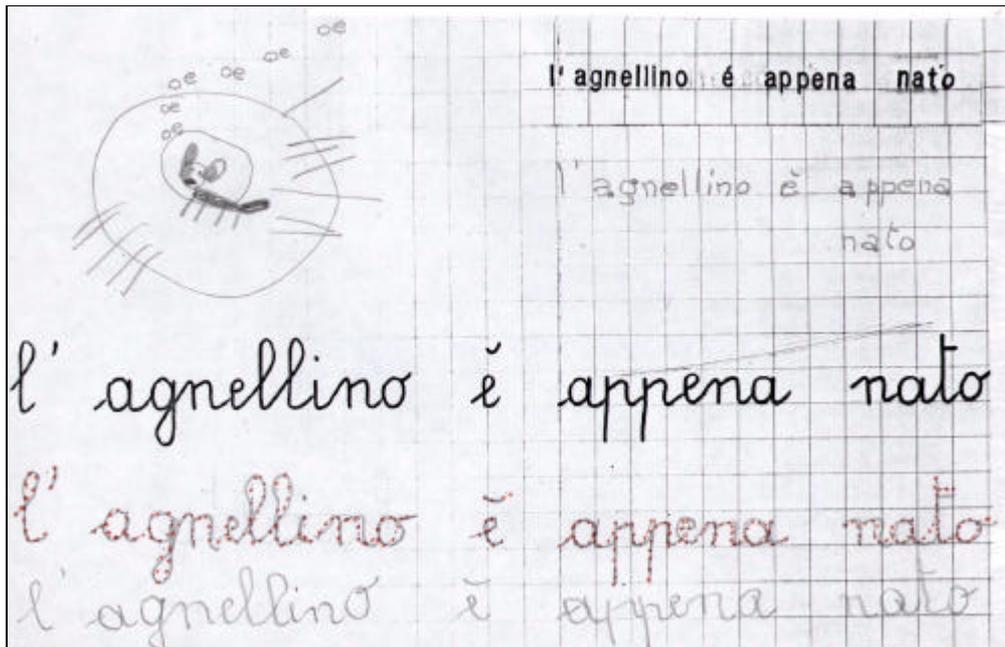

L'agnellino e' appena nato = the little lamb is just born
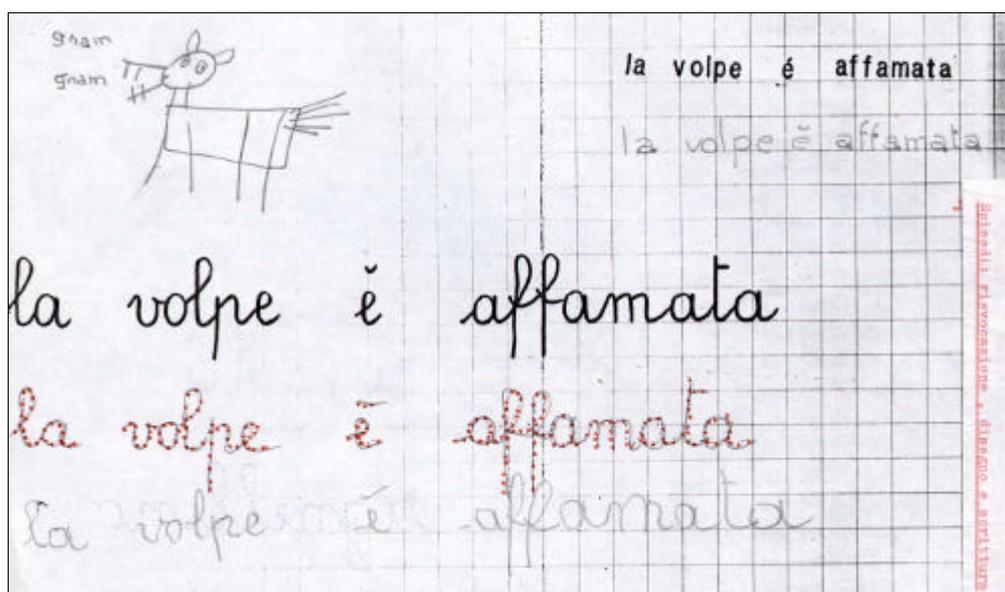
la volpe è affamata = the fox is hungry

Understanding of the structure of the text

Patchwork

The characters interact in the environment in an *inside-outside* relationship.
Each child is given a small coloured frame and blocks with words which will be glued properly.

(fuori = outside   dentro = inside)

Two small frames and some names are then offered, with "*before*" and "*after*" for a time sequence.

prima = before pecora = sheep agnellino = *little lamb volpe = fox dog = dog*	*dopo = after volpe = fox pecora = sheep* *agnellino = little lamb cane = dog*

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The next topological relationship is "*nearby*"-"*far*". Four small rectangles and the words are properly glued and then the variation in "*before*" and "*after*" is managed.
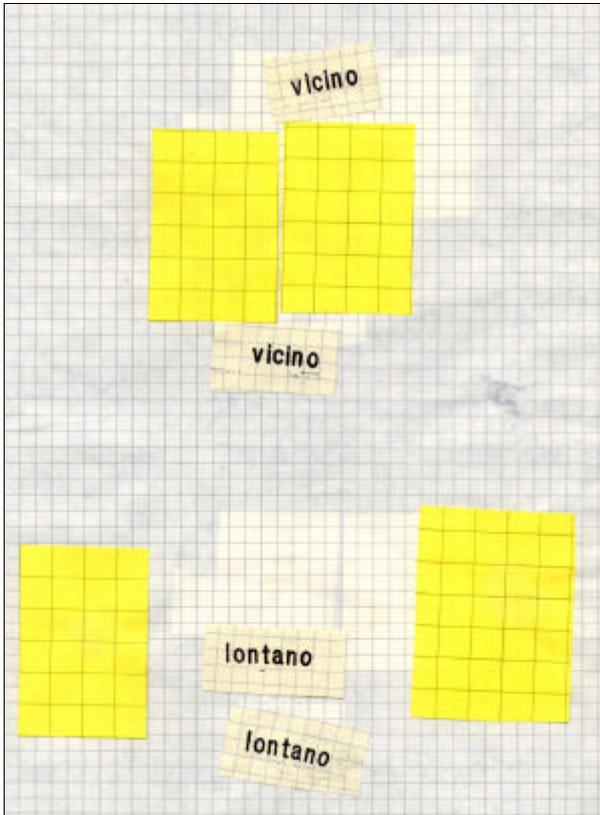

vicino = nearby

lontano = far away
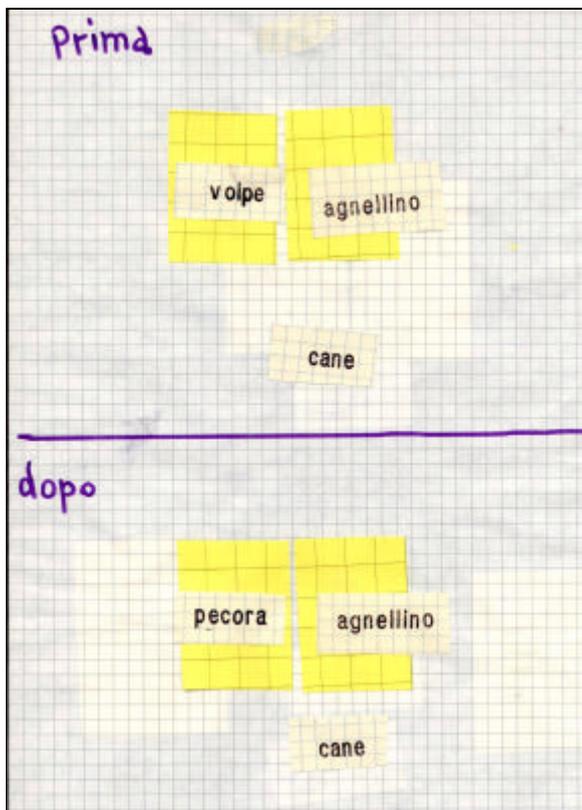
prima = before
volpe = fox
agnellino = lamb
cane = dog

dopo = after
pecora = sheep
agnellino =lamb
cane =dog

Now we draw on two cards: - environment, characters- and - <u>developing action</u>-.


Disegno ambiente = drawing of the environment
Disegno personaggi = drawing of characters
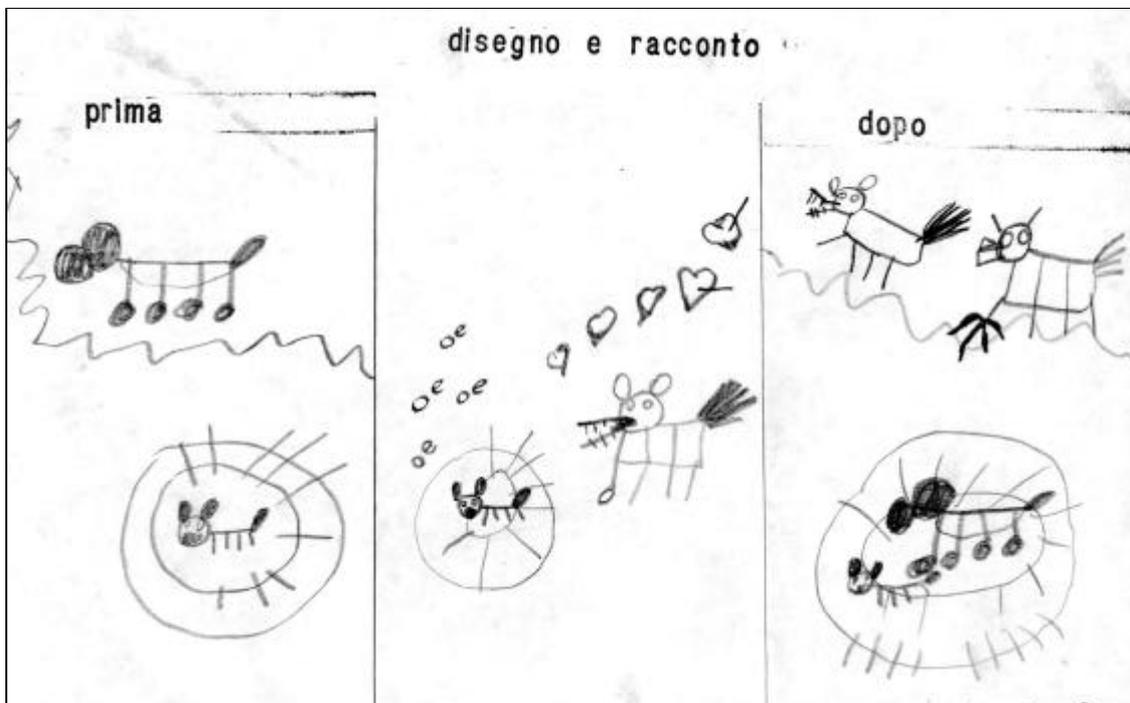
Disegno e racconto = drawing and telling
prima = before   dopo = after

Quick reading and completion

The story is given in bigger types than usual because we consider as a necessity an intermediate step between the basic signs of our material and those of a normal printed page (aids employed: small typing machine).

La volpe e il cane.

Una volpe affamata, penetrata in un branco di pecore, prese un agnellino appena nato e fingeva di dargli tanti bacetti. 'Che fai?" gli domandò il cane da guardia. "Niente" rispose la volpe, "gioco con lui e gli faccio tante carezze come una mamma". "Lascialo subito", abbaiò "altrimenti ti farò io tante carezze di cane!" a volpe si allontanò e l'agnellino restò con la mamma.

> Translation
> The fox and the dog
> A hungry fox, sneaked into a herd of sheep, caught a newly born lamb and pretended to give it many kisses. "What are you doing?" asked the shepherd dog. "Nothing", replied the fox, "I am playing with it and hugging it like a mother". "Leave it at once", the dog barked, "otherwise I shall give you many dog's hugs!" The fox went away and the little lamb stayed with its mom.

Already since the first reading exercise it is important not to accept that the child breaks the words by syllabifying. As a matter of fact, when the word sounds in a whole, it is meaningful and can evoke a fluid image that, in connection with other, favours the understanding of the sentence.
The reading of the story must be repeated to reach a good speed. The child listens to him-/herself and decides how many times to read again the text.

Then the same text is offered, but the written words alternate with blank spaces occupied by a number of dashes equal to the letters of each missing word.
The pupil will have to fill them up by avoiding as much as possible to look at the previous text.

------- La ----- e --- cane .

--Una--- ----- affamata , -----------

-- In -- branco -- pecore , ----- un

--------- appena ---- e -------

di ------- tanti --------- .

« Che --- ?», gli -------- Il ---

da ------- .

« Niente ! », ---------- la ------ ,

« gioco ---- lui - gli ------ ;

tante -------- come ---- mamma

« --------- subito », ------

« altrimenti -- farò -------- di

---- ! ».

La ------ si ----------- e

-- agnellino ------ con --- mamma

The --- and ---- dog
A hungry ---- , ------- in --- heard --- sheep, ------- a newly -----   ---- and ---- of ------
many ------. "What -----?" , the -------- ------- him.
"Nothing", ------ the ------, " I am playing ----- it, I --- it many ---- like a -----.
"----- at once", ----- -------, "otherwise I ---- -----you dog's -------!".
The ------ went ----- and the ----- lamb --- with ---- mom.

Blind reading

We read and try to remember the "hidden" part with an effort for the completion of the thought through a partial visual contribution.

As a matter of fact, when the child pronounces the hidden word exactly, this is written in the mind, occupies its space on the sheet and is memorized and recognized immediately also in a different context. So the reading becomes quicker.

To the top the title has been taken away. The child will chose another one more adequate. The comparison between the title chosen by the teacher and that proposed by the child is meaningful: the first recalls the action of the two adult characters, whereas the child's title concentrates the attention on the smaller animal.

Una volpe affamata, penetrata
di pecore, prese un agnellin(
e fingeva di dargli tanti ba
"Che fai?" gli domandò il ca
"Niente" rispose la volpe,
e gli faccio tante carezze
mamma".
"Lascialo subito", abbaiò " alt
lo tante carezze di cane! "
La volpe si allontanò e l·agr
con la mamma.

Un agnellino in pericolo

A lamb in danger.

7.4 The canary and the moon

Il canarino e la luna

Un vecchio cinese aveva un canarino
a cui aveva insegnato tante canzoni
La gente si fermava davanti alla casa
per sentire il canto dell' uccellino
Ma un giorno improvvisamente il canarino
restò muto, sembrava che avesse dimenticato
tutto.
Una vecchia disse al cinese:
"Picchialo con una bacchettina
e canterà."
L' uomo rispose:
"No, mai lo picchierò!"

Costruì una barchetta di carta,
la posò sul fiume e vi adagiò
il canarino.
Venne la notte, si alzò la luna
e il canarino dondolando sull' acqua
pian piano ricordò tutte
le sue canzoni.

Translation - The canary and the moon

An old Chinese man had a canary to whom he had taught many songs. The people was stopping in front of the house to hear the song of the canary.
But one day the canary suddenly lost his voice, it seemed he had forgotten everything. An old lady said to the old Chinese "Beat him with a stick and he will sing". The old man replied "No, I shall never beat him!". Instead, he built a little paper boat, put it on the river and put the canary comfortably inside.
The night came, the moon raised and the canary, while rocking on the water, little by little remembered all his songs.

<u>Reconstruction of the text in bidimensional shapes and colours</u>

Big group patchwork

It is very interesting to build up a big patchwork together.

A blue coloured card will be used as background to give the idea of the night. The space is divided horizontally into two equal parts: the sky to the top, the river and the ground to the bottom. Long and short triangles are available for the children in order to build up Chinese characters.

With the paper cuttings in dark and light blue and brown the children will fill the background thereby creating rhythms and avoiding to pair similar pieces. The children complete the patchwork with a paper strip, a painted and clipped canary, stars and the moon in glittering purpurin.

Only clear intentions and the preparation of the material by the teacher will allow a good result and a lively and quick action not beyond the skills of the children.
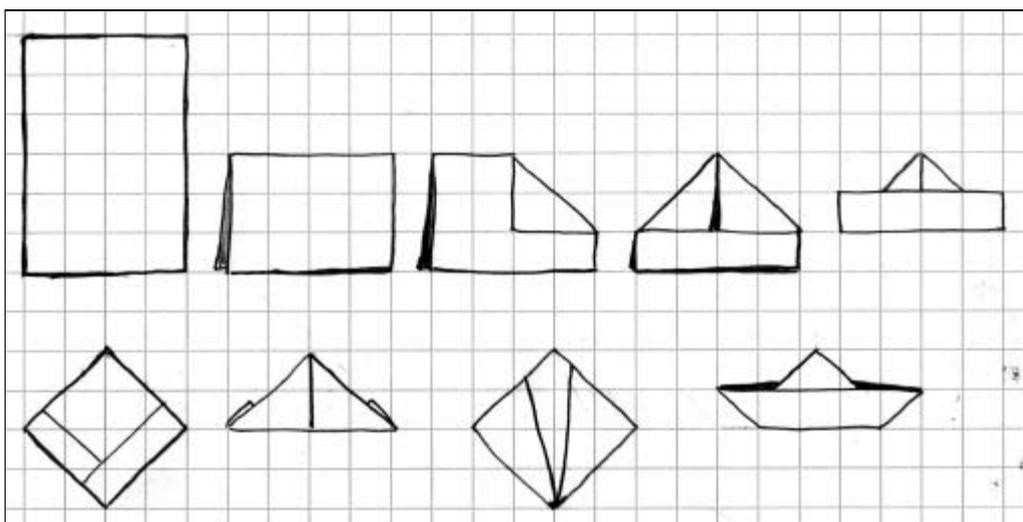
<u>Reading of the stripes</u>

The story is located on a series of stripes which will be clipped and used as follows: two of them are given to the child, then the remaining ones, one by one.
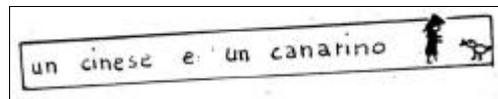
The Chinese is a canary

To the right of each stripe a child makes a small drawing as recall.

After every contribution, we stop and read again all together.

At the end the stripes are all in order on the table. The whole story is read in choir.

The attention of the child goes from the words to the small drawing. The two parts interact and help each other, so the whole class can take part to a loud reading of the text.

A Chinese and a canary

the canary knows the songs

people stop

people listen to the song

the canary is dumb

"Beat it!", says the old woman

the little paper boat

the house by the river

the night is coming

the canary on the water

the moon rises

he remembers his songs

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The same operation is repeated for the text in italics.

> la gente si ferma
> la barchetta di carta
> la casa sul fiume
> viene la notte
> ricorda le sue canzoni
> il canarino resta muto
> il canarino sa le canzoni
> si alza la luna
> _ Picchialo! _ dice la vecchia
> il canarino sull' acqua
> la gente ascolta il canto
> un cinese e un canarino

The people stop	The little paper boat
the house by the river	the night is coming
he remembers his songs	the canary looses his voice
the canary knows his songs	the moon raises
Beat him! Says the old woman	the canary on the water
the people listen to the song	a Chinese and a canary

Exercise: by using two stripes at a time, one in capital letters and one in italics, we can subdivide the sentence in words in different types. These will be then reordered.

Reading of words in circles and in vertical.

The arrow indicates the direction of reading. However, the sheet stays still so that the child can practise in catching the word in any space location.
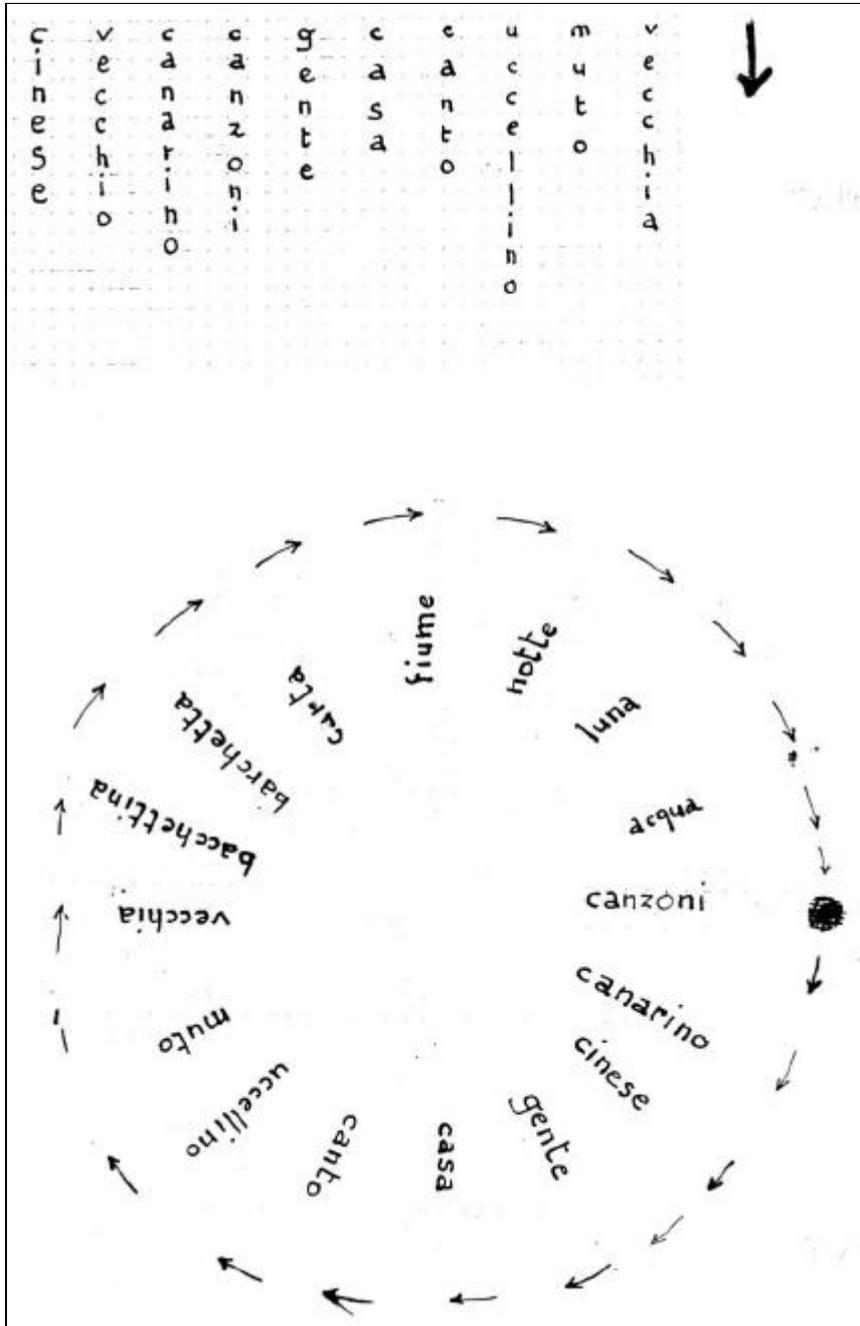
Cinese = Chinese
vecchio = old
canarino = canary
canzoni = songs
gente = people
casa = house
canto = song
uccellino = little bird
muto = dumb
vecchia = old woman

fiume = river
notte = night
luna = moon
acqua = water
canzoni = songs
canarino = canary
cinese = Chinese
gente = people
casa = house
canto = song
uccellino = little bird
muto = dumb
vecchia = old woman
bacchettina = stick
barchetta = little boat
carta = paper

<u>Expressive reading</u>

With the latter exercise, the child is urged to trasfer his/her skills for big-case characters on usual typed characters. It is a further small visual effort which, however, allows the child to use any text with clusters of letters learnt in a personal way by each child.

In this occasion fluency and expression will be more cured.

As a matter of fact, by now the words in the text are no more difficult for the child, so it is possible to ask him/her to better respect the punctuation and to brighten up question marks and exclamations.
It will be good to draw the articles near the names in the punctuation.

At the end all together listen to the expressive ability obtained. In this first period it is very important to make the children acquire skill and speed quickly in order to keep the interest and the pleasure of reading alive.
To offer the child occasions of continuously varied reading can give good results on a long time, but to alternate reading with an analytical and deepening exercise on the same text is even more fruitful and interesting.

Il canarino e la luna

Un vecchio cinese aveva un canarino a cui
aveva insegnato tante canzoni.
La gente si fermava davanti alla casa per
sentire il canto dell'uccellino.
Ma un giorno improvvisamente il canarino
restò muto, sembrava che avesse dimenticato
to tutto.
Una vecchia disse al cinese:
- Picchialo con una bacchettina e canterà!
L'uomo rispose:
- No, mai lo picchierò!
Costruì una barchetta di carta, la posò
sul fiume e vi adagiò il canarino.
Venne la notte, si alzò la luna e il cana-
rino, dondolando sull'acqua, pian piano ri
cordò tutte le sue canzoni.

<u>Understanding of the text structure</u>

Let's come back to the cards with the space relationships "*above*"-"*below*" and some clippings, in addition, with the words "*terra*" = earth, "*fiume*" = river, "*barchetta*" = little ship, "*canarino*" = canary, "*stelle*" = stars, "*luna*" = moon, "*cielo*" = sky, "*sopra*" = above, "*sotto*" = below. The aim is to make a patchwork.
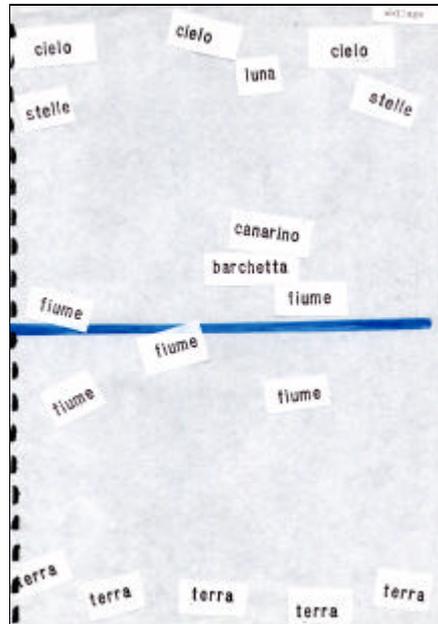
We also use the cards with the space relations "*before*" and "*behind*", rectangular clippings with the words "*before*" and "*behind*", a blue stripe representing the river and the shape of a Chinese man: patchwork.
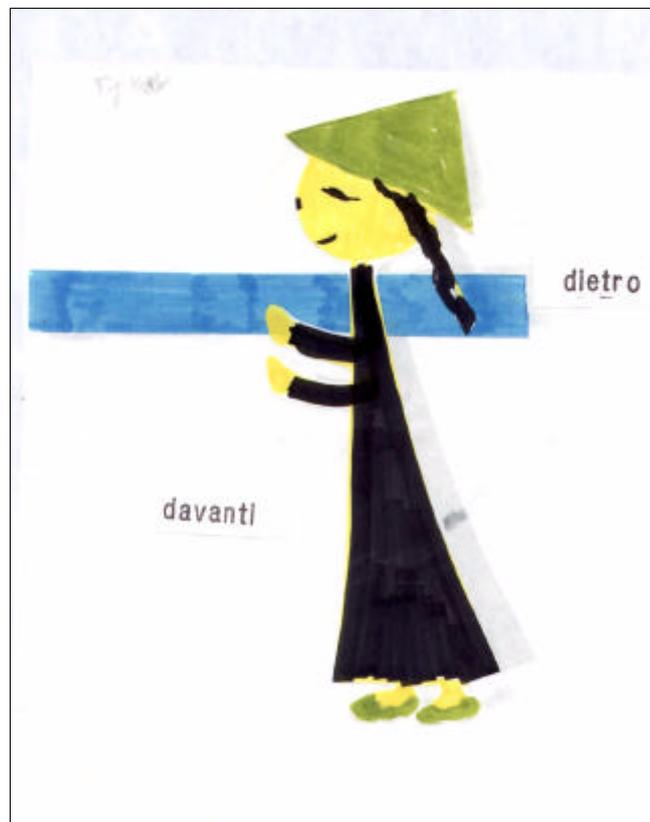
We add the cards with "*close*"-"*far*" and the words "*people*", "*canary*" and "*Chinese*" for more patchwork.
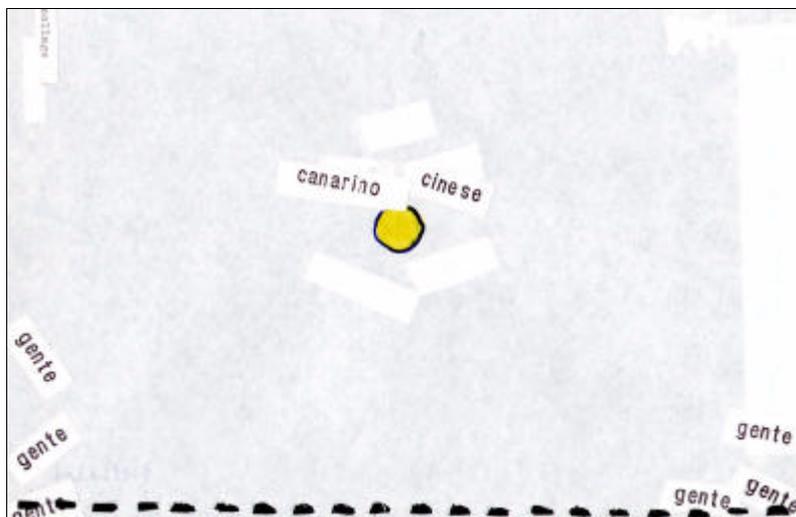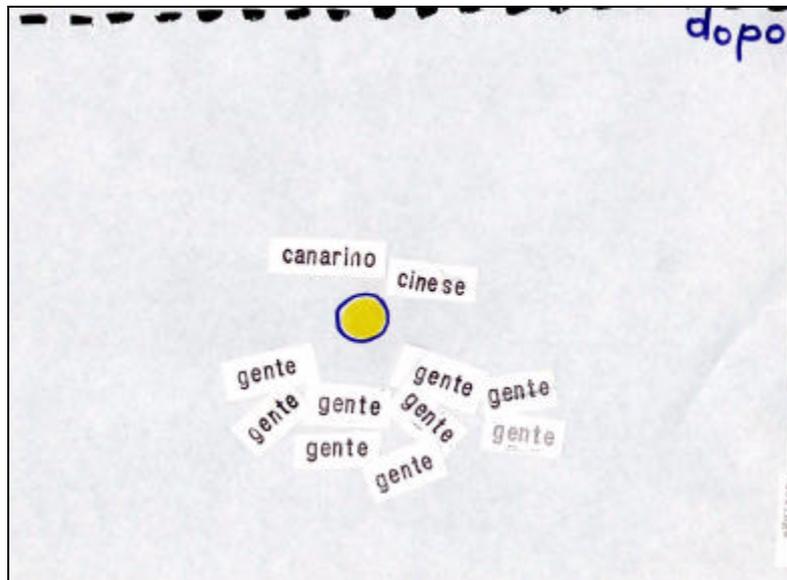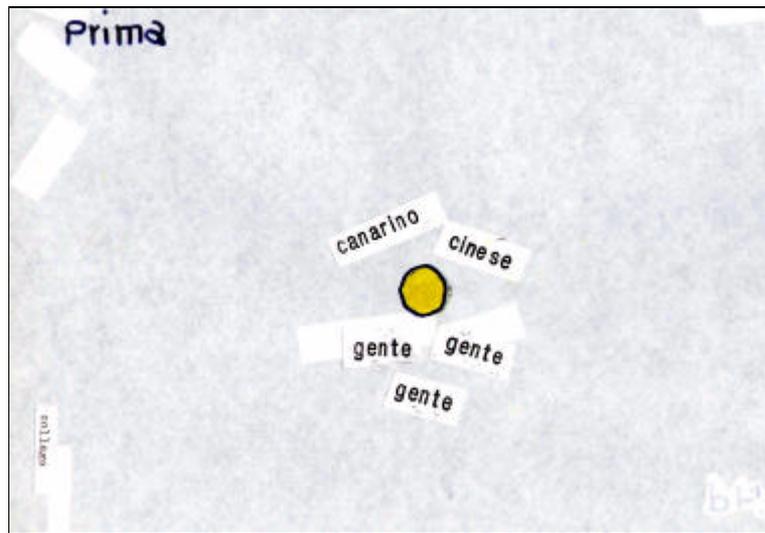
Drawing of the environment.   Drawing of the characters
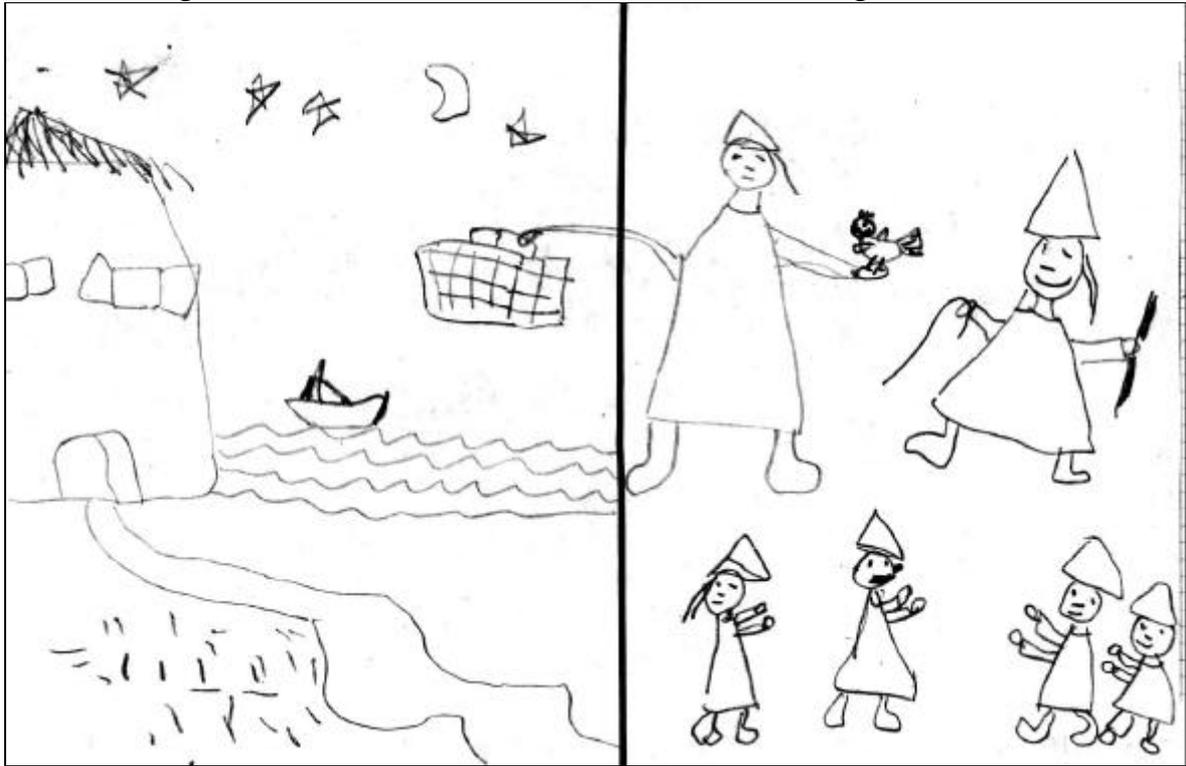
Drawing and telling

Before   After

The reference cards proposed can be used in an opposite way: coming back to the writing in order to plan and organize the composition of a free text.

Example.

AMBIENTE	PERSONAGGI
dalla nonna Brunilde il terreno dietro l'officina	io – la Chica la mia mamma mio fratello Alberto

Environment	Characters	
at Grandmom Brunilde	myself	Chica
the ground behind the factory	Mom	my brother Alberto

PRIMA		DOPO
il pranzo – giochiamo a nascondino	io vado da solo la Chica mi segue mia la mamma la sgrida	la Chica segue l'Alberto

Before		After
the lunch	I go by myself	
we play hiding	Chica follows me	Chica follows Alberto
	Mom shouts at Chica	

La Chica nel cortile.

Un giorno io e la mia famiglia io
siamo andati a pranzo dalla
nonna Brunilde.

Dopo mangiato io e mia cugina
Chica siamo andati in cortile.
Abbiamo giocato a nascondino.
Dopo un pò io mi ero stancato
di giocare a nascondino e
volevo andare dopolo a
vedere il tereno dietro
l' olicina.
Ma la Chica mi seguiva lostes.
Io ho detto alla mia mamma:
« Mamma, la Chica mi segue
sempre ».
La mia mamma ha detto alla
Chica. « Non seguirlo più ».
E la Chica ha smeso di
seguirmi.
Ma segue mio fratello Alberto.

Translation - Chica in the courtyard

One day my family and myself went for lunch to Grandmom Brunilde's. After lunch my cousin Chica and I went to the courtyard. We played hiding. After a while I was tired of playing and wanted to go alone and see the ground behind the factory. But Chica was following me all the same. I told to my mom: " Mom, Chica always follows me!"

Mom told Chica: "Don't follow him anymore".

And Chica stopped following me. But she follows my brother Alberto.

Current event - observation and research

The teacher cannot ignore the everyday events, the news on the TV, on the radio or shown on newspapers and magazines. These facts reach also the 5-6 years old children who are often well informed and use a rich vocabulary, although this does not correspond to an adequate understanding.

When the relationship with the children is positive, the children use their knowledge but they also wait for the confirmation from the adults, give names, pose questions, make comments.
It is normal that the facts of the village-world enter the children's talk and imagination beside school topics, fairy tales, animal tales, etc..

If we are working with illiterate adults, it is even more important to refer to current events.

Also research (school) topics which are attended and absorbed can offer occasions for the construction of sentences and text.
The exploration and the direct observation are lead by the teacher, who then lets the topic be freely open by children's imagination.
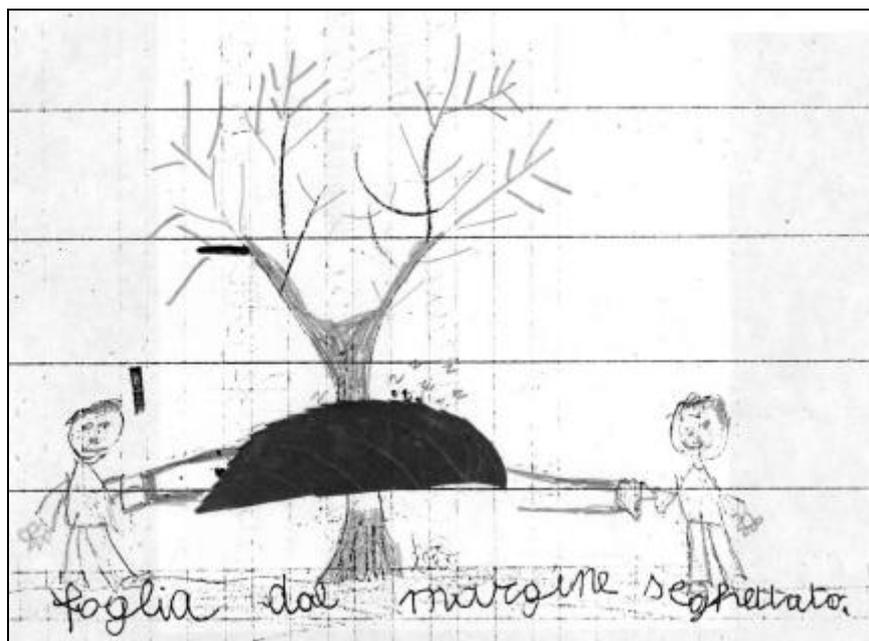
leaf with a jigsaw-like margin

my leaf is a dinosaur
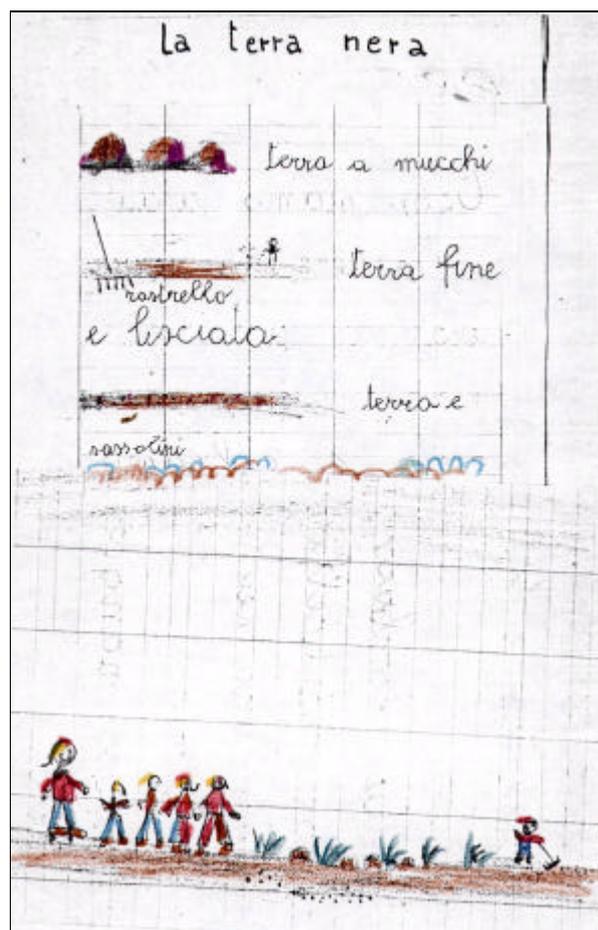
La terra nera = the black ground
terra a mucchi = ground in heaps
terra fine e lisciata = fine and smoothed ground
terra e sassolini = ground and small pebbles

Giochi con le fo-
glie.
Con una foglia
di cicoria abbia-
mo fatto uno
squalo:
bocca grande
e dentacci
aguzzi.
Con una foglia
di erba abbia-
mo costruito una
lancia.
Sulla pagina
chiara di una
foglia abbiamo
scritto "ape.

Era un dettato
facilissimo e
tutti hanno
preso Bene

Bene
ape

Translation - Games with the leaves
With a long and jigsaw-like leaf we made a shark: big mouth
and ugly sharp teeth.
With a slender grass leaf we biult up a sword.
On a light-coloured side of a leaf we wrote "bee".
This was a very easy dictation and we all got "well done".

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