

Will Hussey & Barry Hymer

Puffed Out

The Three Little Pigs' Guide to
a Growth Mindset



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An artful note for the teacher

Who knew the story of the three little pigs was so complicated, and so challenging? In fact, for decades adults have even been reading it to *infants*, as if it were a simple tale for simple kids! You've probably read it yourself or had it read to you in your cot. You might have read it to your pupils, or your own children. If you haven't, or you've forgotten it because it was so long ago, this is the essential plotline: three pigs build a house each. A wolf exposes the limitations of two of the houses through lung power, but the third house remains standing. So he attempts to force an entry via the chimney and fails.

But this less-is-more version of the tale loses so much in its stripped-back state, and would certainly not have been so popular for so many centuries in this form. In fact, it's more a case of less-is-even-less. Before you let your pupils loose on all the hidden challenges of the full and unedited story, here's a more worked-up version of the tale.

Three little pigs get thrown out by their mum to make their way in the world. It's not clear quite why she did this, or, if it ever were known, the reasons are lost in the mire (there are no mists of time). Perhaps she fancied a quiet life after all those exhausting pig-rearing years. Perhaps she was being eaten out of barn and sty. Perhaps she wanted to bring her fancy-pig round for a romantic candle-lit dinner and the little pigs would've ruined the atmo. Or perhaps, thinking the best of her, she knew the time had come for them to leave, and to keep them at home any

longer would have been psychologically damaging, leaving them deskilled and helplessly dependent. So perhaps it was an act of selfless love. Anyway, whatever the reason, these were the days when it was still possible to get on the sty ladder, mortgages were freely available and the build-your-own-pigsty movement was just getting going. So it was a good time to waddle off into the wider world. And as far as we know, the pigs held no lasting grudges against their mum, so this doesn't turn into a dark slasher tale of deep hurt and eventual revenge.

The three turfed-out little pigs turned out to be quite resourceful little fellows after all, as perhaps predicted by their wise mum. (We say 'fellows', but there's no hard evidence that they were male pigs at all, and we have a suspicion that at least two of them were female and victims of early sexism in the retelling – but that's our patriarchal society for you.) Although there's little reference to getting the landowner's permission, each little pig set about building his own house on a patch of greenbelt land. The youngest, apparently lazy and feckless in most retellings, but in reality probably just the least skilled by virtue of her youth, built a house made of straw. Nowadays she would be celebrated for her eco-credentials, but back then people thought straw houses were naff, flimsy and poorly insulated. Or maybe they knew even then that straw actually had outstanding insulation properties, but they just didn't care about climate change and the need to keep heating to a minimum to save the planet.

The middle brother came over all Bear Grylls and built a perfectly adequate log cabin from a local wood store that just happened to have a 'free wood – help yourself' sign beside it (and if you believe that you'll believe anything – actually the

middle pig was a light-fingered little toe-rag, but that's another story). Like straw, we know nowadays that wooden houses need not be rickety and ramshackle, and that wood is the building material of choice for many of the most warm, civilised and downright interesting nations in the world. Like the Norwegians. But back then, anything other than solid stone, concrete or brick was considered passé. This is probably because the fledgling brick industry was gaining a stranglehold on the sty market and peddling their wicked lies, such as 'Brick is best' and 'If it ain't brick we'll kick it down'.

In the earliest known version of the tale (sponsored by Barratt Medieval Homes), the eldest brother worked hard and purposefully, and some time after his younger sibs, finally completed his own home – built entirely of bricks, mortar, drywall plasterboard and a dodgy 1970s Artex finish.

The rest of the tale involves the wolf, various taunting chants from the pigs (most of which seem to involve proud but rather tasteless boasting about their newly discovered facial hair), super-lupine blowing down of the first two houses, panicky fleeing of the first two pigs from house to house until they find sanctuary in their generous older brother's brick-built home, more hairy chinny-chin-chin taunting from the pigs, a desperate attempt by the wolf to enter the brick house Father Christmas-style, and, for the wolf, either a grisly demise in a fire roaring in the hearth or (for younger listeners) a hasty but non-life-changing retreat back up the chimney and a return to the woods, never to be seen or heard of again.

Now that you've been reminded of the story's basics, let's get down to the serious business of *really* understanding it. If your

pupils can work their way through these 60 pig-related challenges without their brains hurting, we've probably not done justice to the story. And we certainly won't have helped their brains to grow. Because, as Professor Carol Dweck, originator of mindset theory tells us, a hurting brain is the feeling of a brain growing, so if they manage to persist, make mistakes and false starts, sweat them out and struggle to eventual success, then these little pigs will have helped you grow your pupils' brains. You will have changed their shapes and their structures and, what's more, they'll never be able to go back to their gormless, lazy, fixed, pre-pig brains.

And that's our confession. This book might *seem* to be about the three little pigs, but to be honest, it's not really. The pigs are just the focus of our real purpose, which is to grow your pupils' brains by getting them to think between, above, below, around and beyond the lines. And once they've grown their brains by struggling through the challenges in this book, if you popped into a hospital equipped with the right machines and asked to see an MRI scan of their new pig-grown brains, you would be amazed at how many millions of new connections (synapses) you will have made between their brain nerves (neurons), and therefore how much more powerful their brains have become. And how much readier they now are to accept new challenges and to grow several million more neural connections.

And when you reach that point, you and your pupils might even be ready to tackle the fiendish complexities of 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears' and the next stage of their endlessly growing and changing brains. But that's for another time. You'll need to get into training with those pigs first – good luck!

Instructions: Know Matter

Thinking can be a funny business. Or alternatively deadly serious. So maybe it would be more accurate to describe it as dead funny – in the case of this book, anyway. Immerse yourself amongst the pages and try to get to grips with an assortment of greased pigs. Be careful – they're slippery little blighters.

Take the chapter heading for starters; it might take some, err ... getting your head around. Those of you who think you could do better in this respect will notice that you're cordially invited to do so (a title should be earned, after all).

There's plenty to ponder over, and if you require a nudge in the right direction, you will find three – although the direction you take depends on which way you're looking at it. Prompts and responses abound, although it's not always clear which is which; questions can be answered and answers should be questioned.

The Thinkantation encourages you to translate words into action – literally making sense and crafting meaning, putting the 'ink' into 'think'. The editors' note is typically best ignored, and designed to derail your rationale – what do they know anyway? In addition to the ample food for thought, you'll also stumble across various asides, aboves and belows, intended to signpost the spectacular irrelevance.

Make of it what you will; prolonged exposure causes eye-watering, mind-altering growth something.



What does a Wolfie workout consist of?

1. Pig or Small?

Your Title:



Ponder

The three pigs are described as 'little'. Are they too young to leave home? Should their parents be prosecuted for negligence?



Nudges

- ♥ Do you think the pigs are indeed little? Compared to whom/what?
e.g. 'No, I think they are an average size for a pig but they seem quite immature.'
- ♥ Should the pigs have been allowed to leave home at such an early age?
e.g. 'I think the pigs were too young to leave home and clearly weren't prepared for the outside world.'
- ♥ Do you think the pigs were well cared for?
e.g. 'Maybe the pigs were emotionally neglected by their parents, even though they were well fed.'

What does a pig enjoy
for a healthy snack?

How do you
bribe a pig?



Sticking points

Make sense of – ‘Prosecuted’ means to legally accuse or hold someone accountable.

Understand – ‘Little’ can refer to size or age.

Decipher – What constitutes ‘emotional negligence’? (Failing to look after someone’s mind as well as their body.)



Thinkantation

Create a life-size cut-out of one of the pigs.



Editors' note

Sorry, some of these are pig questions, but well done for persevering. Does a pig actually enjoy a healthy snack?

Some pigs have curlier tails than others; how do they feel about this?

2. Law in Order?

Your Title:



Ponder

There is a notable absence of any law enforcement in the story. Why?



Nudges

♡ Do you think the pigs were responsible for policing the town?

e.g. 'Mr Pig had just started his second tenure as sheriff, employing his sons as deputies. They were intent on cleaning up the town, before realising they'd caused most of the mess.'

♡ Why did the real police avoid the area?

e.g. 'Streaky Mews became a no-go area. Contract killing – or "pork scratching" – was rife.'

♡ Undercover officers were rumoured to have undertaken several covert missions. Were they successful?

e.g. 'Yes, no one knows anything about them.'

Promoted pigs don't earn stripes, they gain streaks.

Criminal pigs have no honour; they will happily squeal on other gang members.



Police patrolling Streaky Mews from the sky are affectionately known as 'flying pigs'!

Really - pigs can fly?



Sticking points

M 'Law enforcement' typically manifests as a 'force' appointed to police a community.

U Amongst criminals, 'honour' is supposedly adhering to a code where the police are not informed under any circumstances.

D How might the police benefit from 'criminal collusion'?
(Turning a blind eye enables all parties to go about their business uninterrupted.)



Thinkantation

Design and make a head to put a price on.



Editors' note

There is no suggestion of collusion between the police and the pigs; any truths are purely coincidental.

There is some disagreement over the number of thorns on the cactus. It's a prickly subject.

Who knew the story of the three little pigs was so complicated, and so challenging?

In fact, for decades adults have even been reading it to infants, as if it were a simple tale for simple kids! The essential plotline: three pigs each build a house. A wolf exposes the limitations of two of the houses through lung power, but the third house remains standing. He attempts to force an entry via the chimney and fails.

This book might seem to be about the three little pigs, but the pigs are just the focus of its real purpose, which is to challenge and encourage learners to immerse themselves in thinking between, above, below, around and beyond the tale's unexplored blind-spots.

Do sheep enjoy dressing up in wolves' clothing?

Crammed full of activities and diverse open-ended questions, there's plenty to ponder over, and if you require a nudge or two in the right direction, you'll find them – although the direction you take depends on which way you're looking at it.

Prompts and responses abound, although it's not always clear which is which; questions can be answered and answers should be questioned.

Suitable for primary and lower secondary teachers

The wolf had already acquired a reputation for being both 'big' and 'bad'. What happened prior to this particular escapade for him to acquire such notoriety?

Puffed Out is a very neat idea. It shows how it is possible to take a single story, 'The Three Little Pigs', and to magnify mega discussions around big ideas.

Mary Myatt, education adviser, speaker and author of *Hopeful Schools*

Clever, funny and imaginative: a creative feast.

Andy Cope, author, teacher and happiness expert

Offers a wealth of laughter and fun activities which stretch the mind and promote learning.

Denise Yates, Chief Executive, Potential Plus UK

If I'd known about these thinking skills maybe I could have come up with a plan to get into that third house.

The Big Bad Wolf

Will Hussey is an experienced teacher and author who writes about thinking ... and spy dogs. Will has a degree in physical and adventure education and reckons that's pretty much how all education should be: sedentary and unadventurous education is not much use to anyone. He's completed three London marathons and the Snowdon marathon. He's vowed 'never again'. He is (almost) a black belt in karate and has a wife and two children who don't take him too seriously.

Professor Barry Hymer is one of the country's foremost authorities on cultivating a growth mindset and a much in demand speaker who has worked closely with Carol Dweck on several UK mindset conference tours. He is interested in helping schools with practical ways to foster growth mindsets in their pupils.

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