

Story: [Hooray for Fish!](#)

Author: Lucy Cousins

Illustrator: Lucy Cousins

Teacher: [Jennifer Formosa](#)

Context: An independent school catering for children from pre-kindergarten to secondary level in Malta

Age group: 4 - 5 years old (this lesson is intended for children in the first term of the 1st Grade)

Number of children in the class: 22

Learning intention: To write the number 4 with the correct formation and directionality, and to link its symbol to its number value

Key mathematical vocabularies: number, counting, how many, next, four

Resources needed: A copy of the 'Hooray for Fish!' story book, interactive whiteboard, Number 4 Fish worksheets, aprons, paintbrushes, paint, mini whiteboards and markers, laminated fishbowl and cut-out fish

Synopsis by the publisher:

Paddle along with Little Fish on a mesmerizing underwater tour of friends spotty and stripy, happy and gripy, hairy and scary, even curly whirly and twisty twirly. From the creator of *Maisy* comes an eye-popping picture book that is sure to have little ones joining the chorus: Hooray for fish!

Starter / Teaching input (10 mins):

I started off the lesson by reading the story to the children, stopping to elicit the numbers 1, 2 and 3 on the 'number fish' page (see Figure 1) and to include the children in counting the fish on the "How many can you see?" page (see Figure 2). The children were already familiar with the story so I did not spend any time discussing it, and immediately returned to the 'number fish' page to elicit which 'number fish' would come after the Number 3 Fish if Lucy Cousins had continued to paint more number fish. Examples of questions and responses:

1. What have these fish got on their bodies? *Numbers*
2. What **number** does this fish have on it? *One*
3. What number does the **next** fish have on it? *Two/three.*
4. The author is asking us **how many** fish we can see; how can we find out? *By counting.*
5. If Lucy Cousins had continued to paint more 'number fish' after Number 3 Fish, which **number** would the **next** fish have on it? *Four*

I then wrote five random numbers (from 0 to 9, making sure to include the number 4) on the interactive whiteboard, with a different number in each corner of the whiteboard and one number in the middle. I told the children that they were going to be 'mini illustrators' and paint their own Number 4 Fish, so on the word "Go!" they would have to point at the number 4 to show that they knew which number they would be using. After giving them a few seconds to look at the different numbers I shouted out "Go!" and after taking a quick mental note of those students who were most hesitant or confused, I pointed to it myself and named it while tracing over it.

Main activity (25 mins):

After demonstrating the correct directionality for writing the number four, I wrote it in dotted lines on the whiteboard and asked a couple of children to come to the board and trace over it in the same way. I then asked the children to practice writing it 'in the air' and on each other's backs, using their index fingers. Two more children were then asked to attempt to write the number on the whiteboard, without dotted lines to follow.

The children then put on their art aprons and were given paint and the Number 4 Fish worksheets at their tables (see Figures 3 and 4). After counting how many 'Number 4 Fish' were on their worksheets, as a whole class, the children were then asked to start tracing over the number 4s with their index fingers. Once I or my teaching assistant had seen a child correctly trace over the numbers on their worksheets with correct starting point and directionality), s/he was then given a paintbrush to start painting the numbers with (those children who had found difficulty with identifying the number 4 in the Starter were monitored especially closely).



Upon completion of the painting activity, the children took their worksheets out to dry, washed their hands and removed their aprons, and sat down on the carpet to practise or help each other to write number 4s (and other numbers) on mini whiteboards. In the meantime, those finding difficulty with correctly forming the number 4 were supported by the teacher and teaching assistant on a one-to-one basis.

Plenary (10 mins):

When all the children were ready from their painting and seated on the carpet, a laminated fish bowl and laminated fish were placed in front of them. I asked one of the children to write the number 4 on the fish bowl and then asked the children to do the same on their mini whiteboards. Next, I asked another child to place 4 fish in the fish bowl, and asked the children to draw four fish onto their mini whiteboards. At this stage, the children were asked to swap mini whiteboards with someone next to them to check if the number 4 was written correctly and if there was the right number of fish drawn underneath it. The children were familiar with peer assessment and helped their peers to correct any identified mistakes in a supportive manner.

Reflection:

Using this story to introduce number formation to the children offered a breath of fresh air both to them as students and to me as a teacher. In previous years, my students would get terribly demotivated and bored tracing over numbers in decontextualized workbooks and worksheets, which would be equally as demotivating and boring for me in trying to support them to do so! Through linking number work to the story 'Hooray for Fish!', I felt that I was able to provide the children with a reason to learn to write their numbers other than for the mere sake of following my instructions; and since they were playing the role of 'mini illustrators' they engaged fully with the task and were keen to master it.

After the lesson, the children's 'number fish' then joined their other artworks of different fish they had created in extension of the story 'Hooray for Fish!', which was further developed as a class theme over a three-week period.

Figures:

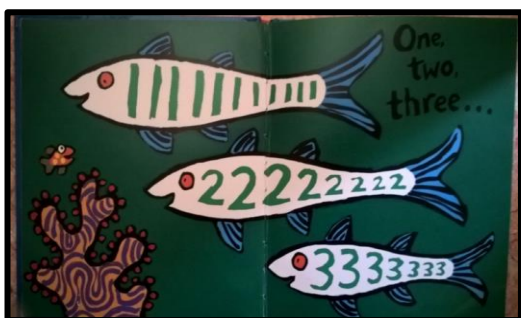


Figure 1: 'Number fish' as illustrated by Lucy Cousins



Figure 2: 'How many can you see?' page

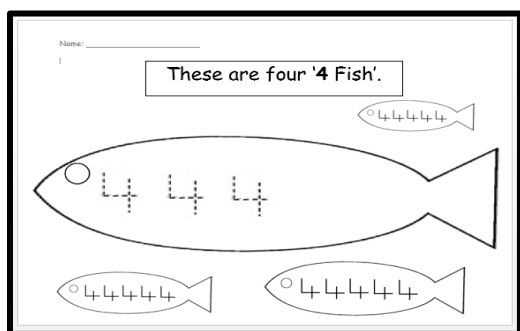


Figure 3: Number 4 Fish Worksheet

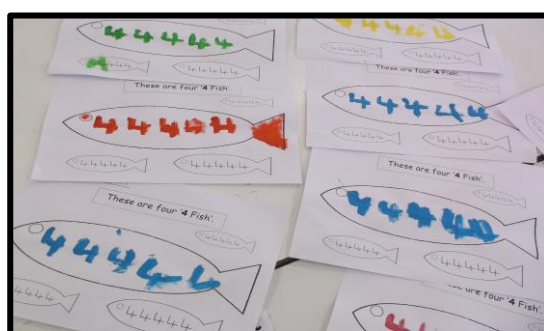


Figure 4: Completed worksheets