

# Reviews

## The Thinking Train series

by Herbert Puchta and Günter Gerngross  
Helbling Languages 2015

*At the Zoo*  
978-3-99045-302-5

*What Are You Doing, Daniel?*  
978-3-99045-303-2

*Roberto's Backpack*  
978-3-99045-304-9

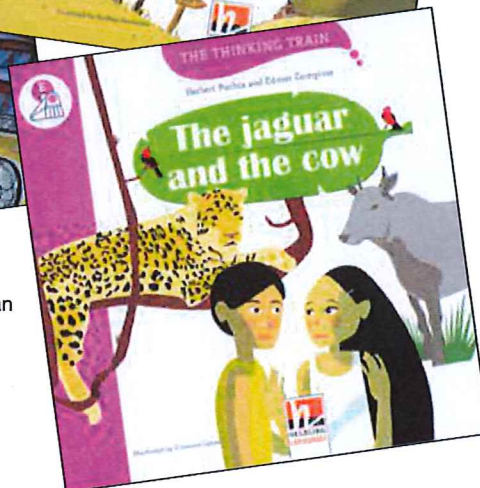
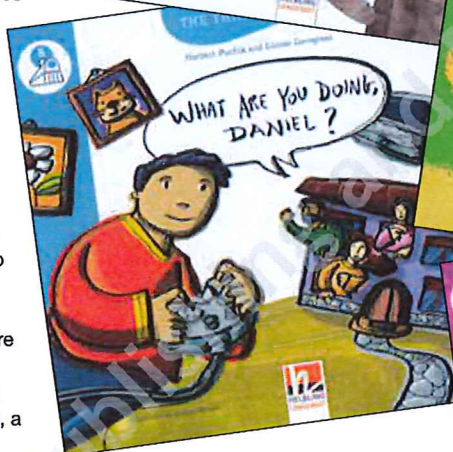
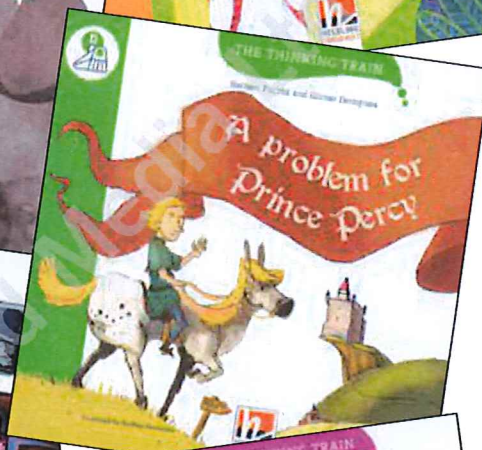
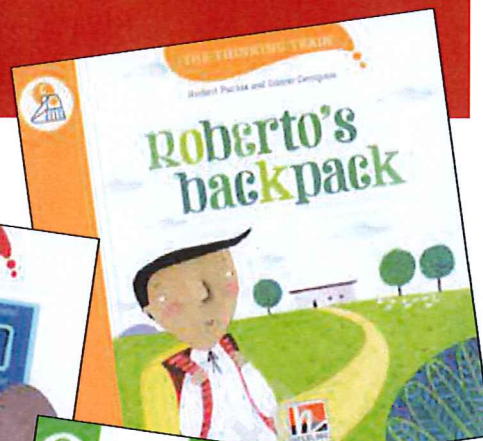
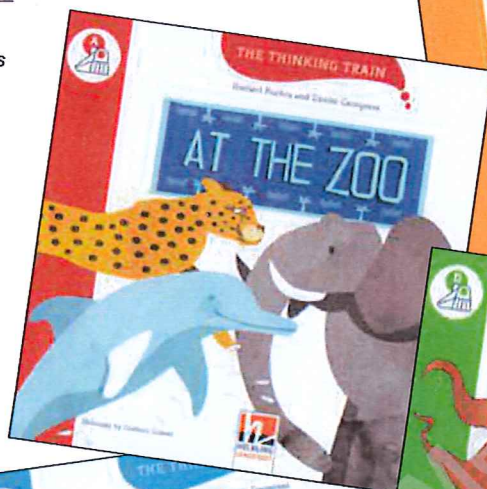
*A Problem for Prince Percy*  
978-3-99045-305-6

*The Jaguar and the Cow*  
978-3-99045-306-3

The Thinking Train is a five-level series of picture books for young learners, which combines practice in reading with the development of thinking skills. The five levels (A to E) are linked to the Cambridge Young Learners English and Trinity levels, with levels A to C corresponding to the Cambridge 'Starters' level (Trinity 1) and levels D and E corresponding to the Cambridge 'Movers' level (D = Trinity 2 and E = Trinity 2/3).

The stories are original and all are lavishly illustrated. They are also varied, having settings ranging from rural Mexico, the Brazilian rainforest, a fairytale land of princes and princesses, a zoo, and what looks like a typical European home. Though not overly 'preachy', the books do contain some important messages: the importance of living in harmony with nature, pulling your weight in the family home, doing your chores before you go out to play with your friends, and achieving success by intelligent thought.

There are 'Before reading' and 'After reading' activities, and a 'Make and do' section at the end of each book. In addition, throughout the stories, there are 'bubbles' with instructions to the students to make predictions, act out a scene, answer a question, make deductions, describe a picture, solve a problem, draw conclusions or interpret the meaning of some event. The aim is to provoke thoughtful interaction with reading texts and develop children's creative thinking and critical thinking skills.



Each book also has an access code for a website, where students can listen to the story being read and play games linked to it.

The stories themselves are charming, and whilst the activities are linked to the stories, they are not the comprehension questions that often accompany graded readers, being focused more on language development and thinking skills, and involving pairwork, groupwork, acting and roleplay. Children will particularly enjoy the 'Make and do' sections, where they are invited to do such things as download animal masks to make and paint, design their perfect bedroom, grow bean plants, construct a castle out of a box and make a poncho with a paper bag and a set of downloadable stickers.

Inevitably, perhaps, the two books at the upper levels of the series are the most exciting, because the children they are

intended for will have more language at their fingertips and will be able to do more with it. However, it is a credit to the authors that even the lowest-level book makes the best possible use of the language available and is bright, fun and enjoyable. I wonder whether the downloadable animal masks will fit me ...

Sally Young  
Manchester, UK

Subscribers can get a 12.5% discount on these books. Go to the ETP website and quote ETPQR0314 at the checkout.