

LESSON PLAN GUIDE

PictureBook English Reading Series — Grammar Fluency

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Category	Fluency in Key Grammar	Title	Grammar Book 17 – What Do You Think?: That Clauses
Ages	6–9	Theme	Noun Clauses with 'That' + Opinion Verbs + 17 Sibling Debates

INTRODUCTION OF THE BOOK

In this book, children dive into 17 Great Sibling Debates — Summer vs Winter, Dogs vs Cats, Chocolate vs Vanilla, and more. Through these endlessly debatable topics, children master noun clauses with 'that', learning how to share their own opinions and report what others believe using verbs like think, say, know, believe, and feel.

The sibling debate format is brilliant because it naturally produces two contrasting that-clauses connected by 'but' — 'He thinks that dogs are best, but she thinks that cats are better.' This structure appears constantly in real English conversation, and children who master it can express complex, nuanced thoughts with confidence and fluency.

NOUN CLAUSES — WITH AND WITHOUT 'THAT'

Reporting verb	With 'that'	Without 'that' (natural)
think	<i>I think that dogs are the best.</i>	<i>I think dogs are the best.</i>
say	<i>He says that summer is better.</i>	<i>He says summer is better.</i>
know	<i>She knows that cats are independent.</i>	<i>She knows cats are independent.</i>
believe	<i>I believe that winter is more fun.</i>	<i>I believe winter is more fun.</i>
feel	<i>They feel that pizza is the best food.</i>	<i>They feel pizza is the best food.</i>

THE BUT BRIDGE — CONNECTING TWO OPINIONS

He thinks that...	But she thinks that...	Your verdict: I think that...
<i>summer is best</i>	<i>winter is better</i>	<i>Write your own!</i>
<i>dogs are best</i>	<i>cats are better</i>	<i>Write your own!</i>
<i>chocolate is best</i>	<i>vanilla is better</i>	<i>Write your own!</i>

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Children will be able to:

- Use noun clauses with that — 'I think that dogs are the best'
- Use common opinion verbs — think, say, know, believe, feel — with that-clauses
- Understand that 'that' can often be omitted in natural conversation
- Connect contrasting opinions using 'but' — 'He thinks... but she thinks...'
- Express and defend personal opinions using full that-clause sentences

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

1. Play the Opinion Game

After reading each debate, ask your child: 'What do you think?' Encourage them to answer with a full that-clause sentence: 'I think that chocolate is better than vanilla' or 'I believe that summer is the best season.' Repeat for several debates. The goal is to build the muscle memory of the structure — so it flows naturally without the child having to think about the grammar.

2. Discover the Invisible That

Show your child the secret trick: in English, we can often remove 'that' and the sentence still sounds completely natural. Read a sentence both ways: 'I think that cats are cute' → 'I think cats are cute.' Try this with several examples from the table above. Ask: 'Which version sounds more natural to you when you speak?' This discovery helps children feel confident with both forms and understand that written and spoken English can differ slightly.

3. Build the But Bridge

After reading each debate, help your child connect the brother's and sister's opinions using 'but': 'He thinks summer is best, but she thinks winter is better.' Go through three or four debates from the book this way. Then challenge your child to add their own verdict: 'He thinks summer is best, but she thinks winter is better. However, I think spring is the most beautiful!' This builds longer, more sophisticated opinion paragraphs naturally.

4. Hold your own Great Debate

Pick a debate topic from the book and hold a real mini-debate. One person argues one side, the other argues the opposite — both using full that-clause sentences. After two minutes, each person summarises the other's view: 'You think that dogs are better because they are loyal, but I think that cats are better because they are independent.' This perspective-taking exercise builds both grammar fluency and empathy.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

Create a Family Opinion Survey. Choose five debate topics from the book and ask every family member which side they are on. Write up the results as a report using that-clauses: 'Dad thinks that summer is best. Mum thinks that winter is more fun. My sister thinks that autumn is the most beautiful. I think that spring is the best because everything comes alive!' This fun family activity produces rich, natural that-clause writing and always reveals surprising opinions about familiar topics.

Try the fun online learning activities for this book on our website!

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TEACHER'S NOTES AND TIPS

Noun clauses with 'that' are one of the most common structures in both spoken and written English — they appear in virtually every conversation that involves sharing opinions, reporting what someone said, or expressing knowledge. The optional nature of 'that' is a sophisticated point that many grammar textbooks handle poorly — children benefit enormously from experiencing both forms in

natural context rather than being told a rule. The sibling debate format is highly motivating because the topics are genuinely controversial and personally relevant — children have real opinions about dogs vs cats and chocolate vs vanilla! For classroom settings, the Family Opinion Survey works brilliantly as a class poll, with results written up collaboratively as a grammar-rich class report.