

**Semester Project: *Bears in the Night* by Stan and Jan  
Berenstain SS 20222**

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# Text: *Bears in the Night* by Stan and Jan Berenstain

The following text has been taken from Berenstain & Berenstain (1972).

In bed

Out of bed

Out of bed

To the window

At the window

Out the window

Out the window

Down the tree

Out the window

Down the tree

Over the wall

Over the wall

Under the bridge

Under the bridge

Around the lake

Under the bridge

Around the lake

Between the rocks

Through the woods

Out the window

Down the tree

Over the wall

Under the bridge

Around the lake

Between the rocks

Through the woods

Up Spook Hill!

Down Spook Hill

Through the woods

Between the rocks

Around the lake

Under the bridge

Over the wall

Up the tree

In the window

Back in bed

### **Meaning of Color-coding:**

Prepositions of Place

Prepositions of Direction

Prepositions of Place and Direction

Vocabulary

Definite Article

### 3) Background

This chapter will provide the most important background information on the text itself and on the creators of said text.

American writers and illustrators Stan and Jan Berenstain published numerous successful children's books, amongst them the famous book series *Berenstain Bears*. Stanley Melvin Berenstain and Janice Marian Berenstain were both born in Pennsylvania in 1923. They got married in 1946 and started working on cartoons for magazines such as *The Saturday Evening Post* soon after. They then started writing and illustrating children's books that were inspired by their personal domestic experiences. In 1962, the first book of their successful book series *Berenstain Bears* was published. The couple's books were edited by another pioneer of children's literature: Dr. Seuss, also known as Theodor Seuss Geisel. Some of Jan and Stan Berenstain's books aim at helping children learn how to read. Stan Berenstain died in 2005, and Jan Berenstain in 2012 (Illustration History, n.d.).

Before passing away in 2012, Janice Berenstain and the couple's son Mike Berenstain – who continued publishing books with his mother until her death – celebrated the *Berenstain Bears* 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. In an interview with their publishing company *Random House*, Janice mentioned that other book publishers had turned her and her husband down since they created cartoons. They had received negative feedback on the act of cartooning, but due to their children's love for cartoons, they continued drawing them. It was in the late 1950s, when Theodor Seuss Geisel was promoted to head of beginner books at Random House, that their method of creating books was accepted and appreciated (Random House Kids, 2012).

As indicated above, the Berenstains also intended to facilitate learning for children. The text analyzed in this paper, *Bears in the Night*, published in 1972, could have likely been aimed at facilitating learning prepositions for young readers.

## 4) Language Analysis

In the following section, various language aspects of *Bears in the Night* shall be analyzed more closely. We will first take a closer look at the prepositions of place, prepositions of direction, and prepositions of place and direction that are mentioned in the text. We will furthermore analyze the use of the indefinite article – or lack thereof. Lastly, we will also closely examine a few select expressions from the text – with their usefulness for vocabulary teaching already in mind.

### 4.1) Prepositions of Place

Prepositions in general are mostly short, common words that either indicate a direction (“*around* the lake”), location (“*in* the basket”), time (“*by* tomorrow”), or that introduce an object (“a bunch *of* cookies”). They are usually “followed by an object, which can be a noun (noon), a noun phrase (the door), or a pronoun (you)” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

Prepositions of place indicate the location or position of something or someone in relation to something or someone else. Examples for prepositions are words such as *in*, *at*, *on*, *next to* etc. In general, the word *at* is used for a point, *in* for an “enclosed space”, and *on* for surfaces (EnglishClub, n.d.). As indicated above, there are more than these three options for describing the position of someone/something: *above*, *under*, *next to*, *between*, *behind*, *in front of*, *over*, or *beside*.

Prepositions of place differ from prepositions of direction. As stated above, prepositions of place indicate a position, a “final destination” of a person or thing at a particular time, so to speak. Prepositions of direction, on the other hand, are associated with motion: they describe “the direction of the movement” (A Research Guide for Students, 2018).

With regard to the text *Bears in the Night*, many instances where prepositions of place are used can be found.

Preposition of place	Example in the text	Meaning/Analysis
in	<u>In</u> bed	The very first words of the story are “In bed”, which is the description of the picture of the <i>Berenstain Bears</i> who are all lying <i>in</i> bed. It might seem confusing to read <i>in</i> bed, as they are not in an enclosed space, but rather <i>on</i> the surface of the bed. According to Encyclopædia Britannica (n.d.), however, we use the preposition <i>in</i> bed when someone is ”lying under the bed’s covers”, whereas <i>on</i> the bed usually refers to being on top of the blankets. In this case, the bears are all lying underneath the blanket, thus the preposition <i>in</i> is used.
at	<u>At</u> the window	The phrase “At the window” describes the location of the bears after getting out of bed. They are located at a specific point ( or place) in the room, therefore the preposition <i>at</i> is used.

## 4.2) Prepositions of Direction

As already explained above, prepositions of direction are words that show the relationship between nouns and other words in a sentence. In our context, we need to relate preposition of direction with a movement.

Preposition of direction	Example in the text	Meaning/Analysis
out of	<u>Out of</u> bed	This preposition is used to say that the bears get out of the bed, which means they “walked out” of the bed. It indicates a direction or movement.
to	<u>To</u> the window	“To” is used as a function word to indicate direction or, more specifically, movement towards something. The bears move closer to the window.

out	<b><u>Out</u></b> the window	<p>“Out” is used as a function word to indicate movement. There is a significant difference to “out of bed”: The bears were not in the window itself beforehand – which is of course impossible – therefore, the bears go “out the window” but not “out of the window”.</p> <p><u>Further examples:</u> looked out the window; climbed out the window, ...</p>
down	<b><u>Down</u></b> the tree	The bears go “down” the tree, meaning that they move from the top of the tree to its bottom, thus clearly indicating movement and direction.
over	<b><u>Over</u></b> the wall	The preposition “over” in a preposition of direction. It indicates movement of someone or something (“The child jumped over the fence”); in the case of the <i>Berenstain Bears</i> , “over” refers to this very movement of crossing an obstacle. “Over” can in this case thus be categorized as a preposition of direction.
around	<b><u>Around</u></b> the lake	“Around” is used to state that the bears move past an obstacle to get to the other side of it – in our case, they go around the lake; the preposition “around” therefore clearly indicates a movement or direction
through	<b><u>Through</u></b> the woods	“Through” is a preposition used to describe the action of passing a region or area. The bears going “through” the woods suggests that they cannot avoid this obstacle by going past it.
up	<b><u>Up</u></b> Spook Hill	The preposition “up” indicates vertical movement. In our case, the bears start their journey at their house and eventually walk up Spook Hill, meaning that they move to higher ground.

(Merriam-Webster. n.d)

### 4.3) Prepositions of Place and Direction

While most prepositions clearly indicate a certain location or movement in a specific direction, there are some prepositions that can, in fact, be used for both purposes. With these prepositions of place and direction, a certain amount of context information is required to determine whether the preposition in question indicates a place or direction.

Preposition of place or direction	Example in the text	Meaning/Analysis
under	<u>Under</u> the bridge	“Under” can function as a preposition of place or a preposition of direction. “Under” can indicate the position of someone or something (“She is sitting under the tree”), or the direction of movement (“She went under the bridge”). It is arguably more likely to be a preposition of direction in the case of the <i>Berenstain Bears</i> , as the bears are constantly moving toward a specific destination throughout the story.
between	<u>Between</u> the rocks	In the accompanying picture, the bears are surrounded by rocks, meaning that they are located between the rocks. “Between” is typically used as a preposition of place, indication that the person or item in question are located within their surroundings. However, as mentioned above, the bears are in fact still moving. Once again, this preposition is thus arguably used to indicate the direction of the bears.
in	<u>In</u> the — window	In this specific case, “in” is used as a preposition of direction. The bears use the open window to get from the outside of the house to in the inside; however, going “through the window” would indicate that the window is still closed. Similarly, one usually enters a house by going “in the door” and not “through the door”.



		However, “in” can also be used as a preposition of place, for instance, “I live in a small village”.
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## 5) Teaching Potential

Using authentic material, such as books or songs, in the EFL classroom can be extremely beneficial to the learners, as it prepares them for language structures that they will eventually encounter outside the classroom. Using real-life sources and realistic language might motivate learners, as they immediately get to see what they can use the newly acquired language for (“Ah, now I understand what the lyrics mean!”) and as it is closer to their personal life. For this reason, it is important to consider how authentic texts, such as the one introduced in this paper, can be used in class, and how new language aspects found within this text – or any text – can be further embedded in the lessons.


The target group for the following ideas of working with and beyond the text is a first grade in the lower secondary form, as this is when prepositions are usually taught in Austrian schools. Furthermore, *Bears in the Night* would most likely not be challenging enough and potentially considered to be too childish for older students.

### 5.1) Working with the Text

*Bears in the Night* is a picture book, meaning that the transcript itself could technically be used in lessons; however, we believe that it would be indefinitely more valuable to work with the original text which is accompanied by drawings. Using a projector, the text and images can easily be presented to the students. The teacher might want to start off by reading the story out loud before inviting the students to read along. We would suggest using a lot of movement such as gestures or even crouching down and using one’s entire body, following a similar concept as Michael Rosen for his picture book turned song “We’re Going on a Bear Hunt” (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Iou5LV9dRP0>). For extra fun and giggles, very extreme gestures and movement might be considered, e.g. getting under the desk every time the preposition “under” appears in the text. However, the teacher may want to gauge the mood in the classroom before going too overboard; a very active class might take things a little too far.

Once the students are familiar with the text, there are various potential ways of getting the students to further engage with the text. Listed below are a few suggestions.

The teacher might opt to provide the students with either just the picture or just the text and ask the students to add whichever is missing.

_____ bed	
Out of bed	*students draw picture*

Following the same concept, the transcript could also be split up so that each line is printed on a strip of paper. The students then draw one strip of paper and either act the scene out or draw it on the board, with the other students having to guess the correct line Charades-style.

The following two suggestions would work in both a competitive and a non-competitive setting. The students could also be provided with the strips of paper and then be asked to bring the story in the correct order. Alternatively, the teacher pins the prepositions to one side of the board and the rest of the phrases on the other side – the students must now match the phrases with the correct prepositions. There are some instances where more than one solution is theoretically correct, even if it differs from the original text. If a situation like this comes up, simply embrace it as a teaching opportunity.

## 5.2) Going beyond the Text

The teacher may chose to take a random object and place it somewhere in the classroom. The students then have to say where the object is (e.g., “The shoe is on the book shelf.”).

Prepositions are a great way to get the students moving. Placing oneself in a certain position will most likely be more memorable than looking at pictures and filling out missing words – as has already been demonstrated in the section above. For this reason, prepositions are the perfect opportunity to let the students work freely on a “Preposition-sheet”, which they create themselves.

This can be done by splitting the class into groups of 3-4 people and each student within the group is assigned a letter (A, B, C or D). Each group should have one phone that can take pictures. All groups get assigned 4-5 prepositions in context (for instance: A is next to B; C is on the desk; prepositions can be used multiple times with different objects to ensure variety). The students also get A4-sheets with the words (prepositions only) on them. The learners can now take pictures of each other (holding the A4-sheets so the word of the preposition demonstrated can be seen in the picture) in the assigned locations. The students can later upload the pictures into a ready-made Word Document (picture of them on one side, sentence describing the picture on the other). They then have to change their given sentences and replace the letters with names (Instead of “A is next to B” → “Jan is next to Yagmur”).

Prepositions of direction can be emphasized by drawing an arrow on the picture (for example “Zoey jumps over the school bag”). Once all students have created a short “Preposition Sheet”, they send it to their teacher who checks everything before combining some pictures and sentences of all individual “Preposition Sheets” into one. This “Whole-class Preposition Sheet” can then be handed out to all students or displayed in the classroom. This might be a fun, motivating way to provide the students with study material, rather than simply learning the prepositions by looking at pictures in course books.

Another alternative option to working with the coursebook alone is to let the students draw and label their own story about prepositions. Before doing so, however, the teacher needs to make sure that they know multiple prepositions and necessary words (nouns). The task could be to choose four people or objects around the house (for instance, your bed, your pet, your favorite book, your sibling) and to then draw pictures and describe these pictures; the content should be logical. One must remember, however, that not all students like to draw and that coming up with sentences by yourself in first grade can be very challenging – as the vocabulary most of them have acquired so far is very limited. This exercise thus needs a lot of preparation and guidance.

As mentioned before, many students do not like drawing at all, a possible alternative for these children is to give them pictures they can cut out and stick together: the teacher could for instance give each student six pictures of a basket and six pictures of a cat. The students get six prepositions (*next to, in, under, above, behind, in front of*) and now they have to cut out the baskets and the cats and arrange them to create six pictures that fit the prepositions they have been given. They can

write their own sentences underneath each picture (“The cat Lucy is next to the basket”) and color them (this way, they could even repeat the colors when writing the sentences → “The blue cat Lucey is next to the orange basket”).

## 7) References

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