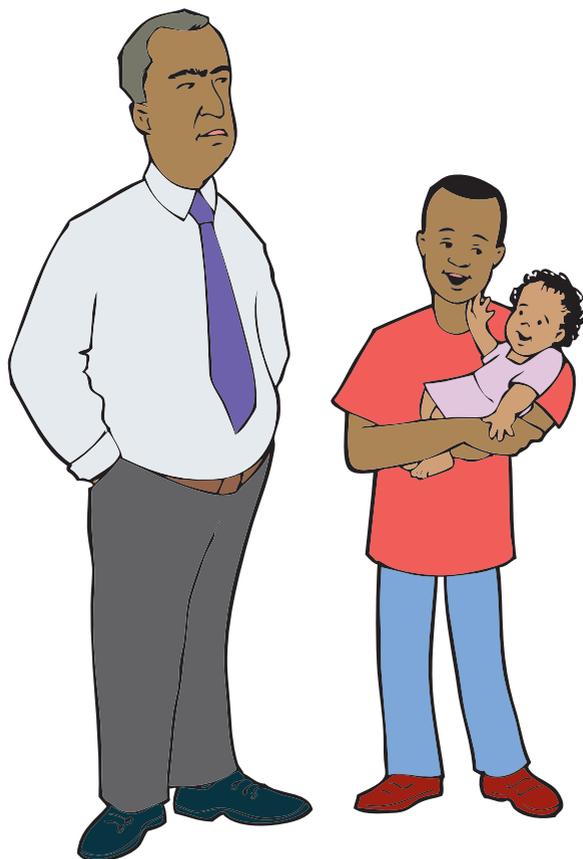
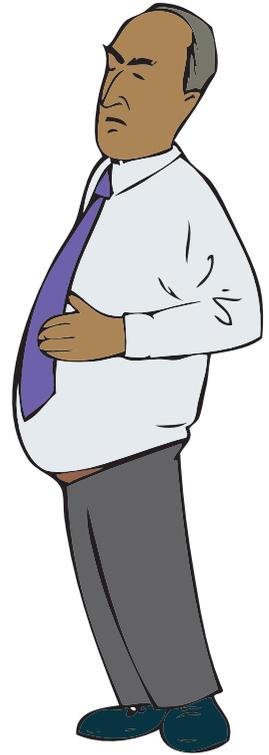


big don and little anna



READING IS THE KEY TO LEARNING

This is Big Don.
He works with my father.
He is tall.
He always wears smart clothes.
He smiles a lot.
I do not think he likes children.
I do not think I like him very much.



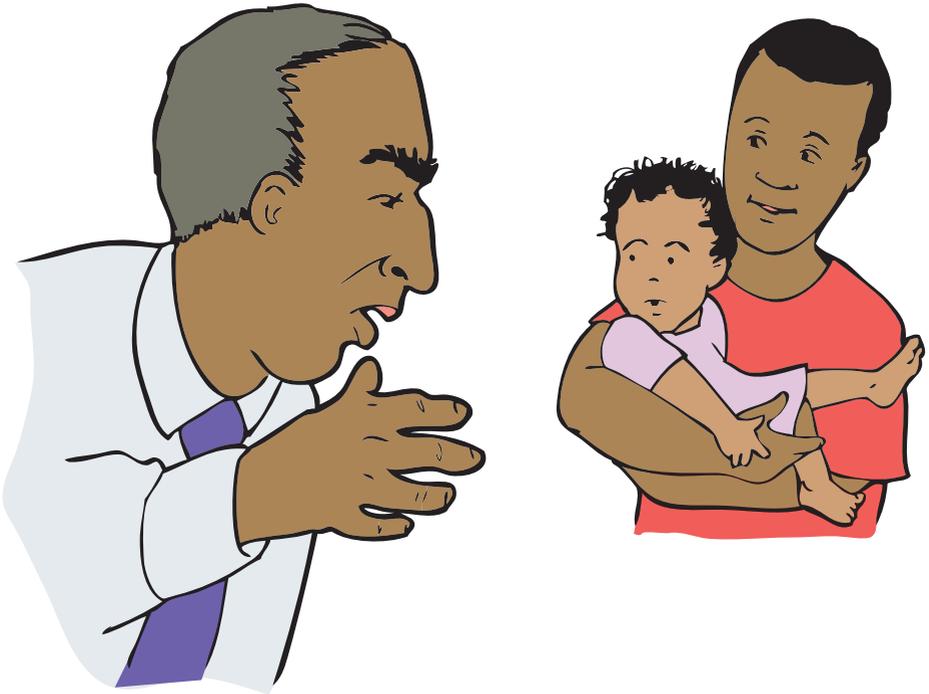
This is Anna.
She is six months old.
She has two teeth.

I talk to her all
the time.

She says, "AH"
and "EE"
and "GOO".



Big Don looked at us.
“What is this?” he asked.



“She is my Auntie’s baby,” I said, politely.
“She is called Anna.”

“AAR,” said Anna.



“Oh, it is a girl is it?” said Big Don.
He did not look pleased.

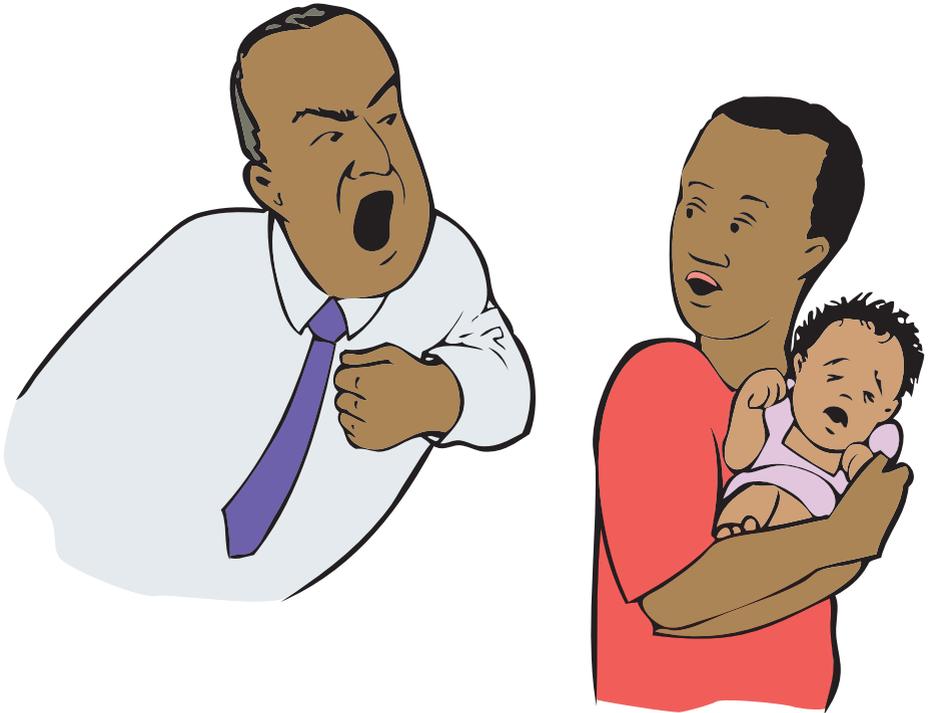
He thought.

“Are you a boy?” he asked me loudly.
I wanted to say ‘No... Hippopotamus,’
but I have to be polite to older people.
I did not say anything. “Why are you talking
to that girl?” asked Big Don.
“I like it,” I said. “It makes her smile.
She talks back to me.”



Then I held Anna’s tiny fingers one by one.
“One, two, three little chickens,” I sang.
Anna laughed and laughed.
“YEE!” said Anna.

“That’s not talk,” said Big Don.
He bent over the baby. He said very loudly
and fiercely,
“Me DON, say DON.”
Anna looked up at him. He was big.
He looked angry. He shouted.



“WAAAA,” said Anna. “W A A A A, WAAA.”

Big Don stood up.
“You see,” he said, “It does not talk. It just cries.
Later that child will talk, in a year or two. I know.
I have a child. It is a boy.”
Big Don smiled and smiled.
“Now go away and help your mother,”
he said. “Boys do not look after babies.
Girls do that.”



I told my mother. She looked sad.
“I know Big Don’s little boy,” she said.
“He is three. He can only say a few words.
He has no brothers and sisters. His mother
and father do not speak to him very much.”



In our Child-to-Child school our teacher tells us that we must always talk to babies.



“How will they learn words,” she asks, “if they do not hear words?”

“They must learn to talk well first,” she says, “then they will learn to read. If they cannot talk well they will not be ready for school.”



“This school helps little children get ready. You must all help, girls and boys.”

So I went on talking to Anna.



Big Don did not like it. He said to my mother, “Sami always talks to that baby. He is wasting his time. He must help you more.”

“No, Don,” said my mother. “Sami is helping us... I want him to talk to Anna. I want him to play with her. I want him to talk as she learns to walk. I want him to take her round and show her things and talk, talk, talk all the time. I tell you, Don, when she is three she will be talking like a teacher.”



a word from Sami

Never listen to people like Big Don who tell you that talking with young babies is not important. Believe my mother and teachers all over the world.

Talking with babies is one way that every child can help them get them ready for school.

Talking to babies is fun. Playing with them is fun. Making up new games is even more fun.

Find more ideas about playing with babies in our other books. Read them and have fun.





First stage

Who can use this book?

Average readers classes 4 & 5.

How can it be used best?

Reading for school children. Discussion following the reading.

How does it help children to develop?

Helps develop in children the essential concept of talking to younger ones, and of resisting pressures not to do this. Helps them to spread the message to others, such as child minders and grandparents, that little children learn to talk (and later to read) through talking.



a hanging library book

Story by Hugh Hawes and illustrations by David Gifford 2007.