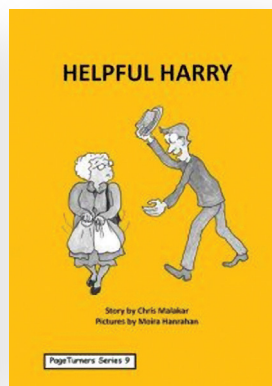
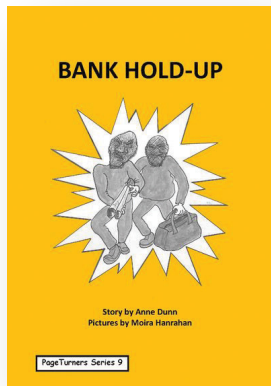


THE SCORE



Dunn, A. (2018). **BANK HOLD-UP**. Victoria, Australia: PRACE Page Turners. ISBN 978-1-877052-61-3 (pbk.) 12pp. (Series 9). AU\$7 (excl. GST). Illustrations by Hanrahan, M.

Malakar, C. (2018). **HELPFUL HARRY**. Victoria, Australia: PRACE Page Turners. ISBN 978-1-877052-94-1 (pbk.) 16pp. (Series 9). AU\$7 (excl. GST). Illustrations by Hanrahan, M.

Reviewer

Natasha Clark
English Language Institute
Victoria University of Wellington

These two books are in the PageTurners range, published by PRACE (Preston Reservoir Adult Community Education). Like all ten stories in Series 9, they have a crime theme. PageTurners books are aimed at beginner to elementary adult learners, and these two have 110 words each. This puts them at Level 1 on a scale where Level 1 books have approximately 100 words and Level 4+ books have over 600 words. They have black and white cartoon-style illustrations, and the back of each book includes a page of exercises and a complete word list. They can be purchased in hard copy or as e-books on the PRACE PageTurners website, where you can also find free audio recordings of both books. In addition, a free downloadable worksheet for *Helpful Harry* is available on the PageTurners website under “Teaching Resources”, providing extra reading comprehension and language review exercises.

Bank Hold-Up reads not so much like a story but rather a personal account of an unpleasant experience. It’s a description of a scary armed robbery, made more immediate by being narrated in the first person. All the tropes of a hold-up are present: stockings over heads, a gun, the line “This is a hold-up. Nobody move”. The

narrator, then the bank teller, and finally everyone in the bank is understandably described at different points as being “scared stiff”. The men get away with the money, and then suddenly it’s all over. The lack of resolution is unsettling, and I found myself turning the page, hoping for something to befall the robbers as they make their exit. The abrupt ending does however fit the “slice of life” genre and could provide an opportunity for students to discuss or write a possible ending as a follow-up activity.

Verb forms in this book are mainly in the simple past, and the vocabulary is predominantly from the first thousand word list, with seven words from the second thousand list plus just two lower frequency words (*teller* and *scared*). Such items should be manageable for readers because the illustrations support the story well. With no more than three sentences per illustration, the reader can use visual and linguistic cues to guess the meaning of unknown lexis. The final exercises consist of comprehension questions, a gap-fill, and a “correct the mistakes” exercise, which together form a useful review of the vocabulary in the book.

In contrast, *Helpful Harry* has a clear narrative arc, with a resolution and even

some character development, insofar as this is possible in 110 words. Our protagonist Harry is at a loose end and so decides to alleviate his boredom by offering to help people. Given the crime theme of this series, it goes without saying that his plan backfires. As in *Bank Hold-Up*, Moira Hanrahan’s humorous illustrations in *Helpful Harry* provide good visual support, and from the pictures we get a sense of Harry as a kind but goofy and somewhat naïve guy, who means well.

Again, there are seven words in the story from the second thousand list and two low-frequency off-list words (*bored* and *Harry*). The story is told mostly in the simple present, with over half of it in direct speech. There are four exercises at the back of the book, and direct speech (including five questions which appear in the story) is a language focus which is picked up in these exercises. There is also an extension exercise to practise some common collocations which don’t appear in the book.

As with other titles in the PageTurners range, these two easy readers provide interesting content and useful language for developing reading and literacy skills, suitable for use both inside and out of the classroom.