

WORKSHEET 4.1 Further work on leaflets

Here is a newspaper report on a visit to a holiday attraction in Holland. Read the article carefully.

Cheesy ... but charming

Sberyl Garratt and five-year-old son Liam visit an eccentric Dutch theme park. No Mickey Mouse here – it's more fairies and trolls, snowball-throwing games and talking litter bins ...

Soon after arriving at the Dutch theme park Efteling, we were in a boat on a man-made waterway, which is pretty much as you'd expect of a trip to Holland. Apart from the camels and the crocodiles ...

An hour or so later, we were floating again, this time in the air in open-fronted cable cars. The fairytale scenes before us on the Dream Flight were cheesy but charming, and beautifully done: the smells and temperature changing as we moved from one set to the other; fairies perched in trees; a rainy wood full of goblins and trolls.

These state-of-the-art rides are recent additions to a fairytale-themed park that is almost 50 years old, though you don't have to queue for the main attraction – the setting itself, in the Brabant region near the Belgian border. Efteling's mature woods make it less artificial than most theme parks, with clever details like talking litter bins to keep little minds occupied and little legs walking. Wholesome and quietly beguiling, it's a great place to blow away the winter cobwebs.

Our five-year-old's favourite spot was the Fairytale Forest, featuring low-tech tableaux from various fairy stories. A fakir charming tulips from the ground then flying from one side of his home to another on a creaky magic carpet had him transfixed. He also liked Laafland, an imaginative playground that is home to a 'lost tribe' – statues of grotesque-looking little folk called Laafs.

We stayed in the Golden Tulip Efteling Hotel, a kitsch confection aimed at children. It has Dutch-speaking character actors and a generous play area, yet its only restaurant was fully booked on the evening we stayed and no snacks were available. But the family rooms were large and comfortable and the hotel has its own entrance to the park, allowing guests to get to some of the more popular rides before queues build up.

The next morning, my husband and I took it in turns to play in a nearby maze with our son, while the other rode on the stomach-churning Bird Rok, a disorienting indoor roller coaster which lurches around for much of the time in total darkness. 'Mum, you look funny,' observed my son cheerfully as I got off, ignoring my wan smile and dragging me on to the nearby Carnival Festival ride. Seated in little cars, we rode for what seemed like an eternity around tableaux of large, colourful puppets portraying various national stereotypes, while being assaulted by a tune even more inane than Disney's 'It's a Small World' ditty. My son loved it and wanted to go on again immediately.

This was only the second year the park had opened in December and January, as Winter Efteling. The response last Boxing Day exceeded all expectations: there were 25 000 people inside, the car parks had to be closed and the resulting traffic jams made the national news bulletins.

The majority of the roller coasters and white-knuckle rides were closed, and could be seen only from the carriages of a steam train which chugged around the park, but there was plenty added on to compensate. Christmas trees, lanterns and artificial snow decorated the pathways. A Bavarian Christmas market offered German snacks and drinks. There was a huge



indoor skating rink, where small children glided along holding onto chairs and parents could drink hot toddies in the 'après-ski' bar. An indoor winter wonderland playground provided huge inflatables, snowball-throwing stalls and a snow slide that children could hurtle down on tyres.

As darkness fell, lights came on along the pathways and in the trees, and bonfires were tended in the big open squares. Then the musicians and entertainers who had performed around the park all day really came into their own, entrancing children with fire-eating and juggling. The beautifully lit flying-pagoda ride glided high in the sky, hovering over the park like a Far Eastern UFO, and everything stayed open till 8p.m., offering a long, good-value day out.

On the crisp, clear winter days we were there, we were warmed up by frequent visits to reasonably priced stalls selling mulled wine, hot chocolate and delicious hot snacks (from doughnuts to chips with mayonnaise). But there was plenty to do undercover, so even rain wouldn't have dampened our spirits. We spent more than an hour, for instance, in a building

housing a glorious 150-year-old steam carousel, an ornate miniature railway, a theatre where fountains danced to music and several bars.

This was a winter day out with parents and children happy and not a TV or computer screen in sight. Now that's magic.

Factfile

What it costs: You can book breaks to Efteling through Amsterdam Travel Service (0870 727 5916). Adult two-night packages are 195 euros per person and the same package is 175 euros per child aged 4–11 sharing their parents' room. Prices include return ferry crossing for one car and occupants, B&B, unlimited park entrance with free access to all rides. Children under 4 go free.

When to go: Winter Efteling is open 8–9, 15–16 Dec, 22 Dec–6 Jan (closed New Year's Day), 12–13 Jan; 11a.m. to 8p.m. (closes 4p.m. on New Year's Eve).

Now produce your own leaflet for the park aimed at providing information for visitors.