

BY THE END OF YEAR 4

ILLUSTRATING THE READING STANDARD

“Camping down the Line” (*School Journal*, Part 2 Number 1, 2004)

Noun frequency level: 8.5–9.5

By the end of year 4, students are required to locate and evaluate the information and ideas within a variety of fiction and non-fiction texts, drawing on the knowledge and skills described in the Literacy Learning Progressions, to meet the reading demands of the curriculum. The curriculum tasks will often involve the students in generating their own questions as well as answering questions from the teacher.

The students and their teacher are planning an EOTC week as part of their health and physical education programme. The students need to identify both the risks associated with camping and the safety measures required to avoid those risks.

“Camping down the Line” is a humorous narrative describing a family’s dramatic experience. The story provides opportunities for the students to achieve specific learning outcomes in English, health, and physical education.

The teacher chose the text because the theme of the story (that campers need to prepare well and be safety conscious) supports the students’ learning in the context of outdoor education. The text requires them to locate and use implicit information to meet their reading purposes.

The following example illustrates aspects of the task and text and demonstrates how a student engages with both task and text to meet the reading demands of the curriculum. A number of such examples would be used to inform the overall teacher judgment for this student.

“We can’t sleep here,” wailed Mum.

“Why not?” asked Dad.

“Because it’s ... well, it’s dark.”

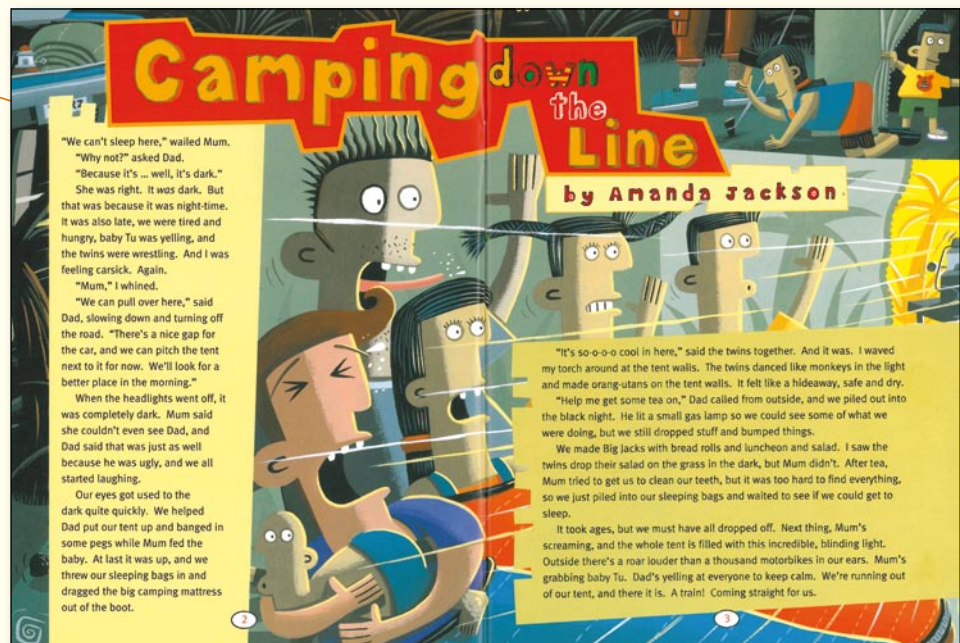
She was right. It was dark. But that was because it was night-time. It was also late, we were tired and hungry, baby Tu was yelling, and the twins were wrestling. And I was feeling carsick. Again.

The student uses the opening paragraphs to make and justify inferences. He can infer that the family is not enjoying the trip and that Dad knows that they must find a place to sleep right away. He also asks questions about why Mum thinks it is too dark, and he makes predictions about the problems of camping in the dark, confirming or changing these predictions as he reads on. He returns to these paragraphs later to infer that Dad was under some pressure when he made the decision to put up the tent. The student asks and answers questions about how to choose a safe tent site.

We were still shaking when Dad broke the silence. “Can I borrow your torch?” I gave him my torch, and we could hear him thrashing around the grass and scrub in the dark. When he came back, he handed me the torch and said, “We’ve put the tent up a bit too close to the train tracks.”

“You don’t say!” squeaked Mum.

The student asks questions and makes connections to his prior knowledge to interpret the figure of speech “broke the silence”. He finds evidence to support his inferences about how everyone feels after their lucky escape. He also refers to information in the text to answer questions about how the family could have been better prepared (for example, it appears they had only one torch). The student then assesses the family’s preparations and considers the implications for the class’s planning of their own overnight camp.



“We can’t sleep here,” wailed Mum. “Why not?” asked Dad. “Because it’s ... well, it’s dark.” She was right. It was dark. But that was because it was night-time. It was also late, we were tired and hungry, baby Tu was yelling, and the twins were wrestling. And I was feeling carsick. Again. “Mum,” I whined. “We can pull over here,” said Dad, slowing down and turning off the road. “There’s a nice gap for the car, and we can pitch the tent next to it for now. We’ll look for a better place in the morning.” When the headlights went off, it was completely dark. Mum said she couldn’t even see Dad, and Dad said that was just as well because he was ugly, and we all started laughing. Our eyes got used to the dark quite quickly. We helped Dad put our tent up and banged in some pegs while Mum fed the baby. At last it was up, and we threw our sleeping bags in and dragged the big camping mattress out of the boot.

“It’s so-o-o-o cool in here,” said the twins together. And it was. I waved my torch around at the tent walls. The twins danced like monkeys in the light and made orang-utans on the tent walls. It felt like a hideaway, safe and dry. “Help me get some tea on,” Dad called from outside, and we piled out into the black night. He lit a small gas lamp so we could see some of what we were doing, but we still dropped stuff and bumped things. We made Big Jacks with bread rolls and luncheon and salad. I saw the twins drop their salad on the grass in the dark, but Mum didn’t. After tea, Mum tried to get us to clean our teeth, but it was too hard to find everything, so we just piled into our sleeping bags and waited to see if we could get to sleep. It took ages, but we must have all dropped off. Next thing, Mum’s screaming, and the whole tent is filled with this incredible, blinding light. Outside there’s a roar louder than a thousand motorbikes in our ears. Mum’s grabbing baby Tu. Dad’s yelling at everyone to keep calm. We’re running out of our tent, and there it is. A train! Coming straight for us.