

# Giant Soup

by Margaret Mahy  
illustrated by Robyn Belton



This text is levelled at Purple 1.

## Overview

In this humorous fairytale-style narrative, the giant's mother has gone on holiday leaving her son to make soup by himself for the first time. The giant catches a boy to flavour the soup, but the boy manages to outwit the giant and escape.

This text has relatively simple vocabulary and sentence structures, but students will need to make

inferences in order to work out what is really happening and understand the humour.

There is an audio version of the text on the Ready to Read CD *Readalong 2010*.

## Related texts

- Stories that require students to infer, for example, at Turquoise: *The Queen of Spain*, *Timo's Shorts* (both RTR); at Purple: *Did You Shake Your Tail Feathers?*, *Whitebait Season* (both RTR), "The Snowman" (JJ 32); at Gold: "Dog Magic" (JJ 35).

## Text characteristics

Key text characteristics as described in the reading standards for after two and three years at school are shown in the boxes with a solid outline. Other boxes indicate additional characteristics.

A mix of explicit and implicit content that provides opportunities for students to make simple inferences, for example, the launching of the narrative straight into the action so that readers need to infer the setting and context, and the characterisation of the foolish giant and resourceful boy through their actions and dialogue and the illustrations rather than direct description



Some whole pages with no illustrations

The clear narrative structure, including a series of similar incidents

The giant's mother was going on a holiday.  
"What shall I eat, Mum?" asked the giant.  
"Make yourself a pot of soup,"  
said the giant's mother.  
The giant put a big pot of water on the stove.  
He cut up a lot of onions  
and put them in the water.  
Then he tried it.  
"This soup is no good," said the giant.  
"It must have carrots in it."

The repeated phrase "It must have" meaning "It needs to have ..."

Frequent use of dialogue, which includes repetition, exclamations, contractions, and colloquial expressions ("might as well", "see how you're getting on")

Jason swam round and round  
among the bits of onion and carrot.  
"Hey!" said Jason. "You don't know how to cook.  
This soup is cold. Turn on the stove."



The giant turned on the stove.  
Jason swam round and round.  
He drank a bit of giant soup.  
"Hey!" said Jason. "There's no salt in it.  
You can't make soup."  
The giant put some salt in the soup.  
"That's better," said Jason.  
He swam round and round  
and drank a bit more soup.  
"Don't drink it all!" cried the giant.  
"Hey!" said Jason. "This soup isn't right.  
There's no pepper in it."  
The giant put pepper in the soup.

Punctuation and print features (including exclamation marks, dashes, and increased print size) that support expressive reading

"I might as well go home, then," said Jason.  
"I'll come in tomorrow and see how you're getting on."  
"I'm cooking a cake tomorrow," said the giant.  
"I'd better come and help you," Jason said.  
"And I'll bring my recipe book."

"Oh, no, no, no! You eat too much!" cried the giant.  
"Don't come back again --  
\*\*\*\* ever, ever!"



The humorous details in the illustrations

The open ending, which invites students to consider what might happen next

Mostly familiar words, but some new topic words and descriptive language that are supported by the context and/or by illustrations, for example, "onions", "beef bone", "refrigerator", "giant sneakers", "among", "drank", "salt", "recipe"

## Suggested reading purpose

- To find out what happens when Jason becomes part of the giant's soup

## Setting a learning goal

*(What opportunities does this text provide for students to learn more about how to “read, respond to, and think critically about” texts?)*

To meet the reading purpose, students need to draw on a range of comprehension and processing strategies, often simultaneously. The strategies, knowledge, and skills below link to *The Literacy Learning Progressions*. Select and adapt from them to set your specific learning goal. Be guided by your students' particular needs and experiences: who they are, where they come from, and what they bring (*Reading and Writing Standards for Years 1–8*, Knowledge of the learner, page 6).

This text provides opportunities for students to:

- make connections to their prior knowledge of fictional giants and/or stories by Margaret Mahy and narrative structure
- infer what the characters are like and form and test hypotheses about what will happen
- use word-solving strategies to decode and/or work out the meanings of unfamiliar words.

## Introducing the text

- Ask the students to share what they know about making soup. Have them share what they know about giants and talk about stories they know, including those from other cultures. Establish some general characteristics of giants. This is particularly important for students who are unfamiliar with giants.
- Read the title and discuss the illustrations on the cover or page 2. What is the giant thinking? Knowing about the sorts of stories Margaret Mahy writes, what do you think will happen in this text?
- Share the reading purpose and learning goal. Discuss how the students need to notice clues in the text and illustrations, and that they need to keep in mind (make connections to) what has already happened as they read so they can infer what is happening in the story.

## Reading the text

Below are some behaviours you could expect to see as the students read and discuss this text. Each example is accompanied by instructional strategies to scaffold their learning. Select and adapt from the suggestions according to your students' needs and experiences.

- These behaviours are closely linked and will support each other.

### The students make connections to their knowledge of narrative structure, use text and illustrative clues to infer what the characters are like, and form and test hypotheses about what will happen.

- Have the students read page 3 and summarise the situation so far (who, what, why).
- If necessary, clarify that the phrase “It must have” means “It needs to have”.
- *What clues are you noticing about what the giant is like?* Prompt the students to consider the page 2 illustration as well as the text. The students should be able to infer that the giant doesn't know much about making soup and to predict that carrots will be the next ingredient. Prompt them to make connections to what they know about fictional giants and Mahy stories. *I can see he's going to add some carrots. I wonder what else a giant would like to eat in a soup?*
- To provide oral language opportunities, especially for English language learners, have the students think, pair, and share their hypotheses. These could be recorded and revisited during the lesson. English language learners who share the same first language could discuss their ideas together.
- Have the students read page 4 and test their hypotheses. Encourage discussion as they read and enjoy the (not unexpected) text development at the end of this page. *Where will the giant find a boy?*
- Have the students examine the illustration before they read page 6. *What clues are you noticing about this boy?* (For example, he's walking very confidently and reading a book at the same time, so he probably likes to learn things and/or the book must be about something he's really interested in.)
- Have the students test (and possibly refine) their hypotheses in the light of the information about Jason's book being a cookbook.
- Note that page 8 confirms that the giant doesn't know how to cook.
- Have the students read pages 8 and 9 and share their inferences and hypotheses about how Jason is feeling and why he is being so helpful. *Is Jason really stupid, or does he have a plan? What are you noticing about the giant?*
- Have the students test their hypotheses on pages 10 and 11. *Is Jason out of danger?*
- Have the students read to the end of the text. *Is Jason ever going to have this problem with the giant again?*

- Revisit the reading purpose and track how the students have met it. Encourage debate about Jason's actions. Was he just lucky, or did he have a plan? What would Jason have done if the giant had said he could come back and help with the cake? Ask the students to provide evidence for their opinions.

**The students use word-solving strategies to decode and/or work out the meanings of unfamiliar words.**

- You may need to support students with the relatively uncommon word “shall” on page 3. This word is more likely to be found in fairytales (for example, “You shall go to the ball”) than in everyday language. Prompt the students to use the context and word order to work out its meaning. *If you were the giant and your mother was going away without leaving you any food prepared, what word would you use?* (for example, “what will” or “what can”).
- The students can use a similar strategy (using context and word order) on page 8 to work out the meaning of “among”.
- Prompt the students to use the illustration to clarify the word “onion” on page 3. Remind them of other familiar words that have the same sound for “o”, for example, “front” and “done”.
- The students can break up the word “re-friger-a-tor” (page 4) into recognisable chunks or syllables. Using context, they are likely to work out this word after the first two syllables (as long as they have heard it before). Clarify that this is the formal version of the word “fridge”.

**After reading**

- The students can reread the text while listening to the audio version on the Ready to Read CD *Readalong 2010*.
- Review the strategy that Jason used to outsmart the giant. Encourage the students to debate whether Jason was confident about managing to escape.
- Track the evidence that the students used to make inferences about the characters. For example, their evidence that the giant's character might include the way he speaks (simply and with lots of repetition), his lack of knowledge about soup making, and the way he is portrayed in the illustrations. Discuss how their knowledge of other fictional giants influenced their ideas.
- Reread pages 9–12 more closely. *What tells you that the giant was getting worried about Jason?*

- Have the students work in pairs to read aloud their favourite section of dialogue. Listen in as the students read, noting their use of expression and their ability to use the punctuation (especially the speech marks, commas, and exclamation marks) to support phrasing and expression.
- Compare this giant with other well-known giants, for example, the BFG or the giant from Jack and the Beanstalk. Encourage students to share their knowledge of giants from their own cultures. You could revisit your discussion from when you introduced the text.

