



Overview

This bitter-sweet story introduces us to a girl, her father, and her grandfather, Pa. Pa has a bad cough – and a dog he calls Sandshoe. The girl and her dad visit Pa every Sunday until Pa gets sick, and we have to infer either that Pa has become seriously ill or that he has died. Sandshoe goes to live with the girl and her family, and they share their love of Pa by continuing the hide-the-bone game they played every week at Pa's place.

Some students may need support to identify the clues about Pa's health and to make an inference about what has happened to him.

The colloquial language may need explaining for some students.

Texts related by theme

"The Ringawera" SJ 1.1.08 | "Nana and the Flower Arranger" SJ 2.1.08

Text characteristics from the year 4 reading standard

some abstract ideas that are clearly supported by concrete examples in the text or easily linked to the students' prior knowledge

some places where information and ideas are implicit and where students need to make inferences based on information that is easy to find because it is nearby in the text and there is little or no competing information

a straightforward text structure, such as a structure that follows a recognisable and clear text form

That was the way things used to be. Before Pa got sick, Now we don't make that long drive over the bridge and up the long, long road with the non-stop traffic to park under the tunnel of trees in Pa's driveway. The house belongs to someone else.

And Sandshoe? Well, he belongs to me. And he buries his bones in our backyard, behind the compost bin because we don't have hydrangeas.

When Sandshoe first came to live with us, I thought about changing his name, but nothing seemed to fit. Sandshoe didn't look like a Gumbboot or a Sneaker or a Scruff or a Fred. He looked like a Sandshoe, all twisted and dirty with his tail wag-wagging. Sometimes, when I feed him at night, I wonder if he misses Pa with his grumbling and coughing and his gruff, gruff voice. So when I give him a bone and he jumps up and puts his paws on my jeans, I say to him, "Git down, Sandshoe. Git down." And he does. Straight away, like magic. And sometimes when I say it, just a certain way, Old Sandshoe sits his bottom on the grass and cocks his ear like he's listening to something I can't hear. And he speaks to me with his big black eyes. And I know right at that moment, we're both thinking about the same thing.

illustrations by Kieran Rynhart

some words and phrases that are ambiguous or unfamiliar to the students, the meaning of which is supported by the context or clarified by photographs, illustrations, diagrams, and/or written explanations

other visual language features that support the ideas and information, for example, text boxes or maps

some compound and complex sentences, which may consist of two or three clauses

figurative language, such as metaphors, similes, or personification

Possible curriculum contexts

Health and Physical Education (Relationships with Other People)

LEVEL 2 – Relationships: Identify and demonstrate ways of maintaining and enhancing relationships between individuals and within groups.

ENGLISH (Reading)

LEVEL 2 – Language features: Show some understanding of how language features are used for effect within and across texts.

ENGLISH (Writing)

LEVEL 2 – Language features: Use language features appropriately, showing some understanding of their effects.

Possible reading purposes

- To find out about the importance of family relationships and the bonds between people and their pets
- To find out how the writer uses language features to convey feelings and relationships.

See [Instructional focus – Reading for illustrations](#) of some of these reading purposes.

Possible writing purposes

- To tell a story about how or why a person chooses or “inherits” a pet
- To tell a story about visiting a grandparent
- To use language features, such as repetition, for effect in writing
- To retell a special event or a humorous incident involving a grandparent.

See [Instructional focus – Writing for illustrations](#) of some of these writing purposes.

Text and language challenges

VOCABULARY:

- Possible unfamiliar words and concepts, including “non-stop traffic”, “intersection”, “tunnel of trees”, “Sandshoe”, “Git”, “slobber”, “scurried”, “topple”, “trot”, “hydrangeas”, “bury”, “buries”, “compost bin”
- The use of the modal verb “would” to indicate actions that happened over and over in the past
- The contractions of “would” including “we’d”, “he’d”, “I’d”
- The use of a simile (“as ugly as a twisted sandshoe”), a metaphor (“the tunnel of trees”), and personification (“he speaks to me with his big black eyes”).

Possible supporting strategies

Identify any words that students may find challenging, and introduce them before reading the story. Discuss the use of colloquial language, including spellings that reflect pronunciation.

Some students may need support to understand the use of the modal verb “would” to express repeated/habitual actions in the past. You could give them examples of actions that happened only once (“We went to Christchurch when I was seven”) and contrast these with examples of repeated actions that included some kind of routine or habit (“When I was a child, we would spend our summers camping at Raglan beach.”) Note that in the second example, the past simple tense could have been used instead, but the use of the modal verb emphasises that the action was repeated. Note also that, because the modal verb expresses a repeated action, it can’t be used with verbs like “live”. You could also look at examples of the contracted form (“we’d”, “they’d”).

The English Language Learning Progressions, Introduction, pages 39–46, has some useful information about learning vocabulary.

ESOL Online has examples of strategies and approaches for focusing on vocabulary, at Pedagogy.

SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED:

- Family relationships, including those that involve a sense of love and obligation to maintain regular contact
- The fact that older people get sick and die
- The notion of the continuity of relationships and connections, even after a loved relative or friend has died or become ill.

Possible supporting strategies

Share your own stories of visiting older relatives regularly and the sense of wanting and not wanting to keep up the contact. Discuss why we can feel ambivalent about our obligations towards people we care about.

Be aware of and sensitive to different feelings, customs, and expectations about older family members. For example, some students may not be comfortable expressing negative feelings about visiting their grandparents, or they might expect the older family member to be living with the family. Support these students to notice differences and make comparisons with their prior knowledge and experience.

Use sensitivity as you encourage students to share stories of relatives or friends who have died after a period of illness. Discuss the ways we keep memories alive, for example, through continuing with familiar activities.

TEXT FEATURES AND STRUCTURE:

- The use of a modal verb (past tense) in the first part and the change to the present tense in the second part
- The sentence that marks the change from the past to the present: “That was the way things used to be.”
- The use of repetition, including “the long, long road”, “right, then left, then right again”, “cough-coughing”, “yap-yapping”, “Git down”, “over and over again”, “gruff, gruff voice”.

Possible supporting strategies

Review the features that students expect to see in a fiction story, including the use of past and present tenses.

For students who find it challenging to identify and understand different verb forms, you could explicitly identify the verbs in the different parts of the story, underlining them and/or putting them into a table. These students may also need support to understand the form “used to be”.

Prompt students who know other languages to explore features such as repetition in these languages. Do they do that in those languages? Do they have other ways of conveying a similar meaning or effect?

Instructional focus – Reading

English (Level 2 – Language features: Show some understanding of how language features are used for effect within and across texts.)

Text excerpts from “Old Sandshoe”

We visited Pa every Sunday. Some days I didn’t want to go, but Dad said I had to. So I did.

Pa would unlock the door, and while he was cough-coughing, Sandshoe would be yap-yapping, with his tail wagging all over the place.

And sometimes when I say it, just a certain way, Old Sandshoe sits his bottom on the grass and cocks his ear like he’s listening to something I can’t hear. And he speaks to me with his big black eyes.

And I know right at that moment, we’re both thinking about the same thing.

Students (what they might do)

Students **make connections** between their own experiences of family visits and the information in the text to **infer** that Pa is the narrator’s grandfather. They **evaluate** the idea of someone doing something they don’t necessarily want to do by **making connections** with their own experiences of making family visits.

Students use what they know about sentence structure to **locate** the verbs, including the auxiliary “would”. They **make connections** between these verbs and information earlier in the text (“every Sunday”) to **infer** that the events happened in the past and that they happened repeatedly.

Students identify the change of tense in the second part of the story. They **ask and answer questions and make connections** between the clues in the text and their own experiences (direct or from reading) to **infer** that Pa has died or become seriously ill. They identify repetition to **make connections** between this part of the text and earlier parts. Students **evaluate** what has happened and **infer** how life is now both different and the same for the dog and the girl.

Students **ask and answer questions** of the text and themselves as they **make connections** between this and earlier parts of the text and their own experiences. They **locate** and **evaluate** the repetition within the text and draw on their own feelings to **infer** the feelings of the girl and the dog.

Teacher (possible deliberate acts of teaching)

ASK QUESTIONS to support students as they infer meaning.

- Who do you think the characters are in this story? What clues did you use?
- The author implies a lot of information in these lines. What does she assume you will understand?
- What experiences of your own helped you to understand the narrator’s ambivalence about the Sunday visits? If necessary, explain the concept of ambivalence – having opposite feelings about something at the same time. Remember that you could explain ambivalence in different situations, not just in the context of visiting family.

PROMPT THE STUDENTS to notice the tense used in the story so far.

- What verb have you noticed being used a lot in this story?

EXPLAIN that “would” is known as a modal verb. In this text, it supports the main verb and tells us that something happened in the past, often more than once.

MODEL the difference when the modal is removed: “Pa unlocked the door.”

- How does that change the meaning?
- Why might the author use “would” in this part of the story?

(See note above under “Text and Language Challenges”.)

ASK QUESTIONS to support students to infer meaning.

- What have you noticed about the text on this page? What tense is the author using? What does this tell you? For students who need more support with noticing verb forms, you could repeat the activity of underlining the verbs and discussing what form they are and what meanings they convey.
- What has happened to Pa? What knowledge of your own helped you make that inference?
- What information in the text helped you make the inference?
- Why do you think the author doesn’t just say he has died or become seriously ill? What do you think was her purpose?
- What things are the same now for the girl and the dog?
- What things are different?

GIVE FEEDBACK

- I noticed you wrote down a few words while you were reading, and you looked them up afterwards. That’s an excellent technique to use. What do you do if you need to know the meaning before you can read on?
- The way you “thought out loud” as you worked out what might have happened seemed to work well for you. Asking yourself questions as you read is a very important strategy to use when you’re reading independently.

METACOGNITION

ASK QUESTIONS to make the students’ strategies explicit for them.

- When did you need to reread to make sure you understood? It’s a good strategy to use when you’re not sure what happened in a story.
- What experiences of your own helped you to make connections with this story? How did your experiences help you to understand the text?
- What comparisons did you make with things that are different from your own experiences? How did these comparisons help you?
- Visualising how characters feel as you read can help you to understand their actions. Find a place in the text where you did this.

Reading standard: by the end of year 4

The Literacy Learning Progressions

Assessment Resource Banks

Instructional focus – Writing

English (Level 2 – Language features: Use language features appropriately, showing some understanding of their effects.)

Text excerpts from “Old Sandshoe”

We drove over the bridge and up the long, long road with the non-stop traffic until we came to the big intersection. We turned right, then left, then right again, and finally we made it to Pa’s house and parked under the tunnel of trees in his driveway.

Sandshoe was a good dog. He always did as Pa said, even though he’d never been trained like those dogs we see in the park at dog school. Sandshoe never needed training because he understood everything Pa said to him.

I never saw Pa pat Sandshoe, but he’d say “Good dog.” Sandshoe’s tail would thump the ground, and it was like Sandshoe’s big black eyes were loving Pa as much as they loved that bone.

And he speaks to me with his big black eyes.

Examples of text characteristics

USING DETAILS TO IMPLY INFORMATION

Writers can use details to give information that prompts the reader to make inferences. Using a lot of detail can support the reader to infer something without the author saying it directly.

USING DETAILS TO INFORM THE READER

Writers also use details to support a statement. The details supply reasons or evidence that help the reader to believe or understand the statement. Sometimes a detail may be repeated with slight changes to emphasise its importance.

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

Writers use figurative language to convey ideas in ways that help their readers visualise the things, actions, or feelings they describe.

- “it was like ...” compares the way the dog feels about Pa with the way he feels about a bone.
- “like he’s listening to something I can’t hear” compares what the dog is doing with how the girl might listen.
- “he speaks to me” uses personification, suggesting the dog’s eyes can communicate in the same way as a person’s speech.

METACOGNITION

ASK QUESTIONS to help students think more deeply about the strategies they use to convey ideas in their writing.

- How did your writing plan help you keep going when you got stuck? What did you do?
- Do you use other people’s writing as models when you write? In what ways can models help you?
- How did your own experiences help you to write a story about ...? How can you help readers who haven’t had these experiences.
- How did you decide when to add details and when not to? What effect did you want? What language did you use to achieve this effect?

Teacher

(possible deliberate acts of teaching)

ASK QUESTIONS to help the students consider their writing choices.

- Who is your audience?
- What is your purpose for writing this story? What message or theme do you want your readers to get from it?
- Why have you chosen these particular characters for your story?
- What language features are you considering using?

EXPLAIN the differences between explicit and implicit information.

- In the first extract, there are a lot of explicit details about the journey. The author isn’t doing this to show us how to get there. She is telling us something else: we have to infer what she wants us to learn from this description.

ASK QUESTIONS to support the students’ thinking about their use of details.

- Talk about the fact that in this example there are a lot of phrases with prepositions that give details about direction and location. Look at these examples and co-construct more. Encourage students to use these in their writing where appropriate (for example, to add details to a description of a journey or trip).
- How does the author show us that Sandshoe is a good dog?
- Look at the things she repeats. Why do you think she does this?
- As you write, think about the effect you want to create by adding details.

MODEL the use of figurative language to convey information about characters.

- We learn a lot about the dog from the way the author uses figurative language. The similes help us to understand the author’s ideas in relation to things we already know about from the text or from our own experience; personification helps us to see the dog in human terms.
- Explore more examples as a class. You could prompt students who know other languages to think about whether they use personification in those languages.

PROMPT students to use figurative language in their writing.

- Find a place where you could use a simile to make a comparison that will help your audience understand a character better.
- If you have non-human characters in your story, how can you use personification to convey their feelings or relationships?

Note: Help students to selectively and strategically use figurative language, such as similes, to avoid over-using it and negating its impact.

GIVE feedback to affirm students’ choices in their writing.

- The relationship between the old woman and her grandson is clear to me from the details you’ve added. Before you put them in, I wasn’t really sure how they were connected.
- Comparing Dan to an eel is a great way to show your readers how tricky he can be – it’s an excellent use of a simile.