

Introduction

Why do we read? To satisfy curiosity? To develop deeper understandings? To gain specific information – or simply for enjoyment and entertainment?

These teachers' notes are intended to help you to encourage your students to use the *School Journal* for all of these purposes. They provide a wealth of detailed suggestions for using the Journals in your class reading programme.

The notes should be used alongside *The Essential School Journal*, *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 1 to 4*, and *Guided Reading: Years 1–4*.

The Teaching Approaches

A classroom reading programme uses a variety of approaches, including:

•	reading to students
•	reading with students
•	reading by students.

These notes include ideas for using *School Journal* material for all these approaches, with a particular emphasis on guided reading.

For information on deciding which approach to use with a particular Journal item for particular students, see *The Essential School Journal*, pages 12–15, and *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 1 to 4*, pages 91–102.

Guided Reading

Guided reading is at the heart of the instructional reading programme. In this approach, teachers work with a small group of students to guide them purposefully through a text, supporting the students' use of appropriate reading strategies.

The teacher will have identified the particular needs of the students through ongoing assessment, including discussion and observation during previous reading sessions.

Guided reading involves:

•	selecting a teaching purpose based on the needs of the students
•	selecting a text that has features that link closely to the teaching purpose, appropriate supports and challenges, and content that will interest and engage the students
•	introducing the text and sharing the teaching purpose and learning outcomes with the students
•	reading and responding to the text
•	focusing on the use of particular reading strategies or on particular aspects of the text, according to the purpose of the session
•	discussing the text and, where appropriate, doing follow-up activities.

These notes include information about:

•	a suggested purpose for the reading
•	features of the text that make it appropriate for teaching particular strategies or language features
•	possible discussion points, learning experiences, and follow-up activities, where these are appropriate.

Questions for teachers are included as prompts under the main headings. For most texts, a range of

teaching purposes could be selected. In most cases, these notes will highlight one teaching purpose (shown in bold type) for each text, but they will also list other possible purposes for which the text could be used.

In concentrating on these specific purposes, it is important not to lose sight of the bigger picture – the meaning of the text for its readers and their enjoyment of the reading experience.

Introducing the Text

The introduction should be relatively brief. It should:

•	make links with the students' background knowledge and motivate them to read
•	highlight selected features of the text
•	introduce in conversation any unfamiliar names or potentially difficult concepts
•	share the purpose for the reading with the students.

Reading and Responding

Some texts can be read straight through; others will need to be broken up with pauses for discussion. While the students are reading the text silently, you can observe their reading behaviour and help any students who are struggling. You could encourage your students to identify (for example, with a paper clip or adhesive “stickies”) any words that cause difficulty.

Discussing the Text

This should be brief (a maximum of ten or fifteen minutes) and should not be a simple “question and answer” session. You should encourage your students to think about their own responses to the text and to consider alternative points of view.

You can discuss new concepts, vocabulary, and text features in greater detail, and you can also look at words that have caused difficulty for the group. These notes list some words that have challenged students when the material has been trialled. You should not assume, however, that these same words will challenge your own students. Wait and see what comes out of the first reading. Encourage your students to use a variety of strategies to work out unfamiliar words. This is an opportunity to develop their awareness of word-level strategies. For example, you could use a whiteboard to draw the students' attention to particular prefixes and suffixes, to break up words into syllables to assist with decoding, or to discuss the meanings of words.

This is also a good time to look closely at language features if these are a focus for the lesson. For example, you could discuss features such as alliteration or the use of similes or metaphors, and you could take the opportunity to expand students' own written vocabulary by pointing out interesting verbs or adjectives and synonyms for commonly used words.

Where appropriate, you may decide to select follow-up activities.

Selecting Texts: Readability

When you are thinking about using a *School Journal* item for a particular student or group of students, you can use *Journal Search* to find its approximate reading level. These levels are calculated using the Elley Noun Frequency Method (*Elley and Croft*, revised 1989). This method measures the difficulty of vocabulary only and does not take into account other equally important factors affecting readability.

When selecting texts, you should also consider:

•	the students' prior knowledge, interests, and experiences
•	the complexity of the concepts in the item
•	the complexity of the style
•	the complexity and length of the sentences

•	any specialised vocabulary
•	the length of the item
•	the density of the text and its layout
•	the structure of the text
•	the support given by any illustrations and diagrams.

It is important to remember that most of these points could constitute either supports or challenges for particular students, and you should consider all of these aspects when selecting the text and the approach to be used.

These notes give further information about some of the potential supports and challenges in particular *School Journal* items. They include information gathered through trialling the items with groups of students.

Developing Comprehension Strategies

Reading is about constructing meaning from text.

Using a guided or shared reading approach provides an ideal context in which to teach comprehension strategies, for example:

•	making connections
•	forming and testing hypotheses
•	visualising
•	identifying the author’s purpose and point of view
•	inferring
•	asking questions and seeking clarification
•	identifying and summarising the main ideas
•	analysing and synthesising
•	evaluating.

Be aware that some question forms, especially those that use modal verbs such as “might”, “could”, or “would”, may pose additional challenges for ESOL students.

These notes suggest ways to develop these and other strategies.

For further information about comprehension strategies, see *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 1 to 4*, pages 131–135.

A Wild Ride

by Allyson Ross

From School Journal, PART 1 Number 5 2005

Overview

This recount vividly conveys the excitement of a jet boat ride and is a useful model for adding impact to personal recounts. The recount is paired with a brief explanation that provides some background information about jet boats.

Suggested Teaching Purpose

Based on the information I have about my students' learning needs, what would be an appropriate teaching purpose for this session?

Examples of an appropriate teaching purpose are listed below.

•	To support the students in developing the comprehension strategies of analysing and synthesising , inferring, making connections, and visualising
•	To explore how the writer uses contrasting moods to convey the excitement of the ride.

Features of the Text to Consider in Context

What features of this text would make it appropriate for teaching particular comprehension strategies or language features?

•	The structure of the text as a recount paired with an explanation
•	The unidentified narrator
•	The use of vivid language, especially verbs and adjectives, to create mood and atmosphere, for example, "dreary", "clear and deep", "roared", "whipping", "spraying", "churning", "hurtled", "skimming"
•	The strong contextual clues that help students to work out the meanings of words
•	The "show, don't tell" approach by which the writer describes what the narrator's body is doing to indicate how he or she is feeling, for example, "My stomach had butterflies", "I closed my eyes"
•	The contrast between the quiet, slow mood of the opening section and the excitement of the ride
•	The use of a variety of interesting alternatives to "said", for example, "bribed", "demanded", "yelled", "shouted", and "laughed"
•	The use of colloquial expressions, such as "He'd been on at", "You'll see", and "Hold tight!"
•	The use of italics for emphasis
•	The repetition of the words in the title at the conclusion of the recount
•	The technical language of the explanation.

Readability

Noun frequency level: 8–9 years

What aspects relating to this text might constitute challenges for my students?

•	Colloquial expressions, for example, “been on at”, may be challenging for ESOL students.
•	Words and concepts that some students may find challenging include “dreary”, “bribed”, “heavily laden”, “reversed”, “hand signals”, “360-degree spin”, “clambered”, “hurtled”, “skimming”, “shallower”, “outboard”, “propeller”, “jet stream”.

What prior knowledge would support my students in reading this text?

•	The students’ experiences of “wild rides” (such as roller coasters) and of boats.
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Sharing Learning Outcomes with Your Students

I will be able to:

•	explore how the writer makes this recount sound so exciting;
•	use clues in the text to help me infer information that isn’t stated directly in the text;
•	draw on my experiences of recounts and of wild rides to help me understand the feelings of the characters;
•	identify the vivid language in the recount that helps me to build pictures in my mind.

A Framework for the Lesson

How will I help my students to achieve the learning outcomes?

In the sections below, particular comprehension strategies have been identified in brackets. Many of these relate directly to the highlighted teaching purpose, but other strategies have also been identified where appropriate.

Before reading

•	Introduce the title and read to “‘What is it?’ we asked” on page 3 without showing them the photographs. Ask “I wonder what the special treat might be? What do you think?” (Forming hypotheses)
•	Encourage the students to share their own experiences of wild rides and the effect that the rides had on their bodies. (Making connections)
•	Share the teaching purpose and learning outcomes with the students.
•	Tell the students that there are some challenging words in this story but that they should be able to work them out from the context. Ask them to jot down any words they have trouble with as they read.

During reading

•	Distribute the Journals and allow time for the students to browse through and review their predictions. (Testing hypotheses)
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•	Ask the students to read to “‘Hold tight!’ shouted Brian” on page 5. Ask “Who are the characters in this recount? What can you tell us about them from the text?” (Inferring)
•	If necessary, clarify what a “360-degree spin” is.
•	Ask the students to read on to the end of the story. “While you’re reading, I want you to think about how the author makes this experience come alive for the reader.” (Analysing and synthesising)
•	“Why did Finn end up on the floor?” “Why did the writer close his or her eyes?” (Inferring) “What do you notice about the last sentence?” (Analysing) “Who told the story?” “Did the writer enjoy the ride?” Ask the students to go back to the text to find evidence to support their answers. (Inferring)

After reading

•	Briefly discuss any words or phrases that the students found difficult and the strategies they used (or could have used) to work them out. For example, they could use the context and syntax of the second sentence to work out “dreary”, or they could work out the meaning of “bribed” by reading on and finding out about the “special treat”.
•	Revisit the purpose for reading the text. Have the students think, pair, and share their ideas about how the author makes this experience come alive for the reader. Talk about the language and structure. A number of suggestions follow.
•	Help the students analyse how the writer manipulates the mood of the text to create dramatic contrasts. For example, the recount opens with a flat, end-of-holiday feeling, then gives a hint of excitement with the idea of jet boats, then slows again with the explanation of safety rules and the description of the peaceful river. Have the students find the part (on page 5) where the mood suddenly changes. “How did the children feel at the start of the recount? What are some words and phrases that show how they felt?” “When did their feelings change? How can you tell?” (Inferring)
•	You could focus on the writer’s use of language. “I wonder why the writer says ‘down the river we hurtled’ on page 6 rather than ‘we went quickly down the river’?” “What other examples can you find of descriptive language that helps you to create a picture in your mind?” (Analysing and synthesising; visualising)
•	Draw out the idea that the writer creates impact by describing the effects of the ride on the children’s bodies. Focus on the second paragraph on page 7 and have the students imagine what it would feel like if they were there. (Visualising; making connections)

•	Reflect with the students on how well the teaching purpose has been achieved and note any teaching points for future sessions.
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Revisiting the Text

What follow-up tasks will help my students to consolidate their new learning?

•	Read the explanation about jet boat engines together. Clarify that jet boats can be used in shallow water because the motor is quite flat under the boat, unlike boats with outboard motors. You could refer back to the text on page 7, where it describes the boat “almost skimming the grass on the riverbank”. (Identifying main ideas) Some of the students may have seen or experienced the extreme (and exhilarating) manoeuvrability of jet boat rides. (Making connections)
•	The students may also like to read “Here Goes” by Jan Trafford, an article about an amphibian boat invented by a New Zealander, in SJ 1.5.99. Ask the students to look for any similarities or differences in how the authors convey the excitement of the ride. (Making connections; analysing and synthesising)
•	Ask the students to reread the paragraph beginning “The current was swift...” on page 5 and to find words that help to create a dramatic contrast between the peace of the river and the excitement and action of the boat ride. Chart these words on the board. During shared writing time, use the recount as a model for writing about other experiences, for example:
	- using descriptive language to recount their own holiday experiences or to convey a moment in time;
	- creating contrasting moods to add impact;
	- using a “show, don’t tell” approach, in which they convey their feelings indirectly. (Analysing and synthesising)

There's a Boy under the Bed!

by Sian Burling-Claridge

From School Journal, PART 1 Number 5 2005

Overview

In a reversal of the usual “monster under the bed” scenario, a young monster finds that there really is a boy under his bed. With his mother’s help, he faces his fear and discovers that boys aren’t as frightening as he thought. The “monster-specific” language of this fantasy enhances its humour.

Suggested Teaching Purpose

Based on the information I have about my students’ learning needs, what would be an appropriate teaching purpose for this session?

Examples of an appropriate teaching purpose are listed below.

•	To support the students in developing the comprehension strategies of inferring , analysing and synthesising, and making connections
•	To enjoy the humorous reversal of the conventional “monster under the bed” scenario.

Features of the Text to Consider in Context

What features of this text would make it appropriate for teaching particular comprehension strategies or language features?

•	The structure of the text as a narrative with a setting, characters, a problem, and a resolution
•	The fantasy world populated by monsters
•	The gradual build-up of clues that Jeltin and his mother are monsters
•	The humour of the similarities between the monsters’ world and the boy’s world, for example, in the relationships between family members
•	The suspense of pages 9 and 10 that is created through:
	- the description of Jeltin’s actions
	- the vivid language, for example, “screamed”, “quivering”, “shaking”
	- the repetition of “the hand” on page 10 and the mantra “Boys don’t exist. Boys don’t...”
	- the use of the ellipsis for anticipation
	- the dialogue
•	The descriptive verbs “flopped”, “slithered”, and “flip-flopped” and the invented verb “flubbed”
•	The humorous implications of the name “Colossa”
•	The dialogue, in which the speaker is not always identified
•	The use of italics for emphasis
•	The twist at the end, which is shown in the illustration. (Jeltin is shown pulling out the nails from the trapdoor.)

Readability

Noun frequency level: 8.5–9.5 years

What aspects of this text might constitute challenges for my students?

•	The use of idiomatic expressions that may be difficult for ESOL students to understand, for example, “as far away”, “as far as they would go”, “Not if I can help it”, as well as the extensive dialogue
•	Words and concepts that some students may find challenging: “icky”, “quivering”, “It was no good”, “flubbed”, “scrawny”, “blue-vein cheese”, “licorice”

What prior knowledge would support my students in reading this text?

•	Their familiarity with the “monster under the bed” scenario
•	Their experiences of family relationships, including annoying siblings and misunderstandings between parents and children.

Sharing Learning Outcomes with Your Students

I will be able to:

•	find clues in the text that help me to understand who the characters are and how they are feeling;
•	explain how the author gives this story its humour.

A Framework for the Lesson

How will I help my students to achieve the learning outcomes?

In the sections below, particular comprehension strategies have been identified in brackets. Many of these relate directly to the highlighted teaching purpose, but other strategies have also been identified where appropriate.

Before reading

•	Share the teaching purpose and learning outcomes with the students.
•	Photocopy the plain text on page 18 of these notes. Ask the students to read the photocopied text and to think about the implications of the title, the setting, and what they can find out about Jeltin. Ask the students to share their ideas. “What makes you think that?” “What do you think Jeltin looks like?” (Inferring; visualising; forming hypotheses)

During reading

•	Hand out copies of the Journal. “How is Jeltin different from the way you visualised him?” “How is he similar?” (Testing hypotheses)
•	Ask the students to reread to “have another look” on page 10. “How is Jeltin feeling? How can you tell?” “What are the clues that tell you that suspense is building?” (Inferring)

•	Ask the students to read to “didn’t look scary at all” on page 12. “I wonder why Jeltin felt disappointed?” (Inferring)
•	Ask the students to read to “how to fetch” on page 14. “I wonder why the boy shrugged (on page 13)? What was he thinking?” Draw out the idea that the boy is being polite: he knows that what he did is considered mean in his world but a nice thing to do in Jeltin’s world. (Inferring)
•	“I’m thinking that Jeltin’s attitude towards the boy has changed. What do you think? Why do you think that?” Get the students to go back to the text to justify their statements. (Inferring)
•	Have the students read to the end of the story. Discuss the twist at the end and the humour of the illustration. “Why does Jeltin’s mother think he can’t eat his dinner? What is the real reason?” (Inferring)

After reading

•	Briefly discuss any words or phrases that the students found difficult and the strategies they used (or could have used) to work them out.
•	“When did you realise that Jeltin was a monster?” Have the students work in pairs on the photocopied text to highlight the “monster clues”. (Inferring; analysing and synthesising)
•	Explore the ways the writer creates humour in the text. Talk about the more conventional idea of children being frightened of monsters under the bed and draw out the idea that writers can create humour by turning ideas around. Have the students work in pairs to rewrite page 10 together as if it was a monster under the bed. “What changes did you have to make?” (Analysing and synthesising)
•	Talk about why the author has named Jeltin’s pet “Colossa”. “Can you think of a word that sounds similar?” Explain that the word “Colossa” originates from a Greek word meaning something that is very large (or “colossal”). (Analysing and synthesising)
•	Talk about the idea of “facing fears”. Talk about a time when, like Jeltin, you were scared of something but found that it wasn’t so scary when you confronted it. Prompt the students to share their own stories about facing fears. You could also make links to the play “Fear of Numbers” in SJ 2.3.05 (Making connections) Ask them to go back to the story to find clues to the changing relationship between Jeltin and the boy, from fear to friendship. (Inferring)
•	Use a Character Perspective chart to record the main events and the feelings and reactions of Jeltin and his mother. Reflect on the mother’s changing attitude to the boy and compare it to Jeltin’s. (Identifying main ideas; inferring)

Jeltin <i>What does he think/feel?</i>	Main Ideas	Jeltin's mother <i>What does she think/feel?</i>
"There's a boy under my bed!" (scared)	Jeltin sees a pink hand.	Jeltin's a nuisance. (annoyed)
•		Reflect with the students on how well the teaching purpose has been achieved and note any teaching points for future sessions.

Revisiting the Text

What follow-up tasks will help my students to consolidate their new learning?

•	Ask the students to draw cartoons showing parts of the story, with thought bubbles of what the characters were thinking and feeling. (Analysing and synthesising)
•	As a group, ask the students to adapt the text for a readers' theatre and to perform it with pace, fluency, and expression.
•	Ask the students, in pairs, to talk or write about what would happen if Jeltin visited the boy's world. (Analysing and synthesising)
•	Encourage the students to read other stories that show familiar scenarios from unusual perspectives, for example, <i>The Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig</i> by Eugene Trivizas (Simon and Schuster, 1997) and <i>The True Story of the Three Little Pigs</i> by Jon Scieszka (Penguin, 1996). (Making connections to other texts)

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Beach Balls

by Jill MacGregor

From School Journal, PART 1 Number 5 2005

Overview

This article describes how a group of girls investigated the appearance of strange grass balls on their local beach. It includes a diagram and fax messages.

Suggested Teaching Purpose

Based on the information I have about my students' learning needs, what would be an appropriate teaching purpose for this session?

Examples of an appropriate teaching purpose are listed below.

•	To support the students in developing the comprehension strategies of asking questions , identifying main ideas , and visualising
•	To help the students to develop their information literacy skills as they brainstorm information sources and strategies that the girls could use to solve their problem
•	To help the students to articulate their thinking processes as they consider a problem.

Features of the Text to Consider in Context

What features of this text would make it appropriate for teaching particular comprehension strategies or language features?

•	The structure of the text as a factual recount
•	The range of text forms, including the recount, two fax messages, and a diagram
•	The unfolding process of the investigation, which allows the reader to work through the process of asking questions and seeking answers along with the children in the article
•	The information about the beach balls
•	The descriptive language.

Readability

Noun frequency level: 8.5–9.5 words

What aspects relating to this text might constitute challenges for my students?

•	The students' ability to use information from the text to visualise the process of the hay being swept from the land to the sea, being transformed into balls, and then being washed back to the shore
•	The girls' names

•	Words and concepts that some students may find challenging: “investigate”, “scattered”, “springy”, “taniwha”, “matted”, “ponga”, “toetoe”, “unravelling”, “driftwood”, “sponge”, “fax”, “Department of Conservation”, “Manawatū”, “bales”, “sea floor”, “recycled”, “gnomes”, “pumice”.
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What prior knowledge would support my students in reading this text?

•	Familiarity with coastal areas
•	Experiences of carrying out scientific investigations
•	Familiarity with fax machines and messages
•	Awareness of the role of the Department of Conservation
•	Experiences of interpreting diagrams.

Sharing Learning Outcomes with Your Students

I will be able to:

•	ask questions about the beach balls and look for answers to my questions in the text;
•	identify information in the text about how the beach balls are formed;
•	think about ways of solving the mystery in the text.

A Framework for the Lesson

How will I help my students to achieve the learning outcomes?

In the sections below, particular comprehension strategies have been identified in brackets. Many of these relate directly to the highlighted teaching purpose, but other strategies have also been identified where appropriate. Your approach to reading this text may differ according to whether you wish to focus on the text features of the narrative or the questions associated with the girls’ investigation.

Before reading

•	Show the students page 16 and ask them to speculate on what the article might be about. (Forming hypotheses)
•	Invite the students to speculate on the author’s purpose in writing the article. (Identifying the author’s purpose)
•	Share the teaching purpose and learning outcomes with the students.

During reading

•	If your purpose is to focus on the narrative, you could ask the students to read pages 17 and 18 and encourage them to speculate on what the balls might be and how they could have been made. (Forming hypotheses)
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•	If your purpose is to focus on asking questions, you could ask the students to read pages 17 and 18. “If you were these girls, what would you want to find out? How would you go about finding answers to your questions?” You could try the “5Ws and an H” approach (who, what, where, when, why, how). Record the students’ questions on a chart. (Asking questions)
•	Ask the students to read page 19 and review their hypotheses about the beach balls in the light of this new information. (Testing hypotheses)
•	“How could the girls find out more?” Encourage the students to draw on What they know about seeking and identifying relevant information (information literacy). (Making connections) Record the students’ ideas.
•	Ask the students to read pages 20 and 21. If necessary, explain the role of the Department of Conservation and what a fax is.
•	Have the students read pages 22 and 23 and talk with a partner about Mr Cooksley’s explanation and diagram. (Identifying main ideas; visualising) Refer to the question chart and have the students think, pair, and share what they’ve found out. (Identifying main ideas; asking questions)
•	Have the students read to the end of the article to find out what the girls did with their beach balls. (Identifying main ideas)
•	Reflect on whether the students found answers to all their questions. “Is that what you would have done to find out about the beach balls?” (Analysing and synthesising)

After reading

•	Ask the students to draw a flow chart or a story map of the processes the girls in the story followed. (Identifying main ideas; analysing and synthesising)
•	Suggest that the students could look at the Department of Conservation website (www.doc.govt.nz) to find out more about what the department does.
•	Reflect with the students on how well the teaching purpose has been achieved and note any teaching points for future sessions.

Revisiting the Text

What follow-up tasks will help my students to consolidate their new learning?

• Use this recount as a starting point for helping the students to explore how information can be conveyed through diagrams. Have the students draw a series of diagrams to illustrate a known phenomenon, for example, the water cycle, or to show how something works, for example, a can opener or a pencil sharpener. (Making connections; visualising)

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Sand

by Emma Jean Finch

From School Journal, PART 1 Number 5 2005

Overview

This poem creates a series of images that trace the changing appearance and texture of sand during the course of a day.

Suggested Teaching Purpose

Based on the information I have about my students' learning needs, what would be an appropriate teaching purpose for this session?

Examples of an appropriate teaching purpose are listed below.

•	To support the students in developing the comprehension strategies of visualising , analysing and synthesising, making connections, and evaluating
•	To help the students to appreciate the way in which the writer has combined rich language with a simple repetitive structure to create strong visual images.

Features of the Text to Consider in Context

What features of this text would make it appropriate for teaching particular strategies or language features?

•	The structure of the poem in five couplets, each with its own sub-heading
•	The changing mood, from the glowing warmth at the start of the day to the heat and hard edges of mid-morning and a growing sense of mystery at the end of the day
•	The use of alliteration: "golden grains", "Bright bronze", "warm white"; and assonance: "Heaped" and "gleaming" to evoke mood
•	The evocative adjectives that appeal to the senses of sight and touch, for example, "sparkling" and "crumbly"
•	The adjectives for colours that reflect the time of day: "golden", "bronze", "white", "blue", "black"
•	The different nouns for "sand" that change as the light changes: "grains", "fragments", "powder", "dampness", "shadows".

Readability

What aspects relating to this text might constitute challenges for my students?

•	The sophisticated language and imagery
•	Words and concepts that some students may find challenging: "Dawn", "grains", "dusted", "bronze", "fragments", "inviting", "Dusk", "Blue-tinged dampness", "crumbly", "Heaped black shadows", "gleaming".

What prior knowledge would support my students in reading this text?

•	The students' familiarity with the way ideas and images can be conveyed through poetry
•	The students' experiences of being on a beach at different times of the day.

Sharing Learning Outcomes with Your Students

I will be able to:

•	visualise the effects of the changing light on the sand;
•	draw on my experiences to help me understand the ideas the writer is trying to convey;
•	explore the imagery and ideas that the writing conveys;
•	evaluate the effectiveness of the poem's vocabulary and structure.

A Framework for the Lesson

How will I help my students to achieve the learning outcomes?

In the sections below, particular comprehension strategies have been identified in brackets. Many of these relate directly to the highlighted teaching purpose, but other strategies have also been identified where appropriate.

Before reading

•	Talk about the times of day and the way things look different as the light changes. You may like to show the students photos or images of the same object in different lights. Many of Monet's paintings offer good examples, for example, those of Rouen cathedral or of haystacks. Alternatively, you could relate it to the idea of shadows changing over the course of a day. (Making connections)
•	Tell the students you have a poem for them to read that describes a sandy beach at different times of day.
•	Share the teaching purpose and learning outcomes with the students.

During reading

•	Read the title and the poem to the students. You could ask them first to imagine that they're sitting on a beach. "As you listen to the poem, think about the way the sand looks and feels. How does that change during the day?" (Visualising)
•	Reread the poem, verse by verse. "What senses does the poem appeal to?" Chart words and phrases that describe the ways the sand feels and the ways it looks. (Analysing and synthesising)
•	"What do you notice about the structure of this poem?" (Analysing and synthesising) "Does it need the sub-headings?" (Evaluating)

•	“Which verse do you like the most?” “What is it about the verse that appeals to you?” (Evaluating) “I wonder why the author wrote this poem?” (Identifying the author’s purpose)
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After reading

•	Have the students read the poem aloud. Reflect on the use of alliteration and assonance to create mood. Compare the moods of the different verses, for example, the power and fire of “Mid-morning” with the soft coolness of “Dusk”. (Analysing and synthesising)
•	“What season do you think this poem was written in? Why do you think that?” (Inferring)
•	Reflect with the students on how well the teaching purpose has been achieved and note any teaching points for future sessions.

Revisiting the Text

What follow-up tasks will help my students to consolidate their new learning?

•	The students could compare this poem to other poems about the beach or about changes in natural features (for example, “Seasons” by David Hill in SJ 2.4.05).
•	Have the students write their own poems following a similar structure and describing a feature of the environment that is special and familiar to them (for example, grass, hills, or trees). The poem could describe the same objects at different times of the day or year. Ask them to include language that conveys a sense of the changing atmosphere. (Analysing and synthesising)
•	Ask the students to each draw a picture for one of the verses, using colour and texture. Then get them to link their pieces to create one artwork.

Any Excuse

by Marie Langley

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Overview

When Sam forgets his homework, his friends suggest a series of increasingly improbable excuses, each more outrageous than the last. However, their teacher completely outdoes them in the note she leaves to explain why she can't be in class.

Suggested Teaching Purpose

Based on the information I have about my students' learning needs, what would be an appropriate teaching purpose for this session?

Examples of an appropriate teaching purpose are listed below.

•	To support the students in developing the comprehension strategies of evaluating , inferring, and identifying the author's purpose
•	To help the students understand the way the writer builds up our ideas about the characters and playfully explores the ethics of making up excuses
•	To help the students reflect on why people make excuses and whether this can be justified.

Features of the Text to Consider in Context

What features of this text would make it appropriate for teaching particular comprehension strategies or language features?

•	The conventions of a play: a list of characters in upper-case letters, stage directions in italics, directions for specific characters in brackets, and dialogue for each character
•	The way the dialogue develops a picture of the characters
•	The humorous contrast between the impression (created through the students' dialogue) that Miss Mack is quite tough and the way her letter contradicts this impression
•	The humorous effect of the ever-increasing exaggeration
•	The use of vivid language, for example, "stampeded", "trampled", "snatched", "swooped", "beamed up"
•	The use of the abbreviations "Miss Mack" and "Temp" (to suggest "temporary")
•	The use of colloquial language, for example, "Yeah, right", "Hey", "Wicked", "Cool".

Readability

Noun frequency level: 8–9 years

What aspects relating to this text might constitute challenges for my students?

•	If performing the play, the need for good timing when dealing with the interruptions and asides while Mr Temp is reading the letter
•	Idiomatic phrases that may cause difficulties for ESOL students: “make up”, “How about”, “In case you hadn’t noticed”
•	Words and concepts that some students may find challenging: “stampeded”, “trampled”, “time traveller”, “swept away”, “hovering”, “beamed up”, “nudge”.

What prior knowledge would support my students in reading this text?

•	Their experiences of forgetting their own homework and of making excuses
•	Their experience with inferring character from dialogue.

Sharing Learning Outcomes with Your Students

I will be able to:

•	work out what the characters are like from their speeches and actions;
•	use the dialogue and stage directions to work out what is happening in the play;
•	speculate about why the author might have written this play;
•	discuss whether or not it’s all right to make excuses.

A Framework for the Lesson

How will I help my students to achieve the learning outcomes?

In the sections below, particular comprehension strategies have been identified in brackets. Many of these relate directly to the highlighted teaching purpose, but other strategies have also been identified where appropriate.

Before reading

•	Introduce the title. “Why might someone make up an excuse?” “Is it ever OK to make up an excuse?” (Making connections; evaluating)
•	Tell the students that you have a play for them to read and briefly review the conventions of the play format.
•	Share the teaching purpose and learning outcomes with the students.

During reading

•	Ask the students to read to “show your grandchildren” on page 29. Ask the students to share the ideas they have built up about Miss Mack, Sam, and Lou and the reasons for these. (Inferring)
•	Talk about the way the children’s excuses have changed from being simple to elaborate. “What is the difference between Sam’s and Lou’s attitudes towards making up excuses? How do you know?” (Inferring)

•	Ask the students to read to the end of page 30. “I wonder what Miss Mack is going to say?” “What makes you think that?” (Forming hypotheses)
•	Ask the students to read on to the end of the play to see if they change their impressions of any of the characters. “Have you changed your mind about Miss Mack? Why?” (Inferring)
•	Talk about the children’s responses to Miss Mack’s excuses. “What do the children think of Miss Mack’s letter? Do they believe her?” or “Why does everyone nudge Sam?” (Inferring)
•	“Why do you think the author has written this text?” “Do you think she has a message to convey about making excuses, or is she just having fun exploring an idea?” “Why do you think that?” Draw out the idea that there is no “right answer”. (Evaluating)

After reading

•	“How does Sam feel about making up excuses?” Ask the students to go back to the text to look at his responses to his friends’ suggestions. (Inferring)
•	Encourage the students to explore the contrast between Sam’s and Lou’s personalities and their attitudes to making up excuses. “Can you find any clues about what they’re like?” Chart the students’ ideas on the board under each character’s name, noting the attribute and the evidence for it in the text. (Inferring)
•	“Early in the play, Jae says, ‘Any excuse will do as long as it’s a really good one’. What do you think? Is it okay to make up excuses? Are there any exceptions?” (Evaluating)
•	Reflect with the students on how well the teaching purpose has been achieved and note any teaching points for future sessions.

Revisiting the Text

What follow-up tasks will help my students to consolidate their new learning?

•	Ask the students to perform the play on audiotape, concentrating on reading with fluency and expression and bringing out the personalities of the different characters.
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