

Power

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Overview

The narrator in this poem believes she has the power to change the world – through a smile.

Suggested teaching purposes

- To support the students in developing the comprehension strategies of **inferring** and identifying the main idea.
- To engage the students in reading and discussing a poem that has interesting ideas about power.

Suggested learning goal

I am learning to infer the main idea within a poem.

Success criteria

I will be successful when I have:

- made connections to what I already know about poems and to ideas about power
- asked questions as I read about what power means in this poem
- reread the poem and found clues that helped me answer my questions.

Features of the text

What features of this text support the teaching purpose?

- The underlying themes, including self-confidence, self-esteem, friendship, reaching out to people, and the power of the individual to make a difference
- The idea that power is a state of mind as opposed to a physical power
- The use of “power” as both a noun and a verb
- The metaphors of “power” and “power up” to suggest self-esteem and caring for others, and the association of these ideas with technology, especially with computers, which “power up” to be ready
- The gradual revealing of the metaphor
- The use of upper-case letters to emphasise the impact of the smile
- The strong personal voice and the use of the first person
- The free-verse structure of the poem
- The repetition of the opening sentence at the end as a “frame” for the ideas about power
- The second and third stanzas of the poem as a recount consisting of sentences split over several lines.

Readability

What prior knowledge or experience might help my students to read this text?

- Awareness of feelings of self-esteem and confidence
- Experiences of reading texts, especially poems, that have layers of meaning or that can be interpreted in different ways

- Familiarity with free-verse poetry.

What text features might challenge my students and require a prompt or a brief explanation?

- The different concepts and meanings of “power”
- The descriptive phrases: “sandals flapping”; “I power up”

Preparation for reading

The day before doing the lesson below, you could use the following suggestion:

- Tell the students the title and first line of the poem. Ask them to work individually or with a partner to write down some responses to your questions about these to prepare for reading the poem the next day. For example, you might ask them “What does the opening sentence mean to you? Who do you think the narrator could be, and what do they want to change? Does the world need changing? What makes you feel powerful?” (Making connections; inferring; forming hypotheses)

A framework for the lesson

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

Before reading

- Reread the first line and discuss the students’ thoughts and ideas about concepts of power from the pre-reading task. These ideas could be recorded in a group reading book or on the whiteboard. Explain that you will be revisiting these ideas at the end of the reading. (Making connections; inferring; forming hypotheses)
- Explain that the poem has a free-verse structure, and so it doesn’t have a regular rhythm or rhyme. If possible, make connections to a free-verse poem that the students are familiar with. (Making connections)
- “As we read, let’s try to find clues to what the author wants us to think about.” (Identifying the main idea)
- Share the learning goal and success criteria with the students.

Reading and discussing the text

Refer to Effective Literacy Practice in Years 5 to 8 for information about deliberate acts of teaching.

- Have the students read the whole of the second stanza and share any questions they have about the ideas. Record their questions in the group reading book. Explain that you will be doing a lot of rereading to look for clues and discuss the ideas more thoroughly. (Asking questions)
- (Adapt the following suggestions according to the questions the students have already come up with.) “Why isn’t she bothered about whether she looks funny or not? What message is the author trying to give us about the narrator and the way she thinks about her job?” Draw out the key idea that the narrator thinks her job is so important that she doesn’t care what she looks like. (Inferring)
- “What image is conveyed of this person as she walks to school?” (Inferring; visualising)
- Have the students read the third stanza. “What has the narrator done to be ready? What might she have to be ready for?” (Summarising; inferring)
- “What can we infer about the relationship between Manu and the narrator?”

What helps us make that inference?" (Inferring)

- "What clues can you find in this stanza that suggest how the narrator is feeling?" Draw out the idea that "smile" is written in capital letters for emphasis. (Inferring)
- "Does the narrator have 'power' over other people? If so, how?" (Making connections; inferring)
- Discuss the effect of the poem ending with the same sentence it began with. "Does the ending work for you? Why? Why not?" (Analysing and synthesising; evaluating)
- Revisit the students' questions and discuss any answers they have found. "What helped you work that out?" Encourage the students to share different interpretations. Have them reread the poem with a buddy to look for clues to any unanswered questions. (Inferring; identifying the main idea; asking questions)
- "Why do you think the author gets the reader to infer what the power is? Why doesn't she just tell them?" Draw out the idea that having to work something out for yourself gives you more opportunities to think about it so that you develop a deeper understanding. (Evaluating)
- Review the learning goal and success criteria and reflect with the students on how well the learning goal has been achieved. For example, "How has asking questions about the ideas in the poem helped you to decide about the main idea in this text? What else helped you?" Note any teaching points for future sessions.

Links to Further Learning

What follow-up tasks will help my students to consolidate and/or extend their new learning?

- The students could look at a selection of photographs of well-known people or positive role models. Have the students discuss whether they consider these people have power and what that power is. They could also make suggestions about other people who have power. (Making connections; analysing and synthesising)
- Have the students describe: the types of power they think they have and how it affects others; or ways they may have used their power today or seen someone else use theirs. (Making connections)
- The students could describe one thing they would like to change about themselves and how they might go about this. (Making connections)