

The Second-hand Tent

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Overview

When Dad brings home a second-hand tent, he gets a lot more than he bargained for. This vivid and lively poem brings to life the smells, sounds, and tastes of a beach camping holiday. There is a strong New Zealand flavour to this poem, and it includes the use of made-up compound or hyphenated words. You may need to provide extra support for ESOL students (see introduction to the notes http://www.tki.org.nz/r/literacy_numeracy/professional/teachers_notes/school_journal/notes/introduction_e.php for suggestions on how you might do this).

Suggested teaching purposes

- To support the students in developing the comprehension strategies of **inferring** and visualising.
- To enjoy the rich language an author uses to convey her ideas.

Suggested learning goal

I am learning to make connections to my own experiences to help me visualise and understand the ideas in this poem.

Success criteria

I will be successful when I have:

- made connections to what I already know about camping and about how compound words work
- used the language in the poem to help me visualise what the poet is describing
- inferred what is happening in the poem and how the children feel.

Features of the text

What features of this text support the teaching purpose?

- The structure of the poem as a series of highly descriptive rhyming couplets (in italics) within a narrative frame (the story of Dad bringing the tent home and the children imagining the good times they will have with it)
- The rhyme patterns (2/4 in the frame, 2/2 in the italics)
- The concept of the tent starting to “chat” (personification)
- The double meaning of “This tent of ours can take us places” (both literally and in their minds)
- The use of an ellipsis to indicate that the tent has lots more to say
- The use of strong, sensory beach images including made-up compound words and hyphenated words
- The punctuation, including a dash, a colon, ellipses, and commas to support phrasing and expression
- The transition of the tent from an unknown object at the beginning of the poem to “this tent of ours” by the end.

Readability

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

- Experiences of tents, camping, and family holidays, especially at the beach
- Familiarity with the concept of compound words (that each part of the word contributes to the overall meaning)
- Knowledge of the characteristics of some of the items, for example, that pipi can “spit” and kelp can “pop”.

What other features of this text might constitute challenges for my students that may require a prompt or a brief explanation?

- The concepts and experiences in the poem that are typically New Zealand (especially for ESOL students)
- The meanings of some of the components of the made-up words, for example, “pipi”, “scuttle”, “kelp”, “lupin”, “paua”.

Preparation for reading

- Prior to reading the poem, you could have read other related texts with the students, such as “Spider’s Web” (SJ 2.1.06), “I Hate Camping” and/or “Camping Holiday” (SJ 1.4.03), or “School Camp Fun” (SJ 1.1.04), or “Camp Poem” in *My Dad is an Alien* (JYPW) in order to develop or revisit vocabulary associated with tents, beaches, or camping.
- Have students create a brainstorm or acrostic poem based on the word “beach”, “tent”, or “camping”.

A framework for the lesson

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

Before reading

- Tell the students you have a poem for them to read and enjoy that uses rich language to convey ideas about a tent. Discuss the students’ experiences of tents and camping. (Making connections)
- Discuss the title and the concept of “second-hand” with the students. “Where might the tent have been and what might it have seen?” (Making connections; inferring)
- Tell the students that this poem includes many examples of compound words and that the poet has made some of them up. Brainstorm some compound or hyphenated words associated with camping or tents, for example, “campsite”, “chillybin”, “sunhat”, “bedroll”, “backpack”. Draw out the idea that both parts of the words work together to create the overall meaning. This activity would be especially helpful for ESOL students. (Making connections; building vocabulary)
- 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 first two stanzas. “Who does ‘we’ refer to here? How do you know?” (Inferring)
- “It starts to ‘chat’ ... What can that mean?” If necessary, explain or remind the students about the concept of personification. (Inferring)

- Ask the students to read the section in italics. Have them think, pair, and share about why the poet has set the poem out like this. “What does the ellipsis at the end suggest?” Draw out the idea that this is the tent “chatting” and the ellipsis indicates that it has more to tell. (Inferring)
- Allow plenty of time to savour and discuss the meanings of the descriptive language in this section. Encourage the students to make connections to their experiences of the beach. “What sense (smell, sound, taste, sight, touch) does each example relate to? How do the words help you to build up a picture of camping?” (Making connections; visualising)
- The students could read some of the compound words out loud. “Think about how the tent might say them.” (Inferring; visualising)
- Have the students read the rest of the poem. Discuss the last two stanzas. “Why are they smiling?” Identify and confirm with the students the literal and figurative meanings of the phrase “can take us places”. (Inferring; analysing and synthesising)
- Discuss the transition from an unknown object (in the title) to “this tent of ours” by the end. “What has changed? What do you think this might mean?” (Inferring)
- Encourage the students to develop their ideas about the history of the tent. “Share with the person next to you what you think the history of the tent is, for example, where it has been, what it has seen, who it was owned by, and how old it might be. Are there any gaps in the picture you are building in your head?” (Inferring; visualising; asking questions)
- Review the learning goal and success criteria and reflect with the students on how well the learning goal has been achieved. For example, “How did the language in the poem help you build a picture in your head of all those camping experiences? What helped you infer how the children were feeling?” 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?

- Have the students “move” the tent to another location (river, lake, camping ground and so on). Write dialogue for the tent to describe its experiences in this new location, including made-up compound words. For those students with no experiences of camping, they could set the tent in their back garden or the local park. (Making connections; links to writing; building vocabulary)
- Have the students read the poem aloud with a partner, practising the use of different pace and expression as they take on the roles of the different characters. (Visualising)