

Steps to the Gorge

story by [Kristin Martin](#) | illustrated by [Greg Holfeld](#)

worksheet: Planning a story

Understanding

[EN3-3A](#)

Conduct a [Question Starts Visible Thinking Routine](#) to generate creative questions about what the story could be about. Brainstorm a list of at least twelve questions about the story. Use these question-starts to help students think of interesting questions:

- Why ...?
- How would it be different if ...?
- What are the reasons ...?
- Suppose that ...?
- What if ...?
- What if we knew ...?
- What is the purpose of ...?
- What would change if ...?

Review the brainstormed list and highlight the questions that seem most interesting. Then, select one or more of the highlighted questions to discuss. Students could use this [Question Starts Thinking Routine worksheet](#).

Complete a tree chart to show student understanding of 'family' in relation to the text. List all the events that finally led to the safe escape from the crocodile, in the branches of the [Tree Chart worksheet](#).

Engaging personally

[EN3-5B & EN3-8D](#)

Write a brief recount about a family holiday that did go, or could have gone, wrong. Students can create an imaginary narrative if they prefer.

Conduct a [Step Inside visible thinking routine](#). This routine is designed to help students look at characters and events differently by exploring different viewpoints. Three core questions guide students in this routine:

1. What can the person or thing **perceive**?
2. What might the person or thing **know about or believe**?
3. What might the person or thing **care about**?

Brainstorm perceptions from the story, for example, Kara perceiving the worst (imaginary worst possible-case scenarios), Sam wanting to see crocodiles and her false bravery, Dad being

funny/brave/calm, Tricia being supportive, and the general struggles of a blended family holiday. Use one of these [Step Inside Thinking Routine worksheets](#) to record responses.

Conduct a '[What Makes You Say That?](#)' [thinking routine](#) to encourage students to share their ideas and look at the thinking behind their responses. For example, who was brave in the story? Why did Kara keep imagining the worst? What was the main difficulty in the story? This routine promotes evidence-based reasoning and encourages students to consider different viewpoints and perspectives on a topic.

Connecting

EN3-8D

Background reading: [Teaching Strategy explained: text-to-text, text-to-self, text-to-world](#)

- Text-to-text connections occur when we make connections between other texts in relation to the text we are reading.
- Text-to-self connections occur when we make connections between personal experiences and the text.
- Text-to-world connections occur when we relate the text with what we already know about the world.

Text-to-Text: How do the ideas in this text remind you of another text (story, book, movie, song, etc.)? Complete the following statements:

- What I just read reminds me of (story/book/movie/song) because ...
- The ideas in this text are similar to the ideas in ... because ...
- The ideas in this text are different than the ideas in ... because ...

Students complete the statements using one of these [Think Pair Share worksheets](#).

Engaging critically

EN3-7B

Complete a [PMI chart](#). Encourage students to use their PMI chart to highlight three elements (in three different colours or use coloured post-it notes) within the narrative that are positive, negative and interesting:

1. **Plus/Positive:** Good/Positive experiences, themes, messages, events and happenings in the text.
2. **Minus/Negative:** Events in the text that are negative/bad experiences in the text, things that go wrong etc.
3. **Interesting:** Anything that appeals to the student; questions, feelings and emotions that arise, morals, messages and connections that resonate with the students.

Intertextuality: Create a persuasive flow chart or infographic, using [Canva](#), regarding the importance of safety, especially in the Australian bush. Scaffold arguments using this [Persuasion Map worksheet](#) to organise thinking and slogan generation. Adapting structure and styles of texts draws on the [English Textual Concept 'Intertextuality'](#), where texts can be appropriated for audience, purpose, mode or media.

[Cycle of Events graphic organisers](#) may help students to recognise the way texts build an image of a certain group of people, or events. Students can write what each section tells in one colour and then choose another colour to list techniques used and another colour to explain the impact.

Experimenting

[EN3-2A & EN3-8C](#)

Create a film strip of 'Steps to the Gorge', using this [Story Board worksheet](#). Option to adapt it into a play or podcast using [Audacity](#).

Design a warning sign to alert tourists about crocodiles when visiting Australian gorges.

Conduct an interview with local people who claim to have seen the killer crocodile.

Create an animation of the story using [Vyond](#).

Write a suspenseful narrative using a similar plot to the one in 'Steps to the Gorge'. Use one of these [Story Map graphic organiser worksheets](#) to help scaffold writing. Option to publish using [Storybird](#) or [Book Creator](#).

Remind students that in order to engage their audience, they need to consider character identification (step-siblings), situations (family life) and themes (danger and holidays) to warrant reader interest and build a decent plot. Choosing which ideas will connect with their audience, and their language choices, directly influences student writing development.

Reflecting

[EN3-9E](#)

Conduct an [I used to think ... But now I think ... routine](#). This routine helps students to reflect on their thinking about a topic or issue and explore how and why that thinking has changed. It can be useful in consolidating new learning as students identify their new understandings, opinions, and beliefs. Record responses on this [I Used to Think ... Now I Think ... worksheet](#).

Exit Slips are a formative assessment that can be used to quickly check for understanding. The teacher poses one or two questions in the last couple minutes of class and asks student to fill out an 'exit slip' (e.g. on an index card) to ascertain student thinking and understanding. Here are [Instructions on filling out an Exit Slip and two Exit Slip worksheets](#).

Further reading

[English Textual Concepts](#)

Resources

[Harvard Thinking Routines](#)

[Think From the Middle: Strategy Toolbox](#)