

Mr Gum's Secret

story by Simon Cooke | illustrated by [Anna Bron](#)

Understanding

[EN3-3A](#)

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:

- What can the person or thing **perceive**?
- What might the person or thing **know about or believe**?
- What might the person or thing **care about**?

The story evokes feelings of kindness, friendship, ignorance/arrogance, insight, judgement, and courage to name a few. Brainstorm perceptions from the story. Option to use as story titles. Students can record their responses on one of these [Step Inside worksheets](#).

Perspective provides a lens through which we see the world. The lens can clarify, distort, magnify or blur what we see. In this way perspective offers a dynamic basis for the relationship between the composer, text and the responder. **Create** a story arc to find and summarise the main events in the story, 'Mr Gum's Secret', highlighting Mr Gum's transformation as portrayed by the author, Simon Cooke. For information on how to use a story arc, read [Using a Story Arc](#) or watch this [Introduction to the Story Arc YouTube clip](#). How does Simon Cooke portray Mr Gum? What role does Mr Vincent play? Why was Mr Gum always glaring and not talking? How does the audience perceive Mr Gum? How does the author engage students in the story? Explore further the [English Textual Concept 'Perspective'](#).

Find three interesting words from the story. For example: ventriloquist, phantom and impersonation. TSM word of the month could also be included: fastidious. Research their meaning and use them to increase student vocabulary in this [Vocabulary Graphic Organiser worksheet](#).

Engaging personally

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

Write a list of idioms, metaphors or phrases that also mean, 'lost your marbles'.

Write a diamante poem about Mr Gum's transformation from 'Mute to Animated'. Use this [Diamante Poem worksheet](#) to scaffold and prompt writing.

Write a personal of 'Mr Gum's Secret' using one of these [Summary worksheets](#). Discuss whether the secret was predictable or an interesting plot twist. Encourage students to use their own opinion (point of view) to allow for personal interpretations of the text.

Connecting

EN3-8D

Background reading: [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-self: Have a class discussion on how do the ideas in this text relate to their own lives, ideas and experiences?

- What I just read reminds me of the time when I ...
- I agree with/understand what I just read because in my own life ...
- I don't agree with what I just read because in my own life ...

Students complete a [Text to Self Connections worksheet](#) to record connections. Discuss as a class.

Engaging critically

EN3-7B

Discuss the last sentence in the story, 'Mr Gum's Secret': "For once there was no trace of a glare on Mr Gum's face, just a broad smile from ear to ear."

- How has Simon Cooke made us feel toward Mr Gum?
- Why did Simon Cooke include a character like Mr Vincent?
- How do we know what happens next?
- How has the story changed the way students think about old people? What is the message within the story?

Conduct a [Think, Pair, Share routine](#) to promote understanding through active reasoning and explanation. This routine encourages students to think about something, such as a problem, question or topic, and then articulate their thoughts. Ask students to consider the questions above, asking them to take a few minutes of thinking time and then turn to a nearby student to share their thoughts. Think Pair Share encourages students to understand multiple perspectives.

Write a letter to the author, Simon Cooke, using the [writing a letter to the author guidelines and worksheets](#) and the [Narrative Praise Question Polish Peer-Review worksheet as a scaffold](#). Encourage students to highlight three elements within the narrative that they would Praise, Question and Polish:

1. **Praise:** What I like about the author's writing style or ideas.
2. **Questions:** For the author to remove any confusion.
3. **Polish:** Things to improve, I would change, I wish that ..., I wonder if ..., I couldn't believe ...

Support: Write a postcard

Experimenting

[EN3-7C](#)

Write a letter of praise giving thanks to Max from Mr Gum's point of view. Experimenting with point of view allows students to explore other ways of seeing and invites certain attitudes and responses to the text. Explore further the [English Textual Concept 'Point of View'](#).

Design a poster/advertisement for the 'Skipper and Murray' performance at Peaceful Meadows Nursing Home.

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

Write a narrative ending with the words: "... just a broad smile reaching from ear to ear." Use this [Narrative Idea Pyramid worksheet](#) to organise ideas and plan writing.

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](#)