

Waggy's Tail

Story by Bill Condon | illustrated by Fifi Colston

EN2-2A | ACELY1694

Rewrite a portion of the text as a play.

After reading 'Waggy's Tail', discuss the plot and characters as a class. Break the plot into sections for an easy summary (and for students to choose a section to rewrite later).

Example:

Section one: Waggy tries to fly and chases a ball onto the road.

Section two: Mum and Dad talk to the pups about being dogs.

Section three: A van comes to pick up the pups.

Section four: Humans buy the pups one by one while Waggy hides in his kennel.

Section five: Tiger gives Waggy some advice.

Section six: Daisy and Ben choose Waggy.

Turn to 'A Touch of Gold' on page 11 of Blast Off. Students identify the main aspects of a play script – the character list, the structure, the dialogue and the stage directions. (See image as an example.) Using this as a template, students choose two consecutive pages of 'Waggy's Tail' to rewrite as a play.

Success criteria:

- Includes a title
- Includes a character list at the beginning
- Structures play correctly, with character's name in a separate column to dialogue
- Direct speech from the text has been converted into dialogue
- Some stage directions have been given, both separated and incorporated into the dialogue. They must be in italics and in brackets if incorporated into dialogue.

Extension: In groups, students perform plays as a class.

A Touch of Gold

Title of play

play by Nola Hosking, based on a Greek myth
illustrated by Douglas Holgate

Author and illustrator

Characters

KING MIDAS A STRANGER
PRINCESS MARIGOLD SERVANTS

Character list

SCENE ONE

Palace garden. KING MIDAS walks with MARIGOLD. She skips along happily, sniffing the roses. SERVANTS bow. MIDAS and MARIGOLD nod to them in a regal way.

Setting and introductory instructions for actors

Person speaking in separate column on left

SERVANTS Good morning, King Midas. Good morning, Princess Marigold.

MARIGOLD Oh, Father, the roses are so beautiful! Look at all the pretty colours!

MIDAS Beautiful? They will soon die. No flower is beautiful for long.

MARIGOLD What do you think is beautiful, Father?

MIDAS There is only one thing that remains beautiful forever.

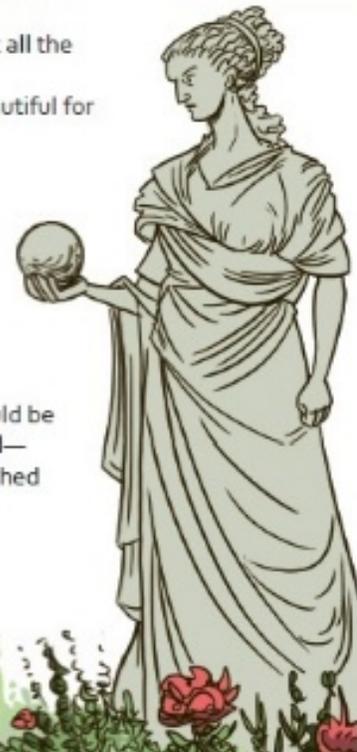
MARIGOLD What's that, Father?

MIDAS Gold! Gold is beautiful, my child.

MARIGOLD (scornfully) Gold is hard and cold and locked up in a cellar. It doesn't smell nice.

MIDAS (Laughing) You can't cuddle it or even eat it. Gold makes you rich. If I had lots of gold, I could be the most important person in the entire world—famous and powerful. I wish everything I touched would turn to gold.

Instructions for how actor delivers line in brackets and italics



Exploring verbs of speech

Record the many different verbs of speech from the story 'Waggy's Tail'. What's your opinion about the use of this verb in the sentence—does it add interest, or is it too distracting?

Saying verbs	Is this a successful way to show how this was said?
said	Yes—it lets the reader focus on the words, not the way the character says it.

Now come up with some of your own!

Saying verbs	Information about emotion, mood or sound

Write a short conversation. Use some of the saying words from the tables above. Remember to put quotation marks around only the words that are being spoken.

A Touch of Gold

Play by Nola Hosking | illustrated by Douglas Holgate

EN2-10C | ACELT1602

Compare and **evaluate** two traditional tales.

Before reading, ask if students know any Greek myths. Students might recall some of the Greek Gods and reference Disney's 'Hercules' as well as the Percy Jackson series by Rick Riordan. Explain that you will be looking at a Greek myth first.

Read 'A Touch of Gold' as a class. Ask if students have ever heard of the 'Midas touch.' This phrase came from the Greek myth of King Midas.

Read 'Turtle's Trip' on page 32 of this issue of Blast Off. This folktale is a way of explaining why you don't see turtles in New York. Ask students if they know of any other stories that explain something about the world (many Dreamtime stories do this: How the Birds Got Their Colours, How the Kangaroos Got Their Tails, How the Echidna Got its Spikes).

At a glance, 'A Touch of Gold' and 'Turtle's Trip' may not seem to have much in common. They're different text types and come from different cultures. Allow students do a [think, pair, share](#) about how 'A Touch of Gold' and 'Turtle's Trip' might be connected. Possible answers: their purpose is to entertain, both are traditional tales, both have a moral to the story.

Once students have this last answer, see if the class can define what morals from stories are (lessons that teach us how to behave in society). In pairs, students decide what the moral of each story is.

A Touch of Gold: There are more precious things than material wealth.

Turtle's Trip: Don't let pride keep you from achieving your dreams.

Students choose one of the texts and writes an extended explanation as to how the story demonstrates its moral, using evidence from the text.

To help students with this task, ask the following questions:

What does the main character want?

What happens when they get it?

How does the character feel when they get what they want?

How is the story resolved?

Example: The moral to 'Turtle's Trip' is don't let pride keep you from achieving your dreams. Turtle longed to see the world, but she was too much in a rush, hurrying to grab the stick without really listening to the pigeon's warnings. When the other animals yelled goodbye, Turtle was flattered and tried to answer, which meant she let go of the stick. She was too proud to think about the pigeon's warning and lost her chance to see New York City.

Extension: Explore some of [Aesop's fables](#), which all have morals.

Character map

King Midas changes from selfish and greedy to less materialistic and more loving. Create a character that goes on a similar journey.

Fill in the lines below with information about your character.

Part A

Record your character's name, age and occupation.

What do they enjoy doing?

What do they dislike doing?

Describe your character's personality traits.

Part B

Describe the life-changing event that will have an impact on your character's personality.

Part C

How will you show the change in your character's behaviour through what they say and do?

Describe the new traits your character now possesses.

What evidence will you include to show this?

Gold as Honey

Poem by Jenny Blackford | illustrated by Sylvia Morris

EN2-2A | ACELT1606

Write a poem using similes.

Read the poem or watch [Gold as Honey](#). Reread the lines:

white as milk

gold as honey

soft as silk

Ask students to identify the language feature in all three examples (similes - comparing two things using 'like' or 'as').

If you have a digital subscription, do the interactive activity 'Complete the Simile'. Alternatively, complete a brainstorm with the class to think of similes and view an [example list](#) on Organized Classroom.

Students construct a poem using the same structure as 'Gold as Honey', but using a different pet. They can find an example picture online to assist with visualisation, then write a list of features from this image and come up with similes.

As with the text, the first two lines must rhyme, as do the last lines of each stanza. They can be creative with their similes, as well as with what pet they choose (rock, dragon, otter etc). A good way to start is by brainstorming features of their chosen pet and coming up with similes for these features. It will be useful for them to find rhyming words for the similes during the brainstorming time. They can use a [rhyming dictionary](#) if needed.

An example is below.

My new dragon's
name is Wagon.
His two wings are
black as tar.

All the rest is
red as roses,
hot as fire,
bright as stars.

Similes

In the poem 'Gold as Honey' the author uses 'as' to compare one thing to another: white as milk; gold as honey; soft as silk. Practise using similes in the activities below.

PART A

Think of a suitable word to complete these similes.

It is as dark as	
The water was as cold as	
He runs like a	
It is as warm as	
She is as sweet as	
They are as hungry as	

PART B

Use your own ideas to complete the following similes.

He was as loud as _____ This soil is as dry as _____

The pillow was as soft as _____ The sun is as hot as _____

It's going to fly like a _____ This cake is as sweet as _____

PART C

Create your own similes using the prompts below. The first one has been done for you.

It's hot	Simile: It's as hot as an oven cooking bread.
The dog runs very fast	Simile:
The thunder is very loud	Simile:
The roses are red	Simile:

My Kid Brother and His Thirst for Knowledge

Story by Jenny Robson | illustrated by Anna Bron

EN2-4A | ACELY1692

Analyse a text by generating factual and inferential questions.

Before reading the text, ask students why we ask questions. Students should respond with something along the lines of 'to find out information.' Ask students why we might ask questions about a text (to better understand the text).

Explain to students the difference between thin questions (factual questions where answers can be found in the text) and thick questions (inferential questions where the answer is not directly stated; rather, students have to think of the answer themselves and use the text to back up their answer). Explain that thick questions can have a variety of answers depending on their own understandings and ideas.

Draw up a large [T-Chart](#) for the class to use, or present a T-Chart on [Google Jamboard](#) (collaborative interactive whiteboard software). One side will say "Thin Questions" and the other side will say "Thick Questions." Read the title of the text to the class and write an example question for the title under each heading e.g. Thin question: Who is the narrator of the story? Thick question: Why is the brother so desperate for knowledge?

As a class, read 'My Kid Brother and His Thirst for Knowledge.' No notes need to be taken at this time. Explain why the example thin question is factual (the name of the narrator can be found in the text) and why the example thick question is inferential (there is no explicit answer as to why the brother wants to know about so many things). In pairs or small groups, students go through the text again and write out several thin and thick questions on Post-It notes. Explain that thick questions can be about how characters are feeling, what they might be thinking, why they do certain things. Students stick the completed Post-It notes on the relevant side of the chart, then as a class go through them and check they're in the right spot as either thick or thin questions.

Examples of thin questions:

- What is the little brother's name?
- Why don't their parents answer the questions?
- What does Mary hope her brother will be when he grows up?
- How does Mary feel when she thinks Dougie has run out of questions?

Examples of thick questions:

- Where might their father be?
- Why does their aunt not want to answer the brother's questions?
- How does Dougie feel about not having any questions left?
- What might Mary want to be when she grows up?

Individually, students choose three thin questions and three thick questions to answer in their books. For the thick questions, they need to find clues in the text to help back up their answers. They can share their answers with a partner to see if their partner agrees.

To finish off, do a quick survey to find out whether students believe they have a better understanding of the text now they've asked and answered questions about it.

Living in an Igloo

Article by [Kate Walker](#) | illustrated by Michael Streich

EN2-9B | ACELA1498

Incorporate new vocabulary into a short performance.

Read the article 'Living in an Igloo' as a class and discuss. Ask students questions about what they've learnt. Examples:

- What are igloos? (Round houses made out of snow)
- Why are they useful to the Inuit people? (Keeps them warm, protects them from the weather and polar bears)
- What are Inuit knives made out of? (Walrus tusk)
- Describe an oil lamp. (Large stone basin containing seal oil and a lighted wick)
- What are some of the daily chores of Inuit people? (Keep the oil lamp burning during the night, stamp over the surface of the platform first thing in the morning, empty the waste bucket into a snow cave, cleaning cracks in the floor)

Students identify words from the text they don't know, or hadn't heard before. Examples could be Inuit, blizzard, insulator, kayak, harpoons. Write these words on the board. Students chose one of these words and use computers/laptops/tablets to find a definition, some pictures and some example videos (where relevant) until they have a thorough understanding of the word. Students can also use the [Fruyer Diagram](#) (a four-squared vocabulary-learning activity).

As a warm-up for the next part of the activity, students can do a quick role-playing game where they walk around the classroom as a certain character.

In small groups, students create, rehearse and perform a short play (1-2 minutes) using the words they researched. Give a prompt to help them construct the play, such as losing a knife during an ice storm. The play doesn't have to be about Inuit people, but they have to use their chosen words in the correct context.

Comprehension questions

Answer the following questions in full sentences, using information from the text to support your responses.

1. How long did it take an Inuit family to build an igloo?

2. Explain how the blocks of ice were held together.

3. Where did the family sleep in the igloo? Why?

4. Why would Inuit games be designed to develop strength and agility?

5. What would you find the hardest part of living in an igloo today?

6. What lessons did Inuit children learn? Why were these lessons so important?

Use Your Imagination

Story by Kim Rackham | illustrated by Peter Sheehan

EN2-2A | ACELT1794

Create a sensory chart for a specific setting.

Read the story 'Use Your Imagination'. Students discuss the story develop a short summary. Check that students understand that the aliens in the story are concepts rather than visible beings. They can fill out the chart below to help them.

	Description in the text	Senses used
A1		
B2		
C3		

ANSWERS:

	Description in the text	Senses used
A1	"a happy, calm feeling, as if I were being cuddled by a warm blanket"	Feeling
B2	"my hands were tingling, in a warm sort of pins and needles way" "The tingles moved up my arms, and then colour flashed through my brain. Red, orange, violet, yellow, pink—ripples of colour that I could see one by one and all at once. Colour that wasn't in my eyes, but was all through my body."	Feeling and sight (colour)
C3	"I felt a kind of vibration, as though there was music rolling up my arms and into my body. It's not like I heard anything with my actual ears, but I'm sure it felt like sound"	Feeling and sound

Can students imagine these aliens? Can they imagine what it feels like to be cuddled in a warm blanket? What do they think yellow "feels" like? Or pink? Can they imagine what

the vibrations of music feel like inside their body? Encourage them to think of a song they really love, and how it makes them feel when they're listening to it.

Ask students if they think the author did a good job of describing the aliens using sensory details. Using sensory details to make the reader feel like they're part of the story isn't limited to aliens – writers try to build a setting this way too.

Students choose a setting they know well. Examples could include the beach, the classroom, a park, the local swimming pool, a forest. Using a computer, laptop or tablet, students look up pictures of their chosen place to help with their visualisations.

Students fill out the chart below. Encourage them to dig deep for each sense, using both positive and negative ideas, and to include onomatopoeic words like drip, sizzle, crunch.

SETTING:	
Sense	Description
Sights	
Sounds	
Smells	
Touch	
Tastes	

EXAMPLE CHART: Picnic at the park

Sense	Description
Sights	Children playing, adults sitting, picnic baskets and rugs, dogs, playground equipment, green grass, sand, blue river down the slope, scraped knees, paper plates, food – bread, fruit, juice, roast chicken, sausages, jam, cheese, chips
Sounds	Sizzle of sausages, children laughing, murmur of adults talking, crack of opening a new juice bottle, dogs barking, rustle of wind in the trees, birds warbling, crickets chirruping, bees buzzing, swings creaking, crunch of eating, crinkle of chip packets
Smells	Cooked meat, freshly cut grass, dog poo, rubbish bins, fruit juice, briny smell coming from the river
Touch	Fuzzy picnic rugs, woody picnic baskets, soft blades of grass under bare feet, silky sand, hot plastic and metal on the play equipment, hot chicken, itchy grass seeds
Tastes	A sour grape bursting in a mouth, tangy chips, sweet and sticky jam, fresh bread, salty taste in the air from the river

Students can refer to this chart for their next narrative writing task.

Conversation While Looking at Stars

Poem by Beverly McLoughland | illustrated by Marjorie Crosby-Fairall

EN2-8B | ACELA1496

Explore how illustrations can change the meaning of a narrative.

Without showing the illustration, read the poem 'Conversation While Looking at Stars' to the students. Have them draw a quick sketch of what they think the illustration to this poem looks like. Most, if not all of them, will draw humans looking at the night sky.

Reveal Marjorie Crosby-Fairall's illustration. Are the students surprised to see aliens? Ask them why they think the illustrator made this choice.

The poem has been cleverly turned around by the illustration because it suggests that the poem is about an alien speaking to his dad about humans, rather than the other way around. In this poem, humans would be the aliens. Discuss how the poem connects humanity to the aliens in the last line:

I suppose they look on stars
And wonder too.

Read the story 'My First Day of School... Again!' from Countdown Issue 1 2021. Ask students to identify the plot twist at the end (the narrator is the teacher, not the student).

Students are to imagine that the last lines of the story,

'Good morning, class,' I say, conjuring up my most confident voice. 'My name is Ms Cook. I'll be your teacher this year.'

are cut out. Students are to create their own illustration for the story, showing the plot twist instead. They can either draw the picture themselves or use the [vector creator](#) on icons8 (images can be exported for free as a PNG file). The illustration must show that the narrator of the story is the class teacher, not a student. They can use thought bubbles to show how the character is feeling.

An example from icons8 is below.



Will Wonders Never Cease?

Monte Kaolino

Article by [Zoë Disher](#) | photos by Alamy

[EN2-4A](#) | [ACELT1604](#)

Write headings for an article using alliteration.

Read the article 'Monte Kaolino'. Discuss any terms that students may not be familiar with, such as 'slag heap'.

Ask students to study the sub-headings. What do they notice about each of them? Explain that each sub-heading features alliteration, where the same sound is repeated at the beginning of many (or all) words in a sentence or phrase. Give an example, such as 'Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers.' Tongue twisters generally use alliteration.

In pairs, students come up with three of their own sentences featuring alliteration. Encourage students to think about the same sounds rather than the same letters, and to be creative in their responses. For example, 'ph' is used as a 'f' sound and 'c' can be used as a 's' sound. Students share their sentences in larger groups.

Turn to 'Living in an Igloo' on pp. 19-23. Read each sub-heading of the article. In groups, students are to come up with alternative, relevant sub-headings that feature alliteration, as was done in 'Monte Kaolino'.

Students should look at how the author of 'Monte Kaolino' took the main idea of each section and gave it a describing word with the same starting sound. They need to do the same for the different sections of 'Living in an Igloo' (two to three passages per student). It might help to brainstorm some 'i' adjectives to go with igloo before you start, such as interesting, icy, idealistic. Students can also use a dictionary to find more words.

Examples:

Building an igloo = Interesting Igloos

Keeping warm = Warming Wicks

Why don't igloos melt? = Stable Structures

Sleeping in an igloo = Nestling Nights

Daily chores = Tough Tasks

Igloo home-school = Exciting Education

Fun and games = Gleeful Games

Leaving the igloo = Contemporary Children

Turtle's Trip

Retold by Karen Jameyson | illustrated by Sarah Davis

EN2-11D | ACELA1489

Write a fact file on turtles using factual language.

Read 'Turtle's Trip' and discuss the story. Ask students if they know the word starting with 'm' that describes animals moving back and forth across large distances (migration). Check the website distance.to to get a feel for how far it is from [Haiti to New York](#) (2419km) and ask students if they can figure out how far across Australia that might be (for example, Sydney to Brisbane). Not even Adelaide to Perth (2130km) is that far, but it's close.

Now the students have an idea of how far the pigeons in the story were travelling, reveal to them that pigeons don't migrate! That information was altered for the purpose of the story. Turtles migrate, however. View the short Youtube video of [64,000 green sea turtles captured on video in Great Barrier Reef](#) and ask the students how far they think turtles travel, keeping in mind the distances in the first part of the activity.

Go to the Australian Marine Parks webpage on [Sea turtles in the Coral Sea](#). The first dot point under the Did you know? subheading gives the information for the longest known turtle migration (3880km) and the next section, Epic migrations, gives the general distances (less than 8km to over 2000km).

Read the other Did you know? facts to the students. Explain that they will be writing a fact file on turtles. Remind them of the difference between language of feeling and opinion and the language of factual reporting. (For example, "Turtles are cute" is an opinion.)

Use one of the PDF [fact file templates](#) from Sparklebox or something similar for students to write their information.

Several useful webpages for finding information are:

[Fun turtle facts for kids](#) on the Science Kids website.

[Fun Turtle Facts for Kids](#) on the Cool Kid Facts website.

When students have completed their fact files, ask them the difference between their work and 'Turtle's Trip.' (The purpose of the fact file is to inform; the purpose of 'Turtle's Trip' is to entertain and therefore has fictional elements.)