

A Christmas Wish

story by [Anne Renaud](#) | illustrated by [Marjorie Crosby-Fairall](#)

EN2-11D | ACELT1596

Student's **rewrite** the story into a modern Australian context.

Prior to reading the story, discuss the kinds of decorations that can typically be found on a Christmas tree. Sample answers include tinsel, baubles, angels, stars, snowflakes, glittery items, birds, animal ornaments, miniature wooden toys.

Ask students to draw their version of the perfect Christmas tree. Some students do not celebrate Christmas in their family. These students may like to use an image from [Dreamstime](#) for the next activity.

Read the story, until the end of page 5, before stopping. Draw up two columns on the board and ask students to write a list of similarities and differences between Philomena's Christmas tree and their dream Christmas tree drawn earlier.

Sample answers:

Similarities	Differences
<p>The tree is the traditional fir tree shape</p> <p>The tree has been put up prior to Christmas</p>	<p>Philomena's tree is bare, with just berries and nuts found in the forest tucked into the branches</p> <p>The dream tree is full of sparkly and interesting decorations, including fairy lights.</p>

Now, ask students to consider how their life is different to Philomena's life. They are to create a Venn diagram using the [graphic organiser](#) from the Digital Learning Selector. Encourage students to also consider the illustrations and what they might tell the reader about the setting of the story and aspects of Philomena's life.

After the students have completed the Venn Diagram, discuss the differences in context.

Suggested discussion points:

- The story is set in a different time in history, before technology (evidence – Philomena uses a candle as a light).

- The story is set in the Northern Hemisphere because Christmas is being celebrated in winter (evidence – Philomena sits by the fire knitting to keep warm)
- The clothing Philomena wears is old fashioned

Ask students to rewrite the story about Philomena, into a modern Australian setting. They should keep the elements about Philomena wanting nice Christmas decorations and having a friend (such as Celeste) to provide some unique decorations just in time for Christmas. They should change the setting to include modern elements (such as technology), references to summer weather.

Extension Task: Create an illustration to accompany the updated version of Philomena's story.

Spiders: super or scary?

Spiders are often considered scary, but in the story 'A Christmas Wish' the spider is a friend of the main character. It all depends on your point of view.

List positive and negative words to describe spiders below.

Positive words	Negative words

Write a paragraph about spiders that presents a positive point of view. Your paragraph might be informative or imaginative. Use lots of positive vocabulary.

Now write an informative or imaginative paragraph about spiders that presents a negative point of view. Use lots of negative vocabulary.

Backyard Buddies

poem by Alison A Ferguson | illustrated by [Cheryl Orsini](#)

[EN2-2A](#) | [ACELT1791](#)

Compose a poem using alliteration and create a storyboard.

Explain to students that this poem describes features of a very special backyard tree using some interesting examples of [alliteration](#).

Ask student to identify examples of alliteration in the poem by underlining or circling the examples.

Suggested answers include:

- Watch warblers weave a nest
- Swing with superpowers
- Feathered fledglings learn to fly
- sparkling stars on strings
- plant tiny pips in pots

If you have a digital subscription, head to the [interactive](#).

This poem describes how the tree changes according to the seasons. Design a four-square storyboard illustrating the four seasons as described in this poem. Students may like to use the scaffold provided:

<p>Spring: I dance beneath your blossom showers, watch warblers weave a nest</p>	<p>Summer: I wrap your bark in fairy lights, hang sparkling stars on strings while counting down December nights to see what Santa brings.</p>
<p>Autumn: I chase the leaves that swirl about, plant tiny pips in pots</p>	<p>Winter: I wake to find a spider's thread between your frosty twigs</p>

Further Reading

[Christmas Wonder](#) – illustrated by Cheryl Orsini – students may like to read this picture book in the lead up to Christmas and note the stylistic features unique to Cheryl Orsini evident in the picture book and in the illustration for 'Backyard Buddies' in this issue of Countdown.

Know your words!

Read the poem 'Backyard Buddies' to find the answers to the following questions.

1. Find a compound word.

2. Find a 3-syllable word.

3. Find a word that contains a silent letter.

4. Find two examples of alliteration (words that start with the same letter in the same phrase).

5. What do you think a 'blossom shower' is?

6. How many synonyms can you think of for the word 'dance'? A synonym is a word with the same meaning.

7. How does this illustration make you feel?

8. Can you think of an antonym for the following words? An antonym is a word with the opposite meaning.

friends

frosty

whisper

Molly's Messy Desk

play by Diana Noonan | illustrated by Aśka

EN2-1A | ACELY1792

Engage in a class debate.

Read the play as a class. After reading engage students in a discussion using the following prompts:

- Are you messy like Molly?
- Why do you think Molly likes to store so much in her desk at school?
- Do you think it is a good idea?
- In this story, is it a good thing that Molly had so many items in her desk?

After finding lots of useful items in Molly's desk, Maui says:

Now every group has got something to look at with their microscope. Mr Sutton, you should let Molly keep her desk the way it is. Untidy desks are really useful for when we do science.

Divide the class into two teams with an even number of students in each. Team A will agree with Maui (that messy desks are useful) and Team B will agree with Mr Sutton (That students should keep a tidy desk).

Give the groups time to complete the following preparation (you may like to take your class to an outdoor learning space so that the teams can't eavesdrop on one another):

- Use a giant piece of butchers paper and markers to write a list of arguments for their side of the debate
- For each argument, find an example from the play 'Messy Molly' that supports the idea (look at what the characters are saying and doing)
- For arguments that do not have an example from the story, think about a real-life example that could be used
- Within each team, ask students to find a partner – and each pair chooses an argument with an example from the butchers paper. The pairs will present their argument to the class.

When it is time for the debate, ask the two teams to stand up facing one another, ensuring partners are standing next to each other.

Begin the debate with the Team A (that messy desks are useful) and the pairing closest to the front. When they have presented their argument, move to the first pairing of the Team B

(that students should keep a tidy desk) who will present their argument. Keep moving down the line until all arguments have been presented.

Issue students with a small scrap of paper to use as a voting ballot. Ask students to think of all the arguments they have heard today and write either 'Team A' or 'Team B' on their secret voting ballot to choose which team won the debate. Students should not simply vote for their own team, but instead think critically about all the arguments heard and conclude about who won the debate.

Collect all the student ballots and complete a tally of votes to find out the winning team.

Captain Ahab's Weird Wide World: When Hippos Yawn

article by Cheryl Bullow | photo by Dreamstime

[EN2-8B | ACELA1483](#)

Create a mini picture book for small children.

After reading the article, engage students in a discussion using the following questions:

- Why do hippos yawn?
- Why is this an unexpected reason for yawning?
- How can you tell that this is a factual/information text?
- If you were to write an imaginative story about hippos, how might the text be different?

Students are to create a short story for very young children in which one of the main characters is a yawning hippo. The yawning should cause a misunderstanding with a second character.

When they have written their story, students are to use one of the following techniques for making a stapleless book to turn their short story about a Hippo yawn into a published picture book.

[How to make a book without staples](#)

[Easy Mini Notebook from ONE sheet of Paper - NO GLUE - Mini Paper Book DIY - Easy Paper Crafts](#)

Students should consider:

- How to distribute the words across the pages available
- How to illustrate each page to complement the words on that page – thinking about the angle, colours, layout and salience on each page
- Giving the story a title
- Writing a blurb for the back cover

The Hippo Upstairs

poem by Diana Murray illustrated by [Tohby Riddle](#)

[EN2-2A](#) | [ACELT1791](#)

Write a sequel to the poem 'The Hippo Upstairs.'

After reading the poem or watching the [video](#) if you are a digital subscriber, ask students to write a three-sentence summary of what happens in the poem. Students can share these with a friend and compare their summary of events.

Discuss the following features of the poem:

- Who is speaking in the poem?
- Rhyming pattern (ABCB)
- Onomatopoeia (Thumpa, bumpa, thumpa)

Ask students to think of another unexpected item that the Hippo might use in their home upstairs?

(suggested ideas include: drumkit, blender, trampoline)

Ask students to choose one of these items, then brainstorm the sounds that their chosen item would make when the Hippo uses it (onomatopoeia).

Ask students to think of three problems that this item could cause for the person living in the apartment below.

Now students are to use these ideas to write a sequel to the poem in which the Hippo uses a new item that causes problems downstairs. They should begin in the same way:

A hippo lives upstairs from me.

I hear him day and night.

Success Criteria:

- Write using 1st person (from the point of view of the person living below the Hippo)
- Use onomatopoeia
- Use ABCB rhyming pattern
- Include the problems that the Hippo causes downstairs
- Include what the speaker in the poem is going to do about it at the end!

Further Reading

[There's a Hippopotamus on our roof eating cake by Hazel Edwards](#)

Stowaway story

by [Katie Furze](#) | illustrated by [Althea Aseoche](#)

[EN2-9B](#) | [ACELA1479](#)

Compose a newspaper report telling the story of Walter the stowaway

Read the story as a class. Explain to students that local newspapers often publish feel-good 'soft news' stories relating to their local area. Inform students that they will be writing a newspaper report for a local newspaper.

Discuss the following:

- What is the purpose of a newspaper report? (Suggested answer: To inform readers about recent events)
- What information should be included? (Suggested answer: What happened? Who was involved? How did it happen? Where did it happen? How did it happen?)
- How is the newspaper report organized? (Sample Answer: There is a main headline, the most important information comes first, sometimes there are subheadings.)
- What kind of language is used when writing a newspaper report? (Suggested answer: Past tense, formal language)
- How are the opinions and personal stories of people involved included? (Suggested answer: Reporters will incorporate quotes from people involved. They will use direct speech)

Show students a sample newspaper report, as the class reads through the article, stop and point out the different features discussed previously (such as headline, subheadings, paragraphs, quotes from people involved, formal language). Choose one of the following:

- [Puppy reunited with owner after being found 480km away from home in Sydney's CBD](#)
- [Cat escapes vet, walks 30km home to hungry kittens](#)

Students now start planning their newspaper report about Walter's adventure. Students use the Newspaper Story Format worksheet from [Read Write Think](#) to gather their ideas before using this plan to write a newspaper report for a local Adelaide newspaper.

Success Criteria:

- Use a catchy headline
- Includes the key information: Who, What, Where, When, Why, How
- Organise news report into paragraphs
- Includes quotes from people related to the news event (eg. Pet owner, vet, Customs Officer)
- Writes using formal language

Sunflowers

poem by Jackie Hosking | illustrated by Michel Streich

[EN2-3A | ACELY1685](#)

Design an infographic for children learning to grow sunflowers.

Read the poem as a class. Discuss the following:

- Ask students to identify facts about sunflowers that are included in the poem. Suggested answers: sunflowers grow from seeds, sunflowers grow to the sun, sunflowers grow a long stalk before flowering.
- What is the poet's opinion of sunflowers? And how can you tell? Suggested answer: The poet is in awe of sunflowers. They think they are spectacular flowers. We know this because the poet uses the simile 'they'll bloom like suns on earth.'
- What is the purpose of this poem? Suggested answer: It is a poem that describes the growth of a sunflower from seed, it is descriptive and hopes to show the beauty of a sunflower.
- If someone was wanting to grow sunflowers in their garden for the first time, what additional information would they need to know to be successful? (Suggested answers: Where they should be planted, when the seeds need to be sown, if the climate is suitable, how often to water)

Use the information from the poem and visit the following websites to find out more about growing sunflowers:

[Mr Fothergills](#)

[How to grow sunflowers](#)

Inform students that they will be using the information they have uncovered about growing sunflowers from the poem and the websites to create an infographic. The purpose of the infographic is to inform readers on the best way to grow sunflowers from seeds.

Before students begin, show them the sample infographics about [regrowing fruits and vegetables from scraps](#). There are two different styles of infographic used on this page.

Ask students to compare the infographics by making a list of similarities and differences. Then ask them to consider which style most appeals to them. Suggested answer below:

Similariteis	Differences
Minimal text	One is in a table format, the other is more artistic
Images/diagrams	One uses numbers to show the steps, the other illustrates the steps in a circular fashion

Ask students to create their own infographic for children learning to grow sunflower seeds. They may like to draw on paper or use [Canva](#).

Success criteria:

- Use simple brief sentences
- Use diagrams/illustrations
- Choose a layout that makes sense
- Use numbers or arrows or flowchart style to indicate step order
- Use accurate information about growing sunflowers
- Choose appropriate colours and font style

Humpty Dumpty's Death

story by Jessica Fallico | illustrated by [Christopher Nielsen](#)

[EN2-8B](#) | [ACELT1600](#)

Compose a 'breaking news' segment about a nursery rhyme, making use of news report language and puns.

After reading the story, explain the definition of a [pun](#) to students. Ask students to use a pencil to circle or underline the puns used throughout the story.

Some suggested answers:

Breaking news

town is shell-shocked

Goose is in a flap

Eggsperts

any fowl play

spatulation

Humpty was a cracker of a bloke

scrambled mess

sunny side up;

Ask students what the impact of these puns are on readers? What mood or feeling does it create?

Sample answer: The puns create a sense of fun and make the reader smile or laugh.

Now, explain to students that newsreaders take on a particular style of speaking and use some specific word and phrases when delivering a news report. Ask students to use a different colour to underline or circle examples of typical newsreader words and phrases.

Some suggested answers include:

We interrupt this program with breaking news

live on the scene,

Witnesses say

back to you in the studio

Ask students why newsreaders speak in this way? What mood or feeling does it create for people who watch the news every day?

Sample answer: News readers like to set a tone of authority, so that the audience trusts them.

Now view the Humpty Dumpty episode of Nursery rhyme Newstime available on [ABC iview](#). Ask students to list examples of typical news bulletin language and style of speaking, these can be discussed after viewing.

Students are to form pairs and choose a popular or well-known nursery rhyme. They are to work together to write a script for a breaking news segment of a news show in which a reported is 'live on the scene.' They can use the following scaffold to plan their work.

Name of chosen nursery rhyme	
Summary of events in the original nursery rhyme	
The most newsworthy feature of the story	
The name of the reporter	
The name of a witness to be interviewed by the reporter	
Words from the nursery rhyme that could be used to make puns	

Students are to write their script together.

Success Criteria:

- Use typical language and style of a news reporter
- Use puns
- Retell story accurately

Extension Task: Students can rehearse their script and use props and/or costumes to act out their 'breaking news' segment. One student should play the part of the reporter, the other one of the witnesses. This performance can be filmed for the class to view using a video camera on a phone or tablet, or it can be performed live for the class.

Comprehend it

Read 'Humpty Dumpty's Death' and answer the questions below.

1. What type of text is 'Humpty Dumpty's Death'?

2. Can you think of a different title for this story?

3. This story uses lots of wordplay involving eggs (or egg-related things). How many examples can you find?

5. Why do you think the town may have been called Storyville?

6. Why does the author include the saying 'Despite his hard shell, he had a heart of gold'?

7. Imagine you are reporting on this event. Rewrite the final paragraph in your own words.

Keep Your Wig On!

article by Cheryl Bullock | photos by Alamy

EN2-1A | ACELY1792

Design a wig in pairs and present the wig design to the class

Read the article as a class. After reading, students are to complete the table below. Students are to select three favourite wig examples from the article to focus on. In the final column, students are to rank each wig according to their preference.

Wig type	Who is this wig for?	Purpose (why it is/was used)	Ranking

After completing the table, students are to work in small groups of 3-4 to compare tables and vote on the best wig for that group before returning to the class to share their favourites. When deciding, groups should consider the following:

- Appearance
- Purpose

Each wig selected by the small groups will become finalists in a vote to determine the best type of wig. Before the vote, there should be time for discussion and debate in which students give reasons why their chosen wig is better than another group's chosen wig.

Conduct a whole class vote and tally up the results to decide on the best wig according to the class.

Now that the class has considered the pros and cons of a number of different wig types, students are to work in pairs to design their own wig. When planning their wig, they should consider:

- What is the purpose of the wig?
- What will it look like? (Colour, shape, size, materials)
- Who is the wig for?
- What will make the wig unique?
- What other wig types have influenced your creation?

Pairs must complete the following:

- A detailed drawing of the wig – perhaps multiple drawings from different angles (such as the front, side and back)
- A name for the type of wig
- A detailed description of the wig including the information from the planning stages of the activity

Pairs are to present their wig and the description to the class.

Don't Say Boring

story by Katie Aaron illustrated by Amy Golbach

EN2-11D | ACELT1596

Write a diary entry showing the change in attitude of a character

Prior to reading the story, tell students that the class in the story is studying 'The Animal Kingdom.' Ask students to imagine they are the teacher in the story. Ask students to complete a **Think Pair Share** activity in response to the following prompt

- What kind of activities and/or experiences would you plan for your class during the unit of work about 'The Animal Kingdom?'

Sample answers include:

- A trip to the zoo
- A visit to a farm
- Viewing David Attenborough Documentaries
- A vet to visit the school as a guest speaker
- Bring a pet to school day
- Make a poster project about an unusual animal
- Advertising campaign to save a local endangered species
- Horse riding lessons
- Visit reptile park

After various ideas have been shared with the class, ask students to rank the top 5 suggestions that they would like to do if they were students.

Sample student might rank the ideas above as follows:

1. Horse riding lessons
2. Trip to the zoo
3. Advertising campaign to save a local endangered species
4. Vet visit
5. Bring a pet to school day

Now that students have completed the pre reading activity, they are ready to read the story. Read up until 'On top of the trolley was a glass tank, with a bright orange goldfish circling slowly in the clear water.'

Ask students what their reaction would be if they were in Mrs Crisp's class? Give them a scale of 1-5, where 1 is not excited at all and 5 is extremely excited. Compare answers by conducting a tally of results.

Read on up until the end of page 29 'He stared into the tank and the fish stared back with its bulging eyes.' Use the same scale of 1-5 to rank Will's enthusiasm for the class fish.

Read on until the end of the story. Now rank Will's enthusiasm for the class fish at the end of the story, using the same scale 1-5.

Ask students to imagine they are Will. They are to write a diary entry retelling his experiences with Finn, the class goldfish. The diary entry should include:

- Will's initial opinion of Finn
- Will's enthusiasm for Elephants
- How and why Will's opinion of Finn the goldfish changed
- Whether or not Will might be more open minded about animals that appear to be less exciting of exotic than African Elephants in future

Convincing arguments

How convincing are you? Decide whether you agree or disagree with the following statement.

Goldfish make great pets Agree Disagree

Find reasons to support your opinion in the story 'Don't Say Boring' by Katie Aaron.

Reason 1	
Reason 2	
Reason 3	
Conclusion	