

Rat Boy

story by [Wendy Graham](#) | illustrated by [Sylvia Morris](#)

EN3-UARL-01 | AC9E4LY03

Learning intention:

I am learning to identify the key aspects of characters and narratives so that I can apply them to my own writing.

Success criteria:

- I can recall key points the author has used in the text to shape the story and characters
- I can use these points to create my own story
- I can write a narrative using a scenario, problem and resolution.

Essential knowledge:

To learn more about identifying the theme of a text through its characters, watch the English Textual Concepts video [Theme](#).

After reading the story, discuss what themes are explored through Mr. Spoons' role in the story (loneliness, kindness, friendship). Discuss the benefits of Mr. Spoons adopting Basil based on what readers know from the story. Answers should include:

- Basil gets to have a safe home with someone that will care for him and enjoy his company
- Mr. Spoons will have company and a pet to look after who is not big and noisy
- 'Sonny Jim' will be able to visit Basil and Mr. Spoons.

Ask students to recall what we know about Mr. Spoons from the text. Answers may include:

- He spends a lot of time waiting by his gate hoping to talk to someone
- He lives next door to 'Sonny Jim'
- He is kind and gentle

- He is elderly
- He has equipment for small projects in his back shed.

Explain to students that they are going to expand on the text further by creating a story called 'The Adventures of Basil and Mr. Spoons'. Discuss what kinds of things Basil and Mr. Spoons are likely to do together based on what is already known from the story and its themes. Explain to students that they should take this information and use their imaginations to expand on it.

This should include a scenario as well as a problem and solution. Model an example, such as:

<p>Scenario</p>	<p>Mr. Spoons is building a new letterbox to put on his front fence. He realises that he doesn't have enough wood in his back shed, so he and Basil set off for the hardware store together.</p>
<p>Problem</p>	<p>While Mr. Spoons is looking through the different types of wood, Basil jumps from his shoulder and onto a shelf, where he scurries along frightening some of the customers. He makes his way to the gardening section and accidentally knocks over some spades, causing a big ruckus.</p>
<p>Resolution</p>	<p>Luckily, 'Sonny Jim' is there to help Mr. Spoons find Basil and get him home safely.</p>

Students should then create their own story plan by creating a mind map, list of bullet points or outline of their idea, similar to the one above. Once they have a clear idea of what their story will be, they can begin writing it.

Rats!

article by Karen Jameyson | illustrated by [Fifi Colston](#), photos by Dreamstime

[EN3-RECOM-01](#) | [AC9E4LA03](#)

Learning intention:

I am learning to identify the way authors engage readers of non-fiction texts so that I can deliver written facts in more entertaining ways for the audience.

Success criteria:

- I can identify facts contained in the text
- I can identify ways the author has made their writing interesting and give examples from the text
- I can research my own choice of animal
- I can apply the author's style when writing a list of facts.

Essential knowledge:

To learn more about identifying the style an author writes in, watch the English Textual Concepts video [Style](#).

After reading the article, ask students to recall the types of information provided about rats. Answers may include:

- Where they live (underground)
- When they are active (at night)
- How fast they move (Almost 13km per hour)
- Special abilities (squeezing through small openings, escaping danger, treading water, holding their breath)
- Interesting body parts (Sensitive whiskers, ears with outstanding hearing, eyes that can see above them, tails that help them balance, teeth that don't stop growing)
- Lifespan (1-2 years)
- Birth rates (8 babies per year)

Discuss the way that the author makes these facts more interesting for the audience (you may wish to compare it to an information report if students are experienced with writing them). Ask students to share their observations and give examples from the text of techniques the author has used to communicate the information in an entertaining and lighthearted way. Answers may include:

- Opening the main article with a rhetorical question (Did you know that there are more rats on Earth than there are people?)
- Using punctuation to enhance points (e.g., Rats can hold their breath for three entire minutes!)
- Using clever sub-headings (e.g., Hide and Squeak, Oh Rats!)
- Using imaginative ways to explain the importance of rats' features (e.g., Without its tail....well....whoops! Let's just say the rat would not be on that powerline for long.)

Explain to students that they are going to do their own information-gathering of an animal of their choice and use it to write a list of animal facts in an interesting way. Model the process by doing the following:

- Choose an animal the class is likely to know a lot of facts about
- Ask students what facts they know about this animal and write their answers on the board
- Have students 'Think, Pair and Share' to come up with funny or interesting ways to explain these facts (e.g., "Just when you think baby elephants can't get any cuter, they suck their trunks for comfort in the same way human babies might suck a dummy or their fingers. Awww")

Once students understand the process, they should begin their information-gathering using library books or online sources and begin writing their list.

Dracula's To-Do List

poem by Juli Mayer | illustrated by [Christopher Nielsen](#)

[EN3-RECOM-01](#) | [AC9E4LY05](#)

Learning intention:

I am learning to use prior knowledge to analyse information contained in a poem so that I can extend my ability to interpret texts.

Success criteria:

- I can recall facts about vampires
- I can identify the way the author has used these facts creatively in the text
- I can use facts about another character to compose my own poem.

Prior to reading the poem, discuss students' prior knowledge of Dracula. Explain that they may be aware of the Count Dracula or other vampire characters from books, TV shows or movies such as *The Little Vampire*, *Sesame Street* or *Hotel Transylvania*. Watch the video [Monsterpedia - Dracula](#) for further context.

Read the poem, or if you have a digital subscription, you may wish to listen to the audio version. Discuss the reasons for the items on Dracula's to-do list based on students' knowledge of the character. Answers may include:

- He sleeps in a coffin
- He wears a black suit and shiny shoes
- He keeps his hair neat
- He needs his teeth to be strong
- His skin is pale and sensitive to sunlight
- He pursues people to suck their blood.

Brainstorm a list of other spooky fictional characters, such as:

- A mummy
- A werewolf
- Frankenstein
- A witch
- A ghost

Inform students that they should choose a spooky character and brainstorm a to-do list for them based on what students know from previous texts they have read or watched. If possible, allow students to research their characters using junior fiction library books or online sources. Students should then write a short poem using the items on their list. Model an example of planning and writing, such as:

A Witch

- Casts spells
- Wears a pointy hat and pointy shoes
- Has a black cat
- Rides a broomstick
- Has a wart on her nose

Sew the brim on pointy hat

Get some mince to feed the cat

Clean the bristles on the broom

Cast a spell to cause some doom

Sharpen the shoes' pointy toes

Roughen wart on tip of nose

For further ideas on developing the writing process in the classroom, please refer to "How to Write Spooky Stories for Kids" and "Teaching Spooky Writing in the Classroom" on The School Magazine social media channels, these writers tips can be used in the creation of success criteria.

The Thief Who Talked

story translated and adapted by Ping Cui and Robert Colvin | illustrated by [Stephen Axelsen](#)

EN3-UARL-01 | AC9E4LE01

Learning intention:

I am learning about the value of generational storytelling so that I can broaden my knowledge and understanding of shared cultural traditions.

Success criteria:

- I can explain what folk stories are
- I can recognise the similarities in storytelling across cultures
- I can apply my understanding by telling by creating and telling my own story.

Read the story in full, or if you have a digital subscription, play the audio version to enhance the effect of the oral retelling. Draw students' attention to the byline (A Chinese oral folk story translated and adapted by Ping Cui and Robert Colvin). Discuss the meaning of oral folk stories and ensure students understand that these are stories that are passed down through generations within a culture by retellings.

Explain that famous fairytales such as Sleeping Beauty and Little Red Riding Hood came from European folk stories, as did many fables, including The Tortoise and the Hare. All have had many retellings over centuries.

Watch the videos [A Maasai Flood Story](#) and [Tiddalick the Frog](#). Explain that both stories are folklore from different cultures that have been used to discuss the occurrence of floods – one explaining the beginning and the cause, the other explaining the consequence and the end.

Write the following list on the board:

- Lightning
- Thunder
- Clouds

- Wind
- Drought

Inform students that they should choose one of the weather events on the list to come up with their own folktale. Their story may be used to explain what started or ended the weather event or discuss something that happened during it. Students may wish to create a mind map or take notes for their ideas; however, they will be sharing their stories orally. Stories should be approximately 30-60 seconds long.

Once students have had time to think about their idea and develop their story, split them into small groups. Each student should have a turn telling their folk story to their group. Once all stories have been told, come back together as a whole class, and go through the list of weather events to discuss and compare the stories that were told for each one. For example, ask students who told a story about thunder to briefly explain the premise of their story to the class. Discuss the way that different students have come up with different ideas to explain the same premise, just as different cultures did with their own folk stories.

Bug Fashion

poem by [Diana Murray](#) | illustrated by [David Legge](#)

[EN3-UARL-01](#) | [AC9E4LE04](#)

Learning intention:

I am learning to incorporate facts with imagination in my writing so that I can remember to seek inspiration from the world around me.

Success criteria:

- I can locate facts in a text.
- I can identify ways the author has used facts to inspire humorous ideas
- I can use my own choice of insect fact to create an imaginative stanza.

Read the poem out loud or if you have a digital subscription you may wish to listen to the audio recording. Ask students what parts of the poem they think are funny or silly. Answers may include:

- Crickets getting ready to go to a dance
- Crickets wearing shorts or skirts
- Butterflies going out to dinner without their shoes
- Dung beetles preferring dungarees and avoiding frills
- Bees being dressed in jumpers
- Ants wearing ties
- Bugs having trouble finding clothes in their size.

Discuss which parts of the poem may tell readers real facts about the bugs mentioned. These should include:

- Crickets' ears are on their knees
- Butterflies' taste buds are on their feet
- Dung beetles push manure with their back legs while upside down.

Discuss the way the author uses her imagination to connect these facts with a funny idea about what that would mean for the way the bugs would wear their clothes.

Inform students that they are going to locate an interesting fact about an insect of their choice and find a way to turn it into a silly idea. Explain that it does not need to be related to clothes, it may be any idea that they can link to their chosen fact.

If possible, borrow some non-fiction books about insects (Dewey Decimal number 595.7) for them to look through. Otherwise, websites such as Smithsonian's [Fun Facts About Bugs](#) and National Geographic Kids' [25 Cool Things About Bugs](#) have helpful information for this activity. Explain that they should do some brainstorming once they have chosen their facts.

Once students have located their chosen fact and done their brainstorming, they should compose a stanza with the same rhyme scheme as Bug Fashion (AABB). To help them plan, model an example on the board, such as:

Fact: A single honeybee colony can produce around 100kg of honey each year – that's 220 jars! (National Geographic Kids)

Brainstorm ideas: Honey sandwiches, honey biscuits, snacks, lunch, jars of honey, markets, school fetes

Stanza:

Want to know how bee colonies make their money?

Over two hundred jars every year of honey

They sell them to beetles and flies at school fetes

Who make honey biscuits to feed to their mates.

Students may wish to share their stanza with the class.

Will Wonders Never Cease: A Slippery Slope

article by [Zoe Disher](#) | photos by Alamy

[EN3-VOCAB-01](#) | [AC9E4LA11](#)

Learning intention:

I am learning to embed descriptions of setting, mood and tension in my nonfiction writing so that I can better engage readers.

Success criteria:

- I can recognise the way the author engages and informs the readers using language to create setting, mood and tension
- I can expand my vocabulary by using comprehension strategies to understand unfamiliar words
- I can use these tools to compose my own text on an insect of my choice.

After reading the article, discuss the facts students learnt from the text. These should include:

- Antlions are the young stage of some lacewing insects
- They look like flat, spiky beetles with enormous jaws
- They spiral around in the sand to dig their pitfall traps
- They bury themselves at the bottom to wait for victims
- Antlions and their pitfall traps are fairly common
- Antlions like to build them in areas with fine, dry sand.

Reread the first section of the article and discuss the way the author has used this to create:

- Setting (It's like a scene from a science fiction movie / In the sand is a crater with steep sides)
- Mood (One false step and you're sliding down an avalanche of sand)
- Tension (At the bottom, a monster waits, its jaws open, ready to inject you with a lethal venom/ Is this the end?)

Discuss the meaning of key words, particularly those that are likely to be unfamiliar, and how they help create imagery for the reader. These may include:

- Crater
- Avalanche
- Lethal
- Venom
- Lacewing
- Spiral
- Pitfall

Watch the video [This Antlion is a Devious, Cold-Blooded Killer](#). Discuss the way the narrator also used language to create these same storytelling aspects in his introduction (A sandy wasteland. Its savage ruler lies hidden beneath the sand. Its presence was revealed only by catapulted corpses. The grisly remains of discarded victims). Throughout the discussion, familiarise students with the meaning of any unknown words and phrases used in the video, so that students can develop a deeper understanding of the way they are being used.

Inform students they will be choosing an insect to research and write a short text about. In their writing, they should use language to create imagery of their insect, its behaviour, its habitat and its prey or predators. If possible, provide students with access to thesauruses so they can strive to learn new words to use in their texts.

Students should create an introduction paragraph setting the scene and mood and creating tension where possible. This should be followed by a paragraph with further facts about their insects. If time allows, have students share their writing with a partner or the class.

The Bike Race

story by [Kathryn England](#) | illustrated by Amy Golbach

[EN3-CWT-01](#) | [AC9E4LE05](#)

Learning intention:

I am learning to relate to characters through shared experiences so that I can understand how to incorporate my own life into my creative writing.

Success criteria:

- I can identify narrative elements in the story
- I can link the characters' experience to my own life
- I can compose a narrative using myself as the protagonist.

Essential knowledge:

To learn more about identifying the theme of a story through its characters' experiences, watch the English Textual Concepts video [Theme](#).

After reading the story, ask students to identify the following:

- The goal of the main characters (to win the Sunshine Farm bike race)
- The complication (Prem's bike had a wobbly front wheel and a loose pedal, Tarah's had a wonky back wheel and a rusty chain)
- The solution (Taking parts from both bikes to build a new bike)
- The tension (Having to race against a dozen other riders and manage to get into the lead by overtaking Grant)
- The outcome (Winning the race along with two new bikes)

Discuss what the theme of the story may be (working together to overcome challenges, finding creative solutions can be more effective than the easy way out). Ask students to discuss how this might relate to their own experiences. This may involve having to find a creative solution to overcome an obstacle or coming up with strategies to succeed in a situation where they may be the underdog.

Students should write a short story about themselves rising to meet a challenge just like Prem and Tarah did. Explain that it doesn't need to be a situation that has happened to them in real life (although it may be based on one), but they should come up with an imaginative story that presents a challenge to them in being able to achieve their goal. They should come up with a solution in their story, ideally a collaborative one, that helps them reach their goal in the end.

Assessment as/of learning:

Imaginative text rubrics can be found on [The School Magazine](#) website and can be used to deconstruct imaginative texts as part of the teaching and learning cycle as well as providing Assessment as/of Learning for children's compositions. Children can use these rubrics as success criteria in the crafting of their imaginative text via anchor charts. The rubrics can also be used to provide structure for peer or teacher assessment.

Sarah Saw a Triceratops

poem by [Bill Nagelkerke](#) | illustrated by [Cheryl Orsini](#)

[EN2-UARL-01](#) | [AC9E4LA10](#)

Learning intention:

I am learning to analyse the way visual techniques are used to draw the viewer's eye to important aspects so that I can more effectively use visual elements in my storytelling.

Success criteria:

- I can link the elements of the illustration to the text
- I can identify the way framing and salience has been used by the illustrator
- I can expand on the story in the poem and create an illustration that effectively links to the story.

Essential knowledge:

Use the glossary definitions of [salience](#) and [framing](#) to ensure students understand these concepts prior to the lesson.

After reading the poem, ask students to identify the way the picture and the text work together to tell the story. Answers may include:

- Sarah looks angry in the picture, allowing readers to determine her tone in the second stanza
- The triceratops looks pleased in the picture, suggesting that it is unfazed by Sarah's frustration
- The top is separating at the buttons and looks tight on the arms, confirming that the triceratops is stretching the top
- There are multiple tops on the floor that the triceratops has clearly already tried on.

Discuss the way the illustrator has used framing and salience to depict different elements of the poem in the same picture. These may include:

- The subject of the poem is the triceratops, who is shown in the foreground of the picture

- Sarah is shown slightly further back as a secondary focus in the illustration, just as she is in the poem
- A rack of clothes is shown in the background of the illustration, showing there is reason for Sarah to stop the triceratops, as there are more clothes to try on
- The crumpled clothes are shown in the foreground drawing the viewers eye down to attract attention to the pile the triceratops has already potentially ruined.

Have students read the poem again and discuss the possibilities of what may happen next. Use guiding questions, such as:

- What kind of condition will the tops be in?
- Will the triceratops continue trying on tops despite Sarah telling it to stop?
- How will Sarah's sister react if she finds out a triceratops has been trying on her tops?
- Will Sarah cover for the triceratops?

Inform students they are to brainstorm their own idea about what will happen next. Explain that they should write a paragraph to continue the story and create an accompanying illustration. In drawing their illustration, students should consider what is included in their writing and how they can best show it using framing and salience.

For an extension challenge, students can continue the story in poem form following the same rhyme scheme in the text (ABCB)

Miss Octopus

story by [Don Long](#) and Johnny Frisbie | illustrated by Noela Young

[EN3-UARL-01](#) | [AC9E4LE03](#)

Learning intention:

I am learning to identify key points and interactions in a story so that I can consider how stories may be told by different characters' points of view.

Success criteria:

- I can locate the interactions between Māmā Rū'au and Miss Octopus
- I can consider how these interactions might be perceived from Miss Octopus' point of view
- I can write a story from Miss Octopus' point of view.

Essential knowledge:

To learn more about identifying the point of view in a story, watch the English Textual Concepts video [Point of View](#).

After reading the story, ask students to recall the interactions between Māmā Rū'au and Miss Octopus. These should include:

- Māmā Rū'au gently poked the hole with a stick
- Māmā Rū'au says "So there you are, little playful one," when Miss Octopus was at her feet
- Māmā Rū'au and Miss Octopus stared at each other, not blinking
- Māmā Rū'au knelt down and smiled at Miss Octopus
- Māmā Rū'au touched Miss Octopus' head with the tip of her forefinger
- Māmā Rū'au began tickling Miss Octopus for such a long time that she closed her eyes and Māmā Rū'au thought she was asleep until she shivered and changed colours
- Miss Octopus walked slowly backwards over the coral to deeper water when the tide began to fill the lagoon and kept stretching her head to see what Māmā Rū'au was doing.

Discuss what Miss Octopus may be thinking or feeling during these interactions. Watch the video [Wild Octopus is Always Excited to See His Human Best Friend](#) and discuss the way the octopus reacted to the human and what it seemed curious about and interested in.

Inform students that they are going to write the story about Māmā Rū'au and Miss Octopus but this time from the point of view of Miss Octopus. Explain that they do not need to write the whole story but should include the key interactions listed above and demonstrate what this experience would be like from Miss Octopus' perspective in their writing.

Books such as 'Diary of a Wombat' and 'Hello, Little One' may help students get into the mindset of writing a narrative from an animal's point of view.

Keas Go to Court

play by Darlene Thompson | illustrated by [Andrew Joyner](#)

[EN2-UARL-01](#) | [AC9E4LE03](#)

Learning intention:

I am learning to share my thoughts and opinions with my peers and listen to them so that I can respectfully discuss ideas with others.

Success criteria:

- I can form my own opinions about the events of the story
- I can share my ideas with my peers
- I can listen to the thoughts of others and consider if that influences my own feelings.

Split the class into groups of eight or adjust as necessary and assign roles to each member of the group. Groups should then read the play aloud together. Within the groups, students should discuss the following questions and points, ensuring that all members have a chance to share their answers or opinions.

- Identify the arguments the keas used in their defence (they are inquisitive by nature, they have strong beaks that should be used, they are a protected species)
 - Do you agree with their reasons?
- Do you agree with the judge's ruling? Why / why not?
- Would you deliver a different consequence if you were the judge?
- What do you think happened next?
 - Did they destroy the judge's chair?
 - If so, was there a further consequence?
 - Did they fly back to their homeland and attack the farmer's new equipment?

Groups should conclude by reflecting on their discussion and considering if the points of other group members influenced their own opinions or ideas in any way. If time allows, come back together as a whole class and discuss the answers and opinions that resulted from group discussions.