

I Have a Cat

poem by Amy C Losak | illustrated by [Christopher Nielsen](#)

[EN2-CWT-01](#) | [AC9E3LY06](#)

Learning intention

I am learning to adopt the stylistic features used by the authors of texts I have read so that I can experiment with using different styles.

Success criteria

- I can identify elements of an author's style.
- I can plan vocabulary to use in a poem.
- I can compose lines of repeated language.
- I can incorporate a variety of style features into a poem.

Essential knowledge

View the video [Style](#) from The School Magazine. Ensure students identify that style refers to the personal approach of a writer and the features they include.

Read I Have a Cat or listen to the audio file. Discuss the following questions:

- Are there any repeated words or phrases? (I have a cat)
- What rhyme scheme does the poem follow? (ABCB)
- What conclusions can we draw about the poet's style? (They like to use repeated language and to follow a set rhyming scheme)

Inform students that they will be composing a poem in the same style as that used in, I Have a Cat. Briefly summarise the main style points from I Have a Cat and note these on the board:

- Uses repeated language
- Features an ABCB rhyming pattern.

Gradually release responsibility by first composing an example with the students. Discuss things that are important to students, for example their pets, plants or favourite toys. Place students in pairs and instruct them to decide on one or two of these to discuss in more detail. Provide students with post-it-notes or individual whiteboards and instruct them to list vocabulary to describe the animal or item they have chosen. [Google Jamboard](#) is a good

digital alternative to physical post-it-notes. Provide examples, such as fluffy, white, fur, shaggy, excitable to describe a dog.

Allow time for students to discuss their ideas before sharing responses. If students have recorded their ideas on post-it-notes compile them and attach them to the board. Sort the vocabulary into groups depending on the subject matter. For example, group all the vocabulary that describes dogs together. Select a subject matter for the collaborative poem, such as dogs.

Discuss the vocabulary students have identified to describe dogs and select examples students find most descriptive. Note these on the board.

Refer back to the list of style features from I Have a Cat and draw students' attention to the first item on the list, repeated language. Collaboratively compose a line that could be repeated throughout the poem. Inform students that they can use the repeated line from I Have a Cat for inspiration, choosing a line such as 'I have a dog', or that they can create a completely new and innovative line, such as 'My dog is the absolute best because...'

Next, refer students to the second item on the list of style features, the rhyming scheme ABCB. Draw students' attention back to the list of vocabulary they compiled and identify rhyming words for as many of the words as possible. An online rhyming dictionary or a thesaurus might be useful for this. For example:

Fluffy: huffy, puffy

White: bite, fright, kite

Fur: purr

Use these ideas to compose a poem collaboratively, for example:

My dog is the cutest because,
He's cuddly and so fluffy,
I once took him running,
But he got so puffy.

My dog is the cutest because,
His fur is gleaming white,
Sometimes we wash him,
The water does give him a fright.

Place students with a partner and instruct them to compose their own poem by completing the following:

- Identify something that is important to you
- List vocabulary to describe it
- Decide on a phrase to repeat
- Identify rhyming words for the vocabulary
- Compose a poem.

Assessment for/as learning:

Match the pairs together to form groups of four. Instruct them to read each other's poems. Tell them to assess the poems, using the style features as criteria for assessment, such as:

- Uses repeated language
- Follows the rhyme scheme ABCB.

Tell students to use [two stars and a wish](#) to provide feedback to their peers, for example, I love that you have followed the style of the poem when it comes to the rhyme. Next time, perhaps experiment with using other types of repeated language.

[Effective Feedback](#) has more information on the types of feedback.

A Can of Worms

story by [Geoffrey McSkimming](#) | illustrated by [Douglas Holgate](#)

[EN2-VOCAB-01](#) | [AC9E3LA07](#)

Learning intention

I am learning to understand the way verbs add meaning to a sentence so that I can make deliberate choices with the vocabulary I use.

Success criteria

- I can reflect on how making deliberate choices with the verbs I use adds meaning to sentences.
- I can identify descriptive verbs.
- I can compose a script.
- I can include descriptive verbs.

Essential knowledge

Remind students that verbs are action words and discuss examples, such as:

- Run
- Swim
- Dance
- Talk

[Verbs](#) from the New South Wales Department of Education page has more information.

Display the following edited extract from Can of Worms:

Bob the odd-job otter who fidgets with All Things Broken heard Shasta's saying as he was rubbing the cleats on the SS Webweaver's deck above. 'Worms?' he said to himself. 'She's going to give us worms for dinner?'

Discuss the following questions:

- What type of otter is Bob? (An otter who fidgets, an otter who says unusual phrases)
- How does Bob hear Shasta? (There is no information in the text about this)
- What is Bob doing when he hears Shasta and why? (He's rubbing the cleats on the deck although it's unclear why)
- How is Shasta planning to serve the worms? (There is no information in the text about this)

Draw students' attention to questions where there isn't enough information provided in the text to answer them, for example how Bob hears Shasta, how Shasta is serving the worms and what tone of voice Bob speaks in.

Read Can of Worms or listen to the audio file. Refer students back to the same extracts that were displayed and inform students that in the actual story the verbs are more descriptive. Display the version of the extracts from Can of Worms and underline the verbs that are different from the first extract, such as:

Bob the odd-job otter and Fixer of All Things Broken and Wonky overheard Shasta's exclamation as he was polishing the cleats on the SS Webweaver's deck above. 'Worms?' he muttered to himself. 'She's going to cook us up worms for dinner?'
Bob thumped his tail against the deck.

Display the same questions as previously and discuss:

- What type of otter is Bob? (An odd-job otter and Fixer of All Things Broken and Wonky)
- How does he hear Shasta? (He overhears her)
- What is Bob doing when he hears Shasta and why? (He's polishing the cleats on the SS Webweaver's deck)
- How is Shasta planning to serve the worms? (She is planning to cook them)

Discuss the fact using more specific verbs impacts readers' understanding of texts. Ensure students note that the descriptive verbs in the second extract make the meaning of the sentences clearer. Draw students' attention to the fact that there is now enough information for them to respond to all the questions displayed.

Instruct students to work with their partner identifying further examples of descriptive verbs from the story. Note these on the board. For example:

- twitched
- dancin'
- banged
- clacking
- remembered
- scratchin'
- jigglin'
- fidgetin'

Discuss general verbs and jot a list of them on the board. Sample responses include:

- Get
- Run
- Walk
- Eat
- Write
- Dance
- Have

- Say

Select one of the verbs and create a word-web, placing the verb in the middle of a circle with arrows coming off it, that point outwards. For example, write get in the middle of the circle. Discuss more specific synonyms for this verb and note an example next to each of the arrows, for example, grab, snatch, track down, claw-back. A thesaurus on an online search might help with this.

Tell students to work with the same partner and provide them with thesauruses or with access to digital technology. Tell students to complete word webs, noting specific verbs around the general verb.

Inform students that they will be composing a brief script for their partner. Tell students that the script will need to use the most descriptive and specific verbs so that their partner knows how best to perform the actions. Instruct students to select the most appropriate verbs from their word-webs to include in their sentences. Gradually release responsibility, composing an example together first, by completing the following:

- Refer back to the story and identify the misunderstanding that occurs (Bob thinks Shasta is preparing worms for dinner when she actually says that having her brother to dinner would be like opening a can of worms).
- Refer students to the ending of the story (Shasta says if her brother had come for dinner there might have been fireworks. Bob thinks she means that they'll be eating fireworks).
- Discuss the type of conversation that might occur between the characters due to this misunderstanding, for example Bob might panic about having to eat fireworks. Tell students that they will be composing dialogue about this misunderstanding.
- Discuss ideas and compose an example. As you write, pause when using a verb and emphasise that you must select the most descriptive verb for the sentence. Underline descriptive verbs in the example. A sample response is:

Bob: Fireworks, goodness. I can't digest such a thing. I'd be sprinting around the deck after gobbling down fireworks!

Shasta: Oh, you'd be fine, events would just explode with a bang.

Bob: If I see any fireworks, I'll snatch them and launch them overboard.

For more scaffolding on structuring a script, see The Donkey's Tale, pages 25 to 29, found in this issue of Countdown.

Place students with a partner and instruct them to compose their own script about the misunderstanding. Remind them to include descriptive verbs and to use their word-webs for ideas.

Once complete, instruct students to swap scripts with a peer. Inform students that they will be performing each other's scripts and that they will be adding actions based on the descriptive verbs. Tell students it's important that they don't speak to each other at this stage as the goal is to use only the scripts to guide the students' performances.

Discuss how students might mime the actions for particular verbs, role-playing the difference between verbs such as snatch (where the performer will pretend to grab something) versus pick up (where the performer would mime gently lifting something). Allow time for students to read each other's scripts and rehearse their performances.

Assessment for/as learning:

Instruct students to perform the scripts to the person who composed them. Tell students that they should consider whether the person acting out their script is performing it in the way they intended.

Instruct students to answer the following questions in their workbooks:

My classmate performed my script in a similar way to the way I planned when_____

The most notable differences were_____

I think I could improve on_____ when selecting the most suitable verb.

Finally, students should answer the following [exit ticket](#) question in their workbooks:

- Selecting the most descriptive verb is important because___ (It allows writers to provide the most vivid and accurate descriptions)

Dandelion Hill

poem by Lisa Varchol Perron | illustrated by Shelley Knol-Miller

[EN2-RECOM-01](#) | [AC9E3LA03](#)

Learning intention

I am learning to experiment with making deliberate language choices so that I can compose texts in a particular style.

Success criteria

- I can identify how language impacts the mood of a text.
- I can identify imagery.
- I can compose a poem that utilises language features to convey a mood.

View the video [Style](#) from The School Magazine. Ensure students identify that style refers to the personal approach of a writer and the language features they include.

Ensure students are familiar with the term imagery by viewing The School Magazine video, [Connotation, Imagery and Symbol](#). Ensure students note that imagery means using language to create an image in their readers minds. Tell students that metaphors are one example of imagery.

Display the following poem:

Dandelions dying,
The field is dry,
Hot sun beating down,
High in the sky.
The dandelions are parched,
If only it would rain,
The clouds dry as a crisp,
It's such a pain.

Discuss the following questions:

- What is the topic? (Dandelions, the dry weather)
- What are examples of language that helps you to form an image of the scene in your mind? (Dying, dry, hot sun, beating)

Note: Inform students that 'dry' and 'hot sun' are examples of adjectives and noun groups/phrases and 'dying' and 'beating' are examples of verbs.

- What examples of imagery are in the poem? (Hot sun beating down, the dandelions are parched, the clouds dry as a crisp)
- What mood does the poem convey? (Somber, melancholy)

Read Dandelion Hill or listen to the audio file. Discuss the same questions from earlier.

Sample responses include:

- What is the topic? (Dandelions)
- What are examples of language that helps you to form an image of the scene in your mind? (Carpet, beneath my feet, gentle yellow, pounding heat)

Note: Inform students that 'carpet', 'beneath my feet', 'gentle yellow' are examples of adjectives and noun groups/phrases and 'pounding heat' is an example of a verb group/phrase)

- What examples of imagery are in the poem? (A dandelion carpet, a gentle yellow welcome, as I race the setting sun)
- What mood does the poem convey? (Joyful, hopeful, uplifting)

Inform students writers make deliberate choices with vocabulary to help them convey a particular mood. Inform them that writers select specific adjectives and metaphors to assist them with this.

Tell students that they will be composing a poem, using deliberate word choices to convey a specific mood. Inform them that first you will be composing a poem collaboratively.

Take students outside to the school field. Alternately, show them pictures of fields/parks in the surrounding areas. Discuss how students feel about the location. Emphasise differences between the students' responses and inform them that their opinions are a personal choice. Sample responses might be that the students feel calm and relaxed in the location or that they feel hot and uncomfortable. Once back in class, note vocabulary students identified on the board for them to refer to later.

Collaboratively decide on a mood such as relaxed. Underline vocabulary on the board that helps convey this mood and discuss further examples, such as: floating, calm, peaceful, relaxed, daydream. Use this vocabulary to compose imagery or metaphors that might feature in the poem.

Remind students that metaphors convey a feeling by comparing two items. Sample metaphors include:

- My limbs are cooked spaghetti (Comparing limbs to cooked spaghetti to convey the meaning that they're feeling loose and relaxed)
- My hair a flapping kite (Comparing hair to a kite conveys the idea that it is flapping in the wind)

Collaboratively compose a poem to convey the chosen mood. Inform students that they can choose to make their poems rhyme or not. A sample poem is provided below:

Floating across the school field,
My limbs cooked spaghetti,
It's like I'm flying high above,
My hair a flapping kite.
I have nothing to worry about,

My shoulders drop,

My arms feel light,

I'm totally relaxed.

Read the poem with the students. Refer back to the list of vocabulary composed earlier and draw students' attention to words from the list not featured in the poem, for example: calm, peaceful, daydream. Edit the poem to include more of this vocabulary, emphasising that students should aim to make deliberate word choices, for example:

Floating across the school field,

I'm in a daydream,

My hair a flapping kite.

The world is still and calm.

I feel at peace,

My shoulders drop,

My limbs cooked spaghetti,

I'm totally relaxed.

Place students with a partner and instruct them to complete the following:

- Select a mood you wish to convey
- Identify vocabulary that conveys this mood
- Compose a metaphor using the vocabulary
- Use the vocabulary in a poem
- Edit the poem to ensure you have made deliberate word choices.

Assessment for/as learning:

Instruct students to swap poems with another pair. Tell them to use the criteria above to score the poems, providing one point for each of the criteria, with a maximum score of five. Allow time for students to provide each other with oral feedback, suggesting ways the poems might be improved.

[Effective Feedback](#) has more information on the types of feedback.

The Secret Seed Vault

article by [John Lockyer](#)

[EN2-UARL-01](#) | [AC9E3LE02](#)

Learning intention

I am learning to analyse my personal preferences for subject matter so that I can better understand my preferences for literature.

Success criteria

- I can use criteria to rate articles on how engaging they are.
- I can identify which texts I am interested in reading.
- I can reflect on my own personal preferences for literature.

Read The Secret Seed Vault or listen to the audio file.

Discuss the main idea of the article. Note: Remind students that the main idea means what the text is mostly about. (Protecting the supply of food by preserving seeds.)

Display the following questions and discuss:

- How interesting do you find the article? Rate your answer from 0 to 10, with 1 being not interesting at all to 10 being very interesting.
- How many people does this topic impact, a few, most of Australia or most of the world? Use a scale from 0 to 10, with 0 being the topic impacts no one to 10 being the topic impacts most of the world. (Students most likely will rate the impact a 9 or 10)
- How critical is the subject to the survival of humans? Use a scale from 0 to 10, with 0 being not critical at all to 10 being really critical. (Students will most likely rate the topic a 9 or 10 for being critical for human survival)
- How engaging did you find the article? Use the scale from 0 to 10, with 0 being not engaging at all and 10 being very engaging, for students to rate their response. (Students' responses may vary, depending on their personal preferences)

Sketch a number line on the board and label it from one to ten. Select some examples of responses to the discussion questions, for example a rating of eight for how interesting students found the article and a number nine for how many people the topic impacts. On the number line, label the corresponding number for the score it was allocated, for example writing above number nine, 'impact', writing above number ten, 'critical to human survival'.

Instruct students to complete their own number lines in their workbooks, visually representing their responses to the discussion questions.

Refer students to Captain Ahab's Weird Wide World: How Many Birthday Candles? found on page 18 of this issue of Countdown. At this point, tell students not to read the article, just skim the heading, the subheadings and the accompanying photo.

Instruct students to jot a second number line in their workbooks and score their responses to the following questions on the number line. Remind students not to read the article for now.

- How interested are you to read this article? Rate your response from 0 for not very interested to 10 for very interested. Use the label 'how interested to read' when noting your response on the number line.

Allow time for students to record their response.

Read Captain Ahab's Weird Wide World: How Many Birthday Candles? or listen to the audio file. Discuss the main idea of the article. (The lifespan of tortoises and the reasons they live so long.)

Display the same questions as before and instruct students to record their responses on their second number lines. These are:

- How many people does this topic impact, a few, most of Australia or most of the world? Use a scale from 0 to 10, with 0 being the topic impacts no one to 10 being the topic impacts most of the world. (Students most likely will rate the impact a 1 or 2)
- How critical is the subject to the survival of humans? Use a scale from 0 to 10, with 0 being not critical at all to 10 being really critical. (Students will most likely rate the topic a 0 or 1 for how critical it is for human survival although some may identify the potential impact on the food chain of any animal becoming extinct)
- How engaging did you find the article? Use the scale from 0 to 10, with 0 being not engaging at all and 10 being very engaging, for students to rate their response. (Students' responses may vary, depending on their personal preferences)

Discuss the two topics, emphasising that the subject matter of The Secret Seed Vault has a far wider impact on the world whereas the subject matter of Captain Ahab's Weird Wide World: How Many Birthday Candles? is more of a special interest topic.

Discuss which article students prefer and use the rating to guide responses. For example,

I awarded The Secret Seed Vault an 8 out of 10 and I found this the most interesting article. I only awarded Captain Ahab's Weird Wide World: How Many Birthday Candles a 2 for how critical the topic is for human survival, and I didn't find the article very interesting.

Or, I awarded Captain Ahab's Weird Wide World: How Many Birthday Candles a 2 for how critical the topic is for human survival, but I personally found the topic very interesting, and I gave it a 10 for being highly engaging.

Extension:

Place students in pairs. Provide them with previous copies of Countdown. Tell students to skim the articles, focusing on the heading, the subheadings, the captions and any illustrations on photos. Inform students that they do not need to read the articles thoroughly. The goal here is for them to identify the types of articles they might be interested in reading. Instruct students to discuss with their partners which of the articles they'd most like to read. Tell them to use the same criteria as earlier to rate the articles for each of the elements and to record their responses on a new number line.

As a class, discuss which of the articles students are most interested in reading.

Assessment for/as learning:

Instruct students to complete an [exit ticket](#), responding to the following question:

Which type of articles are you most interested in reading?

Provide the following sentence stems for them to organise their thoughts and instruct them to note their responses in their workbooks:

I prefer___ (name of article) because I like articles on topics that (have a huge impact on the world/are of special interest).

[Effective Feedback](#) has more information on the types of feedback.

Ruby Talks in Her Sleep

story by Nora Nickum | illustrated by Gabriel Evans

[EN2-UARL-1](#) | [AC9E3LE02](#)

Learning intention

I am learning to connect to the emotions and experiences of characters so that I can create characters readers engage with.

Success criteria

- I can identify the character arc in a story.
- I can create an arc for a character.
- I can create a story that features the character's arc.

Display a copy of Ruby Talks in Her Sleep and read up to the end of Page 15 or listen to the audio file. Discuss the following questions:

- What does Ruby want? (To sleep over at her friend Sofia's place)
- What is preventing her? (Fear of sleep talking and embarrassment)
- What does she decide to do? (To spend the next few nights practising not talking in her sleep)

Continue reading or listening to the story, up to the end of Page 16. Discuss the following:

- How does Ruby feel when she is first at Sofia's place? (She is distracted, having fun and forgetting about being nervous)
- How does she feel when bedtime approaches? (She becomes nervous)

Read or listen to the end of the story (end of Page 17) and again discuss the following questions:

- How do we know how Ruby feels when Sofia asks her if she was talking in her sleep? (She tried to cover it up by making an excuse and her face goes pink so we can infer that she feels embarrassed)
- How does Sofia react when she lands on the floor in a pile of blankets? (She makes the excuse she was doing some stretches when it is obvious that she fell out of bed)
- How does Sofia feel about falling out of bed? (Embarrassed)
- What does Sofia's embarrassment make Ruby feel? (She feels less embarrassed as she realises, she is not the only one with unusual nighttime habits. This causes her to confess to the sleep talking)

Draw a semi-circle on the board. Inform students that this is Ruby's character arc, the way her character changes over the course of the story. Note how she feels about sleep talking at the beginning of the story and why on the left side of the arc (worried about her friend Sofia finding out she sleep talks). Discuss how she feels in the middle of the story and the event that causes her to feel this way (embarrassed when she sleep talks while staying at Sofia's place). Discuss how she feels by the end of the story and why and note this on the right-hand side of the arc (she feels less alone when she discovers Sofia falls out of bed in her sleep. This makes her comfortable enough to confess to sleep talking).

Discuss times when students may have felt embarrassment. Provide an example such as failing a test. Inform students that sometimes negative emotions can inspire us to work harder. Refer back to the previous example and inform students that failing a test might make students work harder next time. Note: Students may be uncomfortable discussing personal matters. In this case, use fictitious scenarios, such as a dog embarrassed to be scared of cats. Plot examples of character arcs based on the scenarios discussed, for example, a dog who is embarrassed to be afraid of cats until it meets a dog who runs away from a mouse, and it feels comfortable enough to share its fears with the other dog.

Inform students that they will be composing a story that features a character arc when the character changes from embarrassment to being more comfortable based on finding others with similar feelings. Compose a brief story collaboratively before instructing students to work independently/with a partner. For example:

Fred heard the hiss of a cat and sprinted as fast as his legs would carry him. There was no way he was risking being scratched by one of those scary creatures. As he rounded the corner he saw the local dogs, hanging out. He slowed his pace, pretending not to be scared. He walked as slowly as he could bear while he passed the dogs, checking over his shoulder as he went in case that scary feline had followed him. Once safely behind the fence, he exhaled and hung his head. It was just so embarrassing. But every time he tried to be brave, he ended up running away in fear.

A commotion made him turn around. A giant bulldog was sprinting along the pavement, a mouse in pursuit.

"Help, help, please," the bulldog called.

Fred stepped up. "Shoo mouse, go!" The mouse ran off.

The bulldog exhaled. If a big bulldog was scared of mice, maybe it wasn't so embarrassing to be scared of cats.

"Wow, you're so brave!" the bulldog said.

This was his moment. "Actually, I'm scared of cats." It felt so good to say it out loud.

Place students with a partner. Alternatively, they can work independently for this task. Instruct students to compose stories by completing the following:

- Consider a character who is embarrassed about something
- Create a character arc that includes an event that causes them to change
- Feature the character arc in a brief story.

Assessment for/as learning:

Match pairs/students together and instruct them to swap stories. Instruct students to peer assess the work of their peers against the criteria identified earlier. Instruct students to provide oral feedback to their peers, sharing what they did well and areas for development.

[Effective Feedback](#) has more information on the types of feedback.

Captain Ahab's Weird Wide World: How Many Birthday Candles?

article by Karen Jameyson

[EN2-RECOM-01](#) | [AC9E3LY05](#)

Learning intention

I am learning to use context to identify the meaning of unknown words so that I can read increasingly complex texts.

Success criteria

- I can identify context clues.
- I can use these to identify the meanings of unknown words.
- I can compose sentences that feature unknown words.
- I can incorporate context clues into my sentences.

Read Captain Ahab's Weird Wide World: How Many Birthday Candles? or listen to the audio version. Display the following words:

- Department
- Extremely
- Seychelles
- St Helena
- Metabolism
- Scientists

Inform students that they will be using context clues to identify the meanings of unknown words. Instruct any students who already know the meanings of the words to keep them quiet for now. Identify the sentence the first word, department, appears in:

If tortoises had birthday cakes to celebrate birthdays, the fire department might need to drop in!

Discuss other words that appear in the sentence that provide insight into what the word 'department' might need, for example, fire and drop in.

Discuss students' predictions about the meaning of the word, for example that it is people who work with fire or fight fire. Inform students that they should keep reading to the end of the paragraph to search for other clues.

There would be a huge number of candles on some of those cakes.

Discuss what this sentence reveals (that the reason for calling the fire department is due to the fact the candles may cause a fire). Reflect on what this allows students to infer (that department means the organization, so in this case, the organisation of fire fighters).

Repeat this process with the next word on the list, 'extremely'.

And one special tortoise is extremely old!

Again, discuss the other words in the sentence such as 'special' and 'old'. Refer students to the next sentences in the text:

Meet Jonathan, a Seychelles giant tortoise. There might well be other tortoises even older than Jonathan. But Jonathan, who lives on the island of St Helena in the South Atlantic Ocean, is the oldest one that people know about.

Draw students' attention to words such as 'oldest' and the fact that this reveals Jonathan is very old. Discuss the fact that this allows readers to infer that 'extremely' means the same as very.

Place students in pairs and instruct them to repeat this process with the remaining words. Students should note their predictions about what each of the words mean on individual whiteboards.

Discuss responses, instructing students to share the clues in the sentence that allowed them to infer what the words might mean.

Inform students that they will be composing sentences that include context clues to enable readers to make predictions about the meanings of unknown words. Tell students that first you will complete examples together.

Refer students to the list of words in Bob's Long-necked Puzzler on page 19, including:

- Apatosaurus
- Banjo
- Bouzouki
- Cassowary
- Clam

Note: inform students to ignore words on the list that they are familiar with, such as bottle. The goal here is to select unfamiliar words.

Use a dictionary to look up the meaning of the first word, Apatosaurus (a large, long-necked dinosaur). Collaboratively compose a sentence that provides context clues about the meaning of the word, without explicitly stating it, for example:

The long-necked Apatosaurus lived during the late Jurassic period.

Place students with a partner. Instruct them to complete the following:

- Select words from the list (page 18)
- Look up their meanings in a dictionary
- Compose a sentence that features the word
- Include context clues about the word's meaning.

Once students have completed their sentences, instruct them to swap with another pair. Tell students to use the context clues to check the meanings of the words before checking them using a dictionary.

Assessment for/as learning:

Refer students to the list of instructions provided for the independent activity. Tell them that they should reflect on which of the instructions they completed and any they did not. Provide the following sentence stems and instruct students to complete a brief self-reflection in their workbooks:

I completed the instructions where I was required to_____ (Compose sentences with the selected word)

Next time I will try to_____ (Provide more subtle context clues)

Finally, instruct students to complete an exit ticket, by completing the following sentence:

Context clues are useful because_____ (They help identify the meanings of unknown words)

Next time I encounter an unfamiliar word I will_____ (Read the sentences after the one it appears in, searching for clues)

The Zorthan Episode

story by Peter Friend | illustrated by [Peter Sheehan](#)

[EN2-UARL-01](#) | [AC9E3LE01](#)

Learning intention

I am learning to investigate how point of view is influenced by past experiences so that I can consider an alternative point of view for the characters.

Success criteria

- I can identify the recent experiences of characters.

- I can identify how characters' reactions are influenced by past experiences.
- I can use past experiences to create stories with an alternative point of view.

Essential knowledge

View the video [Point of View](#) from The School Magazine. Ensure students identify that the point of view a text is told from refers to the lens through which the subject is viewed.

Read The Zorthan Episode or listen to the audio file, up to the end of page 21. Discuss the following:

- Whose point of view is the story told from? (It's told in the third person, focusing on Will and Mia)
- What have Will and Mia just been watching and playing? (Zorthans)
- What do Will and Mia find in the kitchen? (Their mum is missing and there is a broken pink teacup)
- What happened in the previous episode of The Zorthans?

(Princess Zillani had been turned into a china vase. And then, when the Princess had tried to escape by wriggling off the vase stand, she had smashed herself on the floor below).

Note: inform students that this forms part of the character's recent experience.

- What do Will and Mia think happened to mum? (She has turned into a teacup, and she has smashed herself on the floor just as Princess Zillani did)
- Why do Will and Mia think this? (They have recently watched that particular episode of The Zorthans and they were playing the game)

Keep reading to the end of the story, Page 22, or listen to the audio file. Discuss the following:

- How do the characters react when they think mum is the teacup? (They talk to the teacup, and both start crying)

Read to the end of the story and identify what had happened to mum (she had gone outside to collect the dustpan and brush and had got talking to the neighbour, Mrs Williams).

Discuss the following:

- How do the characters' past experiences shape their reactions? (They connect the broken teacup in the kitchen to the one in the episode of The Zorthans and they

believe that mum has been turned into a teacup, just as the princess was in the television episode)

- How might we use this in the stories we write? (We can use past experience to provide backstory for how the characters behave)

Inform students that they will be composing their own story about characters connecting current events to past experiences. Tell them that first you'll be completing an example collaboratively.

View the episode [Women's World Cup](#) from Behind the News. Discuss the subject matter, ensuring students identify it focuses on the soccer Women's World Cup. Discuss how Will and Mia might have reacted to finding the broken teacup if they had just watched this episode of Behind the News. For example, they might have thought mum had dashed off to play a game of soccer, breaking the cup in her haste. Collaboratively compose a brief narrative about Will and Mia's reaction to the broken cup with this as their previous experience. Use the following line from *The Zorthans* in the beginning of the story:

But when they got through the kitchen doorway and looked around, there was no sign of their mother at all.

But there *was* something on the floor.

Just beside the kitchen table, on the floor tiles, there was a smashed teacup. A pink one.

For example:

"Hmmm, that's strange," Will said.

"But where's mum?" Mia asked.

They looked from the teacup to the open back door. Mum must have left in a hurry.

"Perhaps she's dashed out to play soccer," Will suggested.

"Oh yes, she might want to find a team, now soccer is so popular," Mia agreed.

"That makes sense. Go mum," Will exclaimed.

"Yes, go mum! Soccer lasts for at least ninety minutes, so she won't be home anytime soon. Guess we'd better clean up this mess then," Mia said with a shrug.

Instruct students to compose their own stories. Tell them that they should decide whether Will and Mia are happy about mum playing soccer or not. Place students with a partner and instruct them to compose a brief story.

Assessment for/as learning:

Instruct students to respond to the following exit ticket question in their workbooks:

- Writers can use past experiences to _____ (provide backstory to explain their character's reactions)

The Donkey's Tale

play by [Sue Murray](#) based on 'Town Musicians of Bremen' by the Brothers Grimm |
illustrated by [Aśka](#)

[EN2-CWT-01](#) | [AC9E3LE05](#)

Learning intention

I am learning to re-read and edit texts for meaning so that I can ensure texts I compose make sense.

Success criteria

- I can identify elements of style in dialogue.
- I can consider how the style of dialogue contributes to characterisation.
- I can compose dialogue.
- I can write the dialogue in a style to suit the character.

Essential knowledge

View the video [Style](#) from The School Magazine. Ensure students identify that style refers to the personal approach of a writer/illustrator and the features they include.

Read The Donkey's Tale or listen to the audio file. Discuss the style of language used by the character Donkey. Ensure students note that the Donkey uses formal language. Identify examples and jot them on the board for students to refer to later, such as:

- Oh me, oh my
- There I was
- It's off to Bremen for me
- And what brings you out and about on this chilly winter's morning?

Place students with a partner and instruct them to identify further examples. Discuss the words and phrases students identify and add these to the list on the board.

- Pardon my saying so

- Shall
- Care to join me.

Discuss what this style of language reveals about Donkey's character. For example, that Donkey is quite traditional, something we often associate with being older, and that this supports the idea that Donkey is elderly. Inform students that any elements that help construct the idea of a character in a reader's mind is known as characterisation.

Refer students to the story Can of Worms, found on pages 5 to 10 of this issue of Countdown. Read the first two pages of the story, up to the end of page 6. Instruct students to discuss the following with their partner:

- What is distinctive about the style the character Bob uses when he speaks? (He uses made up words and unusual phrases)
- What are examples of some of the unusual things Bob says?

I am not sure if me old tummy will like the thought of worms.'

No, siree, all those squirmy little critters sliding down me throat and wrigglin' about in me stomach regions. Yergh.'

Ooh, my word, I'd rather eat baked spregnockits and roasted flartydirvlers out of the Webweaver's engine than have worms dancin' around in me insides!'

- What does the style of language reveal about the character? (It makes the character appear unique, a little old and eccentric and it gives the character a distinctive style)

Display a list of characters and discuss examples of the style of language they might use, for example:

- A knight (authoritative/bossy, using traditional words and phrases)
- A pop music star (slang and modern language)
- A scientist (complex vocabulary and scientific words)
- A pirate (piratical language)

Inform students that they will be composing a brief extract of dialogue between two characters where one character has a distinctive style. Tell students that first you will be completing an example collaboratively. Inform students that when composing texts writers will often go through many drafts. Tell students that the first draft is for getting ideas on the page. Then for the next draft authors will spend time editing. Inform students that they will be following this same process with their texts.

Refer back to The Donkey's Tale and identify how the characters in the story meet (they are running away, trying to find a new place to live). Tell students that the dialogue they will be composing will focus on this same idea. Collaboratively select a character, for example a knight. Discuss vocabulary the character might use and note words and phrases on the board, for example:

- Good day fair maiden.
- Where goes thee?
- You can't be too careful around these parts
- I will duel anyone who attacks you.

Collaboratively compose dialogue, using the vocabulary identified. Tell students that this dialogue can be recorded in the style of a play script, in the same way the story appears in The Donkey's Tale. A sample response is:

Knight: Well, goodness me, what are you doing here fair maiden?

Princess: I am running away. The king wanted me to marry a dreadfully dreary prince. I just had to escape.

Knight: Well, we can't have you travelling alone around here. I'll keep watch over you.

Refer back to the list of vocabulary compiled for the knight. Collaboratively edit the dialogue to include more of the vocabulary identified. For example:

Knight: Good day fair maiden. Where goes thee?

Princess: I am running away. The king wanted me to marry a dreadfully dreary prince. I just had to escape.

Knight: Well, you can't be too careful around these parts. I'll keep watch over you and I'll duel anyone who attacks you.

Instruct students to work with the same partner as before and to complete the following:

- Select a character and consider how they might talk
- Note vocabulary in your workbooks
- Use the vocabulary to compose a brief piece of dialogue, where the character meets another person while running away.

Assessment for/as learning:

Collaboratively decide on criteria students might use when peer-assessing their classmates work. For example:

- Created a story about a character running away
- Composed lines of dialogue
- Write them in a style to match the character.

Display the criteria and instruct students to swap work with a partner. Tell students to assess the work of their peers, making brief notes on one element of the criteria their peer was successful with and one element they might improve in.

[Effective Feedback](#) has more information on the types of feedback.

Polka Dots

poem by Jill Richards Proctor | illustrated by [David Legge](#)

[EN2-UARL-01](#) | [AC9E3LA09](#)

Learning intention

I am learning to analyse stylistic features of authors so that I can make deliberate choices when creating images.

Success criteria

- I can analyse illustrations by the same illustrator.
- I can identify features of an illustrator's style.
- I can create an illustration in the style of an illustrator.

Essential knowledge

View the video [Style](#) from The School Magazine. Ensure students identify that style refers to the personal approach of a writer/illustrator and the features they include.

View the illustration that accompanies the poem Polka Dots. Refer students to the first illustration from Hundreds and Hundreds of Octopi, page 14 Countdown issue 8, 2023. Inform students that the illustrations that accompany Hundreds and Hundreds of Octopi are also illustrated by David Legge. Inform students that for now they'll only be focusing on the first illustration from Hundreds and Hundreds of Octopi and the illustration that appears with Polka Dots. Discuss the following:

- What are some of the similarities between the illustrations? (Both feature animals, strong colours and expressive faces)
- What are some of the differences? (The illustration accompanying Hundreds and Hundreds of Octopi is set inside a frame while the illustration that accompanies Polka Dots spills onto the page without any clear frame)
- What can we conclude about David Legge's style? (He uses strong colours, he exaggerates characters' facial expressions, and he draws animals)

Place students with a partner and instruct them to analyse the remaining illustrations that accompany Hundreds and Hundreds of Octopi to see if there are any further similarities and differences between these illustrations and the image from Polka Dots. For example, that David Legge often uses softer colours for the backgrounds (except in the background of the illustration on page 15, accompanying Hundreds and Hundreds of Octopi) and that he fills most of the frame with the characters rather than the settings.

Display the following sentence stem on the board and instruct students to record their responses in their workbooks:

Common features of David Legge's style include:

- Strong colours
- Exaggerated facial expressions
- Softer colours for the background usually
- Filling much of the frame with the characters rather than the background
- Often includes animals.

Those with a digital subscription can complete the interactive activity now.

Inform students that you will be composing a poem collaboratively for them to illustrate. Refer back to Polka Dots and identify the subject matter, a leopard, an animal with distinctive markings who loses its spots. Discuss other animals that have distinctive features, such as zebras with their stripes, monkeys with their long tails. Discuss vocabulary to describe one of these animals, such as zebras:

- Stripes
- White and black
- Long nose
- Looks like a horse.

Remind students that the text Polka Dots, focuses on the leopard losing its spots. Using the vocabulary identified, compose a brief collaborative poem about an animal losing its markings. This poem can rhyme or not. For example:

I bumped into a zebra,
And knocked off all its stripes,
They landed on my back,
Making me look a fright.

My skin is now furry,
With black and white lines,
If only I had a tail,
I'd embrace this new hairline.

Inform students that they will be creating an illustration in the style of David Legge to accompany the class poem. Discuss ideas that students might include in their illustrations, for example:

- A person with a shocked facial expression
- Black and white stripes across their back
- A thought bubble to show them dreaming of having a tail.

Refer students back to the list of criteria they noted in their workbooks and instruct them to refer to this when creating their illustrations. Provide students with coloured pencils, textas, paint or access to digital programs such as Microsoft Paint and tell them to get creative. Students may choose to frame their illustration or not. They may also choose whether to include the poem within the image.

Assessment for/as learning:

Instruct students to swap illustrations with each other. Tell students that they will be using the style features that they noted in their workbooks as criteria for assessing the illustrations their peers have created. Display the criteria:

Common features of David Legge's style include:

- Strong colours
- Expressive faces

- Softer colours for the background usually
- Filling much of the frame with the characters rather than the background
- Often includes animals.

[Effective Feedback](#) has more information on the types of feedback.

A Picnic for the Tortoise Family

story by Karen Jameyson | illustrated by [Cheryl Orsini](#)

[EN2-UARL-01](#) | [AC9E3LA01](#)

Learning intention

I am learning to compare and contrast folktales so that I can draw conclusions about the style features of this genre.

Success criteria

- I can discuss how authors and illustrators have a particular style in which they make stories exciting using various techniques unique to their writing.
- I can identify and analyse the different stylistic and organizational features authors use to engage their audience.

Essential knowledge

View the video [Style](#) from The School Magazine. Ensure students identify that style refers to the personal approach of a writer/illustrator and the features they include.

Read A Picnic for the Tortoise Family or listen to the audio file. Discuss the style of the text (folktale). Draw students' attention to elements of the text such as beginning with 'Once upon a time' and the label in the byline which states it's an English folktale retold by Karen Jameyson. Provide examples of folktales students might be familiar with, such as Jack and the Beanstalk and Little Red Riding Hood. Discuss anything students know about folktales and note elements on the board for them to refer to later. Sample responses include:

- They are very old stories that have been passed on through the generations.
- They often begin with phrases such as 'Once upon a time,' and end with phrases such as, 'They all lived happily after.'

Tell students that often folktales include a moral or lesson for how people should live. Discuss what the moral of this story might be. Draw students' attention to the ending, where Baby Tortoise reveals he had been hiding all along waiting to see if his parents stick to their promise. Discuss how this might translate into a moral lesson example, steering students to conclude that it teaches readers to keep a promise.

Refer students to The Donkey's Tale, found on pages 25 to 29 of this issue of Countdown. Read the play as a class or listen to the audio file. Discuss the moral lesson from this story, for example that anything is possible when you work as a team.

Inform students that they will be identifying stylistic elements of folktales by analysing both stories. Tell students that they will be using a Venn Diagram to organise their ideas.

Remind students of how Venn Diagrams are organised, with similarities between the two topics noted in the centre where the two circles overlap and the differences in each of the two outer sections. Students may complete the Venn Diagram in their workbooks or use a digital [graphic organiser](#).

Place students with a partner and instruct them to complete their Venn Diagrams. Sample responses include:

Similarities between the two folktales:

- Both include animals
- Both feature a moral lesson.

Elements present only in A Picnic for the Tortoise Family:

- The ending of the story feels sad, with the Baby Tortoise realising their parents haven't kept their promise.

Elements present only in The Donkey's Tale

- The characters work together to scare away robbers (anything is possible when you work as a team)
- The story features a happy ending, with all the animals' becoming friends.

Discuss responses, reflecting on any further elements' students identified about the style of folktales, such as:

- They may have happy or sad endings
- They often feature animals.

Assessment for/as learning:

Display the following [exit ticket](#) question for students to respond to in their workbooks:

- Folktales often feature a similar style, which includes elements such as: ____ (A moral lesson, a happy or a sad ending and often they feature animals as characters)