

The Red-handed Man

part one of a two part story by [Geoffrey McSkimming](#) | illustrated by Gabriel Evans

[EN3-1A](#) | [ACELT1795](#)

Design a riddle in the style of Rodney Boynton’s introduction.

Introduce the term riddle using the [Collins](#) definition: a puzzle or joke in which you ask a question that seems to be nonsense but which has a clever or amusing answer. Then provide students with some examples of riddles to solve. You may wish to choose some from the website [The 85 Best Riddles for Kids That Aren’t Too Confusing](#).

Ask students why riddles are entertaining. Answers may include that they make you think hard, you feel a sense of accomplishment if you answer them, or that the answers could be surprising.

Provide students with the opening of ‘The Red-handed man’ from: ‘Mr Erasmus, that wise and quiet soul’ to ‘Rodney remained as silent as stone.’ The focus is on the opening of the story to understand how the author hooks the reader and creates a mysterious tone.

Explain to the class that Rodney’s identity is a riddle they must solve. First they must collect the clues. Ask them to read the text closely for details of Rodney Boynton. Some answers may include:

- He seems to appear out of nowhere
- He is looking ‘very wonky’
- He seems to have suffered from a bit of wind
- He stares ‘blankly’
- Mr Erasmus pulls him back up and helps him put his coat on
- He is ‘as silent as stone’

In groups, challenge students to solve the riddle. Collect a range of answers and ask groups to explain how they arrived at that answer. If students are finding it challenging remind them of Rodney’s location in Mr Erasmus’s garden.

Once students have solved the riddle (Rodney is a scarecrow) ask them why the author, Geoffrey McSkimming starts with a riddle. Answers could include that it is an exciting and engaging start to the story, or that it creates a mysterious mood and this is a mystery story.

Finally, ask students to write their own riddle. First, ask them to choose a common object (a piece of fruit, an animal, something in the classroom).

Then ask them to use some of the following sentence stems to describe their object in an indirect way:

- I look like...
- I have...
- I sound like...
- I am...
- I feel..
- I can be found...

For example: I look like a twig. I sound like scratching at the window. I feel light and smooth. I can be found connected to a piece of paper. What am I? (A pencil.)

Students can then share their riddles with each other.

Unique character speech

The characters of Mr Erasmus and Sylphie Quicksilver are very different from one another. The author clearly shows us this by making each character speak in a unique way.

1. Write a description of each character's speech, thinking about the elements below.

length of sentences formality pronunciation
funny sayings invented or made-up words

Mr Erasmus	Sylphie Quicksilver

2. Based on what you have written in the columns above, what might each character's voice sound like? Think about aspects such as volume, pace and general pitch.

Mr Erasmus:

Sylphie:

3. What impression does each character's way of speaking give you about the character?

New Year's Eve

poem by Beverley McLoughland | illustrated by [Anna Bron](#)

EN3-3A | ACELT1611

Explore the use of personification in a written and a visual text.

Read the poem with the class without revealing Anna Bron's illustration. Then, using [Google Jamboard](#), ask students to record what they thought the poem was about. They might find it hard to detect the meaning of the poem at this stage and answers may be vague.

Explicitly teach the term personification: when you give something non-human, human qualities. You may wish to use the Literary Terms definition of [personification](#) and the accompanying examples.

Reread the poem, explaining how the poet Beverley McLoughland has used personification. She has turned the Old Year and the New Year into people, who are catching and disembarking from trains. This describes the end of one year and the beginning of another. Suggested point of analysis include:

The Old Year	Q: Why does 'Old Year' have capital letters? A: It is a proper noun because he has been made a person and it is his name.
Is at the station	
Waiting for the train.	Q: Why is he getting on a train? A: He is leaving to go somewhere, just like the year finishes on the 31 of December.
A one-way ticket	Q: Why is it only a one-way ticket? A: He won't ever return, in the same way that when a year finishes, you can never return to that year.
In his hand –	
He won't be back again.	
Where is he heading?	Q: Are there any clues where he is going? A: No, it is a total mystery. We also don't know where the past lives, except in our minds.
No one knows.	
Some place faraway,	
His luggage packed	
With memories	Q: Why is his luggage full of memories? A: This is because he represents the year that has just finished, which is full of good and bad memories for each person.
Of each and every day.	
Happy memories,	
Sad ones too –	
The whistle blows, and then,	

He climbs aboard	Q: Why is the Old Year described as a 'he'? A: This is because the poet has personified him and turned him into a human.
As the brand New Year	Q: Why does New Year also have capital letters? A: Just like the Old Year, the New Year is a person.
Steps, wondering from the train.	Q: What do you think they are wondering about? A: All the experiences that will happen in the new year.

After analysing the use of personification in the poem, ask the class to describe or draw what they think the Old Year and the New Year would look like as people:

- What would their age be?
- What kind of clothing would they be wearing?
- What would their facial expression and posture be like?
- What sorts of colours would best illustrate them?

Reveal Anna Bron's illustrations and evaluate how closely they match the students' predictions.

Finally, ask students to create their own visual personification of the seasons (spring, summer, autumn, winter). Use the four prompts listed above to help them construct their images.

Canine Careers – a Dog’s Guide to Jobs

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

[EN3-3A](#) | [ACELA1504](#)

Understand how the pattern of language interaction and the degree of formality vary across different text types.

Ask students to read the text and then answer the following questions:

1. Who is the subject of this text? (Dogs)
2. What information does it give about the subject? (Different jobs that they can do.)
3. Is this information humorous or serious? Explain your answer. (Humorous, reasons may include: it has been written for dogs to read, even though that’s impossible; it contains lots of jokes, for example talking about truffle hunters that would like to keep their fingers.)

Explain to students that when we read a text or write a text we need to remember PAF: purpose, audience and form. This article has a very unusual PAF.

- Purpose: why has the text been written? This article is to inform dogs about all their different career choices.
- Audience: who has the text been written for? This article is written for dogs to read. That is why it uses the second person pronoun ‘you’ to directly address the doggy audience.
- Form: what is the text type? This is a careers guide, with the added bonus of being chewable.

(At this point you might want to explain to the class that the article is a joke and uses an unusual PAF structure to entertain the audience.)

Next, discuss how the degree of formality in the language and structure can vary across text types. This can include: the concept behind the text (e.g. writing to a dog compared to writing for a human), the types of vocabulary used, humour and the use of first, second or third person.

Ask students to read the government Health Direct website [Assistance Dogs](#). Compare the PAF (purpose, audience and form) of this website. You may also want to discuss with students the role of government websites to provide reliable and direct information.

Provide students with two excerpts from each text and ask them to identify differences in the patterns of language interaction.

Canine Careers:

Hello Waggy Woofers! Have you ever thought about all the different jobs dogs do? We’re such a talented bunch! In fact, there are so many jobs for dogs out there, it’s

hard to know which one is best for you. It's important to consider your strengths and find a job which suits your abilities.

Assistance Dogs:

Assistance dogs are working animals that are specially trained to help people who are living with physical disabilities to move around, do everyday activities and tasks, and be more independent. They are also called service dogs.

You may want them to complete a table (example below) to categorise these differences. Some examples have been included.

Language used	Canine Careers	Assistance Dogs
Types of sentences	A range including statements, rhetorical questions and exclamations.	Statements only.
Use of slang and colloquial language	Informal, calling the audience 'woofers' and a 'bunch'.	No, only formal language used.
Use of contractions		
Technical vocabulary		
First, second or third person		

Finally, discuss why an author might use a more relaxed pattern of language interaction when writing a nonfiction article. Students should identify that it makes it more interesting because of its unusual structure and use of humour.

Picture Perfect

story by [Bill Condon](#) | illustrated by Amy Golbach

[EN3-7C](#) | [ACELT1612](#)

Compose an Agony Aunt column to help the protagonist overcome her hurdles.

Before reading the story, introduce the class to the text type of an Agony Aunt column. You may wish to draw some examples that are appropriate for your class from the website [Ask Dr M – kids](#). Explain the key features of an Agony Aunt column:

- Newspaper or magazine column which provides advice for personal problems
- The column is anonymous and the person asking for advice doesn't give their real name
- The person giving advice should provide good and sensible actions that will solve the problem
- They should be non-judgmental and positive in tone
- They directly address the reader by saying 'you' and 'your'

Read the beginning of the story as a class up until the line on page 19:

If only I could, thought Ashleigh.

At this point stop so as not to reveal the solution that Ashleigh independently comes up with. As a class, summarise Ashleigh's problem. You should include the following details: Ashleigh has unexpectedly made it to the State Athletics Finals and the newspaper want to write an article about her team's achievement. However, she is missing her front tooth and her parents cannot afford the \$5000 dental bill to replace it.

Students can either write their own letter to the Agony Aunt as Ashleigh, or you could provide them with a sample letter (example below). Remind them to come up with an anonymous pen name for Ashleigh.

Dear Agony Aunt,

My teammates and I recently made it to the relay final in the State Athletics Championships. No one was expecting it and now the paper wants to write a story about us. It seems too good to be true, however I'm dreading it. There will be a photo of the four of us with the story and this is a big problem. You see, a month ago I face-planted onto a table and knocked out my front tooth. Now I look hideous! Mum and dad don't have enough money after paying for food and rent to cough up the \$5000 to pay the dentist. The photo is next week and I have no idea what to do. Please help!!!

Sincerely, Gappy.

Students need to write their response to Ashleigh, as the Agony Aunt. Remind them that their job is to provide sensible and good advice that will give her a solution to the problem. You may wish to brainstorm a range of possible solutions with the class.

Before commencing their task, direct students to rephrase the five features of an Agony Aunt column, listed above, into success criteria (for example: the tone is non-judgmental and positive).

Students should share their Agony Aunt responses to reveal the range of possible solutions to Ashleigh's problem.

Finally, read the conclusion of the story. Discuss the course of action that Ashleigh took – to black out one tooth of each of her teammates. As a class, decide whether this was the best solution that Ashleigh could have found.

Simple and compound sentences

Simple sentences contain one clause. Some examples of simple sentences are *She hated having her photo taken* and *I'm going to have the photo framed!*

Compound sentences contain two or more main clauses joined by a conjunction. These two clauses make sense on their own. Some examples of compound sentences are *Casey sat in the front and Ashleigh sat in the back* and *Would you like to go or would you prefer to stay at home?*

1. Identify these sentences as simple or compound.

- a. My front tooth is missing. _____
- b. I wanted to smile but it was embarrassing. _____
- c. Ashleigh left school early so she could go to the dentist. _____
- d. She smiled during the photo shoot. _____
- e. Can I take a look at your medal, please? _____

2. Put an 's' next to the simple sentences and a 'c' next to the compound sentences.

We went to the circus yesterday and it was so much fun!

There were plenty of great acts.

My favourite was the trapeze artist act.

I would like to think I could swing up so high but I don't think I would ever be able to do it.

3. Use one of the conjunctions in the box in each sentence to make each pair of simple sentences into one compound sentence.

or	so	but
----	----	-----

- a. I wanted to go to home. Emily wanted to go to the park.

- b. Would you recommend this beauty salon? Is there a better one in town?

- c. Ashleigh liked to practise her running. She could go really fast.

Memories

poem by Jackie Hosking | illustrated by [Marjorie Crosby-Fairall](#)

[EN3-6B](#) | [ACELA1512](#)

Draw a detailed illustration of the poem with close attention to vocabulary choice.

Read the poem to the class without revealing Marjorie Crosby-Fairall's illustration. Then ask the following comprehension questions:

- What is the subject of the poem? (A dilapidated shack.)
- Where is the poem set? (In an empty space full of brambles.)
- What is the poem about? (The sadness the shack feels at being deserted, but also the memories that were made in the house.)
- Does the poem have a message? (While physical items might decay, memories continue on.)

Explain to students that they will be drawing an illustration to accompany the poem. It should be based on the vocabulary used by the poet Jackie Hosking. Read through the poem and identify the interesting words used to describe the setting and the subject. Examples may include: brambles, tattered, shambles, weatherboards, tumble, broken shell, disconcerted and shack.

Using Google slides (or similar presentation software) ask students to find images of these interesting words. Once students have a visual reference point for unknown vocabulary, ask questions to test how well they understand the specific term, in contrast to a more general synonym. For example:

- What is the difference between a bramble and a tree? (Brambles tend to spread out, like a hedge, and have thorns and spikes.)
- What is the difference between a shack and a house? (A house is a general term for where humans live, in contrast a shack suggests something basic and roughly built.)

Instruct students to draw a detailed illustration of the poem, based on their thorough knowledge of the vocabulary in it.

Once students have created their visual representations, compare their illustrations to Marjorie Crosby-Fairall's. Ask them to label the vocabulary used in the poem as it features in her illustration (for example, the brambles appear in the bottom left of the frame).

Their illustrations can become a class display, with Marjorie Crosby-Fairall's in the middle.

Extreme Exoplanets

article by Zoe Disher | photo by Alamy

[EN3-3A](#) | [ACELY1702](#)

Play a game of 'Fact or Fib' to enhance comprehension of the article.

Read the article with the class. Ask a round of rapid fire questions:

1. Is this fiction or nonfiction? (Nonfiction)
2. How do you know? (The article contains research and details that can be proven by science.)
3. What is the purpose of this article? (To inform the reader about exoplanets.)

Explain to students that they are going to play a game of 'Fact or Fib' based on this article and additional research. (This game was devised by Linda Hoyt and features in her book 'Revisit, Reflect, Retell.')

First, revise the terms fact and fib. A fact is a statement that can be proven or shown to be real. In contrast, a fib is a small, unimportant lie or something deliberately made up. Explain that nonfiction texts are generally full of facts, but sometimes we can misread them and remember fibs instead.

Ask the students to reread the article and create a bullet point list of all the facts they can find. (They should be able to find at least five or six facts.)

Next, direct students to look at a couple of reliable websites to find out more facts about exoplanets. They should aim to have 15 facts in total. Some suggested websites include:

- NASA: [What is an exoplanet?](#)
- Planets for Kids: [Exoplanets](#)
- NASA's interactive website: [Strange New Worlds](#)

Then, use the steps below to play the game 'Fact or Fib'. If you have a digital subscription, you can play an interactive version of '[Fact of Fib](#)'.

1. Students look at their list of facts and choose their favourite five.
2. They need to decide if they will write their selected statement as a fact or turn it into a fib.

For example:

Statement: You can visit exoplanets with a very powerful NASA space probe.

Answer: Fib! Exoplanets are hundreds or thousands of light years away, so we cannot visit them.

3. Students write their Fibs and Facts on a folded piece of paper. The statement appears on the front and the answer inside.
4. Allow students to circulate around the room quizzing each other on their knowledge of exoplanets.

Prefix?

The prefix 'exo' means outside, outer, external. It is often used to form new words.

Use a dictionary to match the words below with their meaning. Then, in the final four spaces, use your imagination to invent four new words with the prefix 'exo'. Make sure to write the meaning of these newly-invented words.

exoskeleton

exoplanet

exospore

exocarp

exotoxin

exobiology

Word	Meaning
	the outer layer of a fungal spore
	the outer layer of ripened fruit
	an external planet
	the search for life in the universe outside of Earth
	a hard outer structure
	a toxin released by bacteria

Errol O’Feral Meets His Match

play by [Bill Condon](#) and Dianne Bates | illustrated by [Christopher Nielsen](#)

EN3-1A | ACELA1501

Identify the use of colloquial language in a text and experiment with changing the text into more formal language.

Prior to reading the text, provide students with some contextual information on nineteenth century bushrangers and gentlemen. Identify the differences between these two groups using a [T-chart](#). You may want to use the following resources:

- Britannica Kids: [Bushranger](#)
- Kiddle: [Gentleman Facts for Kids](#)

Read the play as a class. After reading, answer the following questions:

- Looking at the text and illustrations, is Errol O’Feral a gentleman or a bushranger? How do you know? (Bushranger. Answers may include: he describes himself as a bushranger, there are wanted posters of him everywhere, he has a beard and a hat.)
- What does he do to pretend to be a gentleman? (He has a bath with soap, he shaves his beard and puts on a tie, he is meeting a lady.)

Explain to students that in the nineteenth century, bushrangers would use a range of different English words when compared to a gentleman. Many of these words would be Australian slang or [colloquial](#) language.

Instruct students to reread the play to identify examples of Errol using colloquial language. Some examples include:

‘I’ll do something I haven’t done since I was a nipper!’

‘Good on ya!’

‘By jingo you’re a grouse-looking sheila!’

Students highlight the specific examples of colloquial language (nipper, on ya, jingo, grouse, sheila) and attempt to work out their meaning in context. Provide students with the answers to these terms if they are unable to work out their meaning. Please note that many online Australian slang dictionaries contain content inappropriate for classroom use.

Ask students to rewrite some of Errol’s lines as a gentleman, using formal rather than colloquial language. For example:

‘I’ll behave in a way I haven’t done since I was a small boy.’

'Extremely well done fine.'

'By the heavens, you are an extremely attractive young lady.'

Extension: students could practice delivering the lines in an exaggerated Australian accent as the bushranger, or attempting a British accent as the gentleman. You could use the YouTube clips: [Australia Zoo Tour with Steve Irwin](#) and [Upper-class Accent Examples](#) to allow students to hear the differences in the accent types.

Brain Break

poem by Robert Schechter | illustrated by [Greg Holfeld](#)

[EN3-8D](#) | [ACELY1699](#)

Complete a mindfulness activity to enhance students' understanding of the meaning of the poem.

Read the poem with the class. Have a preliminary discussion about its meaning. Draw students' attention to the poem's title and first stanza and ask what the poem is about. Students should identify that the poem is about someone who has taken a day off thinking. Extend student answers by asking if they can locate a quotation as evidence ('quiet now inside my head', 'without a thought or care').

Then ask the following comprehension questions about the poem:

- Can you find all the synonyms for the word thinking? (Brewing, thought, inklings, notions, solve, turn-a-phrase, mutter, wonder, ponder)
- What does the speaker's brain usually do? (Think very hard about different things. Students may mention specific quotations such as 'solve a riddle', 'ponder how a bird can fly'.)
- What is the speaker's brain doing today? (It is on a break. No ideas are spinning around and their internal voice is not speaking.)

Ensure before proceeding to the next step that students have a thorough understanding of the poem's meaning: the speaker's brain has taken a break from thinking. This means that their internal voice is not speaking about things and different ideas are not spinning around their head.

Explain to students that they will now complete a mindfulness activity. The purpose of this activity is to slow down their brain and get them to think about what is happening in their body and the world around them. (For a range of two minute mindfulness activities, see the Cool Australia resource [The Nature of Mindfulness](#).)

After completing the activity, place students in pairs. They should have a structured conversation, based on the following points:

1. What did you notice when you were doing the activity?
2. Did your mind wander during the activity and did you think about other things?
3. What sorts of emotions did you feel?
4. What did you see, touch, hear and smell?

5. In the poem, the speaker does not have an internal voice, just silence. Did you experience this? Or was your experience different?
6. Also, in the poem, the speaker stops any ideas spinning around. Did this happen to you to? Or was your experience different?

After students have completed this structured conversation, conduct a whole class discussion about whether the students were able to experience a brain break too.

The New Kid

story by [Alys Jackson](#) | illustrated by [Sylvia Morris](#)

[EN2-2A](#) | [ACELT1798](#)

Compose an origin story for another fictional character, in the style of ‘The New Kid’

Read the story as a class until the place where The School Magazine character is on the page. Explain that before reading the ending, the class will make some predictions about the story’s resolution.

Ask the students to collect information about the new kid from the text and illustrations. This information should be categorised and placed into the following table (below, with some sample answers):

Ordinary details about the new kid	Unusual details about the new kid
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has glasses and brown hair • Appears to be taller than average • Has just started at a new school • Lives in an area with frequent storms and tornadoes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is called a freak by his peers • May have broken a girl’s arm • Smashed the toilet windows with his fist

After students have completed their table, ask if he reminds them of anyone in literature and film? Collect predictions.

Read the story’s conclusion and check the new kid’s revealed identity (Clark Kent/Superman) against the predictions made by the class.

Explain to the class that they have just read an ‘origin story’ – a backstory revealing how a character became a protagonist or antagonist. Discuss other examples of origin stories that they might already know, for example Voldemort in Harry Potter or Darth Vader in the Star Wars series.

Instruct students that they will now write an original origin story for one of their favourite fictional characters. You may wish to hold a class brainstorm a list of suitable characters to write an origin story about (a range of superheroes, Katniss Everdeen, Percy Jackson).

Then provide students the following steps to scaffold the writing of their origin story:

Step One: complete a character biography worksheet.

Step Two: highlight the details in your character biography that will feature in the story.

Step Three: decide on the age of the character when your story occurs, your story’s setting and a brief summary of the events.

Step Four: what will the character learn in your story and how will this event impact their behaviour and traits in later life (when the book or film they feature in is set).

Students write their origin stories. They should also be given the opportunity to illustrate their chosen character to depict how they would look at a younger age. Student work can be collated into a class anthology.

Character Biography Template

Create your characteristics and then write a story using this character

Name/Nickname

Protagonist

Antagonist

Other:

Age, birthplace

Height, build

Eyes, hair

Heritage, religion

Medical conditions

Occupations, Hobbies, Traits, Habits

Occupation and job description

Hobbies, interests

Positive traits and habits

Negative traits and habits

Relationships

Family

Significant friendships

Enemies

Significant Events, Conflicts, Issues

Events

Conflicts, issues

A new point of view

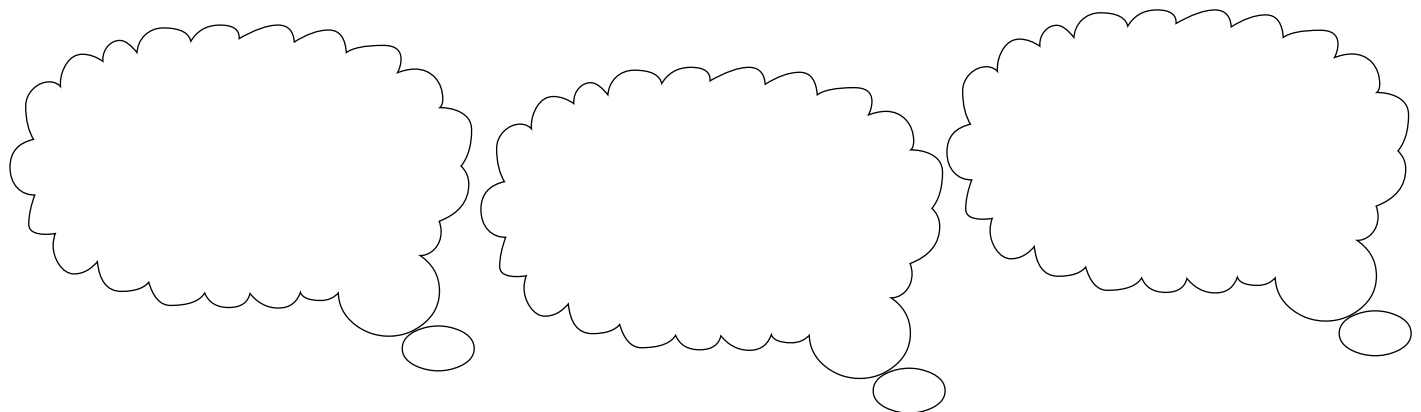
Plan to rewrite part of 'The New Kid' from the point of view of Clark Kent. The part of the story you will be rewriting is the scene where the piece of iron was heading right for them. Use the questions below to help you think carefully about Clark's character.

1. What sort of person is Clark Kent? Write five key words that describe his personality. Give evidence for your choices. For example, Key words: Strong. Evidence: Punches piece of iron.

Key word	Evidence

2. What might Clark notice about the scene in the carpark? What would worry or alarm him?

3. Write three thoughts that might go through your character's head as they witness the scene.



4. Use your answers to help you draft your scene.