Mervin the Vermin

story by Geoffrey McSkimming | illustrated by Greg Holfeld

EN3-UARL-01 | AC9E6LA03

Learning intention:

I am learning how authors use punctuation to achieve a particular aesthetic so that I can read dialogue with expression.

Success criteria:

- I can describe how dialogue is read based on the author's punctuation choices.

- I can interpret situations based on those punctuation choices.

- I can read dialogue aloud using complex punctuation to inform the expression in my voice.

Essential knowledge:

- More information about style can be found in the English Textual Concepts video Style.

Prior to reading Mervin the Vermin (part 2), display the following piece of dialogue on the board:

> 'I've never seen anything like it. It looked a bit like a human, but it was
>
> entirely white. White like snow. It was so bright it hurt my eyes to look at it.'

Read aloud, or have a capable student read aloud, the text as it is written. Note that there are no indications in the text as to how the dialogue should be read.

Now display the following on the board:

> 'I've never seen any ... *thing* ... like it. It looked a bit like a human, but it ... it ... it was

entirely *white*! White like *snow*! It was so bright it hurt my eyes to look at it!'

(Note: The words thing, white and snow are italicised.)

Ask students how this text differs from the first example. Have them identify the complex punctuation in the dialogue (not the full stops, commas or capital letters). Students should note the ellipses and the italics. Pose the following questions:

- How do you read a sentence when you see ellipses? (Pause between words)
- How do you read words that are italicised? (Emphasise them)
- What does it tell you when you see the word "it" repeated three times, with ellipses in between? (The character is stammering)
- How do we read these sentences with exclamation marks? (With emphasis)
- Looking at the dialogue as a whole, what do you think the character is feeling? (Scared or awed)

Select some students to read the dialogue aloud using the complex punctuation.

Display the following pieces of dialogue on the board:

1.   'I c-c-came straight here. I couldn't get in there to get him out!'

2.   'Thank you, Officer, I will. I'm sorry to have bothered you … of course it is. Thanks for your understanding. Bye.'

3.   'I was standing back, watching them to make sure they didn't run away—the girls, not Frank—and then I remember I kind of got bored.'

4.   'I … I leant against the door so I could see through the glass, and next thing—the door swung open, BANG, and I fell inside. It all happened so fast. Melicent, Milicent and Molicent ran after me, into that place, and then—there must've been a gust of wind or something, I don't know—the door slammed shut again, with all of us inside!'

In pairs, students are to identify the complex punctuation used within each piece of dialogue, describe how the dialogue would be read aloud and explain what the character is doing or how they're feeling based on the punctuation choices. Ask whether the exclamation marks are used for happiness, anger, surprise or stress in each instance.

Answers:

'I c-c-came straight here. I couldn't get in there to get him out!'	Dashes between letters tells us the character is stuttering. The exclamation mark is to show stress.	The character is probably stressed or scared.
'Thank you, Officer, I will. I'm sorry to have bothered you … of course it is. Thanks for your understanding. Bye.'	Ellipses is to show a pause while someone else is speaking.	The character is maybe embarrassed or relieved because the dialogue suggests a problem is solved. The ellipses show the character is talking on the phone, as the pause is for the officer speaking on the other end of the line.
'I was standing back, watching them to make sure they didn't run away—the girls, not Frank—and then I remember I kind of got bored.'	The em-dashes indicate an aside. This means the character stops in their story to give a short explanation midway through a sentence. The reader has to pause for each em-dash.	The character is recounting.
'I … I leant against the door so I could see through the glass, and next thing—the door swung open, BANG, and I fell inside. It all happened so fast. Melicent, Milicent and Molicent ran after me, into that place, and then—there must've been a gust of wind or something, I don't know—the door slammed shut again, with all of us inside!'	Ellipses suggest character is stammering. Em-dash indicates the sentence is cut off to show the abruptness of the door swinging open. Capitalised word indicates reading loudly. Em-dash indicates an aside. This means the character stops in their story to give a short explanation midway through a sentence. The reader has to pause for each em-dash. Exclamation mark is to portray alarm in the storytelling.	The character is recounting a high-tension situation.

Select individual students to read sections of Mervin the Vermin aloud, using their knowledge of punctuation to give expression to the dialogue.

Dossier of Discovery:

Catch Me If You Can!

article by Mina | photos by Alamy

EN3-CWT-02 | AC9E6LE05

Learning intention:

I am learning to identify key information in a text so that I can use it to adapt a different type of text.

Success criteria:

- I can identify the key information in a non-fiction text.

- I can describe the language features and rhyming sequence of a poem.

- I can adapt my non-fiction information to use in a similar style of poem.

Essential knowledge:

- More information about style can be found in the English Textual Concepts video style.

As a class, read Dossier of Discovery: Catch Me If You Can! If you have a digital subscription, complete the interactive activity Fulgurite Facts.

Return to the first paragraph under the subheading Fast as lightning (finishes with the phrase "also called fulgurite"). On the board, model taking notes by finding key information in the first paragraph. Sample notes may be:

- ice particles in clouds crash together to produce an electric charge

- charge builds up and releases as lightning

- fossilised lightning is called fulgurite

- fulgurite can be centuries old.

In pairs, students are to find key information through the rest of the text and take notes. Encourage them to pay special attention to what fulgurite looks like. Sample notes may be:

- fulgurite is a rare type of glass

- caused by silica and lightning together

- looks like thin, glassy tubes

- can be smooth or lined with fine bubbles on inside

- outside coated with rough sand particles

- diameter = couple of cms

- can be metres long

- can be made by planting metal rod in sand

Once students have their key information, turn to page 20 of this issue of Touchdown and read the poem A Show of Summer. Explain that students will be writing their own poem about fulgurite in the style of A Show of Summer, using the information they've collected.

As a class, identify the rhyming scheme of the poem (ABCBDEFE). Point out that lines C and D are the same two words reversed (flittering and fluttering/fluttering and flittering). Ask students to identify other language features in the poem. For more information, visit NSW Education Department's page on Literary Devices. Some possible answers:

- Line A has alliteration

- Line A is a metaphor

- The first line B is personification

- The last two lines are a simile.

Ask students how they can describe fulgurite using similes and metaphors, as well as to think of two adjectives that can be swapped around, the same as lines C and D in A Show of Summer.

Students work individually or in pairs to create a poem about fulgurite. Encourage them to count the syllables in A Show of Summer to mimic the rhythm as best they can, and to use a rhyming dictionary if needed. A sample poem is below.

A lashing of lightning

Makes the sky boil

Crashing and smashing

Through sand and soil

Smashing and crashing

Silica to glass

Thin tubes of fulgurite

Like a rough spyglass.

Students can complete the checklist below for self-assessment before swapping with a partner for a peer review using the same checklist.

1. Have I included key information about fulgurites?

2. Have I followed the same rhyming scheme as A Show of Summer?

3. Have I included some language features, such as metaphors or alliteration?

4. Have I mostly followed the rhythm of A Show of Summer?

Incomplete

poem by Amelia Shearer | illustrated by Michel Streich

EN3-OLC-01 | AC9E6LY02

Learning intention:

I am learning to discuss, clarify and interrogate ideas about a text in a group setting so that I can develop a text with a similar style.

Success criteria:

- I can participate in and contribute to group discussions about a text.

- I can explore personal reasons for my opinions.

- I can develop and support arguments in group discussions.

Essential knowledge:

- More information about style can be found in the English Textual Concepts video Style.

As a class, read Incomplete or listen to the audio recording. Discuss the rules of group discussion etiquette such as taking turns, listening respectfully, giving reasons for disagreeing and making final decisions as a group.

Sort students into groups of three or four. Ask groups to discuss:

- what the final word of the poem is supposed to say (fade)

- what clues give them the answer (fade rhymes with made, which follows the rhyming scheme of the poem and because the text fades out, giving readers a stylistic clue).

- how effective they found this style (answers will vary – encourage discussion of personal reasons for differing opinions, such as students who enjoy creativity within text structures or students who simply liked the poem because they could relate to the subject matter)

Once groups have had time to discuss the poem, explain that each group will be creating a poem using the same style, where the reader will be able to figure out the last word through

context and stylistic choices. Brainstorm a missing word that could suit the task, such as bold, shout, whisper, disappear, big, small, elephant, mice.

Scaffold the task by creating a poem as a class first. Select the word mice from the brainstorm list and ask students what the poem could be about (such as being very quiet). Ask students for a situation where they might be quiet (such as a library). Ask students for a list of words that rhyme with mice (such as lice, thrice, twice, ice, spice, splice, rice).

Create two stanzas with the class. Explain that the first stanza is to show the reader rhyming scheme and the second stanza is to set up the missing word. Encourage students to use the same rhyming scheme as Incomplete to make it easier. An example poem is below.

We're always at the library,

Among the desks and books,

And when we make a lot of noise,

The staff all give us looks.

They don't like us shouting,

They've told us once or twice,

So, we make sure that when we're there,

We creep like little...

Explain that, as with Incomplete, this poem's text will fade away before the last word, but if students were to use a word like bold or shout as their missing text, it would be better to make the preceding words thicker and darker.

Instruct groups to write their own poem on a sheet of A3 paper, following the steps below:

1. Choose a word that will be missing (hint: make it easy to rhyme).

2. Select a situation that will make it clear to the reader what the missing word is.

3. Write two stanzas, the first to show the rhyming scheme, the second to set up the missing word (students can use a rhyming dictionary to help with their poems).

4. Decide on stylistic choices that will assist the reader with filling in the missing word (such as fading text or bolding text).

Remind students of the rules of group discussion etiquette as stated above. Also remind them that should give reasons (such as rhyming ease) for what missing word they want the group to choose and to listen to other suggestions.

When complete, students present their poem to the class. A sample peer review checklist is below.

Assessment for/as learning:

1. Does the first stanza's rhyming scheme match the second?

2. Is it clear what the missing word is supposed to be?

3. Does the missing word have the correct rhyme?

4. Is there a stylistic element to assist the reader with the missing word?

Scuttle Bug

story by Shaye Wardrop | illustrated by Queenie Chan

EN3-VOCAB-01 | AC9E6LA02

Learning intention:

I am learning to construct word clines so that I can investigate how vocabulary choices create meaning in texts.

Success criteria:

- I can identify vocabulary that contribute to the mood of a text.

- I can create a word cline using synonyms.

- I can describe why an author may have chosen specific vocabulary for a text.

Read the story as a class or listen to the audio recording. Ensure students understand the setting and situation of the story by asking the following questions (sample answers are given in brackets):

- When do you think this is set? (The future)

- Where do you think this is set? (A city somewhere)

- What is the genre of this narrative? (Post-apocalyptic)

- What clues tell you it's post-apocalyptic? (Buildings are in disrepair, children don't go to school, grow caves suggest food has to be grown underground, there is mention of a time "before", supposedly nothing is left beyond the city)

- What do you think the apocalyptic event was? (Climate change, nuclear war, zombie apocalypse)

Explain that a post-apocalyptic story usually portrays a certain bleak mood, and that the author selects specific vocabulary to convey this mood. Instruct students to study the text closely to find examples of vocabulary that contribute to the post-apocalyptic mood. Answers may include:

- crumbling

- tattered

- broken

- dusty

- rusty

- smashed-up

- soggy

Invite students to share their answers with the class. Choose a word from the students' answers and write it on the board. As a class, come up with synonyms for that word, then place the words from weakest to strongest in a word cline.

For example, write the word "crumbling" on the board. Students might suggest synonyms such as decaying, fragmenting, disintegrating, deteriorating, collapsing, and decide to order them from weakest to strongest like this:

1. decaying

2. fragmenting

3. disintegrating

4. deteriorating

5. crumbling

6. collapsing

Discuss with students why they decided to place the word "crumbling" where they did on the cline (for example, it is the second-most dangerous condition, behind collapsing). Look at the context of the word in the text and ask students why the author might have chosen this word over its synonyms (for example, a collapsing road doesn't make sense unless it's raised, so crumbling is the strongest word to portray the poor condition of the street).

In groups of three or four, students are to choose a different word from the list and repeat the task. They should:

- List synonyms

- Order the synonyms from weakest to strongest

- Describe why the author might have chosen this particular word for the text.

Once complete, have groups share their answers with the class.

Where Are The Christmas Beetles?

article by Angela Tomiolo | photos by Alamy

EN3-UARL-01 | AC9E6LA07

Learning intentions:

I am learning to explain how visual representation contributes to written factual texts so that I can create my own analytical images to accompany a text.

Success criteria:

- I can describe how an analytical image would enhance the reader's understanding of a text.
- I can select and research relevant information to create my own analytical image.
- I can construct my own analytical image to enhance the reader's understanding of a factual text.

After reading Where Are The Christmas Beetles?, display the NSW English Syllabus Outcome EN3-3A or the Australian Curriculum outcome ACELA1524 on the board:

> Uses an integrated range of skills, strategies and knowledge to read, view and
>
> Comprehend a wide range of texts in different media and technologies.

> Identify and explain how analytical images like figures, tables, diagrams, maps and graphs contribute to our understanding of verbal information in factual and persuasive texts.

Ask students to review the article and brainstorm what sort of analytical images would contribute to a reader's understanding of the text. Answers may include:

- population maps to show the difference between where Christmas beetles used to be found and where they're found today

- maps to show areas of habitat loss

- a graph or a table to show declining population numbers

- sample data from the 'citizen scientist project'

- a diagram showing the consequences for the ecosystem if Christmas beetles become extinct (soil health, waste management, pest control, and pollination)

- a labelled diagram of the Christmas beetle

- a diagram of the life cycle of the Christmas beetle

In pairs, students are to choose an analytical image type to add to the text and create it either by hand or using a computer program such as PowerPoint or Paint. Ensure students understand that an analytical image contributes data and isn't just a plain drawing. Students may need to do further research to find specific statistics and locations.

Some useful websites include:

The Australian Museum's Christmas Beetle webpage

Beetle Identification's page on Christmas Beetles

Learn About Nature's webpage on the Beetle Life Cycle

Kiddle's section on Beetle Bodies

If students can't find extra information, encourage them to be creative with their analytical images, as long as none of their data contradicts the information given in the original text. The important part is that they understand how their analytical image will enhance a reader's understanding of the article.

When complete, students can present their image to the class and explain how it enhances the text.

Assessment as/ of learning:

- My visual aid is an analytical image that contributes data to the text

- My analytical image uses relevant information to complement the text

- My analytical image is clear and easy to understand.

A Show of Summer

poem by Jackie Hosking | illustrated by Amy Golbach

EN3-UARL-01 | AC9E6LE03

Learning intentions:

I am learning to identify similarities between texts so that I can describe the characteristics of an author's style.

Success criteria:

- I can identify similarities between poems.
- I can describe the characteristics of an author's style.

Essential knowledge:

- More information about style can be found in the English Textual Concepts video Style.

Prior to reading A Show of Summer, have students view the English Textual Concepts video style. Instruct them to consider the poet's style while either reading A Show of Summer as a class or listening to the audio recording.

Give pairs of students a copy of, or similar template to, the concept map on page seven of the Google Docs slideshow (as pictured below).
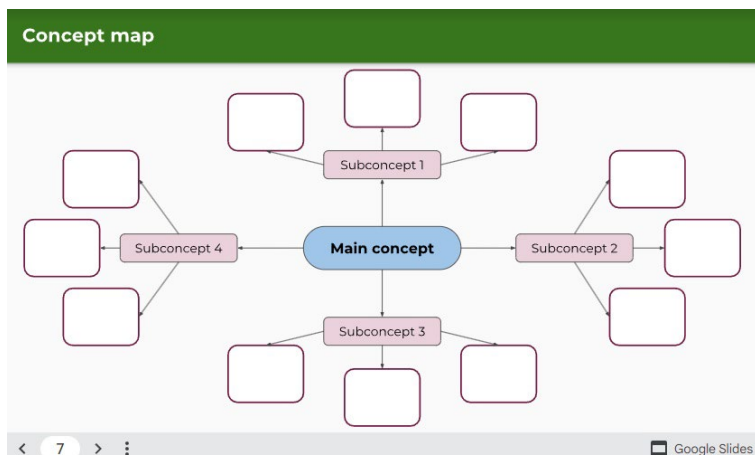
Have pairs fill out the Main Concept box as 'Jackie Hosking's Style'. Explain that students will be reading and listening to other poems by Hosking. Brainstorm what sorts of things they

could be looking for when identifying similarities between poems. These will go under the Subconcepts heading. Sample answers include subject matter, poetry techniques and vocabulary.

In pairs, students use computers or tablets to view Jackie Hosking's poetry readings on her website and listen to an explanation of her techniques on the YouTube video The World of Jackie Hosking and Poetry (techniques mentioned in this video are repetition, rhyme, similes, metaphors, alliteration and surprise endings; vocabulary choices mentioned in this video are strong words, action words, verbs and adjectives).

Poetry readings available on Hosking's website:

- A Not So Ordinary Afternoon
- A Sticky Situation
- Metamorphosis
- It Is What It Is
- A Dessert Sky
- Birdsong

Staying in their pairs, students complete their concept maps by finding similarities between Hosking's poems. Sample answers include:

Subheading: Subject Matter

Concepts – animals, butterflies/insects, nature, sweet foods, the beach

Subheading: Poetry techniques

Concepts – rhyming schemes, repetition, similes, metaphors, alliteration, puns

Subheading: Vocabulary

Concepts – strong verbs, interesting adjectives

After completing their concept maps, students share their answers with the class and fill in any blank boxes.

Beware of Dragons

poem by Sandi Leibowitz | illustrated by Jenny Tan

EN3-UARL-01 | AC9E6LY03

Learning intention:

I am learning to analyse language so that I can identify strategies authors use to influence readers.

Success criteria:

- I can identify the point of view and purpose of a text.
- I can identify vocabulary used to influence the reader.
- I can consider a text from an alternate point of view.

Essential knowledge:

- Information about point of view can be found in the English Textual Concepts video Point of View.

Before reading the text, brainstorm words and mythology associated with dragons. Sample words include fire, danger, wings, adventure; sample mythology includes that they hoard treasure, they are usually very large, and that people can turn into them (as in the CS Lewis's Narnia story Voyage of the Dawn Treader). After the brainstorming session, use an Affinity diagram to organise students' ideas of dragons. Concepts can include description, behaviour and events from specific stories.

As a class, read Beware of Dragons or listen to the audio recording. Display the text on the board or give students copies to study so they can answer the following questions (answers are in brackets):

- Who does the "our" and "we" in the text refer to? (Dragons)

- Who are the dragons writing the text for? (Other dragons)

- Looking at the last stanza, what type of special text could this poem represent? (A dragon's creed or anthem)

- What do dragons think of humans? (They are weak and impure)

In pairs, students take a closer look at the text to find evidence that supports this point of view. Instruct them to note down vocabulary and comparisons that portray what dragons think of humans. Model the first one below for the class.

"Cities cold" has a negative connotation, suggesting humans live in desolate, unnatural places. The mention of the cold is especially relevant to dragons, who are associated with heat and fire.

Other answers:

1. unwooded lands = unnatural deforestation, very negative

2. dirtied streams = suggests pollution, water is the giver of life and humans have ruined it

3. may learn to fear = dragons are the dominant apex predator and even learning about them will make humans afraid

4. sameness of their days = humans live dull, uneventful lives

5. see their nightmares coming true = humans live in fear of dragons

6. heroes who will die anew = humans have tried killing dragons before but failed, and new ones who try will also fail, suggesting dragons are the superior species

7. they know not where = humans are ignorant and don't know where to find the dragons

Bonus = mention of mountains, mist and caverns, which are natural structures in comparison to cold cities, unwooded lands and dirty streams portrays the idea that dragons are the better creatures

When finished, students compare answers to the rest of the class.

Ask students to consider how the poem might be written if it was from a human's point of view, specifically a dragon-slayer. Have students give examples of vocabulary they would use if the poem was an anthem for humans instead. Suggested lines:

- In cities shining/mighty fortresses (instead of cities cold)

- With industry and science (instead of unwooded land and dirty streams)

- Learn to hunt (instead of learn to fear)

- Practise and refine skills (instead of sameness of days)

- Bravely face the enemy (instead of nightmares coming true)

- Conquer/Slay the monster (instead of heroes dying anew)

The Royals are Crackers

play by Darcy-Lee Tindale | illustrated by Tohby Riddle

EN3-UARL-01 | AC9E6LE01

Learning intention:

I am learning to closely examine a character's perspective so that I can make connections between my personal experiences and those of characters from different social and cultural contexts.

Success criteria:

- I can identify the time and cultural context of a text.

- I can use a graphic organiser to analyse a character's perspective.

- I can use my personal experience to connect to a character in a text.

Prior to reading the text, ask students to discuss what they as Australian citizens know about royalty and their main source of information about kings and queens. Answers may include movies, fairy stories and media's portrayal of English royalty.

After reading The Royals are Crackers as a class, ask students to use clues from the text to identify the cultural and historical context. Students may notice that the celebration of Christmas suggests it's a Western culture. They may also note that the threat of beheading suggests it's set in the past, as that would be illegal now.

Explain that students will be looking more closely at the perspective of one of the characters mentioned in the text using the Step Inside graphic organiser (page two of the Jamboard copy provides a template for distributing to the class, as below – alternatively, give groups an A3 sheet of paper and have them divide it into quarters).

Students are to keep the cultural and historical context of the play in mind when filling out the four segments of the page. To scaffold, model the following answers for the court jester (let students contribute with their own answers as well). Encourage students to put themselves in the court jester's shoes and imagine what he or she is thinking, feeling and seeing for the duration of the play.

1. What might the character see/notice/observe?

The royal family celebrating Christmas, the princess crying, a collection of other employees trying to figure out the answer to the joke, Christmas crackers, the princess's throne.

2. What might the character know, understand, hold true or believe?

Believes in working hard to make the royal family laugh (he must be the best if he's employed by the royal family), knows he'll be beheaded if he doesn't figure out the answer to the joke, understands very little (or at least pretends to in order to act as a fool)

3. What might the character care deeply about?

Telling jokes, keeping his job, not being beheaded, Christmas, the royal family, impressive athletics like cartwheels.

4. What might the character wonder about or question?

What will I get for Christmas? Will the Queen order my beheading today? What sort of jokes will I tell today? Have I practised my cartwheels enough?

Assessment as learning:

Give students copies of the template or have them quarter an A3 sheet of paper to come up with their own answers for a different character from the play. When complete, allow students the opportunity to share their answers with the class. Have them fill in any details they think of while listening to other answers.

Thunja

story by Rolli | illustrated by Anna Bron

EN3-OLC-01 | AC9E6LY07

Learning intention:

I am learning to use a variety of software so that I can create a multimodal text in an author's style.

Success criteria:

- I can insert audio files or hyperlinks in software.
- I can identify the key elements of an author's style.
- I can create a multimodal text using an author's style.

Essential knowledge:

- More information about style can be found in the English Textual Concepts video style.
- Examples of software can be found on the NSW Department of Education's page Learning Tools.
- Instructions on how to insert an audio file into Microsoft PowerPoint.
- Instructions on how to insert an audio file into Google Slides.

After reading Thunja as a class or listening to the digital recording, ask the following questions:

- What point of view does the text use? (Third person)
- Who is the main character? (Oona)
- What are some strange things that happened in the narrative? (Answers will include the trees morphing, Oona seeing the music, Oona visualising her island with no houses or people, a giant octopus fought a giant golden fish.)
- Do you think what happened in the story was real? (Answers will vary according to students' interpretation of the story. This can be a chance to discuss whether what Oona experienced was real, a hallucination or a dream.)

Ask students what kinds of strange things might happen if Oona went out on a different night to meet the old man. Encourage them to brainstorm with a partner as many strange ideas as they can.

Individually, students draft a short story about Oona's strange new experience using the original author's style. Once complete, they can use a software such as Microsoft PowerPoint to create slides displaying their story. Explain that students will also be inserting at least one audio file to enhance their story. The audio file can be of them reading a portion of the story, soundbites for sounds mentioned in the narrative or atmospheric music. Students can use devices to record themselves reading aloud or record sounds such as the wind blowing in the trees or birds singing. They can also use a webpage such as Find Sounds to download soundbites. Alternatively, if they've chosen software that doesn't support audio files (such as Microsoft Word), they can insert a hyperlink for a webpage with an audio file or video. Instructions for doing this can be found on Microsoft's support page Hyperlinks in Word for the web.

Once completed, students share their multimodal stories with a partner.

Assessment as learning:

- Have I written my story in third person?
- Is Oona my main character?
- Does my story follow the same style as Thunja?
- Does my story feature strange events?
- Have I included an audio file or a hyperlink in my story?