Will Wonders Never Cease?

Tiger Beetles

Article by Zoë Disher | photos by Alamy

EN2-UARL-01 | AC9E4LE04

Create a 'mad lib' template for other students to use.

As a class, read the article on tiger beetles. Explain that you will be changing the meaning by altering a few words.

Ask students to define a 'plural noun'. If they're having trouble, remind them that a noun is a person, place or thing, and that a plural means more than one. Encourage students to share some plural nouns, for example teeth, roosters, chips, frogs, tables etc. Choose the silliest answer and say that 'tiger beetles' in the text is now going to be replaced with the new plural answer. An example text is below.

> Unicorns have long legs and big eyes. They can come in many colours, including bright metallic hues, and they often have spots. So they're not called unicorns because they look like unicorns. They get their name because they're fierce hunters, who run down and catch other insects such as ants, caterpillars and beetles.

Highlight to students that the pronouns 'they' and 'their' in the text no longer refer to tiger beetles, but the new plural noun.

Now ask students to think of a verb. Remind them that verbs are doing words. Examples are hop, sing, swim, gallop, bite. Choose a silly one that will suit the second paragraph of the text when replacing the word 'run' (and also the word 'land speed'). Show students that the verb needs to be changed to a noun form (e.g. runner) and a present continuous form (e.g. running) and ask if you need to remember any spelling

rules when doing this. Keep the plural noun from the first paragraph. An example text is below.

> In fact, unicorns are the fastest sneezers of all the insects, and the sneeze record goes to an Australian species. It was measured sneezing nine kilometres an hour over the desert sand in South Australia. That's fast enough to sneeze from your toes to your head and back down again in just over a second.

Ask students how changing the verbs and nouns has changed the meaning of the text. Unicorns here are referred to as insects, which they aren't, and the fact of sneezing from toes to head doesn't make any sense. Explain to students that words in non-fiction texts like Tiger Beetles is vital for conveying factual information.

For more practice with mad libs, visit Glow Word Books' page on Online Mad Libs for Kids. Scroll down to try a variety of topics. There are hints at the beginning of each topic for the different types of words required. The more 'mad libs' attempted, the more students will understand the process.

After they have grasped the concept, explain to students that they will be creating their own mad libs template. This is tricky, so they can work with partners if they like. It's easier to write a text out first (three to four sentences long) and then erase the words that will be replaced. Encourage students to erase words that can be replaced by multiple options. Their text can be on any topic, or one they are studying in class. A sample template is below:

TEMPLATE

> Today in class we will be (blank). This means that everyone must remember to bring their (blank). (Blank) will go first. Afterwards, we'll all eat (blank) (blank).

Once students have erased the words, they need to identify the type of word (verb, noun etc) that needs to be replaced and write a list of these types so another student can fill in the blanks. Students should have at least one verb, noun and adjective listed. For example, the sample template will have a list that looks like this:

LIST

- a verb ending in 'ing'
- a noun
- a proper noun
- an adjective
- a plural noun

It helps to mention the required verb form for a more coherent text, such as past tense, a verb ending with 'ing' or a present tense verb. Students should also be aware that the vagueness of the noun is what makes it funny – they shouldn't give hints (like 'a food' or 'a person's name') unless necessary. For example, in the last sentence of the sample template, if the adjective was blue and the plural noun was pencils, then the template would read: "Afterwards, we'll all eat blue pencils" which is more ridiculous than "Afterwards, we'll all eat delicious biscuits."

Students are to swap ONLY their list with a friend. Once their friend has filled out the list, the creator fills in the template and shows them the results. It's important that the friend does not see the template itself until the end, as this will influence their answers.

Ghosts in the *Cumulus*

Story by Geoffrey McSkimming | illustrated by Peter Sheehan

EN2-VOCAB-01 | AC9E4LA07

Identify and **experiment** with dialogue tags.

Before reading the story, ask students to write the letters A-Z down one side of a page. Cross out the X and Z. Independently, students spend a few minutes filling out alternative words for "said" beginning with the same letter. Explain that these are called dialogue tags. An example answer list is below, but there are plenty of other responses available. A useful website is Owlcation's 550 Alternative Words for "Said". See who can fill the most letters in the time given.

A – asked

B – babbled

C – called

D – demanded

E – exclaimed

F – finished

G – giggled

H – howled

I – inquired

J – jabbered

K – keened

L – lied

M – mimicked

N – noted

O – ordered

P – prodded

Q – questioned

R – raged

S – shouted

T – thundered

U – uttered

V – volunteered

W – whispered

Y – yelled

Read the story 'Ghosts in the Cumulus', asking students to note words used instead of 'said' in the story. The complete list is below.

> answered, went on, asked, sighed, nodded, hovered, warned, told her, commented, sang, blurted, replied, squeaked, muttered

Once students have identified these dialogue tags, they are to use a dictionary or online dictionary to find the meanings of any unknown words.

Students are to write a short ghost story with as many of the dialogue tags from 'Ghosts in the Cumulus' as they can. For each dialogue tag they use correctly, they get a point, with a total possible score of fourteen (they will have to be creative to fit the word 'hovered' in as a dialogue tag!). Remind students that they must start a new line every time someone new speaks, and that speech marks are used for direct speech, with ending punctuation inside the closing speech mark.

For example:

> 'Do you think Mum's ready yet?' Simon asked.
>
> 'Not yet,' Mikayla sighed. They were still waiting at the car, the camping gear packed and ready to go.
>
> 'What's taking her so long?' Simon muttered.
>
> 'Oh my gosh!' Mikayla squeaked. 'What's that?'

The School Magazine
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Sleep Tight

Article by Zoë Disher | illustrated by Michel Streich | photos by Alamy

EN2-REFLU-01 | AC9E4LY04

Make predictions about the text and **write** an extra paragraph that could be included in the article.

Before reading the text, view ABC's Text Detectives video starting at 1min 35s and finishing at 7 min 50s. Revise with students the steps taken in the video to predict the text.

1. Look at titles/headings/cover/blurb

2. Think about whether the text is informative (non-fiction) or imaginative (fiction)

3. Check the images

4. Predict 4-5 key words and scan the text to find them

5. Check key words and adjust/justify our predictions

Write or display the heading 'Sleep Tight' on the board. Ask the class to raise their hands if they think it's non-fiction, then raise their hands if they think it's fiction.

Display/hold pages 12 and 13 open for the class to view the images. Ask the class to think about whether they can see photographs or illustrations, or perhaps both. Take another survey to see whether students think this is a fiction or non-fiction text. Clarify that the text is non-fiction. Ask students the purpose of a non-fiction text (to inform the reader).

In pairs, students predict 4-5 key words they might find in the text. Examples include sleep, bed, eyes, brain, dreams.

Display the subheadings of the article:

- Wake up!
- Types of sleep
- Deep sleep
- REM sleep
- Asleep with half a brain
- Beddy-byes

Ask students if any of their key words were included in the subheadings.

Students individually fill out the first two columns of a KWL chart. Information on KWL charts can be found on the K-W-L Charts page for the website 'Facing History & Ourselves'. A link to a KWL template is also provided on the webpage.

Once students have written down what they already know and what they want to know, read the entire article as a class. Students are to note whether their predicted key words are mentioned, adjusting and justifying their predictions as they go.

After reading the article, students fill out the final column of the KWL chart, writing what they've learnt about sleep.

Ask if anyone wants to add to the "W" column of their chart, or whether any of their questions weren't answered in the text. Encourage students to think about their own sleep experiences, or how other animals might experience sleep. This is now the time for research. Students are to write another paragraph for the article to do with something that wasn't covered in the text. Suggested topics with useful websites are below:

- Sleep paralysis (The Conversation: Why are some people affected by sleep paralysis?)
- Bats (Children's Museum: Why do bats sleep upside down?)
- Sleepwalking (CBC Kids: Why do people sleepwalk?)
- Hibernation (Britannica Kids: Hibernation)
- Dreams (The Conversation: Where do dreams come from?)

Students write an informative paragraph on what they've researched. As this is an inclusion to the article, they must write their own subheading for their text.

Success criteria:

- relevant subheading
- factual information
- links to sleep (main subject of article)
- stays on one topic
- correct punctuation and grammar

Comprehension questions

Answer the following questions in full sentences, using information from the text to support your responses.

1. Approximately how long will you have spent sleeping by the time you finish primary school?

_____

2. Why is 'deep sleep' also known as slow wave sleep?

_____

_____

3. What are some of the things that happen during REM sleep?

_____

_____

_____

4. How can you tell if a dog or a cat is in deep REM sleep?

_____

_____

5. Explain the challenge that dolphins and whales face when sleeping?

_____

_____

6. Give two reasons why sleep is so important. Remember to use full sentences.

_____

_____

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A Dog in the Sun

Written and illustrated by Christopher Nielsen

EN2-VOCAB-01 | AC9E4LA11

Write a poem in the style of 'A Dog in the Sun', utilising new vocabulary.

Read the poem as a class. Direct students to the word of the month, which can be found on page 2 of this issue of Blast Off. Ask if anyone knows what 'drowsing' means. Hint that it comes from the word 'drowsy.'

Check for a definition in the dictionary or an online dictionary, such as Merriam-Webster. You can also check a thesaurus for a list of synonyms and antonyms.

Students are to rewrite the poem, incorporating the word drowsing in the second line and choosing their own animal. Depending on how many syllables the name of the animal has, the beginning of the poem should be altered to suit the rhythm.

For example, one-syllable animal names might look like this:

What a beautiful thing,

A snake drowsing in sun.

Two-syllable animal names:

What a beautiful thing,

Panda drowsing in sun.

Not all animals look like cinnamon buns while sleeping. Students can rewrite the second two lines to suit their chosen animal. For example, for a snake it might be:

Curled up in coils,

His hard work is done.

Words that rhyme with sun include: bun, won, done, fun, run, tonne, none, stun, shun.

The next lines:

Soaking up rays,

It's the world's biggest sponge!

can stay the same.

For the second stanza, students brainstorm things their animals might dream about, such as habitat, diet and behaviour. They can use a rhyming dictionary such as Poetry4Kids to assist them with the wording. They must also try to match the rhythm of the original text.

An example for the snake:

Dreams filled with tree trunks,

And bird eggs and bugs.

The next two lines

He stretches and sighs,

And lolls out his tongue.

can stay the same.

The final two lines should be a repeat of the first two lines.

The example snake poem looks like this in its final version:

What a beautiful thing,

A snake drowsing in sun.

Curled up in coils,

His hard work is done.

Soaking up rays,

It's the world's biggest sponge!

Dreams filled with tree trunks,

And bird eggs and bugs.

He stretches and sighs,

And lolls out his tongue.

What a beautiful thing,

A snake drowsing in sun.

Students check and edit their poems and draw a picture at the bottom of their animal drowsing.

Chance of a Storm

Story by Amy Dunjey | illustrated by Anna Bron

EN2-VOCAB-01 | AC9E4LA02

Create a set of statements that are facts and opinions about the text which can be played as a game of Slap the Answer.

Before reading, say these two statements to the class:

> 'I enjoy reading stories.'
>
> 'Fiction is imaginary.'

Ask what the difference is between the statements. After some discussion, students should identify the first statement is an opinion while the second statement is a fact. Ask students how they can tell facts from opinions. Answers will vary, but may include vocabulary ('I think', 'you should', 'I believe' for opinion while 'statistics show', 'it's concluded' for fact), feelings versus no feelings and being able to prove or disprove facts.

Watch the Youtube video Fact or Opinion for Kids to consolidate understanding.

Give more statements and ask students to sort them into facts or opinions. If you have a digital subscription, go to the Fact or Opinion activity

Tell students that as they read 'Chance of a Storm', they are to think of facts and opinions based on the text. For example, 'It's set on a farm' is a fact, while 'Storm is cute' is an opinion. Students can read aloud in groups, as a class or silently by themselves.

Once they have read the story, students are to write a list of five statements that are a mix of facts and opinions about the text. Some examples are:

- Georgie did the right thing by letting Storm go (opinion).
- Storm followed Georgie to school (fact).
- I think Georgie could grow up to be a vet (opinion).
- A baby cow is called a calf (fact).
- Storm was a good name for the calf (opinion).

Students get into groups of three and label themselves 1, 2 and 3. They will need two copies of paper that look like this:

1 will start off as the game host.

2 and 3 stand side by side at a desk. Each contender has a fact vs opinion sheet in front of them. (It's better that each contender get their own sheet to avoid students accidentally slapping each other.)

1 reads their first statement. 2 and 3 must slap the correct circle on their paper depending on whether the statement is a fact or an opinion. Whoever slaps the correct circle quicker wins a point. Best out of five.

Students rotate so each get a go as game host.

Further reading: *Facts vs Opinions vs Robots* by Michael Rex

Question time!

Read the story 'Chance of a Storm' and answer the following questions. Remember: you may have to look hard to find some of the answers.

1. Describe a challenge that Georgie faces.

2. List at least two of the themes of this story.

3. Why did Georgie choose the name Storm for the calf?

4. Why did Georgie feel 'a pang of guilt' when she watched Storm from the bus window?

5. Why did Georgie's 'heart sink' when Storm looked over at the rest of the cattle?

6. What lesson, if any, do you think Georgie may have learned?

Zippy and Alba

Poem by Lisa Varchol Perron | illustrated by Cheryl Orsini

EN2-UARL-01 | AC9E4LE04

Identify, analyse and **experiment** with various literary devices.

After reading the poem, discuss the following questions:

- What is personification? (attributing human characteristics to a non-human)
- What is being personified in the text?
- How does the reader feel about the oak and the hummingbird because of this personification?
- What is a simile? (comparing two things using "like" or "as")
- What is a metaphor? (comparing two things by saying one thing is the other)

Students complete the table below.

Poetic device	Examples from the text	Effect
Personification		
Rhyme		
Simile		
Metaphor		

Example answers:

Poetic device	Examples from the text	Effect
Personification	Hummingbird/oak – by morning time the two are friends	endearing the reader to the characters
Rhyme	Thrashing, flashing	Sense of urgency and danger with the sharp "ash" sound, thrashing for the trees whipping back and forth in the wind, flashing to describe the lightning
Simile	Zippy's breathing comforts like a soothing song	A feeling of safety amidst the fear
Metaphor	Alba's branch is described as an arm	The branch is like a hug, which gives a feeling of friendship between the characters

Once the table is filled out, students experiment with these devices. They are to create their own versions of personification, rhyme, simile and metaphor that could be used as an extension of the poem.

Example answers are listed below, along with prompt questions:

Personification (How does it feel to take care of friends? What is it like being comforted when you're frightened?)	Alba is glad to help, says goodbye to Zippy as she flies away
Rhyme (What other rhyming words might fit the ones already included this poem? Explain how they suit.)	Crashing – the crash of thunder Smashing – the falling of other trees
Simile (What is something that happens in the poem? How can we compare it to something else?)	Zippy sleeps as soundly as a baby
Metaphor (What might a storm be compared to? How can we turn that into a metaphor?)	The storm was a raging bull.

Personification

Read the poem 'Zippy and Alba'. It contains examples of personification (where inanimate objects are given human qualities).

Part A

Match the example of personification with the rest of the sentence by writing the correct letter in the box.

1.	The thunder	a.	crept along the garden fence.
2.	The vine	b.	across the water.
3.	The warm blanket	c.	rolled across the valley.
4.	The stone skid	d.	hugged the baby.

Part B

Identify the examples of personification and the human attributes in the following sentences:

1. The forest cried out for water.

   What is being personified? _____

   What human trait or quality has it been given? _____

2. 'That story is not going to write itself?' the teacher said.

   What is being personified? _____

   What human trait or quality has it been given? _____

3. The car jumped into first gear.

   What is being personified? _____

   What human trait or quality has it been given? _____

Part C

Complete the following sentences with your own examples of personification. The first one has been done for you.

1. The flowers *begged for water.*
2. The frying pan _____
3. The old house _____
4. The car _____

Gold!

Story by Pam Greatorex | illustrated by Douglas Holgate

EN2-UARL-01 | AC9E4LY01

Investigate similarities and differences between images from different eras.

As a warm up, ask the following questions to the class in the order provided and see how quickly students can figure out the answer.

What am I?

1. I am an action.
2. I require a pan.
3. I am done at a river or creek.
4. I was done a lot in the outback of Australia in the 1800s.
5. I am the reason for a lot of "rushes".
6. If you do me, you might be rich.
7. I am _____

Gold panning!

Read the story 'Gold!' Ask students whether they would have wanted to gold pan in the 1800s. Answers will vary depending on whether they consider the risk of being chased away by the troopers worth the chance of finding gold.

Display the text from Department of Primary Industry's Children on the Goldfields. Zoom in on the images 'Young miners at Box Ridge' and 'The zealous family.' In pairs, students are to choose one of these images and compare it with the below image from 'Gold!'

Students can write their answers in a template such as the one on page 22 of the Paired Passages Graphic Organizers. Once they have looked past the basic differences (photograph versus illustration or black and white versus colour), students should examine the clothing, actions and tools in each image. Encourage students to think about the possible viewpoints and intents behind the images.

For example, the image from 'Gold!' could be interpreted as a positive representation. The character George is smiling and looking over at Joe, as if he is learning the skill of gold panning. In comparison, the people in 'Young miners at Box Ridge' aren't smiling. They're very young children holding heavy tools, digging through piles of dirt with no adult to help. In 'The zealous family', again, a very young child is holding a cart ready to be pulled. The latter two images could be interpreted as a negative representation… in today's view.

Once students have filled out their graphic organisers, have a class discussion about how child labour in the gold fields might have been viewed in the 1800s. Read through some of the text from 'Children on the Goldfields' to find out more about life for children in that era. Students can add to their graphic organisers if they've interpreted something from the text that could be connected to their chosen image.

Plan a time travel story

In the story 'Gold!', George travelled back in time to the goldfields. *When* would you go to if a book could shift you to any point in time? Use this sheet to help plan your adventure and then write a story about it.

1. The book moves you in time but not space. Will you be leaving from school or from home?

_____

2. Explain what time you would like to travel to.

_____

_____

3. What things do you already know about that time period?

_____

_____

_____

4. Discover some more details about different areas of life in your chosen time period. Remember: details make your story more believable!

Clothes	
Jobs	
What the area I am in looked like at that time	
Technology	
Other interesting details	

The Talking Frog

Poem by Robert J Schechter | Illustrated by Tohby Riddle

EN2-OLC-01 | AC9E4LY02

Perform a retelling of a fairy tale, examining it from a modern viewpoint.

Read the poem aloud to the class. After reading, ask students if they know what fairy tale this poem is referring to. Briefly summarise the story of The Frog Prince:

- The princess's favourite ball fell down a well
- A talking frog said he'd fetch it for her if she agreed to kiss him
- She got her ball back but didn't keep her promise
- The frog pleaded his case to the king
- The king said his daughter had made a promise and must fulfil it
- The princess kissed the frog and he turned into a prince

Explain to students that fairy tales are stories from long ago and today's views often challenge the values and events in these stories. 'The Talking Frog' takes a traditional tale and explores the idea that these days a talking frog might lead to more fame and fortune than a prince (tell them to imagine how many views it would get on Tik Tok!). Give some other examples of how traditional fairy tales wouldn't work in modern times. Would a passing prince really see a dead girl in the forest and kiss her (Snow White)? Would a glass shoe really only fit one girl in an entire kingdom (Cinderella)? Would a little girl really think a wolf was her grandmother (Little Red Riding Hood)?

Students are to select a fairy tale and find something that doesn't work well when viewing it from a modern lens. Encourage them to think logically – yes, witches and dragons don't exist, but their scrutiny should focus more on the plot than the characters. They can look for fairy tales through library books or online at websites like World of Tales or Story Nory.

When students have chosen a fairy tale, they are to reframe it in a similar way to 'The Talking Frog', where one of the characters points out how something doesn't make sense. Students can write a short story or a poem, or write a play and include a few classmates. After some rehearsal, students are to read or perform to the class.

Success criteria:

- Reimagines a fairy tale to include a logical twist
- Speaks clearly, with correct pacing and volume
- Writes and presents creative work with the target audience in mind

The Big White Pussycat

Play by Diana Petersen | illustrated by Sheree Fiala

EN2-CWT-01 | AC9E4LE05

Write a poem based on a cultural celebration.

Read the play as a class. Once finished, return to the song the trolls sing as they destroy the Christmas icons in the house. Ask students what the trolls are attacking (toys, Christmas cake, jelly, honey). The toys and Christmas cake are iconic parts of Christmas.

Ask students to imagine the trolls had come in on a different celebration. What other celebrations do they know? Answers may include Easter, Hanukkah, Diwali and Eid al-fitr. Weddings and birthdays are also accepted answers.

Students choose a celebration and imagine the trolls have come in to ruin it. What iconic parts of the celebration could be included? Give students time to brainstorm. For example, a Western wedding might include a cake, a dress and veil, fancy plates and the song 'Here Comes the Bride'.

When students have enough information for their celebration, they can incorporate it into their own poem, basing it on the one from 'The Big White Pussycat'. Using the wedding example, the trolls might jump on the cake, tear the bride's veil, smash the plates and sing their own version of 'Here Comes the Bride'.

For example,

Tear up the veil,

Smash all the plates,

Throw up on the groom's suit,

Jump on the cake.

Go through all the presents,

Mess up the pile,

Here comes the bride now,

Screaming up the aisle.

Students are allowed to use one or two lines from the original poem to include in their own. They can also use an online rhyming dictionary like Poetry4Kids to help with word choice.