The Siren's Mirror

story by Geoffrey McSkimming | illustrated by Gabriel Evans

AC9E5LA07 EN3-UARL-01

Learning Intention:

I am learning to interpret sequential images in texts so that I can make informed predictions about plot, character and narrative.

Success Criteria:

- I can use my knowledge of narrative codes and conventions to make informed predictions.
- I can analyse character through dialogue and actions to make informed predictions about their next actions.
- I can explain how sequential images can contribute to the meaning of a text.

Essential knowledge:

For more information about how to identify narrative structure, view The School Magazine's videos on Narrative and Code and Convention.

For more information about understanding character, view The School Magazine's video on Character.

Oral language and communication

Before reading The Siren's Mirror (part two), refer to part one of the story in this year's Orbit issue 1. Ask students to analyse dialogue and character actions to evaluate Mr Erasmus and Sylphie's characters. For example, while the text tells us that Mr Erasmus is a serene and thoughtful chap, he also keeps a box of mysterious objects, suggesting he's interested in the supernatural. Another example is Mr Erasmus and Sylphie's opposed reactions to the book *Molluscs for Fun and Profit: The Joy of Gastropods*, which tells the reader that Mr Erasmus finds joy in all knowledge and reads for pleasure, while Sylphie, who had visited Mr Erasmus on a whim, probably can't sit still long enough to read an informative book on molluscs.

After refamiliarising themselves with part one of the text, ask students to write predictions on the trajectory of the story. Remind them that part two will be a similar length to part one. Discuss the codes and conventions of a narrative structure, such as building suspense before heading to the climax scene where everything is resolved. For example, students might predict that at first Mr Erasmus doesn't believe Sylphie, as this will increase tension and suspense. Also, knowing about Mr Erasmus's character, students might predict he would want to read up about siren's mirrors while Sylphie might fly around searching for the

"ghost". Ask students if they believe there is a ghost in the garden, the siren's mirror is warping time or whether there's a logical explanation for the second Mr Erasmus.

Understanding text:

Without introducing part two of the story, display the images from part two in sequential order for students to view. Discuss the images. Students might notice the following:

Image one: The Mr Erasmus with the frangipani scones is sitting with Sylphie, who is likely explaining in more detail about the second Mr Erasmus.

Image two: Mr Erasmus may be searching the garden for the second Mr Erasmus. Students may predict from his worried expression that he has seen something, or perhaps he hasn't found anything at all.

Image three: Sylphie is looking in the mirror again and can see the second Mr Erasmus.

Image four: Mr Erasmus is looking in the mirror. The image doesn't show anything in the mirror, which may lead students to believe Mr Erasmus thinks Sylphie's making it up.

Image five: It appears Mr Erasmus is waving, though looking more closely at his awkward stance, students might suspect this isn't the Mr Erasmus they've analysed closely, but rather someone else.

Creating text:

Students make adjustments to their predictions based on the images. Read The Siren's Mirror part two as a class or listen to the audio recording if you have digital subscription. Ask students if their predictions were correct. Discuss how the images gave clues to help with their predictions.

Assessment for/as learning:

Students complete an exit ticket stating one clue from the images that helped inform their predictions.

Sylphie's Squizzes:

Scrumptious Seaweed

article by Zoë Disher | photos by Dreamstime and Alamy

AC9E5LE05 EN3-CWT-01

Note: This activity requires photocopies of the text, one per student pair, ensuring this material is used for educational purposes and not any other purpose and no more than this portion of the publication is copied, shared, or made available for purchase.

Learning Intention:

I am learning to experiment with language features and poetic techniques so that I can create a poem.

Success Criteria:

- I can describe how a text can fall into both fiction and non-fiction categories.
- I can experiment with literary devices such as figurative language.
- I can create a text drawing from elements of another text.

Essential knowledge:

More information about figurative language can be found in The School Magazine's video on Connotation, Imagery and Symbol.

More information about text types and structure can be found in The School Magazine's video on Code and Conventions and Genre.

A glossary of literary devices such as similes, metaphors, alliteration, rhyme and rhythm can be found on the NSW education department's page English A-Z.

Oral language and communication

Display a T-chart on the board with the headings "Fiction" and "Non-Fiction". Ask students to think of different text types and which category they'd fall under. For example, an article would go under non-fiction, while a narrative would go under fiction. Encourage students to look around at classroom materials, posters, novels and textbooks to come up with ideas to contribute to the chart. Some examples include:

Fiction: Narrative, plays, poems, fairytales, picture books

Non-fiction: Articles, persuasive texts, classroom posters, maths textbooks, scientific methods, recounts, diary entries, travel books, atlases, advertisements

Students may notice an overlap, such as creative non-fiction or a scientific method of something fantastical, such as a witch's brew. Discuss other ways text types might fall into both fiction and non-fiction categories.

Understanding text:

Read Scrumptious Seaweed as a class and ask the following questions:

- Is this text fiction or non-fiction? (fiction)
- What is the purpose of the text? (to persuade people of the benefits of seaweed)
- What are some examples of vocabulary or phrases used to persuade the reader?

> (Important, delicious, great news, benefits, could there be a better crop out there? Great for your health, packed full of useful vitamins, minerals and antioxidants, make your stomach smile while your tastebuds tingle, complete package, tasty, good for the planet, good for you, a fabulous wig)

Creating text:

Tell students that in pairs they will be creating a non-fiction poem using words from the text. Explain that they will be cutting up words from their photocopies of the poem and arranging them in a different way, using literary devices such as metaphors, similes, rhyme and rhythm – encourage them to find rhyming words in the text before beginning. Refer to the persuasive vocabulary identified previously as good key words. The subheadings would also be useful. Note: Students should draft the poem in their books before cutting.

An example poem with emphasis on rhyme, rhythm and alliteration:

> Tasty treats
>
> nori sheets
>
> appears in soups and salads
>
> Packed with minerals
>
> tastebuds tingle
>
> great news for the planet.

An example poem with emphasis on simile and metaphor:

> Delicious as dessert,
>
> Make your stomach smile, tastebuds tingle
>
> Crop for planet's population

Important ingredient for the world

Assessment for/as learning:

In small groups, student pairs read their poem aloud. Peers can give feedback in the form of two stars and a wish.

The Rope Swing

story by Melissa Salisbury | illustrated by Lesley McGee

AC9E5LA03 EN3-UARL-01

Learning Intention:

I am learning to analyse how narratives have characteristic rises in tension so that I can plot the rising tension in my own narrative writing.

Success Criteria:

- I can identify points of tension within narratives.
- I can plot rising tension on a graph.
- I can use a graph to plot my own narrative.

Essential knowledge:

More information about text structures can be found in The School Magazine's video on Code and Conventions.

Bullying No Way's page on Resources and Support for Bullying Prevention

NSW Education's page on Discussing Bullying

Vocabulary

Prior to reading, discuss what the word tension means in terms of story structure. Students should conclude that tension is suspenseful moments in a story that makes the reader want to continue reading. Explain that tension doesn't have to mean a huge battle – it can be as simple as a student who can't find their pencil right before a test.

Tell students that the amount of tension changes in a story depending on the narrative structure. Ask students where they might find high and low points of tension in a typical narrative. See if anyone can describe the highest point of tension being in the climax scene, but don't reveal this information if they don't know yet.

If you have a digital subscription, complete the interactive activity Rising Tension.

Understanding text:

Read The Rope Swing as a class or listen to the audio recording if you have digital subscription. Ask students if they can pick moments of tension in the story. Answers may include:

- The boys making fun of Toby.
- One of the boys taking Inez's cap.
- Inez's cap being thrown in the river.

- Toby building up the courage to use the rope swing.
- Toby swinging out on the rope.

Explain to the class that the boys in the story are exhibiting bullying behaviour, which adds to the tension and makes Toby and Inez – and therefore the reader – very uncomfortable. Resources have been provided under the Essential Knowledge subheading of the lesson to address this. There is also a fact sheet provided by the NSW Department of Education titled *Anti-Bullying: Parents and carers tips* available online for download. Some questions to pose to the class:

- What else could the children do to help in this situation?
- Do you agree or disagree with how the children responded?
- What could the children have done/said differently?

If students don't pick up any tension at the beginning of the story, point out the small moments such as Inez's abrupt appearance, the brief mystery of what happened to Inez's arm, Inez asking Toby if he wants to go to the rope swing and the mystery of why Toby is strongly opposed to going to the rope swing. Remind students it's these moments of micro-tension that keep the reader hooked until the higher points of tension later in the story.

Draw a basic graph on the board with an x and y axis. Label the x axis "Plot Points" and the y axis "Tension". Mark the y axis with a 0 at the bottom and a 10 at the top. Select willing students to write out points of tension on strips of paper and stick it to the board along the x axis. As a class, discuss what degree of tension the plot point is, with 0 being no tension and 10 being the highest. Draw a line between the strips of paper to make the graph. In general, the incline of tension should rise steadily until its peak for the climax.

A general example of a plot tension graph titled How to Create Tension in Your Screenplay can be found on the Screenwriter's Utopia website.

Ask students what happens after the climax scene. Students may note the tension disappears from the story as things are wrapped up, so the tension line should drop from 10 on the y axis to a 0.

Creating text:

Using the same graph pattern, students are to plot a story by putting their own tension points on the graph. They can draw this in their workbooks. Remind students that the tension at the beginning of the story doesn't need to be big – secrets, mysterious moments or minor inconveniences can start the narrative off. The events should lead on to the next, getting worse and worse until the climax. A useful format is to ask the following questions:

Who is the story about?

What do they want?

What is in their way?

How do they try to overcome this obstacle?

How do their actions make things worse?

How do they try to overcome this new obstacle?

How do their actions make things even worse?

How do they finally resolve the issue?

Assessment for/as learning:

Students swap their work with a partner to discuss where they have put points of tension on the graph. Partners can make suggestions and comments about the work.

Extension: Students write their plotted stories.

Nana's Story

poem by Feana Tu'Ako | illustrated by Noela Young

AC9E5LY06 EN3-CWT-01

Learning Intention:

I am learning to develop ideas using visual features so that I can structure and sequence a persuasive text.

Success Criteria:

- I can compose a visual outline for a persuasive text.
- I can group related information into sequential paragraphs.
- I can consider logos and ethos when writing a persuasive text.

Essential knowledge:

More information about Grandparents Day can be found on the NSW Government's webpage Grandparents Day.

Activities and useful books can be found on the NSW Government's webpage Grandparents Day Resources.

More information about text structures can be found in The School Magazine's video on Code and Conventions.

Oral language and communication

Ask the class to consider their relationship with their grandparents. Remind them that everyone will have a different response, and that some students:

- Will have four grandparents

- Will have step-grandparents

- Will have experienced the loss of one or more grandparent

- Will have a loving relationship with one or more grandparent

- Will have a complicated relationship with one or more grandparent

- Will have grandparents living with them

- Will have grandparents living interstate or overseas

- Will have a situation not listed above

Ask willing students to share an experience or their thoughts on their relationship with their grandparents. Invite students to share more answers with their partners if they are willing.

Ask students the following questions:

- Do you know the names of your grandparents?

- Do you know what your grandparents' jobs were?

- Have you ever seen pictures of your grandparents when they were children?

- Do you know anything about your grandparents' parents and siblings?

For those who still have a connection with their grandparents, encourage them to ask these questions next time they meet if they don't know the answers.

Understanding text:

Read the poem Nana's Story or listen to the audio recording if you have digital subscription. Display the following questions:

- Who do you think Nana used to be?

- What do you think Nana might have laughed about?

- What surprises do you think Nana and her grandchild have shared?

- What do you think Nana worried about?

- What kind of life do you think Nana used to live as a young adult?

- What kind of mother do you think Nana was?

- What kind of grandparent do you think you'll be?

In small groups, students can discuss these questions one at a time. Afterwards, they can share their group answers with the class.

Creating text:

Explain that there's a special day called Grandparents Day, celebrated in October. Pose the following question to the class: Why is it important to celebrate Grandparents Day?

In their workbooks, students write at least five reasons for the importance of celebrating Grandparents Day. Students can refer back to the poem and their previous discussions in the lesson for pathos responses, as well as look at additional personal stories on the NSW Government webpages on Grandparents Day stories (scroll down to find more links to stories on the right-hand side). For logos responses, encourage students to think about how celebrating Grandparents Day might benefit individuals, the school community, the wider community and the state.

Explain that students will be writing a persuasive text to call for all schools in Australia to celebrate Grandparents Day. Have them first draw a concept map in their books (page 7 of the concept map slide is the best example) with their five reasons for the importance of celebrating Grandparents Day being the subheadings. Students can then branch out from the subheadings with three supporting arguments for each subheading.

For example:

Subheading – Grandparents are people with rich histories and stories to pass on.

Supporting point one – Grandparents have lived through historical events and can recall personal experiences to help enrich our knowledge.

Supporting point two – Our grandparents raised our parents, so asking them about our parents' childhoods might give us more insight into our present lives.

Supporting point three – If we were grandparents, wouldn't we want to pass on our stories, so they were never lost?

For more capable students, invite them to present an opposing point of view in their concept map, with rebuttals as the supporting points, to show they have considered both points of view. For example, an opposing point may be that some students don't have grandparents, or have complicated relationships with their grandparents, and don't want to celebrate Grandparents Day. Their rebuttals may include that those with loving relationships with their grandparents shouldn't miss out and a suggestion that the school could reach out to the local old-aged community to invite lonely residents to be surrogate grandparents for the day.

When the concept map is complete, students choose their three strongest subheadings and draft a persuasive text using each point as a paragraph. They should also include an introductory and concluding paragraph.

Assessment for/as learning:

A rubric can be found on The School Magazine's webpage Stage 3 Comprehending and Creating Persuasive Texts using Ethos, Pathos and Logos to assess and evaluate. This can be used to guide students with their writing and/or as a marking guide.

Saying Hello

article by Donna Sharp | illustrated by Fifi Colston

AC9E5LA01 EN3-OLC-01

Learning Intention:

I am learning how greetings in different languages change according to social context so that I can better understand how social roles affect language use in Australia.

Success Criteria:

- I can understand how greetings in other languages change according to social context.
- I can explain how different social roles and situations affect how people greet each other in Australia.
- I can roleplay greetings in different social situations.

Oral language and communication

Draw a horizontal line across the board and label the left side "informal" and the right side "formal."

Brainstorm with the class all the ways we can say hello. Answers include:

- G'day
- How's it going?
- Hey, what's up?
- Sup?
- Good morning
- Aboriginal language greeting appropriate to the country on which your school is located
- Additional languages other than English that children are familiar with

For each answer, the student can write on the line where they think the greeting belongs. For example, "good morning" would be closer to the right side of the line, because it's formal.

Ask students to consider what sort of circumstances they use might good morning versus when they might use 'sup. Students might recognise a more formal greeting is often used with teachers, whereas they might use 'sup with their friends.

Ask students what kind of greeting they might use with royalty.

Understanding text:

Read Saying Hello as a class. Ask students to hunt through this issue of the Orbit magazine to find the word of the month (it is on the contents page - bilingual). Discuss the meaning of the word and, if appropriate, have a discussion in the class with students who speak multiple

languages and/or dialects. Ask what sort of greetings they use in their other languages, including variations depending on social context.

Visit Cultural Atlas's site on Japanese Greetings and go through the dot points with the class. (You can find various informal videos online for help with pronunciation.) Explain to students that these lessons in etiquette are not necessarily needed to be studied and remembered by Japanese students, as they have been raised in these social contexts. Explain that similarly, Australian students have a good understanding of etiquette in Australia without needing to explicitly be told.

Creating text:

Students write out a list of dot points like on the Cultural Atlas webpage explaining to foreign visitors how to change their greetings based on social context in Australia. Students should have at least eight dot points outlining what to say and do in different situations. They can include an explanation of handshakes in their explanation.

Some examples:

- When greeting a store owner or someone in the street in a small country town, you can say "*G'day*".
- When greeting your teacher in the morning, it's acceptable to say "*Good morning*" and the teacher's name, with their title at the beginning, such as "*Good morning, Mrs Smith*."
- When meeting an important adult, shake your right hand with their right hand in a firm, but not clenching, grasp. Make eye contact and say "*Hello, it's nice to meet you.*"
- When catching up with friends, you can say a variety of greetings, such as "*Hey*", "*Hi*" and "*What's up?*"

Assessment for/as learning:

To finish the lesson, have students form two equal lines on either side of the classroom. Call the first pair forward and assign them a role (for example, a queen and a peasant) and have them greet each other according to social rules. Remind students that royalty requires a bow or a curtsey, though the situation will unlikely come up in Australia.

Some other roles:

Student and teacher

Prime minister and student

Student and student

Parent and their own child

A student and their friend's parent

Two friends in a small town

A tourist in a small town and a resident from that town

A famous singer and a fan

A husband and wife

A zookeeper and a student visitor

A principal of a school and a prospective student

The Underwater Genius

poem by Christopher Snipes | illustrated by Tohby Riddle

AC9E5LY02 EN3-OLC-01

Learning Intention:

I am learning to use appropriate interaction skills so that I can justify an opinion.

Success Criteria:

- I can connect texts to my own experiences.
- I can use appropriate interaction skills to justify an opinion.
- I can use persuasive techniques to convince someone else of my opinion.

Essential knowledge:

For more information about understanding character, view The School Magazine's video on Character.

Oral language and communication

Pose the following question to the class: Has someone ever convinced you to do something you didn't want to do?

Encourage students to consider any situation, from a parent convincing them to try a strange new food, to a friend daring them to dive from a high diving board. Ask them how the other person ended up convincing them. Do a think, pair, share for answers.

Understanding text:

Read the text The Underwater Genius or listen to the audio recording if you have digital subscription. Ask students what sort of person they think Erika is. Remind them that it's more complicated than a single answer, as she has a contradictory personality – the narrator tells us she's academically gifted, but not logical. Ask students to discuss in pairs why Erika is determined to swim with a bowling ball, and how their answers affect the type of person she is. Possible answers:

- She thinks swimming is too easy and wants to make it harder for herself (prideful)

- She is curious to see what would happen if she swam with a bowling ball (scientific)

- She doesn't feel confident swimming and thinks a bowling ball will help her (misinformed)

- She thinks a bowling ball will help her get deeper quicker than anyone else (arrogant)

Willing pairs can share their answers with the class.

Creating text:

Explain that students will individually write dot points with reasons to convince Erika not to swim with her bowling ball. Encourage students to use high modality words (outlined in the NSW Department of Education's page Modality) and other persuasive techniques learnt in the classroom.

Explain that students will now roleplay best friends of Erika. With you in the hotseat playing Erika, students have to convince you that you shouldn't swim with a bowling ball. Encourage deeper interaction skills by asking:

- How can you use questioning to your advantage? (Questioning allows students to better understand Erika's reasoning and help Erika think about her choice)

- How can you use paraphrasing in your argument? (Paraphrasing will help students better understand Erika's point of view)

- How can your past experiences help in this situation? (Draw on strategies other people have used to convince them, helps empathise with Erika)

Remind students they can refer to their dot points where necessary.

Call students up in groups between 2-5 students depending on class size. For each group, select a different reason for why "Erika" (you in the hotseat) has chosen to go swimming with the bowling ball, so groups will have to use different arguments and questions each round.

Assessment for/as learning:

Once all students have had a turn, they can fill out a self-evaluation using the statements below, rating their performance from one to five (with one being strongly disagree and five being strongly agree).

I used questioning to clarify Erika's choices.

I used paraphrasing to confirm Erika's ideas.

I clearly outlined and justified my opinion.

I used high modality words to persuade Erika.

I used my past experiences to empathise with and persuade Erika.

Shining Stars

story by Philippa Werry | illustrated by Caitlin O'Dwyer

AC9E5LY04 EN3-RECOM-01

Learning Intention:

I am learning to read texts for specific purposes so that I can make informed evaluations about characters.

Success Criteria:

- I can use information in a text to evaluate the personality of characters.
- I can explain how characters grow and change in a text.
- I can create character profiles based on the character's dialogue, actions and relationships in a text.

Essential knowledge:

For more information about understanding character, view The School Magazine's video on Character.

Oral language and communication

Explain to students that we can draw a lot of information about characters from what they do and say, and how other characters around them are behaving. If you have a digital subscription, you can complete the interactive activity Evaluating Characters.

Without allowing students to view the text, read aloud the first two paragraphs, up to "nobody heard." Ask the class the following questions for application, analysis and evaluation.

Application:

- What do we know about the setting so far? (In a rocky stream)

- What character are we following? (Stella?)

- What does Stella say? (Yuck/I'm not going in there)

- What does the text say the other children are doing? (Shrieking, splashing, jumping from rock to rock)

Analysis:

- What can you infer about the other children's feelings from their actions? Are they happy, frightened, sad? (They are playing, having fun, excited)

- Where do you think Stella is refusing to go? (The stream)

- Why? (She thinks it's yucky)

- Why might Stella think the stream is yucky? (It could have dirt or leeches etc)

Evaluation:

- Comparing the other children's behaviour to Stella's, what might you assume about Stella's personality? (Answers may include: she is a clean person, doesn't like to play, doesn't like water, she's outspoken, she's not very fun etc)

- Think about a time you've played in a stream, river, ocean or pool. Did you have fun? Do you think you would be friends with someone who talks like Stella?

Understanding text:

Give students an opportunity to view the text and the first illustration. Read aloud up to the fifth paragraph where Stella says "smelly and spooky" and ask students what else they have learnt about the setting. Guide students towards identifying that the children are heading towards a cave rather than playing in a stream. Explain that information can change as a text progresses, which gives readers the opportunity to reflect on their previous assumptions and change their minds about prior judgements. Explain that the same can happen with characters in literary texts. Ask students to share any experiences they've had with a text, whether it be a movie, TV show or book, where they've changed their minds about a character during the narrative, and what new information led them to this change. Encourage them to think of surprise villains, cowardly characters who had a moment of bravery etc.

Continue to read the story out loud and have the students take notes on what other things they learn about Stella during the story. When the story's finished, ask students to share their answers. Ask:

- Has your opinion changed on Stella?

- How do you think Stella has changed over the course of the story? Give examples from the text.

- Do you prefer the old Stella or the new one?

Creating text:

With input from the class, create a character profile on the board of Stella. Include a quick sketch, an outline of what she looks like, her backstory, her family, fears, motivations, favourite things and anything else you'd like to include. Though they are encouraged to use their creative license, students should use evidence from the text and illustrations where possible. For example, the fact that Stella wore plastic sandals on a trip to the cave tells us

that she's inexperienced with outdoor activities such as camping, and we might infer that she spends a lot of time watching TV or playing games.

Once you've formed a brief profile of Stella, explain that students will be creating their own profile of Stella's brother Joey using the same strategies. Remind them to look at Joey's actions and dialogue and his relationship with his sister to build a better idea of him. Ask students:

- How did you feel about Joey at the start of the story?

- What did he say or do to make you feel this way?

- Did your opinion of him change as the story went on? Why/why not?

- Did Joey learn anything about himself or change during the story in the same way as Stella? Why do you think this? (Students might recognise that Joey is not the main character of the story and therefore it isn't necessary for his character to learn or change through the narrative.)

Assessment for/as learning:

Students can use the following checklist to evaluate their work:

- Have I given a description of Joey?

- Have I written his backstory, motivations, fears and family life?

- Have I used evidence from the text where possible?

- Have I used Joey's actions, dialogue and relationship to Stella to inform my choices?

Moon Mystery

poem by Beverly McLoughland | illustrated by Matt Ottley

AC9E5LE02 EN3-UARL-01

Information on how to set up stations for this lesson plan is under Creating Text.

Learning Intention:

I am learning to use specific terms about literary devices and language features so that I can present an opinion on a poem.

Success Criteria:

- I can explain how imagery affects my opinions of a literary text.
- I can identify rhythm and rhyme in poetry and give my opinion on it.
- I can make judgements about the language used in a text.

Oral language and communication

Ask students to define and give examples of a metaphor. More information about metaphors can be found on the NSW Department of Education's glossary webpage. Explain how poetry commonly uses metaphors as a way to explore the world with different viewpoints. Ask students to find what two things are being compared as you read aloud the poem.

Understanding text:

Read Moon Mystery aloud and give students time to study the illustration. Students write what they think the poem is about in their workbooks. When they've finished, give some students the opportunity to share their answers with the class. Students should have noticed that the poem is comparing the moon to milk, stars to pawprints (simile) and alley cats to suspects. Questions to prompt further discussion and clarify student's thinking include:

- How did you choose these assumptions?

- Why are you saying that?

- Can you rephrase that, please?

- Do you agree or disagree that stars are like pawprints?

To encourage students to make considered judgements on the poem, ask the following questions:

- Do you think these are good examples of imagery?

- What did you think of the rhythm and rhyme?

- Was there any word or phrase that particularly caught your attention?

- What rating would you give the poem out of ten? Give reasons for your answer.

- How do you think your judgements of the poem are affected by your opinion on cats?

Creating text:

Instruct students to divide a page from their workbooks into three columns. Put students into groups of three and tell them to decide who will be A, B and C. Explain they will be completing a jigsaw. Each student will become a specialist in one subject and return to explain their findings to the rest of their group at the end.

Create three "stations" in different parts of the classroom and label one "Imagery" (Person A), two "Rhythm and Rhyme" (Person B) and three "Language" (Person C). For each station, set up the following questions/activities for students to discuss in their specialty groups and write in one of their workbooks columns:

Imagery

- What is the setting of the poem? (Night in the city)

- Using the illustration to guide you, what does "lapping at that milk-white moon tonight" mean? (Drinking from a puddle with the moon's reflection)

- What does the poem suggest has happened to the moon? (That an alley cat has lapped up the moon)

- Why are the stars described as "telltale"? (They are being compared to pawprints and suggest they are evidence in a crime)

- How are stars like pawprints? (Small trails along the sky, leading from the moon)

- What does it mean that every alley cat has an airtight alibi? (That every alley cat can verify its whereabouts when the moon went missing)

- What actually happened to the moon? (It set)

Rhythm and Rhyme

- Count the number of syllables in each line

- Find the rhyming scheme (ABCDB EFGHIJKH - each line has a corresponding letter of the alphabet, with rhyming lines showing matching pairs; examples of rhyming schemes can be found on the Literary Devices page Rhyme Scheme)

- Does the rhythm work to match up the rhymes? (Yes)

- Why are some words by themselves? (So the reader pauses at certain points)

- What sort of movement in real life does the rhythm of the poem bring to mind? (Answers will vary)

Vocabulary

- Every student finds one synonym for milk-white (e.g. cream, egg-white, chalky, snowy)

- Students rank the words, including milk-white, from strongest to weakest in terms of description for the poem

- Students discuss why the phrase milk-white was chosen for the poem

- Do the same for the words “prowling” and “lapping”

Once students have completed their speciality subjects, they return to their original group and share their findings. Students fill out the final two columns of their workbooks with their group members’ findings.

Assessment for/as learning:

Using the information gathered in the activity, students write a review of the poem, giving their opinion. Remind students that reviews are written in first person past tense (“I thought the poem was…”) and have a rating at the end. Students must include an opinion about each of the specialty groups. An example review is below.

> I thought the poem Moon Mystery written by Beverly McLoughland and illustrated by Matthew Ottley was a brilliant and interesting look at the night life of a city. Using imagery and vocabulary to evoke cats lapping at the moon the way they lap at milk was a stroke of genius. Comparing pawprints to the stars gives the reader a sense of reflection between the sky and city streets and blurs the line of where the moon really exists. The rhythm and rhyme made me think of an alley cat slinking between skip bins, pausing and scanning the area before sneaking forward again. The fact that I don’t like cats had no impact on my enjoyment of the poem. I give it 5/5.