

Language features in imaginative text

Stage 1

Overview

Purpose

This literacy teaching strategy supports teaching and learning for Stage 1 students across all key learning areas. It targets specific literacy skills and suggests a learning sequence to build skill development.

Teachers can select individual tasks, or a sequence, and embed into their teaching and learning program according to their students' needs. While exemplar texts are provided throughout this resource, it is recommended teachers select texts which are relevant to their students and curriculum.

Learning intention

Students will learn to identify the way language in narrative texts can be used to make inferences about the feelings, qualities and actions of characters.

Syllabus outcomes

The following teaching and learning strategy will assist in covering elements of the following outcome/s:

- EN1-RECOM-01 comprehends independently read texts that require sustained reading by activating background and word knowledge, connecting and understanding sentences and whole text, and monitoring for meaning.
- EN1-UARL-01 understands and responds to literature by creating texts using similar structures, intentional language choices and features appropriate to audience and purpose.

[NSW English K-10 Syllabus \(2022\)](#)

Success criteria

The following descriptors may guide teachers to develop success criteria for student learning:

- identifies the language features used in texts and explains their purpose
- justifies inferences about character feelings, qualities and actions using language features.

National Literacy Learning Progression guide

Understanding texts (UnT4-UnT6)

Key: C=comprehension P=process V=vocabulary

UnT4

- makes relevant comments or asks relevant questions to demonstrate understanding of a text (C)
- makes connections between texts and personal experiences (C)

UnT5

- reads and views the content of texts and describes new or learnt information (C)
- draws obvious inferences by integrating print, visual and audio aspects of simple texts (e.g. uses images and key words to infer a character's job) (C)

UnT6

- draws inferences and explains using background knowledge or text features (e.g. infers character's feelings from actions) (C)
- identifies parts of text used to answer literal and inferential questions (P)
- interprets language devices (e.g. exaggeration or repetition) (V)

National Literacy Learning Progression

Evidence base

- Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (2017). [Effective reading instruction in the early years of school](#), literature review.
- Konza, D. (2014). Teaching Reading: Why the “Fab Five” should be the “Big Six”. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 39(12).
- Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (2020). [What works best](#) 2020 update.
- Scarborough, H.S. (2001). Connecting early language and literacy to later reading (dis)abilities: Evidence, theory and practice. In S. Neuman & D. Dickson (Eds.), *Handbook for research in early literacy* (pp. 97-110). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Alignment to system priorities and/or needs: [Five priorities for Literacy and Numeracy](#), [Our Plan for NSW Public Education](#), [School Excellence Policy \(nsw.gov.au\)](#).

Alignment to School Excellence Framework: Learning domain: Curriculum, Teaching domain: Effective classroom practice and Professional standards

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Background information

Language features

The features of language that support meaning, for example sentence structure, vocabulary, illustrations, diagrams, graphics, punctuation, figurative language. Choices in language features and text structures together define a type of text and shape its meaning. These choices vary according to the purpose of a text, its subject matter, audience and mode or media of production (NESA, 2012).

Style

The way in which the effects of distinctive language forms and features of a text, often including those specific to its medium, combine to generate an overall impression.

Particular style elements may be observed in multiple works by the same author, from the same genre, or written during the same time period or artistic movement (NESA, 2022).

Students should be provided with opportunities to respond to literature by engaging them in rich talk about the texts that they read aloud, discussing how authors/illustrators make specific choices about language forms, features and structures to suit their purpose, audience and context (Stage 1 Teaching Advice, Understanding and responding to literature (NESA, 2022).

Adjective

A word class that describes, identifies or quantifies a noun or a pronoun. Different types of adjectives include:

- possessive, for example my, his, her
- quantifying, for example two, many, lots of
- descriptive, for example big, old, yellow, beautiful
- comparative, for example more delicate, best, bigger
- superlative, for example longest, fastest, happiest
- classifying, for example Persian cat, air transport. (NESA, 2022).

Verb

The verb is perhaps the most important part of the sentence. A verb is a word that tells what is happening. Finite verbs locate the condition or action of the verb in a specific time frame: past, present or future (see finite verbs and tense). Verbs create the relationship between the subject and the object of the verb (see subject–verb agreement). Different types of verbs include:

- action verbs, for example 'They danced...'
- thinking verbs, for example 'I forgot...'
- feeling verbs, for example 'We like...'
- saying verbs, for example 'He whispered...'
- relating verbs, for example 'They are...' (NESA, 2022).

Character

A person (or animal) created in a text (usually narrative) to represent human characteristics including physical, emotional and intellectual characteristics, habits and behaviour. (NESA, 2022) Characters in texts are deliberately constructed by composers. A composer's choice of language, their visual representation of a character through image, as well as what a character does, says and thinks, all attempt to engage or position readers to respond to texts and their characters in a particular way.

Trait and actions

Character traits can include the character's physical and emotional qualities. We can infer character traits by their actions and behaviour. We can identify changes in character's ideas and motivations as the story develops.

Prior learning

Students should have an understanding of character and background knowledge (refer to Stage 1 Reading - Connecting ideas).

Further information on English textual concepts can be found on the [curriculum textual concepts web page](#).

Reference: English K-10 Syllabus © NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) for and on behalf of the Crown in right of the State of New South Wales, 2012 and 2022.

Where to next?

- Inference

Resource list

English K-10 Syllabus © NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) for and on behalf of the Crown in right of the State of New South Wales, 2012 and 2022

Matson, S. (2020). [Once upon a time](#). The School Magazine

Effective reading instruction in the early years of school

The CESE literature review [Effective Reading Instruction in the Early Years of School](#) (2017) outlines the key components of effective reading instruction. The research base has been further explored in the [Effective reading guide](#) which outlines the [Simple View of Reading](#) and [Scarborough's Reading Rope](#).

Comprehension is an active process that involves the reader understanding and interpreting what is read. It is heavily dependent on a student's [word recognition skills](#) and their [language comprehension abilities](#). To be able to understand written material, students need to be able to first decode what they read and then apply their language comprehension to make connections between what they read and what they already know.

In the context of effective reading instruction for the early years, it is important to understand that while students are learning the alphabetic code the majority of comprehension instruction should focus on oral language comprehension development through explicit teaching during modelled and shared reading experiences. An explicit focus on teaching students to strategically apply their background knowledge, vocabulary knowledge, knowledge about texts, understanding of language structures and reasoning skills to texts will support them to develop strong language comprehension abilities as they develop fluent word recognition skills.

What works best- Explicit teaching

Explicit teaching practices involve teachers clearly explaining to students why they are learning something, how it connects to what they already know, what they are expected to do, how to do it and what it looks like when they have succeeded. Students are given opportunities and time to check their understanding, ask questions and receive clear, effective feedback.

This resource reflects the latest evidence base and can be used by teachers as they plan for explicit teaching. Teachers can use classroom observations and other assessment information to make decisions about when and how they use this resource as they design teaching and learning sequences to meet the learning needs of their students.

Further support with [What works best](#) is available.

Gradual release of responsibility model

The Gradual release of responsibility model is a helpful framework to understand what explicit instruction can look like when teaching reading.

At the heart of the model is the concept that, as we learn new content, the responsibility for the cognitive load shifts from primarily sitting with the teacher as the model or expert, to the responsibility sitting with the student as they take on independence in their learning and application.

It is important to note that the model is not linear and can be used flexibly rather than from beginning to end over the course of a lesson or in the same way for every student. Instead, it should be seen as a dynamic model that is recursive, meaning it can be repeated and revisited as needed and informed by formative assessment. As students increase in their ability, teachers gradually carry less of the cognitive load and students gradually assume more responsibility for the learning in order to become independent in the knowledge, skill or concept understanding and the application of this across contexts.

Modelled instruction

The Gradual release of responsibility model begins with the teacher assuming a significant proportion of the cognitive load for the learning. Modelled instruction is when the teacher models how an expert reads with a particular emphasis on the skill, concept or knowledge focus. This section is when the teacher is saying “I do, you watch”.

Although modelled instruction is characterised by teacher voice, students are active participants and engaged in careful observation. As the teacher explains the learning intention and its purpose, students should be encouraged to reflect on their current knowledge, understanding or skill. The teacher builds understanding of the academic language or background knowledge necessary to access the learning and students reflect on and add to their background knowledge or academic vocabulary. Modelled instruction is often characterised by the teacher ‘thinking aloud’ to demonstrate how a skilled reader monitors and controls their comprehension. At the end of modelled instruction:

- revisit the learning intention and reflect on what students observed the teacher doing to show the learning intention
- co-construct the success criteria based on what the teacher modelled and students observed
- co-construct an anchor chart that students can refer to as they continue their learning.

Shared practice

Shared practice offers rich instructional opportunities as teachers and students both engage with a shared text. This is when the teacher invites students to share responsibility for the thinking, with the teacher saying “I do, you help.” Shared instruction is an interactive reading experience with the teacher or expert continuing to model or demonstrate the skills, concept or understanding that is the focus of the learning, however, students are now invited to join the teacher in sharing the cognitive load for the learning.

Shared practice is characterised by rich and authentic conversations amongst the community of readers as both teacher and students discuss, pose ideas, ask questions and extend their thinking.

Guided practice

The next stage is guided practice when the student takes on significantly more responsibility with the teacher saying “you do, I help.” Guided practice often involves the teacher working with a small group of students and encouraging students to think aloud about the strategy focus. The teacher asks questions to prompt or clarify thinking, supporting and guiding the learning of the group. Guided practice is characterised by high challenge texts scaffolded with high support for the needs of the learner.

Collaborative practice

Collaborative practice is when students take on and share more responsibility with their fellow learners. The teacher is still present and available but is saying “you do together, I will support you as needed.” Students are often paired with a partner or work in a small group. They work collaboratively on a strategy focus, sharing their thinking as they work together. Students are encouraged to think aloud as they read and to engage in shared discussion, questioning and collaboration. During collaborative practice, the teacher supports students by observing, monitoring, prompting and guiding them towards independence. The teacher encourages the use of support structures such as anchor charts, learning intentions and success criteria.

Independent practice

Once the student is confident with the learning, they continue to practice independently. The teacher is present and available and is now saying “you do alone and I will watch.” Students can record how they think aloud, problem solve and use the focus strategy to support their reading. The teacher uses this stage as an opportunity to observe and formatively assess students. Multiple opportunities across varying contexts need to be offered to students in order for them to develop independence with a skill or strategy.

Further professional learning

Use the following links for more information and resources for effective reading instruction:

- A video explaining the [Simple view of reading](#)
- A video [introducing Scarborough’s reading rope](#)
- A video explaining the [lower strands of Scarborough’s reading rope](#)
- A video explaining the [upper strands of Scarborough’s reading rope](#)
- [Literacy and numeracy professional learning](#):
 - [Effective reading: Phonics](#)
 - [Effective reading: Phonological Awareness](#)
 - [Focus on Understanding texts: The components of reading – Blended learning](#)
 - [Focus on vocabulary – Blended learning](#)
 - [Fluency on Teams – Blended learning](#)

Differentiation and adjustments

When using these resources in the classroom, it is important for teachers to consider the needs of all students, including [Aboriginal](#) and EAL/D learners.

EAL/D learners will require explicit English language support and scaffolding, informed by the [EAL/D enhanced teaching and learning cycle](#) and the student’s phase on the [EAL/D Learning Progression](#).

Teachers can access information about [supporting EAL/D learners](#) and [literacy and numeracy support](#) specific to EAL/D learners.

Learning adjustments enable students with disability and additional learning and support needs to access syllabus outcomes and content on the same basis as their peers. Teachers can use a [range of adjustments](#) to ensure a personalised approach to student learning.

[Assessing and identifying high potential and gifted learners](#) will help teachers decide which students may benefit from extension and additional challenge. [Effective strategies and contributors to achievement](#) for high potential and gifted learners helps teachers to identify and target areas for growth and improvement. A [differentiation adjustment tool](#) can be found on the [High potential and gifted education website](#).

Text selection

Example texts are used throughout this resource. Teachers can adjust activities to use texts which are linked to their unit of learning.

Further support with text selection can be found within the [National Literacy Learning Progression](#) Text Complexity appendix.

The [NESA website](#) has additional information on text requirements within the NSW English syllabus.

Teaching and learning experiences

Understanding language features

Learning intention

We are learning that authors use language features in their texts to communicate ideas.

Success criteria

I can:

- explain what a language feature is and why authors use them.

Suggested teaching and learning sequence

1. Explain authors make careful choices about the way they write and the words they use in texts. Explain good readers are always looking for language features to get clues about what the author is trying to tell them. The author might use these language features to help the reader understand what a character is like, how a character is feeling and what they are doing.
2. Explore the term language features with students. Explain language is to do with communication and in this case it is to do with the way authors communicate with words. It is the way authors choose to use words so they can help the reader understand what they mean. Feature means the noticeable or important parts of something. So, language features are the noticeable or important ways an author has communicated through their word choices.
3. Explain there are many different types of language features an author can use to help readers understand. Authors can use things like rhyme, repetition, alliteration and onomatopoeia. Explore a range of familiar texts to demonstrate examples of language features in known texts.
4. Authors choose the types of words they use carefully to help the reader build a picture of what a character is like, how they are feeling and what they are doing. We are going to focus on the way authors use verbs and adjectives to give us those clues about what a character is like, how a character's is feeling and what they are doing.
5. Co-construct an anchor chart that includes a definition of the term language features and examples of a range of language features from familiar texts.
6. Display the anchor chart in the classroom for students to refer to throughout the learning sequence.

Analysing verbs to understand feelings and actions

Learning intention

We are learning to identify and analyse the way authors use verbs to help us understand what a character is like, how they are feeling and what they are doing.

Success criteria

I can:

- explain how authors can use verbs to help me understand a character's actions.
- identify verbs that help me understand a character's feelings.

Text selection

Select a text with interesting examples of verbs that have been used to develop reader understanding of character actions, feelings and/or qualities. 'Hetty's day out' by Pamela Allen and ['Once upon a time' by Sara Matson in The School Magazine](#) (refer to [Appendix 2 – Once upon a time](#)) have been chosen as the example text for its interesting use of verbs. However, teachers can select an alternative text relevant to their unit of learning.

Suggested teaching and learning sequence

Modelled instruction

1. Explain the learning intention that good readers notice the way authors use verbs to help us understand what a character is doing and how they are feeling.
2. Explain verbs are probably the most important part of the sentence. They tell us what the person, place, thing or idea in the sentence (the subject) is doing or being. Verbs can help us know what the character/s in a story are doing, saying or thinking.
3. Read a text to the class that demonstrates interesting use of verbs to show what a character is doing or feeling, for example, 'Hetty's day out' After reading the story to the class, display a page/s from the text, for example, the pages in 'Hetty's day out' showing Hetty waking up then setting off for the day.
4. Explain you are going to show them how a good reader notices the verbs authors use to help them to understand characters. Reread the text up to the section where Hetty sets off. Use the sentence stem 'I see...', for example, saying "**I see** that the author has used verbs to show Hetty's actions such as, woke up, yawned, washed, squeezed, thought and set off." Circle or highlight the words as you notice them.
5. Mimic the actions Hetty took and think aloud, "Oh, this is what I do sometimes when I wake up especially when I've had a really good sleep. I might yawn and stretch just like Hetty did and then I might wash my face to get ready for my day."
6. Explain you are going to use your background knowledge of waking up and the words in the text to think about what the author is trying to tell you about Hetty. Use the sentence stem 'I think...' saying, for example, "**I think** the author wants me to know that Hetty is feeling well- rested, relaxed and carefree. I think that Hetty is ready to start her day but is not in a rush as she took her time getting out of bed." As you think aloud, circle the words and record your thinking about Hetty using a table such as [Appendix 1- Hetty](#).

7. Return to the text and read the part of the text that recounts Hetty's interaction with Mrs Gibson. Think aloud as you notice the verbs that are related to Hetty, for example, "**I see** the verbs thought and skipped. Mimic the action of skipping. Think aloud saying, "I often see children skipping in the playground or when they are walking down the road. They often skip when they feel happy. So, I think the author has used the verb skipping to show Hetty's actions and to help me understand how she is feeling. I think the author wants me to know that she is thoughtful about her day and that she is happy). Add this information to the table about Hetty ([Appendix 1- Hetty](#)).
8. Repeat the process with the section of the text that recounts Hetty's interaction with Mr Jones. Think aloud as you notice the verbs that are related to Hetty, for example, "**I see** the verbs thought and trotted. **I think** the author is using different verbs to explain how Hetty is moving. At the beginning the author told us Hetty set off, then she skipped and now she trotted. I wonder how she will move next." Repeat the process with the section of the text that recounts Hetty's interaction with Mrs Branbury. Think aloud as you notice the verbs that are related to Hetty saying, for example, "**I see** the verbs thought and ambled. If I think about the verbs that tell me how Hetty was moving, I have noticed the verbs skipped, trotted and now ambled." Have students model how to skip and trot and then draw their attention to the word ambled. "Ambled is not a word we often hear in spoken language, but it is a terrific way to describe the way someone might move. Ambled means walking slowly in a relaxed manner." Model for students how someone might amble. Have students show how they might amble down the street. Refer to 'A guide for planning and implementing explicit vocabulary for further advice about the importance of and suggested process for explicitly teaching vocabulary.
9. Explain your thinking, "So the author has told us that Hetty skipped, then trotted, which is usually a bit slower than skipping, and then ambled, which means walking slowly in a relaxed manner. **I think** the author wants me to notice that Hetty is slowing down. I think the author wants me to think about how Hetty is moving but also how she is feeling. I think she is slowing down because she is getting full and tired." Add this information to the table about Hetty.
10. Continue reading through the text noting the verbs that explain how Hetty is moving.
11. Return to the text and explain you are going to substitute the word "walked" for the verbs that the author chose. Reread the text and explain you think the text is rather boring with the word walked repeated so many times and the word waked doesn't help you understand what Hetty is doing and how she is feeling.
12. Revisit the learning intention that good readers notice the way authors use verbs to help us understand what a character is doing and how they are feeling. Revisit the information recorded in [Appendix 1 – Hetty](#) and explain that in this case, the author has used carefully chosen verbs to help you understand what the character is doing; how she is moving differently and slowing down.
13. Have students turn to a partner and reflect on what they saw and heard the teacher notice about the verbs and how the teacher used these to understand the characters. To support student conversations, provide students with the sentence: My teacher noticed in the text and this made him/her think Have pairs of students share their thinking with the class.
14. Revisit the language features anchor chart and add the student reflections about verbs to the chart.

Shared practice

1. Revisit the learning intention. Have students turn to a partner and explain how verbs can help us learn about the character. Have some students share with the class and revisit the co-constructed anchor chart to remind students that authors carefully choose how they will use language to communicate and we are focusing on the verbs they use.
2. Read a text to the class that demonstrates interesting use of verbs to show what a character is doing or feeling, for example, [‘Once upon a time’ by Sara Matson in The School Magazine](#) refer to [Appendix 2 – Once upon a time](#)). Support students’, particularly EAL/D learners’, understanding of the story and characters by watching a video of a Bluebird, an Owl and a bear in the wild.
3. Explain that as good readers we want to notice the verbs the author used to help us understand characters. We can get clues about what a character is doing and what they are feeling. We are going to consider two of the characters: Bear and Bluebird. In the first sentence, **I see** the word twittered.
‘Wake up! Wake up!’ Bluebird **twittered** in Bear’s ear.
4. Explain the meaning of the word **twittered**, saying for example, “If someone is twittering about something, they are speaking in a fast or high-pitched voice.” Invite students to practice saying “Wake up! Wake up!” by twittering in the way Bluebird did using a fast or high-pitched voice.
5. Create a table to take note of the verbs related to Bluebird (refer to [Appendix 3 – Bluebird](#)). Record what Bluebird did (twittered) and invite students to suggest how that might mean she is feeling.
6. Display the following sentence and invite students to identify the verb that tells us what Bluebird is doing. Explain that **chirped** means saying something in a cheerful, high-pitched voice. Invite students to practice saying “Spring started a week ago! Now get up! I have news” by chirping in the way Bluebird did using a cheerful, high-pitched voice.
Spring started a week ago!’ Bluebird **chirped**. ‘Now get up! I have news.’
7. Add this information to the table (refer to [Appendix 3 – Bluebird](#)) and invite students to articulate how they are getting more clues about how Bluebird is feeling.
8. Display the following sentence and invite students to think-pair-share as they identify the verb that tells us what Bluebird is doing and then discuss what further clues this gives us about how she is feeling. If needed, explain if something such as a bird **soars** into the air, it goes quickly up into the air.
‘It’s about the Forest Fling,’ Bluebird said, soaring in circles above Bear’s head.
9. Support students to understand the author has used the verbs twittered, chirped and soaring to help us understand how Bluebird sounds and moves. Ask the student what this tells us about how Bluebird feels. Prompt students to articulate that we can understand Bluebird is feeling cheerful and excited. Add this information to the table about Bluebird. Add this information to the table (refer to [Appendix 3 – Bluebird](#)).
10. Have students use an [exit slip](#) to explain how authors can use verbs and to record what we learnt about Bluebird using verbs. Use the formative assessment information to make decisions about which students require further support through additional modelled instruction or shared practice and which students are ready for guided, collaborative or independent practice.

Guided practice

1. Revisit the learning intention. Have students explain how verbs can help us learn about the character. Provide students with a table (refer to [Appendix 4 – Bear](#)) that can be used to record what the character Bear are doing and how he is feeling.
2. Reread the text with the group, inviting students to join in a choral reading of the whole text, part of the text, or the sections of Bluebird speaking that were the focus of the [shared practice](#).
3. Draw the groups' attention to the following sentence. Remind students that we are focusing on how the author has used verbs to help us understand what the character is doing and feeling. Today our focus character is Bear.

Bear lumbered out of his cave and down to the river.

4. Read the sentence with the students and ask them to identify what bear is doing. Show students the [Collins online dictionary](#) definition of the word lumber, "If someone or something lumbers from one place to another, they move there very slowly and clumsily." Have students mime lumbering around the space and explain to a peer how this word gives us a clue about how Bear is feeling using the sentence stem "I think Bear is..." Have students record their thoughts on the table ([Appendix 4 – Bear](#)).
5. Have students continue reading and pause at the section below. Ask students to identify what Bear did (frowned) and what that makes us think about his feelings. Extend students by asking them how the second and third sentences add to our understanding of what Bear is thinking and how these thoughts also give us a clue about what he's feeling. Have students record their thoughts on the table ([Appendix 4 – Bear](#)).

Bear frowned. If Owl entered the contest, she'd be sure to win. He might as well give up now.

6. Repeat the process using the following section of text:

Bluebird looked doubtful. 'Owl's story sounds really smart. She just might win.'

Bear sighed and picked up his pencil. 'You're probably right.'
7. Have students share the information they recorded about Bear in [Appendix 4 – Bear](#) with the group and then make adjustments or additions to their tables based on the thinking of their peers.

Collaborative and independent practice

Use a range of texts during guided and collaborative practice as needed to support students as they move towards being able to independently identify and analyse the way authors use verbs to support reader understanding of characters.

Analysing language to understand physical appearance and personality

Learning intention

We are learning to identify and analyse the way authors use language to help us understand a character's physical appearance and personality.

Success criteria

I can:

- identify the language used by the author to help me understand what a character looks like and what their personality is like
- explain what a character is like using language from the text to support my thinking.

Text selection

Select a text with interesting examples of descriptive language that has been used to develop reader understanding of character qualities and feelings. 'Noni the pony' by Alison Lester has been chosen as an example text for its interesting use of descriptive language. However, teachers can select an alternative text relevant to their unit of learning.

Suggested teaching and learning sequence

Modelled instruction

1. Explain the learning intention that good readers notice the way authors use language to help us understand what a character looks like (their physical appearance) and what their personality is like.
2. Revisit previous learning (refer to [Analysing verbs to understand feelings and actions](#)) that authors can use verbs to tell us what a character is doing. Introduce the new learning that authors can also use relating verbs and the information that follows to tell us what a character is like. Explain we are going to notice the way the author has used verbs, including relating verbs like is and are, to give us some more information about what the character is like. Explain sometimes we will get information about what a character looks like which is their physical appearance. Sometimes the author will give us information about the character's personality. Display a table (refer to [Appendix 5- Noni the Pony](#)) that can be used to capture information about the character.
3. Read a text to the class that demonstrates interesting use of relating verbs and descriptive language for a character for example, 'Noni the pony'. After reading the story to the class, display a page/s from the text, for example, the first page where we meet Noni.
4. Explain you are going to show them how a good reader notices the way the author has told you what the character looks like and what the character's personality is like. Display the first sentence and explain this is an example of where the author has used a relating verb to give us some information about what the character is like. Think aloud as you explore the sentence, for example, "I can see that the first sentence is about Noni the Pony. I can see that the author has used the word 'is' as the verb and this tells me that the rest of the information is about Noni the Pony. The author has told me that Noni is friendly and funny. Let me look at my table. Are these telling me about what she looks like or

about her personality? I think they are about her personality so I will note them down in that column of the table.” Add this information to the table (refer to [Appendix 5- Noni the Pony](#)).

5. Think aloud as you consider the next sentence, for example, “The next sentence is about Noni’s tail and again I can see the verb ‘is’ so I know that the information after the verb is telling me about her tail and what it is like. The author has told me that Noni’s tail is the colour of honey. I can add that to my table under the column about her physical appearance. I noticed that the author also used an adjective before the noun to give me some information. It says “shimmering tail.” If something shimmers, it means it shines faintly as though it is moving. It is similar to twinkle or glisten. That gives me helpful information about what Noni’s tail looks like so I can also note that down in the column about her physical appearance.” Record the information in [Appendix 5 – Noni the Pony](#).
6. Display another page from the text, for example the page when Noni is kicking up her heels with the ducks and the chickens. Think aloud as you consider the sentence, for example, “The next sentence is about what Noni does and how she moves. I can see the verbs ‘gallops, spins, canters, and bucks.’ Play a video of a horse galloping and cantering to support student understanding. Record these verbs in the table (refer to [Appendix 5 – Noni the Pony](#)). I know that canter and gallop are common verbs for describing the way a horse moves. They are words we use when a horse is running quickly and freely. I know that horses can spin and buck, which means to kick their back legs in the air. I know horses normally do this if they are surprised or startled. The picture I am visualising in my mind is of Noni running and kicking and spinning freely. I can also see the phrase ‘kicks up her heels.’ I know this phrase is sometimes used to mean have a fun or lively time. It comes from the idea of someone dancing and having fun. I will add this phrase to my table.”
7. Explain the author has chosen these verbs to tell me about what Noni is doing and that has given me clues about her personality. These verbs make me think that Noni the pony is energetic, playful and lively which means enthusiastic and cheerful. I can add those words to my table under the column about Noni’s personality. Record the information in [Appendix 5 – Noni the Pony](#).
8. Have students turn to a partner and reflect on what they saw and heard the teacher notice about the language and how the teacher used the language features to understand the character. To support student conversations, provide students with the sentence: My teacher noticed....in the text and this made him/her think.... Have pairs of students share their thinking with the class.
9. Revisit the language features anchor chart and add the student reflections to the chart.

Shared practice

1. Revisit the learning intention that good readers notice the way authors use language to help us understand what a character looks like (their physical appearance) and what their personality is like. Have students turn to a partner and explain what we learnt about Noni in the previous lesson.
2. Reread Noni the Pony with the class. After reading the story to the class, display a page/s from the text, for example, the pages in 'Noni the Pony' where we meet Noni's best friends.
10. Invite students to think-pair-share about what we learn about Noni in this section of the text. Ask students what we should add to the table [Appendix 5 – Noni the Pony](#) and where on the table the information should go.
3. Repeat the process with several other pages from the text, for example, when Noni and her friends are playing hide and seek, the page about Noni being gentle, and the page with the thunder. Record student thoughts and insights using the table in [Appendix 5 – Noni the Pony](#).
4. Have students turn to a partner and reflect on what they know about Noni and how they know that based on the text. Have students use an [exit slip](#) to describe Noni's personality. Prompt students with the sentence stems: Noni is I think this because Use this formative assessment information to make decisions about which students require further support through additional modelled instruction or shared practice and which students are ready for guided, collaborative or independent practice.

Guided, collaborative and independent practice

Use a range of texts during guided, collaborative and independent practice as needed to support students as they move towards being able to independently identify and analyse the way authors use verbs to support reader understanding of characters.

Appendix 1 – Hetty

What did Hetty do?	What does this tell me about how Hetty was feeling?
woke up yawned washed squeezed thought set off	well-rested relaxed carefree
thought skipped	thoughtful happy
trotted ambled	full tired

Appendix 2 – Once upon a time

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Wake up! Wake up! Bluebird twittered in Bear's ear.

Bear stopped snoring and opened one eye. 'Is it spring yet?'

'Spring started a week ago!' Bluebird chirped. 'Now get up! I have news.'

Bear lumbered out of his cave and down to the river. After a long drink of water, he asked, 'What kind of news?'

'It's about the Forest Fling,' Bluebird said, soaring in circles above Bear's head. 'This year, there's a writing contest. The winner's story will be read aloud on opening night. And guess who's—'

'A story contest?' Bear interrupted. 'Maybe I'll enter. I've always wanted to be a writer.' 'So has Owl!'

Bluebird said. 'She's entering too, and you know how smart she is.'

Bear frowned. If Owl entered the contest, she'd be sure to win. He might as well give up now.

But then he pictured all the forest animals circled around the campfire, listening to his story. His winning story.

'I think I'll give it a try,' he said.

The next morning, Bear sat in his cave, surrounded by crumpled papers. 'Writing a story is hard,' he said.

Just then, Bluebird fluttered in. 'Guess what? I stopped by Owl's tree, and she's already written fifty-two pages. Her story's amazing! At least ... I *think* it is.'

'What do you mean?' Bear asked.

'She uses a lot of long words,' Bluebird said. 'Harrumph,' Bear said. 'I like stories I can understand.'

He remembered being a cub. He had loved to sit in his little chair while Papa Bear read to him in a deep, growly voice. None of Papa Bear's stories were confusing.

Bluebird looked doubtful. 'Owl's story sounds really smart. She just might win.' Bear sighed and picked up his pencil. 'You're probably right.'

The next day, Bear went outside to write. But the sunshine made him sleepy, so he took a nap instead. He dreamed about fish soup and acorns and the porridge Mama Bear used to make for breakfast. She'd covered it with brown sugar and thick, yellow cream.

Bear woke up hungry. While he was catching himself a fish for supper, Bluebird came by. 'How many pages have you finished?' she asked.

Bear flipped a fish out of the water. 'One—well, *almost* one.'

'Bear! The deadline is tomorrow night,' Bluebird scolded. 'You need to get busy!' 'How's Owl doing?'

Bear asked, although he wasn't sure he wanted to know.

'She's written eighty-eight pages!' Bluebird said. 'She has a chapter about the history of shoelaces, and another about giant pickles, and another about Polish-speaking ostriches.'

'I've never heard of Polish-speaking ostriches,' Bear said.

Bluebird looked wise. 'Owl says a story's supposed to teach you something.'

'Harrumph,' Bear said. 'I like stories about everyday things. Like friends, and families, and forests. And maybe porridge.'

Bluebird patted him on the head. 'Try not to feel too bad. It's not your fault you don't have Owl's brain.'

The next day, Bear woke up early. After breakfast, he sat at the table with his notebook and pencil.

'Now where was I?' he said aloud. He looked down at the paper. All he had so far was *Once upon a time*.

Moments later, Bluebird sailed in. 'I just came from Owl's tree. She's finished!' 'Really,' Bear said glumly.

'She wrote 203 pages,' Bluebird said, hopping up and down on Bear's shoulder. 'Her description of the sunrise takes up 100 pages alone!'

'Harrumph,' Bear said. 'I can describe the sunrise in two words: *It's pink.*'

'I'm sorry, Bear, but she's going to win for sure!' Bluebird flew around the room in a feathery frenzy. As she zoomed over the coffee table, her wing brushed a framed photo to the ground. *Crash!*

'Bluebird!' Bear said. 'Watch where you're flying, please.'

He picked up the photo. It showed him as a cub, standing next to his childhood friend, a little girl with long, golden hair. He hadn't thought about Goldilocks in a long time.

'I like stories with interesting characters,' he said softly, remembering the day they had met. Suddenly his paw itched for a pencil.

'Sorry about the broken glass,' Bluebird said. 'And I'm sorry about the contest. Maybe next year, huh?'

'Maybe,' Bear said, sitting down again. 'Or maybe not.'

The next night, the Forest Fling opened with its traditional campfire. All the animals gathered around as Mouse, the head of the judging committee, cleared his throat and began the winning story:

Once upon a time, there were three bears: Papa Bear, Mama Bear and Baby Bear. They lived in a cottage in the forest. One day, while waiting for their porridge to cool...

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Appendix 3 – Bluebird

What did Bluebird do?	What does this tell me about how Bluebird was feeling?
twittered chirped soared	cheerful excited

Appendix 4 – Bear

What did Bear do?	What does this tell me about how Bear was feeling?

Appendix 5 – Noni the Pony

What does Noni the Pony look like?	What does Noni the Pony do?	What is Noni the Pony's personality like?
shimmering tail tail is the colour of honey	gallops spins canters bucks kicks up her heels	friendly funny energetic playful lively enthusiastic cheerful