














#### Topic: Learn about stories

#### Reading a mystery letter

##### Lesson concepts

-  Text and purpose — Texts have different forms
-  Text organisation — Concepts about print: books
-  Sentences — Sentences express ideas
-  Visual language — Words and images contribute to meaning: stories
-  Spelling — Letters of the alphabet represent sounds in spoken words
-  Spelling — High-frequency sight words, known words
-  Features of literary texts — Characters, events
-  Features of literary texts — Beginnings and endings
-  Text processing strategies — Print knowledge, contextual knowledge, semantic knowledge, grammatical knowledge, phonic knowledge
-  Comprehension strategies — Understanding and discussing texts
-  Text structures and language features that create texts — Short texts: familiar words and phrases, beginning writing knowledge

Today students will:

- ▶ understand that a narrative has a solution to a problem
- ▶ understand the different contribution of words and images to meaning in stories.

## Resources

### Text

Walker, A 2010, *I don't believe in dragons*, Scholastic, NSW.  
(Or use an online search engine to find a read-aloud version of the story.)

### Find and prepare

Sheet — Letter 1

'Being the best reader I can be' chart (from previous lessons)

'Understanding stories' chart (from previous lessons)

Strip of paper or cardboard (write 'Story solutions')

Playdough

Construction materials

Props and equipment for acting out a story

Scrapbook

### Note

In this lesson, students will continue to record visual ideas for how to be the best reader they can be. Write the sub-heading 'Story solutions' on a strip of cardboard or paper.

As part this lesson, students will receive a mystery letter that they will be asked to respond to. Organise for the letter, **Sheet — Letter 1**, to appear suddenly at the beginning of the 'Read and respond to a mystery letter' part of the lesson.

## Lesson

### Review characteristic features of a story

#### Say to students

‘ We have been thinking about story beginnings, story problems and repeated patterns in stories. Knowing about these parts of a story helps a reader understand and enjoy the story. ’

- Read and view the 'Understanding stories' chart created in the previous lessons.

## Explore the solution to a story

### Say to students

‘ When I’m reading a story I get a good feeling when the character solves the problem that they have faced. Let’s think about the solution to the problem in the book *I don’t believe in dragons*. ’

### Note

If you have been using an alternative story about an imaginary creature, please modify the example activities accordingly to explore the problem in the text you are using.

### Focus questions

The problem in the book is that Jack doesn’t believe in dragons.

Q: *How is Jack’s problem solved?*

Q: *How does the author/illustrator show that Jack has solved his problem?*

Q: *How does it make you feel when you see that Jack’s problem has been solved?*

### Say to students

‘ The words and the pictures in the book give information about how the problem is solved.

Part of this story is about what is real and what is not real.

The picture only pages seem to show the imaginary information, but there are words on the pages that are showing what is real. Jack doesn’t think the dragon is real, but then the author has created a double page just with a picture of a BIG dragon doing something interesting in the school world. So it goes not real, REAL, not real, REAL.

When Jack finds that the dragon is a friend at the end of the story, he is happy. ’

- Display the page of the book where Jack suddenly sees the dragon (or a character from the text you are using encounters the solution to their problem in the story).
  - Ask students to be in the role of Jack at this moment and show how he must be feeling.
  - Ask students to talk about how surprised Jack must be and what he might say.
- Continue to add information to the ‘Understanding stories’ chart by including the sub-heading ‘Story solutions’ and information about story solutions (as shown below).

- Encourage students to add pictures that explain and help them remember each of the features of story beginnings.

<b>Understanding stories</b>
<b>Story beginnings</b>
<i>Who is in the story? Where does the story happen? When does the story happen?</i>
<b>Story problems</b>
<i>What problems face the people or animals in the story? What differences or difficulties are there between the people or animals in the story? What has caused these problems?</i>
<b>Story solutions</b>
<i>How did the people or animals solve their problem? How did the story end?</i>

### Read and respond to a mystery letter



- Draw student’s attention to the mystery letter from **Sheet** — [Letter 1](#).

<b>Focus questions</b>
<i>Q: Here is a letter addressed to us. How exciting is this?</i>
<i>Q: Did someone in Prep send this letter?</i>

- Be sure that students understand the difference between a postal letter and letters of the alphabet.

### Focus questions

- Q: *What is a letter?*
- Q: *Who writes letters?*
- Q: *Have you ever written a letter?*

- Read the letter and discuss what is known about the information in the letter (a greeting, the contents, a sign off or who it is from).
  - Explain the meaning of 'PS', written toward the end of the letter. (For example: PS means that even though you have signed off, you have thought of something else you wish to say.)
  - Talk about how the information is like a story.
  - Make connections to story beginnings, story problems, repeating patterns and story solutions.

### Focus questions

- Q: *Does this letter have a beginning?*
- Q: *Does it have characters? A setting?*
- Q: *Does this letter present a problem?*
- Q: *Does this letter offer a solution?*

- Make sure students understand the story that has been outlined in the letter (for example: that Sam has lost his dog and needs to find it).
- Keep and display the letter for use throughout the lessons.

## Write a response to the imaginative text

### Say to students

“ That’s a very sad story about a dog that is lost. I wonder if you could think of some places that the dog could have gone. ”

- Read the letter again, talk about the scenario outlined in the letter and discuss some answers to the questions.
  - Have students think of some places that a dog might like to go and how Sam could get his dog back.
- Explain to students that they will write a reply to Sam with some ideas about where they think the dog may be.

- Demonstrate writing a reply to Sam. Include:
  - a greeting — who it is to
  - contents — responding to the problem
  - sign off — who it is from
  - add a PS to the end of the letter.
- Allow time for students to write or draw a response to the letter. Ideas might include:

<p><i>Dear Sam,</i></p> <p><i>You might find your dog in a neighbour's yard.</i></p> <p><i>From Tom</i></p>	<p><i>Dear Sam,</i></p> <p><i>Dogs run everywhere. Your dog could be with some other dog friends.</i></p> <p><i>From Jack</i></p>	<p><i>Dear Sam</i></p> <p><i>Dogs go to the vet's.</i></p> <p><i>From Emma</i></p>
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- As they write, encourage students to listen for the most obvious sound in the words and to use alphabet charts, the high-frequency words, or other print resources.

### Share letters with the class

- Allow time for students to read their letters to another person.
- Collect students' letters and explain that you will send them off to Sam.
- Discuss with students what might happen next with the characters.

### Review letters and sounds

#### Note

This series of lessons provides opportunities for students to review three- and four-letter words in context that have the letter blends 'sm', 'st', 'sp', 'sc', 'sn', 'dr', 'pr', 'cr' and 'tr' and the letter endings 'am', 'at', 'ap', 'an', 'ad', 'in', 'it', 'id', 'ip' and 'im'.

Draw students' attention to these letter patterns in words as you write and read texts, for example: stories, factual texts and everyday or environmental print.

- Talk about the sound that the letters 'd' and 'r' make at the beginning of the word 'dragons'.
  - Ask students to look on the front cover of the book *I don't believe in dragons* and find the word 'dragons' (or examine a written sentence strip that contains a 'dr' word relating to the alternate text you have been using. For example: 'Luckily, Joe's creature was not a dragon!').
  - Have students run their finger underneath the letters 'd' and 'r' and say the /dr/ sound.
  - Ask students to think of other words that begin with /dr/ (for example: 'drink', 'drip', 'drag').
  - Work together to think of sentences where many of the words begin with the letter 'dr' (for example: The droopy dragon was dripping wet.).

## Develop a bank of high-frequency words

- Ask students to select five high-frequency words (for example: 'I', 'said', 'see') that they think they will find in the book *I don't believe in dragons* (or your alternate text).
  - Look through the book to see if these words can be found.

## Develop, progress and consolidate English through the contexts for learning

### Prepare for play

- Explain to students that they will use a book to find characters and events for a role-play.

### Role-play an imaginary event

- Talk about the events and characters from the book *I don't believe in dragons* (or your alternate text).
  - Allow time for students to gather any props and equipment they need and begin to role-play the dragon or other characters from the story.
  - Take on a role within the story (even for a short time) to help students set up the play and to provide ideas as necessary.
  - Help students think about what the dragon or other characters would say and do.
  - Help students talk about what they are thinking and feeling.
- Return to the book and refer to the double pages illustrated with the dragon's actions for ideas to support the play.

## Early literacy skills — Reading and handwriting

### Writing

- Provide students with the opportunity to write their own sentences about the ideas in the book *I don't believe in dragons*.
- Ask students questions to help with their ideas.

#### Focus questions

Q: *What are imaginary friends good for?*

Q: *What are some problems with believing in imaginary creatures?*

Q: *Why do you think Jack did not want to see the dragon?*

- Support students to write responses to the questions using knowledge of letter–sound correspondence.
  - Focus on punctuation, directionality and the most obvious letter sounds in words.
  - Remind students to use the text to check names of characters and demonstrate using displayed words (including high-frequency word lists), word banks and picture dictionaries to support student writing.

## **Fine motor skills and letter knowledge**

- Ask students to:
  - create letter endings with a short /a/ sound in them with playdough (for example: 'am', 'at', 'ap', 'an', 'ad')
  - write single initial consonants on cards to add to the letter ending to create new words
  - construct or draw the item they have spelled (for example: h-at) and photograph it to share with others.

## **Build responsibility in students**

- Have students pack away any materials they used in this session.