obook

oxford big ideas 8

australian curriculum

english

susan leslie | kate dullard | clare ridgway-faye

OXFORD

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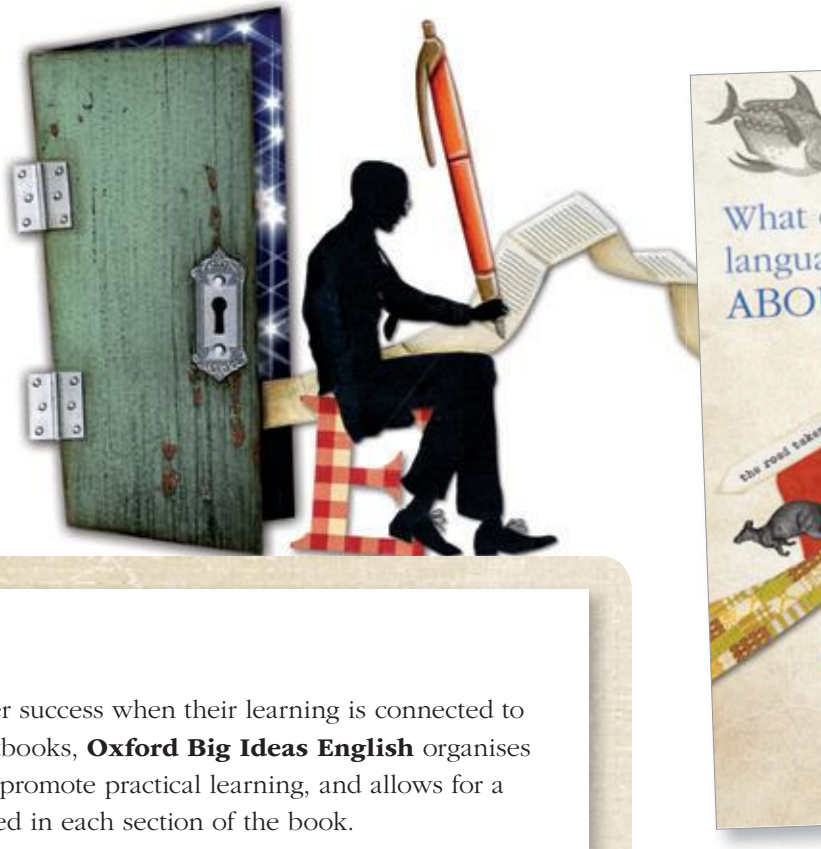
Contents

Part 5: How do literary texts show WHO we are and WHAT is important to us? 212

What is ... Oxford Big Ideas English?

Oxford Big Ideas English is a brand-new series for junior English specifically written for the Australian Curriculum. It offers an innovative approach based on conceptual learning that encourages students' thinking by exposing them to a wide range of texts in different modes and from different cultural contexts.

In line with the *Australian Curriculum: English*, Language, Literature and Literacy are topics explored in every chapter of the book, offering a comprehensive and ready-to-use teaching program that will help you and your students make a smooth transition to the new Australian Curriculum.



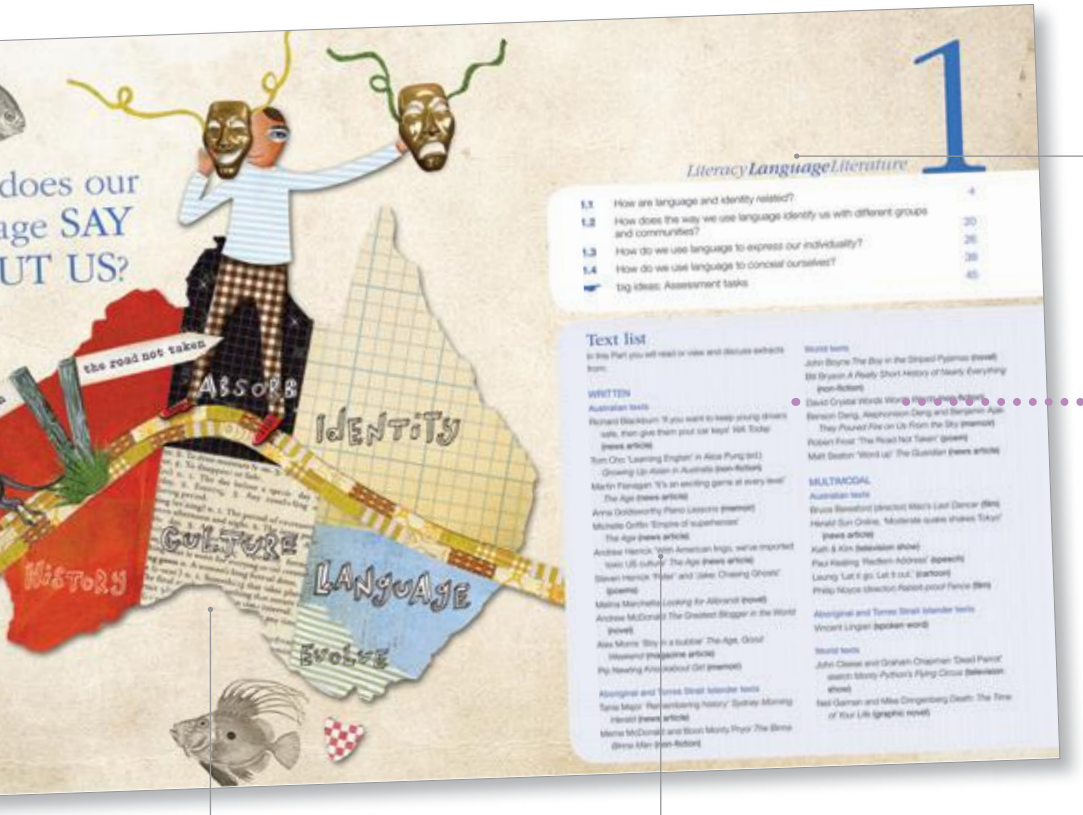
Why big ideas?

Research shows that students achieve greater success when their learning is connected to key concepts. Unlike traditional English textbooks, **Oxford Big Ideas English** organises content into key questions or big ideas that promote practical learning, and allows for a much wider scope in the text types presented in each section of the book.

Every big idea is also aimed to develop genuine literacy skills: throughout the book, students analyse different language features that they can apply to their own writing through a series of graded modelling activities.

Key features

- organises contents into meaningful big ideas and revisits these ideas with increasing complexity
- offers an innovative approach based on conceptual learning
- integrates the strands of Language, Literature and Literacy throughout each chapter
- exposes students to a wealth of literary and non-literary texts from different cultural contexts and with a strong emphasis on digital and multimodal texts
- develops genuine literacy skills through a broad range of activities underpinning the different communication modes
- explores grammar in context from authentic examples of 'language in use'
- enhances writing skills through a wide range of modelling tasks, encouraging students to become text creators and not just text analysers



Each part emphasises a specific strand from the Australian Curriculum: English.

CONCEPTUAL LEARNING

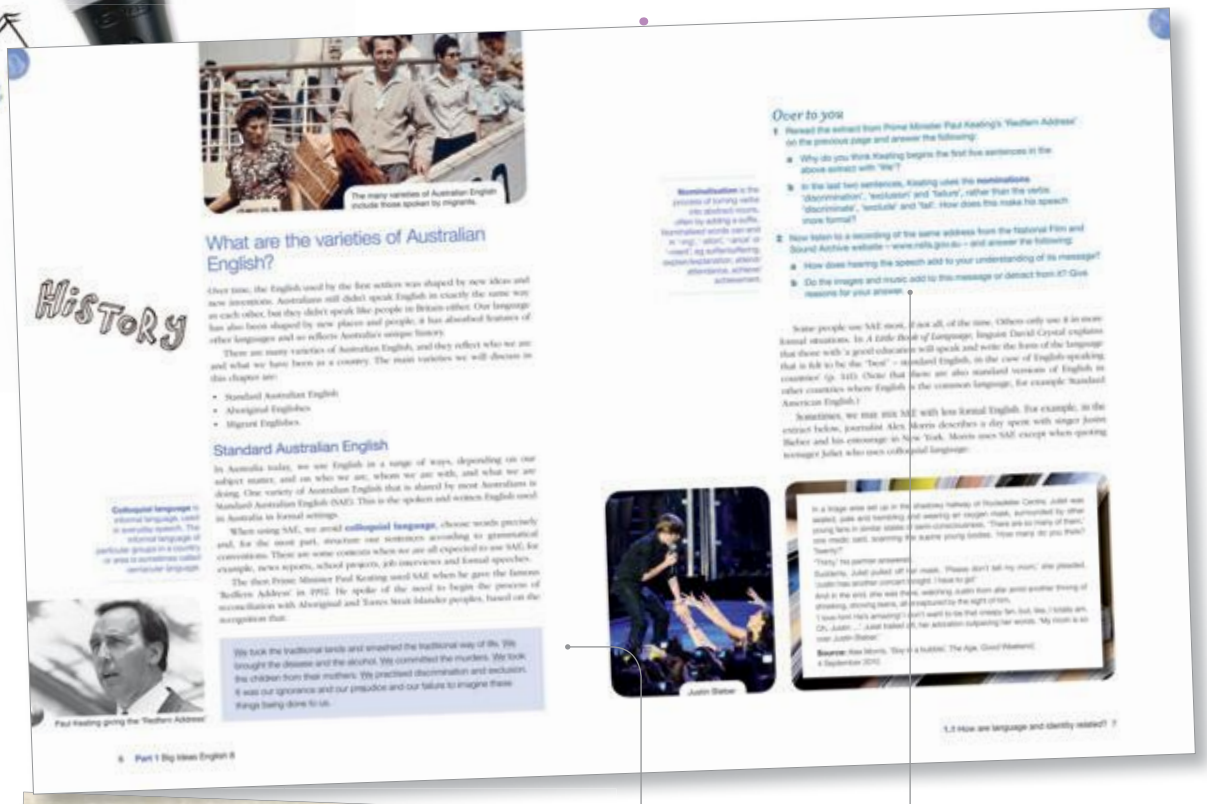
Content is organised around the key ideas at the basis of junior English. Each big idea has a strong writing outcome that encourages students to reflect on how language can be used in a variety of ways for different purposes and audiences, and in different contexts.

The big ideas in the chapter always promote a practical approach to language analysis.

The text list at the start of each part gives an overview of the main texts presented, grouped by mode and cultural context.

GRAMMAR IN CONTEXT

Grammar is explained throughout the book, using authentic examples of 'language in use' to make the learning more practical and effective.



What are the varieties of Australian English?

HISTORY

Standard Australian English

Over to you

Extracts from real texts are used to support every grammar topic explained.

'Over to you' activities are scattered throughout the text to reinforce student learning and allow students to obtain regular feedback about their work.

big ideas

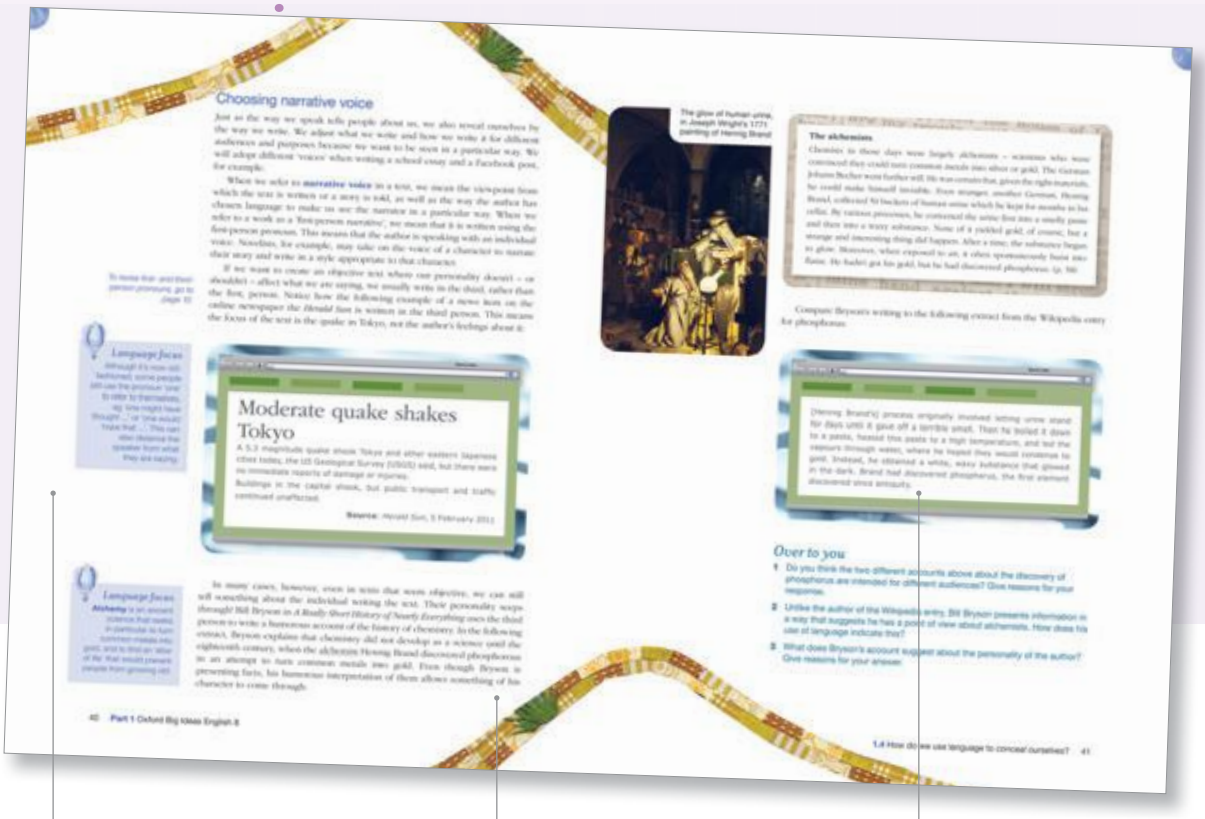
What does our language SAY ABOUT US?

Handy writing and editing tips are included at the end of the book, along with annotated sample responses.

Comprehensive assessment tasks are presented at the end of each part. They build on student skills and knowledge previously acquired.

DIGITAL AND MULTIMODAL TEXTS

Language and text features of digital and multimodal texts are analysed throughout, to ensure that students appreciate and enjoy the use of English in all its variations. Current and engaging stimulus material ensures that the learning is fun, as well as appropriate for the year level.



'Language focus' features explain difficult or new terms, and expand on grammar, spelling or punctuation considerations.

Graphic novels and picture books are used as examples of texts that combine different communication modes.

Digital texts are analysed through a range of movie stills and online texts.

INTEGRATED TEACHING AND LEARNING SUPPORT

obook

Oxford's electronic book format – the obook – offers online and offline access to core student content.

The obook provides the complete student book in an easy-to-read format for any screen size, with multimedia links, a note-taking study tool and dynamic question blocks. Oxford's obook is compatible with laptops, iPads, tablets and IWBs. Networkable versions are also available.

Teacher support

A wealth of online teaching resources are available, including additional worksheets and answers, NAPLAN-style literacy tests and answers, and recommended text lists for extension activities.

Oxford Big Ideas English and the Australian Curriculum

LANGUAGE

Language variation and change

Understand the influence and impact that the English language has had on other languages or dialects and how English has been influenced in return

1.1

Language for interaction

Understand how conventions of speech adopted by communities influence the identities of people in those communities

1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 5.3 5.5

Understand how rhetorical devices are used to persuade and how different layers of meaning are developed through the use of metaphor, irony and parody

1.3 2.1 2.2 3.3 4.1 4.2 5.2

Text structure and organisation

Analyse how the text structures and language features of persuasive texts, including media texts, vary according to the medium and mode of communication

3.3 3.4 4.1 4.2 4.3 4.4

Understand how cohesion in texts is improved by strengthening the internal structure of paragraphs through the use of examples, quotations and substantiation of claims

3.2 3.3

Understand how coherence is created in complex texts through devices like lexical cohesion, ellipsis, grammatical theme and text connectives

3.2 3.3

Understand the use of punctuation conventions, including colons, semicolons, dashes and brackets in formal and informal texts

1.1 3.1 3.2 3.3 5.2

Expressing and developing ideas

Analyse and examine how effective authors control and use a variety of clause structures, including clauses embedded within the structure of a main group, phrase or clause

1.1 1.3 2.3 3.2 4.1 5.2 5.3 5.5

Understand the effect of nominalisation in the writing of informative and persuasive texts

1.1 3.1 3.2 3.3

Investigate how visual and multimodal texts allude to or draw on other texts or images to enhance and layer meaning

2.1 2.2 2.3 4.2 5.4

Recognise that vocabulary choices contribute to the specificity, abstraction and style of texts

1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 2.3 3.1 3.2 4.1 4.2 4.3 4.4 5.3 5.5

Understand how to apply learned knowledge consistently in order to spell accurately and to learn new words including nominalisations

1.1 1.3 3.1 3.2 3.3 4.1 4.2 4.3 4.4 5.1 5.2 5.3 5.4 5.5

LITERATURE

Literature and context

Explore the ways that ideas and viewpoints in literary texts drawn from different historical, social and cultural contexts may reflect or challenge the values of individuals and groups

3.3 4.1 4.2 4.3 4.4 5.1 5.2 5.3 5.4 5.5

Explore the interconnectedness of Country and Place, People, Identity and Culture in texts including those by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authors

5.1 5.2 5.3 5.4 5.5

Responding to literature

Share, reflect on, clarify and evaluate opinions and arguments about aspects of literary texts

2.1 2.3 2.4 4.1 4.2 4.4 5.1 5.2 5.3 5.4 5.5

Understand and explain how combinations of words and images in texts are used to represent particular groups in society, and how texts position readers in relation to those groups

1.1 1.3 2.1 3.3 4.1 4.2 4.3 5.4 5.5

Recognise and explain differing viewpoints about the world, cultures, individual people and concerns represented in texts

3.3 4.2 4.4 5.4 5.5

Oxford Big Ideas English 8 is based on the Australian Curriculum: English and is designed to meet the Year 8 'Achievement Standard'. Students will address, in an integrated way, all of the English strands: Language, Literature and Literacy, as well as the content descriptions for each sub-strand.

LITERACY

Examining literature

Recognise, explain and analyse the ways literary texts draw on readers' knowledge of other texts and enable new understanding and appreciation of aesthetic qualities

2.1 2.2 2.3 4.2 4.3 4.4 5.3 5.4 5.5

Identify and evaluate devices that create tone, for example humour, wordplay, innuendo and parody in poetry, humorous prose, drama or visual texts

1.4 2.2 3.3 4.2 4.3 5.5

Interpret and analyse language choices, including sentence patterns, dialogue, imagery and other language features, in short stories, literary essays and plays

1.1 1.3 1.4 2.1 4.2 4.3 4.4 5.2 5.3 5.4

Creating literature

Create texts that draw upon text structures and language features of other texts for particular purposes and effects

1.1 1.2 1.3 2.1 2.2 2.3 3.1 3.2 3.3 4.1 4.2 4.3 5.2 5.3 5.4 5.5

Experiment with particular language features drawn from different types of texts, including combinations of language and visual choices to create new texts

1.1 1.2 1.3 2.1 2.2 2.3 3.1 3.2 3.3 4.1 4.2 4.3 4.4 5.4

KEY: Coloured numbers indicate the parts and chapters in which the sub-strands are covered

Texts in context

Analyse and explain how language has evolved over time and how technology and the media have influenced language use and forms of communication

1.1 2.1 3.2 3.3

Interacting with others

Interpret the stated and implied meanings in spoken texts, and use evidence to support or challenge different perspectives

1.4 4.3

Use interaction skills for identified purposes, using voice and language conventions to suit different situations, selecting vocabulary, modulating voice and using elements such as music, images and sound for specific effects

1.1 2.4 3.2 3.4 4.3 5.5

Plan, rehearse and deliver presentations, selecting and sequencing appropriate content, including multimodal elements, to reflect a diversity of viewpoints

2.2 2.4 3.2 4.4 5.5

Interpreting, analysing, evaluating

Analyse and evaluate the ways that text structures and language features vary according to the purpose of the text and the ways that referenced sources add authority to a text

2.2 2.3 3.1 3.2 3.3 3.4 4.4

Apply increasing knowledge of vocabulary, text structures and language features to understand the content of texts

1.1 1.2 1.3 2.2 2.3 3.1 3.2 4.2 4.3 4.4 5.1 5.2 5.3 5.4 5.5

Use comprehension strategies to interpret and evaluate texts by reflecting on the validity of content and the credibility of sources, including finding evidence in the text for the author's point of view

3.1 3.2 3.3 4.2 4.3 4.4

Explore and explain the ways authors combine different modes and media in creating texts, and the impact of these choices on the viewer/listener

2.1 2.2 2.3 3.2 3.3 4.2 4.3 5.4

Creating texts

Create imaginative, informative and persuasive texts that raise issues, report events and advance opinions, using deliberate language and textual choices, and including digital elements as appropriate

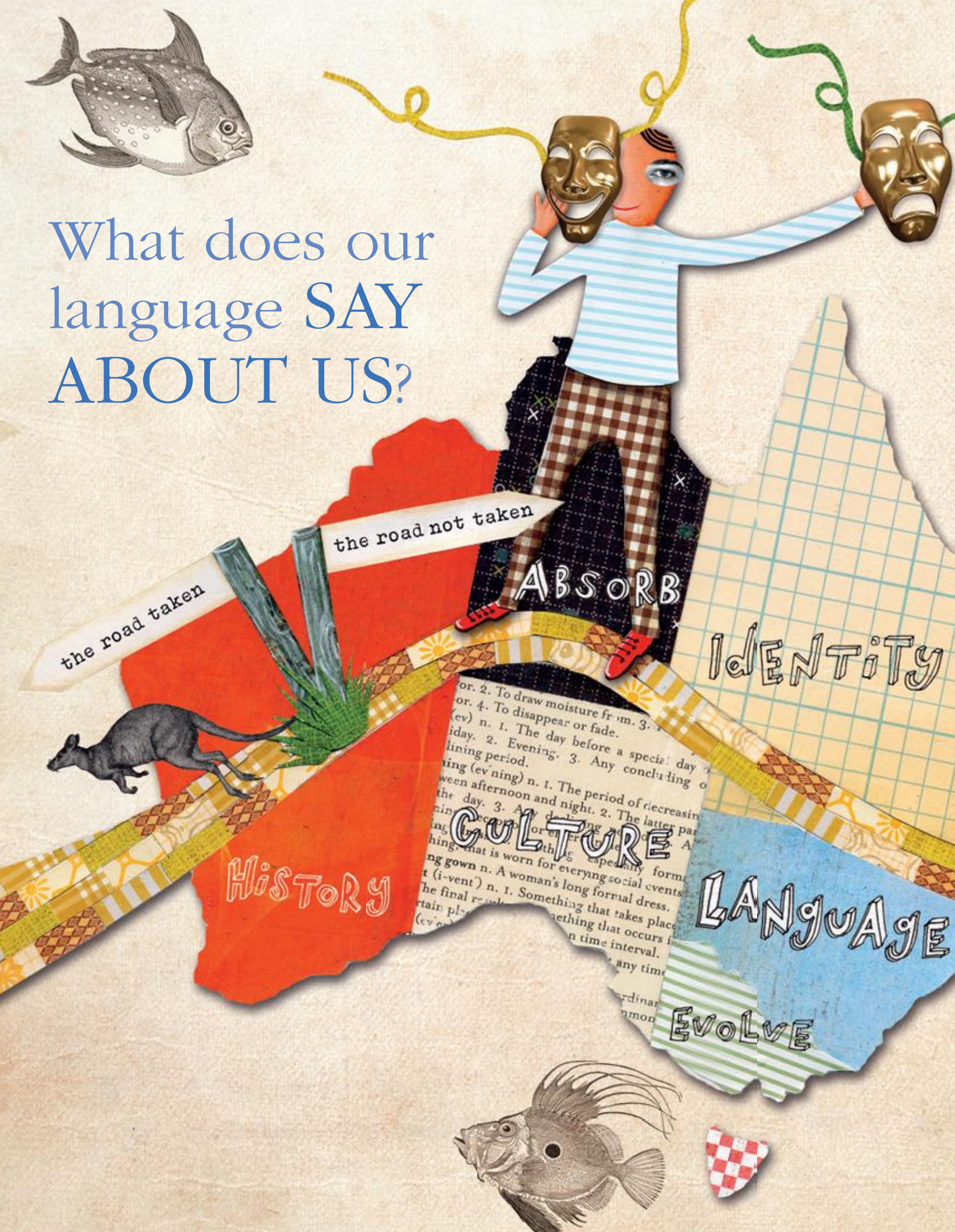
1.3 2.2 2.3 2.5 3.1 3.2 3.3 4.1 4.2 5.1 5.2 5.3 5.4 5.5

Experiment with text structures and language features to refine and clarify ideas to improve the effectiveness of students' own texts

1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 2.1 2.2 2.3 2.4 3.2 3.3 4.1 4.2 4.3 4.4 5.1 5.2 5.3 5.4 5.5

Use a range of software, including word processing programs, to create, edit and publish texts imaginatively

Refer to 'How can I improve my writing?' on page 252 for advice on how to create, edit and publish your texts


What does our language SAY ABOUT US?
the road not taken
the road taken
ABSORB
IDENTITY
CULTURE
HISTORY
LANGUAGE
EVOLVE

1

Literacy ***Language*** *Literature*

Text list

In this Part you will read or view and discuss extracts from:

WRITTEN

Australian texts

Richard Blackburn 'If you want to keep young drivers safe, then give them your car keys' *WA Today* (news article)

Tom Cho 'Learning English' in Alice Pung (ed.) *Growing Up Asian in Australia* (non-fiction)

Martin Flanagan 'It's an exciting game at every level' *The Age* (news article)

Anna Goldsworthy *Piano Lessons* (memoir)

Michelle Griffin 'Empire of superheroes' *The Age* (news article)

Andrew Herrick 'With American lingo, we've imported toxic US culture' *The Age* (news article)

Steven Herrick 'Peter' and 'Jake: Chasing Ghosts' (poems)

Melina Marchetta *Looking for Alibrandi* (novel)

Andrew McDonald *The Greatest Blogger in the World* (novel)

Alex Morris 'Boy in a bubble' *The Age, Good Weekend* (magazine article)

Pip Newling *Knockabout Girl* (memoir)

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander texts

Tania Major 'Remembering history' *Sydney Morning Herald* (news article)

Meme McDonald and Boori Monty Pryor *The Binna Binna Man* (non-fiction)

World texts

John Boyne *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* (novel)

Bill Bryson *A Really Short History of Nearly Everything* (non-fiction)

David Crystal *Words Words Words* (non-fiction)

Benson Deng, Alephonsion Deng and Benjamin Ajak *They Poured Fire on Us From the Sky* (memoir)

Robert Frost 'The Road Not Taken' (poem)

Matt Seaton 'Word up' *The Guardian* (news article)

MULTIMODAL

Australian texts

Bruce Beresford (director) *Mao's Last Dancer* (film)

Herald Sun Online, 'Moderate quake shakes Tokyo' (news article)

Kath & Kim (television show)

Paul Keating 'Redfern Address' (speech)

Leunig 'Let it go. Let it out.' (cartoon)

Phillip Noyce (director) *Rabbit-Proof Fence* (film)

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander texts

Vincent Lingiari (spoken word)

World texts

John Cleese and Graham Chapman 'Dead Parrot' sketch *Monty Python's Flying Circus* (television show)

Neil Gaiman and Mike Dringenberg *Death: The Time of Your Life* (graphic novel)

1.1 How are language and identity *related*?

Our sense of who we are is linked to the language we use. We are identified as citizens of different countries, as members of different communities and as individuals not just by *what* we say, but also by *how* we say it.

When we hear someone speak, we will often recognise them immediately as Australians because of how they use English. We may notice their distinctive accent and choice of words. We may make judgments about their cultural background, and about their age, their interests and their personality based on how they use English. We may also make the same sort of judgments based on their body language. Perhaps we will notice that they use language differently, depending on whether they're at a family celebration, playing a team sport, or giving a speech at a school assembly; they will be using the same language, but they may be using it in different ways in different situations.

Our language is so linked to our identities that changes in the ways we use language reflect changes in our identity – at a national, community and personal level. Like all languages, Australian English is constantly evolving; we use new words and expressions, and drop others in response to new influences and ideas. With increased globalisation and the rapid development of technology, we absorb features of other languages. Second and later generations of migrants often use language differently to their parents, and words and phrases go out of fashion.

In 10 years' time, we will be using words to describe things that are unheard of today.

Language focus

Culture refers to the customs, behaviours, attitudes and institutions (such as schools and government organisations) of a particular nation, people or social group.

CULTURE

Over to you

Working in groups, list the cultural backgrounds of the members of your group. Are there any differences in the ways members of your group use English? Give some examples and share them with the rest of the class.

What does our language say about Australia's identity?

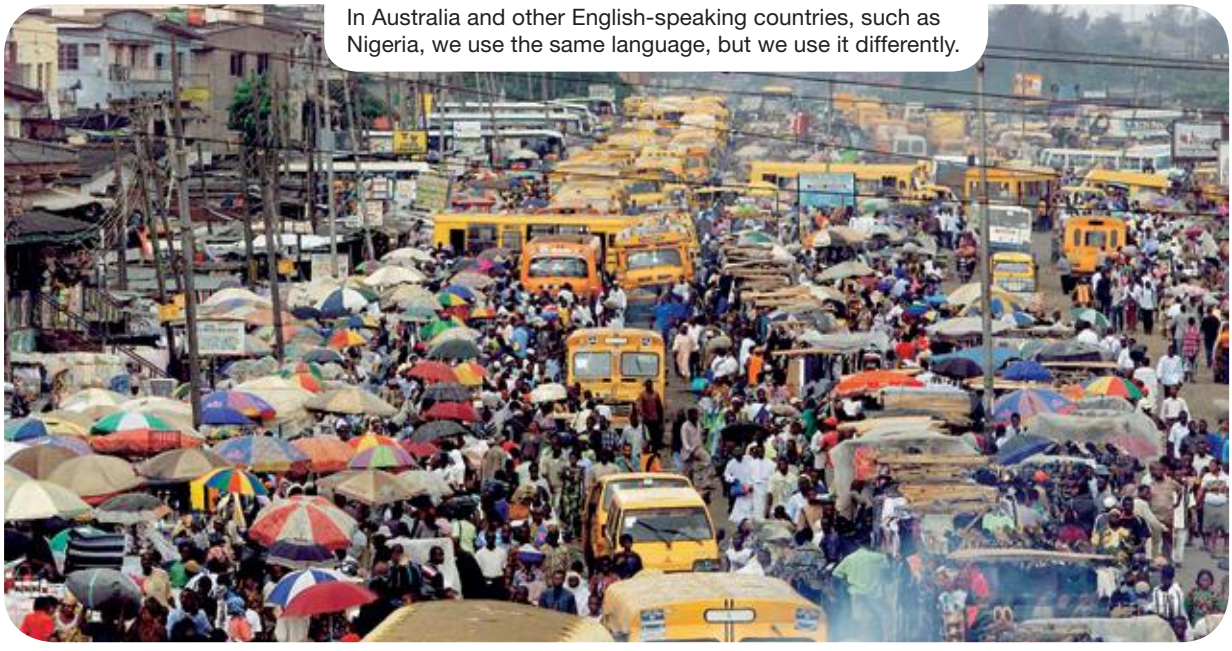
If we look closely at Australian English, it provides a record of the many events and influences that have made Australia a country. It can show us what Australia has gained and what it has lost over the years.

The language brought by the British colonisers – English – is the language most of us speak in Australia today. However, we probably wouldn't recognise much of the English used by the first British settlers. Like all languages, it has evolved in response to what has happened over the last two centuries.

The English we use in Australia today not only differs from the English of the first settlers, it also differs from the English used in other English-speaking countries, such as Scotland, the USA or Nigeria. We use the same language, but we use it differently.

Over to you

1. In small groups, brainstorm a list of Australian words or phrases and their American versions (for example, footpath/sidewalk; queue/line up). Share your list with the rest of the class.
2. Write down some words or phrases that your grandparents (or parents) use, but that you never use. Why do you think this is? Discuss as a class.



In Australia and other English-speaking countries, such as Nigeria, we use the same language, but we use it differently.

The many varieties of Australian English include those spoken by migrants.

What are the varieties of Australian English?

Over time, the English used by the first settlers was shaped by new ideas and new inventions. Australians still didn't speak English in exactly the same way as each other, but they didn't speak like people in Britain either. Our language has also been shaped by new places and people; it has absorbed features of other languages and so reflects Australia's unique history.

There are many varieties of Australian English, and they reflect who we are and what we have been as a country. The main varieties we will discuss in this chapter are:

- Standard Australian English
- Aboriginal Englishes
- Migrant Englishes.

Standard Australian English

In Australia today, we use English in a range of ways, depending on our subject matter, and on who we are, whom we are with, and what we are doing. One variety of Australian English that is shared by most Australians is Standard Australian English (SAE). This is the spoken and written English used in Australia in formal settings.

When using SAE, we avoid **colloquial language**, choose words precisely and, for the most part, structure our sentences according to grammatical conventions. There are some contexts when we are all expected to use SAE; for example, news reports, school projects, job interviews and formal speeches.

Colloquial language is informal language, used in everyday speech. The informal language of particular groups in a country or area is sometimes called *vernacular language.*

The then Prime Minister Paul Keating used SAE when he gave the famous 'Redfern Address' in 1992. He spoke of the need to begin the process of reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, based on the recognition that:

> We took the traditional lands and smashed the traditional way of life. We brought the disease and the alcohol. We committed the murders. We took the children from their mothers. We practised discrimination and exclusion. It was our ignorance and our prejudice and our failure to imagine these things being done to us.

Paul Keating giving the 'Redfern Address'

Over to you

1 Re-read the extract from former Prime Minister Paul Keating's 'Redfern Address' on the previous page and answer the following:

a Why do you think Keating begins the first five sentences in the above extract with 'we'?

b In the last two sentences, Keating uses the **nominalisations** 'discrimination', 'exclusion' and 'failure', rather than the verbs 'discriminate', 'exclude' and 'fail'. How does this make his speech more formal?

2 Now listen to a recording of the same address from the National Film and Sound Archive website – www.nfsa.gov.au – and answer the following:

a How does hearing the speech add to your understanding of its message?

b Do the images and music add to this message or detract from it? Give reasons for your answer.

Nominalisation is the process of turning verbs into abstract nouns, often by adding a suffix. For example, nominalised words can end in '-ing', '-ation', '-ance' or '-ment'; such as suffer/suffering, explain/explanation, attend/attendance, achieve/achievement.

Some people use SAE most, if not all, of the time. Others only use it in more formal situations. In *A Little Book of Language*, linguist David Crystal explains that those with 'a good education will speak and write the form of the language that is felt to be the "best" – standard English, in the case of English-speaking countries' (p. 141). (Note that there are also standard versions of English in other countries where English is the common language, for example Standard American English.)

Sometimes, we may mix SAE with less formal English. For example, in the extract below, journalist Alex Morris describes a day spent with singer Justin Bieber and his entourage in New York. Morris uses SAE except when quoting teenager Juliet, who uses colloquial language:

Justin Bieber

In a triage area set up in the shadowy hallway of Rockefeller Center, Juliet was seated, pale and trembling and wearing an oxygen mask, surrounded by other young fans in similar states of semi-consciousness. 'There are so many of them,' one medic said, scanning the supine young bodies. 'How many do you think? Twenty?'

'Thirty,' his partner answered.

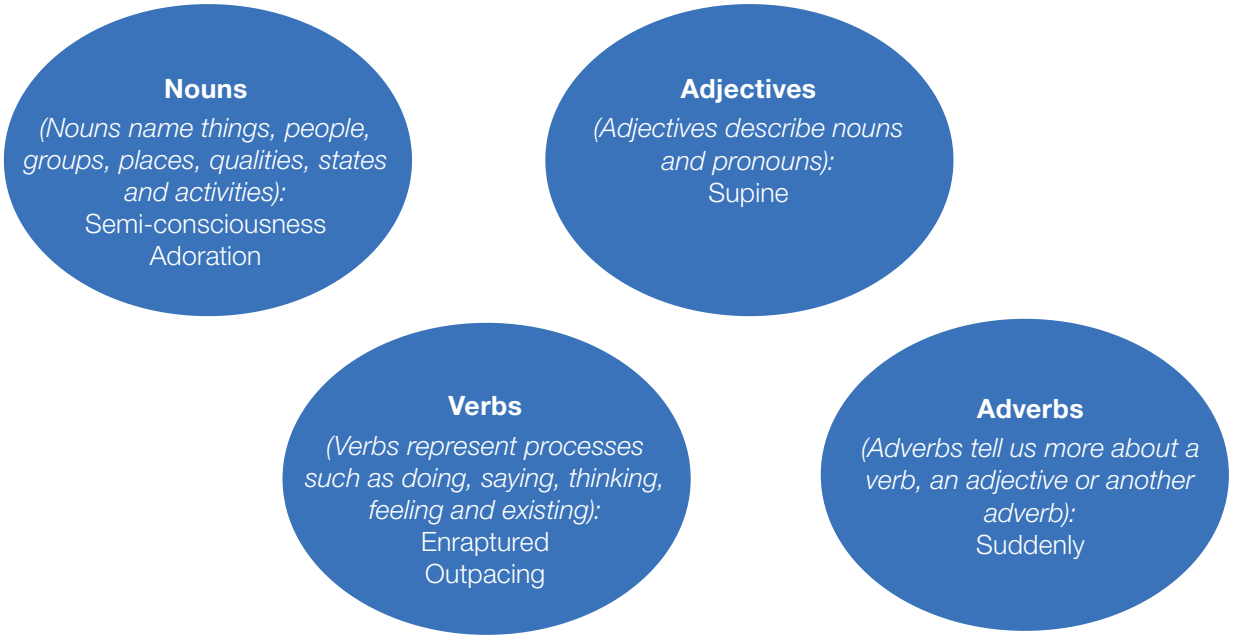
Suddenly, Juliet pulled off her mask. 'Please don't tell my mom,' she pleaded. 'Justin has another concert tonight. I have to go!'

And in the end, she was there, watching Justin from afar amid another throng of shrieking, shoving teens, all enraptured by the sight of him,

'I love him! He's amazing! I don't want to be that creepy fan, but, like, I totally am. Oh, Justin …' Juliet trailed off, her adoration outpacing her words. 'My mom is so over Justin Bieber.'

Source: Alex Morris, 'Boy in a bubble', *The Age, Good Weekend*, 4 September 2010

In this extract, Morris uses a range of vocabulary characteristic of SAE, for example:



Adverbial phrases tell us more about an adverb, for example 'so over' is an adverbial phrase ('over' is an adverb, defined by 'so').

Complex sentences are made up of an **independent clause**, joined by one or more **dependent clauses**.

An **independent clause** is a clause that makes sense on its own.

A **dependent clause** adds meaning to an independent clause, but cannot stand alone.

Although Juliet often uses words that are also used in SAE, she uses them differently; 'I totally agree' may be SAE, but 'I totally am' is not. Juliet's **adverbial phrase** 'so over' would similarly not be used in SAE, although it is commonly used in the everyday conversation of young people. Notice too that Juliet mainly uses simple sentences – for example, 'I love him!' – whereas Morris combines a range of sentence types, such as the following **complex sentence**:

> In a triage area set up in the shadowy hallway of Rockefeller Center, Juliet was seated, pale and trembling and wearing an oxygen mask, surrounded by other young fans in similar states of semi-consciousness.

Dependent clause

Over to you

1. Create a digital or handwritten alphabetical glossary of new words. Start by looking up the meanings of any words in the passage by Alex Morris that you are unfamiliar with.
   - For each word, include its origin and meaning(s), and a sentence showing how it is used.
   - Update your glossary as you add to your vocabulary.
2. Working in pairs, use the same passage as a model to create a text that uses SAE but includes quotations from a speaker using more informal language. Try to include a range of vocabulary, different parts of speech and sentence types in your text.

LANGUAGE

Aboriginal Englishes

Australian English today reflects the influence of the languages of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who lost many of their languages, as well as their land, as a result of British colonisation. Before white settlement, Indigenous Australians spoke over 250 languages. Of those that are left, many are endangered – for example, in 2003 there were only 60 speakers of the language of the Gurindji people.

Vincent Lingiari, a Gurindji man from Daruragu in the Northern Territory, fought for Aboriginal rights and was recorded speaking his language. This can be heard, along with the translation, at www.indigenousrights.net.au. Lingiari said:

Vincent Lingiari

> My name is Vincent Lingiari, came from Daruragu, Wattie Creek station. That means that I came down here to ask all these fella here about the land rights. What I got story from my old father or grandfather that land belongs to me, belongs to Aboriginal men before the horses and the cattle come over on that land where I am sitting now. That is what I have been keeping on my mind and I still got it on my mind. That is all the words I can tell you.

IDENTITY

In the years following British colonisation, not many non-Indigenous people tried to learn Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages, and this is still the case today. In her memoir *Knockabout Girl*, Pip Newling recounts how she left Sydney to go and work in Halls Creek in Western Australia in the 1990s. The Aboriginal people there mostly spoke one of the main local languages, Jaru and Kija. Newling explains that more people in the town spoke one of those languages – or even both – than English. Even so, she adds, 'few non-Aboriginal Australians [had] any understanding of either of these languages'.

A form of language called Pidgin English developed. This was made up of a limited number of English words, together with some words from Aboriginal languages. Over time, some Pidgin English words were absorbed into the English spoken by Aboriginal peoples and developed as Aboriginal Englishes. Aboriginal people began to use these words to communicate with other Aboriginal people who spoke different languages. In some regions, they adapted English words as part of their own language, for example:

- Home *became* → 'Camp'
- A group *became* → 'A mob'
- Fantastic *became* → 'Solid'
- Impressive *became* → 'Deadly'

Like other languages, Aboriginal Englishes have distinctive vocabulary, grammar and accents, which vary in different communities. For some people, Aboriginal English is a first language; for others, it is a second language. It may include Pidgin English words and/or words from local Aboriginal languages. For example, in Meme McDonald and Boori Monty Pryor's book *The Binna Binna Man*, Pryor uses both the English word 'whitefulla' and the Aboriginal word 'migaloo' – from one of the Aboriginal languages of north Queensland – to refer to a white person. The narrator describes his Aunty Em:

> straggling round this morning like she's had her own mob of ghosts chasing after her. That migaloo smile, that sure-of-itself whitefulla smile, has lost its hold. Her mouth's gone all wobbly. (p. 82)

SPEAKING

Pryor also uses phrases and sentence structures that are characteristic of Aboriginal Englishes. The 'Quinkin' for example, is:

> called the Binna Binna man 'cause he's got big long ears. Binna means ears, see. He's got ears that long they drag on the ground, true. Drag along the ground as he walks.
>
> The old people call those spirits Quinkins. They reckon the Binna Binna man can be good and heal you and stuff. But you poke fun at him or go to touch him when he don't want to be touched, then you can get into big trouble, like die. (p. 10)

In the film *Rabbit-Proof Fence*, directed by Phillip Noyce, three Aboriginal children are not allowed to speak their own language when they are forcibly removed from their home and mother in north-western Australia. They are taken to the Moore River Native Settlement. On their first day, 2000 kilometres from home, they are told: 'We don't use that jabba here – you speak English' (Scene 5).

Aboriginal people in the film speak English in a distinctive way, however. For example, when the girls escape, they are helped by Mavis, an Aboriginal maid who had been at Moore River herself. When she first meets the girls, she says:

> Mavis: Youse that lot from Moore River?
>
> Molly: Yeah.
>
> Mavis: What you girls walk all that way – 800 miles? I was there, too scared to run away, but. Everyone was always caught ... Youse got the furtherest. (Scene 11)

Rabbit-Proof Fence

Over to you

1 Find some other texts created by Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander writers and add words to your personal glossary that are characteristic of Aboriginal Englishes.

2 With a partner, read aloud the passages on the previous page from Meme McDonald and Boori Pryor's *The Binna Binna Man*.

   a How does the narrator use language to give the impression that he is speaking directly to his audience?

   b The passages provide vivid word pictures of Aunty Em and the Binna Binna man. Create a visual image showing how you would represent one of them if you were the illustrator of a graphic novel version of the text.

3 In the dialogue from *Rabbit-Proof Fence* on the previous page, Mavis's questions are put as statements. How do we know that she is asking questions?

Migrant Englishes

Migrants from all over the world have changed the way we use English. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, most migrants came from British backgrounds. Since the end of World War II in 1945, however, more than six and a half million people have migrated to Australia from over 200 countries. Over 300 languages are spoken in Australian homes. Forty-five per cent of Australians were born overseas or have one parent who was born overseas. Australia now identifies itself as a multicultural country.

The way new migrants use English sometimes shows their background. For example, in Melina Marchetta's novel *Looking for Alibrandi*, when Josie's Italian grandmother describes a boy she thinks would be suitable for Josie, the way she speaks shows her Italian origin. She gets her grammar and words a little wrong, such as when she pronounces 'with' as 'wit':

'He is very well-manner boy.'

'He is very well-manner boy.'

'Mannered,' I corrected, knowing that it irritated her ...

'You misintrepid everything, Jozzie.'

'It's mis-interpret everything,' I corrected, rolling my eyes.

'You are without respect, Jozzie. Just like your mother. Always wit no respect.' (pp. 36–37)

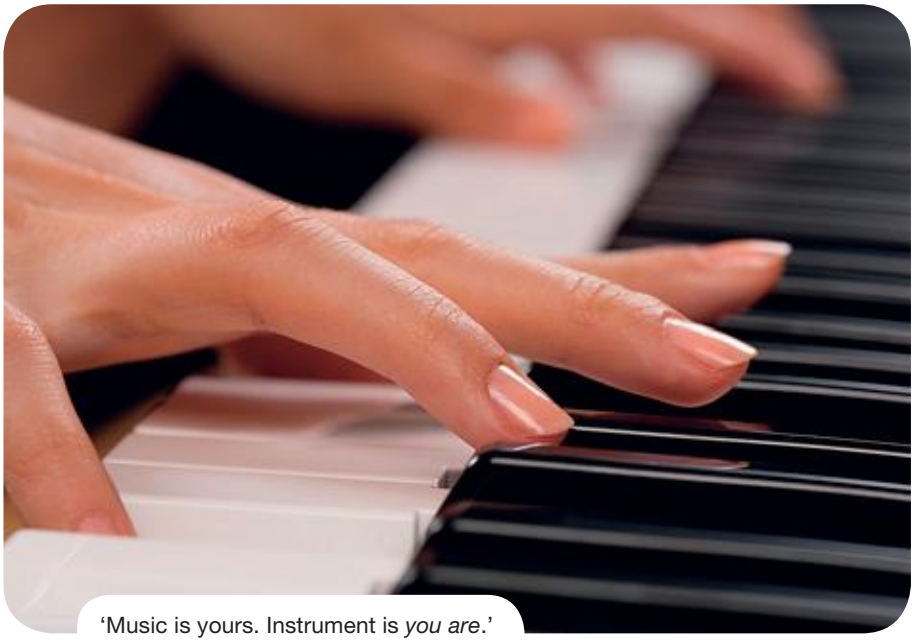
Freshly harvested from the spaghetti bush?

Italian migrants, like Josie's grandmother, brought new words and ideas to Australia. For example, they introduced many of our favourite foods, such as pizza and pasta. In the 1950s, Australians with a British background were so unfamiliar with spaghetti that they fell for an April Fools' hoax. A BBC television program presented a spoof documentary showing how spaghetti was grown and harvested. The television station was flooded with calls from people asking where they could get hold of a spaghetti bush.

First-generation migrants from other countries also speak different varieties of English. In a recent memoir, pianist Anna Goldsworthy describes her first meeting with her piano teacher. Mrs Sivan, who is newly arrived from Russia, expresses complex ideas, but her English is 'new'. For example, she uses the first-person plural **pronoun** rather than the first-person singular to refer to herself. Her sentence order and use of verb tenses is also grammatically unusual!

We use **pronouns** to replace the names of people or things. When we write from our own point of view – or create a character and speak as, or through them – we use the **first-person pronouns** *I, me* (singular), and *we, us* (plural). We use **third-person pronouns** – *he, him, she, her, it* (singular), and *they, them* (plural) – to refer to other people, or to write more impersonally.

> 'We are not teaching piano playing,' she said. Her English was new, and I was not sure if I had heard correctly. 'We are teaching philosophy and life and music digested. Music is yours. Instrument is *you are*. Come in, please come in. (p. 3)



'Music is yours. Instrument is *you are*.'

Other varieties of English include those spoken by migrants from different Asian countries. Some of these have been described as Chinglish, Japlish, Singlish and Manglish. Writer Tom Cho learned English when he arrived in Australia from China. He humorously describes in 'Learning English' (from

Growing Up Asian in Australia, edited by Alice Pung) how difficult he found English lessons and how he developed his own variety of English. He explains that he:

> learnt the trick of replacing words I did not know with phrases like 'bla bla bla,' 'yada yada yada', 'whatever', or the name of a celebrity. (p. 15)

Tom explains how television was an important influence when he was learning English, and that he picked up many expressions by watching television. He especially liked programs with courtroom scenes. Soon, his:

> day-to-day speech was filled with sentences like: 'Murder in the second, twenty to thirty-five years, and we'll drop the conspiracy charge.' (p. 16)

In the film adaptation of Li Cunxin's autobiography *Mao's Last Dancer*, directed by Bruce Beresford, Cunxin uses old-fashioned expressions such as 'upon my soul', which he has learnt from an out-of-date language book (Scene 1).

Children whose parents come from different countries are influenced by the ways their parents speak. The way children speak can also be influenced by their schoolmates. For example, when children from non-English-speaking families form a majority in a school, the students with a British background – who are in the minority – may adjust the way they speak to reflect the majority.

Over to you

1 Working in groups, use the Department of Immigration and Citizenship website (www.immi.gov.au, and choose 'Media', then 'Fact Sheets') to answer the following questions:

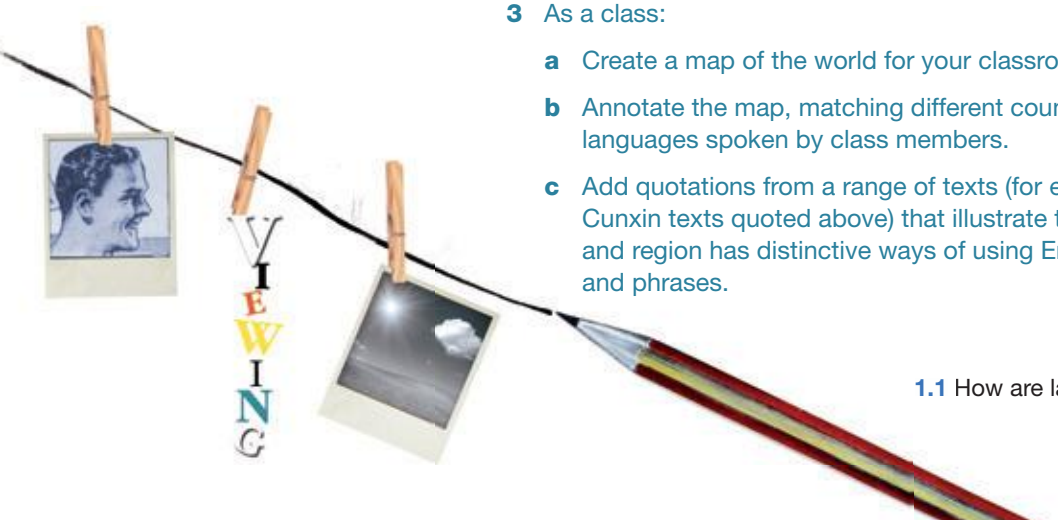
- **a** What are the top 10 countries for migration to Australia?
- **b** Apart from English, what are the most common languages spoken in Australia?

2 In the same groups:

- **a** List the different languages or dialects spoken by members of your group outside school.
- **b** Organise the list according to how many group members speak each language, and compare your group's languages with your answer to Activity 1(b).

3 As a class:

- **a** Create a map of the world for your classroom wall.
- **b** Annotate the map, matching different countries and regions with languages spoken by class members.
- **c** Add quotations from a range of texts (for example, the Tom Cho and Li Cunxin texts quoted above) that illustrate the ways in which each country and region has distinctive ways of using English, such as particular words and phrases.



What do Australian accents say about us?

Language focus

The word **myth** comes from the Greek word *mythos*, meaning 'story' or 'word'. Myths are the stories and knowledge of a culture passed on over the centuries. They attempt to explain how the world came to be as it is.

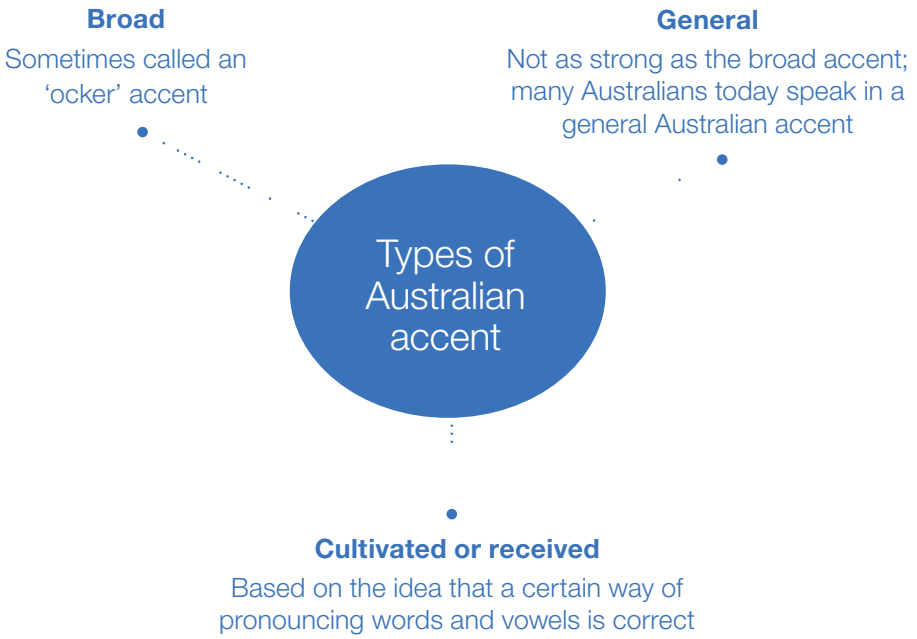
While many Australians who were born overseas speak Australian English with accents that reflect their cultural backgrounds, you can usually tell that someone is Australian as soon as they speak. The Australian accent is unique. The first settlers would not have recognised the way we speak now, as it has changed over the years in response to our unique history.

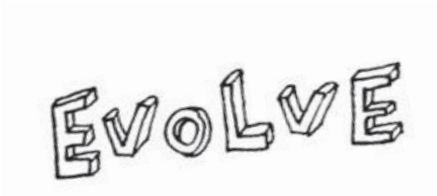
Early settlers, wherever they came from, soon adopted a recognisably Australian accent that was used right across Australia. There are a number of myths about how this happened – one theory is that there were so many flies, the settlers couldn't open their mouths properly, and so developed a way of speaking with their lips barely apart!

Are flies the reason why the Australian accent sounds the way it does?

The Australian accent has changed over time, but a constant feature has been the way Australians pronounce vowels. They may say 'mites' instead of 'mates', and 'to die' instead of 'today', for example.

The Australian accent has sometimes been described as falling into three groups:

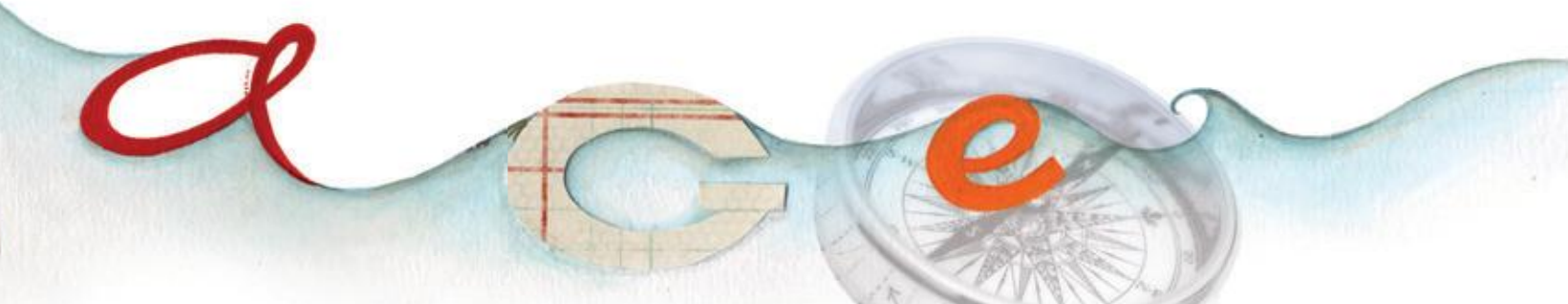




As new varieties of Australian English have evolved, however, the Australian accent has become more varied. Australian accents now reflect the diverse cultural backgrounds of their speakers.

The Australian accent, like Australian English, is always changing as we are more exposed to the accents of people who speak other varieties of English and Australian English. A recent development is called the rising *inflection*, or 'uptalk', where a person raises their voice at the end of a sentence. This sounds as if the speaker is unsure of themselves, or is asking a question. The British writer Matt Seaton suggests in 'Word up', an article in *The Guardian* newspaper, that British teenagers have been influenced by Australian soap operas and also use uptalk. He describes a conversation that he overheard:

> Well, we went canoeing on the lake? Which was, like, really really fun? And then we had storytelling in the barn? And we all had to tell a story about, like, where we're from or our family or something?



Our accent is strongly linked to our sense of identity. When people want to change their identity, they may try to change their accents. In her memoir *Piano Lessons*, Anna Goldsworthy describes her attempts to talk in a 'posh' way when she wins a scholarship to an independent school in Adelaide. She practised her vowels so that:

> 'hi' began more like a 'har' before finding its way back to 'i'. As long as the conversation went no further, nobody would pick me as a scholarship winner. (p. 71)

Comedy shows often caricature peoples' attempts to put on a 'cultivated' or 'posh' accent.

Hyacinth Bucket, from the 1990s British sitcom *Keeping Up Appearances*, pronounces her surname 'Bouquet' and affects a 'posh' accent.

Over to you

In pairs, read the following extract from Series 1, Episode 3 of *Kath & Kim* aloud, using uptalk to mark the end of each sentence or phrase:

> *Sharon:* *Oh, Kimmy, come on, Kim. We've got the big game today, it's the big game. You've got to get up, Kimmy, Kim, come on. Atta girl. See you downstairs in five. Kim, come on. How's about I make you some brekkie, hey? How's about I put the kettle on, alright? Come on, Kimmy. That's a girl.*

1 Discuss whether Sharon's accent would be broad, general or cultivated Australian. Give reasons to support your answer.

2 Now change Sharon's dialogue so that it can be read using a different accent. Consider which words and phrases you need to change. Read your revised version aloud, and summarise the changes you have made.

What does our body language say about our identity?

We communicate with different parts of our bodies, as well as with words. We use gestures, such as shrugging or pointing, and facial expressions such as frowns or grins. The ways we do this partly depend on where we come from. People from different countries sometimes use the same gestures in the same ways – some rude signs are rude wherever you are. On the other hand, some body language means different things in different cultures, or is used in different ways. For example, hand gestures and eye contact play an important part in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Film director Phillip Noyce described the first audition of 12-year-old Everlyn Sampi, whom he cast in the leading role of Molly in *Rabbit-Proof Fence*:

> for the first two hours, she didn't look at me. There is a tradition amongst indigenous people which is the opposite of our tradition. We call it shyness but in fact not looking at a person when you first meet them indicates respect rather than the opposite.

In the film, the hungry Molly and her sisters meet a kangaroo hunter as they walk the 2000 kilometres home. Molly greets him with a flick of the wrist – a hand gesture understood by some Aboriginal peoples to mean 'hello'.

Over to you

As a class, discuss examples of how misunderstandings may occur when people use body language differently.

In some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, it is a sign of respect to drop your eyes.

What is the relationship between changes in language and identity?

Language, and the way we use it, is so closely linked to our sense of identity that when people lose their language, they can feel they have lost their identity. Kokoberra woman Tania Major, who was Young Australian of the Year in 2007, explains how the loss of language has affected Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in this way. She writes of the tragedy of many young people who:

> don't know who they are or where they belong. They don't know their own language, and all too many can't even speak Standard Australian English. My own knowledge of my home languages, Kokoberra and Kokomenja, is imperfect: I mix the languages and older people laugh when I speak. But I have become enthusiastic about restoring the languages in my own life. Do I need them to function? Probably not. But they are part of my identity and help me understand and appreciate who I am.
>
> **Source**: 'Remembering history', Tania Major, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 July 2010

Pip Newling, in her memoir *Knockabout Girl*, illustrates how important language is to a sense of identity. She recalls how very old Aboriginal people in Halls Creek, Western Australia, set up the Kimberly Language Resource Centre. They wanted to try and preserve the local languages. Newling describes how important it was to them to teach these languages to the local Aboriginal children, so they would not lose their sense of identity:

> The old people were so keen and full of determination and joy at the idea that their languages might be spoken fluently by future generations that they came in no matter what. Every day. All day. There was a sense of urgency and support for the task that I have never seen since. Anywhere. (p. 83)

Asian-Australian Ivy Tseng also highlights the links between our language and our identity in 'Learning English' (from *Growing up Asian in Australia,* edited by Alice Pung). When Australian migrants learn English, they can feel that they fit into Australia. But if they lose the language of their parents or grandparents, they can also feel that they don't belong in their own families. Tseng came to realise that when her father made her go to Mandarin lessons, he was trying to ensure she recognised her cultural inheritance.

English has been absorbing words from other languages for over a thousand years. However, some people argue that taking on too many words from another culture is a problem. Writer Andrew Herrick gives an example of this when he suggests that we have taken on American understandings of the words 'winner' and 'loser' and changed aspects of our own culture because of it:

Australian culture was once marked by our admiration for a good loser and for deploring a poor winner. Our tennis champions didn't pump their fists in the air and throw tantrums or their racquets. Our sports heroes weren't hounded and derided when they didn't win, because Australians believed that winning wasn't everything.

The American term 'loser' means something quite different in a culture where only winners are valued. Even trying is demeaned in America, where the sneering term 'try-hard' is applied to people who have little chance of winning.

Source: 'With American lingo, we've imported toxic US culture', Andrew Herrick, *The Age*, 6 August 2010

Over to you

1. All of the writers quoted in the passages above comment that their language is part of their identity. Write several paragraphs describing how your language is part of your identity, and how you would feel if you were no longer able to use it to communicate.
2. Hold a class debate on the topic: 'It's OK to be a loser or a try-hard in Australia.'

1.2 How does the way we use language *identify* us with different groups and communities?

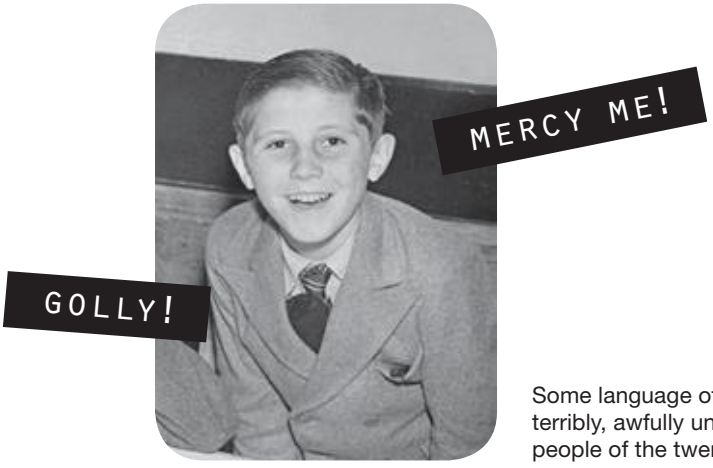
Some people use language in much the same way all the time; but for many of us, how we use language changes in different contexts. As most of us identify ourselves with a number of different communities, we may adjust the way we use English many times in one day, depending on who we are with and what we are doing. Most of us probably use at least several different varieties of English every day. Whenever we say anything – whether it is in spoken or written language – we reveal certain things about ourselves.

In this chapter, we will explore how we use language differently depending on our age and the communities we belong to, or aspire to belong to.

How we use language changes, depending on who we are with and what we are doing.

How do different age groups use language to identify themselves?

People can usually tell how old we are by the way we use English. Enid Blyton's children's books illustrate how differently people spoke 60 or 70 years ago. First published in the 1940s, the characters in the *Famous Five* and *Secret Seven* series use expressions that are rarely heard today. Alison Flood, in her article 'Golly! Blyton gets an update' (*The Age*, 25 July 2010) notes that the girls in the original books wear school 'tunics' and get up to 'jolly japes'. They use expressions like 'golly!' and 'mercy me', and refer to 'tinkers' and 'Mummy and Daddy'. Older people with a British cultural background understand these terms, but younger ones do not. Publishers have recently updated Blyton's outdated language so that it can be understood by readers today. For example, 'tinker' has been changed to 'traveller', and 'mercy me!' to 'oh no!



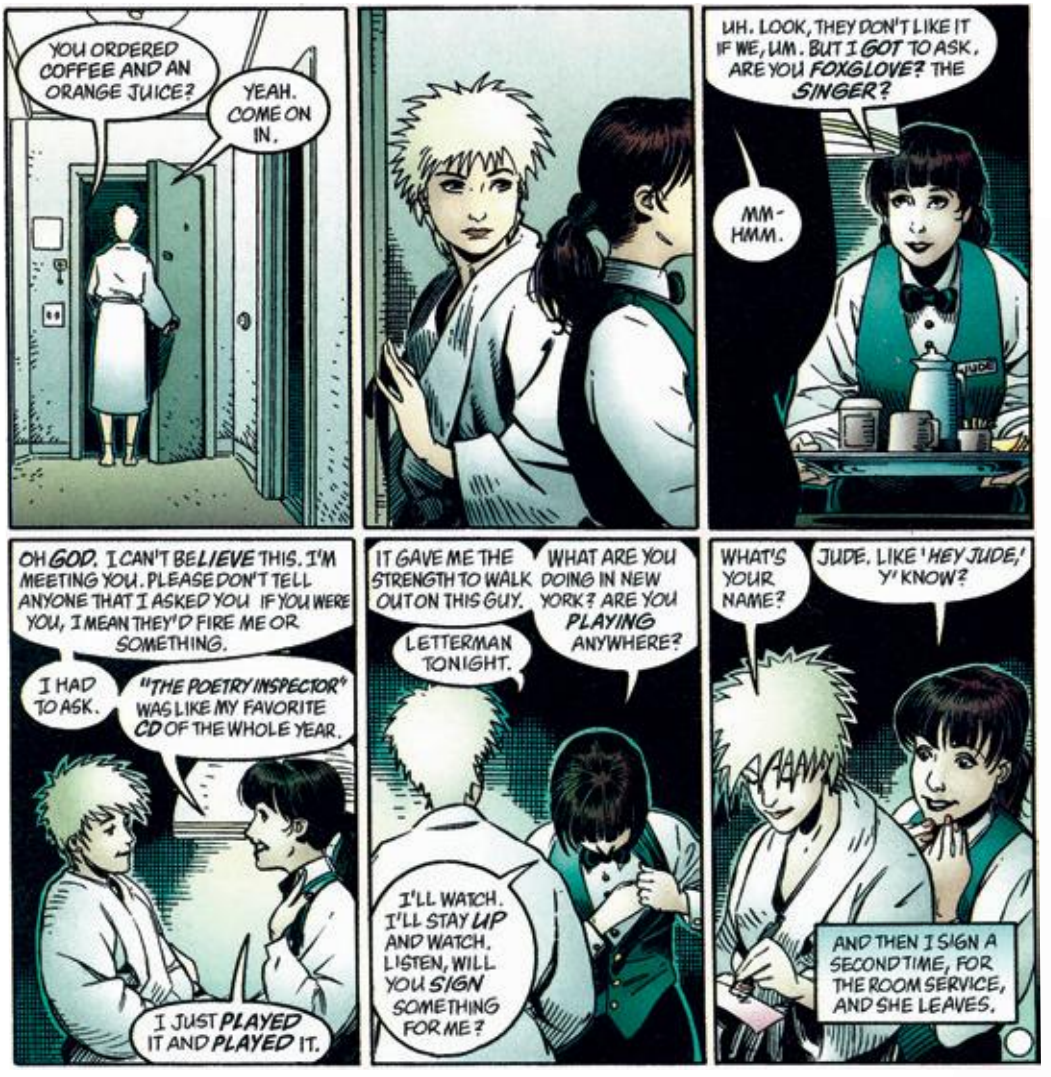
Some language of the 1950s is terribly, awfully unfamiliar to young people of the twenty-first century.

Older people, on the other hand, often have problems working out what younger people mean. In her article 'Teenglish: the word kids don't want parents to know' (*Sunday Times*, 20 September 2009) Lucy Tobin explains the English spoken by young people in Britain and includes a glossary of key words that parents should know. This includes examples of words used to mean the opposite of their usual meaning, for example, 'allow' is used to mean 'forget about it':

> Want to go halves on that?
>
> – Allow that, man; not happening!

Australian teenagers similarly use words and phrases that distinguish them from older people, for example the use of the adverbs 'totally' and 'like':

> He's so totally wrong.
>
> It's like ... you should go.



Illustrating the use of 'Teenglish': Neil Gaiman and Mike Dringenberg's graphic novel *Death: The Time of Your Life* © 1997 DC Comics. *Used with permission.*

Teenagers are using social networking sites to 'communicate with their in-group and conceal the content from the out-group'.

Just as different generations share the same language but use different words and expressions that distinguish them, members of different generations often speak to each other differently. *The Age* newspaper writer David Campbell describes a particular language used when speaking to old people called 'elderspeak': 'It involves the use of a singsong tone, slower speech and a limited vocabulary'. Names are replaced by 'sweetie' and 'darl'. When people talk to babies or small children, on the other hand, they sometimes use 'baby talk'. This usually involves a high-pitched tone, shortening words or substituting simple versions of words such as 'blankie' or 'din dins'.

Sometimes, different generations use language so differently that they misunderstand each other. According to a recent newspaper article (*The Telegraph*, 26 April 2010), research of online social networking pages suggests that sometimes this is quite deliberate and that some teenagers have developed a secret language to exclude adults.

Facebook speak: Teenagers create secret online language

The above headline refers to research in Scotland showing that teenagers are creating a secret language for use on social networking sites. This involves distorting words by removing all the vowels. According to a researcher quoted in the article, the creation of this special language means that teenagers are able to 'communicate with their in-group and conceal the content from the out-group. This further adds to their online identity'.

Over to you

Working in pairs:

1. Find some examples of the ways teenagers use English on social networking sites and Twitter.
2. Create a short script of a discussion between two teenagers talking at recess. You may choose to use some of the expressions you found in your research for Activity 1.
3. Now write a second short script of a discussion between a teenager and someone who is older and/or from a different cultural background.
4. Present your scripts as role-plays to the class, and explain how you changed the way you used English in the two situations.

How do different communities use language to identify themselves?

Slang is a form of colloquial language, often used by people to identify with their peers. It is sometimes humorous and/or vulgar.

One way we identify with a cultural or social group is by using a form of language called **slang**. As linguist David Crystal points out in his book *Words Words Words*:

> Slang is used by people who want to show, by the way they talk, that they belong together. It's very informal, casual, colloquial. It's like a secret language, known only to the people who are members of the group. (p. 113)

He quotes an old rhyme:

> The chief use of slang
> Is to show that you're one of the gang (p. 113)

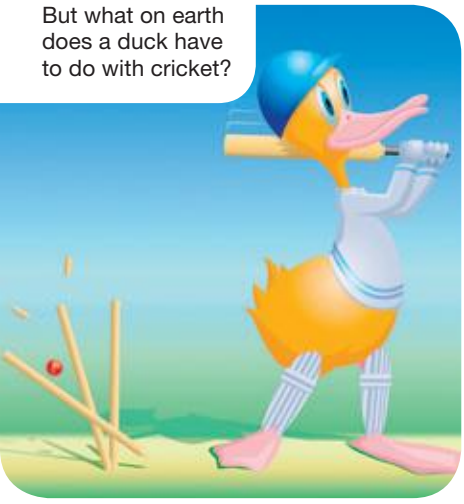
Slang changes over time, and we can often tell a person's age by the slang they use. 'Groovy' of the 1960s, for example, has changed over time to 'awesome', to 'cool', to 'sick', to 'fully sick'.

The evolution of slang: 1960s – 2010s

Jargon is the vocabulary of a particular profession or group.

Jargon is another specialised language that groups use to communicate with each other. Different professions or groups use different jargon. For example, a plumber, a cricketer and a computer expert will all have their own specialised language. A plumber who plays cricket and knows about computers will understand all of them.

Using jargon shows you are an insider. If you don't understand it, it's unlikely you belong to the group. People who don't know anything about cricket, for



But what on earth does a duck have to do with cricket?

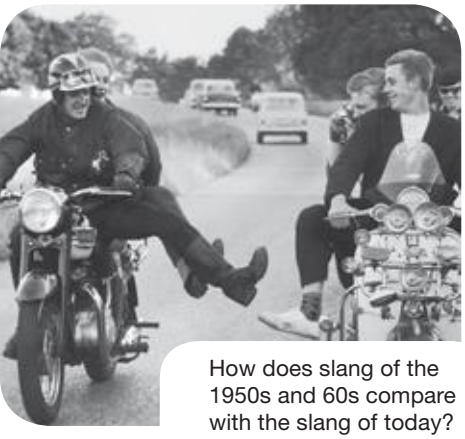
example, may be baffled by terms such as 'silly mid on', 'ducks', 'covers' and 'dibbly dobblies'. Only members of the Cub Scouts have any idea what a 'sixer' or a 'woggle' is.

Andrew McDonald, in his novel *The Greatest Blogger in the World*, illustrates how important it is to speak like the other people in a group you want to join. The narrator, Charlie, is a student at the Schlock School of Excellence. New boy Lance Green, nicknamed 'Cardboard', sets himself apart by the way he talks. Even Lance's father realises that the way his son speaks makes him different. He explains to Charlie that his son 'isn't the most popular of boys. He often eats lunch alone and he uses expressions like "bless you"' (p. 48). When Cardboard asks: 'Do you think I'm boring?' Charlie responds 'Not at all', but advises him to change the way he speaks, that:

> 'it would be cool if you tried to, I don't know, be less of a geek. Try being less polite.'
>
> 'Less polite?'
>
> 'Being too polite is just as bad as small talk, you know.'
>
> 'Small talk?'
>
> 'Yeah, small talk is when you talk about the weather because you don't have anything else to talk about.'
>
> 'Well, it has been kind of warm lately.' (p. 84)

A later comment from Cardboard shows he just doesn't 'get it', and Charlie's response confirms this:

> 'I've been thinking about what you said to me, about being less polite. I've decided to give it a go. What do you think? I can also talk about shooting rabbits in the country, and sometimes I'll spit on the pavement. Your approval would certainly mean the world to me, dear friend!'
>
> 'Well, when you call me *dear friend* it kind of ruins the act.' (p. 135)



How does slang of the 1950s and 60s compare with the slang of today?

Over to you

1. Interview an older relative or acquaintance about some of the slang they used as teenagers. Try and match these words with slang used today. Share your findings with the class.
2. Working in groups, choose one sporting or other group that uses jargon and do some research to find as many examples and definitions as you can. Create a PowerPoint presentation explaining some of this jargon to someone unfamiliar with the group.

1.3 How do we use language to *express our individuality*?

The way we use English indicates where we belong or would like to belong, and it also shows how we are uniquely individual. *What* we say is important, but so is *how* we say it. Although much of what we say has already been said by someone else, many times, every time we speak or write we are still expressing our individuality. We tell others a great deal about ourselves by the ways we choose to combine over a million words.

Although our language choices are very important, we often don't actually think about the words we use and how we combine them in sentences. In this chapter, we will explore how we can choose language features and vocabulary so that they are a powerful way of expressing ourselves – not only as members of different groups, but also as unique individuals. If we want others to find what we say interesting, we need to use language effectively.

Over to you

1 There are many adverbs that describe how someone uses language; for example, 'fluently', 'laconically', 'clearly' and 'precisely'. What do these words mean, and what is the adjectival form of each? Include them in your personal glossary.

2 We use many expressions to describe how someone uses language. We may say, for example:

> ***He has verbal diarrhoea.***
> ***They were talking nineteen to the dozen.***
> ***She really put her foot in it.***

Think of other examples of expressions that describe how someone uses language. Then try to create some of your own.

What may our sentences tell people about us?

We make many language choices that indicate who we are as individuals without really thinking about them, for example:

- When we speak or create texts that express our point of view, or are about ourselves, we use the first-person pronoun *I*.
- We often use **active verbs** that put us at the centre of the action.
- We use adverbs – words such as 'hopefully' or 'sadly' – to indicate our point of view.

Active verbs describe an action and who does it, eg 'My parents punished me.'

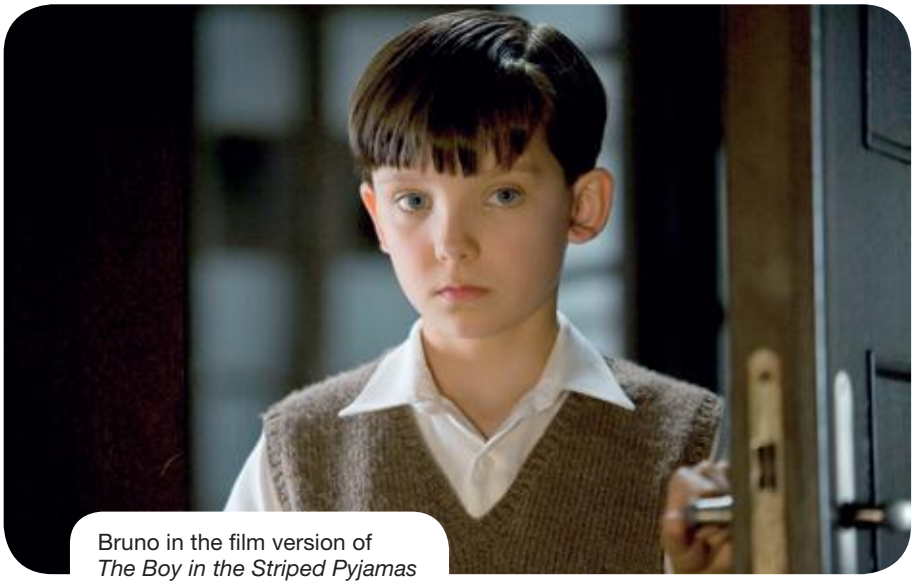
To revise adverbs, go to page 8.

We also tell people about ourselves by the way we construct sentences. For example, if we use a series of short, sharp **phrases** or **simple sentences**, this may indicate that we are anxious, angry or upset. Notice how novelist John Boyne shows how his character, Bruno, is upset in *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*, without actually telling us:

A **phrase** is two or more related words without a verb, eg: 'Absolutely everything.'

A **simple sentence** is made up of one independent clause and makes sense on its own, eg: 'I hate it all.'

> I hate this house, I hate my room and I even hate the paintwork. I hate it all. Absolutely everything. (p. 56)



Bruno in the film version of *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*

Over to you

In the above passage from *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*, John Boyne uses the following:

- phrase: 'Absolutely everything.'
- simple sentence: 'I hate it all.'
- compound sentence: 'I hate my room and I even hate the paintwork.'

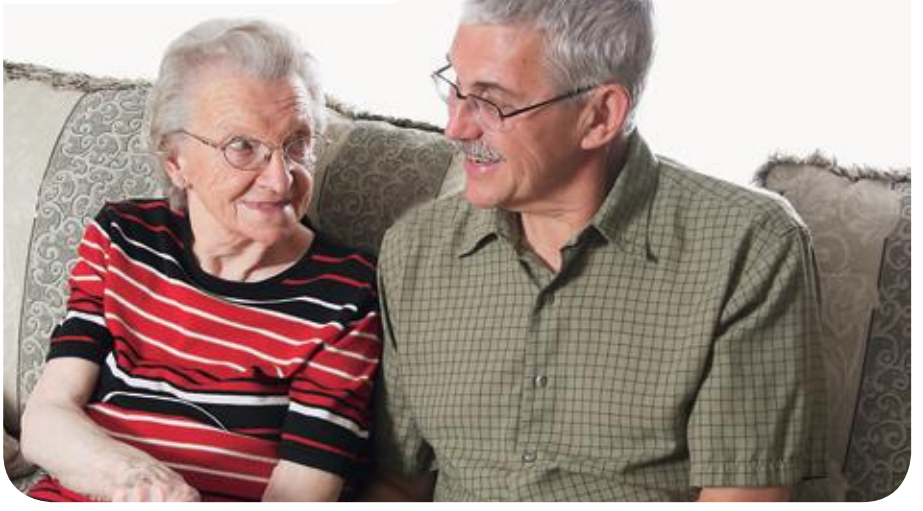
A **compound sentence** communicates more than one idea and is made up of two or more independent clauses, joined by a conjunction, eg 'I hate my room **and** I even hate the paintwork.'

1. Rewrite the phrase above as a simple sentence.
2. Add a second independent clause to the simple sentence above to make it a compound sentence. Join the two clauses with a conjunction other than 'and'.
3. Add a dependent clause to add to the meaning of the compound sentence above, and make it into a complex sentence.
4. Put your sentences together and suggest how you have changed the way we understand Bruno.

In the following article, notice how Martin Flanagan uses the first person and active verbs to write a very personal account of a football game he watched with his 91-year-old mother. Words such as 'footy' and 'barracked' identify him as distinctively Australian. Simple sentences such as 'Mum's loyal' and 'She's had a few strokes' give the impression that this is how Flanagan talks and that he is talking directly to us. His description is understated – and *shows* us, rather than *tells* us, about his love and admiration for his mother. His concluding compound sentence – made up of two balanced independent clauses joined by the conjunction 'and' – suggests that Flanagan is close to his mother, knows what she likes and is responsive to her needs:

> She likes watching the footy and she likes someone to watch it with her.

Flanagan's understated words show us a great deal about the relationship between a mother and son.



It's an exciting game at every level

Mum and I watched eight quarters of footy last Saturday. If there had been no AFL, we would have watched the Tasmanian State League. Two of her granddaughters have boyfriends playing for Hobart. Mum's loyal.

When I worked at *The Examiner* in Launceston in the 1980s, I let her do my tips as they appeared in the paper. I asked her why she kept tipping Latrobe when it kept losing. She said, 'Because Granddad Leary barracked for them'. Granddad Leary died in 1940. Mum's 91. She's had a few strokes. She likes watching the footy and she likes someone to watch it with her.

Source: Martin Flanagan, *The Age*, 4 Sept 2010

Over to you

1. Use a range of simple and compound sentences in a short, understated description of someone that shows – rather than tells – the audience about your relationship with them.
2. Share your piece with a partner and discuss what it reveals about you, the writer.

How does the way we use words distinguish us from other people?

The way we use words is an important way of showing people who we are. For example, we often remember the way people describe something to us – we remember being bored or interested – and this depends on how people use language.

The words we choose and the way we put them together say a lot about us. Think of all those tedious, one-sided mobile conversations we overhear on public transport. They serve their purpose, but they don't express anyone's individuality:

Stringing together a series of predictable expressions – many of which really don't say anything much at all, let alone anything interesting – will mainly show others that there's not much to distinguish us from millions of other people.

We can't express ourselves as individuals if our vocabulary is limited. We need to learn new words to express new ideas. We learn new words best when we:

- read or hear them used in context
- find out what they mean when we come across them
- try and use them ourselves.

Learning new words is an important way of expressing our developing self, but it doesn't always work. Anna Goldsworthy describes the way students at her school learned new vocabulary when they were preparing for a scholarship exam. They were expected to collect words to 'garnish' their essays, such as *'fluctuate, irrevocable, heinous*' (p. 53). This sort of straining for effect doesn't always lead to good expression, however, nor does using too many adjectives – or long words – at once. It can sound laboured and detract from the flow of words. For example, piling on adjectives doesn't necessarily make a description more interesting – choosing an accurate noun or verb can work better:

> A mean aggressive snarling dog was ready to engage in a fight

is less effective than

> The pit bull terrier was ready to fight.

On the other hand, using interesting language can engage our audience and suggest that we are ourselves interesting!

When two or more words have almost the same meaning, they are called **synonyms**. The opposite of a synonym is an **antonym**, eg 'safe' is the antonym of 'dangerous'.

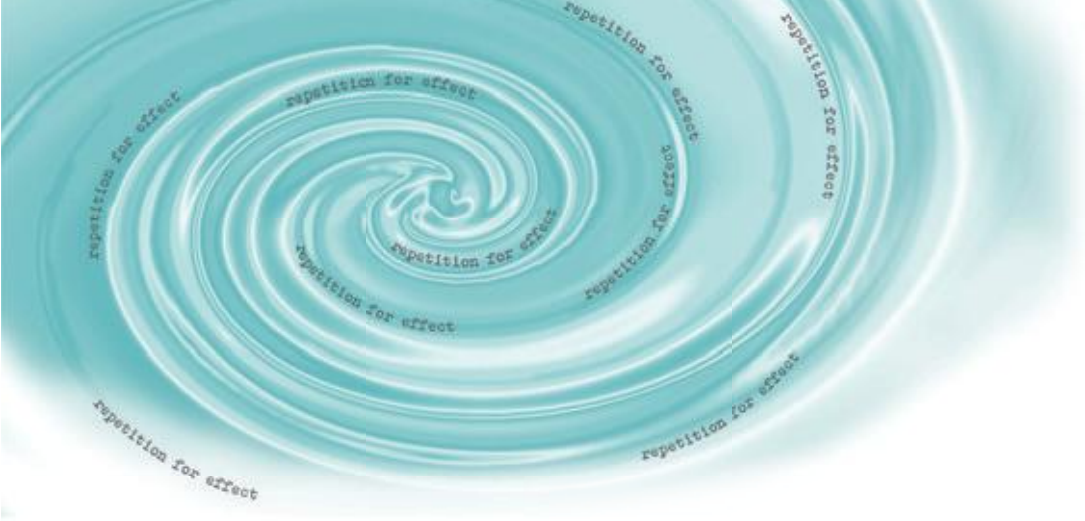
One way to learn new words is to use a *thesaurus* – a type of dictionary that lists **synonyms**, or words that mean similar things. A thesaurus is useful for finding an alternative for an overused or repeated word, and sometimes for finding a more interesting word. As most words have a range of meanings, however, it's important to think carefully about context before replacing one word with another. We can look up a word in a thesaurus and find *possible* synonyms, but we should remember that although the meanings are similar, they are not likely to be *identical*. We can't always replace one word neatly with another.

Different thesauruses may give different synonyms for the same words, but they all:

- list the synonyms in alphabetical order
- list words that are the same parts of speech
- provide an example of the word used in context.

get verb **1** *She got a new book.* acquire, be given, buy, come by, get hold of, obtain, procure, purchase, receive. **2** *He got all the prizes.* earn, gain, land, receive, scoop, score, take, win. OPPOSITE lose. **3** *Go and get your umbrella.* bring, collect, fetch, pick up, retrieve. **4** *She has got a cold.* be afflicted with, catch, come down with, contact, develop, pick up, suffer from. **5** *The police will get the culprit.* arrest, capture, catch, grab, nab *(informal)*, seize. **6** Try to get his attention. attract, capture, draw. **7** *(informal) He didn't get what I meant.* comprehend, cotton on to *(informal)*, fathom, follow, grasp, realise, understand. OPPOSITE misunderstand. **8** *I'll get lunch now.* fix, make ready, prepare. **9** *Try to get him to eat.* cause, convince, induce, influence, make, persuade OPPOSITE dissuade. **10** *The days are getting longer.* become, grow. **11** *How do you get to work?* go, journey, travel. **12** *He got home late.* arrive, at, reach.

An entry for the word 'get' from Oxford's *The Australian School Thesaurus*



Remember, however, that although it can be tedious when someone keeps repeating a word, repetition isn't *always* bad. Sometimes we repeat words for a purpose. In the poem 'Peter' from Steven Herrick's verse novel *Lonesome Howl*, for example, Peter uses the word 'stuff' several times. Herrick does this not because he can't think of another word, but because that's how Peter talks. He doesn't use words precisely and he tends to repeat himself.

My dad, he gets angry sometimes.
I don't know what for.
Maybe it's because of the farm
and not having no money and stuff.
Or maybe it's 'cause he wishes
he was a truckie,
which was his job before he met Mum.
He was just driving through town,
delivering stuff. (p. 50)

Thesauruses, although useful, need to be treated with caution. In the above poem, for example, Herrick repeats the word 'stuff', but uses it in different ways to achieve a particular effect. If we wanted to avoid repeating the word, we could use a thesaurus to find a synonym, but we'd have to be careful. 'Stuff' can be used as a verb and a noun. Herrick uses it as a noun, so synonyms for the verb have to be rejected. The noun 'stuff' also has a range of meanings. By 'no money and stuff', Peter means 'money or material possessions'. In the last line, however, he uses 'stuff' to mean something different – he is referring to the things his father delivers in his truck.

A thesaurus could give the following synonyms for the noun 'stuff':

material, substance, matter, things, objects, and bits and pieces

Only 'things' would work as a replacement (although not a very good one) for 'not having no money and stuff'. 'Material', 'things' or 'bits and pieces' could replace 'stuff' in 'He was just driving through town delivering stuff'. The synonyms 'substance' and 'matter' couldn't be used to replace 'stuff' in either example.

Over to you

Read the following passage from the memoir *They Poured Fire on Us From the Sky* by Benson Deng, Alephonsion Deng and Benjamin Ajak, who vividly describe their experiences as 'Lost Boys', fleeing war-torn Sudan:

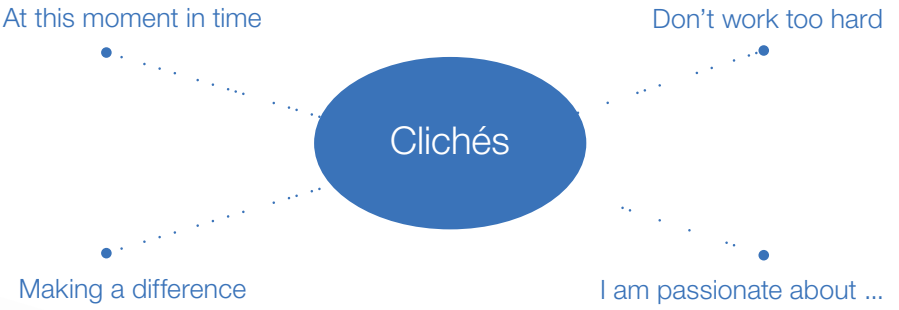
> ***The name Lost Boys came to be when our village was attacked by fierce Arab horsemen. We, little boys, spewed out of the blazing village like a colony of ants disturbed in their nest. We ran in different directions not knowing where we are going. We gathered some fruits for our breakfast and lunch. We, little boys, were so messy, all chaos and cries filling the dark, fiercely lightless night. (Frontispiece)***

Using a thesaurus, identify synonyms for the verb 'spewed', the adjective 'fierce' and the adverb 'fiercely'. Discuss which would be appropriate, and whether any of them are more effective than the originals.

Avoiding clichés

A **cliché** is an overused phrase or opinion.

Despite having so many words to choose from, some conversations are made up almost entirely of **clichés** – well-worn expressions such as:

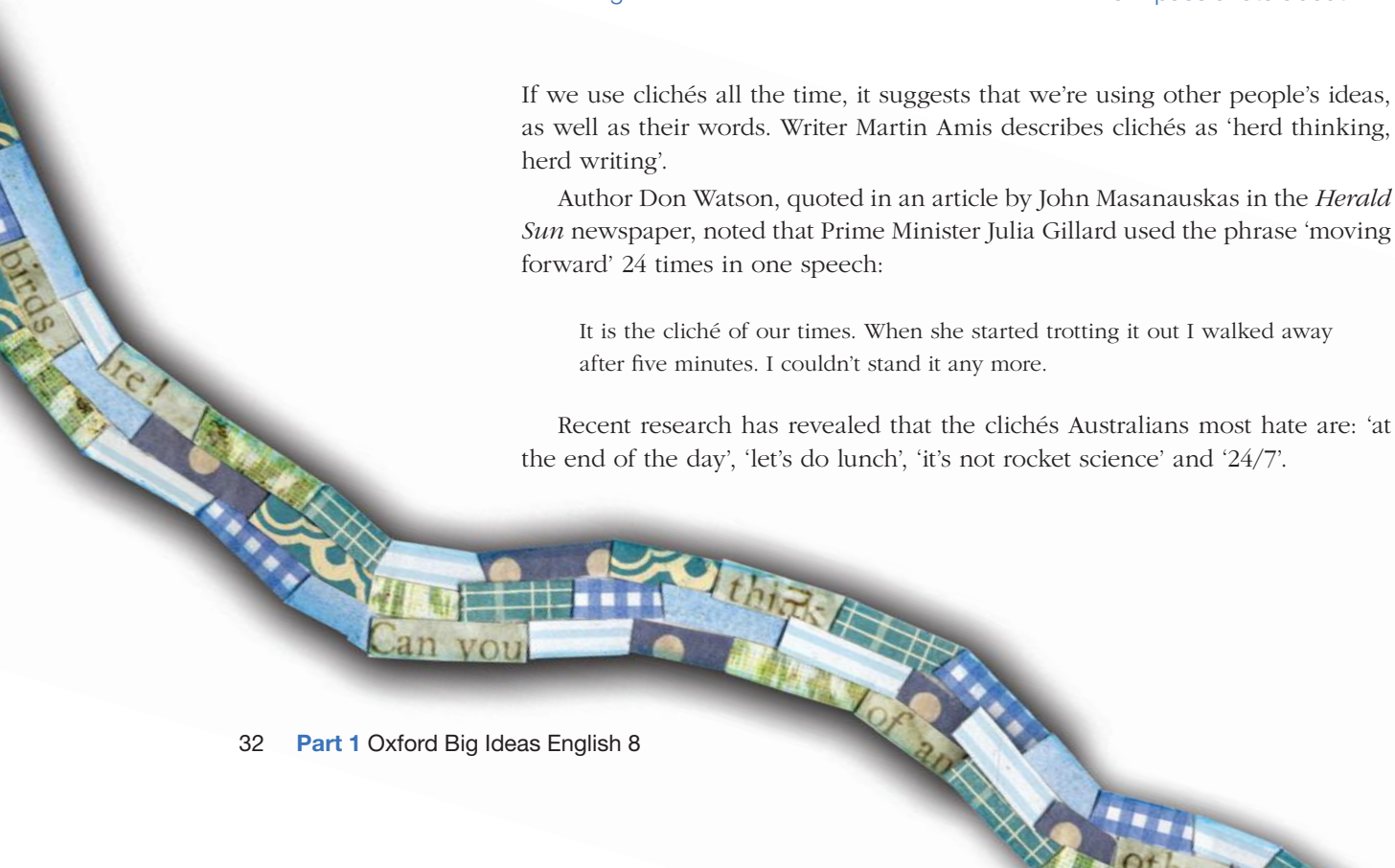


If we use clichés all the time, it suggests that we're using other people's ideas, as well as their words. Writer Martin Amis describes clichés as 'herd thinking, herd writing'.

Author Don Watson, quoted in an article by John Masanauskas in the *Herald Sun* newspaper, noted that Prime Minister Julia Gillard used the phrase 'moving forward' 24 times in one speech:

> It is the cliché of our times. When she started trotting it out I walked away after five minutes. I couldn't stand it any more.

Recent research has revealed that the clichés Australians most hate are: 'at the end of the day', 'let's do lunch', 'it's not rocket science' and '24/7'.



Over to you

As a class:

1 Discuss what Martin Amis means by 'herd thinking'.

2 List as many clichés you can think of. Include those you use yourselves, and those you dislike.

Working in pairs:

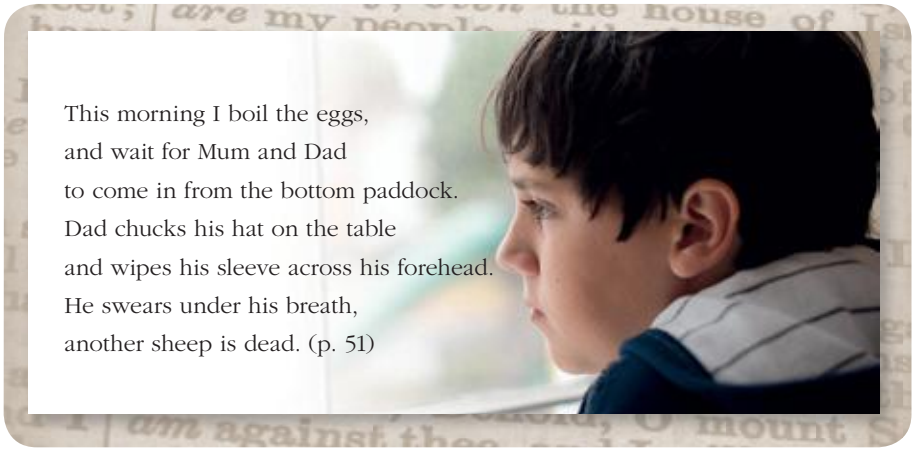
3 Write the script of a conversation between several students, using as many clichés as you can. Share your script with the class.

Language focus

Unique means that there is nothing else like it. Something cannot, therefore, be 'quite unique'. It's either unique or it isn't!

Rather than garnishing what we say with long words, or with clichés, we can give our own, unique take on things. Choosing interesting words is important, and so is the way we put them together.

Simple language can be very effective and say something that is unique. For example, in the following verse from the poem 'Jake: Chasing Ghosts' by Steven Herrick (from his verse novel *Lonesome Howl*), the narrator, Jake, waits for his parents, whose livelihood is being threatened by a wolf:



This morning I boil the eggs,
and wait for Mum and Dad
to come in from the bottom paddock.
Dad chucks his hat on the table
and wipes his sleeve across his forehead.
He swears under his breath,
another sheep is dead. (p. 51)

There are no adverbs in the verse, and the adjectives 'bottom' and 'another' are hardly unique. Yet Herrick creates a powerful picture of both the action and the atmosphere in the kitchen. The language suits the narrator, who is describing people who suffer but try to get on with life without speaking about their feelings.

Over to you

Create a short poem of your own where something difficult or sad happens. To recreate the event and people's response to it, use simple vocabulary, but try and create a powerful impression of the scene. (You will develop this poem in Assessment Task 5 on page 45.)

Try to recreate someone's response to a difficult or sad event.

Using figurative language

In **figurative language**, we use words and phrases in ways that differ from their everyday usage and literal meaning.

While simple language can be a powerful way of expressing our individuality, the way we use **figurative language** to compare one thing with another shows people how we see the world. **Similes** and **metaphors** are both examples of figurative language that require us to make connections between different things.

With a simile, we say that something is *like* something else – she 'squawked like a parrot', for example – whereas metaphors suggest that something *is* something else. When we use a metaphor such as 'my heart is broken', we mean that our emotions have been terribly wounded – we suggest that the heart is connected with emotions – but we don't mean it literally.

There are many clichéd similes that we use without thinking, such as 'quick as a wink' or 'bright as a button'. The same is true of metaphors: we often hear about life's 'winners' or 'losers', for example, and this is a metaphor – we are suggesting that life *is* a game or a war. As with any cliché, when we use clichéd similes and metaphors, we are not telling others anything about ourselves as individuals, except, perhaps, that we don't think for ourselves.

The similes and metaphors we choose to describe people and things therefore say a lot about how we see things. When we use figurative language to compare things creatively, we set ourselves apart from the 'herd' and we add interesting layers of meaning to what we are saying. Anna Goldsworthy does this in her book *Piano Lessons* when she describes sitting next to her piano teacher. She uses an interesting simile to create a memorable picture of hands that:

> brown with the Australian sun, tripped across the keyboard beside hers, as pink and round as starfish. (p. 13)

Notice, too, in the following extract how journalist Michelle Griffin uses a metaphor to help us picture New York through her eyes, suggesting that the city is not just *like* a comic, it *is* a comic – it tells a story, it has illustrated panels and is an 'empire of superheroes':

Michelle Griffin surveys the shadow zones of New York City that have inspired the world's most popular comics.

Any time of day, New York looks like a comic. Every block of Manhattan tells part of the story, like illustrated panels on the page: Superman soars over Midtown's skyscrapers, Batman lurks on the rooftops of Gothic buildings, the Spirit sulks in the shadows of the Lower East Side and Spider-Man's girlfriends plunge to almost certain deaths from the borough-spanning bridges.

Source: 'Empire of superheroes', *The Age*, 4 September 2010

Over to you

Working in groups, bring a range of texts to class (for example, novels, newspaper articles, poems and picture books) and look for metaphors that show something in a creative rather than a clichéd way.

Choose one of these metaphors and present it as a quotation, accompanied by a visual image that would be appropriate for a page of a children's picture book.

'Every block of Manhattan tells part of the story.'

We show something about ourselves by the metaphors we choose. For example, we may see life as a game instead of a journey – one with opponents to be outsmarted and scores to be kept. Alternatively, we may see life as a gift – something to be valued. We may see life as a gift and a game *and* a journey.

Even when choosing well-worn metaphors, the choices we make depend on who we are and how we see the world. Some of the world's greatest writers used well-worn metaphors – but they used them in interesting ways, as Shakespeare did when Jaques says in *As You Like It*: 'all the world's a stage'. The American poet Robert Frost, in his poem 'The Road Not Taken', gives new meaning to another well-worn metaphor – life is a journey:

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim
Because it was grassy and wanted wear,
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I marked the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I,
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

Cartoonist Michael Leunig similarly takes the metaphor of life as a journey and gives it new meaning:

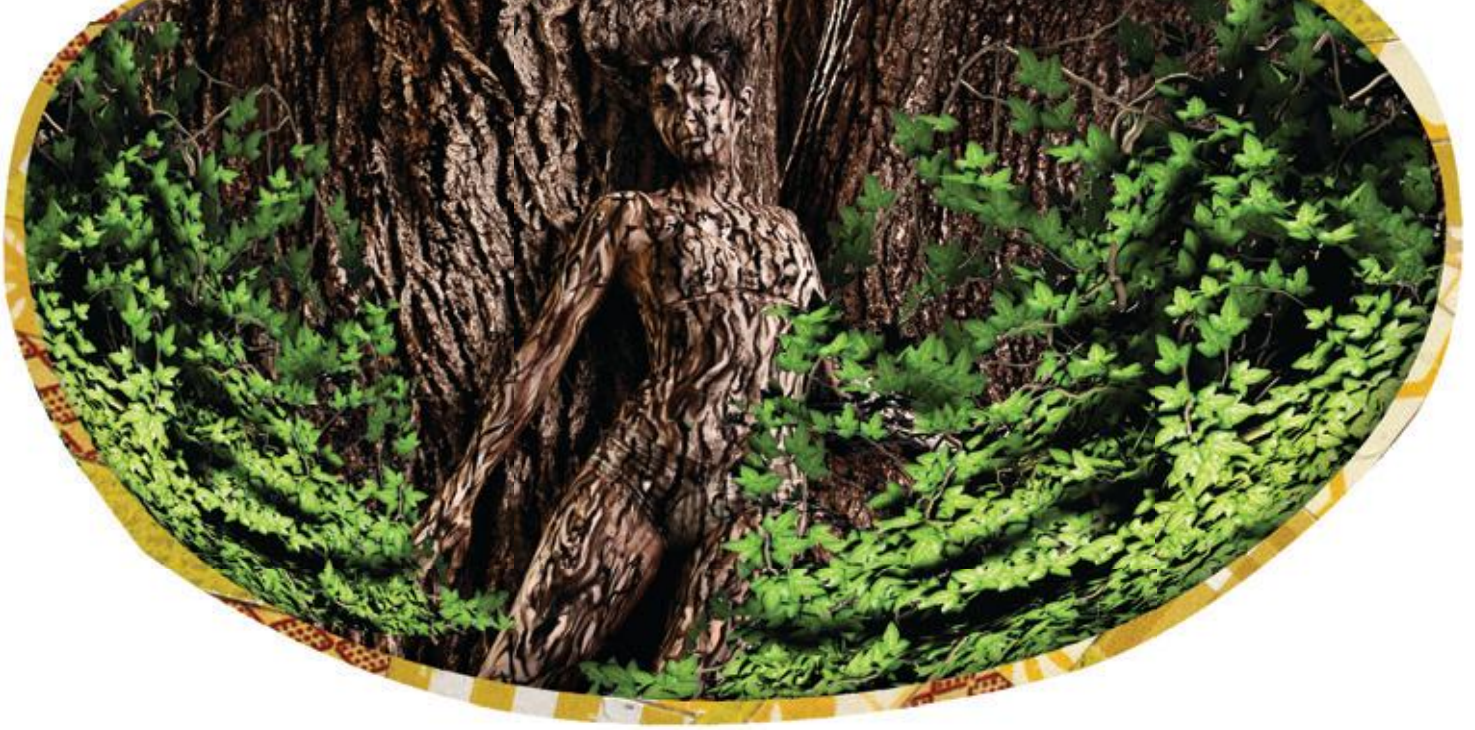
Over to you

1 **a** In Robert Frost's poem 'The Road Not Taken', what choices did the narrator face on their journey?

b Write a short piece suggesting what difference it could have made to the narrator's life had they taken the other road.

2 What words and phrases does Leunig use in his poem accompanying the above cartoon that represent life as a journey? What do the words and image suggest about the sort of journey life could be?

3 Combine words and a visual image to illustrate your own understanding of the metaphor 'life is a journey'.



1.4 How do we use language to *conceal ourselves*?

Language focus

A **diplomat** represents a government in its dealings with the governments of other countries.

We give away a lot about who we are, or who we would like to be, by the way we use language. On the other hand, we also use language to *hide* who we are. The French diplomat Talleyrand, who lived in the eighteenth century, said that 'speech is given to man to disguise his thoughts'. There are a number of ways we can use language so that we distance ourselves from what we say, or avoid saying what we really think. Indeed, when we read some texts we learn very little, either directly or indirectly, about their author.

We can use language as a mask – to hide who we really are.

How do we distance ourselves from what we say?

According to *The Australian Concise Oxford Dictionary*, **objective** means 'uncoloured by feelings or opinions', while **subjective** means the opposite – that something depends on a personal or individual point of view.

Much of our communication is focused on expressing ourselves – on saying what we think or feel about something, or responding to others. When we write or speak in this way, we say we are being **subjective**; that is, we are writing *personally*. We are usually writing or speaking subjectively in a diary, a poem, or a conversation with a friend.

In some forms of communication, however, especially those presenting information, we want to be **objective** or to *seem* objective. We may be identified by name, but we want our audience to understand that we haven't been influenced by personal opinion. For example, an official report may present the views or research of a number of people rather than the writer, or it may present facts in an objective way.

In this chapter, we will explore the following:

Choosing narrative voice

Just as the way we speak tells people about us, we also reveal ourselves by the way we write. We adjust what we write and how we write it for different audiences and purposes because we want to be seen in a particular way. We will adopt different 'voices' when writing a school essay and a Facebook post, for example.

When we refer to **narrative voice** in a text, we mean the viewpoint from which the text is written or a story is told, as well as the way the author has chosen language to make us see the narrator in a particular way. When we refer to a work as a 'first-person narrative', we mean that it is written using the first-person pronoun. This means that the author is speaking with an individual voice. Novelists, for example, may take on the voice of a character to narrate their story and write in a style appropriate to that character.

To revise first- and third-person pronouns, go to page 12.

If we want to create an objective text where our personality doesn't – or shouldn't – affect what we are saying, we usually write in the third, rather than the first, person. Notice how the following example of a news item on the online newspaper the *Herald Sun* is written in the third person. This means the focus of the text is the quake in Tokyo, not the author's feelings about it:

Language focus

Although it's now old-fashioned, some people still use the pronoun 'one' to refer to themselves, eg 'one might have thought ...' or 'one would hope that ...'. This can also distance the speaker from what they are saying.

Moderate quake shakes Tokyo

A 5.3 magnitude quake shook Tokyo and other eastern Japanese cities today, the US Geological Survey (USGS) said, but there were no immediate reports of damage or injuries.

Buildings in the capital shook, but public transport and traffic continued unaffected.

Source: *Herald Sun*, 5 February 2011

Language focus

Alchemy is an ancient science that seeks in particular to turn common metals into gold, and to find an 'elixir of life' that would prevent people from growing old.

In many cases, however, even in texts that seem objective, we can still tell something about the individual writing the text. Their personality seeps through! Bill Bryson in *A Really Short History of Nearly Everything* uses the third person to write a humorous account of the history of chemistry. In the following extract, Bryson explains that chemistry did not develop as a science until the eighteenth century, when the alchemist Hennig Brand discovered phosphorous in an attempt to turn common metals into gold. Even though Bryson is presenting facts, his humorous interpretation of them allows something of his character to come through:

The glow of human urine, in Joseph Wright's 1771 painting of Hennig Brand

The alchemists

Chemists in those days were largely alchemists – scientists who were convinced they could turn common metals into silver or gold. The German Johann Becher went further still. He was certain that, given the right materials, he could make himself invisible. Even stranger, another German, Hennig Brand, collected 50 buckets of human urine which he kept for months in his cellar. By various processes, he converted the urine first into a smelly paste and then into a waxy substance. None of it yielded gold, of course, but a strange and interesting thing did happen. After a time, the substance began to glow. Moreover, when exposed to air, it often spontaneously burst into flame. He hadn't got his gold, but he had discovered phosphorus. (p. 58)

Compare Bryson's writing to the following extract from the Wikipedia entry for phosphorus:

[Hennig Brand's] process originally involved letting urine stand for days until it gave off a terrible smell. Then he boiled it down to a paste, heated this paste to a high temperature, and led the vapours through water, where he hoped they would condense to gold. Instead, he obtained a white, waxy substance that glowed in the dark. Brand had discovered phosphorus, the first element discovered since antiquity.

Over to you

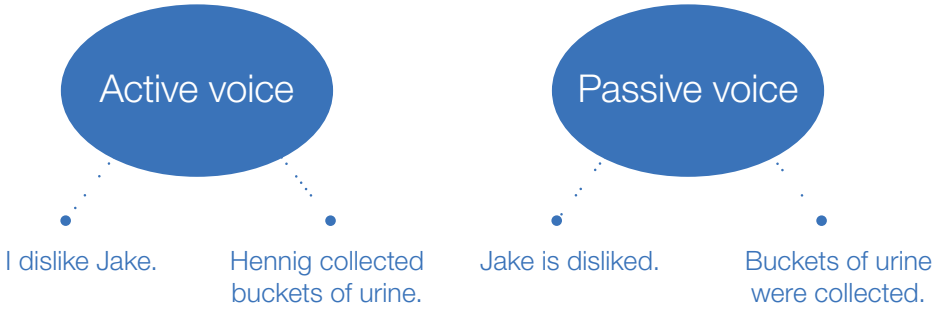
1. Do you think the two different accounts above about the discovery of phosphorus are intended for different audiences? Give reasons for your response.
2. Unlike the author of the Wikipedia entry, Bill Bryson presents information in a way that suggests he has a point of view about alchemists. How does his use of language indicate this?
3. What does Bryson's account suggest about the personality of the author? Give reasons for your answer.

Using the passive voice

To revise active verbs, go to page 27.

In the **passive voice**, the focus is on the action and it is not revealed who or what is performing the action.

Just as we tend to use active verbs and the active voice to tell people about ourselves, we use the **passive voice** if we want to put the focus on what is or has been done. Notice the difference between the following:



In the sentences using the passive voice, we don't know who is doing the disliking or taking the action. So if, for example, we want to say we dislike someone without saying it directly, the passive voice allows us to distance ourselves. Phrases such as 'it has been suggested that …' or 'it is understood that ...' also distance the writer from what they are saying.

We can use the passive voice to avoid saying who did something, for example the passive 'he was killed' avoids saying who did the killing. Richard Blackburn, the writer of the following newspaper article, uses the passive voice when he writes:

> The Chairman of the National Road Safety Council, Roger Cook, said the youth road toll could be cut drastically by getting P-platers out of unsafe old 'bombs' and into their parents' cars.
>
> **Source:** 'If you want to keep young drivers safe, then give them your car keys', *WA Today*, 2 September 2010

The passive 'could be cut' doesn't tell us who is going to do the cutting. It suggests that the chairman is speaking on behalf of his organisation, rather than personally.

Over to you

1. Rewrite the above extract from *WA Today* using the active rather than the passive voice, and discuss what difference this makes.
2. Bring a newspaper to class and try and find examples where the writer has been objective, and where they have revealed something of themselves. Identify the language choices the writers have made and discuss how these affect the ways you understand the material they are presenting.

How do we avoid saying what we really mean?

There are several reasons why we may want to avoid saying directly what we think. We may want to avoid offending someone or being impolite. We may want to be mean, but indirectly, so that our victim wonders which way to take our words. There are a number of ways we can hide behind words, including using euphemisms and tone.

Euphemisms

A **euphemism** is the substitution of a mild or vague expression for a blunt expression that may offend.

We sometimes avoid talking directly about things that are sensitive or unpleasant. We find alternative words or phrases called **euphemisms** that, if taken literally, mean something else. For example, we might say that someone who lies is 'economical with the truth'.

Unsurprisingly, there are many euphemisms for death: a person is 'lost', has 'passed away' or 'is no longer with us'. John Cleese and Graham Chapman's still popular 'Dead Parrot' sketch from *Monty Python's Flying Circus* (1969) makes fun of the euphemisms we use to avoid referring to death. Mr Praline has bought a parrot that turns out to be dead, but when he returns it to the pet shop, the owner insists that the parrot is only resting. Mr Praline uses a string of euphemisms to insist that the parrot is, indeed, 'stone dead':

> It's passed on! This parrot is no more! It has ceased to be! It's expired and gone to meet its maker! This is a late parrot. It's a stiff! Bereft of life, it rests in peace! If you hadn't nailed it to the perch it'd be pushing up the daisies! ... THIS IS AN EX-PARROT!!

Euphemisms are also used to avoid describing something as it really is. For example, the editor of *The Age* described how, in China, the 'usual euphemism' for the massacre in Tiananmen Square in 1989 is 'the June 4 incident'.

Tone

Tone reveals the attitude of the speaker or writer. We may speak in a bored or enthusiastic tone, or write a text that conveys that we are angry or calm.

Neutral means having no particular preference. When we use a neutral tone, we don't show what we think.

We can sometimes avoid directly expressing what we mean by saying or writing something that is **ambiguous** – that is, it can be taken in several ways. We can take the words literally, or we can 'read between the lines'.

If we're not sure how to take an ambiguous spoken comment, the **tone** of voice usually guides us. We tend to know when someone is being scornful, sarcastic or kind by their tone. For example, in the extract from the 'Dead Parrot' sketch on page 43, Mr Praline's tone is scornful as he ridicules the pet-shop owner's claim that the dead bird is 'resting'. If we often adopt a **neutral tone**, however, we can leave our audience in doubt about what we really mean or feel.

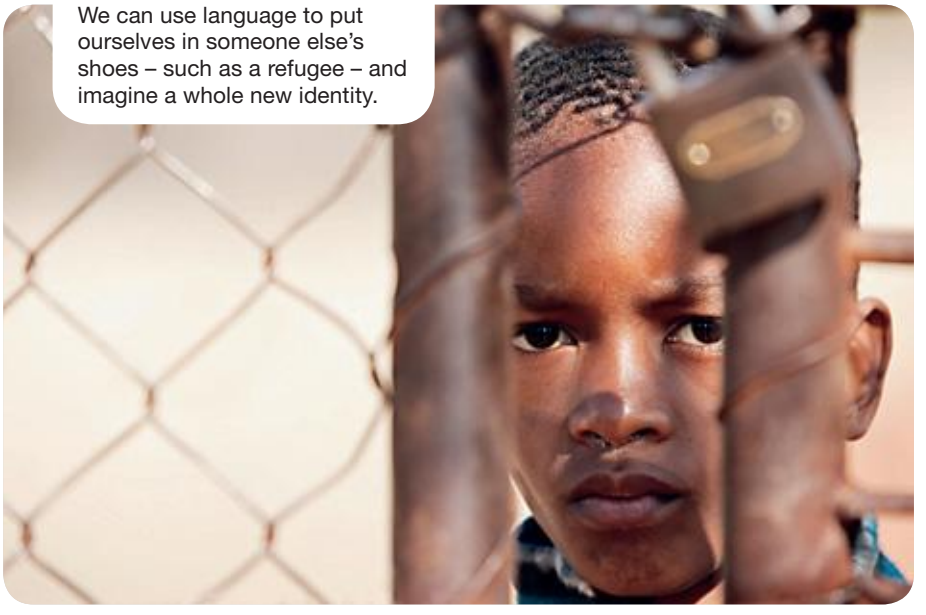
Over to you

1 Watch the 'Dead Parrot' sketch on YouTube and think of several adjectives you could use to describe the tone of voice of both Mr Praline and the pet-shop owner. How would you compare their tone of voice to:

- former prime minister Paul Keating's tone of voice in the 'Redfern Address' (at www.nfsa.gov.au), and
- the tone of voice of an ABC newsreader?

2 Working in pairs, write either a comic script or a serious script, using a series of euphemisms to avoid saying what you really mean. Think carefully about your tone of voice and, when you have practised your script, present it to the class.

We can, of course, also conceal our own identity by writing or operating in a virtual world *as if* we are someone else. We may imagine, for example, what it would be like to be a refugee and write from their point of view. In a debate, we may be asked to present an argument expressing a point of view we do not hold. We use our language to discover who we are and to reveal this to other people, but we also use it to conceal who we are, and to put ourselves in someone else's shoes and imagine a whole new identity.



We can use language to put ourselves in someone else's shoes – such as a refugee – and imagine a whole new identity.

big ideas

What does our language SAY ABOUT US?

For suggestions on how to plan, draft, edit and proofread your texts, refer to 'How can I improve my writing?' on page 252.

1.1 How are language and identity *related*?

create

1 Create several pages for a children's picture book that shows how your own identity and the ways you use English are related.

1.2 How does the way we use language *identify* us with different groups and communities?

write and speak

2 Working in small groups, create a script for several speakers who belong to the same group or community. Show what happens to the way they speak when someone from another community, or who speaks a different variety of English, joins the group. Practise your script and present it to the class

3 Write an imaginative narrative describing how you would feel if you were suddenly no longer allowed to use your own language.

1.3 How do we use language to *express our individuality*?

write and create

4 Write a reflective piece presenting your point of view on the topic: 'You can tell a lot about who a person is and how they would like to be seen by the way they use English.' Then highlight one noun, verb, adjective and adverb in your piece that could be improved on. Use a thesaurus to find an effective replacement and write several sentences explaining your choice.

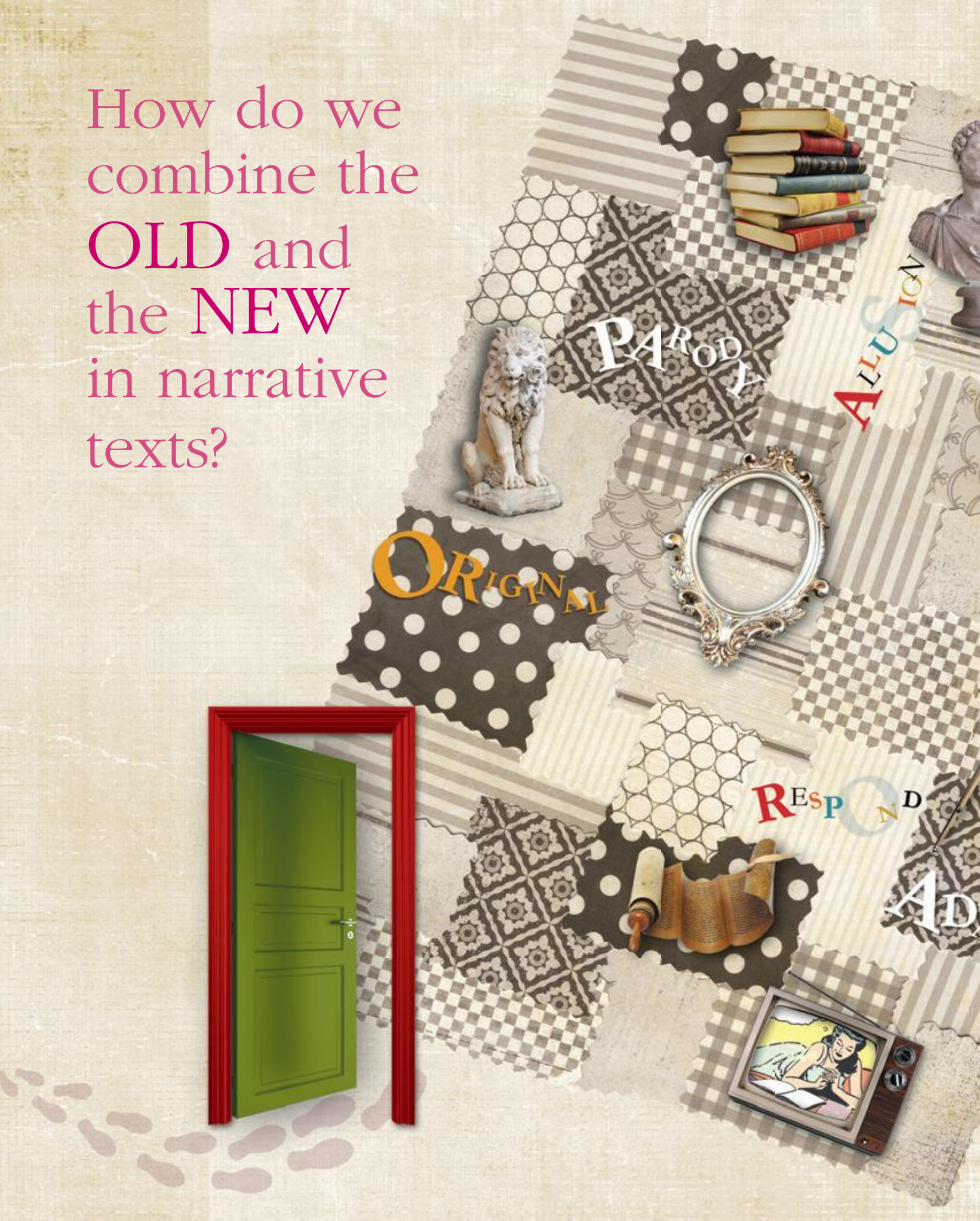
5 Develop the poem you completed for the activity on page 34, where something difficult or sad happens. Try and include a metaphor that shows how you see the world. Choose some images and music, and present your poem in multimodal form, such as a digital poem.

1.4 How do we use language to *conceal ourselves*?

write

6 Rewrite the reflective piece you wrote in Activity 4 above, using a range of language choices to present the ideas in a more objective way.

How do we combine the OLD and the NEW in narrative texts?



2

Literacy Language ***Literature***

Text list

In this Part you will read or view and discuss extracts from:

WRITTEN

Australian texts

Li Cunxin *Mao's Last Dancer* (autobiography)

Li Cunxin *Mao's Last Dancer* (Young Readers' Edition) (autobiography)

Kate Grenville 'The weight of the word' *The Age* (news article)

Joanne Horniman *The Serpentine Belt* (novel)

David Metzenthen *Falling Forward* (novel)

Jim Schembri 'The *Harry Potter* films just aren't fun any more' *Sydney Morning Herald* (film review)

Markus Zusak *The Book Thief* (novel)

World texts

The Bible 'The Book of Job'

Ray Bradbury *The Martian Chronicles* (novel)

TS Eliot 'Macavity: The Mystery Cat' (poem)

Minfong Ho *The Clay Marble* (novel)

Francis Spufford *The Child that Books Built* (non-fiction)

MULTIMODAL

Australian texts

Bruce Beresford (director) *Mao's Last Dancer* (film)

Li Cunxin and Anne Spudvilas *The Peasant Prince* (picture book)

Adam Elliot (director) *Mary and Max* (film)

Don Groves 'Missteps prevent ballet drama from reaching great heights' www.sbs.com.au (film review)

Shaun Tan *Tales from Outer Suburbia* (picture book)

Beth Wilson *Trespass* magazine (online) (film review)

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander texts

Boori Monty Pryor and Jan Ormerod *Shake a Leg* (picture book)

World texts

Nathan Green and Byron Howard (directors) *Tangled* (film)

Gina Wilson *Prowlpuss* (picture book)

2.1 How do we draw on *existing* texts to create *new* ones?

When we hear the words ‘Once upon a time’, we know what to expect.

We learn much of what we know about the world from what other people have already said, written or created, and how they have used language to do it – and we draw on this knowledge when we read or create new texts. Australian writer Clive James said in a *Sunday Age* interview that ‘scarcely anything is *original* – it’s very hard to be totally inventive’.

We draw on texts we’ve encountered without really thinking about it. We automatically expect certain things of a science fiction or action adventure film, for example, even before the opening credits roll. When we hear the words ‘Once upon a time’, we expect some sort of fairy story.

The wider the range of texts we are exposed to, the better prepared we are to understand them and create our own texts.

When we create our own texts, we draw on what we already know – choosing from over a million English words and combining them in sentences, usually according to grammatical conventions. We generally include all the expected elements of a story: a narrator, settings, characters and **themes**. We try and tell our story in ways that engage our audience, so they don’t respond with ‘who cares?’ or ‘and your point is?’ We draw on the conventions of the English language and of narrative texts to do this; but at the same time, we try not to be too predictable – however much we borrow from what has gone before, we also want to express *ourselves*.

A **theme** is the main idea of a text; for example, a novel or film might explore themes such as growing up, bravery or relationships, or ideas about how the world began.

The Iliad tells the story of the Trojan War. It shows what you can do with words.

Creators of texts are always seeking new ways of doing and saying things. American screenwriter Aaron Sorkin paid tribute in an *Age* interview to those who 'opened the doors for the rest of us', explaining how he walked 'in the footprints' of others:

> I don't know how they did it without anybody else's footprints in front of them. We're all forever in their debt.

According to Australian writer David Malouf, Homer's epic poem *The Iliad*, even though it was created thousands of years ago:

> stands there right at the beginning as an example to everybody who's coming of what you can actually do with words.

Because we inevitably walk in the footprints of others doesn't mean we can't be original, however. Some creators of texts – those who are innovative and creative – avoid sticking to a formula, although they still draw on aspects of other texts: even if it's to reject some of them! These are the authors who, as Aaron Sorkin put it, 'open the doors for the rest of us'.

Of course, we can't all open the doors for others, but in this chapter, we will consider how we follow the footprints of others, and how we draw on our knowledge of the **structures** and **features** of other texts every time we read or create texts. It's important to first understand what other people do when they create different sorts of texts, before we can work out interesting or new ways of creating texts ourselves – and avoid slavishly following where others have led.

Sometimes, we may even create footprints of our own for others to follow.

Language focus

When we say something is **original**, we mean it's unlike anything else – that it shows fresh ideas and a new way of looking at or doing something.

The **structures** of texts refer to the way texts are ordered and organised. The **features** of texts refer to the grammar of speech and writing, and the ways we use words.

Over to you

To revise metaphors, go to page 34.

1. What metaphor does Aaron Sorkin use to describe what happens when creators of texts find new ways of doing things? Suggest several alternative metaphors that could be used for describing this process.
2. Look in your library or on the internet at a copy of Homer's epic poem, *The Iliad*. There are a number of different translations of it. Copy out the first lines and discuss: 'What does Homer actually "do with words"?'
3. Identify some examples of texts you have heard, read or viewed where you think the creator has done something original.

How do other texts influence our choice of narrator?

To revise narrative voice, go to page 40.

Every text is written or created from a *point of view* – using a first- or third-person narrator. While we can make various choices about our narrator, we do so from a 'menu' based on:

- what we already know
- what's been done before, and
- what we want to do.

To revise the first and third person, go to page 12.

It's unlikely, for example, that we'd choose to write a diary in the third person, or present a news report in the first person.

Because we read many stories over the years, we recognise that a third-person narrator refers to their characters by name, and uses the pronouns *they, he* or *she*, but never *I*. David Metzenthen, in his novel *Falling Forward*, uses a third-person narrator to tell the story of Bruce, who works on a city high-rise building block. We learn from this narrator about Bruce's thoughts and feelings when newcomer Troy invites himself to stay:

> He wanted Troy to understand how hard, how really, really hard it was to get this place to live in and to get his labouring job. He wanted to tell Troy how easy it would be to lose them both again. And then he'd be back on the street, where he had been – at street level, and he'd be dirty, broke, and hungry and – (p. 7)

It's unlikely that we'd choose to write a diary in the third person.

A first-person narrator, on the other hand, uses the pronoun *I* – we will know what they are thinking, but we will also see everything and everyone from their point of view. In *The Book Thief*, a novel about life in Nazi Germany

Personification refers to the act of giving human qualities to something that doesn't have them – such as an animal, or Death.

in 1939, Australian author Markus Zusak **personifies** Death as a character who tells part of the story about Liesel – the book thief of the title– in the first person. Death addresses the reader directly using the second-person pronoun *you* to recount Liesel's story and her brushes with death:

> I have kept her story to retell. It is one of a small legion I carry, each one extraordinary in its own right. Each one an attempt – an immense leap of an attempt – to prove to me that you, and your human existence, are worth it.
>
> Here it is. One of a handful.
>
> *The Book Thief.*
>
> If you feel like it, come with me. I will tell you a story.
>
> I'll show you something. (p. 16)

In this extract taken from his publisher's website, Zusak describes how much thought went into deciding the most effective narrative voice for his story:

> For more than a year, I tried everything to make the book work, but somehow it never did. I tried first person, third person, second person ... and none of it gave me what I wanted ... Then I stumbled upon the idea of Death narrating the story, and it all made sense.

As readers, we know that the narrator of a story is not the same as the author – they are like another character and we learn things about them as well as the people they describe. In *The Book Thief*, for example, we are surprised to discover that Death is actually afraid of humans!

The choice of narrator may seem quite limited: first, second or third person. As new text types develop, however, they raise new challenges. For example, with the development of films, filmmakers had to find ways of showing how particular characters felt – something novelists could easily do through their narrator:

- One solution filmmakers have come up with is to use *close-up camera shots* that focus on the head of the subject. Such shots encourage the viewer to *identify* with that character – to see things from the character's point of view, or to focus on their reactions, thoughts or feelings.
- Another is to use **voice-over**, where an unseen person gives information or tells us what is going on, much as they do in a novel.

Claymation describes animated films where each character and setting is made of a clay substance.

The **claymation** film *Mary and Max* (2009), directed by Adam Elliot, tells the stories of two lonely people: eight-year-old Mary in Australia, and her pen pal Max in New York. Elliot uses close-up shots as well as voiceover – with a third-person narrator who tells the story and shows us what his characters are thinking and feeling.

A close-up of Mary shows tears running down her face, while voiceover tells the viewer what she is writing and how she is feeling.

Over to you

To revise tone, go to page 44.

1. In the passage from Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief*, what tone does the narrator, Death, use to address the reader? How might a filmmaker position the audience to see things from Death's point of view?
2. Apart from working out how to show what characters are thinking, what other challenges do you think early filmmakers had to resolve so they could effectively tell a story?
3. How might the creator of a digital novel or digital autobiography be able to use technology to tell a story from different points of view?
4. Working in pairs, brainstorm how you could tell a story of your own where you experiment with personification to develop a narrator, or several narrators. Your story may be in print or **multimodal** form.

Language focus

When we say a text **positions** its audience or readers, we mean that it uses spoken, written or visual language so as to make us see things in a particular way.

A **multimodal** text combines different modes. For example, a film is a multimodal text because it combines visual, spoken and sometimes written language.

Language focus

Stories that have a main character going through a door or some sort of opening – literal or metaphorical – into a different world are called **portal stories**.

How do other texts influence the way we present settings?

When we create narrative texts, we build on how others develop settings. We *expect* certain things of particular settings, such as the 'other worlds' in portal stories. We are also used to a setting creating or reflecting *mood* – we expect something sinister to happen, for example, in a grim castle perched on a craggy rock.

Do you think something sinister is going to happen?

In the case of Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief*, the setting is presented in a way that helps us understand *atmosphere*. The novel is set just before World War II (in 1939), when Adolf Hitler's Nazi Party was creating the conditions that led to the Jewish Holocaust. The narrator describes the streets in the German city of Molching:

> each window was decorated for the Fuhrer. In some places, like Frau Diller's, the glass was vigorously washed, the flag pristine, and the swastika looked like a jewel on a red and white blanket. In others, the flag trundled from the ledge like washing hung out to dry. But it was there.
>
> Earlier, there had been a minor calamity. The Hubermanns couldn't find their flag.
>
> 'They'll come for us,' Mama warned her husband. 'They'll come and take us away. We have to find it!' (p. 111)

Language focus

The **Fuhrer** was the German title given to Adolf Hitler, meaning *leader*.

The **swastika** is an ancient Indian symbol (a sun wheel) appropriated by the Nazi Party as its insignia.

Notice how Zusak paints a menacing scene that also shows different responses to 'the Fuhrer':

- Frau Diller's clean windows and pristine flag reflect her enthusiasm.
- 'Others' present crumpled flags that suggest unwilling compliance.
- For the Hubermanns, the flag is a source of fear.

The Nazi flag helps to project an atmosphere of menace.

Over to you

Re-read the passage from Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief* on the previous page.

1. The phrase 'like washing hung out to dry' is an example of what type of figurative language? What does it suggest about the condition of the flag?
2. If you were going to make a film of the scene, how would you depict the setting Zusak describes?
3. Find a passage in another narrative text where the setting is described in a way that adds to your understanding of another aspect of the text, such as plot or character.

How do other texts influence how we create characters?

Scrooge has become more than a character in a book.

How we understand characters in texts – and whether we find them convincing – partly depends on the other texts we have read or viewed, as well as the people we have met in real life. For example, Scrooge, in Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, has become more than a character in a book – the name has become a term used to describe someone who, like Scrooge, is mean with money and mean in spirit.

Sometimes, authors follow in others' footsteps without thinking for themselves when they create characters. Just as we use clichés to save us from thinking how to say things for ourselves, some authors use the character equivalent of a cliché: a **stereotype**.

Stereotypes are like cardboard cut-outs, rather than real people with interesting personalities. We see stereotypes in many **popular** texts; soap operas, for example, are full of them, such as the romantic hero, the ugly duckling who becomes a swan, and the bully or mean person who gets their come-uppance. Sometimes, people from particular cultural or social groups are stereotyped.

We can develop strong – often negative – ideas about people based on the way they are represented in such texts.

To revise clichés, go to page 32.

When we describe a character as a **stereotype**, we are suggesting that they have been produced from a template, rather than individually crafted.

When we use the word **popular** as an adjective to describe texts such as fiction, magazines or films, we mean that those texts are designed to have wide appeal, but are not considered literary.

The romantic hero is a common stereotype in popular texts.

CREATING

In their picture book *Shake a Leg*, Boori Monty Pryor and Jan Ormerod draw on two stereotypes – of Italians and of Aboriginal people – but they set out to show that people don't fit neatly into stereotypes. Some hungry boys go into a pizza place in a town in Far North Queensland. The cook greets them in Italian, and tells them he spent two years in an Italian village to learn 'the secret of pizza'. However, when the cook reveals that he is a 'Murri fella', the boys are shocked. They had wrongly assumed the man was Italian, just because he made pizza. The cook also good-naturedly completes one of the boy's questions: 'How come you're …'

… not standing on one leg,

leaning on a spear,

looking for emu?

The cook uses humour to show the boys that they have stereotyped both Aboriginal and Italian people in ways that ignore their diversity. Creating stereotypes instead of interesting characters is a case of following in the footsteps of other writers far too closely!

Interesting characters are not one-dimensional stereotypes. They are complex and unpredictable. They take some time to get to know, and they make us think about them long after we have stopped reading about them or watching them!

Over to you

List some characters from popular films, books or television programs that may be considered stereotypes. Give reasons to support your point of view, and then share your ideas with the class.

The cook in *Shake a Leg* shows the boys that they have stereotyped both Aboriginal and Italian people.

He's a fiend in feline shape …

Even if we are not always aware of it, we all draw on what we already know to create something new, and we can do this in interesting and imaginative ways, rather than simply combining different traits to create new characters. TS Eliot, for example, wrote a series of poems about different cats called *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*. One of the poems, 'Macavity: The Mystery Cat', describes a very shady and complex character:

> Macavity Macavity, there's no one like Macavity,
> For he's a fiend in feline shape, a monster of depravity.
> You may meet him in a by-street, you may see him in the square –
> But when a crime's discovered, then *Macavity's not there*! (p. 46)

In her verse picture book, *Prowlpuss*, Gina Wilson creates a different cat who shares some of Macavity's characteristics. Like Macavity, Prowlpuss is personified and given human characteristics. Both cats have distinctive eyes – Macavity's are 'sunken in' and Prowlpuss is missing one altogether. Prowlpuss is 'sly', where Macavity is depraved. Like Macavity, Prowlpuss is independent – and elusive:

> He's not a lap cat,
> a cuddle-up-
> for-a-chat cat,
> No, he's not!
> he's not a sit-in-
> the-window-
> and-stare cat.
> He's an I-WAS-
> THERE! cat.

Language focus

A **depraved** person (or cat) lacks morals to the point of wickedness.

Over to you

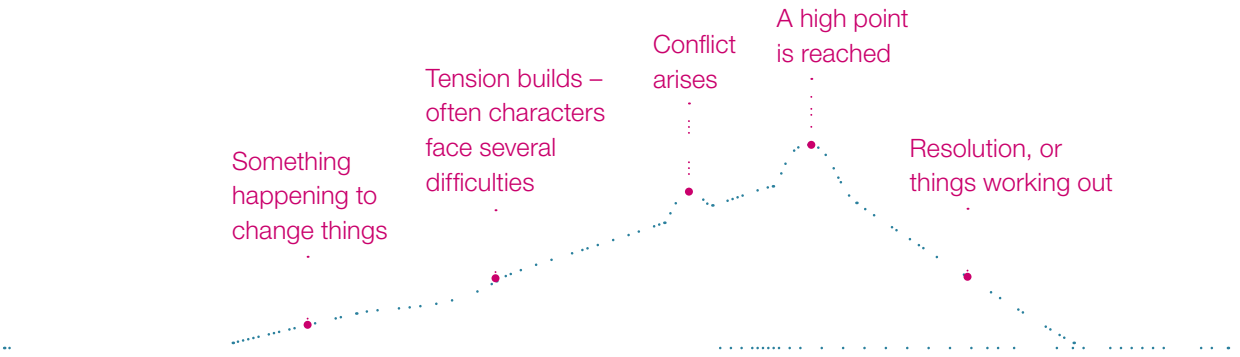
Re-read the extract from TS Eliot's poem 'Macavity: the Mystery Cat' and answer the following:

1. Identify the number of syllables in each line and the **rhyming scheme**, and suggest how the way the poem is written contributes to our understanding of Macavity's character and way of life.
2. Find an online version of the whole poem and create a storyboard, showing how you would depict Macavity in the opening sequence of an animated film. Label your images with phrases from the poem. Share your storyboards with the class.
3. Now re-read the extract from Gina Wilson's *Prowlpuss*. Discuss what characteristics Prowlpuss and Macavity have in common. Does this make them stereotypes?

The **rhyming scheme** (or rhyme scheme) of a poem is the pattern of rhyming sounds at the end of each line. The first set of rhyming sounds is given the letter A, and when a new set of rhyming sounds is introduced, it is given a new letter (B, C, D and so on). AABB and ABAB are examples of rhyming schemes.

How do other texts influence how we create plot?

Centuries ago, before stories were written down or printed, they were told in verse and passed down from generation to generation. With the development of new technologies – print, film and computers – storytellers have built on and developed old storytelling conventions. Many still follow a sequence that has stood the test of time:



The stages of a plot

If this approach is treated as a formula, it doesn't engage us. We know what is coming – we feel as if we have read or seen the story before. A good story depends on drawing the reader into the plot, sometimes making even the most fantastic things believable.

Alice in Wonderland: making even the most fantastic things believable

Language focus

Some creators of print and multimodal texts use **flashbacks** and **flash-forwards**, where scenes are interjected in the story as a way of showing something that happened in the past, or something that is going to happen in the future.

For example, Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, JK Rowling's *Harry Potter* and Neil Gaiman's *Coraline* all go through portals into other worlds, where they face unlikely dangers, experience adventures and learn something along the way – but they all do it in convincing and unique ways. Their authors follow in others' footsteps, but still produce original and engaging texts.

Of course, not all narratives follow the same plot sequence, and new options have been developed over time. For example, stories were usually told in chronological order (with events taking place in the order that they occurred) – until someone came up with the idea of using a series of **flashbacks**. These enable us to see something that happened in the past that relates to, and helps us understand, what is going on in the present.

In the *Harry Potter* novels, JK Rowling adds a new dimension to the flashback. The magical 'pensieve' is a stone basin where the Hogwarts headmaster, Albus Dumbledore, siphons off memories that he can't hold in his head but may want to examine later. Rowling uses the pensieve as a means of presenting flashbacks, but it has an added purpose – it also allows some characters to enter Dumbledore's memories as a sort of virtual reality.

Dumbledore siphons off memories and adds a new dimension to the flashback.

Over to you

List the advantages and disadvantages of using flashbacks or flash-forwards when telling a story.

How do other texts influence how we explore themes?

To revise themes, go to page 48.

Narrative texts explore themes or ideas, as well as tell stories; if we never heard or read a story or saw a film, we certainly wouldn't understand much about the world, or about how other people understand things.

Storytellers build on what has gone before when they explore particular themes. An important theme that has been explored over millennia is the question of how we should live. For example Aesop, a slave who lived in ancient Egypt (in the fifth or sixth century BCE), wrote a series of **fables**, each of which has a **moral**; that is, it makes a point about the right way to live.

A **fable** is a short story that *shows* us something about how we should behave without actually *telling* us.

We sometimes hear, for example, that someone has 'cried wolf' once too often – and this comes from Aesop's famous fable: *The Boy Who Cried Wolf*. In this fable, a bored shepherd boy entertains himself by shouting out that a wolf is threatening the sheep. He does this a number of times and laughs each time the villagers come running to help him. When a wolf really does attack his sheep, the villagers don't come to help because they no longer believe him, and he loses his sheep. The moral is, of course, that if you lie, no one will believe you when you tell the truth.

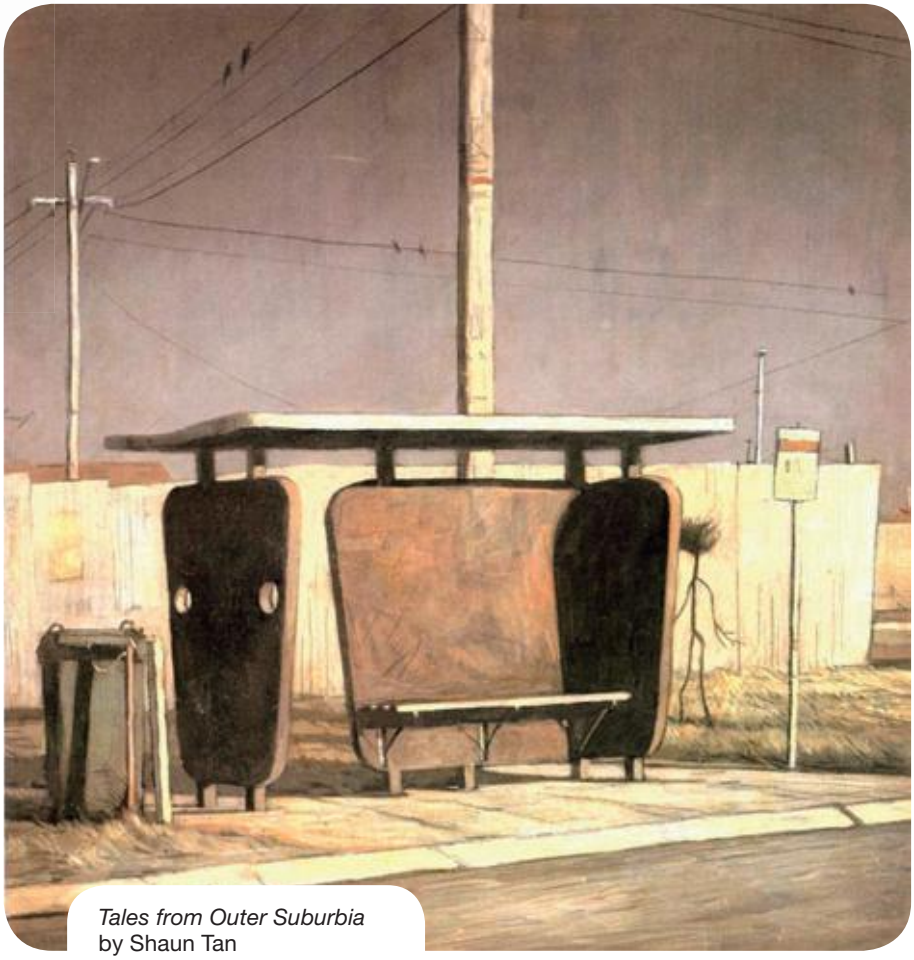
The Boy Who Cried Wolf by Francis Barlow

Over to you

Use an internet search engine to find another example of a fable by Aesop. Write a brief summary of the story and its moral, and share your findings with the class.

We still follow in Aesop's footsteps and write stories with morals – perhaps putting them in modern settings. Shaun Tan's picture book, *Tales from Outer Suburbia*, is a collection of illustrated fables set in a city, and they too tell us something about how we should live. One tale, 'Stick Figures', shows how we treat outsiders and what we have done to the landscape. The stick figures are made up of branches with heads that are 'faceless clod[s] of earth', and they have lived in the suburb 'long before anyone remembers, since before the bush was cleared and all the houses were built' (p. 65). The newer inhabitants, however, want to keep them away. For example, a few boys treat them with cruel but mindless violence:

> Some older boys take great delight in beating them with baseball bats, golf clubs, or whatever is at hand, including the victim's own snapped-off limbs. With careful aim a good strike will send the head – a faceless clod of earth – flying high into the air. The body remains passively upright until smashed into splinters between heels and asphalt. (p. 66)



Tales from Outer Suburbia
by Shaun Tan

The boys are enraged that the stick figures just 'stand there and take it', so that their mindless cruelty becomes boring. Despite this treatment, the stick figures always reappear – and they also make people ask important questions about themselves, such as:

> 'Who are you? Why are you here? What do you want?' (p. 69)

In creating his fable, Shaun Tan has drawn on an oral storytelling tradition that is centuries old. Without spelling out a moral, he invites us to ask the same questions as those prompted by the fable. The illustrations that accompany his fable do more than illustrate – they add to the meaning of the text. The stick figure standing by the bus stop is the only living thing in an asphalted landscape. Apart from the stick figure, all evidence of the natural world has been erased and the barren landscape reflects the nature of its inhabitants.

Over to you

Re-read the extracts from *Tales from Outer Suburbia* on pages 60 and 61, examine the illustration, and answer the following:

1. Why do you think the stick figures always reappear? What do you think this fable is telling us about the people of outer suburbia?
2. Identify where Tan uses **alliteration** and discuss how it emphasises the boys' violence.
3. What do the colours that Tan has used in the illustration suggest about the relationship between the landscape and the people who made it this way?
4. Tan uses the illustration on page 61 to accompany the text that immediately precedes it. Why do you think he has chosen to use this image, rather than a picture showing the boys smashing the bodies of the stick figures into splinters?
5. How does the illustration affect our response to the stick figures?

Alliteration is when several words that follow each other all begin with the same consonant sounds. It's sometimes used to add emphasis, or slow the reader down so they focus on particular words.

Of course, themes that interest people change over time, but we are still interested in many of the same themes that authors explored centuries ago: revenge, jealousy, relationships, the nature of evil and growing up are all examples of themes that provide an endless source of inspiration for authors. What changes is the way we understand these ideas and use language to explore them.

The nature of evil is one example of a theme that provides an endless source of inspiration for authors.

To revise metaphors, go to page 34.

Minfong Ho in *The Clay Marble*, published in 1992, and Joanne Horniman in *The Serpentine Belt*, published in 1994, are examples of authors who have used a similar metaphor to explore the theme of growing up, but who have also created very different texts. In both novels, the narrators believe that objects have magical properties – and in both, they come to realise that the objects are, in fact, metaphors for something within themselves.

In Ho's *The Clay Marble*, the narrator, Dara, has been in a refugee camp on the Thai-Cambodian border and later returns to Thailand as a member of an international relief agency. During her time as a refugee, she and her friend Jantu made clay marbles to play with. They saw these as having magical properties. Jantu dies, and Dara comes to see that the magic is 'in the making of the marble'; that is, she sees that the process of creating something is what is important.

> I looked at it, and for the first time I saw it for what it was: just a lump of clay. There was no magic in it, I realized. Not in the one Jantu made, nor in the one I made. And then I finally understood what Jantu had meant when she had said the magic is in the making of the marble …
>
> I tossed my head back and laughed out loud, in sheer joy. I'm going home, I thought, and I don't need magic marbles anymore. After all, the magic isn't in the marble. It's in me! (p. 148)

THE MAGIC IS WITHIN ME …

Joanne Horniman uses metaphor in a similar way in *The Serpentine Belt* to show how a character learns something about life. The only thing the narrator, Emily, has of her father is his journal, where he writes about a serpentine belt that has the power to unravel and remake history, so that it is flawless. She thinks it has magical properties, but comes to understand that:

> It isn't magic. It isn't all those things I'd imagined. It is just our lives, all our solitary and lonely lives: the way they weave and twist together, looping through time, so that sometimes they connect with each other and sometimes they diverge, each life its own distinct colour, and somehow, together, making a pattern, making a queer kind of sense. (p. 118)

Whether we realise it or not, and whether we are the author or reader of a text, we all draw on other texts when we explore themes. In a way, the process is similar to how Horniman describes our lives in the passage above: they 'weave and twist together, looping through time'.

Over to you

1. Find examples from several narrative texts (such as novels, poems, picture books and films) where their creators have explored a similar theme.
2. Write a paragraph explaining how you would explore the same theme in a narrative text of your own. Suggest a metaphor you could use to show something about an aspect of this theme.

We choose how to structure our texts, how to create characters and settings, and how to explore themes – and we choose language to do so according to what we already know and what we have already seen or read. In *The Child that Books Built*, Francis Spufford expressed surprise when he re-read CS Lewis's seven *Narnia* books and realised just how much they drew on other books he had loved as a child. He found:

> borrowings everywhere, of specially loved names, ideas, situations, atmospheres. Narnia is patchwork. *The Magician's Nephew* is set in E Nesbit's Victorian London … Prince Caspian is named after a sea in Central Asia, and his wicked stepmother Queen Prunaprismia is named after an elocution exercise ('Prunes and prisms, prunes and prisms') … *The Horse and His Boy* is a pony book crossed with *The Arabian Nights*. (p. 100)

Whenever we say, write or create something, we are often unaware of just how much we draw on what we have already seen, heard or read. If, as Spufford suggests, CS Lewis was indeed borrowing from all these texts, Lewis probably couldn't have identified them. And Spufford could only identify similarities to texts he had read himself.

Patchwork cloth is made up of scraps of material from many different sources, sewn together to create something quite new. The patchwork metaphor could be used to compare the process of creating and interpreting all texts. Whether we realise it or not, we combine what we know of other texts when we create or respond to something new. The more texts we are exposed to:

- the more we have to draw on when we create our own texts, and
- the more we can see relationships between what other people have created, and between ourselves and our world.

Over to you

1 Find several examples in a novel or picture book where the author has 'borrowed' from other texts, for example a name, or a particular sort of character or place.

2 Using the patchwork metaphor, create several slides for a PowerPoint presentation, combining words and images to show what the author has borrowed from other texts you know.

2.2 How and why do creators of texts *refer* to other texts?

Explicit means that something is clearly and directly stated. *Explicitly* is the adverbial form.

Implicit is the opposite of *explicit*, and means that although something is not directly stated, it is implied and can be understood. *Implicitly* is the adverbial form.

To **allude** is less precise than to *refer*. When we allude to another text, we do so indirectly.

Most texts draw on shared knowledge of how authors have structured texts, developed characters and explored ideas over time.

Sometimes, authors of print, visual and multimodal texts also **explicitly** refer to other texts – perhaps by directly referring to another text or a character, or including a quotation from another author – in ways that add something both to the original and the new text. Alternatively, authors may **allude** to another text **implicitly**, and leave the reader or viewer to make the connections for themselves.

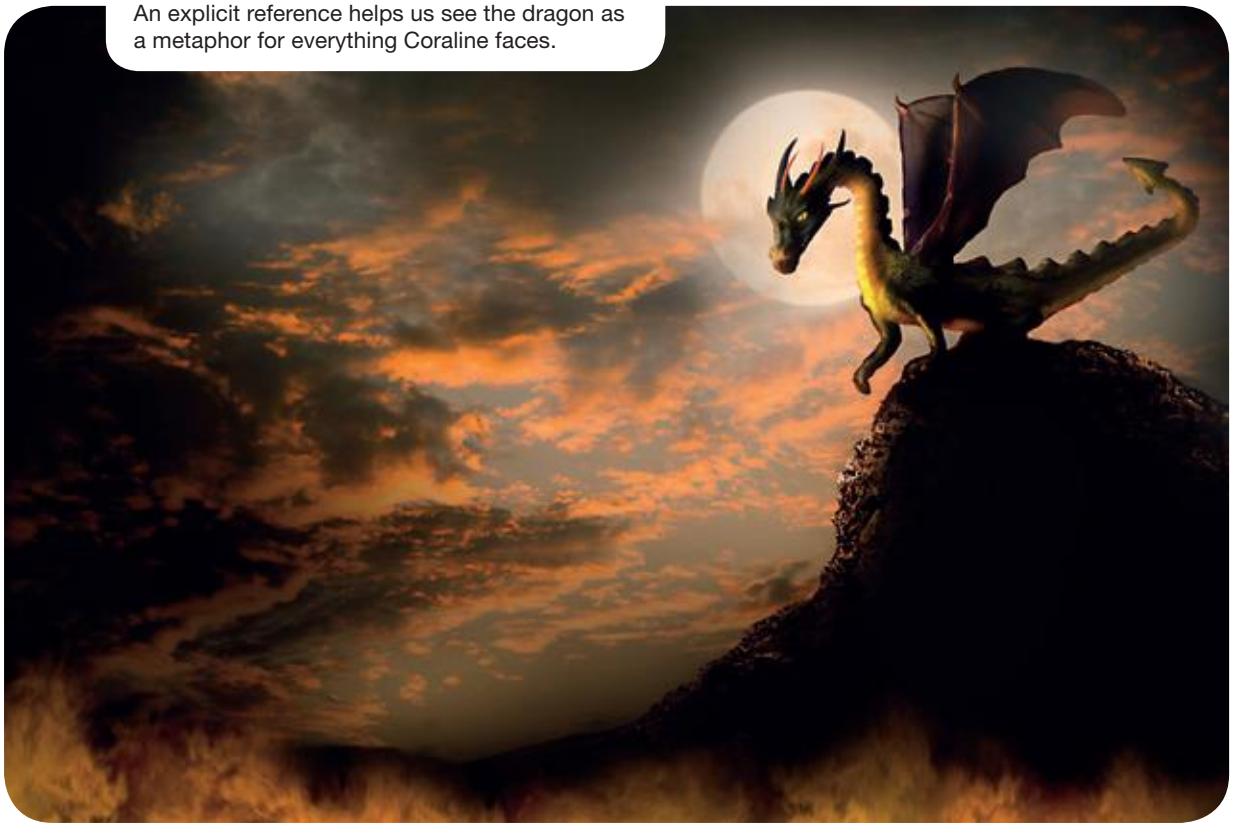
In this chapter we'll look at some of the explicit and implicit ways creators of texts refer to and allude to other texts.

How do we explicitly refer to other texts?

Sometimes, authors may include in their text just one quotation from another author – especially in the page that faces the title page of a book. They do this when something someone else has written relates in an important way to their own text. The text they quote either may have inspired their own text, or may add to the ways we understand it. Neil Gaiman, in his novel *Coraline*, for example, includes the following quotation from writer GK Chesterton:

> Fairy tales are more than true: not because they tell us that dragons exist, but because they tell us that dragons can be beaten.

Although Gaiman only quotes one sentence from Chesterton, that one sentence shapes the way we understand his novel. It focuses our attention on the idea that the dragon is a metaphor for everything that the main character, Coraline, fears. She learns in the course of the novel that, just as Chesterton said, dragons can be beaten.



An explicit reference helps us see the dragon as a metaphor for everything Coraline faces.

Sometimes, creators of texts make explicit references to the printed works of other authors. For example, in Joanne Horniman's novel *The Serpentine Belt*, the narrator, Emily, is at a book exchange, killing time:

> I come to a section of children's books and leaf through one or two without interest till I come to one I've known since childhood. I smile. *The Little Prince*, by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry.
>
> A folded sheet falls from the book. I open it and read.
>
> *Dear Mick and Shane*
>
> *Just passing through Lismore on a bike ride with the boys, haven't got time to drop in but thought we could drop you a line anyway. We hope everything goes well in Brisbane or wherever you are building the verandah. There's a book with this letter which is fantastic – hope you like it. All the best.*
>
> *Love, Felix* (p. 7)

What does an allusion to *The Little Prince* tell us about Emily in *The Serpentine Belt*?

Why does Horniman refer to this particular children's book, *The Little Prince*, rather than another children's book? What does this tell us about Emily and her story? The meaning obviously isn't explicit! If we don't know the text being referred to, we need to ask questions about it. In this case, it could be that *The Little Prince* explores the importance of imagination, and of seeing with the heart – both of which are important to Emily.

Over to you

Either find a quotation on a theme that interests you, or think of a story you read as a child. Create a plan outlining how you could draw on this quotation or story in a story of your own. (You will develop this story in Assessment Task 5 on page 95.)

How do we implicitly refer to other texts?

There are several ways in which authors can imply a reference to other texts. In this section, we will look at:

- allusion, and
- parody.

Allusion

An **allusion** is a figure of speech that makes a reference to a literary work or a work of art, such as a painting. Usually, the reader or viewer is left to work out for themselves what the author means by including the allusion.

One way in which creators of texts draw more implicitly on other literary texts (usually well-known ones) is by **allusion** – that is, they allude to another print or visual text without actually naming the source of the text. This isn't done to turn their text into some sort of literary 'allusion finder', but because it adds additional layers of meaning to the new text. If we understand the allusion, we will understand the new text more richly. If, however, the reader doesn't know the original text, they will miss the allusion and probably won't get what the author is saying.

Many texts allude to stories in the Bible. For example, Ray Bradbury, in his science fiction novel *The Martian Chronicles*, describes a rocket making its third voyage to Mars:

> Now it was decelerating with metal efficiency in the upper Martian atmospheres. It was still a thing of beauty and strength. It had moved in the midnight waters of space like a pale sea leviathan; it had passed the ancient moon and thrown itself onward into one nothingness following another. (pp. 53–54)

Language focus

Note that *Job* rhymes with *robe*, rather than with *bob*.

Bradbury's simile 'like a pale sea leviathan' alludes to a large sea animal that is mentioned several times in Old Testament stories in the Bible. The 'Book of Job', for example, describes a leviathan whose mouth has 'doors … ringed about with fearsome teeth' and whose:

> snorting throws out flashes of light;
> his eyes are like rays of dawn.

To revise similes, go to page 34.

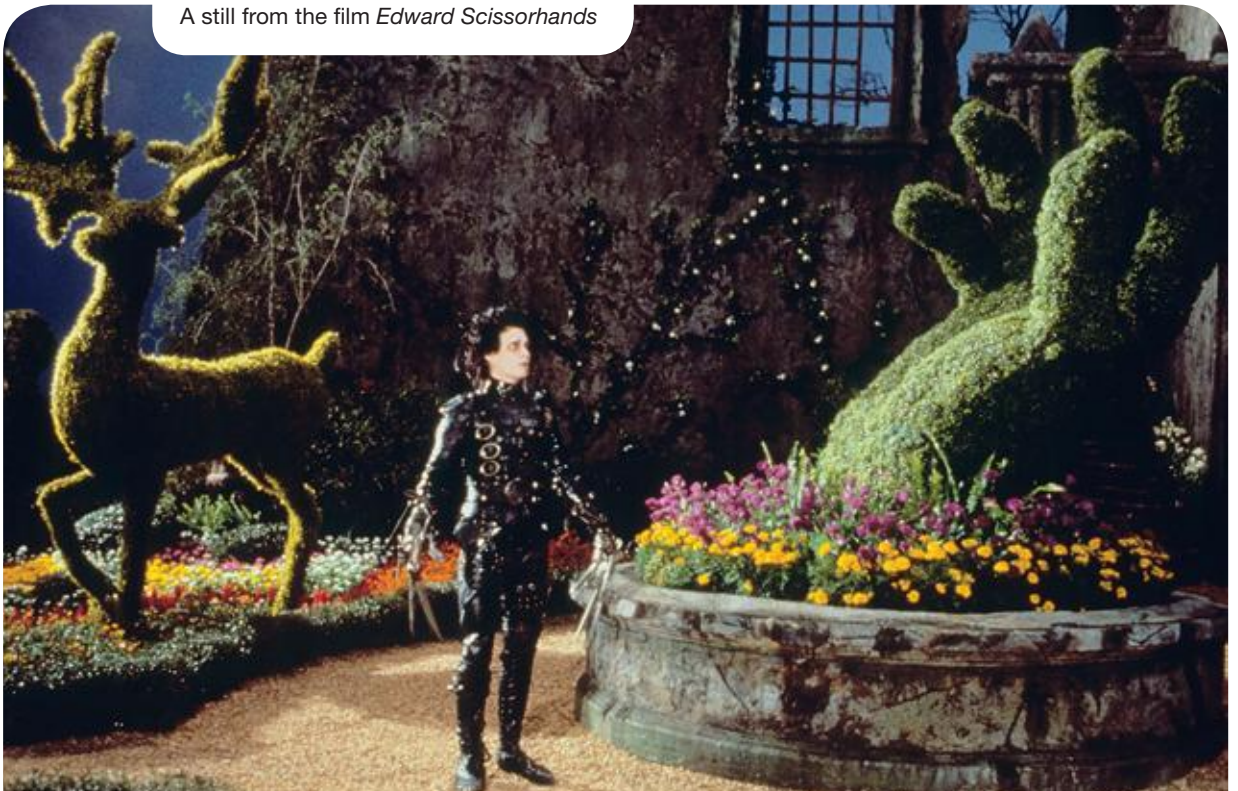
If we recognise Bradbury's allusion to the Bible, we gain a richer image of the rocket, and this is why it's important not just to look up words we don't know in the dictionary, but also to try and understand allusions to other texts. In the case of 'leviathan' for example, a web search of the word identifies its biblical source.

The leviathan

Creators of visual and multimodal texts also draw on other visual texts. The two paintings below are a good example of this: in his painting *The Bar* (1954) (below right), Australian artist John Brack has drawn on French artist Edouard Manet's painting *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère* (1882) (below left). In doing so, however, Brack has created a highly original work.

Filmmakers also make visual references, or allusions, to other texts. Many episodes of *The Simpsons* refer to other films, for example 'Cape Fear' shows Ned Flanders creating a huge hedge sculpture of an angel – a reference to the 1990 film *Edward Scissorhands* (directed by Tim Burton) where Edward makes ornate hedge sculptures.

A still from the film *Edward Scissorhands*



Over to you

1 Create a multimodal diary and record examples as you come across them where creators of texts allude to other print and multimodal literary texts. Include visual images in your diary, and accompany each example with a paragraph outlining why you think the allusion was made. (You will present this diary for Assessment Task 4 on page 95.)

2 Study the two paintings by Edouard Manet and John Brack and compare:

- the appearance and body language of the woman at the bar
- the background and foreground
- the use of colour.

3 Suggest how Brack has drawn on Manet's work and created something new. How might an artist today draw on these two paintings to create something new?

By recognising how texts relate to each other, we will understand them, and the cultures in which they were produced, more fully.

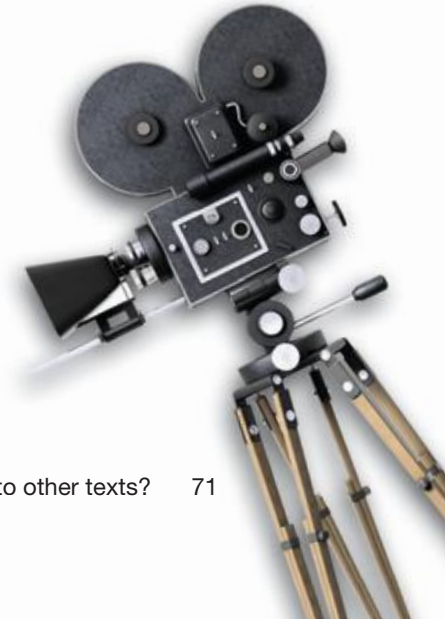
Parody

Parody not only draws on another text or type of text, it also does so in ways that make them look ridiculous. The verb form of the noun *parody* is also *parody*.

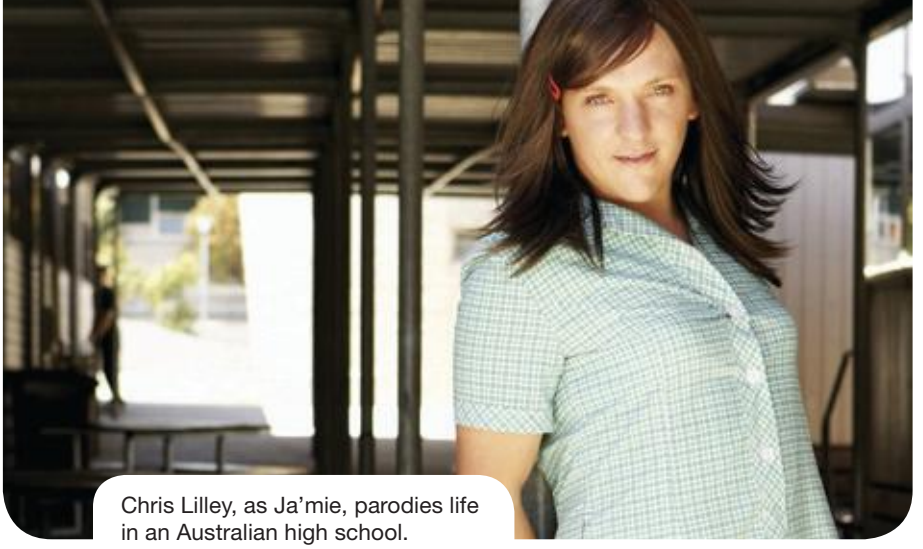
Creators of texts sometimes draw explicitly on particular spoken, print or multimodal texts, or particular types of texts such as the horror genre, to make fun of them or criticise them in some way. Sometimes this involves imitating or exaggerating the features of another text in order to show it in a ridiculous light. This is called **parody**. Authors don't announce that they are doing this; their audiences make these connections for themselves.

A simple example of parody is when a comedian makes fun of – or parodies – someone by imitating what they say and how they say it, and exaggerating their faults. Parody only works if the person or thing being parodied is still recognisable, and sometimes this is done so successfully that people mistake the parody for the real thing. Take, for example, Barry Humphries' character, Dame Edna Everage. Dame Edna, a housewife from the Melbourne suburb of Moonee Ponds, wears outlandish clothes for her chat shows – and what she says, and how she says it imitates and mocks the attitudes of some suburban Australians. Dame Edna is a comic character, yet she is so realistic that some people have believed her to be a real person!

The *Scream* movies are examples of horror films that parody the horror genre.



PARODY



Chris Lilley, as Ja'mie, parodies life in an Australian high school.

The Australian mockumentary series *Summer Heights High* (2007, written by and starring Chris Lilley and directed by Stuart McDonald) parodies life in an Australian high school through characters such as the snobbish and self-obsessed private schoolgirl, Ja'mie King. An example of this is the way Ja'mie talks about her charity work for Sudanese refugees – the parody shows that she is only interested in helping others if there is something in it for her.

Filmmakers also sometimes parody other films. In the *Simpsons* episode 'Boy-Scoutz N the Hood', for example, when the characters Moe Syzlak and Hans Moleman are fighting with knives, Moleman says: 'You call that a knife? *This* is a knife!' – as he produces a huge knife. This parodies a well-known scene from the 1986 Australian film *'Crocodile' Dundee* (directed by Peter Faiman), when Mick 'Crocodile' Dundee (played by Paul Hogan) uses the same line as he pulls out a huge knife to threaten muggers who are attacking him with a switchblade.

Over to you

1 What is the difference between *imitating* someone or something, and *describing* someone or something?

2 Find an example of parody on YouTube and respond to the following:

a How has the filmmaker imitated what a character says and how they say it?

b Is the parody funny? Give reasons for your answer.

Creators of texts who draw on other texts – either implicitly or explicitly – usually not only know that they are doing so, they understand that most of their audience will know this too.

Sometimes, however, writers and creators of texts borrow phrases or ideas from other texts without realising they are doing so. Take the expression: 'Yes we can!', which is a catchphrase used by Bob the Builder in the British children's television show. This phrase was famously used by United States President Barack Obama in his 'Yes we can!' speech of 2008, although it's unlikely he was purposely alluding to Bob the Builder! The same phrase was later adapted by Prime Minister Julia Gillard at the launch of the August 2010 federal election, when it became 'Yes we will!' – suggesting that things *will* be done, rather than that they *can* be done.

YES WE CAN / WILL!

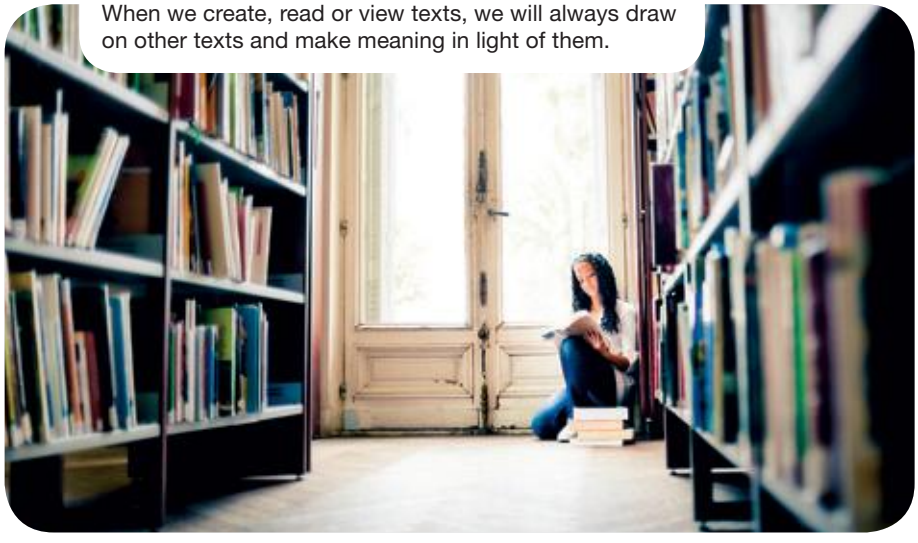
What is the difference between drawing on another text and plagiarising it?

Sometimes we read of cases where the author of one text, such as a music video clip, accuses another of 'ripping off' their work. This means that the second 'author' has presented material that draws so heavily on another text, or parts of another text, that it is very similar to the original.

When we knowingly take – rather than allude to – someone else's ideas or words from a text, without acknowledging them, and without adding to them or changing them in ways that create something new, this is **plagiarism**. Plagiarism is stealing from another author.

Plagiarism is the presentation of someone else's writing or ideas as your own. It is derived from the Greek word for 'kidnapping': *plagium.*

When we create, read or view texts, we will always draw on other texts and make meaning in light of them. Even those who find new ways of doing things are reacting to how things are usually done. We draw on other texts in ways that pay homage to those that have gone before us, and we acknowledge their contribution.



When we create, read or view texts, we will always draw on other texts and make meaning in light of them.

2.3 How do we *adapt* a text to make something new?

Modes are the processes by which we communicate, such as reading, creating, viewing, speaking and listening.

A **medium** (plural: **media**) is the means by which a text is presented. Examples include pen, printing press and voice; electronic media, such as radio and television; and digital media, such as a computer.

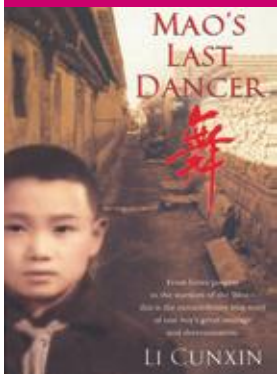
Sometimes, creators of texts go beyond *referring* to another author's text. They combine different **modes** and **media** to create an **adaptation** – a work presented in a new form or medium – that may be valued in its own right, as well as add meaning to the text it draws on.

In 1985, for example, composer Andrew Lloyd Webber drew directly on the poems in TS Eliot's *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats* to give them dramatic form in the musical *Cats*. Many of Shakespeare's plays have been considerably changed when they have been adapted as films or graphic novels. For example, the CG-animated film adaptation of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* – *Gnomeo and Juliet*, directed by Kelly Asbury in 2011 – presents the main characters as garden gnomes.

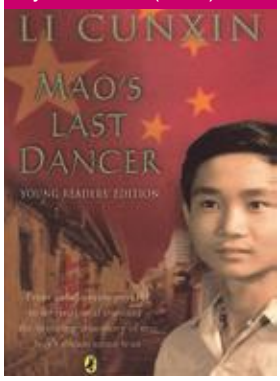
Language focus

When an animator uses computer graphics to create a film, this is called **CG animation**.

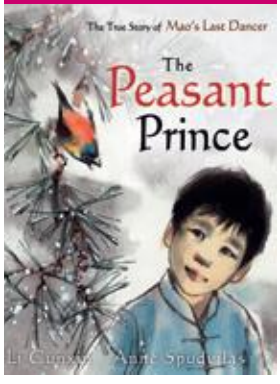
Autobiography by Li Cunxin (2003)



Young Readers' Edition by Li Cunxin (2005)

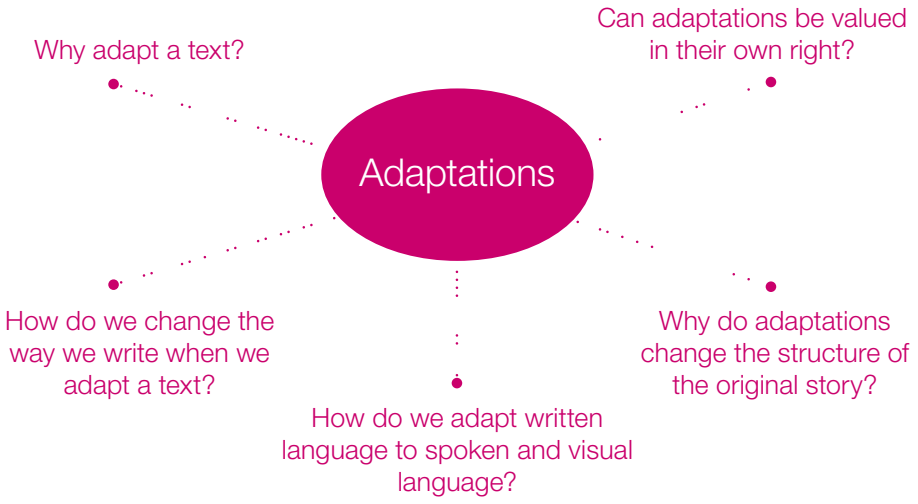


Picture book by Li Cunxin and Anne Spudvilas (2007)



Film adaptation, directed by Bruce Beresford (2009)

Adaptations of well-known and often well-loved print texts to multimodal forms raise some interesting questions, which we will explore in the following pages:



Over to you

Think of examples of narrative texts that have been adapted in several different ways (these could include novel, graphic novel, digital novel, picture book, film, musical or video game). Why do you think these texts were chosen for adaptation?

Why adapt a text?

Texts are often adapted from one form to another to appeal to different audiences or a wider audience, or to adapt the appeal of one text to another form. A novel, for example, may be adapted as a picture book for younger readers. A much-loved story may be adapted as a graphic novel to appeal to a modern audience. Adaptations of a text – such as a film adaptation – may also *add* to the original text in new ways.

Li Cunxin's autobiography, *Mao's Last Dancer*, is a good example of a text that has been adapted in a number of ways for different audiences. Li first wrote his autobiography for an adult audience and then adapted it for publication as a 'Young Readers' Edition'. Since then, it has also been published as two different multimodal texts – a film of the same name, and a picture book for younger readers, *The Peasant Prince*.

Over to you

Look carefully at the front covers of Li Cunxin's autobiography and each adaptation of it. How has each one been designed to appeal to a different audience?

ORIGINAL

Each adaptation of Li's autobiography draws on his account of life in a very poor farming family in a village in north-east China, and how he became a famous ballet dancer.

Li (born in 1961) and his six brothers live in great hardship in the People's Republic of China, led by Chairman Mao Zedong (who was the first chairman of the Communist Party in China, from 1943 to 1976). Li's parents work on farms and the family is often close to starvation. During his schooldays, Li and his fellow students are taught blind obedience to the government, and to Chairman Mao personally.

Li feels he has little hope of any other life, but this changes when he is chosen to go to an academy in Beijing and train as a ballet dancer. Li's life is still hard, but he knows that this is his only way out of a life of poverty. Few people are allowed to leave China, but Li's life is suddenly transformed when he is selected to study ballet in the United States. He is amazed by how different life is, and defects (that is, he refuses to return to China). The Chinese authorities tell him that he will never see his family again.

Things change in China after the death of Chairman Mao, and when Li becomes a star, his parents are allowed to visit him in the United States. He later moves to Australia, and writes about how he made his journey from terrible poverty to fame, and from one culture to another.

The book and film adaptations of Li's autobiography tell the same story, although they tell it in different ways. In each adaptation, their creators had to make various choices, about what to keep and what to change.

Li is taught blind obedience to Chairman Mao.

How do we change the way we write when we adapt a text?

When adapting his autobiography for the Young Readers' Edition, Li had to change some of the ways he wrote. He had to do this again when he developed the picture-book version, *The Peasant Prince*, to take into account the needs and interests of a much younger audience – and also because this time, his story would be told both in words and through Anne Spudvilas' illustrations.

We can understand the sort of changes Li made by focusing on the same example in each adaptation, where Li's father tells him a fable about a frog in a well. The moral is that we should accept our place in the world – Li's father is telling him that there is no way out of his hopeless life of poverty. However, unlike the frog, Li does ultimately overcome all the odds. With hope and persistence, he is finally able to escape from his 'dark, cold well' and reach the stars.

First, read the version of the 'frog in the well' story presented in the Young Readers' Edition of *Mao's Last Dancer*:

'Tell me "The Frog in the Well" story again.'

'Dia [father], can you tell me a story before you go?'

'I've told you all the stories I have.'

'Please tell me "The Frog in the Well" story again,' I begged. He'd sit next to me, put his arm around my shoulder, and begin:

There was a frog that lived in a small, deep well. His well and the sky he could see above it were his entire universe.

One day he met a frog who lived in the world above. 'Why don't you come down and play with me? It's fun down here,' the frog in the deep well asked.

'What's down there?' the frog above asked.

'Everything. You name it. The streams, the undercurrent, the stars, the moon.'

The frog on the land sighed. 'My friend, you live in a confined world. You haven't seen what's out here in the bigger world.'

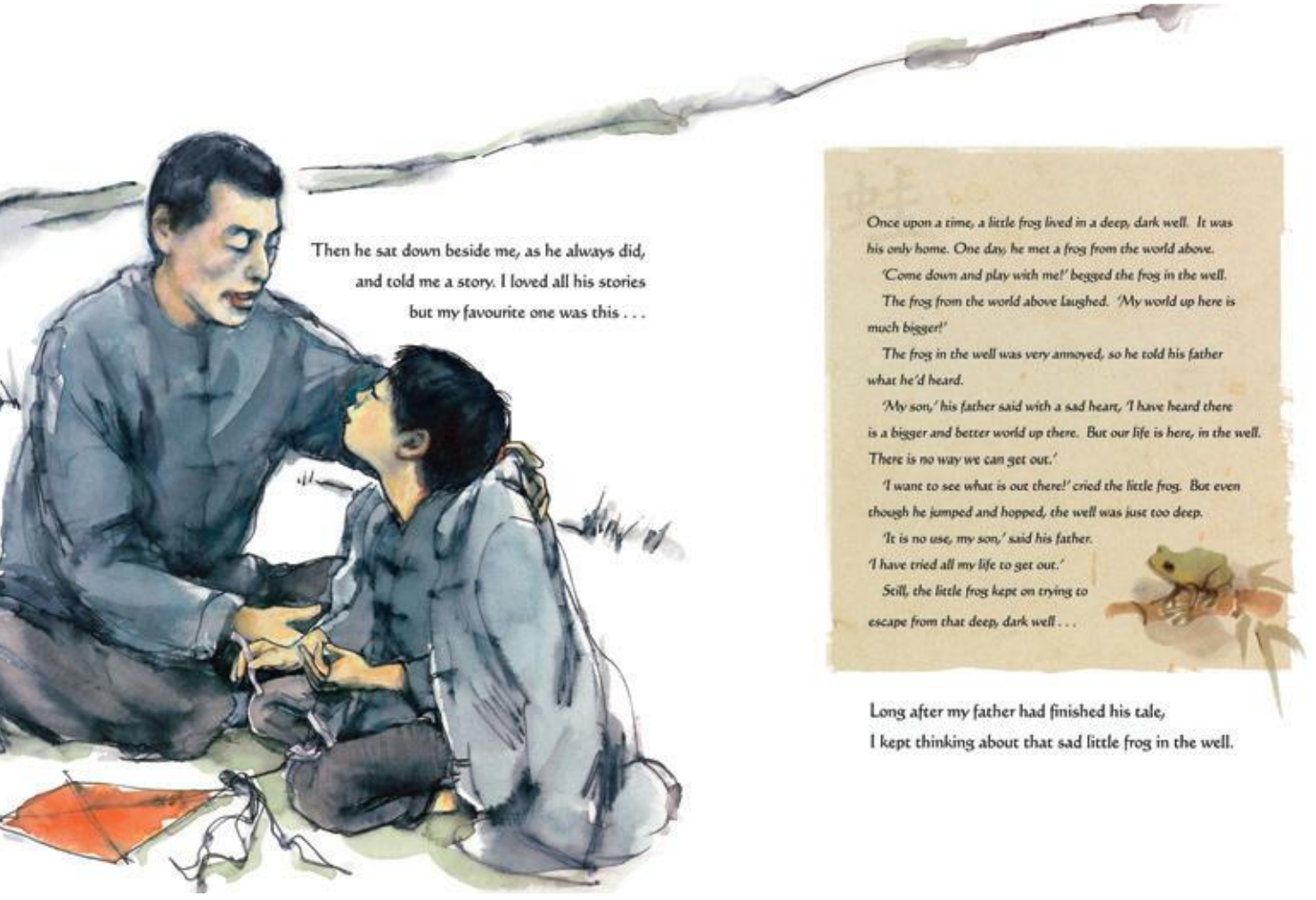
The frog below was very annoyed and went to ask his father if this were true. 'Please don't tell me there is a bigger world out there than ours!'

'My son, the world up there is enormous. But our destiny is down here. There is no way we can get out.'

The little frog was determined. 'I can get out! I can!' He jumped and hopped, but the land above was too far away.

The poor little frog spent his whole life trying to escape from the dark, cold well. The big world above remained only a dream. (pp. 42–43)

In the picture book adaptation, *The Peasant Prince*, Li puts the fable at the centre of the much shorter text:



As we can see, the two versions are different. In the Young Readers' Edition, Li recounts how his father would sit next to him with his arm around his shoulder and tell him stories. Li creates a picture with words; but *The Peasant Prince* version of the story is illustrated. In an *Age* interview with Megan Backhouse, the illustrator, Anne Spudvilas, observes that 'the best pictures open out a story rather than simply follow the text'. Her illustration *shows* the relationship between Li and his father: we can see – and don't need to be told – how Li looks trustingly at his father, who has his arm around him. The two figures form a circle, and we can also see that father and son have a close relationship. Notice too, how Li has used simpler sentences and vocabulary in the picture-book adaptation, so a younger audience will understand them.

Now let's look at what happens to the same fable in the film adaptation of the text. One issue for the filmmaker is that Li's father speaks Mandarin, so when he tells his son the fable, his words have to be translated for a non-Mandarin-speaking audience using subtitles. Long, complex sentences have to be avoided, as these won't fit across the bottom of the screen and the audience has to be able to read quickly.

Language focus

When foreign languages are used in a film, a printed translation is provided at the bottom of the screen, using **subtitles**.

There lived a frog.
The frog could only see the opening of the well.
One day, a toad arrived at the top of the well.
The toad saw the frog and said to the frog,
Come up and have a look.
The world up here
is huge and bright.
From then on,
the frog dreamed of jumping out
of the well to see the world. (Scene 2)

Over to you

1 a The table below includes examples of sentences from the 'frog in the well' fable, quoted on page 77 and above, in three versions of *Mao's Last Dancer*. Copy and complete the table, showing how each adaptation expresses the same sentence. The first one has been done for you.


Once upon a time, a little frog lived in a deep dark well.

Mao's Last Dancer: Young Readers' Edition	*The Peasant Prince:* picture book	*Mao's Last Dancer:* film adaptation
There was a frog that lived in a small, deep well.	Once upon a time, a little frog lived in a deep, dark well.	There lived a frog.
His well and the sky he could see above it were his entire universe.		
But our destiny is down here.		

b For each adaptation, suggest how and why the sentences have been changed or omitted so that they are appropriate for different audiences and different forms of text.

2 Refer to each version of the fable and answer the following questions:

a How do the conclusions of the three versions of the fable use language differently?

b Why do you think the changes were made in each version?

c In the film adaptation, why do you think the frog was changed into a toad?

How do we adapt written language to spoken and visual language?

A **screenwriter** writes the film script, or adapts an existing text for the screen. They write dialogue and some directions for actors, and descriptions of settings, action and behaviour

A **screenplay** is made up of visual descriptions of settings, actions and behaviour, as well as dialogue.

In print texts, authors include dialogue to tell us more about characters by showing us what they say, and how they say it. They combine dialogue with descriptions of where characters are, what they are doing and thinking, and why. A **screenwriter**, on the other hand, cannot include this sort of description in their film script or **screenplay**, which is made up of visual descriptions of settings, actions and behaviour, as well as dialogue. In the case of the film adaptation of *Mao's Last Dancer*, directed by Bruce Beresford, the screenwriter, Jan Sardi, adapted some dialogue from Li's autobiography and added some completely new dialogue to convey some of the characters' thoughts and feelings.

For example, in the Young Readers' Edition print version, Li's father tells him the 'frog in the well' story as they sit on a hill on a bitterly cold day (p. 96). In the film adaptation, the setting is changed, partly because a film needs action to keep the story moving forward, but also because the setting adds meaning to the 'frog in the well' story. Li's father begins the story in the house, sitting on the bed. The room, like the well, is dark, and the newspapers lining the walls suggest a wider world beyond. Li's father lights his pipe as he says 'One day a toad arrived at the top of the well. The toad saw the frog'. The scene **segues** into the father continuing the story as he cycles with Li from home to the audition – and the new setting highlights the idea that Li is moving out of the well, and towards a new life.

Language focus

To **segue** (pronounced SEG-way) is a term taken from music, meaning to go on without pausing.

In the same way, the screenwriter changes the setting for Li's conversation with his mother, before he leaves for Beijing. In the autobiography the conversation takes place as they work together in the kitchen (p. 96), but in the film, Li talks to his mother as he lies in bed (Scene 2) – perhaps to convey the intimacy between mother and son that Li is able to put into words in the book.

Screenwriters may also shorten or cut dialogue because body language and visual language can also be used to convey atmosphere and tone. For example, Niang's words to Li in the Young Readers' Edition:

> No, I can't go with you, but my love will. I will always love you, with all my heart. (p. 96)

can be cut from the film because her expression and body language show her love.

As we've seen in the case of *The Peasant Prince*, illustrations may sometimes take the place of words. In a film adaptation, the screenwriter can also use visual language to convey the same message as written language and sometimes to add to it. Compare, for example, Li's autobiographical account in the Young Readers' Edition of a brief but dramatic moment that changed his life. Government representatives have come to his school to choose children to audition for the Beijing Ballet Academy, and they walk among the students as they sing 'We Love Chairman Mao':

> They passed me without taking any notice, but just as they were walking out of our classroom, Teacher Song hesitated. She tapped the last gentleman from Beijing on the shoulder and pointed at me. 'What about that one?' she said. (p. 91)

To revise close-up camera shots and their effects, go to page 52.

In the film adaptation of *Mao's Last Dancer*, dialogue and visual language are combined with music to tell the same story in ways that also convey the atmosphere. The close-up shot below, from Scene 1, shows the moment described in the passage above when Li is chosen to audition for a place at the Beijing Academy. The film visually conveys the teacher's fear and courage as, determined to give Li a chance, she bows low to the official, before asking: 'What about that boy?' The shot shows Li in a dark, crowded classroom. His Communist Youth Party red scarf is the only colour relieving the gloom.

The moment that changes Li's life

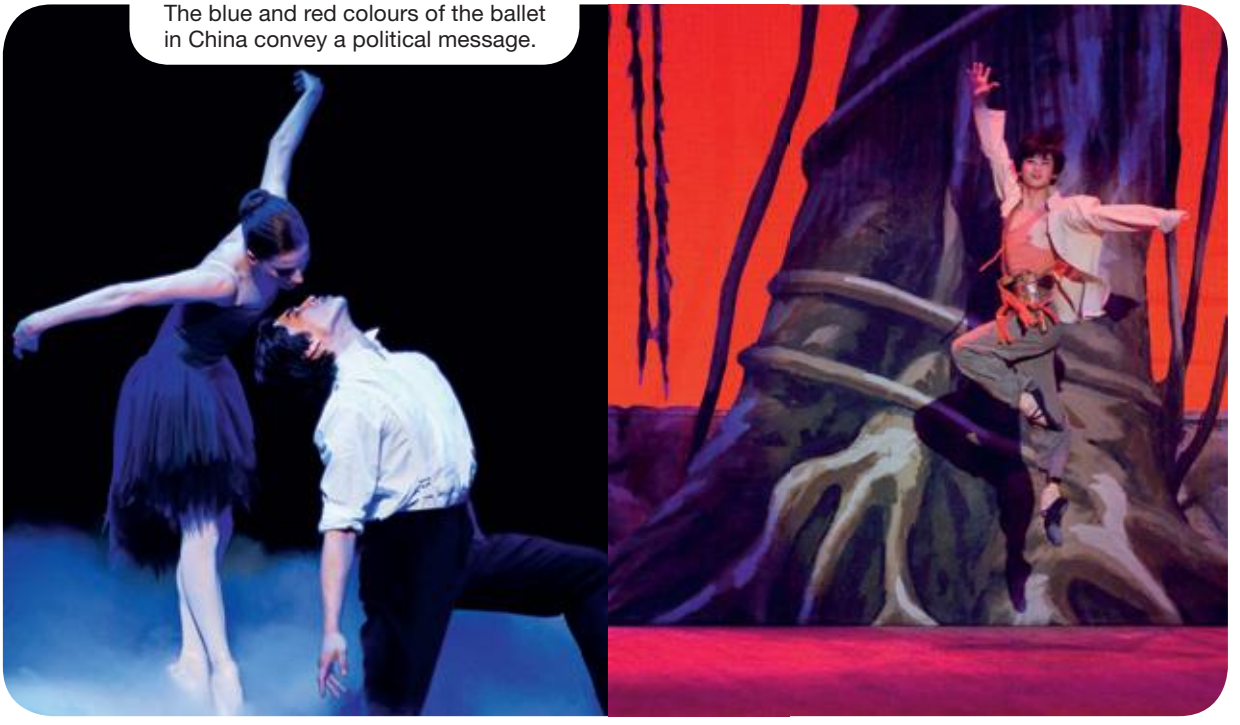
Language focus

In photography, when a colour has been **desaturated**, it has been toned down or had white, black or grey added to it so that it looks less bright.

Descriptions in Li's autobiography tell us about the conditions in China, and what it was like to be a student in Li's classroom and at the Beijing Academy. In the film adaptation, on the other hand, visual images show what this was like. Peter James, director of photography, explained that for scenes set in China he used only 50 per cent of the negative to 'make it seem more grainy, like old-fashioned film'. He also used **desaturated** colour to depict the poverty of China, making it look grey and much less colourful than the footage shot in the United States.

In a film, colour and body language can also be used to add to our understanding of the text. In *Mao's Last Dancer,* for example, compare Li's performances in China and the United States. In Beijing, the 'revolutionary' dance style is chosen by the government leaders and is designed to convey a political message. The ballet is performed by gun-carrying dancers and tells the story of revolutionary struggle. Dancers wear blue uniforms with red armbands. They dance against an alternating backdrop of blue, reflecting their uniforms, and red – the colour of communism. Party officials watch the performance with Teacher Chan, whose eyes fill with tears as he sees his beloved dance manipulated for political purposes. (Scene 5) This scene is contrasted with Li's later performance in the United States. The dancers, like their audience, sparkle. They wear gold, silver and blue body suits and their ballet conveys creativity, rather than a political message. Times have changed in China and Li's parents have been allowed to attend the performance; his mother's eyes fill with tears of pride and amazement as she watches her son. (Scene 15)

Strong visual contrasts between Houston, Texas, and China also highlight the many cultural differences between China and the United States.



The blue and red colours of the ballet in China convey a political message.

Over to you

1. Some people argue that filmmakers can focus too much on visual effects, especially special effects, and that they do this at the expense of developing other aspects of the story, such as relationships between characters. Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer.
2. Look at the film still of Li on page 81 as he is about to be chosen to audition for the Beijing ballet school, and re-read his written account of what happened. Now write your own first-person account of a scene where your life is about to change forever. Accompany your story with a diagram, showing how you would depict this scene in a film adaptation.

Why do adaptations change the structure of the original story?

Most adaptations are shorter than the original text. In the case of *Mao's Last Dancer*, adapting a 322-page autobiographical narrative to a picture book obviously meant leaving out a great deal – both so that it would fit into 36 pages, many of which were taken up with illustrations, and so that it would be appropriate for younger readers. In the case of the film adaptation, if everything in the original autobiography had been included, the film would probably have gone on for days!

Adapting a text from one form to another usually involves selecting what to leave out, as well as making decisions about how to structure the adaptation. Like many autobiographies, Li's narrative is structured chronologically. He starts with his parents' marriage, and moves on to descriptions of his childhood, his time at Madame Mao's Beijing Dance Academy, his defection and then his life and performances in the United States.

These events are recounted with a level of detail that would be inappropriate for a picture book aimed at children, so Li changes the structure of *The Peasant Prince*. Instead of a chronological narrative describing events in detail, he recounts the fable about the frog in the well and relates key events in Li's life to that fable. This is a simpler structure and is suited both to a younger audience and to the picture-book form, but it also allows key events and themes to be explored.

Language focus

When we say that something is presented in **chronological** order (or **chronologically**), we mean that events are ordered according to when they occurred. **Chronological** comes from the Greek word for 'time': *khronos*.

Li's two descriptions of his test for admission to the Beijing Academy in the Young Readers' Edition of *Mao's Last Dancer* and in *The Peasant Prince* are examples of the different ways he adapts the same story for different texts. In both descriptions, he conveys the same information – that the test was painful, and that Li needed to bear the pain silently in order to escape his fate as a poor peasant. In the Young Readers' Edition, Li fits the story into his chronological narrative, recounting that:

> The girl with the big eyes from my class didn't pass this round: she screamed when they bent her body backwards and was disqualified. Then it was my turn. One teacher lifted one of my legs upwards, two others held my other leg steady and straight. They kept asking me if it hurt. It was excruciating! But I was determined to be chosen, so I kept smiling and replied, 'No, it doesn't hurt,' as they lifted my leg higher and higher. *Be strong! Be strong! You can bear the pain!* I kept telling myself. I did bear the pain, but the hardest thing was pretending to walk normally afterwards. They had torn both my hamstrings. (p. 93)

In *The Peasant Prince*, however, Li adjusts the story for younger children and links it to the frog fable which he has made a central focus of this text:

'My body was stretched ...'

> The girl and I were measured and tested. My legs were lifted high, my body was stretched, but I did not cry out in pain. I thought again of the little frog in the well. Perhaps if I could pass this test I could help my family live a better life.

Li changes the structure of the picture book to make it more accessible to his younger readers. The description of his pain is toned down and the readers are told directly why he needed to bear it – so he could help his family. They are also reminded here, and throughout the picture book, to link the story back to the fable with the repeated words: 'I thought again of the little frog.'

Over to you

1. Why does Li focus on the 'frog in the well' fable in the children's adaptation?
2. Create a plan for your own picture book where you use a fable, for example the Aesop fable that you researched for the activity on page 60. (You will develop your planned picture book for Assessment Task 8 on page 95.)

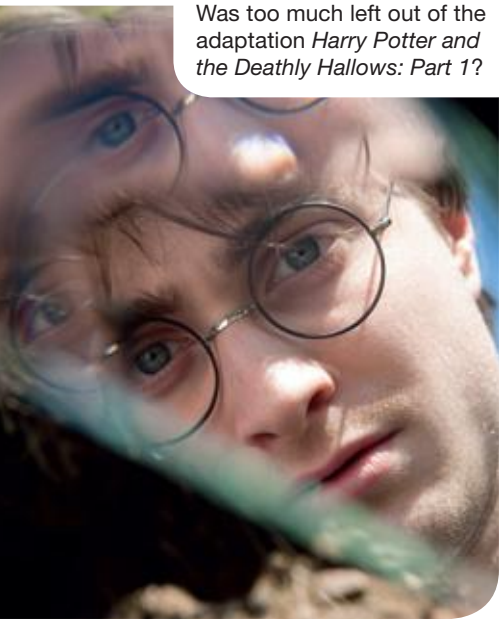
The screenwriter adapting *Mao's Last Dancer* as a film had to be very selective – not only to keep the film to a reasonable length, but also because some of the passages in the book would not translate well to film. Where the book includes descriptions of a number of events that make a similar point, for example, just one or two of them have been included in the film.

Instead of telling the story in chronological order, beginning with the marriage of Li's parents, the opening sequence of the film begins in the middle of the story, and shows a grown-up Li arriving in the United States. Close-up shots encourage us to see things from Li's point of view – and his facial expressions and his responses to situations (rather than the descriptive recounts of what he was thinking and feeling in the book) reveal that he finds everything very strange and not at all as he expected.

The story of Li's life in the United States is interrupted by a series of flashbacks, which show the people and events that led him to Houston.

To revise the use and effects of flashbacks, go to page 59.

Rather than using descriptions, different flashbacks and photographs show Li's family, his country and the harsh poverty of his childhood. Flashbacks also show some – although not all – of the experiences Li describes in his autobiography, such as the test he had to undergo at his audition for ballet school (Scene 2). We see Li's leg being stretched and although, unlike in the book, there is no narrator explaining why it was important not to show pain, or reminding us of the frog story, the flashback makes the connection for us. Li bore the pain – and, unlike the frog, he escaped from the well!



Was too much left out of the adaptation *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 1*?

Not everyone is happy when a filmmaker cuts scenes from a printed text they have loved, or changes the sequence of events. *The Age* film critic Philippa Hawker observed of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 1* (2010) that too much was left out of the film:

> While it's a work that will probably satisfy those who have read the book, it might leave those who haven't somewhat bewildered.

Clearly, those who adapt long books as films have to tread a fine line between including too much, and not including enough.

Over to you

1. What examples can you think of where a filmmaker has cut or changed something in a print text you have read? What effect did this have on your enjoyment of the film?
2. Sometimes filmmakers cut whole scenes from their films during final editing. Why do you think they might do this?

Can adaptations be valued in their own right?

As we have seen, authors can make a lot of changes when adapting a text, while respecting the original. But are these new texts of value in their own right? In the case of *Mao's Last Dancer*, each adaptation may be valued for different reasons and each provides different insights into the same story.

Li's autobiography provides detailed insight into his experiences growing up in China – the politics, the poverty and the people who helped him make his inspiring journey from a poor peasant to an international ballet dancer. The picture book, on the other hand, leaves out most of the detail of the autobiography, and focuses on the 'frog in the well' fable to show Li's courage, hope and determination in a way that is accessible to younger children. When Li's parents are allowed to leave China and watch him dance, he could almost hear them say:

> You followed your dreams and you made your wishes come true.

The film adaptation brings to life the music and colours of the ballet and highlights the contrasts between Li's two worlds, and how important both of them are to him.

Of course, many other multimodal adaptations of print texts have been made – some of them develop aspects of the originating text in creative ways, while others do not. Disney's 2011 CG-animated adaptation (directed by Nathan Greno and Byron Howard) of Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm's fairy tale *Rapunzel* is a good example of an adaptation that adds something of value to an old story.

Tangled: the feisty Rapunzel and her bandit 'prince'

In the Grimms' original (which was itself based on a story told since the 1300s), an evil enchantress imprisons Rapunzel in a tower. Because there are no doors or stairs, Rapunzel must let down her long hair so her captor can climb up and visit. When a prince tries to rescue Rapunzel, they are caught, Rapunzel is cast out into a forest, and the prince is blinded when he falls from the tower. It all ends happily when the couple is eventually reunited.

The Disney adaptation – *Tangled* – presents a less dark story than the original. The story has also been given a new and more modern twist: the prince has been replaced by a bandit, and Rapunzel has become a much more feisty character.

Adaptations of texts have their critics. Some people think that adaptations are always inferior to the original. According to film director Peter Greenaway, in an *Age* interview with Gabriella Coslovich, some film adaptations, including adaptations of the *Harry Potter* novels and the *Lord of the Rings* series, are 'not films, they are just illustrated books!'

Other critics think that at least some film adaptations change a text for the worse. Deborah Gough, for example, complained that children's books such as *Alice in Wonderland* and *Where the Wild Things Are* have been turned into films that are no longer suitable for children.

Still others have suggested that an adaptation, if done well, can enhance our appreciation of the original text, and can be a good text in its own right. Indeed, some people would argue that an adaptation may even be an improvement on the original.

Over to you

1 As a class, list as many examples of texts that have been adapted as you can, and discuss whether you think the adaptations are better or worse than the original.

2 Now divide the class into groups and discuss how you would adapt *Mao's Last Dancer* as an animated film or graphic novel. Consider how you would structure the narrative in your adaptation and how you would use spoken and visual language and sound. Present your ideas to the class.

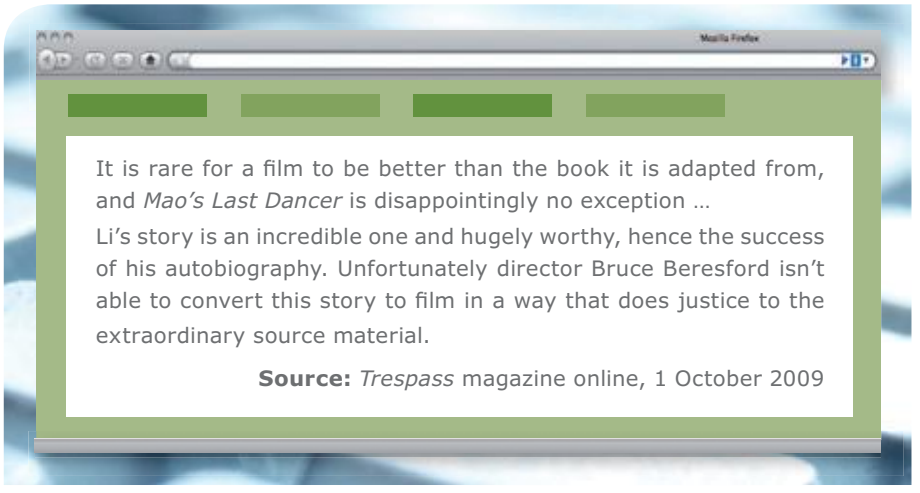
2.4 Why do we *respond* to texts so differently?

Texts come alive in the imaginations of those who respond to them, and we all respond in different ways. How we do so will depend on many things. As Australian writer Kate Grenville puts it:

> One of the things about art is that people disagree about it.
>
> Each of us brings our own experiences, memories and prejudices to a work of art. In that sense, the work is made afresh by each reader.
>
> **Source:** 'The weight of the word,' *The Age*, 20 June 2009

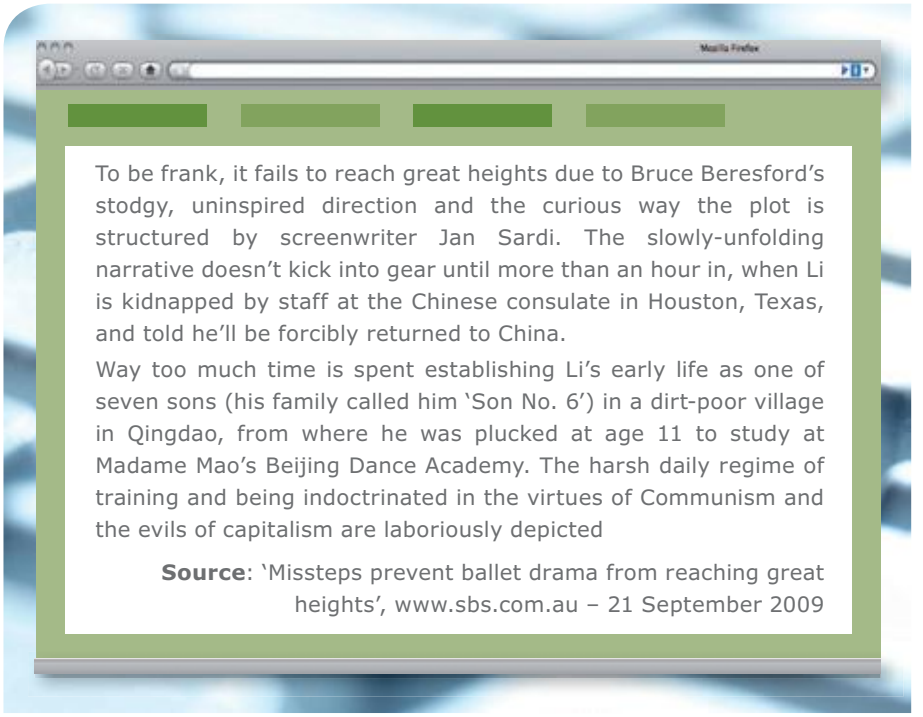
When Grenville says that a work of art – and a literary text is a work of art – is 'made afresh by each reader', she means that no two readers respond to a text in exactly the same way. Texts don't have a fixed meaning; we create our own images of characters, and we have our own ideas about what is interesting or important about them. We have different responses to texts because, as Grenville puts it, 'we bring' certain things to our reading or viewing of a text. We respond to texts in the light of who we are and what we've experienced – and this is shaped by the texts we've already read and viewed.

In the case of *Mao's Last Dancer*, for example, the film may disappoint people who enjoyed Li's autobiography, such as reviewer Beth Wilson:



Our response will also depend on how we see the world. Some people may think Li's decision to stay in the United States in *Mao's Last Dancer* is a courageous one – that he is leaping out of the (metaphorical) well. They may admire the 'rags to riches' success of a man whose determination allowed him to escape a life of poverty. Others, on the other hand, may think that Li exposed his family in China to danger.

Don Groves in his review of the film adaptation found the film 'slow':



To be frank, it fails to reach great heights due to Bruce Beresford's stodgy, uninspired direction and the curious way the plot is structured by screenwriter Jan Sardi. The slowly-unfolding narrative doesn't kick into gear until more than an hour in, when Li is kidnapped by staff at the Chinese consulate in Houston, Texas, and told he'll be forcibly returned to China.

Way too much time is spent establishing Li's early life as one of seven sons (his family called him 'Son No. 6') in a dirt-poor village in Qingdao, from where he was plucked at age 11 to study at Madame Mao's Beijing Dance Academy. The harsh daily regime of training and being indoctrinated in the virtues of Communism and the evils of capitalism are laboriously depicted

Source: 'Missteps prevent ballet drama from reaching great heights', www.sbs.com.au – 21 September 2009

Some may disagree with Don Groves' opinion and find the way the film depicts Li's early life in China fascinating. However, Groves obviously prefers fast-paced action, and this leads him to see some of the film as 'slow'.

Reviewer Jim Schembri, on the other hand, criticises the film because it 'often cuts too quickly through key moments', although he also writes that Beresford:

> does make absolutely sure the big themes central to Li's journey – perseverance, courage, defiance, love – ring out loudly.

Source: *The Age*, 1 October 2009

Bringing our own 'experiences, memories and prejudices' to our readings of a text can mean that we make hasty judgments in the light of them. Just as with any new experience or relationship, first impressions of a text can be wrong. Also remember: our response to a text says something about us!

We need to be able to find reasons to support our judgments about a text that go beyond instant reactions. We will still respond much more positively to some texts than others – we may be more interested in texts about boxers or vampires than texts about ballet dancers – but we should still be able to set aside our preferences to decide whether the text is a good one or not.

We may be more interested in vampires than ballet, but we should still be able to decide whether a text is good or not!

Over to you

1 Discuss some books and films you have read and viewed, and consider what may make people have different responses to them.

2 Is there a correct response to a text? Are some responses to a text better than others? Give reasons for your answer.

How do reviews draw on texts to make something new?

Reading published reviews is a good way of finding out how other people have responded to a text, whether it's a novel, film, song, television program or theatrical performance. An interesting review may encourage us to see things we hadn't seen before, or to realise that something is not, after all, as good as we first thought it was. Alternatively, we may strongly disagree with the reviewer, and have good reasons to defend our very different response.

A review has some things in common with the book or film reports that students are often asked to present. In both, we evaluate a text; but there are differences:

- Book or film reports require students to present a point of view, supported by systematic discussion of different aspects of the text, such as plot, character and setting.
- A review may do these things too, but reviewers usually select aspects of the text that particularly interested (or failed to interest) them. Reviews also reach a wider audience than the classroom, and appear in newspapers, on blogs and websites and through Twitter.

Language focus

When we **evaluate**, we assess how well something has been done. We may use adjectives such as 'slow', 'laborious' or 'gripping' to evaluate a text.

Digital technology provides the opportunity to present reports and reviews in multimodal form, and to integrate images and film with text.

Reviews reach a wide audience; they appear on blogs, websites and through Twitter.

A review may also be presented in the form of a discussion, where presenters discuss – and sometimes argue about – the merits of a text. The ABC's *At the Movies* is an example of this, where David Stratton and Margaret Pomeranz discuss new-release movies and use a star system ranging from 1 to 5 to evaluate them. While they frequently disagree, they also provide reasons for their points of view, supported by film clips and interviews with film directors.

Most reviewers want to inform their audience about new texts, as well as present their point of view in ways that engage the audience's attention. Some reviewers may present an impassioned and personal point of view, while others try to be more objective.

To revise the meaning of 'objective', go to page 39.

David Stratton and Margaret Pomeranz: *At the Movies*

There isn't one correct way of presenting a review; they take many forms and can vary from a 140-character tweet, posted anonymously, to a detailed review, written by an expert, comprising thousands of words. However, as is the case whenever we express our point of view, we need to support our ideas with reasons and references to the text, and to use language persuasively.

Some reviewers use very strong language when they strongly dislike a text! The following is an extract from a review, again by Jim Schembri, of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 1* (2010) (directed by David Yates):

> And what a dire, bum-numbing slog of a journey it is, much of which involves the trio heading off on a camping trip. Just try and keep count of the infuriating number of wide shots featuring a damned tent. Or aerial views of hills and forests.
>
> **Source:** 'The *Harry Potter* films just aren't fun any more', *Sydney Morning Herald,* 17 November 2010

While the review is certainly critical and personal, Schembri does provide some evidence for his point of view – he tried, but couldn't keep count of the repetitious number of wide shots of the tent!

'A bum-numbing slog involving the trio heading off on a camping trip'

When we **assert** something, we are insisting that our point of view is the right one without giving a reason. An **assertion** is a statement that is presented as if it is correct.

Sometimes, reviewers are cutting without being persuasive because they **assert** their opinion, rather than trying to persuade us with reasoned arguments. The following extract from a short review by *Guardian* film critic Peter Bradshaw, who wrote of Thor Freudenthal's film adaptation of *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* (2010), is an example of a review based on assertion:

> It's an interesting idea, deserving of a more interesting treatment, but this is just dopey and patronising.

Language focus

Patronising means treating someone with apparent kindness, but actually talking down to them as if they are inferior.

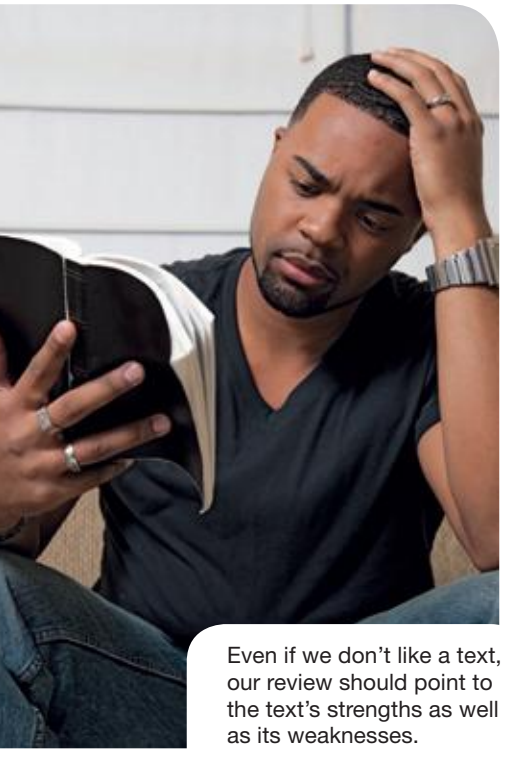
With the proliferation of digital technology, anyone can anonymously comment on a text in ways that, according to some commentators, amount to bullying. *The Age's* Entertainment Editor, Karl Quinn, criticised the way tweeters savaged a new comedy program as it went to air. According to Quinn, once the negative – and usually anonymous – tweets start, 'it takes a brave soul to stand up against the flow'.

Responses to texts in the form of anonymous tweets are not reviews. They express immediate personal and often unconsidered responses. They differ from the considered opinions of reviewers who identify themselves and present opinions they have thought about, supported by reasons.

An effective review points to the strengths (unless there really are none) as well as the weaknesses of a text. It is entertaining but persuasive, because it provides convincing reasons to support comments, and interesting examples.

Reviews highlight that we don't all have the same response to a text, or to reviews of texts, and that it's important to read reviews carefully and consider why we agree or disagree with the reviewer.

When we create a review, based on our response to another text, we draw on our knowledge of how other reviews are structured and how their authors have used language. If it is very good, the review may have value in its own right. As with all texts, when we create a review, we may follow in the footsteps of others, but rather than sticking to well-worn paths, we try to create something that is uniquely our own.



Even if we don't like a text, our review should point to the text's strengths as well as its weaknesses.

Over to you

1 Re-read the passage from Jim Schembri's review of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 1* on page 93 and identify examples of:

- colloquial language
- sentences that do not conform to grammatical conventions
- words or phrases that indicate tone

and suggest why Schembri has made these choices.

2 Working in pairs, choose a narrative text you have both read or seen and use a search engine to find reviews of it. Use the points of view expressed in the reviews, as well as your own ideas, to plan a script for a television chat show where two people discuss the text. (You will work with the same partner to present a developed version of your script for Assessment Task 10 on page 95.)

big ideas

How do we combine the OLD and the NEW in narrative texts?

For suggestions on how to plan, draft, edit and proofread your texts, refer to 'How can I improve my writing?' on page 252.

2.1 How do we draw on *existing* texts to create *new* ones?

write, create, listen, read and view

1 Working in pairs, select a range of narrative texts, including print and multimodal texts. Research some of the ways in which their authors draw on their knowledge of how other authors create narrative voice, setting and character, and structure their plots. Create a graphic organiser that shows this and illustrate it with images from some of the texts.

2 As a class, collect examples of people being represented as stereotypes from texts, such as magazines and popular fiction, and create a collage for your classroom wall.

3 Write a modern fable of your own that could accompany Shaun Tan's illustration (page 61), or another illustration of your choice.

2.2 How and why do creators of texts *refer* to other texts?

write and speak

4 Present the multimodal diary that you developed for Activity 1 on page 71. Include a variety of examples you have collected of texts that allude to other texts and your explanations of why you think the authors made the allusions. Think about how you can creatively combine your examples with visual images. Consider how you will use body language and tone of voice to make your presentation as engaging as possible.

5 Use the quotation or story you identified in the activity on page 68, and use the plan you created to develop a tale of your own that draws on the quotation or story.

6 Work in groups to script and present a parody imitating several stereotypes identified in the collage you created in Assessment Task 2, above.

7 Take Ray Bradbury's allusion to 'a pale sea leviathan' (page 69) and weave it into a story of your own.

2.3 How do we *adapt* a text to make something new?

write, create and speak

8 Drawing on the plan you developed for Activity 2 on page 84, create your own picture book based on the fable you researched.

9 Select a literary text (such as Li Cunxin's *Mao's Last Dancer*) and a multimodal adaptation of that text, and write an essay comparing the two. Present your opinion on whether one version is more effective than the other.

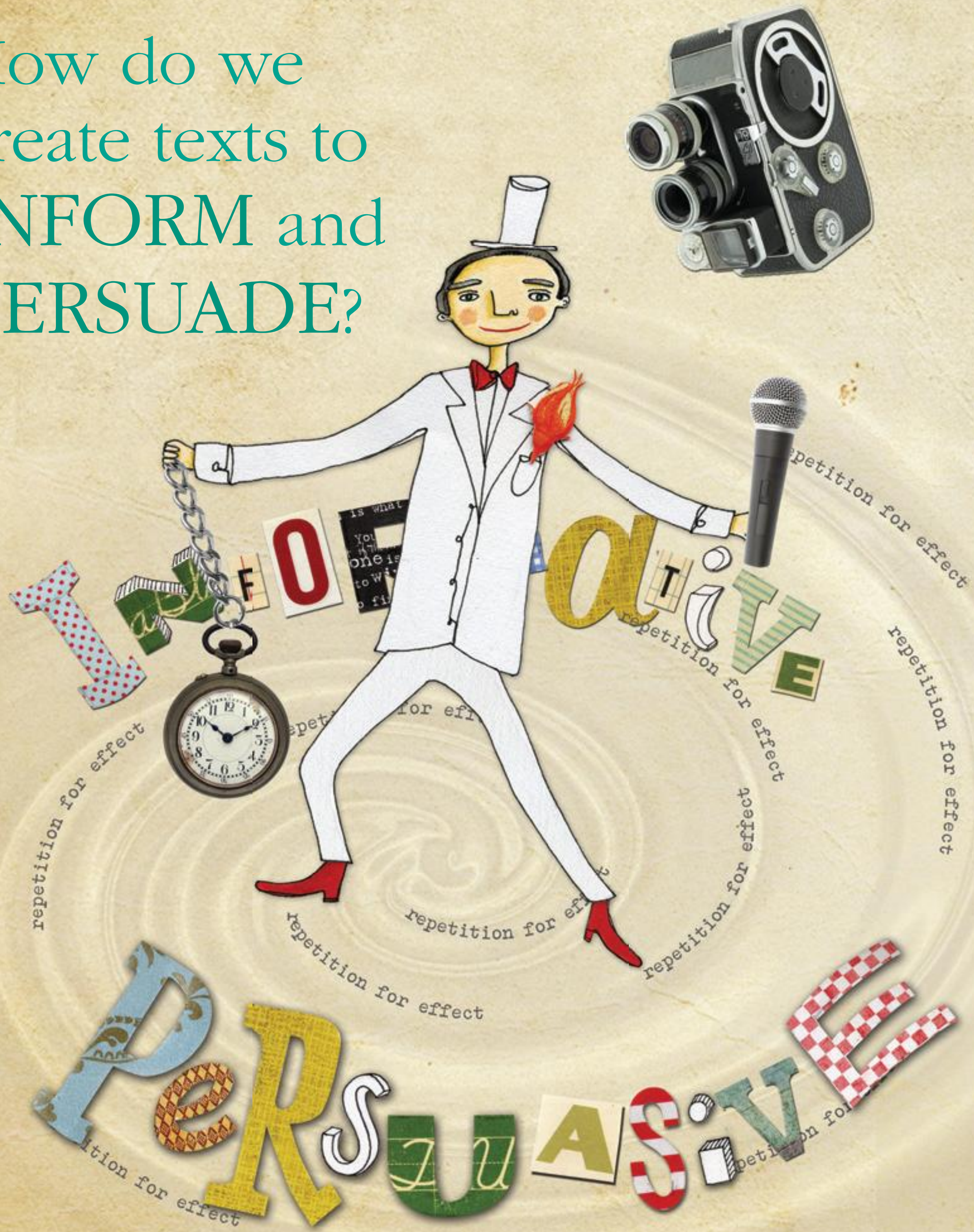
A sample response for this task appears on pages 256–7.

2.4 Why do we *respond* to texts so differently?

write, create, listen and speak

10 Working with the same partner and using the notes you developed for Activity 2 on page 94, develop your script for a television chat show where two people discuss the film or print text. Try and include visual elements – such as stills sourced from the web from the film, or the film poster – and/or music to add interest. Rehearse your script and deliver a presentation to the class.

How do we create texts to INFORM and PERSUADE?



3

Literacy Language Literature

Text list

In this Part you will read or view and discuss extracts from:

WRITTEN

Australian texts

Nicole Brady 'Isabella takes the *MasterChef* cake' *Sydney Morning Herald* **(television review)**

Amy Dale 'Dog days in a drain for Todd' *The Telegraph* **(news article)**

Nick Leys and John Ferguson 'Streets filled with dismay' *Herald Sun* **(news article)**

Jeremy Loadman 'Say it loud and proud: test cricket is boring!' *Sydney Morning Herald* **(opinion piece)**

Sean Parnell, 'City feels sting of river it loved too much' *The Australian* **(news article)**

Matt Preston 'A love of food all can share' *Herald Sun* **(opinion piece)**

MULTIMODAL

Australian texts

Jane Cafarella 'Hungry for more than TV cooking shows' *The Age* (online) **(opinion piece)**

'City feels sting of river it loved too much' *The Australian* (online) **(news article)**

'Cyclone Carlos threatens coast of Western Australia' *Herald Sun* (online) **(news article)**

Leunig 'It's Earth Hour' *The Age* **(cartoon)**

'Over half your news is spin' *Crikey* **(feature article)**

'Renewables boom a silver lining as the storm clouds clear' Clean Energy Council **(web article)**

EXAGGERATE

3.1 What is the difference between presenting *information* and presenting a *point of view*?

Language focus

Non-fiction texts inform about real people, events, issues and places.

To find out more about structures, features and language choices, go to pages 49 and 135.

We know that the way we write and present a text depends on our *purpose* and our *audience*. While we write non-fiction texts for a wide range of audiences, the purpose of these texts is usually either:

- to present information about a person, events, issue or place, or
- to express our point of view.

Consider the types of non-fiction texts you've created in the past, such as a poster on an endangered species, a presentation on your role model or hero, or a book review. All of them fit one or the other of these two purposes; and authors of non-fiction texts will select certain structures and choose features of language that can help us to identify that purpose.

A text that presents information is intended to inform the audience of things that may be important or of interest to them, such as an event that has occurred, services that are available or the consequences of certain actions. Because of this, they're often referred to as *informative texts*. These texts can be in many forms, for example speeches, newspapers and newsletters, television news bulletins, pamphlets and websites.

To revise the meaning of 'objective', go to page 39.

While they may also have secondary purposes – such as to entertain, warn or encourage – the *information* is what's most important. The author is objective, and does not let their own feelings or opinion on the subject interfere with the facts.

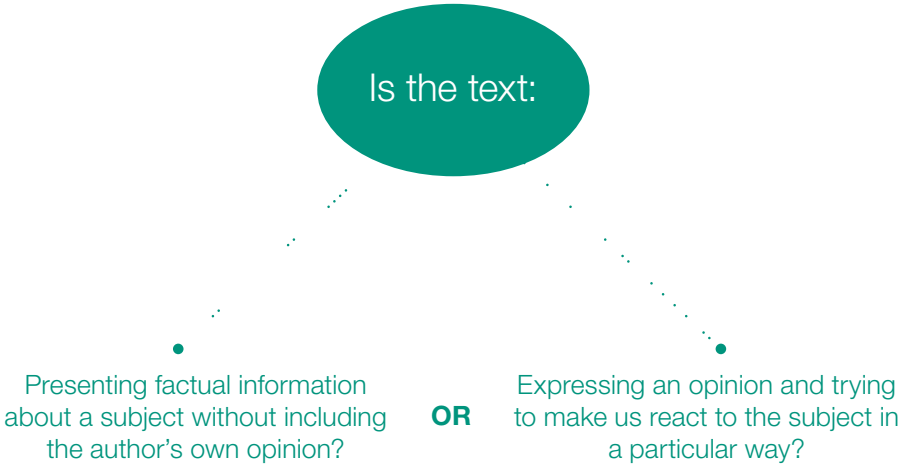
In comparison, a text that presents a point of view usually has a different purpose. Not only does the author want to share their own opinion with the audience, they also want to persuade the audience to agree with them. Because of this, such texts are often called *persuasive texts*. These texts can also be in many forms, for example school essays, opinion pieces in newspapers, letters to the editor, contributions to online message boards, cartoons and advertisements.

In both informative and persuasive texts, the *way* the text is written is as important as *what* is written.

Would a poster on an endangered species present information or express a point of view?

What is the difference between fact and opinion?

Being able to identify the presence of fact and opinion in a text is the first step in working out whether a text is informing or persuading.



When reading or creating informative texts, we need to consider an important question: is the information we are reading or presenting based on fact, opinion, or a mixture of the two? The answer isn't always straightforward, especially as sometimes people present opinions as if they are facts, or facts as if they are opinions.

Let's look at the differences between fact and opinion.

What is a fact?

A fact is something that people do not dispute; it is something that is accepted as being true, such as:

> Cricket is played between two teams of 11 players each.

Of course, what we accept as a fact does sometimes change in the light of new evidence – for example, it was once accepted as a fact that the world was flat – but we usually say something is a fact as long as it is not currently disputed.

Language focus

To **dispute** something is to disagree with it or argue against it. **Dispute** can also be a noun, in which case it is an argument, usually between two people who both think that they are in the right.

It was once accepted as a fact that the world was flat.

When we're asked to 'stick to the facts', we're being asked to focus on what we know to be the case, without reference to our own thoughts or feelings. A useful way to do this is to use the questions 'who', 'what', 'where', 'when', 'why' and 'how' to focus on the information that is accepted as true; that is, it is not disputed.

For an example of how an informative article 'sticks to the facts', look at the following.

Dog days in a drain for Todd

It might not rival the Chilean miners in terms of days spent underground but Todd the dog can lay claim to his own dramatic story of survival.

Who?

What?

Todd, a 10-year-old German shepherd, was trapped in a stormwater drain on Sydney's Northern Beaches for two days before finally being rescued.

Where?

When?

He was winched from his hole yesterday in a two-hour operation by fire crews. Todd usually waits for his owner John Simpson at the driveway of their home, so when he didn't appear as normal on Friday night, panic set in.

What?

'I spent all day [Saturday] looking for him and I was starting to get extremely worried because it's unlike him to run away,' Mr Simpson said. 'My neighbour was doing her ironing yesterday and heard a whimper so she and her husband went and followed the noise to the drain.

How?

'They stuck a torch in and there he was.'

Who?

A Narrabeen rescue crew had to break the pipe in order to winch Todd to safety yesterday after Mr Simpson tore his hamstring trying to reach down and pull his pet out.

Todd spent last night at the vet and it is hoped he will be back at home within days.

Source: Amy Dale, *The Telegraph*, 18 October 2010

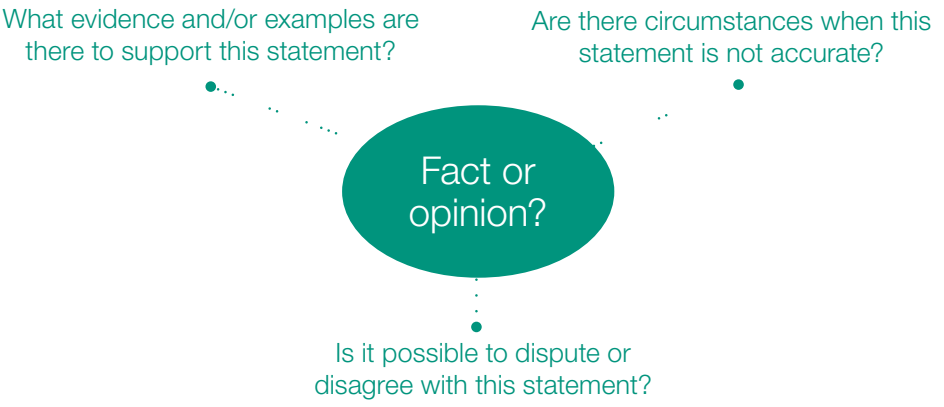
Todd was rescued by Narrabeen fire rescue officers after a two-hour digging operation.

What is an opinion?

Opinion is quite different from fact, because it is a view or attitude that a person or group has about something. Our opinions can be shaped by many things and can change over time. They are usually influenced by our values, beliefs and experiences. Listening to other people's views, reading or experiencing new things can sometimes change our opinions.

As mentioned above, some people assert their opinions as though they are facts, especially when they are passionate about something. For example, 'cricket is boring' is an opinion shared by many, but it is not a fact because it is disputed by some – it is not accurate for everybody.

To help us work out if something is fact or opinion, here are some questions we can ask:



Over to you

1 Write down three facts and three opinions you have on the topic of cricket. Swap your statements with a partner, and identify which are fact and which are opinion.

2 **a** Make a list of facts about one of the following topics:

- reality television
- public transport
- Australia
- dogs.

b Now write down three to five opinions on your chosen topic. These can be your own opinions or hypothetical opinions.

c As a class, write the headings 'fact' and 'opinion' on the board. Share your examples from Activity 2a and b, and use the three questions in the diagram above to decide which heading each statement fits under. An example has been done for you.

Fact	Opinion
Australia is a continent.	Australia is the best place in the world to live.

Language focus

A **hypothetical** opinion is an opinion that you put forward for the purpose of a discussion. It's not necessarily an opinion that you hold yourself.

When it comes to subjects such as global warming, we don't always agree about what are facts and what are opinions.

What is the difference between informing and expressing an opinion?

Usually, when we are presenting information, we don't include our own opinion. On the other hand, when we express our opinion, we may include facts to support our point of view.

Sometimes facts are clear-cut, for example:

A cricket team has 11 players.

Today's maximum temperature was 31 degrees.

However, we don't know everything, and we don't always agree about what are facts and what are opinions. Scientists and environmentalists, for example, argue about global warming; some believe that it is a fact, others deny this and still others are uncertain. An informative text will refer to these different views; however, while a persuasive text may allude to different opinions, it will try and persuade us to accept one or other of them.

We can see this illustrated in the following two texts. Both are about cricket, but one is intended to inform about the rules, while the other expresses a point of view on the game itself. As you read them, think about:

- the presence of fact and opinion, and
- whether the author has additional purposes in writing, and how their use of language suggests this.

Dramatic or dull? Cricket is just one example of a topic that can divide opinion.

INFORMATIVE

All about cricket

Cricket is a bat-and-ball game played by two teams, made up of eleven players each. It was invented in England (supposedly by shepherds), and is now an international sport. It is particularly popular in countries that used be part of the British Empire.

To those unfamiliar with the game, the language used in cricket may appear idiosyncratic, and the game itself somewhat eccentric.

Cricket is played on a large oval-shaped field that has an oblong-shaped pitch in the middle, 20 metres long. At each end of the pitch, there are three upright sticks adjacent to each other, called the stumps.

One team bats and tries to score the optimal number of runs (points) that they can. A run is scored when a batsman hits the ball, runs to the opposite end of the pitch, and touches the crease without being dismissed. The other team bowls and fields, trying to dismiss the batsmen as economically as they can. The teams switch between batting and fielding at the end of each innings.

There are many different ways of playing cricket, but the most popular are test cricket and one-day cricket. Test cricket is played over a five-day period, and if there is time, each team bats twice. One-day cricket (as the name suggests) is usually played on a single day (weather permitting). Each team plays just one innings, and there is a limited number of overs (an over is a set of six balls bowled).

The extract above is from a website.

Language focus

Writers sometimes use round **brackets ( )** to enclose extra information: eg see the highlighted sections in the above text.

Over to you

1. What is the purpose of this text? How does the way the author has structured the text and used language help you to identify the purpose?
2. The author of this text has chosen some interesting adjectives ('idiosyncratic', 'eccentric', 'adjacent' and 'optimal') and adverbs ('economically'). Look up these words in a dictionary and add them to your personal glossary.
3. Create questions about cricket beginning 'who', 'what', 'where', 'when', 'why' and 'how', and find factual answers to each question in the above text.
4. Some words are hyperlinks. What kind of words are they and why do you think they are hyperlinked?
5. Can you find any instances where the author has expressed an opinion about the information they are presenting?
6. Why is the text in beige highlighting set between round brackets?

The second text appeared in the opinion section of the *Sydney Morning Herald* newspaper. Instead of presenting factual information, explaining the rules and objectives of cricket, writer Jeremy Loadman presents his opinion of the game: it's boring!

To revise tone, go to page 44.

As you read this text, think about the *tone* the writer is using and the effect that this tone has on you. How does his choice of tone help reveal his attitude?

Say it loud and proud: test cricket is boring!

Even the broadcaster televising the cricket implicitly admits it: cricket is boring. In between overs Channel Nine is advertising *Ben Elton Live*, one of its trump shows for 2011. Elton rallies his audience in his typical bouncy verse, telling them that after countless days of watching men whack a ball, catch a ball, run around and then have a cup of tea, surely they must be ready to watch something else a bit more exciting. It's not much of a sales pitch is it? Compared to tedium I look all right.

But how exactly do you measure the level of excitement or **boringness** of a sport? One way is to look at who its celebrity fans are. When the Australian Open starts later this month it will not be uncommon to see the odd movie star and supermodel courtside. But which big names do we see at the cricket? None other than Michael Parkinson and John Howard. If Kevin Rudd decided to turn up the set would be complete: boring, boringest and relentlessly dull.

Another way to gauge the general feeling towards a sport is to simply take a poll of what people think of it. While there are plenty of people who will swear black and blue that test cricket is about as exciting as watching the grass grow (just on that, have you noticed that the commentators actually talk about how the grass is growing on the pitch? Not satisfied that they're quite on par with watching the grass grow, it seems they've decided that they should talk about it to make sure they're more boring), there are plenty of cricket lovers who actually cite the boring nature of the game as one of the reasons for their affection for it.

Source: Jeremy Loadman, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 January 2011

English fans make their own entertainment to make up for the long periods of boredom in test cricket.

Language focus

Boringness is an example of nominalisation (see pages 7 and 110).

Over to you

1 What is the point of view expressed in this text?

2 What opinions are expressed to support the author's point of view? See how many you can find.

3 **a** What simile does the author use to suggest that cricket is 'boring'?

b Look up the words 'tedium' and 'relentlessly', highlighted above, in a dictionary and add them to your personal glossary.

4 Does the author use any evidence and/or examples to support his point of view? If so, what?

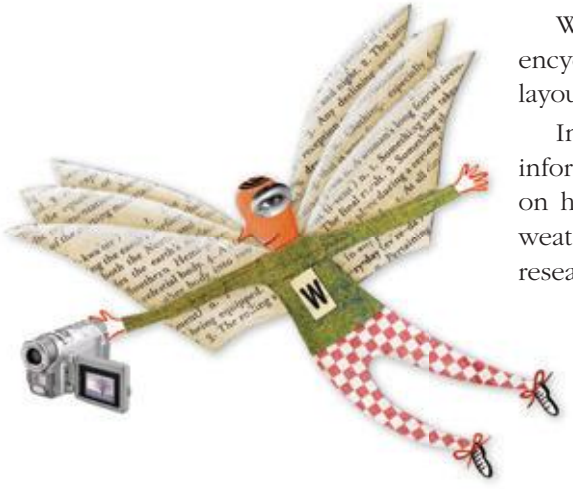
5 Compare 'All about cricket' with 'Say it loud and proud: test cricket is boring!' and list any differences in the language choices made by the authors that you can identify.

To revise similes, go to page 34.

3.2 How do we present information in *different forms*?

There are many ways in which we can present the same information in different forms. Informative texts share many common features, although the language choices made will be influenced by:

- the form of text
- how much information is needed
- the age and interests of the audience, and
- how much time or space is available.



While a pamphlet for adolescents, a *Today Tonight* investigation and an encyclopaedic entry might all be on the same topic, we know that the structure, layout and language of each text will be very different.

In this chapter we will look at some of the features we expect of *all* informative texts. We will then explore some of the differences by focusing on how information has been presented on one topic – Australia's extreme weather conditions – in print and digital media, and exploring how we can research and create our own informative texts on this topic.

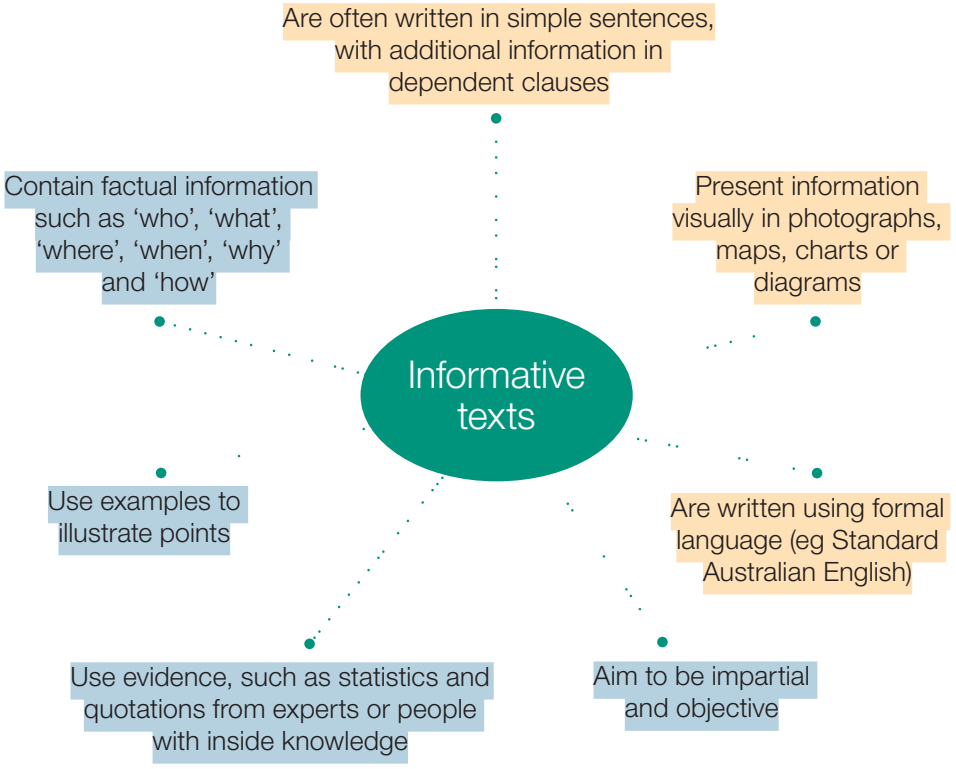
What may we expect of informative texts?

Language focus
If a text is **biased**, it favours something or someone in an unfair way. **Unbiased** means 'without bias'.

We make different language choices depending on the type of text we are presenting, but there are some characteristics we expect of most informative texts. Above all, informative texts should contain accurate, relevant, unbiased information that is easy to understand. To this end, we can expect the following from many informative texts.

Facts and evidence

To revise dependent clauses, go to page 8.



When we want to learn about an event, person or idea, we rarely want general or vague information – we want *details*. An informative text about an event, for example, should always include the facts:

- who was involved
- what happened
- when it happened
- where it happened
- why it happened, and
- how it is affecting people or places (its consequences).

Evidence includes statements from eyewitnesses.

The evidence included in a text proves that the information presented is indeed factual. Evidence includes *statistics*, such as how many people have been affected or how much money has been spent. It also includes *quotations or statements* from eyewitnesses or from experts with specialised knowledge about a topic, such as scientists or police officers.

Evidence shows the audience that the author has done their research and knows what they're talking about. It adds authority to the information, and makes the text more reliable and more detailed.

With so many sources of information at our fingertips, it is easy to become overwhelmed. However, remember that we don't have to look at every website and every news article that has information about a topic we're interested in.

Also, remember that some sources are more reliable than others. We need to be able to make certain that we know where the information is coming from, and that it is valid and accurate: if we don't know where the information has come from, we can't be sure that it's correct. So, be selective and choose a range of reliable sources. The following checklist will help:

Language focus

The verb **rely** means to depend on. When people and things are **reliable**, they can be trusted. If they are **unreliable**, they cannot be trusted.

✓	Checklist
	Does the information come from a reliable author (eg expert, insider)?
	Is the information up to date?
	Has any evidence been included?
	Does the text have another purpose?
	Could the information be biased?
	Is all the information relevant to my topic?

"On the Internet, nobody knows you're a dog."

Choose reliable sources – or you can't be sure who is posting the information you read …

Over to you

Working in pairs, find an informative article in a print or digital newspaper and respond to the following:

a Find an example of each of the qualities listed in the diagram on page 107.

b Use the above checklist to decide whether the article presents reliable information. Then write a paragraph explaining why you think the article is, or is not, reliable.

No matter how exciting an event might be, don't let your emotions get in the way of the facts.

To revise Standard Australian English and colloquial language, go to page 6.

To revise the meaning of 'objective', go to page 39.

Formal language and objectivity

Using formal language and being objective are two key ways of communicating detailed information accurately:

- *Formal language:* in informative texts, authors usually use Standard Australian English and avoid colloquial language.
- *Objectivity:* no matter how exciting or frustrating an event might be, a good informative text doesn't let emotions get in the way of the facts. Authors usually avoid using emotive language and adopt an objective tone, using the third person and keeping their own views out of the text. The audience can then make up their own mind, and they can be moved by what has happened, not by how it is presented.

Clarity

Large segments of text are sometimes off-putting or difficult to read. We can use a variety of methods to break up text so that it is more accessible, such as headings and subheadings, bullet points and text boxes. We can use colons to introduce long lists – for example, 'Extreme weather conditions have occurred in many places: Russia, Pakistan, Brazil, the Philippines and Sri Lanka' – or to introduce items in bullet point form. We can also use charts, diagrams or graphs to present information visually, and in some cases photographs can be more effective than a whole page of writing. Such texts are called *visual texts* and are an important way of communicating information in multimodal texts.

A photograph can be more effective than a whole page of writing.

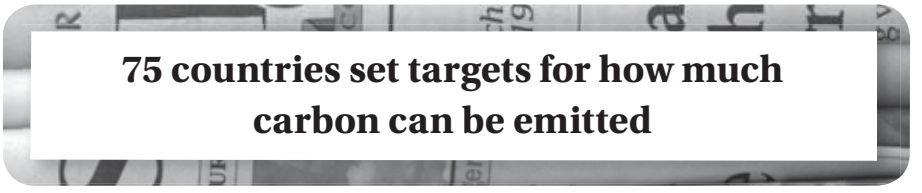
When a clause or phrase is included within a sentence, we describe it as an **embedded clause** or phrase. We use embedded clauses to define and expand on other words in a sentence. A comma (or a dash) is sometimes placed at the beginning and end of the embedded clause.

To revise nominalisation, go to page 7.

When we use written text to present information, we often use simple sentences so that the reader can process the information in small pieces. When presenting detailed information, we can add this in dependent and **embedded clauses** or phrases.

We can also use nominalisation, where we change a verb into a noun – for example adding the suffix '-ment' to the verb 'adjust' to make it the noun 'adjustment'. Nominalisation can allow us to convey complex ideas in a single word, and also makes our sentences or texts sound more formal and objective. Take this *Age* newspaper headline:

Using the verb 'emit' instead of the nominalisation 'emission' would have resulted in the much less concise:



Language focus

A **fluent** text is one that flows and can be followed easily.

We can make our texts clearer and more fluent in a number of ways. For example, we can use related words, rather than repeating the same word:

> Young people are concerned about climate change and it is today's youth who must solve tomorrow's problems.

We can also avoid repetition by using pronouns that refer back to nouns, for example:

> When the Australian Open starts later this month it will undoubtedly feature the odd movie star and supermodel courtside.

Cohesion means to fit well together, or to be unified. **Cohesive devices** help a text fit together as a whole by encouraging the reader to make connections between different parts of the text and link ideas that are related. Cohesive devices can help make a text read more smoothly or fluently, and make more sense.

Another way to make our texts more fluent is to leave out a word or phrase where, without it, the meaning of the sentence is still clear. For example, in the following sentence the words in square brackets can be omitted:

> Climate change scientists are more worried than [they were] last year.

We can also use a variety of **cohesive devices** to connect our ideas and arguments; for example, we may show logical links by using words such as *however*, *nevertheless*, *alternatively*, *consequently* and *clearly*; and phrases such as *on the other hand* and *not only ... but also.*

Over to you

Working in groups, find examples of informative articles and highlight the ways their authors have:

a avoided repeating the same word, and

b used different cohesive devices to make their articles read more clearly or fluently.

How do we present information in different forms?

Even if we believe climate change is the cause of particular weather conditions, we should acknowledge the range of opinions.

As mentioned earlier, we will be focusing in this chapter on Australia's extreme weather conditions. There have been many texts in the print and electronic media reporting recent examples. The informative texts we will be exploring *report events*, rather than *present personal opinions*. They focus on informing their audience about *who* has been affected, *what* happened, *where*, *when*, *how* and *why*.

Why questions focus on providing information about the cause of particular weather conditions. Where there is conflicting information – for example, not everyone agrees about whether climate change is a cause – we should acknowledge the range of opinions in an informative text, rather than suggest that any one of them is a factual explanation.

Australia has always been described as a land of extremes due to its warm, wet tropics and dusty, desert interior. Recently, however, we have experienced weather conditions that are extraordinary even for our country: bushfires in Victoria, heatwaves in Perth and South Australia, hailstones as big as tennis balls in Melbourne, floods in Queensland and snow on the Tasmanian Alps in December. In fact, after nearly 15 years of severe drought, 2010 was the third wettest year since records were first taken in 1900 in many parts of Australia. On the other hand, south-west Western Australia experienced its driest year on record.

We are not alone in experiencing extreme and destructive weather. There have been record heatwaves in Russia; floods and landslides in Pakistan, Brazil, the Philippines and Sri Lanka; and freezing temperatures in Europe and North America. Whether we believe this extreme weather is the result of human-induced climate change or the semi-periodical climate pattern called La Niña, it has had devastating consequences for many people and communities. This is a topic that many people are deeply concerned about, and up-to-date information is crucial for providing warnings of the dangers of such weather events and explaining the sometimes terrible results.

The Lockyer Valley in south-east Queensland, 14 January 2011
Photo: John Grainger, *The Australian* (online)

What are the different sources of information?

Before we can create our own informative texts, we have to obtain accurate information to include. Unless we're writing on a topic we already know a lot about, we will need to do some research and find suitable sources of information.

Today we have access to more sources of information than ever before. News websites and 24-hour news channels are updated regularly so that we can get accurate information almost immediately. Also, instead of waiting for journalists to identify, research and present interesting stories, we can now access them as they happen and from the perspective of those directly affected through the use of mobile phones, Twitter and other social networking sites. There is also a wide range of more traditional print and online sources available. The diagram on the next page, for example, gives some of the sources of information about the Queensland floods in January 2011.

As is the case with any information, we need to check if it's reliable. Let's apply the checklist on page 108 to the text below, which was taken from a media release about Australia's extreme weather conditions from the Clean Energy Council (CEC) website. The CEC is a not-for-profit organisation that represents renewable energy companies.

No author is identified, but the article is published on behalf of the CEC (see source line at bottom of article)

Up-to-date information

Statistical evidence

Evidence from a reliable source: the National Electricity Market (an organisation with specialised knowledge and involvement in the energy industry)

Possibility of bias, as the CEC represents renewable energy companies

Renewables boom a silver lining as the storm clouds clear

August 12, 2010

The wild storms which lashed Victoria and South Australia over the last 24 hours helped deliver near-record levels of renewable energy and hydro.

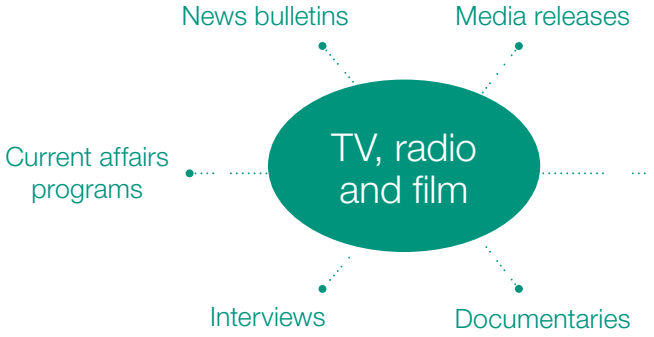
The winds, which reached up to 95km per hour, at their peak delivered more than 1230 megawatts of electricity – comparable to the giant Hazelwood coal-fired power station.

Over the past two days the National Electricity Market (in Victoria, NSW, Queensland, South Australia and Tasmania) averaged more than 1000 MW coming from wind turbines, the same as a medium sized coal-fired power station.

This electricity was generated by around 1000 wind turbines located across the south-east of Australia.

Source: *www.cleanenergycouncil.org.au*

Some sources of information on the Queensland floods in January 2011

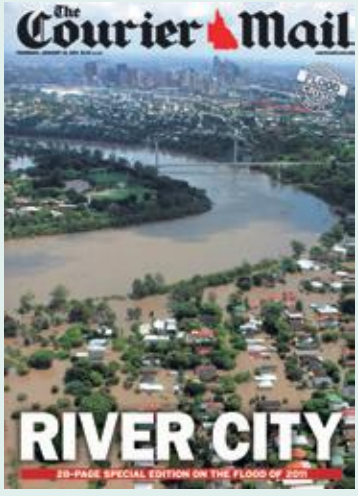


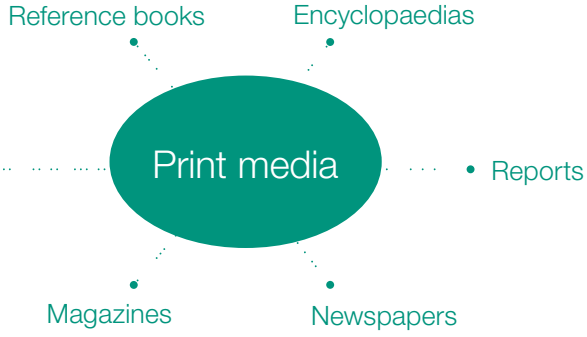
Example

Queensland Premier Anna Bligh gave regular updates throughout the crisis on ABC1's *The 7.30 Report*

Example

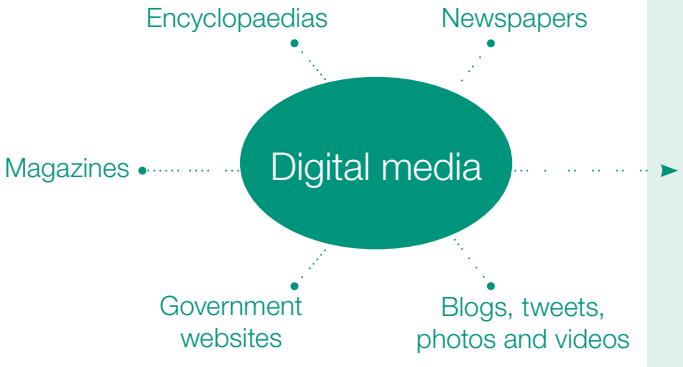
News articles outlined the affected areas, damage to houses and businesses, and expected peak levels and times





Example

The Bureau of Meteorology website – www.bom.gov.au – gave rainfall statistics, satellite images, flood warnings and climate information



Over to you

1. As a class, make a list of extreme weather events and disasters in Australia in the last few years. Some suggestions are:
   - Black Saturday bushfires (2009)
   - Queensland floods (2010–11)
   - Cyclone Yasi (2011).
2. Divide the class into research groups and allocate one weather event/disaster to each group. Within your groups, narrow your subject down to specific topics of interest and allocate one topic to each member of your group. Some suggestions are:
   - the effect of flooding on fruit and vegetable supply
   - the impact of bushfires on native wildlife
   - theories about possible causes of extreme weather events.

   (You will stay in this group for the activity on page 125, and will work together again to present an informative multimodal speech in Assessment Task 3 on page 157.)
3. In your groups, discuss possible sources of information for each topic. Choose a range of print, television or radio, and online texts.
4. Each member should then:
   - research and select two sources and use the checklist on page 108 to make sure they're reliable and relevant
   - share their sources with the group and explain why they are, or are not, reliable and relevant.

How do we evaluate conflicting information?

Language focus

When something contradicts or is different to something else, we say they are in **conflict**. For example, when one child says 'he hit me!' and another denies it, they're telling conflicting versions of the same event.

Depending on how, where and when authors of informative texts obtain their facts, such texts might contain conflicting information. This can happen when:

- information is inaccurate or out of date
- different sources have a different experience or theory concerning the cause of an event
- texts deliberately present information in a particular way to achieve a particular effect.

Jeff Goldblum

Sometimes, misleading or false material is presented as if it were true. For example, in June 2009 *Today* show presenter Richard Wilkins embarrassingly reported that actor Jeff Goldblum had fallen to his death while filming in New Zealand. It was soon revealed that the inaccurate story had been generated by a false news website called FakeAWish.com and was spread via Twitter.

Genuine mistakes can occur when authors use out-of-date information or information from unreliable sources in their texts, but choosing sources carefully can help to avoid this.

Conflicting information can result from the different ways people experience an event. Hailstones may be falling from the sky like golf balls in one suburb, but not in another; and it may seem to some inhabitants that their city is being deluged, and to others that nothing much is happening at all. Does this mean that one person's experience is less accurate than another's? We need to *evaluate* the information and where it comes from to see how it can be useful to us.

There are some circumstances where an author's own view, background or interests influence the way they present information – and even what information they include. When reporting on the causes of the heavy rain that led to the floods in eastern Australia in January 2011, for example, a journalist who believes in climate change and the need for humans to reduce carbon emissions might present different information to a journalist who doesn't believe in climate change, for example:

Wild weather will only worsen: we must act soon!

Droughts end and rain comes as La Niña turns to Australia

There are many sources of information, offering conflicting views. How do we evaluate which are more reliable?

What people might have differing views on the subject of whaling?

Accordingly, when we're faced with conflicting information we need to evaluate which sources are more reliable, by questioning:

- where the information has come from
- whether it is up to date
- whether the topic can be interpreted or experienced differently by different people, and
- whether the information could be influenced by the author's views.

Over to you

Discuss how people with different views or interests might include different information on each of the following topics:

a the effect of divorce on children

b cheaper products through online shopping

c whaling

d skin damage and suntans.

How do we distinguish between important and less important information?

Once we've selected a range of reliable sources, we can begin to extract information from them. Some sources will contain more information than we actually need or can fit into our own text. When deciding what points to include, we need to think about what is relevant to our specific topic. We also want to achieve a balance between general information and precise detail. Remember, it is often a good idea to include additional information in dependent or embedded clauses.

To revise dependent and embedded clauses, go to pages 8 and 110.

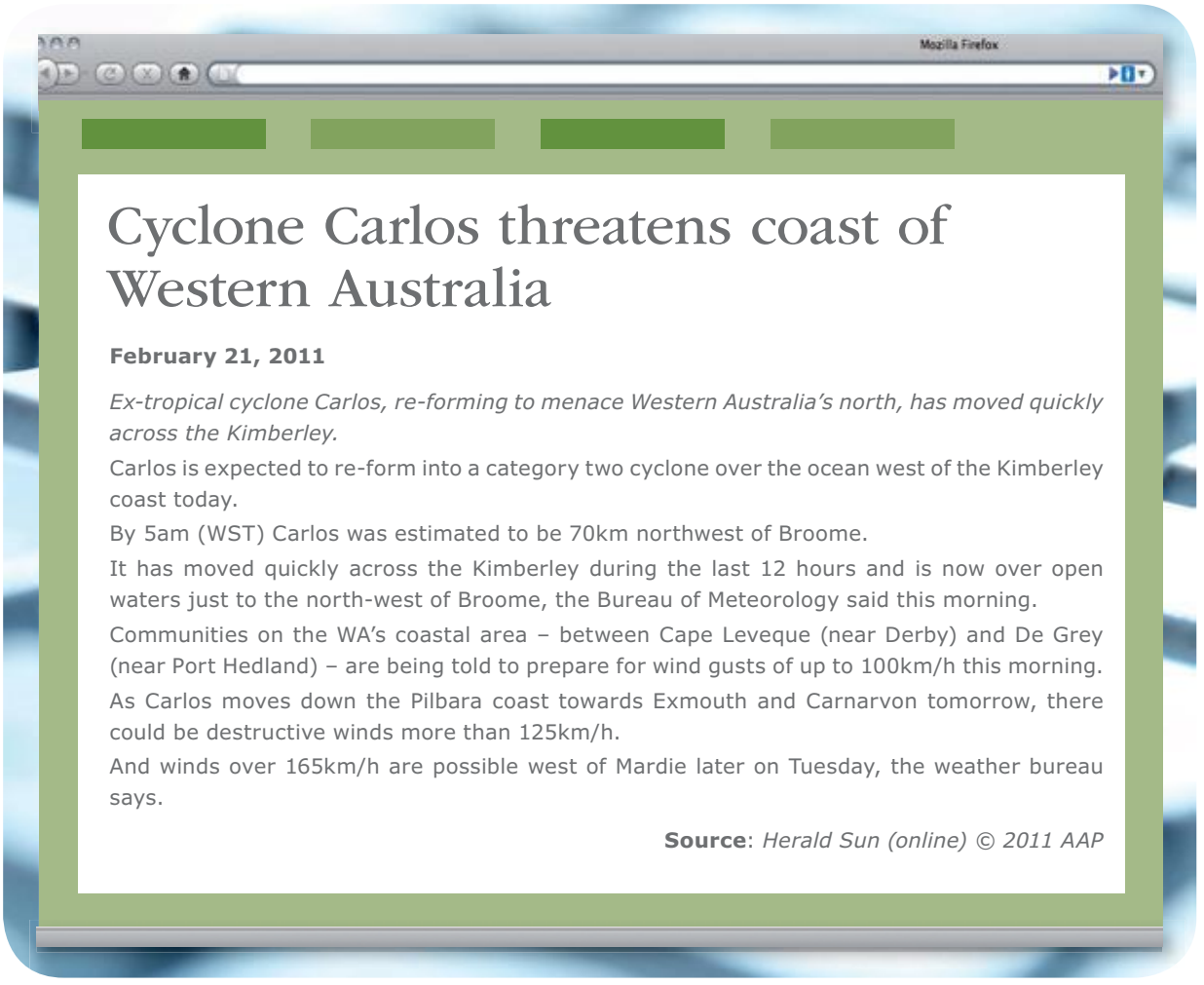
In a way, selecting information is similar to the process of writing a narrative story. So try asking:

- What is necessary for understanding the story?
- Are there any details that can be left out that still allow the text to make sense?
- When and how do details add to our understanding?

Over to you

Using the text below, or one of the sources your group collected for Activity 4 on page 114, identify what is important information and what is less important information about the extreme weather event being discussed:

- First, read through the source and, on a copy, use a highlighter to mark important or vital information.
- Then go through the text again and highlight less important information in a different colour.



Cyclone Carlos threatens coast of Western Australia

February 21, 2011

Ex-tropical cyclone Carlos, re-forming to menace Western Australia's north, has moved quickly across the Kimberley.

Carlos is expected to re-form into a category two cyclone over the ocean west of the Kimberley coast today.

By 5am (WST) Carlos was estimated to be 70km northwest of Broome.

It has moved quickly across the Kimberley during the last 12 hours and is now over open waters just to the north-west of Broome, the Bureau of Meteorology said this morning.

Communities on the WA's coastal area – between Cape Leveque (near Derby) and De Grey (near Port Hedland) – are being told to prepare for wind gusts of up to 100km/h this morning.

As Carlos moves down the Pilbara coast towards Exmouth and Carnarvon tomorrow, there could be destructive winds more than 125km/h.

And winds over 165km/h are possible west of Mardie later on Tuesday, the weather bureau says.

Source: *Herald Sun (online) © 2011 AAP*

How do we present information about the same topic in different media?

When an event occurs that affects a large number of people, information about it is circulated in many forms. Think about a recent event that has received a lot of attention – for example, a celebrity scandal, a new technological gadget, a political issue or a natural disaster – and consider where your knowledge about it came from. Some will be from social networking (online and off), but most will have come from media texts, such as print and online newspapers, magazines, television and radio programs.

For other possible sources, see page 113.

Think about a recent event that received a lot of attention: where did your knowledge about it come from?

As we have already seen, there are many similarities in what we expect of informative texts. There are, however, also some differences in the way we use language and present information, depending on both the type and form of text.

During the Queensland flood crisis of January 2011, our print and online newspapers, magazines, and television news and current affairs programs provided in-depth coverage of almost every aspect of the disaster. By focusing on informative news reports and articles, published in different forms of media, we can begin to appreciate their different features.

Over to you

Working in pairs, discuss key similarities and differences you would expect to find in the way language is used and information is presented on a news event in:

- a printed newspaper
- an online newspaper
- a television news bulletin.

Create a Venn diagram to illustrate the results of your discussion.

Language focus

Sensationalist material is designed to grab a reader's attention. A sensationalist headline might read: 'Footy player's life in ruins'.

What are the features of informative newspaper articles?

Newspapers are described as being either *broadsheet* or *tabloid* (terms that originated many years ago with print-based newspapers). Whether a paper is broadsheet or tabloid will influence the layout and size, as well as the type of information included and the way the informative articles are written.

Features of broadsheet and tabloid newspapers

Broadsheet newspapers, eg *The Australian*

- Twice the size of a tabloid newspaper (A1)
- Front page covers several news stories
- Avoid sensationalist material
- Appeal to 'educated' readers
- Written in a more formal style
- Use longer paragraphs, more precise vocabulary and more complex sentence structures
- Include some long, in-depth articles

Tabloid newspapers, eg the *Herald Sun*

- Half the size of a broadsheet newspaper (A3 when closed)
- Front page carries one main story
- May include sensationalist material
- Appeal to a wide audience
- Written in a more informal style
- Use shorter paragraphs, more commonly used words and fewer complex sentences
- Articles are quite short
- Include a lot of photographs

In some parts of the world, broadsheet newspapers have retained other features of broadsheets but switched to tabloid size. Readers find them easier to read on the train!

Over to you

1 Locate the features of broadsheet and tabloid newspapers on the front pages of *The Australian* and the *Herald Sun* which are on the previous page.

2 As a class, collect broadsheet and tabloid newspapers over a one-week period. In pairs, select one day and create a table like the one below to compare and contrast some of the typical content and structural features. Use dot points.

Newspaper	Major headlines and description of photos	Number of informative articles	Topics of informative articles	Sensation-alist or serious?
Day 1: broadsheet				
Day 1: tabloid				

3 Read the following extracts from a tabloid and a broadsheet newspaper reporting on the same event, and then answer the following:

- **a** Calculate and then compare the average number of words in each paragraph of each article. What is the difference, and how do you account for it?
- **b** Identify the independent clause in the first paragraph in each text. What additional information has been added in a dependent clause or clauses?
- **c** Identify examples of nominalisation and personification in each article and suggest why the authors have used them.

4 Choose a topic related to Australia's extreme weather conditions that interests you and create a plan for a front page for your own tabloid or broadsheet newspaper. Consider carefully how you will structure your page, including the size and number of images, and the length, number and subject of articles. Think carefully about the language choices you will make. (You will develop your front page in Assessment Task 2 on page 157.)

Streets filled with dismay

THE suburbs of Brisbane were virtually silent last night, barring the occasional siren and thump of helicopter blades.

Many residents watched disbelieving on the TV as boats, cars, fridges, and playground equipment roared down the Brisbane River.

Up to 50 suburbs were on flood alert with 20 000 houses likely to succumb to the mud and slush.

Many buildings were already under water, amid concerns about sewerage contamination and mosquito infestations.

The CBD was sinking under the murky water. Power and traffic lights in some suburbs were out.

Source: Nick Leys and John Ferguson, *Herald Sun*, 13 January 2011

City feels sting of river it loved too much

Brisbane's love affair with its river will continue long after the floodwaters recede, but the residents of the River City are going to handle the relationship a lot more carefully in future.

The floodwaters might have peaked a metre below the level of the 1974 flood ingrained in Brisbane memory, but the city's embrace of a river lifestyle meant the destruction was more widespread and significant than before. More than twice as many homes have been inundated and public facilities and businesses are likely to be shut for months.

Source: Sean Parnell, *The Australian*, 14 January 2011

Language focus

An **abstract** is a very short segment or summary of a text. Sometimes it is simply the first sentence of a news article. An abstract gives the reader a better idea of what the article is about than just the headline.

How are online newspaper articles different?

Today, all major newspapers publish online as well as print editions. This is not as simple as just making the articles available on the internet – in fact, very few stories are presented in the same format in both versions. Print newspapers are laid out in columns to make it easier to read text printed on very wide pages, whereas digital articles can fill the whole screen. Often, advertisements or video clips are inserted in digital articles to break up large sections of text and to make sure the reader notices them.

Online newspapers,
eg *The Sydney Morning Herald*

- Show headlines and abstracts of many stories on the homepage, rather than just one or two
- Can show more on a single page, such as slideshows of photos, video footage and advertisements
- Are interactive, so the reader can select which stories interest them
- Can contain photos, video footage and comments sent in by readers
- Can be updated and revised during the day
- Contain a 'search' field that allows the reader to find particular articles, including past articles
- Contain links to similar stories
- Offer subscriptions to the entire newspaper or selected sections, which are emailed to readers
- Can be accessed by internet anywhere in the world on computers, mobile phones or portable reading devices

Below is an extract from the online version of the same article that appears on page 121.

Toolbar to easily navigate between sections

Search function to locate articles easily

Headlines and abstracts of major stories

Over to you

1 Access and explore an online newspaper. How easy is it to use?

2 In pairs, compare the pros and cons of print and online newspapers. Consider:

- content – types of articles and advertisements
- access and ease of use – who's reading them and where?
- structure and amount of information – is it easy to navigate?
- production costs – including resources used and waste.

3 Find an informative print newspaper article about Australia's weather conditions and their impact on the environment, and then find the same article in the online version of the newspaper.

a Which version appeared first? How can you tell?

b Are there any differences between the text and/or paragraphing of the two versions? If so, why do you think this is?

c What other differences can you identify between the two versions? Suggest reasons for the differences.

SPEAKING

What are the features of informative speeches?

We have seen that informative texts have many features in common, and that we may present similar information differently in different types of print and multimodal texts. The same is true of speeches.

Like all informative texts, in a speech on extreme weather conditions:

- We would try to present the information we have researched impartially.
- We would probably address questions typical of informative texts – about what happened, when and where, how and why, and who was affected.
- When there is disagreement about the 'facts', we would present a range of viewpoints, not just the one we agree with. In this way, we present information, rather than a point of view.

Again, as with other informative texts, it is important to work out a focus when presenting an informative speech. It is impossible to provide information about all aspects of extreme weather conditions. No one wants to hear – any more than they want to read – an endless recital of 'facts', especially if it sounds as if they have been taken straight from other sources.

We want to feel that we have learnt something, from someone who is interested in the topic. In a speech, one way of enabling our audience to feel this is to research an aspect of a topic that we want to know more about ourselves. If we believe that global warming is a reality, for example, it would be an interesting challenge to research what those who disagree with us think, and impartially present information about *their* arguments and evidence. When informing about a diversity of viewpoints on any topic where there may be disagreement about the 'facts', we want our audience to know what other people think – not just what we think – so that they can make an informed decision.

No audience wants to hear an endless recital of 'facts'.

When giving an informative speech, we need to engage our audience's interest by presenting interesting and well-researched material in a lively and appealing manner. This means that we need to think very carefully:

- not just about *what* we will say
- but also about *how* we will say it and present it.

To revise dependent and embedded clauses, go to pages 8 and 110.

For example, in a spoken text we will probably use shorter sentences. While we may use dependent and/or embedded clauses to add information, long complex sentences are difficult for listeners to follow. We need to think especially carefully about how our sentences *sound* – and whether they are easy to say. We also need to ensure that our ideas are clearly linked and easy to follow.

For advice on how to create clear and fluent texts, go to page 110.

The way we speak depends on the situation. If we are speaking before a known audience, we may speak less formally than if we are addressing an unknown audience, for example in a public-speaking competition.

Avoiding the sometimes colourful language of persuasive texts doesn't mean informative language has to be dry and dull. We have seen how newspaper articles make use of personification and interesting vocabulary, and we also need to make interesting language choices in speeches. Sometimes an interesting anecdote may add interest to otherwise dry information – for example, an uplifting or amusing story, or a lively account of a difference of opinion.

In the case of many speeches, we may also be able to add interest, as well as information, by presenting information in multimodal form. For example, we could combine our speech with a PowerPoint slideshow that includes music and visual images, such as photographs and film.

One way of planning a multimodal speech, after choosing and researching an aspect of a topic to talk about, is outlined on the next page.

We can add interest, as well as information, by presenting information in multimodal form.

Preparing a multimodal informative speech

Over to you

Working in the same groups as for Activities 2–4 on page 114, follow the steps outlined above and plan a group presentation based on the aspect of extreme weather conditions that you chose to research. You will develop your presentation in Assessment Task 3 on page 157.

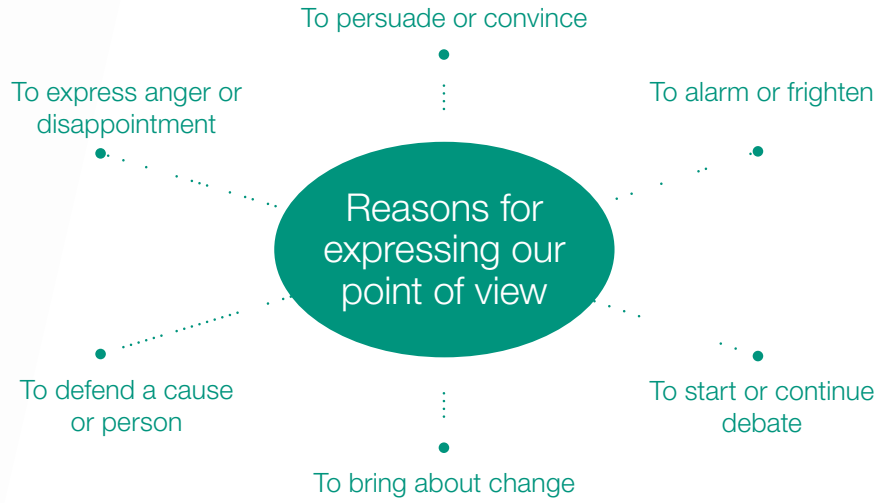
3.3 How can we get people to see *our point of view*?

Being able to present our point of view clearly and logically is an important part of communication. There are many situations where we want others not only to see things from our perspective, but also to agree with us – whether it is a simple everyday argument about what film to see, or an important decision such as which school to go to.

In most situations, simply 'bulldozing' someone with your view is unlikely to persuade them.

What is the difference between informing and persuading?

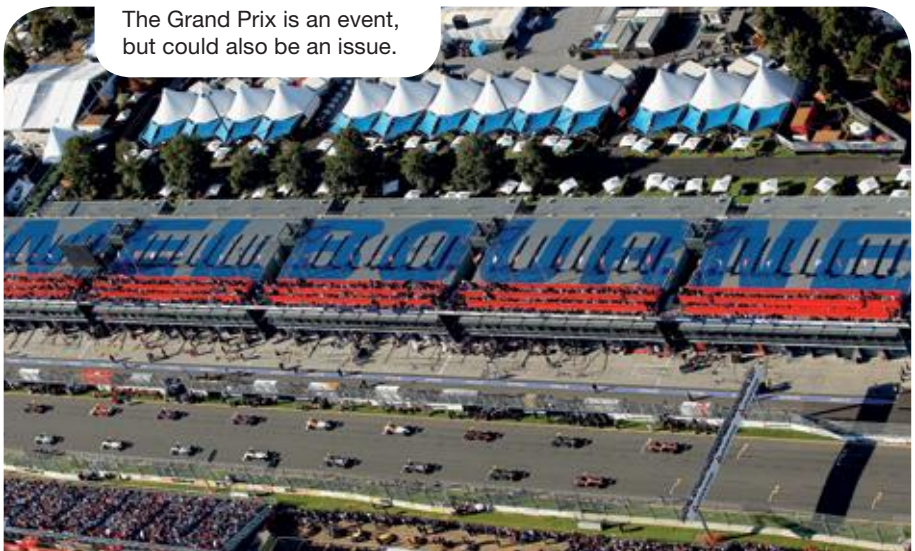
Informing and persuading are two different things. When we inform, we usually keep our own opinions to ourselves; the whole purpose of persuading, on the other hand, is to express our own point of view. There are many reasons why we may want to do this, including the following.



While we inform about particular *events* or situations, we only express our point of view about them if there is an *issue* involved. This is because:

- an event is simply something that has happened, but
- an issue is a complex situation that different people feel differently about.

When people have different opinions about an event, or aspects of it, it becomes an issue. For example, the Grand Prix is an event, and information about it could include its history, what happened in a race and who participated. The Grand Prix may also become an issue if people don't agree about an aspect of it – such as where it should be held, or whether a particular driver should have been disqualified.



The Grand Prix is an event, but could also be an issue.

Issues also arise as a result of other things people disagree about, for example:

Should students wear school uniform?

or

Should the voting age be lowered?

When we hear or read someone giving their opinion, we can ask:

- What aspect of an event has prompted them to express their point of view?
- What is the issue that has caught their interest or concerned them?
- What 'sides' are there, and which 'side' are they on?

We also *use language* differently when we persuade and when we inform. For example, a person writing about the need for city councils to restrict ownership of vicious breeds of dogs might include some statistics about dog attacks, a photo of a scary-looking dog or a victim, and use words or phrases such as 'monsters', 'unnatural', 'out of control' and 'demonic' to describe these animals. In this way, they are trying to frighten us into agreeing with them, while at the same time trying to bring about change in our community.

Photographs such as this can be very effective visual language.

Over to you

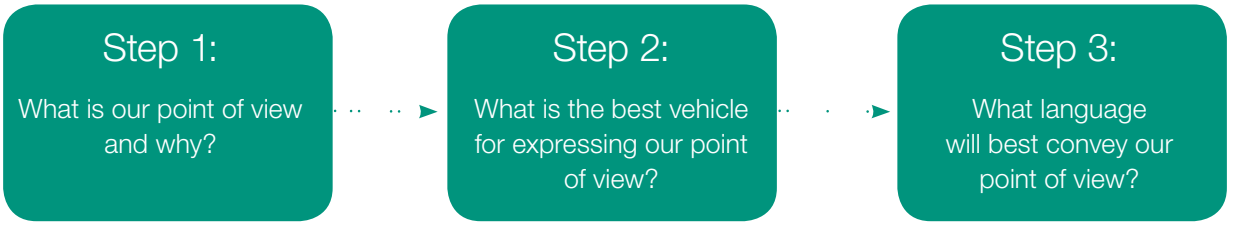
In pairs, discuss whether each of the following statements is an event or an issue:

a A six-year-old Adelaide girl has been attacked by a neighbour's dog.

b There are too many preventable attacks and city councils need stricter laws regarding potentially vicious breeds.

c Dog owners should be made to muzzle and leash their dogs whenever they're in public places.

There are a number of steps we can take to put our point of view about an issue as persuasively as possible.



Step 1: The first step is to think about what *our own point of view* is and why – if we can't explain the reasons for our views to ourselves, we will have a lot of trouble explaining them to someone else!

Language focus

Cultural values are values that are the result of the way we live and the things we appreciate as a society, eg some Australian cultural values could be said to be freedom of speech, having a go, and spending time with family.

We can usually think of at least one good reason why we feel the way we do on a particular issue; for example, our point of view might be the result of:

- a personal experience
- our family values, or
- our cultural values.

It's a good idea to consider what possible views there might be and whether we agree or disagree with them. Let's practise using the topic:

> The current abundance of food-based television shows is creating an unhealthy attitude to food.

We need to work out exactly what the topic is claiming. We can do this by asking:

- What shows are being referred to?
- What is meant by 'unhealthy'?
- Are the television shows responsible for this attitude?

We then need to decide what reasons or arguments exist for agreeing and disagreeing with the statement, and what 'side' we are on, for example:

Agree	Disagree
Shows such as *MasterChef* treat food as a fashion statement rather than a necessity	The number of television shows about food reflects our interest in cooking; it doesn't create it
We should spend money on preventing poverty and starvation, not expensive reality television and competitions	More young people are learning about where food comes from and what is healthy
These shows encourage us to spend more time preparing food than doing other worthwhile things	People have to eat; now they're eating more interesting food

Are television shows such as Nigella's creating an unhealthy attitude to food?

To find out more about different forms of persuasive texts, go to page 141.

To find out more about language choices, go to page 135.

Step 2: Having decided what our point of view is, we should consider what the *best vehicle* for expressing that view is. In some situations an informal discussion will be fine, but at other times we will want to reach a wider audience. In these cases, we can use a variety of texts.

Step 3: Finally, we need to think about *what language* will best convey our view. This will depend on the type of text we choose and our audience.

Over to you

In the following article, 'Isabella takes the *MasterChef* cake', journalist Nicole Brady is informing us about both sides of an issue without expressing her own point of view. Read the article and then answer these questions.

a What is the event that will 'reignite' the 'debate'?

b According to the article, what is the issue or 'debate' that will be 'reignited'?

c What are the two 'sides' or points of view introduced in the article?

d This article is about an issue, but it is informative rather than persuasive. Why?

Isabella takes the *MasterChef* cake

Though the screening of her triumph finished way past bedtime, Queensland student Isabella, 12, last night was the excited victor of Channel Ten's inaugural *Junior MasterChef* competition.

Isabella – in the hope of protecting their privacy the surnames of the child contestants were never revealed – triumphed over Tasmanian Jack, 13, in a cooking challenge in which both displayed extraordinary culinary dexterity. So sharp were their skills that last night's final episode is bound to reignite debate about the 'adultification' of children in the name of entertainment.

Detractors believe primary-school-aged children should not be exposed to the artifices and pressures of reality television. Others argue the series unfolded in a supportive and positive manner that was designed to inspire and educate youngsters.

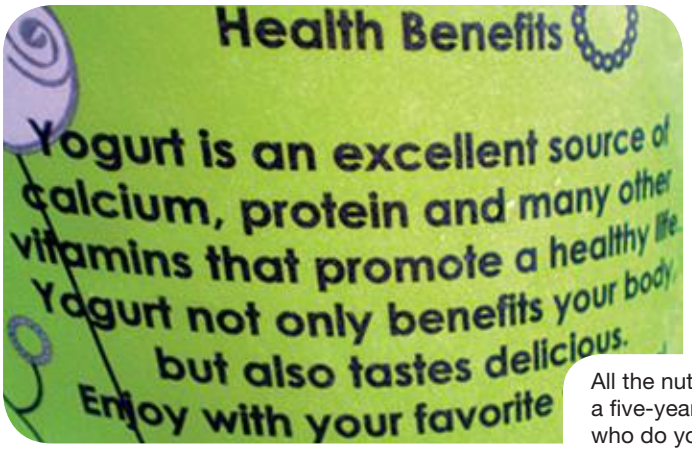
Source: Nicole Brady, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 November 2010

Language focus

Notice how dashes rather than commas have been used to punctuate this embedded clause.

Notice also how new words can be created – although there is no verb 'to adultify', the author has come up with the nominalisation 'adultification'!

To revise nominalisation and embedded clauses, go to pages 7 and 110.



All the nutritional information in the world won't make a five-year-old choose yoghurt over ice-cream. So who do you think might be persuaded by this text?

What makes a point of view convincing?

Often, our *own* reasons for forming a point of view about an issue will be good reasons for others too. Sometimes, all we need to do is explain them clearly. If we can do this in a logical way, it will appear that we've thought a lot about the issue, rather than getting caught up in the moment. We should remember, however, that what is persuasive for some is not always persuasive for others – so make sure your arguments are appropriate for your audience.

Two ways of making your point of view convincing are:

- using logic, and
- appealing to emotion and values.

Using logic

To revise assertion, go to page 94.

Logic means commonsense or reason, and everyone finds it hard to disagree with reason. When we use logic to put forward our view, we are offering arguments that make sense, are not based on assertion, and are backed up by reliable evidence and examples.

It is important not to confuse arguments with evidence:

- Arguments are the main ideas that demonstrate a point of view.
- Evidence is the facts or information used to support these ideas.

To revise reliable evidence, go to page 107.

Convincing evidence could include facts or statistics drawn from reliable sources, expert opinion, or specific examples.

Which of these arguments do you find logical and persuasive?

MasterChef is boring! It's just like every other reality TV show with dull contestants and self-obsessed judges.

I think the focus on food is going too far. Australia is now the fattest nation on Earth and there should be more emphasis on health than taste.

There are a lot of cooking shows on TV, but no one is forcing you to watch them. If they're not your thing, change the channel or turn the TV off.

Cooking shows are so popular because they show that everyone can cook great food. They focus on important skills and ingredients and provide interesting recipes.

Over to you

1 Match each of the following arguments with the evidence that you think logically supports them.

Argument	Evidence
1 We need to change our attitude to food. As a nation, we take having fresh, cheap and healthy food for granted. Our eyes, however, are often bigger than our stomachs.	**a** Sales of ingredients featured on *MasterChef* have increased 1400 per cent.
2 We need to remember that television shows are designed to make money for their sponsors.	**b** SBS has limited commercials, and its programs showcase the best of Sri Lankan, French, Singaporean, American, Latino and Greek specialties.
3 Cooking and food shows can have a very positive effect on people's lives. Many people just don't know how to cook good, healthy meals.	**c** Jamie Oliver has started programs such as the 'Fifteen' restaurants, 'Jamie's Revolution' and 'Ministry of Food'.
4 Many of the dishes cooked on these shows contain more than 100 per cent of the recommended daily serving of fats and sugars.	**d** Australians are throwing out more than $5 billion worth of food each year – more than we spend on digital equipment and more than it costs to run the Australian army.
5 It's not just the commercial television channels that have got on board the gravy train.	**e** Cardiologist Dr Lawrence Schneider, who is a critic of shows such as *MasterChef*, says there's no doubt they are fuelling the obesity epidemic in Australia.

Are we under too much pressure to reproduce food like this at home?

2 For each example of evidence in Activity 1, state whether it is based on:

- facts and statistics
- expert opinion, or
- specific example.

3 Divide the class into groups and allocate each group one of the following topics:

- Television programs about food put a lot of pressure on people to cook restaurant-quality food at home.
- All supermarkets should give leftover food to charity organisations.
- Cooking shows should not use and advertise the products of their sponsors.
- Reality television programs do not show what it's really like to work in a restaurant kitchen.
- When planning meals, there should be more focus on health and nutrition and less on taste and presentation.
- Television programs about food inspire cooks to try new things and be creative.

Now complete the following activities:

- **a** As a group, decide whether you agree or disagree with the statement. What is your point of view? If you can't agree, split into two subgroups.
- **b** Write down three to four logical arguments in favour of your point of view.
- **c** For each of your arguments, discuss and write down possible types of evidence you could use to support it.
- **d** Share your ideas with the class.

Appealing to emotions and values

The opposite of logic and reason could be said to be feelings or emotions, and sometimes we're persuaded by things that touch our hearts, rather than our heads. Advertisements, of course, are designed to persuade us that we want something, and they are a good example of how we can use both written and visual language to appeal to emotions and values. Think about advertising campaigns for adopting a pet from the RSPCA – they're full of images of cute puppies and kittens with big, sad eyes. Advertisers know that this is a much more effective way to persuade the audience than statistics about how many pets are lost or surrendered each year.

We can also appeal to values to persuade our audience. This RSPCA advertisement, for example, is appealing to the Australian value that our pets should be treated like humans and that they have the same needs as us: love, loyalty and companionship.

Who could resist these big, sad eyes?

PERSUASIVE

Some ads appeal to materialistic values.

Language focus

People with **materialistic** values believe that acquiring possessions and looking good are very important.

Manipulate means to influence or change, often without the object's knowledge or consent.

Evoke means to conjure up strong feelings, thoughts, memories or images, eg a photograph of winning a Grand Final might evoke feelings of excitement and pride.

Some advertisements, on the other hand, appeal to the materialistic values held by some Australians – our need to have the right designer labels and the right image.

When trying to persuade others, we can appeal to our audience in the same way as advertisers by manipulating their feelings. Just as advertisements, such as the one above, evoke feelings of envy and desire, we can also evoke feelings of compassion, sympathy, guilt, anger and frustration in our own texts by using **emotive** language.

The adjective **emotive** is used to describe something (eg a word, photograph or memory) that evokes our emotions. It is different to the adjective **emotional,** which is used to describe a person feeling or displaying emotions.

Over to you

Collect advertisements from print or online magazines.

a Decide what emotions the advertisements are designed to evoke and/or the values they are designed to appeal to in their audience (remembering that some advertisements might target more than one).

b Create a collage or poster using the advertisements, and include annotations explaining how they manipulate our emotions and/or appeal to particular values.

c Choose one of the items advertised and create a new advertisement for it, targeting a different emotion or value. Think carefully about the changes you will make to the image and text.

How do authors use language to persuade?

Language focus
Language choices are the choices authors make about the words, sentences, structure and images they will use in a text.

The *way* we present a point of view is an important aspect of making it convincing. Just as some arguments will be more effective than others, some words and phrases will be more persuasive than others. We also have to make sure that our language choices suit the audience and form of our text, for example by:

- choosing persuasive vocabulary
- making our point of view credible
- making our point of view memorable and engaging.

Choosing persuasive vocabulary

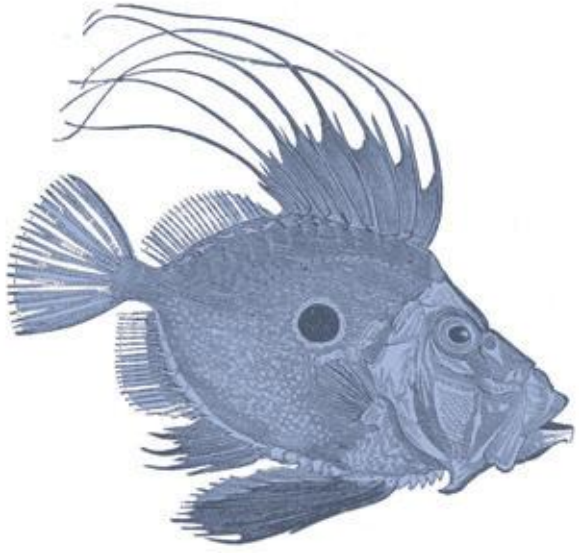
Sometimes we don't think about *why* we use particular words instead of others; we use them out of habit, rather than selecting them carefully. If we are to create persuasive texts, however, we need to develop a vocabulary that allows us to express complex ideas both clearly and persuasively.

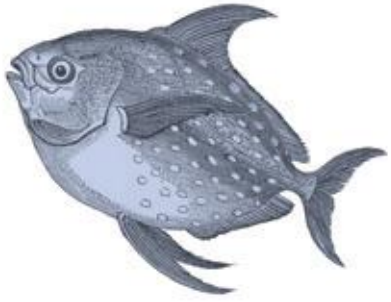
This doesn't mean we should write as if we have swallowed a thesaurus, however! It means we need to use the right words to persuade people that we know what we are talking about. In a persuasive piece on animal rights, for example, it would be important to develop a bank of words and phrases such as 'factory farming', 'endangered species' and 'humane conditions'.

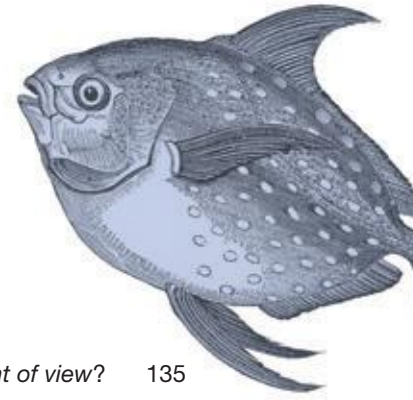
We can also choose words that will subtly position our audience to accept our view, for example many words have either positive or negative **connotations** (sometimes called 'loaded' language). Food critic Matt Preston explains in a *Herald Sun* article how the connotation of the noun 'foodie' has changed in recent years:

> Where once the word 'foodie' was a form of abuse implying a food elitist, now it's been reclaimed for anyone who takes an interest in what they eat and how to prepare it; for anyone who enjoys cooking as a hobby and a joy rather than a drudge and a chore.

The word **connotation** comes from the Latin word *connotare*, which means 'to mark in addition'. It suggests that a word carries other, secondary meanings in addition to its literal meaning. If a word has **negative connotations**, this means that the added meaning is bad or negative.







Over to you

Read the extract below and then complete the following activities:

To revise parts of speech, including nouns, adjectives and verbs, go to page 8.

a Find out the meanings of the highlighted words or phrases and identify whether they are nouns, adjectives or verbs. Add them to your personal glossary.

b Discuss whether each of the highlighted words has a positive or negative connotation. In a different context, could these words have different connotations?

A love of food all can share

Gordon Gekko, from the 1987 movie *Wall Street,* has become a symbol for unrestrained greed.

Back in the 1980s the movie *Wall Street* declared 'greed is good'. Amoral consumption was where things 'were at' and it was a time of food being used as status symbol.

Self-styled foodies spent three days sourcing obscure ingredients for their dinner parties or splashed out big dollars on glossy overseas cookbooks that sat on the coffee table (hopefully) declaring how 'international' and 'sophisticated' they were.

These were the obnoxious years of food. I didn't like them, or those that played those games using food as a way of feeling superior to others. I still don't.

In the past decade, however, this has changed beyond recognition. While the occasional obnoxious foodie still stalks the earth with a shopping list dotted with obscurities and endangered species, they have become outnumbered by those of us for whom the pursuit of good food is a much more egalitarian concern.

The sort of people who find as much joy – if not more – in a great fresh juicy peach or perfect fish 'n' chips on the beach than they do in a lobster dinner in a posh restaurant. In the past decade eating out has become something Melburnians do far more regularly than just on special occasions.

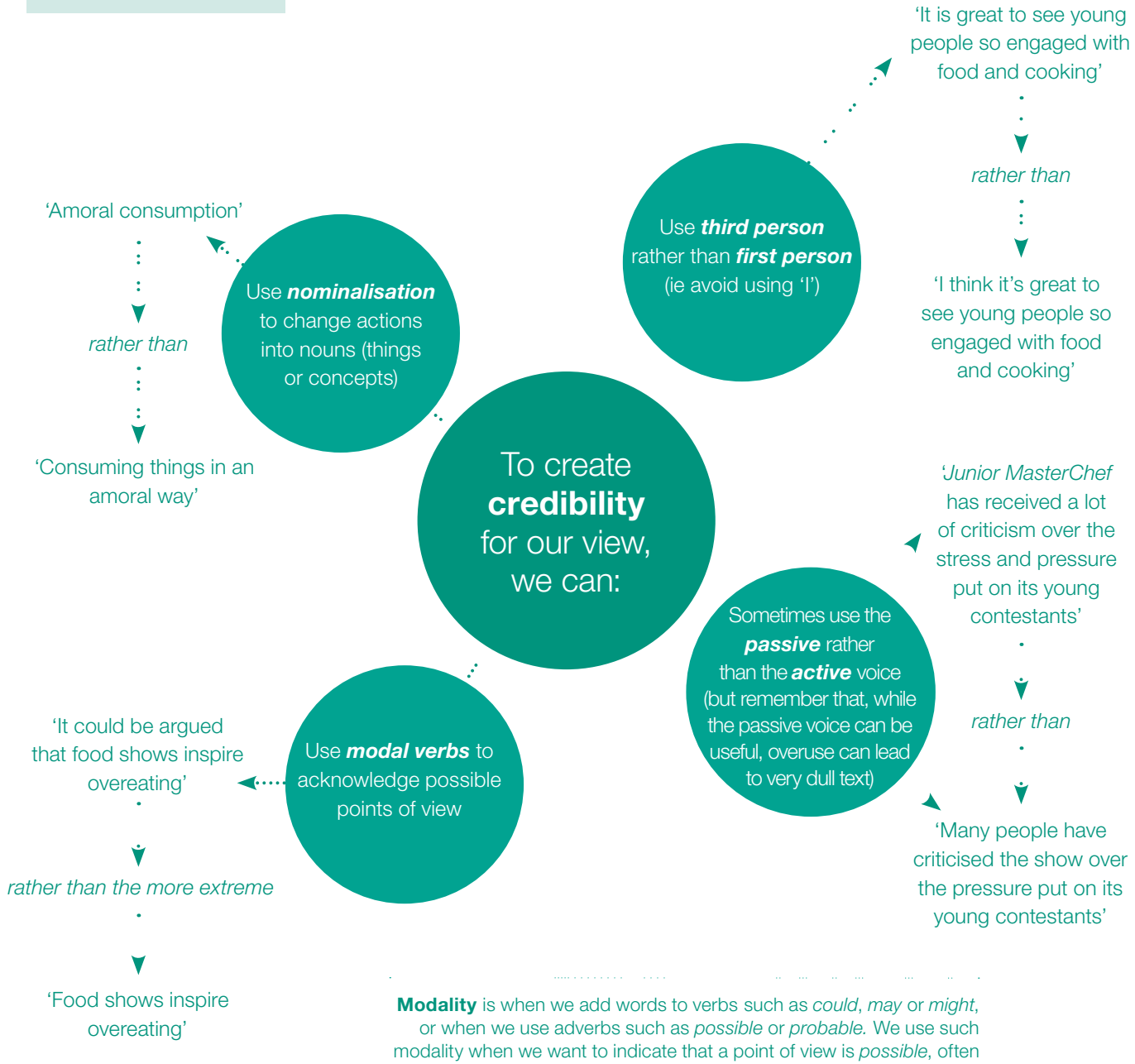
Source: Matt Preston, *Herald Sun*, 12 April 2010

Making our point of view credible

Language focus

Credible means believable or convincing. A credible point of view is one capable of convincing other people that it is correct.

Apart from presenting a reasoned argument, supported by evidence, we can also position our audience to accept our view as credible by making it seem as though it is commonly or universally accepted, rather than just our own personal opinion. This can also make the writing more formal, which might encourage our audience to take us (and our view) seriously. Strategies for making our point of view credible include:



Modality is when we add words to verbs such as *could*, *may* or *might*, or when we use adverbs such as *possible* or *probable.* We use such modality when we want to indicate that a point of view is *possible*, often before we go on to show why we don't agree with it. We can also use strong modal verbs such as *should*, *would* or *must* to indicate certainty.

Over to you

1 Try creating credibility for your point of view by using the techniques on the previous page. Write five or six sentences expressing your opinion about *Junior MasterChef*. You might choose to write about:

- the pressure it puts on the contestants
- the opportunities it gives the contestants
- whether treating contestants like adults is a good thing
- how it would feel to be eliminated.

2 Swap your sentences with a partner and discuss how successfully you used the techniques.

Making our point of view memorable and engaging

We can make our writing more persuasive and increase its impact on the audience by carefully building on the points we've already made, and by choosing language techniques that:

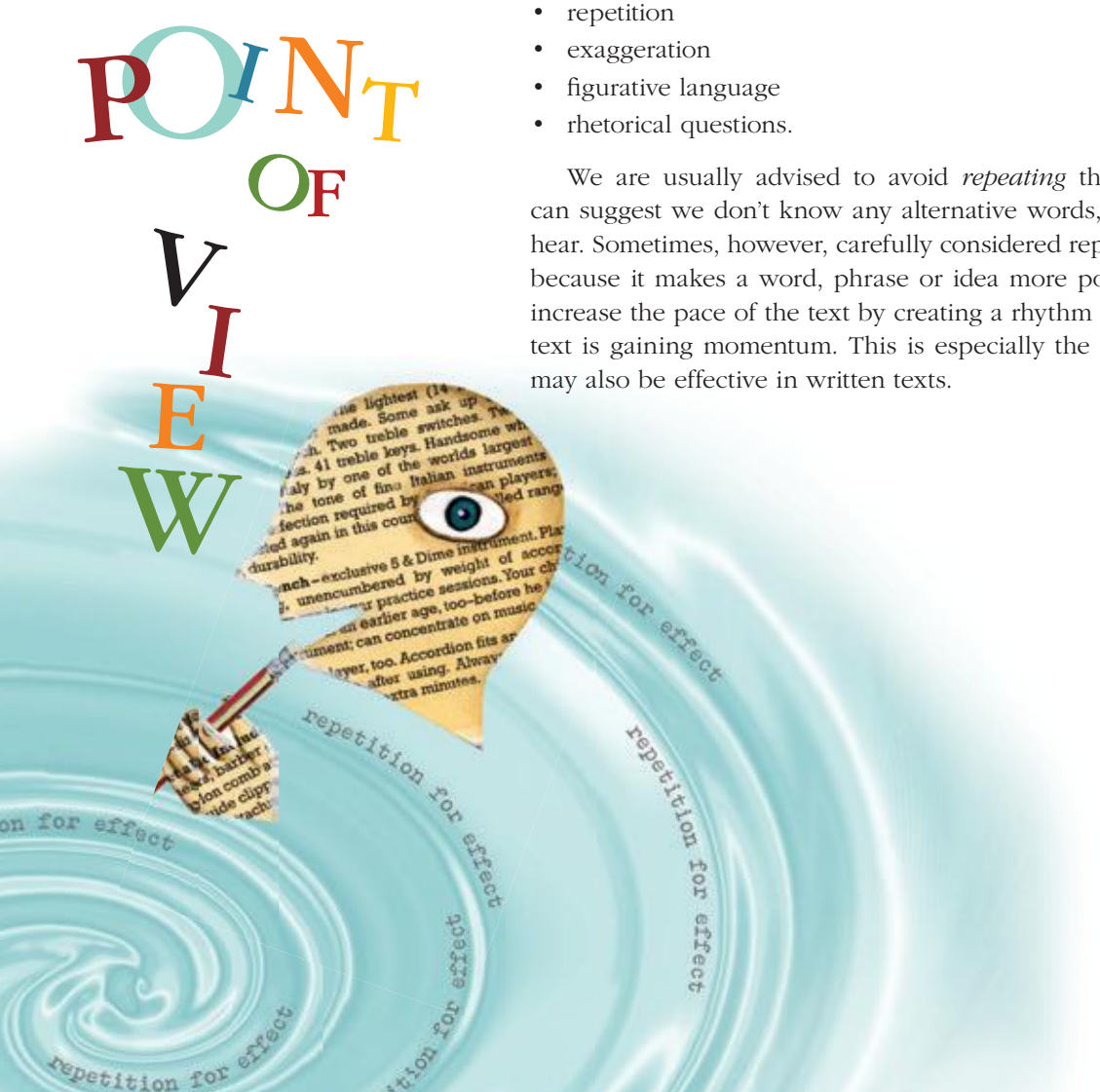
To revise the meaning of 'position', go to page 53.

- engage the audience and make them think
- position the audience to see things in particular ways.

Some of the techniques we can use include:

- repetition
- exaggeration
- figurative language
- rhetorical questions.

We are usually advised to avoid *repeating* the same word or phrase. It can suggest we don't know any alternative words, and can be dull to read or hear. Sometimes, however, carefully considered repetition can be very effective because it makes a word, phrase or idea more powerful. It can also work to increase the pace of the text by creating a rhythm and making it seem like the text is gaining momentum. This is especially the case with spoken texts, but may also be effective in written texts.



The following text is an extract from then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's apology to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children removed from their families between 1909 and 1969. He gave this speech before Parliament in February 2008. It includes some good examples of just how powerful repetition can be.

Kevin Rudd apologises to the Stolen Generations.

> The time has now come for the nation to turn a new page in Australia's history by righting the wrongs of the past and so moving forward with confidence to the future.
>
> We apologise for the laws and policies of successive Parliaments and governments that have inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss on these our fellow Australians.
>
> We apologise especially for the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, their communities and their country.
>
> For the pain, suffering and hurt of these Stolen Generations, their descendants and for their families left behind, we say sorry.
>
> To the mothers and the fathers, the brothers and the sisters, for the breaking up of families and communities, we say sorry.
>
> And for the indignity and degradation thus inflicted on a proud people and a proud culture, we say sorry.

Language focus

The term 'Stolen Generations' refers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who were forcibly taken from their families so they could be brought up 'white'. This practice was reflected in various official government policies from the 1870s to 1973.

Over to you

1. Kevin Rudd repeats the words 'we apologise' at the beginning of the second and third paragraphs, and the words 'we say sorry' at the end of the fourth, fifth and sixth paragraphs. Why do you think he repeats these words, and why do you think he moves from using repetition at the beginning of a sentence to the end of a sentence?
2. Rudd uses many different phrases to describe the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples he is addressing. Identify them, and suggest why you think he chose to do this, rather than repeat the same phrase.
3. Go online and find the text of famous speeches, such as Barack Obama's election acceptance speech and Martin Luther King's 'I have a dream'. Find examples of repetition and explain their effect.

EXAGGERATE

Hyperbole (pronounced hyper-bolee) comes from the Greek word for 'exaggeration'. It means an exaggerated claim or statement that is not meant to be taken literally.

Exaggeration or overstatement (sometimes called **hyperbole**) is another way we can add power to our words, by saying that something is bigger, better or worse than it really is. This can create a dramatic effect and make a situation seem more urgent, terrifying or amazing. For example:

To revise figurative language, including metaphors and similes, go to page 34.

Like creators of fiction and poetry, writers of persuasive texts use *figurative language* such as metaphors and similes to encourage the audience to think about something in a different way. Take the example of exaggeration above where factory-farmed chickens are described as being 'tortured' in 'constant hell'. The metaphor invites us to see the suffering of these birds in a new light.

Another way of engaging our audience is by addressing them directly and asking *rhetorical questions*. These are questions that are designed to make us think. For example, the question 'Would you like to be abandoned?' doesn't ask for a 'yes' or 'no' answer – it requires us to think about the consequences of an action.

Over to you

What are some of the problems of using exaggeration to persuade? Think of an example where it may have the opposite effect.

How do we present our point of view in different types of persuasive texts?

While the persuasive language choices discussed in this chapter can be used in almost any type of persuasive text, each type of text has typical features that make it easy to recognise and that provide us with a guide when creating them. For example, a speech might have the same structure and arguments as an essay, but in a speech we would greet our audience and consider our tone, pace and pauses. Similarly, we may use a metaphor to persuade in an essay, an opinion piece or a letter to the editor, but each text will be structured differently.

Let's look at the features of:

- essays
- opinion pieces
- letters to the editor
- online message boards
- cartoons.

Work out a clear structure for your essay.

Essays

A persuasive essay is a formal piece of writing where we present our point of view about an issue. Most essays require us to respond to a statement or question, and are written in formal language and in the third person.

Although there is no strict formula, the following is a tried-and-tested way of structuring a persuasive essay. A persuasive essay should have a clear structure that includes:

- an introduction – that introduces the issue and indicates the point of view to be presented
- at least two body paragraphs – each one including a topic sentence and logically exploring a separate but linked idea or argument, supported by reasons and evidence
- a conclusion – that summarises the argument, without repeating the introduction.

To build on our previous points and show control over what we're writing, we can use a variety of cohesive devices to connect our ideas and arguments. Common cohesive devices include conjunctions such as *and*, *however*, *although* and *additionally*, which:

- connect phrases
- show cause and effect
- encourage comparisons.

Using a variety of pronouns and synonyms also helps to link back to previous points or ideas without sounding too repetitive. For example, after referring to a person by name the first time, we could use our vocabulary to find other suitable terms in subsequent sentences.

Language focus

A **topic sentence** gives the main idea of a paragraph. It does not need to be the first sentence in a paragraph. It is sometimes referred to as a 'hypertheme sentence'.

To revise cohesive devices, go to page 110.

To revise how to decide on your point of view, go to page 128.

Once we have decided on our point of view on an issue, there are several ways we can present it in an essay. We may acknowledge opposing views by:

- presenting our view and rebutting opposing views, or
- presenting both sides and having a strong conclusion in support of one of them.

Presenting our view and rebutting opposing views

One way of structuring a persuasive essay is to concentrate on the arguments that support our point of view right from the beginning. This approach allows us to focus on our own arguments and use language to put our point of view convincingly for most of the text. For example, an essay disagreeing with the topic 'The current abundance of food-based television shows is creating an unhealthy attitude to food' might argue that cooking shows:

- teach us about healthy options
- introduce us to new styles of cooking
- make food exciting for younger people.

This approach also allows us to rebut conflicting views where appropriate. We don't have to try to appear neutral, and we can undermine opposing arguments by proving them wrong and even ridiculing them. Acknowledging opposing views and showing why they are misled can be more persuasive than pretending they don't exist. We can appear reasonable and educated if we can successfully rebut opposing viewpoints.

Using this structure, we clearly state our point of view in the introduction, and develop it in each paragraph. Below is a possible introduction for such an essay on the topic.

> The popularity of food-based television shows is hard to deny, but rather than creating an unhealthy attitude to food, they are changing our attitudes for the better. Far from lounging in front of the television like couch potatoes, drooling over fast-food ads, viewers are being introduced to the possibility of creating healthy and interesting food. The results are showing in increased sales of fresh food and a corresponding decline in fatty processed foods.

The next paragraph could rebut an opposing view, beginning:

> Some might argue that cooking shows encourage us – even expect us – to spend hours in the kitchen preparing feasts. In fact this is not the case. Programs such as *Jamie's 30-minute Meals* and *Nigella Express* are, as their titles hint at, all about cooking great food quickly.

Language focus

To **rebut** means to refute or oppose with evidence. Simply asserting 'you're wrong!' is not a rebuttal: you need to prove it.

To **ridicule** means to put down or mock something or someone.

To **acknowledge** something means to admit that it exists.

Perhaps food-based television shows can help teach us about healthy options.

Some cooking shows are all about cooking great food quickly.

Presenting both sides and having a strong conclusion in support of our view

If we decide to present *both* sides of an argument before expressing our own point of view, we must remember that the whole point of persuasive writing is to persuade – not to inform about the arguments on both sides of an issue. We still need to make our own view clear. This approach can be useful, however, if we can see the validity of both sides. It is also sometimes necessary if the issue is complicated – for example, we might want to argue that some cooking shows create an unhealthy attitude to food, but that others encourage a healthy attitude.

Using linking words and phrases can help **signpost** the different arguments for the reader and make the text more fluent. For example:

> Consumers paying top dollar have the right to expect quality produce. On the other hand, it is possible that we have begun to take spotless mangoes and prime cuts of meat for granted. Have we turned into food snobs?

Words and phrases that lead the audience through a text are sometimes called **signposts**. They indicate where one idea stops and another starts, and make the text easier to understand. (See also cohesive devices, page 110.)

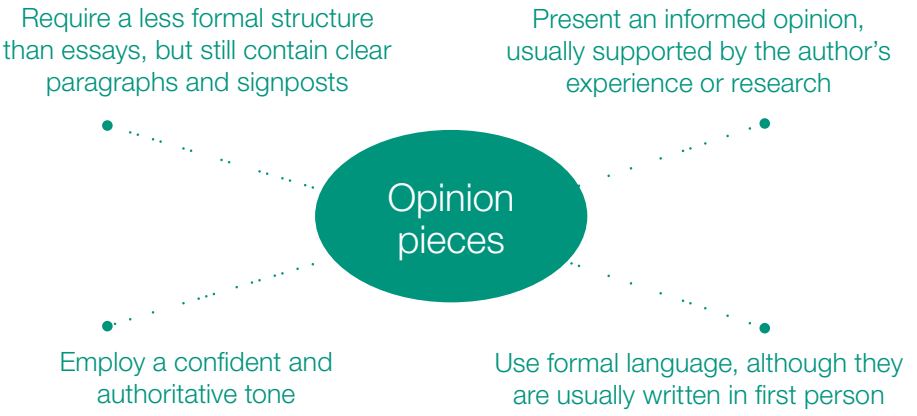
Over to you

1. Refer to the arguments for and against the topic 'The current abundance of food-based television shows is creating an unhealthy attitude to food' on page 129 and add as many arguments in each column as you can. You will develop a presentation based on your arguments in Activity 4 on page 157.
2. Decide what your point of view on this topic is and write a detailed plan for a persuasive essay. You will need to consider:
   - whether you want to present one side of the argument from the beginning, or explore both sides before concluding by supporting one of them
   - three or four arguments to support your point of view
   - how you will order your arguments, from most to least important
   - a topic sentence for each paragraph
   - linking words or phrases to create a cohesive text and signpost your argument, for example 'first', 'alternatively'
   - evidence and reasons to support your arguments
   - how you could rebut an opposing argument
   - what language techniques you will choose to engage and persuade your audience.

To revise language techniques, go to page 138.

Opinion pieces

Opinion pieces are published in newspapers and magazines, usually in response to a current issue or recent event that has caused debate. They are often written by experts in the area or by well-known figures whose views the audience are likely to respect. They usually follow the conventions below:



Let's look at an opinion piece on page 145 from *The Age* that follows the above conventions. Like the creators of all types of effective, persuasive texts, the author has chosen language to make her text more credible, memorable and engaging.

Over to you

Read the article 'Hungry for more than TV cooking shows' on the next page and then answer the following.

1. In one sentence, summarise Jane Cafarella's point of view about television cooking shows. Then, in dot points, list three arguments she uses to support that point of view.
2. What difference would it have made if Cafarella had used the third rather than the first person?
3. What do you think Cafarella's purpose is in including statistics about world poverty and obesity? What kind of impact do they have on you as a reader?
4. What is the effect of phrases such as 'pigging out', 'fat and lazy' and 'firmly fixed on our stomachs'? Do these phrases encourage you to agree with the author's point of view? Give reasons for your answer.
5. Identify as many food-related metaphors and similes as you can, and suggest what effect they have.
6. Write two paragraphs presenting the opposite point of view to that expressed by Cafarella. Try to make your writing memorable by using repetition, exaggeration, figurative language and rhetorical questions.

Hungry for more than TV cooking shows

When the ratings period starts again next month and TV programmers serve up a banquet of new cooking shows, spare a thought for the world's hungry.

There are about a billion undernourished people in the world today, according to the website worldhunger.org, an online publication of the Washington-based private charity World Hunger Education Service.

While you digest that, I can also tell you that there are more than 1.1 billion overweight people and that in America, alone, nearly 70 000 tonnes of food is being wasted each day, while $140 billion is being spent on obesity-related diseases.

More or less. It's hard to put a final figure on it as stopthehunger.com features all these stats in real time, which means you can watch hunger grow before your very eyes.

Like you, I can do without lashings of guilt to add to the New Year's diet plan, but today's national obsession with cooking and eating does seem incongruous when you think that while half the world is cooking or watching cooking shows or reading cookbooks, a significant other part is starving …

But it's not just these stark contrasts that bother me. It's the fact that the national focus is so firmly fixed on our stomachs. Television is a prime example. It seems that every second show on TV revolves around food. These days, instead of Nana and Mum telling us how to cook, we have Nigella, Jamie, Poh, Hewie, Paul, Luke, Maggie and Simon, Guy, Anthony, Maeve and friends, not to mention George, Matt, Anna and Gary.

Cooking shows have been a staple diet of TV since its invention, but we are now pigging out on them. And we love it. When lawyer Adam Liaw won *MasterChef* last year, 3.9 million people tuned in.

A billion people in the world are undernourished, but 1.1 billion are overweight.

Who can blame them? Food is irresistible when it's on your 25-centimetre plate. How much more seductive is it when it's on a 152-centimetre screen in all its high-definition glory?

Food competition shows are especially tempting: it's sustenance, it's entertainment, and it's drama, with all the thrill of the chase that our hunter and gatherer ancestors knew, without even having to get up from our chairs.

But it's also a symptom of how self-absorbed and over indulged we are. Cooking may have made us human as Richard Wrangham, professor of biological anthropology at Harvard, says, but a national obsession with cooking and eating is just making us fat and boring.

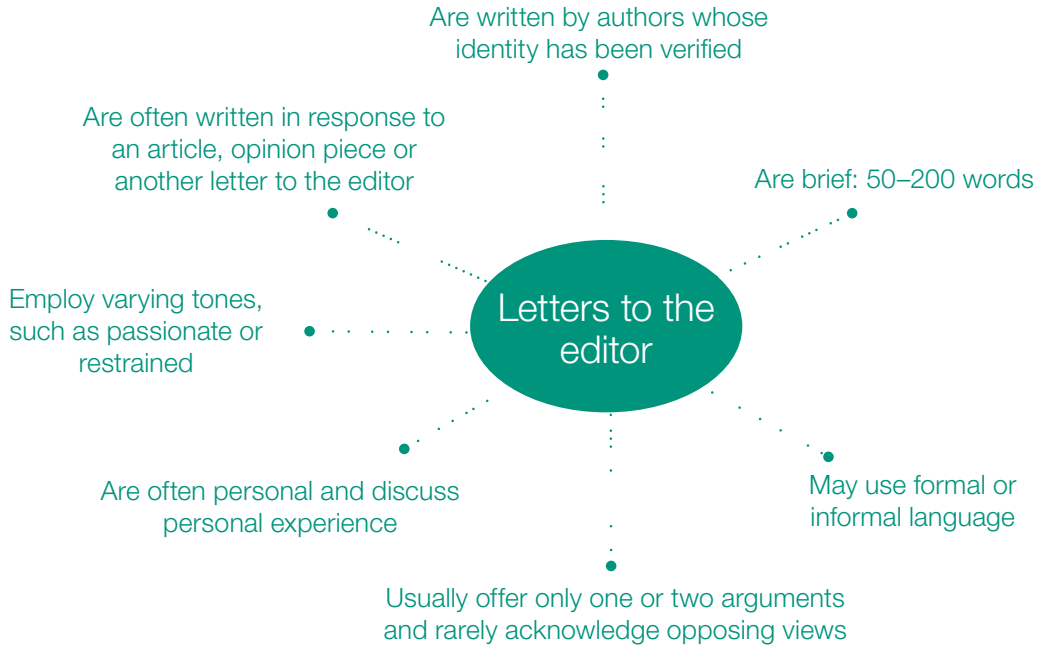
Source: Jane Cafarella, *The Age* online, 10 January 2011

Letters to the editor

When readers feel strongly about an issue or about a published text, they may write a letter to the editor. A selection of these is published in the 'letters to the editor' section, and the identity of the writers is verified before publication. Because they are written by ordinary people, the quality and persuasiveness of these letters can vary greatly.

Language focus

The **editor** of a newspaper or magazine is the person responsible for deciding on the content of the publication.



The following is an example of a letter to the editor written in response to Jane Cafarella's opinion piece on page 145:

> Jane Cafarella (Opinion 10/1) describes my feelings about our sickening fascination with food 'porn' exactly. I can't open a newspaper or turn on the television without seeing a smorgasbord of food and cooking-based stories. Food has become an unhealthy obsession, with the 'creation' of gourmet dishes and fancy titbits portrayed as something worth hours of stress and effort. These shows are nothing more than extended advertisements for supermarket chains and celebrity chefs' latest cookbooks, and yet we swallow them whole.
>
> Molly Jacobs, Ivanhoe

Over to you

1 **a** What reasons does Molly Jacobs give for agreeing with Jane Carafella's opinion piece?

b Suggest two arguments that you could use to rebut Jacobs' argument in a response to her letter.

2 Find some letters to the editor from a magazine or a local or state newspaper. Read some of the letters and discuss:

a What issues have people written about?

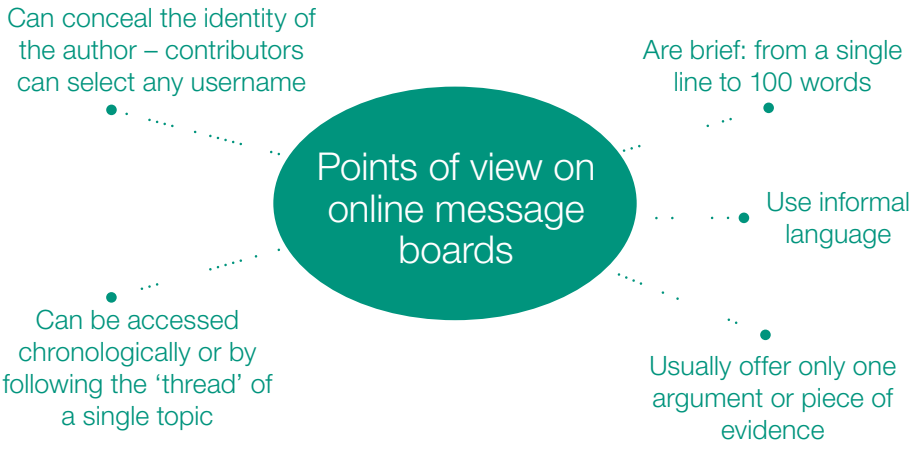
b Are they responding to someone else's letter?

c Find some examples of effective language choice. Why are they effective?

d Are the letters persuasive? Give reasons for your response.

Online message boards

The internet provides us with the opportunity to respond immediately to issues that are important to us. Rather than writing a letter to the editor – which may well not be selected and published in the next edition of the publication – more and more people are choosing to respond online to issues or articles that interest them. Online 'message boards' enable people to present their point of view informally and to read other people's views as well. They include forums and comment sections, blogs (short for 'web logs') and wikis.



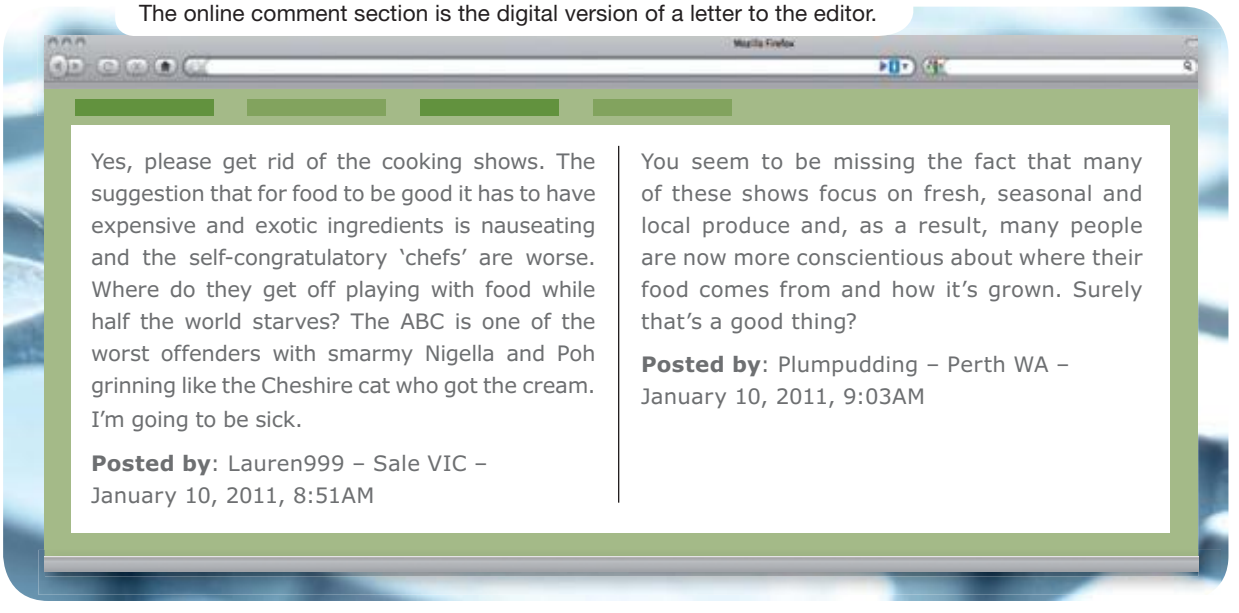
Over to you

1 Look at the examples of online comments below and discuss the differences and similarities between letters to the editor and online message boards. Consider:

- the structure and layout
- the way language is used to persuade
- ease of access and participation.

2 What are some of the advantages and disadvantages of expressing a point of view in a letter to the editor or on an online message board?

The online comment section is the digital version of a letter to the editor.



Yes, please get rid of the cooking shows. The suggestion that for food to be good it has to have expensive and exotic ingredients is nauseating and the self-congratulatory 'chefs' are worse. Where do they get off playing with food while half the world starves? The ABC is one of the worst offenders with smarmy Nigella and Poh grinning like the Cheshire cat who got the cream. I'm going to be sick.

Posted by: Lauren999 – Sale VIC – January 10, 2011, 8:51AM

You seem to be missing the fact that many of these shows focus on fresh, seasonal and local produce and, as a result, many people are now more conscientious about where their food comes from and how it's grown. Surely that's a good thing?

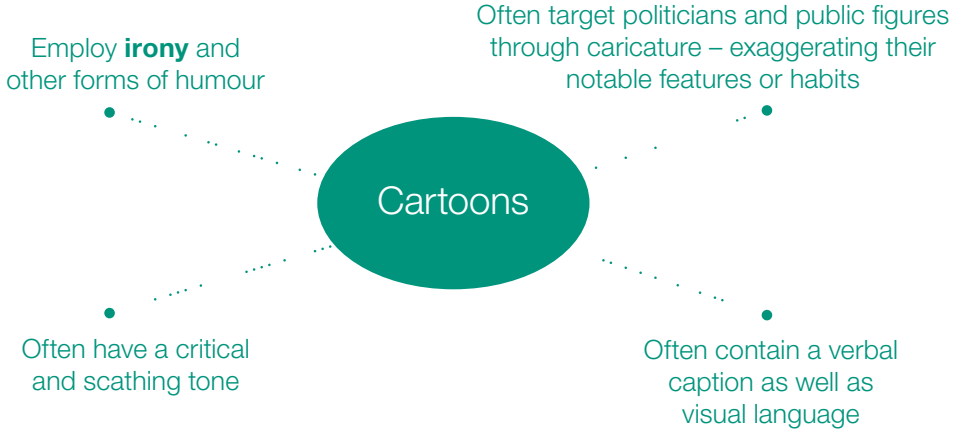
Posted by: Plumpudding – Perth WA – January 10, 2011, 9:03AM

'Playing with food while half the world starves?'

Cartoons

Not just for amusement, these visual texts often present a point of view on a current issue, and usually accompany an opinion piece or an informative article in a newspaper. Cartoons combine words and images, usually to present an unflattering, humorous take on people and events through the use of caricatures.

We can use the term **ironic** to refer to situations or language: when the outcome of our actions or the meaning of our words is the opposite of what we do or say, this can be described as ironic.



Cartoon by Michael Leunig, *The Age,* 25 March 2011

This cartoon by Leunig appeared in *The Age* just before a weekend that combined three events: the Melbourne Grand Prix car race, the duck shooting season and 'Earth Hour', when everyone is encouraged to help the environment by simultaneously turning off their lights for an hour. The mother duck is explaining to her ducklings what will happen. She does not understand humans, but uses precise, **non-finite verbs** to show that the humans' actions will be continuous and to describe exactly what experience has led her to expect – humans will be:

Non-finite verbs often begin with 'to' or end with 'ing' and describe ongoing action. They require a supporting or auxiliary verb, such as *am*, *have*, *had*, *has*, *is*, *are*, *was*, *were* or *will be* to show whether the action happened in the past, present or will be happening in the future.

- turning their lights out
- guzzling high octane racing car fuel, and
- blasting us to smithereens.

The duck's words highlight the irony of the situation. To her, all humans are the same and their actions are contradictory: they plunge themselves into darkness for an hour a year, while at the same time they are 'guzzling' its resources and killing its creatures. For her, turning the lights out doesn't represent an attempt to save the planet; it suggests that humans don't want to see what they are doing.

Over to you

Ellipses (…) indicate that words have been left out, or that more words are to follow.

1. Describe how Leunig depicts the ducks in the above cartoon. How does this compare with the way the mother duck is describing humans?
2. Why has Leunig finished his written text with **ellipses**?
3. In your own words, write the point of view Leunig is presenting about humans in this cartoon. Then write a short letter to the editor responding to Leunig's cartoon, saying whether you agree or disagree with him.
4. Working in groups, choose a newspaper cartoon that expresses a point of view about a current issue. Discuss how the cartoonist has used irony or humour to present the issue, and share your ideas with the class.

5 As a class, play 'persuasive text heads'.

- Choose three people to sit at the front of the class and give each one a headband to wear.
- Without their knowledge, allocate each student a different type of persuasive text. Write the text types on pieces of paper, and insert one into each student's headband, where the class can see them (but the three students cannot).
- The three students take turns asking the class closed questions (that is, questions that can be answered only with a 'yes' or a 'no') about the features of their text type until one of them correctly identifies it.

How do we present a point of view that's different from our own?

How do you present the affirmative case in a school debate, when you actually support the negative?

To revise structures, features and language choices, go to pages 49 and 135.

Although we would not want to present a view we felt was wrong, there are some situations where we need to be able to present a point of view we don't share: everyone is entitled to a defence in court, for example, and a barrister may need to defend someone they believe to be guilty. Similarly, we may need to present the affirmative case in a school debate, when we actually support the negative.

So how do we present a point of view we don't share? The answer is that when we prepare any persuasive text, we first explore *all* possible arguments, on both sides. This means that we are in a good position to argue on either side if we need to and rebut the very opinion we agree with! Sometimes, of course, following this process may actually mean that we convince ourselves, as well as other people.

In some situations it may help if we are able to understand *why* other people hold a view we don't agree with; for example, we could ask what their values are. If we can put ourselves in their shoes, we can present their point of view with more conviction.

The structures, features and language choices that work for our own view can be employed equally successfully to present another view. Remember:

- use logic to create reasonable arguments that are supported by evidence
- appeal to the audience's emotions – their desires, fears and frustrations
- choose words that have positive or negative connotations, depending on your view
- make your opinion memorable by using repetition, exaggeration, figurative language and rhetorical questions
- acknowledge that other views exist, but emphasise why *this* view is right.

Over to you

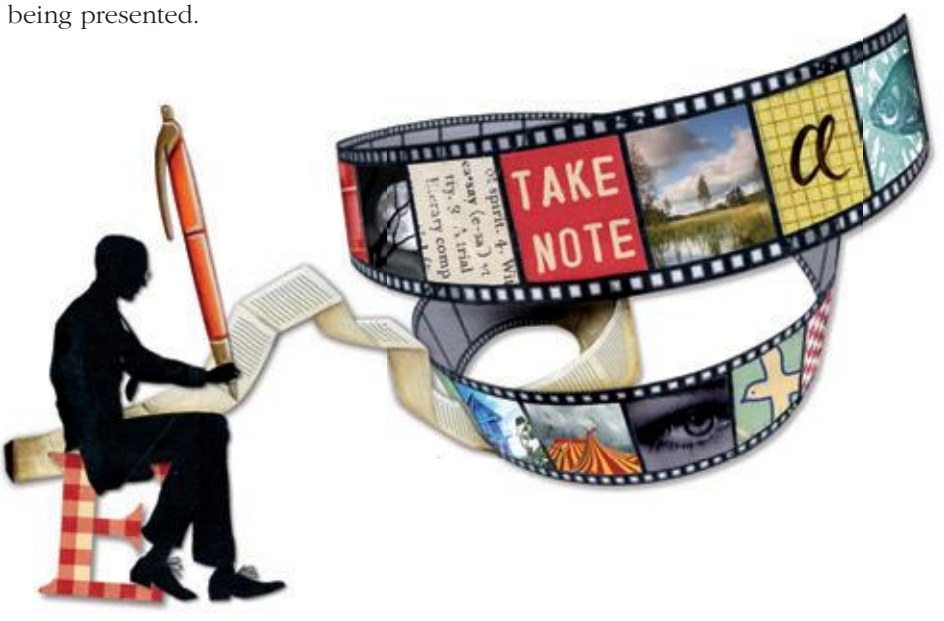
In Activity 2 on page 143, you decided what your point of view was on the topic 'The current abundance of food-based television shows is creating an unhealthy attitude to food'. Now write a letter to the editor or a comment on an online message board on the same topic, but taking the *opposite* point of view. Share your letter or comment with the class and discuss how you overcame the difficulties of presenting a point of view that you do not share.

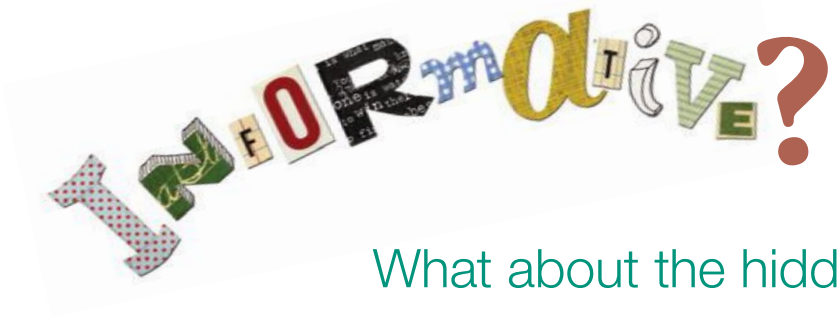
3.4 Can a text be informative *and* persuasive?

Sometimes, texts have more than one purpose, and this is certainly true for informative and persuasive texts; for example, an informative text can warn and a persuasive text can make us feel compassion.

To revise film reviews, go to page 91.

Some texts are intended to inform *and* persuade. For example, a film review may provide some information on the plot and features of a film, but also express the reviewer's opinion of it. Many persuasive texts also inform, especially through the evidence they draw on to support their point of view. A text is always a persuasive text, however, if there is more than one way of seeing things, and the author is trying to persuade us to accept one of them. As we have already seen, it is usually clear when an author has an opinion about the material being presented.





What about the hidden persuaders?

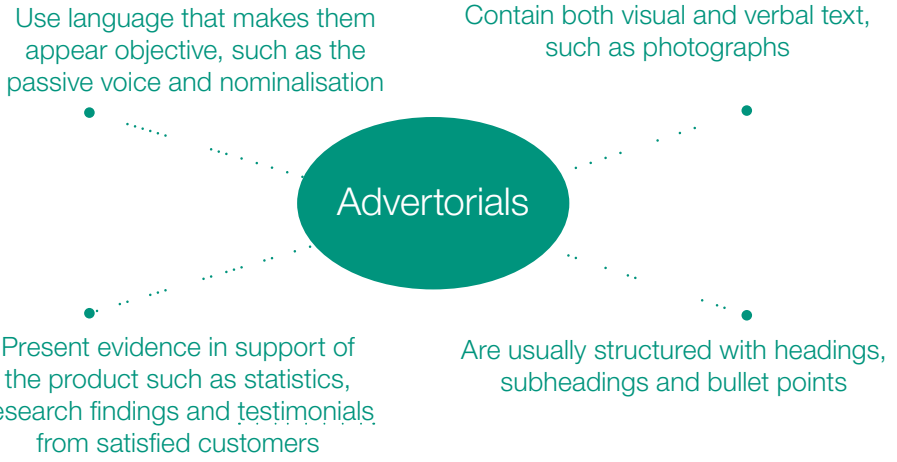
Sometimes a text may *seem* to be informative, when in fact it is also trying to persuade. It's important that we are able tell when a text isn't an objective informative text, as it may initially appear to be.

We need to *evaluate* the information that is presented – and keep in mind that we might be told only positive (or negative) features, rather than the whole story. Take the case of advertorials or 'infomercials', which seem to present factual information but are really attempting to persuade us to buy a particular product or service. Similarly, some apparently informative media articles are almost entirely based on material produced by public relations (PR) companies.

Advertorials

Advertorials are a mixture of 'advertisements' and 'editorials'. They are multimodal texts in newspapers or magazines that are designed to look and read like objective informative texts. The information they present, however, is always positive and sometimes exaggerated, because advertorials are actually intended to sell a product and are not written by someone independent. Advertisements for holiday destinations and consumer products, for example, may be presented as 'reviews' or informative articles.

To revise the passive voice, go to page 42.
To revise nominalisation, go to page 7.



Language focus

A **testimonial** is a quote from a person testifying to their experience of a product or service.

When a text is an advertorial, this is sometimes – but not always – indicated by a caption at the top describing it as a 'special feature', an 'advertising feature', or even as an advertorial. This tells us that the 'information' has been provided by the supplier, and is not the work of an independent journalist or writer.

Infomercials

The television, radio and internet version of the advertorial is the infomercial – a mixture of 'information' and 'commercial'. Infomercial items may *seem* to be objective and informative. However, like advertorials, what they are really doing is combining advertising with information about a particular product or service.

An infomercial segment on a daytime television chat show, for example, may involve a host interviewing a company representative, and the presentation of positive 'information' on just one brand or product. It will also include details about why and where the audience should buy it, how much it will cost and details of 'special offers'. Nothing critical of the product will be mentioned. There will be no independent comparisons with similar products or services, and only positive comments will be aired!

When a journalist or media presenter provides independent information on new products and services, on the other hand, they provide a more objective viewpoint. It has been argued, however, that the line between advertising and informing is becoming more difficult to distinguish in the media. Take a fashion magazine, for example. Are photographs of clothes being used to illustrate a general article about new trends, or to persuade us to buy particular brands?

Over to you

1 Find one example of an advertorial and one example of an infomercial. Identify the language features of each text that suggest it is advertising products, rather than providing objective information about them.

2 Do you think it's important that texts state whether they're written and paid for by the company or people selling the product? Should labels such as 'advertising feature' be a legal requirement? Give reasons for your response.

3 Consider whether and in what circumstances you might be persuaded by:

- **a** an author reviewing their own book
- **b** an actor appraising their own performance
- **c** a manufacturer exclaiming about the effectiveness of one of its own products.

Beware! An infomercial on a daytime chat show will only present positive 'information'.

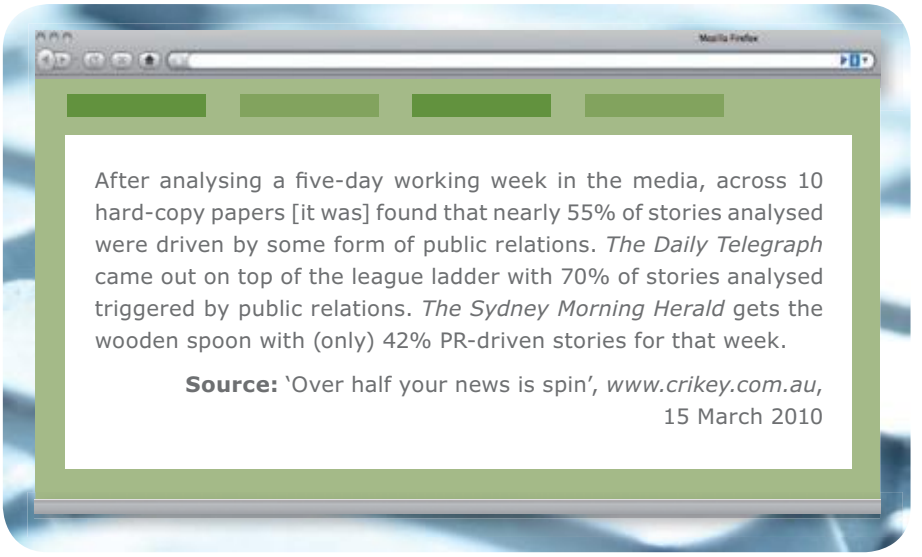
Publicity material

Some apparently informative texts are in fact a deliberate publication of information by people who are, in reality, trying to promote a person or product. It may look as if a dedicated investigative reporter has uncovered an actor's shameful secret, when the truth is that a publicist has called the magazine to announce that same 'shameful secret'. Publicists frequently present such stories in a way that makes them appear more scandalous, embarrassing or exciting than they really are, because this will appeal to some audiences and sell more copies. This is often called 'spin'. Sometimes, of course, the 'information' may not exactly be a lie, but it may not exactly be the truth either!

We need to read all texts critically and evaluate the reliability of sources cited in a text. If an article quotes 'a close friend of the family' as the source of information, for example, we should take this with a grain of salt.

Publicists frequently make stories appear more scandalous, embarrassing or exciting than they really are.

The online newspaper *Crikey* reported the results of a six-month investigation into the role PR plays in the media, which it conducted with the University of Technology, Sydney. It found that:



> After analysing a five-day working week in the media, across 10 hard-copy papers [it was] found that nearly 55% of stories analysed were driven by some form of public relations. *The Daily Telegraph* came out on top of the league ladder with 70% of stories analysed triggered by public relations. *The Sydney Morning Herald* gets the wooden spoon with (only) 42% PR-driven stories for that week.
>
> **Source:** 'Over half your news is spin', *www.crikey.com.au*, 15 March 2010

Over to you

1. Working in groups, look through one daily newspaper and one popular magazine and suggest which of the articles may have been driven by some form of PR. Give reasons for your suggestions.
2. Conduct a class debate on the topic: 'Newspapers should not publish "information" provided by publicists.'

big ideas

How do we create texts to INFORM and PERSUADE?

For suggestions on how to plan, draft, edit and proofread your texts, refer to 'How can I improve my writing?' on page 252.

3.1 What is the difference between presenting *information* and presenting a *point of view*?

read and create

1 **a** Using the article 'All about cricket' on page 104 as a model, write an informative article for a school newsletter about a sport or activity of your choice. Try and include interesting facts and vocabulary.

b Write a second article expressing a point of view about the same sport or activity. Think carefully about your language choices.

c Write a paragraph comparing the differences in the language choices you made in your two articles.

3.2 How do we present information in *different forms*?

write, create and speak

2 Draw on the plan you developed for Activity 4 on page 120 and create a front page for your own tabloid or broadsheet print newspaper. Now write one to two paragraphs explaining the changes you would make to your front page in order to present it in an online version of the same newspaper.

3 **a** Draw on the plan you developed for the activity on page 125 and, in the same groups, prepare and rehearse a multimodal informative speech and present it to the class.

b Discuss the changes you would need to make in order to adapt your presentation for a primary school audience, and then prepare and present a second multimodal presentation in line with these changes.

3.3 How can we get people to see our *point of view*?

write, create, listen, speak and read

4 Draw on the arguments you developed in Activity 2 on page 143 to create a persuasive text presenting your point of view on the topic: 'The current abundance of food-based television shows is creating an unhealthy attitude to food.'

5 **a** As a class, make a collection of different types of persuasive texts.

b Working individually, select one of the texts to examine more closely. Identify the purpose of the text, the point of view of the author, and how language is used to persuade the audience. Write up your findings in three or four paragraphs.

A sample response for this task appears on pages 258–9.

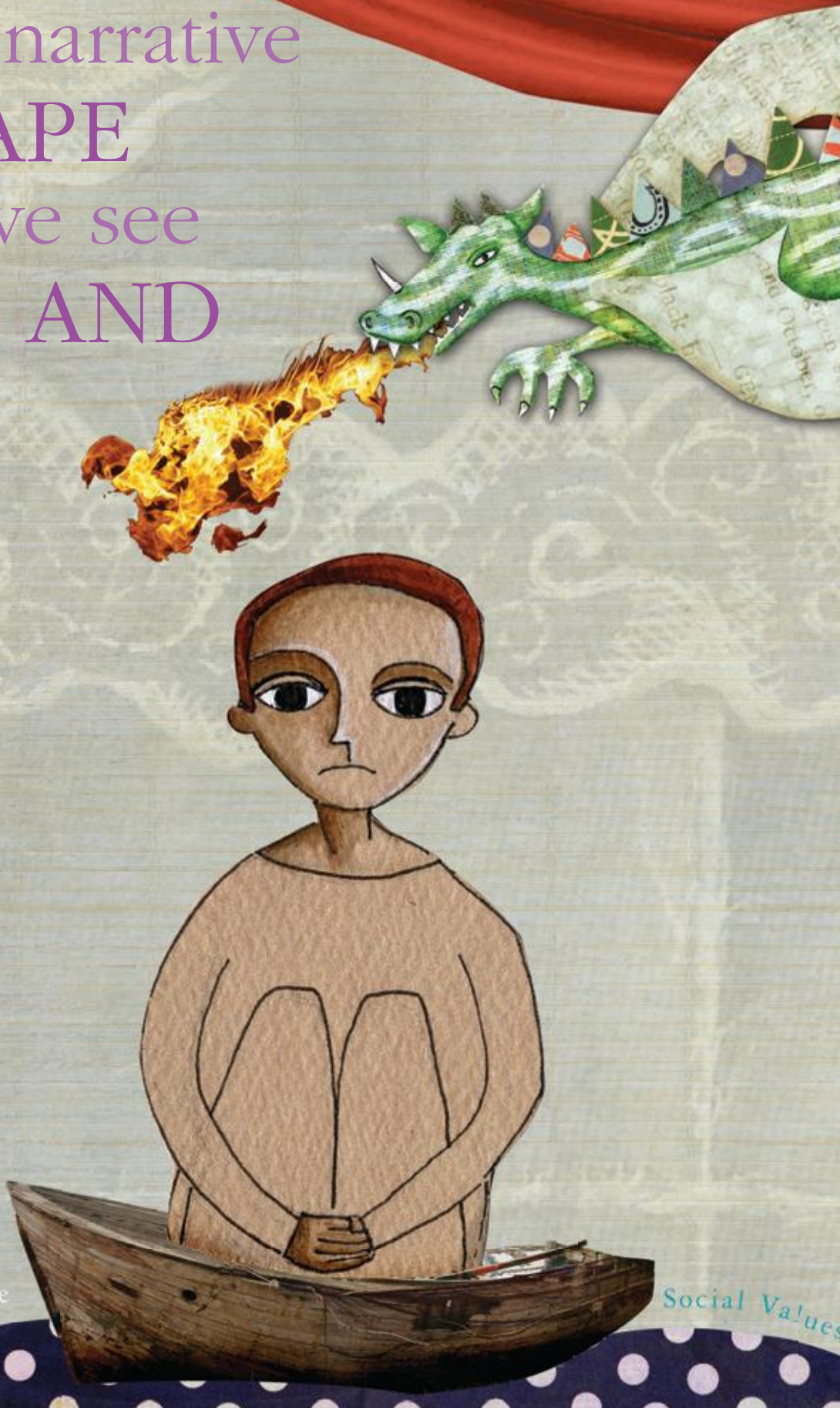
3.4 Can a text be informative *and* persuasive?

write, create, speak and listen

6 **a** In pairs, write the script of an advertorial or infomercial and present it to the class. You should provide context or background on an item; outline its features; and think about how you will use language to select and present the information as persuasively as possible. You may also like to include elements such as music and images. Create a storyboard or mock-up, then use a program such as Publisher, PowerPoint or PhotoStory to produce your final presentation.

b As a class, review the presentations and discuss why they are persuasive rather than informative.

How can narrative texts SHAPE the way we see PEOPLE AND ISSUES?



Preach Challenge Social Values

4

Literacy Language ***Literature***

Text list

In this Part you will read or view and discuss extracts from:

WRITTEN

Australian texts

Patricia Cornelius *Boy Overboard* **(play)** (based on the novel by Morris Gleitzman)

Morris Gleitzman *Boy Overboard* **(novel)**

World texts

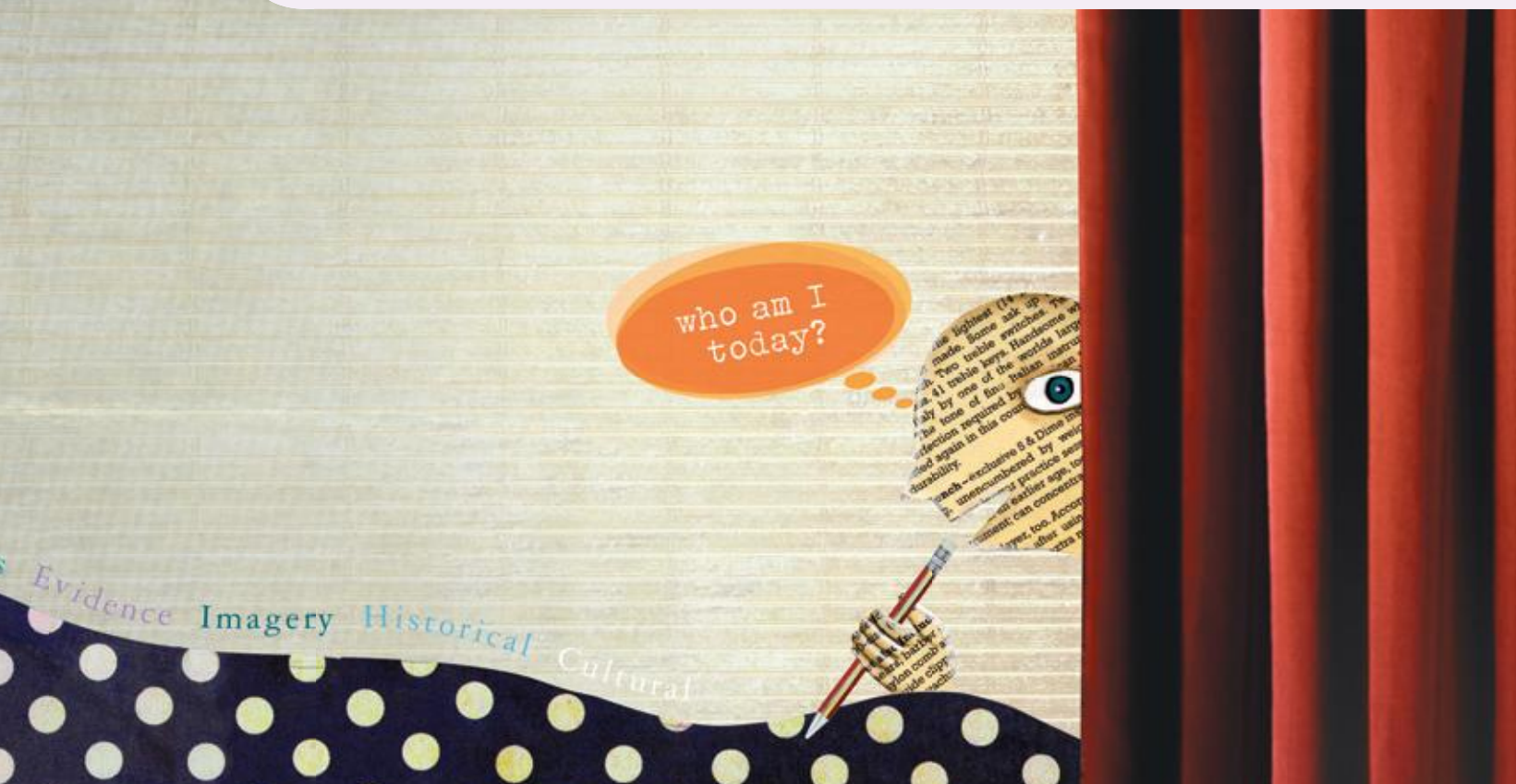
Cola Bilkuei *Boy Soldier* **(autobiography)**

Ji-li Jiang *Red Scarf Girl* **(autobiography)**

MULTIMODAL

World texts

Armin Greder *The Island* **(picture book)**



4.1 What is the *relationship* between narrative texts and how we see people and issues?

We are exposed to so many narrative texts – both fiction and non-fiction – in our lives that it is important to recognise how they shape the way we feel about certain issues. We might not realise that even the popular culture texts we see on television all the time can have an impact on our thinking and behaviour.

Unlike persuasive texts that present a point of view on an issue, authors of some narrative texts use stories rather than arguments to shape the ways we see people and issues. For example, after watching the *Simpsons* episode where Lisa convinces Mr Burns to open a recycling plant, we might think twice about throwing a soft drink can in the regular rubbish bin. Watching a program such as *Modern Family* might change our view of what a family looks like. Even children's films such as *Toy Story* send us messages about friendship, loyalty and jealousy.

To revise themes, go to page 48.

Most narrative texts explore a *theme*, or a key idea or issue. They might show how people change as they grow up, or they might look at the nature of relationships. The way the theme is treated in the text has the power to shape the way we see it.

One big (straight, gay, multicultural, traditional) happy *Modern Family*

Narrative texts also represent *characters* so that we see them in a particular way. We might come away from reading a text having a very strong feeling that a certain character is selfish or honourable, for example. It is important to consider what the writer or creator of the text has done to leave us with that impression.

Most authors of narrative texts don't set out to represent groups of people in particular ways, or to shape how we see people or issues. This is usually the focus of non-fiction persuasive texts such as essays and opinion pieces, which we explored in Part 3. However, the way we are made to feel about characters in narrative texts, and what happens to them, can influence the way we then think about issues that have been raised in the text.

What is the difference between persuasive narrative texts and propaganda?

Language focus

Propaganda is material – often misleading or biased – that is used to promote a particular view of the world as if it is factual. (To revise bias, go to page 107.)

A text that sets out to represent groups of people or issues in particular ways can be described as 'didactic', or as propaganda.

In her autobiography *Red Scarf Girl*, Ji-li Jiang explores the effects of propaganda when she was growing up during the Cultural Revolution in China. This was a period of political turmoil, under the rule of Chairman Mao Zedong, that led to chaos and millions of deaths.

The colour red is associated with Communism and with the Cultural Revolution.

The different versions of Mao's Last Dancer, *explored in Part 2, also deal with the Cultural Revolution in China.*

> Who would have believed that our entire educational system was wrong after all? Seventeen years after Liberation, the newspapers told us, our schools were not bringing us up to be good red socialists and communists, as we had thought, but revisionists. We thanked heaven that Chairman Mao had started this Cultural Revolution, and that the Central Committee of the Communist Party had uncovered the mess in our schools. Otherwise we would not even have known that we were in trouble. What a frightening idea! (p. 38)

Language focus

The term **revisionists** refers to people who were committed to revising or modifying Communist beliefs and values. These people were considered very dangerous during the Cultural Revolution.

The language choices in this extract are interesting to note. Jiang says that 'the newspapers told' people what to think – that they played a large part in distributing propaganda. By adding this information in an embedded clause, Jiang makes it clear that she is giving the government's view, rather than her own. Further, when she states that it is 'frightening' that they 'would not even have known' that they were in trouble, we get the sense that she is being ironic and feels the newspaper reports were propaganda, rather than a true reflection of what the schools were like.

To revise embedded clauses, go to page 110.

To revise irony, go to page 149.

Propaganda was fed to children during the Cultural Revolution.

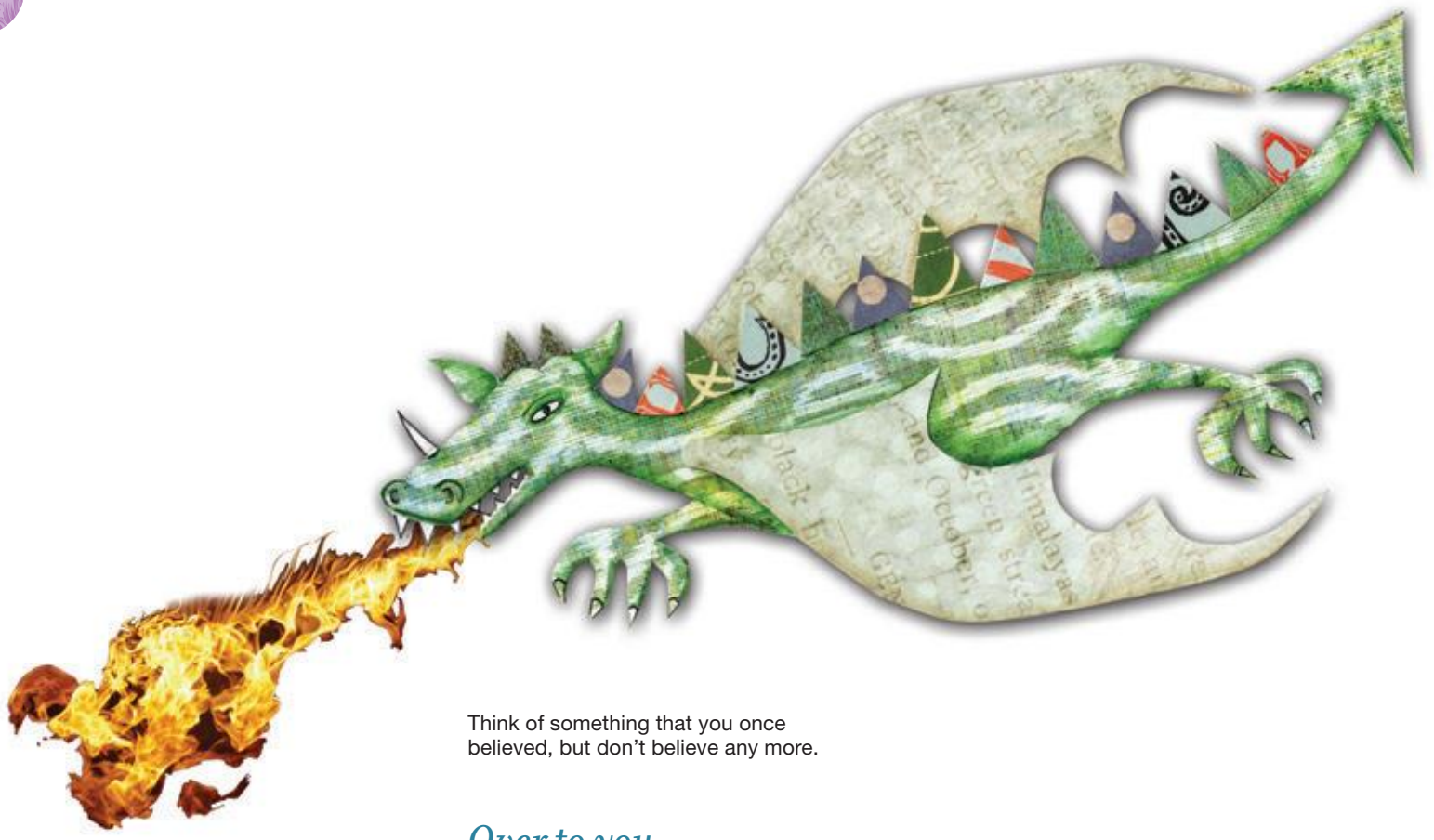
Propaganda is not always created by official sources, such as newspapers. Jiang explains the role that students themselves played in creating propaganda:

> On Monday, all school classes were suspended indefinitely. All students were directed instead to participate in the movement by writing big posters, *da-zi-bao*, criticizing the educational system … each *da-zi-bao* was a bitter accusation … The more I read, the more puzzled I became. Did the teachers really intend to ruin our health and corrupt our minds? If so, why hadn't I ever noticed? Was I so badly taken in that I was unable to see them for what they really were? (pp. 38–43)

Language focus

Jiang describes the **da-zi-bao** as 'a form of propaganda in the shape of a large handwritten poster presenting an important issue'.

Da-zi-bao



Think of something that you once believed, but don't believe any more.

Over to you

1. Ji Li Jiang uses a string of rhetorical questions at the end of the extract on page 163. What do these questions indicate about her view of the propaganda?
2. Think of something that you once believed, but don't believe any more. Write a paragraph that uses rhetorical questions to illustrate the moment when you realised the truth.

To revise rhetorical questions, go to page 140.

3. Think of three other situations where you might use rhetorical questions. Consider why they might be used in each situation – what would you be trying to achieve in each case?

To revise metaphors, go to page 34.

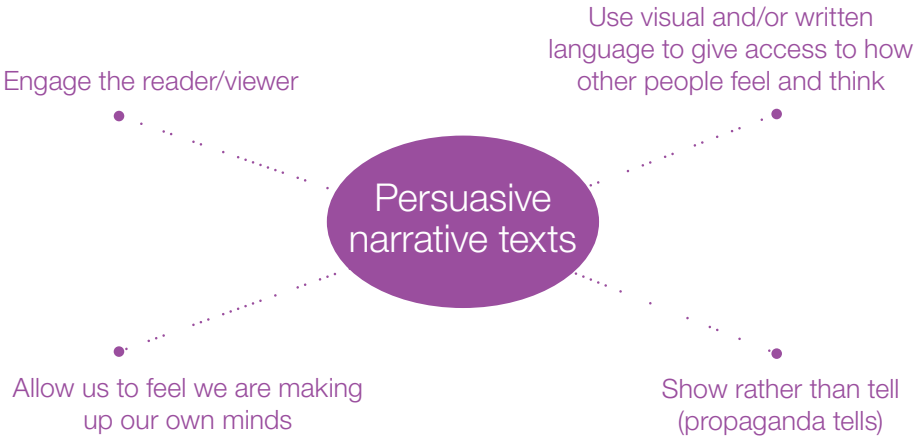
4. When someone has been influenced by propaganda, we sometimes say that they have been 'brainwashed'. This is a metaphor. Explain the literal meaning of 'brainwashing'. Then, explain how that metaphor is used to describe the effects of propaganda.

To revise 'position', go to page 53.

People generally don't like to feel that they're being preached to, or told what to believe. However, some narrative texts that present a strong point of view about people or issues are valued as literature, rather than being seen as propaganda. These texts may be fiction, such as picture books or plays, or non-fiction, such as autobiographies, but they all present characters and issues in ways that position us to be sympathetic or critical, or to see things from new perspectives. As a result, they may persuade us more gently – and more effectively – than propaganda might.

Language focus

When we talk about someone else's **perspective**, we are describing their way of looking at things, or their point of view.



In this Part, we will explore examples of narrative texts that position us to see:

- a group of people: refugees

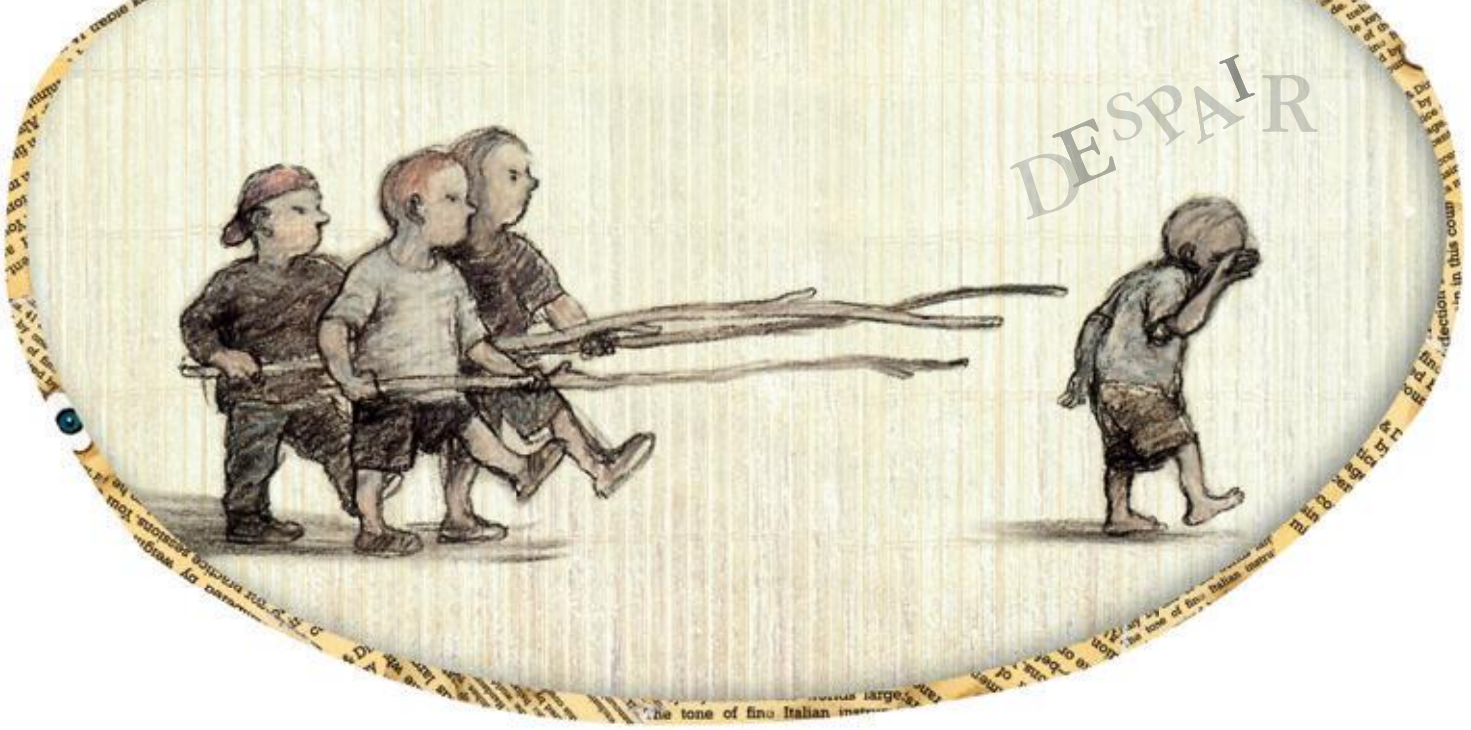
and

- an issue: how we should deal with refugees who arrive by boat (or 'boat people')

in particular ways. These texts may encourage us to understand different points of view – unlike propaganda, which would instruct us that only one point of view is possible.

Over to you

Think about some fictional texts you have read or viewed lately. Choose one that explored an issue. Did it change the way you saw that issue? Why or why not?



4.2 How can a *picture book* shape the way we see people and issues?

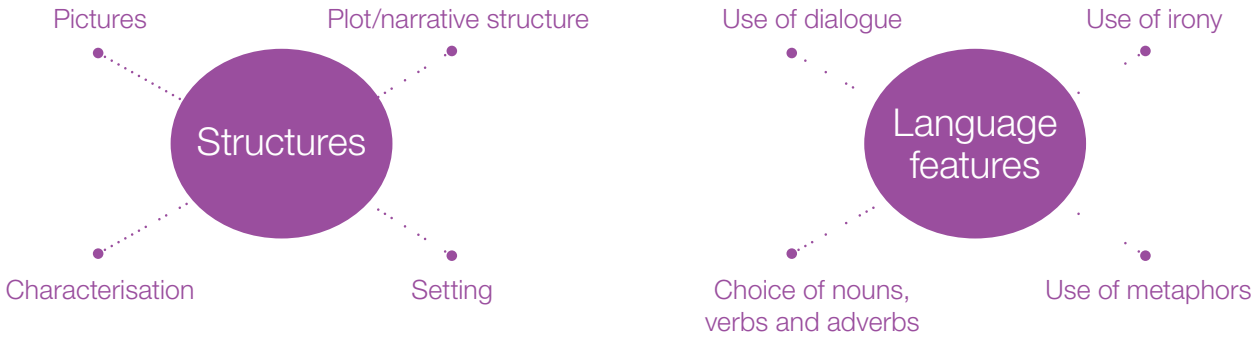
We could be fooled into thinking that because picture books are often enjoyed by young children, they don't explore real issues. However, these texts can tell stories that powerfully shape the way we see life. Think about how many people believe in knights in shining armour and the possibility of 'living happily ever after' because of stories they read as children. From a young age, we are presented with narrative texts that persuade us – whether or not that is their intention.

Think of how many people believe in knights in shining armour – thanks to the influence of picture books.

Some picture books explore ideas and viewpoints that concern us all and can be understood in different ways by readers of different ages. In this chapter we will look at one example – Armin Greder's *The Island* – to illustrate how stories can explore themes that concern us all and influence the way we see people and issues.

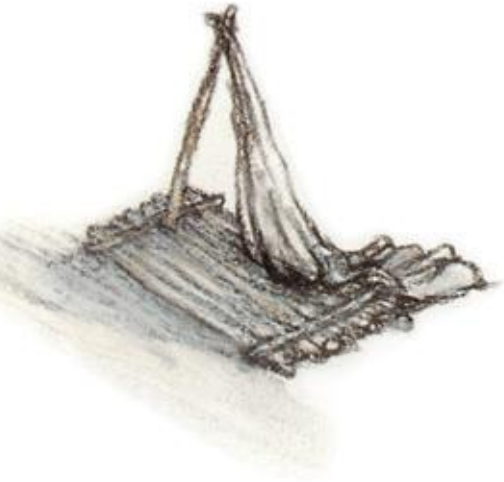
While they don't directly tell us what to think, picture books often present a range of views, frequently through characters, that allow us to decide which view we want to support.

Like persuasive non-fiction, picture books can use structures and language features to influence the ways we see people, or an issue, for example:



How can plot and narrative structure shape the way we see people and issues?

Picture books can be used as vehicles for exploring an issue by showing what happens to people we can believe in and relate to. *The Island*, for example, looks at the issue of refugees.



A man's raft is washed ashore on an island. The people who live on the island feel threatened by this stranger, as he is different from them, yet the reader is positioned to see that he poses no real threat. The people on the island lock him away in a goat pen and, throughout the story, different views about the treatment of 'outsiders' are explored through different characters. Some are concerned for his wellbeing, while others are worried that he has nothing to offer the community and will simply drain their resources.

Fear prevails and the man is eventually put out to sea, while the islanders make plans to strengthen the security of their border so no more strangers will arrive.

Greder does not preach to the reader – he does not tell the reader which reaction is 'right' and which is 'wrong'. He simply presents different points of view to give the reader the chance to think about the issue and decide where their sympathies lie. Readers are prompted to consider questions such as: What would I do if I were the policeman, the fisherman or the stranger? What is 'right'?

To revise chronology, go to page 83.

Using the features of a chronological narrative allows the reader to engage with a complex issue, while feeling as though they are simply reading a story. The book begins with the words 'one morning', and the events are described chronologically, making us want to continue reading to find out how it concludes.

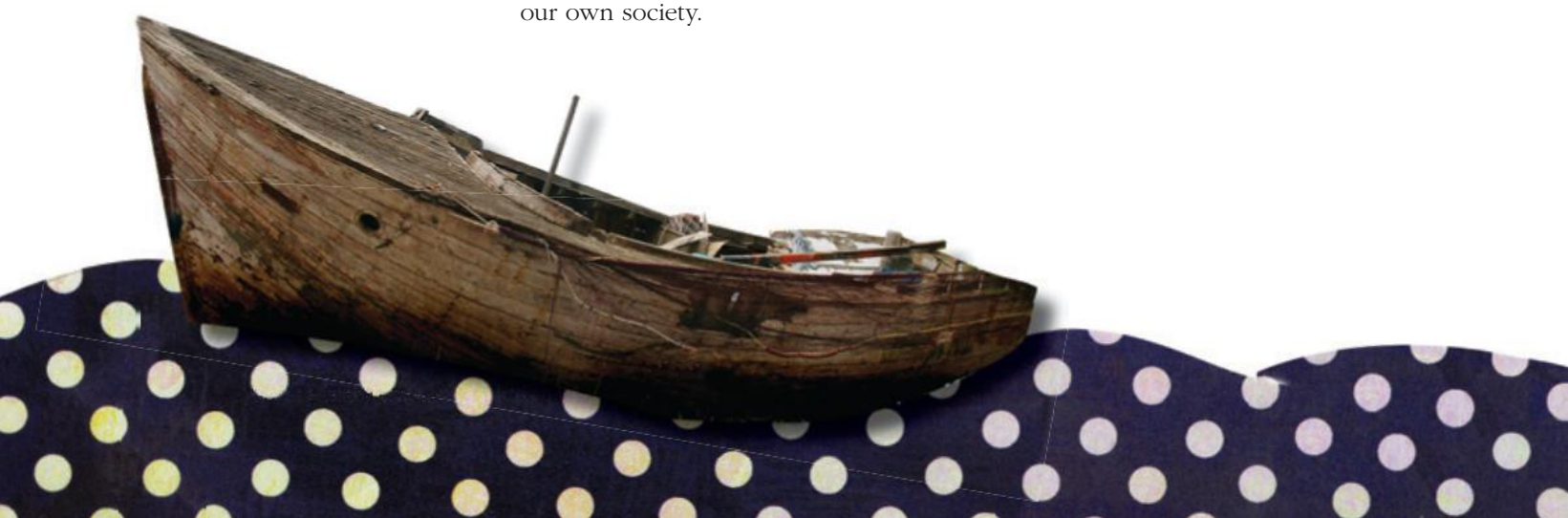
The following excerpt shows some of the reactions to the stranger:

The people stared at him. They were puzzled.
Why had he come here? What did he want? What should they do?
One of them suggested it would be best to put the man straight back
On his raft and send him away without delay.
'I am sure he wouldn't like it here, so far away from his own kind.'

But the fisherman knew the sea.
'If we send him back, it will be
the death of him and I don't want
that on my conscience,' he said.
'We have to take him in.'

...
'But we can't just feed anyone who
comes our way,' argued the grocer.
'We don't have enough for everyone.
We would all starve to death!'

As you can see from this excerpt, the issue divides the people of the island. The three reactions above demonstrate different points of view on how to handle the situation. Exploring these points of view allows the reader to think about how they feel about the issue in the story – and then how it applies to our own society.



Over to you

1 Create a table, like the one below, that outlines what each character wants (their desired outcome) and why (their motivation).

Character	Desired outcome	Motivation
First person		
Fisherman		
Grocer		

2 What would you do in this situation? Why?

Using irony

To revise irony, go to page 149.

In *The Island*, Greder does what many authors do – he uses irony to shape the way we see people and issues.

We use the term 'ironic' to refer to situations or language. We see ironic situations occur in everyday life. For example, we could be standing in the sun at an outdoor school assembly while somebody speaks about the importance of being sunsmart.

What is the irony in this image?

Language focus

Note that irony is not always created by chance. Our tone might be described as ironic when we make our point by using language that normally has the opposite meaning.

Irony is also used in speech and language, when people say the opposite of what they mean. In spoken language we can often detect irony by the tone of voice someone uses, as well as the context, and we can make a judgment about whether they really mean the opposite. In written texts, the context provides the clue – we can make a judgment based on the context about whether the author expects to be taken literally, or whether they are being ironic.

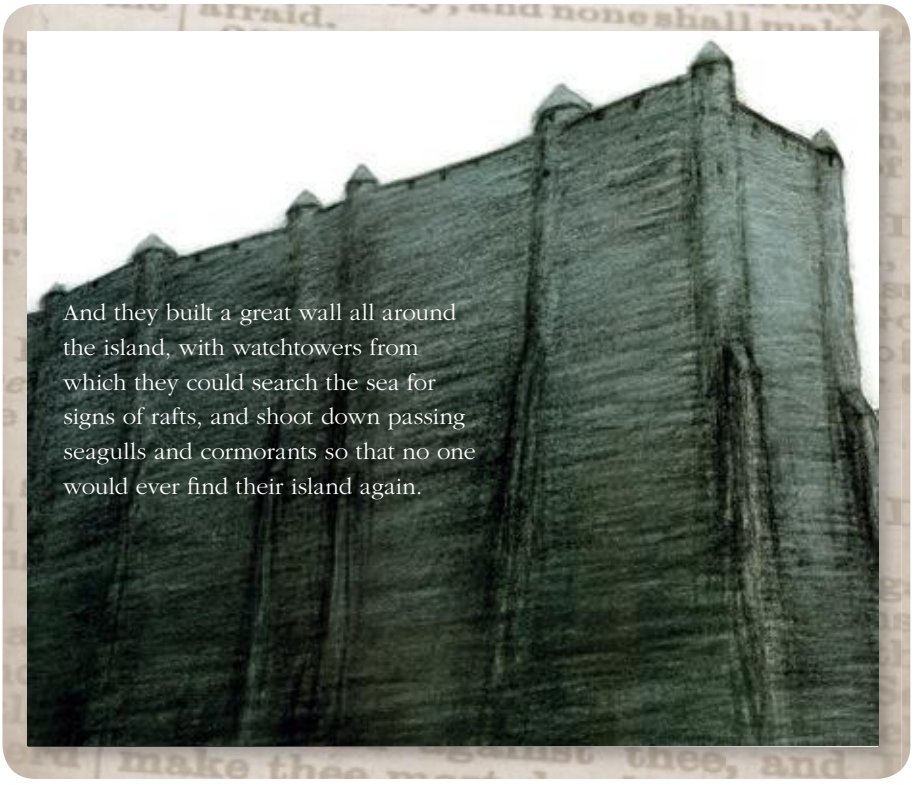
Language focus

Context refers to the *setting* of a word or phrase that determines or affects its meaning.

IRONY

Because we are free to make these judgments, using irony is an example of how authors and creators of texts leave room for people to make their own connections without feeling as if they are being told what to think.

The conclusion of *The Island* can be seen as ironic. Throughout the story, the people on the island are worried that the stranger will threaten their way of life, but by the end of the story their way of life has changed dramatically. The way we are positioned to see this is very powerful. Rather than being told, we are shown how the community has changed as a result of their fear:



To revise 'position', go to page 53.

This conclusion positions the reader to see that the way we treat outsiders, in this case refugees, harms us as well as them. The people are so worried about strangers that they turn their own island into a prison. In trying to maintain their freedom, they actually lose it. The situation is therefore, ironic.

Over to you

1. What does the community gain from their actions at the end of the story?
2. What is the long-term impact of shutting down the island?
3. Do you think they made the right decision? Why or why not?
4. How does this example of irony in *The Island* add to our understanding of the issue?

How can setting shape the way we see people and issues?

The setting in stories adds to the way we understand their themes. As the title of Armin Greder's picture book suggests, the story is set on an island. Here, the author is perhaps using the island – a land isolated from all others by the physical barrier that the water presents – to show why the people fear the stranger. They are not used to those who are different from them because they have less interaction with other cultures.

In the illustrations, the sea surrounding the island looks very dark and intimidating – we cannot see any other land or islands close by. This makes the idea of having to go out into the sea on a raft seem terrifying. Greder is using the island setting to explore ideas about refugees; about how we treat them, and the impact this has on us.

The sea surrounding the island is dark and intimidating.

Using metaphors

To revise metaphors, go to page 34.

When we describe one thing as if it *is* something else, this is a metaphor. In *The Island*, the island itself is a metaphor because it is represented *as* a prison. In the same way, the goat pen where the stranger is imprisoned is a metaphor for how the islanders – and perhaps many of us – treat outsiders. The stranger is isolated from the community and the people try to forget about him. The choice of setting makes us think about why members of the community are afraid, and also what is lost and gained by the people in isolating the stranger.

They took him to the uninhabited part of the island, to a goat pen that had been empty for a long time. They made him understand that he was to stay there and showed him where he could sleep on some straw.

And then they locked the gate and went back to their business, and life on the island returned to what it had always been.

And life on the island returned to what it had always been.

The stranger escapes and approaches the people for food. Eventually:

the innkeeper agreed to let the man have the scraps he would otherwise toss to the pigs, and they took him back to the goat pen. They strengthened the gate and took turns to guard him, so that in future he would not disturb them.

Over to you

1. In what ways are the islanders afraid the stranger will disturb them?
2. **a** Australia is an island. Does this mean we don't interact with other cultures?
   b Create a concept map showing all the different ways we interact with and learn about other cultures.
3. The goat pen metaphor shows how the islanders treat the man as less than human – he is put in a pen and fed on pig food. In groups, discuss some examples of how we treat people as 'outsiders' in our own society.
4. In an interview on ABC Radio in July 2010, Leader of the Opposition Tony Abbott criticised the government's policy on asylum seekers. He said that since the government had made changes to its policy, Australia has had 'a small armada of boats come our way'.
   a Look up the word 'armada' and add it to your personal glossary.
   b How can Abbott's use of the word 'armada' be seen as a metaphor?
   c Explain the effect of this metaphor.

How can characterisation shape the way we see people and issues?

The way an author presents characters in a text has a huge influence on how we view people and issues. Imagine you have just read a story about a family who had to have their dog put down because the government had decided this breed was dangerous. If the dog had been characterised as loving, friendly and part of the family, you might think this law was unfair. On the other hand, if the dog had been depicted as vicious and threatening, you might think that the law was fair. In each case, the characterisation of the dog and the family would shape the way you saw the issue.

Should this dog be put down?

How about this one?

In *The Island*, characterisation is important to the way we view the issue of refugees. In particular, decisions made by the author about:

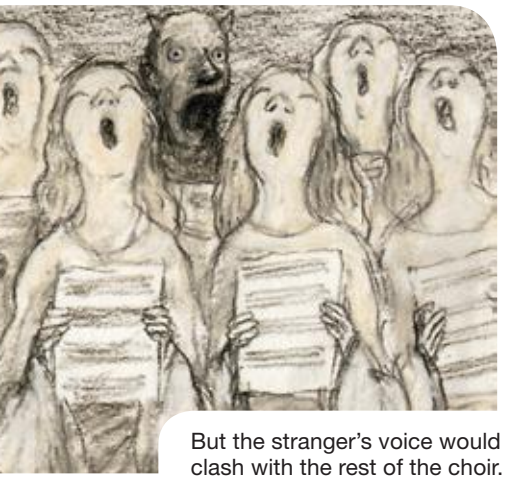
- what the characters are called
- how they act, and
- what they say

all influence the way we feel about them.

Choosing nouns, verbs and adverbs

To revise nouns, go to page 8.

Unlike most authors of fiction, rather than giving his characters individual names, Armin Greder uses nouns to represent characters as groups, or by their role in the community. The text describes 'the people', or uses nouns such as 'the carpenter', 'the carter' and 'the priest'. These nouns make us see characters according to their role, rather than as individuals. It defines them by the contribution they make to their community. It also causes us to make assumptions about what each character would value based on their role:



But the stranger's voice would clash with the rest of the choir.

The carpenter remembered the man's poorly crafted raft. He evidently had no idea how to use a hammer or saw.

The carter said simply, 'Look at him! I need Someone who can carry heavy loads.'

And the priest was very sorry, but the stranger's voice would clash with the rest of the choir.

Over to you

1 What qualities and attributes come to mind when you see the nouns 'carpenter', 'carter' and 'priest'?

To revise irony, go to page 149.

2 What is the priest worried about in the extract above? In what way could the priest's comments be considered ironic?

On the other hand, the use of the nouns 'the stranger' and 'the man' clearly isolates this character from the community. By not giving him a name or a role, the author is showing us how excluded he is. Also, the use of the term 'stranger' has negative connotations. It is often used to describe someone who should be feared.

To revise connotations, go to page 135.

Greder chooses verbs and adverbs as carefully as he chooses nouns – to position us to see characters in certain ways. The verbs and adverbs he uses to show a character's actions are often very effective in giving us a sense of what the character is like and how we should respond to them, for example:

To revise verbs and adverbs, go to page 8.

> The people grabbed him roughly and screamed at him.

Over to you

1 What sort of picture do the verbs 'grabbed' and 'screamed' in the above extract paint of the people?

2 Look at the following list of verbs:

seized	grasped	snatched	took hold of
clutched	gripped	clasped	

If you used one of these verbs instead of 'grabbed' in the clause 'The people grabbed him', which one would have the biggest impact in terms of changing our view of the people? Why?

3 By changing the verb and the adverb ('roughly') in the clause 'The people grabbed him roughly', create three new descriptions that make the people seem:

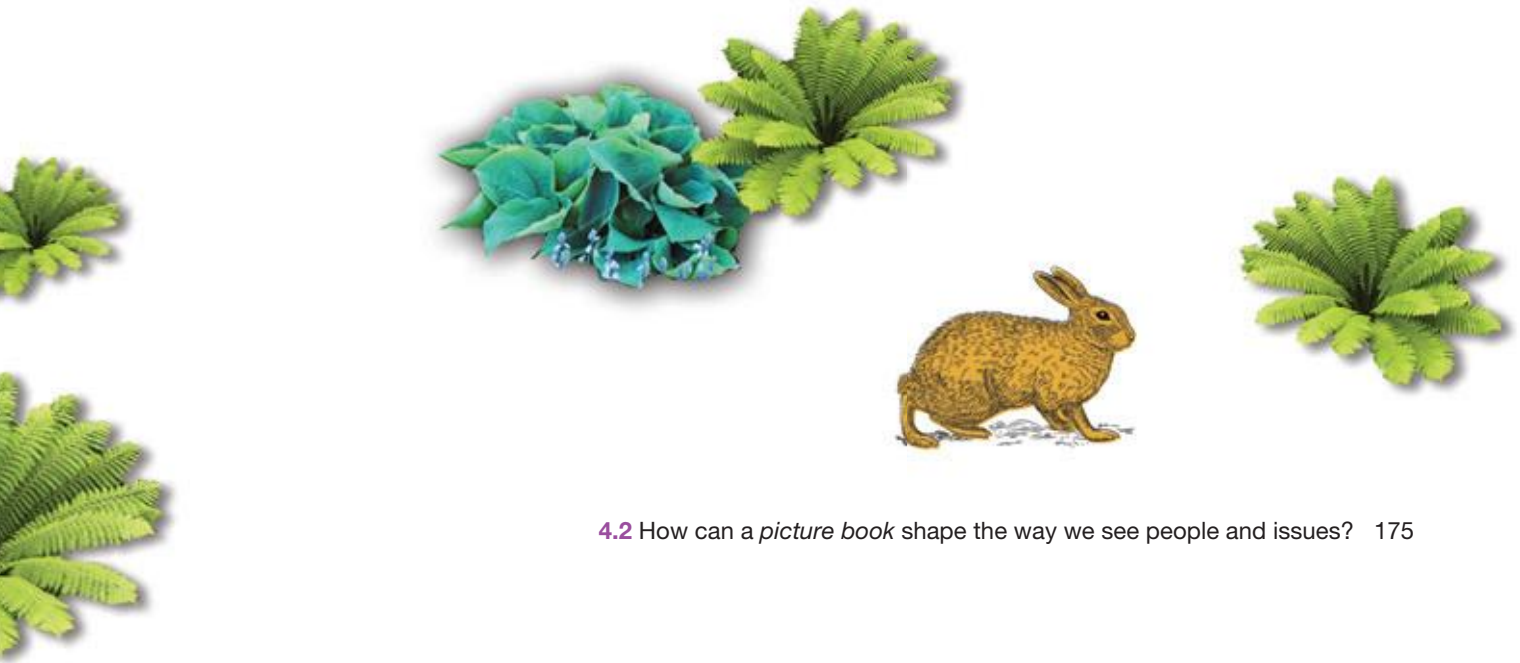
a playful

b uninterested

c caring.

Language focus

Uninterested means that someone is not interested in, or is bored by something. **Disinterested**, on the other hand, means that someone is not motivated by their personal interest and that they are free from bias.



Using dialogue

Dialogue is important in giving us a sense of who the characters are and what they are like. Look, for example, at this excerpt, when the fisherman is trying to convince people that the stranger should stay:

> The fisherman suggested that someone should give him a job so that he could earn his keep. 'And,' he added quietly, 'he would probably work for less pay than one of us.'

The stranger says nothing throughout the whole story.

What a character says, how they say it, and also what they *don't* say, tells us a lot about them. Although *The Island* contains dialogue, the stranger says nothing throughout the whole story. This in itself is important.

Over to you

1 **a** What do we learn about the fisherman from the above excerpt?

b Why has Armin Greder included the adverb 'quietly'? How does this add to our understanding of the fisherman's character?

2 Why do you think Greder has chosen that the stranger should remain 'voiceless'? How does this influence the way we see the stranger?

3 With a partner, create a character who could be added to Greder's story. Write two paragraphs, using nouns, verbs, adverbs and dialogue to bring your character to life.

How can pictures shape the way we see people and issues?

Every day we are exposed to images that shape the way we view people and issues. In newspapers, the image chosen to accompany a story can have a huge impact on how we then feel about the story itself. If an article about new laws restricting knives was accompanied by a photograph that showed someone using a knife to rescue a trapped dolphin, we might feel differently about the laws than if it had been accompanied by an image showing a shadowy figure using a knife to threaten someone. We might not even be conscious of the way we have been persuaded.

It isn't just in the newspapers that this occurs. When we choose a picture to put on our social networking page, we do so carefully, knowing that it might shape the way people view us.

In picture books, from a very young age, we are exposed to images that we are taught to read in a certain way. In an illustrated fairy tale, for example, we can usually pick the heroes and the villains just by looking at the illustrations.

Over to you

1 From your knowledge of picture books, create a table like the one below that gives a description of what the following characters would usually look like:

Character	Description
Woman: evil	
Woman: good	
Man: evil	
Man: good	

To revise stereotypes, go to page 55.

2 What are the advantages and disadvantages of using stereotypical illustrations like this?

In *The Island*, visual images support the written text. They do so by giving us a sense of who the characters are and how they are interacting with others in the story. This is achieved through various visual elements, such as:

- body language
- body shape/size
- facial expression
- clothing
- use of colour
- use of space
- relationship between written and visual text.

Look closely at the above illustration. A possible reading of it is as follows:

Body shape/size

Body language

Body language

Clothing

Facial expression

Use of space

Use of space

In the image, the men are big and strong. They all have a similar facial expression and they appear to be almost marching, united in their attempt to keep the stranger away from them. Their tools – rakes, pitchforks and even a broom – are being used as weapons, and the men are pointing them aggressively at the stranger, who doesn't look like a threat at all. We get this impression because he is physically much smaller than the men, unarmed and naked. His nakedness further emphasises his vulnerability. His facial expression suggests a deep sadness – he does not seem angry or threatening; rather, he appears deflated and defeated.

The men are walking in a pack, tightly bound together. The stranger is kept apart from the men. The distance between the stranger and the men emphasises his isolation and the blank space on the page surrounding him suggests he is truly alone.

Body shape/size

Greder uses a limited range of colours, which reflects the limited outlooks of the men.

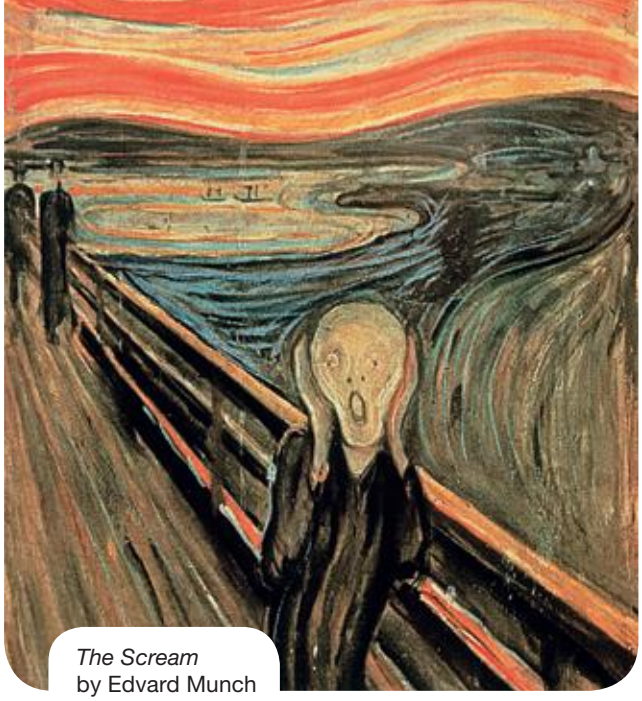
Use of colour

A sense of irony is also created through the way the written text works with the visual text. The idea of 'taking someone in' would usually involve accepting them and looking after them. Clearly, this is not the case here, so the visual elements are very important in shaping our view of the townspeople.

Relationship between written and visual text

Language focus

If someone is **vulnerable**, they might become a victim of an emotional or physical attack.



The Scream
by Edvard Munch

ALLUSION

To revise allusions, go to page 68.

Some people consider the illustrations in *The Island* to be a visual allusion to the Norwegian artist Edvard Munch's painting *The Scream*. This painting is often used to represent isolation and anxiety.

Over to you

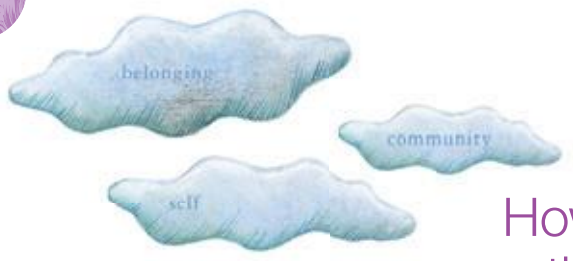
1 **a** What similarities can you see between *The Scream* and the illustrations from *The Island*?

b How might this allusion influence the way some readers would view the stranger in the story?

2 In pairs, analyse and discuss the image below, commenting on as many features as you can.

To revise irony, go to page 149.

3 Think of an ironic situation. Create a page for a picture book that shows the irony, through the combination of words and images.



How else can a picture book show – rather than tell – us about people and issues?

Showing, rather than telling, is important in persuasive literature. As we have already seen, people generally don't like to feel that they're being told what to think.

One way in which picture books can show, rather than tell, is to let us see what characters are thinking. In *The Island*, the people's thought processes reveal prejudices, stereotypes and mass fears. This excerpt, for example, *shows* us how fear develops in the town through the descriptions of how the characters are feeling:

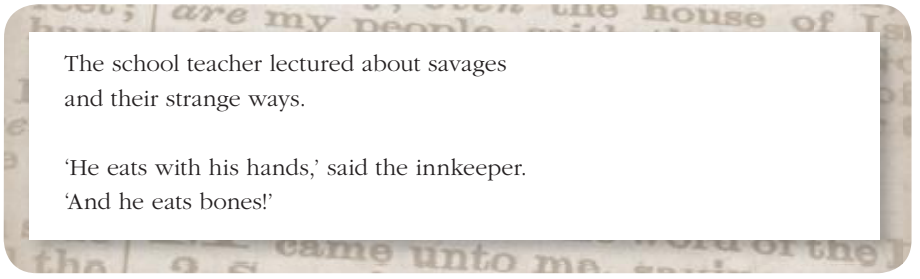
> He haunted their days and often their dreams. Men frowned and muttered under their breaths. Women stayed in their kitchens, and mothers warned their children not to go near the goat pen.

This paints a more vivid picture far more subtly than simply *telling* us that 'everyone was afraid of the stranger'.

Over to you

From Armin Greder's choice of the verbs 'frowned' and 'muttered' in the extract on the previous page, we get a sense of how the men are feeling. Choose some adjectives you could use to describe the men, based on the image Greder has created.

Dialogue also gives us a sense of how fear builds in the community. We learn about the thoughts and feelings of others from what they say to people around them:



The school teacher lectured about savages
and their strange ways.

'He eats with his hands,' said the innkeeper.
'And he eats bones!'

Here, *The Island* is offering readers some ideas about how viewpoints are formed. The story suggests that children are learning to think a certain way through the messages they receive from the school teacher and the adults in the community.

Over to you

1 **a** As a class, brainstorm things you have been taught to fear by your parents or your teachers.

b Looking at the different examples, try to explain *how* and *why* this fear is created.

2 We often use the word 'savage' as an adjective, for example 'a savage wolf'. The teacher, however, uses the term 'savages' as a plural noun, meaning a group of people considered to be uncivilised or primitive. Discuss the following:

a What does it mean to be civilised?

b Why do you think the stranger eats with his hands and eats bones?

c Are the people on the island behaving in a civilised manner?

3 **a** What is the innkeeper trying to suggest about the stranger?

b What is the impact of the **exclamation mark** at the end of his speech?

We use **exclamation marks** to give emphasis. They can indicate that we are joking, surprised or shocked, or that we are giving a command.

4 In the previous chapter, the students in *Red Scarf Girl* were being subjected to propaganda. Is the same thing happening to the children in *The Island*? Discuss your thoughts in groups.

The story also shows how people become inhumane. Greder suggests that the media plays a role in this:

> 'Foreigner Spreads Fear in Town,' said the newspaper in big black letters.

'Foreigner Spreads Fear in Town'

While the media appears to be simply reporting on what is happening, the act of doing so reinforces the community's fear. The fear allows people to justify their treatment of the stranger, as illustrated by the policeman's comment:

> 'I am sure that he would murder us all if he could,' said the policeman

In each example, the story does not directly tell us that people are afraid or exaggerating the situation to create fear. Rather, it shows us through descriptions of their behaviour and speech. This then makes us wonder why they are behaving the way they are. Through learning about what fear looks like and how it spreads in the story, we might be positioned to look at our own society in a different way.

Over to you

Re-read the comment from Leader of the Opposition Tony Abbott on ABC radio on page 173. In what way does Abbott's remark relate to Armin Greder's point about fear and the media?

Even the way *The Island* is laid out helps to show us, rather than tell us, about the characters and issues the text explores. When the stranger is first introduced, the author chooses to use the following short sentences:

When he saw them coming, he stood up.

He wasn't like them.

The people stared at him. They were puzzled.

The second sentence is indented – it starts much further from the margin than the rest of the text. Together with the use of space, this helps to show that the stranger is isolated from the very beginning of the story.

Over to you

What do you think Armin Greder wants us to think about the issue of refugees, particularly those who arrive by boat ('boat people')? Use three examples from the text to support your view.

4.3 How can a *play* shape the way we see people and issues?

To revise perspective, go to page 164.

Just as a picture book can combine narrative and illustrations to shape the way we see things, a play can do the same through various theatrical elements. Theatre has the power to challenge or change the way we see people and issues. Through theatre, we can explore issues and human behaviour, and make our audience see something from a different perspective. But like all successful persuasive narratives, plays have to do so in ways that won't make people feel like they are going to a lecture, or being told what to think.

Theatre has the power to challenge or change the way we see things.

It is important to think about the ways in which our views are shaped by the choices that have been made by the playwright or the director.

Over to you

1 As a class, discuss: 'How is reading or seeing a play different from reading a picture book?'

2 Create a table like the one below to list the main points of difference between reading or seeing a play and reading a picture book. Some examples have been given.

Play	Picture book
Mostly dialogue, with stage directions	Dialogue may form part of the story
When reading a play, setting, action, tone of voice and body language are described in the stage directions or implied from the dialogue	Setting, action, tone of voice and body language are described as part of the narrative

2 Would you rather watch a play or read a picture book? Give reasons for your response.

Language focus

Stage directions give the actors, producer and director instructions about setting, action, how something should be said, and body language.

How can an issue be explored in a play?

In plays, we are often introduced to characters who are involved in a particular issue and, through seeing how the issue affects them, we can then 'zoom out' and think more widely about how the issue might affect others.

The play *Boy Overboard* was adapted for the stage by Patricia Cornelius from Morris Gleitzman's novel of the same name. Like Armin Greder's picture book *The Island*, it deals with the issue of refugees. However, while *The Island* makes us think about the way people behave and why, *Boy Overboard* makes us empathise with the main characters.

Language focus

Empathy is the ability to share and understand the feelings of others.

The play begins in Afghanistan. The main character, Jamal, is obsessed with soccer. His younger sister Bibi loves soccer too, but as she is a girl she is not allowed to play. Their parents are running an illegal school in their home and when the government finds out, the family decides to leave Afghanistan to escape political persecution. They pay to be smuggled to Australia. When boarding the boats, Jamal and Bibi are separated from their parents and have to survive the terrible journey on their own.

The story deals with many issues, such as gender roles, people smuggling and refugees, all of which are explored through the family's journey.

Language focus

Persecution is what we call unfriendly behaviour or ill-treatment that is based on someone's race, or their political or religious beliefs.

How can setting shape the way we see people and issues?

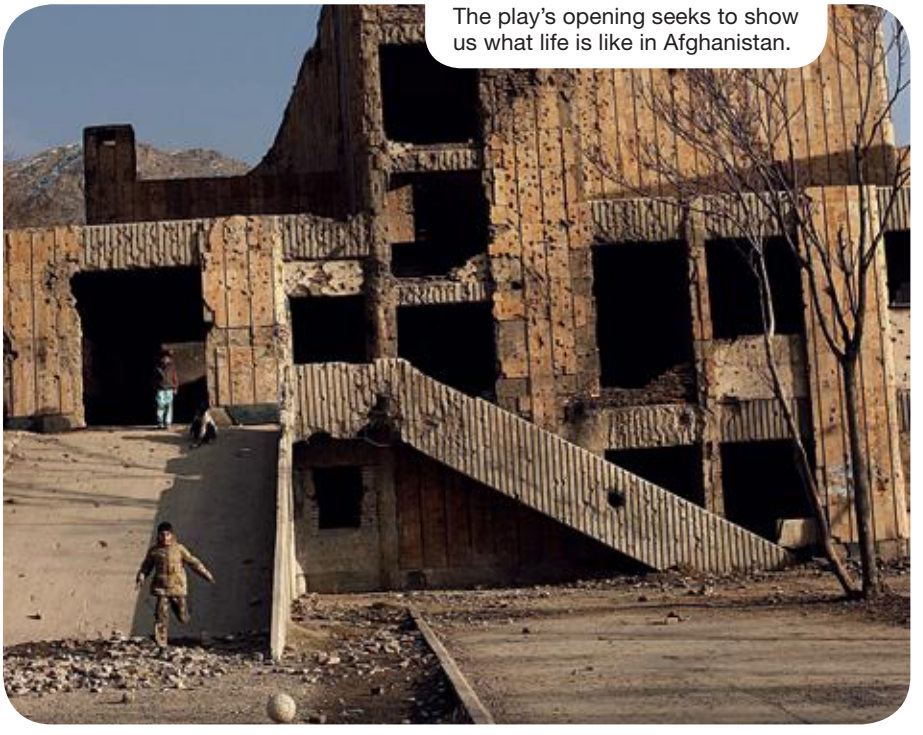
The play begins by showing us what life in Afghanistan is like for Jamal and his family. It is important to establish this, as most Australians have never been to Afghanistan, and we need to be able to understand more about why the family might be leaving.

Jamal

Language focus

A **landmine** is an explosive device placed on or just under the surface of the ground. In war zones, landmines can cause problems years after a war is over because they are difficult to find, so often they cannot be retrieved.

Early in the play, it appears that the children lead very similar lives to most Australian children, with the boys playfully joking with each other while they kick a soccer ball around. However, when Bibi comes outside to join the boys' game, the setting becomes very important. First, the boys are very reluctant to allow her to play, because as a girl she is forbidden to do so. Second, as we see in the extract on the following page, she steps on a landmine while chasing the soccer ball.



The play's opening seeks to show us what life is like in Afghanistan.

Jamal: Bibi, slide your foot off slowly.

Bibi: But then you'll be on the mine. You could be blown up.

…

Jamal: Bibi, if you get blown up, people will find out you've been playing soccer.

Bibi: Mum and Dad are always doing things they're not meant to do.

Jamal: [*more anxious*] Bibi, if the government finds out a girl's been playing soccer, Mum and Dad are in big trouble.

BIBI thinks for a moment.

Bibi: [*angrily*] I don't want to get blown up and I don't want you to get blown up either. It's not fair. (pp. 7–8)

Reading or watching the play in Australia, we see that in Afghanistan, Bibi is not allowed to play soccer simply because she is a girl; and that a simple soccer game almost ends in children being blown up. Thus, the setting positions us to think about why people leave their home country and seek refuge in another.

Over to you

1 What impression does this excerpt give us of life in Afghanistan? How does this impression position us to view Jamal's family's decision to leave?

2 Use the internet to source some images of Afghanistan. Use the images to create a page for a picture book that represents the scene above.

Soccer is forbidden to Afghan girls, such as Bibi.

How can characterisation shape the way we see people and issues?

Unlike *The Island*, *Boy Overboard* gives us insight into the character of the refugees. For a start, the refugees in the play are given names. This helps us to identify with them and positions us to see them sympathetically, as individuals. We also get a sense of what the characters are like from:

- costumes, body language and general appearance
- dialogue
- the way they interact with other characters
- how they respond to events that occur in the play.

The characters play a large part in shaping our view of any issues that are explored in the text. An example of how this might occur is outlined below:

What happens	Examples – based on *Boy Overboard*	Possible reaction
We get to know a character.	• We see Jamal being brave and kind to other characters. • We hear his dreams to play soccer for Afghanistan and see his determination to stop the war.	We like and admire him.
The character faces an issue or a complication.	Jamal and his family have to leave Afghanistan because they are in danger.	We worry about them and feel sorry for them.
We see how the character is affected by what happens.	• Boarding the boat, Jamal is separated from his parents, which makes him sad. • He gets sick on the boat. • He doesn't have enough food. • The people smugglers abandon them and the boat begins to sink.	We imagine what it would be like to be in his situation. This is called *empathy*.
We start hoping for a particular outcome.		Because we like the family, we want things to be better for them. We want them to get to Australia safely and be accepted as refugees.

What would it be like to be on this boat?

If we have the reactions outlined in the table on the previous page, then we are positioned to support the idea of accepting refugees who arrive by boat. Perhaps without even realising it, we have been influenced because of our response to a particular character.

Over to you

1 Do you think this is the reaction that the playwright Patricia Cornelius wants us to have? Why or why not?

2 The main characters of this play are children. Do you think this has an effect on the way we feel about the issue of refugees? Why or why not?

How can spoken language shape the way we see people and issues?

Just like in a picture book or another sort of story, the spoken language in a play is very influential in shaping the ways we see people and issues. We need to look at:

- what is said
- how it is said
- what is *not* said.

The way playwrights choose to phrase things, the language they use and what they choose to leave out all have an impact on our reading of the play. For example, the language used during the soccer game at the beginning of the play reminds the audience of the dangers that are ever-present in these children's lives:

> Mussa: He's fantastic at dribbling and passing.
>
> Jamal: If I had an unexploded shell for every goal I've set up I could go into the scrap metal business.
>
> …
>
> Jamal: I want to smack the ball with all my strength and watch it whiz past Yusuf like a Scud missile. (p. 3)

Language focus

If someone becomes **desensitised**, they are less likely to be shocked or distressed by acts of violence or cruelty because they have seen so much of it.

To revise similes, go to page 34.

Imagery refers to language that gives very rich visual descriptions, creating images in our minds.

In the excerpt above, Jamal's words remind us that for these children, violence is always a threat. The casual way he refers to unexploded shells raises questions in our mind about what sort of life the children have had to cause them to be desensitised like this. The simile Jamal uses in suggesting the ball would move 'like a Scud missile' has a similar effect. Patricia Cornelius is using the **imagery** of war to describe the boys' soccer game and, in doing so, reminds us why the family is leaving.

Jamal casually uses war imagery to describe a soccer game.

Over to you

Imagine Jamal had grown up somewhere else, where war was not a part of his life. Rewrite his lines replacing the imagery of war with something different, such as food, animals or perhaps music:

If I had a _____ for every goal I've set up I could_____.
I want to smack the ball with all my strength and watch it whiz past Yusuf like a _____.

The tone of spoken language is also very effective in shaping our views of people and issues. For example, in the scene where the children are told they will be leaving Afghanistan, the tone used by their parents to deliver the news adds meaning to the words being spoken:

Fatima: We've decided to leave Afghanistan.

JAMAL's jaw drops.

Jamal: Leave Afghanistan!

Bibi: Where will we go?

Mohammed: [*sadly*] A long, long way away.

Jamal: Will they play soccer there?

Fatima: [*sadly*] We will find a wonderful place to start a new life. (p. 27)

The stage directions – indicating that both Fatima and Mohammed should speak their lines sadly – are very important in showing us the difference between *stated* and *implied* meaning:

- Stated meaning refers to exactly – and only – what is said.
- Implied meaning refers to what is not expressly said.

For example, if Mohammed and Fatima's lines were not delivered sadly, the audience might get the impression that leaving Afghanistan was something they were very excited about. However, the meaning implied by the stage directions is that they are very sad about leaving.

To revise exclamation marks, go to page 181.

The punctuation and stage directions also add meaning to Jamal's words. The exclamation mark and his facial expression show that this is very unexpected.

Jamal's shock and the parents' sadness are important in showing us that this has not been an easy decision for the family to make. It makes us consider all the difficult aspects of having to leave your country behind. We are then positioned to see the family sympathetically.

Over to you

1 a Choose some other adverbs that could replace the word 'sadly' in the excerpt on the previous page.

b Give your new stage directions to a partner and have them speak the lines as you want them delivered.

c Discuss how each adverb changes the meaning of what is being said.

2 a Using what you know about the story so far, draw up a table that outlines some of the reasons for and against the family's decision to leave.

b How does the table make you feel about the family?

How else can a play show – rather than tell – us about people and issues?

Language focus

Compliment or **complement**? People often confuse these two words. 'Complement' means to add to, or complete; while 'compliment' means to politely congratulate or praise someone.

Just as the illustrations in picture books complement the written text, plays use a variety of elements in addition to the dialogue spoken by the characters to add to our understanding of people and issues, including:

- set design
- stage directions
- costumes
- lighting
- soundtrack.

These elements work together to create a sense of who the characters are and what their situation is.

For example, notes at the beginning of the play outline the set design, which calls for:

> *A series of platforms at different heights … [which] can be moved in and out and around the performance space to accommodate the action. The platforms are like rafts – isolated, floating and vulnerable.*

The set design helps makes the characters seem vulnerable, which might make us feel a desire to protect them. This is especially the case when Patricia Cornelius has helped us to get to know and like the characters. Also, because the platforms are like rafts, the audience is reminded of the dangerous journey the family has to undertake.

A scene from *Boy Overboard*

Different theatrical elements work together to add to our understanding of people and issues.

Language focus

When asylum seekers who travel to Australia by boat are often held in facilities off the Australian mainland, this is called **offshore detention**.

As we have already seen, stage directions can give actors ideas about the emotion that the playwright wishes to show in a particular scene. For example, at the end of the play, Andrew – a serviceman who has been kind to Jamal and Bibi – is trying to explain to Jamal how they ended up in offshore detention rather than being able to proceed to Australia:

Jamal: All I want to know is why we're here and not in Australia?

Andrew: I wish I knew how to explain it to you – the Australian government changed its refugee policy.

Jamal: I want to know why Australians don't want us.

Andrew: The Australian government thought they'd get more votes by keeping you out. And they did.

Jamal: Why don't Australians want us?

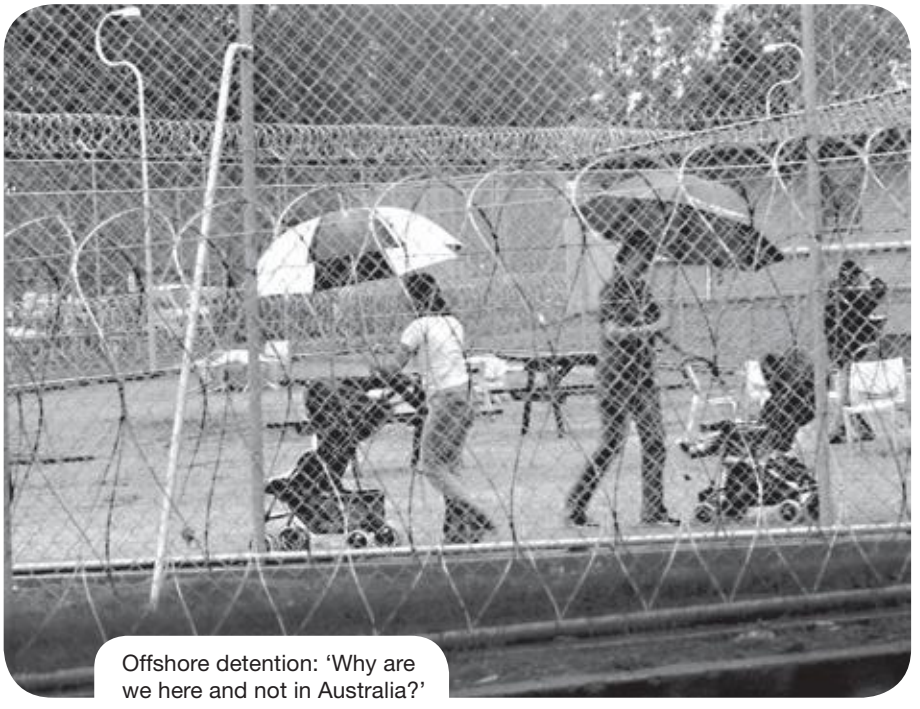
ANDREW drops his head. He shrugs.

Why?

Andrew: I don't know. (p. 64)

The dialogue gives us a sense of what is happening. However, when Andrew is unable to answer the question, the verbs used to describe his actions give us the sense that he feels ashamed or despondent that he cannot do more to help Jamal, without actually telling us that this is how he feels.

To be **despondent** is to be in low spirits because of loss of hope or courage.



Offshore detention: 'Why are we here and not in Australia?'

Over to you

The words used to name feelings are described as **abstract nouns**. Abstract nouns name qualities, states or actions, such as 'shame' or 'hunger'.

Look up the following **abstract nouns** and add them to your personal glossary. Choose the body language or actions you would include in stage directions to show each one:

a elation

b trepidation

c incredulity

d melancholy.

Stage directions also give us a sense of what we are supposed to be focusing on in each scene. When Bibi enters for the first time, the stage directions show us a lot about her character without directly telling us too much:

> *The lights come up on nine-year-old BIBI, her hands defiantly placed on her hips, her veil slipped off her head. (p. 4)*

To revise adverbs, go to page 8.

The lighting cues show us that Bibi's entrance is important. Her body language and the adverb 'defiantly' show us that she is bold, and well aware that she is doing something considered wrong in leaving the house to join the boys' soccer game. The costume choice is also important – it shows us that she is resistant to the customs of her culture.

From this, we get a sense of Bibi's character and we are also positioned to consider gender roles in different cultures. We might think about how hard it would be for someone like Bibi to live in a place where there are strict rules about what girls can and can't do.

The stage directions also indicate when music should be played, and in this case, several recordings of folk music from the album 'Inside Afghanistan' are used, which helps to create a sense of the setting.

As we read or view the play, the various elements described above combine to help us understand the characters and their situation as Cornelius wants us to.

Stage lighting can be used to emphasise such things as mood, a character's importance, or a character's isolation.

Over to you

1 Often, our own experiences and values influence the way we respond to issues and characters. For example, in Australia, we have laws in place that ensure equal opportunity for men and women, boys and girls. We also have a national women's soccer team! How might this influence the way we view Bibi's situation?

2 If you were writing a play set in your school, choose three songs you would include in the soundtrack to help establish a sense of the setting. Explain your choices.

How does a play adaptation differ from a novel?

Have you ever noticed that if you pick up a play and a novel, the play usually feels a lot thinner? This is so even when the play and the novel are telling the same story, which is the case with the play and novel versions of *Boy Overboard*.

Plays are usually much shorter than novels.

Sometimes, this is to do with the practical side of putting on a play – not many people want to go and see a play that is 12 hours long, so the person who turns the novel into a play will have to cut out some events.

However, the difference in length is often caused by what can be *shown* in a play compared with what has to be *written* in a novel; for example, a lengthy description of a change of setting in a novel can be represented on stage through the use of lighting, props, or with characters leaving and re-entering the stage.

To revise narrative voice, go to page 40.

The novel *Boy Overboard* is written with Jamal as the first-person narrator. This means his narration tells us not only what is happening, but also what he is thinking and feeling. Because this is important in helping us get to know Jamal as a character, the play adaptation needs to show this in a different way.

How can a play show what a character is thinking?

SHOW v TELL

For example, when Jamal sees a boat approaching during their journey to Australia, the description of what happens needs to be shown to the audience without Jamal actually telling them how he is feeling.

The novel reads:

> The people at the front of the boat start screaming.
>
> At first I think word has just reached them about the fifty different kinds of ice-cream. But when I turn round, I see they're excited about something else.
>
> Another boat is coming towards us.
>
> I jump up, dizzy with excitement myself.
>
> For a wild moment I think it's Mum and Dad's boat. That we've caught up with them and they've seen us and come over.
>
> But it's too big to be Mum and Dad's boat. And as it gets closer, I can see there are no people sitting on the deck. Just a few men in tracksuits and trainers, standing watching us.
>
> Another wild thought hits me. They look like a soccer team, perhaps, travelling to a World Cup qualifying match by boat.
>
> Then I see the men are all holding automatic weapons. (p. 140)

In the novel, Morris Gleitzman describes the many thoughts and emotions Jamal experiences. He uses a new paragraph each time Jamal has a new idea about who might be on the boat. This helps us to pause and think about his hopeful idea, only to then see how disappointed he is when he realises what is really happening. We go back and forth, from excitement to disappointment.

Now let's look at how the play represents the same event. As well as the actors showing through their body language how they are feeling, Patricia Cornelius also uses dialogue to represent the excitement and disappointment. The children ask each other questions to represent the possibilities Jamal considers in his narration of the novel:

> *The boat is quiet and everyone rests. JAMAL stands and looks out to sea curiously.*
>
> Jamal: There's a boat coming towards us.
>
> *BIBI stands and looks out with JAMAL.*
>
> Bibi: Is it Mum and Dad? Have we caught up with them?
>
> *They both look out eagerly for a moment.*
>
> Jamal: No, it's too big to be Mum and Dad's boat.
>
> *OMAR and RASHIDA get up sleepily and join them. OMAR waves tentatively.*
>
> Omar: Who are they?

Jamal: I don't know.

Rashida: Perhaps they've brought food and water.

Bibi: Who are they?

Omar: They're wearing tracksuits and trainers.

Jamal: They couldn't be a soccer team, could they?

Bibi: No, Jamal, no.

The entire boatload of refugees has by now woken and got to their feet, totally focused on the arrival of this boat.

Rashida: Who are they?

Jamal: They're carrying automatic weapons. (p. 48)

The stage directions also show some of the excitement and hope depicted in the novel, with the adverb 'eagerly' and Omar's tentative wave describing the actions of the children.

Over to you

1 Because Jamal is the narrator of the novel, we get to read all the things he doesn't say out loud. The excerpt below is an example from the novel of when Jamal shares his thoughts with the reader. In pairs, read the excerpt and discuss how you might show this in the play:

suddenly I realise just how important my plan is. If I can become the star of the Afghanistan national soccer team, perhaps that'll make all of us more popular, not just me and Mum and Dad and Bibi. Perhaps none of us will ever be threatened or bullied or killed again, not by the government or anybody.

It's a good plan.

A really good plan.

But to make it work I need practice. (p. 42)

2 As a class, create a diagram showing the changes a playwright has to make when adapting a novel as a play. Discuss how novels and plays can give different understandings about an issue such as refugees.

'If I can become the star of the Afghanistan soccer team, perhaps none of us will ever be threatened or bullied or killed again.'

4.4 How can an *autobiography* shape the way we see people and issues?

To revise perspective, go to page 164.

When someone is telling a story about something that has just happened, it is not uncommon to hear another person interrupt with: 'That's not how it happened – it was like this …'. A dispute over the details of the story might then follow.

This argument might not be a result of one person remembering things incorrectly. Rather, it could be that each person involved has a different perspective.

We all see things differently, and this is why it is important to realise that although an autobiography is non-fiction, there will always be elements that are based on the writer's perspective.

The writer's perspective can shape the way we see people and issues, just as it can in any other form of narrative text. We might be influenced to adopt the narrator's view of an issue if hearing their story has made us admire or like them in the same way we might like the main character in a play, picture book or novel.

'That's *not* how it happened!'

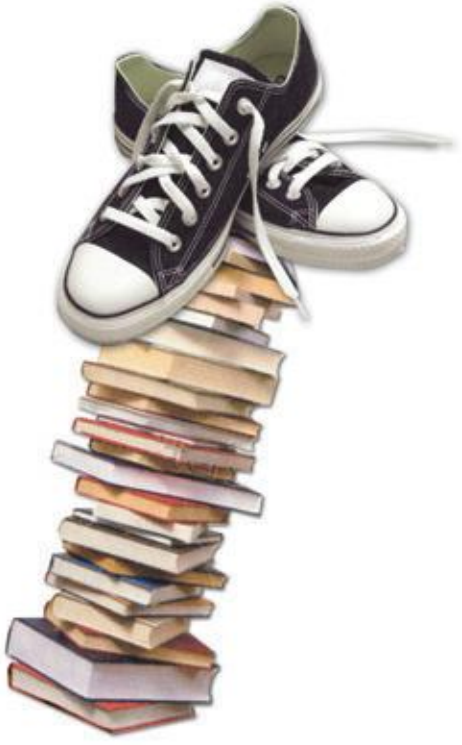
The structure of an autobiography is often similar to that of a novel, as well. Many people would find reading about another person's life as a series of disconnected points rather boring, so many autobiographical texts tell the story in a way that makes the reader want to read on to find out what happens next. Autobiographies are often constructed in the form of a chronological narrative; that is, they tell a story over time. They can also engage the reader in many ways, such as by building suspense or alluding to events that happen later on.

To revise chronology and alluding, go to pages 83 and 66.

All these features combine in such a way as to allow the reader to engage with complex issues, while feeling as though they are simply reading someone's story.

While autobiographies are about real people, they still create 'characters' – we come away with a strong sense of who are the 'good guys' and who are the 'bad guys'. So it is important to think about what makes someone 'likeable' when we read an autobiography. The stories that the writer chooses to tell and the way they tell them also contribute to our sense of what the 'characters' are like.

What makes someone likeable? Or unlikeable?



Another way that autobiographies can shape our views is through what the writer chooses to include and exclude. If we sat down to write our own autobiography and included everything we had ever done, seen, eaten, said and heard from the moment we were born up until that point, it would very probably be an extremely boring book that nobody would want to read. So, we have to choose what stories to leave out.

It is almost as if we choose a version of ourselves to present to the world – we include the stories that help to create that image and exclude the ones that don't fit in.

So we should read autobiographies critically, thinking about how our views of people and issues are being shaped by what is written and how it is constructed.

Language focus

When we talk about reading **critically**, we mean that we should question what is written, rather than just accepting it as fact. We might ask ourselves: 'How am I being positioned to see this information, issue, event or person?'

Over to you

Imagine you are writing your autobiography. Choose a story from your life that you would include if you wanted to show your readers that you were:

- brave
- generous, or
- smart.

How can an issue be explored in an autobiography?

While most autobiographies focus on a person's life, many do so while also commenting on issues that have affected that person. For example, *Boy Soldier* tells the story of Cola Bilkuei, who as a young boy was forced to join the Sudan People's Liberation Army. He escaped from the camp and 14 years later arrived in Australia as a refugee. Because of his experiences, it would be almost impossible to tell his story without either directly or indirectly commenting on the issue of refugees.

Cola Bilkuei was forced to join the Sudan People's Liberation Army.

An **epilogue** is a section at the end of a text that might make a comment about what has happened, or offer a conclusion.

In fact, Bilkuei writes about his purpose in the book's **epilogue**:

> many Australians don't know much about where we have come from, or the lives we have lived. It's up to us to create more of a link, to let Australians know more about us. We should tell Australians what it was like for us back in Sudan. I think that when we do, Australians will respect us more. I hope this book can do something to help. (p. 235)

Cola Bilkuei

From this, we can gather that Bilkuei is telling his story with the hope it will help Australians understand more about refugees, what they have been through and why they seek a better life elsewhere.

As with a successful persuasive fictional text, however, Bilkuei doesn't preach to the reader or tell us what to think. Rather, his stories shape our views in a more subtle way. For example, one story he tells is of when he finally arrives in Australia and a friend, Mayoum, shows him a photograph of three men, one of whom is Cola's father. He is asked to point at his father:

> I pointed to him, and Mayoum laughed. I was pointing to the wrong one. I suppose it seemed funny at the time, but it also made me sad. I had not seen my father for sixteen years, more than half my life, and I couldn't remember what he looked like. (p. 215)

Language focus

When something is done in a **subtle** way, it is done so delicately that it is almost difficult to analyse or describe.

A story like this one can show us a lot about the different emotions Bilkuei is experiencing. While he is glad to be in Australia, he has a lot of sadness about the time he has spent away from his family. This can make us think about what it would be like to be in this position. This empathy can then shape the way we see other refugees.

To revise empathy, go to page 185.

Over to you

1. How would you feel if you were in Cola Bilkuei's position? How would your life be different?
2. Think of another text you have read that made you imagine what it would be like to be in the position of one of the characters, or to share the feelings of one of the characters. Write a paragraph about how it made you feel about the character and their situation.

How can setting shape the way we see people and issues?

Understanding the setting and how it has affected the subject of an autobiographical narrative is important in shaping the way we view that person. *Boy Soldier* is set in many different countries. In fact, each chapter is named according to where the chapter is set:

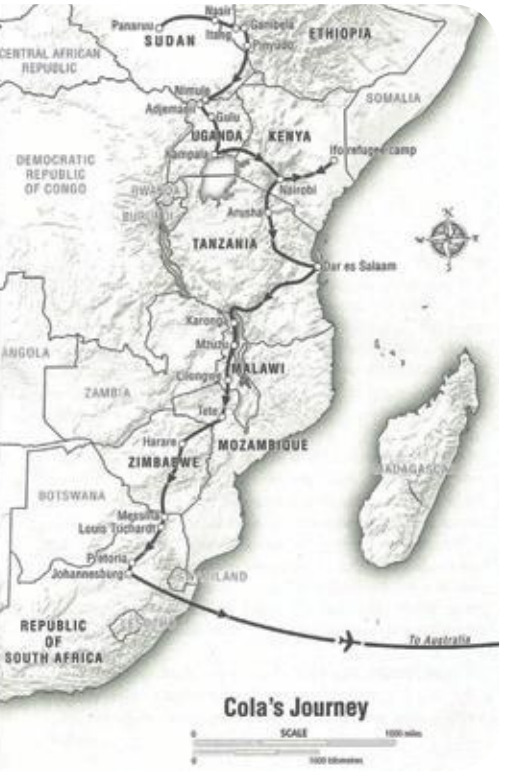
1 Sudan
2 Ethiopia
3 Return to Sudan
4 Uganda
5 Kenya
6 Tanzania
7 Malawi
8 Mozambique
9 Zimbabwe
10 South Africa
11 Australia

Structuring the text in this way, and also showing the countries on a map, gives us a sense of the enormous journey Cola Bilkuei has undertaken before we even begin reading.

In the opening chapter, 'Sudan', Bilkuei recounts:

> When I think about my village and all that my life consisted of, it feels as though I'm looking back at someone else's life. My new life in Sydney, Australia, is a world away from everything I knew back home. (p. 1)

From this, we know the outcome of the story – that Bilkuei eventually makes the journey to Sydney as a refugee. However, rather than spoiling the ending, this helps to engage the reader. It makes us want to read on to find out how a young boy from Sudan manages to end up in Australia after escaping from a military training camp with no money or passport.



Including this map gives us a sense of Bilkuei's enormous journey.

Bilkuei describes his new life in Australia as being very different from his old life. This might create interest for an Australian audience – we want to find out what his life was like before he arrived. As he describes some of the customs and routines of his old life, this also helps us understand why people who move from one country to another often have trouble adjusting to new ways of life. For example, Bilkuei's family owned cattle:

> My childhood memories are saturated with the smell of cow dung, whether it was fresh or burning …
>
> After the dung had been burnt, the ash was used. We smeared our bodies with it. This was not so much for decoration as to show that we were men with a real job: to protect the cattle. Without the painted-on ash we would be considered too clean, too lazy and too much of a target for teasing by men and older boys, who would say that if we were too clean we looked like girls. It wasn't just for show, though. In Dinka culture it is of prime importance to protect your cattle – if you looked like someone who didn't work and get dirty, you might be placing your cows in danger of being stolen. (p. 7)

'We smeared our bodies with the ash.'

The excerpt on the previous page tells us quite a bit about what is important to the men in the Dinka tribe. Also, it introduces us to some similarities and differences between Australian culture and Dinka culture. While the idea of covering yourself in burnt cow dung might not seem like much fun, many people in Australia take a similar degree of pride in their work – we just tend to show it in a different way.

Thus, the setting helps us to understand Bilkuei's background and what he has been through to get to Australia.

Over to you

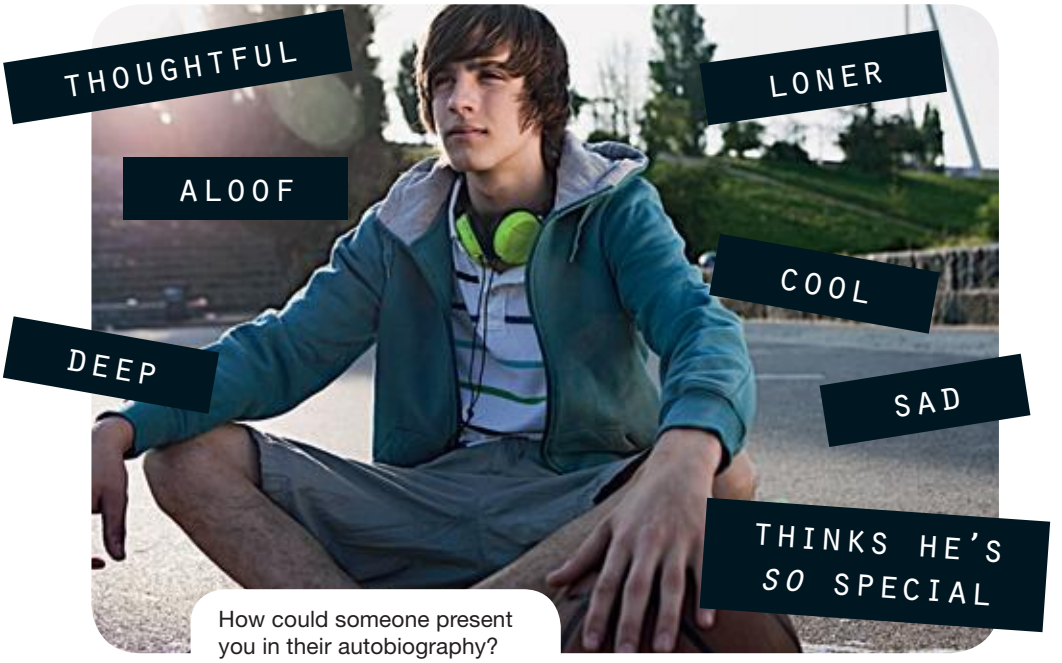
1 Think of something you, your family or your friends do that might be considered unusual by someone from another culture.

2 What makes things 'normal' for one person and strange for another?

How can characterisation shape the way we see people and issues?

While the 'characters' in an autobiography are real people, the way they are described and what the writer chooses to include of their speech and actions still influences the ways we see them. For example, if you were being written about in someone's autobiography, the way you were presented would probably be different according to who was writing. You could be the loyal friend, the annoying younger sibling, the admirable sportsperson or even the class clown, depending on who was telling the story and how they see you.

Similarly, if these 'characters' are involved in an issue that the story explores, how we feel about them will shape our view of that issue.



How could someone present you in their autobiography?

In Cola Bilkuei's story, the military police are characterised as being very cruel. This is achieved through the language Bilkuei uses to describe some of the conditions in the training camp:

> The typical punishment was thirty strokes of a stick, but they also made us stand with our arms spread and stones in our hands for a couple of hours. If our hands dropped, they beat us. Another punishment was to make us run to the river and jump in fully clothed, then beat us as we ran back, soaked. Or they would make us roll in the sand in wet clothes and beat us if we refused. Or they'd bark orders: 'Stand up, sit down, stand up, sit down!' Or you would have to crouch-jump for two hundred metres. These punishments would happen every day, even for the most minor offences. (pp. 62–63)

The military police are not named, which makes them appear less human. Instead, pronouns are used. The pronouns in this description almost create a sense that there are two teams – 'us' against 'them' – and Bilkuei frequently describes what 'they' did to 'us'. As the reader, because we have been following his story, we find ourselves on his 'side'.

To revise pronouns, go to page 12.

In addition, the repetition of the words 'beat us' gives us the sense that the beatings are happening over and over and over again. This is reinforced by Bilkuei starting three sentences in a row with the **conjunction** 'or', which adds to the feeling that the beatings are endless.

Conjunctions usually connect similar words that are the same part of speech (such as two nouns or two adjectives), or connect two or more clauses to make compound or complex sentences. We don't usually begin a sentence with a conjunction.

Over to you

1. Choose three people from different areas of your life and imagine that they are going to mention you in their autobiography. What sort of 'character' would you be in the eyes of each of them? Why might we be presented as a different 'character' depending on who is telling the story? Share your thoughts with a partner.
2. How does the above excerpt from *Boy Soldier* make you feel about:
   - **a** the military police
   - **b** Cola Bilkuei?
3. If you were a member of the military police, how might you describe the events that Bilkuei recounts above?

Bilkuei characterises the military police as cruel – but how would they characterise him?

How can spoken language shape the way we see people and issues?

Think about every conversation you've ever had. If you tried to write down a transcript of each one of these conversations, you would probably have great difficulty. While you might be able to remember details of some of the most important conversations in your life, you would have to be pretty amazing to remember each one word for word.

This is one reason why dialogue is usually used less frequently in an autobiography than it might be in a novel or a play – it is difficult to recall the exact details of many conversations, especially those that might have taken place many years ago.

While *Boy Soldier* includes some dialogue, it also uses **indirect speech**, which is helpful because it allows the writer to reveal important points about what was said without having to recall the exact words that were spoken. For example:

Can you remember every conversation you've ever had?

> He said he'd show me a safe way around the border. About a kilometre away, he explained, was a place where people had cut the fence. I wanted him to take me over. He said he couldn't, because he'd committed a crime in Zimbabwe and couldn't go back. (pp. 171–2)

Indirect speech is sometimes called 'reported speech'. We use indirect speech when we report something that we or someone else said. We do not put indirect speech in speech marks.

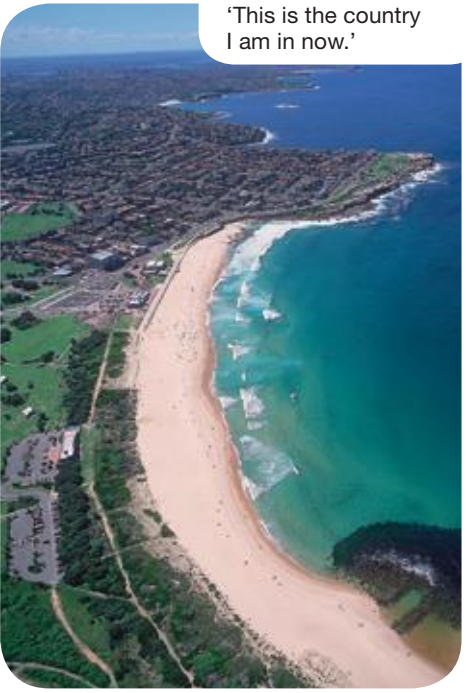
Indirect speech can often make it harder to get a sense of a person's character. For example, the actual words chosen by the man giving the above advice to Cola Bilkuei would influence the way we see him, but without knowing what he said and how he said it, we can only guess.

Over to you

1 With a partner, discuss what sort of person the man giving advice to Cola Bilkuei could have been. Explore different possibilities, for example is he kind? Mean? Apologetic? Distant?

Choose one possibility each and then, working individually, change the words in the above passage from indirect speech to direct speech, choosing your language carefully to suit the 'character' you wish to create.

How else can an autobiography show – rather than tell – us about people and issues?



'This is the country I am in now.'

While Cola Bilkuei does not have the easiest time in Australia, he makes it very clear in closing his autobiography how he feels about where he ends up. This anecdote at the end of the epilogue tells of his first experience on a Sydney beach, when a friend, Biar, goes missing:

> We went home to western Sydney thinking he had drowned. We were terribly upset. We got home and opened the door … and I nearly fainted in surprise. He was lying there, asleep!
>
> We screamed and laughed and woke him up to ask what had happened.
>
> When Biar had become separated from us in Maroubra, he had asked a local woman for help. They looked around for us, but couldn't find us anywhere. So she had driven him all the way home, more than an hour from one side of Sydney to the other, from the coast to the western suburbs. Then she drove herself back again.
>
> That is the country I am in now. (p. 236)

To revise adverbs, go to page 8.

The final sentence of the entire text shows us how Bilkuei feels about living in Australia. He uses the anecdote as almost a summary. The adverb 'now' makes us think about what life was like 'then' – or previously – for Bilkuei, and compare it to his new life. As Australian readers, we might even feel a sense of pride that people in our country can be so kind and generous to strangers. This might then persuade us to behave in a similar way, because we have been shown an account of what it means to the people who receive such kind treatment.

As this all happens through an anecdote, it is achieved without the sense that we are being lectured to, or told what to do.

Over to you

Think about the last time you felt really grateful. How would you *show* how you felt, without telling the reader directly?

How do we evaluate narrative texts that shape the way we see people and issues?

To revise empathy, go to page 185.

As we have seen, authors often create narrative texts that explore real issues – in fiction such as picture books and plays, and in non-fiction texts such as autobiographies. Such texts often refer to real situations and places, such as Afghanistan or the Sudan, but they don't list facts or provide footnotes, and they don't quote experts. They present fictional accounts or, in the case of autobiographies, accounts based on personal experience.

In telling a story, their focus usually isn't to persuade us to see people and issues in particular ways, but this is often what happens, whether we realise it or not.

If this happens, and a text positions us to see things in new ways, do we need to evaluate what they are saying, just as we would for an informative text, or a persuasive text such as an essay or an opinion piece? In this Part, we have looked at texts that encourage us to empathise with the plight of refugees. Just how reliable are these texts – and does it matter?

In evaluating a narrative text that deals with a real issue, we could pose a number of questions, for example:

To revise perspectives, go to page 164.

To help us answer these questions, we can read informative articles on the subject, and we can read persuasive articles in newspapers or watch television current affairs programs and documentaries. These will give us other perspectives and tell us different things. They may inspire us to read further – to find out more, for example, about the experiences of other refugees, or about some of the conflicts that create refugees.

Unlike the texts that we have explored in this Part, however, such texts probably won't give us an understanding of what it is like to be a refugee. Narrative texts that represent real people and places, and explore issues at the same time, invite us to imagine ourselves in different situations – to wonder: what if it were me? And how should we treat refugees?

Narrative texts that represent real people and places, and explore issues, invite us to imagine: what if it were me?

Over to you

1 Reflect on the texts explored in this Part. How are they similar in what they make us think and feel about refugees? Are there any key differences?

2 **a** Are you more likely to be persuaded by narrative persuasive texts or other forms of persuasive texts? And do you find written, visual or multimodal texts more persuasive? Why do you think this is the case?

b Do you think it is important to consider questions like this? Why or why not?

3 Find some informative and/or persuasive non-fiction texts about Sudanese refugees (but not other autobiographies). Compare the way these texts treat the issue of refugees with the way it is treated in *Boy Soldier*. Look, for example, at the focus, the language and the features.

a How do the texts differ in the sort of understanding they offer us?

b What is the benefit of each of these text types?

4 In evaluating the credibility of *Boy Soldier*, what factors should we take into account?

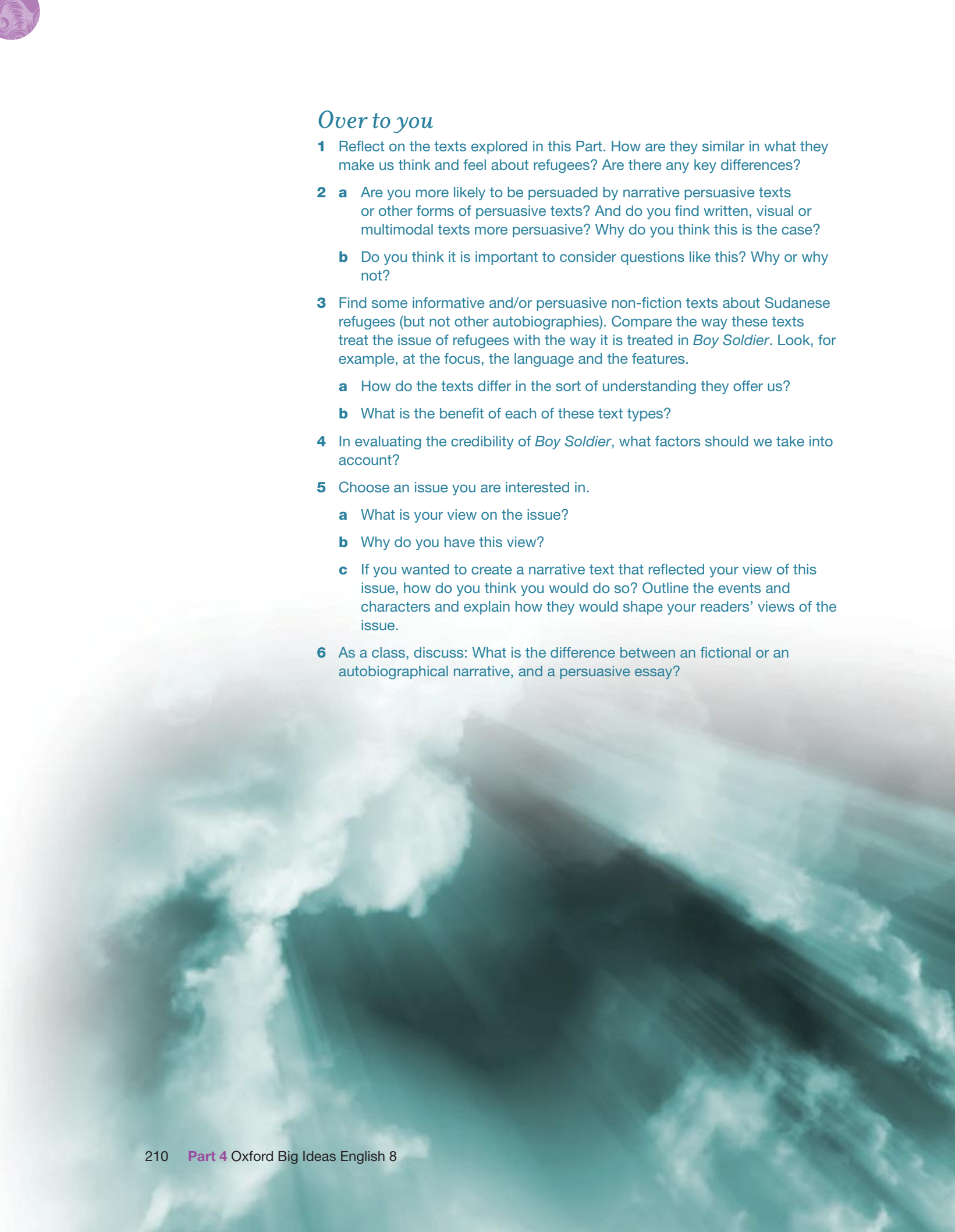
5 Choose an issue you are interested in.

a What is your view on the issue?

b Why do you have this view?

c If you wanted to create a narrative text that reflected your view of this issue, how do you think you would do so? Outline the events and characters and explain how they would shape your readers' views of the issue.

6 As a class, discuss: What is the difference between an fictional or an autobiographical narrative, and a persuasive essay?



big ideas

How can narrative texts SHAPE the way we see PEOPLE AND ISSUES?

For suggestions on how to plan, draft, edit and proofread your texts, refer to 'How can I improve my writing?' on page 252.

4.1 What is the *relationship* between narrative texts and how we see people and issues?

read, create and write

1 Using a combination of images sourced from the internet and written text, choose a celebrity to turn into Australia's new leader. Next, choose an issue you think this celebrity would raise if they became our new leader. Create propaganda in the form of a poster that tells people what to think about this issue.

2 Research a time in history when propaganda was used. Find an example and write about what it is trying to say and how it attempts to persuade people.

3 Choose a narrative text you have enjoyed that deals with an issue. Write a report that analyses the persuasive features of the text, explaining how the text makes us feel about the issue. Include as many of the elements explored in this chapter as you can.

4.2 How can a *picture book* shape the way we see people and issues?

read, create and write

4 Choose an issue and research it on the internet or using print texts.

- **a** Create a picture book that incorporates the issue. Either draw the illustrations or use the internet or print texts to source images to accompany your story.
- **b** Include a statement that explains what your issue is and outlines the persuasive features that you have included.

5 Imagine that you are adapting *The Island* for the stage, and that you have chosen to give the stranger one speech in the play. Write the speech that he would give to the people on the island to convince them to let him stay.

A sample response for this task appears on pages 260–1.

4.3 How can a *play* shape the way we see people and issues?

write, create and speak

6 Imagine you and your family are suddenly in danger and have to seek refuge in another country. Write some dialogue for two characters whose feelings change over the course of the script (for example, from fearful to hopeful).

- Without actually telling the audience through the dialogue, use other theatrical elements to show how the characters are feeling. Use stage directions to give instructions about gestures, tone, facial expressions, soundtrack, etc.
- With a partner, rehearse your scene and then present it to the class.

4.4 How can an *autobiography* shape the way we see people and issues?

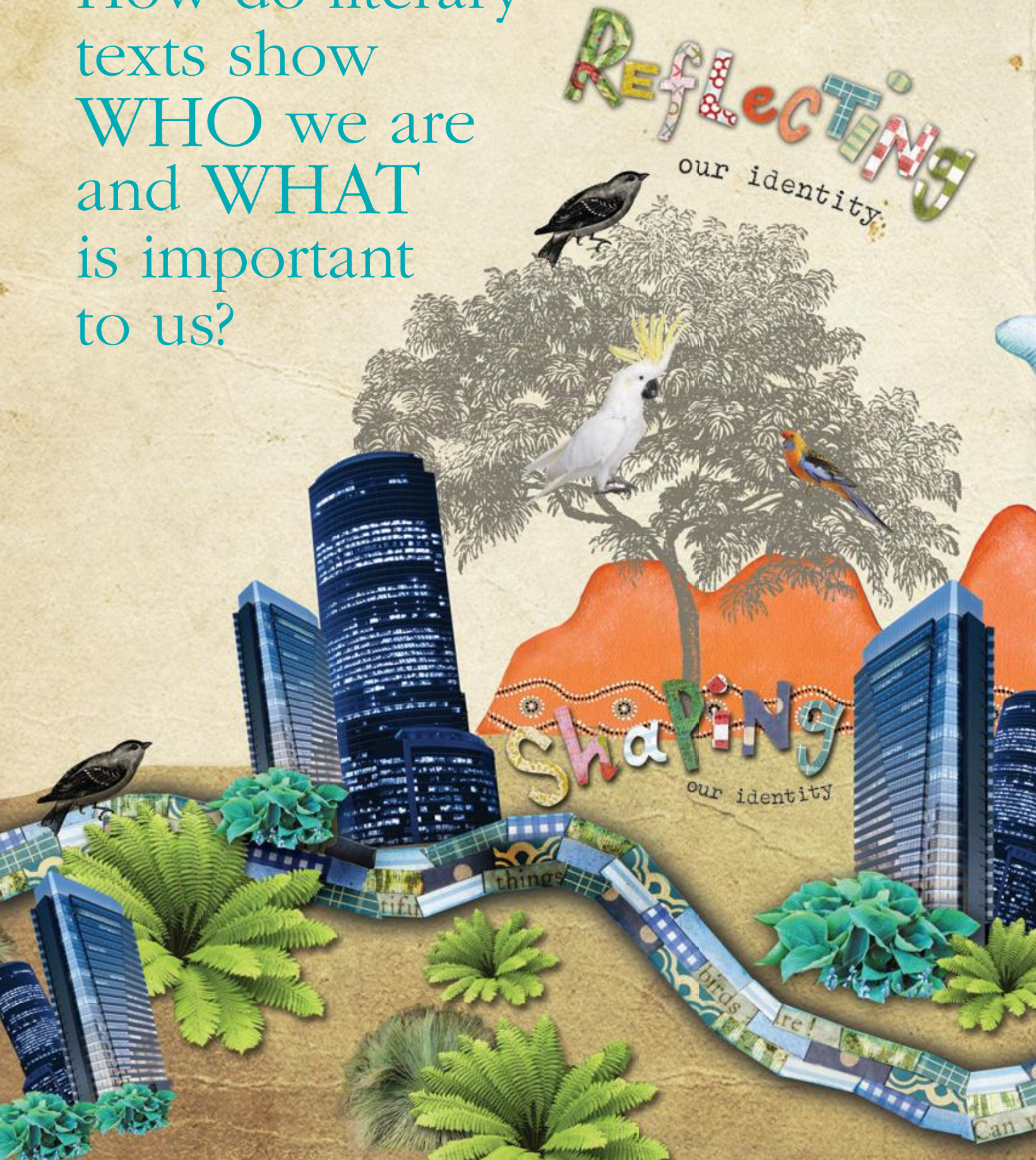
write, read and speak

7 Write two short accounts in an autobiographical style, presenting yourself as a different 'character' in each one. Accompany each account with a photograph that reflects the version of yourself you have chosen to present.

8 Find another text that deals with refugees.

- Compare the content, features and language to one of the texts explored in Part 4.
- Include a reflection that shows how the text added to or changed your understanding of the issue of refugees.
- Deliver your findings to the class as an oral presentation.

How do literary texts show WHO we are and WHAT is important to us?



5

Literacy Language ***Literature***

Text list

In this Part you will read or view and discuss extracts from:

WRITTEN

Australian texts

Bronwyn Blake *Find Me a River* (**novel**)

Raimond Gaita *Romulus, My Father* (**memoir**)

Tom Gilling 'Inspiring Australians' *Weekend Australian Magazine* (**magazine article**)

Rex Ingamells 'Shifting Camp' (**poem**)

David Malouf *A First Place* (**non-fiction**)

Karl Quinn 'Eugenics cited in Bolt race case' *The Age* (**non-fiction**)

John van Tiggelen 'Coming home' *The Age, Good Weekend* (**magazine article**)

Ania Walwicz 'Australia' (**poem**)

Tim Winton *Land's Edge* (**memoir**)

Judith Wright 'The Surfer' (**poem**)

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander texts

Rita Huggins and Jackie Huggins *Auntie Rita* (**semi-autobiography**)

Hyllus Maris 'Spiritual Song of the Aborigine' (**poem**)

World texts

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni *The Conch Bearer* (**novel**)

John Steinbeck *Of Mice and Men* (**novella**)

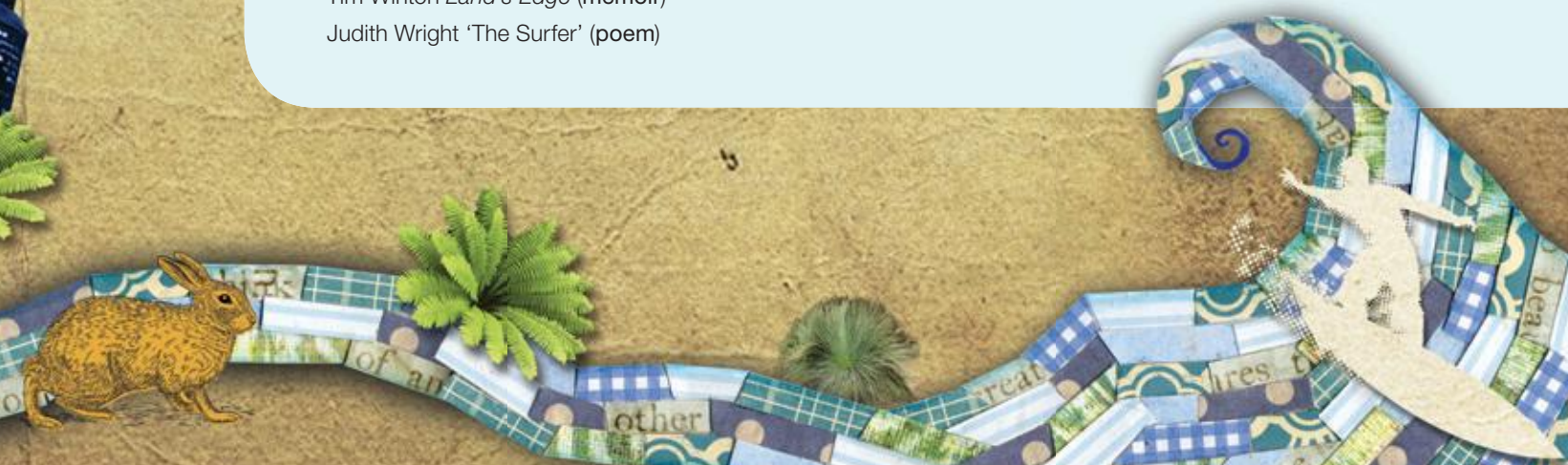
MULTIMODAL

Australian texts

Jeannie Baker *Where the Forest Meets the Sea* (**picture book**)

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander texts

Rachel Perkins (director) *Bran Nue Dae* (**film**)



5.1 How are literary texts and identity *connected*?

Our identity, or our sense of who we are, is shaped by many things. From birth, our families have an enormous impact on us; and everything that happens from then – for example, the language we speak, our schooling, the people we meet and major world events – will contribute to the individuals we become.

Our identity can also be shaped by texts: the films we see, the music we listen to, the books we read and the websites we view. However, it is important to realise that while texts can have an impact on us, when we *create* texts we put a little bit of ourselves into them:

- the texts we read can *shape* our identity, but
- the texts we create can also *reflect* our identity.

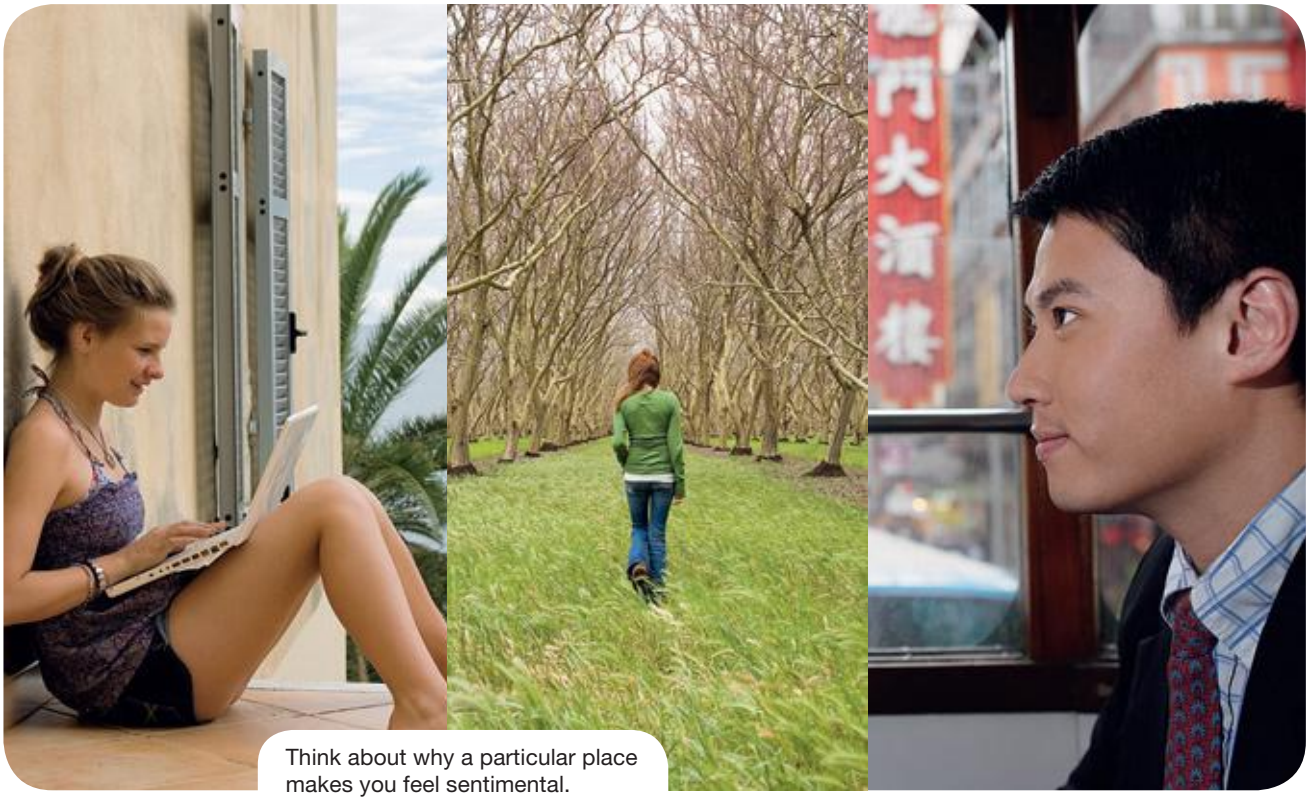
Through reading and creating texts, we can learn more about the relationship between literary texts and identity. We explore and learn more about who we are, how we see ourselves, and where and how we belong. For instance, reading a text about a particular environment might make us feel sentimental. This gives us a chance to think about how and why we experience that sentimental feeling. It could be that the text reminds us of a particular place – reflecting on this might make us more conscious of our connection to that place, or where we feel we belong.

Literary texts also help us understand how people from other cultures and places see themselves. For instance, many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authors of both fiction and non-fiction explore the strong connection between Indigenous cultures and spirituality, and the land. From reading about this connection, non-Indigenous people can learn more about it.

To revise empathy, go to page 185.

Reading texts created by other people helps us understand how they see the world, which invites us to empathise with people from other cultures and places, or with different life experiences. It follows that when *we* create texts, *other* people can understand more about how we see things.

When we create texts, we make conscious choices about the landscape or 'place' in which they are set. Whether we present imagined worlds set in the past, present or future, or reached through magical portals; or whether we describe lived experiences of the world, texts show how the world we come from – our environment – and our culture shape our identity.



Think about why a particular place makes you feel sentimental.

A stereotypical Aussie?

Boy Overboard *is discussed in Chapter 4.3.*

How do country and place shape identity?

When we know that a text has been created in a particular country or place, we might have expectations about the identities of the people involved. For example, the characters in Morris Gleitzman's *Boy Overboard* are undoubtedly shaped by their experiences in Afghanistan. Similarly, we can look at the experiences of an author to see how and why they have chosen to set a text in a particular environment. It would be unusual, for example, for someone who had never had anything to do with (or any interest in) Ecuador to choose it as the setting for one of their texts. However, someone who is interested in the way that their own life has been shaped by living near the beach might choose to set a novel on the coast.

In fictional literary texts, we also choose settings because they add meaning to what we want to convey; readers will make particular assumptions about the identities of the characters in a text based on where the characters live. It is important to remember, however, that these assumptions are based on generalisations and stereotypes, which can sometimes be offensive. Not all people who live near the beach are the same, and neither are all people who live in Australia.

What we can do, however, is look critically at the way we are shaped by where we belong. This means we can accept that, while everyone is affected differently, our country and place will usually have an impact on our identity.

Language focus

Generalisations are broad statements based on knowledge of specific cases. We can make a generalisation that most people who exercise are healthy, for example.

To revise stereotypes, go to page 55.

Our country and place will usually have an impact on our identity.

Over to you

1. Look at the different Australian settings on this page. With a partner, discuss the stereotypical 'identities' associated with each.
2. In your eyes, what does it mean to be an Australian? Has your identity been shaped by where you have been brought up? If so, explain how.
3. Draw a concept map that shows all the different 'places' to which you belong. Identify an aspect of your identity that has been shaped by each of these places.

How does culture shape identity?

To revise the meaning of 'culture', go to page 4.

Our culture will also have an impact on who we are and how we see ourselves. It is important to remember, however, that the culture of a particular place or group can change over time. For instance, we might hear about a football club that is trying to 'change its culture' from one that is known for rough play to one that promotes a more disciplined style of play. The players who belong to this club will have to adapt in order to remain part of the club. Thus, on a very basic level, we can see how – in order to fit in – our identity is often shaped by the culture of the groups we belong to.

Because identity is complex, the relationship between our culture and who we are isn't simple. We are always going to belong to different groups, and sometimes the culture of one group might clash with that of another. For example, if your family culture values hard work and academic results, but the culture of your group of friends does not, you might feel slightly torn at times between wanting to fit in with your friends and wanting to please your parents. Such a 'cultural clash' can exist at this simple level, but can also be more complex.

Many literary texts show us things about who we are and what is important to us; for example, the excerpt below from an article in *The Age* shows the impact of culture on Pat Eatock, who describes what north Queensland was like for her at school in the 1940s:

Language focus

To **segregate** means to keep apart, or to divide. In this case, the playground was segregated, meaning the white children played separately from the Aboriginal children.

As a five-year-old in Ingham, north Queensland, Pat Eatock says she got to play at lunchtime in the white children's section of the segregated school playground.

At least, she did so until the day her father, who had been away in the army, came to school. He was an Aborigine. Suddenly, Mrs Eatock says, she was moved to the black section.

She was not too upset by that because the black children always seemed to be having more fun ... But then the white mothers complained that white children were being mixed in with black, so she says she was moved back to the white section.

And so the five-year-old had her first inkling that the racial identity of a white-skinned Aborigine in Australia is anything but a straightforward matter.

Source: 'Eugenics cited in Bolt race case', Karl Quinn, *The Age*, 29 March 2011

Over to you

1. With a partner, discuss how it would feel if you were in Pat Eatock's position.
2. What impact do you think the incident would have had on Eatock's sense of identity?
3. Would this happen today? Why or why not? What does this tell us about the way that the culture of a place can change over time?

Where we come from often shapes where we end up.

The excerpt on the previous page illustrates how the culture of the places and groups we belong to can influence our identity. Sometimes, however, the values and behaviours of people in a particular group – what they care about and what they say and do – are themselves shaped by the social and political values of the time. This will have an impact on the identity of people both inside and outside these particular groups, as in Eatock's case.

The culture of a place is often linked to the environment or landscape, which might reflect as well as influence the way people live or what they value. Australian author David Malouf, commenting on the importance of place in shaping our identity, says:

> the place you get is always, in the real sense of the word, fortunate, in that it constitutes your fortune, your fate, and is your only entry into the world.
>
> **Source**: 'Inspiring Australians', Tom Gilling, *Weekend Australian Magazine*, 2 August 2008

Malouf has also commented on the way we are drawn to what we know, and what is familiar when we create texts. He suggests that we understand things about the place we come from because it is the only place where we 'recognise how many secrets and mysteries there are in people's lives'.

We often see the importance of the relationship between landscape and identity when writers, filmmakers or even musicians are being interviewed. They are frequently asked about where they grew up and how this had an influence on them, and therefore, on the sorts of texts they might create.

In this Part, we will look at a number of different texts that show and tell us about the connection between where we live and who we are; these texts all explore the way that the landscape can have an impact on our identity.

Over to you

1. Think of a familiar place where you know the people well. What do you understand about these people that outsiders may not understand?
2. Imagine you are using the same place as the setting for a film or a novel. What sort of characters would exist in this setting and how would you make it clear that this is where they belong? Discuss your responses with a partner. (You will develop one of these characters in Assessment Task 1 on page 251.)

5.2 How can an *autobiography* explore the link between landscape and identity?

When exploring the link between landscape and identity, autobiographies are a good place to start. This is because such texts usually track someone's life, exploring and explaining how they have become the person they are. We can therefore assume that anything and any place that has had a big influence on that person will be explored in a text of this style.

While fictional texts may show a connection between people and the landscape, autobiographical texts often tell us about this relationship more directly. Authors might write frankly about what it was like growing up near the beach, or in the inner city, or in the suburbs, and how this experience has helped mould them into the person they are today. For instance, someone who grew up near the beach might have spent all their spare time swimming and surfing. This could then have turned them into someone who feels a close connection with the outdoors. They might not care much about television programs, but they might be passionate about conservation. While a fictional text might also show – or perhaps just hint at – this link, the nature of autobiographies means that the writer will often want to explain and explore the connection between the landscape and their identity more fully.

How can an autobiography tell us about the link between landscape and identity?

To revise narrative voice, go to page 40.

Drawing the story of the Dreaming in the sand

Because writers of autobiographical texts tend to use first-person narrative to tell their story, they can directly explain to us how different factors in their lives have influenced their identity. They reflect on events and tell us why they were significant to them. In terms of exploring the connection between landscape and identity, they might tell us:

- how they feel about the landscape
- how the landscape has had an impact on their daily life
- how the landscape has shaped their views
- about events in their life that were a result of the landscape
- how they feel about different landscapes because of the setting in which they grew up.

All of these points are linked to identity. If we feel a strong connection to the land, then we see our identity as linked to it. For example, many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander writers speak of the strong links between country, place and their sense of identity. The culture of any Indigenous community, and thus the identity of anyone belonging to this culture, has a very strong connection with the land. There are historical links, spiritual links and many customs that are related to the landscape.

Over to you

Imagine you have just won a huge amount of money in the lottery that will allow you to buy a house anywhere in the world to live in when you grow up.

- Where would you choose to live? Describe the landscape of the place.
- Can you see any connection between the place you have chosen and your identity?
- Describe to a partner where you have chosen to live and how it relates to who you are.

How can an autobiography show us about the link between landscape and identity?

To revise language structures and features, go to page 49.

All authors, including writers of autobiographies, draw on shared structures and features to create different types of texts, and it's important to look at *how* they do this to tell us about their personal connection with the landscape. Such structures and features include:

- narrative voice
- metaphors
- personification, and
- sentence structures.

Narrative voice

To revise narrative voice, go to page 40.

Narrative voice refers to the viewpoint from which a text is written or a story is told. Authors use different styles or tones to create a narrative voice, just as we all use language differently when we speak to different audiences and for different purposes.

When we refer to a work as a first-person narrative, we mean that the story is told by the person who is involved. In the non-fiction semi-autobiographical text *Auntie Rita*, Aboriginal authors Rita and Jackie Huggins tell us through the first-person narrative what the land meant to Rita Huggins. The use of first-person pronouns such as 'I' and 'me' often creates a more personal connection between the writer and the reader. We get to hear about the effects of big events from the person directly affected. Through their descriptions of the land itself, the authors help us to understand the impact of being taken away from the land to the Woorabinda Aboriginal Settlement:

To revise pronouns, go to page 12.

The land I come from. The place I belong to.

> I was only a small child when we were taken from my born country. I only remember a little of those times there but my memories are very precious to me. Most of my life has been spent away from my country but before I tell you any more of my story I want to tell you what I remember about the land I come from. It will always be home, the place I belong to.
>
> My born country is the land of the Bidjara-Pitjara people, and is known now as Carnarvon Gorge, 600 kilometres northwest of Brisbane … Our people lived in this land since time began. In our land are waterfalls, waterholes and creeks where we swam and where the older people fished. Our mob always seemed cool, even on the hottest days, because the country was like an oasis. There were huge king ferns. I believe they have been described as living fossils because their form has not changed for thousands of years. (p. 151)

Over to you

To revise similies, go to page 34.

1 Rita and Jackie Huggins describe the land using a simile, saying it was 'like an oasis'. Look up the word 'oasis' in a dictionary. What effect is created by the use of this simile?

2 In the second paragraph, Rita and Jackie Huggins repeatedly use the plural possessive pronoun 'our' (for example 'In our land are waterfalls'). How would the piece sound different if they had said 'In the land'? What about 'In my land'? How does their choice of pronoun help show the connection between Rita Huggins' people and the landscape? Discuss with a partner.

In a similar way, Raimond Gaita writes about the impact that the Australian landscape had on his father. Gaita's memoir, *Romulus, My Father*, is an account of his own life and his relationship with his father, Romulus Gaita. Romulus was born in Romania and emigrated in 1950, eventually ending up in Bonegilla in north-eastern Victoria. For someone who didn't really want to leave his home country, the Australian landscape became a reminder of how far away he was from his home country. Notice how Raymond Gaita uses adjectives and nouns in the following extract:

To revise adjectives and nouns, go to page 8.

> Though the landscape is one of rare beauty, to a European or English eye it seems desolate, and even after more than forty years my father could not become reconciled to it. He longed for the generous and soft European foliage, but the eucalypts of Baringhup, scraggy except for the noble red gums on the river bank, seemed symbols of deprivation and barrenness. In this way he was typical of many of the immigrants whose eyes looked directly to the foliage and always turned away offended. Even the wonderful summer smell of eucalyptus attracted them only because it promised useful oil. (p. 14)

This excerpt illustrates that the link between identity and landscape is a complex one. Perhaps if we have a negative experience in a place, we are more likely to view the landscape negatively.

The eucalypts seemed symbols of deprivation and barrenness.

Over to you

To revise the meaning of 'connotation', go to page 135.

1 **a** In a dictionary, look up the adjective 'desolate' and the nouns 'deprivation' and 'barrenness' – words that Raimond Gaita uses to describe how his father sees the Australian landscape. What are the connotations of these words?

b Compare them to the adjectives used to describe the European landscape: 'generous' and 'soft'.

2 In small groups, discuss what is different about the ways in which Rita Huggins and Romulus Gaita view the Australian landscape. Why do you think this might be the case?

3 Rita and Jackie Huggins' text is written in the first person (*I*, *me*), while Raimond Gaita is here describing his father, so his text is written in the third person (*he*, *him*).

a Which style do you like reading better? Why?

b Which style do you find more credible, or more personal? Why?

c What other differences do you note?

d Discuss this with others in your class. Which style do most people in your class prefer?

4 Imagine you had to leave Australia for another country. Thinking carefully about your choice of nouns, adjectives, adverbs and pronouns, write a short descriptive passage about what you would miss most in the Australian landscape.

5 Discuss the following statement with a partner: 'No landscape is really more beautiful than another; rather, our view of the landscape is influenced by the experiences we have in that place.' Come up with a 'for' and 'against' table of points that agree with and challenge this idea.

Metaphors

To revise metaphors, go to page 34.

Some writers also make use of metaphors to tell us about the impact their environment has had on their identity. A metaphor represents something as if it *is* something else. For example, Alex Miller grew up on a South London Council estate. In 'Coming home', an interview by John van Tiggelen in *The Age Good Weekend* magazine, Miller described a brick wall that was built across the road that separated them from the more wealthy neighbouring suburb, Bromley. He said that the wall 'was there to keep us out. To deny our existence.'

Miller grew up on a grim housing estate.

However, he also describes how he and some friends, aged 10 or 11, constructed a glider 'large enough to carry us over the treetops – and over the Bromley wall'!

When reflecting on the impact that the Bromley wall had on his identity, Miller explains that it metaphorically represents a scar, reminding him of how, as a boy, the actual wall made him feel excluded and devalued:

> If I'm honest – if I am prepared to open my heart a little here – I will say that the Bromley wall is still there, the scar, the mark of the contempt that it left, and that it will never quite be gone, despite the outback, despite my success, despite my wonderful children and my wife and all my friends, who are so important to me.
>
> I feel the oppression of the wall; the resistance of it on my spirits still sometimes, and there seems to be nothing I can do to overcome it. But when I'm writing, the wall is hardly ever there. When I'm writing, my home-made glider does not crash into the poplars but rises and carries me over them and beyond the wall to the imaginative landscapes of my life's experience and my hopes. Writing fiction is the most wonderful liberty imaginable.
>
> **Source**: 'Coming home', John van Tiggelen, *The Age, Good Weekend*, 7 November 2009

To revise embedded clauses, go to page 110.

Language focus

A **semicolon** indicates a longer pause than a comma; it often separates independent clauses that make sense on their own, but also belong together.

Notice how, as Miller explains the significance of the wall, he uses dashes in the first sentence to add extra information in the form of an embedded clause. The dashes create the sense that what he wants to add is related to but – at the same time – disconnected from what he is saying. The dashes 'interrupt' the sentence.

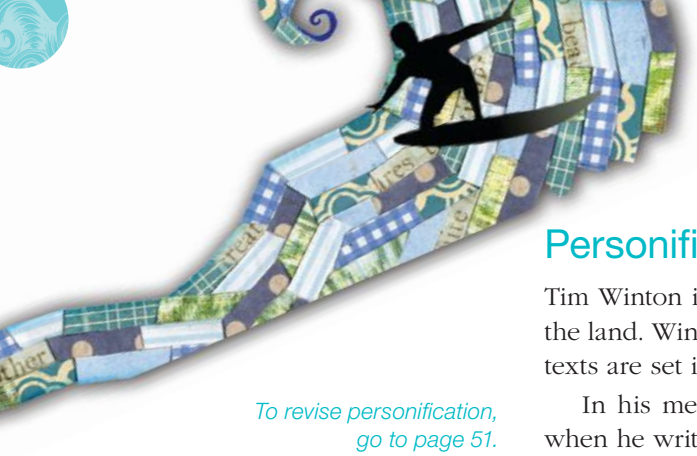
Also, Miller uses a semicolon after the words 'I feel the oppression of the wall' instead of a full stop. Using a semicolon here suggests that the two ideas are closely connected, more than a full stop might.

Over to you

1 Explain the link Miller makes between his writing and the glider. What is similar about them?

2 **a** Think of an object in the landscape – artificial or natural – that you could use as a metaphor for an aspect of your identity. Discuss with a partner what the object represents.

b Create a visual representation of the object and accompany it with a paragraph explaining how the object is a metaphor for an aspect of your identity. In your paragraph, draw on Miller's use of dashes and semicolons as a model to add extra information or show the connection between your ideas.



To revise personification, go to page 51.

Personification

Tim Winton is another author whose writing reveals a strong connection with the land. Winton grew up in Western Australia and is a keen surfer. Many of his texts are set in coastal environments, reflective of his own life.

In his memoir *Land's Edge*, Winton gives the wind human characteristics when he writes about its impact on the landscape and on people:

> On the west coast in summer the morning is for the beach and the afternoon is a time to find shelter. The western summer is ruled by wind. Here the wind is a despot. It rushes off the land before dawn, ploughing out into the sea, full of wheat dust and pollen, crashing at the curtains and rattling every loose sheet of tin, warm and unrelenting. It heats up with the coming of day, an allergenic blast that scorches flat everything in its path …
>
> It's morning when people are about, when the sea is bullied flat by the wind and the air is hot and dry. Just before noon the easterly mellows and becomes benign and before long it gives out altogether. (p. 23)

When Winton describes the wind as if it were a 'despot' – that is, someone with absolute power, who often abuses it by treating people in a cruel way – he is using personification. Winton sees the wind as being so much a part of people's lives that he has almost turned it into another 'character' in this landscape.

Personifying the wind as a despot creates a negative picture. In another context, however, the wind could be personified in much more positive ways, such as a valiant firefighter, rescuing people's homes from bushfires by changing direction and slowing the spread of the flames.

Sometimes, aspects of the landscape can seem almost human ...

Over to you

1 Re-read the extract on the previous page. Make a list of verbs Tim Winton has used that add to the sense that the wind is a person, and compare it with a partner.

2 **a** Create a table of 'elements' of the landscape near where you live. You could include trees, highways, buildings, the sun, wind, paddocks, rivers, etc. For each element, list verbs you could use to personify it. Use Winton's personification of the wind as a guide to help you. For example:

Element	Verbs
Sun	Beating, punishing, soothing
River	Laughing, playing

(You will draw on your table of elements in Assessment Task 3 on page 251.)

b Choose one of these elements and write a short passage using personification to show the impact the landscape has had on you.

Sentence structures

The combination of long and short clauses in a complex sentence can add impact to a particular image or idea, or create a sense of voice. Take this complex sentence from the writing of Rita and Jackie Huggins:

> Our mob always seemed cool, even on the hottest days, because the country was like an oasis.

To revise independent and dependent clauses, go to page 8.

To revise phrases, go to page 27.

To revise simple sentences, go to page 27.

- 'Our mob always seemed cool' contains a verb and makes sense on its own; therefore, we call this an *independent clause*.
- 'Even on the hottest days' adds extra information to the sentence; however, it doesn't contain a verb and doesn't make sense on its own, so we describe this as a *phrase*.
- 'Because the country was like an oasis' contains a verb, but it doesn't make sense on its own. We describe this as a *dependent clause*; because it 'needs' the independent clause.

Rita and Jackie Higgins have combined a short independent clause, a phrase and a short dependent clause, separated by commas, in one complex sentence. In doing so, they build an image of the country, prompting us to read slowly, reflecting the heat of the days, as well as the cool of the people in their gentle 'oasis'. The writers identify themselves as part of a whole 'our mob' – that feels protected by their country.

5.3 How can a *novel* explore the link between landscape and identity?

While an autobiography may directly explain the relationship between landscape and identity, a novel will be more likely to show – rather than tell – us about that relationship. Some novelists may do this in an overt way, while others might be less direct and leave things for readers to figure out for themselves.

This can be done in different ways. A novelist might explore the relationship between landscape and identity by allowing us to see how their characters view the landscape. For example, imagine a novel where a young woman has to leave her home in a rural town to attend boarding school in the city. The descriptions of each setting would tell us a lot about the character and her experiences. If the character were to be daunted by the city, the novelist might describe the skyscrapers as 'monstrous' or 'looming'. Alternatively, if the character were excited about the change, the novelist might describe the towers as 'glistening in the sunlight'.

'Looming' skyscrapers

Descriptions of the urban landscape can show us that skateboarding is an important aspect of this character's identity

Another way in which novelists explore the connection between landscape and identity is to show how characters relate to the landscape. Characters might use the landscape for purposes that are crucial to their identity.

For instance, if a writer creates a character who defines herself as a skateboarder, her clothing, taste in music, and social activities all might reflect this aspect of her identity. As well as this, however, the way the novelist uses the urban landscape may also relate to skateboarding – the character might be drawn towards outdoor places with rails, steps and gutters, and she might spend all her spare time in these spaces. The writer can use descriptions of the urban landscape and the way the character uses these settings to show us that skateboarding is an important aspect of this character's life and identity.

Language focus

Urban is an adjective used to describe things that are related to city life.

How can a novel show us about the link between landscape and identity?

Novelists use many different literary techniques to show the connection between characters' identity and their environment. Sometimes a character feels a strong connection to the land. In other cases, a character may feel the opposite – that the landscape is oppressive or stifling. This uncomfortable feeling of suffocation or being trapped may give the character the impetus to relocate.

In many novels, we can see a strong connection between identity and landscape. Sometimes, novelists show this connection through dialogue – we might find out what is important to characters when they talk to each other. Sometimes, novelists show a connection to the land through the activities of their characters.

As well as through the speech and/or actions of characters, novelists will often use descriptions of the setting to show the connection between identity and landscape. The descriptions may be expressed in a range of sentence structures, and will often include features such as similes, contrast and sensory appeals to give us a stronger image of what the setting is like.

Similes

To revise similes, go to page 34.

Novelists often use similes to show readers the connection a character has with the landscape. A simile can help the reader see how a particular character is feeling because it is based on a comparison with something the reader might already know about or understand.

To revise the meaning of 'Stolen Generations', go to page 139.

In Bronwyn Blake's novel *Find Me a River*, Kes lives in the Baw Baw Mountains in Gippsland, Victoria. Her father is a member of the Stolen Generations and Kes begins a search to try to locate his family. Along the way, she develops a greater awareness of the importance of her Aboriginal background.

Blake uses similes in the following passage to show how Kes feels about the landscape:

> She walked across to the handprints and gently placed her hand over one. It was a perfect fit. She stood there smiling, as if, in the absolute silence of the cave, the walls were talking to her. If she could only understand enough, open some part of her brain that felt shut, she'd hear them, all the old people, the ones who had been here before.
>
> Of course, they weren't the first ones to find this cave. The Kurnai people had lived in these mountains for thousands of years. This must have been a special place for them. Kes could almost feel them standing beside her. It was quiet, like the silence inside a big cathedral, cool like one as well. (p. 192)

Over to you

To revise personification, go to page 51.

1. Bronwyn Blake uses a simile to personify the cave, saying it felt 'as if ... the walls were talking to her'. What might this suggest about Kes' connection with the land?
2. Think of a place you feel strongly connected to. Use a simile to personify this place and share it with a partner. Ask them to describe the effect it creates.
3. Blake uses a simile to compare the quiet in the cave to 'the silence inside a big cathedral'. Why do you think Blake has chosen a cathedral? Why not, for example, a library? What does this suggest about the connection of Aboriginal people to the land?


'The walls were talking to her.'

Contrast

Language focus
A **novella** is a short novel.

Language focus
The Great Depression was a worldwide economic slump that began in 1929 and lasted throughout most of the 1930s. Many people became unemployed and lost their homes.

Some novelists use contrast to show the relationship between landscape and identity. This involves comparing two things to show how they are different. A writer might, for example, give a particularly favourable description of one landscape and then describe another in a negative light to show the reader where the characters feel more at home. This contrast allows readers to understand more about the characters.

American novelist John Steinbeck explores the connection between landscape and identity in his novella *Of Mice and Men*. In this text, the two main characters, Lennie and George, are migrant farm workers (meaning people who move from farm to farm seeking seasonal work, not immigrants) during the Great Depression. They dream of one day owning their own land; for them, being able to live off the land represents freedom:

> 'Some day – we're gonna get the jack together and we're gonna have a little house and a couple of acres an' a cow and some pigs and …'
>
> 'An live off the fatta the lan',' Lennie shouted. (p. 18)

The way Lennie shouts his dream of living 'off the fat of the land' makes it obvious that this is some sort of catch-phrase, one he has repeated many times. This helps us understand just how important this dream is to Lennie. Notice also how Steinbeck uses conventions of vernacular speech in the dialogue to show us more about the characters' identity – by running words together ('fatta' = 'fat of') and using an apostrophe in place of the letter 'd' ('lan" = 'land').

To revise the meaning of 'vernacular', go to page 6.

The land represents freedom.

Symbolism is the use of objects or natural elements to represent ideas or feelings.

Because the land represents freedom, Steinbeck gives contrasting descriptions of the natural landscape and the ranch where Lennie and George work for most of the novella. In doing so, he shows us what the land means to these men – it **symbolises** their dream.

The Californian landscape is described as follows:

'A stilted heron laboured up into the air'.

> Evening of a hot day started the little wind to moving among the leaves. The shade climbed up the hills toward the top. On the sand-banks the rabbits sat as quietly as little grey, sculptured stones. And then from the direction of the state highway came the sound of footsteps on crisp sycamore leaves. The rabbits hurried noiselessly for cover. A stilted heron laboured up into the air and pounded down river. (pp. 7–8)

Steinbeck describes the ranch in these terms:

> The bunk-house was a long, rectangular building. Inside, the walls were white-washed and the floor unpainted. In three walls, there were small, square windows and in the fourth, a solid door with a wooden latch. Against the walls were eight bunks … Over each bunk there was nailed an apple-box with the opening forward so that it made two shelves for the personal belongings of the occupant of the bunk. (p. 20)

Steinbeck also uses direct contrast to show the difference between inside and outside:

> Although there was evening brightness showing through the windows of the bunk-house, inside it was dusk. (p. 37)

Over to you

1. Which of the first two descriptions sounds more appealing to you: the Californian landscape or the ranch? Why? What could this suggest about Lennie and George?
2. Note the personification of the shade in the first description: it 'climbed up the hills'. Choose one natural element and write a one-sentence description of it, using personification.

3 Create a table showing the adjectives and adverbs used in the descriptions of the Californian landscape and inside the ranch.

- What do you notice about the two lists?
- Which words are more interesting?
- What might this suggest?

4 John Steinbeck uses a simile to describe the rabbits, sitting 'as quietly as little grey, sculptured stones'. Choose a native Australian animal and describe it using a simile.

5 Looking at the final excerpt, explain what the difference between the bright light outside and the 'dusk' inside might symbolise for Lennie and George.

Sensory appeals

Novelists are often able to show a character's connection to a particular place by using appeals to the senses. They use smell, sight, touch, taste and sound to create a sense of the place and how a character feels about it. In Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's novel *The Conch Bearer*, the main character, Anand, is unhappy about having to work at a tea stand to help support his family. When an old man named Abhaydatta offers him a challenge – to help him on his journey to the Silver Valley to return a powerful, magical conch to its rightful owners – the quest sounds exciting to Anand. The descriptions of the landscape reflect his feelings, both through the use of contrast, and through sensory appeals.

What smells, sounds and tastes can you imagine in this scene?

Abhaydatta describes the Silver Valley to Anand in the following way:

> The Silver Valley! Even now it is the most beautiful place in the world, protected by the jagged, icy swords of the mountains that form a ring around it. Only a few people know the secret passes that lead into its fragrant groves and the shining lakes of clearest water from which it takes its name. (p. 24)

Shining lakes of clearest water

This vision is compared to life as Anand knows it working at a tea stall:

> With the children's laughter echoing in his ears, he closed his eyes and clenched his fists. *I want my life to change*, he said fiercely inside his head, holding his breath until he grew dizzy, putting all his strength into the wish and launching it from him the way an archer sends forth an arrow. He could feel it speed across the sky … The sense of contact was so strong that Anand's body jerked backward from the impact. He opened his eyes, expecting to see *something* … But all that lay in front of him was the familiar stretch of dirty pavement with rotting garbage piled along the gutter. p. (9)

Over to you

1 Make a list of all the sensory appeals used in these two passages.

- Of these appeals, which ones are positive and which are negative?
- What does this tell us about the way Anand feels about each setting?

2 Choose a landscape and think about how you could describe it both positively and negatively. Create a table showing the sensory appeals you would use to describe it in each way. An example is provided below:

Landscape: the beach	Positive	Negative
Smell	Fresh, salty air	Rotting seaweed
Sound		
Sight		
Touch		
Taste		

Sentence structure

To revise independent and dependent clauses, go to page 8.

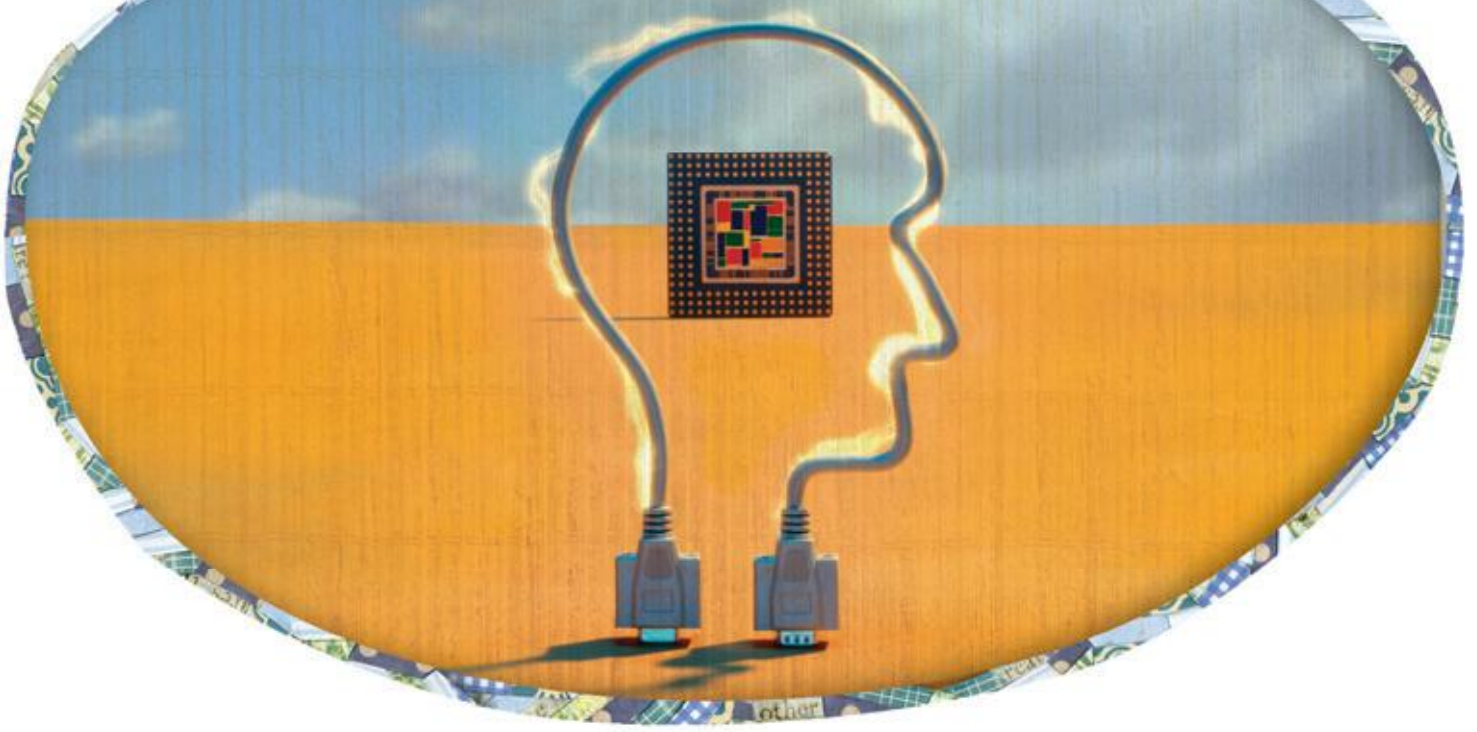
The way we read a text is affected by how the author has structured their sentences. For example, in the final extract on page 232, Steinbeck places the independent clause 'inside it was dusk' after the dependent clause 'Although there was evening brightness showing through the windows of the bunk-house'. He could have reversed the order and begun with 'Inside it was dusk', but this would have shifted the focus from brightness to dusk.

Authors also sometimes deliberately ignore grammatical conventions in order to create a sense of voice and represent a specific character. Look at some of the excerpts in this chapter to see how writers vary their sentences for added effect. For example, Steinbeck chooses to open his description of the Californian landscape with 'Evening of a hot day started the little wind to moving among the leaves', rather than the grammatically correct: 'On the evening of a hot day the little wind started to move among the leaves' (see page 232). This creates a very relaxed picture of the environment. Also, this sentence structure reflects the informal speech of the American characters in the novel – the speech of the ordinary man.

Similarly, although we don't usually use a conjunction at the beginning of a sentence, Steinbeck opens a sentence in the same paragraph with the conjunction 'and', which helps to create a more relaxed feel, as of someone speaking casually. This makes sense, given he is describing the landscape in which Lennie and George feel most comfortable.

Over to you

Write an introductory paragraph of a novel, using a range of sensory appeals to create a sense of landscape. Think carefully about how you could use different sentence structures to engage your readers. (You will draw on this introduction in Assessment Task 4 on page 251.)



5.4 How can a *multimodal text* explore the link between landscape and identity?

While written texts use words to paint a picture of a landscape and how people relate to it, multimodal texts use a combination of words, images and sounds to explore the relationship between people and place. When we see a landscape, we might have a particular idea of who 'belongs' there. For instance, images and sounds of a busy city centre might make us think of someone wearing a business suit; while we might have trouble imagining the same person wearing a business suit while wandering dusty outback plains.

Similarly, a soundtrack of car horns and pedestrian crossings makes us think of the city, but it would be strange to hear waves crashing and rumbling while we looked at an image of urban skyscrapers.

The reason why some sounds and images 'work' with a particular landscape, while others seem strange, is because we 'read' the landscape, whether we are aware of this or not. Multimodal texts, because they appeal so strongly to our senses, often bring strong images, feelings or memories into our minds based on our own experiences. We might describe them as evocative for this reason.

Language focus

The word **evocative** is an adjective used to describe something that conjures up strong feelings, thoughts, memories or images. Particular descriptions might **evoke** memories of our childhood (see also page 34), or we might discuss the **evocation** of certain memories as a result of reading a passage.

Over to you

1 Look at the images on this page. For each setting:
   - Give a description of the sounds you would expect to hear.
   - Then, create a character who you think would be likely to live in this setting. Give them a name and describe their clothing. Make comments about their personality traits and how these qualities are linked to the landscape.

2 Think of a film you have seen recently where you felt that a character truly belonged to their landscape. How did you get this impression? Discuss this with a partner.

How can a film show us about the link between landscape and identity?

The Australian film *Bran Nue Dae* (2010) is set in 1960s Broome, a place well known for the different cultures that can be found there. Jimmy Chi, who wrote the stage musical on which the film was based, was born there. The mixture of cultures in Broome is largely linked to the landscape. It was (and still is) a place popular for pearl traders, and people came to work there from Southeast Asia and Europe, bringing a strong Catholic influence. Many of these workers married members of the Aboriginal community.

Bran Nue Dae director Rachel Perkins says of her film:

> I hope that it becomes another voice in the conversation about what Australia is about. Because, ultimately, cinema reflects the stories of a people and a country and there are many voices in Australia and *Bran Nue Dae* is one of them.

Broome: diversity and community

Bearing all this in mind, let's look at how the creators of the film have used elements such as costumes, composition and props to try to show audiences the link between landscape and identity.

Costumes

We 'read' clothing just as we 'read' the landscape, and the clothing that costume designers choose for actors to wear in films is designed to tell us something about those characters. The designers rely on us to use our prior knowledge and experiences to 'read' a character's clothing.

Language focus
A **still** is a single shot from a movie.

Over to you

1 In the still above, we can see how various groups have been represented in one shot. In pairs, group the characters according to their clothing.
   - How many different groups can you identify?
   - How does the clothing they wear help us to understand the characters?

2 Imagine you are going to make a film set in a location you know well, such as a local shopping centre or sports club. Create a storyboard, illustrating how you would use costumes to show us something about the different people who inhabit the space.

Composition

The composition of a shot – what is included and where people are positioned – can tell us a lot. In the shot above, for instance, members of the various different 'groups' (Catholic Church personnel, the hippies, the local Aboriginal people, the rock-and-rollers) are all mixed in together and dancing to the same music. This might suggest that this place is diverse, but that the groups do combine to form a community. Dancing in front of the Roebuck Bay Hotel perhaps suggests that the hotel is a significant community site. The name of the hotel also reflects the importance of the landscape; being situated close to the sea is one of the reasons why Broome contains so many different cultural groups.

Does Father Benedictus look like he belongs in this setting?

Props

Films and plays also use props to give us extra information about the identity of the characters. In the still above, the creators of *Bran Nue Dae* have used props that seem out of place against the landscape in order to create a humorous picture of Father Benedictus. We can get a lot of information about this character, even without knowing much about him beforehand.

Over to you

1 Looking at the still above, think about other images you have seen that are set in a similar landscape.

- What would you normally expect to see in the foreground of the picture?
- Does your experience of seeing these other images make the one above look odd to you? Why or why not?

2 Using the composition of the shot, as well as the props and costume, what can you learn about Father Benedictus? Does he look like he belongs in the setting?

3 What defines whether or not we belong in a place? Should it be as simple as what we wear and what we do? Discuss this with a partner.

How can a picture book show us about the link between landscape and identity?

Sometimes, texts will explore the effect that identities have on the landscape, as well as the other way around. One such text is Jeannie Baker's picture book *Where the Forest Meets the Sea*. In this multimodal text, the images combine with the written text to explore the relationship between people and the natural landscape.

To revise narrative voice, go to page 40.

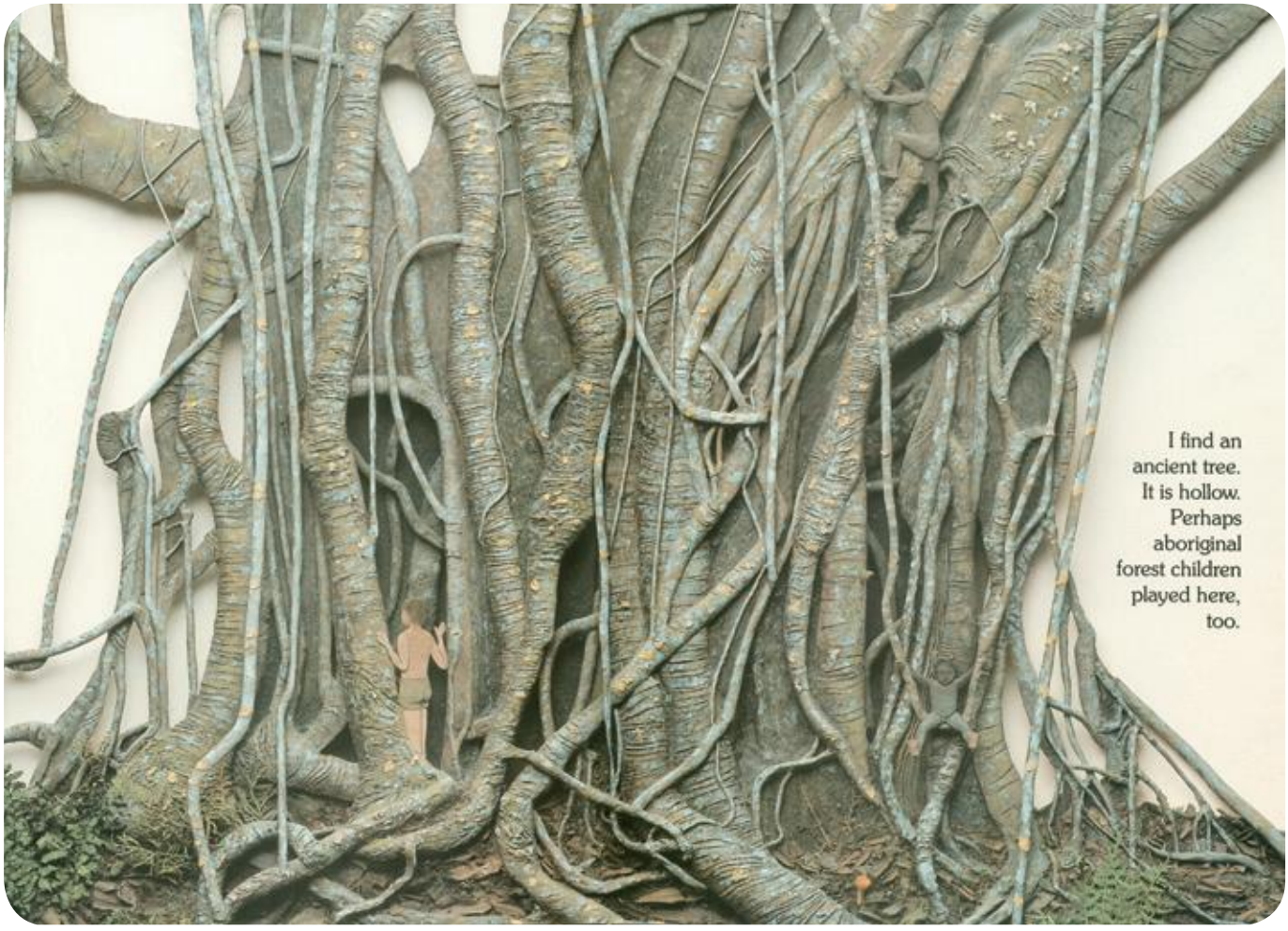
Narrative voice and point of view

In this text, a boy and his father visit a place that is only accessible by boat. The boy narrates the story, so the reader sees things through his eyes as he visits the place for the first time. The images are often drawn from his perspective: we see things as he sees them. However, the images are at times drawn from someone else's point of view, as though there are beings in the forest watching the boy and his father, such as in the one below. This, combined with the shadowy, translucent figures of Aboriginal people, included throughout, creates the sense that the forest has a history, and is inhabited.

In the images below and on the next page, notice how pale and conspicuous the boy is. While the Aboriginal people seem almost at one with the landscape, the boy does not fit in – he stands apart.

Language focus

Translucent is an adjective meaning 'semi-transparent'. We can see shadows and light through it, but not clear images.



Texture

Baker uses collage, which means that her images are made up of layers. The tree in the above image appears to be a photograph, and the people have been stuck on top of it. The written text – particularly the word 'perhaps' – encourages us to look more closely at the image, to see who might be hiding in the tree. We can also see the image of the boy, peering into the tangle, wondering who has been there before him.

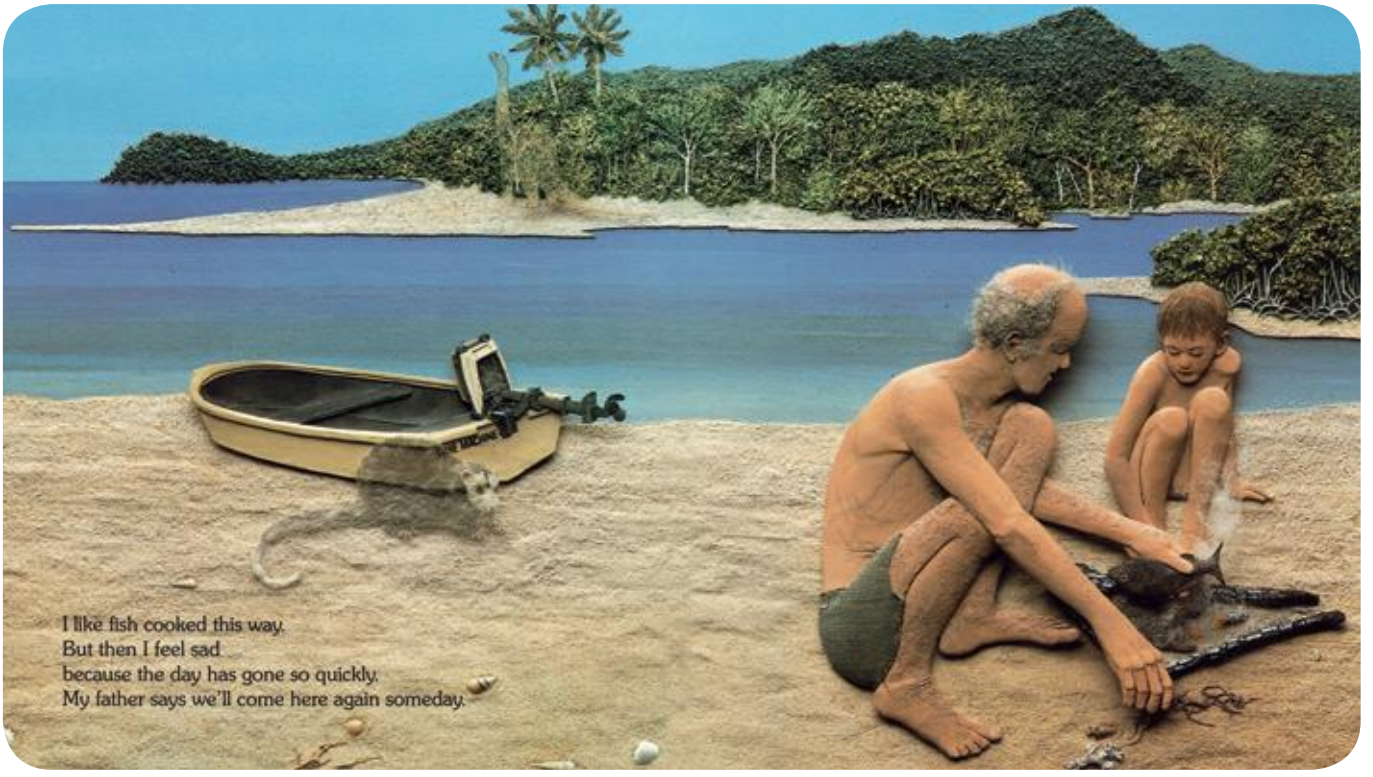
Over to you

1 What could Jeannie Baker be suggesting by using layers in her illustration; that is, by putting the natural elements in first, followed by the people?

2 What does the size of the people compared to the size of the tree suggest about our relationship with the landscape?

Contrast

At the end of the text, Baker contrasts two versions of the same landscape. The first shows the natural world. In the second, shadowy images of tourist development are superimposed. The boy wonders about the future of the place, and the reader ponders the same question: will the boy return to fish with his father, or to sit by a pool watching television?



Over to you

1 Look at the scenes on the previous page.

a Which do you prefer? Why?

b How do the images and the words in these two scenes combine to present a point of view?

c What point do you think Jeannie Baker is trying to make about the relationship between people and the landscape?

2 This is a children's picture book. Do you think it is only relevant to young children? Why do you think Baker has aimed the book at children? Discuss your responses to these questions with a partner.

3 As a class, discuss the following statement: 'Children's texts should not be used to explore adult issues.'

4 Create your own page of a picture book, based on your relationship with your surrounding landscape. Use natural materials or photographs to create texture to add meaning to the written text on the page. (You will draw on this page in Assessment Task 5 on page 251.)

5.5 How can a *poem* explore the link between landscape and identity?

To revise evocation, go to page 236.

In the previous chapters in this Part, we have explored the relationship between landscape and identity in a number of different forms of texts. Let's now look at a particular aspect of this relationship – what it means to be Australian – and how this can be explored through poetry. Because poetry can paint such an evocative picture of the landscape, it can be a powerful means by which we discover more about our relationship with the landscape, and about who we are and what is important to us.

When we consider what it means to be Australian, we have to acknowledge that this will vary from place to place, from person to person, and over time. In this chapter, we will look at different poems that focus on how the land relates to different visions of Australian identity.

The poems we will explore show us what the landscape means to the poets who have written about it. They give insights into the many different ways we see and relate to the world around us, and help us understand more about how the landscape shapes our identity.

How can a poem show us about the link between landscape and identity?

Many poets choose to explore the relationship between landscape and identity. In some cases, however, it might be more difficult to see this link than it would be in a novel. For instance, in a novel, we would look at how a character interacts with the landscape in order to understand the relationship. However, a poem about landscape may not contain a 'character'. This means that we might instead have to analyse the relationship between the narrator of the poem and the landscape.

To help us understand this relationship, we can look at the poetic devices that have been used. Just as filmmakers use devices such as costumes to add to our understanding of characters and their situations, poets use language features to help us understand their subject matter better.

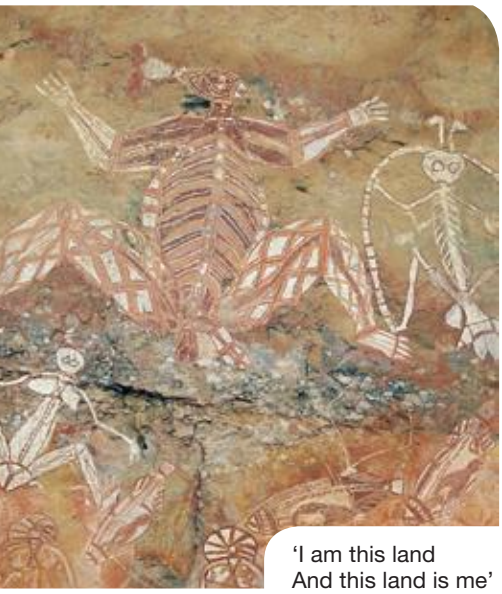
To revise narrative voice, go to page 40.

Many of these features are also used by the authors of other types of texts. We have seen, for example, how authors of different types of texts make choices about narrative voice, about using particular similes or metaphors, and about a range of sentence structures. As we shall see, poets draw on these features, as well as some that are mainly used by poets, such as rhyme and rhythm.

Poets can combine a range of language features to paint a picture of the landscape in ways that help bring it to life and help us to understand it in new ways.

How would you paint this landscape using words?

Consider the following poem by Hyllus Maris. In Aboriginal culture the relationship between people and the landscape is explored through stories of the Dreaming. In most of these stories, the Ancestral Beings created life and the landscape. Once they had done this, they transformed into aspects of the land to form sacred sites. As the poem below shows, these sacred sites make the relationship of Aboriginal people to the landscape an ongoing and spiritual one.



'I am this land
And this land is me'

Spiritual Song of the Aborigine

I am a child of the Dreamtime People
Part of this land, like the gnarled gumtree
I am the river, softly singing
Chanting our songs on my way to the sea
My spirit is the dust-devils
Mirages, that dance on the plain
I'm the snow, the wind and the falling rain
I'm part of the rocks and the red desert earth
Red as the blood that flows in my veins
I am eagle, crow and snake that glides
Through the rainforest that clings to the mountainside
I awakened here when the earth was new
There was emu, wombat, kangaroo
No other man of a different hue
I am this land
And this land is me
I am Australia.

Over to you

1 In 'Spiritual Song of the Aborigine', Hyllus Maris uses a simile that describes the desert earth as being as 'red as the blood that flows in my veins'.

- What are the connotations of the word 'blood'?
- What does this comparison suggest about the narrator's relationship with the land?

To revise connotations, go to page 135.

2 How has Maris used metaphor to show the connection between Aboriginal Australians and the land, Australia?

How would living a nomadic life change your identity?

Language focus

If we describe someone or something as being **iconic**, it means that they are seen as typical, or representative of something.

One iconic Australian identity is that of the stockman, herding sheep or cattle from place to place. His identity is based on a close relationship with the land – he moves animals to new pastures when the resources in one area are running low. The poem 'Shifting Camp', by Rex Ingamells, explores the relationship between stockmen and the land:

Shifting Camp

Glint of gumtrees in the dawn,
so million coloured: bush wind-borne
magpie-music, rising, falling;
and voices of the stockmen calling.

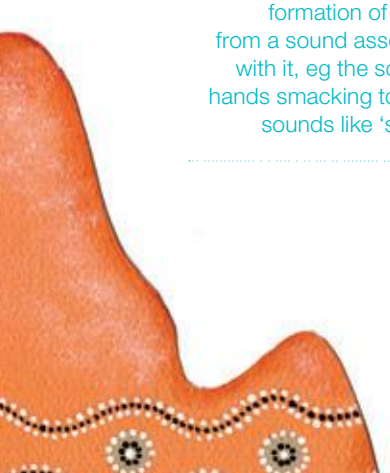
Bellowing of cattle: stamping,
impatient of the place of camping:
bark of dogs, and the crack-crack-crack
of stockwhips as we take the track.

Neighing of night-rested mounts …
This is a day that really counts:
a day to ride with a hundred head,
and a roll of canvas – that's my bed.

Over to you

Onomatopoeia is the formation of a word from a sound associated with it, eg the sound of hands smacking together sounds like 'smack'.

1. Words that are named after the sounds they make are examples of **onomatopoeia**. Look at all the instances of onomatopoeia in the poem 'Shifting Camp' and suggest how they help to create a picture of the environment.
2. Think of the life of the narrator of the poem 'Shifting Camp'. In pairs, discuss the impact it would have on your identity if you had to live a nomadic life like this, constantly moving from place to place.
3. As a class, debate the topic: 'A nomadic way of life is more interesting than a settled life.'



Rhyming scheme and rhythm

To revise rhyming schemes, go to page 57.

Stanzas are groupings of words or lines in poetry. They are sometimes called **verses**.

Poets draw on language features such as rhyming scheme and rhythm that are not commonly used in prose texts. These features give poems their distinctive appearance and sound, and also contribute to the ways in which a poet can explore ideas. Poets often use the same rhyming scheme in each **stanza**.

In 'Shifting Camp', on the previous page, Ingamells uses the rhyme scheme AABB and so on. This is because the first and second lines rhyme ('dawn' and 'borne' are the 'A' rhyme), and the third and fourth lines rhyme ('falling' and 'calling' are the 'B' rhyme). In this poem, the rhyming scheme creates a strong and repetitive rhythm.

Rhythm is the way in which sounds are arranged in a poem and the way those sounds, or beats, make us read the poem. Sometimes, the rhythm is designed to reflect what is actually happening in the poem. Because 'Shifting Camp' is about people who are always on the move, it adds impact if the rhythm also keeps the reader on the move. In this case, the momentum created by the rhythm and the rhyming scheme mirrors the experience of the stockmen, as they move from camp to camp.

Over to you

The poem 'Shifting Camp' describes the sounds of the bush. Using the same rhyming scheme as the poet has used, add two more stanzas that describe some of the smells you would expect the narrator to experience in this setting.

Language focus

Free verse is poetry that does not rhyme and has no fixed rhythm.

Just as some poets use formal rhyming schemes and strict rhythm to add to the picture their words paint, other poets deliberately use free verse to create a picture of a less structured landscape.

One part of the Australian landscape that is often associated with a relaxed lifestyle is the coast. Judith Wright's poem 'The Surfer' uses free verse to explore the relationship between identity and landscape.

How does the sea affect the surfer's identity?

The Surfer

He thrust his joy against the weight of the sea;
climbed through, slid under those long banks of
foam –
(hawthorn hedges in spring, thorns in the face stinging).
How his brown strength drove through the hollow and coil
of green-through weirs of water!
Muscle of arm thrust down long muscle of water;
and swimming so, went out of sight
where mortal, masterful, frail, the gulls went wheeling
in air as he in water, with delight.

Turn home, the sun goes down; swimmer, turn home.
Last leaf of gold vanishes from the sea-curve.
Take the big roller's shoulder, speed and serve;
come to the long beach home like a gull diving.

For on the sand the grey-wolf sea lies, snarling,
cold twilight wind splits the waves' hair and shows
the bones they worry in their wolf-teeth. O, wind blows
and sea crouches on sand, fawning and mouthing;
drops there and snatches again, drops and again snatches
its broken toys, its whitened pebbles and shells.

Over to you

1 How does the title of Judith Wright's poem reflect the link between someone's identity and the landscape?

2 Look at the use of personification in the first two stanzas, where the 'muscle' and 'shoulder' of the wave are described. What image does this give us of the water?

3 Twice in the poem the surfer is compared to gulls. What does this suggest about the relationship between him and his environment?

4 Look at the extended metaphor in the final stanza, where the sea is described as a grey wolf.

a Make a list of all the verbs used to describe the sea in this stanza. Are they verbs we would normally associate with water?

b What kind of picture do these verbs paint of the sea? Choose three adjectives to describe the image you have in your mind of the sea after reading this poem.

While there are many traditional views of the Australian landscape and its natural inhabitants, it is also important to consider what Australia looks like through the eyes of people who have moved here more recently. Many immigrants talk about the unusual look of the Australian landscape and fauna in comparison to what they were used to seeing, as we saw in the case of Romulus Gaita (see page 223).

One poem that explores this idea is 'Australia' by Melbourne-based poet Ania Walwicz, who came to Australia from Poland in 1963, when she was 13. In the following excerpt, notice how Walwicz has chosen sentence structures that reflect the speech patterns of someone for whom English is a second language.

Australia – a prose poem

You big ugly. You too empty. You desert with your nothing nothing nothing. You scorched suntanned. Old too quickly. Acres of suburbs watching the telly. You bore me. Freckle silly children. You nothing much.

With your big sea. Beach beach beach. I've seen enough already. You Dumb dirty city with bar stools. You're ugly. You silly shoppingtown. You copy. You too far everywhere. You laugh at me. When I came this woman gave me a box of biscuits. You try to be friendly but you're not very friendly.

You never ask me to your house. You insult me. You don't know how to be with me. Road road tree tree. I came from crowded and many. I came from rich. You have nothing to offer. You're poor and spread thin. You big. So what. I'm small. It's what's in.

This poem shows how others see us. It also reminds us just how much our identity is shaped by our relationship with a particular country and place.

Over to you

1. Identify examples of where Ania Walwicz breaks the conventions of grammar, and suggest and how and why she has done so.
2. Rewrite the first stanza, using conventional grammar. Share your stanza with the class and discuss which version is more interesting and effective.
3. Find clues in the poem that help you identify its tone, and think of several adjectives to describe how the poet is feeling.
4. Copy out all the lines that refer to the Australian landscape. Use them to write a summary of the narrator's view of the Australian landscape.
5. What point does Walwicz make about the relationship between our view of the land and our experiences?
6. Each poem in this chapter has presented a different view of the relationship between the Australian landscape and identity. Referring to the poems, write an essay reflecting on how they help us understand what it means to be Australian.

big ideas

How do literary texts show WHO we are and WHAT is important to us?

For suggestions on how to plan, draft, edit and proofread your texts, refer to 'How can I improve my writing?' on page 252

5.1 How are literary texts and identity *connected*?

write and create

1 Look back at Activity 2 on page 219, where you thought about characters who would exist in a place familiar to you.

- Choose one of these characters and write a biographical article about them.
- Show how aspects of their identity have been shaped by their experiences in this setting. For example, you could discuss their relationships, social life, work, sports, etc.
- Include a photograph or illustration that links them to their landscape.

5.2 How can an *autobiography* explore the link between landscape and identity?

write

2 Choose a particular landscape you are familiar with and fond of and write two descriptive passages in an autobiographical style:

- Write one from your perspective, showing your connection with the land.
- Write the other from the perspective of someone new to Australia who sees the landscape with less fondness.

3 Revisit the table you created for Activity 2a on page 227, where you listed verbs you could use to personify elements of your surrounding landscape. Choose one of these elements and write a short passage in which you use personification to show the impact this element has had on you.

5.3 How can a *novel* explore the link between landscape and identity?

write

4 Refine and edit the introductory paragraph of a novel you created for the Activity at the bottom of page 235 using a range of sensory appeals, and then add two additional paragraphs. Think carefully about your language choices and how you will structure your sentences to create a sense of landscape and a character's relationship to it.

5.4 How can a *multimodal text* explore the link between landscape and identity?

write and create

5 Develop the page you created for Activity 4 on page 243 into a full picture book based on your relationship with your surrounding landscape. Use drawings, photographs or other images to explore the impact your environment has had on your identity.

5.5 How can a *poem* explore the link between landscape and identity?

write

6 Using the following 'recipe', create a poem of at least three stanzas based on the landscape. Your poem should include the following 'ingredients':

- a rhyme scheme of AABB
- personification
- a simile
- at least two sensory appeals
- onomatopoeia.

How can I improve my writing?

Throughout *Oxford Big Ideas English 8*, you will have many opportunities to practise writing more effectively. You will do this when creating a range of different texts for different purposes and audiences. The information in this section will help you to refine and improve your writing, whether it is to be in print or digital form, before submitting it for assessment.

In this section you will also find some sample responses to tasks. Often, seeing an example makes things much easier to understand. Make sure you carefully read these examples before *planning* your own work.

All writers – however experienced they may be – revise their work many times, improving it with each change they make. There are many ways of improving upon texts. Sometimes slightly reordering the sequence of ideas or making topic sentences clearer can make all the difference. Always remember that anything worthwhile takes time to create.

The checklist below sets out some suggestions for improving the text you are creating. Bear in mind, however, that not all texts are the same, and what is appropriate for one text may not be appropriate for another.

What should I consider as I write?

ASK YOURSELF	CONSIDER	TICK	HINTS/EXAMPLES
Is my text suitable for its purpose and audience?	Use features that are appropriate to the type of text you are writing. Write with your audience in mind.		If you are writing a letter, have you used the correct layout? If you are writing a narrative, do you have a consistent narrative voice?
Have I used the appropriate form of English?	Always keep your audience and purpose in mind when choosing between formal and informal English.		In a speech, have you used a good balance of formal and informal expressions? In a newspaper report, have you used formal language and avoided being casual and informal?
Is my tone appropriate?	The tone you use is an important part of getting your meaning across. Using the correct tone will ensure that your readers will not be confused about your intentions.		A sarcastic tone may be suitable in a letter to the editor, but not in a news report. Humour may be appropriate when you write a speech for a friend's birthday party, but not when you write a job application letter.
Is my text clearly expressed?	Having a clear purpose for every sentence and paragraph helps to get your ideas across clearly. Is there a way you could refine and clarify your work to improve its effectiveness?		Will your meaning be clear to a reader unfamiliar with the subject? Have you used a broad, interesting and relevant vocabulary? Have you used a range of sentence types? For an imaginative text, have you used imagery such as similes, metaphors and symbols to create a picture with words?
	Write in a way that will encourage your readers to continue reading.		A strong opening sentence can hook your readers, making them want to read further.
	Sometimes less is more. Concise texts are much more effective and are likely to stick in your readers' minds.		Do all the words and phrases you use add something to your meaning? If not, remove any that are not necessary.

Is my text clearly structured?	Your ideas and points of discussion should be presented in a clear and logical order. If you think there is room for improvement, experiment with the structure of your text to clarify ideas and improve the effectiveness of your text. If you are writing an essay, you should ensure you have a clear introduction and conclusion. These are essential to making your intentions clear to your reader.		If you are writing an informative print text or a text expressing a point of view, does each paragraph have a separate point and a clear topic sentence? Are the paragraphs in the most logical order? Have you used a range of cohesive devices to link your sentences and paragraphs? If appropriate, would headings and bullet points make your text clearer?

What do editing and proofreading a text involve?

Everything you do to improve a text is usually referred to as **editing**, which means going over material you have already written to make *adjustments* rather than *corrections*. Editing your work can make all the difference, allowing you to transform something you have written from ordinary to extraordinary.

Once you've edited your text, the next step is to **proofread** it to carefully check spelling, grammar and punctuation. (The verb 'to proofread' means 'to read proofs'. 'Proofs' are the sets of pages provided to authors before a book is printed so that they can make any final corrections.) The following is a checklist of some of the things you might look for.

Word choice and vocabulary

ASK YOURSELF	CONSIDER	TICK	HINTS/EXAMPLES
Have I chosen the best possible words to express my ideas?	Go over your work and change words if you think a different word will be more effective or clearer for your reader.		Replace clichés with something more meaningful.
	Have you used the same verbs or adjectives too much? Making use of a broad vocabulary will make your work more interesting. Remember, a badly written text can prevent the reader from appreciating its message.		Use more specific verbs and nouns, adjectives or adverbs. Address overused words and repetitive writing. Use modal verbs to indicate possibility and certainty. Consider using nominalisation to convey complex ideas. Choose a range of appropriate language techniques to add impact to your text.

Spelling

ASK YOURSELF	CONSIDER	TICK	HINTS/EXAMPLES
Have I checked my work using a dictionary or spellchecker?	Use a dictionary to ensure that you are using new words correctly and that you are spelling them correctly.		Read the various definitions for a word if there are several. Are you using the right word in the right way?
	Spellcheckers that come with word processing programs are useful but limited; they do not replace the regular use of a good dictionary.		Select the 'English (Australian)' dictionary option rather than the default 'English (US)' before you begin writing. To test whether the spellchecker is correct, type any word ending in '-ise', such as 'realise'. Spellcheckers using the American dictionary will automatically use an '-ize' ending instead of '-ise'.

Have I used words correctly?	Spellcheckers will not pick up every mistake.		Spellcheckers may not indicate if you have used the incorrect version of many common homophones (words that sound the same but are spelled differently), such as there/they're/their or its/it's.
	Spellcheckers will not pick up simple typographical errors as long as the words make some sort of sentence.		A spellchecker will accept the following sentence (bold words are incorrect even though the spell checker accepted them): *The filmmakers were able to **drawer** on visual language and special **affect snot** available to a novelist.*
	Synonyms (words that have similar meanings) may have *slightly* different meanings. When you are searching for a synonym in a thesaurus, check its exact meaning in a dictionary to ensure you are using the correct word.		Compare the difference in meaning in the following sentences, both of which contain synonyms for the adjective 'big': *My dog Rufus is **large**.* *My dog Rufus is **great**.*

Punctuation

ASK YOURSELF	CONSIDER	TICK	HINTS/EXAMPLES
Have I placed punctuation correctly?	Punctuation is a guide to your readers. Using incorrect punctuation may cause misunderstanding. Placing punctuation in the wrong spot can change the meaning of a sentence.		*My sister, Trishna, is a singer.* (I have one sister, whose name is Trishna. She is a singer.) *My sister Trishna is a singer.* (I have more than one sister, and the one named Trishna is a singer.)
Have I ended my sentences correctly, and in the most effective way?	Understand the use of punctuation conventions, including colons, semicolons, dashes and brackets in formal and informal texts. Commas are used to separate clauses and phrases within a sentence. A single comma is usually used at the end of a dependent clause, before an independent clause. A comma is usually placed at the beginning and end of an embedded clause. Dashes are sometimes used instead of commas. A semicolon often separates independent clauses that make sense on their own, but also belong together. Colons are used to introduce long lists. Parentheses – or round brackets – are sometimes used to enclose extra information within a sentence.		Examples: *Before going to school, Charlie took her dog for a walk.* *Before going to school, after she had had her breakfast, Charlie took her dog for a walk.* *Before going to school – after she had had her breakfast – Charlie took her dog for a walk.* *Charlie took her dog for a walk; she was glad when it was over.* *Charlie's dog liked most foods: dog biscuits, steak and pumpkin.* *Charlie fed her dog a variety of foods; the dog had sophisticated tastebuds.* *Charlie's dog ate a wide range of foods, and a lot of it (and was frequently sick because of it!).*
	Exclamation marks are useful to show the reader the tone of the sentence.		Be careful not to overuse them, however, as they lose their impact. You also only need to use one at a time!

Have I used quotation marks (speech marks) at the beginning and end of what someone has said?	When indicating what a character in a story has said (direct speech), use quotation marks to indicate where speech begins and ends.		Example: *Anna laughed as the dog licked her face, crying out, 'Get this crazy puppy off me, Costa!'* *Costa replied, 'Awww, he's only playing.'*
	Use quotation marks to indicate you have used the *exact words* that someone else has written or said.		Example: *After winning the football match, the player said he was 'totally pumped'.*
Have I used apostrophes correctly to show possession and contractions?	Always think of the function of the apostrophe in your sentence.		Apostrophes can express possession. For example: *This is Henry's cap.* (Henry owns the cap) Apostrophes also indicate a contraction (the removal of letters): *it's = it is* (the second 'i' has been removed) *don't = do not* (the second 'o' has been removed)

Using ICT effectively

ASK YOURSELF	CONSIDER	TICK	HINTS/EXAMPLES
Have I used the appropriate ICT to create and edit my work?	Using a computer word processing program can help the process of creating your piece immensely.		In a print text, using a clear, legible font at the appropriate size will mean your readers can access your text easily.
	Using the right software or word processing program for your text is important. Would your text be more effective and accessible if you had produced it using a different program?		For example, a multimodal text with lots of images, such as a graphic novel or comic strip, could be created using Microsoft Pain or a similar imaging program, rather than a word processor. A hand-drawn image could also be scanned and included in a text document.
	Compared to writing work out by hand, using a word processor allows quick and easy editing. You can use it to restructure and refine your ideas.		A computer spellchecker will help you to locate and fix errors. You can delete words or passages quickly and cleanly, as well as cutting and pasting chunks of texts to help with the structure, flow and clarity of your text.
Have I used the best ICT options to publish my work?	Is there a more imaginative way you could present your work? When delivering a speech, consider creating an accompanying PowerPoint presentation.		A pie chart/graph showing the amount of shopping done online by Australians in 2001 compared to 2011 could accompany a news report on the impact of online shopping on retailers.
	Create a multimodal text by combining written and visual language. Using ICT makes this relatively easy and convenient, and can make your work more imaginative and effective.		Consider including electronic images such as photographs, cartoons, drawings and other graphics in your work to illustrate an idea or reinforce a point.
	Is there a way you could publish your work more authentically?		If you have written a blog post, for example, actually posting it online would mean it reaches the intended audience more effectively. Consider using free, existing software, such as WordPress, a blog tool and publishing platform.

Sample responses

Sample response 1

From Part 2, page 95, task 9

Task instruction

Select a literary text (such as Li Cunxin's *Mao's Last Dancer*) and a multimodal adaptation of that text, and write an essay comparing the two. Present your opinion on whether one version is more effective than the other.

Student-selected literary text

Holes (novel), Louis Sachar (1998); *Holes* (film), Louis Sachar (screenwriter) and Andrew Davis (dir.) (2003)

Student response

Introduces both texts in introduction

Suggests similarities between the texts

Good use of metalanguage and discussion of features of multimodal texts

The literary text *Holes* is a novel by Louis Sachar, written in 1998. It was adapted into a film in 2003. Both texts tell the story of Stanley Yelnats, a boy who is wrongly convicted of stealing and sent to Camp Green Lake Juvenile Correctional Facility. Both versions are full of humour and action, and both explore the ideas of self-confidence, honour, friendship, racism and fate. It is difficult to say which version is more effective because they each do different things better. The film is able to show the desert location much more effectively because of setting, lighting and the way it is filmed. It also captures the excitement and wildness of the boys, especially through the soundtrack. However, the film adaptation is less effective than the novel in exploring how Stanley grows and changes, and this is one of the most important aspects of the story.

The film adaptation is able to make the most of setting, lighting and different camera shots and angles to present a vivid setting for the story. In the novel the desert surrounding Camp Green Lake is described as 'desolate', 'barren' and a 'wasteland'. Although these are evocative words, they are not as effective as seeing the huge desert, as we do in the film. The opening of the film uses shots from a helicopter to show the size and sameness of the desert. The bus, which is taking Stanley to Camp Green Lake, and the road are shown as tiny and vulnerable. Later in the film, when the boys are digging holes, the heat can be seen in close-up shots of the sweat and dirt running down their faces. These scenes are also brightly lit, either by the real desert sun or lighting, to show how harsh the conditions are. When Stanley goes after Zero into the desert, the distance and heat are shown in hazy, low-angle shots. Because it is a multimodal text, the film is able to capture the atmosphere and environment much more effectively.

The film adaptation also creates a strong sense of the boys at Camp Green Lake, especially those in Group D. In the novel, it takes a while for the reader to learn who the different characters are and what they're like: although they have nicknames, they don't really help to tell the boys apart. In the film, the boys all look different: they're different ages, heights, builds and races. This

helps the audience to identify who they are. X-Ray, who is the leader of Group D, is also often positioned at the front of the group and in the centre of the group shots, so it is immediately, visually clear who is the leader. In the novel, X-Ray does most of the talking for Group D and is first in line for the water truck; these clues help us to identify him as the leader, but not as clearly. The music or soundtrack used in the film also helps to create a sense of mischief in the scenes where the boys are mucking around, when they steal Mr Sir's seeds and drive his into a hole. The loud country music makes it sound fun and breaks up the monotony of the digging. The novel isn't able to do this as effectively and these scenes remain quite tense.

One area where the novel is more effective than the film adaptation is showing the ways Stanley grows and changes during his time at Camp Green Lake. In the novel, he is overweight, self-conscious and shy. He was bullied at school and couldn't stand up for himself. While at the camp he becomes more confident, being accepted by the other boys and becoming physically stronger. However, the changes are not all for the better. Because he likes being part of the group, Stanley isn't kind to Zig-Zag or Zero, who asks him to teach him to read. Stanley refuses, saying 'my heart had hardened as well'. We understand what he's worried about because this is written in the first person. In the novel, it takes Stanley longer to realise that being honourable and a good friend are more important than being popular. In the film, Stanley is a tall, smart, average boy. Once he puts on the orange overalls, he seems to fit in straight away. We can see that he is unsure about becoming friends with X-Ray or Zero, but we don't really know why. The novel is also able to develop Stanley and Zero's friendship more because it has more time to show how it grows over time. In the film, Stanley's conflicting emotions are not shown, so when Stanley goes into the desert after Zero, it doesn't seem as big a deal or show the importance of friendship as effectively.

Concise analysis of character and characterisation

Good integration of quote from novel

Successfully concludes paragraph by linking back to opinion

The film adaptation of *Holes* is excellent. It includes most of the major ideas and events of the novel and, more importantly, effectively captures the atmosphere of Camp Green Lake and the mood of the boys. However, because it doesn't explore the problems Stanley faces or the changes he goes through in as much detail, in some ways it is not as effective as the novel.

Teacher comment

This essay has a clear structure, with introduction, three body paragraphs and a conclusion. The three arguments are outlined in the introduction and supported in the body of the essay with examples from both versions of *Holes*, including some quotes. The student's opinion is clearly expressed throughout; the essay doesn't include unnecessary explanation of plot or other characters, but focuses on the three arguments which support this opinion. There is some discussion of the features of the different text types, including specific examples of how multimodal features such as use of camera, lighting and setting are used. More specific examples of how Stanley and his friendship with Zero are depicted in the film would improve it.

Sample response 2

From Part 3, page 157, task 5b

Task instruction

Working individually, select one of the persuasive texts collected by the class in task 5a to examine more closely. Identify the purpose of the text, the point of view of the author, and how language is used to persuade the audience. Write up your findings in three or four paragraphs.

Student-selected persuasive text

Hollywood rule means audiences lose

Hamish Ford, 27 September 2011, opinion online, *The Age* (excerpt)

Film lovers today have never had it so good, with more movies from a greater range of countries being made than ever before.

Yet for any viewer who judges the state of contemporary cinema by what is released in Australia, it is a very different story. Yearning to see something interesting or intelligent on the big screen – in other words not violent, brainless Hollywood entertainment aimed at teenage boys – such audiences have become so desperate that they resort to praising a wheezy, frankly dreadful film like *The King's Speech*.

There are two distinctly different contemporary cinemas. The first is defined by the paltry selection of usually very conservative films on offer at our cities' theatres – titles that are almost invariably European when they're not from the US, with the occasional Chinese martial arts or period drama thrown in for colour. The second is a vibrant, incredibly diverse, and genuinely global cinema: an embarrassment of riches almost exclusively available via film festivals and digital format (DVD, Blu-ray, online).

There has, of course, always been a sizable gap between the world of film glimpsed at major festivals versus that on offer in town on a Friday night. But for some time now local cinemas have denied us what can rightfully be called 'cutting-edge', important, or simply wonderful films from all corners of the planet. No one walks into a bookshop and only selects from titles starting with A. But such is the absurd denuding of choice if viewers conflate contemporary cinema with the white-bread menu offered by ever more cautious Australian distributors.

Student response

This opinion piece by Hamish Ford presents the point of view that Australian cinemas usually only show American mainstream movies, and that people are missing out on seeing really good films. Its purpose is to make the audience think about what they can see at the cinema, and to make them angry or upset about it. They, or the Australian distributors, might then try to have a better variety of films available in cinemas. Ford's main arguments are that only 'violent, brainless Hollywood' movies are released in mainstream cinemas and world movies are only shown in festivals and on DVD or online. These arguments are persuasive because they make the reader think about the types of movies on at the cinema, and they are nearly all Hollywood action movies or romances. It makes the reader wonder why the films that are shown in festivals or in DVD shops aren't at regular cinemas too.

To persuade the reader to agree with him, Ford uses adjectives such as 'brainless', 'violent', 'paltry' and 'white-bread' to describe the Hollywood films. These words have negative connotations and make the films seem stupid, boring and weak. No one really wants to see stupid or weak films, so he could be trying to make the reader feel angry or frustrated. Ford contrasts these films with what he believes are better films, using the words 'vibrant', 'diverse', 'cutting-edge', 'important' and 'wonderful'. These words make the reader feel like they are missing something 'simply wonderful' that can only be 'glimpsed' by not having access to these films. Again, this could make them feel angry and more likely to agree with Ford's point of view.

Ford blames the 'conservative' films on 'cautious' Australian distributors, the people who decide what is shown in Australia and where. He doesn't blame the audiences, or 'film lovers'. This is more likely to make the reader agree with him, because they would prefer to be 'desperate' and 'yearning' for 'intelligent' entertainment, like Ford, rather than enjoy the same films as 'teenage boys' (unless the reader *is* a teenage boy).

Two examples are used to demonstrate Ford's argument: *The King's Speech* and only being able to choose books from authors beginning with the letter A. The first example is evidence, but not very good evidence: *The King's Speech* isn't a Hollywood film, or violent. It fits into his 'period drama' category but was very popular and won lots of awards, so this argument, which is really only his opinion, might make people who liked *The King's Speech* disagree with him. The second example uses exaggeration to suggest that the limited choice we have is totally ridiculous, because you would never just look at authors whose names begin with A.

Teacher comment

This response clearly outlines the purpose and point of view of the selected text. The arguments used by the author in presenting his point of view are summarised concisely, and the student has suggested how these are persuasive. The student has also discussed how language is used to persuade, identifying particular techniques, giving examples and explaining their effect on the audience. In some examples, the effect could be explained more specifically: for example, 'angry or frustrated' is vague. 'Cheated' or 'fooled' might be more effective.

Sample response 3

From Part 4, page 211, task 5

Task instruction

Imagine that you are adapting [picture book] *The Island* for the stage, and that you have chosen to give the stranger one speech in the play. Write the speech that he would give to the people on the island to convince them to let him stay.

Student response

The stranger [*quietly*]:

I understand that you are afraid. You think that I am so different to you, that I might hurt you, and that I will change your community. Please hear what I have to say and you will see that I am not so different, and that I don't want to cause you any trouble.

You think I am not like you. But please look more closely [*holds out arms, palms upwards*]. I have no clothes, no possessions or friends. This should make it easier for you to see that underneath or away from these things, I am just like you. I get cold, hungry, thirsty, afraid and lonely. I am a human being, not an animal. By taking me in, you have shown that you are compassionate people. Let me stay with you here and I will show you that I am also a kind person.

Some of you think that I will hurt you. Why would I do that, when I am all alone with nothing on your island in the middle of the ocean? You are my last chance of survival. I have come here because I was not safe in my own land. There is war there. Every day, innocent people I know are killed or put in prison; our homes and businesses are in ruins; there is no order or law and we don't know when it will end. I want to live somewhere where there is order and law, and where people can live and work in safety [*gestures to stage/setting*]. Your island is such a place and I would never hurt it.

Lastly, please consider the possibility that I might become a useful, valued member of your community. You can see that I have no tools or equipment, and that I am weak and tired. However, I have skills and knowledge that might benefit you. I know stories and songs that you've never heard before. I can cook food that you've never tasted. I may be different in some ways but sometimes difference and change can be positive, because they make things more interesting and exciting. I am different to you, but I am just like you. Please let me stay.

- Acknowledgement of the islanders' fears positions the stranger as reasonable and intelligent
- Clear structure: three main arguments are outlined at beginning and then elaborated upon in following paragraphs
- Polite and humble tone maintained throughout
- Attempt to evoke empathy in the islanders
- Effective use of ideas and imagery from the book
- Effectively appeals to the islanders' sense of themselves as good people
- Effective use of a rhetorical question
- Explanation of own experiences to provide context of why he fled his homeland
- Suggests positive consequences of his presence: perhaps more persuasive than focusing solely on their responsibilities
- Suggestion of some of the benefits of a multicultural society

Teacher comment

This response demonstrates an excellent understanding of the islanders' fears, as well as the broader reasons some societies are reluctant to accept refugees. The tone of the speech is humble and understanding, creating a non-threatening plea to the islanders' humanity and reason. The student uses persuasive techniques such as a rhetorical question, emotive language, and repetition to evoke empathy in the audience and explain the stranger's motives and desires successfully. The student uses irony in calling the islanders 'compassionate people'. The student also incorporates other ideas and images from *The Island* into the speech, such as the stranger being treated as an animal, the prison, and the stranger's apparent lack of skill or worth. This demonstrates the student's appreciation of how narrative texts can persuade and position us to view issues in a certain way.

Glossary of metalanguage terms

Abstract nouns	The words used to name feelings are described as abstract nouns. Abstract nouns name qualities, states or actions, such as 'shame' or 'hunger'.
Active verbs	Active verbs describe an action and who does it, eg 'My parents punished me.'
Adaptation	An adaptation is a work presented in a new form or **medium**. For example, when a novel is made into a film, picture book or graphic novel, it is called an adaptation.
Adjectives	Adjectives describe **nouns** and **pronouns**.
Adverbial phrases	Adverbial phrases tell us more about an **adverb**, for example 'so over' is an adverbial phrase ('over' is an adverb, defined by 'so').
Adverbs	Adverbs tell us more about a **verb**, an **adjective** or another adverb.
Alliteration	Alliteration is when several words that follow each other all begin with the same consonant sounds. It's sometimes used to add emphasis, or slow the reader down so they focus on particular words.
Allude	To allude is less precise than to *refer*. When we allude to another text, we do so indirectly.
Allusion	An allusion is a figure of speech that makes a reference to a literary work or a work of art, such as a painting. Usually, the reader or viewer is left to work out for themselves what the author means by including the allusion.
Ambiguous	Ambiguous means open to different interpretations.
Antonym	*see* **synonym**
Assertion	When we assert something, we are insisting that our point of view is the right one without giving a reason. An assertion is a statement that is presented as if it is correct.
Clause	A clause is a pair or group of words that must have a **noun** (or **pronoun**) and a **verb**.
Cliché	A cliché is an overused **phrase** or opinion, such as 'there are plenty more fish in the sea', 'at the end of the day' and 'it's been a rollercoaster ride'. The use of clichés suggests the writer or speaker hasn't thought about things very clearly or in any great depth.
Cohesion	Cohesion means to fit well together, or to be unified. Cohesive devices help a text fit together as a whole by encouraging the reader to make connections between different parts of the text and link ideas that are related. Cohesive devices can help make a text read more smoothly or fluently, and make more sense.
Colloquial language	Colloquial language is informal language, used in everyday speech. The informal language of particular groups in a country or area is sometimes called *vernacular language*.
Complex sentence	A complex sentence is made up of an **independent clause**, joined by one or more **dependent clauses**.

Compound sentence	A compound sentence communicates more than one idea and is made up of two or more **independent clauses** joined by a **conjunction**, eg: 'I hate my room **and** I even hate the paintwork.'
Conjunctions	Conjunctions usually connect similar words that are the same **part of speech** (such as two **nouns** or two **adjectives**), or connect two or more sentences. We do not usually begin a sentence with a conjunction.
Connotation	A connotation is an implied meaning that can paint the subject in either a flattering or an unflattering light. This is sometimes called 'loaded' language.
Dependent clause	A dependent clause adds meaning to an **independent clause**, but cannot stand alone.
Ellipsis	Points of ellipsis (…) indicate that words have been left out, or that more words are to follow.
Embedded clause	An embedded clause or **phrase** is one that helps to define and expand on other words in a sentence, eg 'Shoplifters *are a growing problem and* will be prosecuted'.
Emotive	The **adjective** 'emotive' is used to describe something (eg a word, photograph or memory) that evokes our emotions. It is different from the adjective 'emotional', which is used to describe a person feeling or displaying emotions.
Epilogue	An epilogue is a section at the end of a text that might make a comment about what has happened, or offer a conclusion.
Euphemism	A euphemism is the substitution of a mild or vague expression for a blunt expression that may offend.
Exclamation mark	We use exclamation marks to give emphasis. They can indicate that we are joking, surprised, or shocked, or that we are giving a command.
Explicit	Explicit means that something is clearly and directly stated. 'Explicitly' is the adverbial form.
Fable	A fable is a short story that *shows* us something about how we should behave without actually *telling* us.
Features	The feature of texts refer to the grammar of speech and writing, and the ways we use words: see also **structures**. Structures and features of texts include ways of organising text (eg narrative or verse), spelling, paragraphs, punctuation, layout, sentence structure, vocabulary, **tone**, rhythm and body language.
Figurative language	In figurative language, we use words and phrases in ways that differ from their everyday usage and literal meaning.
Flashbacks/flash-forwards	Some creators of print and multimodal texts use flashbacks and flash-forwards, where scenes are interjected in the story as a way of showing something that happened in the past, or something that is going to happen in the future.
Hyperbole	Hyperbole (pronounced hy-PER-bol*ee*) comes from the Greek word for 'exaggeration'. It means an exaggerated claim or statement that is not meant to be taken literally.
Imagery	Imagery refers to language that gives very rich visual descriptions, creating images in our minds
Implicit	Implicit is the opposite of **explicit**, and means that although something is not directly stated, it is implied and can be understood. 'Implicitly' is the adverbial form.
Independent clause	An independent clause is a clause that makes sense on its own.

Indirect speech	Indirect speech is sometimes called 'reported speech'. We use indirect speech when we report something that we or someone else said. We do not put indirect speech in quotation marks (speech marks).
Irony	When the outcome of our actions is actually the opposite of what we intended, this can be described as ironic. Irony is not always created by chance, however. Our tone might be described as ironic when we make our point by using language that normally has the opposite meaning.
Jargon	Jargon is the vocabulary of a particular profession or group.
Medium	A medium (plural: media) is the means by which a text is presented. Examples include pen, printing press and voice; electronic media, such as radio and television; and digital media, such as a computer.
Metaphor	A metaphor is a form of comparison where we say that one thing *is* another thing. We don't mean this literally (that is, we don't mean that it is actually the same thing).
Modality	Modality is when we add words to verbs such as *could*, *may* or *might*, or when we use **adjectives** such as *possible* or *probable*. We use such modality when we want to indicate that a point of view is *possible*, often before we go on to show why we do not agree with it. We can also use strong modal verbs such as *should*, *would* or *must* to indicate certainty.
Mode	Modes are the processes by which we communicate, such as reading, creating, viewing, speaking and listening.
Moral	A moral is a lesson about how we should live.
Multimodal	A multimodal text combines different **modes**. For example, a film is a multimodal text because it combines visual, spoken and sometimes written language.
Neutral	Neutral means having no particular preference. When we use a neutral tone, we don't show what we think.
Nominalisation	Nominalisation is the process of turning **verbs** into **abstract nouns**, often by adding a suffix. Nominalised words can end in '-ing', '-ation', '-ance' or '-ment'; eg suffer/suffering, explain/explanation, attend/attendance, achieve/achievement.
Non-finite verbs	Non-finite verbs begin with 'to' or end with '-ing' and describe ongoing action. They require a support auxiliary **verb**, such as *am*, *have*, *had*, *has*, *is*, *are*, *was*, *were* or *will*.
Nouns	Nouns name things, people, groups, places, qualities, states and activities.
Objective	Objective means 'uncoloured by feelings or opinions'. The opposite of **subjective**.
Parody	Parody not only draws on another text or type of text, it does so in ways that makes them look ridiculous. The verb form of the noun 'parody' is also 'parody'.
Passive voice	In the passive voice, the focus is on the action and it is not important – or not known – who or what is performing the action
Personification	Personification refers to the act of giving human qualities to something inanimate.
Phrase	A phrase is a two or more related words without a **verb**, eg 'absolutely everything'.
Popular	When we use the word 'popular' as an **adjective** to describe texts such as fiction, magazines or films, we mean that those texts are designed to have wide appeal.

Pronouns	We use pronouns to replace the names of people or things. When we write from our own point of view – or create a character and speak as, or through them – we use the first-person pronouns *I*, *me* (singular), and *we*, *us* (plural). We use third-person pronouns – *he*, *him*, *she*, *her*, *it*) singular, and *they*, *them* (plural) – to refer to other people, or to write more impersonally.
Rhyming scheme	A rhyming scheme (or rhyme scheme) of a poem is the pattern of rhyming sounds at the end of each line. The first set of rhyming sounds is given the letter A, and the when a new set of rhyming sounds is introduced, it is given a new letter (B, C, D and so on). AABB and ABAB are examples of rhyming schemes.
Screenplay	A screenplay is the script for a film.
Screenwriter	A screenwriter is the writer of a **screenplay**.
Signposts	Words and **phrases** that lead the audience through a text are sometimes called signposts. They indicate where one idea stops and another starts, and make the text easier to understand.
Similes	Similes are used to compare two different things, and they usually use the word 'as' or 'like'. For example, the old English saying for something useless – 'It's as much use as a chocolate teapot' – is a simile.
Simple sentence	A simple sentence is made up of one **independent clause** and makes sense on its own, eg 'I hate it all'.
Slang	Slang is a form of **colloquial language**, often used by people to identify with their peers. It is sometimes humorous and/or vulgar.
Stanzas	Stanzas are groupings of words or lines in poetry. They are sometimes called **verses**.
Stereotype	When we describe a character as a stereotype, we are suggesting that they have been produced from a template, rather than individually crafted.
Structures	The structures of texts refer to the way texts are ordered and organised: see also **features**. Structures and features of texts include ways of organising text (eg narrative or **verse**), spelling, paragraphs, punctuation, layout, sentence structure, vocabulary, **tone**, rhythm and body language.
Subjective	Subjective means that something depends on a personal or individual point of view. The opposite of **objective**.
Symbolism	Symbolism is the use of objects or natural elements to represent ideas or feelings.
Synonym	When two or more words have almost the same meaning, they are called synonyms. The opposite of a synonym is an **antonym**, eg 'safe' is the antonym of 'dangerous'.
Theme	A theme is the main idea of a text, for example a novel or film might explore themes such as growing up, bravery or relationships, or ideas about how the world began.
Tone	Tone reveals the attitude of the speaker or writer. We may speak in a bored or enthusiastic tone, or write a text that conveys that we are angry or calm. See also **neutral**.
Topic sentence	A topic sentence gives the main idea of a paragraph. It does not need to be the first sentence in a paragraph. It is sometimes referred to as a 'hypertheme sentence'.
Verb	Verbs represent processes such as doing, saying, thinking, feeling and existing.
Verse	*See* **stanzas**
Voiceover	In a film, voiceover is the voice of an unseen person giving information or telling the story.

Index

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