

A House with a Mouse

by Desna Wallace

From School Journal, Part 1, Number 3, 2004

Overview

This humorous play is about a family who moves into a new house. They don't realise, however, that a group of furry friends are also keen to make the house their new home. The ending leaves you wondering what will happen next.

Readability

Noun frequency level: 7–8 years

Suggested level: 8–9 years

Supports and Challenges

The features to consider in context and the points outlined below could constitute either supports or challenges for individual readers.

•	The students' familiarity with common household pets (and pests) and with shifting homes
•	The students' prior experiences of reading plays
•	The manageable length of the text
•	Words and concepts that some students may find challenging: "absolutely", "brilliant", "probably", "nosey", "mouse catcher", "definitely".

Features to Consider in Context

•	The conventions of a play: a list of characters in capital letters, stage directions in italics, directions for specific characters in parentheses, and dialogue for each character
•	The element of humour involving trickery
•	The personification of the animals
•	The use of natural animal sounds, for example, "Squeak! Squeak!", to identify the animal characters
•	The ending which leaves the reader to make inferences about what might happen next
•	The use of colloquialisms, for example, "Best house on the block".

Introducing Students to the Text

•	Ask the students what would happen if they found a mouse in their house. Think, pair, and share experiences within the group.
•	Tell the students that they are going to read a humorous play entitled "A House with a Mouse".
•	Allow time for the students to view the illustrations on page 9 and check that they know the difference between dialogue and stage directions.
•	Share the purpose for reading the text. "The play is humorous, and we will read it to see what makes it funny and if the humour is effective – does it make us laugh?"
•	Ask the students to read silently to "MOTHER. ... That'll get rid of the mouse."

During the Reading

•	Discuss how the author has made the play funny so far. "Mark a humorous part of the play with your finger and share it with your partner. Explain why you think it is funny."
•	"If this was an audiotaped play, how would you be able to identify the animal characters? The human characters?"

- Ask the students to read to the end of the play to find other parts that are funny.

After the Reading: Responding to the Text

Possible focus areas for discussion

- Ask the students what they think of the way the play ends. “Were there any surprises?” “What might happen next?”
- Allow time for the students to think, pair, and share any funny parts. “What makes the humour effective?” (For example, the element of humans being tricked by animals.) “Did it make you laugh? Why?” “How does the author show what the animals have been up to?” (Personification)
- “What props or costumes would be needed if the play was performed?”
- “If you were listening to an audio version of this play, what would make the performance effective?” Prompt the students to identify the skills needed for effective play reading – reading that enables the audience to hear and understand the play (for example, fluency, expression, voice projection, following cues, and maintaining pace).
- Allocate the roles and ask the students to practise reading the play to develop pace, fluency, and expression.

Suggested Task

You may like to try the task below. You may need to work with the group for this task.

Suggested Achievement Objectives	Learning Outcomes <i>Students will be able to:</i>	Learning Experiences <i>Students could:</i>
Using Texts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • exploring language • thinking critically 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • present a play on audiotape, using voice and sound effects to establish the characters’ personalities and maximise the play’s humour. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rehearse and produce an audiotaped version of the play for the class listening post.

Links with Other *School Journal* Titles

“Helping Each Other” 1.2.90; “A Dog Day” 1.2.91; “Home Comes the Hunter” *Junior Journal* 25

Journal Search Categories

Talking Animals

Cross-curricular Links

The Arts: Drama, Visual Arts

Associated Websites

Caring for Pets – Unit Plan (English Online)

<http://english.unitecology.ac.nz/resources/units/pets/home.html>

Life on the River

article and photographs by Cushla Mahoney

From School Journal, Part 1, Number 3, 2004

Overview

This report identifies why the Mekong River is important to the people of the Mekong Delta region in South Vietnam. It presents information about how the river is used for housing, transport, growing food, and recreation.

Readability

Noun frequency level: 8–9 years

Suggested level: 9.5–10.5 years

Supports and Challenges

The features to consider in context and the points outlined below could constitute either supports or challenges for individual readers.

Features to Consider in Context

Introducing Students to the Text

During the Reading

•	Ask the students to reread the second paragraph and decide, in pairs, what the key idea is. Discuss the students' responses before recording the information on the first section of the bubble chart.
•	Draw the students' attention to the use of quotation marks for "park" and explain why they are used.
•	As the students silently read the rest of the article, ask them to locate the key idea in each paragraph. Record the key ideas on the chart (see examples above) and compare them with what happens in your local region.

After the Reading: Responding to the Text

Possible focus areas for discussion

•	Revisit the purpose for reading the text and ask the students to discuss, in pairs, what would be some advantages and disadvantages of living on the river. Share the views within the group.
•	Draw the students' attention to the way the author uses paragraphs to organise the information, with different ideas grouped in separate paragraphs.

Suggested Tasks

You may like to select a task from those listed below. You may need to work with the group for some tasks.

Suggested Achievement Objectives	Learning Outcomes <i>Students will be able to:</i>	Learning Experiences <i>Students could:</i>
Close Reading • processing information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> gather information from a variety of sources; identify key ideas and record them in the form of a bubble chart. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> use the Internet and library to find out more about the foods grown in Vietnam; add relevant information to the bubble chart.
Presenting • thinking critically • processing information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> present information using words and images. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> design a poster or use a computer presentation package to present pictorial and textual information to the class on how the river supports the lives of people living in the Delta region.
Close Reading • processing information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> read a recipe and follow the instructions to prepare a meal. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> as a group, use a recipe to cook a Vietnamese meal for the group.

Links with Other *School Journal* Titles

"Grown-ups Know Best" 1.5.94

Journal Search Categories

Boats

Transport

Cross-curricular Link

Social Studies: Place and Environment

Associated Websites

AskAsia Teachers' Gateway

www.askasia.org/teachers/

Scenes from Mainland South-east Asia

<http://depts.washington.edu/seac/media/vanfleet/vanfleet.htm>

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Snake!

by Jan Maguiness

From School Journal, Part 1, Number 3, 2004

Overview

This high-interest text recounts the discovery of a yellow-bellied sea snake on a New Zealand beach and provides information about this deadly creature.

Readability

Noun frequency level: 8.5–9.5 years

Supports and Challenges

The features to consider in context and the points outlined below could constitute either supports or challenges for individual readers.

•	The students' prior knowledge of beaches and snakes
•	The photographs and drawings that accompany the text
•	The manageable length of the text
•	Words and concepts that some students may find challenging: "driftwood", "deadly", "fangs", "Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry", "yellow-bellied", "poisonous", "venom", "carnivore", "paralyses", "prey", "surface", "paddles", "shed their skin", "prefer", "deadliest".

Features to Consider in Context

•	The structure of the text as a personal recount that includes a report giving information about yellow-bellied sea snakes
•	The use of personal experience to engage the reader's interest in the topic
•	The statement and question at the beginning, which draw the reader in and give impact to the writing
•	The use of both past and present tenses
•	The use of a note to provide additional information.

Introducing Students to the Text

•	Ask the students to think, pair, and share what they know about snakes. During the discussion, you could introduce some of the vocabulary (for example, "poisonous", "venom", "fangs", "cobra", "prey").
•	Ask the students, in pairs, to decide what they would do if they found a snake while out walking. "What would you think, feel, and do?"
•	Introduce the title of the article and allow time for the students to view the photographs. Read the first sentence aloud to the students. Ask them if they agree or disagree with the statement and why.
•	Read the second paragraph aloud and share the purpose for reading. Tell the students the article has information about yellow-bellied sea snakes and after reading and talking, they will be able to identify certain facts about the snake. Explain that the facts will be recorded as notes on a chart using headings like: "What is it?", "What does it look like?", and "What does it eat?".
•	As they read, the students may suggest other appropriate headings.
•	As the students to read silently to "... more poisonous than a cobra" to compare the author's reaction to finding the snake with what they decided to do.

During the Reading

•	Ask the students what words in the text give the first clue that the author has seen a snake in New Zealand. “Is this an effective beginning? Why?” “How did the author react to finding the snake? Why would she feel like that?”
•	“What did the author do?” Clarify the function of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. Tell the students that the ministry is commonly known as MAF.
•	Ask the students if they were able to identify a fact in the text to be recorded on the chart. Decide which heading this fact fits under. As you record this information, make the point that this is a way of making notes as you read a text.
•	Ask the students to read to the end of the article to locate specific information for the chart related to the headings.

After the Reading: Responding to the Text

Possible focus areas for discussion

•	“How would you feel if you could bring a snake to show the class?”
•	Ask the students to discuss, in pairs, what they would do if they found a yellow-bellied sea snake, given what they now know about them. Ask them to give reasons for their decisions.
•	Revisit the purpose for reading, referring to the text and discussing with the students any facts that they have located about the yellow-bellied sea snake.
•	Provide each student with yellow stickies and allocate particular sections of the chart to individuals or pairs. Ask them to record the facts in note form and attach the stickers to the chart.
•	Ask the students to suggest other snakes that they could study (for example, cobras, pythons, carpet snakes, and rattlesnakes).
•	Explain that after further reading and talking, the group could draw up a retrieval chart to compare the yellow-bellied sea snake with other snakes, for example:

Snake	Where It Lives	What It Eats	Size and Colour	Interesting Facts
Yellow-bellied sea snake				
Python				

Suggested Tasks

You may like to select a task from those listed below. You may need to work with the group for some tasks.

Suggested Achievement Objectives	Learning Outcomes <i>Students will be able to:</i>	Learning Experiences <i>Students could:</i>
Close Reading Transactional Writing Presenting • thinking critically • processing information	• gather and record factual information; • present information in a form that enables comparisons to be made.	• in pairs, locate, discuss, and record facts about another type of snake; • as a group, present the information on a retrieval chart that compares the different snakes.

<p>Presenting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • thinking critically • processing information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • present factual information in the form of a non-fiction book that will have impact for readers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in pairs, use the fact chart to create a page for a class non-fiction book on different types of snakes, including features such as a glossary and labelled diagrams.
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Links with Other *School Journal* Titles

“Face to Face with a Tuatara” 1.3.98

Journal Search Categories

Living Things

Natural Science

Reptiles

Cross-curricular Link

Science: Making Sense of the Living World

Associated Websites

ADW – *Pelamis Platurus* (Yellow-bellied Sea Snake)

http://animaldiversity.ummz.umich.edu/site/accounts/information/Pelamis_platurus.html

BBC Nature – The Really Wild Zone - Amazing Animals - Yellow-bellied Sea Snake

www.bbc.co.uk/nature/reallywild/amazing/sea_snake.shtml

Marine Life Profile – Sea Snakes

<http://waquarium.otted.hawaii.edu//MLP/root/pdf/MarineLife/Vertebrates/SeaSnakes.pdf>

Twenty Fingers on One Hand

article and photographs by Jill MacGregor

From School Journal, Part 1, Number 3, 2004

Overview

This article explains how bananas grow from small suckers or shoots into plants that produce leaves, stalks, rows of flowers, and finally “hands” of banana “fingers”. Labelled photographs support the explanation.

Readability

Noun frequency level: 8–9 years

Supports and Challenges

The features to consider in context and the points outlined below could constitute either supports or challenges for individual readers.

•	The students’ experiences of growing fruit and vegetables
•	The features of an explanation, such as the labelled photograph that accompanies the text
•	Words and concepts that some students may find challenging: “Twenty Fingers on One Hand”, “enormous”, “temperatures”, “suckers”, “base”, “clumps”, “overlapping stalks”, “paddle-shaped leaves”, “shreds”, “waxy”, “bracts”, “produced”, “awkward”, “tastes furry”, “starchy”, “mushy”.

Features to Consider in Context

•	The structure of the informational text, which includes:
•	a sequenced explanation
•	a description of the parts of a plant
•	the use of the present tense
•	photographs
•	subject-specific vocabulary
•	The author’s purpose of providing information
•	The mixture of Tongan and English vocabulary.

Introducing Students to the Text

•	Ask the students to close their eyes and imagine the taste of an overripe banana, a green banana, and a fresh, ripe banana. Ask them to share their thoughts with a partner.
•	Ask the students where bananas grow. Locate Tonga and Nuku‘alofa on a map.
•	Explain that the students are going to read an article about how bananas grow. Ask them to predict what sort of information could be given in the article.
•	Ask the students, in pairs, to form a question they would like answered about how bananas grow. Chart these questions, including one that you ask.
•	Introduce the title and ask the students what it might mean.
•	Share the purpose for reading. “We’ll read the text to find out what the main stages in the growth of a banana plant are and to find the answers to our questions.”
•	Distribute the Journals and allow time for the students to skim and discuss the photographs. Introduce some of the subject-specific vocabulary during the discussion.
•	Ask the students to read silently to “There are twenty fingers on each hand”.

During the Reading

•	Clarify the meaning of the title.
•	Have the students share and mark any parts of the text (for example, with a paper clip or yellow sticky) that answer any of the charted questions.
•	Ask the students to reread paragraph 3: “Banana plants need plenty of rain ...”. Ask “How do banana plants start growing?” “What is the main idea here?” “How can we show that information?” Begin constructing a flow chart to record the key stages in the growth of the banana plant (the life cycle). The students could draw the stages or select from photocopied photographs from the text with key words or strips for labelling.
•	Ask the students to reread the paragraph that begins “Banana plants grow very quickly.” What is the main idea? Is it at the beginning or end of the paragraph? What are the key words referring to?
•	Continue asking the students to find the parts in the text that tell in sequence how a banana plant grows and add the information to the flow chart.
•	Clarify any vocabulary still causing difficulty and ask the students what strategies they will use if they come to a tricky word. If necessary, revise or teach a specific processing strategy.
•	Ask the students to finish reading the article and decide, in pairs, what information is needed to complete the flow chart.

Suggested Task

You may like to attempt the task below. You may need to work with the group for this task.

Suggested Achievement Objectives	Learning Outcomes <i>Students will be able to:</i>	Learning Experiences <i>Students could:</i>
Using Texts Presenting • exploring language • processing information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • present an oral explanation using a chart to show the information in a visual form; • speak clearly and fluently to an audience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • as a group, present their flow chart to the class and explain how bananas grow.

After the Reading: Responding to the Text

Possible focus areas for discussion

•	Discuss the information still to be placed on the flow chart and ask the students to refer to the text to justify their decisions.
•	Refer to the charted questions asked by the students when you introduced the text. Ask them to provide evidence from the text if their question has been answered.

Links with Other *School Journal* Titles

“Hot Bread” 1.4.99; “Umu” 1.5.00; “My Dad’s Raw Fish” 2.4.02; “Inati” 2.4.03; “A Bunch of Peanuts” 3.2.99; “Feeding Time” *Junior Journal* 16

Journal Search Categories

Fruit

Pacific Islands

Cross-curricular Links

Science: Making Sense of the Living World

Social Studies: Place and Environment

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Wanted

by Gail Whitten

From School Journal, Part 1, Number 3, 2004

Overview

This poem, written in free verse, conveys a child's desire to own a pet.

•	Carry out a shared reading of the poem.
•	Ask the students to silently reread the poem and discuss in pairs what makes this an effective poem. Share views in larger groups of six or eight students.

Features to Consider in Context

You could discuss the following features with the students, focusing on what makes this an effective poem.

•	The author's use of punctuation and structure in the first two verses to build a sense of expectation and mystery
•	the sensory images
•	the vivid language, especially the active verbs: "locked", "pounding", "nestles".

Suggested Task

You may like to attempt the task below. You may need to work with the group for this task.

Suggested Achievement Objectives	Learning Outcomes <i>Students will be able to:</i>	Learning Experiences <i>Students could:</i>
Poetic Writing • exploring language • thinking critically	• work co-operatively to write a poem using free verse form.	• as a group, write words and phrases on a whiteboard to describe a pet using the senses of sight, touch, and hearing; • select some of these words and phrases to shape into a free verse poem.

Links with Other *School Journal* Titles

"Our Pup" 1.1.92; "Little Furry Cats" 1.5.95; "My Cat" 1.1.98; "Three Poems" 2.2.93

Journal Search Category

Pets

Poetry

Associated Websites

Caring for Pets – Unit Plan (English Online)

<http://english.unitecology.ac.nz/resources/units/pets/home.html>

SPCA – Caring for Your Pet – Caring for Pet Mice

www.rspanz.org.nz/pet_care/mice/mice.html

Suzy's World – Mouse

www.suzy.co.nz/suzysworld/Factpage.asp?FactSheet=109

Mice and Rats at Enchanted Learning

www.enchantedlearning.com/themes/mouse.shtml

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