

Baked Beans on Toast

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Overview

Blake's mum has a problem—a gambling problem, and it's affecting more than just herself. The reading level of this narrative is relatively low, but the issues raised are complex and challenging, so the text could be used with older students who find reading difficult as well as with younger students. **Note that the issues raised in this text may be sensitive for some students.**

There is an audio version of this text on the *School Journal Part 3 and Part 4 CD 2005*.

Suggested Teaching Purpose

Based on the information I have about my students' learning needs, what would be an appropriate teaching purpose for this session?

Examples of an appropriate teaching purpose are listed below.

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| • | To support the students in developing the comprehension strategies of making connections, inferring , or evaluating. |
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Features of the Text to Consider in Context

What features of this text would support these teaching purposes?

•	The opportunities for the students to infer from the text, for example, why Blake doesn't want to go with his friends, why he doesn't tell them about his problem, and why they don't ask
•	The gradual revelation of Mum's gambling addiction
•	The realistic but sensitive nature of the issues being explored
•	The ideas about truthfulness and lies (or omission of details)
•	The range of emotions expressed in the text
•	The persona adopted by the narrator of a child of a similar age to the students and the use of the first person, which encourage the students to empathise with the narrator
•	The relationships between the characters
•	The reversal of roles, with Blake feeling responsible for and protective of his mother
•	The use of dialogue to provide extra information, including information about the narrator's feelings, "Not sure yet," I told him, feeling embarrassed", "... she might've gone round to see a friend," I lied."
•	The narrative structure (setting, complication, and resolution or conclusion)
•	The jump in time, which is signalled by the double line space near the top of page 22
•	The cautiously optimistic ending.

Readability

Noun frequency level: 8–9 years for guided reading

What other features of this text might constitute challenges for my students? (For example, features that may require a prompt or a brief explanation)

•	The use of the past perfect tense (“I’d waited”, “All week, I’d worked hard”) to indicate events that have happened in the more distant past
•	The words and phrases: “pokies”, “ducked behind”
•	The colloquial language “What’re you up to?”, “You coming to the movie or not?”, “What d’ya reckon?”

What prior knowledge would support my students in reading this text?

•	Awareness of pokies, gambling, and addictive behaviour
•	Experience in having to deal with a problem on their own.

Sharing Learning Outcomes with Your Students (select one or two)

I will be able to:

•	make connections between the ideas and information in this text to help me understand what’s happening;
•	read between the lines and use what I know about people and the world to work out about what’s happening in the text and why the characters talk and act as they do;
•	discuss the behaviour of the various characters and consider their feelings and why they might have acted as they did.

A Framework for the Lesson

How will I help my students to achieve the learning outcomes?

In the sections below, particular comprehension strategies, reading processes, and links to other aspects of literacy learning have been identified in brackets. Many of these relate directly to the highlighted teaching purpose, but others have also been identified where appropriate.

Before reading

•	Some of your students may have little or no awareness of the problem of gambling addiction or of the concept of a child feeling responsible for an adult. Rather than trying to explain these concepts before the reading, take your cue from your students as they make their way through the text and use your professional judgment to decide how much information to provide and how deeply you want to focus on the more sensitive ideas it raises.
•	Tell the students that this text requires them to infer information that isn’t provided by the author and that it’s about a situation that might seem unfamiliar to them. Discuss the strategies they could use to help them understand the text. “As a reader, you will often need to try to make meaning of things you’re not sure about. When that happens, you need to search for information in the text that you <i>do</i> know about and try to make connections between that and the bits that are new and unfamiliar.” Tell the students you’re there to help them with further information if they need it. (Inferring; making connections)
•	Clarify the learning outcome(s) with the students.

During reading

•	Monitor the discussion as the reading proceeds and feed in any background information about gambling or addictions that you think the students might need.
•	Have the students read page 18 and ask them to clarify what’s happening on the surface. (Summarising)

•	“What have you noticed so far that <i>isn't</i> clearly stated in the text?” Help the students to raise questions about Blake’s behaviour. Draw out the idea that Blake is hiding something and encourage the students to share how they made their inferences. For example, Blake ducked behind the tree, felt embarrassed, lied to his friends, and is worried about being able to pay Jacob back. (Asking questions; inferring; making connections)
•	Have the students think, pair, and share their predictions (using clues from page 18) about what the problem could be. Look for evidence that they’ve noticed the frequent references to Mum and/or money. (Inferring; forming hypotheses)
•	Have the students read to “promised that she’d pay me” on page 20. You may need to explain the meaning of “pokie machines”. Ask the students to consider how Mum connects to the story. Observe whether the students have noticed that Blake’s problem has been going on for a long time and check that they’ve made the connection that The Empire is the pub. (Inferring; making connections)
•	You may need to clarify that the author has used the past perfect tense in this section (“It wasn’t the first time I’d waited...”, “I’d always let her...”, “she’d say”) to indicate that Blake is recalling events from the more distant past. This is important to the meaning of the story because it shows that Mum’s gambling has been going on for a long time. (Inferring)
•	Have the students read to the end of the first paragraph on page 22. Ask them to work in pairs for a few minutes to list one or two inferences they’ve made so far and what they had to do to make those inferences. For example
Mum has a problem with the pokies (she spends a lot of time playing the machines in the pub)	<p>“Sure enough, there was Mum ... furiously pressing buttons.”</p> <p>“It wasn’t the first time ...”</p> <p>Blake has often heard Uncle Andy and Auntie Rosa talking about Mum and the pokies.</p>
Blake is very embarrassed about his mother’s behaviour	<p>He looked up and down the street to make sure none of his mates were around.</p> <p>“I’d always let her get down the road a bit before I caught her up.”</p>
Blake and Uncle Andy pretend to each other that there isn’t a problem	<p>“I knew Uncle Andy didn’t believe me.”</p> <p>“We stood there in the park for a couple of minutes without saying anything.”</p> <p>“I felt uncomfortable because we both knew what he was doing.”</p>

Don’t spend too long on this activity at this point, but plan to return to it after the reading. There are many inferences that could be drawn from this text, but the purpose of introducing this activity here is for the students to pause and reflect on their overall understanding and on their use of strategies. It’s also an opportunity for you to monitor how they’re going and provide support if necessary. (Inferring; making connections)

•	Have the students briefly preview the next section of text (on page 22) and make connections to their knowledge of narrative structure to draw out the idea that the double line space signals a change to the next stage of the narrative (the resolution or conclusion). Encourage the students to predict how the story will end and why they think that. (Inferring; making connections; forming hypotheses)
•	Get the students to read to the end of the text. “Is this what you thought would happen?” (Testing hypotheses)
•	Explore the deeper implications of the final section. “Why has the author used italics for some of Mum’s words on page 23?” Draw out the idea that the italics imply that Mum is starting to tell the truth—that she seems to be facing up to her problem. (Inferring)

After reading

Select from these suggestions according to your purpose for the reading and what you’ve observed about the students’ needs during the reading.

•	Return to the inference chart started during the reading. Encourage the students to add further inferences and explain how they made them. Allow plenty of time for the students to explore and exchange ideas and their use of strategies and to discuss any differences in their conclusions. There are no right or wrong answers—the personal connections the students make to this text may result in variations in interpretation. Use your judgment about any need to mediate the discussion. (Inferring; making connections)
•	Discuss the behaviour of the main characters. “What choices did Mum (or Blake or Uncle Andy) make?” “Why did they make them?” “What other choices did they have?” (Inferring; evaluating)
•	Explore the students’ ideas about the significance and effectiveness of the title. (Making connections; evaluating)
•	Discuss the theme of truth and lies in this text. “Why did the characters lie to each other?” “Do you think Blake’s friends knew what was going on?” “Did they know he was lying to them?” “Why do you think they didn’t say anything?” Use your judgment about how far you want to take this discussion. For example, you could discuss why Uncle Andy didn’t address the issue directly with Blake. (Inferring; evaluating)

Reflect with the students on how well the learning outcome has been achieved and note any teaching points for future sessions.

Links to further learning

What follow-up tasks will help my students to consolidate and/or extend their new learning?

•	Photocopy an illustration from the text or have the students sketch a picture of Blake standing with another character. Ask the students to draw a speech bubble that shows what each character is saying and a thought bubble to show what they’re really thinking. (Inferring)
•	The students could read other texts that explore sensitive social issues from the viewpoint of a child, for example, “Birthday Visit” by the same author in SJ 3.2.05, “The Argument” in SJ 4.1.04, and “No Joke” in SJ 4.3.00.