

Saying Goodbye

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Overview

An afternoon walk with his Poppa Joe turns into a revelation for Carlo about his grandfather and his family history. This rich and moving text, based on an actual historical event, has strong messages about belonging and links well with the social studies strand Culture and Heritage. You could discuss this text with the whole class as well as using it for small-group shared or guided reading. Expect the students to have plenty to say — you may want to revisit the text over a number of sessions.

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.

- To support the students in developing the comprehension strategies of **making connections**, inferring, and analysing and synthesising.

Features of the Text to Consider in Context

What features of this text would support the teaching purpose?

- The two interconnected stories — Carlo's present-day outing with his grandfather and Poppa Joe's story about the Santina tragedy
- The themes of family, belonging, and the loss of loved ones
- The layers of meaning in the title
- The setting within the Italian community, the inclusion of Italian words and names, and the cultural content, for example:
 - the references to pasta and fishing
 - the Italian flags on the boats
 - the wailing women dressed in black
 - the priests
 - the men crossing themselves
 - kissing on both cheeks
- The emotional content of the story, including:
 - the sad events of 1933
 - the repetition of the word "never" (for example, "never found", "never got to say goodbye") to emphasise the feeling of sadness and loss
 - the way Poppa Joe lives to a large degree in the past and the poignant contrast between what he remembers and forgets
 - the women crying on the beach and the solemnity of the memorial service
 - Carlo's gradual change in his attitude towards his grandfather

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The clues about the characters and their feelings, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The use of dialogue, including the use of alternatives to “say” or “says” (“sigh”, “chuckles”, “mutters”, “shouts”, “murmurs”) Poppa’s repeated references to the tomato seeds he brought from Italy, which illustrate Poppa Joe’s age and forgetfulness and also act as a symbol of family ties the dramatic acceleration in pace as Poppa Joe realises what day it is
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ways the author draws the reader into the story, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the dramatic opening her “show don’t tell” approach, which requires the reader to infer what’s happening (solve the mystery) the first-person narration, which means that the reader experiences only what the narrator does as Poppa’s story is gradually revealed the use of the present tense (for immediacy) in Carlo’s story
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The wealth of information and ideas conveyed in the illustrations.

Readability

Noun frequency level: 9–10 years for guided reading

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

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Italian context and words, for example, “Massalubrense”, “Guiseppe”, “Principe Umberto”, “Vincenzo”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Particular words and concepts, including “grumbling”, “shooing”, “hauling”, “groper”, “wizened”, “twenty-seventh”, “impatiently”, “The Esplanade”, “Taputeranga”, “flying flags at half mast”, “dinghy”, “wailing”, “Poppa Joe’s face is remote”, “Baring Head”, “wreath”, “The men on our boat cross themselves”, “she was a good boat”, “memorial service” (as compared with a funeral), “flotilla”.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The changes in tense, including the use of the present tense to describe aspects of the past, for example, “In the photos on the wall, Poppa Joe is a young man ...”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The need to infer information from the dialogue, especially in the opening paragraphs.

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

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Their knowledge of their own family histories
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Their relationship with older family members
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Their knowledge of New Zealand history, particularly the place of Italians as an important immigrant group.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Their familiarity with the strategy of inferring.

Sharing the learning outcome and success criteria with your students

Learning outcome

I will be able to make connections to my own experiences to help me think about and discuss the history, relationships, and feelings of the family in this text.

Success criteria

I will be successful when I have:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> made connections between Carlo’s family experiences (particularly his family history) and my own experiences to help me understand the significance of the events in this text;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> looked for clues in the text and illustrations to help me understand the history and the feelings of the main characters;

- used clues in the dialogue and the illustrations to help me infer the impact of events in the past for this family;
- looked for connections between the ideas and events in the text to help me think more deeply about the significance of family traditions and histories.

A Framework for the Lesson

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

Before reading

- Tell the students that this story is about Carlo and his family, who originally came from Italy, and the ongoing impact that an actual historical event still has on their family. Find out what the students know about Italy and, if possible, the Italian community in New Zealand. Locate Italy on a map. (Making connections)
- Discuss the students' knowledge of their family histories. Find out which students have families who have emigrated from other countries. Ask them to share their experiences of their conversations with the oldest members of their families. "What stories do they tell you?" (Making connections)
- Share the learning outcome and success criteria with the students.

During reading

- Have the students read page 3 up to "down to the beach" and review what they've found out so far. For example, that Carlo is the narrator and the boy in the page 3 illustration; that Poppa Joe is his grandad and Nonna is his nana; and that Carlo doesn't want to go to Poppa Joe's. (Inferring)
- "Does this raise any questions for you?" For example, why is Carlo reluctant to go out with Poppa Joe? Encourage the students to share their questions and possible answers. (Asking questions)
- Have the students read to the end of page 3. (Tell them the word "Massalubrense".) "Has this answered any of your questions?" Prompt them to make connections between the information in the text and the illustrations on page 2. You may need to confirm that it was common for Italian men to have left their wives in Italy when they first came to New Zealand, meaning that families were split up. Make connections with any experiences the students may have of families living apart. (Making connections)
- Discuss what the students have found out about Poppa Joe so far, both from explicit statements and their use of inference. For example, that Poppa Joe is ninety (stated in the text), that he is committed to his wife and family, that he likes gardening, that he forgets things, that he was a fisherman and, in particular, that he is proud to be Italian. Ask the students to share the evidence for their inferences. (Inferring)
- Review how Carlo is feeling at this point in the story. "What did you do to work that out?" (Inferring)
- Have the students read to "waves me on impatiently" on page 4. "How have things changed? What are you noticing about Poppa Joe?" (Analysing and synthesising)
- Ask the students to read to the end of page 4. If necessary, explain the significance of the Italian flags flying at halfmast. Your students may be able to make connections with their own experiences (for example, of tangi) to understand why some women are dressed in black and wailing. (Making connections)
- Remind the students of the title. Have them think, pair, and share about who is saying goodbye to whom, using clues in the text to support their ideas. Check that they've got the idea that something sad has happened in the past and that Poppa Joe is being swept along by his memories and the emotion of the scene. (Inferring)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore the illustrations on pages 6 and 7 before reading these pages. “I’m wondering why some of these illustrations are brown ...” Draw out the idea that the illustrator has used brown (sepia) tones to make them look like old photographs (though when the students read what happened, they will realise that in fact there would have been no photographs). If necessary, clarify that “Guiseppe” is the Italian equivalent of “Joseph” (Poppa’s full name). Draw out the idea that the men saying “Guiseppe ... you’re here” could suggest that they were expecting him. (Inferring)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draw the students’ attention to Poppa Joe’s repetition of “never found” and discuss what this indicates about how he feels. You could discuss what not being able to bury someone means to Catholics and other religious and cultural groups. (Inferring; making connections)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remind the students of how the story started. “I’m noticing something about Carlo’s attitude at the end of this page ...” (Inferring; making connections)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have the students read page 8. “What has the author done to help us notice changes in the characters as we were reading?” Ask one half of the group to discuss in pairs what they’ve noticed out about Poppa Joe on this page, especially about how he’s feeling. For example, his repetition of “never got to say goodbye ... never said goodbye” and his temporary shift to the present tense (“But I’m not there”) in the first paragraph, and the way he is moving now compared with the way he walked when he was heading to the beach. Have the other half of the group work in pairs to discuss how Carlo has changed, using evidence from the text, for example, the change from “I sigh” to “I say” and the way he hugs Poppa at the end. Have both sets of students share and discuss their ideas with the whole group. (Inferring; analysing and synthesising; making connections)

After reading

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revisit the page 2 illustrations and discuss the links between the illustrations and their significance to the story. (Making connections; analysing and synthesising)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If your students have had difficulty ordering the sequence of events in the text, you could have them work together to create a timeline of the events from Poppa’s life that are mentioned in the text, starting with his life in Italy. (Analysing and synthesising)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss in greater detail the shift in Carlo’s attitude and how his relationship with Poppa develops in the story. Have the students highlight evidence in the text that shows the shift. Draw out the idea that he gains a greater awareness of Poppa’s life — and therefore his own life. “Why do you think Poppa hasn’t shared the story of the boat with Carlo until now? Have you ever discovered things about your family that made you feel differently about them? If so, what were those things?” Ask the students to discuss with a partner how making connections to their own experiences has helped them to understand what this would have been like for Carlos. (Analysing and synthesising; making connections)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore the references to the tomatoes at the beginning and end of the text. “What does Poppa’s story about the tomatoes say about him?” Your students may suggest that they show his pride in being Italian — or that they show how old and forgetful he is getting because he keeps repeating the story. Draw out the idea that the tomato seeds can be seen to symbolise the seeds of the family and how they have spread around the world. Note that certain Māori and Pasifika proverbs refer to the scattering of seeds in a similar way. (Inferring; analysing and synthesising; making connections)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss the significance of the title. For example, it could refer to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the young Italian men saying goodbye to their wives and families when they went to New Zealand - not getting the chance to say goodbye to the men on the <i>Santina</i> - the way the community “says goodbye” to the <i>Santina</i> men each year - the idea of saying goodbye to Italy and settling in a new country.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss the particularly Italian details in the text, especially the “big pot of pasta” and the Italian names. “What do these details tell you about Carlo’s family?” Draw out ideas about pride and maintaining cultural identity when in another country. Make connections with the experiences of students who may have come to New Zealand from other countries or may have lived overseas. (Analysing and synthesising; making connections)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have the students identify ways that Carlo’s family and wider community have held on to their traditions in New Zealand. For example, how they continue to have Italian names, work as fishermen, eat tomatoes, wear “Italia” football T-shirts, kiss on both cheeks, gather for memorial services, and follow religious traditions. (Making connections; analysing and synthesising)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You could probe a bit deeper into the text to explore the aspects that suggest a gradual loss of customs and community — for example, how Carlo calls Guiseppe “Poppa Joe” and the fact that no one else in Carlo’s family remembered the date of the memorial service. “What might happen on 27 September from now on, especially after Poppa Joe dies?” Depending on your students, you could refer back to the title and consider another possible meaning for “saying goodbye” — perhaps, farewelling (or forgetting) the past and the old ways. (Inferring; analysing and synthesising)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “How important do you think it is for communities to keep up their traditions and for old people to pass on their experiences to young people? Why? In what ways does your family or community keep up its traditions and pass on its knowledge?” You could make connections with various cultural celebrations. (Evaluating; making connections)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the learning outcome and success criteria and reflect with the students on how well the learning outcome has been achieved. For example, “How has making connections to your own family experiences helped you to understand the ideas in this text? How has making connections between the ideas helped you to deepen your understanding of the importance of family traditions and history?” 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?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have your students explore in further detail how their own families have held on to their traditions or make a timeline of significant events in their family. (Making connections)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your students could further investigate the history of Italians in New Zealand, particularly Island Bay, or the wreck of the <i>Santina</i> on 25 September 1933. Try a web search using the words “Santina” and “Cook Strait”. (Making connections)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The students could compare the ideas in “Saying Goodbye” with those in other texts about events that shape family histories and traditions, for example, “Family Treasures” (SJ 1.3.07), “TV Mum” (SJ3.1.04), or “Doctor in the House” (SJ 4.3.06). (Making connections) <i>[insert link to online notes]</i>

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