

Nana and the Flower Arranger

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Overview

In this deeply moving narrative, Luke is struggling with the death of his Nana and how best to express his feelings. He feels pressured by some members of his family who don't seem to understand him. This is a rich text that students are likely to make strong emotional connections to and could be read and discussed over more than one session. Be aware of sensitivities when using this text with students who may have recent experiences of loss.

Suggested teaching purposes

- To support the students in developing the comprehension strategy of **inferring**.
- To engage the students in reading a text that explores how a boy copes with the death of his much-loved nana.

Suggested learning goal

I am learning to look for clues to help me understand the characters and how they are feeling.

Success criteria

I will be successful when I have:

- made connections to my own life and experiences to help me understand the characters
- used clues in the text and illustrations to infer what the characters are thinking and feeling
- asked myself questions like "How do I know?" and "What clues are there?" to check that my inferences make sense.

Features of the text

What features of this text support the teaching purpose?

- The strong personal voice, including the use of Luke as a first-person narrator
- The disclosure at the end that the story of *Nana and the Flower Arranger* is Luke's special story about Nana
- The dramatic nature of the narrative with its emotional content and the mystery of the "flower arranger"
- The climax on pages 6 and 7 with:
 - the discovery of the messed-up grave and the serious implications about who might have done it
 - the short sentences and the repetition of "I", which add impact
 - the focus on what Luke can hear rather than see on page 7, which deepens the suspense for the reader
- The intensity of Luke's feelings and his emotional roller-coaster ride
- The clues to the close bond between Luke and Nana
- The sensitively portrayed relationships between the characters and the

changes in those relationships

- The use of dialogue to convey the characters' feelings, thoughts, and relationships
- The specific contrast between Luke's discomfort and his older sister's poise and confidence
- The many connections within the text, for example, the frequent references to birds and flowers
- The specific reference to Nana's enjoyment of flower arranging on page 5
- The poetic style of the writing:
 - the vivid adjectives such as "papery-thin", "fluffy", "salty", "tattered"
 - the use of alliteration such as "precious, papery-thin", "happy ... hole", "window and watched", "fantails flitting", "flapped and fluttered", "weka, walking like a wind-up toy"
- The wealth of information and ideas conveyed in the illustrations.

Readability

Noun frequency level: 8–9 years for guided reading

What prior knowledge or experience might help my students to read this text?

- Experiences of death or funerals
- Knowledge of birds, particularly New Zealand birds
- Awareness of the importance of family stories within families
- Familiarity with "reading between the lines" and making connections between ideas when reading narrative texts, particularly dialogue

What text features might challenge my students and require a prompt or a brief explanation?

- The names of the flowers
- Some of the descriptive poetic language (especially for ESOL students)
- The concept of an "arranger".

A framework for the lesson

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

Before reading

- Tell the students you have a story for them to read about how a boy copes with his Nana's death and what helps him to move on. Encourage the students to share any experiences they have of tangi or funerals or thoughts about the possible death of a grandparent. Discuss their emotions, in particular, grief and how it makes them feel. Draw out the idea that people react to sad situations in different ways. (Making connections)
- Review what the students know about making inferences when reading. Suggest that reading about what a person does and says can help the reader to infer how they feel and can often have more impact than directly describing their feelings. Tell the students that the boy who's telling the story gives lots of clues that will help them infer how he feels and what his relationships with the other characters are like. (Making connections; inferring)
- Share the learning goal and success criteria with the students.

Reading and discussing the text

Refer to Effective Literacy Practice in Years 5 to 8 for information about deliberate acts of teaching.

- Remind the students to make use of the illustrations throughout the story when inferring and predicting.
- Read the title and, referring to the previous discussion and what you've told them about the book, encourage the students to predict what it might refer to. (Making connections; forming hypotheses)
- Have the students read pages 2 and 3. Remind them about the clues they can use to make inferences. "It says here that Luke was 'totally quiet' and wouldn't look in the hole. Share with the person next to you what he might be feeling." (Inferring)
- There are a lot of ideas signalled in these opening pages, such as Luke's feelings of being different from the rest of his family, his relationship with Nana and Grandad, and the links between Nana and flowers and birds. Take some time to help the students notice and briefly discuss these ideas before reading on. You could ask the students to predict which ideas might be ones to look out for as they read. If necessary, use prompts to support their thinking. For example:
 - Discuss the various items that were placed on Nana's coffin. "What do you notice about them? I wonder why they were chosen and what they suggest about Nana. Use the text to support your answers." (Making connections; inferring)
 - "Luke was distracted by the bellbird. It made him 'forget where he was'. Do you think his response was appropriate? Why or why not?" (Making connections; evaluating)
 - Have the students compare the responses of Dad and Grandad to Luke's comments. "I wonder what they are thinking and feeling." (Inferring)
- Have the students read page 4 to find out how the characters are feeling. Discuss why Luke might not have wanted to hear the stories about Nana. "Emma is inside talking to people. How do you think she is feeling? What clues have you used to work this out? Why isn't she outside?" (Making connections; inferring)
- "I wonder why Luke stays outside so long. What clues show us how he is feeling? Have you ever been in a situation like this?" (Inferring; making connections)
- Have the students work in pairs to discuss how Dad feels about Luke's behaviour. "Show me where in the text it shows this." (Inferring)
- Have the students read page 5. "Emma picked all the best flowers and tied them with a bow. What does this suggest about her? What clues in the text helped you infer this?" (Inferring)
- Discuss what we know about Luke and Nana's relationship so far. "Do you think Nana would have liked the dandelion? How do you know?" (Inferring)
- Have the students think, pair and share to compare Dad's response on this page to his previous interactions with Luke. Encourage students to identify

what has changed and why this might be. (Analysing and synthesising; inferring)

- Revisit the students' predictions about the title. How are our success criteria helping us make inferences?" (Testing hypotheses; inferring)
- Have the students read page 6 and share their responses to the shocking situation of the messed-up grave. "How would you feel about this? How does the writer show the impact on Luke?" Encourage the students to share their ideas about the reason for the messy grave and what they think will happen next. (Making connections; visualising; forming hypotheses)
- Have the students read page 7 to check their predictions. "I notice that the tone changes towards the end of the page. I wonder why there is a smile in Grandad's voice ..." Draw attention to the idea that Luke is the only one who doesn't know what has happened because his head is buried in Grandad's jacket, and that means the reader doesn't know either because it's Luke who is telling the story. (Testing hypotheses)
- Ask the students to think, pair, and share their inferences about how Luke is feeling and how the writer shows this (for example, his attempt to stop Grandad seeing the messy grave and burying his head in Grandad's jacket). (Inferring)
- Have the students read to the end of the story to find out what everyone else can see. Discuss the link to the title and to the students' predictions. (Testing hypotheses)
- Encourage the students to think about how Luke is feeling now and how this is shown in the text ("I do have a story ..." and "We all laughed ..."). Check that the students have understood that the story they have just read is Luke's story. (Making connections; inferring)
- "From what you've inferred as you've been reading, do you think Grandad is right when he says that Nana would have liked the weka?" (Inferring; evaluating)
- "Why do you think the author referred to 'many weeks'? What is he trying to tell us about Nana? How might this have affected Luke? How do we know this?" (Inferring)

After reading

- Revisit Luke's relationship with Nana. "What do you think are some of the important things they shared? What helped you to infer that?" Have the students work in pairs on a photocopy of the text to highlight the clues that support their inferences. (Analysing and synthesising; inferring)
- Revisit the text and create a chart together of the emotional changes that Luke goes through. Draw out the clues in the text (including illustrations) that show his progression. (Inferring)
- Discuss how important parts of the story are told through dialogue. (Analysing and synthesising; inferring)
- Identify and discuss evidence from the text that shows how the other characters react to the loss of Nana. "What does the author want us to know about the characters?" For example:
 - "What can we infer from Dad's actions and dialogue? Why did he not put anything on the coffin? Why wouldn't he leave Luke alone to begin

with?" (Inferring)

– "Is Grandad aware of Luke's feelings? How does he show this?" (Inferring)

- Revisit a particular illustration and discuss its significance to the story. (Making connections; inferring)
- Briefly discuss any words or phrases that the students found difficult and the strategies they used (or could have used) to work them out.
- Reflect with the students on how well they have met the learning goal and how the success criteria helped them. 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?

Have the students reread the story and work with a partner to find one or two places where the author "shows not tells". Have them record their inferences in a chart.

(Analysing and synthesising; inferring)

What the text says	What I think the author means
I glared at him.	Luke was feeling sad, upset, and confused, and a bit left out of the family gathering
I added a dandelion	Luke knows that Nana liked simple, everyday, colourful flowers because he had a special and close relationship with her. No one else knew this about Nana.