

A Quiet Evening

by Johnny Frisbie

illustrations by Judith Künzle

Overview

This personal report describes a peaceful evening on a Pacific island beach. This story has been adapted (in consultation with the author) from a version that was published in the Tupu series in 1990. There is an audio version on the Ready to Read CD *Readalong 2008*.

Suggested purposes

This text supports the comprehension strategies of making connections, inferring, visualising, analysing and synthesising, and identifying the author's purpose. It can also be used as a model for descriptive personal writing.

Text features

(This information is intended as a guide for teachers rather than as a list of teaching points.)

- the Pacific island beach setting
- the first-person narration
- the report structure – the introduction (“I like to go ...”), the series of main points (describing the aspects of the beach and the personal encounter with the rat), and the conclusion (“I walk back home”)
- the phrase “cool, white sand” that links the beginning and end of the report
- the clear message about the narrator's love of her “quiet evenings” created through
 - the use of the continuous present tense (“In the evening, I like to go ...”, “I find a place ...”, “The shadows ... wave slowly ...”, “Sand crabs crawl ...”) to show that she goes to the beach often and that she (mostly) sees the same things
 - the detail in the descriptions and her musings about the sand crabs that indicate that this is a very familiar scene to the narrator
 - the description of the friendly “relationship” between the girl and the moon – “The moon above looks down on me. I smile back.”
 - the peaceful, relaxed tone (and the contrast on pages 13–14)
- the dramatic contrast between the familiar scene and the sudden intrusion of the rat as a threat to the terns (“Then, sneaking from nowhere ...”) and the tension of waiting to see if the terns will be safe
- the descriptive poetic language:
 - the verbs – “glimmering”, “nesting”, “sneaking”, “twitching”, “wave”
 - the adverbs – “slowly”, “quietly”, “peacefully”
 - the simile – “like a thief”
 - the personification of the moon
 - the precise positional language
 - “Across”, “above”, “not far along”, “among”, “around”
- the topic-specific vocabulary – “coconut trees”, “lagoon”, “Sand crabs”, “white

- terns”, “fronds”, “silver mullet”, “shallows”
- the illustrations that perfectly reflect the perspective of the narrator, particularly the close-up on page 14 with the narrator and rat focusing on each other as unexpected intruders
- the indicators of time and place – “In the evening”, “Across the lagoon”, “all night”, “At dawn”, “Then”
- the use of commas to support phrasing.

Introducing the text

Show the children page 7. Read the title and the author’s name. Encourage the children to predict what the story will be about. Ask them to think about their own experiences of being on a quiet beach on a summer evening. *What would you see, hear, and feel?* Start a T-chart to list the children’s ideas, leaving the second column blank for the children to add ideas from the text. Discuss the clues to the setting in the page 7 illustration. Return to the chart and have the children highlight the ideas that they think they would find in this particular setting. Encourage any children who have experiences of Pacific islands to share their expert knowledge.

Explain to the children that this is a descriptive text and they are likely to come across some unfamiliar words. Review the strategies the children could use to work out new words, for example, looking for parts of the word that are familiar, sounding it out (in chunks), looking for clues in the surrounding text or illustration, and making connections to their background knowledge.

While you’re reading, I want you to think about why the author has written this text.

During the reading

Ask the children to read the text silently, pausing at various points for discussion or to clarify any difficulties. Encourage them to note any words they are unsure of for discussion after the reading.

Page 7 – *What clues are there on this page about why she likes going to the beach?* Add “cool, white sand” to the blank column on the chart and compare this with the children’s ideas.

Page 8 – Encourage the children to infer what a lagoon could be, making connections to the setting and the reflections of the lights in water shown in the illustration. *Where are the lights coming from?*

Page 9 – *Why does she think the crabs are funny?* Draw out the idea that she must have watched the crabs many times to know so much about them.

Review the ideas about the beach on these two pages and add any new ones to the chart, noting any that match the children’s ideas from before the reading.

Pages 10 and 11 – Have the students use the illustration to confirm what “terns” are. You may need to provide support for “fronds”.

Pages 12 and 13 – Remind the children of the strategies they can use to work out unfamiliar words. You may need to reassure them of the use of the word “shallows” to mean “shallow water”. *How does the feeling of the text change on page 13? Draw out the idea of the rat as an intruder. What words has the writer used to show how she feels about the rat?*

Page 14 – Encourage the children to infer what’s happening here. The close-up illustration supports the idea of the girl and the rat staring at each other. Draw out the idea that the encounter has been unexpected for both parties and that (probably) the rat has changed his mind about attacking the birds because he perceives the girl as a threat.

Page 15 – *Why do you think the girl smiles back at the moon?* Draw out the idea that the girl has been to the beach so often in the evening that she feels like she and the moon are friends. You could also draw out the idea that the light of the moon helps to keep the girl and the terns safe by showing what’s happening. (There is also a subtle link here to page 8 when she pretends the lights from the houses are stars.)

Why does she keep going back to the beach? Update and review the ideas on the chart. *Why do you think the author wrote this text?* Draw out the idea that she’s sharing her love of the beach in the evening.

Ideas for revisiting the text

Listen to the children reread the text with a partner, observing how they manage the unfamiliar descriptive vocabulary and their ability to read fluently.

Discuss the unfamiliar vocabulary in the text and the clues the children used to work out their meanings. Use a chart such as the one below to record their ideas. Refer to a dictionary for confirmation where appropriate.

Discuss the overall feeling of the text. Ask the children to locate some of the descriptive words and phrases, for example, “wave slowly back and forth”, “lights glimmering”, “sleep quietly”, “sleep peacefully”. If necessary, explain that adverbs describe how something is done. Draw out the feeling of peacefulness created by these words and phrases. *What words does the writer use to show how the rat is a contrast to this feeling of peacefulness?* You could write the “peaceful” verbs and adverbs on a chart and add contrasting words in a separate column, for example, “slowly”/ “quickly”; “glimmering”/ “sparkling”; “quietly”/ “loudly”; “peacefully”/ “restlessly”.

| Word/phrase | How I (or we) worked out the meaning | What it means |
|---------------|---|--|
| lagoon | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the illustration (there are reflections of the lights shining on water) – it must mean something to do with water because she’s at the beach | – a large pool of sea water that has a bank of sand between it and the sea |
| silver mullet | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the illustration – I think I’ve heard of mullet before | – types of fish |

| | | |
|-----------------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| the shallows | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – it makes sense because fish need to be in water – the illustration | – it's short for "the shallow water" |
| white terns | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the word "nesting" – the illustration | – types of birds |
| coconut fronds | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – it says this is where the terns were nesting – the illustration of the tree | – another word for coconut leaves |
| the heart of the tree | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – it had to be somewhere that would be safe for the rat – I know that getting to the heart of the matter means getting right to the core of it | – the middle of the tree |

Study the illustrations and read the name of the illustrator. The children may recognise her name from *A Quilt for Kiri* and *A Gift for Auntie Ngā*. *How has the illustrator supported the ideas in this text?* For example, the black and white tones, the use of white on pages 8 and 15 to convey the lights glimmering and the moon shining, the relaxed position of the narrator, and the way they reflect the perceptions of the illustrator, especially the close-up of the rat on page 14.

Suggestions for further tasks

Listen to the audio version on the CD *Readalong 2008*.

During shared writing, describe an evening in a different setting, using some of the poetic features of the text. The students could follow this by doing some personal writing about the beach or another setting at a preferred time of day.

Share-read the poem "Sand" in *School Journal 1.5.05*, which describes sand on the beach at different times of the day.

Read other texts from *Night is a Blanket* and compare the ideas about the moon or night.