

Red Flags

by Jura Fearnley

SJ 1.5.08

Overview

It is a wet day, and the red flags are out. Several children provide their creative imaginings as to what will happen if anyone should walk on the grass. This text could be used with or without the illustrations. A word-only document has been provided at the end of these notes.

Suggested reading purpose and teaching purpose

Based on the information I have about my students' learning needs, what would be appropriate reading and teaching purposes for this lesson?

- To read an amusing story about some children's imaginative responses to a common school situation.
- To support the students in developing the comprehension strategies of **visualising** and making connections.

Suggested learning goal

We are learning to use words from the text to create pictures in our heads to understand what each character imagined.

Success criteria

To support our comprehension of the text, we will:

- make connections to what we already know using our senses
- describe the pictures that the words create in our minds
- identify the key words and phrases that help us to create the pictures
- explain what the author did to help us create these pictures.

Readability

Noun frequency level: 8.5–9.5 years for guided reading

What features of this text support a range of reading and teaching purposes?

- The names of the characters that reflect their traits
- The simile “soft and bouncy like trampolines”
- The use of descriptive vocabulary, including alliteration (“sweltering/smouldering”, “blistering/baking”, “slimy/sticky”) and rhyme (“sizzle/frizzle”)
- The use of dashes to indicate pauses and continuation of speech
- The use of italics for emphasis
- The parentheses containing extra information

- The words in upper case for emphasis
- The question at the end, which encourages the reader to think of their own scenario
- The use of the word “would” followed by a verb
- The supportive illustrations.

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

- Experience of red flags or similar signals to indicate an area to keep away from
- Experience of descriptive language and of devices such as similes and alliteration
- Experience of creative, imaginative writing.

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

- Particular words and phrases, including “murmured”, “toucans”, “Bonjour”, “Guten Tag”, “Bore da”, “Hola”, “sweltering”, “smouldering”, “blistering”, “chimed”, “slither”, “tentacles”
- The twins finishing each other’s sentences.

A framework for the lesson

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

Before reading

- Discuss the title and the students’ prior knowledge of the colour red meaning “stop” or “danger”. Discuss the use of red flags or cones at school and where and when they are used. Share the reading purpose. Briefly introduce the story by telling the students that the characters in it have different ideas about what will happen if they ignore the red flags and walk on the grass.
- Review what the students know about visualising and how it helps readers to “see” the events. Briefly review the senses of smell, sight, sound, touch, and taste. Explain that visualising doesn’t only mean sight and that they may think of other sensations as they read. Have the students share their ideas about how authors might support readers to create images from the text.
- Provide a copy of a chart like the example below for the students to complete after the first reading. Depending on the learning needs of your students, you may wish to provide this for them to complete as they read. Provide students with a photocopy of the text (see the word document below) so that they can highlight key words and phrases.

Senses used to create pictures	Key words from the text that create pictures	Pictures that these help me to create in my mind
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Sight (looks like)		
Hearing (sounds like)		
Touch (feels like)		
Smell (smells like)		
Taste (tastes like)		

- 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.

As your students read through the text, support them with any unfamiliar vocabulary, grammar, and concepts as necessary.

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- “What do you think might happen?” Have the students think, pair, and share their ideas. “Let’s read on and find out how the characters describe what they think will happen.” (Making connections)

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- “As you read, I want you to think about the words and phrases that the author has used that help you to ‘see’ the place in your head.” Have the students share with a partner what they think the place looks like, highlighting specific words from the text and writing them on the chart. Model the first row. “How does the author’s use of the simile ‘soft and bouncy like trampolines’ help us to visualise the slugs?” (Visualising)

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- Have the students read to “other side of the world”. “I can see a pattern emerging here about sinking. What might that tell us about the ground under the grass?” Have the students highlight the key words that help them to create the image in their heads. Draw out the idea that deserts are hot, dry, and sandy but the jungle would have lots of trees and greenery. Have them read to the end of the page. “I’m wondering why the author has used different greetings here. What do you think she is trying to tell us about the children?” (Visualising; inferring)

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- Discuss some of the language used and how it creates an image of a very hot world. For example, help the students to make connections to things they know about that sizzle, such as sausages cooking. “Blistering’ and ‘baking’ makes me think of hot ovens sending out extreme heat. What do you think of?” Have the students share their ideas with a partner, using specific examples from the text. Refer them back to the success criteria to check. (Making connections; visualising)

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- “The words ‘slimy’, ‘sticky’, and ‘slither’ make me think of all sorts of creatures. What words on this page make you think of particular creatures?” Have the students share their ideas and explain their thinking. Ask them to highlight the words that they feel are the most descriptive.

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- “Are the things described in the story similar to what you thought might happen?” (Making connections, visualising)

After reading

- Depending on your lesson, have the students complete the chart and then share their ideas with a partner or the whole group. (Making connections; visualising)
- Discuss some of the language features, such as the simile, alliteration, and rhyme and how they helped the reader. “What would you have pictured if the author had not described the slugs and worms as being bouncy like trampolines?” (Visualising)
- Revisit the names of the students in the text. “What does the name Cornelius Slugtrapper suggest to you?” Discuss each name and the characteristics or personality traits the names suggest. Prompt the students to look for parts of words they know. For example, “argument” in “Argumenta” and the link to Albert Einstein and the name of a well-known Internet search engine in “Googlestein”. You could also have students look at page 20 and discuss if there are any clues about each character in the illustration. (Making connections; visualising; analysing and synthesising)
- Discuss the use of ellipses when the twins are speaking. “I’m wondering what information this is giving us about the twins without telling us in words.” (Inferring; analysing and synthesising)
- Discuss which world the students preferred, giving reasons for their selection. (Making connections; visualising)
- If you didn’t use the illustrated text, have the students compare the illustrations with what they had pictured. “How do these illustrations compare with the pictures you were imagining?” (Visualising; making connections)

- 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. “How did making connections between the author’s choice of words and your senses help you to create pictures in your head?” “How will what you have learnt today about creating pictures in your head as you read help you when you read another imaginative text like this by yourself?” 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 write their own creative description of what they think would happen and put versions into a shared book. (Visualising; making connections)
- Create a class chart of descriptive words and phrases from the story, which the students can refer to for use in their own writing. (Visualising; making connections)
- Have the students read other texts, such as “Sparklies” (SJ 1.2.05), that include descriptive vocabulary that supports visualising. (Analysing and synthesising)
- Students could write brief descriptions and have a partner illustrate them. (Visualising)
- Ask the students to share with a partner how they were able to visualise to help them explore a text when reading independently.

Red Flags

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At assembly, the teacher said, “It’s raining today, and the red flags are out. So remember – please do not walk on the grass.”

“What would happen if we did?” asked Molly McMerry from Room 2.

“Well ...” Cornelius Slugtrapper from Room 5 murmured thoughtfully, “I think you would sink down and down till you came to a special underground world.

“There’d be lots of tree roots, and the underground children would climb up and swing from them. When they jumped down, they wouldn’t hurt

themselves because they'd land on slugs and worms. And as everyone knows, slugs and worms are soft and bouncy like trampolines.

"That's what would happen if you walked on the grass when the red flags were out. Definitely."

"I disagree," said Agnes Argumenta from Room 6. "I think you would sink and sink and sink – and then pop out on the other side of the world. You'd arrive in a playground just like ours, but it would be surrounded by jungles and deserts, toucans and camels – and skyscrapers.

"All the children would run up to welcome you saying, 'Bonjour!', 'Guten Tag!', 'Bore da!', and 'Hola!'

"That's what would happen if you walked on the grass when the red flags were out. Definitely."

"You've got it all wrong," said a voice from Room 8.

"Allow me to explain. My name is Albert Erasmus Googlestein (you've probably heard of me), and *this* is what would happen.

"You'd sink down – that much is true – but then things would start to feel rather hot. The ground would sizzle, the air would frizzle, and even the rocks would start to melt. There's not much shade in the centre of the earth. In fact, it would be the most sweltering, smouldering, blistering, baking place you've ever been.

"And that's what would happen if you walked on the grass when the red flags were out. Definitely!"

"Wrong!" yelled the Twiggy twins from Room 1.

"You're so wrong it's not funny," said Twiggy 1.

"I'm not even smiling a little bit," said Twiggy 2.

"If you walked on the grass, a great, big, slimy, sticky monster with four brains ..." began Twiggy 1.

"... and sixteen eyes," chimed in Twiggy 2.

"... would slither up to you and wrap its tentacles around your throat and squeeze ..."

"... and squeeze ..."

“... and squeeze you like a pimple until ...”

“... SPLAT!”

“And that’s what would happen if you walked on the grass when the red flags were out,” said Twiggy 1. “Definitely.”

“Yes, definitely,” said Twiggy 2.

It’s been raining all day, and the red flags are still out.

“Please do not walk on the grass,” says the teacher.

What do YOU think would happen if you did?