

# Shrinkage

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## *Overview*

“Just go in, wander round, grab something you like, then come out ... simple as.” The pressure is on for Pippa to shoplift. By doing so, she will pass the entrance test for inclusion in Kylie’s group.

This text is centred on the themes of peer pressure and friendship. It explores an extended moment in time – Pippa’s dilemma in the shop leading to her ultimate decision and its immediate consequences. The open ending raises as many questions as it answers.

Your students should be able to hypothesise about the author’s purpose early on, so their challenge will be to predict what will happen in the text to support that purpose. The prediction process is likely to draw out many of the deeper ideas and questions that the text raises.

## *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 the lesson?*

- To explore the powerful conflict between peer pressure and conscience and the consequences for one girl
- To support the students in developing the comprehension strategies of **forming and testing hypotheses** and identifying the author’s purpose and point of view.

## *Suggested learning goal*

We are learning to hypothesise the author’s purpose and identify how the story’s events are organised to achieve that purpose.

## **Success criteria**

*To support our comprehension of the text, we will:*

- use prior knowledge and evidence from the text to hypothesise the author’s purpose
- use prior knowledge and text clues to predict the path the story might take to meet the author’s purpose
- regularly check and revise our predictions about the purpose and path as we read
- explore the effectiveness of the author’s path in relation to her purpose.

## *Features of the text*

*What are the potential supports of this text in relation to my students’ learning needs and to the reading and teaching purposes?*

- **Text form:** A fictional narrative in the third person that gives an extended description of one event (not much more than a moment in time).
- **Themes:** Peer pressure and friendship.
- **Structure and organisation:** The supportive illustrations, particularly:
  - the way Pippa appears to shrink
  - the sickly green and yellow hues, perhaps mimicking Pippa's state of mind
  - the subtle presence of the police car at the end (reflected in the shop window).
- **Language choices:**
  - The multiple meanings of the title – literal (stated on page 20) and metaphorical (Pippa feeling small and Pippa potentially shrinking in the eyes of others)
  - The way the author builds tension and engages the reader, for example, by using:
    - detailed descriptions of Pippa's thoughts and actions ("Pippa swallowed hard", "Pippa stood frozen for a moment")
    - foreshadowing ("But now Pippa was inside the shop, it didn't seem simple at all", "That was supposed to distract the shopkeeper")
    - rhetorical questions ("Why am I doing this?", "Where had they gone?", "Why hadn't they waited for her?", "How could she have been so stupid?")
    - expressive language, especially verbs ("risked a look", "glanced", "gasping with relief", "peering", "jerked", "buckling", "throwing up").
- **Specific vocabulary:**
  - Words with the "un-" or "in-" prefix ("unkindly", "unsmiling", "incredulous")
  - The double negative "not unkindly".

### ***Readability***

Noun frequency level: 9–10 years for guided reading

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

- Particular words and concepts, including "distract", "browsing", "profit margins", "mouthing", "tunnelling through", "peering", "jerked", "buckling", "not unkindly", "incredulous"
- The range of complex verb forms
- The use of colloquialisms unfamiliar to English language learners, for example, "simple as", "hanging about", "bunch of girls", "way too real".

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

- **Personal experience:**
  - Their experiences of peer pressure and of wanting to be accepted
  - Their familiarity with the feeling of knowing they've done something wrong
- **Literacy-related knowledge:**
  - Their familiarity with narrative structure
  - Their familiarity with making inferences.

### *A framework for the lesson*

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

### **Before reading**

- Share the reading purpose with the students and briefly introduce the text.
- Explore the illustrations on pages 18 and 19 only. "What information about the setting do they give you? How do you think the girl feels?" Notice the three girls outside. Have the students predict what the text is about. (Inferring; forming hypotheses)
- Introduce the title but don't discuss it just yet. "Let's keep the title in mind as we read."
- Share the learning goal and success criteria with the students.

### **During reading**

*Refer to Effective Literacy Practice in Years 5 to 8, pages 80–93, for information about deliberate acts of teaching.*

#### **Page 18**

- Read the page. Draw attention to "Why am I doing this?" and clarify what Pippa has to do. "How would you describe Pippa and Kylie so far?" Encourage the students to back up their ideas. (Inferring; evaluating)
- "I think I'm developing an idea about why the author has written this text." Have the students think, pair, and share what the author's point of view might be. (Identifying the author's purpose and point of view; forming hypotheses)
- Discuss what might happen in the story to achieve that purpose. "Let's explore some possible plot lines and outcomes." You could start the students off by writing "steal" and "not steal" on the board. From there, encourage them to come up with possible paths of action. You could represent the paths as a tree or a road, with forks at important choices. Prompt your students with questions such as:
  - "If Pippa shoplifts, what might she take?"
  - "If she shoplifts and gets away with it, will she do it again?"
  - "If she doesn't shoplift, what will she do instead, and how will her friends react?"

- “In either case, what might be the effects on Pippa, her friends, her family, and the school?”
- What prior knowledge and clues in the text so far support your predictions? Discuss this with your partner.

(Forming hypotheses)

- Remind the students that the paths should relate to their chosen author’s purpose. However, they could experiment with other paths too. Doing so might reveal how plot lines that are the same to begin with may still diverge greatly later on (or vice versa) and serve quite different purposes. Give the students time to think through the possibilities and do a thorough job. They could work individually or in pairs. If the activity takes a long time, you could stop here and continue with the lesson another day. (Forming hypotheses; identifying the author’s purpose and point of view)
- Have the students share and discuss their various paths and then highlight the path they think would best serve the author’s purpose. Below is a model of a “tree” your students might come up with. (Forming hypotheses)

## Page 20

- Read the page and check their predictions so far. Talk about the meaning of “shrinkage” and the girls’ use of the concept to justify the shoplifting. Also consider “even Marcia”, eliciting what the words suggest about the ranking of the girls. Finally, draw attention to “taking something she knew she’d never use made it seem OK.” “What do you think about this

idea? What did you predict Pippa might steal?" (Testing hypotheses; inferring; evaluating)

### Page 21

- Read the page and check their predictions again. Briefly discuss how Pippa is feeling. "Which path are we going down? Do you want to revise your prediction?" What new information do you need to consider? Encourage the students to predict again – "How do you think the author will end the story to achieve her purpose? How confident are you about the purpose and point of view you predicted?" (Forming and testing hypotheses; identifying the author's purpose and point of view)

### Page 22

- Discuss the final paragraph and illustration and link them to the title. "What are the different things that 'shrinkage' refers to?" Prompt them to consider how small Pippa looks in the image and why the lip gloss is foregrounded. (Analysing and synthesising)

### After reading

- Notice the sentence "Of course this was likely to happen" on the final page. Use it as an opportunity to ask: "Is this what you expected would happen? Did you, for instance, anticipate that the shopkeeper would know about the girls?" Notice how she says "the ones who've given us trouble before". "These words raise questions in my mind: Have the girls been caught before? If so, could they have set Pippa up to be caught, and what does that suggest about the sort of people they are?" Draw out what the students think and why. (Testing hypotheses; asking questions)
- Have the students highlight the path that the author took. Discuss how far it goes – only up to Pippa getting caught (the climax) – and how many questions it leaves unanswered. Some are noted above, and others are relevant too, such as what the shopkeeper will do and how Pippa's mum will really react. "What do you think might happen and why? What evidence from the text supports your thinking?" Draw attention to the police car reflected in the shop window if your students haven't noticed it already. (Analysing and synthesising; asking questions; evaluating; inferring)
- "I wonder why the author chose to end here?" Draw out the power of leaving a text unresolved so that the reader can fill in the gaps. Also, the unresolved ending may further clarify the author's purpose – "Could it simply be to raise ideas and questions about shoplifting, peer pressure, and friendship and leave the reader to answer them?" (Analysing and synthesising; identifying the author's purpose and point of view; asking questions; inferring)

- As an extension to the discussion above, you could explore the rhetorical questions in the text (the ones Pippa asks herself) and how they relate to the author's purpose. (Analysing and synthesising; identifying the author's purpose and point of view)
- With the students, review the learning goal and success criteria and reflect on how well the learning goal has been achieved. Specifically discuss how the process of hypothesising has allowed for deeper exploration of the text and the issues it raises. Note any teaching points for future sessions. "How will your learning from today strengthen your understanding of other narrative texts with similar themes?"

### **Links to further learning**

*What follow-up tasks will help my students to consolidate their new learning?*

The students could:

- analyse other aspects of the text that relate to the author's purpose, for example, her use of rhetorical questions (as noted above), detailed descriptions of Pippa's thoughts and actions, foreshadowing, and expressive language (Analysing and synthesising)
- rewrite the story according to one of their alternative plotlines to achieve the same or another purpose (Making connections)
- "resolve" the ending, writing what they think will or should happen next (Forming hypotheses; evaluating)
- read other stories about peer pressure, such as "The Bullet" (SJ 4.3.08), and compare what the author's purpose was and how they went about achieving it. (Making connections)