



Overview

“Car Games” is a play about the digital devices used by a family on a car trip. While this scenario may be outside the experience of some students, it will resonate with many who have travelled in a car with their family, been involved in sibling squabbles, or been more interested in a device than on interacting with their parents. The action takes place in the static setting of the car. Throughout the play, speakers are talking at cross-purposes. The tone is humorous, with a fast-paced exchange between the family members, including Grandma, who is not present but who sends puzzling text messages. However, there is a seriousness that may prompt some critical thinking: *Have we all become reliant on digital devices? Are we all distracted by devices?*

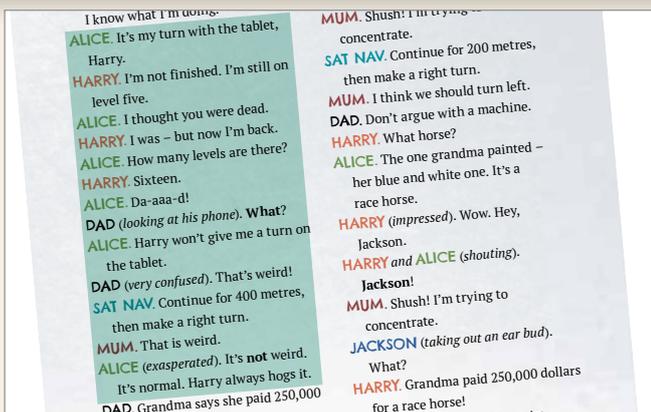
This play:

- provides a comical view of family interactions
- refers to a range of digital devices and their uses
- requires students to be able to visualise the setting
- may need some explanation about Grandma’s text message errors for students to understand the joke at the end.

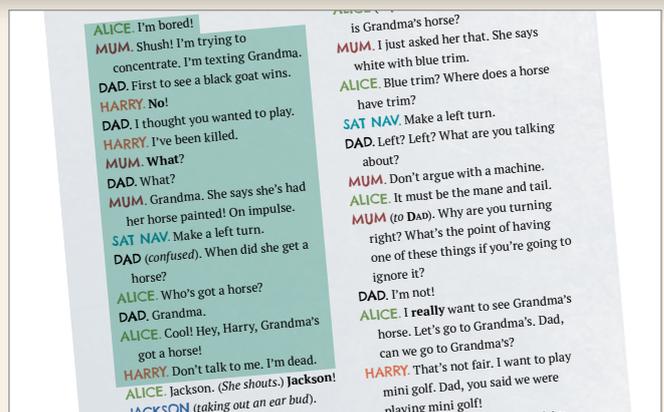
A PDF of the text is available at www.schooljournal.tki.org.nz

Texts related by theme “Baa-mite” SJ L3 Oct 2015 | “Meme & Me” SJ L4 Oct 2016

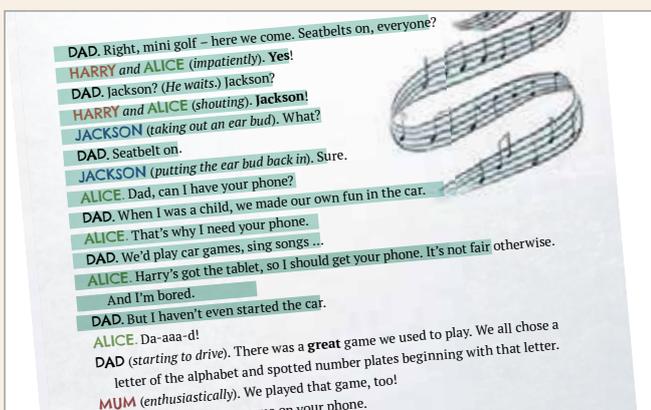
Text characteristics from the year 5 reading standard



abstract ideas, in greater numbers than in texts at earlier levels, accompanied by concrete examples in the text that help support the students’ understanding



some ideas and information that are conveyed indirectly and require students to infer by drawing on several related pieces of information in the text



sentences that vary in length and in structure (for example, sentences that begin in different ways and different kinds of complex sentences with a number of subordinate clauses)



figurative and/or ambiguous language that the context helps students to understand

Possible curriculum contexts

English (Reading)

Level 3 – Purposes and audiences: Show a developing understanding of how texts are shaped for different purposes and audiences.

– Ideas: Show a developing understanding of ideas within, across, and beyond texts.

ENGLISH (Writing)

Level 3 – Purposes and audiences: Show a developing understanding of how to shape texts for different purposes and audiences.

– Language features: Use language features appropriately, showing a developing understanding of their effects.

THE ARTS (Drama)

Level 3 – Communicating and Interpreting: Present and respond to drama, identifying ways in which elements, techniques, conventions, and technologies combine to create meaning in their own and others' work.

HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION (Relationships with Other People)

Level 3 – Interpersonal skills: Identify the pressures that can influence interactions with other people and demonstrate basic assertiveness strategies to manage these.

Possible first reading purposes

- To enjoy reading a comical exchange between family members
- To identify the features of a play with several characters.

Possible subsequent reading purposes

- To explore the importance of appropriate timing with the fast-paced dialogue between characters
- To think critically and debate the merits of digital devices
- To critique the author's use of a play format as a vehicle for getting across her message
- To perform the play.

Possible writing purposes

- To create dialogue in a family scenario from personal experience
- To write a persuasive piece, for example, *Should children be discouraged from using digital devices?*
- To write instructions for someone who has limited experience of digital devices on how to use an MP3 player or send a text message.



The New Zealand Curriculum

Text and language challenges

(Some of the suggestions for possible supporting strategies may be more useful before reading, but they can be used at any time in response to students' needs.)

VOCABULARY

- Possibly unfamiliar words and phrases, including “trim”, “mane”, “racket”, “hogs”
- Topic-specific words and phrases: “satellite navigation system”, “Sat Nav”, “tablet”, “ear bud”, “device”, “level five”
- Deliberate confusion between words: “horse”/ “house”, “pigs”/ “pegs”, “bears”/ “beans”.

Possible supporting strategies

- Although these words are not difficult, students will need some prior knowledge of the context to understand their use. Use questioning to support understanding: *If we are talking about a white house with blue trim, which bits would be blue? What does the word “hogs” tell us about what Harry is doing?*
- To introduce topic-specific words, explain, question, and prompt: *One of the characters in the play is actually a device that the driver is using – the sat nav. What would ear buds be used for? What would we be referring to if we talked about “levels” when we were using a tablet?*
- The *English Language Learning Progressions: Introduction*, pages 39–46, has useful information about learning vocabulary.
- See also [ESOL Online, Vocabulary](#), for examples of other strategies to support students with vocabulary.

SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED

- Familiarity with the format of a play
- Awareness of the range of digital devices used for various purposes
- Some knowledge of the traits of elderly people
- Some knowledge of the games played before there were electronic devices.

Possible supporting strategies

- Discuss the list of characters and the description of the scene.
- Compile a collective list of commonly used devices, with their intended purpose and target users.
- Lead a discussion around devices designed for a specific purpose, such as a sat nav, and devices that are multi-purpose, such as a tablet.
- Compare “car games” – old and new.

TEXT FEATURES AND STRUCTURE

- The use of dialogue to reveal characters and relationships
- The conventions of a play format, such as character names in capitals with a colon following and the use of italics and brackets for stage directions
- The inclusion of a character – Grandma – whom we only meet by association.

Possible supporting strategies

- Prompt prior knowledge by discussing the purpose of plays.
- Print a copy of the play (from the PDF available on TKI) for each participant so that they can highlight their own lines.
- Model the reading of dialogue, using expression and pace.
- Explain the use of italics and brackets for stage directions.
- Identify the contributions Grandma makes to the play, through texts.



Sounds and Words

Instructional focus – Reading

English Level 3 – Purposes and audiences: Show a developing understanding of how texts are shaped for different purposes and audiences; Ideas: Show a developing understanding of ideas within, across, and beyond texts.

The Arts Drama Level 3 – Communicating and Interpreting: Present and respond to drama, identifying ways in which elements, techniques, conventions, and technologies combine to create meaning in their own and others' work.

Health and Physical Education Relationships with Other People Level 3 – Interpersonal skills: Identify the pressures that can influence interactions with other people and demonstrate basic assertiveness.

First reading

- Set the purpose for reading.
 - Explain to the students that the text is a play. Prompt prior knowledge of plays by inviting students to discuss with a partner the similarities and differences between plays and narrative texts.
 - Tell the students that the play deals with a family travelling in a car and the way various family members use digital devices. Invite responses and personal connections through prompting and questioning. *Think of a time when you were in a car with your family. Have a chat with a buddy about your preferred device.*
 - Direct the students to read the cast list and the setting. Invite their responses and predictions. *If you think of your own experiences, how do you think this journey might go?*
 - Ask the students to read the whole play to themselves, discussing any confusions or challenges. Check that the students understand the author's deliberate strategy of confusing the reader.
- If the students struggle with this text**
- Provide each student with a paper copy of the play. When characters have been allocated, provide highlighters and direct the students to highlight their character's name each time they speak or are mentioned in the stage directions.
 - Students may find the swift changes, from character to character, confusing. Direct them to the consistent format, that is, capitals for the characters' names, a different colour for each character's name, and italics for the stage directions.
 - If necessary, explain any ambiguity where characters are talking at cross-purposes.
 - English language learners may find this play challenging because of its rapid pace and play on words. Consider providing them with a brief plot summary prior to their first reading.

Subsequent readings How you approach subsequent readings will depend on your reading purpose.

The teacher

Check that all students actually understood what was going on in the car. Use some literal questions and some inferential, for example:

- *Where were they hoping to go? Where did they end up? Do you think Dad set the sat nav device up correctly?*
- *Who was using which device?*
- *Who was at the centre of the confusion?*
- *Did anyone enjoy the journey?*
- *Are children more successful at using digital devices than adults?*

Lead discussion about the purpose of drama.

- *Are plays meant to tell a story? To entertain? To make us think?*

The teacher

Invite six students to take a role each and read through the script.

Discuss the concept of taking a read-through into a performance.

- *What will we need to consider?*

Introduce terminology around drama: props, action, script, characterisation, comedy, audience, complication, roles. Lead a discussion about the techniques needed to satisfy an audience, such as maintaining pace and speaking clearly.

The performance can be recorded with a tablet for peer critiquing or self-critiquing. It can also prompt further discussion around the use and value of devices.

The students:

- working in pairs, respond to your questions by locating answers and discussing possibilities
- infer that the adults are at the centre of the confusion (Grandma had been sending text messages without her glasses; the sat nav had been set incorrectly).

The students:

- read their parts aloud, paying attention to expression, tone, and pacing
- work in a group as a production team, making decisions about props, action, script, characterisation, comedy, audience, complication, and roles
- rehearse and perform the play to peers
- view the recording and identify ways their performance could be improved.

GIVE FEEDBACK

- *I heard you trying out various ways to say that line. That was a good method for working out the best way to bring out the humour. When you performed the play, I noticed the audience found that line really funny.*
- *When you first read the play, I noticed you had to reread the part where Mum reads out Grandma's text, and you only carried on reading when you had worked it out. In this case, the author deliberately confused us, but you worked it out by using your word knowledge.*

METACOGNITION

- Did you understand what the play was about more easily when each part was read by a different actor

Reading standard: by the end of year 5

The Literacy Learning Progressions

Assessment Resource Banks

Instructional focus – Writing

English Level 3 – Purposes and audiences: Show a developing understanding of how to shape texts for different purposes and audiences; Language features: use language features appropriately, showing a developing understanding of their effects.

The Arts Drama Level 3 – Communicating and Interpreting: Present and respond to drama, identifying ways in which elements, techniques, conventions, and technologies combine to create meaning in their own and others' work.

Text excerpts from “Car Games”

Examples of text characteristics

Teacher (possible deliberate acts of teaching)

Page 35

SAT NAV. Continue for 400 metres, then make a left turn.

DAD. Or how about a general knowledge quiz! What's the capital of Australia?

ALICE. Da-aaa-d!

DAD. I know. Goat spotting! First to see a black goat wins. Let's play that one.

HARRY (looking at his tablet).
Yes!

ENGAGING THE AUDIENCE

Writers draw on an awareness of their audience to decide how to engage them. As well as choices of content and vocabulary, they consider the way their characters will speak the lines and the stage directions they need to add.

Prompt recall of the discussions about the way the cast had to speak.

- *What did we think of “Dad”? Did we get an idea of the sort of person he was through what he said? What about Jackson? Why were people getting impatient with him?*

Explain the task to the students.

- *You are going to write and record some dialogue. You can write it as if it is a script. The scenario can be based on your own experiences, but you can exaggerate what happened for dramatic effect (for example, make it funnier).*

Suggest criteria for success, for example:

- *The words our characters say were carefully chosen. We chose words that added to what the audience knew about the characters. We chose things for them to say that kept the audience interested.*

Lead students through a visualisation.

- *Bring to mind a time when you were with members of your family. Notice where you are. Notice who is there. Who is talking? What are they saying? Notice the way they are saying it. What sort of mood are they in? Notice who replies.*

Provide time for students to write independently, following the format of the play. Give feedback and lead peer response on the impact of the writing.

- *Was this engaging for the audience?*
- *Was the dialogue convincing?*
- *Did the characters' personalities come through in the dialogue?*

Page 39

JACKSON laughs.

EVERYONE. What?

JACKSON. Grandma says sorry about the texts.

ALICE. Why?

JACKSON. Because she's just found her glasses.

USING VERBS

Writers make choices about the words they use and about how they arrange them. It is useful to have ongoing conversations about what words do in a sentence.

Direct the students to write their own instructions: *How to send a text message.*

Explain and model the use of imperative verbs and imperative sentences, and then lead discussion about their effect.

- *An imperative verb speaks directly to the reader. It is telling the reader what to do through a command, a request, a direction, or an instruction, for example, “Pick up the phone”.*
- *An imperative sentence doesn't have a subject and usually begins with the verb. The subject of the sentence is the reader, and is implied: “[You] Put on your glasses.”*
- *How does the imperative help to make instructions clear?*

Guide the revision process to ensure that all students will be successful. Have them focus on verb use and sequence for their instructions.

- *How have you ordered your instructions? Bullet points? Numbers?*
- *Check the first word in each point. Is it a verb, telling the reader what to do?*
- *Are the points in the right order?*

METACOGNITION

- We have been thinking about the way dialogue tells us about a character, alongside their actions. What helps us get to know them? Do we always need what they say and what they do to get a picture of their character?

GIVE FEEDBACK

- *The dialogue you wrote is very convincing. The way the characters talk shows us their personality.*
- *I notice that you have rewritten a section of your instructions to include imperative verbs. This has made your instructions much easier to follow.*