

ILLUSTRATING THE READING STANDARD

“World’s Water Running Out” *School Journal*, Part 2 Number 1, 2007

Noun frequency level: 9.5–10.5

The students in a year 5–6 class are beginning a science inquiry into the sustainability of water. The science curriculum focus is on investigating the water cycle and its effect on the climate, landforms, and life.

“World’s Water Running Out” is structured as a news report (from the future) of an event where world leaders are gathering to discuss the worsening water crisis. The big science idea in the text is that the amount of water available to the world is finite. The author uses humour to engage the reader with her message.

The teacher chose “World’s Water Running Out” to use as an introductory text because of its message that water is a non-renewable resource that cannot be taken for granted.

Students are required to imagine the future world and make connections to their own world in order to develop a full understanding of this message. The abstract ideas in the text are accompanied by concrete examples that support the students’ understanding. Some ideas and information are conveyed indirectly and require students to infer by drawing on several related ideas across the text.

*The following example illustrates aspects of the task and text and demonstrates how a student engages with both task and text to meet the reading demands of the curriculum. A number of such examples would be used to inform the overall teacher judgment for this student.*

“Water may soon need to be rationed,” said US President Amelia Topp. “If we carry on wasting it, there simply won’t be enough to go round.”

“We’ve been predicting this since last century,” said water scientist Dr A. Quatic.

“It wasn’t like this when our kids were young,” said two of the protesters, Frank Memory, 72, and Maria Memory, 70.

Outside the conference, a noisy crowd waved banners reading “SOS – Save Our Streams” and “Don’t pollute it – we have to drink it!”

Frank and Maria’s daughter, Luisa, 39, laughed. “I can remember having a long, hot shower every morning,” she said. “Sometimes we used to fill the bath right up with hot water and soak in it for hours. People even used to grumble when it rained!”



The student makes connections to his prior knowledge about water restrictions, and his personal experience of saving water, to predict how the text may say that water is being wasted in the present. With teacher prompting, he links his ideas to the examples given by characters later in the text, such as watering the garden and having long showers, to confirm his predictions.

The student locates the statement made by Dr A. Quatic, links this to the date at the top of page 18, and later wonders why the author has given the reader the ages of the characters. He responds to teacher questioning by integrating these pieces of information and inferring that the story is set in the future but refers to present-day practices.



The student can identify with Luisa, because thirty-nine is about the age he will be in 2037. He reflects on the author’s point of view by connecting to his own personal experience of using water freely. He makes connections (between his knowledge of the meaning of SOS and of punctuation) and the idea that water is a precious resource) to understand how the dash is used in “SOS – Save Our Streams” to emphasise and link the ideas on the banner.

The student evaluates the message on the banner on page 20 and links this to information across the text to recognise the key science concept that water is a major component of our planet and is a finite resource. He makes connections to other texts he has read, such as “The Water Cycle” (*Connected 2 2002*), to confirm the author’s message that, because water is an essential but finite resource, it is important to take action to conserve the world’s water.