



Overview

Marcus is a “middle boy”. He doesn’t stand out in any way and tends to be overlooked. Then, one Wednesday, everything changes. A strange wind springs up, and Marcus suddenly finds himself doing extraordinary things. The story is open-ended but with an implication that Marcus’s days of being a “middle boy” are over. This humorous story provides many opportunities for students to notice clues to Marcus’s behaviour and, at a deeper level, to consider the underlying theme of the importance of self-belief.

“Marcus and the Wind” requires students to “confidently use a range of processing and comprehension strategies to make meaning from and think critically about” text (*The Literacy Learning Progressions*, page 14).

An audio version of the text is available as an MP3 file at: www.juniorjournal@tki.org.nz

Text characteristics

Key text characteristics relating to the reading standard for after three years at school are shown in the boxes with a solid outline.

A mix of explicit and implicit content within text that requires students to make connections with the idea that not being especially good or especially bad at something means “being in the middle”

Words that are used in less common ways, for example, the use of the word “middle” and its different meanings in this text

Use of descriptive verbs

Marcus and the Wind by Kylie Parry

Marcus was a middle boy. He was the middle child of his family. At school, he wasn't especially good at anything and he wasn't especially bad at anything either. Sometimes Marcus was so middle that his teacher forgot his name.

“Ummm, Mitchell, could you bring me your maths book?” his teacher would say.

Even his own mum and dad seemed to forget him.

“Sarah, where are your socks?” Mum would say to his sister.

“Sam, are you ready for school?” Dad would say to his brother.

They didn't say anything to Marcus.

The day that everything changed was a Wednesday. When Marcus was on his way to school, the wind started to blow. It ruffled the leaves on the trees and swept along little pieces of rubbish.

In Room 6, they were all doing handwriting when the funny feeling started. Marcus was trying extra hard to do a good job on his W's. The wind was blowing harder. It rattled at the windows and sneaked under the doors. Marcus's insides started to feel strange.

Students need to make connections to their prior knowledge of fantasy stories to infer what is happening in this story

Visual language features such as the change from Marcus being at the edge of the first illustration to being at the centre of the rest and the koru-like swirls that suggest the movement of the wind and also create a “magical” effect around Marcus

A variety of sentence structures, mostly simple and compound sentences, with a few complex sentences

English (Reading)

Level 2

- Ideas: Show some understanding of ideas within, across, and beyond texts.
- Language features: Show some understanding of how language features are used for effect within and across texts.

Health and Physical Education

Level 2 – Personal identity: Identify personal qualities that contribute to a sense of self-worth.

Suggested reading purpose

(What can the students expect to find out or think about as a result of reading this text?)

- To find out what happens to Marcus when the wind starts to blow

Suggested learning goals for this text

(What opportunities does this text provide for students to learn more about how to “read, respond to, and think critically” about texts?)

Select from and adapt the suggestions below according to your students’ strengths, needs, and experiences – their culture, language, and identity. (*Reading and Writing Standards for Years 1–8*, Knowledge of the learner, page 6).

- The students draw on their knowledge of fantasy stories and their own experiences to form and test hypotheses about what is happening to Marcus.
- They draw on their own experiences and clues in the text to infer how Marcus feels.
- They use the descriptive language to visualise the behaviour of the wind.
- They use multiple sources of information to clarify meanings of unfamiliar words and ideas.

Text and language features**Vocabulary**

- Possible unfamiliar words, in particular descriptive vocabulary, such as “especially”, “ruffled”, “swept”, “rattled”, “sneaked”, “insides”, “gust”, “flapped”, “leapt”, “twirled”, “forehead”, “wrinkled”, “fantastically shaped”, “interval”, “frisky”, “whirlwind”, “gasp”, “towered”, “spires”, “eased”, “open-mouthed”, “astounding”, “sigh”, “quietly”, “drifted”
- Common words used in unusual ways: “so middle”, “shoot up”.

Possible supporting strategies

Monitor the students’ **word-solving** attempts by noticing their use of words from the text. Prompt them to remember the strategies they can use, often in combination, for example:

- when decoding
 - using their knowledge that letters and digraphs can have more than one sound (“especially”, “leapt”)
 - breaking words into smaller chunks (“fan-tas-ti-cal-ly”, “in-ter-val”, “whirl-wind”)
 - drawing on similarities to known words, for example, using knowledge of “high” to help with “sigh”
- when working out word meanings
 - using the context, the illustrations, and their prior knowledge
 - reading on to look for further information.


Have a dictionary available to confirm or clarify word meanings. Have bilingual dictionaries available, where appropriate, for students who have a first language other than English.

Text features


- The personification of the wind
- The use of an ellipsis to end the story.

- Provide support for the student to understand how the wind has human characteristics, for example, “It rattled at the windows and sneaked under the doors.”
- Help students to attend to the ellipsis and if necessary remind them that in this story it leads the reader to anticipate what might happen next.

Metacognition

Effective readers are metacognitive. They are aware of the processes and strategies they draw on and are able to explain how they use these to successfully make meaning and think critically. Examples of metacognitive behaviours, or strategies teachers can use to promote metacognitive behaviours, are threaded through the notes and indicated by .

HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT YOUR STUDENTS TO BE METACOGNITIVE

 Ask questions: *What do you know about fantasy stories? How did that help you make hypotheses about this story?*

 Use prompts: *The author has used lots of descriptive language to describe the wind? How did this help you to visualise the wind?*

Ask questions: What strategies did you use to work out an unknown word? How did they help you?

Introducing the text

- Make the introduction brief to avoid giving away information (and surprises) that the students can enjoy discovering for themselves.
- For students who need support with the vocabulary, you could prepare pre-reading activities to introduce key words that students are not familiar with. For example, you could prepare collaborative crosswords for pairs to complete. Each student has a crossword with half the clues (definitions for the vocabulary) and half the answers. They work in pairs, taking turns to read out clues and help their partner find the answers. When they have finished, they compare their crosswords and check their answers. For more information about this strategy, and other strategies

for teaching vocabulary, see ESOL Online at <http://esolonline.tki.org.nz/ESOL-Online/Teacher-needs/Pedagogy/ESOL-teaching-strategies/Vocabulary/Collaborative-crossword>

- Have the students read the title and view the illustrations on pages 2 and 3. Ask them to share their expectations of the text. Expect them to predict, from the title and the humorous style and swirling edges of the illustrations, that this story will contain unusual (fantasy) events.
- Share the reading purpose and learning goal(s).

Reading and discussing the text

The surprises and humorous details mean that discussion is likely to develop spontaneously as students share their responses to the reading. The notes below highlight some key ideas.

Instructional strategies you can use to support the students to achieve the learning goals are in the right-hand column. Select from and adapt the suggestions according to your students' needs.

What to look for, prompt, and support as the students work towards achieving their learning goal

Page 2

The students respond to the humour in the writer's description of Marcus.

They use evidence from the text and illustrations (for example, the teacher getting his name wrong and Marcus's position at the far right of the illustration) to clarify the meaning of Marcus being "so middle".

They make connections to their own experiences to infer how Marcus feels about being "so middle".

The students predict (from the title, their knowledge of story structure, and the illustration on the facing page) that things will change for Marcus and the change will somehow involve the wind.

Students make connections to fantasy stories they may have read previously and explain that things may change for Marcus.

How you can support students to read, respond, and think critically

Ask the students to find clues that show how the author and illustrator show Marcus being "so middle".

Have them share their findings with a partner and then discuss as a group. If students need more support, you might ask *Why didn't his parents say anything to Marcus? How do you think Marcus feels about that?*

You could use a graphic organiser, like the example below, to support the students as they make inferences about the way Marcus feels.

As we read, we are going to think about how Marcus feels at different times. How does the author show us how Marcus feels?

Have the students read page 2, and as a group, fill in the graphic organiser. Prompt the students to draw on their own experiences of how they feel when people behave like Marcus's family and teacher.

Page	How do you think Marcus feels?	How do you know?
2	Sad, left out, "middle"	His face looks sad in the picture. Nobody is looking at him. His teacher forgot his name. His parents didn't say anything to him.
3		

Ask the students to talk with a partner about where they think this story will go and why.

Draw on what students know about fantasy stories and how they are structured.

Have the students read page 3 and review their suggestions.

What is the wind doing? (The rattling at the windows and sneaking under the doorways seems to suggest that it's trying to get inside, possibly to get closer to Marcus.)

Fill in the graphic organiser for page 3 and discuss how Marcus's feelings are expressed in the text and the illustrations.

Ask the students to talk with a partner about where they think this story will go and why. Expect them to suggest that it will have something to do with the "W's" and Marcus's "funny feeling".

Pages 4–6

The students notice the connection between the increasingly wild behaviour of the wind and Marcus's amazing behaviour.

They infer how Marcus might be feeling as a result of such surprising events.

Have the students read pages 4–6 and review their suggestions.

What are you noticing about the wind? What are you noticing about Marcus?
Prompt the students to refer to the illustrations as well as the text.

If they are unsure about the meaning of “whirlwind”, prompt them to read on to get more information.

Why did Mrs Wright rush to get her camera? How is she feeling about Marcus?

If necessary, support English language learners with “eased back”. You could link this to the idea of slowing down when driving.

Have the students think, pair, and share their ideas about Marcus's feelings on pages 4–6. Fill in the graphic organiser as a group.

Page 7

The students infer that Marcus no longer needs the “support” of the wind.

They summarise how Marcus has changed.

If necessary, prompt the students to read on to clarify the meaning of “open-mouthed”.

What are you noticing about the wind? About Marcus?

Have the students compare their ideas with a partner.

How has his family's behaviour changed from the beginning of the story? How might this make Marcus feel?

As a group, complete the graphic organiser. Review the graphic organiser with the students and discuss the changes in Marcus.

Prompt the students to consider the purpose of the ellipsis at the end of the story. *What kind of day is Thursday going to be for Marcus?*

What is the message of the story?

They hypothesise what the long-term effect is likely to be for Marcus.

The students think critically about the underlying theme.

Revisit the reading purpose and learning goal(s).

☑ *How did thinking about a time when you felt overlooked (or when you did something amazing) help you when you were reading?*

☑ The students explain how making connections to their own experiences helped them to visualise how Marcus was feeling, both when he was being overlooked and when he started doing amazing things.

☑ The students identify some challenges in the text (for example, “shoot up”, “whirlwind”, “eased back”, “open-mouthed”) and explain how they worked (or tried to work) out their meanings.

☑ *What strategies did you use to help you work out the meanings of words in this text? How did they help?*

After reading

- Students can reread the story as they listen to the audio version. Audio versions also provide English language learners with good models of pronunciation, intonation, and expression.

Provide opportunities for the students to practise and consolidate their skills of making connections between the story and their own experiences to make inferences and predictions about Marcus.

- The students could create thought bubbles for the illustrations of Marcus on pages 2–6.
- Together, summarise what Marcus was like at the beginning of the story, then have the students draw and describe three ways that Marcus changed.
- Ask the students to brainstorm words (including ones not in the text) that describe Marcus at various points. Use these words to write sentences about Marcus. Model this, for example, “Marcus was ‘so middle’ because he wasn’t especially good or especially bad at anything.” Have the students choose two or three of these words and then write their own sentences. For example, “Marcus was special/amazing/astounding because he worked like a whirlwind/made a towering building with spires and flags/got all the answers right in maths.” For students who need a writing frame to scaffold their writing, you could use the following example:
Marcus was _____ because he _____. Marcus felt _____ because he _____.
- Have the students rewrite part of the story from the point of view of one of Marcus's siblings or classmates. Alternatively, they could create thought bubbles for the students and teacher on pages 5 and 6.
- Have the students write a “to-do list” or a diary entry for Marcus for Thursday.

Provide opportunities for the students to practise and consolidate their skills of visualising.

- Explore the words that create the idea of the wind being alive. The students could highlight examples on a photocopy of the text. Have them draw a picture of the wind as a person or wild creature that rattles and sneaks and flaps and bends and leaps.

Provide opportunities for the students to practise and consolidate their skills of clarifying meanings of unfamiliar words and ideas.

- Identify the synonyms for “amazing” in the text. Ask the students to suggest further examples and create a word web. You could contrast this with a word web that has synonyms for “middle”, for example, “average”, “normal”, “not especially good or bad”, “easy to overlook”. Display the word web/s and encourage the students to incorporate the words into their writing. For English language learners, provide repeated opportunities for scaffolded practice, for example, vocabulary clozes.

Related texts

Texts with a mixture of fantasy and reality: “The Desk” (JJ 38), “Taniwha Trouble” (JJ 40), “Missing” (JJ 42)

Humorous texts with an underlying message: “Missing” (JJ 42)

Texts where the main character achieves something that is likely to change how they think of themselves: the RTR texts *Kapa Haka* (Turquoise), *That's the Way!* (Purple), *Tom's Tryathlon* (Purple), *Wheke* (Gold); “Free Juice” (JJ 46).