

# Teacher talk *What am I? Amazing Australian Animals*

Read about evidence-based theories that underpin best teaching practices. By learning more about the theory behind teaching strategies you will develop a deeper understanding of what 'works best' for the learners in your classroom.

**Teacher talk** will help you to understand the pedagogic practices surrounding the '[Big Six](#)' focus areas. You will discover a range of instructional strategies that integrate these core elements of reading development.

Inclusive teaching and learning opportunities that build on the Big Six as well as students' needs, strengths and interests are vital for building student capacity in learning English. This can be a complex and challenging task. Teacher talk offers instructional strategies aimed at scaffolding the learning of a diverse range of students, including English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D) students and students from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.

Try these strategies as you share *What am I? Amazing Australian Animals* with your class, and use them in other aspects of your reading program. Discuss with your colleagues the instructional practices that resonate with you, and those that have been effective in your classroom.

## Scaffolding meaning, vocabulary and oral language

Shared reading of a factual text provides the opportunity for students to be engaged in learning new information and concepts. It is also a great opportunity to explore the language structure of the text, and vocabulary related to the topic.

For explicit teaching and learning related to *What am I? Amazing Australian Animals* place students into small groups to read aloud and discuss. Set aside specified times during the week for separate discussions about each animal.

Revisit the text many times so that you can build upon students' knowledge and understandings. Think about specific instructions to assist your students to understand the language structure, vocabulary and concepts related to each animal in the text.

## Book introduction

Before reading the text, prepare students for any new language structures, vocabulary and concepts they may encounter. This is also a time to spark students' interest in the topic and elicit their prior knowledge.

Introduce background information that will support students in accessing the information in *What am I? Amazing Australian Animals*. Discuss each of the animals in the text and the main concepts related to each one. Extended conversation with high student participation will support students' understanding. Use knowledge of your student's oral language competencies and vocabulary control to guide your teaching conversation.

Introduce topic-specific vocabulary in the text. Provide definitions and explanations for these words and phrases as required. An understanding of these Tier 3 words will ease the concept load for students when they first hear the text.

## During read-aloud

As you read aloud to the whole group, stop as required to explain, clarify, repeat, model language, use synonyms or to view illustrations. This will support students in making meaning.

Small-group read-alouds are also beneficial as it is easier to ensure that each child has the opportunity to interact if meaning is lost. Demonstrate through the think aloud process (Fisher, Frey and Lapp, 2011) the importance of maintaining understanding and how to investigate further if you do not understand.

## After the read-aloud

Invite your students to respond to the text using their prior knowledge and what they have discovered about each animal. Through discussions using the 'PEER' and 'CROWD' strategies (Zevenbergen and Whitehurst, 2003) check on your students' understanding of new vocabulary and concepts.

Strategy	What it means
PEER - sequence of questions	<p>P - Prompting the student to talk about the text by using questions to begin the conversation</p> <p>E - Evaluating the student's response and providing a comment</p> <p>E - Expanding the student's answers by rephrasing, adding information or modelling correct syntax</p> <p>R - Repeating the prompt so the student has the opportunity to reuse the language</p>
CROWD - different ways to begin the PEER questioning sequence	<p>C - Completion prompts: the student fills in the blanks by saying a word or a phrase to finish the teacher's sentence</p> <p>R - Recall prompts: the student is asked to recall information</p> <p>O - Open-ended prompts: open-ended questions are asked</p> <p>W - 'Wh' prompts: questions beginning with who, what, where, when, why and how</p> <p>D - Distancing prompts: relate something in the story to the student's personal experiences</p>

### Vocabulary focus

*What am I? Amazing Australian Animals* includes topic-specific vocabulary related to each animal (see the tables below). Further extended talk and activities will help students become familiar with this vocabulary. Using and encountering the words many times is an important aspect for learning.

To cater for English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D) students who might need extra support, pay explicit attention to words that have multiple meanings. A discussion surrounding words that can be both a noun and a verb will also support their understanding of the text.

### Content words

<b>platypus</b>	<b>saltwater crocodile</b>
freshwater lakes	rivers
rivers	swamps (multiple meanings - verb and noun)
creeks	inlets
evening	lakes
I spend (multiple meanings)	coast (multiple meanings)
burrow (multiple meanings - verb and noun)	reptiles
thick	carnivores
waterproof	territory
fur	prey (multiple meanings - verb and noun and meaning according to spelling)
shrimps	lunes
nerves	protective
bills (multiple meanings)	hatch/hatchlings
signals (multiple meanings - verb and noun)	several
<b>cassowary</b>	<b>quoll</b>
tropical	habitats
rainforests	grasslands
seeds	bush
dung	mountain
unique	pointy
helmet/casque	carnivore
releases heat	nocturnal

For more information on explicit teaching of vocabulary go to these websites:

- [Literacy Teaching toolkit: Vocabulary](#)
- [Noella Mackenzie: A focus on vocabulary](#)
- [Primary Connections: Using a word wall to support student explanations](#)

#### Australian Curriculum links

Year 1: [AC9E1LA09](#)

## Phonological awareness

### Syllables

Support phonological awareness through the identification of syllables in words. Saying words by hearing and clapping the syllables assists readers to understand that words can be broken into parts.

The ability to hear the multiple parts of a word can be used when students are ready to explore spelling patterns and prefixes and suffixes. It is also an important precursor to efficient decoding of multisyllabic words.

Use words from *What am I? Amazing Australian Animals* to focus on syllabification. For example:

- amazing
- Australian
- animals
- platypus
- crocodile
- cassowary
- quoll
- river

For more information on phonological awareness go to

- [NSW Department of Education: Phonological awareness](#)
- [Literacy Teaching Toolkit](#)
- [Reading and Writing Centre](#)

#### Australian Curriculum links

Year 1: [AC9E1LY12](#)

## Fluency

Have students use sentences from *What am I? Amazing Australian Animals* to consolidate concepts of print (words make up a sentence in a left to right order), work on their automatic recognition of words and practise reading with fluency.

Select one of the following sentences from the text to read fluently:

I am a platypus.

I am a quoll.

I am a saltwater crocodile.

I am a cassowary.

## Sentence work

- Write the sentence on two strips of cardboard.
- Read the sentence to your students. Students repeat the sentence.
- Cut up one sentence strip, say the words as you cut the sentence strip.
- Model how to reassemble the cut-up words back into the sentence.
- Invite a student to reassemble the cut-up words back into the sentence independently, saying the words aloud.
- Use one sentence as a model for students to place words under if they find the reassembling task difficult.
- Encourage students to make and reread the sentence many times for fluency.

### Australian Curriculum links

Year 1: [AC9E1LA05](#), [AC9E1LY14](#)

## References

Fisher, D., Frey, N., & Lapp, D. (2011). Coaching middle-level teachers to think aloud improves comprehension instruction and student reading achievement. *Teacher Educator*, 46(3), 231-243.

Zevenbergen, A. A., & Whitehurst, G. J. (2003). Dialogic reading: a shared picture book reading intervention for preschoolers. In A. Kleeck, S. Stahl, & E. Bauer (Eds.), *On reading books to children*. New York: Routledge.



This document is part of the **Literacy Hub's shared reading set**.  
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