

Teacher talk *The Last Laugh*

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 *The Last Laugh* 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 comprehension

You can support your students in gaining a deep understanding of the text by implementing various teaching and learning strategies. These strategies include providing an environment where rich discussions occur, modelling the think aloud strategy, implementing a text analysis task and guiding your students to make personal connections with the text.

Rich talk

Provide rich, high-quality talk about the text. This should involve both teacher-to-student and student-to-student talk (Duke and Pearson, 2002).

Encourage discussions at a number of levels including:

- clarifying information
- discussing particular vocabulary
- predicting plot
- making interpretations about character qualities
- making connections to characters, events, settings and the plot
- identifying the underlying messages that are intended by the author.

Think aloud

The think aloud strategy is a recognised instructional technique for improving comprehension (Duke and Pearson, 2002). You can use it to talk about the plot and the characters and their qualities. Think aloud involves you saying what you are thinking as you perform a specific comprehension strategy. For example, you could talk out loud about the qualities of one of the characters and why you think they have these qualities. Model how to use evidence from the text to support and explain your thinking, such as what is happening in the illustrations and the character's actions and language.

The think aloud strategy can be used regularly by teachers. It can also be used by students. The think aloud strategy can help to further improve students' comprehension, so they need to be encouraged to use this practice when they read (Duke and Pearson, 2002).

Text analysis

Priscilla Witte (2016) has developed a text analysis chart that can be used to help your students explore *The Last Laugh* by talking about the characters' feelings, actions and qualities, as well as the key events in the story and the author's message. This chart can be used in conjunction with the think aloud process.

The text analysis chart below has been adapted from Witte's (2016) and can be used as a graphic organiser to guide teacher talk and discussion. Explain to students that the graphic organiser will help them to think about the characters in *The Last Laugh* and what happened in the story. Copy the Text analysis graphic organiser (see example below) onto a large chart. Demonstrate how to fill in the chart as you think aloud and record your thoughts. Involve the students in the discussion and use their ideas to fill in the chart. Explicit demonstration of this task will take time so you may like to revisit it over several days.

The text analysis graphic organiser will also enable students to understand the importance of being able to justify their thinking using evidence from the text (Witte, 2016). It will be important for you to model how readers use evidence from the text to make judgements about a character's actions, feelings, qualities and the message that the author is sending.

Areas for discussion about the author's implied messages include:

- key events that happen and how the characters respond to these
- language used by the author that gives clues about a character's feelings or qualities
- illustrations that give clues about a character's feelings or qualities
- the culmination of events to understand the author's underlying message.

Text analysis chart

Key event	Character's actions or feelings	Character qualities	Evidence from the text	Author's message
Central message:				

View this completed chart as an example of a completed text analysis of *The Last Laugh*. Note: you may want to condense the number of key events that you analyse.

Key event	Character's actions or feelings	Character qualities	Evidence from the text	Author's message
Monkey loved to play, swing and sing.	Monkey is fun-loving, playful and cheerful. She is very talented at swinging through the trees, and this makes her feel happy.	Monkey is self-confident, boastful and talented.	Words that Monkey sang: <i>'No one is as fine. No one is as fun. No one is as clever as me.'</i> Illustrations of Monkey show her looking very pleased with herself.	We can relate to Monkey's human traits of being boastful and confident as we all have things we are good at and feel proud about.
Monkey and Elephant playing - Monkey is fast and Elephant is slow.	Monkey was laughing cheekily at Elephant. Elephant was slow, feeling sad and doubting his abilities.	Monkey doesn't notice or reflect on how her actions and words made Elephant feel.	Monkey laughed because Elephant was too slow. <i>'You can't keep up with me.'</i> Faces of Monkey and Elephant in the illustrations show their feelings.	Monkey was not aware that her actions didn't consider the emotions and needs of others. The notion of empathy can be explored through this friendship.
Monkey and Lion - both are fast but Monkey can climb high and Lion can't.	Monkey was laughing and boasting about herself. Lion was left alone at the bottom of the tree.	Monkey is still boasting and not reflecting on how her actions and responses affect Lion's feelings.	Monkey laughed at Lion. <i>'You can't climb as high as I can.'</i> Illustrations show Monkey showing off and laughing at Lion.	Again, Monkey was not aware that her actions didn't consider the emotions and needs of others.
Monkey and Bird - both are fast and can go up high, but Bird can't swing like Monkey.	Monkey was laughing and boasting about herself. Bird was left alone on the branch of the tree.	Monkey is still boasting and not reflecting on how her actions and response affect how Bird is feeling.	<i>Bird could not swing, and Monkey laughed.</i> Illustrations show Monkey leaving Bird alone.	Monkey still shows no awareness that her actions did not consider the emotions and needs of others.
Monkey follows a butterfly.	Monkey was not thinking about where she was swinging.	Monkey is trying to climb as high as the butterfly - testing herself. Trying to be the same as the butterfly. She is a risk-taker.	<i>She followed, and followed, and followed. She went up. She went down. She went around and around and around.</i> Illustrations show Monkey high on a small branch and taking big swings.	Monkey was not aware that by climbing too high she was in an unsafe situation.

Key event	Character's actions or feelings	Character qualities	Evidence from the text	Author's message
Monkey gets stuck in a tree.	Monkey was feeling frightened, tired and scared.	Monkey is trying to free herself, therefore showing initiative. Monkey is becoming scared.	<i>'Oh, no,' cried Monkey.</i> Monkey was tired and scared. Illustrations show Monkey panicking.	Monkey was aware that she was now in an unsafe situation.
Bird helps Monkey.	Monkey was very scared and upset. Bird is feeling useful.	Monkey is able to reflect on how she needs help. Bird shows support for Monkey by flying off to get help.	<i>'No,' sobbed Monkey.</i> Explanation about the vine being tangled around her tail. Illustrations show Monkey is stuck.	Bird was happy to help Monkey and didn't hesitate even though Monkey laughed at her, and this is what a 'good' friend does.
Bird gets Elephant and Lion to help.	Each animal uses a special feature and skill to help free Monkey.	Monkey is thankful and appreciative of the help from her friends. Elephant, Bird and Lion feel proud because they cleverly solved a problem.	A description of how Elephant and Lion help Monkey. Illustrations show them looking pleased and proud.	Elephant and Lion help Monkey despite Monkey making fun of them earlier. This shows loyalty and a willingness to forgive, which are positive qualities.
Monkey sings a different song.	Monkey has a new song that shows respect and appreciation for her friends.	Monkey has changed by showing an understanding of how friends help each other, and that she isn't the only one who has talents and skills. She realises that everyone has something special and unique about themselves.	<i>My friends are all fine, My friends are all fun, My friends are all clever like me!</i>	People can change just like Monkey did. Being a good friend isn't just about playing and having fun together. Good friends help each other and recognise and appreciate each other's strengths and talents.

Central message:

The text shows the importance of interacting positively with each other and understanding that including others is important for their wellbeing. The text also has a strong message about collaborating and banding together in times of need. These are important elements of personal and social responsibility. Themes that could be explored are friendship, respect, empathy, inclusion, collaboration, individual differences and individual strengths.

By completing a text analysis of *The Last Laugh* you can make explicit links to content descriptions in Health and Physical Education in the Australian Curriculum. Descriptors can be viewed here:

Australian Curriculum links

Foundation: [AC9HPFP02](#) | Year 1 and Year 2: [AC9HP2P01](#)

Making connections

The think aloud strategy can be used to help your students make connections with the text. Revisit *The Last Laugh* and explain how you might connect to the feelings of the characters in the text. Justify your thinking out loud.

Ask students to identify with the characters or their feelings and relate these to their own personal experiences. This could involve both teacher-to-student and student-to-student talk (Duke and Pearson, 2002). Encourage students to share personal experiences by prompting them with questions. *Have you ever boasted about something you can do? Have you ever felt sad because someone upset you? Have you ever been in a situation where lots of people have helped complete a job or task? Do you know of any other characters in stories who are boastful? Share who they are and how they are boastful.*

Australian Curriculum links

Foundation: [AC9EFLY05](#), [AC9EFLE01](#) | Year 1: [AC9E1LY05](#), [AC9E1LE01](#), [AC9E1LE02](#), [AC9E1LE03](#)
Year 2: [AC9E2LE03](#)

References

Duke, N., & Pearson, P. (2002). Effective practices for developing reading comprehension. In A. E. Farstrup & S. J. Samuels (Eds.), *What research has to say about reading instruction* (3rd ed.). Newark, DE: International Reading Association, Inc.

Witte, P. G. (2016). Teaching first graders to comprehend complex texts through read-alouds. *The reading teacher*, 70(1):29-38.



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