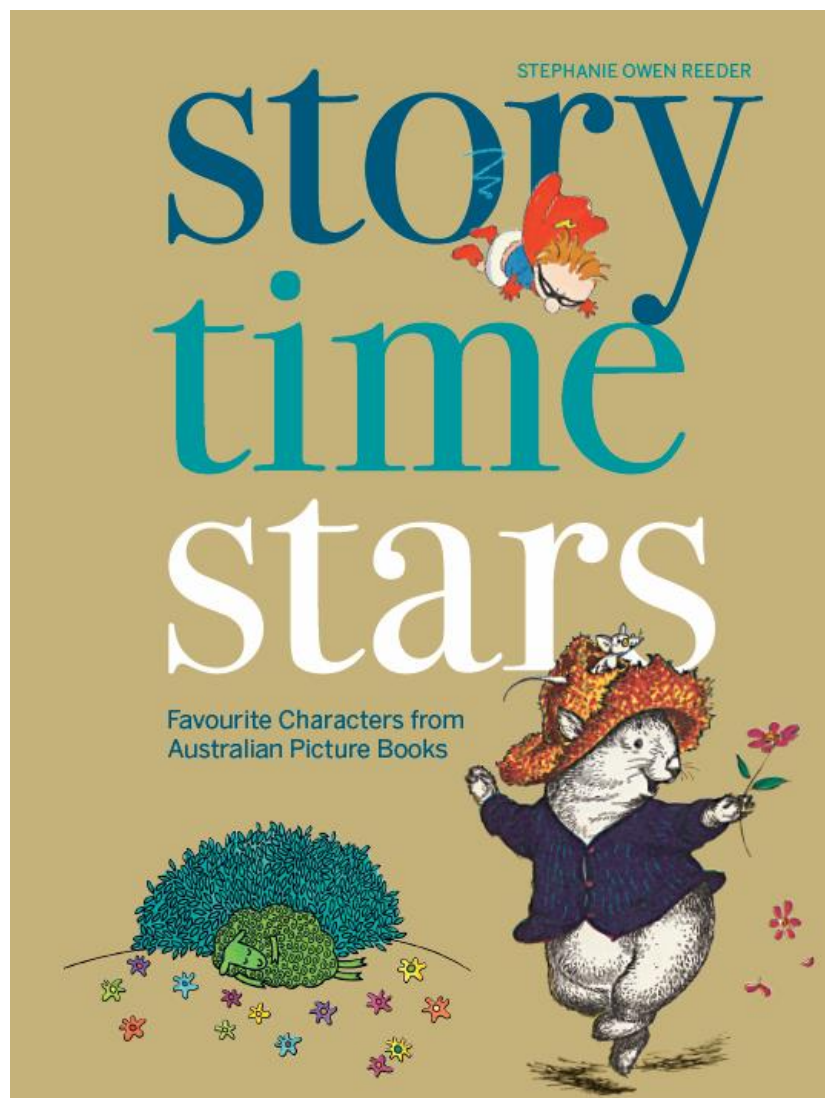


TEACHERS' NOTES Years 2-4

Story Time Stars
by Stephanie Owen Reeder



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Recommended Year Levels: 2-6

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Dr Stephanie Owen Reeder has been involved in children’s literature for over 35 years as a teacher, librarian, editor, reviewer, academic, author and illustrator. She is the author of the award-winning Heritage Heroes series, including *Lost! A True Tale from the Bush* and *Lennie the Legend: Solo to Sydney by Pony*. Stephanie’s picture books include *Dance Like a Pirate* and *Trouble in the Surf*, illustrated by Briony Stewart.

About the Book

From Snugglepot and Cuddlepie to the green sheep and Pig the Pug, Australian children’s book characters have delighted the young and young-at-heart for over 100 years. Get together with old friends and meet new ones in this lighthearted retrospective of much-loved characters from illustrated books for children.

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM CONTENT

- Learning Area(s)
 - English
 - HASS—History
 - The Arts—Visual Arts
- General Capabilities
 - Literacy
 - Critical and Creative Thinking
 - Personal and Social Capability
 - Ethical Understanding
 - Intercultural Understanding
- Cross-curriculum Priorities
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures
 - Asia and Australia’s Engagement with Asia
 - Sustainability
- Digital Classroom
 - Year 3
 - [Changing Streetscapes](#)
 - [Connections to Country](#)
 - [Australian Symbols](#)
 - [Emblems](#)
 - Year 4
 - [First Contacts](#)

Introductory Activities

These are activities to do before reading to prepare students for the concepts/themes explored in the book. They are not necessarily curriculum based.

- Look at the cover of *Story Time Stars: Favourite Characters from Australian Picture Books* with the class. What do you think this book will be about? What do you see that makes you think that?
- Who are your favourite picture book characters? Are they from Australian picture books?

Australian Curriculum Content

Years 2–4

English

Story Time Stars covers a large part of the Australian Curriculum: English for Primary Years. The works and characters within cover a number of themes that are relevant to the lives of students from diverse backgrounds, will encourage reflection on the past, and will expand literacy capabilities through Australian children’s literature and illustration, both modern and historical, in varying styles. As the content of *Story Time Stars* is so broad, and the links to the language and literacy content areas apparent, the curriculum links included in this document focus on the Literature content area of the Primary English curriculum.

Below are extracts from the Primary Level Descriptions for English from the Australian Curriculum relevant to *Story Time Stars*:

- The English curriculum is built around the three interrelated strands of language, literature and literacy.
- Students communicate with peers and teachers from other classes and schools, community members, and individuals and groups, in a range of face-to-face and online/virtual environments.
- Students engage with a variety of texts for enjoyment. They listen to, read, view, interpret and evaluate spoken, written and multimodal texts in which the primary purpose is aesthetic, as well as texts designed to inform and persuade. These include various types of media texts including newspapers, film and digital texts, junior and early adolescent novels, poetry, non-fiction and dramatic performances.
- The range of literary texts for Foundation to Year 10 comprises Australian literature, including the oral narrative traditions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, as well as the contemporary literature of these two cultural groups, and classic and contemporary world literature, including texts from and about Asia.
- Literary texts support and extend students as independent readers.

For a comprehensive description of the Australian Curriculum: English for Years 2, 3 and 4, see [Australian Curriculum: English](#).

English—Literature

YEAR 2

Content Description

Discuss how depictions of characters in print, sound and images reflect the contexts in which they were created ([ACELT1587](#))

Elaborations

- exploring iconography of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures
- recognising recurring characters, settings and themes in Dreaming stories experienced through texts, films and online sources
- discussing moral and teaching stories from varied cultures, identifying and comparing their central messages.

Discussion/Inquiry Questions

- Read the books featured in *Story Time Stars* that have Indigenous characters (*Stradbroke Dreamtime*, *My Place*, *Sam's Bush Journey*, *The Rainbow Serpent* and *Shake a Leg*). Discuss the different ways in which these books present Aboriginal culture.

Activity

- Write a review of one of these books. What was the story about? Did you like it? Why or why not? Would you recommend this book to your friends?
- Read other Dreamtime stories retold and illustrated by Dick Roughsey, author-illustrator of *The Rainbow Serpent*. Choose your favourite character from these books and write a character sketch, describing what sort of creature or person it is and why you like it.

Content Description

Compare opinions about characters, events and settings in and between texts ([ACELT1589](#))

Elaborations

- discussing each others' preferences for stories set in familiar or unfamiliar worlds, or about people whose lives are like or unlike their own.

Discussion/Inquiry Questions

- Choose a selection of picture books from *Story Time Stars* and discuss how the author and illustrator have created the characters. Choose your favourite. Why do you identify with that character? Is it because of their personality, or because they live in a setting you are familiar/unfamiliar with, or because they do the same/different activities as you? Do they

make you laugh or cry? How have the author and illustrator created a character that you can identify with?

Activity

- Write a story in which you travel to a different country, like Anh Do in *The Little Refugee* or Cartwheel in *My Two Blankets*. Describe how things are different in the new country, how this makes you feel and what helps you to feel more at home.
- Choose the character in *Story Time Stars* that you would most like to be. Create a poster about this character. Draw a picture of them and provide information about what sort of person or creature they are and why people will enjoy reading about them.

Content Description

Identify aspects of different types of literary texts that entertain, and give reasons for personal preferences ([ACELT1590](#))

Elaborations

- describing features of texts from different cultures including recurring language patterns, style of illustrations, elements of humour or drama, and identifying the features which give rise to their personal preferences
- connecting the feelings and behaviours of animals in anthropomorphic stories with human emotions and relationships
- drawing, writing and using digital technologies to capture and communicate favourite characters and events.

Discussion/Inquiry Questions

- Around half the characters featured in *Story Time Stars* are animals. Discuss why the creators of picture books often use animals as the main characters in their books. Examine what sorts of animals often feature (for example, cats, dogs, bears and rabbits) and explore the difference between books about real animals in their natural settings and animals that are actually human beings in disguise (anthropomorphism).

Activity

- Some of the animal characters in *Story Time Stars* are sometimes naughty or rude, like the Magic Pudding, Blinky Bill or Pig the Pug. Create an animal character that is cheeky and funny, and write a story about one of their adventures.
- Choose one of the human characters from *Story Time Stars* and re-create them as an animal character. Which animal will you choose and why? What characteristics does your character have in common with the animal? Re-create the cover of the book featuring your animal character.

Content Description

Discuss the characters and settings of different texts and explore how language is used to present these features in different ways ([ACELT1591](#))

Elaborations

- describing features of text settings including time, colours used to portray year, season, and place (country or city) and how this impacts on the characters
- describing plots including beginnings (orientation), how the problem (complication) is introduced and solved (resolution), and considering how these features construct meanings
- identifying features of imaginary or fantasy texts, for example magic powers, shifts in time
- investigating Aboriginal stories, found from online sources, that explain physical features of the landscape and identify and describe the common features of language used
- comparing two or more versions of the same story by different authors or from different cultures, describing similarities and differences in authors' points of view.

Discussion/Inquiry Questions

- A number of the books featured in *Story Time Stars* are set in the Australian bush. Discuss how illustrators and authors present settings in picture books. What sorts of words does the author use to let you know where and when the story is set? How much detail does the illustrator provide, and how do they use imagery, colour and perspective to present the setting?

Activity

- Select one of your favourite books from *Story Time Stars*. Rewrite the story, setting it in a different place. Think about how you might have to change the storyline to go with the new setting. Draw one of the images from the book showing the new setting.
- Select one of your favourite books from *Story Time Stars* and rewrite it with a new main character—perhaps one of the other characters that already appear in the book. For example, you could tell the story of Pig the Pug from the perspective of Trevor the sausage dog, or recount one of Mr Chicken's adventures from the point of view of a tourist who is travelling with him.

YEAR 3

Content Description

Discuss texts in which characters, events and settings are portrayed in different ways, and speculate on the authors' reasons ([ACELT1594](#))

Elaborations

- reading texts in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children/young people are the central characters/protagonists and making links to students' own lives, noting similarities

- exploring the ways that the same story can be told in many cultures, identifying variations in the storyline and in music (for example 'The Ramayana' story which is told to children in India, Indonesia, Thailand, Cambodia, Burma, Laos, Tibet and Malaysia).

Discussion/Inquiry Questions

- A number of books in *Story Time Stars* deal with refugees or immigrants to Australia (for example, *The Little Refugee*, *My Two Blankets* and *The Peasant Prince*). Discuss how the picture-book creators have presented the lives of the main characters in these books before and after they come to Australia. What style of art has each illustrator used?

Activity

- Imagine that you had to escape from Australia because of a war or natural disaster. Where would you go? How would you survive? What would help you settle into your new life? Write a diary documenting your experiences.
- Read the story *Shake a Leg*. Make a list of the things about Aboriginal culture and lifestyles you have learnt about from this book. Discuss with the class how this is similar to or different from your own life experiences.

Content Description

Draw connections between personal experiences and the worlds of texts, and share responses with others ([ACELT1596](#))

Elaborations

- discussing relevant prior knowledge and past experiences to make meaningful connections to the people, places, events, issues and ideas in the text
- exploring texts that highlight issues and problems in making moral decisions and discussing these with others
- drawing on literature from Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or Asian cultures, to explore commonalities of experience and ideas as well as recognising difference in lifestyle and world view.

Discussion/Inquiry Questions

- *Story Time Stars* covers a wide range of books from 100 years of Australian children's illustrated books, ranging from illustrated storybooks with lots of text to picture books with lots of illustrations. Discuss why some people might prefer one book over another. What is it in a particular book that appeals to you? Is it the illustrations? Is it the main character? Is it a familiar setting? Is it a theme that resonates with you because of something you have experienced? Is it the way the words roll off your tongue and stick in your brain?

Activity

- Select your favourite book from *Story Time Stars*. Write a review of the book explaining what you love best about it, why it is your favourite book and why other people might enjoy reading it. Give it a star rating out of five, with five being the very best.
- Select the book in *Story Time Stars* that best matches an experience from your life. Retell the story with you as the main character.

YEAR 4

Content Description

Make connections between the ways different authors may represent similar storylines, ideas and relationships ([ACELT1602](#))

Elaborations

- commenting on how authors have established setting and period in different cultures and times and the relevance of characters, actions and beliefs to their own time
- comparing different authors' treatment of similar themes and text patterns, for example comparing fables and allegories from different cultures and quest novels by different authors.

Discussion/Inquiry Questions

- Select three books from *Story Time Stars* that have a similar theme or storyline (for example: *The Magic Pudding*, *Blinky Bill* and *The Muddle-Headed Wombat* relate the adventures of cheeky Australian animals; *Ambrose Kangaroo*, *Quippy*, *Grug* and *Noni the Pony* present simple tales about early childhood experiences. Discuss how authors and illustrators present similar themes or storylines in different ways.

Activity

- Select three books featured in *Story Time Stars* with a similar theme or storyline. Compare the following elements of each book and present your findings to the class: text; illustrations; layout; main characters; settings; and book design (cover, endpapers, font etc).
- Select the books in *Story Time Stars* that have an Indigenous main character (for example, *Stradbroke Dreamtime*, *Sam's Bush Journey*, *The Rainbow Serpent* or *Shake a Leg*). Create a poster outlining the different ways in which the authors and illustrators present aspects of Indigenous culture through their main characters.

Content Description

Discuss how authors and illustrators make stories exciting, moving and absorbing and hold readers' interest by using various techniques, for example character development and plot tension

([ACELT1605](#))

Elaborations

- examining the author's description of a character's appearance, behaviour and speech and noting how the character's development is evident through his or her dialogue and changing relationships and the reactions of other characters to him or her

- identifying pivotal points in the plot where characters are faced with choices and commenting on how the author makes us care about their decisions and consequences.

Discussion/Inquiry Questions

- Select three books from *Story Time Stars* with very strong main characters (e.g. Fox, Mr Chicken, Pig the Pug or Mr Huff). Discuss how the author and illustrator convey the character's personality through: descriptive elements in the text; the visual representation of the character; the way the character interacts with their environment and other characters; and the way the character reacts to situations/events.

Activity

- Select one of the characters from *Story Time Stars* that you identify with, really like or really dislike. Write and illustrate a story about this character that puts them in a different setting and a different situation to the one in which they are portrayed in the original book. How would this character respond to this situation? How would they react to the places, people and situations you have invented for them? Make sure they stay true to their original personality.
- Create your own strong character. What are their main personality traits? Are they cheeky, nasty, rude, friendly, brave or helpful? Create a picture book featuring your character facing a difficult situation.

HASS

Storytime Stars broadly incorporates several themes throughout the HASS curriculum, especially those relating to Australian history. These include Aboriginal culture, colonial life, convicts, pioneers, bushrangers, swagmen, immigrants and the environment.

Teachers may like to use *Story Time Stars* as a resource to bring a literature element into their HASS studies. For a comprehensive description of the Australian HASS Curriculum for Years 2, 3, and 4, see [Australian Curriculum: HASS](#).

The Arts—Visual Arts

The Visual Arts Learning Area in Years 2 to 4 involves students making and responding to artworks independently and collaboratively with their classmates and teachers.

Story Time Stars provides stimulus material through illustration and children's book art for students to:

- build and extend their awareness of visual conventions, and closely observe visual detail as they use materials, techniques and technologies and processes in visual arts forms
- explore and experiment with visual conventions such as line, shape, colour and texture to develop an individual approach to a theme or subject matter

- explore, observe and identify ideas and symbols used and adapted by artists in their artworks as they make and respond to visual arts
- consider how and why artists, craftspeople and designers realise their ideas through different visual representations, practices, processes and viewpoints.

For a comprehensive description of the Australian HASS Curriculum for Years 2, 3, and 4, see [Australian Curriculum: The Arts—Visual Arts](#).

Further Reading

- Books:
 - Alderman, Belle and Lauren Harman, (eds), *The Imagineers: Writing and Illustrating Children's Books*. Canberra: Reading Time, 1983
 - Alderman, Belle and Stephanie Owen Reeder (eds), *The Inside Story: Creating Children's Books*. Canberra: CBCA (ACT Branch), 1987
 - Alderman, Belle, *The Ashton Scholastic Guide: Best Books for Children*. Sydney: Ashton Scholastic, 1992
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 - Collins, Paul, *Book People: Meet Australia's Children's Authors and Illustrators*. Melbourne: Macmillan Library, 2002
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 - Holden, Robert and Jane Brummit, *May Gibbs: More than a Fairytale: An Artistic Life*. Richmond, Victoria: Hardie Grant Books, 2016
 - Holden, Robert, *Koalas, Kangaroos and Kookaburras: 200 Australian Children's Books and Illustrations 1857–1988*. Sydney: James Hardie Industries Ltd, 1988
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 - Kakmi, Dmetri, *When We Were Young*. Melbourne: Viking, 2007
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- Muir, Marcie, *A History of Australian Children's Book Illustration*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1982
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- Rafidi, Mark, *Standing on the Shoulders of Giants: Insights from Australia's Great Picture Book Authors and Illustrators*. Ulladulla, NSW: Harbour Publishing House, 2014
- Saxby, H.M., *A History of Australian Children's Literature 1941–1970*. Sydney: Wentworth Books, 1971
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- Saxby, Maurice, *The Proof of the Puddin': Australian Children's Literature 1970–1990*. Sydney: Ashton Scholastic, 1993
- Scobie, Susan (comp.), *The Dromkeen Book of Australian Children's Illustrators*. Sydney: Scholastic, 1997
- Smith, June and Margaret Hamilton, *Celebrate with Stories: The Children's Book Council of Australia 1945–1995*. Sydney: Margaret Hamilton Books, 1995
- Tan, Shaun, *Sketches from a Nameless Land: The Art of the Arrival*. Sydney: Hachette, 2010
- Walsh, Maureen, *May Gibbs: Mother of the Gumnuts*. Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1994
- Watts, Julie, *The Art of Graeme Base*. New York: Abrams, 2008
- Websites
 - [Austlit: Discover Australian Stories](#)
 - [National Centre for Australian Children's Literature](#)
 - [Trove](#)