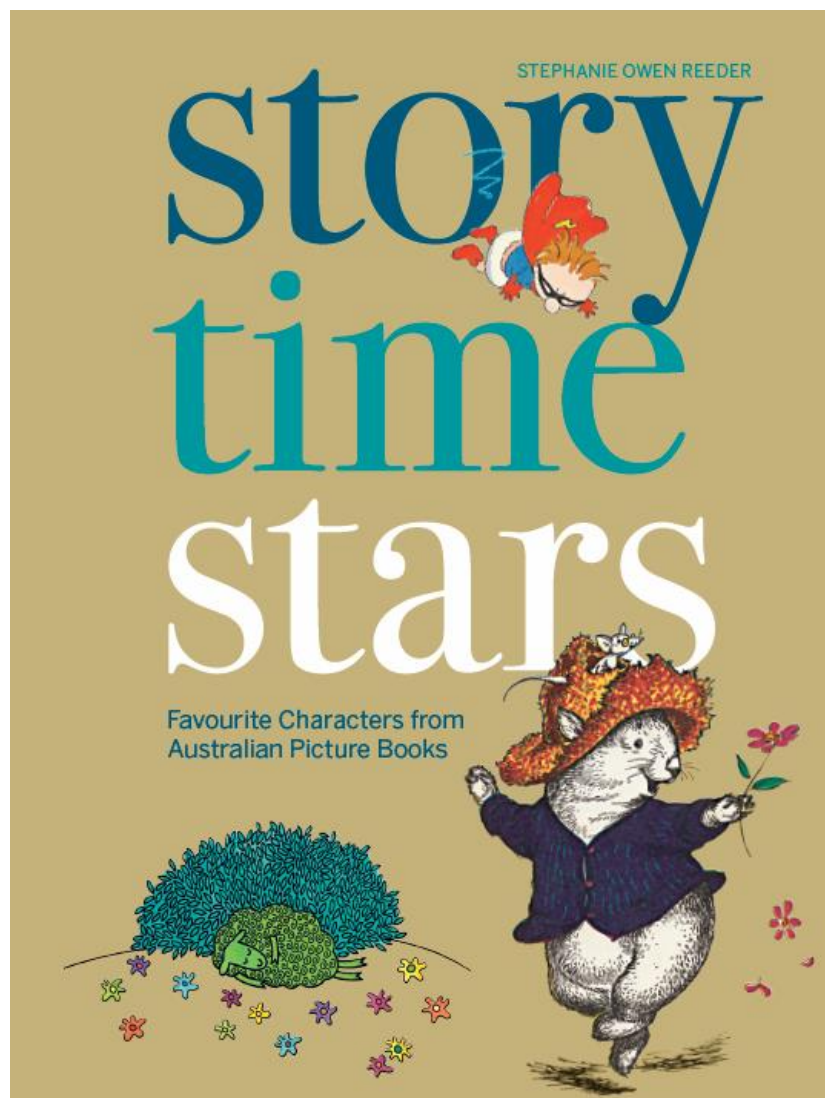


TEACHERS' NOTES Years 5 and 6

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, critic, 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 *Story Time Stars*, a light-hearted 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 5
 - [Indigenous Experiences](#)
 - [The Promise of Gold](#)
 - [Inland Adventures](#)
 - Year 6
 - [The Poet of Australia](#)
 - [A National Identity](#)
 - Year 7
 - [Cultural Perspectives in Literature](#)

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* 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 5–6

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 5 and 6, see [Australian Curriculum: English](#).

English—Literature

YEAR 5

Content Description

Identify aspects of literary texts that convey details or information about particular social, cultural and historical contexts ([ACELT1608](#))

Elaborations

- describing how aspects of literature, for example visuals, symbolic elements, dialogue and character descriptions, can convey information about cultural elements, such as beliefs, traditions and customs
- identifying variability within cultural contexts in literary texts, recognising the diversity of people’s experiences within a cultural group such as differences in setting and lifestyle between urban and remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Discussion/Inquiry Questions

- Select a number of picture books featured in *Story Time Stars* that are set in a different time or place (for example, *Waltzing Matilda*, *Mulga Bill’s Bicycle*, *The Rainbow Serpent*, *My Place*, *The Lost Thing*, *My Dog*, *The Peasant Prince*, *The Little Refugee* or *My Two Blankets*.) Discuss the ways in which the authors and illustrators present settings and create characters. How do they show that the story is set in another place or time?

Activity

- Both *Waltzing Matilda* and *Mulga Bill’s Bicycle* are based on poems written by Banjo Paterson in the late 1800s. Select another poem by Banjo Paterson—or his contemporary Henry Lawson—and create a picture book based on that poem. Break up the text into 14 double-page spreads. What elements will you illustrate? How will you present your main character? Make sure your illustrations and design elements reflect the tone and theme of the poem—humorous, entertaining, dramatic, adventurous or tragic.
- Select three of the five books featured in *Story Time Stars* that deal with the migrant experience: *My Place*, *My Dog*, *The Little Refugee*, *The Peasant Prince* or *My Two Blankets*. How does each story portray the cultural origins of the characters and the factors that led them to leave their homes? Present your findings in a poster entitled ‘The Migrant Experience’. Include images, text and design elements that explore such things as: why people leave their homes to seek asylum in another country; how they travel; what they experience; who helps them along the way; what happens when they arrive in a new country; and how they settle into their new home.

Content Description

Present a point of view about particular literary texts using appropriate metalanguage, and reflecting on the viewpoints of others ([ACELT1609](#))

Elaborations

- posing and discussing questions, such as ‘Should this character have behaved as they did?’, and beginning to make balanced judgments about the dilemmas characters face and relative merit and harm.

Discussion/Inquiry Questions

- Select three books from *Story Time Stars* in which characters display negative personality traits such as rudeness, duplicity, selfishness or nastiness (for example, Mrs Snake or the Big Bad Banksia Men in *Snugglepoot and Cuddlepoot*, Pig the Pug, the Magic Pudding or Fox). Discuss the ways in which the authors and illustrators present these characters and how they deal with the moral dilemmas caused by their errant or disruptive behaviour.

Activity

- Create a story with a nasty or badly behaved character. Provide a backstory to explain why the character is like they are and why they behave in this way. Explore how other characters respond to and deal with this sort of bad behaviour. Consider whether your character will learn from experience to behave in a more socially acceptable way or will continue to misbehave.
- Rewrite *Fox* or *Pig the Pug* with the main character being well-behaved and kind. Present your story to the class and discuss how the tone, theme and impact of the story are changed by the character behaving well rather than badly.

Content Description

Recognise that ideas in literary texts can be conveyed from different viewpoints, which can lead to different kinds of interpretations and responses ([ACELT1610](#))

Elaborations

- identifying the narrative voice (the person or entity through whom the audience experiences the story) in a literary work, discussing the impact of first person narration on empathy and engagement
- examining texts written from different narrative points of view and discussing what information the audience can access, how this impacts on the audience’s sympathies, and why an author might choose a particular narrative point of view
- examining the narrative voice in texts from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traditions, which include perspectives of animals and spirits, about how we should care for the Earth, for example reflecting on how this affects significance, interpretation and response.

Discussion/Inquiry Questions

- Read *My Place*, which is written from a number of different viewpoints, with the linking 'character' being the place itself and the big tree at its centre. How do the author and illustrator present the different stories of the people who have lived there? How do you know whose 'voice' you are hearing on each double-page spread?

Activity

- Choose a place that is close to your heart (perhaps where you were born, where you grew up or where you have had a great holiday) and write a story from the perspective of the place itself. How does it feel about people visiting it? What does it like and what doesn't it like? How does it feel about the changes happening around it over time?
- Read *The Rainbow Serpent*. Make a poster showing the main Indigenous cultural traditions and information about this Dreamtime creature that are contained in the story.

YEAR 6

Content Description

Make connections between students' own experiences and those of characters and events represented in texts drawn from different historical, social and cultural contexts ([ACELT1613](#))

Elaborations

- recognising the influence our different historical, social and cultural experiences may have on the meaning we make from the text and the attitudes we may develop towards characters, actions and events.

Discussion/Inquiry Questions

- Select a number of books that are featured in *Story Time Stars* that are set in a different historical or cultural context (for example, *Waltzing Matilda*, *Mulga Bill's Bicycle*, *The Rainbow Serpent*, *My Place*, *The Lost Thing*, *My Dog*, *The Peasant Prince*, *The Little Refugee* or *My Two Blankets*.) Discuss the ways in which the authors and illustrators present the context for their stories. How do they create empathy towards their characters and understanding of differences and similarities?

Activity

- Rewrite *Mulga Bill's Bicycle* in a modern context. What type of vehicle might Bill be trying to ride on or drive in? Or will he be trying to come to terms with a modern piece of technology like an iPhone or a drone? How does he react to it? How does he approach learning a new skill? What happens to him in the end?
- Write a story based on the experiences of Anh Do in *The Little Refugee* or Cartwheel in *My Two Blankets*, but with you as the main character. How would you react in such a situation? How would you like the people around you to behave?

Content Description

Analyse and evaluate similarities and differences in texts on similar topics, themes or plots
([ACELT1614](#))

Elaborations

- exploring texts on a similar topic by authors with very different styles, for example comparing fantasy quest novels or realistic novels on a specific theme, identifying differences in the use of narrator, narrative structure and voice and language style and register.

Discussion/Inquiry Questions

- A number of the picture books in *Story Time Stars* have quite complex characters based on inanimate or imaginary creatures. Examine complex picture books that feature inanimate objects (such as *The Lost Thing* and *The Watertower*) or ones that feature imaginary creatures (such as *Mr Huff* and *The Bunyip of Berkeley's Creek*). Discuss the ways in which the creators of these books have imbued their characters with strong personality traits. What response do you have to each of these main characters? How have the book creators manipulated the text and images to evoke that response?

Activity

- Select an inanimate object and write a story in which it is the main character. What personality traits does your character have? What role does it have in the story? How does its character develop? What effect does it have on those who interact with it? And how do you want the reader to feel about your character?
- Select an imaginary creature of some type (e.g. a dragon, yeti or ghost) and write a story in which it is the main character. What role does it have in the story? How does its character develop? What effect does it have on those who interact with it? How do you want the reader to feel about your character?

Content Description

Identify, describe, and discuss similarities and differences between texts, including those by the same author or illustrator, and evaluate characteristics that define an author's individual style
([ACELT1616](#))

Elaborations

- exploring two or more texts by the same author, drawing out the similarities, for example subject or theme, characterisation, text structure, plot development, tone, vocabulary, sense of voice, narrative point of view, favoured grammatical structures and visual techniques in sophisticated picture books.

Discussion/Inquiry Questions

- Read the two books featured in *Story Time Stars* written by author Margret Wild: *Fox* and *Biff and Buff*. Discuss how these two books highlight the author's ability to adopt different writing styles to suit the theme and tone of the subject she is writing about. Discuss the

poetic and lyrical qualities of her texts, and her ability to create believable characters and to write for different age groups.

Activity

- Retell the story of the relationship between fox, magpie and dog for a younger audience. How can you simplify this powerful fable so that younger children will understand the underlying theme but not be too upset by it?
- Discover what other picture books by Margaret Wild are held in your school library. Select a number of her books for either younger or older audiences and create a poster promoting the attributes of these books for the appropriate audience.

HASS

Story Time Stars broadly incorporates several themes from 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 5 and 6, see [Australian Curriculum: HASS](#).

The Arts—Visual Arts

The Visual Arts Learning Area in Years 5 to 6 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 observe closely 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 5 and 6, 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
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 - Collins, Paul, *Book People: Meet Australia's Children's Authors and Illustrators*. Melbourne: Macmillan Library, 2002
 - Eccleshare, Julia (ed.), *1001 Children's Books You Must Read before You Grow Up*. Sydney: ABC Books, 2009
 - Edwards, Hazel, *Not Just a Piece of Cake: Being an Author*. Melbourne: Brolga Publishing, 2015
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 - Hamilton, Margaret, *The ABC Book of Australian Children's Illustrators*. Sydney: ABC Books, 2005
 - Hamilton, Margaret, *The Picture People: Illustrators of Contemporary Australian Picture Books*. Sydney: Margaret Hamilton Books, 1993
 - 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
 - Lees, Stella and Pam Macintyre, *The Oxford Companion to Australian Children's Literature*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1993
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 - Muir, Marcie, *A History of Australian Children's Book Illustration*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1982
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 - O'Harris, Pixie, *Was It Yesterday?* Adelaide: Rigby, 1983
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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
- Saxby, Maurice and Glenys Smith, *First Choice, A Guide to the Best Books for Australian Children*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1991
- 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](#)