

Session 2

Countdown

Yakka, Yip and the Yahoos by Geoffrey McSkimming

Session Focus

RS2.7 Discusses how writers relate to their readers in different ways, how they create a variety of worlds through language and how they use language to achieve a wide range of purposes

- Identifies the main elements of structure in a narrative, such as orientation, complication and resolution.
- Identifies a writer's use of Australian slang and notices how this contributes to characterisation and other effects in a text text.

RS2.8 Discusses the text structure of a range of text types and the grammatical features that are characteristic of those text types

- Identifies a variety of saying verbs and discusses how these can be more effective than the repetitious use of 'said'.
- Discusses the use and effect of figurative language (simile) and literary devices (alliteration).

What you will need

- multiple copies of **Worksheet 2**
- copies of the *Macquarie Dictionary* for students to use
- <http://www.cultureandrecreation.gov.au/articles/slang/> — background information for teachers regarding Australian slang and colloquialisms
- an image of a Moreton Bay fig tree to show students

Setting the Scene

- Explain to the students that the text they will be reading features the *Countdown* characters, Yakka and Yip.
- Ask students what Australian slang words they know. List these and determine the meanings e.g. G'day. How'zat? Ripper! Use the opportunity to point out that slang words often have several different spellings because they are mainly *spoken* words, not words we usually find in written language.
 - Invite students to look up the words in the *Macquarie Dictionary*.
 - Tell students that the cockatoo's name, Yakka, is an Australian slang word. Explain that 'yakka' means hard manual work and that the word may be of Aboriginal origin.
 - Ask students: why else might the cockatoo be called Yakka? (To 'yak' also means to talk, so perhaps Yakka is talkative.)
- Talk to students about how Australian slang is one type of what is called *colloquial language*, which means 'spoken language'. Discuss how writers sometimes use slang to make a text sound more informal, like speech, and to make characters seem more realistic by setting them in a place and time.

Modelled Reading

- Ask students to turn to the story *Yakka, Yip and the Yahoos* by Geoffrey McSkimming.
- Ask students to read the title out loud. Question them on what they hear.
- Explain that the author has used *alliteration* by repeating the 'y' sound at the beginning of each word. Encourage students to offer examples of alliteration using their own name e.g. Funny Frank.

- Ask students what they think the story will be about.
- Review with students the stages of a narrative. Remind them that the orientation is the beginning of the story, the place where the author introduces the characters and the setting (i.e. where the story is taking place).
- Read aloud or select students to read *Chapter 1: A tree of their own*.
- After reading, ask students to identify the characters and setting in the orientation.
- Before proceeding, ask students to predict what the next chapter will be about. Read aloud or select students to read *Chapter 2: Recycling*.
- Direct students' attention to the direct or quoted speech by finding examples from each character.
- Before proceeding to Chapter 3, ask students to predict what this chapter will be about. Read aloud or select students to read *Chapter 3: Yahoos!*
- Remind students of narrative structure and ask them to identify a complication. Explain that they will have to wait to read the resolution in Part 2, next month.
- Think! Pair! Share! Students take time to think up an appropriate resolution; students then turn to a partner and share their resolutions.

Guided Reading

- Show students a Moreton Bay fig tree, or describe the tree to the students, emphasising its size.
- Direct students' attention to the simile in the third sentence: *branches that spread out from the trunk like the arms of a welcoming, woody octopus*. Explain to students that a simile creates a relationship between two things or ideas by comparing them. Similes often make surprising connections, by comparing something ordinary and everyday with something unexpected or unfamiliar. Discuss the effect of this simile by asking: Why do you think the writer compares the tree's branches to an octopus? (e.g. to show how many branches there are and how alive and friendly the tree seems.)
- Reinforce understandings of simile by referring students to another simile at the end of Chapter 2: *The thick branches snaked around the wooden walls, like big, gentle arms*. Discuss the effect of these similes in this text. Why does the writer compare the tree to arms cradling the treehouse? (e.g. to show a soft, nurturing side to nature.)
- Give students time to re-read the story to themselves, with a partner or taking turns as a whole group.
- In small groups or pairs, ask students to read through the text and identify Australian slang. Students suggest the meanings of the words by looking at how they are used in the text.
- Complete **Worksheet 2 (Part A)**. Students may use the *Macquarie Dictionary* or website to assist them in finding the meanings.
- Check students' understanding.
- Ask students: what effect does this type of language create? Help students to appreciate how it enhances the characters' personality traits and makes the characters seem real, friendly, Australian ...
- Encourage students to try and use these words in an oral sentence. If needed, go back to the story and review the context in which these words were used.
- Point out that English contains many alternatives to 'said' as a saying verb. Create a list of saying verbs.
- Complete **Worksheet 2 (Part B)** Students record the saying verbs used by each character, e.g. squawked.
- Discuss why writers use other words for 'said'.
- Discuss what these words tell us about the characters and how they behave.

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Independent Activities

- Use the text to develop a Readers Theatre.
 - Direct the students' attention to *Chapter 2: Recycling*.
 - In small groups ask students to take on the roles of Yip, Yakka and the narrator.
 - Discuss and model the use of voice, facial expression and hand gestures to interpret characters.
 - Encourage the narrator to pay particular attention to saying verbs and to be expressive in their narration. Choose fluent readers to model.
 - Rotate roles so students can experience different characters.
 - Select groups to present their Readers Theatre to each other or to the whole class.
- Build on students' knowledge by examining Australian idioms and rhyming slang. Refer to the Australian Government culture and recreation website: <http://www.cultureandrecreation.gov.au/articles/slang/> ■

Text Tip

Reading *George Underpits* (back cover cartoon serial)

Aaron Blabey, the author of this month's Bookshelf title, *Sunday Chutney* (see session 3, next page), is also the author of our new back-cover cartoon series. *George Underpits* is a delightful ten-episode series on an environmental theme that will become clear from episode 2. Aaron Blabey has kept this first episode deliberately very straightforward, so that even our youngest readers can easily follow the plot. Notice the elements that keep it simple:

- it shows only nine frames, two of them filling complete lines: later episodes will contain a larger number of frames.
- each frame has clear boundaries, with white borders.
- each frame shows only a single action or event and each is very uncluttered.
- boxed narratorial comments are used in frames 1 and 4, to make the text stand out against the background.
- narratorial comments are simple sentences only.
- speech bubbles are clearly assigned to discrete speakers.
- key events are narrated explicitly: e.g. he took a bit of a tumble; He woke up to an unfamiliar voice.

Like all excellent cartoons, however, this one leaves plenty of implicit meanings for readers to fill in. For example, in frame 1 we are told that George was doing something stupid but readers must work out what that something stupid is from the illustration. Readers are also not told explicitly whose unfamiliar voice woke him, or why that gave him a bit of a shock.

Aesthetically, this episode uses a rich browny-red palette, and the colour continuity, variation in frame sizes and shifts from distance to close-up views give the episode visual appeal as well as balance. ■

Worksheet 2

Part A: Slang Words in Yakka, Yip and the Yahoos

by Geoffrey McSkimming

Locate the Australian slang words in the story. Use the story and a dictionary to help write the meaning of each word.

Word	Meaning
Yakka	
cobber	A mate or friend.
beaut	
yahoos	
bonza	
din	



Worksheet 2

Part B: 'Saying' Verbs in Yakka, Yip And The Yahoos

The author uses different words for 'said'. These are called *saying verbs*. These verbs are often found near "speech marks" or dialogue. Record in the table other saying verbs the author uses when Yakka and Yip speak.

Yakka	Yip
scraarked	shrieked

