Creating a picture book

Year level: 3–4

About the unit

Unit description

This unit of work is designed to help students create a well-written story and then to self-publish it as a picture book. It focuses on:

- the elements of a picture book
- the need for and construction of quality writing
- the production of the picture book.

Knowledge, understandings, skills, values

- Picture books are a specific genre with particular features.
- Quality stories require quality writing.
- Quality writing requires consistent structure, syntax and spelling so that its meaning can be easily understood.

Focus questions

- What is a picture book?
- Why do I need to know about the setting and characters before I can write about them?
- What do I need to know about the setting and characters before I can write about them?
- How can I make my stories more interesting and engaging?
Resources

The Le@rn@ing Federation digital curriculum resources

- Super stories: The Abandoned House series: L6184 nouns and adjectives, L6185 verbs and adverbs
- Super stories: The Sea Cave series: L6186 nouns and adjectives, L6187 verbs and adverbs
- Picture story series: L8199 outdoor adventure, L8200 situations, L8201 in the crowd, L8202 history
- Wonderful words, creative stories series: L8741 beach, L8742 food, L8740 pets, L8739 space
- Wonderful words: assessment series: L9679 pets, L9680 beach, L9681 space, L9682 food
- Wonderful words: assessment: teacher guides: L10162 pets, L10164 space, L10165 food
- R4701 Lighthouse book, 1900–10

Internet sites


Software

Publishing tools such as:

- Microsoft PowerPoint
- Microsoft PhotoStory3
- Apple Keynote
- Pencil: http://www.pencil-animation.org/
- Scratch: http://scratch.mit.edu/
- Toondoo: http://www.toondoo.com/
- Storybird: http://storybird.com/
- MS Word
- MS Publisher
- OpenOffice applications

Visual thinking and learning tools such as:

- Inspiration: http://www.inspiration.com
Print
Books
A collection of early Australian picture books such as:
- *Snugglepot and Cuddlepie*, May Gibbs, Angus & Robertson, 1992
- *The magic pudding*, Norman Lindsay, Angus & Robertson, 1995
- *The adventures of the muddle-headed wombat*, Ruth Park, Collins/Angus & Robertson, 1990
- *Blinky Bill*, Dorothy Wall, Collins/Angus & Robertson, 1991
- *Dot and the kangaroo*, Ethel C Pedley, Angus & Robertson, 1991

A collection of contemporary Australian picture books such as:
- *Fox*, Margaret Wild and Ron Brooks, Allen & Unwin, 2000
- ‘*Let’s get a pup’ said Kate*, Bob Graham, Walker, 2001
- *Baby bilby, where do you sleep?* Narelle Oliver, Lothian, 2001
- *In my backyard*, Nette Hilton and Anna Spudvilas, Lothian, 2001
- *A year on our farm*, Penny Matthews and Andrew McLean, An Omnibus Book from Scholastic Australia, 2002
- *Refugees*, David Miller, Lothian, 2003

Other resources
- Aesop’s fable: ‘The lion and the mouse’

Attached printable resources
The following teacher-created learning resources referred to in the Unit of work are available for you to modify, print and use in your own teaching and learning context:

- BookLook assessment sheet (page 11)
- Storyboard template (page 12)
Teaching the unit

Setting the scene

Resources
- R4701 Lighthouse book, 1900–10
- Collection of early Australian picture books (if actual copies of the early books are not available, digitised versions of some are available through the National Library of Australia website: http://www.nla.gov.au)
- Collection of contemporary Australian picture books
- BookLook assessment sheet (page 11)

Teaching and learning activities

What is a picture book?
Share the collection of early picture books, including R4701 Lighthouse book, 1900–10.
What are your first impressions of these books?
Are you attracted to them as must-read stories?
What attracts you or turns you off? Why?
What are the implications of these observations for our own storybooks?

Share the collection of contemporary picture books.
What are your first impressions of these books?
Are you attracted to them as must-read stories?
What attracts you or turns you off? Why?
What are the implications of these observations for our own storybooks?

Compare and contrast the books of the different eras and begin developing a class database of the essential design elements of a picture book including layout, colour, and text font, shape and size.

Have each student select a contemporary picture book and examine it to investigate:
- the setting
  Is it portrayed through words or pictures?
- the characters
  Are they real or imaginary?
  What can we learn about them from the text?
  What can we learn about them from the pictures?
• the plot
  *Is it simple or complex?*

  *If you were to map it, what would it look like?*

• the relationship between the text and the illustrations.
  *How do they work together?*

  *Could one stand alone without the other?*

  *How is the author’s message enriched and enhanced by the artist’s illustrations?*

Discuss the implications of these observations for the students’ own storybooks and complete the database of essential elements to be included when they write their own.

**Assessment**

Assess the students’ knowledge of the language of books by having them create a glossary, using the BookLook assessment sheet (page 11).

**Investigating**

**Resources**

- Wonderful words, creative stories series: L8741 beach, L8742 food, L8740 pets, L8739 space
- Wonderful words: assessment series: L9679 pets, L9680 beach, L9681 space, L9682 food
- Wonderful words: assessment: teacher guides: L10162 pets, L10164 space, L10165 food
- Super stories series: L6184 The Abandoned House: nouns and adjectives, L6185 The Abandoned House: verbs and adverbs, L6186 The Sea Cave: nouns and adjectives, L6187 The Sea Cave: verbs and adverbs
- Aesop’s fable ‘The lion and the mouse’

**Teaching and learning activities**

**Story starters**

Share Aesop’s fable of ‘The lion and the mouse’ as an example of how creatures might become dependent on each other. Brainstorm other relationships that might form the plot of a story.

Have students fold an A3 sheet of paper into four and label the segments Setting, Characters, Plot, Resolution. Use this to jot down ideas they have for their story and create a draft using these ideas.

**Working with words**

Have the students examine the texts of a variety of picture books.

*How does the author tell such an engaging story in such a short space?*
Discuss the need to make sentences interesting by carefully selecting the words that are used and ensuring that each one works hard. Have students work through some of the Wonderful words, creative stories and Super stories learning objects and then use what they have learned to begin their story-writing processes.

How can words make our sentences more interesting?
How can words engage the reader?
How can words build up a sense of anticipation and climax?

Have them review and revise their draft using what they have learned.

Working with pictures
Have each student choose a favourite picture book and, from that, their favourite illustration. Have them analyse the illustration using questions such as:

Does the picture enrich or enhance the author’s meaning, or does it tell a story of its own?
What is it telling you that the words don’t?
In order to convey the message of the picture, how has the artist used the design elements of colour, line, shape, scale, medium and composition (position, perspective, frames, repetition)?
How are the characters’ moods and emotions shown?
How does the medium influence or reinforce the message?
How does the illustration build up a sense of atmosphere or anticipation?
Where is the viewer in this picture? Why?

Discuss the implications of these observations for the illustrations in the students’ own stories.

Assessment
Assess the students’ understanding of the parts of speech using the Wonderful words: assessment learning objects. The results of these can be interpreted by using the Wonderful words: assessment: teacher guides.

Bringing it all together

Resources
- Inspiration: http://www.inspiration.com
- Storyboard template (page 12)
- Picture story series: L8199 outdoor adventure, L8200 situations, L8201 in the crowd, L8202 history
- Publishing tools such as those listed on page 2.
Teaching and learning activities

Be prepared

Have the students prepare and plan the text of their stories using a graphic organiser such as *Inspiration*. They need to consider:

- what they have learned about the nature and structure of a picture book
- the story structure, including an engaging beginning, a credible plot and a satisfying ending
- their target audience and how they will adjust their vocabulary and sentence structure to meet the needs of that audience
- the maximum number of words or pages
- what will be shown in the pictures that does not need to be included in the text.

Storyboards

Use an enlarged version of the Storyboard template (page 12) to create a storyboard for each page of the final product, including:

- text elements – font, size, colour, position, special effects
- images – rough sketch of content and position.

Image matters

Have each student examine their story and determine the most appropriate medium to illustrate it. Consider:

- drawing
- painting
- printing
- collage
- paper sculpture
- photography
- computer-generated images.

*Why is this the most suitable medium for this story?*

*What do I need to know, have and do to be able to create my illustrations in this medium?*

Discuss the ethical use of other people’s images, particularly those available through the internet, the need to attribute anything that is not of their own creation, and the format for doing this. Discuss and decide whether it will be permissible to use these sorts of images in their books.
Final formats
Discuss the final format of the book.

Will it be print or digital?

If it is to be a digital publication, work through the appropriate Picture story and Digital story learning objects to explore the sorts of things that need to be considered for this format.

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Decide on the most appropriate application for digital publication

What do we need to know, understand and do to use these applications?
How will we insert the illustrations?
How will we publish and distribute our final products?

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Decide on the most appropriate software application to use if it is to be in print format.

What do we need to know, understand and do to use these applications?
How will we insert the illustrations?
How will we publish and distribute our final products?

Assessment
Create a checklist or rubric of the essential elements each book should contain using the class database constructed earlier. Assess the final product against this.

Drawing conclusions
Teaching and learning activities
Making up my mind
Discuss how the finished product was an amalgamation of a lot of parts, each providing something unique yet working together to build a whole. Have students reflect on the following:

What were the key influences on my choices?
How did I meet the needs of the task and my audience?

Have students consider what was left out as well as what was selected.

Assessment
Have the students reflect on their learning journey throughout this process.

What do I know now that I didn’t know before?
Which parts of the process had the greatest influence on my final story?
Which parts did I do well?
Which parts did I enjoy most?
Which parts do I need more support with?
If I were to do it again, how would I change it?
What have I learned from this that I could use in other projects?

Communicating

Teaching and learning activities
Sharing our stories
Share the final version of the story with the intended audience.

Did they enjoy it?
Did they understand it?
Was it received in the way you thought it would be? Why?
Which parts did they like best?
Which parts need to be changed?

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Offer the finished books to the school library as part of its resource collection for a short time so others can read them.

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Keep a photo record of the students at work and then create a presentation of the project, recording their comments and reflections of the various aspects and how these contributed to their knowledge and understanding.
**Writer:** Barbara Braxton

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Demonstrate your knowledge of picture books by providing definitions for these key words. This is called a glossary.

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