

Conceptual narrative: Texts to inform

Big ideas of English elements

What do we want our students to develop?

Identity – an understanding of the interconnectedness of Country and Place, People, Identity and Culture in texts in forming personal and social identities

Texts – an understanding of how the selection of text structures is influenced by the selection of language mode and how this varies for different purposes and audiences

Choosing and using language – how to select more specialised vocabulary to create increasingly complex texts including, choosing from a broad range of language, audio and visual features to innovate with text structures and express ideas in new ways.

See Appendix 1 which shows how these three key elements develop in sophistication and complexity across Foundation to Year 10.

What does the Australian Curriculum say?

Year 7 and Year 8

Students:

- communicate with peers, teachers, individuals, groups and community members in a range of face-to-face and online/virtual environments
- listen to, read and view, interpret, evaluate and perform a range of spoken, written and multimedia texts in which the primary purpose is aesthetic, as well as texts designed to inform and persuade
- create a range of imaginative, informative and persuasive types of texts, for example, narratives, procedures, performances, reports and discussions and are beginning to create literary analyses and transformation of texts.

Introduction

Let's look at the concepts in Years 7 and 8 where students are developing their understanding that information texts often deal with specialised topics and may include such features as chapters, indexes, glossaries and bibliographies.

The three key elements of Identity, Texts and Choosing and using language combine and are enacted through the three content strands of language, literature and literacy. All three elements are evident in this example using the questions from the Bringing it to Life (BitL) tool.

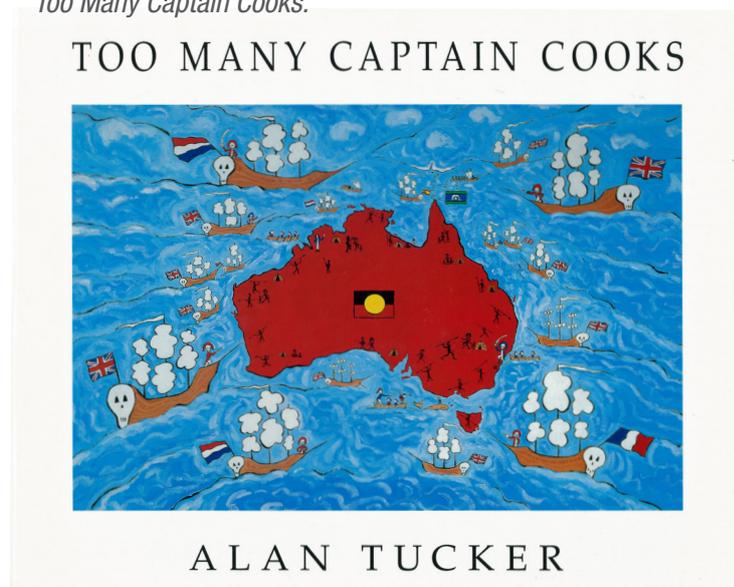


Year 7 and Year 8 example:

Too Many Captain Cooks (1994), written and illustrated by Alan Tucker, is an informative text. In fourteen double-page spreads, each consisting of printed text and a colourful painting, the book describes a succession of encounters between the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia and the traders, explorers and invaders they came into contact with.

Now, to bring the essence of being a powerful language user to life we will use the questions from the Bringing it to Life (BitL) tool.

See Appendix 2 for large version of the front cover of *Too Many Captain Cooks*.



From the book *Too Many Captain Cooks* by Alan Tucker, 1994
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What do you already think?

Questions like these will help me to understand not only what my students already know, but what they will need to know in order to understand how this text is related to its social and historical context.

Using the BitL questions, I could ask:

- *What does the cover of this book suggest it is going to be about? What do the size, format and style of the book suggest about the kind of book it is likely to be?*
- *What do you notice about the style of the painting that appears on the front cover of this book? Do you think it is the work of a child or an adult? Why?*
- *The continent of Australia appears in the centre of the painting. What does its position on the page make you think? What about its bold red colour? What does the flag in the middle make you think?*
- *What are the figures that appear on the landmass of Australia and in the boats doing? What do these figures suggest to you? Why?*
- *How many different types of boats can you see? Which ones are clearly of European origin? Which ones are not? Where do you think the non-European ones might have come from? Does the size of the boats have any significance? Why?*
- *How many different flags can you see in the picture? What countries do they represent?*
- *Why do you think some of the figures are holding spears and some are pointing spears towards the boat? Why are some of the figures not doing this?*
- *Only two of the boats in the picture are shown as being at anchor. What do you think this might mean?*
- *Only two white faced people are shown standing on Australian soil. What do you notice about them? Who do you think they represent?*
- *What story do you think this book is going to tell? From whose perspective do you think it is going to be told? Whose perspective might be missing?*
- *What do you know about the early encounters between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and those who arrived on these shores from other countries?*

Can you identify purposes, contexts and audiences?

These questions help students identify:

- what the purpose of the text is, for example, is it to entertain, persuade or inform?
- the context, for example, is it from another culture? Is there a message about life in the text?
- who the intended audience is, for example, is it for young children? Is it for adults?

Using the BitL questions, I could ask:

- *Based on your discussion of the front cover, who would you say this book is intended for? What makes you think so?*
- *What do you think the purpose of this book might be? Why?*

In 1992, a landmark decision, known as the Mabo decision, was made by the High Court of Australia. This decision recognised native title in Australia for the first time.

Too Many Captain Cooks was first published in 1994. How do you think the timing of this book might relate to the Mabo decision?

Too Many Captain Cooks contains a foreword by independent curator and writer, John Keene, a quote by Gordon Bennett, an Aboriginal artist, a foreword by the author, notes on the paintings, a bibliography and a glossary.

- *What do you think each of these elements add to the text?*
- *Why do you think they have been included? What purpose (or purposes) do you think they are intended to serve?*

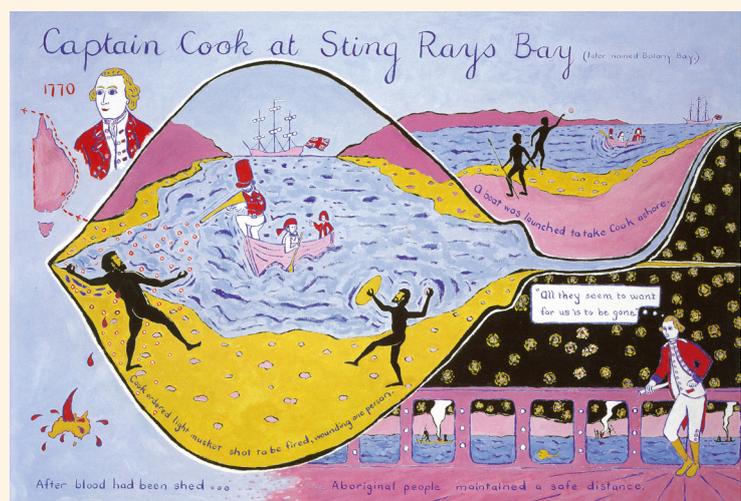
How can you make meanings?

These questions help students think about different text processing and comprehension strategies we can use to make sense of texts that we listen to, read or view.

Using the BitL questions, I could ask:

- *Which strategies can you use to interpret the text? Which ones help you synthesise and critique ideas and issues?*
- *What devices have been used to increase the complexity of the text?*
- *Do you think the illustrations are simply giving visual form to information that is already contained in the printed text or do you think they are adding to the information? Why? Why not?*
- *Which has the greater emotional effect upon you, the printed text or the paintings? Why?*
- *Why do you think the author decided to use both print and visual means of communication in this book?*

See Appendix 3 for a larger version of this page from the book.



From the book *Too Many Captain Cooks* by Alan Tucker, 1994
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Can you make connections?

These questions help students to make connections to previous experiences, connections within texts and connections to other texts.

'In the Judges' Report on the 1995 Children's Book Council of Australia Awards, the following criticism of *Too Many Captain Cooks* was made:

Too Many Captain Cooks has no contents page or index, nor is it arranged chronologically. These are flaws in a work of this standard as they make retrieval of information very difficult.

Reading Time: The Journal of the Children's Book Council of Australia, vol. 39 no. 3, August 1995, p. 10

Using the BitL questions, I could ask:

- *How accurate do you think these comments are? Are they fair?*
- *Are the judges right when they say that the book is not arranged chronologically?*
- *Each section of the book has its own title, none of which refers to a particular date or period of time. What do the titles refer to? What makes you think this?*
- *The information in the book may be seen as a series of unrelated episodes. If we consider the text as a whole, however, how effectively do you think these episodes build up a consistent overall 'picture' of the ways in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in this country have been affected by their encounters with 'foreign' visitors?*
- *What do you think the overall 'picture' is?*
- *Why do you think that the book returns, in the final episode, to where it began, in the Torres Strait Islands? What does the long journey from the first to the last episode represent?*
- *Do you think the absence of a contents page and index are flaws in this book or do you think the judges have failed to fully understand its purpose?*

What do you think now?

These questions encourage students to explore different aspects of the texts they listen to, read or view. They support students to think about their own, and others' perspectives of the text.

Using the BitL questions, I could ask:

- *Do you think Alan Tucker's book provides a new perspective about first contact between Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and foreigners? In what ways?*
- *Is the book balanced, objective and neutral in the way it presents information? Why? Why not?*
- *Do you think the title, 'Too Many Captain Cooks' is significant? Why? Why not?*
- *What devices have been used to create tone? How effective are they?*

In what ways could you express your ideas, experiences and information?

These questions help students to express their ideas, experiences and information to different audiences, dependent on purpose and context. They also support students to use a variety of strategies to support the audience in making sense of what they listen to, read or view.

Using the BitL questions, I could ask:

- *What appropriate, sequenced content and multimodal elements can you use to reflect a point of view on European encounter with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia?*
- *What deliberate language and textual choices will you make to reflect your point of view? Why did you choose these?*
- *What devices can you use to create the tone you are after in your text? How will you know they are effective?*

Concluding comments:

By exploring this text through these questions, we can help our students to be able to think, work with and process words, images and sounds as powerful language users. All of these questions consider the elements of identity, texts and choosing and using language through the interweaving of the three content strands of Language, Literature and Literacy.

Appendix 1

Appendix 1 shows how these three key elements develop in complexity across Foundation to Year 10:

Identity – refers to the development of language to represent who we are, where we come from and where we are going, as well as, learning about the identities of others represented through language.

Texts – the concept of what a text is and how it is put together grows in complexity across F–10 and students develop understanding about the factors that influence text construction. Texts include spoken, written, visual or multimodal.

Choosing and using language – the developing skills and experiences needed to be creative, confident and accurate when choosing and using language in Standard Australian English.

These elements combine and are enacted through the interweaving of the three content strands (Language, Literature and Literacy) to develop powerful language users, the essence of English.

Identity

The identity element develops in two main ways:

- forming and expressing a sense of personal and social identity
- learning how identities are represented in, and influence, texts and their interpretations.

Students will progress along these continua at different rates and so the following descriptions at each band are only a guide, aligning with the Content Descriptions and Achievement Standards at these stages.

Foundation - Year 2

Students develop their personal and social identity by engaging with familiar texts from their own and other cultures. Students also describe their place in the world and learn to express who they are, where they live now and where they have come from through these opportunities.

Years 3 - 4

The concept of identity expands to include learning about historical, social and cultural identities, represented in a wide range of multimodal texts. Students make connections between their personal experiences and the world of texts. They learn to see language differences when communicating facts and opinions. As students develop their own preferences for mysteries, quests or humorous short stories they also learn

to give more detailed reasons for why they like them.

Years 5 - 6

Students explore different social and geographical identities through dialects and accents, for example, how people's lifestyle can vary within the same cultural group. They learn that combinations of historical, social and cultural identities influence people's attitudes towards actions, characters and events in texts.

Years 7 - 8

Students explore the interconnectedness of Country and Place, People, Identity and Culture in texts, including digital texts. Students learn that accents and styles of speech create personal and social identities. Students identify and explain different viewpoints represented in texts.

Years 9 -10

Students engage with texts which can have inclusive and exclusive social effects and can empower or disempower people through their representations of identity. They evaluate the social, moral and ethical positions represented in texts and reflect on representations of values. Students identify the range of 'real' and 'online' communities to which they belong and how language reinforces their membership.

Texts

This element has two components:

- making meaning of a range of texts that are read, viewed and listened to (Receptive modes)
- creating a range of spoken and written multimodal texts (Productive modes).

Students will progress along these continua at different rates and so the following descriptions at each band are provided as a guide, aligning with the Content Descriptions and Achievement Standards at these stages.

Foundation - Year 2

Using Receptive modes, students by the end of Year 2:

- learn about the language features and structures of texts used to describe characters, settings and events
- monitor meaning and self-correct using context, prior knowledge, punctuation, language and phonic knowledge
- identify literal and implied meaning, main ideas and supporting detail
- make connections between texts by comparing content.

Using Productive modes, students by the end of Year 2:

- use everyday language features and topic-specific vocabulary
- create texts that show how images support the meaning of the text
- create texts, drawing on their own experiences, their imagination and information they have learned
- engage in group and class discussions and make presentations.

Years 3 - 4

Using Receptive modes, students by the end of Year 4:

- explain how language features, images and vocabulary are used to engage the interest of readers
- describe literal and implied meaning connecting ideas in different texts
- respond to others' viewpoints
- listen for key ideas in discussions.

Using Productive modes, students by the end of Year 4:

- use language features to create coherence and add detail to their texts
- express an opinion on information in a text
- create texts that use images and detail to extend key ideas
- create structured texts to explain ideas for different audiences
- make presentations and contribute actively to class and group discussions, varying language according to context.

Years 5 - 6

Using Receptive modes, students by the end of Year 6:

- analyse and explain how language features, images and vocabulary are used by different authors to represent ideas, characters and events
- compare and analyse information in different texts, explaining literal and implied meaning
- select and use evidence from texts to explain response
- listen to discussions, clarifying content and challenging others' ideas.

Using Productive modes, students by the end of Year 6:

- understand how language features and language patterns can be used for emphasis
- show how specific details can be used to support a point of view
- explain their choices of language features and images used
- create detailed texts elaborating on key ideas for a range of purposes and audiences
- make presentations and contribute actively to class and group discussions, using a variety of strategies for effect.

Years 7 - 8

Using Receptive modes, students by the end of Year 8:

- understand how the selection of text structures is influenced by the selection of language mode and how this varies for different purposes and audiences
- explain how language features, images and vocabulary are used to represent different ideas and issues in texts
- interpret texts, questioning the reliability of sources of ideas and information
- select evidence from the text to show how events, situations and people can be represented from different viewpoints
- listen for and identify different emphasis in texts, using that understanding to elaborate upon in discussions.

Using Productive modes, students by the end of Year 8:

- understand how the selection of language features can be used for particular purposes and effects
- explain the effectiveness of language choices they use to influence the audience
- through combining ideas, images and language features from other texts, students show how ideas can be expressed in new ways
- create texts for different purposes, selecting language to influence audience response
- make presentations and contribute actively to class and group discussions, using language patterns for effect.

Years 9 - 10

Using Receptive modes, students by the end of Year 10:

- evaluate how text structures can be used in innovative ways by different authors
- explain how the choice of language features, images and vocabulary contributes to the development of individual style
- develop and justify their own interpretations of texts
- evaluate others' interpretations, analysing the evidence used to support them
- listen for ways features within texts can be manipulated to achieve particular effects.

Using Productive modes, students by the end of Year 10:

- show the selection of language features can achieve precision and stylistic effect
- explain different viewpoints, attitudes and perspectives through the development of cohesive and logical arguments
- develop their own style by experimenting with language features, stylistic devices, text structures and images
- create a wide range of texts to articulate complex ideas
- make presentations and contribute actively to class and group discussions, building on others' ideas, solving problems, justifying opinions and developing and expanding arguments.

Choosing and using language

The choosing and using language element develops in three main ways:

- language use progresses from everyday and familiar to include more specialised and technical vocabulary and language devices
- learning about individual text structures and their features develops into combining of structures, devices and features to create new texts
- learning to convey and express ideas develops to include the ideas and perspectives of others in texts that are increasingly responsive to audience needs and interests.

Students will progress along these continua at different rates and so the following descriptions at each band are provided as a guide, aligning with the Content Descriptions and Achievement Standards at these stages.

Foundation - Year 2

These early stages involve students learning to choose and use everyday words and images to express themselves, their experiences and their imaginings. They begin to choose topic-specific vocabulary as they learn about simple information texts. Simple texts to entertain, inform and persuade are recreated and retold. Students present to mainly familiar audiences, choosing and using appropriate language for self-expression. Students also begin to develop interaction skills, such as taking turns, as they express themselves in groups.

Years 3 - 4

The next stage involves students choosing and using more content specific words and images from an increasing range of texts and topics. The formality of the spoken situation is also now a consideration, particularly as audiences become more unfamiliar. Students learn to choose print and multimodal elements appropriate to the audience and purpose as they develop greater control over text structures to entertain, inform or persuade. For example, students might present an information report in their own words using appropriate images to add meaning. Students use their expanding vocabulary to express feelings and opinions. They have increasingly interactive discussions that take into account other perspectives. They may participate in a small group discussion, for example, to identify the similarities and differences between two texts and then consolidate the group's ideas into one coherent, representative response.

Years 5 - 6

Students choose from an increasingly content-specific vocabulary. They learn that words may mean different things in different contexts and so their choices require greater precision for accuracy. Students also now consider the expertise of the audience as well as the formality of the situation, for example, when choosing and using language for presentations. They start to experiment and innovate with text structures, adapting texts they have experienced. Students choose and combine a wider range of multimodal elements, including sound. They move beyond merely taking into account other people's ideas and start to clarify and question them, in written texts as well as spoken interactions.

Years 7 - 8

Students select from more specialised vocabulary to create increasingly complex texts. Students choose from a broad range of language, audio and visual features to innovate with text structures and express ideas in new ways. There is a focus on choosing not only to entertain, inform or persuade but also to create layers of meaning as they raise issues, report events or advance opinions. Students might be creating advertisements and choose humorous devices to entertain and engage while the main purpose is to persuade, for example. Interaction skills now demonstrate appropriate and effective choices of voice qualities, body language and multimodal elements. The emphasis is on choosing and using language to elicit particular audience responses and so the needs and interests of the audience are of particular importance. For example, students may create and write a script for a short play using verbal, visual and audio elements to create atmosphere and deepen interpretation of meanings.

Years 9 - 10

Language structures, devices and images are chosen to reflect a developing sense of personal style as students respond to issues. They make appropriate thematic links to other texts as well as interpreting and integrating ideas from other texts. Choices made are increasingly sophisticated as students focus on the complex messages they wish to communicate. They also anticipate possible interpretations of that message, influenced by the value systems of the audience. The focus is on increased precision and persuasiveness of texts. Students therefore make purposeful presentations that build on others' ideas, solve problems and justify opinions. Interaction skills demonstrate appropriate and effective choices in voice and language conventions. For example, they may make presentations on an issue to an audience who are likely to hold contrary views and so will need to draw on their language repertoire to engage and influence.

Appendix 2

From the book *Too Many Captain Cooks* by Alan Tucker, 1994

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TOO MANY CAPTAIN COOKS



ALAN TUCKER

