Engaging personally with texts in K-6 through the NSW English K-10 syllabus

Implementing new curriculum - Building capacity
## Welcome

Welcome to *Engaging personally with texts in K-6 through the NSW English K-10 syllabus*.

This resource is designed to assist you to:
- implement aspects of the new English K-10 syllabus
- understand the difference between ‘literacy’ and subject English
- identify the needs of your students in engaging personally with texts
- identify the relevant outcomes and content from the syllabus that relate to engaging personally with texts.

## Overview

This resource explores the study of texts in K-6 classrooms. It is organised into three main sections:

### What is subject English in the K-6 classroom?

In this section you will explore syllabus rationale and consider the aim of subject English.

### Engaging with texts to explore connections and representations

- Animals like us
- Monsters can be friendly
- Fairytales re-imagined
- Friendship

In this section of the resource, you will have the opportunity to explore examples of texts you could use with your students to explore representation and connections and discover how this learning is embedded in the content of the NSW English K-10 syllabus.

### Professional reflection

This section provides you with a number of additional resources to reflect on your knowledge of English as the study and use of language.

### Resources

You may wish to visit your school library before you start this resource. If you have one or more of the following texts with you as you work through the resource it will enhance your experience.
- *Olivia* by Ian Falconer
- *My uncle’s donkey* by Tohby Riddle
- *Where the wild things are* by Maurice Sendak
- *The gruffalo* by Julia Donaldson
- *Jeremiah in the dark woods* by Janet and Allan Ahlberg

## Rationale

The new English K-10 syllabus has mandated that in EACH YEAR, students MUST study examples of media, multimedia and digital texts which are appropriate to their needs, interests and abilities, examples which become increasingly sophisticated as students move from Kindergarten to Year 6. This resource is designed to provide teachers with a range of resources and strategies to teach media, multimedia and digital texts from Early Stage 1 to Stage 3.
What is subject English in a K-6 classroom?

Read the **rationale** of the English K-10 syllabus.

According to the rationale, what is subject English all about? Is there a single word that stands out in the rationale's description of English?

Note in particular the following sentence from the **rationale**:  
*English is the study and use of the English language in its various textual forms.*

Note also this statement from the **Content and use of terminology** page of the English K-10 syllabus:  
*...the study of English is an active pursuit where students use language to learn about language.*

At its broadest level, English could be conceived as the study of how ideas are represented in texts, especially through language, and how ideas are connected, within texts and between texts.

Read the **aim** of the English K-10 syllabus. Does this confirm what the rationale is saying about subject English?

**AIM**

1.1.1 Literacy is the ability to understand and evaluate meaning through reading and writing, listening and speaking, viewing and representing.
Now consider literacy in the context of [NSW English K-10 syllabus](#):

*The English learning area has a particular role in developing literacy because of its inherent focus on language and meaning. However, all curriculum areas have a responsibility for the general literacy requirements of students as they construct meaning for themselves and others.*

from the elaboration of Literacy in the ‘Learning across the curriculum’ section of the syllabus.

### Discussion: The relationship between English and literacy

In what ways do English and literacy intersect? In what ways are they different?

Use the following Venn diagram to guide your discussion and record your ideas by downloading a copy.
Engaging with texts to explore connections and representations

Definitions

Engaging personally with texts
Engaging personally with texts is one of the key processes in the English K-10 syllabus. It is intended to ‘emphasise student agency through students developing and applying knowledge and understanding of context and language forms and features, and reflecting on their learning.

*English K-10 syllabus (2012)* Board of Studies, NSW

Making connections
Learners make personal connections from the text with something in their own life (text-to-self), another text (text-to-text), something occurring in the world (text-to-world).

*Focus on Reading 3-6 (2010)* NSW DEC

Representation
The way ideas are portrayed and represented in texts, using language devices, forms, features and structures of texts to create specific views about characters, events and ideas. Representation applies to all language modes: spoken, written, visual and multimodal.

*English K-10 syllabus (2012)* Board of Studies, NSW
# The big picture: Looking at the stage statements

The stage statements give a big picture of the intended learning for students by the end of a stage. The table below makes it easy to see how important the concepts of connections and representations are in the English K-10 syllabus.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Extracts from stage statements relating to concepts of representing and making connections.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ES1</td>
<td>They interpret and provide relevant explanations of characters and main events in imaginative texts, and key ideas and visual features in short informative texts, making connections to personal experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S1</td>
<td>They use an increasing variety of skills and strategies, including knowledge of text structure, context, grammar, punctuation, word usage and phonics, to make connections between texts and their own experiences and information in texts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2</td>
<td>Students identify literal information in texts and make inferences, integrating and linking ideas and asking questions to clarify understandings. They recognise the representation of characters, settings and events in imaginative texts and start to evaluate point of view.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S3</td>
<td>Students independently read and view an extensive range of complex texts and visual images using a comprehensive range of skills and strategies. They respond to themes and issues within texts, recognise point of view and justify interpretations by referring to their own knowledge, values and experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S4</td>
<td>Students make connections between texts, they recognise the main ideas and points of view, and the ways in which texts seek to position responders.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Looking closer: Representation and making connections in the syllabus content

Explore
Connecting students to texts and engaging them personally is the intent of the English K-10 syllabus. Look at the Stage 1 content below to discover how representing and making connections are embedded throughout. This is true of all stages in the syllabus.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Outcomes/content relating to concepts of representing and making connections</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| **A**     | **EN1-1A** Speaking and Listening 1  
• explore **different ways** of expressing emotions, including verbal, visual, body language and facial expressions  
• use role-play and drama to **represent** familiar events and characters in texts  
**EN1-2A** Writing and Representing 1  
• create short imaginative, informative and persuasive texts using growing knowledge of text structures and language features for familiar and some less familiar audiences, selecting print and multimodal elements appropriate to the audience and purpose  
• compose a **range** of written forms of communication, including emails, greeting cards and letters  
• draw on **personal experience** and topic knowledge to express opinions in writing  
**EN1-4A** Reading and Viewing 1  
• discuss **different texts** on a similar topic, identifying similarities and differences between the texts  
• use comprehension strategies to build literal and inferred meaning and begin to analyse texts by drawing on growing knowledge of context, language and visual features and print and multimodal text structures  
• **compare** opinions about characters, events and settings in and between texts  
• identify visual **representations** of characters’ actions, reactions, speech and thought processes in narratives, and consider how these images add to or contradict or multiply the meaning of accompanying words |
| **B**     | **EN1-6B** Speaking and Listening 2  
• **make connections** between different methods of communication, for example Standard Australian English, Aboriginal English, home language, sign language and body language  
• recognise **different oral texts**, for example conversations at home, in the classroom and playground  
**EN1-7B** Writing and Representing 2  
• identify the audience of imaginative, informative and persuasive texts  
• discuss some of the **different** purposes for written and visual texts  
• describe some differences between imaginative informative and persuasive texts  
• **compare different kinds of images** in narrative and informative texts and discuss how they contribute to meaning  
• discuss the **characters and settings of different texts** and explore how language is used to present these features in different ways |
## B EN1-8B Reading and Viewing 2
- understand that texts can draw on readers’ or viewers’ knowledge of texts to make meaning and enhance enjoyment, for example comparing fairytales
- respond to a range of literature and discuss purpose and audience

### EN1-9B Grammar, Punctuation and Vocabulary
- recognise, discuss and use creative word play, for example alliteration and onomatopoeia
- understand how texts are made cohesive through resources, for example word associations, synonyms, and antonyms

## C EN1-10C Thinking Imaginatively and Creatively
- recognise the way that different texts create different personal responses
- respond to a wide range of texts through discussing, writing and representing
- recognise and begin to understand how composers use creative features to engage their audience
- identify and compare the imaginative language used by composers
- identify creative language features in imaginative texts that enhance enjoyment, for example illustrations, repetition
- recognise similarities between texts from different cultural traditions, for example representations of dragons in traditional European and Asian texts

## D EN1-11D Expressing Themselves
- identify aspects of different types of literary texts that entertain, and give reasons for personal preferences
- recognise simple ways meaning in texts is shaped by structure and perspective
- respond to texts drawn from a range of cultures and experiences
- identify features of texts from a range of cultures, including language patterns and style of illustration
- discuss characters and events in a range of literary texts and share personal responses to these texts, making connections with students’ own experiences
- identify, explore and discuss the morals of stories from a variety of cultures, for example Asian stories, and identify their central messages
- express preferences for specific texts and authors and listen to the opinions of others
- respond to a range of texts, for example short films, documentaries and digital texts, that include issues about their world, including home life and the wider community

## E EN1-12E Reflecting on Learning
- discuss some of the ways that story can be reflected in a variety of media, for example film music and dance
Engaging personally with texts in K-6

What does making connections look like in a classroom?

Personal engagement with texts allows students to make connections between the text and themselves. It is the intent of the English K-10 syllabus that students engage with texts and identify how texts relate to themselves, other texts and the broader world. Making connections is an aspect of comprehension that encourages inferential and high order thinking. Making connections encourages rich talk about texts and allows students to understand that no text exists in isolation.

Watch

Click on the image below to see an example of how students can engage with texts and participate in rich discussions.

Discussion

Reflect upon your own practice using the video discussion sheet.
What texts could I use in my classroom to teach concepts of representing and making connections?

How can I use texts to address aspects of the syllabus about representations and making connections?

There are many ways to group and study texts. The most important point to remember is that students need to study a range of texts to be fully able to understand the representations and connections of ideas. It is important for teachers to explicitly teach the wider world context of the text, as no text exists in a vacuum.

The texts on the following pages are grouped together as a sample of how teachers might approach enabling students to make connections and understand representations in a range of texts. The types of learning experiences and questioning around the texts would depend on the stage level.
Example 1: Animals like us!

Making connections

Engaging personally with texts
Both texts concentrate on everyday activities. Most students will be able to relate personally to the types of experiences in the texts.

Family (in different forms) is at the centre of the story.

Both texts use iconic references to create humour and rely on the reader's background knowledge to access the humour.

Understand and apply language forms and features
The narrative structure of both texts is similar to that of a child’s daily routine. Once Olivia has been introduced to the reader, the text then takes on a day-to-night sequence. My Uncle’s Donkey starts in the morning and ends after the night-time routine.

Visually both texts are very similar. The illustrations depict objects and characters in the foreground. The backgrounds are white, which makes the reader pay more attention to the expressions on the characters’ faces.

Both texts use anthropomorphic animals to tell the story.

Understanding representations
A study of either text could lead to a study of representations in texts. See the sample ideas below.

How pigs and donkeys represented in texts? Think of fairy tales, rhymes and animated movies.

Learning experiences and question approaches
What are the different visual representations of pigs and donkeys in these texts?

How is the family represented in Olivia and My uncle’s donkey? What other texts represent families in different ways?

Why might composers choose to give animals human features to represent a family?

Look at the sibling relationship in the text. What features of the text (language and visual qualities) convey to the reader the relationship between Olivia and her brother?

What other texts portray sibling relationships? Are they represented in the same way? Consider I wish I had a pirate suit by Pamela Allen or any version of the Cinderella story.

The donkey in My uncle’s donkey could be in the narrator’s imagination, as the donkey and the uncle never make eye contact. How is imagination represented in other texts? Consider Tiddler by Julia Donaldson and Axel Sheffler, Where the wild things are by Maurice Sendak, When Harry caught imaginitus by Nick Bland.
### Other resources for making connections

**Oliva website**  

**Oliva** (animated series)  

**Action Jackson** by Jan Greenberg, Sandra Jordan and Robert Andrew Parker (2007)

**Artist referred to in Oliva**  

**Artist referred to in Oliva**  

**Excerpt from The kid** with Charlie Chaplin (film reference from My uncle’s donkey)  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qNseEVlaCl4&feature=player_detailpage](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qNseEVlaCl4&feature=player_detailpage)

**Gnossienne No. 3, Gnossienne n. 3 – Single** (music reference from My Uncle’s Donkey)  

**British Museum** (home of the Portland Vase)  
[http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/gr/t/the_portland_vase.aspx](http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/gr/t/the_portland_vase.aspx)

**Flowers for Van Gough – free app**  

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### Examples of representations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pig</th>
<th>Donkey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **The sheep-pig** by Dick King-Smith  
| **Charlotte’s web** a novel by E.B White (1952)  
**Charlotte’s web** film (2006) and (1973) | **The donkey who carried the wounded** by Jackie French |
| **Miss Piggy** from the Muppets – YouTube clip | **The wonky donkey** by Craig Smith (also available as an app book and song) |

Rhyme: ‘This little piggy went to market …’

**Peppa pig** -  
(screened on the ABC and often available in iView)

Rhyme: ‘Donkey, donkey, old and grey …’
Example 2: Monsters can be friendly

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Making connections</th>
<th>Understanding representations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engaging personally with texts</td>
<td>Learning experiences and question approaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where the wild things are starts with the character Max's naughty behaviour. Most students will be able to connect personally with naughty behaviour.</td>
<td>How are monsters represented in texts?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand and apply language forms and features</td>
<td>Compare these texts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The language of both texts has similar repetition of the word 'terrible'.</td>
<td>The Gruffalo (also available as an audio book) The Gruffalo movie (2009), Where the wild things are by Maurice Sendak, 'The Banksia men' from The adventures of Snugglepot and Cuddlepie by May Gibbs, Monster's inc film (2001), Leonardo the terrible monster by Mo Williams, also see <a href="http://www.mowillems.com">http://www.mowillems.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The illustrations of the covers of the two texts are similar. Both have one lonely looking monster sitting or standing under a tree. The tree in both illustrations is used to frame the height of each monster.</td>
<td>How are friendships represented in texts?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ron Brooks uses a similar style of illustrative technique in John Brown, Rose and the midnight cat. Alerting students to observe the visual similarities is another way of making connections between texts and the features that are used to enhance meaning.</td>
<td>In Where the wild things are, Max tames the monsters and forms a type of friendship with them. Julia Donaldson's Gruffalo forms a power based relationship with the mouse. Explore other texts where friendship is represented.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other recourses for making connections

- Kermit the Frog - Lime in the Coconut [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1wg_L0wGTyA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1wg_L0wGTyA)
### Example 3: Fairytales re-imagined

#### Making connections

**Engaging personally with texts**
- Both texts are based on the reader having some knowledge of fairytales. The texts play with the reader's knowledge and opinions about fairytales.
- Most readers will be able to identify with the traditional fairytale characters that appear in the texts.
- Some readers will be familiar with other works by Janet and Alan Ahlberg, e.g. *Each peach pear plum.*

**Understanding representations**
- The three pigs in David Wiesnner's text go 'out' of the book and use the paper to help with construction. The style of illustration changes as the pigs leave the traditional story and come 'out'.
- The story is told from the perspective of the pigs.
- Speech bubbles are used to explain the pig's thinking.
- The narrative structure in *Jeremiah in the dark woods* is familiar, but complexity is added by the reader's own knowledge of other texts.
- Dialogue is central to the telling of the story.

#### Learning experiences and question approaches
- How are the representations of the characters in both texts different or similar to the traditional representations?
- Why would composers choose to portray the characters in this way?
- Why do traditional tales get retold from a different perspective?
Other texts to explore

Previously by Allan Ahlberg and Bruce Ingman
The true story of the three little pigs by Jon Scieszka and Lane Smith
The paper bag princess by Robert Munsch
Meg and Mog by Jan Pienkowski (uses the dual narrative and speech bubble technique to tell the story)
http://www.janpienkowski.com/books/meg-and-mog/
Engaging personally with texts in K-6

Back to the syllabus

As the English K-10 syllabus requires students to study a range of texts over the course of a year and stage, it is important to use digital texts and visual texts that are not 'book based' with students. Students need to become critical readers and viewers.

It is also important for students to study different appropriations of common texts. This helps students develop and understand connections between ideas and techniques composers use to enhance reader/viewer enjoyment.

This learning is described in the *Stage 3 stage statements* (see below). However this type of learning can also be tracked from Early Stage 1.

> ‘Students independently read and view an extensive range of complex texts and visual images using a comprehensive range of skills and strategies. They respond to themes and issues within texts, recognise point of view and justify interpretations by referring to their own knowledge, values and experiences. They identify, critically analyse and respond to techniques, literary devices and language features used by writers to influence readers ... Students identify text structure of a range of complex texts and explore how grammatical features work to influence an audience’s understanding of written, visual, media and multimodal text’s.’

*English K-10 syllabus* (2012) Board of Studies, NSW

Consider the representation of friendship in the texts on the following pages and the teaching sequence which follows.
Example 4: Representations of friendship
Examples of texts you may wish to use

Quotations on friendship
“A Friend may well be reckoned the masterpiece of Nature.” - Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803 - 1882) US poet & essayist.
“Keep your friendships in repair.” - Ralph Waldo Emerson (as above)
“Be slow in choosing a friend, slower in changing.” - Benjamin Franklin
“In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.” - Martin Luther King Jr.
“It takes much bravery to stand up to our enemies but we need as much bravery to stand up to our friends.” - J.K. Rowling
Learning experiences and question approaches

Below are some teaching ideas linked to the example texts. They are loosely written in sequence, but the amount of scaffolding, type of grouping and time taken to teach and explore each idea will vary according to context.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Google the word ‘friendship’ with students and then select ‘image’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A page of small images will appear that depict friendship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discuss the page as a whole. Are there any images that stand out?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why? Are there similar images? What are the main colours on the page?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Select one image in particular. (This may be prechosen by the teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or it may be a student choice). Examine the image in detail, thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>about colour, framing, salience, style, perspective ... Discuss and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>label.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Watch the <a href="#">Harry Potter friendship</a> YouTube clip. Ask the students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to take note of their emotional responses to the clip.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discuss the differences between the two texts (the Google friendship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>image and the YouTube clip).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was the emotional response different between the two texts? Did the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>students enjoy one text more than the other?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask the students to identify what elements helped amplify their</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>response to the text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make a class list of responses.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Watch the <a href="#">Harry Potter</a> YouTube clip a second time. Ask the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>students to think about what the composer of the piece has done to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>capture audience attention. Ask them to think about music and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lyrics, lyric and image integration, scene selection, etc. What</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>visual elements have been used to capture the idea of friendship?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do visual elements the clip show about friendship? What does</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the audio add? What language does the audio use to describe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>friendship? Is the language persuasive? Encourage the students to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>justify their responses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discuss student responses. Ask students to consider the composer’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>purpose of putting the clip together and think about what response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the composer was hoping to extract from the viewer.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Read aloud the Henry Lawson poem <a href="#">To an old mate</a>. Have a similar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>discussion around this poem as with the Harry Potter clip and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>friendship visual. The students may need some scaffolding to help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>them understand the language style of the poem. Students could</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>compare the lyrics from <a href="#">Keep holding on</a> (from the Harry Potter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clip) to the words of the Henry Lawson poem [To an old mate]. Guide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the students to examine the language, structures and features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>including grammar and spelling of the two texts. For more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>information on teaching grammar in context see Resource [Exploring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>composing K-6 through the NSW English K-10 syllabus](#).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sort through friendship quotes and ask students to find a quote</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that best matches their perception of friendship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask students to construct or manipulate a visual representation of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>their selected quote, such as a poster, using digital technologies.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ask students to compile a selection of images (including photographs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of themselves and short film clips). Use movie making software to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>order the images and film and then record or insert an audio track.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Professional reflection

Reflect
Now that you have explored just some of the many ways of using language to learn about language through connecting texts and representation, it is time to reflect upon your strengths and needs as an educator. Download the reflection upon learning resource to make a personal note of your knowledge and areas for further learning. You may like to use this to help define your personal leaning plan as part of your Teacher Assessment Review Schedule (TARS).
For further readings see the resources on the next pages.
## Resources

| Further reading               | PETAA Paper 185 Choosing texts for teaching and learning (2012)  
<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Revisit Reflect Retell</em> by Linda Hoyt Heinemann (2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional resources/links</td>
<td><em>Genres in Children’s Literature – iTunes U course.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children's books podcast <em>The Guardian</em></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td><em>The Puffin Podcast</em></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children's Literature – Professor Alyson Simpson discusses <em>the importance of using good literature in the classroom.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>McDonald, Lorraine <em>A literature companion for teachers</em> (2012) PETAA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>