



## **Planning a Talk for Reading Unit Guide: Fox by Margaret Wild**

### **Choosing the text**

When selecting a text, it is essential that it provides scope for rich discussion – dialogic talk. Comprehension of high-quality literature is scaffolded by the teacher, supporting students to appreciate literature they wouldn't necessarily be capable of, or interested in reading independently. In fact, if students can independently comprehend a text, then what purpose does teacher lead instruction serve? It is therefore imperative that the text demands strategic reading, modelled and guided by the teacher, to drive student learning forward.

### **Planning the unit of work**

Essential to any good lesson is good planning. Effective planning ensures that lessons are purposeful and enable student learning to occur. So, where does planning a TFR unit start? First - by considering literacy concepts that underpin the purpose or theme of the text. These may include:

- Structure of text – how the text works
- Role of characters/issues/information
- Role of setting/mood/tone
- Use of language, including figurative
- Perspective/viewpoint – writer/narrator/character/reader
- Main ideas/themes/arguments

Through unpacking a text, with consideration of literacy concepts, we can identify the purpose and value of the text.

### **Structure of text – how the text works**

The text is written in a narrative style, reminiscent of either a wishing or losing tale. The text direction and font are unique but not purposeful to any hidden or apparent meaning.

### **Role of characters/issues/information**

Different relationships are explored in this text. A friendship exists between Magpie and Dog, but Magpie's desire to fly sees her form a relationship with untrustworthy Fox. This ultimately leads Magpie to unfortunate circumstances where she is forced to reflect on her loyalty to Dog. The descriptions of Fox are closely linked to fire. "...rich red coat. He flickers through the trees like a tongue of fire." "Fox scorches through woodlands..." There is a comparison being made



between Fox and the bushfire that took Magpie's ability to fly away from her. Dog rescues Magpie at the beginning of the story from the remnants of the bushfire. He again rescues Magpie at the end of the story when her loyalty to Dog encourages her to not give up.

### **Role of Setting/Mood/Tone**

The descriptions of setting powerfully establish mood. The story begins with descriptions to infer the negative aftermath of a bushfire. The story ends with Magpie deserted in a desert described as *hot and red*, another reference to the bushfire with magpie feeling *"...herself burning into nothingness."* The setting is specifically Australian with mention of Australian flora and landscapes.

### **Use of language, including figurative**

Colours are referred to as reflections of the character's emotions. *"...she feels herself melting into blackness.....into the shadows of the rocks."* describing Magpie's despair. *"...he races....into the blueness"* describing Magpie's elation. The metaphors *"melting into blackness"* and *"burning into nothingness"* are used at the beginning and end of the story to describe Magpie's feelings. Speech verbs are used to convey character emotion, as well as what the characters say and their actions. The author cleverly describes Fox's personality traits through Magpie's senses – *"And at night his smell seems to fill the cave – a smell of rage and envy and loneliness."* The text is full of rich language that has instructional potential to enhance student vocabulary.



### **Perspective/Viewpoint – writer/narrator/character/reader**

It is easy to view Fox as a negative character given his actions and descriptions. Students would need to be encouraged to consider the actions of Magpie and her loyalty towards dog at different stages of the text.

### **Main themes/ideas/arguments**

Underpinning the story is the theme of loyalty. Students would need to explore the differences between friendship and loyalty to fully understand the depth of this text.



## Phase 1 – Introduction to the text

### Introduction

**Aim:** Achieve a basic understanding

- Connect to background knowledge, tuning in and engage with text.
- Teacher models reading with fluency
- Daily vocabulary
- Daily Reading and Re-reading
- Prediction
- Initial responses
- Literal retrieval questioning
- Establish learning focus

Hook students by allowing them to explore items collected from a 'bushfire, such as burnt leaves, a burnt magpie feather, ash. Provide background knowledge about how wildlife is affected by bushfires, through watching a video about conservation following fires. Ask students questions. What happens to wildlife in bushfires? What happens to the animals' homes?

Establish students' knowledge about emotions and how they can be represented by colours. Use a colour wheel and write emotions/feelings on the different colours, discussing the connections.

In the first reading of the text, ask students prediction questions. Where is Fox taking Magpie? Will Magpie make the journey back home? Do you think Dog is worried about Magpie? During the same read, ask literal questions to engage students in literal understandings of the text. "Where does Dog take Magpie?"

At the conclusion of the first read, complete a Tell-Me-Chart with students (right). What did they like about the story? What did they dislike? What were some puzzles that were left unanswered? Encourage students to provide answers that are responsive to the text rather than personal opinions about what they like and dislike.

Model reading to the students, focussing on expression matched to the mood of the text. Read dialogue the way in which it is written with reference to punctuation and speech verbs. During re-reading of the text, ask students to echo and choral read with you.

Fox	
<p><u>Likes</u></p> <p>I like that Fox rescued Magpie from the charred forest.</p> <p>I like that Magpie and fox help each other with the missing eye and missing wing.</p> <p>I like that Magpie tries to warn Dog about Fox.</p>	<p><u>Dislikes</u></p> <p>I don't like Fox watching Magpie.</p> <p>I don't like that Fox left Magpie in the desert.</p> <p>I don't like that Magpie left dog.</p>
<p><u>Puzzles</u></p> <p>Why was Fox mean to Dog and Magpie?</p> <p>What caused the forest fire?</p> <p>Why did Dog have one eye?</p>	



Explicitly teach value-adding vocabulary to students in every lesson, providing student friendly definitions with an expectation that students use the vocabulary in context.

## Phase 2 – Investigation Phase

### Investigation

**Aim:** Deepen understanding of the focus

- Strategic reading
- Dialogic talk to develop understanding
- Response activities
- Reading as a writer
- Shared writing and practice of answers
- Summarising
- Students demonstrate fluent reading

Once students have grasped a literal understanding of the text, begin to develop a deeper understanding of the text specific to the literacy concepts.

Through dialogic talk and response activities, develop students' skills as strategic readers.

Read the text-line-by-line, asking students questions and providing ample exploration and investigation time. Lead discussions by prompting

students to delve deeper to form understandings. Encourage all responses. Model and guide the use of sentence stems that encourage exploration of the text in a 'safe' environment where answers are provided tentatively to allow for changing of minds, such as:

- I wonder if...
- I may be incorrect in saying this but...
- I'd like to add to what Jim said and say...

Model sentence stems that give students a structured way of providing answers to inferential questions, such as Point, Evidence, Explain.

How is Magpie feeling?

**Point:** The author suggests that Magpie is heartbroken.

**Evidence:** In the text it states that Magpie drags her body into the shadows. Furthermore, she whispers "I will never again be able to fly."

**Explain:** It is clear that Magpie is heartbroken. She is whispering and dragging her body which are natural responses to being deeply upset.



Create a graphic organiser to explore the theme of loyalty. Find evidence from the text to support the question “Who is Magpie loyal to?”

<i>Who is Magpie loyal to?</i>	
<i>Dog</i>	<i>Fox</i>
<i>Magpie says, “I will be your missing eye, and you will be my wings.” to Dog.</i>	<i>Magpie trembles and shrinks away when she sees Fox.</i>
<i>Magpie tries to warn Dog about Fox.</i>	<i>Magpie leaves with Fox whilst Dog is sleeping.</i>
<i>Magpie says, “I will never leave Dog. I am his missing eye, and he is my missing wings.” twice to Fox.</i>	
<i>Magpie thinks of Dog waking to find her gone and begins the journey home back to Dog.</i>	

Identify the character’s emotions through summarising evidence from the text. How has language and setting been used to depict character?

helpless	Magpie does not want his help. <i>“I will never again be able to fly.”</i> <i>“How would you feel if you couldn’t run?”</i>
frustrated	<i>“An eye is nothing!”</i>
depressed	Magpie drags her body into the shadows of the rocks, until she feels herself melting into blackness. Sighing, Magpie does as he asks.
heartbroken	...she wakes with a rush of grief.

Model reading as a reader by thinking aloud, describing how strategic reading is occurring. For example: *“It says in the text that Magpie huddles. She must be feeling unsafe or worried because that’s how people are feeling when they huddle (demonstrate what huddling looks like). A scruff of feathers adrift in the heat. Adrift means to float. A Magpie can’t float. I think the author has said adrift because it makes it sound like the heat is all around her – over her, around her, under her. A scruff of feathers implied that she’s weak, just a pile of feathers that are scruffy. There’s not much to her.*





## Phase 3 – Independent Understanding

### Independent understanding

**Aim:** Demonstrate understanding towards independence

- Identify key focus
- Demonstrate understanding
- Apply key focus in writing

At the conclusion of the Investigation Phase, we want to assess students' levels of understanding. Students could demonstrate their understanding of the text through discussion or writing tasks. We could ask students to identify the theme of loyalty in another text. Perhaps students could be asked to describe a character's emotions through setting and the use of colours.

### Apply a key focus in writing

Revisit an example from text and unpack the author's deliberate use of language to show how a character moves using a simile.

"He flickers through the trees like a tongue of fire, and Magpie trembles."

Discuss the use of the simile to describe how the Fox moves. Students write a simile to describe how the whale is moving.

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Using the same examples from the text, identify the use of "tremble" to show that Magpie is scared. Students write a sentence to show how the girl is feeling through her actions.

### Identify key focus

*The Tale of Desperaux* is a lovely story to read for enjoyment alongside this Tfr unit. After reading the entire text over a period of time, revisit chapter twelve. Provide students with a written copy of the text and ask them to answer the question "Who is Antoinette loyal to?". Students provide written answers to the question. You may like to scaffold the responses by providing the Point Evidence Explain sentence starters mentioned previously:

**Point:** The author suggests that...

**Evidence:** In the text it states...

**Explain:** It is clear that...

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