

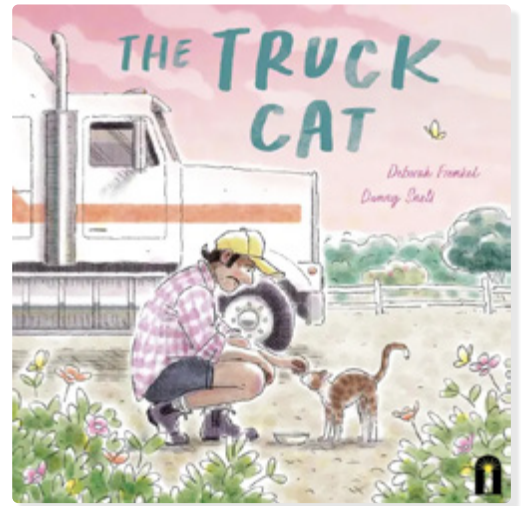
THE TRUCK CAT

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READING AUSTRALIA

Lower primary resource

About the book

| | |
|---------------------|------------------------------------|
| Title | <i>The Truck Cat</i> |
| Author | Deborah Frenkel |
| Illustrator | Danny Snell |
| Publisher | Hardie Grant Children's Publishing |
| Date of publication | 2024 |
| ISBN | 9781761215766 |
| Category | Picture book |
| Pages | 32 |



About this resource

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| Suitable for | Foundation to Year 2 |
| Themes | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Relationships• Belonging• Trucks• Travel• Friendship• Immigration• Identity• Home |
| Content descriptions | English – Year 1 |
| General capabilities | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Critical and creative thinking• Intercultural understanding• Literacy• Personal and social capability |
| Unit writer | <p>Libby Baker is a classroom teacher, teacher librarian, and literacy consultant. Her research and consultancy focuses on teaching functional grammar for critical literacy using multimodal texts in the primary years. Libby has taught across all age groups in the primary years during her 14 years of teaching, and has worked as a literacy and EAL/D specialist. She is currently a TL, a classroom teacher, and an ALEA ACT Local Council executive. © ALEA 2025</p> |

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Literature and context

Connecting to prior knowledge

Endpapers prediction

Display the front endpapers of *The Truck Cat*, which show a cat following a butterfly.

Explain the purpose of endpapers. These are the pages before the title page and after the last page of a book. They are like ‘stage curtains’ for books, often providing clues about the story to come and/or what happens in the end (Australian author [Margrete Lamond](#) has an interesting [blog post](#) about this).

Have a class discussion about the endpapers for *The Truck Cat*:

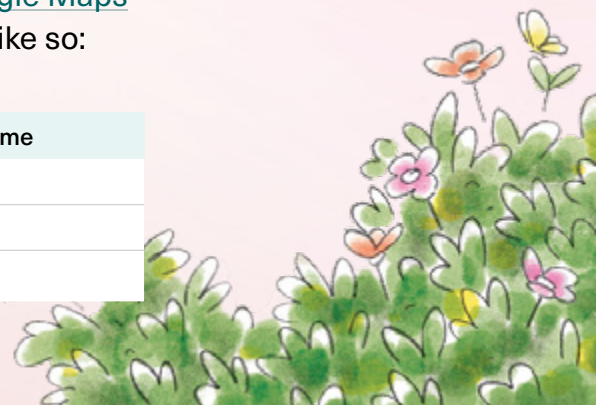
- Ask students to predict who will be the main character in the story. Ask them to justify their response.
- Next, ask students what is missing from the front endpapers that is present on the front cover. They may notice the absence of the truck and the driver.
- Ask students to predict why the driver and truck are absent. Students may suggest that the endpapers are signalling that the cat will be alone at some point.
- Finally, flip to the back endpapers that show the cat and a child. Ask students to predict what will happen in the story.

AC9E1LA08

Truck driver travels

Ask a few students how far they might travel in a day. Use [Google Maps](#) to measure their distances. Record these amounts on a table like so:

| Name | Distance | Travel time |
|------|----------|-------------|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |





Next, add 'Truck driver' as a name to the table. Explain that a truck driver can drive up to 12 hours a day and must have at least seven continuous hours of rest. Ask students to predict what distance this might be, based on the previous distances and travel times in the table.

Display the travel times and distances listed on the [Freight Metrics website](#). Plot one of these routes on Google Maps to compare the distance between students' travel and the average travel of a truck driver.

Conclude with a short discussion about the effect of driving for such long distances. Ask students:

- What would be the most difficult part of travelling for so long?
- How would your life change if you had to drive for most of your day?

AC9E1LY05

Exploring the text in context of our community, school, and 'me'

Cats in pop culture

Explain that this book is called *The Truck Cat*. Ask students to think about cats that they know from books, television shows, movies, and even games. Make a list of these cats with students. Suggestions include:

| | | | |
|---------------------------------|--|---------------|--|
| Candy Cat from <i>Peppa Pig</i> | The Cheshire Cat from <i>Alice's Adventures in Wonderland</i> | Garfield | Chloe from <i>The Secret Life of Pets</i> |
| Hello Kitty | Crookshanks from <i>Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban</i> | Puss in Boots | The cat from <i>Little Kitty, Big City</i> |

Next, make a [mind map](#) of these cats' attributes. Write 'Cat Attributes' in the middle of the map and ask students to use descriptive words (adjectives) to define the cats' physical and personal traits. Allow them to share knowledge about cats in their family during this activity.

To assist students to identify cat attributes, prompt them with questions such as:

- What do all these cats have in common?
- What do they like to do?
- How do they move?
- Do they have friends/owners? How do they treat them?

At the end of this activity the mind map should display a range of vocabulary, especially in relation to the cats' personalities (e.g. playful, cheeky, friendly, caring, independent, clever, curious, territorial, manipulative).

AC9E1LE02

Home memories

Note: For the purpose of tracking page numbers, the first page of the story is considered p. 3.

During the story, Tinka (the cat) and Yacoub (the truck driver) remember experiences from their respective homes, promoting the theme of belonging in the book (pp. 12–13). This activity aims to demonstrate how different and similar our stories of home are, and how each of our home stories develops our sense of belonging.

Ask students to draw an outline of their home on a blank sheet of paper. This could be a house, an apartment, or somewhere else they feel 'at home'. Next, ask students to think of something that they do at home with other people that gives them a sense of belonging. Prompt students by describing activities such as:

- baking a special treat with my mum or dad
- eating dinner with my family
- watching a movie with my sibling
- reading a book with my friend

Ask students to select ONE belonging activity and draw it inside their home.

Summarise this activity by discussing the similarities and differences between the activities students have drawn.

AC9E1LE02





Responding to literature

Responding to the text

What do I remember and what do you remember?

Read *The Truck Cat* to the class. Once you have finished, ask students to think of a key moment from the story. It might have been near the beginning or closer to the end. Tell students that they need to remember this moment and be prepared to talk about it.

Get students to walk around the classroom and stop when you clap your hands. They will face the nearest person, share their chosen moment from the story, then listen to their peer share theirs. After both students have shared, they will resume walking around the room until you clap your hands again.

To summarise this activity, ask students to recall some of the moments their peers shared with them in a whole class discussion.

AC9E1LY02 AC9E1LE05

Tinka: the sequel

Reread *The Truck Cat* to the class. At the end of the story, ask students to imagine what Tinka's life might look like in the future. Give them some time to consider how things might change. Prompt them with the following questions:

- What might Tinka be doing in a year or two?
- Where might he travel to?
- Where might he sleep?
- What might he be playing with in the future?
- What might he be eating?

After giving students time to think about these questions, ask them to draw a cover illustration for a sequel to *The Truck Cat*, illustrating the life Tinka will have in the future.

Allow them to share their illustrations with a partner, explaining what the future Tinka is doing and what they considered in their design.

AC9E1LE02 AC9E1LY05

Exploring plot, character, setting, and theme

Hot seating with Yacoub

Explain that the class will engage in a [hot seating](#) activity to better understand Yacoub's character. Before you begin, brainstorm questions that students could ask Yacoub to learn more about his actions, thoughts, and feelings. Draw two columns on the board and record any questions in the lefthand column. Suggestions include:

- Why do you miss your home?
- How do you feel when you are in the truck?
- Why is Tinka important to you?

This activity can be completed as a whole class or in groups of five to six. To begin, arrange the students in a circle. Ask for a volunteer to take on the role of Yacoub. This person should feel confident answering the questions from the class brainstorm.

The volunteer will sit in the middle of the circle (in the 'hot seat'), and the students around the outside will interview them. The volunteer should respond in character as Yacoub; record their answers in the righthand column next to the relevant question.

Students can take turns being in the hot seat. They can swap at any point during this activity.

AC9E1LE03

Character clues

This activity maps key plot points from the story to inferences about the characters. Create a table with two columns. Label the lefthand column 'Plot Points' and the righthand column 'Character Clues'. Explain that the plot is the storyline, and that each plot point provides the reader with clues about the characters involved.

Record the first few plot points in the lefthand column before asking students to suggest the remainder. For example:

1. Tinka lives with Yacoub in his truck
2. Tinka and Yacoub drive all around the country making deliveries
3. Tinka chases a butterfly
4. Tinka gets lost
5. Mari rescues Tinka



6. Yacoub is alone
7. Yacoub finds Mari's bakery and Tinka
8. Yacoub and Mari start a family
9. Tinka has a home with Yacoub, Mari, and their child

Now explain that, as a class, you will use the plot points as character clues. Invite students to suggest what each plot point reveals about the attributes and relationships of the characters involved. Record their ideas in the righthand column. For example:

| Plot point | Character clues |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Tinka lives with Yacoub in his truck | Tinka and Yacoub are friends and care for each other |
| Tinka follows a butterfly | Tinka is curious and playful |

AC9E1LE03





Examining literature

Examining text structure and organisation

Vectors and reading paths

Open to the front endpapers. Discuss with students what the lines represent. Suggested prompts and possible responses include:

| | |
|---|------------------|
| What are the curved lines around Tinka? | Grass |
| Why are the grass lines curved? | To show movement |
| What is the line behind the butterfly? | Its flight path |

Focus the discussion on the line that shows the butterfly's flight path. Explain that this line is called a vector. A vector shows perceived movement on a still image. The line on this page makes it look like the butterfly is flying up, down, and around, even though nothing is moving. Explain that vectors also provide 'reading paths' for our eyes. Ask students to close and then open their eyes, noticing how their gaze moves across the page to finally rest on the butterfly.

Now turn to pp. 16–17, when Tinka begins chasing the butterfly. Ask students what they notice about the illustrations on these pages. Allow this to be an open discussion, writing comments on sticky notes and placing them in the book OR recording responses on the board. Encourage students to use the new metalanguage of 'vectors' and 'reading paths' as they respond to the illustrations.

Summarise this discussion by explaining how the vector of the butterfly's movement carries the reader's gaze across the page as they follow Tinka. This reading path is confirmed by the placement of the text on this spread. The repetition of the butterfly and Tinka shows that time is passing: this isn't just one moment in time, but many. Students may also notice the smaller movement lines around Tinka.

Finally, allow students to experiment with vectors, reading paths, and movement lines on paper or individual whiteboards, drawing the butterfly's flight path and positioning words around this vector for the reader.

AC9E1LA05

Shot distances

Turn to p. 18, where the words ‘here’, ‘there’, ‘over’, and ‘under’ are repeated. Ask students if they know what type of words are being used to describe where Tinka is. Explain that they are prepositions, which – in this case – show where Tinka is in relation to other objects (i.e. his position).

Point out that the illustrations also demonstrate Tinka’s position. They do this through different shot distances. Shot distance describes how far the subject of the image is from the viewer. Explain that this affects the viewer’s relationship with the illustrations. There are three different shot distances:

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| 1. Long shot | Further from the action, more public, disconnected |
| 2. Medium/mid shot | Shows the character and the world around them |
| 3. Close-up shot | Forced attention, personal relationship |

Explain that you will highlight where Tinka is on the page and which shot the illustrator has used, moving from left to right along the top row of tiles on p. 18:

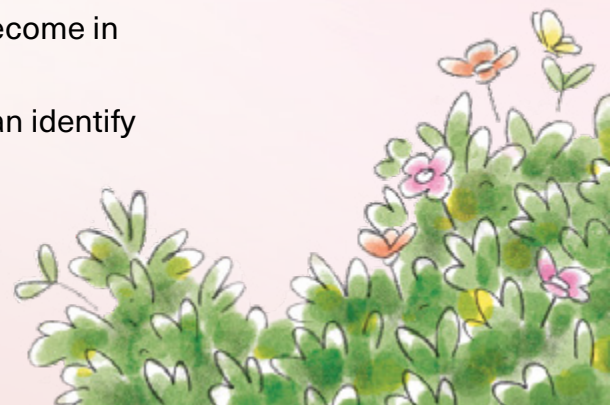
- The first and second tiles are medium shots. The focus is on Tinka and I can see some of the world around him.
- The third tile is a long shot. I know this because I can see many different things around Tinka. He is small in the image.
- The fourth tile is a close-up shot. The focus is on Tinka. I can see the details on his face, but I can’t see the details of the world around him.

Following this, ask students to identify the shots in the bottom row of tiles.

Finally, ask students how the different shots provide the reader with different information and feelings. For example:

- The closer you get to a character, the more involved you become in their actions and emotions.
- The further away you are from a character, the more you can identify their setting.

AC9E1LA05 AC9E1LA08





Examining grammar and vocabulary

Alliteration

Read p. 4, which describes some of the places Tinka lives. Ask students if they notice anything about the sounds at the beginning of the words in the phrase, 'brick motels with beetles in the bathtub'.

Once students have had an opportunity to share their ideas, tell them that this is an example of alliteration. Explain that alliteration is the use of the same letter sound at the beginning of words that are close together. This is a form of figurative (poetic) language, which provides rhythm to language.

Next, ask students if they can identify another example of alliteration on p. 4. To assist with this, reread the text aloud.

Draw up a table with five columns and three rows. Leave the first row blank, then write the alliterative phrases in the second and third rows. The table should look like this:

| | | | | |
|----------------|------|---------|----|-------------|
| | | | | |
| brick motels | with | beetles | in | the bathtub |
| rest-stop huts | with | rats | In | the rafters |

Explain that you will be classifying and labelling the information in all five columns. Ask students what information the words provide. Possible responses include:

| | |
|----------|--------------------------|
| Column 1 | Dwelling, place to stay |
| Column 2 | Means 'together' |
| Column 3 | Creature, animal, insect |
| Column 4 | Means 'where' |
| Column 5 | Object, thing in a house |

Write the most appropriate label for each column in the top row of the table. Explain that you will now use this formula to create an example of alliteration. Brainstorm other dwellings, creatures, and objects that you could use for this activity. Then model how to create an alliterative phrase. For example:

| | | | | |
|---------|------|---------|----|---------|
| palaces | with | poodles | in | pyjamas |
|---------|------|---------|----|---------|

Allow students to come up with their own examples of alliteration before sharing them with the rest of the class.

AC9E1LE04

Nena: word investigation

Reread p. 12, which contains some of Yacoub's memories. Afterwards, ask students if they have picked up any clues as to who 'nena' might be. Explain that, as readers, we can use clues in the text and illustration to define the word 'nena'. The text describes nena as being from Yacoub's home country, and as someone who made food. Ask students who the people in the picture are (i.e. Yacoub as a child with an older woman who might be his grandmother).

Make a mind map of different words for 'grandmother'. Ask students what they call their own grandmother (or another older woman in their family). Add these suggestions to the mind map. Also investigate words that are used to describe grandmothers in other languages. [This Babel article](#) is a good starting point.

Finally, ask students to draw a picture of their grandmother OR an older woman who is important in their lives. Ask student to label their picture with the name they call their grandmother/relative. Display these names alongside the word 'nena' to demonstrate the diversity of language in the class.

AC9E1LA09



Creating literature

Puppets retell

Explain that you are going to reread *The Truck Cat* and that you would like students to notice the storyline and important characters. Afterwards, ask them to list the characters that move the story along. Prompt them to think about who is necessary for the story to make sense. List these characters and the reasons they are important to the narrative. For example:

| | |
|---------------|---|
| Tinka | the main character |
| Yacoub | the reason Tinka is a truck cat |
| Mari | rescues Tinka |
| the butterfly | the reason Tinka ends up at Mari's bakery |

In small groups, ask students to create paper puppets of the main characters. Print out the template on the next page and allow students to decorate them to look like the characters from *The Truck Cat*. Cut out and glue the puppets onto popsicle sticks.

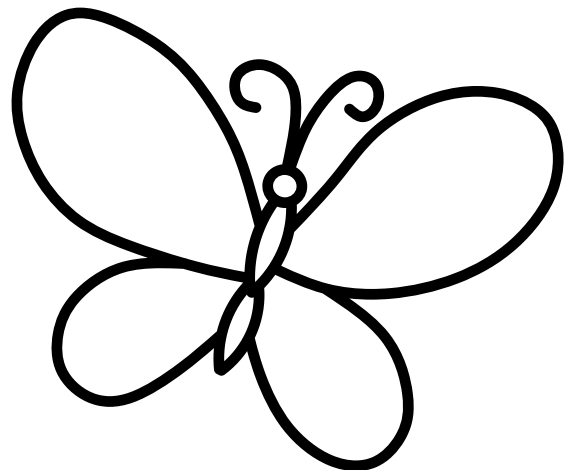
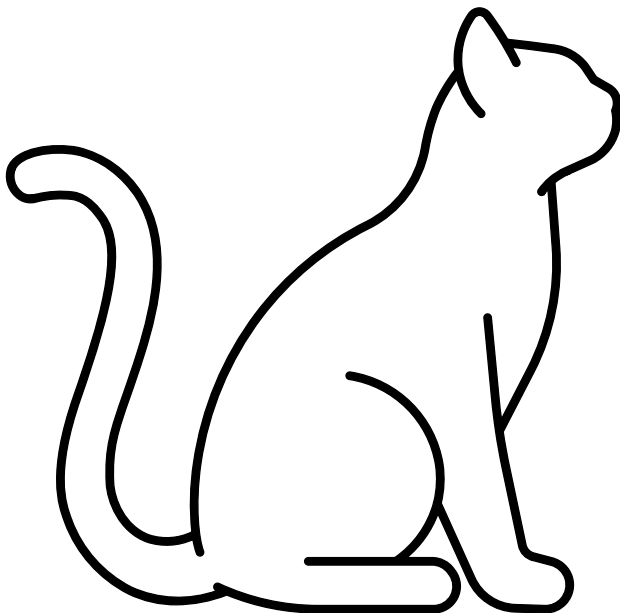
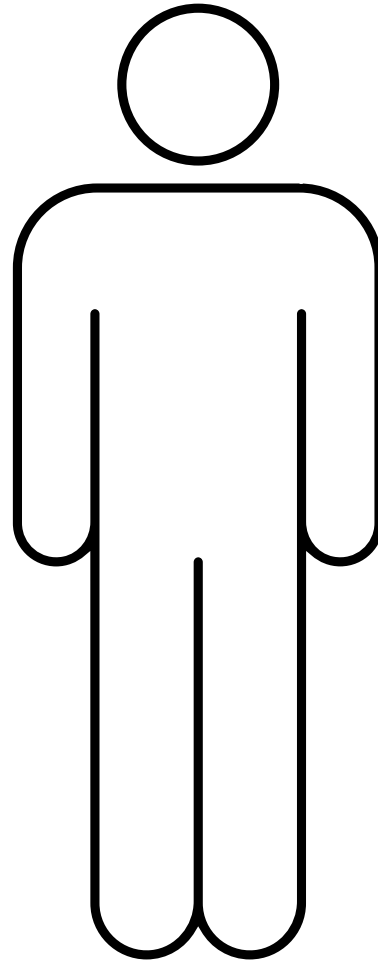
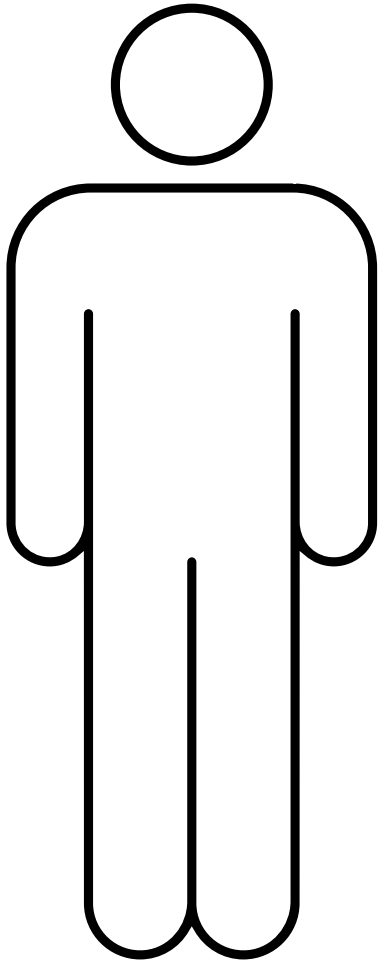
Once each group has finished, ask them to orally retell the story of *The Truck Cat* using their puppets. Then encourage them to innovate on *The Truck Cat* and create their own storyline using the puppets. Remind them that there needs to be a problem and a resolution, such as getting lost and being found.

Allow students to practise and present their puppetry to the rest of the class.

AC9E1LE05



Template for puppets retell



Innovated writing prompt

Patterned writing can allow students to think like a writer, noticing the patterns within a text.

Begin by explaining that students will use the opening of *The Truck Cat* as a prompt for their own writing. Reread and allow students to copy down the first four sentences on p. 3, which list the different places cats live.

Next, explain that students will use these sentences as the opening for a short written innovation on the story. They must choose a different cat name and cat 'type' for their story. You might like to revisit the **Cats in Pop Culture** activity (see the **Literature** section) as a reminder of different cat attributes.

In pairs, invite students to brainstorm different cat names and types. They can record their brainstorm on whiteboards or paper. Encourage them to choose a cat type that relates to something significant in their family or community. You can also offer suggestions to help students come up with the cat types. For example:

- 'We have lots of trams in our city, so I could make my cat a Tram Cat.'
- 'My family goes to soccer every weekend, so I could make my cat a Soccer Cat.'

Once students have had some time to brainstorm, allow them to choose ONE cat name and type to innovate on the final sentence from p. 3. You can scaffold this as follows:

But [NAME] was a [TYPE] cat. [NAME] lived [WHERE STUDENT LIVES].

Students can then continue writing about their cat. Prompt them to describe the following:

- what their cat does every day
- what their cat likes
- what their cat wants

To summarise this activity, students can share their innovated writing in pairs or small groups, or with the whole class.

AC9E1LE05



More resources

About the book, author, and illustrator

- *The Truck Cat*:
 - » [Hardie Grant Children's Publishing](#)
- Deborah Frenkel:
 - » [Hardie Grant Children's Publishing](#)
 - » [Website](#)
 - » [Instagram](#)
 - » [Facebook](#)
 - » [Australia Reads](#)
- Danny Snell:
 - » [Hardie Grant Children's Publishing](#)
 - » [Website](#)
 - » [Instagram](#)

Related texts

- *I'm Australian Too* by [Mem Fox](#), illus. Ronojoy Ghosh
- *My Two Blankets** by Irena Kobald, illus. Freya Blackwood
- *Teacup** by Rebecca Young, illus. Matt Ottley
- *Songbird** by Ingrid Laguna
- *Way Home** by Libby Hathorn, illus. Gregory Rogers
- *Stay for Dinner* by Sandhya Parappukaran, illus. Michelle Pereira
- *Words That Taste Like Home* by Sandhya Parappukaran, illus. Michelle Pereira

Books about special friendships with animals

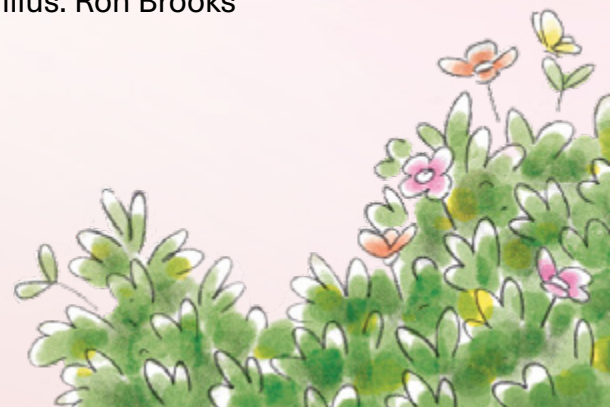
Lower primary (F–2)

- *Come Down, Cat!** by Sonya Hartnett, illus. Lucia Masciullo
- *John Brown, Rose and the Midnight Cat** by Jenny Wagner, illus. Ron Brooks
- *Boss Cat* by Sarah Speedie, illus. Tom Jellett
- *When Billy Was a Dog* by [Kirsty Murray](#), illus. Karen Blair
- *Eat My Dust!* by Neridah McMullin, illus. Lucia Masciullo

Upper primary (3–6)

- *Loyal Creatures** by Morris Gleitzman
- *Fog a Dox** by Bruce Pascoe

* Reading Australia resource available





Curriculum summary

English – Year 1 (Version 9.0)

| Language | | |
|--|---|---------------------------|
| Text structure and organisation | understand how print and screen texts are organised using features such as page numbers, tables of content, headings and titles, navigation buttons, swipe screens, verbal commands, links and images | AC9E1LA05 |
| Language for expressing and developing ideas | compare how images in different types of texts contribute to meaning | AC9E1LA08 |
| | recognise the vocabulary of learning area topics | AC9E1LA09 |
| Literature | | |
| Engaging with and responding to literature | discuss literary texts and share responses by making connections with students' own experiences | AC9E1LE02 |
| Examining literature | discuss plot, character and setting, which are features of stories | AC9E1LE03 |
| | listen to and discuss poems, chants, rhymes and songs, and imitate and invent sound patterns including alliteration and rhyme | AC9E1LE04 |
| Creating literature | orally retell or adapt a familiar story using plot and characters, language features including vocabulary, and structure of a familiar text, through role-play, writing, drawing or digital tools | AC9E1LE05 |
| Literacy | | |
| Interacting with others | use interaction skills including turn-taking, speaking clearly, using active listening behaviours and responding to the contributions of others, and contributing ideas and questions | AC9E1LY02 |
| Analysing, interpreting and evaluating | use comprehension strategies such as visualising, predicting, connecting, summarising and questioning when listening, viewing and reading to build literal and inferred meaning by drawing on vocabulary and growing knowledge of context and text structures | AC9E1LY05 |