

ILLUSTRATING THE READING STANDARD

“Nana and the Flower Arranger” *School Journal*, Part 2 Number 1, 2008

Noun frequency level: 8–9

By the end of year 4, students are required to locate and evaluate the information and ideas within a variety of fiction and non-fiction texts, drawing on the knowledge and skills described in the Literacy Learning Progressions, to meet the reading demands of the curriculum. The curriculum tasks will often involve the students in generating their own questions as well as answering questions from the teacher.

The students are learning about their own and others’ cultural practices around tangi and funerals, with a focus on finding out about varied ways of dealing with grief as part of a social sciences inquiry. As they explore and analyse their own and others’ values and perspectives, they are making connections with their own and others’ experiences.

“Nana and the Flower Arranger” is a first-person narrative about a boy who is struggling to come to terms with the death of his nana. He does not want to join the rest of the family in sharing stories

about Nana. The narrative promotes discussion about how people respond to sad situations in different ways and about the importance of family stories. The text encourages students to draw on their own culture, language, and experiences. There are connections to the key competency of relating to others.

The teacher chose this text because it includes implicit ideas so that the students need to make inferences based on information that is close by in the text or in the illustrations. The text also includes abstract ideas supported by concrete examples in the text (the characters’ words and actions). Words that may be unfamiliar are supported by context and illustrations.

The following example illustrates aspects of the task and text and demonstrates how a student engages with both task and text to meet the reading demands of the curriculum. A number of such examples would be used to inform the overall teacher judgment for this student.

I didn’t do anything. I just stood there beside Dad, staring into the bush over the fence, not into that deep hole. I was totally quiet.

I walked behind everyone else. I didn’t think Nana would be happy in that hole, but I didn’t say anything.

The student finds information in the title and illustrations to predict that the story is set on the day of a funeral, and with teacher prompting, he asks questions about who or what the flower arranger might be. The student uses Luke’s descriptions of his own behaviour, such as “I didn’t do anything”, “I just stood there”, and “I was totally quiet”, to infer that Luke is struggling to come to terms with his nana’s death. With teacher prompting, the student considers the reasons for Luke’s thoughts and behaviour, makes connections to his own experiences of sadness, and rereads this section to hypothesise that Luke is too sad to carry on as usual and wants to be left alone.

Dad called me to come in. “Don’t want to,” I said. “Why not?” “I don’t have a story to tell about Nana.” I kicked a stone. “Doesn’t matter,” Dad said. “Yes it does.” I glared at him.

The student asks questions about why Luke doesn’t have a story to tell about Nana and, with prompting, makes connections to his own experiences. He evaluates the information about Luke’s actions and statements to infer that Luke feels left out and ashamed because he doesn’t have a special story to tell. He notices how the abstract ideas of sadness and shame are conveyed by what Luke says and does.

The student uses his knowledge of the “ed” suffix and the context of the previous sentences to work out the meaning of “glared”.

Then I stopped. I stared. I was shocked. The beautiful pile of flowers had been tossed about.

With teacher support, the student reflects on Luke’s response to the mess at the grave. He makes connections to his prior knowledge of protocol at tangi or funerals and to what he has already found out, in his reading of the story, about Luke’s close relationship with his nana and his sadness at her death.



“You know, Grandad, I do have a story about Nana to tell now.”

We all laughed for the first time in many weeks.

The student makes connections to Luke’s earlier feelings about not having a story to tell and infers that Luke seems happier now and can see the humour of the situation at the grave. The student infers what the story about Nana might be. With teacher prompting, the student evaluates the information about Luke’s altered feelings – at first he wanted to be left alone, but now he is ready to share stories about funny or happy times as a way of dealing with sadness. In discussion with others, the student identifies these two ways of dealing with sadness and makes links to known cultural practices that help people to express their feelings at tangi and funerals.