

# Scarecrows from Space

by Philippa Werry  
photographs by Mark Coote



This text is levelled at Purple 2.

## Overview

The students at Gladstone School are making scarecrows for the Gladstone Scarecrow Festival. It's their favourite time of year! This year, the theme is "space". This report describes how some of the scarecrows were made, including some challenges the students needed to think about and overcome.

Because of the technological context of this report, there is a relatively high proportion of unfamiliar vocabulary, for example, the names of the recycled materials. Suggestions for building students' prior knowledge are provided, including a pre-reading

task (see Introducing the text). There is an audio version of the text on the Ready to Read CD *Readalong* 2011.

## Related texts

- Texts about scarecrows: *Scarecrow* (RTR poem card), *The Gardener and the Scarecrow* (RTR, Blue)
- Texts about technological procedures: *Hedgehog Fun* (RTR, Blue), *The Mask Parade* (RTR, Turquoise); at Gold: "Our Recycled Worm Farm" (JJ 40) and *The Impossible Bridge* (RTR).

## Cross-curriculum links

- Technology (level 1, technological products) – Understand that technological products are made from materials that have performance properties.

## Text characteristics

Key characteristics as described in the reading standards for after two and three years at school are shown in the boxes with a solid outline. Other boxes indicate additional characteristics.

Some settings and contexts that may be outside the students' prior knowledge but can easily be related to it, for example, the contexts of constructing scarecrows and the space theme of the scarecrow festival

Shifts in time as the students move through the process of making their scarecrows, including references on page 2 to events that had happened before the text started and (on page 3) to the finished scarecrow on page 8

Punctuation features, such as question marks, quote marks, exclamation marks, a dash, and an ellipsis to clarify meaning and support expressive reading

A mix of explicit and implicit content that provides opportunities for students to make simple inferences about some aspects of the scarecrow-making process and about the nature of technology (recycling, problem solving, and co-operation). For example, there is explicit information about how to build scarecrows and specific examples of how some groups approached the process, but students need to use implicit information in the text and photographs to infer the likely sequence and what sorts of problems the students would have had to solve.

The structure of the text as a report, with an introduction, a series of main points and a conclusion.

**How do you make a scarecrow?**  
Ask the students at Gladstone School. Every year, they make scarecrows for the Gladstone Scarecrow Festival. It's their favourite time of year.

This year, the theme is "space", so they have collected lots of tinfoil, tubes, bows, and shiny material.

Local family has brought along bales of straw. One of the teachers has made a trip into town for wooden stakes.

**How can we make our scarecrows look like an astronaut?**

How can we make our scarecrows look like an astronaut?	What we could use
spaceboots	spaceboots
spacesuit	gray tinfoil, silver foil, huffpaw
power pack	plastic bottle, pump
balloon	red balloon
oxygen tube	vacuum cleaner hose
space helmet	paper plates, tinfoil

\*See a photograph of their scarecrow on page 8.

Sam's group are making a friendly alien. They want it to look big and cuddly, so they use a pop-up laundry bag for the body. Their alien has three eyes and black, curly hair.

They add strips of carpet underlay and a purple scarf. They use some tinfoil and a yellow ball to make a nose.

Visual language features, for example, photographs, a heading, a table, a footnote, (signalled by an asterisk), and a caption, that are clearly explained and linked to the body text

A variety of sentence structures, including compound sentences and a few complex sentences, so that students are required to notice and use punctuation, and words such as "so", "to", "and" and "but" as a guide to phrasing and meaning

Information organised in paragraphs

Some unfamiliar words and phrases, the meaning of which is supported by the context or illustrations, for example, "Gladstone Scarecrow Festival", "theme", "tinfoil", "tubes", "shiny material", "local", "bales of straw", "wooden stakes", "imagination", "astronaut", "spaceboots", "spacesuit", "power pack", "oxygen", "silver", "steel bowl", "vacuum cleaner hose", "pantihose", "alien", "pop-up laundry bag", "furry", "carpet underlay", "antennae", "display"; and some commonly used words that have multiple meanings, for example, "space", "straw", "trip", "stakes", "turn", "stuff"

## Suggested reading purpose

- To identify the steps involved in making a “scarecrow from space”

## Setting a learning goal

*(What opportunities does this text provide for students to learn more about how to “read, respond to, and think critically about” texts?)*

To meet the reading purpose, students need to draw on a range of comprehension and processing strategies, often simultaneously. The strategies, knowledge, and skills below link to *The Literacy Learning Progressions*. Select and adapt from those below to set your learning goal. Be guided by your students’ particular needs and experiences: who they are, where they come from, and what they bring (*Reading and Writing Standards for Years 1–8*, Knowledge of the learner, page 6).

This text provides opportunities for students to:

- use explicit information in the text and visual language features to identify some steps involved in building the scarecrows (summarise)
- make connections to their prior knowledge (the planning task) and “read between the lines” in order to make inferences about some aspects of making the scarecrows that are not explicitly stated
- use word-solving strategies to decode and/or work out the meaning of unfamiliar words and phrases.

## Introducing the text

### A few days before the lesson

- In order to support students with the context and some of the space and technical vocabulary of this text, set them a task, such as the one suggested here.
- Discuss the cover of the book and clarify that this book is about students who make “scarecrows from space”. You could make a connection to *The Mask Parade* (Turquoise) in which students make masks for a “gold, bold, and bouncy” themed parade.
- Find out what your students know about scarecrows.
- Tell them that some of the students in the book make an “astronaut” scarecrow. Using a photograph or illustration of an astronaut as a reference (you could photocopy the one on page 3), encourage the students to discuss what they would do if they had to make an astronaut scarecrow.
- Give your students a copy of the page 3 table with just the headings filled in and ask them to

make a plan for an astronaut scarecrow, listing at least four items. Encourage them to consult family members for ideas and to look around their homes for possible materials.

### The lesson

- Ask the students to share their ideas from the planning task, then have them look through the text to find out the sorts of ideas the Gladstone students had. Enjoy their discovery of the page 3 table and footnote (and the “astronaut” photograph on page 8). Allow some time for discussion and use the opportunity to include and explain some of the less familiar vocabulary from the text.
- Tell the students that, in this text, some of the information about making scarecrows is clearly stated but that some is not, so they will have to look for clues in the text and make connections to what they already know about making scarecrows in order to make inferences.
- Share the reading purpose and the learning goal (how they will achieve the reading purpose, for example, by summarising and inferring). Remind them that as well as finding out the overall process of making a scarecrow, they will be able to compare their plans for the astronaut scarecrow with those of the students in the text.

## Reading the text

Below are some behaviours you could expect to see as the students read and discuss this text. Each example is accompanied by suggested instructional strategies you can use to scaffold their learning. Select and adapt from the suggestions according to your students’ needs and experiences.

### The students use explicit and implicit information to identify and infer the steps involved in building the scarecrows

- Use a graphic organiser, such as the filled-in example below, to guide your students in their summarising. You could model using verbs as key words, for example, find, add, make, and stick. As the students read through the text, encourage them to revisit the chart and add or modify points as appropriate.
- As you fill in the chart together, ask the students to justify their suggestions by asking *How do you know?* For example, most of the information about what the students had to do before making the scarecrows is stated explicitly on pages 2 and 3, except for the point about collecting the pantihose. You could use this as an opportunity to model a think-aloud. For example, on page 4: *I’ve noticed in the text and*

the photos that they're using pantihose for the arms and legs, but that wasn't mentioned before. So I'm inferring that when they were collecting things earlier, they also collected pantihose. We can add that to the chart.

- As they read, the students will notice that a number of steps in the scarecrow-making process are described, but not all of the steps are in sequence. Prompt them to look for language clues, such as the verbs within a sentence. For example, on page 2, the phrases “have collected”, “has brought along”, “has made a trip to town to buy” indicate that these events had happened before the text started. On page 3, the verbs “decide”, “think”, and “find” and the indicator of time “Then” provide explicit information about some key steps and their sequence.

<b>What they had to do before they made the scarecrows</b>
<b>Everyone</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– collect all sorts of bits and pieces (tinfoil, tubes, boxes, shiny material, clothes)</li> <li>– get straw</li> <li>– buy stakes</li> <li>– collect pantihose</li> <li>– solve problems (before they made them and all the way through)</li> </ul>
<b>Each group</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– think about what sort of space scarecrow they would make and what they might need</li> <li>– make a plan</li> <li>– find what they need</li> </ul>

<b>What they had to do as they made the scarecrows (the steps in the process)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– nail the stakes together</li> <li>– make the bottom half of the scarecrow</li> <li>– make the top half of the scarecrow</li> <li>– use the cross frame to help join the top half to the bottom half</li> <li>– put on the head</li> <li>– dress and decorate the scarecrow</li> </ul>
} solve problems

- The students may infer that the sequence of steps could vary according to the type (and shape) of scarecrow. For example, it might have been easier to dress some scarecrows before joining the top and bottom halves together.

- Draw attention to the description of the tricky aspects on page 5. Prompt the students to examine the photographs, as well as the text, to help them make inferences about what the problems are and how the students are trying to solve them.
- Work through the text in this way, recording the main steps on the graphic organiser. You could provide an opportunity for less confident students to rehearse their thinking and verbal expression of ideas by using a think, pair, and share approach for some sections.
- Encourage the students to check their ideas by rereading.
- Revisit the learning goal and support the students to track how they met it. *What helped you to identify the steps in the process?*

**The students use word-solving strategies to decode and/or work out the meaning of unfamiliar or ambiguous words and phrases.**

- Prompt the students to “break up” multisyllabic words into recognisable chunks or syllables, for example, “Glad-stone”, “Fes-ti-val”, “tin-foil”, “ma-ter-i-als”, “im-a-gin-a-tion”, “ox-y-gen”, “un-der-lay” (or “under-lay”). You can model this on a whiteboard.
- Remind students to use more than one source of information (for example, the rest of the phrase or sentence, any other references in the text, and/or the photographs) to help them clarify the meaning of unfamiliar subject-specific words. For example, the concept of “bales of straw” is strongly supported by the page 2 photograph and the significance of the straw is clarified on page 4. Similarly, photographs and further references help to build students’ understanding of “wooden stakes”.
- On the first reading of this text, you may decide to provide more support than usual with some of the less familiar technical words, in order to keep the flow of the reading. However, expect the students to at least make an initial attempt. Note aspects that they find difficult and plan to return to them in a subsequent lesson. To support your students, in particular English language learners, you could record unfamiliar or difficult words on the whiteboard as your students read through the text. In discussion with your students, decide the most appropriate meanings of the words and record these. In addition to this, also record which strategies the students used to make their decisions.

- If students are confused by any of the common words that have more than one meaning, prompt them to use the context of the sentence and their knowledge of syntax to clarify the intended meaning.
- Have a dictionary available to confirm or clarify word meanings.

### After reading

- The students can reread the text while they listen to the audio version on the Ready to Read CD *Readalong 2011*.
- Review the chart and the ways the students found the information. Then ask the students to reread the text with a partner and identify some problems or challenges the Gladstone students had and how they solved them. Remind the students to use both text and photographs and make connections to what they have already learned about making scarecrows. Some possible examples, using explicit or implicit information or a mix of both, are listed below. Have the students describe the clues they used to identify the information.

The problem:	The solution:
deciding what to do and what to use	using lots of imagination
making the scarecrows stay upright	using the frames
making an oxygen tube	using a vacuum cleaner hose
making scarecrow arms and legs	stuffing pantihose with straw
making the friendly alien look big and cuddly	using a pop-up laundry bag
making the alien princess look more like an alien	adding four eyes and two antennae

- Follow up on any decoding strategies, particular words, or features of words that students found difficult during the first reading. Alternatively, have the students share with a partner any words they found difficult and the strategies they used to work them out. Listen to the discussions and provide support as appropriate.

- Have the students make a photocopy or sketch of one of the scarecrows in the photographs and add labels for the materials used to make it. (Often this information will not be explicit in the text, so your students will need to make inferences, using implicit information and their prior knowledge.) You could encourage the students to think critically by adding their own suggestions for alternatives or improvements.
- Discuss some keywords you or the students could use to find online information about the Gladstone Scarecrow Festival or other scarecrow festivals.