Sparkle Fish

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Overview

This evocative poem compares the poet's thoughts to the characteristics and actions of fish caught in a net.

Suggested teaching purposes

- To support the students in developing the comprehension strategy of **visualising**.
- To read and enjoy a poem that has interesting ideas and images about thinking.

Suggested learning goal

I am learning to make pictures in my head to help me understand the ideas in this poem.

Success criteria

I will be successful when I have:

- made connections to what I know about poetic language devices
- made connections between (compared) the ideas and images in this poem and my ideas about thinking
- shared my ideas about why I think the author chose a fish image for her poem.

Features of the text

What features of this text support the teaching purpose?

- The lively, inspirational title
- The strong personal voice including:
    - the careful selection of verbs to express the ideas
    - the use of the first person
- The use of an extended simile: "My thoughts are like fish", "Some …"
- The repetition of "Some" to convey the idea that there are many kinds of fish – and many kinds of thoughts
- The variety in the images
- The dramatic contrast between the thoughts that "lie very still" and those that "flip and flop"
- The use of punctuation and line breaks to support phrasing and expression, particularly the structure of the final three lines, which supports the idea of thoughts slipping
- The quirky illustrations, which invite the reader to match them up with the ideas in the poem!

Readability

What prior knowledge or experience might help my students to read this text?

- Familiarity with similes and metaphors

- Having seen a fish caught in a net or on a line
- Their experience of visualising.

What text features might challenge my students and require a prompt or a brief explanation?

- Use of the elliptical sentence (for ESOL students), for example, "My thoughts are like fish [that are] caught".

A framework for the lesson

How will I help my students to achieve the learning goal?

Before reading

- Tell the students you have a poem called "Sparkle Fish" for them to read. Ask the students to share their experiences of catching fish, especially when using a net. Focus on the ways that fish move when they're caught. (Making connections; visualising)
- Explain that the poem uses a simile to convey the poet's ideas. Revisit what the students know about similes (and metaphors) and why writers use them. (Making connections; analysing and synthesising)
- Share the learning goal and success criteria with the students.

Reading and discussing the text

Refer to Effective Literacy Practice in Years 5 to 8 *for information about deliberate acts of teaching*.

- Before giving out the Journal, read the first two lines to the students. "What is the poet comparing her thoughts to? How do you know that?" Clarify that the poet is using a simile. Drawing on the earlier discussion, ask the children to share their ideas about how their thoughts can be like fish. If necessary, provide a model of your thinking: "When I think about fish caught in a net, I can 'see' them flapping around madly. When I'm busy and trying to do lots of things at once, it's as if my thoughts are flapping around like fish!" (Visualising; forming hypotheses)
- Give out the Journals and have the students read through the whole poem to find out how the poet's thoughts are like fish. Discuss the layout of the poem and how it adds to the meaning by tapering off just like the thoughts that disappear. (Analysing and synthesising; inferring)
- Share the learning goal and success criteria then reread the poem together, exploring the ideas and images. Encourage the students to visualise their own thoughts and how they are like fish. You could have them fill in a chart like the one below, as a group or in pairs. (Making connections; visualising)

Line/image from the poem	What I think this means	When my thoughts are like this
lie very still	a quiet thought that needs time to grow a private thought	
flip and flop	an enthusiastic thought a thought that changes back and forth	
flying fish that sparkle when they leap	a creative, wild idea inspirational thoughts	

| slip through my net | unformed ideas that seem less important | |
| swim to the bottom of the sea | gone, doesn't matter | |

- Once the chart is completed, have the students share their ideas. "Why do you think the poet chose that title?" Have the students think, pair, and share their responses. They could add these to the chart. (Inferring)
- Explore the supporting visual images and how they also convey ideas about thoughts at different stages. Some are very detailed and some incomplete. (Inferring; visualising)
- "Why do you think the author chose to use the fish simile to describe her thoughts? Did you find this effective? Why or why not?" (Inferring; evaluating)
- Review the learning goal and success criteria and reflect with the students on how well the learning goal has been achieved. For example, "How did making connections between the ideas in this poem and your own thoughts help you understand and appreciate the poet's ideas? What else helped you?" Note any teaching points for future sessions.

Links to further learning

What follow-up tasks will help my students to consolidate their new learning?

The students could:

- innovate on the poem and choose their own simile for thinking. For example, "My thoughts are like stars in the dark night sky …" (Making connections; visualising)
- identify any thoughts they had during this reading and compare them with a fish (Making connections; visualising)
- read other poems that use metaphor or simile, for example, "Fireworks" (SJ 1.4.00), "Snowfall" (SJ 2.2.06), or "Waiting" (SJ 1.4.07). (Making connections; analysing and synthesising)
- describe what their own thinking is like during different subjects or activities (Making connections; visualising)
- start an individual or class record of particular types of thoughts, for example, "What sparkly thoughts have you had today?" (Making connections; visualising)