



Overview

This lively graphic text provides a hilarious take on the old “dog ate my homework” story. Miri draws monsters in her schoolbooks to calm herself down when she’s feeling angry or upset. When one drawing comes to life, she finds that her teacher is surprisingly understanding.

The format will be very appealing to students, and the familiar classroom setting will support them to identify with a situation that is not too far from reality. Miri’s drawings allow her to deal with her emotions, but as her teacher knows and readers must infer, there is a time and place for letting your imagination run wild.

This narrative:

- has a theme of using creativity to deal with negative feelings
- requires students to infer why Miri might feel angry or upset and what the outcome of the story might be
- uses visual images to communicate actions, events, characters, and feelings
- provides a model for students to use as they experiment with ways of communicating ideas.

A PDF of the text is available at www.schooljournal.tki.org.nz

Texts related by theme “Harry’s War” SJ L3 June 2014 | “Not So Normal” SJ L3 Sept 2014

Text characteristics from the year 6 reading standard



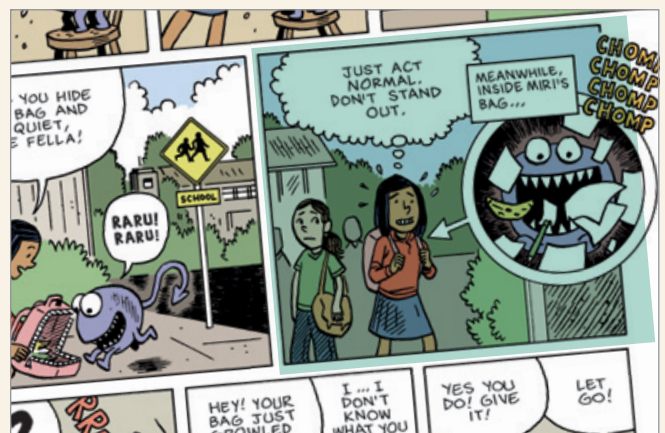
abstract ideas, in greater numbers than in texts at earlier levels, accompanied by concrete examples in the text that help support the students’ understanding



some ideas and information that are conveyed indirectly and require students to infer by drawing on several related pieces of information in the text



some information that is irrelevant to the identified purpose for reading (that is, some competing information), which students need to identify and reject as they integrate pieces of information in order to answer questions



illustrations, photographs, text boxes, diagrams, maps, charts, and graphs that clarify or extend the text and may require some interpretation

Possible curriculum contexts

HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Level 3 – Personal identity: Describe how their own feelings, beliefs, and actions, and those of other people, contribute to their personal sense of self-worth.

ENGLISH (Reading)

Level 3 – Ideas: Show a developing understanding of ideas within, across, and beyond texts.

ENGLISH (Writing)

Level 3 – Ideas: Select, form, and communicate ideas on a range of topics.

Possible reading purposes

- To enjoy reading a graphic novel
- To explore why Miri draws monsters and what can happen when things go too far
- To reflect on the ways we deal with our feelings
- To identify text and language features of graphic novels.

Possible writing purposes

- To express your own ideas in drawings, such as in a graphic novel
- To create images that communicate a range of emotions
- To research and write about the work of other graphic artists.



The New Zealand Curriculum

Text and language challenges

VOCABULARY

- Use of onomatopoeia: “Chomp”, “Sluorp”, “Buuurp”, “Zip!”, “Sigh”
- The expressions, “Good gracious!”, “a little chat”.

Possible supporting strategies

Some of these suggestions may be more useful before reading, but they can be used at any time in response to students’ needs.

- Most students will have no trouble with the vocabulary in this text, with the possible exception of “detention”. Support students to infer its meaning from the context and illustration.
- English language learners may need some support. Identify any words or expressions they may find challenging and discuss them prior to reading. In particular, point out the spelling of some of the sounds in this text (Buuurp, sluorp). Consider allowing English language learners to partner with a strong reader so that some of these words can be modelled for them.
- *The English Language Learning Progressions: Introduction*, pages 39–46, has useful information about learning vocabulary.
- See also *ESOL Online, Vocabulary*, for examples of other strategies to support students with vocabulary.
- You may want to clarify that “Miri” is a nickname or shortened form of the character’s full name, “Miriamia”.

SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED

- Familiarity with the classroom setting
- Some experience of drawing or using other forms of creativity to express feelings
- Knowledge of homework and detention
- Familiarity with the structure and features of comics and graphic novels and how to read them.

Possible supporting strategies

- Students should need no introduction to the setting. Some may not have experience of expressing their feelings through creativity, but this concept can be developed during and after reading.
- Some students may be unfamiliar with the old excuse “the dog ate my homework”. You may wish to introduce this expression ahead of time to help students find the humour in Raru eating Miri’s homework.

TEXT FEATURES AND STRUCTURE

- Comic, in 52 frames across eight pages (four spreads)
- The use of images rather than words to carry meaning
- The need to use images and prior knowledge to infer meaning when there are no or few words to support this
- Some places where dialogue is read downwards, as well as left to right.

Possible supporting strategies

- Review with the students what they already know about comics. Remind them of the way you read the frames across and down the page, using examples to illustrate this. If necessary, discuss standard comic/graphic novel text features, such as speech bubbles and thought bubbles.
- If possible, show students some comics, picture books, or graphic novels and model the way you use your knowledge and experience to help you interpret the images.



Sounds and Words

Instructional focus – Reading

Health and Physical Education (Level 3 – Personal identity: Describe how their own feelings, beliefs, and actions, and those of other people, contribute to their personal sense of self-worth.)

English (Reading) (Level 3 – Ideas: Show a developing understanding of ideas within, across, and beyond texts.)

First reading

- Set a purpose for reading, which can be as simple as reading for enjoyment.
- Allow students to read the text independently, sharing their responses with a partner.

If the students struggle with this text

- Support them, if necessary, to follow the order of the frames.
- Provide support for any unfamiliar words, including the sounds.

Subsequent readings

The teacher

Set a purpose for reading that will require students to consider Miri's motivations.

- *What can you learn about Miri from the way she is shown in the first page?*
- *What can you infer from the way the other students react?*
- *As the story continues, Miri goes through many emotions. Work with your partner to trace the changes she goes through and the feelings she experiences. What information from the text and your own experiences help you work out what Miri is feeling?*
- *Make a list of all the "emotion" words that you can apply to Miri as you review the text. How many of these are you familiar with from your own experience?*

The teacher

Ask students to discuss the following questions in pairs.

- *Miri tells Miss Latka that her drawings help her feel better. What does that tell you about Miri and about the uses of creativity?*
- *Is this something you've experienced?*
- *How does her drawing help improve her relationship with her teacher?*
- *Will the events in the story help improve Miri's relationships with her classmates? Why do you think that?*

The teacher

Ask questions to support students as they evaluate the text.

- *Were you surprised by the ending? Did it fit with what you expect in a comic?*
- *Dylan Horrocks's comics and graphic novels often have a theme or message for readers. What is the message in this story?*
- *Is this an effective way to convey that message?*

The students:

- reread the text, examining the images of Miri
- make connections between the images, the words, and their own school experiences to infer that some of her classmates seem pleased that the teacher is telling Miri off
- reread the whole text, focusing on Miri's changing emotions as shown in the illustrations
- make connections between the illustrations and their experiences of emotions to infer her feelings that range from anger to satisfaction (with her drawing), shock, anxiety, fear, concern, dread, contrition, amazement, admiration, loneliness, sadness, surprise, and happiness
- list the emotions they identified and share their connections with them.

The students:

- form hypotheses about the way people use creativity to express or change their feelings
- make connections between their hypotheses and their own experiences to confirm or question the impact creativity can have on feelings
- make connections between the text and their own experiences of student-teacher relationships to infer that Miri and Miss Latka will get along better now because they share a love of drawing monsters – and because Miss Latka now understands Miri's feelings
- integrate information in the text, the inferences they have made about Miri, and their own classroom experiences to form an opinion about whether Miri's relationships with her classmates will change.

The students:

- evaluate the story, using their knowledge and expectations of a graphic novel as they form and express opinions about the ending
- consider the events of the story and the inferences they made about Miri's changing emotions to infer that the message or theme is about valuing yourself despite the opinions of others
- discuss the theme with their partner and decide whether the graphic novel is an effective way to express that theme.

GIVE FEEDBACK

- *You told us about the time you were teased for humming in class and how your classmates eventually realised you made up great raps. By making a connection to your own experience, you were able to understand Miri's feelings.*
- *Going back to reread a section helped you understand what happened next in the story. Remember you can use this strategy whenever you lose track of what is happening in a story.*

METACOGNITION

- Do you use the same strategies to read a graphic novel as you use in regular stories? Tell me what is the same or different.
- Find a place where the images helped you make an inference. Explain how you did this.



Reading standard: by the end of year 6

The Literacy Learning Progressions

Assessment Resource Banks

Instructional focus – Writing

Health and Physical Education (Level 3 – Personal identity: Describe how their own feelings, beliefs, and actions, and those of other people, contribute to their personal sense of self-worth.)

English (Level 3 – Ideas: Select, form, and communicate ideas on a range of topics.)

Text excerpts from “Miri & Raru”



Examples of text characteristics

FORMAT

Writers choose a format that they feel comfortable using and that fits their idea. A writer who likes drawing might choose to use a comic or graphic novel format; other writers might choose poetry, plays, narratives, or any one of many other forms.

STORY ELEMENTS

Most narratives have a setting in time and place, one or more characters, and a plot that often includes a problem, a complication, and a resolution.

Teacher

(possible deliberate acts of teaching)

Support students as they select their ideas for writing a graphic text.

- Which ideas do you know a lot about or have strong feelings about?
- Study the way the writers crafted some graphic texts that you've enjoyed and choose one or two that you would like to use as a model for expressing your ideas.

Prompt students to plan their writing.

- Once you have your idea, think about the elements that you will use to tell your story. You can use a story map like this to help with planning.

My idea	
Setting (where and when)	
Characters	
Plot problem	
Plot complication	
Plot resolution	
Ending	



SHOWING FEELINGS

In a graphic text, the writer needs to draw facial expressions to show what characters are thinking or feeling. In a written text, writers use descriptions or imply feelings through characters' actions and speech.

Prompt students to consider the ways they will show feelings.

- Characters all have feelings, and it's your job to show or tell your readers what they are.
- How will you show the characters' emotions?
- If you're not sure how to express a character's feelings, try feeling it yourself and let your face and body show this. Ask a partner to describe what they imagine you are feeling. Now use what you felt and the words your partner used to write about or create the character.



SPEECH AND THOUGHT BUBBLES

In cartoons and graphic texts, dialogue and thoughts are shown by using two similar kinds of bubble. There is not a lot of room to write in the bubbles, so writers need to compress meaning into short utterances or thoughts.

Invite students to share their work.

- Tell us how you got around the problem of limited space for dialogue in a graphic text.
- How did you choose what the characters would say or think?
- What other methods did you use to let readers know what was happening?

Point out examples in “Miri & Raru”.

- Dylan Horrocks uses words for the sounds in his story, like the sound of Raru eating the kitchen table on page 4 and his burp on page 5.
- He also adds a connecting box on some frames to indicate a time sequence, such as the words “LATER ...” and “AND ...” at the top of page 3. He has also added an arrow to tell us what Miri is doing.
- Use these and examples from other graphic texts to guide you when you need to use words to help readers follow your graphic story.

GIVE FEEDBACK

- I noticed you referred back to your plan several times to check that your idea was coming along the way you wanted it to. Make sure that your plan includes the detail you need.
- Adding a text box here helped me understand that these scenes take place a day or two later.

METACOGNITION

- What were the challenges of telling a story with very few words? How did you overcome those challenges?
- How did you make decisions about the idea to write about? What helped you make these decisions?

Writing standard: by the end of year 6

The Literacy Learning Progressions