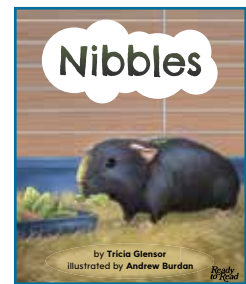


# Nibbles

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illustrated by Andrew Burdan

This text is levelled at Blue 1.



## Overview

Nibbles the classroom guinea pig sleeps in a cage by the teacher's desk. One day, it starts to rain heavily, and by the next morning, the school is flooded. But what about Nibbles? Will she be rescued? This story is based on an actual event, thankfully one with a happy ending.

*Nibbles* supports the development of a self-extending reading processing system. It requires students to “apply their reading processing strategies” and to “monitor their reading, searching for and using multiple sources of information in order to confirm or self-correct” (*The Literacy Learning Progressions*, page 10).

There is an audio version of the text as an MP3 file at [readytoread.tki.org.nz](http://readytoread.tki.org.nz)

## Cross-curriculum links

Health and physical education (level 1, community resources) – Identify and discuss obvious hazards in their home, school, and local environment and adopt simple safety practices.

## Related texts

Texts about coping with challenging events: *Is That an Earthquake?* (shared); *Going Camping* (Yellow 3); *Stay Where You Are* (Blue 2); *The Night the House Shook* (Blue 3)

## Text characteristics

The students are working towards the standard for after one year at school. Many characteristics of Green texts are also in texts at earlier levels but in simpler forms. These characteristics, as they relate to this text, are shown in the boxes with a solid outline. Other boxes indicate additional characteristics.

The familiar setting at school

Most content explicitly stated but also some implicit content that provides opportunities for students to form and test hypotheses (for example, about what will happen when the school is flooded) and make inferences (for example, about why the guinea pig is called Nibbles)

Illustrations that support and extend the meaning but may not exactly match the words

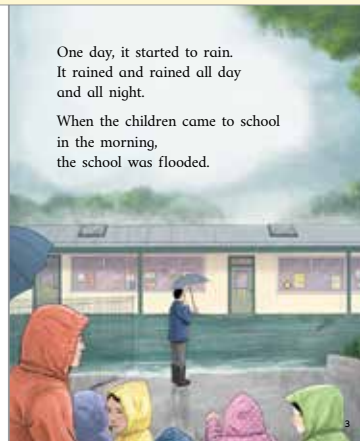
Sentences that run over more than one line but do not split phrases and several lines of text on every page

Nibbles the guinea pig lived in Room 2.  
The children loved to play with her.  
At night, Nibbles slept in a cage  
by Mrs Smith's desk.



2

One day, it started to rain.  
It rained and rained all day  
and all night.  
When the children came to school  
in the morning,  
the school was flooded.



3

Dialogue between easily identified speakers

Sentences that include indicators of time and place

A range of punctuation, including speech marks, commas, exclamation marks, and a question mark, to support phrasing and meaning

Many high-frequency words

Interest words and phrases that are likely to be in a reader's oral vocabulary and that are strongly supported by the context, the sentence structure, or the illustrations, (for example, “as fast as she could”, “cage”, “children”, “classroom”, “desk”, “filling up”, “flooded”, “guinea pig”, “jacket”, “hall”, “night”, “principal”, “school”, “slept”, “snuggled”, “Suddenly”, “swimming”, “tucked”)

Words that begin with a variety of digraphs and consonant blends (“children”, “classroom”, “close”, “flooded”, “play”, “principal”, “school”, “shouted”, “slept”, “Smith”, “started”, “swimming”, “snuggled”) and compound words (“classroom”, “everywhere”, “Inside”) that provide opportunities for students to build and apply their knowledge of letters, sounds, and words

Reading standard: After one year at school

The Literacy Learning Progressions

## Suggested reading purpose

(What can the students expect to find out or think about as a result of reading this text?)

We are reading this story to find out what happens to Nibbles when the school is flooded.

## Possible learning goals

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

The behaviours listed below link to *The Literacy Learning Progressions*. **Select from and adapt** them to set your specific learning goal. Be guided by your students’ particular needs and experiences – their culture, language, and identity (*Reading and Writing Standards for years 1–8*, Knowledge of the learner, page 6).

This text provides opportunities for students to:

- make connections between their own experiences and the information in the story in order to form and test hypotheses and make inferences
- identify and summarise the main events in the story
- make meaning by searching for and using multiple sources of information rather than one source
- monitor their reading and self-correct where necessary, for example, by rerunning text or checking further sources of information.

## Introducing the story

- Use your knowledge of your students to ensure that the introduction to the story activates their prior knowledge and supports them for a successful first reading. This story uses vocabulary and language structures (for example, “as fast as”, “all”, “by”, “classroom”, “could”, “her”, “inside”, “lived”, “in the morning”, “night”, “Oh, no”, “One day”, “there was”, “When”) that students are likely to be familiar with from previous reading and writing.
- If possible, a few days before the reading, arrange for a parent to bring a guinea pig to school. Otherwise, have videos or photographs available for any students with limited experiences of guinea pigs or small pets.

For English language learners, you could talk through the first few pages before the whole-group session to build confidence with vocabulary, including relevant words such as “nibble”, “pet”, and “flood” that are not actually in the story.

- Use the cover illustration to start a discussion about the students’ experiences of guinea pigs. Steer the discussion towards how it feels to hold a guinea pig (or other small pet) in order to support the word “snuggled” that they will meet on the last page.
- Read the title. The students are likely to infer that the title is also the name of the guinea pig. *Why do you think the guinea pig is called Nibbles?*
- On the title page, expect the students to infer from the children’s pictures and the sign on the cage that Nibbles is a classroom pet.
- Tell the students the story is based on something that really happened. Browse through the illustrations on pages 2–5. Discuss the problem on page 3, feeding in the word “flooded” if necessary. Have the students share their hypotheses (predictions) about what will happen. Some may realise that Nibbles is still in the classroom, but if not, you can use the page 5 illustration to prompt their thinking. *Why are they looking so worried? What have they forgotten?* This is a good place to stop and set the purpose for the reading.
- During the discussion, rephrase the students’ responses or use prompts to draw out (or feed in) new language structures and vocabulary. For example:
  - on page 2, to introduce the word “slept”, you could say: *I wonder where he slept at night*
  - on pages 3 and 4, use the word “principal” as you refer to the illustration.
- Use your knowledge of your students to decide whether to tell them the names of the characters or have them attempt the names for themselves when they read the story.

## Monitoring the reading

- Observe closely as the students read the story quietly to themselves. Note their confidence and perseverance with challenges and any instances of self-monitoring, cross-checking, and self-correction. Provide support to individual students as necessary. For example:
  - on page 2, you may need to provide reassurance about the irregular verb “slept”
  - on pages 2 or 3, if a student stops reading at the end of a line, assuming that the sentence has ended, remind them to read on to the full stop
  - on page 5, to support “Suddenly”, ask: *What’s a word we often see in stories when something happens quickly?*

- If a student makes an error without noticing, wait until the end of the sentence or the page before intervening, unless they stop reading. Waiting gives them the opportunity to notice the error and fix it. Use appropriate prompts to draw their attention to the error. For example:

Text in book	Student reads	Teacher prompt
The children loved to hold her.	The <b>class</b> loved to hold her.	Direct the student to check visual information. <i>Have another look at that word (“children”).</i>
In the hall, Nibbles snuggled down with the children.	In the hall, Nibbles <b>stayed</b> down with the children.	Prompt the student to identify their error: <i>One of those words is wrong. Have a closer look.</i>
... and Nibbles was swimming as fast as she could.	... and Nibbles was swimming as ... <b>was</b> swimming <b>fast and</b> ... The student has several attempts but seems puzzled by the syntax.	Prompt the student to read on to the end of the sentence.

- Other prompts that you could use include: *Are you sure?; Were you right?; Does that sound right and look right to you?; You said \_\_\_\_, does that make sense?; Try that again; If the word was \_\_\_\_, what letters would you expect to see?*
- Remember to base these types of prompts on what you know about the students’ prior knowledge. For example, asking an English language learner if a word or sentence sounds right may not be useful if they are not familiar enough with English phonemes, vocabulary, or syntax to know the answer. In this case, an explanation and further examples would be more effective.
- Reinforce the students’ attempts to problem-solve, whether they are successful or not, for example: *You did some good thinking. I noticed you read “class” and then you fixed it. How did you know this word was “cage”?*
- For further suggestions about ways to support students to self-monitor (to cross-check, confirm, and self-correct), see *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 1–4*, page 130.

## Discussing the story after the first reading

- Encourage the students to share their responses to the ending. *Is this what you thought would happen? How would you have felt if you were one of the children?*
- Read and discuss the information on the inside back cover.
- Remind the students of their purpose for reading. Ask the students to summarise (retell) the events in the story.
- Encourage them to think critically: *Why didn’t the children go with Mrs Smith when she went back into the classroom? Why do you think Mrs Smith tucked Nibbles inside her jacket?*
- Have the students reread the story, stopping to discuss points of interest. You can revisit the story over several sessions, exploring such features as:
  - the indicators of time and place (words and phrases that tell the reader when and where things happened)
  - what the principal did to keep the students safe
  - the clues to the characters’ feelings: *What helped you think about how the characters were feeling?* Prompt the students to make connections to their own experiences as well as finding evidence in the text and illustrations. Have them read the dialogue in a way that reflects their thinking
  - the descriptive language, (for example “rained all day and all night”, “flooded”, “Suddenly”, “swimming as fast as she could”, “tucked the wet little guinea pig”, “snuggled down”). *How does this help you build a picture of what was happening?*
  - the use of the pronouns (“her” and “she”) to show that Nibbles is female
  - the compound words.

## After reading: practice and reinforcement

After-reading tasks should arise from monitoring the students' needs during the lesson and should provide purposeful practice and reinforcement. Where possible, make links to other reading texts, including texts generated from language experience and shared writing, to the wider literacy programme (oral language, writing, handwriting, alphabet and word games and activities), and to other curriculum areas.

**Select from and adapt** these suggestions, according to the needs of your students.

- Ask the students to reread the story to a partner. Listen in, noting their ability to self-monitor and to use punctuation to support phrasing and expression. You could also use this time to take a quick running record with a student to provide more information on an aspect you have noticed.
- The students can build up their comprehension and fluency by rereading the story while listening to the audio version. Audio versions also provide English language learners with good models of pronunciation, intonation, and expression.
- Provide opportunities to reread this story and others with similar themes (see Related texts).
- Use the Internet to find out more about the actual incident at Tawa School in 2015. Discuss your own school's safety plan for flooding and what you and the students would do to keep yourselves (and any classroom pets) safe. The students could draw, write, and share their own safety plans. Alternatively, they could write about any experiences they have of heavy rain or flooding.
- Ask the students to draw and write about Nibbles at three different times in the story: before the flood, while she is in danger, and after she was rescued. You could provide questions (What happened first? What happened next?) and/or sentence starters (Nibbles lived ..., Then ..., After Nibbles was rescued ...) for extra support.
- Focus on the descriptive language. Discuss how the words or phrases help build a picture of what is happening or how the characters are feeling. For example: *On page 6, what tells you that Nibbles is in big trouble?* Encourage the students to make connections to their wider reading, for example, the phrase "as fast as you can" in *The Gingerbread Man* and in the Ready to Read poem card "Pat a Cake", and the use of "Suddenly" in other stories. Start a chart of favourite descriptive words and phrases that the students can add to and refer to when they are writing.
- Build vocabulary by creating a word web about guinea pigs.
- Write the compound words "classroom", "everywhere", and "inside" on the screen or whiteboard and ask the students to identify the two smaller words within each example. Encourage them to build other compound words using "room", "side", and "where". Note there are several examples of compound words using "room" in *Noisy House* (Blue 1).
- Have word games available that encourage students to sort words by common characteristics, such as initial blends, initial digraphs, or inflected endings ("ed" and "ing"). As well as words from this story, include words they have met in their previous reading and writing.