# Exploring character Stage 2

## Overview

### Purpose

### This literacy teaching strategy supports teaching and learning for Stage 2 students across all key learning areas. It targets specific literacy skills and suggests a learning sequence to build skill development. Teachers can select individual tasks, or a sequence, and embed into their teaching and learning program according to their students’ needs. While exemplar texts are provided throughout this resource, it is recommended that teachers select texts which are relevant to their students and curriculum.

### Learning intention

Students will learn to identify character traits as well as infer traits through actions and behaviours.

### Syllabus outcomes

The following teaching and learning strategies will assist in covering elements of the following outcomes:

* EN2-RECOM-01: reads and comprehends texts for wide purposes using knowledge of text structures and language, and by monitoring comprehension
* EN2-UARL-01: identifies and describes how ideas are represented in literature and strategically uses similar representations when creating texts

NSW English K-10 Syllabus (2022)

### Success criteria

The following Year 3 NAPLAN item descriptors may guide teachers to develop success criteria for student learning:

* identify a character trait from a narrative
* identifies how a character is portrayed in a text
* infers the reason for a character’s actions in a narrative
* infers the reason for a character’s actions in a narrative extract
* infers the reason for a character’s actions from vocabulary in a narrative
* identifies the main character in a text
* identifies relationship between characters
* interprets a character’s feelings in a narrative
* interprets a character’s feelings at the end of a narrative
* identify the reason for a character’s feelings in a narrative
* identify a character’s motivations in a narrative
* identify a character’s perspective in a narrative
* infers a character’s perspective from dialogue.

### National Literacy Learning Progression guide

#### Understanding Texts (UnT6-UnT9)

Key: C=comprehension P=process V=vocabulary

##### UnT6

* scans texts to locate specific information in a predictable print text (C)
* draws inferences and explains using background knowledge or text features (e.g. infers character’s feelings from actions) (C)
* identifies parts of text used to answer literal and inferential questions (P)
* uses morphological knowledge to explain words (e.g. help (e.g. base) + less (e.g. suffix) = helpless) (V)

##### UnT7

* reads and views predictable texts (see *Text complexity*) (C)
* draws inferences and identifies supporting evidence in the text (C)
* interprets unfamiliar words using grammatical knowledge, morphological knowledge and etymological knowledge (V)

##### UnT8

* reads and views some moderately complex texts (see *Text complexity*) (C)
* draws inferences and verifies using text evidence (C)
* understands precise meaning of words with similar connotations (e.g. generous, kind-hearted, charitable) (V)

##### UnT9

* draws inferences, synthesising clues and evidence across a text (C)
* uses processes such as predicting, confirming predictions, monitoring, and connecting relevant elements of the text to build or repair meaning (P)

[National Literacy Learning Progression](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/literacy-and-numeracy/resources-for-schools/learning-progressions)

## Evidence base

* Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (2017). [Effective reading instruction in the early years of school](https://education.nsw.gov.au/about-us/educational-data/cese/publications/literature-reviews/effective-reading-instruction-in-the-early-years-of-school), literature review.
* Konza, D. (2014). Teaching Reading: Why the “Fab Five” should be the “Big Six”. Australian Journal of Teacher Education, 39(12).
* Oakhill, J., Cain, K. & Elbro, C. (2015). Understanding and teaching reading comprehension: A handbook. Routledge.
* Quigley, A. (2020). Closing the reading gap. Routledge.
* Quigley, A (2018). Closing the vocabulary gap. Routledge.
* Scarborough, H.S. (2001). Connecting early language and literacy to later reading (dis)abilities: Evidence, theory and practice. In S. Neuman & D. Dickson (Eds.), Handbook for research in early literacy (pp. 97-110). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

**Alignment to system priorities and/or needs:** [Five priorities for Literacy and Numeracy](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/literacy-and-numeracy/priorities), [Plan for Public Education](https://education.nsw.gov.au/about-us/strategies-and-reports/plan-for-nsw-public-education?utm_source=sfmc&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=20231023_MuratDizdar_DivisionChanges_EdSupportStaff&utm_term=Our+Plan+for+NSW+Public+Education&utm_id=139002&sfmc_id=4252521&sfmc_datasourcename=AllDoENonSchoolStaff), [School Excellence Policy (nsw.gov.au)](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/school-excellence-and-accountability/school-excellence).

**Alignment to School Excellence Framework:** Learning domain: Curriculum, Teaching domain: Effective classroom practice and Professional standards

**Consulted with:** Strategic Delivery, Teaching Quality and Impact

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**Feedback:** Complete the [online form](https://forms.office.com/r/P5kVmTJWPE) to provide any feedback

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### Teaching strategies

| Task | Appendices |
| --- | --- |
| [Connecting actions with traits](#_Connecting_actions_with) | [Appendix 1 - Trait bank](#_Appendix_1)  [Appendix 2 - Trait bank: visual support](#_Trait_bank:_visual) |
| [Inferring traits](#_Inferring_traits) | [Appendix 3 - Trait bank: actions and behaviours](#_Trait_bank:_actions) |
| [Identifying characters](#_Identifying_characters) |  |
| [Making inferences about characters](#_Making_inferences_about) | [Appendix 4 - Nim’s Island extract](#_Nim’s_Island_extract)  [Appendix 5 - Inference table](#_Inference_table) |

### Background information

The following information from the English Textual Concepts website can further support understanding of point of view and perspective.

Further information on English textual concepts can be found on the [curriculum textual concepts web page.](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/english/textual-concepts)

#### Character

Character is traditionally viewed as a description of a fictional person. As a construct, it is made up of verbal or visual statements about what that fictional person does, says and thinks and what other fictional characters and the author of the text say about him or her. The reader, listener or viewer fleshes out these statements to imagine a person-like character, sufficiently individualised and coherent to establish the sense of an identity. In this way, representation of a ‘real’ person invites personal identification and judgements about the character’s morality and value to their society. This kind of analysis can contribute to shaping one’s own sense of a moral and ethical self and so becoming a way of enculturation.

Characters may also be created and/ or read as representations of ideas, of groups of people or of types that serve a function in a narrative genre. Questions of characterisation then focus on the ways a character is constructed both by the responder and the composer and its function in the text.

Character is an important concept in narrative as a driver of the action, a function in the plot, a way of engaging or positioning a reader or as a way of representing its thematic concerns. The way character is read is an indication of particular approaches to texts, be it through personal engagement or critical response.

### Where to next?

* Exploring perspective
* Audience and purpose
* Inference

## Overview of teaching strategies

## Purpose

These literacy teaching strategies support teaching and learning from Stage 2 to Stage 5. They are linked to NAPLAN task descriptors, syllabus outcomes and literacy and numeracy learning progressions.

These teaching strategies target specific literacy and numeracy skills and suggest a learning sequence to build skill development. Teachers can select individual tasks or a sequence to suit their students.

### Access points

The resources can be accessed from:

* NAPLAN App in Scout using the teaching strategy links from NAPLAN items
* NSW Department of Education literacy and numeracy [website.](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/literacy-and-numeracy/teaching-and-learning-resources/literacy/teaching-strategies)

What works best

Explicit teaching practices involve teachers clearly explaining to students why they are learning something, how it connects to what they already know, what they are expected to do, how to do it and what it looks like when they have succeeded. Students are given opportunities and time to check their understanding, ask questions and receive clear, effective feedback.

This resource reflects the latest evidence base and can be used by teachers as they plan for explicit teaching.

Teachers can use classroom observations and other assessment information to make decisions about when and how they use this resource as they design teaching and learning sequences to meet the learning needs of their students.

Further support with [What works best](https://education.nsw.gov.au/about-us/educational-data/cese/publications/research-reports/what-works-best-2020-update) is available.

Differentiation

When using these resources in the classroom, it is important for teachers to consider the needs of all students, including [Aboriginal](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/aec) and EAL/D learners.

EAL/D learners will require explicit English language support and scaffolding, informed by the [EAL/D enhanced teaching and learning cycle](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/literacy-and-numeracy/resources-for-schools/eald/enhanced-teaching-and-learning-cycle) and the student’s phase on the [EAL/D Learning Progression](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/multicultural-education/english-as-an-additional-language-or-dialect/planning-eald-support/english-language-proficiency). Teachers can access information about [supporting EAL/D learners](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/multicultural-education/english-as-an-additional-language-or-dialect) and [literacy and numeracy support](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/literacy-and-numeracy/resources-for-schools/eald) specific to EAL/D learners.

Learning adjustments enable students with disability and additional learning and support needs to access syllabus outcomes and content on the same basis as their peers. Teachers can use a [range of adjustments](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/disability-learning-and-support/personalised-support-for-learning/adjustments-to-teaching-and-learning) to ensure a personalised approach to student learning.

[Assessing and identifying high potential and gifted learners](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/high-potential-and-gifted-education/supporting-educators/assess-and-identify#Assessment1) will help teachers decide which students may benefit from extension and additional challenge. [Effective strategies and contributors to achievement](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/high-potential-and-gifted-education/supporting-educators/evaluate) for high potential and gifted learners helps teachers to identify and target areas for growth and improvement. A [differentiation adjustment tool](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/high-potential-and-gifted-education/supporting-educators/implement/differentiation-adjustment-strategies) can be found on the High potential and gifted education website.

### Using tasks across learning areas

This resource may be used across learning areas where it supports teaching and learning aligned with syllabus outcomes.

Literacy and numeracy are embedded throughout all syllabus documents as general capabilities. As the English and mathematics learning areas have a particular role in developing literacy and numeracy, NSW English and Mathematics syllabus outcomes aligned to literacy and numeracy skills have been identified.

### Text selection

Example texts are used throughout this resource. Teachers can adjust activities to use texts which are linked to their unit of learning.

Further support with text selection can be found within the [National Literacy Learning Progression](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/literacy-and-numeracy/resources-for-schools/learning-progressions) Text Complexity appendix.

The [NESA website](https://curriculum.nsw.edu.au/learning-areas/english/english-k-10-2022/overview) has additional information on text requirements within the NSW English syllabus.

## Teaching strategies

### Connecting actions with traits

1. Students are asked to take some time to think about a member of their family or community they have spent time with as they will be learning how to describe their traits.
2. Discuss how we use adjectives to describe people; these are words that describe a noun and add more detail so that a reader can get a better image of what the character looks like, sounds like, thinks like and so on.
3. Students brainstorm adjectives to describe the member of their family or community that they know, such as tall, hilarious, curious, or clumsy, using whiteboards, sticky notes, workbooks.
4. Ask students to notice if some of these traits we know from looking at the person and if others we only know from our experience of interacting with them. The brainstorm might be categorised into ‘observable’ or ‘not observable’ or **inferred***.*
5. Explain that the traits we can’t actually see, such as being clumsy, are not observable, so the author has to give the reader clues that the character is clumsy. Brainstorm ways an author can give clues that a character is clumsy (dropping items, tripping over their own feet, walking into objects). Explain that traits are often shown through actions.
6. Students use inferred traits ([Appendix 1 - Trait bank](#_Appendix_1)) and use dramatic elements to act out what this might look like. Students write down the trait on a whiteboard then ‘chin it’ (place under chin) to the classroom to see similar threads.

Teacher may use [Appendix 2 - Trait bank: visual support](#_Trait_bank:_visual) to differentiate learning.

1. Have students colour code lists into observable traits and traits they infer because they know the person.

#### Inferring traits

1. Teacher models developing an action to infer a trait:

| Trait | Action |
| --- | --- |
| curious | peer into a window which says, “Do not look!” |
| cheeky | making faces behind the teacher’s back |

1. Jigsaw activity: Using a cut-up collection of actions and behaviours ([Appendix 3 - Trait bank: actions and behaviours](#_Trait_bank:_actions)) and the inferred traits ([Appendix 1 - Trait bank](#_Appendix_1)) have students match the traits based on actions.

To challenge students, students choose 2-3 traits and decide on an action for a character, for example, bored, curious, intelligent – the character might enter a cave which has been closed for centuries.

#### Identifying characters

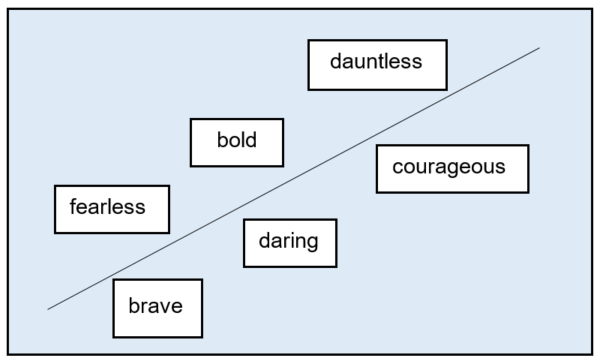
1. Teacher calls out the name of well-known picture books, novels, movies. Students respond with the main character’s name. Discuss where there might be some differences and if it is possible to have more than one main character. Some example texts might be: The Lion the Witch and The Wardrobe, The Hobbit, Little Red Riding Hood, Harry Potter series.
2. Place a range of texts on display for students to read. Students determine who the main character is on a sticky note. Discuss any differences between main character choices. The class collectively determines a checklist for determining a main character (features prominently in the story, events revolve around this character, character solves the complication, may be first-person narrative). Review texts a second time with criteria to ensure the class is satisfied with the decisions.

To increase [abstraction](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/high-potential-and-gifted-education/supporting-educators/implement/differentiation-adjustment-strategies), teacher may prompt student justification of reasoning by asking ‘What makes you say that?’

1. Teacher reads aloud a familiar text. Students record questions and teacher prompts students’ understanding of the relationships: Who is the main character? How do you know? What relationship does X have with Y? Discuss the importance of authors establishing relationships between characters by introducing them thoughtfully and chronologically.
2. Teacher reads or views a quality text which links to a current unit of learning. Teacher models creating a visual representation of the relationships between the characters. Students create a story map, or a graphic organiser of their choice, to show the relationship between characters using arrows, captions and colour coding. Teacher prompts students with questions such as who is X? How do they know Y? What relationship does X have with Z?
3. Readers’ Theatre: three students are given a well-known character to role play. The class uses questioning to determine who the character is, based on who they know and interact with in the story.

#### Making inferences about characters

1. Explain to students that you are going to read a short extract from a novel, ‘Nim's Island’ (refer to [Appendix 4 - Nim’s Island extract](#_Nim’s_Island_extract)). The text is about a young girl alone on a tropical island. After reading the text, teacher facilitates a discussion with students and brainstorms vocabulary that would describe the character Nim.
2. To support students’ vocabulary development of character traits, students complete a ‘word cline’. [Word clines](https://app.education.nsw.gov.au/digital-learning-selector/LearningActivity/Card/566) are used as a way of sorting words. It helps students to build, refine and use new vocabulary. The words that are used have similar meanings and are arranged by the class in graduating intensity according to the word that is being used, and the scale it is being used on. The teacher can use the words that were provided by students in the previous brainstorm or may choose to use the words in the example provided below.



The following process is adapted from Quigley, A. Closing the vocabulary gap (2018) and follows the explanation of the SEEC process to explicitly teach vocabulary (refer to [Stage 2 reading - vocabulary](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/literacy-and-numeracy/teaching-and-learning-resources/literacy/teaching-strategies/stage-2/reading/stage-2-vocabulary) for more information).

1. Teacher summarises that the character Nim could be described as ‘dauntless’.
2. Say the word again to students and draw attention to the syllables and phonemes.
3. Teacher writes the word and draws students' attention to the common prefixes and root words. Notice common graphemes, phonemes, suffix and root word.
4. When introducing new words, teachers provide a student-friendly definition and multiple meaningful examples. For example, a dauntless person is [brave](https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/brave) and [confident](https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/confident) and not easily [frightened](https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/frighten) (Collins dictionary). A knight that decides to battle a dragon in its own lair would been seen to be dauntless.
5. Ask for student examples and clarify multiple meanings or any misconceptions.
6. Students explore the word through a [Think-Pair-Share](https://app.education.nsw.gov.au/digital-learning-selector/LearningActivity/Card/645?clearCache=65675106-1669-57fa-9f58-1f00c02d28a7) of a time when they were ‘dauntless’.
7. Discuss inference: inference is the process of drawing conclusions using evidence in texts. We use clues and background knowledge to make an inference. Discuss the key terms: process, drawing conclusions and evidence (refer to [Stage 2 reading – Inference](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/literacy-and-numeracy/teaching-and-learning-resources/literacy/teaching-strategies/stage-2/reading/stage-2-inference) for more information).
8. Teacher models a ‘think aloud’ strategy to find evidence in the text to support the description of Nim being ‘dauntless’. A ‘think aloud’ process is where a teacher articulates their thought process when reading and responding to a text. A ‘think aloud’ gives a glimpse into the thoughts and processes of a skillful reader. Teacher records the selected words and phrases on a chart and explains the background knowledge that they bring to the text and then demonstrates how they can draw conclusions of Nim based on this process (refer to [Appendix 5 - Inference table](#_Inference_table)).
9. Students create 3-4 sentences to explain how Nim’s character is ‘dauntless’. They are encouraged to use as many words and phrases from the chart as they can. Students share with a partner and explain why they selected those words or phrases.

## Appendix 1

### Trait bank

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| curious | dreamer |
| upset | doubtful |
| carefree | nervous |
| absent-minded | quick |
| brave | neat |
| cheerful | sorry |
| spiritual | cheeky |

## Appendix 2

### Trait bank: visual support

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| curiousa photo of a squirrel in a tree | dreamer  a photo of a person in a grey top  looking upwards |
| upset  a photo of a man covering face with both hands while sitting on bench | doubtful  an adult holding their chin while looking at a laptop computer |
| carefree  an adult with their arms outstretched in front of scissor gate | quick  a photo of a leopard on green field |
| brave  an aerial photo of the legs and feet of a person standing on wooden bridge over water with planks missing | neat  a photo of a clothes rack in a room. the rack has a grey dress on a coat hanger and white towel is draped over the rail. Shoes, a hat and folded shirts is neatly placed on the lower shelves on the rack |
| cheerful  a photo of a woman holding a smiley face balloon over her face with one hand and a bunch of other balloons in the other hand | sorry  a photo of a pug lying on floor with a forlorn look on its face |

Photos from [unsplash.com](https://unsplash.com/)

## Appendix 3

### Trait bank: actions and behaviours

Students use these cards to match actions and behaviours with inferred traits from Appendix 1. Print the two pages on separate colours.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Peering into a window which says, “Do not look!” | Staring out the window and creating stories with the shapes of the clouds. |
| Hiding face and crying into a pillow. | Wrinkled face and feeling uneasy about the idea. “I am not sure that will work…” |
| Running through fields, wind in hair and no shoes. | Having butterflies in the tummy, a dry mouth and racing heart. |
| Putting the milk in the cupboard and a fork in the fridge. | Fingers racing and flipping through the pile of work on the desk. |
| Standing tall, taking a deep breath and stepping onto the boat. | Organising all desks to line up evenly with not a scrap of rubbish to be seen. |
| Greeting people with a sunny smile and happy heart. | Writing a letter with teardrops falling on the page. |
| Walking with Elders and connecting with land and the stories of the Dreaming. | Making faces behind the teacher’s back. |

## Appendix 4

### Nim’s Island extract

Orr, W. (2008). Nim's Island. Allen & Unwin Children’s.

In a palm tree, on an island, in the middle of the wide blue sea, was a girl.

Nim's hair was wild, her eyes were bright, and around her neck she wore three cords. One was for a spyglass, one for a whorly, whistling shell, and one for a fat red pocketknife in a sheath.

With the spyglass at her eye, she watched her father's boat. It sailed out through the reef to the deeper dark ocean, and Jack turned to wave and Nim waved back, though she knew he couldn't see.

Then the white sails caught the wind and blew him out of sight, and Nim was alone. For three days and three nights, whatever happened or needed doing, Nim would do it.

"And what we need first," said Nim, "is breakfast!" So she threw four ripe coconuts thump! into the sand and climbed down after them.

Then she whistled her shell, two long, shrill notes that carried far out to the reef, where the sea lions were fishing. Selkie popped her head above the water. She had a fish in her mouth, but she swallowed it fast and dived toward the beach.

And from a rock by the hut, Fred came scuttling. Fred was an iguana, spiky as a dragon, with a cheerful snub nose. He twined round Nim's feet in a prickly hug.

"Are you saying good morning," Nim demanded, "or just begging for breakfast?"

Fred stared at the coconuts. He was a very honest iguana.

Coconuts are tricky to open, but Nim was an expert. With a rock and a spike, she punched a hole and drank the juice, cracked the shell and pried out the flesh. Fred snatched his piece and gulped it down.

Marine iguanas don't eat coconut, but no one had ever told Fred.

Now Selkie was flopping up the beach to greet them. "We'll come in, too!" Nim shouted and dived off the rocks.

Selkie twisted and shot up underneath, gliding Nim through the waves: thumping over, ducking under. Nim clung tight, till she was half sea lion and half girl, and all of her was part ocean.

Then Selkie and Fred went to sunbake on the rock and Nim went back to the hut. She poured a mug of water from her favourite blue bottle, brushed her teeth above a clump of grass that needed the spit, and started her chores. There were lots today, because she was doing some of Jack's as well as her own.

## Appendix 5

### Inference table

Teacher uses this chart to record the ‘think aloud strategy’ for making inferences about characters.

| What the text says… | My background knowledge… | What we can infer… |
| --- | --- | --- |
| In a palm tree, on an island, in the middle of the wide blue sea, was a girl. | The word ‘in’ tells me that the girl must have climbed the tree. I know palm trees are very tall trees with no branches so she must have climbed straight up using her hands and feet to hold onto the trunk. | She is not afraid of heights. She is brave to climb a tree with no low-lying branches. |
|  |  |  |