

# Literary devices

## Stage 4

### Overview

#### Learning intention

Students will learn to interpret and analyse a range of literary devices, including metaphor and figurative language, in varying texts.

#### Syllabus outcomes

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

- EN4-1A: responds to and composes texts for understanding, interpretation, critical analysis, imaginative expression and pleasure
- EN4-2A: effectively uses a widening range of processes, skills, strategies and knowledge for responding to and composing texts in different media and technologies
- EN4-3B: uses and describes language forms, features and structures of texts appropriate to a range of purposes, audiences and contexts

[NSW English Syllabus K-10](#)

#### Success criteria

The following Year 7 NAPLAN item descriptors may guide teachers to co-construct success criteria for student learning.

- interprets the meaning of a metaphor in a text
- interprets the meaning of figurative language in a text
- interprets the meaning of figurative language in an information text
- interprets the meaning of literary language in a narrative extract
- analyses the effect of a literary device in a narrative
- analyses the effect of a metaphor in a narrative
- analyses the use of a literary device in a text

# National Literacy Learning Progression guide

## Understanding Texts (UnT9-UnT11)

Key: C=comprehension P=process V=vocabulary

### UnT9

- analyses the use of language appropriate to different types of texts (e.g. compare the use of pun in imaginative and persuasive texts) (C)
- identifies language used to create tone or atmosphere (V)
- analyses language and visual features in texts using metalanguage (e.g. cohesion, interpretation, figurative) (V)

### UnT10

- applies and articulates criteria to evaluate the language structures and features for relevance to purpose and audience (C)

### UnT11

- evaluates the use of devices such as analogy, irony, rhetoric and satire and how they contribute to an author's individual style (C)
- analyses the cumulative impact of use of language features and vocabulary across texts (C)
- interprets symbolism in texts, providing evidence to justify interpretation (C)
- interprets complex, formal and impersonal language in academic texts (V)

[National Literacy Learning Progression](#)

## Evidence base

- Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (2017). [Effective reading instruction in the early years of school](#), literature review.
- Oakhill, J., Cain, K. & Elbro, C. (2015). Understanding and teaching reading comprehension: A handbook. Routledge.
- Quigley, A. (2020). Closing the reading 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](#), [NSW Department of Education Strategic Plan](#), [School Excellence Policy \(nsw.gov.au\)](#).

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

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**Feedback:** Complete the [online form](#) to provide any feedback

# Teaching strategies

Task	Appendices
<a href="#">Identify and define figurative language</a>	<a href="#">Appendix 1 - Literary devices match-up posters and card sort</a> <a href="#">Appendix 2 – Literary devices match-up</a>
<a href="#">Identifying figurative language in text</a>	<a href="#">Appendix 3 – ‘Bridge to Terabithia’ extract</a> <a href="#">Appendix 4 – Literary Devices – analysing texts</a> <a href="#">Appendix 5 – Information text</a> <a href="#">Appendix 6a – Figurative language in an information text– match and sort</a> <a href="#">Appendix 6b – Figurative language in an information text – match and sort (teacher’s copy)</a>
<a href="#">Interpret and analyse literary devices in poetry</a>	<a href="#">Appendix 7 ‘Fishing from the rocks’</a> <a href="#">Appendix 8 – Poem analysis table</a>
<a href="#">Interpret and analyse literacy devices in information texts</a>	<a href="#">Appendix 9a – Literary devices – information text</a> <a href="#">Appendix 9b – Literary Devices – annotated information text</a> <a href="#">Appendix 9c- Literary devices – lexical chains annotated text</a>
<a href="#">Analyse irony and satire in images</a>	<a href="#">Appendix 10 – Frayer model graphic organiser</a> <a href="#">Appendix 11 - Michael Leunig cartoon</a>
<a href="#">Analyse personification in prose fiction</a>	<a href="#">Appendix 12 - Analysing personification in prose fiction ‘The Book Thief’</a>
<a href="#">Analyse personification in informative texts</a>	<a href="#">Appendix 13a – Personification in an informative text</a> <a href="#">Appendix 13b – Personification in an informative text - annotated</a> <a href="#">Appendix 10 – Frayer model graphic organiser</a> <a href="#">Appendix 14- Frayer model graphic organiser - personification in informative texts</a>

# Background information

## Literary devices

Literary devices are used in texts to connect with the reader and convey meaning. Accomplished readers are able to recognise and interpret the use of various language devices that composers use for effect. Explain to students that composers use different language devices for particular purposes. In a persuasive text, composers might use persuasive devices such as rhetorical questions, repetition, metaphors, hyperbole and modality to persuade readers to agree with a particular point of view. In narrative texts, composers might use literary devices such as personification, similes, alliteration, onomatopoeia and imagery to engage the reader and allow them to visualise the setting and characters.

## Personification

Personification is a type of metaphor where something non-human is described as if it were human or had human characteristics.

## Irony

A clash between what the words say and what they mean. Irony has three forms:

- rhetorical irony – saying something contrary to what is meant, for example 'I had a great time' (I was bored)
- dramatic irony – stating or doing something unaware of its contrast with the real situation, for example where the reader or watcher knows disaster is about to befall a character who says, 'I've never been happier'
- situational irony - where events are opposite to expectations, for example, building a fence to keep a dog contained-then the dog jumping over it.

## Satire

The use of one or more of exaggeration, humour, parody, irony, sarcasm or ridicule to expose, denounce and deride folly or vice in human nature and institutions. The emphatic feature of these language devices draws attention to what is being criticised.

Reference: English K-10 Syllabus © NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) for and on behalf of the Crown in right of the State of New South Wales, 2012.

## Where to next?

- Vocabulary in context
- Inference
- Literal comprehension

# 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](#).

## 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](#) is available.

## Differentiation

When using these resources in the classroom, it is important for teachers to consider the needs of all students, including [Aboriginal](#) 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](#) and the student's phase on the [EAL/D Learning Progression](#).

Teachers can access information about [supporting EAL/D learners](#) and [literacy and numeracy support](#) 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](#) to ensure a personalised approach to student learning.

[Assessing and identifying high potential and gifted learners](#) will help teachers decide which students may benefit from extension and additional challenge. [Effective strategies and contributors to achievement](#) for high potential and gifted learners helps teachers to identify and target areas for growth and improvement. A [differentiation adjustment tool](#) 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](#) Text Complexity appendix.

The [NESA website](#) has additional information on text requirements within the NSW English syllabus.

# Teaching strategies

## Identify and define figurative language

1. Vocabulary bank: Students are asked to visualise a familiar experience. For example, sitting on the beach, walking in the bush, the feeling before a storm hits. Students brainstorm words and phrases that describe the event. Teacher displays this vocabulary and introduces more sophisticated synonyms which build on the word map, drawing connections between terms and defining words that are uncommon or unknown. This is a good opportunity to introduce more sophisticated, Tier 2 vocabulary. For example, if brainstorming 'beach', students may offer words such as water, ocean, sharks, sand, deep blue. The teacher may introduce terms such as driftwood, reflection, coarse golden sand, horizon, tide, ebb and flow.
2. *Mind map*: Students brainstorm with teacher to create a mind map where students contribute the different language devices that they know. As more information is reviewed, this can be added to the mind map.
3. Enlarge 'Language devices match-up' posters ([Appendix 1 - Literary devices match-up posters and card sort](#)) and display around classroom. Each poster contains a definition for a language device. Read the definition and see if students can identify the language device that is defined on each poster (poster 1 - metaphor, poster 2 - onomatopoeia, poster 3 - personification, poster 4 - hyperbole, poster 5 – simile). Write the language device on the posters.
4. Distribute the 'Literary devices match-up' cards ([Appendix 2 – Literary devices match-up](#)). Students read the examples on their cards and determine the language device. Students walk around the room and use Blu Tack or a similar product to stick their cards on the appropriate poster. *Additional task*: students create their own examples and add these by writing directly onto the poster.
5. Students engage in rigorous discussion to agree or disagree with placement, using accountable talk: "I can see why you might place this here, but I would argue it is more appropriate to be placed here because..."

## Identifying and interpreting figurative language in text

1. Students identify targeted figurative language in a range of texts currently linked to unit of learning. Students predict the language they may expect to read in each text. For example, a poem, an information report, a narrative and a persuasive text. Teachers display figurative language posters in the classroom and students add the literary devices they find with the name of the text, example and definition. This can be completed for any text explored in class.
2. Students read excerpt from 'Bridge to Terabithia' ([Appendix 3 – 'Bridge to Terabithia' extract](#)). Students discuss the highlighted examples with a partner, identifying the literary device, explaining its use, why the composer used it in this excerpt and its effect on the reader ([Appendix 4 – Literary Devices – analysing texts.](#))
3. Discussion: using an information text relevant to a current unit of learning, or refer to [Appendix 5: Information text](#), discuss with the class that writers of information texts also use figurative language



to engage their audience and communicate their message. For example, scientists often use metaphors to explain concepts like the greenhouse effect. Similes are often used to relate everyday events to complex ideas. Recap/discuss the types of literary devices students may expect to find in an information text, for example, metaphor, repetition and modality. Read the heading, sub-headings and images/graphics to explain/discuss the purpose and audience for the chosen text. (If using Appendix 5 explain that the Curious Kids articles on 'The Conversation' website are written by experts in their field, responding to questions from children on a wide variety of topics.) Read the opening excerpt from the text, using the 'think aloud' strategy to pause, identify and analyse the effect of any literary devices and their impact on the reader. Read through the remainder of the text. Students could complete a match and sort linking examples from the text to their meaning (refer to [Appendix 6a – Figurative language in an information text– match and sort](#)) or record their findings on a [graphic organiser](#).

*Differentiation:* Read through the remainder of the text then allocate sections of the text to the class. Students then re-read their allocated extract in pairs and label any figurative language they notice, discussing what they think is the purpose of the device. (For example, Does it support an idea? Extend meaning for an idea? Does it create an image?) Display the extract on the board and students underline and label the different *literary devices in their excerpt and explain their purpose to the class*.

For [higher order thinking](#), lead a class discussion on the following question. How does the writer's use of literary devices allow an audience to understand complex scientific ideas?

4. [Hot seat:](#) for [challenge](#), issue students with a range of texts relevant to a current unit of learning. (the texts should feature figurative language.) Students take turns in the hot seat, adopting the persona of a text's writer. The class asks questions about how and why figurative language were used to explain key ideas.

## Interpret and analyse literary devices in poetry

1. Students independently read a poem linked to current unit of learning or, alternatively, 'Fishing from the rocks' by Mia Gregson ([Appendix 7 - 'Fishing from the rocks'](#)). During second read, students highlight any literary devices evident in text. Students annotate the poem, identifying what they can infer from the devices.  
*Variation:* as necessary, teacher provides margin notes and/or glossary to facilitate this independent reading. Various levels of support can be provided using this strategy.
2. Teacher models reading the poem aloud, paying attention to enjambment (moving over from one line to another without a terminating punctuation mark – refer to [literarydevices.net](#)) in the stanzas. Students are given a stanza to discuss and identify any literary devices using their poem annotation and the work they completed in the first part of this task. Students analyse the text and create a visual representation of the stanza. Students share back with class and teacher guides discussion to reinforce audience and purpose. Students order information and stanzas to create a class display.  
*Experiment/evaluate:* What happens if you change the order of the stanzas? Is the poem still effective? What new meanings are made? Students cut up stanzas/pictures and manipulate order.

3. Teacher models how to annotate the poem using questions below to guide. Students then work in pairs to complete column 4 in the table of [Appendix 8 – Poem analysis table](#).

## Key prompts:

- Whose point of view do we hear in this poem? Provide an example.
- What tone is conveyed through the dialogue?
- Identify the use of personification. What does this imagery convey?
- ‘Time begins. Fishing time extending hope.’ What is conveyed through the use of truncated sentence and metaphor?
- What is the effect of the enjambment in these lines?  
‘around the headland  
To the threatening rocks, the swelling ocean.’

## Interpret and analyse literary devices in information texts

1. The teacher explains how literary devices such as metaphors, rhetorical questions and puns may be used in information texts as well as works of fiction to create meaning and add interest. The teacher explains that a metaphor is a literary device used to compare things, by suggesting that one thing is another, for example 'My fingers are ice'. Metaphors are common in spoken and written language and visual metaphors are common in still images and moving images. (Reference: English K-10 Syllabus © NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) for and on behalf of the Crown in right of the State of New South Wales, 2012.) Using a suitable text linked to current area of learning (or refer to [Appendix 9a – Literary devices – information text](#)) the teacher uses the ‘think aloud’ strategy to model how to identify, interpret and analyse how authors use literary devices to create meaning. Suggested think aloud script:

*‘We are going to explore how writers use different literary devices, such as metaphor, in information texts. Writers use metaphor to create meaning, sometimes to help explain a challenging concept or perhaps to add humour. Today’s text is a science blog by Dr Karl called ‘The Dirt on Food.’ When I first read this heading I immediately thought of the dirt on vegetables, like carrots and potatoes that grow in the ground, so I thought that this article might have something to do with the dirt or soil that is found on food, maybe it is about food hygiene and washing vegetables? This would be a literal explanation of the heading. But I also know that ‘dirt’ is often used as a metaphor for something bad, and that the saying about ‘having dirt on’ something or someone is about having information that might damage reputations. You might have heard someone say, ‘You will never guess what I heard, I have the dirt on him now.’ This refers to knowing something about someone, perhaps secret, and ‘dirt’ infers it could be something ‘grubby’. This type of information may also be based on rumour, or gossip and only loosely on facts. Let’s see if our article reveals what the ‘dirt on food’ really is. When I read the opening rhetorical question: ‘Is it **true** that Big Agriculture has totally ruined our **soil**, and used up practically all of its goodness, so there’s barely any nutrition left in our food?’ I realise that this **is** about dirt, and soil quality, rather than dirty vegetables, but the question ‘is it true?’ suggests it*

is about whether the information about soil quality is accurate. So, based on this I think the title is a metaphor, the article is about stories/reports about damage to soil quality which are possibly not true. I will read on to see if I am correct. Dr Karl further reveals that this is a metaphor when he answers his question in the next sentence with 'No', and describes it or 'the dirt' as a 'good myth', further suggesting that this information is not completely factual as I know a myth is a story from the past, not something based on evidence. The metaphor is really clever and makes you consider what the article is about, and it requires you to read carefully for clues. Without the metaphor the heading could read 'Correct information about soil conditions for food production'. But that isn't very catchy at all! Would you listen to a blog with that title?

2. [Think-Pair-Share](#): Students create their own literal headings for other science blogs relevant to a current unit of learning. Students could share and justify their 'alternative literal heading' with the class.

For [challenge](#), students could create new headings using metaphors for familiar information texts (previously linked to a unit of learning) and justify their choices to the class.

3. *Extension*: using the 'think aloud' strategy the teacher identifies, interprets and analyses other literary devices in the text, such as pun, idiom and rhetorical questions. For example, the pun in the title (the article explores soil quality in which food is grown) and the idiom - 'grain of truth'. Students could use [Appendix 10 – Frayer model graphic organiser](#) to synthesize understanding of pun, idiom and rhetorical question. (Refer to [Appendix 9b – Literary Devices – annotated information text.](#))
4. *Lexical chains*: the teacher identifies and models how lexical chains are used to further support and extend the metaphor in the text ([Appendix 9a – Literary devices – information text](#)). The teacher explains how lexical chains are a sequence of related words in writing and that we can use these to track ideas in a text. They also build reader understanding on a topic. For example, language is used to infer that the 'dirt' is incorrect/not factual - 'claims out there', 'claimed', 'other' 'people say', 'very dramatic graph', 'outrageous claims' - and overt language is used to refute the 'dirt' - 'total rubbish!', 'that's rubbish', 'pretty useless', 'big problem', 'what's really happening here?', 'sloppy unverified data'. ([Appendix 9c- Literary devices – lexical chains annotated text](#)). For more on lexical chains refer to [Stage 4 Connecting ideas](#).

## Analyse irony and satire in images

1. *Frayer model* (graphic organiser): Discuss current understanding of irony: A clash between what the words say and what they mean (refer to Background information). Have students think, pair, share in small groups to discuss examples and how they match the criteria of irony. Students use [Appendix 10 – Frayer model graphic organiser](#) to synthesize understanding of irony.
2. *Venn diagram*: students use Venn diagram to compare and contrast satire and irony.
3. Students analyse a cartoon relevant to a current unit of learning (or refer to [Appendix 11 - Michael Leunig cartoon](#)) for both satirical and ironic elements: What type of irony is evident in the cartoon? What is ironic? Students use the cartoon as a launch for a mind map by explaining the visual features that represent this ironic situation. Why is this cartoon satirical? What is being criticised? Why?

# Analyse personification in prose fiction

1. Explain that personification is a type of metaphor where something non-human is described as if it were human or had human characteristics, and that personification is often used in fiction as it can make stories come alive, allowing us to see things from novel perspectives (definitely use that pun). Ask students to share any examples they can think of from novels, poems, films, TV shows or any other texts where personification is used.
2. Explain that the Australian novel 'The Book Thief' is actually entirely narrated by a personified entity, and that the book is set in Nazi Germany during World War II.
3. Read the extract from 'The Book Thief' ([Appendix 12 - Analysing personification in prose fiction 'The Book Thief'](#)) with the class. Support students with vocabulary that may be unfamiliar by rephrasing key ideas as you go (or getting students to explain what they think a term or phrase means). Ensure that students understand the word 'soul', as it is essential to comprehending the extract. EAL/D students from some cultural backgrounds may not be familiar with the idea of a soul, or may understand it differently to its use in the extract.
4. Ask students who they think is narrating the story. This could be done through class discussion or through a [Think, Pair, Share](#) activity. The narrator is 'Death', sometimes called the Grim Reaper. Encourage students to focus on how they know this and the evidence they have for it. You may want to unpack this idea of Death as an entity with agency, as it is quite culturally-specific.
5. Students answer the questions in [Appendix 12 - Analysing personification in prose fiction 'The Book Thief'](#). The first two have been answered through the previous discussion/activity. Solutions to the other two questions can be modelled by the teacher as necessary.
  - Who is the narrator in The Book Thief? (Death)
  - What is it that shows us that the narrator is personified? (The extract is written in first person. We get an idea of his feelings and intentions, 'as genially as possible', 'carry you gently away', 'It helps me relax.)
  - What kind of 'person' is the narrator? What words or phrases in the text build that idea for you and why? (He seems somewhat sensitive and caring, or at least very respectful - different from what we might expect from 'Death'. He acts 'genially' and 'gently'; he needs help relaxing; he enjoys the colours of the sky.)
  - Find two other examples of personification in the text. What is the effect of each of them? ('A scream will dribble down the air.' The scream seems divorced from the soul. A dribble moves slowly and is something you can't usually control. 'What will the sky be saying?' This makes it seem like the sky is commenting on the situation through its colours and patterns. It's as if the situation is so important that even the sky will have an opinion on it.)To increase [complexity](#) students create their own examples of personification, based on this text or any other text relevant to their current learning.

## Analyse personification in informative texts

1. *Explicit instruction*: Teacher explains that personification is a type of metaphor where something non-human is described as if it were human or had human characteristics, and that while personification is often used in fiction, it is also used in persuasive and informative texts. The teacher explains that in science and mathematics, literary devices like personification can be used to make complicated concepts easier to understand. Sometimes imaginary characters are created to help explain ideas, or non-human objects are given personalities. For example, a 'sneaky virus' or an 'intelligent gene.'
2. The teacher reads aloud the text 'So who's not a clever little virus then?' ([Appendix 13a – Personification in an informative text](#)) pausing to identify examples of personification, discuss key ideas and the purpose of using personification in science texts. (Refer to [Appendix 13b – Personification in an informative text - annotated](#) to support this discussion.) The teacher re-reads the first two paragraphs and highlights/annotates examples and 'non-examples' of personification explaining and analysing the meaning of each. *Think-Pair-Share* – in small groups students annotate the remainder of the text, identifying further examples and non-examples of personification.
3. *Fruyer model* – teacher models how to identify examples of personification in the text, non-examples in the text and create their own example of personification (refer to [Appendix 13b – Personification in an informative text - annotated](#).) Students use [Appendix 10 – Fruyer model graphic organiser](#) to synthesize their understanding of personification in the sample text or a text suitable to a current unit of learning. (Refer to [Appendix 14 – Fruyer model graphic organiser: personification \(teacher's copy\)](#)) For *challenge*: students create their own personified character for a subject other than English. They could create a list of character traits for their character and create a visual representation. For example, a virus who is sneaky, clever, cruel, intelligent, or a river that is threatening, malicious, greedy (to explore floods).

A figure of speech  
where a word or phrase  
is used that is not  
literally possible.  
Saying that something  
is something else.

The formation of a word  
that creates the sound  
associated with the  
word.

**Giving human  
characteristics or  
attributes to something  
that is non-human.**



An exaggerated statement that is not meant to be taken literally.

A figure of speech that involves the comparison of two things, usually using the words 'like' or 'as'.

# Appendix 2

## Literacy device match-up

I'm so tired I'm going to sleep for a whole week.	The books fell with a loud thud.	The well was as dry as a bone.
The flood raged over the entire village.	Do not judge a book by its cover.	The wind whispered through the dry grass.
Your suitcase weighs 1000 kilos!	She clicked her fingers.	Tim is as funny as a monkey.
The shadow of the moon danced on the lake.	The rock hit the water with a splash.	Lucy is as cunning as a fox.
The flowers danced in the gentle breeze.	The cat meowed.	Her cheeks are red like a rose.
I'm so bored I could die.	Thunder boomed all night.	The fire swallowed the entire forest.
He was as brave as a soldier.	It is the fountain of life.	I'm so hungry I could eat a horse!
The rustling leaves kept me awake.	I received my first pay check and now I'm rolling in dough.	I am dying of shame.

The words fled from his mind when he met her.	It's as hot as hell.	He cried all night and all day.
It's so cold I'm going to freeze to death.	Ding-dong!	The classroom was a zoo.
The house looked as though it was weeping.	I'm so tired I'm going to sleep for a whole week.	Her skin was as soft as a baby's bottom.
It's so hot I'm melting.	The cows mooed in the field.	There was a loud crash when the cars collided.
I wandered as lonely as a cloud.	Love is a battlefield.	It leaned like the Tower of Pisa.
Everyone could sense the elephant in the room.	I haven't seen you in a hundred years.	The helicopter blades whirred in the distance.
She was as light as air.	That dress is so ugly it's burning my eyes.	The car suffered a severe beating in the accident.
I have a million things to do.	Look at my car. She's a beauty, isn't she?	I'm coughing my lungs out.

## Appendix 3

### Text analysis: *Bridge to Terabithia*, Katherine Paterson, Crowell Co., 1977

**Ba-room, ba-room, ba-room, baripity, baripity, baripity, baripity.** Good. His dad had the pickup going. He could get up now. Jess slid out of bed and into his overalls. He didn't worry about a shirt because once he began running he would be hot as popping grease even if the morning air was chill, or shoes because the **bottoms of his feet were by now as tough as his worn-out sneakers.**

"Where you going, Jess?" May Belle lifted herself up sleepily from the double bed where she and Joyce Ann slept.

"Sh." He warned. The walls were thin. **Momma would be mad as flies in a fruit jar** if they woke her up this time of day.

**He patted May Belle's hair and yanked the twisted sheet up to her small chin.** "Just over the cow field," he whispered. May Belle smiled and snuggled down under the sheet.

"Gonna run?"

"Maybe."

Of course he was going to run. He had gotten up early every day all summer to run. He figured if he worked at it - and Lord, had he worked-he could be the fastest runner in the fifth grade when school opened up. **He had to be the fastest-not one of the fastest or next to the fastest, but the fastest.** The very best.

He tiptoed out of the house. **The place was so ratty that it screeched whenever you put your foot down**, but Jess had found that if you tiptoed **it gave only a low moan**, and he could usually get outdoors without waking Momma or Ellie or Brenda or Joyce Ann. May Belle was another matter. She was going on seven, and she worshiped him, which was OK sometimes. **When you were the only boy smashed between four sisters**, and the older two had despised you ever since you stopped letting them dress you up and wheel you around in their rusty old doll carriage, and the littlest one cried if you looked at her cross-eyed, it was nice to have somebody who worshiped you. Even if it got unhandy sometimes.

For accessibility: sections of text which have been highlighted as examples of literary devices are listed in Appendix 4 table on the next page.

# Appendix 4

## Literary devices – analysing text

Language device	What do I already know?	Why did the composer use it (effect)?
<b>Onomatopoeia</b> “Ba-room, ba-room, ba-room, baripity, baripity...”		
<b>Simile</b> “the bottoms of his feet were by now as tough as his worn-out sneakers”		
<b>Imagery</b> “He patted May Belle’s hair and yanked the twisted sheet up to her small chin”		
<b>Repetition</b> “He had to be the fastest – not one of the fastest or next to the fastest, but the fastest”		
<b>Personification</b> “The place was so ratty that it screeched whenever you put your foot down”		
<b>Hyperbole</b> “When you were the only boy smashed between four sisters...”		

## Literary devices: analysing texts (support)

Language device	What do I already know?	Why did the composer use it (effect)?
<b>Onomatopoeia</b> “Ba-room, ba-room, ba-room, baripity, baripity...”	Onomatopoeia is a device where the word makes the sound associated with it.	To convey the sound of the pickup truck.
<b>Simile</b> “the bottoms of his feet were by now as tough as his worn-out sneakers”	Similes are used to compare things.	To compare the character’s feet with the worn-out sneakers to show that his feet were rough and hard.
<b>Imagery</b> “He patted May Belle’s hair and yanked the twisted sheet up to her small chin”	Imagery is visually descriptive language.	To allow the reader to visualise what the characters are doing which draws the reader in and engages them.
<b>Repetition</b> “He had to be the fastest – not one of the fastest or next to the fastest, but the fastest”	Repetition is used to reinforce something so that the reader remembers it.	To emphasise that the character wants to be the fastest runner in the fifth grade.
<b>Personification</b> “The place was so ratty that it screeched whenever you put your foot down”	Personification is when non-human things are given human characteristics or qualities.	To show that the house is old and falling apart where the ‘screech’ sound makes it appear as though it is in pain.
<b>Hyperbole</b> “When you were the only boy smashed between four sisters...”	Hyperbole is an exaggeration.	To emphasise that the character was the only boy in a house full of girls.

## Appendix 5a: Information text

### Curious kids: Could the Earth ever stop spinning, and what would happen if it did?

by Jaco Van Loon, Astronomer, Keele University, January 7, 2022.

#### **Could the Earth stop spinning, and if it did, what would happen? – Paul, aged 12, Aberdeen, Scotland.**

The Earth has been spinning since its birth, four and a half billion years ago.

The Earth was made from rubble that was left over when the Sun formed from the collapse of a huge cloud of matter. The rubble that went on to become the Earth circled around the Sun like water does around the plughole when you empty a bathtub, spinning as it went.

The Earth continued to circle the Sun and spin after it was formed and is going to spin like this for a long while to come.

The Earth spins steadily, once every 23 hours and 56 minutes. During this time, the Earth also moves a little further on its orbit around the Sun, which takes one year to complete. This means it needs to turn a bit more – for four minutes – until it faces the Sun again. This means that one day on Earth lasts 24 hours.

#### Moving in space

The reason the Earth keeps spinning is because there is hardly anything to stop it. If you spin a roundabout in a playground and let go, eventually it will come to a stop. This is because as it spins, the air and the surface of the playground are pushing against it, causing friction and slowing it down.

The Earth is spinning in space, which is pretty much empty. In space, there is not even air to push against and slow down the Earth's spin.

However, there is one thing that slows down the Earth's spin: the Moon.

The motion of the side of the Earth facing the Moon is not balanced perfectly by gravity, and neither is the side of Earth facing away from the Moon. This imbalance creates the ocean tides, which make the oceans bulge out on either side of the Earth.

As the Earth spins, these bulges move across the Earth's surface like a wave, pushing against the Earth's spin. This slows down the Earth's spin. It means that Earth's day lengthens by one second every 50,000 years.

The only thing that could stop the Earth's spin would be if another planet crashed into it. Even if this happened, it is more likely that it would change the way Earth spins, not stop it altogether.

#### A six-month day

If the Earth stopped spinning, you wouldn't suddenly be launched off into space. Gravity would still keep you firmly on the ground.

There would be lots of changes, though. If Earth were to stop spinning but continue to orbit the Sun, a "day" would last half a year, and so would the night. It could warm up much more during the day and cool down much more during the night. This would affect the climate on Earth.

A large temperature difference between day and night would cause strong winds, which would move warm air towards the cooler, night time side of the Earth. Wind would also blow from the warm regions around the equator to the cold polar regions. On a spinning Earth, this does not happen because the wind is deflected sideways.



The eastwards and westwards winds, and the winds towards the poles, would meet. They could possibly create huge swirls of wind the size of entire continents.

The core of the Earth is partly molten iron. The spinning motion of the Earth turns this molten iron into a magnet and gives the Earth a [magnetic field](#).

This protects us against harmful radiation, which comes from particles from the Sun and cosmic rays from outside the solar system. While the magnetic field stops the radiation from reaching us, it hits the Earth's atmosphere, and we see it as the aurora – the northern or southern lights.

Without the magnetic field, this radiation would reach the Earth's surface and make people ill. Some birds use the magnetic field to [find their way](#), so without the Earth spinning, they would get lost.

If the Earth didn't spin, the night sky would always show the same constellations of stars, because you would always be looking out into space in the same direction. This is very different from seeing the stars rise and set during the night, and seeing different constellations at different times of the year.

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For the full text with images see: [Curious Kids: Could the Earth ever spot spinning, and what would happen if it did?](#) The Conversation 7 January 2022

## Appendix 6a: Figurative language in an information text – match and sort

Curious kids: Could the Earth ever stop spinning, and what would happen if it did?

by Jaco Van Loon, Astronomer, Keele University, January 7, 2022.

Device	Example from text	Effect?
Metaphor	The Earth has been spinning since its birth...	
Simile		Makes an everyday visual comparison so that the reader that the reader can picture how the Earth orbited the Sun while it was being formed.
Simile		
Metaphor	'launched off'	

## Appendix 6b – Figurative language in an information text - – match and sort (teacher copy)

Curious kids: Could the Earth ever stop spinning, and what would happen if it did?

by Jaco Van Loon, Astronomer, Keele University, January 7, 2022.

Device	Example from text	Effect
Metaphor	The Earth has been spinning since its birth...	Uses a familiar process, such as childbirth, to explain the Earth's formation.
Simile	The rubble...circled around the Sun like water does around the plughole when you empty a bathtub...	Makes an everyday visual comparison so that the reader can picture how the Earth orbited the Sun while it was being formed.
Simile	As the Earth spins, these bulges move across the Earth's surface like a wave, pushing against the Earth's spin	Makes a comparison to a familiar object associated with the beach and tides so that the readers can picture how the Moon interacts with the oceans on a global scale.
Metaphor	If the Earth stopped spinning, you wouldn't suddenly be <b>launched off</b> into space. Gravity would still keep you firmly on the ground.	Compares people with space rockets.

# Appendix 7

## Poem analysis

### *Fishing from the rocks* – Mia Gregson

'Think I'll drop a line.

Tide's out. Weather's mild.'

Then the flurry: the hopeful basket, the rod, the hook, the line and sinker.

'Guess you can come with me, but stay away from the edge.'

We're all following him

Across soft sand, past paddocks of cows, around the headland

To the threatening rocks, the swelling ocean.

To the promise of success, the flailing fish on the quivering line.

Three of us to the forbidden side of the beach.

And the long-eared dog, all excited at the daring.

'Never go further than the edge of the beach.

Stay in the safe sandy zone.'

Time begins. Fishing time extending hope.

The kids and the dog staying away from the ocean.

Watching the waves swell over the ledge

Swirling over the jagged rocks.

And in shallow pools, at least for the dog,

Something's in there, a matching goal.

'Where's the fish, Roxy, where's the fish?'

Dad and dog search the water in vain.

Year 7 NAPLAN Reading Magazine, 2013 ACARA

# Appendix 8

## Poem analysis -Literary devices table

Literary Technique	Definition	Own example	Example from Poem
Tone	<p>The voice adopted by a particular speaker to indicate emotion, feeling or attitude to subject matter.</p> <p>The author's attitude towards the subject and audience, for example playful, serious, ironic, formal.</p>		
Dialogue	Recorded conversation – can be direct or indirect.		
Point of view	The particular perspective brought by a composer, responder or character within a text to the text or to matters within the text.		
Personification	Attributing human characteristics to abstractions such as love, things or animals		
Truncated sentence	A short sentence that is incomplete as there are words missing. For example, 'Hear me?'		
Metaphor	A resemblance between one thing and another is declared by suggesting that one thing is another		
Enjambment	Continuing a sentence beyond a line without pausing.		

# Appendix 9a

## Literary devices - information text

Great Moments in Science with Dr Karl Kruszelnicki, ['The Dirt on Food'](#) (transcript), ABC Radio, 27 July 2021. Presenter: Dr Karl Kruszelnicki, Producer: Sarah Sedghi.

### The Dirt on Food

**Dr Karl:** G'day, Dr Karl here.

Is it true that Big Agriculture has totally ruined our soil, and used up practically all of its goodness, so there's barely any nutrition left in our food? Well, no - but like all good myths, there is a small grain of truth.

There's claims out there that you would have to eat eight of today's oranges to get the same amount of vitamin A our grandparents would have got from just one. Other people say that over the last century, calcium, magnesium and iron in cabbage, lettuce, tomatoes and spinach have dropped by up to 90%.

This claimed 90% reduction comes from a 2018 paper in the journal, "nutrients". On the third page, there is a very dramatic graph, showing "average mineral content of calcium, magnesium, and iron in cabbage, lettuce, tomatoes and spinach" on the vertical axis, and years on the horizontal axis. The graph shows the three minerals measured falling from 400mg of minerals/100 grams of food, down to much less than 50. Yes, that's dramatic! The caption below the graph spells out that "... *mineral content... has dropped 80-90% between 1914 and 2018.*"

Wow!!

Sounds worrying...but hang on, what's really happening here.

There's a big problem with the data. Out of the tiny sample of just seven data points – the data they're basing their claims on - three are marked with asterisks. And then the tiny print reads, "*Asterisks indicate numbers could not be independently verified.*" So, in plain English, they're really saying that three of the seven data points could not be proven. Not only is the data sample size tiny, it's also pretty useless. And very significantly, one of these data points they couldn't verify was the oldest data point from 1914 that was used as proof food used to be way more nutritious then.

The graph shows that in 1914, mineral content was around 400 mg/100g of veggies. When you try to find out where this number came from, the references send you to a book written that year, by Henry Lindlahr. It's called "Nature Cure", and is one of the foundation texts of modern American Naturopathy. In it he made all sorts of outrageous claims. He said that you could diagnose any disease by simply looking at a person's iris – that's rubbish. He claimed that vaccinations against smallpox did not work, but even worse, actually caused cancer, insanity and tuberculosis. Again, total rubbish!

Was he a respected food scientist of the day, able to make precise and accurate measurements of minerals in foods? No, the exact opposite. According to his contemporary, Dr Morris Fishbein, the editor of the Journal of the American Medical Association for 25 years, *“the methods of diagnosis used in the Lindlahr institution were preposterous”*.

So why would anybody use this sloppy and unverified data. Well, two of the three authors of the more recent 2018 article that says food nutrition is declining are full-time employees of a company that sells wellness nutritional supplements. The third author is a paid consultant for that same company. That sounds like a conflict of interest, perhaps?

So then, what about a different paper that was published in 2004 in the Journal of the American College of Nutrition, that compared some 43 plants from the years of 1950 and 1999 – half-a-century apart. It looked at micronutrients, as well as the fat, protein and carbohydrate levels in these 43 food plants, that ranged from asparagus to watermelon.

Well, overall, in about half the nutrients, they found no change. There was a statistically significant decline in the other half. It ranged from a small 6% drop in protein to a larger 38% drop for the B vitamin, riboflavin. So how do we explain this?

It turns out that the major factor affecting the nutrient levels in any species of food crop is the specific variety, or cultivar. One study looked at some 50 varieties of broccoli. Depending on the variety, a nutrient could vary by a factor of 10. Across about 100 different varieties of tomatoes, the Vitamin C level varied by a factor of three. And calcium levels in beans can vary by a factor of two, again depending on the variety.

When farmers choose a crop, they usually look at the return in regards of the yield, disease resistance, suitability for the local climate, and so on.

But the nutrient quality of the specific variety of that food type likely never comes into it.

That’s the dirt on food!

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Great Moments in Science with Dr Karl Kruszelnicki, '[The Dirt on Food](#)' (transcript), ABC Radio, 27 July 2021  
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# Appendix 9b

## Literary devices annotated information text

Great Moments in Science with Dr Karl Kruszelnicki, '[The Dirt on Food](#)' (transcript), ABC Radio, 27 July 2021. Presenter: Dr Karl Kruszelnicki, Producer: Sarah Sedghi.

Metaphor

Idiom

Rhetorical question

Irony

### The Dirt on Food

**Dr Karl:** G'day, Dr Karl here.

Is it true that Big Agriculture has totally ruined our soil, and used up practically all of its goodness, so there's barely any nutrition left in our food? Well, no - but like all good myths, there is a small grain of truth.

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**Was he a respected food scientist of the day, able to make precise and accurate measurements of minerals in foods?** No, the exact opposite. According to his contemporary, Dr Morris Fishbein, the editor of the Journal of the American Medical Association for 25 years, "*the methods of diagnosis used in the Lindlahr institution were preposterous*".

**So why would anybody use this sloppy and unverified data.** Well, two of the three authors of the more recent 2018 article that says food nutrition is declining are full-time employees of a company that sells wellness nutritional supplements. The third author is a paid consultant for that same company. **That sounds like a conflict of interest, perhaps?**

So then, what about a different paper that was published in 2004 in the Journal of the American College of Nutrition, that compared some 43 plants from the years of 1950 and 1999 – half-a-century apart. It looked at micronutrients, as well as the fat, protein and carbohydrate levels in these 43 food plants, that ranged from asparagus to watermelon.

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When farmers choose a crop, they usually look at the return in regards of the yield, disease resistance, suitability for the local climate, and so on.

But the nutrient quality of the specific variety of that food type likely never comes into it.

### **That's the dirt on food!**

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Great Moments in Science with Dr Karl Kruszelnicki, '[The Dirt on Food](#)' (transcript), ABC Radio, 27 July 2021  
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# Appendix 9b

## Literary devices annotated information text - accessible table

Literary device	Example from text
Metaphor	Dirt on Food That's the dirt on food!
Idiom	Grain of Truth
Rhetorical question(s)	1. ...but hang on, what's really happening here. 2. Was he a respected food scientist of the day, able to make precise and accurate measurements of minerals in foods? 3. So why would anybody use this sloppy and unverified data. 4. That sounds like a conflict of interest, perhaps?
Irony	very dramatic graph, Wow!

# Appendix 9c

## Literary devices - lexical chains annotated text

Great Moments in Science with Dr Karl Kruszelnicki, '[The Dirt on Food](#)' (transcript), ABC Radio, 27 July 2021. Presenter: Dr Karl Kruszelnicki, Producer: Sarah Sedghi.

Lexical chain 1 – infer

Lexical chain 2 – overt

### The Dirt on Food

**Dr Karl:** G'day, Dr Karl here.

Is it true that Big Agriculture has totally ruined our soil, and used up practically all of its goodness, so there's barely any nutrition left in our food? Well, no - but like all **good myths**, there is a small grain of truth.

There's **claims out there** that you would have to eat eight of today's oranges to get the same amount of vitamin A our grandparents would have got from just one. **Other people say** that over the last century, calcium, magnesium and iron in cabbage, lettuce, tomatoes and spinach have dropped by up to 90%.

This **claimed** 90% reduction comes from a 2018 paper in the journal, "nutrients". On the third page, there is a very dramatic graph, showing "average mineral content of calcium, magnesium, and iron in cabbage, lettuce, tomatoes and spinach" on the vertical axis, and years on the horizontal axis. The graph shows the three minerals measured falling from 400mg of minerals/100 grams of food, down to much less than 50. Yes, that's dramatic! The caption below the graph spells out that "... *mineral content... has dropped 80-90% between 1914 and 2018.*"

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Naturopathy. In it he made all sorts of **outrageous claims**. He said that you could diagnose any disease by simply looking at a person's iris – **that's rubbish**. He **claimed** that vaccinations against smallpox did not work, but even worse, actually caused cancer, insanity and tuberculosis. Again, **total rubbish!**

Was he a respected food scientist of the day, able to make precise and accurate measurements of minerals in foods? No, the exact opposite. According to his contemporary, Dr Morris Fishbein, the editor of the Journal of the American Medical Association for 25 years, "*the methods of diagnosis used in the Lindlahr institution were preposterous*".

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**Lexical chain 1** – infer - like all good myths, claims out there, other people say that, claimed, claims, couldn't verify, claimed, outrageous claims,

**Lexical chain 2** – overt - big problem, pretty useless, that's rubbish, total rubbish, sloppy and unverifiable data

# Appendix 10

## Frayer model graphic organiser

<p><b>Example</b></p>	<p><b>Non-example</b></p>
<p><b>Definition</b></p>	<p><b>Own example</b></p>

# Appendix 11

## Irony and satire cartoon

Michael Leunig 'Cave Family'



Image courtesy of Michael Leunig

([www.leunig.com.au/works/cartoons](http://www.leunig.com.au/works/cartoons))

# Appendix 12

## Analysing personification in prose fiction

Zuzak, M. (2013). *The book thief*. Pan McMillan, Australia.

Of course, an introduction.

A beginning.

Where are my manners?

I could introduce myself properly, but it's not really necessary. You will know me well enough and soon enough, depending on a diverse range of variables. It suffices to say that at some point in time, I will be standing over you, as genially as possible. Your soul will be in my arms. A colour will be perched on my shoulder. I will carry you gently away.

At that moment, you will be lying there (I rarely find people standing up). You will be caked in your own body. There might be a discovery; a scream will dribble down the air. The only sound I'll hear after that will be my own breathing, and the sound of the smell, of my footsteps.

The question is, what colour will everything be at that moment when I come for you? What will the sky be saying?

Personally, I like a chocolate-coloured sky. Dark, dark chocolate. People say it suits me. I do, however, try to enjoy every colour I see - the whole spectrum. A billion or so flavours, none of them quite the same, and a sky to slowly suck on. It takes the edge off the stress. It helps me relax.

### Personification in 'The Book Thief'

1. Who is the narrator in *The Book Thief*?
2. What is it that shows us that the narrator is personified?
3. What kind of 'person' is the narrator? What words or phrases in the text build that idea for you and why?
4. Find two other examples of personification in the text. What is the effect of each of them?

# Appendix 13a

## Personification in an informative text - excerpts

### So who's not a clever little virus then? (excerpts)

The COVID-19 virus is not a clever or sneaky virus (but it is not dumb either)

by Keith S. Taber, Emeritus Professor of Science Education at the University of Cambridge, UK  
April 20, 2020.

One of the things I have noticed in recent news reports about the current pandemic is the tendency to justify our susceptibility to the COVID-19 coronavirus by *praising* the virus. It is an intelligent and sneaky foe, and so we have to outwit it.

**But no, it is not.** It is a virus. It's a tiny collection of nucleic material packaged in a way that it can get into the cells which contain the chemical resources required for the virus to replicate. It is well suited to this, but there is nothing intelligent about the behaviour. (The virus does not enter the cell *to* reproduce any more than an ice cube melts *to* become water; or a hot cup of coffee radiates energy *to* cool down; or a toddler trips over *to* graze its knee rather than because gravity acts on it.) The virus is not clever nor sneaky. That would suggest it can adapt its behaviour, after reflecting upon feedback from its interactions with the environment. It cannot. Over generations viruses change – but with a lot of variations that fail to replicate (the thick ones in the family?)

Yet any quick internet search finds references to the claimed intellectual capacities of these deadly foes. Now of course an internet search can find references to virtually anything – but I am referring to sites we might expect to be authoritative, or at least well-informed. And this is not just a matter of a hasty response to the current public health emergency as it is not just COVID 19, but, it seems, viruses generally that are considered intellectually superior.

### **Those smart little viruses**

The site *Vaccines Today* has a headline in a posting from 2014, that “Viruses are ‘smart’, so we must be smarter”, basing its claims on a lecture by Colin Russell, Royal Society University Research Fellow at Cambridge University. It reports that “Dr Russell says understanding how ‘clever’ viruses are can help us to outsmart them”.

...

A headline in *Science news for Students* (published by *Society for Science & the Public*) from 2016 reads “Sneaky! Virus sickens plants, but helps them multiply”. I am sure it would not take long to find many other examples. An article in *Science* refers to a “nasty flu virus”.

...

There are many references in the literature to clever viruses, such as Epstein-Barr virus according to a piece in *the American Journal of Transplantation*. The Hepatitis C virus is clever according to an article in *Clinical Therapeutics*.

### **Science communication as making the unfamiliar, familiar**

Science communication is a bit like teaching in that the purpose of communication is often to be informative... and indeed to make the unfamiliar, familiar. Sometimes we can make the unfamiliar familiar by showing people the unfamiliar and pointing it out. ‘This is a conical flask’. Often, however, we cannot do that – it is hard to show someone hyperconjugation or hysteresis or a virus specimen. Then we resort to using what *is* familiar, and employing the usual teacher tricks of



metaphor, analogy, simile, modelling, graphics, and so forth. What is familiar to us all is human behaviour, so personification is a common technique. What the virus is doing, we might suggest, is *hijacking* the cell's biochemical machinery, as if it is a carefully planned criminal operation.

### **Why does it matter?**

...Viruses are not clever – they have evolved over billions of years, and a great many less successful iterations are no longer with us. The reason it matters is because evolution is often not well understood.

...

This is why I worry when I hear that viruses are these intelligent, deliberate agents that are our foes in some form of biological warfare. It is a dangerous way of thinking. So, I'm concerned when I read, for example, that the cytomegalovirus is *not just a clever virus* but **a very clever virus**. Indeed, according to an article in *Cell Host & Microbe* "CMV is a very clever virus that knows more about the host immune system and cell biology than we do". Hm.

For the full text with images refer to: [science-education-research.com/so-whos-not-a-clever-little-virus-then/](http://science-education-research.com/so-whos-not-a-clever-little-virus-then/) on Prof. Keith S. Taber's site: [Science-Education-Research](http://Science-Education-Research), Date accessed: 7/3/2022

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Prof. Keith S Taber, [So who's not a clever little virus then?](http://Science-Education-Research.com/so-whos-not-a-clever-little-virus-then/), [Science Education Research](http://Science-Education-Research), 20 April 2020

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# Appendix 13b

## Personification in an informative text - annotated

### So who's not a clever little virus then? (Excerpts)

The COVID-19 virus is not a clever or sneaky virus (but it is not dumb either)

by Keith S. Taber, Emeritus Professor of Science Education at the University of Cambridge, UK  
April 20, 2020.

#### Examples

#### Non-examples

#### Purpose of personification

One of the things I have noticed in recent news reports about the current pandemic is the tendency to justify our susceptibility to the COVID-19 coronavirus by *praising* the virus. It is an **intelligent and sneaky foe**, and so **we have to outwit it**.

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Yet any quick internet search finds references to **the claimed intellectual capacities** of these **deadly foes**. Now of course an internet search can find references to virtually anything – but I am referring to sites we might expect to be authoritative, or at least well-informed. And this is not just a matter of a hasty response to the current public health emergency as it is not just COVID 19, but, it seems, viruses generally that are considered intellectually superior.

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The site *Vaccines Today* has a headline in a posting from 2014, that “**Viruses are 'smart'**, so we **must be smarter**”, basing its claims on a lecture by Colin Russell, Royal Society University Research Fellow at Cambridge University. It reports that “Dr Russell says understanding how ‘clever’ viruses are can help us to outsmart them”.

...

A headline in *Science news for Students* (published by *Society for Science & the Public*) from 2016 reads “**Sneaky!** Virus sickens plants, but helps them multiply”. I am sure it would not take long to find many other examples. An article in *Science* refers to a “**nasty** flu virus”.

...

There are many references in the literature to **clever** viruses, such as Epstein-Barr virus according to a piece in *the American Journal of Transplantation*. The Hepatitis C virus is **clever** according to an article in *Clinical Therapeutics*.

## Science communication as making the unfamiliar, familiar

Science communication is a bit like teaching in that the purpose of communication is often to be informative... and indeed **to make the unfamiliar, familiar**. Sometimes we can make the unfamiliar familiar by showing people the unfamiliar and pointing it out. 'This is a conical flask'. Often, however, we cannot do that – it is hard to show someone hyperconjugation or hysteresis or a virus specimen. Then we resort to using what *is* familiar, and employing **the usual teacher tricks** of metaphor, analogy, simile, modelling, graphics, and so forth. **What is familiar to us all is human behaviour, so personification is a common technique**. What the virus is doing, we might suggest, is **hijacking** the cell's biochemical machinery, as if it is a **carefully planned criminal operation**.

### Why does it matter?

...Viruses are not clever – they have evolved over billions of years, and a great many less successful iterations are no longer with us. The reason it matters is because evolution is often not well understood.

...

This is why I worry when I hear that viruses are these **intelligent, deliberate agents** that are **our foes** in some form of biological warfare. It is a dangerous way of thinking. So, I'm concerned when I read, for example, that the cytomegalovirus is *not just a clever virus* but **a very clever virus**. Indeed, according to an article in *Cell Host & Microbe* "CMV is a very clever virus that knows more about the host immune system and cell biology than we do". Hm.

For the full text with images refer to: [science-education-research.com/so-whos-not-a-clever-little-virus-then/](https://science-education-research.com/so-whos-not-a-clever-little-virus-then/) on Prof. Keith S. Taber's site: [Science-Education-Research](https://science-education-research.com/) Date accessed: 7/3/2022

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Prof. Keith S Taber, [So who's not a clever little virus then?](https://science-education-research.com/so-whos-not-a-clever-little-virus-then/), [Science Education Research](https://science-education-research.com/), 20 April 2020  
[Section 113P Warning Notice](#)

# Appendix 13b

## Personification in an informative text – accessible table

### So who's not a clever little virus then? (Excerpts)

The COVID-19 virus is not a clever or sneaky virus (but it is not dumb either)

by Keith S. Taber, Emeritus Professor of Science Education at the University of Cambridge, UK  
April 20, 2020.

Personification	Evidence from text
Examples	<p>It is an intelligent and sneaky foe, and so we have to outwit it.</p> <p>The virus does not enter the cell <i>to</i> reproduce any more than an ice cube melts <i>to</i> become water; or a hot cup of coffee radiates energy <i>to</i> cool down...</p> <p>...with a lot of variations that fail to replicate (the thick ones in the family?)</p> <p>Yet any quick internet search finds references to the claimed intellectual capacities of these deadly foes.</p> <p>“Viruses are ‘smart’, so we must be smarter”</p> <p>Sneaky! Virus sickens plants, but helps them multiply</p> <p>nasty flu virus</p> <p>clever viruses</p> <p>What the virus is doing, we might suggest, is <i>hijacking</i> the cell’s biochemical machinery, as if it is a carefully planned criminal operation.</p> <p>intelligent, deliberate agents that are our foes</p> <p><i>not just a clever virus but a very clever virus</i></p>
Non-examples	<p>It is a virus.</p> <p>It’s a tiny collection of nucleic material packaged in a way that it can get into the cells which contain the chemical resources required for the virus to replicate.</p> <p>It is well suited to this, but there is nothing intelligent about the behaviour. (The virus does not enter the cell <i>to</i> reproduce...</p> <p>The virus is not clever nor sneaky. That would suggest it can adapt its behaviour, after reflecting upon feedback from its interactions with the environment. It cannot.</p>
Purpose of personification	<p>Science communication is a bit like teaching in that the purpose of communication is often to be informative... and indeed to make the unfamiliar, familiar.</p> <p>...we resort to using what <i>is</i> familiar, and employing the usual teacher tricks of metaphor, analogy, simile, modelling, graphics, and so forth. What is familiar to us all is human behaviour, so personification is a common technique.</p>

# Appendix 14

## Frayer model graphic organiser – personification (teacher’s copy)

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Examples</b></p> <p>‘It is an intelligent and sneaky foe’ ‘we have to outwit it’ ‘viruses are smart’ ‘deadly foes’</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Non-examples</b></p> <p>‘It is a virus.’ ‘It’s a tiny collection of nucleic material packaged in a way that it can get into the cells which contain the chemical resources required for the virus to replicate.’ ‘The virus is not clever nor sneaky’</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Definition</b></p> <p>Personification is a type of metaphor where something non-human is described as if it were human or had human characteristics.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Own example</b></p> <p>During drought the thirsty sun seeks out every drop of moisture, soaking it up, leaving the land parched and despairing.</p>