

Year 5 & 6

English/literacy – Exploring literary description



Things your child will need

Have these things available so your child can complete this task.

Ideal

- [Exploring literary descriptions video](#)
- Activity sheet 1: Literary description puzzle
- Paper or workbook
- Pencil or pen
- Highlighter

Backup

- Printed version of the [Exploring literary description PowerPoint presentation](#)
- Paper

Before your child starts

This lesson is the first of 2 lessons exploring literary descriptions. Students use literary descriptions to add detail within a story, such as a character or setting.

What is a literary description?

A literary description is a creative way to describe a person, place or thing. These are found in literary texts such as novels and poetry, but might also be found in persuasive texts, such as in a travel brochure describing a destination.

The most common literary descriptions are based around a character or a setting.

What your child needs to do

Your child will watch a video of a lesson about identifying and finding examples of literary descriptions in texts. The teacher will guide your child as they learn how to identify, explain and create a literary description.

Throughout the lesson, your child will be asked to pause the video to complete an activity on the activity sheets.

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English/literacy – Exploring literary description

What your child can do next

Your child will be completing a range of activities, including:

- learning what a literacy description is
- highlighting and annotating texts for key features.

Extension/Additional activity

Your child might find literary descriptions in different pieces of writing such as in news articles and travel brochures.

Options for your child**Activity too hard?**

Have your child find adjective clues that focus only on a character's physical appearance first such as 'matted' or 'smooth' to describe the physical feature of hair. When confident, have your child look for adjectives to describe a character's behaviour or actions such as 'kind-hearted'.

Activity too easy?

Have your child find further examples of literary descriptions that focus on a setting of a story. Your child will still look for clues to describe physical features such as the metaphor:

"The water was an emerald glistening in the sunlight".

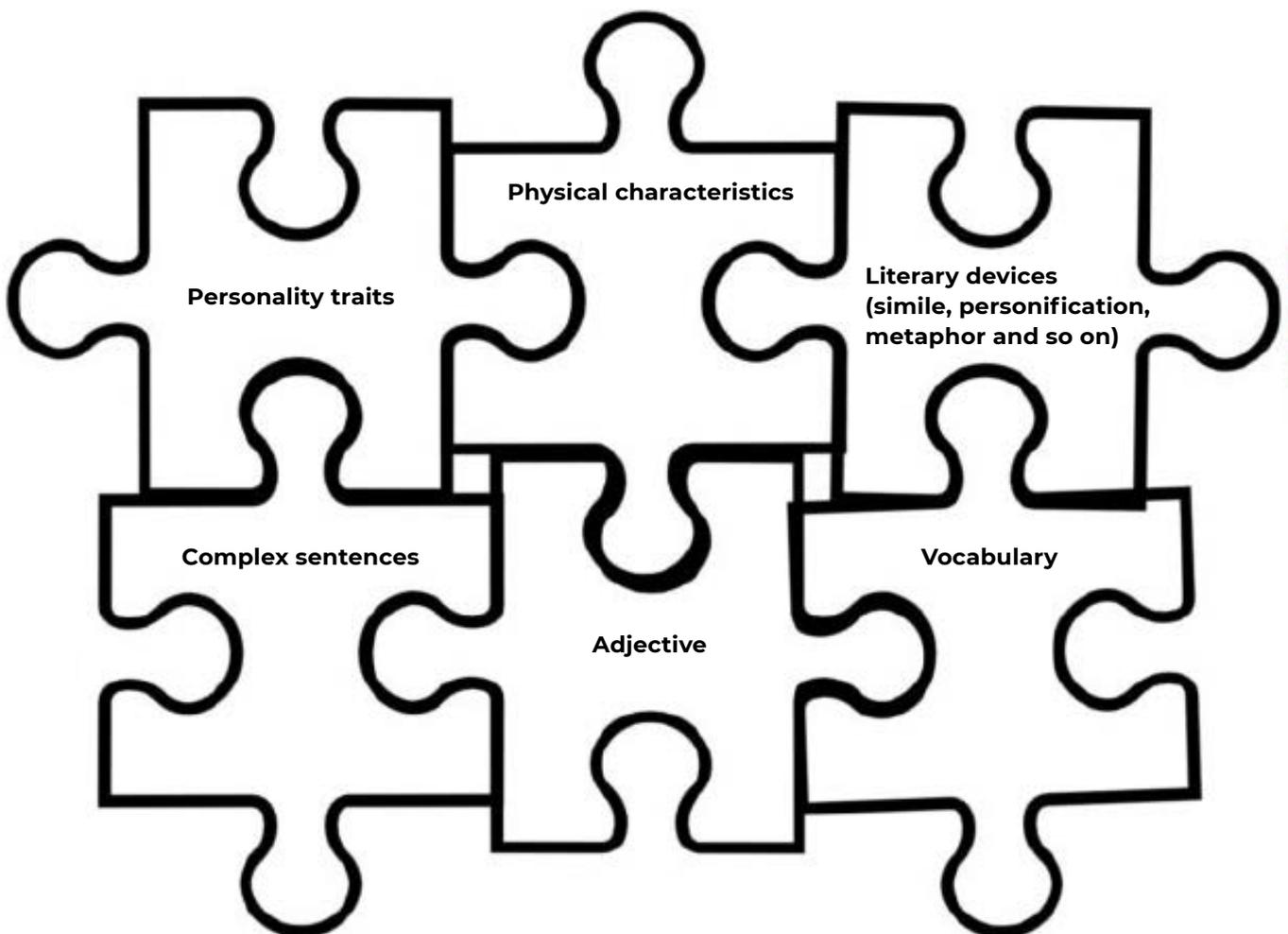
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English/literacy – Exploring literary description

Activity sheet 1: Literary description puzzle

Your tasks

- Highlight key features in the two character descriptions.
- Use the puzzle to guide what you highlight.
- Write annotations around the text extracts.



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English/literacy – Exploring literary description

Activity sheet 1: Literary description puzzle (continued)

Text extract 1

A black shadow dropped down into the circle. It was Bagheera the Black Panther, inky black all over, but with the panther markings showing up in certain lights like the pattern of watered silk. Everybody knew Bagheera, and nobody cared to cross his path, for he was as cunning as Tabaqui, as bold as the wild buffalo, and as reckless as the wounded elephant. But he had a voice as soft as wild honey dripping from a tree, and a skin softer than down.

– Rudyard Kipling, *The Jungle Books*

Text extract 2

My brother Ben's face, thought Eugene, is like a piece of slightly yellow ivory; his high white head is knotted fiercely by his old man's scowl; his mouth is like a knife, his smile the flicker of light across a blade. His face is like a blade, and a knife, and a flicker of light: it is delicate and fierce, and scowls beautifully forever, and when he fastens his hard white fingers and his scowling eyes upon a thing he wants to fix, he sniffs with sharp and private concentration through his long, pointed nose...his hair shines like that of a young boy – it is crinkled and crisp as lettuce. (p. 135)

– *Look Homeward, Angel*, by Thomas Wolfe (Simon & Schuster, 1995, originally published 1929)

Text extract 3

This hobbit was a very well-to-do hobbit, and his name was Baggins. The Bagginses have lived in the neighbourhood of The Hill for time out of mind, and people considered them very respectable, not only because most of them were rich, but also because they never had any adventures or did anything unexpected: you could tell what a Baggins would say on any question without the bother of asking him. This is a story of how a Baggins had an adventure, and found himself doing and saying things altogether unexpected. He may have lost the neighbours' respect, but he gained – well, you will see whether he gained anything in the end.

The mother of our particular hobbit – what is a hobbit? I suppose hobbits need some description nowadays, since they have become rare and shy of the Big People, as they call us. They are (or were) a little people, about half our height, and smaller than the bearded dwarves. Hobbits have no beards. There is little or no magic about them, except the ordinary everyday sort which helps them to disappear quietly and quickly when large stupid folk like you and me come blundering along, making a noise like elephants which they can hear a mile off. They are inclined to be fat in the stomach; they dress in bright colours (chiefly green and yellow); wear no shoes, because their feet grow natural leathery soles and thick warm brown hair like the stuff on their heads (which is curly); have long clever brown fingers, good-natured faces, and laugh deep fruity laughs (especially after dinner, which they have twice a day when they can get it). “

– *The Hobbit*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

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English/literacy – Exploring literary description

Activity sheet 1: Literary description puzzle (continued)

Text extract 4

Look, I didn't want to be a half-blood.

If you're reading this because you think you might be one, my advice is: close this book right now. Believe whatever lie your mom or dad told you about your birth, and try to lead a normal life.

Being a half-blood is dangerous. It's scary. Most of the time, it gets you killed in painful, nasty ways. If you're a normal kid, reading this because you think it's fiction, great. Read on. I envy you for being able to believe that none of this ever happened. But if you recognize yourself in these pages – if you feel something stirring inside – stop reading immediately. You might be one of us. And once you know that, it's only a matter of time before they sense it too, and they'll come for you.

Don't say I didn't warn you.

My name is Percy Jackson.

I'm twelve years old. Until a few months ago, I was a boarding student at Yancy Academy, a private school for troubled kids in upstate New York.

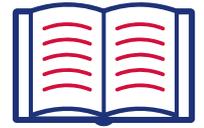
Am I a troubled kid?

Yeah. You could say that.

- Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief (Book 1) 2013 Penguin

Year 5 & 6

English/literacy – Creating literary descriptions



Things your child will need

Have these things available so your child can complete this task.

Ideal

- [Creating literary descriptions video](#)
- Activity sheet 1: DIAL into a character
- Activity sheet 2: Character bubble map
- Activity sheet 3: Literary description
- Paper or workbook
- Pencil or pen
- Highlighter

Backup

- Printed version of the [Creating literary descriptions PowerPoint presentation](#)
- Paper

Before your child starts

This lesson aims to support your child to write a literary description based on a character.

What is a literary description?

A literary description is a creative way to describe a person, place or thing. These are found in literary texts such as novels and poetry, but might also be found in persuasive texts, such as in a travel brochure describing a destination.

The most common literary descriptions are based around a character or a setting.

What your child needs to do

Your child will watch a video of a lesson about identifying and finding examples of literary descriptions in texts. The teacher will guide your child as they learn how to identify, explain and create a literary description.

Throughout the lesson, your child will be asked to pause the video to complete an activity on the activity sheets.

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English/literacy – Creating literary descriptions

What your child can do next

Your child will be completing a range of activities, including:

- revising what a literacy description is
- exploring how to structure a literary description
- creating a literary description
- editing and getting feedback on their description.

Extension/Additional activity

Your child might create a literary description of a destination and create a travel brochure.

Options for your child**Activity too hard?**

Have your child build vocabulary first to help them with their sentences.

Your child may prefer to rewrite a literary description from a character they already know quite well.

Activity too easy?

Your child can create a literary description from the point of view of a different character.

For example, if writing about Miss Trunchbull, your child could write about Matilda from Miss Trunchbull's point of view.

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English/literacy – Creating literary descriptions

Activity sheet 1: DIAL into a character

Your tasks

- Read the literary description about Miss Trunchbull.
- Complete the DIAL into the character table below using the questions to guide your answers.

“Miss Trunchbull, the Headmistress, was something else altogether. She was a gigantic holy terror, a fierce tyrannical monster, who frightened the life out of pupils and teachers alike. There was an aura of menace about her even at a distance, and when she came up close you could almost feel the dangerous heat radiating from her as from a red hot rod of metal.

When she marched – Miss Trunchbull never walked, she always marched like a storm trooper, with long strides and arms swinging when she marched along a corridor you could actually hear her snorting as she went, and if a group of children happened to be in her path, she ploughed right on through them like a tank, with small people bouncing off her to left and right.

She was above all a most formidable female. She had once been a famous athlete, and even now the muscles were still clearly in evidence. You could see them in the bull neck, in the big shoulders, in the thick arms, in the sinewy wrists and in the powerful legs.

Looking at her, you got the feeling that this was someone who could bend iron bars and tear telephone directories in half.

Her face, I'm afraid, was neither a thing of beauty nor a joy for ever. She had an obstinate chin, a cruel mouth and small arrogant eyes. And as for her clothes...they were, to say the least, extremely odd. She always had on a brown cotton smock which was pinched in around the waist with a wide leather belt. This belt was fastened in front with an enormous silver buckle...”



Image and text extract from Roald Dahl's 'Matilda'

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English/literacy – Creating literary descriptions

Activity sheet 1: DIAL into a character (continued)

Student scaffold

DIAL	Questions	Your Answers
<p>D Description</p>	<p>What descriptive words did the author choose to tell us about the character?</p>	
<p>I Illustration</p>	<p>What do the illustrations tell us? Illustrate what you think the character looks like</p>	
<p>A Actions</p>	<p>What does this character do?</p>	
<p>L Language</p>	<p>What does this character say? How do they speak? What words do they use?</p>	

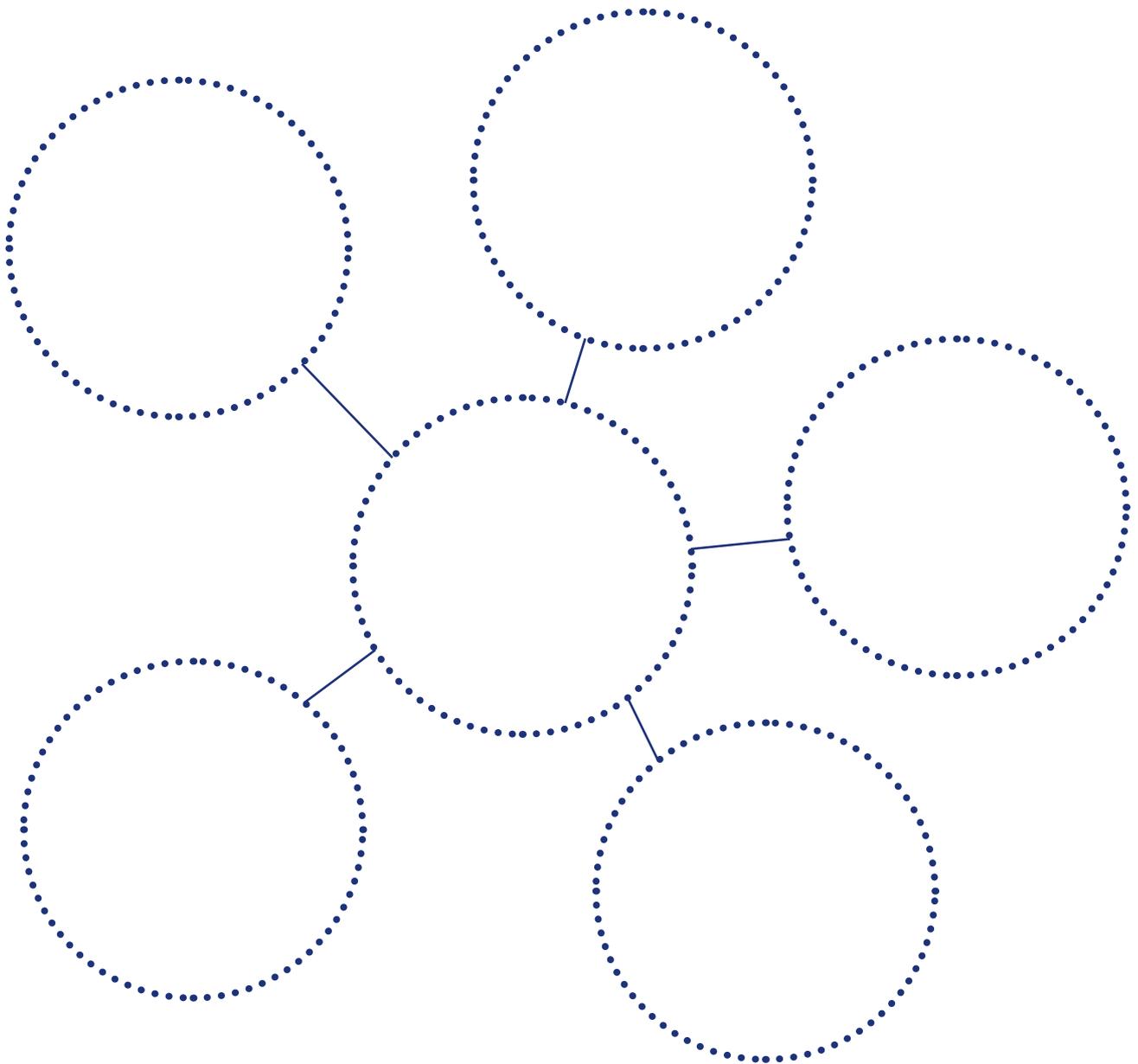
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English/literacy – Creating literary descriptions

Activity sheet 2: Character bubble map

Your task

- Use this map to brainstorm vocabulary.



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English/literacy – Creating literary descriptions

Activity sheet 3: Literary description**Your tasks**

- Write a character description to introduce your reader to your character.
- Use a character you already know, or create your own.
- You might like to visualise and draw your character first to help you.

Some tips to consider

- Incorporate into your description the puzzle pieces from the literary devices puzzle guide.
- Use sophisticated vocabulary.
- Use adjectives to help the reader visualise your character.
- Incorporate a mix of simple, compound and complex sentences.
- Use punctuation for effect (!, ? ; ; ... ,).
- Use literary devices, such as metaphor and simile, in your work.

Your literary description

Year 5 & 6

English/literacy – Responding to text 1



Things your child will need

Have these things available so your child can complete this task.

Ideal

- [Responding to text video](#)
- Activity sheet 1: Image brainstorm
- Activity sheet 2: Almost impossible: Crossing the Blue Mountains
- Activity sheet 3: Cloze passage
- Paper or workbook
- Pencil or pen
- Highlighter

Backup

- Printed version of the [Almost impossible: Crossing the Blue Mountains PowerPoint presentation](#)
- Paper

Before your child starts

This lesson focuses on building vocabulary and background knowledge around the text: 'Almost Impossible: Crossing the Blue Mountains' by Kate Walker and published in the School Magazine.

This text is written from the point of view of European settlers and does not acknowledge that the traditional custodians of the Blue Mountains crossed them regularly. You can explore the more information about the traditional custodians on the [NSW National parks website](#).

What your child needs to do

Your child will watch a video of a lesson to introduce them to the text and explore vocabulary within it. The teacher will guide your child as they brainstorm and delve into the meaning of words within different contexts.

Throughout the lesson, your child will be asked to pause the video to complete an activity on the activity sheets.

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English/literacy – Responding to text 1

What your child can do next

Your child will be completing a range of activities, including:

- brainstorming vocabulary around an image
- using context clues to determine the meaning of a word
- exploring strategies to understand a word in more detail
- choosing appropriate words in a cloze passage.

Extension/Additional activity

Your child might research additional information about the Blue Mountains, Aboriginal Dreaming stories based in the area or on Governor Arthur Phillip.

Options for your child

Activity too hard?

Your child might focus on understanding the vocabulary within the first section of the text. Have your child say the words aloud in different sentences.

Activity too easy?

Have your child create their own cloze passage with different words omitted from the text.

Year 5 & 6

English/literacy – Responding to text 1

Activity sheet 1: Image brainstorm

Your tasks

- Use this image to start a vocabulary brainstorm.
- Place the words around the image.
- After returning to the video for further instruction, use a thesaurus or other words you know to add to the words.



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English/literacy – Responding to text 1

Activity sheet 2: Almost impossible: Crossing the Blue Mountains**Your tasks**

- Read the following text extract.
- Highlight any unfamiliar vocabulary within the 'First Attempts' section.

Almost Impossible: Crossing the Blue Mountains

Article by Kate Walker, published in The School Magazine

(Note: This text is written from the point of view of European settlers and does not acknowledge that the traditional custodians of the Blue Mountains crossed them regularly.)

The Blue Mountains, west of Sydney, can be crossed by car in one hour and fifteen minutes, the distance being just seventy kilometres. However, back in 1788 when European colonists first settled in Sydney Cove, those mountains were a barrier no-one could pass. It would take twenty-five years and as many attempts to find a way across.

First attempts

In December 1789 Governor Arthur Phillip sent Lieutenant William Dawes with two soldiers to cross the Blue Mountains on foot. Only six horses had come from England with the First Fleet, and they were too valuable to be risked or spared. Horses would have been useless on the journey anyway. Dawes's party spent three exhausting days climbing rocky ravines and hacking through tangled bush. They reached Mount Twiss, north of where Linden is today. Here their food ran out and they turned back, having crossed less than a quarter of the way.

It was a bitter defeat. Dawes had been sent to find better farmland away from the coast. Crops planted in the sandy soil of Sydney Cove had failed to thrive, and better farmland needed to be found if the colony was to feed itself. But those mountains, a mere fifty kilometres away, defied escaped convicts and soldiers alike. Governor Philip mounted no more serious attempts and focussed instead on developing farms around the Parramatta and Hawkesbury Rivers. Unfortunately those farms failed too.

In 1792 Major Francis Grose took over as caretaker Governor, with Captain William Paterson as second-in-command. Paterson was a seasoned soldier and explorer, and he set out in September 1793 to cross the Blue Mountains by boat. His party of soldiers and convicts followed the Grose River, which flowed out of the mountains to the north. Rowing against the river current would prove the easiest part of the journey.

They soon entered a vast valley rimmed with sheer cliffs on either side. The exploration party was forced to carry their two boats over rocky shallows. Then came the waterfalls. Waterfall after waterfall, around which the boats had to be hauled. After ten tiring days, one boat had been shattered on a stump, and the planks of the other boat were coming loose. Paterson had followed the torturous river for just a third of its length when he admitted defeat and turned back. Boats were as useless as horses in this wild country.

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English/literacy – Responding to text 1

Activity sheet 3: Cloze passage

Your task

- Read the text extract and add a word in the gap that you think makes sense.

The text continued:

Seamen attempt a crossing on foot

Henry Hacking had been quartermaster of the First Fleet ship Sirius. He was a rough man, often in trouble with the law, and he hoped that if he found a path across the mountains, the [insert correct word 1 here] would overlook his villainous deeds. With two companions he is believed to have [insert correct word 2 here] only as far as present-day Linden. Though Hacking himself suggested he made it much further—all the way to the Great Cliff wall of Kings Tableland. If he had, that cliff plummeting 1000 metres to the Jamison Valley below would have stopped him. On his return, Hacking [insert correct word 3 here] the mountains ‘an impassable barrier’ and announced that if he could not cross them, no-one could.

That boastful challenge was taken up by George Bass, the naval explorer after whom Bass Strait is named. In 1796 Bass and two [insert correct word 4 here] tried crossing the mountains along the Burraborang Valley to the south. Rather than [insert correct word 5 here] cumbersome boats, they came prepared with ropes and what Bass called ‘scaling irons ... hooks fastened to the wrists, to better climb the precipitous ridges’ (probably what we’d call today grappling hooks). With these Bass was able to climb steep [insert correct word 6 here]. Other times, he had himself lowered down on ropes. His party travelled west, reaching the Kanangra Plateau, with its 700 metre high walls. Bass wrote later, ‘after fifteen hard days ... many (more) lines of cliffs made us turn back.’

Word 1:

Word 2:

Word 3:

Word 4:

Word 5:

Word 6:

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English/literacy – Responding to text 2



Things your child will need

Have these things available so your child can complete this task.

Ideal

- [Responding to text video](#)
- Activity sheet 1: Nonfiction and fiction
- Activity sheet 2: Almost impossible: Crossing the Blue Mountains
- Paper or workbook
- Pencil or pen
- Highlighter

Backup

- Printed version of the [Almost impossible: Crossing the Blue Mountains PowerPoint presentation](#)
- Paper

Before your child starts

This lesson focuses on comprehension skills including skimming a text for information, and using text evidence to make inferences. Your child will explore that we make inferences each day by using our background knowledge, clues in the text, images and making predictions to make a judgement on what is happening, for example, if there is steam coming from the bath, we can infer the water is hot.

This text is written from the point of view of European settlers and does not acknowledge that the traditional custodians of the Blue Mountains crossed them regularly. You can explore the more information about the traditional custodians on the [NSW National parks website](#).

What your child needs to do

Your child will watch a video of a lesson to explore the text and demonstrate how to use text evidence to answer questions. The teacher will guide your child as they brainstorm and delve into the meaning of words within different contexts. Throughout the lesson, your child will be asked to pause the video to complete an activity on the activity sheets.

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English/literacy – Responding to text 2

What your child can do next

Your child will be completing a range of activities, including:

- exploring nonfiction text features
- using evidence in texts to make inferences.

Extension/Additional activity

Your child might compare a Blue Mountains tourism website with information about the Blue Mountains from the text

Options for your child**Activity too hard?**

Explore inferences further by giving scenarios, for example: she drank the whole water bottle in thirty seconds – the inference would be that she is thirsty.

Activity too easy?

Have your child read the entire text and annotate other examples of where they might make an inference.

Year 5 & 6

English/literacy – Responding to text 2

Activity sheet 1: Nonfiction and fiction

Your tasks

- Highlight clues in the text that show it is nonfiction (headings, sub-headings, images and so on)
- Highlight clues in the text that show it is fiction.

[Access the full text from NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service here.](#)

Blue Mountains National Park

Explore World Heritage-listed Blue Mountains National Park, home of the famous Three Sisters in Katoomba. Discover iconic lookouts and waterfalls, historic walking tracks, mountain biking, Aboriginal culture, adventure sports, and camping – right on Sydney’s doorstep.

[Blue Mountains Heritage Centre](#) is a good introduction to this popular park, and the [Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area](#).

Pack a [picnic](#) and enjoy a day trip to marvel at the [Three Sisters](#) rock formation from Echo Point, in Katoomba. Take in sweeping views of sheer sandstone cliffs and hazy blue Grose Valley declared wilderness area from [Govetts Leap](#), in Blackheath. At Wentworth Falls you’re spoilt for choice with world-class lookouts, walks and waterfalls.

This [certified Ecotourism Destination](#) is a walker’s paradise, boasting over 140km of tracks and trails. Why not walk a section of historic [Prince Henry Cliff walk](#), between Katoomba and Leura. Climb [Mount Banks’ summit](#) or descend into the [Grand Canyon](#). Combine a short walk with [Aboriginal rock art](#) or a swim in a natural pool, near Glenbrook.

[Mountain bike](#) riders can tackle the famed Woodford-Oaks trail, scenic Narrow Neck, or Faulconbridge Ridge trail. There are also great opportunities for adventure sports tours, including abseiling, rock climbing and canyoning.

Within 2 hours’ drive from Sydney, you can be [camping](#) by majestic eucalypts at Euroka, or watching a spectacular sunset at Perrys Lookdown. Seek solitude at remote Acacia Flat, or 4WD to Mount Werong or Buralow Creek, for a night of stargazing and wildlife spotting.

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English/literacy – Responding to text 2

Activity sheet 1: Nonfiction and fiction (continued)

There are 6 areas in this park

1. Katoomba area



Katoomba area is the heart of Blue Mountains National Park. This popular day trip from Sydney is home of the iconic Three Sisters. It's packed with heritage walks, world-class views and waterfalls, in... [Read more](#)

2. Blackheath area



Blackheath area spoils you with amazing walks, mountain biking and cliff top views in Blue Mountains National Park. Visit Govetts Leap, conquer the Grand Canyon and explore the Grose Wilderness. [Read more](#)

3. Glenbrook area



Glenbrook area is your eastern gateway to Blue Mountains National Park from Sydney. Camp in the wild and enjoy natural swimming spots, Aboriginal rock art, walks and mountain biking, so close to Sydney...[Read more](#)

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English/literacy – Responding to text 2

Activity sheet 1: Nonfiction and fiction (continued)

There are 6 areas in this park (continued)

4. Lower Grose Valley area



The Lower Grose Valley area of Blue Mountains National Park tempts you with crowd-free nature escapes. Discover remote camping, walks, and mountain bike trails to secluded lookouts and waterfalls, les...[Read more](#)

5. Mount Wilson area



Visit the natural wonders of Mount Wilson area on an exhilarating walk or mountain bike ride. Hike to Mount Banks, or explore canyons and wilderness in this remote corner of Blue Mountains National Park...[Read more](#)

6. Southern Blue Mountains area



The Southern Blue Mountains area near Oberon is a hidden corner of Blue Mountains National Park. Get off the beaten track and explore remote campgrounds, wilderness walks and 4WD routes. Nearby, Yerra...[Read more](#)

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English/literacy – Responding to text 2

Activity sheet 2: Almost impossible: Crossing the Blue Mountains**Your tasks**

- Read the following text extract.
- Use evidence from the text to infer how each person might be feeling.

Almost Impossible: Crossing the Blue Mountains

Article by Kate Walker, published in The School Magazine

(Note: This text is written from the point of view of European settlers and does not acknowledge that the traditional custodians of the Blue Mountains crossed them regularly.)

The Blue Mountains, west of Sydney, can be crossed by car in one hour and fifteen minutes, the distance being just seventy kilometres. However, back in 1788 when European colonists first settled in Sydney Cove, those mountains were a barrier no-one could pass. It would take twenty-five years and as many attempts to find a way across.

First attempts

In December 1789 Governor Arthur Phillip sent Lieutenant William Dawes with two soldiers to cross the Blue Mountains on foot. Only six horses had come from England with the First Fleet, and they were too valuable to be risked or spared. Horses would have been useless on the journey anyway. Dawes's party spent three exhausting days climbing rocky ravines and hacking through tangled bush. They reached Mount Twiss, north of where Linden is today. Here their food ran out and they turned back, having crossed less than a quarter of the way.

It was a bitter defeat. Dawes had been sent to find better farmland away from the coast. Crops planted in the sandy soil of Sydney Cove had failed to thrive, and better farmland needed to be found if the colony was to feed itself. But those mountains, a mere fifty kilometres away, defied escaped convicts and soldiers alike. Governor Philip mounted no more serious attempts and focussed instead on developing farms around the Parramatta and Hawkesbury Rivers. Unfortunately those farms failed too.

Infer how Dawes might have felt:

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English/literacy – Responding to text 2

**Activity sheet 2: Almost impossible: Crossing the Blue Mountains
(continued)****Text continued:**

In 1792 Major Francis Grose took over as caretaker Governor, with Captain William Paterson as second-in-command. Paterson was a seasoned soldier and explorer, and he set out in September 1793 to cross the Blue Mountains by boat. His party of soldiers and convicts followed the Grose River, which flowed out of the mountains to the north. Rowing against the river current would prove the easiest part of the journey.

They soon entered a vast valley rimmed with sheer cliffs on either side. The exploration party was forced to carry their two boats over rocky shallows. Then came the waterfalls. Waterfall after waterfall, around which the boats had to be hauled. After ten tiring days, one boat had been shattered on a stump, and the planks of the other boat were coming loose. Paterson had followed the torturous river for just a third of its length when he admitted defeat and turned back. Boats were as useless as horses in this wild country.

Infer how Captain William Paterson might have felt:

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English/literacy – Responding to text 2

Activity sheet 2: Almost impossible: Crossing the Blue Mountains (continued)

Text continued:

Seamen attempt a crossing on foot

Henry Hacking had been quartermaster of the First Fleet ship *Sirius*. He was a rough man, often in trouble with the law, and he hoped that if he found a path across the mountains, the authorities would overlook his villainous deeds. With two companions he is believed to have trekked only as far as present-day Linden. Though Hacking himself suggested he made it much further—all the way to the Great Cliff wall of Kings Tableland. If he had, that cliff plummeting 1000 metres to the Jamison Valley below would have stopped him. On his return, Hacking declared the mountains ‘an impassable barrier’ and announced that if he could not cross them, no-one could.

That boastful challenge was taken up by George Bass, the naval explorer after whom Bass Strait is named. In 1796 Bass and two companions tried crossing the mountains along the Burratorang Valley to the south. Rather than haul cumbersome boats, they came prepared with ropes and what Bass called ‘scaling irons ... hooks fastened to the wrists, to better climb the precipitous ridges’ (probably what we’d call today grappling hooks). With these Bass was able to climb steep ravines. Other times, he had himself lowered down on ropes. His party travelled west, reaching the Kanangra Plateau, with its 700 metre high walls. Bass wrote later, ‘after fifteen hard days ... many (more) lines of cliffs made us turn back.’

Infer how Henry Hacking might have felt when George Bass did not succeed: