

Volume 40 Issue 3



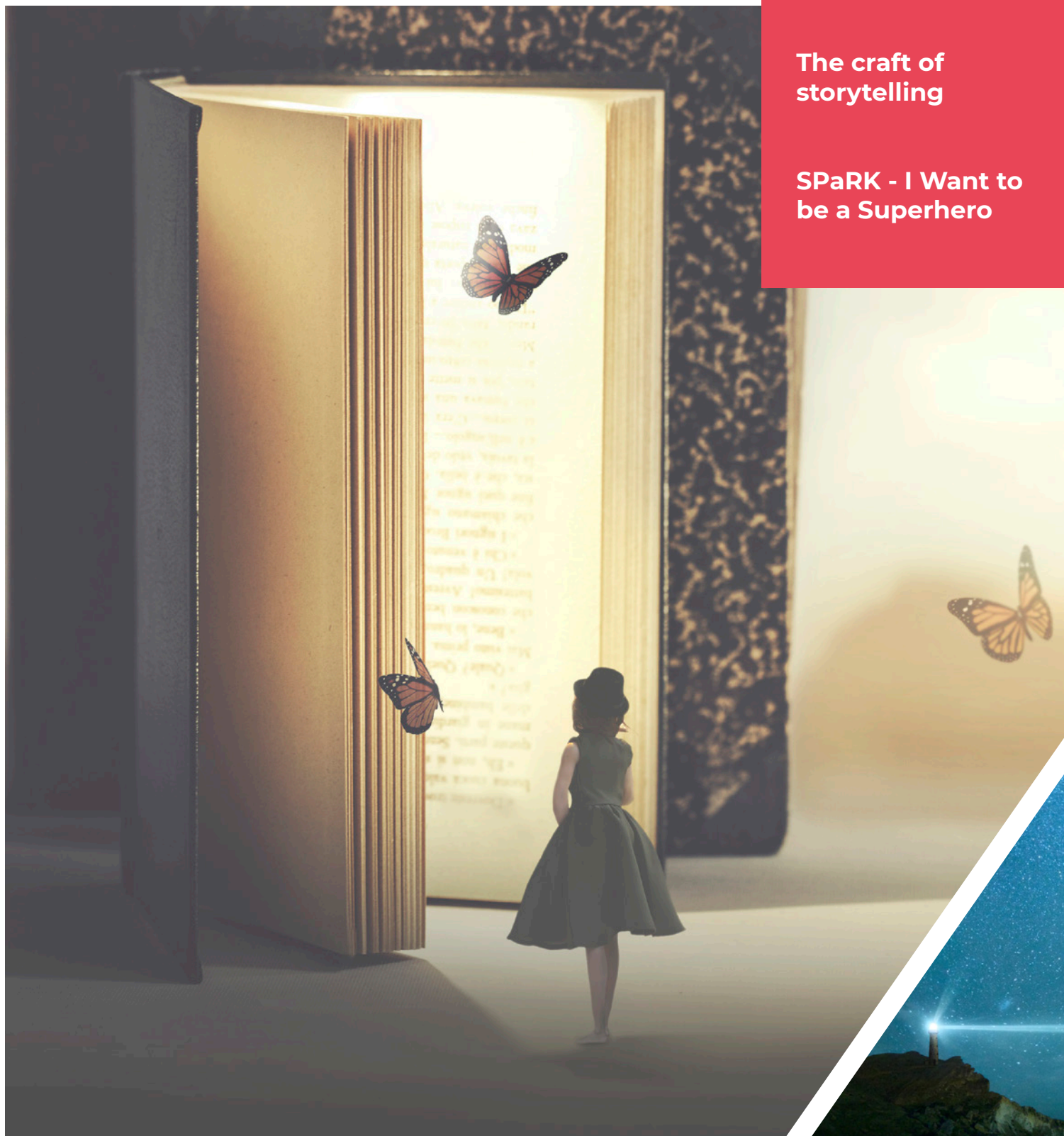
Scan

The journal for educators

**Assessing
multimodal
comprehension**

**The craft of
storytelling**

**SPaRK - I Want to
be a Superhero**



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Scan is a leading refereed journal, published monthly between February and November. Scan aims to bring innovative change to the lives and learning of contemporary educators and students. Through Scan, teachers' practice is informed by critical engagement with peer reviewed research that drives improved school and student outcomes across NSW, Australia and the world. Scan aims to leave teachers inspired, equipped and empowered, and students prepared.

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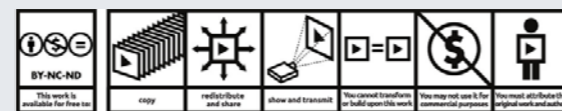
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A framework for assessing multimodal comprehension



Jennifer Asha
Literacy educator

The inclusion of multimodal texts as resources for teaching literacy is mandated by the NSW English K-10 Syllabus and well accepted by teachers. There is a rich history and bank of research-based knowledge for teachers to draw on for teaching and assessing literacy with print-based texts. However, there is less assistance for those teaching reading-viewing with multimodal texts.

This article puts forward a reinterpretation of a well-known framework to assist teachers considering appropriate pedagogy for teaching students to read-view multimodal texts. Particular emphasis is placed on the assessment of student meaning construction with multimodal texts.

Jennifer Asha offers a reinterpretation of the Four Resources Model for teaching and assessing reading-viewing with multimodal texts.

A model of pedagogy for teaching multimodal texts

In previous Scan articles, [Examining persuasive techniques using visual and digital texts](#) and [Constructing meaning with persuasive online advertisements](#), I have explored appropriate resources for teaching the crucial critical literacy skills that students need when comprehending multimodal texts. The pedagogy put forward by those articles is underpinned by the Four Resources Model (Luke & Freebody, 1999).

Luke and Freebody's dynamic model was designed as a way of helping to conceptualise reading pedagogy. Drawing on historical approaches to teaching reading from the last fifty years (Pearson & Cervetti, 2015), the model articulates four resources that an effective reader enacts when reading:

- The **code breaker** resource is enacted when the reader is engaged in cracking the code of the text, and is focussed on the material form of the text.
- The **text participant** resource is evident when the reader is involved in creating and integrating knowledge from the text.
- When engaged in the **text user** resource, a reader is considering and enacting the social functions of a text in a particular context.
- The resource of **text critic** is enacted when a reader reflects on texts in various modes to examine and evaluate, and justify evaluations of texts, from a discerning point of view (Freebody, Luke & Gilbert, 1991; Comber & Simpson, 2001; Freebody, 2007). This text critic resource is applicable when reading texts created for imaginative and informative purposes. However, it is particularly important when comprehending persuasive multimodal texts that were created with the specific purpose of convincing the audience of a particular perspective.

While the original articulations of the Four Resources Model were centred on print-based texts, the model can be readily applied to the reading-viewing of multimodal texts.

A reinterpretation of the Four Resources Model

Meaningful literacy instruction is informed by targeted assessment (Afflerbach, 2017) of student literacy development. Thus, pedagogy informed by the Four Resources Model would include assessment of students' reader-viewer resource application.

Teachers using the Four Resources Model to reflect on student comprehension of multimodal texts would consider students' enactment of these resources during and after reading-viewing. The following paragraphs suggest a way of thinking about the Four Resources Model for the purpose of assessing student comprehension of multimodal texts.

Noticing multimodal elements

Students' comments about the text that name the multimodal elements used or label the visual or written resources would constitute code breaking. These comments would include verbiage such as **'I see...'** and **'I notice...'** and is called **noticing** in my interpretation of the Four Resources Model.

The teacher can ask:

- Is the reader-viewer noticing and unlocking the visual/verbal/audio codes and conventions of the text?

Engaging with the meanings of a multimodal text

Students are **engaging** with the meanings of a multimodal text when they describe the text's purpose and effect on themselves as reader-viewer, or explain its meaning making techniques. In this process, students would say things such as **'the text...'** or **'the techniques...'**

The teacher can consider:

- Is the reader-viewer engaging with the meanings of the multimodal text?
- Are they talking about the characters, plot, setting or content of the text?
- Is the reader-viewer enjoying, learning or being persuaded by the text, or engaging with the text, in a way that is aligned with the text purpose?

Responding to and reflecting on a multimodal text

When students create new visual, verbal or written texts using knowledge of multimodal codes and meaning making resources they are **responding** to the multimodal text. Such responses would include an oral personal response to text, making connections with other texts read-viewed, and reflecting mentally on the meanings of the text. When enacting the **responding** resource students may say things such as **'I feel...'** and **'I think...'**

Questions to prompt teacher thinking in this regard could be:

- Is the reader-viewer using oral or written language or visual text creation to respond to the multimodal text?
- Is the reader-viewer making connections between what they notice in the text and their own experience?
- Are they interpreting or synthesising information from the text?

Critiquing a multimodal text

Discussion of the creators' intent and choices made in the creation of the multimodal text would demonstrate the student enacting the **critiquing** resource. Students' comments may include mention of **'the creator...'**, **'they...'** and **'the audience...'**

The teacher can ask:

- Is the reader-viewer engaging as critic to analyse the purpose of the multimodal text creator and the anticipated response to the text by the intended audience?
- Are they showing an understanding that the text has been created to meet a particular purpose for a specific audience?

Classroom assessment of student noticing, responding, engaging and critiquing

An application of this reinterpretation of the Four Resources Model applied to student talk is shown in Table 1, as a small group of students discuss a magazine advertisement for a fishing boat. The three

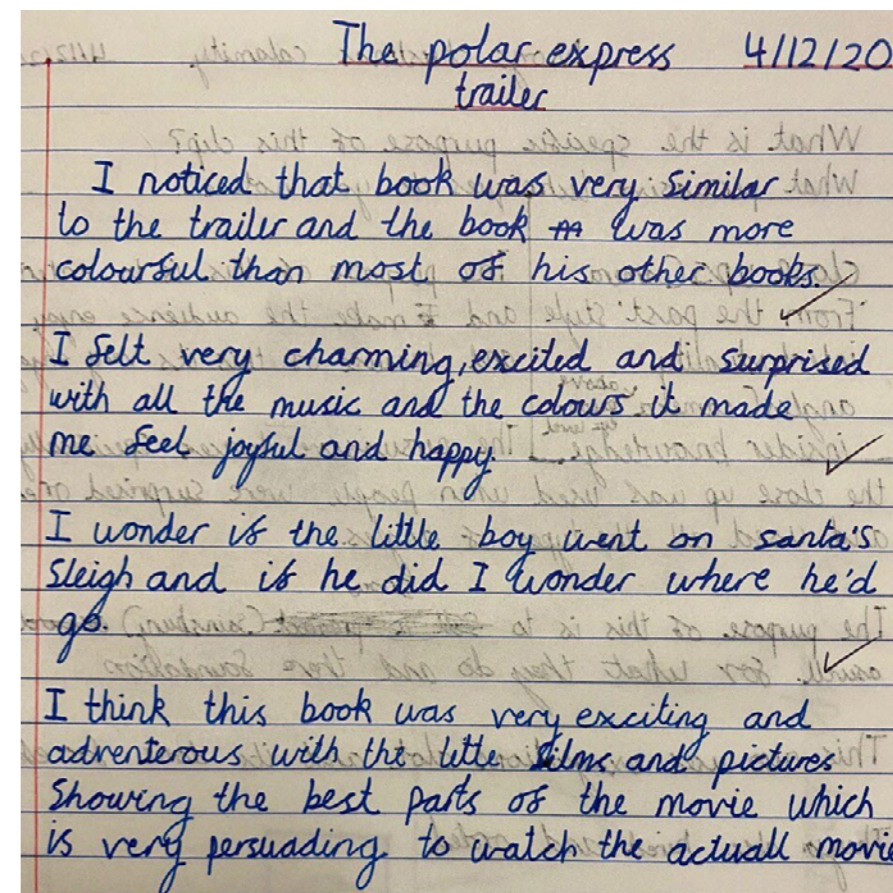
Student	Comment	Resource
1	'Ok, so the teacher said we've got to look at the ad and talk about what it means.'	-
2	'Well, it's obviously about boats. Trying to sell boats.'	Noticing
1	'It looks like a cool boat, I wouldn't mind owing one of them.'	Responding
3	'It makes me think of when I went fishing at Berowra.'	Engaging
1	'There's only one boat in all that water.'	Noticing
3	'It's very salient, it stands out even though it's small.'	Noticing
1	'It makes you think that the boat must be tough to get through all that water.'	Engaging
3	'The brand name is there at the bottom.'	Noticing
1	'What does this even mean, though? The big hand coming down.'	Noticing Engaging
2	'That's like that painting we saw, on the roof of that big church we saw pictures of during art.'	Engaging
3	'God's hand. Reaching down.'	Noticing Engaging
1	'God is touching the boat.'	Noticing Engaging
2	'They're trying to make us feel in awe of the boat.'	Critiquing
3	'I think they're saying the boat is special, touched by God.'	Critiquing
1	'I might tell my dad about this type of boat.'	Responding

Table 1. Sample analysis of students' comments about a multimodal text

students all contribute to the discussion and collaboratively comprehend the text, enacting different resources.

Short transcripts, such as this, can be recorded during a small group discussion and analysed to give the teacher information on which resources are enacted by the group, as well as how individual students enact each resource. This transcript reveals that while Student 2 spoke 3 times out of the total 14 utterances, they enacted 3 different resources: noticing, engaging and critiquing. Student 1 spoke 7 out of 14 times, noticing, engaging and responding. Student 3 spoke 5 times, noticing, engaging and critiquing. In follow up lessons, the teacher could use strategies such as modelled reading-viewing to demonstrate each resource in the context of constructing meaning with a multimodal text. Prompting questions could also be used to encourage noticing, engaging, responding and critiquing from all students during small group discussions.

Individual discussion between a student and teacher presents another opportunity to assess student resource use, in a similar way to the small group setting. The analysis of written work samples, as shown in the following examples, could also be an informative assessment process. In Student work sample 1, a Stage 3 student has recorded their reflections and observations after watching [the movie trailer for The Polar Express](#). The class had previously read the picture book of the same name, written and illustrated by Chris Van Allsburg. The student's knowledge of this print-based text is evident in their reflection on the movie trailer: **'the book was very similar to the trailer'**. This comparison of texts is also evidence of the student **noticing** the plot and characters common to both texts, and **noticing** the use of colour in the picture book, while **engaging** in the meanings of the trailer. **'I wonder if the little boy went on Santa's sleigh...'** is another example of the



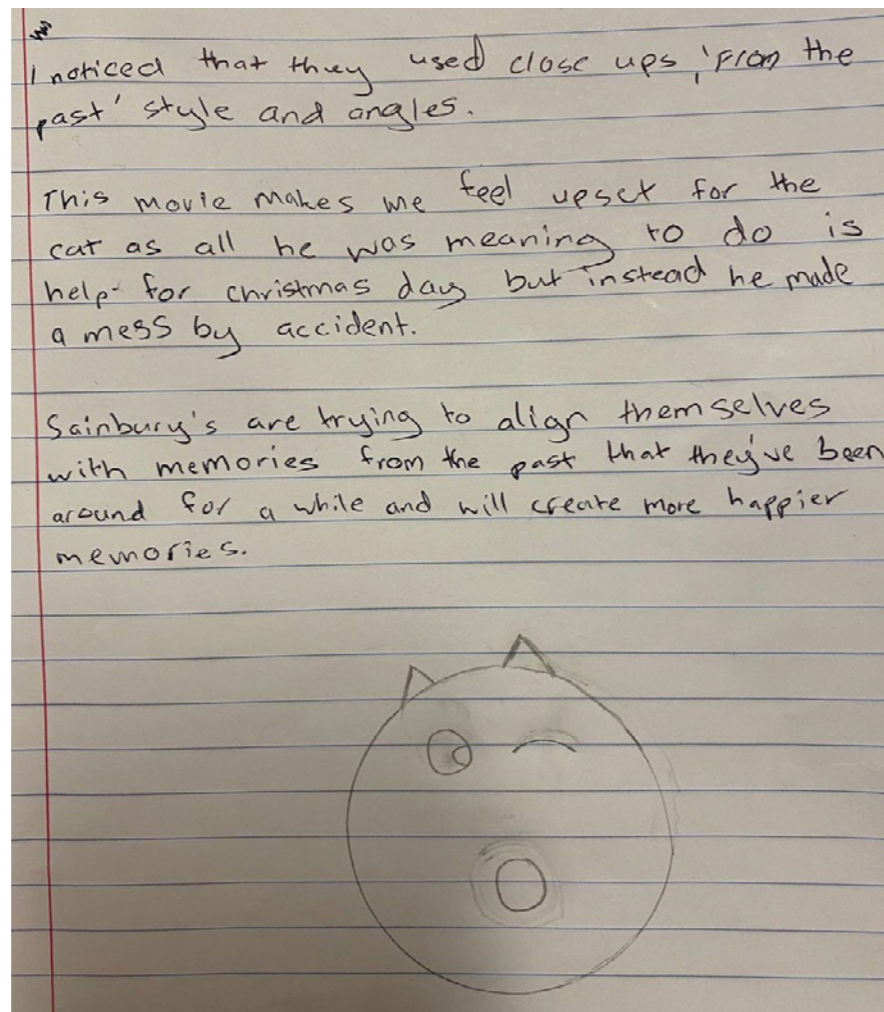
Student work sample 1

student **engaging** with the story, pondering the actions of a character. The student's comments on the effects of the music and colours used in the trailer – **'[They] made me feel joyful and happy'** – indicate **responding** personally to the trailer. The comment on the choice of content in the trailer can be seen as evidence of the student's **critiquing** as they demonstrate an understanding of the text creators' choices to meet the purpose of the text: **'showing the best parts of the movie is very persuading...'**

Student work sample 2 was written by a Stage 3 student after watching an [advertisement for Sainsbury's](#), a UK grocery store. The advertisement is a recreation of the 50 year old picture book classic, 'Mog's Christmas Calamity' by Judith Kerr, and was linked to a Save the Children charity campaign to promote child literacy. As such, it doesn't advertise any particular products but retells a favourite childhood story of the intended audience, only showing the company name at the very end of the narrative clip. This student's writing indicates previous learning about visual elements through the **noticing** of close-up shots and angles. The mention of **'from the past style'** refers to elements of the setting used

as a persuasive technique, noticed by the student. The student doesn't enact the **engaging** or **critiquing** resource to give a commentary on the effect of the shot distance or angle on the audience, or the creators' purpose for using these techniques. Although, the student's last paragraph shows evidence of **critiquing** as they comment on the supermarket's intentions for making the advertisement. The student reflects on their personal response to the text ('I felt upset...') showing evidence of **responding**, while also **engaging** in the meanings of the multimodal text, as the character's actions and motives are interpreted: 'all he was meaning to do [was] help...'

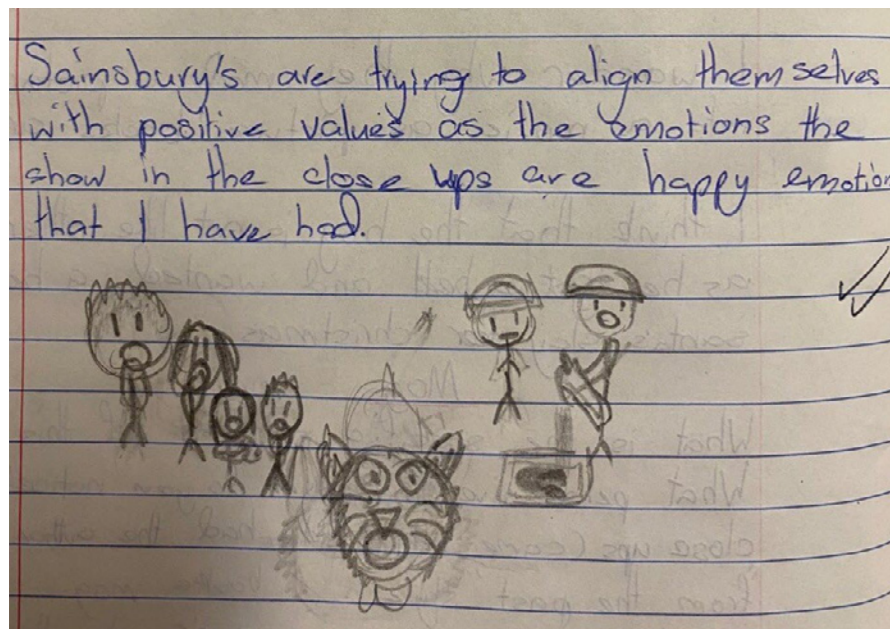
The written comment in Student work sample 3 shows evidence of all four resources. The student is **responding** in writing and image. Their response indicates **noticing** the visual technique of distance, through the mention of close-ups. The student enacts **critiquing** as they interpret the reasons the advertisement makers have for including this element and the effect on the intended audience.



Student work sample 2

The student is also **engaging** with the meanings of the text as they make connections between their own emotions and those shown on the faces of the characters.

Through a reinterpretation of the Four Resources Model, teachers can assess the comprehension of multimodal texts. Applying the concepts of **noticing, engaging, responding** and **critiquing** to students' spoken or written responses to multimodal texts can give teachers insight into the reading-viewing resources students are enacting. Equally, this practice can help teachers to plan future reading-viewing lessons that lead students to be discerning, critical meaning makers.



Student work sample 3

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How to cite this article – Asha, J. (2021). A framework for assessing multimodal comprehension. *Scan*, 40(3).

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Story telling: A writer's perspective - Kirli Saunders



Kirli Saunders

Writer and NSW Aboriginal Woman of the Year (2020)

Acclaimed writer, Kirli Saunders, kindly agreed to respond to a range of questions posed by Scan. This article comprises the questions and responses. The interchange offers readers a glimpse into the thoughts and ideas behind Kirli's writing.

Kirli Saunders is a new and exciting voice for children and young adult readers. Three of her recently published books include, 'The Incredible Freedom Machines' (2018), a picture book illustrated by Matt Ottley, 'Kindred' (2019), a suite of poetry for adults and young adults, and 'Bindi' (2020) with illustrations by Dub Leffler, a verse novel suitable for upper primary or lower secondary students. Born on Gundungurra Country, situated in south-eastern New South Wales, Kirli is a proud Gunai woman and her books have a contemplative aura that communicates a passionate bond with Country and ancestral wisdom.

Q&A

Were books important in your early years?

We were spoilt with a library card and many trips to the book shops as children, something I'm really grateful for. My family also loved to share stories. Dad was particularly good at the spooky ones!

What life experiences led you along the path to becoming a writer?

I had wonderful teachers who inspired me to create and supported me to express myself through art, music, writing and dance. It wasn't until year 11, that I found poetry. I loved the rhythmic word play, the layout and the accessibility of poetry. It underpins most of my work now.

Do you find writing energising or exhausting?

I find writing for creation really energising. Something I've been doing more recently is taking the time to sit in a space and observe and list everything going on around me. Or I write the smallest most minute detail of an action that brings me joy (like planting a seed). I find these activities, writing for the sake of it, for the joy and calm of it, really soothing.

Your publications cover a range of intended readers. What led to these diverse choices?

Poetry is the backbone of my picture books, poetry and plays, so I think in some way there's a real synergy between my stories which present differently. I like the way that presenting in different genres allows me to share ideas with a range of audiences.

In most instances, I'd say the feeling or essence of a work will shape the genre of the story. My plays, 'Going Home' and 'Dead Horse Gap' are journeys, so pairing them with action and sound on a stage feels right. My verse novel, Bindi is a narrative, a series of happenings, and then I feel they fit together in a sequential flow. My picture books are sparse but whimsical, and then they need illustrations to accompany them.

How important do you think emotional connections are for a writer? What connections are most significant to you as a writer?

Connecting emotionally with my readers, and the world around me is one of the main reasons I publish what I write. I like to create spaces to share my

thoughts, feelings or imaginings, and for others to feel seen, heard and held in those spaces.

How have other authors, friends, and/or family assisted you in your writing?

My friends and family are wonderful characters in my real-life adventures and in my written ones. They're also remarkable proof-readers. I feel really lucky that the poets and writers I admire have also been great mentors and supports for me as I've navigated the writing world.

Do you have any messages for young aspiring writers?

Nope, just a bunch of eco-friendly balloons and streamers, and a marching band championing them. It's so remarkable to pursue writing and I really encourage anyone interested to dive into it and keep creating and learning and finding strength in their voice.



In what ways do you think teachers can inspire and assist their students' creative writing?

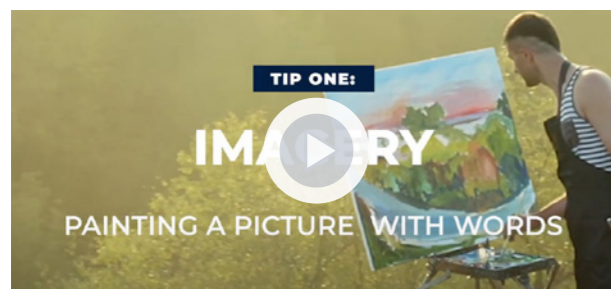
By providing contemporary high quality engaging stories from a diverse range of creators – through books, theatre, music, digital, audio and visual forms. And by championing creation and expression and not just the technicalities of writing.

Your books demonstrate the power of language. The narratorial voice in 'Bindi' incorporates words from the

Gundungurra language. Why did you choose to have Bindi use these words? I was born and raised on Gundungurra lands, and without these language words. So, I wanted to learn and make accessible the incredible language that has allowed me to communicate with the land more intuitively and to honour the teachers of that language in my community.

Additional resources

The thoughtful and very personal responses presented here articulate some of the key elements behind Kirli's delightful books. Teachers may choose to share these responses with students when studying any of Kirli's publications or in the process of learning and teaching aspects of creative writing. Additional resources to support such studies include video interviews with Kirli Saunders from the State Library Victoria and from Technology 4 Learning NSW Education, along with a website titled 'Review: The Incredible Freedom Machines' and a podcast, 'At Home with Kirli Saunders'. Links to these digital resources are available in the references and further reading list.



YouTube video: 'Everyone's an author: Ch 6 Poetry and place - Kirli Saunders' by Technology 4 Learning, NSW Education.

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How to cite this article – Saunders, K. (2021). Story telling: A writer's perspective – Kirli Saunders. Scan, 40(3).

SPARK

Shared Practice and Research Kit

I Want to be a Superhero



Nancy Penfold

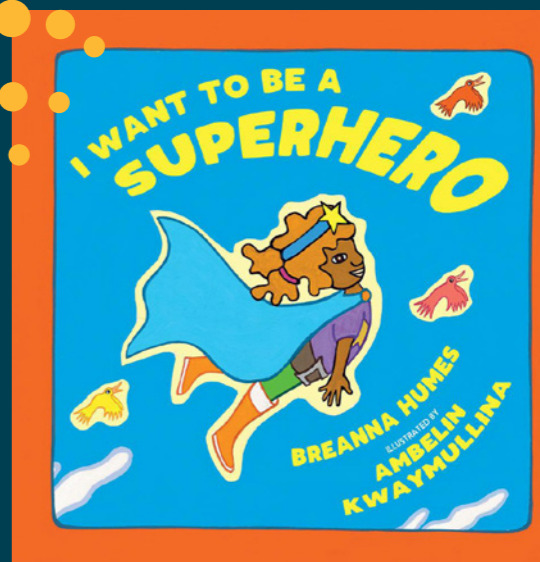
Teacher on Barkindji Country, Broken Hill North Public School

In this Shared Practice and Resource Kit (SPaRK), Nancy Penfold suggests ways 'I Want to be a Superhero' by Breanna Humes and Ambelin Kwaymullina can be used as a springboard for a range of engaging activities for early learners.

Educational significance

'I Want to be a Superhero' is a wonderful book to use with early learners. This bright, humorous story by Aboriginal author Breanna Humes was written when she was just eight years old. By engaging young learners with its clear, positive message, it can inspire them to create and share their stories too. It has similar colours and patterns to other books by Aboriginal authors and illustrators. By focusing on the themes of identity and caring relationships, this book can be used to support varied activities.

Resource overview



'I Want to be a Superhero' is the first picture book written by Breanna Humes. It inspires young audiences to think about their dreams and how they might achieve them. Readers follow a young Breanna as she asks her Elders how to make her dream of becoming a flying superhero come true. Her Elders are interested in helping her achieve her goal. They fill her with hope and guide her understanding of what it means to be a superhero. Through persistence and dedication Breanna is able to achieve her dream. The narrative is complemented with Ambelin's bright illustrations that draw readers into the hopeful world of young Breanna.

After reading the book, teachers can elicit student responses by asking questions like the following. What are your dreams and what will it take to see you fulfill them? Her Elders play a big part in Breanna's success. Who are your elders? What role do they play in your lives? Breanna not only seeks advice from her Elders but puts into practice the advice she receives.

The text is a great starting point to look at the dreams and aspirations of the students in the class. What dreams do the students have? Do they know what they have to do to achieve their dreams? Have they had any advice from their elders like Breanna did? What are the important messages to learn from your Elders or from this story?

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- Express themselves & their relationships with others & their world

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It would be a valuable story to use with other resources by Aboriginal authors when encouraging students to see similarities and differences between this story and other texts. A range of texts by Aboriginal authors and illustrators could be displayed in the school library or classroom. Students can be asked if they can find any similarities in the storylines, language and/or illustrations.

Syllabus links

'I Want to be a Superhero' has value for learning and teaching in a number of subject areas including English, PDHPE, science, visual art and drama for Early stage 1 and Stage 1 students. Teachers may wish to use this text as a focus for a cross curriculum unit of work.

Suggestions for using this resource

Prior to reading the text the class could discuss and brainstorm the idea of a 'superhero'. Questions to aid discussion may include:

- What does it mean to be a superhero?
- Do you know any superheroes?
- What is special about them that makes them a superhero?

While reading the text a teacher may want to raise questions for students to think about, or alternatively could leave discussion until the completion of the story.

After reading 'I Want to be a Superhero' the class could compare their initial ideas about a 'superhero' with notions presented in the book. The book has strong messages on identity and could be used as part of a writing or PDHPE unit looking at identity. It may also lead into a STEM unit looking at the flying aspect of the superhero. Attention could also be drawn to the additional information given in the back about Breanna and how she worked hard to make her dreams come true. It is also important to draw students' attention to the role Elders play in the book and compare it to other picture books known to students.

Texts with similar themes

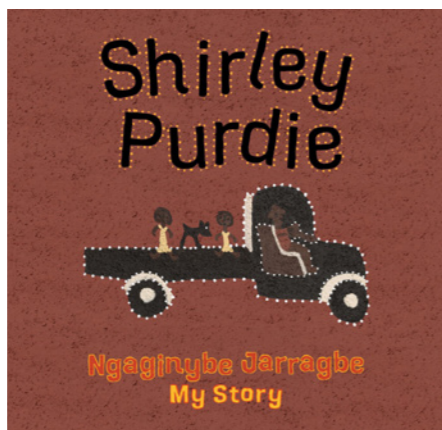
The class could be encouraged to discuss how 'I Want to be a Superhero' is both similar and different to other Aboriginal stories. For instance, 'Our Home, Our Heartbeat' by Adam Briggs, Kate Moon and Rachael Sarra is another picture book filled with bright visuals. It is based on Brigg's song 'The Children Came Back' and this book has much to offer children of all ages. In the story Briggs has a range of 'deadly' Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people doing all sorts of interesting jobs. It raises questions like - Are the people in this story superheroes too?

Another autobiographical picture book is 'My Story, Ngaginybe Jarragbe' by Shirley Purdie. Shirley's words and artworks tell her story of perseverance and the journey she took to follow her dreams to achieve success.

Students can respond to the following questions:

- Do you think Shirley is a superhero?
- What might her Elders have told her that inspired her to work hard to achieve her goals?

It would be worth considering the use of all three texts to reinforce the message about having dreams, listening to Elders and working hard to achieve goals. These ideas can also be tied to school values around striving to succeed and achieve your personal best.



Texts with similar themes: 'Our Home, Our Heartbeat' by Adam Briggs, Kate Moon and Rachael Sarra (left). 'My Story, Ngaginybe Jarragbe' by Shirley Purdie (right).

Teaching activities

English

'I Want to be a Superhero' could be used to support several writing units around the ideas of personal identity. For example:

- Informative text - When I grow up.
- Persuasive text - The best job to have is ...
- Imaginative text - Breanna really becomes a flying superhero – what adventures do you think she would have?
- Persuasive text - What would be the best kind of superpower to have? How would you use that superpower?
- Imaginative text - Imagine you have become a superhero. What kind of superhero are you and how could you help people?

Early Stage 1 - English

A student:

- ENe-8B: demonstrates emerging skills and knowledge of texts to read and view, and shows developing awareness of purpose, audience and subject matter
- ENe-10C: thinks imaginatively and creatively about familiar topics, simple ideas and the basic features of texts when responding to and composing texts.

Stage 1 - English

A student:

- EN1-8B: recognises that there are different kinds of texts when reading and viewing and shows an awareness of purpose, audience and subject matter
- EN1-10C: thinks imaginatively and creatively about familiar topics, ideas and texts when responding to and composing texts.

PDHPE

'I Want to be a Superhero' also provides links to the PDHPD strand 'Health, Wellbeing and Relationships'. In a unit looking at belonging, identity of family structures students can identify strengths and in themselves and others and look at the way relationships support us to achieve our goals.

Students may be able to help each other identify ways that they are 'superheroes' through discussions or 'warm fuzzy' cups where students drop notes into

each other's cups with affirming pictures or words about each other that make them a 'superhero'.

Early Stage 1 - PDHPE

A student:

- PDe-1: identifies who they are and how people grow and change.

Stage 1 - PDHPE

A student:

- PD1-1: A student: describes the qualities and characteristics that make them similar and different to others.

Science and Technology

Breanna wants to fly. Students can design, make, test and evaluate a flying machine for Breanna. In groups, pairs or individually students use STEM journals and a range of different materials to design and develop a flying machine for Breanna. Look at which materials would be best for a flying machine. The class could have competitions to discover which flying machine flies the furthest, spends the longest time in the air, or is the safest aircraft for Breanna. They can consider and evaluate the design process.

Early Stage 1 - Science and Technology

A student:

- STE-2DP-T: develops solutions to an identified need.

Stage 1 - Science and Technology

A student:

- ST1-2DP-T: uses materials, tools and equipment to develop solutions for a need or opportunity.

Creative Arts

The text links in well with the Early Stage 1 'About Me' visual art sample unit in the [Creative Arts K-6 Units of Work](#). Students can explore the concept of identity through visual art using a range of mediums to create artworks depicting themselves in their chosen profession, as a superhero or a superhero they know from their family or community.

Students can also explore these concepts through drama in imaginative play and performance. The text also links well with the Stage 1 'If The Cap Fits' sample unit in [Creative Arts K-6 Units of Work](#) where students

explore different occupations and the uniforms that identify them.

Experimenting

While 'I Want to be a Superhero' is a short story that targets the earlier years, it could also be used as an introduction when considering the changing roles and responsibilities of older students. For instance, it could support leadership initiatives in schools and personal growth units. It could also be used to identify potential careers and community support agencies that work as 'superheroes'.

Older students may be encouraged to use a local newspaper, website, or job posting organisations to identify careers in which people could be considered superheroes. Students can work together to identify why particular jobs, in their local or wider community, may be considered superhero jobs. In identifying superhero jobs students could explore potential career options and the influence they would have as superheroes in those roles. What choices would they need to make in school, social and personal lives to make sure they too could be superheroes?

[Koori Mail](#) always has a range of jobs up on their website. If using a publication like Koori Mail please be aware of how it is used as a resource. When looking at potential careers and community superheroes we aim to develop interest in those areas and enable students to see a link between hard work in school and listening to their Elders and becoming a superhero for their community. The aim should be to ensure all students feel included and as though they can contribute, this may be a sensitive topic and you should seek advice from your local Aboriginal support team through agencies such as the Aboriginal Education Officer (AEO) or the [Aboriginal Education Consultative Group \(AECG\)](#).

References and further reading

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How to cite this article – Penfold, N. (2021). SPaRK – I Want to be a Superhero. Scan, 40(3).

Writer biographies



Jennifer Asha

Jennifer Asha is a literacy educator in primary and tertiary settings with expertise in teaching and learning visual literacy.

Jennifer's previous Scan articles include [Examining persuasive techniques using visual and digital texts](#), [Constructing meaning with persuasive online advertisements](#) and [Teaching visual grammar in the context of digital texts](#).



Kirli Saunders

Kirli Saunders is a proud Gunaï Woman and award-winning international writer. She is a teacher, consultant and artist. In 2020, Kirli was named the NSW Aboriginal Woman of the Year. Her acclaimed titles include 'The Incredible Freedom Machines' (2018), 'Kindred' (2019), and 'Bindi' (2020) and she has a number of forthcoming works.



Nancy Penfold

Nancy Penfold is a proud Kalkadoon and Meriam woman teaching on Barkindji Country at Broken Hill North Public School. She believes the best way to learn is through sharing stories and is passionate about instilling a love for the art of storytelling in her students and school community. Nancy is an active member of her local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group, Aboriginal Medical Service and Police Citizens Youth Club. She values the role community partnerships play in supporting and strengthening the love of literacy in all learners.