

Ideas Overview

Main idea

The main idea of a text is what it is primarily focusing on, its topic or subject matter. Students can identify the main idea in a whole text or part of a text by asking ‘What is this text mostly about?’ The theme is often related to the main idea of a text because it is the underlying message or important concept the author wants to convey through the subject matter. Students can identify the theme by asking ‘What messages/ideas are being communicated in this text?’

Ideas and themes in students' writing may include:

- Humanity – challenges, mystery, naivety, knowingness, aversion, rage
- Relationships, responsibilities, and seeking knowledge about self or others (e.g. matched and mismatched love, parent/child relationships, experiences such as manhood)
- Elements of popular culture or topical events and issues
- Heroic quests
- Good versus evil
- Truth versus deception
- Strength versus weakness (physical and psychological)
- Overcoming odds and extreme struggles

Skill Focus: Expanding on simple ideas for a narrative

STAGE 2

Strategies

Identifying ideas represented on the covers of picture books

Using a graphic organiser or concept map to brainstorm simple ideas

Activities to support the strategies

Modelled

Tell students that authors select the pictures for the covers of their books to help potential readers know what the book is about. Mask across the words in the title so that the picture is the main focus. Choose a selection of familiar and unfamiliar texts so that students can confidently answer initial questions that require them to identify what the book might be about.

For example:

Robot Zot by Jon Scieszka

The Magician's Elephant by Kate DiCamillo and Yoko Tanaka

We Had a Picnic This Sunday Past by Jacqueline Woodson

Grandfather's Journey by Allen Say

A Light in the Attic by Shel Silverstein

Goodnight Gorilla by Peggy Rathmann

The Polar Express by Chris Van Allsburg

The Very Hungry Caterpillar by Eric Carle

Where the Wild Things Are by Maurice Sendak

Students may be familiar with some of these texts like:

The Hungry Caterpillar by Eric Carle

Where the Wild Things Are by Maurice Sendak

Ask students open-ended questions such as:

What can you see?

Where do you think this could be?

What do you think the person is doing?

What is this picture mainly about?

Ask students to justify their answer by asking:

Why do you think that?

Finally, ask students what they think the book will be about. Show them the title and ask them to predict what details they might find in the book.

Brainstorm or create a mind map that identifies events or actions that could be used to expand on the idea presented on the cover of the text.

Ask:

What ideas can we come up with that explain what is happening in the picture?

Get students to contribute any answers they can think of and record them on the board.

Answers might include:

K-6 Outcome

WS.2.9: Understands and creates notes for relevant writing purposes

Item & Stimulus

Writing task criterion 3 Ideas

The Box

Today you are going to write a narrative or story. The idea for your story is "The Box". What is it? Who made it? Where did it come from? Is it valuable? Perhaps it is alive? The box might reveal a message or something that makes the reader think. What happens in your story if the box is opened?

Think about

- the characters and where they are
- the complication or problem to be solved
- how the story will end

Remember

- often plan story before you start
- write in sentences
- pay attention to the words you choose
- pay attention to spelling and punctuation
- check and edit your writing when you have finished.

Item Descriptor

Making connections between simple ideas

Statements of Learning for English (p. 18)

When students write stories they have the opportunity to introduce characters and provide a brief description of setting.

Quality Teaching Framework

Quality learning environment:
Engagement

Significance: Narrative

The dog and the girl are best friends..

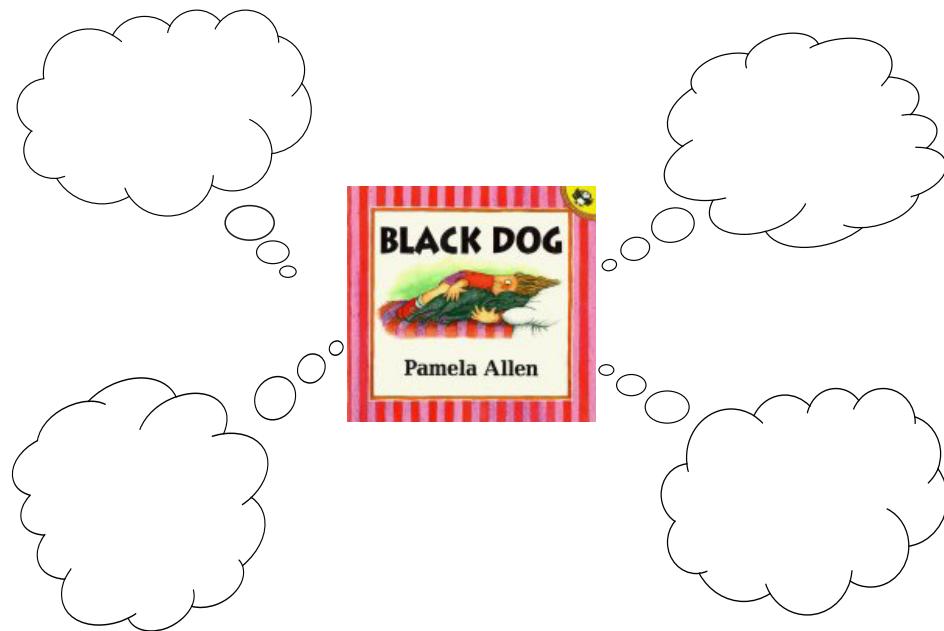
The dog got lost.

The girls found the dog.

The dog is tired because he had an adventure.

Jointly complete the mind map, expanding on the ideas that students contributed to the class brainstorm.

Worksheet 3



Jointly construct a paragraph that builds on the idea that the girl and the dog have a special relationship.

Guided

Choose another of the unfamiliar texts for students to use as stimulus in a brainstorming activity or, alternatively, present students with a picture of a common or everyday event that they are likely to have experienced with their family. Organise the class into groups of three to brainstorm ideas from the cover and the title of the picture book or from the picture.



Students are to jointly construct a paragraph outlining their narrative. They must:

- write a title that expresses the main idea of their paragraph
- include details in their paragraph that support the main idea of their simple story.

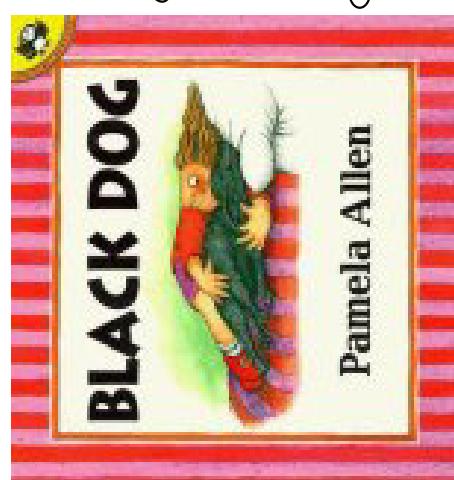
Share the paragraphs with the class and discuss the idea that each response explores.

Independent

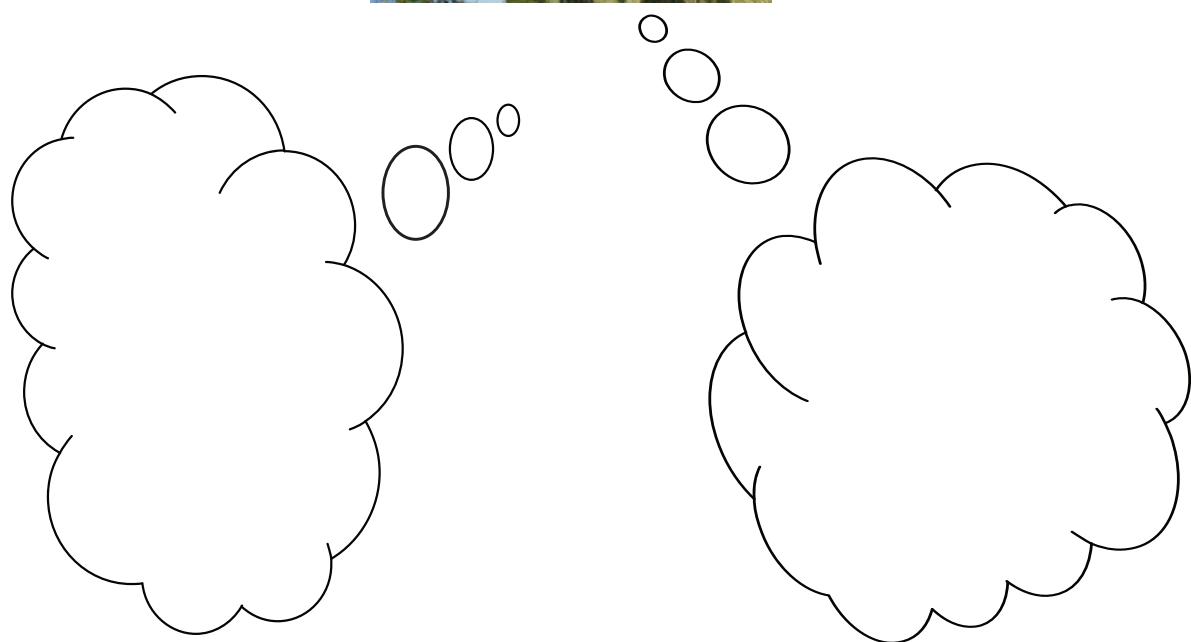
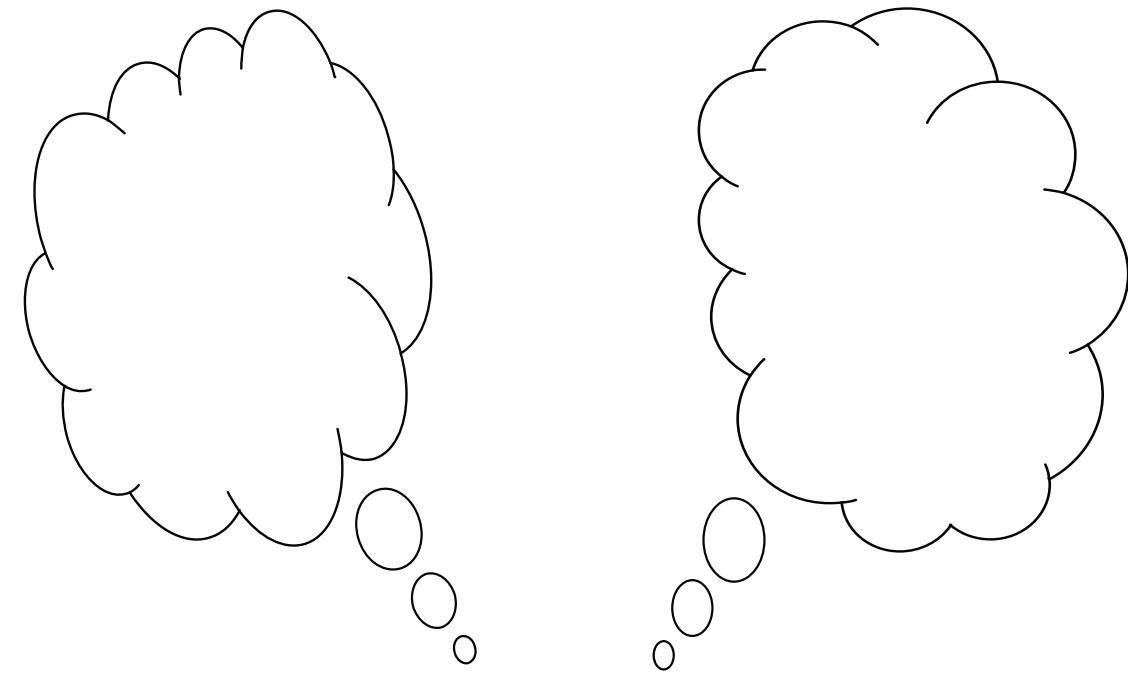
Get students to work with a graphic organiser to brainstorm ideas for a story of their choice. The graphic organiser will help them to plan, structure and organise their ideas into an effective story. The graphic organiser found at the following website includes a character map, conflict map, resolution map and setting map. It is possible to utilise different parts of the organiser depending on the ability of students completing the activity. They can print their responses and use them to complete a simple short story that focuses on one idea.

<http://www.readwritethink.org/materials/storymap/>

Get students to illustrate their story. They can draw an illustration, use computer generated graphics or create a collage from pictures they find in magazines to best represent the idea they are exploring.



Worksheet 4



Skill Focus: Selecting and crafting ideas for a narrative

STAGE 3

Strategies

Identifying ideas in texts

Using a graphic organiser or concept map to expand on ideas and include suitable detail in a narrative

Activities to support the strategies

Modelled

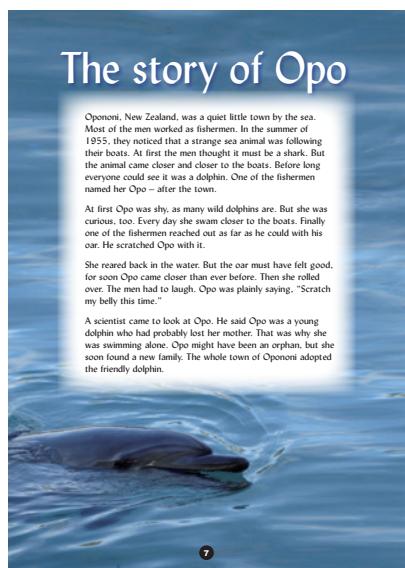
Use the stimulus *The Story of Opo* from the 2008 Year 3 Reading magazine to deconstruct ideas in a text. Distribute copies of the text to students and read it together. Get students to read the text a second time for themselves. Ask:

Who or what is the text about?

What happens in the text?

Where is the text set?

What is the main idea of the text?



Offer students a selection of statements about the text and have them choose the one that makes a valid generalisation about the text. Discuss why particular statements are more suitable than others.

Use a visual model to explain how a main idea relates to details that support it. Use the example below to jointly deconstruct *The Story of Opo*.

K-6 Outcome

- WS3.9 Writes more involved literary texts
- RS3.5 identifies and interprets ideas, themes and issues in literary texts

Item & Stimulus

Writing task criterion 3
Ideas

The Box

Today you are going to write a narrative or story.

The idea for your story is "The Box".

What is inside the box? How did it get there?

Is it a present? Is it a surprise?

The box might reveal a message or something that was hidden.

What would happen in your story if the box is opened?

These ideas:

- the characters and where they are

- the complication or problem to be solved

- the setting and time

Remember to:

- open your story before you start

- use descriptive language

- pay attention to the words you choose,

- your spelling and punctuation, and paragraphs

- check and edit your writing after you have finished.

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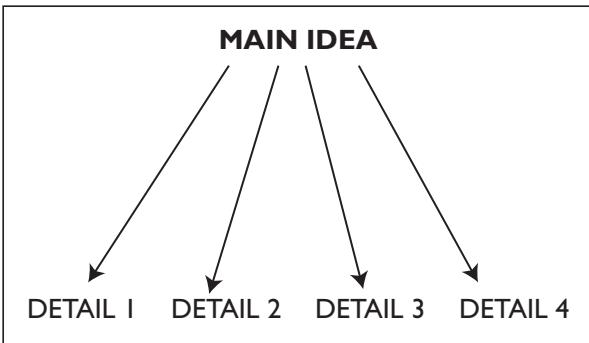
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Adapted from First Steps: Reading Resource Book, 1994, Education Department of Western Australia.

Guided

Students should use a graphic organiser to help them to think about the ideas and details they want to include in their narrative; and to plan, structure and organise their ideas into an effective story. The graphic organiser found at the following website is engaging and comprehensive.

<http://www.readwritethink.org/materials/storymap/>

Students are required to enter a title for their project and their name. From there, they complete the multiple graphic organiser screens to comprehensively brainstorm the details that they will include to flesh out the idea of their story. Each screen directs them to answer a series of questions.

In the character map they must name their main character and then answer the following questions:

- What does the character look like?
- How does the character act?
- How do other characters in the story react to this character?

In the conflict map they answer the following questions:

- What is the conflict?
- Why does this conflict occur?
- What are some of the ways the conflict could be resolved?

In the resolution map they answer the following questions:

- How is the conflict resolved?
- What happens after the conflict is resolved?
- How does the conflict and its resolution affect the character?

There is also a setting map that encourages students to think carefully about where their story takes place. Considerations for mapping include:

- Where does the story take place?
- When does the story take place?
- Write a detailed description of the setting. (weather, noise, colours)

Students can edit their entries at any time.

Independent

Exploring narrative (QTF)

Students are to use their printed mind maps to construct a suitable narrative. The use of the mind maps generated by the graphic organiser will help students to include details supporting their central idea in their narrative.

The story of Opo

Opononi, New Zealand, was a quiet little town by the sea. Most of the men worked as fishermen. In the summer of 1955, they noticed that a strange sea animal was following their boats. At first the men thought it must be a shark. But the animal came closer and closer to the boats. Before long everyone could see it was a dolphin. One of the fishermen named her Opo – after the town.

At first Opo was shy, as many wild dolphins are. But she was curious, too. Every day she swam closer to the boats. Finally one of the fishermen reached out as far as he could with his oar. He scratched Opo with it.

She reared back in the water. But the oar must have felt good, for soon Opo came closer than ever before. Then she rolled over. The men had to laugh. Opo was plainly saying, “Scratch my belly this time.”

A scientist came to look at Opo. He said Opo was a young dolphin who had probably lost her mother. That was why she was swimming alone. Opo might have been an orphan, but she soon found a new family. The whole town of Opononi adopted the friendly dolphin.