

# NATIONAL **Literacy** and **Numeracy** WEEK

## Teachers' Notes for Six Word Australian Stories for Primary

### Outcomes

#### Year 3

Plan, draft and publish imaginative, informative and persuasive texts demonstrating increasing control over [text](#) structures and [language features](#) and selecting print, and multimodal elements appropriate to the [audience](#) and purpose ([ACELY1682](#))

#### Year 4

Plan, draft and publish imaginative, informative and persuasive texts containing key information and supporting details for a widening range of audiences, demonstrating increasing control over [text](#) structures and [language features](#) ([ACELY1694](#))

#### Year 5

Plan, draft and publish imaginative, informative and persuasive print and multimodal texts, choosing [text](#) structures, [language features](#), images and sound appropriate to purpose and [audience](#) ([ACELY1704](#))

#### Year 6

Plan, draft and publish imaginative, informative and persuasive texts, choosing and experimenting with [text](#) structures, [language features](#), images and digital resources appropriate to purpose and [audience](#) ([ACELY1714](#))

These resources are aligned to the Australian Curriculum v 8.2.

### Notes for 3-6

#### Material and Preparation Required

- Images of six different Australian environments, e.g. rainforest, desert, cityscape, town, suburb, mountains, riverbank, coastal/beach etc.
- Teacher can prepare a sample six word story for Lesson 2 : Modelled Writing
- Tell students the idea of six word stories is attributed to Ernest Hemingway. In the 1920s, Ernest Hemingway's colleagues bet him that he couldn't write a complete story in just six words. They paid up. Hemingway is said to have considered this his best work.

*For sale: baby shoes, never worn.*

## LESSON 1: Building Content Knowledge

- Explain that the challenge is to write a six word story about an Australian environment and find an image to represent that story. Inform students they will learn about six word stories in future lessons. First, they need to learn about different Australian environments.
- Show students images of different Australian environments. Ask students to identify the objects in the different environment. Using the think-pair-share technique, ask students to brainstorm nouns found in these different Australian environments, and add adjectives to the nouns. During the Shared Writing lesson, record the students' suggestions so that they are available for use later (e.g. word wall, poster, or Padlet).
- Using a map (or digital map):
  - Mark where the different kinds of environments are located in Australia.
  - Mark where students have visited or lived.
  - Add photos to create a display.
  - Add places found in other stories the class has read.
- Students select an environment familiar to them. Create "Where am I?" riddles.

Examples:

I am a capital city in Australia. I am found on a river. A large mountain range stands to the west of me. My temperature creates a warmer climate than the states south of me. I could be described as sunny, warm, and busy. *I am Brisbane.*

I am a type of environment found in Australia. Unlike other types of this environment, I don't require fires for my trees to reproduce. One place I am found is Tasmania. I am described as cool, wet, and dense. *I am a Temperate Rainforest.*

## LESSON 2: Modelled Writing

- Discuss in whole class, groups, or pairs: What is a story? Why do people tell stories? Which is your favourite story and why? What kinds of stories do our class like the most? (Optional activity: consider collecting data from the students' discussions or have students create a survey and graph the results.)
- Re-introduce the idea of the challenge: to write a six word story. Inform the students that you will be writing a six word story for them today. This is Modelled Writing so you can demonstrate the kind of thinking you want your students to undertake.
- Read some six word stories to the students (there are many examples available online – try to choose a selection with relevance to the year level of your students and with punctuation features you would like to model e.g. full stops or commas). This is to prompt students to consider the form of the six word story. Ask students to compare the examples, for example some are made of one sentence and some are two. Other work with the examples could include identifying at the word level (e.g. nouns, verbs, adjectives), and identifying synonyms for words used. Ask questions such as, What's the difference between a traditional story and a six word story?
- Describe the first environment using expanded noun groups and interesting adjectives, without showing the image you have selected for this lesson (you may like to do some preparation for this beforehand). Ask the students to close their eyes and see if they can visualise the landscape. You may also like to include an audio stimulus e.g. birds and rustling leaves for a rainforest environment or seagull cries for the coast.
- Show the students the image. Were their visualisations like the image? What do they know already about this type of environment? Formatively assess their level of background knowledge through this discussion and address any misconceptions.
- Read a non-fiction text about this environment and ask the students to make a mental note of the things found in the environment and how they are described.
- After reading, ask students to contribute to a brainstorm, recording what they

remember from the text (and what they already knew) on a large Y Chart. The purpose is to describe the 'where'. Brainstorm first the nouns and then the adjectives to describe what the environment looks, sounds, and feels like. Encourage the provision of synonyms for words, multiple adjectives, and any specialised terminology if known e.g. canopy, decomposition. Put the Y Chart aside.

- Construct a T Chart (with columns for 'Who?' and 'Do?') to consider 'who' could be found in the environment e.g. a particular native animal, a bush walker, a tree logger, an Indigenous Australian, an environmentalist, a scientist, a farmer, a tourist, a lost child, a city dweller. Select ONE of these and decide whether they would have different things to add to the Y Chart that are dependent on their thoughts about the environment. Lastly, ask the students to think about what that person may 'do' in the environment e.g. build a shelter, take photographs, do tests, relax. Ensure that you record this information on the second column in the T Chart.
- Using all the information in the Y Chart and the T Chart, begin to select some elements that could be used to tell a story about the who, the do and the where. It should not be too difficult to choose the most interesting 'Do' element! You are demonstrating the process so ensure you think aloud as you make decisions, edit, move, and replace words in the story.
- When you have a first draft, discuss how the selection of different elements creates a different story. Is the story happy, sad, thoughtful, or scary? Ensure the students are aware that this is your first draft and that you will continue to work on the six word story before the next lesson. Discuss the important role the inference plays in a six word story. The reader must do a lot of the work to fill in the gaps and be able to see the story as a whole.

### LESSON 3: Shared Writing

- Present your six word story and image from Lesson 2. Show the students that you are a writer. Ask for feedback from the students! They will enjoy this opportunity!
- Review the students' knowledge of the design principals for visual texts and discuss how this informed your choice of image.
  - Line: Lines indicate action and movement.
  - Shape: Rounded and smooth shapes suggest comfort and security. Sharp, spikey shapes indicate tension and action. Does that match the story's intention?
  - Colour: What colour is most salient in the image? What does this colour indicate to the viewer?
  - Space: What takes up the most space in order to capture the viewer's attention? A lot of white space gives a feeling of emptiness and isolation, or gives the viewer a place to rest.
  - Texture: Do the objects invite the viewer to touch the image? Have different textures been used?
  - Perspective: Compare how we are positioned as the viewer. Do you feel like an observer or a part of the image?
- Inform the students that they will be sharing in the writing of a six word story and finding an image.
- Introduce another Australian environment to the students through riddle, visual imagery and sound file.
- Once the environment is identified, ask students to share what they know. Record their 'where' ideas on a Y Chart (refer Lesson 2), noting expanded noun groups for 'looks like, feels like & sounds like'. Then create a T Chart for 'who' and 'do' (refer Lesson 2).
- Remind the students that the stories:
  1. Must be exactly six words
  2. May be one sentence or more
  3. Must relate to some element of the focus environment

4. May relate to an animal's or person's activity in the environment
  5. Should engage readers and prompt them to inference.
- Ask for a suggestion as a beginning to a six word story for this environment. As this is a Shared Writing lesson, the teacher guides the students' suggestions. Discuss elements of the first suggestion, including the number of words, what inferences the words generate for a reader, whether the words indicate the "where". Work with any suggestions as to how the words could be changed, replaced, or modified etc. Continue until you have shared in the writing of a first draft of a six word story.
  - In pairs, ask students to work with this first draft to make further modifications. Teacher will work as scribe for students unable to write. Pairs will then consider the image that would help to tell their story.
  - After completing a final draft of the story and selecting an image, conference with the pairs to provide feedback on their work.

#### **LESSON 4: Independent Writing (with teacher support)**

- Students will work to create their own six word story based on an environment of their choice. What do the students know about this type of environment? Students complete Y Chart for where (looks like, feels like and sounds like) and T Chart showing who and do for this environment.
- Remind students that in this first draft their stories:
  1. Must be exactly six words long
  2. Can be one sentence or more
  3. Must relate to an element of the focus environment
  4. May relate to an animal's or person's activity in the environment
  5. Should engage readers and require the reader to inference.
- Share first drafts of stories with peers and give and receive feedback. Select an area of focus, depending on the needs of your students.
  - Does the story show something happening? If not, does it still tell a story?
  - Does the story make a reader infer something? What?
  - Does the story have interesting words? Can you think of other words?
  - Are there synonyms that you could recommend the writers use instead?
  - Did the story make you feel something? What? How do you think the writer did this?
  - Which words had the most impact on you as a reader?
  - Is the punctuation effective?
- Students can edit the work. This final draft should have correct spelling and punctuation.
- Students choose an image that they feel is representative of their six word story. Using an application such as PowerPoint, students will add their story to the image. Students or teacher can compile the separate images/stories into a joint presentation. To do this, students may need some support on searching for and saving images, adding slides to PowerPoint, importing photos to PowerPoint as backgrounds, using text boxes, adding transitions, and saving PowerPoints etc.

#### **Ideas for sharing**

- Images, making the stories visual <http://bengrey.wikispaces.com/6+Word+Story+Project>
- Share stories within the school, on the school website, or in a display in the school foyer or library.
- Padlet is a site that allows students to add information and images without having to log-in. The teacher will need to create an account and a Padlet for any sharing to be completed. The students can download all the information from their brainstorm to a pdf document. This padlet activity could be used to present the stories written in Lesson 3.

## Additional resources and links to other texts

### Images

- Copyright free images can be found on a range of websites.
  - <http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/>
  - <http://www.flickr.com/>
  - [Visual Elements](#)

### Strategies

- [Think, Pair, Share](#)
- [T Chart](#)

### Presentation Tools

- [Prezi](#) – one way to present the students' writing
- [PowToon](#)
- [Movie Maker](#)
- [Padlet](#)

### Websites for Six Word Stories

Both these sites provide examples of ways to present your six word stories using visual text. Teachers will need to select examples that are appropriate to the age of their students.

- <http://bengrey.wikispaces.com/6+Word+Story+Project>
- <http://sixwordstoryeveryday.com/>

### Websites and Videos for Australian Environments

- <http://australianmuseum.net.au/wild-kids-habitats>
- <http://www.australia.gov.au/about-australia/our-country/our-natural-environment>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CRPs6xk29Es>
- <https://www.csu.edu.au/australia/nature>

### Books for teachers

- *The Shape of Texts to Come* by Jon Callow
- *Write Ways* by Beverly Derewianka
- *Not Quite What I Was Planning: Six-Word Memoirs by Writers Famous and Obscure*  
Edited by Rachel Fershleiser and Larry Smith and published by Harper Perennial
- *It All Changed in an Instant: More Six-Word Memoirs by Writers Famous & Obscure*  
Edited by Larry Smith and Rachel Fershleiser and published by Harper Perennial
- *The Tiny Book of Tiny Stories: Volume 1* by Joseph Gordon-Levitt

### Examples of six word beach stories from Mr Gavin Arnold's Year 5 Class:

Waves crashing. Seagulls singing. GREAT DAY!  
Waves crash. Slip. Slop. Running in!  
Keeping watch. "Help! Help!" Diving in!  
Sneaky pelican. Empty bucket. No dinner.  
See shark. Panic strikes! I scream.

### Writer

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