

# A Rock and a Hard Place

Genre/Form: Fiction; adventure

Length: 209 words

Stage: Early

**Synopsis:** A young girl signs up to go rock climbing. At one point in the climb, she slips and is hanging at the end of her safety line. By watching a tiny ant climb step by step carefully up the same cliff, she regains enough courage to finish the climb herself.

## Possible Focus

To understand the story, the reader must be able to visualize the events and the main character. The reader's appreciation of the story will be enhanced by his or her ability to empathize with the changing emotions of the main character.

## Suggestions for Introducing Text

- Have you heard the expression "caught between a rock and a hard place"? What do you think it means?
- Have you ever been to camp? If so, recall an experience you had. If not, what special summer experience can you recall?
- Ask the student to share experiences with climbing that he or she may have had, read about, or witnessed. What happened?

## After Retell: Possible Questions and Suggestions for Extending the Text

- How did watching the ant help Rupa?
- What is the significance of the title?
- Have you ever tried to do something you were afraid to do? What happened?
- Have you ever accomplished something you thought you couldn't? How did that make you feel?
- Can you think of something that you have learned from watching an animal in activity? What was the animal and what did you learn?

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# Text Features

## Content, Themes, and Ideas

- challenges of rock climbing
- situation (of being afraid) may be easy to relate to

## Literary Features

- third person narrative
- character's understanding of her own abilities change

## Vocabulary

- some challenging words (Rupa, loomed, cautiously, bracing, palms, tiniest, ledge)
- both assigned dialogue and internal reflection

## Sentence Complexity

- simple and compound sentences
- range of punctuation (question mark, exclamation point, ellipses)

## Print Features

- small amount of text
- colourful print in title
- wide margins

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# A Turtle Named Donovan Bailey

**Genre/Form:** Fiction; realistic fiction

**Length:** 373 words

**Stage:** Fluent

**Synopsis:** A young person finds an injured wood turtle, cares for it, and then returns it to its marshland home. Shortly after, there is an announcement that the marsh will be drained for farmland, leaving hundreds of species of animals, some endangered, homeless. The young person and several of his schoolmates initiate a marshlands protection project involving the whole community.

## Possible Focus

The reader needs to use factual information provided in the story to understand the complex social issue.

## Suggestions for Introducing Text

- Provide students (who do not have prior knowledge) with background information on the Canadian runner, Donovan Bailey.
- Ask students what they already know about keeping turtles as pets.
- Look at the picture of the marshland. Why are marshlands important?

## After Retell: Possible Questions and Suggestions for Extending the Text

- Using evidence from the text, discuss what the narrator experienced and discovered that inspired him to start a marshlands protection project.
- Why is the title humorous?
- Do you think it is possible for one person to make a difference? Can you think of someone who has single-handedly made a difference in his or her community or the world?
- "Fact: In Canada, more than 60 percent of the wetlands near populated areas have disappeared." Discuss what might happen if this continues.
- What race did the turtle, Donovan Bailey, help to win? How?

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- brings attention to environmental issues
- provides factual information on wetlands and wood turtles
- illustrates the possibilities of collective action
- topic may be of interest to many

## Literary Features

- first person narrative
- factual information embedded in fictional text

## Vocabulary

- some words/phrases may be challenging (ecosystems, morphed)

## Sentence Complexity

- mostly compound and complex sentences

## Print Features

- photos supportive of text
- colourful print used in title
- longer paragraphs
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# And No Birds Sang

**Genre/Form:** Fiction; adventure

**Length:** 304 words

**Stage:** Fluent

**Synopsis:** A young boy, Devarsi, his father, and their dog, Gingersnap, are camping at the base of a cliff in a park in California. One morning, Devarsi notices that the birds are silent and his dog is pacing nervously, so they move camp to a higher meadow site just before an earthquake hits that covers their former site with tonnes of rock.

## Possible Focus

In this story, it is important for the reader to be able to visualize the situation as the main character sees it in order to make a prediction based upon literary foreshadowing provided by the author.

## Suggestions for Introducing Text

- Discuss with the students the significance of the title. Are they aware of situations when birds stop singing?
- What part in the story might the dog have to play?

## After Retell: Possible Questions and Suggestions for Extending the Text

- In what ways does the author (foreshadow) show something is about to happen?
- Discuss other examples of animals communicating upcoming events or changes through their behaviour. (Example—weather)
- Have student relate personal stories of camping or outdoor activities that involved some danger.
- What would be your “dream trip”? Whom would you go with and where would you go?

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# Text Features

## Content, Themes, and Ideas

- topic of camping would be familiar or of interest to many students
- gives insights into animal behaviour
- students vicariously experience danger averted

## Literary Features

- foreshadowing as a literary device
- tension building to a climax
- third person narrative

## Vocabulary

- some words may be unfamiliar (cascaded, tremors)

## Sentence Complexity

- variety of sentences

## Print Features

- coloured print in title
- longer paragraphs
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- photos minimally related to text

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# Barriers

**Genre/Form:** Fiction; realistic fiction

**Length:** 392 words

**Stage:** Fluent

**Synopsis:** Andrea, a student confined to a wheelchair after an accident, finds herself unable to go to the movies since both of the town's theatres are on second floors. After futile appeals to the theatre managers, she and her friends start an e-mail campaign, finally getting support from her MP who also has a child in a wheelchair. As a result of the pressure to make the theatres accessible, one makes the changes while the other closes, causing some community members to be angry.

## Possible Focus

This story illustrates how a human rights issue can be seen from multiple perspectives. To understand the human rights issue, the reader must empathize (make personal connections) with Andrea's position and the larger issues of accessibility for all. Given two opposing views of the issue, readers must be able to critically analyse and form their own opinion.

## Suggestions for Introducing Text

- Discuss the kinds of barriers people with physical disabilities face in your school; in your community.
- What are some of the barriers you face daily?

## After Retell: Possible Questions and Suggestions for Extending the Text

- Discuss why the manager suggested, "Why can't your girlfriend just stay at home and watch DVDs?" How would that make Andrea feel? How does it make you, the reader, feel?
- Use evidence from this story to discuss how attitudes create barriers.
- Respond to the question posed by the narrator at the end of the story.

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# Text Features

## Content, Themes, and Ideas

- encourages empathy for people with disabilities
- poses questions about human rights issues
- illustrates the value of taking action
- topic would be easy to relate to
- multiple meaning of "barriers"

## Literary Features

- first person narrative
- characters represent a number of different perspectives on a social issue
- requires reader to monitor tense shifts

## Vocabulary

- familiar vocabulary

## Sentence Complexity

- variety of sentences
- assigned dialogue

## Print Features

- coloured print used for title
- photos support text
- longer paragraphs
- no spaces between paragraphs

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# Bessie's Ribbon

**Genre/Form:** Fiction; historical fiction

**Length:** 319 words

**Stage:** Transitional

**Synopsis:** This story takes place at the turn of the century in St. John's, Newfoundland. A young girl encounters Marconi and his assistants conducting an early experiment with radio waves using a kite. Drawing on her knowledge of kite-flying, Bessie assists the scientists by giving them her hair ribbon to extend the tail and stabilize the kite.

## Possible Focus

The reader's understanding of this story is dependent on the ability to use prior knowledge about kite-flying and about scientific experimentation. Readers who are aware of the work of Marconi will bring a deeper understanding to the story. It is important for the reader to be able to visualize in order to fully appreciate the story's events.

## Suggestions for Introducing Text

- Briefly discuss the work of Marconi and the development of transatlantic radio communications in St. John's, Newfoundland.
- Discuss prior knowledge related to kite-flying.
- What do the photos tell you about the time period of this story?

## After Retell: Possible Questions and Suggestions for Extending the Text

- What happened to the experiment and how did Bessie save it?
- Why is the name "Signal Hill" significant?
- Why did Marconi's assistants try to shoo Bessie away?
- Discuss the significance of the last sentence: "The wind sang in her ears, and she could almost hear strange voices in the air."

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# Text Features

## Content, Themes, and Ideas

- topic may be unfamiliar to some students
- illustrates how a young person can make important contributions
- story provides historical information

## Literary Features

- third person narrative
- figurative language ("the wind sang in her ears")
- some descriptive language

## Vocabulary

- some words/phrases may be challenging (Marconi, blustery, wavered, gale, threw hands up in despair)

## Sentence Complexity

- some assigned dialogue
- a variety of simple, compound, and complex sentences

## Print Features

- photos reflect historical context
- photos support text
- colourful title print
- cover picture foreshadows story

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# Bottlebrush Girl

**Genre/Form:** Fiction; realistic fiction

**Length:** 395 words

**Stage:** Extended Fluent

**Synopsis:** For her community service credit at school, Jacqueline reluctantly spends a Saturday helping a group of younger children plant white pine saplings that remind her of "bottlebrushes." Several days later as she is passing the planting site, she notices a truck backing carelessly over the saplings. She finds she really does care about the trees and the environment.

## Possible Focus

In this story, the main character undergoes a change of perspective that the reader needs to infer from her actions and thoughts. The reader's interpretation of the metaphor of the bottlebrush used throughout the story is important in making the text coherent.

## Suggestions for Introducing Text

- Have students discuss their experience with volunteering or doing community service. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages.
- What do you know about planting trees?

## After Retell: Possible Questions and Suggestions for Extending the Text

- Using evidence from the text discuss how Jacqueline's perspective changed throughout the story.
- Why did she call herself "Bottlebrush Girl" and what did she mean by "my personal forest"?
- What other things could Jacqueline do to support/protect her "personal forest"?

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# Text Features

## Content, Themes, and Ideas

- importance of community service/volunteering
- raises issues about the importance of forest conservation
- students able to relate to the topic and events

## Literary Features

- third person narrative
- character's understanding of importance of community service and forest conservation changes
- metaphor of bottlebrushes

## Vocabulary

- multiple uses of the word "plant"
- most vocabulary familiar
- some unfamiliar words (cumbersome, scraggly, outraged, scurried)
- some unusual phrases (a plantation of saplings, to her astonishment, eaten alive by black flies)

## Sentence Complexity

- uses both assigned dialogue with punctuation and unpunctuated internal comments
- variety of sentences—compound, complex
- punctuation used for emphasis

## Print Features

- photos support text
- longer paragraphs
- wide margins
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# Changes

**Genre/Form:** Fiction; realistic fiction

**Length:** 377 words

**Stage:** Transitional

**Synopsis:** A young man about to start high school is worried about all the physical and social changes he is experiencing. He auditions for the high school theatre program and gains confidence when he performs a successful improvisation scene with a female student he has not met before.

## Possible Focus

To make sense of this first person narrative, the reader needs to follow how the narrator's feelings about his transition to high school change. An assessment focus might be how the reader draws upon his or her prior knowledge of life changes to make connections with the narrator's feelings around awkwardness and later, acceptance. Readers who are familiar with theatrical terms and phrases will be able to use this specific prior knowledge in constructing meaning.

## Suggestions for Introducing Text

- Discuss the range of feelings a student might have experienced when he or she moved from elementary school to junior high school or any other such transition.
- What kinds of changes do most teenagers experience?
- Tell me about any drama experiences you have had. How did you feel?

## After Retell: Possible Questions and Suggestions for Extending the Text

- Using evidence from the story, discuss why the narrator felt good about his performance at the audition.
- How did his participation in the audition help to change the way he felt about high school?
- Reflect on your own transition experience (for example: the transition from elementary school to junior high or middle school). What helped you through that transition?

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# Text Features

## Content, Themes, and Ideas

- many students may be able to relate to the character's feelings
- carries a positive message about facing fears and taking risks

## Literary Features

- first person narrative
- character develops and changes in response to events in the story
- literary reference ("happily ever after")

## Vocabulary

- theatrical words and expressions used in context of the story (audition, routine, improv scene, play a guy, feeding me lines, perfect ending)

## Sentence Complexity

- complex sentences requiring a full range of punctuation to access meaning

## Print Features

- photos only minimally supportive of text
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# Lazy Susan

**Genre/Form:** Fiction; realistic fiction

**Length:** 371 words

**Stage:** Transitional

**Synopsis:** After losing his/her mobility in an accident, the narrator becomes more cognizant of the misfortunes of others. The narrator uses the process of writing to try to understand how a homeless woman, whom the narrator previously teased for being different, became homeless. Submitting the writing to a website for young writers and receiving responses from other writers encourages the narrator to continue to reach out to others through writing.

## Possible Focus

Because of an accident, the narrator in this story changes his/her view of others who are "different," becoming much more willing and able to empathize with them. To construct meaning for this text, the reader must be able to make connections with the narrator's experience and feelings.

## Suggestions for Introducing Text

- Why do people get teased?
- What do you know about "street people"? What would you ask a street person if you had the opportunity?
- Read the first two sentences. What can you predict about the story to come? If you were to receive some insurance money, how would you spend it?

## After Retell: Possible Questions and Suggestions for Extending the Text

- What is the significance of the title "Lazy Susan"?
- How is name calling a form of bullying?
- What experiences have you had that are similar to those of the narrator? (Readers may make connections to a wide variety of experiences from Internet use to teasing to writing stories.)

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- Discuss the phrase “That way I could travel not just locally, but globally.”
- Can you relate a story that illustrates a change in your sensitivity to a situation?

## Text Features

### Content, Themes, and Ideas

- story illustrates theme of understanding differences and empathy for others
- story illustrates possibilities of technology to communicate with others worldwide
- illustrates the power of writing

### Literary Features

- first person narrative
- character develops and changes in response to own misfortune

### Vocabulary

- familiar vocabulary
- unfamiliar expression (“bundle buggy”)

### Sentence Complexity

- range of sentences—simple, compound, and complex
- use of semicolon

### Print Features

- short and longer paragraphs
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# "Let's Go, Babcock!"

Genre/Form: Fiction; mystery

Length: 317 words

Stage: Early

**Synopsis:** When the character comes home to find that someone has broken into his house, he also notices that his talking parrot has learned a new phrase "Let's go, Babcock!" When the police check, they discover Babcock is the name of a known burglar working the area and the crime is solved.

## Possible Focus

As in all mystery stories, the reader needs to call upon his or her knowledge of the genre identifying clues and following the sequence of events in order to make predictions.

## Suggestions for Introducing Text

- Brainstorm what the student would expect to encounter in a mystery story.
- What does a mystery story mean to you? How is it different from an adventure story or a suspense story?
- Can parrots really talk? What do you know about how parrots communicate?

## After Retell: Possible Questions and Suggestions for Extending the Text

- What evidence helped the police to solve this crime?
- Discuss whether you think this story could really happen.
- What is the significance of the last line: "Let's just say a little birdie told us"?
- Have you ever experienced a "personal invasion"? How did it make you feel and why?

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# Text Features

## Content, Themes, and Ideas

- genre is mystery
- story is somewhat far-fetched

## Literary Features

- first person narrative
- simple plot
- little development of character

## Vocabulary

- some unfamiliar words (Babcock, Captain Wilberforce, burglar)
- figure of speech ("a little bird told us")

## Sentence Complexity

- simple and compound sentences
- assigned dialogue

## Print Features

- quotation marks
- short paragraphs
- photos reflect text
- wide margins

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# Report from Planet B-12

**Genre/Form:** Fiction; science fiction

**Length:** 353 words

**Stage:** Transitional

**Synopsis:** An alien scientist from the Planet B-12 shares observations of a couple of humans in an unidentified location. The scientist has three pairs of eyes ... one pair to observe the external physical features, a second pair of eyes to see the internal organs, and a third pair to see emotions and thoughts. The alien scientist is puzzled by human couple's unselfish emotions and concern for each other and describes these human characteristics as emotional confusion.

## Possible Focus

In this first person narrative, the reader's understanding depends upon his/her ability to observe human behaviour from an alternative perspective. The reader needs to make inferences about both the narrator and the story situation. A more sophisticated reader may have enough prior knowledge to understand the relationship of terms such as "Oculus" and B-12 to the theme of sight. Readers can be asked to find evidence in the text to make reasonable and/or creative predictions about possible life on the Planet B-12.

## Suggestions for Introducing Text

- Read the title and the first sentence to make predictions about what kind of story this is.
- Brainstorm what student knows about the science fiction genre.
- Look at the photos—do you think they are all real? Why or why not?

## After Retell: Possible Questions and Suggestions for Extending the Text

- Discuss the meanings of "blue planet" and "research samples" in this story.
- What different things might a fourth set of eyes see?

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- Discuss the meanings of "blue planet" and "research samples" in this story.
- What different things might a fourth set of eyes see?

- Discuss what you know and infer about the narrator of this story. Predict what it would be like to live on the Planet B-12. How would it be different from life on earth? Support your predictions from the story.

## Text Features

### Content, Themes, and Ideas

- science fiction
- requires interpretations to understand the theme of multiple kinds of sight
- interesting idea that would make a good foundation for group discussion

### Literary Features

- first person narrative—narrator includes own observations, interpretations, thoughts, and feelings about what is observed
- minimal plot

### Vocabulary

- some words may be challenging (pathetic, neurons, Oculus)

### Sentence Complexity

- variety of sentences—simple, compound, and complex
- requires readers to use a full range of punctuation (dashes, colons, exclamation points) to access meaning

### Print Features

- large colourful front photo attracts attention
- wide margins
- more printed text
- no captions
- title in coloured print

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# Rose of Grace Harbour

**Genre/Form:** Fiction; historical fiction

**Length:** 366 words

**Stage:** Fluent

**Synopsis:** This story takes place in Harbour Grace, Newfoundland, in 1932. A young woman, Rose, is working part-time at the hotel where Amelia Earhart is staying. The famous American aviator is preparing for her first solo Atlantic crossing. Rose makes a thermos of hot soup for the pilot to carry with her. She is excited to meet the famous aviator and witness the take-off of the airplane.

## Possible Focus

In reading this story, the reader needs to understand historical fiction as a literary genre. The understanding is enhanced by a reader's ability to visualize the events and to draw on his or her prior knowledge of the history of flight and Amelia Earhart.

## Suggestions for Introducing Text

- Engage student in discussing his or her own experience in meeting a famous person. What did he or she do and how did he or she feel?
- Read the first line. Recount an "unforgettable day" in your own life.
- Give student some background information on Amelia Earhart. Discuss what early airplanes and air flights must have been like.

## After Retell: Possible Questions and Suggestions for Extending the Text

- What made the day so unforgettable for Rose?
- If she hadn't been nervous, what might Rose really have liked to say to or ask Miss Earhart?
- What might you have said to Miss Earhart if you had that experience?
- Why was a "solo flight across the Atlantic" so newsworthy in 1932?

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# Text Features

## Content, Themes, and Ideas

- historical context may be unfamiliar to students
- many students able to relate to main character's situation and feelings
- provides some historical information

## Literary Features

- third person narrative
- opportunities for empathy with main character
- story takes place in another time
- some descriptive language

## Vocabulary

- familiar vocabulary
- "Amelia Earhart" name may require support and background

## Sentence Complexity

- assigned dialogue
- some complex sentences

## Print Features

- black-and-white photo supports text
- photos give historical context
- longer paragraphs
- coloured print used in title

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# Scribbles

**Genre/Form:** Fiction; realistic fiction

**Length:** 311 words

**Stage:** Transitional

**Synopsis:** In an effort to fit in at his new school, a young Mi'kmaw boy is convinced by his new friends to spray paint graffiti on the school wall. Reflecting on how his grandfather had promoted respectful behaviour, the boy decides to scrub the graffiti off. In the process, he stands up to the instigator of the spray painting and acquires the nickname "Wipeout."

## Possible Focus

In this piece, the reader must first understand the narrator's internal struggles with his actions and then reflect upon the broader implications of how one's background influences one's decision making. An assessment focus might be to provide opportunities for the reader to describe the factors that affected the narrator's actions and then to make connections to the broader theme. Another focus for assessment might be the reader's understanding of figurative language.

## Suggestions for Introducing Text

- Discuss student's knowledge of and feelings about graffiti.
- Where have you seen graffiti? Why do you think people write on walls?
- What should happen to people who get caught writing graffiti on walls?

## After Retell: Possible Questions and Suggestions for Extending the Text

- What factors affected the narrator's decisions to first spray paint graffiti on the school and second, to scrub it off?
- Why was the narrator so troubled by his own actions?
- Have you ever been influenced to act in ways you know your parents/grandparents wouldn't approve? Why? Have you ever been in a situation where you did not go along with a group of your friends? Why?

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# Text Features

## Content, Themes, and Ideas

- topic may be of interest to many
- story shows a character struggling with conflicting values in an effort to have friends
- conveys a positive message about importance of family values in the Mi'kmaw culture

## Literary Features

- first person narrative
- main character faces and resolves a conflict
- figurative language (personification—"The scribbles jumped off the wall"; simile—"felt as if those bright red letters were branded across my forehead"; metaphor—"We were garbage")

## Vocabulary

- mostly familiar words
- some words may be challenging (hilarious, smirked)

## Sentence Complexity

- many complex sentences

## Print Features

- large photo shows main character
- longer paragraphs
- title in coloured print
- cover photo intriguing

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# Sneezes

**Genre/Form:** Fiction; traditional literature (humour)

**Length:** 331 words

**Stage:** Transitional

**Synopsis:** A young woman keeps a diary and notes that there is a new boy at school. She is interested in him, but every time she meets him, she sneezes from nervousness. Finally they are assigned a project together, and she manages to control her nervous reaction.

## Possible Focus

To appreciate the humour in this text, the reader needs to be able to construct the story from the diary entries, visualizing the narrator in a series of embarrassing situations.

## Suggestions for Introducing Text

- What might be the topic entry for a diary written in early September?
- Look at the layout of this story. What do you know about this kind of writing?
- What do you think a diary written in early September might be about?

## After Retell: Possible Questions and Suggestions for Extending the Text

- If Eric kept a diary of his first few meetings with the narrator, what might it say?
- What does the narrator mean when she writes, "More ghastly disasters"?
- Can you relate a time when an embarrassing and humorous incident happened to you or someone you know?

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# Text Features

## Content, Themes, and Ideas

- topic is familiar and within reader's experience
- brings humour to an everyday situation

## Literary Features

- diary format
- simple plot
- humour used as a literary device

## Vocabulary

- familiar vocabulary

## Sentence Complexity

- varying lengths in sentences
- full range of punctuation to access meaning

## Print Features

- use of italicized and capitalized words for emphasis
- organized by dates
- title and dates (subheadings) in coloured print
- photos reflective of story
- wide margins

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# Snow Rats

**Genre/Form:** Fiction; traditional literature (humour)

**Length:** 394 words

**Stage:** Extended Fluent

**Synopsis:** Wanting money and not liking to do much physical work for it, the narrator comes up with a scheme to hire out his little brother and friends as snow shovelers, paying them a minimum amount while he raked in the majority of profits. Then one weekend, a series of catastrophes exposes the narrator's scheme and it collapses.

## Possible Focus

To appreciate the humour in this story, the reader needs to be able to visualize the situation and the characters' reactions. In addition, the reader needs to reconstruct the "scam" and form his/her opinion on the characters' actions.

## Suggestions for Introducing Text

- Read the title and first paragraph then discuss what the "scam" might be and what a "snow rat" might be.
- Have you ever earned money shovelling snow or doing another chore? How hard was the work?

## After Retell: Possible Questions and Suggestions for Extending the Text

- How does the narrator operate his/her "snow scam"?
- What would have been a fair way to divide up the money? Why?
- What is humorous about this story?
- Who is the "biggest rat" in this story and why?

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# Text Features

## Content, Themes, and Ideas

- requires reader to recognize the style of humour
- students able to relate to the characters' situation
- illustrates family dynamics (older–younger siblings)

## Literary Features

- first person narrative
- figurative language ("soldiered on," "rocketed into the room," "snow rats," "the problems mount as fast as the snow," "plastered me")
- reveals characters' thoughts and perspectives

## Vocabulary

- business terminology (cash dividends, guaranteed, capital investment, enterprise, balance was profit)
- mostly familiar language with descriptive phrases

## Sentence Complexity

- compound and complex sentences
- use of dashes

## Print Features

- coloured print used in title
- longer paragraphs
- wide margins
- photos reflect story only marginally

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# The Case of the Dead Duck

Genre/Form: Fiction; mystery

Length: 238 words

Stage: Transitional

**Synopsis:** Two young people find a dead duck by a polluted river, so they decide to investigate. When they discover large tire tracks, they make casts of the tracks and check out the tires of the big trucks of several local companies. They find the truck with the matching prints, report it to the police, and get credit for solving the crime.

## Possible Focus

At the most basic level, readers need to be able to follow (retell) the sequence of events in the solving of the crime. The reader's enjoyment of this piece depends upon his or her familiarity with the detective story/mystery genre and his or her ability to recognize the subtle humour.

## Suggestions for Introducing Text

- Based upon the title, what kind of story do you think this might be?
- Look at the title and the photo on the front page. Are there problems in and around the water that might account for a "dead duck"?

## After Retell: Possible Questions and Suggestions for Extending the Text

- Discuss the clues and evidence the investigators found that helped them solve the case.
- What evidence in the text (words and/or phrases) does the author use to show this is a case of water pollution?
- With what other examples of water pollution are you familiar?
- How does water pollution affect some animals?

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# Text Features

## Content, Themes, and Ideas

- genre of mystery/detective story may be familiar in text and media forms
- requires student to recognize and understand humour
- demonstrates problem solving and initiative
- carries serious message about water pollution

## Literary Features

- multiple uses of words (duck, tracks)
- first person narrative
- uses language of detective fiction—case report
- pun in last line

## Vocabulary

- mostly familiar vocabulary
- unfamiliar use of word (cast)

## Sentence Complexity

- many short sentences to replicate crime fiction writing

## Print Features

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# The Fifth Player

**Genre/Form:** Fiction; realistic fiction

**Length:** 355 words

**Stage:** Transitional

**Synopsis:** Four students have formed their own “garage” band. One player wants to add a fifth musician with a unique sound. While at the mall, they hear an aboriginal drumming group and notice that one of the drummers is a classmate. They decide he would make a good addition for their group.

## Possible Focus

One assessment focus might be to determine whether the reader can reconstruct the sequence of events leading up to discovering a possible fifth player. Other readers may make inferences about the positive and unique contributions of the Mi'kmaw culture. Those students who are familiar or have had experiences with musical bands may connect with those experiences.

## Suggestions for Introducing Text

- Engage students in discussing adolescents and “garage bands.”
- Discuss what the title might mean for a story about a “garage band.”
- Look at the photo inside. What kind of band is shown there?

## After Retell: Possible Questions and Suggestions for Extending the Text

- Why did the narrator think Denny would make a good “fifth player”?
- How might Denny react to the invitation to become part of the band?
- In a group—whether it is a musical band or a school project group—what kind of conflicts can occur? How should they be solved?
- What other activities might be part of an Aboriginal Day celebration?

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# Text Features

## Content, Themes, and Ideas

- illustrates the value of one component of the Mi'kmaw culture
- main character demonstrates an openness to cultures other than own
- familiar topic (adolescent relationships)

## Literary Features

- first person narrative
- simple plot
- some readers will make inferences beyond the story regarding Mi'kmaw culture
- limited number of characters

## Vocabulary

- familiar vocabulary
- unfamiliar word (aboriginal)

## Sentence Complexity

- assigned dialogue
- some complex sentences

## Print Features

- black-and-white photo
- no captions
- wide margins
- title in coloured print

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# The Friendship Basket

**Genre/Form:** Fiction; realistic fiction

**Length:** 247 words

**Stage:** Early

**Synopsis:** A young girl promises to give her extra concert ticket to her best friend but changes her mind and gives it to a “cool girl” instead, in return for an invitation to the cool girl’s party. At both the concert and during the party, the narrator misses her best friend who is now angry with her. She makes up a basket of special items and delivers it to her best friend who forgives her.

## Possible Focus

In this piece, the reader needs to attend to the changing thought process of the narrator as it is represented in her diary. An assessment focus could be how well the reader follows the sequence of the entries.

## Suggestions for Introducing Text

- Have the student read the title and discuss when someone might make up a “friendship basket”?
- What might go in a friendship basket that you would like to receive?
- What would you include in a friendship basket for your BEST friend. Tell me a little bit about why you chose each item.

## After Retell: Possible Questions and Suggestions for Extending the Text

- In this story, why does the narrator make the decisions she does?
- Has anything like this ever happened to you?
- How would you make up with someone whose feelings were hurt by your actions?
- Why is “friendship like pizza”?
- What do you think makes someone “cool”?

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- Why is “friendship like pizza”?
- What do you think makes someone “cool”?

# Text Features

## Content, Themes, and Ideas

- main character faces a common dilemma
- story conveys a message about loyalty to friends
- genre is diary

## Literary Features

- first person narrative
- simile ("Friendship is like pizza")
- character's appreciation of friendship changes

## Vocabulary

- unfamiliar name (Nisha)
- some unfamiliar words (incredible, make-overs, apologizing)

## Sentence Complexity

- mainly simple and compound sentences
- tense change

## Print Features

- coloured print used for title and subheadings
- organized by dates
- short paragraphs
- wide margins

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# The Innovation

**Genre/Form:** Fiction; science fiction

**Length:** 388 words

**Stage:** Extended Fluent

**Synopsis:** In a memo dated 2115, Agent EB-39 reports to a government committee on an innovation and its innovators. The Past-o-Vision, similar to a television, has the ability to show the truth of what happened in the past. The agent recommends the immediate termination of the project and the exile of its creators because of the negative consequences to the government if the citizens had accurate information about events and government actions.

## Possible Focus

To fully understand this piece, the reader needs to make text-to-text connections from having read other reports. Given the evidence of what could happen, the reader needs to make inferences about what is presently happening in the society represented in the story.

## Suggestions for Introducing Text

- Have students scan the text and predict what kind of story it might be given the format.
- Discuss what "Past-o-Vision" might be.

## After Retell: Possible Questions and Suggestions for Extending the Text

- What evidence is there that this is a "state-controlled" society?
- What kinds of "intense pressure" might have been exerted on the professor and his student?
- What other consequences might "Past-o-Vision" have?
- Should some technological innovations be controlled by the government?
- What if "Past-o-Vision" were available today?
- What does it mean that "With one gone, the other will 'wither on the vine.'?"

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# Text Features

## Content, Themes, and Ideas

- requires prior knowledge of report format, scientific research, and politics
- explores the social consequences of technical advances
- describes another time and another society

## Literary Features

- requires reader to go beyond literal to implied meaning
- third person narrative
- story goes forward in time
- bureaucratic language requires reader to attend carefully to each part

## Vocabulary

- uses technical and bureaucratic language (microchips, gelatin screen, vibrations, innovation, false reports)
- some unfamiliar words or phrases (audacity, imperative, "distant past," pinnacle, "wither on the vine")

## Sentence Complexity

- importance of familiarity with and attention to report headings
- sentences short but bureaucratic language increases complexity

## Print Features

- report format
- subheadings
- title and subheadings in coloured print
- photo reflects text minimally
- numbered lists in two sections

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# The Invincibility Factor

**Genre/Form:** Fiction; realistic fiction

**Length:** 376 words

**Stage:** Transitional

**Synopsis:** Three 17-year-old boys get summer jobs laying pipe in a ditch. They discover that since the construction company does not abide by safety regulations, their job is dangerous, and none of the other workers will do it. One boy complains, loses his job, and hears a week later that the ditch collapsed and left one worker seriously injured.

## Possible Focus

To make sense of this first person narrative, the reader needs to follow how the narrator's perspective on his job shifts radically. A focus for assessment might be the reader's ability to understand the character's change from naïve excitement to taking action with short-term negative consequences.

## Suggestions for Introducing Text

- Discuss how even when many teenagers are aware of the risk of some activities such as drinking, drinking and driving, smoking, etc., they continue to participate. Why?
- Look at the cover photo. What does that sign mean?
- Look at the picture of the men working. What dangers could there be at this worksite?

## After Retell: Possible Questions and Suggestions for Extending the Text

- What does it mean to "be invincible"?
- Using evidence from the text, discuss how the narrator's perspective of their summer job changed.
- Discuss why the company would allow such unsafe conditions to exist.
- Discuss how the narrator demonstrates his naïvete.

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# Text Features

## Content, Themes, and Ideas

- characters encounter a problem requiring a difficult decision
- illustrates positive consequences of responsible behaviour

## Literary Features

- first person narrative
- character's understanding of his situation changes
- opportunities for empathy with characters

## Vocabulary

- mostly familiar vocabulary
- some words/phrases may be challenging (planking, invincible, vertical pressure)

## Sentence Complexity

- both assigned and unassigned dialogue
- a variety of sentences including some complex

## Print Features

- photo extends understanding of text
- large font
- long and short paragraphs
- coloured print in title

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# The Quest

**Genre/Form:** Fiction; realistic fiction

**Length:** 351 words

**Stage:** Transitional

**Synopsis:** The mother of a young boy with dyslexia introduces him to a spelling game where he has to make words using letter tiles. At first, when he plays with his sister, she beats him. Finally, after persisting, he wins a game using the word **quest**.

## Possible Focus

To understand the narrator's perspective, a reader needs to be able to make connections to his or her own experiences around learning.

## Suggestions for Introducing Text

- Read the title and the first paragraph. Given Peter's learning problems, what activities and assignments would be difficult for him at school?
- What do you think "the quest" might be?
- Do you enjoy playing spelling games? Name some spelling games with which you are familiar.

## After Retell: Possible Questions and Suggestions for Extending the Text

- What was the significance of Peter's mother's whistling?
- What did the "quest" turn out to be? Why was that word significant for Peter?
- How can persistence help people overcome challenges?

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# Text Features

## Content, Themes, and Ideas

- familiar topic
- illustrates the value of perseverance

## Literary Features

- opportunities for empathy with main character
- first person narrative
- takes place in context of everyday life in a family
- written in a conversational style

## Vocabulary

- some unfamiliar terms and expressions (dyslexic, oldie-goldie, competitive, "I cleaned up")
- the word **quest** is used in multiple ways

## Sentence Complexity

- varying length of sentences
- some complex and compound sentences

## Print Features

- italics (quest, on/no, was/saw)
- large photo
- wide margins
- short paragraphs

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# The Strangest Dream

**Genre/Form:** Fiction; fantasy

**Length:** 434 words

**Stage:** Fluent

**Synopsis:** The narrator, a 15-year-old student, dreams that he shares a train ride with William Shakespeare. In the context of the play, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, they discuss the relationships among dreams, illusions, truth, and the art of the playwright.

## Possible Focus

On the surface, this first person narrative is the story of a dream conversation between a present-day student and William Shakespeare. Some readers' understanding will be reflected in a literal retelling of the sequence of events. Readers who are familiar with Shakespeare as a playwright may be able to demonstrate the exploration of the universal theme of illusion and reality as it is represented in both the characters' conversation and in the situation of the story itself.

## Suggestions for Introducing Text

- Introduce William Shakespeare as a poet and playwright of the 1600s. What do you know about Shakespeare?
- Read the first paragraph and discuss why the narrator didn't recognize Shakespeare when he saw him.
- Share a dream that you have had. Have you ever had a dream about a famous person?
- How do dreams influence how we live?

## After Retell: Possible Questions and Suggestions for Extending the Text

- In this story the characters talk about dreams and illusions. Have you ever had a dream that felt very real? Discuss.
- Shakespeare says "Just because something is an illusion, doesn't mean it isn't true." Plays are not real but can they be true?
- Why do you think the narrator of the story might be dreaming about Shakespeare?

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# Text Features

## Content, Themes, and Ideas

- exploration of universal theme of reality and illusion
- topic is mature
- topic may contain unfamiliar references (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, "Goodnight, Sweet Prince, and flights of angels sing thee to thy rest.")
- requires reader to understand multiple layers of text—for example, the fact that the content of the conversation is mirrored by the story situation

## Literary Features

- literary allusions
- complex ideas
- reveals characters' thoughts and perspectives through dialogue
- entire text is a metaphor and requires readers to go beyond the literal level of text to construct implied meaning

## Vocabulary

- sophisticated concepts represented—illusions, reality

## Sentence Complexity

- uses both assigned and unassigned dialogue

## Print Features

- coloured print for title
- pictures related to story but do not add directly to the story
- smaller font
- wide margins

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# The Weather Station

**Genre/Form:** Fiction; mystery

**Length:** 386 words

**Stage:** Extended Fluent

**Synopsis:** This story takes place in St. Martin's, New Brunswick, in 1942 during the war. A young man discovers a shack in the woods that he thinks is a Canadian military weather station. On visiting the cabin a second time, he hears the man inside is transmitting messages in German. He reports the discovery and a German spy is captured.

## Possible Focus

In this story the reader needs to follow the sequence of events as well as be aware of the facts that help to change the main character's interpretation of the situation. Students familiar with war stories can draw on their prior knowledge to visualize the story.

## Suggestions for Introducing Text

- What does the cover picture suggest about the story?
- Discuss the importance of weather stations during peacetime and wartime.
- Locate New Brunswick, St. Martin's, and the Bay of Fundy on map.

## After Retell: Possible Questions and Suggestions for Extending the Text

- Why did William not let the radio operator know that he was aware of him at first?
- What might have happened if the German agent had discovered William first?
- Discuss the quote "During wartime, keeping secrets is a matter of life and death."

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# Text Features

## Content, Themes, and Ideas

- insights into the impact of WWII on daily lives in the Maritimes
- emotions and feelings difficult to fully appreciate
- portrays another time

## Literary Features

- third person narrative
- one main character
- tension builds to climax
- character's understanding of situation changes

## Vocabulary

- familiar vocabulary
- some words require emphasis and/or expression indicated by italics and capital letters

## Sentence Complexity

- compound and complex sentences
- full range of punctuation to access meanings

## Print Features

- use of italics
- use of capital letters
- picture only generally related—does not support understanding of story
- longer paragraphs

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# Time to Dream

**Genre/Form:** Fiction; realistic fiction

**Length:** 360 words

**Stage:** Extended Fluent

**Synopsis:** When Afiyah gets disillusioned about being a singer in a small town, her mother tells her about Portia White, a black woman born in Truro who became internationally-known as one of the greatest singers of the 20th century despite having to battle with racism. Afiyah uses the life of Portia White to inspire her to dream her own dreams.

## Possible Focus

This story involves a change in the attitude of the main character; therefore, the reader needs to be able to analyse the factors that contribute to that change.

## Suggestions for Introducing Text

- Discuss with the student how his or her present dreams could affect his or her future.
- Looking at all the pictures, what do you think the young girl on the cover is dreaming about?

## After Retell: Possible Questions and Suggestions for Extending the Text

- Using evidence from the text, discuss how Afiyah's attitude changed and why.
- Discuss the quote from Portia White: "First you dream, then you lace up your boots."
- How do you think racism affected Portia White as she performed around the world?

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# Text Features

## Content, Themes, and Ideas

- illustrates value of working to fulfill your dreams
- illustrates overcoming barriers (racism, location)
- insights into accomplishments of an African Nova Scotian woman
- many students will be able to relate to the situation

## Literary Features

- third person narrative
- character's attitude changes because of influence of historical figure
- metaphor (having dreams and lacing up your boots)

## Vocabulary

- some expressions may be unfamiliar (overt racism, conquering concert halls, command performance)

## Sentence Complexity

- both assigned and unassigned dialogue
- many complex sentences

## Print Features

- longer paragraphs
- wide margins
- black-and-white photo indicates historical context
- photos support text

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# Timing is Everything

**Genre/Form:** Fiction; traditional literature (humour)

**Length:** 238 words

**Stage:** Early

**Synopsis:** A team of boys at a track meet is nervous about the competition, especially when they see the competing team's members have all shaved their heads and they look scary. The team coach encourages his team to believe in themselves regardless of how the other team appears. The coach recasts the shaved heads as "lollipops looking to be licked."

## Possible Focus

The humour in this story is dependent upon the reader being able to visualize and empathize with the characters in the situation and to interpret the multiple meaning of the word "lick."

## Suggestions for Introducing Text

- Discuss related knowledge or experiences with team sports and sports competitions. How do teams demonstrate their "team spirit"?
- What purpose(s) do team logos and team clothing serve?
- What feeling might the team of "bald-headed guys" share that the other team may not? Why?

## After Retell: Possible Questions and Suggestions for Extending the Text

- Why did the other team members shave their heads?
- How did the coach help his team members to believe in themselves?
- Why is the phrase "Lick 'em" considered a play on words?

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# Text Features

## Content, Themes, and Ideas

- illustrates the value of using humour to ease tense situations
- topic is familiar to many students
- requires students to recognize and understand humour

## Literary Features

- first person narrative
- humour used as a literary device
- simile (like a bunch of lollipops)

## Vocabulary

- sports terminology (relay, anchor, baton)
- unfamiliar phrases (freaking us out, we licked 'em)
- possible multiple meanings for the title

## Sentence Complexity

- simple and compound with some complex sentences
- assigned and unassigned dialogue
- range of punctuation to access meaning

## Print Features

- italics
- photo appears generic and not directly related to the story
- wide margins
- title in coloured print
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# Unbelievable

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**Length:** 409 words

**Stage:** Early

**Synopsis:** A young girl goes to an unchaperoned party where both her date and her best friend are drinking. Although she fears what he will say, she calls her dad to pick her up. She is surprised when, rather than being angry with her, he is proud of how responsible she has been.

## Possible Focus

To make sense of this text, a reader needs to make personal connections to the situation the main character finds herself in and how her perspective towards both the party and her father changes. The reader must monitor assigned and unassigned dialogue as well as the narrator's internal reflections.

## Suggestions for Introducing Text

- Have student read title and first line of the story and look at the pictures to make predictions about what might happen.
- Do students you know carry cell phones with them? When is that a good thing and when is it not a good thing?

## After Retell: Possible Questions and Suggestions for Extending the Text

- What would you have done in a similar situation?
- Why wasn't Chrissie's father angry?
- Using evidence from the text, discuss how the author shows Chrissie's changing reactions through the use of the word "Unbelievable."

# Unbelievable

**Genre/Form:** Fiction; realistic fiction

**Length:** 409 words

**Stage:** Early

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## Content, Themes, and Ideas

- many students able to make connections to character's situation
- illustrates a young person making responsible decisions
- story could be springboard for discussion on difficult decisions

## Literary Features

- first person narrative
- character's understanding of a situation changes

## Vocabulary

- mostly familiar
- title may be challenging

## Sentence Complexity

- assigned and unassigned dialogue
- many compound with some simple and complex sentences
- sentences require full range of punctuation to access meaning

## Print Features

- larger font
- short paragraphs
- photos related but does not offer direct support
- spaces between paragraphs—clear breaks

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