Upper Primary

These notes have been written to help teachers use the Accelerated Literacy teaching strategies in Year 5. However, they could also be used with older students who have difficulties with reading.

Outcomes of the teaching sequence

At the end of this teaching sequence, students should be able to:
- read the passages studied fluently and with a high level of inferential comprehension
- discuss the story: give opinions about the author’s language choices; identify the story’s structure, theme and ideology
- spell chosen words and understand related spelling strategies
- use the story as a model for writing.

Notes

- The following notes have been written for teachers who have attended professional development workshops in teaching Accelerated Literacy. The notes presume some understanding about how to teach the program.
- For a detailed explanation of how to implement the teaching sequence, please refer to the teachers’ handouts from the first professional development workshop. Additionally, you could refer to http://www.nalp.edu.au.
- It is also assumed that teachers have read the text on which these notes are based and have a detailed understanding of the text before beginning a teaching sequence.
- Teachers are responsible for ensuring the suitability of the text on which these notes are based for their particular teaching context.

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Teaching Notes

68 Teeth
Upper Primary

Aussie CHOMPS
68 Teeth
James Moloney

nalp
National Accelerated Literacy Program
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Using this resource
Using this resource

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The text

68 Teeth by James Moloney. Published 2005 by Puffin. Page numbers provided here refer to this edition.

68 Teeth
Synopsis of the story

Jack returns from boarding school for a holiday at his family’s cattle property in Queensland’s Gulf Country. There’s nothing Jack loves more than riding his motorbike (with his dog, Minty, on the back) and going fishing – until he discovers a huge saltwater crocodile in the river. The Gordon family’s concern about their own safety and that of their cattle encourages Jack’s father to contact the Parks and Wildlife Service. Nils, the catcher hired by the service, discovers that the croc is much smaller than Jack had claimed. Jack is embarrassed by this, but this feeling is later replaced by pride as he and Minty save Nils from the clutches of a huge saltwater croc.

Themes

Themes in 68 Teeth include:
- good triumphing over evil
- the bond between pets and their owners
- courage in the face of adversity
- the attraction of home
- life in the outback
- how young people can be underestimated.

Why use this story?

68 Teeth is an action-packed adventure story in which a plucky 14-year-old twice escapes the clutches of a bloodthirsty saltwater crocodile, rescuing Nils, a professional ‘croc catcher’ in the process. Young readers will empathise with Jack (Nils patronises him for much of the book) and enjoy his triumph at the end.

Structure of the text

68 Teeth is a narrative with a hero and a villain. It includes two dramatic action sequences.

Passage one

In the first action scene (pages 8–11) Jack discovers the crocodile, and watches in horror as it attacks a steer. Full of blood (not to mention wild thrashing, a painful bellow and a sickening snap), the passage vividly depicts the battle between a large, vicious, powerful animal and a small, weak, defenceless one.
Studying this passage will show students how to read and write gripping passages that gradually build in intensity.

Initiating event: A huge crocodile shot out of the muddy water, fast as a cat and more powerful than a lion.

Event 1: Its terrible jaws snapped around the nearest leg it could find. 
Reaction: A young steer let out a painful bellow.
Comment: But worse was to come.

Event 2: The croc didn’t hesitate for a second. It was already drawing back towards the water, dragging its desperate victim with it.
Reaction: The other cattle charged away in terror, not even stopping at the top of the high river bank to watch.

Event 3: The crocodile now had their unfortunate companion all the way into the water. It flipped over suddenly, turning the steer with it.
Reaction: A sickening snap echoed across the mud and sand, and the steer bucked wildly in agony.
Comment: But the crocodile had only just begun.

Event 4: Still with that same grip, it flipped again and then began to spin over and over. 
Reaction: The brown hide of the steer span with it. There was no more bellowing now. The steer’s head remained under water most of the time. Every breath would fill its lungs with more water. It was losing the strength to fight back.

Event 5: Still the croc turned over and over.
Observation (size): Jack couldn’t believe how big it was. It had to be at least four metres long. No, wait, the in-goal area of the school’s footy field was five metres wide. It was that length, easily.
Observation (contrast): The muddy water around the two writhing animals was stained with another colour now, a rusty red. The water was foaming, and Jack noticed the bubbles had a pinkish tinge.
Comment: There was no hope for the steer.
Reaction: Half-drowned and rapidly losing blood, it was as good as dead.

Event 6: The croc sensed this as well. It stopped spinning the limp body around and slipped backwards into deeper water, taking the steer with it.
Comment: If the poor animal wasn’t already dead, it would drown soon enough.

Final observation (contrast): The sudden silence after the fury of the attack came as a shock. Aside from the bubbles left behind by the wild thrashing, there was nothing to show of the deadly battle that had just been so easily won.
The author’s techniques

Crocodile

James Moloney depicts the crocodile as:

- the aggressor
- the initiator
- big, strong and fast.

The crocodile is the catalyst of all the events, while the steer merely reacts to them. The attack on the steer climaxes around events three and four, and the crocodile begins to settle down once the battle is won. The following shows this sequence.

**Aggressive, fast and explosive**

**Initiating event:** A huge crocodile shot out of the muddy water, fast as a cat and more powerful than a lion.

**Event 1:** Its terrible jaws snapped around the nearest leg it could find.

**Event 2:** The croc didn’t hesitate for a second. It was already drawing back towards the water, dragging its desperate victim with it.

**Climax**

**Event 3:** The crocodile now had their unfortunate companion all the way into the water. It flipped over suddenly, turning the steer with it.

**Event 4:** Still with that same grip, it flipped again and then began to spin over and over.

**Settling down victory**

**Event 5:** Still the croc turned over and over.

**Event 6:** The croc sensed this as well. It stopped spinning the limp body around and slipped backwards into deeper water, taking the steer with it.

Steer

James Moloney depicts the steer as:

- young, weak and vulnerable
- in pain
- simply reacting to the crocodile.

While the crocodile initiates the events, the steer simply reacts to them. Its resistance to the attack fades throughout the sequence, and has disappeared altogether by event five. The following shows this sequence.
Pain
Reaction: A young steer let out a painful bellow.

Recovery: The other cattle charged away in terror, not even stopping at the top of the high river bank to watch.

Climax
Reaction: A sickening snap echoed across the mud and sand, and the steer bucked wildly in agony.

Recovery: The brown hide of the steer span with it. There was no more bellowing now. The steer’s head remained under water most of the time. Every breath would fill its lungs with more water. It was losing the strength to fight back.

Defeat
Reaction: Half-drowned and rapidly losing blood, it was as good as dead.

Narrator
James Moloney uses the narrator to:
• link events
• build tension.

Just as James Moloney has done in the above structure involving the crocodile and the steer, he has built suspense and then brought the sequence to a subdued conclusion. He does this through the narrator’s comments, which are short confirmations of what is happening in the event–reaction sequence.

Tension
Comment: But worse was to come.
Comment: But the crocodile had only just begun.

Defeat
Comment: There was no hope for the steer.
Comment: If the poor animal wasn’t already dead, it would drown soon enough.

Jack’s observations
James Moloney uses Jack’s observations to:
• remind us of the central character’s presence
• reveal the central character’s feelings about the events
• further dramatise the events.

James Moloney includes these observations late in the structure in order to help emphasise the significance of the event. The central character is the vehicle through which emphasis is added.
The observations all make use of comparisons:

- Jack couldn’t believe how big it was. It had to be at least four metres long. No, wait, the in-goal area of the school’s footy field was five metres wide. It was that length, easily.
- The muddy water around the two writhing animals was stained with another colour now, a rusty red. The water was foaming, and Jack noticed the bubbles had a pinkish tinge.
- The sudden silence after the fury of the attack came as a shock. Aside from the bubbles left behind by the wild thrashing, there was nothing to show of the deadly battle that had just been so easily won.

Passage two

This second action scene (pages 49–51) takes place after the croc catcher, Nils, has been left badly injured by the crocodile and vulnerable to further attack. It describes Jack’s efforts to save Nils and Minty – and Minty’s efforts to save Jack.

**Event 1**  
**Action – Attacker**  
The crocodile edged forward.

**Event 2**  
**Sound**  
Now a new sound broke the eerie deathwatch on the river bank.

**Who – Defender 1**  
It was Minty.

**Action – Defender 1**  
She dashed between Jack and the crocodile, barking like a machine gun.

**Reaction – Defender 2**  
‘Get away you stupid mongrel,’ Jack shouted at her.

**Event 3**  
**Reaction – Attacker**  
The croc hesitated for a second, sizing up the dog, then lunged at her, its jaws snapping only centimetres from her shoulder.

**Reaction – Defender 1**  
Minty leapt away just in time, but didn’t bolt as she had when the smaller reptile had writhed in her cage.

**Observation**  
Minty seemed more terrified even than Jack, but would defend her master no matter how great the danger.

**Event 4**  
**Thought**  
If Jack wanted to save her, he would have to keep the croc off balance.

**Simultaneous event**  
With the creature distracted by Minty’s frenzied dancing,

**Action – Defender 2**  
he dared two quick paces and smashed the shortened tree branch against the croc’s sensitive snout.
The creature turned towards him immediately, but Jack had been careful to stay well balanced and, as soon as the blow landed, he bounded backwards five, six, seven rapid steps until he saw that the croc was not coming after him.

It was still after the crazy dog, though. Jack rushed in again and slammed the driftwood on to the same spot. The croc lunged at him this time, but he had stayed on the balls of his feet and sprang away almost as soon as contact was made. The croc opened its massive jaws and Jack expected to hear a roar, like an angry lion. Instead, that ominous hiss warned him of the creature’s fury.

Minty was becoming more ferocious too – and more reckless. She darted in, drawing the croc’s attention to herself, barking at every breath. One miscalculation and those jaws would snatch the body clean off the top of her legs. The same applied to Jack. If he slipped in the treacherous mud, he would surely be snapped in half.

Did he dare another attack? He gulped down a breath and came at the monster again, but with a demented dog on one side and a boy wielding a vicious club on the other, the croc retreated to the comfort of the water again. It did not submerge this time but stayed watching, like a log with eyes, waiting for its confusion to clear and eager to taste more blood.
Language features of the text

James Moloney tells the story from the perspective of an outside narrator, interpreting the characters’ actions and thoughts for readers.

Books with similar themes

The following stories also feature courageous kids battling physically stronger characters: *Call It Courage* by Armstrong Sperry; *Rowan of Rin* and *Deltora Quest* by Emily Rodda.
Accelerated Literacy teaching
Teaching the sequence

The National Accelerated Literacy Program consists of a cycle of interrelated activities based on a sequence beginning with literate orientation and focused on one selected text. The text may vary from a short, illustrated story written for early childhood students to several carefully selected passages from a longer book intended for older students.

Teachers spend, on average, an hour and a half a day teaching Accelerated Literacy. The total number of weeks spent on a text across a sequence of consecutive lessons will vary according to the age of the students and the complexity of the text.

Low and high order literate orientation are carried out before reading. The other strategies use the students’ fluent reading of and common knowledge about a text as teaching resources for extending their literacy competence.

Further information on the teaching sequence can be found at http://www.nalp.edu.au.
In the classroom
In the classroom

The teaching sequence on *68 Teeth* aims to teach:
- how to read the study passages at 90 per cent accuracy or above
- how to discuss the story, including the meaning and inferences contained in the author’s language choices
- how to spell fluently and write clearly the words taught as part of the teaching sequence
- how to write, with appropriate teacher support, a story in which a central character is pitted against an aggressive, superior character and wins.

**Literate orientation**

Literate orientation is a pre-reading strategy that prepares students to read the study text fluently, accurately and independently. The teacher models a literate orientation to the text and discusses why the author made certain language choices. Literate orientation consists of two components: low order literate orientation and high order literate orientation. Both are equally important.

In low order literate orientation the teacher starts the process of ‘pointing the students’ brains’ at the text by modelling a literate interpretation of the text, including its illustrations when necessary.

In high order literate orientation the teacher shifts the students’ focus from general considerations to a close examination of the author’s wording in the text. The teacher systematically models how to attend closely to the language features of the text and how they construct meaning.

**Low order literate orientation – Whole book**

To begin low order book orientation on *68 Teeth*, teachers should read the whole book to the class in stages, with an orientation to each chapter before reading it.

Discuss some of the following points, choosing what to say about the book to suit your class. Examples of ‘what you could say’ are given for Chapter 1 only.

**General points about the author**

- James Moloney was inspired to write after teaching in the Queensland outback as a young man. It was during his time as a teacher–librarian at an all-boys school in Brisbane, however, that he became interested in writing mainly for boys who were reluctant to read.
- James Moloney’s style of writing places action ahead of emotion. Moloney believes that reluctant readers are more interested in what characters do, rather than what they think and feel. Young readers will find the brave, capable Jack an appealing main character.
• James Moloney takes ideas for his writing from his own life experiences and from books, newspapers and television programs, particularly documentaries.

Teaching focus
• In this chapter James Moloney introduces us to the hero of the story, Jack.
• We find out that Jack is home on holiday from his boarding school in Charters Towers, 600 kilometres away.
• We find out that Jack’s family lives on an outback cattle station in the Gulf Country of Northern Queensland. We also find out that one of his pets has gone missing while he has been away at school.
• Jack celebrates his homecoming by going fishing. He rides his motorbike to the river, taking his dog, Minty, with him.
• We are also introduced to the villain of the story, the crocodile. Its attack on a steer leaves Jack frightened and shocked.

What you could say
In the first chapter of *68 Teeth* we will read an orientation to the story and also the first complication. The orientation tells us about the setting and introduces some of the characters in the story. Jack is the main character, and we find out that he is home on school holidays. His parents live on a large cattle property in the Gulf region of Queensland. We find out that Jack has just turned 14 and that he looks forward to taking over the family station when he is older. Unfortunately, while Jack was away at school, his new pup Nutmeg disappeared from the homestead.

Jack loves coming home and can think of nothing better than going fishing with his dog, Minty. At first it looks as if Jack’s fishing trip is going to be a great success, as he immediately hooks a large barramundi. It is while Jack is reeling in the fish that the complication begins. It is here that we are introduced to an unwelcome visitor.

Listen carefully while I read the chapter. I want you to see if you can hear how James Moloney provides us with lots of information about Jack. He does this because he wants us to get inside this character’s head. He wants us to see and feel the same as Jack.

*Read Chapter 1 to the class.*
Inferences

Inferences should be made clear before reading the chapters.

James Moloney has expressed Jack’s appreciation for being home.

- What do we learn about Jack from this chapter?
- What do we learn about Jack’s family?
- What suggests that Jack enjoys life on the station?
- How does Jack’s appreciation of station life make him an appealing character?
- How is Jack set up as competent and skilled even though he is not yet an adult?
- Why is Jack set up as competent and skilled?

What you could say

Now we know that Jack likes to come home for the holidays. James Moloney lets us know this by what he says about Jack’s actions and thoughts.

Preformulation

We know that Jack had to travel 600 dusty kilometres to get home. This is a long way for a 14-year-old boy to travel on his own. It took a whole day, which means he has spent the first day of his holidays travelling. After coming that far, you would think that Jack would be excited about getting home. This proves to be the case: when he wakes up in his own bed, he is really excited.

**Question:** Can anyone remember what Jack decided to do on this first day home?

Reconceptualisation

That’s right. Jack decided that he would celebrate his first day at home by going fishing. And Jack wasn’t the only one who was excited, was he?

Preformulation

There was someone else outside who was really happy to have Jack home.

**Question:** Who was jumping around excitedly, waiting for Jack to take her fishing on the motorbike?

Reconceptualisation

Yes, his dog, Minty, sounds like she is even more excited than Jack. She is dancing around, eager to get going. Jack sounds like he loves to take Minty with him, too. James Moloney tells us that Jack playfully swats Minty away and describes the feeling of Minty’s warmth on his back. This bond between Jack and Minty is important for the story; it is also one of the things that help us like Jack.
Teaching focus

- The reader finds out about Jack’s reaction to the croc’s attack on the steer.
- Jack is anxious to let his father know about the attack as soon as possible.
- Jack doesn’t tell his mother straightaway. First he gets her to call for his father and Kelvin, who works at the station.
- The reader finds out a little about Kelvin and a little more about Jack’s parents.
- Jack’s father decides to call the Parks and Wildlife Service to have them relocate the crocodile further downstream.
- We are introduced to the crocodile trapper, Nils.
- Jack is a little surprised by the way Nils looks and by the equipment he carries.
- Nils is dubious about Jack’s estimate of the croc’s size.

Read Chapter 2 to the class.

Inferences

How does James Moloney make it clear that Jack respects his father?

- Jack hurries back home to tell his father about the croc.
- Jack doesn’t immediately tell his mother when he gets home, but rather asks her to call his father.
- Jack is compared with his father rather than his mother. He understands what his father is thinking even when nothing is said.
- Moloney tells us that Jack’s father is more practical than his mother, and his father’s comments about what the presence of a croc might mean reflect this.
- Jack’s father takes charge of the situation.
- We find out how Jack feels about Nils. Nils’s clothing and equipment suggest to Jack that he is rough and unprofessional. He doesn’t work for the Parks and Wildlife Service, but has a licence to trap crocodiles. Jack also questions the suitability of his vehicle and boat for this job.
- Nils isn’t like croc catchers Jack has seen on TV, but Jack is intrigued by him.
- Nils appears to know a lot about crocodiles’ behaviour. Unlike everyone else, he appears unflustered by their presence.
- Nils suggests that harpooning and/or noosing the jaws will not be possible, as Jack and his father are inexperienced helpers.
- Jack is irritated by Nils’s suggestion that he is exaggerating the size of the croc, and is embarrassed when Nils discovers a croc around only half the size that Jack had claimed.
Teaching focus

- Jack helps Nils to fetch his tinny so he can take it back to the place where he’ll set up the trap.
- Nils has dinner with the family, but decides to sleep in his truck just in case the croc enters the trap.
- Jack wants to stay out with Nils, but neither his parents nor Nils will allow it.
- Nothing happens on the first night, but Jack rides out the next day and Nils shows him the trap.
- Jack’s father asks him if he wants to camp out while they check the station fences. Jack doesn’t go because he doesn’t want to miss seeing the croc.
- Jack rides out again the next morning to find Nils’s tinny beached downstream. He starts to get worried about Nils.
- Jack takes the boat back upstream to find Nils waiting beside the trap.
- Inside the trap is a three-metre crocodile.

Read Chapter 3 to the class.

Inferences

How does Jack feel about Nils now?

- Jack starts to talk to Nils more. He is starting to ask questions.
- Nils asks Jack for help getting the tinny.
- Jack wants to stay with Nils overnight.
- Nils is happy to explain things to Jack.
- Jack listens to Nils’s advice about how far crocs will stray from the water. Nils is offering a lot of information on the habits of crocodiles.
- Jack becomes worried about Nils when he finds the tinny beached downstream.

What tells the reader that Jack is interested in the capture of the crocodile?

- Jack enjoys being able to help Nils out by giving him a ride on the back of his motorbike to get the tinny.
- Jack wants to stay near the trap overnight.
- Jack rides straight out to check on things the next morning.
- Jack looks carefully at how the trap works.
- Jack knocks back the opportunity to camp out with his dad and Kelvin for fear he will miss out on seeing the croc.
- He heads straight out again the next morning to check on things.
- Despite the danger, Jack and Minty take the boat back upstream to where Nils is waiting at the trap.

James Moloney reminds us of the slight hostility that Jack and Nils initially shared. How does he do this?

- Nils grinned as he invited Jack to look at the three-metre crocodile inside the trap.
Teaching focus

- Jack has a closer look at the croc inside the trap.
- He is surprised to find that the markings on its head are different from those he remembers.
- Jack concludes that he must have been wrong about the croc’s size and colour because of the terror he was feeling at the time.
- Minty is frightened by the crocodile. When Nils mocks her fear, Jack defends her.
- Nils provides more information about crocodiles, explaining how a saltwater croc might end up so far inland.
- Nils checks the gate of the trap. Jack chooses to keep back.
- Nils is attacked by another croc as he starts back up the bank.
- Jack helps Nils out, using the information Nils himself has given him.
- The crocodile retreats and disappears below the surface of the water.
- The crocodile attacks again, and this time both Jack and Minty defend Nils.
- The crocodile retreats again, but continues watching them from the water.

Read Chapter 4 to the class.

Inferences

James Moloney highlights Jack’s bravery and competence in this chapter, while continuing to make him likeable. How does he do this?

- Jack was initially scared of the smaller croc in the trap, but has to overcome this fear in order to fight the bigger one.
- When Nils puts Minty down, Jack defends her. Again, Nils’s comments are a little insulting. This incident points to the strength of Jack’s relationship with Minty, and makes us like him more.
- Jack turns out to have been right about the size of the croc he saw on his first day back at the station.
- Jack comes to the aid of Nils. He bravely punches the croc, remembering that the snout is its most sensitive spot.
- Jack continues to help Nils despite the looming presence of the croc and the objections of Nils himself.

James Moloney builds suspense throughout this chapter. How does he do this?

- It first appears as if the crocodile has been caught and that the river banks are now safe.
- Both Jack and Minty are afraid of the female crocodile in the trap.
- The appearance of the captured crocodile doesn’t square with Jack’s memory.
- Nils splashes through the water, but something makes Jack stay out of the water.
- The peace is suddenly broken when the river erupts.
- The huge male crocodile drags Nils down the bank by his foot.
• Nils grabs hold of the trap.
• Jack helps prevent Nils from being dragged into the water, and then punches the crocodile on the snout. The animal retreats to the river.
• Nils can now only crawl, and is losing consciousness.
• The croc resurfaces, suggesting it will attack again.
• The crocodile returns to the fray, though more cautiously this time. It appears that Nils will be killed.
• Jack and Minty team up to protect Nils, and one another, from the croc.

The confused croc retreats a second time, and awaits another opportunity to attack. The author has provided enough clues to indicate that more action is on the way. What are these?

• Nils has previously told Jack how a crocodile’s eyelids allow it to see underwater. Now this huge croc is watching them through the very same eyelids.
• Nils had also described crocs as the perfect killing machine.

**Teaching focus**

• Nils manages to drag himself 15 metres from river’s edge, where he lies bleeding and barely conscious.
• Jack manages to bandage and splint Nils’s leg as the crocodile watches from the water.
• Jack decides to use the winch to get Nils up onto the truck.
• Minty does her best to distract the crocodile while Jack works the winch.
• The winch is so slow that Jack and Minty both have to distract the crocodile.
• The crocodile makes one last, unsuccessful attempt to grab Nils before he is safely pulled onto the top of the tray.

*Read Chapter 5 to the class.*

**Inferences**

The reader is again invited to admire Jack, this time for his quick thinking.

• Jack is able to treat Nils’s bleeding, using his first aid knowledge.
• He thinks of a clever way to move Nils out of danger.

In this complication James Moloney builds further suspense. How does he do this?

• Nils weakens, and is now drifting in and out of consciousness.
• The croc is still waiting and watching from the water.
• Minty continues to put herself in harm’s way.
• Jack is not able to move Nils on his own.
• Jack has a hard time getting the winch to work (first it turns the wrong way, then the barrel stops, then he needs a harness).
• When the winch finally does work, it moves very, very slowly.
• The crocodile is advancing, but taking only small steps.
Teaching focus

- Now that Jack is safely inside the truck, Minty retreats from the crocodile.
- Jack decides to drive the truck back to the homestead despite not really knowing how to drive.
- He manages to get the truck travelling along at a good speed, gaining in confidence as he goes.
- He makes it back to the homestead, not knowing if Nils is still alive.
- Jack’s mother takes control of the situation and reassures Jack.

*Read Chapter 6 to the class.*

Inferences

James Moloney builds excitement in this chapter. How does he do this?

- Nils’s condition may be life threatening, so Jack has to act urgently.
- Jack needs to work out how to drive the truck. This complication adds suspense and doubt.
- Minty’s leap into the moving truck creates further excitement.
- The closer Jack gets to the homestead, the more excited readers become. Jack smashes the truck through the gate, adding to the climax of the chapter.

In this chapter, the author gives Jack’s mother some overdue credibility. How does he do this?

- Once Jack has arrived back at the homestead, his mother swiftly takes control of the situation.
- She is calm, reassuring and competent.

Jack is again portrayed in a way that will have young readers admiring him.

- He is clever and capable, and never gives up.

Teaching focus

The epilogue brings the story to an end. It answers some of the questions readers might ask when they have finished all the chapters. The conclusions are as follows:

- Nils Fingleton survived and still traps crocodiles for a living.
- The flying doctor came from Mount Isa and Nils had his leg operated on in Cairns.
- Nils is very, very grateful for what Jack did for him. He tells everyone about Jack’s courage.
- The croc was eventually caught and relocated. Jack didn’t go to have another look at it once it was caught.

*Read the epilogue to the class.*
Inferences

James Moloney presents Jack as a more distinguished character.

- Nils acknowledges Jack’s courage and competence. This contrasts with his earlier somewhat condescending attitude towards Jack. Here Nils refers to Jack as a young man rather than little mate (Chapter 2).
- Jack feels no need to see the crocodile again. He isn’t afraid, but has already seen it better than anyone else ever will.

Read the story aloud

Having read the whole book, sections at a time, you may choose to read the whole book or parts of it again, particularly the sections that include the study passages. This rereading will help keep the study passages in context.

Refine the focus to the study passages

Once you have started reading the book and have read at least the first four chapters, return to Chapter 1 to start looking at the author’s language choices in closer detail. You can then spend part of each lesson reading the book to students, and another part working on the study passages.

Low order literate orientation – Passage one

The following notes provide some suggestions for the first lessons on study passage one. The aims here are to teach students how to:

- read and write graphic and stirring battle scenes between two characters
- read and write complications that create mental images and evoke emotional responses from readers
- read and write gripping passages that slowly build in intensity before gradually returning things to normal.

Teaching focus

- James Moloney tells the story from the perspective of an outside narrator.
- In the crocodile, the author has constructed a physically imposing character, which he contrasts with the weaker, more vulnerable steer. The steer is essentially used a prop, allowing the crocodile to display its deadly skills.
- Look at the words the author uses to describe the ferocity of the crocodile and the helplessness of the steer.
- Look at how the author creates suspense and excitement, then returns things to ‘normal’ once the incident is over.
- Explore the significance of this incident for the central character, Jack.
- Look at how the author uses similes and comparisons to build vivid mental images.
What you could say

**Preformulation**
The crocodile and the steer. Two characters: One is strong, aggressive, decisive, and superior.

*Question:* Who is that character?

**Reconceptualisation**
The crocodile. James Moloney wanted a character that would win this battle. Massive pegs of teeth. The croc has massive pegs of teeth.

*Question:* It’s got what?

**Reconceptualisation**
Massive pegs of teeth. Wow, you should be an author. Terrific, but James Moloney probably chose a crocodile because crocodiles have got things like that, massive pegs of teeth. The other character is more like a victim …

*Complete the teaching sequence, high order literate orientation, transformations, spelling and writing on passage one before beginning work on passage two.*

**Low order literate orientation – Passage two**
The following notes provide some suggestions for the first lessons on study passage two.

**Teaching focus**
- James Moloney tells the story from the perspective of an outside narrator.
- The author again uses characters with a wide range of physical capabilities.
- Look at how relationships between characters help to create suspense and evoke the reader’s sympathy for physically inferior characters.
- Look at how the author allows the main character, Jack, to triumph over the crocodile, despite his physical inferiority.
- Look at the words the author uses to describe the crocodile’s ferocity, and the braveness of Jack and Minty.
- Look at how the author creates suspense and excitement.
- Look at how the author uses similes to build vivid mental images.
**High order literate orientation – Passage one**

As there are many layers of meaning in any one story, the teacher has to decide on the focus of each lesson and the language features that are important to that focus. Identifying how the author’s language choices influence readers to see characters in either a good or a bad light is particularly important in this book.

**Teaching focus**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure and wording</th>
<th>Why language choices were made</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Initiating event</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A huge crocodile shot out of the muddy water, fast as a cat and more powerful than a lion.</td>
<td>The author starts this passage with a bang. The size and power of crocodile are important elements in the passage, so need to be established early on, while the ‘cat’ simile helps illustrate the ferocity of the lunge. The water’s muddiness is relevant information, because an animal of the crocodile’s size would need to be well hidden to not be noticed by Jack, Minty and the cattle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Event 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Its terrible jaws snapped around the nearest leg it could find.</td>
<td>The crocodile is starting to sound dangerous, as well as big. Not stating who the leg belongs to keeps the reader in suspense. It could be Jack’s or Minty’s leg.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reaction</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A young steer let out a painful bellow.</td>
<td>Knowing that the steer is young and in pain leads us to think of it as vulnerable and defenceless.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Comment</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>But worse was to come.</td>
<td>Moloney now builds a sense of anticipation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The croc didn’t hesitate for a second. It was already drawing back towards the water, dragging its desperate victim with it.</strong></td>
<td>The desperation of the steer is a stark contrast to the ruthless efficiency of the crocodile. As Nils puts it later in the story, the crocodile is a <em>perfect killing machine</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reaction</strong></td>
<td><strong>The other cattle charged away in terror, not even stopping at the top of the high river bank to watch.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The crocodile now had their unfortunate companion all the way into the water. It flipped over suddenly, turning the steer with it.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reaction</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Comment</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Still with that same grip, it flipped again and then began to spin over and over.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reaction</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Event 5

**Still the croc turned over and over.**

- **Observation (size)**
  
  Jack couldn’t believe how big it was. It had to be at least four metres long. No, wait, the in-goal area of the school’s footy field was five metres wide. It was that length, easily.

- **Observation (contrast)**
  
  The muddy water around the two writhing animals was stained with another colour now, a rusty red. The water was foaming, and Jack noticed the bubbles had a pinkish tinge.

- **Comment**
  
  There was no hope for the steer.

- **Reaction**
  
  Half-drowned and rapidly losing blood, it was as good as dead.

- **Event**
  
  The croc sensed this as well. It stopped spinning the limp body around and slipped backwards into deeper water, taking the steer with it.

- **Comment**
  
  If the poor animal wasn’t already dead, it would drown soon enough.

- **Final observation (contrast)**
  
  The sudden silence after the fury of the attack came as a shock. Aside from the bubbles left behind by the wild thrashing, there was nothing to show of the deadly battle that had just been so easily won.

### Event 6

- **Observation (size)**
  
  The death roll continues, along with our sense of horror.

- **Observation (contrast)**
  
  Moloney reminds us that Jack is observing this attack. Comparing the croc’s size to something we’ve all seen helps the reader to picture the enormity of the animal. Jack’s observation is important information for later in the story.

- **Observation (contrast)**
  
  Moloney uses contrast to imply that the steer is bleeding, again reminding readers of the croc’s aggressiveness, and generating sympathy for the steer.

- **Comment**
  
  The author makes it clear that the steer has been defeated, and so begins to deflate some of the tension.

- **Reaction**
  
  Moloney nonetheless maintains some suspense, by keeping the steer alive.

- **Final observation (contrast)**
  
  Moloney now brings the event to a close. The scene left behind is in stark contrast to what occurred only moments before. There is no evidence of the attack but a few bubbles.
What you could say

**Preformulation**
The first thing James Moloney does here is tell us about the character. We know who that character is: it’s that big, aggressive character. That’s how he starts it off – by telling us what that big, superior, aggressive character is.

**Question:** Who can tell me what James Moloney tells us about that character?

**Reconceptualisation**
Yes a huge crocodile. That’s the first thing he says, isn’t it? He tells us the crocodile is ‘huge’. That’s how he introduces this complication. It’s really surprising. We don’t expect that, do we? A huge crocodile.

**Complete the teaching sequence, transformations, spelling and writing on passage one before beginning work on passage two.**

**High order literate orientation – Passage two**

**Teaching focus**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure of text and wording</th>
<th>Why language choices were made</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Event 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Action – Attacker</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The crocodile edged forward.</td>
<td>The word <em>edged</em> suggests that the crocodile is moving towards his prey with slow, methodical care, which increases the suspense.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Event 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sound</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Now a new sound broke the eerie deathwatch on the river bank.</td>
<td>The <em>new sound</em> indicates a change of events. Not telling readers what the sound is adds to the suspense – as does the powerful phrase, <em>eerie deathwatch</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who – Defender 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It was Minty.</td>
<td>No easing of the tension: Minty was terrified of the crocodile earlier in the story, so she’s unlikely to help Nils here. If anything, the reader is now worried for Minty as well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action – Defender 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>She dashed between Jack and the crocodile, barking like a machine gun.</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Minty’s brave intervention is an exciting surprise – and very touching, as it reinforces the strength of her bond with Jack. The *machine gun* simile helps convey her frantic aggressiveness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reaction – Defender 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘Get away, you stupid mongrel,’ Jack shouted at her.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Jack’s words reinforce how he feels about Minty. He is not shouting because he dislikes her, but because he doesn’t want to see her hurt.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event 3</th>
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</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reaction – Attacker</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>The croc hesitated for a second, sizing up the dog,</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The reader’s concern for Minty increases.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action – Attacker</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>then lunged at her, its jaws snapping only centimetres from her shoulder.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Readers are again reminded of the crocodile’s power and ferocity, while the closeness of its snapping jaws creates tension and excitement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reaction – Defender 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minty leapt away just in time, but didn’t bolt as she had when the smaller reptile had writhed in her cage.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Minty’s refusal to bolt emphasises her braveness and allows the tension to continue to build. By contrasting Minty’s actions with her earlier fear of the smaller crocodile, the author reminds us that courage is about overcoming fear.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Minty seemed more terrified even than Jack, but would defend her master no matter how great the danger.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Moloney removes any doubt about Minty’s feelings, confirming our admiration for her. Again the very powerful bond between Jack and Minty is on show. A physical battle, with two weaker characters fighting for each other against a superior rival, is a very good way to bring out the strength of a relationship.

Note: Teachers may choose to finish here.
**Event 4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thought</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If Jack wanted to save her, he would have to keep the croc off balance.</td>
<td>The author again celebrates the bond between Minty and Jack, showing that, just as Minty is looking out for her master, her master is looking out for her.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Simultaneous event</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>With the creature distracted by Minty’s frenzied dancing,</td>
<td>As there are more than two characters in this battle, Moloney tells readers what the other characters are doing. Here, he tells us that the crocodile is distracted so he can introduce Jack’s next action. It is also evident that Minty has not stopped aggravating the crocodile, despite the close call.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action – Defender 2</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>he dared two quick paces and smashed the shortened tree branch against the croc’s sensitive snout.</td>
<td>Readers are reminded of the bravery of Jack’s actions by the word dared, and that he was dangerously close to the crocodile. His intelligence is evident too: Jack remembers that crocodiles have sensitive snouts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Event 5**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reaction – Attacker</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The creature turned towards him immediately, but Jack had been careful to stay well balanced and, as soon as the blow landed,</td>
<td>Here we see the fearlessness of the crocodile (in immediately turning to face its aggressor) and the competence of Jack (in anticipating that it would do so).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action – Defender 2</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>he bounded backwards five, six, seven rapid steps until he saw that the croc was not coming after him.</td>
<td>The author draws out the sentence – five, six, seven rapid steps – to increase the tension.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Simultaneous event</strong>&lt;br&gt;It was still after the crazy dog, though.</td>
<td>The author maintains the tension. The moment Jack is safe, Minty isn’t.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Action – Defender 2</strong>&lt;br&gt;Jack rushed in again and slammed the driftwood onto the same spot.</td>
<td>Jack’s actions are clever, quick and decisive; he has admirable control over what he is doing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reaction – Attacker</strong>&lt;br&gt;The croc lunged at him this time, but he had stayed on the balls of his feet</td>
<td>Jack maintains control of the situation. The reader continues to be impressed by the competence of this young man.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reaction – Defender 2</strong>&lt;br&gt;and sprang away almost as soon as contact was made.</td>
<td>James Moloney again shows that Jack has thought about what he is going to do, anticipating problems before they arise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Action – Attacker</strong>&lt;br&gt;The croc opened its massive jaws and Jack expected to hear a roar, like an angry lion. Instead, that ominous hiss warned him of the creature’s fury.</td>
<td>The author’s language choices remind the reader of the crocodile’s ferocity, huge jaws and fury, as well as the roar Jack expects to hear. The word <em>ominous</em> is a sign of things to come, adding to the suspense.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event 7</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Feelings – Defender 1</strong>&lt;br&gt;Minty was becoming more ferocious too – and more reckless.</td>
<td>The author wants the reader to feel proud of, and excited for, even the smallest one in the battle. The suspense continues to build.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Action – Defender 1</strong>&lt;br&gt;She darted in, drawing the croc’s attention to herself, barking at every breath.</td>
<td>Minty, like Jack, is full of energy and courage. Although the dog is unable to attack the croc physically, as Jack is doing, she effectively draws its attention away from her master. Minty is more agile than Jack and Jack is better equipped to attack than Minty, so their actions are also complementary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event 8</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Consequence – Defender 1**  
One miscalculation and those jaws would snatch the body clean off the top of her legs. |
| James Moloney uses graphic imagery to remind readers of the physical difference between the crocodile and Minty, and the danger the latter is braving. |
| **Consequence – Defender 2**  
The same applied to Jack. If he slipped in the treacherous mud, he would surely be snapped in half. |
| The reader is reminded that Jack is just as vulnerable as Minty – perhaps even more so, since his foothold is slippery. |
| **Event 9** |
| **Thought – Defender 2**  
Did he dare another attack? |
| Jack’s courage and resourcefulness are again on show. |
| **Action – Defender 2**  
He gulped down a breath and came at the monster again, |
| The croc is now referred to as a monster, which reinforces just what Jack and Minty are up against. |
| **Foreshadowing reaction**  
but with a demented dog on one side and a boy wielding a vicious club on the other, |
| Moloney hints that Jack and Minty are starting to get the better of the croc. |
| **Reaction**  
the croc retreated to the comfort of the water again.  
It did not submerge this time but stayed watching, like a log with eyes, waiting for its confusion to clear and eager to taste more blood. |
| A momentary easing of the action, though the tension levels remain. Readers are kept guessing about what might happen next. The croc does not disappear completely: it is merely confused and rethinking its strategy. Despite its retreat, the author still places the crocodile in a commanding position. |
Transformations

Transformations is an activity designed to change students’ orientation to the text under consideration, from that of a reader looking for meaning to that of a writer learning how the author used various literary techniques to achieve a particular effect or purpose.

In addition, transformations provides a key opportunity for ‘handover’ of understanding about the language choices in the text. The questioning techniques in this part of the teaching sequence reflect the growing common knowledge shared between class members, and between class members and the teacher.

A successful handover might mean, for example, that there is less need for preformulation.

Transformations – Passage one

Passage one is a recount of a vivid or gripping event that constitutes a complication. When authors write about an attack or conflict, they often construct one character to be powerful, intimidating and superior. Here, the crocodile isn’t just big or large, it is huge. James Moloney wants to make this character as intimidating as possible. He uses similes to bring home the aggressiveness of the crocodile’s actions.

Transformations – One

Text

* A huge crocodile shot out of the muddy water, fast as a cat and more powerful than a lion.

Goals of the transformations

Comprehension

At the very beginning of this passage the reader is introduced to the complication, which is the battle. The crocodile is the superior character involved in this complication. Here students need to understand the impact of the inferences contained in James Moloney’s language.

Word recognition leading to spelling

The main spelling focus for these transformations will be engaging in joint reconstructed writing so that students can take on the role of the author to consider the language choices that are important in the complication to the narrative.
Writing

Joint reconstructed writing on this passage will prepare students for other writing exercises in which they experiment with James Moloney’s strategy for writing about an attack or conflict. Students will learn how to construct a strong, decisive character.

Example of text segmentation

Initially, the sentence could be segmented in the following way. Other segmentations could also be used.

*A huge crocodile / shot out of the muddy water / , / fast as a cat / and more powerful than a lion / . / *

Teaching focus

Who (Attacker)
The author introduces the surprise new character straightaway, for immediate impact. The word ‘huge’ conveys the crocodile’s power and hints at the danger to come. It also aims to shock readers.

Action
Now we find out what it is that the crocodile is doing. The words *shot out* add to our sense of danger, and to our appreciation of the animal’s explosive power. The water’s muddiness is noted to add plausibility: Crocodiles tend to prefer muddy water, not least because it allows them to hide.

Simile 1
The author uses a simile his readers will be familiar with: we’ve all seen a cat pounce.

Comparison
A lion is powerful, but not as fast as a cat. To convey both speed and power, the author uses two comparisons.
What you could say

**Preformulation**
**Question:** And then, like we talked about before, we need to find out what this crocodile does, because what we are talking about here is starting a complication with an explosive event, aren’t we?

**Reconceptualisation**
Yes, great. Well done.
**Question:** Shot out from where?

**Reconceptualisation**
**Question:** Yes, great. We talked about ‘shooting out’ being like a gun, didn’t we? That’s speed, that’s fast. Even though this animal is huge, it ‘shot out’ of the muddy water …

**Preformulation**
Shot out of the muddy water.
**Question:** And why was the water muddy?

**Reconceptualisation**
Yes, because he’s making it dirty.

**Reconceptualisation**
And so he can hide, so you can’t see him. Good. You kids are doing really, really well.

**Transformations – Two**

When authors write about an attack or conflict, they often construct one character to be more powerful and intimidating than the other. They sometimes use adjectives to bring out the character’s specific features, and a narrator to help create suspense.

**Text**

*Its terrible jaws snapped around the nearest leg it could find. A young steer let out a painful bellow. But worse was to come.*

**Goals of the transformations**

**Comprehension**
The author makes inferences about the personality and qualities of the two characters. The students need to understand that James Moloney uses one character as a prop to help bring out the qualities (eg power, viciousness) of the other.

**Word recognition leading to spelling**
The main spelling focus for these transformations will be engaging in joint reconstructed writing so that students can take on the role of the author to consider the language choices that are important in the complication to the narrative.
Writing
Joint reconstructed writing on this passage will prepare students for other writing exercises in which they experiment with James Moloney’s strategy for writing about an attack or conflict. Students will learn how to construct a strong, decisive character.

Example of text segmentation
Initially, the next sentences could be segmented in the following way. Other segmentations could also be used.

*Its terrible jaws / snapped around the nearest leg / it could find / . /
* A young steer / let out a painful bellow / . /
* But worse was to come / . /

Teaching focus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Language choice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We know that James Moloney is talking about the crocodile because it is the only character that has been introduced into the passage at this stage. James Moloney continues to construct the crocodile as dangerous by focusing on its most frightening feature, its terrible jaws.</td>
<td>Its terrible jaws /</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The reader is left to wonder whose leg it is: it could be Minty’s or even Jack’s. This thought is intended to shock. The word snapped reinforces the croc’s speed, and around is a reminder of his size, while nearest adds to the sense of danger, implying that there was more than one leg to choose from. The crocodile had options.</td>
<td>snapped around the nearest leg /</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The author reminds the reader that the crocodile had been looking for something to grab when it shot out of the water.</td>
<td>it could find / . /</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The author introduces the second character. The word young suggests this character is vulnerable and weak.</td>
<td>A young steer /</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Moloney now implies that the leg belongs to the steer, and invites our sympathy for the animal.</td>
<td>let out a painful bellow / . /</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The narrator creates suspense, foreshadowing that things are going to get worse. The use of the word but here indicates that something unexpected will follow.</td>
<td>But worse was to come / . /</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Transformations – Three

When authors write about an attack or conflict, they often construct one character to be weaker and more vulnerable than the other. They sometimes use adjectives to emphasise the character’s specific features, and have them reproduce behaviour that we see in real life.

Text

*The croc didn't hesitate for a second. It was already drawing back towards the water, dragging its desperate victim with it.*

Goals of the transformations

**Comprehension**
The author again portrays the two characters in specific ways: one as the aggressor, who employs an established method of attack (*the death roll*), and the other as the victim.

**Word recognition leading to spelling**
The main spelling focus for these transformations will be engaging in joint reconstructed writing so that students can take on the role of the author to consider the language choices that are important in the complication to the narrative.

**Writing**
Joint reconstructed writing on this passage will prepare students for other writing exercises in which they experiment with James Moloney’s strategy for writing about an attack or conflict. Students will learn how to construct a strong, decisive character.

After doing transformations on all three passages, students can learn how to show progression of events through a sequence.

Example of text segmentation

Initially, the sentences could be segmented in the following way. Other segmentations could also be used.

*The croc / didn’t hesitate for a second / . / It was already drawing / back towards the water / , / dragging its desperate victim with it / . /*
Teaching focus

Who (Attacker)
Seeking to vary his language wherever possible in order to maintain the reader’s interest, the author now abbreviates the name of the crocodile to the snappier and perhaps more menacing croc.

Response
The author consolidates our impression of the croc as a remorseless killing machine: it knows what to do and intends to do it as quickly as possible.

Action
The word already reaffirms that the crocodile is focused and in control.

Position
The author wants to get the crocodile back to the water because in the water it has an even greater advantage over the steer and will be able to perform the death roll, thus providing an opportunity for a piece of dramatic writing.

Action
Desperate tells us that the steer is still alive and trying to escape. The word victim emphasises the unevenness of the combatants, suggesting that the battle is almost over, despite only just beginning.

Spelling
The spelling segment of the Accelerated Literacy teaching sequence follows transformations once the teacher is reasonably sure that students are able to recognise many of the words from the text out of context. Teachers are then able to use the students’ ability to hold a stable image of a word in their memory to show how that word can be broken into letter pattern chunks. Spelling activities include joint reconstructed writing.

How to choose spelling words
Keep the following points in mind when choosing words to work on in spelling:

- Are there any words that have patterns (or letters) that students have worked on before?
- Are there any new patterns that occur more than once or are commonly occurring?
- Are there any words that have interesting origins or roots that will help students develop an understanding of English?
- Which words will help students with joint reconstructed writing?
- Which words that students have already been taught need revision?
- Consider students’ age and stage of spelling development.
Suggestions for spelling

This text has been benchmarked at upper primary level, so it would be reasonable to assume that students studying it would be well into the transitional stage of spelling. Consequently, focus on words that help students use visual strategies to notice larger chunks of letters that go together to make orthographic patterns.

Where students are still negotiating the phonetic stage of spelling, work on initial consonants and blends to develop their decoding skills in reading and to help them write words.

Examples from passage one

The chart below shows some patterns that exploit words from study passage one. Build on these charts throughout the year to make the most of words that have been closely studied.
### Etymology

Etymological information on selected words is always interesting for students. Many websites, as well as dictionaries and other books, provide etymological information. Two informative websites are [http://www.etymonline.com](http://www.etymonline.com) and [http://www.thefreedictionary.com](http://www.thefreedictionary.com).
Examples

animal: 1398 (but rare before end of 16c., and not in K.J.V.), from L. animale, neut. of animalis ‘living being, being which breathes’, from anima ‘breath, soul’ (see animus). Drove out the older beast in common usage.

crocodile: 1563, restored spelling of M.E. cocodrille (c.1300), from M.L. cocodrillus, from L. crocodilus, from Gk. krokodilos, word applied by Herodotus to the crocodile of the Nile, apparently due to its basking habits, from kroke (pebbles) + drilos (worm).

Joint reconstructed writing

Joint reconstructed writing provides a transition from spelling activities to writing activities and works best when taken from transformations. Joint reconstructed writing involves the teacher and students working together to reconstruct the text using the same words as the author. It successfully reduces the stress associated with working out what to write about, what to write and how to write it. Stress associated with spelling is greatly reduced, giving students the mental space to think about subject matter and language choices.

The teacher ‘thinks aloud’ to reconstruct a passage with the students, using the writer’s language choices. This is a culmination of all the shared knowledge built up so far about language choices used in the construction and positioning of particular phrases and includes the dimensions of letter formation, the role of initial consonants and blends, and visual patterns.

Reconstruct sentences, paragraphs and sections of text as appropriate. For example:

- how James Moloney uses similes to introduce a threatening character and compare that character with others
- how James Moloney uses action–reaction sequences to demonstrate the superiority of one character over another
- how James Moloney progresses the event sequence by constructing a dominant and a submissive character.
Example

Students will use similes to introduce and construct an explosive and threatening character in a complication, as modelled below:

**Who (Attacker):** A huge crocodile  
**Action:** shot out of the muddy water,  
**Simile 1:** fast as a cat  
**Simile 2:** and more powerful than a lion.

Teaching focus

Draw on the common knowledge developed so far with students about this part of the story. Encourage students to contribute their views on how and why James Moloney wrote this text.

What you could say

We are going to write the explosive start to the complication in exactly the same way as James Moloney. I want you to think why James Moloney wrote this the way he did.

He starts the complication by introducing us to the aggressive character from the battle that follows. How does James Moloney describe this character?

A huge crocodile, that’s right. James Moloney wants this character to sound threatening, so he chose a really big crocodile. Let’s have a go at writing this part first.

Do you all remember how we should start the sentence? That’s right, a capital letter. Next we find out about the size of the character. Remember how we write ‘huge’. It starts with an ‘h’, you’re right. For the next chunk, remember how we make the long vowel sound.

Continue reconstructing the text, discussing meaning, language choice and the mechanics of spelling and writing.
Writing

Writing activities should not be based only on patterning, but on a principled understanding of why writers use specific techniques. For example, it is not much use substituting words to write a ‘new’ sentence or paragraph if students do not know what the skill they are learning is about or when to use it.

Writing goals consist of goals for the whole teaching sequence (overall goals), as well as goals for individual lessons (short-term goals).

Goals for 68 Teeth would include:
- Overall goals such as writing a story in which the central character is pitted against an aggressive character and wins
- Short-term goals such as jointly reconstructing parts of the story that contribute to the reader’s understanding of its structure and the author’s language choices; short workshops based on writing strategies, such as using similes to construct a character; writing complications that start with an explosive event; or writing an action – reaction sequence that establishes the dominance of one character over another.

Activities

The example scenarios in writing workshops two and three are linked, but students may choose to do completely different scenarios for each workshop. To allow students to apply what they have learnt, have them write a passage that links all three workshops. Students could attempt this activity with several scenarios that fit the structure.

Writing workshop one

This is an example of a workshop based on a writing strategy. It is more suitable for older students. Younger students may enjoy contributing orally while the teacher writes on a whiteboard or butcher’s paper. Once students can reconstruct the paragraph, and understand why the author used particular phrases and words, they will be ready to use it as a resource for writing their own introductory paragraph.

- Begin by building a story scenario about a powerful and dominant character. Students also need to create a second character to observe the actions of the dominant character.
- Tell the students that they are going to use the actions of this character to start the complication. They will use similes to describe the actions.
• Begin by modelling how to write the sentence. Think aloud as you write, explaining the mechanics of the process and why you are putting down each word.

• Once you have modelled how to write the first paragraph, build a new scenario about a dominant character with the students and jointly negotiate a first paragraph based on the same pattern.

Some students may only be able to work with the teacher. Plenty of work at the earlier stages of the Accelerated Literacy sequence will build the skills necessary to move beyond joint negotiation. Students who are ready to work independently can make up a scenario of their own, then write a first sentence for that scenario using the pattern and strategies studied.

Example

A young girl snorkelling in a sheltered bay is watching a coral trout meander through the reef.

Who (Attacker): A ferocious bull shark
Action: thundered through the suspended seaweed
Simile 1: quick as a striking snake
Comparison: and as agile as a rabbit.

Writing workshop two

Write the start of an action – reaction sequence that creates the obvious dominance of one character over another. Include a feature, a location and a character name. Conclude with a narrator’s comment informing the reader that the sequence is not yet complete and that the dominance is set to continue.

After dealing with this sentence in transformations, jointly reconstruct the two sentences, as follows:

From passage one
Feature: Its terrible jaws
Action: snapped around the nearest leg
Where: it could find.
Who (Victim): A young steer
Reaction: let out a painful bellow.
Comment: But worse was to come.

Create a scenario, then use this pattern to establish the dominance of one character over another.
Example
Rorge, the juvenile magpie lark, watched in horror as Corg, the red goshawk, ambushed an innocent flock of wood swallows.

Text pattern
Feature: Its honed beak
Action: smashed into a feathered body
Where: perched on the end of a limb.
Who (Victim): An old wood swallow
Reaction: shrieked in agony.
Comment: But the job was only half done.

Writing workshop three

Progress an event sequence in which the dominant character takes further control of the situation.

After dealing with this sentence in transformations, jointly reconstruct the two sentences as follows:

From passage one
Who (Attacker): The croc
Response: didn't hesitate for a second.
Action 1: It was already drawing
Position: back towards the water,
Action 2: dragging its desperate victim
Where: with it.

Create a scenario, then use this pattern to describe the character’s feelings of distress.

Example

Text pattern
Who (Attacker): The goshawk
Response: didn't react to the impact.
Action 1: It banked sharply
Position: once clear of the tree,
Action 2: turning back to see a tattered bundle of feathers
Where: crash to the ground.
Writing a narrative

Students could use James Moloney’s strategy to create a central character with whom the reader can identify and empathise. Constructing the central character as an ‘underdog’ will help achieve this. It is important that one character has a distinct physical advantage over the other. Students must ensure that the central character observes the physical dominance of the aggressive character prior to the conflict.

Students may choose to make the characters animals, humans or, like James Moloney, both.

- Start by listing some possible characters and the conflict they may have.

**Examples:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Central character</th>
<th>Superior character</th>
<th>Observation of dominance</th>
<th>Situation of conflict</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Young girl snorkelling</td>
<td>A shark</td>
<td>Shark attacks and kills a large reef fish.</td>
<td>Girl protects baby brother from the shark.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A small football player</td>
<td>A huge opponent</td>
<td>Team-mates visibly and vocally intimidated by opponent.</td>
<td>A close game. The ball lies between the central and superior characters as they charge towards it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A juvenile magpie lark</td>
<td>A red goshawk</td>
<td>Goshawk systematically kills other birds in the garden.</td>
<td>The magpie lark protects his mother from the goshawk.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Then work out how to make the dominant character appear bad and the main character appear good. Use James Moloney’s strategy of pitting the dominant character against an innocent and vulnerable character while the main character observes in horror.
- Discuss thoroughly before starting to jointly construct a class story.
- Use writing workshops to practise writing strategies.

These steps must precede asking students to write a narrative independently.
Appendices
Sample weekly plans

The following weekly plans are included as a guide only to the way teachers could move through the teaching sequence over a period of time. The plans’ content has been condensed. In reality, working through this text will take some weeks, and the following plans could actually take three or more weeks to complete. Parts of a session that are not finished in one lesson can be picked up in the next. Teachers will need to introduce the subsequent lesson/s carefully so students know what to expect, what the purpose of the lesson is, and where they are in the teaching sequence.
### Sample weekly plan

#### Text: *68 Teeth* by James Moloney

**Teaching focus:** The physical dominance of one character over another.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low order literate orientation</td>
<td><strong>Chapter 1</strong> Central characters introduced. Jack witnesses croc attack. Jack shocked and frightened.</td>
<td><strong>Chapter 2</strong> Jack rushes to tell his father about the croc. Introduced to Nils.</td>
<td><strong>Chapter 3</strong> Jack is really keen to help Nils out. Nils captures a three-metre (rather than the five-metre) croc. Nils tells Jack lots of information about the behaviour of crocs.</td>
<td><strong>Chapter 4</strong> Croc looks different from what Jack remembers. Another croc attacks Nils. Jack and Minty help make the croc retreat.</td>
<td><strong>Chapter 5</strong> Croc continues to attack Nils as Minty and Jack continue to defend him. Jack wins Nils onto the back of his truck.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Read story with the class. Students join in when they can.

**High order literate orientation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Passage one</th>
<th>Transformation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A huge crocodile shot out of the muddy water, fast as a cat and more powerful than a lion.</td>
<td>Who: A huge crocodile. Action: <strong>shot out of the muddy water,</strong> Simile 1: <em>fast as a cat,</em> Simile 2: <em>and more powerful than a lion.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Spelling**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>huge</th>
<th>crocodile</th>
<th>shot</th>
<th>fast</th>
<th>cat</th>
<th>powerful</th>
<th>lion</th>
<th>muddy</th>
<th>water</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Writing**

Include any words students have had trouble reading. Revise words learnt previously.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low order literate</td>
<td><strong>Chapter 6</strong>&lt;br&gt;Jack drives Nils back to the homestead. Jack's mother takes control of the emergency</td>
<td><strong>Epilogue</strong>&lt;br&gt;A happy ending, with all questions answered. Jack is a hero.</td>
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<tr>
<td>orientation</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>High order literate</td>
<td><strong>Passage one</strong>&lt;br&gt;Still the croc turned over and over ... it was that length, easily.</td>
<td><strong>Passage one</strong>&lt;br&gt;The muddy water around the two writhing animals was stained ... The steer was as good as dead.</td>
<td><strong>Passage one</strong>&lt;br&gt;The croc sensed this as well ... it would drown soon enough.</td>
<td><strong>Passage one</strong>&lt;br&gt;The sudden silence after the fury of the attack that had just been so easily won.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>orientation</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformations</td>
<td><strong>Who:</strong> A huge crocodile  &lt;br&gt;<strong>Action:</strong> shot out of the water  &lt;br&gt;<strong>Simile 1:</strong> fast as a cat  &lt;br&gt;<strong>Simile 2:</strong> and more powerful than a lion.</td>
<td><strong>Its terrible jaws / snapped around the nearest leg</strong> (Revise previous transformations before joint reconstructed writing)</td>
<td><strong>Its terrible jaws / snapped around the nearest leg / it could find</strong></td>
<td><strong>Its terrible jaws / snapped around the nearest leg / it could find</strong></td>
<td><strong>Its terrible jaws / snapped around the nearest leg / it could find</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td><strong>other, river, over, under, shock, show</strong>&lt;br&gt;Introduce students to words with the same spelling patterns as those in the transformations and passage one. Add these to spelling journals.</td>
<td><strong>time, that, live.com/pa</strong>&lt;br&gt;ioneer</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td><strong>Who:</strong> A huge crocodile  &lt;br&gt;<strong>Action:</strong> shot out of the muddy water  &lt;br&gt;<strong>Simile 1:</strong> fast as a cat  &lt;br&gt;<strong>Simile 2:</strong> and more powerful than a lion.</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Who:</strong> A ferocious bull shark  &lt;br&gt;<strong>Action:</strong> thundered through the suspended sea weed  &lt;br&gt;<strong>Simile 1:</strong> quick as a striking snake  &lt;br&gt;<strong>Simile 2:</strong> and as agile as a rabbit.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
A huge crocodile shot out of the muddy water, fast as a cat and more powerful than a lion.

Its terrible jaws snapped around the nearest leg it could find.

A young steer let out a painful bellow.

But worse was to come.

The croc didn't hesitate for a second.

It was already drawing back towards the water, dragging its desperate victim with it.

The other cattle charged away in terror, not even stopping at the top of the high river bank to watch.

The crocodile now had their unfortunate companion all the way into the water.

It flipped over suddenly, turning the steer with it.
A sickening snap echoed across the mud and sand,
and the steer bucked wildly in agony.

But the crocodile had only just begun.
Still with that same grip,
it flipped again
and then began to spin over and over.
The brown hide of the steer span with it.
There was no more bellowing now.
The steer’s head remained under water most of the time.
Every breath would fill its lungs with more water.
It was losing the strength to fight back.

Still the croc turned over and over.
Jack couldn’t believe how big it was.
It had to be at least four metres long.
No, wait, the in-goal area of the school's footy field was five metres wide.

It was that length, easily.

The muddy water around the two writhing animals was stained with another colour now, a rusty red.

The water was foaming,

and Jack noticed the bubbles had a pinkish tinge.

There was no hope for the steer.

Half-drowned and rapidly losing blood, it was as good as dead.

The croc sensed this as well.

It stopped spinning the limp body around

and slipped backwards into deeper water,

taking the steer with it.

If the poor animal wasn’t already dead,

it would drown soon enough.
The sudden silence after the fury of the attack came as a shock.

Aside from the bubbles left behind by the wild thrashing,

there was nothing to show of the deadly battle

that had just been so easily won.
The crocodile edged forward.

Now a new sound broke the eerie deathwatch on the river bank.

It was Minty.

She dashed between Jack and the crocodile,

barking like a machine gun.

‘Get away you stupid mongrel,’

Jack shouted at her.

The croc hesitated for a second,

sizing up the dog,

then lunged at her,

its jaws snapping only centimetres from her shoulder.

Minty leapt away just in time,

but didn’t bolt

as she had when the smaller reptile had writhed in her cage.
Minty seemed more terrified even than Jack, but would defend her master no matter how great the danger.

If Jack wanted to save her, he would have to keep the croc off balance.

With the creature distracted by Minty’s frenzied dancing, he dared two quick paces and smashed the shortened tree branch against the croc’s sensitive snout.

The creature turned towards him immediately, but Jack had been careful to stay well balanced and, as soon as the blow landed, he bounded backwards five, six, seven rapid steps until he saw that the croc was not coming after him.
It was still after the crazy dog, though.

Jack rushed in again

and slammed the driftwood onto the same spot.

The croc lunged at him this time,

but he had stayed on the balls of his feet

and sprang away almost as soon as contact was made.

The croc opened its massive jaws

and Jack expected to hear a roar, like an angry lion.

Instead, that ominous hiss warned him of the creature's fury.

Minty was becoming more ferocious too – and more reckless.

She darted in,

drawing the croc's attention to herself,

barking at every breath.

One miscalculation and those jaws would snatch the body clean off the top of her legs.
The same applied to Jack.

If he slipped in the treacherous mud,

he would surely be snapped in half.

Did he dare another attack?

He gulped down a breath

and came at the monster again,

but with a demented dog on one side

and a boy wielding a vicious club on the other,

the croc retreated to the comfort of the water again.

It did not submerge this time

but stayed watching, like a log with eyes,

waiting for its confusion to clear

and eager to taste more blood.
Upper Primary

These notes have been written to help teachers use the Accelerated Literacy teaching strategies in Year 5. However, they could also be used with older students who have difficulties with reading.

Outcomes of the teaching sequence

At the end of this teaching sequence, students should be able to:
- read the passages studied fluently and with a high level of inferential comprehension
- discuss the story: give opinions about the author’s language choices; identify the story’s structure, theme and ideology
- spell chosen words and understand related spelling strategies
- use the story as a model for writing.

Notes

- The following notes have been written for teachers who have attended professional development workshops in teaching Accelerated Literacy. The notes presume some understanding about how to teach the program.
- For a detailed explanation of how to implement the teaching sequence, please refer to the teachers’ handouts from the first professional development workshop. Additionally, you could refer to http://www.nalp.edu.au.
- It is also assumed that teachers have read the text on which these notes are based and have a detailed understanding of the text before beginning a teaching sequence.
- Teachers are responsible for ensuring the suitability of the text on which these notes are based for their particular teaching context.

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