Early Childhood

These notes have been written to help teachers use the Accelerated Literacy teaching strategies in the first two years of schooling.

Outcomes of the teaching sequence

At the end of this teaching sequence, students should be able to:

- read the story studied fluently and interpret the illustrations at a high level
- 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.

The National Accelerated Literacy Program is jointly funded by the Australian Government through the Department of Education Science and Training, and the Northern Territory Government through the Department of Employment, Education and Training, and supported by Charles Darwin University.
Big Rain Coming
Early Childhood
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</tbody>
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Using this resource
Year level

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The text

*Big Rain Coming* by Katrina Germein, illustrated by Bronwyn Bancroft. Published 2002 by Penguin Group (Australia). Page numbers provided here refer to this edition.

The transcript

‘In the classroom’ includes sections of a transcript of a videoed lesson. These demonstrate authentic examples of the negotiation roles taken by one teacher and a class and are not all that could be said. The transcript segments are presented as dialogue in the following format:

**T:** Question or comment by the teacher

**S:** Response from the students.
Big Rain Coming
Synopsis of the story

Set in a remote Indigenous community south-east of Katherine, this story includes a diverse cast of characters – including kids, dogs and frogs – who spend a week anxiously waiting for rain.

Themes

The main themes of Big Rain Coming are the patience and wisdom of the elders (Old Stephen provides an accurate weather forecast early on in the story) and the dependence we all have on weather cycles. The latter theme is explored partly through Bronwyn Bancroft’s illustrations, which celebrate seasons, pathways and cycles using colour, circles and movement. Nature is depicted as a living force: the sun and the clouds have faces, while the people in the story don’t. The message seems to be that all of the earth’s inhabitants are alike when it comes to the need for rain.

Why use this story?

Big Rain Coming is a text for early readers. Teachers can concentrate on a few literate language features, including the author’s:

• use of simple words to reduce overload for early readers
• use of image-building language
• repetitive yet satisfying structure built around the days of the week
• use of humans, animals and weather as participants
• use of pathways, cycles and the passage of time as recurrent themes
• use of foreshadowing, as Old Stephen reads nature’s signs to predict rain
• creation of a sense of expectation, drawing out the suspense with anti-climax until the anticipated rain finally comes.

Structure of the text

Big Rain Coming has a simple narrative structure with an orientation, complication and resolution.

Orientation: On Sunday afternoon Old Stephen nodded to the dark clouds spreading in the south. ‘Big rain coming,’ he said.

Complication: But on Monday there was no rain. The night was so warm … But there was still no rain.

Resolution: On Saturday, there was rain. Wonderful cool wet RAIN.
The story has a satisfying resolution when, after a week-long build-up, the clouds finally deliver the promised rain. A coloured band runs throughout and beyond the narrative, from the inside front cover to the inside back cover, to remind us that the weather cycle is, indeed, cyclical. The big rain will come again.

**Language features of the text**

**Third-person narration**

The story is narrated in the third person and contains limited but powerful direct speech from the main character, Old Stephen. Katrina Germein conveys a sense of increasing heat and desperation through vivid image-building language, and this is supported by Bancroft’s pictures. The repeated delays increase the reader’s satisfaction when the anticipated rain finally comes.

**The passing of time is used to stage events**

Each reference to the passing of another day is accompanied with actions and reactions, allowing us to identify with the participants’ feelings. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The next day</th>
<th>What happened (action)</th>
<th>Characters’ reactions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On Tuesday,</td>
<td>there was still no rain.</td>
<td>The panting dogs at Roberta’s camp dug themselves dusty holes to keep cool.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The author varies the references to the passage of time so they don’t become too repetitive (eg *On Sunday afternoon, But on Monday, On Tuesday, Wednesday came, By Thursday night, Then on Friday evening, On Saturday*).

**Images of ‘when’ and ‘where’**

The author uses words that tell us when (eg *while they slept, after school*), and where (eg *in the south, around the leaky tap on the rainwater tank, over the hills*). Showing how and why authors make these language choices will encourage students to use similar techniques in their own writing.

**The creation of suspense and tension**

The author creates suspense by setting up an expectation that the story is going to be about rain, then dashing this expectation each time another day is introduced by using such words as ‘but’ and ‘still no rain’.
Books with similar themes

*Big Rain Coming* is Katrina Germein’s first book. She has lived and worked in the remote Northern Australian communities of Minyerri and Ramingining. Minyerri is the setting for this and her subsequent illustrated book, *Leaving*. Both stories are inspired by the Indigenous people of Northern Australia and their relationship with the environment.
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
The teaching sequence on *Big Rain Coming* aims to teach:

- how to read the story 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 short suspenseful narrative which stages characters’ reactions to something that is expected to happen, but which occurs only after one or two delays.

**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**

There are a number of points to focus on, as follows.

- The story takes place over the course of a week, with plot developments each day.
- Old Stephen is wise (not least because he rests in the shade while the kids frolic in the heat).
- The landscape is dry and dusty, but not completely parched. The illustrations include a billabong, and the trees and hills are green.
- The illustrator has made the human characters faceless, perhaps to indicate that we are all dependent on water.
- The illustrator has instead given faces to the sun, moon and clouds, so as to personify these elements of nature.
- The illustrator has included a coloured band, which precedes, runs through and extends beyond the narrative, so that we understand the place of this small story within a wider context. Weather is cyclical. Big rain (and, indeed, big dry) will come again.
• The illustrator has included many circular images, including the bands around the rainwater tank, the circles within the sun and the earth, the glow around the moon, the spots on the frogs and the swirls around the characters dancing in the rain. These images strengthen the weather-cycle theme, reminding us that rain follows dry and dry follows rain.

Teaching focus

• Introduce Katrina Germein.
• Say that this is a ‘change over time’ book like The Very Hungry Caterpillar, which also takes place over the course of a week.
• Talk about the setting and find Minyerri on a map.
• Talk about the three distinct phases of Northern Australia’s climate: the dry, the build-up and the wet.

Teaching focus

• The title is Big Rain Coming and the jumping, dancing and cartwheeling characters on the cover are expressing their joy about the fact that it will rain soon in this hot, dry place.
• We can see that the earth is a reddish brown, so the story is probably set in the outback.
• Open the whole cover and point out the hot sun, the scuttling lizards, the swirls within the earth and the coloured band that stretches from left to right.

What you could say

This is a story about a community that is waiting for rain. You can see the title here on the cover. The book is called Big Rain Coming. It was written by a woman called Katrina Germein. She lived in an Indigenous community, at a place called Minyerri, for a long time, which is where she got the idea for this story.

These people are very excited about the coming of the rain. You can see them jumping for joy, dancing and turning cartwheels on the brown earth. The earth looks dry, doesn’t it? It looks as though they really need some rain. But it doesn’t look really dry, like a desert. It looks as though it would be a good place to grow plants, I think. Look at this lizard. Even the animals are waiting for the rain.

[Spread book open.] If we open the book right up we can see more lizards scuttling about from place to place looking for something to eat or drink. Or perhaps they are looking for shade? And look at this sun! It’s really radiating out, isn’t it? Can you see the hot surface of the land?

And have a look at this colourful band travelling across the page. A woman called Bronwyn Bancroft, who is a famous artist, did all these illustrations. You’ll see this pattern all through the book. Maybe it’s the Rainbow Serpent? Or it
could be a pathway. I think it might be showing us the passing of time, showing that life goes on through good times and hard times.

Teaching focus

Sunday

- Introduce Old Stephen. Explain that the word *Old* is part of his name, and that it tells us that he has lived for a long time and has a lot of knowledge about the world.
- Old Stephen has seen some dark clouds spreading in the sky to the south. The clouds tell us it will probably rain soon.
- Old Stephen nods to the clouds. Body language is an important part of communication. Especially in places where distances are great and where you might need to be silent at times (eg while hunting).
- Show how the other characters are looking in the direction that he’s pointing to. They aren’t really dressed for the heat, but Old Stephen is wearing clothes that cover him from the sun. This shows his wisdom and experience.
- Look at the position of the sun in the sky. It is afternoon. Even in the late afternoon, there is a lot of heat.
- The story starts on Sunday – the first day of the week. Perhaps this book will be structured according to the days of the week?

Teaching focus

- Old Stephen speaks for the first time. He says that a good heavy rain is on the way. Now we feel excited as we, too, wait for the rain.
- The children continue to play in the heat while Old Stephen, sensibly, rests in the shade. Maybe the children think it will rain very soon?
- The illustrations show birds on the move, as they often are when the weather is about to change.
- There is still some greenery on the trees and on the hills in the distance, suggesting that the setting is not a desert, but rather a place waiting for the cycle of rain.
- Notice the face on the cloud. It is a live and active force.

Teaching focus

Monday

- On Monday we have the first surprise: the rain does not come.
- The story’s pattern begins to emerge: the first event happens on Sunday and this event is happening on Monday.
- While the clouds have not disappeared, they are lower in the sky. The sun is now huge. It looks very bright and hot and covers the land with a burning line.
- Old Stephen continues to wait patiently in the shade. He doesn’t seem worried that the rain hasn’t come.
Teaching focus

- It’s getting hotter all the time. The night is so warm that Rosie’s kids sleep outside.
- The illustration suggests that, even then, they have a hard time getting comfortable.

Teaching focus

**Tuesday**
- It’s the next day and there is no rain – not even any clouds. The sky is a vivid blue. It looks like it will never rain again.
- This young person is on his way somewhere on a skateboard with a didgeridoo.
- I wonder where everyone else is. Probably in the shade somewhere trying to get relief from the searing heat.
- Everyone hopes that the rain will come sometime soon.

Teaching focus

- It looks hotter than ever; there’s even a heat haze in the sky.
- Humans aren’t the only ones feeling the heat. Panting, the dogs at Roberta’s camp dig holes to try and keep cool. The dirt they have dug up might be a bit cooler than the surface dirt that has been baked by the sun.

Teaching focus

**Wednesday**
- On Wednesday there is still no rain and there are no clouds in the sky.
- Maybe it won’t rain after all.
- The suspense is growing – even the lizard looks like it is trying to find shade.
- On the other hand, the trees look quite healthy. They have adapted to going for long periods without water.

Teaching focus

- The children swim in the billabong to try to cool off. The water is warm and still, and there is not a breath of a breeze. The swim is not that refreshing, but it is better than nothing.
- While there are still no clouds to be seen, the sky is starting to look a little hazy. This might be a sign that rain is coming.
Teaching focus

Thursday
- On Thursday there are still no clouds and no rain.
- The children turn cartwheels, probably because the sun has gone down and it is getting a little cooler. Look at the glorious sunset. That sight would make anyone turn cartwheels.
- Old Stephen seems to be studying the sky. Was he wrong about the rain?
- There are the birds on the move again. Perhaps they sense a change coming.

Teaching focus

The sun is back out again and looks as hot and strong as ever, and there are still no clouds in the sky.
- Some frogs huddle under the shade of the rainwater tank, quenching their thirst from a leaky tap. Things are really getting desperate now, not just for the humans.

Teaching focus

Friday
- It’s Friday evening and huge thick grey clouds, echoing with thunder, have appeared in the sky.
- The illustrator has drawn faces on the clouds. One of them has its mouth wide open. Perhaps it’s making a noise like thunder.

Teaching focus

- Old Stephen again says, ‘Big rain coming’. The rain feels very close now.
- On the other hand, the clouds aren’t covering the whole sky; they could still be quite a distance away. Perhaps this is just another false alarm. Maybe they will roll away again and Saturday will be hotter and drier than ever.

Teaching focus

- Still no rain, and the clouds have grown a little smaller in the sky.
- The girls don’t seem at all worried about getting wet. They walk sedately along. Their dresses are being blown by the wind.

Teaching focus

Saturday
- Hooray! Finally, the waiting is over. The clouds have brought rain, and plenty of it.
- Look at Old Stephen and the children. Everyone looks very happy dancing and playing in the rain.
- Look at all the circular patterns. This has all happened before and will all happen again.
Teaching focus

- Here are some of our friends from the front cover. There is a lot of rain and they seem to be enjoying it very much. The tension of the build-up is finally over.

Read the story aloud

Following the low order literate orientation, read the story to the class. Show the students where you are reading with a pointer or marking strip of some kind so they know you are attending to the words. Read the story expressively and if the students want to read with you allow them to do so, but do not slow down and wait for them. Avoid the reading becoming a chant by consistently modelling fluent, expressive reading.

High order literate orientation

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>Orientation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On Sunday afternoon Old Stephen</td>
<td>The author tells the reader when this story took place. It’s just one Sunday afternoon probably not too long ago. An ordinary Sunday at the end of the ‘build-up’ time. Storms often build up towards the end of the day. Old Stephen introduces the main character. The fact that Old is part of his name, refers to his age but it also implies that he is knowledgeable and wise and should be respected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What he did</td>
<td>‘Nodding to’ is a way of pointing in a certain direction. Old Stephen nodded to the clouds. When he speaks it will be the clouds he is talking about.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nodded to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the dark clouds</td>
<td>Dark clouds often indicate rain is going to fall or a storm may be coming. Contrast them with the lighter, fluffier clouds in the other direction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spreading</td>
<td>spreading means to grow or increase so these clouds must be getting bigger so quickly that the people can notice it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This indicates in which direction the clouds are spreading. The clouds are not directly overhead, they are some distance away. It will take some time before they move overhead and deliver rain. How long it takes is our story. This information sets up the story as it foreshadows what will happen and is the beginning of building this suspense for the rain to come. The story is building just as the clouds are.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Complication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>But</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the previous page there was the expectation given that there was ‘Big rain coming’. If not on Sunday then the next day – Monday. Now the <strong>But</strong> is an indicator to say that the expected did not happen.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>on Monday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>on Monday. The reader now expects that there will be statements about what happens on each of the days of the week. The suspense is building.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>there was no rain.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>there was no rain. So the expected didn’t happen. Remember that Old Stephen didn’t say when it would rain, just that it would. This is the beginning of the pattern of anticipation and then let down on each day of the week.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characters’ reaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The night was so warm</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The night was so warm</em> tells what the weather was like on that Monday night when the expected rain doesn’t come. It must have been a really hot day if the night is still warm. This is what the build up is like. It’s really hard to sleep.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rosie’s kids</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Now we find out what one group of characters did on this really warm night and why they did it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>dragged their beds outside</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We aren’t told anything about Rosie’s kids, or Rosie for that matter; we are just told what they did. It must have been hot for kids to drag their beds outside.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>to maybe feel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>And the author tells us the reason why they did this. It was not definite that they were going to feel a breeze because the author uses the word <em>maybe</em>.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>some breeze while they slept.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>But they did it because they were hopeful they would feel some breeze. So even a little breeze or breath of air would have been nice while they slept.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What happened the next day (action)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>On Tuesday, there was still no rain.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Characters’ reaction</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The panting dogs at Roberta’s camp dug for themselves dusty holes to keep cool.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What happened the next day (action)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wednesday came, and still no rain.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Characters’ reaction</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The children swam in the billabong after school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The water was warm and still.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What happened the next day (action)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>By Thursday night there was still no rain.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Characters’ reaction</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The fat green frogs huddled around the leaky tap on the rain-water tank.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What happened the next day</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Then on Friday evening the thick grey clouds over the hills were echoing with thunder.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
‘Big rain coming,’ said Stephen.

Old Stephen makes the same statement as he did at the beginning of the book. The suspense has been building and building to this point and everyone is waiting for this rain to come. The author just says ‘Stephen’ now rather than ‘Old Stephen’ but we know that it is the same person. There is an even greater expectation that it is going to rain now that Stephen has spoken again.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What happened</th>
<th>Old Stephen makes the same statement as he did at the beginning of the book. The suspense has been building and building to this point and everyone is waiting for this rain to come. The author just says ‘Stephen’ now rather than ‘Old Stephen’ but we know that it is the same person. There is an even greater expectation that it is going to rain now that Stephen has spoken again.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>But</strong></td>
<td>The sentence starts with <em>But</em> suggesting again that what is expected isn’t going to happen, and the pattern continues. The author is playing with us, allowing the suspense to grow.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Resolution**

**Event**

*On Saturday there was rain.*

The pattern finally breaks.

**Elaboration/Expansion**

*Wonderful cool wet RAIN.*

We have been waiting for rain for the whole story, so its coming merits an expansion.

**What you could say**

**Preformulation**

At the very beginning of the story, Katrina Germein tells us much of what we need to know. First, she tells us when it all started.

**Question:** Who remembers when the people first noticed the clouds?

**Reconceptualisation:**

That’s right. It was *On Sunday afternoon*. We don’t know which particular Sunday, just one Sunday some time ago, when the rains were due. It must have been really hot that afternoon.

**Preformulation**

Next, we find out who the main character of the story is and learn a little about him.

**Question:** Who is the main character?

**Reconceptualisation:**

Yes, it’s Old Stephen. His name tells us something else about him. Old people have a lot of knowledge and experience, and we need to respect them and listen to what they say. The people in this community listen to Old Stephen and get really excited about the coming of the rain.
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.

Goals of the transformations

Comprehension

It is important that students understand the inferences in this text, including:

- what the dark clouds represent and the fact that they are spreading
- why the author chose to have a character such as Old Stephen making the statement that there is ‘Big rain coming’
- why the kids drag their beds outside.

Word recognition leading to spelling

In order to develop word recognition skills, it is necessary to cut the transformations into single words so that the teacher can determine whether students can recognise words out of context. Words that could be the focus of this lesson include dark, clouds and south.

The other 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 to the orientation of this narrative.
Writing

Authors who write for young children generally use simple story structures with a straightforward orientation, complication and resolution. These transformations can be used to demonstrate the information that can be included in the orientation of a story about the weather.

Joint reconstructed writing on this passage will prepare students for other writing exercises in which they experiment with using the author’s strategy for writing the orientation to a narrative.

Text (pages 1–8)

On Sunday afternoon Old Stephen nodded to the dark clouds spreading in the south.
‘Big rain coming,’ he said.
But on Monday there was no rain.
The night was so warm Rosie’s kids dragged their beds outside to maybe feel some breeze while they slept.

Example of text segmentation

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

On Sunday / afternoon / Old Stephen / nodded to / the dark clouds / spreading / in the south / . /
‘ / Big rain / coming / , / ’ / he said / . /
But / on Monday / there was / no rain / . /
The night / was / so warm / Rosie’s kids / dragged / their beds / outside /
to maybe feel / some breeze / while / they / slept / . /
# Teaching focus

## Structure of text and wording

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orientation</th>
<th>Why language choices were made</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>When</strong></td>
<td>Katrina Germein begins the orientation with when (rather than where or why). Stories often begin like this.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>On Sunday / afternoon</em></td>
<td>The fact that the author has chosen the main character to be ‘old’ is important because an old person has more experience and often more knowledge and wisdom than a younger person. The “Old” is part of his name, which emphasises the respect in which Old Stephen is held by his community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who</strong></td>
<td>This is a way of pointing in a certain direction. When Old Stephen talks, he will be talking about what he nodded to.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Old Stephen</em></td>
<td>It is important that the clouds are dark because that makes them more likely to bring rain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What he did</strong></td>
<td>The fact that the clouds are spreading also increases the likelihood of rain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>nodded</em></td>
<td>However, we learn that they are in the south rather than directly overhead.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>to the dark clouds</em></td>
<td>This is what Old Stephen said. The author wrote he rather than Old Stephen because readers can work out who is speaking from the previous sentence. Old Stephen is respected and has had a lot of experience with predicting rain. Therefore there is great credibility attached to this statement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Observation</strong></td>
<td>But is an indication that what has just been stated will be at odds with what follows.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Big rain / coming/, /”/ he said</em>/ . /</td>
<td>The author could have said the next day but she is setting up a story pattern based on all seven days of the week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Complication</strong></td>
<td>The reader begins to empathise with the participants anxiously anticipating rain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Event</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>there was / no rain</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The night / The reader can assume that the reference here is to Monday night because Tuesday hasn’t been mentioned yet.

was / so warm / Here the author builds up an image for the reader of how warm the night was by describing the reactions of Rosie’s kids.

Rosie’s kids / The author introduces us to a group of characters and doesn’t tell us much except that they are the kids who belong to Rosie. What is important is their reaction to the warm night.

dragged / their beds / The verb dragged (rather than, say, took) suggests that moving the beds was difficult. It must have been very hot for the kids to go to all that effort.

outside / The author doesn’t tell us exactly where they dragged their beds, just that it was outside. Anywhere outside would be cooler than in a house.

to maybe feel / some breeze / The reader is now told why the kids dragged their beds out. They aren’t guaranteed to get cooler, though, as the author uses the word maybe.

while / they / slept / . / It is very difficult to sleep if you feel too hot.

What you could say

Preformulation
Let’s look at what this author has chosen to tell us first. Katrina Germein begins by telling us when these events happened. Stories often begin like this.

Question: Who remembers what day the author first talks about in this story?

Reconceptualisation
That’s right. It was On Sunday afternoon. Here, the author doesn’t just give the day, but what part of the day. She sets up the feeling for us that if a storm is brewing on Sunday afternoon, then rain on Monday is pretty likely. This is what we begin to expect.

Preformulation
The author has made her main character old. This is important because an old person has more experience than a child.

Question: So who is the main character Katrina Germein writes about?

Reconceptualisation
Yes, it’s Old Stephen. This is the character who knows the most about when it will rain. So readers expect rain soon, don’t they?
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 a Year 1 level, so it would be reasonable to assume that students studying it would be negotiating the transitional stage of spelling. Some students, however, could still be at an earlier stage of spelling, particularly those with little reading experience. These students need to learn to recognise and write initial letters before working on words that help them use visual strategies to notice larger chunks of letters that go together to make common orthographic patterns.

For beginning readers, it is also important to teach a bank of high-frequency words that occur in all texts.

Begin to make class lists of spelling words. These can be flexible; that is, words can belong to more than one list. Following are some suggestions.
Examples from the text

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>b–</th>
<th>d–</th>
<th>–ou–</th>
<th>t–</th>
<th>w–</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B/ig</td>
<td>d/ark</td>
<td>cl/ou/d/s</td>
<td>T/ues/d/ay</td>
<td>W/ed/n/es/d/ay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b/ed/s</td>
<td>d/og/s</td>
<td>ou/t/s/ide</td>
<td>t/ank</td>
<td>w/at/er</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b/ill/a/b/ong</td>
<td>d/ust/y</td>
<td>s/ou/th</td>
<td>w/ar/m</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 and http://www.thefreedictionary.com.

Examples

Sunday: O.E. Sunnandæg, literally ‘day of the sun’ from sunnan, oblique case of sunne ‘sun’ + dæg ‘day’, from a W.Gmc. loan-translation of Latin, dies solis ‘day of the sun’


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.
Students at the phonetic stage of spelling development

Students in their first year of school, in the phonetic stage of spelling development, will still be learning to recognise words and write letters. The physical demands of forming letters are quite high for many of these students, especially combined with the cognitive demands of remembering the names of letters and sounds, so they will need support with word recognition, handwriting and spelling.

Joint reconstructed writing is undertaken using either a blackboard or whiteboard, or a sheet of butcher’s paper that everyone can see. The students write some letters of each word and the teacher writes the rest. Students should form letters on small whiteboards or blackboards before they contribute to the joint writing.

Steps in joint reconstructed writing

- The book should be readily available for easy reference. The teacher explains to the students that together they are going to try to write the story the way Katrina Germein did, and that they will start by telling readers when the story took place and who the main character was.

**What you could say**

We are going to try to write the first part of this story the way Katrina Germein did, starting with telling readers when the story took place and who the main character was.

Can anyone remember how this story starts? That’s right, On Sunday. What letter do we need to start the word, On? That’s right. It’s tricky, isn’t it? It’s an ‘O’.

[The teacher can write the ‘O’ or ask a student who knows how to do it to come and write it on the paper or board.]

Go on to ask the students to help you to write ‘On’. If this is a word the students can write, ask them to come and help write the next letter.

When writing ‘Sunday’, remind students that the word used to mean ‘day of the sun’.

Continue like this until the sentence has been reconstructed. The discussion should include what words come next, what letter or letters each word starts with, what letters come next and how to write them, and why the author used particular words.
Students at the transitional stage of spelling development

These students, who are usually in Year 1 (age 6), may be able to write many letters independently. They may also know some of the letters that go together to form English letter patterns, such as cl/ou/d/s and s/ou/th.

These students can work with the teacher on jointly reconstructing parts of the text, with the teacher working on the blackboard, whiteboard or butcher’s paper while they write in individual writing books.

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 Big Rain Coming would include:

- overall goals, such as jointly constructing a class book about an event that is anticipated but does not occur straightaway
- short-term goals, such as discussing and listing things that might be eagerly anticipated; writing sentences that elaborate on characters’ reactions to circumstances; writing sentences that reveal things about a character through what they say and do; and discussing and listing a sequence of time markers that herald change and could be used in the class text.

Activities

Workshop one

Discuss and list things that could be eagerly anticipated. For example:

- long school holidays
- camping trips
- a performance
- winning a game.
Workshop two

Write sentences elaborating on characters’ reactions to circumstances.
For example:

- The day was so cold that …
- The kids were so bored that …
- The dancers had practised so much that …
- The other team’s score was so high that …

Workshop three

Write about a character by describing what he or she says and does.

Workshop four

Discuss and list a sequence of time markers that herald change and could be used in the class text. For example:

- the seasons
- mealtimes
- each week in a month.

Joint construction of a class book

Joint construction allows the teacher to assist students by ‘thinking aloud’ about the way an author plans and writes short narratives. Joint construction of class books is a particularly appropriate writing activity for Year 1 students, for whom the physical and cognitive demands of writing are great. Students of this age have not only to think about what to write, they also have to remember how to form letters and spell words correctly. For students in the transitional stage of spelling, negotiating the possible spellings of words takes confidence and a range of spelling resources.

Possible steps in jointly constructing a class book

- Read other stories that involve the staging of events. Discuss the time markers in these stories as you read them.
- Discuss how authors of narratives must plan their stories – Orientation, Complication, Resolution.
- Explain that you are going to plan and then write a story in the way authors do.
- Discuss a character who is wise and who can predict when events will occur.
- Discuss and agree on a time sequence for the story.
- Have students work in groups to illustrate the sequence (carry out illustration tasks in art lessons). Arrange the illustrations and discuss the sequence.
- Discuss what you might say for each illustration.
- When everyone has agreed on the story sequence and how it will work, start to write.
Carry out the writing jointly and remind students about the strategies you can use. For example, using characters’ reactions to tell readers what they are thinking and feeling. Use butcher’s paper and work together, allowing students to write the words they know.

For a joint construction of this nature, the teacher needs to have some examples prepared ahead of the lesson to help get the activity started.

The outcome of the joint construction will be a class book that everyone can read. More than one joint construction can be attempted before students are asked to write independently; in fact, it would be not be necessary for students in Year 1 or younger to write a whole story independently.

**Examples of joint construction**

**Examples of joint construction 1:**

A. At breakfast time, mum pointed to the bright sun.
OR
B. After lunch, Gran looked at the trees bending in the wind.
OR
C. On Tuesday night, dad showed us the ants climbing the walls.

**Example of joint construction 2:**

Early one evening a young rock band started to practise next door to Leah’s house. The noise was very loud. ’Don’t worry, it will be quiet again soon,’ said her mother.
Leah couldn’t hear the television properly and turned it up as loud as it would go.
At dinner time, the band was still practising. Leah’s younger brother sat at the table with his hands covering his ears. Leah’s dad shook his head and screwed up his face whenever the singer tried to sing the high notes.
Finally, at bedtime, the band had finished practising.
The beautiful, sweet sound of silence.

**Example joint construction 3:**

At dawn, as the sun slowly rose and shone through the palm trees, the old Captain looked out past the reefs of the island and nodded slowly.
’The search parties will be out looking for us now and will rescue us soon,’ he said.
The survivors had lit a fire because they were cold and they also thought it would be a good signal for the rescuers to know where they were.
By mid-morning there was no sign of any search party.
A few of the older men decided to write ‘HELP’ in big letters on the beach using rocks, so that maybe a plane could see it from the air.
By lunchtime there was still no sign of any search party.
A fight broke out between two girls as one of them was hiding some food and not sharing it with anybody else.
By mid-afternoon there was still no sign of any search party. Some of the women decided to go and look for some fresh water, as everyone was feeling quite thirsty, and some fit, strong men set out to find some food. Late in the afternoon, there was a low rumbling sound coming from the sky. Everyone looked up and saw a small plane come and circle overhead and then leave again. ‘The search party will be here to rescue us soon,’ said the old Captain. But by dusk there was still no sign of the rescuers. Everyone was feeling anxious now and all eyes were looking out towards the darkening ocean. At about midnight one of the survivors saw a light in the distance. ‘They’ve come, they’ve come!’ he shouted. Everyone jumped to their feet dancing, singing and jumping up and down as the rescue boat drew near.
Sample weekly plan

The following weekly plan is included as a guide only to the way teachers could move through the teaching sequence over a period of time. The plan’s content has been condensed. In reality, working through this text will take some weeks, and the following one-week plan could actually take two or even three 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

**Class:** Kindergarten and Year 1  
**Term:** 1  
**Week:** 1

**Text:** *Big Rain Coming* by Katrina Germein

**Teaching focus:** Engage students in reading *Big Rain Coming*. Model feelings of anticipation or suspense.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low order literate orientation</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overview of the story using illustrations. Focus on modelling feelings of suspense while reading.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<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><strong>High order literate orientation</strong></td>
<td>First sentence. Focus on the orientation to story. Discuss On Sunday afternoon, Old Stephen, dark clouds, spreading.</td>
<td>‘Big rain coming,’ he said. Revise last lesson as it leads into what Old Stephen said when he saw the clouds.</td>
<td>But on Monday there was no rain. Discuss first time expectations of rain not met and continuation of pattern of days.</td>
<td>The night was so warm… Discuss how warm it was, how Rosie’s kids reacted, and why.</td>
<td>Revise or complete from last lesson. Focus on anticipation and suspense.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transformations</strong></td>
<td>First sentence. Aim to cut into meaning chunks and focus on author providing information about when, who and what.</td>
<td>Revise first sentence. Aim to cut into single words. Play word recognition games.</td>
<td>‘Big rain coming,’ he said. Aim to cut into two meaning chunks: what was said and who said it. Introduce quotation marks and their job.</td>
<td>‘But on Monday…’ Focus on why author wrote “but”. Work towards cutting into words and play word recognition and word order games.</td>
<td>The night was so warm… Focus on author providing an example of reaction to the heat and lack of rain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spelling</strong></td>
<td>Initial sounds b, r or s. Or dark, cloud. Depending on class/student.</td>
<td>Revise initial sounds or words /south</td>
<td>Revise. Joint reconstructed writing On Sunday afternoon… When and who.</td>
<td>Continue with joint reconstructed writing on first sentence. What Stephen did and what he saw.</td>
<td>Continue discussions from previous lesson. Begin class construction if appropriate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Independent Writing</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Read story with the class. Students join in when they can.
Sample lesson plan

In the first few lessons most time will probably be spent on literate orientations, with transformations, spelling and writing being brought into the sequence as students become more familiar with the story.

Class: Kindergarten and Year 1  Week: 1  Term: 1

Purpose of lesson
- Literate orientation on Big Rain Coming by Katrina Germein.
- Use transformations and spelling to engage the students in developing concepts about print and decoding skills.

Lesson 2 – Teaching sequence

Low order literate orientation
Retell the story of Big Rain Coming, allowing students to contribute what they can remember from the previous session. Discuss:
- the significance of the participants’ reactions to the heat
- how they must have felt each day when there was no rain
- that they must have known rain would arrive soon because Old Stephen said it would.

High order literate orientation
Focus on the first page. Reorient the first sentence – when the story starts, who predicts the rain, what has been seen, where the clouds were when they were first seen.
Discuss the language choices in Old Stephen’s reaction.
‘Big rain’ – This means a proper downpour, not just a shower. Discuss the build-up part of the cycle of the wet and the dry.
coming’ – It’s not raining yet, but it will soon. Old Stephen is quite sure of this.
he said – Who said this? How can he be so certain that it will rain?

Transformations
Continue with the first page.
Focus on the author’s language choices and the reasons for them. For example, turn over dark and see what difference it makes to the meaning of the story. Link it to spreading and point out how both are to do with the type of clouds seen. Turn over afternoon and discuss significance. Turn over in the south. What difference to the story does this make? And so on.

Spelling
Cut transformations into single words and play word recognition or word order games.
Introduce initial sounds or words as appropriate.
One day the grown ups said we were going on a trip.

We would pack some blankets, a rug, and some tea and sugar.

We would have a car to drive.
Big Rain Coming (141 words)

On Sunday afternoon

Old Stephen nodded to

the dark clouds spreading

in the south.

‘Big rain coming,’ he said.

But on Monday there was no rain.

The night was so warm Rosie’s kids dragged their beds outside
to maybe feel some breeze while they slept.

On Tuesday, there was still no rain.

The panting dogs at Roberta’s camp dug themselves
dusty holes to keep cool.
Wednesday came, and still no rain.

The children swam in the billabong after school.

The water was warm and still.

By Thursday night there was still no rain.

The fat green frogs

huddled around the leaky tap on the rain-water tank.

Then on Friday evening

the thick grey clouds

over the hills were echoing

with thunder.
’Big rain coming,' said Stephen.

But there was still no rain.

On Saturday there was rain.

Wonderful

Cool

Wet

RAIN.
Early Childhood

These notes have been written to help teachers use the Accelerated Literacy teaching strategies in the first two years of schooling.

Outcomes of the teaching sequence

At the end of this teaching sequence, students should be able to:

- read the story studied fluently and interpret the illustrations at a high level
- 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.