These notes have been written to help teachers use the Accelerated Literacy teaching strategies in Years 7 and 8.

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.

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.
Teaching Notes

Answers to Brut
Secondary

GILLIAN RUBINSTEIN

Answers to BRUT
Kiss your dog goodbye...

nalp
National Accelerated Literacy Program
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Using this resource
Using this resource

Year level

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The text


The story is available as an audio book. ISBN: 0732025818

Author’s website: http://www.gillianrubinstein.com/
hump-backed and bow-legged, with a frontal 
and razor-sharp teeth. Brut 
like all other tigers, not very 
remotely bad-tempered. He like to 

Answers to Brut
Synopsis of the story

*Answers to Brut* sees two very different families brought together by one very difficult bull terrier, Brut, and their efforts to rescue him from a certain and brutal death. The story celebrates the bond between children and their pets, and raises moral questions about confronting fear and violence.

Themes

This story celebrates strong family relationships and the devotion children can feel towards animals. Courage, friendship and responsibility are all explored.

Why use this story?

This short novel could be read to a class quickly. It includes some excellent examples of character description, development and contrast. Event sequences are suspenseful, leading to an exciting climax. Students will empathise with the problems of the two young boys, Kel and Caspian, as they confront the adult world.

Because of the range of writing techniques employed by this author, there are also many opportunities to discuss what authors do in relation to other texts. For example, the description of Brut could be compared to the description of the spiders in *Rowan of Rin*. Both reflect strong passions in the observer: the first positive, the second, negative. Discussing this with students would help them develop an understanding of inter-textual connections.

Structure of the text

**Orientation**
Chapter 1 introduces most of the main characters and reveals their personalities. The setting is alluded to; however, the characters are more important than the setting in this story.

**Complication**
Chapter 2 covers the problem of the missing dog and how this affects each of the characters.

Chapters 3-11 chronicle the ways in which the characters attempt to solve the problem.
Resolution
Chapters 12-13 see Caspian finally find and save his dog. The characters’ lives after this climax are described.

Structure of passage one

Setting and introduction of characters
From where he was crouching under the prickly branches of the olive tree, Kel could see the bull terrier clearly.

Description of Brut
It had a broad head of solid bone, with a jaunty black patch over one eye. The rest of its skin was white, and its coat was so short and fine he could see pink gleaming through it.

Its body was compact and solid.

Kel’s reflections
Muscle and bone, he thought to himself, savouring the sound of the words. Muscle and bone. What a beauty! What a brute!

Expansion of or return to description
Its nose was gleaming black, and its eyes were black too. They were set aslant in its head. The dog looked wicked.

Kel’s feelings and reflections
He watched it enviously. How he wished it was his.

Kel loved all dogs, but he loved bull terriers most. He loved their clever, ugly faces and their stiff-legged aggressive walk.

‘A bully’ll never let go,’ his father once told him. ‘He’ll get something in his teeth, and he won’t drop it. You have to kill him first.’

His father thought bullies were the best dogs in the world

Kel’s conclusion
and Kel thought so too.
Language features of the text

Passage one

- Gillian Rubinstein describes one character, Brut, from a second character’s point of view. This description includes reaction of the second character, Kel, which reveal traits of his character; repetition to portray his musing about Brut; and reflections and narrator’s comments to add important information.
- Rubinstein elaborates on events to tell how, when, where and why (eg under the prickly branches of the olive tree, over one eye, to himself, in its head) to help readers visualise the setting and the action.
- Rubinstein has chosen descriptive verbs to tell not only what happened but how it happened (eg crouching, gleaming, savouring, set).

Passage two

- This exciting action sequence includes various physical and mental reactions to shock, delays description to build suspense, and uses short clauses to reflect the pace of events.
- Rubinstein elaborates on events to tell how, when, where and why (eg in the arena behind the scratch line, on the sodden floor of the arena, into his arm through the flesh to the bone) to help readers follow the sequence of events and visualise the setting and action.
- Rubinstein has chosen descriptive verbs to tell not only what happened but also how it happened (eg dawned, locked, heaved, forced, cheering, egging, ducked, penetrated, clouding).
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 *Answers to Brut* aims to teach:

- how to read the passages studied 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, effective character descriptions and a dramatic sequence of events (as well as incorporate other writing techniques taught as part of this teaching sequence).

**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 the general considerations in the low order literate orientation 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**

In *Answers to Brut* the plot is driven by conflict between a very few well-developed characters. Their strengths and weaknesses and reactions to loss and fear are contrasted strongly.

Gillian Rubinstein wrote: *I’m interested above all in character, and how people react to danger or suffering, how they deal with ambition, passion, disappointment and so on.* [http://www.gillianrubinstein.com](http://www.gillianrubinstein.com).

Below is an overview of the main characters as the basis for discussion.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Traits</th>
<th>Possible discussion points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Ferrier family</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin</td>
<td>Martin works hard to provide for his family and doesn’t want to get involved with criminals. He doesn’t even want to report them to the police.</td>
<td>Contrast with Terry and Steve, who are petty criminals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura</td>
<td>Strong-minded, stubborn, committed to the environment and veganism.</td>
<td>Contrast with Liz, who cares just as much for her child but is capable of turning a blind eye to Steve’s activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spirit and Skye</td>
<td>Usually passive, except when it comes to Brut.</td>
<td>Contrast with Caspian and Kel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caspian</td>
<td>Loves his family but wishes they were different. He can’t understand their attitude at times. Often feels out of place. Determined to find his beloved dog. Learning to deal with adults and adult issues. Despite his fear he acts courageously and is resourceful.</td>
<td>A complicated character who is growing and learning. His family acquired Brut by chance and it is Caspian who saves Brut, not Kel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Macey family</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steve</td>
<td>Steve turns to crime to provide for his family. Dangerously moody. An opportunist. Skips town when almost caught dog-fighting.</td>
<td>Compare with Caspian’s dad.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liz</td>
<td>Hard-working and devoted to her family, but not always a stickler for rules. Decisive in an emergency.</td>
<td>Compare with Laura. Which mum ends up helping Caspian find Brut? And standing up to Terry?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Kel

Envious of others’ good fortune. Alternates between being honest and being self-centred. Devoted to his mum and admires his father. Sees himself as a rebel but eventually accepts responsibility for his own actions.

Contrast with Caspian. Even though Kel is rougher, who ends up showing more courage? Deals with uncomfortable emotions by fighting. Feels he should own Brut simply because he loves bull terriers.

Other

Brut

A strong, savage specimen, governed by instinct and, ultimately, love. Disobedient, stubborn, exuberant and strongly attached to the children.

The power of love: his attachment to Caspian ultimately overrides his instinct to fight to the death. He Answers to Brut!

Terry

Criminal, a cold person. Quite menacing.

Reacts violently when he feels threatened or afraid.

Teaching focus

• Introduce author.
• Gillian Rubinstein has said this is her favourite book.
• Explain the meaning of the title. (Caspian’s bull terrier is stolen, and made to join a dog-fighting ring, but eventually returns to him after answering to its name, Brut.)

Teaching focus

• This chapter (which includes study passage one) introduces Kel, his dad, Caspian and Brut. The setting is gradually filled in later in the book.
• We learn a bit about bull terriers, and about how much Kel admires them, empathising with their rebelliousness.

Teaching focus

• This chapter introduces Caspian’s family and their vegan ways. We learn that the children are totally devoted to the trouble-making Brut, while their parents are less keen.
• In particular, we learn, Brut fills a void in Caspian’s life. Like Kel, the straight-laced Caspian admires his rebelliousness.
• Brut goes missing at the end of the chapter, and the parents think this is probably a good thing. He causes too much trouble.
Teaching focus

- This chapter follows Brut’s adventures, revealing much about his naughty but endearing personality.
- Kel finds Brut and brings him home, pretending that he’s a stray. He half believes the story and calls the dog Caesar.
- We meet Kel’s mother, Liz.

Teaching focus

- Kel believes he would be a more worthy owner of Brut than Caspian.
- After convincing himself that he’ll return Brut at the end of the weekend, Kel has a super day with the dog.
- Kel’s shady dad returns home, and takes Brut away while Kel sleeps. While it is not clear what he has done with the dog, Kel feels the uncomfortable effects of guilt and responsibility.

Teaching focus

- Kel’s guilt makes him angry. He picks a fight at school but it doesn’t make him feel any better.
- A schoolmate discusses dog-fights, providing Kel and the reader with a clue to Brut’s whereabouts.
- Kel sees the ‘Lost Dog’ ad Caspian’s family has placed in the paper and decides to confess. He can’t stand these terrible feelings any more.

Teaching focus

- More information about Caspian’s father and the family’s lifestyle is provided.
- Kel meets with Caspian and his sisters at school and confesses.
- The kids decide to work together to find Brut.

Teaching focus

- We learn about how Brut is being treated. He is being abused so he becomes savage enough to fight another dog.
- Kel has no luck getting information from his parents about Brut, but by chance, a seedy-looking man named Terry gives Kel a message to pass on to his dad. ‘Next Friday week, Warehouse 3.’
- The Ferrier children cleverly work out a plan to incorporate Skye’s birthday treat with finding Brut.
Teaching focus

- Caspian’s reflections show how desperate he is to grow up and to be independent.
- Caspian’s family locate Brut and are confronted by Terry, the hostile and dangerous criminal Kel’s father sold the dog to.
- Laura and Martin back down, refusing to become involved with such a menacing character. This upsets the children.
- Caspian understands that his parents are afraid but wants them to take action.

Teaching focus

- Terry finds the family’s phone number, and rings to threaten them again.
- Laura and Martin forbid the children to look for Brut.
- The children confront Kel’s father, who pretends to know nothing about Brut, insisting that he sold Terry another stray dog altogether; however, the children are convinced that Brut is in danger.
- Kel has reached the end of his tether and lashes out at the Ferriers, calling them freaks.

Teaching focus

- After some detective work and a lucky break, Caspian works out the location of Warehouse 3.
- Caspian persuades Kel to come along, but Kel is caught sneaking out of the house by his mum, Liz.
- Once she realises what Caspian is attempting, Liz decides to go along to the warehouse to try to protect him.
- Liz is scared, which makes what Caspian is doing seem more dangerous.

Teaching focus

- Caspian makes the trip into the city and then to the Port area; he is frightened but determined.
- Caspian is waylaid by Kel and Liz in their car.
- Liz tries to take him home, but Caspian is so determined to track down Brut that Liz promises to help him.
- Meanwhile, Spirit is a nervous wreck and admits to her parents what Caspian is up to.

Teaching focus

- This chapter is the climax of the story and includes study passage two.
- Liz gets them into the warehouse where Caspian is shocked to see his beloved dog viciously fighting another crazed bull terrier.
- When Caspian calls his name, Brut responds (thus giving Rubinstein her title); going against all his instincts, he lets go his grip of the other dog. Both Caspian and Brut are injured as a result, and the crowd (including Terry) disperses.
Teaching focus

- This chapter provides a final resolution to the story.
- The police fail to find anyone at the scene of the dog-fights or at Terry’s place in the country.
- Kel’s father has also fled, taking Kel and Liz with him.
- Caspian was very brave at the dog-fight but now he has nightmares about Terry in which he is not brave at all.
- Martin is offered a steady job at a university far away. The family looks forward to living in the country, which would be a more suitable environment for Brut. They can all make a fresh start.

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 made a start on reading the book and have read at least the first chapter, you may return to passage one to start looking at the author’s language choices in detail.

Low order literate orientation – Passage one

Text (pages 1–2)

Teaching focus

This passage at the beginning of the book is part of the orientation to the story. It provides the reader with information needed to understand the sequence of events and the very strong emotions displayed by the characters.

When Kel is introduced here, he is hiding. At the end of the book he disappears. Like Caspian, Kel is a misfit and sees himself as a rebel exploring in the bush by himself and spying on Caspian and Brut.

Kel loves and admires bull terriers, not least because his father does. He desperately admires his (often absent) father as well.

The description of Brut, the bull terrier, is written from Kel’s point of view. Not only does Kel love these dogs but he wishes this particular wicked-looking one was his.

By including a quote from Kel’s father in his reflections, the author provides vital information about bull terrier behaviour, which is needed to appreciate the climax of the story. A bull terrier will never let go. ‘He’ll get something in his teeth, and he won’t drop it. You have to kill him first.’
Complete the teaching sequence, high order literate orientation, transformations, spelling and writing for passage one before beginning work on other study passages.

Low order literate orientation – Passage two

Text (pages 111–112)

Teaching focus

The climax to the story, this passage includes both staged delays (as Caspian works through his sense of shock) and a fast-paced and dramatic action sequence.

After doggedly pursuing clues and despite feeling intimidated by the terrifying Terry, Caspian decides he must take action to rescue his dog. Kel agrees to accompany him but when he fails to show up, Caspian surprises himself by bravely pressing on. The first part of the text is an action/reaction sequence but it delays revealing the main action in the pit, instead providing an interlude where Caspian’s thoughts are explored.

The second part is a fast-paced action/reaction sequence in which Rubinstein uses short, punchy sentences to help us appreciate that lots of things are happening at once.

The third part sees the pace slowed down again, so the reader can empathise with Caspian’s and Brut’s reactions, and enjoy the bond they so clearly share.

Low order literate orientation – Passage three

Text (page 5)

The text of study passage three appears on page 5. This passage offers a good example of an author describing characters through the eyes of another character. Humour is used to gently poke fun at the way some people choose to live. We all have our quirks though, and this description is not judgemental at all.

Low order literate orientation – Passage four

Text (page 63)

Study passage four is paragraph 3 on page 63. This passage is an excellent example of how an author can describe a character quite briefly but, by using a contrast between the appearance of the character and the effect he has on Caspian, manage to convey a great deal.
The technique is relatively simple: the character appears to have a certain attribute, eg amiability, BUT Caspian senses menace.

The character smiles BUT Caspian perceives he is wary and cold.

The model presented for study passages one and two can be used to develop a teaching sequence for the study of these passages.

**High order literate orientation – Passage one**

**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>Title of chapter</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What a Brute!</strong></td>
<td>Bruté usually has a negative meaning, savage or crude, but here it is used positively, in admiration of an animal which seems to be governed by its instincts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Setting</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From where he was crouching under the prickly branches of the olive tree,</td>
<td>Crouching tells us he was making sure he couldn’t be seen. He must have been uncomfortable because of the prickly branches. Readers can empathise with how he felt, looking out through prickly olive green leaves at something. This intriguing start to the sentence conveys the fact that someone is hiding before we find out who he is and what he is hiding from.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction of characters</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kel could see the bull terrier clearly.</td>
<td>Now we find out that he is called Kel and he is hiding from a dog. We still don’t know why he needs to hide, though. To find out, we need to read on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Description of Brut</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It had a broad head of solid bone, with a jaunty black patch over one eye.</td>
<td>The description, which is an admiring one, starts at the head. Jaunty is a pretty positive-sounding word, denoting a carefree and confident (as opposed to bloodthirsty) nature. If you didn’t know what bull terriers looked like you would get a pretty good idea from this careful description.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The rest of its skin was white, and its coat was so short and fine he could see pink gleaming through it. With a short and fine coat with skin showing through, it sounds like this bull terrier is built for strength rather than looks! Gleaming is a positive description and will be repeated later to describe the dog’s nose.

Its body was compact and solid. This confirms the hints that this dog is strong and muscular rather than beautiful.

**Kel’s reflections**

Muscle and bone, he thought to himself. His thoughts are very much focused on the dog’s strength and solidity. He certainly isn’t thinking ‘What a cute black patch’!

Savouring the sound of the words. Kel is enjoying the sight of the dog. Even the words he uses to describe what he sees he finds desirable and exciting. He savours the words in his mouth like good food. And he savours the sound of them like good music.

Muscle and bone. What a beauty! What a brute! Kel repeats the words which have a fascination for him. Kel knows that this is one spectacular specimen. For a lover of bull terriers, ‘What a beauty!’ and ‘What a brute!’ are not contradictory statements.

**Expansion of description**

Its nose was gleaming black, and its eyes were black too. They were set aslant in its head. The dog looked wicked. Rubinstein resumes the description. A gleaming black nose is a sign of health, while black eyes can be mysterious, evil, playful: anything you want. A distinguishing feature of bull terriers is the way their eyes are set at an angle in their heads. This gives them a wicked look, as Kel observes. Wicked could mean playful, unpleasant, impressive or harmful. This dog could be all of those things.

**Kel’s feelings**

He watched it enviously. How he wished it was his. Kel loved all dogs, but he loved bull terriers most. Kel really wants this dog. This will get him into trouble later and start a chain reaction of dangerous events.

He loved their clever, ugly faces and their stiff-legged aggressive walk. He loves these dogs and thinks their faces are clever even though they are ugly and their stiff-legged walk makes them look aggressive, which he admires.
Kel’s reflections

‘A bully’ll never let go,’
his father once told him.
‘He’ll get something in
his teeth, and he won’t
drop it. You have to kill
him first.’

Kel thinks back to a conversation with his father, who also admires the strength and aggressiveness of bull terriers. These dogs must be pretty tough if you have to kill them before they release their grip!

Kel’s conclusion

*His father thought bullies were the best dogs in the world*

Kel summarises his father’s view of bull terriers.

*and Kel thought so too.*

Kel agrees with his father and confirms for the reader his admiration for the dog he is watching. We learn later that Kel wants to be like his father.

What you could say

**Preformulation**

*T:* We are going to study the first part of this book, where we are introduced to Kel and Brut. The name of the chapter is ‘What a Brute!’ Surprisingly, the word is used in a positive way here. To be a brute is usually a bad thing.

**Question:** I wonder why Kel thinks of the dog in that way? Why is the chapter called, ‘What a Brute’?

**S:** He is strong.

**Reconceptualisation**

*T:* That’s right, the dog is strong. And he acts upon his instincts without worrying about whether they are right or wrong. Kel really admires this. He really likes bull terriers, doesn’t he?

**Complete the teaching sequence, transformation, spelling and writing for 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>Action</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Then he saw the dogs.</em></td>
<td>Rubinstein has repeated the statement to mimic how a person reacts when they are confronted with something shocking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>He saw the dogs.</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Slow reactions: mental**

- *But there was nothing in his brain*
- *to help him cope with what he was seeing, so he continued to stare at them for several seconds, until it dawned on him through his shock*
- *that the blood-stained animal with its jaws locked firmly round the neck of another equally bloodied creature was his beloved dog, Brut.*

Because Caspian had never seen anything like this before, his brain couldn’t process it at first. He was in shock. There are no memories or concepts in his head to help him sort out what he was seeing. So the only thing he could do was stay put and continue to stare for just a few more seconds until his brain started to work properly. If something dawns on you it’s like the sun coming up and shedding light on the problem. So his brain is dark with the shock and then understanding gradually comes. Both dogs were blood-stained and one of them had the famous bull terrier jaws locked firmly around the other’s neck. Bull terrier jaws actually do lock, that’s how they can hang on to pigs so well. And that dog was his much beloved and missed pet. So what he was watching was his own pet killing another dog for sport.

**Slow reactions: physical**

- *His stomach heaved and he could feel a sour taste at the back of his throat.*
- *What Caspian sees nauseates him. Now Caspian displays the normal human reaction to shock and seeing a lot of blood. When your stomach heaves it is getting ready to expel vomit. He could taste the vomit at the back of his throat.*

- *He forgot all about what Liz had said.*
- *Liz had said ‘Just stay behind me and let me do all the talking.’ But Caspian forgot he had agreed to this when faced with this gory scene.*

- *He kicked at the person in front of him and forced his way to the edge of the pit.*
- *Caspian springs into action. He probably has no idea what he will do next.*
### Narrator’s aside

*Then several things happened at once.* What is related next actually all happened at the same time.

### Fast action

*Terry was in the arena behind the scratch line, cheering, egging Brut on.* First we learn about *Terry*. We learn where he was and what he was doing. He was definitely an enthusiastic part of the operation. We have already been told about *the arena*. It had a low wooden fence and red carpet squares. The *scratch line* is the line that the dogs can't step over without committing a foul. We have to imagine what Terry’s *cheering* sounded like: as he was *egging Brut on*, he was probably making the cruel sounds he did when Brut was in his shed. These sounds would encourage the dog to be even more aggressive.

### Fast reaction

*He looked up, saw Caspian and took a leap towards him.* Terry is trying to stop Caspian interfering. He would have recognised him straightaway and known he was going to cause trouble. Terry is an aggressive man, remember, so he would have no qualms about taking a *leap towards* Caspian and manhandling him to save his operation.

### Fast reaction

*At the back of the group Steve, who had been taking bets for the next fight, caught sight of Liz and Kel* At the same time Steve *caught sight of Liz and Kel*. The sight of his wife and son would have given Steve a great shock, as he has hitherto tried to keep them unaware of his illegal doings.

*and dropped his can of beer in horror.* This reaction shows the extent of his horror. He is so surprised his hand stops working and he drops his beer.

### Fast action

*Caspian ducked under Terry’s arm* At the same time as Terry leaps at Caspian and Steve sees his wife and son, Caspian manages to avoid the leaping Terry. When you *duck* you move quickly often putting your head down first.
and found himself on the sodden floor of the arena. He hadn’t been able to plan where he was ducking to and so he just found himself that is, he just ended up, in the arena. The sodden floor of the arena is probably covered in blood and saliva.

He started to shout as loudly as he could. ‘Brut! Brut! Brut!’ It is not a very good idea to physically intervene in a dog-fight. Caspian does the only thing he can and shouts Brut’s name again and again.

### Fast reaction

**And Brut answered.** Anyone who has tried to break up a dog-fight knows that they don't usually take notice if you shout. You usually have to put the hose on them. Amazingly, Brut, who has been bred to fight and who has been cruelly tortured into a frenzy, answers him! This touching moment signals the end of the fast action for a while (and gives Rubinstein her title).

### Slow action

**The boy’s voice penetrated the red fury that was clouding his brain.** The colour red denotes anger in literature. When you ‘see red’ you become very angry, and when your brain is clouded you can’t think clearly.

**It spoke through the pain and the rage,** Brut was able to hear Caspian speak even though he felt such strong pain (from the fighting and being starved), and even though he was enraged with the other dog.

**and the dog remembered for one brief moment what he had forgotten for so long, his real home and his real family.** Brut recalls what his recent experiences of torture had made him forget: he used to be a family dog. That was his real life, not fighting strange dogs for no reason.

### Slow reaction

**His hold on the other bull terrier faltered.** Brut is distracted from the business of fighting, and loosens his grip on the other dog’s neck. This puts him in a very vulnerable position now.
He who had never let go in his life, let go now. He drew back and turned towards Caspian.

Brut is doing something he has never done before. It goes against all his instinct.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fast action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The other bully leapt at his throat.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unconstrained by memories of family life, the other bully takes the opportunity to try to kill Brut.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **But it was Caspian’s arm that the fangs sank into, as the boy grabbed his dog.** |
| The word *But* tells us that something unexpected is about to happen. Unfortunately for Caspian, this is at the same time he has grabbed his dog to try and rescue him. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Slow reaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The thing Caspian remembered afterwards was the seemingly endless time when the teeth sank into his arm through the flesh to the bone, and no one did anything about it.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time slows down again for Caspian as he processes his second shock: an attack that no-one seems to be doing anything about. We learn about what he feels from his memories of the events. Victims of shock often refer to time seeming to stand still while something horrific happens.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Terry stood there, it seemed, forever, a half smile on his face, frozen,** |
| Terry might have been in shock as well. It seemed to Caspian that he *stood there forever*. Being *frozen* means being unable to move. |

| **doing nothing, just watching, while the brindle terrier snarled and mauled at the arm,** |
| *Brindle* means tawny brown or grey marked with darker streaks or patches. Discuss how Caspian would have felt with a dog snarling and mauling his arm. |

| **and the white one leapt at the boy from the other side.** |
| This is from Terry’s point of view. For all he knew, Brut *(the white one)* was attacking Caspian too, but he still did nothing. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caspian’s physical reaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Caspian screamed in pain.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finally Caspian reacts and it is this reaction which galvanises the people watching into action. If you scream in pain it is because the pain is extreme.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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

Goals of the transformations

Comprehension
The first paragraphs of Answers to Brut form part of the orientation to the narrative. This is a story where the characters drive the plot and so two of them are introduced at the very beginning (with only the briefest reference to the setting). It is important for the students to understand the inferences in the author’s choice of language.

Word recognition leading to spelling
One spelling focus for the transformations will be engaging in joint reconstructed writing, so that students can take on the role of the author and consider Rubinstein’s language choices. Other suggested spelling words will support students with their independent writing.

Writing
Joint reconstructed writing on this passage will prepare students for other writing exercises in which they experiment with using Rubinstein’s strategy for writing the orientation for a narrative. Note that while she touches on the setting, she spends much more time introducing the characters.

Teaching focus

- Authors sometimes begin stories with a reference to the setting (although they don’t always describe it in detail). This story is mostly about the relationships between and development of the characters, so the author introduces them straightaway. We are not told when this story takes place and only gradually work out where events occur. This strategy allows the author to then make the characters more colourful and important than their location.
Kel is introduced first, through his reflections and thoughts, followed by the dog he is secretly observing.

- The dog is described, his strength and aggression highlighted.
- Kel desperately wishes the dog was his. This is his motivation for his later behaviour and so the author has to include it here.
- Kel’s dad is also briefly introduced. He knows a lot about bull terriers including how much they are worth. This explains why he later sold Brut. The author uses Kel’s dad to inform the reader about the attributes of bull terriers.

**Setting**

The author could have written ‘Kel could see the bull terrier clearly from where he was crouching under the prickly branches of the olive tree.’ There is the same information but with a different emphasis.

But writing this way makes it a little mysterious. Having an unknown character crouching in the first sentence is also a good way to get the readers’ attention. Readers wonder who is crouching and why. The author chose to arrange the sentence so that the place where and the character he are both foreshadowed and then quickly identified.

**Introduction and description of characters**

Now the author fills in the details. He is Kel. And he is doing something from this place where he is crouching, and that is seeing the bull terrier clearly, so now it can be described.

The bull terrier, and Kel’s appreciation of it, is very important to the story, so Rubinstein makes sure we start to get to know the dog through Kel’s eyes. He sounds like a magnificent specimen. The description tells something about Kel’s attitude to the dog too. He admires it greatly. The author has researched to make sure she has described the breed accurately.

**First character’s reflections**

The author has chosen to show us Kel’s reflections as dialogue. This is a good technique to allow the reader to feel like they are inside the mind of the character.

Even though she wrote that he thought to himself, we get the idea that he mouthed the words and found them so pleasant that he did it again.
Repetition adds emphasis
For a bull terrier lover, saying a dog is a beauty and a brute is no contradiction. The formidability of the species is part of its appeal.

Expansion of description
After allowing the reader to share Kel’s thoughts the author returns to a description of the dog.
This description gives more insight into Brut’s personality (or at least Kel’s view of it).

First character’s reflections
Rubinstein now gives a very clear indication of how Kel is feeling. She has chosen a strong word, envious, and then repeats the sentiment. She could have written, ‘He wished it was his’ but using the word How makes the wish more poignant, more hopeless. It puts the emphasis on the wished, which implies it is out of the realm of things that will happen.

Rubinstein repeats the word loved to emphasise the strength of Kel’s emotions. The force of his emotions has to be emphasised, so that Kel’s actions later make sense.

The author expands on the statement (using love a third time) by explaining that Kel loves everything about these dogs, even the bits that others might find unattractive. He is a true bull terrier lover.

In having Kel think back to something his father has said, Rubinstein implies that Kel admires him too.

This is important information for later in the story. Rubinstein deliberately has Kel’s dad explain how strong this instinctive behaviour is. The reader infers that an adult probably knows what he is talking about, so this fact about bull terriers must be true.

By referring again to his father, the author lets us know Kel’s thoughts are still being conveyed.

The fact that Kel agrees with his father, is another thing the reader has already worked out, but the author spells it out anyway for emphasis.

What is it about these two that they admire aggressive dogs? We find out later. For now we are intrigued. This also helps to establish the relationship between father and son which Kel’s father puts at risk by his criminal behaviour.
What you could say

**Preformulation**

*T:* Let’s think very carefully about why the author started the first chapter like this. Remember that, for Gillian Rubinstein, the characters are much more important than the setting.

**Question:** So who is introduced first in this book?

*S:* Kel.

**Reconceptualisation**

*T:* Exactly. But we don’t know his name straightaway. In fact, we find out what he is doing before we find out who he is. And this makes us want to read on.

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**Transformations – Passage two**

**Goals of the transformations**

**Comprehension**

This action/reaction sequence is a pivotal part of the story. Rubinstein varies the pace of events in accordance with the effect she wants to achieve. Where the passage describes Caspian’s reactions to shock, the clauses are long and the elements of mental shock are expanded. And where the passage recounts the action, the pace is quicker, with shorter clauses and no expansions.

**Word recognition leading to spelling**

One spelling focus for this transformation will be engaging in joint reconstructed writing so that students can take on the role of the author and consider why certain language choices were made. Other suggested spelling words will support students with their independent writing.

**Writing**

Joint reconstructed writing on this passage will prepare students for other writing exercises in which they experiment with using Rubinstein’s strategy for writing an event sequence. Workshop activities can focus on writing an event sequence.

**Teaching focus**

- Authors can use a number of techniques to add suspense and excitement to their writing. One is to delay telling what has happened by focusing on the character’s physical and mental reactions. Another is to briefly describe a number of events that are happening at the same time. These two techniques can be alternated and this is what Gillian Rubinstein does in this passage.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure and wording of text</th>
<th>Features to discuss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Action/reaction (mental and physical)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| *Then he saw the dogs.*  
*He saw the dogs.* | Rubinstein repeats what Caspian saw to reflect the way it takes a while for things to sink in when you don't understand what you are seeing. |
| *but there was nothing in his brain to help him cope with what he was seeing, so he continued to stare at them for several seconds, until it dawned on him through his shock that the blood-stained animal with its jaws locked firmly round the neck of another equally bloodied creature was his beloved dog, Brut.* | Rubinstein delays describing the dogs’ activities in order to dwell on Caspian’s mental reaction to what he has seen and so build up the tension.  
She could have written something like, “he couldn’t believe his eyes” but instead she wrote at length about what was happening in his brain.  
Readers can empathise with these mental reactions. It’s not that he didn’t recognise Brut, it’s just that there was too much to take in that he had never experienced before. Readers have an image of him standing and staring for a few seconds before he worked out that Brut was attacking the other dog. |
| *His stomach heaved and he could feel a sour taste at the back of his throat.* | Wanting to vomit is a common reaction to the sight of blood and violence. |
| *He forgot all about what Liz had said.* | So is forgetting some sensible advice someone has just given you. |
| *He kicked at the person in front of him and forced his way to the edge of the pit.* | The author now contrasts Caspian’s physical and mental repugnance with his action, which is unexpected. Before, we have seen Caspian back away from violence, now he is confronting it. At this point the reader is ready for some excitement, and is eager to find out how Caspian can possibly save Brut. |
**Narrator’s aside**

| Then several things happened at once. | The reader is now told to prepare for several events in quick succession. This is a technique Rubinstein has used elsewhere in the book. (Compare with Chapter 8, paragraph 36.) |

**Action/reaction (mental and physical)**

| Terry was in the arena behind the scratch line, cheering, egging Brut on. He looked up, saw Caspian and took a leap towards him. | This is the first of the things that the author has told us will be happening all at once. She makes sure that Terry’s reaction matches his violent nature. |
| At the back of the group Steve, who had been taking bets for the next fight, caught sight of Liz and Kel and dropped his can of beer in horror. | Steve’s reaction reveals his need to shield his family from this part of his life. |
| Caspian ducked under Terry’s arm and found himself on the sodden floor of the arena. He started to shout as loudly as he could. 'Brut! Brut! Brut!' | This is the last of the simultaneous actions. |
| And Brut answered. The boy’s voice penetrated the red fury that was clouding his brain. It spoke through the pain and the rage, and the dog remembered for one brief moment what he had forgotten for so long, his real home and his real family. | The pace now slows down a little as the author speculates about what might be going on in Brut’s mind. Remember, Rubinstein has told us that bull terriers can’t let go. So if Brut does, it means that his bond with Caspian is stronger than his instinct. |
| His hold on the other bull terrier faltered. | Now the author describes what Brut ‘answering’ actually means. It means letting go of the other dog’s throat. |
| He who had never let go in his life, let go now. He drew back and turned towards Caspian. | Rubinstein makes sure that we know that Brut has never done anything like this before, to help us appreciate the importance of the dog’s reaction. |
| The other bully leapt at his throat. | But now the dog is in an extremely vulnerable position. |
**But it was Caspian’s arm that the fangs sank into, as the boy grabbed his dog.**

The author has to put Caspian in the way of the other dog’s fangs or Brut would have been killed. It would be natural for Caspian to grab his dog so as to drag him to safety. Rubinstein is also making Caspian an ever bigger hero, as he’s put his safety on the line for his dog.

**The thing Caspian remembered afterwards was the seemingly endless time when the teeth sank into his arm through the flesh to the bone, and no one did anything about it.**

Rubinstein slows the pace down again with this longer sentence, and takes us inside Caspian’s head as he thinks about the event later.

**Terry stood there, it seemed, forever, a half smile on his face, frozen, doing nothing, just watching, while the brindle terrier snarled and mauled at the arm, and the white one leapt at the boy from the other side.**

This (also long) sentence suggests that Terry is shocked as well. It sounds like time is standing still for him as well as for Caspian.

The author is trying to help the readers empathise with the characters’ reactions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Character’s dramatic physical reaction</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Caspian screamed in pain.</em></td>
<td>This short, sharp sentence jolts us out of Caspian’s head and into the reality of a young boy undergoing pain and shock. He does what we would all do: scream from the pain.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## 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 Junior Secondary level, so it would be reasonable to assume that students would be well into negotiating the transitional stage of spelling. Consequently, work on words that help students use visual strategies to notice larger chunks of letters that go together to make orthographic patterns.

For example: –ck is a pattern suggested. Expand students’ knowledge by combining smaller chunks into larger orthographic patterns. So the –ck in prickly, wicked and black is in the ick, and the ack. And the –ea in head, gleaming and beauty is in ead, eam and eaut.

Examples from passage one

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>–ou–</th>
<th>–ck–</th>
<th>–oa–</th>
<th>–ea–</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cr/ouched/ing</td>
<td>pr/icked/ly</td>
<td>br/oadd</td>
<td>h/eadd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s/av/oured/ing</td>
<td>bl/acked</td>
<td>c/oat</td>
<td>gl/eam/ing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s/oud</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>b/eaut/y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t/hought</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thr/ough</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Examples from passage two

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>–ea–</th>
<th>–ou–</th>
<th>–ock–</th>
<th>–ck–</th>
<th>–oa–</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cr/eated/ure</td>
<td>r/ounded</td>
<td>sh/ocked</td>
<td>n/eked</td>
<td>thr/oated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h/eaved</td>
<td>thr/oughed</td>
<td>l/oked/ed</td>
<td>b/ack</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l/eaep</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>k/ik/ed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>r/eal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>d/uck/ed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l/eappt</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>scr/eam/ed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What you could say

Now we are going to learn to spell some of the words from the text. Can everybody read this word? That’s right, it is *crouching*. This is what Kel was doing at the start of the book, remember, when he was hiding from Caspian and Brut.

So let me cut up this word so we can look at its bits first. So if I cut off *–ing*, what does this say? That’s right: *crouch*. And then if I cut off the *cr*? Yes: *ouch*. Now what does this bit say, in this word? *Ou*. Now this? *Ch*. Right, let’s put the chunks back together. *Ouch*. And if I add this? *Crouch*. And finally I put this *–ing* on the end and it says … *crouching*. So this word is actually made up of lots of common patterns in English.

And how about this word? Yes, *savouring*. Remember Kel enjoyed saying those words about Brut as much as if he had something nice in his mouth. These words both have the same pattern in them.

Let’s practise that on the boards. *Ou* is a common pattern. Remember it needs an *o* and a *u* together. I’m just going to turn it over now, so you have to look at the letters in your heads. Say it as you write it. That will help you to remember how it sounds and how it looks together. You can say it out loud or under your breath. That’s what good spellers do.

Continue as above, checking students are writing the word in its chunks (rather than copying it down letter by letter). Point out connections with other spelling patterns learnt. Students who can spell this word will also enjoy discussing its origins.

**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

crouch: probably from Old French (c. 1394) crochir, ‘to become bent, crooked,’ from croche, ‘hook.’
savour: from Old French (c. 1225) savour, related to Latin sapere, ‘to have a flavour’.
wicked: from Old English wicca ‘wizard’. Slang ironic sense of ‘wonderful’ first used in 1920 by F. Scott Fitzgerald.

to duck: ‘to plunge into’, c.1300; to suddenly go under water, c.1340, from presumed O.E. *ducan “to duck,” Sense of “bend, stoop quickly” is first recorded in Eng. 1530.

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.

Example

Reconstruct how Rubinstein has Kel describe Brut and then enjoy saying the words so much he repeats them.

Concentrate on drawing on the common knowledge developed so far with students about this part of the story. Encourage students to contribute as much as they can about their understandings of why Gillian Rubinstein made the language choices she did.
Important points
- The location is briefly mentioned, but only as a setting for Kel to hide in.
- The dog is described from Kel’s point of view.
- There is a tantalising contrast here between the dog’s ugliness and aggressiveness and Kel’s admiration for these qualities.

What you could say

T: Now we are going to try to write a little bit of the beginning to the story of *Answers to Brut* in the same way as Gillian Rubinstein did. Can you remember how she starts the story? She tells us where Kel is, doesn’t she?

Can you remember the words she used to tell us where Kel was hiding?

S: *From where he was crouching.*

T: Good. Now let’s see if we can remember how to write the words that tell us where Kel was. Remember to start with a capital letter and remember to write *From* in its chunks. How did it start? That’s right, *Fr–*. Then what was the next chunk? –*om*, that’s good.

(Continue with ‘*From where he was crouching*’)

Can anyone think why Gillian Rubinstein would have started her story this way?

Now we have written where Kel was, what do we need to say next if we are writing like Gillian Rubinstein? Yes, we need to build a picture of where exactly he was. He wasn’t crouching out in the open was he? No, he was under the prickly branches of the olive tree…

Let’s see if you can write that. You can try by yourself or wait and do it with me. That bit finishes with just a comma because there is more information we need. That’s right, who is there and what he can see. Straight away we realise he is hiding from the dog, don’t we, even though the author doesn’t say this exactly.

Continue like this, mixing a discussion of the meaning of the text with reasons for writing it like this and how to spell the words.

Further examples

1. Reconstruct how Gillian Rubinstein returns to describing the dog’s head and then shares Kel’s intense feelings about him.

2. Reconstruct how Gillian Rubinstein introduces a new character (Kel’s dad) by having Kel remember something he has said about bull terriers that has stuck in Kel’s mind.
Writing

Writing activities should not be based only on patterning, but also 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 *Answers to Brut* would include:

- overall goals such as writing a story which includes a character feeling passionate about an animal and displaying an unusual amount of courage, an action/reaction sequence and a resolution
- short-term goals such as writing descriptions of settings, writing about both positive or negative responses to an animal, incorporating dialogue to add further information about the animal, and writing action/reaction sequences including both mental and physical reactions.

**Workshop one**

a) Start by listing possible characters, where they are, and an animal they feel passionate about that others might not like, and then write a positive description of that animal as seen through their eyes. (Students might need to do some research outside of Accelerated Literacy time. Remember how knowledgeable Gillian Rubinstein was about bull terriers.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character/setting</th>
<th>Passionate about</th>
<th>How they would describe it</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| A girl lying down in the forest with a magnifying glass. | Trapdoor spiders. | • Dull brown body.  
• Pale gold hairs.  
• Three sets of eyes.  
• Trap door camouflaged.  
http://www.amonline.net.au/factsheets/trapdoor_spiders.htm |
b) Next add some more facts to the grid using the character’s reflections about some dialogue. Make the dialogue sound realistic.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Reflections</th>
<th>What was said</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The girl’s favourite teacher.</td>
<td>She remembers a science lesson.</td>
<td>‘A trapdoor bite won’t kill you like a funnel-web will. It will just make you feel a bit sore and sorry for yourself.’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

c) Revisit the structure of passage one. Use or adapt this as a writing plan to add a setting, description and reflections about the animal.

- Setting
- Introduction and description of two characters
- First character’s reflections
- Expansion of description
- First character’s reflections.

The end result may look something like this:

_The dry leaves tickled her nose as Jane lay face down on the forest floor staring intently at the trap door. She thought how beautifully camouflaged it was and she watched it slowly open to reveal the chocolate coloured body of the trapdoor spider. Its pale gold hairs shone. It had three sets of eyes and Jane thought they looked intelligent as they stared back at her._

_Jane was a spider fanatic but she knew the most about trapdoors. She remembered her old science teacher telling her about them. ‘A trapdoor bite won’t kill you like a funnel-web will,’ he had said. ‘It will just make you a bit sore and sorry for yourself.’_

Workshop two

a) List possible characters, where they are, an animal they feel passionate about, and then write a negative description through their eyes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character/setting</th>
<th>Passionate about</th>
<th>How they would describe it</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| A boy visiting his grandmother who keeps birds in a cage. | Any birds (hates them!) | • Red and green feathers.  
• Scaly legs and claws.  
• Clever, beady eyes.  
• Aggressive attitude. |

Note that if students have studied _Rowan of Rin_, the description of the spiders could be discussed again.
b) Next add some more facts to the grid using the character’s recollections of some dialogue. Make the dialogue sound realistic.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Reflections</th>
<th>What was said</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An experience the boy’s friend had once.</td>
<td>He remembers his friend’s scars.</td>
<td>‘Never trust a bird, my friend. They might eat out of your hand and sit on your shoulder but one day they will turn on you. I know. It happened to me.’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

c) Revisit the structure of passage one as noted in the transformations. Use or adapt this as a writing plan to add a setting, description and reflections about the animal.

- Setting
- Introduction and description of two characters
- First character’s reflections
- Expansion of description
- First character’s reflections.

The end result may look something like this:

*The stale smell of caged birds almost suffocated him as he walked into his grandma’s living room and sat down. Ben perched on the edge of the couch, hoping that this time his grandma would not take out the big red and green parrot and sit it on his shoulder. Thinking about those dry scaly claws digging into his shoulder made his skin crawl. The parrot was staring at him with those clever beady eyes and nodding his head aggressively.*

*Ben remembered what his friend Roger had said as he showed him the scars on his neck and ear. ‘Never trust a bird my friend. They might eat out of your hand and sit on your shoulder but one day they will turn on you. I know. It happened to me.’*
Workshop three

a) Make a list of possible action/reaction sequence scenarios. Include both mental and physical reactions. The scenarios will need to be dramatic. The students will need to identify with the character and the scenario, just like they can with Caspian and the dogfight. Teachers may wish to compare this action/reaction sequence with others they may have studied (eg *Bridge to Terabithia* or one of the Paul Jennings stories).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Reaction (physical)</th>
<th>Reaction (mental)</th>
<th>Reflections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am in a boxing match. The other boxer is better.</td>
<td>My opponent starts to dance around and throw punches.</td>
<td>I put my arms up to protect my face, and am consequently unable to see. I start to feel giddy and light-headed.</td>
<td>I can’t believe I agreed to this fight. I am simply not ready for this sort of competition.</td>
<td>Each round seems to take an hour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argument where one character has power over the other.</td>
<td>Grandmother takes CD away and says she won’t give it back until Ben has done the dishes.</td>
<td>Tears come to his eyes and he ashamedly brushes them aside.</td>
<td>Ben was angry because he was intending to do the dishes at some stage.</td>
<td>Afterwards, he thinks that he should have just done the dishes straightaway.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrepid exploit such as white-water rafting.</td>
<td>Suddenly raft was going down some pretty fast rapids.</td>
<td>Sally held tight onto the sides and tried to steer as best she could.</td>
<td>Ran through the drill in her mind for what to do if the raft capsized.</td>
<td>Thought after that the lessons she took were well worth listening to.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being attacked by a kangaroo.</td>
<td>A surprised and cornered kangaroo started towards Jack, looking aggressive.</td>
<td>Then he saw the tree and reached it and climbed it all in the same moment.</td>
<td>At first Jack was frozen, as he tried to think how to escape.</td>
<td>Thought after that it took forever to climb the tree.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
b) Choose one of the scenarios and extend the discussion. Start to write as a group. Use the transformation structure of passage two:

- Action/reaction (both mental and physical)
- Narrator’s aside
- Series of simultaneous action/reactions (both mental and physical)
  1. 
  2. 
  3. 
  4. 
- Character’s dramatic physical reaction.

The end result may look something like this:

*Jack saw what he had first thought was a pile of dead grass jump up and glare at him. He realised that the huge grey kangaroo menacing him meant business but he was frozen to the ground and couldn’t work out which way to run.*

*Then a few things happened at once.*

*The kangaroo lunged forward and a loud growl came from deep inside its chest. Jack headed for a large rock, thinking he could climb up and escape from the kangaroo. But as he got closer it looked less like a haven and more like a vertical wall with no footholds. The kangaroo, swerving to follow him, lost its balance and fell, giving Jack a few precious seconds to change tack and find another way to escape. As the kangaroo clumsily got to its feet, Jack spied a medium-sized tree with low branches to climb and a thick bough about three metres up.*

*He ran as fast as he could and climbed onto the lowest branch. When he was almost safe he felt a claw scratch his knee below his shorts. He thought after it was all over – it seemed to take forever to climb those last centimetres, as the kangaroo gouged out his leg from his knee down to his ankle! Jack finally pulled his shredded leg free and straddled the branch. He gave a low moan and sobbed.*
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.
**Class:** Year 7 to 8  
**Text:** *Answers to Brut* by Gillian Rubinstein

**Teaching focus:** The first paragraph, while it describes Brut, also gives readers insight into Kel’s character.

<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>Introduce author, title, type of story.</td>
<td>Review characters and their motivations.</td>
<td>Discuss the collaboration and investigation.</td>
<td>Caspian’s and Kel’s plan.</td>
<td>Focus on resolution of story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Introduce characters. Read ch 1-3</td>
<td>Prepare for complication. Read ch 4-6</td>
<td>Read ch 7-9</td>
<td>Read ch 10-11</td>
<td>Read ch 12-13</td>
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<tr>
<td>High order literate orientation</td>
<td>Passage one: First paragraph, description from Kel’s point of view.</td>
<td>Continue on to Kel savouring the words.</td>
<td>Move to the second part of the description.</td>
<td>Facts given by Kel’s dad.</td>
<td>Passage two: description of experience of shock.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformations</td>
<td>Focus on foreshadowing technique in first sentence. Why?</td>
<td>Continue with description. This paragraph is the hook for readers.</td>
<td>Focus on why author uses dialogue to express Kel’s thoughts.</td>
<td>What does the author show about Kel in the description of the dog?</td>
<td>Discuss technique of including facts by using dialogue. Transformations – passage one.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>cr/ouch/ing</td>
<td>s/av/bur/ing</td>
<td>Revise last lessons.</td>
<td>Revise last lessons. Jointly reconstruct first paragraph.</td>
<td>prick/ly w/ick/ed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>s/ound th/rough</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Discuss characters and animal for grid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Choose and jointly write a passage describing an animal.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Read story with the class. Students join in when they can.
From where he was crouching under the prickly branches of the olive tree, Kel could see the bull terrier clearly. It had a broad head of solid bone, with a jaunty black patch over one eye. The rest of its skin was white, and its coat was so short and fine he could see pink gleaming through it.

Its body was compact and solid. Muscle and bone, he thought to himself, savouring the sound of the words, Muscle and bone. What a beauty! What a brute!

Its nose was gleaming black, and its eyes were black too. They were set aslant in its head.

The dog looked wicked. He watched it enviously. How he wished it was his.

Kel loved all dogs, but he loved bull terriers most. He loved their clever, ugly faces and their stiff-legged aggressive walk.
‘A bully’ll never let go,’ his father once told him. ‘He’ll get something in his teeth, and he won’t drop it. You have to kill him first.’

His father thought bullies were the best dogs in the world and Kel thought so too.
Then he saw the dogs.

He saw the dogs, but there was nothing in his brain to help him cope with what he was seeing, so he continued to stare at them for several seconds, until it dawned on him through his shock that the blood-stained animal with its jaws locked firmly round the neck of another equally bloodied creature was his beloved dog, Brut.

His stomach heaved and he could feel a sour taste at the back of his throat. He forgot all about what Liz had said. He kicked at the person in front of him and forced his way to the edge of the pit.

Then several things happened at once.

Terry was in the arena behind the scratch line, cheering, egging Brut on. He looked up, saw Caspian and took a leap towards him. At the back of the group Steve, who had been taking bets for the next fight, caught sight of Liz and Kel and dropped his can of beer in horror. Caspian ducted under Terry’s arm and found himself on the sodden floor of the arena. He started to shout as loudly as he could. ‘Brut! Brut! Brut!’
And Brut answered. The boy’s voice penetrated the red fury that was clouding his brain. It spoke through the pain and the rage, and the dog remembered for one brief moment what he had forgotten for so long, his real home and his real family. His hold on the other bull terrier faltered. He who had never let go in his life, let go now. He drew back and turned towards Caspian.

The other bully leapt at his throat. But it was Caspian’s arm that the fangs sank into, as the boy grabbed his dog.

The thing Caspian remembered afterwards was the seemingly endless time when the teeth sank into his arm through the flesh to the bone, and no one did anything about it. Terry stood there, it seemed, forever, a half smile on his face, frozen, doing nothing, just watching, while the brindle terrier snarled and mauled at the arm, and the white one leapt at the boy from the other side.

Caspian screamed in pain.
In the end Caspian had to go home without his dog.

He was hot and angry when he came in the house,

and his mother asked the one question he didn’t want to hear.

‘Where’s that dog?’

His two younger sisters, Spirit and Skye, were sitting at the kitchen table eating their tea.

They were thin and fair, like Caspian, with brown skin and green eyes, and hair that was almost white.
All three children had a slightly unearthly look about them,

which people thought was angelic.

Caspian had decide some time ago

it came from lack of protein.

A good diet of hamburgers would soon make them look like everyone else.
Answers to Brut – Study passage four (75 words)

‘Can I help you folk?’ Terry sounded amiable enough as he came up to the gate, but beneath the innocent words lay an unspoken menace that made the hairs on the back of Caspian’s neck rise. He shuddered without meaning to. Close up, Terry gave the air of being one of the most dangerous people you were ever likely to meet. He had a smile on his face, but his eyes were wary and cold.
These notes have been written to help teachers use the Accelerated Literacy teaching strategies in Years 7 and 8.

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.

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.