Secondary Teaching Notes

These notes have been written to help teachers use the Accelerated Literacy teaching strategies in Years 7 and 8. However, they could also be used with older students who have difficulties with reading.

Outcomes of the teaching sequence

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

• read the passages studied fluently and with a high level of inferential comprehension
• discuss the story: give opinions about the author’s language choices; identify the story’s structure, theme and ideology
• spell chosen words and understand related spelling strategies
• use the story as a model for writing.

The National Accelerated Literacy Program is jointly funded by the Australian Government through the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, and the Northern Territory Government through the Department of Employment, Education and Training, and supported by Charles Darwin University.

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.
Teaching Notes

The Cay
Secondary
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Using this resource
Year level

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The text

The Cay
Synopsis of the story

The Second World War comes to the small island of Curaçao (pronounced kura’são) and 11-year-old Philip is terribly excited. However, his attitude changes when the ship in which he and his mother are being evacuated to Virginia is torpedoed. Temporarily blinded, Philip is marooned on a deserted cay with a wise old man and a cat. This is the story of his survival. It is also a story of prejudice and compassion.

Themes

Some of the themes in this story include:

- survival and self-reliance
- prejudice, tolerance, respect and compassion
- blindness as a metaphor for prejudice.

Why use this story?

The Cay is a gripping story about the developing relationship between Timothy, an old black man, and Phillip, a young white boy. Although Phillip has become temporarily blind, he comes to see that skin colour doesn’t matter. The book was written during the civil rights movement in the 1960s and is dedicated to ‘Dr King’s dream’.

Structure of the text

The story is a narrative told in the first person by Phillip. Set in 1942 in the Caribbean, the initial complication is Curaçao’s involvement in the Second World War. Then there is a series of potentially more serious and personal complications, such as Phillip’s transport boat being torpedoed, Phillip being blinded by a blow to the head, and getting stranded on an island with Timothy. The story is resolved with Phillip’s rescue. Phillip’s discussions with Timothy and his reflections reveal a growing love and respect for the old black man who saves his life.
Language features of the text

**General**
- A dramatic event introduces the setting, which is described with an ever-widening perspective. Simile is used to create powerful images.
- Dramatic events are described without emotion, more as a recount of events.

**Specific**
- The author has elaborated on events telling when and where (e.g., in the darkness of the sea, in the middle of the night).
- The description of where the narrator lived is an elaboration on I was asleep...
  - on the second floor of our narrow, gabled green house in Willemstad
  - on the island of Curaçao, the largest of the Dutch islands
  - just off the coast of Venezuela.
- The recount of attacks by the German submarines is also elaborated.
  I remember that on that moonless night...
  - in February 1942
  - they attacked the big Lago oil refinery on Aruba, the sister island west of us.

Elaborating events like this makes it possible to follow the sequence of events and visualise settings and action.
Accelerated Literacy teaching
Teaching the sequence

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

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

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

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

The teaching sequence on *The Cay* 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, a description of one dramatic event using an appropriate simile, a description of a place using a widening perspective and a recount of dramatic events.

**Literate orientation**

Literate orientation is a pre-reading strategy that prepares students to read the study text fluently, accurately and independently. The teacher models the literate orientation to the text and explains to students how and 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**

The beginning of the book refers to places and buildings with which the students won’t be familiar. Teachers are advised to devote a little time to researching the history and geography of Curaçao for themselves, and showing students images of the island of Curaçao, the town of Willemstad, Fort Amsterdam etc.

See these websites for information about the history of Curaçao and some pictures of the colourful houses, a map, the port etc. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cura%C3%A7ao](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cura%C3%A7ao) and [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Willemstad%2C_Netherlands_Antilles](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Willemstad%2C_Netherlands_Antilles) or search for images of Fort Amsterdam.

Teaching focus

The title of the book (usually pronounced ‘key’) refers to a low island off the coast of Florida. The word is derived from the Spanish word ‘cayo’, meaning islet. The Cay tells the story of a boy called Phillip and an old sailor, Timothy, who are shipwrecked together on a cay in the Caribbean. The story is set during the Second World War. At the beginning of the novel, Phillip is living in Willemstad on the island of Curaçao, the largest of the Dutch Islands just off the coast of Venezuela. He had come to the island with his parents from Virginia in the USA. Timothy is a West Indian (referred to as a negro in the book) from St Thomas, in the Virgin Islands, who worked as a deckhand on board the SS Hato, a small freight ship.

When a German submarine attacks Curaçao in February, 1942, Phillip’s mother is so afraid that she decides to take Phillip back to the USA onboard the SS Hato. However, the ship is torpedoed and sinks only two days into the journey. As the ship goes down Phillip is hit on the head and knocked unconscious. When he regains consciousness he is floating on a raft with Timothy out in the open ocean. The blow Phillip has received on his head causes him to lose his sight while still on the raft. After some days at sea, the raft drifts to a small cay and this tiny island is the setting for the rest of the novel. Because of his blindness, Phillip is totally dependent on Timothy who knows enough about the conditions to survive. At first, Phillip is very suspicious of Timothy because of his prejudices towards his race and culture. However, as they survive together on the island, he comes to appreciate Timothy and then love him. During a tropical hurricane Timothy saves Phillip’s life but, when the hurricane is over, Timothy is dead. Philip manages to survive on the island alone until eventually he is rescued. He could only survive because of Timothy’s preparations and training. Timothy had always realised the danger the blind Phillip would be in if he was alone. Timothy not only saves Phillip’s life but also changes his attitudes towards people of other races. The novel is an exciting survival story, as well as a story of the strong relationship between two very different people.

Teaching focus

Chapter 1 starts with a vivid image of a German submarine in all its dark menace. Readers are propelled into life on wartime Curaçao from the first paragraph. The story is related through the eyes of Phillip Enright, who is looking back from adulthood to tell his story. He begins with his life as an 11-year-old boy living on Curaçao with his parents, relates the story of his survival after a shipwreck and finishes with his rescue at least five months later. In the first chapter we ‘see’ the island through his childlike eyes and discover the tension and fear his mother was feeling about being far from her home in Virginia during a time of war.
Teaching focus

Chapter 2 relates a sad time for Phillip, as his mother decides to leave Curaçao and return to Virginia. He loves the island and does not want to leave but he has no choice. He and his mother leave Curaçao in April 1942 aboard the SS Hato, a small Dutch freighter headed for Miami. Both Phillip and his father are upset but resigned to parting for the duration of the war. The chapter ends with Phillip going down to his cabin after looking sadly back at Curaçao as the ship sailed out to sea.

Teaching focus

Chapter 3 picks up the voyage two days out of Panama, when, on 6 April 1942, the ship was torpedoed by a German submarine. Phillip describes the scene as the passengers and crew prepared to abandon the Hato. Unfortunately for Phillip, he received a blow to his head just as he was being lowered into the sea on a lifeboat.

When he recovered consciousness he was on a raft with a huge, very old Negro … He was ugly. His nose was flat and his face was broad; his head was a mass of wiry grey hair. Phillip could just remember seeing him working on the deck of the Hato. He was shocked to find that there was no one else on the raft. They had some food, a keg of water and the ship’s cat, Stew Cat. Phillip also had a terrible headache from the blow he had received in the lifeboat. The ship had been hit at 3.00 am and so they spent the first day on the raft in daylight, although Phillip slept some of the time. He obviously had concussion. As the first night on the raft arrived, Phillip was feeling very angry with Timothy. Timothy insisted on rationing the water and he expected Phillip to eat raw fish. Phillip constructed this experience as a characteristic of Timothy’s race. These ideas were strongly influenced by his mother’s views, who believed that the West Indians were inferior people.

Teaching focus

Chapter 4 finds Timothy and Phillip attempting to sleep on the raft. Phillip did sleep for a while but next morning still had a headache. As the day went on, Phillip not only had a headache but also had a problem seeing clearly. He slept for a while and when he woke up he thought it was night-time, even though it was really only 10.00am. It quickly became obvious that the blow on the head had damaged his sight and Phillip was blind. He was terrified, upset and angry.
Chapter 5 starts at noon on the third day on the raft. An aircraft passed overhead but did not see the raft. From now on, as Phillip relates the story, he focuses on the sounds he could hear since he could no longer see. In this chapter, the author describes conversation between Timothy and Phillip as Phillip tries to cope with his blindness.

Chapter 6 continues on the raft. Timothy spotted a low island in the distance. Phillip stood up in excitement and fell into the sea. Timothy had to jump into the sea to rescue Phillip who, of course, could not see how to get back onto the raft himself. After a while it became obvious to Timothy that they were being washed towards the island and Phillip argued that they should stay on the raft where they could have a better chance of being seen by aircraft or ships. Timothy was determined that they should land, however. He thought they had more chance of survival there.

Chapter 7 begins with their landing on the cay. There were no people on it or fresh water. However, there were bushes and coconut palms and a slightly higher spot where they could make a camp. Timothy and Phillip’s situation on the tiny cay is revealed through their discussions. Philip is extremely anxious about their chances of rescue and his anxiety is made worse by his blindness. The extent of his anxiety is revealed on an occasion when Timothy leaves him for a short while to explore the cay. Phillip panics and demands that Timothy never leave him alone again.

Chapters 8 to 14 recount the routines Timothy and Phillip develop to survive on the island. Timothy trains Phillip to carry out tasks and find his way around. The island has sufficient food available from the sea for their survival and eventually Phillip finds the courage to climb a coconut palm and add fresh coconut milk and meat to their diet. During their time on the island a close friendship develops between Phillip and Timothy. When Phillip first realised he had been shipwrecked with a West Indian, he was shocked. He felt superior, gave Timothy less respect than he would have given other adults and tried to assume a dominant role. Timothy, however, was un challengingly patient. He was firm and trusted his judgement, but was also extremely patient and kind. At the end of Chapter 9, Phillip realises Timothy’s true worth. He realises that Timothy is training him to care for himself and that he is planning for the future and their survival in everything he does. After that point, Phillip’s attitude changes completely and he and Timothy become friends.
At the end of Chapter 14, Timothy recognises weather signs that herald the approach of a hurricane. As they prepared to survive the coming weather, Phillip realises how much work Timothy had done in their time on the island to prepare for an occasion like this.

Teaching focus

Chapter 15 tells of the tragic storm that battered the island. Because of Timothy’s preparations, they were able to tie themselves to a palm tree during the worst of the hurricane. Timothy sheltered Phillip at the height of the storm when the winds drove sand and rain across the island and flayed the skin from his back. When the storm was finally over, Timothy was almost dead. He lived long enough to realise Philip was safe and then died that night. Phillip was blind and alone on a forgotten cay.

Teaching focus

Chapters 16 and 17 recount how Phillip managed on the island without Timothy. He still had Stew Cat with him. He had somehow survived the storm and was at least some company. Phillip was grateful for Timothy’s training then, for he managed to catch fish and remake their camp with driftwood blown up in the storm. He buried Timothy’s body as best he could and settled down into a routine of fishing.

Teaching focus

Chapters 18 and 19 tell of Phillip’s rescue about five months after his shipwreck. He knew that he could not survive forever on the island and when he finally heard a plane and lit a signal fire, he was desperately disappointed when it flew away. He prepared another fire and worked out how to use sea grape, a plant that grew on the cay, to make smoke. When the day came that he heard another plane he lit the larger, smokier fire but once again the plane flew away. However, a few hours later, he heard a ship’s bells and heard the voice of a sailor calling out. The plane had spotted him and had radioed the ship to pick him up. The captain and crew of the ship found his story hard to believe. He was taken to Panama and later picked up by his very relieved parents. Phillip and his parents returned to Curaçao and he eventually regained much of his sight. His final wish, as he reflected on all that had happened to him, was to one day find the lonely little cay where he had buried Timothy and revisit it to stand by his grave.
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

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

Low order literate orientation – Passage one

The story begins in a dramatic fashion with an image of the German submarines that compares them to hungry sharks. This demonstrates that authors don’t always tell a story in a simple orientation, complication and resolution sequence. In this story, the description of the German submarine is used to capture readers’ attention and draw them into the story. The author then goes back to describe the setting through the eyes of Phillip Enright, the narrator of the story. Phillip himself describes the scene looking back on his childhood and so is able to reflect on incidents that happened to him as a child with an adult perspective. The incident described in this passage – the arrival of German submarines in Curaçao – set in motion all the events that follow.

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 – Passages two and three

Following the arrival of the German submarines, life changed for Phillip, but he did not realise the significance of the changes immediately. His first reaction to hearing about the submarine attack was intense excitement. At the age of 11, he could not know the implications of war for his life. The following short paragraphs illustrate the contrast between the excitement Phillip felt and the fear and tension that gripped the adult community. Phillip relates how he and his friend stole away from their homes to investigate the town. They go to Fort Amsterdam and the Queen Emma Pontoon Bridge. These places were familiar parts of the scenery that made up the setting for the boys’ everyday life. On this day, however, their familiar life gives way to the unfamiliar.
The two short passages described below are still part of the orientation. Their function is to illustrate Phillip’s emerging awareness of the war that is going to affect his life so dramatically later in the novel. Each of the passages presents a contrast between what Phillip (and his friend) had always known and the new tension that has become part of their lives following the attack on Aruba by the German submarines.

Complete the teaching sequence, high order literate orientation, transformations, spelling and writing for passage two before beginning work on other study passages.

Low order literate orientation – Passage four

This passage relates the sinking of the ship on which Phillip and his mother are travelling home to the United States. The incident constitutes the beginning of the main complication of the story. Phillip had been living happily on the island of Curaçao until German submarines attacked a neighbouring island. Ships in the area had been torpedoed and the future of the island was uncertain. Phillip’s mother decides that she has to take Phillip back home to Virginia for the duration of the war. She is afraid to go by air, so they set out by ship. Unfortunately, but not so unexpectedly, the ship is torpedoed and sinks.

Complete the teaching sequence, high order literate orientation, transformations, spelling and writing for passage four before beginning work on other study passages.

Further passages for study

Other passages may also be usefully studied using the teaching sequence literate orientation, transformations, spelling and writing. The text of study passages five and six, on pages 67 and 90, can be found in the photocopiable masters section of this book.
## High order literate orientation – Passage one

**Text (pages 1–2)**

**Teaching focus**

### Structure and wording of text

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orientation – foreshadowing</th>
<th>Why language choices were made</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| *Like silent, hungry sharks, that swim in the darkness of the sea, the German submarines arrived in the middle of the night.* | The image created is one of:  
*Silence* – they arrive without warning. Suddenly they are just there.  
*Hunger* – when they arrive, they are looking for something to devour. Their hunger needs to be satisfied at some other creature’s cost.  
*Sharks* – these are animals with a predatory, ruthless nature. They are strong and efficient killers.  
*Swim in the darkness of the sea* – they arrive when prey (in this case, people) are at their most vulnerable. When they are asleep and helpless to retaliate.  
It is only when the dread invoked by that image is established that readers find that it is German submarines that arrived in the middle of the night.  
Readers of that opening paragraph now know that the story is set in the Second World War. They will also expect that the submarines will attack something and create havoc with people and property. |

### Orientation – setting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence</th>
<th>Why language choices were made</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>I was asleep</em></td>
<td>The second paragraph of the text begins with <em>I</em>, but readers do not yet know who this refers to. The narrator is remembering his location on this significant night and what he found out later about this event. He was part of the setting but has not become part of the action yet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>on the second floor of our narrow, gabled green house</em></td>
<td>The narrator describes his immediate location first. This description serves to give readers a quick snapshot of the narrator’s home before going on to explain where the house was situated. The house was narrow, it had more than one storey, it had a gabled roof and it was painted green.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
in Willemstad, on the island of Curaçao, the largest of the Dutch islands just off the coast of Venezuela.

The reader then locates the house – in Willemstad. Then Willemstad – on the island of Curaçao. Then Curaçao – the largest of the Dutch islands. Then the Dutch islands – just off the coast of Venezuela.

This widening perspective (from the narrator’s bed to the town, the island, the location in the world) allows the author to pack a great deal of information in just one sentence.

I remember that on that moonless night in February 1942

Having succinctly and explicitly described the setting for orientation, the author then returns to the actions of the German submarines. First he remembers the time of the attack – on that moonless night in February 1942.

That moonless night was the night the submarines arrived. By describing the night as moonless the author builds atmosphere as well as information about the scene. Submarines would choose a moonless night to attack because they could not be seen. A completely dark night also imparts a sinister quality to the scene.

The date – February 1942 – places the event at the time of the Second World War. Now readers can expect that, if the German submarines arrived unexpectedly, Willemstad must have belonged to an enemy of Germany. The town, the island and the narrator were being drawn into the war.

What happened: a recount

they attacked the big Lago oil refinery on Aruba, the sister island west of us.

Next, readers find out about the reason for the submarines being in the area – they attacked the big Lago oil refinery on Aruba. The author also adds information about Aruba – the sister island west of us.

Then they blew up six of our small lake tankers, the tubby ones that still bring crude oil from Lake Maracaibo to the refinery, Curaçao Petroleum Maatschappij, to be made into petrol, paraffin, and diesel oil.

Following that attack on the refinery the submarines then – blew up six of our small lake tankers. This information affected the people of Curaçao (our) and so more information about the tankers is added. Readers now have a clear understanding about what happened on that night. Enemy submarines attacked and blew up a strategically important oil refinery and various boats attached to it.

The author does not provide detailed information about the attack. Readers have to imagine what it would have been like that night with the torpedoes ploughing through the water, the explosions, the shouts and cries of workers and the billowing smoke and smell of burning oil at the scene. The author provides just enough information to tune readers into the circumstances that surrounded the night the story begins.
One German sub was even sighted off Willemstad at dawn.

The final image in this paragraph brings the war closer to Willemstad where the narrator lived. It was not only Aruba at risk – one German submarine was even sighted off Willemstad. At midnight, when the first attack took place, it was the middle of a moonless night. At the conclusion of the paragraph, dawn has arrived and with it the light to see a submarine in the area of the narrator’s home. The threat from the German submarines is immediate.

Complete the teaching sequence, transformations, spelling and writing for passage one before beginning work on other study passages.

High order literate orientation – Passage two

Text (page 3)

Teaching focus

The passages 2 and 3 are still part of the orientation. Their function is to illustrate Phillip’s emerging awareness of the war that is going to affect his life so dramatically later in the novel. Each of the passages presents a contrast between what Phillip (and his friend) had always known and the new tension that has become part of their lives following the attack on Aruba by the German submarines.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure and wording of text</th>
<th>Why language choices were made</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The fort looks as though it came out of a storybook, with gun ports along the high wall that faces the sea. For years, it guarded Willemstad.</td>
<td>The fort is the first place Phillip and his friend, Henrik von Boven, visited on the morning following the submarine attack. There was no school but the seriousness of the situation had not impacted on the children at all. The author describes the fort as looking as though it came out of a storybook. This suggests it looks harmless. It was a fort with gun ports along the high wall that faces the sea. This implies there were no guns, just the gaps where they had been. The fort had once had a serious purpose (For years, it guarded Willemstad) but nowadays is more just a good place for boys to play at war.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
But this one morning, it did not look like a storybook fort at all. With the conjunction *But*, however, the scene takes on a sinister aspect. Now it *did not look like a storybook fort at all*. All its innocence was gone on the day of the attack. The author then tells why it was not like a storybook fort any more.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Contrast</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td><em>But this one morning, it did not look like a storybook fort at all.</em></td>
<td>With the conjunction <em>But</em>, however, the scene takes on a sinister aspect. Now it <em>did not look like a storybook fort at all</em>. All its innocence was gone on the day of the attack. The author then tells why it was not like a storybook fort any more.</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Why</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>There were real soldiers with rifles</em></td>
<td>Storybook forts had no soldiers or ceremonial guards. Now there were <em>real soldiers</em> with all their menace – even if they were on the side of the islanders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>and we saw machine guns.</em></td>
<td>Before this day, there were only gun ports or the spaces for guns. Now there were very deadly guns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Men with binoculars had them trained toward the white-caps,</em></td>
<td>Some of the men at the fort had binoculars that they were using to look out to sea. Every wave that broke at sea could potentially hide a submarine approaching Willemstad. People with binoculars were watching to see that didn’t happen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>and everyone was tense.</em></td>
<td>The watching and waiting with binoculars and machine guns made all the people at the fort tense. They didn’t know whether they would be attacked too. The last thing the soldiers wanted was two 11-year-old boys around them. If there were an attack, they would be in great danger.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Reactions</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>They chased us away, telling us to go home.</em></td>
<td>Obviously the boys did not go home voluntarily. They had to be chased away. The scene this paragraph reveals is one of excitement for the boys, who did not realise what war meant, and tension for the soldiers, who were intent upon protecting themselves and the island.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Complete the teaching sequence, transformations, spelling and writing for passage two before beginning work on other study passages.*
### High order literate orientation – Passage three

**Text (page 5)**

**Teaching focus**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure and wording of text</th>
<th>Why language choices were made</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| *I looked out toward the sea again. It was blue and peaceful, and a good breeze churned it up, making lines of white-caps. White clouds drifted slowly over it.* | In the previous paragraph, Phillip remembered the spectacle of the fort on the day of the submarine attack. He remembered the sudden change in his perception of it. The reality of the war that had reached his island home had still not really impacted on him, though. In this paragraph he remembers and describes another everyday scene. This time it was the sea (which must have been something he looked out at often). This day it was *blue and peaceful*. Its appearance, at least, conveyed peace. The author expands on this description of the sea by making its appearance more explicit:  
  
a good breeze *churned it up* – a good breeze has no menacing undertones. It gives the impression of a good day for sailing.  
making lines of white-caps – white-caps only added to the peaceful nature of the scene. They were attractive and not in the least menacing.  
*White clouds drifted slowly over it* – the white of the clouds and the white-caps of the waves both exude peace. They drifted slowly; another peaceful allusion. |
Contrast

**But I couldn’t see the usual parade of ships coming toward the harbour; the stubby ones or the massive ones with flags of many nations that steamed slowly up the bay to the Schottegat to load gas and oil.**

Superficially, the day was normal and quite lovely. However, Phillip noticed something that made him puzzled. This change in his perception of the scene is also signalled by the conjunction *but*. While the sea looked peaceful, there was something about it that was not as usual. Usually there were all the ships that you’d expect in a busy and prosperous port, but not today. There was not the *usual parade of ships coming towards the harbour* – a parade gives the impression of a great number of ships arriving one after the other and landing continuously.

The author emphasises the number of ships that would have been usual by giving examples of typical ships. These examples help readers build vivid images of the usual scene. *Flags of many nations* means that a large number of ships landed at the harbour at Willemstad. The author also gives an example of what the ships did on a usual day and why they did it. They *steamed slowly up the bay to the Schottegat to load gas and oil*. This information tells readers that the port was the source of a vital resource. Oil and gas are always vital commodities in a time of war.

Reaction

**The sea was empty; there was not even a sail on it. We suddenly became frightened and ran home to the Scharloo section where we lived.**

When Phillip and Henrik became aware that the seemingly peaceful scene they could see was not the scene they should have been able to see, they suddenly became afraid. They realised that the *sea was empty; there was not even a sail on it*. In other words, not even a pleasure craft was out on the sea sailing. There was nothing. Although the author does not say it, readers realise at this point that some ships had been sunk and others were too afraid to venture out to sea.

Both boys suddenly realised, as everything they had seen came together, that they were in danger. They *suddenly became frightened*. That realisation brought their carefree morning to a sudden end as they *ran home*. They both left the uncertainty and strangeness they had discovered in the town and sought the familiarity of their homes.

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**Complete the teaching sequence, transformation, spelling and writing for passage three before beginning work on other study passages.**
High order literate orientation – Passage four

Text (pages 18–20)

Teaching focus

This part of the text is an example of an action sequence and can be used to show students how the author relates a tense incident where the participants are in great danger. The author tells readers what each of the participants does, following the torpedo hitting the ship, and also describes the changing scene.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure and wording of text</th>
<th>Why language choices were made</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Orientation to the chapter</strong></td>
<td>Phillip states that we were torpedoed. He does not say the ship was torpedoed, which was, in fact, what happened. The <em>we</em> includes the ship, the passengers and crew. What happened to the ship affected everyone. The other information in this sentence is a detailed account of the time the ship was torpedoed. The time includes time of day (it would have been dark and most people would have been asleep), the date (important in calculating the time Phillip was shipwrecked) and the time out of Panama (gives readers an idea of where the ship was located in the Caribbean Sea).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>We were torpedoed at about three o’clock in the morning on 6 April 1942, two days after leaving Panama.</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Event 1**

I was thrown from the top bunk and suddenly found myself on my hands and knees on the deck. We could hear the ship’s whistle blowing constantly, and there were sounds of metal wrenching and much shouting. The whole ship was shuddering. It felt as though we’d stopped and were dead in the water.

Phillip has been asleep in bed and so the first he knows about any problem is when he was thrown from the top bunk. He only realised this when he found himself on his hands and knees on the deck. The event was sudden (indicated by suddenly) and, at first, he would not have understood what had happened.

Instead of being told what Phillip did next, though, we are told what Phillip and his mother could hear. They would have been trying to work out what had happened to them. It was night time and, as they would not have been able to see, what they could hear would have given them their first clue. They could hear:

*The ship’s whistle* – the unusual quality about this was that it was blowing constantly, a signal that something was wrong.

*sounds of metal wrenching* – these sounds would certainly be unexpected, alarming, and indicate the ship was damaged.

*much shouting* – another cause for alarm, as it would normally be quiet at night. There would only be shouting in an emergency.

Next, the author describes what they could feel physically:

*The whole ship was shuddering* – sometimes part of the ship might shudder as it carried out various manoeuvres but if the whole ship shuddered there was definitely trouble.

The ship had stopped – another way of saying this for ships is dead in the water. The ship would not stop in the middle of the night without a good reason. Together with the sounds they could hear, the fact that they had stopped would confirm that there was an emergency under way.
### Event 2

| My mother was very calm, not at all like she was at home. | Phillip’s mother’s behaviour that night was unusual – *not at all like she was at home*. So far, she has been portrayed as a woman in a state of panic over the safety of herself and her son. Now, in a time when she could be expected to panic, she acts with unexpected calm. |
| She talked quietly while she got dressed, telling me to tie my shoes, and be certain to carry my wool sweater, and to put on my leather jacket. Her hands were not shaking. | The author then provides examples of the things she did calmly:  
*She talked quietly* while she got dressed – she did not panic in the way that readers might expect after her previous conduct. She must have considered carefully what to wear.  
She also considered what Phillip needed to wear and gave him assistance, implying that he was more worried than she was (*Her hands were not shaking* restates how calm she was.) |
| She helped me put on my life jacket, then put hers on, saying, ‘Now, remember everything that we were told about abandoning ship.’ | *She helped me put on my life jacket, then put hers on* – shows that she was being methodical and ensuring Phillip’s safety before her own.  
She spoke to Phillip calmly, reminding him what to do – *remember everything that we were told about abandoning ship*. Even though they had not yet been told to abandon ship, she was thinking ahead. This, after all, is what she would have imagined might happen. |
| The officers had held drills every day. | This final expansion provides information for readers on the normal procedure aboard ship and explains why Phillip and his mother knew what to do in an emergency. |
### Event 3

**As she was speaking, there was another violent explosion. We were thrown against the cabin door, which the steward had warned us not to lock because it might become jammed.**

By starting this section of the text with *As she was speaking*, the author adds urgency to the event. One incident didn’t finish before the next thing started. Things happened simultaneously.

At the beginning of the chapter, Phillip related that their ship was torpedoed and that he found himself on the floor. No explosion is actually mentioned but now there was another violent explosion. This wording implies that there had been a previous violent explosion that must have happened when *we were torpedoed*.

This time, however, both Phillip and his mother were dressed and standing up in their life jackets. As a result they were *thrown against the cabin door*. The word *thrown* links with *violent explosion*. Really, Phillip and his mother lost their balance as the ship rocked and fell over. However, to say they were *thrown* emphasises the violence of the explosion and their lack of control.

The cabin door is also given added importance in this segment of text. Instead of just being thrown against the cabin door and going on with the next event, the author provides more information about it. First of all, it is the cabin door *which the steward had warned us not to lock*. (The steward was the person on board that looked after them and cleaned their cabin.) Then the author says why it should not be locked – *because it might become jammed*. The information about the door slows down the progress of the action sequence but provides information that is important, not only to explain how Phillip and his mother were able to leave their cabin later but also to show that they were obedient, orderly people.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event 4</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>We pushed it open and went out to the boat deck, which was already beginning to tilt.</strong></td>
<td>Phillip and his mother were able to push their door open and went out to the boat deck. Now they were outside where they could find out what was happening. Before this, they were experiencing the torpedo attack from inside their cabin. Now they can see the consequences of the attack. Phillip describes the scene by describing both the ship and the actions of the people on board. The ship: The boat deck was already beginning to tilt – a sign that the ship was close to sinking. The deck would only tilt when the ship was stationary if water was inside the hold.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Everything was bright red, and there were great crackling noises. The entire afterpart of the ship was on fire,</strong></td>
<td>Everything was bright red, and there were great crackling noises describes the colour and sound of fire before actually saying that there was a fire. It was the entire afterpart of the ship. Although one part of the ship was actually on fire, everything was bright red. Because it was dark, the fire was providing light. To start the sentence with Everything was bright red adds a dramatic, eerie and unnatural quality to the scene. Standing on the deck as he was, Phillip would have observed the whole scene bathed in this eerie red light before noticing where it was coming from.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and sailors were launching the lifeboat that was on our deck.</td>
<td>The sailors: Sailors were launching the lifeboat that was on our deck. This was another indication that the situation aboard the ship was quickly worsening. The crew were preparing for all aboard, passengers and crew, to leave the ship. Although the author doesn’t actually say that the ship was sinking at this stage, all the signs of activity on board indicate that this is what was happening.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Steam lines had broken, and the steam was hissing out. Heat from the fire washed over us.</strong></td>
<td>The ship: The author has described the destruction of the ship through Phillip’s eyes. The situation for the passengers on the ship is revealed by degrees. Each part of the description contributes something to the overall picture of destruction and the approaching sinking of the ship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>When the lifeboat had been swung out, the captain came down from the bridge.</strong></td>
<td>The captain: The next character to make an impression on Phillip that night was the captain of the ship. He has had to come down from the bridge. This is another sign that the ship is nearing its end. Once the lifeboat had been swung out, the time for abandoning ship has come. Now, before it actually happens, the author steps aside from the progress of the ship to describe the captain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He was a small, wiry white-haired man and was acting the way I’d been told captains should act.</td>
<td>First, his appearance: He was a small, wiry white-haired man. From this physical description, readers can deduce that he was fit, although an older man. He was experienced but not old and doddering. No one could say later that the captain of the ship had been responsible for the sinking. Phillip says that he was acting the way I’d been told captains should act.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>He stood by the lifeboat in the fire’s glow, very alert, giving orders to the crew. He was carrying a brief case and a navigation instrument I knew to be a sextant.</td>
<td>Then he gives examples of the way the captain acted. The captain was in control of the ship even at this late stage. Although the German submarine had torpedoed the ship and it was sinking, the captain was controlling the way the people in his care behaved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the other side of the ship, another lifeboat was being launched.</td>
<td>The ship: Little by little, the crew were preparing to abandon ship, although the sailors are not actually mentioned in this sentence. The ship and lifeboat are the focus of the sentence. Nevertheless, readers have to infer that it was the sailors launching the lifeboat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Near us, two sailors with axes chopped at lines, and the two big life rafts plunged toward the water, which looked black except for pools of fire from burning fuel oil.</td>
<td>The sailors: As well, sailors launched two life rafts. The rafts are significant as it will be a raft Phillip finds himself on. The words chosen for the launching suggest frantic last minute activity consistent with the rapidly approaching sinking of the ship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The water: Until now, all the focus has been on the ship and the people on it. Now, there is a shift to the sea where everyone will soon be fighting for survival. It is not a welcoming sight. It is black, a sinister colour, except for pools of fire from burning fuel oil.</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Final event

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The captain shouted, ‘Get a move on! Passengers into the boats!’</th>
<th>The final moments onboard the ship arrived when the captain ordered the passengers into the boats. His urgency is evident when he shouts ‘Get a move on!’ He realised that the ship was close to sinking.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On the captain’s orders the crew took control of the passengers. Grabbed is an urgent almost rough action. The roughness was as a result of the exploding oil tins hastening the end of the ship: the sailors were actually trying to help the passengers. Phillip by this time must have been feeling as though his fate was out of his control. He could only remember feeling himself being passed into the hands of a sailor on the boat. He and other passengers were part of an orderly though hurried evacuation of the ship.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At that moment, the Hato lurched heavily and something happened to the boat falls. The bow tilted downwards, and the next thing I knew we were all in the water. I saw my mother near me and yelled to her. Then something hit me from above. At that moment, just when they should have been safely in the lifeboat, the ship lurched – something that could not have been foreseen. Something, Phillip did not know what, happened to the boat falls. Boat falls are the structures from which lifeboats are suspended. If something happened to them, the boat could not be lowered evenly. This caused the bow or the front of the boat to tilt downward and the passengers to be tipped into the water. Now the situation was completely out of Phillip and his mother’s control. Phillip could see his mother. He could remember that he called out to her but there his recollections ended. He was hit from above and then this episode of his life abruptly ends. The next chapter takes readers into Phillip’s uncertain future.</td>
<td></td>
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</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

Comprehension

The first paragraphs of this story are part of the orientation to the narrative. Readers are told where and when the German submarines attack. Although written in the first person, readers don’t yet know who is relating this story. A simile is used to create a powerful visual image of the submarines.

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 the language choices in the orientation of this narrative and why they are important. 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 Theodore Taylor’s strategy for writing the orientation for a narrative. This is a short study passage which provides a rich resource for writing. Writing workshops will explore the use of simile and a description of a location incorporating an ever-widening perspective, as well as a recount of events.
### Teaching focus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure and wording of text</th>
<th>Points for discussion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Orientation: foreshadowing, a threatening image (simile)</strong></td>
<td>The author introduces the chapter and the novel with a threatening image which foreshadows events. This captures readers’ attention. The sinister, threatening representation of German submarines as sharks plunges readers straight into the central event in the chapter before knowing about the characters and setting involved. This is a deliberate strategy of the writer to entice readers to read on and discover what happens next. The threatening image of submarines arriving at night is followed by a paragraph that describes where the character is and when the incident occurred. It is not until well into Chapter 1 that the identity of the character relating the story begins to emerge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Like silent, hungry sharks, that swim in the darkness of the sea, the German submarines arrived in the middle of the night.</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| <strong>Orientation: what narrator was doing, a description of setting and time</strong> | |
| <em>I was asleep</em> | This paragraph describes what the narrator could remember about the night the submarines arrived. People can often remember exactly where they were when a momentous event occurs. The author chose specific language to locate this place as it could be assumed that many readers were unfamiliar with this setting. |
| <em>on the second floor of our narrow, gabled green house</em> | Where that location is in the world. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>in Willemstad, on the island of Curaçao, the largest of the Dutch islands just off the coast of Venezuela.</td>
<td>Narrator’s general location.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I remember that on that moonless night in February 1942</td>
<td>When the event occurred.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What happened: a recount</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>they attacked the big Lago oil refinery on Aruba, the sister island west of us. Then they blew up six of our small lake tankers, the tubby ones that still bring crude oil from Lake Maracaibo to the refinery, Curaçaoche Petroleum Maatschappij, to be made into gasoline, kerosene, and diesel oil.</td>
<td>Recounts of events appear in narratives from time to time. Here the author provides the facts but no description or emotional response. Readers must imagine the details, and wait to be cued in to the narrator’s reaction to these events. The clue to the narrator’s view of events is the opening sentence (in which the submarines were likened to sharks).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One German sub was even sighted off Willemstad at dawn.</td>
<td>The author is starting to locate the action close to the narrator’s location at Willemstad.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Transformations – Passage two

Teaching focus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure and wording of text</th>
<th>Points for discussion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Orientation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The fort looks as though it came out of a storybook, with gun ports along the high wall that faces the sea. For years, it guarded Willemstad.</td>
<td>Two scenes are described and contrasted in this paragraph. First of all the fort is compared with something harmless and nostalgic – a storybook fort.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contrast with appearance now</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>But this one morning, it did not look like a storybook fort at all.</td>
<td>The word <em>but</em> starts the sentence that creates the contrast. Now it looks like a real fort with all the menace that implies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Why</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 1. There were real soldiers with rifles  
2. and we saw machine guns.  
3. Men with binoculars had them trained toward the white-caps,  
4. and everyone was tense. | The author expands the description of the fort with a brief description of the soldiers. This is why it is not like a storybook fort anymore. They carry real weapons. |
| **Reactions**                |                       |
| They chased us away, telling us to go home. | Their reactions are provided to show how inappropriate they thought the presence of the boys was. The fort had once been a site for boys’ play, now it was a site for real war. |
### Teaching focus

#### Orientation

I looked out toward the sea again. It was blue and peaceful, and a good breeze churned it up, making lines of white-caps. White clouds drifted slowly over it.

In this passage the author accentuates the tension and danger of the situation in Willemstad by contrasting what Phillip usually saw on the harbour with the scene on the morning after the attack of the German submarines. This is a powerful technique by which the author conveys a frightening situation. To create the contrast, the author first shows how Phillip is struck by how normal the sea looks. He describes the sea, as it was that day, beautiful as always, and peaceful.

#### Contrast

But I couldn't see the usual parade of ships coming toward the harbour; the stubby ones or the massive ones with flags of many nations that steamed slowly up the bay to the Schottegat to load gas and oil. The sea was empty; there was not even a sail on it.

Then the author contrasts the beauty of the sea with an absence of the usual ships that the people of Willemstad would be expected to see on other normal days. It is this contrast, even though they don’t actually see any danger, which conveys the frightening atmosphere.

#### Reaction

We suddenly became frightened and ran home to the Scharloo section where we lived.

Finally, the author describes how Phillip and Henrik are frightened by the sudden realisation that something momentous and terrifying must be happening to cause this dramatic change or contrast with normal expectations. Readers need to understand it is this contrast which frightens the boys.
### Orientation to the chapter

We were torpedoed at about three o’clock in the morning on 6 April 1942, two days after leaving Panama.

The first sentence in the chapter states what happened to Phillip and precisely when. The time the ship was torpedoed is given in precise detail, almost as if it was a reference point for all that had gone before and what is to come. There is no build up to the torpedoing. It just happened out of nowhere. This abrupt start to the chapter reflects the way the event actually happened.

### Event 1

*I was thrown from the top bunk and suddenly found myself on my hands and knees on the deck. We could hear the ship’s whistle blowing constantly, and there were sounds of metal wrenching and much shouting. The whole ship was shuddering. It felt as though we’d stopped and were dead in the water.*

The author has written this part of the text in the passive voice to make Phillip seem powerless. Some unknown power had thrown him from the top bunk. He didn’t just fall. The author uses a metaphor to describe his plight when he says Phillip found himself, as if he had been searching around for himself and there he was, unexpectedly, on the deck. The metaphor adds to the mood of complete surprise about the event. The first Phillip knew was when he found himself on the deck of the ship. In this part of the text, the author relates what happened to Phillip and his mother and then expands the event with a description of what they could hear and see.
### Event 2

*My mother was very calm, not at all like she was at home.*

She talked quietly while she got dressed, telling me to tie my shoes, and be certain to carry my wool sweater, and to put on my leather jacket.

*Her hands were not shaking.*

She helped me put on my life jacket, then put hers on, saying, ‘Now, remember everything that we were told about abandoning ship.’

The author contrasts Phillip’s mother’s behaviour in this emergency with her normal behaviour. This part of the text relates what Phillip and his mother did in response to all they had heard and felt. They simply got dressed. The mundane actions that unfold here contrast strikingly with the desperate situation they are in. The author tells readers how Phillip’s mother behaved and then provides examples.

The officers had held drills every day.

This statement allows the author to provide an explanation for Phillip’s mother’s calm and competent manner.

### Event 3

*As she was speaking, there was another violent explosion.*

*We were thrown against the cabin door, which the steward had warned us not to lock because it might become jammed.*

There had been one violent explosion onboard the ship and now there was another. This explosion happened at the same time as Phillip’s mother was speaking. Here, the author relates what happened and then what happened as a consequence. He also adds some important information about the cabin door. Even though the action is frantic, the author includes descriptions of small details.
Event 4

We pushed it open and went out to the boat deck, which was already beginning to tilt.

Everything was bright red, and there were great crackling noises. The entire afterpart of the ship was on fire, and sailors were launching the lifeboat that was on our deck. Steam lines had broken, and the steam was hissing out. Heat from the fire washed over us.

When the lifeboat had been swung out, the captain came down from the bridge. He was a small, wiry white-haired man and was acting the way I’d been told captains should act. He stood by the lifeboat in the fire’s glow, very alert, giving orders to the crew. He was carrying a brief case and a navigation instrument I knew to be a sextant.

On the other side of the ship, another lifeboat was being launched. Near us, two sailors with axes chopped at lines, and the two big life rafts plunged toward the water, which looked black except for pools of fire from burning fuel oil.

Final event

The captain shouted, ‘Get a move on! Passengers into the boats!’

Tins of lubricating oil in the afterholds had ignited and were exploding, but the ones forward had not been exposed to the fire.

This part of the text relates how Phillip and his mother left their cabin to confront the devastation outside on the boat deck. Here the author has Phillip relate what he could see, hear and feel. Each of Phillip’s memories is related as a small, vivid ‘snapshot’. First readers are made aware of the tilting ship. Then we read about the colours, noise and progress of the fire. Finally, we read about the actions of people such as sailors, the captain and other passengers.

In this part of the text, the author brings the episode to its inevitable conclusion. The fire was out of control. The captain ordered the passengers into the boats. The author explains his urgency by referring to the tins of lubricating oil.
A sailor grabbed my mother’s hand and helped her in, and then I felt myself being passed into the hands of a sailor on the boat. The other passengers were helped in, and someone yelled, ‘Lower away.’ At that moment, the Hato lurched heavily and something happened to the boat falls. The bow tilted downwards, and the next thing I knew we were all in the water. I saw my mother near me and yelled to her. Then something hit me from above.

Again the author describes the scene leading up to the point where the passengers abandon ship as a series of vivid scenes that stuck in Phillip’s memory long after the event. The actual sinking is abbreviated, though, because Phillip did not see it. He did not remember anything after he was tipped out of the lifeboat. This event marks the end of this part of the story. From here on, he is propelled into a completely different existence.

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 and so it would be reasonable to assume that students studying this text 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.
Examples from passage one

-ark-
  sh/ark/s
  d/ark/ness

–d–, –ed–
g/able/d
att/ack/ed
s/ight/ed

-ee–
a/sl/ee
l/arge/st

–oo–
fl/oor
m/oor/less

Examples from passages two and three

–ea–
ch/arse/d
s/ea
st/eem/ed
p/eeace/ful
y/ear/s

–d–, –ed–
gu/ard/ed
tr/ain/ed
l/ive/d

–oo–
l/ook/s
st/ory/b/ook
l/ook/ed
g/ood

–or–
fr/or
st/ory/b/ook
m/or/ing
p/or/s

or–
g/oo

Example

gable: 1338, from O.Fr. gable, from O.N. gafl, probably from a P.Gmc. root meaning “fork”, gabel “pitchfork”. From the Y-shaped timber supports of the roof at gable ends.

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

Example

gable: 1338, from O.Fr. gable, from O.N. gafl, probably from a P.Gmc. root meaning “fork”, gabel “pitchfork”. From the Y-shaped timber supports of the roof at gable ends.
Joint reconstructed writing

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

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

Reconstruct sentences, paragraphs and sections of text from the transformations.

Examples

Reconstruct part or all of the text of study passage one. The story begins with the dramatic arrival of German submarines. The author uses a simile to create a powerful image. The location of the narrator at the time is described and elaborated on with a widening perspective, from the second floor to Venezuela. The sequence of events is recounted in an unemotional way. Readers need to imagine the chaos, noise, explosions, etc.

What you could say

Now we are going to try to write a little bit of the beginning to the story of The Cay in the same way as Theodore Taylor.

Can you remember how he starts the story? He tells us that German submarines arrived. But he describes them in a special way called a simile. What does he compare them to?

Yes, they are like silent, hungry sharks. So we can picture them quite clearly and feel the fear the people of Willemstad must have felt. Good, let’s see if we can remember how to write the words that tell us what the submarines are like.

Remember to start with a capital letter and remember to write Like in its chunks. How did it start? That’s right, L. Then what was the next chunk? ike, that’s good. Remember to say it under your breath in those chunks as you write.

(Continue with Like silent, hungry sharks.)
Can anyone think why Theodore Taylor would have started his story this way? (Discuss.)

Now we have written what the submarines were like, what do we need to say next if we are writing like Theodore Taylor? Yes, we need to keep building the picture of the submarines being like sharks. These sharks swim in the sea. So now we write what they do and even add when they do it.

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 to come. That’s right, we write what is being compared to sharks, and then what they did.

**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 *The Cay* would include:

- overall goals such as writing an orientation which includes a dramatic beginning which captures readers’ attention and a description of the setting which gradually widens in perspective followed by a sequence of events, or writing about a place that has a very different role from its role in the past
- short-term goals such as using a simile in a dramatic scenario, describing a setting using a widening perspective, and developing contrasting descriptions of a place at different times (incorporating the reactions of participants).

**Workshops based on passage one**

Start by discussing and listing possible dramatic scenarios. Discuss constructing an orientation to a story where a simile could be used to describe a participant.

For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>Participant/s</th>
<th>An effective simile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A new student is nervous and arrives at the school at lunchtime.</td>
<td>All the students.</td>
<td>Like a swarm of ants or bees.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Next discuss and add a description of the setting using a widening perspective, taking in what the narrator was doing and feeling, and a recount of the actions of the other participant/s.

For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>Narrator’s action</th>
<th>Recount of participant/s action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A remote school, a long distance from any shop, an even longer distance from any town.</td>
<td>Waiting nervously outside.</td>
<td>All the things the students did at lunchtime, including staring at the new student.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Revisit the structure of passage one as noted below. Use or adapt this as a writing plan.

- Foreshadowing – threatening image (simile)
- What narrator was doing
- Setting – a description of setting and time
- What happened – a recount.

Example of a joint writing outcome from the above writing workshop activities:

_Like a swarm of frenzied bees that dart from flower to flower, the students erupted from the classroom doors at lunchtime. I was nervously waiting by the gate of the little school in the country, 50 kilometres from the nearest shop and hundreds of kilometres from the nearest town. That day, my first day at the school, the students raced to the swings, fought over the balls, laughed and shouted and queued impatiently at the canteen where they were served sandwiches, drinks and fruit. Some students sat under a tree eating their lunch and staring at the stranger – me._

Workshop based on passage two

Start by discussing and listing possible places which could have had a benign role in the past, but now take on a more sinister role. Alternatively, describe a sinister place that now has a more benign presence.
Example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place where children played</th>
<th>Comparison</th>
<th>Contrast new role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A street that has old abandoned houses on it. The houses were almost destroyed in a cyclone many years ago.</td>
<td>Looks like it is a ghost town from an old movie.</td>
<td>The houses are being renovated so new families can move in.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Next discuss and add why the place appears different and what a reaction to this realisation could be.

Example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Why place appears different</th>
<th>Possible reactions to this</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Shiny new roofs appear.</td>
<td>We joined in planting seedlings in all the front gardens.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Broken windows and doors repaired.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Rubbish bulldozed away.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Lots of busy people around.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Revisit the structure of passage two, as noted below. Use or adapt this as a writing plan.

- Orientation
- Contrast
- Why
- Example 1
- Example 2
- Example 3
- Example 4
- Reactions

Example of a joint writing outcome from the above writing workshop activities and using the plan:

As long as we could remember, the street had always looked like a ghost town with rubble lying around and grass and even trees growing through the floors of the houses. But today it was beginning to look like a real street with proper homes. Many houses already had shiny new metal roofs. Others had front doors and some windows had glass in them. A big yellow bulldozer pushed all the rubbish up the street. Men and women hammered and sawed and there was an air of excitement and anticipation. Some children were in charge of planting seedlings in every front garden, so we joined in.
Appendices
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  
**Week:** 1  
**Term:** 1  

**Text:** *The Cay* by Theodore Taylor

**Teaching focus:** Starting a story with a dramatic event.

<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>Lesson focus</strong></td>
<td>Introduce story, themes and the dramatic event with which it begins.</td>
<td>Carefully present the power of an image described using a simile.</td>
<td>Revise information about setting of this story.</td>
<td>Revise and expand information about the setting, history, geography, etc.</td>
<td>Expand information on reasons why Curacao was crucial to war effort and therefore was a target.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Low order literate orientation</strong></td>
<td>Provide information about Curacao which students will need to understand first part of story. Read chapters 1 to 3.</td>
<td>Encourage discussion from last lesson. Prepare students to listen to next part of story. Read chapters 4 to 7.</td>
<td>Discuss the characters of Phillip and Timothy. Provide a literate orientation for next reading. Read chapters 8 to 10.</td>
<td>Encourage discussion of events and inferences so far. Discuss then read chapters 11 to 13.</td>
<td>Discuss Phillip's changing attitudes. Read chapters 14 to 15.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>High order literate orientation</strong></td>
<td>How to begin a story with a dramatic event using a simile to create powerful image. Like silent, hungry sharks, that swim in the darkness of the sea, the German submarines arrived in the middle of the night.</td>
<td>Description of what narrator is doing and where he is at time of events. I was asleep on the second floor of our narrow, gabled green house</td>
<td>Elaboration which provides a widening perspective on location. In Willemstad, on the island of Curacao, the largest of the Dutch islands just off the coast of Venezuela.</td>
<td>What actually happened that night. I remember that on that moonless night in February 1942 they attacked the big Lago oil refinery on Aruba, the sister island west of us.</td>
<td>What happened next. Then they blew up six of our small lake tankers, the tubby ones that still bring crude oil from Lake Maracaibo to the refinery, Curacaoche Petroleum Maastricht, to be made into petrol, paraffin, and diesel oil.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transformations</strong></td>
<td>Focus on author's use of a powerful simile which captures readers' attention. Like silent, hungry sharks that swim in the darkness of the sea, the German submarines arrived in the middle of the night.</td>
<td>Focus on what author is comparing to deadly sharks, the German submarines arrived in the middle of the night.</td>
<td>Focus on author's description of what Phillip was doing and where. (setting) I was asleep on the second floor of our narrow, gabled green house</td>
<td>Focus on author's care in further locating the setting of his story. In Willemstad, on the island of Curacao, the largest of the Dutch islands just off the coast of Venezuela.</td>
<td>Revise and discuss the techniques the author uses to begin story, and the description of the setting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spelling</strong></td>
<td>sh/ark/s</td>
<td>d/ark/ness</td>
<td>Revise: s/ub/m/s/ub/me/s/n/ght</td>
<td>Revise: a/sleep gr/een</td>
<td>Revise then fl/oer Varge/st</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Writing</strong></td>
<td>Start to introduce and discuss ideas about a workshop scenario which includes a dramatic event described with a simile.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Photocopiable masters
Like silent, hungry sharks, that swim in the darkness of the sea,

the German submarines arrived in the middle of the night.

I was asleep on the second floor of our narrow, gabled green house
in Willemstad, on the island of Curaçao, the largest of the Dutch
islands just off the coast of Venezuela.

I remember that on that moonless night in February 1942

they attacked the big Lago oil refinery on Aruba, the sister island
west of us.

Then they blew up six of our small lake tankers, the tubby ones that
still bring crude oil from Lake Maracaibo to the refinery,
Curaçaosche Petroleum Maatschappij, to be made into petrol,
paraffin, and diesel oil.

One German sub was even sighted off Willemstad at dawn.
The fort looks as though it came out of a storybook, with gun ports along the high wall that faces the sea. For years, it guarded Willemstad.

But this one morning, it did not look like a storybook fort at all.

There were real soldiers with rifles
and we saw machine guns.

Men with binoculars had them trained toward the white-caps,
and everyone was tense.

They chased us away,
telling us to go home.
I looked out toward the sea again.

It was blue and peaceful,

and a good breeze churned it up,

making lines of white-caps.

White clouds drifted slowly over it.

But I couldn't see the usual parade of ships coming toward the harbour; the stubby ones or the massive ones with flags of many nations

that steamed slowly up the bay to the Schottegat to load gas and oil.

The sea was empty;
there was not even a sail on it.

We suddenly became frightened

and ran home to the Scharloo section where we lived.
The Cay – Study passage four (467 words)

We were torpedoed at about three o’clock in the morning on 6 April 1942, two days after leaving Panama.

I was thrown from the top bunk

and suddenly found myself on my hands and knees on the deck.

We could hear the ship’s whistle blowing constantly,

and there were sounds of metal wrenching and much shouting.

The whole ship was shuddering.

It felt as though we’d stopped and were dead in the water.

My mother was very calm,

not at all like she was at home.
She talked quietly while she got dressed,

...telling me to tie my shoes, and be certain to carry my wool sweater, and to put on my leather jacket.

Her hands were not shaking.

She helped me put on my life jacket,

then put hers on,

saying,

‘Now, remember everything that we were told about abandoning ship.’

The officers had held drills every day.

As she was speaking,
there was another violent explosion.

We were thrown against the cabin door,

which the steward had warned us not to lock

because it might become jammed.

We pushed it open

and went out to the boat deck,

which was already beginning to tilt.

Everything was bright red,

and there were great crackling noises.
The entire afterpart of the ship was on fire,

and sailors were launching the lifeboat that was on our deck.

Steam lines had broken,

and the steam was hissing out.

Heat from the fire washed over us.

When the lifeboat had been swung out,

the captain came down from the bridge.

He was a small, wiry white-haired man

and was acting the way I’d been told captains should act.
He stood by the lifeboat in the fire’s glow, very alert, giving orders to the crew.

He was carrying a brief case and a navigation instrument I knew to be a sextant.

On the other side of the ship, another lifeboat was being launched.

Near us, two sailors with axes chopped at lines,

and the two big life rafts plunged toward the water,

which looked black except for pools of fire from burning fuel oil.

The captain shouted,

‘Get a move on! Passengers into the boats!’
Tins of lubricating oil in the afterholds had ignited and were exploding,

but the ones forward had not been exposed to the fire.

A sailor grabbed my mother’s hand

and helped her in,

and then I felt myself being passed into the hands of a sailor on the boat.

The other passengers were helped in,

and someone yelled,

‘Lower away.’

At that moment, the Hato lurched heavily.
and something happened to the boat falls.

The bow tilted downward,

and the next thing I knew we were all in the water.

I saw my mother near me

and yelled to her.

Then something hit me from above.
Timothy had fashioned a cane for me, and I was now using it to feel my way around the island. I fell down often, but unless I fell into sea grape, it did not hurt. Even then, I only got a few scratches.

Slowly, I was beginning to know the island. By myself, keeping my feet in the damp sand, which meant I was near the water, I walked the whole way around it. Timothy was very proud of me.

From walking over it, feeling it, and listening to it, I think I knew what our cay looked like. As Timothy said, it was shaped like a melon, or a turtle, sloped up from the sea to our ridge where the palms flapped all day and night in the light trade wind.

The beach, I now believed, was about forty yards wide in most places, stretching all the way around the island. On one end, to the east, was a low coral reef that extended several hundred yards, awash in many places.

I know it was to the east because one morning I was down there with Timothy when the sun came up, and I could feel the warmth on my face from that direction.
The sea grape, a few feet tall at the edge of the beach, and higher farther back, grew along the slopes of the hill on all sides. There was also some other brush that did not feel like sea grape, but Timothy did not know the name of it.

To the south, the beach sloped gradually out into the water. On the north side, it was different. There were submerged coral reefs and great shelves. The water became deep very abruptly. Timothy warned against going into the water here because the sharks could swim close to the shore.

Timothy said that the water all around the cay was clear and that he could see many beautiful fish. There was brain coral and organ-pipe coral that the parrot fish would nibble.

From what I could feel and hear, our cay seemed a lovely island and I wished that I could see it. I planned to walk around it at least once a day, following the vine rope from the ridge to the beach, then setting out along the sand.
At sunset, with the air heavy and hot, Timothy described the sky to me. He said it was flaming red and that there were thin veils of high clouds. It was so still over our cay that we could hear nothing but the rustling of the lizards.

Just before dark, Timothy said, ‘‘Twon’t be long now, Phill-eep.’

We felt a light breeze that began to ripple the smooth sea. Timothy said he saw an arc of very black clouds to the west. They looked as though they were beginning to join the higher clouds.

I gathered Stew Cat close to me as we waited, feeling the warm breeze against my face. Now and then, there were gusts of wind that rattled the palm fronds, shaking the little hut.

It was well after dark when the first drops of rain spattered the hut, and with them, the wind turned cool. When it gusted, the rain hit the hut like handfuls of gravel.

Then the wind began to blow steadily, and Timothy went out of the hut to look up at the sky. He shouted, ‘Dey boilin’ ovah now, Phill-eep. ‘Tis hurrican’, to be sure.’
We could hear the surf beginning to crash as the wind drove waves before it, and Timothy ducked back inside to stand in the opening of the hut, his big body stretched so that he could hang on to the overhead frame, keeping the hut erect as long as possible.

I felt movement around my legs and feet. Things were slithering. I screamed to Timothy who shouted back, ‘B’nothing but d’ilil’ lizard, comin’ high groun’.’

Rain was now slashing into the hut, and the wind was reaching a steady howl. The crash of the surf sounded closer; I wondered if it was already beginning to push up towards our hill. The rain was icy, and I was wet, head to foot. I was shivering, but more from the thought of the sea rolling over us than from the sudden cold.

In a moment, there was a splintering sound, and Timothy dropped down beside me, covering my body with his. Our hut had blown away. He shouted, ‘Phill-EEP, put your ‘ead downg.’ I rolled over on my stomach, my cheek against the wet sand. Stew Cat burrowed down between us.
There was no sound now except the roar of the storm. Even the sound of the wind was being beaten down by the wildness of the sea. The rain was hitting my back like thousands of hard berries blown from air guns.

Once something solid hit us and then rolled on. ‘Sea grape,’ Timothy shouted. It was being torn up by the roots.

We stayed flat on the ground for almost two hours, taking the storm’s punishment, barely able to breathe in the driving rain. Then Timothy shouted hoarsely, ‘To d’palm.’

The sea was beginning to reach for our hilltop, climbing the forty feet with raging whitecaps. Timothy dragged me toward the palm. I held Stew Cat against my chest.

Standing with his back to the storm, Timothy put my arms through the loops of rope, and then roped himself, behind me, to the tree.
Soon, I felt water around my ankles. Then it washed to my knees. It would go back and then crash against us again. Timothy was taking the full blows of the storm, sheltering me with his body. When the water receded, it would tug at us, and Timothy’s strength would fight against it. I could feel the steel in his arms as the water tried to suck us away.

Even in front of him, crushed against the trunk of the palm, I could feel the rain, which was now jabbing into me like the punches of a nail. It was not falling towards earth but being driven straight ahead by the wind.

We must have been against the palm for almost an hour when suddenly the wind died down and the rain became gentle. Timothy panted, ‘D’eye! We can relax a bit till d’odder side o’ d’tempis’ hit us.’

I remembered that hurricanes, which are great circling storms, have a calm eye in the centre.
These notes have been written to help teachers use the Accelerated Literacy teaching strategies in Years 7 and 8. However, they could also be used with older students who have difficulties with reading.

Outcomes of the teaching sequence

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

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

Notes

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