



Overview

This TSM contains information and suggestions for teachers to pick and choose from, depending on the needs of their students and their purpose for using the text. The material provides many opportunities for revisiting the text.

“Springers” is a fictional story set in a rest home, where George and his daughter are visiting his elderly mum. Meredith has dementia, although it’s not clear to what degree: at times her strong mind and character shine through, at others, she seems childlike and resigned to the loss of autonomy that many people in rest homes experience. This is a subtle story, carefully observed, that sheds a gentle light on the way ageing can impact on families.

This story:

- is set in a rest home, with a main character who has dementia
- provides subtle clues about the relationship between an elderly woman and her son
- reveals ways that people interact when they are stressed or uncertain
- has complex layers
- uses the second-person voice, placing the main character in the role of observer
- contains some unattributed dialogue.

A PDF of the text is available at www.schooljournal.tki.org.nz

Texts related by theme “How to Be Normal” SJ L4 Nov 2018 | “Match Report” SJ L4 Nov 2014

Text characteristics from the year 8 reading standard

We have retained the links to the National Standards while a new assessment and reporting system is being developed.

For more information on assessing and reporting in the post-National Standards era, see: <http://assessment.tki.org.nz/Assessment-and-reporting-guide>

... saw, he’s resting his cheek on his palm and looking at Grandma, not at you or the jumping frog. “Some more,” she says.

Dad asks if he can make some tea.

“Definitely. Bags are in that bottom drawer, under my diaries.” Grandma points to the small dressing table by the door.

“Under your diaries,” Dad says.

“Yes, but don’t bother, actually. They’ve taken the kettle. There was a big discussion, and they decided I wouldn’t have one any more. Jane came, at least.”

After four more springs, Dad says, “All right, should we go somewhere? A cafe?”

He goes off without waiting for an answer, saying he’ll be back with a wheelchair.

You collect up the frogs and continue springing them. Grandma reclines in her chair with her head back and her eyes half-open watching. She’s smiling a little, and when they hit the ceiling, she makes a small, satisfied noise.

elements that require interpretation, such as complex plots, sophisticated themes, and abstract ideas

When Dad gets back with the chair, Grandma’s so quick getting in you’re not sure why it’s necessary, but Dad looks at you and comments it would be good if they had safety belts. She’s looking at you, too, winking.

Your dad pushes her slowly down the corridor. One wheel squeaks with each rotation. When you get outside, on the footpath, Dad looks both ways, undecided. “Not a big town, is it? What do you reckon?”

Grandma shuffles in her chair. “Doesn’t make a difference.”

He turns left. You would have gone right. The chair’s rattly and slow, and you have to be mindful of each step so you don’t catch the back of Dad’s sandals.

“You do know I’d rather walk?” Grandma says. She shuffles round in the chair to face you. “Does he know I’d rather walk?” You nod neutrally. You don’t really know.

sentences that vary in length, including long, complex sentences that contain a lot of information

“Good, thanks.” She nods, satisfied, and looks at Dad. He sits on the bed and gestures for you to take the hard chair. You do. Your grandma sits in the armchair.

“What about you?” Dad asks. “All right?”

“Despite the fact someone stole my blue cardigan yesterday, I’m fine.”

“That’s good,” he says.

“Just yesterday. It was my blue cardigan with the swans.”

“I brought you a frog, Mum.”

Your father’s forgotten it was you who picked the frog. You dig it out of your bag and hand it to him. For a moment, he looks disappointed. It’s soft, a kid’s toy, but in the shop, he’d told you it was a good choice.

complex layers of meaning, and/or information that is irrelevant to the identified purpose for reading (that is, competing information), requiring students to infer meanings or make judgments

If you told your friends about this, they wouldn’t understand – but when you first see the frogs, you laugh with happiness. They have the same googly eyes, fat bellies, and bobbly fingers, but each one is different. There are china frogs, metal frogs, soft frogs, and plastic frogs. Some are naked, realistic-looking frogs; others wear hats or shorts.

They’re mostly jolly, but after a while of looking, you see that a few of the realistic ones have a frozen sadness. Their skin looks too dry, and they’re so still. At least a hundred frogs sit together on the glass shelves. You wonder how long they’ve been there, waiting to be seen.

Grandma’s rocking backwards and forwards in her new spot by the window, beaming. “No toads,” she says. “I binned the toads.” She leans over to open the cabinet and instructs you to take out all the plastic ones. “My springers,” she explains. You have no idea what she’s talking about, but you do as she says.

metaphor, analogy, and connotative language that is open to interpretation



Reading standard: by the end of year 8

VOCABULARY

- Possibly unfamiliar words and phrases, including “nondescript”, “tartan”, “gestures”, “logistical”, “juts out”, “incremental”, “cabinet”, “springers”, “tab”, “reclines”, “rotation”, “rattly”, “neutrally”, “temples”, “decade”, “exhaust”, “kererū”, “swivels”
- Colloquial language, including “I binned the toads”, “That one’s a dud”
- Figurative language: “Bit of a one-way street, huh?”

Possible supporting strategies

- Identify words or phrases that may be unfamiliar. English language learners may struggle with some of the colloquial or figurative language in the text and the range of verbs.
- Remind the students of effective word-solving strategies, such as looking for root words and affixes, rereading to better understand the context, linking to their prior knowledge, and inferring the meaning then reading on to check.
- Discuss possible interpretations of “a one-way street” and why Meredith might have used this phrase.
- Direct the students to make a note of unfamiliar words and spend time later clarifying their meaning. Ensure that the students are not confused by words that have more than one meaning, for example, “tab”.
- Create lists of collocations for vocabulary where appropriate (a collocation is two or more words that are often used together), for example, “incremental steps”, “incremental progress”, “incremental change”, “incremental pay scales”. Being familiar with a word’s collocations deepens English language learners’ understanding of the word and helps them to know how to use it.
- *The English Language Learning Progressions: Introduction*, pages 39–46, has useful information about learning vocabulary.
- See also [ESOL Online, Vocabulary](#), for examples of other strategies to support students with vocabulary.

SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED

- Some understanding of rest homes and dementia
- Some understanding that relationships between parents and grandparents are not always easy

Possible supporting strategies

- Before they read the text, give the students pictures of rest homes and elderly people. In pairs, have them share their ideas and thoughts about the pictures and list any questions they have. This activity will help to activate the students’ prior knowledge and introduce key vocabulary.
- Prompt the students to make connections with times they have visited a rest home or spent time with an elderly person who has lost some of their mental sharpness.
- Discuss ways that the role between parents and their children sometimes reverses when parents get very old and how this might feel for adult children.
- Discuss clues that show the reader that George is feeling uncomfortable or tense. Use [role-playing games](#) such as [Say It](#) or [Hot Seat](#) to explore the way George or Meredith experienced the visit.

TEXT FEATURES AND STRUCTURE

- Written in the second person (which is unusual for a story)
- Present tense with moment-by-moment narration
- Some unattributed dialogue
- Generally short, crisp sentences

Possible supporting strategies

- Remind the students of the differences between first-, second-, and third-person voice. Many students are unlikely to have encountered a story told in the second person before. Encourage them to notice the effect this has on the story, creating some distance between the main character and the other characters in the story and at the same time drawing in the reader to experience what is happening through the perceptive eyes of the main character. For another example of a second-person voice, see “River Swimming” (*School Journal*, L3, June 2018).
- Prompt the students to recall ways to identify which character is speaking when dialogue is unattributed. In this text, it’s not always immediately clear whether the pronoun “you” in dialogue refers to the young person, the father, or both. Reading back then reading on or paying attention to what is being said can help.



Possible curriculum contexts

ENGLISH (Reading)

Level 4 – Ideas: Show an increasing understanding of ideas within, across, and beyond texts.

Level 4 – Purposes and audiences: Show an increasing understanding of how texts are shaped for different purposes and audiences.

ENGLISH (Writing)

Level 4 – Ideas: Select, develop, and communicate ideas on a range of topics.

Level 4 – Purposes and audiences: Show an increasing understanding of how to shape texts for different purposes and audiences.

HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION (Relationships with other people)

Level 4 – Identity, sensitivity, and respect: Recognise instances of discrimination and act responsibly to support their own rights and feelings and those of other people.

Possible first reading purpose

- Find out about a young person's experience of visiting a grandparent in a rest home.

Possible subsequent reading purposes

- Analyse the impact of a visit to an elderly relative on the main character, her grandmother, and her dad
- Identify the challenges for an older person living with dementia
- Examine the significance of the frogs in the story.

Possible writing purposes

- Write a story about visiting a grandparent or an elderly person
- Rewrite the story from the perspective of Meredith or George
- Describe your response to the story and any connections you made with it.



Instructional focus – Reading

English Level 4 – Ideas: Show an increasing understanding of ideas within, across, and beyond texts; Purposes and audiences: Show an increasing understanding of how texts are shaped for different purposes and audiences.

First reading

- Provide a brief overview and set the purpose for reading.
- Provide the opportunity for the students to read the story in its entirety. Prompt them to make connections within the text and with their own experiences of elderly people and/or rest homes.
- Ask the students to highlight any parts of the story that they don't understand as they read and to note any questions they may have.
- Have pairs of students share their first impressions of the way each character experienced the visit.

If the students require more scaffolding

- If necessary, break the story into sections. As the students read each section, ask questions to help them make predictions and inferences. Have students work in pairs or small groups to find answers to these questions and to their own questions.
- Remind the students to make connections within the text and to their own experiences, for example, times that they have visited a rest home or a relative that they don't know very well.

Subsequent readings How you approach subsequent readings will depend on your reading purpose. Where possible, have the students work in pairs to discuss the questions and prompts in this section.

The teacher

Discuss what the visit was like and any parts of the narrative that the students found strange or confusing. Have pairs of students share and discuss their questions together before discussing them in a larger group.

Ask questions to facilitate the discussion:

- *How do we know that the main character and Meredith haven't seen each other for a long time?*
- *What do you think was the best part of the visit for the main character? Were there any parts that weren't so enjoyable?*
- *Which parts of the visit did Meredith enjoy the most? Which did she enjoy the least?*
- *How does the way the main character interacts with Meredith differ from the way George interacts with her?*

If the students need extra support, they could complete a three-level guide comprehension activity (see the example at the end of this TSM).

The teacher

Discuss some of the challenges elderly people experience in rest homes and ways this can impact on their hauora/well-being (social, mental/emotional, physical, and spiritual).

Explain what dementia is and have the students share any experiences they have had of people with the condition. Have the students work in pairs to explore the clues in the story that suggest Meredith has some form of dementia.

If necessary, give the students prompts such as:

- *Why do you think Meredith doesn't call the main character by her name?*
- *Can you find examples of Meredith speaking or acting in a childlike way?*
- *What are some ways that Meredith has lost control over life? What things does she still have control over?*
- *How does the level of control Meredith has compare with the level of control the main character has in the story?*
- *Each answer needs to be supported using examples from the story. Have pairs of students share their ideas with another pair.*

The students:

- make inferences about the length of time since the main character last saw Meredith, backing up their ideas with reference to the text
- share their inferences about what aspects of the visit were most enjoyable for the main character, for example, the frog springer episode or eating the biscuits that had been hidden under Meredith's bed
- make inferences about which parts of the visit the various characters didn't enjoy, explaining their conclusions using evidence from the text
- explore the dynamics of the outing and the significance of what each character says or does
- integrate and synthesise information across the text to evaluate how George feels about visiting his mother and hypothesise why this might be so.

The students:

- locate and evaluate places where the writer provides clues about Meredith's mental hauora/well-being
- integrate information they find to form an opinion about Meredith's social and emotional hauora/well-being
- find examples of:
 - Meredith's lack of control, for example, the kettle being taken out of her room or having to sit in a wheelchair
 - Meredith retaining some control, for example, binning the toads, hiding biscuits under the bed, or telling George to move the chair and offer opinions and hypothesise about their impact on Meredith.

Subsequent readings (cont.)

The teacher

Discuss the title and the significance of the frogs in the story, asking:

- *Why are the frogs an important part of the story? What role do they play?*

If necessary, explain the use of objects as symbols and have students explore what the frogs might represent.

Prompt students to make connections between the description of the frogs and the writer's purpose in writing this story.

The students:

- discuss the description of the frogs and/or the scene that follows and their significance
- offer opinions on the significance to Meredith of the frogs, based on examples in the story.

(Note that student responses may vary here. Encourage students to share and build on each other's ideas, making links to the writer's purpose in including a detailed description of the frogs.)

GIVE FEEDBACK

- *I saw how you looked for specific information to back up your interpretation of the relationship between George and Meredith. You also added a bit to your answer using your own experience of visiting your Dad's aunty. Good readers use the text and their own experiences to make inferences as they read, as you just did. Good job!*

METACOGNITION

- *How did your understanding of the story change when we read it more closely a second time? Which details did you notice that you didn't notice the first time? How did talking with your group change the way you understood the story?*



Reading standard: by the end of year 8



The Literacy Learning Progressions



Assessment Resource Banks

Instructional focus – Writing

English Level 4 – Ideas: Select, develop, and communicate ideas on a range of topics; Purposes and audiences: Show an increasing understanding of how to shape texts for different purposes and audiences.

Text excerpts from “Springers”	Examples of text characteristics	Teacher (possible deliberate acts of teaching)
<p>Page 36</p> <p>Your dad stands for a moment at the door before knocking, maybe reading her name. You look at the side of his face and wait. Usually his cheeks are pink, but today, they’re red.</p>	<p>SHOW, DON’T TELL</p> <p><i>“Show, don’t tell” is a writing technique that involves showing readers how someone is feeling through their actions, appearance, or speech rather than stating the feeling directly. This allows the reader to make their own conclusions about what is happening and can create a more visual or sensory experience for the reader.</i></p>	<p>Discuss the small details that the writer provides to show that George is finding the visit challenging or confronting, for example, the way he pauses before knocking on Meredith’s door, his red cheeks, or the way he watches Meredith while the main character is springing the frogs.</p> <p>Give the students different sections of the text to analyse and have them share their thoughts with the class.</p> <p>Give pairs of students sentences that “tell” rather than “show”. Challenge the students to rewrite the sentences to “show” what is happening, for example, “The lesson was really boring” could be adapted to “My eyes glazed over and I stared into nothingness while the teacher droned on”.</p> <p>Have the students explore ways that they can adapt their writing to “show without telling”, seeking feedback from their peers on the effect of their adaptations.</p>
<p>Page 36</p> <p>You follow your dad down a corridor that smells like eggs.</p>	<p>SENSORY DETAILS</p> <p><i>Sensory details provide information about the way something looks, sounds, smells, feels, or tastes. Appealing to a reader’s senses can help them to experience a story in a more direct or personal way, drawing them into the story.</i></p>	<p>Discuss the ways that words can create feelings. Read out examples of words that appeal to people’s senses and have the students close their eyes and think about how they experience each word, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sight: green, bright, dull, blazing, glaring, sharp, flashing, lively, wobbly, darting• Smell: sweet, sour, foul, fresh, stale, clean, smoky, fishy, rotten, dank• Touch: boiling, freezing, soft, smooth, rough, hard, stinging• Taste: bitter, sweet, hot, putrid, salty, spicy, oily• Sound: singing, whispering, roaring, laughing, screeching, howling. <p>Discuss the ways the main character in “Springers” observes what is going on, noticing the small details that she provides about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the smell, size, and look of the rest home, for example, the corridor that smells like eggs• the subtle ways her dad reacts at different stages of the visit, for example, his hesitations, his red cheeks, and the way he quietly watches her grandma during the frog-springing episode• the outing, for example, the rattly wheelchair with the squeaky wheel. <p>Have the students discuss in pairs how well they could visualise or feel what was happening in the story and whether the main character’s close attention to detail helped.</p> <p>Give the students a straightforward passage of writing and have them work in pairs to add sensory details that bring the description to life. Encourage them to include a simile or metaphor.</p> <p>For native English speakers, the correct order in which adjectives are added to a sentence is intuitive, but English language learners may need explicit instruction about this. We begin with the determiners (article or demonstrative adjective, then any possessives), followed by the adjectives in order (quantity; opinion; factual; comparing and classifying), then the noun. Revise the difference between first-, second-, and third-person narratives. Explain that the use of the second person is unusual in stories. Discuss its effect, in particular the way it can help the reader to participate in the story, seeing things through the eyes of the main character.</p> <p>Have the students discuss in pairs their experience of reading the story in the second person.</p> <p>Challenge them to rewrite the story from Meredith’s perspective or to adapt a piece of their own writing using second-person narration.</p>
<p>Page 38</p> <p>If you told your friends about this, they wouldn’t understand – but when you first see the frogs, you laugh with happiness.</p>	<p>PERSPECTIVE</p> <p><i>Perspective is a tool that lets us know whose lens we are looking through when we read a text.</i></p>	<p>GIVE FEEDBACK</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>I can see from the way your buddy responded that the extra details you added to your writing helped them create a mental image of what was going on. These small details are also a good example of “showing not telling”.</i>

METACOGNITION

- How did being asked to add sensory detail change the way you remembered and described the visit to your koro? Are some senses more powerful than others when it comes to describing a situation? When is it useful to describe a combination of senses? When is it useful to focus on just one?

GIVE FEEDBACK

- *I can see from the way your buddy responded that the extra details you added to your writing helped them create a mental image of what was going on. These small details are also a good example of “showing not telling”.*

“Springers”: Three level guide

Decide whether you agree or disagree with each statement below. Then add supporting evidence from the text. When you have finished, discuss your answers with a partner. If you have different answers, discuss your reasons and try to reach an agreement.

LEVEL 1: LITERAL STATEMENTS (WHAT THE AUTHOR SAID)

Does the text say this? What words support your answer?

1. *The main character often visits Meredith.*
2. *Meredith loves her frog collection.*
3. *George and Meredith often talk on the phone.*

LEVEL 2: INTERPRETIVE STATEMENTS (WHAT THE AUTHOR MEANT)

Does the text give you this idea? What words and phrases support your answer?

1. *The main character enjoyed spending time with her grandmother.*
2. *Meredith is angry with George for not visiting her more often.*
3. *Meredith enjoyed going for a walk.*

LEVEL 3: APPLIED STATEMENTS (WHAT THE AUTHOR WOULD AGREE WITH)

Do you agree with this? Why? Be prepared to share your reasons.

1. *Being old is easy because you don't have to do anything any more.*
2. *Meredith and George love one another.*
3. *Some people find it hard to care for their parents when they get older, even if they love them.*