



## Overview

This humorous science fiction story is about two creatures, Pebble and Stone, who live on the planet Rock 2. One day, a spacecraft visits and leaves an unusual object behind. As the story progresses, Pebble and Stone notice the object changing and invent new words to describe what they are seeing. The story ends with a delicious surprise for the characters.

This text requires readers to “confidently use a range of processing and comprehension strategies to make meaning from and think critically about” text (from *The Literacy Learning Progressions*, page 14).

They will need to use clues in the text and illustrations and draw on their prior knowledge about seeds and plants in order to visualise the setting and infer what is happening.

Ideas about seeds are explored a bit more seriously in two other items in this journal. The short article “Seeds” provides an explanation about how seeds grow, and could be read before this story. The poem “Kākano” describes seeds as taonga.

There is a PDF of the text and an audio version as an MP3 file at [www.juniorjournal.tki.org.nz](http://www.juniorjournal.tki.org.nz)

## Related texts

Mystery texts: “The Desk” (JJ 38); “Missing” (JJ 42); “Something Strange” (JJ 46); “Marcus and the Wind” (JJ 47); “Always Great, Never Late” (JJ 48)  
 Science fiction texts: “Saving Planet Stripe” (a play, JJ 36); “A Closer Look” (SJ, Level 2, Aug 2012)

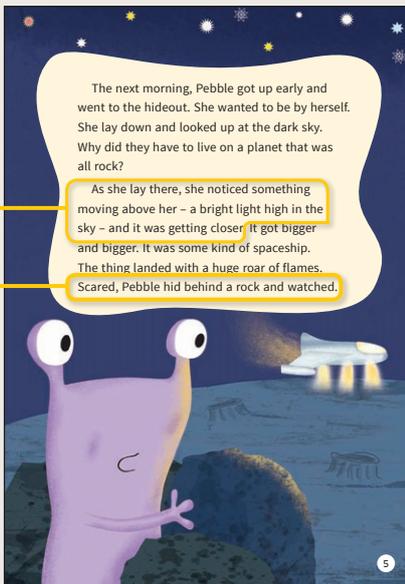
## Text characteristics

Key text characteristics relating to the reading standard for after three years at school are shown in the boxes below.

A variety of sentence structures, including complex sentences

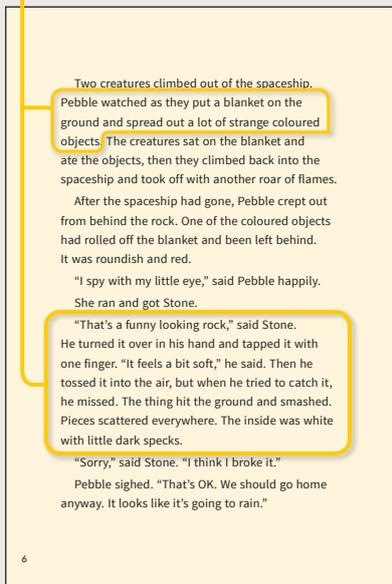
A mix of explicit and implicit content within text and illustrations that requires students to make connections between ideas in the text and their prior knowledge in order to make inferences, for example, about the setting and the mystery object

Some unfamiliar words and phrases, the meaning of which is supported by the context or illustrations, including made-up words to describe the mystery object, subject-specific vocabulary (about planets and rocks), and familiar words used in unfamiliar contexts (for example, “boiled”, “cake”, “frozen”, “roast”, and “sandwich” used to describe the rock food)



The next morning, Pebble got up early and went to the hideout. She wanted to be by herself. She lay down and looked up at the dark sky. Why did they have to live on a planet that was all rock?

As she lay there, she noticed something moving above her – a bright light high in the sky – and it was getting closer. It got bigger and bigger. It was some kind of spaceship. The thing landed with a huge roar of flames. Scared, Pebble hid behind a rock and watched.



Two creatures climbed out of the spaceship. Pebble watched as they put a blanket on the ground and spread out a lot of strange coloured objects. The creatures sat on the blanket and ate the objects, then they climbed back into the spaceship and took off with another roar of flames. After the spaceship had gone, Pebble crept out from behind the rock. One of the coloured objects had rolled off the blanket and been left behind. It was roundish and red.

“I spy with my little eye,” said Pebble happily. She ran and got Stone.

“That’s a funny looking rock,” said Stone. He turned it over in his hand and tapped it with one finger. “It feels a bit soft,” he said. Then he tossed it into the air, but when he tried to catch it, he missed. The thing hit the ground and smashed. Pieces scattered everywhere. The inside was white with little dark specks.

“Sorry,” said Stone. “I think I broke it.” Pebble sighed. “That’s OK. We should go home anyway. It looks like it’s going to rain.”



Some unfamiliar contexts and settings, for example, the science fiction context and the setting on another planet

Frequent use of dialogue, some of which is not explicitly attributed, and more than one character speaking on a page

Shifts in time, for example, in relation to the changes to the mystery object

Ideas organised in paragraphs and some pages with no illustrations

**English (Reading)**

Level 2 – Purposes and audiences:  
Show some understanding of how texts are shaped for different purposes and audiences.

**Science (Living World)**

Levels 1 and 2 – Life processes: Recognise that all living things have certain requirements so they can stay alive.

**Select from and adapt** the suggestions below according to your students' strengths, needs, and experiences – their culture, language, and identity (*The New Zealand Reading and Writing Standards for years 1–8*, Knowledge of the Learner, page 6).

**Possible reading purposes**

(What can the students expect to find out or think about as a result of reading this text?)

- To solve the mystery of the strange object found on Rock 2

**Possible learning goals**

(What opportunities does this text provide for the students to learn more about how to “read, respond to, and think critically” about texts?)

- The students **make connections** between the ideas in the text and illustrations and their own experiences to **visualise** the setting and events.
- They use their visualisations and further clues to **make predictions and inferences** about the characters and what the mystery object could be.
- They **identify and discuss** the clues in the text that supported their predictions and inferences.
- They **monitor** their own reading, for example, they notice when something is unclear, and take action, for example, rereading a sentence, or looking for clues close by, to solve the problem.

**Text and language features****Possible supporting strategies**

(These suggestions may be used before, during, or after reading in response to students' needs.)

**Vocabulary**

- Possibly unfamiliar words and phrases: “boulder”, “brilliant”, “crater”, “dribbled”, “instead”, “mysterious”, “sighed”, “little rock hopper”
- Descriptive language including:
  - made-up words (“blurps”, “glosh”, “gloshes”, “toffle”, “plogs”)
  - familiar words used in unfamiliar contexts, for example, “boiled”, “cake”, “frozen”, “roast”, and “sandwiches” used in relation to rocks
  - precise descriptive verbs (“crawled”, “crushed”, “groaned”, “grumbled”, “mumbled”, “scattered”, “sprouting”, “tapped”).

Readers are able to use strategies for working out unfamiliar words only when they know most of the vocabulary in a text. For students who need support with vocabulary, introduce and practise selected items before reading. See [ESOL Online: Vocabulary](#) for suggestions.

Prompt students to remember the strategies they can use, often in combination, for example:

- when **decoding**:
  - recognising syllables or chunks in longer words (“brill-i-ant”, “in-stead”, “mys-ter-i-ous”)
- when **working out word meanings**:
  - using the context of the sentence and surrounding sentences
  - using the illustrations, the unfolding meaning of the story, and their prior knowledge
  - reading on to look for further information.

Have a dictionary available for the students to use to confirm or clarify word meanings, but remind the students that they can make a best attempt at a word's meaning and come back to it later. Have bilingual dictionaries available, where appropriate.

**Text features**

- Science fiction text features (an imaginary world based on scientific ideas, in this case, ideas about space, including a rock planet and alien characters)
- The “I Spy” game
- Some sentences that begin with a descriptive word or phrase: “Scared, Pebble hid behind a rock ...”; “With a full mouth, Stone mumbled happily ...”

Lead the students into a discussion of what science fiction is, using an example of a story, film, or app with which they are familiar: *Where does it happen? What is unusual about some of the characters?* Encourage them to share other stories, films, and apps they think are similar.

If students are unfamiliar with the “I Spy” game, you could introduce it a few days earlier so they can enjoy understanding it as they read the story.

Explain that sometimes sentences can start with a word or phrase that doesn't seem to make sense until you read the rest of the sentence. Model reading these examples with appropriate phrasing and intonation and discuss the meaning (and see After reading).

**Specific knowledge**

- Knowledge of how seeds grow.

Try to ensure that the students have read the article “Seeds” before reading “I Spy”, but avoid making an explicit connection between these two texts. Give the students the chance to solve the mystery for themselves.

**Metacognition****HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT YOUR STUDENTS TO BE METACOGNITIVE**

Here are some ways you can build students' awareness of the processes and strategies they are using as they make meaning and think critically.

- *What helped you infer why Pebble had a nightmare?*
- *How did rereading that paragraph help you?*

## Introducing the text

- Use your knowledge of your students to ensure that your introduction to the text is effective in activating their prior knowledge and providing appropriate support for a successful first reading.
- Ask the students to use the title and the illustration across pages 2 and 3 to make predictions about the story and the two characters. Confirm that the story is science fiction and it involves a mystery. Discuss the general features of science fiction (see Text features).
- Have the students think-pair-share the ways the characters and the setting in this sci-fi story might be different from our planet and people. Prompt them to make connections to what they know about science fiction (or space) and to think of aspects like appearance, food, language, and plants. List their ideas on a chart like the one on the right, leaving space to add comments after the reading.
- Tell the students that the story has some made-up words and they will need to work out what they mean. You could provide the students with sticky notes so that they can write the words and their ideas about their meanings as they read the story.
- Share the reading purpose and learning goal(s).

What might we find in this science fiction story?	What did we find?
Characters	There might be aliens or machines. They might have made-up names, like C3PO. They might look different, not like people.
Setting	It won't look like Earth. It might be far away on another planet that looks like the moon.
Story structure	It will be the same as other stories. The introduction could tell us who, what, where, when.
Language	They might use different words.
Machines	Spaceships, lasers, robots
Food	Food will be different and made in strange ways like fruit bars but really a whole meal.

## Reading and discussing the text

Suggestions for ways that you can support the students to achieve the learning goals are in the right-hand column of the table below. **Select from and adapt** the suggestions according to your students' needs. These suggestions may apply to the first or a subsequent reading of the text.

### Student behaviours

*Examples of what to look for and support as the students work towards achieving their learning goal(s). Much of the processing that students do at this level is "inside their heads" and may not be obvious until after they have read the text and you are discussing it as a group.*

### Deliberate acts of teaching

*Examples of how you can support students as they work towards achieving their learning goal(s). This may involve individual students rather than the whole group.*

### The first reading

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The students use the information on page 2 to confirm the setting and review their predictions about what life might be like on Rock 2.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prompt the students to review their ideas on the sci-fi chart.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They infer from the dialogue on pages 2–4 that Pebble doesn't seem very happy.</li> <li>• The students confirm their inference about Pebble from what she says on page 4 and from the fact that that she has a "rock nightmare". They notice there is a big difference between Mum's and Pebble's opinions.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask a question to help the students notice the clues in the dialogue on pages 2–4: <i>Is there anything in the conversation between Pebble and Stone that tells you how Pebble is feeling? What do you notice about Mum and Pebble's conversation?</i></li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The students demonstrate self-monitoring and checking. For example, in the last paragraph on page 5, they might be confused by the reference to "The thing" and realise they have lost meaning. They take action to fix the problem by rereading the sentence or paragraph and looking at the illustration to check their thinking.</li> <li>• On pages 6 and 7, the students make connections between the descriptions in the text, the illustration, and their prior knowledge to visualise what the visitors were doing. They are likely to recognise the shattered apple and may be able to infer that the "creatures" in the spaceship were probably from Earth and were having a picnic.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prompt the students to visualise what is happening in each paragraph. If necessary, draw their attention to key clues and prompt them to make connections to their own experiences: <i>Think of a time when you sat on a blanket outside and ate some food ...</i></li> <li>• Pause at the end of page 6 to enjoy sharing clues and inferences. Ask the students to predict what could happen next. Prompt them to think critically about the characters as they read on: <i>Stone and Pebble haven't seen an apple before. I wonder what they will discover next.</i></li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The students discuss the inferences they have made so far and the evidence they have used. They predict (form their own hypotheses) about what might happen to the mystery object.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask the students to share their thinking about what has happened and what could happen. Remind them to check their predictions as they read on.</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As they read the made-up words, the students use the nearby descriptions and illustrations to infer what each one could be. For example, on page 8, they may predict the "green sprouting thing" is a tree. As they read on, this thinking is confirmed by the description of "long brown arms" and "green, flat bits" and the illustration on page 9.</li> <li>• The students notice from phrases such as "A few weeks later", "one day", and "Over the next few weeks" that many weeks have passed from the time the strange object arrived until the "glosh" is picked from the "toffle".</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enjoy the students' responses to the humour in the story and their delight at solving the word puzzles. Remind them that they can record their ideas on sticky notes and share these when everyone has finished reading.</li> <li>• Prompt the students to make connections with their prior knowledge by noticing the change in the toffle over time.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As the students finish, they reflect on their purpose for reading. They scan the story to review the clues that helped them to solve the mystery.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As they complete their reading, remind them of the reading purpose.</li> </ul>  |

## Discussing the text after the first reading

- The students share the evidence that helped them solve the mystery, such as the description of what the object looked like and how it changed.
- The students consider what has made Pebble change over the course of the story, referring to the text to support their ideas. For example, on page 6, she speaks happily for the first time and they infer she's happy because she's found something that looks different – and is not a rock!
- The students revisit their earlier ideas of what is particular to sci-fi stories and, using evidence from the text, refine and add to them. For example, they add more information relating to the setting and the characters, including the way everything is made from rock and the characters' names are synonyms for rock.
- Support the students to find and share the clues in the text that helped them work out what the mystery object was. Draw out the idea that although they may have realised it was an apple on page 7, it was a mystery to the characters.
- Ask the students to think critically about how the arrival of the mystery object led to a change in Pebble's attitude.
- Have the students review their ideas on the sci-fi chart.
- You could extend their thinking by asking them how the game of I Spy might be different in future.

## Supporting metacognition

With support, the students reflect on their learning. They revisit the reading purpose and learning goal(s).

- The students explain how rereading and visualising helped them to clarify what the "green, flat bits" were.
- The students identify some challenges in the text and explain how they tried to work them out.

Remind the students of the reading purpose and learning goal(s).

- *How did rereading the text and visualising help you clarify what was happening?*
- *What helped you work out why the story started with the "I Spy" joke?*

## After reading: Practice and reinforcement

- The students can reread the story as they listen to the audio version. Audio versions also provide English language learners with good models of pronunciation, intonation, and expression.
- Provide opportunities for students to reread this story, as well as other humorous mystery texts (see Related texts, above). Read science fiction stories to the class and help the students locate them in the school library.
- Encourage the students to share their prior knowledge about what seeds need and how they grow, including information from "Seeds" and "Kākano" (in this journal) and from their own experience of growing plants. They could build a list of the conditions a seed needs to grow and then review the text to see if this tree had similar conditions.
- Have the students work in pairs to record the clues they noticed and how they helped identify the mystery object. For example:

Clues	Our inferences and ideas
One of the coloured objects rolled off the blanket	It's food because the creatures were eating the objects.
It was roundish and red	like an apple or tomato
It feels a bit soft	It wasn't a rock.
The picture on page 7	It looks like a smashed apple
The thing smashed ... scattered ... white with dark specks	Part of a plant of some kind – dark things were probably seeds, like a piece of fruit.

- Look closely at how the made-up words are used, focusing on their place in the sentence as nouns and the clues around them. Have the students draw a picture of the tree, using the page 9 illustration as a guide, and add labels describing the part of the tree, the name in English, and the name the characters give it. Where there is no "Rock" name, the students can create one. The students could also add labels in te reo Māori and other languages.

green, flat bits	blurps	leaves
long brown arms	branches	(rock name)

- Provide opportunities for the students to practise visualising by having them illustrate parts of the story. Give them sentences to select from, for example: "The creatures sat on the blanket and ate the objects ..."; "One of the coloured objects had rolled off the blanket and been left behind."; "A long, green thing was sprouting ..."; "Soon, the toffle had long brown arms, and on each arm, there were green, flat bits."; "The next week, there were pretty, white shapes among the blurps." The students will need to locate the sentences in the story and read the surrounding text to make sure they get the details right. You could have the students work in pairs (but on different sentences) so that they can confer and support each other. Have them check each other's pictures for accuracy.

- Build the students' confidence with reading complex sentences. Focus on the sentence "Scared, Pebble hid behind a rock and watched" (page 5). Explain that this is an alternative, more elegant way of saying "Pebble was scared. She hid behind a rock and watched". Together, innovate on the sentence structure, for example, "Yelling, Thomas leapt over the fence" or "Happy, Moana walked over to Mum". Practise reading the sentences together, attending to the punctuation. Other sentences you could use include: "As she lay there, she noticed ..." (page 5); "... as they sat eating a bag of rock balls" and "With a full mouth, Stone mumbled happily ..." (page 11).