

The Duel: The Inventors Awaken

by Simon Cooke

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Year 5



Overview

This light-hearted fantasy story, told through narrative, is the first part of a two-part story. The second part will appear in the *School Journal*, Level 3, August 2016. It is also a sequel to “The Sun and Other Inventions” (*School Journal*, Part 3 Number 1, 2007). You can find a PDF of this earlier story at www.schooljournal.tki.org.nz

The text includes numerous illustrations, which amplify the content and add another layer to the story. It makes excellent use of dialogue for humorous effect. It could also provide a good opportunity to discuss the relationship between grandparents and their grandchildren.

Humour is a cultural construct, so teachers may need to provide more scaffolded support for students from other cultures.

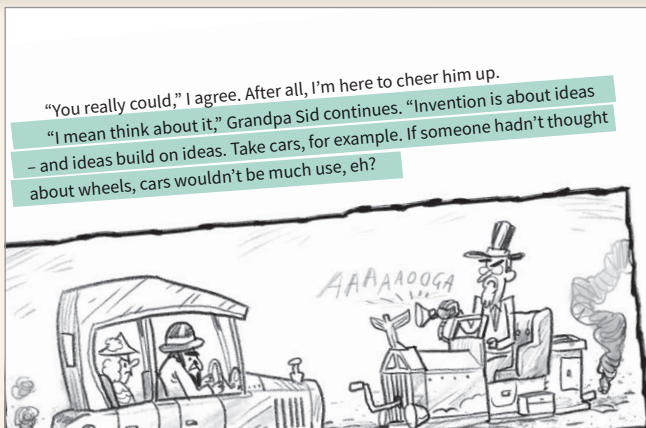
This story:

- includes humour and hyperbole
- tells some of the story through dialogue
- contains elements of a fantasy narrative
- contains a large number of illustrations that provide extra information.

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

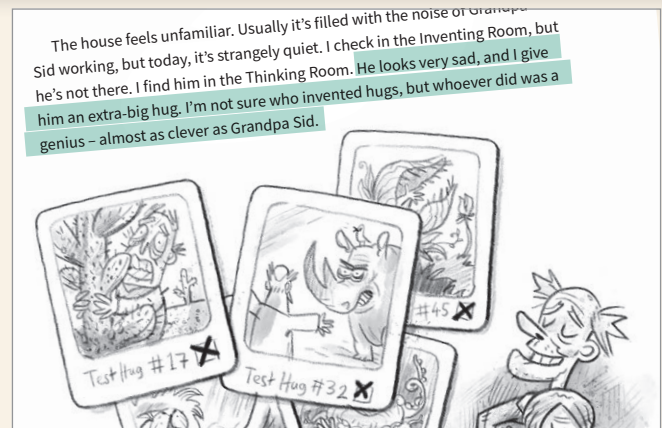
Texts related by theme “The Sun and Other Inventions” SJ 3.1.07 | “The Butterfly Effect” SJ L3 April 2012

Text characteristics from the year 5 reading standard



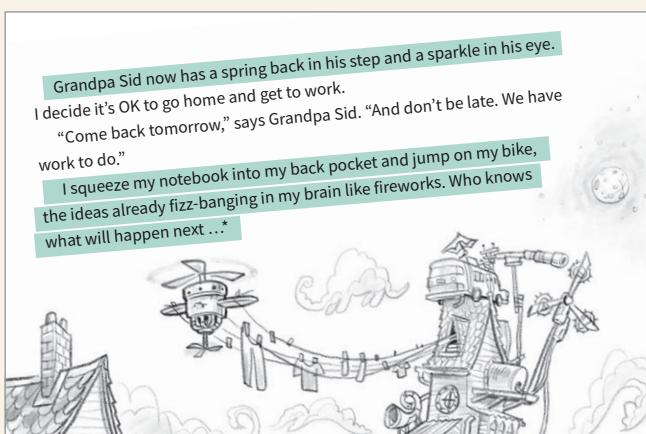
“You really could,” I agree. After all, I’m here to cheer him up.
“I mean think about it,” Grandpa Sid continues. “Invention is about ideas – and ideas build on ideas. Take cars, for example. If someone hadn’t thought about wheels, cars wouldn’t be much use, eh?”

abstract ideas, in greater numbers than in texts at earlier levels, accompanied by concrete examples in the text that help support the students’ understanding



The house feels unfamiliar. Usually it’s filled with the noise of Grandpa Sid working, but today, it’s strangely quiet. I check in the Inventing Room, but he’s not there. I find him in the Thinking Room. He looks very sad, and I give him an extra-big hug. I’m not sure who invented hugs, but whoever did was a genius – almost as clever as Grandpa Sid.

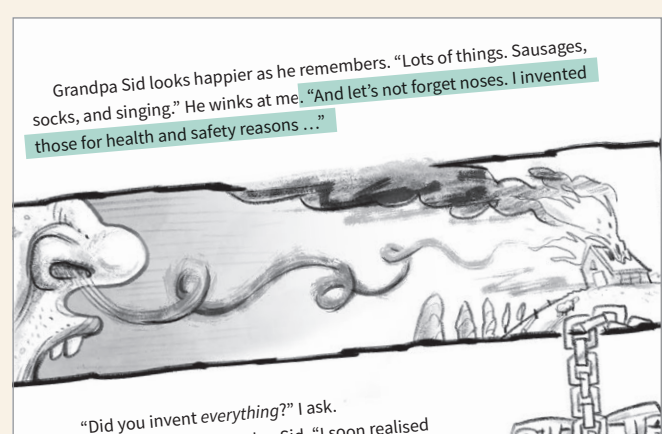
some ideas and information that are conveyed indirectly and require students to infer by drawing on several related pieces of information in the text



Grandpa Sid now has a spring back in his step and a sparkle in his eye. I decide it’s OK to go home and get to work.
“Come back tomorrow,” says Grandpa Sid. “And don’t be late. We have work to do.”

I squeeze my notebook into my back pocket and jump on my bike, the ideas already fizz-banging in my brain like fireworks. Who knows what will happen next ...”

figurative and/or ambiguous language that the context helps students to understand



Grandpa Sid looks happier as he remembers. “Lots of things. Sausages, socks, and singing.” He winks at me. “And let’s not forget noses. I invented those for health and safety reasons ...”

“Did you invent everything?” I ask.
Grandpa Sid. “I soon realised

illustrations, photographs, text boxes, diagrams, maps, charts, and graphs that clarify or extend the text and may require some interpretation

Reading standard: by the end of year 5

Possible curriculum contexts

ENGLISH (Reading)

Level 3 – Ideas: Show a developing understanding of ideas within, across, and beyond texts.

– Language features: Show a developing understanding of how language features are used for effect within and across texts.

ENGLISH (Writing)

Level 3 – Ideas: Select, form, and communicate ideas on a range of topics.

– Language features: Use language features appropriately, showing a developing understanding of their effects.

Possible first reading purpose

- To read for enjoyment.

Possible subsequent reading purposes

- To explore what makes the story funny and how the author uses humour to engage an audience
- To understand how dialogue can be used to tell a story
- To see how illustrations support the text and provide additional information
- To identify possible themes and the writer's purpose in writing the story.

Possible writing purposes

- To write the rest of the story
- To write a prequel and compare it with the actual prequel, "The Sun and Other Inventions"
- To make up a biography about a fictional character who invented something
- To design your own invention and explain how it works using words and diagrams
- To write the story from Baron von Spanner's perspective.



The New Zealand Curriculum

Text and language challenges

(Some of the suggestions for possible supporting strategies may be more useful before reading, but they can be used at any time in response to students' needs.)

VOCABULARY

- Possibly unfamiliar words and concepts, including "vanquish", "escapology", "neutralised", "dastardly", "modestly", "institutes", "apprentice", "implications"
- Some difficult phrases, such as "I invented invention", "Always think about the implications of your inventions", "You never know when inspirations will tap you on the shoulder", "I was the only person who stood between the world and its destruction"
- The unusual name, Baron von Spanner
- Repetition: "He invented ... so I invented ..."
- Made-up language: "poppo-dopple-ate-a-nator"
- Hyperbole: "you could argue that I invented invention".

Possible supporting strategies

- Tell the students that there will be some figurative and colloquial language in this text. Pull out some examples to explain what is meant by "figurative" and "colloquial" language. Ask them to think of colloquial language examples that they use. Explain that these language features are more often found in narrative texts.
- If appropriate, you could write the challenging words up on the whiteboard first and discuss their meanings with the students.
- Tell students there are clues in the illustrations that will help them define difficult words and concepts.
- Remind students of the strategies they can use to work out the meaning of unfamiliar words, such as using their word knowledge or context clues, reading on, and rereading.
- *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 scientific and historical knowledge to discern fact from fiction in order to appreciate the humour
- A familiarity with sophisticated humour (for example, being able to identify Grandpa's disingenuous descriptions of the invention of cars, soccer, and campfires)
- Some familiarity with fantasy narratives.

Possible supporting strategies

- Some students, especially English language learners, may need support to understand the humour and not interpret the story literally. Explain that the author has made the story deliberately ridiculous to be funny. To help students understand this, encourage them to list other random examples of things that Grandpa has invented. They could also draw their own pictures to illustrate some of the figurative language and hyperbole.
- Discuss the characteristics of fantasy writing, drawing on fantasy novels they may have read, such as Harry Potter. *What do you expect from a fantasy narrative?*

TEXT FEATURES AND STRUCTURE

- A story within a story (Grandpa's narrative)
- Some unattributed dialogue
- Illustrations that connect with the narrative
- Figurative language: "flatter than a pancake", "more fizz-bang than a fireworks display".

Possible supporting strategies

- Discuss the title and the use of the word "duel". Make predictions about the text.
- Spend some time looking through the illustrations and draw out what the students find out.
- Explain that this is a sequel as well as the first part of a two-part story.
- Discuss the concept of a cliff-hanger. Explain this is a complete story, but it also leaves you hanging for the next part.
- Discuss how the dialogue provides insight into each character. The narrator says, "You can't give up, Grandpa. You're the greatest inventor in the world." What does this tell you about the narrator and how she feels about Grandpa Sid?
- Explain that narratives are often built around a single problem and that small or partial solutions help to advance the story. Ask students to identify the main problem in the narrative and discuss whether or not it is resolved.
- Point out the unattributed dialogue and direct the students to identify who said what. *How do you know who's speaking? How did you work it out?* Two students could each take the role of one of the characters and read through sections of dialogue. Help English language learners to identify reference chains within the text. (See *ELIP, Stage 2 Reading*, section 11 (c) for an example of a reference chain.



Sounds and Words

Instructional focus – Reading

English Level 3 – Ideas: Show a developing understanding of ideas within, across, and beyond texts; Language features: Show a developing understanding of how language features are used for effect within and across texts.

First reading

- Set the purpose for reading. Read without interruptions to get a complete sense of the story – and to enjoy it!
- Ask students to note places where they struggled or had to reread the text.
- Ask students to retell the story in pairs to show they understand the plot.
- Draw out the students' reactions to the story.
- Discuss what makes the story a narrative.
- Share a funny part from the story and discuss what makes it funny.
- Share clues that show the relationship between the different characters.
- Ask students to make a prediction about what will happen next.

If the students struggle with this text

- Remind students of the strategies that are particularly useful on a first reading, such as reading on, rereading, and making connections to their prior knowledge.
- It may help to read the prequel, "The Sun and Other Inventions", before reading this text. Have the students record any questions triggered by the prequel that they would like "The Duel: The Inventors Awaken" to answer. Revisit these questions after the first reading.
- Create a storyboard as a class to show the development of the narrative.
- Reread parts of the text together to support the students' understanding that this is a comical, fantastical story.
- Pull out the similes and metaphors. Write them on a whiteboard or chart. Once the students understand their meanings, encourage them to come up with their own similes and metaphors.
- Explore the relationship dynamics between the characters. *How do we know how the characters feel about each other? How do we know their motives? Why are they acting the way they are?* The students could create a table about the characters and their motivations, using evidence from the text to back up their conclusions.

Subsequent readings

How you approach subsequent readings will depend on your chosen reading purpose.

The teacher

Ask the students to identify the features of the text that show it is a fantasy.

- *How do you know this is a fantasy story?*
- *Could Grandpa have invented all those things? Why/why not?*
- *What features do you recognise from other fantasy stories?*

The teacher

Prompt the students to explore how the author uses dialogue.

- *What helps you identify the speaker if the author doesn't tell you who is talking?*
- *Does the dialogue tell you what is happening?*
- *Could this story be told without dialogue? How would it be different?*

The teacher

Direct the students to work in pairs to discuss the illustrations.

- *How do they add to the story? What extra information is in the illustrations? Do they add to the humour?*

The teacher

Ask the students to look at the techniques the author uses to provide a sequence to the narrative.

- *Think about the decisions the author has made so that he can tell the story in a more interesting way. What has he left in and what has he taken out? What effects have those decisions had?*

The teacher

Ask questions to identify the moral of the story.

- *Why did the author write this story? What is the key message he wants us to get?*
- *Do you think he was successful? Why/why not?*

GIVE FEEDBACK

- *You made some interesting connections to Andy Griffiths' stories when you were talking about what made the story funny. That helped me to see why you enjoyed the humour in this story.*
- *It was a good idea to go back and look at the illustrations again when you weren't sure of what Grandpa Sid meant. Going back to the illustrations is a good way to clarify things.*

METACOGNITION

- Is it easy to see a serious message in something humorous like this? How do you decide what it is?
- Is there a particular type of humour that you find funny? What makes it funny? Could you use any elements of that in your own writing?

The students:

- make connections between what they know of fantasy stories and the features of the text
- discuss and evaluate Grandpa's inventions to conclude that they are so ridiculous that they aren't real and the story must be fantasy.

The students:

- identify who is speaking by using their knowledge of the conventions of writing dialogue, such as a new line for a new speaker, opening and closing speech marks to signify the words being spoken, and use of present tense
- reread sections of unattributed dialogue to get the meaning and identify the speaker if they are unsure of who is speaking
- visualise the events that are conveyed through dialogue
- summarise the key points in the action that are told through dialogue (for example, von Spanner turned against Grandpa Sid and chained him up).

The students:

- think critically about the information in the illustrations to conclude that the author has chosen to leave out a lot of detail, for instance, about the way Grandpa Sid made the stars or the problems of having a campfire without fire.

The students:

- identify where the author skips through a lot of action in a short time, for example, in the details of the duel he gives two examples and then says "On and on it went ..."
- evaluate the examples the author has included to realise that too much unnecessary detail would slow down the narrative
- identify examples where the author has decided that leaving something to the imagination is funnier than spelling it out, for example, "he invented ... furless cats (an accident for which he later apologised)"
Note: Missing information can make the story difficult for new learners of English. Check regularly for meaning and allow small-group discussion about the plot. Prompt students to check their own understanding. It may help to create a story map or timeline.

The students:

- are able to identify a possible message in the story, for example, that the author wants us to think about the consequences of our actions or about the importance of family relationships.



Reading standard: by the end of year 5

The Literacy Learning Progressions

Assessment Resource Banks

Instructional focus – Writing

English Level 3 – Ideas: Select, form, and communicate ideas on a range of topics; Language features: Use language features appropriately, showing a developing understanding of their effects.

Text excerpts from “The Duel”

“And let’s not forget noses. I invented those for health and safety reasons.”

Examples of text characteristics

ILLUSTRATIONS

A writer and/or illustrator can use illustrations to clarify meaning and extend the text.



“Something’s upsetting your grandpa,” Mum says when I get home from school ...

“I’ll bike over right now,” I say.

TO NE

The tone the writer uses in the dialogue and the way their characters think can suggest how they feel about each other and the nature of the relationships between them. For example, a warm, chatty tone full of colloquialisms and figurative language can imply a warm familial relationship.

“And what is soccer without the invention of the soccer ball?” ... I ask this because I know Grandpa Sid wants me to.

UNATTRIBUTED DIALOGUE

A writer sometimes uses unattributed dialogue to speed up the action, add interest, and stop the writing from becoming repetitive. You can follow unattributed dialogue by looking for the usual conventions of dialogue that tell you when someone new is speaking, by reading for meaning, and by looking for responses and other links between passages of speech.

Teacher

(possible deliberate acts of teaching)

Have the students write a story and use illustrations to extend it.

- Write a story and illustrate it. Put information in your illustration that isn’t included in your writing.
- Ask your partner to read your story without the illustrations. Does it make sense? Then ask them to read it with the illustrations and tell you what extra value they add.

Have the students try their hand at writing using different tones.

- Write your own paragraph to suggest a warm, relaxed relationship between two characters. How will you show the reader this relationship? What will they say? What will they do? Ask your partner to give you feedback.
- Now try a different narrative style to see if you can imply a different relationship between the characters. Students could dramatise these scenarios in pairs before writing.

Ask the students to try using unattributed dialogue in their writing.

- Write the next part of the story using dialogue and unattributed dialogue. Make sure readers can understand who is talking and that you use present tense verbs.
- Swap your dialogue with a partner. Ask them if it makes sense and if they can follow who is speaking.

GIVE FEEDBACK

- The chatty language you’ve used in your second paragraph really succeeds in suggesting a warm relationship between the two characters. The tone is quite different from your earlier paragraph where they seemed unfriendly. Think about what you did to achieve this.
- The dialogue flows well. You’ve made it sound like a natural conversation, and it’s clear who is speaking when the dialogue is unattributed.

METACOGNITION

- How did reading the dialogue aloud help you to see where you needed to clarify who was speaking? What have you learnt about writing dialogue?
- How did you decide which part of the story to illustrate? Did you find it easy or hard to add extra detail using the illustrations? Why/why not?

Writing standard: by the end of year 5

The Literacy Learning Progressions