The Show Went On

by Bernard Beckett
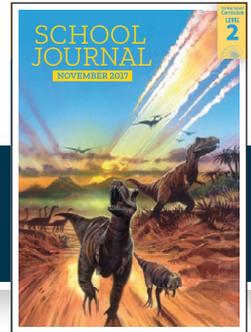
Overview

This TSM contains a wide range of 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 materials provide many opportunities for revisiting the text.

The story begins with the children of Room 7 dressed as farmyard animals and about to make their entrance in the school production. The cast of the production are referred to by name and also by their animal character. Things prove to be more dramatic than expected, and we are led through a farcical sequence of events from the perspective of Seth, one of the Room 7 children. A potentially alarming incident is averted and the story ends happily, with the words of the title.

This story includes:

- the familiar setting of a school production
- a narrative told from one character's perspective
- humour and dialogue
- implied information requiring readers to infer
- illustrations which support the images in the text.

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

Text characteristics from the year 4 reading standard

> was actually a paddling pool filled with water.)
> It had taken three days – and ten hairdryers –
> to get the costume dry.
>
> Very soon, Seth and his classmates would rush into the scene. They were dressed as farm animals. The taniwha would chase them, and then they would all do the farmyard dance. They had been practising this for the last six weeks. Mr Appleton had reminded them that, tonight, they must be perfect.
>
> 10

some abstract ideas that are clearly supported by concrete examples in the text or easily linked to the students' prior knowledge

> were dressed as a horse. Talia was the front end. George was bent down behind her, a long tail sticking out at the rear.
>
> Josh was at the very back of the line. Josh found it difficult to be still and quiet. He was dressed as a frog because he was very good at jumping. Seth could hear Josh humming to himself, the way he did when he wanted to say something but wasn't allowed.
>
> Mr Appleton looked to the back of the line. "Quiet, Josh," he whispered.
>
> "But –"
>
> "No, Josh, quiet!" Mr Appleton's voice rose dangerously. Josh didn't notice.

some places where information and ideas are implicit and where students need to make inferences based on information that is easy to find because it is nearby in the text and there is little or no competing information

> So, even though there was still another thirty seconds before their entry, the farmyard animals followed the cat on to the stage. The cat meowed, the dog barked, the duck quacked, and the surprised taniwha jumped out of the way. The crowd cheered.
>
> 14

a straightforward text structure, such as a structure that follows a recognisable and clear text form

> laughing. Seth knew why. They were laughing because Rex and Anthea, dressed as a taniwha, were rolling on their backs with their legs in the air while Chen tickled their taniwha tummy with a broom. During dress rehearsal, the taniwha had accidentally rolled back into the lake. (The lake was actually a paddling pool filled with water.) It had taken three days – and ten hairdryers – to get the costume dry.
>
> Very soon, Seth and his classmates would rush into the scene. They were dressed as farm animals. The taniwha would chase them

some compound and complex sentences, which may consist of two or three clauses

Reading standard: by the end of year 4

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 phrases, including "taniwha", "broom", "dress rehearsal", "paddling pool", "farmyard", "vomited", "rear", "blurted", "smoulder", "billowing", "solo", "oversized", "trumpeter", "honk", "roared", "leapfrogged", "stump", "croak", "bandleader"
- Words used with a contextual meaning, including "show", "show week", "entry", "roared", "row"

Possible supporting strategies

- Remind students of strategies for working out unfamiliar vocabulary, such as looking at the context, using knowledge of word patterns and prefixes or suffixes, and making connections to prior knowledge.
- Discuss the use of context clues to support understanding. *"Talia was the front end. George was bent down behind her, a long tail sticking out at the rear." We may not be familiar with the word "rear" but we can see what it means. Which part of the horse has the tail?*
- Clarify, especially for English language learners, that words can have different meanings in different contexts. *"So, even though it was another thirty seconds to their entry, the farmyard animals followed the cat onto the stage." When we are talking about a musical production, the characters come onto the stage at different times. We call this an "entry". What would be another use of the word entry?*
- *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

- Familiarity with the meaning of common expressions and idioms such as "finger to his lips", "Mr Appleton's voice rose dangerously", "in search of", "broke in two", "butterflies in his stomach"
- Some familiarity with being in a school performance

Possible supporting strategies

- English language learners in particular may need an opportunity to talk about the meaning of some of the expressions or descriptions of actions, such as "Their teacher, Mr Appleton, waited at the front with his finger to his lips." The body language to indicate "Sshh!" will be universal but will need clarification.
- Explain the difference between literal meaning and idiomatic expressions such as "butterflies in his stomach". English language learners can find the use of idioms particularly difficult to understand. When idioms are used, be very explicit about what they mean. Ask students to share their experiences of being in a performance and how they felt as they were waiting to make their entry.

TEXT FEATURES AND STRUCTURE

- A fiction story with setting, characters, plot, and theme
- The use of dialogue and humour to carry the story along

Possible supporting strategies

- Prompt students' prior knowledge of the expected features of a story. They could record these features in a story map, as they go through the story. Explore the clues that the writer gives about each character. *What do we find out about Helen the rooster? What about Max the sheepdog? While Helen is screaming, Max is laughing – what does that tell us about their characters?*
- Direct students to specific places in the text. *Let's have a look at the first page again. The audience was laughing at the taniwha being tickled. What was the extra information that made us laugh? What had happened during the dress rehearsal?*
- Remind students about the way direct speech is punctuated. Have them locate the spoken words and work with a partner to attribute the direct speech to a character.

Sounds and Words

Possible curriculum contexts

ENGLISH (Reading)

Level 2 – Structure: Show some understanding of text structures.
– Language features: Show some understanding of how language features are used for effect within and across texts.

ENGLISH (Writing)

Level 2 – Purposes and audiences: Show some understanding of how to shape texts for different purposes and audiences.
– Language features: Use language features appropriately, showing some understanding of their effects.

Possible first reading purpose

- To enjoy reading a funny story about a near disaster at a school performance.

Possible subsequent reading purposes

- To identify and respond to the humour and dialogue used to tell the story
- To explore the structure and features of a narrative text.

Possible writing purposes

- To write a factual recount about a school performance you have watched or been involved in
- To plan and write a personal narrative about a time when something funny happened.

The New Zealand Curriculum

Instructional focus – Reading

English Level 2 – Structure: Show some understanding of text structures; Language features: Show some understanding of how language features are used for effect within and across texts.

First reading

- Set the purpose for reading.

- Introduce the text to the students. Prompt recall of what they know about stories. *We are going to read a story. What do we find in a story? There will be a setting, and what else? Have a chat with a buddy.*

- Explain that the setting is a school production. Prompt prior knowledge of what is involved in a school production. *We have all watched school productions, and most of us have taken part in one. What sort of thing happens? What do the performers need to do before the performance?*

- You could read the first page together and have the students read the rest of the text by themselves with a particular purpose in mind, or have them read independently from the beginning after the introduction and a brief discussion.

If the students require more scaffolding

- Use the illustrations to make links to what students know about school productions and the features of stories, that is, about setting, characters, and events.

- Have the class brainstorm and create a word cloud/map of vocabulary associated with school productions.

- Chunk the text and provide focused guiding questions for each section. *Who have we met so far? When do we find out what animal Seth was dressed as? Who led the animals onto the stage?*

- As the students read, provide opportunities for them to make connections and share their responses with a partner.

- Throughout the reading, check that all the students are following what is going on.

- Model reader response to support understanding of the details that add humour. For example, "It had taken three days – and ten hair driers – to get the costume dry" and "The horse broke in two. The head ran into a wall and fell over. The back end ran round in circles, patting its bottom."

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

The teacher

Check that all students understood the sequence of events in the story.

- *Talk to a buddy to remind yourselves of what happened in the story.*

Scaffold the recall with questions – some literal and some inferential – to prompt deeper level thinking.

- *Who was the tallest in the class? How did she take control?*

- *Why would Melanie the duck have been chosen to perform a solo during the farmyard dance?*

- *Why has the author included the information about when Melanie's ballet lessons were?*

Lead a discussion around the use of "extra" information for humour.

- *"Stephanie, the tallest child in the class, whose father had once rowed at the Olympics, took control." Why do we need to know about Stephanie's father? What does it tell us about Stephanie? Would her father be proud of the way she took control?*

The students:

- include the main events in their retelling of the story and remember which child played which animal

- record who did what when the tail was on fire, for example, "the rooster screamed", "the sheepdog began to laugh", and "the pig began to cry"

- locate examples of humour in the text and discuss them with a buddy or with the class, supporting their opinions about why they thought those examples were funny. Groups of students could present each scene as a freeze frame.

Subsequent readings (cont.)

The teacher

Direct students to the actions of individual characters and lead discussion about the clues to each of their character traits.

- *What do we learn about Helen the rooster? What did she do last year? This year?*

The students could complete an information transfer chart like the one below, which requires them to infer information about the characters from the text and the illustrations. This activity is best completed in pairs as the students need to discuss their ideas and reuse the vocabulary. They could discuss their completed charts as a group and reach a consensus on the answers.

Name	Character in the production	Place in line on pages 12–13 (number from 1–10)	Personality (What they are like)	Evidence
Mr Appleton				
Seth				
Rex				
Anthea				
Chen				
Helen				
Talia				
George				
Josh				
Max				
Melanie				
Constance				
Stephanie				

The teacher

Lead a discussion with the students about the purpose of fiction and about the different types of stories they have encountered.

- *Some stories you have read will be sad, some funny, some scary. What other types of stories might there be? Which do you prefer?*
- *What are some features of narratives that we know about?*

Prompt them to apply what they know about elements of narrative to this text.

- *This story has a setting. Do we know what it is? What was the first clue?*
- *How many characters do we meet?*
- *What are some other features of narratives that we can find in this story?*

Provide a template for students to record the elements of the story: title, author, main character, other characters, setting(s), problem, theme, resolution.

The students:

- evaluate the character traits from the actions of each character.

The students:

- talk with a partner, recalling and sharing their reading experiences
- discuss what they know about narrative texts
- look for clues, identify the elements of the story, and locate evidence in the text
- use a template to record the elements of the story.
  DIGITAL TOOLS The students could use Google Docs for this.

GIVE FEEDBACK

- *I noticed how you searched the text for clues and reread sections slowly when you were looking for particular information. Rereading slowly helps you to really focus in on specific ideas or information.*

METACOGNITION

- *Has this story made you want to read more humorous fiction? How will the experience of reading this help you when you meet another story with multiple characters?*

Reading standard: by the end of year 4

The Literacy Learning Progressions

Assessment Resource Banks

Instructional focus – Writing

English Level 2 – Purposes and audiences: Show some understanding of how to shape texts for different purposes and audiences; Language features: Use language features appropriately, showing some understanding of their effects.

Text excerpts from "The Show Went On"	Examples of text characteristics	Teacher (possible deliberate acts of teaching)
Page 14 Melanie the duck, who went to ballet lessons every Tuesday and Thursday and had a solo during the farmyard dance, said, "It doesn't matter. Everybody get back in line." But nobody listened.	**INCLUDING DETAIL** *Writers make deliberate choices to include specific details that the reader needs or to give clues so that the reader has to make inferences.*	Make links between reading and writing. - *The writer gives us clues so we can infer what is meant. When we write, we need to consider when to tell our reader explicitly what's going on and when to give them clues. (This is often referred to as "Show, don't tell".)* Remind the students about the story and direct them to an example of giving clues. - *Why do you think the writer has told us that Melanie the duck goes to ballet lessons? How does that link to her performing a solo dance?* Prepare the students to write a factual recount of a personal experience of a school performance. Prompt prior knowledge. - *What does your reader need to know? What details will help the reader know what was going on and how you felt about it?* After a first draft, guide students with the revision process. **DIGITAL TOOLS** 💻 You could use the comments and/or suggesting feature of Google Docs for this. Direct them back to the text. - *How do we know how Seth was feeling?* Have the students reread their draft. - *Find a place where you have described how you were feeling.* - *Have you made it clear for your reader?*
Pages 13–14 Mr Appleton gasped. He ran to the fire extinguisher, but it wasn't in its usual place. During show week, a lot of things got moved. "I'll be back in a moment," he called as he ran off in search of another one. Smoke was now billowing from the end of the horse's tail. It looked like a firework that was about to explode. Helen the rooster screamed. Max the sheepdog began to laugh. The horse broke in two. The head ran into a wall and fell over. The back end ran around in circles, patting its bottom.	**USING HUMOUR AND DIALOGUE TO REVEAL CHARACTER** *Writers can reveal character traits through including what they say and what they do.* *When writers want to amuse their readers, they can make their characters say, or do, comical things.*	Share a personal story. - *This story made me laugh. I know that sometimes, when things go wrong, it can be very funny, as long as nobody gets hurt. It reminded me of a time when Nana came to stay, and she had forgotten her suitcase …* Provide opportunities for students to bring to mind a personal experience that has a comical element. Prepare students to draft a piece of writing where they describe what happened and how it was funny. Remind students what writers need to include in a personal narrative. - *What do we know about beginnings? How do we hook our reader in?* - *How do we make it clear who is speaking? How do we punctuate the direct speech?*
Page 15 Now there was silence. The audience waited to see what would happen next. George waited, too. So did the band. So did the farm animals. So did the taniwha. Everybody waited.	**REPETITION** *Writers use repetition for dramatic effect or to emphasise an idea. It can draw attention to what might seem a relatively unimportant detail.*	Ask students what they notice about the excerpt from the text. Lead a discussion to consider the impact on the reader. - *Which word is used more than once?* - *Why do you think the writer has said "So did …" What effect does that have?* - *Why does the writer use short sentences?* - *Why is it important that we are aware that everybody was waiting?* Invite students to reflect on where they have used, or might choose to use, repetition deliberately for effect. Have them try out using repetition in a description of an event and then share their writing with a partner.

METACOGNITION
- *Did you find it challenging to make your personal story funny? How helpful was it to share it with a buddy when you were revising what you had written? What happens if you don't agree?*

GIVE FEEDBACK
- *You have started your personal narrative with direct speech. That's very engaging. It makes me wonder who's talking so I have to keep reading to find out.*

👆 Writing standard: by the end of year 4
👆 The Literacy Learning Progressions

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