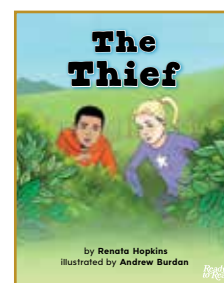


The Thief

by Renata Hopkins
illustrated by Andrew Burdan

This text is levelled at Gold 1.



Overview

In this lively mystery story, Sophie's treasure has gone missing. Sophie and her cousin Manu make a plan to catch the thief – though students will discover that there is more than one “thief” in this story.

The Thief has a series of short chapters, giving students an opportunity to develop reading “stamina” on a longer story and to carry ideas across longer sections of text. This book requires students to “confidently use a range of processing and comprehension strategies to make meaning from and think critically about” text (*The Literacy Learning Progressions*, page 14).

There is an audio version of the text as an MP3 file at www.readytoread.tki.org.nz

Related texts

Mystery stories: “Taniwha Trouble” and “The Pet Day Problem” (JJ 40); “Something Strange Going On” (JJ 46); “Always Great, Never Late” (JJ 48); “I Spy” (JJ 50); “No Big Deal” (JJ 51)

Texts about birds: *Did You Shake Your Tail Feathers?* (Purple 2); “Endangered Bird” (a poem about a weka, JJ 29); “Ring! Ring!” (JJ 49); “Kāhu and Hōkioi” (JJ 51); “Stop Thief!” (a play, JJ 55)

Stories divided into chapters: “Zapped!” (a story published in four chapters in *Junior Journals* 52–55)

Cross-curriculum links

English (levels 1 and 2): Selects and reads texts for enjoyment and personal fulfilment.

Text characteristics

The Thief has the following characteristics that help develop the reading behaviours expected of students reading at Gold.

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 to make predictions and inferences

Information about weka that may be new to students

Frequent use of dialogue, much of which is not explicitly attributed

The format as a chapter book, including a contents page

Shifts in time and place, several characters and events, and more than one storyline

Ideas and information organised in paragraphs

A variety of sentence structures, including compound and complex sentences, requiring students to attend to linking words and phrases and punctuation, to clarify meaning



Some vocabulary that may be unfamiliar (for example, “thief”, “glared”, “frowned”, “epic”, “rustle”, “crouched”, “strutted”, “darted”, “weka”, “curious”, “hollow”, “grinned”, “bait”, “turbo-charged chicken”, “tangle of wire”, “imagine”, “drawer”, “breath”, “honest”) including several alternatives to “said” (“yelled”, “suggested”, “explained”, “whispered”, “insisted”, “panted”, “admitted”) the meaning of which is supported by the context, the sentence structure, and/or the illustrations

Language features that provide opportunities for students to build and apply their vocabulary knowledge:

- colloquial language and figures of speech (for example, “Got it?”, “way better”, “Are not”, “ARE SO!”, “epic”, “get their beaks on”, “pulled a face”, “pins and needles”)
- the irregular past-tense verb forms “fought”, “stole”, “stolen”, “crept”, “sped”, “caught”
- “thieves” as the plural of “thief”

Suggested reading purpose

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

To find out who is the thief and what is the treasure

(Once they start reading, the students can set their own more specific reading purposes for each chapter.)

Possible learning goals

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

The behaviours listed below link to The Literacy Learning Progressions. **Select from and adapt** them to set your specific learning goal. Be guided by your students’ particular needs and experiences – their culture, language, and identity. (*Reading and Writing Standards for Years 1–8*, Knowledge of the learner, page 6)

This text provides opportunities for students, over several readings, to:

- **make connections** between their own experiences and information in the story to **make predictions and inferences**
- **ask questions** and look for possible answers
- use key words and phrases to identify main points and track the connections between them (**summarise**)
- identify and discuss some ways the writer has made this story exciting (**analyse**)
- **monitor** their reading, and when something is unclear, take action to solve the problem, for example, by cross-checking sources of information, rereading a sentence, reading on, and/or looking for clues close by in the text.

Introducing the story

- Use your knowledge of your students to ensure that the introduction to the story activates their prior knowledge and supports them for a successful first reading. A short video on the importance of introducing the text is available at <https://vimeo.com/142446572>

For English language learners, you could also talk about the cover and the first few pages before the whole-group session, to build confidence with vocabulary. Read the title and clarify what a thief is. Discuss what the children are doing in the cover illustration. Then read and discuss the headings on the contents page, clarifying meanings of key words such as “treasure” and “chase”. Give out copies of the illustrations from pages 2–8 (page numbers removed) and have pairs of students decide on the correct order for the images, then share their ideas with the rest of the group. Use this discussion to highlight, feed in, record, and clarify key vocabulary (in English or in their first language).

You can find useful guidance about supporting English language learners at [ESOL online](#)

- Prompt the students to use the title and cover illustration to begin a discussion about the story, for example, who, what, where. Ensure that all students know what a thief is.
- Tell the students that this is a chapter book and have them use the chapter titles on the contents page to review their predictions (or questions) about the story. The students might like to say which chapter they are most looking forward to reading and why.
- Discuss what is happening in the illustrations on pages 2 and 3. Clarify the characters’ names (expect the students to notice Sophie’s name on the sign by the hut). Draw out the idea that Sophie and Manu are arguing. Prompt the students to predict what these pages could have to do with a thief and treasure.
- Together, set the purpose for reading the book and clarify *how* you want the students to read it. For example, they could read the whole book by themselves and then discuss it the next day, or they could read to the end of page 7 (or another stopping point) and discuss the story so far before reading on. However you decide to do it, ask the students to pause at the end of each chapter to review their predictions or questions (either by themselves or with a partner) and to make a prediction or think of a question before they read the next chapter.
- Give the students sticky notes to record their ideas or mark aspects they find interesting or challenging, reminding them you will discuss these afterwards.

Reading the story

- During the first reading, the focus is on students experiencing and enjoying the story rather than on totally accurate word solving. At this level, much of the processing that they do is “inside their heads” and may not be obvious until the discussion after the reading. Intervene only if it’s clear a student needs help. There will be many opportunities to provide support with word solving and comprehension on subsequent readings.

Student behaviours

Examples of the sorts of behaviours (developed over several readings) that will help students achieve their learning goal(s).

The students make connections between their prior knowledge and information in the story to make inferences and predictions.

- They use clues in the text (including dialogue) and illustrations to make inferences about the characters, for example:
 - they infer on pages 2 and 3 that Sophie is wrong about Manu because he doesn’t seem to know what Sophie is talking about
 - on page 8, they make connections to their own experiences to infer why Sophie pulled a face.
- On page 5, they predict from its cheeky behaviour that the “brown bird” might have something to do with the missing treasure.
- On page 9, they infer from the reference to “pins and needles” (if they know this term) that Sophie and Manu have been waiting a long time.

They ask questions and look for or think about possible answers. For example, they might wonder about:

- what Sophie’s treasure might be (and notice the answer on page 8).
- what Manu’s hut will look like and if it will be “epic”.
- if the weka might be the thief (and begin to look out for clues).
- what “bait” might mean on page 8 and then notice the reference to it on page 9.
- at the end of page 9, when the weka appears, if the plan will work.

They use key words and phrases to identify main points and track the connections between them.

- They use indicators of time and place (such as “yesterday”, “Half an hour later”, “Halfway back to the house”) to track events.
- They use speech marks, new lines for new speakers, and context (who the characters are and what the previous person has said) to track the unattributed dialogue.

They monitor their reading and, when something is unclear, take action to solve the problem.

- They use a variety of word-solving strategies, for example, they use the illustration, the sentence structure, and the overall context of the paragraph to infer the meaning of “glared” on page 2.
- They use punctuation to help clarify the connections between ideas within and across sentences, for example:
 - they reread the third paragraph on page 9, attending to the dash and the speech marks at the beginning of the next paragraph to clarify that Manu has interrupted Sophie
 - on page 10, they reread the sentence (“Leaping up,”) checking the comma to clarify phrasing and meaning.
- They mark aspects they are not sure of.

Deliberate acts of teaching

How you can support individual students (if needed).

- Remind the students to keep their reading purpose in mind and to record new predictions or questions at the end of each chapter. Explain that making predictions and asking themselves questions helps them think more deeply about what they are reading.
- Remind the students of strategies they can use to solve words and clarify meaning. If necessary, provide support with specific words, for example, reminding them that “g” can have a soft sound to help them solve “Imagine” or reassuring them about irregular past-tense verb forms, or that “thieves” is the plural of “thief”.

Discussing and rereading the story

You can revisit this story several times, focusing on different aspects (and providing opportunities for the students to build comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency).

Select from and adapt the following suggestions according to your students’ needs and responses to the reading. Some of the suggestions overlap, and several can be explored further as “After reading” activities.

- Remind the students of the reading purpose and encourage them to share their responses. *When did you realise that the weka had stolen Sophie’s treasure? What clues helped you?* Encourage the students to share the predictions they made or questions they thought of as they were reading, as well as any experiences they have of weka.
- Have the students summarise the story (identifying the main things that happened and why). Alternatively you could ask them to identify one problem that each of the characters had in the story and how they solved it.

- Prompt the students to think critically:
 - *What did Mum mean by “two cheeky thieves”?*
 - *Can a thief be “honest”?*
 - *Was the weka really a “thief” or just doing what weka do?*
- Revisit the story together, stopping to discuss points of interest. Encourage the students to share any aspects they have marked with sticky notes. You could also explore such aspects as:
 - the clues that helped Manu work out who the thief was and the best way to catch it.
 - the clues to characterisation. For example, ask the students to identify what helped them understand Manu’s feelings on pages 2–3. Record their ideas. Discuss how some of the information is stated clearly (“Manu felt so mad”) but that the students also need to put clues together and use their own experiences to help them infer his feelings. The students could explore further pages as an after-reading activity.
 - ways of tracking the unattributed dialogue. Encourage the students to read sections of dialogue aloud, attending in particular to the use of punctuation such as question marks, exclamation marks, and dashes that support the meaning. Use the opportunity to clarify aspects that may have confused English language learners, such as why Sophie said, “You know what I mean” (on page 3) or the full meaning of the abbreviated phrases “Got it?”, “Are not”, and “ARE SO!” on pages 2–3.
 - ways the writer has made this story exciting (for example, making it a mystery story and providing clues, the funny things the weka does, the description of the chase on page 10, the dramatic punctuation, having some words all in capital letters, and the interesting language, such as the vivid verbs, adjectives (“epic”, “curious”, “hopeful”, “turbo-charged”), and the figure of speech “pins and needles”. You could have the students act out meanings of some of the verbs, for example, *What does it look like to glare? To strut?*

After reading: practice and reinforcement

After-reading tasks should arise from your monitoring of the students’ needs during the lesson and provide purposeful practice and reinforcement. Where possible, make links to other texts, including texts generated by the students, and to the wider literacy programme (for



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example, oral language, writing, handwriting, and word games and activities) and other curriculum areas.

Select from and adapt these suggestions, according to the needs of your students.

- Provide opportunities for the students to reread this story and to read other texts with similar themes or ideas (see Related texts).
- The students can build their comprehension and fluency by rereading the book as they listen to the audio version. Audio versions are particularly supportive for English language learners because, as well as clarifying pronunciation, they provide good models of the prosodic features of English, such as intonation and phrasing.
- Support deeper comprehension by having the students work individually or in pairs to identify five key events from the story (one from each chapter) and then create a comic strip that includes a sentence, speech bubble, or thought bubble (containing the key idea) and a quick drawing for each event.
- Build on the characterisation activity started earlier. Give pairs of students a photocopy of another double-page spread and have them highlight further clues to the characters’ feelings and add them to the chart.

Pages	How Manu (or Sophie) is feeling	What helped our thinking

- The students could draw and write about a time when they were blamed for something they didn’t do or about an adventure they’ve had with cousins or friends.
- Support the students to find out more about weka.
- Build the students’ confidence in reading and writing complex sentences. Choose an example from the story. Substitute words and phrases to create new sentences together, for example: “Leaping up, Manu and Sophie raced after the thief” could become “Laughing, Mum watched the children chasing the weka” or “Sighing heavily, Mum realised that Greedy Cat had eaten the cake”. The students could work in pairs to create their own examples. Encourage creativity and humour.
- Arrange a mini-lesson on irregular past-tense verb forms. (Explicit teaching about this aspect of English is particularly important for English language learners.) Explain that not all verbs in English can have “ed” added in the past-tense. Read and discuss examples from the story and list their present- and past-tense forms on a chart (steal/stole, stolen; spend/spent; catch/caught; fight/fought; hide/hid, hidden; creep/crept; speed/sped). Create oral sentences together, using the verbs. Also look for opportunities during shared writing to incorporate irregular verb forms.

