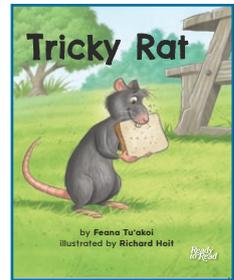


# Tricky Rat

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illustrated by Richard Hoit

This text is levelled at Blue 1.



The Learning Progression Frameworks describe significant signposts in reading and writing as students develop and apply their literacy knowledge and skills with increasing expertise from school entry to the end of year 10. This teacher support material describes the opportunities within this text for students to develop this expertise.

## Overview

When Rat sees two seagulls fighting over some bread, he uses a clever trick to get himself some lunch.

*Tricky Rat* supports the development of a self-extending reading process, requiring students to “monitor their reading, searching for and using multiple sources of information in order to confirm or self-correct” and to use a variety of comprehension strategies to “engage more deeply with texts” (The Literacy Learning Progressions, page 10).

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

## Curriculum links

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

## Related texts

Stories with tricky characters: *Greedy Cat*, *I'm the King of the Mountain*, *Number One*, (shared); *Lunch for Greedy Cat*, *Purr-fect! (Yellow 3)*; *Crow Tales (Blue 1)*; *I Want to Fly (Blue 2)*

## Text characteristics

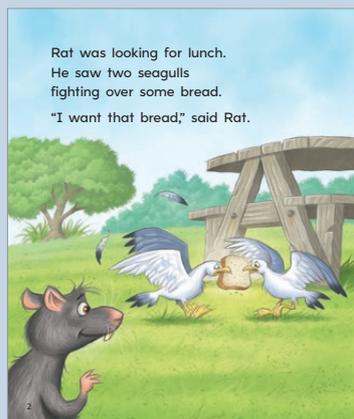
*Tricky Rat* has the following text characteristics that help develop the reading behaviours expected of students reading at Blue.

Narrative features (setting, plot, characters, dialogue, and a clear beginning, middle, and end) to enable students to draw on and build their knowledge of story structure

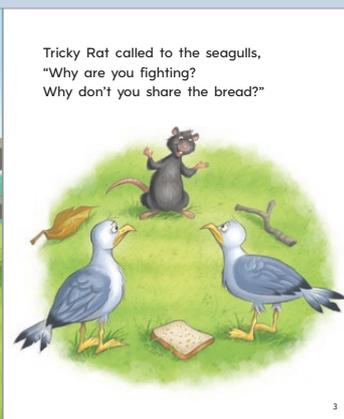
A mix of explicit and implicit content that provides opportunities for students to make predictions and inferences

A range of punctuation, including speech marks, commas, question marks, exclamation marks, and a dash, and the use of italics to support phrasing and meaning

A framework of high-frequency words



Rat was looking for lunch.  
He saw two seagulls  
fighting over some bread.  
"I want that bread," said Rat.



Tricky Rat called to the seagulls,  
"Why are you fighting?  
Why don't you share the bread?"

Sentences that run over more than one line but do not split phrases and several lines of text on every page to provide opportunities to practise fluent, phrased reading

Vocabulary features that provide opportunities for students to apply and build their knowledge of letters, sounds, and word structure:

- the initial consonant blends (in “bread”; “cried”; “small”; “smaller”; “smiled”; “started”; “Stop”; “stopped”; “Tricky”) and the digraphs (in “share”; “shouted”; “Thank”; “that”; “That’s”; “the”; “They”; “this”)
- the contractions – “don’t”, “I’ll”, “That’s”
- a variety of verb forms – “called”, “cried”, “fight”, “fighting”, “help”, “make”, “nibbled”, “share”, “shouted”, “smiled”, “started”, “Stop”, “stopped”, “took”, “want”
- words ending with “y” as an “ee” sound – “Sorry”, “Tricky”, “very”

Interest words (for example, “bread”, “good idea”, “lunch”, “piece/s”, “Rat”, “same size”, “seagull/s”, “small”, “smaller”, “Sorry”, “Thank you”, “Tricky”) that are likely to be in a reader’s oral vocabulary and that are strongly supported by the context, the sentence structure, and/or the illustrations, providing opportunities for students to apply their processing system

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## Suggested reading purpose

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

To find out why Rat is tricky

## 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 goals listed below reflect the descriptions of reading behaviours in *The Literacy Learning Progressions* and *The Learning Progression Frameworks*. **Select from and adapt** them according to your students' strengths, needs, and experiences – their culture, language, and identity (*The Literacy Learning Progressions*, page 7).

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

- **make connections** between their prior knowledge and information in the story to **make predictions and inferences**
- identify the main events in the story (**summarise**)
- **make sense of text** by searching for and using multiple sources of information rather than one source
- **monitor** their reading and self-correct where necessary, for example, by rerunning text or checking further sources of information.

## 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>

**Select from and adapt** the following suggestions.

- A few days before introducing this book, make available other familiar tales with tricky characters for the students to reread and enjoy (see Related texts).

For English language learners, you could talk through the illustrations on the cover, title page, and first few pages before the whole-group session to build confidence with new vocabulary and to make connections to tales they know about tricky characters. You can find further information about features of texts that may need support at ELLP.

- Read the title and discuss what it means to be tricky. You could make a link to the tricky behaviour of the cat in *Purr-fect!* (or the fox in *Crow Tales* if the students have read it). Support the students to predict, using the cover illustration, what tricky thing Rat might have done. Expect them to make a connection to the bread he's eating.
- Turn to the title page. *What's happening here?* Encourage the students to speculate about how this picture might fit with the cover illustration.
- Use the page 2 illustration to recap (summarise) what the students have noticed about the story so far (who, what, where). Draw attention to Rat's face. *I wonder what Tricky Rat is thinking about?*
- Have the students use the page 3 illustration to generate ideas about how Tricky Rat is planning to get the bread. *What might Rat be saying to the seagulls?* Use this discussion to draw out or feed in some of the interest vocabulary, such as "lunch", "share", "fighting", "piece".
- Share the purpose for reading. The students could begin reading the story for themselves or, if you think they might need more support, you could also discuss the illustrations on pages 4–5.

## Monitoring the reading

- Observe closely as the students read the story quietly to themselves. Note their confidence and perseverance, and any instances of self-monitoring, cross-checking, and self-correction. Provide support to individual students as necessary. There will be opportunities to provide further support with word solving and comprehension on subsequent readings.
- If a student makes an error without noticing, wait until the end of the sentence or page before intervening, unless they stop reading. Waiting gives them the opportunity to notice the error and fix it for themselves. Use appropriate prompts to draw their attention to the error.
- Remember to base your prompts on what you know about the student's prior knowledge. For example, asking an English language learner if a word or sentence sounds right may not be useful if they are not familiar with English syntax and vocabulary. In this case, an explanation and further examples would be more effective, or simply tell them the word.
- See the table on the following page for examples of possible student errors and teacher responses.

Text in book	Student reads	Teacher prompt
"I <b>want</b> that bread," said Rat.	"I <b>went</b> that bread," said Rat.	<i>Does that make sense? Can you find your mistake and fix it?</i>
Tricky Rat <b>called</b> to the seagulls	Tricky Rat c ... (The student stops reading.)	<i>What else can you see that will help you? Prompt the student to notice "all" inside the word.</i>
They <b>started</b> to fight again.	They s ... (The student stops reading.)	<i>Look at the first <b>two</b> letters.</i>
"Stop!" <b>shouted</b> Rat.	"Stop <b>shouting</b> Rat."	<i>Does that make sense? Have another look.</i>
Rat <b>nibbled</b> the bread.	Rat ... (The student stops reading.)	Cover the rest of the word to show "nib". <i>Say the first part of the word. What did Rat do? He nib ...</i> If "nibbled" seems unknown, tell the student the word.
He nibbled it into two <b>pieces</b> .	He nibbled it into two <b>pee-kes</b> .	<i>Does that make sense? Remind the student that "ce" together makes an "s" sound.</i>

- Other prompts that you could use include: *Were you right?; You said ... can you find your mistake and fix it?; What else could you check?; Say the first part, then the next part; Think about what would make sense; Does that look right and sound right?; Read the sentence again.*
- For further suggestions about ways to support students to self-monitor (to cross-check, confirm, and self-correct), see *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 1–4*, page 130.

## Discussing and rereading the story

You can revisit this story several times, providing opportunities for the students to build vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency. **Select from and adapt** the suggestions below. Some of the discussion points overlap, and several can be explored further as after-reading activities.

- Remind the students of their purpose for reading. *What did Rat do that was tricky? Why did he want to trick the seagulls?*
- Browse through the story together to track how Rat managed to trick the seagulls and eat the bread. Clarify the trick by asking how Rat is making the pieces the same size. To support the word "nibbled", focus on the bottom illustration on page 5. *What is Rat doing here?*
- Encourage the students to think critically about Rat:
  - Why did Rat smile on page 6?
  - Why did he say "thank you" at the end of the story? (If necessary, reread the last page together, modelling the impact of the dash and italics in Rat's dialogue.)

- Did the seagulls realise that Rat had tricked them? How do you know?
- Have the students reread the story, stopping to discuss points of interest. You could explore such aspects as:
  - the narrative structure. Ask the students to describe what happened at the beginning, middle, and end. What was the problem at the beginning of the story for Rat? For the seagulls? Did they all solve their problems? Together, create summary sentences and record them on a chart like the one below.

Beginning	Middle	End
Rat was looking for lunch. He saw two seagulls fighting over a piece of bread.	Rat nibbled the bread. He tricked the seagulls.	Rat was happy because he got to eat lots of the bread.
The seagulls were fighting over a piece of bread.	They thought Rat was helping them, but they didn't notice he was eating most of the bread.	The seagulls were happy because they both got a piece of bread and the pieces were the same size.

- what the characters are like. Ask the students to think of words that describe Rat (for example, tricky, bossy, clever, hungry, sneaky, cheeky, bold) and identify evidence for this in the text and illustrations. Record their ideas on a character web. The students could also do a web for the seagulls, either now or as an after-reading activity.
- the words that describe the size of the pieces ("not the same size", "smaller", "too big", "the same size", "very small")
- the use of speech marks and attributions to indicate dialogue, and the alternatives to "said" ("called", "cried", "shouted") to show how the characters are talking. You could reread the story together using a modified form of Readers' Theatre, with you as the narrator and the students as the characters. Remind them to use the punctuation and italics to support phrasing and intonation.
- the use of contractions to make the dialogue sound more natural. Read the sentences where they occur (pages 3 and 4) and write the contractions out in full to show what letters are replaced by the apostrophe.
- how the students worked out (or tried to work out) unfamiliar words or phrases, for example, by looking for the biggest known part of the word, using their knowledge of letters and sounds and word structure (such as inflected endings), thinking about what makes sense, reading on to the next word, or rereading. Draw attention to specific aspects of words such as:

- initial consonant blends or digraphs
- words ending in “y” as an “ee” sound
- different verb forms, including the irregular past-tense form “took”. Identify the root words and experiment with adding other endings (“nibble”, “nibbles”, “nibbling”, “nibbled”; “cry”, “cries”, “crying”, “cried”; “take”, “takes”, “taking”, “took”). Discuss some of the changes that need to be made, such as dropping the final “e” when adding “ing”, doubling the final consonant in “stop” to make “stopping”, and changing the final “y” to “i” in “cries” and “cried”. (See also After reading)

## After reading: practice and reinforcement

After-reading tasks should arise from your monitoring of the students during the lesson and provide purposeful practice and reinforcement. Where possible, make links to other texts, including texts generated from language experience and shared writing, and to the wider literacy programme (oral language, writing, handwriting, alphabet and word games and activities) and other curriculum areas.

For English language learners, SELLIPS also has ideas for purposeful and relevant tasks.

- Listen in while the students reread the story with a partner. Note their ability to self-monitor and use punctuation to support phrasing and expression. You could also use this time to do a quick Running Record with a student to provide more information on an aspect you have noticed.
- The students can build their comprehension and fluency by rereading the story while listening 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.
- Provide many opportunities for students to reread this story and other related texts. You could also read tricky animal stories to the whole class.
- Have the students arrange copies of the illustrations in sequence and then use them as a guide for retelling the story. They could record their retelling for others to listen to. Alternatively, you could give the students a set of summary sentences to put in sequence. Provide extra support for English language learners by having them work in pairs.

- Ask the students to draw and write about how Rat and the seagulls were feeling at the beginning and end of the story. They could add thought or speech bubbles to their pictures. Alternatively, have the students work in pairs to talk and write about what the seagulls might have said after Rat ran away.
- Have the students create their own character web for Rat or the seagulls.
- The students could compare acts of trickery across different stories, as in the partially completed example below. (This could also be a whole-class activity.)

Character	What the character did that was tricky	Why the character did it
Tricky Rat	Pretended to help the seagulls	He wanted to eat the bread.
The cat in <i>Purr-fect!</i>	Said nice things to the bird so he would come closer	She wanted to eat the bird.
Fox in “Silly Crow”		
Flea in <i>I’m the King of the Mountain</i>		

- Have the students work in pairs to complete word families for some of the verbs in the story (for example, “call”, “calls”, “calling”, “called”; “shout”, “shouts”, “shouting”, “shouted”). Then ask the students to choose four of the verbs to use in sentences. Provide extra support for English language learners by composing oral sentences together.
- Have word games available that encourage students to sort words by common characteristics, such as initial blends or digraphs, inflected endings (“ed”, “ing”), endings with “y” as an “ee” sound, or those belonging to the same word family, as in the activity above. As well as words from this story, include words they have met in their previous reading and writing.