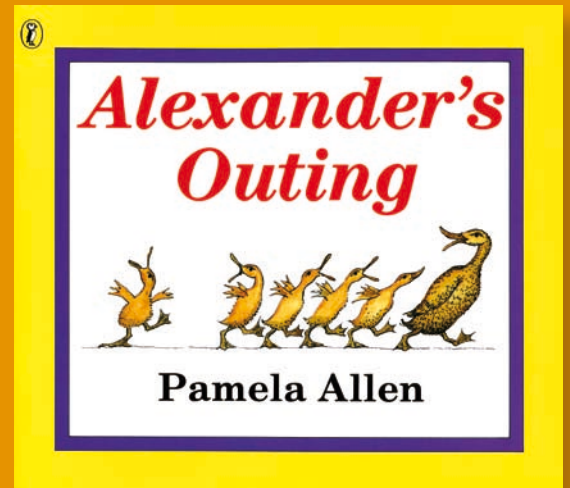


Teaching Notes

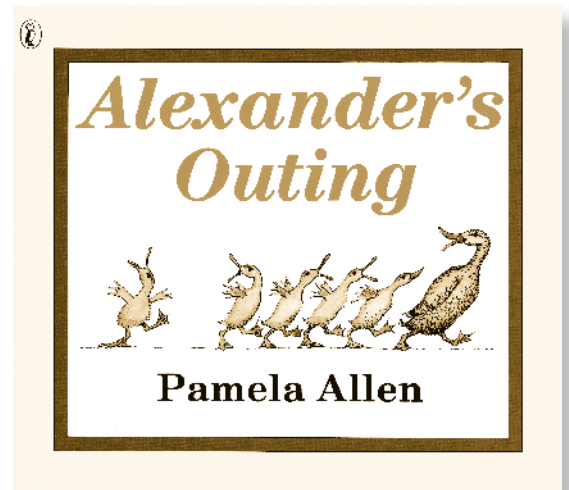
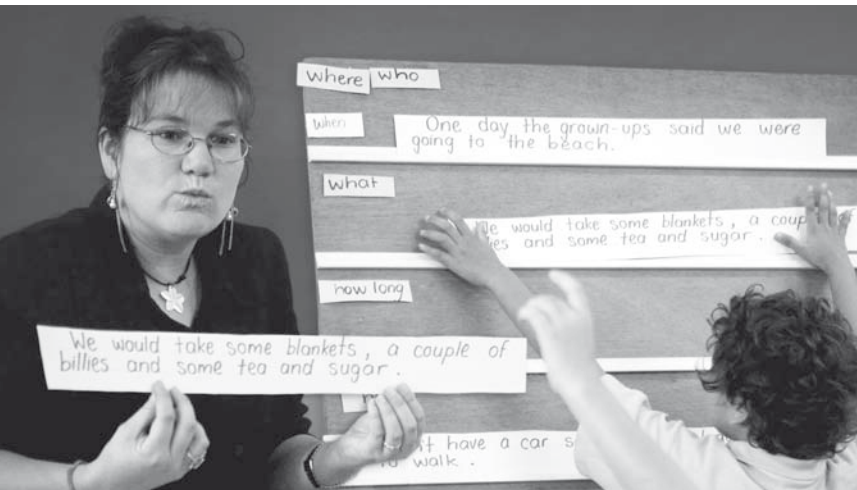


Alexander's Outing

Early Childhood

nalp

Teaching Notes



Alexander's Outing

Early Childhood

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These notes were written by Kate Mullin and have been produced as part of the National Accelerated Literacy Program.

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Using this
resource

Using this resource

2

Year level

These notes have been written to help teachers use the Accelerated Literacy teaching strategies in Year 1. However, they could also be used in Year 2 where students have difficulties with reading.

Outcomes of the teaching sequence

At the end of this teaching sequence, students should be able to:

- read the story studied fluently and interpret the illustrations at a high level
- discuss the story: give opinions about the author's language choices; identify the story's structure, theme and ideology
- spell chosen words and understand related spelling strategies
- use the story as a model for writing.

Notes

- The following notes have been written for teachers who have attended professional development workshops in teaching Accelerated Literacy. The notes presume some understanding about how to teach the program.
- For a detailed explanation of how to implement the teaching sequence, please refer to the teachers' handouts from the first professional development workshop. Additionally, you could refer to <http://www.nalp.edu.au>.
- It is also assumed that teachers have read the text on which these notes are based and have a detailed understanding of the text before beginning a teaching sequence.
- Teachers are responsible for ensuring the suitability of the text on which these notes are based for their particular teaching context.

The text

Alexander's Outing by Pamela Allen. Published 1992 by Penguin Group (Australia). Reproduced by permission of Penguin Group (Australia). Page numbers provided here refer to this edition.

To see a map showing how far Alexander and his family walked, follow this link: <http://www.ltl.com.au/Maps/webmaps/sydneycentre/operahouse/rbgarden.htm>

To read a profile of Pamela Allen, follow this link: http://www.penguin.com.au/PUFFIN/Authors/f_authors.cfm



Alexander's Outing

Alexander's Outing

4

Alexander's Outing

Synopsis of the story

Absent-minded Alexander is one of five ducklings living in a beautiful Sydney park with their mother. But Alexander's mother is bored and so sets off in search of adventure, taking her babies with her.

Of the five ducklings in the story, Alexander looks the least attentive, so we are not surprised when he falls down a hole in the road, out of reach of everyone. Of course his family is distraught and it is only after much human intervention and problem-solving that he is brought safely to the surface again.

As Alexander and his family return to the park, we are left wondering if Alexander learnt anything from his experience. His behaviour seems unaltered.

Themes

- You should always pay full attention to what you are doing.
- You should always heed the advice of 'adults'.
- Team-work is often better than individual effort.
- When confronted with a difficult problem, keep working to find the solution.
- Family members look out for and support each other.

Why use this story?

Alexander's Outing is a beautifully illustrated and engaging story for junior primary students. While the resolution is drawn out (with a series of aborted rescue attempts), it has a straightforward narrative structure: orientation, foreshadowing of complication, complication complete with evaluation and resolution. The coda is not explicit but embedded in the final page of the book.

The first part of the story has a predictability which appeals to young children and is heavily supported by the illustrations. The second part conveys the message that when confronted with problems you should keep working at them until they are resolved.

Despite the great anguish felt by Alexander's family while he is trapped underground, the story ends on a whimsical note. As Alexander waddles off to return to his home in the park, we are left to wonder if he has learnt a lesson about absent-mindedness. The illustrations would suggest not! However, as the family returns to the park, there is an implicit understanding that they will never leave it again after the traumatic events of the day.

There are multiple opportunities for interactive reading with students through the repeated phrases and rhyming words.

Structure of the text

- The orientation is short and supported by illustrations.
- A minor complication (Alexander's mother's boredom) is quickly addressed when she heads off in search of adventure.
- The major complication is foreshadowed by Alexander inattention to his mother's words of warning. *'Stay close, take care!' quacked Alexander's mother, but Alexander did not stay close and Alexander did not take care. He straggled behind with his head in the air.*
- This straggling results in the complication: Alexander falls down a hole in the road.
- The elements of evaluation (through speech and actions) and tension are introduced and drawn out, as groups of adults undertake a series of initiatives in an attempt to rescue Alexander.
- The complication is resolved through the actions of a child.

Structure of the study passage

Pages 1–3

This opening passage performs a number of functions in the overall narrative structure. As well as being an orientation (establishing the location and characters in the story), it introduces a minor complication and foreshadows the major complication.

Orientation	<i>Alexander lived with his mother and his four brothers and sisters in the most beautiful place in the whole of Sydney,</i>
Minor complication	<i>but Alexander's mother was bored.</i>
Temporary resolution of complication	<i>So one warm sunny morning they all set out in search of adventure, past the bottle tree, through the iron gates and along Art Gallery Road.</i>
Foreshadowing of major complication	<i>'Stay close, take care!' quacked Alexander's mother, but Alexander did not stay close and Alexander did not take care. He straggled behind with his head in the air.</i>

Alexander's Outing

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Alexander's Outing

Language features of the text

Repetition

The author's frequent use of repetition of similar language structures encourages children to join in with the oral reading once they know the story. This also provides good models for early writers. For example:

- Alexander's mother twice warns *Stay close, take care!*
- *Alexander did not stay close and Alexander did not take care; Alexander did not grab hold and Alexander did not hear.*
- *Such joyful quacking!* and *Such happy flapping!*
- Alexander's family journey as they left the park *past the bottle tree, through the iron gates and along Art Gallery Road* is the same as his journey back to the park, only in reverse.
- Frequent use of -ed words: *flapped and flapped and quacked and quacked*, etc.
- Frequent use of -pping words: *dipping and tipping, skipping and dripping*, etc.
- Use of *up and up and up* as Alexander reaches the hole's surface.

Similar language structures

The author uses similar language structures to give the writing a nice rhythm and create an element of predictability.

- *Alexander did not stay close and Alexander did not take care; Alexander did not grab hold, Alexander did not hear.*
- *Such joyful quacking!'; 'Such happy flapping!*

Use of 'but'

The author uses *but* throughout the text to foreshadow problems.

- ...but *Alexander's mother was bored.*
- ...but *Alexander did not stay close and Alexander did not take care.*

Use of 'so' as a consequential conjunction

- ...*Alexander's mother was bored so one warm, sunny day...*

Use of simile

- *Out popped Alexander* like the cork out of a bottle.

Use of circumstance of place or prepositions

- *past the bottle tree*
- *through the gates*
- *along Art Gallery Road*
- *across College Street*
- *to the Archibald fountain*
- *in the most beautiful place*

Use of illustrations

- The illustrations are a major feature in this book, as they add to its emotional intensity through a study of the characters' faces and actions.
- They are critical, as how else can readers be made aware of the emotions of animals whose responses are limited to quacking and flapping?
- The only illustrations which are drawn in full (with a background) are those involving parks. The rest simply feature the characters and their actions.

Conventional grammar and punctuation

- Use of conventions of writing in the English language: capitalisation, punctuation (exclamation marks, quotation marks, etc).

Language features of the study passage

The author introduces the main character, Alexander, in the first word of the story. Alexander is the only character named, which indicates his significance.

The study passage achieves a number of functions in the overall structure of narrative. It is, in part, an orientation, establishing the location and characters in the story but, in addition, it introduces a minor complication while foreshadowing the major complication to come. It does this by:

- introducing the characters
- locating them in their home
- creating a minor complication (Alexander's mother was bored)
- resolving the minor complication (they all set out in search of adventure)
- foreshadowing the major complication (but Alexander did not stay close).





Accelerated Literacy teaching

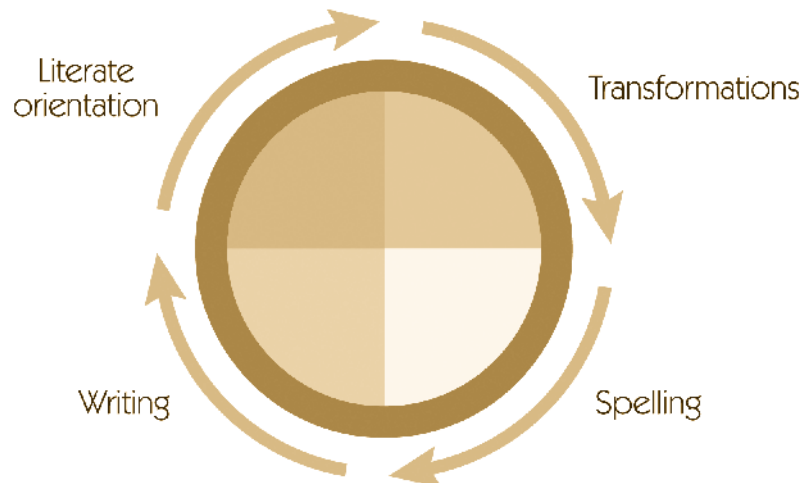
Teaching the sequence

The National Accelerated Literacy Program consists of a cycle of interrelated activities based on a sequence beginning with literate orientation and focused on one selected text. The text may vary from a short, illustrated story written for early childhood students to several carefully selected passages from a longer book intended for older students.

Teachers spend, on average, an hour and a half a day teaching Accelerated Literacy. The total number of weeks spent on a text across a sequence of consecutive lessons will vary according to the age of the students and the complexity of the text.

Low and high order literate orientation are carried out before reading. The other strategies use the students' fluent reading of and common knowledge about a text as teaching resources for extending their literacy competence.

Further information on the teaching sequence can be found at <http://www.nalp.edu.au>.





In the
classroom

In the classroom

12

In the classroom

The teaching sequence on *Alexander's Outing* aims to teach:

- how to read the book at 90 per cent accuracy or above
- how to discuss the story, including the meaning and inferences contained in the author's language choices
- how to spell fluently and write clearly the words taught as part of the teaching sequence
- how to write, with appropriate teacher support, an orientation to a story introducing character/s and location.

Literate orientation

Literate orientation is a pre-reading strategy that prepares students to read the study text fluently, accurately and independently. The teacher models a literate orientation to the text and discusses why the author made certain language choices. Literate orientation consists of two components: low order literate orientation and high order literate orientation. Both are equally important.

In low order literate orientation the teacher starts the process of 'pointing the students' brains' at the text by modelling a literate interpretation of the text, including its illustrations when necessary.

In high order literate orientation the teacher shifts the students' focus from the general considerations in the low order literate orientation to a close examination of the author's wording in the text. The teacher systematically models how to attend closely to the language features of the text and how they construct meaning.

Low order literate orientation

The first object of low order literate orientation on *Alexander's Outing* is to orient students to the text using the illustrations. Only when this process is complete should the book be read to the class.

The pages in this book are not numbered but for the purposes of these notes, page one starts with *Alexander lived with his mother and his four brothers and sisters...*

Teaching focus

General points about the author and the book

What you could say

The book we are going to read today is called *Alexander's Outing* by a very famous writer/illustrator called Pamela Allen. We are reading it not only to enjoy a really good story but also to find out all about how Pamela Allen wrote it.

This story is about a little duck called Alexander, who goes on an outing with his mother and brothers and sisters. Now when we go on an outing we expect to have fun times, and I'm sure that's what Alexander expected too, but things don't quite turn out that way in the story. In fact, Alexander has a very unfortunate outing. He falls into a hole in the ground and has to be rescued! Let's look at the pictures in the book and see what happens to Alexander.

Teaching focus

- How we can infer that Alexander is most likely to be the inattentive duckling, who is falling behind all the others (the foreshadowing of the complication starts here).

What you could say

On the front cover of the book we can see what is probably a mother duck being followed by five ducklings. You've probably seen ducks following their mother all stretched out in a line. Often the last one seems to have to scuttle a little bit faster to keep up with everyone else, but this doesn't seem to be the case here.

Three of the ducklings have their eyes on their mother and are following her while the fourth is turning around to the last duckling in the line. I think it is telling that last little duckling to hurry up or he'll be left behind. But I don't think that duckling number five is paying any attention. He is turned the other way and seems to be studying something in the sky. My guess is that this is probably Alexander.

Teaching focus

- How we know for sure that duckling number five is Alexander.
- He seems to be a happy little fellow.

What you could say

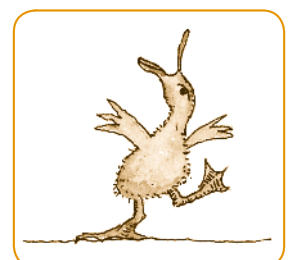
Just inside the front cover you can find the title of the book again and underneath the title is a picture of the duckling who was last in the line. So this must be Alexander. This is Pamela Allen's way of telling us which duckling is which. He seems to be a happy little fellow and interested in the world around him.

Introduction

Cover



Inside front cover



Title page



Teaching focus

- Pamela Allen author and illustrator

What you could say

The next page in is just like the cover of the book but we also get to read that Pamela Allen wrote this book. You may have read other books that she has written. She also drew all the pictures. As we go through the book, you'll find that the pictures match the words very closely. We also find out that this book was published by Puffin Books. Publishers decide which books they will print and sell.

Page 1



Teaching focus

- Already Alexander can be distinguished from the other ducklings by his behaviour. He's at the back of the line, and looking the wrong way.
- The background – why would anyone want to leave such a beautiful park?

What you could say

It is clear right from the beginning of the story which of the characters is Alexander. He has to be the one who is different. For a start, he is at the back of the line and we know that being at the back sometimes means that you are not paying attention. Often kids who sit at the back of the class or the back of the bus don't pay attention to the teacher. Alexander is at the back of the line and he isn't paying attention to his mother. We presume the biggest duck in the picture is his mother. It is the mother duck who stays with the ducklings and not the dad. All the other ducks are smaller and they are all the same size, so they probably hatched together. Alexander is the same size too, so he isn't at the back because he is too small to keep up.

Because Alexander's mother has lived in the same park all of her life, she finds it dull, even though it is *the most beautiful place in the whole of Sydney*. Alexander's mother hasn't travelled much and doesn't realise how much better it is than other places. So she decides to set off in search of adventure, taking all her ducklings with her. I'm not sure she really knows what she is doing but she sets off anyway. Right from the beginning of the story, Alexander is at the back because he isn't paying attention.

Teaching focus

- The park that Alexander lives in is very grand.
- Alexander's mother is not looking back. She doesn't notice he is falling behind.

What you could say

Alexander seems much more inquisitive than the other ducklings. They are so intent on watching their mother that they don't pay attention to their surroundings. Alexander does the opposite. He is so intent on looking at things that surround him that he doesn't pay enough attention to what his mother is doing. Maybe she should be keeping a closer eye on him. After all, Alexander is very young and is easily distracted by the things around him.

They walk up the hill and past the bottle tree. I think we call this a 'boab tree'. Trees just like this grow wild in the Kimberley region of Australia and they are very beautiful. The family walks out through the gates of the park. Now these gates look very grand and special. This must mean that the park is very grand and special too. If we look at a map of the harbour area of Sydney, we can work out that it is the Royal Botanic Gardens.

Teaching focus

- Where does Alexander's mother think she is going? Does she know? She is walking right past some very important buildings in Sydney.
- Alexander has fallen further behind and no one is paying any attention to him. This is very worrying.

What you could say

After they leave the park, the duck family walks along Art Gallery Road. I doubt if Alexander's mother knows the names of the roads. She has probably never even been outside the Royal Botanic Gardens before. You can see the Art Gallery in the background. It looks like an old building with steps leading up to the entrance, big stone columns and a statue of a man on a horse. Inside the gallery there are some valuable paintings and sculptures for everyone to see.

However, Alexander's mother is not interested in stopping off to view paintings and sculptures. In fact, she walks right past the gallery without a second look. If you look at the picture, only Alexander is gazing around him, *straggling behind with his head in the air*. You can see that already Alexander is falling behind the others and now the duckling in front of him has stopped urging him to keep up. Perhaps he is sick of monitoring Alexander and has given up. Isn't it annoying when you are trying to help someone and they keep ignoring you?

Page 2



Page 3



Page 4



Teaching focus

- The motorists are shocked to see ducks cross the road in front of them.
- Alexander doesn't heed his mother's warnings to stay close and take care.
- We have the feeling that something awful is going to happen.

What you could say

The duck family is crossing College Street and Alexander is still lagging behind. A young man has kindly stopped the traffic for the ducks to cross. Of course, ducks don't follow road rules, so if the young man stops traffic there is less risk of an accident happening. It seems as though the mother duck wants her ducklings to cross the road quickly so that they can get to where they are going. She turns and warns them to stay close and take care, but yet again Alexander doesn't seem to be paying attention.

Page 5



Teaching focus

- The family is distraught.
- Now we can only see four ducklings, rather than five.

What you could say

However, by the time we get to the next page we can see that things have changed dramatically. Mother duck and her ducklings are panicking and distraught. They are flapping and quacking and getting themselves into a terrible state. Why would this be so? You only have to count the ducklings to realise that something is wrong. There were five ducklings before and now there are only four. I wonder which duckling is missing.

Page 6



Teaching focus

- This is our first view of below ground level.
- Alexander's family seem very worried about him.
- There is no way the ducks can rescue Alexander on their own.

What you could say

It is only after they stop making all this noise that the ducks begin to realise where Alexander is. It would seem that, while he was walking along with his head in the air, he didn't see a hole in the ground and has fallen into it. He doesn't seem to be hurt, but it looks like quite a deep hole and there is obviously no way he can get out without help. The sides are steep and smooth. Perhaps if Alexander had been walking along and watching the ground in front of him, he wouldn't have fallen down this hole. As there are no cars in this picture, the hole is probably on the footpath rather than the road.

Teaching focus

- Alexander's family doesn't desert him.
- The humans want to help the duck family and try out some ideas, but nothing works.

What you could say

The quacking and commotion of the ducks has attracted the attention of some people. Mother duck is standing over the hole calling to Alexander. There is no way she is going to leave him. She is doing what all mothers do, protecting her baby as best she can. The two humans, one an older woman and the other a young man, are certainly very surprised to see a family of ducks quacking and flapping in such a way. It is only when they get close that they realise what has happened to Alexander.

The young man thinks that he might be able to rescue Alexander if he kneels down and stretches his arm down the hole. But, no matter how long his arms are, he simply can't reach the duckling and even when the older lady offers her umbrella to lengthen his reach to scoop Alexander up, it is impossible. So these first two people are unable to rescue Alexander. As time has gone by, the duck and ducklings have got themselves into a state of hysteria. You can see from the way that the lady is looking at them that she is concerned about them.

Teaching focus

- The humans have taken over and pushed Alexander's family out of the way.
- Alexander's family stays close and keeps talking to him.

What you could say

The ducks are making such a commotion outside the park that even people inside the park can hear them. Remember they are on College Road, just outside Hyde Park (if we look at the map we can see these places), and they are making such a hullabaloo that some people inside the park having a picnic are disturbed.

They wander over to where all the noise is coming from and there they see the older woman and young man peering down the hole. They ask what the problem is. When it is explained to them, they don't have any ideas of how to rescue Alexander. Trying to be kind, and thinking that Alexander might be hungry, the young woman drops part of a sandwich down the hole to him. I don't think that ducklings should eat sandwiches. I know that young kids often throw bread to ducks in the park, but I think it gives them a tummy ache. Of course, while all the humans are discussing the problem the poor duck family has been pushed

Pages 7-9



Pages 10-11



to one side but they are still making a fuss. They know that Alexander is in trouble but they are powerless to help him. It is like the situation when a child falls down a deep, narrow well. The family is unable to rescue the child; they need the help of the emergency services to do that.

Page 12



Teaching focus

- The illustration reminds us that Alexander is a long way down the hole.
- Do you think he knows that everyone on the surface is trying to help him?

What you could say

In the next picture we see Alexander being hit on the back of the head by the cheese sandwich. Now you know that if something is dropped from a height, it gains momentum. So it would have seemed heavy when it knocked Alexander on the head. You can see by the expression on his face that it has taken him by surprise. The force of it has knocked him off his feet and he falls over with a hard bump.

Pages 13-14



Teaching focus

- A policeman arrives with more ideas about how to rescue Alexander.
- Nothing is working and time is passing.

What you could say

By the time a policeman arrives on the scene, the mother duck has worked her way to the front of the group again and is calling down the hole to Alexander. The rest of his family keeps quacking and making a fuss, and you can tell from the look on the faces of the humans that they are feeling a little fed up and glum. They've been working at this for some time but without success. However, the policeman thinks that if he can lower his whistle down the hole on a piece of string, Alexander will be able to grab it and be lifted to safety.



But it is all in vain because Alexander doesn't grab the string. He is lying at the bottom of the hole and his eyes are closed. This may be because the cheese sandwich has knocked him out, or he may just be asleep. He has had an exhausting day so far and bits of it have been rather unpleasant. He is also stuck down a deep, dark hole away from all the noise and clamour, so he may have done what babies do when it is dark and quiet and simply gone to sleep.

Teaching focus

- Time is passing.
- The people seem to have run out of ideas.
- What is to become of Alexander?

What you could say

By now the crowd at the top of the hole has grown to 7 humans and 5 ducks! A little boy and his mother have joined the crowd. The concern on everyone's face is very apparent and they are still mystified as to how to get Alexander out. They can't go away and leave a duckling stuck down the hole, but they seem to be rather short on ideas of how to help. Alexander's mother and brothers and sisters are beside themselves. All of these humans have gathered and tried to rescue Alexander but without success. Surely humans should be able to do it. They are cleverer than ducks, and are capable of solving problems, but not this one, it seems. Meanwhile, Alexander is getting weaker. When he quacks to his brothers and sisters, his quacks aren't strong and loud. That suggests he is tired and is giving up. This must worry his mother. What is going to happen to her baby?

Page 15



Teaching focus

- The shock of the adults
- The unusual view that Alexander would have from his position at the bottom of the hole

What you could say

While they have been pondering Alexander's fate, the humans haven't been keeping a close eye on the little boy and, before anyone can stop him, he tips his drink down the hole. Everyone is shocked, and worried that Alexander will drown. Now of course the one thing that ducks are particularly good at is swimming. That's what they do for large parts of their day. But the humans seem to have forgotten all about this. They are still thinking about putting something down the hole to lift Alexander out, but I don't think that that is the answer.

Pages 16-17



Page 18



Teaching focus

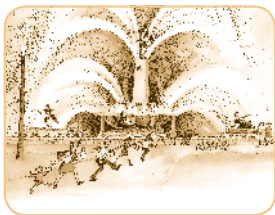
- Previously gloomy faces have become hopeful.
- Someone obviously has a plan to rescue Alexander.

What you could say

It looks like somebody has had a bright idea. You can see from their faces that everybody is happier. So whatever this bright idea is, the humans think it has a chance of working.

We can see that cups and plastic bags and containers of all sorts are going to be needed if this idea is going to work. Everyone gets handed a container (apart from the ducks that is: I don't think they are going to be very useful when it comes to holding containers).

Pages 19-21



Teaching focus

- The humans have a plan and are working together to help Alexander.
- Everyone thinks that the plan will work.
- The ducks don't seem to be so distraught.

What you could say

The first thing that the humans do is head off to a water fountain. Some of them seem to be bending over the fountain. I wonder what they can be doing. They look quite cheerful. I definitely think they have figured out a way to rescue Alexander.

On the next page, we can see that they have filled their containers with water from the fountain and are tipping them into the hole where Alexander fell down. The duck family is still watching closely and quacking away. You get the feeling that they think something worthwhile is being done. They don't seem to be flapping around in such a panicky fashion any more.

Pages 22-23



Teaching focus

- The anxious wait for Alexander to get to the surface.
- Only Alexander's family is in the pictures now.

What you could say

Now we can see how the problem is being solved. As more and more water gets tipped into the hole, Alexander will float to the surface, as ducks are quite at home on water and find it easy to float and swim. It would probably take many, many journeys to the Archibald Fountain and back to get enough water in the hole to bring Alexander to the surface. I think those people must be very kind to spend so much of their time trying to help him.

You can see from the pictures the stages in Alexander's rise to the surface and the fact that he floats nicely on the surface of the water. You can see too that the cheese sandwich has sunk to the bottom of the hole. It must be heavy; normally you would expect bread to break up into little pieces in the water and float on the surface. It must really have hurt Alexander's head when the young woman dropped it into the hole on top of him.

Teaching focus

- The joy and relief of the family to have Alexander with them once more.

What you could say

Alexander climbs onto the ground to be with his mother and brothers and sisters.

His family is ecstatic to have him back: his arrival on dry land is marked by lots of joyful flapping and quacking. He must have been down there for hours and hours and all the time they waited anxiously, unable to help him. Pamela Allen draws only the duck family in this picture because this is a special moment for them. Alexander's mother must be feeling really relieved.

Teaching focus

- The duck family has had a long day and needs to get home.
- The humans are happy to have been able to rescue Alexander.

What you could say

Once the duck family has finished their celebrations, they start to make their way back home. You can imagine that a lot of time has passed since they left the Royal Botanic Gardens and they have walked a very long way. Usually you see ducks flying from one area of water to another. Have you ever seen ducks flying and landing in a pond? I wonder why the ducks didn't simply just fly to Hyde Park. Perhaps the ducklings are too young to undertake a journey like that.

As the policeman stops the traffic in College Street for the ducks to start their homeward journey, we can see all of the people who helped rescue Alexander. They all look very happy. They probably feel really good about having helped out some birds in trouble. It doesn't seem to matter that it has taken a lot of time out of their day to do it. Can you imagine the stories they will have to tell when they get home?

I am still a little concerned about Alexander. As the family moves along Art Gallery Road, he is starting to lag behind the others again and is looking skywards. I'm wondering if he has learnt anything at all from his experience. I wonder if his mother has thought about moving him closer to the front so that she can keep an eye on him.

Pages 24-25

Pages 26-27



As they pass through the gates of the Botanic Gardens and walk past the boab tree, we can see they have all returned home safe and sound. Thank goodness. I'm really quite relieved about this, as Alexander is still waddling along at the back of the group looking behind him or staring at the sky. He is so different to his brothers and sisters, who just keep their eyes on their mother and follow in her footsteps. I can't decide if it is a good thing that he is more interested in things going on around him, or if it would be better if he just looked straight ahead like them.

Page 28



Teaching focus

- The family arrives home safe and sound.
- Alexander is still not paying attention.

What you could say

The duck family arrive home safely. By the time they get to their duck pond, it is tea time. I think they have been away all day. That is a very long outing for a bunch of ducklings. I'm sure their mother is relieved to get them home safe and sound and I'm sure they will all sleep soundly tonight. I wonder if their mother will be so keen to take her brood with her when she next sets off in search of adventure. After today, she may be happy to stay where she is.

Read the story aloud

Following the low order literate orientation, read the story to the class. Show the students where you are reading with a pointer or marking strip of some kind so that they know you are attending to the words. Read the story expressively and if the students want to read with you allow them to do so, but do not slow down and wait for them. Avoid the reading becoming a chant by consistently modelling fluent, expressive reading.

Refine the focus to the study passage

Once the literate orientation has been completed on the whole book, return to the beginning to focus on the author's language choices in closer detail.

Low order literate orientation – Study passage

Teaching focus

This passage:

- introduces the characters
- locates them in their home
- introduces and then resolves a minor complication
- foreshadows the major complication.

What you could say

On the first page of the book, we see Alexander and his brothers and sisters at home in the park. Alexander is not paying attention to anyone, he has his head under his wing. He is probably having a little scratch or fluffing up his feathers. Now, this is important because if we had to decide which duckling on this page is most likely to get into trouble, who do you think it we would pick? That's right. It would be Alexander. Firstly, he is the only duckling we are told the name of and, secondly, he is the duckling who, right from the front cover of the book, is not paying attention to his mother. Parents protect their little ones because there are dangers all around that they don't recognise. If Alexander isn't paying attention to his mother, he won't hear her warnings and she won't be able to protect him. Later on in the book, this becomes a really important point.

Alexander's mother is a bit distracted this morning. She may live in one of the most beautiful places in the whole of Sydney, but she is bored. She has probably lived in this park all of her life and has got so used to its beauty that she doesn't think of it as being special. She wants to explore the world outside the park. Of course, she can't leave her babies behind while she does this. Who knows what might happen to them while she was away? A dog could come into the park and chase them or even attack them. They are just babies; she needs to have them near her all of the time, so she sets off in search of adventure with all her ducklings in tow. We are not sure if she knows where she is going but she probably doesn't. An outing is only really an adventure if you go to places you haven't been to before and don't know what to expect. So I would imagine that they all set off in good spirits on this beautiful day to explore the world.

So, without a backward glance, Alexander's mother sets off to find a way out of the park. She walks ahead, keeping her eyes to the front. Of course, she can walk much faster than the ducklings. Her legs would be longer and she'd take bigger steps, so the ducklings would have to scuttle very quickly to keep up with her. Being a good mother, she warns her ducklings to *Stay close and take care*.

When we read these words, they should act as a warning to us that dangers are afoot and something nasty might be about to happen. This is a dangerous environment for ducks who have no experience of the world outside the park. There are so many dangers for Alexander's mother to look out for. She issues firm warnings again and again throughout the story. These warnings build up and build up, so that when something nasty does happen to Alexander, we are not really surprised. We have come to expect it.

For a description of high order literate orientation, refer to page 12.

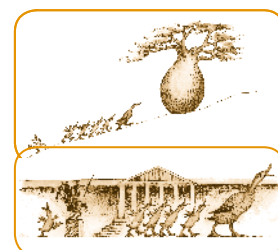


High order literate orientation – Study passage

Teaching focus

Structure of text and wording	Why language choices were made
Orientation	
<i>Alexander lived with his mother and his four brothers and sisters</i>	Alexander is one of five ducklings. That's quite a number of children for any mother to look after. Imagine having to round up five children every time you wanted to do anything! Of course, they would have all been the same age if all the eggs were hatched at the same time. Alexander's father is not around, but that is what we expect in duck families. Mothers have all the responsibility for looking after the children.
Location	
<i>in the most beautiful place in the whole of Sydney,</i>	Like many duck families, Alexander's family lives in a park. The illustrations tell us that. The text tells us that this park is the most beautiful place in the whole of Sydney. From the illustrations, we can see that it is near the Opera House and the Harbour Bridge in Sydney. If you look up a map of Sydney you can work out that the park that Alexander's family lives in is actually the Royal Botanic Gardens, which are very beautiful. Alexander's mother was probably born here so she just thinks of this place as home, nothing special.
Minor complication	
<i>but Alexander's mother was bored.</i>	Spending your entire life in the same place would get boring, however beautiful it might be. Looking after five babies would also be very hard work, so no wonder Alexander's mother craves some excitement.

Temporary resolution of minor complication	
<i>So one warm sunny morning they all set out in search of adventure,</i>	Alexander's mother decides that an adventure would help with her boredom. She must have given it some thought as she didn't set off straight away. She waited until the weather was good. <i>A warm sunny morning</i> would be perfect for an outing: not too hot and not too cold. She probably doesn't know exactly where they are headed because she is <i>in search of adventure</i> . That means she is probably going to make choices about where to go as she goes, depending on what she sees. She took her ducklings with her. Probably they were too young to leave behind unattended.
Description of route using expansions	
<i>past the bottle tree,</i>	Now we get to hear where the journey took them. 'They went' is implied in the text before each of the phrases that describe the route. First of all they went <i>past the bottle tree</i> . Bottle trees aren't common in Sydney so this one would have been very noticeable. They didn't stop at the tree, though; they walked right past it.
<i>through the iron gates</i>	Next, they went through some ornamental gates. The author doesn't tell us where these gates are, but they look very impressive so we can assume that they are the main entrance (and exit) to the park. This is probably the first time the ducks have ever left the park, so they would have been very excited.
<i>and along Art Gallery Road.</i>	Now the ducks are out on the street and surrounded by traffic. They probably haven't ever walked along a street with cars and buses and bicycles before. The road they are walking along has Sydney's Art Gallery on it, but Alexander's mother walks right past it. She probably doesn't know that it is an important building with lots of famous and expensive paintings and sculptures in it.
Foreshadowing major complication	
<i>'Stay close, take care!' quacked Alexander's mother,</i>	Alexander's mother realises that she and her ducklings need to stay really close together to keep safe. She also needs them to take care; that means watch where they are going and what they are doing. Her warning is firm, as we can see from the exclamation mark. The ducklings should know that she is serious.



<i>but Alexander did not stay close and Alexander did not take care.</i>	The word <i>but</i> lets us know that Alexander is not going to do as his mother says. He is the only duckling who does not pay attention to his mother.
<i>He straggled behind with his head in the air.</i>	Alexander doesn't even try to keep up with everyone. He doesn't walk as fast as they do and he gazes around him as he goes. You can see already that Alexander is going to find himself in trouble: he is neither staying close nor taking care. If he is looking at the sky, he can't be paying attention to what is on the road or footpath in front of him. <i>Straggled</i> is a slow, absent-minded way of walking.

Transformations

Transformations is an activity designed to change students' orientation to the text under consideration from that of a reader looking for meaning to that of a writer learning how the author used various literary techniques to achieve a particular effect or purpose.

In addition, transformations provides a key opportunity for 'handover' of understanding about the language choices in the text. The questioning techniques in this part of the teaching sequence reflect the growing common knowledge shared between class members, and between class members and the teacher. A successful handover might mean, for example, that there is less need for preformulation.

Goals of the transformations

Comprehension

Right from the illustration on the cover the reader is left in no doubt that Alexander's outing is not going to be straightforward. Students need to make the implicit link between the illustration on the cover of the book and Alexander. If only one duckling gets named which one is it likely to be? Most likely, the one who is falling off the back of the line.

Readers need to understand that setting out *in search of adventure* is a risky business, as Alexander's mother doesn't seem to have done any planning, and she has five ducklings in tow. The whole outing could be fraught with danger, and if problems do arise then the ducks have limited capacity to put things right.

Mother duck's warnings are closely followed by the word *but* and then a description of Alexander's woolly-headedness. Young readers need to be guided to the potential for problems that this simple word heralds. *But* is a crucial signpost in the story, as it introduces an element of counter-expectancy.

Word Recognition leading to spelling

The main spelling focus for the transformations with early childhood students is on the development of decoding. Some of the initial sounds, sight words and commonly occurring letter clusters in English words which can be dealt with in this passage are highlighted in the spelling section.

It is important to revisit any spelling patterns in *Alexander's Outing* that students may have come across in other texts they have studied. In this way, students can begin to see that there are regularities in the English language spelling system.

Writing

Joint reconstructed writing on this passage will prepare students for other writing exercises in which they experiment with using Pamela Allen's strategy for introducing characters, locations and complications.

Example of text segmentation

Alexander lived with his mother and his four brothers and sisters in the most beautiful place in the whole of Sydney, but Alexander's mother was bored.

So one warm sunny morning they all set out in search of adventure, past the bottle tree, through the iron gates and along Art Gallery Road.

Initially, the sentences could be segmented in the following way.
Other segmentations may also be used.

Alexander / lived with his mother / and his four brothers and sisters / in the most beautiful place / in the whole of Sydney / , / but / Alexander's mother was bored / . /

So / one warm sunny morning / they all set out / in search of adventure / , / past the bottle tree / , / through the iron gates / and along Art Gallery Road / . /

Teaching focus

Language choice

Alexander /

/ lived with his mother /

and his four brothers and sisters/

in the most beautiful place / in the whole of Sydney / , /

But /

Alexander's mother was bored / . /

So /

one warm, sunny morning /

Points for discussion

Main character introduced

In books for young children, the characters and the story line must be easy to follow. For this reason, authors will put the main character in the story in a prominent position so that children can become really familiar and involved with him or her.

In this story, Alexander is also the only character to be given a name, and this is given as the beginning of the first sentence in the story which puts him in a very prominent position indeed.

Additional characters introduced

Alexander still lives with his mother. Allen has made us aware that he is very young without having to spell it out.

The fact that Allen hasn't given Alexander's siblings names shows that they are not going to be as important to the story as Alexander. She is just using them to help young readers gain entry into the story through reference to an environment they are all familiar with – family life. They are also needed to provide the cacophony which attracts the people to the scene of the drama, and to provide a contrast to Alexander's wayward behaviour.

Setting

Allen lets us know that Alexander's family lives in a really beautiful place. It is not just one of many beautiful places, it is *the most beautiful place in the whole of Sydney*. She is really saying that they are very fortunate and should be very happy and content with life.

Minor complication

The *but* warns us that something is not right. Authors use *but* as a very simple device so that the expectations of the reader are suddenly changed.

Now we know what's wrong. Allen puts this little complication right at the beginning of the story to encourage us to keep reading. We want to know what Alexander's mother is going to do to relieve her boredom.

Resolution to minor complication

This one little word lets us know that Alexander's mother intends to do something about her boredom. This word joins two sentences together. She was bored is joined to what she did to fix the problem.

The readers are able to match the illustrations and the words. Allen is encouraging the reader to think that the family will have a wonderful time when they set off to relieve their mother's boredom. Sunny weather in books usually equals good times or nice things.

They are Alexander's mother and the five ducklings.

in search of adventure means that they don't have any particular destination in mind, but are simply going to go out and see what they can see. This, of course, gives Pamela Allen the opportunity to make the adventure end in tears if she wants to, although at this moment we are not thinking this way. We are expecting the whole family to have a good time.

Description of route to adventure

Allen uses three expansions to make the description of the ducks' journey vivid, so that young readers can visualise the little party along their route to adventure (with help from the illustrations too).

These places are important markers because, at the end of the book when the family is returning to the park, they pass the same three places. There are three different prepositions (*past, through, along*) which give an impression of movement and progress. Authors often use groups of three when they want to expand on things.

They all set out /

*in search of
adventure / , /*

*past the bottle
tree / , /
through the iron
gates /
and along Art
Gallery Road / . /*

Spelling

The spelling segment of the Accelerated Literacy teaching sequence follows transformations once the teacher is reasonably sure that students are able to recognise many of the words from the text out of context. Teachers are then able to use the students' ability to hold a stable image of a word in their memory to show how that word can be broken into letter pattern chunks. Spelling activities include joint reconstructed writing.

How to choose spelling words

Keep the following points in mind when choosing words to work on in spelling:

- Are there any words that have patterns (or letters) that students have worked on before?
- Are there any new patterns that occur more than once or are commonly occurring?
- Are there any words that have interesting origins or roots that will help students develop an understanding of English?
- Which words will help students with joint reconstructed writing?
- Which words that students have already been taught need revision?
- Consider students' age and stage of spelling development.

Suggestions for spelling

The choice of words for spelling may be based on the following.

Letter cluster patterns

There are few recurrences of patterns within the text and so single instances of the pattern have been highlighted. However, teachers may be able to build on patterns studied in earlier texts, or to be studied in later texts, as such patterns are readily found in English words.

Prepositions

Prepositions are used precisely in these passages to describe the locations the ducks pass in their search for adventure.

Characters/relationship names

Words to do with the characters/relationship names are commonly used throughout the book.

These are just some suggestions for spelling. Teachers will need to make other choices based on class needs and spelling goals. Not all of these spelling words should be taught to students.

Examples from the study passage

For precommunicative spellers – some initial letters/sounds

A /lexander	b /rothers	m /other	s /isters
A /rt	b /ut	m /ost	S /ydney
a /long	b /ored	m /orning	s /o
a /nd	b /ottle		s /unny
a /dventure	b /ehind		s /et
			s /earch
			s /tay
			s /traggled

Mainly for semi-phonetic and phonetic spellers

Sight words

he	but b/ut	with w/ith	was w/as
one	not n/ot	his h/is	
so			

Common letter cluster patterns

–ast– p/ ast	–ask– fl/ ask ask /ed b/ ask /et	–ong– l/ ong al/ ong	–ace– pl/ ace
–ough– en/ ough thr/ ough	–ole– wh/ ole h/ ole	–arm– arm /s w/ arm	–ost– m/ ost
–our– f/ our	–er– s/ist/ er /s Al/ex/and/ er	–ake– t/ ake	–oth– and –er– m/ oth/er br/ oth/er /s.
–orn and –ing m/ orn/ing	Past tense ending –d l/ive/ d b/ore/ d str/agg/le/ d The past tense ending is –d because the original word already ends in an –e		

Etymology

Etymological information on selected words is always interesting for students. Many websites, as well as dictionaries and other books, provide etymological information. Two informative websites are <http://www.etymonline.com> and <http://www.thefreedictionary.com>.

Example

Both mother and brothers belong to a family of words which includes father. All three words have the **–ther–** spelling in common. This replaced the **–der–** spelling which was used until about the 1500s.

Handwriting

Note that the title page of Alexander's Outing uses the font 'ɑ' while the rest of the text uses 'a'.

Joint reconstructed writing

Joint reconstructed writing provides a transition from spelling activities to writing activities and works best when taken from transformations. Joint reconstructed writing involves the teacher and students working together to reconstruct the text using the same words as the author. It successfully reduces the stress associated with working out what to write about, what to write and how to write it. Stress associated with spelling is greatly reduced, giving students the mental space to think about subject matter and language choices.

The teacher ‘thinks aloud’ to reconstruct a passage with the students, using the writer’s language choices. This is a culmination of all the shared knowledge built up so far about language choices used in the construction and positioning of particular phrases and includes the dimensions of letter formation, the role of initial consonants and blends, and visual patterns.

Reconstruct sentences, paragraphs and sections of text as appropriate. The first example below is just one of the reconstructions possible. It is only a part of the first sentence but it may be enough for some early childhood students to work on at any one time.

Example 1

The orientation: how Pamela Allen introduces the characters and the place where they live.

What you could say

Right at the beginning of her story, Pamela Allen introduces us to the main character in the story. Can anyone remember what his name is? That’s right: Alexander. We know that he is a special duckling in this story because he is the only one that Pamela Allen has given a name to.

Now Alexander was one of our spelling words. Let’s see if we can remember the letter chunks that make up Alexander. It starts with *A/*. Which two letters make the *A/* sound? That’s right an *A* and an */*, but we need to write them together to make *A/*. Watch me do it, or if you want to do it by yourself go ahead but keep the *A* and the */* joined together.

(After the introduction of the characters and where they live, the rest of the sentence can be worked on with a focus on structure and function of language choices.)

Example 2

How Pamela Allen introduces a minor complication (What's wrong in this beautiful place?)

Example 3

How Pamela Allen resolves the minor complication (What Alexander's mother intends to do about it.)

Example 4

How Pamela Allen describes the beginning of family's journey in search of adventure.

While reconstructing the rest of the passage, discussion needs to focus on Pamela Allen's language choices that describe the kind of weather, what the family did and where they walked.

Writing

Writing activities should not be based only on patterning, but also on a principled understanding of why writers use specific techniques. For example, it is not much use substituting words to write a 'new' sentence or paragraph if students do not know what the skill they are learning is about or when to use it.

Writing goals consist of goals for the whole teaching sequence (overall goals), as well as goals for individual lessons (short-term goals).

Goals for *Alexander's Outing* would include:

- overall goals such as writing an introduction to a story introducing character/s and location, and using *but* to foreshadow a complication
- short-term goals such as the use of *but* or *so*, writing a description of a journey using prepositions, using similes and using repetitive language to build significance and intensity.

Activities

Workshop one

Practise using *but* to counter expectancy and to signal a problem/continuing problems throughout the text. (eg ...*but Alexander's mother was bored*. You wouldn't expect her to be bored if she was living in the most beautiful park in the whole of Sydney.)

Examples:

- Bernie had received everything he wanted for Christmas but he still wasn't happy.
- The day was sunny but a sudden thunderstorm ruined the picnic.

Workshop two

Practise using *so* as a consequential conjunction (eg Alexander's mother was bored, so she set off in search of adventure).

Examples:

- Mary woke up in the night really thirsty so she went to the kitchen to get a drink of water.
- The insect crawled up the inside of the tube so Sam got a stick to try to poke it out.

Workshop three

Practise describing a journey using prepositions (eg *past* the bottle tree, *through* the gates, *along* Art Gallery Road, *across* College Street, *to* the Archibald fountain).

Students could enact a journey from their classroom to a different part of the school and then return to write about it. It would be important that the teacher be on hand during this journey, so that it can be accurately recounted.

Other appropriate prepositions can be brainstormed (eg *in*, *beside*, *next to*, *in front of*). Which do you use if you want to depict movement and which if you want to depict a static scene?

Workshop four

Describe the same journey in reverse to finish a story and return things to normal. This is a useful device if the upheaval in the middle of the story is to be overcome and a sense of balance is to be restored by the time the story concludes.

Workshop five

Use repetitive language to give significance and build intensity (eg '*Stay close, take care.*') This can take the form of a statement or question.

Examples:

- 'Keep going, you are doing well.'
- 'Are we nearly there yet?'

Workshop six

Practise using simile to give a sense of drama to a story, or make a description more vivid (eg *Out popped Alexander like the cork out of a bottle.*) Discuss with students the impression they want the reader to get of characters/things so that the best image is created.

Examples:

- Rowena is in a very bad mood and is upsetting everything that gets in her way: Rowena whirled through the classroom ...like a willy willy
- Robin is overweight and he has had a very big meal so that his snores are loud, lengthy, full bodied: Robin sat down in the chair and started to snore like thunder rumbling in the distance.

Joint construction

The teacher and students should discuss the complete storyline before embarking on the orientation. They would need to decide if there is to be one main character in the story, and, if so, how he or she could be introduced. Discuss whether it is better to have one main character or multiple characters and what difference each option might make to the overall storyline. They would need to think about suitable locations for their characters. Having Alexander and his family living in a park is perfect; that is where we expect to find ducks. But would a park be a good location if the characters were pigs or even other birds like chickens?



Appendices

Appendices

Sample weekly plan

The following weekly plan is included as a *guide only* to the way teachers could move through the teaching sequence over a period of time. The plan's content has been condensed. In reality, working through this text will take some weeks, and the following one-week plan could actually take two or even three weeks to complete. Parts of a session that are not finished in one lesson can be picked up in the next. Teachers will need to introduce the subsequent lesson/s carefully so students know what to expect, what the purpose of the lesson is, and where they are in the teaching sequence.

Class: Year 1		Week: 1	Term: 1		
Text: <i>Alexander's Outing</i> by Pamela Allen		Weekly Goals: Introduction to narrative and function of orientation in story as a whole. To be able to read passage 1 fluently and write part of it when guided by the teacher, using spellings learnt as part of the sequence.			
Strategy	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Low Order Literate Orientation	Literate orientation to whole text using illustrations and including inferences and staging of narrative – at this stage simply focus on who, where, problems and how they are solved. Focus on narrative structure.	Let students tell you what they remember about the story while you guide them with props like where, who, problems and solutions. Look at website displaying map of journey. Refocus for study – read and then do low order on passage 1 and its importance to whole story. Also introduce terms like setting and character.	Read passage 1 to students Why do we have orientations in stories? What do they tell us? Discuss characters and setting for this story. Reaffirm how we know which duck is Alexander. Why would his mother want to leave such a beautiful place? What does 'going in search of adventure' mean?	What is the problem with Alexander's mother? Which word tells us there is a problem coming up? Why did PA have Alexander's family go off on a warm sunny day? Would the story have been as good if it had been raining on that day?	Who is the main character in the story? Where is the setting? Why should Alexander's mother be happy living where she lives? Which words tell us she isn't? Being bored is a problem or complication. So how does PA solve it?
Read story to / with class					
High Order Literate Orientation		High order orientation of first passage (depending on class, it may be that elements of passage 1 are dealt with today and then the rest tomorrow) Choral reading of first sentence.	Finish high order of passage 1 from yesterday if necessary. Choral reading of passage 1.		Choral reading of whole passage.
Transformations			Start work on passage 1. Highlight first sentence: ● major and minor characters ● description of place – why would anyone want to leave it? ● the effect of 'but' on the reader. Choral reading of sentence.	Finish work on transformations: the second sentence highlighting: ● the use of 'so' ● prepositions/directional words which reflect movement. Choral reading of sentence. Choral reading of whole passage.	Cut up first part of sentence 1 and reorganise, discussing word function and how words are recognised.

Class: Year 1					
Term: 1					
Week: 1					
Text: <i>Alexander's Outing</i> by Pamela Allen					
Weekly Goals: Introduction to narrative and function of orientation in story as a whole. To be able to read passage 1 fluently and write part of it when guided by the teacher, using spellings learnt as part of the sequence.					
Strategy	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Spelling	Initial letters – revisit book cover and discuss how book title starts with capital letters as does Pamela Allen's name. Briefly cover rule for starting names. How many capital A-s on front cover?		Teachers need to choose spellings from the list provided to meet their students' needs. It may be that initial sounds need to be focused on but so does the 'mind set' towards visual patterning. Words need to be taught that are found in the first sentence. Capitalisation for names. Discussion on why chunking is easier Al/ex/and/er f/our m/oth/er m/ost br/oth/er/s s/ist/er	Revise spellings from yesterday. New spellings: pl/ace wh/ole b/ore/d Jointly reconstruct the first part of the sentence of passage 1. "Alexander lived with his mother and his four brothers' and sisters..."	Choral reading of sentence 1. Students identify which words were spelling words. Discussion on why we chunk words. Discussion about how they were chunked. Jointly reconstruct remainder of first sentence: ..."in the most beautiful place in the whole of Sydney, but Alexander's mother was bored."
Writing					Teacher discusses possible storyline that would provide the opportunity to work on one of the short term writing goals. In this way the teacher models the thinking process and the need to have the story worked out in your mind before starting to write. Modelled writing of teacher-generated story.



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Alexander's Outing – Study passage (80 words)

42

Alexander lived with his mother and his four brothers and sisters in the most beautiful place in the whole of Sydney, but Alexander's mother was bored.

So one warm sunny morning they all set out in search of adventure, past the bottle tree, through the iron gates and along Art Gallery Road.

'Stay close, take care!' quacked Alexander's mother, but Alexander did not stay close and Alexander did not take care.

He straggled behind with his head in the air.

Early Childhood

These notes have been written to help teachers use the Accelerated Literacy teaching strategies in Year 1. However, they could also be used in Year 2 where students have difficulties with reading.

Outcomes of the teaching sequence

At the end of this teaching sequence, students should be able to:

- read the story studied fluently and interpret the illustrations at a high level
- discuss the story: give opinions about the author's language choices; identify the story's structure, theme and ideology
- spell chosen words and understand related spelling strategies
- use the story as a model for writing.

Notes

- The following notes have been written for teachers who have attended professional development workshops in teaching Accelerated Literacy. The notes presume some understanding about how to teach the program.
- For a detailed explanation of how to implement the teaching sequence, please refer to the teachers' handouts from the first professional development workshop. Additionally, you could refer to <http://www.nalp.edu.au>.
- It is also assumed that teachers have read the text on which these notes are based and have a detailed understanding of the text before beginning a teaching sequence.
- Teachers are responsible for ensuring the suitability of the text on which these notes are based for their particular teaching context.



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