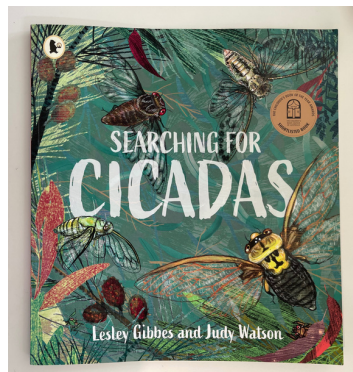




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Connecting Reading and Writing: Searching for Cicadas

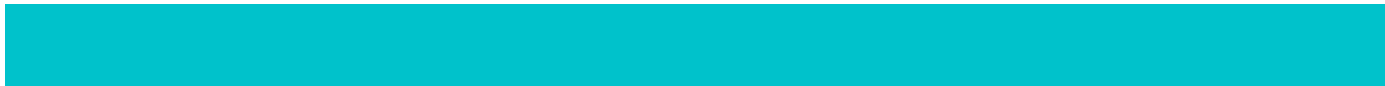


Lesson Sequence Overview

[Searching for Cicadas](#) by Lesley Gibbes and Judy Watson (2019, Walker Books) is an imaginative recount of a grandpa and his grandchild who go cicada-watching in summertime. The imaginative recount text combines with an information text on cicadas which is characteristic of the award-winning narrative nonfiction [Nature Storybooks series](#).

The following learning sequence has been designed to maximise interaction and engagement before, during and after reading by showing how a writer and illustrator construct a text to engage readers on the topic of cicadas by combining imaginative and informative **genres**. Through the strategies and interactions, learning has been designed to link reading and writing through use of the teaching and learning cycle (Derewianka & Jones, 2016 and Rossbridge & Rushton, 2015). The key concept of **genre** is the focus, as purpose and language features are connected through both reading and writing strategies. In this sequence the focus is mostly on the imaginative recount text and students making connections to their own experiences to both comprehend and compose texts about their own **context** and experiences. Connections between reading and writing are fostered through focusing on recounting events and the possible functions of the verb/verb group when recounting in texts in particular contexts.

It is necessary to read the book several times before implementing the sequence. The following table summarises strategies designed for interacting with the book.



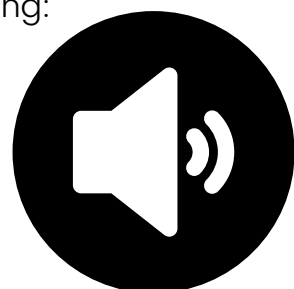
Before Reading	During Reading	After Reading	Writing
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Drawing on context and experience• Floorstorm• Video viewing and response• Connecting to the cover• Predicting genre, purpose and text features	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reading without interruption• Reread with think alouds• Reread whole text	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The author's context and purpose• Comparing books• Three level guide comprehension• Text purpose and verbs: Verb types and tense• Connecting context and experience	<p>Purpose: to recount imaginatively</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Modelling / text deconstruction• Joint construction• Independent construction

Before Reading

Drawing on context and experience

Play the sound of a cicada and ask students to respond to the following:

- What do you hear?
- How does it make you feel?
- What experience have you had with this sound?



Using [Google Translate](#) to show the word cicada in multiple languages, for example, كيكادا, kuliglig, ve sàu, jangkrik, cicala.

Reveal one translation at a time and ask students if they recognise the word and topic of the book they will be reading.

Floorstorm

Students can be reminded that predicting and making connections to prior knowledge and experience is an important part of reading. Tell students that floorstorming (White, 2017 and Wilhelm, 2004) will activate their knowledge and help them to engage with the new book that they are going to read.

A selection of images related to the subject matter can be placed on the floor for the whole class or copies of the images can be given to small groups. Students are instructed to view the images and record observations, ideas or connections on sticky notes. **Ensure only one word or phrase is written on each sticky note.** Students can be encouraged to record in languages other than English.

After floorstorming, students can remove the sticky notes and categorise into groups. This will assist in classifying vocabulary, making connections between ideas and developing vocabulary required for reading the text.



Video viewing and response

Provide the sentence stems: I noticed ..., I wonder ..., I'm surprised by ... Tell students to think about what they notice, wonder and are surprised by while watching a video on cicadas such as [Amazing Cicada Life Cycle Sir David Attenborough's Life In the Undergrowth, BBC](#) (0:00-2:56). After viewing students share responses in small groups. At this point ask groups to predict the book they will be reading by asking:

- What will the book be about?
- What will be the purpose of the book?

Connecting to the cover

From bottom to top, slowly reveal the cover of [Searching for Cicadas](#) in this order:

1. from the bottom to below the title
2. only Cicadas from the title,
3. the complete title
4. the complete cover.

At each point discuss predictions of precise subject matter of the book and how this might relate to purpose. In particular discuss how the reveal of Searching for in the title might change their predictions. Discuss if this implies if there will be humans in the text or not and the significance of ing on the end of the verb search. Discuss how it might signal an ongoing or reoccurring event. Ask students if any of their predictions may be

changing and draw particular focus to stories where students have mentioned other people or family members.

In small groups students record the following before sharing with the whole class. Again, revise predictions. Ensure book cover remains on display.

Personal experience with cicadas	Information about cicadas

Predicting genre, purpose and text features

Provide groups of students with the following list and ask them to predict which features they believe will be present in the text. Groups share their predictions. Return to these predictions after the initial readings by the teacher (see during reading).

Before reading		After reading	
<input type="checkbox"/> mostly images	<input type="checkbox"/> human participants	<input type="checkbox"/> mostly images	<input type="checkbox"/> human participants
<input type="checkbox"/> mostly written text	<input type="checkbox"/> animal participants	<input type="checkbox"/> mostly written text	<input type="checkbox"/> animal participants
<input type="checkbox"/> photographs	<input type="checkbox"/> story like text	<input type="checkbox"/> photographs	<input type="checkbox"/> story like text
<input type="checkbox"/> drawings	<input type="checkbox"/> information text	<input type="checkbox"/> drawings	<input type="checkbox"/> information text
<input type="checkbox"/> labelled diagrams	<input type="checkbox"/> past tense	<input type="checkbox"/> labelled diagrams	<input type="checkbox"/> past tense
<input type="checkbox"/> images with captions	<input type="checkbox"/> present tense	<input type="checkbox"/> images with captions	<input type="checkbox"/> present tense
<input type="checkbox"/> contents	<input type="checkbox"/> information about cicadas	<input type="checkbox"/> contents	<input type="checkbox"/> information about cicadas
<input type="checkbox"/> index	<input type="checkbox"/> information about the author	<input type="checkbox"/> index	<input type="checkbox"/> information about the author
<input type="checkbox"/> glossary	<input type="checkbox"/> information about the illustrator	<input type="checkbox"/> glossary	<input type="checkbox"/> information about the illustrator
<input type="checkbox"/> page numbers		<input type="checkbox"/> page numbers	
<input type="checkbox"/> range of different fonts		<input type="checkbox"/> range of different fonts	

Based on predictions above, ask students to also predict the genre and purpose of the text by displaying a list of possible purposes for imaginative, informative and persuasive texts.

Imaginative texts	Informative texts	Persuasive texts
<input type="checkbox"/> to narrate a story	<input type="checkbox"/> to give bundles of information	<input type="checkbox"/> to present two sides of an argument
<input type="checkbox"/> to describe in an imaginative way	<input type="checkbox"/> to explain a process	<input type="checkbox"/> to present one side of an argument
<input type="checkbox"/> to recount events in an imaginative way	<input type="checkbox"/> to give instructions	
	<input type="checkbox"/> to describe in an informative way	
	<input type="checkbox"/> to recount events in an informative way	

During Reading

Reading without interruption

Read [Searching for Cicadas](#) without interruption twice and without showing images – once reading the **recount** text only and a second time reading only the **information** text without interruption. Discuss any differences students might notice. Read the complete text, sharing pictures. Return to text features and predictions from before reading to confirm and discuss. Also discuss **genre** and purpose again.

Reread with think alouds

Reread *Searching for Cicadas* using think alouds to model making connections to predictions and discussions made before reading and in particular the **genre**, purpose and text features as well as connections to personal experience and **context**. For example:

- I wonder why there are two different fonts and two blocks of text.
- I notice font and layout patterns repeated on each page.
- I notice each page has a page number.
- I think the book might have multiple purposes. Perhaps the text with Grandpa and the child is recounting events.
- I wonder if the events really happened or if they are fictitious.
- The tense seems to be present so I'm not sure if it is recounting.
- I think Grandpa and the child have searched for cicadas before.
- I notice it's getting darker in the images.
- I wonder how long Grandpa and the child are searching and waiting.
- I can tell that the child has learnt a lot from Grandpa over years of searching for cicadas.
- I wonder how Grandpa learnt about cicadas.
- I'm trying to think about why the author has included the information.
- This experience reminds me of when I go fishing with my cousin.
- There is a lot of information on the final page that I didn't expect.

Reread the whole text

Read the whole text again without teacher interruption. Students may wish to add their own responses during this reading. The text should be read several additional times throughout the lesson sequence.



After Reading

The author's context and purpose?

After revisiting the purpose of [Searching for Cicadas](#), students view the author Lesley Gibbes talking about the book in [Royal Zoological Society of NSW, YouTube \(0:41-2:55\)](#). Ask students to listen for how she describes the genre or purpose of the book (narrative/non-fiction), the inspiration of her grandmother's garden in summertime and the passing down of a love of nature from one generation to the next.



In pairs students share findings and come up with what they believe to be the purpose of the book, beyond being imaginative or informative. Also discuss the term narrative and how the author and publisher use it in a general sense. Tell students that there are a range of genres and narrative tends to include a major complication to be solved while the text involving Grandpa and the child is only recounting events. Also ask students, based on Lesley Gibbes comments, if they think the recount is based on actual events or is more of an imaginative recount. Students can also find evidence in the book to justify their thoughts whilst connecting to the author's context.

Comparing books

Walker Books, the publisher of *Searching for Cicadas*, has published numerous books in the [Nature Storybooks series](#). Provide groups of students with a different book from the series. Ask them to compare to *Searching for Cicadas*, using the checklist from the [Predicting text features and purpose](#) activity from the before reading. Students can share their findings with the whole class.

Adapt this teaching sequence for students of different ages, needs and interests by selecting another picture book which is an imaginative recount. Find a list of alternative books [here](#).

Students may discover that many features are similar but may also notice that the majority of books do not have human participants and the imaginative and informative text may be different genres with different purposes, from recounting to describing and explaining. Most are also about particular animals while some of the more recent publications are about a place, for example [Dry to Dry: The Seasons of Kakadu](#) and [Desert Lake: The Story of Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre](#).

Three level guide comprehension

Provide small groups with a copy of Searching for Cicadas and a Three level guide ([ESOL online, Ministry of Education New Zealand](#)) with statements to be discussed as either true or false (see example below).

Explain or model the three levels by telling students that literal answers are located within the text (reading on the lines), inferential answers can be found across the text and combined with reader knowledge (reading between the lines) and evaluative responses are found outside the text as the reader makes a judgment or gives an opinion (reading beyond the text). Small groups complete the Three Level guide and then share and justify responses.

When designing Three level guides it is best to construct statements which are ambiguous in order to foster conversation.

Three level guide

LITERAL (I can find it in the text)

- Grandpa and his grandchild go cicada watching in springtime. **TRUE/FALSE**
- Cicadas look like aliens from outer space. **TRUE/FALSE**
- A nymph is a female cicada. **TRUE/FALSE**
- The child takes a photo of the Black Prince while it flies way. **TRUE/FALSE**

INFERENTIAL (I can find it across the text and use my background knowledge)

- The Green Grocer is one of the rarest cicadas. **TRUE/FALSE**
- Grandpa knows more about cicadas than his grandchild. **TRUE/FALSE**
- Grandpa and his grandchild have a very close relationship. **TRUE/FALSE**
- It is best to see cicadas late at night. **TRUE/FALSE**
- The story takes place over two days. **TRUE/FALSE**
- The child is telling the story. **TRUE/FALSE**

EVALUATIVE (I can think outside the text)

- The main reason the author has used two types of text is to encourage children to read more information books. **TRUE/FALSE**
- I think the author and illustrator have had many personal experiences with cicadas. **TRUE/FALSE**
- The book would only appeal to readers interested in cicadas. **TRUE/FALSE**

Text purpose and verbs: Verb types

Ask students if they know the typical types of verbs used when recounting. Some may say action verbs as they tell the events which occur across the text.

Select and read a page from the book such as page 27 and have the verbs/verb groups identified for students (pack up, is in the contraction there's, lands, tickle, laugh, whirls, spins, disappears, are in the contraction we're, to see, go, says, finds, see, can't wait). Ask students if all the verbs are action verbs. Guide the students to classify the verbs into a table.

To tell actions that happen	Action verbs	pack up, lands, tickle, laugh, whirls, spins, disappears, go, finds
To link pieces of information	Relating verbs	is (there's), are (we're)
To show sensory experiences, thoughts & feelings	Sensing verbs	to see, might see, can't wait
To report what is said	Saying verbs	says

Students should notice that there are definitely action verbs. But there are also relating verbs which help to build description, sensing verbs in terms of sight and the feeling of not be able to wait as well as a saying verb to report what is said by a character.

Discuss how the range of verb types gives greater insight into the characters and creates a more engaging recount of events for the reader helping to connect not only to the events but also the characters. Students can repeat this activity in small groups with the text on page 15. The role of dialogue can be discussed as another way to convey events.

Further sections can be analysed with verbs/verb groups added to the table. Students can also discuss the everyday choice of verbs and how this is fitting for the **context** and purpose of the recount text and the events the characters are involved in.

Repeat this sequence with the information text within the book where students will see that the text is dominated by action and relating verbs as cicadas are described and their actions. Saying and sensing verbs do not occur as cicadas are non-human. The choice of verb is also more technical due to the purpose of the text, for example, lay, hatch, burrow, feed, sheds, emerges.

Text purpose and verb choice: Tense

Return to the discussion of the overall text purpose of Searching for Cicadas and then again focus on the text about Grandpa and the child. Ask students to confirm if it is an example of recounting past events and encourage students to justify. Also revisit if they think the recount is imaginative or informative. Students can be reminded of the author's comments in the video, and how she has drawn upon her childhood context.

Guide discussion on the role of verbs/verb groups in being the heart of events and that the verb tells the reader the tense or indicates time. The verb group is at the heart of the event or clause or message. Write the following clause/event on the board and support students to identify the verb.



Grandpa and his grandchild searched for cicadas.

Discuss the verb as being past tense which indicates that the event has happened and finished. Students will probably notice the ed suffix added to the regular verb.

Rewrite the sentence by changing the tense and discuss how this may change the meaning and engagement for a reader.

Grandpa and his grandchild search for cicadas.

Students may have already said that verbs are in past tense when a writer is recounting past events. However, sometimes in imaginative recounts, the verb may take the present tense. This is known as the historical present tense (Derewianka and Jones, p87, 2023) and can be a choice when recounting as events are still from the past but may be events that are repeated, as in an annual camping trip or school concert.

The choice also serves to involve the reader more closely in the action. It is also more likely in imaginative recounts rather than informative recounts as sometimes the events may not have even happened or the author makes adjustments to reality to engage the reader.

Return to the title of the book.

Searching for cicadas ...

Students should notice that the verb is at the front of the title or clause and ends with the ing suffix. (As students have read the book several times they will know who does the 'searching' and should be seeing that the events are



ongoing/repeated activities for Grandpa and grandchild every summer.)

After identifying the verb **searching** use think, pair, share to engage students with the following questions about the book title:

- Is it clear if the **searching** has happened in the past, present or future?
- Does the reader know who or what is **searching**?
- Why was this choice made for the reader?

The discussion will focus on meaning and choices. Depending on the age and needs of the students they can be told that **searching** is a non-finite verb as it ends with **ing** and doesn't express tense or have a subject or doer/actor. This puts the focus on the action/event.

Ask students to consider the text purpose again and what they believe the verb choices are within the book. Select pages 6 & 9 from the book and reread with verbs covered with sticky notes (**go, collect, packs, put, walk down, found, want to see, says, are** in the contraction **they're**). Ask students to state the missing verb/verb group during the reading. Note if the students use past, present tense or future tense. Discuss how the choices change the feel of the text for the reader and why the tense may be past, present or future at that stage in the text. These pages are the orientation and events are placed in the present but events from last year and hopes for this year are also shared with the reader through tense shifts.

Select another page from further into the book. Identify the verbs/verb groups with the students and then ask them to identify the tense in small groups. Most pages will be dominated by the historical present tense as Lesley Gibbes engages the reader in the happenings. Discuss this as a whole class and then revisit the purpose. Students can complete the following stems to evaluate the learning:

- I notice ...
- I was surprised by ...
- I now understand that ...

References to time used as sentence starters throughout the book can also be investigated as a way to show how the past, present (and future) are represented and track the duration of events across the book. For example:

In the summertime (p6)

Last year (p9)

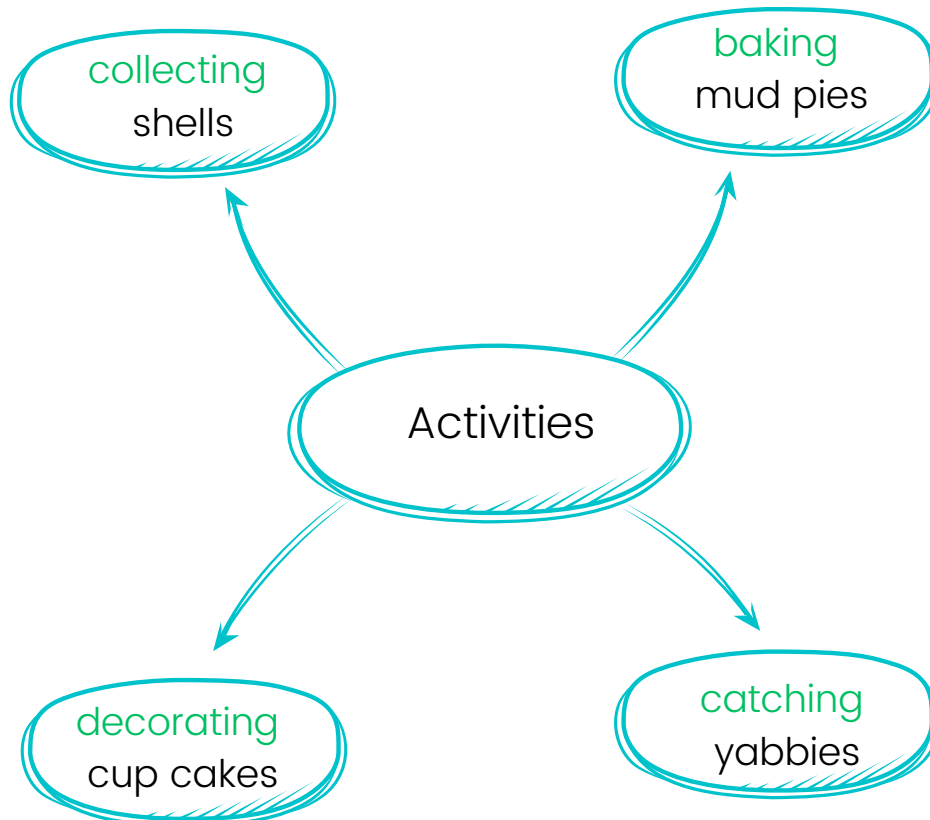
This year (p9)

Now (p17)

In the morning (p21)

Connecting context and experience

Return to the cover and title to refocus on the **ing** suffix in the verb **searching** (non-finite verb). Revise its meaning in telling us it is an ongoing/repeated activity for Grandpa and his grandchild. Brainstorm other activities students do with a friend or family member where a love of nature is fostered and/or knowledge is passed from generation to generation. Record the verb as a non-finite. Keep the brainstorming on display.



In pairs, students interview and record responses about such an experience. Encourage inclusion of all student languages in the classroom. Form pairs into groups of four with students sharing their partner's story recount.

Name	What is an activity that you do with a family member or friend that fosters a love of nature or passes knowledge from one generation to another?	How often do you do the activity?	How does the activity make you feel?	What sorts of things do you talk about during the activity?

Writing

Modelling / text deconstruction

Tell students that they are going to look closely at a section of the imaginative recount from [Searching for Cicadas](#) (for example, page 18) They will think about how the events are written to show the shared experience between Grandpa and the child. Remind students that the selected text is imaginative as even though it was inspired by the childhood of Lesley Gibbes, it is fictitious. This is also a reason why past tense has not been chosen as would be expected in a text that recounts in an informative way..

Display the text and model identifying the phases of the text (Derewianka & Jones, 2023 and Rossbridge & Rushton, 2015) and ensure verbs/verb groups are highlighted, Annotate phases across the text (dialogue, observation of events, prediction of events, reflection). Discuss how this differs from event-based recounts and how it conveys the shared experience and knowledge of Grandpa and the child. For example, the dialogue uses saying verbs and description is developed with relating verbs. Also discuss the tense of the action, relating and saying verbs and how they reflect the phases.

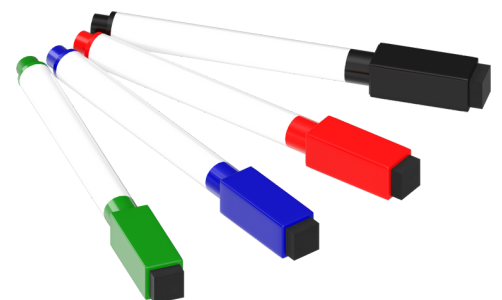
Jointly develop writing criteria and keep displayed. For example:

- the text draws on the writer's context
- the text recounts events of a shared experience fostering a love of nature and/or passing down knowledge across generations
- a variety of phases are used to show shared experience, for example, events, dialogue, observation, reflection
- a range of verb types are used to engage the reader (action, relating, sensing, saying)
- the text uses present tense to engage the reader and recount events which are repeated over time.

Review the text based on criteria. Small groups may review other sections of the text based on the criteria.

Joint construction

Tell students that they are going to help write an imaginative recount of a shared experience of the teacher. The teacher might have photos to share of a favourite childhood experience, for example, catching tadpoles or hunting for treasure. The teacher tells their story orally using the prompts from the interview reading task. Remind students that the purpose is to recount imaginatively so they can add or develop events based on trying to show a shared experience fostering a love of nature and/or passing down knowledge across generations.



Refer to the displayed criteria throughout to guide student choices and talk. Encourage student participation by asking them to record ideas in small groups on mini whiteboards before sharing with the whole class, for example:

- What should the next phase be?
- What verb would be best if we maintain the present tense? Write it down.
- What type of verb could be used to show the passing down of knowledge?

The purpose of joint construction is to handover to the students so there should be 50/50 participation between the teacher and students. This will require the teacher to facilitate the writing but in particular the conversation about the text based on the metalanguage used in the modelling/deconstruction lesson. This can be achieved through thinking aloud, posing open questions and pausing to invite students into the conversation. Other strategies such as think, pair, share and writing ideas on mini whiteboards as well as sharing the pen are useful for ensuring joint participation in the process.

After writing, ask small groups to review the text based on the criteria. Groups share possible changes and then jointly edit and review the text.



Independent construction

Students return to the experiences shared during the brainstorming and interview task completed after reading. Students then decide on the title for their own imaginative recount using the same structure as [Searching](#) for Cicadas.

Remind students that because the recount is imaginative, they can draw upon their own experience and/or that of others. Students share their title in groups and justify how they will ensure their writing will be about a shared experience fostering a love of nature and/or passing down knowledge across generations.

Revisit the displayed criteria and ask students to write their own text based on their own or the experiences of others, or combinations of experiences.

After writing students self and peer edit and review in a different colour based on the criteria. Students share stories in small groups.

*Depending on the age, needs and interests of the students, students may focus on writing a complete recount or focus on one significant event. This may impact the text or length of text selected for modelling and joint construction.

*If another model/mentor texts is used past tense may be the focus which will require adaptations to criteria.



References

Derewianka, B & Jones, P (2023) [Teaching language in context \[3rd Ed.\]](#), Oxford University Press, Melbourne.

Ministry of Education New Zealand, ESOL Online, [Three level guide](#).

Rossbridge, J, & Rushton, K(2015). [Put it in Writing: Context, text and language](#). PETAA, Newtown.

White, A(2017) [Floorstorming: Building Background Knowledge Through Visual Displays](#). Conference Paper.