Conceptual narrative: Texts to inform

Big ideas of English elements

What do we want our students to develop?

Identity – an understanding of:

- different social and geographical identities through dialects and accents: for example, how people's lifestyles can vary within the same cultural group

- how combinations of historical, social and cultural identities influence people's attitudes towards actions, characters and events in texts

Texts – create detailed texts elaborating on key ideas for a range of purposes and audiences

Choosing and using language – choose from an increasingly content-specific vocabulary, considering the expertise of the audience, as well as the formality of the situation.

See Appendix 1 which shows how these three key elements develop in sophistication and complexity across Foundation to Year 10.

What does the Australian Curriculum say?

Year 5 and Year 6

Students:

- communicate with peers and teachers from other classes and schools, community members, and individuals and groups, in a range of face-to-face and online/virtual environments

- listen to, read, view, interpret and evaluate spoken, written and multimodal texts in which the primary purpose is aesthetic, as well as texts designed to inform and persuade

- create a range of imaginative, informative and persuasive types of texts including narratives, procedures, performances, reports, reviews, explanations and discussions.

Introduction

Let's look at the concepts in information texts at Year 5 and 6. At this level the focus is on how different texts give information, and using various print and media texts which present new information on familiar and less familiar curriculum topics.

The three key elements of identity, texts and choosing and using language combine and are enacted through the three content strands of Language, Literature and Literacy. All three elements are evident in this example using the questions from the Bringing it to Life (BitL) tool.
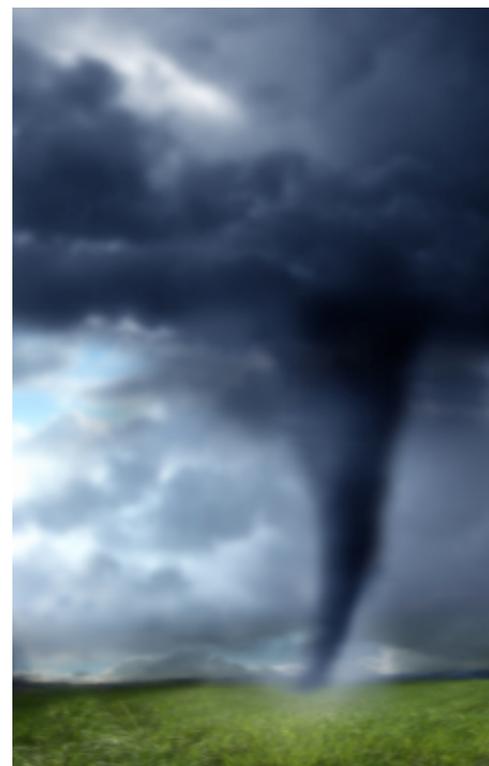
Year 5 and Year 6 example

Let's think about the topic of natural disasters, using a film clip about survival during tornadoes:
www.news.discovery.com/earth/weather-extreme-events/house-of-straw
-resistant-to-tornadoes-130528.htm

Now, to bring the essence of being a powerful language user to life we will use the questions from the Bringing it to Life (BitL) tool.

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downloaded, 20 March 2015

What do you already think?

Before introducing the text I want to activate prior knowledge about the text, establish a purpose for engaging with the text and make predictions about the text with my students.

Using the BitL questions, I could ask:

- *Why would we want to view this text?*
- *What do you already know about tornadoes?*
- *What can you imagine?*
- *What information do you expect from this clip? Are there clues? What are they?*
- *What questions could you ask that might be answered by the clip?*

Can you identify purposes, contexts and audiences?

These questions help students identify:

- what the purpose of the text is, for example, is it to entertain, persuade or inform?
- the context, for example, is it from another culture? Is there a message about life in the text?
- who the intended audience is, for example, is it for young children? Is it for adults?

Using the BitL questions, I could ask:

- *What is the purpose of this text? How do you know?*
- *Who is the intended audience for this clip? How do you know?*
- *How is the text structured? Does the structure of the text help it achieve its purpose? Why? Why not?*
- *Let's look at the title, how the text begins, the length of the text and the information given. Does the language suit the audience? If so how? If not, why not?*
- *What information do you expect from the text? Are there clues? What are they? Where do you find them?*

How can you make meanings?

These questions help students think about different text processing and comprehension strategies we can use to make sense of texts that we listen to, read or view.

Using the BitL questions, I could ask:

- *What strategies can help you understand this clip?*
- *How do you check your understanding as we view?*
- *What comprehension strategies could you use?*
- *Can you visualise the tornado hitting a building?*
- *How do the images add meaning? What visuals are used? Why?*
- *Is the text written from a particular viewpoint? How can you tell?*
- *Could the text have shown other viewpoints? Whose? Why? Would another video, present this information differently? What about texts using other media?*
- *Is technical language is used? How do you know? Why do you think this technical language is being used?*

Can you make connections?

These questions help students to make connections to previous experiences, connections within texts and connections to other texts.

Using the BitL questions, I could ask:

- *How does the clip connect with your own knowledge of tornadoes?*
- *What information can you connect from different parts of the clip? How did you make these connections?*
- *How does the vocabulary affect the meanings and opinions in the clip?*
- *What similarities/differences are there between the clip and other texts about tornadoes?*

What do you think now?

These questions encourage students to explore different aspects of the texts they listen to, read or view. They support students to think about their own and others' perspectives of the text.

Using the BitL questions, I could ask:

- *What else do you think about the effect of tornadoes now that you have viewed the clip? Do you still have questions?*
- *What might be the advantages/disadvantages of using straw bales?*
- *Do you think people can protect themselves against tornadoes by changing the way that they build?*
- *Would you feel safe in a straw building? Would your classmates feel safer? Why? Why not?*
- *How might you question the opinions drawn from the clip? What ideas would you add? Why?*
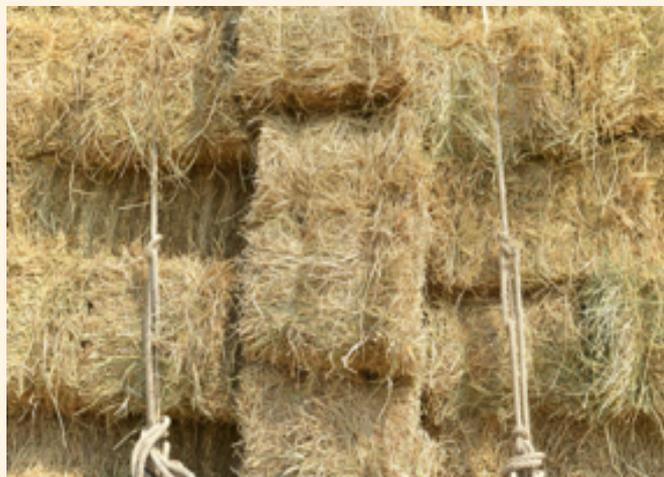
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In what ways could you express your ideas, experiences and information?

These questions help students to express their ideas, experiences and information to different audiences, dependent on purpose and context. They also support students to use a variety of strategies to support the audience in making sense of what they listen to, read or view.

Using the BitL questions, I could ask:

- *In what ways could you present information about the benefits of using straw bales to build homes? What information can you use from the text to show this?*
- *How can you plan and record what you are going to share? Could you use different multimedia elements to effectively show the different benefits?*
- *Who could this information be for? Why? Why not?*
- *Who might benefit from this information?*
- *How can you edit and improve your text?*

Concluding comments

By exploring this text through these questions, we can help our students to be able to think, work with and process words, images and sounds as powerful language users. All of these questions consider the elements of identity, texts and choosing and using language through the interweaving of the three content strands of Language, Literature and Literacy.

Appendix 1

Appendix 1 shows how these three key elements develop in complexity across Foundation to Year 10:

Identity – refers to the development of language to represent who we are, where we come from and where we are going, as well as, learning about the identities of others represented through language.

Texts – the concept of what a text is and how it is put together grows in complexity across F–10 and students develop understanding about the factors that influence text construction. Texts include spoken, written, visual or multimodal.

Choosing and using language – the developing skills and experiences needed to be creative, confident and accurate when choosing and using language in Standard Australian English.

These elements combine and are enacted through the interweaving of the three content strands (Language, Literature and Literacy) to develop powerful language users, the essence of English.

Identity

The identity element develops in two main ways:

- forming and expressing a sense of personal and social identity

- learning how identities are represented in, and influence, texts and their interpretations.

Students will progress along these continua at different rates and so the following descriptions at each band are only a guide, aligning with the Content Descriptions and Achievement Standards at these stages.

Foundation–Year 2

Students develop their personal and social identity by engaging with familiar texts from their own and other cultures. Students also describe their place in the world and learn to express who they are, where they live now and where they have come from through these opportunities.

Year 3–Year 4

The concept of identity expands to include learning about historical, social and cultural identities, represented in a wide range of multimodal texts. Students make connections between their personal experiences and the world of texts. They learn to see language differences when communicating facts and opinions. As students develop their own preferences for mysteries, quests or humorous short stories they also learn

to give more detailed reasons for why they like them.

Year 5–Year 6

Students explore different social and geographical identities through dialects and accents, for example, how people's lifestyle can vary within the same cultural group. They learn that combinations of historical, social and cultural identities influence people's attitudes towards actions, characters and events in texts.

Year 7–Year 8

Students explore the interconnectedness of Country and Place, People, Identity and Culture in texts, including digital texts. Students learn that accents and styles of speech create personal and social identities. Students identify and explain different viewpoints represented in texts.

Year 9–Year 10

Students engage with texts which can have inclusive and exclusive social effects and can empower or disempower people through their representations of identity. They evaluate the social, moral and ethical positions represented in texts and reflect on representations of values. Students identify the range of 'real' and 'online' communities to which they belong and how language reinforces their membership.

Texts

This element has two components:

- making meaning of a range of texts that are read, viewed and listened to (Receptive modes)

- creating a range of spoken and written multimodal texts (Productive modes).

Students will progress along these continua at different rates and so the following descriptions at each band are provided as a guide, aligning with the Content Descriptions and Achievement Standards at these stages.

Foundation–Year 2

Using Receptive modes, students by the end of Year 2:

- learn about the language features and structures of texts used to describe characters, settings and events

- monitor meaning and self-correct using context, prior knowledge, punctuation, language and phonic knowledge

- identify literal and implied meaning, main ideas and supporting detail

- make connections between texts by comparing content.

Using Productive modes, students by the end of Year 2:

- use everyday language features and topic-specific vocabulary
- create texts that show how images support the meaning of the text
- create texts, drawing on their own experiences, their imagination and information they have learned
- engage in group and class discussions and make presentations.

Year 3–Year 4

Using Receptive modes, students by the end of Year 4:

- explain how language features, images and vocabulary are used to engage the interest of readers
- describe literal and implied meaning connecting ideas in different texts
- respond to others' viewpoints
- listen for key ideas in discussions.

Using Productive modes, students by the end of Year 4:

- use language features to create coherence and add detail to their texts
- express an opinion on information in a text
- create texts that use images and detail to extend key ideas
- create structured texts to explain ideas for different audiences
- make presentations and contribute actively to class and group discussions, varying language according to context.

Year 5–Year 6

Using Receptive modes, students by the end of Year 6:

- analyse and explain how language features, images and vocabulary are used by different authors to represent ideas, characters and events
- compare and analyse information in different texts, explaining literal and implied meaning
- select and use evidence from texts to explain response
- listen to discussions, clarifying content and challenging others' ideas.

Using Productive modes, students by the end of Year 6:

- understand how language features and language patterns can be used for emphasis
- show how specific details can be used to support a point of view
- explain their choices of language features and images used
- create detailed texts elaborating on key ideas for a range of purposes and audiences
- make presentations and contribute actively to class and group discussions, using a variety of strategies for effect.

Year 7–Year 8

Using Receptive modes, students by the end of Year 8:

- understand how the selection of text structures is influenced by the selection of language mode and how this varies for different purposes and audiences
- explain how language features, images and vocabulary are used to represent different ideas and issues in texts
- interpret texts, questioning the reliability of sources of ideas and information
- select evidence from the text to show how events, situations and people can be represented from different viewpoints
- listen for and identify different emphasis in texts, using that understanding to elaborate upon in discussions.

Using Productive modes, students by the end of Year 8:

- understand how the selection of language features can be used for particular purposes and effects
- explain the effectiveness of language choices they use to influence the audience
- through combining ideas, images and language features from other texts, students show how ideas can be expressed in new ways
- create texts for different purposes, selecting language to influence audience response
- make presentations and contribute actively to class and group discussions, using language patterns for effect.

Year 9–Year 10

Using Receptive modes, students by the end of Year 10:

- evaluate how text structures can be used in innovative ways by different authors
- explain how the choice of language features, images and vocabulary contributes to the development of individual style
- develop and justify their own interpretations of texts
- evaluate others' interpretations, analysing the evidence used to support them
- listen for ways features within texts can be manipulated to achieve particular effects.

Using Productive modes, students by the end of Year 10:

- show the selection of language features can achieve precision and stylistic effect
- explain different viewpoints, attitudes and perspectives through the development of cohesive and logical arguments
- develop their own style by experimenting with language features, stylistic devices, text structures and images
- create a wide range of texts to articulate complex ideas
- make presentations and contribute actively to class and group discussions, building on others' ideas, solving problems, justifying opinions and developing and expanding arguments.

Choosing and using language

The choosing and using language element develops in three main ways:

• language use progresses from everyday and familiar to include more specialised and technical vocabulary and language devices

• learning about individual text structures and their features develops into combining of structures, devices and features to create new texts

• learning to convey and express ideas develops to include the ideas and perspectives of others in texts that are increasingly responsive to audience needs and interests.

Students will progress along these continua at different rates and so the following descriptions at each band are provided as a guide, aligning with the Content Descriptions and Achievement Standards at these stages.

Foundation–Year 2

These early stages involve students learning to choose and use everyday words and images to express themselves, their experiences and their imaginings. They begin to choose topic-specific vocabulary as they learn about simple information texts. Simple texts to entertain, inform and persuade are recreated and retold. Students present to mainly familiar audiences, choosing and using appropriate language for self-expression. Students also begin to develop interaction skills, such as taking turns, as they express themselves in groups.

Year 3–Year 4

The next stage involves students choosing and using more content specific words and images from an increasing range of texts and topics. The formality of the spoken situation is also now a consideration, particularly as audiences become more unfamiliar. Students learn to choose print and multimodal elements appropriate to the audience and purpose as they develop greater control over text structures to entertain, inform or persuade. For example, students might present an information report in their own words using appropriate images to add meaning. Students use their expanding vocabulary to express feelings and opinions. They have increasingly interactive discussions that take into account other perspectives. They may participate in a small group discussion, for example, to identify the similarities and differences between two texts and then consolidate the group's ideas into one coherent, representative response.

Year 5–Year 6

Students choose from an increasingly content-specific vocabulary. They learn that words may mean different things in different contexts and so their choices require greater precision for accuracy. Students also now consider the expertise of the audience as well as the formality of the situation, for example, when choosing and using language for presentations. They start to experiment and innovate with text structures, adapting texts they have experienced. Students choose and combine a wider range of multimodal elements, including sound. They move beyond merely taking into account other people's ideas and start to clarify and question them, in written texts as well as spoken interactions.

Year 7–Year 8

Students select from more specialised vocabulary to create increasingly complex texts. Students choose from a broad range of language, audio and visual features to innovate with text structures and express ideas in new ways. There is a focus on choosing not only to entertain, inform or persuade but also to create layers of meaning as they raise issues, report events or advance opinions. Students might be creating advertisements and choose humorous devices to entertain and engage while the main purpose is to persuade, for example. Interaction skills now demonstrate appropriate and effective choices of voice qualities, body language and multimodal elements. The emphasis is on choosing and using language to elicit particular audience responses and so the needs and interests of the audience are of particular importance. For example, students may create and write a script for a short play using verbal, visual and audio elements to create atmosphere and deepen interpretation of meanings.

Year 9–Year 10

Language structures, devices and images are chosen to reflect a developing sense of personal style as students respond to issues. They make appropriate thematic links to other texts as well as interpreting and integrating ideas from other texts. Choices made are increasingly sophisticated as students focus on the complex messages they wish to communicate. They also anticipate possible interpretations of that message, influenced by the value systems of the audience. The focus is on increased precision and persuasiveness of texts. Students therefore make purposeful presentations that build on others' ideas, solve problems and justify opinions. Interaction skills demonstrate appropriate and effective choices in voice and language conventions. For example, they may make presentations on an issue to an audience who are likely to hold contrary views and so will need to draw on their language repertoire to engage and influence.