

# Spider

by Alan Bagnall

JUNIOR JOURNAL 42



## OVERVIEW

This humorous, easy-to-read poem describes a child's dilemma upon finding a spider in the bath. It's likely to provoke a strong response from students as they make connections to their own experiences of spiders, but it also requires them to infer in order to fully understand the child's problem.

Students can compare this poem with "Spider Work" in the same Journal and consider how each writer uses language to convey contrasting points of view about spiders.

There is an audio version of the text on the *Junior Journal 42 and 43* CD.

## RELATED TEXTS

Poems about spiders, in particular "Spider Work" in the same Journal and "Fred" (JJ 36)

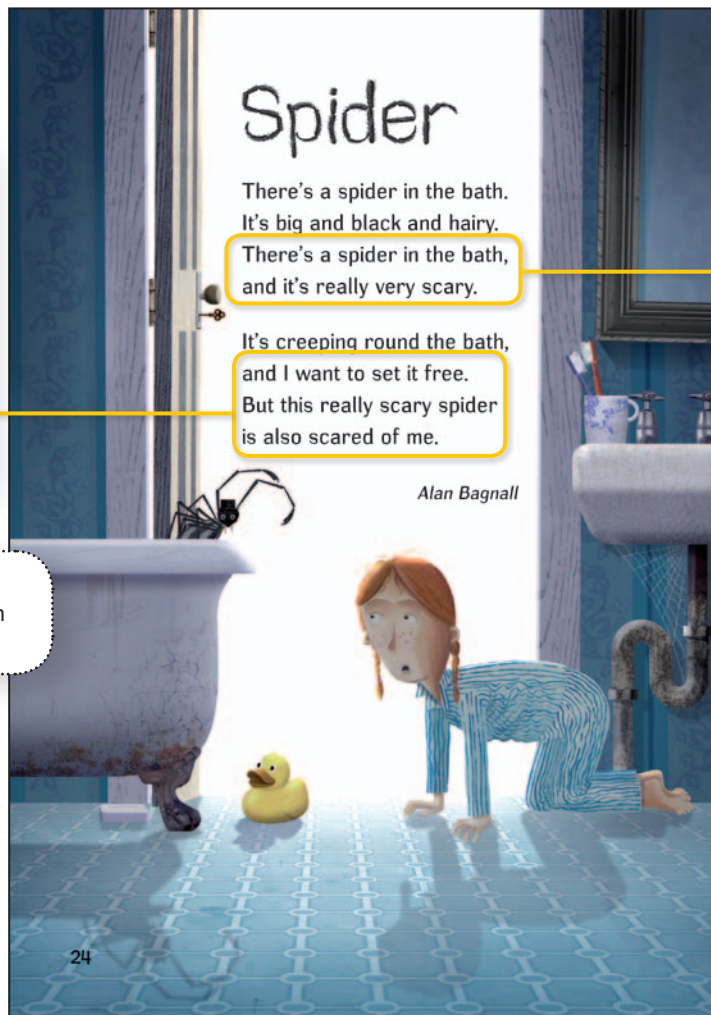
Other texts about spiders: *The Spider in the Shower* by Margaret Mahy; *The White-tailed Spider* (RTR, Gold).

## TEXT CHARACTERISTICS

Key text characteristics relating to the reading standard for after three years at school are shown in the boxes with a solid outline. Other boxes indicate additional characteristics.

A mix of explicit and implicit content that requires within text and illustrations students to notice clues and make connections to their own experiences in order to infer that the child in the poem is having a problem getting rid of the spider

The shift from the perspective of the girl to that of the spider in the last line



## Spider

There's a spider in the bath.  
It's big and black and hairy.

There's a spider in the bath,  
and it's really very scary.

It's creeping round the bath,  
and I want to set it free.  
But this really scary spider  
is also scared of me.

Alan Bagnall

A variety of sentence structures, including simple and compound sentences, with some phrases repeated for poetic effect

**English (Reading)**

Level 2 – Ideas: Show some understanding of ideas within, across, and beyond texts.

Level 2 – Language features: Show some understanding of how language features are used for effect within and across texts.

**SUGGESTED READING PURPOSES**

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

- To find out how the girl and the spider feel about each other and what the author thinks about spiders
- To identify how the writer has used language that supports visualising
- To read expressively for an audience.

**SETTING A LEARNING GOAL**

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

Some behaviours you could expect to see as the students read in order to meet the reading purpose are suggested below. **Select and adapt** from them to set your specific learning goal(s). Be guided by your students’ particular needs and experiences – their culture, language, and identity (*Reading and Writing Standards for Years 1–8*, Knowledge of the learner, page 6).


The students:

- make connections between the descriptive language and their own experience of spiders to visualise what is happening and to infer what the girl and the spider feel about each other
- attend to the line breaks, punctuation, and rhyme to read expressively for an audience
- use word-solving strategies to decode and/or work out the meaning of unfamiliar words and phrases.

**INTRODUCING THE TEXT**


- Discuss the students’ (and your) experience of and feelings about spiders. *What are some words you could use to describe spiders?* If they have already read “Spider Work” (in this Journal), encourage debate about contrasting points of view.
- Have the students look at the illustration and make inferences about what the girl and the spider are feeling.
- Share the reading purpose and learning goal(s).

**METACOGNITION**




Effective readers are metacognitive. They are aware of the processes and strategies they draw on and are able to explain how they used these to successfully make meaning and think critically. Examples of metacognitive behaviours, or strategies that promote metacognitive behaviours, are threaded through the notes and indicated by .

**EXPECTED STUDENT BEHAVIOURS**

*(what to look for, prompt, and support as the students work towards achieving their learning goal)*

-  As they read or reread this text, students notice when meaning has broken down. They draw on a range of strategies to correct the problem and can explain what they did.

**HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT YOUR STUDENTS TO READ, RESPOND, AND THINK CRITICALLY**

-  Ask questions: *How did you know that bit was wrong? Or I noticed that you reread that bit when you got confused. How did rereading help you?*
-  Use prompts: *How did you know that bit was right? Think about the strategy you used. How did it help you?*
-  Give feedback: *I noticed that you read this as... and then you fixed it up by ...*

**READING AND DISCUSSING THE TEXT**

In order to meet the reading purpose: **The students make connections between the descriptive language and their own experience of spiders to visualise what is happening and infer how the girl and the spider feel about each other.**

**EXPECTED STUDENT BEHAVIOURS**

*(what to look for, prompt, and support as the students work towards achieving their learning goal)*

**VERSE 1**

The students check and refine their inferences about how the girl feels by making connections between the descriptive language (“big and black and hairy”, “very scary”) and their own experience of spiders to infer that the girl is scared of the spider.

**HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT YOUR STUDENTS TO READ, RESPOND, AND THINK CRITICALLY**

After reading the first verse, have the students think, pair, and share what they think now and whether their initial inference has changed. *What is she feeling? How do you know? Is this what you thought before reading?*

## VERSE 2

The students can visualise the girl's problem. They infer from the line "and I want to set it free" that the girl doesn't want to hurt the spider but just wants it out of the house.

They recognise the word "But" as an indicator that there is going to be a complication of some sort.

They visualise and think critically about the situation (that if the spider is scared, it's likely to be running away from the girl so it's harder to catch).

Support the students to create a picture in their mind. "Creeping" is a good word to describe how the spider is moving. I can see very clearly what is happening. Have them share their picture with a partner. What is the girl thinking? How do you know?

Support the students to notice the word "But". What word tells you that there's going to be a problem?

Prompt the students to think critically: What will the spider do if it's scared of the girl? Why is that a problem?

Prompt the students to consider what could happen next. Make a picture in your mind of what you think happens next. Tell a partner about your picture.

As they read, the students attend to meaning, punctuation, line breaks, and rhyme to read expressively for an audience.

In order to meet the reading purpose: **As they read, the students attend to meaning, punctuation, line breaks, and rhyme to read expressively for an audience.**

The students use appropriate intonation and expression. They read fluently.

What feelings about spiders is the author trying to convey? How will we read the poem to show these ideas?

Prompt them to use appropriate expression: Tell me how you can say "creeping" in a scary voice.

Read the poem with the students, modelling appropriate rhythm and expression.

For English language learners who find the pronunciation and intonation challenging, make sure that they hear the poem several times and have opportunities to practise in groups (or on their own with the CD).

Provide feedback on the students' expressive reading.

With support, the students reflect on their learning. They revisit the reading purpose and learning goals and explain some of the things they did to meet them, for example, how they visualised the situation and inferred the girl's point of view.

Revisit the reading purpose and learning goals.

Ask questions: How did the illustration help you understand what was happening in this poem? What words helped you decide what the girl and the spider felt about each other.

Prompt the students to think about how strategies such as using the illustrations, visualising, or identifying specific words and phrases could help them when they read another poem.

## AFTER READING

- Students can enjoy listening to the audio version on the *Junior Journal 42 and 43* CD and use it as a model for their own expressive oral reading of the poem.
- Have the students draw a picture to show how the girl felt and then draw another picture to show how the spider might have been feeling.
- Have the students consider what the author wanted the reader to think about spiders. Encourage discussion of different points of view about spiders.
- As you encounter the vocabulary in other texts (for example, "crept" and "scared" in "Scaredy Crow"), remind students of their work with this poem and/or refer to your vocabulary list or charts.
- The students can read and enjoy other texts about spiders and compare different points of view.