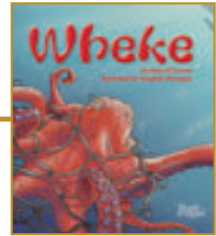


Wheke

by Sean O'Connor
illustrated by Vaughan Flanagan



This text is levelled at Gold 2.

Overview

In this narrative, Martin feels uneasy about getting too close to the octopus at the marine laboratory, but after he spends more time there, he manages to overcome his fears.

The “show don’t tell” approach of this text requires students to ask questions and search for clues to infer the answers, particularly about how Martin’s feelings change. Students will be able to make connections to any experiences they have had of feeling uneasy or uncertain about a situation.

There is an audio version of the text on the Ready to Read CD *Readalong 2010*.

Related texts

- Texts about octopuses: *Mum’s Octopus* (RTR, Orange)
- Texts about overcoming personal challenges or fears, for example, *I Want to be the Fox*, *Mum’s New Job* (RTR, Green), *Shimbir* (RTR, Orange), *Dimitri’s Lunch* (RTR, Turquoise), *The White-tailed Spider* (RTR, Gold)
- Texts that require students to infer, for example, at Purple: *Giant Soup*, *Did You Shake Your Tail Feathers?*, *Whitebait Season* (all RTR), “The Snowman” (JJ 32); at Gold: *A Gift for Auntie Ngā*, “Night is a Blanket” in *Night is a Blanket* (RTR), “Dog Magic” (JJ 35), “The Builder’s Pet” (JJ 39), “Pirate Crew” (JJ 41).

Text characteristics

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

Cross-curriculum links

Science (levels 1 and 2, life processes) – Recognise that all living things have certain requirements so they can stay alive.

The structure of the text as a narrative

A mix of explicit and implicit information within text and illustrations, for example,

- the opening, which plunges right into the action and requires the reader to infer who, what, where, when, and why
- the clues about Martin’s feelings, for example, his decision (on page 8) to name the octopus and beginning to refer to it as “him” rather than “it”
- the underlying themes that wild creatures belong in their own habitats and that people can overcome their fears by facing up to them



Martin stared at the octopus. The octopus stared back. The octopus uncurled one of its arms. The suckers stuck to the side of the tank, right by Martin’s face. “Yuck!” said Martin, jumping back. “Octopuses are really smart,” said Beth. “They’re great escape artists, too!” “It’s planning how to get out and eat me,” thought Martin. “You don’t need to worry,” said Beth. “He’s just curious.”

Frequent use of dialogue

Ideas organised in paragraphs

Some words with more than one meaning, for example, “curious”, “live” (as in “live octopus”)

Several time shifts, signalled by indicators of time and the use of the verb forms “had” and “must have” for events that had happened before the story began

A variety of sentence structures, including complex sentences

Words with suffixes (“powerful”, “carefully”) and prefixes (“octopus”, “uncurled”, “unlucky”)

The laboratory and marine reserve settings, which may be unfamiliar to some students

The information about octopuses and marine reserves

The use of the Māori word “wheke” (meaning octopus or squid) in the title and from page 8

Some unfamiliar words and phrases, the meaning of which is supported by the context or illustrations, for example, “escape artists”, “curious”, “live octopus”, “release”, “marine reserve”, “snorkelling”

The vocabulary related to sea life, for example, “Wheke”, “octopus”, “arms”, “suckers”, “laboratory”, “colossal squid”, “giant beak”, “crabs”, “shellfish”, “fish”, “crayfish”, “marine reserve”, “sea life”, “kelp”, “snorkelling”, “starfish”

The descriptive language, for example, “stared”, “Yuck!”, “jumping back”, “tangled up”, “nervous”, “huge”, “dangerous-looking”, “nightmares”, “sucked into its giant beak”, “frightened”, “squeeze itself between the rocks”, “glide”, “wrap up”, “crunch”, “powerful beak”, “unlucky”, “disturb”, “rocky”, “swirled”, “carefully lowered”, “smiling”, “dipped”, “spotted”, “poking out”

Suggested reading purpose

- To find out how Martin’s feelings about the octopus change

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?)

To meet the reading purpose, students need to draw on a range of comprehension and processing strategies, often simultaneously. The strategies, knowledge, and skills below link to *The Literacy Learning Progressions*. Select and adapt from them to set your specific learning goal. Be guided by your students’ particular needs and experiences: who they are, where they come from, and what they bring (*Reading and Writing Standards for Years 1–8*, Knowledge of the learner, page 6).

This text provides opportunities for students to:

- ask questions and search for answers
- “read between the lines” and make inferences
- track the sequence of events (summarise) using indicators of time and verb forms as clues
- use clues in the text to help visualise the author’s descriptions
- use word-solving strategies to decode and work out the meanings of unfamiliar words and phrases
- identify the main ideas (underlying themes) of this text.

Introducing the text

- Look at the cover and tell the students the title. Prompt them to work out what “Wheke” means and use their prior knowledge to establish what language it is, for example, their knowledge of the “f” sound for “wh”. Discuss how the octopus might have become caught in the net.
- Ask the students to share what they know and think about octopuses or squid.
- Don’t share the specific reading purpose and learning goal at this point. Tell the students that this author uses a “show don’t tell” approach so that they will need to ask questions and make inferences. Prompt them to recall another text they have read recently (this could be a guided text or one that you have read to them) that has required them to infer.

Reading the text

Below are some behaviours you could expect to see as the students read and discuss this text. Each example is accompanied by instructional strategies to scaffold their learning. Select and adapt from the suggestions according to your students’ needs and experiences.

The students ask themselves questions and search for information (both explicit and implicit) to help them make inferences about what is happening and how Martin’s feelings are changing.

- Set a purpose for reading page 2. For example, *As you read, ask yourself questions about what is happening.*
- Ask the students to share their questions (for example, who, what, where, why) then read page 3 to look for clues to the answers. Encourage them to also refer back to page 2. For students who may need more support, especially English language learners, you could model how to find the answers by using an enlarged photocopy of the page and circling or underlining the relevant sections.
- Discuss the students’ inferences and the evidence for them.
- Focus on the clues to how Martin’s feelings change and share the overall reading purpose and learning goal.
- You can continue in this way, stopping after each double-page spread to discuss the students’ questions and inferences or have the students read and discuss the text with a partner. There are opportunities for students to ask themselves some key questions at the end of page 5 (“What will Martin decide?”) and on page 10 (“Why was Beth watching Martin’s face?”). If necessary, prompt them to notice by asking: *What question is in your mind here?*
- When the students have read the text, construct a chart together that tracks how Martin’s feelings have changed and what evidence they used for their inferences. A partially completed example is given below.

| Pages | How was Martin feeling? | What clues did we use to infer this? |
|-------|---|---|
| 2–3 | scared | the illustration He said, “Yuck!” and jumped away from the tank. He thought the octopus wanted to eat him. We think octopuses are scary. |
| 4 | a bit nervous about seeing the octopus really scared of the colossal squid | the first sentence “Martin had been having nightmares” |

- Revisit the learning goal and support the students to summarise how they met it, for example, how they formed and tested a hypothesis or made an inference. *What clues did you put together?*

The students identify and discuss the main ideas (underlying themes) of this text – that people can overcome their fears by facing up to them and that wild creatures belong in their natural habitat.

- Prompt the students to consider the main ideas by asking *What do you think Martin learnt about himself in this text?* You could discuss how Beth supported him in getting him to overcome his fears. The students could make connections to *The White-tailed Spider* (RTR, Gold), which uses a similar strategy to try and overcome people’s fears.
- Prompt the students to consider the other main idea by asking *Why didn’t Martin investigate the arm poking out (on page 12)?* or why Beth wanted to set Wheke free rather than keeping him in the laboratory for people to come and see.

The students track the sequence of events (summarise) using indicators of time and verb forms as clues.

- After reading pages 2 and 3, direct the students to focus on the second sentence on page 3. Support them to notice the significance of the verb “had” by asking them to recall the events so far (the octopus getting tangled in the net,

Beth rescuing the octopus and taking him to the laboratory, and Beth inviting Martin and his mum to visit), and then to put them in sequence. *How do you know this is the right order?* Explain the use of the verb “had” to refer to something that happened quite a while ago rather than recently.

- Then have the students read page 4 and repeat the same steps (identify the events and put them in sequence). They could do this as a think, pair, and share task. Clarify that page 5 returns to the present situation in the laboratory. Draw out the idea that page 4 is like an insight into Martin’s thinking (a large “thought bubble”). There is another insight into Martin’s thoughts on page 6.
- Tell the students to also look out for indicators of time (for example, “That night”) to help them clarify the rest of the sequence of events.

The students use clues in the text to help them visualise the author’s descriptions, for example, how the octopus moves and eats.

- Model a think-aloud. For example (on page 2): *The word “uncurled” is helping me think about how the octopus moves its arms. The illustrations are also helping me build a picture of the octopus moving in a smooth, flowing way.*
- Prompt the students to look on page 8 for more clues about how the octopus moves (“squeeze itself between the rocks”, “they don’t have bones”, “glide”). They could move their own arms as if they didn’t have bones.
- Have them read the fourth paragraph on page 8 (and refer to the illustration) to clarify how the octopus ate his food.

The students use word-solving strategies (for example, using grapho-phonetic information, knowledge of word structure, and context, or looking for synonyms) to decode and/or work out the meaning of unfamiliar or confusing words and phrases.

- Prompt students to break up multi-syllabic words into chunks or syllables, for example, “oct-o-pus”, “lab-or-a-tory”, “re-lease”, “care-ful-ly”, “star-fish”. You can model this on a whiteboard.
- Have the students think, pair, and share about the meaning of “escape artist” on page 2. Clarify that “artist”, as well as referring to someone who creates art, can mean someone who has a particular skill. (Page 8 offers clues as to why an octopus is so good at escaping.)

- To help the students with the meaning of unfamiliar words, prompt them to think about the context and look for words or phrases close by. For example, the context supports the meaning of “curious” (page 2); syntax helps to clarify the meaning of “live” as in “live octopus” (page 4); the synonym “huge” supports the meaning of “colossal” (page 4); and the phrase “set him free” supports the meaning of “release” (page 9).
- You could use a think-aloud to model strategies for working out word meanings. For example, on page 9: *I’m not sure about what a marine reserve is, but the next sentence says people aren’t allowed to go fishing there or disturb the sea life. So I’m inferring that it’s like a bush reserve but in the sea, a safe place for sea creatures and plants. I’ll look out for other clues as I read.*
- Have a dictionary available to confirm or clarify word meanings.

After reading

- The students can reread the text silently while listening to the audio version on the Ready to Read CD *Readalong 2010*.
- The students can work with a partner to identify some examples of descriptive language that helped them visualise the way something looked, felt, or was done.
- Have the students share with a partner any words or phrases they found difficult and the strategies they used to work them out. Listen to the discussions. Do you need to follow up on any decoding strategies, particular words, or features of words?
- Focus on some pairs of synonyms in the text (“colossal” and “huge”; “set him free” and “release”) and generate others or find more examples in a dictionary. The students could deepen their understanding by arranging the synonyms for “huge” on a cline (or continuum) according to their degree of size.
- Discuss how prefixes or suffixes can affect the meaning of a word. You could focus on the prefix “octo” meaning “eight”. Explain that the rest of the word “octopus” comes from the Greek word “pous”, meaning “foot”. Have the students generate more words using the prefix “octo”, or they could refer to a dictionary.