

LEVEL **l**iii 2 3 4 5

I Was Sad When My Cat Died

THE LEARNING CONTEXT

This class worked for two weeks on a language and art study of cats.

During the first week, the students were immersed in a wealth of cat-related literature through their personal reading, shared reading, and stories and poems read to them by their teacher. The titles included Joy Cowley's Greedy Cat stories from the Ready to Read series, *Fat Cat Tompkin* by Dianna Noonan and *Cat's Whiskers* by Bronwyn Tester from the Voyages series, *Scallywag* by Jeanette Rowe, *Big Cat Dreaming* by Margaret Wild, and *Pawprints in the Butter* by Joy Cowley and friends. The class assembled a list of content words and dynamic verbs from their reading throughout the week. The students also created art works that emphasised the ways cats move.

During the second week, the students worked in pairs to discuss their own cats. The teacher encouraged them to question each other for clarification and to elaborate on their ideas. The students then shared particular experiences with small groups and finally with the whole class.

Over several days, the teacher modelled a draft of her own cat story and emphasised the use of precise and colourful verbs and adjectives. The students then wrote an initial draft paying special attention to vocabulary while the teacher moved about and conferenced with individuals. The students shared their drafts in small groups or with the class and received feedback. They revised and proofread their drafts.

The teacher checked each piece for spelling and punctuation before the students published them. This work is Cameron's first draft, edited by him and with some teacher corrections.

Teacher-student conversations

On the first day

Teacher: That's a good start to your story. I like how you've told how you felt. What happened next?

Cameron: We had a funeral. He got put in the dirt. I'll put that in.

On the second day

Teacher: Why was he like Greedy Cat?

Cameron: Because he was a golden colour when he had all of his fur.

Teacher: Can you add that to your piece?

Cameron: Yes, his golden colour.

Teacher: Shall I do that, because you're tired?

Cameron: Yes.

INTEGRATING READING AND WRITING

A reading programme, featuring a range of cat-related texts, originally motivated this story.

Reading programmes provide opportunities for students to read a range of texts that draw upon and relate to their own knowledge and experience. In guided and shared reading, there is scope for students to explore and discuss the choices that writers make about vocabulary and language features.

Students can be usefully engaged in sequencing activities using sets of illustrations. They can progress to simple text pieces that have been cut up.

WHERE TO NEXT?

To move Cameron towards the next learning step, the teacher could help him to focus on:

- structure: developing logical sequencing of ideas;
- language features: possibly using such features as similes;
- spelling: recording all dominant consonant and vowel sounds;
- punctuation: using full stops, capital letters, and speech marks consistently and with greater independence.

These skills could be modelled during shared writing sessions. Specific feedback during conferencing times will help Cameron to meet his personal learning goals.

CURRICULUM LINKS



Level 1: Writing Functions

Poetic Writing: Students should write on a variety of topics, beginning to shape ideas.

Levels 1 and 2: Reading and Writing Processes

Exploring Language: Students should explore choices made by writers, and identify and use the common conventions of writing and organisation of text which affect understanding.

Thinking Critically: Students should identify and express meanings in written texts, drawing on personal background, knowledge, and experience.

English in the New Zealand Curriculum, pages 35–36

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I Was Sad When My Cat Died

STUDENT'S FIRST DRAFT

6-8 of
I was sad.
We When my cat
died from a car.
And I tried to
yell out to him
"look out you silly
gee you will pay
for this."
Good start. What happened next?
We
we had a
funeral and he
was very flat.
We buried him
in the the dirt
dirt at W
Wellington
Wellton He
It was
like Greedy
because he was a golden colour
and a of.
the fur came
far cam off.



Poetic Writing: Personal Experience

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ACCESS THE ENGLISH EXEMPLARS ONLINE AT www.tki.org.nz/r/assessment/exemplars/eng/

What the Work Shows

Cameron uses a strong personal voice to share an experience and feelings that are obviously important to him. Precise description and direct speech give impact to his writing.

STUDENT'S FIRST DRAFT

DEEPER FEATURES

Voice

Records a personal experience and shows the beginning of personal voice. Also includes a personal response.

Ideas

Includes ideas that are personally meaningful. Begins to support ideas with some detail.

Sentences

Uses some variation in sentence beginnings. Writes mainly simple sentences but uses a compound and a complex sentence.

Language features

Uses precise description, direct speech, and a reading analogy to give his writing impact.

I was sad When my cat died from a car. I trid to Ual alt to him “Look out you silly gos you well pae for this.”

We had a fonroe and he was vare flat. We bered him in the dirt at Wellton. He was like Geed cat because he was a golden colour and ol of the far cam off.

SURFACE FEATURES

Spelling

Spells most high-frequency words correctly. Records dominant sounds in order.

Punctuation

Uses capital letters and full stops with support. Uses speech marks with some success.

Grammar

Uses most sentence structures correctly.

REFERENCES

Cowley, Joy and friends (1991). *Pawprints in the Butter*. Wellington: Mallinson Rendel.

Noonan, Diana (1994). *Fat Cat Tompkin*. Santa Rosa, California: SRA (Voyages series).

Rowe, Jeanette (1990). *Scallywag*. Sydney: Ashton Scholastic.

Tester, Bronwyn (1997). *Cat's Whiskers*. Santa Rosa, California: SRA (Voyages series).

Wild, Margaret (1996). *Big Cat Dreaming*. Toronto: Annick Press.

Titles and other details for the Ready to Read books featuring Greedy Cat (including those in big-book format) can be located in the Ministry of Education's online catalogue at www.learningmedia.co.nz

[I was sad when my cat died from a car. I tried to yell out to him, “Look out you silly goose you will pay for this.” We had a funeral and he was very flat. We buried him in the dirt at Wellington. He was like Greedy Cat because he was a golden colour and all of the fur came off.]