

Super-Nature Stars

Time allocated: 4 × 22-minute lessons

Getting started

Background information for teachers

Read

- Dreaming stories
- Bunyips
- Culture camps

Read also

- Ceremony and Elders
- Bush miracles
- Traditional astronomy

Plot summary

Denny is a 10-year-old boy who loves to tease his 5-year-old nephew, Jarrah. He tells the reader the scary stories he has invented about their Aunt Yanyi's house. While the rest of his family go to the beach on a very hot day, Denny helps Aunt Yanyi with her housework. But things go wrong. Where he sweeps, spiders run amok and dust swirls around him. When he cleans up the garden, there are too many weeds – and he hears snakes rustling among them. When he washes his hands in the bathroom, he sees a huge spider, and then the power cuts out. When he talks to Aunt Yanyi, a magpie flies in, breaks her ornaments and poops on him. But his birthday is tomorrow and, at the end of the day, the family give him a big surprise.

Discussion points and activities using the Yarning Strong anthologies

Year 3

1. Invite the class to define the word “respect”. What does it look like, sound like, feel like? Is it featured in your school or class rules?
2. Read the poem *A Kangaroo is in the Sky* (pp. 18–19) in the Yarning Strong Family Anthology.
 - a) Invite students to illustrate this poem in their own way.
 - b) Have students share their illustration with a partner and explain what they drew and why.

Lesson plan

- c) Discuss how the poem shows that all humans and plants and animals are connected. This is what Aboriginal people refer to as connection to Country.
 - d) How is connection to Country is shown in *Super-Nature Stars*?
3. Map out all the different things Denny learns in *Super-Nature Stars* and how he learns more about himself and his culture with each new lesson. Read *Dadirri, A Reflection* (pp. 33–34) in the Yarning Strong Identity Anthology.
 - a) Discuss why storytelling is important in First Nations cultures, and how this is one major way that Aboriginal people learn about their family, history and culture.
 - b) Discuss how First Nations cultures encourage children to wait patiently, listen carefully, and when it's the right time you will learn and find out where/how you belong.
 - c) Compare this to your map of Denny's learning and growth. Discuss how Denny is becoming a storyteller and why this is a good thing in his family.
4. Read the poem *Seasonal Revelations* (p. 50) in the Yarning Strong Family Anthology.
 - a) Look at the image of the tree, and how the trunk/branches are in the shape of a human arm/hand. How does this image show the connection between people and Country?
 - b) What are some key lines in the poem that give a sense of history and how long people have lived on this land?
 - c) What are some key lines that connect people to trees and Country?

Year 4

1. Invite the class to define the word "respect". What does it look like, sound like, feel like? Is it featured in your school or class rules?
2. Read *Respect* (pp. 8–9) in the Yarning Strong Family Anthology. Discuss what respect means in these two texts: are there any additional meanings you could add to the class definitions? Discuss what is meant by "respect for Elders" and "respect for Country".
3. What does Denny learn about respecting Elders and Country in *Super-Nature Stars*?
4. Read the poem *Living Literature* (p. 7) in the Yarning Strong Family Anthology.
 - a) Consider how old trees can become. What does the poet mean by saying our stories and memories are held in trees?
 - b) What does this tell us about how we live in connection with nature?

Lesson 1

Learning intention

Students will explore how helping Elders is a form of respect and identify how storytelling (yarning) connects generations.

Lesson plan

Success criteria

- I can describe how Denny shows respect to Auntie Yanyi.
- I can explain the difference between a “scary story” and a “yarning story”.
- I can identify why laughter and surprises are important for family belonging.

Materials

- Copies of *Super-Nature Stars*
- Yarning Circle Visual: A diagram explaining the tradition of sharing stories
- Predictive Story Map: A 3-box sequence (Denny's Scary Story | Denny's Hard Work | The Family Surprise)
- Pre-drawn Auntie's House template

I do

- Introduce the Focus Question: “How do we show we care for our Elders?”
- Model Inference: Read Chapter 1 – Sweaty socks, where Denny teases Jarrah with scary stories.
- Think Aloud: “Denny uses his imagination to tease his nephew, which is funny, but his true character is shown when he chooses to stay behind in the heat to help Auntie Yanyi with housework. This is a practical way to show respect.”
- Set the Scene: Explain the setting (a hot day, Auntie's house) and the nature elements (spiders, snakes, magpies) that make Denny's day difficult.

We do

- Analyse the Conflict: Discuss the disasters Denny faces (the power cut, the magpie, the dust).
- Group Discussion: Ask, “Even though things went wrong, why was Mum proud of Denny?”
- Define Scary Story: Point to the opening chapter of the text, where Denny invents stories to tease Jarrah.
- Think Aloud: “When Denny tells Jarrah about scary things in Auntie's house, his purpose is to tease or play a joke. It is an ‘invented’ story meant for a quick reaction.”
- Define Yarning: Display the Yarning Circle Visual. Introduce the idea that Denny's ability to tell stories is a gift passed down from his ancestors.
- Discuss how laughter (even after a magpie poops on you!) helps a family stay close.

You do

- Story Mapping: Have students use the Predictive Story Map to illustrate the three main phases of the story:
 - Denny not going to the beach with Jarrah and helping Auntie instead.

Lesson plan

- Denny facing the spiders/dust/heat/magpies while helping Aunty.
- The family camping surprise.
- Values Reflection: Have students write one sentence focusing on Denny's help or his storytelling: "Denny is a Super-Nature Star because..."

Enabling

Give students a pre-drawn Aunty's House template to add the spiders and magpies to.

Extending

Ask students to yarn a 30-second story about a time they helped an elder, focusing on making the audience laugh.

Checking for understanding

- The Laughter Test: Ask: "Why did the family surprise Denny with a camping trip instead of just a present?"
- Exit Ticket: Ask students to name one ancestor skill Denny used in the story.

Curriculum links

English

- AC9E3LE02 discuss connections between personal experiences and character experiences in literary texts and share personal preferences
- AC9E3LY02 use interaction skills to contribute to conversations and discussions to share information and ideas
- HASS
- AC9HS4K01 the diversity of First Nations Australians, their social organisation and their continuous connection to Country/Place

Assessment ideas

Record students' contributions to the discussion about why Denny's mum was proud of him, drawing out their understanding of the concept of respect for elders.

Review students' story maps, looking for evidence of their understanding of how respect is shown and the importance of belonging within families.

Lesson 2

Learning intention

Students will identify and interpret colloquial expressions and hyphenated compound words to understand how language choices affect the mood and realism of a narrative.

Success criteria

- I can define the term *colloquial* and identify examples in the text.
- I can use context clues to determine the meaning of informal expressions.
- I can locate hyphenated compound words and explain how they add detail to a sentence.

Materials

- Copies of *Super-Nature Stars*
- Research sheet 1 (Understanding colloquial expressions)
- Sticky notes
- Highlighters and dictionaries

I do

- Defining Colloquialisms: Introduce the term “colloquial” as informal, everyday language used in conversation.
- Display Research sheet 1: Demonstrate how to use the page numbers on the sheet to find expressions.
 - Example: On page 9, find “his noggin”.
 - Think Aloud: “In this sentence, the author isn't being formal. Based on the context of Denny's actions, 'noggin' means his head.”
- Introducing Hyphenated Compounds: Point out hyphenated compound words in Chapter 1 – Sweaty socks, like “five-year-old” or “sweat-soaked”. Explain that these hyphens glue words together to create a single, specific meaning.

We do

- Context Hunt: Look at page 8 together to find the word “meanie” or the phrase “put a sock in it”.
- Discussion: Why does the author use these words instead of formal language? (Effect: It makes the characters sound like real family members talking to each other.)
- Playground Talk: Discuss colloquial expressions students use at home or in the playground.

Lesson plan

You do

- Colloquial Research: Have students select at least six expressions from Research sheet 1 to locate and interpret using the indicated page numbers.
 - Examples include “deadly” (p. 27), “you mob” (p. 30) and “yarns” (p. 34).
- Hyphen Hunt: Have students search Chapter 2 – Dusty work to find at least five examples of hyphenated compound words.
- Partner Share: In pairs, have students compare their hyphenated words and discuss their meanings (e.g., how *over-the-top* describes a behaviour more vividly than just saying *very*).

Enabling

- Provide a simplified definition of “colloquial” on a sticky note for the student's desk.
- Highlight the specific sentences containing the hyphenated words in Chapter 2 – Dusty work to narrow their search.

Extending

Ask students to rewrite a paragraph from the story using formal language and discuss how it changes the feeling or mood of the family scene.

Checking for understanding

Select a colloquial expression from Research sheet 1, such as “put a sock in it”, and ask: “If I didn’t know this meant ‘be quiet’, what clues in the story help me figure it out?”

Curriculum links

English

- AC9E3LA03 describe how texts across the curriculum use different language features and structures relevant to their purpose
- AC9E4LA08 understand how adverb groups/phrases and prepositional phrases work in different ways to provide circumstantial details about an activity

Assessment ideas

Evaluate and record students’ contributions to the discussion about colloquial phrases in terms of their ability to identify and interpret colloquial expressions they are familiar with.

Rove and take notes during students’ partner discussions about how well they can identify and interpret hyphenated words.

Lesson plan

Collect Research Sheet 1 as evidence of students' understanding of both colloquial expressions and hyphenated compound words.

Lesson 3

Learning intention

Students will analyse how Denny's expressive language builds his character and creates mood, then adapt these features to create their own humorous recounts and visual interpretations.

Success criteria

- I can identify expressive words and phrases that reveal Denny's personality.
- I can explain how Denny's language choices influence the mood of a scene.
- I can compose a humorous recount using invented and hyphenated words.
- I can illustrate a scene from the text using specific details found in the writing.

Materials

- Copies of *Super-Nature Stars* (Chapter 1 – Sweaty socks, and pp. 14–15 and 31)
- ComicBook! app or similar digital software
- Highlighters and drawing materials

I do

- Analysing Voice: Read the opening page of Chapter 1 – Sweaty socks aloud. Highlight expressive phrases like those used to describe Denny's "scary stories".
- Think Aloud: "When Denny uses words like these, it tells me he is imaginative and a bit of a trickster. The language makes the mood feel energetic and funny, rather than truly frightening."
- Modelling Detail: Briefly look at page 14. Point out specific sensory details of Aunty Yanyi's house that influence the way Denny acts.

We do

- Mood Investigation: Turn to page 31. In pairs, have the students highlight expressive phrases on the page.
- Discussion: Ask, "What kind of mood is created here through Denny's words?" (e.g., chaotic, hilarious or overwhelmed).
- Brainstorming Compounds: Together, invent a new hyphenated word to describe a messy room, such as "clothes-covered" or "dust-monster-filled".

Lesson plan

You do

- Humorous Recount: Working in pairs, students compose a short, funny story about cleaning their bedrooms.
 - They must include expressive phrases from the book.
 - They must include their own invented hyphenated words.
- Visualising the Setting: Students re-read the scene on pp. 14–15 where Denny climbs the stairs and sweeps the beds.
- The Drawing Task: Have students use the ComicBook! app or paper to draw two specific moments from the story.
 - Requirement: Students must label the details of the house using exact words from the story to ensure the visual represents the text accurately.

Enabling

- Provide a list of expressive starters for the bedroom recount (e.g., “The floor was a...”).
- Provide a checklist of three specific items from page 14 that *must* appear in the drawing.

Extending

Comparative Mood: Ask students to write two versions of the same sentence: one in Denny's voice and one in a serious, formal voice. Discuss how the mood shifts.

Checking for understanding

Look at a student's drawing. Ask: “Which word from the text helped you know exactly how to draw this?”

Curriculum links

English

- AC9E3LA03 describe how texts across the curriculum use different language features and structures relevant to their purpose
- AC9E3LY01 recognise how texts can be created for similar purposes but different audiences
- AC9E4LY06 plan, create, edit and publish written and multimodal imaginative, informative and persuasive texts, using visual features, relevant linked ideas, complex sentences, appropriate tense, synonyms and antonyms, correct spelling of multisyllabic words and simple punctuation

Lesson plan

Assessment ideas

Monitor and record students' contributions to the discussion about expressive language based on their highlighting of the text. Invite reflections about how each phrase students identified reflects the mood of the characters.

Have each pair share their completed humorous recounts with another group and note the expressive language and invented hyphenated words that were used. Rove and take notes on how effectively they can identify these language features.

Collect and analyse the language in students' humorous recounts as evidence of their understanding of expressive language and their ability to create invented hyphenated words.

Collect students' drawings and assess how successful they are in choosing and depicting moments from the story.

Lesson 4**Learning intention**

Students will analyse how authors use similes to create vivid imagery, and research historical timepieces to create a comparative fact sheet. They will then apply creative language features to draft their own spooky tale.

Success criteria

- I can identify and define a simile as a comparison using "like" or "as".
- I can complete a compare-and-contrast fact sheet about timepieces using Research sheet 2 (Telling the time in the past and in the present).
- I can compose a short tale using similes, hyphenated words and expressive language.

Materials

- Copies of *Super-Nature Stars* (Chapters 1 and 2)
- Research sheet 1 (Understanding colloquial expressions)
- Research sheet 2 (Telling the time in the past and in the present)
- Digital app (e.g., StoryKit) or paper/pencils for illustrating

I do

- Modeling Similes: Locate the sentence on p. 12: "... making silver hairs stick out like echidna spikes ..."

Lesson plan

- Think Aloud: “The author uses the word ‘like’ to compare two very different things: soft hair and sharp spikes. This is called a simile. It helps me visualise how messy and wild Auntie’s hair looks.”
- Defining Sundials: Re-read Denny’s description of the sundial on page 16. Explain that a sundial uses the position of the sun to tell the time.

We do

- Brainstorming Similes: As a class, compose similes for the characters.
 - *Example:* “Auntie Yanyi is as busy as a bee.”
- Spooky Brainstorm: Re-read Denny’s spooky tales about the sundial (pp. 7–8) and bunyips (pp. 31–32).
- Creative Thinking: Together, brainstorm a magical tale about an everyday object, such as a “haunted broom” or “glowing paints”, using interesting expressions and hyphenated words.

You do

- Comparing Time: Have students research sundials and modern timepieces. Using Research sheet 2, they draw a sundial for the Past and a modern clock for the Present, then completing the comparison boxes.
- Creative Composition: In pairs, students use a digital app such as StoryKit to compose and illustrate a short spooky or magical tale.
 - Requirement: Each student’s tale must include at least one simile, one invented hyphenated word and one colloquial expression found on Research sheet 1.

Enabling

- Provide a Simile Starter list (e.g., “His eyes were like...”, “She ran as fast as...”).
- For Research sheet 2, provide images of different sundials for students to trace or reference.

Extending

- Complexity in Writing: Challenge students to write their spooky tale from the perspective of the object (e.g., the broom’s point of view).
- Technical Research: Ask students to find out *why* a sundial might be less accurate than a modern watch in certain weather conditions.

Checking for understanding

- Simile Spotting: Ask students to identify the two things being compared in their own stories.

Lesson plan

- Comparison Review: Look at Research sheet 2. Ask: "What is one way a sundial is different from a digital watch?"

Curriculum links

English

- AC9E3LE04 discuss the effects of some literary devices used to enhance meaning and shape the reader's reaction
- AC9E3LY05 use comprehension strategies when listening and viewing to build literal and inferred meaning, and begin to evaluate texts by drawing on a growing knowledge of context, text structures and language features
- AC9E3LY06 plan, create, edit and publish imaginative, informative and persuasive written and multimodal texts, using visual features, appropriate form and layout, with ideas grouped in simple paragraphs, mostly correct tense, topic-specific vocabulary and correct spelling of most high-frequency and phonetically regular words

Assessment ideas

Record students' ideas for similes to describe the characters and evaluate their success.

Evaluate students' ability to compare and contrast using Research Sheet 2, looking for students who demonstrate an understanding of the similarities and differences between the two timepieces.

Check students' completed spooky stories for evidence of similes, invented hyphenated words, colloquial expressions and any other expressive language.