

Figurative language; similes and metaphors

Year 4



Lesson overview

This lesson consists of three activities exploring letter writing conventions and culminating in students writing a letter to their own pen pal. Schools may wish to set up a pen pal system with students at another school in Australia or encourage the students to choose their own pen pal. Register for **The Pen Pal Club** at auspost.com.au/penpalclub to assist you in arranging pen pals for your students.

The activities throughout this lesson will use the book *The Pen Pal Club* by Sally Morgan as a stimulus for writing letters to pen pals and exploring features of writing, from the very basic to the more complex. This lesson will primarily focus on the Literacy strand of the English curriculum however students will also explore aspects of the Language and Literature strands. Year 4 students will be exploring the figurative language features of similes and metaphors. They will identify similes and metaphors in *The Pen Pal Club*, improve standard sentences by creating similes and metaphors of their own and then writing a letter to their chosen pen pal, including similes and metaphors as language features in their writing.

Teachers may choose to organise an excursion to the local Post Office for students to post their letters at the end of these activities. This is a great opportunity for students to ask questions and expand their knowledge about the Australian postal system. Email penpalclub@auspost.com.au to arrange a tour of your local Post Office.

Learning intentions

Students will understand:

- How to use adverbs
- How to use figurative language such as similes and metaphors
- How to lay out an informal letter

Resources

- *The Pen Pal Club* by Sally Morgan
- Large (A2) paper x 2 sheets
- Envelopes
- Stamps
- Supplementary interactive whiteboard (IWB) resources

For schools that do not have access to an IWB, please be aware that the resources can be downloaded or accessed on personal devices or used as a reference if teachers choose to provide their own resources.

Assessment

- Group discussions
- Group work (supervised)
- Self assessment activities
- Peer assessment activities
- Summative tasks (addressed envelope and letter)

Australian Curriculum links Year 4 – English Outcomes





- Identify characteristic features used in imaginative, informative and persuasive texts to meet the purpose of the text (**ACELY1690**).
- Plan, draft and publish imaginative, informative and persuasive texts containing key information and supporting details for a widening range of audiences, demonstrating increasing control over text structures and language features (**ACELY1694**).
- Re-read and edit for meaning by adding, deleting or moving words or word groups to improve content and structure (**ACELY1695**).
- Write using clearly formed joined letters, and develop increased fluency and automaticity (**ACELY1696**).

Differentiation

As with all our lessons teachers are encouraged to change or update the activities in order to cater to diverse student needs.

The activities in this unit have been differentiated for three ability levels (support, core and extension) with differing levels of support.

General capabilities

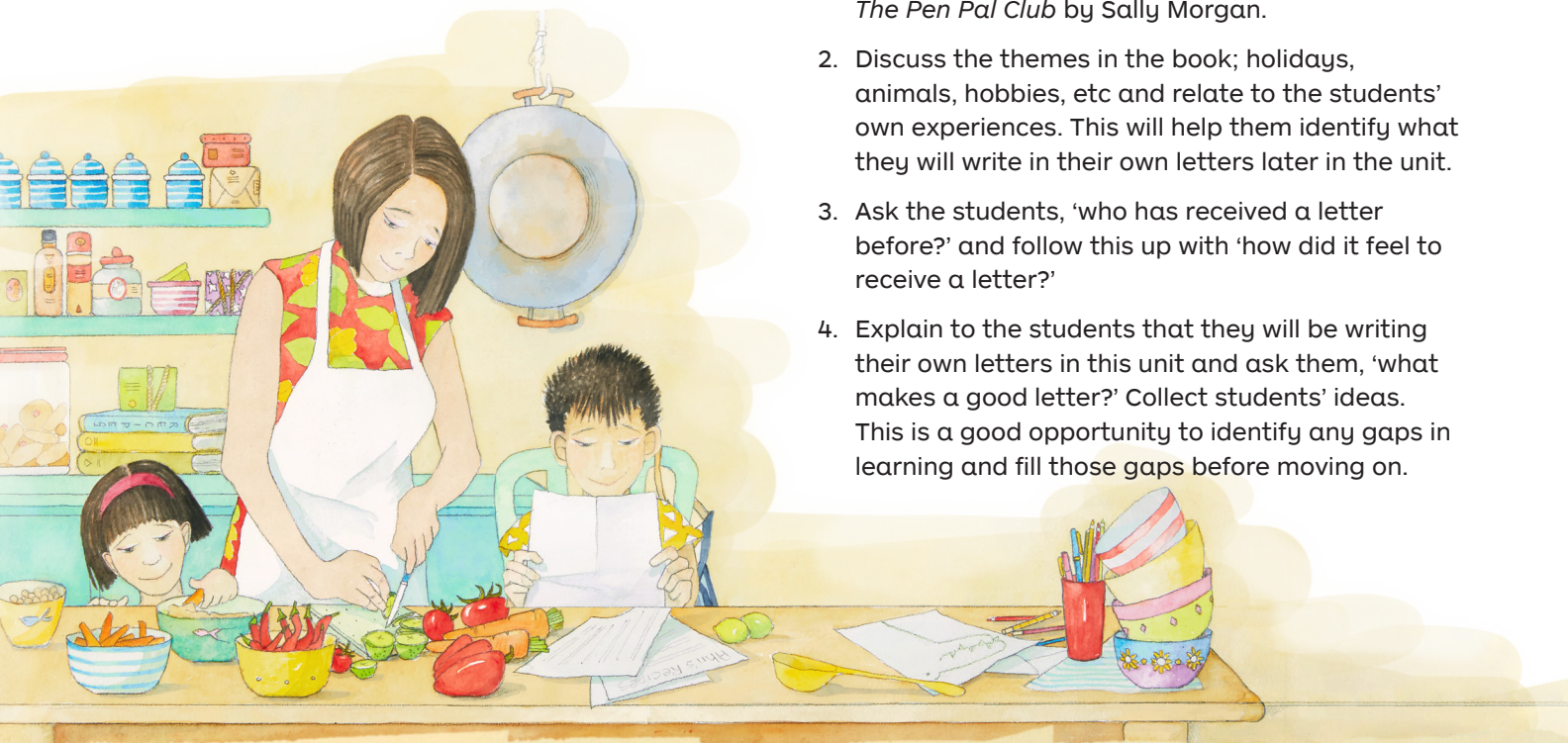
-  Literacy
-  Critical and Creative Thinking
-  Personal and Social Capability
-  Intercultural Understanding

Cross curriculum priorities

-  Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures (depending on school context)

Introduction

1. Gather the class as a group and read the book *The Pen Pal Club* by Sally Morgan.
2. Discuss the themes in the book; holidays, animals, hobbies, etc and relate to the students' own experiences. This will help them identify what they will write in their own letters later in the unit.
3. Ask the students, 'who has received a letter before?' and follow this up with 'how did it feel to receive a letter?'
4. Explain to the students that they will be writing their own letters in this unit and ask them, 'what makes a good letter?' Collect students' ideas. This is a good opportunity to identify any gaps in learning and fill those gaps before moving on.



Activity 1

Introduction

1. Explain to the class that you will be recapping how to write a good sentence today, so we can write a good letter at the end of this unit.
2. On the board, display a crazy sentence using one of the students' names. Ensure the sentence does not have correct punctuation and / or grammar so the students can improve it. i.e. 'in his spare time steven enjoys throwing flaming donuts into the pacific ocean'
3. As a class, improve the sentence until it is grammatically correct.
4. Repeat this activity as required to ensure each student's understanding.
5. Introduce or recap adverbs, i.e. words to describe a verb.
6. Display the slide *Describing Boring Sentences* on the board. Encourage students to choose an adverb describe the action and make each sentence more interesting. Teachers may need to model this first. Show that the adverb can go in different places within the sentence, i.e. 'Angrily, Jack dialled the number'. vs 'Jack dialled the number angrily'.

Main body - Part 1

1. Hand out the *Adverbs for Interest* activity sheet.
2. Challenge the students to rewrite each sentence with an adverb to make it more interesting. Three differentiated activities have been provided below. Teachers are encouraged to select the most appropriate activity according to student ability, or provide another, more appropriate activity.
 - **Support** - Students that need extra support sit in a small group with an adult and work together to improve one of the sentences on the sheet. Each student writes out the improved sentence in their workbooks or on their activity sheet.
 - **Core** - Students work in pairs to improve each sentence on the activity sheet by inserting an adverb. Each student rewrites the updated sentences on the activity sheet or in their workbook.
 - **Extension** - Students work independently to improve each sentence on the activity sheet by adding an adverb and some extra details to make it more interesting.

Main body - Part 2

1. Bring the class back together as a group. Introduce or recap similes, i.e. describing something using 'as' or 'like'.
2. Look through *The Pen Pal Club* again. What do the children in the book talk about?
3. Collect a list of nouns or noun phrases mentioned, i.e. camels, crocodiles, shiny gold nuggets, etc.
4. Model how to improve one of the nouns or noun phrases by using a simile to describe it. i.e. 'The shiny gold nuggets sparkled amongst the rocks like sunlight on water.'
5. Challenge the students to work with a partner and write a simile to describe one of the nouns or noun phrases you have collected. Encourage students to think about what they are reminded of when they think about each object. Students who need extra support may need to complete this activity in a small group with an adult.



Plenary

1. Invite the students to share the similes they have created. Teachers may choose to use student contributions to create a learning tool for display.
2. Ask the students to display their understanding of adverbs and similes using a 'thumbs up', 'thumbs down' self assessment. You can use the statements below or use your own.
 - I understand that adverbs describe a verb.
 - I understand where to use an adverb.
 - I understand what a simile is.
 - I understand that a simile uses 'as' or 'like'.
 - I understand how to write a simile.

Activity 2

Introduction

1. Start with a writing warm up: Ask the students, or display on the board, the following question, 'Would you rather have extra eyes in the back of your head or have three feet? Why?' Challenge the students to write their answer within a time limit of 2-5 minutes, depending on student needs.
2. Recap similes and the features of similes from previous activity.
3. Recap or introduce metaphors, i.e. describing something without using 'as' or 'like'. A metaphor describes object A as being object B. i.e. 'the stars were pinpricks stitched into the heavy blanket of the night'
4. Demonstrate how to write a metaphor. Discuss with the students the advantages of using figurative language and the difference in the feeling of the sentence. For example, using a metaphor tells the reader how to feel about the object, much more than a literal description.
5. Read the poem 'What is White?' by Mary O'Neill and discuss how the author has used descriptions of other things to describe the colour white.
6. On a large piece of paper (A2) draw a small red box. Underneath it, write 'what is red?' Challenge students to generate ideas to describe the colour red as other things; objects, feelings, places, experiences, etc.
7. Look through *The Pen Pal Club* to find the metaphors used. Can you find all 4?

Main body

1. Revisit the similes the students wrote in the previous lesson. Reuse the previously employed nouns for the following metaphor activity.
2. Demonstrate how to use the *Writing Metaphors* activity sheet by inserting a noun from the book then thinking about its characteristics before finishing it with a comparable object to create a metaphor.

Object	Gold nuggets
Characteristics	small, shiny, glittering, heavy, gold,
Comparable Object	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heavy drops of sunshine. • Special foil-wrapped chocolates at grandma's house.

Three differentiated activities have been provided below. Teachers are encouraged to select the most appropriate activity according to student ability, or provide another, more appropriate activity.

- **Support** - Students that need more support work in a small group with an adult and a second large piece of paper with a small green square drawn in the middle. The adult facilitates the students' thinking to generate ideas for how they could describe the colour green using a metaphor. Each student writes out a complete metaphor for the colour green in their workbooks.
- **Core** - Students use the *Writing Metaphors* activity sheet in pairs to list the nouns from the simile activity and work in pairs to develop a list of their characteristics. From this, each student in the pair writes out a metaphor for each noun in their workbooks. As an extension, students could think of their own nouns to describe as metaphors.
- **Extension** - Students pick a noun card from a pile (*Metaphor Nouns* activity sheet) and write a metaphor for it in their workbooks.

Plenary

1. Bring the class together as a group and review what students have learned about writing metaphors. Invite students to share the metaphors they have written during the session. Praise their creativity and diversity.
2. Remind students that they will be writing a letter to their pen pal in the next activity.
3. For homework, direct students to decide who they will send their letter to and find that person's address. If you have signed up to **The Pen Pal Club**, distribute the school address and assign each students a pen pal from the corresponding class to write to.

Activity 3

Introduction

1. Start with a writing warm up. Invite students to finish this story starter: 'If I could fly...' Give the students a time limit of 2 - 5 minutes depending on student needs.
2. Revisit the book *The Pen Pal Club*, by Sally Morgan and look at how the letters are displayed. Display the letter template on the board and discuss each of the sections.

Main body

1. Explain that the students will be drafting a letter to their pen pals in this activity.
2. Remind students of the features they need to include in their work to make it an interesting and well-written letter, i.e. capital letters, full stops, adjectives, compound sentences, different types of sentences, including questions for their pen pal and figurative language including adverbs, similes and metaphors.
3. Three differentiated activities have been provided below. Teachers are encouraged to select the most appropriate activity according to student ability, or provide another, more appropriate activity.
 - **Support** - Students sit in a small group with an adult. They use the Letter Template activity sheet to draft a letter consisting of at least four sentences to their pen pal, one of which is a question for their pen pal and another containing some description, including an adverb or a simile or metaphor. On the back they may choose to illustrate their letter with a picture like Jack or Ruby in *The Pen Pal Club*.
 - **Core** - Students work independently to draft their letter to their pen pal in the Letter Template activity sheet. Their letter should consist of at least five compound sentences, containing adjectives, separated by full stops. Their letter must include at least one question for their pen pal and at least one example of figurative language including a simile or metaphor. On the back they may choose to illustrate their letter with a picture like Jack or Ruby in *The Pen Pal Club*.
 - **Extension** - Students work independently in their writing books or on paper to draft out their letter to their pen pal, using the template on the board as a guide.

Their letters should consist of at least six compound sentences, containing adjectives, and using correct punctuation for each type of sentence. Their letter must include at least two questions for their pen pal and at least two examples of figurative language. Once they have finished, students may choose to draw a picture for their pen pal to describe something they wrote about in the letter.

During this activity, teachers should play the role of facilitator, assessing and filling gaps in students' learning by observing work, answering questions and providing guidance where necessary.

- Using the *Assess my Writing* (peer assessment) or the *Self Check* (self assessment) activity sheet, students should aim to check a partner's or their own writing for capital letters, full stops, adjectives and different types of sentences.

Plenary

1. After gaining appropriate feedback, students should write out their letters in 'best copy'.
2. Support the students in putting their letters into envelopes and applying a stamp. Their homework will be to address the envelope and post it!

Extending thinking

1. Encourage students to think of some questions they would like to ask a postie.
2. Discuss writing a letter to ask for something specific. How would you persuade that person to give it to you?
3. Discuss some persuasive language features.
4. Discuss the difference in sending a letter to a pen pal in Australia and a pen pal in a different country. What consideration might we have to take into account? Discuss student's ideas and own experiences.



Adverbs for Interest

Improve each sentence by adding an adverb and re-writing it.

1. Taylor read her book. _____

2. Mike answered the phone. _____

3. Dan washed the dishes. _____

4. Kylie cooked the meal. _____

5. Sam ate the chocolates. _____

Writing Metaphors

Use the table below to create metaphors for each noun.

Noun	Characteristics	Comparable object / feeling / experience

Metaphor Nouns

A winter hat	The ocean	The night sky
A fan	The desert	Your bed
A city	A swimming pool	An elephant
Birds in the morning	A roller coaster	Grass
Eggs	An ice cream	A blank sheet of paper
Someone you love	Red hair	Scoring a goal

Assess my writing!



Partner assessment. Read your partner's writing and draw a smiley face if they have included the following.

Capital letter at the start of every sentence	
Full stop at the end of every sentence	
Some interesting details	
Adjectives	
Some questions for my pen pal	
Different types of sentences	
Figurative language (simile or metaphor)	

Self check!

Self assessment. Draw a smiley face if your writing has:

Capital letter at the start of every sentence	
Full stop at the end of every sentence	
Adjectives in my sentences	
Compound sentences Using 'for', 'and', 'nor', 'but', 'or' 'yet' 'so'	
Different types of sentences	
Figurative language (simile and metaphor)	

Letter template

Dear

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From,

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The Pen Pal Club

Year 4



Describing Boring Sentences

Think of an adverb to make each sentence more interesting.

- **The plant grew.** _____
- **The cat slept.** _____
- **John walked.** _____
- **The teacher marked.** _____

Letter template

Dear

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From,
.....

Letter Template

- Greeting - Who are you writing to?
- Main letter - What will you write about?
- Sign off - your name