

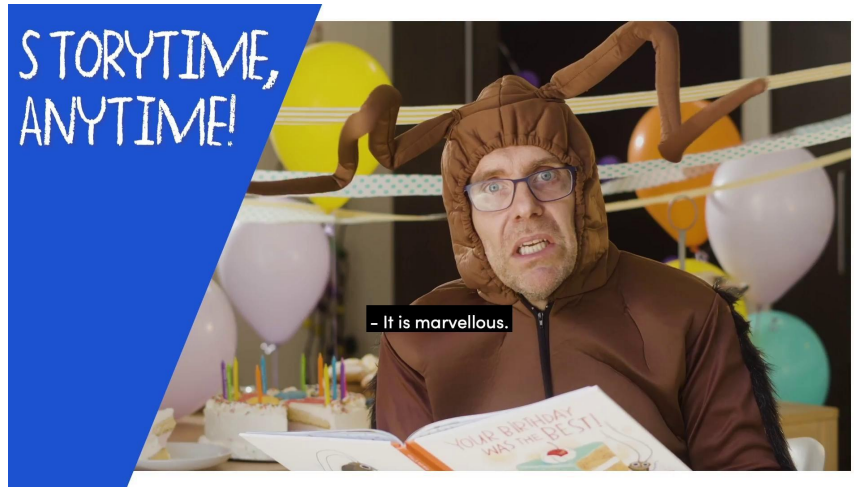
Engaging students with stories online at Story Box Library

Practical ideas and activities for using stories online to provide rich learning opportunities for primary aged students



Introducing Story Box Library

Story Box Library is a collection of carefully curated Australian children's literature read aloud online by a diverse range of storytellers - including authors, musicians, sports people, TV personalities, librarians etc.



We like to think of Story Box Library as an online 'reading room' - committed to supporting and encouraging the practice of storytelling.

It's a place where the wonderful world of Australian children's literature is on permanent exhibit and children can connect and be inspired when they watch a range of celebrated stories read aloud by engaging storytellers.

It is intended for use as a complementary form of delivering the precious experience of being read aloud to.

Educators don't always have access to the hard copies of stories they'd like to share in class so we aim to provide a safe, trusted and high quality online storytelling experience to help share stories from the amazing authors and illustrators that Australia produces.

We have a diverse range of storytellers who read aloud the stories - from actors, comedians, sports people, musicians, artists, authors, to children- people with varying accents and from different cultures, each sharing past and present book titles.

Here is a short introductory clip to give you a flavour of Story Box Library: https://storyboxlibrary.com.au/short_films/storytime-anytime

Using read-aloud stories to engage students

1. Opening discussions into **new topics**
2. Exploring **language features**
3. Modelling **text structures**
4. Modelling **literary devices**
5. Developing **comprehension and critical reading skills**
6. Engaging in an **author study**
7. Independent activities during **literacy rotation**
8. Celebrating **Book Week**, and other **recognised days/events**
9. Supporting **student wellbeing**
10. Exploring **First Nations' people, cultures and histories**



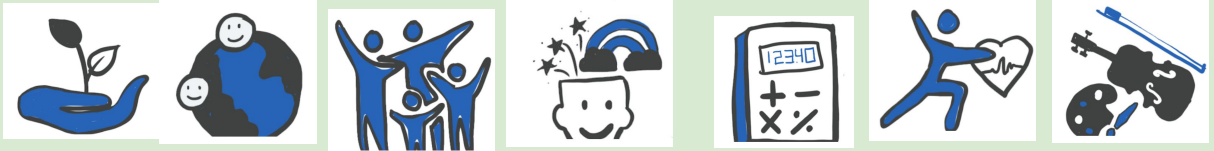
The following slides provide examples of how Story Box Library can be used to engage students.

1. Introducing a new topic or theme

Stories are a valuable way to engage and introduce students to a new a topic or theme.

They can help:

- pique student interest
- provide a context to explore and understand a theme/topic



Stories can provide a powerful springboard in which to introduce students to a particular topic or theme - opening up discussions, curiosity and connections.

With almost 500 stories in our library, and new stories being released each week, there is a large pool of stories on the site which explore a wide range of themes - whether it is transport, environment, climate change, diversity, friendship, anxiety and resilience, music, migration, technology and history, the list is extensive.

1. Introducing a new topic or theme

... via the topic search filters in the Resource section

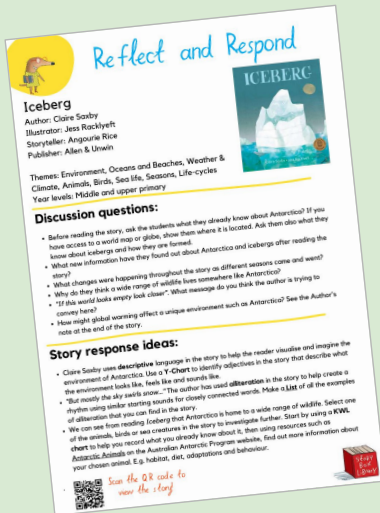
The screenshot shows the website's interface with five numbered steps:

- 1** My Dashboard: A sidebar menu with options like Stories, Resources, Sleep with Kip, Short Films, Storytellers, Authors and Illustrators, and Blog.
- 2** Story Resources: A section with three cards: Classroom Ideas, Activity Time, and Units of Work.
- 3** Browse by category: A grid of category filters including Additional and Online Text, Events and Celebrations, Family, First Concepts, Health and Physical Education, History, Maths, Play and Imagination, Science and Environment, Social and Emotional Learning, Society and Culture, and Technology and Construction.
- 4** Classroom Ideas: A page titled 'SCIENCE AND ENVIRONMENT' with sub-themes like All Themes, Environment and Nature, Natural Disasters, Weather and Climate, Natural Resources and Sustainability, Animals and the Living World, Space, Physical Sciences, and Seasons and Cycles.
- 5** Advanced Filter: A sidebar filter menu with categories like Environment and Nature, Natural Disasters, Weather and Climate, Climate Change, Natural Resources and Sustainability, Animals and the Living World, Space, and Physical Sciences. It also shows story cards for 'POLAR BEAR IN SYDNEY HARBOUR', 'ANTARCTICA', and 'ICEBERG' with PDF download icons.

1. Locate the **Resources** section in the main menu of the website
2. Select **Classroom Ideas**
3. On the Classroom Ideas page, you will find **Category** filters along the top. Select one.
4. You can then drill down further by expanding the **Advanced filter** options that will appear on the left side of the page. Select the 'PDF' icon on the story image, to download the Classroom Ideas for your chosen story.

1. Introducing a new topic or theme

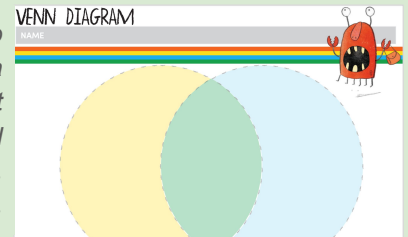
... using **Classroom Idea** resources



Sample 'Discussion questions' for the story *Iceberg* by Claire Saxby:

- What changes were happening throughout the story as different seasons came and went?
- Why do they think a wide range of wildlife lives somewhere like Antarctica?
- What message do you think the author is trying to convey here?
- How might global warming affect a unique environment such as Antarctica? See the Author's note at the end of the story.

Sample activity: Use a **Venn diagram** to compare the environment in Antarctica with the environment around you. What are some of the similarities and differences? Consider: weather, climate, wildlife, landscape and nature.



Classroom Ideas include downloadable '**Reflect and Respond**' PDFs.

These consist of:

- **Discussion questions** - to help students reflect on themes in the story, making connections, inferences, identifying learnings etc. The Discussion questions also focus on particular language and text features in the story, which we visit further in this presentation.
- **Story response ideas** - suggested classroom activities that help students to explore the themes further with the support of handy templates to scaffold students thinking.

1. Introducing a new topic or theme

... using the *Units of Work*



Story Box Library also includes **Units of Work** to help explore particular themes. Units of Work are a series of thematic lessons all based around a particular topic. These are a new addition to SBL, and so far include the themes of: **Emotions and Wellbeing, STEM, Families, Natural Disasters** - with more units to be added soon.

Each unit includes 4-5 lessons that can be used in sequence or stand alone - all linked to the Australian curriculum. Each lesson within a unit begins by exploring a particular story related to the theme, and includes discussion prompts and activities with printable resources.

These can be found in the **Resources** section of the website.

2. Exploring language features and devices

- Alliteration
- Onomatopoeia
- Personification
- Symbols/motifs
- Language
- Rhyme
- Adjectives
- Similes ...



Example: Bob Graham uses **similes** to help build the character of Scratch. Write 6 similes that someone could read to help them to build a visual picture of you. Eg. I have eyes as blue as a cloudless sky, I can jump like a gazelle etc.

Example: "The rain turned savage". Discuss the purpose of **personification** as a language device. Why do you think the author has used this type of device in the story?



Stories of course, are valuable resources for helping to model different language features and devices. Students can see how language features have been used in texts and explore the type of effect they have on the story and the reader.

With the story captions switched on, teachers can pause and focus on particular language features to discuss and explain further - whether it's the use of rhyme, adjectives or visual language features, such as imagery and symbolism.

2. Exploring language features and devices

... Using the 'Language Features' filter in the Classroom Ideas section

The screenshot displays a website interface for searching resources. On the left, a 'Language Features' dropdown menu is open, with 'Alliteration' selected and highlighted by a green arrow. The menu lists other features: Alliteration, Allegory, Allusion, Antonyms, and Apostrophes. On the right, a grid of search results is shown, including book covers for 'The Race for the Chinese Zodiac', '4E for FREAKS', 'MICKY MINKIE FOOTY CRUNCHED!', 'Billie's BAD HAIR DAY', 'TED', 'ONE MINUTE SILENCE', 'Queen Alice's Palaces', 'YAK AND GNU', 'Scary Night', and 'Mulga Bill's Bicycle'. Each book cover includes a 'PDF' icon.

Resources that focus on particular language devices in stories, can be searched for using the the '**Language Features**' filter in the Resources sections.

1. Select **Resources** from the main menu
2. Click on **Classroom Ideas**
3. Locate the **Language Features** search filter on the left side of the page
4. Search results showing stories with resources that include the chosen language feature, will then appear in the centre of the page.

2. Exploring language features and devices

... Using the Classroom Idea resources

Koalas eat
gum leaves.



LENA • PHILIP BUNTING

Discuss how Laura and Philip Bunting use **onomatopoeia** to describe movement.

The author, Nicki Greenberg uses **alliteration** and **rhyme** in this story. Choose your own animal and create a description of it using both alliteration and rhyme.



Irena has used the blanket and waterfall as symbols in the story. Discuss what these **symbols** represent.

'He found a very very very very VERY big box.' Why has the author used **repetition** in this sentence?



Examples from **Reflect and Respond** downloads that include activities or questions focused on exploring particular language features and devices.

3. Modelling text structures and inspiring creative writing

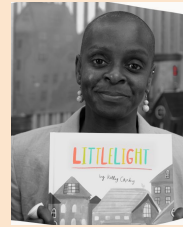
- Circular narratives
- Parallel narratives
- Persuasive writing



Use a **Plot Summary** organiser to summarise the narrative features of this story (i.e. orientation, complication and resolution).



Use your imagination to complete a **Character Profile** for one of the characters in this story.



Use a **Story Map** to record the narrative features of this story, including setting, characters, orientation, complication and resolution.

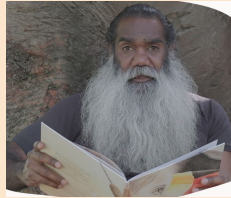
Stories can be used also as mentor texts to model different text structures, or as stimulus for different creative writing activities.

These examples show activities from our Classroom Ideas which prompt students to reflect on and summarise plot structure and development - as well as analysing characters within texts.

By identifying and analysing these features in stories, students become more familiar with common story elements and structures which they can then apply and use when planning their own story writing.

3. Modelling text structures and inspiring creative writing

... Using the Classroom Ideas and Story Response templates



*Sorry Day: Separate the **parallel stories** that are told throughout the story (alternating timelines) - How are the two stories distinct from each other?*

*Select a character from the story and write a **diary entry** from their perspective. What might they be thinking and feeling? What might they hope for?*



*Write the **article** to go with the newspaper headline that can be seen in the last illustration: **GELATO LICKER LOOSE IN ROME***

*Decorate and write a message on a **Postcard** that Emma might send to a friend back home.*



Here are further examples taken from the Classroom Ideas - that include ideas for **creative writing** response activities, inspired by stories.

Many of these activities include or refer to various templates or tools that help support students with structuring their responses.

These **Story Response Templates** are now included with our latest Classroom Ideas or alternatively they can be downloaded from our Resources section under **Story Response Templates**.

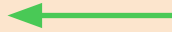
3. Modelling text structures and inspiring creative writing

... Searching by 'Writing Task' in the Resources section

Writing Tasks

Select... ▲

- Descriptive writing
- Persuasive writing
- Poetic writing
- Information writing
- Diary writing



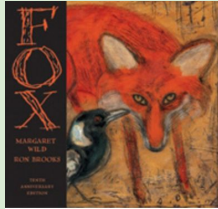
Also includes: *Instructional writing, Letter writing, Creative writing, Menu writing, Report writing, Mystery writing, Explanatory writing, Recount writing, Collaborative writing, Point of view writing, Dialogue Sequel writing, Cautionary tale, Alternative ending, Script writing.*

In the **Classroom Ideas** section, you can search for resources by **Writing Task**.

This filter will help identify story resources that include particular writing activities.

4. Modelling literary elements

- Symbols/Motifs
- Imagery
- Point of view
- Dialogue
- Gaze
- Perspective
- Saliency
- Colour



Use a Senses Wheel to identify the words/phrases/sentences that the author has used to build **imagery** in this story.

Who is the **narrative voice** in this story? Choose one of the characters from the story and rewrite the story from his/her **point of view**.



How has **colour and tone** been used to convey mood and meaning? How does this change across different illustrations in the story? What do you notice about the **size** of characters and objects, and the **point of view** in which we see them?



Discuss the **symbolic** meaning of the cicada in this story. Find 5 other small or odd details in the illustrations. What do you think they represent?



Stories can be used to model particular literary devices and techniques - helping to show how they can be used to convey emotions, mood and messages.

Here are some examples of activities and prompts that draw attention to particular literary devices in stories.

You will be able to find these throughout the **Classroom Ideas** attached to each story - as they highlight opportunities for exploring these elements in the story - from lower primary through to upper primary.

Again, the **Language Features** filter in the Classroom Ideas section will help you with identifying resources that include these particular elements.

There is also a **Visual Detective** template with prompts to encourage students to analyse and explore illustrations. An Upper Primary one and a version for Lower/Middle Primary students can be found in the Story Response Template section of the website.

5. Developing comprehension and critical reading skills

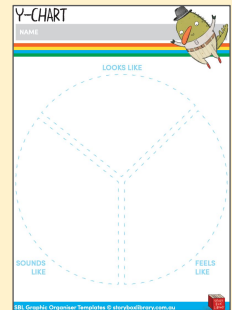
- **Comprehension strategies** (e.g. Recalling, sequencing, summarising)
- **Critical reading skills** (e.g. Identifying author's purpose, inferring, predicting, asking and answering questions, synthesising, comparing and contrasting)



Example: Why do you think Milla doesn't want to leave the jetty? What clues are in the story that help tell us how she is feeling at the beginning of the story?

Use the Y-Chart to describe what Milla might:

- be able to see at the end of the jetty
- feel after jumping off the jetty for the first time
- hear when she dives off the jetty into the water



The following resources that sit alongside each story provide opportunities for students to engage further with the texts at a deeper level - encouraging them to reflect on and analyse the story.

Story Response Tools such as T-charts, Venn Diagrams, Plot Summaries and Character Profiles etc - are particularly helpful for scaffolding and supporting students with comprehension and processing skills such as summarising, comparing, recalling, sequencing and analysing author's purpose.

For example, for the story 'Jetty Jumping' students can use a Y-Chart that prompts them to infer and analyse the language and visuals in the story to come up with their own descriptions.

5. Developing comprehension and critical reading skills

... Using Story Response Templates



Ideas for using these **Story Response Templates** to help foster deeper thinking and comprehension opportunities are included in the **Classroom Ideas**, however, they are also stand-alone resources too that can be tailored for your own uses.

They include a mixture of:

- **Graphic organisers** - to support students with organising, inferring, comparing and analysing information and language in stories
- and **Book response templates** - that support students with analysing and reviewing stories, including character analysis, identifying plot structure and evaluating stories from a personal perspective
- and there are also **Writing templates** - which are frameworks to help shape and structure students' creative responses to stories

5. Developing comprehension and critical reading skills

... Finding Story Response Templates

The screenshot displays the 'Story Resources' website interface. At the top, a cartoon dog character is shown. Below it, the 'Story Resources' header is visible. The main content area is divided into six categories, each with a representative image and a brief description:

- Classroom Ideas:** Practical classroom ideas to explore themes and elements in the story further with lower, middle and upper primary students.
- Activity Time:** Fun and engaging learning experiences designed for younger learners.
- Units of Work:** Comprehensive thematic lessons linked to the Australian curriculum for lower, middle and upper primary students.
- Story Response Templates:** Versatile templates to assist students with analysing and responding to texts in creative ways.
- Professional Development / Events:** To support educators, libraries and families, Story Box Library's online webinars and events cover a...
- Promotional Materials:** Downloadable resources for promoting Story Box Library in your community.

On the right side, a dropdown menu titled 'Relevant Templates and Organisers' is open, showing a list of options: 'Select...', '3-2-1 Pyramid', 'A-Z List', 'Action List', 'Advertising Template', and 'Anchor Chart'. A green arrow points from the 'Story Resources' header to this dropdown menu. Another green arrow points from the 'Classroom Ideas' category to the 'Story Response Templates' category.

Story Response Templates can be found in the Resources section.

Resources that use the templates to explore stories, can be found using the Search filters in the Classroom Ideas page of the Resources section.

6. Engaging in an Author study

- Collections of stories from a particular author can be shared with students as a **Playlist**
- **Short films** - provide an insight into creative processes for authors and illustrators

My Playlists

FREYA BLACKWOOD

- The Unwilling Twin **PLAY**
- The Tiny Star **PLAY**
- The Great Rabbit Chase **PLAY**
- Molly & Mae **PLAY**
- Perfect **PLAY**
- Go To Sleep, Jessie! **PLAY**
- My Two Blankets **PLAY**
- Banjo and Ruby Red **PLAY**
- The Treasure Box **PLAY**
- Maudie and Bear **PLAY**
- The Boy and the Elephant **PLAY**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Freya Blackwood Lives in NSW Australia, with her little girl Ivy. They live in great 1940s house with a their cat Daisy and a dog called Zelo. She works as a children's book author and illustrator from a studio in her backyard. Freya and her brother grew up in a very creative household interested in colours, shapes, textures and all things visual. In 2002 she started illustrating picture books. She loves exploring different characters and bringing them to life. Her picture book 'Harry and Hopper' by Margaret Wild was shortlisted for the Patricia Wrightson Award (NSW Premier's Awards) for 2010, as well as winning The Kate Greenaway Medal for 2010. Freya also enjoys the design and problem solving elements involved with

You might be exploring the work of a particular author with a class and would like students to have the opportunity to read a range of their stories.

Students can be provided with a **Playlist** of the authors stories, which they can watch and read along too. This is easily compiled by searching by author using the search filters and adding the relevant stories to a playlist that you can then share with students.

Each story page also includes a short bio about the author.

6. Engaging in an Author study

... using Short Films



ABOUT THE FILM FILM DETAILS

"When I look back on my childhood, I was always writing things and making books." Meet Tai Snaith. Artist. Picture-book creator. Would-be Prime Minister (if politicians could also be artists!).

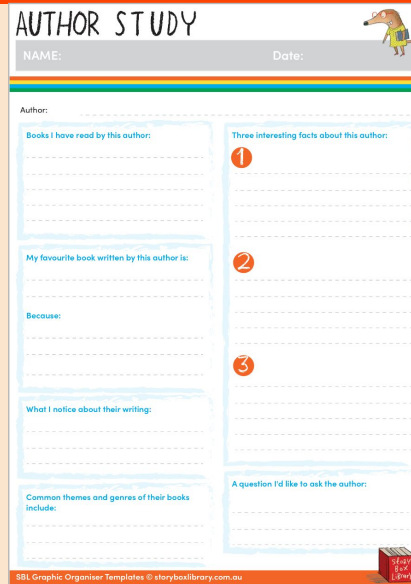
Find out what inspires Tai to create wondrous pieces of art, through a tour of her Melbourne-based studio and home and learn how she creates, from ideas to finished picture books.

Children can experience 'meeting' real authors and illustrators through watching **short films**, and find out what motivates them and how they work.


These are a handy resource particularly during Book Week.

6. Engaging in an Author study

... using our Author Study template



AUTHOR STUDY

NAME: _____ Date: _____ 

Author: _____

Books I have read by this author:

My favourite book written by this author is:

Because:


What I notice about their writing:

Common themes and genres of their books include:

Three interesting facts about this author:

- 1
- 2
- 3

A question I'd like to ask the author:

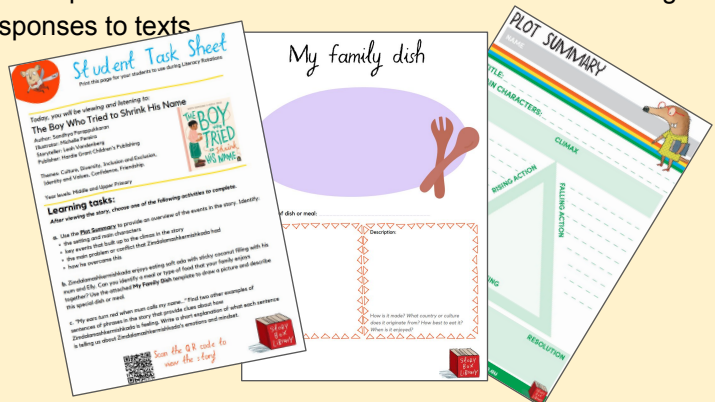
SBL Graphic Organizer Templates © storyboxlibrary.com.au 

An **Author Study template** can be found in our **Story Response Template** section.

7. Independent activities during literacy rotations

Independent or group activity - students can access stories on tablets/iPads with headphones, and complete a response activity:

- **Student Task Sheets** - are useful for independent and small group literacy programs.
- **Story Response Templates** - tools that provide frameworks to assist students in scaffolding and observing their thinking and responses to texts



If you run group literacy rotations in the classroom, students can be assigned a story to watch and read along to on an iPad or laptop.

Many stories that are suitable for middle & upper primary students have a **Student Task Sheet**. These can be found via the **Activities tab** on the story pages. Or for many of the recent releases, can be found **within** the downloadable **Classroom Ideas** - also found on the Activities tab or in the Resources section.

These are designed for independent use - during literacy sessions. Each sheet includes 3 text response options, each with a different focus - which may be to identify literary elements such as alliteration or the use of rhyme, or analyse the story via a plot summary or a character profile.

There is usually a creative writing activity option too, along with relevant printable templates to help students scaffold and organise their ideas.

Another alternative is to provide students with one of the **Story Response Templates** - which are the graphic organiser and writing templates that you've seen featured throughout the presentation so far.

These can also be used as part of an independent book response activity or completed together in pairs.

○

8. Celebrating Book Week and other recognised days/events

- **Book Week** - dedicated activity resources designed for CBCA Book Week shortlisted stories.
- **ANZAC day, NAIDOC week, Harmony Day, Earth Day and more** - collections of stories featured for recognised events.



A selection of CBCA shortlisted stories are included on the site each year in preparation for **Book Week**. Alongside the shortlisted stories we also develop a range of classroom ready resources to support educators with exploring the stories with their students.

There are also stories available to help you celebrate national, international and other events, such as [Harmony Week](#), Earth Hour, [World Environment Day](#) etc.

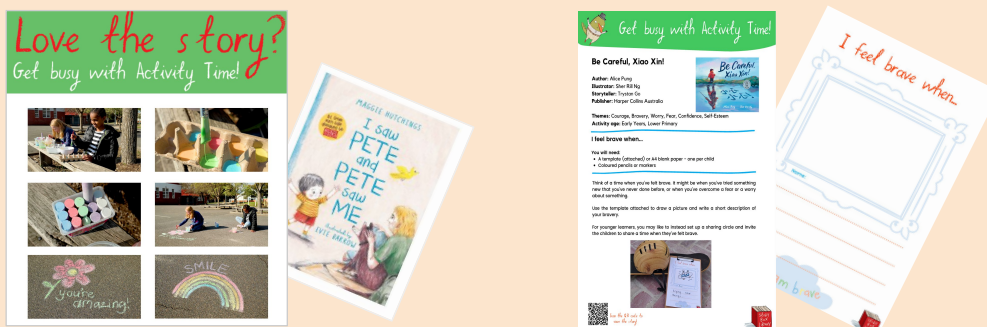
Collections of stories for events such as these are featured on the home page - and can be saved as Playlists.

9. Supporting student wellbeing

Within our extensive library is a wide range of stories that explore themes related to social and emotional wellbeing. These stories can:

- act as vehicles for opening up discussions
- provide engaging and safe contexts in which to explore emotions and feelings
- model strategies to support social skills and relationships

Use filters to search by theme e.g. anxiety and resilience, inclusion and exclusion, empathy etc.



As you'd be well aware, children's literature can be a powerful vehicle for exploring themes related to social and emotional wellbeing.

To help educators locate stories that help model and open up discussions around particular wellbeing themes such as friendship, conflict, identity, confidence, resilience etc - there are 'theme' filters that can be used to search for relevant stories.

Discussion prompts and activities to explore these themes further can be found in the downloadable **Classroom Ideas** and **Activity Time** resources that accompany each story.

9. Supporting student wellbeing

... Searching for resources and stories to explore social and emotional topics

The screenshot displays a website interface for 'Classroom Ideas'. At the top, there is a blue header with the text 'Classroom Ideas :'. Below this, the main heading is 'SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING'. Underneath, there are four tabs: 'All Themes' (highlighted in red), 'Emotions and Feelings', 'Social Skills and Relationships', and 'Personal Skills and Milestones'. Below the tabs, the word 'Wellbeing' is centered. To the right of the main content area, there is a vertical sidebar titled 'ADVANCED FILTER'. This sidebar is currently expanded to show a list of topics under the heading 'EMOTIONS AND FEELINGS'. The topics listed are: Courage and Bravery, Hope, Empathy, Confidence and Self-esteem, Worries and Fears, Curiosity, Forgiveness, Loneliness, Love, Jealousy, Anxiety and Resilience, Grief and Loss, Depression, Anger, Humour, and Sadness. Each topic has a small square checkbox next to it. Below the 'EMOTIONS AND FEELINGS' section, there are three collapsed sections: 'SOCIAL SKILLS AND RELATIONSHIPS', 'PERSONAL SKILLS AND MILESTONES', and 'WELLBEING'. Two green arrows are overlaid on the image: one points from the 'Emotions and Feelings' tab to the 'EMOTIONS AND FEELINGS' section of the filter sidebar, and the other points from the 'All Themes' tab to the 'WELLBEING' section of the filter sidebar.

Search filters within the Resource section can be used to locate **Classroom Ideas** and stories that explore particular social and emotional topics.

The Advanced filters on the left-hand side help educators drill down to specific topics.

9. Supporting student wellbeing

... Using the Units of Work

Unit of Work:
Emotions and Wellbeing
F - Year 2

It's OK to feel the way you do
Don't Think About Purple Elephants
I SAW PETE and PETE SAW ME
RODNEY LOSES IT!
It's OK to Feel the Way You Do

Emotions and Wellbeing

Curriculum links

General Capabilities: Personal and Social Capability - Level 1 & 2

- Self management - Express emotions appropriately - express their emotions constructively in interactions with others
- Self awareness - Recognize emotions - identify a range of emotions and describe situations that may evoke these emotions
- Social awareness - Understand relationships - identify ways to care for others, including ways of making and keeping friends

[Click here for the Personal Social Capability Learning Continuum](#)

Emotions and Wellbeing

Lesson 1 - It's Okay To Feel The Way You Do (exploring emotions)

Learning Intention:

- We can identify and describe emotions - making connections between how people might be feeling and how they might react.

Success Criteria:

- I can identify emotions.
- I can describe an emotion using words and/or pictures.

Resources Needed:

- Access to *It's Okay To Feel The Way You Do* on Story Box Library - whole class viewing or individual screens
- Emotions Worksheet (see attached)
- Y-Chart Worksheet (see attached)
- pencils and/or pens

It's Okay To Feel The Way You Do

Author: Josh Langley
Illustrator: Josh Langley
Publisher: Big Sky Publishing

Everyone has feelings ... sometimes we just don't know what to do with them!
Happy, sad, lonely, angry, anxious, proud, scared - they're all feelings and emotions and they're all OK!
Yes - every single one of them! In this bright and heartening story, Josh Langley helps kids get to know and make friends with their feelings.

We also have Health and Physical Education Units of Work that explore **Emotions and Wellbeing**. Includes a unit for lower primary and one for Y3-6 students.

Each lesson within the unit is centred around a particular story - that can be used as a discussion opener into a particular aspect of the theme.

For example, here in Lesson 1 - students focus on identifying and describing different emotions and feelings using the story *'It's okay to feel the way you do'* as a stimulus.



To access the resources highlighted in this presentation please visit the [Resources section](#) of Story Box Library - or check out the Activities tab on each of the story pages.

10. Exploring First Nations' cultures, people and histories

Promote greater awareness and understanding of First Nations' cultures, histories, people, heroes and champions of change through children's literature.

- Find titles in our growing **First Nations' Stories** collection, created and read by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander creators, storytellers and more, reading about history, culture, First Nations legends, connections to Country, and more.
- Watch our recorded PD from 2022, featuring Jasmine Seymour, to learn how educators can facilitate First Nations' stories confidently in the classroom, and use children's literature for greater awareness and understanding of First Nations' heroes and histories:

['Sharing First Nations' Stories Confidently in the Classroom'](#)



Discover engaging and inspiring titles for NAIDOC Week and beyond, via our growing **First Nations' Stories** collection.