



## Lesson 1

Topic: Introduction to literary memoirs

### Exploring the inspiration for memoirs

#### Lesson concepts:

- 🎯 Language and identity — Personal and social identities: accents, styles of speech
- 🎯 Visual language — Composition generates point of view: gaze, angle, social distance
- 🎯 Use of vocabulary — Extended and academic texts: abstract nouns, description
- 🎯 Text and context — Making connections to issues represented in texts drawn from different contexts
- 🎯 Comprehension strategies — Interpreting, synthesising and critiquing ideas
- 🎯 Handwriting style — Personal style

#### Lesson notes

In this lesson, students will understand how to evaluate the effect of language in a text. They will also learn how illustrations in a picture book can support and enhance the meaning of the text.

#### Lesson answers

1. Read **Sheet 1 — Grandma's memoir** and answer the following questions.
  - a) What adjectives (describing words) came to mind when you read this story? (1 sentence)  
*For example: When I read this story, the adjectives 'mysterious', 'exciting', 'scary' and 'interesting' came to mind.*
  - b) Was there anything in the story that was really memorable for you? (1–2 sentences)  
*For example: Gladys seeing the Joogabinna in the storm really stood out to me because, as a reader, you don't really know if what she saw was real or something brought about because of the dust cloud and the storm. This added to the excitement level in the story.*
  - c) What was the story about? (2–3 sentences)  
*For example: Grandma Gladys recounts her childhood experience living on her family's dairy farm and hearing Aboriginal stories from Ernie, her father's right-hand man, about mythical creatures of the bush. Then, one hot afternoon, when young Gladys is out rounding up the dairy cows, she thinks she sees one of the creatures in Ernie's stories — the Joogabinna. She gallops away, terrified by the experience.*



2. Students view the **Video 1 – QAR Reading strategy**. No answer required.

a) What was Grandma Gladys' brother's name? (1 sentence)

Grandma Gladys' brother's name was Edward.

b) How many cattle did Grandma Gladys observe stampeding? (1 sentence)

Grandma Gladys observed about 60 dairy cows stampeding.

c) Did Grandma Gladys definitely see a Joogabinna? Explain your answer. (2–3 sentences)

It is unclear whether Grandma Gladys definitely saw the Joogabinna because she uses expressions such as 'I swear I saw ...'. In addition, when she claims to have seen the creature, she was alone and peering through a brown fog of dust while her vision was blurred. It is possible that Ernie's stories had made such an impression on the young Gladys that she thought she saw one of his mythical creatures.

d) What can you infer about Grandma Gladys' view on modern life? Use evidence from the text to support your answer. (3–4 sentences)

Grandma Gladys acknowledges that modern life is very different from the life she had as a child. She mentions that her childhood and Pippa's are 'worlds apart.' It seems that Gladys thinks that modern life offers too many distractions and detracts from the magic, mystery and adventure of life. She does not speak of modern technology or towns with the same passion that she uses to describe her childhood and the countryside. She values a life away from 'modern inconveniences', where one can enjoy the magic of nature.

e) Compare Grandma Gladys' experiences and interactions with the Australian bush with your own. How have they been similar or different? Explain your answer. (3–4 sentences)

Personal response required. Some students may agree with Gladys' summation that the bush is filled with magic, mystery and adventure. Others may have a very different perspective on the Australian bush.

f) Do you think life in the 1930s, as described by Grandma Gladys, was more or less exciting for children? Explain your answer. (3–4 sentences)

For example: I think that life for children in the 1930s would have been very boring. I can't imagine life without my computer or the internet or my skateboard. I don't know how children would have kept themselves busy.

Or ...

I think that life for children in the 1930s would have been exciting because they didn't have any 'modern inconveniences' to distract them from appreciating nature. They could have gone adventuring, climbed a tree or used their imagination without thinking about that computer game waiting for them at home. However, I also think children would have had to grow up a lot more quickly, and could have missed out on just being kids. For example, Gladys was a child but she was rounding up dairy cows.



3. Re-read Sheet 1 and answer the following questions:

a) Look at this example of metaphor from Grandma's memoir. Change it to a simile or another metaphor: It was a blisteringly hot summer afternoon ...

For example:

The afternoon was as hot as a baker's kitchen. (simile using 'as')

Or...

The afternoon was blisteringly hot, like the wild chillies that grew in Mum's garden. (simile using 'like')

Or...

The afternoon was a sweltering inferno. (metaphor using 'was')

b) Explain the effect of the following descriptive language on the reader.

Descriptive language	Effect on the reader
'I remember ... being left with the thought that our little house was just a tiny island in a sea of ancient bush and grasslands.'	The metaphor allows the reader to empathise with young Gladys' sense of isolation and feeling of remoteness, as well as her slight feelings of trepidation at living in a remote, rural location. In the context of the story, it highlights the feeling of fear young Gladys experienced when she heard strange, loud bush noises at night.
'The usually calm animals boomed past us, their eyes as wide as Mother's fine china plates.'	The simile in this description allows the reader to create a strong mental image of the level of alarm felt by the stampeding cattle. In addition, the simile includes a comparison that tells the reader that Gladys' mother is a refined woman who has 'fine china'.
'... dust continued to dance upon the rippling humidity of the afternoon like a brown fog.'	This description works to create a strong visual image of the thick dust raised by the cattle stampede. The use of 'a dark brown fog' also affects the tone of Gladys' recollection. In the context of the memoir, the story becomes slightly alarming because the young girl thinks she sees a terrifying creature in the midst of this brown fog.

4. Students view the **Video 2 — Language of Affect and Judgment**. No answer required.



5. Use **Sheet 1** to answer the following questions.

- a) List the positive words that Grandma Gladys uses to write about her childhood. Explain what effect this has on the reader. (List words and then write 2–3 sentences.)

For example: 'enchanted', 'astonished', 'beauty', 'lush', 'greatest', 'magic', 'loved', 'adventure'

Using positive evaluative language to reminisce about her childhood and the countryside where she grew up allows Grandma Gladys to position the reader to view these things in a positive light.

- b) Can you find any positive words about modern life in the text? Explain what effect this has on the reader. (2–3 sentences)

For example: No. The evaluative language used is generally not positive. Words like 'blaring', and phrases such as 'modern inconveniences' and 'ceaseless sounds' are used to describe the modern world. These choices in language position the reader to view modern life as intrusive and not ideal.

- c) The glossary explains that an abstract noun refers to an idea, state or quality (for example: courage, love). What abstract nouns can you use to describe the theme of the memoir on Sheet 1? (1–2 sentences)

For example:

mystery, magic, courage, adventure, fear, isolation, wonderment, astonishment

6. Answer the following questions about the illustrations for Gladys' memoir on Sheet 1.

- a) List the figures in the illustrations.

Grandma Gladys, Ernie, the Joogabinna, Pippa

- b) How are the figures in the illustrations arranged and enclosed? (framing) (1–2 sentences)

For example: The figures have been arranged to sit alongside the text to enhance characterisation and/or to deliberately draw the eye to the subject matter.

- c) Why do you think the illustrator has drawn many envelopes (and some computer keyboards) around the text, leading to Pippa? (salience) (3–4 sentences)

For example: In the memoir, Grandma Gladys mentions that she used envelopes in the 1930s while Pippa uses email in modern times, so I think the envelopes and computer keyboards are a metaphor that represent this idea. I think they are supposed to highlight old attitudes meeting modern attitudes, but not in a confrontational way. This is shown in the way the envelopes fall gently to Pippa, who seems attentive and eager to listen to her grandmother's story. In this way, I think this helps to emphasise Gladys' values and beliefs, which are different from Pippa's.



- d) Why do you think the Joogabinna has been placed in an oval shape with a rusty brown haze around it? (layout, gaze, angle and social distance) (3–4 sentences)

For example: Gladys recounts how it was very hot, dusty and humid when she first sees the Joogabinna, so I think the rusty brown colour is supposed to represent the dust. The oval shape around the image could represent Gladys' stinging eye, and the figure's lack of colour makes it seem as if the audience is looking at it from a distance. This makes me question Gladys' account of the story because her eyes and the environment could have deceived her into thinking an ordinary man was a creature of myth.

- e) How do you think the use of social distance helps to support the author's point of view in the text? Use one image from the text to support your answer. (1–2 sentences)

For example: I think the Joogabinna is the most dominant image on the page. Its size, black colour and pointed stare, combined with the eerie glow surrounding it, give off a feeling of something that is intelligent but non-human. They also aid in explaining the fear and terror Gladys must have felt when she first saw the creature, regardless if it was real or not.

7. Read **Sheet 2 – Types of Appreciation**. No answer required.

8. What is your evaluation of Grandma's memoir? Explain your answer. (3–4 sentences)

Personal response required. For example: Grandma Gladys' memoir was a well-written and captivating story that stimulated my imagination. I found the story entertaining because it made something ordinary and commonplace – the Australian bush – seem exciting and magical. The memoir conveyed a thoughtful message that encourages people to look for the splendid things in life.

9. Choose an abstract noun that best conveys the central idea inspired by the artefact or symbol.

Personal response required.

- 10 Write a short memoir (one or two paragraphs) about your chosen artefact or symbol and its significance.

Personal response required. For example: I have a piano-shaped jewellery box that reminds me of my father. Whenever I look at it, I remember the day he gave it to me. I had been sick with the flu and had stayed home from school. When Dad came home, I was in bed. Before he even took off his coat, he came to my room and told me he had a present for me. I opened up a small white box that he handed me and to my surprise found a little wooden piano as small as the palm of my hand. 'What do I do with this?' I asked and he responded jokingly, 'Open the lid!'

I opened the lid of the piano to hear the wonderful sound of Mozart. I saw a soft red drawer inside. Suddenly, I heard Dad yell from the living room, 'You'll have to wait for your birthday before I buy you a treasure to put in it!' Little did he realise that the tiny piano-shaped jewellery box was my treasure and still is.



## Lesson 2

Topic: Introduction to literary memoirs

## Exploring descriptive language

### Lesson concepts:

- Language and identity — Personal and social identities: accents, styles of speech, idioms
- Punctuation — Complex sentences: prepositional phrases, embedded clauses
- Use of vocabulary — Extended and academic texts: abstract nouns, description
- Spelling new words — Use of Greek roots, Latin roots
- Text and context — Making connections to issues represented in texts drawn from different contexts
- Editing texts — Removing repetition, refining ideas, reordering sentences, adding or substituting words for impact

### Lesson notes

In this lesson, students will understand how descriptive and figurative language in a narrative can influence the reader.

### Lesson answers

1. Open **Sheet 4 — The Empty Pot** and read the folktale. **No answer required.**
2. Using the QAR strategy, answer the following questions to comprehend the literal and implied meaning of the text:

### Right there

- a) What challenge did the Emperor set the boys? (1 sentence)  
**To tend to their seeds, then return and show the Emperor what they had grown.**
- b) Why did the villagers cheer with excitement? (1 sentence)  
**A boy's plant had started to grow.**

### Think and search

- c) Why was Jun 'red-faced'? (1–2 sentences)  
**Jun was red-faced, because he was embarrassed that he was unable to grow a plant from his seed, even though he was a good gardener. Jun was ashamed that many other boys from his village had lush plants to show the Emperor, and he was the only one with an empty pot.**
- d) What is the moral of the folktale? (2–3 sentences)  
**The moral of the folktale is that honesty and integrity will take you a lot further in life than dishonesty. Jun showed that with sincerity, courage and persistence he could win the competition and achieve his goal.**



- e) What is implied in the text about courage and honesty? Use examples from the text to explain your answer. (2–3 sentences)

The fact that Jun persisted in his quest to make the seed grow, even though he knew he was failing, showed courage. It infers that having the courage to believe in yourself and face others in difficult times is often necessary to achieve success. The honesty Jun demonstrated by showing the Emperor an empty pot implies that even in times of uncertainty, you should act honestly and not give up on your goals as you never know how life might turn out.

3. The following table contains three head nouns from the text on **Sheet 4**. To practise building detailed descriptions, experiment with building an extended noun group for each. Fill out the appropriate section of the noun group table. Note: You do not need to use every section of the table.

Example response:

Pointer	Numerative	Describer	Classifier	Head noun	Qualifier
Which one or who?	How many?	What like?	What type or kind?	What is being described or classified?	Additional information to the head noun
the		esteemed	Chinese	Emperor	who had a son
<b>Extend the noun group</b> the esteemed Chinese Emperor who had no son					
a		hopeful		boy	whose courage helped him succeed
<b>Extend the noun group</b> a hopeful boy whose courage helped him succeed					
the		boiled		seed	that would never grow
<b>Extend the noun group</b> the boiled seed that would never grow					

4. What is the impact of using the words 'Jun stood red-faced' rather than 'Jun was embarrassed'? (1–2 sentences)
- Using the words 'red-faced' rather than 'embarrassed' lets the reader imagine in their mind how Jun is feeling rather than being told. It helps the reader connect with the characters and the emotions of the story.



5. Experiment with the choice of verbs used in the story by replacing the *italicised verbs* provided in the sentences in the table below, with stronger verbs. List as many alternatives as you can.

Verb in folktale	Stronger verb
The emperor <i>invited</i> any boy who wanted to become the new leader to his palace.	summoned; called; welcomed
Jun quickly made his way home <i>carrying</i> the emperor's seed ...	cradling; cupping; nestling
The emperor, dressed in his finest silk, <i>walked</i> toward the boys ...	ambled; strolled; stomped; marched

6. Identify the two similes present in the folktale on **Sheet 4**.

'...as carefully as a fragile egg.'

'...washed over Jun like a wave.'

7. Students view the **Video 3 – Idioms**. No answer required.

8. Match the following idioms with their correct meanings. Insert the correct number to correspond with the relevant meaning.

Idiom	Correct number	Meaning
A picture paints a thousand words	3	1. When something is actually quite easy and pleasurable to achieve. A straightforward task that can be easily accomplished.
A piece of cake	1	2. If someone exaggerates a problem or makes a small problem seem far greater than it really is.
A storm in a teacup	2	3. A picture can often get a message across much better than a verbal description.
The bigger they are, the harder they fall	5	4. People cannot change basic aspects of their character, especially negative ones.
A leopard can't change its spots	4	5. The more powerful have more to lose, so when they suffer something bad, it is worse for them.

9. Open **Sheet 3 – Greek and Latin roots**. You will need it with you as you complete the task below. No answer required.
10. Open **Sheet 5 – Autobiographical text** and rewrite the traditional story from **Sheet 4** as an autobiographical text. **Sheet 5 – Autobiographical text** (attached).



## Lesson 3

### Topic: Narration of life events

## Examining a literary memoir

### Lesson concepts:

- Cohesive devices — Complex text cohesion: initial and concluding paragraphs, topic sentences
- Visual language — Composition generates point of view: gaze, angle, social distance
- Use of vocabulary — Extended and academic texts: abstract nouns, description
- Text and context — Making connections to issues represented in texts drawn from different contexts
- Comprehension strategies — Interpreting, synthesising and critiquing ideas

### Lesson notes

In this lesson, students will understand how language features and narrative structure combine to create a memoir.

### Lesson answers

1. Students view the **Video — Text structure: Memoir**. **No answer required.**
2. Open **Sheet 6 — Jim Wolf** and the cats and read the memoir extract. (You might find some words are spelled differently — after all it was written in America and first published in 1867.)  
**No response required.**
3. Open the **Slideshow — Memoir analysis** and complete the tasks on each slide.

### Autobiographical text

Use the template below to write an autobiographical text based on the traditional story, *The empty pot*. This example has been written with the theme/moral message: *honesty and integrity bring great rewards*. It is the same theme as the traditional story, *The empty pot*. For example:

#### Title: The Emperor

Despite that dusky circle of saffron haze beaming down upon us, my body felt chilled. I stood with dozens of other boys in a single straight line atop the steps of the Imperial palace. A crowd of thousands waited in anticipation in the square behind me — a heavy presence that seemed somehow to push me forward and draw me down at the same time. I had never felt so alone or so filled with despair.

I had been daring and foolish enough to accept the Emperor's challenge some months prior, thinking that, because I knew plants, I should have a good chance.



'Tend to your seed,' the Emperor had said in this very spot, looking magnificent in his golden, gleaming robes which we boys thought at the time to be the grandest of things. 'You will return in the summer with your plant and show me what you have grown. I will then choose the boy who will become my successor.'

Looking over at the other boys now, I could see they had sprouted thick and beautiful plants with lush colours of jade, burgundy, lilac ... but my pot of richly dense soil, so lovingly tended, was still without a hint of green.

As I stared down into my pot of dirt, tightness began low in my throat. I glanced over at my father, visible to me even among the mass of people in the square, as always exuding a kind of shabby grace. His kind smile gave me the strength I needed to pull back. I would not dishonour him with my tears. I would tell the truth and take defeat with humility.

Almost at once, it seemed, the Emperor began his inspection. I would always remember how especially awe-inspiring and wise he looked with his poised elegance and silken robes. He strolled from boy to boy, at times peering down to take a closer look at both their anxious faces and their magnificent plants. The closer he strolled the more my heart beat faster. The cold feeling in my belly became like a block of ice, sharp edges stabbing my insides. My palms felt very wet where I clutched my little empty pot.

When at last he reached me, I first noted his scent; a floral and musky aroma that was pleasing to the nose and which only seemed noticeable when he moved, for it stilled just as he did. It only made me feel even more unworthy to be in his presence. I knew I smelled of dirt, of months spent fertilising useless soil. How could I have ever thought I would be worthy as his successor? It was then that I felt a peculiar silence seemed to settle over the square. I swallowed, feeling the heartbeat in my throat.

'What is this?' the Emperor spoke to me quietly. I had been too ashamed to look at him earlier, and now I bowed even lower, my fingers holding tight to the pot of dirt as if it could somehow save me.

'Forgive me, your Majesty,' I somehow managed, hating the tremble in my voice. 'I did as you asked. I tended to the seed, but I failed.' I peeked upwards in time to see the slight smile on his wizened face. Then he stood back and raised his arms to the crowd. 'There is only one boy worthy to be my heir. Only one boy with the honour and courage to return with the seed I handed him; a seed that had been boiled and would not grow. Jun will be the next Emperor of China!'

The crowd's roar of response burst through me! The dawning realisation that came upon me then must have been like that of a dragon taking flight for the first time. A zing of pure warmth and feeling melted the block of ice in my stomach as I beamed at the smiling Emperor, the other boys' gaping mouths, my father's face of joyful tears. I knew that my life from that point on would change completely.

The Emperor, beaming, took hold of my elbow as we began our ascent into the palace. 'For true gold,' he whispered to my ears only, 'fears no fire'.