Types of literary texts

'Literature includes a broad range of forms: such as novels, poetry, short stories and plays; fiction for young adults and children, multimodal texts such as film, and a variety of non-fiction. Literary texts also include excerpts from longer texts. This enables a range of literary texts to be included within any one year level for close study or comparative purposes.

Key ideas, Australian Curriculum: English

The *Australian Curriculum* and its linked State curricula require different types of literary texts to be studied, offering students a range of literary experiences. While some people claim to read 'only fantasy' or 'only non-fiction', students need to taste a diverse literary smorgasbord. Students' choices about the types of literature they enjoy can be unpredictable, so it is essential to introduce them to well-written texts from different domains.

We often use the French word *genre* when talking about texts. It comes from the Latin *genus* meaning 'a class or category' and is used in Australian education to refer to structural and grammatical conventions of the fiction or non-fiction text under scrutiny. The conventions construe the different social purposes of the types of text and ways they can be achieved.

Experienced readers may share assumptions about the features and general structures of literary fiction and non-fiction texts, but genre conventions are not fixed (Winch, et al., 2014); they change in different contexts and over time. New genres are invented, often borrowing and recombining styles to create multiple hybrid genres.

Writers can disrupt, alter and break literary conventions to create unique texts. For example, the non-fiction text *William Bligh: a stormy story of tempestuous times* (Sedunary & Emmerichs, 2016) uses a first-person conversational tone to address the reader and make contemporary references about blogging, for example. This book is discussed in Chapter 10.

Literary narratives can be divided generally into either realistic fiction or fantasy fiction, although many contemporary narratives combine realism and fantasy. Realism has several domains: it can focus on history, family, school, social issues, the environment or war, for example. Fantasy can include folk and fairy tales, myths and legends, stories set in invented worlds or our world, and when moved into the future, science fiction. Mystery novels and humour can cross these boundaries.

Contemporary literary non-fiction texts may also cross boundaries, with many considered 'poetic' (Kessler, 2012, p. 341). They may include aspects of autobiographies, biographies, memoir, personal essays and creative non-fiction. The CBCA's Eve Pownall Award for Information Books draws attention to the range of non-fiction texts of very high literary calibre.

This chapter explains the essential principles of discrete genres. Once these are identified, students will be able to more easily recognise combinations of conventions in individual texts. They can then be guided to understand how these support the genres and how they may be exploited to compose original and imaginative texts.

The picturebook deserves special mention. It is often seen as a form of story rather than a genre on its own, though this is debated. The picturebook is a unique blend of images and words, thus the use of 'picturebook' as a single word is an attempt to capture that uniqueness (Lewis, 2001). I view it as a form of literature with its content falling within one or more of the genre categories named above.

ACELY1722 Y7; ACELT1791 Y3; ACELT1785 F

Today, hybrid genres of fiction and non-fiction literary texts are emerging. New forms of texts, such as verse novels, graphic novels and manga have their own sets of conventions, as do 'postmodern' picturebooks. Definitions and examples of such texts will be explored later in the chapter. Verse novels are discussed in Chapter 11.

The sections below use excerpts to demonstrate the conventions of different genres and provide mentor text resources for the suggested teaching points. While it is often preferable to enjoy the whole text with your students, particularly with picturebooks, well-chosen excerpts allow the teaching point to be applied across a range of texts.

REALISM

CONTEMPORARY REALISM: FAMILY, SCHOOL, SOCIAL ISSUES, WAR

Stories in the realism genre are conventionally located in a particular time and place, with the characters perceiving and describing events (see Table 2.1). The reader recognises relationships within the text – set, for example, at school, between groups or within families – as contemporary, even if their verbal language/dialect, terminology and societal arrangements are different to the reader's immediate context. The realism presented is not objective: certain ways of thinking about the time, space and events are evident through the values and beliefs of the story's characters.

Family stories form a common realism sub-genre and are often closely integrated into school and social issues–related literary texts, such as those concerned with refugees, racial conflict, bullying, divorce and single parenting.

Often realistic stories are the most accessible for reluctant or less-mature readers, as the lives portrayed resemble their own lives. Presented opposite are two examples of realistic fiction, followed by possible classroom experiences to explore the evidence for realism with students.

TABLE 2.1 CONVENTIONS OF CONTEMPORARY REALISM

▶ set in our contemporary world

▶ has recognisable settings, possible situations and realistic characters

▶ uses recognisable language, terms and expressions

▶ may include colloquial language and contemporary references (music, films, people)

▶ presents family relationships and friendships

▶ constructs emotional conflict for the focal character within the family, or outside it, or both

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Often realistic stories are the most accessible for reluctant or less-mature readers, as the lives portrayed resemble their own lives. Presented below are two examples of realistic fiction, followed by possible classroom experiences to explore the evidence for realism with students.

EXAMPLE 2.1 *HENRY HOEY HOBSON* (Bongers, 2010, pp. 2–3)

This excerpt portrays Henry's arrival at a new school and his feelings about this event.
The ellipses (...) indicate an omitted section.

Not for the first time that morning, I cursed Mum, threefold, under my breath.

For renting a house, two weeks into first term, in the same street as the smallest, daggiest school in Brisbane.

...

And for not doing her homework – yet again – so that it was left for me to discover, during the drawn-
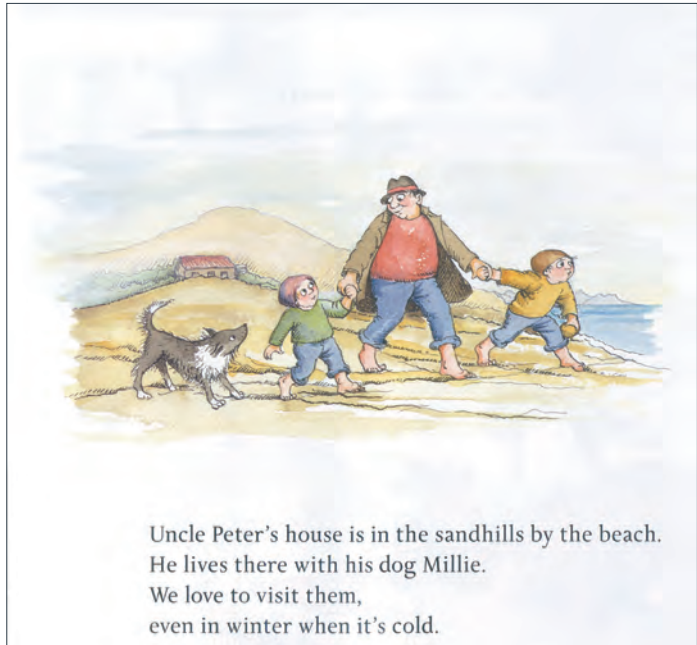
out assembly and the class that followed, that I was the only boy in year seven.

There was no point in pretending I was cool with it. Mum always said that one look at my face and Blind Freddy could tell what I was thinking. The curse of a thin skin and a strong heart: that awful rush of blood that swept up my pale neck and engulfed my head at times like these.

...

 I buried my burning face in my bag, but there weren't too many places a lunch box could hide. Eventually I'd have to surface and face the inevitable problem of where to sit, and how to while away a twenty minute break, with no friends and no prospects.

EXAMPLE 2.2 *OUR DAFT DOG DANNY* (Allen, 2009, p.1)

Uncle Peter's house is in the sandhills by the beach.
He lives there with his dog Millie.
We love to visit them,
even in winter when it's cold.

CONTEMPORARY REALISM

1. Select a contemporary realism picturebook and, with students, circle any parts of an image that show evidence of the conventions listed above.

e.g. The clothes of the characters suggest that the story 'is set in our contemporary world'.

▶ With either example, have students underline any words or phrases that signal the time, location and relationships, and name them.

e.g. 'sandhills by the beach' and 'in the same street as the smallest, daggiest school in Brisbane'

▶ Create a table listing the conventions. Using the examples above have your students count how many conventions the author has employed to establish the orientation. If using the picturebook, draw the students' attention to whether the verbal and visual elements support each other. Has the author or illustrator added different kinds of 'realistic' information?

2. Create a table with two column headings, positive and negative. Using one of the examples above, or your own selection, have students identify and list under the appropriate column evaluative or emotional vocabulary and phrases, and/or parts of the image, and/or colloquial terms; for example, 'daggiest', 'I was cool with it'.

▶ Ask students to describe what effect these have on the reader and hypothesise why an author might construct a realistic orientation in this way. In Example 2.1, discuss the effect of accumulated emotion on how the reader understands the character Henry.

3. When your students have gained confidence in identifying the way the orientations are constructed, select other realistic picturebooks and/or novels as mentor texts and adopt the same processes as suggested in the two tasks above.

▶ Discuss comparisons, noting whether the authors and illustrators use the same conventions.

▶ **CREATE THEIR OWN TEXT**: Together compose a short orientation that follows some of the conventions of realism identified in the mentor texts. If appropriate, follow this joint construction with students, in pairs or individually, composing their own realism orientations.

HISTORICAL REALISM

> Any writer who tells a story set in the past must negotiate the fine line between history and fiction, between readers' contemporary sensibilities and historical accuracy ... Reading these novels, we are reminded again and again that the issues of the past are inscribed on our own lives, that yesterday continues to impinge upon today.   Adapted from Joanne Brown (1998)

Historical realism texts describe events from a specific time and place as experienced by characters who hold values, attitudes and beliefs from the historical period (see Table 2.2). These values may be very different to ways of thinking about the world in Western society today. Students develop their critical reading of historical texts when these differences are contrasted and explained.

TABLE 2.2 CONVENTIONS OF HISTORICAL REALISM

▶ portrays ordinary life, describing minor, even trivial, details of life at the time

▶ specific dates and/or real historical events are named, incorporated, described

▶ vocabulary names the food eaten, the type of clothing worn, the objects used

▶ names of characters are appropriate for the time and place

▶ patterns of change and interaction have parallels in our own time giving a sense of continuity

▶ characters develop as individuals, in the *bildungsroman* or 'coming of age' story

▶ extraordinary events are part of the plot and produce extraordinary acts of courage from the character/s

▶ authenticity is crucial: concepts of childhood, health, affluence, happiness are culturally specific to the time period

▶ problems are often a result of social conditions and ways of thinking at the time.

Historical realism explores how understanding our past deepens our understanding of the present. Often readers can appreciate changes in equity, health and social conditions through a comparison with their lived experiences. Today, there are many digital websites which bring history alive for students, such as www.abc.net.au/gallipoli which could be used with Example 2.3, *Anzac biscuits*. This picturebook is a dual narrative: the alternating double pages move the story in location from a safe, peaceful Australian kitchen in 1914 to a dangerous, booming war zone. Example 2.4, *Pankration,* is set further back in time, in 400 BCE. This kind of historical text offers a sense of continuity in terms of the human condition – for example, the Olympic Games continue to be held, and slavery still exists in the form of human trafficking.

EXAMPLE 2.3 *ANZAC BISCUITS* (Cummings & Swan, 2014, pp. 1&4) (Text transcribed for clarity)

The farm was quiet.

Rachel and her mother were in the kitchen.

The fire crackled and Rachel was warm.

'Let's make some biscuits for Dad,' her mother said.

'Yes, let's!' Rachel cried.

The soldier looked across the fields as the night wind howled.

There was a blinding flash and a deafening boom and the young soldier quaked.

The farm was quiet.
Rachel and her mother were in the kitchen.
The fire crackled and Rachel was warm.
'Let's make some biscuits for Dad,' her mother said.
'Yes, let's!' Rachel cried.

The soldier looked across the fields as the night wind howled.
There was a blinding flash and a deafening boom and the young soldier quaked.

EXAMPLE 2.4 *PANKRATION* (Blacklock, 1997, p. 120)

The scene is near the end of the novel and portrays the religious sacrifice performed at the opening of the ancient Olympic Games at Olympia in 400 BCE.

The Bouleuterium was packed. It was a wonder anyone could see at all. All the athletes stood together as a boar was sacrificed. Together all the competitors swore on the entrails of the sacrificial animal that they ... had committed no act of violence and that they would uphold all the rules of the Games. Then the Hellanodikai took their oaths, swearing to be impartial, to punish any competitor who failed to comply with the rules or broke his sacred oath, and to take no bribes.

'What would happen to anyone who tried to bribe the Hellanodikai?' Nic asked the man alongside him.

'Didn't you notice? The road here is lined with bronze statues of the gods. Paid for with fines for just that offence. And if a competitor lies about his worthiness, or when he takes the oath, he can be whipped. In front of everyone!'

'Oh.' Nic shuddered at the thought of being whipped in front of thousands of men. 'How could anyone survive humiliation like that?' Free men were never flogged. Only slaves were ever at the other end of the whip.

HISTORICAL REALISM

1. Using Example 2.3 or similar texts, with students, circle any parts of the images in the picturebook which place the text in a past time.

◗ Have older students underline any words or phrases that contribute towards constructing the time period.

◗ Ask your students to describe the features that the different authors have selected to construct the time period.

◗ If appropriate, hand over the task to students to complete for the prose excerpt.

2. Create a table with students listing the conventions of historical realism.

◗ Using Examples 2.3 and 2.4 have students identify and supply evidence of the conventions. Not all conventions will be included.

For example, some conventions may be noted this way:

portrays ordinary life in the past

✔ Rachel and her mother were in the kitchen.

describes significant and interesting events of the time

✔ significant event 'There was a blinding flash and a deafening boom …'

✔ significant event 'Together all the competitors swore on the entrails of the sacrificial animal …'

problems are often a result of social conditions

✖ neither text

FOLK AND FAIRY TALES

Over the past two centuries, folk and fairy tales have become associated with children's literature; yet it is thought that adults were their original audience. The tales are part of a spoken tradition, passed from generation to generation orally rather than written down. In the Western English–speaking world, the tales typically come from several collections and often overlap. Table 2.3 is a selective overview of the history of folk and fairy tales.

Folk and fairy tales are readily available as picturebooks, illustrated collections and digital versions – and tales of different cultures from all over the world can be found and used in classrooms. When young readers recognise folk and fairy tales as familiar stories, they have gained deep cultural and literary knowledge. Over the past thirty years, many folk and fairy tales have been reconstructed, or 'fractured', offering alternative, contrasting perspectives to the original stories (see Table 2.4).

There are two basic kinds of fairy tales (Hixon, 2010):

i) restoration tales, in which highborn personages suffer a temporary fall in fortune and, with the aid of magic, endure trials and tests before being finally restored to their original positions

ii) rise tales, in which the protagonist is not highborn at the outset but, again though magical means, achieves both wealth and title, along with a good marriage.

TABLE 2.3 OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORY OF FOLK AND FAIRY TALES

PUBLISHED	COLLECTOR/WRITER	COUNTRY	TALES
1697	Charles Perrault	France	recorded oral stories as *Tales of Mother Goose* included *Cinderella*
1812	Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm	Germany	found folk tales such as *Rumpelstiltskin*, *Little Red Cap (Little Red Riding Hood)*, *Hansel and Gretel, Rapunzel*
1837–1844	Hans Christian Andersen	Denmark	wrote such tales as *The emperor's new clothes, The little mermaid, Thumbelina, The Ugly Duckling, The nightingale, The princess and the pea, The red shoes*
1889	Andrew Lang	United Kingdom	published a series of fairy stories, starting with *The blue fairy book*, which included *Puss in boots* and *Dick Whittington* among many others
1890–1894	Joseph Jacobs	Australian-born	was an avid collector of English and Celtic tales which he rewrote for his young audiences
Current era	Disney	USA	is the contemporary teller of fairy and folk tales: the changing images in the films over the years show shifting sensitivities towards non-Anglo readers

TABLE 2.4 CONVENTIONS OF FOLK AND FAIRY TALES

▶ located in a deliberately vague time and place, 'Once upon a time in a kingdom far, far away, there lived ...'

▶ characters are defined by their appearance – beauty is goodness, ugly is evil

▶ characters have disguises which hide their 'true nature'

▶ powerful emotions of jealousy, greed, fear, love and hate motivate the characters

▶ low status females rescued by high status males (princes) to live happily ever after

▶ plot is formulaic – early complication, often involves a journey, ends happily

▶ repetitive patterns occur – the number three is significant (three little pigs, three wishes, etc.) there are dark forests, enchantment, spells, impossible tasks, helpful and talking animals or mysterious creatures, tricksters, foolish bargains

▶ inclusion of magical creatures – not only fairies, but goblins, elves, trolls and giants; often, talking animals and the presence of magic are more common to the fairy tale than fairies themselves

FOLK AND FAIRY TALES

As a class have your students select two familiar fairy tales (or introduce a fairy tale by reading and enacting parts of it).

1. Provide a table of the conventions referred to above. Divide the class between the focus tales and have them work in pairs to record their evidence for as many of the conventions as they can find.

◗ As a class, compare the two tales to see what conventions they have in common.

◗ If appropriate to your class level, together decide if the tales are examples of 'restoration' or 'rise' tales.

2. Using one of the tales, conduct a discussion and have the students list the actions of the males and females separately.

◗ Hand over to the students to complete the same analysis with the second tale.

◗ Support students as text analysts to describe the differences between how the males and females are presented in the tales. If relevant to the class level, they can become critical readers by introducing the concepts of masculine and feminine gender roles and matching the actions to ways of thinking about 'what counts' as being masculine and feminine in the texts and in the students' own lives.

3. When students are confident in identifying conventions and gender roles, introduce them to an alternative or 'fractured' fairy tale.

◗ For example, the classic *The true story of the three little pigs by A. Wolf* (Scieszka & Smith, 1989) or *The princess and the packet of frozen peas* (Wilson & de Gennaro, 2009).

◗ Have the class examine which conventions the tale breaks.

◗ How does the author attribute the gender roles in the fractured fairy tale?

◗ **CREATE THEIR OWN TEXT:** Together plan an outline for a class fractured fairy tale. Depending on the level of the students, compose the tale together as a class, or in pairs.

MYTH, LEGEND OR FABLE?

Fairy and folk tales have always essentially aimed to entertain their listeners, but myths, legends and fables have had different purposes, which may be religious, heroic and/or moral.

Myths were explanations of all aspects of the natural world. In prehistoric times and before the advent of science, for example, the Ancient Greeks believed Helios drove his chariot across the sky. Apollo was later conflated with Helios by Roman writers but not the Greeks themselves.

Legends are about people – men and women who were elevated through their courageous deeds and inspired stories and ballads. Today, 'legend' has moved into common parlance – football players and cricketers, for example, are called legends when they have had a good playing career; we might call a friend a legend if he or she achieves something special, or we might use it jokingly or ironically to refer to finishing a simple task.

Fables are simple stories, usually involving animal characters, which concretely express a moral 'truth' that can be easily remembered.

FANTASY

The word 'fantasy' comes from the Middle English (1275–1325) word *fantasie* meaning 'mental image' and 'imaginative faculty', and from *phantasia,* which is Greek for 'image'. Fantasy has been regarded as the genre that asserts the power of the human imagination because its writers invent worlds, characters and lifestyles beyond the here and now. Fantasy is enjoying a resurgent interest in contemporary culture, greatly assisted by the Harry Potter novels and films, by fantasy online games such as *World of warcraft*, and TV series such as *Game of thrones.*

The Middle Ages often provides a context for fantasy, 'everything from Robin Hood to *The Hobbit,* from picturebooks about witches to the castles, warriors, and quests common to video games' (Bradford, 2017, p. 17). Contemporary fantasy can take place not only in our 'natural' world but also in a 'super'-natural one (see Table 2.5). Young people need experience with folk and fairy tales to appreciate modern fantasy.

TYPES OF FANTASY

There are three main ways that fantasy writers set up their worlds:

1. The fantasy is set in the real, primary world, but elements of magic intrude upon it, e.g. *Mary Poppins* (Travers, 1934/2008).

2. The fantasy starts in the real, primary world, then moves into a fantasy world, e.g. *The lion, the witch and the wardrobe* (Lewis, 1950/2009).

3. The fantasy begins and ends in its own, secondary, or alternative, world, e.g. *The Hobbit* (Tolkien, 1937/1998) or the *Deltora* series (Rodda, 2000).

Fantasy explores possibilities of the human imagination outside the boundaries of the 'real' world. It usually advocates the need for perseverance in the face of adversity.

EXAMPLE 2.5 *THE DUCK AND THE DARKLINGS,* (Millard & King, 2014, pp. 16–17)

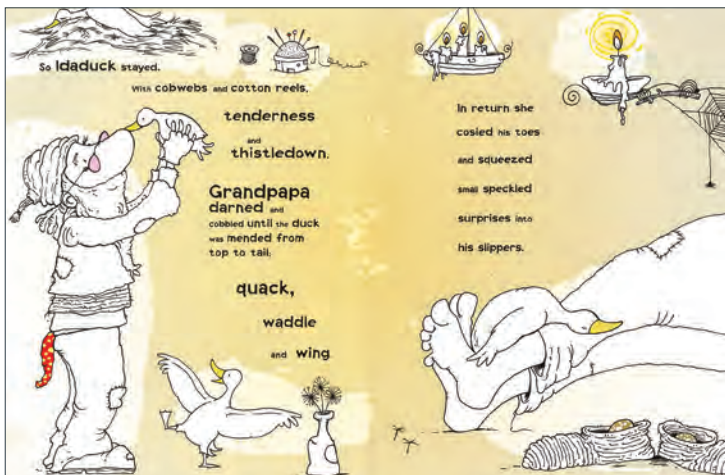### TABLE 2.5 CONVENTIONS OF FANTASY

▸ characters cross a 'portal' or entry point between the primary and the alternative worlds

▸ there is often a journey or a 'quest'

▸ there may be underground caves and/or passages

▸ time can be altered – called 'time-slip' or 'time travel' fantasy

▸ the past can merge with the present

▸ the primary and alternative worlds may be parallel

▸ stories often draw on myths and features of medieval traditions

▸ settings can be in the future, in a virtual reality or in the paranormal (with ghosts present)

▸ codes and chants often hold secrets

▸ fictional countries have their own history, geography, maps, myths, legends and prophecies

▸ characters can have powers and/or special qualities, such as seeing the future or mindreading

▸ magical animals and beasts exist

▸ animals are given human qualities, especially of speech – called 'anthropomorphism'

▸ characters' names, habitats and clothing are often unusual and different to modern times

▸ the narration and the characters' speech may be formal at times

▸ objects or clothing can have special powers

▸ a frequent major theme is that evil exists in the world and needs to be overcome

EXAMPLE 2.6 Excerpt from *A MOST MAGICAL GIRL* (Foxlee, 2016, pp. 7–8)

This is the opening scene in the story. The ellipses (...) indicate an omitted section.

It's exactly the kind of day she sees things. She knows it, but it doesn't stop her from going out.

...It has rained so hard that the street has filled with puddles. She mustn't look. Don't look, she tells herself. Don't look. The wind is tugging at umbrellas. It's pulling at her skirts, untying her hair. She should go inside. ...

Only Annabel doesn't go inside.

Nothing in her lessons can explain this sensation.

... There – she's looked now.

She's looked straight into the puddle at her feet.

It's just an ordinary puddle, dull ditchwater, the wind ripping across its surface. She shouldn't bend down. What if her mother, coming down the stairs, catches a glimpse of her kneeling in the street. Oh, the shame of it!

... But there is nothing that can stop her falling down, hands to stone. There is something there. She's leaning closer. Through the puddle clouds she catches a glimpse of something dark. There's a window. A window filled with blackness and a curtain blowing, and she wants to see inside it and she wants to look away, both at once. She moves closer, her nose almost touching the water, and sees inside.

FANTASY

1. Using Example 2.5 or another fantasy picturebook, with students, circle any parts of the image and any words that contribute to creating the fantastic world. Reread the picturebook and discuss how the fantasy is continued through the story.

2. Use Example 2.6 to introduce the idea of fantasy conventions and demonstrate which of the many conventions are evident.

▶ When students are confident, have them (in pairs) examine another excerpt or picturebook page to determine and compare which conventions are evident.

3. Review which fantasy conventions are evident on the first page of a different fantasy text.

▶ **CREATING THEIR OWN TEXT:** With the class, jointly construct a short orientation which follows one of the mentor texts you have examined. Students can compose a different orientation using the same or other fantasy conventions.

SCIENCE FICTION

Science fiction (or sci-fi) for young readers follows most of the conventions of fantasy but also has some unique conventions (see Table 2.6).

Science fiction explores the possibility of the existence of other universes, galaxies and living forms. It draws attention to new technology that, as history has shown, may be a future invention in the real world. Apps such as the author David Weisner's multi-award-winning *David Weisner's Spot* (a paid app) has inventive wordless stories across five futuristic 'worlds'.

TABLE 2.6 CONVENTIONS OF SCI-FI

▶ the story is set in a future time and place

▶ technology is important as writers create inventions – which may not always be invented for the greater good of humankind or our planet

▶ the setting can be outside the boundaries of the real world

▶ sometimes our known world has been destroyed by an environmental or nuclear disaster and characters have to survive in difficult conditions

▶ humans (and sometimes inter-galactic creatures) battle to save the universe from evil powers

EXAMPLE 2.7 *THE BOY AND THE TOY* (Hartnett & Masciullo, 2010, pp. 20–21)

The boy's father has invented a clever toy, which has been a playmate to his son. The scene shows what happens when the boy stops playing with the toy.

To pass the time, the boy took his other toys out of their basket. He had a lot of toys that he loved from when he was little.

But the toy didn't know how to play with other toys. 'Oh no!' said the boy. 'Not like that! Maybe you should just watch.'

EXAMPLE 2.8 Excerpt from *MECHANICA: A BEGINNER'S FIELD GUIDE* (Balchin, 2016, p. 2)

The introduction to this picturebook presents it as a serious non-fiction and realism text about a futuristic recount of the evolution of the 'increasingly dangerous' Mechanica.

A Brief History (paragraph 3)

As the planet became more polluted, many Earth species began to disappear. By 2190, the public were asking questions and demanding solutions. In place of the lost wildlife species, the corporations of both the East and the West began to create Mechanica; human-created life forms designed to replace the old. These creatures not only provided a form of entertainment, but some replaced the roles of extinct wildlife. For example, the early *Interfectorem apis* – a mechanical bee – was used for agricultural purposes under controlled conditions for the propagation of vegetables and plants.

SCIENCE FICTION

1. Using Example 2.7 or another suitable sci-fi picturebook, with students, examine the 'invention' it includes.

 ▶ Have students, in pairs, circle any parts of the images and any words that describe the invention.

 ▶ Discuss what these words imply about how the character/s might feel about the invention.

▶ Reread the picturebook excerpts and together identify the sci-fi conventions. Older students could complete this work as an introductory task.

2. Using Example 2.8 or another sci-fi prose excerpt, guide students to list what they consider to be powerful language in the description of the invention. Together describe how the reader is positioned to think about the invention by this language and why this might be important for the beginning of a sci-fi text.

3. Have students sketch their own invention based on one of the examples you have read together. They should name it and label its parts and functions. If possible, use a drawing app.

ANIMAL STORIES: REALISM OR FANTASY?

In many books, animals are given human qualities. These kinds of animal stories are part of the *fantasy* genre: animals can have emotions, human-like personalities and the ability to speak to each other (see Table 2.7). When animals, or any non-human 'thing', are given human attributes, they are described by the technical term 'anthropomorphism'. Anthropomorphised animal characters not only speak to each other but may cross the human–animal natural boundary and speak to human characters who can understand them. Of course, animal stories can be part of the realism genre as well. In *realistic animal stories*, animals are part of the natural world and their interaction with the human characters is often at the heart of the story.

TABLE 2.7 CHARACTERISTICS OF ANIMALS IN FANTASY AND REALISTIC STORIES

FANTASY STORIES	REALISTIC STORIES
Animals – speak to each other and/or to humans	Animals – act as animals in the natural world
– have strong human feelings & personalities	– can be pets, working animals, wild animals etc
– appear dressed in clothes	– create a strong bond with humans
– experience human life events	– react to their human's situation and feelings
– have wisdom and offer advice to others	– 'save' their human character from danger

Portraying animals as characters with human qualities allows young people to experience more serious moments in a vicarious way: when an anthropomorphised animal character gets lost, loses a parent or dies, it is less traumatic than if a human character has these experiences. Of course, young readers (and adults) will still empathise with animal characters and share their emotions, as they share Wilbur's distress when Charlotte dies in *Charlotte's web* (White, 1952/2012). Often the animal character is wiser than the humans and gives good advice and leadership. One of the best-known such characters is Aslan, the lion in the classic *The lion, the witch and the wardrobe* (Lewis, 1950/2009).

Several classic stories show how animals can be integrated: sometimes as pets e.g. *My friend Flicka* (O'Hara, 1941/2008); as 'workers', e.g. the historical novel *Black Beauty* (Sewell, 1877/2009); sometimes living naturally in the wild, e.g. Mr Percival in *Storm Boy* (Thiele, 1963/2006); or on farms, e.g. Wilbur and Charlotte in *Charlotte's web (White,* 1952/2012). These animals usually display courage and loyalty in their relationships with the characters and other animals.

EXAMPLE 2.9 *MRS WHITLAM* (Pascoe, 2016, pp. 29–31)

When the daughter of a neighbour dies in an accident, Marnie is given her riding gear and her horse, called Mrs Whitlam, or Maggie. When Marnie rides Maggie to pony club one of the girls is very unfriendly to her. The scene crosses three pages with ellipses (…) indicating an omitted section.

This time when I swung the saddle over the saddle blanket, Maggie looked around to check that I knew what I was doing.

'Well you tell me if there's a special way,' I said to her, my face pressed into the barrel of her body, secretly breathing in her horsiness. 'I want you to be comfortable. We're going to pony club … where your mates are.'

… I knew my voice was not reliable enough to speak so I rode on toward the gate but not before I heard someone say, … 'Vicki's clothes …'. They were the kind of words that hung in the air. What I knew for sure was that I wasn't coming back.

Maggie's step was as sure and determined as my voice wasn't. Perhaps she had made up her mind she wasn't going back either.

EXAMPLE 2.10: *THE SWAP* (Ormerod & Joyner, 2013/2016, pp. 2–3)
Caroline Crocodile is jealous of her new baby brother.

ANIMAL STORIES

1. After reading and discussing either or both of these examples, or other animal story texts, ask students to decide if the animal stories are a fantasy, a realism narrative or a mix of both and discuss the evidence for their decision; for example, in Example 2.10 *The swap* the characters are crocodiles that love 'to eat up his fish and frogs' and 'look at his adorable snout'. They have human emotions and language: 'Caroline was very jealous. "He's no fun", she said.'

❥ Together discuss how the feelings are very human and real for younger children.

2. Reread Example 2.10 and support students to list the story's vocabulary of realistic words and phrases specific to the particular animal in one column.

❥ In a second column, ask them to list the fantasy words that typically do not relate to the animal, e.g. jealous, kiss, new hat, swap.

❥ Guide the students to describe how these words point to the two aspects of the story and how the contrasts construct its humour.

3. Using Example 2.9 *Mrs Whitlam,* with students, repeat the two-column exercise above.

e.g. 'the barrel of her body', 'her horsiness', and 'Maggie looked around to check', 'made up her mind'.

❥ Discuss and compare these two lists. What qualities does Marnie, the narrator, assume Maggie has?

MYSTERY STORIES: REALISM OR FANTASY?

Stories of mystery can overlap both realism and fantasy genres. Realistic mystery stories tend to be like detective novels, where young characters investigate illicit doings. The attraction of such plot lines is evidenced by the long-term popularity of books such as Enid Blyton's *Famous Five* series, or the *Nancy Drew* and *Hardy Boys* series, both produced by a syndicate of ghost writers. As detectives, young characters resolve wrongs by defeating powerful lawbreakers, exposing swindles and restoring inheritances or goods to rightful owners (see Table 2.8).

When mystery stories are in the realm of fantasy, they breach the borders of the world as we know it. Often the mundane is made mysterious and the mysterious mundane. These stories usually involve supernatural elements rather than a crime to be solved.

Mystery stories offer a space where young readers can vicariously operate between childhood and adulthood, following the characters as they solve the mystery. Mystery stories are often 'page-turners' as readers feel a mix of excitement and nervousness about the characters' dangerous situations.

TABLE 2.8 CONVENTIONS OF MYSTERY/DETECTIVE STORIES

◗ concerned with uncovering secrets of some sort

◗ characters have time away from parents or caregivers

◗ they often find significance in things overlooked by adults

◗ as children, they can often follow suspicious others without calling attention to themselves, but their usual invisibility does make them vulnerable when they are noticed, creating tension

◗ often they are physically threatened by the adults under suspicion

◗ they can reason, plan and organise settings

◗ can include natural spaces such as caves, underground tunnels, seashores and islands

◗ mirrors are often the entry point for the supernatural

◗ characters may travel through time

◗ the supernatural 'unknown' appears – sometimes as a ghost from the past, as a demon, an alien, in shape-shifter form, or produced by technology

◗ the supernatural unknown does not respect any rules or boundaries

◗ the resolution may solve the mystery, or the ending may be ambiguous

---

EXAMPLE 2.11 *THE TUNNELS OF TARCOOLA* (Walsh, 2012, pp. 166–167)

The scene depicts the moment when Kitty connects an earlier obscure clue around the word 'birthday' to the mystery of where important documents are hidden in the tunnels.

David was skimming through the tattered pamphlet. It was the coalmine.

'Look', he showed the others. 'There's a bit of a map here. The tunnels actually go out under the harbour. Look at this: 'Sinking of the first shaft, named the Birthday, started in June 1897'.

'Let me see that!' Kitty grabbed the pamphlet. 'Birthday! The other shaft was called Jubilee. Look, Andrea. Look, it's marked on the map. Birthday is just north of the house. That must be where that locked door in the shaft leads. That's where it is!'

...

'I still don't get it', said Andrea. 'What did she hide, and why?'

'We can't be sure until we find it', said David. 'But hey, it's got to be these missing documents. Maybe there's something in the will that explains everything. I bet Buckingham wants to find it so he can destroy it'.

'Maybe there's treasure as well', said Kitty hopefully. 'Can we go tomorrow?'

...

'We'll get the key tomorrow and do a proper search!' hissed Andrea. 'I'll call you after we've been down, okay?'

> **MYSTERY STORIES**
>
> **1.** Example 2.11 shows a moment in the mystery that is a major event in the plot. Using this excerpt or one from another mystery story, discuss with students what appears to be happening and comment on any conventions used in the excerpt. Have students present *evidence* for their decisions.
>
> **2.** Using the same excerpt, have students underline any moments that indicate that the characters are surprised or scared by the events in the scene.
>
> ◗ Discuss the language that constructs this effect; for example, in Example 2.11 note the repetition of the command 'Look' used by two of the characters.
>
> ◗ Follow the mentor text to jointly construct a moment of surprise or fright that could happen in a mystery story.
>
> **3.** Discuss why mystery stories may be popular with some readers. Ask students to research and share different mystery titles with the class.

HUMOUR: REALISM OR FANTASY?

Humour in children's literature is notoriously under-researched. It is another domain that crosses genres, and crosses ages too, because different kinds of humour may appeal to different age groups. A large measure of what children find amusing is concerned with our physical bodies (see Table 2.9). Exaggerated noses, hair and body parts or functions may all share in slapstick, ridicule, caricature, grossness and implausible predicaments (McGillis, 2009). Verbal humour, too, often connects with the body in some way through names and name-calling. The conventions listed in Table 2.9 summarise some of the ways humour is apparent in literature. A focus on the physical body may be evident in each.

Humour offers young readers the opportunity to chuckle at representations of their younger selves, their parents, or 'out-loud' laughter for laughter's sake. Often writers use humour to alleviate the seriousness of the moment (danger, illness or social issues). Humour is a way of escaping conventional behaviour and language. It can also be a way of confronting uncomfortable truths.

TABLE 2.9 GENERAL FORMS AND CONVENTIONS OF HUMOUR	
1. PHYSICAL SLAPSTICK HUMOUR ◗ slapstick seems violent, yet has no lasting effect ◗ ridiculous and/or gross situations taken for granted ◗ incongruity and deliberate nonsense described	**2. HUMOUR OF SITUATION** ◗ deadpan representation of absurd events, taken seriously by the characters ◗ contrast between a picturebook's verbal and visual texts ◗ life-like embarrassing situations ◗ well-meaning situations turn out unpredictably ◗ a serious point can underlie the humour

3. HUMOUR THROUGH LANGUAGE PLAY	4. HUMOUR THROUGH CHARACTERISATION
▶ rhymes, onomatopoeia and nonsense words or combinations ▶ alliteration and exaggeration ▶ humorous names and name-calling ▶ exaggeration/hyperbole in the narration style ▶ puns and parody ▶ a humorous tone, regardless of theme or genre	▶ characters act in ways children aren't allowed to in real life ▶ characters' personalities, clothing and/or appearances are exaggerated or unusual ▶ slang, gross or obscene remarks spoken by characters ▶ the main character may be naïve, nicknames can be used ▶ characters may be younger, or older, than the implied audience ▶ irreverent attitudes to authority ▶ wry remarks in dialogue showing sophisticated understanding of word-play

EXAMPLE 2.12 *CAPTAIN JIMMY COOK DISCOVERS THIRD GRADE* (Temple, Temple & Foye, 2016, pp. 58–62)

Jimmy has acquired a false (prosthetic) arm that he wants to use in his school presentation. He takes it with him when he goes to the shop with his parents. The ellipses (...) indicate omitted text.

Bed, Bath and Cables is a giant warehouse filled with furniture and everyone goes there. Mum loves it. I am not really a fan ... Dad just goes for the two-dollar meatballs and nods a lot. I put up a bit of a protest, but in the end we made a deal. I agreed to go if:

1. I could bring my arm

2. Mum agreed to leave me in the Kids' Ball Pit.

... The girls who were meant to be supervising finally looked up from their mePhones and noticed that things were getting pretty out of hand and that half the balls were now in the shop ... So the girls called Security. Security was this big woman called Rocky, with a bald head, massive arms and a tattoo of a wizard. She blew a whistle and made us all get out, but I realised I'd left my arm in the pit.

... We all had to wait by the edge .... So that was pretty boring until we saw the hand and started pointing it out to Rocky. Rocky ... yanked it out pretty hard, but the hand actually belonged to a kid who'd been stuck under the balls for like days. The kid had been there so long he'd had to go to the toilet, and that really did put an end to any chance of us getting back into the pit.

The good thing was, they had to take all the balls out of the ball pit for what they called 'hygiene reasons'. And that made it really easy to find my arm.

HUMOUR

1. Using Example 2.12 remind students of the four general forms of humour listed in Table 2.9 and ask them to decide how many of the forms they can identify here.

▶ Have students highlight examples of different forms of humour to share with the class.

▶ Select a scene from another humorous text and ask the class to compare the forms of humour it uses.

2. Review the points in 'Humour through language play', and with students, underline or list examples of the conventions from Example 2.12, or from another humorous text.

▶ **CREATE THEIR OWN TEXT:** Jointly construct a short scene modelled on the focus scene and discuss the language features you need to include as you compose.

3. Review the four forms of humour and divide the class into four groups. Allocate a form to each group and ask them, in pairs, to construct an image with related words that is a humorous 'moment', using some of the conventions of their form.

◗ Have groups share their 'moment' with other groups, naming the conventions they used.

INNOVATIVE LITERARY FORMS: POSTMODERN PICTUREBOOKS, GRAPHIC NOVELS AND MANGA

POSTMODERN PICTUREBOOKS

There are numerous definitions of 'postmodern' in relation to picturebooks. Good introductions include Bull & Anstey (2010) and the YouTube CG Publishing presentation *Playing with the postmodern: picture books for multiliteracies*.

Traditionally, fiction texts of all forms encourage their readers to 'forget' that the text world is a constructed one (McDonald, 1999) and regard characters as people living their lives in their 'real world'. Consequently, experienced readers have expectations about how a picturebook functions and may be surprised, perplexed, confounded and delighted (often in this sequence) when they first view a postmodern picturebook (see Table 2.10).

> Traditional picture books are already multi-modal, and postmodern picture books build on (or some say disrupt) traditional relationships between image and story more extensively. Similar to digital texts, they invite interactions between the text and readers in ways that encourages the reader to shift from a role of passive recipient of the author's intended meaning to the role of active co-author.

(Paugh, 2014, p. 100)

TABLE 2.10 CONVENTIONS OF POSTMODERN PICTUREBOOKS
(from Allen, 2014, and Lewis, 2001; see also Sipe & McGuire, 2008).

FRAME OR 'BOUNDARY BREAKING':

◗ characters, narrators, writers and illustrators may talk to each other, and the reader

◗ generic conventions are clearly evident, rather than hidden

◗ 'high' culture (for example, Shakespeare's plays) and 'low' culture (comic books) are bundled together.

EXCESS:

◗ characters are grotesque or overstated and their behaviour shocks or is atypical for a children's picturebook

◗ language is exaggerated

◗ content is 'over the top' or introduces taboo topics

◗ images are flamboyant, layout is exuberant

◗ there is a general 'gigantism' (Lewis, 2001) that disrupts reader expectations.

INDETERMINACY, AMBIGUITY, LACK OF CLOSURE:

◗ information is deliberately vague, omitted or ambiguous, for example, rather than a satisfying resolution, there is no closure
◗ verbal and visual information connections are missing
◗ the reader must make inferential leaps across textual gulfs, as nothing is routine, closed, or apparent – narrative gaps may become chasms
◗ there are multiple meanings and multiple ways of thinking about the narrative.

PARODY & INTERTEXTUALITY:

◗ exploits literary and artistic traditions to make humorous or satirical comment – mocking, trivialising or making fun of a more serious original
◗ borrows from multiple texts – a high level of intertextuality is called a pastiche (or, colloquially, a mash-up)
◗ to enjoy the parody fully, the reader needs to identify the intertextuality, question the worthiness of the original text and appreciate the clever and amusing deployment of the original
◗ 'fractured fairy tales' are good examples of parody for young readers; see Example 2.13 *Wolfie*, and Folk and Fairy Tales section (pp. 16-18).

PERFORMANCE:

◗ the reader manipulates the book to follow the verbal or visual text
◗ the book's physical space on the page is manipulated beyond normal expectations, for example, with tiny or huge print or collage work
◗ attention is drawn to the usually 'invisible' parts of the peritext – the endpapers, the title page, foreword and afterword, dedication and even the imprint (copyright page)
◗ characters and/or narrator appear to step outside the pages and address readers
◗ readers cannot 'get lost' in the story, they are always aware it is a fiction.

These kinds of performance features are called metafictive devices (the prefix 'meta' means 'about' or beyond' – so they are fiction devices about the fictional nature of the literary text).

The devices construct a fiction story that announces itself as a fiction story – it is self-reflexive, looking inside itself, rather than creating the usual pretence of truth and reality. Such picturebooks raise questions about reality, and how fictional these 'real' contexts may be in the way they are reported and produced.

EXAMPLE 2.13 *WOLFIE: AN UNLIKELY HERO* (Abela & Brecon, 2017, pp. 12–13)

The picturebook tells the story of Wolfie, who keeps interrupting the narrator to demand a kinder version of his story.
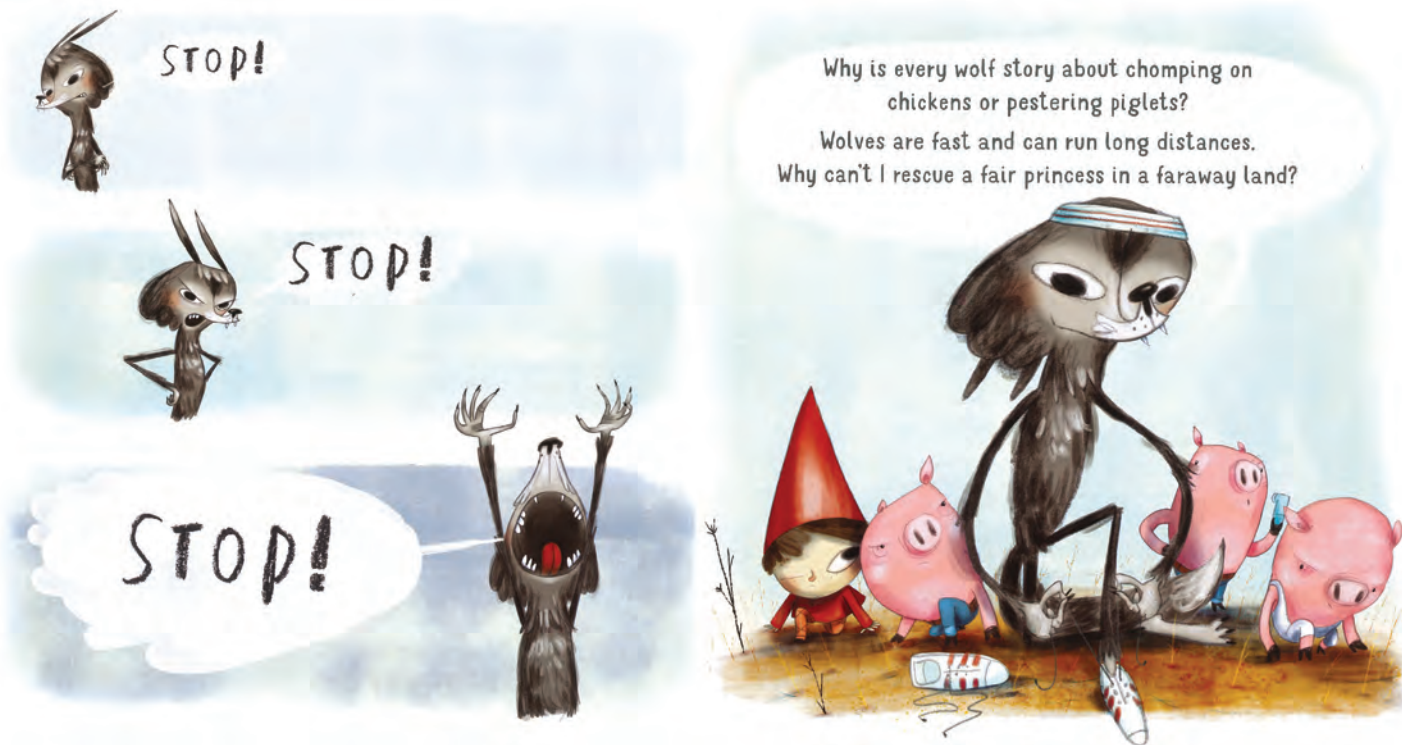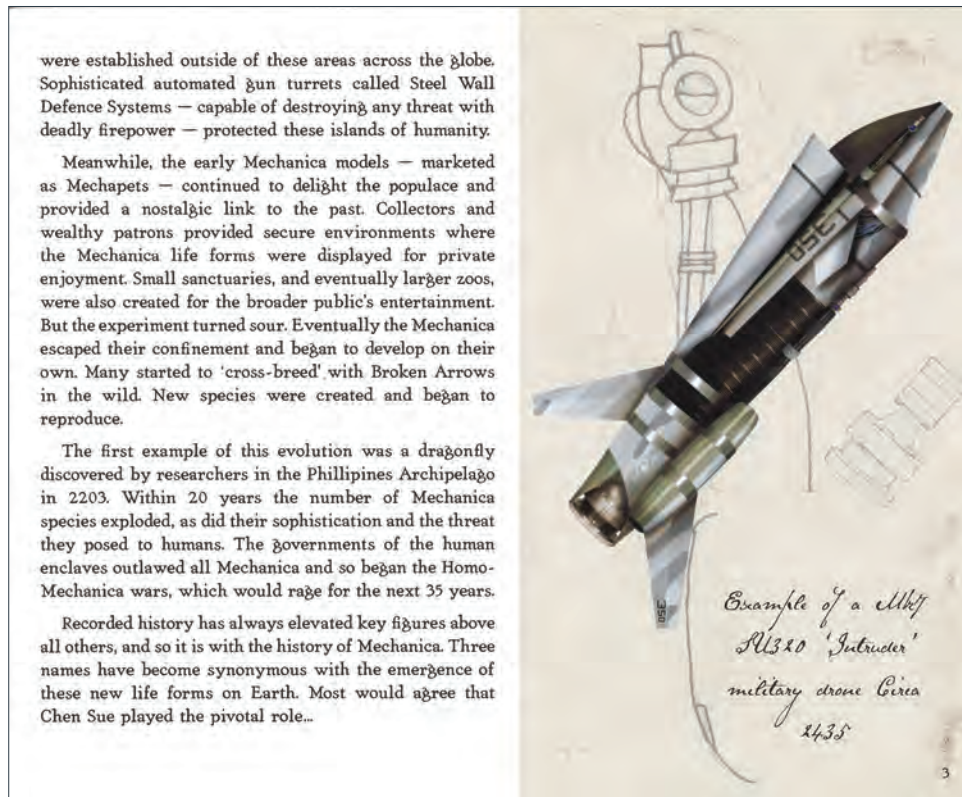

POSTMODERN PICTUREBOOKS

1. With students, examine Examples 2.13 and 2.14 and discuss which conventions are evident. Compare the conventions used across the examples. Why have the authors made their choices?

2. Together explore the possible purposes and messages from either (or both) examples. Students can consider i) the effect of a character interrupting and changing the narrator's version of his story (based on the well-known and traditional 'baddie' – a wolf), and/or ii) the point of a 'factual' representation of the 'Mechanica' future of our planet.

3. Research has shown that when primary-age and older students are explicitly taught about these conventions, with opportunities to see examples in different picturebooks, they can create their own postmodern books (Pantaleo, 2010, 2011). After students have examined in detail one or two different postmodern picturebooks, they can work in pairs to construct another postmodern page, which could be part of the *Wolfie: an unlikely hero* text or *Mechanica* text. Students will need to plan which aspect of fairy tale traditions or modern life their postmodern text will critique or play with.

EXAMPLE 2.14 *MECHANICA: A BEGINNER'S FIELD GUIDE* (Balchin, 2016, p. 3)

This text 'breaks the boundaries' of what counts as fiction and non-fiction, sci-fi and realism. See also Example 2.8.

were established outside of these areas across the globe. Sophisticated automated gun turrets called Steel Wall Defence Systems — capable of destroying any threat with deadly firepower — protected these islands of humanity.

Meanwhile, the early Mechanica models — marketed as Mechapets — continued to delight the populace and provided a nostalgic link to the past. Collectors and wealthy patrons provided secure environments where the Mechanica life forms were displayed for private enjoyment. Small sanctuaries, and eventually larger zoos, were also created for the broader public's entertainment. But the experiment turned sour. Eventually the Mechanica escaped their confinement and began to develop on their own. Many started to 'cross-breed' with Broken Arrows in the wild. New species were created and began to reproduce.

The first example of this evolution was a dragonfly discovered by researchers in the Phillipines Archipelago in 2203. Within 20 years the number of Mechanica species exploded, as did their sophistication and the threat they posed to humans. The governments of the human enclaves outlawed all Mechanica and so began the Homo-Mechanica wars, which would rage for the next 35 years.

Recorded history has always elevated key figures above all others, and so it is with the history of Mechanica. Three names have become synonymous with the emergence of these new life forms on Earth. Most would agree that Chen Sue played the pivotal role...

Example of a Mk7 SU320 'Intruder' military drone Circa 2435

GRAPHIC NOVELS

Graphic novels are a form of narrative text related to comic books. Historically, a comic book is a short, serialised monthly publication with straightforward plot and characters. A graphic novel, on the other hand, tells a more sophisticated story, with significant themes.

A graphic novel is not a literary genre but a literary form. Graphic novels can be in the broad realism or fantasy/science fiction genre – and the appropriate conventions and social purposes of these genres are layered into the narrative (see Table 2.11). For example, *Rockhopping* (Balla, 2016) and the wordless *The arrival* (Tan, 2007) employ conventions of realism, while *Coraline* (Gaiman & McKean, 2002) – for older readers – and *The hero of Little Street* (Rogers, 2010) – for younger readers – are in the fantasy genre. As well, the graphic form has its own set of conventions. Duncan & Smith (2017) describe four key elements to the functioning of graphic novels: the panel, the sequence, the page and the narrative, which 'may overlap and support one another in the actual creation of meaning' (p. 10).

There is a growing appreciation of the literary merit of graphic novels among teachers. Research shows that the form attracts reluctant readers, offers a contemporary perspective on how stories can be told and critiqued, and taps into the reading world of the students (Connors, 2010; Pantaleo, 2011).

TABLE 2.11 CONVENTIONS OF GRAPHIC NOVEL FORM

- sequenced panel-to-panel format of coloured images
- narrative action sequenced over several frames through a flexible page layout
- frames with varied panel shapes, size and verbal text
- verbal text lettering style varies and is often in upper case
- graphic lines communicate action and emotions

- narration and dialogue in captions, balloons, speech or thought bubbles
- fonts and balloon shapes can be stylised to convey meaning
- colours, body language, settings can be symbolic
- visual text shows intensity, shading or perspective (see Chapter 12 for details of visual technique)

EXAMPLE 2.15 *ROCKHOPPING* (Balla, 2016, pp. 4–5)

These two pages show the start of Clancy's training for a week-long bush trek with his Uncle Egg. The annotations within different frames add detail and interest.
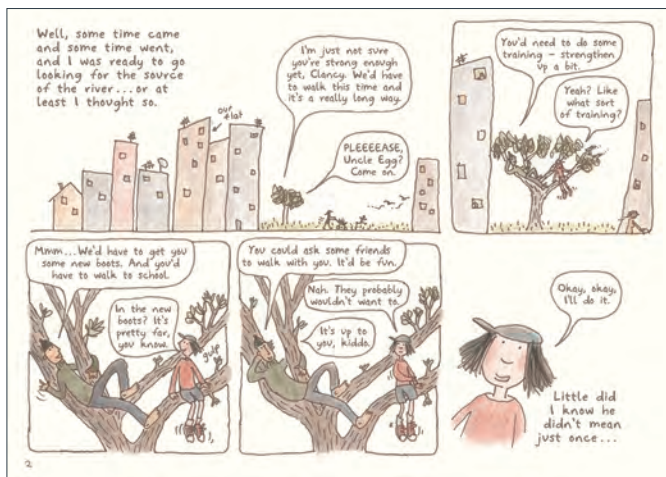
EXAMPLE 2.16 *JASON AND THE GOLDEN FLEECE* (Yomtov, Sandoval & Fuentes, 2010, pp. 6–7)

*This is the orientation to a graphic version of the Greek myth.*

MANGA

Manga is the Japanese word for graphic texts: it literally means 'random or whimsical pictures'. In Japan these texts are serialised and are 'more commonly recognised by their cartoony imagery and dew-eyed characters' (Cheung & O'Sullivan, 2017, p. 29). Manga is different from *anime* – this is the Japanese term used for any animation, though in the West it usually refers to Japanese cartoon animation (MacWilliams, 2008). Two Australian young women – Queenie Chan and Madeleine Rosca – have become internationally known manga artists.

Manga uses the conventions of fantasy, narrative and graphic novels, and has some unique conventions of its own (see Table 2.12).

TABLE 2.12 CONVENTIONS OF MANGA FORM

- written from top to bottom and right to left, starting at the back, the traditional reading/writing sequence of Japanese language (unless 'flipped' by the publisher for Western readers)
- mainly black and white (but cover art is coloured)
- a mix of graphic techniques used in the same text
- highly detailed backgrounds and degrees of shading and toning
- sound effects evident
- two-dimensional drawings, characters with large eyes, and hair of abnormal size and colour
- characters lead ordinary lives but often have extraordinary powers or 'special' friends
- manga characters often mix racial, cultural and gender characteristics, making them universal
- tiny figures denote frustration or anger and can be dwarfed by the background
- emotions shown using symbols (such as drops of sweat for worry) rather than words
- different styles published for different ages and interests or for specific audiences
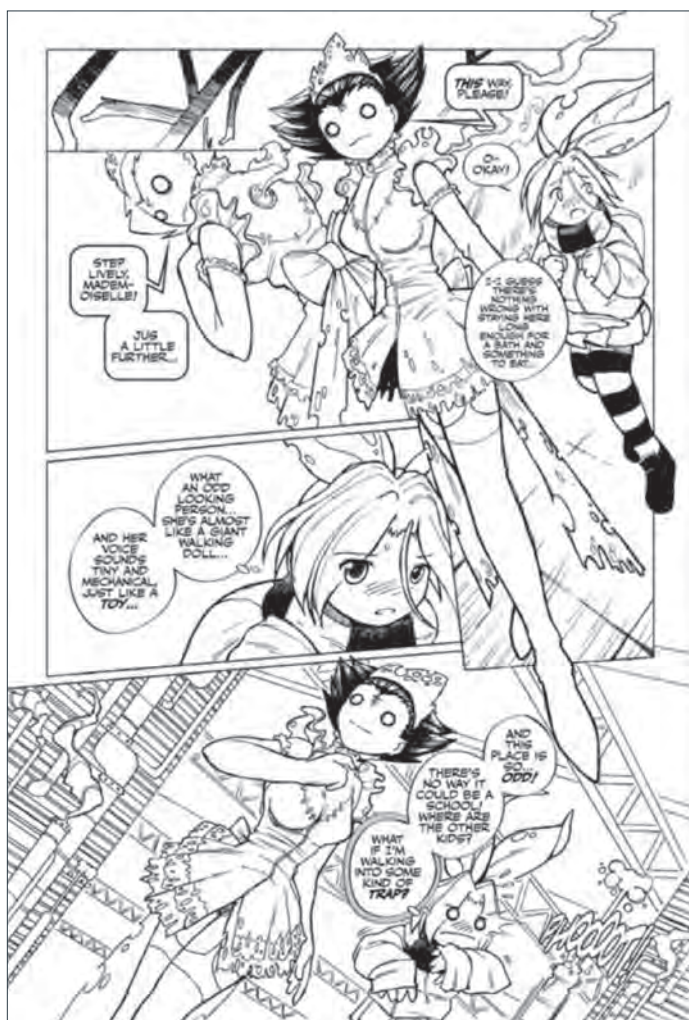
EXAMPLE 2.17 *HOLLOW FIELDS*
(Rosca, 2007–2016, Ch.1, p. 41)

In 2007, Australian Madeleine Rosca received the first International Manga Award (dubbed the 'Nobel Prize of Manga' by the Foreign Ministry of Japan) for best non-Japanese manga.

The scene shows the moments after Lucy has mistakenly arrived at the school called Hollow Fields. Miss Notch offers her a warm bath and dinner, and as she is cold and wet she decides to accept.

Read right to left, top to bottom

GRAPHIC NOVELS AND MANGA

1. With students, read the three examples above and discuss the general differences between the graphic novel and manga forms. If possible, distribute other examples of graphic novels and manga for review.

◗ Divide students into three groups and allocate one as the Myth Graphic Group, one as the Realism Graphic Group and the third as the Manga Group. In pairs, have students refer to the conventions for their group's type of text and find examples of several (3–5) different conventions for each image. Then have students introduce the conventions of their text to members of another group.

◗ Have students refer to the conventions and the examples to individually construct a character figure, that could be part of a graphic or manga novel, using a digital drawing app if possible.

NON-FICTION LITERARY PICTUREBOOKS

Non-fiction texts are established in the range of the text types students are asked to examine in the *Australian Curriculum: English.* Within this category, non-fiction literary picturebooks differ from traditional textbooks and have become a notable genre of their own. According to the criteria for the CBCA's Eve Pownall Award for Information Books:

> Entries in this category should be books which have the prime purpose of documenting factual material with consideration given to imaginative presentation, interpretation and variation of style. Books are judged on the balance and harmony of language style and presentation, graphic excellence, clarity, appropriateness and aesthetic appeal of illustrations, and the overall design of the book. Referencing of sources are important, as are inclusion of a contents page, index, bibliography and glossary which enhance the reader's experience. Autobiographies and biographies are entered in this category.

Children's Book Council Australia

These non-fiction texts have a strong content focus (as distinct from a well-researched fictional narrative, such as historical fiction) (Pappas, 2006) (see Table 2.13). The hybrid nature of some non-fiction picturebooks means that the content is told through a narrative lens, which may distract from its informational purpose. However, the best information picturebooks meld the qualities of literary language and the technical knowledge they are communicating.

TABLE 2.13 CONVENTIONS OF LITERARY NON-FICTION BOOKS

◗ contents page	◗ author information
◗ index	◗ appropriate organisation – chronological, cause-effect, description etc.
◗ glossaries	
◗ references	◗ subject-specific vocabulary
◗ photographs, drawings	◗ expressive language
◗ graphs	◗ rhetorical questions
◗ captions	◗ question/answer dialogue
◗ dot points	◗ picturebook design principles

EXAMPLE 2.18 *THE GIGANTIC BOOK OF GENES* (Hendry, 2016, p. 13) (Text transcribed for clarity)

The magic of DNA

Genes are sections of DNA (short for deoxyribonucleic acid). DNA is made of four chemical bases: adenosine (A), guanine (G), cytosine (C) and thymine (T). The way these bases are ordered in the DNA is the code that makes up all life.

Up close, DNA looks a bit like a twisted ladder. Two long strands are held together by bonds between the bases. They wind around each other in a shape called a double helix.

Copy cat

Cells multiply by making copies of themselves. That's how our bodies grow and change. When a cell divides, its DNA unzips down the middle. New bases bind to the loose ends of each strand, creating two copies of the DNA –one for each of the new cells.

Sometimes tiny mistakes are made in the code when the DNA is being copied. This is how changes, or 'mutations', in our DNA happen.

Example 2.18, *The gigantic book of genes,* draws on a number of conventions. As the image shows, genes are described and explained using scientific vocabulary but then a simile 'like a twisted ladder' (p. 12) and 'unzips' (p. 13) shifts the language to a more accessible basis for the audience. The magnified DNA image is a 3D illustration, accompanied by a coloured diagram, with captions, to illustrate how cells multiply. There are no questions on this page, though there are on other pages. The verbal text is placed in primary position on both pages, though the large DNA image is the salient feature. The title 'The magic of DNA' is echoed in the twisting object.

NON-FICTION LITERARY PICTUREBOOKS

1. Select a non-fiction picturebook. This is an opportunity to extend your coverage of specific content being studied in class. With students identify examples of the first nine conventions listed in Table 2.13. Explain how they support the reader.

▶ Have students look for other examples on different pages and in pairs or groups explain how these assist readers in understanding the information.

2. Draw attention to the subject-specific vocabulary. How is the technical language of the concept or subject explained in words and/or images? The level of technicality will depend on the age range of the audience. With older students different levels of books could be compared for how they explain the subject-specific vocabulary.

3. Now identify any expressive language that contrasts with the technical vocabulary. Ask students to mark up the language they find unexpectedly expressive for a factual text.

▶ After discussing these choices by the author, have students attempt a rewrite of a brief excerpt without the expressive language. How do these versions effect understanding?

4. If appropriate to the level of the class, together discuss the organisation of the book and decide if there is a single structure, for example, chronological/time sequence in a biography, a routine of question/answer, or a mix of structures. Explore why this structure is relevant to the purpose and topic. Rhetorical questions (those that engage the audience by seeking their attention) can be part of this focus.

5. If the students have the relevant background knowledge, select a page and together identify the visual design elements used, describe their purpose and explain their effect on the reader/viewer. Students can repeat this task with a different page. See Chapter 12 for an explanation of visual design elements.

SUMMARY: TYPES OF LITERARY TEXTS

The study of literary genres creates awareness of how they are constructed and offers students a broad range of literary experiences. It provides occasions for guided interpretation, analysis and synthesis, and creates opportunities for students to experiment and create their own texts based on the mentor texts provided.