CONTENTS

The Game ............................................................................................................................................. 4
Aims....................................................................................................................................................... 5
Emergent Readers .................................................................................................................................. 6
  Character: create your monster........................................................................................................ 6
Further Story Monster Activities ........................................................................................................ 7
  Design a monster............................................................................................................................. 7
  Monster stories ............................................................................................................................... 7
  Multimodal stories .......................................................................................................................... 7
  View the Monster Gallery .............................................................................................................. 8
Beginning Readers ............................................................................................................................... 9
  Playing Story Monster .................................................................................................................... 9
  When the first level has been completed ....................................................................................... 10
Further Story Monster Activities ..................................................................................................... 11
  Print your Monster ........................................................................................................................ 11
  CLOZE activity .............................................................................................................................. 11
  Silly sentences AND STORIES ..................................................................................................... 11
Fluent Readers ..................................................................................................................................... 12
Activities ............................................................................................................................................... 13
  Characterisation ............................................................................................................................ 13
  The world ......................................................................................................................................... 13
  Narrative .......................................................................................................................................... 13
  Interpreting texts and reading character ...................................................................................... 14
  Build vocabulary ........................................................................................................................... 14
  Silly sentences ................................................................................................................................ 14
  Exquisite Corpse ............................................................................................................................ 14
  Explore genre ................................................................................................................................... 14
  Story Monster: the Sequel .............................................................................................................. 15
  The monster returns ....................................................................................................................... 15
  Create a new game ......................................................................................................................... 15
  Imagine your story monster in 3D .................................................................................................. 16
The Australian Curriculum: Some quick links with Story Monster ................................................. 17


**STORY MONSTER**

*Story Monster* is a literacy game for primary school students. This learning tool combines gameplay and storytelling to develop foundational knowledge and skills related to reading, writing and screen literacy.

*Story Monster* can be played in the classroom and at home. *Story Monster* introduces knowledge and skills in a holistic and meaningful way by having players tell a short, sentence length action story in a game environment.

While the game has grammar as its starting point, it incorporates wide-ranging knowledge and skills relating to narrative, film language and design, videogames, game play and ICT.

**The Game**

The player designs a hungry monster who loves to gobble up words. This greedy monster needs training to make well-structured sentences. The player’s challenge is to feed the monster the right part of speech (e.g. noun, verb) from a constantly moving selection of words. Once a sentence is complete, the player can see it animated and hear it read out loud.

In the course of the game, the player makes decisions about genre, character design, costume, props and develops understanding of game play related to worlds, levels and controls.

At the end of the game, the monster can be added to a gallery for other players to admire. It can also be printed out as a PDF.
Aims

This interactive game promotes engagement with language and design by encouraging young learners to make their own stories.

*Story Monster* has been designed to contribute to students' developing understanding of language structure. In accordance with the aims of the Australian Curriculum: English Learning Area design, this game familiarises players with some of the basic grammatical language used to describe the parts of a sentence (syntax).

In the *Language* strand, students develop their knowledge of the English language and how it works. ...They discover the patterns and purposes of English usage, including spelling, grammar and punctuation at the levels of the word, sentence and extended text, and they study the connections between these levels. By developing a body of knowledge about these patterns and their connections, students learn to communicate effectively through coherent, well-structured sentences and texts. They gain a consistent way of understanding and talking about language, language-in-use and language-as-system, so they can reflect on their own speaking and writing and discuss these productively with others.

Source: Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA).

www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/English/Language

This basic knowledge is embedded in a wider learning framework which emphasises print, screen and digital literacy along with imaginative story-telling.
INTRODUCING STORY MONSTER

Emergent Readers

Before playing the game, players are given the opportunity to design a character. This process involves a number of creative choices and encourages students to think about the basics of characterisation and about the overall effect of the individual design choices they make.

CHARACTER: CREATE YOUR MONSTER

Encourage students to think about the process of character design.

- What kind of monster do I want to design?
- How do I make the kind of monster I am after? What design decisions do I need to make?
- Why do different eyes, head shapes or nostrils change the way the monster looks?
- How does colour change the appearance of the monster?
- After my monster has been created, what name can I give it?
Further Story Monster Activities

**DESIGN A MONSTER**

Challenge students to design and draw their own monster.
- Try to make it completely different from the Story Monster.
- What are some of the different shapes that a monster can be?
- Is it going to have legs? If so, how many?
- Create a world for the monster.
- Ask students to describe their monster in words. Is it scary, sweet, silly, colourful?

**MONSTER STORIES**

Create a story about this monster.
- What are some of the crazy things it does?
- What is it thinking?
- Does it have any monster friends?

Ask students to share their stories in small story circles of 4 or 5 students.

**MULTIMODAL STORIES**

- Record students telling or reading their monster stories. (You can download the voice-recording program *Audacity* for free.)
- Students can recreate their monster design digitally, using a drawing program like *Paint*.
- Use a program such as *Windows Movie Maker* to combine the image and the sound. The images and the stories can play consecutively as part of the one file.
- Students can take turns at the listening post to hear each others’ monster stories, or they can be screened on the interactive whiteboard.
A player needs to reach the end of the game before they can upload a monster to the online Monster Gallery. However, students can view other players’ creations.

At the end of the first level, it is possible to print off a PDF of the monster. If students are unable to play the first level on their own, the game could be played as a class activity on the interactive whiteboard. The class could design the monster together and make decisions in response to the teacher’s prompts. The printed monster could be shared as a kind of class mascot.
Beginning Readers

PLAYING STORY MONSTER

After designing and naming a monster character, the player selects a genre and a world before playing the first level of the game. The genres are: adventure, science fiction and fantasy.

The idea of genre will be reinforced when the player dresses the monster for the game world.

The first level of the game requires the player to build a simple sentence.

My monster [verb] a [noun].

Players choose from 5 verbs and 3 nouns as they build their first sentence. If they choose the wrong part of speech, the monster tumbles from the sky (with a scream) and the level begins again.

Players learn by doing, following a process of trial and error. Their efforts are encouraged by the silly and rather impolite behaviour of the greedy monster.

When the level is successfully completed, the sentence is read out loud and acted out by the monster.

This first level introduces students to the idea of sentence structure and to two basic grammatical terms: verb and noun, and their functions (active, doing word and naming word).

This level also demonstrates the different language modes that can be used to express ideas. In one short activity, students play a game and construct a sentence that they see in print, hear read out loud and see animated.

Each of the sentences is a short narrative, something that is emphasised by the animation.
WHEN THE FIRST LEVEL HAS BEEN COMPLETED

Ask students about their initial reaction to seeing their sentence acted out in animation by the monster.

- What did you like best about your monster story?
- What visual and sound elements did the animation add to make the sentence more interesting/funny/surprising?
- What type of monster story would you like to make next?

Encourage students to play the level again choosing a different genre and world.

- Students can be challenged to see how many different noun/verb combinations are possible in this first level. How many different animations can they make? (There are 5 verbs and 3 nouns, so there is also the potential for a bit of maths learning at this stage.)
- Which combinations of noun and verb make the most surprising sentence?
- Which words contribute to the funniest animations?

Teachers may offer the game to students as an independent or extension activity during literacy rotation, allowing students to discover elements of the game for themselves.

The game could also be introduced to the whole class, using an interactive whiteboard, student participation and some teacher direction.
Further *Story Monster* Activities

**PRINT YOUR MONSTER**

At the end of the first level students can print a PDF of their monster. This can be used for:

- labelling body parts,
- writing new sentences or stories,
- adding new features to the monster,
- to place the monster in a different world.

**CLOZE ACTIVITY**

Extend and reinforce students’ learning with a CLOZE activity where they choose their own verbs and nouns.

- Begin with a class brainstorming activity, to generate separate lists of nouns and verbs on the board for students to refer to when completing CLOZE activities.
- Students can try to imagine even sillier things for their monster to do.

**SILLY SENTENCES AND STORIES**

Students work in pairs with one suggesting verbs and the other nouns.

- Who can come up with the craziest combination?
- Illustrate your sentence.
- Share your work with the class.

Consider this basic format of the simple sentence as a kind of micro-story that can be built on.

- Choose a sentence from *Story Monster* and add to it. ‘My monster ate a spaceship.’ What happens next? Complete your silly monster story.
Fluent Readers

Games encourage problem-solving, intuitive learning and perseverance.

In the next two levels of the game, players are challenged by more complex sentence structures and an expanding repertoire of grammatical terms.

The second level of the game introduces adjectives and adverbs.

My Monster [adverb] [verb] [adjective] [noun].

The difficulty of the game increases as players have a larger pool of words to choose from and must identify the correct part of speech from four possible options.

Students may attempt this level as an extension task and will learn to identify the appropriate word through a process of trial and error. Games encourage problem-solving and intuitive learning.

This level could also be introduced to the class as a whole, using an interactive whiteboard.

Once students have mastered the second level, they will be able to proceed straight to the third level and should be able to work it out on their own. (The third level can test students’ patience, as they can work hard to build the sentence, then make a mistake and find themselves back at the beginning of the level – as they would in most conventional videogames!)

The third level of the game reinforces what has already been learnt, models a more complex sentence structure and introduces the idea of the list, made up of commas and finishing with ‘and’.

The sentence structure is: My Monster [adverb] [verb] [adjective] [noun] [comma/and] [adjective] [noun] [and] [adjective] [noun].

After completing the game, students will be able to talk effectively about some of the basic decisions they make when constructing imaginative sentences that convey ideas, information or a short narrative. They will then be able to build on this understanding.
Activities

Students can build on the idea of the sentence as a micro-story, exploring more complex ideas about the monster and his world.

A PDF of the monster can be printed after gameplay. This can be a great stimulus for individual writing tasks or for sharing on a whiteboard.

CHARACTERISATION

- Provide more details about the monster.
- Is it the only monster in the world?
- Does it have friends, family, enemies?
- What is its ‘back story’? (What has happened to the monster BEFORE we meet him?)

THE WORLD

- Use interesting words to describe the world.
- What are some of the secrets of this world?
- What was NOT included in the game?
- What was happening off-screen?

NARRATIVE

- Add an opening and an ending to the micro-story. For example, what happened before the monster vomited the skull? What happened next?
- Were there other characters in the world off-screen? What were they doing?
INTERPRETING TEXTS AND READING CHARACTER

- Visit the monster gallery using the interactive whiteboard. (Five monsters appear on the screen at a time.)
  - Compare the different monsters.
  - Ask each student to choose a favourite monster and explain what appeals to them about this monster and why.
- Explore character types. Encourage students to think about the way that individual elements of the monsters affect the way we ‘read’ them visually.
  - Describe the different monsters.
  - In what ways are the monsters similar? How are they different?
  - Describe each monster’s personality. Explain the design features that create this impression.

BUILD VOCABULARY

- Divide students into four groups: the noun group, verb group, adverb group and adjective group.
- How many monstrous words can each group find for their part of speech?
- Each group might like to choose their top five monstrous words, and the class can combine them into silly sentences.
- Students can also see how many space/science fiction, fantasy/fairytale, adventure/jungle words they can list.

SILLY SENTENCES

- Using the sentence structure from the third level, students can create long silly sentences: My monster greedily swallowed a happy frog, an electric eel, a bulbous toad, a cranky cockroach and a lucky penny.
- Create a comic strip illustrating these events, using a new box for each event.

EXQUISITE CORPSE

This is a storytelling exercise where contributors add words to a sentence without having seen what the previous person wrote.

- Each student writes a noun, folds the piece of paper over so that the word cannot be seen and passes it on to the next person to write an adverb; the sheet is folded again and passed on. This process continues until the sentence has been completed.
- When the sentences are finished, they can be shared and read out loud.
- Students can imagine how these sentences would be illustrated, animated (using a storyboard) or extended into a longer story. Students might like to use ACMI Storyboard Generator when completing this activity. Go to http://generator.acmi.net.au/storyboard/byo-intro
EXPLORE GENRE

Each level of Story Monster can be played in a different genre. After the player chooses the genre, this concept is reinforced by the player’s choice of costume. Once the monster is dressed for his world, the design of the world reinforces the idea of genre. Genre-specific nouns are carried over from one level to the next, so by the third level, there is a fairly crazy mix of possibilities – something that adds to the humour. The incongruity of having, for instance, ‘wand’ as a choice in the adventure genre provides an opportunity for discussing genre conventions and the expectations built into a genre.

- What other genres do students recognise? (Suggestions: action, romance, detective, horror, the western.) Students may also notice that, as in many screen texts, comedy is used throughout Story Monster to tell the monster’s story.
- Ask students to choose a genre that is not featured in Story Monster and recreate one of the levels in a different genre.
  o Design the world and the costumes.
  o Choose the sound effects and voices.
  o Choose the vocabulary.

STORY MONSTER: THE SEQUEL

THE MONSTER RETURNS

Design another level for Story Monster, perhaps to create compound sentences or to introduce the idea of prepositions and phrases.

- Explain the challenge clearly and concisely.
- Choose a genre.
- Design costumes, props, music, sound effects and vocabulary.
- Would the animation design need to be changed to fit the new sentence structure? How?

CREATE A NEW GAME

Students work together in groups to devise their own language game. They might like to focus on the parts of speech and punctuation featured in Story Monster and come up with a completely different approach or they might like to teach something new.

If students are learning a language other than English, they might like to adapt Story Monster and make it a language-learning game.
IMAGINE YOUR STORY MONSTER IN 3D

Students can animate their monster story or silly sentence. Stop motion clay animation is a fairly simple process that young students find rewarding.

- Design and create the monster character using clay/plasticine/playdough.
- Choose a genre and design the world in which the animation will take place.
- Create a storyboard to help with planning. Students might like to use ACMI Storyboard Generator when completing this activity. Go to http://generator.acmi.net.au/storyboard/byo-intro
- You will need: a digital camera (still or movie); a computer with a firewire connection for a movie camera; a USB connection for a stills camera; animation software; and patience.
- For more information about creating a stop motion animation, go to www.acmi.net.au/channel/#Year=&EventType=ACMI%20Kids&EventName=&ContentType=How%20To&Srch=&Sort=date&Clip=3735
- Visit www.acmi.net.au/screenit.aspx to access the most recent Screen It Primary Teacher Education Resource Kit. The kit offers information about and suggestions for making stop motion animations with primary students.
THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM: SOME QUICK LINKS WITH "STORY MONSTER"

FOUNDATION YEAR

- Understand that punctuation is a feature of written text. (ACELA1432)
- Understand concepts about print and screen. (ACELA1433)
- Recognise that sentences are key units for expressing ideas. (ACELA1435)
- Recognise that texts are made up of words and groups of words that make meaning. (ACELA1434)
- Identify some features of texts including events and characters and retell events from a text. (ACELT1578)
- Construct texts using software including word processing programs (ACELY1654)

YEAR 1

- Understand concepts about print and screen, including how different types of texts are organised (ACELA1450)
- Identify the parts of a simple sentence that represent ‘What’s happening?’, ‘Who or what is involved?’ and the surrounding circumstances (ACELA1451)
- Explore differences in words that represent people, places and things (nouns, including pronouns), happenings and states (verbs), qualities (adjectives) and details such as when, where and how (adverbs) (ACELA1452)
- Discuss how authors create characters using language and images (ACELT1581)
- Recreate texts imaginatively using drawing, writing, performance and digital forms of communication (ACELY1666)
- Read supportive texts using developing phrasing, fluency, contextual, semantic, grammatical and phonetic knowledge and emerging text processing strategies, for example prediction, monitoring meaning and re-reading (ACELY1659)
- Create short imaginative and informative texts that show emerging use of appropriate text structure, sentence-level grammar, word choice, spelling, punctuation and appropriate multimodal elements, for example illustrations and diagrams (ACELY1661)
- Construct texts that incorporate supporting images using software including word processing programs (ACELY1664)

YEAR 2

- Recognise that capital letters signal proper nouns and commas are used to separate items in lists (ACELA1465)
- Know some features of text organisation including page and screen layouts, alphabetical order, and different types of diagrams, for example timelines (ACELA1466)
- Understand that nouns represent people, places, things and ideas and can be, for example, common, proper, concrete or abstract, and that noun groups/phrases can be expanded using articles and adjectives (ACELA1468)
- Create events and characters using different media that develop key events and characters from literary texts (ACELT1593)
- Create short imaginative, informative and persuasive texts using growing knowledge of text structures and language features for familiar and some less familiar audiences, selecting print and multimodal elements appropriate to the audience and purpose (ACELY1671)
- Construct texts featuring print, visual and audio elements using software, including word processing programs (ACELY1674)
LEVEL 3

- Discuss how language is used to describe the settings in texts, and explore how the settings shape the events and influence the mood of the narrative (ACELT1599)
- Understand that verbs represent different processes (doing, thinking, saying, and relating) and that these processes are anchored in time through tense (ACELA1482)
- Create texts that adapt language features and patterns encountered in literary texts, for example characterisation, rhyme, rhythm, mood, music, sound effects and dialogue (ACELT1791)
- Plan, draft and publish imaginative, informative and persuasive texts demonstrating increasing control over text structures and language features and selecting print and multimodal elements appropriate to the audience and purpose (ACELY1682)
- Use software including word processing programs with growing speed and efficiency to construct and edit texts featuring visual, print and audio elements (ACELY1685)

LEVEL 4

- Understand that the meaning of sentences can be enriched through the use of noun groups/phrases and verb groups/phrases and prepositional phrases (ACELA1493)
- Understand how adverb groups/phrases and prepositional phrases work in different ways to provide circumstantial details about an activity (ACELA1495)
- Identify features of online texts that enhance readability including text, navigation, links, graphics and layout (ACELA1793)
- Use a range of software including word processing programs to construct, edit and publish written text, and select, edit and place visual, print and audio elements (ACELY1697)

Based on Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) materials.
www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/English/Curriculum/F-10