

Teacher guidelines

Gaps and silences in text

Year 9

English

Students write a new section for the novel, *Looking for Alibrandi*. The new section will fill in a gap or silence in the original text and expand on the characters and plot.

Time allocation 8 hours (after studying the novel)

Context for assessment

This assessment is designed to fit into a unit of study of a novel after significant study of the novel has occurred. The novel is *Looking for Alibrandi*, by Melina Marchetta.

**Identify
curriculum**

Defining what students are expected to learn, and how they will demonstrate their achievement.

This assessment gathers evidence of learning for the following **Essential Learnings**:

English	Essential Learnings by the end of Year 9
<p>Ways of working</p> <p>Students are able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify main ideas and the sequence of events, make inferences and draw conclusions based on their understandings of the reliability of ideas and information across texts • interpret and analyse how language elements and other aspects of texts position readers/viewers/listeners • construct literary texts by planning and developing subject matter, and manipulating language elements to present particular points of view • construct non-literary texts by planning and organising subject matter according to specific text structure and referring to other texts • make judgments and justify opinions about how the qualities of texts contribute to enjoyment and appreciation. 	<p>Knowledge and understanding</p> <p>Reading and viewing</p> <p>Reading and viewing involve using a range of strategies to interpret, analyse and appreciate written, visual and multimodal texts across local, national and global contexts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Readers and viewers draw on their prior knowledge, knowledge of language elements, points of view, beliefs and cultural understandings when engaging with a text. <p>Writing and designing</p> <p>Writing and designing involve using language elements to construct literary and non-literary texts for audiences across local, national and global contexts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writers and designers establish and maintain roles and relationships by recognising the beliefs and cultural background of their audience, and by making specific language choices. • Writers and designers refer to authoritative sources and use a number of active writing strategies, including planning, drafting, revising, editing, proofreading, publishing and reflecting.

(Continued on next page)

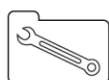
	<p>Language elements</p> <p>Interpreting and constructing texts involve manipulating grammar, punctuation, vocabulary, audio and visual elements, in print-based, electronic and face-to-face modes (speaking and listening, reading and viewing, writing and designing) across local, national and global contexts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paragraphs build and sustain cohesion and develop a central idea. • Figurative language, including onomatopoeia and alliteration, and emotive, evocative, formal and informal language, creates tone, mood and atmosphere. <p>Literary and non-literary texts</p> <p>Manipulating literary and non-literary texts involves analysing the purpose, audience, subject matter and text structure.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texts can reflect an author's point of view, beliefs and cultural understandings. • Literary texts entertain, evoke emotion, create suspense, parody and develop themes.
<p>Assessable elements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge and understanding • Interpreting texts • Constructing texts • Appreciating texts 	
<p>Source: Queensland Studies Authority 2007, <i>English Essential Learnings by the end of Year 9</i>, QSA, Brisbane.</p>	

Sequence learning

Describing learning experiences and resources that will enable students to complete the assessment.

Listed here are suggested **learning experiences** for students before attempting this assessment.

- Systematically teach reading strategies. See Appendix A: Successful reading.
- Read the novel, *Looking for Alibrandi*, in class time.
- Engage in substantive conversation about the plot and the characters, with notes being kept by the students for future reference.
- Construct a literary sociogram that is a graphic representation of the relationships between the characters. See Appendix B: Literary sociogram.
- Provide opportunities for students to role play their characters. Students should act out events in the novel, create new events and act out how they think their character would behave. This should contribute to the understanding of the personality of the characters. This activity could be done as group work, mock plays, interview panels, etc.
- Discuss the effects of culture on people, interpretations, actions, expectations, etc. Emphasise the traditional roles of Nonna, Christina and Josie and their associated conflicts.
- Discuss peer groups and influences on the individual.
- Discuss teenage issues including school, life after school, teenage relationships, etc.
- Discuss cultural assumptions and positioning the reader through appreciation of the qualities of texts.
- Consider what “gaps and silences” are and how to use them to develop a deeper understanding of characters and their motivations. Lead a discussion to come up with a working definition of “gaps and silences”. Use Appendix C: Gaps and silences.
- Explore narrative text type, including letters, diary entries for this purpose, etc.
- Identify and use active and passive voice choices, mood, tone, etc.
- Practise using correct grammar, including punctuation for direct speech.
- Practise drafting, writing, editing, etc.
- Complete exercises to improve writing techniques.



Teacher resources

Appendix A Successful reading

Appendix B Literary sociogram

Appendix C Gaps and silences

Class set of *Looking for Alibrandi* by Melina Marchetta

“It’s all depths and deconstruction”, Kevin Donelly, *Online Opinion: Australia’s e-journal of social and political debate*, 3 August 2006, accessed 21 May 2008: <www.onlineopinion.com.au/view.asp?article=4739>.

“What successful readers know and do”, on the My Read website: <www.myread.org/what.htm>.

Texts for teaching grammar and punctuation (especially direct speech) etc.

**Develop
assessment**

Gathering evidence that demonstrates how well students have achieved the curriculum expectations.

Preparing

Consider these points before implementing the assessment.

- Students should have finished reading the novel and completed significant study of characters, plot, theme and writing style. They should also be familiar with the cultural implications of the novel.
- Engage the students in substantive conversation about characters, plot and theme (conflict and identity — multiculturalism, ethnicity and teenage issues) during and after reading the novel.
- Students should have a well-developed sense of natural justice through their education so far, and through the study of this novel.

Sample implementation plan

This table shows one way that this assessment can be implemented. It is a guide only — you may choose to use all, part, or none of the table. You may customise the table to suit your students and their school environment.

Suggested time	Student activity	Teacher role
Setting the scene		
60 minutes	<p>Read the <i>Student booklet</i> and ask questions to clarify the assessment.</p> <p>Discuss gaps and silences and answer reflection questions (optional exercise).</p>	<p>Clarify and deconstruct the assessment, checking for student understanding. Discuss each topic as a class to help students choose a topic and deepen understanding.</p> <p>Guide students through Appendix C: Gaps and silences (optional exercise).</p>
Section 1. Description		
60 minutes	<p>Choose a topic.</p> <p>Revisit character profiles and notes on multiculturalism.</p> <p>Brainstorm ideas.</p> <p>Complete the appropriate planning tools (1–6) in the <i>Student booklet</i>.</p>	<p>Assist in the selection of topics individually.</p> <p>Check students' work on the planning tools. Encourage them to write meaningful responses and clarifying comments that will be useful in the writing process.</p> <p>Encourage students to look deeper into their character by asking some confronting questions of them in-role.</p> <p>Ensure students work through the planning tool for their topic, or allow them to work through a few until they choose a topic.</p>
180 minutes	<p>Plan and write the narrative for the new section of the text.</p> <p>Complete the Editing checklist in the <i>Student booklet</i>, checking spelling, punctuation, grammar, sentence construction, expression, choice of vocabulary.</p>	<p>Guide students through the Editing checklist in the <i>Student booklet</i>.</p>
60 minutes	<p>Workshop with at least two other students. Swap work and conference, providing each other with meaningful and helpful feedback.</p> <p>Peers re-use the editing checklist sheet.</p>	<p>Organise students into peer feedback groups and facilitate a peer conferencing workshop.</p>
60 minutes	<p>Write the final draft of the new section of the text.</p>	<p>Assist students with their final draft.</p>
Section 2. Reflection		
60 minutes	<p>Complete the Reflection questions in the <i>Student booklet</i>.</p>	<p>Guide and assist students in their reflection on the assessment where necessary.</p>

Make judgments

Making standards-referenced, consistent judgments.

During the learning process, you and your students should have developed a shared understanding of the curriculum expectations identified as part of the planning process.

After students have completed the assessment, identify, gather and interpret the information provided in student responses. Use only the evidence in student responses to make your judgment about the quality of the student learning. Refer to the following documents to assist you in making standards-referenced judgments:

- *Guide to making judgments*
- *Indicative A response*
- *Sample responses* (where available).



For further information, refer to the resource *Using a Guide to making judgments*, available in the Resources section of the Assessment Bank website.

Use feedback

Using feedback to enrich teaching and learning.

Evaluate the information gathered from the assessment to inform teaching and learning strategies.

Involve students in the feedback process. Give students opportunities to ask follow-up questions and share their learning observations or experiences.

Focus feedback on the student's personal progress. Emphasise continuous progress relative to their previous achievement and to the learning expectations — avoid comparing a student with their classmates.

Giving feedback about this assessment

Note the text-type choices that students make. These choices should indicate the individual student's understanding of the unit or assessment. This information, coupled with their individual results, should act as a tool to assess what follow-up the student needs.



For further information, refer to the resource *Using feedback*, available in the Resources section of the Assessment Bank website.

Successful reading

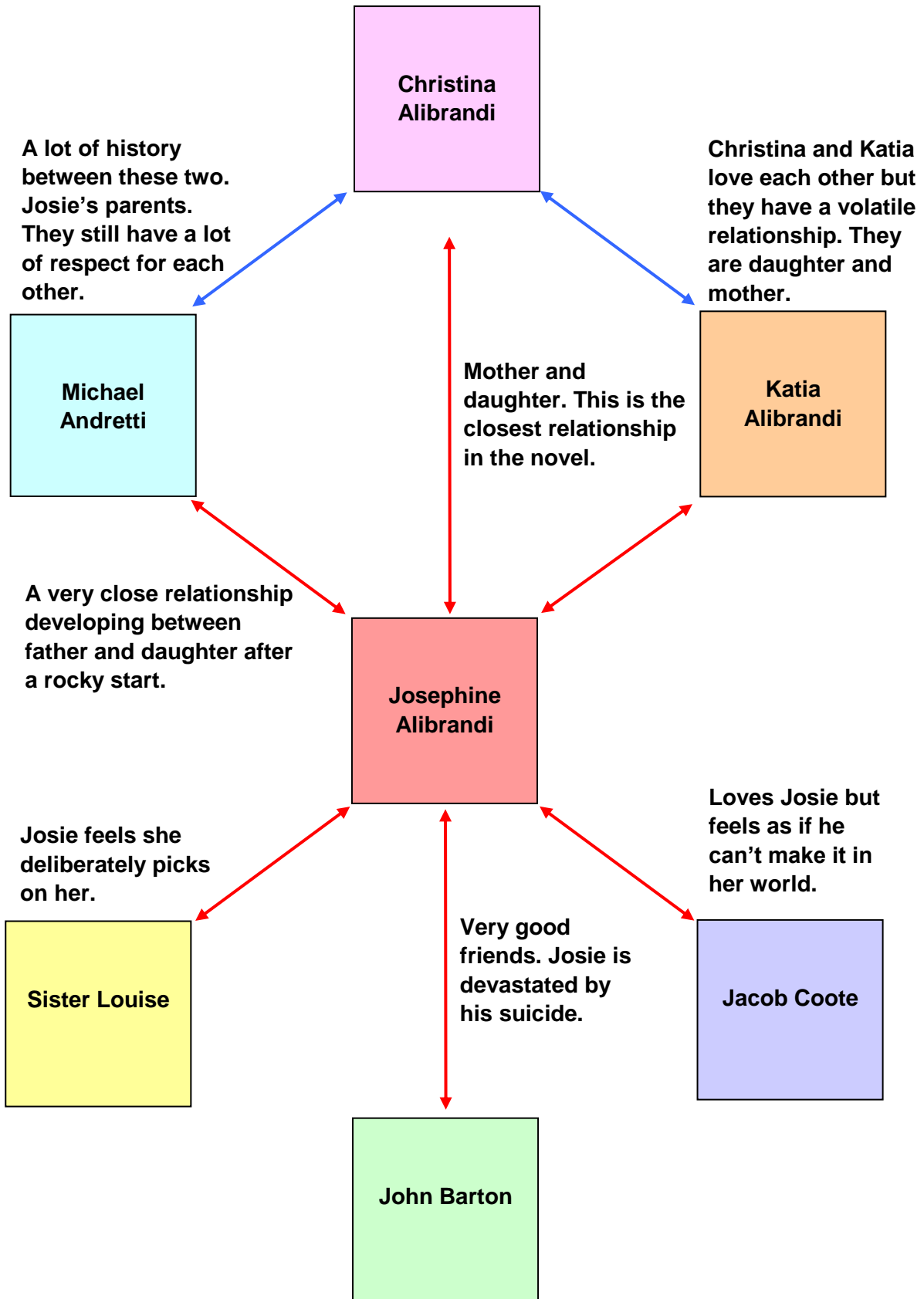
Roles/resources	What successful readers know and do
Code breaker	Understand : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the relationship between spoken sounds and written symbols • the grammar of texts • the structural conventions of texts.
Text user	Know that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • different types of texts have different purposes • these purposes shape the way that texts are structured and formed. Apply this knowledge when using text (e.g. comprehending, creating, transforming).
Text participant	Make meaning by drawing on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • own experiences and prior knowledge • knowledge of similar texts.
Text analyst	Is aware of and can identify that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • texts are not ideologically natural or neutral but are crafted to represent the views and interests of the writer • information, ideas and language in texts influence reader perceptions • texts empower or disempower certain groups.

Source: <www.myread.org/what.htm>.



Literary sociogram

The lines represent the relationships in the novel. Text explaining the type of relationship is near each line.



Gaps and silences

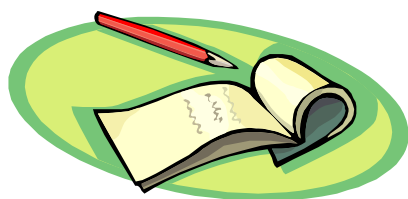
When writers create texts, they do not always include all the details about people and events. There are reasons why they do this.

The writer might believe that the story reads better without the extra text.

The writer may prefer to leave some things up to the reader to decide for themselves to increase their reading enjoyment.

Sometimes writers deliberately manipulate the reader by leaving some details out. For example, a journalist constructing an article that wheedles public sympathy about a murderer on death row (to convince the justice department to decrease the sentence to life imprisonment) may deliberately leave details out about the nature of the crime and the victim's suffering. Another may leave out details about a factory's habit of polluting the river and the air because they provide many avenues of employment for local people.

The writer may allow readers to make their own assumptions about what someone is like. Have you ever watched a television program that has been adapted from a book you have read and noticed how different some of the characters are from what you expected? A good example of this is the *Lockie Leonard* series. It doesn't mean that you are wrong; it just means that you have a different interpretation of the text from the producers of the television program. This happens because of the gaps and silences that writers have left in the text. You have room to make your own decisions about some things.



What do you understand by the term “gaps and silences”?

After a discussion with your teacher and the class, decide on a useful definition for “gaps and silences” and write it in your notebook.

In groups of three, discuss the following reflective questions to provide feedback to your class.

1. Are there gaps and silences in the text — *Looking for Alibrandi*?
2. Who or what is missing from the text?
3. What did Melina Marchetta hope to achieve by creating these gaps and silences?