

These notes are for:

- Middle Years
- Years 5-7

Key Learning Areas:

- English

Example of:

- Fiction/novel
Third person narrative

National Curriculum Focus*:

General capabilities: personal and social capability; ethical behaviour

English Content Descriptions

| Year 5 | Year 6 | Year 7 |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| ACELA1502 | ACELA1522 | ACELT1619 |
| ACELA1512 | ACELT1613 | ACELT1620 |
| ACELT1608 | ACELT1615 | ACELT1621 |
| ACELT1609 | ACELT1616 | ACELT1622 |
| ACELT1795 | ACELT1618 | ACELT1625 |
| ACELT1610 | ACELT1800 | ACELY1804 |
| ACELT1611 | ACELY1709 | ACELY1720 |
| ACELT1798 | ACELY1710 | ACELY1721 |
| ACELT1612 | ACELY1711 | ACELY1725 |
| ACELY1698 | ACELY1801 | ACELY1726 |
| ACELY1700 | ACELY1714 | |

*Key content descriptions have been identified from the Australian National Curriculum. However, this is not an exhaustive list of National Curriculum content able to be addressed through studying this text.

Themes:

- Belonging
- Alienation
- Friendship
- Football
- Itinerancy
- Identity
- School
- Family
- Bullying
- Strength & resilience
- The individual vs. the group
- Masculinity

*Notes may be downloaded and printed for regular classroom use only.

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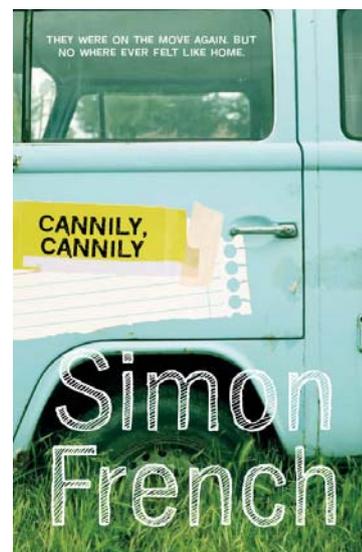
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Cannily, Cannily

Cannily, Cannily

Author: Simon French
ISBN: 9781921720741
ARRP: \$16.95
NZRRP: \$18.99
April 2012



Synopsis

Home, he thought grimly. Funny sort of home, a caravan and a kombi with a tent annexe to connect the two.

Trevor is canny. Knowing. Thrifty. Cautious.

But he also wants to belong.

Cannily, Cannily was short-listed for the UK Guardian Fiction Prize and was Commended in the Children's Book Council of Australia Awards when it was originally published in 1982.

Author Information

Simon French grew up in Sydney's west and had his first novel published while he was still at high school. He has written several novels and picture books, published in Australia and overseas. His work is praised by critics and has won several awards, including the 1987 Children's Book Council of Australia Book of the Year Award for *All We Know*. *Change the Locks* was an Honour Book in 1992. *Where in the World* won the 2003 NSW Premier's Literary Award for Children's Literature, was short-listed for the 2003 CBCA Book of the Year Award for Younger Readers, long-listed for the 2003 Guardian Children's Fiction Prize and nominated for the IBBY Honour List in 2004. Simon's most recent novel is *Other Brother* (2012). Simon is a primary school teacher in the Hawkesbury region of New South Wales.

How To Use These Notes

These notes provide a variety of discussion questions and activities that can be used with *Cannily, Cannily*. Please select according to the level, learning style and targeted outcomes of your students.



In the Classroom

Language Style & Structure

- Before reading, discuss the title of the book. What do you think the story will be about? Where and when might it be set? What genre do you think it will be (e.g. fantasy, suspense, comedy, historical fiction)? Examine the front cover. Do your expectations change in any way?
- Read the opening chapter of the novel. How does Simon French use language to create atmosphere and draw the reader into the story? Some techniques to consider include:
 - the opening sentence evoking the conventional fairytale beginning, “Once upon a time”, putting the reader in a receptive frame of mind.
 - the reminiscent or reflective tone established by memories and flashbacks, e.g. “He thought about it often”.
 - long, fluid, rhythmical sentences which further the nostalgic atmosphere and make the reader feel as if they are travelling in the van with the protagonist, e.g. “The coast had been left for places further inland, for the infinite stretches of bushland, plains and country towns”.
 - connecting words such as “but” and “and” being used to start sentences, further developing the sense of continuity and movement, e.g. “And it all moved slowly”.
 - the use of the present tense to create a feeling of immediacy, e.g. “He could see a road now”.
 - imagery which appeals to a range of senses, immersing the reader in the scene, e.g. “He could hear the waves pounding on the shore, feel the sand between his toes; he could see himself running into the water”.
 - imagery which pays close attention to detail, helping readers visualise the setting, e.g. “he could see in detail the luggage and spare tyres on the roof rack, the dent in the back mudguard, the broken fog light, the caravan in tow”.
 - comparative language techniques such as similes (“the loose doors sounded like an orchestra of castanets”) and metaphors (“The kombi’s interior was alive with noise”).
 - alliteration and other sound devices, e.g. “The wind whistled”.
 - the use of dialogue to create authenticity and give insight into characters, e.g. “You awake, Trevor?”
- Re-read the opening page of the novel and the excerpts from Trevor’s story in Chapter 13. Using these as inspiration, recount a childhood memory of your own. Try to bring your writing to life by incorporating some of the techniques Simon French uses such as sensual imagery, rhythm, similes, metaphors and dialogue.
- The first and last chapters of the novel have been given titles, while the chapters in the middle are numbered. What are the first and last chapters called? What might the significance of these titles be?
- Compare the opening and closing paragraphs of the book. What similarities do you see? How do they help give the novel a sense of unity and completeness?
- Write a report for the local newspaper about the football match in Chapter 12. Before you begin writing, make sure you decide what your attitude is: were Trevor’s team heroic battlers who suffered a tragic defeat or were they a disgrace and an embarrassment? Were you happy with the result or disappointed? Make sure you include a catchy headline, put the most important information first and use language which is a combination of informative and persuasive.
- Analyse the way Simon French uses dialogue to convey the culture of the football team. In particular, consider the way colloquial language and insults/derogatory terms are used. For instance, “bunch of fairies” (p55) and “I reckon you’re a pansy. Mum’s boy” (p66).
- “Will you write?” Martin asked then ... “When you get to wherever you’re going to. So I know where you are and all that” (p193). Compose a letter that Trevor writes to Martin after he has settled in his new home.
- Write an alternative ending for the book where Trevor and his family decide to stay in the town rather than leave. Try to write in a style similar to Simon French’s.
- Compare *Cannily, Cannily* with *Other Brother* or another novel by Simon French. In what ways are the books different? Aspects to consider include narrative voice, characters, setting, themes, structure and language. After comparing the two books, what would you say is distinctive about Simon French as a writer?

Setting

- Draw a map of the town using the description on pages 14-16.
- Compare Trevor’s school with your own. Construct a Venn diagram showing the similarities and differences.
- What do you think is the author’s attitude towards the town and its inhabitants? What do you think is Trevor’s attitude? Are the two necessarily the same? Explain your answers with close reference to the text.

Character

- Imagine a film was being made of *Cannily, Cannily*. Pretend that you are the director and prepare notes on the main characters. For each character include:
 - a brief description of them, including their age, personality, relationships with other characters, background, etc.
 - how you think the role should be played. Consider voice, posture, movement, gestures, facial expression, etc.
 - costume suggestions (you may like to do this as a series of drawings).
 - an actor who you think would be suitable for the role and an explanation of why you have chosen them (include a photo if possible).
- Present your work to the class, as if they were the production company funding the film and you had to persuade them that the film was going to be a huge success. You might like to include props or a costume to help bring your presentation to life.
- “Did anyone ever tell you, Trevor Huon, that you’re plain stubborn?” Kath said with a resigned smile” (p94). What do you think motivates Trevor to stay on the football team, despite the evident hostility of Mr Fuller and his teammates? Is it the desire to belong? To prove himself to the other boys, or to himself? An act of rebellion against Mr Fuller? Or is it, as Kath suggests, simply stubbornness? What would you have done if you were in his position?



- “For a long time he had been able to see that Kath and Buckley were intrinsically different from a lot of other parents that he saw, and that was no means a conclusion based on appearance alone” (p61). In what ways are Trevor’s parents different to the other parents in the town? What is the significance of Trevor calling them by their first names? Do you consider them good parents? Why or why not?
 - How does the attitude of Martin Grace and the other members of the football team change towards Trevor over the course of the novel? Why do you think these changes occur? Make a list of quotes which demonstrate this change in attitude. Make sure you include page numbers.
 - How would you explain Mr Fuller’s attitude towards Trevor? Why do you think Mr Fuller is so hostile towards Trevor? Does his attitude change at all over the book? In Chapter 13 why do you think he says nothing when Trevor disobeys his instructions and keeps his story as it is?
 - What is your opinion of Mr Fuller as a teacher? Is he fair? Does he encourage or support his students? Do you think his teaching strategies are a good way of helping students learn? How would you feel if he taught your class? Write a letter to Mr Fuller giving him advice on how he could be a more effective teacher.
 - The story is told primarily from the point of view of Trevor. Choose a key episode in the book and rewrite it from the perspective of another character. For instance, rewrite the lesson where Trevor reads out his story from Mr Fuller’s perspective, or Martin’s visit to the caravan from Martin’s perspective. Focus particularly on the character’s thoughts and feelings, rather than simply recounting events.
 - Debate the following questions as a class, with one half of the class arguing one viewpoint and the other half taking the opposing view. After hearing both sides, write your own responses to the questions.
 - Was Trevor foolish to lie so he could join the football team?
 - Was Martin Grace primarily a bully or a good friend?
 - Was Mr Fuller a bad coach who set a poor example by bullying the boys and advocating dirty play, or an effective coach who taught his team discipline and gave them the tactics they needed to be champions?
 - Were Trevor’s parents unfair to him by constantly moving from place to place?
 - Should Trevor and his family have stayed in the town at the end of the novel?
- Themes**
- What does the word “canny” mean? Why do you think Simon French has chosen to call the novel *Cannily, Cannily*? Read or listen to the lyrics of the song “Cannily, Cannily” (there is a video version online at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wg5bSfYEKrc>). Do you think Simon French may have been alluding (making reference) to this song in the title of the book? Explain your answer.
 - Does anyone in the class play football or another team sport? What do they like about it? Are there any things they don’t enjoy? As a class, write up a list of pros and cons for playing team sports.
 - How is the soccer match at the end of the novel different to the earlier football games that have been played in the book? What do you think this match might represent or symbolise? What does it tell us about how the boys have been influenced by Trevor?
 - “All the boys in that class in one team. In what team?” (p43). In many ways *Cannily, Cannily* is about the conflict between an individual and a group, with Trevor as the outsider who comes up against the rough masculine power of the football team and schoolyard. Discuss this idea as a class. Is Trevor still an outsider at the end of the book, or has he become part of the group? Explain your answer. Which do you think is ultimately presented as more powerful in the book: the lone individual or the united front of the group? Can you think of any other examples of this individual versus group dynamic in books that you’ve read or movies you’ve seen?
 - “Trev’s got it all over Fuller.” “Only because he’s weak –” “Rack off, Brad. Never seen you stand up to Fuller” (p177). Discuss the different ways strength is presented in the novel. Some ideas to consider could be Trevor’s quiet yet determined opposition to Mr Fuller; the rough camaraderie of the football team, Martin standing up for Steven to the other team-members, and the contrast between Mr Fuller and Buckley as authority figures.
 - “Trevor hated caravan parks. He disliked the temporary, disorganised life, the clutter of caravans and cars and people’s possessions, the dust in summer, the mud in wet weather” (p12). What are some of the challenges Trevor faces in the novel as a result of his transient lifestyle? How would you feel if you were Trevor? What would be some of the advantages and disadvantages of continually travelling from place to place?
 - The book refers to Trevor being called a “gypsy” because of his itinerant lifestyle. Today, the term “gypsy” is often seen as a pejorative, or insulting, term for the Romany or Roma people. Research this group on the internet. Where do they live? How has their culture changed over time? What challenges do they face today?
 - Create a visual representation such as a collage to show the key themes of the novel. Firstly, brainstorm the main themes of the book in small groups. Then, find photographs or other images to symbolise each theme. Present these in an artistic way, considering how you can use font, colour, borders, composition and other visual elements to further enhance your ideas.

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the latest book news and links to a range of fabulous teacher resources,
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