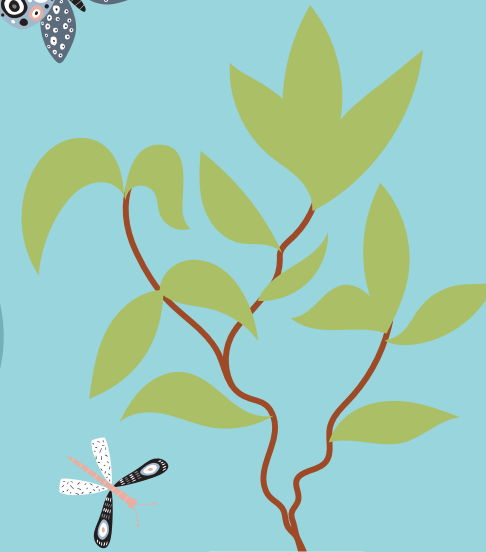
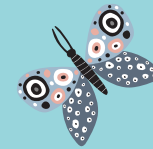
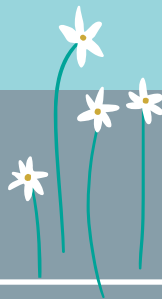


#LoveReading

# Let's talk books!

Challenges  
and resources  
to develop book  
reviewing skills



CYNGOR LLYFRAU CYMRU  
BOOKS COUNCIL of WALES

## Challenge 1

### What makes a 'good' book?

#### Activities

- As a class, discuss your favourite reading books. Share your favourite titles and briefly explain why you like those books.

- Discuss what initially attracted you to a book (the cover / the blurb / a well-known author / the recommendation of a friend or teacher / the subject or an appealing theme, etc). Steer the discussion towards the role of reviews in attracting readers to books.

- Look at examples of whole class reviews on the interactive whiteboard (suitable examples can be found at [www.gwales.com](http://www.gwales.com) and [www.sonamlyfra.cymru](http://www.sonamlyfra.cymru).) Briefly discuss content, structure and style.

#### Key Questions

- What kind of books do you enjoy reading?
- What's your favourite book?
- What makes a book 'good'?
- What initially attracts you to a book?

- How can you find out about a book before you read it, to decide whether it appeals to you or not?
- Imagine you are a judge of a competition such as the Tir Na n-Og Awards. What would you look for in a winning book?

- What is similar/different about the reviews?
- What features do you notice, in terms of content/structure/style?
- What book terminology is used in the reviews?
- Do reviews have to be in written form? Can oral reviews be effective? Why / why not?

#### Glossary/ Linguistic Features

##### Terms for expressing opinions:

- My favourite book is ... because ...
- It's a good book because ...
- I enjoy ... books because ...
- In my opinion a good book is ...
- This is a 'good' review because ...
- This would be a better review if ...

##### Book-related terminology:

Title, non-fiction, fiction, novel, collection of stories, poetry, series, author, illustrator, front cover, back cover, blurb, chapter, publisher, events, themes, genre, narrative, construction, beginning, middle, end, strengths / weaknesses.

##### Glossary:

Content, style, structure, form, features.



## Challenge 2

### What makes a 'good' book review?

Resource 1, 1a

Resource 2

#### Activities

- Work in pairs / small groups in order to look more closely at an exemplar review and identify its features, in terms of content, structure and style. (It could be one of the exemplars already discussed as a class, an example of another pupil's work or one that was prepared for the purpose - see Resource 1). You can record ideas on Post-its.
- Search for examples of specific features in the review and highlight them in different coloured pencils (focus on stylistic features such as phrases for expressing opinions, persuasive language, varying sentence initiation, powerful adjectives, connectives; and structure / content features such as background information about the book, brief reference to the content of the story, reference to the style of the book and to the author, etc). Then, as a class, create a key for these features. (See Resource 2). Share ideas with the rest of the class after completing the task.
- As a whole class (or working independently), determine a book review's success criteria (SC), taking into account the features discussed above. (The SC can be levelled to meet the needs or ages of the different pupils in the class).

#### Key Questions

- What features do you notice in this review?
  - Is this a 'good' review? Why / why not?
  - What makes a 'good' review?
  - Could this review be improved upon? How?
- 
- Can you find examples of the terms for expressing opinion / background information about the book and the author, etc, in this review?
  - Take a look at the list of features in Resource 2 and discuss their meanings
- 
- In your view, what constitutes the Success Criteria of a book review?

#### Glossary/ Linguistic Features

##### Terms for expressing opinions:

- My favourite book is ... because ...
- It's a good book because ...
- I enjoy ... books because ...
- In my opinion a good book is ...
- This is a 'good' review because ...
- This would be a better review if ...

##### Book-related terminology:

Title, non-fiction, fiction, novel, collection of stories, poetry, series, author, illustrator, front cover, back cover, blurb, chapter, press, publisher, events, themes, genre, narrative, construction, beginning, middle, end, strengths / weaknesses.

##### Glossary:

Content, style, structure, form, features.



## Challenge 3

### Planning a book review

Resource 3

Resource 4

### Activities

- Remind each other of the work undertaken in the last lesson on features of a book review. Note the features/Success Criteria on Post-its.
- You are going to produce verbal and written reviews of the book you have read from this year's BookSlam booklist.

- Discuss how to organise and plan ideas before writing. (A planning sheet similar to the one in Resource 3 could be used).
- Discuss how the boxes on the planning sheet in Resource 3 represent the content of each paragraph in the review. Discuss how to fill each box on the sheet with rough notes / bullet points. Model if necessary.
- Plan a review (using Resource 3 or a model of your choice. You may use the word pyramid in Resource 4 to help you, if necessary).

### Key Questions

- What are the features/Success Criteria of a book review?
  - Do you like the book? Why / why not?
  - What are the main strengths / weaknesses of the book?
- 
- What are the main points / information to include in your review?
  - How are you going to plan your work before writing?
  - How do you organise your work on a planning sheet?
  - Where are you going to find the necessary information about the book (e.g. date of publication, publishers, illustrator, information about the author, etc)?
  - How much information are you going to reveal about the plot? Why should you not disclose too much?

### Glossary/ Linguistic Features

Features, Success Criteria, strengths, weaknesses.

#### Book-related terminology:

Title, non-fiction, fiction, novel, collection of stories, poetry, series, author, illustrator, front cover, back cover, blurb, chapter, press, publisher, events, themes, genre, narrative, construction, beginning, middle, end, strengths / weaknesses.

#### Glossary:

Content, style, structure, form.

*Resource 4 -*

book review

word pyramid.



## Challenge 4

### Let's Talk...

Resource 4

Resource 5

Resource 6

### Activities

- Discuss the questions on the 'Let's Talk ...' cards (*Resource 5*) as a whole class. How are you going to answer them? What kind of language/phrases/sentence patterns would be appropriate to use?
- Practice using appropriate vocabulary/ sentence patterns/terms for expressing opinion as a whole class (See *Resource 6 - Book Review Vocabulary Mat*).
- Work in pairs. You are going to interview each other about the book by using the questions on the 'Let's Talk ...' cards - *Resource 5* (you can use the plan you prepared in the last lesson as an aid to answering the questions if necessary).
- You can use the vocabulary mat (*Resource 6*) and / or the word pyramid (*Resource 4*) to help you answer the questions.
- After practising asking and answering the questions in pairs, a few pairs to interview each other in front of the rest of the class.

### Key Questions

- How would you answer this question?
- What vocabulary/phrases/ sentence patterns would be appropriate to use when answering this question?
- See *Resource 5 - 'Let's Talk ...' cards*

### Glossary/ Linguistic Features

- See *Resource 4 - book review word pyramid, Resource 5 - 'Let's Talk' cards and Resource 6 - book review vocabulary mat*



## Challenge 5

### Write a book review

Resource 4

Resource 6

#### Activities

- Review previous learning:
  - Purpose and characteristics of a book review;
  - Success Criteria of a book review;
  - Plan for a book review;
  - Vocabulary, phrases, sentence patterns and expressive language suitable for use in a book review.

- Write an example of the first paragraph of a joint book review as a class.
- Look carefully at the success criteria for a book review, and using your book review plan, write a book review. (You can use the class model first paragraph if you wish, or write your own.)

#### Key Questions

- What is the purpose of a book review?
- What are the main features of a book review?
- What are the Success Criteria for a book review?
- How is the planning sheet going to help you write your review?
- What kind of vocabulary/ language/phrases will you need to include in your review?
- How can you ensure that your review is 'good'?

#### Glossary/ Linguistic Features

See

*Resource 4 -*

*Book Review*

*Word Pyramids*

*Resource 6 -*

*Book Review*

*Vocabulary Mat*



## Challenge 6

### Self-assess and improve the book review

Resource 7

#### Activities

- Read over a book review you wrote in previous lessons. Consider the Success Criteria you set in Challenge 1 to decide whether the review is 'good' or not.
  - Self-assess your work using the two stars and wish approach (see the slips in *Resource 7*). You could also assess each other's work against the Success Criteria (again see *Resource 7*).
  - Redraft your work taking your comments into account when self-assessing the first draft.
- 
- Create oral reviews of the books, based on your written reviews in the form of an advertisement or interview. Film and share them more widely - via the school website/ Twitter account. Tag @LlyfrDaFabBooks #carudarllen #lovereading. Share your work by e-mailing your reviews to [wbc.children@books.wales](mailto:wbc.children@books.wales)

#### Key Questions

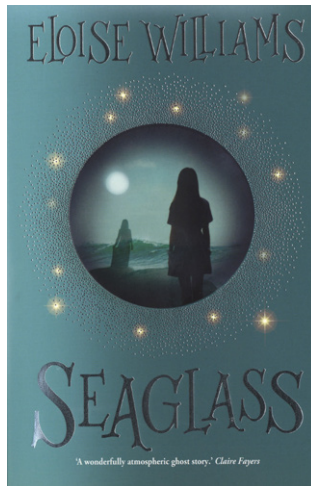
- Have you written a 'good' review?  
Why / why not?
- How can you improve on your review?
- Is the second draft 'better' than the first draft?  
Why?

#### Glossary/ Linguistic Features

Success Criteria,  
self- assessment, peer  
assessment, first draft,  
second draft, two stars  
and a wish, strengths /  
weaknesses.



## Eloise Williams *Seaglass*



*Seaglass* is a novel by Eloise Williams, published by Firefly in 2019. The start of the story gives a taste of what's to come. The descriptions the author uses are full and rich, and help us believe in what's real – and unreal. “She stares into a sea of rage. This is what war is” makes us think of the challenges the main character, Lark, will face, which include a visit from a ghost.

Eloise Williams has set the story in Pembrokeshire, and we can imagine the beautiful landscape when reading, though some of the characters aren't

impressed by the landscape as they can't get a phone signal while they're there on holiday.

Lark is a 13-year-old girl with a loving family but things don't run smoothly. Her younger sister, Snow, has stopped speaking, her mother is very ill and her father doesn't always help the situation. She has fallen out with her best friend Gwenni, and finds herself trapped in a nightmare holiday, caravanning by the sea with several other families and Sherlock, the dog.

Lark shows typical teenage characteristics and Eloise Williams portrays these cleverly, with a touch of humour, despite the difficulties which surround the character. I admire Lark throughout the story – she isn't to be trifled with! Mam-gu is a very colourful figure in the story, reading tea leaves and wearing dangly earrings. I could imagine what she was like when reading the vivid descriptions, and

thought the cat, Marple, completed the portrait of her.

Mamgu, Gwenni, her brother, Charlie, as well as other characters fill the book with thrills, anger, love and adventure.

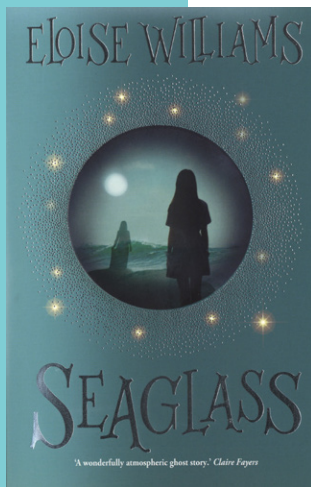
The writing is at its best, in my opinion, in the parts set in Witches' Wood, with its old house and ghostly figure of the girl in the green dress. The supernatural element works really well as it is in contrast with Lark's own determination to keep her feet firmly rooted in reality.

The trials, excitement and suspense will appeal to younger teenagers. The landscape itself is a key character, and this is portrayed very effectively. Through the clever use of language, we move between present, past and future. This is a lively story, and once it had ended, I wanted to read it again!





### Eloise Williams *Seaglass*



*Seaglass* is a novel by Eloise Williams, published by Firefly in 2019. She is an experienced author, as she has also written *Elen's Island* (2015), *Gaslight* (2017) and *Wilde* (2020), all published by Firefly.

The prologue of the story gives a taste of what lies ahead. The language is rich, conveying a sense of the real and unreal: "She stares into a sea of rage. This is

what war is" will prove to be a suitable metaphor for Lark, the main character, as she faces a sea of challenges from both the present and the past, as well as visitations from a young ghost.

Set in Pembrokeshire, the beautiful landscape is skilfully evoked throughout the novel and provides comfort and adventure to Lark, her family and friends, even though the younger characters are not impressed by the lack of phone signal in their half term holiday venue.

Lark is a 13-year-old birthday girl with a loving family but that love does not always run smoothly or provide the kind of support she is seeking; her younger sister, Snow, has stopped speaking, her mother is seriously ill and her father

doesn't always seem to get it. She has fallen out with her best friend Gwenni, and to add to her troubles, she finds herself trapped in a nightmare half term holiday, caravanning by the sea with several other families and the ever loyal Sherlock, the dog.

Initially, Lark seems full of teenage emotions, both positive and negative, but this proves to be deceptive. She knows when this teenage feistiness is about to strike and has developed strategies, some of them humorous, for diffusing it. When it comes to her role as a protective older sister to Snow, Lark is not to be trifled with.

In many ways, Lark's parents are far from central to the plot, in comparison to her enigmatic Mamgu, a tea-leaf-reading, dangly-earring-wearing larger than life figure who seems to look beyond the here and now. A cat called Marple completes the portrait.

Mamgu, Gwenni, her book loving brother, Charlie, the wayward Lorelei and her hapless boyfriend JTI offer plenty of thrills, animosity, love and adventure at the heart of the tale.

It is here that the writing shines most convincingly, in my opinion – in the

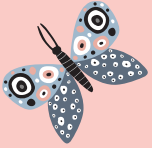
Witches' Wood with its old decaying house and the strange ghostly figure of the girl in the green dress, a girl to whom Snow is irresistibly drawn. The supernatural element works well because of Lark's determination to keep her feet firmly rooted in reality.

Lark's trials and the genuinely engaging suspense will appeal to younger teenagers, and the novel picks up speed when the plot requires it to do so. Both landscape and reading books are strong themes throughout, as are the themes of isolation, growing up, prejudice and otherness, so relevant as always. *Seaglass* casts different shades and shadows back and forth between present, past and future. This is a lively read with much to engage its younger audience.

Having enjoyed *Seaglass*, I'm looking forward to reading Eloise Williams' other books, and encourage all readers to do so.

#LoveReading





## Features of a Book Review

Can you find examples of these in the text?

- Reference to the contents using the present tense
- Variety of sentence starters
- Powerful adjectives
- Persuasive language
- Phrases to express opinion
- Background information about the book
- Reference to style of the book
- Summary of the contents
- Quotes from the book



## Features of a Book Review

Can you find examples of these in the text?

- Reference to the contents using the present tense
- Variety of sentence starters
- Powerful adjectives
- Persuasive language
- Phrases to express opinion
- Background information about the book
- Summary of the contents
- Quotes from the book



## Features of a Book Review

Can you find examples of these in the text?

- Reference to the contents using the present tense
- Variety of sentence starters
- Adjectives
- Persuasive language
- Background information about the book
- Summary of the contents



## Features of a Book Review

Create your own key for the different features in the text

 \_\_\_\_\_

---

 \_\_\_\_\_

---

 \_\_\_\_\_

---

 \_\_\_\_\_

---

 \_\_\_\_\_

---

 \_\_\_\_\_

---

 \_\_\_\_\_

---

 \_\_\_\_\_

---

 \_\_\_\_\_

---



## Features of a Book Review

Create your own key for the different features in the text

 \_\_\_\_\_

---

 \_\_\_\_\_

---

 \_\_\_\_\_

---

 \_\_\_\_\_

---

 \_\_\_\_\_

---

 \_\_\_\_\_

---

 \_\_\_\_\_

---

 \_\_\_\_\_

---



## Features of a Book Review

Create your own key for the different features in the text

 \_\_\_\_\_

---

 \_\_\_\_\_

---

 \_\_\_\_\_

---

 \_\_\_\_\_

---

 \_\_\_\_\_

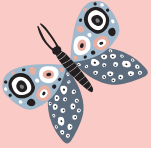
---

 \_\_\_\_\_

---

 \_\_\_\_\_

---



# Planning a review of \_\_\_\_\_

## Step 1 General Information

Title, author, publisher,  
publishing date, awards

---

---

---

Information about the author:

---

---

Cover (description and opinion):

---

---

Blurb (summary and opinion):

---

---

---

## Step 2 Story Summary

Genre: \_\_\_\_\_

Main events / plot:

---

---

---

---

Themes / messages / questions  
that arise:

---

---

---

Significance of title:

---

---

---

## Step 3 Characters

Main characters / secondary  
characters / most or least favourite  
/ description of characters –  
adjectives.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



# Planning a review of \_\_\_\_\_

## Step 4 Favourite part /scene

Remember to say why.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Step 5 Style

Form – e.g. story/diary; narrative – e.g. first or third person; language techniques – e.g. adjectives, comparisons, idioms, dialect. Try and use examples.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Step 6 General opinion

Strengths /Weaknesses; Score out of 5 stars; Appeal to whom, what age? Compare with another book. Remember – use language to express opinion.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## Resource 4



### Word Pyramid: Describing the Cover



#LoveReading



## Adjectives to describe the cover

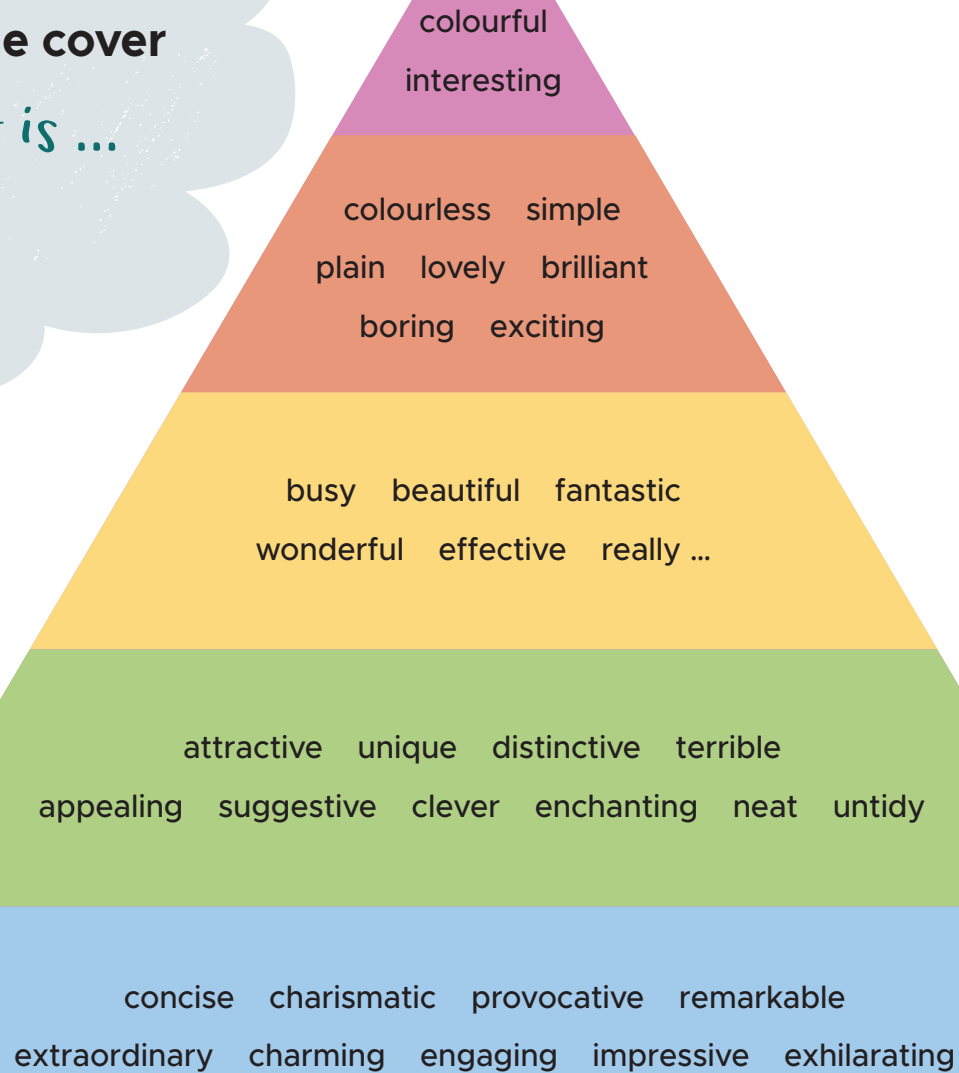
The cover is ...

### Persuasive language

If you enjoy ...this  
is the book for you

Go on, read this book!

This book is hard  
to put down!



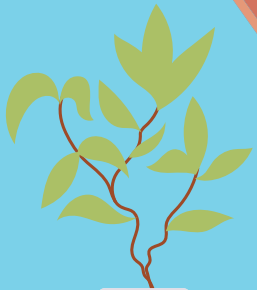


Word Pyramid:

## Describing the character



#LoveReading



## Adjectives to describe the character

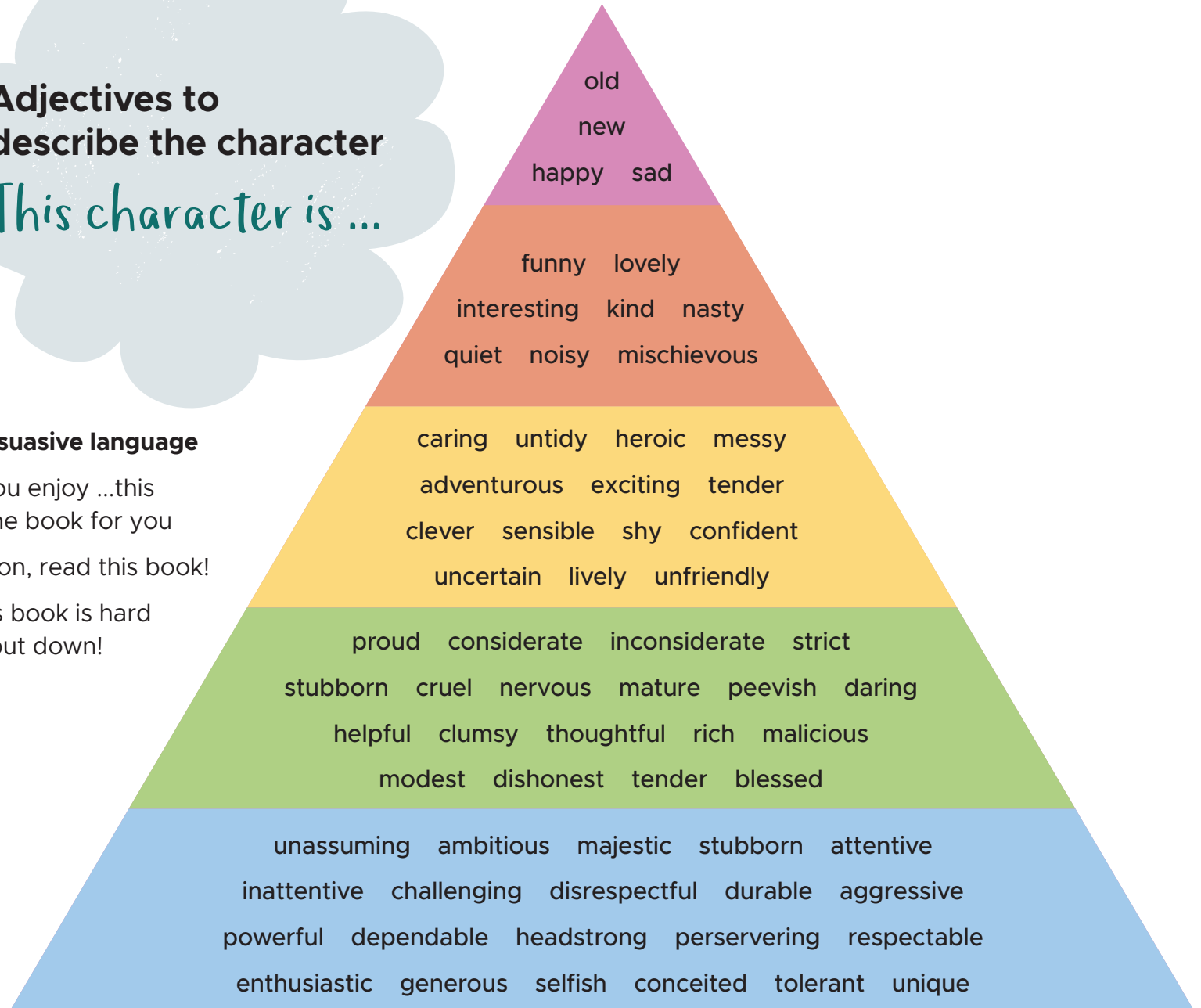
This character is ...

### Persuasive language

If you enjoy ...this is the book for you

Go on, read this book!

This book is hard to put down!



## Resource 4



Word Pyramid:

### Describing the story / contents



#LoveReading



### Adjectives to describe the story / contents

*This story is ...*

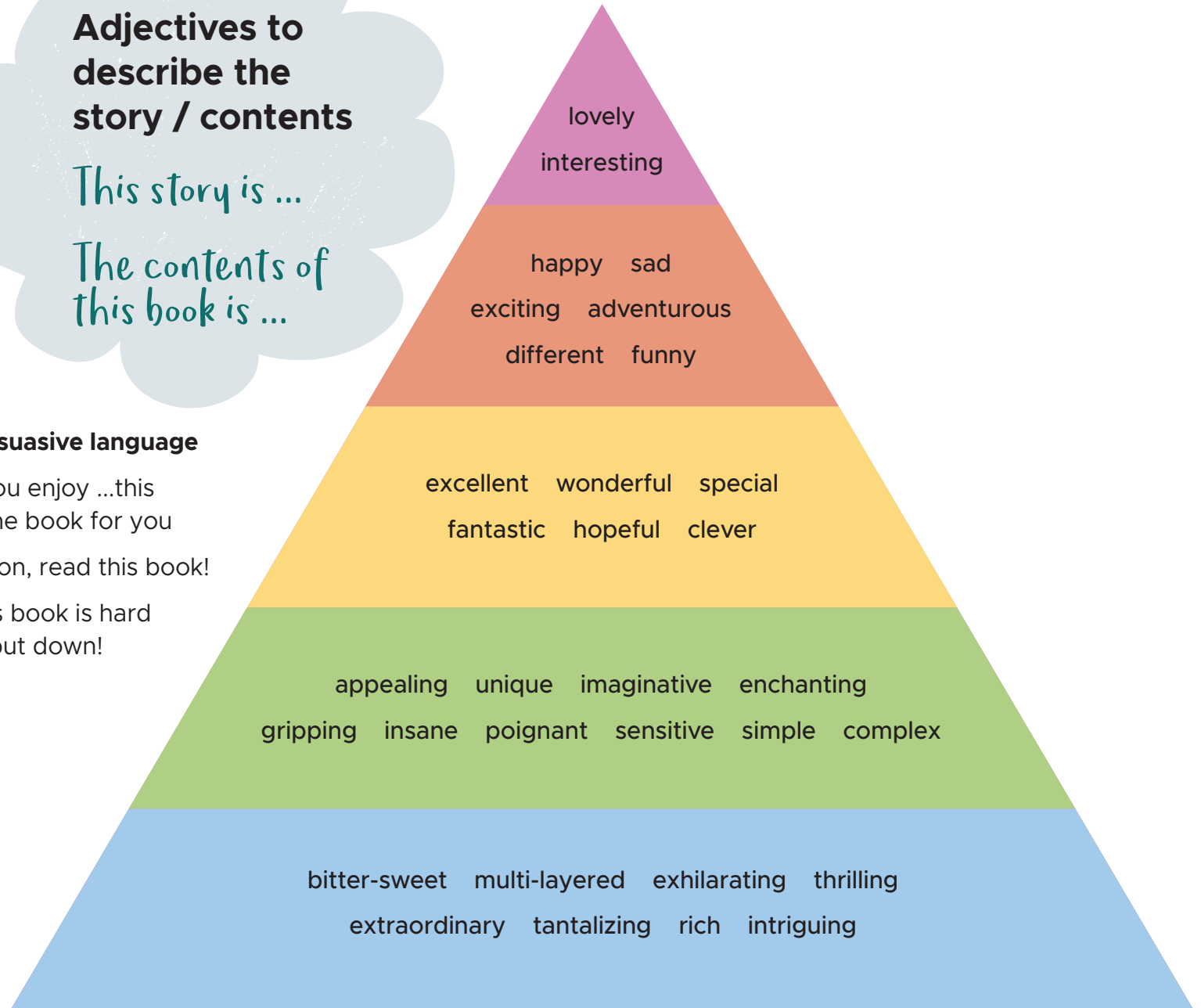
*The contents of  
this book is ...*

#### Persuasive language

If you enjoy ...this  
is the book for you

Go on, read this book!

This book is hard  
to put down!





Word Pyramid:  
**Expressing  
opinion**



#LoveReading



**Expressing  
opinion**

... because ...

**Persuasive language**

If you enjoy ...this  
is the book for you

Go on, read this book!

This book is hard  
to put down!

I think that...  
In my opinion...

I believe / feel that...  
My favourite /least favourite...  
is...

...is definitely... ...is certainly... ...is actually...  
I'm definitely / certainly of the opinion that...

Personally, I believe that...  
I must say that...

Without a doubt... Without a shadow of a doubt...



Which book  
are you going  
to review?



What can you  
tell me about  
this book?



Which is your  
favourite part  
of the book?  
Why?



What is  
the most  
important part  
of the book?



What kind of  
book is it?



What are the  
key elements  
of the book?





What do you think of the beginning/ending?



Tell me about the illustrations.



How many stars would you score out of 5?



To what genre does this book belong?



Tell me about the main characters.



What makes this book special?





To whom  
would you  
recommend  
this book?



What are the  
main themes  
of the book?



What are  
the main  
messages of  
the book?



How does this  
compare with  
other books  
that you  
have read?

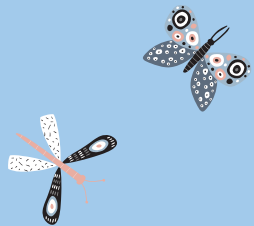


What can you  
tell me about  
the author of  
this book?



Has this  
book won  
any awards?





#LoveReading



Describe the front cover.



Do you think the cover is effective?  
Why?



When was the book published?



What does the blurb say?



Who is the publisher?



What is the significance of the title?





For whom do you think this book is suitable?



Summarise the book in your own words.



Would you like to read more by this author?



What would you like to ask the author?

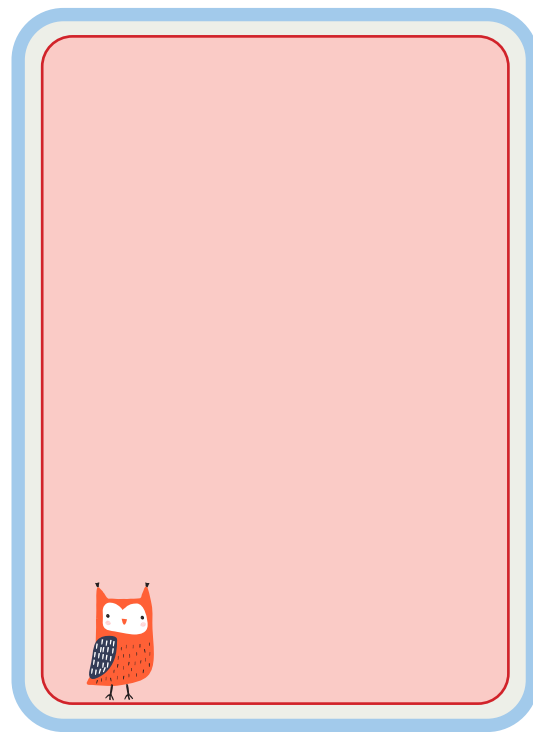
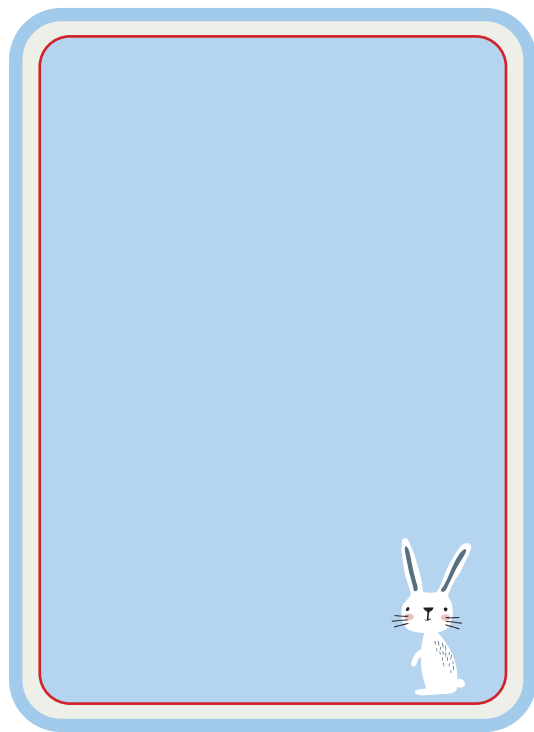
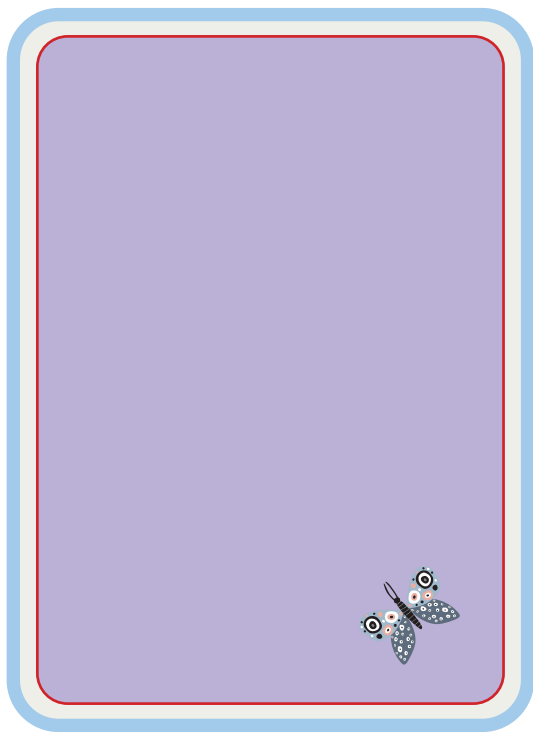
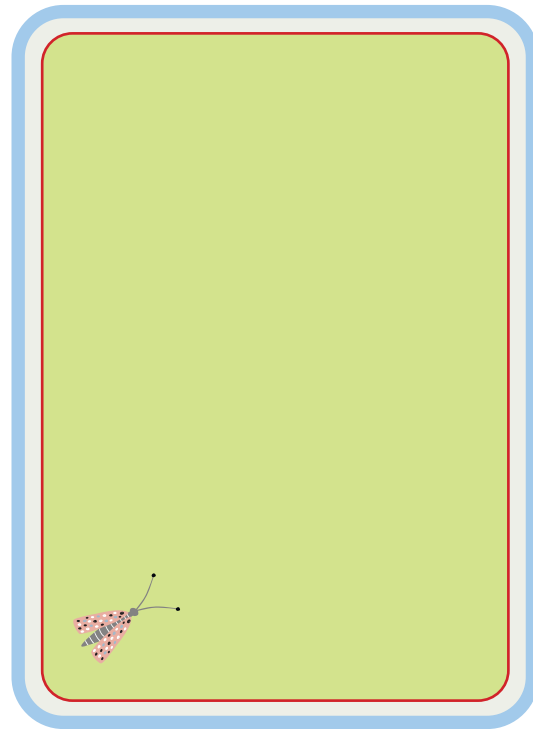
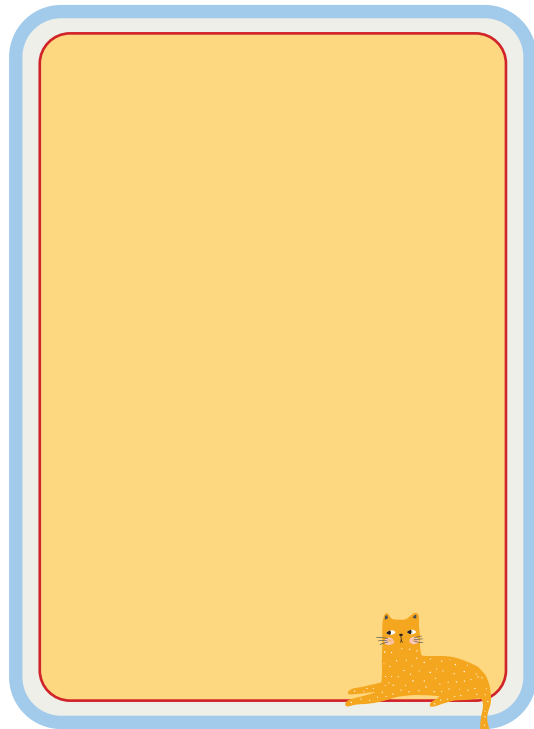
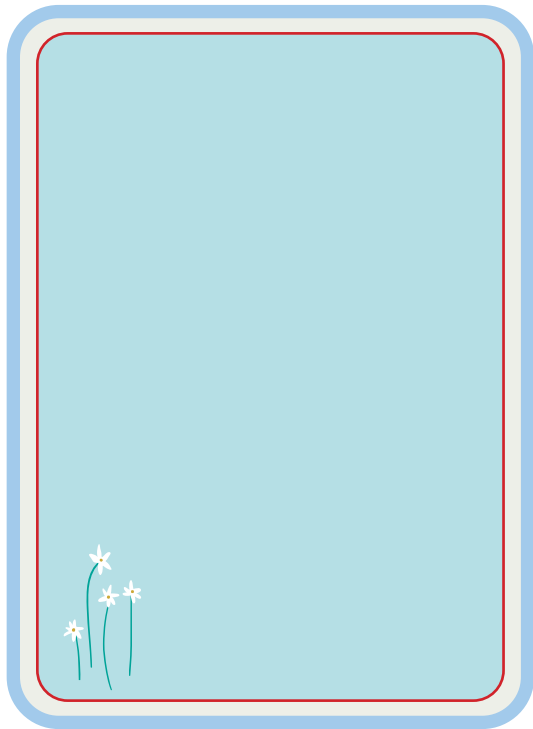


What would you change about the book?



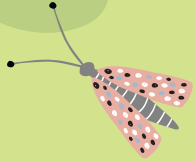
Have you read any books that are similar to this one?





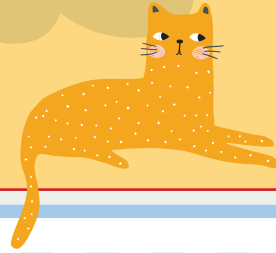
#LoveReading

Let's  
Talk



#LoveReading

Let's  
Talk



#LoveReading

Let's  
Talk



#LoveReading

Let's  
Talk



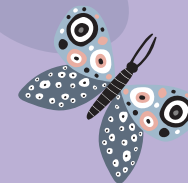
#LoveReading

Let's  
Talk



#LoveReading

Let's  
Talk





Vocabulary Mat:

# Book Review



#Love Reading



## Sentence Starters

The book is...

In the book the...

This is a... book...

To begin...

Then...

Following that...

Then...

Later...

After the...

By the end...

At the end...

On one hand...

## Expressing Opinion

I think / feel / believe that...

In my opinion...

I definitely think that...

I really feel that...

I'm convinced that...

Personally, I believe that...

I must say that...

Without a doubt...

My favourite... is... because...

The part where... is...

## Negating sentences

I don't think / feel / believe that...

I'm not of the opinion that...

The... doesn't...

There is no...

There isn't any...

## Connectors

then but so because

when if to by for

while although as well as

in contradiction to

however nevertheless

in spite of



# Self-assessment



Did I follow the success criteria?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

In future I will...

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Self-assessment



Did I follow the success criteria?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

In future I will...

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Self-assessment



Did I follow the success criteria?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

In future I will...

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Self-assessment

Did I follow the success criteria?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

In future I will...

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

