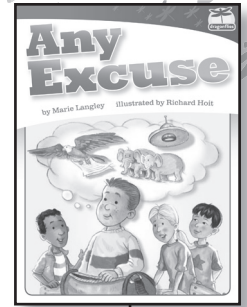


# Any Excuse

by Marie Langley

illustrated by Richard Hoit



## Overview

This is a lively and entertaining play about a boy who forgets his homework. His friends try to resolve the problem by thinking of the best excuse. Their teacher appears to have the best excuse, tricking them all in the end.

## Suggested purposes

This text supports the comprehension strategies of noting details in illustrations and drawing conclusions. This is a good text for studying a narrative in play format and how a script is written and performed.

## Text features (Focus on only one or two per session.)

- the theme of being honest
- the relationship between the characters and the way they each try to resolve the problem
- the conventions of a play – the list of characters, the scene instructions, the stage directions (written in the present tense and in italics)
- the detailed and humorous illustrations
- the commas to support phrasing
- the contractions – *she'd, you'll, I'm, don't, that's, hadn't, I've, what'll, haven't*
- the content words
- the word endings – *ing, ed, ly*
- the exclamation marks for emphasis
- the colloquial language – *cool, this'll be boring*
- The compound words – *butterflies, grandchildren, homework, spaceship, otherwise, somewhere*
- the onomatopoeia – *shhhhh!, wow!*
- the hyperbole
- the lively and descriptive past-tense verbs – *trampled, stampeded, snatched, carried, hovering, swooped, kidnapped*

## Setting the scene

Tell the students that they are going to read a play. Discuss the students' prior knowledge of plays.

Look at the front cover. Ask the students to read the title. *What is an excuse? Who has ever used one? Look carefully at the illustration. What do you think they might need an excuse for? What do you think their excuses might be? Do you think they will be effective excuses?* Encourage the students to use the illustrations to make predictions.

Read the names of the author and illustrator.

**Back cover** – Read aloud the preview question. Discuss the students' predictions.

## The first reading

**Title page** – Read the names of the author and illustrator.

**Pages 2 and 3** – Look at the way the text is laid out. *How is this different from other texts?* Discuss the features of a play. *How do we read this text?* Help the students identify that some of the text is scene instructions and stage directions that aren't to be read aloud. *Where is this story set?*

**Pages 4 and 5** – Look at the illustration. *Why has the illustrator used a thought bubble? What does it represent? What excuses did Nic and Lou make up?* Ask the students to identify the stage directions regarding the action and movement.

**Pages 6 and 7** – *What excuse have they thought of? What is happening each time they think of another excuse? Is Sam convinced this plan will work? What is his alternative idea? Which one is more likely to be successful?*

**Pages 8 and 9** – *What took the students by surprise? What were they expecting the note to say?* Discuss how the students can distinguish between what Mr Young is saying and what Miss Mack is saying. *Why do you think Miss Mack has made this excuse?*

**Pages 10 and 11** – *Do the students believe Miss Mack's excuses? How do we know this? How is Mr Young feeling while he reads the note? What clues has the author given us?*

**Page 12** – *How do you think Sam was feeling at the start of this page?* Discuss the ending and whether the students found it satisfying. Ask them to reflect on the purpose of the story and the message the author was trying to convey.

### Ideas for revisiting the text (Choose only one or two per session.)

- Listen as the students reread the text in parts, observing their ability to read expressively and fluently and their confidence with the structure of a play. If necessary, review the use of stage directions and the other play features.
- Discuss the narrative structure. Identify the introduction, the problem, the anticlimax, and the ending.
- Focus on the adjectives such as “trampled”, “stampeded”, “snatched”, “carried”, “hovering”, “swooped”, “kidnapped”. Draw out the idea that the adjectives add clarity and interest.
- Look at the use of past-tense verbs: “trampled”, “stampeded”, “snatched”, “swooped”, “kidnapped”. Discuss the word endings of any new words and the way the structure and meaning may change. Include the verbs “fly/flew” in this discussion. Ask the students to think of other examples.
- Write “recipe” on the board. Break the word into syllables to identify the sounds. Explain that this can be a difficult word to spell because of the “ee” sound and the use of the “i”.
- Focus on the author's use of colloquial language. Discuss why it is used and identify it in the text.
- Identify the punctuation that helps give direction to the reader.

### **Suggestions for further activities**

- Write excuses that are as imaginative as possible. The students can illustrate their ideas in a bubble in a similar way to the book.
- Practise and perform the play.
- In shared writing, ask the students to add another inventive and creative excuse for Sam on pages 4 and 5. Encourage them to write it in a “play” format and then have someone perform or present it.
- Ask the students to identify the contractions and put them in word families. They can then add other contractions to the list.
- BLM word activity: use descriptive verbs

The students can write sentences using descriptive verbs from the story.

- BLM comprehension activity: resequence and illustrate the story

The students can resequence the main events of the story by cutting out the sentences and putting them in order. They can then illustrate each event.