

The logo for 'Children's Books Daily' is centered at the top of the page. It features the words 'Children's books' in a large, white, cursive font, with 'DAILY' in a smaller, white, sans-serif font directly below it. The background is a dark blue with a repeating pattern of white line-art illustrations of various books and open pages.

Children's books DAILY

‘PIE IN THE SKY’ – TEACHERS’ NOTES

Prepared by teacher Melissa Kroeger for Children’s Books Daily in context with the Australian Curriculum.

‘Mostly it was just Papa and me. Papa and me making cakes. Papa and me with big smiles on our faces, the smiles he said cakes always bring.

But.

Papa, you and I.

We’ll never have our pie in the sky, will we?

It was one year and eleven months ago, wasn’t it?

Title: [‘Pie in the Sky’](#)

Author: Remy Lai

Publisher: [Walker Books Australia](#)

Age Range: middle primary/upper primary 8+

Themes: personal and social issues, siblings, humour, loss, identity, lying, repercussions and discovery

Jingwen finds himself in such a foreign place after leaving his home, his country, his grandparents and everything he ever knew when he arrives in Australia with his pesky brother Yanghao and his hardworking mother. He is thrown into an all English-speaking school, catching a bus with everybody chattering ‘Martian’ and in charge of looking after the most annoying brother whilst his mum works to support them. Jingwen feels alienated in every direction. But Jingwen thinks he knows just how to make everything ok and it’s to do with the dream he and his Papa had for Australia. It’s to do with the most marvellous cakes of all. Even if he has to break rules and deceive those who are closest to him.

About the Author: Remy Lai studied fine arts, with a major in painting and drawing. She was born in Indonesia, grew up in Singapore, and currently lives in Brisbane, Australia where she writes and draws stories for kids, with her two dogs by her side. [‘Pie in the Sky’](#) is her debut middle-grade novel.

DISCUSSION / STIMULUS:

- Who was your favourite character and why?
- What did you like best about this book?
- What did you like least about this book?
- What would you say is the biggest message from this book?
- Why do you think Jingwen felt he needed to carry out his journey of making cakes? How was it going to make everything 'better'?
- Yanghao is an 'annoying' sibling to Jingwen. What do you think Yanghao thinks and feels about his big brother Jingwen?
- How would the story's journey have been if Papa was alive when they began their new life in Australia?
- Often we meet people who are new to our country and don't speak our language. How has 'Pie in the Sky' changed your view of these people/ helped you to understand how to communicate or treat them?
- Jingwen lied to his mother. Was it the right thing to do? How could Jingwen have dealt with the situation differently? Discuss what might have been different scenarios that could have aided Jingwen to still make the cakes but without being deceitful?
- Lying is a theme throughout the book. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages to lying.
- Jingwen and Yanghao have such different experiences to each other at school. Discuss your experience of school with others and compare your experiences.
- Discuss how Remy Lai uses her illustrations to extend on the story. Do the illustrations show emotions of the characters? Set the scene? Help you to understand the text more? Find some examples and discuss with your group or class.
- This book is not a true graphic novel, nor is it a true novel. It is a 'hybrid'. Why do you think Remy Lai decided to make this book a hybrid? How has it helped to mould the book?

CURRICULUM-LINKED ACTIVITIES

YEAR 5 & 6 MEDIA ARTS

ACAMAM063 *Develop skills with media technologies to shape space, time, movement and lighting within images, sounds and text*

- designing and creating an animated sequence that personifies inanimate objects and creates smooth action

YEAR 6 ENGLISH

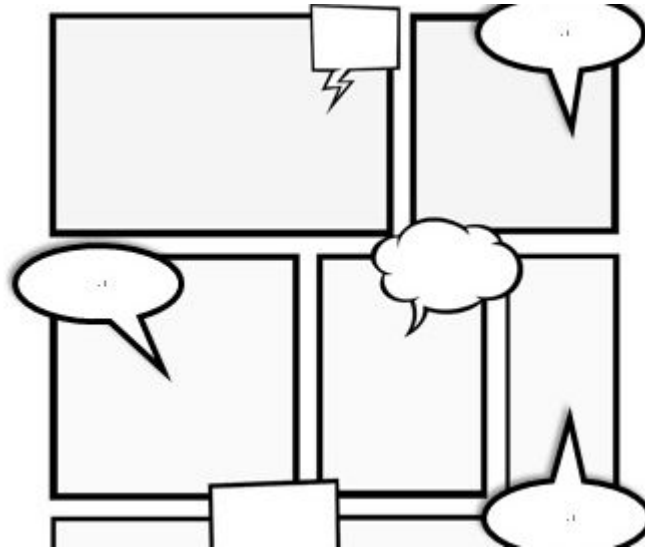
Language – Expressing and Developing Ideas

ACELA1524 *Identify and explain how analytical images like figures, tables, diagrams, maps and graphs contribute to our understanding of verbal information in factual and persuasive text*

- observing how sequential events can be represented visually by a series of images, including comic strips, timelines, photo stories, procedure diagrams and flow charts, life-cycle diagrams, and the flow of images in picture books
- observing how concepts, information and relationships can be represented visually through such images as tables, maps, graphs, diagrams and icons

Activity:

- Look at graphic novels in your library. Take note of how they are set out, what way they flow and how the story is relayed. How much detail do they contain? How do the characters show emotion? How do the illustrations help to tell the story?
- Choose your favourite part of 'Pie in the Sky' that is not heavily illustrated. Recreate it in illustrations/ animation form using a graphic novel/comic template (these can be downloaded or design one of your own) Example:



- To add more detail will you need to write more lengthy text underneath?

YEAR 4 ENGLISH

Literature – Literature and Context

ACELT1604 Use metalanguage to describe the effects of ideas, text structures and language features of literary texts

- sharing views using appropriate metalanguage

YEAR 5 ENGLISH

Literature – Examining Literature

ACELT1611 Understand, interpret and experiment with sound devices and imagery, including simile, metaphor and personification, in narratives, shape poetry, songs, anthems and odes

- discussing how figurative language including simile and metaphor can make use of a comparison between different things, for example 'My love is like a red, red rose'; 'Tyger! Tyger! Burning bright, in the forests of the night'; and how by appealing to the imagination, it provides new ways for looking at the world

YEAR 6 ENGLISH

Literacy – Interpreting, Analysing and Evaluating

ACELY1711 *Analyse how text structures and language features work together to meet the purpose of a text*

- comparing the structures and features of different texts, including print and digital sources on similar topics, and evaluating which features best aid navigation and clear communication about the topic

Activity:

- Throughout the book Jingwen uses figurative language – metaphors, similes and idioms. Find examples of these and discuss and write what they actually mean.
- Here are some examples, classify whether they are a metaphor, simile or idiom and identify what their meaning is:
 - P2 'The wing of the aeroplane slices through the fluffy cloud like a knife through cake.'
 - P3 'We're too old and set in our ways'
 - P42 '...my brain's already fried...'
 - P45 '...like a crow's caw'
 - P53 '...optimistic mumbo jumbo...'
 - P 53 'Mr Fart clops down the rows of desks, sounding like a horse in a hurry...'
 - P62 'In the hallway, English-that-sounds-like-Martian words echo off the walls and swirl round and round, hammering on my brain like techno music.'
 - P67 'Now I'm the one waddling from carrying too many seashells in my pockets...'
- Select your favourite figurative language from the book and create a cartoon illustration to show its meaning.

YEAR 3 ENGLISH

Language – Text Structure and Organisation

ACELA1478 *Understand how different types of texts vary in use of language choices, depending on their purpose and context (for example, tense and types of sentences)*

- becoming familiar with typical structural stages and language features of various types of text, for example narratives, procedures, reports, reviews and expositions

YEAR 4 ENGLISH

Language – Text Structure and Organisation

ACELA1490 *Understand how texts vary in complexity and technicality depending on the approach to the topic, the purpose and the intended audience*

- becoming familiar with the typical stages and language features of such text types as: simple narrative, procedure, simple persuasion texts and information reports

YEAR 5 ENGLISH

Language – Text Structure and Organisation

ACELA1504 *Understand how texts vary in purpose, structure and topic as well as the degree of formality*

- becoming familiar with the typical stages and language features of such text types as: narrative, procedure, exposition, explanation, discussion and informative text and how they can be composed and presented in written, digital and multimedia forms

Activity:

- For most of the cakes that Jingwen makes, he describes what it is like, lists the ingredients and details the steps for making it. Find a recipe for a cake that Jingwen made in the book – look in cookbooks or online. Write the recipe out. Highlight the different parts of the procedure: title, ingredients, method. Can you find different language choices in the detail of the recipe? What are they? How do they compare to a narrative or a report or persuasive text? Discuss.
- Plan and make one of the cakes following the recipe!