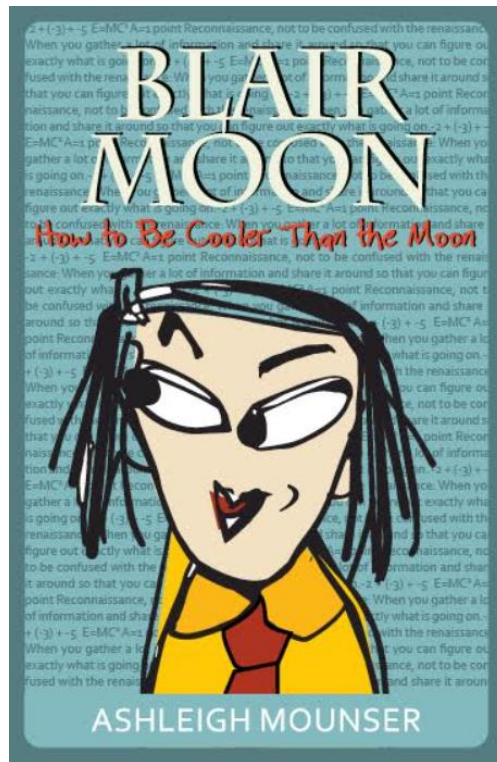


BLAIR MOON: HOW TO BE COOLER THAN THE MOON

WRITTEN BY ASHLEIGH MOUNSER

Teacher Notes



These notes were written to provide teachers with Australian Curriculum linked lesson plans that are related to the text, Blair Moon: How to Be Cooler Than the Moon.



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SUMMARY

Blair, an outspoken young girl who grew up in an old folk's home, begrudgingly attends school for the first time. She has big ambitions to be the Student President, but is challenged by the notion that she needs to somehow become 'cool' to gain votes. Themes of friendship, individuality, determination and resilience will appeal to and inspire young readers.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ashleigh Mounser is a prize-winning writer of poetry, fiction, and film. She has a Bachelor of Creative Writing from UOW, a Graduate Certificate in Screenwriting from AFTRS and is the recipient of three arts grants from the Bouddi Foundation for the Arts, presented by John Bell. This is her first children's book.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

The learning activities below include a unit of four lessons, to be completed in sequence or individually, and a set of questions for each chapter. Questions are separated into discussion prompts and comprehension questions to suit a small group 'book club' dynamic. The text and accompanying lesson plans are targeted for Year 5 and 6 students. The lessons cover a range of Literacy and Literature skills from the Australian Curriculum version 8.4 ranging from character analysis to text innovation.

LESSON ONE – CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Learning Intention: We are learning to understand how different audiences will connect with characters in different ways.

Success Criteria:

- I can provide text to text, text to self and text to media connections
- I can use quotes from the text to support my connections
- I understand that my point of view will be different to other readers

Curriculum Links:

Year Level	Strand	Australian Curriculum Link
Year 5	Literacy	Clarify understanding of content as it unfolds in formal and informal situations, connecting ideas to students' own experiences and present and justify a point of view (ACELY1699)
Year 6	Literature	Make connections between students' own experiences and those of characters and events represented in texts drawn from different historical, social and cultural contexts (ACELT1613)

Tune In: Set out sheets of paper around the room with the characters names in the middle. Students walk around and add descriptive information about the characters to the sheets.

Class Activity: Place the completed character profiles on the board. Discuss as a class: are all these characters necessary to the story? Discuss how some characters are easier to connect to than others, depending on who the reader is. Ask students to think of a character in this book they most connect with, and the character they find it really difficult to connect with.

Individual Activity: Students will choose a character and make text to self, text to text and text to media connections. Students will need to find quotes or passages from the text that support their connection.

Example to provide to students: *Blair is determined and fights to achieve her goals. She shows this when she says, "I'm not President, and I'm definitely not cool, but a moon never gives up. Just goes away for a bit and then comes back, bigger and better and brighter than ever." I also like to achieve goals I set for myself. Last year I set a goal to always get my homework completed on time and I achieved it.*

Reflection: Students pair up with someone that chose the same character as them to share their connections.

LESSON TWO – PERSPECTIVES

Learning Intention: We are learning that the viewpoint of the main character or narrator can influence the audience's response.

Success Criteria:

- I can identify which perspective the text is written from
- I can recognise that my perception of the story and characters is affected by the narrator
- I can demonstrate an understanding of different character's perspectives of an event within the story

Curriculum Links:

Year Level	Strand	Australian Curriculum Link
Year 5	Literature	Recognise that ideas in literary texts can be conveyed from different viewpoints, which can lead to different kinds of interpretations and responses (ACELT1610)
Year 5	Literacy	Show how ideas and points of view in texts are conveyed through the use of vocabulary, including idiomatic expressions, objective

		and subjective language, and that these can change according to context (ACELY1698)
Year 6	Literacy	Analyse strategies authors use to influence readers (ACELY1801)

Tune In: Get students into groups and provide them with a character from the book (Blair, Blair’s mum, Poppy, Melanie, Becca, Nancy, Edgar, Phillip or Valerie). Provide them with a sheet of paper and ask them to draw a mind map of how their character connects to, and feels about, other characters. Once students are done, ask them to walk around the room to view the other posters.

Class Activity: Lead a class discussion about the different perspectives within the novel. We see events from Blair’s perspective, but it is clear that the other characters have very different opinions. How does this impact how we feel about other characters?

Complete an example of the activity as a class, using the moment when Blair decides that she will play Maria.

Blair’s perspective: "I will play Maria." Read the short passage following this quote from part four.

Another student’s perspective may begin: "I watch Blair take the spotlight, jealousy seeping through every fibre of my being." Ask the students to help you construct the remainder of the paragraph.

Individual Activity: Students choose an event from the text, and write about what occurred from another character’s perspective. Event ideas may include; Blair’s first day at school, Blair’s party, when Blair visits Nancy at Universe-City, the Student President Speeches, West Side Story rehearsals, Blair and Melanie’s fight.

Reflection: Students place their paragraph on their table and students walk around the room choosing a few to read. Call the class together to reflect on the importance of considering multiple viewpoints in storytelling.

LESSON THREE – INNOVATION ON TEXT

Learning Intention: We are learning to replicate the writing style of the author.

Success Criteria:

- Write a paragraph using a similar structure and vocabulary to the author
- Use a similar tone and voice to the author
- Innovate on the text by writing a passage that gives Blair’s opinion on themselves

Curriculum Links:

Year Level	Strand	Australian Curriculum Link
Year 5	Literature	Create literary texts that experiment with structures, ideas and stylistic features of selected authors (ACELT1798)
Year 6	Literature	Create literary texts that adapt or combine aspects of texts students have experienced in innovative ways (ACELT1618)

Tune In: Engage in a class discussion, asking students to use words to describe Blair’s personality. Once you have some words brainstormed, challenge the students to discuss topics as Blair would. Topics may include homework, the canteen, school uniforms, recess etc.

Class Activity: How do we know how Blair talks? Because the text is written in a way that tells us her thoughts, actions and relationships to others as the text is written in a first person perspective. Read a passage from the book and guide the discussion to focus on the author’s use of descriptive language, sentence structure, dialogue, and the narrator’s voice. Create a class chart with these identified elements.

Individual Activity: Students will work individually to write from Blair’s perspective. They are focussing on Blair’s first day at school and writing how Blair would describe themselves if they were in her class. Students only need to write a paragraph, but ensuring to focus on sentence structure, tone, voice and vocabulary similar to the author.

Reflection: In small groups, students read aloud their description of themselves from Blair’s perspective. Each group can choose one person to read in front of the whole class.

LESSON FOUR – BOOK REVIEW

Learning Intention: We are learning to analyse a text and provide a personal opinion.

Success Criteria:

- Provide a point of view about the text using supporting evidence
- Reflect on how others may feel about the text
- Use appropriate metalanguage in the book review

Curriculum Links:

Year Level	Strand	Australian Curriculum Link
Year 5	Literature	Present a point of view about particular literary texts using appropriate metalanguage, and reflecting on the viewpoints of others (ACELT1609)
Year 6	Literacy	Participate in and contribute to discussions, clarifying and interrogating ideas, developing and supporting arguments, sharing and evaluating information, experiences and opinions (ACELY1709)

Tune In: Ask students to stand up if they give the book 1 star, 2 stars, 3 stars, 4 stars, 5 stars, asking a few members from each group why they would provide that rating. Put students in groups of people with different ratings to them to discuss what they like and dislike about the text to gather a range of viewpoints.

Class Activity: Introduce the concept of a book review and what it contains. A book review typically includes a summary of the text, a rating, reasoning behind the rating, important quotes, a recommendation for who would enjoy the text and other highlights from the book. Explain to students that everyone has a different perspective of the book and therefore will have different reviews and different recommendations for the target audience. Brainstorm the target audience of the text as a class.

Individual Activity: Students complete their book review individually.

Reflection: Get students together in groups of others who gave the book the same star rating. Students read one another's book reviews and give peer feedback whilst discussing if there are any similarities or differences in their opinions.

COMPREHENSION AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These questions aim to provide teachers with a flexible resource to conduct various formative literacy assessments. The comprehension questions are designed for students to work individually to provide a written answer that highlights their understanding of the text, whilst the discussion questions aim to promote communication amongst students in a small group.

The questions are split up into chapters so you can distribute them as your students' progress through the text.

Curriculum Links:

Year Level	Strand	Australian Curriculum Link
Year 5	Literacy	Navigate and read texts for specific purposes applying appropriate text processing strategies, for example predicting and confirming, monitoring meaning, skimming and scanning (ACELY1702)
Year 5	Literacy	Use comprehension strategies to analyse information, integrating and linking ideas from a variety of print and digital sources (ACELY1703)
Year 6	Literacy	Use comprehension strategies to interpret and analyse information and ideas, comparing content from a variety of textual sources including media and digital texts (ACELY1713)

Year 6	Literacy	Participate in and contribute to discussions, clarifying and interrogating ideas, developing and supporting arguments, sharing and evaluating information, experiences and opinions (ACELY1709)
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Part One of Many Parts of My Positively Thrilling Life

Comprehension Questions

- Why does Blair describe her day as ‘positively shocking’?
- Why does Blair’s mother want her to go to school?
- What does Blair say to convince her mother that she shouldn’t have to go to school?

Discussion Questions

- What is your first impression of Blair?
- How do you think the other kids will react to her at school?
- Do you think you would be different if you grew up in an ‘old folks’ home’?

Part Two: A Tale of Things I’d Rather Not Do

Comprehension Questions

- Why does Blair think Mrs Clancy is upset about her attending school?
- What are some of the concerns Nancy and Edgar have about Blair going to school?
- How does Blair react when meeting Poppy’s friends?

Discussion Questions

- Do you think Blair will be a good Student President? Why?
- Was the school welcoming to Blair? What could they have done differently?
- How would you feel if you started at a new school?

Part Three: Looking Back on my School Day

Comprehension Questions

- Why does Blair refer to her first day of school as “a day without reward”?
- What do we learn about Valarie in this chapter?
- How does Blair’s perception of school change throughout the chapter?

Discussion Questions

- Mum says to Blair that she didn’t try to enjoy school. Do you think Blair made a good effort on her first day?
- Would you rather be Blair or Poppy? Why?
- Do you think Blair’s mum was expecting her to enjoy school?

Part Four: Return to the Madhouse

Comprehension Questions

- Why does Blair want to be Student President?
- How does Poppy feel about Blair telling her not to play horsey?
- What is Blair’s reaction to the way Melanie speaks to the teacher?

Discussion Questions

- Do you think Blair’s manifesto on “how to be cooler than several cucumbers” will work?
- Do you think Blair should have been given the role as Maria in the musical?
- How is Blair different to the other students?

Part Five and Step One: Rock Some Cool Kicks

Comprehension Questions

- What was the reaction to Blair’s new shoes? Was it the reaction she was hoping for?
- Describe Principal Morgan.
- What does it mean that Jamie’s room has been “left as a shrine” to her?

Discussion Questions

- What could have Blair done to the shoes to make them look cool?
- Is Blair fitting in at her new school?
- How do you think the principal feels about Blair?

Chapter Six (or were we doing Parts?)

Comprehension Questions

- How does Poppy react to Jamie?
- How are Jamie and Blair different?
- Find evidence in the text to support your analysis of Blair and Jamie’s relationship.

Discussion Questions

- Do you and your sibling get along, or do you have differences like Blair and Jamie?

- Do you think Blair is 'relatable' like she wants to be?
- Will Blair's cat suit work to make her seem cool?

The Seventh Section

Comprehension Questions

- *'This school isn't big enough for the two of us,' she says.*
What does Melanie mean when she says this? Does Blair understand the meaning?
- Why does Melanie slap Blair?
- How does Blair resolve the situation in the principal's office?

Discussion Questions

- Do you think Blair is getting popular like she thinks she is?
- How do you think Poppy's friends feel about Blair? Would you like to be treated that way?
- Do you think Melanie and Blair will become friends with the treaty in place?

Part or Chapter Eight and Steps Three and also Four: Dye Something and Pierce Something

Comprehension Questions

- How does Mrs McDonald respond to Blair's suggestions for the musical?
- Why does Blair want to change the song lyrics?
- Why does Blair think the Cool Kindergarteners were chosen to play the Sharks in the play?

Discussion Questions

- How does Blair feel about the play? Do you agree with her concerns?
- What do we learn about Blair's relationship with her mum in this chapter?
- Do you agree with what Nancy and Edgar said about being 'cool'?

Section Nine or Something and Part Five: Get a Sick Ride

Comprehension Questions

- Does Part Five of Blair's plan work?
- Why do the other kids laugh when Mr Keirran calls Blair a disruptive influence?
- Why does Blair follow Melanie and her friends to the top of the stairs?

Discussion Questions

- Would you want to be friends with Blair at this point in the story? Why?
- If someone in your class rode a mobility scooter into the room, would you think they were cool?
- Why does Blair want to impress Melanie and her group?

Part or Section Ten in My Positively Thrilling Life (in which Blair Moon attends a sleepover with no firm dress code)

Comprehension Questions

- Why does Kelly say that Blair sounds just like Melanie?
- What is Blair's opinion of the girls' plan to graffiti the school?
- Blair's mum wanted her to wash the hairspray out of her hair before they left. What does this tell us about how she feels about the sleepover?

Discussion Questions

- Do you think Melanie a good influence on Blair?
- Why do you think the girls think that making up rumours is cool?
- What do you think will happen when the principal sees the graffiti?

The Eleventh Bit of the Story (in which I, Blair Moon, revise the manifesto on how to be cooler than several cucumbers)

Comprehension Questions

- Why does Blair change her manifesto list?
- What does Poppy suggest for the graffiti?
- How does Blair convince her mum to drop them off at the school after hours?

Discussion Questions

- What would you do if you were in Poppy's position?
- Do you think Blair values Poppy's input and ideas?
- How do you think everyone will react to seeing the graffiti?

Chapter Midnight (in which a photo opportunity goes awry)

Comprehension Questions

- Why does Blair go to Poppy's house when she doesn't show up for their meeting?
- How does Poppy feel about her brother's swim meet?
- Why did Blair want to talk to the reporter?

Discussion Questions

- Do you think Poppy is right to be upset at Blair?
- What could Blair have done at the swim meet to make Poppy feel better?
- How do you think Poppy's morning was going before they jumped in the car? Why?

The Thirteenth Instalment

Comprehension Questions

- Why does Poppy call Blair 'Miss Moon'?
- Why does Poppy want Blair to leave Phillip alone?
- Why does Mr Keirran want to speak to the person responsible for the graffiti?

Discussion Questions

- Do you think Poppy is right to be upset with Blair?
- Do you think Blair respects authority?
- What will Blair paint as the new mural?

Chapter Fourteen (Blair Moon and The Mural)

Comprehension Questions

- Who comes up with Blair's new slogan?
- How does Poppy confront Blair about the mural?
- Why does Blair visit Edgar at the old folks' home?

Discussion Questions

- How would you feel if your friend took credit for your work?
- Do you think that Poppy still wants Blair to be the Student President?
- Can you think of another slogan Blair could use?

Chapter Fifteen (in which a peace treaty is proposed)

Comprehension Questions

- Why does Blair want to host a party?
- How does Valerie feel when Blair is at her house talking to Poppy?
- Why doesn't Poppy accept Blair's offer to take ownership of her cob loaf?

Discussion Questions

- Do you agree with Poppy standing her ground?
- If Blair asked you for advice on how to repair her friendship with Poppy, what would you say?
- What do you think will happen at the party?

The Sixteenth Instalment and also Step Ten: Throw a Hootenanny

Comprehension Questions

- Why does Blair think the party is the key to winning votes?
- Why does Nancy tell Blair's mum about the party?
- What happens at the party that Blair's mum wouldn't approve of?

Discussion Questions

- Do you think the party was a good idea?
- If you were there, what would you think of the party?
- How would the party have been different if Melanie wasn't there?

Chapter Something or Other (who cares)

Comprehension Questions

- Why does Jamie say that Blair will never be cool?
- What does Blair mean when she says she feels "lost in a much more metaphysical woo-woo way"?
- How does Universe-City differ from Blair's expectations?

Discussion Questions

- What do you think Blair is feeling in this chapter?
- Do you relate to Jamie or Blair more?
- What advice would you have given Blair if you were Jamie?

Chapter Eighteen (in which I decide that we're sticking to chapters from here on out)

Comprehension Questions

- Blair thinks Nancy and Edgar have begun a relationship to benefit her how?
- What are Nancy and Edgar really trying to teach Blair?
- Does Blair's mum think she would be different if she grew up at school instead of at the old folk's home?

Discussion Questions

- Do you think Blair understands what her mother is trying to tell her?

- What clues in the chapter tell us how Blair's mum is feeling?
- What is special about Blair Moon?

Chapter Nineteen and Step Eleven: Run for President of the Students

Comprehension Questions

- Why is Blair feeling overwhelmed?
- Why does Blair feel insecure at the very start of her speech?
- What does Blair promise to the students in her speech?

Discussion Questions

- Who do you think should win Student President?
- Do you think Blair's gesture with the mural is enough for Poppy to forgive her?
- What could Blair have said in her speech to have a better chance of winning?

The Last Bit

Comprehension Questions

- How does Blair's comparison about the moon relate to her experience and growth from her time at school?
- What changes end up being made from the original West Side Story musical?
- Why does Blair get everyone together in a group huddle before the performance?

Discussion Questions

- How has Blair changed throughout the story?
- Would Blair have changed the same way if she didn't attend school?
- What do you think Blair will experience next year in High School?
- How does Blair's clothing throughout the book reflect her personality?