Teachers' notes by
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Con-Nerd
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The Australian Curriculum Years 5 and 6

The English curriculum is built around the three interrelated strands of Language, Literature and Literacy. Teaching and learning programs should balance and integrate all three strands. Together the strands focus on developing students' knowledge, understanding and skills in listening, reading, viewing, speaking, writing and creating. Learning in English builds on concepts, skills and processes developed in earlier years, and teachers will revisit and strengthen these as needed.

Students engage with a variety of texts for enjoyment. They listen to, read, view, interpret and evaluate spoken, written and multimodal texts in which the primary purpose is aesthetic, as well as texts designed to inform and persuade. These include various types of media texts including newspapers, film and digital texts, junior and early adolescent novels, poetry, non-fiction and dramatic performances. Students develop their understanding of how texts, including media texts, are influenced by context, purpose and audience.

Literary texts that support and extend students in Years 5 and 6 as independent readers describe complex sequences, a range of non-stereotypical characters and elaborated events including flashbacks and shifts in time. These texts explore themes of interpersonal relationships and ethical dilemmas within real-world and fantasy settings. Informative texts supply technical and content information about a wide range of topics of interest as well as topics being studied in other areas of the curriculum. Text structures include chapters, headings and subheadings, tables of contents, indexes and glossaries. Language features include complex sentences, unfamiliar technical vocabulary, figurative language, and information presented in

various types of graphics. Students create a range of imaginative, informative and persuasive types of texts such as narratives, procedures, performances, reports, reviews, explanations and discussions.

English Achievement Standard

<u>Receptive modes (listening, reading and viewing)</u>

By the end of Year 6, students understand how the use of text structures can achieve particular effects. They analyse and explain how language features, images and vocabulary are used by different authors to represent ideas, characters and events.
Students compare and analyse information in different texts, explaining literal and implied meaning. They select and use evidence from a text to explain their response to it. They listen to discussions, clarifying content and challenging others' ideas.

<u>Productive modes (speaking, writing and creating)</u>

Students understand how language features and language patterns can be used for emphasis. They show how specific details can be used to support a point of view. They explain how their choices of language features and images are used.

Students create detailed texts elaborating on key ideas for a range of purposes and audiences. They make presentations and contribute actively to class and group discussions, using a variety of strategies for effect. They demonstrate understanding of grammar, make considered choices from an expanding vocabulary, use accurate spelling and punctuation for clarity and make and explain editorial choices.

More information on The Australian Curriculum can be found at http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/.

Source for curriculum

ACARA: Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (2011). *The Australian Curriculum v1.2: English Foundation to Year 10 Curriculum.* Retrieved December 2011, from http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/English/Curriculum/F-10

Study Notes

<u>**Background**</u>

Con- Nerd – Oliver Phommovanh

Oliver is a young Thai-Australian writer for children. In 2008 Oliver was published in the *Growing Up Asian in Australia* anthology and has featured on panels at the Sydney Writers' Festival among many other appearances and blogs. He is a primary school teacher who shares his writing passion with kids and engages them with humour. He's also a stand-up comedian and has appeared on national TV and radio as well as a number of well-known comedy venues such as the Comedy Store in Sydney. His first book, *Thai-riffic!*, was published in June 2010 to critical acclaim, followed by *Con-nerd* in 2011.

<u>**Focus: Families/Asian Australian experiences/Friendships/Cultural and Social Differences**</u>

"IT'S ONE SMALL STEP FOR NERDS, ONE GIANT LEAP TO BEING COOL.

Mama tells me I'm gifted and talented. But I know the truth. I'm just a nerd. Kids call me Con-nerd - half Connor and all nerd.

I'm supposed to become a doctor but I have this deep, dark secret: I want to be a cartoonist.

And all of a sudden my mega-cool comics are getting noticed at school - I might even get into a special art class . That would sure impress this girl I'm keen on . . . and it might just be my chance to show the world my true destiny. But I'm not sure Mama will see it quite that way . . .

Full of the signature laugh-out-loud humour seen in his fabulously funny Thai-riffic!, OLIVER PHOMMAVANH has produced yet another totally engaging and hilarious story about finding your own special talents and having the confidence to use them.*"*

<u>**Themes:**</u>

Identity
Family relationships
Friendships
Asian Australian experiences
Cultural and social differences

Key Understandings & skills

Information and communication technology (ICT) competence:

- Research and critically evaluate information in relation to the text, on the Internet
- Book Trailer creation
- ICT activities as listed below

Critical and Creative Thinking: Readers/Writers Notebooks

- Infer character motivation
- Locate and interpret evidence
- Reinforce the comprehension strategies
- Make personal connections to the text and reflect on related issues
- Investigate author characterization and setting
- How authors use imagery effectively
- Character profiles, character maps
- Problem solving

Ethical Behavior/ Personal and Social Competence:

- Personal connections – how might you react to situations if you were in Connor's situation?
- Make personal connections to the text and reflect on related issues
- Use as a model for personal reflective writing based on experience

Links to other learning areas:

Asia and Australia's relationship with Asia cross curriculum priority outlined in The Australian Curriculum.

Assessment

'For' assessment:

Writers Notebook.

This will lead students to reflect on and respond to **Con Nerd**, by creating a readers/writers notebook.

Students are to use a readers/writers notebook throughout their reading of **Con Nerd**, to document and record response to texts, thoughts while independently reading, shared class discussions and answers to text related questions.

'As' assessment:

Reading and Writing conferring, Writers Notebook development (rubric assessment – self, peer, teacher), on demand testing.

'Of' assessment:

Folio of pieces, presented as Writers Notebook.

Various written text responses that explore theme, character development etc. Students will have evidence of independent thought and reflection (supported in Writers Notebook. This will include evidence of note taking/summarizing to support their point of view etc.) within the portfolio.

Suggested Teaching and Learning Activities:

Readers/Writers Notebook:

- Name your Notebook **Con Nerd- Readers/Writers Notebook- Your name/Term/Start date**
- Keep this notebook handy for jotting down notes as you read.
- Encourage students to personalize their notebook with artwork, cartoons, sketches, drawings and colour.
- Ask students to be on the lookout for pictures and cuttings they might feel relates to **Con Nerd** or its characters.

Vocabulary Log:

Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own vocabulary development through the use of a Vocabulary Log. This could be a few pages set aside in the back, middle or front of their Reader's/Writer's notebooks. As students read **Con Nerd**, they are invited to record words that are unfamiliar or new to them in their logs and then to use a dictionary and/or the context of the novel to locate a meaning for each entry.

Before Reading-

- In your Notebook, write a few paragraphs predicting what you think **Con Nerd** is about.
- What do you predict Connor's cartoons might be about? Would they be realistic cartoons about his life or something more farfetched? Why do you think this?
- Make some predictions about the possible reasons for Connor's Mum not being very happy about Connor being a great cartoonist. Support with an example from the blurb.

Early Reading-

Focus on Character Identity-

Read pages 1-15 and answer the following questions, supporting with references to the text:

- How does Connor feel about the pressure he feels from his mother to be a good student?
- What would Connor rather be doing while he is at tutoring?
- Share an example from the text of how Connor sees his tutor? (pg. 3)
- Does Connor want to be a Doctor when he grows up? How do we know this? Give a direct quote example.
- Read the paragraph on pg.7 "the one day mama went on a spider squashing rampage. She got rid of anything that was red, black and blue…" How do we think Mama's actions made Connor feel? Do you think Connor's mother is being fair to Connor? Why?
- Connors mother gives him a dictionary to read, to improve his spelling and vocabulary. Connor states, "that's great, when I get bashed up, Ill know five different words that mean help." (pg.9) What is Connor telling us about himself with this thought?
- Make predictions about Stephen and Dazza. What types of people do you think they are? Are they friends with Connor? Are they his enemies? Support with quotes from the text.
- Should Dazza and Stephen be in the Character Map? Why?
- Who are Connor's friends? Can you name them? Add them to your Character Map.
- Who is Tori? Why might Connor be excited to meet her? Make predictions about how you think Connor and Tori's friendship might develop.
- "Miss Ciampa has been at the school since the age of the dinosaurs. She still uses a blackboard. One of her students even grew up to become a teacher." What is Connor telling us about his teacher?

Write a few paragraphs sharing your thoughts and what you have learned so far about Connor and his family- answer the following questions:

- What socio- economic status do you think Connor's family has?
- What do you think happened to Connor's father?
- Do you think Connor and his Mum have a good relationship with one another?
- Support your opinions with evidence and quotes from the text.

Read pages 18- 53 and answer the following questions

- How does Connor feel about Ryan? Who is Ryan? Add him to your Character Map.
- Connor says "I'm dying to ask more questions about him, but Id feel like I'm picking at a scab." (p.21) What or who is Connor talking about? Why does he feel this way?
- Why does Connor hang out in the Library at lunchtime? Give examples from the text.
- What type of person do we think Tori is? Is she friendly? A bully? Support your answer with examples from the text.
- Where do you think "Nerd Headquarters" is? (p.32)
- Why is Mandy the only one allowed to call Connor 'Con Nerd'?
- Connors classmates agree to intervene and help transform Connor from nerd to cool. Make predictions on how you think this plan might turn out.
- Do you think Connors classmates really want to help him? Why/why not?

Exploring Asian Cultures and Religions:

Throughout Con Nerd, Connor makes several references to his mother's cultural beliefs and rituals, including a shrine for Connor's father and Chinese New Year. The following website is an excellent resource for further research and activities your students can do individually or as a class.

Asia Society for Kids can be found here- http://kids.asiasociety.org/

Character Mapping:

With a Character Map, students begin by placing the character's name in the center of the map. A sample Character Map can be found here http://www.thinkport.org/9c0ce9f6-ab90-4bf2-98e1-f6ae423ab8be.asset?

Students then identify a character trait or quality to place in the oval on each branch of the map. Each character trait or quality must be supported with evidence from the novel.
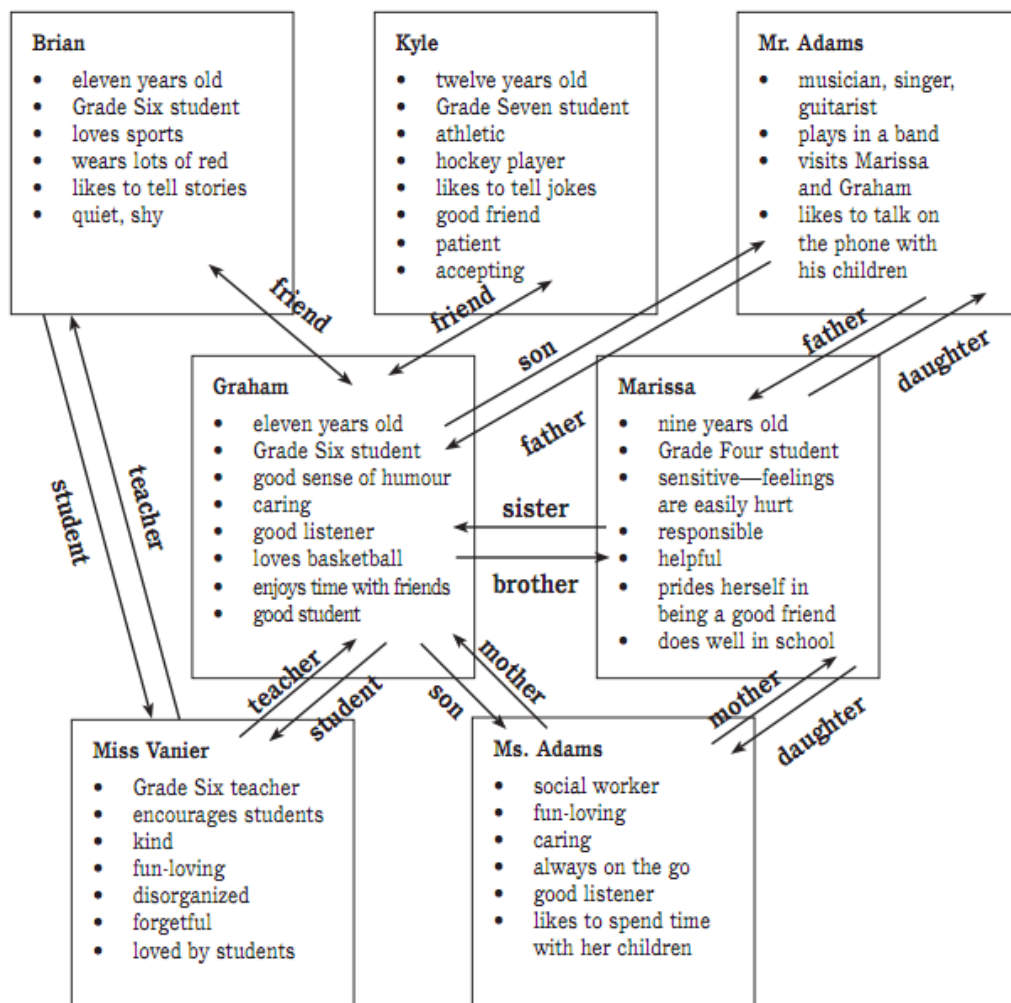
Examples of evidence that support each trait or quality form the sub-branches for each branch of the Character Map. This evidence is placed in the circles that branch out from each oval. This provides students with a visual portrayal of the characters they meet in the novels they read.

These Character Maps provide key information for character analysis and comparison.

Sociogram:

A Sociogram takes the first character map one step further and shows the relationships between characters. As students read their novels and encounter new characters, they create a box for each character in which they name and describe in point form what they know about the character. They use arrows between the boxes to highlight and describe the relationships between characters. A sample Sociogram can be seen below.

Here is how a Sociogram would work with a sample student in Grade Six. The sample student's name is Graham.

Brian
- eleven years old
- Grade Six student
- loves sports
- wears lots of red
- likes to tell stories
- quiet, shy

Kyle
- twelve years old
- Grade Seven student
- athletic
- hockey player
- likes to tell jokes
- good friend
- patient
- accepting

Mr. Adams
- musician, singer, guitarist
- plays in a band
- visits Marissa and Graham
- likes to talk on the phone with his children

friend — *friend* — *son* — *father* — *daughter*

Graham
- eleven years old
- Grade Six student
- good sense of humour
- caring
- good listener
- loves basketball
- enjoys time with friends
- good student

father — *sister* — *brother*

Marissa
- nine years old
- Grade Four student
- sensitive—feelings are easily hurt
- responsible
- helpful
- prides herself in being a good friend
- does well in school

student — *teacher* — *teacher* — *student* — *son* — *mother* — *mother* — *daughter*

Miss Vanier
- Grade Six teacher
- encourages students
- kind
- fun-loving
- disorganized
- forgetful
- loved by students

Ms. Adams
- social worker
- fun-loving
- caring
- always on the go
- good listener
- likes to spend time with her children

Again, this becomes part of the process of reading and responding to the novel. The students can use their journal stopping points to add characters and relationships to their Sociograms. As they read, students will become more aware of character development and how the characters are interrelated. At the end of the novel, they will have a complete overview of all characters.

ICT Activities:

Create Your Own Comic:

Connor loves comics! Now it's time for your students create their own. They can do this in two ways, using Comic Life on MacBooks, iMacs or iPads, OR ask students to visit the following URL-
http://superherosquad.marvel.com/create_your_own_comic

Students can begin creating their own comics using characters from **Con Nerd**, or ones they made up themselves! If you do choose to use the following URL, students are limited to characters from the Marvel SuperHero Squad.

You might like to direct students to create dialogue for their characters that reflects the storyline of **Con Nerd**.
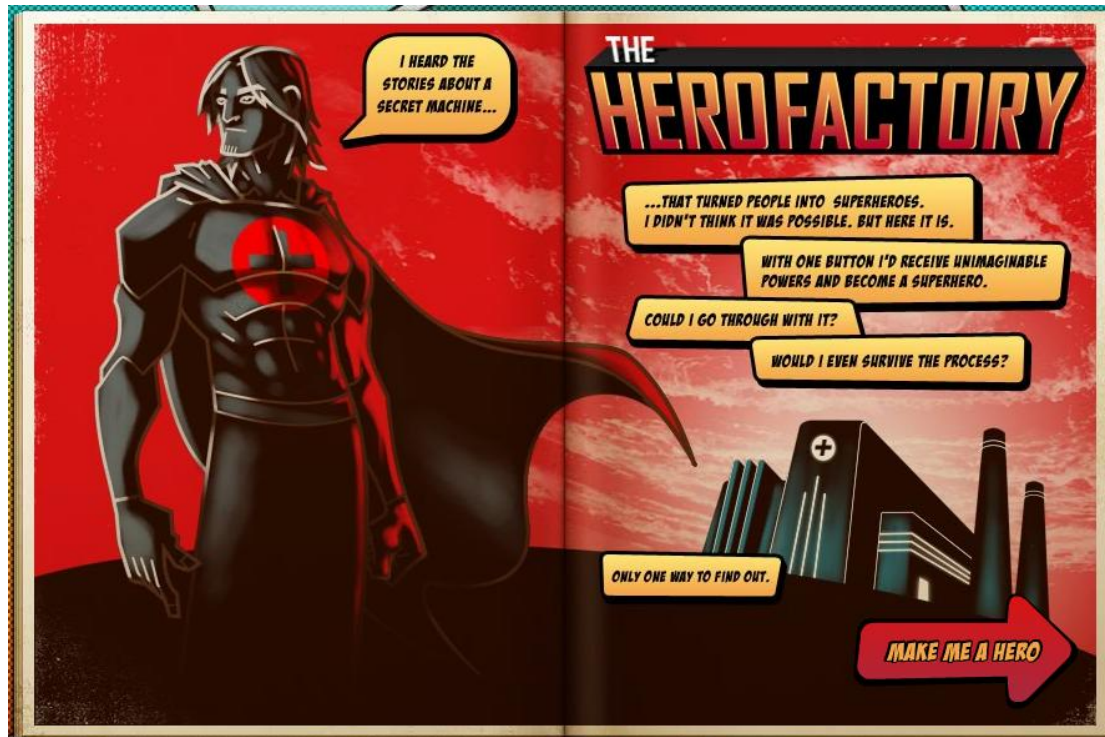
Create Your Own Hero:

Creating your own Hero with HeroFactory is a fun and rewarding task that students will enjoy and enthuse over.

Simply direct students to the following website and follow the simple and easy instructions.

http://cpbherofactory.com/

Character Voki

1. After reading chapters 1-4 choose two characters from the book.

2. You will be creating a talking avatar using Voki.com.

3. Go to Voki.com and log-in or create a Voki account. (Note: If you are not logged in, you will not be able to embed your Voki in your blog/keynote.)

4. Choose two characters from **Con Nerd**. Create a Voki for those characters. Due to the word count limitations in each Voki, you may need to do a few Vokis for your character to complete the speech requirements. You're writing the speech in first person as if the character is talking about himself/ herself. Include the following details in your speech:

- Three text details that describe their behaviors, how they feel, what they might be thinking about one another/their situation, their appearance, etc.

Word Clouds:

Enter the words you have collected and recorded in your vocabulary log, into Wordle to create word clouds. Print these word clouds and use them in class to create short stories of your own. See how many words you can use!

Wordle URL: http://www.wordle.net/create

Book Trailer – Con Nerd

Using iMovie/Windows Movie Maker, you will be creating a Book Trailer for **Con Nerd**. This will form part of your assessment for this Unit of work.

- Create a folder on your desktop titled **Book Trailer- Con Nerd**.
- Source images from the following websites (remember to save the URL's of the images chosen and paste them into a Word doc for later).
- http://www.morguefile.com/
- http://www.wylio.com/
- http://imagebase.davidniblack.com/main.php
- http://www.photos8.com/
- Once you have chosen and saved your images to the folder, begin your storyboard
- Go to Pages/Word Processing/Miscellaneous
- Select Storyboard
- Begin planning your trailer using the storyboard template

Remember to consider the following-
1. Are your chosen images relevant?
2. Will you include text?
3. Is the text relevant?
4. Where will choose to place text?
5. Are you complying with copyright rules?
6. Is your music choice relevant?
7. Does it suit the 'mood' you are trying to convey?

- Once satisfied with your storyboard, consider music choice.
- Use the following site to source creative commons licensed music (remember to save the URL's of the music chosen and paste them into a Word doc for later)
- https://creativecommons.org/legalmusicforvideos
- Open iMovie and begin creating your Book Trailer
- Don't forget to paste all URL's for sites used into a Bibliography Slide at the end of your book trailer.
- Use the following checklist to determine if your Trailer is ready to submit for assessment.

Book Trailer Checklist

You are NOT finished until you complete all of these steps!

Verify that every single image link works. If one doesn't work, you have 2 choices:
- replace the picture and cite the new one
- find the image and cite it properly

Put your citations in the order the pictures appear in the video. Make your citation slide pretty:

- Line up all the entries
- Make the fonts all the same
- Double check your spelling and capitalization

- Do this: file – save as pictures
- Insert your citation picture into iMovie

- Double-check all of your spelling and grammar on your trailer text frames.
- Make sure your music matches the mood of the book.
- Make sure you have included the title, author, and book cover picture in the very beginning of your trailer.

Once you have done all of this, finalize the trailer, fill out the bottom part, and give this sheet to your teacher.

 Name:

Book Trailer name:

Saved to …… folder/ server…..:

Book Trailer Rubric

Daily grade:

_____/25: All images (except the book cover) found on sites listed

_____/25: citation slide present at end of trailer

_____/50: All links on citation slide work (-10 for each problem)

Test grade:

_____/50: Grammar (-5 points for each major error)

Elements:

_____/10: Mood was obvious and consistent

_____/5: Setting was represented and matched mood and pictures

_____/20: Plot was introduced, but not completely revealed; it made sense

_____/10: Pictures were interesting and made sense

_____/5: Title of the book was included

Reflections on the Novel:

Now you have completed reading **Con Nerd**, it is time to reflect on the novel. Revisit the work you completed while reading. Were your early reading predictions and character analysis correct?

Write a page on how the outcomes of the novel differed from your early predictions, or were the same.

Interview:

Choose a character from **Con Nerd** to interview. Write 6 questions you would ask this character and then write the answers you think the character would give you.

Hand Drawn Comic Strip:

In your Readers/Writers Notebook, draw and write your own comic strip based on characters in the novel or perhaps characters from your own life. Be sure to be as imaginative and inventive as possible with your story line and artwork

6 Word Story:

Using only six words sum up **Con Nerd** and its story line. You may choose to do this from the point of view of one of the characters.

Write an Epilogue/Prologue:

Choose to write either an epilogue or a prologue for **Con Nerd**.
Depending on which you choose, set your epilogue/prologue 10 years into the future or the past. You may do this from any characters point of view.