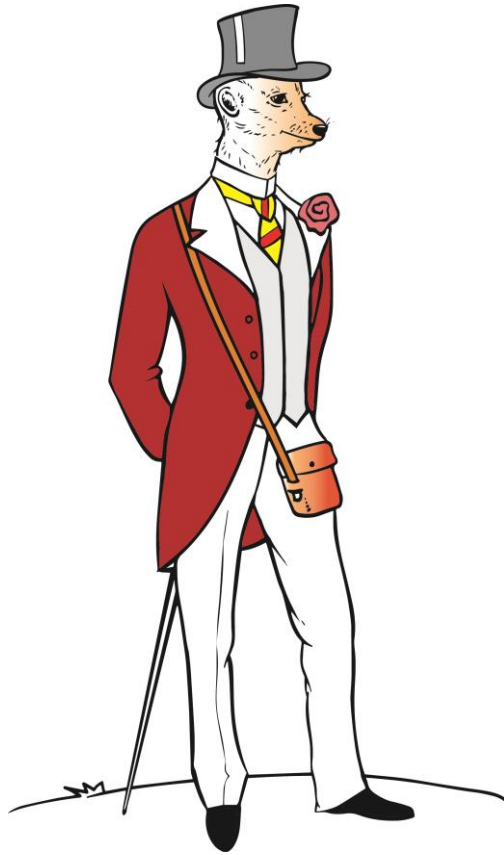


Mr. Meerkat's Poetry for Children



Teacher's Companion

Stage 3: Grades 5 and 6

By

Leonard Reynolds

A Letter to Santa

Dear Santa,

I hope my mail finds you in the Christmas off-season
And your family and workers are quietly resting
But I write, in secret, for a very special reason
Hoping you enjoy my letter's conclusion

I am ever so thankful for the bicycle gift
Even with all those twenty one gears to shift
And it took two days more before I received it
But hiding it in Dad's old car was insight, I admit

The bicycle you sent was wonderful at first
But then, to my horror, the front tyre burst
So we looked about and went to the shop
And to my surprise your bikes were in stock

It's not that I want to question your sources
Or even suggest you pool your resources
But when I looked close and saw the prices
I think you might benefit to call Cmart's head office

I don't know how they got your brand
For the theories of commerce I don't understand
But you carry your gifts to so many lands
I was wondering if Cmart might lend you a hand

Your faithful friend,
Alina Greenspan

Explanatory Notes

Subject:	Advice for Santa
Theme/s:	Christmas Commerce and marketing The truth about Santa
Mood:	Humorous
Persona:	A child
Description:	5 quatrains making up the body of a letter
Style:	Occasional poem, epistle, free verse, narrative, light verse
Rhyme:	ABAA, AABB, AABB, AABC, AAAA
Rhythm:	The simple rhyme and similar-length lines create a melodic rhythm
Features:	Direct address, formal language, euphemism, irony, idiom, synecdoche, rhyme

Lesson Objectives

Key language focus: Tone; Formal and informal language

Culminating activity: Identify the tone of different texts and explain how it affects the reader

This lesson focuses on exploring tone through examining three different versions of Alina's letter. Students consider formality, the degree of politeness and other features that contribute to tone and convey the attitudes of the writer. Students also explain how different tones affect the reader despite conveying similar information.

Students will meet the following ACARA content descriptors for English – Year Six:

- Understand that strategies for interaction become more complex and demanding as levels of formality and social distance increase
- Explore a range of everyday, community, literary and informative texts discussing language features and comparing the effect of authors' choices in two or more texts
- Explore texts on a very similar topic by authors with very different styles, identifying differences in the use of voice, language style and register
- Compare texts including media texts that represent ideas and events in different ways, explaining the effects of different approaches
- Compare the structures and features of different texts
- Use prior knowledge and textual information to make inferences and predictions
- Find the main idea of a text
- Identify how authors use language to position the reader and give reasons

Cross-Curriculum Links (ACARA)

- HASS
 - Economics and business
 - [The reasons businesses exist and the different ways they provide goods and services](#)
 - Investigate the different places that Santa could source goods for presents
 - Categorise C Mart as a business in the primary, secondary or tertiary sector
- Arts
 - Media arts
 - [Explore representations, characterisations and points of view of people in their community, including themselves, using settings, ideas, story principles and genre conventions in images, sounds and texts](#)
 - Students select combinations of media materials to represent Santa in different ways

General Capabilities and Cross-Curriculum Priorities (ACARA)

- [Literacy](#)
 - Navigate, read and view subject specific texts with some challenging features and a range of graphic representations
 - Interpret and analyse information and ideas, comparing texts on similar topics or themes using comprehension strategies
 - Use developing knowledge of the structure and features of learning area texts to comprehend and compose a range of more complex texts for identified purposes
 - Use subjective, objective and evaluative language, and identify bias
 - Use simple, compound and complex sentence structures to record, explain, question, describe and elaborate ideas and events
- [Ethical understanding](#)
 - Evaluate the consequences of actions in familiar and hypothetical situations

Extension Activities:

- Compare and contrast this text with the poem “A Letter from the Easter Bunny” (Reader 15). Focus on formality and the use of language features to establish tone. Consider the different impacts of the two letters on the reader. Have students rewrite one of the texts replicating the tone of the other.
- Write Santa’s reply to Alina.
- As an Economics and Business activity, classify different types of stores in your local area, for example discount department stores (K Mart, Big W etc), locally-owned specialty stores, large specialty stores (Harvey Norman, Officeworks, etc) etc. Identify the pros and cons of different store types. Classify C Mart and discuss why Santa might choose a store like this for Christmas gifts.
- Categorise C Mart as a business in the primary, secondary or tertiary sector.
- As a Media Arts lesson, have students select and combine a range of media materials to represent Santa in different ways, based on how he is represented in the different letters.

Differentiation Options:

- Create a scale, rating letter openings and closings from most formal to least formal.
- Compare and contrast formal and informal texts such as a text message, a marketing email and a letter from a bank.
- Write a narrative or a letter responding to the prompt: “Dear Santa”
- Study the structure of a thank you letter and have students write a letter to someone who has given them a gift or helped them in some way.

Discussion Points

Pre-reading

- Who has written a letter to Santa before?
- What did you write about?
- When did you write the letter? Before or after Christmas? Why?
- Did you get a reply?

During reading

- Greeting
 - o Does the greeting give us any clue who is writing the letter?
 - o Does it tell us how their feeling or what their relationship with Santa is?
- Stanza 1
 - o When is the “off-season” for Santa, do you think?
 - o Is the letter from before or after Christmas?
 - o Does this give a hint of what the person might write about?
 - o Why is this person writing?
 - o What do you think the “special reason” is?
 - o Do you notice anything about the way this writer is writing?
 - o What examples of formal language can you identify?
 - o Why do we use formal language?
 - o Why might they write in a formal way?
- Stanza 2
 - o What did the writer get for Christmas?
 - o Does it sound like a good bike? Why or why not?
 - o Would you like a bike for Christmas?
 - o When did the writer get their Christmas present?
 - o Why was it so late?
 - o What does the writer mean when they say hiding it in the old car was “insight”?
- Stanza 3
 - o What went wrong with the bicycle?
 - o How did the writer try to solve this problem?
 - o What could they have bought at the shop to fix it?
 - o What surprised the writer at the shop? Hint: What does “in stock” mean?
 - o Why would it have been surprising that Santa’s gifts were the same as what was at the store?
 - o Have you gotten presents from Santa that are from the store?
- Stanza 4
 - o What is the writer suggesting to Santa in this stanza?
 - o What made the writer want to tell Santa about the bikes at C Mart?
 - o Do you think the prices are low or high?
 - o Why?
 - o The writer also says that they are not doing two things. What are these things?

- Why might the writer want Santa to know they aren't "questioning [his] sources" or "suggest[ing he] pool [his] resources"?
- Stanza 6
 - What tells us that the writer is surprised to find the same bike they got from Santa at C Mart?
 - Theories of commerce are how stores buy goods (like bikes) to sell. Why might understanding these make a difference to the writer?
 - How do you think the store got Santa's bikes?
 - This stanza reveals why the writer has written their letter. What is the reason?
 - What do they want to tell Santa?
 - Do you think C Mart would help Santa if he asked?
 - Do you think Santa would ask? Why or why not?
- Closing
 - What does the closing tell us about the writer?
 - What does it tell us about Alina's relationship with Santa?

Post-reading

- Why was Alina writing to Santa?
- How is this letter different to most of the letters Santa gets?
- How do you think Santa will feel about the letter?
- Why?
- What was Alina's attitude or tone in the letter? How is she trying to sound?
- What are some examples of how Alina is trying to be polite?
- What are some examples of how Alina is trying not to offend Santa?
- Do you think Alina's tone makes a difference to how the letter sounds?
- Do you think it would make a difference to how Santa would feel reading the letter?
- Why?
- What examples of formal language can you find?
- Why might Alina have chosen to use formal language?
- What do you think Santa might do when he gets the letter?

Activities

Literar

96. Who wrote the letter? _____

97. What did Alina get for Christmas? _____

98. What 2 problems were there with Alina's Christmas present?

a. _____

b. _____

99. Was Alina upset about the problems with her bike? Give a reason for your answer by talking about the poem.

100. Find 2 examples in the text of:

a. Alina using formal language

b. Alina being polite

c. Alina being careful not to offend Santa

101. Why do you think Alina is being so polite and taking care not to offend Santa?

102. Could what Alina wrote be offensive or upsetting to Santa? Why?

Inferential

103. What are the main ideas in Alina's letter?

104. What motivated Alina to write her letter? Why did she want to write to Santa? What did she want to tell him?

Let's compare the attitude and ideas in three different letters from Alina.

Text 1	Text 2	Text 3
The poem "A Letter to Santa"	Dear Santa, Thanks for the bike. It's a shame it took us 2 days to find it and that the front tyre burst. We went to the shops to fix the tyre and I saw the same bike in C Mart. The bikes were very cheap so you might want to look at your pricing. You could also save money if you asked C Mart to do the local deliveries for you. Cheers, Alina	Dear Sir, I am writing to inform you that I am very disappointed with your work this year. Despite my requests you have again failed to deliver a satisfactory present. My present this year was 2 days late and the front tyre burst. It is disappointing to find you source your presents at the local C Mart. Although their prices are very reasonable, the quality is poor. If you continue your involvement with them, although I don't recommend it, you might consider asking them to do your local deliveries. From, Alina

Evaluative/Applied

For each text, answer the following questions in your book:

- 105. What is the tone of the text? Consider whether it is polite or rude, formal or informal, and whether it is trying not to offend.
- 106. How is the writer feeling?
- 107. What is the writer's attitude towards Santa?
- 108. How would Santa feel when he read the letter and why?