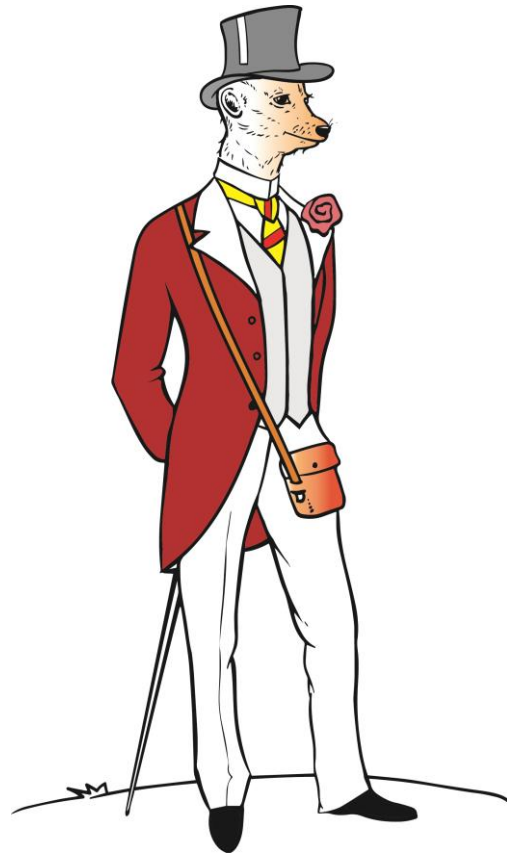


Mr. Meerkat's

Poetry for Children



Teacher's Companion

Stage 3: Grades 5 and 6

By
Leonard Reynolds

If I Pretend

I want some time to be alone
And hope you don't think I'm silly
But if I pretend I can't see you
Will you cover your eyes to hide me?

Strangers are friends first hard to trust
I watch their movements closely
So if I stand so very still
Will you search around to find me?

The night is filled with many things
That creep and hunt so slowly
So if I cloak my head with fear
Will you crawl away and leave me?

I get afraid of sudden noise
I move away so quietly
So if I stand behind this tree
Will you walk on by and pass me?

I don't believe you understand
How I find most others nasty
So if I look real nice and fine
Will you try your best to like me?

It is important to make new friends
And I want to be seen as pretty
So if I change my skin sometimes
Do you think my mask will help me?

I don't like things that jump around
I like things calm and carefree
I sit up high and near the sky
And hope you won't climb up to tease me

It's often nice to be polite
And not too loud or scary
If I sit quite still and on my own
Will you take some time and befriend me?

Explanatory Notes

Subject:	Identity and fear of rejection
Theme/s:	Identity and self-image Self-confidence, fear of others, fear of rejection Friendship
Mood:	Self-conscious, diffident
Persona:	A child
Description:	Each of the quatrains explores a different element of the self-image of a child, contributing to a naturally contradictory whole
Style:	Accentual verse, descriptive
Rhyme:	ABCB
Rhythm:	A simple, methodical rhythm with a slow pace is created by the longer lines
Features:	Rhyme, rhetorical question, direct address, metaphor, descriptive language, symbolism

Lesson Objectives

Key language focus: Metaphor

Culminating activity: Create 2 short self-image descriptions using animal metaphors

In this lesson, students will explore the concept of self-image. In the pre-reading activity, students identify the components of their own self-image and explore the inherently contradictory nature of how we behave and see ourselves. In deconstructing the poem, students examine how different animals are used as metaphors to represent different aspects of the narrator's self-image before creating their own animal metaphors.

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

- Identify how language choice and imagery build emotional connection and engagement with the story or theme
- Bring subject and technical vocabulary and concept knowledge to new reading tasks
- Make connections between the text and students' own experience or other texts
- Make connections between information in print and images
- Find specific literal information
- Use prior knowledge and textual information to make inferences and predictions
- Summarise a text or part of a text

Students will meet the following ACARA content descriptors for HPE – Year Five and Six:

- Identify how personal qualities contribute to identities and inform world views
- Explore how personal and cultural identities change over time

Cross-Curriculum Links (ACARA)

- 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 themselves in different ways, based on their self-image
 - Visual arts
 - [Explore ideas and practices used by artists to represent different views, beliefs and opinions](#)
 - Consider how self-image is conveyed through self-portraits
 - Create representations of the different aspects of their self-image through self-portraits or artworks of animals
- HPE
 - Communicating and interacting for health and wellbeing
 - [Practice skills to establish and manage relationships](#)
 - Develop and practice strategies for establishing and maintaining friendships when struggling with low self-confidence or shyness

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
 - Compose and edit learning area texts
 - 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 simple, compound and complex sentence structures to record, explain, question, describe and elaborate ideas and events
- [Critical and creative thinking](#)
 - Combine ideas in a variety of ways and from a range of sources to create new possibilities

Extension Activities:

- Ask students to write an extended response about how the imagery in the poem contributes to their understanding of the narrator and what emotional effect it has on them as a reader.
- Rather than or in addition to writing self-image passages, examine the structure of the poem and have students create their own poetic verses or self-image poem modelled on this structure.
- Analyse a range of self-portraits, considering how the elements of art are used and what views, beliefs and opinions are conveyed by the artworks. Have students create character profiles or mind maps about the different artists, based on the messages conveyed in the artworks. This activity could lead to students creating their own self-portrait or an imagined “self-portrait” for the narrator of the poem.
- As a Media Arts lesson, have students select and combine a range of media materials to represent the contradictory facets of their self-image and to represent themselves in a particular way.
- As an HPE lesson, discuss the ways that the narrator of the poem is struggling, for example with shyness and low self-confidence. Identify examples of these struggles in the poem and how the narrator does or doesn’t try to overcome them. Discuss how shyness and low self-confidence can affect people and their relationships, cultivating empathy. Assist students to develop and practice strategies for coping with these feelings themselves and for establishing and maintaining friendships when struggling themselves or with someone who is struggling.

Differentiation Options:

- Create a character profile for the narrator of the poem, focusing on the different elements of their identity or self-image.
- Pre-complete the second column of the table on the activity sheet as a class, in order to assist students who may struggle with the metaphorical nature of the poem.
- Have students create a collage that depicts the different elements of their self-image, using images and text cut from magazines and/or resourced online.
- After students have completed their self-image passages based on animals, ask them to create an artwork that employs different elements of art to depict the animal and the qualities it conveys about their personality. The artworks could also include the students’ descriptive passages.

Discussion Points

Pre-reading

- NB. Completing the pre-reading activities will give students a grounding in what self-image is, helping them engage with the topics of the poem.
- What does it mean to “pretend” things?
- Do you pretend things sometimes?
- What do you pretend?
- What do you think this poem, “If I pretend” could be about?
- This is an interesting poem because it’s not about any of those things. The narrator is a child and they are using pretending to tell us about their self-image.
- What is a self-image?
- This poem looks at a child’s self-image, probably someone about your age. Each stanza talks about a different feeling and a different part of their self-image. The child uses animals to describe their self-image. Let’s see if we can work out what each stanza is about.

During reading

- Stanza 1
 - o What does the child want?
 - o What do they ask the reader to do?
 - o Why do you think the child wants to pretend this?
 - o What animal is the child pretending to be?
 - o Have you ever seen a tawny frogmouth? How do they protect themselves?
 - o What part of the child’s self-image might this stanza be describing?
 - o Is being alone an important part of your self-image?
- Stanza 2
 - o What does the child say about making friends?
 - o Are they right? Is it hard to trust new friends?
 - o Why?
 - o What animal is the child pretending to be in this stanza?
 - o What do lizards/water dragons do when a person spots them?
 - o How do you think the lizard explains what the child does when they first make friends?
 - o What part of the child’s self-image is this stanza about?
- Stanza 3
 - o What does the beginning of this stanza describe?
 - o What do you think the child is afraid of?
 - o What if it’s not just things at night? What else could this represent?
 - o What does the child do when they are scared?
 - o What animal does this?
 - o We aren’t scary night creatures. Why might the narrator want to hide from us?
 - o What is this telling us about the child’s self-image?
- Stanza 4
 - o What else scares the narrator, according to this stanza?

- Do you get scared of sudden noises?
- What does the child do when they are afraid?
- What animal is this like?
- Can you think of other animals that do this?
- What do you do when you are afraid?
- What part of the child's self-image do you think this stanza is about?
- Stanza 5
 - What does the child think of most other people?
 - Do you think they mean their behaviour or their appearance? Why?
 - Why does the child try to look "nice and fine"?
 - What does this tell us about the child's self-image?
 - What does the narrator worry about when they meet new people?
- Stanza 6
 - Does the narrator think friends are important?
 - What do they want their friends to think of them?
 - What animal is the child pretending to be?
 - What do you think they mean by "change my skin"? What might they be talking about?
 - Do you ever try to change yourself to fit in?
 - Is it a good idea to change to fit in, or not?
 - Why does the child sometimes feel like they are wearing a mask?
 - What do we learn about the narrator's self-image in this stanza?
- Stanza 7
 - What do we learn about the child's likes and dislikes?
 - What animal does this relate to?
 - Why does the child want to climb up in the tree?
 - What does this tell us about the child's self-image?
- Stanza 8
 - Describe the narrator.
 - Which animal are they comparing themselves to?
 - What is this animal like?
 - What do they hope the reader will do?
 - What does this tell us about the child's self-image?

Post-reading

- What different images of the narrator did we see?
- What is important to them?
- What scares them?
- Can you be brave even when you are scared of something?
- How is the narrator brave even though they are scared?
- Does the narrator want to make friends?
- What would you hope others would do if you were shy or timid?
- Can you come up with some advice for the narrator?

Pre-reading activities

Our self-image is the mental picture that we have of ourselves, our identity. It is a way of seeing ourselves that is made up of many different parts. It is influenced by family, friends, our strengths and weaknesses, and many other things. Self-images are contradictory and sometimes they are not even true!

Can you do a mind map of your self-image?



Self-image is complicated because we all have many different self-images all at once. For example, you are one thing as a student, another as a friend and still another at home.

Can you describe how you are different in two situations or roles?

Self-images can also be contradictory. That is why at school you might be quiet and shy, and at home or with friends you might be very talkative.

What are some contradictory things about your self-image?

Activities

Literal	96. Complete this table using the information in the poem.			
	Stanza	Animal that the narrator pretends to be	Why the narrator feels like this animal	What this tells us about the narrator
	1	A tawny frogmouth	Because they hide by pretending no one can see them	They feel nervous and want to hide
	2			
	3			
	4			
	5			
	6			
	7			
Inferential	8			
	97. What did you think or feel about the narrator and why?			
	<hr/>			
	<hr/>			
Evaluative/Applied	98. The narrator in this poem used lots of different animals to tell us about their self-image. Can you write two short passages each using a different animal to explain part of your self-image?			
	<p>Here is an example:</p> <p>Sometimes I pretend I am a hawk circling high up in the sky, away from everything. This is because sometimes I want to stay on the outside of everything and just watch what is happening around me without getting involved.</p>			

