Assessments on six tasks are reported in this chapter. Four of the tasks involved prepared readings of fully scripted plays or poems. Because the students had time to practise these tasks before performing, we have categorised them as speaking tasks (albeit with a substantial reading aspect). The fifth task examined students’ engagement with reading by asking for information about a favourite book, while the sixth task explored students’ understanding of similes in three poems.

The play reading tasks used the same procedures and marking criteria for year 4 and year 8 students, but the plays were different. Three of the four remaining tasks were identical for year 4 and year 8 students, and the last was almost identical (it involved one less question for year 4 students).

The play reading tasks are trend tasks (fully described with data for both 1996 and 2000) and the poetry reading tasks are link tasks (to be used again in 2004, so only partially described here). The other two tasks are released tasks, used for the first time in 2000 and fully described here.

The performances of year 4 and year 8 students in 2000 were compared on 15 components of the four tasks attempted by both year levels. On average, 15 percent more year 8 than year 4 students succeeded on these components, with similar gains on all four tasks. These findings contrast with our findings in 1996, where results in tasks requiring oral presentation and dramatisation of written material showed little difference between year 4 and year 8 students.

Trends in performance between 1996 and 2000 could be examined on the two play reading tasks, each of which used the same five marking components. Averaged across these components, 12 percent more year 4 students succeeded on the components in 2000 than in 1996, and the corresponding gain for year 8 students was 5 percent. This is consistent with the pattern of gains reported in Chapters 3 and 4 — large for year 4 students and small for year 8 students.
Three Woolly Lambs

Approach: Team
Focus: Preparing and presenting a fully scripted play reading.
Resources: 5 copies of the play.

Questions/instructions:
In this activity your team is going to read a play. Try to enjoy doing the play, and to make it sound as interesting and realistic as you can. You don’t have to dress up, and you don’t have to do any acting unless you want to.

Before you get ready for the play, I will tell you what it is about. The play is called “Three Woolly Lambs”. There are 4 characters in the play. They are called Little Woolly Lamb, Middle Woolly Lamb, Big Woolly Lamb, and Taniwha. In this play the terrifying Taniwha wants to eat the woolly lambs. But they cleverly stop the Taniwha.

Before you do the play, I want you to practise reading it through together one time. After that you can talk about how you are going to make it really good. It is important to think of ways to use your voices to make the play realistic and interesting.

After you’ve practised it, you will do it again for a special recording on the video. To get started, I will tell each of you the part you will play. After you’ve practised it once, you can change who does the parts if you want to.

Here are the copies of the play.

Tell each child the part they will play, ensuring that less confident readers are given shorter parts to read. Taniwha is the longest part, the middle woolly lamb the next longest, and the big woolly lamb and little woolly lamb are of similar lengths.

The Three Clever Woolly Lambs

CAST: Little Woolly Lamb
Middle Woolly Lamb
Big Woolly Lamb
Taniwha

Little: Look at the yummy green grass on that hill over there. Yes, I would like to eat some of that grass.
Big: Yes it does look good. Off we go. (Softly) Clip, Clop, Clip, Clop.

Taniwha: Who’s that clip-clopping on my bridge?
Little: It’s me, Little Woolly Lamb. I’m going up to the top of the hill to eat the yummy green grass.
Middle: Oh, no you’re not! I’m going to gobble you up.

Little: Oh please don’t gobble me up. Middle Woolly Lamb is bigger than me. Why don’t you wait for Middle Woolly Lamb?

Taniwha: Well be quick.
Middle: No you’re not. You’re not going anywhere! I’m going to gobble you up.

Big: No, Middle. No you’re not. We’ll push you back where you belong.

Taniwha: Aaaaaahhhhh!

Big: That takes care of that nasty old Taniwha. Thank you Middle Woolly Lamb. Thank you Big Woolly Lamb. Now lets eat some of that yummy green grass.

Fluency within individual speeches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Strong 2000</th>
<th>Moderate 2000</th>
<th>Weak 2000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 4</td>
<td>48 (51)</td>
<td>45 (53)</td>
<td>6 (3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Expressiveness — capturing the feel of the part

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Strong 2000</th>
<th>Moderate 2000</th>
<th>Weak 2000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 4</td>
<td>44 (51)</td>
<td>41 (52)</td>
<td>15 (17)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Timing & continuity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Strong 2000</th>
<th>Moderate 2000</th>
<th>Weak 2000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 4</td>
<td>72 (61)</td>
<td>22 (33)</td>
<td>6 (6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Accuracy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Strong 2000</th>
<th>Moderate 2000</th>
<th>Weak 2000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 4</td>
<td>66 (48)</td>
<td>29 (47)</td>
<td>5 (5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Speech clarity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Strong 2000</th>
<th>Moderate 2000</th>
<th>Weak 2000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 4</td>
<td>72 (75)</td>
<td>25 (25)</td>
<td>3 (0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total score: 9–10

Commentary:

Two thirds or more of the students achieved high levels of speech clarity, reading accuracy and continuity, but slightly less than half presented their parts fluently and expressively. On average, about 10 percent more students scored highly on each attribute in 2000 than in 1996, with 18 percent more achieving a total score of 9 or 10. This task used the same procedures and criteria as the year 8 task Dial 111 (opposite).
In this activity your team is going to read a play. Try to enjoy doing the play, and to make it sound as interesting and realistic as you can. You don’t have to dress up, and you don’t have to do any acting unless you want to. Before you get ready for the play, I will tell you what it is about. The play is called “Dial 111”. There are 4 characters: Mr Pannick, a telephone operator, an ambulance driver, and a nurse. In the play, Mr Pannick rings the operator to ask for an ambulance because something has happened to his wife. But it takes a long time to get all the important information from Mr Pannick, and everyone gets confused. Before you do the play, I want you to practise reading it through together one time. After that you can talk about how you are going to make it really good. It is important to think of ways to use your voices to make the play realistic and interesting. After you’ve practised it, you will do it again for a special recording on the video.

To get started, I will tell each of you the part you will play. After you’ve practised it once, you can change who does the parts if you want to. Here are the copies of the play.

Tell each child the part they will play, ensuring that less confident readers are given shorter parts to read. Mr Pannick is the longest part, the operator the next longest, and the ambulance driver and nurse are of similar lengths.

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**Chapter 5: Oral Responses to Written Material**

**Trend task**

**Approach:** Team

**Focus:** Preparing and presenting a fully scripted play reading

**Resources:** 5 copies of the play.

**Questions/instructions:**

In this activity your team is going to read a play. Try to enjoy doing the play, and to make it sound as interesting and realistic as you can. You don’t have to dress up, and you don’t have to do any acting before you want to.

Before you get ready for the play, I will tell you what it is about. The play is called “Dial 111”. There are 4 characters: Mr Pannick, a telephone operator, an ambulance driver, and a nurse. In the play, Mr Pannick rings the operator to ask for an ambulance because something has happened to his wife. But it takes a long time to get all the important information from Mr Pannick, and everyone gets confused. Before you do the play, I want you to practise reading it through together one time. After that you can talk about how you are going to make it really good. It is important to think of ways to use your voices to make the play realistic and interesting. After you’ve practised it, you will do it again for a special recording on the video.

To get started, I will tell each of you the part you will play. After you’ve practised it once, you can change who does the parts if you want to. Here are the copies of the play.

Tell each child the part they will play, ensuring that less confident readers are given shorter parts to read. Mr Pannick is the longest part, the operator the next longest, and the ambulance driver and nurse are of similar lengths.
Favourite Book

Approach: One to one  
Focus: Enjoyment of reading.  
Resources: Sheet of photographs.

Questions/instructions:

1. Can you remember the name or title of the book?  
   Prompt: What was the title?  
   specifies title clearly 83 84  
   identifies series — no specific title 10 7  
   unclear/unsure of title 4 5  
   no response 3 4

2. Do you remember who wrote it?  
   Prompt: Who wrote it?  
   named fully 27 52  
   surname only 1 2  
   unclear/ unsure 4 25  
   no response 68 21

3. Now think about the book and what made it really good for you to read. Explain to me why you enjoyed the book.

   What made it good  
   genre/type 20 43  
   topic/content 64 77  
   pictures 17 6  
   characters 36 40  
   reading level 10 11  
   learned a lot from it 7 8  
   writing style 23 30

4. Did someone give you the book to read, or did you find it on your own?  
   Prompt: Where did you get the book from?  
   home 11 10  
   friend 4 7  
   school library 32 36  
   classroom 17 9  
   community library 6 8  
   gift 19 15  
   school book club 1 1  
   personal purchase 5 8  
   Duffy’s Books 4 3  
   don’t read at all 1 3

Commentary:

This task gives an interesting picture of students’ use of and response to books. Students are not very conscious of authors, particularly at year 4 level. They say they choose books mainly because of the topic/content, but also because of the characters, genre and writing style. By far the most important source is the school library, suggesting the importance of students having access to quality school library resources.
Chapter 5: Oral Responses to Written Material

Approach: One to one

Focus: Understanding metaphors in poetry.

Resources: Three short poems.

Questions/instructions:

In this activity we will be reading parts of poems that have words with special meanings. Words in poems sometimes mean something different from what they actually say. I’ll read some short pieces of poetry with interesting uses of words. Here is the first piece of poetry.

Show Poem 1 and read to the student.

Guard Dog

The guard dog howled.
The young man scowled.
He had a face like thunder.

Anonymous

Then point to words “a face like thunder”

1. What does “a face like thunder” mean?
2. What does it make you think of?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>highly appropriate, rich response</th>
<th>y4</th>
<th>y8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>relevant, reasonably full response</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>relevant but quite limited response</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>any other response</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Show Poem 2 and read to the student. YEAR 8 ONLY

Some Days

Some days this school
is a huge concrete sandwich
squeezing me out like jam.

David Harmer

Then point to the words “a huge concrete sandwich squeezing me out like jam”

3. What does “a huge concrete sandwich squeezing me out like jam” mean?
4. What does it make you think of?

| highly appropriate, rich response | -  | 3  |
| relevant, reasonably full response | -  | 23 |
| relevant but quite limited response | -  | 44 |
| any other response | -  | 30 |

Show Poem 3 and read to the student.

My Cat

My cat
becomes a tiger.
His eyes are
wide and bright.
He shimmers
in the shadows,
then melts
into the night.

Alan Bagnall

Then point to the words “then melts into the night”

5. What does “then melts into the night” mean?
6. What does it make you think of?

| highly appropriate, rich response | 2  | 4  |
| relevant, reasonably full response | 12 | 25 |
| relevant but quite limited response | 45 | 50 |
| any other response | 41 | 21 |

Commentary:

Year 4 students attempted poems 1 and 3 only. A substantial number of students explained the literal meaning but could not link this to keywords like “thunder” and “melt”. This meant that they could not enjoy the figurative richness of the simile. Ten to 15 percent more year 8 than year 4 students scored in the top two categories.
### Link tasks 6–7

#### LINK TASK 6

**Approach:** Team  
**Level:** Year 4 and year 8  
**Focus:** Reading poetry aloud.  
**Resources:** 4 poetry booklets and instructions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total score</th>
<th>% responses y4</th>
<th>y8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9–10</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7–8</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5–6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3–4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0–2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Commentary:** About 15 percent more year 8 than year 4 students scored 9 or above.

#### LINK TASK 7

**Approach:** Team  
**Level:** Year 4 and year 8  
**Focus:** Group performance.  
**Resources:** Chart, 4 copies of individual materials.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total score</th>
<th>% responses y4</th>
<th>y8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7–8</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5–6</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3–4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0–2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Commentary:** About 20 percent more year 8 than year 4 students scored 9 or above.