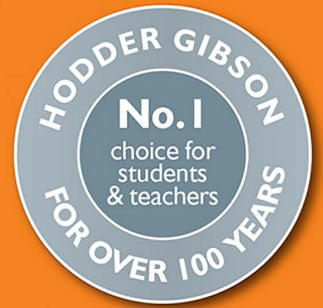


**BGE S1-S3**



# English



**Second and  
Third Levels**

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# 3 Critical reading and writing

**Critical reading** means reading something very carefully. When we read critically, we think about **what** writers write and about **how** they write. We think about the language that the writer uses.

**Critical writing** means how we write about the **texts** that we have read and studied. In English lessons, we usually do this by writing an essay about what we have learned from studying a text.

In this chapter, you will learn about **critical reading** by studying a short story in a lot of detail. You will learn about **critical writing** by learning how to write an essay about that story, with plenty of support. You will then have the chance to show what you have learned by writing another essay, this time with a little less support.



## ► Short story: 'Smelly Feat'

You're going to read a story by an Australian writer called Paul Jennings. He is well known for writing funny stories.

'Smelly Feat' is a story about a young boy called Berin who has to find a way to stand up to bullies when they threaten a creature that he cares about.

### Active learning

#### Building

Berin has to come up with a plan to stand up to a group of bullies from his school. You may have heard people offer all sorts of advice about how to deal with bullies. The sensible option is to ask an adult you trust to help. But what if that isn't an option?

Here are some situations to think about:

- You overhear someone saying nasty things about you.
- Someone blames you for something you didn't do.
- A few of your friends start making fun of someone for no good reason.

Your teacher will give you a few minutes to think of the most imaginative (but safe!) way to stand up for yourself in a situation where you might feel a bit helpless.

Your teacher will ask you to share these ideas with the class.

#### Strengthening

You may now be given some time to write a paragraph explaining the clever way that you would stand up for yourself. Try to include plenty of detail and description, as you learned about in Chapter 2, on writing.

### 3 Critical reading and writing

You are going to start your work on this story by reading it together in class. Your teacher might read the whole story to you or they might ask pupils to do some reading.

The story is split into 12 different sections, which should make it easy to talk about afterwards.

The story uses some words or ideas that you might not understand, especially because it is set in Australia. These are explained in footnotes at the bottom of the page. If there are any other words (or ideas) that you don't know, ask your teacher.

The most important thing at this stage is to make sure that you understand what happens in the story.

Here's the story. Read it now with your class.

#### Smelly Feat

1

'No,' screamed Dad. 'Please don't. No, no, no. Have mercy. Please, Berin, don't do it.' He dropped down on his knees and started begging.

'Very funny,' I said as I pulled off one running shoe.

Dad rolled around on the floor. 'I'm dying,' he yelled. 'I can't stand it.' He held his nose and watched me untie the other shoe.

Talk about embarrassing. He was supposed to be a grown-up man. My father. And here he was acting like a little kid in Grade Three. He always carried on like this when I came back from tennis.

My feelings were hurt. 'I can't smell anything,' I said.

'You need a nose job then,' he snorted.

My little sister Libby put her bit in. 'The fox never smells its own,' she said through a crinkled nose.

Talk about mean. I was sick of them picking on me every time I took off my shoes. I shoved my socks into my runners and stomped off to my bedroom. I threw myself down on the bed and looked around the room. Garlic was running around in her cage. I tapped the wire with my toe.

Garlic was my pet mouse. 'At least you like me,' I said.

The little mouse didn't say anything. Not so much as a squeak. In fact something strange happened. Garlic sniffed the air. Then she closed her eyes and fell fast asleep.

I jumped up and tapped the cage. Nothing. Not a movement. At first I thought she was dead but then I noticed her ribs going in and out. She was breathing.



*feat*: to achieve something, usually something very good and quite difficult

*Grade Three*: in Australia, this is the same as Primary 3 in Scotland

*runners*: another word for trainers



I ran across the room to fetch Dad. But just as I reached the door I noticed Garlic sit up and sniff. She was all right. I ran back over to her. She started to totter as if she was drunk. Then she fell over and settled down into a deep sleep. I walked away and waited on the other side of the room. Garlic sat up and scampered around happily.

Something strange was going on. Every time I went near the cage Garlic would fall asleep. When I left she woke up. My mouse was allergic to me.

I looked down at my feet. It couldn't be. Could it? No. They weren't that bad. I put on my slippers and approached the cage. Garlic was happy. I slowly took off one slipper and held a bare foot in front of the wire.

Garlic dropped like a stone. She didn't even have time to wrinkle her nose. I put the slipper back on. Garlic sat up and sniffed happily.

This was crazy. My feet smelt so bad they could put a mouse to sleep. Just like chloroform. I had to face up to it. Even though I couldn't smell a thing, I had the strongest smelling feet in the world.

## 2

I went out into the back yard to look for our cat. She was licking herself in the sun. 'Here, Fluffer,' I said. She looked up as I pushed a bare foot into her face.

Her eyes turned to glass and she fell to the ground. Fast sleep. I put the slipper back on my foot and Fluffer sprang to life. With a loud 'meow', she hurtled off over the fence.

This was crazy. My feet worked on a cat.

A loud noise filled the air. Barking. It was that rotten dog down the street. Its name was Ohda and it barked all night. 'Ruff, ruff, ruff.' On and on and on. Most nights you couldn't get to sleep for it barking.

I smiled to myself. This was my big chance. I left my slippers on the porch and set off down the street. Ohda was a huge dog. An Alsatian. She growled and snapped and tore at the wire gate with her teeth. I was glad she couldn't get out. I approached the gate carefully and held out a foot. Ohda stopped barking and sniffed. Her eyes watered. She held her feet up to her nose and rubbed at it furiously with her paws. Then she rolled over on her back and whimpered.

The poor dog was suffering terribly. It was just like Dad rolling around on the floor and pretending he was dying. Suddenly Ohda yelped and squealed. The huge dog bolted off into the far corner of the yard and sat staring at me as if I was a monster. Ohda was terrified.



*totter*: to walk unsteadily

*chloroform*: a liquid drug that can be used to put people to sleep

*bolted off*: ran away very quickly

3

I walked home slowly and thoughtfully. My feet could put a mouse to sleep. And a cat. But not a dog. They weren't powerful enough for dogs. 'Dogs must be too big,' I said to myself.

Dad sat on the sofa watching the TV. As soon as I entered the room he screwed up his nose. 'Oh Berin,' he groaned. 'Those feet are foul. Go and have a shower.'

I couldn't take any more. The world was against me. Dad was picking on me again. Garlic had fallen asleep. Fluffer had collapsed into a coma. Ohda had been reduced to a whimper. Even the animals didn't like me.

I rushed out of the house and slammed the door. I headed down the street without caring where I was going. Tears pricked behind my eyes. I loved animals. It wasn't fair. I was born with smelly feet. I couldn't help it.

After a bit I found myself at the beach. The tide was in and a little river of sea water cut Turtle Island off from the shore. I felt a little better. Turtle Island. My favourite spot. And in three months' time, in November, my favourite thing was going to happen.

Old Shelly, one of the last of the South Pacific sea turtles, would haul herself up the beach to lay her eggs. If you were lucky and knew where to look you might be there when she arrived. Every year, on the twentieth of November, she came to lay her eggs.

Once there had been hundreds of turtles crawling up the beach every summer. But people caught them for soup. And stole the eggs. Now there were hardly any turtles left. I knew where she would come ashore. But I didn't tell anybody. Not a soul. Old Shelly was two hundred years old. I couldn't stand it if anything happened to her. Or her eggs.

Seagulls swooped down and formed a swarming flock on the sand. I walked towards them. As I went they started to collapse. One after another they fell over and littered the beach like feathery corpses.

Even the seagulls were passing out when they smelt my feet. The smile fell from my face. I had to clean my feet. I strode into the salty water and headed for Turtle Island. The sand swirled between my toes. The water was cold and fresh.

I looked behind me and saw the gulls waking. They flew and squawked, alive and wide awake. Some of them followed me to the other side. They scuttled along the sand and approached me as I left the water. Nothing happened. The gulls didn't fall asleep. The sea had washed away the smell. The animals of the world were safe again.



*coma*: when someone is very deeply unconscious, usually in hospital

*two hundred years old*: this might sound unbelievable, but sea turtles can live much, much longer than humans

*passing out*: to faint or black out

## 4

I looked along the beach and frowned. Footsteps in the sand. They walked off along the shore into the distance. I always felt as if Turtle Island was my own special place. I didn't like anyone else going there. There are some cruel people in the world and the fewer that knew about Old Shelly the better.

I followed the footsteps along for about a kilometre. They finally led into a huge sea cave. I silently made my way inside and edged around the deep pools that sank into the rocky floor. It was a favourite crayfishing spot.

Three kids were lowering a craypot into the water. It was Horse and his gang. They didn't see me at first. 'Empty,' said Horse. 'Not one rotten cray. I bet someone's been here and nicked' em.'

Horse was a real big kid. All the members of his gang were big. Greg Baker was his closest mate. 'Just wait till November the twentieth,' he said. 'Turtle soup.' They all laughed.

'And turtle omelette,' said Horse.

I couldn't believe what I was hearing. They planned to catch Old Shelly. After two hundred years of swimming free in the sea the grand old creature would end up as soup. It wasn't right. My head swam. I jumped out from behind the rock.

'You can't do it,' I screamed. 'There's hardly any turtles left. She might even be the last one.'

They all turned and looked at me. 'A spy,' said Horse.

'Berin Jackson,' said his mate Greg Baker. 'The little turtle lover. What a dag.'

The other kid there was nicknamed Thistle. I didn't notice him edging his way behind me. I was too mad to notice anything.

'You can't hurt that turtle,' I screamed. 'It's protected.'

'Who's going to stop us?' sneered Greg Baker.

'Me,' I yelled. 'I'll tell my Dad.'

They thought about that for a bit. 'We wouldn't hurt the turtle, would we?' sneered Horse.

'Nah,' said the other two.

I knew they were lying. And they knew that I knew they were lying. But there was nothing I could do. You can't dob someone in for something they might do.

'Get him,' yelled Horse.

Thistle grabbed me from behind. The other two held one leg each. They lifted me into the air.

'Let me go, you scumbags,' I shouted. There were tears in my eyes. I tried to blink them back as they swung me higher and higher. I struggled and kicked but they were too strong for me.



*crayfishing*: to catch crayfish in a special trap (crayfish look like mini lobsters)

*craypot*: the special trap that you catch crayfish in

*Turtle soup*: in several parts of the world, this is thought to be a very special and delicious meal. It is controversial because making it involves killing a sea turtle

*dag*: an Australian insult that means something like 'idiot' or 'loser'

*dob someone in*: to tell on someone or report them so that they get into trouble

*scumbag*: The insult 'scumbag' is used widely these days but is particularly popular in Australia. It means that someone is mean and/or cruel

Suddenly they let go. I flew through the air and splashed into the deep water. I sank down, down, down and then spluttered up to the surface. I spat out salt water and headed for the rocky shore. The gang were already leaving. They laughed and shouted smart comments back at me.

#### 5

It was the worst day of my life. Animals fainting at my feet. Tossed into the water by a bunch of bullies. And now, Horse's gang were going to try and catch Old Shelly.

I walked home along the beach, shivering and wet. I thought about that turtle. Two hundred years ago she hatched out on this very beach. Her mother would have laid scores of eggs. When the tide was right the babies would have hatched and struggled towards the water. Seagulls would have pounced and eaten most of them. In the sea, fish would have gobbled others.

Old Shelly might have been the only one to live. And for the last two hundred years she had swum and survived. And now Horse and his rotten gang were going to catch her.

There was nothing I could do. If I told Dad about the gang they would just lie and say I made it up. I knew those kids. They were in my class at school. I had tangled with them before. They were too strong for me. I couldn't handle them on my own.

Or could I?

I suddenly had an idea. Three months. I had three months to get ready before Old Shelly began to lumber ashore and dig a hole for her eggs. Three months should be enough. It might work. It just might work. I might just be able to save the turtle if I used my brains.

And my feet.

#### 6

That night I emptied out my sock drawer. I had six pairs of blue socks. Mum bought them at a sale. I slipped one pair on my feet. Then I put on my running shoes. After that I struggled into my pyjamas. I could just get my feet through the legs without taking off my shoes.

I hopped into bed. But I felt guilty. I pulled back the blankets and looked at the sheets. The runners were making the sheets dirty. I jumped out of bed and crept down to the kitchen. I found two clear plastic bags. Just right. I pulled them over my shoes and fastened them around my ankles with elastic bands. Terrific. I pulled up the covers and fell asleep.

I had a wonderful dream.

In the morning I faced my next problem. The shower. As soon as the coast was clear I nipped into the bathroom and locked the door. I didn't want my sister Libby to see me. She would dob for sure.

The shower was on the wall over the bath. I put in the plug and turned on the shower. When the bath was full I took off my pyjamas and lowered myself in. But I left my feet hanging out over the edge. I couldn't let my running shoes get wet. And I couldn't take them off. Otherwise my plan would fail.



scores of: a 'score' means 20, so 'scores of' means 'lots of'

lumber: to move heavily and with some difficulty



That night before bed I took a pair of clean blue socks out of the cupboard. I went outside and rubbed them in the dirt. Then I threw them in the wash basket. That way Mum would think I had worn the socks that day and she wouldn't get suspicious.

Every morning and every night I did the same thing. I wondered if it would work. I planned to go for three months without taking off my shoes.

It was a diabolical plan. I wouldn't have done it normally. Not for anything. But this was different. I had to save Old Shelly from the gang. And smelly feet were my only weapon.

If my feet could send a cat to sleep after only one day, imagine what they could do after three months. Three months in the same socks and the same shoes. Three months without taking off my running shoes. What an idea. It was magnificent. I smiled to myself. I really hoped it would work.

## 7

Well, it was difficult. You can imagine what Mum would have said if she'd known I was wearing my shoes to bed.

And I had to stop Libby from finding out too.

Every night for three months I went to bed with my runners on. And every night I dirtied a pair of socks outside and put them in the wash. Mum and Dad didn't suspect anything. Although I did have a couple of close calls.

One day Mum said, 'Your socks don't smell like they used to, Berin. You must be washing your feet a lot more.' I just smiled politely and didn't say anything.

I also had problems at school with the Phys. Ed. Teacher. I had to forge a note to get out of football and gym. 'These corns are taking a long time to heal,' he said to me one day. I just smiled and limped off slowly.

Three months passed and I still hadn't taken off my shoes or socks once. I hoped and hoped that my plan would work. I knew that Horse's gang were planning to catch Old Shelly. They sniggered every time I walked past them at school.

Finally the day came. November the twentieth. High tide was at half past four. After school. Old Shelly wouldn't arrive until the top of the tide. And the gang wouldn't be able to do anything while they were in school.

All went well in the morning. But after lunch it was different. I walked into the class and sat down in my seat. The day was hot. Blowflies buzzed in the sticky air. Mr Lovell sat at his desk and wiped his brow. I looked around. There were three empty seats.

Horse and his mates weren't there.

They were wagging school. And I knew where they were. Down the beach. Waiting for Old Shelly.

I went cold all over. What if Old Shelly came in early? What if I was wrong about the tides? Turtle soup. I couldn't bear to think about it.

'Mr Lovell,' I yelled. 'I have to go home. I forgot something. Horse is after Old Shelly.'



*diabolical*: evil or terrible

*corns*: painful areas of thick skin on your foot

*blowflies*: in Scotland, we call these 'bluebottles'

*wagging school*: a phrase that means skiving or skipping school

All the kids looked at me. They thought I was crazy. Mr Lovell frowned. He didn't like anyone calling out without putting up their hand.

'Don't be silly, Berin,' he growled. 'We aren't allowed to let students go home without their parents' permission.'

'But I have to go,' I yelled. 'Old Shelly is...'

Mr Lovell interrupted. He was angry. 'Sit down, boy, and behave yourself.'

'You don't understand...' I began.

'I understand that you'll be waiting outside the principal's office if you don't be quiet,' he said.

I sat down. It was useless. Kids don't have any power. They just have to do what they're told.

Or do they?

8

I looked at my feet. I looked at the running shoes and socks that hadn't been changed for three months. I bent down and undid the laces. Then I pulled off my shoes and socks.

I stepped out into the aisle. In bare feet.

The room grew suddenly silent. The hairs stood up on the back of my neck. I looked at my feet. Long black nails curled out of my putrid toes. Slimy, furry skin was coated with blue sock fuzz. Swollen veins ran like choked rivers under the rancid flesh. The air seemed to ripple and shimmer with an invisible stench.

I sniffed. Nothing. I couldn't smell a thing. But the others could.

The blowflies were the first to go. They fell from the ceiling like rain. They dropped to the floor without so much as a buzz.

Mr Lovell jumped as if a pin had been stuck into him. Then he slumped on his desk. Asleep. A crumpled heap of dreams. The class collapsed together. They just keeled over as if they had breathed a deadly gas.

They were alive. But they slept and snored. Victims of my fetid feet.

I wish I could say that there were smiles on their lips. But there weren't. Their faces were screwed up like sour cabbages.

9

I ran out of the room and across the schoolyard. The caretaker was emptying a rubbish bin into the burner. He dropped the bin and flopped unconscious to the ground as I passed.



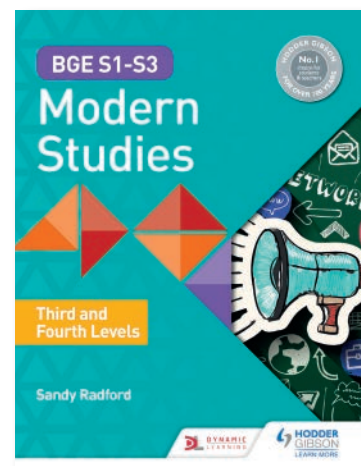
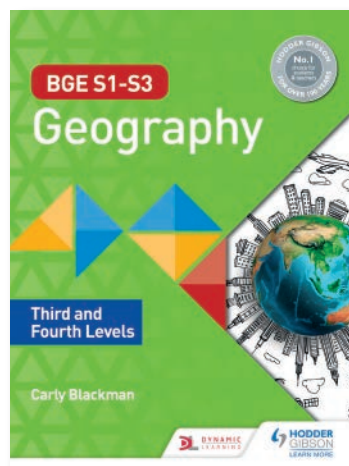
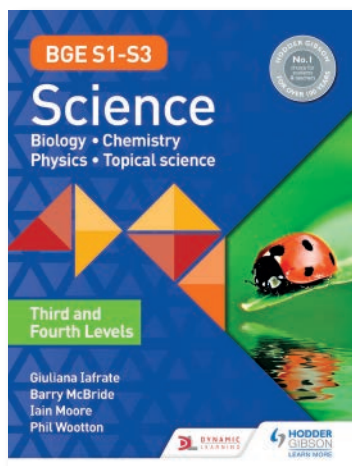
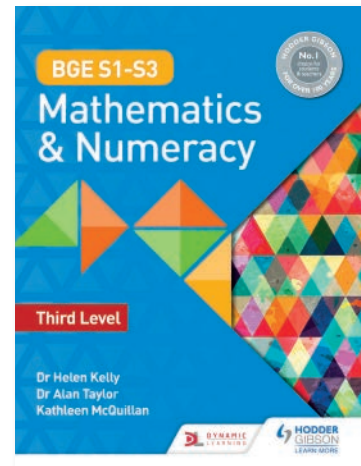
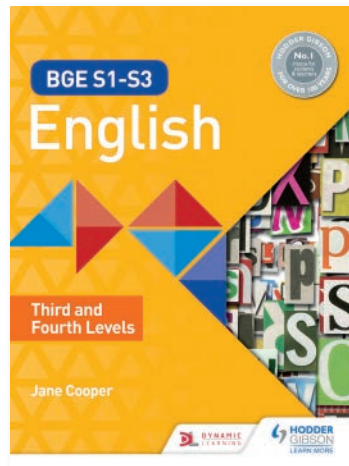
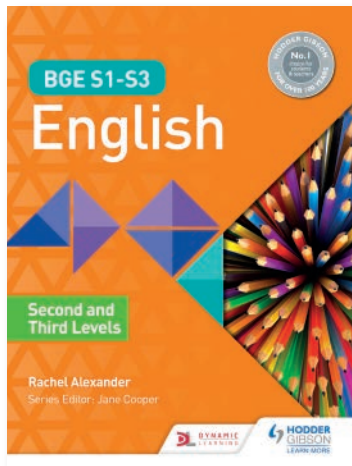
*putrid*: disgusting or rotting

*rancid*: rotten or decaying

*keeled over*: fell over

*fetid*: something rotten, smelly and very, very unpleasant

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