PREVIEW

Below the New Paint

Selected activities and teaching excerpts from the full learning pack

From the original reading texts

Below the New Paint

An original short story for Aspire Learning Resources

[01] In the photograph on the shire noticeboard, the hall was already blue. There were people in the picture too: little white figures leaning over the veranda rail, all apparently in possession of a working car and somewhere dry to put it.

[02] The real hall at Wattle Reach was the colour of a used envelope. I came through the side door on Saturday with two sausage rolls in a paper bag and found Auntie Jan crouched beside a tin of primer. Somebody had left a new brass plaque on the ticket counter, still in its clear wrapper. The date of the reopening was engraved at the bottom. Two weeks to go.

[03] 'You can eat first,' she said. 'I'm waiting for Len to find the spare roller.'

[04] Behind the counter, a brown line crossed the wall at the height of my shoulder. It ran through the old white paint, over a nail head and out the other side of the doorway. Beside it, in pencil, someone had written *Thursday 3.10*. The foil pie trays in the kitchen cupboards had all been cleaned and stacked again. The line was the only thing that made the building look as though anything had happened.

[05] 'Leave a bit of that,' I said.

[06] Jan tore the bag open so it sat flat between us. 'You want to leave it where people buy their raffle tickets?'

[07] 'That's where it is.'

[08] Her sausage roll steamed in the cold. She lifted it and put it down again. 'Your mum will buy raffle tickets here.'

[09] I knew what she meant. Mum's sewing machine had stood on the dining table for a week, waiting for its turn with a man in town who repaired motors. Mum had cleared a space under the window in our new place, where she'd put it if it came back. I'd been at the hall when she first asked if someone could drive her home to get it, hours before the water came up to the hall steps. One of the men at the door had said, 'There are things you can replace,' in the voice people use when they've already decided which things you're grieving.

[10] I had taken a photo of the line that morning, before Jan arrived. In the picture it looked like an underline with nothing written over it.

From the core workbook

Annotated model

Prompt. How does the opening create doubt about the version of events offered by the shire's noticeboard?

> In the opening, the confident picture of a refurbished hall is set against the narrator's doubtful, observant voice. The figures in the shire photograph are 'apparently in possession of a working car and somewhere dry to put it' [01]. The tentative adverb 'apparently' draws attention to how carefully the figures seem posed. Their easy access to transport and dry space suggests the picture belongs to an imagined version of Wattle Reach. The next paragraph's 'colour of a used envelope' brings the reader back to a worn building that still needs work. Putting the two views side by side creates a wry tone and allows the reader to question which realities a polished public image leaves out.

Part of the analysis	Why it earns its place
'confident picture' beside 'doubtful, observant voice'	Identifies a relationship between two choices. The claim is open to evidence.
'apparently'	Examines a real word and explains what its uncertainty does.
'colour of a used envelope'	Brings in a detail from a different paragraph. The worn household object counters the clean shire image.
'a wry tone' and the final claim	Connects the effect on the reader to a larger concern about what public accounts show.

Test the reasoning

Circle the detail in 'a used envelope' that does most of the work in the model. Would 'a new envelope' do the same job? Explain.

From the core workbook

Trace the line

Read [04], [10], [23] and [28]. Record how the brown line is presented in each one. Then explain what changes in its importance as the narrative develops.

Moment	What the reader is shown	Meaning added or changed
The first description [04]		
The photograph [10]		
The first label [23]		
The frame and question [28]		

Try the counterfactual. Imagine the writer began with the framed line and only later described the mark as it originally appeared. What tension would that opening lose? Could the reordered story gain something else?

From the home educator guide

Session 2 · Track a choice across the story

I do · 8 minutes

Write *mark → underline → label → frame and question* on paper. Read [04] and [10]. Say: ‘A stain can tell us where water reached. The image of an underscore with no words gives the same stain an extra possibility. The narrator sees a space for the story people could add. I’ll keep my interpretation provisional because the framing at the end could change it.’

Compare an underline beneath a real word with an isolated line on a scrap of paper. Ask, ‘What does an underline usually do?’ Expect that it emphasises words. This demonstration gives a reluctant reader a concrete image to use.

We do · 15 minutes

Place four scraps representing [04], [10], [23] and [28] in order. Put one phrase from each paragraph on its corresponding scrap. Discuss [23]. Say: ‘Temporarily imagine they keep the first label. Visitors get an accurate statement about height. What do they now have a chance to add when they see the question instead?’

If the student says ‘The frame hides the flood’, point to the visible fragment in [28]. Reply: ‘What can a visitor see? Where does the line seem to go? Both parts matter.’ Avoid telling the student exactly what to infer about the unseen part.

You do · 12 minutes

The student completes the Support explanation with help gradually removed or writes the Core reordered-opening response independently. When a first explanation is vague, ask them to compare two exact words: *reached* and *room*. The former fixes a measurement in time. The latter may name space, welcome and the work of providing both.

Close · 5 minutes

Listen for a claim about change. A suitable check is ‘The first label makes the line evidence of _____. The question makes it a place for _____.’ Prompt with the early and late text references if needed, then ask the student to repeat their thinking unaided.