For the Teacher: Giddy Up

Text features to note and sample activities

Features of a play text	Ask, *What is a play? How is a play text different from a story text?* A play is a text that is spoken aloud by actors on the stage, on television or on radio. • It has a list of characters—the "cast". • It is a narrative told in direct speech. • Each character's turn to speak is indicated by the name before the words. • The characters speak in the present tense. • Direct speech is not enclosed in quotation marks. • It may include stage directions and suggestions for props, costumes and scenery. It may also be divided into acts and/or scenes.
Additional features of this play	**Setting** A movie set in the desert. *What do you know about making movies? What do you like about cowboy movies?* **Characters** Mr Speaks, Movie Director, "directs" the action. The cast consists of familiar characters from the cowboy story—hero, heroine, bandit, sheriff. *How is Mr Speaks different from the other characters?* **Humour** The low budget aspects of the film are emphasised. (See language/vocabulary below.) Also, words/phrases are repeated that stand in for actual action (e.g., gallopy gallopy). This is a humorous subversion of the familiar genre of the cowboy story, as well as a comment on the "unreality" of movie-making. *What is strange about the props in this movie?* **Visual literacy** • Costume denotes character (sheriff's star, bandit's mask, cowboy hat). • The movie **within** the play is shown by the director with megaphone and camera **outside** of the movie action (often in the foreground).
Reading and responding	*Giddy Up* can be used with groups of students at different reading levels. Multi-level shared reading groups provide the opportunity for more confident readers to support their less confident peers. Less confident readers will develop their confidence through repeated readings. By taking on different roles at different times, all students are motivated to read and re-read the text. **Comprehension** Encourage students to use a range of comprehension strategies to respond to the text. Some questions that encourage them to **infer** and **make connections** include: • *What does Mr Speaks want to do? What makes it difficult for him (to make a movie)?* • *How do the actors feel about the movie? Are they angry/amused/patient/impatient?* • *Have you seen any cowboy movies/Westerns that are similar to this one? How are they similar/different?* Students could **identify the main idea** in this play, **summarise** the story or **retell the story** in their own words.
Language/vocabulary exploration and development	**Movie-making vocabulary:** Lights, camera, action! Cut! Let's get this show on the road. **"Cowboy" language:** sure thing, mean critter, mighty nice, yee-haw! **"Action" vocabulary:** gallopy, trot, neigh, jiggle
Focus on sentences, words and letter-sound relationships	• Focus on the phrase "Lights, camera, action!" Discuss its meaning in a movie-making context and how the direction/action that follows is implied. Invite students to add a verb to each noun to make the action explicit (e.g., "Turn on the lights! Roll the camera! Start the action!"). Examine other sentences to review nouns and "action words" (verbs). • Have students make a word list with all the double-letter words in the text, for example: fussing; sheriff; critter; piggy; jiggle; gallopy; payroll; slipping; arrest; handcuffs; rubber. Invite students to add words of their own.
Writing activities	Extend students' reading and understanding of play texts by having them create their own scripts from known texts (readers' theatre) or write their own plays. Some ideas: • *You are making a low budget film about a space invasion.* • *You are auditioning people to play chickens in a chicken film.* • *The* Giddy Up *film crew meet a real bandit on a motorbike.*