



Funny stories about Census Collectors



Overview

In this activity, students are asked to write an amusing narrative, using the Census Collector as the main character, to entertain peers in the classroom. Students are given a couple of examples of short stories derived from Census Collectors' experiences during the 1996 Population and Housing Census. Students will be given time to read their completed short narratives to each other in small groups and/or to the class. The extension activity gives students the opportunity to explore cartoons as an alternative text type for a specific audience.

Key Learning Area(s)

English

Strand

English - Writing
English - Speaking and listening

Suggested Level/Grade

CSF II, Levels 4 and 5
Years 7 and 8

Curriculum Focus

To encourage students to:

- write creatively about a specific topic using a specific text type to convey detailed information and ideas and examine different perspectives on themes and issues related to the Census;
- use familiar ideas and information in their writing, showing control over the way some basic text types are written; and
- consider the influence an intended audience has on the construction of their own writing.

Learning Outcomes*

*These learning outcomes have been developed using national curriculum profiles, the Victorian Curriculum Standards Framework (CSF II) and Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) goals.

The students are able to:

- use writing to develop familiar ideas, events and information;
- adjust writing to take account of aspects of context, purpose and audience;
- produce a spoken text which deals with unfamiliar ideas and information;
- control the linguistic structures and features of a written narrative text;
- when prompted, use a range of strategies for planning, reviewing and proofreading their own writing;
- use a multi-strategy approach to spelling; and
- use a range of strategies to plan, compose, revise and edit texts dealing with some unfamiliar ideas and information.

Indicators

Evident when students are able to:

- construct stories in which ideas, details and events are developed and relevant to the storyline;
- write fictional texts in which ideas, characters, details and events are developed and described;
- write a detailed description of a person, place or object, selecting details that develop an overall image of what is being described;

- prepare and present an oral presentation of their writing;
- experiment with humourous adaptations of standard text types to amuse or entertain readers;
- explore options for influencing readers (use of humour, appealing to emotions);
- use knowledge of audience background to interest and engage that audience, such as in writing for children;
- record information from a variety of sources before writing;
- select vocabulary for precise meaning and explain the effect of vocabulary choices in own writing and text models;
- use commas, exclamation marks and quotation marks correctly to indicate sentence structure;
- plan and draft texts dealing with some unfamiliar ideas and information using a variety of techniques, such as brainstorming, making notes or graphic representations;
- conference for assistance and use resources such as a dictionary, thesaurus or spelling check;
- use word processing and graphic software to compose and revise texts;
- edit texts for clarity of ideas and information and effectiveness of word choice; and
- write legibly and expressively.

Vocabulary

Census
Census Collector

Materials

Worksheets and Resource Sheets included in this document:

- Worksheet 1: Real life encounters by Census Collectors
- Worksheet 2: Census Cartoons

Sequenced Learning Activities

1. Introduce the writing activity and inform students that they will be asked to write an imaginative short story about a Census Collector's experience. Examples of non fiction short stories are provided on Worksheet 1 to provide students with a model for their work. At the conclusion of the writing phase of this activity, students will be asked to share their short stories with the class or within a small group.
2. Conduct a teacher led whole class discussion explaining that Australia's 14th national Census of Population and Housing will be held on 7 August 2001 and explain that:
 - the Census of Population and Housing is the largest statistical collection undertaken by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). Its objective is to measure the number and key characteristics of people in Australia on Census night. This provides a reliable basis to estimate the population of each State, Territory and Local Government area which is used primarily for electoral purposes and the distribution of government funds;
 - over 30,000 people are recruited as Census Collectors, who are primarily responsible for the delivery and collection of Census forms;
 - Census Collectors deliver a form and information booklet to every dwelling in their Collection District (a geographical area which can have between 150 and 350 dwellings to which a Census Collector is assigned prior to Census night. Census Collectors are required to return to each dwelling to collect the form following Census night; and

- it is not an easy task to deliver and collect Census forms, especially in remote areas, but Census Collectors endeavour to include everyone in the Census. This includes people camping in the outback or travelling and people who live in parks or on the street. In rural areas, Census Collectors use any means of transport at their disposal to locate every person who should be included in the Census.

3. Remind the students that Census Collectors deliver Census forms to people in:

- private dwellings;
- non-private dwellings, such as hotels, hospitals, nursing homes and boarding houses; and
- other dwellings such as caravan parks and marinas.

Explain that these are ideal 'locations' for their story writing.

4. Distribute Worksheet 1 'Real Life Encounters by Census Collectors'. Give students time to read over the sample stories. As a whole class activity, discuss the stories and ideas being communicated. Write these on the board for students to copy into a suitable workbook.

Examples of themes include:

- the importance placed on having the Census form delivered and collected;
- that Census Collectors endeavour to include everyone in the Census count regardless of where they live or what they do; and
- that Census Collectors travel far and wide to include everyone in the Census count.

5. Conduct a teacher led whole class discussion explaining the following:

- that the target audience in this situation consists of other students in the classroom;
- the characteristics of the target audience, their interests and knowledge of Census processes;
- how simple stories can be crafted to carry a subtle message;
- that the story should be short but also convey an important message about the Census or the role of the Census Collector; and
- how to engage the attention of an audience by adding a little bit of humour to the story.

Record teacher and student ideas on the board. Ask students to copy the board work into their workbook.

6. Set a suitable writing time, begin the writing task and encourage students to respond creatively to the challenge.

7. At the end of the writing time, allocate some time for students to share their stories with other students in their classroom. Otherwise ask all or select some students to read their stories to the class.

8. Stories could be displayed on a pinboard or notice board in or near the classroom

Extension Activity

Distribute Worksheet 2 'Census Cartoons' and ask students to follow the instructions.



Real life encounters by Census Collectors



The following stories are some of the many amazing, yet true adventures of the 30,000 Census Collectors who distributed and collected Census forms across Australia during the last Census in 1996. Given the lengths that Census Collectors will go to to ensure that every person is located and counted in the Census, it is not surprising that Census Collectors have many interesting tales to tell.

Your task is to write a story of around 250 words, detailing a funny or weird experience an imaginary Census Collector may come across in the 2001 Census of Population and Housing. Be creative!

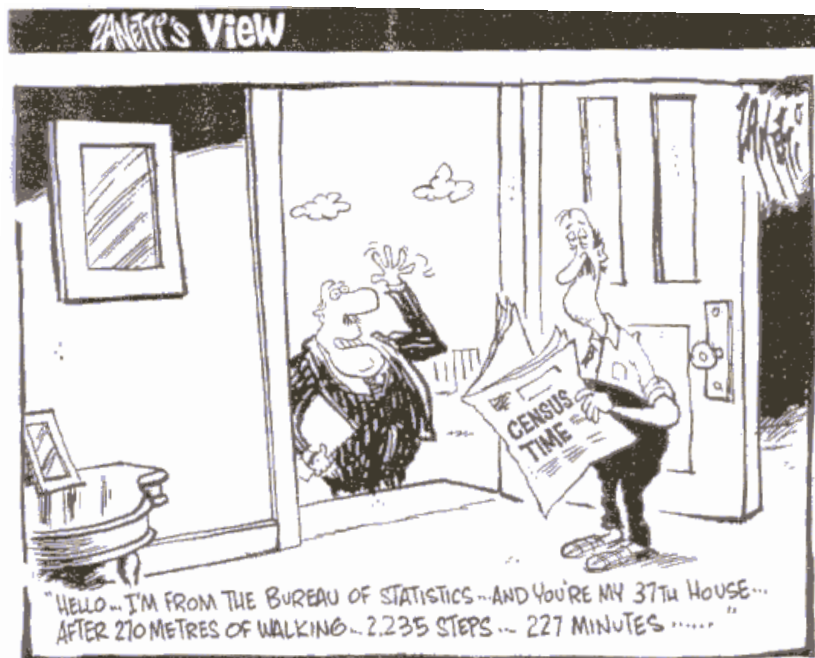
The following are based on real life stories from some of the 1996 Census Collectors:

1. A police car with sirens wailing and lights flashing was seen pursuing a car down the main street of an Adelaide Hills township this week. The Census Collector driving the car dutifully pulled over to the side of the road fearing that she had done something wrong. The police car pulled up behind her and the officer walked up to the drivers window and said, "Sorry I missed you at my home, here is my Census form!" Needless to say, the Census Collector was both relieved and thankful.
2. In South Australia, a Census Collector managed to find an old hermit who lived many kilometres away from everything. The Census Collector had been told about a hermit living somewhere in the region by a local farmer. The Census Collector was eager to find the hermit in order to include him in the Census count. The farmer, quite taken with the Collector's enthusiasm to find the recluse, offered to help. They jumped in the farmer's four-wheel-drive and followed a barely discernible track, through swamps and bogs, through a locked gate (for which the farmer held the only key), until eventually they came to a little humpy made from second hand corrugated iron and drums. The Census Collector smiled upon seeing the hermit come out of the humpy. The hermit also seemed pleased to see his visitors, and was surprised that someone would go so far out of their way to ensure that he was not missed in the count. He said that he was not found during the 1991 Census, however, he was counted in Queensland in 1986. The problem now for the zealous Census Collector was how to retrace his steps to recover the Census form once it had been completed by the hermit after Census night!
3. Having spotted a building in the middle of the bush, a Census Collector parked and vacated her vehicle in order to walk up to the building to confirm whether it was inhabited or not. When she was some distance away from her car, a large, agitated emu appeared and proceeded to chase the now very frightened Census Collector. Fortunately, the Census Collector beat a very hasty retreat, yelling in fear as she glanced over her shoulder at the approaching bird. She fumbled around for her car keys, eventually managed to open the car door and positioned herself safely in her car. When questioned on how large the emu was, she replied that it appeared very large over her shoulder, but perhaps not quite as large when she was safely back in her car. Subsequent investigation revealed the building would not be occupied on Census night, which came as a relief to the Census Collector, who did not have to return to the building, or the emu, to deliver a form.

Census Cartoons

Cartoons are a useful medium for communicating ideas.

1. Write a 200-250 word summary of what you think the cartoonist (Paul Zanetti) is trying to communicate about the Census. Who do you think the audience is? Write about the structure and graphics used in the cartoon.
2. Develop your own cartoon using a similar style to the cartoons below depicting a Census Collector in a comic situation for an adult audience.



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