EXPLORING RECOUNTS—A SAMPLE UNIT

The following unit is an example of one approach to teaching about recounts using an example of an historical recount. It is assumed that teachers would contextualise the study of recounts, select mentor recounts to suit their teaching purposes and adjust the teaching focuses according to the students’ needs.


Video clip: Splash ABC, 2015, Centenary of Mawson’s First Antarctic Expedition <http://splash.abc.net.au/media/-/m/85580/centenary-of-mawson-s-first-antarctic-expedition>. This clip has old black and white film from the expedition plus re-enactments of the journey. It provides background information about the physical environment of Antarctica.

SEQUENCE 1: THE PURPOSE AND STRUCTURE OF HISTORICAL RECOUNTS

» Ask students what they know about Douglas Mawson. Let their prior knowledge inform and guide further introductory activities. Use a shared KWL chart (see Chapter 7, p. 135) to record prior learning and questions.

» After a suitable orientation to the text, read Meet Douglas Mawson to the students—ideally so that they can see the written and visual text. Don’t read or show the timeline. Revisit the KWL chart (to focus on the content) and add what they have learnt from the reading of the text.

» Discuss what the students liked, disliked and noticed about the book. Encourage them to justify their opinions and comments. Draw their attention to the possible intended audience, the relationship of the illustrations to the written text and where and why the text is divided on the pages.

» Ask them to suggest the author’s purpose for writing the text—revise or introduce the recount/retell. Focus on the fact that it is a recount of a specific historical event—a historical recount.

» Seek and build on what the students already know about recounts. Reread the first paragraph of text and ask them to locate the answers to who, what, when, where and why. Use the term ‘orientation’ and discuss its purpose.

» Scan through the remainder of the book to identify the key events—note that text on two pages might be associated with one event. Use the term ‘sequence of events’. Ask them to identify the conclusion to the recount.

» Read the timeline and ask students to locate the time period around which this recount is centred. Compare and contrast different types of recounts. Identify the key differences between this and a personal recount.
SEQUENCE 2: THE LANGUAGE OF RECOUNTS

» Ask the students what Dumbledore needed to know to write this book. Talk about how he might have prepared for writing.

» Students watch a short clip, *Centenary of Mawson’s First Antarctic Expedition*, and take notes of extra information they gained from the oral and visual text. If required, talk about and show how to take notes.

» After watching the clip, discuss the purpose, intended audience, structure and features of the clip. Share and discuss the information the students gathered. They select some of the information and create sentences in the past tense that begin with words/word groups that establish a time or place. Share the sentences focus on tense formation and ways of establishing time and place—words instead of then, first, next etc.

SEQUENCE 3: GRAMMAR AT CLAUSE AND SENTENCE LEVEL

» Review the structure of historical recounts and the language features of verbs in the past tense, and ways of indicating time, place and sequence. Seek and build on the students’ prior knowledge of clauses.

» Draw the students’ attention to the sentence: ‘For over a month Mawson and his team sailed on board the Aurora, through wild storms and pack ice’. Ask them to identify the word that tells what happened (happening/verb), then the words/word group that tell/s who or what did the happening (subject/who or what the sentence is about), then ask them to show the words that tell where (two instances) (circumstance, prepositional phrase, adverbial phrase) and how long (one instance). Talk about form and function of clauses, independent clauses and simple sentences.

» Repeat the process with the sentences beginning ‘Three teams of huskies …’ and ‘With great effort …’.

» The students refer to their notes from the video clip and construct sentences using similar patterns.

SEQUENCE 4: GRAMMAR AT CLAUSE AND SENTENCE LEVEL

» Review student knowledge of clauses and link with the previous teaching focus.

» Use the sentence from the book: ‘When they reached the coast of Antarctica, Mawson named their landing place Commonwealth Bay’. Ask students to identify what happened/the happenings (verbs or verb groups). Locate and talk about the number of clauses (two). Depending on the students’ prior knowledge, talk about the function of independent clauses, main clauses, dependent/subordinate clauses and conjunctions (subordinating and coordinating).

» Work with the students and use other sentences from the text to locate the happenings/verb/verb groups. As appropriate, talk about the function of the clauses within the sentences and how they work to create clear meaning.

» Groups of students use either *Douglas Mawson* or *Ice, Wind, Rock: Douglas Mawson in the Antarctic* (or extracts) and focus on sentences as in the above activities.

ICT: Use digital and online resources to find examples of the teaching focuses.
SEQUENCE 5: WRITING PROCESS

» Review what the students know about recounts and writing and jointly create criteria for an effective historical recount.

» Discuss the preparation required to write historical recounts. Together, select another historical person/event drawn from a specific subject or discipline or integrated inquiry for a jointly constructed text. Brainstorm what students need to find out or know about the subject before writing.

» Form inquiry questions to guide research. Model how to take and organise notes; how to narrow the recount to one major event; and how to draft, review, edit and publish.

ICT: Consider using apps such as Book Creator, Kids Pix or the like to facilitate the writing process.