

STORY 46

words we know

special	because	caused
believe	enough	once
summer	winter	autumn
narrow	willow	borrow
metre	centimetre	kilometre
maze	amaze	amazement
will	willing	unwilling
cent	decent	percent
lighten	brighten	frighten
feast	beast	least
help	helpless	helplessly

STORY 46

new sound

ire as in **fire**

Look through the story.
Find some words with the “ire” sound,
and say them aloud.

special words

Murray grey surface
pause quarters build
seize month heart
litre piece rough

Learn how to say each special word.
See if you can find each one in the story.
Then you are ready to read the story.

FITZROY READERS STORY NUMBER 46

Arthur and the Crayfish



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This is a true story. One summer morning by the Murray River, Arthur the drover was camped with his tent. Three hundred and fifty sheep were grazing in the lane. This was a narrow paddock that ran between the highway and the river.



Arthur's horse slowly chewed her way through the rough grass over the fence which the sheep could not reach.

Arthur was only half awake when he heard a soft rustling.



It seemed to come from across the river. But there was nothing there - only willow trees and another fence. Arthur looked hard, but he could not see very clearly. He was due to retire.

Arthur was curious. Nothing would stop him now. He stepped quietly down to the water and peered across. He spied a crayfish - at least thirty centimetres long!



It was climbing up the bank, but awkwardly. It seemed unnatural. He crouched and tilted his head. He thought he could see better that way.



What a surprise he got! He wanted to call out in his amazement, but he kept silent, although his heart was beating with excitement. There was a large grey water rat, dragging the unwilling crayfish to its doom! The cray was struggling, but the rat had a firm grip on it.



Arthur admired the furry hunter, who must have dived to the bed of the river, seized the cray, and held his breath till he reached the surface.



By now Arthur's mouth was watering. He knew how delicious crays were, and this was one hundred percent fresh. He desperately wanted to steal the rat's prize. He desired that cray.



Arthur knew that water rats could move fast. He did not want to lose the cray. He had to get close and frighten Mr Rat away. “Mr Rat can hold it while I think,” he thought.



“If I yell, then Rat will quit,” mumbled Arthur. “If I don't do something, he'll take his cray down a hole and I'll be left with nothing. If I waded slowly across, and try not to startle Rat...”



Arthur's bony legs slid into the cool moving water. His skinny face was glaring at his prey. He was about three quarters of the way across. Then Rat looked up, froze for a moment, and disappeared into the willows. Rat had left the cray behind! The cray started to crawl back to safety underwater. Fortunately it was a slow mover.

Arthur was up to his neck but was in a hurry now, and splashed the last few metres. He grasped the cray across its back. Its claws groped helplessly in the air. Arthur felt inspired.



“I am a hunter - at the age of sixty-five!” He felt proud. He was in no hurry now, and waded slowly back, careful not to let his prize escape.



Arthur tied the cray to a post, just so it wouldn't creep away. He had to build a fire. Luckily he had a large pot - ten litre size - just right for cooking crays. Arthur couldn't believe his luck. He would be feasting like a king.

He was going to eat the entire beast, but something made him pause and think, "I owe that rat a piece of this crayfish. He probably has a family to feed. And, after all, he caught it first."



He couldn't exactly call Rat to the campfire. Rats were far too shy for that.



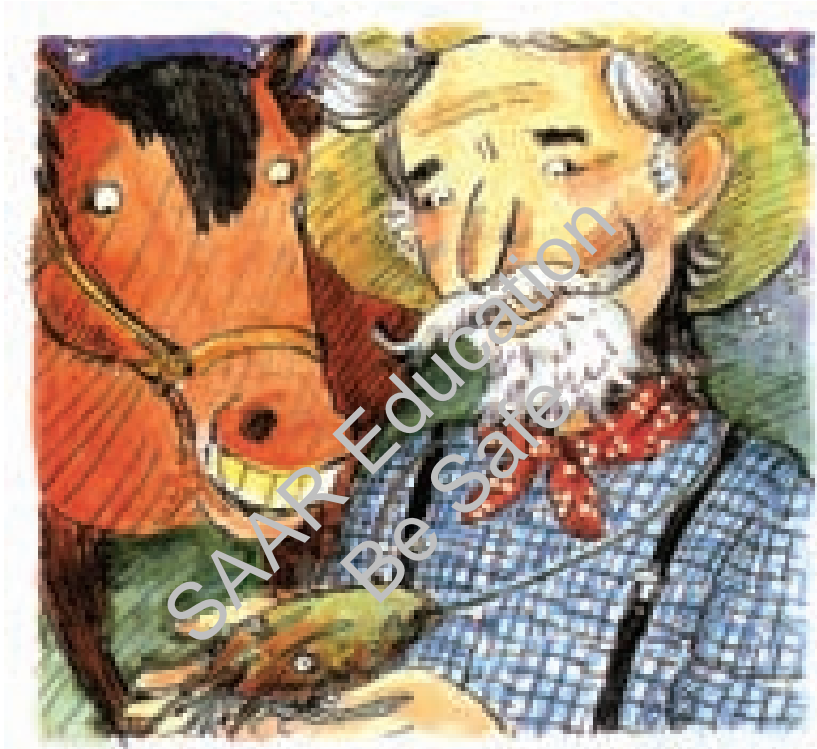
He knew what he would have to do. But he'd let his lunch settle down and have a quiet snooze first. The horse was due for a pair of shoes. Arthur had them in his bag. He knew this job well. It would make him perspire. After that he'd be glad to make the trip to the other bank in the cool water.

Several legs of cray and a bit of back would feed Mr Rat - or was it Mrs Rat? – and family.



When the horse had been shod, Arthur put some pieces of cray into a bag and made his way across the water. Arthur was certain that Rat would find the gift and get his share.

The old man told this story at least fifteen times that month. And just in case they didn't believe him, he kept the cray head on a piece of wire.



Some evenings, when no one was around, he'd even wear it round his neck - his hunter's trophy.

THE END

STORY 46

words we've used

Murray	grey	surface
pause	caused	because
quarters	towards	build
litre	metre	seize
rough	enough	month
always	heart	parents
naturally	piece	believe

some new words

hire	empire	umpire
fired	tired	enquire

STORY 46

teacher's page

teacher, information from this page may be shared with students when you feel they are ready for it

English is an *alphabetic* language. The *symbols* that are written or printed indicate the *sounds* of the word to be spoken. Most of the letters that occur in written English indicate the *basic sounds* of those letters, for example: all the letters of **cat**, **dustbin**, and **expect**, the **s** and the **d** of **said**, and the **f**, **n**, **i**, and **t** of **furniture**.

Most of the letters which do not represent their basic sound belong to special letter patterns or digraphs (what we have called *extra sounds*), each of which represent an English sound, for example: the **ar** of **part**, the **ur** of **turn**, the **ure** of **signature**, and the **tion** of **nation**.

Only a small number of words use letters outside of these guidelines. That is to say, only a few words use letters which do not represent their *basic sound* nor belong to regular *digraphs*, for example, the **o** in **do**, the **e** in **the**, the **f** in **of**, the **a** and **i** in **said** and the **y** in **eye**.

We call these words *special words*. As you can see, some of the most used words in English are special words. These must be learned by rote (“by heart”).