Synopsis
Apollo the Powerful Owl decides to change his diet because it is monotonous and he frightens all the other animals and birds in the forest with his meat-eating habits. No one likes him and he is lonely.

However, when he tried other food, his stomach ‘growled and grumbled and rumbled and rumbled and tumbled’ and he felt sick and weak.

Wilfred the Wise Old Owl shows him the error of his ways and gives him some sensible advice. When Apollo takes this advice, something wonderful happens.

Author Motivation
The author's motivation in writing this book was to stretch the imagination of the readers in a fun way and subtly show the importance of learning – even for pirates!

Author Background Information
Gordon Winch has written many books, which have delighted children around the world for more than 30 years. His picture book, Samantha Seagull’s Sandals, illustrated by Tony Oliver, was first published in 1985 and has never been out of print. Its 25th anniversary edition appeared in 2010. Some of his other favourites are Enoch the Emu, Rodney Thinks of Food, Koala Sees the World and his book of witty and whimsical verse for children, Rhinos, Toucans and Woolly Dogs.

Illustrator Background Information
Stephen Pym is a talented first-time illustrator. His imaginative and original artwork in Apollo the Powerful Owl was short-listed for the Crichton Award, granted to outstanding first-time illustrators.
Educational Applicability

When children read this story, they are both entertained and informed about the unique and endangered creature, the magnificent Powerful Owl. It is Australia’s largest owl and is now a threatened species, in danger of extinction. All of Gordon Winch’s books about animals and birds have an added educational component and Apollo The Powerful Owl is no exception. Children will have their interest aroused by the topic of owls generally and more so by the Powerful Owl itself. The book will easily become a classroom favourite.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

Before and during reading the book:

Show students the book with its spectacular cover. Read the title and talk about owls and ask questions. For instance,

1. What can you tell me about owls?
2. What do they look like?
3. What do they eat?
4. Where do they live?
5. Why don’t you see them very often?
6. Have you ever heard of a Powerful Owl?

Turn the pages, looking briefly at the illustrations. Is Apollo a real owl? I wonder what happens to him. Let’s find out.

Reading the book as a shared experience. Read the book to the children with little interruption, turning the pages so children can see the illustrations. Be dramatic. Bring the story to life. Another technique is to mask the print, while turning the pages and asking the children what might be happening. Then take off the masking, read the story and see how close they were. It is important that children understand the text and realise how the illustrations support and enhance the meaning. Ask questions about the book, at literal and inferential levels. Literal (Reading the lines):

1. What different foods does Apollo try?
2. What happens when he eats them?

Inferential (Reading between the lines):

1. Why are the animals and birds so frightened of Apollo?
2. What happened when Apollo took Wilfred’s advice?

For added fun, let children join in with ‘… his tummy growled and grumbled and rumbled and tumbled’ every time it comes up in the text. Have them ‘act out’ how Apollo looked when he ate the wrong food, how he looked when he took Wilfred’s advice.

To assist in decoding the text, stop at longer words and use phonic skills to read them: cockatoo, kangaroo, possum. Other words can be read in context or as sight words. Do not spend too much time on detail in shared reading as more focus can be later placed on individual children in guided reading groups. The shared reading lesson is for enjoyment, meaning, and realising ‘how the story goes’. Future lessons on the book during guided or independent reading will follow.
**Reading the Book in the Four Roles of the Reader**

When teaching *Apollo the Powerful Owl* use the four roles of the reader as a guide lines for lessons.

1. The code-breaker role, (letter-sound knowledge, sight words, punctuation)
2. The text-participant role (searching for meaning: literal and inferential)
3. The text-user role (how the text can be used by me. For instance, using a recipe, a procedural text)
4. The text-analyst role (where the reader questions the writer’s assumptions or biases)

**ACTIVITIES**

**Language**

1. Begin an owl project. Find pictures, stories and information about owls and the Powerful Owl in particular.
   Use the library and the Internet.
2. Learn an owl poem like this one:

   *The Owl*
   I’d rather like to be an owl
   And live way up above the ground
   And make a hooting sort of sound
   And stay up late at night.

   The only thing to trouble me
   Is that I’d have a mouse for tea.
   I couldn’t eat a mouse, you see
   Or take a single bite.

   - Gordon Winch

3. Have a discussion about endangered species in the world, generally, and in Australia and New Zealand, particularly. What are some endangered animals and birds in your country? Why are they endangered? What can we do about it?

**Design**

Draw pictures of owls and make an ‘owl wall’ in your classroom.

**MARKETING AND SELLING POINTS**

1. Stephen was shortlisted for the Crichton Award for his illustrations in Apollo the Powerful Owl.
2. Gordon Winch was twice a finalist for the Koala Award, best book of the year, as chosen by children and his work has sold successfully overseas.
3. This book educates children on the plight of the magnificent Powerful Owl – Australia’s largest owl – which is a threatened species.