

## Overview

When Abby's teacher plans a class trip to Rotorua, Abby's family has to raise money for the bus fare and to provide Abby with a dressing gown. The way they do this reveals a lot about the family's attitudes and values. In Rotorua, Abby is billeted with a city family and has a great time. When Abby leaves her dressing gown behind by mistake, the actions of the Rotorua family show how differently the families value the mended dressing gown.

The story does not overtly favour one set of values over another. Readers can form their own opinions, which provides an opportunity for exploring different values and the reasons and realities behind the differences.

## Text characteristics from the year 5 reading standard

sentences that vary in length and in structure (for example, sentences that begin in different ways and different kinds of complex sentences with a number of subordinate clauses)

abstract ideas, in greater numbers than in texts at earlier levels, accompanied by concrete examples in the text that help support the students' understanding

The next morning Aunty Noa brought the dressing gown round and laid it on the table. It looked like a faded, flat, pink body. "I can double over the hem to cover that tear," said Abby's mother. "There aren't any buttons," said Abby. "Not to worry. We can find buttons." Aunty Noa pushed her chair back. "How many do we need?" she asked. They counted the buttonholes. "Eight."

The three of them looked for buttons on clothes that were no longer useful. Two red buttons from an old pair of dungarees. One black button from an old shopping bag. Aunty Noa had two different-coloured buttons from dresses she was cutting up into dusters. There was a brown leathery button with a gold stud in the middle that had been in the kitchen drawer ever since Abby could remember. One of Mum's old skirts had two buttons where one would do. But Abby's favourite was a silver button that looked like a coin with a lion pressed into its face.

Mum and Aunty Noa sewed the buttons on, stitched around the hem, and tidied up the pocket. When they were finished, Abby did all the buttons up and looked at the finished dressing gown. The silver one was at the top, shining like a medal.

"They all have a little story to tell, so you won't be homesick," said Aunty Noa.

On the morning of the trip, Abby packed her bag with all the things on the list from school. Lastly, she folded the dressing gown carefully and laid it on top.

a significant amount of vocabulary that is unfamiliar to the students (including academic and content-specific words and phrases), which is generally explained in the text by words or illustrations

figurative and/or ambiguous language that the context helps students to understand

some ideas and information that are conveyed indirectly and require students to infer by drawing on several related pieces of information in the text

# Possible curriculum contexts

## HEALTH AND PE (Healthy Communities and Environments)

LEVEL 2 – Societal attitudes and values: Explore how people's attitudes, values, and actions contribute to healthy physical and social environments.

## ENGLISH (Reading)

LEVEL 3 – Purposes and audiences: Show a developing understanding of how texts are shaped for different purposes and audiences.

## ENGLISH (Writing)

LEVEL 3 – Ideas: Select, form, and express ideas on a range of topics.

## Possible reading purposes

- To explore the value that different people put on possessions
- To find out how families help each other in different ways
- To identify the different values held by the two families in the story.

## Possible writing purposes

- To use the text as a model to write a scene or short story about an incident or event that reflects people's different values or attitudes
- To plan a story about the return visit: Hine visits the farm
- To write notes to prepare for a debate on a relevant social topic, such as the pros and cons of "designer label" versus second-hand clothes
- To describe someone important in their lives and something kind or funny they have done.

See [Instructional focus – Reading](#) for illustrations of some of these reading purposes.

See [Instructional focus – Writing](#) for illustrations of some of these writing purposes.

# Text and language challenges

## VOCABULARY:

- Possible unfamiliar and/or specialist words, including "host school", "billets", "billeted", "donation", "milking", "dressing gown", "patch", "hem", "dungarees", "dusters", "leathery", "homesick", "accountant", "real estate agent", "satin-covered"
- The use of colloquial and technical expressions – "worth it", "double over the hem", "not to worry"
- The use of metaphors – "heart sank", "fit for a princess"
- The use of similes – "like a faded, flat, pink body", "feeling like a princess"
- The use of personification – "They all have a little story to tell"
- Connectives that indicate the passage of time – "after school", "as", "A few weeks later", "The next morning", "On the morning of the trip", "All too soon", "Just over a week later", "After a while".

## Possible supporting strategies

Provide opportunities for students to encounter and practise key words, such as "donation" and "dressing gown", before and after reading.

Some students may need extra support to understand the colloquial or figurative uses of language. Allow time and opportunities before reading for them to encounter any unfamiliar expressions through oral and written language. For example, you could do some group work and discuss word sets – collocations, metaphors, idioms around particular items, such as "the ship sank", "a sinking feeling", "heart sank", "sink the ball", "fit like a glove", "fit for a princess", "not fit for a dog" – within a meaningful context. With students who know other languages, encourage them to think about what words go together and how idiomatic and figurative language work in those languages.

*The English Language Learning Progressions: Introduction*, pages 39–46, has some useful information about learning vocabulary.

## SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED:

- The cultural context of the story, in two different New Zealand settings (rural and urban)
- The concept of a class visit to another place, including fund-raising, bus travel, billeting, staying with unknown people
- The different values people place on things such as clothing
- The use of problem solving – to raise money, to fix the dressing gown, to have the dressing gown returned.

## Possible supporting strategies

Before reading, use a group or paired discussion so that students can review what they already know about school trips to other places, staying somewhere overnight, and the preparations needed.

Group sharing of experiences, using photos and student-made trip diaries if they are available, can help build knowledge if necessary.

Support students to connect what they know about different values and attitudes with issues they have discussed, such as rubbish at school, school uniforms versus mufti, or pollution.

## TEXT FEATURES AND STRUCTURE:

- The use of dialogue to convey information about characters' attitudes and values
- The use of descriptive verbs – "rushed", "shouted", "crashed", "crawled", "burst out", "sniffed"
- Quoted text from the newsletter, using italics and quote marks to indicate that Abby or her Mum are reading the words aloud
- Many compound and complex sentences, including some multi-clause sentences, for example, "And the man who was trimming the pine trees behind their place said she could have fifty cents every time she opened and shut the gate for his truck."
- Many relative clauses, often to identify people and things, for example, "the man who was trimming the trees behind their place".

## Possible supporting strategies

As students start reading, support them to identify the setting in time and place. If necessary, use a story map or similar framework to help students identify and clarify the features of the narrative. Prompt them to use the illustrations as well as the text.

Check the students' understanding of the quoted section of the newsletter. Tell them that it is in italics because it shows the actual words from the newsletter.

Select sections of the text and ask the students to work in groups to identify the details about who, what, and where. Ask the students to point out the phrases that give the information. As appropriate for your students, explain how relative clauses and adverbials (such as prepositional phrases) give details.

# Instructional focus – Reading

## Health and PE

(Healthy Communities and Environments, level 2, societal attitudes and values –

Explore how people's attitudes, values, and actions contribute to healthy physical and social environments.)

### Text excerpts from "Buttons"

### Students (what they might do)

### Teacher (possible deliberate acts of teaching)

"Forty dollars!" said Mum.  
Abby's heart sank. Mum looked out the window for a minute. Abby held her breath and waited.  
"I'm sure we can work something out," said Mum at last.

*The students infer that \$40 is a lot of money for Abby's family from information about how Mum reacted. They make connections between their own knowledge of family life and the context to infer that Mum is considering the importance of the trip for Abby and how they could raise the money.*

**PROMPT** students to help them understand the decision Mum has to make.

- Mum exclaims when she reads the cost. Why is that?
- Why do you think Mum looks out the window?
- It says "Abby's heart sank" and "Abby held her breath". What does this tell you about Abby?
- Mum has a decision to make. What do you think she will do?

"Apparently the school thinks pyjamas aren't enough for the billets," she said. "You've got to have a dressing gown as well."

Abby knew how hard it had been for them to save \$40. There'd be no money left over for a dressing gown.

"Your Aunty Noa says we can have Ata's old dressing gown," said Mum. "It just needs a bit of work, and it'll be fit for a princess."

*Students draw on the context and their own knowledge of expectations to infer that Mum feels a dressing gown is not necessary, and they evaluate Mum's decision to mend an old dressing gown for Abby to take.*

**ASK QUESTIONS** to support the students to make inferences and evaluate characters' responses. Encourage them to provide evidence from the text for their answers. Ask questions to unpack the tone and connotations of "Apparently" and "aren't enough".

- What do you think Mum means when she says "pyjamas aren't enough for the billets"?
- What can we infer about Mum's attitude? Is it just about the money?
- What does she mean by "a bit of work"?
- Turn to a partner and share your thinking about Mum's attitude and the dressing gown Abby will take on her trip.

Lastly, she folded the dressing gown carefully and laid it on top.

*The students use information in the text and their knowledge of how they treat clothes to infer that the dressing gown is now precious to Abby.*

**MODEL** your thinking about what might happen next in the story.

- I can see that Abby really values the old dressing gown because it is the last thing to go into her case and she carefully lays it on top. I wonder if the family in Rotorua will realise how special it is to Abby? Let's read on and find out.

**ASK QUESTIONS** to encourage the students to think deeply about what this means.

- Was the host family being kind or not? Why do you think that?
- What does the author want us to think about the characters and their reasons for their actions? What do you think about them?

"I have sewn some new buttons onto it. It was no trouble at all."

*The students draw on what they understand about different values to infer that the Rotorua family thought they were doing something kind for Abby.*

**DIRECT** the students to share their thinking about the theme of the story in paired or group discussions.

- Should we try to understand values that are different from our own? How could we do that?

*Students who share other languages and cultures might benefit by working in groups to discuss the values shown in the text in their other languages and/or to compare their own values with values in other cultures they know.*


### METACOGNITION

**ASK QUESTIONS** to develop students' awareness of the strategies they have used as they read and responded to the text.

- How did making connections with your own knowledge help you to understand the text?
- When you add information from texts to knowledge you already have and then add your own thinking, you're integrating. What sources of information (apart from this story) and knowledge of your own have you used to help you think about values? Have you changed any of the opinions you had about people's values?

### GIVE FEEDBACK

- I like the way you were able to infer that the dressing gown is precious to Abby. Well done.
- By making connections to your own life and then thinking deeply about how the two different families felt about the dressing gown, you were able to form your own opinion. Well done.

 Reading standard: by the end of year 5

 The Literacy Learning Progressions

 Assessment Resource Banks



# Instructional focus – Writing

English (Level 3, ideas – Select, form, and express ideas on a range of topics.)

## Text excerpts from “Buttons”

“Don’t forget to take a newsletter home,” said Abby’s teacher as everyone rushed for the door after school.

“We’ve got a class trip!” Abby shouted as she crashed through the kitchen door.

“I have sewn some new buttons onto it. It was no trouble at all. We did enjoy your visit. You must come again.”

Abby offered to carry next door’s cream down to the roadside after early milking. It meant she had to get up twenty minutes earlier, but it was worth it for a dollar a time.

## Examples of text characteristics

### DESCRIPTIVE VERBS

*One way of making writing more interesting is to include verbs that describe the action. Some of the descriptive verbs that add to the action in this story are:*

*“rushed”, “shouted”, “crashed”, “crawled”, “burst out”, “sniffed”*

### IMPLICATION

*In order for a reader to infer, a writer needs to imply ideas in their writing. Students need to learn to imply in their writing if this fits in with their purpose.*

### USE OF DETAIL

*By using a series of small details about actions, an author builds up a picture in the reader’s mind. This helps the reader to understand the characters’ actions and how they relate to the overall theme of the story.*

## METACOGNITION

**ASK QUESTIONS** to help the students think more deeply about the strategies they use to convey ideas in their writing.

- How useful was this story as a model for helping you plan and write? For example, did it help you to use descriptive verbs to show how characters behave or think? Did it help you to think about what kinds of details would help your readers understand the important ideas?
- Why did you choose to write about this incident or event? How does it relate to the ideas you wanted to convey about attitudes and values?
- What other choices of audience could you have made? How would this be reflected in your writing?

## Teacher

(possible deliberate acts of teaching)

**MODEL** the use of contrasts in language to convey information about characters.

- When I was reading the opening lines, I got a feeling of Abby as an enthusiastic, excited girl in a hurry. I kept reading and saw how the author showed us that her mother is very different. She takes her time to think before she speaks.

*Discuss how the author’s choice of language can affect what we learn about the characters.*

**EXPLAIN** the difference between explicit and implicit.

- In the letter from the Rotorua family, the author used the sentence “We did enjoy your visit” to say directly that the family enjoyed having Abby to stay. But the author used the sentence “It was no trouble at all” to suggest that the mother thought that Abby would be pleased to have the new buttons. The author didn’t say it directly, but I can work it out from the text.

**EXPLAIN** that details help the reader to understand importance in a story. They show the reader what’s important.

- The author gives us details showing that Abby had to work hard, earning a small amount of money at a time, to raise money for her trip.

**TELL** the students to look for another example of adding detail on page 5.

- The author shows us exactly what the characters did to mend the dressing gown. This helps us to understand the amount of work that was needed and the importance of the characters’ actions.

*If students need more support to understand the effect of adding details, model by rewriting the first three paragraphs on page 5 into one or two short sentences then comparing this with the original. You may also want to offer support with adding prepositional phrases or using relative clauses to add details, for example, details about who, when, where, or what with.*

**GIVE FEEDBACK** to affirm students’ choices of ways to show the important ideas in their stories.

- I can tell that Ginny feels strongly about this. You have used descriptive verbs, such as “argued” and “leapt up”, to show me how she speaks and acts.
- These details about Sharla’s family helped me to understand why wearing a headscarf is important to her.
- The way that you have implied that he is a bully without directly saying it is very effective. By describing what he did (he “snorted”, “pushed”, and “sneered”), you made it very clear to me.

Writing standard: by the end of year 5  
The Literacy Learning Progressions