

BY THE END OF YEAR 7

ILLUSTRATING THE READING STANDARD

“Deer, Oh Deer” (School Journal, Part 4 Number 1, 2010)

Noun frequency level: 12–14

By the end of year 7, students are required to use a range of fiction and non-fiction texts to locate, evaluate, and synthesise information and ideas in order to meet the reading demands of the curriculum, drawing on the knowledge, skills, and attitudes described for the end of year 7 in the Literacy Learning Progressions. The curriculum tasks will also involve the students in generating their own questions as well as answering questions from the teacher.

The students in a year 7 and 8 class are working on a social studies unit exploring the impact that people’s decisions have had, and continue to have, on the New Zealand environment. They are also focusing on the selection and evaluation of relevant information, interpretation of evidence, and identification of bias as they think critically about the text and develop an informed argument for a follow-up writing task.

“Deer, Oh Deer” explores the introduction of wild deer to New Zealand and the impact they have had on the environment over

the last 140 years. The text contains elements of explanation (cause and effect) as well as descriptive detail. The text is supported by a selection of relevant historical advertisements, photographs, and tables.

The teacher chose this text because it has a non-continuous structure and is a mixture of description, explanation, and opinion. Because the information is already presented as a single text, the students can concentrate on locating, selecting, and evaluating relevant information to make their own judgments about the impact of deer on New Zealand’s natural environment. The headings, photos, information boxes, and “for and against” table assist students to navigate the text.

The following example illustrates aspects of the task and text and demonstrates how a student engages with both task and text to meet the reading demands of the curriculum. A number of such examples would be used to inform the overall teacher judgment for this student.

They soon cleared the hills for farming, but they missed their familiar countryside with its birds, trees, and animals.

It was the wealthy few, though, who longed for deer hunting – then considered the sport of gentlemen.

It wasn’t long before “acclimatisation societies” were formed, devoted to introducing into New Zealand animals and plants that would “contribute to the pleasure and profit of the inhabitants”.



Deer hunting is a tourism industry in New Zealand and brings in valuable foreign currency.

The New Zealand Deerstalkers’ Association pushes for “deer management” so that deer hunting can continue and the forest can also regenerate.

The student navigates the text by using the headings. She gathers, evaluates, and synthesises relevant ideas and information from the text, the information boxes, the photos, and the historical advertisements in order to establish that there is a deer problem in New Zealand. When directed to the relevant section on “acclimatisation”, she interprets this concept by drawing on her prior learning in social studies about European migration to New Zealand and the desire of the immigrants to transform the New Zealand environment for their own specific recreational purposes.

With prompting, the student makes connections to her relevant prior knowledge and asks and answers questions in order to think critically about the use of historical advertisements in the text, for example, “When were they made?” “What are they advertising?” “Why were they advertising this?” The student connects the historical information in the first two paragraphs with her evaluation of the advertisements to make inferences about the historical nature and causes of the “deer problem” in New Zealand.

The Deer Debate

All of these Deerstalkers are very passionate about wild deer in this country – both for and against! Write a persuasive paragraph about the answer to the so-called “deer problem”.

For	Against
Deer hunting can be a valuable source of income for the country. It is a sport that has been enjoyed for centuries and has become a popular activity for many people. Deer hunting can also be a valuable source of information about the deer population and their behavior.	Deer hunting is a cruel and inhumane activity. It is a sport that has been enjoyed for centuries and has become a popular activity for many people. Deer hunting can also be a valuable source of information about the deer population and their behavior.
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What would you do?

Glossary

acclimatisation – the process of adjusting to a new environment

deer hunting – hunting wild deer for sport or food

deerstalkers – recreational deer hunters

recreation – an activity that causes a person to enjoy or relax

tourism – the activity of visiting a place for leisure

The student synthesises information across the text to identify other causes of the “deer problem”, such as lack of natural predators and an abundance of safe, edible plants. She asks questions and evaluates the response to the “deer problem” in order to understand that possible solutions can create further problems. With some teacher prompting, the student also asks questions such as “What is the ongoing impact of wild deer in New Zealand?” and “What can be done?” With teacher support, she scans the text to find, read closely, and evaluate relevant information. The student identifies a position she will take in her argument for or against the “deer problem” and identifies other information needed from other texts and websites to supplement her argument.