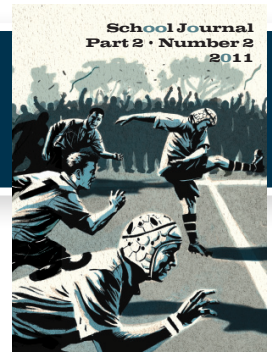


Mrs Wilding's Potatoes

by Bill Nagelkerke

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Noun frequency level: 8.5–9.5
Year 5



Overview

The newest All Black is visiting Liam and Jordan's school – but helping an elderly neighbour (Mrs Wilding) means the boys are running late. They watch the local hero answer questions at assembly and sign autographs, but they miss out on meeting him themselves and grumble about having to return to collect their reward of potatoes from Mrs Wilding. When they arrive, Mrs Wilding has a surprise: the helpful great-nephew digging her potatoes is the famous All Black himself.

This is a straightforward narrative, but some students may need support to understand the colloquial expressions. The extensive use of dialogue provides rich opportunities for writing instruction.

The text offers opportunities for students to build on the key competencies of relating to others and participating and contributing.

Texts related by theme

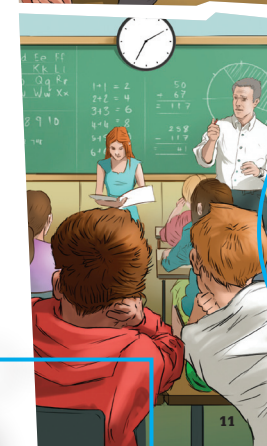
“From Kick-off to Cup” SJ 2.2.11 | “The Real Ritchie McCaw” SJ 2.2.11 | “Get Ready to Roll!” SJ 2.2.11

Text characteristics from the year 5 reading standard

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

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)

After that, it was question time. Jordan and Liam had questions ready, but they weren't picked. Corban took his time answering each one. He even mentioned his favourite book, *Hairy Maclary from Donaldson's Dairy*. “My aunty read it to me when she was babysitting,” he said. It was hard to imagine anyone babysitting big Corban. “At least we'll be able to get his autograph,” said Jordan. But they were out of luck – again. After assembly, Mr Proctor said, “Corban can't stay to sign your jerseys and rugby balls, I'm afraid. He's got a heavy training schedule later this morning and more work to do this afternoon. But we're grateful he could come in for assembly. Let's give him a big round of applause and wish him good luck for his first test match.” Everyone clapped as Corban left the stage with Mr Proctor. “Stink,” said Liam. Jordan agreed. “We'll probably never get this close to an All Black again,” he said. Neither of them was very much interested in schoolwork after that. The day dragged on. They thought it would never end.



They were nearly home when Liam remembered Mrs Wilding had told them to stop by for some new potatoes. Jordan sighed. “What if she wants us to dig up the potatoes first?” “Doesn't look like it,” said Liam. “She's already got help.” Mrs Wilding was in the garden as they had expected. But there was someone else there too, digging the potatoes. “Hi there,” said Mrs Wilding. “I've been keeping my eye out for you boys. I've got those new spuds I promised.” “Thanks, Mrs Wilding,” said Liam. “Thanks for nothing,” Jordan muttered. “My great-nephew came round this afternoon to dig them for me,” Mrs Wilding said. “Corby, meet Liam and Jordan. They're always here when I need them.” The person digging the potatoes turned around. “Any friend of my aunty's a friend of mine,” he said, smiling. It was Corban McIntyre.

Illustrations by Vaughan Flanagan



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

illustrations, photographs, text boxes, diagrams, maps, charts, and graphs that clarify or extend the text and may require some interpretation

Reading standard: by the end of year 5

Possible curriculum contexts

HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

(Relationships with Other People)

LEVEL 3 – Relationships: Identify and compare ways of establishing relationships and managing changing relationships.

ENGLISH (Reading)

LEVEL 3 – Language features: Show a developing understanding of how language features are used for effect within and across texts.

ENGLISH (Writing)

LEVEL 3 – Language features: Use language features appropriately, showing a developing understanding of their effects.

Possible reading purposes

- To find out what happens when an All Black visits his hometown
- To identify and compare the attitudes of two boys who are asked to help a neighbour
- To explore the use of dialogue and colloquial language.

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

Possible writing purposes

- To tell another story about meeting a hero or famous person
- To use language features such as dialogue effectively in a story
- To recount an occasion when they were asked to help a neighbour.

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

Text and language challenges

VOCABULARY:

- Possible unfamiliar words and phrases, including “Occasionally”, “autograph”, “compost”, “groaned”, “muscle”, “massive”, “microphone”, “picked”, “mentioned”, “jerseys”, “training schedule”, “test match”, “spuds”, “muttered”, “great-nephew”
- Colloquial expressions, including “vege”, “lend a hand”, “giving me a hand”, “dumped”, “No sweat”, “rolled his eyes”, “Boy”, “stop by”, “real early”, “the grand tour”, “Man”, “Mrs W.”, “an old boy”, “Put your hands together”, “a big round of applause”, “dragged on”, “keeping my eye out”, “spuds”
- The simile “As wide as goalposts!”
- The metaphors “everyone poured into the hall” and “The day dragged on” and the hyperbole “They thought it would never end.”

Possible supporting strategies

Identify any words or phrases your students will need support with. Students who are not familiar with the All Blacks or with the colloquial language will benefit through exposure in oral language first.

You could use the illustrations to preview the content and to introduce new words and concepts. You may want to start a class vocabulary list (ten to twelve items) for the story.

Guide students in identifying words that are useful for them to record in their vocabulary books and learn. Give them opportunities to choose their own items, too.

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

SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED:

- An understanding of the significance of the All Blacks in New Zealand
- Knowledge of the routines for special visitors in schools
- Knowledge of helping out neighbours
- Knowledge of the features of stories.

Possible supporting strategies

Before beginning the whole book, ask the students (in pairs or small groups) to brainstorm sports that are important to them and/or their communities.

Share experiences of helping out neighbours and others, for example, doing buddy reading at school. Discuss the reasons we do these things and the mutual benefits gained.

TEXT FEATURES AND STRUCTURE:

- A straightforward narrative with a chronological sequence of events
- Dialogue that carries the action forward and conveys information about the characters
- Informal, colloquial language
- Italics for emphasis
- A variety of sentence structures including simple, compound, and complex
- The need to infer meaning
- The theme of helping others (with unexpected benefits).

Possible supporting strategies

Remind students to ask and answer questions of the text as they read so they can uncover meanings that are not explicit. Where necessary, prompt students to make connections with their own experiences to help infer the motivations and feelings of the characters.

After they have read the first two paragraphs, ask the students to identify who, what, and where. Tell them that this is the orientation, which usually comes at the beginning of a narrative. Talk about what else they expect to find in this type of text. Encourage the students to make links to other texts they know (including texts in languages other than English). Create a list of typical features of narratives (in English). Remind students that in narratives (especially in the *School Journal*), there is often a twist or unexpected event as the story is resolved. Talk about how having expectations about a text type helps a reader understand the text. Refer students to the features as appropriate during reading and writing.

Instructional focus – Reading

Health and Physical Education (Relationships with Other People, level 3 – Relationships: Identify and compare ways of establishing relationships and managing changing relationships.)

English (Level 3 – Language features: Show a developing understanding of how language features are used for effect within and across texts.)

Text excerpts from “Mrs Wilding’s Potatoes”

Students (what they might do)

Teacher (possible deliberate acts of teaching)

“There’s two more bags in the garage,” Mrs Wilding said. “Could you get them as well?”

“No sweat,” said Liam.

“Thanks, boys,” said Mrs Wilding.

Jordan rolled his eyes at Liam.

Students *make connections with their own language use and the literal meanings of the words to infer the meaning of “No sweat” and “rolled his eyes”. Using this knowledge, they also infer what each boy felt about helping.*

ASK QUESTIONS to support students to identify the language features.

- Do you use the expression “No sweat”?
- What does it mean to you?
- Why are those words used?
- What does “rolled his eyes” imply about what Jordan is thinking?

Note that students who are new to New Zealand are unlikely to be familiar with colloquial expressions, such as “No sweat”. Body language also differs greatly across cultures, so these students may not know what “rolled his eyes” suggests. These students will need clear explanations as well as opportunities to explore and share their own ideas about the meanings.

Jordan and Liam looked at each other. “It’s all *her* fault,” Jordan said.

“Mrs W. can’t help being old and needing a bit of help now and again,” said Liam.

Students *make connections to earlier parts of the text to understand that “her” refers to Mrs Wilding. They also make connections to parts of the text to infer that Liam is sympathetic to Mrs Wilding’s needs and Jordan seems to be more interested in his own needs.*

PROMPT students to identify clues in the text.

- What have you learned so far about the two boys?
- How has the author shown their different attitudes to helping Mrs Wilding?
- Look back through the text so far to find the clues he has given.

Some students may need support with identifying the clues to the boys’ attitudes and with making connections about them across the text. During or after the first reading, have students label a graphic organiser with the names of the boys, the sections of the text, each boy’s attitude, and the evidence from the text. Model how to fill in the graphic organiser. Have pairs share their ideas, then fill it in as a group, discussing and explaining the language as you do.

“No sweat,” said Liam.

“Thanks, boys,” said Mrs Wilding.

Jordan rolled his eyes at Liam.

“My great-nephew came round this afternoon to dig them for me,” Mrs Wilding said. “Corby, meet Liam and Jordan. They’re always here when I need them.”

The person digging the potatoes turned around. “Any friend of my aunty’s a friend of mine,” he said, smiling.

It was Corban McIntyre.

The students *use their vocabulary knowledge and they make connections with their family knowledge to work out the meaning of “great-nephew”. They integrate information to infer the truth of Mrs Wilding’s words for Liam and the irony for Jordan.*

The students *evaluate the resolution of the problems in relation to their purpose for reading.*

EXPLAIN that authors often show characters’ attitudes through the way they speak and what they say (show not tell).

- How does the use of italics help you to understand Jordan’s attitude?
- What do Liam’s words tell us about his attitude? What does he mean by “can’t help being old”?

ASK QUESTIONS to help students identify the relationships in the story.

- What is Mrs Wilding’s problem?
- What is her relationship with the boys?
- What is her relationship with Corban? How do you know that?
- What does she mean by “They’re always here when I need them”? Is that true for both boys? How do you know that? Is there somewhere in the text that shows that?

GIVE FEEDBACK

- The connection you made with your prior knowledge of someone rolling their eyes really helped you to understand that Jordan was not as keen to help as Liam.
- I noticed how your group read the dialogue aloud to show the way the characters would speak. That’s a good way to check for meaning in dialogue.

METACOGNITION

- Tell me how checking back through the text to confirm or modify your inferences helped your understanding. What parts did you go back to? What did you find?
- How did making connections with things you know about help you understand the story? Did thinking about and telling us about the sports heroes you know of help you to understand how important the visit was to the boys? Why?

Reading standard: by the end of year 5

The Literacy Learning Progressions

Assessment Resource Banks

Instructional focus – Writing

Health and Physical Education (Relationships with Other People, level 3 – Relationships: Identify and compare ways of establishing relationships and managing changing relationships.)

English (Level 3 – Language features: Use language features appropriately, showing a developing understanding of their effects.)

Text excerpts from “Mrs Wilding’s Potatoes”

Examples of text characteristics

Teacher (possible deliberate acts of teaching)

“Hey, boys,” she called out, “would you mind giving me a hand with this bag of compost? It’s a bit too heavy for me.”

“Sure thing,” said Liam. Jordan groaned.

DIALOGUE

Dialogue is an excellent shortcut to giving information about a character and can be more effective than a description. The words used and how they are spoken help the characters come to life.

PROMPT the students to focus on a small section of dialogue to see how it is used to develop the characters.

- What can you tell about Mrs Wilding from what she says and how she says it?
- What can you tell about Liam?
- What do we learn from the sound Jordan makes?
- Now reread your own writing. If you’ve used dialogue, how will it help your readers to understand the characters?

Corban *had* already arrived by the time Liam and Jordan got to school. Mr Proctor was giving him the grand tour.

“I saw him arrive,” said Georgia.

“So did I,” said Mackenzie. “Man, is he big.”

“And he’s got *massive* shoulders,” said Ethan. “As wide as goalposts!”

DIALOGUE

Dialogue can be used to show the relationships between characters. Conventions, such as punctuation and reporting clauses, help the reader to know who is speaking, what they say, and how they say it.

EMPHASIS

Writers use language features to stress important ideas and to show how a character might speak. Italics show that a word should be said with a strong emphasis.

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

- *Simile and hyperbole: “As wide as goalposts!”*
- *Metaphor: “The day dragged on.”*
- *Hyperbole: “They thought it would never end.”*

EXPLAIN that when several lines of dialogue are put together, the writer is showing that the speakers are conversing or talking to each other.

- Readers need to be able to know who is speaking and where they start and stop speaking. That’s why we have speech marks and other punctuation around direct speech. Review your use of dialogue and make sure you’ve punctuated it correctly.
- How will your readers know who is speaking?
- What reporting verbs (such as “said”, “called out”, “muttered”) can you use to let the reader know *how* the words are spoken?

You might want to spend some time on reporting verbs. Identify all of the reporting verbs in the text. Explore the meanings of the verbs and their effects and purposes. Model speaking in a range of ways and ask the students to supply an appropriate reporting verb. Have the students do the same thing in small groups (using cards with the verbs as prompts if appropriate). Give the students a short text with dialogue that only uses “said”. Ask them to work in pairs or small groups to replace some of the instances of “said” with other reporting verbs. Then have the students work on using the verbs in their own writing.

MODEL the way figurative language can convey meaning and mood.

- Ethan says Corban’s shoulders are as wide as goalposts. That’s pretty wide! If he’d said “about 60 centimetres wide”, it may have been more accurate but wouldn’t have conveyed how awesome Ethan thinks Corban’s shoulders are. He’s exaggerating for effect – this is called hyperbole (hy/per/bol/e).
- What’s another way of saying “the day dragged on”? What impact does this metaphor (likening the day to something physically dragging) have?

PROMPT students to make links to other texts with figurative language. Work on co-constructing some figurative language (you could focus only on hyperbole with students who find this challenging). Provide the students with examples of texts that would benefit from adding figurative language. Work through one example, modelling your thinking as you add the figurative language. Where appropriate, provide opportunities for students to talk about figurative language in other languages they know and to compare it with such language in English.

TELL students to review their writing to find places where figurative language would convey the meaning or mood more effectively.

GIVE FEEDBACK

- You’ve fixed the spelling and punctuation. That makes your writing much clearer and unambiguous.
- The words you’ve used helped me see the differences between the characters. I can tell already that Nell is going to have trouble with Karlo’s attitude.

METACOGNITION

- What strategies did you use as you revised your writing? How did your knowledge of language features help you?
- How did using a model (such as a published text) help you to understand and apply language features?
- How did you make decisions about what you wanted your characters to be like? How did you help your readers to see them?

 Writing standard: by the end of year 5

 The Literacy Learning Progressions