

# Writing in social sciences, level 4

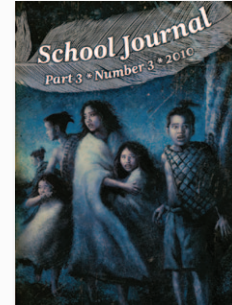
## Writing history

### Overview

This resource gives examples of purposeful curriculum learning within the social sciences context of writing history, but its primary focus is on teaching the writing skills and knowledge that support students' learning in this context.

These materials use texts from the Ministry of Education's instructional series to support the curriculum learning and the writing tasks. The selected texts have themes that relate to the context of writing history.

See Teaching Writing in Years 7 and 8 for ways to improve the effectiveness of your teaching in writing to increase your students' rate of progress.



School Journal  
Part 3 Number 3  
2010



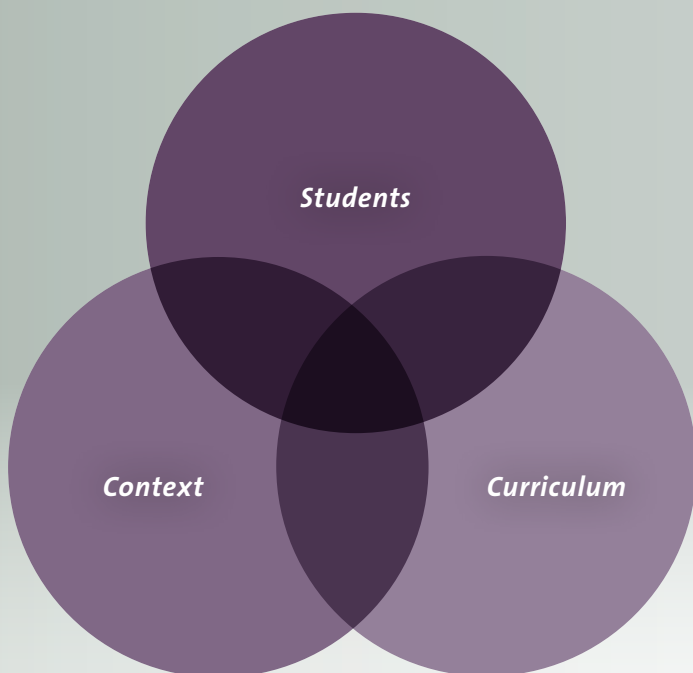
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### Three aspects of planning

When planning, consider:

- the big ideas that underpin the New Zealand Curriculum and the big ideas contained in the social sciences curriculum
- the relevance of the topics and contexts for your students
- the learning strengths and needs of your students.

These three aspects of planning (curriculum, context, and the students' learning strengths and needs – see the diagram below) are integral and reciprocal. They naturally overlap, so learning tasks and activities address all three aspects. The point where the planning starts may vary.



#### Students' literacy strengths and needs

##### Writing

What skills and knowledge do my students bring to the learning?

What support will my students need to:

- think about and record information?
- generate concise and relevant content?
- select and use structures, language features, and vocabulary appropriate to their topic, purpose, and audience?
- select appropriate writing processes for their writing tasks?

##### Context (for inquiry and learning)

##### Writing history

**Big idea:** Those who write or tell stories about real people, places, and events have their own points of view and purposes. The information that is passed on, and the way it is conveyed, can have consequences (both positive and negative) for a culture or a community.

- Written history may reflect the values and perspectives of the writers.
- Our understandings of history can change over time as we become more aware of different ways of seeing the past.
- Writers of history need to be critically aware of their values and perspectives and how these may affect their writing.

##### Curriculum

##### Social sciences

- Social studies: Understand how people pass on and sustain culture and heritage for different reasons and that this has consequences for people.
- Social studies: Understand that events have causes and effects.

## Texts that support the theme of writing history

### **School Journal, Part 4 Number 3, 2010 – “Moriori: A Story of Survival” (article)**

Relevant theme:

- The well-being (and perhaps even the survival) of a race or group of people can often be affected by the way they have been portrayed through written and oral histories.

### **School Journal, Part 3 Number 3, 2010 – “A Short History of Rēkohu” (article)**

Relevant themes:

- History is usually marked by major events. Events can be recorded in a timeline. The selection of events will depend on the writer’s purpose and point of view.

### **School Journal, Part 3 Number 3, 2010 – “Where No Boat Could Live” (article)**

Relevant theme:

- The way writers of history describe people, places, and events that are unfamiliar to them can reflect the values and perspectives of the writer.

### **School Journal, Part 3 Number 3, 2010 – “The Journey” (story)**

Relevant themes:

- Oral history may be passed down for many generations. Eventually, stories may be lost or recorded in writing or other media. Recording a story from the past is one way of sharing history with a wider audience.

## Texts related by theme

### **School Journal, Part 4 Number 3, 2010 – “Three Days at Te Awapātiki” (story)**

### **School Journal, Part 4 Number 3, 2010 – “Surviving Rēkohu” (article)**

## Overview of social sciences concepts

Concepts are embedded in all the social sciences achievement objectives across the four conceptual strands of the New Zealand Curriculum. They are an essential part of teaching and learning in social sciences.

For information on the four conceptual strands see: [http://ssol.tki.org.nz/social\\_studies\\_years\\_1\\_10/teaching\\_and\\_learning/effective\\_teaching\\_in\\_social\\_studies/building\\_conceptual\\_understandings](http://ssol.tki.org.nz/social_studies_years_1_10/teaching_and_learning/effective_teaching_in_social_studies/building_conceptual_understandings)

For further support in planning, teaching, and differentiating students’ writing at years 7 and 8 as they meet the demands of the social sciences curriculum, see: <http://literacyonline.tki.org.nz/Literacy-Online/Student-needs/National-Standards-Reading-and-Writing/Differentiation-between-the-writing-standards/Year-5-and-6>

Texts	Text features and structure	Supporting strategies
<i>School Journal 4.3.10 – “Moriori: A Story of Survival”</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report that includes headings, a brief biography, a map, historical information, personal reflections, and a timeline</li> <li>• Use of visual features, including contemporary and historical photographs, illustrations, a map, captions, and excerpts in large font</li> <li>• The theme of the importance of culture and identity and how they can be damaged and then restored</li> <li>• The use of quotes from original sources</li> <li>• The theme of resilience and survival “against the odds”</li> <li>• Some long, complex noun phrases, for example, “many generations of New Zealand schoolchildren”, “a very popular man”</li> <li>• Many adverbial and prepositional phrases, often adding detail about place or time, for example, “Over the last thirty years”, “from the islands”, “between eight hundred and a thousand years ago”.</li> </ul>	<p>These text features should all be familiar to year 7 and 8 students.</p> <p>Create a graphic organiser that helps students identify the key aspects and/or features of the text that will feed into their writing.</p> <p>Model and support students to analyse more complex sentence structures that they can use to add details and interest to their writing.</p>

Texts	Text features and structure	Supporting strategies
<i>School Journal 3.3.10 – “A Short History of Rēkohu”</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introductory paragraph and maps that establish the context</li> <li>• Timeline that briefly tells the history</li> <li>• Use of present verb forms to tell about past events</li> <li>• Use of ellipses</li> <li>• Summaries of stories from ancient history as well as more recent stories</li> <li>• Some long, complicated noun phrases, for example, “the arrival of the Wheteina people from Hawaiki”</li> <li>• Text boxes showing different kinds of text/information</li> <li>• Passive verb forms, for example, “this is dedicated”, “His visit is followed by”</li> <li>• Indicators of time, sequence, and duration, for example, “already”, “when”, “is followed by”, “Later”.</li> </ul>	<p>These text features should all be familiar to year 7 and 8 students.</p> <p>Discuss the relationships the graphic features have to the text, focusing on how students can use such features to support and clarify their own writing.</p>
<i>School Journal 3.3.10 – “Where No Boat Could Live”</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of sentences that include dashes, parentheses, or ellipses</li> <li>• Some long, complicated sentences with many clauses and/or phrases, for example, “What they needed was a new type of boat that could safely carry people, and their hard-won cargo of food, without the fear of sinking.”</li> <li>• Adverbial clauses, for example, “And even though this new place was vastly”, “Because the cooler climate prevented the Moriori from”</li> <li>• Inversion of adjectives: “Buoyant and seaworthy, the Moriori wash-through waka”.</li> </ul>	<p>Review the use of labelled diagrams to support students as they use them in their own writing.</p> <p>Analyse one or more complex sentences to show students how they are constructed and what effect they have. Support students to develop their ability to use more complex structures in their writing.</p>
<i>School Journal 3.3.10 – “The Journey”</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Third person narrative, “as told to”</li> <li>• True story with links to other articles in this issue</li> <li>• Use of short sentences to build tension</li> <li>• Extensive use of adverbial phrases and clauses</li> <li>• Passive verb forms, for example, “Not a word was said by anyone”, “All this had to be done quickly”, “without any of them being seen by the warriors”</li> <li>• A wide variety of past verb forms</li> <li>• Varied sentence structures that include the use of lists, dashes, and ellipses</li> <li>• The need to infer meaning through the slow unfolding of the story</li> <li>• Background information at the end of the story.</li> </ul>	<p>As students start to use complicated sentences in their writing, provide and analyse models and explain the rules governing their use.</p> <p>Discuss examples of passive verb use in the text and why the passive is used. Students can experiment with changing active verbs to passive verbs to show how the emphasis changes.</p>

### **Instructional Focus: Writing**

Begin by describing for your students the sort of writing they will be doing to support their learning. As a way of creating an authentic learning experience, students could then share these texts with the wider community by using an online publishing solution – for example, a wiki or a Google website.

### **Three learning processes**

The writing tasks described below relate to three learning processes:

1. finding and recording information
2. exploring values and perspectives
3. reflecting and evaluating.

### **1. Finding and recording information**

Support the students to gather relevant information about Rēkohu and the Moriori through reading and responding to texts and other sources. As they read and respond to the information, help them to develop questions related to the points of view of the writers and the impact on the Moriori people of how their history has been told.

### Writing demands

The writing demands when finding and recording information include:

- generating and recording questions
- using key words, phrases, comments, and reflections to record relevant information from a range of texts and sources
- recording exact language, for example, quotations
- evaluating their information for accuracy and bias (intentional or otherwise)
- organising information by using a graphic organiser or short paragraphs to describe their responses and to clarify ideas and information.

### Prompts to support planning

- What do my students already know about the way history is written?
- Am I clear about what I want them to learn?
- Do some students need more support to ask relevant questions, find information, and compare it across texts?
- What recording formats will support them? Are they able to access these independently? If not, what kind of support will I need to provide?
- How well are my students able to make connections between the history of Rēkohu and a current issue, such as the responses to boat people? How can I support them to do this?
- What kinds of words, phrases, clauses, sentences, paragraphs, and texts do my students need to be able to produce? What language do they need support with?

## Task: Students ask questions and comment on information from texts

### Students

Possible responses to the task

Text	My questions and comments
<i>Moriari: A Story of Survival</i>	<i>Why was he taught that Moriari no longer existed? How come the School Journal didn't tell the truth? Why were Moriari treated so badly by almost everyone in the past?</i>
<i>A Short History of Rēkohu</i>	<i>Who told the "traditional stories"? How do we know about the old times on Rēkohu? I wonder how they decided which events to include in the timeline and which to leave out? Kids must have believed what the old School Journal said because it was written for schools.</i>
<i>Where No Boat Could Live</i>	<i>The Moriari boats looked primitive to Europeans, but when they stopped to look at why they were built this way, some people realised they were very practical. Everything depends on how you look at something.</i>
<i>The Journey</i>	<i>I wonder why it's taken so long for this story to be written down and published? I wonder if any of the details changed over time and with different storytellers?</i>
<i>My question is can we know what is the truth when we read and write history?</i>	

### Teacher

Possible deliberate acts of teaching

**Prompt** the students to ask and record questions as they read. For example:

- What did you already know about the Moriari?
- What is your response to learning that people had not been told the truth about the Moriari?
- Why might children have been taught something that was not true?
- Is history always true? What do these stories tell you about how the past is told?
- Why do you think people tell stories differently?

For English language learners, you may need to explore selected sentence structures and vocabulary for asking questions. Some of these students will benefit from sentence starters or cloze sentences that they can complete to create their questions. They may also benefit from making notes and discussing their ideas in their first language.

**Ask questions** to support deeper thinking about the ways historical knowledge can be recorded.

- Why do you think early Europeans wrote so negatively about the Moriari? What has changed since those times?
- Why did the *School Journal* say Moriari were "indolent"?
- What was the impact of those histories on the Moriari?
- What lessons from these articles could you apply to your own writing of history?

**Give feedback** on the students' use of:

- sentence structures and language appropriate for asking questions or making pertinent comments
- appropriate content and language that show an ability to use information to describe something from the past.

## 2. Exploring values and perspectives

The students evaluate information they have gathered about the ways that Moriori history has been written. They reflect on the values and perspectives of the writers and how these may have affected the way history was told. They use writing to clarify the values and perspectives they bring to their writing.

Writing demands	Prompts to support planning
<p>The writing demands when exploring values and perspectives include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>describing and comparing values and perspectives</li> <li>questioning information sources to identify values and perspectives</li> <li>reflecting on their writing to clarify their own values and perspectives.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What authentic writing tasks will help my students explore the roles of values and perspectives in historical writing?</li> <li>What specific writing knowledge and skills, processes and strategies, or language features might I need to teach them?</li> <li>How can I best support my students in these areas?</li> <li>How can I support my students to use writing to clarify their thinking?</li> </ul>

### Task: Students explore bias in examples of historical writing

Students Possible responses to the task	Teacher Possible deliberate acts of teaching
<p><b>Students record observations, questions, and hypotheses.</b></p> <p><i>The comments made by some of the early Europeans in Rēkohu show that they had no respect for the Moriori people. They judged them by their own values and experiences, and these would have been very different from the Moriori. For example, in "Where No Boat Could Live" (SJ 3.3.2010), the way the clerk on board the Chatham described the Moriori fishing rafts shows that he looked down on them. He obviously valued European skills and the things they could make more highly than those of Moriori. But I learned that these rafts were perfectly suited to their purpose. Using words like "rough" and "crudely made" shows that he thought the rafts were primitive and no good. He just disses the rafts and the people who made them. He didn't stop to learn how well they actually work.</i></p> <p><i>The 1916 School Journal article (in SJ 3.3.2010, page 8) used negative language to describe Moriori and implied that they were of no account. The expression "ocean waifs" makes them sound as if they were drifting around like pieces of rubbish. From the Moriori perspective, the Europeans might have been scary and threatening, and that could explain the way they looked and behaved. By comparison, the article "Moriori: A Story of Survival" (SJ 4.3.2010) describes their positive characteristics and the terrible treatment they suffered.</i></p> <p><b>What the writing shows</b></p> <p>The student has identified examples of where the writers reveal their values and perspectives by showing disdain for Moriori. The student provides reasons for this ("judged them by their own values", "implied that they were of no account") and gives examples with comparisons and an evaluation.</p>	<p><b>Prompt</b> the students to recall what they have learnt about values and perspectives. (Refer to <i>Approaches to Social Inquiry</i> in the Building Conceptual Understandings in the Social Sciences series, page 8.)</p> <p><b>Discuss</b> the need to be aware of underlying bias.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When we read and write history, we need to be aware of bias. One way is to ask ourselves questions such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Who is telling this story? Why are they telling it?</li> <li>Whose story is being told? Whose story is NOT being told?</li> <li>Is there a different way of telling this story?</li> </ul> </li> <li>What other questions can we ask ourselves to ensure we're being objective?</li> <li>How do we make sure our sources do not show bias? For example, would using Greenpeace material only to write a history of commercial fishing tell the whole story? What might be left out? Why?</li> </ul> <p><b>Explain</b> the importance of language choices in writing history.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The language we use in writing history can show bias, sometimes unintentionally. For example, describing people as "backward" or "primitive" implies that we are comparing them to some more-desirable norm – or to ourselves. What is implied by these words?</li> </ul> <p>English language learners may need extra support with identifying the tone of the language. These students will benefit from exploring examples and from analysing how tone changes with certain language.</p> <p><b>Prompt</b> the students to identify some of the ways they can check for objectivity when they are writing history.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Look at the adjectives, verbs, and adverbs you use to describe actions, feelings, or responses. Are they objective?</li> </ul> <p>You could use a cline to support students with identifying the tone and connotations. The cline could be a continuum of objectivity along which students place adjectives, verbs, and adverbs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do some of your words imply a value judgment?</li> <li>What strategies can you use to ensure you give a balanced view?</li> </ul> <p><b>Give feedback</b> on the students' use of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>reflection to identify any bias, tone, and sources they've used</li> <li>language and structural features that will achieve their purpose.</li> </ul>

### 3. Reflecting and evaluating

Reflecting and evaluating occur throughout a social inquiry. Students focus on the knowledge they are developing about writing history. They are able to explain their thinking as they evaluate their understandings.

Writing demands	Prompts to support planning
<p>The writing demands when reflecting and evaluating include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• using reliable information and sources</li> <li>• representing other people's ideas and opinions fairly</li> <li>• reflecting on the objectivity of their writing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do students have access to a wide range of information and sources?</li> <li>• How can I help students to write clearly and in a balanced way about people, places, and events?</li> <li>• What supports will allow students to give and respond to feedback?</li> </ul>

#### Task: Students write to reflect on and evaluate what they have learnt about writing history

Students Possible responses to the task	Teacher Possible deliberate acts of teaching
<p><i>Before I read these journal articles, I knew nothing about Moriori or their history. I now realise that this is an example of the way Moriori have been treated: as if they never existed. Some of the articles and stories I've read have shown me how destructive the writers of history can be when they only give their own perspective on a culture they do not know or understand. I've compared this with the way I've grown up with knowledge about Māori history in New Zealand. I know quite a lot about the tikanga, Māori language and culture, and about the old ways. I've learnt about Māori history in school and in other ways, but I've never learnt about Moriori history until now.</i></p> <p><i>These articles and stories have made me think about the way values and perspectives affect what gets told. Now when I review the inquiry I'm working on, I want to go back and check the references I've used. I want to know who is telling the story and if they are reliable. I need to dig deeper and see if there are other facts or stories that could show a different perspective. I'll also look at the language used and check for bias.</i></p> <p><i>I need to make sure I'm telling the whole story, not just my opinions. A lot of the information I found came from one source, so I'll need to find some different sources and check to see who wrote them and whose values they show.</i></p>	<p><b>Ask questions</b> about using sources for writing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How have you checked your sources for reliability?</li> <li>• Whose values and perspectives have you represented in your writing? Are these the only ones to consider? Why do you think that?</li> </ul> <p><b>Prompt</b> the students to transfer this way of thinking into their writing. If necessary, work through an example of student writing. You could use the example in the left column, pointing out structures and features or ask a volunteer to share their work.</p> <p>Prompt the students to review as they research and write a history article or story.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep your purpose in mind: what is the story you want to tell? Why do you want to tell it?</li> <li>• Whose story is it? How can you make sure your writing reflects the “true” or “whole” story and not just your interpretation of it?</li> <li>• Are your original inquiry questions still relevant? Are there any changes you'd like to make?</li> <li>• How will making changes affect your writing?</li> </ul> <p><b>Direct</b> the students to work with partners as they write. Tell them to give and receive focused feedback by using questions. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has the writer used a range of sources?</li> <li>• How did the writer check that the information was reliable?</li> <li>• Whose values and perspectives are represented in the writing?</li> <li>• Is the writing balanced and fair to the people, places, culture, or events described?</li> <li>• Is the language fair? Has the writer avoided language that could be biased or that shows a particular perspective?</li> </ul> <p><b>Give feedback</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You've described how you tracked your information sources. Now you're adding comments beside each one, explaining why you used it. This shows you're really thinking about how to use different sources to get a good balance of perspectives.</li> <li>• When you reflected on what you're learning about writing history, you realised you needed to make some changes to the questions you'd started with in your project. This shows you're not afraid to go back and rework your writing in the light of your new insights. That's what history writers have to do over and over again.</li> </ul>
<p><b>What the writing shows</b></p> <p>The student is able to reflect thoughtfully on the changes in his understandings about the way knowledge is passed down and history is written. He compares his knowledge of Māori history with his lack of knowledge of Moriori to make inferences about the reasons for this disparity.</p> <p>The writer reflects on his new awareness of the need to evaluate source materials and to monitor his own writing for accuracy and balance. He gives examples of specific actions he can take to do this.</p> <p>The student uses a first-person voice with appropriate vocabulary (“realise”, “destructive”, “perspective”, “culture” “reliable”, “bias”, “opinions”) for a reflective piece of writing. He uses a broad range of verb forms correctly to describe his thinking as it changed.</p>	