



Overview

Jean loves eating eggs for breakfast, but one morning, there are no eggs left. This engaging article describes how Jean asks her family about getting their own chickens to ensure a constant supply of eggs. The family discussions about the costs and benefits of keeping chickens bring out financial literacy concepts that will be familiar to many students.

Keeping chickens will appeal to most children, and some may have had some experience of this.

The article allows you to introduce financial literacy concepts in a real and relevant setting.

Students could read the text once with support before returning to explore the financial concepts. The topic lends itself to examining entrepreneurship (selling eggs, profit, loss, and savings) or other examples of saving money by doing or making things.

Texts related by theme "Emily's Hens" SJ 1.2.06

Text characteristics from the year 4 reading standard

some abstract ideas that are clearly supported by concrete examples in the text or easily linked to the students' prior knowledge

a straightforward text structure, such as a structure that follows a recognisable and clear text form

some compound and complex sentences, which may consist of two or three clauses

Counting Chickens

Eighteen eggs a week – that's how many we usually ate. So how many chickens did we need? Most people think a chicken lays one egg a day, but we read that's not always true. We also found out that chickens lay fewer eggs in winter. Our cousins keep chickens on their farm, so we sent them an email to see if they could help us with the figures. They said that over a year they get an average of six eggs a day from thirteen chickens. That's forty-two eggs a week. Too many for us! Mum suggested we start with six chickens, which should give us about twenty eggs a week. Perfect.

Eggs laid on our cousins' farm over a year

Month	Number of Eggs
Jan	200
Feb	180
Mar	170
Apr	140
May	130
Jun	90
Jul	110
Aug	160
Sep	280
Oct	270
Nov	240
Dec	210

So Hera and I did some proper research. We started a list. Mum was right – chickens need all kinds of things: a coop, wheat, pellets, grit, and straw. "Good start," Mum said, checking our list. "Now we need to make some decisions ... like how many chickens to get. Then we can work out how much they'll cost us to look after."
"I want lots of chickens!" I said. I wanted eggs for my breakfast every morning.
"You might want lots," said Dad, "but how many do we need? We'll have to look after all these birds."
So it was back to the maths the next night.

some places where information and ideas are implicit and where students need to make inferences based on information that is easy to find because it is nearby in the text and there is little or no competing information

some words and phrases that are ambiguous or unfamiliar to the students, the meaning of which is supported by the context or clarified by photographs, illustrations, diagrams, and/or written explanations

other visual language features that support the ideas and information, for example, text boxes or maps

Possible curriculum contexts

MATHEMATICS AND STATISTICS (Statistics)

Level 2 – Statistical investigation: Conduct investigations using the statistical enquiry cycle.

SOCIAL SCIENCES (Social Studies)

Level 2: Understand how people make choices to meet their needs and wants.

ENGLISH (Reading)

Level 2 – Purposes and audiences: Show some understanding of how texts are shaped for different purposes and audiences.

ENGLISH (Writing)

Level 2 – Purposes and audiences: Show some understanding of how to shape texts for different purposes and audiences.

Possible reading purposes


- To enjoy reading about a family's decision to keep chickens
- To learn why and how to make decisions involving money
- To gain information about the pros and cons of owning chickens.

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

Possible writing purposes

- To describe another decision-making process for buying a pet or other domestic animal
- To make a simple poster (flow chart) to show how a financial decision can be made
- To write instructions for keeping chickens or other animals.

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

 The New Zealand Curriculum

Text and language challenges

VOCABULARY:

- Possible unfamiliar words or phrases, including “Chooks”, “Scrambled”, “soldiers”, “free-range”, “proper research”, “compromised”, “peck”, “mixed diet”, “recycled”, “doing up”, “skip”, “chicken wire”, “snug”
- Words related to financial literacy: “spending”, “cost”, “decisions”, “figures”, “average”, “prices”, “cheap”, “financial decision”, “choice”, “need”, “want”
- Words related to chickens: “coop”, “wheat”, “pellets”, “grit”, “straw”, “breeds”, “Leghorn”, “Plymouth Rock”, “Sussex”, “Orpington”, “silkie”, “broody”, “layers”
- The double meanings of the words “soldiers” and “layers”.

Possible supporting strategies

Explain that “chooks” is a colloquial term for chickens, used mainly in Australia and New Zealand.

Use strategies to preview the vocabulary, such as having students share stories about keeping chickens and other pets and charting the key vocabulary associated with keeping pets or with financial literacy. Refer to page 16 of *The New Zealand Curriculum* for the importance of specific language associated with learning areas of the curriculum. Use pictures or videos as prompts for pairs to brainstorm vocabulary and then share them with the class. Feed in key vocabulary for the text. Make a word wall or map to record words associated with keeping chickens, adding to it before, during, and after reading.

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

SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED:

- Direct or indirect experience of keeping pets or domestic animals, in particular of keeping chickens
- Knowledge of the possible costs and benefits of keeping chickens or other animals
- Experience of making choices between needs and wants based on costs and benefits
- Experience of family or group decision making, including the need for compromises
- Understanding the principals of financial literacy, including the ways we make financial choices, based on values.

Possible supporting strategies

Provide opportunities for students to share their stories of keeping chickens or other animals. Ask them to focus on the decisions involved in obtaining, setting up, and feeding animals. Some students may have little or no prior knowledge of keeping animals. If necessary, build knowledge by visiting a family that keeps chickens or by showing videos or photos.

Review the students' knowledge of the basic concepts and vocabulary involved in making financial choices, such as “wants”, “needs”, “costs”, “benefits”, and “compromises”.

TEXT FEATURES AND STRUCTURE:

- Report narrated by a young girl
- Use of dialogue
- The use of photos
- Charts and graphs that illustrate information
- The list of important ideas
- Headings that identify the subject of each section
- Use of chronological order
- Use of calculations, decision making, and results
- Language to express hypotheses and possibilities: “Then we'd never run out”, “It might save money too”, “which should give us about twenty eggs a week”, “If they give us . . . , each egg will cost”, “Would there be any vet bills?”

Possible supporting strategies

Support the students to identify the main idea of the article and the way the headings relate to this idea.

Use a flow chart to record the stages of the decision-making process, highlighting the concepts involved at each stage, such as costs and comparisons. (You could record, with the class feeding in, or you could model using a graphic organiser and then have the students fill it in as they read.)

Some students may need support to make connections between the text and their graphic representations.

Select one or two ways to express hypothesis or possibility. Provide students with examples, explanations, and opportunities for scaffolded practice.



Sounds and Words

Instructional focus – Reading

Mathematics and Statistics (Level 2 – Statistical investigation: Conduct investigations using the statistical enquiry cycle.)

Social Sciences (Level 2 – Social Studies: Understand how people make choices to meet their needs and wants.)

Text excerpts from “Backyard Chooks”

“We should get our own chickens,” I grumbled. “Then we’d never run out.”

“That’s a great idea,” said Mum. “It might save money too. We’ll have to do the maths.” I wasn’t exactly sure what she meant – but I was about to find out.

So Hera and I did some proper research. We started a list. Mum was right – chickens need all kinds of things: a coop, wheat, pellets, grit, and straw. “Good start,” she said, checking our list. “Now we need to make some decisions ... like how many chickens to get. Then we can work out how much they’ll cost us to look after.”

“... Think about it: Our costs will be the same, but we won’t get as many eggs.”

In the end, we compromised. We would get ... chicken, and we’d still have about seventeen eggs a week. I also agreed to one more thing: I’d be in charge of feeding the chickens.

Our six chickens would cost about \$4.00 a week for food and straw. If they give us seventeen ... worries. Would there be any vet bills? Could the price of chicken pellets go up? There might be other hidden costs too – things we hadn’t thought of – but at least we had the main things covered.

Students (what they might do)

The students make connections between the text and their knowledge of the costs of food to infer that keeping chickens for eggs could be cheaper than buying eggs. They infer from the text and their knowledge of maths that Mum is thinking of using maths to calculate and compare these costs. They make predictions about the outcome of this.

The students make connections to understand the maths processes and data the girls will use. They infer that the quantities needed will depend on the number of chickens kept. They make connections between the text and their own experiences of life to infer the differences between “needs” and “wants”. They make predictions about how the family will calculate how many chickens they need.

The students make connections between ideas in the text and their experiences to evaluate the compromise. They analyse the gains and losses and, with support, integrate this with information in earlier parts of the text. They infer that making a compromise based on sound reasons (justifications) can help with making a decision.

With support, the students integrate information to understand how the costs were derived. They compare the cost per egg with the amount for bought eggs and infer that having chickens will save money. They make connections to understand Mum’s worries. They evaluate the risks and make judgments about whether the family should get chickens.

Teacher (possible deliberate acts of teaching)

PROMPT the students to discuss their household’s egg consumption.

- Do you use a lot of eggs in your family? What are they used for?
- If you keep chickens, tell us about this. Do you eat their eggs?
- Would your family save money if you had chickens? Why do you think that?

Make a chart headed “Do the maths”. Use it where maths is used to help make financial decisions. Subheadings can include set-up costs, ongoing costs, hidden costs, and benefits.

ASK QUESTIONS about doing the maths.

- Why does Mum say they’ll have to do the maths? What questions will they need to ask? What information could help them?
- What do you predict they will do next?

Some students, especially English language learners, will need support with the language used to describe data. Provide activities to support this. For example, (after giving students vocabulary and matching visual definitions) read sentences describing simple graphs and ask students to draw the graphs in the article, check them with the originals, and record the language for the descriptions.

PROMPT the students to make connections.

- When have you done “proper research”? How does your own experience of doing research help you to understand what Jean and Hera have to do?
- When have you had to make a decision similar to theirs, for example, about how many people to invite to a party or how much snack food to buy for camp? What data helped you?
- How do your own experiences help you understand the kinds of decisions Jean and Hera need to make? What data will they need?

DIRECT the students to discuss the differences between “needs” and “wants”.

ASK QUESTIONS to support the students to understand the concept of compromise or trade-offs.

- What did Jean want? What did Dad want? What did the family need?
- What has Jean gained by agreeing to the compromise? What has she lost?
- What has Dad (and the family) gained and lost?

ASK QUESTIONS to support students (especially English language learners) to understand the meaning of “compromise”. Direct students to the previous text and ask them to identify what Jean wants and what Dad wants. Together, read the following text and ask “Did Jean get what she wanted?” Did Dad get what he wanted? Establish that they both got some of what they wanted (a “compromise”).

ASK QUESTIONS to support the use of a statistical inquiry cycle.

- What were the important questions for Jean and her family?
- How did using data help them?
- How serious are the risks or hidden costs?
- What might have happened if they had not used this process?

GIVE FEEDBACK

- I noticed you looking at the graphs and charts. That is a good strategy to check your understanding.

METACOGNITION

- How did your own knowledge of using data help you understand this text? Show me a place where you were able to make a connection.
- How do you think the author would have written the text if it was meant for adults? Why do you think that?
- There is a lot of information in this text. Did you find any parts hard to follow? What did you do then?

 Reading standard: by the end of year 4

 The Literacy Learning Progressions

 Assessment Resource Banks

Instructional focus – Writing

Mathematics and Statistics (Level 2 – Statistical investigation: Conduct investigations using the statistical inquiry cycle.)

Social Sciences (Level 2 – Social Studies: Understand how people make choices to meet their needs and wants.)

English (Level 2 – Purposes and audiences: Show some understanding of how to shape texts for different purposes and audiences.)

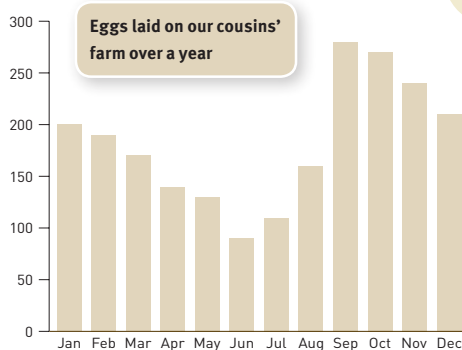
Text excerpts from “Backyard Chooks”

Counting Eggs

We made a start on the maths that night. The first thing we needed to work out was our spending on eggs ...

“It doesn’t quite work like that,” said Mum. “Where are we going to keep the chickens? What are we going to feed them? You need to think of all the costs we might have.”

Over a year, they said they get an average of six eggs a day from thirteen chickens. That’s forty-two eggs a week. Too many for us!



Like dogs, there are different breeds of chicken – another new thing I learnt. There are Leghorn, Plymouth Rock, Sussex, Orpington – and lots more. There’s even a breed called silkie, which is covered in fluffy white feathers. I wanted silkies.

The next morning, snug in the straw, was a small creamy-coloured egg ... from my silkie! It was delicious – but the big question: Was it really a 25-cent egg? I guess it’s too soon to tell.

Examples of text characteristics

POSING QUESTIONS

An inquiry usually starts with one big question and some sub-questions. The questions shape the content of the inquiry and can be used to organise writing.

DISPLAYING DATA

Data can be confusing, so displaying it in a simple format helps readers to understand it.

PUNCTUATION

Comma: *Commas separate ideas, clauses, interrupters, or items in a series.*

Dash: *A dash is a stronger mark of separation than a comma. It can give emphasis or add drama in a sentence.*

Ellipsis: *These three dots represent hesitation or that some words have been left out.*

Colon: *A colon announces a list or an unexpected question or idea. The word after the colon is capitalised if it is a proper noun or the start of a complete sentence.*

Hyphen: *A hyphen can make two words act together like a single adjective.*

Apostrophe: *The apostrophe indicates a contraction (There’s) or possession (Jean’s).*

METACOGNITION

- What was your purpose for writing? How will your audience know this?
- How will the structure you’ve used help you to achieve your purpose?
- Why did you choose to use these particular visual features? How did you create them to suit the needs of your audience?

Teacher (possible deliberate acts of teaching)

ASK QUESTIONS to help the students think about the impact they want to have on their audience.

- What aspect of your topic will interest your audience?
- How will this affect the ideas and details you choose?

MODEL making the purpose of a text clear. Show two or three ways that the purpose of a report or recount is made clear to the audience, for example, through the title, through dialogue, by using questions, by the choice of headings, or by the use of visual features. Using some published texts as examples, show how authors have made the purpose clear.

PROMPT the students to make the purpose of their writing clear.

- How will your readers know what they are going to read about?
- How could one or more key questions early on help you to plan and your readers to understand your purpose?

ASK QUESTIONS to support students’ choices for visual features.

- What data will support your ideas?
- How will you describe the data?
- How will you display the data?

MODEL some simple charts and graphs that students can use according to the kind of data they want to display. See earlier notes about the language for describing data. Provide repeated and scaffolded opportunities for students to read, listen to, write, and speak this language.

MODEL how punctuation can affect meaning and expression. See <http://www.grammarbook.com/> for further information.

If you have noticed that some students require support to use punctuation correctly, provide them with a chart of explanations and work through some examples together.

PROMPT students to edit and proofread their writing for the correct use of punctuation.

- Work with a partner to proofread each other’s writing. Look at every line, focusing on the punctuation.
- Check that the punctuation used is the best for the purpose. For example, would a dash have a bigger impact than a comma?
- Use reference tools such as the Internet if you are not sure which punctuation to use.

GIVE FEEDBACK

- The plan you developed has worked well – the headings let me know what to expect and where to find specific information.
- Using a graph in place of writing all of the details helps make the data accessible. You’ve been able to make your explanation much shorter and simpler too, giving just the main trends.

Writing standard: by the end of year 4
 The Literacy Learning Progressions