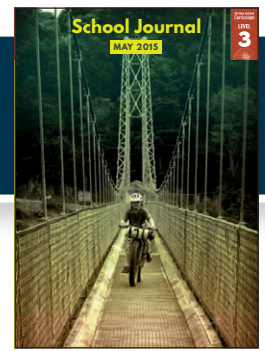


# Boy on a Bike

by Bronwen Wall

School Journal  
Level 3, May 2015  
Year 5



## Overview

“Boy on a Bike” is an article that celebrates the determination, focus, and commitment of a boy who sets himself a huge goal: to ride a bike the length of the North Island. The text will be engaging and enjoyable for most students, and it can be used as a spin-off for a variety of practical research projects. The many graphic features provide strong support and keep up the interest as we learn about Mac’s reasons for the ride, his preparation, and his dad’s support.

This article:

- has an underlying theme of “never underestimate what you can achieve with hard work”
- provides many opportunities for students to ask questions, search for answers, and form opinions
- supports students’ independent or group research as they follow up information and ideas in the text.

Texts related by theme “Cold Pressed” SJ L3 Aug 2013 | “All That Jazz” SJ 3.2.08 | “The Vege Car” SJ 3.1.07

## Text characteristics from the year 5 reading standard

But Mac was only nine years old, and 3,000 kilometres is a long way. Together, Mac and his parents worked out a compromise. Mac would cycle the length of the North Island, a bit less than half that distance, and his dad would cycle with him, following an agreed route. Plus Mac would use the safest bike they could find – a fat bike (see page 10). A fat bike would be sturdy enough to last the trip. Its thick tyres would also mean Mac could travel off-road – across sand, through mud, and over gravel. There was one final condition: Mac had to prove to his parents that he could do this. He would have to train. “And I’m not going to drag you out of bed to go training,” his dad, Craig, warned. “It’s all up to you.”

A map of the North Island of New Zealand showing a route starting from Auckland and going clockwise. Key locations marked include Auckland, Thames, Matamoras, Arapuni, Taumarunui, Bulls, Foxton, Paraparaumu, Whanganui, Pipiriki, Taumarunui, Matamoras, Arapuni, Thames, and Auckland. The route is labeled 'Mac's proposed route'.

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

that distance, and his dad... following an agreed route. Plus Mac would use the safest bike they could find – a fat bike (see page 10). A fat bike would be sturdy enough to last the trip. Its thick tyres would also mean Mac could travel off-road – across sand, through mud, and over gravel. There was one final condition: Mac had to prove to his parents that he could do this. He would have to train. “And I’m not going to drag you out of bed to go training,” his dad, Craig, warned. “It’s all up to you.” But Mac didn’t need to be dragged anywhere. In fact, he says it was the other way round!

A map of the North Island of New Zealand showing a route starting from Auckland and going clockwise. Key locations marked include Auckland, Thames, Matamoras, Arapuni, Taumarunui, Bulls, Foxton, Paraparaumu, Whanganui, Pipiriki, Taumarunui, Matamoras, Arapuni, Thames, and Auckland. The route is labeled 'Mac's proposed route'.

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

A photograph of a person riding a bicycle on a paved road. The cyclist is wearing a blue shirt and dark shorts. The background shows a green landscape with a fence.

### LONG TRAINING DAYS

Mac and his dad trained every weekend. Some days, they cycled up to 80 kilometres. Other days, their ride was shorter. Sometimes, in the holidays, they biked several days in a row. They trained in the rain; they trained in the sun. They trained through the dark of winter, getting up before dawn to make sure they could cover enough kilometres. Slowly, the sun come up,” Mac remembers.

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

and their training rides became even... At the same time, Mac researched his trip. How much would it cost? Where would they stay? What route should they take – and what sights should they look out for along the way? Mac also studied the elevation charts in the guidebook. These showed the height and length of hills and helped him to prepare mentally for what he would face along the way.

An elevation chart with the y-axis labeled 'Elevation (metres above sea level)' ranging from 0 to 1,400 in increments of 200. The x-axis is labeled 'Distance (kilometres)' ranging from 0 to 50 in increments of 10. The chart shows a blue area representing the elevation profile of the route, with a peak of approximately 1,200 metres around the 15 km mark.

### An elevation chart

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

## MATHEMATICS AND STATISTICS

Level 3 – Geometry and Measurement: Position and orientation. Use a co-ordinate system or the language of direction and distance to specify locations and describe paths.

## TECHNOLOGY

Level 3 – Technological Knowledge: Technological products.

## HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Level 3 – Personal Health and Physical Development.

## 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 – Purposes and audiences: Show a developing understanding of how to shape texts for different purposes and audiences.

## Possible reading purposes

- To find out why a boy decided to cycle the length of the North Island
- To consider why people take on physical challenges
- To use information in the text to create a scale model of Mac's journey
- To identify the technological considerations of the challenge.

## Possible writing purposes

- To recount a challenge
- To describe a moment in time during a challenging event
- To draw up plans and instructions for building a smaller-scale journey that others could use.



# Text and language challenges

## VOCABULARY

- Possibly unfamiliar words and phrases, including “howled”, “gripped”, “peripheral vision”, “frantically”, “squinted”, “St John cadet”, “compromise”, “dragged”, “prepare mentally”, “headwind”, “comes into play”, “underestimate”
- Topic-specific words, including “fat bike”, “elevation charts”, “kilojoules”, “elevation”, “pledge page”, “social media page”, “robust”, “sandwiching”, “suspension bridge”
- Place names: “Ahipara”, “Ninety Mile Beach”, “Pureora Forest”, and other places en route
- The expression: “put foot to pedal”
- The metaphor: “sandwiching”.

## Possible supporting strategies

- Identify any words that students may find challenging and decide how to provide support. For standard vocabulary words, provide opportunities for students to encounter the words in regular class discussions and activities. For topic-specific words, provide support or prompt students to use context and analogies to work out any unfamiliar words.
- Once you have introduced the new words, you could go through the story, looking at the pictures, discussing what they show, and prompting the students to use the new words. (This provides opportunities for students to reuse the vocabulary and visualise the words, as well as activating prior knowledge.)
- If necessary, support students to pronounce place names correctly.
- *The English Language Learning Progressions: Introduction*, pages 39–46, has useful information about learning vocabulary.
- See also [ESOL Online, Vocabulary](#), for examples of other strategies to support students with vocabulary.

## SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED

- Knowledge of New Zealand's geography, in particular of the North Island
- Some knowledge of challenges that people take on, including travelling over long distances
- Familiarity with bicycles
- Experience of preparing or training for a big event
- Familiarity with social media and the concept of online pledging
- Knowledge of distance and elevation measurements
- Bike tyre measurements in inches and centimetres
- Knowledge of volunteering and of St John's ambulance services.

## Possible supporting strategies

- Review what students know about the distances in New Zealand, for example, the number of kilometres from Auckland to Wellington or Picton to Christchurch. Use a projected or enlarged map of the North Island to support reading. Ideally use a format that will allow students to expand the view to find the small places mentioned in the story.
- Provide access to a website that gives distances between points, for example, the time and distance calculator on the AA's website.
- If students need support to understand the elevation chart, use practical examples to show how a cross-section illustrates height at particular points. You could do this by lining up some “mountains” of clay or playdough and slicing it horizontally or by pushing a calibrated needle or thin ruler vertically from the “mountain tops” to the table at different points.
- Invite a bike retailer or local biking enthusiast to show different types of bikes. The students could identify the different parts. English language learners would benefit from using technical terms to label a diagram of a bike.

## TEXT FEATURES AND STRUCTURE

- Non-fiction article told in several different ways
- Use of present tense in a text box and past tense in body text
- Map of the North Island with places marked
- Elevation chart
- Photographs, some with captions
- Boxed information with a calorie chart
- Boxed information with labelled diagram of tyre sizes.

## Possible supporting strategies

- Review the features of non-fiction articles, asking students to name and identify those in the article.
- Point out that not all the information in an article like this is central to the big ideas, for example, the calorie chart is interesting but not essential to understand that Mac had to eat a lot.



# Instructional focus – Reading

## Health and Physical Education (Level 3 – Personal Health and Physical Development.)

### English (Level 3 – Purposes and audiences: Show a developing understanding of how texts are shaped for different purposes and audiences.)

#### First reading

- Students can think, pair, share to make a personal connection with undertaking a challenge and activate their prior knowledge. Ask them to share a time when they were challenged to do something that was difficult and how they achieved it.
- Skim the text with the students, using the headings, photos, map, and diagrams to gain an overall impression of what the article is about. *What strikes you as unusual about this article? What personal connections can you make with what you've seen so far, for example, do you know about different kinds of bikes? Are you familiar with places in the North Island? Have you seen or read about other challenges people have done? Prompt students to identify the different text features and how they are used. What do the map and the elevation chart add to the article? What is the significance of the calorie chart? How do the photos help you understand Mac's journey?*
- Remind students to ask questions of the text and of themselves. *What do you wonder about Mac and what he did? How can you use your questions as you reread the text? What do you wonder about yourself and your ability to take on challenges? How can you use these thoughts to help plan for writing about a challenge?*

#### If the students struggle with this text

- Provide a framework for students to ask and answer questions. For example, use a template with the questions Who? What? Where? Why? and How? down the left side. Support students to write a question for each word as they read, then to note the answers they find. Some of the W,W,W,W,H starters will generate more than one question – and some will not generate any.
- Record any unanswered questions and discuss ways they might be answered.
- Help the students navigate the page to differentiate between the story and the extra information in boxes, charts, and captions.
- Some students may find the structure confusing because it starts at the beginning of the journey, then goes back in time and describes the build up, then comes back to the actual bike ride. Ask them to look for signal words and phrases, such as “A year earlier” and “It was the first day of their big adventure” to work out the sequence. For some students, it may be helpful to include the changing sequence in your introduction of the text.

#### Subsequent readings

##### The teacher

Check that students understand the main idea: that Mac cycled the length of the North Island to raise funds for St John ambulances.

- *What motivated Mac?*
- *What problems and solutions arose as he went over the plan with his parents?*
- *What was the compromise they reached? Why was it a compromise?*

If students have difficulty with this, you could have them create a problem and solution chart to identify evidence from the text.

Problem to be overcome	Solution

Prompt the students to make connections with the text.

- *Thinking about your own interests and your families, what connections can you make? Would you want to do something like this? Would your families respond in the way Mac's did?*

(You could provide sentence scaffolds for English language learners, for example, Max and his Dad did ...

I think my family would / would not want to do this because ...)

##### The teacher

The following suggestion could be carried out as a class project and completed over several sessions. It provides opportunities for learning about relative distances and for calculating totals. If possible, project a large map of the North Island onto a screen or smart board. Alternatively, provide students with copies of a map of the North Island that they can use to record their findings.

Direct the students to work in small groups to carry out research.

- *Using the map on page 4, a road map, and the Internet, find out the distances between all the places Mac passed through.*
- *Mark the places and distances on a map of the North Island.*
- *Add up all the distances. Do you get the same total as Mac (“over 1,300 kilometres”)?*
- *If your total is different from Mac's, why do you think that is? What information in the text helped you understand this?*
- *What is your opinion of the journey Mac took? Explain your reasons.*
- *Why do you think people take on challenges? What do you think they achieve?*

Some students, including some English language learners, might benefit from specific teaching on adjectives for comparing, for example, far, further, furthest; near, nearer, nearest; close, closer, closest.

Use the map to talk about the comparative distances between different places. Also review measurement vocabulary as appropriate, for example, metre, kilometre, centimetre, millimetre.

##### GIVE FEEDBACK

- *You inferred that Mac's dad must have been allowed to take time off work for the journey, and you told us that your parents wouldn't be able to go away for three or four weeks like Mac's dad did. That connection and comparison helped you appreciate the enormity of the challenge Mac (and his family) took on.*
- *You noticed several discrepancies as you researched Mac's journey. You suggested some good reasons for those differences. Thinking critically about what you read is important because information can be interpreted in different ways.*
- *You've combined evidence in the text with your own opinions to conclude that fundraising events like this are good value because they raise a lot of money and raise awareness for a good cause.*

##### METACOGNITION

- Explain how you reached this conclusion about the worth of Mac's achievement. How much is fact and how much is opinion? Which holds more weight as an argument?
- When you read a text like this that has a lot of different ideas and features, what strategies help you find your way through?

##### The students:

- ask questions and locate answers as they read
- infer that Mac and his parents agreed to four conditions (he would cycle the length of the North Island, his father would go with him, he would use the safest bike, and he would train to prove he could last the distance)
- make connections with the text to make inferences about whether they would want to do a similar challenge.

##### The students:

- engage in a research project based on the places Mac travelled
- use a website to help calculate road distances and compare the total with that in the article
- use information in the article to make inferences about why the distance Mac travelled is different from the distances they calculated
- use information from the article and their research along with their own opinions to evaluate Mac's challenge
- form and justify opinions about people who take on major challenges.



Reading standard: by the end of year 5



The Literacy Learning Progressions



Assessment Resource Banks

# Instructional focus – Writing

## Health and Physical Education (Level 3 – Personal Health and Physical Development.)

### English (Level 3 – Purposes and audiences: Show a developing understanding of how to shape texts for different purposes and audiences.)

#### Text excerpts from “Boy on a Bike”

Dad rubbed a hand across his sweaty face. “I’m sorry, son,” he said. “This is a crazy plan. I’m not sure we can do it.”

Mac squinted up at his father and grinned. “It’s simple, Dad,” he shouted. “Just keep pedalling.”

Some days, they cycled up to 80 kilometres. Other days, their ride was shorter. Sometimes, in the holidays, they biked several days in a row. They trained in the rain; they trained in the sun. They trained through the dark of winter, getting up before dawn to make sure they could cover enough kilometres.

It was the first day of their big adventure – and Mac and Craig finally reached the Ahipara camping ground shortly after ten that night.

It had taken eleven and a half hours, and they were totally exhausted – with just 1,227 kilometres to go!

#### Examples of text characteristics

##### IRONY

When the words spoken are not what you’d expect, the effect is irony. Using irony is one way that writers can “show, not tell” to make their work more interesting.

##### REPETITION

Repeating a sentence or clause pattern to convey information is a way of showing that something happens over and over but is different every time. It can help readers understand the time, length, or difficulty of a task.

##### THE DASH

The dash can be used like a long comma to show a break in a thought. It interrupts the flow of a sentence for dramatic effect.

#### Teacher (possible deliberate acts of teaching)

Explain what makes the extract ironic.

- The writer shows us something we don’t expect. I thought Mac would be the one to give up, and I was surprised when it was Dad who’d had enough. It seems like the usual father–son roles are reversed and that’s what makes Mac’s words surprising and amusing.

Prompt the students to consider the effects they want in their writing.

- How can you show your readers that things are not what they expect?
- Are there some places where you can use irony or unexpected responses to “show” rather than “tell” readers what’s happening?

English language learners may benefit from exploring the use of adjectives and adverbs to help show irony.

Prompt the students to review their writing.

- Are there places where you describe something that is repeated many times? If so, consider using this extract as a model. Notice how commas and contrasts are used (Some/Other; in the rain/in the sun).
- If you want your readers to have a sense that something happened over and over, try using this kind of structure.
- Ask a partner to read your work before and after making changes. Have you improved it? If not, ask your partner to explain why not and to suggest how to improve it.

Explain how dashes can be used.

- When you review and revise, check that you’re making the best use of the punctuation. In the first example, the sentence would be fine without a dash but the dash makes the reader pause, almost like Craig and Mac pausing to catch their breath. It matches the drama of their arrival. In the second example, a comma would be fine, but the dash again causes the reader to pause and this emphasises the ironic humour in the second part of the sentence.

Prompt students to check their use of punctuation.

- Check every place where you’ve used punctuation and ask yourself: is this necessary? Is it in the right place? Is there another mark that might give a stronger impact?

You could provide a punctuation checklist to prompt students to remember what marks to check for.

- Now reread again to make sure you haven’t left out any punctuation that would make your work “read” better. Reading aloud helps you find places that might need punctuation.

#### GIVE FEEDBACK

- The list of things you had to do before you set out on the camp made me feel tired just reading it. You’ve used repetition to help your readers see how tiring it was to take everything out and put it all back several times.
- You’ve used repetition very effectively here. It highlights how hard it was to train for the cross-country race. And you haven’t overdone it. You’ve used just enough for the reader to understand that you faced several challenges.

#### METACOGNITION

- What strategies helped you plan your writing? Which ones would you recommend for a non-fiction article? Why?
- What changes did you make as you reviewed and revised your writing? How did they improve your writing?
- I can see you’ve experimented with various ways of showing how hard the challenge was. How did you decide which version to go with?

Writing standard: by the end of year 5

The Literacy Learning Progressions