

Overview

This fictional comic is based on the true story of the Polynesian Panthers in 1970s New Zealand. Inspired by the Black Panther Party in the United States, the Polynesian Panthers were a group of young New Zealanders who wanted to tackle the widespread prejudice faced by Pacific communities. Told from a personal, present-day perspective, *Once a Panther* encourages the reader to reflect on the positive change the Polynesian Panthers created and the ongoing legacy of the dawn raids for Pacific communities. This story links to an article and a poem on the dawn raids and the Polynesian Panthers that were published in *School Journal*, Level 4, November 2018.

This is a rich text that can be used in multiple ways over several sessions. During the reading, the students will need to ask questions, make connections, find information, make inferences, and synthesise ideas across the text.

Key competencies

Key competencies explored through this story include: thinking, relating to others, participating and contributing, and using language, symbols, and texts.

Themes and ideas

Themes and ideas explored in this story include:

- racism
- fighting for what is right – how groups organise to respond to community challenges
- concepts about immigration, identity, belonging, and what makes someone a “Kiwi”
- how events and movements in one part of the world can inspire action in another part of the world.

A PDF of the text and an audio version as an MP3 file are available at www.schooljournal.tki.org.nz

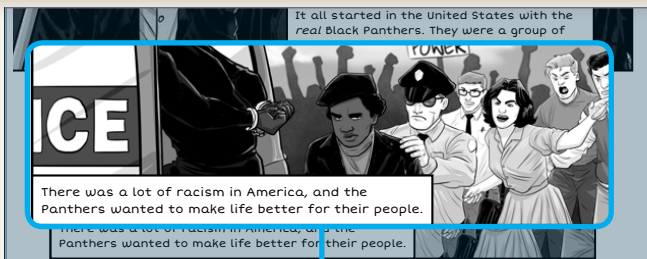
Texts related by theme

“Rise Up: The Story of the Polynesian Panthers and the Dawn Raids” SJ L4 Nov 2018 | “Brave Flower” SJ L4 Nov 2018 | “Stand Up: A History of Protest in New Zealand” SJ L3 Nov 2017

Text characteristics from the year 6 reading standard

We have retained the links to the National Standards while a new assessment and reporting system is being developed.

For more information on assessing and reporting in the post-National Standards era, see: <http://assessment.tki.org.nz/Assessment-and-reporting-guide>

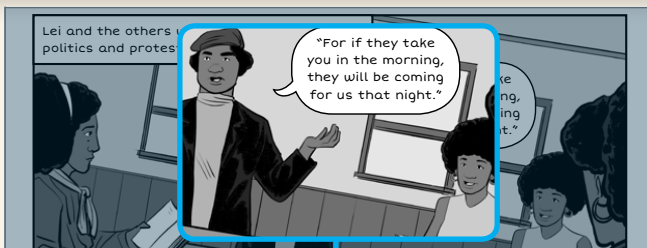


Abstract ideas, in greater numbers than in texts at earlier levels, accompanied by concrete examples in the text that help support the students' understanding



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

Text characteristics from the year 7 reading standard



Sentences that vary in length, including long, complex sentences that contain a lot of information



Illustrations, photographs, text boxes, diagrams, maps, charts, and graphs containing main ideas that relate to the text's content

Making meaning: Supports and challenges

Possible supporting strategies should be implemented at the appropriate time during the reading or lesson.

VOCABULARY:

- Possibly unfamiliar words and topic-specific vocabulary, including “African Americans”, “put up”, “us young ones”, “landlords”, “dawn raids”, “illegal immigrants”, “targeting”, “overstayers”, “blitz”, “paperwork”, “visa”, “deported”
- Concepts related to social justice, including “social justice”, “racism”, “prejudice”, “protest”, “fight for what was right”, “Māori land rights”, “apartheid”, “making an important point”, “rights”, “take a stand”
- Names and places: “Auckland”, “Wakanda”, “Black Panther”, “Shuri”, “Polynesian Panthers”, “New York”, “the United States”, “Auntie Lei”, “Muldoon”, “Britain”, “America”, “Ponsonby”, “Auntie Losa”, “Feke”, “Bastion Point”, “Springbok”, “South Africa”
- Words in Samoan: “Tōfā soifua”
- Colloquial words and phrases: “the best”, “save it”, “Check out the coconuts”, “uni”, “Whaddya reckon?”, “Right on”, “that interested”, “pretty cool”, “afros”, “swag”, “Oooh shame”, “I mean, I got that life was hard”, “Islanders”, “dodgy”, “bro”, “I didn’t really get it”, “mid-seventies”, “cracking down”, “blitz”, “on the spot”, “stood up to”, “cops”, “crying like a baby”, “Wakey wakey!!!!”, “Right on”, “spewing”, “ungodly hour”, “crack up”, “Mean”
- Mottos and slogans, including, “Wakanda forever”, “All Power to the People”, “KIWIS MUST COME FIRST!”, “fight for what was right”, “taste of their own medicine”, “take a stand”, “Once a Panther, always a Panther”
- Figurative language, for example, “For if they take you away in the morning, they will be coming for us at night”, “We can’t let a FLOOD come here and swamp us”, “crying like a baby”
- Features of informal dialogue, including contractions, exclamations, and incomplete sentences, for example, “Oooh, shame!”, “Right on”, “Wakey wakey!!!!”, “What a crack up”.

SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED:

- Familiarity with comic strips, cartoons, and graphic novels, where stories are told in words and pictures
- Some understanding of social injustice and of how people can organise to resist racism and prejudice
- Some knowledge of New Zealand history, including the immigration of Pacific peoples, political figures from the 1970s, and the protests for Māori land rights and against the Springbok tour
- Some knowledge of the movie *Black Panther* and the main characters.

Possible supporting strategies

Identify vocabulary and ideas that may be challenging for the students. Encourage them to recall the strategies they can use to solve word problems, such as:

- reading back, clarifying the context, looking for clues, and reading on to see if the meaning becomes clear
- looking for base words, recognisable chunks, or word families.

Before and after reading, discuss the colloquial language. English language learners may benefit from exploring and comparing examples of words with similar meanings in their first language.

Write each colloquial word and its meaning on separate cards and have pairs of students correctly match each word with its definition.

The incomplete sentences, contractions, and exclamations may be challenging for some English language learners. Consider discussing them alongside the colloquial language before they begin reading. Encourage them to talk about why the author included this language (that is, to create authentic character voice).

Explain that a motto or a slogan is a short, striking phrase that is often used to persuade people or promote a message. Discuss the meaning of the mottos and slogans in this article.

Discuss how figurative language can be used to emphasise a message and excite an emotional response from the reader. *Figure Friendly: How to Teach your ESL Students about Figurative Language* has useful suggestions about how to teach English language learners to understand and recognise figurative language. Effective strategies include having students draw illustrations of both the literal and figurative meanings or dramatising the meaning of each.

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

See also [ESOL Online, Vocabulary](#), for examples of other strategies to support students with vocabulary.

Possible supporting strategies

Before reading, ask the students to share their experiences of reading comics. There are online sources, such as these [vocabulary definitions](#) from ReadWriteThink, which provide information about the features and meta-language of comics.

Have the students share what they know about the *Black Panther* movie and the movement from which it got its name. Note that this is a PG13 movie and many students won’t have seen it. This will not interfere with their ability to access the text. You can fill the students in from your own knowledge of the film or by drawing on [online synopses](#).

Clarify, if necessary, that “Polynesian” people are people from Pacific Island nations. Have a map of the Pacific available and invite the students to identify the nations that have a particular connection to New Zealand.



For your own knowledge, and/or to provide additional information for your students, view the first part of the NZ On Screen documentary on the [Polynesian Panthers](#). NZ On Screen also offers a documentary on the [dawn raids](#).

Te Ara has information about Pacific immigration, including statistics that back up the claim that [Pacific Islanders were unfairly targeted for overstaying](#) and the famous [National Party advertisement](#) that demonised Pacific immigrants.

The New Zealand History website has information on [Bastion Point](#), the [1981 Springbok Tour](#), and [Robert Muldoon](#).

Support students to understand the references to other texts and historical movements throughout the book. “For if they take you in the morning, they will be coming for us that night” is an excerpt from a [letter from James Baldwin](#) to Angela Davis during her [legal battle](#) against charges of murder, kidnapping, and criminal conspiracy (published in the 1971 book, *If They Come in the Morning*). [All Power to the People](#) is a Black Panther slogan. The Black Panthers used the [clenched fist](#) as a symbol of power. For further information on the Black Panther Party, see [This Day in History](#).

TEXT FEATURES AND STRUCTURE:

- Comic (or graphic novel) format, where meaning is carried by the illustrations and the text
- Words in the form of captions and speech bubbles
- Two layers of narrative: The present-day story and the story within the story of Uncle’s time with the Polynesian Panthers, told in the past tense but unfolding chronologically
- The use of colour for the panels depicting events in the present day and black and white for those set in the past
- The stark change in the colour of the gutters on pages 10 and 11 (from white to black)
- The brief flashback to the story of the Black Panthers
- A quotation: “For if they take you in the morning, they will be coming for us that night”

Supporting strategies

List some of the features of the students’ favourite comics and support them, if necessary, to identify those features in this comic.

Check that the students know to read each page in a left to right, zigzag fashion.

You may need to model how you use and integrate the information in the illustrations with the captions and/or speech bubbles.

Make sure the students understand that the story is told from frame to frame and that often readers need to make inferences about what happens after one frame and before the next.

Model by thinking aloud how to make meaning from visual text. *All Uncle does is cough and the kids stop laughing – they must know each other pretty well.*

Explain that there are two narrative layers and have the students scan the text to identify what they are. Check that the students understand that the story is told from the present-day perspective of a member of the Polynesian Panthers as he looks back on his teenage years in the 1970s. *When is this happening? Who is present? Who is speaking? What has the illustrator done to help you notice the shifts in time?*

Possible curriculum contexts

ENGLISH (Reading)

Level 4 – Ideas: Show a developing understanding of ideas within, across, and beyond texts.

Level 4 – Structure: Show a developing understanding of text structures.

Level 4 – Language features: Show an increasing understanding of how language features are used for effect within and across texts.

ENGLISH (Writing)

Level 4 – Language features: Use a range of language features appropriately, showing an increasing understanding of their effects.

SOCIAL SCIENCES (Social Studies)

Level 4 – Understand how people participate individually and collectively in response to community challenges.

SOCIAL SCIENCES (Social Studies)

Level 4 – Understand how formal and informal groups make decisions that impact on communities.

Possible reading purposes

- To find out about the Polynesian Panthers
- To understand a period of New Zealand's history that impacted on many people of Pacific Islands descent
- To identify what compels people to make a difference in their community.

Possible writing purposes

- To write a list of questions they would like to ask a Polynesian Panther
- To construct an annotated timeline of events in the story
- To describe someone they know who makes a difference to their lives.



Instructional focus – Reading

At all stages, encourage the students to vocalise their ideas and thought processes, supporting each other to justify their ideas with reasoning. Think, pair, share is a useful strategy to support peer interaction. Some students may need explicit instruction of new vocabulary before reading. Refer to the “Making meaning: Supports and challenges” section on page 2 for supporting strategies.

Introducing the text: Paving the way for successful readers

Before reading

- Have the students look at the cover and make predictions. Repeat this with the title page. Record the students’ predictions so they can be revisited later.
- Provide context through a close examination of the Black Panthers illustration on page 4. If possible, project the PDF of the text so you can zoom in on this frame.
 - Have the students observe the people’s gestures and expressions, their clothing and hairstyles, the objects they are carrying, the text on the placards, the logos, and so on.
 - Have the students tell you what they see, without making any interpretations. Write this down without comment.
 - Ask the students what questions they have about the image.
 - Explain the historical context and background of this image. Refer to the background information on page 4 to clarify that the Black Panthers were one arm of the civil rights movement in the United States. Have the students discuss their questions and try to find some answers.
- Introduce *Once a Panther* and share the purpose for reading. Tell the students that the Black Panthers inspired a movement in 1970s New Zealand called the Polynesian Panthers. *We’re going to find out about the Polynesian Panthers – who they were, what they did, and why.*
- Reiterate that this story covers different places and time frames. Have the students skim and scan the text, looking for clues about when and where different sections are set.
- Reiterate that this text is based on true events but follows fictional characters in the form of a comic. *Have a chat with your buddy about other comics you have read. What were their key features? What did you like about them? What helped you to follow the story?*
- Explain that the comic includes a lot of colloquial language. *As you read, think about why this is.*
- Explore with the students some useful strategies for dealing with unfamiliar words or ideas that they might encounter.

First reading

- Ensure that the students have ample time to process the text and track the events and characters throughout the story.
- Read the story through for enjoyment and interest. Some students may be able to read the whole text independently. Others may benefit from share-reading some of the text with you, following the text with their eyes.
- Some students may need to silently read the text in chunked sections and discuss it with a partner or with the whole group (think, pair, share) as they go. Suggested chunks: pages 2–3, 4–5, 6–8, 9–12, 13–16.
- Use this time to listen in to student discussions and monitor how well they are reading and understanding the text.
- If you are unsure about a particular student’s reading and understanding, ask them to quietly read you a few lines and have a brief discussion. This may be a good opportunity to provide specific feedback and prompt the student to tell you about a strategy they have used.
- After the reading, look at the cover page again and compare what happened in the text with what they had predicted.

If the students require more scaffolding


Remind the students of strategies that are particularly useful on a first reading, such as slowing down, rereading, asking questions, making connections with their prior knowledge, using context clues to make predictions, and reading on to check. Remember to give students enough processing time to answer questions before moving on. Use some of the following approaches, depending on the students’ needs:


- Use group discussion around the themes and ideas listed on page 1 of these notes to draw out more specific information that relates to the story.
- Support the students to understand the demands the Polynesian Panthers were making by repeating the process you used before the reading, this time unpacking the image of the Auckland protest scene on page 4.
- As you read, model “pondering questions” and how to search for information or ideas related to these questions. *I wonder how things were different in New Zealand when Uncle was young.*
- Support the students to make connections between their own experiences and ideas and those in the story. *Can you think of a time when you knew something wasn’t right, but it took a particular event to make you really want to take action?*
- Have the students listen to the audio of *Once a Panther* as they silently read the text. Repeat as necessary. After reading, have the students share and discuss their responses with a partner.

Subsequent readings

Use subsequent readings to focus on particular themes and ideas described in the text. These subsequent readings can include students listening to the audio as they read along. Support the students to integrate and synthesise ideas across the text through modelling, thinking aloud, prompting, and explaining. They should then be able to interpret those ideas and the text's themes. See suggestions for possible reading purposes on page 4.

- Prompt the students to read the visual text closely and make inferences about what is happening and what the different people are thinking and feeling. Ask questions and encourage the students to refer to the text for evidence. *What is going on at the top of page 5? Why is the landlord saying they should have told him they were Pacific Islanders when they rang? How does each person in this situation feel about it? How can you tell? How would you feel if this happened to your family? What is the significance of this event in Uncle's life and his family's life?* A [Say-It](#) task might help students identify what different characters are thinking and feeling.
- Support the students to understand the narrative structure by using a visual [story map](#) that unpacks each of the two layers of narrative. Begin by focusing on Uncle's recount. When the students have completed this story map, have them retell Uncle's story to each other. Next, have the students focus on the interactions between Uncle and his niece and nephew. For each story map, prompt the students to introduce the main character, describe the setting, clarify the problem, identify the sequence of events (including the flashback) and identify the various ways the author has indicated a change in time and place (such as the use of colour), and describe the resolution. Once completed, have the students compare the two narratives.

 Create, and share through Google Drive, a story-map template with A4 dimensions using Google Slides.

- Discuss why the writer structured the story the way he did. *What is the point the writer is making about the connections between the past and the present? What is his message?*
 - Clarify, if necessary, that while the characters are fictional, the story is based on real events and real people. Use a graphic organiser to list what or who they are, what the students have learnt about them, and any questions the students have. You could add to the graphic organiser as you continue to explore the text together.
-  Create and project a graphic organiser template for the whole class using Google Slides.
- Prompt the students to look closely at the scenes inside the Polynesian Panthers' meetings and ask them to look for clues that show the connections between the Polynesian Panthers and the Black Panthers and their shared motivations.
 - Point out that people on both sides of the debate used language and symbols to persuade. Focus on page 9. Explain who Frank Gill and Robert Muldoon were and ask questions about the messages in the dialogue and the headlines. *Who does the newspaper headline refer to when it says "Kiwis"? Who is Frank Gill appealing to in his statement? How does he want his audience to feel about Pacific Island immigrants? What effect do you think this would have on his intended audience and on Pacific people in New Zealand?* Have the students reread the text to identify other examples of persuasive language and how they work. [Say-It](#) or [Three-level-guide](#) tasks could be used to help students infer from both the text and the illustrations.
 - As a group, evaluate the Polynesian Panthers' actions, particularly around conducting their own dawn raid. Encourage the students to challenge each other and support their opinions with examples from the text and their own experiences.
 - Invite the students to respond critically to the messages in the story. Be sensitive to any students expressing racial abuse or suffering from racial abuse. *Uncle says, "Once a Panther, always a Panther" and the kids raise their fists in the Black Panther salute. What is the point the writer is making here? Do you agree that these issues are still alive today? What do we know about how people are responding to them? How*

Monitoring the impact of teaching

As the students read and discuss the text, take particular note of the following:

- Can the students identify and discuss the main themes?
- Can they independently use strategies for:
 - Working out unknown vocabulary?
 - Making sense of ideas when meaning broke down?
 - Making connections to their personal experiences?
- With support, can the students link ideas and information across the text?
- Do the students transfer skills and knowledge from your modelling to their reading?
- Do the students use evidence from the text to explain their responses?
- What do the students have to say about whether this was a worthwhile text to read and what it has made them think about?
- Were there any surprises in the students' responses? If appropriate, how will you follow up on them?

Providing feedback and supporting metacognition

Provide explicit feedback and support the students to develop their metacognition. Both strategies support students' growing independence and confidence as proficient readers.

Providing feedback

I noticed you asking lots of questions and rereading to find the answers. That's what good readers do – especially when they get a bit confused and need to clarify the meaning. When you were debating your ideas with your buddy, it showed me you were thinking about what you were reading.

I noticed you and your partner tracking the story in a zigzag pattern. That's exactly how you follow the story when you read a comic.

Supporting metacognition




What feelings did you have as you read this comic? Which illustrations helped you to feel that way? What connections did you make to your own experiences or other people's experiences? Did those connections help you to better understand some things in the story?

Suggestions for writing instruction

Students may choose to:

- write a list of questions they would like to ask a Polynesian Panther. These could be questions for Uncle, or the students could view the first part of the NZ On Screen [Polynesian Panthers](#) documentary and write questions for Will 'Ilolahia. Consider creating a [Viewing guide](#) to assist students to identify the main points from the documentary.
- use the dates in the text to construct a timeline of events. The students could visit the library and use online sources such as Te Ara and the New Zealand History site to add information to their timeline.
- interview somebody who belongs to another group that has made a difference to New Zealand society. (Check that English language learners can form appropriate question stems.) Using Google Docs, students could type their interview script and then act it out and record it. These could be put in an online space that whānau and other taura could access.
- tell a buddy about someone who makes a difference to their life and then write a description of that person that includes an explanation of their impact.

Scaffold the students to build on their writing strengths, giving stronger support where needed and reducing it as the students become confident using and developing the strategies themselves. Help them to see the connections between their reading strategies and writing strategies (for example, implying as a writer, inferring as a reader). Also, it might be helpful to revisit the particular features of the text that the author has used. Allow plenty of time (with agreed targets) for the students to think about, plan, rework, and polish their writing.

	Writing standard: by the end of year 7
	The Literacy Learning Progressions
	Assessment Resource Banks