



The Learning Progression Frameworks describe significant signposts in reading and writing as students develop and apply their literacy knowledge and skills with increasing expertise from school entry to the end of year 10.

Overview

This TSM contains information and suggestions for teachers to pick and choose from, depending on the needs of their students and their purpose for using the text. The material provides many opportunities for revisiting the text.

In 1866, the *General Grant* was sailing from Australia to London when it was shipwrecked on one of the Subantarctic Islands. Of the eighty-three people on board, only fifteen made it ashore. A survivor later wrote about how the castaways had only six matches, with five “squandered”. The lighting of the last match was a critical moment in their survival. Paul Mason has dramatised the moment in this suspenseful play. (The fire was successfully lit and never allowed to go out. The castaways were finally rescued eighteen months later.)

This play:

- offers an insight into a famous New Zealand shipwreck and into the wider historical context

- is based on survivor accounts and so has an adult-only cast and uses archaic sentence structure and vocabulary
- offers the opportunity for students to stage a serious play and to explore how to communicate through a variety of dramatic conventions
- offers opportunities for students to explore concepts about leadership and a group’s response to a hostile environment
- links closely to “Want Relief” (SJ L3 May 2020), a fictionalised account of a nineteenth-century shipwreck by the same author
- has themes of loss, survival, and endurance.

A PDF of the text is available at www.schooljournal.tki.org.nz

Texts related by theme

“Want Relief” SJ L3 May 2020 | *Endurance* SJSL L4 2020 | “The Subantarctic Islands” SJ L3 August 2017

Text characteristics

see your fingers before your eyes. The ship crashed and shuddered against the unforgiving rock.

JAMES TEER. The foremast struck the roof, taking the main topmast with it. Spars crashed to the deck. Large stones fell, shattering timber. We fled below.

JOSEPH JEWELL. What followed was such a night of horror as I think never experienced by human beings. We bumped and juddered again and again. More stones crashed onto the deck. We were afraid the vessel would sink before morning, and if she had, there would not be anyone left to tell our sorry tale.

some abstract ideas that are clearly supported by concrete examples, requiring students to make links to other parts of the text and to their prior knowledge

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some compound and complex sentences, which may consist of two or three clauses, requiring students to carefully gather and track ideas as they read

JAMES TEER. I’m a fool. We need dry twigs. Quickly!

Some of the castaways spread out to look for twigs. Others remain, collapsed and shivering on the beach.

WILLIAM SANGUILY (*speaking to the audience*). The *General Grant* lay berthed eight weeks in Melbourne, loading cargo before we sailed. Mostly wool and hides – and two boxes filled with gold. Many in steerage were goldminers, returning with their finds, but there were families below decks, too. Among them, the Lansons, farmers from France, if I recall, with four children. And Mrs Oat with her four little ones. Eighty-three of us on board all told.

some places where information and ideas are implicit, requiring students to make inferences based on the context and events encountered so far

WILLIAM SANGUILY (*speaking to the audience*).

The *General Grant* is lost. Twenty-five fathoms deep. As we escaped from the wreck I saw Captain Loughlin, clinging to the mizzen-topmast, waving farewell as his ship went down. Standing at his post to the last.

JAMES TEER (*speaking to the audience*). We rowed against the waves and the wind and met nothing but sheer cliffs. We stuck to our oars, fighting the cold and our misfortune, until at last, on the afternoon of the third day, we found a safe place to land ...

some words and phrases that are ambiguous or unfamiliar, requiring the students to use the context, illustrations, and/or written explanations to gain meaning

Text and language challenges

Some of the suggestions for possible supporting strategies may be more useful before reading, but they can be used at any time in response to students' needs.




Go to the Learning Progression Frameworks “Making sense of text: vocabulary knowledge”, and “Making sense of text: using knowledge of text structure and features” to find detailed illustrations showing how students develop expertise and make progress in these aspects.

VOCABULARY

- Topic-specific vocabulary related to sailing ships, for example, “seaman”, “first mate”, “fathoms”, “mizzen-topmast”, “berthed”, “loading cargo”, “steerage”, “jib boom”, “shot astern”, “rudder”, “foremast”, “spars”, “main topmast”
- Other unfamiliar vocabulary, for example, “flint”, “kindling”, “sheared”
- Figurative language, for example, “fighting the cold and our misfortune”, “frozen fingers like a claw”, “their lives hung in the balance”, “unforgiving rock”, “grateful hands”, “a night of horror”
- The language of the theatre, for example, “Scene”, “the castaways freeze”
- Archaic language, for example, “misfortune”, “precious little provisions”, “at the mercy”, “Aye”, “by wreck of the ship *General Grant* on Auckland Isles”, and the use of honorifics, such as “Mr”, “Mrs”, or “sir”
- Collocations, for example, “is lost”, “waving goodbye”, “Standing at his post”, “Thank heavens”, “heavy swell”, “safe landing”, “loading cargo”
- Colloquial expressions, for example, “Thank heavens”, “tell our sorry tale”, “done for”, “well and dry”.

Possible supporting strategies

- Remind the students of strategies that are particularly useful on a first reading, such as rereading to look for clues, making connections with their prior knowledge, and/or reading on to see if the meaning becomes clearer.
- Identify words or phrases that may be unfamiliar. Tell the students that the article includes a lot of technical language about boats and sailing ships. Provide pictures of sailing ships and then have the students brainstorm words they think they may encounter, either from their personal experiences of sailing or from reading other texts about sailing and old sailing ships. Discuss the meaning of these words. Students could add further new words to this list during reading.
- Remind the students of strategies for working out unfamiliar vocabulary, such as looking at the context and thinking about the surrounding information, finding root words, using knowledge of word patterns, prefixes and suffixes, and making connections to prior knowledge.
- Consider using one or more of the following resources to provide additional support with the sailing terminology: [Glossary of Boating Terms](#); [Diagram of a Sailing Ship](#); [Principal Parts and Sails of 19th-century Sailing Ships](#). Students might collaborate to sketch a sailing ship and annotate it with key terms.  They could use [SketchUp](#) for this task.
- Discuss the notion that language is always changing. Words come in and out of fashion and their meaning can change. *What might we now say instead of “misfortune”?* The same can happen with what is considered good manners – in the past, it was normal to refer to someone by an honorific, unless that person was of a perceived lower class.
- Prompt the students to use their prior knowledge of other texts and make inferences to interpret the deeper meaning of the figurative language. *Did their lives really hang in the balance? Why does the writer describe their hands as “grateful”? What is the image you get in your mind when you read these words? Thinking about other texts we have read, why do writers use this sort of language?”*
- [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, including this page on [collocations](#).

SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED

- Some awareness of the history of migration and gold mining in the nineteenth century
- Understanding that migration in the nineteenth century required people to travel vast distances on sailing ships
- Understanding that a ship bound from Melbourne to London could become wrecked in New Zealand territory
- Some awareness of technological change and that, in those days, it would not be possible to radio for help
- Some familiarity with the conventions of drama

Possible supporting strategies

- Explain that the nineteenth century was a time when many Europeans, particularly from Britain or Ireland, migrated to places like New Zealand, Australia, and the United States. Initially, they were often gold miners and whalers, who were mostly single men. Later, there were more families looking for land to settle on. Students may be able to make personal connections to this history, either from the perspective of the colonisers or from the perspective of those whose land was colonised.
- Display a map of the clipper route, which sailing ships used when travelling between England and Australia or New Zealand in the nineteenth century. Explain that this route was taken because it was the fastest, allowing sailors to take advantage of the strong westerly winds in the Southern Ocean. (For further information, go to [Clipper route](#).)
- Consider reading “Want Relief” (SJ L3 May 2020) first as an introduction to both the historical context and the language of the time. This story, also written by Paul Mason, is a fictionalised account inspired by the wreck of the *General Grant* and other real-life shipwreck stories from the same era.
- Use the pictures and photograph to get a sense of the tough physical environment in which the survivors found themselves. Students could augment this by scanning the visual text “The Subantarctic Islands” (SJ L3 August 2017).
- See the following sources for background information, which includes some of the eyewitness accounts that the play is based on: [NZ History: Wreck of the General Grant](#); [Te Ara: The Wreck of the General Grant](#); [NZETC Wrecked on a reef: Wreck of the ship General Grant](#).
- Prompt the students to think, pair, share, and compare their prior experiences of performing a drama, either through a scripted play or through process drama, in which improvised drama is used to explore ideas and themes. (There is more on process drama in the Ministry of Education resource *Telling our Stories: Classroom Drama in Years 7–10*. Wellington: Learning Media, 2004. For more about improvisation see [Elements of Drama BBC Bitesize](#).)

TEXT FEATURES AND STRUCTURE

- A play with standard features: a list of characters, a description of the setting, dialogue, and stage directions
- Archaic and often formal language and phrasing, including, “What followed was such a night of horror I think as never experienced by human beings”, “We obtained a fire, which we kept alive every day of the long months we were on those isles”
- Formal modes of address (“Mr Brown, sir”)
- The tension created by the life or death situation; the awareness of the previous loss of life; the reference to the deaths of children; the combination of long, complex sentences with short, urgent sentences; the repetition of key words and phrases; the use of exclamation marks; the figurative language; and stance and gesture explained in the stage directions
- The allusions, direct and indirect, to the dramatic elements of tension and role play and the dramatic conventions of freeze frame, spoken thoughts, guided depiction, and flashback

Possible supporting strategies

- Discuss the features of an article, a story, and a play and the differences between them.
- The students could annotate copies of the play, highlighting and naming examples of each feature to use as a model for further writing or to refer to when discussing the text later. This could be particularly useful for English language learners.
- Prompt the students to use their prior knowledge of similar texts as well as their knowledge of sentence structure to work out the meaning of the archaic language. This might include the *School Journal* story by the same author, “Want Relief”.
- Have the students think, pair, share, and compare their thoughts about the ways people address each other in the play and what that reveals about the manners of the time and the relationships between the castaways.
- Explain or clarify that two of the key elements of drama are role and tension. When we are in role, we use our imagination to identify with another person so we can explore and represent their experience. Tension involves mental pressure or emotional intensity to provoke a response, focus attention, or heighten involvement.
- Introduce the following dramatic conventions and have the students suggest examples of their use in plays, movies, or television programmes:
 - **freeze frame:** members of a group use their bodies to make an image or tableau capturing an idea, theme, or moment in time
 - **spoken thoughts:** the action freezes and one person speaks their thoughts aloud to add tension, provide information, or for another purpose
 - **guided depiction:** a commentary is given at a key moment, either by one of the characters or by someone outside the action
 - **flashback or flashforward:** the action shifts in time so that participants or the audience can see the background or consequences of an action.



Possible curriculum contexts



The Literacy Learning Progressions: Meeting the Reading and Writing Demands of the Curriculum describes the literacy knowledge, skills, and attitudes that students need to draw on to meet the demands of the curriculum.

ENGLISH (Reading)

- Level 4 – Ideas: Show an increasing understanding of ideas within, across, and beyond texts.

ENGLISH (Writing)

- Level 4 – Purposes and audiences: Show an increasing understanding of how to shape texts for different purposes and audiences.
- Level 4 – Structure: Organise texts, using a range of appropriate structures.

SOCIAL SCIENCES

- Level 4 – Understand how exploration and innovation create opportunities and challenges for people, places, and environments.
- Level 4 – Understand how the ways in which leadership of groups is acquired and exercised have consequences for communities and societies.

THE ARTS: DRAMA

- Level 4 – Developing practical knowledge: Use conventions to structure drama.

Possible first reading purpose

- Find out what happens when a group of shipwrecked survivors are down to their last match

Possible subsequent reading purposes

- Learn about a real event in New Zealand's history through a moment in time
- Explore and analyse the emotions, fears, and challenges of a small group of survivors on a desolate island in the nineteenth century
- Identify the structure and language features Paul Mason has used to create this play

Possible writing purposes

- Write another "moment in time" about the same group of people waiting for rescue
- Write a newspaper report about the disaster, using the language of the time
- Read the School Journal Story Library story of the *Endurance* and research the story of the *General Grant*, then compare these two events and how the people involved survived
- Describe what might have happened if the last match had also failed



Instructional focus – Reading

English Level 4 – Ideas: Show an increasing understanding of ideas within, across, and beyond texts.

Social Sciences Level 4 – Understand how exploration and innovation create opportunities and challenges for people, places, and environments; Understand how the ways in which leadership of groups is acquired and exercised have consequences for communities and societies.

The Arts: Drama Level 4 – Use conventions to structure drama.



Go to The Learning Progression Frameworks – Reading: “Reading for literary experience”, “Making sense of text: using knowledge of text structure and features”, and “Making sense of text: reading critically” to find detailed illustrations showing how students develop expertise and make progress in these aspects.

First reading

- Set the purpose for reading. Explain that this play is based on actual events. Have the students skim and scan the text to predict what those events might be.
- Prior to the first reading, you may need to devote a separate session to introducing and charting some of the elements and conventions of drama that are used in the play (see page 3 of this TSM). During the first reading, have the chart on display.
- Have the students read the play to themselves.
- Invite their responses. *What was the immediate problem these people faced? How do you imagine they would have felt?*

Possible supporting strategies

If the students require more scaffolding

- Remind the students of strategies that are particularly useful on a first reading, such as asking questions, making predictions, reading on, rereading, and making connections with their prior knowledge.
- Ask questions to help the students locate information. *Who are the characters? What are their roles? What is the setting? What has just happened? What is happening now?*
- Check that the students understand that at times, the action pauses and we flash back to the shipwreck. Have them mark these passages, then work in pairs to sketch a timeline clarifying the sequence of events.

Subsequent readings

How you approach subsequent readings will depend on your reading purpose. Where possible, have the students work in pairs to discuss the questions and prompts in this section.

History

The teacher

Reread the author’s note, which explains the back story and the factual details, including people’s actual words. Have the students work in pairs to infer where the events and dialogue may be facts and where the writer has made them up. You might also use the links on page 3 to give the students the opportunity to compare the play with the historical record.

- *How accurate is the story told in the play? Where has the writer used his imagination? Is that justified?*
- *Why do you think the writer chose this way of telling this story? What did you learn about life in the nineteenth century?*
- *What do you suppose the writer’s purpose was in writing this play? What did you get out of it?*

English language learners could use a 1, 2, 3, 4 Summary template like the one below to unpack the meaning of the text. After reading each paragraph, they answer the questions in the table.

1	What is the big idea?
2	What important details support the big idea?
3	What is a connection you made?
4	What questions do you have about the big idea?

The students:

- reread the play and connect it to the historical record
- identify and discuss what they learnt about the incident and about life in the nineteenth century
- make comparisons between the dangers of travel by ship in the nineteenth century and the relative safety of travelling by ship in the twenty-first century
- make inferences about why the writer thought it was worth recording these events as a play.

Structure and language

The teacher

Prompt the students to discuss the structure and language features and how they help to communicate a sense of tension.

- *The writer focuses on the shipwreck and the attempt to light a fire on landing. Why do you suppose he chose these two moments, rather than another time in the castaways' eighteen months on the island?*
- *How does the writer weave the two parts of the story together? What might that mean for how you stage the play?*
- *There's quite a bit of repetition, especially on the first two pages. Why do you think that is?*
- *"Frozen fingers like a claw" gives me a sense of how desperate the situation is. Did you notice other examples of figurative language that add to the sense of tension?*
- *How did you feel about the old-fashioned language? Did it interfere with the sense of tension or did it make sense to you?*

Characters and challenges

The teacher

Create a template for the students to analyse the five main characters and their response to the shipwreck and the need for fire. Prompt them to pay attention to the stage directions as well as the dialogue. Encourage them to think about how well the characters will cope with the rest of their time on the islands.

- *Who is emerging as a possible leader? How can you tell? Why might leadership be important for the group's survival?*
- *What other qualities or skills are going to be important in the months ahead? Who do you think has those skills?*
- *What do you notice about the relationships between group members? How might they evolve?*

	What we learn from ...			
	How they are described	What they say	What they do	How they respond to the situation
William Sanguily				
James Teer				
Joseph Jewell				
Bartholomew Brown				
Mary Ann Jewell				

The students:

- explore the writer's choices regarding structure and language and consider how they help to create a sense of tension
- consider the implications of the play's structure for how it would be performed
- consider the impact of the archaic language on their ability to connect with the characters.

The students:

- integrate information from the dialogue and stage directions to make inferences about the personalities and backgrounds of the main characters and how they respond to the situation and each other
- go beyond the text to imagine how the characters are going to endure the next eighteen months, how their group will operate, and what each of them will contribute
- explore the central themes of how leadership and other qualities are necessary for individuals and groups to endure loss and to survive in extraordinary circumstances.

Structure and language

The teacher

Refer to the list of dramatic conventions. Ask the students to identify when, how, and why the following dramatic conventions are either included or implied: freeze frame, spoken thoughts, guided depiction, flashback.

Focus on a specific scene and have one student go into role to speak to the audience while the others create a freeze frame that captures what is happening in the background. Prompt them to support each other, using clues from the text to understand each person's personality and state of mind and how they relate to others in the group. Consider using video or photographs to help the students help themselves and each other with this activity.

Work towards a performance of the play.

The students:

- draw on their prior knowledge and their experience of reading the play, identify the conventions the writer uses to convey the two moments of time, and explain why he has used these conventions
- collaborate to create a freeze frame of a moment in time that captures the tension felt by the castaways and their individual responses to their circumstances
- think critically about the characters and about how their thoughts, feelings, and mannerisms could be conveyed in a performance
- rehearse and perform the play to others
- record the play, then view the recording and identify ways the performance could be improved.

GIVE FEEDBACK

- *When you created the freeze frame, you referred back to the play. That was helpful as it prompted you to think about where each person was standing in relation to each other.*
- *You really did hold your fingers "like a claw". You communicated both the physical cold and the emotional fear the character felt.*

METACOGNITION

- *How did you deal with the old-fashioned language? Did it affect your ability to connect with the characters?*
- *What have you learnt about how to communicate without speaking? What clues helped you decide how you would portray your character in the freeze frame?*



The Literacy Learning Progressions

Assessment Resource Banks

Instructional focus – Writing

English Level 4 – Purposes and audiences: Show an increasing understanding of how to shape texts for different purposes and audiences; Structure: Organise texts, using a range of appropriate structures.

Social Sciences Level 4 – Understand how exploration and innovation create opportunities and challenges for people, places, and environments; Understand how the ways in which leadership of groups is acquired and exercised have consequences for communities and societies.

The Arts: Drama Level 4 – Use conventions to structure drama.



Go to The Learning Progression Frameworks – Writing: “Creating texts for literary purposes”, “Creating texts to communicate current knowledge and understanding”, and “Writing meaningful text: using knowledge of text structure and features” to find detailed illustrations showing how students develop expertise and make progress in these aspects.

Text excerpts from “Last Match”

Page 20

JAMES TEER. I’m a fool. We need dry twigs. Quickly!

Some of the castaways spread out to look for twigs. Others remain, collapsed and shivering on the beach.

WILLIAM SANGUILY (*speaking to the audience*). The General Grant lay berthed eight weeks in Melbourne, loading cargo before we sailed.

Page 21

JOSEPH JEWELL (*speaking to the audience*). We sailed on the fourth day of May, 1866, waving goodbye to Port Phillip, bound for London.

All went well until the early hours of the fourteenth. Just past midnight, in darkness, and at the mercy of a heavy swell, we struck rocks ...

Examples of text characteristics


STAGE DIRECTIONS, DIALOGUE, AND IMPROVISATION

A playwright will have a clear idea of how the scenes and dialogue will look and sound. They choose where to include a direction for actors. By contrast, improvised drama is work that is made up by a group as they go along. Improvised drama requires each person to be in the moment and to respond to what is happening. It can be refined, rehearsed, and recorded to become a scripted piece that can be crafted into a performance.

NEWSPAPER REPORT

The purpose of a report is to describe and classify information. It presents a logical sequence of objective facts. Typically, a newspaper report begins with a heading and lead sentence designed to hook the reader. Other elements include a date and byline, an introduction, the main body of the report, quotations, and a conclusion.


Teacher (possible deliberate acts of teaching)

Discuss what may have happened in the eighteen months the castaways were marooned on the island. Then have the students brainstorm their ideas about key moments the group may have experienced (for example, finding food or water, building a shelter, having a moment of hope, and what happened to the four who set out in a boat). Have them select one of these moments as the basis for a “guided depiction”. This involves one actor speaking to the audience while the others create a freeze frame.  The students could film their guided depiction to share with the class.


Explain that the students are to begin by workshoping the image they want to create, using improvisation. After they have refined their piece, they should use the play as a model for writing a script that others can follow. If they created an annotated model earlier, they could refer to that.

Discuss the function of stage directions and dialogue in a script and some possible success criteria.

- How much do actors need to be told? How much can be improvised?
- None of the characters in “Last Match” had a lot of dialogue, but we still learnt a lot about them. How can you convey ideas and feelings without the characters talking?

Give the students some examples of newspaper reports, including historical reports, and have them identify the key elements. Have them use these as models for writing a report of the disaster, using the language of the time.  They could use a [Google Slides](#) newspaper template for this report.

Prompt them to think about how the historical context would have affected the quality and timing of information and the language used by journalists. Students may need to do some additional research to understand both this and the other challenges the survivors endured and how they overcame them.

Have the students review each other’s reports, looking at the soundness of their research, whether they have communicated the key facts in a logical order, and whether the language reflects the time and is engaging for its audience.  They could do this by adding comments to the Google Slide.

The students might finish by comparing the reports they wrote with the example from [NZETC](#).

Page 21

JOSEPH JEWELL. What followed was such a night of horror as I think never experienced by human beings. We bumped and juddered again and again. More stones crashed onto the deck. We were afraid the vessel would sink before morning, and if she had, there would not be anyone left to tell our sorry tale.

COMPARISON

A comparative essay or report is one that evaluates the similarities and differences between two subjects. A writer might first focus on one of the subjects and then the other or move between the two.

A good comparative essay makes a bigger statement about the overall topic. The writer backs statements with evidence and chooses words like “both”, “likewise”, and “similarly” in order to be clear about the flow between statements.

Review the purpose and structure of a comparative essay or report. Tell the students that they are to read the School Journal Story Library story of the *Endurance* and research the story of the *General Grant*, then compare these two events and how the people survived.

Discuss how the students can structure their notes to help prepare for their essay. (For example, they could create a Venn diagram and/or use “Last Match” to create a template with headings for the subtopics.)

Prompt them to think about the bigger message that they might want to communicate:

- *Who had the worst experience – the survivors of the General Grant or the men of the Endurance?*
- *If you had to choose a word to say what links these stories, what would it be? What word would you choose to say what is most different about them?*

Support English language learners to use appropriate text connectives by displaying lists (for example, “on the other hand”, “however”, “despite this”, “equally”, “to illustrate”, “on the contrary”). Discuss their meaning and model how they might be used. The students could add to these lists as they come across more examples. If necessary, you could also provide sentence scaffolds.

Page 23

JAMES TEER. The last match.

MARY ANN JEWELL. Our last chance.

WILLIAM SANGUILY. If it fails?

JOSEPH JEWELL. It won't fail.

WILLIAM SANGUILY (*hysterical*). But if it does, we're done for. The cold! We'll perish.

FICTIONALISED RECOUNT

In a fictionalised recount, the writer combines made-up details, characters, and events with historical facts. They often recount what happened from the perspective of one of the characters. The reader learns what this person is seeing, feeling, and thinking but has to infer what is happening elsewhere or how events are experienced from the perspective of other characters.

Discuss what might have happened if the last match had also failed. Encourage the students to research other stories of nineteenth-century shipwrecks to find out what, if anything, they might have been able to do to save themselves. They could then conduct a hot-seating activity, in which they go into role as one of the survivors and are questioned by other students about what happened next. Have the students use this experience as the basis for writing a letter or diary entry, in the voice of one of the characters, recounting what happened.

METACOGNITION

- *Tell me how you approached writing your comparison. What were the key topics you felt you needed to address? Did more come up when you read the story of the Endurance? What made you decide to structure your comparison as you did? Do you feel it's successful?*

GIVE FEEDBACK

- *You gave a lot of thought to the comparison you made between the two events. You've brought out the fact that leadership was important. What other skills and qualities were also important?*

