



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.

This item complements the article about coprolites in the same Journal, providing a more emotive response to the idea that extinction is permanent – and often caused by the actions of people. The poem might be called a mōteatea – a lament. It is written in the voice of the huia and tells the story of its demise. Manhire is a master of rhythm and internal rhyme, making this a beautiful poem for reading aloud and for use as a model for writing.

The poem is accompanied by explanatory text about what happened to the huia. There is also an image of the distinctive tail feather that was both part of what was valued about the huia and part of what brought about its extinction.

This item:

- has strong links to Aotearoa New Zealand’s histories (see page 4 of this TSM)

- provides an opportunity for students to appreciate and respond to a poem that is also a lament
- has a central theme of extinction alongside themes of exploitation and short-sightedness
- conveys a sense of loss, grief, and anger
- provides opportunities for exploring and contrasting the values, attitudes, and behaviours of mana whenua and nineteenth century European explorers regarding the natural world
- provides opportunities for students to make connections, ask questions, infer, and visualise.

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

Texts related by theme

“Return of the Moa?” SJ L4 Oct 2015 | “Spirit of the Bird” SJ L3 Aug 2015 | “Richard Owen’s Giant Mystery” SJ L3 Aug 2015 | “The Coprolite Hunters” SJ L3 Nov 2020

Text characteristics

Opportunities for strengthening students’ reading behaviours

a feather on the ground

I lived among you once
and now I can’t be found

I’m made of things that vanish
a feather on the ground

Bill Manhire

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

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE HUIA?

To Māori, the huia was tapu. The bird was prized for its beauty. Only rangatira of high rank and their whānau wore huia feather hair. This changed in 1901, when the Duke of York visited New Zealand – as a token of friendship and respect – placed her own huia on the Duke’s hatband. From that day, the bird’s fate was sealed.

The huia was a social bird. Pairs mated for life. At one time

mixed text types

Huia

I was the first of birds to sing
I sang to signal rain
the one I loved was singing
and singing once again

My wings were made of sunlight

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

I sang upon a postage stamp
I sang upon your coins
but money stepped towards me
and stole away my voice

Where are you when you vanish?
Where are you when you’re found?
I’m made of greed and anguish
a feather on the ground

figurative and/or ambiguous language that the context helps students to understand

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 – Reading: “Making sense of text: vocabulary knowledge” and “Making sense of text: using knowledge of text structure and features” to find detailed illustrations showing you how students develop expertise and make progress in these aspects.

SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED

- Some knowledge of the huia as one of Aotearoa New Zealand's many extinct birds
- Some knowledge of extinction
- Some knowledge of the reasons why the huia or other birds became extinct
- Some knowledge of the effects of colonisation on Māori, on the country's resources, and on the environment of Aotearoa New Zealand
- Familiarity with poetry and poetic structures
- Some sense of what New Zealand was like in the nineteenth century.

Possible supporting strategies

- Tell the students the title of the poem and ask them to share what they know about huia. If necessary, explain that the huia was a bird that was endemic to Aotearoa New Zealand: it was only ever found here. It became extinct early in the twentieth century.
- Discuss the fact that the word “extinction” is not used in the poem, yet that is its topic. Use a concept map to chart information, ideas, and words about extinction that the students glean from the poem and text box.
- Useful sources of information on the huia include [New Zealand Birds Online: Huia, Huia: The Sacred Bird](#) and [Te Karanga a te Huia | The Call of the Huia](#).
- For an image of the huia stamp, see [NZ Post 1988 Pictorials](#), and for one of the coin, go to [Online Coin Club – Sixpence, 1957](#) or [2015 New Zealand Annual Coin: Huia](#). Discuss what these images say about how New Zealanders feel about the huia.
- For information and teaching ideas about the concept of kaitiakitanga, go to [Te Takanga o te Wā Māori History Guidelines for Years 1–8](#).
- For information on waiata and haka, including print, image, and media files, go to [Tāmata Toiere](#).

VOCABULARY

- Possibly unfamiliar words and phrases, including “signal”, “anguish”, “token”, “fate”, “predators” “toll”, “fashionable”
- Words in te reo Māori, including “huia”, “tapu”, “rangatira”, “whānau”
- Adverbs of time and place, including “1901”, “From that day”, “late nineteenth century”, “In 1892”, “After the Duke's visit”, “Back in New Zealand”, “Tararua Ranges, near Wellington”, “28 December 1907”.

Possible supporting strategies

- Remind the students of strategies for working out unfamiliar words, such as using word knowledge, looking for words within a word, identifying prefixes and suffixes, making connections with their prior knowledge, rereading to look for clues, and reading on to see if the meaning becomes clearer.
- Ask the students to suggest how the huia got its name, then use the explanation in the [New Zealand Geographic](#) to check their ideas. Invite them to test how they think the bird's call sounded and then check this against old recordings of the call being imitated.
- Activate the students' prior knowledge of the words “tapu” and “rangatira”. You may first need to clarify your own understandings of these words. See The NZ History site for an explanation of tapu and its role in regulating interactions between people and with the natural environment. This page also explains the concept of mana and its importance to rangatira, in particular. See also the [Māori Dictionary](#).
- English language learners could play Think and Link. In this game, the students reuse vocabulary in a way that fosters critical thinking skills and helps them to make connections. Write each word on a piece of paper and shuffle them. Turn over two words and ask the students to connect them in one sentence.
- [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.

- The first-person narrative from the perspective of a huia that speaks directly to the reader
- The lack of punctuation, apart from capital letters and question marks
- The last two lines in the second stanza reference the last two lines of the first stanza
- The rhythm, which is mostly regular and chant-like
- Repetition: “sang”/“singing”/“song”; “I sang”, “My ...”, “now a”, “Where are you”, “I’m made of”, “a feather on the ground”
- Rhetorical questions: “Where are you when you vanish?” and “Where are you when you’re found?”
- Figurative language, including metaphors (“wings were made of sunlight”, “tail was made of frost”), personification (“money stepped towards me / and stole away my voice”)
- Abstract language: “I’m made of greed and anguish”
- Explanatory text and a visual image.

- Remind the students of the features of poems they have read, heard, and written. Discuss how poems are different from narratives. List the features they know about for them to return to later.
- Explain, if necessary, that poems often use figurative language – words and phrases that have both a literal meaning and a metaphorical meaning. We also use figurative language in everyday life to make a point. Prompt the students to suggest some examples, and ensure that they bring up some that are used in this poem.
- Discuss what we mean by the structure of a poem. Clarify that this refers to the way poets organise and compress ideas and feelings through the number of stanzas, length of the lines, rhythm, rhyme, and repetition. Prompt the students to make connections with poems they have read before.
- If you have students who share a language other than English, prompt them to discuss the features of poetry written in their language.



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 3 – Ideas: Show a developing understanding of ideas within, across, and beyond texts.
- Level 3 – Language features: Show a developing understanding of how language features are used for effect within and across texts.
- Level 3 – Structure: Show a developing understanding of text structures.

ENGLISH (Writing)

- Level 3 – Ideas: Select, form, and communicate ideas on a range of topics.
- Level 3 – Language features: Use language features appropriately, showing a developing understanding of their effects.

SOCIAL SCIENCES

- Level 3 – Understand how people make decisions about access to and use of resources.
- Level 3 – Understand how people remember and record the past in different ways.
- Level 3 – Understand how early Polynesian and British migrations to New Zealand have continuing significance for tangata whenua and communities.

Aotearoa New Zealand’s histories

The key ideas for Aotearoa New Zealand’s histories are:

- that the influx of European settlers in the nineteenth century put great pressure on the country’s resources
- that the way of life and protocols of tangata whenua meant that resources were generally used in a sustainable way, but European colonisation, increased population, greed, and lack of respect had a huge and sometimes devastating impact.

Throughout your work with this text, consider these connections and bring them into the teaching and learning in ways that work for your rohe and your learners. Some examples of ways to do this are given in these support materials.

Possible first reading purpose

- Read and enjoy the craft and language of a poem about an extinct bird.

Possible subsequent reading purposes

- Identify the author’s purpose for writing the poem
- Evaluate the impact of the language choices the writer makes in relation to his purpose
- Identify links between the poem and the text box that help explain the demise of the huia.

Possible writing purposes

- Express opinions and communicate information as an outcome of historical inquiry
- Create their own mōteatea (lament) using the poem as a model.



Instructional focus – Reading

English Level 3 – Ideas: Show a developing understanding of ideas within, across, and beyond texts; Language features: Show a developing understanding of how language features are used for effect within and across texts; Structure: Show a developing understanding of text structures.

Social Sciences Level 3 – Understand how people make decisions about access to and use of resources; Understand how people remember and record the past in different ways; Understand how early Polynesian and British migrations to New Zealand have continuing significance for tangata whenua and communities.



Go to the [Learning Progression Frameworks – Reading](#) to find detailed illustrations showing how students develop expertise and make progress in those aspects featured in the following section of this TSM. These aspects have been selected as the main focus for this TSM, but other aspects could also be relevant to the text.

First reading

- Activate the students' prior knowledge by asking what they already know about or have heard about huia. See "Specific Knowledge Required: Possible supporting strategies" for ideas.
- Read the poem out loud, using your voice to convey the meaning.
- Ask the students to share how it makes them feel and the images it brings to their minds. Prompt them to identify the tone of the poem, for example, whether it is happy, sad, or nostalgic. Have them provide examples from the poem to justify their answers.
- Ask the students to read the poem and the text box. Give them sticky notes or printed copies of the texts to note down their thoughts and questions as they read. Some students, particularly English language learners, may find it difficult to hear the rhythm and rhyme in the poem. Repeated opportunities to hear it read aloud, choral readings, and clapping the beat as they read will support them.

Possible supporting strategies

(LPF – Making sense of text: using a processing system)

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.
- Focus on one stanza at a time in a shared reading approach. Read each stanza aloud as the students follow along in their own copies or (better) on an enlarged version of the text projected on a whiteboard. Clarify words and concepts so that students get the gist of each section. Explain that poems are open to multiple interpretations, and we're expected to reread them to get more out of them.
- Model your own wonderings about the poem and your use of inference to make connections. *I wonder why the poet began with the line "I was the first of birds to sing". Maybe it was first because it had been here for a long time and was native to New Zealand. Maybe it was also a bird that sang early in the morning.*
- Ask the students to suggest how a bird could "sing" on a postage stamp or a coin. Discuss their suggestions as a group.
- Invite the students to share what they think is the purpose of the rhetorical questions. Clarify, if necessary, that they are not there to be answered but for the reader to consider the huia's sadness.

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.

Poem–text box links and the author's purpose

The teacher

Have the students share their thoughts and questions about the poem with a partner. Ask them to discuss in pairs what the poem is about and how it relates to the information in the text box. Have them identify specific words and phrases in the poem that link to information in the text box. They could use highlighters or draw arrows and boxes to show these connections on a copy of the text.

Prompt the students to consider why the author used poetry to convey his message about the huia.

- *What did you get from the explanation that you didn't get from the poem?*
- *What did the poem give you that you couldn't get from the explanation?*

Have the students share any other questions their discussion has raised. Record these as possible avenues for further inquiry.

The students could play Hot Seat to explore the issue of the bird's extinction from different perspectives (students could take on the roles of a huia, a rangatira, a colonist settler, the Duke of York, and a fashionable European).

(LPF – Reading for literary experience; Acquiring information and ideas from informational text)

The students:

- make connections between the poem and the text box to identify the possible message in the poem and to find answers to their questions
- consider and describe how different genres may suit different writing purposes
- make inferences about the author's purpose in writing the poem and why the text box has been included
- integrate information from the poem and the text box to draw conclusions about the various attitudes to the environment held by people in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries
- go beyond the text to identify critical questions that require further inquiry.

Language choices and the author's purpose

The teacher

Introduce the acronym SMILE to analyse the poem: S= Structure, M = Meaning, I = Imagery, L = Language, and E = Effect. Point out that the first four elements are all means of achieving the fifth element; that is, they are all intended to have an effect on the reader.

Working in pairs, have the students complete the graphic organiser below. Explain that the questions are just some examples and encourage them to suggest others.

Have the students compare what they find and discuss the knowledge and strategies they used to complete their analysis.

"Huia"	Responses
Structure <i>How is the poem organised?</i> <i>How many verses are there?</i> <i>What do you notice about the punctuation? Does it rhyme?</i> <i>Is there repetition?</i> <i>Does it have a sense of rhythm?</i>	
Meaning <i>What is this poem about?</i> <i>What is the poet's message?</i>	
Imagery <i>What pictures do you get in your mind when you read the poem?</i> <i>There are several metaphors in the poem – what are they? Why do you think the poet included these?</i> <i>What are they saying?</i>	
Language <i>What words did the poet use to create an image?</i> <i>What was the effect of the rhetorical questions?</i>	
Effect <i>How did the poem make you feel?</i> <i>What did it make you think about?</i> <i>What effect did the poet's choices have on you as the reader?</i>	

(LPF – Making sense of text: using knowledge of text structure and features; Reading to organise ideas and information for learning)

The students:

- use what they know about poetic features and structure and the topic to analyse the poem
- locate and synthesise information across the poem to understand how and why the poet created particular effects
- ask questions as they explore the text
- evaluate the author's choices in relation to their impact on them as readers.

GIVE FEEDBACK

- *You inferred that "My wings were made of sunlight / My tail was made of frost" was a reference to the shiny tinge in the bird's feathers and the white feathers at the end of its tail. I saw that you then checked your inference against the picture. Remember to use other sources or features of the text as well to confirm your inferences.*

METACOGNITION

- *Was there a part of the poem that you found particularly hard to understand? What strategies did you use to make sense of it?*
- *What lessons do you think we can learn from the story of the huia? What does this story tell you about how European immigrants treated the new land? What questions does it prompt for you?*



The Literacy Learning Progressions



Assessment Resource Banks

Instructional focus – Writing

English Level 3 – Ideas: Select, form, and communicate ideas on a range of topics; Language features: Use language features appropriately, showing a developing understanding of their effects.

Social Sciences Level 3 – Understand how people make decisions about access to and use of resources; Understand how people remember and record the past in different ways; Understand how early Polynesian and British migrations to New Zealand have continuing significance for tangata whenua and communities.



Go to the [Learning Progression Frameworks – Writing](#) to find detailed illustrations showing how students develop expertise and make progress in those LPF aspects featured in the following section of this TSM. These aspects have been selected as the main focus for this TSM, but other aspects could also be relevant to the text.

Text excerpts from “Huia”

Page 19

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE HUIA?

To Māori, the huia was tapu. The bird was prized for its beautiful tail feathers. Only rangatira of high rank and their whānau wore huia feathers, usually in their hair. This changed in 1901, when the Duke of York visited New Zealand. A Māori woman – as a token of friendship and respect – placed her own feather in the Duke’s hatband. From that day, the bird’s fate was sealed.

Examples of text characteristics


WRITING FOR HISTORICAL INQUIRY

Writing is an integral part of learning in social sciences. It is used to find and record information, explore values and perspectives, and consider responses. A wide variety of formats can be used. As with all writing, it is important to be thoughtful and deliberate about choosing a format that suits the purpose.

Teacher (possible deliberate acts of teaching)

(LPF – Using writing to think and organise for learning)

Using the questions that have arisen from reading the text, the students can lead an inquiry into the impact of colonisation on the huia and other indigenous birds. The following approaches involve purposeful historical writing using a variety of genres.

- Have the students use the adverbs of time and place to create a timeline that helps them understand the huia’s story and gives them a sense of the historical context.  They could create an interactive timeline, using [Google Drawings](#) or [Prezi](#).
- Use the timeline activity to provide a context for exploring the relationship mana whenua had with the natural world and comparing it with the colonists’. The students could conduct further research before debating whether things are different today. They could then write an essay capturing their thinking on what we can learn from te ao Māori about how we could better protect our threatened species.
- The students could read “The Coprolite Hunters” in this *School Journal*. This could be a prompt for finding out about what happened to other New Zealand birds that were once prolific. They could write explanations modelled on the explanation of what happened to the huia.

Complete the inquiry with discussion about how reading, writing, and talking are all parts of how we do historical inquiry. Have the students think, pair, and share their experiences of using writing as part of this inquiry.

Some students, especially English language learners, would benefit from using a graphic organiser to organise their thoughts before writing. You could also provide word banks, such as a list of expressive verbs, other model texts, text frames, and sentence scaffolds as extra support.

Text excerpts from “Huia”

Page 6

Where are you when you vanish?

Where are you when you're
found?

I'm made of greed and anguish
a feather on the ground

Examples of text characteristics

MŌTEATEA

Te reo Māori is an oral language that uses waiata and haka to preserve knowledge, histories, and traditions and to express emotions. Waiata and haka are regarded as containing the highest form of language, as they use proverbs and figurative language. Mōteatea is a general term for a traditional, chanted song-poem. As a verb, “mōteatea” means “to grieve”, so the word is also used to mean “a lament”. Āpirana Ngata described different classes and sub-classes of waiata, including waiata tangi, which are laments for death and loss.

Teacher (possible deliberate acts of teaching)

(LPF – Creating texts for literary purposes)

Discuss how poetry and songs can provide a record of historical events that help take us into the thoughts and feelings of the poet or songwriter. Play the students some examples of mōteatea from a site such as Tāmata Toiere or the New Zealand Folksong website, or invite them to share some they know. Students could learn the meaning and significance of local mōteatea, drawing on the knowledge and expertise from your local community, for example, from kaumātua at your local marae or the kapa haka group at a nearby high school. Students from other cultures could share laments from their traditions.

Have the students select a mōteatea for analysis, using and adapting the approach described in the “Subsequent readings” section of this TSM. They could compare the features of a mōteatea or waiata tangi with those of “Huia”.

Have the students use the poem as a model for creating their own poem or mōteatea.

GIVE FEEDBACK

- *It was fascinating to hear the connection you made to the ways your family uses poetry and music to express sorrow. You got us making lots of connections, and you're right – it seems as if people in all cultures need poems or chants or songs when they are grieving.*

METACOGNITION

- *How do you feel about using waiata to create a historical record? Why do you think they are used?*
- *What were some of the ways you used writing to inquire into something? Think about your family or about our community. How do different kinds of writing help us understand our past?*

