

# The Story of the Ventnor

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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 1902, thirteen lives were lost when the SS *Ventnor* sank off the Hokianga coast in Northland. The ship was carrying the carefully packaged bones of almost five hundred Chinese goldminers on their way home for burial. Despite immediate efforts to retrieve the bones, the ship and its precious cargo were lost. Over the following months, some of the bones washed up on Hokianga beaches. Most of these bones were collected and cared for by local iwi, with the stories of the shipwreck and the Chinese kōiwi passed down across generations of Māori. Over one hundred years later, some of the descendants of the goldminers discovered the fate of the bones and the kindness that iwi had shown and travelled north to learn more. A shared respect for the ancestors has since drawn together Chinese New Zealand communities and the iwi who are now kaitiaki of the goldminers' remains.

This item:

- has strong links to Aotearoa New Zealand's histories
- provides opportunities for exploring the inquiry practice of identifying and using sequence
- has themes of cross cultural relationships, respect, and kaitiakitanga
- reflects the role of tangata whenua as kaitiaki within their rohe and the importance of manaakitanga
- provides opportunities for students to explore ways that people demonstrate respect for ancestors
- can be used to explore the concept of cultural interaction
- combines a historical narrative with contemporary events
- includes illustrations and photographs to support the text.

A PDF of the text is available at [www.schooljournal.tki.org.nz](http://www.schooljournal.tki.org.nz)

### Texts related by theme

“**Bok Choy**”, “**Bright Fine Gold**”, and “**Following Gold**” (all SJ L3 May 2015) | “**Chinese New Zealanders**” SJ L4 May 2019 | “**Family Photographs**” SJ L4 Oct 2018 | “**Leaves**” SJ L4 May 2020 | **Bok Choy** SJSL L3 2015

## Text characteristics

Opportunities for strengthening students' reading behaviours

At Mitimiti, a bright red Chinese waharoa (gate or entrance way) stands on the Maunga Hione urupā. The gate, which looks out to sea, was built by Nick Grace of Te Rarawa. The iwi wanted to respect the ancestors and honour the history that connects the two cultures. “We see the waharoa as a sign or tohu,” says Nick, “placed there to call people back.” The waharoa is now an icon for the Chinese descendants and a special place where they can go.

### MOVING FORWARD

The story of the *Ventnor* – and everything that's happened since – has inspired songs, poems, documentaries, and even an opera. Now there is a memorial at Onoponi, close to where the lifeboats came ashore. The memorial lists the

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 Te Rarawa ancestors realised that the bones were from the *Ventnor*. They wanted to return the kōiwi (bones) to Auckland, where they had a better chance of reaching China. South of the harbour, Te Roroa ancestors took the kōiwi from the beaches to a burial place near their own urupā. It's said that gum diggers from nearby Waipoua helped by lending a horse and cart. Stories of the kōiwi were handed down from one Māori generation to the next. The people of the Hokianga

a significant amount of vocabulary that is unfamiliar to the students (including academic and content-specific words and phrases), which is generally explained in the text by words or illustrations

For the Chinese, both here and in Guangdong, these graves were worrying. They believed it was very important to be buried in a place where your family could take care of your spirit. If this didn't happen, you might become a “hungry ghost”, lost forever in the afterlife and never finding peace. So the community took action. In 1878, it formed the Cheong

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

The voyage of the *Ventnor* took longer to organise. This time, teams from the Cheong Shing Tong went to cemeteries as far away as Auckland. Nine elderly Chinese men were to care for the remains during the voyage. In return, they were given a free passage home. There was also one unexpected passenger: Choie Sew Hoy. He had died in 1901, and his remains were on board with the others.

The *Ventnor* was only a few hours into its journey when it struck a rock off Taranaki. The ship continued north, but by the following evening, it had



illustrations, photographs, text boxes, diagrams, maps, charts, and graphs that clarify or extend the text and may require some interpretation

## 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 early Chinese migration to Aotearoa, including the hardships and discrimination Chinese miners faced
- Some knowledge of the Otago gold rush that peaked in the mid-1860s
- Some understanding of what happens in a gold rush
- Some understanding about ways that culture and heritage shape our views about life after death
- Some understanding of the importance that some cultures place on honouring their ancestors
- Some understanding of the role of tangata whenua as kaitiaki of their rohe.


### Possible supporting strategies

- Build up the students' prior knowledge of the discrimination faced by Chinese New Zealanders in the 1800s and early 1900s, using stories and poems such as those listed in “Texts related by theme” on page 1 of this TSM. Discuss the restrictive immigration laws that resulted in most goldminers leaving their families behind in China. Useful sources include [NZ History](#) and [Te Ara – The Encyclopedia of New Zealand](#)
- Discuss the various ways that people demonstrate respect for their ancestors, for example, many people in Chinese communities burn incense, lay flowers, and bow at ancestral graves. Have the students investigate and share ways that respect is shown towards ancestors in their own families and whānau. Be mindful of the fact that for many New Zealanders, the ancestors are understood to be present with us.
- Discuss the concept of culture, which students often associate with observable factors, such as foods, clothing, festivals, and language. Support the students to understand that the actions taken by the Māori and Chinese people in the article are underpinned by values such as respect for ancestors and a belief in the afterlife. Help them to make connections between other shared features of Māori and Chinese cultures, for example, respect for the elderly and the importance of manaakitanga.
- The following resources provide more background information on the *Ventnor* and on the way the communities came together to remember their ancestors:  
[Newshub 10 April 2021](#), [Stuff 4 April 2021](#), [Stuff 11 April 2021](#), [CGTN \(China Global Television Network\) 11 April 2021 \(The dedication of the \*Ventnor\* memorial\)](#)  
[Journey to Lan Yuan – EP8: The Ventnor Disaster](#) (a video by Toitu Otago Settlers' Museum on the history of the *Ventnor* shipment)  
[NZ Chinese Association – Ching Ming April 2018](#) (a short video on a trip by members of the Chinese Association to the Hokianga in 2018).

## VOCABULARY

- Possibly unfamiliar words and phrases, including “scrambled”, “precious cargo”, “remains”, “deceased”, “cemeteries”, “supervised”, “treated”, “zinc”, “sealed”, “venture”, “confident”, “aftermath”, “gum diggers”, “descendants”, “ancestors”, “plaque”, “gratitude”, “unveiling ceremonies”, “compassion”, “icon”, “documentaries”, “memorial”
- Words and phrases related to the Otago gold rush, including “gold rush”, “goldminers”, “goldfields”, “abandoned”
- Place names in Aotearoa New Zealand and China, including “Hokianga”, “Guangdong”, “Central Otago”, “West Coast”, “Southland”, “Taranaki”, “Omapere”, “Te-Oneroa-a-Tōhē”, “Waipoua”, “Rawene”, “Mitimiti”, “Maunga Hione”, “Opononi”
- Names of hapū and iwi: “Te Rarawa”, “Te Roroa”, “Te Tao Maui”, “Te Hokoheka”
- Te reo Māori words and phrases: “kōiwi”, “urupā”, “iwi”, “pōwhiri”, “kaumātua”, “kuia”, “wāhi tapu”, “mihi”, “manuhiri”, “aroha”, “waharoa”, “tohu”
- Abstract concepts and figurative language, such as “bound for”, “Times were tough”, “take care of your spirit”, “hungry ghosts”, “the afterlife”, “passage home”
- Names of Chinese Societies: “Cheong Shing Tong (the Flourishing Virtue Society)”, “New Zealand Chinese Association”
- Names related to sea vessels: “SS *Ventnor*”, “SS *Hoihow*”
- Names of people: “Choie Sew Hoy”, “Wong Liu Shueng”, “Peter Sew Hoy”, “Alex Nathan”, “Fraser Toi”, “Nick Grace”, “Meng Foon”

## Possible supporting strategies

- Explain that one of the things that makes New Zealand English special is that it includes a number of kupu Māori. Have the students share their understanding of words used in the text that haven’t been translated (for example, urupā and wāhi tapu) and share other te reo Māori words that they commonly use. Create a class vocabulary list of commonly used te reo Māori words and display them on the classroom wall for the students to reference as they read and write.
- Use maps of Aotearoa and China to locate the places mentioned in the article. Discuss the challenges of distance between Central Otago and the Far North, particularly in the early 1900s.  Google Maps allows for exploration of areas and can give a better idea of the distances involved.
- Highlight phrases that contain abstract concepts. Support the students to integrate their prior experience and knowledge of language (spoken and written) with the context to understand what the author intended.
- Discuss the important role cultural societies can play in supporting people with a shared culture, heritage, or identity to maintain their traditions, histories, languages, and cultural expression. In particular, discuss the ways that the Cheong Shing Tong (the Flourishing Virtue Society) may have been important for Chinese goldminers who were often ostracised or experienced discrimination from Pākehā New Zealanders. Identify any cultural societies (historical or still functioning) in your own rohe and explore their purpose and significance.
- Before and after reading, discuss the words and expressions that have colloquial or figurative meanings. Make sure the students understand these words and how they change in different contexts.
- You could support English language learners to learn unfamiliar words by using a “What goes with?” activity. Choose a word and ask the students to suggest other words that go with it, for example, if the word is a noun, the students suggest adjectives (community: local community; business community; Chinese community), if it’s an adjective, they suggest all the nouns it may describe (confident: a confident speaker; a confident person; a confident swimmer), and so on.
- *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.

## TEXT FEATURES AND STRUCTURE

- A dramatic introduction that sets the scene, followed by eight sections of text
- Ideas that are generally directly stated and well-supported
- A mix of historical and contemporary content, involving time shifts from the shipwreck of the *Ventnor* to the events that preceded it and its consequences
- Abstract subheadings that require some interpretation: “Gold rush”, “Hungry ghosts”, “Passage home”, “Aftermath”, “Wāhi tapu”, “Releasing the spirits”, “A living history”, “Moving forward”
- A range of quotes, including some where the person speaking refers to what someone else has said
- Illustrations and photographs that support the text.

## Possible supporting strategies

- Skim the article with the students, prompting them to notice its features and predict its purpose and the kind of information it will contain.
- Identify the time shifts in the article, from 1902, back to the 1860s, and then on into the present. Have the students identify the main events by working together to place them on a timeline.
- If the students are having difficulty recognising words that signal a shift in time, try using a text reconstruction task. Give them a set of mixed-up paragraphs or sentences and have them put these back into the correct order. You could develop a class list of time markers for the students to refer to.
- Use the subheadings to prompt the students to share their ideas and understandings about the abstract concepts of “hungry ghosts”, “passage home”, “aftermath”, and “wāhi tapu”. Have them reconstruct the story of the *Ventnor* and associated events using these terms.
- Remind the students that when they are reading quotes, they need to pay close attention to the punctuation, verbs, and proper nouns to identify different speakers; recognise what they are saying; and interpret the meaning of the quote in relation to the rest of the article. Model how to do this using one of the quotes in the article.



## 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.

### ENGLISH (Writing)

- Level 3 – Ideas: Select, form, and communicate ideas on a range of topics.

### SOCIAL SCIENCES

- Level 3 – Understand how cultural practices vary but reflect similar purposes.
- Level 3 – Understand how people remember and record the past in different ways.
- Level 3 – Understand how the movement of people affects cultural diversity and interaction in New Zealand.

### Aotearoa New Zealand's histories

Big idea: Māori history is the foundational and continuous history of Aotearoa New Zealand.

National context: Whakapapa me te whanaungatanga

Years: 4–6

What are the origin and settlement stories of particular groups who have moved to Aotearoa New Zealand? Why were some treated differently from others?

The key ideas in “The Story of the Ventnor” are:

- that people from a variety of countries came to make Aotearoa home and whether their experiences were positive or negative depended on how the migrants were treated
- that the past is remembered and recorded in different ways and that oral traditions have particular importance in Māori culture
- that the Chinese and Māori cultures share values of caring for and showing respect for their ancestors
- that kindness and respect can bring communities together.

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.

### Aotearoa New Zealand's histories – inquiry practice

- Identifying and using sequence.

### Possible first reading purpose

- Find out what happens when a ship carrying the remains of nearly five hundred Chinese goldminers sinks off the Hokianga coast.

### Possible subsequent reading purposes

- Explore the cultural interaction between Chinese New Zealanders and the home peoples of the Hokianga
- Describe ways that different cultures show respect for kōiwi
- Identify ways that people remember and record the past.

### Possible writing purposes

- Describe a memorial in your rohe, including how it relates to the history of the people of your area
- Retell a story that has been passed down through the generations
- Explain a way your family or whānau shows respect for their ancestors.



## Instructional focus – Reading

**English** Level 3 – Ideas: Show a developing understanding of ideas within, across, and beyond texts.

**Social Sciences** Level 3 – Understand how cultural practices vary but reflect similar purposes; Understand how people remember and record the past in different ways; Understand how the movement of people affects cultural diversity and interaction in New Zealand.



Go to the [Learning Progression Frameworks – Reading](#) to find detailed illustrations showing how students develop expertise and make progress in the 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

- Initiate a discussion to find out how much the students know about early Chinese migration to Aotearoa, including some of the challenges these migrants faced. (See page 2 of this TSM for supporting strategies to build your students' relevant prior knowledge before reading.)
- Have pairs of students read the first paragraph on page 28 together, sharing their ideas and questions about what the article will be about. Check for understanding of the term “remains”.
- Ask the students to skim the text to get a sense of its purpose and to find key ideas related to their reading purpose. *What do the images and other features suggest about the topic, setting, and purpose of the text?*
- Make a list of any questions the students may have and use these during subsequent readings as the basis for locating information and clarifying understanding.

### 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.
- Model how to work out the meaning of unfamiliar words and phrases.
- Go to the New Zealand History and Te Ara links (in the “Specific knowledge required” section of this TSM) to support and strengthen their understanding of the context.
- Give the students sticky notes to identify words, phrases, or contexts they find challenging. These can be shared, discussed, and clarified as a group.
- Prompt the students to make connections with ways that people show respect for their ancestors and the ways that significant events can bring people from different cultural backgrounds together.
- Chunk the text into sections and share-read them. Pose guiding questions for each section, for example: *Why did Chinese men come to Aotearoa in the 1860s and what challenges did they face? Why did Chinese communities want to send people's bones back to China? How did Māori communities respond when they found the bones? How were the stories of the Chinese goldminers kept alive in Māori communities?* Support the students to locate information to answer the guiding questions, pausing where necessary to clarify any questions or vocabulary.

### 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.

### Exploring abstract concepts

#### The teacher

Explain the difference between concrete and abstract ideas – that concrete concepts are things that we can see, hear, touch, taste, or smell, whereas abstract concepts are things we can't see that require us to make connections with our experiences or make comparisons with something else we know.

Give groups of students the subheadings “Gold rush”, “Hungry ghosts”, “Passage home”, “Aftermath”, “Wāhi tapu”, and “Releasing the spirits”. Have them share their ideas of what these subheadings mean in relation to the article, locating relevant information in the text. Encourage the students to share how they visualise phrases such as “hungry ghosts” and “releasing the spirits” and what other connections they make with them.

Have the students use the subheadings to reconstruct the story orally.

You could give English language learners a list of the key words and phrases and discuss these with them. They could then use the list as a support for retelling the story orally.

#### (LPF – Making sense of text: using knowledge of text structure and features; Making sense of text: vocabulary knowledge)

##### The students:

- share and explain their interpretations of the abstract terms and phrases used in the text
- integrate their understanding of the text with their own knowledge and experience of wāhi tapu and burial places
- locate information in the text to support their understanding
- reconstruct the story using these key words and phrases.

## **Respect for ancestors**

### **The teacher**

Have the students discuss why the Chinese descendants felt grateful towards the Hokianga iwi mentioned in the article.

Ask them to reread the final paragraph of the text, sharing their ideas about what it means to respect our ancestors and ways that people can do this.

Have the students work in groups to identify ways that both Chinese and Māori communities demonstrated their respect for the goldminers who had passed away.

Encourage the students to think about what motivated communities to take action, for example, shared beliefs and values.

## **Cultural interaction**

### **The teacher**

Explain that although there are significant differences between Māori and Chinese cultures, there are also areas of deep connection, for example:

- believing that the ancestors are always present
- acknowledging the spiritual nature of events
- respecting the elderly
- making guests feel welcome and looked after.

Working in groups, have the students identify examples of these aspects of culture in the article.

Ask the students to return to their original questions and discuss ways that the article met and went beyond their expectations in terms of what the text covered.

- *What makes this article more than just a story of a shipwreck? What were the main ideas that the writer wanted to convey?*

### **METACOGNITION**

- *How did your own experiences help you to understand the ideas in the text? Which parts did you find hard to understand?*
- *Which strategies did you use when there were parts that you found challenging?*

## **(LPF – Acquiring and using information and ideas in informational texts)**

### **The students:**

- make connections between the text and their own understanding of showing respect for ancestors
- locate information in the text that shows how Chinese and Māori communities in the article showed respect for the dead
- think critically about the underlying as well as observable aspects of culture.

## **(LPF – Reading to organise ideas and information for learning; Making sense of text: reading critically)**

### **The students:**

- locate and integrate information across the text that relates to underlying as well as observable aspects of Chinese and Māori culture
- evaluate the purpose of the article and summarise its key themes
- integrate the information and the key events and actions described in the text to draw their own conclusions about the ways that the author conveyed her message about connections between Chinese and Māori cultures.

### **GIVE FEEDBACK**

- *I noticed that you found the shifts in time a bit confusing at first. Creating a timeline of events can make it easier to understand the sequence of events.*



# Instructional focus – Writing

English Level 3 – Ideas: Select, form, and communicate ideas on a range of topics.



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 “The Story of the Ventnor”

## Examples of text characteristics

## Teacher (possible deliberate acts of teaching)

Page 28

The night of 28 October 1902 was calm and clear, but the SS *Ventnor* was in trouble. Ever since it hit a rock the day before, the ship had been drifting and slowly sinking. Now, miles out to sea off the Hokianga coast, it was about to go under ... thirteen people died that night. Also lost was the ship’s precious cargo: the remains of almost five hundred men. Most had died many years earlier, long before the *Ventnor*’s journey had even begun.

### SETTING THE SCENE

*The introduction to a historical narrative often provides the reader with information about a significant event in the story, locating it in a specific time and place.*

### (LPF – Writing meaningful text: using knowledge of text structure and features)

Have the students discuss why the writer chose to begin the article with the sinking of the *Ventnor*. What information does the writer provide about the time and place? What adjectives and verbs has the writer used to draw the reader into the scene? How does the introduction signal that this was not an ordinary shipwreck?

With the students, explore a significant event that happened in your rohe. Identify some of the circumstances that led to the event and what happened afterwards.

Working in small groups, have the students imagine what they may have seen, heard, smelt, or felt if they were present at the event. Brainstorm adjectives and verbs that would help readers visualise the event.

Identify indicators of time and place that would be useful to include when introducing the event.

Have the students create a compelling introduction to an article about the event, seeking feedback on their drafts from their writing group or partners.

Page 32

Stories of the kōiwi were handed down from one Māori generation to the next. The people of the Hokianga wondered if the Chinese would ever come back, and one day, they did. In 2007, some people from New Zealand’s Chinese community learnt what had happened.

### TRANSITIONS OF TIME OR PLACE

*Historical texts often cover long timespans, especially when they link past events with the present. Writers use words and phrases that help readers to transition from one time period or place to another.*

### (LPF: Writing meaningful text: using knowledge of text structure and features)

Using a timeline of events, discuss the timespan the text covers, from 1866 to the present day. Identify how the story of the *Ventnor* was kept alive in Māori communities but largely lost by Chinese communities until it was rediscovered in 2007.

Discuss why, when shifting time or location in a text, it’s important to support readers to make the transition smoothly. Have the students share their ideas about ways writers do this, for example:

- using adverbs of time showing how much time has passed
- referring to an upcoming time or scene before they start writing about it
- describing how a story has been kept alive across time
- identifying the time when a story that has been lost is rediscovered.

Using a historical event in their rohe or a family story that has been passed down, have the students experiment with ways to transition readers from one time or place to another. They could ask a peer reviewer for feedback on whether they found the transition smooth or hard to follow.

## Text excerpts from “The Story of the Ventnor”

Page 33

As they walked, Alex remembered the words of his kuia. “She said, ‘Don’t forget to look after the Chinese wāhi tapu.’ She believed the places where their bones had washed up were just as important as if it had been our own ancestors.”

## Examples of text characteristics

### ORAL HISTORIES

*Historical stories are often passed down orally from one generation to the next. Quotes are a useful way to identify text that comes from the ideas and wisdom of our ancestors.*

## Teacher (possible deliberate acts of teaching)

### (LPF: Creating texts to communicate current knowledge and understanding)

Have the students discuss ways that the past is remembered and shared.

Talk about the important role that oral histories played in the story of the *Ventnor*, in both Māori and Chinese communities. Point out that different iwi have their own stories about the kōiwi (see page 34 for the story handed down within Te Tao Maui of Te Rarawa).

Have the students ask a family member or a family friend to share a story that has been passed down to them that they don’t mind sharing with others. Then have the students retell the story in written form. Remind them of the importance of acknowledging who a story belongs to and who has passed it down. English language learners may like to conduct the interview in their first language and retell the story using both languages.

Ask the students to examine the punctuation used in the quote on page 33. Using this quote as a model, challenge the students to add a quote to their story that involves someone else being quoted.

### GIVE FEEDBACK

- Using “he” and “she” in quotes can sometimes be confusing, especially when there is more than one speaker involved. Let’s have a look at the quotes you have used and decide whether it would be helpful to provide some more detail, such as using the person’s name.

### METACOGNITION

- What process did you use when deciding how to structure your text? What changes did you make after receiving feedback?
- How did you support your readers to transition from one time to another?
- How did you decide which quotes to use in your article?

