



BETWEEN YOU & ME

**CULTURE IN CONTEXT
IN AOTEAROA**

Edited by Lee Murray, Piper Mejia & Jean Gilbert

Foreword by Victor Rodger

Teachers' Notes

Choosing a title

Titles, like the names of characters, can be tricky to choose. Words are everything to authors, so this dilemma is to be expected. In the case of this anthology, the editors debated for months over both the main title “Between You and Me” and the sub-title “Culture in Context”.

“Between You and Me” came from our desire to convey a sense that the texts are biographical in nature as well as being about an identity-defining moment in the author’s life, and a feeling of trust in sharing our truth with an unknown audience.

The sub-title, “Culture in Context”, arose from a discussion of what makes culture, as, in Aotearoa, we have a shared culture as citizens of the same country, but other facets of our culture come from the community we are born in and the one we create over our lifetimes. Culture can both unite and divide us, depending on context, though the more we share and accept each other’s differences, the stronger our shared culture becomes.

Task: Give students an assortment of titles and get them to plot a story they think would resonate with them.

The importance of a foreword

Forewords are an endorsement of a text provided by someone with a critical reputation. We are honoured to have had Victor Rodger write such a brutally honest foreword for this anthology. For teachers, forewords offer a greater understanding of the proposed audience and purpose of the work and should be treated as an equally important text.

Task: Read Victor Rodger’s foreword and discuss what he reveals about his motivation for writing the foreword, as well as his understanding of the audience and purpose of this anthology.

Teaching writing is second to teaching editing

One thing we have learned on our 10-year journey running writing competitions and conferences for Young NZ Writers is that the real stories are shown in the editing, and this starts with how students set up their documents. Here is a [link](#) to how to set up a document, so it is suitable for publication, and below are our tips for getting students writing and editing.

Advice for novice writers ...

Step 1 – Create a moment in time

Short stories do not have:

- prologues or epilogues.
- ‘hours later’, ‘days later’, ‘months later’, ‘years later’, or ‘centuries later’.
- never end with, ‘woke up and it was all a dream’, ‘to be continued’, or similar.

A moment in time could be morning, afternoon, or evening. It could be a day. A carefully crafted short story implies a short time frame, for example, an hour.

Note: If you allow your main character to be knocked unconscious or go to sleep, you are not staying in the moment. In real life, a person who is knocked unconscious will take between 6 weeks and 3 months to recover fully – which you do not have time for in a short story.

Step 2 – The main character must change

In a short story, do not describe a character's age or physical appearance unless it is pivotal to the story. Hair length or colour, eye colour, skin colour, or body type should only be mentioned if it moves the story forward. This could also extend to the character's name. What needs to be clear is how the character changes:

- happy to sad.
- frightened to comforted.
- kind to cruel.
- scared to brave.

These concepts can be further developed in a cyclic construction by returning your protagonist to their original state, for example, from happy to sad to happy (but wiser). Please **note** that it's preferable if 'main' characters do not die.

Don't break the 4th wall: do not speak directly or introduce yourself (the author) to the audience.

Step 3 – Context can create conflict

The main character must face, overcome, or resolve some conflict – which changes them in some way. This conflict is created by context.

- a character excited to start college ends up having the worst day of their life – realises they will have to do it all over again tomorrow.
- a trip to the beach turns to disaster when the character is caught in a rip.

Step 4 – Endings

Endings can seem incomplete, but they should allow the audience / reader to imagine clearly what might happen next.

Step 5 – Avoid tired tropes

- parents / siblings should not have died or disappeared, then suddenly reappear.
- the main character does not have to be long-lost royalty or discover they have superpowers.
- the sudden appearance of a twin.
- saving the world.
- the monster was me.
- waking up imprisoned.
- chased into a forest.
- starting your story with waking up.

Step 6 – Structure

There are several ways to structure a story:

- diary entries / a letter (going from fine to bleak), BUT this structure can be overused.
- a recurring day where your character ends up where they began.

Our suggestion is to start your story with action in the middle of the conflict and end your story as soon as the conflict has been resolved.

Editing

Step 1 – delete anything that implies something has happened before or after the story.

Step 2 – delete all descriptions of characters that are not key to the story.

Step 3 – delete modifiers and filtering words (thought/felt/seemed).

Step 4 – replace adverb+verb with a better verb and adjective+noun with a better noun.

Step 5 – learn the difference between ‘telling’ a story and ‘showing’ a story (show not tell).

Soundproof

by Sarah Dunn



The Author’s Inspiration

This story was inspired by the culture and landscape of the Far North, where my father’s whānau have been farming since before Te Tiriti o Waitangi. When I was growing up, Dad would tell us kids stories about his adventures as a young man working on family land near Herekino—riding horses to bring in stock, diving for kai moana, baling hay, and driving tractors. I thought about the many possible futures available to us today as cities expand and wondered what Dad’s way of life might look like in one of them.

Before you read

Tūtira mai ngā iwi was written by Wi Huata to explain how *iwi* come together to support one another. Later, he used this song to promote Moral Re-armament, uniting different cultures (https://www.folksong.org.nz/tutira_mai_nga_iwi/index.html). Over time, it has become a recognisable song performed at many occasions, one that unites the people of Aotearoa.

Māori (original version)	English (translation)
Tūtira mai ngā iwi	Line up together people
tātou tātou e	All of us, all of us
Tūtira mai ngā iwi	Stand in rows, people
tātou tātou e	All of us, all of us
Whai-a te marama-tanga	Seek after knowledge
me te aroha – e ngā iwi!	and love of others – everyone
Ki-a ko tapa tahi	Think as one
Ki-a ko-tahi rā	Act as one
Tātou tātou e	All of us, all of us (repeat)
Tā-tou tā-tou e E!!	
Hi aue hei!	All of us, All of us!! Hi aue hei!

- What other songs in Māori do you know?
- When do you sing them?

Tasks

Language

- Highlight and find definitions for new words found in the text.
- Why does the author use words in both English and Māori?
- Find one example of each of the following language features:
 - listing
 - onomatopoeia
 - colloquial language
 - alliteration

Setting

- When is the story set?
- Where is the text set?
- What issues does the text explore?
- Why is this setting important in the text?

Characters

- Describe the relationship between the three main characters:
 - Alana
 - Petrina (Pet)
 - Ihaka
- Whose point of view (POV) is the text told from? Why is this important to the story?

Incidents

- What is the **intake mic**?
- What upsets Ihaka?
- What does the author imply when she writes, “They both knew what was up.” Why is this important?
- Why does Alana go looking for Ihaka, and how does she find him?

Ideas

There are two main ideas explored in this text: **mental health** and **community**.

- Find two examples from the text that reveal the issue of mental health.
- Find two examples from the text that reveal the issues of community.
- Why are these issues important in Aotearoa?

Extension Tasks

Personal Response

Summarise the text in your own words and explain the author’s audience and purpose.

Creative Writing

Write a text about:

- a government action that disrupted a community.
- a character dealing with their mental health.

Discussion / Debate

- What initiatives are there to support people with mental health issues, to raise awareness, and to remove the stigma? What more could be done?
- What ways do people create supportive communities where you live? What more could be done?

The Notebook

by Jean Gilbert

The Author's Inspiration

This story was inspired by my own lived experience with Face Blindness. I don't recognise anyone, not even myself. "The Notebook" is a sample of my life as a teenager. I know what it feels like to be different. For years, I struggled with feelings of loneliness. I was desperate to fit in, to be normal. But you know what? It's okay to be different, to be unique, to be who you are with all those flaws and imperfections. I wish someone had told me that when I was a teenager. I wish I had not been so afraid of who I was (the brain disorder) and instead embraced it. I am who I am, and I think I'm pretty cool. Even though a person may seem okay, you never know what is going on underneath the surface. So, be kind. It's as simple as that. Face Blindness doesn't define me. It makes me stronger. Now, I call it my superpower.



Before you read

Face blindness, or prosopagnosia, is a brain disorder. It's characterised by the inability to recognise or differentiate faces. People with face blindness may struggle to notice differences in the faces of strangers. Others may have a hard time recognising familiar faces. The disorder is estimated to affect about 2 percent of the population (<https://www.healthline.com/health/face-blindness>).

- What other neuro-diversity differences might make attending school challenging?
- What can schools do to assist neuro-diverse students succeed at school?

Tasks

Language

- Highlight and find definitions for new words found in the text.
- Find and explain why the author has used each of the following punctuation techniques:
 - Parentheses
 - Italics
 - Numbering
 - Words in capital letters

Setting

- When is the text set?
- Where is the text set?
- What issues does the text explore?
- Why is this setting important in the text?

Characters

- Whose point of view (POV) is the story told from? Why is this important to the story?
- Describe the relationship between the (unnamed) narrator and other characters:
 - narrator's sister (unnamed)
 - Sophie
 - Mr Ryker

Incidents

- What is the narrator worried about every day?
- What is the significance of the notebook?
- Why is the main character afraid of being honest with Sophie?
- Why do they both laugh when the main character says, "I won't forget you"? Is it funny?

Ideas

There are two main ideas explored in this text: **neurodiversity** and **fear of rejection**.

- Find two examples from the text that reveal that the character is neuro-diverse.
- Find two examples from the text that reveal the idea of fear of rejection.
- Why are these issues important to young people, especially in today's society?

Extension Tasks

Personal Response

Summarise the text in your own words and explain the author's audience and purpose.

Creative Writing

Write a text about an unhappy experience at school. You can base it on a real experience (all good creative writing is drawn from what the author knows).

Formal Writing / Speech

Research other ways neurodiversity has impacted people's lives. You may include:

- famous historical / popular culture figures.
- barriers that prevent neurodiverse people from living fully integrated lives.
- organisations / technological advancements that improve their quality of life.
- highlight milestones that have changed society's attitudes towards neurodiversity.

Skate Park

by Dan Rabarts

The Author's Inspiration

As a parent, I see many of the challenges my children face, especially now they're growing into their place as teenagers and starting to see the big wide world beyond our parental sphere of influence. The inspiration for "Skate Park" came from a situation that one of my son's friends found himself in, where a local man was hanging around the skate park not far from our house and offering drugs, for free, to the young people who used this facility. One thing we learn as we get older is that



nothing ever comes for free, not really, and so the other side of this story is not only about the importance of role-modelling among seniors and parents to help guide our young people through these challenges, but simply about the need to remain connected and able to have conversations, because there are so many dangers out there in the world, lurking like sharks just under the waves. And the best way we can confront them is by sharing common ground and being able to talk about things.

Before you read

Drug is a term used to describe a medicine or other substance which has a physiological effect when ingested or otherwise introduced into the body. In colloquial language (slang), drug implies an illegal substance.

- What are some common illegal drugs used in Aotearoa?
- What are some common legal drugs (worldwide) that may cause negative side effects?
- What is the difference between legal and illegal drugs, and who gets to decide?

Tasks

Language

- Highlight and find definitions for new words found in the text.
- Find one example of each of the following language features:
 - colloquial language
 - slang
 - emotive language
 - listing

Setting

- When is the text set?
- Where is the text set?
- What issues does the text explore?
- Why is this setting important to the text?

Characters

- Whose point of view (POV) is the text told from? Why is this important to the story?
- Why does the author use a lot of colloquial and kiwi slang?
- Describe the relationships between the characters:
 - Trent
 - Jayden
 - Phil
 - Trent's dad

Incidents

- What is the purpose of a skate park, and how has this purpose been subverted?
- Why doesn't Trent tell Jayden that he is making a coffee table with his father?
- Why does Jayden phone Trent for help?
- What is the symbolism around the scars on Trent's father's hands?

Ideas

The main idea, **taking risks**, is explored in two ways in this text:

- Find an example of a positive risk (taken by Trent).
- Find an example of a negative risk (taken by Jayden).
- What is the difference between the boys' lives that make them take different risks?
- In what ways are Trent and his father good role models?
- What tools do young people need to overcome negative peer pressure?

Extension Tasks

Personal Response

Summarise the text in your own words and explain the author's audience and purpose.

Creative Writing

- Brainstorm situations where young people are peer pressured into participating in activities with unwanted consequences.
- Write an advice column giving strategies for young people to cope with situations of peer pressure.

Project / Research

Design an out-of-school programme for young people. Make your programme engaging. Think about the age of participants, activities, supervision, location, costs, time, transport, and food. Create a brochure advertising your programme.

A Moment in Time

by Isaiah Tour

The Author's Inspiration

“A Moment in Time” is based on an experience that I faced one day on my way home from high school. It was a real turning point in my life and is a memory that has stuck with me even to this day. It was a single event that could have had many outcomes and many ripple effects based on choices by more than one individual. It also highlights complicated issues of perception in society.



I purposefully omitted the details of the person who had decided to commit this crime, as I do believe that this role can be anyone and that gender and ethnicity does not play any part of this. However, due to perception it's easy to use our own biases to paint this character by how we are influenced by the media and stereotypes. I also do believe that this person had no ill intention and felt like they had no choice, but that there is so much more to this person than one moment in time.

I also wanted to write about the complicated relationship between Asian parents and their children, particularly growing up in a Western country, and that feeling of alienation. The character, Eric, simply wants to escape reality through music as that feels like his safe space in a world that is quite noisy.

Before you read

Social and cultural alienation often means a person feels caught between the culture of their family and the culture they are growing up within. For many migrant children, or children born in Aotearoa to migrant parents, this feeling of alienation may include a reluctance to speak the language of their parents or practise their cultural traditions for fear of not being accepted by their peers.

- define culture and what it means to you.
- explain cultural traditions your family practises that others might not.
- define what makes a New Zealander a ‘Kiwi’.

Tasks

Language

- Highlight and find definitions for new words found in the text.
- Identify the literary technique used in each of the following examples:
 - “the world slips away”
 - “overprotective Asian parents”
 - “A person in an oversized black hoodie, denim shorts, and jandals...”
 - “my voice croaks”

Setting

- When is the text set?
- Where is the text set?
- What issues does the text explore?
- Why is this setting important in the text?

Characters

- Whose point of view (POV) is the text told from? Why is this important to the story?
- Describe the relationship between the narrator (Eric) and other characters:
 - mother
 - thief

Incidents

- Why is music important to the narrator?
- What is the significance of Eric's reaction to his mother's use of emojis?
- What does Eric understand about the thief's motivation?
- Why does Eric lie to his mother?

Ideas

There are two main ideas explored in this text: **truth** and **privilege**.

- Find two examples from the text that reveal the idea of truth.
- Find two examples from the text that reveal the idea of privilege.
- What is something that would make you feel terrible if it were stolen from you?
- What do you do when you see people in need (like homeless people)?

Extension Tasks

Personal Response

Summarise the text in your own words and explain the author's audience and purpose.

Creative Writing

Write a text about breaking a rule (at home, school or in society). You can base it on a real experience (as all good creative writing is drawn from what the author knows).

Debate / Discussion

In recent years, there has been a discussion around privilege, especially 'white' privilege. What does this term mean, and do you think it is a fair way to examine issues like poverty and equity?

Make a New Game

by Shriya Bhagwat

The Author's Inspiration

Inspiration for "Make a New Game": Everyone is unique, and it has taken me courage to embrace my own uniqueness. My friends have walked with me, and I could not have done it without their love and their acceptance, and their faith. Gratitude for being loved and being able to love is my inspiration for writing this text.



Before you read

With modern technology, it is easy for people to 'follow' their celebrity 'crushes', to be a part of a larger fandom. But technology is a two-edged sword, allowing people to hide their identity in order to hurt people they know (not just celebrities). Online abuse, often termed *online bullying*, is an increasing cause of anxiety and depression, both examples of mental health issues.

- Do you 'follow' anyone online? If yes, what kind of messages do you post? Why?
- What devices do you have access to, and what do you use them for?
- Have you ever experienced unwanted attention online? If yes, what did you do to deal with it?

Tasks

Language

- Highlight and find definitions for new words found in the text.

Imagery is used to 'paint a picture' of a character or environment: At the beginning of this text, the author describes a 'spider crawling on the roof beams'.

- What do you think the spider symbolises?

Parallel structure is often used to show the same idea in two ways. In this text, the author compares what has happened to a celebrity, *Divya*, and the narrator, *Jinal*.

- What comparison is she making between the characters' lives? Why?

Magical realism is when magical or fantastic events are treated as if they are real. In this text, the author has a dream conversation with her idol (who she has never met and knows is dead).

- Why is it important that this discussion happens between Jinal and Divya rather than between Jinal and her parents or her friends?

Setting

- When is the text set?
- Where is the text set?
- What issues does the text explore?
- Why is this setting important in the text?

Characters

- Whose point of view (POV) is the text told from? Why is this important to the story?
- Describe the relationship between the main character (Jinal) and other characters:
 - parents
 - Divya
 - Buddy

Incidents

- Why would Jinal's mother tell the school that she was sick?
- Who was Jinal trying to avoid at school and why?
- Why is Divya (and her music) important to Jinal?
- What does Jinal realise about herself after she dreams of Divya? How does this change her?

Ideas

The main idea explored in this text is **bullying**.

- Find examples from the text that reveal the main character Jinal is bullied.
- Find examples from the text that reveal the main character Jinal is a bully.
- Why has the author made the main character both a bully and a victim of bullying?

Extension Tasks

Personal Response

- Summarise the text in your own words and explain the author's audience and purpose.

Creative Writing

Dreams are a great way of getting writing ideas. For a week, keep a dream diary by your bed and as soon as you wake up write down what you dreamed about, no matter how crazy. Share your dreams and see if you can work out what your brain was thinking during the night. You can also use your dreams to write a longer piece of fiction.

Speech / Research

Research a person you admire. They could be someone you know or in a field you are interested in such as science, arts, literature, or sports. Explain why you have chosen them, what have they done in their lives that makes them admirable, and how they have influenced you.

A Bad Day Out

by Kyle Mewburn



The Author's Inspiration

“A Bad Day Out” is based on a true story. It was hard enough being trans in the rigidly binary suburbs of 1970’s. Once puberty hit, I felt almost overwhelmed by frustration and futility as my physical reality began to diverge from my inner truth. With time running out, I decided to do something about it.

Before you read

LGBTQI+2 stands for lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender, queer (or questioning), intersexual, asexual, and any other identity other than ‘straight’ or heterosexual. People who belong to the rainbow community are us, they have always been us, but even today they must fight for the same rights as heterosexuals, and as a result are more likely to experience violence in their lifetimes. One current issue is the right to have their preferred name and pronoun used in both casual and legal situations.

- Define the terms that make up the rainbow community.
- How does the rainbow community participate in your school?
- How can clothing be an issue for members of the rainbow community, and what can schools do to mitigate the impact a person’s clothing choice may have?

Tasks

Language

- Highlight and find definitions for new words found in the text.
- Find at least one example of each of the following language features:
 - metaphor
 - emotive language
 - rhetorical question
 - listing
 - alliteration

The author has structured this text as a piece of *internal monologue*.

- What are two language features used to do this?
- Why has the author chosen to write her story in this way?

Setting

- When is the text set?
- Where is the text set?
- What issues does the text explore?
- Why is this setting important in the text?

Characters

- Whose point of view (POV) is the text told from?
- Why is this important to the story?

This text is an example of ‘man vs. man’ text trope.

- What is wrong with this terminology, considering the subject matter and changes in society?
- Describe the main character’s relationship with themselves.

Incidents

- Why does the main character prefer people to think she is carrying a dead body instead of what she is really carrying?
- How is the main character *free*?
- Why would no one notice that she was missing from school?
- Why is this day a turning point in the main character’s life?
- How is this day ‘destroyed’ by the expression on the store manager’s face?

Ideas

The main idea explored in this text is ***gender identity***.

- Find examples from the text that reveal the main character’s gender.
- Find examples from the text that reveal the main character’s physical body does not fit their gender.
- Why has the author made the main character hide their identity from their mother / friends / society?

Extension Tasks

Personal Response

Summarise the text in your own words and explain the author’s audience and purpose.

Creative Writing

Deciding who you are, or what kind of person you are, often begins before puberty. Write a diary entry (or a series of diary entries) where your main character is struggling with their identity through discovery, exploration, and acceptance.

Formal Writing

Choose a topic to write an op-ed for your school magazine on:

- Both gender and sexuality are on spectrums, the more we understand about these spectrums the easier it will be to have a more inclusive society.
- Historic and modern rainbow community icons we should know about.
- How to be an ally to the rainbow community.
- Changing how we teach ‘sex’ education in schools.
- Great LGBTQIA2+ books or authors young people should read (Editors’ note: Gender Failure by Ivan Coyote is a great book to read on this topic)

Whakawhiti Kōrero

by Ikey Ihaka Tunui



The Author's Inspiration

The story “Whakawhiti Kōrero”—whakawhiti meaning to exchange, and kōrero meaning to talk / words—follows the story of 14-year-old Tina and her brief experience of whakawhiti kōrero, the exchanging of words, or texting, on the dating app, Tinder, and the potential dangers of technology.

The inspiration for “Whakawhiti Kōrero” came from the growing influence of technology over the upcoming generation, and how that technology can potentially be used. The message behind the story is kia tupato, meaning to be careful. In the story, readers will see that Tina has her village: from her father to her younger brother, her Kuia and Koro, and even her own marae. All of these people have helped shape the person she is today. However, like reality, there are certain circumstances that can influence certain actions.

Before you read

Tinder is an app designed to help single people meet. The app allows you to indicate those people you find attractive, and, if they also find you attractive, you are both notified. If one of you is attracted and the other isn't, neither is notified. And of course, if both parties don't find each other attractive, they both go on their ways, never knowing what the other thinks.

- Why do you think people use apps to meet strangers?
- What are the dangers using apps in this way? Are some people more vulnerable than others?
- What are more traditional ways of meeting a potential romantic partner? Are these ways still relevant or appropriate in today's society?

Tasks

Language

- Highlight and find definitions for new words found in the text.
- The author uses **dialogue** between two characters to move the text forward.
 - What are the advantages and disadvantages of using dialogue to structure a text?
- The author uses **symbolism** of a boat (in her dream).
 - What do boats symbolise?
 - What do dreams symbolise?
 - Why does the author use symbolism?

Setting

- When is the text set?
- Where is the text set?
- What issues does the text explore?
- Why is this setting important in the text?

Characters

- Whose point of view (POV) is the text told from? Why is this important to the story?
- Describe the relationship between the main character (Tina) and other characters:
 - Chloe and Sarah
 - Tina's father
 - Charlie
- How do these relationships influence Tina's behaviour?

Incidents

- Why does the main character 'get on' Tinder?
- What did Tina mean by, "he slowly unlocked her thoughts, one key at a time"?
- What did Tina's dream mean?
- What was the 'lie'?

Ideas

The main idea explored in this text is *peer pressure*.

- Find examples from the text that reveal how the main character is being peer pressured.
- Find examples from the text that reveal how the main character accepts / rejects being peer pressured.
- Why has the author made the main character hide their actions from their parents?

Extension Tasks

Personal Response

Summarise the text in your own words and explain the author's audience and purpose.

Creative Writing

There are lots of apps that allow you to communicate with family, friends, and strangers. Create a 100-word short conversation with no more than 2 characters texting one another.

Formal Writing / Debate

Brainstorm the range of apps and communication-enabled online games that everyone in your class uses.

Discuss:

- Why do they have them?
- How much time do they spend using them?
- What are the advantages / disadvantages of using them?

Dancing Ghost

by Gina Cole



The Author's Inspiration

As a lawyer, I often acted for people involved in Court cases where they may have been facing a jail sentence. I wanted to write a story from the point of view of a child whose parent had been charged with a crime, and how it affected them in the school environment. The inspiration came from when I was at secondary school and the father of a girl in my class was constantly in the news for being charged with embezzlement. None of us understood anything about the court case and none of us knew the meaning of the word embezzlement. All we saw was our classmate who never spoke to any of us about what was going on for her. The story is about grabbing onto anything, no matter how crazy, that may help you to retain some kind of inner stability in your life when everything around you seems to be crumbling.

Before you read

As with most countries, indigenous people, and people living in poverty, make up the greatest percentage of the prison population. This is no different in Aotearoa. Follow this link to an interactive guide to the state of crime and justice in Aotearoa. (<https://interactives.stuff.co.nz/2018/05/prisons/crime.html#/10>).

Discuss with your class / partner:

- What surprised you in this online text, and why?
- What didn't surprise you and why?

Tasks

Language

- Find definitions for the following words:
 - Misophonic
 - Claustrophobic
 - Embezzlement
 - Fraud
- What **connection (parallel structure)** does the author draw between Amanda's discovery of a dancing ghost and Tere dealing with her father's court case?
- What is the **symbolism** of a ghost dancing in a keyhole?

Setting

- When is the text set?
- Where is the text set?
- What issues does the text explore?
- Why is this setting important in the text?

Characters

- Whose point of view (POV) is the text told from? Why is this important to the story?
- Describe the relationship between the (unnamed) main character and other characters:
 - Mother / father
 - Friends Tere and Amanda
- How do these relationships influence their behaviour?

Incidents

- Why does the main character only buy a bottle of water? What does this imply about their relationship with food?
- Why is Tere the only member of the class to talk to the main character about what is happening with her father?
- Why do they decide to go into the closet?
- What does the closet remind the main character of?
- Why do they hope every keyhole in the world has a dancing ghost?

Ideas

The main idea explored in this text is ***loss of power***.

- Find examples from the text that reveal that the main character feels powerless.
- Find examples from the text that reveals how the main character tries to regain some power in their life (possibly in an unhealthy way).

Extension Tasks

Personal Response

Summarise the text in your own words. and explain the author's audience and purpose.

Creative Writing

Everyone has committed a crime; maybe it is stealing money from your parents, or an item from the corner diary. As you get older, maybe you'll drive without your seatbelt or drink / smoke underage. Write an article about a student who has been caught doing something you think they should not be in trouble for doing.

Debate

In the novel, *Utopia* by Thomas More (1551), he writes, "For if you suffer your people to be ill-educated, and their manners to be corrupted from their infancy, and then punish them for those crimes to which their first education disposed them, what else is to be concluded from this, but that you first make thieves and then punish them." Debate whether you think this statement is still true almost 500 years later.

How to Make Char Siu Bao with your Por Por on the Weekends

by Lee Murray



The Author's Inspiration

“How to Make Char Sui Bao with your Por Por on the Weekend” was inspired by my daughter’s experiences of learning to prepare roast pork buns, her favourite dim sum dish, with my mother, her Chinese grandmother. With this instructional poem, I wanted to reveal how cultural traditions and knowledge are passed on from generation to generation, with each family adding their own little rituals depending on the context. Of course, for my daughter and her Por Por, it wasn’t just about cooking steamy bao—even though we all love to eat them—but the shared connection and understanding that grew between them.

Before you read

Every family has ways of cooking and eating that are different from everyone else’s. It might be that you always have fish and chips on a Friday, or that the wacky cake recipe is your great-grandmother’s from the war. Some people eat with their fingers and others with chopsticks. Some point the prongs of their fork towards the plate and others away from the plate.

What is your favourite meal?

- What is in it?
- How is it cooked?
- Who makes it?
- When do you eat it?
- Why is it your favourite?

Tasks

Language

- What do you think the following words mean?
 - char sui bao
 - Por Por
- Why does the author use these words instead of their English equivalent?
- **Pronouns**, **listing**, and **imperatives** are language features you expect to find in a recipe. Find examples of each.

Setting

- When is the text set?
- Where is the text set?
- What issues does the text explore?
- Why is this setting important in the text?

Characters

- Whose point of view (POV) is the text told from? Why?
- What do steps 1, 2, 3 and 4 reveal about the character's experience at school?
- What does the whole recipe reveal about the character's relationship with their Por Por?
- What does the character reveal about themselves when they eat the first bao?

Incidents

- How often does the character make char sui bao with their Por Por? Why is this significant?
- Why does the main character not tell her Por Por why the students at school won't eat the bao she makes?

Ideas

The main idea explored in this text is ***cultural identity***.

- Find examples from the text that reveal the main character's culture.
- Find examples from the text that reveal how the main character accepts / rejects their culture.

Extension Tasks

Personal Response

Summarise the text in your own words and explain the author's audience and purpose.

Creative Writing

Write a blog describing the history behind your favourite recipe (include the recipe as well).

Formal Writing

Write an article about a cultural practice where food plays a significant role. For example, compare how birthdays or weddings are celebrated in two different cultures.

Cheongsam

by Lee Murray

The Author's Inspiration

“cheongsam” is a poem which tells of a stunning cheongsam of pale silk, decorated with dark piping. The dress belonged to my own grandmother, Wai Fong, an opera singer who, as a young woman, sang on the radio in China (which means she was probably a bit of a celebrity in those days). She wore the dress on her wedding day, in the 1930s, when she was just nineteen years old, and not long before she fled to New Zealand. Once here, the garment was stored in a camphor chest because none of my grandmother's seven dainty daughters were slim enough to wear it. There was even less chance of me squeezing into it with my European parentage. The poem is intended to demonstrate the otherness I experienced as a mixed-race child, even within my own family, and the desperate steps we might go to in order to belong.

Before you read

The idea of ‘otherness’ is rooted in a feeling that our self-image is different from all others. Children of mixed heritage often experience this when one side of their heritage is more accepted than the other by the society in which they live. Migrant children also feel this ‘otherness’ when the language and culture of their new home country is at odds to the language and culture of their parents’ country. However, this feeling of ‘otherness’ can also be felt by people belonging to the LGBTQIA+2 community, in particular, those whose homes are not accepting of their identity / self-image.

- In what ways are you similar or different to members in your family?
- In what ways are you similar or different to your friendship group?
- How do you embrace or struggle with your ‘otherness’?

Tasks

Language

- Highlight and find definitions for new words found in the text.
- Find examples of the following language features:
 - Alliteration
 - Listing
 - Simile
 - Allusion
 - Metaphor
 - Symbolism
 - Irony

Setting

- When is the text set?
- Where is the text set?
- What issues does the text explore?
- Why is this setting important in the text?

Characters

- Whose point of view (POV) is the text told from? Why is this important to the story?
- Describe the relationship between the narrator and:
 - their ancestors
 - their culture
 - society

Incidents

- What does the narrator imply when she says:
 - *only a child's fingers can operate*
 - *hold it against me*
 - *child of the devil*
 - *to make space for me*
 - *I smile because it's fitting*

Ideas

The main idea explored in this text is ***belonging***.

- Find examples from the text that reveal the main character's ancestry.
- Find examples from the text that reveal how the main character feels rejected by her culture.
- Find examples from the text that reveal what the main character is willing to do to fit in / belong.

Extension Tasks

Personal Response

Summarise the text in your own words and explain the author's audience and purpose.

Creative Writing

Imagine you find an object in a box that has been packed away for years. The object belonged to someone you heard about but never really knew well. Describe the object and what you imagine it can tell you about this person.

Formal Writing

Choose a culture and write a magazine article about the history of traditional clothing. You could choose to be specific like the history of bathing suits or women's sporting attire.

An Ordinary Day

by M.L.E. Brown

The Author's Inspiration

Makereta was born in 1966, adopted in Fiji as a baby and brought to Aotearoa by her Pakeha NZ parents (respectively of Irish and Anglo-Scots extraction). She grew up on Auckland's North Shore. "I was raised Pakeha and a privileged Pakeha at that. That came and still comes with its own challenges. "An Ordinary Day" is mostly autobiographical. The one background embellishment that didn't happen to anyone at my school, did happen to someone I knew. The real problem with racism in New Zealand was that no one in white Aotearoa ever wanted to talk about it let alone admit it existed here. I certainly experienced that growing up and sadly it's still true enough to be a problem forty years on."



Before you read

‘Within living memory’ means that there are people alive today who witnessed important historical events. In Aotearoa / New Zealand, these historical events include the 1981 Spring Bok Tour / Anti-Apartheid protests. At that moment in time, people were divided between those who believed that sports have nothing to do with politics and those who believed that human rights are more important than sports.

What do you know about the following historical events in Aotearoa / New Zealand?

- 1970s – 1980s Dawn Raids.
- 1975 – Dame Whina Cooper’s hikoi to parliament.
- 1981 – Spring Bok Tour / Anti-Apartheid protests.
- 1985 – Sinking of the *Rainbow Warrior*.
- 1984 – Beginning of the AIDs epidemic (in Aotearoa).
- 1986 – Homosexual Law Reform Bill.
- 1884 – 1987 Nuclear-Free Aotearoa / New Zealand.

Make a timeline of your life and populate it with historical events that have occurred in your lifetime. Make notes of the events that have had an impact on your life and / or are important to you.

Tasks

Language

- Highlight and find definitions for new words found in the text.
- The author uses the **pronoun you** to connect the (unnamed) narrator and the reader.
 - What similarities / differences are there between your life and the narrator’s life?
- The author uses *italics* for dialogue instead of quote marks as it is recorded speech, a memory.
 - What words stick in the narrator’s memory? Why these words?

Setting

- When is the text set?
- Where is the text set?
- What issues does the text explore?
- Why is this setting important in the text?

Characters

- Whose point of view (POV) is the text told from? Why is this important to the story?
- Describe the relationship between the narrator and other characters:
 - Garrison Taylor
 - Georgia
- How do these relationships influence the narrator's thoughts?

Incidents

- How does the narrator describe themselves? Why?
- What does the narrator imply when they state:
 - "Good Kiwi names"
 - "Just a few Māori in feather cloaks"
 - "The Big Bongas"
 - "This is an ordinary day."
- How does the narrator explain what type of Polynesian is 'acceptable'? (Define acceptable.)
- Georgia believes "Gaz is harmless" because it is "just words". This is **an allusion** to the childhood chant "sticks and stones will break my bones, but names will never hurt me". Does society still think / accept this? Why / why not?

Ideas

The main idea explored in this text is **racism**.

- Find examples from the text that reveal how the narrator is experiencing racism.
- Find examples from the text that reveal how the narrator copes / does not cope with their experience.
- Why has the author made the narrator hide their experience from teachers / friends?

Extension Tasks

Personal Response

Summarise the text in your own words and explain the author's audience and purpose.

Creative Writing

Choose another historic event and use it as a setting for a character experiencing racism. You might want to include details of how the historic event impacts your character's life. For example, they could be a part of a protest, be watching the event on TV, or it could be the cause of the racism they are experiencing.

Formal Writing

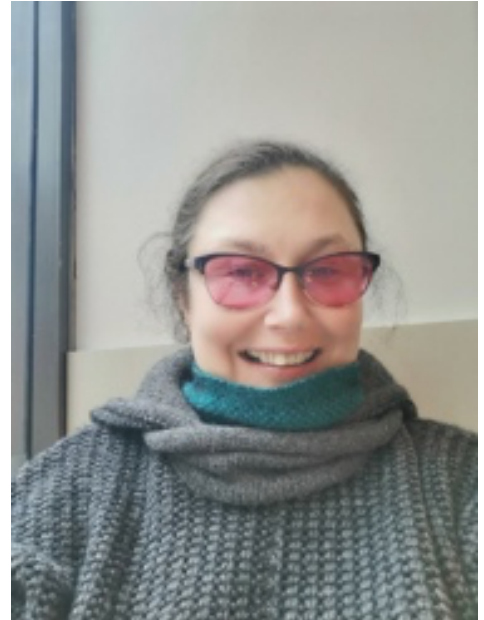
Propose an alternative way to deal with racism / bullying in schools. You will have to research your school's current procedures, and maybe create a focus group to discuss what works and what doesn't work. Present your proposal to your principal.

The Dump

by Sally McLennan

The Author's Inspiration

I'm a disabled author who lives in a church in the Wairarapa. I was born in a farming community, and I've moved from country to town and back my whole life. I am, by adoption a member of the Ngāti Porou at Tolaga Bay. My family has been gifted with a hereditary adoption into the tribe because of the service of my grandfather to that hapu. My half-siblings whakapapa back to Ngāti Porou by blood on the other side of my family. I lived in Thailand as a secondary school student, and since then I've mixed with the Thai population in New Zealand. Tony was the name of my Thai brother whose grandmother was Italian. I wanted to honour the courage it takes to transition between countries and communities in "Dumped." It was also important to me to recognise the gifts of diverse people. I have experienced racism as a different person in the Chinese Thai community. I see the racism my friends experience here. It's extreme. We need to normalise immigrants and diversity. While it's not always an overt part of the story the experience of racism and nastiness to disabled people (which is so prevalent, something often not realised by good souls) inspired me to model better behaviour in "Dumped".



Before you read

Words have the power to influence how a person is defined by themselves and others. The word *disabled* replaced the word *handicap* to remove the negative impression it gives when discussing someone who may have mobility or intellectual impairments. However, even the word *disabled* can be contentious and as a result sometimes the words *differently abled* are used. Innovation in technology has had the biggest impact in changing society's bias towards 'able-body' people, as it has helped disabled people overcome the barriers of a world created only for 'able' people.

- List some inventions that have assisted people to live with greater independence in society.
- Can you think of other changes in society that have allowed improved inclusivity?

Tasks

Language

- Highlight and find definitions for new words found in the text.
- What are two meanings of 'dumped'?
- The author uses *imagery* to describe the narrator's home. What words make them appear 'poor'?
- What is implied by the *cliché* "badge of honour"? Where did this phrase originate?

Setting

- When is the text set?
- Where is the text set?
- What issues does the text explore?
- Why is this setting important in the text?

Characters

- Whose point of view (POV) is the text told from? Why is this important to the story?
- Describe the relationship between the main character and other characters:
 - their mother
 - the people at the dump
 - their neighbour Mr Spears
 - Makamae
- How do these relationships influence the main character's behaviour?

Incidents

- Why does the main character pretend they are “like an outlaw” when they visit the dump?
- Why does the main character visit the dump?
- The vet, Tony (from Thailand), does not treat the ferret like a pest. What does the writer imply?
- What does the new leg symbolise to the main character? To the Ferret? To the audience?

Ideas

The main ideas explored in this text are *acceptance* and *inclusiveness*.

- Find examples from the text that reveal the ideas of rejection and exclusion.
- Find examples from the text that reveal the ideas of acceptance and inclusiveness.
- Why has the author used feral cats, ferrets, and the dump as symbols of these ideas?

Extension Tasks

Personal Response

Summarise the text in your own words and explain the author's audience and purpose.

Creative Writing

At some point in your life, you may have been embarrassed by a relative. Write a story about this moment (your story could be a response to an event involving a sibling, parent, or grandparent). What did this episode teach you about yourself?

Formal Writing / Debate

Predator Free NZ is an organisation dedicated to making Aotearoa / New Zealand a bird sanctuary, to protect our indigenous species from extinction. Read their website and write an opinion piece, either supporting or rejecting the idea that Aotearoa / New Zealand should no longer allow people to have cats as pets.

Three pieces of flash fiction

by Jack Remiel Cottrell

Text 1 – Trying

The Author’s Inspiration

This story is actually very close to a real event that happened to me in Year 11. I had untreated ADHD and was a horrible little goblin of a child. But at the same time, I didn’t understand why – everyone else seemed to find it so easy. The part of the story that isn’t quite true is that by secondary school I had already stopped trying. Eventually, I just stopped showing up as well.



Before you read

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a condition that can cause unusual levels of hyperactivity and impulsive behaviours. People with ADHD may also have trouble focusing their attention on a single task or sitting still for long periods of time. Other related disorders include, ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder) and ODD (Oppositional Defiance Disorder).

- Can you think of any other disorders that might make going to school or having a job difficult?
- What could teachers do to reduce barriers to learning or misunderstanding for students with these conditions?

Text 2 – This Machine Kills Fascists

The Author’s Inspiration

This Machine Kills Fascists. I was writing a story to the prompt “machine” and that gave me two immediate thoughts—robots, and the statement on Woody Guthrie’s guitar: This machine kills fascists. I wondered how I could work the ideas together. I wanted to explore the ways a desire to be nonconformist might enable fascism, how genuine protest in the 21st Century is undermined by a combination of technology and fascism, and how the slogan might be co-opted by actual fascists. Then I wanted to explore how robots might see us in the future. To an android, all humans could be recognisable as fascists. The final paragraph is an extremely basic description of some of the processes used in machine learning. I think the paragraph which makes you most uncomfortable is the one which says the most about you—I would 100% buy that pen.

Before you read

Fascism is a form of far-right, authoritarian ultranationalism characterised by dictatorial power, forcible suppression of opposition, and strong regimentation of society and the economy. Fascism rose to prominence in early 20th-century Europe. Fascists believe that liberal democracy is obsolete (source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fascism>).

Woodrow Wilson Guthrie (July 14, 1912 – October 3, 1967) was an American singer-songwriter and one of the most significant figures in American folk music. His work focused on themes of American socialism and anti-fascism. His music includes songs such as “This Land Is Your Land”, written in response to the American exceptionalist song “God Bless America”, and has inspired several generations both politically and musically (source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Woody_Guthrie).

- What is the connection between Woody Guthrie’s age and his anti-fascism beliefs? (What world event might have shaped his beliefs?)

Text 3 – New Zealand Gothic

The Author’s Inspiration

New Zealand Gothic. I was trying to get Studylink to let me onto their website using my RealMe login, and because Studylink is a Kafkaesque nightmare organisation, it wasn’t working. After about the sixth try, I wondered if that meant I wasn’t real. Having already written a very weird story called Work and Income Gothic, I decided to extend the idea to the absurdities of Aotearoa as a whole. Never-ending motorway projects, ghost buses, and the weird path between the international and domestic terminals at Auckland airport all needed to be made just a little stranger.

Before you read

Studylink, Realme, Work and Income are three systems used in Aotearoa / New Zealand.

- *Studylink* is a way for tertiary students to apply for loans to pay for their study in Aotearoa / New Zealand.
- RealMe is a way to log in to NZ government sites and services. It is also a secure way to prove who you are when you’re online. Some organisations need only a RealMe login, and for others you need to set up a RealMe verified identity.
- Work and Income is a government organisation set up to financially support low-income people.

Despite the intent of these three systems, being online, they are often not easy to use or access when compared to a face-to-face experience, hence the writer’s *Kafkaesque* experience.

Kafkaesque experience is a characteristic or reminiscent of the oppressive or nightmarish qualities of Franz Kafka’s fictional world.

- Why would using an online system be difficult for some people, especially people who might need financial assistance?
- What could the government do to make accessing support easier?

Extension Tasks

Personal Response

Summarise each text in your own words and explain the author’s audience and purpose.

Creative Writing

Write a trilogy of flash fiction (no more than 100 words each) about an issue you experienced at three different moments in your life. For example:

- starting primary school, intermediate school, and high school.
- seeing someone bullied, being bullied yourself, and being a bully towards someone else.

Formal Writing

Choose an iconic writer and discuss their influence on both the genre they helped to create and the influence of their writing on society. Some suggested writers:

- Charlotte, Emily, and Anne Bronte
- Mary Shelley
- H. P. Lovecraft
- Asimov
- Edgar Allan Poe
- Janet Frame
- Katherine Mansfield

Letters to Granny

by Hina Tabassum Cheema



The Author's Inspiration

The inspiration to write this story came through a few real-life interactions with Muslim children. It was shocking for me to know that there were many Muslim children who would hide their Muslim identity. They faced many challenges in New Zealand. They were extraordinarily intelligent, confident, and social within Muslim community, but not so when they interacted outside of their community. Later, I realised that not only Muslim, but children who looked different in any respect, had to face similar challenges. Since New Zealand is increasingly becoming diverse, such challenges need to be addressed. This story is just a small effort in this direction.

Before you read

Clothing can be a symbolic representation of (cultural and religious) identity. For example, the design and texture of a scarf, including how it is worn, can indicate if a person is French, Israeli, or Middle Eastern. In modern society, governments can dictate if and where particular items of clothing can be worn. For example, you cannot wear a hijab when getting a passport or driver's licence in Aotearoa / New Zealand.

Look at the following items of clothing and discuss when and where it can / can't be worn and by whom:

- a skirt.
- swimming togs.
- a hat.

Your answer will be influenced by your own cultural, religious, and gender bias.

Tasks

Language

- Highlight and find definitions for new words found in the text.
- **Salutation** is the term used to greet another person, such as at the beginning of a letter. Why does the main character (Myla) change how they start their letters?
- **Valediction** (or complimentary close) is the term for ending an interaction, such as at the end of a letter or email. Brainstorm all the ways you can end a letter / email. Discuss when you would use each one.

Setting

- When is the text set?
- Where is the text set?
- What issues does the text explore?
- Why is this setting important in the text?

Characters

- Whose point of view (POV) is the text told from? Why is this important to the story?
- Describe the relationship between the main character (Myla) and other characters:
 - parents.
 - grandmother.
 - students at school.
- How do these relationships influence Myla's behaviour?

Incidents

- Why does the main character write to her grandmother instead of emailing or phoning her?
- Why is the main character struggling to make friends?
- What is the grandmother's advice?
- Does the main character follow her grandmother's advice? Why / why not?

Ideas

The main idea explored in this text is ***cultural oppression***.

- Find examples from the text that reveal how the main character is hiding their culture.
- Find examples from the text that reveal how the main character feels about hiding their culture.
- Why has the author made the main character hide their actions and feelings from their parents?

Extension Tasks

Personal Response

Summarise the text in your own words and explain the author's audience and purpose.

Creative Writing

Listen to 'Brown Brother' (YouTube) in which Joseph Iosefo describes how people in his culture accept the negative stereotypes given to them. Use the poem to inspire you to write your own poem listing what 'is' and 'isn't' apart of your culture. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g7kbakbqKr0>

Research

The history of women's clothing is often related to the oppression of women, denying them equitable movement within society. Choose a culture and create a poster presentation of how the clothing women are 'permitted' to wear has changed over the years.

Whenua; After Birth Land

by Donna McLeod

The Author's Inspiration

Donna McLeod (Te Ati Awa, Taranaki, Ngāti Rarua) lives on McLeod Bennett Papakaiinga with her whānau in Motueka. She is a playwright, poet, and performer. Donna is a member of Te Ohu Whakaari and Te Oro Ha. Inspiration: Our Auntie Keupe often questioned how I knew and felt this mamae. Whenua is my reply. It was written on the way to her tangihanga.



Before you read

In 1978, 222 people occupied Bastion Point for 506 days in protest at the government's announcement of a housing development scheme on the former Ngāti Whātua reserve land. This land had been seized over time through compulsory acquisition, and, following a Treaty of Waitangi Tribunal that lasted many years, it was returned to Ngāti Whātua.

- What protests have you heard about in recent times?
- What protests have you (wanted to) join? Why / why not?

Tasks

Language

- Highlight and find definitions for new words found in the text.
- The author uses a lot of *Māori* words without translations. What are they implying by doing this?
- The author uses *metaphor* to interweave her culture into the text, such as greeting the Maunga Taranaki as her ancestor, “Salutations Koko”. Find other metaphors and explain how they give insight into Māori culture (way of thinking).

Setting

- When is the text set?
- Where is the text set?
- What issues does the text explore?
- Why is this setting important in the text?

Characters

- Whose point of view (POV) is the text told from? Why is this important to the story?
- Describe the relationship between the narrator and other characters:
 - the land.
 - their ancestors.
- How do these relationships influence narrator's beliefs?

Incidents

- Where is the narrator flying? (Identify the place and event)
- Who is the narrator taking with them? Why?
- What is the narrator's inheritance? How does she feel about it?
- Why does the narrator both "(I) cry" and "(we) celebrate"?

Ideas

The main idea explored in this text is ***cultural responsibility***.

- Find examples from the text that reveal how the narrator is participating in a cultural practice.
- Find examples from the text that reveal how the narrator accepts / rejects this cultural practice.
- Why has the author made a point of the narrator's age (14 and 57) and her auntie's age (92)?

Extension Tasks

Personal Response

Summarise the text in your own words and explain the author's audience and purpose.

Creative Writing

There are lots of apps that allow you to communicate with family, friends, and strangers. Create a 100-word short conversation with no more than 2 characters texting each other.

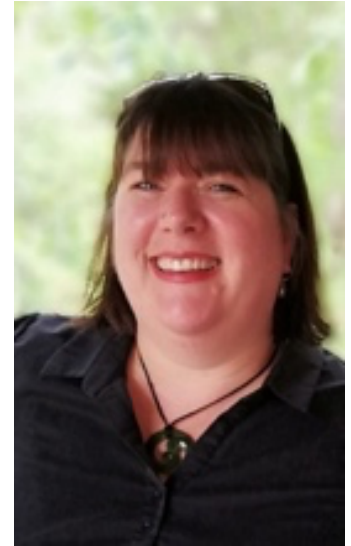
Formal Writing / Speech

Explore and compare a cultural ceremony (for example, a birthday, wedding, or funeral) from at least two different cultures. Include:

- what is similar / different
- what roles are different depending on your age and gender
- what is the history behind the cultural ceremony?

Bring a Plate

by Piper Mejia



The Author's Inspiration

*I moved to Aotearoa when I was four years old. I was an excited little girl just dying to make friends in the small community of Tokoroa. However, despite having English as a first language, I struggled with understanding the cultural implications around a lot of the words and phrases that people used. **Bring a plate** is a true recount of my failed attempt to join the Brownies that still resonates within me today.*

Before you read

Kiwi slang is the term used for words that are in English, but that English speakers from another country may not understand. Some lists of Kiwi slang include Māori terms, and while Māori is a unique language and differentiates New Zealand from other English-speaking countries, Māori words are not slang and should be referred to instead as colloquial language.

- What 'kiwi' terms do you know? What do they mean?
- Do you know any funny stories where people did not understand Kiwi slang?

Tasks

Language

- Highlight and find definitions for new words found in the text.
- Highlight all the times the author mentions flowers. In the text, the flowers are symbols of belonging, and when author repeats a symbol, it is called a *motif*.

Highlight the *imagery* the author uses to depict a small town. What might make it more difficult for an immigrant to settle into a small town when compared to a city?

Setting

- When is the text set?
- Where is the text set?
- What issues does the text explore?
- Why is this setting important in the text?

Characters

- Whose point of view (POV) is the text told from? Why is this important to the story?
- Describe the relationship between the unnamed narrator and other characters:
 - parents.
 - sister.
 - other people.
- How do these relationships influence the narrator's behaviour?

Incidents

- Why does the main character need to take a plate?
- How does it make the narrator feel when her name is not called, and when she is given a paper plate?
- How does the narrator’s sister look after her?
- What is the attitude of the mother when she realises they have misunderstood the term, ‘bring a plate’?

Ideas

The main idea explored in this text is ***fitting in***.

- Find examples from the text that reveal how the narrator is trying to fit in.
- Find examples from the text that reveal how the other characters are not trying to fit in.
- Why do you think the author has made it seem like the narrator is the only one trying to fit in?

Extension Tasks

Personal Response

Summarise the text in your own words and explain the author’s audience and purpose.

Creative Writing

Write a short text about a cultural misunderstanding that leads to humorous or embarrassing consequences.

Formal Writing / Brochure

Create a brochure inviting new members to join an activity that you enjoy (real or imagined), such as kapa haka, cadets, circus tricks, D&D, or a book club.

Nursery

by Piper Mejia

The Author's Inspiration

This story was inspired by my own sister's decision to be a teenaged mother and her struggle with the social stigma that she faced with this decision. The story is also a reflection of how not everyone has the privilege of making a choice about being a parent, that despite laws and access to health care, even in Aotearoa young girls are still strongly influenced by culture. At its heart, this is a feminist piece of writing about body autonomy and the gender burden that comes with simply because we were born female.

Before you read

- What is the definition of the terms, feminism, body autonomy, and gender?
- What do these terms mean to you?
- Why are these terms seen as issues (how are they expressed culturally and politically)?

Tasks

Language

- Highlight and find definitions for new words found in the text.
- What two meanings does the title, *Nursery*, have?
- Authors often use *allusion* to myths and legends to craft their stories. In this text, the author uses allusion to the Christian religion, in particular the story of how Eve was cast out of the garden of Eden. Highlight all the 'explicit' references made to this religion. What is the author's purpose in doing this?

Setting

- When is the text set?
- Where is the text set?
- What issues does the text explore?
- Why is this setting important in the text?

Characters

- Whose point of view (POV) is the text told from? Why is this important to the story?
- Describe the relationship between the main character and other characters:
 - boyfriend
 - mother
 - (dead) sisters
 - other people
- How do these relationships influence their behaviour?

Incidents

- What does the boyfriend imply when he says, “There are places you can go. People who can help you.”
- Why does the main character feel she does not have choices?
- Why is the mother sometimes ‘kind’ and sometimes ‘cruel’ to the main character?
- What does the narrator’s boss understand about her life, her way of being?
- What is the ‘real’ choice that the narrator makes at the end of the story?

Ideas

The main ideas explored in this text are ***body autonomy and gender burden.***

- Find examples from the text that reveal the decisions the main character is making about her body.
- Find examples from the text that reveal how other characters react to her decisions.
- Why has the author made the main character the daughter of a single mother? What is she implying about the gender burden that girls / women pass down through generations?

Extension Tasks

Personal Response

Summarise the text in your own words and explain the author’s audience and purpose.

Creative Writing

Write a short story about attending a rally or protest (for or against a controversial issue). Have the narrator / main character experience an incident that makes them change their mind about the issue they are protesting.

Formal Writing

Brainstorm issues that only impact on one section of society, for example, only women, only Māori, only LGBTQIA+2. Perhaps focus on how this issue is important in your school or in Aotearoa. Write a letter to the Principal / Prime Minister, outlining why you think this issue needs to be addressed, and provide some suggested solutions. NOTE: it is best practice to focus on an issue where you are a part of the group being disadvantaged. Otherwise, clearly explain your role as an ally.

NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

My story implies that the main character could be Māori (or part Māori). This decision could be considered both cultural appropriation and coding for negative stereotypes. So, why did I do it when I said the story was inspired by my sister? The answer is complex, but it stems from my own atheism and the dominating influence I witness in my Māori and Pacifica students’ lives. I also wanted to include the idea of ‘white’ privilege though a Pakeha boyfriend. **Discuss** whether you think authors should / have the right and responsibility to include characters outside their own lived experience.

Homecoming

by Jade Kake

The Author's Inspiration

Ko Jade Kake tāna ingoa. He uri tēnei nō Ngāpuhi, Te Whakatōhea me Te Arawa. I te taha o tōna pāpā, nō Hōrana ia. He kaihoahoa, he kaituhituhi, he kaihāpai ia. Ko tāna aronga nui, ko te mahi tuhituhi mō te 'decolonisation', te rangatiratanga o ngā hapū, ngā waiuatanga hou me te tirohanga anamata te Māori. Kei Whangārei ia e noho ana.



I was inspired by my own experiences staying with whānau when I was a teenager, especially whānau I hadn't met before or didn't know well, as well as the experiences of my koro and his siblings, who were split up and sent to live with various whānau members after their mother died. I tried to imagine what it might be like for young people in this situation, in an unfamiliar setting feeling uncertain about their place and right to be there.

Before you read

There is no such thing as a 'typical' family construct. In recent times, wealthier societies promoted the nuclear family, consisting of two adults and two children. However, a nuclear family lacks the support gained through blended, extended, or intergenerational families, which may also include grandparents, aunts and uncles and cousins.

- What are some reasons people may not live with their family?
- What are the benefits / disadvantages of living alone?
- What are the benefits / disadvantages of living with an extended family?

Tasks

Language

- Highlight and find definitions for new words found in the text.
- The author uses the **point of view** of a nearly silent narrator. What tone does this create? Why does the author give the main character a single name (Shannah), yet gives the other character several names (the woman, Whaea, and Nan)?

Setting

- When is the text set?
- Where is the text set?
- What issues does the text explore?
- Why is this setting important in the text?

Characters

- Whose point of view (POV) is the text told from? Why is this important to the story?
- Describe the relationship between the main character (Shannah) and her nana. How does this relationship influence Shannah's behaviour?

Incidents

- Who drops Shannah off? What does this imply about her life?
- What does the woman's comment "There's not much to you" imply?
- What does the woman do to show she cares about Shannah?
- Why does the woman repeat, "You're home now. This is your home."?

Ideas

The main idea explored in this text is **(familial) rejection / abandonment**.

- Find examples from the text that reveal how the main character has been rejected / abandoned.
- Find examples from the text that reveal how the main character copes with being rejected / abandoned.
- Why has the author made the main character quiet? What are they hiding?

Extension Tasks

Personal Response

Summarise the text in your own words and explain the author's audience and purpose.

Creative Writing

Write a memory of one of your grandparents. You might want to reflect on a story they told you or describe an incident that helped you understand them better.

Formal Writing / Debate

Homelessness is on the rise in Aotearoa / New Zealand, and over 50% of homeless people are families with children. Research the ways different communities (in Aotearoa and around the world) are dealing with both the causes and effects of homelessness.

Student writing

Each of these pieces of student writing were inspired by prompts provided by Young NZ Writers for their annual writing competitions. These stories are wonderful exemplars of the creativity of young people.

You Don't Understand (*You Don't Understand 2012*) by Kevin Lee

This text was from the first competition for secondary students run by Young NZ Writers, and participants were given the simple prompt “you don't understand”. This short piece was not the winner but is included in this anthology because it shows how a text does not have to be long to convey a clear sense of time, place, and environment. The author has used a range of simple techniques to develop a clearly recognisable teenager and their interactions with a parent. Open writing prompts can sometimes work better than narrow prescriptive ones.

Task: 3-2-1 is a great technique to help students learn to edit their work.

3 – get students to write a 300-hundred-word short text (including title).

2 – tell students to delete 100 words (you might discuss the use of filler words, better verbs instead of adverbs, and better nouns instead of adjectives).

1 – tell students to delete another 100 words. A hundred-word short text is called a *drabble* or *Flash Fiction*. These concise texts are great to use in school newsletters or to turn into posters.

The End by Elizabeth Chua and **Pavlova: The Absolutely True Story** (*Beyond this Story 2013*) by Emma Sio

These two stories came from a prompt asking students to write a *hyper-fiction*, a story based on real people or real events in Aotearoa. This produced some amazing writing about the Tangiwai Disaster and the sinking of the *Wahine*. These stories stood out in their development of tone, with **The End**'s visceral depiction of the end of a way of life, a culture, and a people, and **Pavlova's** humorous invention of something very new. One characteristic that helps develop the tone (and pacing) in each text is sentence length: **The End** uses lots of short sentences (statements of fact), while **Pavlova** uses lots of long sentences (storytelling).

Task: Tone

Get students to choose a moment of significance in Aotearoa, and then brainstorm the vocabulary they could use to shape the tone of a narrative (positive or negative). They might also think about point of view and tense. Is the story happening in the moment or is it a reflective look back in time?.

The Owner's Manual for Your Teenager: The Step-by-Step Guide to Caring for Your Pet by Rebecca Talsma (*Teenagers are an alien species 2013*)

This humorous and sophisticated piece of writing draws parallels between inanimate household objects and teenagers. Notice the use of ‘you’ as the writer speaks directly to the audience, and the use of the third person to develop the ‘less-than-human’ quality of teenagers. Relying on a rigid structure of sub-headings is an interesting way to develop an idea and can be applied to other communications such as letters, emails, recipes, and game instructions.

Task: Structure

Get students to write a *recipe for disaster*, or instructions to play *the game of life* using the same format.

Mary Lou Lane by Sian McIlroy and **Courage** by Robbie Murray (*Alter Ego 2017*)

Poetry can be tricky to teach how to write, and it is very difficult to judge (in terms of a writing competition) as it relies on techniques that can be exploited for audience and purpose. These two poems both depict a feminist theme: the first, **Mary Lou Lane** disempowers the character Mary Lou, blaming her for what happens to her, whereas, in contrast, **Courage** celebrates the strength of women standing up for each other against injustices.

Note: our suggestion when teaching poetry is to spend a lot of time on free verse (rather than rhyming or styles that have specific rules). Spoken poetry is a very popular form and often comprises biographical storytelling with a sense of rhythm using repetition, listing, and alliteration.

Task: Theme

Students choose an issue they are passionate about (gender diversity, cultural identity, female empowerment), then write the issues two ways: firstly, from the point of view of an individual, and secondly, from the point of view of society.

Bike by Jacob Hagan (*Something strange happened in Rotorua 2019*)

In the 10 years we ran writing competitions at Young NZ Writers, the main reason stories failed to make the shortlist was because there was no conflict, nothing for the main character to overcome, or their character never developed or changed as a result of the conflict they faced. Conflict is the key to short story writing. In this text, the author used the Redwood Forest as their setting and the difficulty in riding a bike as the conflict the main character had to overcome. At the beginning of the story, readers feel sorry that the protagonist is having such a terrible time riding his bike, but this compassion quickly dissolves by the end of the tale. Why should readers care about the character after he has committed such a violent act?

Task: Conflict

Give students a range of contexts and then get them to decide:

- what is the conflict?
- how does the main character fail (once or twice) in overcoming the conflict?
- how is the conflict resolved (or not)?
- how does the conflict change the main character (for better or worse)?