

# Earthquake

by Lynn Davis

School Journal  
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Year 5

Level 3



## Overview

This narrative about a family's experiences will give students an insight into the impact of the earthquakes in Christchurch. There are opportunities for students to gain information about life during and after the September 2010 earthquake and the concerns shared by the family and the community. There is an insert at the end of the text, which updates the information about the author's family, whose story the text is based on.

The unfamiliar language is well supported within the text and with visual information.

**Be aware of possible sensitivities around this subject, especially for those who may have lost friends or relations in the February 2011 Christchurch earthquake.**

Texts related by theme

"One City – Two Earthquakes" SJ L3 Nov 2011 |

"Making Lakes and Making Quakes" Connected 1 + 2 2008

## Text characteristics from the year 5 reading standard

sentences that vary in length and in structure (for example, sentences that begin in different ways and different kinds of complex sentences with a number of subordinate clauses)

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

"Yes," said Penny, "but our house isn't. There's a big crack all the way through it, and we can't open the outside doors. We have to go in and out of the window. The backyard's a mess, too. There's mud and sand all over the lawn."

By the end of the day, Ellie's house had power and water, but Penny's didn't. Penny's family couldn't even use their toilet. They had to share a portable loo with all their neighbours.

School stayed closed for several days. There were lots and lots of aftershocks. Ellie's dad worried about the cracks in the house. They seemed to be getting bigger with every aftershock.

Ellie worried about her cat, Billy. He wouldn't eat or drink anything, and he spent all day and all night hiding in the linen cupboard.

She worried about Penny too. The engineers had said that Penny's house was unsafe and might have to be demolished. Penny and her family had packed up as many of their things as they could and had gone to stay with her aunt.

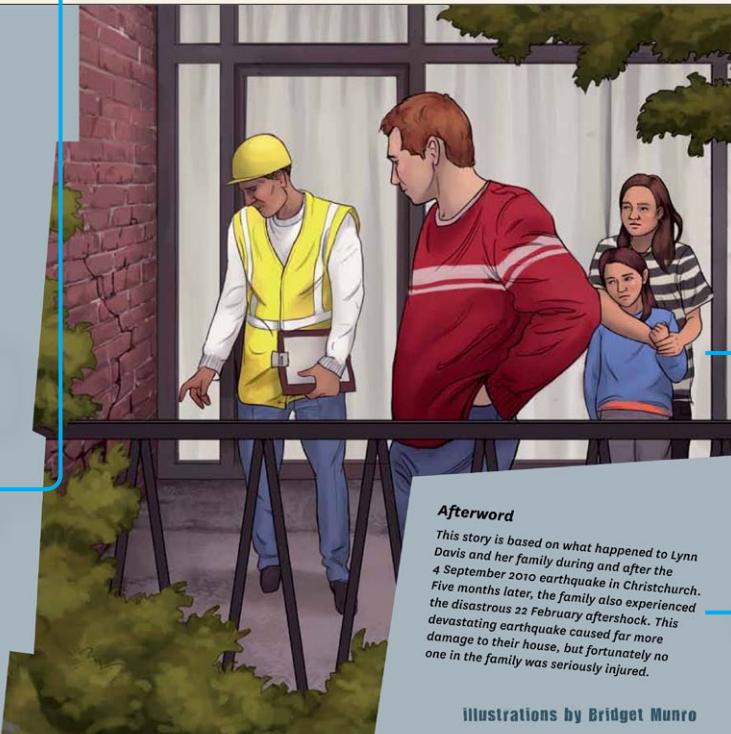
When school started again, most of Ellie's classmates were back. Everyone had a different story to tell about the earthquake. Each time there was an aftershock, they all shot under their desks and held on tightly to the metal legs.

Two weeks after school began, the engineers visited Ellie's house. "Your house is safe to live in," they said, "but the garage needs strengthening."

Ellie was relieved that their house would be OK, and now that there were fewer aftershocks, she felt much safer going to sleep at night.

Best of all, Billy had come out of his hiding place, and he'd started to eat again.

6



Afterword

This story is based on what happened to Lynn Davis and her family during and after the 4 September 2010 earthquake in Christchurch. Five months later, the family also experienced the disastrous 22 February aftershock. This devastating earthquake caused far more damage to their house, but fortunately no one in the family was seriously injured.

Illustrations by Bridget Munro

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

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

# Possible curriculum contexts

## SCIENCE (Physical World)

LEVEL 3 – Physical inquiry and physics concepts: Explore, describe, and represent patterns and trends for everyday examples of physical phenomena, ...

## ENGLISH (Reading)

LEVEL 3 – Purposes and audiences: Show a developing understanding of how texts are shaped for different purposes and audiences.

## ENGLISH (Writing)

LEVEL 3 – Purposes and audiences: Show a developing understanding of how to shape texts for different purposes and audiences.

### Possible reading purposes

- To find out about one family's experiences of an earthquake
- To identify a young girl's actions and responses to the earthquake
- To explore the consequences of the earthquake for the community.

See [Instructional focus – Reading](#) for illustrations of some of these reading purposes.

### Possible writing purposes

- To explain what to do in an earthquake
- To describe a traumatic event or experience
- To describe an experience of an earthquake.

See [Instructional focus – Writing](#) for illustrations of some of these writing purposes.

# Text and language challenges

## VOCABULARY:

- Possible unfamiliar and/or specialist words and phrases, including “Earthquake”, “violently”, “leapt”, “lurched”, “drill”, “pitch”, “crouched”, “Eventually”, “huddled”, “magnitude”, “announcer”, “suffered”, “major”, “damage”, “ceiling”, “chimney”, “cancelled”, “supplies”, “boarded”, “demolished”, “queues”, “aisles”, “batteries”, “the coast”, “portable loo”, “several”, “aftershocks”, “linen”, “engineers”, “shot under”, “tightly”, “metal”, “strengthening”, “relieved”, “based”, “experienced”, “disastrous”, “devastating”, “fortunately”, “seriously”, “injured”
- Colloquial and idiomatic language, including “power’s out”, “cut off”, “pretty unsafe”, “selling out”, “loo”, “shot under”
- The capitalised and italicised text “*WAS*”.

### Possible supporting strategies

Identify vocabulary your students will need support with in order to understand the story. Select ten to fifteen items. Give each pair of students two or three items and simple example sentences using each item. Ask the pairs to discuss the sentences and what they think their vocabulary items mean. Give pairs definitions for their items and have them match these up. Check they have done this correctly and tell them to prepare to explain their items to the rest of the group (using acting, pictures, example sentences, and so on). Ask the pairs to explain their items and to create a word bank by sticking their items and definitions onto a poster. Refer to the word bank during reading.

Identify new vocabulary that the students should prioritise for learning. *The English Language Learning Progressions: Introduction*, pages 39–46, has useful information about learning vocabulary.

## SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED:

- Knowledge of earthquakes
- Experiences of people coping with challenging situations.

### Possible supporting strategies

Through discussion, link into the students' prior knowledge of the Christchurch earthquakes, supporting them to recognise the challenges people have faced. Students may have their own experiences about earthquakes to share.

You could use some of the illustrations as prompts for discussion. Pairs could brainstorm earthquakes using a graphic organiser, such as the one below, to record ideas and vocabulary associated with earthquakes.

Earthquakes		
What happens	How people feel	What people do

Students could refer to and add to the chart during and after reading (and perhaps also during reading “One City – Two Earthquakes”).

## TEXT FEATURES AND STRUCTURE:

- A fictional story based on a real-life experience
- Third person
- Multiple time frames and associated wide range of verb forms, including a lot of past perfect (“had said”, “had been cut off”, “they’d bought”, “had piled up”)
- Speech in present tense
- Language for signalling time relationships, especially subordinate clauses starting with “when”
- Titled text on first two pages and the last page
- Afterword with an update about the family.

### Possible supporting strategies

Remind the students of the strategies and expectations readers have when reading fictional texts.

Encourage the students to make use of the illustrations to support their understanding of the text.

For students who need support with following the multiple time frames and the associated language, you could use a timeline. Identify and plot the main events on a timeline during and after reading. Draw the students' attention to the language that signals time relationships (verb forms, phrases, and subordinate clauses) as well as their prior knowledge and inferences. If appropriate, choose some of the language that indicates time for an explicit focus: noticing examples, explaining their meanings, co-constructing examples, and practising the language over time and in different contexts.



## Sounds and Words

# Instructional focus – Reading

English (Level 3 – Purposes and audiences: Show a developing understanding of how texts are shaped for different purposes and audiences.)

Text excerpts from “Earthquake”	Students (what they might do)	Teacher (possible deliberate acts of teaching)
<p>The teacher had said the doorway might not always be the safest place in an earthquake.</p> <p>Ellie crouched down very low with her arms over her head and waited. “At least I’m away from the windows and the big mirror,” she thought.</p>	<p><i>Students make connections between the text and their prior knowledge to understand what Ellie is doing. They also use their prior knowledge and understanding of the verb form “had said” to identify that Ellie is thinking about something that had happened earlier at school.</i></p> <p><i>Students use information in the text and their knowledge of earthquakes to infer why it is good that Ellie is away from the windows and mirror. They locate, evaluate, and integrate information (The teacher said ...) to understand that the phrase “At least” refers back to the teacher’s comments earlier in the text.</i></p>	<p><b>PROMPT</b> the students to make inferences to deepen their understanding of the text.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>There is an earthquake happening. Ellie is crouched down very low with her arms over her head. How might this help? What is she waiting for?</li><li>Ellie is thinking that at least she is away from the windows and the big mirror. Why is she thinking about the windows and the mirror?</li><li>Why did Ellie think “at least”? What is she referring to? Have a look back in the text and see if you can find what this refers to.</li></ul>
<p>Downstairs, the whole family huddled around the radio.</p> <p>... people are warned to boil all drinking water ...</p> <p>The water had been cut off.</p> <p>At the supermarket, the queues stretched back into the aisles. People had piled up their trolleys with groceries. Water, bread, and batteries were selling out fast; the shelves were almost empty.</p>	<p><i>As students read the descriptions, they visualise the scenes. They ask and answer questions about different aspects of the text, including why water, bread, and batteries were selling out fast; what the radio was needed for; and the loss of power. They locate, evaluate, and integrate the information in the text (... boil all drinking water ..., The water had been cut off ...) to understand the situation.</i></p>	<p><b>MODEL</b> asking and answering questions to support the students’ understanding.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>When I read the text, I wondered why water was selling out fast. Why were people buying water? I referred back to the text to understand that some people would have had their water cut off but if not, the water would need to be boiled. That was why people were buying bottled water.</li><li>What about the batteries and the bread? Why were they selling out? Share your ideas with a partner.</li><li>What questions do you have about the text so far?</li></ul> <p><b>ASK QUESTIONS</b> to support the students’ understanding of the author’s purpose for writing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>I’ve noticed that the author tells us what Ellie and her dad are worried about, and we can see the family looking worried in the picture. Why do you think the author has mentioned this? What does she want us to know?</li><li>What have you found out about what it is like for this family? Which parts of the text have helped you to do this?</li><li>Turn to your partner and tell them what you think the author’s purpose was for writing this story. What parts of the text helped you to come to this understanding?</li><li>How did the author’s language choices help her to achieve her purpose?</li></ul> <p>Refer to the graphic organiser, if you began one before reading.</p> <p>Provide opportunities for students who share a first language other than English to discuss their ideas in this language.</p>
<p>Ellie’s dad worried about the cracks in the house.</p> <p>Ellie worried about her cat, Billy.</p> <p>She worried about Penny too.</p>	<p><i>Students notice and evaluate the repetition of the word “worried”. They integrate this with information they have read so far in the text and draw conclusions about the author’s purpose for writing and how she has achieved this.</i></p>	<p><b>GIVE FEEDBACK</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>You linked your prior knowledge about earthquake drills with what you read in the story. I can see that it has given you a better understanding of Ellie’s experience.</li><li>You were able to locate and integrate many parts in the text where the author conveyed how people were feeling. This is a good strategy to deepen your understanding of the overall text.</li></ul>
<p><b>METACOGNITION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>What images came to mind when you read the third paragraph? How did visualising each action support your understanding?</li><li>When we question in our head as we read, it helps us connect to the text and think about the meaning. Are you aware of the questions you ask in your head? How do they help you?</li><li>Before reading we made a word bank about earthquakes. How did thinking about some of these words help you read and understand the text?</li></ul>		<p> <b>Reading standard: by the end of year 5</b></p> <p> <b>The Literacy Learning Progressions</b></p> <p> <b>Assessment Resource Banks</b></p>

# Instructional focus – Writing

English (Level 3 – Purposes and audiences: Show a developing understanding of how to shape texts for different purposes and audiences.)

Text excerpts from “Earthquake”	Examples of text characteristics	Teacher (possible deliberate acts of teaching)
<p>“There has been a magnitude 7.1 earthquake in Christchurch,” the announcer said. “Many buildings are thought to have suffered major damage. Most of the city is without power, and people are warned to boil all drinking water for at least three minutes.”</p>	<p><b>REGISTER</b> <i>The author has used particular words and phrases that are appropriate to convey the more formal language used by the radio announcer. This contrasts with the language used by the family. This is called the “register” – the language used by people and its context.</i></p>	<p><b>PROMPT</b> the students to notice the author’s language selection.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>What do you notice about the speech used by the announcer? How does the language sound?</li><li>The information is given without comment. What do you notice about the words? The announcer uses topic-specific vocabulary (“magnitude 7.1”) and more formal language (“suffered major damage”). There are a lot of passive constructions in the radio speech (“Many buildings are thought”) – which is typical. How is this different from Ellie’s father’s speech earlier in the text?</li><li>Working with a partner, rewrite the announcer’s speech as if Ellie’s father was telling her the same information. How are the language choices different? What does this mean for us as we think about the choices we make as writers?</li></ul>
<p>Her bed was shaking violently. She opened her eyes. It WAS shaking violently. In fact, the whole house was shaking.</p>	<p><b>REPETITION</b> <i>Repeating an idea or a word draws the reader’s attention to it. Repetition can be a clue to a word’s importance and can also create an effect on the reader.</i></p>	<p><b>EXPLAIN</b> that authors can use different techniques to influence their readers and achieve their purpose.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Think about your overall purpose and the way you want your readers to experience the text at key points. For example, in this extract “shaking” is repeated three times. The extract is the opening to this story and the repetition gives the reader a sense that the earthquake was not short and sharp – that it kept going and going.</li><li>Look at your writing. Work with a partner to identify whether there is anywhere that could benefit from the use of repetition.</li></ul>
<p>Ellie leapt out of bed. It was hard to stand up. She lurched across the room and stood under the doorframe.</p>	<p><b>DESCRIPTIVE VERBS</b> <i>The use of strong, descriptive verbs adds to the clarity of the image and action. Through the use of “leapt” and “lurched” the reader recognises the urgency with which Ellie got out of bed and that she was thrown rather than walked across the room.</i></p>	<p><b>EXPLAIN</b> that descriptive verbs can add clarity to writing and provide the reader with a clearer understanding of the action.</p> <p><b>PROMPT</b> the students to identify the descriptive verbs in the text.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Let’s look at the sentence. As readers, what do we know about the way Ellie got out of bed? Which word tells us that?</li></ul> <p><b>MODEL</b> the effect of rewriting the sentence using other verbs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>What is the effect if we changed the verb “leapt” to “got”? What about “crawled”? Would that be appropriate in this text? Why? Why not?</li><li>As writers we select language carefully to make our writing clearer and more accurate for the reader. Reread your writing and identify any parts that you could revise. How could changing the verbs add to your writing?</li></ul> <p>To support students with acquiring more descriptive verbs, you could give small groups of students charts with one common and general verb or phrase in the middle (for example, walk, get out of bed, look). Ask them to add other more descriptive or more specific verbs around it. Have each group work on their chart for five minutes then pass it to the next group to add to and so on until all of the groups have written on each of the charts. Review all the charts together and display them on the classroom walls.</p>
<p><b>METACOGNITION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Have the changes you made to the verbs in your writing supported the clarity of the images? How?</li><li>You have made some use of repetition. How did you know where to best use it and what to emphasise?</li><li>How did the character influence the way you selected the language she used? Why was that an appropriate register?</li></ul>		<p><b>GIVE FEEDBACK</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The race commentator in your story really stands out. It’s all down to your use of dialogue and the way it runs together. I get a real sense of the character.</li><li>Your use of repetition gives me an understanding of the character. I can see him very clearly in my mind.</li><li>You have selected more descriptive verbs that add to the picture. They give me a clear understanding of what happened.</li></ul>