



Overview

Zoe is just like everyone else in her class – because her classmates have learned to use sign language. This report describes how signing has helped Zoe enjoy all the usual routines and fun of school life. Photos, diagrams, and additional information about New Zealand Sign Language provide an insight into the way that people who are deaf can participate fully in everyday life.

The article provides opportunities to explore the idea of supporting and respecting others. It can be used to work across several of the key competencies, including using language, symbols, and texts; managing self; relating to others; and participating and contributing.

Texts related by theme

“Getting Ready to Roll” SJ 2.2.11 | “Dreaming in Words” SJ 2.2.03 | “Sign It!” SJ 2.2.02

Text characteristics from the year 5 reading standard

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

some information that is irrelevant to the identified purpose for reading (that is, some competing information), which students need to identify and reject as they integrate pieces of information in order to answer questions

Josefine, another classmate at Saint Pius who is fluent in sign language, says learning to sign the national anthem and performing at Parliament was a lot of fun. As was getting their photo on the front page of two newspapers. Sometimes I put earplugs in my ears to see what it's like to be Deaf," Josefine says. "I can still hear a little bit, but it makes me think about what it would be like if everything was silent."

At lunchtime, Zoe and her friends play games like tag or traffic lights. "Zoe does everything we do," Josefine says. "But we have to remember to tell her when someone's been tagged in case she hasn't seen it."

When Angela, the professional interpreter, arrives in the classroom, the students are about to have a spelling test. Angela interprets the words for Zoe: she signs "successful", "clover", "trapped", and "postage". Angela also works with Zoe to publish something she has written on the laptop. It's a story about her baby cousin. "Ava's face is tan, soft, and chubby as pillows. Her lips are rosy red, and she smells like perfume ..."

A N G E L A

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)

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

HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION (Relationships with Other People)

LEVEL 3 – Identity, sensitivity, and respect: Identify ways in which people discriminate and ways to act responsibly to support themselves and other people.

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 learn about Zoe and how she is “just like everyone else” in her class
- To compare Zoe’s experiences with your own or those of children you know
- To understand how to support a person who is deaf.

Possible writing purposes

- To explain the support that you or another person at school needs
- To ask questions and carry out research to learn more about supporting classmates who are deaf or who have other support needs.

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

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

 The New Zealand Curriculum

Text and language challenges

VOCABULARY:

- Possible unfamiliar words and phrases, including “New Zealand Sign Language”, “communicating”, “interpret”, “signs” (as a verb), “professional interpreter”, “roster”, “lyrics”, “certificate”, “Congratulations”, “communicate”, “fluent”, “national anthem”, “Parliament”, “bill” (legal meaning), “earplugs”, “publish”, “laptop”, “perfume”, “cheerleading”, “especially”, “cartwheels”, “somersaults”, “star jumps”, “beat”, “sleepover”, “abseiling”, “kayaking”, “awesome”, “nicknames”, “plait”
- The expression “as was”
- The simile “chubby as pillows”
- The names, including those with unfamiliar spellings, such as “Deztinee”, “Ms Chinna”, “Josefine”.

Possible supporting strategies

Identify vocabulary, concepts, and names that may be challenging for your students. Use strategies to support students with this vocabulary. For example, you could have them match new vocabulary and definitions and/or pictures. You could use the images in the book (or other images or audiovisual clips) as prompts for discussion and for co-constructing a vocabulary list for the text.

Identify any new vocabulary that the students should prioritise for learning and have them record this vocabulary. Plan for ways to ensure they have opportunities to encounter and use this vocabulary in many contexts.

The English Language Learning Progressions: Introduction, pages 39–46, has some useful information about learning vocabulary.

SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED:

- Familiarity with daily life and work in a classroom
- Knowledge and understanding of individual differences, including deafness, and the various ways they are supported at school
- Experience of using or seeing sign language used
- Knowledge of Parliament and the role of bills and laws to bring about changes in society
- Experience of using a different language from the language used by the rest of the class.

Possible supporting strategies

Ask the students to share ideas about their everyday classroom life. Next, ask them to consider how a student or teacher who was deaf, blind, learning disabled, or unable to walk unaided would experience classroom life and what kinds of supports they may need.

If possible, provide opportunities for students who have a first language other than English to explore the topic in this language. Where appropriate, prompt students to make links to their experience of using a language other than English in class.

Discuss the formal name of our sign language (New Zealand Sign Language) and the fact that most countries – even those where English is the main language – have their own version or dialect of sign language.

Either briefly explain the meaning of the clause “a bill was passed in Parliament”, or ask one or more students to research its meaning and report back to the group. Discuss the reasons why Parliament passed this bill and what it means to have three official languages in New Zealand. Are there other widely used languages in New Zealand that could become “official”?

TEXT FEATURES AND STRUCTURE:

- A report structure
- Language for signalling time, sequence, and frequency, for example, “Today”, “then”, “When”, “For most of the time”
- Photographs
- Illustrations of signing
- Fact boxes (including with “Did you know?” headings) that provide additional information.

Possible supporting strategies

Create a T-chart, headed “Challenges” and “Supports”, which the students can complete and refer to as they read. Before they read, ask them to list the challenges they imagine a deaf student would have in class. During reading, they can amend their list if necessary and make notes in the Supports column as they encounter ways to overcome each challenge. After reading, students can review their charts and evaluate the extent to which Zoe is able to be “just like everyone else”.

 Sounds and Words

Instructional focus – Reading

Health and Physical Education (Relationships with Other People, level 3 – Identity, sensitivity, and respect: Identify ways in which people discriminate and ways to act responsibly to support themselves and other people.)

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

Text excerpts from “Just like Everyone Else”

Zoe presents her review of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*, and answers the questions, in New Zealand Sign Language. This is a way of communicating using eyes and hands rather than ears and a voice.

Because of these great skills, Zoe’s class was chosen to sign the national anthem at Parliament to launch New Zealand Sign Language Week 2011. This was the first time the anthem was sung there in English, te reo Māori, and New Zealand Sign Language.

Did you know?

In 2006, a bill was passed in Parliament that made New Zealand Sign Language our third official language (along with English and te reo Māori). The language is unique to New Zealand and includes signs for some words in Māori, such as “marae”, “hāngi”, and “pōwhiri”. Around 24 000 New Zealanders use New Zealand Sign Language every day.

“My favourite thing was going on camp,” Zoe says. “We did abseiling and kayaking, and we went on the high ropes. It was awesome. I did things I never thought I could do. I’m lucky because I can sign to all my classmates, and they understand me and help me. It’s OK being Deaf. I’m just like everyone else.”

Students (what they might do)

Students **locate, evaluate, and integrate** information from the text, photos, and diagram to **infer** that Zoe is deaf. They **make connections** with their own experiences of giving book reviews to understand that Zoe does the same as everyone else. They compare the different ways of communicating and **infer** that for Zoe and the class, using signing is as natural as talking and listening.

Students draw on their own knowledge of the national anthem and of Parliament to understand the importance of this event. They use vocabulary knowledge and the context to understand the meaning of “launch”, **making connections** with other events to identify it as the start of a special occasion.

Students **ask and answer questions** about why the three languages were used at Parliament. They **locate, evaluate, and integrate** information to confirm the status of the three languages. They ask themselves further questions for later exploration about the status of languages in New Zealand.

Students **make connections** between the text and their own experiences of camps and activities to identify things that are the same for them and those that might be different. They **form hypotheses** about the possible differences that being deaf might make (for example, not being able to call for help or follow spoken instructions from a guide) and **infer** that, in spite of the differences, Zoe is very much “like everyone else”. Students draw conclusions about the ways that everyone can have the same opportunities to participate.

METACOGNITION

- Tell me more about how you were able to identify with Zoe or one of her friends. How did this help you understand the text?
- How much did you already know about this topic? How did you use your prior knowledge to help you understand the article?
- You integrated information from the text to support your understanding. How do you think your understanding of integration will help your writing?

Teacher (possible deliberate acts of teaching)

PROMPT the students to make connections and infer meaning as they read.

- What have you learned about Zoe, based on the title, the photos on the first two pages, and the diagram?
- What knowledge or experiences helped you to make inferences?
- What evidence in the text supports your inferences?
- From what you’ve read so far, how do you interpret the title of this article?

PROMPT the students to integrate information from the two excerpts.

- Turn to a partner to share what you’ve learned from these excerpts.
- What did you already know about New Zealand’s official languages?
- How does the information in the separate fact box add to your understanding?
- Remember that by integrating information from different parts of the text, we gain a better overall understanding.
- What questions do you have about New Zealand’s languages? How could you find answers?

ASK QUESTIONS to clarify the students’ understanding of Zoe’s experiences.

- Talk with a partner about your school camp experiences.
- What aspects of your experiences were the same as Zoe’s? What things were different?
- What conclusions can you draw about Zoe and her classmates?
- What do you think the author wants readers to learn from this article?

GIVE FEEDBACK

- The comparisons you made between Zoe’s class and our class helped you to reach interesting conclusions.
- As you read, you found answers to some of your questions about Zoe’s classmates learning to sign, and you also have some good questions for follow-up research.
- Integrating information from different parts of the text gave you a better understanding of sign language and its place in New Zealand.

 Reading standard: by the end of year 5

 The Literacy Learning Progressions

 Assessment Resource Banks

Instructional focus – Writing

Health and Physical Education (Relationships with Other People, level 3 – Identity, sensitivity, and respect: Identify ways in which people discriminate and ways to act responsibly to support themselves and other people.)

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

Text excerpts from “Just Like Everyone Else”

Examples of text characteristics

Teacher (possible deliberate acts of teaching)

Zoe has just reviewed her book, and her classmates have a lot of questions. What was the best part? Which character would she most like to be? Zoe grins. “Hermione ... she is very clever and knows how to do good spells.”

AUDIENCE

Authors always have an audience in mind. This helps the author decide on the style of their writing and the kind of information that would interest the audience.

For most of the time, when she’s in class, Zoe gets help from a special teacher of the Deaf or a professional interpreter. But there’s also a roster of children who interpret for Zoe when these people aren’t at Saint Pius X school. Deztinee started signing at the age of seven, when she first met Zoe at school in Titahi Bay. The girls walk to school together every morning.

TENSES

When authors are planning a narrative or recount, they make decisions about whether to use past or present verb forms for the main action.

Did you know?

Deaf people often give sign names to other people. They are like nicknames and are usually about the person’s character or appearance. Zoe has a special sign name for everyone in her class.

ADDRESSING THE AUDIENCE

Addressing questions to the reader can engage the reader and make them think more deeply about ideas in the text. A question can often signal that the author is going to provide additional information.

METACOGNITION

- What was hard about considering your audience? What was easy?
- Why did you use the present tense? What effect did you want to achieve?
- What specialist vocabulary did you assume your readers already knew on this topic? How could you give them more support with the vocabulary they might not know?

EXPLAIN the author’s assumptions in this excerpt.

- The writer starts straight in, telling us about Zoe’s book review. She assumes her audience is familiar with giving book reviews in class. She also assumes most readers will recognise the book right away – most primary school children know who Hermione is. These clues tell me that the author is writing for children who are about the same age as Zoe.

ASK QUESTIONS to support the students as they form their writing intentions.

- How will you make decisions about your topic, purpose, and audience?
- What “voice” will you use? Why?
- What do you know about your audience and the aspects of your topic that might interest them?
- How will you keep your audience in mind as you write?

MODEL an analysis of the excerpt.

- In this article, the author mostly uses the present tense. In the recounting section, this gives her writing a sense of “here and now”, which makes it interesting. In other sections, she uses the present tense to talk about things that occur all the time. The author uses the past tense in the sentence that gives a piece of information about the past: when Deztinee started signing. Then she returns to the present tense – “The girls walk to school together every morning”.

DIRECT the students to review their use of tenses.

- Would your writing have more impact if you changed the tense for the main action? Change it to see what difference it makes.

For students who need support with understanding and using a range of verb forms, you could use timelines to help them identify and select different verb forms. Co-construct timelines for sections of text that you have read, illustrating how the verb forms convey information about time relationships. Encourage students to create their own timelines for events as part of their planning for writing and to experiment with and select appropriate verb forms as they do so.

EXPLAIN that one way to provide additional or background information for readers is to insert a fact box. This fact box may start with a question, which addresses the reader directly and draws their attention.

PROMPT the students to review the ways they have kept their audience in mind.

- Ask your partner to read over your work and give you feedback from the audience’s point of view. Do they feel engaged?
- Do you want to engage the reader more directly? How might you do that?
- Are there changes you need to make to your voice or tone, the amount of detail, or the vocabulary?

GIVE FEEDBACK

- The changes you made to help your audience understand the information are very helpful. The fact box is a good way to provide those extra details.
- You’ve stayed “on topic” right through – that’s hard to do with so much information, but it’s important to help your audience follow the main ideas.
- Your choice of mainly present tense really adds to your story and brings it alive for the reader.

 **Writing standard: by the end of year 5**

 **The Literacy Learning Progressions**