



## Overview

“Uncle Tino” is a deceptively simple story about Samoan twins, Jessie and Jonas, who are embarrassed by their exuberant uncle who has recently arrived from Sāmoa. The lively story is woven through with Samoan concepts and values as Jessie and Jonas gradually change their attitudes toward Uncle Tino. The story reinforces the idea that cultural knowledge and skills are “cool” and worthy of respect.

This text allows students to engage positively with the concept of fa'asāmoa (Samoan culture). By drawing on a Samoan world view and seeing the story “through Samoan eyes”, teachers can support their students to gain insights into the layers of meaning.

Fa'asāmoa includes the values and aspects of identity that are outlined in Ministry of Education's “Compass for Pasifika Success”. The central element of fa'asāmoa is family (āiga).

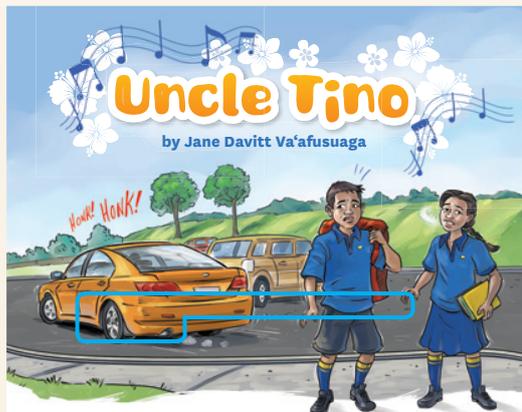
Āiga means “family”, “related”, or “home”. It expresses the idea that all people who have a relationship through blood or marriage live together or close by. The arrival of Uncle Tino to live with the family is an example of āiga in practice.

When Uncle Tino offers to help out with the culture club, other fa'asāmoa values are illustrated: that of giving service (tautua) and of respect (fa'aaloalo). When Mrs Falefa thanks him for his help, she is recognising the special skill, energy, and authenticity that he has brought. The principal shows his respect for Uncle Tino when he invites the concert audience to leave the hall and watch the fire dancing. Other examples are pointed out throughout this TSM.

Texts related by theme

“Dances of Sāmoa” SJ L2 Oct 2012 | “A Silent World” SJ 2.2.02 | “Mele's Money Dance” SJ 1.1.10

## Text characteristics from the year 4 reading standard



The twins could hear Uncle Tino honking his car horn as he drove away from school and down the road. “He's so embarrassing!” said Jonas, looking around to see if anyone was staring at them.

“I know!” moaned Jessie.  
“Let's ask Mum if we can walk to school from now on,” Jonas suggested. “We can say we want to get more exercise.”  
Jessie nodded. “OK. We'll ask Mum tonight. But don't tell her the real reason we want to walk. She'll only remind us again that Uncle Tino has just arrived from Sāmoa. Everyone honks their car horns there.”

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While the twins were doing their homework that evening and Mum was emptying their schoolbags, they asked about walking to school.

“It'll keep us fit,” explained Jessie.  
“Yeah,” said Jonas, “and we'll stay together, so we'll be safe.”  
“OK,” said Mum. “I'll tell Tino, but I'm sure he'll be disappointed.” She pulled a piece of paper out of Jessie's schoolbag. “What's this notice about?” she asked.  
“Something about culture groups,” said Jessie.  
“Culture groups?” asked Uncle Tino, walking into the room.  
“Yes,” said Mum, reading the notice. “The school needs helpers for the Samoan group. You could do that, Tino.”  
“Sure,” Uncle Tino said.

Jonas and Jessie looked at each other, but they didn't say anything.



some abstract ideas that are clearly supported by concrete examples in the text or easily linked to the students' prior knowledge

some places where ideas and information are implicit and where students need to make inferences based on the information that is easy to find because it is nearby in the text and there is little or no competing information

some compound and complex sentences, which may consist of two or three clauses

## Possible curriculum contexts

### SOCIAL SCIENCES

Level 2 – Social Studies: Understand how cultural practices reflect and express people’s customs, traditions, and values.

### ENGLISH (Reading)

Level 2 – Ideas: Show some understanding of ideas within, across, and beyond texts.

### ENGLISH (Writing)

Level 2 – Ideas: Select, form, and express ideas on a range of topics.

### Possible reading purposes

- To explore Samoan values and traditions
- To understand why and how the twins change towards Uncle Tino
- To enjoy a warm and lively story with a familiar setting and characters.

See *Instructional focus – Reading* for illustrations of some of these reading purposes.

### Possible writing purposes

- To share and describe similar family experiences
- To describe a time when you had to change your opinion of a person
- To write a character study of Uncle Tino.

See *Instructional focus – Writing* for illustrations of some of these writing purposes.

## Text and language challenges

### VOCABULARY:

- Possible unfamiliar words and phrases, including “honking”, “embarrassing”, “moaned”, “culture groups”, “slap dance”, “lāvalava”, “disbelief”, “Me neither”, “kerosene”
- The words in gagana Sāmoa (the language of Sāmoa), which are explained in the glossary
- The colloquial language “kids”, “cool”, “Ple-ease”.

### Possible supporting strategies

Familiarise yourself with the gagana Sāmoa words and terms and how to pronounce them. Depending on the knowledge of your students, you may need to provide support for accurate pronunciation and meanings. You could use an online resource such as <http://pasifika.tki.org.nz> or staff, students, parents, or other community members.

Before the reading, preview any words that you think will be unfamiliar to your students. Prepare a vocabulary list. For each word, include a simple definition in English and/or a picture and a simple example sentence. Depending on your students’ strengths and needs, you could:

- give students all of the words with the matching example sentences and have them use the examples to match the words to the correct definitions
- give pairs of students two or three words to find the matching definitions for (and then share with the group)
- give pairs two or three words to find the matching definitions, write another example sentence, and then share with the group.

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

### SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED:

- Some knowledge of the values and traditions of fa’asāmoa (Samoan culture), including family and relationships, respect, and service
- Understanding and/or experience of the hard work (practice, repetition) required to achieve excellence in a performance
- Experience of forming and changing opinions about people as we learn more about them
- Experience of school and family life, including culture groups and concerts.

### Possible supporting strategies

Use the background information provided on page 1 of this TSM as well as explanations in the reading notes (page 3) and writing notes (page 4). You may also wish to seek further information (for example, about similarities and differences between the culture and traditions of different Pacific nations) from your local communities. The Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs can also provide useful guidance and contacts.

### TEXT FEATURES AND STRUCTURE:

- Straightforward narrative structure in the past tense
- The use of phrases that signal time, for example, “While the twins ... that evening”, “after the practice”, “next week”, “by now”
- The extensive use of dialogue
- The change in the characters Jessie and Jonas
- The use of hyperbole: “at least ten times”; and metaphor: “performed their hearts out”
- The repetition of “Suddenly”.

### Possible supporting strategies

Chart the main characters with the students, showing their relationships.

Review the structure of a typical narrative that has characters, plot, a setting, and characters. The typical narrative structure involves an orientation, setting up an issue, a conflict or problem, and resolution. Students could use a graphic organiser to chart this structure, taking notes under each of the headings (see also next page). They could then use the same kind of graphic organiser to plan their own writing.

Discuss the use of colloquial and figurative language in dialogue.

# Instructional focus – Reading

**Social Sciences** (Level 2 – Social Studies: Understand how cultural practices reflect and express people’s customs, traditions, and values.)

**English** (Level 2 – (Level 2 – Ideas: Show some understanding of ideas within, across, and beyond texts.)

## Text excerpts from “Uncle Tino”

“Let’s ask Mum if we can walk to school from now on,” Jonas suggested. “We can say we want to get more exercise.”

Jessie nodded. “OK. We’ll ask Mum tonight. But don’t tell her the real reason we want to walk. She’ll just remind us again that Uncle Tino’s just arrived from Sāmoa. Everyone honks their car horns there.”

“Fa’afetai lava, Tino,” said Mrs Falefa after the practice. “Our songs sounded so much better with your guitar – the kids’ singing was the best I’ve ever heard.”

Uncle Tino smiled. “I’m glad to help, Mrs Falefa,” he said. “I’ll bring my pātē next week so I can play the drums for the sāsā.”

Mrs Falefa began holding a practice every day for the school’s end-of-year concert.

The principal stood up and spoke to the audience.

“Ladies and gentlemen, girls and boys,” he announced. “We have a special treat for you tonight. But you’ll all have to follow me outside.”

Jonas and Jessie looked at each other in surprise. Everyone in the hall ... started to play the pātē.

Suddenly, Uncle Tino ran onto the court. He was wearing a lāvalava, and his .... He was carrying a long stick, and it was on fire!

## Students (what they might do)

The students **make connections** between the children and their own experiences of family relationships to **infer** that Jessie and Jonas are going to lie to their mother. They **evaluate** the children’s reason for lying and **ask and answer questions** about Mum’s response. They **make connections** between the text and their own feelings about what other people might think of them to **infer** the different views of the children and their mother about Uncle Tino.

The students **make connections** between the text and their own experiences of singing with accompaniment to **infer** that Uncle Tino’s playing helped the singers stay together and keep in tune. They **make connections** with any prior knowledge of Samoan guitar playing to further **infer** that Uncle Tino’s skilful playing added authenticity and quality to their singing.

Students **make connections** between the text and their experiences of practising a skill to **infer** that Mrs Falefa increased the number of practices to ensure the concert would be perfect.

The students **make connections** between the text and their knowledge of school protocols and status to **infer** that the principal is showing respect to Uncle Tino by including his performance in the concert. They **make predictions** about why the audience is asked to go outside. Students **think critically** about how different cultural practices can be valued at school and the reasons why this is important.

## Teacher (possible deliberate acts of teaching)

**DIRECT** the students to discuss the extract using think, pair, share. Encourage them to use their own languages. Prompt the discussion if necessary.

- How would you feel if you were Jessie or Jonas?
- Why do they lie to their mother? What do you think about that?
- How would Uncle Tino feel if he knew that they were embarrassed by his behaviour?
- Why do the children, Mum, and Uncle Tino have different points of view about this?

**ASK** the students to share their thinking with the group. Draw out (or explain) the differences between life in Sāmoa and life in New Zealand and the values (such as the importance of āiga or belonging) that sit behind these differences.

Use a graphic organiser (with columns for the time frame, main action, and characters’ views) to support students to follow the action and the characters’ viewpoints and feelings. Have students read the first four paragraphs, then together identify (noting the evidence in the text) and record the time frame, the main events, and the characters’ views. (Note that in this case, the time frame is suggested and not stated, but in other cases, there will be phrases that signal the time.) Have students work through each section and fill in the graphic organiser, then discuss the text at the end of each section.

**ASK QUESTIONS** to draw out the students’ own experiences.

- How could playing a guitar (or other instrument) help with singing?
- What do you know about the way a skilled Samoan guitarist plays?
- What do you think Uncle Tino’s playing does for the group?
- What do you know (or can you guess) about the dances?
- Why is Uncle Tino willing to help the culture group? What does this tell you about him?
- Mrs Falefa holds practices every day. What experiences have you had where you had to practise a lot to get something right? What did you learn about the value of working hard?

**ASK QUESTIONS** to prompt their discussion.

- What is special about the principal’s actions?
- What does this tell you about how he regards Uncle Tino? What does it say about how he regards Samoan culture?
- What experiences do you have that can help us understand what Uncle Tino and his friend are about to do?
- How can we show that we value diverse cultural traditions at school? Why is this important?

**GIVE FEEDBACK**

- Some of you know a lot about fa’asāmoa. Thank you for sharing your knowledge. It helped us to understand more about the story.
- You’ve identified the theme of cultural differences in this story and made some strong connections with other stories we’ve read.

### METACOGNITION

- Show me a place where you identified with a character in the story. How did this help you understand the theme?
- What strategies helped you to dig deeper into the meaning of the story? Show me a place where you used a strategy to do this.
- How did you work out what “performed their hearts out” meant?

Reading standard: by the end of year 4

The Literacy Learning Progressions

Assessment Resource Banks

# Instructional focus – Writing

**Social Sciences** (Level 2 – Social Studies: Understand how cultural practices reflect and express people’s customs, traditions, and values.)

**English** (Level 2– Ideas: Select, form, and express ideas on a range of topics.)

## Text excerpts from “Uncle Tino”

“What’s this notice about?” she asked.

“Something about culture groups,” said Jessie.

## Examples of text characteristics

### DIALOGUE

*Dialogue is an excellent way to show a character’s feelings or attitudes without having to describe them.*

“Culture groups?” asked Uncle Tino, walking into the room.

“Yes,” said Mum, reading the notice.

### USING A PARTICIPIAL PHRASE

*A participial phrase can be used to show two actions by the same character that take place at the same time.*

Jonas and Jessie looked at each other, but they didn’t say anything.

### IMPLICATION

*For a reader to infer, a writer needs to imply ideas. This can be done by building on an idea or interaction from an earlier part of the story.*

## METACOGNITION

- What were you thinking when you wrote this? What did you want your readers to learn about the characters?
- What strategies did you use to review and edit your writing? How helpful were these strategies?
- What do you want your readers to feel when they reach the end of the story? How have you helped them to understand the real meaning of what happened?

## Teacher

(possible deliberate acts of teaching)

**EXPLAIN** that dialogue often shows the reader what a character is feeling.

- With a partner, read these two lines aloud – one of you as Jessie, the other as Mum. Use the kind of expression Jessie and Mum would use. You could use gestures as well.
- What do you learn about Jessie and her attitude to culture groups?
- When you’re writing dialogue, remember to use the kinds of words your characters might actually say. That way, you can show your readers something about the character’s feelings and attitudes.
- Revealing characters’ feelings, attitudes, or values is important when you’re trying to show differences between characters.

**MODEL** the construction of a participial phrase.

- Listen as I read the last sentence in this extract.
- Now listen as I change it into two sentences: “Yes,” said Mum. Mum read the notice.
- The way the author expressed this has given the sentence a good flow – I can visualise Mum speaking and reading at the same time.
- “Reading the notice” doesn’t make a sentence by itself because the subject (the person doing the action) is missing.
- Notice the use of a comma and the “-ing” word. These details help make the sentence work.
- Try using this kind of phrase when you’re writing dialogue and you want to show what a character is doing while they are speaking.

The key thing that trips people up with these phrases is making sure the participial phrase has the same agent (the “doer” of the verb) as the subject of the main clause.

**EXPLAIN** the difference between explicit and implicit.

- In this extract, the author doesn’t tell us what Jonas and Jessie are thinking. She had told us earlier in the story that Uncle Tino embarrassed them. Now she expects us to infer that they’re worried he will embarrass them again. She doesn’t need to tell us directly: we can work it out from what she told us earlier.
- Read over one of your stories with a partner. Are there any places where you can imply meaning instead of telling your readers directly?
- Try one or two different ways of doing this, giving each other feedback.

## GIVE FEEDBACK

Your dialogue is very effective: it helps me see the kind of person Mele is and how she feels about ...

- The changes you’ve made to the dialogue show what Sefa was doing as he was talking. This flows more smoothly now, and I can visualise his actions.
- I’m glad the father changed his attitude by the end of the story. Once he saw that ..., everything worked out well.

 Writing standard: by the end of year 4

 The Literacy Learning Progressions