



## Overview

Mana hates running, but he's training to compete in the IronMāori Tamariki. His dad is sure he can do it. On the day, his whānau is there in support, and Mana is very happy with the result.

Mana is the main character. He works hard, has the support of his whānau, and he succeeds. Importantly, his goal is to complete the event, not to win it. The message of perseverance will be relevant to a wider range of students. The story has an subtext of family tensions – the parents have separated and Dad has a new partner.

The humour (as in the relationship between Mana and his father) is subtle and will be recognised by students in this year level.

IronMāori Tamariki has been running for about ten years and is a New Zealand-wide competition. IronMāori Tamariki is popular among Māori and is reported widely, for example, on Māori television and on social media. IronMāori Tamariki ties into traditional values of whānau support and of valuing physical prowess.

Texts related by theme

“Sports Day” SJ 2.3.09 | “How to Swim a Length Underwater” L2 Oct 2011

## Text characteristics from the year 4 reading standard

some words or phrases that are ambiguous or unfamiliar to the students, the meaning of which is supported by the context or clarified by photographs, illustrations, diagrams, and/or written explanations

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

“Hey, Dad, how far did we run?” I ask when we get back to his place.  
“E toru kiromita,” Dad says. That’s 3 kilometres!  
I jump into the shower. Then it’s teatime – bacon and mushroom pasta. Yum! Dad’s partner, Sharon, is a mean cook.  
Afterwards, while we’re doing the dishes, Dad tells me about his latest “good read”.  
“You know Richie McCaw?”  
“Duh! Richie McCaw, All Blacks’ captain!”  
“Well, do you know what he was like when he was your age?”  
“Yeah, nah. Why?”  
“He was like you.”  
“What, Māori?”  
“No. I’ll show you. Check this out.”  
He hands me a book. It’s about Richie McCaw. I look at the photos of Richie McCaw as a kid. He’s like me – kind of chunky!  
“Far! Dad, so you think I can do this IronMāori Tamariki?”  
“Son, I know you can.”



The next day, Mum picks me up from the swimming pool. (I spend a week with Mum and a week with Dad.) Training for the swim is easy. I’m in the Orca group. I’m not the fastest swimmer, but I can do ten lengths easy. Swimming just feels right. It’s not hard work like running.  
Luckily nobody hears when Mum says, “Hey, what happened to my cuddly son? You’ve lost some weight, taku pēpi. Are they feeding you OK over there?”  
“It’s all good, Mum.”

“I hope Dad’s not pushing you too much. Are you sure you can do this IronMāori Tamariki?”

I don’t answer. Stuff about Dad makes Mum annoyed.  
“Mum, are you coming to Napier to watch me?” I ask instead.

She changes the subject.

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

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



## Possible curriculum contexts

### SOCIAL SCIENCES (Social Studies)

Level 2: Understand how cultural practices reflect and express people's customs, traditions, and values.

### ENGLISH (Reading)

Level 2 – Purposes and audiences: Show some understanding of how texts are shaped for different purposes and audiences.

### ENGLISH (Writing)

Level 2 – Purposes and audiences: Show some understanding of how to shape texts for different purposes and audiences.

### Possible reading purposes

- To enjoy reading a story about a boy's efforts to compete in a duathlon
- To explore concepts such as perseverance and whānau/family support
- To think critically about the role of physical activity in our lives.

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

### Possible writing purposes

- To write a personal recount of taking up a challenge that required training and perseverance
- To research and write about a similar event, such as a kapa haka competition.

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 “superhero”, “togs”, “rashie”, “goggles”, “wetsuits”, “insulation”, “buoy”, “rhythm”, “cruising”, “weird”, “transition”, “macaroni cheese”
- The words in te reo, most without translation
- The colloquialisms, such as “cuzzie”, “a mean cook”, “Duh!”, “Yeah, nah”, “Far!”, “cold as”, “crack up”, “wiped out”, “a mean buzz”, “yakking up a storm”, “fulla”
- The idiomatic expressions, such as “wind me up”, “Here’s the deal”, “lean, mean machine”, “tune out”, “It’s on!”, “In no time at all”, “turn it up a gear”
- The metaphors: “butterflies in my stomach”, “You’re an orca. Salt water is your home”, “I’m a machine”.

### Possible supporting strategies

Spend time familiarising yourself with any unfamiliar Māori words or expressions. Depending on the knowledge of your students, provide support for pronunciation and meanings. Look up or ask others for help with any words that are unfamiliar to you. You could ask other people in your school community or iwi for support.

Before reading, preview selected vocabulary that may be unfamiliar to your students. In particular, some may need support with the colloquial and idiomatic language. List unfamiliar words and expressions, and then provide a simple definition in English with an example sentence. Then assign one or two words to pairs of students. Support the pairs to construct their own example sentences (they could act out a short two-line skit if this is fun). Have the pairs read out / act out their examples with the vocabulary missing (“Say ‘beep’ instead of your word/phrase”) while the other pairs guess the vocabulary. Discuss and record the examples.

See ESOL Online, Vocabulary, for examples of strategies to support students with vocabulary. Some students may be more familiar with the use of colloquial language in their oral exchanges. Support them to understand how they are used in the story and what they mean. *The English Language Learning Progressions: Introduction*, pages 39–46, has useful information about learning vocabulary.

### SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED:

- Experience of running, swimming, and participating in sporting events
- Understanding of the concepts of fitness and training
- Knowledge and/or experience of a family where Mum and Dad live separately, or where a parent has a new partner
- Understanding the concept of whānau/family support
- Understanding a family’s use of repartee or humour
- Knowledge of Richie McCaw and books about the lives of famous sports people.

### Possible supporting strategies

Ask students to share their experiences of training for a sports event, explaining what was hard and why they did it. Prompt them to consider the role of whānau and family in supporting and encouraging their training.

Allow students who share a first language other than English to explore their ideas in this language.

The subtext of a separated family may not be immediately apparent, so allow time before discussing this explicitly. Many students will be in a home situation with Mum and Dad living apart, but be aware it is a sensitive issue. See the suggestions in the reading section.

### TEXT FEATURES AND STRUCTURE:

- Straightforward first-person narrative
- Fictional recount of preparing and competing in an event, Iron Tamariki
- Extensive use of dialogue and internal monologue
- Extensive use of colloquial and idiomatic language that gives authenticity to the narrator’s voice
- Subtext that implies tensions between Mana’s parents
- The climax that shows Mana’s pleasure in completing the event
- The use of humour between Mana and his dad
- Use of ellipses to indicate feelings and pauses in speech
- Use of parentheses to show the narrator’s thoughts.

### Possible supporting strategies

Review features such as the order of events and the time markers, the use of dialogue, and the structure from the start to the end of the story.

Read and act out selected dialogue to support students with understanding it and how it works in the narrative. Support students to identify the setting and the characters and their relationships. Prompt students to name the characters in the illustrations as they learn who they are.

Some students may need support to fully understand the events and to make the necessary inferences. Support students to use a graphic organiser (see below) to record the events and Mana’s feelings (and how they have inferred these feelings). Model making inferences and filling in the graphic organiser. At selected points in the story, give students opportunities to discuss and revise their ideas in pairs and as a whole group.

Event	Mana’s feelings	How I know



Sounds and Words

# Instructional focus – Reading

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

**English** (Level 2 – Purposes and audiences: Show some understanding of how texts are shaped for different purposes and audiences.)

## Text excerpts from “Iron Tamariki”

## Students (what they might do)

## Teacher (possible deliberate acts of teaching)

“OK, Mana. Here’s the deal. If you can complete this Iron Tamariki event, I’ll make your favourite dinner every night for the whole year!”

“Cool!”

“Well, son,” he says, “you know your father wasn’t always this lean, mean machine. I may look twenty and all muscle ...” (he doesn’t) “... but when I was your age ...”

*The students locate information in the text and **make connections** between the text and their own experiences of relationships to **infer** that Mana and his father get on well and that his father likes to exaggerate. They use their knowledge of punctuation to understand that the words in parentheses show what Mana is thinking. They enjoy the humour of the dialogue.*

**DIRECT** the students to work in pairs as they reread this extract, taking turns to read the parts of Mana and his father.

**PROVIDE PROMPTS** to guide their reading.

- How does the punctuation guide your reading?
- What did you do when you came to the ellipses and parentheses?
- What tone of voice would each character use? Do the illustrations help?
- What can you infer about each character, and about their relationship?
- What kind of audience do you think the author had in mind when he wrote this story? Why do you think that?

### MODEL

- I wonder how Mana is feeling at this point. I’ll tell you how I understand how characters are feeling when I read stories. I make connections to similar situations. For example, when I started off in a race, I felt nervous and excited at the same time. I think that’s what Mana is feeling, and that’s why he’s talking to himself. I also know from my own experience that having support from your whānau makes a big difference. I wonder why Mana’s mum isn’t there.

**ASK QUESTIONS** to support the students’ understanding.

- Why are some sentences in speech marks? Who says them? Who is he talking to?
- What does Mana mean when he says he’s an orca and salt water is his home? How did you work that out?

**DIRECT** the students to reread this extract closely then turn to a partner to discuss these questions. You could have the students work through the graphic organiser and unpack how to make inferences.

- What is happening in this section? What can you infer about how Mana is feeling?
- Why do strangers call out “Kia kaha!”? How would that make him feel?
- Did you predict the outcome of the race? Were you surprised?

**ASK QUESTIONS** to support the students’ understanding. You may want to record some of their responses on a whiteboard or chart paper.

- Go through the story again to identify where Mana mentions his mum.
- Which clues helped you to understand the situation between Mana’s mum and dad?
- Why did he think it was “really weird” (on page 24) to see Mum, Dad, and Sharon together?
- How have things changed over the course of the story?
- How does Mana feel about this?
- How do you think his mum’s presence affected Mana’s performance?

**EXPLAIN** that the story has two main messages.

- What message does the author convey about sticking with something (like training and racing), even when it’s hard?
- What message does he give about whānau support?

### GIVE FEEDBACK

- I noticed you were reading closely to understand what happened at the end of the story. That’s something good readers often do – it can take two or more readings to really get the message.
- You asked good questions about Mana’s training and his father’s role. You thought about your own experiences to help you understand the way Mana and his Dad spoke to each other.

Just before we go down to the start line, I look out for my whānau. There they are – Dad, Sharon, and Nanny Mere. They all give me the big thumbs up.

I talk in my head. “Deep breaths, Mana. Relax. You’re an orca. Salt water is your home.” Someone’s talking with a loudspeaker. Then BANG! It’s on!

*The students locate information and **infer** how Mana is feeling. They **infer** that the support of his whānau is important and **ask questions** about who is, and who is not, at the event. The students use knowledge of sentence structure to **make connections** between the narrative (“I talk in my head.”) and the words in quotes to understand that Mana is saying these words to himself.*

Some of the other kids have caught up. A few boys run past me. I’m not worried ... This isn’t hard – I can do it. People I don’t even know call out to me, “Kia kaha, boy!”

*Students make the following inferences:*

- *Mana is not going to win*
- *he is happy to complete the race*
- *“it” refers to completing the race, and that is more important to him than winning.*

*They draw on prior knowledge about whānau and community support to understand that cheering on a competitor is a way of showing respect for their efforts, even if they are not likely to win.*

All my whānau give me a big hug. Mum, Dad, and Sharon are all smiling. It’s the first time I’ve seen Mum in a good mood around Dad, and she’s yakking up a storm with Sharon.

*The students **make connections** within the text to identify places where Mana has referred to his mum. With support, they **integrate** this with their own knowledge of relationships to understand that Mana’s parents are separated and this has caused tensions.*

### METACOGNITION

- Show me a place where you used your own experiences to help you make an inference.
- Show me a place where knowing how sentences and punctuation work helped you follow the meaning.
- Why did the crowd around Mum crack up laughing when she called out to Mana? What knowledge of your own helped you work that out? If you didn’t understand, how could you find out why they laughed?

# Instructional focus – Writing

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

**English** (Level 2 – Purposes and audiences: Show some understanding of how to shape texts for different purposes and audiences.)

## Text excerpts from “Iron Tamariki”

“I ... hate ... running.” I suck in a few deep, long breaths.

“C’mon, cuzzie! You can do it!”

That’s Dad. He’s always trying to wind me up.

Afterwards, while we’re doing the dishes, Dad tells me about his latest “good read”.

“You know Richie McCaw?”

“Duh! Richie McCaw, All Blacks’ captain!”

“Well, do you know what he was like when he was your age?”

“Yeah, nah. Why?”

“He was like you.”

“What, Māori?”

“No. I’ll show you. Check this out.”

It’s race day, and we’re in Napier. We’re staying at Nanny Mere’s house. The race is about to start. I’ve got butterflies in my stomach. I’m wearing my togs, my rashie, my goggles, and my swimming cap, and I’m covered all over with sunblock. A few kids have wetsuits.

## Examples of text characteristics

### TONE

*The way writing “sounds” can change according to the writer’s purpose and audience. Keeping the tone relaxed and informal sets the scene for an amusing story told by a boy in his own voice.*

### INTERESTING OPENERS

*Making the opening lines of a story interesting pulls the audience in and makes them want to keep reading. One way to make an opening interesting is to start in the middle of some action. The audience wonders what’s going on and wants to keep reading.*

### DIALOGUE

*Dialogue serves many purposes in a story. It can move the plot along, show characters and their reactions, and convey understanding about the relationships between characters.*

### COLLOQUIAL LANGUAGE

*The use of natural, colloquial language can help characters sound more realistic. It also helps the writer connect with the audience by using language they relate to.*

### BUILDING TENSION

*As a story reaches its climax, one way to build tension is to use shorter sentences. Listing items is another way of helping readers understand a character’s growing anticipation.*

## METACOGNITION

- What strategies help you most when you’re planning, writing, and reviewing? What is it about these strategies that works for you?
- How did you keep your audience in mind? What would you change if you’d chosen a much older or younger audience? Why?

## Teacher

(possible deliberate acts of teaching)

**EXPLAIN** that as they plan, writers make decisions about their audience and their purpose for writing.

**ASK QUESTIONS** to support the students as they start writing.

- Once you’ve decided on your audience and your purpose, how do you want your writing to “sound”? For example, will your tone be serious or relaxed? Friendly or formal?
- What language choices will help your audience understand your purpose?

**DIRECT** the students to share their opening sentences with a partner.

- Does the opening grab your attention?
- Are there some details or background that could be left out, letting the reader work out what’s happening for themselves?
- In sharing this with your partner, can you come up with a more catchy or intriguing opening?

**MODEL** the way the dialogue in this extract works.

- As I read this, I use what I know about the way conversations work to keep track of who is talking. The writer didn’t need to say, “Dad said” or “I said” on each line because its obvious who says what. The writer assumes his readers understand how dialogue works. The writer also expects his readers to understand the friendly, almost cheeky way Mana and his dad talk to each other and the colloquial language they use.

**ASK QUESTIONS** to support the students as they review their dialogue writing.

- Check the dialogue: when you read it aloud to your partner, does it sound natural? (Be aware that English language learners may need more support with what sounds “natural” in English.)
- Check the use of punctuation. Do you need to change anything to make sure readers know where the talking starts and ends?
- Do your characters use words and expressions that your readers can relate to?
- Does the dialogue help your readers to learn more about the action, the characters, and their relationships?

**TELL** students to consider the structure of their writing drafts.

- If you made a seismograph of the action in your story, what would it look like?
- Does it build up slowly or quickly?
- Is there a high point where the action reaches a climax?
- How do you show your readers that the story is coming to a climax or an exciting point?
- Use the work of other writers to see how they build interest, and examine their story structure closely.

### MODEL

- In this extract, when Mana lists those items, it’s like we’re hearing what is going on in his head. That’s just what I do before an important event – I go over every detail in my head to make sure I’m ready. The writer has done this so we can see that Mana is all keyed up for the race. It’s a great way to build the tension before the end of the story.

### GIVE FEEDBACK

- You planned well, and I noticed you revised your plan when you got into the writing and found you could jump right in instead of giving a lot of background.
- Your dialogue is much sharper now – working on it out loud made a big difference. You could “hear” what your characters sounded like and make changes to give them more natural ways of talking.



Writing standard: by the end of year 4



The Literacy Learning Progressions