

Tom's Tryathlon

by Kristine Hornblow
photographs by Peter Crawford

Overview

In this recount, Tom talks about his first experience of participating in the Weet-Bix™ Kiwi Kids Tryathlon. Fact boxes provide further information. This is a long text and may be better read over more than one session. There is an audio version of this text (narrated by Tom) on the Ready to Read CD *Readalong 2005*.

Suggested purposes

This text supports the comprehension strategies of identifying main ideas (the sequence of events), making connections (with what the children know about triathlons), and identifying the author's purpose. It provides excellent opportunities for learning and practising strategies for working out unfamiliar vocabulary.

Text features

(Focus on only one or two per session.)

- the strong personal voice:
 - the conversational tone
 - the inclusion of Tom's opinions
 - the colloquial language — "Go, mate!", "SOOO cool!"
 - the use of contractions
 - the use of exclamation marks to convey excitement
- the subject-specific vocabulary — "assemble", "contests", "course", "event", "finish line", "hooter", "kilometres", "laps", "lifeguards", "loudspeakers", "marshal", "medal", "metres", "stitch", "track", "transition area", "Triathlon", "Tryathlon"
- the bold print to signal new words
- the play on words — "Triathlon" and "Tryathlon"
- the prefixes "kilo" and "tri" and the suffix "metres"
- the fact boxes
- the indicators of time — "About a week before", "after school", "At last", "On race day", "This year", "Two weeks before"
- the use of paragraphs
- the use of the dash on pages 4 and 7 to link ideas
- the change from past to present tense on page 10 to quicken the pace

- the™ trademark symbol
- the use of numerals to describe distances
- the design features (the "running man" border, the use of inset and multiple photographs, and the text within some photographs).

Possible challenges

- the text length
- the subject-specific vocabulary
- the concept of distances
- the similar sounds of “medal” and “metal”.

Introducing the text

Show the children the cover of the book and find out what they know about triathlons (or Tryathlons). Read and discuss the fact box on page 3. Tell the children that, in this book, Tom is going to tell them about his experience of training for and racing in a Tryathlon. Give the children some time to browse through the book and talk about what’s happening before they start reading. This is a long text, so if you read the whole text at one sitting, you could use the first reading as a time to “make meaning” (to gather information about Tom’s experience at a literal level) and focus more on thinking critically during a second reading when the children have an overview of the text.

During the reading

Read the title and the names of the author and the photographer.

Title page — *Was this photograph taken at the beginning or the end of the race? How do you know?* (Tom is red in the face and is wearing his medal.)

Ask the children to read the text silently, pausing at various points for discussion or to clarify any difficulties.

Page 2 — Draw out the idea that Tom is introducing himself. *Who is he saying “Hi!” to?* Explain the meaning of the trademark symbol.

Page 3 — Use this page to clarify the structure of the text — a recount with fact boxes that help to explain things. *Why is the word “Triathlon” in bold print?* If you haven’t already done so, talk about the reason for calling this a Tryathlon.

Page 4 — Clarify that this is about Tom’s training. Talk about how the dashes make a link to extra information and help to make this sound as if Tom is talking directly to the reader. If necessary, model the conversational tone. Help the children visualise the distances by drawing a diagram of the running track and/or relating the distances to things that the children are familiar with, such as “about once around the top field”.

Page 5 — *What does this page tell you about the training?*

Page 6 — *How would Tom say “SOOO cool!”?*

Page 7 — Focus on the words “metal” and “medal” and check that the children are articulating them clearly. *How will you check which word is which?* If necessary, clarify the meaning of “metal”.

Pages 8 and 9 — *Why are there text boxes on these pages? Why is the word “stitch” in bold print?* This is a good place to break the reading if you wish. Tell the children that the next part is about the actual race.

Page 10 — If you’re reading this in two parts, briefly recap. Note the tense change. Set the children the task as they read of finding out what “transition area” means. Explain that “transition” is another word for “change”.

Page 11 — Note whether the children make the link between “assemble” and “assembly”. *What helps to make the text sound exciting?*

Pages 12 and 13 — *Does everything go smoothly? How do you know? How does the text box help you?*

Page 15 — *What helped him keep going?*

Page 16 — *How's he feeling? How do you know?*

Encourage the children to make connections to Tom's experience. *Would you want to do something like this? Do you think Tom would want to do this again? Why do you think the author wrote this text?* (Kristine Hornblow is Tom's mother.)

After the reading

(Choose only one or two per session.)

Ask the children to choose a double-page spread that they particularly enjoyed and read it to a partner. Listen in, observing their fluency and expressiveness and how they manage the subject-specific vocabulary. *Why did you choose this part of the text to read?*

Review the overall structure of the text. Summarise the main idea of each page on the whiteboard. Draw out the idea that pages 2–9 cover a long period while Tom prepares for the race. The change to the present tense on page 10 helps to show that now Tom is talking about just the actual race and that things are now happening quickly. Remind the children that they could think about using more than one tense in their own writing.

Ask the children to work with a partner and choose two pages from the text that they think give good clues about how Tom is feeling. Have the children think, pair, and share their ideas about what Tom is feeling on their selected pages and how they worked that out. For example, the information could be directly stated in the text (identifying main ideas) or be implied through the text and/or photographs (inferring), or the children could draw on their experiences of how they would have felt (making connections and visualising).

Together, identify the features of the text that give it its strong personal voice and record them on a chart. Use the chart as a reference during writing sessions.

Identify the indicators of time in the text and draw out the idea that they help the reader to follow the sequence of events. Together, construct a timeline of the events leading up to the race.

Draw the children's attention to the author's use of paragraphs. Explain that each paragraph has a main idea. Ask the children to reread a page or two with more than one paragraph and to summarise the main idea of each paragraph.

Identify some of the subject-specific words and talk about how the children worked them out. Some are explained in the text boxes, but for others, the children will need to draw on a range of visual, meaning, and syntactic information along with their prior knowledge. There may be some words that the children have heard before but not met in print or that they know but are used here with a different meaning ("track", "stitch"). They may be able to draw on their knowledge of similar words (as for "assemble") or identify familiar parts of the word (as for "lifeguards"). Talk about how they can draw on the surrounding text (for example, for "hooter" and "laps") and think about what would make sense. Have a dictionary handy as another way of checking. For ESOL children or children who you feel need more support, you could write some of the subject-specific words and their meanings on separate cards and have the children work together to match them up, using the text as a reference.

Focus on the impact of the design on the text. Explain that every book has a designer as well as an illustrator or photographer and that it's the designer who decides how to put everything together. *What has the designer done to help make this book easy to understand and look exciting?*

Focus on the meaning of the prefix "tri" in "triathlon". Make a list of other words with the same prefix, such as "triangle", "tricycle", and "tripod". You could do the same with the prefix "kilo" or the suffix "metre".

Suggestions for further tasks

Listen to the audio version on the CD *Readalong 2005*.

Construct a timeline of Tom's training and of the race itself.

Have the children find out more about a New Zealand triathlete.

Create a mural of the Tryathlon event and add labels, using the subject-specific vocabulary in bold with a definition underneath.

Use the structure of the recount, and its conversational tone, as a model for writing. Encourage the children to draw on some of the text features identified in the chart to support them in developing their own personal voice in their writing.

You could link this text to a school sports event.

Have fun taping a "commentary" of the race, focusing on Tom's performance.