

Mihi and the Foghorn Father

by Rachel Hayward

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Year 4



Overview

Family relationships and the need for honesty are the themes of this charming story about a girl and her over-enthusiastic Dad. Mihi loves her Dad, but when he watches her play rugby, his loud advice and encouragement put her off her game. When she bravely lets Dad know this, he makes a deal with her that helps them both to enjoy the match.

The story provides opportunities for making connections within the text as well as making inferences based on students' own knowledge of family relationships. The story is an excellent model for writing due to its rich descriptive language and expressive dialogue.

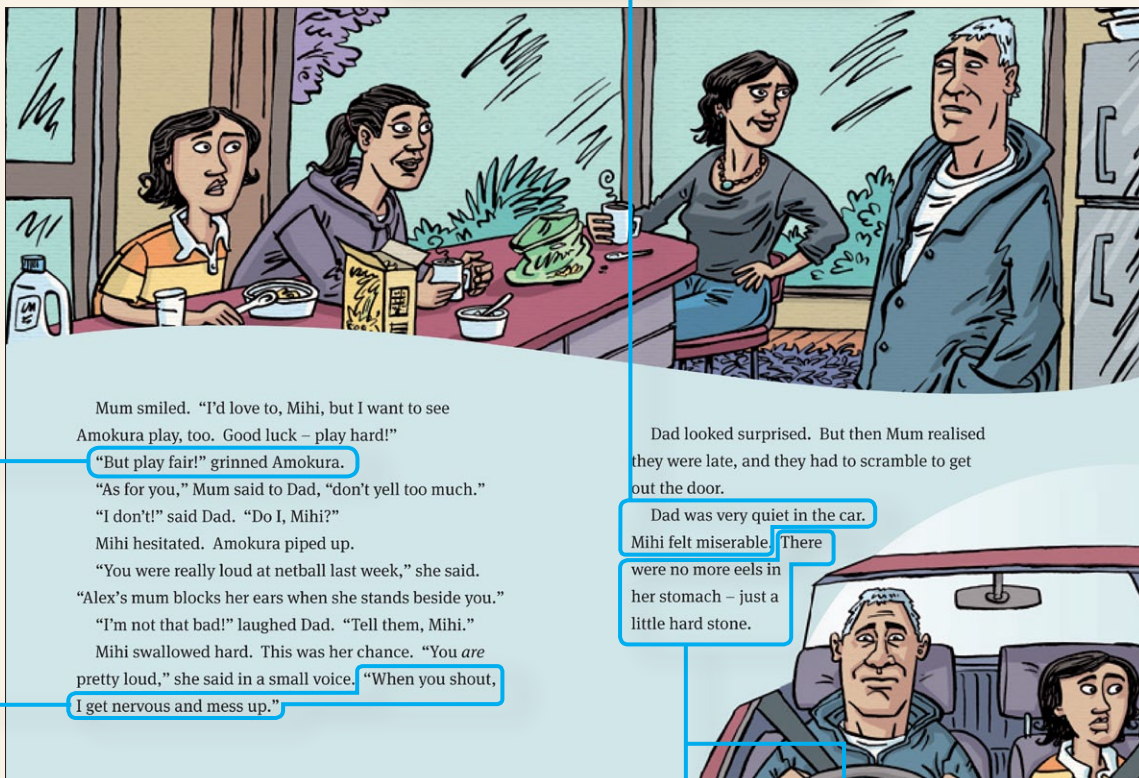
Texts related by theme

“Catch of the Day” SJ 3.3.09 | “Operation Flax” SJ 3.1.08 |
“Baked Beans on Toast” SJ 3.3.05

Text characteristics from the year 4 reading standard

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

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



Mum smiled. “I’d love to, Mihi, but I want to see Amokura play, too. Good luck – play hard!”

“But play fair!” grinned Amokura.

“As for you,” Mum said to Dad, “don’t yell too much.”

“I don’t!” said Dad. “Do I, Mihi?”

Mihi hesitated. Amokura piped up.

“You were really loud at netball last week,” she said.

“Alex’s mum blocks her ears when she stands beside you.”

“I’m not that bad!” laughed Dad. “Tell them, Mihi.”

Mihi swallowed hard. This was her chance. “You *are* pretty loud,” she said in a small voice. “When you shout, I get nervous and mess up.”

Dad looked surprised. But then Mum realised they were late, and they had to scramble to get out the door.

Dad was very quiet in the car.

Mihi felt miserable. There were no more eels in her stomach – just a little hard stone.

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

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

figurative language, such as metaphors, similes, or personification

Reading standard: by the end of year 4

Possible curriculum contexts

HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION (Relationships with Other People)

LEVEL 2 – Relationships: Identify and demonstrate ways of maintaining and enhancing relationships between individuals and within groups.

ENGLISH (Reading)

LEVEL 2 – Language features: Show some understanding of how language features are used for effect within and across texts.

ENGLISH (Writing)

LEVEL 2 – Language features: Use language features appropriately, showing some understanding of their effects.

Possible reading purposes

- To find out how Mihi and her “foghorn father” sort out a problem
- To explore the relationships between Mihi and her parents
- To understand how well-meaning actions can have unintended consequences.

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

Possible writing purposes

- To write a story about sorting out a problem with a friend or relation
- To recount a personal story about a relative
- To describe a time when you felt nervous about doing something.

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

Text and language challenges

VOCABULARY:

- Possible unfamiliar words and phrases, including “ceiling”, “rugby day”, “nervous”, “eels”, “squirming”, “burst”, “lazybones”, “cheerfully”, “tumbling”, “leaping”, “stomach”, “enthusiastic”, “encouraging”, “foghorn”, “bellowed”, “fright”, “snatched”, “tackle”, “knocked”, “concentrate”, “worried”, “disappointed”, “sigh”, “hesitated”, “piped up”, “blocks her ears”, “laughed”, “swallowed”, “surprised”, “realised”, “scramble”, “miserable”, “deal”, “sailed”, “boomed”, “horrified”, “support”, “whistle”, “high-fived”, “victory dance”, “clamped”, “firmly”, “whoop”, “scattered”, “clubrooms”
- The sporting terminology: “a close game”, “half-back”, “made a break for the try line”, “tackle”, “half-time”, “play hard”, “play fair”, “kick-off”, “dodged”, “side-stepped”, “passed the ball wide”, “team-mates”
- colloquial language: “tummy”, “lazybones”, “high-fived”, “let out a whoop”.

Possible supporting strategies

Support the rich descriptive language in this story by discussing the words and phrases (often metaphors or similes) that describe feelings and ways of speaking. Guide discussion to support the students to share and compare ideas to find the best explanation of what each example conveys. Support students in selecting vocabulary they will focus on learning and provide opportunities for them to encounter and use the vocabulary over time and in a range of contexts. *The English Language Learning Progressions: Introduction*, pages 39–46, has some information about learning vocabulary.

Read the title aloud. Break the word “foghorn” into two parts. Elicit the meanings of “fog” and “horn”, then encourage students to predict the meaning of “foghorn” and of “foghorn father”. Establish that speaking and ways of speaking play a large part in the story. Elicit some examples students could use to describe ways of speaking. Ask pairs to list ways of speaking and then to share them with the rest of the group (prompt for “yelled” and perhaps “roared”). Start a wall chart of speaking verbs. During reading, invite students to note and share interesting speaking verbs and other ways to describe speaking, and add them to the chart. During writing, remind students to use the chart for ideas.

SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED:

- Knowledge of family groups and dynamics
- The concept of respect for the feelings of others, including being tactful
- Experiences of playing and/or watching a team sport.

Possible supporting strategies

Provide opportunities for students to discuss how we deal with problems in relationships, including the need for tact. Draw out the tensions that can arise when there is a problem but you don’t want to offend or hurt someone’s feelings.

Ask students to work in pairs to share their experiences of being a spectator on the sideline at a rugby or other match. Why do some people yell? What is the effect of the spectators on the players?

TEXT FEATURES AND STRUCTURE:

- The implied information about the family dynamics, including why Mihi feels nervous, why Mum can’t come, and why Mihi can’t tell Dad her problem
- The extended metaphor that describes feeling nervous
- The use of metaphors – “butterflies in their tummy”, “the eels ... in her stomach”, “Keep your mind on the game”, “a little hard stone”, “keep your eye on the ball”
- The simile – “voice like a foghorn”
- The expressive dialogue that uses font variations (italics, larger size, bold, capitals), punctuation, and alternatives to “said” for dramatic effect
- The use of verbs as adjectives – “squirming, twisting eels”
- The construction “The more ..., the more ...”.

Possible supporting strategies

See the Vocabulary section for support with the metaphors and similes.

Show pictures of butterflies and eels. Ask the students how both creatures move. Tell them to imagine what it would feel like if they had butterflies or eels in their stomach. Have them discuss their ideas and what emotion they think the metaphor conveys. For students who share a first language other than English, encourage them to talk about metaphors for nervousness in their language. Talk about what the use of this metaphor contributes to the writing.

If necessary, provide additional support for students to infer the implied information, such as the reason Mihi feels nervous about rugby day.

Encourage small groups of students to read the story aloud, acting out the sections of dialogue. Use an audio recording of the story to support the students’ understanding of the print clues used for expression.

Instructional focus – Reading

Health and PE (Relationships with Other People, level 2 – Relationships: Identify and demonstrate ways of maintaining and enhancing relationships between individuals and within groups.)

English (Level 2 – Language features: Show some understanding of how language features are used for effect within and across texts.)

Text excerpts from “Mihi and the Foghorn Father”

Students (what they might do)

Teacher (possible deliberate acts of teaching)

Dad was enthusiastic. He was encouraging. But he was really loud. Mum said he had a voice like a foghorn. Mihi had never heard a foghorn, but she knew Dad had the biggest voice on the sideline.

The students use their vocabulary knowledge to work out the meanings of “enthusiastic” and “encouraging”.

They cross-check with information earlier in the text as they ask and answer questions about the problem Mihi is experiencing.

“As for you,” Mum said to Dad, “don’t yell too much.”

“I don’t!” said Dad. “Do I, Mihi?”

Mihi hesitated. Amokura piped up.

“You were really loud at netball last week,” she said. “Alex’s mum blocks her ears when she stands beside you.”

“I’m not that bad!” laughed Dad. “Tell them, Mihi.”

Mihi swallowed hard. This was her chance. “You are pretty loud,” she said in a small voice. “When you shout, I get nervous and mess up.”

Students use their strategies and their knowledge of language features to follow the dialogue and work out who is speaking and how they speak.

They use clues in the text and their own knowledge of family relationships to infer the differences between the responses of Mum, Dad, Amokura, and Mihi. In particular, they use the words “hesitated”, “swallowed hard”, and “small voice” to infer the feelings of Mihi – about letting Dad know his loud voice makes her nervous.

When they got to the field, Dad turned to Mihi. “Let’s make a deal,” he said. “You do your best to help your team win, and I’ll do my best to keep quiet.” He held out his hand. “Deal?”

Mihi smiled and shook his big hand. “Deal!”

The students make connections between the text and their knowledge of resolving problems to infer the meaning of the deal. They infer that Dad understands how he can help Mihi and that they both have a responsibility.

PROMPT the students to reread for clues that will help them infer meaning.

- Read back over the story so far. What parts tell you how Mihi was feeling?
- What clues help you to infer her problem? (“rugby day”, “She felt sick”, “This was Dad’s rugby weekend”, “She might keep Dad quiet.”)

ASK QUESTIONS to support the students to make deeper connections with the text. In pairs, have them discuss their ideas about parents on the sidelines and then have them share these with the group.

- What do you think parents and family feel about watching their children play sport?
- How do you feel about your family watching?
- What does the illustration tell you about Dad?
- What can Mihi do about the situation? What would you do?

Have the students act out this section of dialogue. They can work in small groups, using the clues in the text to help them express the speech of each character accurately. Prompt them to pay attention to the language that describes ways of speaking.

ASK QUESTIONS to help students clarify the relationships in the family.

- What did you learn about the relationships between the two children and their father?
- Why do you think Amokura speaks up but Mihi finds it hard to say what she thinks?
- Why do you think Dad appeals to Mihi?
- Do you think Dad will take the concerns of Mihi seriously? Why do you think that?
- How has the writer helped you to understand more about Mihi and Dad?

PROMPT the students to work with a partner to analyse the deal.

- Is this a good way to solve the problem? What other way could it have been done?
- How do you think Mihi feels now? How can you tell?
- Do you think they will keep to the deal? What might happen next?

If necessary, support students to understand the concept of a deal – that it involves both parties agreeing to actions for a specific outcome. Use classroom examples to illustrate other “deals”, such as working hard to earn extra free time.

GIVE FEEDBACK

- You asked good questions about the problem Mihi was having with her dad. The answers helped you understand why Mihi felt so nervous.
- You identified some good clues about the feelings Mihi was having. They helped you to understand that Mihi didn’t want to hurt Dad’s feelings.

METACOGNITION

- Tell me how you worked out how Mihi felt about her dad. What clues did you use?
- Show me where you went back to reread. Why did you do that? How did it help you?
- Tell me how you made connections to other situations in your family even though none of you play sport.

Reading standard: by the end of year 4

The Literacy Learning Progressions

Assessment Resource Banks

Instructional focus – Writing

Health and PE (Relationships with Other People, level 2 – Relationships: Identify and demonstrate ways of maintaining and enhancing relationships between individuals and within groups.)

English (Level 2 – Language features: Use language features appropriately, showing some understanding of their effects.)

Text excerpts from “Mihi and the Foghorn Father”

Some people get butterflies in their tummy when they're nervous, but Mihi had eels – squirming, twisting eels.

...

Mihi felt the eels tumbling and leaping in her stomach.

...

There were no more eels in her stomach – just a little hard stone.

Examples of text characteristics

EXTENDED METAPHOR

When a metaphor is continued across a text, the reader can compare changes as the story progresses. This helps the reader to better understand what is happening for a character.

“TACKLE HER!” roared Dad. Mihi tripped, crashed into one of her team-mates, and knocked her over.

...

Dad's voice boomed, “KEEP YOUR EYE ON THE BALL, MIHI!”

...

STRESS

There are several ways a writer can give spoken words a strong emphasis. Using capital letters, italics, and punctuation such as exclamation marks all helps the reader to understand how the writer intends the words to be spoken.

“SORRY!” he shouted. He put his hand over his mouth and kept it there.

...

She dodged and side-stepped.

...

Dad was doing a little victory dance, his hand clamped firmly over his mouth.

WORD CHOICE

The more precise the word chosen, the easier it is for the reader to understand exactly what the writer intended.

Teacher

(possible deliberate acts of teaching)

PROMPT the students to review what they know about metaphors.

- Have you used metaphors in your writing?
- What effect do you want them to have?

If appropriate, provide opportunities for your students to explore metaphors (for being nervous, initially) in their first language, either with a partner who shares the same first language or by describing them to you. Discuss, and give examples of, the way metaphors often don't translate well.

MODEL how the extended metaphor in the extracts helps you to understand the changes in the feelings Mihi is having. Read each extract aloud, sharing the feeling you get as the metaphor changes.

DIRECT the students to review their own writing to find places where a metaphor could help convey an idea or a feeling.

- Ask a partner to read your writing. Talk about the ideas or feelings you want to convey.
- Would a metaphor be a good way of expressing your feelings? Is the metaphor you've used a good one?
- Would it help to use the same one again in the story, with some changes to show how a character has changed?

PROMPT the students to “write like a reader” by reading their story aloud or silently.

- Imagine you're reading your story aloud to an audience. How do you want the characters to sound when they speak?
- How can you help your readers to know that? Can you use the way you write the words and the punctuation to show more clearly how you want them to sound?

PROMPT the students to review the verbs they have used.

- Check that every verb is working hard for you. Does it say exactly what you mean? If not, use the chart to find some alternatives.

MODEL the use of precise or specific language. Sometimes students overload their writing with descriptive language that makes the writing turgid or “over the top”. Support them and their writing partners to use peer feedback to make decisions about changing or removing unnecessary words. An analogy such as “using a sledgehammer to put in a drawing pin” may help to explain why some words are too strong for the writer's purpose.

GIVE FEEDBACK to affirm students' writing decisions and guide their learning.

- The metaphor you used helped me to understand Rosie's feelings. How could you extend it to help your readers to see how she changes later?
- When I read the dialogue, I could imagine just how the boys were talking. Reading your writing aloud to Tama has helped you choose verbs that make the way they were speaking much clearer.

METACOGNITION

- Tell me about the process you used to find this metaphor. Did you try out some other ideas first? Why do you think this one worked best? Is this a metaphor that is used in your first language?
- Show me where you've revised your writing. What did you do here, and why did you do it?
- Describe what you did to help your readers understand the relationship between Sarah and her best friend.

 Writing standard: by the end of year 4

 The Literacy Learning Progressions