



Overview

This article describes how trees have been used in New Zealand and the impact people have had on the native forests. The text shares the perspectives of people involved in the timber industry and of conservationists since the arrival of European settlers. It outlines the events that occurred, the resulting impact on indigenous forests, and the steps taken to sustain them.

Photographs and a diagram support the text. Some students may have difficulty with the extensive factual information. The use of graphic organisers to summarise the key information could support the students to monitor the events in the text.

Texts related by theme "Pukeitī Robins" SJ 2.1.11 | "Seeds for the Birds" SJ 2.4.07 | "The Bittern" SJ 3.1.09

Text characteristics from the year 6 reading standard

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)

abstract ideas, in greater numbers than in texts at earlier levels, accompanied by concrete examples in the text that help support the students' understanding

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



The interior of Te Whare Rūnanga at the Waitangi Treaty Grounds



The Mangonui Courthouse was built of kauri in 1892. Until the 1920s, many houses were built from kauri. It was strong but light and didn't shrink or warp.



Rimu trees being logged at Mamaku near Rotorua, 1915



Loading a kauri log onto a truck in Northland

The forests of Tāne

When the first people arrived in New Zealand, more than 80 percent of the land was covered in trees. Some of these trees were felled to build waka and whare. However, plenty were left, and the forests of Tāne continued to thrive. Bark, leaves, flowers, and sap (taken to make rongoā or medicine) were also gathered sustainably.

Although early Māori were gardeners, they were also hunters. Sometimes, they used fire to catch birds, and these fires sometimes spread out of control and burnt huge areas. When Pākehā settlers arrived, they felled and burnt the forests on a larger scale. Land was burnt for towns and roads – and, most importantly, land was needed for farms.

The town of Inglewood rises from the ashes, 1876. Often the easiest way to get rid of the bush was to burn it.



Tougher times for trees

Throughout the nineteenth century – and especially from 1840 – trees became big business. Kauri, kahikatea, rimu, and totara were especially valuable. Huge numbers were felled and sent to Australia, Britain, and California. (Between 1890 and 1920, almost a quarter of our milled native timber was sold overseas.)

Back home, wood was needed for building houses, furniture, fences, and wharves. It was also used for railway sleepers, roof shingles, and firewood. It seemed that the settlers' need for timber was never-ending. By the turn of the twentieth century, most of the native forests left were in places that were too difficult to reach. And people started to seriously worry.

People were concerned about New Zealand's disappearing forests for various reasons. Māori and early conservationists worried about our native birds and animals and their lost habitats. A growing number of people were also exploring the outdoors. They wanted places where they could enjoy tramping and mountaineering or could just appreciate the bush.

Others worried that the country's future need for timber was going to be much larger than the supply. New Zealand's population was growing, and this meant that more houses would be needed. But where was all this extra wood going to come from? Many experts said there was going to be a serious shortage.



In July 1909, the School Journal published a special Arbor Day issue, lamenting the loss of our forests.



figurative and/or ambiguous language that the context helps students to understand

illustrations, photographs, text boxes, diagrams, maps, charts, and graphs that clarify or extend the text and may require some interpretation

Possible curriculum contexts

SCIENCE (Planet Earth and Beyond)

LEVEL 3 – Earth systems: Appreciate that water, air, rocks and soil, and life forms make up our planet and recognise that these are also Earth's resources.

ENGLISH (Reading)

LEVEL 3 – Structure: Show a developing understanding of text structures.

ENGLISH (Writing)

LEVEL 3 – Structure: Organise texts, using a range of appropriate structures.

Possible reading purposes

- To learn about the history of the timber industry in New Zealand
- To identify and evaluate the efforts made by different conservation groups to protect and sustain the environment
- To evaluate the impact of milling on the country's natural resources at different points in time.

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

Possible writing purposes

- To summarise the impact of milling on native forests
- To list the current methods used to sustain and regenerate native forests
- To debate the issues around the milling of native forests.

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

Text and language challenges

VOCABULARY:

- Possible unfamiliar and/or specialist words and phrases, including “Timber!”, “exist”, “absorb”, “greenhouse gases”, “countless”, “species”, “extinct”, “erosion”, “decades”, “European traders”, “native forests”, “felling”, “masts”, “80 percent”, “thrive”, “sap”, “sustainably”, “settlers”, “systematically”, “nineteenth century”, “milled”, “wharves”, “railway sleepers”, “roof shingles”, “twentieth century”, “conservationists”, “habitats”, “tramping”, “mountaineering”, “appreciate”, “shortage”, “protest”, “solution”, “exotic”, “acres”, “pine”, “plains”, “building boom”, “Second World War”, “government”, “plantation forests”, “announcement”, “beech”, “wood chips”, “pulped”, “cleared land”, “regenerate”, “replanted”, “outcry”, “Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society”, “debate”, “lowland”, “unsustainable”, “Crown land”, “reserves”, “national parks”, “Arbor Day”
- Māori language without explanation – “kauri”, “lwi”, “Tāne”, “waka”, “whareniui”, “Pākehā”, “kahikatea”, “rimu”, “tōtara”.

Possible supporting strategies

Provide a map of New Zealand as a reference during reading and support students to find the places as they read. Students could also use atlases and “google maps” as reference material. Provide instruction on these tools if required. You could give the students the place names and ask them to find them on a map before reading.

Develop vocabulary lists or word webs associated with trees, forestry, and conservation, which can be added to during and after reading.

Identify the vocabulary that the students need support with to understand this text. Focus vocabulary learning on the language that students are likely to encounter in many contexts. Offer the students guidance on which words are most important for them to learn (and which are very low-frequency and not such a priority). *The English Language Learning Progressions: Introduction*, pages 39–46, has useful information about learning vocabulary.

Prompt students to use context clues or the prior knowledge of students familiar with te reo Māori to understand the Māori words they may not know.

SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED:

- Knowledge of native and exotic trees
- Knowledge of uses for timber
- Knowledge of the timber industry
- Knowledge of conservation
- Knowledge of New Zealand history.

Possible supporting strategies

Before reading, tell the students the title and make predictions about what will be in the article. Give pairs or small groups selected photographs (without captions) from the article. Ask them to discuss what they can see in their photos and what that might suggest about the content of the article. Ask them to prepare to present their photographs and ideas to their classmates. If possible, provide opportunities for students who have a first language other than English to explore their ideas in this language. Work with the groups and support them in their task. Have the groups present their ideas to their classmates. As part of the discussion, introduce and record some of the key vocabulary for the article.

Read the first paragraph and discuss the benefits of trees as a natural resource. Support understanding by making links to conservation, the environment, and sustainability.

TEXT FEATURES AND STRUCTURE:

- Information about Arbor Day at the end of the text
- Diagram with key
- Glossary
- Photographs – present day and historical
- Headings
- Title with an exclamation mark
- Language for signalling time and sequence
- Passive constructions.

Possible supporting strategies

Give pairs or small groups one of the section headings, written on the top of a chart. Ask them to brainstorm and make notes about what they think will be in their section. Ask each pair or group to discuss their sections and put them in the order they think they'll occur in the text. Display the charts and refer to them during reading.

Provide a timeline to identify the key points throughout history, which is added to as the students read.

Explore with students the strategies readers use to understand the visual language features in the text.

The text contains a lot of information and low-frequency vocabulary. It may be beneficial to read small sections at a time with some students.

Instructional focus – Reading

Science (Planet Earth and Beyond, level 3 – Earth systems: Appreciate that water, air, rocks and soil, and life forms make up our planet and recognise that these are also Earth’s resources.)

Text excerpts from “Timber!”

Students (what they might do)

Teacher (possible deliberate acts of teaching)

Without trees, the world as we know it wouldn’t exist. Our forests make oxygen, and they absorb greenhouse gases. Trees are home to countless species, many of which are in danger of becoming extinct. Trees help to stop erosion, and they give us shelter and shade. The list could go on ...

Students **make connections between the opening sentence and what they know about trees. They ask questions about why the world would not exist. Students integrate the information presented in the rest of the paragraph (Trees are home ..., Trees help to stop erosion ...), and evaluate the statement in the first sentence, using evidence in the text to justify their thinking.**

PROMPT the students to connect to their prior knowledge about trees. Read the opening sentence to the students.

- I wonder how the world might be different?
- Share with a partner some facts that you know about trees and any questions that this sentence generates.

English language learners may need support with understanding the phrase “the world as we know it” and with the hypothetical meaning in the first sentence. Paraphrase the sentence in a few different ways to ensure these key points are understood.

ASK QUESTIONS to support the students to evaluate the information in the first paragraph. Ask them to read the rest of the paragraph.

- How did the information add to what you already knew about trees? What else could we add to the list?
- Do you agree with the statement in the first sentence?
- What information made you agree or disagree?
- Why do you think the author began the article in this way?

The forests of Tāne

When the first people arrived in New Zealand, more than 80 percent of the land was covered in trees.

Huge numbers were felled and sent to Australia, Britain, and California. (Between 1890 and 1920, almost a quarter of our milled native timber was sold overseas.)



Students **locate and interpret information from the diagram on page 36. They integrate this with information from the text to develop their understanding of how New Zealand has changed because of the felling of timber over the years.**

PROMPT the students to interpret and integrate the information from the diagram.

- Look at the diagram on page 36. Tell your partner what you think it is showing. Share your ideas with the whole group.
- With your partner, look back through the text and identify information that supports your ideas.
- Did the diagram help your understanding? How?

EXPLAIN summarising to the students.

- When we summarise, we identify the key words, events, or information and record them in a shortened form. These key pieces of information help us to know what is happening and to see links across a text.

ASK QUESTIONS to support the students to summarise the text.

- There are a number of dates and important events in the text. As you read, decide with your partner which dates and events are important and note them on a timeline.
- Review your notes. Are they brief?
- Have you included the main point or event?
- How do you know it is the most important information?
- How is summarising the events helping you to understand the text?

One solution to this problem was to plant fast-growing **exotic** trees. Between 1925 and 1935, over 400 000 acres ...

Then, in 1971, ...

In 1977, ...

Students **locate and evaluate important events and dates from across the text. They integrate this key information to support their understanding of the text.**

For students who need support with the process, point out one of the time markers and then ask pairs to find others in a selected section of the text. Review their ideas as a group, pointing out, if necessary, that phrases or clauses with “when”, “before”, and “after” (and so on) are also time markers (not just dates). Model the process of putting the time markers onto a timeline and making notes first. Then ask the students to complete the timeline for a small section in pairs, review what they’ve done, and then ask them to do it independently.

GIVE FEEDBACK

- Your timeline is very clear, and the brief notes you made beside the dates are a useful summary of what happened. Making a summary is a good strategy for confirming your understanding.
- You used the photos and the diagram to support your understanding of the text. Remember how you did this next time you read an article with diagrams and photos.

METACOGNITION

- What phrases did you find difficult to understand. What strategies did you use to work out their meaning?
- How did summarising the text help you?
- We used the diagram of the native forests to see how much has disappeared. How did using the diagram support your understanding of the text?

Reading standard: by the end of year 6

The Literacy Learning Progressions

Assessment Resource Banks

Instructional focus – Writing

English (Level 3 – Structure: Organise texts, using a range of appropriate structures.)

Text excerpts from “Timber!”

Rimu trees being logged at Mamaku near Rotorua, 1916

Examples of text characteristics

CAPTIONS

Captions are short descriptions or titles that accompany an illustration or photograph. They support the reader, by describing what is in the photograph or illustration, and help them to connect the image with the text.

The forests of Tāne

When the first people arrived in New Zealand, more than 80 percent of the land was covered in trees.

HEADINGS AND FIRST SENTENCES

Headings cue the reader in to what is to come in the following paragraph or section. They are usually brief and capture the main idea of what is to follow.

The first sentence in a paragraph or section often contains the key idea, and the following sentences elaborate on that idea.

One solution to this problem was ...

By the 1950s, ...

Then, in 1971, ...

Some people believed ...

The following year, ...

LINKING PARAGRAPHS

Authors make their writing flow by linking paragraphs through related ideas. Connectives (such as “Then”) make the link explicit but are not always needed. Sometimes the link can take the reader from a general idea to a more specific idea, or vice versa. Other links may move the reader on in time.

METACOGNITION

- Did rereading your writing help you to clarify your message? What changes did you make? Why?
- Did you write the connectives as you wrote or did you add them as you redrafted? Why was that?
- How has thinking about connectives supported you to organise your writing?

Teacher

(possible deliberate acts of teaching)

PROMPT the students to identify the features and purpose of captions.

- The captions help us to understand what is happening in the photographs and support us to understand the text.
- We’ve looked at a variety of photographs and read the captions. Turn to a partner and tell them how the captions helped you to understand the text better.
- What did you notice about the captions? What information was given? Remember that captions are short and may tell you who, what, where, and when. Captions are not always in complete sentences as an author uses economical language.
- Now look at your writing. What images have you used? Do they need captions to support them?

ASK QUESTIONS to support the students as they draft and edit their writing.

- How have you structured your writing? How do you help your readers to navigate the text?
- If you used headings, does each heading indicate a new topic or subtopic?
- How well does the heading capture the idea of what follows?
- Do the ideas within a section follow on logically from each other?
- Will your readers be able to work out how each part of the text fits with the whole?

EXPLAIN that authors use words and phrases to support readers to link information and make connections across paragraphs.

PROMPT the students to reflect on and revise their writing. They can do this by reading each other’s work and giving focused feedback. Provide two or three questions to help the students focus their feedback.

- Does the writing meet the writer’s purpose?
- Has the writer expressed their ideas convincingly?
- Is there enough information to help the reader understand the key ideas?
- Do ideas flow well from one paragraph to the next and from one section to the next? If not, what links could be made?

For students who find this challenging, note the role of a range of connectives but focus on only one type (for example, time markers) at any one time.

GIVE FEEDBACK

- I could clearly see the link between your headings and your first sentences. This allowed me to skim the text to get an overall understanding of it.
- Your captions are precise and clear. They certainly helped me to make links to what was in the text.
- The linking phrases you used enabled me to understand the order of events. It was very easy to follow the text.

 Writing standard: by the end of year 6

 The Literacy Learning Progressions