



## Overview

Young Wilfred can be a rebellious godwit, but news that his family will soon embark on “the Journey” takes the wind out of his wings. After his family explain what “the Journey” is – their annual migration from Alaska to New Zealand – and a godwit elder recounts his heroic journey, Wilfred reassesses his attitude.

This endearing narrative, told through dialogue, introduces animal migration in a light-hearted way. The anthropomorphism of the birds adds humour and allows for exploration of both bird

and human worlds, including family dynamics. The text illustrates how fiction can simultaneously inform and engage. The themes of: youthful enthusiasm versus the wisdom of age; social responsibility; and home are interesting areas for discussion. The text complements the article “Kūaka: The Marathon Bird”, from the same *School Journal*.

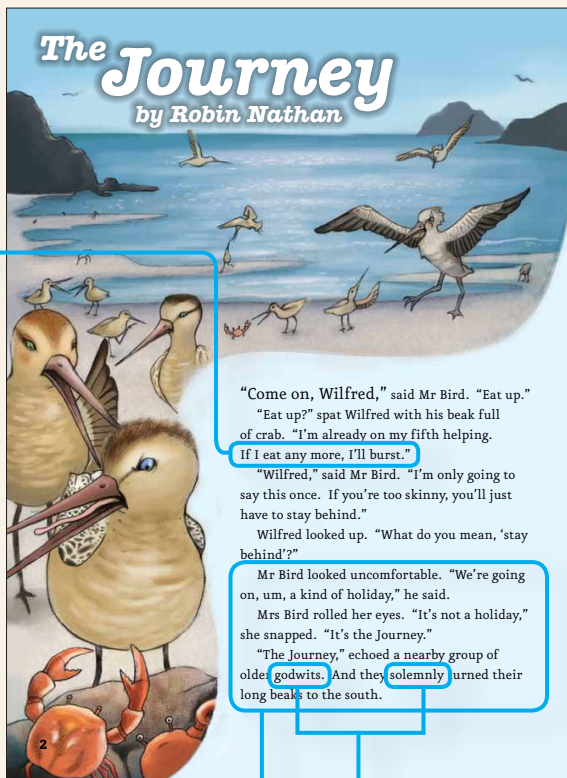
Texts related by theme

“Pacific Paradise?” SJ 4.2.10 | “Flight of the Albatross” SJ 3.2.09

## Text characteristics from the year 5 reading standard

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

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)



“Come on, Wilfred,” said Mr Bird. “Eat up.”  
“Eat up?” spat Wilfred with his beak full of crab. “I’m already on my fifth helping.”

If I eat any more, I’ll burst.”

“Wilfred,” said Mr Bird. “I’m only going to say this once. If you’re too skinny, you’ll just have to stay behind.”

Wilfred looked up. “What do you mean, ‘stay behind’?”

Mr Bird looked uncomfortable. “We’re going on, um, a kind of holiday,” he said.

Mrs Bird rolled her eyes. “It’s not a holiday,” she snapped. “It’s the Journey.”

“The Journey,” echoed a nearby group of older godwits. And they solemnly turned their long beaks to the south.

Wilfred followed their gaze, but all he could see was the Pacific Ocean, stretching out forever. Wilfred gulped. He had a feeling this holiday wasn’t going to be much fun.

“Look,” said his father, drawing in the sand with his beak. “Here we are, in Alaska, right?” Wilfred nodded.

“And over there ...”

“Way, way over there,” interrupted his sister Doreen.

“... is New Zealand. All we’re going to do is fly from our home in Alaska to our summer home in New Zealand.”

“Is it far?” asked Wilfred.

“Only 11,000-odd kilometres,” said Mrs Bird. “Now do what you’re told and eat up.”

“But can’t we just stop and get food on the way?” spluttered Wilfred.

Mr and Mrs Bird shook their heads.

“No food?” Wilfred’s beak dropped open in amazement. “Well, maybe I’ll just stay in Alaska and hang out with my friends.” And he thrust his head under his wing.



some ideas and information that are conveyed indirectly and require students to infer by drawing on several related pieces of information in the text

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

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

## Possible curriculum contexts

### SCIENCE (Living World)

LEVEL 3 – Life processes: Recognise that there are life processes common to all living things and that these occur in different ways.

### ENGLISH (Reading)

LEVEL 3 – Purposes and audiences: Show a developing understanding of how texts are shaped for different purposes and audiences.

### ENGLISH (Writing)

LEVEL 3 – Purposes and audiences: Show a developing understanding of how to shape texts for different purposes and audiences.

### Possible reading purposes

- To learn about godwit migration through a fun narrative
- To explore ideas about the human world and the bird world through a humorous story
- To explore a narrative told almost exclusively through dialogue.

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

### Possible writing purposes

- To write about a scientific topic in narrative form
- To use anthropomorphism as a way of exploring social themes or relationships
- To show characters' personalities and feelings through the careful choice of language.

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

 The New Zealand Curriculum

## Text and language challenges

### VOCABULARY:

- Possibly unfamiliar words and phrases, including “godwits”, “gulped”, “Alaska”, “11,000-odd kilometres”, “amazement”, “thrust”, “laddie”, “muffled”, “horrified”, “mass”, “flock”, “impressed”, “whipper-snapper”, “Flight Officer Wingspan”, “bolt of lightning”, “whip”, “fallen leader”, “panicked”, “exhausted”, “stifled”, “birdbrain”
- The colloquial expressions (especially for ELLs) – “eat up”, “followed their gaze”, “hang out”, “You’re far too chicken”, “picked up the story”, “coasting along without a care in the world”, “keep an eye on”, “winds picked up”, “threw a glance at”, “paid his respects”, “at the head of the flock”, “for all I was worth”, “prepared for the worst”, “eye of the storm”, “kept a respectful silence”, “here to tell the tale”, “under her breath”, “kicked back into life”
- The casual language and short sentences of the younger characters compared to the more poetic voice and longer sentences of the godwit elder
- The words that give insight into the characters’ feelings, including adverbs (“solemnly”, “patiently”, “faintly”, “encouragingly”, “impatiently”) and alternative words for “said”.

### Possible supporting strategies

Decide which words or expressions to introduce before reading. English language learners, for instance, may need support with the expressions. You could provide them with examples of usage and have them discuss the meanings in pairs. Students who share the same first language could discuss your examples in their language. Then have the students scan the text and find and discuss the examples in the text. Give them (simple) definitions for the expressions. Tell them to look at the examples you provided and the examples in the text and use these to help them match the expressions and definitions. Have the pairs look at the other pairs’ answers. Go through the correct answers as a group.

Also review strategies for working out the meanings of unfamiliar words during reading, such as using the context, splitting the word into parts, or reading on and later returning to the challenges. The students could complete a chart with their ideas for meanings before, during, and after reading.

Identify new vocabulary that the students should prioritise for learning. *The English Language Learning Progressions: Introduction*, pages 39–46, has useful information about learning vocabulary.

Give the students the verbs and adverbs and definitions (perhaps in a table). Have them match the definitions and vocabulary. Go over the correct answers together. Remind them to look out for these verb and adverbs – and any other ways to describe manner of speaking – as they read.

### SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED:

- Knowledge of the migratory behaviour of birds or other animals
- Knowledge of geography, especially the immense distance between Alaska and New Zealand
- Familiarity with dialogue-based narratives
- Experiences of family relationships.

### Possible supporting strategies

Explain that part of the story is set in Alaska. “What do you know about this place?” Use a globe to locate Alaska. To get a sense of its distance from New Zealand, make comparisons with distances that the students are familiar with, for example, the distance between their town and one nearby, or between their home country and New Zealand.

### TEXT FEATURES AND STRUCTURE:

- The use of a narrative to explore a scientific topic – bird migration
- The anthropomorphism of the birds and the associated humour
- The use of dialogue to tell the story
- The story within the story – Captain Thunder’s recount
- The implied information – “Mr Bird looked uncomfortable”, “Mrs Bird rolled her eyes”, “And they solemnly turned their long black beaks to the south”.

### Possible supporting strategies

Explain the term anthropomorphism. Clarify that it means describing non-humans as if they were human (“anthropos” meaning “human” and “morphe” meaning “form”). Prompt the students to consider why a writer might use anthropomorphism, perhaps with reference to other texts. Ask students who have knowledge of stories in other languages and cultures whether anthropomorphism is used in those stories and whether they’d like to share an example.

If necessary, review the features of dialogue, especially the punctuation and the different time frames – that is, the narrative has a past time frame and the direct speech is mostly present (some future and some past).

 Sounds and Words

# Instructional focus – Reading

**Science** (Living World, level 3 – Life processes: Recognise that there are life processes common to all living things and that these occur in different ways.)

**English** (Level 3 – Purposes and audiences: Show a developing understanding of how texts are shaped for different purposes and audiences.)

## Text excerpts from “The Journey”

Mr Bird looked uncomfortable. “We’re going on, um, a kind of holiday,” he said.

Mrs Bird rolled her eyes. “It’s not a holiday,” she snapped. “It’s the Journey”.

“The Journey,” echoed a nearby group of older godwits. And they ...

Wilfred followed their gaze, but all he ...

“All we’re going to do is fly from our home in Alaska to our ...

“Is it far?” asked Wilfred.

“Only 11,000-odd kilometres,” said Mrs Bird. “Now do what you’re told and eat up.”

“But can’t we just stop and get food ...

Mr and Mrs Bird shook their heads.

“No food?” Wilfred’s beak dropped open in amazement.

“So,” explained the old godwit patiently, “we’re all going on the Journey.”

“But why?”

“You’re a godwit, son,” said Mr Bird. “That’s what we do.”

“Your father’s right,” sighed the old bird. “We do it ...

## Students (what they might do)

The students **make connections** with their own experiences to **infer** that Mr Bird isn’t being entirely honest about the holiday. They **confirm** this with Mrs Bird’s reaction. They **make connections** between what she says and the older godwits’ response to predict that the journey must be a serious matter. They **visualise** the ocean and **make connections** with their prior knowledge to **hypothesise** that the godwits are about to migrate. They **check** their prediction later. They **integrate** information from within the text to understand why Wilfred’s parents insist on him eating.

The students **make connections** with their prior knowledge, earlier text, and the illustrations to establish that the Journey is a vast yearly migration. They **infer** from this and other pieces of text that Mr and Mrs Bird are trying to play down this fact and that Wilfred is feeling concerned. They **ask questions** about why the birds can’t stop for food and perhaps **form a hypothesis** for later research.

The students **infer** (and possibly **evaluate**) the old godwit’s character by how he speaks after Wilfred’s earlier rudeness. They **make connections** between the message about “doing what’s done” and their experiences of the human world. They **integrate** everything they have read so far to begin identifying what some **main ideas** might be (for example, roles and duties being passed down over time).

## METACOGNITION

- How did making connections between parts of the text, and between the text and your prior knowledge, support your understanding?
- What strategies helped you with challenges in this text?
- Which questions helped you to understand the scientific information in the text?

## Teacher (possible deliberate acts of teaching)

**MODEL** using text clues and making connections to gain meaning.

- I’ve noticed that Mr Bird looks uncomfortable and pauses (“um”). He seems to be hiding something – I wonder why? The words “rolled her eyes” and “snapped” suggest that Mrs Bird doesn’t agree with Mr Bird’s description. Explore the different meanings of “holiday” and “journey” and what they convey in this context.
- I can imagine the older godwits’ echoing voices and solemn movements – this journey must be serious. I’ve worked out that they’re looking at the ocean by connecting “to the south” with “Wilfred followed their gaze, but all he could see was the Pacific Ocean.”

**ASK QUESTIONS** to help the students unpack and integrate information.

- I wonder why they look towards the ocean?
- I wonder what eating a lot has to do with all this? What would birds need lots of energy for? Use the information on this page and share your ideas with a partner

**PROMPT** the students to identify what the Journey is.

- I’ve noticed “summer home”. We’ve talked about other animals that have summer and winter homes. Can you remember any? Think, pair, and share.
- There’s a scientific name for this sort of journey. Can anyone tell me what it is? What other animals migrate?

**MODEL** asking questions around the text.

- I’ve noticed that Mr Bird says “All we’re going to do” and Mrs Bird says “Only 11,000-odd kilometres”, even though that’s a really long way. I wonder why? Do your parents ever try to make things sound less serious than they are?
- I’m wondering why they can’t stop and get food. Why don’t they just dive into the sea for a fish? Are there no islands on the way? I’m going to note these things down to check on later.
- What questions do you have about their journey? Share these with a partner.

**ASK QUESTIONS** to help the students think more deeply about the text and its main ideas and to evaluate its approach.

- What reason do Wilfred’s elders give for the migration? What is the significance of this answer coming from an elder?
- What things in your family or culture do people do because they always have?
- What other reason is given for the migration? (Look towards the top of page 4.) What do humans/other animals do in winter?
- What do you think of the storytelling approach to the topic of migration?
- What is the effect of the godwits having human traits? Which aspects of the narrative accurately represent godwits, and which tell us more about humans than birds?

**GIVE FEEDBACK**

- I noticed you making lots of connections between pieces of text and your own experiences and then integrating all that information to form your conclusions. That will help you when you’re reading texts by yourself.

Reading standard: by the end of year 5

The Literacy Learning Progressions

Assessment Resource Banks

# Instructional focus – Writing

**Science** (Living World, level 3 – Life processes: Recognise that there are life processes common to all living things and that these occur in different ways.)

**English** (Level 3 – Purposes and audiences: Show a developing understanding of how to shape texts for different purposes and audiences.)

## Text excerpts from “The Journey”

“Look,” said his father, drawing in the sand with his beak. “Here we are, in Alaska, right?”

Wilfred nodded.

“And over there ...”

“Way, way over there,” interrupted his sister Doreen.

“... is New Zealand. All we’re going to do is fly from our home in Alaska to our summer home in New Zealand.”

“Of course he did, birdbrain,” scoffed Doreen.

“Mum,” whined Wilfred, “Doreen called me birdbrain.”

“I’ll talk to you later,” hissed Mrs Bird under her breath.

The captain kicked back into life. “There’s nothing wrong with a bird’s brain, laddie,” he chuckled.

Mr Bird looked uncomfortable. “We’re going on, um, a kind of holiday,” he said.

Mrs Bird rolled her eyes. “It’s not a holiday,” she snapped. “It’s the Journey.”

## Examples of text characteristics

### FORMAT

*When writers choose a text type for their work (narrative, article, and so on), they take into account their topic, their audience and how to engage them, and the ideas they want to communicate.*

### DIALOGUE

*Dialogue is an effective way to tell a story, especially to convey character and to show rather than tell (which involves readers more in making meaning). Writers often use alternative verbs for “said” to convey a character’s personality or feelings, to avoid repetition, and to make the text more engaging.*

### ANTHROPOMORPHISM

*Giving animals human characteristics lets writers capture readers’ imaginations. It can also allow them to explore themes that might be harder to explore otherwise, for example, family relationships.*

### METACOGNITION

- How does the text type you have chosen fit your topic, audience, and purpose?
- What impact did converting your text into dialogue have? Was making the change difficult, easy, or otherwise? Why?
- How did you find the experience of using animals as characters instead of humans? Explain your response.

## Teacher

(possible deliberate acts of teaching)

**DIRECT** converting the key message of the text extract into a non-fiction sentence, for example, “The godwits travel from Alaska to New Zealand to escape the winter in Alaska.”

- How does this compare to the text?
- Does the narrative format add anything? If so, what?

**PROMPT** your students to think about their topic, their purpose for writing, and the different approaches they could take.

- Would a narrative format work, or would a scientific format such as an article or report be better? Why?
- If you need factual accuracy, narrative devices such as suggesting birds migrate because it’s a tradition might not be very effective.
- If a narrative would work, what key messages would you include? What ideas would you leave out so that the narrative didn’t get too complicated?

**PROMPT** converting the text extract into a description of action rather than dialogue, for example, “Doreen thought Wilfred’s question was stupid and told him so. Wilfred complained to his mum ...” Have the students evaluate the effect.

**ASK QUESTIONS** to encourage the students to consider how they might convert some of their writing into dialogue.

- What sort of language would this character use?
- How would they say this particular thing? Show me through facial expressions, gestures, and tone of voice.
- What adverbs or alternative verbs to “said” could you use to indicate that?

For students who need support with using this language, you could provide some scaffolded practice before asking them to use the language independently. For example, watch a video clip of a simple dialogue (or show illustrations). Co-construct sentences using direct speech and including verbs and adverbs to describe the dialogue. Give the students a dialogue with only the verb “said” to describe the speaking and ask them to replace “said” with appropriate alternatives from a bank that you have provided. Have the students share their answers with a partner then discuss possible answers as a whole group.

**MODEL** your response to the anthropomorphism in this extract.

- This text reminds me of the way my parents behave. Sometimes, writers’ ideas for characters can be inspired by real people, but those people might not want to read about certain aspects of themselves in print. By giving animals those characteristics, writers can explore ideas without offending anyone.

**PROMPT** the students to think about things that would be better or easier to write about if they used animals or other non-human things as a “vehicle”. They could share their thoughts with a partner if appropriate. Provide opportunities to experiment with anthropomorphism in this way, being mindful of the sensitivities involved.

### GIVE FEEDBACK

- You included just the right amount of factual detail about bees in your story – enough to interest me but not too much to overwhelm me or interrupt the flow of your story.
- The words you chose here allowed me to imagine how the character was speaking and gave me a clear idea of their feelings.

Writing standard: by the end of year 5

The Literacy Learning Progressions