

# Fallen Leaves

by Paul Mason

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Year 8



## Overview

This historical fiction, set in 1845, is told from the point of view of a young Māori protagonist. Haora works in the printery at Kororāreka at the time when war was building between Ngāpuhi chief Hone Heke (Hone Wiremu Heke Pōkai) and the British troops. The writing evokes a sense of foreboding and anticipation, contrasting with the quiet but urgent work of the brothers. The language is “of its time” and may seem unfamiliar to many students, but it’s a good challenge at the same time.

This story:

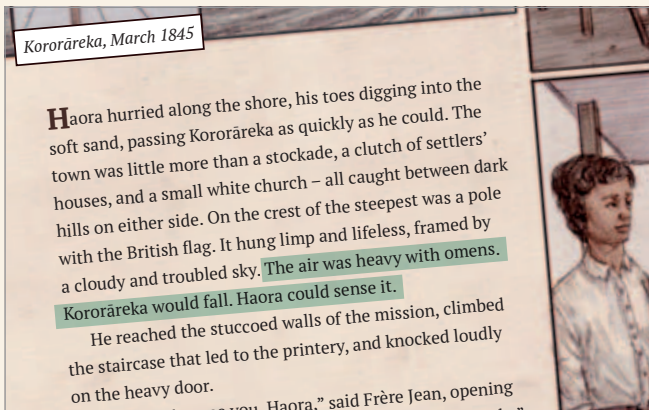
- includes direct and indirect references to actual people, places, and events
- uses rich descriptive language
- provides an excellent model for writing historical fiction
- uses illustrations to help convey the story.

A PDF of the text is available at [www.schooljournal.tki.org.nz](http://www.schooljournal.tki.org.nz)

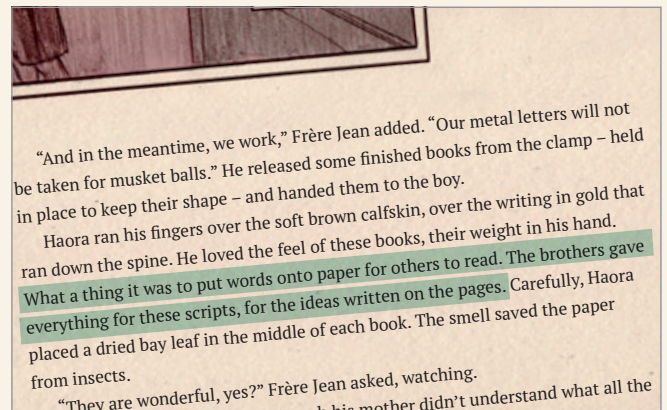
Texts related by theme

“Ngā Pakanga o Aotearoa/The New Zealand Wars” SJ L4 Nov 2014 | “Kauri Island” SJ L4 Nov 2014 | “Ngā Tātarakihi o Parihaka” SJ L4 May 2016

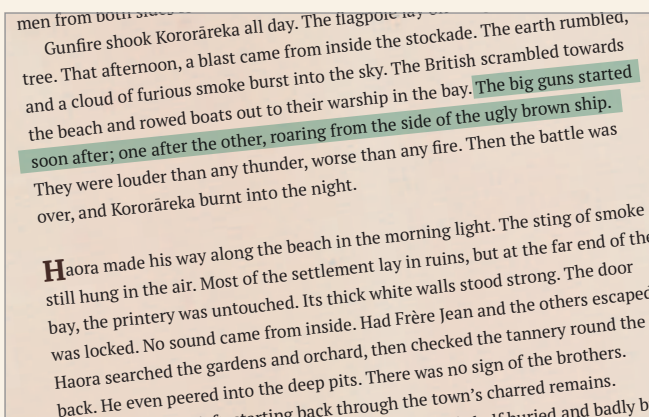
## Text characteristics from the year 8 reading standard



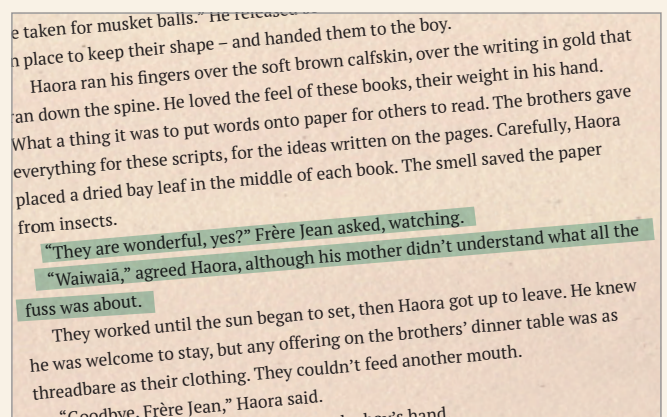
elements that require interpretation, such as complex plots, sophisticated themes, and abstract ideas



complex layers of meaning, and/or information that is irrelevant to the identified purpose for reading (that is, competing information), requiring students to infer meanings or make judgments



sentences that vary in length, including long, complex sentences that contain a lot of information



adverbial clauses or connectives that require students to make links across the whole text



Reading standard: by the end of year 8

## Possible curriculum contexts

### ENGLISH (Reading)

Level 4 – Purposes and audiences: Show an increasing understanding of how texts are shaped for different purposes and audiences.

### ENGLISH (Writing)

Level 4 – Purposes and audiences: Show an increasing understanding of how to shape texts for different purposes and audiences.

### SOCIAL SCIENCES

Level 4 – Understand that events have causes and effects.

### Possible first reading purpose

- To find out about an important event in New Zealand history.

### Possible subsequent reading purposes

- To find out how the author sets the scene and implies a sense of foreboding
- To identify how the author creates a fictional story around a factual historical event
- To establish fact from fiction.

### Possible writing purposes

- To write a fictional account of a real historical event
- To write the story from another point of view, for example, from that of the brothers.



The New Zealand Curriculum

## Text and language challenges

(Some of the suggestions for possible supporting strategies may be more useful before reading, but they can be used at any time in response to students' needs.)

### VOCABULARY

- Possibly unfamiliar words and phrases, including “stockade”, “clutch”, “crest”, “omens”, “stuccoed”, “mission”, “printery”, “apprentice”, “weren’t ones for talking”, “musket balls”, “threadbare”, “tannery”, “charred”, “fared no better”
- Specialised vocabulary associated with printing books: “printery”, “plate”, “binding table”, “hide”, “leaf”, “clamp”, “calfskin”, “spine”, “scripts”
- The double meaning of “leaf” and “leaves”.

### Possible supporting strategies

- Identify any unfamiliar words and preteach them. If students are able to work words out from the context, encourage them to do so.
- After one or more readings, discuss the title and the double meaning of “leaves”. *Why has the author called the story “Fallen Leaves”? What does this refer to?*
- If necessary, support students to understand expressions from an older time, such as “weren’t ones for talking”, “What a thing it was ...”, “gave everything”, “feed another mouth”, “Go in peace”, “fared no better”. Invite them to share other “old” expressions they may have encountered either in their own lives or through other stories, such as fairy tales or myths and legends.
- *The English Language Learning Progressions: Introduction*, pages 39–46, has useful information about learning vocabulary.
- See also *ESOL Online, Vocabulary*, for examples of other strategies to support students with vocabulary.

### SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED

- Familiarity with aspects of the history of Aotearoa New Zealand, including British occupation
- Some knowledge of Hōne Heke Pōkai and the flagpole incidents in Kororāreka (Russell)
- Some knowledge that early missionary work included the printing of books
- Some understanding of the processes and materials involved in hand-printing and bookbinding
- Knowledge that a tannery processes animal skins, which can be used to make book covers.

### Possible supporting strategies

- Review what students already know about key events in the settlement of New Zealand. You could use the article on the New Zealand Wars in *School Journal*, Level 4, November 2014 to strengthen background knowledge.
- Provide information about the events at Kororāreka in 1845, for example, <http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/> has information relevant to this story: Hōne Heke and the flagpole, the sacking of the town in March 1845, and the printery established by French Catholic missionaries.
- If possible, bring an old leather-bound book to show and discuss the traditional bookbinding process.
- Invite the students to share previous experiences of making their own books.

### TEXT FEATURES AND STRUCTURE

- Historical fiction, set in Kororāreka in 1845
- Third-person narrative, told through the eyes and thoughts of a young Māori boy
- Includes illustrations that provide visual context for the story
- Straightforward chronology
- Literary structures that add authenticity to the setting in time and place.

### Possible supporting strategies

- Remind students of the features of historical fiction, for example, the use of archaic or more formal language and the factual basis of the stories.
- Review the illustrations before reading to help students understand the characters and the setting in time and place.



Sounds and Words

# Instructional focus – Reading

**English** Level 4 – Purposes and audiences: Show an increasing understanding of how texts are shaped for different purposes and audiences.

**Social Sciences** Level 4 – Understand that events have causes and effects.

## First reading

- Set the purpose for the first reading, which can be simply to find out about an important historical event from a young boy's perspective.
- Read the title and date aloud, then flick through the illustrations.  
*What do you learn from these images? Who are the main characters? What are they doing?*
- You may need to provide a short introduction that includes background knowledge about the historical setting.
- Direct the students to read the story through, keeping in mind the setting. *As you read, think about the events that we are not told about. When you've finished reading, what questions do you have about this time and place?*

### If the students struggle with this text

- Point out the place and date under the title and prompt the students to think about where and when the story is set.
- Spend a few minutes looking more closely at the illustrations, prompting the students to make connections that help them identify the place and characters.
- Read the first page together, then direct the students to share what they have learnt so far with a partner. Check to make sure they are on the right track, then leave the students to continue reading.
- Check in as they read to make sure they are not stuck and are getting the gist of the story.
- Ask students to share places where they lost meaning, and together, discuss ways that they can work out the meaning.

**Subsequent readings** How you approach subsequent readings will depend on your reading purpose.

### The teacher

Ask the students to share their first impressions of the story.

- *Retell the story briefly to a partner. What are the main events? Who are the main characters?*
- *Who are the brothers? What are they doing? Are they part of the factual story or completely fictional? How do we know?*

You could have students complete a grid like the one below. You can change the headings to suit your reading purpose. Once completed, the students then retell the story using all the information in their completed grid. This could be particularly helpful for English language learners.

| 3 specialised words | 3 main events | 3 historical facts | 3 questions I have |
|---------------------|---------------|--------------------|--------------------|
|                     |               |                    |                    |
|                     |               |                    |                    |
|                     |               |                    |                    |

### The teacher

Direct the students to work in pairs to identify fact and fiction in the story and to think critically about the writer's purpose.

- *What do you know about the events behind this story?*
- *How can you work out fact from fiction?*
- *Does the story make you want to know more about the real events? How can you find out more?*
- *Why do you think the writer has based his fictional story on actual events? What was his purpose?*
- *How might the story have been different had it been told from the viewpoint of another character, for example, Frère Jean?*

### The students:

- include the main events and characters in their retelling of the story
- identify the main characters as Haora and the brothers
- use their prior knowledge of religious men, the reference to "Frère Jean", and the illustrations to infer that the brothers are Catholic priests
- make connections between what they have learnt about the history of the time and the details in the story to infer that the writer has based the brothers and the printery on the real Catholic mission that printed religious books in Kororāreka.

### The students:

- draw on their prior knowledge and, if necessary, carry out further research to recall and/or identify the actual events of March 1845
- make connections between what they know of the events in Kororāreka in 1845 and the events in the story to identify examples of people, places, and events that are based on facts (This could also be done as a [three-level thinking guide](#).)
- evaluate the writer's purpose in basing the story on factual events and infer that he wanted to put a human face on historical facts
- based on their own response to the story, infer that the writer wanted young people today to understand more about these historical events
- share their opinions of the story and whether or not the writer has achieved his purpose, giving evidence to support their opinions.

## Subsequent readings

### The teacher

Lead a discussion about the overall feeling or atmosphere of the story.

- *We know what happened at that time and place, and Haora sensed “omens”. How does the writer convey this sense of foreboding?*
- *What was the effect on you of this growing sense of foreboding?*

### GIVE FEEDBACK

- *You told us about the links you have to Ngāpuhi and how the stories you’ve grown up with helped you to identify with the boy in the story. Those powerful connections helped you understand the story.*

### METACOGNITION

- How did you go about finding facts to compare with the people, places, and events in the story? How did the facts help you understand the story?

### The students:

- identify words and phrases that help build the sense of foreboding, such as Haora’s wondering if the brothers knew that Heke Pōkai and his warriors were coming, his need to speak of the “dark clouds”, his reminder to Frère Jean of the boat, and his concerns for the brothers (Students could construct a lexical chain by choosing a key word, for example, “omen”, and then finding the ten words that most closely link to it. They then compare their list with a partner’s list.)
- identify that the last three sentences confirm Haora’s sense of foreboding and extend it beyond that last line.



Reading standard: by the end of year 8



The Literacy Learning Progressions



Assessment Resource Banks

# Instructional focus – Writing

**English** Level 4 – Purposes and audiences: Show an increasing understanding of how to shape texts for different purposes and audiences.

**Social Sciences** Level 4 – Understand that events have causes and effects.

## Text excerpts from “Fallen Leaves”

## Examples of text characteristics

## Teacher (possible deliberate acts of teaching)

Page 40

Kororāreka, March, 1845

Haora hurried along the shore, his toes digging into the soft sand, passing Kororāreka as quickly as he could. The town was little more than a stockade, a clutch of settlers' houses, and a small white church – all caught between dark hills on either side. On the crest of the steepest was a pole with the British flag.

### PURPOSE AND AUDIENCE

The writer's purpose helps him or her decide what to write and how to write. The choice of audience also influences these decisions. *Which comes first?*

### SETTING THE SCENE

Writers help their readers to visualise a setting or a feeling by providing descriptions and by giving details readers may be familiar with, for example, by using specific place or character names.

Ask questions to support students as they make decisions about their writing.

- *You've chosen an important event in history. What do you want your readers to understand about the event?*
- *What's an effective way for you to communicate this to your readers? For example, will you write a factual report, a poem, or a story based on the events? Can you use a real or invented character who can “tell” the story?*
- *Who are you writing for? What do you expect your audience to know already?*
- *How can you help them make connections to things they already know or have experienced?*

Prompt students to consider the way they set the scene for their audience.

- *How will you help your readers understand what you're writing about, right from the start?*
- *Do your opening or “scene-setting” sentences have the impact you were hoping for? Do they say what you mean clearly and concisely?*
- *If not, try some revisions and test them out. Expect your writing partner to give you helpful, specific feedback that will help you fine-tune your work. Do the same for your partner: peer reviewing is a very important strategy for ALL writers and one that is used by most authors.*

You could provide a writing review checklist that includes writing techniques and features that the students may like to use. This will help guide discussion, feedback, and reflection.

Page 45

The earth rumbled, and a cloud of furious smoke burst into the sky. The British scrambled towards the beach and rowed boats out to their warship in the bay. The big guns started soon after; one after the other, roaring from the side of the ugly brown ship. They were louder than any thunder, worse than any fire.

### DESCRIPTIVE LANGUAGE

Writers choose specific words and phrases (including metaphors and similes) to convey images and to describe scenes and events vividly.

Explain how writers choose language carefully to create an image for the reader. It's the careful selection of a few precise and powerful words that convey the image so clearly. Prompt the students to identify descriptive language in the story and ask them to write their own passages using the examples as a model.

- *Find sentences in the story that are descriptive. What words has the author chosen? Why are they effective?*
- *Note that it isn't just descriptive verbs and adjectives the author has used but also figurative language, for example, “louder than any thunder”, “worse than any fire”.*
- *Review your writing, looking for places where you can use words in these ways. Can you:*
  - *choose words with connotations that help carry the meaning?*
  - *imply meaning?*
  - *help readers to make connections?*
- *Ask a partner to read a few sentences of your writing aloud. Listen carefully. Do your words have the impact you want them to have? What changes would give them more impact?*

Assist English language learners to build up noun groups in their writing so that they can develop more detailed description. For ideas see [Supporting English Language Learning in Primary Schools: A guide for teachers of years 7 and 8, Book 4, pages 11–19.](#)



Writing standard: by the end of year 8



The Literacy Learning Progressions

## Text excerpts from “Fallen Leaves”

## Examples of text characteristics

## Teacher (possible deliberate acts of teaching)

Page 43

What a thing it was to put words onto paper for others to read. The brothers gave everything for these scripts, for the ideas written on the pages.

### IMPLICATION

Writers don't need to spell everything out for their readers. Often they only use a hint or a comment.

Ask questions to support the use of implication.

- *In this extract, what does the author assume his readers will know about New Zealand history and the work of the early missionaries?*
- *What is he implying about the brothers and their purpose?*
- *In your writing, think about what you expect your readers to know.*
- *Are there places where you can give a hint or a comment without saying exactly what you (or a character) think(s)?*

### GIVE FEEDBACK

- *The details you used in the introduction helped me to make connections with what I already knew. I identified easily with this time and place.*

### METACOGNITION

- What were you thinking about as you decided on your purpose and audience? How well do you know the audience and what they will bring to your text?



Writing standard: by the end of year 8



The Literacy Learning Progressions