

As Easy as One, Two, Three

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Overview

This TSM contains information and suggestions for teachers to pick and choose from, depending on the needs of their students and their purpose for using the text. The material provides many opportunities for revisiting the text.

After crash landing on an unfriendly planet, Tane and Mia must find an energy crystal to recharge their ship. Tane has found a crystal, but he's stuck in security goo outside the Meruvian fortress. To rescue Tane, Mia must navigate her way through the most difficult defence maze in the universe! She has her guide-bot to help, but unfortunately, the guide-bot doesn't have all the data necessary to find the quickest and safest route through the maze.

This story:

- contains elements of science fiction and fantasy
- tells some of the story through dialogue
- provides an opportunity to link to the digital technologies curriculum
- offers a humorous way to convey the idea that a computer program should be logical and rule out unwanted possibilities
- includes a maze and a prompt for the students to work out directions so that others can navigate the correct path.

A PDF of the text is available at www.schooljournal.tki.org.nz

Texts related by theme

“Level 10” SJSL 2 2009 | “The Chess Champions of Nuhaka” J L2 August 2016 | “The Amazing Humans” SJ L2 May 2017 | “Who Killed Farrell Flint?” SJ L3 May 2017 | “Good as Gold” SJ L2 August 2016

Text characteristics from the year 4 reading standard

We have retained the links to the National Standards while a new assessment and reporting system is being developed.

For more information on assessing and reporting in the post-National Standards era, see: <http://assessment.tki.org.nz/Assessment-and-reporting-guide>

“That’s not the entrance,” Mia said.

“You asked for the quickest way,” the guide-bot replied.

“The quickest way is straight through the wall.”

“But I can’t walk through walls,” Mia groaned.

“You never told me that,” said the guide-bot. “Humans! They never give enough information. And when things go wrong, they blame the poor guide-bot!”

The guide-bot led Mia to the maze’s entrance. “Will I get to Tane in time?” Mia thought anxiously. “We don’t want to end up as slaves in the Meruvian slime pits!”

She followed the guide-bot’s light deep into the maze.

The temperature was rising, fast. Turning a corner, Mia came to

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

paths blocked by lava. Computing new course.”

The new route led Mia to a room with five doors. The guide-bot’s laser pointed at one of them. Mia paused, thinking hard.

“Guide-bot. More information for you. Don’t take me down paths blocked by fire or pools of acid ... or Meruvian dragons.”

The guide-bot buzzed. Then it chose another door.

“Ha,” grinned Mia. “This is as easy as one, two, three!”

She crossed a bridge of ice over a river of nightmares. Then the path led into a long tunnel. The walls were covered in green hands that tickled as Mia went by. It seemed silly, but Meruvians were

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

“Computing new course,” said the guide-bot.

It pointed to a tunnel on the left, and Mia raced towards it. She had escaped the octopus, but the tunnel got narrower and narrower. Mia couldn’t go any further.

She glared at the guide-bot.

“Do you want to add more data?” it asked timidly.

“Yes,” snapped Mia. “Don’t take me down paths that are too narrow to get through.”

The guide-bot sniffed and began to compute.

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

The guide-bot buzzed. Then it chose another door.

“Ha,” grinned Mia. “This is as easy as one, two, three!”

She crossed a bridge of ice over a river of nightmares. Then the path led into a long tunnel. The walls were covered in green hands that tickled as Mia went by. It seemed silly, but Meruvians were terrified of tickling.

Finally, Mia reached a long path of purple carpet. At the end of the path, she could see the Meruvian fortress. She was

some words and phrases that are ambiguous or unfamiliar to the students, the meaning of which is supported by the context or clarified by illustrations and/or written explanations



Reading standard: by the end of year 4

VOCABULARY

Possible supporting strategies

- The invented words and ideas, including noun phrases, such as “energy crystal”, “com-screen”, “security goo”, “Meruvian fortress”, “Deadly Maze of Doom”, “space-pilot school”, “enviro-suit”, “slip-slicker spray”, “portable guide-bot”, “Meruvian slime pits”, “lake of lava”, “bridge of ice”, “river of nightmares”, “giant, girl-eating purple octopuses”, “Meruvian warship”
- Topic-specific language, including, “jetpack”, “laser light”, “database”, “information”, “computing”, “data”
- Other possibly unfamiliar words and phrases, including “oxygen level”, “life support”, “fortress”, “dissolve”, “security”, “lava”, “tentacles”, “database”, “computing”, “laser”, “octopus”, “obstacles”, “plotted”, “closing in on them”, “Reversing course”
- Colloquial language and idioms, including “Just doing my job”, “Hey, sis”, “as easy as one, two, three”, “take it step by step”, “Ha”, “Yeah, yeah”, “Oh, be quiet”, “About time”
- Contractions including “I’ve”, “I’m”, “You’ve”, “I’ll”, “they’d”, “there’s”, “What’s”, “That’s”, “can’t”, “don’t”, “couldn’t”
- Use of various types of verbs, for example, saying verbs (“said”, “asked”, “replied”, “groaned”, “thought anxiously”, “cried”, “snapped”, “laughed”, “beeped”, “muttered”), action verbs (“flashed”, “beeped”, “failing”, “racing”, “is coming”, “appeared”, “ran out”, “taken”, “go”, “passing”, “take”, “grab”, “breathe”, “dissolve”, “unstuck”, “get through”, “picked up”, “snapped”, “climbed”, “walked”, “looked”), sensing verbs (“know”, “think”, “hoped”, “sighed”), relating verbs (“are”, “is”, “have”, “were”)
- Identify words or phrases that may be unfamiliar. Set students up for success by explaining briefly before they start reading: *This is a science fiction story. It has some unusual made-up words and ideas and it has some technical words about computing and technology. We'll help each other out when we get to them. The pictures will also help.*
- Prompt the students to share their knowledge of words and phrases that have come from the world of science fiction or fantasy, including from books, films, or gaming. You could start by sharing some that might be familiar to them (for example, “the Caped Crusader”, “Klingons”, “the Time Lord”).
- Prompt the students to look at the illustrations to understand the concept of an alien landscape with strange obstacles and futuristic means of survival.
- Before and after the reading, discuss the colloquial language. English language learners may benefit from exploring and comparing examples of words with similar meanings in their first language.
- Ensure that English language learners are familiar with the contractions. Help them to identify the two words that were combined to create each contraction. Explain why an apostrophe has been added. Explicitly tell students that contractions are often used in informal situations in speech and in writing, but they are not appropriate in more formal situations.
- The use of verbs can be difficult for some English language learners. They require explicit teaching, and students need to “notice” how verbs are used in texts. You could focus on only one type of verb at a time, for example, saying, action, sensing, or relating verbs. Identify what happens to the verb with a change of tense. Create word banks of more interesting verbs to express actions or character or in place of “said”. Strategies such as [verb stories](#) and cloze exercises where all the verbs have been deleted can be effective for helping students to “notice” verb use.
- Find examples of interesting verbs in the text and explain how the verb group is formed and extended. Discuss what effect adding or deleting those words would have on our understanding of the character or on what is happening in the story. Encourage students to extend the verb group, or to use a greater variety of verbs and verb types, in their own writing.
- *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

Possible supporting strategies

- Prior experience of science fiction or fantasy texts
- Some awareness that for a computer program to solve a problem, it needs to have the data to choose the best options, taking a step-by-step approach
- An appreciation of silly humour and zany ideas
- Familiarity with the concept of a maze.
- Prompt the students to share their prior knowledge of the science fiction or fantasy genre. *What do we expect to find in a science fiction or fantasy story?*
- Lead discussion on the fun and silly humour by talking about the idea of dangerous aliens being scared of tickling and of a computer being timid. Understanding humour in a second language is a complex, high-level skill. Build students' background knowledge prior to reading by pre-teaching key vocabulary and, if necessary, explicitly explaining the humour.
- Have students share their experiences of solving a maze or of using a computer program to solve a problem.

TEXT FEATURES AND STRUCTURE

Possible supporting strategies

- A straightforward narrative text structure
 - Mostly short, straightforward sentences
 - The use of science fiction and fantasy conventions, including an unworldly setting, children who can fly spaceships, talking robots or computers with personalities, aliens with unusual names (Meruvians), a mix of futuristic and medieval elements (spaceships, interplanetary travel, fortresses, and dragons), made-up words, and allegory
 - Imperatives, including “Be quiet”, “Add more data!”, “Don’t take me down paths that are too narrow to get through”, “Watch out!”
 - Vivid descriptive language with lots of action and adverbs describing how actions are carried out
 - A lot of dialogue, some of which is not attributed, for example, “Not in boiling-hot lava!” “Really?” “Yes really. Add that to your database.”
 - The use of speech marks to indicate the thoughts that are not actually spoken out loud, for example, ““Ha,” grinned Mia. “This is as easy as one, two, three!”
 - Some elements of a procedural text (“Step one: ... Step two ...”)
 - The use of the ellipsis and the dash
 - The use of italics to provide emphasis (“*very rude*”)
 - The two-page spread of the maze that follows the story and shows the hazards Mia faced
 - The final direct address to the reader.
- Discuss the title. *When have you heard the expression “As easy as one, two, three”? What does it mean?*
 - Encourage the students to use the title and illustrations to make predictions about the genre and the predicament the main characters are in.
 - Prompt discussion about what science fiction is, using an example of a story, film, or game that the students are familiar with. *Where does it happen? What is unusual about some of the characters?* Encourage them to share other stories, films, and games they think are similar. Work with them to record the main characteristics of science fiction and organise them under headings (for example, Setting, Characters). Students unfamiliar with science fiction may benefit from front loading prior to reading this story. In small groups, read and discuss science fiction texts and view illustrations, videos, and film clips. Discuss common features of the genre.
 - In some languages, text types can be structured very differently from English, so English language learners may benefit from explicit teaching of the structure of each text type. Strategies you could use include guided writing; teacher modelling; annotated model texts; [text frames](#); [text reconstruction activities](#) and collaborative or shared writing. Using [checklists](#) will also help English language learners to know what you expect to see in their completed writing. (Note: These strategies could be helpful for all students.)



Sounds and Words

Possible curriculum contexts

ENGLISH (Reading)

Level 2 – Ideas: Show some understanding of ideas within, across, and beyond texts.

ENGLISH (Writing)

Level 2 – Structure: Organise texts, using a range of structures.

TECHNOLOGY

Level 2 – Technological knowledge: Technological systems: Understand that there are relationships between the inputs, controlled transformations, and outputs occurring within simple technological systems (Computational thinking for digital technologies).

Possible first reading purpose

- To find out if space pilot Mia rescues her brother.

Possible subsequent reading purposes

- To identify the features of a science fiction story
- To match the events in the story to what is depicted in the maze.

Possible writing purposes

- To write the set of instructions the guide-bot needed to find its way through the maze
- To write another set of instructions for an imaginary maze
- To write the next chapter describing how the guide-bot gets Mia and Tane out of another tricky situation.



The New Zealand Curriculum

Instructional focus – Reading

English Level 2 – Ideas: Show some understanding of ideas within, across, and beyond texts.

First reading

- Explain that the story is science fiction, the characters are on an alien planet, and one of them is in danger.
- Share the purpose for reading with the students.
- Let the students read without interruption to enjoy the story and to get a complete sense of the narrative. Ask them to note places where they struggle or have to reread the text.
- Discuss and clarify any areas of difficulty the students noted.
- Draw out the students' reactions to the story.
- Explain that narratives are often built around a single problem and that small or partial solutions help to advance the story. Ask the students to identify the main problem in the narrative and discuss whether or not it is resolved.
- Share a funny part from the story and discuss what makes it funny.

If the students require more scaffolding

- Have the students read the story in chunks. As they read, encourage them to make and check predictions about what will happen next.
- Reread parts of the text together to support the students' understanding that this is a comical, fantastical story. *What elements tell us this? What do you notice about the setting ... the characters ... the language?* Support the students to compare what they have noticed about this story with the common characteristics of science fiction you recorded earlier. Also look at how the verb groups build understanding of the action and the characters. (See "Text features and structure".)
- Work with the students to create a storyboard that shows the development of this narrative. Have the students use this to retell the story in pairs.
- Point out the unattributed dialogue and direct the students to identify who said what. *How do you know who's speaking? How did you work it out?* Two students could take the role of the main characters and read through sections of dialogue. Help English language learners to identify reference chains within the text. (See *ELIP*, Stage 2 Reading, section 11 (c) for an example of a reference chain.)
- For information about the language function of recounting (which includes narrative texts) at different levels, see *Supporting English Language Learning in Primary Schools: A Guide for Teachers of Years 3 and 4*, pages 15–19.

Subsequent readings How you approach subsequent readings will depend on your reading purpose. Where possible, have the students work in pairs to discuss the questions and prompts in this section.

The teacher

Ask the students to identify the made-up words and the details that help to set the story in the future.

Give the students time to share the words and details in small groups. If they are unclear about what any of the words mean, they could discuss them and decide on a definition.

Focus on the noun phrases. Explain that a "noun phrase" contains a word that names a person, thing, or idea and some other words that modify it by adding more detail or a description.

- *"Deadly Maze of Doom" is a noun phrase. Which of the words is the noun? Which are the words that modify it – that tell us exactly which maze we are talking about? Try saying the sentence without the modifiers. How does it sound then?*
- *Look at the made-up words you identified and defined. Which of these are noun phrases? What effect do they have on you as a reader? Why has the author given us so much detail?*

Give the students highlighters or sticky notes and ask them to go back through the text to identify the action words and the words that describe how an action is carried out.

Discuss the students' response to the text. Draw out how the writer creates tension, excitement, humour, and interest with his frequent use of action verbs, his vivid descriptions, and his crazy made-up words.

Have the students reread page 12 and encourage them to notice other ways he maintains excitement and tension, for example, by combining complex sentences with others that are short and dramatic and by using the ellipsis or dash to make us pause and wait for what comes next.

The students:

- use their knowledge of language to identify the action words, noun phrases, and descriptive words
- identify how noun phrases provide more information
- describe their reaction to the text and identify parts that particularly engaged them
- discuss and evaluate the effect of the writer's choice of words, growing their understanding about how language can help engage and entertain the reader.

Subsequent readings (cont.)

The teacher

Prompt the students to explore how the author uses dialogue to move this story on.

The students:

- identify who is speaking by using their knowledge of the conventions of writing dialogue, including the use of speech marks and of a new line for a new speaker
- track the story to understand who is speaking when dialogue is not attributed and when the dialogue is not spoken out loud
- visualise the events that are conveyed through dialogue
- practise forming contractions and expanding them back into two words. Look at various types of texts and whether contractions are evident. Help students to identify when it might be all right to use contractions and when not. This could be done as a Jigsaw activity.

GIVE FEEDBACK

- *You found lots of clues that helped you to identify the key moments in the story. I can see them in your storyboard. Now see if you can use them to retell the story.*

METACOGNITION

- *Show me a place where you were able to make a connection between the text and an experience or knowledge of your own. What helped you to make the connection?*



Reading standard: by the end of year 4

The Literacy Learning Progressions

Assessment Resource Banks

Instructional focus – Writing

English Level 2 – Structure: Organise texts, using a range of structures.

Text excerpts from “As Easy as One, Two, Three”

Examples of text characteristics

Teacher (possible deliberate acts of teaching)

Page 19

Can you finish the guide-bot’s instructions?

ALGORITHMS

An algorithm is a step-by-step process for using data to solve a problem. The word “algorithm” is often used to talk about the rules that are programmed into a computer. However, it can also be used in other situations in which there needs to be a clear and logical set of rules.

Have the students take up the challenge of finishing the guide-bot’s instructions. Then ask them to draw up their own maze and write a set of instructions for it. They can have fun testing the instructions on each other.

DIGITAL TOOLS

The students could use Google Sheets or a Google Doc table to create a database of the characteristics of humans so that the guide-bot can make better decisions about where to go.

Discuss what the students have learnt about writing instructions. Introduce the term “algorithm” and present examples from everyday life (for example, following a recipe) or from their learning in mathematics or science (for example, completing a long division problem or setting up an experiment). They could create algorithms for simple everyday activities, such as washing their faces or brushing their teeth.

Page 12

Tane’s face appeared on the com-screen. “Hey, sis – I’ve found another energy crystal, but I’ve got a problem. My jetpack ran out of fuel, and now I’m stuck in security goo right outside the Meruvian fortress. You’ve got to rescue me before the Meruvians find out I’m here!”

NARRATIVE

Narratives tell the story of a group of characters in a particular time and place. The stories set up one or more problems, which must be resolved. The basic purpose of narrative is to gain and hold a readers’ interest, but they can also have other purposes, such as to inform or to convey a message.

Have the students write the next chapter in Mia and Tane’s adventure. Discuss the features of the story they will want to carry over. These could include the vivid descriptions, made-up words, contractions, and the use of dialogue to reveal relationships. Use this discussion to construct a set of success criteria for the stories.

Page 14

Turning a corner, Mia came to a lake of lava. “How do I get across that?” she cried.

“Swim,” said the guide-bot. “Humans can swim. I have data that proves it.”

“Not in boiling-hot lava!”

“Really?”

“Yes, really. Add that to your database.”

DIALOGUE

Dialogue serves many purposes in a story. It can move the plot along, show characters and their reactions, and convey relationships between characters.

Model the way the dialogue works in this extract.

- *The writer doesn’t always tell us who is speaking, so I have to use what I know about conversations to keep track. In the first two lines of dialogue, we are given the names of the speakers. There are only two characters in this scene, so knowing that a conversation alternates means that we can work out who is talking in the rest of the conversation. Writers expect their readers to understand this.*

Ask questions to support the students as they review their own writing.

- *When you read the dialogue to yourself, is it clear who’s talking? If not, how can you help your readers?*
- *Does your dialogue sound like the way people really talk? How could you make it sound more natural?*
- *Does the dialogue help your readers to know more about the action, the characters, or their relationships?*

It may help to have them read the dialogue aloud or try it out on a partner.

METACOGNITION

- *What happened when you tested your instructions on your partner? Did they work the way you intended? What has that taught you about writing instructions?*

GIVE FEEDBACK

- *The alien’s name helped me imagine how it looks and the alliteration made it funny. You really got my attention!*



Writing standard: by the end of year 4

The Literacy Learning Progressions