

Fact or Opinion?

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School Journal
Level 2, June 2023
Reading level year 3



The refresh of *The New Zealand Curriculum* is replacing the Learning Progression Frameworks and Literacy Learning Progressions by incorporating the learning for literacy and communication into the curriculum learning area progressions. To learn more about the refresh, visit [Refreshing The New Zealand Curriculum](#).

Overview

This article explains the difference between fact and opinion. It includes a simple report that uses language, statistics, and sources to convey facts and opinions. The reader is invited to evaluate the information to determine what is fact (true) and what is the writer's opinion (point of view). It discusses the grey areas between fact and opinion and how people's opinions can be based on bias.

"Fact or Opinion?" is scaffolded for extra support: it has simple and compound sentences, explanations, examples, glossed words, a simple layout, a report that exemplifies the difference between fact and opinion, headings as questions, a bulleted list that highlights the differences between fact and opinion, and a sidebar that adds interest with quirky animal facts.

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

Themes

"Fact or Opinion?" connects to the theme of getting the message. It is designed to build knowledge and introduce the important ideas and vocabulary connected with the theme. Other texts in this Journal also focus on this theme. Page 5 of this TSM gives an overview of all the texts in this Journal, including a list of themes for each text. There is also a link to the audio for this text, which provides further support so ākonga can revisit the story as often as they need to.

"Fact or Opinion?" asks how we know whether information is based on evidence or on personal experiences and views. Other texts that focus on the theme of getting the message are stories and a poem show how creators of text can distort or take information out of context and that certain texts are designed for specific purposes. There is also an article that encourages the reader to evaluate an issue and others' points of views and then consider their own viewpoint.

Other themes that can be explored in this text include:

- Communication
- Evidence
- Persuasion
- Bias

Related texts

"Suckered" *School Journal* L3 Nov 2018 | "Fact or Fiction?" *Connected* L3 2015 | "Have You Checked?" *Connected* L2 2015

Strengthening reading behaviours (what to notice)

Text structure and features

- Abstract ideas

*A fact is a piece of information that's been proven or shown to be true. It's backed up by **reliable evidence**, such as research, experiments, and **observations**.* (page 8)

- **Technical information**

Some people are good at persuading others when they think they're right. However, their opinions can be biased. For example, Edith has a dog, and she says that dogs make the best pets. She is biased towards dogs because she owns one. (page 12)

Requiring ākonga to:

- use the glossed words, the context, and their own previous reading experience to understand what "reliable evidence" means
- understand that they need to look for evidence to know whether something is true or not
- make connections to their own experience and use the example provided to understand what "bias" means.

Vocabulary

| | |
|---|---|
| Possibly challenging words and phrases | dispute, reserve, university, mammals, grub |
| Topic-related terms | fact, opinion, information, reliable evidence, experiments, observations, prove, sources, research, persuading, biased, convince, statement |
| Te reo Māori | pekapeka, tuatara, wētā, pūriri |

Helpful prior knowledge (pre-reading and introducing the text)

- Some awareness that some information can be factual and some can be opinion
- Some experience of looking for evidence to support predictions or inferences, for example, when reading and looking in other learning contexts
- Some prior knowledge of the vocabulary related to fact and opinion.

Possible reading and writing purposes

- Find out how to tell whether a statement is a fact or an opinion
- Identify the differences between facts and opinions
- Describe whether something is a fact or an opinion
- Write a simple report that includes fact and opinion.

Possible curriculum contexts

This text has links to level 2 of the New Zealand Curriculum in English and Social sciences.

Understanding progress

The following aspects of progress are taken from the [Learning Progression Frameworks \(LPFs\)](#) and relate to the specific learning tasks below. See the LPFs for more about how ākonga develop expertise and make progress in these aspects:

- Acquiring and using information and ideas in informational texts
- Making sense of text: using knowledge of text structure and features
- Reading to organise ideas and information for learning
- Writing meaningful text: using knowledge of text structure and features

Supporting ākonga for successful reading

- Before reading, ensure that ākonga have a good understanding of the difference between “facts” and “opinions”. English language learners may need explicit teaching of these terms. You could do a continuum task to check their understandings. For example, read some statements and ask ākonga to place themselves along a continuum as to whether they think they are fact (at one end), opinion (at the other end), or unsure (in the middle). Statements could include: “Rugby is the best sport.” “Cats have fur.” “The New Zealand flag has four stars.” Ākonga can discuss their thinking, using speaking frames to scaffold sentences. For example, “This statement is a fact because ...” “This statement is an opinion because ...” You could repeat this task after the reading to see if ākonga have a better understanding of these terms.
- Present ākonga with the shop owner’s statements about carrots (page 8) before reading the article. Ask them whether each statement is a fact or an opinion and how they know. Explain that the text contains many examples of fact and opinion, which will allow them to test their ability to distinguish between fact and opinion. As ākonga read, prompt them to discuss these examples with a partner.
- Preview the text with ākonga, encouraging them to notice features that will help them to make sense of it. English language learners may need support with the subheadings and the use of rhetorical questions, tables, examples, photos and captions, and glossed words.
- Share-read with ākonga who may require extra support and provide the audio for them to revisit the article as often as they need to. Some ākonga may benefit from listening to the audio before reading and discussing the ideas with others.
- Discuss the challenges posed by the report (pages 10–11), where the reader has to distinguish between fact and opinion. Ensure that ākonga understand that the report is made up. Prompt them to notice the picture, callouts, and arrows. If they

need more support, model reading the text on page 10 and thinking about it, then show them how to make the link to the explanatory callouts on page 11. Some understanding about the differences between mammals and birds will be required.

- Have ākonga highlight unfamiliar vocabulary and concepts, sentences they find tricky, or places where they were confused. Discuss strategies for working them out, such as using decoding skills, word knowledge, context clues, and the glossary. If necessary, highlight words for further discussion and exploration.
- Word endings can be challenging for English language learners, so when ākonga are reading, check they are attending to the endings of words. Draw attention to the use of the simple present tense. Focus on the third paragraph on page 8 and ask ākonga to identify the verbs. If necessary, point out the contractions, such as “it’s” and “that’s”, and prompt ākonga to provide their extended forms.
- English language learners may need explicit teaching of prepositional phrases (a preposition followed by a noun), such as “on their forehead” and “under its knee” (page 15).
- Together, review the structure of a typical paragraph. For example, identify the main idea and supporting detail for the first paragraph on page 8. Then ask ākonga to identify the main ideas for the second and third paragraphs. Explain that a paragraph’s main idea is usually within a topic sentence, which is often the first sentence. The topic sentence provides a summary that helps the writer organise the information in the paragraph. It also helps the reader to know what to expect in the rest of the paragraph. As ākonga read on, encourage them to identify examples where the topic sentence is not the first sentence and discuss why. They could reconstruct a text that has been cut up into sentences or paragraphs. This task will help them to notice topic sentences and the links within sentences through connectives such as prepositions, adverbs, and conjunctions.

Strengthening understanding through reading and writing

Select from the following suggestions and adapt them according to the strengths, needs, and experiences of your ākonga. Most of these activities lend themselves to ākonga working in pairs or small groups.

- **PROMPT** ākonga to discuss what they have learned about the differences between “facts” and “opinions”. Record their ideas, including any topic words. Discuss the meanings of these words. *How does the writer help the reader understand what these words mean?*
- **REREAD** the introduction on page 8 with ākonga. Discuss the writer’s purpose and their responses to her questions. *Has the writer achieved her purpose? What have you learned from reading the article?*
- **FOCUS** on the word “source” (page 11). Have ākonga identify where it occurs in the text and construct a definition of the term “reliable source”. Draw out the idea that Mani Rewi is a reliable source because she does research at a university and so has considerable knowledge of her subject area. *Why is Mani Rewi a reliable source? How did she become an expert? Do you know someone who is an expert? Who? Why are they a reliable source of evidence? Refer to people in the community who are experts in their fields or who have particular knowledge, such as a kaumātua or kuia, doctor, sports coach, or musician.*
- **REVISIT** the report on pages 10–11, which provides clues about the difference between fact and opinion. Draw the attention of ākonga to the visual layout, including the highlighted sections. *Why has the author used different colours and lines? Encourage them to follow the lines with their fingers (as some ākonga will find it difficult to track across the page). Read the two pages together (you could read page 10 first, then revisit it section by section and follow the lines to page 11). What is the purpose of the report? Talk through their conclusions to the “flappy problem”. English language learners may need explicit instruction around the heading “A flappy problem”. Explain that “flappy” is an adjective that refers to bats and birds that fly and “flap” is a verb that refers to the movement of their wings.*
- **MAKE CONNECTIONS** to ākonga learning in science. Have them work in groups to reflect on examples from recent learning experiences and then report back to the class on what they learned about evidence in science.
- **FOCUS** on the words “biased” and “persuading”. Prompt ākonga to identify examples of bias in the article. Encourage them to make connections to their own experiences and to realise that we all have biases and sometimes we try to persuade others to agree with our point of view. Discuss and record some examples of when they, or someone they know, has shown bias and when others have tried to persuade them to their point of view. *How do you know when somebody is biased or when they are trying to persuade you to agree with them? Why is it important to recognise this? What clues help you to recognise bias or persuasion?*
- **HAVE** ākonga write a simple report that presents the facts about a recent school or community event and includes their opinion about what happened. Ākonga can then share their reports and use them to practise identifying what is fact and what is opinion.

- **USE** the “Reflecting on the text” template on page 4 to provide ākonga with an opportunity to practise differentiating between fact and opinion and then reflect why it’s important to tell the difference between them. Have them reread a familiar text that includes both fact and opinion statements and identify two examples of each, providing evidence to support their decisions. Discuss why it’s important to be able to do this. Then ask ākonga to swap their template with a partner. They can discuss whether the writer has provided sufficient evidence to justify their opinion. *How well has the writer expressed their point of view? Have they backed it up with evidence?*
- **PROVIDE** a graphic organiser so ākonga can summarise the information from the text to help them organise their ideas and reuse the language.

Reflecting on the text: “Fact or Opinion?”

| Statement | Fact or opinion? | Evidence |
|--|------------------|----------|
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| | | |
| <p>Self-reflection: Is it important to be able to tell the difference between fact and opinion? Why? What is your evidence?</p> | | |

Exploring a theme: The texts marked with a **T** share the theme of getting the message.

| | | READING LEVEL | THEMES | CURRICULUM LINKS |
|---|---|---------------|--|---|
|  | The Big Rescue STORY T DOWNLOAD AUDIO | Year 4 | Getting the message Communication Storytelling | English Social sciences |
|  | Fact or Opinion? ARTICLE T DOWNLOAD AUDIO | Year 3 | Getting the message Communication | English Social sciences |
|  | Cycleways ARTICLE T | Year 4 | Getting the message Communication | English Social sciences Technology Health and PE |
|  | Mixed Messages PLAY T | Year 4 | Getting the message Communication | English The arts: drama |
|  | Today's News POEM T | Year 4 | Getting the message Communication | English Social sciences |
|  | My Dog STUDENT WRITING | N/A | | English |
|  | Holiday Mahi STORY | Year 4 | Team work Rewards of helping out Resilience Family/whānau | English Health and PE |
|  | My Tūrangawaewae ARTICLE | Year 4 | Identity and culture Creativity Team work Communication | The arts: visual arts Social sciences Mathematics Technology |