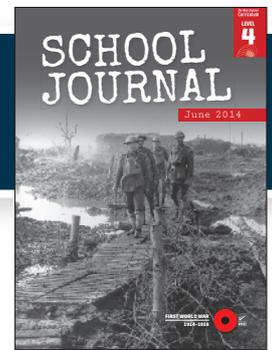


# The Children's War

by Jock Phillips

School Journal  
Level 4, June 2014  
Year 8



## Overview

After a general introduction and overview of the First World War, the article describes how the New Zealand government used a variety of methods to encourage children to support the war effort. One method was to use the *School Journal* to give children positive stories (avoiding the harsher realities) and articles about exemplary "Empire heroes". As well as providing information about the impact of the war on schoolchildren, this article provides opportunities for students to make inferences and think critically about the way a government can control information and shape it for a purpose.

This is a long article with a large amount of information. Facts about dates and events are supported by a timeline that runs across the foot of most pages, and the images give students support. Students will need a certain amount of prior knowledge about the challenges of war and the profound effect it can have on individuals, whether they are directly involved in fighting or, like the children, at home "carrying on". To learn more about the First World War, go to: [www.nzhistory.net.nz/war/first-world-war](http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/war/first-world-war)

Texts related by theme | "Lest We Forget" SJ L4 June 2014 | "King and Country" SJ L4 June 2014 | "Underground Soldiers" SJ L4 June 2014

## Text characteristics from the year 8 reading standard

metaphor, analogy, and connotative language that is open to interpretation

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

illustrations, photographs, text boxes, diagrams, maps, charts, and graphs containing main ideas that relate to the text's content

**Empire Pride**

The government was especially keen that children receive "short lessons on the history of the Empire" and their "duties to it". In many ways, this was the kind of material the *School Journal* had always contained. During the war, children read about how New Zealand joined the British Empire through the Treaty of Waitangi. They were reminded that the Empire covered a quarter of the earth's surface and contained a quarter of the world's people. They learned about other children in the British Empire – in Canada, Australia, South Africa, and India. This was to make readers feel part of one big Empire family.

New Zealand children were also encouraged to love England, the "motherland". The *Journal* contained poems that expressed this idea, like Robert Browning's "Oh, to be in England/Now that April's there!" and Rupert Brooke's poem "The Soldier", published in the *Journal* a few months after he died in 1915: "If I should die, think only this of me:/ That there's some corner of a foreign field/That is for ever England."

**Children dressed up to show their patriotism**

**The desolation of the Western Front: something School Journal readers weren't told about**

One of the most important lessons was for children to think of themselves as future heroes. Who knew when the war would end... and when another generation of soldiers would be needed. In 1917 – when New Zealand soldiers were dying at Messines and Passchendaele – the *Journal* asked children: "Now, what can you do for your Empire? The answer was to 'learn all you can of the brave men and women who made the Empire great, and try to be like them.' So the *Journal* published articles about British explorers like David Livingstone, naval heroes like Lord Nelson, and the great English navigator James Cook. It also followed the adventures of Ernest Shackleton, whose team's perilous journey to Antarctica began in 1914. Shackleton was the perfect example of a contemporary Empire hero: courageous, resilient, and self-sacrificing.

1916		1917	
<b>10 MARCH:</b> The tunnellers are the first New Zealanders to arrive on the Western Front.	<b>1 AUGUST:</b> Conscription is introduced in New Zealand.	<b>9 APRIL-16 MAY:</b> The Battle of Arras takes place.	<b>7-9 JUNE:</b> New Zealand soldiers fight in the Battle of Messines.
<b>4 AUGUST:</b> The Battle of Romani takes place in the Sinai Desert.	<b>15 SEPTEMBER:</b> New Zealanders attack on the Somme.	<b>4 OCTOBER:</b> The Third Battle of Ypres begins.	<b>12 OCTOBER:</b> New Zealand has its "blackest day" of the war, with over 800 New Zealand soldiers killed at Passchendaele.

academic and content-specific vocabulary

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 of reading (that is, competing information), requiring students to infer meanings or make judgments

# Possible curriculum contexts

## SOCIAL SCIENCES (Social Studies)

Level 4: Understand how formal and informal groups make decisions that impact upon communities.

## ENGLISH (Reading)

Level 4 – Ideas: Show an increasing understanding of ideas within, across, and beyond texts.

## ENGLISH (Writing)

Level 4 – Ideas: Select, develop, and communicate ideas on a range of topics.

## Possible reading purposes

- To learn about the impact of the war on school children
- To understand why and how the government promoted support for the war
- To explore how decisions are made in communities and the impact those decisions can have
- To identify some of the features and structure of historical non-fiction.

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

## Possible writing purposes

- To make a personal response to the text or an aspect of it
- To describe and compare the similarities and differences between children’s experiences of the First World War and of modern wars.

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



# Text and language challenges

## VOCABULARY:

- Possible unfamiliar words and phrases, including “censored”, “authorities”, “scanned”, “Countless”, “wharves”, “recruitment”, “stalemate”, “Morale plummeted”, “despondent”, “justify”, “care parcels”, “Honouring the Flag”, “unity”, “Union Jack”, “patriotic talk”, “catch”, “spin”, “reassured”, “heart-warming”, “benign”, “dirigibles”, “the wireless”, “mingled”, “motherland”, “contemporary”, “resilient”, “self-sacrificing”, “desolation”, “handkerchiefs”, “Secretary of Education”, “noble”, “scrap iron”, “copper pennies”, “crusaders”, “cadet force”, “morality”, “vices”
- Idiomatic expressions, including “loved ones”, “shipped overseas”, “in short supply”, “with some satisfaction”
- The metaphor: “the flood of men ... reduced to a trickle”.

## Possible supporting strategies

Identify words and expressions that may be unfamiliar to your students, especially those related to the British Empire, war, and patriotism. Remind the students to use the glossary at the back of the Journal. The old-fashioned vocabulary and expressions may need to be unpacked, for example, in the flag-raising song, the poetry, and the quoted words of the Secretary of Education.

Select key vocabulary that students will need. Plan activities to introduce this key vocabulary before reading – and, if useful vocabulary, activities to practise it after reading. See ESOL Online – Vocabulary for suggestions. Integrate vocabulary activities with those for exploring the topic and building prior knowledge before reading. For example, have the students work in pairs and assign each pair a photo or audiovisual clip relevant to the text. Have them brainstorm key words and ideas associated with their image or video and present them to the group. Discuss and record the key ideas and vocabulary. *The English Language Learning Progressions: Introduction*, pages 39–46, has useful information about learning vocabulary.

## SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED:

- Knowledge of New Zealand’s place in the First World War
- Knowledge of the British Empire
- Location of the battle sites of the First World War
- An awareness of the role of government in education and home life one hundred years ago
- Knowledge of the significance of flags and flag-raising ceremonies, in particular, the flags of New Zealand and the Union Jack
- The concept of patriotism and serving one’s country
- Ability to evaluate a text, integrate information, and think critically about information and themes.

## Possible supporting strategies

Build knowledge of the First World War through exposure to texts concerning New Zealand’s involvement in it. The text should be read in conjunction with the related stories and articles in this and other School Journals. Use the map on pages 2–3 to discuss the extent of the British Empire in 1914 and the main areas in which the war was being fought.

If necessary, review the role of government, pointing out the way government policies and actions influence people’s lives. Point out flagpoles at school and discuss the use of New Zealand’s flag. This should include building knowledge of the origins of the flag and the relevance of the Union Jack. Broaden discussions you will have had earlier about patriotism and the British Empire to include the role of those who were not fighting, for example, the families of soldiers. Support students to make connections between the text and their awareness of New Zealand’s involvement in current wars.

## TEXT FEATURES AND STRUCTURE:

- Report, with introduction, headings, and a timeline
- Organisation of content under five thematic headings
- Photos from the 1914–1918 period
- References to, and extracts and quotes from, School Journals of the period
- Quotations from poems and songs
- Quotation marks to denote words and phrases used in the past, including “our native country’s flag”, “flag of Empire”, “Little Crusaders”, “truly noble”, “poor children of Belgium”
- Some long paragraphs and complex sentences
- Complex relationships between ideas (for example, “Because war was everywhere, it was impossible to keep children from hearing about it. Besides, most of them were directly affected”, “To increase the feelings of unity and pride, children had to sing...”)
- Many forms of pronouns (for example, “... on the steep slopes of Gallipoli, in the deserts of the Middle East. **These places** ... how did the war reach children here? And how did it involve **them**?”)

## Possible supporting strategies

Several readings of this text may be necessary to deal with the complexities of the content and the structure. Skim the article with the students to help them to get a sense of its structure and purpose. Prompt them to use the headings to identify the focus of each section and to notice the era the article is set in by examining the photographs. Review the way a timeline operates and support the students to make connections between entries on the timeline and information in the text – they are not always on the same page. If the students struggle with the density of the text, break it down to read section-by-section, paragraph-by-paragraph, and sentence-by-sentence according to the students’ needs. Support the students to make connections that will help them with the theme of each section. Break long sentences into phrases and clauses, identifying Who? What? Where? When? How? and Why? – and the relationships between each phrase or clause. Pay particular attention to the main verbs and to signals of relationships (such as cause and effect) between ideas. Prompt students to identify what the pronouns refer to. If students need support with this, select a section of text and display it. Draw circles around the pronouns and boxes around the nouns they refer back to and draw lines between them.

You could use the strategy of jigsaw reading to support students (by breaking the text into chunks, integrating oral and written language, and providing opportunities for revisiting the text). The Selections 2009 Teachers’ Notes for New Zealand at War has some useful ideas for supporting students with this type of text and topic.



# Instructional focus – Reading

**Social Sciences** (Social Studies, level 4: Understand how formal and informal groups make decisions that impact upon communities.)

**English** (Level 4 – Ideas: Show an increasing understanding of ideas within, across, and beyond texts.)

## Text excerpts from “The Children’s War”

The government wanted people to stay positive about the war, even children. It wanted people to see the war as a joint effort – and for those back home to believe that the sacrifices ... to be good for their mothers – and useful. It was their duty to help win the war. They were even encouraged to see themselves as soldiers of the British Empire, just like their fathers at the front.

Inside the classroom, students spent the day surrounded by maps of the Western Front and photos of Empire heroes. During lessons, they worked their way through the School Journal. Between 1914 and 1918, the Journal contained a lot of material about the war – with one catch: it avoided the unpleasant truth about the soldiers’ experiences. Instead, the war was given a positive spin, with stories of heroism and success.

One of the most important lessons was helping children to think of themselves as future heroes. Who knew when the war would end ... and when another generation of soldiers would be needed? In 1917 – when New Zealand soldiers were dying at ... Passchendaele – the Journal asked children: “Now, what can you do for your Empire?” The answer was to “learn all you can of the brave men and women who made the Empire great, and try to be like them.”

## Students (what they might do)

The students **locate** information about the government’s aim. They **make connections** between the text and what they know about the role of government now to **evaluate** their reasons. They draw on prior knowledge about New Zealand at that time to **make inferences** about links between the country’s identity and its membership of the Empire. The students **think critically** about the concept of “duty”, comparing the lives of children of the past with their own lives and **evaluating** the differences.

The students **make connections** between their school days and the text, contrasting the topics and focus of teaching. They **ask questions** about the changes in focus and about the content of the School Journal then and now. They use vocabulary knowledge to understand the connotations of “catch” and “spin” and to **infer** that the writer believes it was wrong to avoid telling children the truth about the war. Students **think critically** about the government’s role in deciding what children should know about the war. They also **evaluate** the role of the historian.

The students **make connections** between their lives and the lives of children during the war to **make inferences** about the “lessons” of the education they are receiving now. They **locate** information about the government’s purpose. One inference they might make is that it was to prepare children to become soldiers in the future. They **synthesise** information and ideas as they **infer** that children in 1914–18 were expected to aim to serve the Empire. The students who have read “Grey Angels” (SJ L3, May 2014) will **make connections** between the shocking losses of 1917 with the government’s focus on preparing still more young people to die for the Empire. They **evaluate** this discrepancy and **think critically** about the motive for it.

## Teacher (possible deliberate acts of teaching)

**ASK** the students to read pages 4 and 5 then discuss it with a partner or group.

- How did the title help to prepare you for reading the text?
- Were you surprised to find that it was about children in New Zealand?

**DIRECT** the students to reread the last paragraph.

**ASK QUESTIONS** to prompt critical thinking.

- Why would the government want to influence children’s thinking?
- What words or ideas help you to understand why this was important?
- What does “duty” mean to you now? What did it mean then?
- How important was being part of the British Empire then? How important is it to us now?

**ASK** the students to turn to a partner.

- Compare the classroom then with your classroom now. What are the main differences?
- How would you characterise the *School Journal* materials now?
- What is your opinion of using the Journal to tell only positive stories about real and terrible events?

**ASK QUESTIONS** about language use.

- What are the connotations of “with one catch” – is a “catch” usually good or bad?
- What are the connotations of “spin”? Where have you heard this word and in what contexts? Why do you think the writer used these words? What was he implying?

**MODEL** critical thinking.

- There are two issues for me in this extract. First, it’s my opinion that it was hypocritical of the government to let children think everything was fine. Secondly, the writer’s word choices tell me that he’s revealing his own opinion. I’m not sure what I think about that.

**PROMPT** the students to make connections.

- As you read, keep thinking about the connections you’re making with your own lives.
- What do you infer about the role of education in shaping individual and national character?
- What connections can you make between the role of education then and now in relation to New Zealand’s involvement in modern wars?

**PROMPT** the students to think critically.

- From what you’ve read about the First World War, can you explain why it was thought important for children to see themselves as future heroes? What was the implication?
- What do you think might have been the consequences of children knowing the truth about the war? Why do you think that?
- In other Journal stories and articles, the costs of this war are made very clear. Why is it OK to show children the reality of war now?

**GIVE FEEDBACK**

- The discussions you’ve just had showed me that lots of you were referring to other texts about the First World War and linking ideas between them.
- Asking questions like this shows that you’re digging deeper to understand why the government did this.
- Your family connections with soldiers in the army helped us to understand how different wars are today.

## METACOGNITION

- Work with a partner. Use one page or spread from the article and work through it together, explaining the questions you asked and how you answered them.
- What reading strategies did you use as you read the article? Show your partner a place where you used a particular strategy and explain how it helped you.



Reading standard: by the end of year 8



The Literacy Learning Progressions



Assessment Resource Banks

# Instructional focus – Writing

**Social Sciences** (Social Studies, level 4: Understand how formal and informal groups make decisions that impact upon communities.)

**English** (Level 4 – Ideas: Select, develop, and communicate ideas on a range of topics.)

## Text excerpts from “The Children’s War”

People at home closely followed the war’s progress, especially with so many loved ones away. They read articles in their local newspaper, many of which had been censored. They got letters and postcards from the soldiers themselves, which had also been checked by the authorities. And they scanned the casualty lists that were published each day and discussed the telegrams that could arrive at any time.

The government was especially keen that children receive “short lessons on the history of the Empire” and their “duties to it”.

New Zealand children were also encouraged to love England, the “motherland”. The School Journal contained poems that expressed this idea, like Robert Browning’s “Oh to be in England/Now that April’s there!” and Rupert Brooke’s poem “The Soldier” ...

Children were also given lessons in morality. They were given stern warnings about the dangers of alcohol and cigarettes. Soldiers of the future could not afford to have vices. And at home, while their mothers were “sad and anxious” over absent “soldiers, fathers, and brothers”, children were instructed to be busy and cheerful, truthful and obedient. Being hard working and good would help win the war.

## Examples of text characteristics

### USE OF DETAIL

*By adding details, such as examples, a writer builds up a picture in the reader’s mind helping them to understand the context. Details also help the reader make connections and comparisons.*

### USING QUOTATIONS

*When an author has access to original source materials (for example, School Journals from the period) they are able to use direct quotations. Carefully chosen, these can add immediacy and authenticity. Writers of historical non-fiction generally reference their sources.*

### IRONY

*Irony is using words that mean something different from their literal meaning. It can be used to make a powerful (or cynical) comment on an idea.*

## Teacher (possible deliberate acts of teaching)

**PROMPT** the students to consider their writing intentions.

- How are you making your decisions about the topic, purpose, and audience?
- Where will you find the information you need?
- What ideas do you want your audience to understand?

**MODEL** the impact of details.

- When I read this extract, I was immediately able to see how people followed the news. The first sentence makes a general statement, and the following sentences give examples that help me build a picture of the way news travelled.

**PROMPT** the students to identify areas that could be supported with details.

- When you are planning, and later when you’re writing and revising, think about the details that will bring important ideas to life.
- If you’re using source materials, you may have to hunt further to find details you can use. Where else can you find details?

**EXPLAIN** the importance of using authentic sources of information.

- When you’re writing about real events, you can find information from a variety of sources. The closer you can get to the real people and events, the more likely your information will be accurate and have an immediate impact on your readers.

**PROMPT** the students to punctuate and attribute quotes correctly.

- Check your writing – are some words or sentences taken from other people’s work?
- Remember to use accurate punctuation and to attribute all quotes.
- Use examples in this and other texts as models for the different ways writers can attribute quotations.

**EXPLAIN AND MODEL** how an author can say one thing but imply another.

- Irony is the name given to the way writers use words to say one thing but mean something else. It’s hard to do well, and can often be used incorrectly, but in this context, you may want to try it.
- In this example, the last statement sounds straightforward but it doesn’t fit with what I’ve read about the extreme difficulties of war. The writer is implying that these values would not really help win the war.

**ASK QUESTIONS** about endings.

- What thoughts or questions do you want your readers to have?
- Does your topic have a neat conclusion, or is it up for debate?
- How can your ending let readers know that there is more to be said on the topic?

**GIVE FEEDBACK**

- These details have really improved your article about ... Instead of wondering why ... I now understand that ... The details you added made that clear for me.
- I can see you’ve found good sources of information so you’ve been able to use quotes from ... These really help bring this topic to life.
- When I finished reading, I wondered why ... You’ve made me think more deeply about the reasons for ...

## METACOGNITION

- How did you decide which idea to explore? What factors made the choice hard or easy?
- What new understanding have you gained by researching and writing on this topic?
- What do you want your readers to think, feel, or question when they finish reading? Tell me how you’ve helped them to do this.



Writing standard: by the end of year 8



The Literacy Learning Progressions