



## Overview

“War in Waihi” recounts the events that took place in Waihi in 1912. The article places the “war” in context, providing background to the conflict that happened when miners demanded safer working conditions. The mining company, supported by police and politicians, resisted the demands of the miners’ union and ultimately used violence to break the strike.

This is an adult-focused text, and students may be challenged by the concepts around workplace safety and the role of government in business. They will need to infer meaning and make connections as they synthesise and evaluate information about the impacts of decision making.

The fictional recount “After All” in the same Journal gives a young person’s perspective of the strike and gives students another way to access the information.

There are strong connections with the article “His Own War: The Story of Archibald Baxter” (SJ L4 March 2012), and like the Baxter article, this contains powerful artworks by Bob Kerr.

Some students may need support with the content (mining, workers’ rights, unionism, scabs) and with some of the complex sentences and figurative expressions.

### Texts related by theme

“After All” SJ L4 Oct 2013 | “A Tour Like No Other” SJ 4.2.11 |

“Tūto’atasi: The Struggle for Sāmoa’s Independence” SJ L4 May 2013

## Text characteristics from the year 8 reading standard

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

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

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

**War in Waihi**  
The 1912 Goldminers’ Strike  
by Mark Derby

**The miner’s cough**  
Trouble had been brewing in the town for years. Waihi miners were paid less than miners in other parts of the country, yet they were expected to work fast - and in dangerous, sometimes fatal, conditions. Each time they set off an explosion, the miners had to work before the dust had settled. Some developed a deadly lung disease known as “miner’s cough”.  
Changing this situation wasn’t easy. The Martha Mine was owned by **shareholders** who lived in Britain, and each year the mine managers sent them a report. This explained how much the mine had earned but said nothing about the working conditions in the mine. Most New Zealand politicians weren’t any help, either. They didn’t want to cause trouble for the mine owners by taking sides with the workers.

**Down in the mine around 1910**

**From hill to hole**  
Waihi’s main street ends at a huge hole in the ground. It’s so big that from the top, the giant six-wheeled trucks below look like ants. This enormous pit, called the Martha Mine, was once a hill, the highest for miles around. **What turns a hill into a hole?** The answer: gold.  
Rock has been dug from the Martha Mine for its flecks of gold for more than a hundred years. Today miners use heavy machinery; in 1912, they used picks, shovels, and dynamite. Back then, the Martha was an underground mine. To get to the gold, miners stood inside cages that were lowered by steam engines down deep shafts. They worked long shifts, around the clock, six days a week.  
One morning in May 1912, the big steam engines stopped thumping - and the cages stopped moving. The whole town fell silent. The twelve hundred men who worked in the Waihi mines had voted to go on strike.

**View along the railway tracks looking towards the entrance of the Martha Mine around 1910**

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

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

# Possible curriculum contexts

## SOCIAL SCIENCES (Social Studies)

LEVEL 4 – Understand how formal and informal groups make decisions that impact on communities.

LEVEL 4 – Understand that events have causes and effects.

## 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 an important time in New Zealand's history
- To analyse the factors involved in decision making
- To examine the causes and effects of events and ideas within a text
- To make connections between ideas in the text and other, similar ideas.

## Possible writing purposes

- To explore ways of communicating information about historical events
- To explore ways of expressing different ideas or points of view
- To respond to the text in a dramatic or poetic form.

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

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

# Text and language challenges

## VOCABULARY:

- Possible unfamiliar words and phrases, including “six-wheeler trucks”, “flecks”, “shifts”, “on strike”, “conditions”, “voluntary”, “negotiated”, “victories”, “optimistic”, “rebellious spirit”, “less-radical”, “outraged”, “siding”, “hard-won gains”, “likelihood”, “bolster”, “significant”, “Commissioner”, “criticising”, “tactic”, “accompanied”, “economic”, “abusive”, “invests”, “rights of workers”
- The use of synonyms and words with similar meanings: “fatal” and “deadly”, “gradually” and “eventually”
- Words with multiple meanings, including “mine”, “pick”, “shifts”, “strike”, “brewing”, “spirit”, “vision”, “bolster”
- The multiple implications of the term “scarlet runners”.

## Possible supporting strategies

Identify any vocabulary or concepts your students may find challenging and make decisions about how best to support them. For students who only need support with two or three words, it may be helpful to develop a concept map with terms such as “voluntary”, “negotiated”, “abusive”, and “rights”. Add to the map during reading, prompting students to explain the relationship between the target word and their ideas. Clarify and correct any misunderstandings, allowing students to gain a deeper understanding of the word.

After reading, discuss words that have multiple meanings, supporting students to identify the correct meanings in the context. You will need to exercise judgment here with ELLs. In general, although they need to know that words have multiple meanings, it's best if they learn just one meaning first. *The English Language Learning Progressions: Introduction*, pages 39–46, has some useful information about learning vocabulary.

## SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED:

- Knowledge of mining, particularly gold mining and its dangers
- Understanding that struggle is often part of social history
- Knowledge and understanding of the concept of workers' safety and workers' rights
- Knowledge of New Zealand's political history and of current political structures
- Understanding of how decisions are made in communities.

## Possible supporting strategies

Read this text in the context of a broader study to support the students to understand the history of mining in New Zealand, the reasons for the rise of unionism, and the issue of workplace safety.

Provide students with key vocabulary on mining or unionism (about ten words or phrases) and give them matching definitions and example sentences. Ask them to match the words to the definitions and sentences. Assign pairs or small groups the topic of mining or unionism. Provide a selection of resources, for example, images, simple facts, short newspaper articles, or web pages. Have each group produce a poster about their topic. The poster should have the topic in the middle, surrounded by the key words associated with the topic (and others that they wish to add), and information and images about it. Have each pair or group explain their topic to the class.

With support, the students can also discuss how decisions are made that affect people's lives, asking questions such as “Who made the decision to ...?”, “Who was represented?”, “Who was NOT represented?”, “Should people have to work in unsafe conditions?” Create a graphic organiser to record the competing priorities of different groups. Add to it during and after reading.

## TEXT FEATURES AND STRUCTURE:

- The postscript that summarises events since 1912
- The use of headings to mark themes and events
- The use of present tense in the first and second paragraphs and postscript, and a range of mostly past verb forms for the main text
- The use of language to signal time (“Today”, “in 1912”, “That same year”), duration (“for years”, “for the next seven months”), sequence (“For the next seven months”, “After two months”), and frequency (“Each time”, “each year”, “Week after week”).

## Possible supporting strategies

Remind the students of other recounts they have read about events in New Zealand's history, sharing and listing some common features.

Skim the article with the students, prompting them to identify the structural features (headings, boldface words, postscript, glossary) and to suggest why they have been used.

Support the students to use the images to understand the events.

# Instructional focus – Reading

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

(Level 4 – Social Studies: Understand that events have causes and effects.)

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

## Text excerpts from “War in Waihi”

Trouble had been brewing in the town for years. Waihi miners were paid less than miners in other parts of the country, yet they were expected to work fast – and in dangerous, and sometimes fatal, conditions. Each time they set off an explosion, the miners had to work before the dust had settled. Some developed a deadly lung disease known as “miner’s cough”.

Members of the main union were outraged. They felt that the engine drivers were siding with the mine owners – and putting the hard-won gains of their own union at risk ...

... Instead of reporting for work at the top of the shafts as usual, the miners stayed home. A strange hush fell over Waihi.

The new prime minister, William Massey, had promised to fight the growing power of the unions.

... None of the free labourers went to work that Tuesday. Instead, they stormed from house to house, ordering strikers to leave town. Those who resisted were beaten. Whole families left by train, by horseback, or on foot. Most of them never returned.

## Students (what they might do)

*The students set a purpose for reading, based on the title and their questions about why and when there was a war in Waihi. They consider the learning context (for example, to examine how decisions made by different groups can have an impact on a community) and how the article might relate to it.*

*The students **make connections** between the text and their vocabulary and general knowledge to **integrate** information about why “trouble had been brewing”. They use their knowledge of sentence structure to **unpack the complex sentence**, and **ask questions** about the **cause-and-effect sequence that results in a lung disease**.*

*The students **synthesise** information from the text with their own experiences as they understand and **evaluate** the reasons for the miners’ actions. They **ask questions** and **hypothesise** about the consequences of the miners’ actions. They **visualise** the situation, drawing on the emotive impact of the illustrations to **deepen their understanding**. The students **ask questions** about the motivation of each group and search for answers.*

*The students **ask questions** and locate information about the way decisions were made. They **evaluate** the motivations of the various parties and **synthesise** information to **infer** that the mine owners, the government, and the police cared more about mine profits than miner safety.*

*The students **evaluate** the fairness of the competing claims and draw their own conclusions about the actions of the police, the miners, and the free labourers.*

## Teacher (possible deliberate acts of teaching)

**PROMPT** the students to set a purpose for reading.

- Think about your purpose for reading. What do you expect to find out?
- What questions do you have as you read the title?

Chart the students’ initial questions, asking them to explain what prompted their questions and what answers they expect to find. If necessary, set a specific purpose and one or two guiding questions.

**ASK QUESTIONS** to support the students’ understanding.

- What does “trouble had been brewing” mean? What experiences of your own could help you understand this?
- What were the miners concerned about?
- Who do you think was responsible for the pay and the speed of the mining? Why would they want miners to work so fast?
- What does this tell you about attitudes towards safety in the mine?
- What questions and connections arose as you read this section?

With students who need extra support, unpack the second sentence, clause by clause, asking them to identify the two ideas and the relationship between them. Prompt them to identify the punctuation (commas and the dash) to connect the ideas and the use of “yet” to signal a contrast between being paid less and being expected to work fast and in dangerous conditions.

**PROMPT** the students to ask themselves questions, formulate hypotheses, and search for answers.

- What kinds of questions are coming up for you as you read?
- What knowledge is helping you to make connections and understand what was happening at the mine?
- Thinking beyond the text, what can you infer about the motivations of the different groups?
- What do you think will be the outcome for the miners, in the short term and the long term?

**DIRECT** the students to make a four-column “somebody/wanted/ but/so” chart that shows the competing interests.

- With a partner or the group, list the main players, from the prime minister down to the miners’ families, in the first column.
- What did each want? Make notes in the second column.
- What was the problem or issue for each player? Write these in the third column.
- What was the end result for each of the players? Write these in the last column.
- What conclusions can you draw about the ways decisions were made in 1912?

**GIVE FEEDBACK**

- You have drawn on recent events, as well as information in the text, to achieve your reading purpose of understanding of the ways decisions can affect individuals and communities.

## METACOGNITION

- Work with a partner to share one section of the text and explain how you used questions, connections, and inferences to meet your reading purpose.
- Explain to your partner what you already knew about mining and how it helped you to understand the actions of the miners.
- What reading strategies helped you to track events in this text? How did they help you?

Reading standard: by the end of year 8

The Literacy Learning Progressions

Assessment Resource Banks

# Instructional focus – Writing

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

(Level 4 – Social Studies: Understand that events have causes and effects.)

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

## Text excerpts from “War in Waihi”

## Examples of text characteristics

## Teacher (possible deliberate acts of teaching)

Rock has been dug from the Martha mine for its flecks of gold for more than a hundred years. Today, miners use heavy machinery; in 1912, they used picks, shovels and dynamite. Back then, the Martha mine was an underground mine. To get to the gold, miners stood inside cages that were lowered by steam engines down deep shafts. They worked long shifts, around the clock, six days a week.

### THEN AND NOW

*Writers compare past and present activities by highlighting examples. They use time markers (for example, “Today”, and “in 1912”) and past and present verb forms to make the comparison clear.*

**ASK QUESTIONS** to help the students as they make writing choices.

- What do you want your readers to know about changes that have happened? How will you show what happened in the past and what happened more recently? How can your sentence structures, word choices, or punctuation help you get this across? What verb forms do you need to use to express past or present relationships?
- How do you select the ideas that are most important for your purpose?
- What do you want your readers to think about and understand?

**MODEL** the thinking that a writer expects readers to do.

In this extract, the writer gives us some facts but not the reasons for those facts. As a reader, I have to work those out for myself. This makes me feel that the writer respects my intelligence. I’m more engaged as a reader when I have to think for myself as I’m reading.

- How can you show your readers that you respect their ability to work some things out for themselves?
- Check your writing: are there places where it would be better to give clues to your reader rather than tell them exactly what to think?

**DIRECT** the students to use direct source material where possible.

- Where have you found the information you’ve used?
- Have you found a succinct quote from the source that will add drama to your writing?
- Do you need to acknowledge your sources? If so, what method have you used?
- Can you add drama by using a vivid simile or metaphor? Test it out with your partner to make sure it has the right effect.

**PROMPT** the students to review and revise their writing.

- What was your purpose for writing? How well do you think you’ve met it?
- How have you helped your readers to make connections between the text and the wider context, for example, by giving them additional information or examples?

**GIVE FEEDBACK**

- The planning template you used worked well for your purpose. You’ve been able to organise your writing and make good notes as you carried out your research.
- Checking with the group was an effective way of finding out if the information was enough for them to infer.
- Your last section helped me see the impact of this event – I didn’t realise that was why we have ...

The Martha mine was owned by shareholders who lived in Britain, and each year, the mine managers sent them a report. This explained how much the mine had earned, but it said nothing about the working conditions in the mine. Most New Zealand politicians weren’t any help either. They didn’t want to cause trouble for the mine owners by taking sides with the workers.

### INFERENCES

*Writers provide clues and expect their readers to make connections with their own knowledge to make inferences. When you allow your readers to infer meaning, they must consider their own ideas as well as the information you give them.*

“There is no likelihood of one of our men being lowered into the Waihi mines by one of these individuals while there is a loaf of bread available.”

Newspapers called them “scarlet runners”, criticising their “shrill, screeching language”.

### USING QUOTES

*Adding the actual words spoken or written by those directly involved adds immediacy and authenticity to writing.*

This wave of violence brought the long strike to an end. Work in the mine gradually returned to normal. The defeated strike leaders realised that in the future, to achieve the changes they wanted, they needed to use different tactics. In 1916, they helped form the New Zealand Labour Party. Some were elected to parliament in the first Labour government in 1935.

### CONTEXT

*A piece of historical writing usually sits in a wider context. Writers provide information that helps their readers make connections to the wider context, and therefore, deepen*

## METACOGNITION

- What planning tools helped you to keep your purpose in mind as you gathered information? How did they help?
- How did you decide what to include and what was not relevant for your purpose?
- How did working with your buddies help you to shape your writing? What feedback was especially helpful? Why?

 **Writing standard: by the end of year 8**

 **The Literacy Learning Progressions**