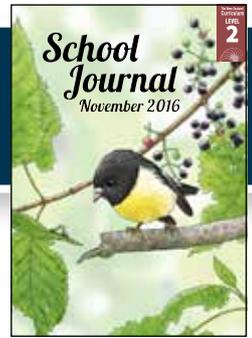


# The Polish Refugee Children

by Ali MacKisack

School Journal  
Level 2, November 2016  
Year 4



## Overview

This true story of Adelphi Zawada's grandparents will be engaging for students in year 4, although it is complex and presents some interesting challenges. Adelphi tells how her grandparents, as children, along with over a million other Polish people, were sent to work camps in Russia following the invasion of their country by the USSR during the Second World War. They survived great hardship and separation from their parents before eventually arriving in New Zealand as refugees.

Many students will be able to connect to their own grandparents' or other family members' stories and experiences from long ago. Students will also be able to make connections with current situations in countries where wars and unrest have forced families to become modern-day refugees, some of whom now live in New Zealand. Be sensitive to the reactions and feelings of any refugee students in your class when using this text. Think about the best approach to sharing this story and how

you will handle any negative comments that other students may unintentionally make.

This article:

- includes a personal recount with photographs and a map
- describes events from a personal, family perspective that are distant in time and place
- requires readers to infer meaning and understand abstract concepts
- enables readers to make personal and global connections.

A PDF of the text and an audio version as an MP3 file are available at [www.schooljournal.tki.org.nz](http://www.schooljournal.tki.org.nz)

Texts related by theme

“Being Kiwi” SJ 4.2.10 | “Don’t Sit on the Roof of Our House” SJ 2.1.04 | “Becoming a Kiwi” SJ 1.2.06

## Text characteristics from the year 4 reading standard



This happened during the Second World War. The **USSR** had **invaded** eastern Poland. The invading soldiers made Babcia's family leave their home. They were sent to one of the many work camps in the USSR, along with over a million other Polish people and their children. Hunger, sickness, and overwork killed thousands of them.

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

### The Camp in Pahiataua

The Polish children and their caregivers went to live in the Polish Children's Camp in Pahiataua. For the first time in their lives, Babcia and Dziadzia went to school every day. Their teachers were also refugees from the camp. All their lessons were in the Polish language because everyone believed that, after the war, they would go back home to Poland.

However, when the war ended, the soldiers from the USSR did not leave Poland. The country was not free, so the children and the adults who were looking after them were invited to stay in New Zealand.



Babcia and Dziadzia at the Pahiataua camp

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

### Going South to Iran

Babcia's family managed to stay alive and keep together. When the Polish people were allowed to leave the camps, they travelled south to get away from the freezing cold. The journey was difficult and took a very long time.

In the south, the family felt safer, but they had nowhere to live. It was also very hard to find work, and they never had enough food. Many children were travelling on to **orphanages** in Iran (then called Persia). Babcia's parents decided to send Babcia and her brother and sister there as well so they wouldn't die from hunger. That was why Babcia's mother put the three children on the train.

My dziadzia (*jah-jah*) – my grandfather – also travelled to an orphanage. I know Babcia's story because

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

### Part Kiwi, Part Polish

When they are young, a lot of children from Polish families go to Polish clubs or Saturday "schools", where they learn Polish words, songs, and games. But we also learn a lot just by being with the family and listening and joining in. My mum is a third-generation Kiwi, but she can speak Polish and she knows a lot about Polish **culture**. She says that being part of the Polish community is like having a window you can look through to get a wider view of the world.

I love having a part of me that's Polish. My teachers never seem to get my last name exactly right, but I like it that my name is unusual. My friends also think it's pretty cool that I know Polish songs and that I can speak Polish. It's not all ordinary.



figurative language, such as metaphors, similes, or personification



Reading standard: by the end of year 4

## Possible curriculum contexts

### ENGLISH (Reading)

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

– Language features: Show some understanding of how language features are used for effect within and across texts.

### ENGLISH (Writing)

Level 2 – Ideas: Select, form, and express ideas on a range of topics.

### SOCIAL SCIENCES (Social Studies)

Level 2 – Understand how cultural practices reflect and express people’s customs, traditions, and values.

– Understand how people make significant contributions to New Zealand’s society.

### Possible first reading purposes

- To read about some Polish children who arrived in New Zealand many years ago
- To find out why some people had to leave their country and travel to other places to be safe
- To find out what it was like to be a Polish refugee in New Zealand.

### Possible subsequent reading purposes

- To make connections between the story of Adelphi’s grandparents and your family’s story
- To understand why cultural traditions are important
- To compare Polish traditions with your family’s traditions
- To track the stages in Babcia’s and Dziadzia’s journey from Poland to New Zealand.

### Possible writing purposes

- To research and retell a story from your own family
- To explain why some people in the world today have to leave their countries
- To describe what you would take and what you would miss if you had to suddenly move to another country.



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 “refugee”, “invaded”, “work camps”, “orphanages”, “malaria”, “official”, “Red Cross”, “citizens”, “third-generation Kiwi”
- The Polish words for grandmother and grandfather, “Babcia” and “Dziadzia”.

### Possible supporting strategies

- Most of the vocabulary will be familiar, but identify any words your students may not know and decide when and how to provide support.
- Preview the glossary and remind students to use it during reading.
- If necessary, point out the pronunciation guides for Babcia and Dziadzia in brackets following the first time they appear in the text.
- [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

- Some familiarity with events of the Second World War, including the displacement of millions of people in Europe
- Some concept of the distance between Europe, Iran, and New Zealand and of the time it would take to travel in the 1930s and 1950s compared with travelling today.

### Possible supporting strategies

- The article may be best read within relevant contexts such as family stories, refugees, or living in different cultures or countries.
- Build background knowledge of the Second World War by displaying a map of the world and identifying places mentioned in the article. Discuss the main modes of transport and the speed of travel during this time.
- Students who have comparable experiences (of parents or grandparents who moved to New Zealand from elsewhere) may wish to share these with the group.
- It may be appropriate to build background knowledge for Part 1 and Part 2 of the article in separate sessions.

### TEXT FEATURES AND STRUCTURE

- The mix of a narrative recount of Adelphi’s grandparents’ experiences and a personal recount of her thoughts and feelings about her grandparents
- The chronology of the text (1930s to 1950s to the present day)
- The opening paragraph, which is out of the chronological order of events.

### Possible supporting strategies

- Skim and scan the text with the students, prompting them to point out specific text features, such as the use of illustrations and photographs, the section headings and subheadings, and the map.
- If students become confused by the different time periods, create a timeline to show the events. Help students to identify the phrases that show the passage of time through the story.
- Support the students to identify that the introductory paragraph is set later than the second paragraph. (Babcia was put on the train after the family had moved to the work camps and had then moved south.)



Sounds and Words

## Instructional focus – Reading

**English** Level 2 – Ideas: Show some understanding of ideas within, across, and beyond texts; Language features: Show some understanding of how language features are used for effect within and across texts

**Social Sciences** Level 2 – Understand how cultural practices reflect and express people's customs, traditions, and values;. Understand how people make significant contributions to New Zealand's society.

### First reading

This article lends itself to being read aloud or shared for a first reading, then read in sections in a guided reading approach. Note that an audio version is available at [www.schooljournal.tki.org.nz](http://www.schooljournal.tki.org.nz)

- Set the purpose for reading.
- Make connections by inviting students to share their own family's journey to New Zealand if appropriate.
- Refer to the Specific Knowledge Required section for suggestions on building background knowledge.
- Read the two parts of the text in separate sessions or work through Part 1 carefully then leave the students to read Part 2 independently.
- Read the first paragraph together, then invite the students to share any ideas, connections, or questions that come to mind. Make a note of the ideas you wish to follow up in subsequent readings.

### If the students struggle with this text

- Allow students to examine the photos and illustrations prior to reading and ask them to make predictions about who and what they think the story will be about.
- Read the text aloud or share-read over two sessions. At the end of each section, check that students have understood the gist by supporting them to identify who the story is about, when and where the events took place, and why the children (now grandparents) had to move from place to place.
- Enlarge sections of the text that students may find difficult and use a shared reading approach to read together. For example, do this for pages 20 and/or 21 to support the information about different times and places.
- Encourage students to use strategies when they encounter problems, in particular, reading on, rereading, making connections, and asking questions.

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

### The teacher

Ask the students to reread the first two pages, including the map.

- *Where did Babcia's family live before the war? Where did they go when the soldiers invaded?*

Prompt the students to make the link between the first paragraph on page 19 and the second paragraph on page 20.

- *The story opens with Babcia's mother putting her on a train. Where were they when this happened?*
- *What made the family decide to send their children to Iran?*
- *Babcia was only seven at the time. What thoughts and feelings do you think she had?*

### The teacher

Direct the students to reread Part 2, using a pencil or sticky notes to mark places where they can make a connection of some kind.

- *If a part of the article reminds you of something in your own life, mark it with S for a text-to-self connection.*
- *If a part reminds you of something you've read or seen in a movie or video, mark it with T for text-to-text connection.*
- *If a part reminds you of something you've read or seen on the news, mark it with a W for a text-to-world connection.*
- *Now review these connections. How do they help you to understand?*
- *Are some connections more helpful than others? Which ones? Why?*

### The students:

- reread to locate the information explaining that the family originally lived in eastern Poland
- use the words and the map to locate eastern Poland, then to follow Babcia's and Dziadzia's movements north to USSR, then south and eventually to Iran
- locate the sentence that states the reason for the parents sending their children away and evaluate this in the light of the events up to that point
- visualise the thoughts and feelings of Babcia aged seven to infer that she would have been very frightened and bewildered by what was happening to her.

### The students:

- locate places in the text where they can make connections and determine the kind of connection each one is
- discuss how their experiences are similar to or different from Adelphi's family's
- share their connections to what they've seen on TV or in movies with Babcia and Dziadzia's story
- evaluate their connections and how each one has (or has not) helped them to understand the article
- if they have strong personal or family connections, use these to visualise thoughts, ideas, or feelings and thus deepen their understanding.

## Subsequent readings

### The teacher

Lead a discussion with the students about the central idea of being a refugee.

- *On page 22, it says “everyone believed that, after the war, they would go back home to Poland”. Why didn’t they go back?*
- *Do you think people choose to become refugees? Why do you think that?*
- *Why do countries like New Zealand take in refugees?*

### GIVE FEEDBACK

- *Comparing the situation in Poland in the 1930s with what you’ve heard about in the Middle East today was useful because it helped you make inferences about how people become refugees.*

### METACOGNITION

- What did you do to make sense of the time frames and to identify the places in this article?

### The students:

- make connections within the text (to the treatment of Polish people by Russian soldiers – “The country was not free”) to infer that it was safer for the children to stay in New Zealand
- make connections to what they know about modern-day refugees to infer that refugees usually have no choice and are often in great danger
- ask questions and form hypotheses about why countries accept refugees.



Reading standard: by the end of year 4



The Literacy Learning Progressions



Assessment Resource Banks

# Instructional focus – Writing

**English** Level 2 – Ideas: Select, form, and express ideas on a range of topics.

**Social Sciences** Level 2 – Understand how cultural practices reflect and express people’s customs, traditions, and values; Understand how people make significant contributions to New Zealand’s society.

## Text excerpts from “The Polish Refugee Children”

### Examples of text characteristics

### Teacher (possible deliberate acts of teaching)

Page 19

When my babcia (*bub-cha*) – my grandmother – was only seven years old, her mother put her on a train with her brother and sister. The train pulled out of the station. Babcia didn’t see her parents again for seventeen years.

#### IDEAS

*Writers come up with ideas in many different ways. One way is to start with a true story from the past, or a photograph that can trigger memories, emotions, or imagined events.*

Prompt the students to consider their ideas.

- Where do ideas come from?
- How can you use another writer’s idea and make it your own?
- How does your planning help you develop the idea into something you can write about?
- What form will your writing take? Will the idea work best as a true story, as a poem, or as something else? Why is that?

Page 22

However, when the war ended, the soldiers from the USSR did not leave Poland. The country was not free, so the children and the adults who were looking after them were invited to stay in New Zealand.

#### IMPLICATION

*In order to get readers to infer, writers need to imply information or ideas. They give clues but don’t state the obvious.*

Ask questions that encourage your students to imply rather than state ideas in their writing.

- What do you want your readers to understand?
- How can you help them work something out for themselves? What clues can you give them?
- When you review your writing, check to make sure you have given just enough information. Are there enough clues? Are there too many clues?
- What does your writing partner think? Do they get the meaning that you’re implying?

Page 26

My grandparents are different from other grandparents because of the way they came to New Zealand and because of the Polish way they still do some things. But they are also just like grandparents everywhere. They love welcoming their family and friends into their home, and there are always cakes and biscuits to share – and walnuts if you are lucky!

#### COMPARE AND CONTRAST

*When two or more things are similar in some ways but different in other ways, it is helpful to make this clear to the reader. Writers use words such as “different from”, “But”, and “just like” to help make these comparisons.*

Explain the use of comparing and contrasting to express ideas.

- If your purpose is to help readers understand an idea, compare it with something your readers already know and point out the similarities and differences between the two.
- Plan before you write by using a diagram to help identify these details. A Same/Different two-column chart is one way to do this.
- Once you’ve got a plan, start by writing sentences that show the same or different details.

Some English language learners would benefit from sentence frames to help them write comparisons.

#### GIVE FEEDBACK

- You’ve taken an idea from this article and used a photo of your grandmother as a child as your inspiration. Will you use facts about her, or will you imagine what her life was like and what she might have been doing or thinking when the photo was taken?

#### METACOGNITION

- What message or big idea did you want to convey? How will you know if you’ve succeeded?