

ILLUSTRATING THE READING STANDARD

“Finding China” *School Journal*, Part 3 Number 3, 2006

Noun frequency level: 9–10

By the end of year 5, students are required to use a variety of fiction and non-fiction texts to locate, evaluate, and integrate information and ideas in order to meet the reading demands of the curriculum, drawing on the knowledge, skills, and attitudes described for the end of year 5 in the Literacy Learning Progressions. The curriculum tasks will also involve the students in generating their own questions as well as answering questions from the teacher.

The students in a year 5 class are involved in a social studies/health inquiry in which they explore the concepts of culture and identity and develop an understanding of resilience and managing change. They do this by investigating how personal experiences can impact on people and contribute to their sense of self-worth. This learning helps students build on the key competencies of managing self and relating to others.

In “Finding China”, Yani recounts her experiences of travelling alone from Dunedin, New Zealand, to attend a boarding school in

Shanghai, China, when she was eleven. Yani’s recount includes comments and reflections. She draws comparisons between school life in New Zealand and China, for example, in terms of the size of the school, homework, writing, and food. The information is logically organised, and the text is well supported by subheadings, photos, explanatory notes, and a map.

The teacher chose “Finding China” because it recounts an experience the students can relate to. The text requires students to make connections with their prior knowledge and to integrate information within the text to develop an understanding of how taking up a challenge can lead to positive change.

The following example illustrates aspects of the task and text and demonstrates how a student engages with both task and text to meet the reading demands of the curriculum. A number of such examples would be used to inform the overall teacher judgment for this student.

... but when I was eleven, I did an amazing thing (even if I do say so myself). Without my parents, I travelled to Shanghai, China, where I went to school for six weeks.

My parents were dubious. I’d never been away from home before. How would I manage? How would they manage? But the more I thought about it, the more excited I became.

I felt like a giant beside them.

The girls were very friendly.

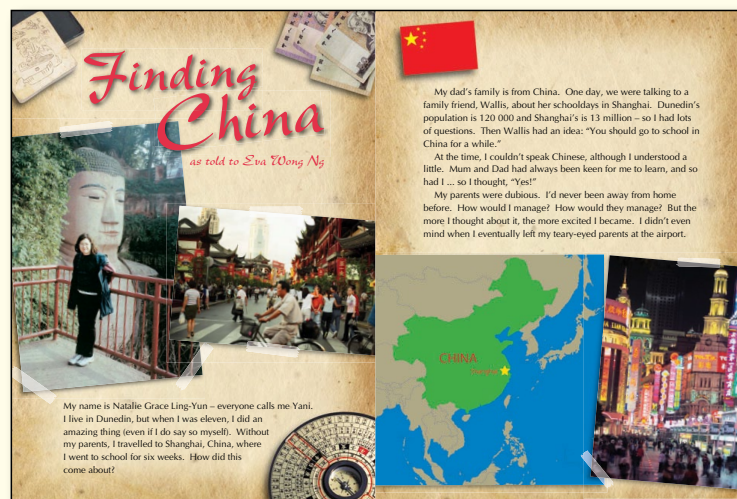
On the whole, I didn’t like the food.

Then the novelty wore off, and I got terribly homesick.

What did I learn? Well, Chinese kids work a lot harder than us. They’re also more respectful of adults and teachers.

I grew up a lot because of the experience. I’m a lot more independent, and I understand people better.

The student reads the first page and makes connections to his own experiences of being away from home. He forms hypotheses about how Yani might feel, for example, how it could be strange at first and that she might get homesick. After reading the second page, he identifies and compares Yani’s feelings (excited) with those of her parents (dubious). He makes connections to his own feelings to imagine how he might feel in a similar situation and to understand both Yani’s feelings and her parents’. The student refers to the map of China and the photo of Shanghai and hypothesises that Yani will encounter many differences.



The student evaluates and integrates information within the text to understand the range of Yani’s feelings during her stay in China. He concludes that she had both good and bad times during her stay and that the bad experiences led her to develop some resilience. He connects her comment from the beginning of the text (“I did an amazing thing”) with her comment at the end of the text (“I grew up a lot because of the experience”). This helps him to understand that her experiences away from the support of her home led to positive changes in her life, an increased sense of self-worth, and a level of independence. He draws the conclusion that she was proud of herself for doing something hard. The student makes connections to experiences in his own life that were challenging but that led to a positive change, for example, going on camp with his class.