

## Overview

*The White Mouse* tells the true story of Nancy Wake, a courageous and adventurous woman who helped end the German occupation of France in the Second World War. This illustrated biography tells of the experiences that shaped Nancy's determination to fight the Nazis and relates some of her exploits in France during the war years. Pages 3, 5, and 9 provide background information about the Second World War, the French Resistance, and the Special Operations Executive. It may be helpful to build prior knowledge for students by reading and discussing the information on page 3 with them before reading the text. During reading, you could pause at the end of each of the other two journal pages to discuss the information there and support them to make connections with the details in the biography.

*The White Mouse* provides opportunities for students to think critically as they evaluate Nancy's actions, compare them with those of modern resistance fighters, and form their own opinions about the role of the individual in a time of war or oppression. The standard and embedded-support audio versions of this text are available at [www.schooljournalstorylibrary.tki.org.nz](http://www.schooljournalstorylibrary.tki.org.nz) The embedded-support version could be used as a first reading to familiarise students with the text. Be sensitive to the experiences some students or their families may have had because of wars or unrest in more recent times.

Texts related by theme

"The Gestapo's Most Wanted" SJ 4.2.09 | "Boy Soldiers" SJ 4.3.08 | "Spitfires from Tonga" SJ 3.1.09

## 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

**Nancy Wake left New Zealand to live in Australia in 1914. She was two years old. As a child, Nancy dreamt of exciting adventures. She ran away to Europe when she was sixteen. During the Second World War, Nancy learnt to shoot guns and blow up trains. She became one of France's most famous freedom fighters.**

Nancy was living in France with her husband, Henri Flocca, when the Second World War began. Years before, she had worked as a journalist travelling around Europe. In Austria, she had seen Nazi soldiers whipping and abusing Jewish people. It revolted her that anyone could treat people in that way. Nancy decided to fight the Nazis in any way she could. So when Nazi Germany invaded France in 1940, Nancy was determined to help the French people fight back.

**THE SECOND WORLD WAR**

The Second World War began in 1939 when Germany, led by Adolf Hitler and his Nazi Party, invaded and occupied Poland. The Nazis wanted to conquer Europe, and this was their first step. France and Britain declared war against Germany. Many other countries (including New Zealand, Australia, and America) fought alongside Britain and France during the war. These countries were called the Allies. Some countries chose to remain neutral.

By 1940, the powerful German military forces controlled France and were dropping bombs on Britain. The war continued for many years, and by 1943 the Allies were starting to win. In 1944, a massive Allied army landed at Normandy in France. The Allies then fought their way towards Germany. In May 1945, the Germans were finally defeated. The Second World War lasted for six years, and more than sixty million people died.

German Stukas

American soldiers in France, 1944

EUROPE AND NORTH AFRICA, 1942

- Allied countries
- Neutral countries
- Countries occupied by Nazi Germany

academic and content-specific vocabulary

Reading standard: by the end of year 8

## Possible curriculum contexts

### SOCIAL SCIENCES (Social studies)

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

Level 4: Understand how people participate individually and collectively in response to community challenges.

### ENGLISH (Reading)

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

Level 4: Purposes and audience – Show an increasing understanding of how texts are shaped for different purposes and audiences.

### Possible reading purposes

- To find out about a brave woman who helped to defend France in the Second World War
- To think critically about the decisions people make that affect the lives of many others
- To identify and evaluate the author's point of view.

Page 4 has suggestions for writing instruction.

For more support and suggestions for accelerating students' writing, see *Accelerating Writing Progress in Years 7 and 8 on the Writing Hub*.



The Writing Hub

## Text and language challenges

### VOCABULARY:

- Possible unfamiliar words or phrases, including "freedom fighters", "invaded", "determined", "conquer", "declared", "Allies", "neutral", "controlled", "brave defence", "Resistance", "smuggling", "communicate", "beliefs", "fled", "equipment", "pilots", "effective", "canisters", "network", "mountainous", "secretive", "mysterious", "identities", "closing in", "Heartbroken", "rugged", "interrogated", "sixth go", "Special Operations Executive", "secret agent", "survival", "organise", "Transmitting", "parachuted", "ammunition", "secret codes", "ambush", "close escapes", "volunteered", "territory", "exhausted", "fake", "hailed", "recognised", "heroically"
- The metaphor "The White Mouse".

### Possible supporting strategies

As you review the text before reading, identify words or phrases that may be unfamiliar to your students or that are used in a different way in this context. Use strategies to support them, such as:

- pre-teaching specific words, using relevant contexts and connections
- reviewing how to use a glossary
- discussing words, concepts, and terms to clarify meaning and dispel any misunderstandings
- listing words and terms related to the topic for later discussion.

For students who find this text challenging, spend some time previewing the content and language. Give students copies of illustrations and ask them to make notes under each one, predicting the content, sharing their knowledge, or simply labelling the illustrations (according to their abilities). To create more genuine information sharing at the end and to make the task quicker, you could give the pairs or individuals different illustrations. Have all students share their ideas and record them as a group. During this discussion, note and introduce key vocabulary and record it, beginning a vocabulary list that they add to as they read. *The English Language Learning Progressions: Introduction*, pages 39–46, has some useful information about learning vocabulary.

### SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED:

- Knowledge of the Second World War, including the countries involved
- Some knowledge of the German occupation of France and the French Resistance movement
- Some knowledge of the ways people may take action to overcome oppression
- Knowledge of the ways countries honour people for heroism
- Knowledge of what kinds of things are considered heroic.

### Possible supporting strategies

Before reading, ask the students to recall what they know about the Second World War, focusing on the war in Europe. Discuss with them any stories, books, or movies about the Second World War that they have read or viewed.

With students from different backgrounds and/or students who don't have a lot of knowledge about the Second World War, it might be useful to begin with the topic of heroes as a way into the text. You could ask them to brainstorm the actions and characteristics that are typical of heroes, as well as to give examples of heroes they are familiar with, including heroes from different cultures. Students who share a first language other than English may benefit from the opportunity to explore this topic in this language. You could then show an engaging and relevant audiovisual clip to lead into the topic of the Second World War. You could begin a mind map of the Second World War, including notes on who, where, when, and why, and add to it as you read.

### TEXT FEATURES AND STRUCTURE:

- A biography that recounts events in the life of Nancy Wake during the Second World War
- The use of pages to provide additional information
- A map of German-occupied countries in Europe and North Africa
- The use of time and sequence markers, including "when", "By 1940", "by 1943", "soon", "After", "Over time", "Before long", "On her sixth go", "On a dark April night", "Now", "After the war"
- The glossary
- A range of past verb forms, for example, "was living", "began", "had worked", "were called"
- A range of sentence types, including compound and complex sentences.

### Possible supporting strategies

Review the features of a biography, reminding the students of other biographies they have read in class. Preview the text, identifying features such as headings, maps, and so on, pointing out the pages that contain background information, and discussing the different layouts used. Spend some time going over the map on page 3 to help them understand the legend (or key) and how to use it. Find out if any of them have connections with the countries.

For some students, you may need to discuss the way words in the text help readers work out the order of events. Highlight a few of these words and then ask them to find more themselves. This can be started before reading, with checks during reading to ensure they notice and can use the words to help them keep track of the order of events.

For students who need support with identifying sequence, you could use a graphic organiser to keep track of the main events and the time signals and the associated verb forms. Create a graphic organiser with columns for time, event/action, and verb form (you could also add a column for where). Fill in examples together after reading the first page and then ask them to fill their copy in as they read.

If necessary, help the students understand long, complex sentences by breaking them into separate clauses and identifying the main idea of each clause and how they are connected. Using who, what, where, when, how, and why as prompts, and breaking down the information together, can help them to identify the main ideas.



Sounds and Words

## Instructional focus – Reading

**Social Sciences** (Social studies: Understand how formal and informal groups make decisions that impact on communities.)

(Social studies: Understand how people participate individually and collectively in response to community challenges.)

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

(Purposes and audiences: Show an increasing understanding of how texts are shaped for different purposes and audiences.)

### Text excerpts from *The White Mouse*

In Austria, she had seen Nazi soldiers whipping and abusing Jewish people. It revolted her that anyone could ...

The Nazis wanted to conquer Europe ...

By 1940, the powerful German military forces controlled France and were dropping bombs on Britain.

#### DEMANDS OF THE TEXT

Students need to:

- draw on prior knowledge to make connections with the text
- locate and synthesise information across the text
- ask questions and search for answers
- evaluate Nancy's reasons for wanting to take action
- use the glossary.

Before long, Nancy was part of the Resistance network. They helped British pilots ... people worked for the Germans. Nancy became very good at working under cover and using different identities.

#### DEMANDS OF THE TEXT

Students need to:

- infer meaning
- make connections with prior knowledge to help them to understand concepts
- synthesise information within the text
- think critically about the actions and responses of individuals and organisations.

### Students

(what to prompt, support, and look for as the students are reading)

*Students make connections between information within the text and their prior knowledge of the topic to identify the circumstances that led Nancy to work to help defend France.*

*They make connections between the text and their own values to understand that Nancy was strongly against treating people unjustly and inhumanely. They ask and answer questions of themselves to evaluate this idea against their own values.*

*They locate, evaluate, and synthesise information from the text and the map to make inferences about the power of the German forces and how difficult it would be to fight them.*

*The students integrate information from the text, the map on page 3, and their understanding of the word "neutral" to infer that Spain was a safer place to be in than France. They integrate information from this extract and on pages 3 and 5 to infer the reasons Nancy needed to avoid the Gestapo and the French police.*

*Students evaluate and synthesise the information about Nancy's actions as they think critically about people who act outside the law for specific purposes. They evaluate Nancy's actions in the light of their thinking and may infer that the cause she was fighting for made her actions morally acceptable.*

### Teacher

(possible deliberate acts of teaching)

**PROMPT** the students to help them understand Nancy's motivation.

- Share with a partner what you know about the treatment of Jews by the Nazis during the Second World War.
- Think about what it would be like to see this happening. How would it make you feel? How can making connections with your own feelings help you understand Nancy Wake better?

**MODEL** bringing together information across a text to make an inference.

- As I started reading, I wondered how strong the German forces were. Let's see if we can find information about this. The map shows it in a very dramatic way. This helps me to understand how powerful the German forces were.

#### GIVE FEEDBACK

- Using what we learnt from the documentary about the Holocaust was a good way to help you to understand Nancy's reactions.
- You've located several relevant pieces of information in the text, put them together, and thought critically about what they mean. That's what good readers do to gain a deeper understanding of a text.

#### MONITORING THE IMPACT OF TEACHING

In order to clarify the students' understanding, make a mind map with "Nancy Wake" in the middle, then ask them to locate and identify the factors on pages 2 and 3 that had an impact on her. Ask them to add ideas of their own to help build a picture of the influences that led Nancy to want to do something.

**PROMPT** the students to integrate information within the text.

- I wonder why they were helping the pilots get to Spain? Check the map and other information on page 3 and then discuss this with a partner.
- Why did Nancy have to avoid the Gestapo and the French police? Go back to page 5 to make a connection that will help you make an inference.

**ASK QUESTIONS** to support the students to think critically.

- Why did Nancy have to work under cover or change her identity?
- What laws or rules do you think she was breaking?
- Was she right to do these things? Tell a partner why you think that.

#### GIVE FEEDBACK

- I noticed you looked at the map to work out why Spain was a safe place. Good readers use information across a text, including from maps and diagrams, to deepen their understanding.

#### MONITORING THE IMPACT OF TEACHING

If the students are not able to make connections within the text to infer meaning, model your thinking for them as a process. Talk about how you asked yourself questions and looked back through the text to locate information that would help to answer them. For example, explain that the map's key showed Spain was "neutral" and you knew that this meant it did not take sides in the war. You inferred that Spain would not hand the pilots over to the Germans, and this (and the fact that it had a border with France) is why the pilots were sent to Spain.



## Text excerpt from *The White Mouse*

After the war, Nancy was hailed as a hero. She became one of the most decorated women in the Allied forces. Britain, France, and America awarded her medals for leadership and bravery. Her acts of courage were also recognised decades later by Australia and New Zealand.

### DEMANDS OF THE TEXT

Students need to:

- use their vocabulary knowledge and the glossary to understand the text
- make connections within the text and with their own knowledge
- ask and answer questions about Nancy's awards
- evaluate Nancy's actions
- draw conclusions about the kinds of people who fight for what they believe is right.

### METACOGNITION

- What big questions did this story raise for you? How do "big questions" help you to go on to learn more about a topic or an idea?
- How did your knowledge of reading biographies help you follow and understand this text?
- Explain to a partner what you need to do to synthesise information in order to form an opinion or reach a conclusion.

## Students

(what to prompt, support, and look for as the students are reading)

*The students use their vocabulary knowledge, and make connections between the text and their knowledge of the ways communities recognise heroism, to understand the meaning of "hailed as a hero". They also make connections across the text (referring back to page 3) to understand why Nancy's awards came from several countries. They ask and answer questions about the reason Australia and New Zealand took so long to recognise her achievements.*

*Students synthesise information about Nancy from across the text and consider her actions from their own perspectives and values. They ask and answer questions of themselves as they compare her actions with what they might do in her situation, and they go on to think critically about the concept of heroism.*

*Some students may also infer that whether a person is considered a hero or not depends on the point of view of those making such a judgment.*

## Teacher

(possible deliberate acts of teaching)

**ASK QUESTIONS** to check that the students understand the words and terms used.

- What does "hailed as a hero" mean?
- Why are heroes "decorated"?
- What does it mean to "recognise" acts of courage?
- Name a modern New Zealand hero. How was he or she hailed or decorated?

**DIRECT** the students to work in pairs.

- As you reread this section, think about the wider concept of heroism.
- From this book, what have you learnt about the characteristics and motivations of Nancy? Are these the same for all heroes?
- As a pair, can you both agree about what it means to be a hero? How easy or hard is it to reach agreement? What can you infer from this?

**GIVE FEEDBACK**

- Your discussion showed me that reaching agreement on this issue is not easy. It's fine to hold different views, and it's important to be able to express your reasons for your own opinions, even if others do not agree.

**MONITORING THE IMPACT OF TEACHING**

If it seems that the students are not able to generalise about the concept of heroism, model your thinking as you skim the text again, noticing the places that describe Nancy's motivations and reasons for her actions. For each example, express your opinion. Use a graphic organiser to compare her actions with those of other heroes, for example, Willie Apiata or people who risked their lives to help rescue people after the Christchurch earthquake.

Support the students to make a list of the characteristics of heroes they know about. Which characteristics do many heroes share? Which characteristics are the most important?

## AUDIO TRACKS

Audio tracks of this text are available at: [www.schooljournalstorylibrary.tki.org.nz](http://www.schooljournalstorylibrary.tki.org.nz)

- Use the standard audio track to support students' comprehension and fluency following reading.
- Use the embedded-support audio track for students who may need further support during reading.

## Suggestions for writing instruction




Your students could respond to this biography by:

- exploring the "big idea" of taking action against an oppressive regime, such as the actions taken by citizens in Egypt in 2011. Under what circumstances are people justified in taking action? How far should people go?
- planning and creating a graphic text based on Nancy Wake and her wartime exploits
- comparing Nancy Wake with another New Zealand hero, for example, Charles Upham, Willie Apiata, or others who have been decorated for acts of heroism in peacetime. They could compare the actions and achievements of the heroes they have chosen and draw conclusions about their shared characteristics.

Support the students to choose another hero and write a short biography of this person.

- Now that you've read a biography of a hero, how can you apply what you've learnt about this kind of writing to your own work?

Support them as they develop a writing plan, showing them tools they could use, such as a biographical graphic organiser. Remind them to consider their audience and purpose and to use what they already know about biographical writing conventions.

 **Writing standard: by the end of year 8**  
 **The Literacy Learning Progressions**  
 **Assessment Resource Banks**