

Overview

Marcus Thomas: New Zealand Caveman presents an engaging account of why Marcus took up caving. His passion for caving as a child led him to contact the New Zealand Speleological Society, and he has gone on to explore many of New Zealand's longest and deepest caves. The article is structured as an interview, with the interviewer's questions forming the headings.

Although the topic will be unfamiliar to most students, the questions may reflect what they would want to ask. The information is specific to caving, but students will be able to make connections with the personal point of view and with concepts such as safety and exploration.

The text is well supported by photos and diagrams that add interest and information.

Texts related by theme

"Underground Explorers" SJ L4 May 2015 | "The Secret Underground" Connected 1 2007

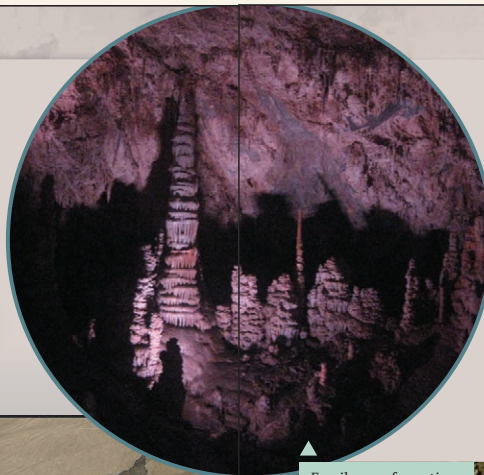
Text characteristics from the year 7 reading standard

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

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

Have you ever been caving overseas?

I have done a little bit of caving overseas – but of course I would love to do more. Many people think that France is the birthplace of modern caving, and there are some amazing underground journeys you can do there. China, Borneo, and Mexico all have huge caves, with lots of exploring still to do. Some of these caves are very remote, in jungles or mountain landscapes which have their own hazards. The world's largest cave chamber is the Sarawak Chamber in Borneo.

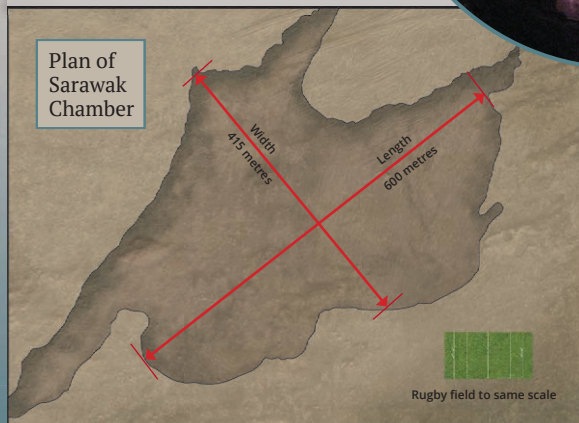


How does someone become a caver?

Anyone can contact the New Zealand Speleological Society. The society connects people with cavers and clubs in their area. The caving community in New Zealand is pretty small, but it's very welcoming. Caving clubs run regular trips for people of all skill levels.

Caves are fragile places. It's important that anyone new to caving learns respect for the environment. Walk carefully and softly – take only photos, leave only footprints. It takes just one careless caver to cause damage that can never be undone.

Plan of Sarawak Chamber



Fragile cave formations



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

complex layers of meaning, and/or information that is irrelevant to the identified purpose for reading (that is, competing information), requiring students to infer meanings or make judgments



Reading standard: by the end of year 7

Possible curriculum contexts

SOCIAL SCIENCES (Social Studies)

Level 4: Understand how exploration and innovation create opportunities and challenges for people, places, and environments.

ENGLISH (Reading)

Level 4 – Structure: Show an increasing understanding of text structures.

Possible reading purposes

- To read about a man who followed his childhood dream to become a caver
- To find out about the challenges of caving
- To learn about the skills and equipment needed to go caving
- To compare the safety factors involved in different activities, including caving
- To understand why people may become interested in unusual and challenging activities.



The Writing Hub

Text and language challenges

VOCABULARY:

- Possible unfamiliar words and topic-specific vocabulary, including “extreme”, “documentary”, “ignited”, “unmistakable”, “technical”, “curiosity”, “water table”, “cavern”, “harness”, “downside”, “outdoor survival skills”, “the dig”, “glow-worms”, “birthplace”, “hazards”, “fragile”, “respect”, “formations”
- The double meaning of “caveman”
- Hyperbole: “I couldn’t wait”
- Metaphor: “And you never know what surprises a cave is hiding”
- Colloquial phrases: “a huge buzz”, “There’s nothing like”
- Adverbs: “fairly”, “pretty”.

Possible supporting strategies

Identify vocabulary that may be challenging for the students. Provide opportunities for them to meet any unfamiliar words, terms, and expressions orally, before reading. Include words from the glossary where possible.

Support the students to make the transition from a word they know orally to the word in its written form, or vice versa. This can include checking their pronunciation of “speleological” and its associated forms (“speleology”, “speleologist”).

Some students may need support with words that have context-specific meanings, for example, “squeeze”, “buzz”.

The English Language Learning Progressions: Introduction, pages 39–46, has some useful information about learning vocabulary.

SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED:

- Some awareness of extreme sports
- Some knowledge of New Zealand and world geography
- Understand how to interpret and compare scale drawings
- An awareness that there are risks and safeguards specific to different activities
- Some knowledge of caves – why they are there and how they are formed – and the geological link between caves and water.

Possible supporting strategies

Caving will almost certainly be outside the direct experience of most students, but you can generate interest and build prior knowledge through video clips, magazine articles (for example, *National Geographic*), books, and movies.

Use maps of New Zealand and the rest of the world to help students identify the places mentioned in the article. Ask students who have ties with other countries to share any knowledge of extreme sports there.

Spend some time exploring pages 8 and 9 to ensure students understand the visuals. If students struggle to understand the cutaway diagram, use a real example, such as a filled roll, sliced across to show how the layers appear.

Support students to brainstorm a list of extreme sports. Prompt them to consider why people might do each one and the particular challenges each one has.

TEXT FEATURES AND STRUCTURE:

- Non-fiction article
- Introduction
- Question-and-answer format of an extended interview
- Questions used as headings
- Glossary
- Photographs, some with captions or labels
- Cutaway diagram with labels
- Plan diagram with scale and comparisons
- A number of complex sentences.

Possible supporting strategies

Scan the text with the students so they get an understanding of the kind of text it is, how it is organised, and the kind of information in the images.

Model how you use the headings to keep track of the main idea in each section and to locate information. Clarify that this text is an interview – the headings are the interviewer’s questions, and the text below each heading is the interviewee’s response.

Point out the graphic features, and if necessary, demonstrate how to use them. Students may need support with the cutaway diagram (see the suggestion above) and the scale drawing.



Sounds and Words

Instructional focus – Reading

Social Sciences (Social studies – Level 4: Understand how exploration and innovation create opportunities and challenges for people, places, and environments.)

English (Level 4 – Structure: Show an increasing understanding of text structures.)

First reading

- Prepare the students for reading this text – use video clips to generate interest and build prior knowledge. Refer to the “Possible supporting strategies” on page 2 as appropriate.
- Have the students ask questions and make predictions about what they will be reading. Prompt them to make connections between the text format and their own non-fiction reading experiences to understand that the text will contain facts and that the introduction, together with the title, sets the overall topic.
- Model your own thinking as you start reading. *I've skimmed the article and read the introduction. I now understand that it's about a person who loves going into caves. I'm asking myself questions that will help me as I read on. Looking for the answers as I read helps me to understand. My first questions is: How did Marcus Thomas find out about caving? What are some other questions we could ask?*
- Prompt the students to look for the connections they can make as they read. What do you already know about “extreme” sports? Why are they called extreme? What do you know about the sports mentioned here? How do they relate to the photos?

If the students struggle with this text

- Remind students to apply their word-solving strategies, where necessary. Prompt them to use what they know about prefixes and suffixes, root words, and spelling patterns. Also, remind them to think about the overall meaning of the surrounding to help them solve words they struggle with. If you have explored unfamiliar vocabulary before the reading, remind them of the meanings you discussed or recorded on a chart.
- If students are struggling with finding specific information, draw their attention to the question/answer format to help them identify the main ideas in each section. Show them how the questions used as headings provide strong clues about the information that will follow.
- If they struggle with a complex sentence, model how to break it down by identifying the main clause (containing the main idea) and the subordinate clause (containing the supporting details). Explain how the main clause makes sense and stands alone as a complete sentence, whereas the supporting clause does not make sense on its own. For example: *I also really enjoyed the technical side of caving, such as learning how to use ropes to get up and down cave walls.*

Subsequent readings

The teacher

Model locating information.

- The question that came to mind when I read the title was “How did Marcus know about caving?” When I skimmed the text, I noticed the heading “How did you get into caving?”, so it was obvious I would find my answer there because when questions are used as headings, the paragraphs that follow always provide information that answers the question. I used the text structure – particularly the headings – to help me find the answer.

Direct students to examine the metaphors.

- Marcus says, “Something in me ignited”. What does “ignited” mean? It’s a metaphor: he’s comparing the start of his interest in caving with the way a fire starts. How does this help you understand what he means?
- Look at the last sentence in the first paragraph. I notice that there is a dash after caving. Talk with your partner about why you think the author used it this way.
- Why does Marcus use the word “consumed” here? What does it make you think of? Was consumed a good word choice? Why? Why not?

Explain how descriptive words help us to visualise.

- When Marcus describes how it feels to explore a cave, the words help you to imagine it.
- Think about a time you did something (like scoring a goal) that gave you “a huge buzz”. (You may wish to clarify this colloquialism for ELL students.) What things might give someone a huge buzz?
- What stories could you tell after a great game of football or a fast ride around a cycle track?
- What experiences help you imagine (visualise) how Marcus feels when he’s caving?

The students:

- locate information that answers their questions. They use their knowledge of sentence structure to recognise the signal words
- identify and use the metaphor of fire (“ignited”) to understand the strength of Marcus’s interest. They use their knowledge of rhetorical patterns (the dash, the use of “But” to begin a sentence) to understand how strongly Marcus felt about caving
- make connections between their feelings for a sport and Marcus’s descriptions. They infer that he found caving far more exciting and interesting than usual sports
- use the descriptions to make connections with their own experiences and to visualise how Marcus felt.

Monitoring the impact of teaching

- Ask the students to work in pairs to share their questions. Then discuss how they found answers to them. Listen in to their discussions to check that they are using the most effective strategies. Offer suggestions if necessary. You could list their unanswered questions and help them to identify those that have factual answers that can be found with research. Prompt them to consider other options around questions, including the option of leaving a question open for further thinking.
- Check the students’ use of strategies when they encounter unfamiliar words, or words used metaphorically. Work with them to identify the literal meanings of “ignited” and “consumed”, then discuss how they are used in the text. Invite students to suggest other words that could be used metaphorically to show a great interest in a sport or topic.

The teacher

Model making an inference after reading page 11.

- When I read the first rule, I wondered why they'd need three sources of light. I checked back through the text and recalled how remote a caver would be. I could understand how dark it must be a long way under the ground, so they'd need to have a light on all the time. I also know that torch batteries can run out. My inference is that by having three sources, cavers have two back-ups in case of failure.
- Why do you think the second rule specifies three people? When might that be important?

Ask questions about rules and safety.

- What rules are in the activities you do? Why are they important?
- What could happen if they were not followed?

Direct the students to share their ideas with a partner or the group.

- What kinds of activities have the strictest rules? Why?
- When you hear or read about accidents with extreme sports, does it make you think they are too dangerous? Why? Why not?
- Do you think people should be allowed to do such risky activities?
- Using what you already know and what you've learnt about caving, think about the thrills and risks involved.
- How safe or dangerous is caving compared with other activities?
- Would you like to try caving? Why? Why not?

The students:

- make connections between information in the text and their prior knowledge about safety and rules. For each rule, they draw on information across the text to make inferences about why it is important and how it makes caving safer
- compare and contrast the rules with those of other activities they know about. With support, they synthesise information from across the text and their prior knowledge to evaluate the relative risks of caving
- think critically about the benefits and risks of caving as they form opinions about caving as an activity that should or should not be promoted.

Monitoring the impact of teaching

To support students as they make inferences, use a three-column chart:

The text says ...	I know that ...	So I infer that ...

Work through an example (such as the first safety rule) with the students as you model an inference. Support the students as they try other examples from the text.

If you made a chart of extreme sports earlier, revisit it now with safety in mind. Support the students to use any knowledge they have of each activity and rate them according to how dangerous each one would be. Help students to develop criteria or questions to identify the risks. They could choose one activity and compare it with caving, using their criteria and their own evaluations of the benefits ("thrills") of each.

Give feedback

- Your question was "Isn't it scary?" and you found the heading, "What don't you like?" That was a good place to look, but it didn't answer the question. You inferred that Marcus isn't scared because he never mentions it. I think I agree with you.
- The comparison with winning the cross-country helped you understand what "a huge buzz" would feel like. You used that to imagine how Marcus felt. Making a comparison to something you are familiar with can be really helpful when you are trying to work out an unusual phrase or what the author means about something.
- Your reasons for each rule made sense to me. You used information in the text and your own thinking to infer that ...
- Making a chart to compare different extreme sports was a great idea. You've ranked them from the safest to the most dangerous. Now you can use it to make decisions about which ones you'd like to try.

METACOGNITION

- How do you deal with a topic that's totally new to you? What strategies help you understand what it's about? Which text features were most useful to you in this article? How do you deal with vocabulary that you have never seen or heard before?
- Show me where something you already knew or had experienced helped you to understand Marcus' passion for caving. Tell me how it helped.
- There are some diagrams in the text that explain important ideas. Talk me through the strategies you use to work out what a diagram is explaining.
- What words or sentences in this text were tricky for you? What made them tricky and how did you get figure them out?

Suggestions for writing instruction

The students could work in a small group and use *Marcus Thomas: New Zealand Caveman* as a model for researching and writing about another leisure activity or sport. Support them to identify a topic and a person to interview. The students can make a short list of questions to ask the person. Give them guidelines, such as:

- think about what your audience already knows and what they will want to know about the topic
- have a mix of questions – ones that will bring out facts and ones that will bring out opinions or feelings
- make sure that your questions are open so the person must give more than one-word answers.

Support the students to prepare for the interview, including reviewing their questions, setting up a meeting, and supplying a recording method if necessary. Help to structure this activity for students by providing them with a set number of questions (for example, five) and letting them organise their interview in a similar way to *Marcus Thomas: New Zealand Caveman* (questions become headings and answers become text below each heading).

The group may want to assign roles, such as recorder, interviewer, and editor. When they have the raw material from the interview, they can work together to write and edit an article based on their interview.

If students need support to find an idea to write about, help them to identify ways they could use this text to form intentions for their writing.

- What questions occurred to you as you read this book? Take one of your questions, research the answer, and then write it up for others to read. Would people be interested in reading this?
- How can you use ideas from this article to come up with ideas for your own writing? For example, could you research a different extreme sport? Where could you find information?
- What kind of structure and language will you use in your writing? Why?
- What photos, maps, diagrams, or illustrations would help you to get your ideas across?

Continue to support the students as they develop a plan for their writing, showing them strategies they could use such as mind maps, flowcharts, and graphic organisers. Support students to prioritise information on their plans and to verbalise their final sentences. In this way, you can support them to move from the plan to first draft. They may also need support in revising their writing.

Give scaffolding for the students to build on their writing strengths, giving more support where needed and reducing it as they take control their writing.



Writing standard: by the end of year 7



The Literacy Learning Progressions



Assessment Resource Banks