

# School Journal Story Library

## Level 4

School Journal Story Library is a targeted series that supplements other instructional series texts. It provides additional scaffolds and supports for teachers to use to accelerate students' literacy learning.

# Diary of a Wild Boy

by Brando Yelavich  
Readability level: year 6



## Overview

*Diary of a Wild Boy* is a true, first-person diary account of how 19-year-old Brando Yelavich circumambulated the New Zealand coastline on foot and, for the most part, alone.

This is a rich text that you can revisit many times for different purposes.

Brando's story is also told in more detail in the article "Wildboy: The Journey of Brando Yelavich" (*School Journal*, Level 4, May 2016), and his autobiography *Wildboy* (Penguin Books New Zealand, 2015). An interview with Brando on Radio New Zealand can be heard at: <http://goo.gl/h5bwvz>

More details can also be found on Brando's website: [www.wildboy.co.nz](http://www.wildboy.co.nz)

## Key competencies

Key competencies explored through this text include: thinking, relating to others, and managing self.

## Themes and ideas

Themes and ideas explored in this text include:

- the emotional journey of discovering oneself
- overcoming physical and mental challenges
- setting and achieving goals
- the importance of relationships
- surviving in the wilderness
- the geography of New Zealand
- using a diary to communicate significant personal feelings.

### Texts related by theme

"Wildboy: The Journey of Brando Yelavich" SJ L4 May 2016

## Text characteristics from the year 6 reading standard

It was my first pig hunt, and I wasn't too sure how to approach it. The bigger two got away quickly - running down the coast like maniacs. I set my sights on the runt. It was sitting beneath a karaka tree and didn't seem bothered that I was there. This changed the second I grabbed it. It let out the loudest squeal I've ever heard!

I didn't know how to make it stop, so I tied the pig to the tree and went to get my knife. On the way back, I locked eyes with a big, black sow at the top of a hill - Mumma pig! In a ball of dust and rocks, she roared towards me.

I remember eleven: "If you're ever chased by a pig, climb a tree." So I did. I climbed straight up the karaka tree, my knife still in my belt. Then I waited.

I have the gift of ADHD\*, which makes me a breath of fresh air in everybody's lives. Because of this, sometimes I do things without thinking about the consequences. Mumma pig arrived and started scratching around below me. I jumped down on top of her, and tried to wrestle her to the ground. She dragged me for about 30 metres before I managed to wear her down. Next time I'll know better. For P.S. Six months later, it's going to take a walk around New Zealand.

Some ideas and information that are conveyed indirectly and require students to infer by drawing on several related pieces of information in the text

Wellington Coast

than going to bed on an empty stomach is waking up still hungry. Living off the land has been harder than I thought it would be.

This morning, in between stomach growls, I heard a sniffing noise coming from outside my tent. Three wild pigs were grazing around the edges. Breakfast!

It was my first pig hunt, and I wasn't too sure how to approach it. The bigger two got away quickly - running down the coast like maniacs. I set my sights on the runt. It was sitting beneath a karaka tree and didn't seem bothered that I was there. This changed the second I grabbed it. It let out the loudest squeal I've ever heard!

I remembered some advice my uncle had given me when I was eleven: "If you're ever chased by a pig, climb a tree." So I did. I climbed straight up the karaka tree, my knife still in my belt. Then I waited.

I have the gift of ADHD\*, which makes me a breath of fresh air in everybody's lives. Because of this, sometimes I do things without thinking about the consequences. Mumma pig arrived and started scratching around below me. I jumped down on top of her, and tried to wrestle her to the ground. She dragged me for about 30 metres before I managed to wear her down. Next time I'll know better. For P.S. Six months later, it's going to take a walk around New Zealand.

Illustrations, photographs, text boxes, diagrams, maps, charts, and graphs that clarify or extend the text and may require some interpretation

## Text characteristics from the year 7 reading standard

I remembered some advice my uncle had given me when I was eleven: "If you're ever chased by a pig, climb a tree." So I did. I climbed straight up the karaka tree, my knife still in my belt. Then I waited.

I have the gift of ADHD\*, which makes me a breath of fresh air in everybody's lives. Because of this, sometimes I do things without thinking about the consequences. Mumma pig arrived and started scratching around below me. I jumped down on top of her, and tried to wrestle her to the ground. She dragged me for about 30 metres before I managed to wear her down. Next time I'll know better. For P.S. Six months later, it's going to take a walk around New Zealand.

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

DAY 152 - Wellington Coast

The only thing worse than going to bed on an empty stomach is waking up still hungry. Living off the land has been harder than I thought it would be.

This morning, in between stomach growls, I heard a sniffing noise coming from outside my tent. Three wild pigs were grazing around the edges. Breakfast!

It was my first pig hunt, and I wasn't too sure how to approach it. The bigger two got away quickly - running down the coast like maniacs. I set my sights on the runt. It was sitting beneath a karaka tree and didn't seem bothered that I was there. This changed the second I grabbed it. It let out the loudest squeal I've ever heard!

I remembered some advice my uncle had given me when I was eleven: "If you're ever chased by a pig, climb a tree." So I did. I climbed straight up the karaka tree, my knife still in my belt. Then I waited.

I have the gift of ADHD\*, which makes me a breath of fresh air in everybody's lives. Because of this, sometimes I do things without thinking about the consequences. Mumma pig arrived and started scratching around below me. I jumped down on top of her, and tried to wrestle her to the ground. She dragged me for about 30 metres before I managed to wear her down. Next time I'll know better. For P.S. Six months later, it's going to take a walk around New Zealand.

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

Reading standard: by the end of year 6

Reading standard: by the end of year 7

## Making meaning: Supports and challenges

### VOCABULARY:

- Possibly unfamiliar words and phrases, including “my muscles feel raw and untested”, “unbearable”, “spasms”, “emerged”, “scaling”, “near-vertical”, “towering”, “seeping”, “sniffing”, “maniacs”, “runt”, “ADHD”, “consequences”, “thrashed”, “overwhelming”, “potential”, “hypothermia”, “balcony”, “exhausted”, “tropical rainforest”, “cheese graters”, “untouched”, “wilderness”, “appreciates”, “connection”, “surprisingly”, “terrain”, “dirty-white”, “flimsy-looking”, “opportunities”
- Place names, including te reo: “Cape Rēinga”, “Great Exhibition Bay”, “Kawhia”, “Takaka”, “Kahurangi”, “Canterbury”
- Similes and metaphors: “Two dirty-white horns stuck out of its head like spears”, “my stomach dropped”, “the water sparkled like a sapphire”
- Colloquial phrases: “it was cool to be able to share the experience”, “I pulled myself together”, “I have no idea”
- Hyperbole: “It let out the loudest squeal I’ve ever heard!”

### SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED:

- Some knowledge of New Zealand’s geography and the varied terrain found around New Zealand, including remote, wild areas
- Some knowledge of surviving in the outdoors
- Some understanding of the risks and rewards involved in taking on a physical or mental challenge
- Some understanding of why people decide to turn their lives around
- Understanding of the important support offered by friends and relations
- Some awareness of mental health conditions and their impact on people’s lives
- Awareness that authors can use diary entries to reveal personal, emotional details.

### TEXT FEATURES AND STRUCTURE:

- Recount of specific events in a diary format through first-person point of view
- Events ordered chronologically, though with some big jumps between entries
- Descriptive language and personal reflections
- Combination of present and past tense
- Some long action sequences
- Use of quoted dialogue from other people to break the monologue and allow the reader to recognise the importance of other people in this adventure
- A few instances of incomplete sentences, often used to add detail or enhance an image.

### Possible supporting strategies

Identify vocabulary and ideas that may be challenging for the students. Encourage them to recall the strategies they can use to solve word problems, such as:

- reading on to see if the meaning becomes clear
- looking for base words, chunks, or word families.

Make a glossary of challenging words.

Introduce the term “ADHD”. Explain that it is an abbreviation and spell out what each letter stands for. Then discuss the students’ understanding of this and similar neurological development conditions.

Discuss the Māori place names and their meanings. English language learners may benefit from exploring and comparing examples of words with similar meanings in their first language.

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

Review some of the similes, metaphors, and other figurative language in this text prior to the students’ first reading.

Have an atlas of New Zealand or an Internet-based map programme at hand to research unknown places.

### Possible supporting strategies

Help the students make connections between the themes in the text and their own experiences.

Some students may have direct experiences of themselves, or a close friend or family member, coping with a personal challenge or mental health issue and making positive changes to their lives as a result. Encourage the students to discuss what this challenge is like for them or their friend or relative, including reflecting on how other people treat them.

*Note: Be sensitive to students who may have experience of serious mental or emotional conditions either personally or in relation to a close friend or family member.*

Discuss the students’ experiences of physical or mental challenges at school, holiday camps, or sporting events, such as cross-country races.

### Possible supporting strategies

Reflect on the author’s choice of the diary format to communicate his experiences to the readers, and discuss the effect and purpose of his descriptive language.

Point out the use of the pronoun “I” and take this opportunity to facilitate a discussion about point of view in a text. Clarify that, here, the first-person point of view is being used. This may be particularly helpful for English language learners.

Some students may benefit from reading along with the audio for the first reading.

Highlight and discuss instances of changes between present and past tense and the reasons for these changes.

Develop a class blog chronicling a particular event, such as a camp, sporting event, or class outing, and encourage students to share their personal feelings about it.



## Possible curriculum contexts

### HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION (Relationships with Other People)

Level 4 – Relationships: Identify the effects of changing situations, roles, and responsibilities on relationships and describe appropriate responses

### HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION (Movement Concepts and Motor Skills)

Level 4 – Positive Attitudes: Demonstrate willingness to accept challenges, learn new skills and strategies, and extend their abilities in movement-related activities.

### ENGLISH (Listening, Reading, and viewing)

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

### Possible inquiry questions

- How have I resolved challenges that I have faced in my life?
- How can relationships with others help a person cope with difficult times?
- How do people make decisions that resolve issues and make positive changes to their lives?
- What goals have I set and achieved?
- What language features do people use in a diary format to share personal experiences and their responses to events?

### Possible reading purposes

- To find out about one of the themes listed on page one, for example, the challenges Brando faced as he walked around the New Zealand coastline
- To identify and discuss the impact on Brando's attitudes and self-belief during his trek around the New Zealand coastline
- To identify what has been included and what has been left out in this personal story, and why.

### Possible writing purposes

- To describe what it would be like to live with a developmental disorder, such as ADHD or autism
- To describe the challenges Brando faced in his solo journey
- To persuade readers of the importance of friendship
- To list important skills and strategies for surviving in the outdoors.



The Writing Hub

## Instructional focus – Reading

Use this text to develop the students' metacognition. At all stages, encourage the students to vocalise their ideas and thought processes, supporting each other to justify their ideas with reasoning.

### Introducing the text: Paving the way for successful readers

#### Before reading

- Introduce *Diary of a Wild Boy*, briefly explaining that it is a true story told as a series of diary entries. These cover a young person's adventures as he spent 600 days walking around the New Zealand coastline. Tell the students that, for this first reading, they will focus on enjoying the text and making sure they have a good understanding of what they are reading.
- Explain that there are some large gaps between diary entries that were necessary to condense a 600-day journey into a readable text. Ask the students to skim through the text to observe the map at each chapter that indicates the location for each day's diary entry and to note the gaps in time.
- Use a group discussion to draw out background knowledge about the themes and ideas listed on page 1.
- Establish a strong link between the students as readers and the author by discussing what might be the author's purpose in writing this text (for example, to share an experience that contains a message – *challenge yourself to learn about and deal with your strengths and weaknesses and change yourself in a positive way*). Challenge the students to justify each idea they present. This link will be strengthened by discussing with the students what they know about New Zealand's geography – listing places they have visited or lived in around the country (linking what they know with what the author is describing).
- Elicit from the students what they know about the structure and purpose of diary writing, and as a result, what they might expect to encounter in this text. Draw attention to Brando's use of colloquial language, including incomplete sentences.
- Explore with the students some useful strategies for dealing with unfamiliar words or ideas that they might encounter as they read the text.
- Consider previewing the photographs and illustrations that accompany this text as a way of providing context for the students before they begin reading.

## First reading

- Have the students read the text through for the enjoyment of discovering what happens on Brando's big adventure. Some students may be able to read the whole text independently. Others may benefit from share-reading some of the text with you, following the text with their eyes.
- Some students may need to silently read the text in chunked sections and discuss what they're reading with a partner or whole group (think-pair-share). Suggested chunks: pages 2–3, 4–7, 8–10, 11–14, and 15–16.
- Use this time to listen in to student discussions and get a sense of how well the students are reading and understanding the text.
- If you are unsure about a particular student's reading and understanding, ask him or her to quietly read you a few lines and have a brief discussion to establish how well that student is coping with the text challenges. This may be a good opportunity to provide specific feedback and prompt the student to articulate a specific strategy they have used.

### If the students struggle with this text

Remind students of strategies that are particularly useful on a first reading, such as reading on, rereading, and making connections with their prior knowledge. Use one of the following approaches, depending on students' needs:

- Use group discussions around the key themes and ideas listed on page 1 to draw out more specific background information that relates to the story.
- Instigate a discussion that makes connections between the students' own experiences and the ideas presented in the text. Where necessary, prompt the students' thinking with questions. *Can you think of a time when you were so exhausted or when something you were doing was so hard that you wanted to give up?*
- Use discussion to draw out key words from the text, developing a glossary of difficult words.
- Encourage the students to make links to similar texts they have read or written.
- Share-read pages 2 and 3 and then pause to discuss how the author has set up his story and why he wanted to go on this adventure.
- Read aloud the day and place headings, review the accompanying illustrations or photos, and elicit questions and connections from the students before reading each chapter.
- Chunk the text into two or three sections. Consider the possible purpose of each section before reading it and confirm that purpose after each reading.
- As you read, model 'pondering' questions about the text and searching for information or ideas related to those questions.
- Deal with specific vocabulary challenges before reading.
- Some students may be new to New Zealand or may not have explored much of the country, and it could be useful to discuss the geography of the country, with support from an atlas or an Internet-based map program. Encourage students who are not born in New Zealand to share their knowledge of the landscape, climate, and geography of their home countries.

## Subsequent readings

Use subsequent readings to focus on particular themes and ideas described in the text. Support the students through modelling, thinking aloud, prompting, and explaining, to link and synthesise ideas across the text in order to interpret those ideas and the text's themes. See suggestions for possible reading purposes on page 3.

- Model or prompt the students to make inferences and think critically about a particular theme from the text. For example:
  - Dealing with challenges: As a group, evaluate the challenges Brando experienced at various stages of his journey and what he learnt about himself in dealing with those challenges. Elicit the students' understanding of facing physical challenges, for example, at school camp, on confidence courses, at school sports days, or when taking part in a particular event. Prompt the students to consider how taking part in those challenges have changed them for the better.
  - The importance of setting and achieving goals: Prompt a discussion about goals that the students have set for themselves and how they felt once they had achieved (or not achieved) those goals. *How did achieving that goal affect/change you?*
  - The importance of relationships: As a group, highlight the different relationships Brando acknowledges in his story and discuss how those relationships helped him.
  - Surviving in the wild: Elicit any experiences the students have had while in the outdoors (for example, school camp, hunting trips, fishing trips) and discuss what the students felt as a result of those experiences and what they learnt from them.
  - If modelling, use thinking aloud to show the students how you integrate ideas and information from across the text and synthesise this information. For example: *There are several places where Brando describes a challenging or difficult situation. However, he also describes amazing experiences. At the end he states that the journey is more important than the destination. I can pull all these ideas together and come up with a conclusion about the impact of the journey on Brando's life.* If prompting, remind them to use their own experiences and their recall of events from this diary text to help them find the facts that will support their ideas.
  - Share the students' understandings of different behavioural development issues, discussing the positive attributes associated with some of those conditions as well as how we can help support members of our community who have those conditions. Draw out the students' understanding of the author's message about ADHD. *What does the author want us to know about living with ADHD? Why did he say that it was a 'gift'? What do you know about ADHD?*
  - Draw the students' attention to the big jumps between entries and the distance that Brando covers in the interim. Initiate discussion and support the students to make inferences and draw conclusions about some of the information that has been omitted, reflecting on their own experiences and using details from the text to support their ideas. For example: *There might have been long boring patches, where nothing exciting or challenging happened, and Brando just walked for hours.*

If modelling, use thinking aloud to show the students how you integrate ideas and information from across the story. If prompting, remind them to use their own experiences and what they have read so far, or what they know about stories in general, to help them find the ideas that will support their thinking.

- Ask the students to work in pairs to discuss particular entries and identify how Brando's attitude changed over time. For example:
  - Day 1 – Cape Rēinga: "Six months and I'll be the first person to walk the entire coastline of New Zealand. Six months and I'll have emerged from the wild."
  - Day 75 – King Country: "I dropped to my knees and screamed."
  - Day 152 – Wellington coast: "Six months have almost gone by, and I'm only in Wellington."
  - Day 190 – Takaka: "Lying on the rocks, I felt an overwhelming sense of peace. I'd had a lucky escape, but I was doing what I loved. I was living life to its full potential."
  - Day 200 – Kahurangi coast: "The wilderness feels like home."
  - Day 436 – Gisborne: "This whole trip has taught me that positive human connection is the secret to life. The bonds we have with other people are what matter the most. Without my friends and family, I could never have come this far."
  - Day 600 – Cape Rēinga: "I know that once I take my last steps to the tip of Cape Rēinga, my life will never be the same. I'll be stepping towards something new; the opportunities are endless."
- Ask the students to scan the text and identify instances of highly descriptive language. Prompt them to reflect on Brando's choice of wording at each instance.
- Have the students consider the language features or vocabulary that enhances the reader's understanding. They could choose to focus on a particular page or spread as an example of the language features used across the text.
- Support the students to identify and explain the purpose of the structure and language features used in a diary.

## Monitoring the impact of teaching

As the students read and discuss the text, take particular note of the following:

- Can they identify and discuss the main themes of the text?
- Can they use strategies independently for:
  - working out unknown vocabulary?
  - making sense of ideas when meaning has broken down?
  - making connections to their personal experiences?
  - making inferences about Brando's actions and reflections?
- With support, can the students:
  - link ideas and information across the text?
  - use these ideas to draw conclusions about Brando's actions and reflections?
- Do they transfer skills and knowledge from your modelling to their reading?
- Do they use evidence from the text to explain their responses?
- Do they transfer features of good writing shown in this text to their own writing?
- Can they articulate and justify their use of particular features in their writing?

## Providing feedback and supporting metacognition

Provide explicit feedback and support the students to develop their metacognition. Both strategies support students' growing independence and confidence as proficient readers. An example of each is provided below.

### Providing feedback

*I saw you flicking back through the book and rereading where Brando says that he couldn't have come so far without people helping him. Going back and rereading is a great strategy for checking that you understand what you read. It's what successful readers do all the time.*

### Supporting metacognition


*You made some interesting inferences about what Brando learnt from his lucky escapes. What did you do to make those inferences? Can you show us the parts of the text, photos, or illustrations that helped you?*

## Suggestions for writing instruction

Students may choose to:

- recount a personal challenge and reflect on how they have grown and changed positively as a result of it (either an event or an interesting moment in time), using a diary-entry format
- prepare the text as a readers' theatre to retell the story to their classmates, using the characters of Brando, his mother, his uncle, the Takaka farmer, and Tarsh
- write a diary entry from Tarsh's perspective or from their own perspective of meeting Brando at a particular stage of his journey around the coast
- develop diary entries or blog postings about a personal experience, such as a school or holiday camp, that includes reflections on their personal reactions to particular events.

Scaffold the students to build on their writing strengths, giving stronger support where needed and reducing it as the students become confident in using and developing the strategies themselves. Help them to see the connections between their reading strategies and their writing strategies (for example, implying as writer, inferring as a reader). Also, it might be helpful to revisit the particular features of the text that the author has used to relate this story. Allow plenty of time (with agreed targets) for the students to think about, plan, rework, and polish their writing.

 **Writing standard: by the end of year 7**  
**The Literacy Learning Progressions**  
**Assessment Resource Banks**