

Overview

This TSM contains a wide range of information and suggestions for teachers to pick and choose from, depending on the needs of their students and their purpose for using the text. The materials provide multiple opportunities for revisiting the text several times.

In this futuristic tale, readers will be confronted with a situation that has strong parallels with present-day moral dilemmas. “The Trial” provides opportunities for rich discussion about the concept of setting up a “new” society with clear rules and when the rules need to be questioned.

In addition, the text offers the chance to explore the structure and features of a screenplay – a script designed for film. It includes instructions for how the actors should deliver their lines. This story can be read, performed, and filmed by a group of students.

This text:

- includes the features of a screenplay
- makes links between fantasy and reality
- uses courtroom terminology
- links to present-day dilemmas through a fantasy setting.

A PDF of the text is available at www.schooljournal.tki.org.nz

Texts related by theme

“Becoming a Martian” SJ L3 May 2017 | “Astrobiology” SJ L4 May 2017 | “Who Froze Farrell Flint?” SJ L3 May 2017

Text characteristics from the year 8 reading standard

on this life-changing venture ever imagined those two words would become this planet's unofficial slogan.

SANDY SWARTZMANN
Rhetoric will not feed your family, Mr Wright.

DELANE WRIGHT
No. But justice might. The choice is yours.

JOSH
It's different for those of us who were born here. We believe in the colony. We trust it, and we trust its future. We have no other choice. And soon, you'll have to start trusting us.

JOSH and LISA

SANDY SWARTZMANN pauses to think. Her tone becomes softer.

SANDY SWARTZMANN
We do trust you. And you're right. Hope is surely as important to us as oxygen. Soon your generation will be old enough to make its own decisions, and perhaps then, some of these rules will change. That will be your choice. But not yet. You're not old enough.

JOSH
What are you saying? Can we stay?

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

Are you denying any of this?

DELANE WRIGHT
Objection.

SANDY SWARTZMANN
On what grounds?

LISA
I'm not denying it. I'm not confirming it. I'm saying you should listen to why we did it.

MAIA ALDRIN
Your motivations are irrelevant. Read the colony code.

JOSH
And what if we want to change the colony code?

MAIA ALDRIN
Then you chose the wrong way of going about it. Because now you're being sent back to Earth, and then we won't be

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

nobody would have come.

DELANE WRIGHT senses his opportunity. He is shaking now, but it is with pride for his daughter.

DELANE WRIGHT
Long ago, before the first settlers made the long journey to this planet, people named its moons Phobos and Deimos: fear and terror. None of us who embarked on this life-changing venture ever imagined those two words would become this planet's unofficial slogan.

SANDY SWARTZMANN
Rhetoric will not feed your family, Mr Wright.

DELANE WRIGHT
No. But justice might. The choice is yours.

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

MAIA ALDRIN
Your honour, there is no doubt both parties are guilty as charged. Security footage clearly shows them leaving the compound after curfew. There's no record of any permission being given for this, and both children disabled their GPS before leaving.

LISA
We're not children!

SANDY SWARTZMANN
In this court, you speak when you -

LISA
People keep treating us like we don't have minds of our own!

DELANE WRIGHT

words and phrases with multiple meanings that require students to know and use effective word-solving strategies to retain their focus on meaning



Reading standard: by the end of year 8

VOCABULARY

Possible supporting strategies

- Possibly unfamiliar words and phrases, including “screenplay”, “defence lawyer”, “accused”, “prosecution lawyer”, “colony”, “pressure suit”, “gavel”, “hereby”, “disciplinary”, “perjury”, “oath”, “curfew”, “hydroponic”, “oxygen-unit technician”, “solitary confinement”, “banishment”, “accusing”, “civic”, “doggedly”, “rhetoric”
- Words with more than one meaning: “order”, “hearing”, “plead”, “charges”, “honour”, “court”, “parties”, “compound”, “record”, “disabled”, “cases”, “grounds”, “point”
- Common phrases: “minds of our own”, “losing it”, “catching on”, “buries his head in his hands”, “beside himself”, “going about it”, “the night in question”
- Metaphor: “be it on their heads”, “played into her hands”

- Remind students of the strategies they can use to work out the meaning of unknown words, such as reading on or rereading the paragraph and using the context to establish the meaning or breaking words into smaller parts.
- Ask students to talk with a partner about any of the legal terms they are familiar with. Provide the relevant information to fill in any gaps.
- Encourage students who are speakers of other languages to consider relevant vocabulary and concepts in their first language.
- Some words may require direct explanation. Your knowledge of your students will guide you in this.
- Create vocabulary mind maps to show how the legal vocabulary is interconnected.
- English language learners may need support to understand words that have more than one meaning, depending on their context. Clarify the meaning of phrases, including use of metaphor, to support them.
- *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

Possible supporting strategies

- Some understanding of courtroom processes
- Some knowledge of facts about Mars
- Some understanding of abstract social science concepts concerning society, rules, rights, and responsibilities
- Some awareness of the differences between a screenplay and the plays students usually encounter, such as those found in the *School Journal*

- Clarify the roles of a prosecution lawyer and a defence lawyer.
- Discuss the aspects of the story that are based on factual information about the planet Mars, such as “pressure suit”, “oxygen-unit”, “scurry about underground”, and “long journey to this planet”.
- Share examples of other plays students may have read or performed. Have them identify key differences from this play.

TEXT FEATURES AND STRUCTURE

Possible supporting strategies

- A screenplay with standard features: a list of characters, a description of the setting, dialogue, and screen directions
- A format that is different from a play: the centring of the dialogue on the page
- Complex layers of meaning

- Discuss the features of a story, a play, and a screenplay and the differences between them.
- Work collaboratively to decide how best to read and understand the text.



Possible curriculum contexts

ENGLISH (Reading)

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

ENGLISH (Writing)

Level 4 – Purposes and audiences: Show an increasing understanding of how to shape texts for different purposes and audiences.

– Structure: Organise texts, using a range of appropriate structures.

THE ARTS (Understanding the Arts in Context)

Level 4 – Drama: Use conventions to structure drama.

Possible first reading purpose

- To follow a story in the form of a screenplay

Possible subsequent reading purposes

- To interpret screen directions and implied character actions and to rehearse, perform, and film the story
- To consider the author's intention for creating the screenplay
- To respond and make connections to present-day situations regarding the movement of people throughout the world and society's need for rules (and to consider who makes those rules)

Possible writing purposes

- To create a character portrait in preparation for performance
- To write a screenplay with screen directions and dialogue
- To write to persuade, considering present-day moral dilemmas, for example, "Should everyone have a 'global' passport?" or "Why does a society need rules?"



Instructional focus – Reading

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

First reading

- Set the purpose for reading.
- Direct students to the title and invite them to respond to the concept of a screenplay.
- If necessary, explain the use of bold fonts for characters and italics for screen directions.
- Model a dramatic interpretation of the voice of the judge.
- Have the students read the play to themselves.
- Invite their responses to the actual story. *Did you understand what was going on? Why did Lisa and Josh feel so strongly?*

If the students struggle with this text

- Refer to the supporting strategies in the previous page to draw out students' prior knowledge.
- Make links to students' familiarity with plays and with film and television.
- Ask questions to help students locate information. *Who are the characters? What are their roles? What is the setting?*
- Provide opportunities for students to work in pairs or small groups to check in for agreement.
- Discuss how they accessed the storyline. Use questions to guide thinking. *How did we find the main ideas? Do we need to reread parts?*

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

The teacher


Go back and identify character names, dialogue, and screen directions.

- *How often does the writer give instructions?*
- *Is it always to help the actor move in a certain way or speak a certain way?*
- *What do we learn from a simple shake of the head?*

Challenge students to create meaning through the way they deliver dialogue or the way they move.

Show a video clip to review the conventions of drama.

Provide opportunities for students to work in small groups for rehearsal and filming.

-  Have the students record video footage of their performance and share it for the class to review. (They could use smart phones, tablets, or digital cameras to record.)

The teacher

Direct the students to page 34 and have them reread and discuss the text.

Use questions to encourage critical thinking.

- *Find all the words that tell us that this is a courtroom.*
- *Is it a surprise to learn that Lisa and Josh are introduced as children, yet are labelled “prisoners” and are “chained”?*
- *How would you feel if you were accused of breaking rules and were chained and brought to court?*
- *Are rules the same as laws?*
- *Why do you think the adults created the rules in this screenplay?*

METACOGNITION

- *How easy was this screenplay to follow? How did the format help you to understand what was happening? Does it make a difference where the text is positioned on the page?*

The students:

- identify the structure and format of the screenplay and explain how it is different from plays they have read
- evaluate what the writer has done and why he's done it
- identify and discuss the challenges involved in live performance
- analyse and think critically about the behaviour traits of the characters and establish how we know these
- practise reading parts in different ways and seek feedback from peers (“Shadow reading” is a great activity to assist English language learners to improve their speaking skills. During rehearsals, a buddy reads the text aloud and the student listens and follows just behind [also reading the text aloud]. They try to copy their buddy's intonation patterns, stress patterns, and pronunciation.)

The students:

- find examples of words that convey the concept of being a prisoner
- make connections to their own understanding of “rules” for refugees
- discuss and evaluate society's need for rules, making links to their own experience of family rules, school rules, road rules, or other rules
- synthesise information in the screenplay with their prior knowledge to draw conclusions about the author's purpose
- discuss and debate the ideas presented in the screenplay.

GIVE FEEDBACK

- *You've integrated several examples in the text to support your conclusion that the rules seem illogical. Can you find evidence that implies what the author's message might be?*



Reading standard: by end of year 8



The Literacy Learning Progressions



Assessment Resource Banks

Instructional focus – Writing

English Level 4 – Purposes and audiences: Show an increasing understanding of how to shape texts for different purposes and audiences; Structure: Organise texts, using a range of appropriate structures.

Text excerpts from “The Trial”

Page 37

MAIA ALDRIN

In a court, when you're asked a question, you answer it. Did your lawyer not explain this to you?

JOSH

This isn't a court.

DELANE WRIGHT

Josh, I think you should just –

MAIA ALDRIN

It most certainly is a court.

JOSH

(losing it)

No, it isn't. It's our dining hall. And you're not a lawyer – you grow hydroponic beans, and he isn't a lawyer – he's Lisa's dad, and you're not a judge – you're an oxygen-unit technician. And it's stupid. All of this is stupid.

Page 43

SANDY SWARTZMANN *pauses to think. Her tone becomes softer.*

SANDY SWARTZMANN

We do trust you. And you're right. Hope is surely as important to us as oxygen. Soon your generation will be old enough to make its own decisions, and perhaps then, some of these rules will change. That will be your choice. But not yet. You're not old enough.

JOSH

What are you saying? Can we stay?

SANDY SWARTZMANN *shakes her head.*

Examples of text characteristics

CHARACTER

Writers let their readers get to know characters through their behaviour and dialogue.

When readers respond to characters in a narrative, they can create a back-story for them. Their imaginations can be triggered as they make decisions about a character's life – things that have not been revealed by the writer.

SCREEN DIRECTIONS AND DIALOGUE


The writer of a screenplay will have a clear idea of how the scenes and the dialogue will look and sound. They choose where to include a direction for actors.

Teacher (possible deliberate acts of teaching)

Discuss students' responses to the various characters.

- Which character did you like best?
- What did you like about them?
- Did you feel empathy towards them?
- What sort of life do you think they have had?

Explore conventions of drama – for example, the way people move.

- How would a rebellious person hold their head?
- How would they walk?
- What facial expressions would we see?
-  The students could work in pairs to read and discuss the ideas on each of the seven screens of this learning resource: [Elements of Drama \(BBC, Bitesize\)](#)
- Explain that we are able to “stand in someone else's shoes” when we know or create more about them.
- Have the students create a back-story to describe a character's past.

Discuss the effect of screen directions in a screenplay.

- Is it useful when you have directions?
- Do the actors need to be told everything?


Prompt students' prior knowledge of dialogue in narrative fiction.

- Do the characters need to talk in every scene?
- How can you convey something without talking?
- What can we learn from the dialogue?

Have the students work collaboratively to create a short screenplay.

Work out a set of criteria together, for example:

- Include at least three characters.
- Use screen directions for
 - a movement
 - the way a character speaks
 - where the action takes place.

 The students could write their screenplay collaboratively on a Google Doc so they can share feedback.

Be aware that for some English language learners, gestures that we commonly use to show emotion and to convey meaning may have a different significance in their first language or culture. Be prepared to discuss these differences and to make the meaning of the gestures explicit if necessary.

Text excerpts from “The Trial”

Examples of text characteristics

Teacher (possible deliberate acts of teaching)

Page 38

MAIA ALDRIN

You left your compound without permission. You disabled your GPS.

You visited a prisoner in solitary confinement. Are you denying any of this?

DELANE WRIGHT

Objection.

SANDY SWARTZMANN

On what grounds?

LISA

I'm not denying it. I'm not confirming it. I'm saying you should listen to why we did it.

MAIA ALDRIN

Your motivations are irrelevant. Read the colony code.

JOSH

And what if we want to change the colony code?

MAIA ALDRIN

Then you chose the wrong way of going about it. Because now you're being sent back to Earth, and then we won't be able to hear you, will we?

LISA

You can't send us back to Earth.

PERSUASION

Writers can be deliberately persuasive with their choice of words and the tone they choose. They can persuade their readers with a rational, logical opinion or an emotive one. Remember that sometimes the best persuasive technique is to use facts rather than emotion to sway an audience.

Ask the students to comment on this excerpt.

- How do the characters talk to each other?
- What sort of person does Maia appear to be?
- What impression does it give you of life in the colony?
- What particular words and phrases does the writer use that gives you that impression?
- Do you feel you're on Lisa and Josh's side or on Maia's side? Why?

Prompt the students' prior knowledge of purpose and audience.

- We organise what we want to say to suit our audience. What do we need to remember if we want to persuade?
- How do we persuade when we are talking? What works?
- Can we use the same strategies in writing?

Discuss the topics raised in the screenplay.

Set up an oral debate.

After writing, prompt students to check that they have selected appropriate words and phrases to make their point of view clear.

GIVE FEEDBACK

- *You clearly feel very strongly about your right to travel where you want to in the world. Your tone is logical, which makes me agree with your reasoning.*

METACOGNITION

- *Who do you have in mind when you write screen directions? Is it the audience or the actor? How did you decide what to include in your screenplay? How do you feel about someone else interpreting what you have included?*

Writing standard: by end of year 8

The Literacy Learning Progressions