

Max and Alice

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Year 4



Overview

This TSM contains 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.

Max is a little different from his classmates. Tasks and events that are routine for them are hard for him. Some of his classmates find this difficult to accept, but Alice and her friends know that it is important to be kind. This story gently reminds us that kindness can take persistence but is worth it.

There are sensitivities in the content and themes of this story. While it is not stated directly, the author implies that Max is on the autism spectrum. There may be students in your class who are also on the spectrum or who have friends or family members with ASD. Others will have had experience of bullying or of being bullied. On page 2 of these TSM, there are links to some Inclusive Education guides that you may find helpful.

This narrative:

- includes themes of tolerance and of understanding difference
- provides the opportunity to explore the issue of bullying and to promote kindness and the acceptance of diversity
- offers opportunities for developing comprehension strategies in inference, making connections, asking questions, and thinking critically.

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

Texts related by theme

“A Bit of a Laugh” SJ L2 May 2012 | “Nobody Laughed” SJ L2 Sept 2014 | “Low Tide” SJ L3 Aug 2016 | “The Show Went On” SJ L2 Nov 2017 | “No Big Deal” JJ 51

Text characteristics from the year 4 reading standard

We have retained the links to the National Standards while a new assessment and reporting system is being developed.

For more information on assessing and reporting in the post-National Standards era, see: <http://assessment.tki.org.nz/Assessment-and-reporting-guide>

Alice waited until Max looked at her, and then she smiled at him. She used her very best supportive smile, which she'd been practising at home in the mirror. Max wiped his eyes with his sleeve and ran to his favourite beanbag. He didn't smile back.

On the day of the earthquake drill, everyone climbed underneath their desks, the way they had practised.

some abstract ideas that are clearly supported by concrete examples in the text or easily linked to the students' prior knowledge

favourite beanbag. He didn't smile back.

On the day of the earthquake drill, everyone climbed underneath their desks, the way they had practised. But Max didn't go under his own desk. He hid under Mr Sandbrook's desk, and when the drill was over and it was time to come out, Max wouldn't move. He stayed there, clinging to the metal legs as if he was trying to stop himself sliding across the floor.

some compound and complex sentences, which may consist of two or three clauses

On the day of the swimming sports, Max took off his shoes and socks and put them on again three times. Only then was he happy that his socks were lined up exactly the way he liked them.

The other kids waited on the bus. Adam and Noah laughed out the bus window. When Mr Sandbrook told them to be quiet, they slumped down behind the seat and pulled faces.

some places where information and ideas are implicit and where students need to make inferences based on information that is easy to find because it is nearby in the text and there is little or no competing information

On the day of school sports, Alice tripped on a skipping rope and grazed her knee. Little drops of bright red blood ran down her leg and stained her new blue socks.



“Are you all right?” Chantelle asked. Chantelle knew Alice didn't like the sight of blood. Alice nodded, trying hard not to cry. She knew if she looked down at the graze, it would

a straightforward text structure, such as a structure that follows a recognisable and clear text form



Reading standard: by the end of year 4

VOCABULARY

- Possibly unfamiliar words and phrases, including “slumped”, “concentrating”, “miniature”, “sniggered”, “supportive”, “clinging”, “crouched”, “sharpener”, “grazed”, “stained”, “glittering”, “invitations”
- Some characters with unusual names: “Noah”, “Mr Sandbrook”, “Ms Va’a”, “Bao”, “Avril”, “Avery”, “Louis”, “Chantelle”

Possible supporting strategies

- Identify words or phrases that may be unfamiliar. Remind the students of strategies for working out unfamiliar vocabulary, such as looking at the context, finding root words, using knowledge of word patterns and prefixes or suffixes, and making connections to prior knowledge.
- Charades can be a fun way of practising the meaning of new words, particularly verbs.
- Discuss the names of the characters. *How do you pronounce these names?* Have the students think, pair, and share their thoughts about how to pronounce the names correctly. If you don't have pronunciation experts for these names in your classroom, use a dictionary or online pronunciation guide. For example, [Samoan Language Resources](#) explains the impact of the glottal stop (as in “Va’a”).
- *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

- Understanding of how people support each other when someone is feeling low
- Some understanding that a smile can convey a range of emotions and messages
- Some awareness of the behavioural differences that can set people apart
- Awareness that writers can strategically manipulate features of narrative writing for a specific purpose, such as using a repetitive phrase and structure to introduce and recount a series of similar episodes

Possible supporting strategies

- Help the students make connections between the theme of the story and their own experience of supporting friends or being supported when having a hard time.
- Tell the students that smiles play an important role in this story. *Show me how you smile. What are you saying to someone when you smile at them?* Have them demonstrate smiles with different meanings and emotions.
- All students will have had direct experiences of diversity, and for many, this will include challenges with social interaction. Encourage them to discuss what it is like for them when they feel that someone is behaving differently or when they are unsure of how to behave, perhaps in a new situation. *How do the reactions of other people affect those who are not too sure of the social rules?*
- If you wish to take this further, consider the resources offered in the Inclusive Education guides, such as the [Guide to ASD and learning](#) and [Strengthen a Supportive Peer Culture](#). The former includes strategies for supporting and including students with ASD, and the latter includes a short animation that you could use to facilitate a discussion about friendship.

TEXT FEATURES AND STRUCTURE

- Engaging hook in the introduction
- A series of separate episodes, introduced with the phrase “On the day ...” and following a repetitive structure: what happened, how the other students responded, how Alice and her friends responded, and how Max responded
- Events told chronologically, but incorporating some time shifts, most of which are clearly indicated by time sequence markers (for example, “Last winter”)
- Narrative text, told in the third person, but from Alice's point of view

Possible supporting strategies

- Read the “hook” together as a group. Discuss what it tells the reader about Max and how others in his class might react. Talk about how we can combine what's in the text with our personal experiences to work out what is happening, how people are feeling, and what might happen.
- Scan the text with the students to identify the series of episodes, noticing how they are introduced and structured. Chart the first of the episodes and identify the words that signal the shift in time to Alice's recollections of what happened the previous winter. Some students may benefit from working in pairs to chart all four episodes.
- During the reading, have the students work in pairs to identify whose perspective we're getting and the clues that tell us this.



Sounds and Words

Possible curriculum contexts

ENGLISH (Reading)

Level 2 – Ideas: Show some understanding of ideas within, across, and beyond texts.

ENGLISH (Writing)

Level 2 – Ideas: Select, form, and express ideas on a range of topics.

HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Level 2 – Relationships: Identify and demonstrate ways of maintaining and enhancing relationships between individuals and within groups.

Possible first reading purpose

- Find out how Alice reaches out to another student.

Possible subsequent reading purposes

- Explore the idea of accepting differences
- Identify how Max and Alice develop a friendship.

Possible writing purposes

- Describe what it is like to feel different from others
- Recount a time when someone was kind to you
- Respond to the story, explaining your reaction to it.



Instructional focus – Reading

English Level 2 – Ideas: Show some understanding of ideas within, across, and beyond texts.

Health and Physical Education Level 2 – Relationships: Identify and demonstrate ways of maintaining and enhancing relationships between individuals and within groups.

First reading

- Read the title and the “hook” with the students.
- Direct the students to read the first four paragraphs (down to “concentrating on his socks”) on page 27 silently, using the illustration to support their understanding.
- Briefly check for understanding. *What’s happening here? Who are the main characters? Why do you think Max is behaving this way? How does Alice respond? What are you predicting the story will be about?*
- Share the purpose for reading.
- Direct the students to read the rest of the text silently, keeping their predictions in mind and adjusting them as they learn more about the situation and the characters.
- If you are unsure about a particular student’s reading and understanding, ask them to quietly read a few lines and have a brief discussion to establish how well she or he is coping with the text. This would provide a good opportunity to offer feedback and have the student explain a specific strategy they have used.

If the students require more scaffolding

- Remind the students of strategies that are useful on a first reading, such as rereading to look for clues, making connections with their prior knowledge, and/or reading on to see if the meaning becomes clear.
- Chunk the text into its four episodes and share-read them. Encourage the students to work in pairs to chart the narrative.
- If the students haven’t worked out whose perspective we are getting, prompt them to notice that one of the clues is in the title.
- Instigate a discussion to make connections between the students’ own experiences and the experiences and perspectives of the people in the story. If necessary, prompt the students’ thinking with questions. *Who are the people on the bus? How do you think they feel about waiting? How would you have felt? How do you think Max feels? How can you tell?*

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

Where possible, have the students work in pairs to discuss the questions and prompts in this section.

The teacher

Direct the students to work in pairs to reread the text and identify places in the story where they are able to make connections with what is happening. Prompt them to infer that some of the students tease Max because he is different and that this is hurtful. (If this is a sensitive area, it may be better to invite connections to other texts.)

- *The connections we make can help us find deeper meaning from a text. Have you laughed with a friend about someone for being different? Or maybe you have been laughed at for something you couldn’t help. Describe what that was like and what happened.*
- *What can you work out about Alice’s parents?*
- *Smiles get mentioned a lot in this story. Why do you suppose that is? Discuss some of the reasons you might smile with your partner. How are people using their smiles in this story?*
- *How do these connections help you to better understand the way the people in the story behave? What inferences can you make about why they behave the way they do? Talk to your partner about your thoughts as you read.*

The teacher

Give the students sticky notes to mark the exchanges between Alice and Max. Ask the students to work in pairs to create a series of sketches that track the relationship between Alice and Max, showing what Alice does and how Max responds, and how their relationship changes. Invite each pair of students to explain their sketches to another pair using evidence from the text.

The teacher

Have the students use think, pair, and share to discuss the author’s purpose for writing the story. If necessary, ask questions to prompt them to make links to the key themes and ideas listed on page 1 of this TSM.

- *What is the writer saying about the way people should treat each other?*
- *Discuss how the writer’s message applies to other classrooms and schools?*

The students:

- identify places where they can make connections between the text and their prior knowledge or experiences
- draw on words in the text (for example, “She smiled at him, the way her parents had taught her to smile at people who were having a hard day”) and their personal experiences and connections and integrate this information to deepen their understanding of the writer’s ideas
- explain the connections and inferences they have made to a partner.

The students:

- make connections within the text and between the text and their personal experiences to visualise and sequence how Alice reaches out to Max and to describe how his responses change
- think critically and ask questions as they evaluate how well the sketches reflect what happens and how the friendship develops.

The students:

- use the information and events in the story to think critically about the writer’s purpose in this story
- make connections about the writer’s message and its applicability to the classroom community.

METACOGNITION

- *Show me a place where you were able to make a connection between the text and an experience or knowledge of your own.*
- *The story finishes with Max's mother smiling at Alice. How is she feeling? How can you tell?*
- *Is there a difference between the way some of the students in the story tease Max and the way you sometimes tease your friends? Can you explain it for me?*

GIVE FEEDBACK

- *You made connections between how Alice reached out to Max and how some students went out of their way to be friendly to you when you were new at this school. Making links to your own experience can be a good way of gaining a deeper understanding of what an author is trying to say.*



Reading standard: by the end of year 4



The Literacy Learning Progressions



Assessment Resource Banks

Instructional focus – Writing

English Level 2 – Ideas: Select, form, and express ideas on a range of topics.

Health and Physical Education Level 2 – Relationships: Identify and demonstrate ways of maintaining and enhancing relationships between individuals and within groups.

Text excerpts from “Max and Alice”

Examples of text characteristics

Teacher (possible deliberate acts of teaching)

Page 30

Chantelle knew Alice didn't like the sight of blood. Alice nodded, trying hard not to cry. She knew if she looked down at the graze, it would frighten her, so she screwed up her eyes and turned her face to the hot sunshine.

DESCRIPTIONS

Description is used in all forms of writing to create a vivid impression of a person, place, object, or event. A key feature of descriptive writing is the use of carefully chosen vocabulary that provides a precise picture of what is heard, seen, felt, smelt, or tasted.

Reread the section about the day of the school sports. Check they notice that when Alice hurts herself, she doesn't just feel physical pain – she is embarrassed that she is afraid of blood and might cry.

- What are we directly told about how Alice feels?
- What are some additional clues that help us understand how she feels?

Use the discussion to create a chart that identifies some of the feelings people may have (for example, ashamed, embarrassed, nervous) and how their feelings might be revealed to others (for example, a pounding heart, blushing, hanging their head).

Page 27

Last winter, Alice, Amy, and Louis had started a kindness club in the library at lunchtime. But some older kids had stolen all the felt pens and drawn on the cushions, and the librarian had closed the club down.


PERSONAL RECOUNTS

In a personal recount, writers retell an event or experience that happened to them. Recounts are told in the past tense and in chronological order. Typically, a recount has three parts: background information, events in chronological order, and personal opinion. The purpose of a recount is to inform or entertain the reader, so the writer selects those details that will be of most interest. Personal recounts often include features such as dialogue and descriptive language to embellish the retelling.

Discuss the features of a recount and record these on a chart. Then, tell the students about a time that someone was kind to you and have the students identify the elements of your recount.

Provide opportunities for the students to bring to mind an experience when someone was kind to them. Prepare them to draft a piece of writing in which they recount this experience and how they felt about it.

Have the students use the chart to support them to write their recounts.

 They might use an app, such as [Popplet](#), to capture and organise their ideas.

Page 32

Max's mother hugged him and whispered something in his ear. Max turned around and pointed at Alice. Max's mother looked towards Alice and smiled.

PERSONAL RESPONSE

A personal response is about the writer's reaction to a text. It is divided into two parts:

1. A description of what happened in the text with specific references to what occurred
2. A description of the connections the writer made to the text.

Have the students respond to the story, explaining their reactions to it. Discuss the structure of a personal response. Emphasise the point that the second part is all about their response as an individual, so it is written in the first person. Support this with possible sentence structures, for example:

- I had a similar experience ...
- I like this character, because ...
- This part makes me feel ...
- This part reminds me of ...

Invite the students to share and compare their responses.

GIVE FEEDBACK

- I could picture exactly how you felt when you discovered that it wasn't a fancy-dress party after all. "Quaking and stuttering with embarrassment." Well put! I'm glad it all ended so well.

METACOGNITION

- What did you discover when you shared your personal response with your buddy? What do you think explains the similarities or differences in your responses?



Writing standard: by the end of year 4



The Literacy Learning Progressions