

Instructions for Travelling without Touching the Ground

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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 many opportunities for revisiting the text.

If you have ever wondered how to grow your own set of wings, look no further. This whimsical poem provides step-by-step instructions; it begins with collecting butterflies and ends with long-lost relatives. "Instructions for Travelling without Touching the Ground" is a poem that will both delight and surprise readers. Using the conventions of a list of instructions, but seamlessly blending the possible and the impossible, the writer has provided a framework that students can borrow to create a poem of their own.

This poem:

- takes the form of a list of instructions
- combines instructions that are possible and impossible
- uses a range of grammatical features, including three-level lists
- combines a formal structure with an off-beat voice
- uses asides to add detail and a lightness of touch
- provides an excellent model for creative writing.

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

Texts related by theme

"Not Your Normal Tent" SJ L3 Nov 2016 | "No Rhyme" SJ L3 Aug 2015 | "Dog Training" SJ L3 Aug 2017 | "River Swimming" SJ L3 June 2018 | "Acrostic Poem" SJ L3 Aug 2018 | "Words" SJ L3 May 2019 | "Fly" SJ L4 May 2019

Text characteristics from the year 6 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>

- Spent two days and two nights putting it together on your bedroom floor (listening to podcasts about famous aviators).
- Paint the plane
(don't let your brother/sister touch it).

- Put the plane beside your bed.
 - Keep one eye open when you go to sleep (so you can watch if the plane lifts off).
 - Sleep.
 - Dream (of flying).
 - Repeat.

- Grow your own wings ASAP.
 - Research food that contains the protein needed to do this.
 - Add these items to the shopping list.

abstract ideas, in greater numbers than in texts at earlier levels, accompanied by concrete examples in the text that help support the students' understanding

- why butterflies are prettier than moths
 - why butterflies don't fly at night
 - why butterflies taste with their feet.
- Bore your family with these facts over dinner (don't worry about boring them – they'll get over it).

- Buy a kitset model of a plane.
 - Spent two days and two nights putting it together on your bedroom floor (listening to podcasts about famous aviators).
 - Paint the plane
(don't let your brother/sister touch it).

- Put the plane beside your bed.
 - Keep one eye open when you go to sleep

some information that is irrelevant to the identified purpose of reading (that is, some competing information), which students need to identify and reject as they integrate pieces of information in order to answer questions

- Close your eyes.
- Make a whooshing sound with your mouth.
- Imagine this sound in your ears (air passing over your wings).
- Do this regularly.

- Make sure all your friends and relatives know you're growing wings.
 - Request flying-related things for your birthday and Christmas.
 - Share the wing thing with long-lost relatives.
 - They may come out of the woodwork.
 - This will help you understand your identity.
 - They may become the role model you have been looking for.

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figurative and/or ambiguous language that the context helps students to understand

INSTRUCTIONS for Travelling without

- Discover a love for butterflies.
 - Become a butterfly collector.
 - Learn facts about butterflies, for example:
 - why butterflies are prettier than moths
 - why butterflies don't fly at night
 - why butterflies taste with their feet.
 - Bore your family with these facts over dinner (don't worry about boring them – they'll get over it).

- Buy a kitset model of a plane.

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



Reading standard: by the end of year 6

VOCABULARY

- Possibly unfamiliar words and phrases, including “kitset model”, “podcasts”, “aviators”, “protein”, “vast”, “online forum”, “Locate”, “handheld”, “collarbone”, “whooshing”, “simulate”
- Two commonly used acronyms: “ASAP”, “aka”
- Collocations: “vast quantities”, “track progress” “long-lost relatives”, “role model”
- A made-up word: “wingbones”
- An idiom: “come out of the woodwork”

Possible supporting strategies

- Identify words or phrases that may be unfamiliar and decide whether any need to be introduced before reading. Not all the vocabulary is directly related to flight, so students could find some words more challenging because of their context. It might be helpful to check whether the students are familiar with the two acronyms “ASAP” and “aka”, both in terms of their meanings and the ways they are spoken.
- Prompt prior knowledge of strategies to work out unknown words, such as reading and thinking about the surrounding information, putting the words into context, and using parts of the words they recognise. For example, the word “simulate” is related to the word “similar”.
- Provide sticky notes for the students to indicate words, phrases, or concepts they don't understand and want to come back to.
- In groups, have the students write as many synonyms as they can for a given word. For example, for “fly”, they could write “soar”, “glide”, “flutter”, “swoop”, “flit”, “sail”, and so on. They could see which group can come up with the most. This game is good for activating prior knowledge.
- Discuss “wingbones” and why the author would make up this word. Challenge the students to invent other compound words and provide a definition for them.
- Idioms can be confusing for English language learners. It's best to teach idioms explicitly. Help the students to understand that idioms are usually used in less formal contexts. Providing an illustration or having the students act out the meaning can be effective ways for the students to learn about idioms.
- *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

- Familiarity with reading and writing poetry
- Understanding that poetry has many forms
- Some knowledge of the structure of a list of instructions
- Some knowledge of online forums and podcasts as sources of information
- Some knowledge that poetry can be humorous or ridiculous

Possible supporting strategies

- Prompt the students to recall other poems they have read that have unconventional forms.
- Some English language learners may not recognise that the list is a poem. Let them know it's a playful list before they read it so they are not confused.
- Discuss online forums and podcasts as alternative ways to learn how to do something new.

TEXT FEATURES AND STRUCTURE

- A poem structured as a list of instructions
- Sentences that begin with imperative verbs in keeping with the writer's choice of form
- Mostly short, simple sentences
- Three list levels defined by numbers, letters, and dashes
- Some competing information
- The use of brackets to provide additional information
- Some use of repetition in the first stanza
- A bracketed list of three items, with each word followed by a question mark

Possible supporting strategies

- Prompt the students to recall features of lists of instructions, for example:
 - the use of clear, concise language
 - each instruction on its own line
 - a specific order, with numbers to make the order clear
 - present tense
 - sentences that begin with verbs.
- Discuss how poems can defy conventions and that poets like to play with different language features and forms. Have the students discuss how the writer has maintained the conventions of a list of instructions and the ways she moved beyond them. You may like to make comparisons with Glen Colquhoun's “A Set of Instructions to Be Used when Reading a Poem”.
- Discuss the pace and the tone of the poem and the ways the poet has created them, for example, the use of brackets to add asides or the use of bullets to give a list of examples.
- Read the poem aloud to help the students follow the ideas and clarify meaning. Listening to the poem being read and taking part in shadow and choral readings will help English language learners to develop a sense of the rhythm of English. It will also help them improve their use of pitch and pronounce sounds more accurately.
- Play movement mime to help the students understand imperative verbs. The students sit in a semi-circle. The first player selects an imperative verb from the poem (or the teacher can write them onto individual cards). The student then mimes the verb. The student who guesses the verb correctly takes the next card, mimes the verb, and so on.



Text and language challenges

- Complete a text reconstruction task. Cut up the text into its individual lines, delete the letters and numbers, and jumble up the lines. The students then reconstruct the poem from the jumbled-up lines. Reconstructing the text helps the students to see that the ideas are presented logically and to notice the structural features. You could provide a template like the one below. Students could work individually or in pairs to reconstruct the whole poem or one section and then put the whole poem together.

“Instructions for Travelling without Touching the Ground”

1. _____
 - a.
 - b.
 -
 -
 -
 - c.
- ()

Possible curriculum contexts

ENGLISH (Reading)

Level 3 – Purposes and audiences: Show a developing understanding of how texts are shaped for different purposes and audiences.

ENGLISH (Writing)

Level 3 – Purposes and audiences: Show a developing understanding of how to shape texts for different purposes and audiences.

Possible first reading purpose

- Enjoy a poem that has an unconventional form.

Possible subsequent reading purposes

- Hypothesise the writer’s purpose for writing the poem
- Analyse the language features and structure of the poem.

Possible writing purposes

- Write a response to the poem, including the effect it has on readers
- Use the poem as a model for creative writing
- Rewrite the poem as a narrative.



Instructional focus – Reading

English Level 3 – Purposes and audiences: Show a developing understanding of how texts are shaped for different purposes and audiences

First reading

- Share the purpose for reading. You may like to introduce the text as a list of instructions and leave the creative nature of it as a surprise for the students to discover for themselves.
- Have the students share their predictions about what a set of instructions for travelling without touching the ground might be about.
- After reading the poem, have the students discuss their responses in pairs, providing examples of how the poem surprised, entertained, confused, or intrigued them.

If the students require more scaffolding

- Prompt prior knowledge of what to expect in a list of instructions. Skim and scan the poem with the students to help them gain an initial overview of its structure. By stanza 4, they might notice that this is not a conventional list of instructions. If necessary, tell the students that the instructions are presented as a poem.
- Ask the students to identify parts of the poem that they find challenging, for example, the use of question marks in the list of foods (stanza 4), indicating the author's uncertainty about whether they contain the protein needed to grow wings.
- Model how to read the poem aloud, using your voice to convey meaning, for example, reading through the list of facts about butterflies like a checklist or modelling how to read the bracketed asides. Allow time for repeated readings and provide explicit feedback to your English language learners on their pronunciation and use of pitch, rhythm, and fluency.

Subsequent readings How you approach subsequent readings will depend on your reading purpose. Where possible, have the students work in pairs to discuss the following questions and prompts.

The teacher

Have the students work in pairs to analyse stanza 1 and discuss how it sets the tone for the rest of the poem. The students may like to investigate whether the facts about butterflies are real or imagined.

Explain what an imperative verb is (a verb that tells someone what to do) and have the students highlight the imperative verbs used in the poem.

Working in pairs, have the students identify features of the poem that maintain the conventions of a list of instructions and features that are not so conventional.

Prompt the students to evaluate the writer's language choices:

- *Was this a good way to write a poem?*
- *Why or why not?*
- *Is it successful? What are the language choices that make it successful?*
- *Are there any language choices that aren't so successful?*

The teacher

Have the students discuss the purpose and audience the author had in mind through using a set of instructions. In particular, have the students look for:

- evidence that shows whether this poem was written for adults or for young people
- features of the poem that make it enjoyable to read
- how the writer has moved beyond the conventions of a list to give the poem its own voice and lightness of touch.

The teacher

Have the students discuss whether they have ever wished they could fly. If the list of instructions was real, would they follow them to grow their own wings? Why or why not?

Prompt the students to make connections with their own dreams of flying or with traditional stories that relate to travelling in the air.

(The Science Learning Hub provides some useful examples.)

Explain the concept of universal appeal – an emotion or theme that almost all humans can relate to. Have the students discuss in groups whether the idea of being able to fly has universal appeal and challenge them to come up with some other examples that have the same appeal.

The students:

- use their knowledge of lists of instructions to identify that:
 - the steps are in a particular order
 - the instructions are clear
 - the poem uses a lot of imperative verbs and most sentences start with a verb
 - some of the sentences are very short.
- identify aspects of the poem that are not usually found in a list of instructions, including:
 - instructions to do something that is impossible
 - the use of asides
 - questions from the writer showing that she is not sure about something
 - made-up words.
- express their opinions and find words, phrases, and sentences to back up their statements.

The students:

- find examples that show the writer wrote the poem for young people, for example, references to brothers and sisters, "old people", and "looking for a role model"
- identify parts of the poem they found funny or surprising and explain how the writer has conveyed the humour
- evaluate the effect of the asides and whether they found them distracting, useful, or entertaining.

The students:

- share their thoughts about being able to fly and whether they would grow wings if they could
- share examples of traditional stories in which people fly or go into the sky, for example, Rona and the moon or Icarus
- discuss the concept of universal appeal and look for other examples, such as losing something you love, wanting to be able to fix a mistake, having a dream
- share their group's views about ideas that have universal appeal, seeking feedback from their peers about whether the ideas strike a chord.

The teacher

Direct the students to reread the final stanza and then discuss in pairs whether finding a role model or understanding your own identity has anything to do with flying or, if this seems too abstract for the students, have them share their responses to the poem's final stanza.

Have the students summarise the purpose of the poem and evaluate its effectiveness, using a double-entry journal. (The students divide a page into two columns and copy some key quotes from the text into the left-hand column. In the right-hand column, they write their responses to the quotes, the impact on them as a reader, the effect of the language choices, and so on.)

METACOGNITION

- *How do you respond when there are parts of a poem that don't make sense to you? Do you need to understand everything to enjoy a poem?*
- *What did you visualise as you read the poem? What features of the poem helped you to visualise each instruction?*

The students:

- share their responses to the final stanza, including questions they have about the way the poem ends
- identify the specific content, structure, and language features of the poem and describe the impact on them before completing a double-entry journal, explaining what the poem is about, how the writer has structured it, and what they liked or disliked about it.

GIVE FEEDBACK

- *It was great to hear you adding rhythm and expression when you read the poem aloud, pausing before each verb and using a serious, informative tone. Now see whether you can change your expression slightly when you read the asides in brackets. Have a think about why and how the author has used this device.*

Reading standard: by the end of year 6

The Literacy Learning Progressions

Assessment Resource Banks

Instructional focus – Writing

English Level 3 –Purposes and audiences: Show a developing understanding of how to shape texts for different purposes and audiences.

Text excerpts from “Instructions for Travelling without Touching the Ground”

Examples of text characteristics

Teacher (possible deliberate acts of teaching)

Stanza 4.

Grow your own wings ASAP

- Research the food that contains the protein needed to do this
- Add these items to the shopping list
- Eat these foods (eggs? tuna? chocolate yoghurt?) in vast quantities
- Be patient.

MAGIC REALISM

Magic realism is a style of storytelling that weaves fantastic or magical events or ideas into an otherwise realistic situation.

The magical elements are told in a matter-of-fact way as if they were completely normal.

Using the poem as a model, explain what magical realism is and have the students work in pairs to find examples of how the writer has combined ideas that are fantastic with aspects of everyday life.

Explain that the form of the poem (a list of instructions) lends itself to a magic realism approach because instructions are usually written in a very matter-of-fact way. Discuss other forms that might work well, for example, a recipe, a job offer, or an advertisement.

Have groups of students brainstorm titles they could use for their own list of instructions. Note that the context doesn't need to be impossible, but there may be some advantages to choosing a topic that has universal appeal. Examples could include:

- *Instructions for staying in bed for as long as you want*
- *Instructions for talking with feathered beasts*
- *Instructions for knowing whether someone is telling the truth.*

Have the students evaluate each other's titles, assessing whether the list is fantastic or whether it leaves the reader wondering whether it is genuine.

With the class, co-construct a graphic organiser that they can use to write their own list of instructions, blending the possible with the impossible.

Stanza 6.

Locate a handheld mirror.

- Stand in front of the bathroom mirror
- Check for obvious changes around the collarbone (aka wingbones)
- Arrange handheld mirror so you can see your back
- Take photos to track progress – if possible.

INSTRUCTIONS

Instructions tell readers how to make or do something. They start with a goal, list what is needed, and use action words to show what to do.

Instructions often use numbers or sequence words to show the order of the actions.

Revise the conventions of lists of instructions.

Have the students work in pairs to highlight the verbs that the writer has used at the start of most sentences, then discuss which of the verbs, if any, might be unusual in a normal set of instructions. Have them work in groups to brainstorm verbs that they could use in their own poems based on a list of instructions, for example, “hold, wait, throw, mix, add, tell, show, remove”.

Put the words on slips of paper and have the students draw out two or three verbs to use in their own writing, alongside their own verbs.

Draw attention to how specific some of the instructions are, for example, “Spend two days and two nights putting it together on your bedroom floor (while listening to podcasts about famous aviators)” and the way that details can make instructions sound either convincing or wacky.

Encourage the students to borrow the techniques the writer has used in their own poems.

Stanza 1.

Discover a love for butterflies.

- Become a butterfly collector.
- Learn facts about butterflies, for example:
 - why butterflies are prettier than moths
 - why butterflies don't fly at night
 - why butterflies taste with their feet.
- Bore your family with these facts over dinner
(don't worry about boring them – they'll get over it).

ASIDES

An aside is where the writer speaks directly to the reader.

Asides are often written in brackets to show that they are separate from the rest of the text.

An aside can be something the narrator is thinking or some extra information that helps to clarify or expand on the text.

Ask the students to identify the way asides have been used in the poem and their effect, for example:

- addressing the reader directly to make the poem feel more friendly or funny than a normal list of instructions
- inserting more information to make the meaning of an instruction clear
- showing that the narrator is not an expert in everything
- adding a touch of magic realism.

Alternatively, if the students are struggling to identify the purpose of the asides, give them one of the examples above and have them work in pairs to find an example within the poem. Explain that a list of instructions generally has an air of authority and that we expect the writer to be fully knowledgeable about the topic they are writing about. In this poem, the narrator plays with the conventions of the form by using an aside to show that they are not quite sure about the proteins needed to grow wings,

Model how to read asides aloud, adjusting your tone slightly to distinguish them from the other parts of the poem.

Have the students add at least two or three asides to their list of instructions, matching the purpose of the aside to one of the purposes explored by the class.

GIVE FEEDBACK

- You've shown that you can borrow a form from another writer and adapt it to make it your own. Now spend time refining your poem, seeing whether you can trim it down a bit. Ask another student to review it for you to see which parts are working well and whether some sections need more detail or could be removed.

METACOGNITION

- Why is it useful to borrow ideas from other writers? Which parts of your poem are borrowed, and which parts are your own?



Writing standard: by the end of year 6



The Literacy Learning Progressions