

# Our First Olympians

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The Learning Progression Frameworks describe significant signposts in reading and writing as students develop and apply their literacy knowledge and skills with increasing expertise from school entry to the end of year 10.

## 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.

“Faster, higher, stronger ...” The Olympic Games have been a source of international interest and entertainment since the late nineteenth century. This article provides information on some of our earliest Olympians, with a particular focus on the four athletes who attended the 1920 Summer Olympics in Antwerp, Belgium. It was the first year that Aotearoa New Zealand had sent an independent national team to the games, and despite facing additional challenges of distance and expense, all four athletes made the finals with one winning a bronze medal. The final paragraph of the article extols the benefits of aiming high and working hard to achieve a goal.

This article:

- provides information about our first national Olympic team
- outlines the challenges of distance and expense that our early Olympians had to overcome
- provides examples of role models who achieved excellence through skill, talent, hard work, and the support of others
- provides opportunities to learn about life in the early part of last century
- provides opportunities for students to locate and interpret information in a text with a range of non-fiction features.

A PDF of the text is available at [www.schooljournal.tki.org.nz](http://www.schooljournal.tki.org.nz)

Texts related by theme

“Just One Wheel” SJ L2 May 2015 | “Score!” SJ L2 August 2017 | “Football: The Beautiful Game” SJ L2 August 2018 | “Iron Tamariki” SJ L2 June 2014

## Text characteristics

Text characteristics – opportunities for strengthening students’ reading behaviours

It’s always exciting to see athletes win medals. But their near-wins and even their losses can inspire us, too. They show us what it means to work hard and keep going in the face of difficulties. They also show that aiming to be your best can lead to achieving things you never thought possible. Darcy, George, Harry, and Violet showed how a small team from a small country could compete with confidence on the international stage. Our first Olympians are not forgotten.

some abstract ideas that are clearly supported by concrete examples, requiring students to make links to other parts of the text and to their prior knowledge

### The first New Zealand team

At the 1920 Olympic Games, many things were different. Those games took place in Antwerp, Belgium. Only one of the New Zealand athletes was female (but she was one quarter of the team – we sent only four athletes altogether!).

The members of the New Zealand team were rower Darcy Hadfield, hurdler Harry Wilson, sprinter George Davidson, and swimmer Violet Walrond. Violet was the youngest swimmer at

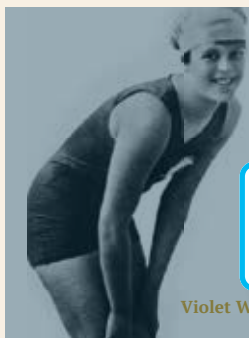
some compound and complex sentences, which may consist of two or three clauses, requiring students to carefully gather and track ideas as they read

Zealand athletes was female (but she was one quarter of the team – we sent only four athletes altogether!).

The members of the New Zealand team were rower Darcy Hadfield, hurdler Harry Wilson, sprinter George Davidson, and swimmer Violet Walrond. Violet was the youngest swimmer at the 1920 Games. She was just fifteen years old.

The team was New Zealand’s first national team. Before 1920, we had either joined with Australia to send a team or we had not sent anyone at all. Our athletes did well; one of them won a medal, and all four made it into a final.

some words and phrases that are ambiguous or unfamiliar, requiring the students to use the context, illustrations, and/or written explanations to gain meaning



Violet Walrond

in the spotlight too much. He told her that she had to retire. Violet was only eighteen years old. When she was nearly ninety, Violet explained to a sports writer that she wanted to carry on swimming, but “In those days, you did what your father said”.

some places where information and ideas are implicit, requiring students to make inferences based on information nearby in the text

## Text and language challenges

Some of the suggestions for possible supporting strategies may be more useful before reading, but they can be used at any time in response to students' needs.



Go to the Learning Progressions Frameworks – Reading: “Making sense of text: vocabulary knowledge” and “Making sense of text: using knowledge of text structure and features” to find detailed illustrations showing how students develop expertise and make progress in these aspects.

### VOCABULARY

### Possible supporting strategies


- A number of unfamiliar words and phrases, including “quarter”, “national”, “challenges”, “expensive”, “strict”, “retire”, “Scholarship”, “demonstrates”, “determination”, “excel”, “confidence”
- Terms related to the sports, including “athletes”, “Olympics”, “rower”, “hurdler”, “sprinter”, “swimmer”, “final”, “compete”, “flag bearer”, “110-metre hurdles”, “100- and 200-metre sprints”, “local events”, “freestyle”, “boxer”, “Olympic record”, “Commonwealth Games”, “long jump”, “discus”, “shot put”, “Olympians”
- Names: “Darcy Hadfield”, “Harry Wilson”, “George Davidson”, “Violet Walrond”, “Ted Morgan”, “Yvette Williams”
- Place names: “Brazil”, “Antwerp”, “Belgium”
- Idioms: “chosen sporting field”, “in the spotlight”, “things you never thought possible”, “the international stage”
- Compound words: “near-wins”

- Remind the students of strategies that are particularly 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 clearer.
- Have the students write unfamiliar words onto cards, adding a definition and a picture or symbol relating to each word and writing a hint that will help them remember the meaning. These cards can be used for revision and for a variety of vocabulary games.
- Create a word wall of topic-specific vocabulary related to the Olympic Games. The students could group the words into categories based on shared features and then label the categories.
- Explore the relationship between the names of events, actions (the verbs), and competitors, for example, hurdles/hurdling/hurdler; sprints/sprinting/sprinter.
- Alternatively, they could build new words into a picture. Select some of the topic words. Read out the first word and ask the students to draw a picture of what it means. If necessary, explain the word by eliciting the definition from the class or by providing it yourself. Continue reading the words one by one, and have the students incorporate each word into their picture. When they have drawn all the words, say them again slowly and ask the students to write each word over its representation. The students could then compare their pictures.
- Have pairs of students discuss the idioms “in the spotlight” and “on the international stage”, using their prior knowledge and knowledge of colloquial language to explain what the phrases mean and how they relate to the article.
- *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 the traditions, spirit, and sports of the Olympic Games
- Some understanding of the rigorous training and preparation that goes into competing at an international level
- Some knowledge of life in the 1920s, in particular modes of transport, the roles of women, and Aotearoa New Zealand as a young nation still establishing its identity
- Some awareness of Aotearoa New Zealand as a “small country” (population-wise) and our geographical isolation
- Some knowledge of simple fractions to understand the humour behind the statement that Violet was “one quarter of the team”

- In pairs, have the students share their Olympic heroes. This allows students from other countries to draw on their prior knowledge and share stories of Olympians from their home country.
- Explore recent or upcoming Olympic events, including a range of track and field events. Have the students share their understanding of Olympic heats, finals, and records. If appropriate, provide some historical context about the 1920 Olympic Games, for example, that the previous games had been cancelled because of the First World War and that many of the athletes competing had been in Belgium a few years earlier as soldiers (including Darcy Hadfield). You can find more information about the historical significance of the 1920 Olympic Games on [NZHistory](#) and [Britannica.com](#)
- Discuss the importance of training before an event, and trace back nine weeks and five days to get a sense of the impact the long journey to Antwerp would have had on the athletes' preparation.
- Have the students locate Antwerp on a map and trace the journey the athletes had to make by boat from Aotearoa New Zealand to Australia, then South Africa, and finally Europe.  Alternatively, you could project Google Earth for the class to see.
- Look at photos of types of transport in the 1920s to provide context for the discussion.

- Use the New Zealand Olympic Committee (NZOC) Olympic Education Programme “Game On!” to explore the Olympic values of friendship, excellence, and respect.
- Explain changing opportunities for women to compete in sports. (For example, only about 2 percent of athletes at the 1920 Olympic Games were female. That’s 65 out of over 2600 Olympians!) Have the students discuss the particular constraints placed on Violet, both during the games and afterwards.
- Have the students think, pair, and share about why Aotearoa New Zealand joined with the Australian team prior to the 1920 Olympics.

## TEXT FEATURES AND STRUCTURE

- A non-fiction article with clear sub-headings and short paragraphs
- Two sidebars with information on the first female and male gold medal winners
- Time shifts
- A mix of simple, compound, and complex sentences
- A few long sentences
- Use of comparison adjectives and modifying adverbs to change the degree
- An introduction that uses an ellipsis (...)

## Possible supporting strategies

- Before reading, prompt the students to recall what they are likely to find in an article. Provide opportunities for the students to talk with a partner to remind one another of the features of information texts.
- Skim and scan the text with the students, prompting them to point out specific features and name them if possible (headings, sub-headings, sidebars, text boxes). Discuss the function of each feature, leaving the content until the students read the whole text.
- Prompt the students to use clues in the text to identify when a time shift has occurred, for example, dates and tense changes.
- If necessary, support the students to understand the connection between ideas in a longer sentence by identifying the clauses, phrases, linking words, and punctuation.
- Support English language learners to understand the effect of using a comparative adjective with a noun or the effect of adding an adverb to an adjective. Discuss the way the meaning changes, for example, between “little time” and “very little time” or a “strict man”, a “rather strict man”, and a “very strict man”.
- Have students find examples in the text, then brainstorm other adverbs and comparative adjectives that could be used in front of the noun. The students could place the modified nouns onto a continuum to show degree from least to most (for example, “lenient”, “more lenient”, “most lenient”; “strict”, “very strict”, “most strict”).



Sounds and Words

## Possible curriculum contexts



*The Literacy Learning Progressions: Meeting the Reading and Writing Demands of the Curriculum* describes the literacy knowledge, skills, and attitudes that students need to draw on to meet the demands of the curriculum.

### ENGLISH (READING)

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

### ENGLISH (Writing)

- Level 2 – Ideas: Select, form, and express ideas on a range of topics.
- Level 2 – Structure: Organise texts, using a range of structures.

### SOCIAL SCIENCES

- Level 2 – Understand how time and change affect people’s lives.
- Level 2 – Understand how people make significant contributions to New Zealand’s society.

### Possible first reading purpose

- Find out about Aotearoa New Zealand’s first national Olympic team.

### Possible subsequent reading purposes

- Identify some of the challenges our early Olympians faced
- Find out about the changing roles and opportunities of female athletes
- Identify how Olympic athletes provide inspiration for everyone
- Explore the writer’s purpose.

### Possible writing purposes

- Describe the sea journey, the experience of being at the Olympic Games, or the decision to retire from swimming from Violet’s perspective
- Create a profile of another New Zealand Olympian
- Create a chart comparing the 1920 Olympic team with the 2021 team and/or the 1920 Olympic Games with the 2021 Olympic Games.



The New Zealand Curriculum

## Instructional focus – Reading

**English** Level 2 – Ideas: Show some understanding of ideas within, across, and beyond texts; Structure: Show some understanding of text structures.

**Social Sciences** Level 2 – Understand how time and change affect people's lives.



Go to the Learning Progressions Frameworks – Reading: “Acquiring and using information and ideas in informational texts”, “Reading to organise ideas and information for learning”, and “Making sense of text: reading critically” to find detailed illustrations showing how students develop expertise and make progress in these aspects.

### First reading

- Before reading, tell the students they will be reading an informational text. Have the students skim the text to gain a general idea of the topic.
- Prompt the students to identify the various features of the text, for example, headings, sub-headings, photographs, and text boxes. Have them discuss with a partner how the features can help readers make sense of the text.
- Read the first paragraph together and have the students share their predictions of what the article will be about. Ask what the sentence “It hasn’t always been like that ...” suggests about the focus of the article.
- Have the students work in pairs to develop Who? What? Where? When? and How? questions that the text might answer. After reading, have the students reflect on whether their questions were answered by the text.

### Possible supporting strategies

#### If the students require more scaffolding

- Remind the students of strategies that are particularly useful on a first reading, such as asking questions, making predictions, reading on, rereading, and making connections with their prior knowledge.
- Prompt prior knowledge of what to expect in an informational text. Discuss and feed in any features that the students are unsure of, such as factual information organised in paragraphs, headings, names of people and places, dates, and supporting photographs.
- Support the students to make connections with their prior knowledge, for example, of recent or upcoming Olympic events.
- Remind the students to use the photographs to help make meaning of the text.
- Prompt the students to use clues in the text to identify the shifts in time. Co-construct a timeline showing significant moments in Aotearoa New Zealand’s Olympic history. If the students are having difficulty identifying shifts in time, have them complete a paragraph or text reconstruction task. Give them muddled up sentences or paragraphs from the article and ask them to recreate the original text.

### 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.

#### Challenges

##### The teacher

Have the students work in pairs to identify challenges that the various athletes faced. Encourage them to infer why something was a challenge and how this may have impacted on an athlete’s performance or state of mind. You may like to provide a graphic organiser to facilitate this process.

#### Opportunities for female athletes

##### The teacher

Have the students discuss why the author decided to start the article by referring to the 2016 Olympics.

Ask the students to work in pairs to identify three ways that New Zealand’s participation in the Olympic Games has changed over the past century.

Then have them discuss how Violet’s experience (both at the Olympics and afterwards) differed from that of her fellow Olympians.

##### The students:

- reread the text and locate specific information describing the challenges athletes had to overcome
- identify what each challenge was and why it was a challenge
- make inferences about the impact of those challenges on the athletes.

##### The students:

- skim the text, looking for headings that might focus their search
- compare recent or upcoming Olympics with the 1920 Olympics, for example, the number of athletes, the proportion of female athletes, and the amount of time needed to travel to the Games
- locate information that identifies the ways that gender defined Violet’s experiences as an athlete, for example, not being allowed to leave the hotel and being told to retire from competitive swimming as a teenager.

## Inspiration

### The teacher

Have the students share their ideas about why many New Zealanders are interested in the achievements of our athletes at international level.

- *Why do people watch the Olympics?*
- *What can we gain from watching other people play sports?*
- *How does watching a New Zealand athlete affect us emotionally? Why?*

For some English language learners, finding the words to express abstract concepts such as emotions can be difficult. Emoji faces is one way of helping the students to identify their feelings.

Ask the students to discuss in pairs the penultimate sentence of the article, which talks about a small team from a small country competing with confidence on the international stage.

- *What does the author mean when he calls New Zealand a “small country”?*
- *What does the author mean by “the international stage”?*

## Writer’s purpose

### The teacher

Have the students identify the author’s purpose in writing the article.

- *How does the writer try to make the article relevant for readers?*
- *If the final paragraph of the article was removed, how would it change your ideas about the purpose of the article?*

### The students:

- make connections with their own experiences of watching sport
- discuss the emotions of pride, joy, or excitement that watching sport can generate
- make inferences about how watching sport can inspire us to be better at sports we play or activities we engage in
- share and explain their ideas on ways that Aotearoa New Zealand is considered to be a small country
- use their prior knowledge from other texts and knowledge of colloquial language to make sense of the metaphor “the international stage”. Colloquial language usually needs to be explicitly taught to English language learners. Ensure they understand the meaning of each word separately and how the meaning changes when the words are used together.

### The students:

- identify ways that the writer helps readers to make connections with their own lives
- share their ideas on the purpose of the article (what the writer wants us to know or think about from reading the article), supporting their ideas with key information from the text.

### GIVE FEEDBACK

- *You’ve located a range of different challenges the athletes faced. I noticed that you started by using the headings to help you find things you recalled from your first reading. That’s a good way of finding information quickly.*
- *You’ve drawn on several different pieces of information to back up your ideas about the writer’s purpose for the article. Doing that helps to make your opinion more convincing.*

### METACOGNITION

- *We spent a lot of time building up our understanding of life in the 1920s before reading “Our First Olympians”. How did this help you make sense of the article?*
- *Tell your partner how you worked out the meaning of “compete with confidence on the international stage”.*



The Literacy Learning Progressions



Assessment Resource Banks

## Instructional focus – Writing

**English** Level 2 – Ideas: Select, form, and express ideas on a range of topics. Structure: Organise texts, using a range of structures.

**Social Sciences** Level 2– Understand how time and change affect people’s lives; Understand how people make significant contributions to New Zealand’s society.



Go to the Learning Progression Frameworks – Writing: “Creating texts to communicate current knowledge and understanding”, “Writing meaningful text: using knowledge of text structure and features”, and “Using writing to think and organise for learning” to find detailed illustrations showing you how students develop expertise and make progress in these aspects.

### Text excerpts from “Our First Olympians”

Page 18

In 2016, one hundred and ninety-nine New Zealand athletes went to the Summer Olympics in Brazil. They won eighteen medals, including four gold. For the first time ever, more than half the team was female. It hasn’t always been like that ...

### Examples of text characteristics

#### CONNECTING THE PAST AND THE PRESENT

*Connecting the past and the present when writing an informational text can help readers to make links to their prior knowledge.*

### Teacher (possible deliberate acts of teaching)

Discuss the benefits of making connections between the past and the present when writing an article, for example, as a way to help readers to make links with their prior knowledge.

Have the students locate examples of connections between the past and present in the article. Information transfer tasks are a useful way to support English language learners to organise their ideas before they talk or write about them. They could use a “compare and contrast” graphic organiser to organise examples of the past and present.

Based on their further explorations of the 1920 Olympic Games, have them discuss what other connections the author might have made, for example, differences in technology, the historical context of the 1920s games, or a comparison between Violet and a current female Olympic athlete.

Discuss the effect of the ellipsis (...) in the introduction and the way it leads readers into events that took place in the past.

- *What predictions might readers make from the sentence “It hasn’t always been like that ...”?*

Discuss how the sequence of writing can help make connections between the present and the past. For example, “Our First Olympians” begins in the present, then moves to 1920, and finishes in the present.

Have the students plan an article about a sports event they have watched or taken part in. They could research and include information about what this sport or event was like in the past and how it has changed. They could then compare the past and the present in their article.

- *What differences between the past and the present do you want to emphasise in your article?*

Page 22

After the Games

#### HEADINGS

*Headings help readers find their way around a text and locate information more easily.*

Revise the purpose of using headings in informational texts, for example, preparing readers for the main ideas, encouraging them to predict what the text will be about, and helping to organise the text in a logical order.

Discuss the benefits of various types of headings, for example:

- straightforward headings that explain exactly what a paragraph or section is about make it easy to locate information and predict what will be in that section
- playful headings can evoke curiosity, making readers want to read the section to find out more.

Have the students decide on alternative headings for the final section of text, choosing words or ideas from the text. Encourage them to explore how changing a heading can change the way the text that follows is interpreted.

Page 20


The team faced a lot of challenges. Getting to the games was one of them. It was expensive to travel, and it could take a long time. In those days, there were very few planes.

### MAIN IDEA AND SUPPORTING DETAIL

*In an informational text, writers often put the main idea at the start of a paragraph or new section. Then they give details that explain and support the main idea.*

Remind the students to think about their audience when writing headings, for example, their age and their likely prior knowledge.

Before they start writing their article, have the students note possible headings for the various sections. This will help them to plan the structure of their piece.

When they have completed the first draft of their article, have the students remove the headings and place them in a table in a random order. Pairs of students can see whether they can match the headings with the paragraphs from each other's writing.  They could use a Google Doc for this task.

Remind the students to use what they have learnt about the structure of paragraphs. The first sentence in a paragraph often contains the main idea. It tells your readers what the paragraph is about. The following sentences support the main idea by providing more detail. In this example, the writer explains the challenge of distance and how the long journey impacted on the athlete's training and preparation for the games. Have the students peer-review each other's paragraphs.

- Does each paragraph include an introductory sentence or phrase that gives the main idea of the paragraph?
- Are there some details that support the main idea? Did they help you to understand the main idea?
- Is there any information in the paragraph or section that doesn't relate to the main idea? Is there somewhere else to put this information?

Some students will benefit from scaffolded practice with topic sentences. You could give them paragraphs without topic sentences and have them match or write the topic sentences. The students could construct paragraphs from jumbled topic sentences and sentences with details.

### GIVE FEEDBACK

- You used some good comparing words to show the difference between the past and the present, such as "back then" and "these days". These really helped to make clear how playing hockey has changed since the days when your grandad played.
- I noticed that you revised some of your headings after getting feedback from your peer reviewer. Getting another person's opinion on your work is a good way of improving your writing.

### METACOGNITION

- How helpful was it to plan the focus of each section in your article before you started writing? Did you make any changes to your plan as you wrote? If so, why?
- What have you learned from writing the article? What would you do differently next time?



The Literacy Learning Progressions