

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.

STOP/GO

by David Geary
Readability level: year 6



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 story is told by Luke, a teenager working a Stop/Go sign with his friend, Hayley. Communicating via RT (radio transceiver), the two characters discuss what goes down when a man gets a flat tyre while speeding through the roadworks. Frank, the foreman of the road crew (and Luke's uncle), refuses to help him out, forcing the driver to walk to a nearby garage to replace his tyre. While he's away, Uncle Frank tows the car away as a prank, and Hayley and Luke must decide whether they should play along with the joke or return the man's car.

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

Key competencies

Key competencies explored through this story include thinking and relating to others.

Themes and ideas

Themes and ideas explored in this story include:

- a moral dilemma
- the ethics of practical jokes
- prejudice
- conflict, revenge, and forgiveness.

A PDF of the text and an audio version as an MP3 file are available at www.schooljournalstorylibrary.tki.org.nz

Texts related by theme

“**Boot Camp**”, SJ L4 November 2019 | **Breathless**, SJSL L3, 2016 | “**The Musician**”, SJ L4 May 2020

Text characteristics Opportunities for strengthening students' reading behaviours

“Hayley, where's Uncle going?” I ask.
“Not sure ...,” she replies. “I can't really see him.” Then we hear another engine starting. “Hold up, what's that?”
“Sounds like the road roller.” I pause. “He wouldn't.”
“He would! Your uncle's mean as,” says Hayley. “He's going to flatten the Charger and stick it in the hole!”
“Seriously?”

BEEP! HONK! We've got two lines of cars in 30-degree heat –
steaks sizzling on a hot plate.

I let the cars **GO**.

Figurative language, including metaphors and similes, requiring students to use nearby information in the text to infer what the phrase means

I do what I'm told. Shades has his thumb out, hitching, but he takes no notice as I drive past. Instead, he's squinting back down the road 'cause he can see something *real* familiar coming his way.

his arms for it to stop, but Hayley ducks down, drives past him, and pulls up next to me. She's sweating bullets but has a big smile.

“Now what?” I ask.

“Simple. Meet me at the rest area by the bridge. We'll leave his car there and take off in mine. We should be long gone before he gets to it.”

A variety of sentence types, requiring students to make inferences to find the main ideas and make meaning

While the road is clear, Uncle Frank hops on the loader, picks up the Charger, and tows it away.

“Hayley, where's Uncle going?” I ask.

“Not sure ...,” she replies. “I can't really see him.” Then we hear another engine starting. “Hold up, what's that?”

“Sounds like the road roller.” I pause. “He wouldn't.”

“He would! Your uncle's mean as,” says Hayley. “He's going to flatten the Charger and stick it in the hole.”

“Seriously?”

BEEP! HONK! We've got two lines of cars in 30-degree heat –

Implied ideas and information, requiring students to infer by drawing on nearby information and/or their prior knowledge



Illustrations, requiring students to interpret and integrate visual information with written text to gain a deeper understanding of the events

Making meaning: Supports and challenges

Possible supporting strategies should be implemented at the appropriate time during the reading or lesson.



Go to the Learning Progression 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.

SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED:

- Some familiarity with the purpose of Stop/Go signs at roadworks to control traffic
- Some understanding of body language and the meaning of specific gestures
- Some familiarity with pranks and practical jokes
- Some awareness of the concept of a mirage
- Some awareness of the Star Wars films.

Possible supporting strategies

Before reading, use the pictures to prompt a discussion about roadworks. Have the students think, pair, and share their thoughts about what a stop-go worker does, why it is important, and how it must feel. Use this discussion to bring out the subject-specific vocabulary. *You've seen them at work. Have you ever imagined what it's like to be in their shoes ... or rather, their steel-capped boots?*

If the word “mirage” is unfamiliar, give students time to predict what it means, then check again at the end of the story.

If students don't understand the Star Wars reference, invite others to clarify it.

Discuss the concept of body language. *What is an “eyebrow salute”? What is an example of an “angry gesture”?* Ask the students to share any other examples of New Zealand gestures that they're familiar with and discuss what they mean.

VOCABULARY:

- Subject-specific language, including “steel caps”, “mirage”, “Valiant Charger”, “RT”, “foreman”, “loader”, “road roller”, “grader”, “grudges”, “eavesdrop”, “ignition”, “idling”, “hitching”, “revenge”, “Roger, copy that”
- Colloquial language, including “old-school”, “Dude”, “Shades”, “plants his boot”, “eyebrow salute”, “jacks up”, “shredding”, “crack-up”, “drama”, “storming off”, “code brown”, “log”, “rogue floaters”, “mean as”, “buzzing”, “real bad”, “dumb dude stuff”, “pumped up”, “little man”, “jerks”, “ripped”, “biff”, “Whoa!”, “you fullas will keep”, “knock off”, “hit the pub”, “got history”, “Shuddup”, “revs”, “outta line”, “pranked”, “Phor!”, “brainbox”, “hang there”, “hoons it”
- Contractions and abbreviations, including “you've”, “that's”, “they're”, “driver's”, “em”, “what's”, “don't”, “can't”, “we're”, “wouldn't”, “it's”, “I'm”, “he's”, “she's”, “where's”, “'cause”, “we've”, “you're”, “doesn't”.

Possible supporting strategies

Remind students to use effective word-solving strategies to make meaning, such as looking at the word, looking for familiar parts (including root words, suffixes, and prefixes), checking to see if the word makes sense, reading on, or using the context.

Explore the use of colloquial language, which may be confusing for English language learners. Support students to use nearby information in the text to infer what the phrase means. Students could think, pair, and share and compare their interpretations of these words and phrases. Invite the students to share equivalent colloquial or figurative phrases they know in other languages.

For additional support, you could have the students play a matching game prior to reading. Give the students two sets of cards, one with the slang terms and another with their “proper” equivalents. Have them work in pairs to match the words and phrases with the “translations”.

Explore how contractions are formed. Prepare sets of matching cards, with the contraction written on the first card and the words that form the contraction on the second. Give a set of cards to each pair or small group of students. First, have the students match each contraction with the words that form it. Next, ask them to place the contractions into groups according to the patterns they notice. Have the students share what they have discovered with the class.

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

TEXT FEATURES AND STRUCTURE:

- Narrative text with a setting, characters, a problem, a conflict, and a resolution
- A complex, action-driven plot made up of characters with competing motivations
- First-person narration in the distinctive voice of an older teenager
- A considerable amount of dialogue, some of which is not attributed
- Short, incomplete sentences
- The use of dashes and ellipses to signal pauses, thought patterns, and additional information
- Some competing information (for example, Luke's distaste for cows)
- An author's note on the inside front cover.

Possible supporting strategies

Review the features of a narrative by asking the students to list all the elements that make up a story. Discuss the general structure of a story, including an exposition (where the setting, characters, and tone are introduced), rising action (where a conflict is introduced and builds up), a climax (the peak of the conflict that includes a “turning point”), falling action (where the consequences of the climax are explored), and a resolution (where the loose ends are tied up and the story ends).

Have the students skim and scan the text to identify features of the punctuation that appear interesting. Prompt them to make inferences about their purpose, drawing on their knowledge of other texts.

In places where dialogue is unattributed, ensure the students understand who the speaker is. If necessary, remind students to use the text close by to infer who is talking.

Have the students identify the chains of reference by giving them copies of the text to mark up. Ask the students to underline the names or nicknames of people and circle all the pronouns. Next, have them draw arrows linking each pronoun to the person it refers to.



Possible curriculum contexts

ENGLISH (Reading):

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

ENGLISH (Reading):

Level 4 – Language Features: Show an increasing understanding of how language features are used for effect within and across texts.

ENGLISH (Reading):

Level 4 – Processes and strategies: Integrate sources of information, processes, and strategies with developing confidence to identify, form, and express ideas.

ENGLISH (Reading):

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

HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION:

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

Possible reading purposes

- Find out what happens when an adult plays a prank on someone
- Evaluate the behaviour of all the characters and share your opinions about how they acted
- Explore how the author uses specific language features to entertain the reader, while at the same time creating authentic characters
- Identify and think critically about the author's purpose

Possible writing purposes

- Describe a dramatic or funny event using everyday language
- Retell a true story of a moral dilemma you faced and the decision you made
- Write a story mainly through dialogue

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



The Writing Hub



The Literacy Learning Progressions

Instructional focus – Reading

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



Go to the Learning Progression Frameworks – Reading: “Reading for literary experience”, “Making sense of text: using a processing system”, “Making sense of text: using knowledge of text structure and features”, and “Making sense of text: reading critically” to find detailed illustrations showing how students develop expertise and make progress in these aspects.

Introducing the text: Paving the way for successful readers

Before reading

- Introduce *STOP/GO*. Discuss the cover and illustrations, provide a brief overview of the setting and characters, and share the purpose for reading.
- Read the first paragraph and check that the students have made the connection between the voice of the narrator and the picture of Luke holding the sign. Use the discussion to bring out topic-specific information and knowledge (see page 2 of this TSM).
- Explain that this story includes a lot of dialogue and colloquial language. *Why do you think this might be?*
- Discuss the fact that in real life, just as in stories, people often don't tell us exactly what they are thinking or feeling. When we watch a movie, we almost always have to work out what is going on in people's minds by paying attention to how they behave, what they say, and how they say it. We do the same things when we read a book, using the clues the author gives us. Have the students read to the bottom of page 3. *What have you found out about Luke, Hayley, Uncle Frank, and the man in the car. What has Luke told us directly, and what have you worked out (inferred)?*

First reading

Allow the students to read the story for enjoyment and interest.

Some students may be able to read the whole text independently. Others may benefit from share-reading some of the text with you.

Some students may need to silently read the text in chunked sections and discuss it with a partner or the group (think, pair, share) as they go. Suggested chunks: pages 2–6, 7–8, 9–10, 11–12, 13–16.

Where necessary, prompt students to summarise what is happening with a partner, using the text as evidence.

Use this time to listen in to student discussions and monitor how well they are reading and understanding the text.

If you are unsure about a particular student's reading and understanding, ask them to quietly read you a few lines and have a brief discussion. This may be a good opportunity to provide specific feedback and prompt the student to tell you about a strategy they have used.

After the reading, look at the cover page again and compare what happened in the text with what they had predicted.

If students struggle with the text

Remind students of strategies that are particularly useful for checking or confirming their understanding on a first reading, such as rereading, looking for clues, reading on, asking questions, and making connections with their prior knowledge. Use some of the following approaches, depending on your students' needs:

- Select a passage of dialogue and model how to use nearby attributed dialogue to make sense of who is speaking. Select another passage and have the students work in pairs to identify who is speaking. Refer to the supporting strategy for exploring chains of reference in the “Text features and structure” section on page 2.
- Model how to use the context to infer the meaning of sentence fragments. Discuss the purpose of these features (to mimic speech and to create a fast, punchy tone).
- Discuss the role of punctuation in helping the reader to understand what is going on and how the characters are feeling. *There's another ellipsis in the sentence, “Shades pulls over, jumps out, kicks the tyre, checks the boot ... slams it shut”. What is the purpose of this ellipsis? Draw out the fact that, in this instance, the ellipsis implies that the reader has to fill in the gaps, adding to our sense of tension and reinforcing the message that Shades is getting angry.*
- Prompt the students to notice the contextual information that is embedded within the narration. *Luke tells us that “Code brown means shut it down”. Where else does he help the reader out with an explanation?*

Subsequent readings

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

- Support the students' understanding of the narrative structure by creating a visual story map. Prompt students to:
 - introduce the main characters
 - put the characters in a setting
 - identify each character's underlying motives
 - clarify the problem that Hayley and Luke are facing
 - identify the sequence of events
 - describe the resolution.

Explain that a story map doesn't include every piece of information – they should leave out details that aren't necessary for telling the story. Once completed, have the students retell the story to a partner.

- Explain that written language is not the same as spoken language. It is planned and organised in ways that spoken language is not. However, the author of this story has attempted to write in a way that is close to how his characters think and speak. Prompt discussion about how he's done this, referring to text features such as the colloquial language, incomplete sentences, dialogue, and punctuation. Select a passage and have a student work with you to model how it would be spoken. Invite feedback from other students, then have them select a passage to try for themselves.
- Challenge the students to consider whether it is appropriate to use so much colloquial language in a story. *The language is pretty edgy. Would you use these words to retell the story to an older person? Move the students to an understanding of the importance of voice – that the text is true to the characters in the story. Could the writer have used different words to say the same thing? How would that have sounded?* For some English language learners, knowing when it is appropriate to use informal language can be difficult. Be explicit when explaining what language is most appropriate in various situations. Role-model different scenarios and how you might change the language you use.
- Discuss the idea of body language and how, in everyday life, we “read” people's gestures and facial expressions. *Luke says that it looks as if Uncle Frank and Shades know each other. What were the clues in their body language to tell him that? Have the students review the text to identify other passages where people's body language communicates their thoughts and feelings. Have students share how some of these same messages are expressed through body language in other cultures.*
- Introduce the term “motivation” – the reasons a character thinks, feels, or behaves in a particular way. Focus on the relationship between Uncle Frank and Shades. Have the students identify the parts of the text that provide clues about what may have motivated Uncle Frank to be so unreasonable. *We're not told for sure what the problem is. Like Luke, we can only guess. Do you think that matters?*
- Have the students work in pairs to complete character studies of Hayley, Luke, Uncle Frank, and Shades. They should select examples or quotes from the text that reveal:
 - aspects of the character's personality
 - the character's likes and dislikes
 - what motivates the character
 - what other characters think or feel about them
 - how they feel about other characters.

Ask questions to prompt deeper thinking.

- Share the character studies and discuss the difference between what the reader is told directly and what we can infer, referring back to the discussion prior to reading.
- Prompt the students to think critically about the themes of the story and the characters' actions. As you do so, support them to make connections between the story and their personal experiences.
 - *What is going on in Luke's head when his “brain starts buzzing real bad”? What thoughts do you imagine he is having?*
 - *Luke suggests that Shades must have done something really bad to deserve having his car taken. What does Hayley say to that? Do you agree with her?*
 - *What do we learn about how other people on the road crew feel about Uncle Frank's “joke”? Why do you think they didn't speak up?*
 - *What do you think of Luke and Hayley's actions? What would you have done in their situation? What might have happened if they didn't take action and return Shades' car?*
 - *Can you think of a time when you were in a similar situation to the one Luke and Hayley were in? Have you seen people behaving badly and felt you didn't have enough power to take action? What happened?*
 - *Would Hayley make a good friend?*
- Have the students use the story to create a Reader's Theatre. Have each student take a character and highlight their part. On their first read through, they should focus on fluency, paying attention to the signals in the punctuation. On the second, they should focus on expression and conveying events in an entertaining and convincing manner. Some English language learners may benefit from listening to the audio version of the story to help with their pronunciation, intonation, and fluency. Provide explicit feedback on their use of oral language.
- Ask the students to predict what might have motivated the author to write the story. Then have them check their predictions by reading the author's note on the inside front cover.

Monitoring the impact of teaching

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

- Can the students identify and discuss the main themes of the story?
- Can they independently use strategies for:
 - working out unknown vocabulary?
 - making sense of ideas when meaning has broken down?
 - making connections to their personal experiences?
- With support, can the students link ideas and information across the text?
- Do the students transfer skills and knowledge from your modelling to their reading?
- Do the students use evidence from the text to explain their responses?

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 noticed that you used the punctuation to give a really good impression of the way the characters were speaking. When Hayley said, "Not sure ...", you knew to pause. It sounded the way we all sound when we're watching and wondering about something.

I noticed the style of language in the dialogue and in the narrative was a bit confusing for you. You kept going back and rereading it and then you figured it out. Remember you can do that whenever you get stuck.

Supporting metacognition

How much did you learn from just reading the words? What gaps did you have to fill?

What connections did you make to your own life as you were reading? Did the story remind you of a funny event you could retell?

Suggestions for writing instruction



Go to the [Learning Progression Frameworks – Writing](#): "Creating text for literary purposes" and "Writing meaningful text: using knowledge of text structure and features" to find detailed illustrations showing how students develop expertise and make progress in these aspects.

Students may choose to:

- share what they know about different kinds of writing, ranging from informal and personal writing (for example, diaries and emails) to writing that seems more formal and impersonal (for example, reports and instructions). They could list their examples and place them on a continuum. *Where do you think STOP/GO might fit on the continuum? What makes you think that?* Explain that while some styles of writing seem like spoken language, there are still differences, as written language is organised in a way that spoken language is not. A story like STOP/GO has lots of informal dialogue and incomplete sentences to reflect the speech and thought patterns of the characters. (See [Exploring Language: Written language and Learning through Talk: Oral Language in Years 4–8](#) for more on the relationship between written and spoken language.)
- rewrite a section of the text in a more formal style, without the use of colloquial language, sentence fragments, complex punctuation, and contractions. Then read the new script aloud in pairs and explore the impact of the changes on the characterisation and tone. *Is the story still believable? Does it sound as if it is being told by a teenager?* Modelling the process of rewriting in a more formal style would benefit some English language learners. Express your thinking aloud. Some English language learners may find writing a shared story helpful before they attempt to write independently.
- think, pair, and share a funny event from their own lives, then use STOP/GO as a model for writing it in the same natural-sounding voice. Prompt them to incorporate punctuation and colloquial language that reflects their character's voice. As they write, encourage them to share their drafts with each other to check that they are conveying their intended tone. You may need to review the punctuation rules for dialogue. Remind them that the reader needs to know who is speaking, but speakers don't always need to be named.

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