

ILLUSTRATING THE READING STANDARD

“The Vege Car” *School Journal*, Part 3 Number 1, 2007

Noun frequency level: 10–12

The students in a year 6 class are beginning an integrated learning inquiry into people’s consumption of natural resources. Their rich concept (Resources: cause and effect) incorporates science, social sciences, and technology. The students have some prior knowledge to bring to this inquiry from the previous year’s focus on conservation and sustainability. They are now identifying how positive changes can result from the choices individuals make and building on the key competency of thinking.

The main idea in “The Vege Car” is about caring for the environment, with a particular focus on taking action and influencing others. The text is a report, with elements of a persuasive text and supporting text boxes. The photographs and map are closely related to, and expand on, the text content. Scientific, topic-specific, and persuasive (“nasty”, “worse”)

vocabulary is used, and there are some Māori concepts and words.

The teacher chose “The Vege Car” because it allows students to integrate ideas and information (from the body of the text and the supporting text boxes) as they evaluate ideas about taking action to influence others and bring about societal change. To do this, they generate questions, such as “Why do people take action on particular issues?” and “What are our opinions about our reliance on fuels from a finite source?”

The following example illustrates aspects of the task and text and demonstrates how a student engages with both task and text to meet the reading demands of the curriculum. A number of such examples would be used to inform the overall teacher judgment for this student.

And yes, the Macdonalds can even drive their car on vegetable oil after it’s been used for cooking – thanks to Dad, James nui Macdonald.

Around three years ago, James nui decided it was time to build a car that didn’t need petrol. It wasn’t just to save money. James wanted to protest against the war in Iraq, which he believes is partly about powerful countries like the United States wanting oil from the Middle East.

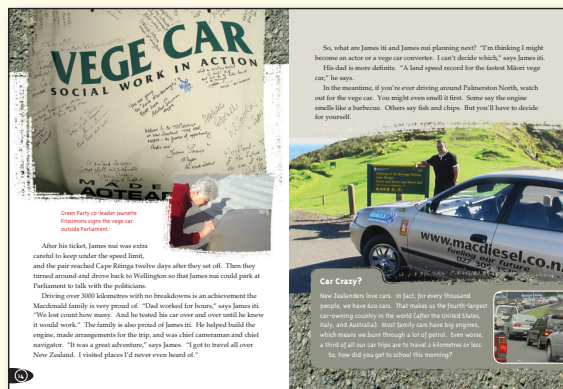
As James nui says, “Vegetable oil is 100 percent environmentally friendly – and it’s recycled!”

Nasty Gases
Driving a car that runs on petrol puts nasty gases into the air. These include carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, nitric oxide, nitrogen dioxide, and hydrocarbons.

James nui, who is Ngā Puhi and Ngāti Whātua, also likes the fact that his car is in keeping with traditional Māori values.

Why not drive from one end of the country to the other? That way, he could show off his car and teach people about cleaner, cheaper fuels at the same time.

While reading an extended section of text, the student locates and links a number of main ideas. These include: driving a car on vegetable oil so that the family car is environmentally friendly and does not need petrol; James nui’s action (building the car); his beliefs about the war in Iraq; and his cultural beliefs. The student identifies the mix of persuasive language and scientific facts included in the text box. After reading, the student scans back through the text and summarises the information so far in order to understand and integrate those main ideas, and he asks questions, for example: “What are the alternatives to petrol for use in cars?” “Would a car really use vegetable oil and be able to go like a ‘normal’ car?”



The student is interested in the ideas in the text box headed Nasty Gases and makes a note to carry out further research into the impact of gases from petrol cars on people and the environment. He evaluates the choices and decisions of James nui and identifies the possible impact that those decisions might have on people’s consumption of natural resources. He also makes connections to the decisions (and the consequences of those decisions) of people in other texts who have cared for the environment, such as Grandad in “The Bittern” (*School Journal*, Part 3 Number 1, 2009).

After a discussion about caring for the environment and taking personal action to influence the actions of others, the student goes to the Internet to research the impact of gases from petrol cars on the environment. He uses the information from the article and his research to formulate inquiry questions related to the class’s rich concept.