

## ILLUSTRATING THE READING STANDARD

**“Deer, Oh Deer”** (*School Journal*, Part 4 Number 1, 2010)

Noun frequency level: 12–14

By the end of year 8, students are required to use a range of fiction and non-fiction texts to locate, evaluate, and synthesise information and ideas in order to meet the reading demands of the curriculum, drawing on the knowledge, skills, and attitudes described for the end of year 8 in the Literacy Learning Progressions. The curriculum tasks will also involve the students in generating their own questions as well as answering questions from the teacher.

The students in a year 7 and 8 class are working on a social studies unit exploring the impact that people’s decisions have had, and continue to have, on the New Zealand environment. They are also focusing on the selection and evaluation of relevant information, interpretation of evidence, and identification of bias as they think critically about the text and develop an informed argument for a follow-up writing task.

“Deer, Oh Deer” explores the introduction of wild deer to New Zealand and the impact they have had on the environment over

the last 140 years. The text contains elements of explanation (cause and effect) as well as descriptive detail. The text is supported by a selection of relevant historical advertisements, photographs, and tables.

The teacher chose this text because it has a non-continuous structure and is a mixture of description, explanation, and opinion. Because the information is already presented as a single text, the students can concentrate on locating, selecting, and evaluating relevant information to make their own judgments about the impact of deer on New Zealand’s natural environment. The headings, photos, information boxes, and “for and against” table assist students to navigate the text.

*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.*

Deer were released into New Zealand – an environment where they had no natural predators and where the native plants they ate did not have any poisonous chemicals, thorns, or prickles ... to protect them from browsing mammals.

By the 1930s, the havoc that deer were causing was so great that the government employed deer cullers to shoot as many as possible.

The department considers deer to be as great a pest as possums, stoats, and rats. But because the cost of deer control is so high, DOC carries it out only in a few special areas ...

It wasn’t long before “acclimatisation societies” were formed.



Deer hunting is a tourism industry in New Zealand and brings in valuable foreign currency.

The New Zealand Deerstalkers’ Association pushes for “deer management” so that deer hunting can continue *and* the forest can also regenerate.

The student sets her own purpose for reading, for example, to establish the impact of introduced deer on the environment and evaluate the author’s stance. She previews the text by using the headings, photos, text boxes, tables, and historic advertisements to determine the relevance of the text for her purpose. She finds relevant information under the sections Hunting, Culling and Farming, and Department of Conservation, which she evaluates to infer that deer are causing irreversible problems to the New Zealand environment. She then asks questions such as “Why were deer introduced in the first place?” She evaluates the concept of “acclimatisation” by drawing on prior knowledge in social studies about European migration to New Zealand and the desire of the immigrants to transform the New Zealand environment for specific recreational purposes, to answer her questions.

| For  | Against   |
|--|---|
| Deer are a valuable part of the New Zealand landscape and provide a source of income for the tourism industry. | Deer are a pest that cause damage to native plants and animals. |
| Deer are a source of food for many native birds and animals.   | Deer are a source of disease for many native animals.           |
| Deer are a source of income for many people in New Zealand.  | Deer are a source of damage to many native plants and animals.  |

By the end of year 8, the student demonstrates greater control, independence, and confidence in evaluating and synthesising information and ideas across the text. The student thinks critically about the text and the impact and ongoing consequences that people’s decisions have on the New Zealand environment.

The student synthesises information within sections and across the whole text, including statements in The Deer Debate. She concludes that the “deer problem” was caused by a series of poor decisions that had long-term consequences such as the destruction of natural habitats, but that there are also some benefits for the tourism trade. She asks questions such as “What is the purpose of this text?” or “What does the author want me to believe, and how has she done that?”. She evaluates the author’s use of language such as “havoc” and “devastated”, and the selection of information, to conclude that the reader is being positioned to agree with the author’s point of view. The student identifies a position she will take in her argument for or against the “deer problem” and identifies other materials and websites to find further information to support her argument.