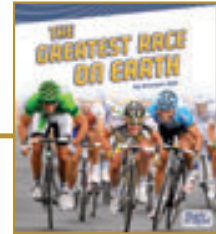


The Greatest Race on Earth

by Bronwen Wall



This text is levelled at Gold 2.

Overview

This report describes why the author considers the Tour de France to be “the greatest race on Earth”. Text boxes provide information about how the race was established.

This text has strong connections to students’ experiences of, or knowledge about, sports and competition. It links particularly well to the Ready to Read text *Tom’s Tryathlon* (Purple). There is an audio version of the text on the Ready to Read CD *Readalong 2010*.

Related texts

- Texts about sporting events, for example, at Purple: *Tom’s Tryathlon*, *Skate Champs* (RTR), and “Motocross” (JJ 30)
- Non-fiction texts that present a particular point of view, for example, at Gold: *Extraordinary Earthworms*, *Sun Bears Are Special*, *The White-tailed Spider* (all RTR).

Cross-curriculum links

- Health and physical education (level 2, societal attitudes and values) – Explore how people’s attitudes, values, and actions contribute to healthy physical and social environments.

Text characteristics

Key text characteristics as described in the reading standard for after three years at school are shown in the boxes with a solid outline. Other boxes indicate additional characteristics.

A mix of explicit and implicit information, for example,

- the information about the Tour de France in the body text and visual language features (headings, text boxes, photographs, caption, and map)
- the explanations about the history of the race (page 3), the process for working out who will wear the yellow jersey and why the jersey is yellow (pages 8 and 9), and about how the cyclists “keep going” (page 10)
- the use of comparisons, for example, “more than 150”, “over 3500 kilometres”, “That’s like ...”, “more than twenty days”
- the author’s use of superlatives, the dynamic photographs, and the repeated phrase “Go! Go! Go!”, which support students to infer the author’s point of view (that the Tour de France is the “greatest race on earth”)

Information organised in paragraphs

The structure of the text as a report, with an introduction, a series of main points (organised under headings), and a conclusion

A variety of sentence structures, including complex sentences

The shifts in time between the present day and historical information and over the course of the race

Settings that may be unfamiliar to some students

The different meanings of “countries” (page 4) and “country roads” (page 7)

The bold print and definitions for key words

The prefixes and/or suffixes in “bicycles”, “greatest”, “kilometres”, “cyclists”, “fastest”

Some unfamiliar words and phrases, the meaning of which is supported by the context or illustrations, for example, “Greatest Race on Earth”, “Tour de France”, “course”, “cyclists”, “newspaper company”, “kilometres”, “Paris”, “capital”, “stage”, “yellow jersey”, “energy drinks”, “water bottles”, “energy bars”, “sprint”

Suggested reading purpose

- To find out why the author thinks this is the greatest race on earth and say if we agree

Setting a learning goal

(What opportunities does this text provide for students to learn more about how to “read, respond to, and think critically about” texts?)

To meet the reading purpose, students need to draw on a range of comprehension and processing strategies, often simultaneously. The strategies, knowledge, and skills below link to *The Literacy Learning Progressions*. Select and adapt from them to set your specific learning goal. Be guided by your students’ particular needs and experiences: who they are, where they come from, and what they bring (*Reading and Writing Standards for Years 1–8*, Knowledge of the learner, page 6).

This text provides opportunities for students to:

- make connections between sections of the text (including visual language features) to identify and summarise main points
- consider the information in the text and come to their own conclusion about the race (evaluate)
- use word-solving strategies (for example, using context or looking for definitions) to work out the meaning of unfamiliar words
- use knowledge of punctuation and syntax to track ideas in long or complex sentences.

Introducing the text

- Refer to or reread *Tom’s Tryathlon* (RTR, Purple) and discuss the students’ experiences of sports competitions they have been in or heard about.
- Tell the students the title and ask them to share their ideas about what would make a race the “greatest race on earth”, for example, in terms of effort, scale, and type of race.
- Give out the books and have the students compare their ideas with the information conveyed in the cover photograph.
- Share the reading purpose and learning goal. Review the sorts of features that help readers find and understand information in a non-fiction text, for example, statements in the introduction and conclusion, topic sentences within paragraphs, key words, and photographs.
- Have the students look through the book for any other features likely to help them find and summarise information. They should notice features such as the use of headings, photographs, bold print for some words, and text boxes.

Reading the text

Below are some behaviours you could expect to see as the students read and discuss this text. Each example is accompanied by instructional strategies to scaffold their learning. Select and adapt from the suggestions according to your students’ needs and experiences.

The students make connections between sections of the text, including the visual language features, to identify and summarise main points.

- Prompt the students to use the questions in the headings as a guide to reading the text.
- Ask the students to read pages 2 and 3 then think, pair, and share what they have found out from them. (As well as the explicit information, they may have noticed the link between the French word “Tour” and the word “tour” in English.)
- Set up a chart to record information. The students could create their own question heading for page 2.
- You can continue reading together in this way, stopping after each section to summarise and fill in the chart together. Alternatively, give the students their own copies of a chart for them to fill in as they read and discuss the text with a partner.
- Encourage the students to look out for connections between pieces of information. You could model this. For example: *On page 4, it says the race is over 3500 kilometres long and that it would be like riding all the way from the top of New Zealand to the bottom and back to Tāupo. I was thinking that it would take a very long time to ride that far – and then on page 7, I see that the race takes more than twenty days ...*
- You may need to support students with ways of clarifying the explanation of the stages and how the wearer of the yellow jersey is decided (pages 7–8). Clarify that each day’s racing is usually over within a few hours and the winner is the fastest person on the day, but the Tour de France lasts for more than twenty days so the eventual winner is the person who is fastest over the whole time. Each day, the person who has been the fastest overall up to that point wears the yellow jersey. You could use the analogy of a rugby or soccer player getting an award for the most tries or goals in a season – the one who scores most over a whole period wins.

The students say why the author thinks this is the greatest race on earth and if they agree.

- At the end of the lesson, revisit the reading purpose. Establish that the title is the author's opinion. Recall the students' ideas from the introductory discussion about what would make a race "the greatest race on earth".
- Then have them work in pairs, to identify any aspects from the summary chart that seem to support the author's opinion (for example, about how long it's been going, the distance, the number of cyclists, the number of spectators, the level of challenge). Encourage debate and reference to the chart and/or text as the students share their opinions.
- Revisit the learning goal and support the students to summarise how they met it. *What helped you to form your opinion about whether you agree with the author?*

The students use word-solving strategies (for example, using context or looking for definitions) to work out the meaning of unfamiliar or confusing words and phrases.

- The definitions of the words in bold print are very clear in this text. If necessary, prompt the students to look for a definition close to the word in bold and to look out for "indicator words" like "It means" or "is called" or a comma ("Paris, the capital of France"). For students who need more support with English, you could make a list, then search for and note the definitions.
- Where there are words that may have more than one meaning, prompt the students to look for clues to clarify what is meant. For example, page 4 includes the plural noun "countries" and page 7 has the word "country" used as an adjective. On page 4, the map, the word "other", and the structure of the sentence clarify the meaning. On page 7, the context and photograph provide clarification.
- Have a dictionary available to confirm or clarify word meanings.

The students search for linking words and notice and use punctuation to clarify the connections between ideas in longer or more complex sentences or sections of text.

- Briefly review the ways that ideas can be linked within sentences. For example, you could write a sentence on the whiteboard and "break it up" to show how ideas are combined. Every summer / in France /, more than 150 cyclists arrive / from all over the world / to take part in the race. This single sentence conveys when, where, who, how many, where from, and why.

- Prompt the students to look out for commas and/or linking words (for example, "so" and "as") if they need help to track the links between ideas. To support your students, especially English language learners, you could model noticing the linking words and identify the relationship to ideas.

After reading

- The students can reread the text silently while listening to the audio version on the CD *Readalong 2010*.
- Have the students share with a partner any sections of text they found difficult and the strategies they used to clarify their understanding. Listen to the discussions. Do you need to follow up on any comprehension or word-solving strategies?
- Return to the idea of how the wearer of the yellow jersey is decided. Ask questions to focus the students' thinking. For example: *Why is the cyclist on page 8 (or 9) wearing a yellow jersey?* (Because he is the fastest cyclist in the race so far.) *Will he wear the yellow jersey the next day as well?* (Only if he is still the fastest cyclist overall.) *Did the person wearing the yellow jersey win the stage?* (He might have won the stage, but he would also need to be the fastest cyclist so far. There isn't a special jersey for the person who wins a stage.)
- Focus on some aspects of word structure, for example, the use of the suffix "est" in the superlative adjectives "greatest" and "fastest". Create a chart showing the root word and the "er" and "est" endings (great, greater, greatest). Build comparative and superlative adjectives from other root words relevant to the race, such as "long", "old", "hard", or "big". Discuss the word "best" as a synonym for "greatest" and how it and the comparative form "better", are irregular (good, better, best). You could also discuss this in relation to the word "most" on page 10 (some, more, most).
- Alternatively, you could focus on how the suffix "ist" is used to create the word for a person who uses a thing (as in cyclist, violinist, balloonist, motorist) or is a member of a profession (artist, scientist, therapist). Have fun looking out for or generating further examples.