



LEVEL 1 2 3 4 5

Rescuing the Temples at Abu Simbel

THE LEARNING CONTEXT

This teacher used social studies as a context for helping her students to develop literacy skills. Their task was to explain why and how the temples at Abu Simbel in Egypt were saved from flooding.

The students familiarised themselves with information on the Abu Simbel temples through close reading and thinking about selected texts. The class discussed the language features of these explanations. They took notes, exploring the ways in which the notes were structured. The students also studied a map of the geographical area involved.

The teacher suggested a format for the students' written explanations, emphasising the importance of including answers to the questions "What?", "Who?", "Where?", "When?", "Why?", and "How?". She explained that she expected them to:

- sequence their explanations logically;
- explain why the temples were under threat;
- explain how they were saved;
- conclude with a statement about the success of the operation.

The teacher encouraged much classroom discussion throughout the process. Once the students had begun drafting their explanations, she roved around and discussed their work with them on an individual basis. After conferencing with the teacher, Dylan went on to redraft his explanation, adding considerably more detail for impact.

Teacher-student conversations

After the first draft

Teacher: I think you've structured this well. What does your first paragraph tell us?

Dylan: Well, it's just the introduction. It gives a very basic outline of why the whole operation had to happen.

Teacher: You mean, it explains why the temples were under threat?

Dylan: Yes.

Teacher: Mmm, as a reader I reckon that tells me why. How did you decide what details to include in the process?

Dylan: I looked at my notes that I'd made when I was reading. I had the reasons why, who was involved, and how they actually did it.

Teacher: So that probably helped you decide how to arrange your paragraphs?

Dylan: Yes.

INTEGRATING READING AND WRITING

Writing explanations often requires the student to do research. Students should be given opportunities for close reading of selected texts that provide factual information. Teachers can provide them with a

selection of material for student research, including published texts that illustrate the language features of explanations. Teachers can help students to develop the literacy skills required to produce written explanations within a range of learning areas.

WHERE TO NEXT?

To move Dylan towards the next learning step, the teacher could help him to focus on impact, targeting the audience by using appropriate style and language. This might include using analogies, similes, or metaphors to engage the reader with factual information, particularly in the introduction and conclusion.

The teacher could do this by:

- modelling writing that uses these strategies and discussing the process;
- exploring models of writing that exemplify the strategies that Dylan needs to develop;
- developing criteria with Dylan for successfully achieving the purpose of the writing.

CURRICULUM LINKS

Level 5: Writing Functions: Transactional Writing

Students should write coherent, logical instructions, explanations, and factual accounts, and express and argue a point of view, linking main and supporting ideas, and structuring material in appropriate styles in a range of authentic contexts.

Levels 5 and 6: Reading and Writing Processes

Exploring Language: Students should, using appropriate terminology, describe, discuss, analyse, and apply the distinctive conventions, structures, and language features of a range of texts and explain how they suit the topic and purpose.

Thinking Critically: Students should interpret, analyse, and produce written texts, identifying and discussing their literary qualities, and explore and identify attitudes and beliefs in terms of personal experience and knowledge of other texts.

Processing Information: Students should, using appropriate technologies, retrieve, select, and interpret information from a variety of sources, and present accurate and coherent information for a range of purposes, analysing the processes used.

English in the New Zealand Curriculum, pages 35–36

NCEA links

Transactional Writing: Explanations

Achievement Standard: English 1.2 Produce formal writing. Unit Standard: 8812 Produce transactional written text in simple forms.



LEVEL 1 2 3 4 5

STUDENT'S
FIRST
DRAFT

Rescuing the Temples at Abu Simbel

Rescuing The Temples At Abu Simbel

In the twentieth century the population in Egypt has expanded rapidly, so dams had to be made on the River Nile to cope with the growing demand for water and electricity. The Aswan High Dam (actually called Sudd el' Ali) was constructed between Cairo and Abu Simbel but it dramatically increased flood danger potential. The temples at Abu Simbel were going to be flooded.

Between 1960 and 1970 the operation began. The United Nations Educational and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) helped in providing scientists, architects and basic manpower and machinery to aid in saving the monuments. It was decided to move them.

A survey from ground and air was conducted over the temples and surrounding terrain. The relics inside the temples were removed and their positions marked. An entire map of the inside and outside created for each temple.

The cliff rock above the temple had to be removed so bulldozers were employed. Scaffolding was put in the inner rooms to prevent parts of the temple from collapsing. They then covered and filled each temple with sand for protection. Saws fitted with special teeth designed to keep them from wearing down were found the most ideal tool for cutting the temples up. They were cut into blocks weighing up to 30 tons, then transported to their new home.

Finally, the process was reversed and the temples were re-erected. Concrete domes were created over each temple to make them seem to still be in a cliff setting. The temples had been saved.



Transactional Writing: Explanation

LEVEL 1 2 3 4 5

What the Work Shows

Dylan has explained a selected occurrence clearly and coherently. He structures his material logically and presents it in an objective style as appropriate to an explanation.

STUDENT'S FIRST DRAFT

DEEPER FEATURES

Ideas

Supports explanation with a range of detailed reasons that are precisely expressed and logically linked.

Structure

Sequences explanation confidently.
Links main and supporting ideas within and between paragraphs.

Sentences

Uses a variety of sentence structures with some impact.

Vocabulary

Selects and uses a range of precise vocabulary that is topic appropriate.

Language features

Uses the passive voice.

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SURFACE FEATURES

Uses the writing conventions of grammar, spelling, and punctuation with few intrusive errors.

REFERENCES

The first page of this exemplar has been slightly shortened to fit. To see the fuller version, go to www.tki.org.nz/r/assessment/exemplars/eng/