



## Overview

This story gently and implicitly explores the theme of bullying and provides opportunities for students to consider strategies for dealing with similar situations. Told through the eyes of a narrator, it portrays the tensions between Henry and Sefa but also focuses on the importance of maintaining personal integrity. The decisions taken by Henry and Sefa can be compared and discussed, with some analysis of the consequences. The story also deals with the responsibilities of those noticing bullying behaviour around them.

*Note: Some of your students may have personal experiences of serious bullying and/or physical abuse. Think about how you will deal with this if it arises during discussions.*

The story has a straightforward narrative structure and plot, with illustrations supporting key aspects of the story. The supportive structure and storyline allow an in-depth study of the theme and language features. There are several figures of speech, as well as dialogue and some colloquial language that provide opportunities for more explicit instruction. The text also offers opportunities for students to build on two key competencies: managing self and relating to others. An audio version of this text is available at [www.schooljournalstorylibrary.tki.org.nz](http://www.schooljournalstorylibrary.tki.org.nz)

Texts related by theme

"Shrinkage" SJ 4.2.08 | *The Bullet* SJSL 2011

## Text characteristics from the year 6 reading standard

sentences that vary in length and in structure (for example, sentences that begin in different ways and different kinds of complex sentences with a number of subordinate clauses)

figurative and/or ambiguous language that the context helps students to understand

As we walked to class, Sefa kept going on about the game. "We could've won," he said. "Henry's a wannabe hero." Sefa did an impersonation of Henry falling over. Everyone cracked up. When Henry caught up with us, everyone went quiet.

That afternoon in class, some of the boys were laughing with Sefa. They couldn't stop. "What's so funny, Sefa?" asked Ms Bonser. "Aah, nothing, Ms Bonser. I'm just showing the boys my picture." "Well, if it's that funny, you can show the whole class." Sefa couldn't keep a straight face as he held up his crude stick-figure drawing. "What on earth is that supposed to be, Sefa?" "It's Henry the hero! See there?" Sefa pointed at the figure in the drawing. "That's him dropping the ball." I couldn't stop myself. I burst out laughing. The rest of the class laughed, too. "I'm just kidding, Miss," laughed Sefa. I looked across at Henry. He was staring out the window.

some ideas and information that are conveyed indirectly and require students to infer by drawing on several related pieces of information in the text

abstract ideas, in greater numbers than in texts at earlier levels, accompanied by concrete examples in the text that help support the students' understanding

illustrations, photographs, text boxes, diagrams, maps, charts, and graphs that clarify or extend the text and may require some interpretation

## Possible curriculum contexts

### HEALTH AND P.E. (Relationships with Other People)

Level 3: Relationships – Identify and compare ways of establishing relationships and managing changing relationships.

Level 3: Identity, sensitivity, and respect – Identify ways in which people discriminate and ways to act responsibly to support themselves and other people.

Level 3: Interpersonal skills – Identify the pressures that can influence interactions with other people and demonstrate basic assertiveness strategies to manage these.

### ENGLISH (Reading)

Level 3: Ideas – Show a developing understanding of ideas within, across, and beyond texts.

Level 3: Structure – Show a developing understanding of text structures.

### Possible reading purposes

- To explore the impact of put-downs
- To think critically about the responses of friends and bystanders to others' inappropriate behaviour
- To make connections to our own experiences and suggest ways of dealing with unwelcome behaviour
- To consider why people bully others
- To explore how an author conveys an idea or message through a personal narrative.

Page 4 has suggestions for writing instruction. For more support and suggestions for accelerating students' writing, see *Teaching Writing across the Curriculum in Years 4–6* on the Writing Hub.



The Writing Hub

## Text and language challenges

### VOCABULARY:

- Possible unfamiliar and/or topic-specific words and phrases, including: “were even”, “marking him”, “dodged”, “cut across”, “sprinted”, “kept going on”, “impersonation”, “cracked up”, “caught up”, “straight face”, “crude”, “stick-figure”, “what on earth”, “competition”, “logo”, “massive”, “symbol”, “represent”, “interrupted”, “response”, “shot up”, “intending”, “symbolise”, “mumbled”, “maniacs”, “smirked”, “nark”, “designs”
- The compound words: “overheard”, “sidestepped”, “website”, “offloaded”, “lunchtime”, “halfway”
- Colloquial expressions, including “wannabe hero”, “Nah”, “gonna win”, “Dunno”, “didn't wanna nark”
- Figurative language, including “couldn't keep a straight face”, “rolling his eyes”, “everyone worked like maniacs”, “ideas bounced around inside my head”, “He was a magician”, “his pencil was a wand”
- Te reo Māori, including “tōtara”, “whakapapa”.

### Possible supporting strategies

Identify vocabulary, including colloquialisms and figurative language, that may be challenging for your students. Use strategies to support them to understand these terms – for example:

- Prioritise the vocabulary that is new and important for your students' learning.
- Give pairs of students two or more illustrations. Ask them to label them and make notes about the setting and what they predict the story might be about. Have the pairs share their ideas and create a chart that includes a vocabulary list and their predictions.
- Focus on some of the topic-specific words, colloquial expressions, and/or figurative language that make no sense when read in isolation. Provide definitions for these words on cards and have students match the definitions to the words. (It may be useful to provide students with simpler example sentences.) Explore these words in the context of the story. Have the students record some of these words and phrases to refer to in subsequent reading or writing sessions.
- Draw attention to the colloquial expressions in the dialogue and discuss how authors use this technique to engage their readers and make the story sound authentic. It may be appropriate to discuss the difference between formal and informal language.

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

### SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED:

- Experience of being treated unfairly
- Understanding of assertive behaviour
- Knowledge of friendship and the ways friends can support one another
- Knowledge of rugby as a game
- Knowledge of classroom dynamics (ways that some behaviours can affect other students)
- Experience and understanding of what happens when people bully others or are bullied.

### Possible supporting strategies

Provide opportunities for students to talk about situations where they have felt uncomfortable with the way someone is behaving towards them or others. Discuss how assertive behaviour can improve an uncomfortable situation. Be sensitive to those students who may not feel comfortable talking about situations. Prompt the students to share their experiences of how friends may have prevented them or others from being treated unfairly.

Ask students who know rugby to explain how players can score a try. Discuss expectations of support in a team game. During this discussion, highlight or feed in key vocabulary that is in the story. Some students may have little knowledge of rugby or of the topic-specific language associated with it.

Students who have a first language other than English would benefit from exploring the concept of bullying in their own language before reading.

### TEXT FEATURES AND STRUCTURE:

- First-person point of view, told in the past tense
- Use of complex noun phrases to provide detail and description, for example, “crude stick-figure drawing”
- Adverbial phrases of time and place: “At lunchtime”, “On Wednesday”, “under the tōtara tree”
- Ellipses: “Just kidding”, “Aah, nothing, Ms Bonser”
- Phrasal verbs: “cracked up”, “caught up”, “shot up”
- Mixture of simple, compound, and complex sentences.

### Possible supporting strategies

Review students' knowledge of narrative structures and help them identify who is telling the story. Some students may benefit from using a graphic organiser that helps them identify the different character actions and reactions, the problem, and the resolution.

During or after the first reading, focus on the author's use of language to describe the characters and events. Focus on some key sentences and help the students identify the headword or key idea by removing the other words and then examining how they support the key idea. Model how to look for the clues in the sentence. Try this with several sentences, but ensure that the students understand them in the context of the story.

Identify where dialogue is unattributed and help the students find out who is talking. They could read the text in pairs to work this out together, noticing the purpose of each piece of dialogue.



Sounds and Words

## Instructional focus – Reading

**Health and P.E.** (Relationships with Other People, level 3 – Interpersonal skills: Identify the pressures that can influence interactions with other people and demonstrate basic assertiveness strategies to manage these.)

**English** (Level 3 – Ideas: Show a developing understanding of ideas within, across, and beyond texts.)

### Text excerpts from *Just Kidding*

“Henry!” Sefa yelled. “Henry! Pass!”  
But Henry held onto the ball. He sprinted for the corner. We cheered him on. If Henry scored, we’d definitely win. Smack! Chris took Henry around the legs ...

“We could’ve won if someone had passed me the ball,” Sefa said, rolling his eyes at Henry.

We all laughed. So did Henry.

#### DEMANDS OF THE TEXT

Students need to:

- use what they know about narrative structure
- identify the narrator
- follow the sequence of events in a series of short sentences
- use what they know about vocabulary, sentence structure, and the context to identify the condition–consequence relationships and work out that the consequences are hypothetical
- make connections between the events and their experiences to make inferences
- use vocabulary knowledge and word recognition strategies to understand unfamiliar words and phrases.

### Students

(what to prompt, support, and look for as the students are reading)

*Students draw on their knowledge of sentence structure (especially the use of “if” to signal consequences) to identify the significance of the events on the first two pages.*

*They make connections to their knowledge of narrative text structure to find “We” and “I” and identify the first-person narration. After making connections to their own experiences of team sports, they infer that Sefa feels Henry let the team down by not passing the ball. They ask and answer questions to think critically about this decision and debate the issue.*

*They use the sequence of events and the description to understand that, although Henry didn’t pass the ball, everyone is OK, including Henry.*

*They use their prior knowledge of narrative stories and the events to form hypotheses about what will happen between Sefa and Henry.*

### Teacher

(possible deliberate acts of teaching)

**PROMPT** the students to pay attention to the short sentences and the use of dialogue.

- I wonder what’s happening in this first part of the story?
- How does the author help us to work out what’s happening?

**ASK QUESTIONS** to focus the students on the first-person narration.

- Who is telling the story? How do you know? What tells you this?
- Who are the main characters in the story? What information do we have about them?

For students who need support, you could model the difference between first- and third-person perspective by transposing “they” into the sentences “We cheered him on” and “We all laughed”. Explore the impact of this change. You may need to direct the students to notice the difference between “we” in the narration and “we” in the direct speech.

If necessary, ask questions to support students to identify the condition–consequence relationships and the way the consequences are hypothetical.

- Why did the students cheer on Henry?
- What was going to happen if Henry scored?
- Did Henry score?
- Who does Sefa mean when he says “someone”?
- Did “someone” pass Sefa the ball?
- Did they win?
- What does Sefa think should have happened?
- Why does Sefa say that?

If it is helpful for your students, you could circle “if” and label the two clauses (condition and consequence or cause and effect). Explain that “if” signals the relationship. Create cause-and-effect flow charts to show the relationships – perhaps both for what did happen and what didn’t happen.

**PROMPT** the students to think critically about the theme.

- Talk with a partner about how we know what Sefa feels about Henry’s actions. Find the parts of the text that tell you that. What would you feel like if you were Sefa? Henry? What do you think each should do?

#### GIVE FEEDBACK

- Sometimes short sentences aren’t easy to read, and I noticed you slowed down and reread the first couple of pages to follow the sequence of events. Try that again over the next few pages if you feel you are losing the thread. Repeat the events in your head as you read.

#### MONITORING THE IMPACT OF TEACHING

Monitor the strategies that students use as they read. Notice whether they change the pace of their reading to focus on specific parts of the text.

Listen in to their discussions as they think, pair, and share. Look for any confusion in their thinking due to the figurative or descriptive language. If necessary, refocus the students on some of the language or text features and support them to work together to unpack those features using their word and text knowledge as well as the context.

**MODEL** how to ask “in the head” questions to confirm the intended meaning. For example:

- Is that what this sentence means?
- Does it fit with the story so far?
- Does that seem right? How do I know?

## Text excerpts from *Just Kidding*

**Students**  
(what to prompt, support, and look for as the students are reading)

**Teacher**  
(possible deliberate acts of teaching)

"It's Henry the hero! See there?" Sefa pointed at the figure in the drawing. "That's him dropping the ball."

I couldn't stop myself. I burst out laughing. The rest of the class laughed, too.

"I'm just kidding, Miss," laughed Sefa.

I looked across at Henry. He was staring out the window.

When I walked into class on Monday, Henry was sitting by himself.

Henry stiffened and looked away.

"Just kidding, man. Can't you take a joke?" said Sefa as he walked off. There was no smile on his face.

### DEMANDS OF THE TEXT

Students need to:

- follow the sequence of events
- identify connecting pieces of information
- follow the story threaded through the dialogue
- follow unattributed dialogue
- interpret colloquialisms.

*The students locate information and make connections between parts of the text, integrating the information to make inferences that Sefa is picking on Henry and that Henry doesn't feel comfortable.*

*They ask and answer questions to think critically about what "just kidding" really means. They draw on prior knowledge and experience and integrate this with the information in the text to make inferences about the building situation between Sefa and Henry. They ask and answer questions about whether or not Sefa's comments and actions are examples of bullying.*

**MODEL** to students how to draw on and integrate information about the characters to make inferences about their motives and reactions. (You could use a graphic organiser to record each character's actions and the inferences.)

- We noticed earlier that Henry laughed with everyone at the end of the game. But now I see a change in Henry and Sefa. First of all, I found this part here where Sefa appears to be putting Henry down and making fun of him. He says he's just kidding, but Henry isn't joining in the joke. He's staring out the window. See if you find more information as you read page 6 that builds on this idea that Henry is not feeling happy and Sefa is rubbing it in.

**PROMPT** the students to explore the meaning and impact of "Just kidding."

- Talk with your partner about what you thought each time Sefa said, "Just kidding." Go back to the text to explain your answers. Use your own experiences to explain whether you think that Sefa is bullying Henry.

**DIRECT** the students to the parts of the text where others are joining in with Sefa and laughing at Henry.

- Now talk with your partner about whether what you have just read amounts to bullying. Take turns to explain why you do or don't think that.

### GIVE FEEDBACK

- You've just told me that you found three pieces of evidence to back up your inference. That's exactly what you need to do to integrate information.
- You've found several places where there is information about Sefa's behaviour. Now collect this information together, which is integrating, and make an inference about Sefa's motives.

### MONITORING THE IMPACT OF TEACHING

Pay close attention to how students find and use different parts of the text to integrate the ideas and information. If they are confused or unsure, model integrating by pulling out the key parts (on a whiteboard, an interactive whiteboard, or a chart). Show how each piece is connected by theme or key ideas and explain how together they support an inference or conclusion. Model the sorts of questions a reader asks "in their head" in order to find and use the ideas and information.



## Text excerpts from *Just Kidding*

“Very thoughtful, Sefa,” said Ms Bonser. ... “How did you come up with your idea?” Sefa mumbled something and sat down. I glanced at Henry. I knew the truth.

“Why didn’t you say anything to Ms Bonser about Sefa?” I asked Henry. Henry shrugged. “Dunno.” “But he stole your idea.” Henry shrugged again. “Didn’t wanna mark I guess,” he said finally.

I thought about what I would’ve done in Henry’s place. When the bell rang, I still had no answer.

For once, Sefa had nothing to say. He just looked towards the principal’s office and then back to us. We left him there. After a moment, Henry turned back and called out. “Relax, Sefa. Just kidding!”

### DEMANDS OF THE TEXT

Students need to:

- identify who had the idea and who shared it with the class
- recognise Henry’s change in attitude
- identify the role of the narrator in supporting Henry
- find and integrate information to draw conclusions about Henry, Sefa, and the narrator
- follow the story through the dialogue.

### METACOGNITION

- How did knowing about story structure help you to figure out what was happening in this story? What did you look for as you were reading?
- What sorts of questions did you have in your mind when you reread to clarify your understanding?
- What structures did the author use that you could borrow when writing your own narratives?

## Students (what to prompt, support, and look for as the students are reading)

The students **locate** information to **make inferences** about “the truth”. They **ask and answer questions** about why Henry wouldn’t tell on Sefa and **evaluate** his decision with their reasons. They use information about the narrator’s thoughts and actions to **make inferences** about the impact of this decision on Henry.

They **integrate** information about Henry’s response to Sefa stealing his idea and state why they think he made this response. They **evaluate** Henry’s decision in light of their own experiences.

They find the humour in the last sentence of the story and think critically about why Henry said this. They then **integrate** and **synthesise** information across the text about Sefa’s behaviour to establish whether he bullied Henry. They discuss the appropriateness of Henry’s response and suggest strategies for addressing bullying.

## Teacher (possible deliberate acts of teaching)

**DIRECT** the students to the sentence “I knew the truth.” Ask questions to clarify their understanding.

- Why does the narrator say “I knew the truth”? What is the truth?
- What do you think Henry will do?

**PROMPT** the students to think critically.

- Talk with your partner and consider these questions:
  - What have we learnt so far about Henry? About Sefa?
  - Why do you think Henry won’t tell on Sefa?
  - What do you think of Henry’s decision? Is it the right one? Use evidence from the text to support your decision.
  - What would you do – the same or something different?

**DIRECT** the students to Henry’s last statement.

- What do you notice about this statement?
- Why do you think he said it? Was it appropriate?
- Take turns at reading it aloud. How do you think Henry would’ve said it?

**ASK QUESTIONS** to support the students to think critically about Sefa’s behaviour.

- Skim through the text and find what Sefa does and says. Read out the dialogue. How does the dialogue help to show Sefa’s behaviour?
- Tell your partner what you think the author’s message is about Sefa’s behaviour. Take turns to discuss what you could do to address bullying directed at you or a friend.

### GIVE FEEDBACK

- I heard some of you telling your partners that you got confused about who had the idea of using the tree and that you had to read it again. That’s a good start, but when you reread, make sure you are clear about what you are trying to clarify. In this case, who said what is a big clue.

### MONITORING THE IMPACT OF TEACHING

Listen to partner conversations during reading to ascertain whether the students have enough information to think critically about the theme and issues the story portrays. If they have difficulty piecing the story together, slow down the reading, model specific strategies for thinking about the overall theme, or revisit the text the following day. You may need to create story maps or graphic organisers that connect the characters’ actions with the overall theme. Although some aspects may need explicit teaching, make sure the big ideas are not lost in the detail of reading.

### AUDIO TRACKS

An audio track of this text is available at [www.schooljournalstorylibrary.tki.org.nz](http://www.schooljournalstorylibrary.tki.org.nz)

Use the audio track to support students’ comprehension and fluency following reading.

## Suggestions for writing instruction

- Draw out the specific strategies the author used to tell this story, particularly the use of short sentences at the beginning. Support the students to create short sharp sentences when writing, focusing on the use of precise nouns, verbs, and adjectives.
- Focus on the use of dialogue. Explore how the author of *Just Kidding* used natural colloquial dialogue to make it sound real. Make sure that the students know the difference between what is acceptable in the narration and what can be used in the dialogue. Ask the students to create short dialogues for different characters showing how they might speak in different ways.
- Explicitly teach how to use complex noun phrases, including detail and description. Take the example from the story: “My idea is to use the big tree outside the principal’s office” and innovate to create different sentences. My idea is to use the ... (what and where). Explain that students can add this kind of prepositional phrase (outside the principal’s office) to give the location relating to a noun. Model adding these kinds of phrases to modify nouns in other sentences and support students to start using them in their writing.

 Writing standard: by the end of year 6

 The Literacy Learning Progressions

 Assessment Resource Banks