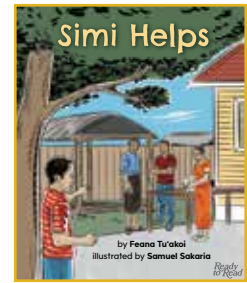


Simi Helps

by Feana Tu'akoi
illustrated by Samuel Sakaria

This text is levelled at Yellow 3.



Overview

Simi's family is preparing an 'umu and Simi wants to help but nobody has a job for him. As he sits under a tree thinking it's not fair, he notices there is no smoke coming up from the 'umu. When he alerts Dad and Papa, they realise the fire has gone out and that they needed his help after all. This text, which features a Tongan family, provides opportunities for students to form and test hypotheses and make inferences.

Simi Helps supports the development of a self-extending reading processing system, requiring students to "search for and use interrelated sources of information" and use "a range of word-solving strategies and comprehension strategies to make or confirm meaning" (*The Literacy Learning Progressions*, page 11).

There is an audio version of the text as an MP3 file at readytoread.tki.org.nz

Cross-curriculum links

Social sciences (level 1, social studies) – Understand how the cultures of people in New Zealand are expressed in their daily lives.

Social sciences (level 1, social studies) – Understand that people have different roles and responsibilities as part of their participation in groups.

Related texts

- Texts about helping others: *Lost, Dragons! Dragons!* (shared); *Locked Out* (Red 2); *A Bird in the Classroom*, *A Friend for Mateo* (Yellow 2)
- Texts about family events or celebrations: *Diwali* (shared)

Text characteristics

The students are working towards the standard for after one year at school. Many characteristics of Green texts are also in texts at earlier levels but are in simpler forms. These characteristics are shown in boxes with a solid outline. Other boxes show additional characteristics.

Most content explicitly stated but also some implicit content that provides opportunities for students to make simple inferences and predictions (for example, why Simi sits under the tree)

The familiar setting of the backyard and the context of an 'umu, which may be unfamiliar

Sentences that run over more than one line but do not split phrases

Illustrations that support and extend the meaning



A range of punctuation, including speech marks, commas, question marks, and an exclamation mark to support phrasing, intonation and meaning

A glottal stop in the word "umu", to support pronunciation

Dialogue between easily identified speakers

The Tongan words ("talo" and "umu"), which are well supported by context and sentence structure. Note that "Nena" is an adaptation of the English word "Nana" and is pronounced in the same way.

To support word recognition, many high-frequency words, several of which ("Can", "Dad", "he", "help", "helping", "looked", "Mum") are repeated often

Interest words (for example, "fire", "knife", "meat", "smoke", "tree") and a wide range of regular and irregular verbs and verb forms ("cutting", "Go", "has gone", "help", "helping", "light", "lighting", "looked", "peeling", "play", "was", "will have to") that are likely to be in a reader's oral vocabulary and that are strongly supported by the context, sentence structure, or illustrations

Reading standard: After one year at school

The Literacy Learning Progressions

Suggested reading purpose

(What can the students expect to find out or think about as a result of reading this text?)

We are reading this story to find out how Simi tries to help.

Possible learning goals

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

The behaviours listed below link to the *Literacy Learning Progressions*. **Select from and adapt** them to set your specific learning goal. Be guided by your students' needs and experiences – their culture, language, and identity. (*Reading and Writing Standards for years 1–8*, Knowledge of the learner, page 6).

This text provides opportunities for students to:

- make connections between their own experiences and the information in the story to form hypotheses and make inferences
- identify (summarise) the main events
- make meaning by drawing on more than one source of information, for example, using the sentence structure and context to supplement information gained from partial decoding
- notice errors in their reading and self-correct.

Introducing the story

- Use your knowledge of your students to ensure that your introduction activates their prior knowledge and supports them for a successful first reading. As part of the discussion before reading, draw out (or feed in) new vocabulary and language structures that you think will need support. Note that you can listen to the audio version of this text for support with pronunciation.
- Use the illustrations on the cover and the title page to introduce the concept of a Tongan family preparing food to be cooked in an earth oven (an 'umu). Invite students, especially Tongan students, to share what they know. Note that an 'umu is usually reserved for a special occasion. If possible, show the students a video clip. Encourage the students to make connections to their experiences of a hāngī.
- Read the title and clarify who Simi is. Ask the students to predict how he might help.

- Share the reading purpose.
- Browse through the illustrations together (stopping before page 8) to discuss who the characters are, what is happening, and how Simi might help (or not). Rephrase the students' responses to elicit new language structures and the vocabulary that may need to be supported, for example:
 - on page 2, to elicit the phrase "lighting the fire", you could say: Why has Dad put his hand up? Why doesn't he want Simi to come any closer?
 - on page 4, clarify that Nena is Simi's nana and she is peeling talo
 - on page 7, to support "smoke", remind the students of the process of preparing the 'umu
- Stop before page 8 and remind the students of the reading purpose. Point out they have already found part of the answer. Remind them of their predictions.

Monitoring the reading

- Observe closely as the students read the text to themselves, intervening only if a student needs help. Note their ability to use print information, in particular initial letters and punctuation, to read groups of words together in phrases, and to manage the dialogue. Look for any instances of self-monitoring, cross-checking, and self-correction. Some possible prompts are provided below.
- Observe and acknowledge their reaction as they discover what happens and check their predictions on pages 7 and 8.
- As students finish reading, they can quietly reread the story until everyone has finished.
- If a student makes an error without noticing a problem, wait until the end of the sentence or the page before intervening, unless they stop reading. Waiting gives them the opportunity to notice the error and fix it.
- Some prompts that you could use include: *Did that look/sound right to you?; Are you sure?; Were you right?; Try that again ... and think about what would make sense.; Think about what would sound right and look right.; Look at the beginning of the word.; Read the sentence again.*
- Remember to base these prompts on what you know about the students' prior knowledge. For example, asking an English language learner if a word sounds right may not be useful if they are not familiar enough with English phonemes and vocabulary to know the answer. In this case, an explanation and further examples would be more effective.

- Reinforce the students' attempts to problem-solve, whether they are successful or not, for example: *You noticed something was wrong, and you went back to try again. That was good.* Or: *You are checking on your reading and fixing it ... that's great reading.* Other prompts could include:

Text in book	Student reads	Teacher prompt
Nena was peeling the talo for the 'umu.	Nena was cutting the t... all ... o for the 'umu.	Tell the student the word "talo", reinforcing the problem-solving effort. Then point to "peeling" and focus their attention on letter detail: <i>That made sense and sounds right, but does that word start like "cutting"?</i> <i>Try that sentence again.</i>
"It's not fair," he said.	"It's not fire ," he said.	Prompt them to think about the message: <i>You said ... Does that make sense? How is he feeling?</i> <i>Try that again and think about what would make sense and sound right.</i>

- For further suggestions about ways to support students to self-monitor (to cross-check, confirm, and self-correct), see *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 1 to 4*, page 130.

Discussing the text

- When they have finished reading, remind the students of the reading purpose. Summarise what everyone needed to do for the 'umu and review how Simi tried to help. You could use a graphic organiser to record the students' ideas.

Page number	How Simi wanted to help	What the adults said	Why the adults didn't let Simi help
2	He wanted to help with making the fire.	Dad said "No" and told Simi to keep away from the fire	A fire is dangerous. Simi needs to keep safe.
3			

- Encourage the students to share their responses to the story. *Should the adults have let Simi help? Was it safe for Simi to use a big knife? Or to light the fire?* Explain that an 'umu involves many tasks and that everyone (except the children) has a job to do.
- Discuss how Simi's feelings changed during the story.

After reading: practice and reinforcement

After-reading tasks should arise from your monitoring of the students' needs during the lesson and should provide purposeful practice and reinforcement. Where possible, make links to other texts, including texts generated from language experience and shared writing, texts from the wider literacy programme (oral language, writing, handwriting, alphabet and word games and activities), and texts from other curriculum areas.

Select from and adapt these suggestions, according to the needs of your students.

- Have the students reread the text aloud to a partner. Listen in, providing feedback to individual students and noting their ability to self-monitor and to use the punctuation to support phrasing and expression. You may also use this time to do a quick running record with a student to provide more information on something you have noticed.
- Provide many opportunities for the students to reread this text and to read other stories with similar themes (see Related texts). This also helps to extend their comprehension.
- Students can build their comprehension and fluency by rereading the story as they listen to the audio version. As well as providing support with the pronunciation of the Tongan vocabulary, the audio version also provides English language learners with good models of English pronunciation, intonation, and expression.
- You could practise reading the dialogue together to enjoy the drama, to practise expressive reading, and to extend their understanding of the story.
- Ask the students to retell the story to a buddy. Pages 14–18 of *Supporting English Language Learning in Primary School: A Guide for Teachers of Years 1 and 2* provides some useful guidance on supporting ELLs with recounting. To download a copy of this resource, go to [ESOL Online, Supporting English Language Learning in Primary School \(SELLIPS\)](#)

- Build vocabulary and oral language structures by having the students talk about things they help with at home, things they are not allowed to help with, and why they are not allowed to help. Create a summary chart together, such as the one below.

Things we can help with	Things we are not allowed to help with
feeding the dog	mowing the lawns
making the bed	hanging out the washing
washing the dishes	driving the car

Have the students draw and write about one or two things they help with at home.

- Ask the students to locate the verb phrases “was lighting”, “was helping”, “was cutting”, and “was peeling” on pages 2 to 4. Have them reread the sentences. Together, identify the root words and the “ing” endings of the main verb. (Briefly discuss the double “t” in “cutting”.) Create some oral and/or written sentences together using both verb forms. For example: Dad was lighting the fire. “I want to light the fire,” said Simi. The students could also add “ing” to some of the other verbs that occur in the text (“keep”, “play”) and create sentences.