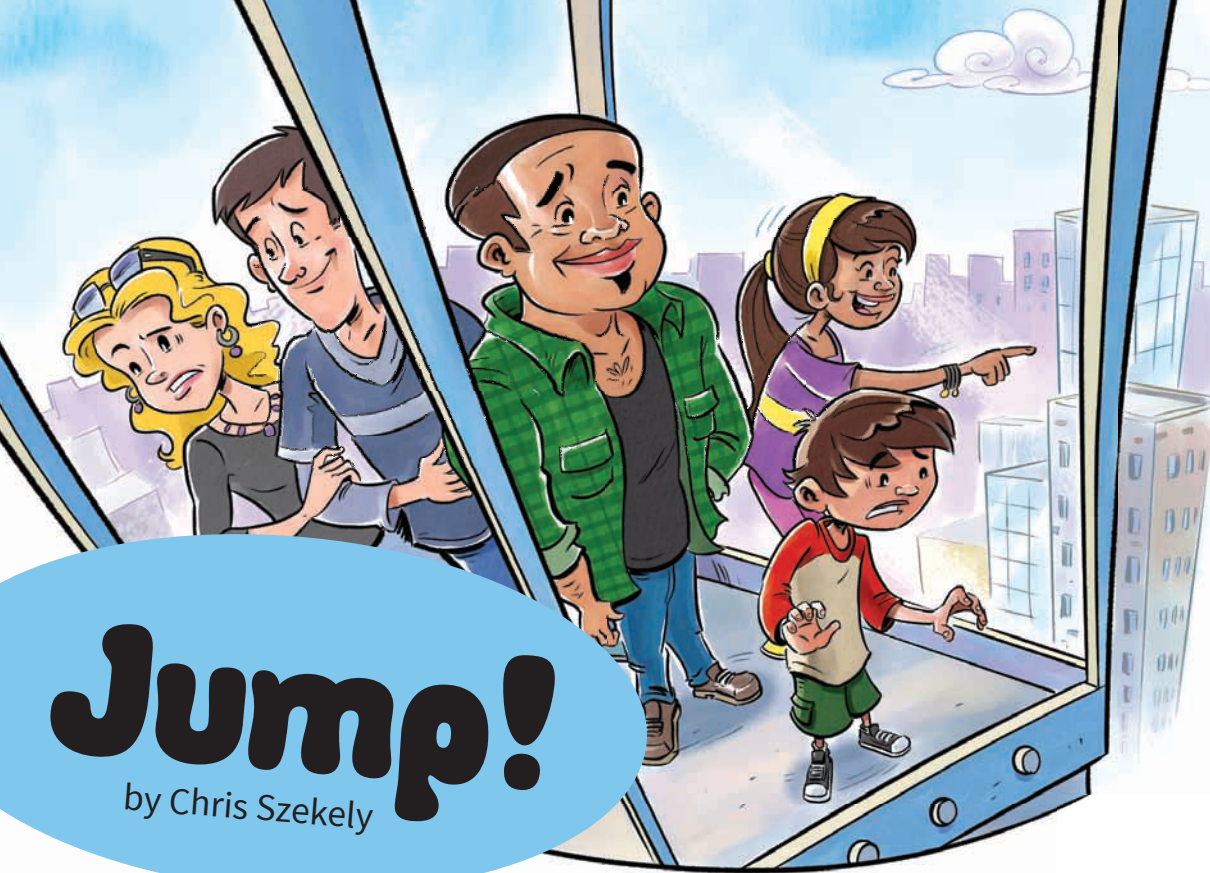


Jump!

by Chris Szekely



“You guys wanna do the bungy jump?” Uncle Hōne asked as they entered the lift.

“No,” said Pānia.

“Yes,” said Matiu.

“We’ll ask at the top,” said Uncle Hōne.

Going up, Matiu’s stomach felt like jelly. Although he’d never been to the West Tower before, he knew it was one of the tallest buildings in New Zealand. Now, he wasn’t so sure about the bungy jump.

“Look!” said Pānia. Through the glass panels, they could see how high they were. They watched the city dropping away below them.

“Ooh!” A woman in the lift grabbed her boyfriend. “I hate heights!”

“Me too,” thought Matiu.

The lift stopped, the doors opened, and they got out. There were heaps of people on the viewing platform, all peering through the floor-to-ceiling windows. The view was incredible – the city was laid out before them like a town for ants.

“That’s where your nana lives,” said Uncle Hōne, pointing.

“Really? How can you tell?” asked Pānia.

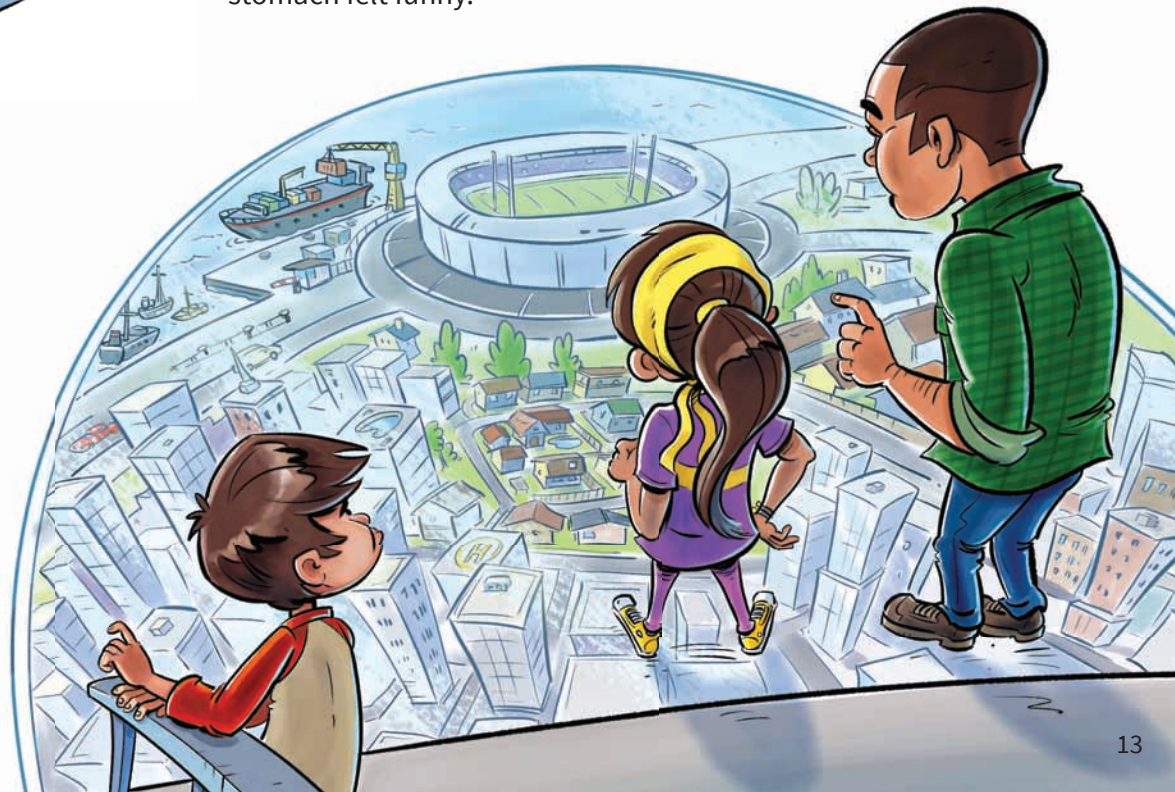
“See, there’s the harbour, and there’s the stadium,” said Uncle Hōne. “Nan’s place is south of that – and a bit to the left.”

At the edge of the viewing platform, the floor was also made of glass. Matiu watched Uncle Hōne and Pānia walking on the glass as if they were walking on air.

“How high are we?” Pānia asked.

“Only 292 metres,” said Uncle Hōne with a smile.

Matiu held on to the handrail. His head felt dizzy, and his stomach felt funny.



“Hurry up!” said Pānia. “Come and stand here with us. It’s easy.” She jumped up and down on the glass. Then she lay face down with her arms and legs spread like a starfish.

“This glass floor is perfectly safe,” said Uncle Hōne, reading from a sign. “It says here that it’s as thick as the concrete floor.”

“Like you, Matiu,” laughed Pānia.

“Nah, like you, Pānia! I’m more like hard as steel,” said Matiu, walking off to the bathrooms.

He felt sick. Jumping off West Tower had seemed an easy thing to do when he was on the ground looking up – but now he was up here looking down ...

“Kia kaha,” he whispered, splashing his face with cold water.

When he came back, Pānia and Uncle Hōne were watching a man who was about to jump. The man was on an outside platform with the instructor, and he looked nervous. When he jumped, everyone gasped, and the woman who hated heights squealed, “I think I’m going to faint!”

Her boyfriend looked at Matiu. “Your uncle says you’re going to jump. Is that right?”

“Yes,” said Matiu, even though he felt like fainting, too.

“You sure you’re big enough?” said the man. “I think they have a weight restriction.”

“That’s right!” said Uncle Hōne, with a wink. “I forgot. Jumpers have to be at least 35 kilograms. Otherwise they can fall through the safety harness. Are you 35 kilograms, Matiu?”

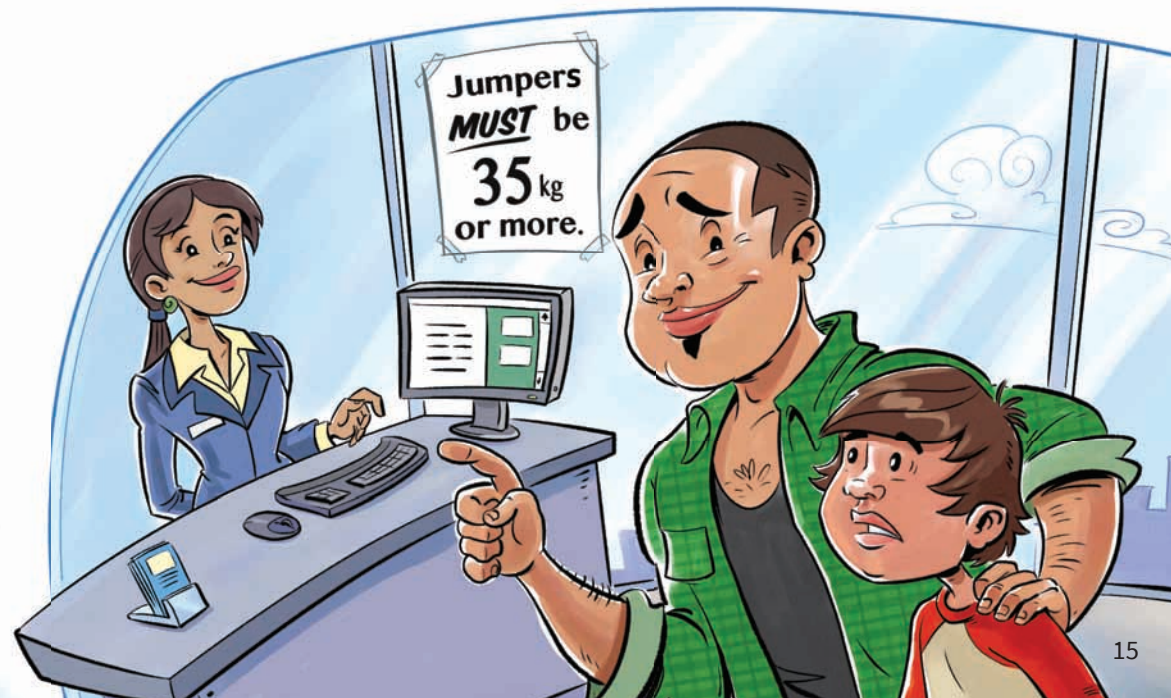
“Nearly,” Matiu replied.

“Nearly 25, more like it,” said Pānia.

“Sorry, man of steel,” said Uncle Hōne. “Looks like your jump’s off.” Matiu couldn’t hide the smile. “But that’s not fair,” he said.

“Tough luck, my man! That’s the rule,” said Uncle Hōne. “Put on a bit more weight and come back next year.”

“I will!” said Matiu. “I definitely will.”



“Yeah, right,” said Pānia. “You can’t even walk on the glass floor.”
Matiu strolled onto the glass and started krumping. Then he did a five-second haka. Then he dropped to the floor and did press-ups.

The crowd gave him a round of applause.

“Show-off,” said Pānia.

“You guys wanna get a photo before we go?” said Uncle Hōne.

“Yes!” said Pānia and Matiu together.

There was a photographer on the viewing deck with a special green screen for trick photos. When Pānia, Matiu, and Uncle Hōne left the West Tower, they had a set of glossy photographs in a cardboard envelope.

“This is my favourite,” said Pānia.

“Mine too,” said Matiu.

The photo showed Matiu and Pānia on the jumping platform. Matiu was falling backwards with a bungy cord attached to him, and Pānia was pushing him off.

“Let’s get it framed,” said Uncle Hōne. “We can give it to Nan for Christmas.”



illustrations by Scott Pearson

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Published 2015 by the Ministry of Education
PO Box 1666, Wellington 6140, New Zealand.
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Enquiries should be made to the publisher.

ISBN 978 0 478 44654 8 (online)

Publishing services: Lift Education E tū
Series Editor: David Chadwick
Designer: Jodi Wicksteed
Literacy Consultant: Melanie Winthrop
Consulting Editors: Hōne Apanui and Emeli Sione



[New Zealand Government](http://www.govt.nz)



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SCHOOL JOURNAL LEVEL 2, MAY 2015

Curriculum learning area	English Health and Physical Education
Reading year level	Year 4
Keywords	bungy jumping, courage, families, humour, siblings, tuakana-teina