

SCHOOL JOURNAL STORY LIBRARY

The New Zealand  
Curriculum

LEVEL


4



# FROGS



BY PAUL MASON  
ILLUSTRATIONS BY MICHEL MULIPOLA



*School Journal Story Library* is a targeted series that supplements other instructional series texts. It provides additional scaffolds and supports for teachers to use to accelerate students' literacy learning.

*Frogs* has been carefully levelled. While the contexts and concepts link to English and health and physical education at level 4 of the curriculum, the text has a reading level of years 5–6.

Teacher support material (available at [www.schooljournalstorylibrary.tki.org.nz](http://www.schooljournalstorylibrary.tki.org.nz)) provides key information to help teachers to provide the additional support and scaffolding that some students may need to meet the specific reading, writing, and curriculum demands of *Frogs*.

Tane checks the rad-monitor on his sun suit. It's in the yellow - but creeping closer towards orange.



The smell from the sludge in the ditch fills the air.

The car graveyard spreads out on the other side of the ditch. Cars from ages ago when regular people still drove them. The graveyard belongs to the Mutts.



You don't mess with the Mutts, everyone knows that.

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Tane holds his breath and listens.

He'll risk it. He might find something worth selling - something hidden among the rusted wrecks.



Could be a circuit board, a tyre, or maybe an air bag.

He can sell it at the market, make a few bucks, and charge up his chip.



The ditch had been a stream once, back before he'd been born - Mr Nicholson had told him. He'd even told him about streams with water that you could swim in.

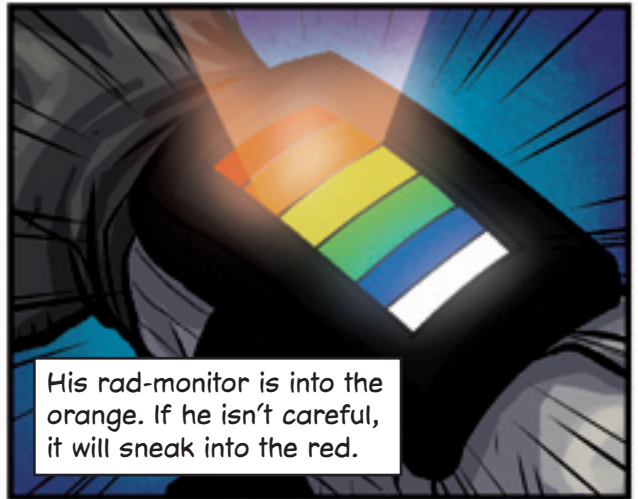
Tane liked it when Mr Nicholson talked about stuff like that.



Land of the Mutts! He'll have to be on the lookout.



Man it's hot out here!



His rad-monitor is into the orange. If he isn't careful, it will sneak into the red.



Tane looks at the cooling towers of the abandoned power station, standing tall in the distance - like silent, concrete giants. He'll use them to navigate his way back out through the maze of tangled metal.



In a glove box, Tane finds an old sat-nav and shoves it in his bag.



Then, hidden behind the seat of a small truck, he finds a prize.



A toolbox - the metal only a little bit scratched. There are plenty of tools inside too.



How come the Mutts missed this?



Should get plenty for it. Charge my chip; maybe buy a protein shake or two.

A movement catches Tane's eye. Ripples spread out in a pool of water.



What's that?

A rat?

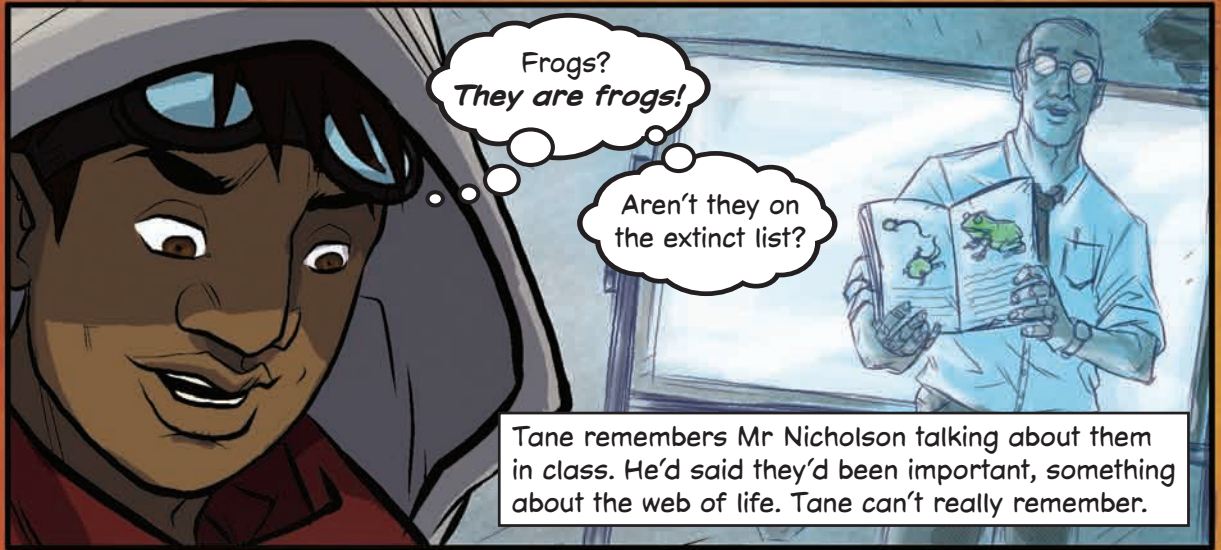
Tane hates rats.  
He shuffles closer.



Suddenly, his mouth is very dry.

Shapes move in the water - some sort of creatures. They have shiny, dark bodies no bigger than a thumbnail. Legs kick out from behind as they dart through the pool, and every now and then, they stick their heads out of the water, eyes staring.





Frogs?  
*They are frogs!*

Aren't they on  
the extinct list?


Tane remembers Mr Nicholson talking about them in class. He'd said they'd been important, something about the web of life. Tane can't really remember.

He smiles at the tiny creatures. Four of them kick around in the water.




They aren't extinct!  
*They're alive!*






They are the most beautiful things Tane has ever seen. How is it possible? Mr Nicholson will be blown away.

How can I take them back?



Too small. Plus, they'll drown 'cause they need air.



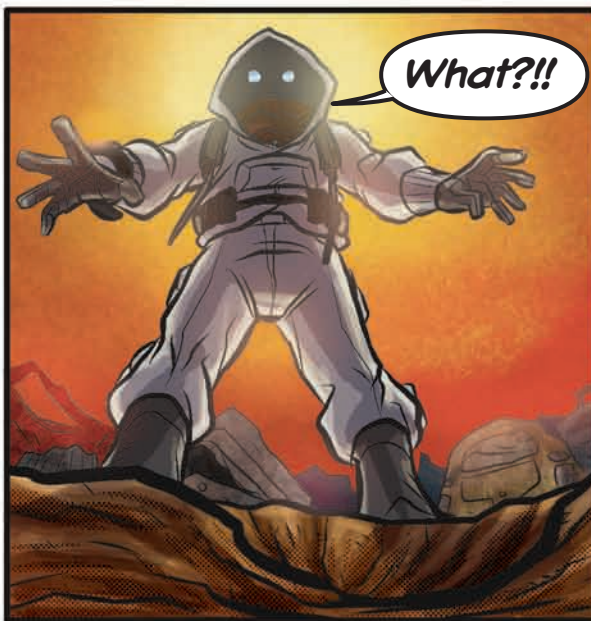
Tane will have to get something from home and risk coming back. He doesn't want to leave the tiny creatures, but they'll be OK for a bit.

After all, they're survivors.

Tane takes a last look at the frogs and notes the car's position to make sure he can find his way back.



At the edge of the yard, he squats down in the shadows, checking the coast is clear. Then he runs for the ditch.







I'm almost maxed!

You've got everything I found. How about you just let me go?

Tane's rad-monitor is creeping into the red. He's got to get some shade.



Can't come in to our yard and walk out that easy. Bet that's not all you found, is it? What did you find? Something too big to carry?

Nothing, I swear.

We'll tie you to a wreck and sweat it out of you.

We've done it before. Tell us and we'll let you go.



Tane thinks of the fragile frogs - their tiny legs, their gasps of breath - how they've beaten the odds to stay alive.



Then he thinks about what the Mutts would do if they found them.




Tears pool in the bottom of Tane's goggles, and he struggles to see through the blur.

I told you, there's nothing.

OK, tie him.



Be seeing you.



The sun beats down. The heat inside Tane's suit climbs higher and higher. His head begins to ache. Not long now, and he'll pass out. But in spite of that, he smiles. There are frogs, real frogs, and he's covered for them.

Tane flexes his fingers and fights to keep his eyes open. The distant wail of a police siren reaches his ears.

## *Acknowledgments*

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