A DRAMATIC-INQUIRY AOTEAROA TEACHER'S GUIDE

The Farmer with a Bad Back

A farm context for young children

Age group

4 to 6 years

Episodes

5 core episodes, with further episodes outlined

Curriculum focus

Communication and Language · Mathematical Thinking · Scientific Inquiry · Social Understanding · Physical Development · Literacy and Emergent Writing · Arts and Creative Expression

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DRAMATIC-INQUIRY AOTEAROA

Contents and Context Map

Ep.	Title	Narrative function	Keys	Student record
1	The Pig Pen	Opens the world. Children meet the farmer, understand his difficulty, step into the fiction, do the first job, and make a record.	Keys 23, 2, 25	Getting-ready-and-jobs list: drawings, marks, or early words
2	Checking on the Hens	Deepens the children's sense of the farm. Introduces careful recording through a new kind of work: collecting and counting eggs.	Keys 23, 9, 25	Egg-collecting record: drawn eggs, tallies, or numerals
3	Making the Farm	Children build a shared physical model of the whole farm, applying and organising knowledge built in Episodes 1 and 2.	Key 16	The farm model on the mat, used in all further episodes
4	Sergeant and the Escaped Sheep	First genuinely unexpected problem. Children face something the farmer did not plan for and must respond calmly and together.	Keys 7, 23, 25	Tools drawing: drawn and labelled tool bag contents
5	The Stream at the Edge of the Wood	Children slow down, look carefully, and meet Wiremu. A place that matters to someone beyond the farmer enters the story.	Keys 9, 23, 25	Peaceful place sign: shared version plus individual signs

Further Episodes

The final section of this guide outlines six further possible episodes covering the vegetable patch, prioritising jobs, an unwell hen, the neighbour, the water trough, the farmer's daughter, and a closing episode in spring. These are planning and extension notes, not live teaching scripts.

Context Overview

Overview

This context gives the children a simple, familiar story world to work inside. A farmer has hurt his back and needs help looking after his small farm. Through the work of helping him, the children can explore what animals and plants need to stay healthy, how farm jobs are organised, and how people look after one another in a community.

The context works well for children aged 4 to 6 because the needs are concrete and easy to understand: pigs need food, animals need water, pens need cleaning, fences need checking, crops need weeding, and the farmer cannot do everything by himself. The learning grows through looking carefully, talking together, making simple decisions, drawing, counting, sorting, mark-making, and practical problem-solving.

The farm can become a shared place the children come to know over time, with new jobs and discoveries added gradually.

Inquiry Questions

- What do the animals on the farm need each day?
- How can we tell when an animal, plant, or place needs help?
- What jobs need doing first?
- How can we help the farmer without making more work for him?
- How do people look after one another in a community?
- How will we know if the farm is getting better?

Narrative

An elderly farmer has lived on his small farm for many years. He knows the animals well, and he knows where everything belongs. He knows which gate sticks, which pig is greedy, which field gets muddy first, and where the hens like to hide their eggs.

But recently the farmer has hurt his back. He can still walk slowly around the farm, but he cannot lift, carry, bend, or do all the heavy jobs he usually does. Some jobs have started to pile up.

The pigs are hungry and their pen needs cleaning. Some of the other animals need feeding. The pond is looking murky. Weeds are growing among the crops. A fence needs checking. Some tools have been left where they should not be. The farmer is worried.

A Team of helpers arrives at the farm. The farmer meets them at the gate. He is pleased to see them, but he wants the work done carefully. Before anything else, he asks them to get ready properly: boots, old clothes, gloves, and listening ears.

After the pigs have been fed and their pen has been sorted, the farmer looks around the rest of the farm. There is still a lot to do.

The Team

Role: The Team are local helpers who have come to support the farmer while his back is bad. They are kind, practical, and willing to help with the everyday jobs on the farm.

Powers: The Team can move carefully around the farm, look closely at what needs doing, talk together about the jobs, and help decide what should be done first.

Responsibilities: The Team need to listen to the farmer, look carefully, take care of the animals, use tools and equipment safely, and treat the farm with respect.

Values: Kindness, care, patience, listening, and doing jobs properly.

Commission

Commissioned by: The farmer, with some quiet encouragement from neighbours who have noticed that he is struggling.

What is needed: The Team are asked to help keep the farm going while the farmer's back gets better. The first job is to help with the pigs. After that, the Team will need to look around the farm and notice what else needs care.

Why it matters now: Animals need food, water, and clean spaces every day. Plants need care. Farm jobs do not wait for long. If the Team can help with the most important jobs first, the farmer and the farm will have a better chance of getting back on track.

Other Points of View

The farmer

He knows the farm better than anyone. He is proud of it and likes things done properly. He is grateful for help, but he may find it hard to let other people take over.

The neighbours

They are keeping an eye on the farmer. They may know how some farm jobs are usually done and can offer useful advice.

The animals

They cannot explain what they need in words, but they can show it. They might be noisy, hungry, restless, muddy, thirsty, or waiting by a gate.

The farmer's family

They want the farmer to rest and recover. They also want to know that the animals and the land are being cared for.

What the Team Needs to Know

- Animals need food, water, and clean places to live.
- Animals can show signs that something is wrong, even though they cannot speak.
- Some farm jobs need doing every day.
- Some jobs are urgent, while others can wait until later.
- Getting ready properly is part of doing the job well: boots, gloves, old clothes, and safe hands.
- Pigs are clever, busy animals. They eat a lot, make a mess quickly, and need their pen cleaned often.
- Fences, ponds, trees, crops, tools, and machinery all need checking.
- The farmer knows the farm well, so the Team need to listen carefully and ask questions.
- When there are lots of jobs to do, it helps to look, talk, sort, and decide what should happen first.

Curriculum Objectives

Curriculum area	NZC link	What the children do
Communication and Language	Communication	Children develop confidence in listening, speaking, asking questions, drawing, and early mark-making. They listen to the farmer, talk about what animals need, describe what they can see, help make a jobs list, and report back using talk, drawing, marks, or simple words.
Mathematical Thinking	NZC – Mathematics	Children meet number, quantity, sorting, matching, pattern, and order through practical farm jobs. They might count pigs, match buckets to animals, compare full and empty containers, sort tools, make a feeding chart, put jobs in order, or notice repeated routines in the day.
Scientific Inquiry	NZC – Science	Children notice what living things need to stay healthy. They look closely at animals, plants, water, and the farm environment, then talk about what seems well and what might need attention. They explore simple cause and effect.
Social Understanding	Belonging, Contribution; NZC – Social Sciences	Children explore what it means to help someone and take responsibility for shared work. They think about how neighbours help one another, why the farmer may find it hard to ask for help, and what it means to do a job properly for the benefit of others.
Physical Development and Wellbeing	Wellbeing	The Team's work can involve safe, purposeful movement: putting on boots and gloves, carrying light equipment, sorting objects, sweeping, scooping, pouring, and moving carefully around an imagined farm. Children also notice wellbeing in others.
Literacy and Emergent Writing	Communication; NZC – English	Children make lists, draw maps, label animal pens, record which animals have been fed, make signs for gates, write or dictate messages to the farmer's family, or keep a simple farm notebook.
Arts and Creative Expression	Communication, Exploration	Children represent the farm, the animals, and the Team's work through drawing, painting, making, model-building, map-making, and other visual forms.

Literacy Links

Listening to the farmer: The farmer gives simple instructions about what to wear, where to go, and how to begin. This gives the children a clear reason to listen carefully.

Making a farm jobs list: The Team look around the farm and make a simple list using drawings, marks, symbols, or early words.

Talking through what to do first: The Team discuss which jobs seem most urgent. The teacher can support language such as "I notice...", "This one might need help first because...", and "What else should we check?"

Reporting back to the farmer: At the end of a session, the Team tell or show the farmer what they have done. This might be spoken, drawn, marked on a chart, or recorded in a simple farm notebook.

Reading the farm environment: Signs, labels, gates, buckets, animal pens, tools, and feed bags can all become meaningful print and symbol opportunities.

Making simple records: The Team can keep track of feeding, cleaning, checking, and mending using ticks, drawings, names, numbers, or simple marks.

Jobs That Need Doing on the Farm

Reference panel – use this page alongside any episode. These are the jobs the farmer cannot manage alone. The Team will work through them across the context, deciding what is most urgent and what can wait.

Job	What the team does
Feed the pigs	Check the pigs have enough food and clean water.
Clean the pig pen	Clear out old straw, sweep the pen, and put fresh straw down.
Check the hens	Make sure the hens have food, water, and clean nesting boxes.
Collect the eggs	Look carefully in the nesting boxes and record how many eggs have been found.
Feed the sheep	Check whether the sheep need hay or extra food.
Check all water troughs	Make sure every animal has clean water.
Look for broken fences	Walk around the farm and notice any gaps, loose posts, or open gates.
Shut and fasten gates	Make sure animals cannot wander into the wrong places.
Weed the vegetable patch	Pull out weeds so the crops have space to grow.
Water the crops	Check whether the soil is dry and water the plants that need it.
Check the pond	Look for murky water, rubbish, overgrown plants, or animals using the pond.
Tidy away tools	Find any tools left out and return them to the right place.
Sweep the yard	Clear mud, straw, and leaves from the main farmyard.
Check the animal shelters	Make sure shelters are dry, safe, and clean.
Sort the feed buckets	Match the right buckets and food to the right animals.
Make a farm jobs list	Draw or mark which jobs have been done and which still need doing.
Check the big tree by the field	Look for low branches, fallen twigs, or anything blocking the path.
Check the farm machinery	Notice whether anything has been left out, looks unsafe, or needs the farmer's attention.
Make signs and labels	Create simple signs for gates, animal pens, tools, or food stores.

LIVE TEACHING GUIDE | Episode 1: The Pig Pen

Duration: 60–75 minutes

Keys used: Key 23: Study someone · Key 2: Experience the action · Key 25: Write some words

CURRICULUM FOCUS

Early language and vocabulary development; emergent mark-making and early writing

Scientific understanding of what living animals need

Physical development through purposeful movement

Social understanding of helping and care

RESOURCES TO PREPARE

Visual resource on the board: gumboots, raincoat, gloves, pig, pig pen, shed, shovel, bucket (pictures only, no words — words added live)

Farmer's chair set beside the mat

Paper set out on tables (one sheet per child)

Sticky notes and marker pen for building the list

STUDENT RECORD

A getting-ready-and-jobs list made by each child using drawings, marks, or early words. The first world-building artefact — the team's own record of what they did and what they need for tomorrow.

TEACHING ROUTE

- Sit in chair — silent observation, children watch the farmer
- Return to mat — discuss what they noticed
- Back in chair — farmer speaks (sore back, pigs)
- Invite children into the fiction
- Enact getting dressed (boots, raincoat, gloves)
- Enact being pigs
- Clean the pig pen together
- Tea — quiet moment
- Build the list at the board with pictures
- Children make their own lists at tables
- Farmer's closing: 'Come back tomorrow'

KEEP IN VIEW

- The first TIR moment is silence — do not rush it

- The enactive phases (being pigs, cleaning) are the heart of the lesson, not warm-up
- All mark-making levels are right: drawing, marks, copied letters, words
- Leave the ending open — the not-knowing brings them back

EPISODE 1

The Pig Pen

Curriculum connections

Early language and vocabulary development; emergent mark-making and early writing; scientific understanding of what living animals need; physical development through purposeful movement; social understanding of helping and care.

Narrative function of this episode

This is the episode that opens the world. The children meet the farmer, understand his difficulty, step into the fiction through enactive play, do the first job alongside him, and finish by making a record of what they learned. By the end, they have been inside the farm, they know the farmer needs them, and they have a list that belongs to them and to the work.

Keys selected

Key 23: Study someone — the teacher moves in and out of role as the farmer; children observe his actions and expressions before interacting with him directly.

Key 2: Experience the action — the children enact being the pigs, and then enact cleaning the pen alongside the farmer, entering the world of the fiction through doing rather than through explanation.

Key 25: Write some words — the fictional context gives the children an urgent and concrete reason to make marks: a list of what the team needs to remember for tomorrow, when they will do the job on their own.

Resources

A prepared visual resource on the board: a simple slide or printed sheet showing clear pictures of the following, arranged in the order they appear in the session: gumboots, a raincoat, gloves, a pig, a pigsty or pig pen, a shed, a shovel, and a bucket. The pictures are clear and uncluttered. Each one is large enough to be seen from the mat. No words appear on this resource yet — the words will be added during the lesson, next to the pictures, as the list is built together.

What does this resource show the team, and what does it make them need to do next? It gives the children a visual record of everything they did and everything they used, in the order it happened. It makes the list possible: children can look at each picture and remember the moment it represents. It also supports mark-making at the tables by giving children something to look at, copy from, or respond to.

World-building artefact

A getting-ready-and-jobs list: each child makes their own version of the list the farmer suggested — using drawings, marks, symbols, copied letters, or early words, at whatever level is right for them. The pictures and writing on the board support everyone. The list is not a record of a classroom activity. It is the thing the farmer asked the team to make so they could do the job on their own tomorrow. It has a purpose inside the fiction, and the children know what that purpose is because the farmer told them.

The Encounter

Before the session begins: a chair is placed beside the teacher's usual spot on the mat. The visual resource is ready on the board but not yet displayed. Paper is set out on the tables, one sheet per child.

Opening: meeting the farmer

The children settle on the mat. The teacher sits with them, close to the chair, and speaks in the facilitator voice:

Facilitator: *When I sit on that chair, I'm going to be someone in a story. Watch carefully and see what you notice.*

The teacher moves to the chair and sits down. No further explanation. The teacher begins to rub her back slowly, wincing, shifting position as if uncomfortable. She does this for a few moments — long enough for the children to really watch — then returns to the mat.

Facilitator: *What do you make of that?*

Take the children's responses. Follow what they offer. If a child says he's hurt, or he's sore, or his back hurts, receive it and stay curious: "What makes you think that?" Do not rush toward the answer.

Facilitator: *I'm going back into the story now. This time you'll be able to hear what the person is thinking to themselves.*

The teacher returns to the chair, rubs her back again, and says, half to herself:

> *Oh, my back. I feel so sore. I must have hurt it yesterday cleaning out the pigs.*

She returns to the mat.

Facilitator: *What did you hear?*

The children respond. If they do not immediately mention the pigs, ask: "Did you hear him say anything about the pigs?" Once the pigs have been named:

Facilitator: *What kind of person looks after pigs?*

Take the children's responses. Then:

Facilitator: *This person in the story is a farmer. This is his farm. He's hurt his back cleaning out the pig pen. It's hard work, and he's not as young as he once was. I wonder if he would like some help. Shall we ask him?*

Slide 3 — picture of the farm

The children say yes.

Facilitator: *Well — if we're going to ask him, we'll have to come into the story.*

The children agree. The teacher stands, encouraging the children to stand with him.

Inside the fiction: getting ready

The farmer looks at the Team and speaks directly to them:

> *Thank goodness you've arrived. There's so much to do. Have you got your gumboots?*

The farmer enacts pulling on a pair of boots, slowly and with some effort given his back. He encourages the Team to do the same. Once boots are on:

> *You'll need a raincoat — I don't fancy the look of those clouds.*

The farmer enacts pulling on a raincoat. The children follow.

> *And your gloves. Those pigs are messy creatures.*

Gloves go on. The farmer looks the team over, satisfied.

> *Right then. Let's see what those pigs are up to.*

Inside the fiction: being the pigs

The teacher steps briefly out of the farmer role — a slight shift in posture and tone, no announcement needed:

> *Would you like to be the pigs for a little while? Let's be pigs for a while. Who knows what pigs do?*

As the children enact being pigs the teacher moves among them, looking and narrating what he sees in a quiet, noticing voice:

> *There's a pig with his nose right in the trough — he looks very hungry. There's one rolling on his back — they do that when they've got an itch. And look at that one — she's fallen asleep. Obviously had a very hard day.*

After a short time, the teacher asks the children to stand up and stop being pigs:

> *Right then. Let's get started. There's a lot to do.*

Inside the fiction: cleaning the pen

> *Each of you will need a shovel and a bucket. There are some in my shed.*

The farmer steps to one side of the mat and opens an imaginary door. The Team gather round. He enacts lifting a shovel and handing it out, then a bucket, one for each of them.

> *I'll show you what to do.*

The farmer enacts cleaning the pen — scooping, lifting, carrying — modelling the actions. The Team work alongside him. After a short while, the farmer winces, straightens up, and puts a hand to his back.

> *Oh. I'm so glad you're here. I couldn't do this on my own.*

The Team continue until the farmer says:

> *That should do it. Let's put these back in the shed.*

The tools go back. The farmer moves back to his chair, and invites the Team to sit on the mat.

> *I think we've earned a cup of tea.*

He enacts pouring and handing everyone a cup. A quiet moment.

The list

> *Now then. Do you think you could do that tomorrow on your own? I was hoping to rest my back.*

The Team say they think they can.

> *Here's the thing — when I'm learning something new, I always write it down so I don't forget. Shall we make a list? So you'll remember what to do and what to bring?*

The children agree.

The teacher steps out of role and brings up the visual resource on the board — gumboots, raincoat, gloves, pig, pig pen, shed, shovel, bucket.

Slide 4 — gumboots, raincoat, gloves, pig, pig pen, shed, shovel, bucket

Facilitator: *What did we do first?*

The children say: gumboots. The teacher writes gumboots on a sticky note, saying the word aloud as he writes it, then puts it on the board next to the picture.

Facilitator: *What next?*

The list is built together, in the order things happened, the teacher writing each word next to its picture as the children name the steps. Keep the pace steady. When the list is complete:

Facilitator: *There it is. That's everything. Now you'll each need your own copy — so you don't forget tomorrow.*

Task at tables

The children move to the tables. The list remains on the board. Each child has a sheet of paper. The teacher circulates in the twilight voice:

> *I'm going to start with the boots — that was the first thing.*
>
> *What are you going to put down first?*
>
> *I can see the pictures up there if you need them.*
>
> *The farmer's going to be pleased we've got this written down.*

Children work at their own level — drawing pictures, copying marks or letters, writing words, or making their own symbols. The board gives everyone something to look at and use.

Closing

Bring the children back together briefly. The teacher returns to the chair as the farmer for a final short moment:

> *Thank you. Really. You've been a great help today. Come back tomorrow and we'll see what else needs doing.*

The teacher returns to the mat.

Facilitator: *We know what to bring. We know what to do. I wonder what else the farmer might need help with.*

Leave that open. The session ends there.

TEACHER NOTES

The first TIR moment — silence and watching

The most important thing the teacher does in the opening is nothing. He sits in the chair and rubs his back without speaking. The children's job is to watch. Do not rush this moment. The watching is the work. If the children are very still and very quiet, that is the fiction being taken seriously — not a problem to solve.

Pacing the enactive phases

For four-year-olds, the enactive sections are the heart of this lesson. Being the pigs and cleaning the pen are not warm-up activities. They are where the children encounter the fiction most fully

and where vocabulary is met in context. Keep each enactive phase short enough to hold attention, but do not cut them in order to reach the list sooner.

The list at the board

Write clearly and say each word aloud as you write it. The children do not need to be able to read what is written. What matters is that they see marks going onto the board next to the pictures that represent their own experience, and that they understand those marks mean something.

At the tables

Some children will draw pictures. Some will make marks. Some may copy a letter or a word. All of these are right. The twilight voice keeps the task purposeful: "the farmer asked us to write this down so we don't forget tomorrow" is always available as a reason. If a child says they cannot write, say: "You can draw it — a picture is perfect for a list like this."

If children are reluctant to enact

Follow rather than lead. Some children will need to watch for a moment before joining. The teacher doing it is the invitation. Do not instruct children to participate — simply continue, and most will follow when they are ready.

Leaving the ending open

The farmer's final line — "come back tomorrow and we'll see what else needs doing" — is the thread that connects to the next episode. Do not tell the children what that will be. The not-knowing is what brings them back.

LIVE TEACHING GUIDE | Episode 2: Checking on the Hens

Duration: 55–70 minutes

Keys used: Key 23: Study someone · Key 9: Study an image · Key 25: Write some words

CURRICULUM FOCUS

Early literacy and mark-making through recording

Mathematical thinking through counting and tallying

Scientific understanding of what living things need

Physical development through careful, purposeful movement

Language development through modelling vocabulary in context

RESOURCES TO PREPARE

Photograph on the board: warm image of the inside of a henhouse with nesting boxes, straw, and a hen sitting quietly

Small pieces of paper (egg-sized) for drawing one egg each

Paper at tables (one sheet per child)

STUDENT RECORD

An egg-collecting record: each child marks how many eggs the team found — drawn eggs, a tally, a numeral, or a combination. The farm notebook is beginning to build.

TEACHING ROUTE

- Gather on mat — recall last time
- Farmer in chair — directs team to the hens
- Study henhouse image on the board
- Enact entering the henhouse (twilight voice)
- Enact lifting hens and collecting eggs
- Count the eggs together
- Return to mat — farmer asks for the record
- Children make egg records at tables
- Farmer's closing — plants fence post detail for Episode 4

KEEP IN VIEW

- Move slowly throughout the enactment — the constraint is what the fiction requires
- The count is real: land on a number and keep it
- Egg-sized paper pieces make the record concrete
- The wobbly fence post is planted here — note it when the farmer mentions it

EPISODE 2

Checking on the Hens

Curriculum connections

Early literacy and mark-making through recording; mathematical thinking through counting and tallying; scientific understanding of what living things need; physical development through careful, purposeful movement; language development through modelling vocabulary in context.

Narrative function of this episode

The pig pen is done. The team have proved they can be trusted with a job. Now the farmer directs them to the next task. This episode deepens the children's sense of the farm as a real place with real needs, introduces a new animal and a new kind of careful work, and gives the team their first experience of recording something that genuinely matters — how many eggs were found.

Keys selected

Key 23: Study someone — the teacher moves in and out of role as the farmer; the farmer directs the team to the henhouse and models the care needed around the hens.

Key 9: Study an image — children look closely at a photograph of a henhouse and nesting boxes before they enact going inside.

Key 25: Write some words — the team records how many eggs were collected, using marks, tallies, drawings, or early numerals.

Resources

A photograph displayed on the board: a clear, warm image of the inside of a henhouse — nesting boxes visible, straw, perhaps a hen sitting quietly in a box. The image should be calm and detailed enough for children to notice several things. It is what the team looks at before they go anywhere near the hens.

Image generation prompt: A warm, clear photograph of the inside of a small traditional henhouse. Wooden nesting boxes line one wall, filled with clean golden straw. One or two brown hens sit quietly in the boxes. Soft natural light comes through a small window. The space is tidy and familiar. No people visible. Suitable for young children aged four to five to look at closely and talk about.

World-building artefact

An egg-collecting record: each child marks how many eggs the team found, using their own mark-making — a drawn egg for each one, a tally, a numeral, or a combination. The record sits alongside yesterday's list. The farm notebook is beginning to build.

The Encounter

Slide 5 — picture of the farm

Opening on the mat

Gather the children on the mat. Let them settle. Then, in the facilitator voice:

Facilitator: *Do you remember what we did last time? We came to help the farmer with the pigs. His back was sore and he couldn't do the heavy jobs on his own.*

Pause. Let the children respond if they want to. Then:

Facilitator: *I wonder how he's getting on today. Shall we see?*

The teacher moves to the chair and sits down. The signal is the same as last time — sitting in the chair is enough. A moment of stillness, then the farmer begins. He shifts carefully, one hand on his back.

> *Oh. Morning. I'm glad you're back. I had a rest yesterday after you'd gone — that helped a bit. The pigs are settled, thank you for that.*

He looks toward the other side of the mat.

> *But I haven't been able to get to the hens yet. They'll need checking. And the eggs — I don't know how many there'll be today. Someone needs to go in carefully and have a look.*

He looks back at the children.

> *Have you been inside a henhouse before?*

He listens to whatever the children offer, responding simply and in character.

> *The main thing is to move slowly. Hens don't like sudden movements or loud noises. If a hen is sitting in her box, you lift her very gently — like this —*

The farmer demonstrates with his hands: slow, careful, cupped — the gesture of lifting something fragile and alive.

> *— and then you reach underneath and feel for the eggs. One at a time. Into the basket. Carefully.*

He winces slightly as he gestures, hand going to his back.

> *I'd do it myself, but — well. You can see.*

The teacher exits the role of the farmer, returning to the mat. A pause, then in the twilight voice:

> *We'd better have a look at what we're walking into before we go in there. There's a picture here of a henhouse — let's see what we notice.*

Slide 6 — inside the henhouse

Studying the image

Bring up the photograph. Use noticing language:

Facilitator: *Can you see the hens?*

Keep the inductive sequence: notice first, stay with description before moving to interpretation. Do not rush to name everything. Let the children find things.

Facilitator: *You remember what the farmer said about lifting up the hens to find the eggs?*

Facilitator: *Right. Let's go and check.*

Enacting the henhouse

The teacher stands and moves to a clear space on the mat. In the twilight voice, gesturing to the space around them:

> *This is the henhouse. We need to open the door very carefully — we don't want to startle the hens.*

The teacher enacts opening a low door slowly, ducking slightly, stepping inside. The children follow.

> *It's quite dark in here. And it smells of straw. Let's give the hens a moment to get used to us being here.*

A brief stillness. The teacher looks around the imagined space.

> *You can see the nesting boxes on the shelves along the wall. There's one of the hens — look at her. She's watching us.*

Now the farmer models the lifting. Slow, deliberate, both hands cupped, leaning gently toward an imagined box.

> *Hello. There we go. Gently does it.*

He lifts the imagined hen, holds her for a moment.

> *Right — let's see if there's an egg.*

He reaches underneath with one hand, finds something, brings it out with great care.

> *There's one. Into the basket. Just hold out the basket for me.*

He passes the imagined egg to the imagined basket held by the children.

> *Your turn. Each of you — find a nesting box. Move slowly. See if your hen has laid an egg today.*

The children enact this. The teacher circulates in the twilight voice, moving quietly among them:

> *Oh, she's a calm one, that hen. You're doing that just right. Can you feel how warm she is?*

> *Careful — don't tip the basket.*

> *I wonder if there are any more in the boxes at the back.*

> *How many have you got so far? We'll need to count them all at the end.*

If a child drops an imagined egg, the teacher responds in the twilight voice without breaking the fiction:

> *Oh — let's hope that one's alright. The farmer will want to know if any broke.*

When the children have worked through the boxes:

> *I think we've checked them all. Let's count what we've got before we go back out.*

Count the imagined eggs together, pointing into the imagined basket, counting aloud as a group. Keep it simple. Land on a number. Then:

> *Right. Back out carefully. Mind the door.*

The teacher enacts stepping out, straightening up, and returning to the mat space. The children follow.

Back together and the farmer's response

Slide 7 — picture of the farm

The teacher returns to the chair. The farmer looks tired but pleased.

> *How did you get on? How many eggs?*

The children tell him the number.

> *That's good. That's a decent number for today.*

He pauses.

> *Could you write that down, please. I need to know how many eggs there are each day — it tells me if the hens are well. If the number goes down, something might be wrong.*

He looks at the children.

Can you make a record? Mark down how many you found?

The teacher exits role and moves to the tables in the twilight voice:

The farmer needs us to keep a record. Let's get that written down before we forget the number.

Task at tables

Children move to tables. Paper is ready. The number from the count remains somewhere visible — on the board, or spoken again clearly as children sit down.

In the twilight voice as the teacher circulates:

I'm going to draw one egg for each one we found.

There is a pile of small bits of paper, egg size, ready for the children to draw on — one egg for each piece.

The farmer said he needs to know if the number goes down. So this record matters.

Once the children have drawn the eggs, count them together and put them into groups.

Closing

Gather the children back briefly. The teacher returns once more to the chair. The team report back to the farmer.

Thank you. I'll add this to my records. The hens seem well today — that's a relief.

A pause.

There's still the water troughs to check. And I noticed one of the fence posts near the lower field is looking a bit wobbly. But that can wait until next time.

He feels his back, shifting carefully.

You'd better get off home. Same time tomorrow?

The teacher exits role and returns to the mat.

Facilitator: *The farmer's got a list of things still to do. I wonder which one we should look at next.*

Leave it there. The question stays open.

TEACHER NOTES

Move slowly throughout

The constraint on movement — slow and careful, don't startle the hens — is not a behavioural instruction. It is what the fiction requires. The children should understand this distinction: they move slowly because that is how you treat hens, not because they are being told to behave.

The count is real

Land on an actual number when the eggs are counted. Keep it. The children will remember it. The egg record at the tables only works if there is a real number to record. Do not let the count drift.

Egg-sized paper pieces

Small pieces of paper, roughly egg-shaped, make the counting record concrete and manageable for very young children. Drawing one egg per piece, then counting and grouping the pieces, is mathematical thinking with a clear purpose.

The wobbly fence post

The farmer mentions it in the closing. Note it. It returns in Episode 3 and is the seed of Episode 4. Let children respond if they do — "we should fix that" — but don't resolve it yet.

LIVE TEACHING GUIDE | Episode 3: Making the Farm

Duration: 60–80 minutes

Keys used: Key 16: Create a settlement

CURRICULUM FOCUS

Mathematical thinking through spatial reasoning, sorting, and organising

Scientific understanding of farm environments and what animals need

Language development through describing, explaining, and making decisions together

Arts and creative expression through model-building and collaborative construction

Social understanding through shared decision-making

RESOURCES TO PREPARE

Aerial or elevated photograph of a small traditional farm on the board — farmhouse, barn, pig pen, henhouse, vegetable patch, pond, fenced fields, gate

Toy farm animals: pigs, hens, sheep

Wooden blocks of various sizes for buildings and fences

Toy tractor; lengths of string or fabric strips for fences and paths

Small piece of blue fabric or paper for the pond; green fabric or felt for fields

Small sticks or twigs for fence posts (if available)

STUDENT RECORD

The farm model on the mat — used in all further episodes. Children's shared physical version of the world they are working inside.

TEACHING ROUTE

- Recall Episodes 1 and 2
- Introduce the building task and the materials
- Study the aerial farm image
- Build the farm on the mat together
- Sit back and look at what has been made
- Narrator voice — the farm story
- Farmer in chair — responds to the farm on the mat
- Farmer points to the wobbly fence post: 'That might be the next job'

KEEP IN VIEW

- Building is mathematical work — spatial reasoning, proximity, relationship
- Children's placement decisions matter: follow their suggestions

- The farm on the mat is now the world for all future episodes — let that land
- The wobbly fence post is named and located here — this is the setup for Episode 4

EPISODE 3

Making the Farm

Curriculum connections

Mathematical thinking through spatial reasoning, sorting, and organising; scientific understanding of farm environments and what animals need; language development through describing, explaining, and making decisions together; arts and creative expression through model-building and collaborative construction; social understanding through shared decision-making and taking care of something that belongs to someone else.

Narrative function of this episode

The team have been inside the pig pen and the henhouse. They know parts of the farm from the inside. Now the farmer needs them to understand the whole farm — where everything is, how it fits together — because there are still jobs to do and it will help to know where things are before they go looking. This episode gives the children a shared, physical version of the world they are working inside. The farm they build on the mat becomes the place the rest of the context happens in.

Key selected

Key 16: Create a settlement — children build a physically plausible model of the farm using available materials, applying and organising the knowledge they have been building across the first two episodes.

Resources

A photograph displayed on the board: a clear aerial or slightly elevated view of a small traditional farm — a farmhouse, a barn or shed, animal pens, a vegetable patch, a pond, fenced fields, a gate at the entrance. The image should be simple enough for four-year-olds to read without being overwhelming. It is the reference the team uses when they are deciding where things should go.

Image generation prompt: A clear, simple aerial illustration of a small traditional farm, viewed from slightly above and to the side so the layout is easy to read. The farm includes a small farmhouse, a wooden barn or shed, a pig pen with a fence, a henhouse, a vegetable patch with rows of plants, a small pond, green fields with post-and-rail fencing, and a gate at the farm entrance. The style is warm and friendly, with enough detail to be interesting but

uncluttered enough for young children aged four to five to look at and understand. No people visible. Soft natural colours.

Materials from the classroom: toy farm animals (pigs, hens, sheep); wooden blocks of various sizes for buildings and fences; a toy tractor; lengths of string or strips of fabric for fences and paths; a small piece of blue fabric or paper for the pond; green fabric or felt for fields; small sticks or twigs for fence posts if available; any other loose parts that could serve as trees, gates, or crops. These are gathered before the session and placed to one side of the mat, not yet sorted or arranged.

World-building artefact

The farm model itself: a physically plausible layout of the whole farm, built by the team on the mat, with all the main areas the farmer has described. This model is the place the rest of the context happens in.

The Encounter

Slide 9 — picture of the farm

Opening on the mat

Gather the children on the mat. Let them settle. The materials are visible to one side but not yet touched. In the facilitator voice:

Facilitator: *We've been to the farm twice now. We've cleaned out the pig pen and we've collected the eggs from the henhouse. I think the farmer's been pleased with our help.*

A pause.

Facilitator: *But I've been thinking — what else do you think might be on the farm?*

Discussion.

Facilitator: *Shall we make a model together? I've brought along these things to use. Blocks for the buildings. The animals are in a box over there. There's some blue cloth for the pond.*

She looks at the image on the board.

Slide 10 — overview of the farm

Facilitator: *Here's a picture that might help us get started. Let's have a look at that first.*

Studying the image

Bring up the image. Move through it slowly.

Facilitator: *What can we see? What's that big building there? Where are the animals kept? Can you find the pond? I wonder where the gate is — that's where we came in.*

Work through the image using noticing language, moving from one area to another without rushing. Keep it observational first.

Facilitator: *Where did we work last time — can you find the pig pen? What about the henhouse?*

Then:

Facilitator: *Right. We need to build this. Where do you think we should start?*

One or two responses, then the teacher moves to the materials.

Building the farm on the mat

The teacher gestures to the open space on the mat and to the materials at the side. In the twilight voice:

> *Let's think about what needs to go where. The picture will help us.*

The teacher begins by placing one or two anchor points — a large block for the farmhouse, a piece of blue fabric for the pond — in roughly the right relationship to each other, referring to the image.

> *I'm going to put the farmhouse here, near the gate. That looks about right from the picture. Where do you think the pig pen should go?*

The children begin to contribute. The teacher follows their suggestions, adjusting, asking questions, building alongside them rather than directing from above.

As the children work, the twilight voice continues:

> *We need a fence around the pig pen — remember how the farmer said pigs can get out if the gate isn't fastened.*

> *I wonder where the shed is. The farmer said there were tools in the shed — we need to be able to find it.*

> *The vegetable patch needs to be somewhere the animals can't get to it. Where would that go?*

> *That wobbly fence post the farmer mentioned — I think it was near the lower field. Where shall we put the lower field?*

Place the animals as the buildings and spaces take shape — pigs in the pen, hens near the henhouse, sheep in a field. The toy tractor can be placed near the shed. Refer back to the image on the board when children are uncertain where something belongs.

If two children disagree about where something should go, the twilight voice holds it:

> *That's a good question. Let's look at the picture again and see what the farmer would say.*

If the building moves very quickly and children have covered the main elements with time to spare:

> *I think there's something missing. The farmer mentioned a pond — do we know where that should be? And what about the gate? We have to come in somewhere.*

If the building is taking longer and time is running short, begin the gathering while children are still adding final details:

> *We've got the main parts of the farm. Let's have a look at what we've made before we talk to the farmer.*

Back together to look at the farm

The children sit back around the edge of the mat, looking at what they have built together. The teacher pauses before returning to the farmer's chair, giving the children a moment to simply look at the farm from the outside.

In the narrative voice:

> *The farm sat on the side of a hill, as it had done since the farmer had been a child. There was the house he was born in, with the green roof and the path leading down to the gate. There was the old shed where the tools were kept, the pig pen, the henhouse, the vegetable patch, and the pond where the water gathered after rain. There was the tree he had played in as a boy, with the remains of the treehouse he had built with his father still tucked among the branches. Beyond the fences, the sheep moved slowly across the lower field, and at the edge of everything, the woodland stood quiet and still. The Team looked over the farm, and now they could see what the farmer had been trying to care for all these years.*

Then the teacher returns to the chair. The farmer looks at the farm on the mat. He is quiet for a moment.

> *That's it. That's my farm.*

A pause. Something genuine in his voice.

> *You've got the pig pen there — that's right. And the henhouse. Is that the shed? Yes — that's where the shovels and buckets are.*

He looks across the farm slowly.

> *That fence post I mentioned — the wobbly one, near the lower field. Can you show me where that is?*

He waits while the children point or move to show him.

> *That's the one. That needs looking at. If that post goes, the sheep could get out into the road.*

He pauses.

I think that might be the next job.

The teacher exits role.

TEACHER NOTES

Spatial reasoning is mathematical work

Children deciding where the pig pen should go relative to the shed, or whether the vegetable patch is safe from the animals, are doing real mathematical thinking about space, proximity, and relationship. The twilight voice can name this lightly: "We need the gate to be near the road, I think — so the farmer can get in and out easily."

If children want to play with the animals rather than build

This is natural and not a problem. The twilight voice can hold it: "Let's get the farm set up first — then the animals will know where they live." If a child is already moving a pig around the mat, follow it: "Oh — is that pig trying to get out of the pen? We'd better make sure the fence is good and strong."

The wobbly fence post

This detail has been planted across Episodes 2 and 3 and lands again here with the farmer pointing to it directly. Episode 4 writes itself from this moment: the team go to check the fence, find the wobbly post, and work out what needs doing. The farm on the mat means they already know exactly where to go.

LIVE TEACHING GUIDE | Episode 4: Sergeant and the Escaped Sheep

Duration: 60–75 minutes

Keys used: Key 7: Watch a drawing · Key 23: Study someone · Key 25: Write some words

CURRICULUM FOCUS

Language development through describing, labelling, and early mark-making

Scientific understanding of animal needs and behaviour

Mathematical thinking through sorting and selecting tools

Physical development through purposeful, coordinated movement

Social understanding through working together and responding to an unexpected problem

RESOURCES TO PREPARE

A large piece of paper on the mat and a marker pen (for live drawing of the dog bowl)

Photograph on the board: open tool bag with tools laid out — hammer, fence staples, pliers, mallet, work gloves, water container

Paper and drawing materials at tables for the tool-drawing task

Image prompt: canvas tool bag on grass, tools clearly arranged, warm natural light, no people, suitable for ages 4–5

STUDENT RECORD

A tools drawing: each child draws and labels the things they are going to put in their tool bag before heading out to the fence. Some will draw each tool; some will add marks or letters; some may copy a word from the board.

TEACHING ROUTE

- Live drawing — silent: teacher draws dog bowl on paper on the mat
- Farmer introduces Sergeant (imagined dog)
- Children enact stroking Sergeant; enact feeding him
- Children enact being Sergeant — then brought back
- Farmer gives the task: fence post and water troughs
- Display tools image — study together
- Children move to tables and draw their tool bags
- Twilight voice: cross the field, discover the fence is down
- Herd the escaped sheep with Sergeant
- Mend the fence; check the water trough
- Report back to the farmer

KEEP IN VIEW

- The live drawing at the opening is silent — do not explain it
- Sergeant is real: treat him as genuinely present throughout
- The moment of realising the sheep are out needs stillness — do not rush past it
- Keep the herding slow and wide: the constraint is what the fiction requires

EPISODE 4

Sergeant and the Escaped Sheep

Curriculum connections

Language development through describing, labelling, and early mark-making; scientific understanding of animal needs and behaviour; mathematical thinking through sorting and selecting the right tools for the right job; physical development through purposeful, coordinated movement; social understanding through working together, responding to an unexpected problem, and taking responsibility.

Narrative function of this episode

The team have built the farm and know where everything is. Now they face their first genuinely unexpected problem: the sheep are not where they should be. Before any mending can happen, the team have to respond to something the farmer did not plan for. This episode introduces Sergeant, deepens the children's relationship with the farmer, and gives the team their most demanding piece of outdoor work yet.

Keys selected

Key 7: Watch a drawing — the teacher draws a dog bowl slowly on paper in front of the children, without explanation, before the farmer introduces Sergeant.

Key 23: Study someone — the teacher moves in and out of role as the farmer throughout the episode.

Key 25: Write some words — the children draw and label the tools they need to bring, using the image of the tool bag as reference.

Resources

A large piece of paper on the mat and a marker pen, for the live drawing of the dog bowl at the opening.

A photograph displayed on the board: a clear, simple image of an open tool bag with tools visible inside and laid out beside it — a hammer, fence staples or nails, pliers, a mallet, work

gloves, a water container. The image should be practical and uncluttered, close enough in detail that individual tools are easy to identify.

Image generation prompt: A clear, simple photograph-style illustration of a canvas tool bag lying on grass, with tools arranged beside it. The tools include a wooden-handled hammer, a mallet, a pair of pliers, a small box of fence staples, a pair of work gloves, and a metal water bottle. Each item is clearly visible and easy to identify. The style is warm and practical, with soft natural light. No people visible. Clean background. Suitable for young children aged four to five to look at closely and talk about.

Paper and drawing materials at tables for the tool-drawing task.

World-building artefact

A tools drawing: each child draws and labels the things they are going to put in their tool bag before heading out to the fence. Some children will draw each tool. Some will add marks or beginning letters beside each drawing. Some may copy a word from the board. The drawing is the team's record of what they decided to bring and why.

The Encounter

Slide 12 — overview of the farm

Opening on the mat — meeting Sergeant

Gather the children on the mat. The large piece of paper is already on the mat in front of them. The marker pen is in the teacher's hand. She does not explain what she is about to do.

She begins to draw. Slowly and in silence she draws a dog bowl — round, simple, with a rim and a little depth. As she draws she says,

Facilitator: *There is someone on the farm we haven't met yet. He's an old fella. Spends a lot of time sleeping under the tree.*

She leaves that for a moment. Then she moves to the farmer's chair and sits down. The familiar signal. A pause. The farmer looks toward the edge of the mat, as if something is there just beyond the children's view.

> *Here, boy.*

He waits. Then his face changes — a quiet pleasure in it. He reaches out and begins to stroke, long and slow, the way you stroke a dog you have known for many years.

> *This is Sergeant. He works with me on the farm — when he isn't sleeping.*

Slide 13 — picture of Sergeant under the tree

He looks up at the children.

Would you like to give him a stroke? He's very friendly. Won't bite. He's too old for that sort of thing now.

The children enact stroking Sergeant. The teacher stays in role, watching them with the farmer's quiet satisfaction.

He likes that. He doesn't get enough of that.

A pause. The farmer looks toward the dog bowl on the paper.

I expect he's hungry. Could you open one of those cans of dog food and put it in his bowl? There should be some in the shed.

The teacher exits role and moves into the twilight voice, coming off the chair.

Let's get that can open. Careful — those lids can be sharp.

She enacts picking up a can, finding the opener, working around the lid. The children join in. She enacts spooning the food into the bowl on the paper, looking at it with satisfaction.

There we go, Sergeant. Get that into you.

Would you like to be Sergeant for a minute? Let's see what he's up to?

The children enact being Sergeant while the teacher comments:

Ah, he's enjoying eating that food — you can see his tail wagging! He's getting excited now, but I expect he's tired. Let's see him lying down and going to sleep… there he goes.

Then bring the children back:

Well, it's to be expected, he's an old fella. Can I ask you to stop being Sergeant. We have a job to do! Let's go and see what it is.

The farmer gives the team their task

The teacher returns to the chair. The farmer shifts, one hand moving to his back.

Right. Two things need doing today. That fence post near the lower field — I had a proper look at it yesterday and it's worse than I thought. And the water troughs need checking while you're out there. The sheep will need fresh water.

He pauses.

You'll need tools for the fence.

The teacher displays the image of the tools and the tool bag.

Slide 14 — tools

The farmer looks toward Sergeant.

Take Sergeant with you. He knows that part of the farm better than anyone. And if those sheep have been pushing at that fence — well. You might need him.

He looks at the team steadily.

Come back and tell me how you get on.

The teacher returns to the mat.

Well, we'll need to get our tools ready before we go anywhere. Let's have a look at what we're going to need.

Studying the image and drawing the tools

Look at the image of the tools.

There's the tool bag. Let's see what's in there. I can see the hammer — that'll be for the fence post. What else can we see? I wonder what the pliers are for.

Work through the image using noticing language. Keep it observational. Let the children find things and name them. When four or five items have been identified:

We need to pack our tool bags so we don't forget anything.

Children move to tables. Paper and drawing materials are ready. The image stays on the board.

The teacher circulates in the twilight voice:

I'm putting the hammer on mine first — that feels like the most important one for a wobbly fence post.

What are the gloves for again? I don't want to forget those.

Can you see the nails in the picture? Little things — easy to miss. Make sure they're on your list.

When children have had enough time to draw:

I think we've got what we need. Let's get our boots and gloves on and take Sergeant out to the lower field.

Crossing the field and finding the sheep

Slide 15 — wobbly post

Children return to the mat. The teacher stands in the open space, Sergeant notionally at her side. In the twilight voice:

Here, Sergeant. Good boy. Stay close.

She begins to walk slowly across the mat, looking ahead, looking at the ground, moving as someone moves across an uneven field.

It's a bit muddy down here near the gate. Watch your step. The grass is long in this part of the field.

She pauses, shading her eyes, looking toward the far edge of the mat where the children placed the lower field fence in Episode 3.

I can see the fence from here. That post does look wobbly — look at the way it's leaning.

She puts the image of the wobbly post on the whiteboard. She moves a little closer. Then she stops. Something has changed in her face.

Oh.

A pause. She looks toward the road beyond the fence.

The fence is down. Look — there's a gap where that post has gone right over.

She turns to the children.

The sheep are out. They're on the road!

She looks at Sergeant.

Right. This is what Sergeant is for. We need to get them back before a car comes.

She asks:

Facilitator: *Does anyone know how to give instructions to a sheep dog?*

Discussion.

In the twilight voice, crouching slightly toward the imagined dog:

Sergeant — away.

She gestures with one arm in a wide, sweeping arc, the way a farmer sends a dog out wide around a flock.

He goes wide — see? You never go straight at sheep. You come around the outside and bring them back toward you.

She demonstrates the movement herself — arms out, moving slowly in a wide arc, low and calm.

Let's spread out. Wide circle. Slow and quiet — no sudden movements, no loud voices. We bring them back through the gap and into the field.

The children enact this with her. The teacher moves among them in the twilight voice, keeping the work calm and purposeful:

That's it — wide and slow. Sergeant's got that side. You take this side.

Here they come. Keep going — gently does it.

Nearly there. Back through the gap — good girl, come on, come on.

When the sheep are back:

Right. They're in. Let's get that fence mended before any of them try that again.

Mending the fence and checking the water

The teacher enacts finding the fallen post, examining it, working out what needs doing. In the twilight voice:

The post has come loose. We need to knock it back in with the hammer first, then fix the wire back on with the nails.

She enacts the hammer work — two-handed, firm, steady.

Can you help hold the post straight while I knock it in? It needs to be straight or the fence won't hold.

Now the pliers — to twist the wire back onto the post. This is fiddly work.

She enacts this carefully, then steps back and looks at the fence.

That should hold. Let's check the water trough while we're here.

She moves to another part of the mat.

The trough's a bit low. And it's got some muck in it.

The team enact tipping it slightly to empty the dirty water, then miming refilling it from the water container in the tool bag.

There. Clean water. The sheep will be pleased about that.

She looks at Sergeant.

Good boy, Sergeant. Good work today.

The team give Sergeant a treat.

Closing — reporting back to the farmer

The teacher returns to the chair. The farmer looks up as the team comes back.

How did you get on? Is the post fixed?

The team tell him. His face changes when he hears about the sheep.

> *They got out? Onto the road?*

A pause. Something genuine in his expression — relief mixed with concern.

> *Good thing you had Sergeant with you. He knows what to do.*

He looks at the children.

> *And the water trough?*

They tell him.

> *Thank you. That's important. The sheep need clean water every day — same as us.*

TEACHER NOTES

Sergeant throughout the episode

Once Sergeant has been introduced, the teacher should refer to him consistently and naturally — he is at their side when they cross the field, he is the one sent wide around the sheep, he gets a word of thanks at the end. Children of this age will hold an imagined animal with great seriousness if the teacher treats him as genuinely present. If a child takes particular ownership of Sergeant during the herding — positioning him, giving him instructions — follow it.

The sheep on the road

The unexpected problem is the heart of this episode. Do not rush past it. The moment of realisation — she stops, she looks, she says oh — should be given enough stillness that the children feel the shift. The problem is not a disaster. It is simply something the team has to deal with, calmly and together.

The herding movement

Keep this slow and wide. Children of four will naturally want to run at the sheep. The twilight voice holds the constraint: slow and quiet, no sudden movements. The constraint is not a behavioural instruction — it is what the fiction requires. That distinction matters.

LIVE TEACHING GUIDE | Episode 5: The Stream at the Edge of the Wood

Duration: 60–80 minutes

Keys used: Key 9: Study an image · Key 23: Study someone · Key 25: Write some words

CURRICULUM FOCUS

Scientific understanding of natural environments, living things, and healthy waterways

Social and cultural understanding through Wiremu's connection to the land and kaitiakitanga

Language development through careful observation, describing, and shared writing

Early literacy through contributed and copied words and mark-making

Arts and creative expression through sign-making and drawing

Environmental awareness

RESOURCES TO PREPARE

Photograph on board: two older men on a wooden deck, draughts board between them, cups of tea — one Pākehā, one Māori, mood warm and unhurried

A length of blue fabric laid across one area of the mat to represent the stream

Objects near the stream: real stones and leaves (what belongs), plus drawn or card pieces for rubbish (what does not)

Large piece of paper for the shared sign (mat work)

Drawing and mark-making materials at tables for individual signs

Second adult (if available) to play Wiremu

STUDENT RECORD

A peaceful place sign: first a shared version created together on the mat with the teacher scribing; then individual signs made at tables by the children, which they put up around the classroom.

TEACHING ROUTE

- Display image of the two men — children notice and respond
- Narrator voice introduces the friendship
- Farmer introduces Wiremu from the chair
- Wiremu describes what he saw at the stream
- Walk to the stream (twilight voice or Wiremu leads)
- Investigate the stream — noticing, sorting
- Remove the rubbish; sort for recycling
- Return to mat — make the shared sign together
- Children move to tables — make individual signs
- Signs go up around the classroom

- Wiremu and teacher close the session

KEEP IN VIEW

- Wiremu is not a token figure — his connection to the stream is genuine and significant
- If no second adult: teacher takes both roles; practice the transition beforehand
- Scribe exactly what the children say for the sign — do not improve it
- The sorting task is simple: does this belong here, or does it not?

EPISODE 5

The Stream at the Edge of the Wood

Curriculum connections

Scientific understanding of natural environments, living things, and what healthy waterways need; social and cultural understanding through Wiremu's connection to the land and the importance of caring for shared places; language development through careful observation, describing, and shared writing; early literacy through contributed and copied words and mark-making; arts and creative expression through sign-making and drawing; environmental awareness and kaitiakitanga.

Narrative function of this episode

The team have been fixing and feeding and herding. This episode asks them to slow down and look carefully at something they have not noticed before — a place at the edge of the farm that matters to someone beyond the farmer himself. Wiremu brings a different relationship to the land into the story. The stream is not a job to be done quickly. It is a place to be understood before anything is touched.

Keys selected

Key 9: Study an image — the children look at a photograph of the two men on the deck before Wiremu is introduced, giving them a clear picture of who he is and his relationship with the farmer.

Key 23: Study someone — the farmer introduces Wiremu from inside the fiction; Wiremu is played by a second adult where available.

Key 25: Write some words — the shared sign is created together on the mat before children make their own at tables.

Resources

A photograph displayed on the board: two older men sitting on a wooden deck, a draughts board between them, cups of tea nearby. One man is Pākehā, one is Māori. The mood is warm, unhurried, the ease of old friendship. This is the image the children see before the farmer tells them who Wiremu is.

Image generation prompt: A warm, friendly illustration of two elderly men sitting on a wooden deck in afternoon light, a draughts board on a small table between them. One man is Pākehā with a weathered, kind face, wearing a farm shirt and boots. The other is Māori, with a calm and dignified expression, wearing comfortable clothes. Both men look relaxed and at ease, as old friends do. Cups of tea sit nearby. Green farmland is visible beyond the deck railing. The mood is gentle, unhurried, and warm. No text. Suitable for young children aged four to five.

A length of blue fabric laid across one area of the mat to represent the stream.

Objects near the stream: the teacher has a choice here. She can use real objects — a few small stones, a leaf or two, a short length of string or a small piece of plastic packaging to represent rubbish, a twig — or she can draw these on pieces of card beforehand, or invite the children to help draw and cut out the objects at the start of the stream investigation and place them near the fabric themselves. A combination works well: real stones and leaves for what belongs, drawn or card pieces for the rubbish that does not. The children placing the objects near the stream before the investigation begins gives them a sense of authorship over the place they are about to care for.

A large piece of paper for the shared sign, made together at the end of the session. Drawing and mark-making materials at tables for the children's individual signs.

World-building artefact

A peaceful place sign: first a shared version created together on the mat with the teacher scribing, then individual signs made at tables, which the children put up around the classroom. The signs belong to the stream. They are the team's way of telling anyone who comes to that place how it should be treated.

The Encounter

Slide 17 — overview of the farm

Opening on the mat — the image and the narrator voice

Gather the children on the mat. Display the image of the two men on the board.

Slide 18 — the two men on the deck

Let the children settle, then draw their attention to it. In the facilitator voice:

Facilitator: *When the team arrive the next day they see the farmer has a visitor.*

Let the children notice and respond. The draughts board, the cups of tea, the deck, the two men. Take a few observations without rushing, using noticing language.

He's an old friend — someone he had known for a very long time. They had met when they were both young men, a long way from home, and they had been friends ever since. When his friend visited, the farmer always made a pot of tea, got the draughts board out, and they would sit on the deck for as long as the afternoon allowed.

The farmer introduces Wiremu

The teacher moves to the farmer's chair and sits. The familiar signal. A pause.

The farmer looks toward where Wiremu is sitting — the second adult, positioned somewhere the children can see them clearly, calm and still.

> *Hello, again. I want you to meet a friend of mine. This is Wiremu. We've known each other since we were young fellas — longer than I care to remember.*

He looks at the children.

> *Wiremu's a doctor. But more than that, his family have known this land for generations.*

A pause.

> *He noticed something this morning. Something I hadn't seen. I'll let him tell you himself.*

The teacher changes role, now speaking as Wiremu. If a second adult is available, Wiremu addresses the children directly, simply and warmly — not performing, not theatrical, just speaking as someone who cares about a place and needs some help. If not, move chairs and play the second role:

> *Kia ora. I'm glad to meet you. I've heard you've been doing a good job looking after things here for my friend.*

A pause. Something more serious comes into his face.

> *I wonder if there is something you can do to help me. This morning, when I came up the lane, I looked down toward the trees at the edge of the lower field. There's a small stream down there — it runs through the trees and along the edge of the farm. My family have known that stream for a long time. It's an important place.*

He pauses.

> *I could see mud where the bank has been disturbed. And I think I saw some rubbish caught near the water. I don't know how it got there. But it needs looking at.*

He looks at the children.

> *Can you help me?*

Walking to the stream

Wiremu leads the team across the mat toward the blue fabric. The teacher moves with them in the twilight voice if she is not playing Wiremu, or Wiremu himself leads if the second adult is present.

> *We go quietly through the lower field. The grass is long here. You can hear the water before you can see it.*

A pause, moving slowly.

> *There it is.*

They arrive at the blue fabric. Everyone stops. A moment of stillness.

> *Let's just look first. What can you see?*

Investigating the stream

Slide 19 — the stream

The children and the adults crouch at the edge of the fabric, looking at what is there. The objects — stones, leaves, twigs, and the pieces of rubbish — are arranged nearby or are placed by the children now if the teacher has chosen that approach.

If the children are placing objects themselves, Wiremu or the teacher in twilight voice guides this:

> *What do you think belongs here, near a stream? What would you find naturally? Let's put those things close to the water.*

> *And what about these? Do these belong here?*

Once the scene is set, the investigation begins. Use noticing language throughout, moving through the inductive sequence:

> *What can we see in the water? What's on the bank? What do you notice?*

> *I can see stones. I can see a leaf floating. What else?*

> *What about that — does that belong here?*

> *I wonder how it got here.*

Wiremu adds quietly, when the rubbish is noticed:

> *That's what I was worried about. When things like that get into the water, they can hurt the insects and the fish. The water needs to stay clean.*

The sorting happens naturally: what belongs stays, what does not belong is carefully removed and placed to one side.

Only the safe pieces — nothing sharp, nothing we're not sure about.

When the rubbish has been removed:

Look at it now. Can you see the difference?

A moment of looking at the cleared stream.

Thank you. This place feels better already. But I think it needs a sign. Something to tell anyone who comes here how this place should be treated.

But first we'll need to put these things in the rubbish. Which ones do you think could be recycled?

Sort the objects and then return to sitting on the mat.

Making the shared sign on the mat

The children gather around the large piece of paper on the mat. The teacher has a marker pen. Wiremu sits nearby. In the facilitator voice:

Facilitator: *What should our sign say? What do we want people to know about this place?*

Take contributions. The teacher scribes exactly what the children say, reading each word aloud as she writes it. She does not correct or tidy the language. She adds a simple drawn border or a few marks the children suggest.

Facilitator: *Is there anything else we want people to know? Wiremu — is there anything you'd want someone to read on a sign like this?*

Wiremu adds one simple line, something about the water belonging to everyone and needing to be looked after.

When the sign feels complete, the teacher reads it back to the children in full.

Facilitator: *That's one sign. Now we're going to need to make some more and put them up so everyone can see them.*

Task at tables

Children move to tables. Paper and drawing and mark-making materials are ready. The shared sign is visible from the tables.

The teacher circulates in the twilight voice:

What are you going to put on yours? You can look at our big sign to help you.

I'm going to draw the stream on mine as well as the words.

When these are done, we're going to put them up so everyone who comes into this room knows about the stream.

When signs are finished, the children bring them and place or stick them around the classroom — on walls, on windows, near the door.

Closing

Gather the children briefly on the mat. Wiremu looks around at the signs.

> *Look at that. The stream has its own signs now.*

He looks at the children.

> *I'll come back and check on it. I hope you will too.*

The teacher, in the twilight voice:

> *The farmer's going to want to hear about this. And I think there's still more of the farm we haven't looked at properly. I wonder what we'll find next time.*

Leave it there.

TEACHER NOTES

Wiremu and cultural respect

Wiremu is a Māori man with a long connection to the land. He is not a token figure and he is not explained or simplified. He speaks from his own relationship to the place. If the teacher or the second adult has any uncertainty about how to represent this authentically, it is worth taking advice from a Māori colleague or kaumātua before the session. The most important thing is that Wiremu's connection to the stream is treated as genuine and significant, not as background colour.

The objects near the stream

The choice between real objects, drawn objects, or a combination is entirely the teacher's. Real stones and leaves are grounding and satisfying for four-year-olds to handle. Drawn rubbish on card is safer and easier to control. A mix — real natural materials, drawn rubbish — works well and gives the sorting task a pleasing clarity. If the children draw and place the objects themselves at the start of the investigation, allow five minutes for this.

The sorting task

Keep it simple and unhurried. The key distinction is what belongs in a healthy stream environment and what does not. Do not introduce complexity about what kinds of rubbish are most harmful. The question is simply: does this belong here?

The shared sign

Scribe exactly what the children say. Do not improve it. The sign belongs to them. If a child offers something unexpected — "no jumping in" or "be nice to the fish" — put it on. The sign will be more alive for it.

If a second adult is not available

The teacher takes both roles across the episode, using the chair for the farmer and a standing position elsewhere in the room for Wiremu. The distinction needs to be clear and consistent so the children always know who is speaking. Practice the transition before the session.

FURTHER POSSIBLE EPISODES

Planning and extension material — not live teaching scripts

What the context has covered so far

Narrative: The team have met the farmer, cleaned the pig pen, collected eggs, built the farm on the mat, mended a fence and herded escaped sheep, and investigated the stream with Wiremu.

Curriculum areas well established: Scientific understanding of animal needs; early literacy through mark-making, lists, and signs; mathematical counting and tallying; physical movement through enactive work; social understanding of helping and community; environmental awareness through the stream episode.

What is still needed

- Plants and growing things (the vegetable patch has been mentioned but never visited)
- The rhythm of farm work — daily, weekly, less frequent jobs — and prioritisation
- Mathematical measurement and comparison (more/less, full/empty, bigger/smaller) in a purposeful context
- The farmer's recovery and the question of when help is no longer needed
- A sense of the farm as a connected system — how one thing affects another
- The neighbours as a point of view — they have been mentioned but never appear
- The farmer's family — mentioned in the Story Plan but not yet part of the story
- A moment of genuine uncertainty or difficulty that the team cannot immediately solve
- A closing episode that reflects on what has changed and what the team has learned

Possible Further Episodes

Episode 6: The Vegetable Patch

The farmer asks the team to check the vegetable patch, which has not been tended since his back went. When they arrive, they find it in a mixed state: some plants are growing well, others are struggling, and weeds have begun to come through. The team must look carefully and decide what needs doing — watering, weeding, thinning — and in what order. This episode brings in plant science directly: what plants need, how you can tell when a plant is healthy or struggling, and why weeds compete. The world-building artefact is a plant record — each child draws a plant from the patch and marks whether it looks well or whether it needs help.

Curriculum: Science (plants and what they need), mathematics (comparing sizes, counting rows), early literacy through labelling drawings.

Episode 7: Too Many Jobs

The farmer gives the team a longer list of jobs than they can complete in one session. This episode is about prioritisation: looking at all the things that need doing, working out which ones cannot wait (the animals' water is low, one of the hens seems unwell) and which ones can be left for now (repainting the shed gate, tidying the tool shed). The team must make a shared decision and be able to explain their reasoning. This is the episode that addresses the inquiry question about why order sometimes matters. The world-building artefact is a two-column jobs chart: jobs to do today and jobs that can wait.

Curriculum: Mathematics (sequencing, ordering by urgency), language (justifying and explaining decisions), science (understanding that some needs are more urgent than others).

Episode 8: The Unwell Hen

One of the hens is not right. She is sitting apart from the others, not eating much, and her feathers look ruffled. The team must observe carefully, describe what they see, and decide whether to try to help themselves or whether this is a situation where someone else needs to be called. This episode introduces the idea that some problems are beyond the team's expertise — and that knowing when to ask for help is part of being a responsible caretaker. A neighbour who used to keep hens herself comes to advise.

Curriculum: Science (signs of health and illness in animals), social understanding (knowing when to ask for help, different kinds of expertise in a community), language (describing symptoms carefully and precisely).

Episode 9: The Neighbour Calls In

One of the neighbours — someone who has been watching the farm from a distance — arrives at the gate. She is not unfriendly, but she is direct: she has been worried about the farm for a while and wants to know how things are going. This episode gives the team a chance to report on their work — to show what has changed and explain what they have done. It also opens up a more complex conversation: the neighbour knew the farmer when he was younger and has opinions about how the farm should be run. The world-building artefact is a before-and-after record: children draw or mark what the farm looked like when they arrived and what it looks like now.

Curriculum: Social sciences (community, different points of view), language (explaining and reporting), science (understanding change over time).

Episode 10: The Water Trough and the Broken Pipe

The team arrive to find the lower field water trough is empty. The sheep are restless. On investigation, the team discover that a pipe feeding the trough has come loose. This is the episode that makes the farm-as-connected-system most visible: the fence was wobbly, the pipe has come loose, and now the animals are without water. The team must work out what happened, what needs fixing, and what to do for the sheep in the meantime. This episode pushes mathematical thinking around capacity and measurement: how much water do the sheep need? How will the team carry enough to fill the trough while the pipe is mended? The world-building artefact is a simple diagram showing how water gets from the source to the trough — drawn by the children with the farmer's guidance.

Curriculum: Science (animals and water, cause and effect in a system), mathematics (capacity, measurement, more and less), technology (understanding how farm structures work and what happens when they fail).

Episode 11: The Farmer's Daughter Visits

A member of the farmer's family arrives — his daughter, who lives some distance away and has come to check on her father. She is warm but anxious. She is relieved the team are there, but she also has questions: is her father really resting? Is he letting the team do the work, or is he trying to do too much himself? This episode brings in the family perspective from the Story Plan and introduces a gentle tension: the farmer has, in fact, been doing a little more than he should. The team must decide what to say. This is the most ethically complex episode in the context and addresses the inquiry questions about what it means to care for something that belongs to someone else, and what a community does when someone cannot manage alone.

Curriculum: Social sciences (family, community, different responsibilities), health (rest and recovery, what bodies need to heal), language (navigating a difficult conversation, understanding different perspectives).

Episode 12: The Farm in Spring

This is the closing episode. The farmer's back is improving. He is beginning to do some of the lighter jobs himself again. The team's work is not over, but it is changing — they are handing things back, gradually, rather than doing everything themselves. This episode asks the children to look at the farm they built in Episode 3 and compare it with how the farm is now: what has changed, what is better, what is still fragile. The farmer thanks the team directly and asks them what they learned. The world-building artefact is a final record — each child contributes something to a shared wall display of what they did and what it meant.

Inquiry question: How do we know whether the work we have done has made a difference?

Curriculum: Science (change over time, signs of health), social sciences (reflection on community and contribution), language (speaking about your own learning), arts (representing experience through drawing and making).