Teaching the Storied Past

History in New Zealand Primary Schools 1900 – 1940

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Abstract

This thesis examines history teaching in New Zealand primary schools between 1900 and 1940, situating the discussion within an intertwined framework of the early twentieth-century New Education movement, and the history of Pakeha settler-colonialism. In particular, it draws attention to the ways in which the pedagogical aims of the New Education intersected with the settler goal of ‘indigenisation’: a process whereby native-born settlers in colonised lands seek to become ‘indigenous’, either by denying the presence of the genuine indigenes, or by appropriating aspects of their culture. Each chapter explores a particular set of pedagogical ideas associated with the New Education and relates it back to the broader context and ideology of settler-colonialism. It examines in turn the overarching goals of the New Education of ‘educating citizens’, within which twentieth-century educationalists sought to mobilise biography and local history to cultivate a ‘love of country’ in primary school pupils, exploring the centrality of the ‘local’ to the experience-based pedagogy of the New Education. Next, it argues that the tendency of textbook histories to depict governments – past and present – in an overwhelmingly positive light, served important ongoing colonising functions. Next it examines the influence of the Victorian ideal of ‘character’ in textbooks, particularly during the first two decades of the twentieth century, through a pedagogy centred upon the assumption that the lives of past individuals or groups could be instructive for present generations. By the 1920s and 1930s, the normative models of behaviour represented by character had come under challenge by the more flexible notion of ‘personality’ and its associated educational aims of expression, creativity and self-realisation, aims that emerged most clearly in relation to the use of activity-based methods to teach history. The juxtaposition of textbooks and activity-based classroom methodologies in the primary school classrooms of the 1920s and 1930s brought to light some of the broader tensions which existed within the settler-colonial ideology of Pakeha New Zealanders. The longer-term impact was a generation for whom the nineteenth-century British intrusion into Maori lands and cultures from which Pakeha New Zealanders massively profited was normalised.
This is to certify that this thesis comprises only my original work; due
acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used;
the thesis is 30,000 words in length, inclusive of footnotes, but exclusive
of abstract and bibliography.
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This thesis is for my mother, Susan Patrick, an outstanding primary school teacher.
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Introduction

In 1975, Tuhoe elder John Rangihau wrote that ‘the number of...Pakeha people, who know better than I do how I am to be Maori just amazes me’.¹ As the historian Peter Gibbons points out, the attitudes of the older Pakeha people Rangihau was referring to might be partly explained by the historical education they had received as primary school pupils.² They might, for instance, have read the 1930s’ series of history textbooks *Our Nation’s Story*, which incorporated elements of Maori culture and history within its wider constructed narrative of British ‘national development’. Or they might – as part of school exercises in history – have crafted a Maori pa out of plasticine or sticks, woven replicas of Maori apparel from flax, or ‘played Maori’ in a re-enactment of an ancient Maori battle. Among the questions I pose in this thesis is why Pakeha New Zealanders, of the generations educated between about 1900 and 1940, might have come to perceive themselves as possessing a shared investment in, and even authority over, Maori culture and identity. More broadly, I look at the diverse ways in which a history education, delivered to New Zealand children through a national, compulsory primary school education system, might have informed the historical awareness of New Zealanders educated in these decades.

The historian Greg Dening writes that, ‘Of all the systems that are expressions of who a people are, the sharpest and clearest is their historical consciousness.’³ I take this premise as a point of departure for my study. It is, thus, less concerned with uncovering ‘what actually happened’ in New Zealand’s past, than with explaining the changing patterns people have imposed on that past – the complex webs of historical narrative through which past events were ordered or ascribed significance by earlier generations of New Zealanders. It should be noted at the outset that this history deals with forms of historical understanding which were European in their origin. While Maori, like Pakeha, also understood the past in relation to their cultural belief systems, unlike Pakeha they did not possess the requisite cultural influence or

access to national institutions to project those understandings through the national school system. One of the objectives of this thesis is to demonstrate that the ways in which a society explains its past cannot be separated from wider relationships of power.

History education in schools forms an important component of what Fiona Hamilton calls the ‘undergrowth of formal history’: the myriad ways in which the past is represented outside of and apart from the discipline of history as it evolved within the academy. While not usually outstanding for its original contribution to knowledge – or for its stylistic merit – school history is nonetheless likely to have had as considerable an influence in informing public ideas and attitudes towards the past as any history produced by a university-based scholar. In an era of New Zealand’s history during which many children’s formal education did not extend beyond primary school, it is indeed difficult to think of any delivery of history more widely distributed or potentially influential in New Zealand society than that devised for children attending the country’s network of primary schools.

This study opens in the early years of the twentieth century. Its end coincides with the beginning of the Second World War. During these decades, New Zealanders were inextricably drawn into global events, among them the Great War of 1914–1918, the Depression of 1928 to 1935, and in 1939, the outbreak of the Second World War. Part of the social and economic context in which this study takes place is that of ‘modernity’: the attempts of educational experts to adapt the curriculum to meet the challenges and possibilities of the ‘modern’ world form an important part of this thesis’s explanatory context. Modernity may be used to refer to a particular socio-economic context or period in history, or it may be used in a relational sense, to refer to that which is new and opposed to the traditional. I will use the term in both these senses. Erik Olssen associates the decades between the 1870s and 1920 as the period during which New Zealand became a modern society. Those who were adults in the 1920s, he writes, ‘had seen their world transformed within their own lifetimes’: ‘New Zealand society was moving from pre-industrial to industrial, from pre-modern to modern, a shift dramatized by the recency of organized European settlement. A new society was emerging from the colonial frontier, characterised by towns and cities, bureaucracy,

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specialization, and organization’. Ordinary New Zealanders from the early decades of the twentieth century benefited from improvements to infrastructure such as electrification, roads and railways. At the same time, government bureaucracies became increasingly complex and their involvement in the lives of ordinary law-abiding citizens intensified: a shift which signalled not only the state’s assumption of greater responsibility for the welfare of its citizens, but also its increased presence in people’s lives. Changes to cultural life resulting from the expansion of leisure time, greater prosperity, and the arrival in New Zealand of new forms of commercial entertainment and imported popular culture received a mixed reception. While some New Zealanders greeted them with enthusiasm, others feared their potentially detrimental effects on social order and morality.

By 1900 the colonial task of ‘breaking in’ the land for settlement, and the dispossession of Maori of their land which had attended it, were largely complete. A parallel process of ‘cultural colonisation’, by which Pakeha New Zealanders sought to take possession of the land and its indigenous inhabitants through writing, art and other forms of cultural production continued. As Olssen points out, the process of ‘modernisation’ which occurred in New Zealand between the 1870s and 1920s impacted upon different regions and portions of the population unevenly. The shift towards urban living among European settlers, for example, excluded Maori, whose communities remained predominately rural and autonomous from Pakeha centres of population until the urbanisation of the Maori population after the Second World War. The adults of the 1920s to whom Olssen referred had witnessed dramatic changes to their society during their lifetimes. They, and the adults of the surrounding decades of the twentieth century, were of the same generations as those who devised the school history programmes which are the subject of this thesis. Their perception of themselves as living in a ‘modern’ world, facing a set of conditions and a pace of change which seemed unprecedented in human history, I argue, profoundly influenced both their educational practice and their attitudes to the past.

Another feature of Pakeha society in the early twentieth century that signalled the context of modernity was its notion of children and childhood. The twentieth century has been referred to by historians of this field as the ‘century of the child’. Over

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the course of the late nineteenth century, scholars of childhood argue, ‘the child’ became the subject of increased anxiety and scrutiny on the part of both parents and governments. By the early twentieth century, the task of officially monitoring children had been cornered by a plethora of ‘experts’, among them psychologists, welfare workers, and educationalists. Childhood, these historians remind us, is not only a biological or developmental category, but is in any society culturally constructed and inscribed with a range of social beliefs and meanings. By the late nineteenth century, adults had begun to associate nostalgia, and a new vulnerability and innocence with childhood. They maintained that children should be sheltered from the cares of the adult world, and only engage in those activities suited to their age and stage of development. The idea that children belonged in school gained wider public acceptance, at the same time that rural families became less economically reliant on children’s labour. In New Zealand, an 1877 act of parliament made attendance at primary school compulsory for all European children between the ages of 5 and 13. Attendance of a government primary or Native School became compulsory for Maori children from 1894. This age provision was lifted to 14 in 1901 for European children, and the same provision was extended to Maori children in 1903. However, historian Colin McGeorge contends that it was not until the 1920s that near to full school attendance by all New Zealand children had been achieved, a shift which he attributes both to the increased vigilance of educational authorities in policing attendance, and a growing public acceptance that schooling was ‘childhood’s sole serious business’.

A national network of government primary schools, managed by District Education Boards and the Department of Education, was responsible for the delivery of primary school level education between 1900 and 1940. From 1914, many of the responsibilities previously held by Education Boards, such as the employment of inspectors and teaching staff, were transferred to the control of the Department of

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11 McGeorge, “Childhood’s Sole Serious Business,” 32-33.
12 Ibid., 25.
Education in Wellington. Government officials employed by the Department were also responsible for producing the official syllabus, and after the establishment of the New Zealand School Journal in 1907, also took on the task of producing much of the general reading material circulated in primary schools. Primary school education in New Zealand was, as it remains, almost exclusively the domain of the state, with private schools, mainly denominational, catering for a minority of enrolments of primary school aged children. Finally, the period of New Zealand’s educational history with which this study is concerned pre-dates the expansion of compulsory secondary schooling after the Second World War. For many children, a primary school education from the age of 5 or 6 up to the age of 13 or 14, constituted the entirety of their formal educational experience.

The Education Department also separately administered New Zealand’s system of Native Schools. Native Schools for much of this period accounted for less than half of the enrolments of Maori pupils: from 1909 onwards more Maori pupils went to mainstream government primary schools than attended Native Schools. Until 1929, Native Schools followed a separate syllabus, which did not include history as a subject. From that year on, Native Schools were expected to follow the same syllabus as government primary schools, and history became a compulsory subject in Native Schools for the first time. This study will thus incorporate a discussion of history teaching in Native Schools between 1929 and 1940.

Up until the late 1970s, the task of writing New Zealand’s educational history was largely the domain of former educationalists. Their histories were concerned with tracing the development of the education system, chiefly in terms of administrative and structural matters, or with documenting the contribution of certain prominent individuals to New Zealand’s educational history. As a whole, they did not display much interest in either the pedagogy or content of history education, and their tone was often celebratory. One exception to the tendency of educational historians of this

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14 In 1917 the proportion of primary school pupils who went on to secondary school was 37 percent; by 1932 it had risen to 55 percent. See James Belich, Paradise Reforged: A History of the New Zealanders from the 1880s to the Year 2000 (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2001), 154.
15 From 1947 ‘Native Schools’ would be known as ‘Maori Schools’.
period to neglect the curriculum in favour of administrative matters is John Ewing’s two volume *History of the New Zealand Primary School Curriculum*, published in 1960 and 1970 respectively, which examined the forces shaping the development of the primary curriculum between 1840 and 1970.

Since the 1970s, a number of more critical studies considering the content of the curriculum and textbooks have been published. The role of the school system in inculcating ‘patriotism’ in school children during the Great War and the 1920s has been the subject of studies by several historians. E. P. Malone has written on the sizeable imperialistic and militaristic content of *The School Journal* in the period leading up to and immediately following the First World War, describing it as amounting to a barrage of ‘imperialist propaganda’ which lasted up until the end of the 1920s. After this, Malone argued, the *Journal* adopted more internationalist views, and, he claimed, by the 1930s and 1940s the now more literary-based *Journal* was ‘practically devoid of ideological overtones’.18 Roger Openshaw has similarly traced the rise of imperialist sentiments and their partial eclipse by internationalism in the interwar period, in his later work from a perspective informed by sociological theory.19 Another educational historian who has looked at the content of locally published textbooks, while departing somewhat from the mould of the histories described above, is Colin McGeorge. McGeorge’s work on textbooks explores ideas of British ethnicity, of Maori, and of racial ideas contained in school texts. His extensive research on the topic of the local content of locally-produced textbooks should be more than adequate to fully dispel the popular notion that there was ‘nothing’ about New Zealand in textbooks before the Second World War.20

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Outside of the domain of educational history, a range of New Zealand historians have displayed an interest in what school books contained. Jock Phillips’ *A Man’s Country* includes a consideration of the role of the education system, particularly *The School Journal*, in reinforcing Pakeha myths of masculinity. General historians have also considered the role of school texts in shaping Pakeha identity. Among this group, the historian to have given the question of history education the most sustained attention was Keith Sinclair. Sinclair’s work occupies a seminal place in New Zealand historiography. His *History of New Zealand*, first published in 1959, was the foundational text in the post-Second World War cultural nationalist school of New Zealand history, which dominated historical writing until at least the 1980s. The topic of education did not feature prominently in Sinclair’s *History*, but formed part of a chapter in his later, more detailed, exegesis on New Zealand national identity, *A Destiny Apart*, published in 1986.

For much of the first half of the twentieth century, Sinclair asserted in *A Destiny Apart*, the New Zealand education system had done little in the way of instilling in New Zealand children a sense of their ‘unique’ identity. Rather, Sinclair claimed, children who attended New Zealand primary schools prior to the Second World War were bombarded with ‘a massive and deliberate indoctrination in British imperialism’, with *The School Journal* rating among the chief culprits. This conclusion Sinclair attributes both to Malone and Openshaw, as well as his own reading of locally-published textbooks. Sinclair argued that a Pakeha national identity had existed before the Second World War, but that it had been actively obstructed by the national school system, which had remained attached to elitist British precedents. Sinclair’s notion that the New Zealand education system had for much of its early history acted as a hostile force to prevent the emergence of an ‘authentic’ New Zealand identity persists even in recent writing on this topic, such as Gregory O’Brien’s *A Nest of Singing Birds*, published to commemorate the 2007 centenary of *The School Journal*. Dismissing the Journal’s interwar decades as dull and derivative of English sources, O’Brien argues that it was
only from the 1940s that the Journal made ‘a concerted effort to understand and express what it means to be a New Zealander’.25

Much of the argument advanced in the present thesis runs contrary to both this standard view of New Zealand educational history and the dominant ways in which schooling in this period has been collectively ‘remembered’. A pervasive view still exists among both historians and the general public alike that history either ‘was not taught’ in New Zealand primary schools until after the 1940s, or, alternatively, that it consisted only of a monotonous series of British ‘kings-and-battles’. Sinclair’s notion of a ‘genuine’ New Zealand identity emerging in spite of the allegedly elitist and conservative goals of those who controlled the national education system, relies for its logic upon the presumption that this school system was fairly ineffectual. While I do not deny that ‘kings-and-battles’ history might accurately encapsulate the educational experiences of some New Zealanders who attended primary schools between 1900 and 1940, I challenge the assertion that this characterisation captures the entirety of what went on in schools during these decades. One of the aims of this thesis is, therefore, to rehabilitate the reputations of the generations of educationalists and teachers who designed and taught history curricula in the pre-1940 period of the twentieth century, and in doing so, to restore a sense of historical complexity to this aspect of New Zealand’s social and cultural history.

What later historians wrote about the work of their educational predecessors could be almost as revealing of their own intellectual preoccupations as an accurate description of past educational practices. One of the characteristics of histories written within the cultural nationalist tradition of New Zealand history writing was the shared assumption of their authors that British history was ‘ideological’, whereas New Zealand history was politically neutral and reflective of a genuine identity that was ‘expressed’ by individuals rather than programmatic. The assumption that the process of forming a ‘New Zealand identity’ was a natural phenomenon led these historians to be largely uncritical about the conditions which permitted such an identity to emerge. This intellectual position has become less tenable in light of recent developments in New Zealand historiography.

Over the past few decades, the uncritical use of ‘national identity’ as an organising concept for New Zealand history has increasingly come under challenge in scholarly work, most notably from the historian Peter Gibbons. Gibbons advocates a post-colonial approach to New Zealand history. Rather than seeing colonisation as occurring only in the early decades of New Zealand settlement, and confined to physical or legal displays of European power, Gibbons argues that colonisation should be conceptualised by New Zealand historians as a much wider discursive process that continues into the present. The historical framework of ‘cultural colonisation’ he proposes incorporates a range of cultural activities, such as writing and printing, that were crucial in the extension and maintenance of European power over Maori. For this reason, historians should view writing itself, including historical writing, as an act of colonisation:

…writing, like Marx’s capital, arrive[d] in New Zealand “dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt.” Writing in and about New Zealand was henceforth involved in the processes of colonization, in the implementation of European power, in the description and justification of the European presence as normative, and in the simultaneous implicit or explicit production of indigenous peoples as alien or marginal.

The use of the written word as an instrument of colonisation, Gibbons notes, went considerably further than just laws or treaties. Historians seeking to write New Zealand history through the framework of colonisation, Gibbons argues, should pay attention to such diverse sources as: ‘verse, prose fiction, histories, ethnographies, memoirs and reminiscences, tourist guide books and albums of scenic views, topographical directories, school textbooks and other educational materials; and images (photographs, drawings, reproductions of local works of art).’ Central to interpreting Gibbons’ framework of cultural colonisation is the work of Canadian literary theorist, Terry Goldie. In a comparative study of the literatures of Australia, Canada and New Zealand...
Zealand, Goldie describes a shared dilemma faced by native-born European settlers in these three countries, arising from their need to feel ‘at home’ in their new surroundings. Such settlers, Goldie argues, felt a deep psychological need to ‘become indigenous’, a desire which was denied to them by the presence of the ‘Other’: those peoples with genuine claims to indigeneity. For this settlers’ predicament, Goldie writes, there were only two possible answers: ‘The white culture can attempt to incorporate the Other, superficially, through beaded moccasins and names like Mohawk Motors, or with much more sophistication through the novels of Ruby Wiebe. Conversely, the white culture may reject the indigene: “This country really began with the arrival of the whites”’.29

Both strategies of ‘indigenisation’ described here by Goldie – one which sought to incorporate aspects of Maori culture and history in order to supply settlers with a distinctive hybridised identity, and the other which sought to marginalise or deny the existence of Maori – were in evidence in New Zealand. A range of Pakeha cultural products and practices can be interpreted as examples of Goldie’s first strategy of indigenisation. The dissemination of printed material about the indigenous features of New Zealand – flora, fauna, the land, indigenous people themselves – to a wider audience, was one instance of such a strategy. Mass-produced forms of knowledge obtained from indigenous people, or dealing with indigenous subjects, allowed wider Pakeha audiences to ‘know’ about New Zealand and its indigenous features, to feel at ‘home’ and even ‘become native’ in their new land. The availability of printed knowledge about ‘New Zealand’ gave them access to knowledge that, in ‘older’ societies, accumulated over many generations and often passed by word of mouth. Goldie’s second strategy typically involved calling upon the history of the ‘Motherland’, and the claim that New Zealand and its inhabitants were essentially ‘British’. In these accounts, history ‘started’ only at the point of British arrival on New Zealand soil, and the Maori presence was either ignored or rendered as marginal to the main narrative of ‘New Zealand’ history. Within Gibbons’ framework, Goldie’s strategies of indigenisation become two alternative approaches to cultural colonisation.

Despite its considerable cultural influence as an institution, the role of history education in the national primary school system in furthering the Pakeha colonial

project has not yet received sustained attention from a New Zealand historian. This thesis seeks to fill a gap in the historical scholarship on cultural colonisation. The implications of Gibbons' work for New Zealand historians are manifold. Firstly, Gibbons argues that those scholars who persist in producing historical narratives that treat concepts such as a New Zealand ‘national identity’ uncritically, refer to the ‘growth’ of the nation as ‘natural’, and treat the Pakeha presence as normative, risk being implicated in the ongoing processes of cultural colonisation. In addition to calling upon New Zealand historians to examine their own practices, Gibbons’ writing also serves as a manifesto for future historical work. Once European settlement is no longer perceived as normative, an entirely different perspective on New Zealand’s nineteenth- and twentieth-century history emerges. His concept of ‘cultural colonisation’ has so far been taken up in projects stemming from younger scholars’ work, including to date, Giselle Byrnes, Fiona Hamilton, Chris Hilliard, Jacob Pollock and Kirstie Ross.

The second framework of analysis relevant to this thesis is pedagogical. This study examines not only the historical ‘content’ of history education, but the theory used to explain how history was to be taught, and to justify its inclusion in the curriculum in the first place. Theoretically, this aspect of my argument is informed mainly by historians working outside of the New Zealand context, specifically, Australian historians Anna Clark, Julian Thomas, Peter Taylor and Chris Healy, and American historians Peter Seixas, Peter Stearns and Sam Wineberg. My study combines elements of these authors’ approaches. Clark’s work provided me with the initial impetus to research the pedagogical as well as the historiographical aspects of history education. I have borrowed from Healy, Thomas, and Taylor in my interpretation of the meaning of history in schools. Thomas and Taylor in a recent talk on the Australian historiography about history education have called for the writing of

educational histories that ‘disaggregate’ history education: which treat it not as a ‘fully realised category of knowledge’, but as a subject which appeared in many different ways across the curriculum. Its impact, they argued, should be assessed, not in terms of passing on a discrete ‘quota’ of historical knowledge, but as a ‘series of effects’, calculated at creating certain ‘kinds of persons’. 33 Healy develops this idea of history education as a ‘series of effects’ further in a chapter on the place of history in schools in the Australian state of Victoria during the early twentieth century. 34

American historians of education Seixas, Stearns and Wineburg call on future historians of education to pay closer attention to the fictive aspects of historical narratives, and the wider cultural meanings embedded in them. Historians, they argue – paraphrasing Hayden White – must scrutinise the ‘content embedded in the form’ of history education. Previous historians assumed that the ‘instructional act can be neatly carved into separate spheres of “content” and “pedagogy”, and that method used had little impact other than on the overall effectiveness of teaching’. On the contrary, they argue, techniques used to teach history convey a range of different underlying messages about the past and the nature of historical consciousness itself. 35 This thesis, accordingly, pays attention to the ‘form’ of school history: a category which I take to encompass aspects of history education ranging from pedagogical theory, the ‘narrativity’ of textbook histories, the practicalities of teaching history in the classroom, and the differing messages about the past that could result from the use of different classroom methodologies. In exploring these new ways of understanding past educational efforts, this study also makes a contribution to the field of educational history.

In one respect, the claim that history ‘was not taught’ in New Zealand primary schools in the early twentieth century and interwar decades is not without basis. It partly rests upon questions of definition. Even educationalists closely involved in the development of history programmes for primary school-aged children sometimes

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34 See Healy, From the Ruins of Colonialism, Chapter Four.

voiced the opinion that their efforts did not constitute ‘real’ history. History, in their estimation, was a subject beyond the comprehension of most children of primary school age. Instead of teaching history, these educationalists regarded themselves as carrying out the preparatory work that came in advance of ‘real’ history lessons. Some educationalists believed that historical knowledge was only suitable for primary school children in certain forms, such as biography or fictionalised history stories. Others sought to convey messages about the past to children through the medium of other curriculum subjects. The types of ‘history’ delivered to primary school pupils frequently traversed conventional disciplinary boundaries into subjects such as fiction, geography, ethnology, art, handcraft, drama, and more. For the purposes of this thesis, I have adopted a broad definition of what I consider to constitute a ‘history lesson’. I include any material which appeared in official or unofficial educational schemes under the heading of ‘History’, any work undertaken in schools with the intention of conveying knowledge about the past to pupils, and any material or activity presented to children with the aim of enhancing their future comprehension of, or ‘love for’, history. The only other criteria for inclusion in this study is that it must have taken place as part of the intentional educational programmes of primary schools, and involved an element of conscious design on the part of either a teacher or educational authority.

The primary sources drawn upon in this study include two widely distributed government textbooks, official reports by school inspectors, official curriculum materials, teachers’ professional journals and a series of classroom guides written for inexperienced teachers. The textbooks are the *New Zealand School Journal*, which was established in 1907 and remains in publication today; and *Our Nation’s Story*, a four volume series of history readers aimed at Standards III to VI. This was first issued in the late 1920s and used in primary schools throughout the 1930s. 36 The *Journal* was compiled or written by officials employed by the Education Department, while *Our Nation’s Story* was commissioned (anonymously) by the Department to match the official syllabus after it was revised in 1928. 37 *The School Journal* was published monthly

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36 The *Journal* was variously entitled *The School Journal, N.Z. School Journal, New Zealand School Journal*. Hereafter it will be referred to as *The School Journal* or simply the *Journal*.

37 The author of the series is not recorded. Colin McGeorge speculates that it may have been A. W. Shrimpton, senior editor at Whitcombe and Tombs. See McGeorge, “What Was ‘Our Nation’s Story?’” 56. Like many of Whitcombe and Tombs’ school publications, *Our Nation’s Story* was not dated. Hugh Price, in his survey of NZ school books, estimates that the first editions of the series came out between 1928 and
in three parts, catering for Standard I and II; III and IV; and V upwards. It was circulated free of cost to every child attending New Zealand government primary, Native, and technical schools, and to private schools at cost price. The Journal was used as a 'general' reader, but before the 1930s, contained significant numbers of non-fiction pieces, many of them on historical subjects.

The professional journals consulted for this thesis include the New Zealand Education Gazette, established in 1921, published monthly by the Department of Education, and National Education: the official ‘organ’ of the primary school teachers’ association, the New Zealand Educational Institute (NZEI). Professional journals give an idea of the type of educational ideas teachers might have encountered in their professional training. In addition to official notices, they contained articles on educational subjects from both New Zealand and overseas, as well as descriptions of actual work undertaken in schools. One of the areas where professional journals are most valuable as a source for educational history is in the realm of practical suggestions for teachers. In 1927, National Education commenced publication of a series of monthly practical classroom guides and sample lesson plans for teachers. History was one of the five curriculum subject areas covered by the supplements. These National Education guides provide invaluable insights into how history might have actually been taught in New Zealand classrooms, and, as they were often written by teachers’ college lecturers, are also indicative of the types of ideas that new teachers might have been exposed to in the course of their training. Inspectors’ annual reports to the Minister for Education also form a valuable source of information on what was taking place ‘on the ground’ in New Zealand primary schools.

No historian, or designer of a school history curriculum, can avoid making difficult choices about which material to include and which to omit. The same has been the case in the writing of the present history. I make no claim to exhaustivity in its coverage of either the ideas or the content of history curricula or educational materials in my chosen period. Instead, I draw out what I believe to be the main purposes of history education in these decades, and the underlying messages about the past that they might have conveyed to children. The chapters are arranged thematically. Each chapter examines a particular set of educational ideas, describes their influence in

shaping the functions and underlying meanings of history education, and relates them back to the theme of colonisation which frames the study as a whole. Chapter One examines the early twentieth-century problem of educating citizens. The next two chapters describe two opposing notions of self-hood which emerge through an analysis of the history curriculum and textbooks. Chapter Two describes the influence of the Victorian ideology of ‘character’, a notion centred in self-sacrifice and the cultivation of particular normative traits and ideals, and its promulgation specifically through textbooks during the early and interwar decades of the twentieth century. The final chapter, Chapter Three, examines an opposing model of self-hood, aligned with educational goals such as self-expression and self-realisation, as it emerged in relation to the use of activity-based methods to teach history in the 1920s and 1930s.
Chapter 1

‘A Romance of Development’:
History in Schools and a Modern Education for Citizenship

In 1903, the Hawke’s Bay inspectors of schools suggested that the nineteenth-century European settlers had been too ‘busy’ to pay regard to educational matters that were not tangible or practical. The settlers’ pedagogy, too, was strictly utilitarian. They had been, the inspectors wrote, ‘apt to overlook’ educational goals such as developing children’s ‘characters’ and the teaching of ‘higher ideals’ in favour of the 3Rs.¹ The European settlers, in other words, were too preoccupied with building the schools to have worried much about what was going on inside them. The Hawke’s Bay inspectors were voicing here what would become an almost commonplace charge about New Zealand’s education system by the 1930s: that it had inherited from the nineteenth-century settlers a legacy of what the educational historian A. E. Campbell called the ‘mechanical habits of mind’ acquired ‘during the pioneering struggle with material circumstances’ and a ‘pioneer concern with tangible results’.² The criticism was one that was sometimes directed at Pakeha culture as a whole.

This thesis advances a counter argument to the belief that the devisers of New Zealand’s primary school curricula from the turn of the century to the Second World War were mainly or exclusively preoccupied by tangible and practical educational aims. The educational goal of building pupils’ ‘characters’ the inspectors mentioned was one of the main objectives of the twentieth-century New Education movement, which became influential in New Zealand’s education system from the early years of the twentieth century. Thus, the inspectors’ remarks can be partly understood in an educational context as fitting within this movement’s broader critique of earlier educational theories and practices. The educational figures who were behind the introduction of the New Education to New Zealand schools fashioned themselves and their movement as modern by self-consciously rejecting the educational ideas of the

¹ Minister of Education, “Education - Reports of Inspectors of Schools: Hawke’s Bay,” Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives (AJHR), E-1B, 1903, 22.
² A. E. Campbell, Educating New Zealand (Wellington: Department of Internal Affairs, 1941), 102, 183.
past. They sought to transform narrow school programmes based on the 3Rs and learning by rote, into broad primary curricula aimed at creating ‘complete’ individuals and good citizens.\(^3\) For reasons I elaborate upon in this study, they envisaged a far greater role for history education in schools than had their predecessors, and their interventions led to an elevation in that subject’s status in primary school programmes.

The comments of Campbell, and those of later critics who accused New Zealand’s education system of being too ‘mechanical’ and obsessed with the achievement of tangible and measurable results, might also be read as criticism directed towards Pakeha culture in general. Their sentiment reflected what emerged during the first half of the twentieth century as a common vein of criticism regarding Pakeha culture. The nineteenth-century European ‘pioneers’, these critics of Pakeha society argued, had built the physical infrastructure of a ‘nation’. But in doing so, they had neglected the artistic, literary and spiritual accomplishments that enriched the national life of ‘older’ countries and, importantly, provided the measurable quality against which a country’s ‘national spirit’ could be assessed.\(^4\) ‘It is but natural’, claimed Our Nation’s Story, ‘that in the early days of a colony its settlers are too busy in establishing their homes to give much attention to fostering the arts or the sciences; but, owing to the splendid work of the pioneers and those who followed them in building New Zealand into a nation, our country has already reached the stage where her citizens are finding leisure and opportunity to devote themselves to the more gracious things of life.’\(^5\) Those who expressed such sentiments tended to assume that the ‘national culture’ in which New Zealand was supposedly lacking was one virtually interchangeable with Pakeha culture, and that its future ‘growth’ was part of a normative process which would eventually lead to ‘mature’ nationhood. Following Gibbons, Hilliard and other writers, I do not take such commentary as fortelling the later emergence of a distinctive kind of New Zealand nationhood. Instead, I interpret it as one among a range of colonising strategies that native-born European settlers employed in order to assert ‘indigenous’

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\(^3\) For an analysis of the New Education movement in the English context, see R. J. W. Selleck, The New Education: The English Background 1870-1914 (Melbourne: Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, 1968). See also Healy, From the Ruins of Colonialism, Chapter 4, for a useful summary of the key ideas of the New Education.

\(^4\) Hilliard writes that commentators on New Zealand literature in the interwar period sometimes observed that the European settlers had had little time for pursuits that were not practical, and compared their own efforts to ‘build’ a national literature to the earlier, more practical, ‘nation-building’ tasks carried out by the nineteenth-century pioneers. See Hilliard, “Island Stories,” 2.

status for themselves – and in doing so – to negate the competing, genuine claims of Maori to that status. In this, and in later chapters, I uncover instances of this and a range of other strategies of ‘indigenisation’ in history schemes devised for New Zealand primary school children.

The objective of the present chapter is to introduce some of the key pedagogical features of the New Education, and their relationship to history education, by examining one of the movement’s overarching objectives: that of educating future citizens. The chapter divides into three distinct sections, each devoted to a particular aspect of the relationship between history and citizenship education. First, the efforts of educational figures to cultivate ‘patriotism’ in primary school pupils are discussed, using biography and local history as examples. I also take this opportunity to explore the implications of an important theme in New Education pedagogy: its emphasis upon the ‘local’ in educational work. Next, I discuss the role constitutional history and civics education played in conveying certain messages to children about governments and governance. I then show how different notions of historical change and causation emerged out of the New Education’s reaction against ‘kings-and-battles’ history, and suggest some of the implications of these altered notions of time and change for the goal of educating citizens. Finally, I draw together all these ideas in a discussion of the forms of local history children encountered in textbooks. At each stage, I also reflect upon the implications of the educational objectives I have described for the wider theme of cultural colonisation which structures this study. As background I briefly summarise the educational context which forms the backdrop to this and later chapters, and introduce some of its prominent players.

Background
A small, yet influential group of professional educationalists were behind the introduction of the New Education to the New Zealand primary school curriculum during the early twentieth century. By virtue of their teaching experience, professional qualifications, or knowledge of modern educational theory, these educationalists claimed for themselves the status of ‘educational experts’, and with it, the right or obligation to impart their knowledge to educational practitioners: primary school teachers. These self-appointed experts – inspectors of schools, teachers’ training college lecturers, senior teachers, school principals, and Education Department officials and
staff – loom large in this study as the framers of the history curriculum. They dominated contributions of articles and letters to professional teaching journals, cooperated on the design of official syllabi, lectured teachers and the general public on educational subjects, and advised practising teachers through a range of other forums, including inspectors’ annual reports and school visits, practical teaching guides and sample lessons.

While most of these educational experts will be introduced as they appear, it is worth briefly introducing here some of the most prominent commentators upon history education. Several of these individuals, as will be seen, contributed to National Education’s classroom supplements on history teaching during the 1920s and 1930s. Nellie E. Coad taught in various Wellington primary schools between 1903 and 1917, during which time she also graduated as a Master of Arts with honours from Victoria College. She then headed the department of history, civics, and geography at Wellington Girls’ College, and wrote a number of civics textbooks and a short history used in secondary schools, New Zealand from Tasman to Massey. Leonard F. de Berry taught at various primary schools and district high schools in the North and South Islands. He gained his degree from Otago University in 1909, and held a number of educational positions, including NZEI president in 1917. He also delivered lectures on educational and historical subjects. He wrote National Education’s classroom guides for history over the years 1933 and 1934. Fanny Irvine-Smith taught at various primary and secondary schools before gaining a Master of Arts in History from Victoria College in 1921. Between 1928 and 1932 she lectured in Maori culture and New Zealand history at the Training College, Wellington. During this time, she also wrote National Education’s column on history teaching for the years 1929 and 1932. She is now better remembered for her history of Wellington street names, The Streets of My City, published in 1948 after her retirement. Theophilus B. Strong worked as a teacher and then as an inspector of schools under the Wanganui Education Board. In 1920 he was appointed

Chief Inspector of Primary Schools, after which he occupied the role of Assistant Director of Education during 1926, and Director of Education in the years 1927-1933. He took a special interest in the subject of history education and contributed several articles on the subject to the *Education Gazette* during his time as head of the Education Department.

The emergence of twentieth-century educational experts was related to both the expanding role of teachers’ training colleges in the provision of teacher education, and availability of university-level education from the late nineteenth-century. Almost all of the experts who commented upon educational matters, either in a professional capacity as inspectors or lecturers, or in public or professional forums, held university degrees. Most of them also had some professional connection to teachers’ training colleges. The teachers they advised were also better educated than their predecessors.

The introduction of the New Education was accompanied by substantial bureaucratic reforms within the education system itself. One of the most significant involved moves to raise the status of teaching to that of a ‘profession’, requiring specialist training and knowledge. In 1905, the Education Department made two years’ teaching experience as a ‘pupil teacher’, followed by attendance at a two-year course at a training college, compulsory for all new teachers: a provision which replaced the apprenticeship-style arrangements for teacher training which predominated in the nineteenth century. Each training college had a ‘Normal School’ – a model teaching school in which beginning teachers could gain practical guidance from more experienced teachers or college lecturers – attached to it. As well as these training college based forms of training, many new teachers also attended classes at a university college as part of their preparation for a teaching career.

The teachers’ training colleges were central to the emergence of a new generation of education experts for several reasons. They provided them with employment, created professional networks, and constituted a forum in which they

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9 Scholefield, *Who's Who in New Zealand and in the Western Pacific*, 326.
10 The University of Otago opened its doors to students in 1869; Canterbury College followed in 1873. Auckland University College was established in 1883, and Victoria College followed as a distant fourth, taking its first students only in 1899. See Nicholas Reid, *The University of Auckland: The First 125 Years* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2008), 3; Rachel Barrowman, *Victoria University of Wellington 1899-1999: A History* (Wellington: VUW Press, 1999), 382.
12 Ewing, *The Development of the Primary School Curriculum*, 149.
could discuss new ideas in education and communicate them to a wider public. In a sense, they also created their own audiences. The introduction of academic-style teacher training in the form of the training colleges created a cohort of primary school teachers who had been exposed to modern educational theories in the course of their professional training. While, during the first decades of the twentieth century, these younger teachers were likely to have been outnumbered by those who had trained under earlier arrangements, by the interwar period this situation was likely to have been reversed. Thus, part of the educational background against which this study takes place is that of a generational shift within the teaching force. The number of teachers trained under older arrangements was gradually surpassed by a cohort of younger teachers who had received formal academic instruction in modern educational theory and practice as part of their training.

The early years of the twentieth century formed a period of educational experimentation internationally, and New Zealand educational experts benefited from their participation in international networks. New Zealanders kept abreast of the latest developments taking place in education overseas through a proliferating specialist literature on educational subjects. Some educationalists travelled overseas to witness international developments in education first hand, or attended guest lectures by touring international speakers. New Zealand educationalists certainly paid close attention to what was occurring in English education, particularly within the elementary school system, but they also looked to the United States and Europe for inspiration. England itself was not isolated: as R. J. W. Selleck points out, English educational thought was in this period mostly derivative of theories formulated in other European countries or in the United States.13 Accordingly, when New Zealand inspectors or education officials embarked upon their educational ‘tours’, they did not stop off only in London, but also visited continental Europe and North America. George Hogben, head of the Education Department between 1899 and 1915, spent much of 1907 on one such tour, during which he and his wife travelled to various countries in continental Europe, and England and the United States. In the course of this travel Hogben devoted virtually all his time to ‘seeing things educational’.14

From the 1920s, the Education Department also intensified its efforts to keep its existing teaching force informed of the latest ideas in education. At the time of its establishment in 1921, Director of Education, John Caughley, expressed a hope that the *Education Gazette* would ‘assist teachers individually in their work, and...co-ordinate and concentrate the efforts of all teachers towards effecting some general systematic advance in certain phases of education in New Zealand’.

Organisations not affiliated with government, such as the NZEI, also contributed to this collective effort to educate New Zealand’s teaching force along modern lines.

The first New Zealand primary syllabus to reflect the ideas of the New Education to any substantial extent was that gazetted by Hogben in 1904. While adjustments to the syllabus were made in 1913, and again in 1919, an equivalent period of syllabus innovation did not occur again until the mid-1920s. In the intervening years, of course, New Zealanders had lived through the experience of modern global warfare. In the post-war decades, the teaching of history in schools emerged as a point of contention in educational circles. Some educationalists and many politicians felt that the post-war climate of unrest demanded intensified efforts to instil values such as patriotism and loyalty in children. At the same time, critics of such an approach decried what they perceived as the excessive nationalism of such schemes and advocated a more internationalist education. By the mid 1920s, the controversies surrounding the subject of history teaching in schools led the Education Department to form a committee of Departmental officials and representatives from primary and secondary schools to investigate the subject. Its critical report, published in 1925, provided a series of recommendations which led to the separate revision of the syllabus for history in primary schools. This syllabus, published in 1926, came into use in schools in 1927. Meanwhile, the Education Department was in the process of revising the entire primary syllabus. When a new primary school syllabus was released in 1928, the prescriptions for history were not substantially amended from those issued in 1926. The new primary school syllabus came into use in New Zealand primary schools in 1929, and was not revised again until 1947, after this study ends.

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Patriotism, biography and local history

Part of the reason for history’s elevated status in primary school schemes aimed at the objective of educating citizens lay in educationalists’ belief that the subject was uniquely suited to equip children with a sense of ‘patriotism’ or ‘love of country’. In proposing schemes to foster patriotism in young children, educational experts turned less often to abstract political ideas of nationhood, than to aspects of life they assumed would be familiar to children: home, family and domestic life, friendship, and school. If the interests of formal historiography in this period tended to coalesce around categories such as the public and the political, histories aimed at school children more often than not referenced the private and domestic spheres. Educational experts wrote of patriotism not in the abstract language of political theory, but instead sought to appeal to pupils’ positive emotions, such as love, pride, friendship, and empathy. They also looked to the ‘local’ – a child’s own community and surroundings – as a way of fostering the emotional ‘foundations’ of patriotism in primary school pupils. In this chapter section, I discuss the efforts of educational experts to foster patriotism in children, first through biography and then through local history, and show how they might be related back to two alternative strategies of indigenisation.

Biography occupied an important place in primary school history schemes during the early and interwar period of the twentieth century. Its prominence was partly due to the fact that educationalists saw biography as a ‘branch’ of history that children could easily relate to, as it involved the ‘personal’ and ‘intimate’ aspects of the past to which young children were drawn.16 ‘History should be made more of a personal matter’, the branch committee of the Otago Educational Institute resolved in 1912.17 Some educational experts held that biography was the only form of history suitable for primary school-aged children, as serious ‘History’ was a subject that only an older intellect could understand. Charles Richard Bossence, an inspector under the Otago Education Board, argued in 1912 that history should be taught to primary school children as biographical sketches only. ‘History is a subject rather for our secondary schools than for our primary schools. I believe that the reading of biographical sketches

16 Another function of biography in curricula during this period – that of providing models of ‘character’ for children to emulate – is the subject of Chapter Two.
of our great men is the best form of the work for young children, but that history per se is a subject only for more experienced people’.18

In its connection to patriotic education, educational experts valued biography for the emotional reactions they hoped it would invoke in children. D. A. Strachan, inspector for Marlborough wrote in his 1912 report that: ‘History becomes a living subject when through vivid and dramatic treatment appeal is made to the emotions as well as the intellect, when the great men of the past become our friends, we sympathise with them in their struggles or wish them success in pursuit of their ideal.’19 Likewise, de Berry wrote in his 1933 column that teachers of Standard II classes ‘should not hesitate’ in repeating work on well-known heroes from history, ‘until they become cherished friends and familiars of the children’.20 Something of the desired effect of such lessons on patriotism is illustrated in the following teacher’s anecdote, which appeared in National Education in 1921. The teacher related how one of his Standard VI pupils, a girl he described in not entirely complimentary terms as ‘an awfully nice girl, but one who would never win a scholarship’ had said to him: “Mr. ---, I could sit all day and listen to your history stories. I can never remember the details afterwards, but I have a sort of feeling that all those people are people I’ve known, and I feel rather proud of it. I feel just like when M--- (a form-mate) won the writing prize at the show!” Is this not, he asked, ‘the beginning of patriotism?’21 More than the specific details of history, it was the sensations that educationalists hoped children would learn to associate with past individuals that comprised the main educational objective of such lessons.

Educationalists perceived this capacity of biography to form emotional connections capable of transcending distance in time and space as particularly important in the formation of imperial bonds. The biographical model of teaching patriotism often conformed with the indigenising strategies which claimed that New Zealand history was essentially ‘British’. But the distant land in question did not have to be Britain. The biographical model of teaching ‘patriotism’ was also adapted by educationalists with more internationalist leanings in the 1920s and 1930s, as a way of

18 Ibid., 272.
21 J [pseud.], letter to the editor, National Education, October 1921, 337.
encouraging children to empathise with peoples from countries outside the British Empire.

Educationalists also looked to familiar features of domestic life and family relationships as a way of rendering imperial relationships meaningful to young children, by conceptualising patriotic emotions in terms of family configurations. Articles on the British royal families of the past and present, for instance, encouraged children to view their relationship with the British royal family as that of a ‘love’ analogous to their feelings about their own relatives. By the mid-1930s, the stridently imperialist views expressed in the ‘Empire Day’ articles – an annual fixture of the June issues of *The School Journal* from early in the century until the early 1930s – had made way for softened and domesticised embodiments of Empire in the form of articles describing the everyday lives of the royal family, particularly the young princesses Elizabeth and Margaret. The turn-out of New Zealanders in their thousands to greet Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip on their 1953-54 tour, might be one after-effect of the efforts of earlier educationalists to personify Empire for school children.22

A child’s ‘natural’ love for its home and family also formed the foundation for models of patriotism based on local and New Zealand history which appeared in suggested programmes for primary school history during the interwar period. Calls to teach patriotism using local history partly emerged from a critique, at least among some educational circles, of excessive nationalism in history schemes prior to the war. These educationalists did not, in general, reject outright the need to teach patriotism (the term they preferred to nationalism) in schools, but instead distinguished between several varieties of the emotion. The patriotism they opposed was that derived from the mass emotions of the crowd, and was ‘false’, ‘dangerous’ and ‘narrow’. By contrast, the forms of the emotion they favoured – ‘true’, ‘intelligent’ or ‘sane’ patriotism – they regarded as an emotion that occurred ‘naturally’ in children: a simple extension of a child’s ‘natural’ love for its home, family and surroundings.23 Miss D. Robertson, a Master of Arts graduate, told the staff of the Wellington Technical College that it was not even possible to teach this desirable variety of patriotism, as most children already

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23 This was a similar distinction to that which later cultural nationalists drew between ‘ideological’ attempts to impose a British identity upon school children, and the more ‘natural’ process by which they held that a New Zealand ‘national identity’ would emerge.
possessed it naturally. ‘True love is spontaneous, and true patriotism is innate and instinctive’, she declared in 1925.24

Some educational experts hoped that ‘natural’ forms of patriotism, based upon what they regarded as the innate affection of every child for its home and surroundings, could be expanded through the teaching of local and New Zealand history. If children learned about the history of their local district, they argued, their existing ‘natural’ attachment to that area would only be enhanced. Strong, by then assistant Director of Education, wrote in the *Education Gazette* of 1926 that inculcating patriotism in young children was an easy problem, as ‘children respond very readily to the comparatively elementary sentiment of love for and pride in their own school and their own town. The study of history serves to deepen this sentiment and change it into love of country and pride in the men and women who have made it what it is to-day’.25 J. Ironside, president of the Otago branch of the NZEI during 1922, told the branch’s Winter Conference that it was good that local history was now receiving more attention from educational authorities, because ‘the boy that is soon to take an active and affectionate interest in his town or his district will surely have that interest deepened and quickened if he knows something of its past’.26

**The idea of the local in the New Education pedagogy**

The place of local history in the curricula of the early- and mid-twentieth century, also stemmed from aspects of the New Education pedagogy. The idea of the ‘local’ occupied an important place under the New Education, and recurs as a theme throughout this study. A considerable component of the prescriptions for ‘New Zealand’ history in the 1928 syllabus (whose authors, falsely, claimed that their scheme was the first to contain New Zealand history27): was, in fact, local history. In the 1928 syllabus, the topic ‘Stories from Local History – Founding of the Town or District’ was prescribed for primary school pupils from Standard III upward.28 The place of both local and New

27 New Zealand history, in fact, appeared for the first time in the 1904 syllabus.
Zealand history in the curriculum of this period, I argue, cannot be adequately explained without first understanding the emphasis the New Education pedagogy placed upon educational realism and experience.

Twentieth-century educational experts frequently accused their educational forebears of having focused too heavily on abstract ideas and book learning, both of which they felt interfered with pupils’ ‘real’ experience of the world. Writing in 1905, Wanganui inspectors claimed that the teacher’s aim should be to ‘interpret’ to pupils ‘the phenomena he meets with in daily life’. ‘The facts and processes he memorises’, they added, ‘must be those he has discovered and seen for himself, not merely those stated in text-books’. Advocates of the New Education pedagogy, by contrast, favoured teaching that was ‘concrete’ instead of abstract, in which children absorbed knowledge through activity, direct experience and participation – not only through book learning – and in which all educational work was related as closely as possible to a child’s own life and existing experience of the world.

The New Education pedagogy's emphasis on educational realism partly stemmed from prevailing learning theories. Young children, educationalists argued, would be naturally more interested in and easily able to comprehend matters of an abstract or remote nature if teachers related all new concepts back to ideas that their pupils had already thoroughly mastered. In designing schemes for young children, teachers were told to draw upon their pupils’ interests and knowledge of the world. As for most children these were primarily ‘local’ – based around their immediate circles of home, family, school and local community – educational experts argued that young pupils’ lessons should be drawn as much as possible from the child’s surroundings. Lessons which proceeded from the local also conformed to what these educationalists regarded as a ‘natural’ sequence of instruction. Taranaki inspectors wrote in their 1901 report that ‘A lesson should not violate the following principles’: ‘Teach from the simple to the complex, from the particular to the general, from the concrete to the abstract…from the near to the remote, and generally from the known to the


30 Another manifestation of this increased educational emphasis on the local was the introduction of Nature Study into the primary syllabus in 1904. Early twentieth-century educationalists hoped that Nature Study would help bring children into closer touch with their surroundings. See Ross, Going Bush, 32-33.
unknown’. Such calls for teachers to organise lessons ‘from the known to the unknown’ were a regular feature in the educational literature of the early and interwar decades.

Educationalists diagnosed a range of potential ‘deficits’ in pupils that might flow from a lack of local referents in school programmes. The preface to one of the first series of textbooks to be published in New Zealand, *The Southern Cross Readers* (c.1890), claimed that a lack of local knowledge formed an educational handicap for New Zealand children, as many ‘thoughtful friends of education’ had observed that children in New Zealand had weaker powers of observation than the children of ‘older’ lands, in which local knowledge was more firmly embedded in the culture. ‘This defect’, they pronounced, ‘seems to be largely due to the fact that the reading books in current use deal with a world to which the young in our land are strangers’. And, Otago inspectors argued in 1902, a lack of local material in history and geography might hinder the development of ‘imagination’ in New Zealand children, as children could not form a picture of the world ‘brought before them through the medium of another’s mind’, unless they had first mastered their own surroundings: ‘The samples of nature and experience that lie beyond their own horizon are very like those that lie within it; but unless they know their own well they cannot imagine those of the rest of the world’. ‘A child should know and understand his surroundings’, agreed Wellington inspectors in 1929, ‘as such knowledge is the only real foundation on which, by comparison, he can build a correct conception of the world beyond his experience’.

The failure of teachers to incorporate sufficient local knowledge into their schemes was not only a problem faced by ‘new’ societies such as New Zealand; ‘the same defect’, Taranaki inspectors pointed out in their 1901 report ‘is referred to by Inspectors in the Home-country under the head of “absence of local colouring”’. The problem, however, is likely to have been more acutely felt in settler-colonial societies such as New Zealand, due to the greater difficulties settlers faced in obtaining local information from traditional sources, such as through knowledge passed on by parents.

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33 Minister of Education, “Education: Reports of Inspectors of Schools – Otago,” *AJHR*, E-1B, 1902, 44.
or elders. Here, I would suggest, the emphasis of the New Education pedagogy upon observation and experience of local surroundings, resonated with the desires of native-born Pakeha settlers (for these educationalists generally assumed their audience was Pakeha) to achieve indigenous status in their ‘new’ land. Both the New Education pedagogy and the goal of indigenisation called for a detailed knowledge of, and mastery over, one’s immediate surrounds. Both pointed to a range of ‘deficits’ which could arise from inadequacies of local knowledge or lack of investment in the local. In the case of the New Education these included a lack of ‘reality’, weakened powers of observation, and an inability of pupils to picture the wider world beyond their own experience. In the case of indigenisation: poor knowledge of indigenous phenomena, a lack of spiritual and emotional connections to the land, and even, perhaps, a lack of ‘national spirit.’ As Kirstie Ross shows in her study of Pakeha ideas about nature, some commentators held that New Zealand’s lack of ‘national culture’ could be attributed to the character of Pakeha interactions with the land. In their effort to ‘break in’ their environment, these critics argued, the ‘pioneers’ had failed to form a spiritual union with the land. 36

Finally, both held the basic assumption of colonisers that the relationship of settlers to the land was one that was both natural and unproblematic. I return to this area of intersection between the New Education pedagogy and the settler aim of indigenisation in Chapter Three of this study: specifically, in the sections on dramatic and imaginative history work, and on local history projects written by school children and their teachers.

Under the New Education, the ‘local’ also had other contrasting meanings to those based on experience and observation I have described above. While educational experts perceived the knowledge and skills pupils gained through the detailed study of their surroundings as valuable in themselves, they also expected that locally-based lessons could be expanded outwards to enhance children’s knowledge of the wider world. Educationalists’ efforts to promote the foundations of patriotism in pupils using local history rested on this very assumption. Locally-based lessons in patriotism can be understood as a component of a framework of emotional connections and loyalties that stretched all the way to the imperial or international level. The ‘love of country’ which educational experts hoped would result from pupils learning about the history of their local district was not only advocated on the basis that it would make children better

36 Ross, Going Bush, 6.
citizens in their local communities. Once having been cultivated at the local level, educational experts treated patriotism as a moveable asset. The principle of ‘teaching from the known to the unknown’ not only justified the inclusion of local history in the primary school curriculum. It also signalled the direction in which these locally-based lessons would ultimately be extended: outwards.

‘J’, a Master of Arts in History, argued in a letter published in National Education in 1921 that, although the teaching of local history was important in patriotic education, restricting pupils’ knowledge and sympathies to their local area alone ran the risk of breeding insularity in future generations: ‘patriotism should begin at home. Just as a child begins by being proud of his family and his home…so this feeling will in time extend to his school, township, his country, his Empire. Of course, care must be taken to see that it does so develop and expand, not stop on the way, otherwise it will degenerate into parochialism. Nothing helps to build up this common feeling as a feeling of community in the traditions of the past’.37 Similarly, Coad argued in 1924 that teachers seeking to strengthen their pupils’ bonds with Empire should build upon their ‘chiefly local’ interests. The ‘practical teacher’, she wrote, ‘builds on these local interests and gradually establishes the right connections with neighbouring countries, with Great Britain, and the rest of the Empire.’ ‘Real Empire patriotism’, she added, was ‘built best upon these local foundations – New Zealand history’.38

A similar approach to civics (a subject usually grouped with history in the syllabus) also gained in popularity in the interwar period. Proponents of this approach favoured the teaching of civics through participatory and locally-based lessons, built upon the same assumption of a synthesis between the local and universal. The 1926 syllabus recommended, for instance, that children be introduced to basic ideas of citizenship by comparing local with national institutions. For example, teachers might cover the syllabus topic ‘General ideas of what a parliament is’ by comparing national governments with local bodies whose workings would, supposedly, be transparent to primary school children. These included: ‘The School Council, School Committee, Education Board, City or Borough Council, or Road Board’.39 This notion that lessons learned locally could have universal applications is developed further in the last section.

37 J [pseud.], letter to the editor, 338.
of this chapter, on local histories presented to children in textbooks. Next, however, I look at the role of history in presenting ideas about good governance to children.

**Ideas about governments and governance**

One of the ‘intangible’ ways in which history contributed to the New Education’s goal of educating citizens, and also helped to advance the wider Pakeha project of colonisation, I argue in this section, was through the subject’s role in conveying largely positive messages about governments and governance to children. I do not refer here to the government in power, or to governments of any particular political allegiance, but simply the idea of governance in general.  

This objective surfaced most clearly in subjects such as civics and constitutional history. But it also appeared across a range of areas of the history syllabus less overtly packaged as containing ‘civics’ lessons. It emerged, for instance, in the tendency of textbook histories to minimise the culpability of past governments in episodes of British history such as slavery or child labour, by describing them as ‘mistakes’. Other examples, seemingly benign, can be seen in descriptions of the services that governments provide for citizens or in studies of the work of individuals or organisations involved in maintaining law and order, such as police, law courts, and so on. In this section, I focus upon the ideas about governance contained in two particular areas of primary school history curricula: first, in British constitutional history, and second, in accounts of the history of the district of Northland in the period leading up to the 1840 signing of the Treaty of Waitangi.

Part of the reason for the importance of history in lessons about government lay in the belief of some educationalists that a technical knowledge of the workings of government and the responsibilities of citizens would be worthless for pupils if they lacked a knowledge of how such institutions had ‘developed’ in the past. ‘Much of the content of civics,’ observed the authors of the 1928 syllabus, ‘is only the culmination of century-long evolution of political ideas, and of course can only be rationally taught along with the history of those ideas’. Each primary school syllabus issued between 1904 and 1928 included some component of British constitutional history, although its influence was somewhat diminished in the syllabi of the interwar period.
The version of British political history that children encountered in textbooks was that familiar to historians as the original object of the description, ‘whig history’. Briefly, the whig version of British political history held that constitutional forms of the present day were the outcome of centuries of gradual and continuous political ‘development’, resulting from the British people’s struggle for ‘liberty’. The innate British ‘love of freedom’, it was held, had protected England from autocracy in the eighteenth century and the revolutionary struggles which marked the history of Western European countries in the nineteenth century. In the twentieth century, its adherents hoped, it might protect British ‘peoples’ from, variously, militant unionism, revolutionary socialism, and totalitarianism. Such accounts of Britain’s constitutional history served various conservative social ends, but my interest here is specifically in the colonising functions of such histories.

Constitutional histories rested upon the assumption that New Zealand governments of the present were the outcome of this same unbroken process of ‘development’, stretching back many centuries into the British past. Present day New Zealand governments, in these histories, gained legitimacy from the fact that they were ‘British’. Questions as to whether British institutions retained their legitimacy after they had been ‘transplanted’ to other, already occupied lands, were, hardly surprisingly, not posed by history textbooks. In fact, many accounts of British constitutional history in New Zealand textbooks did not actually mention New Zealand, and their relevance was often simply assumed. Either way, such accounts assumed that New Zealand’s ‘inheritance’ of British institutions and forms of government was unproblematic.

By no means every educational expert or commentator upon history teaching was in favour of teaching British constitutional history to primary school children, but their quarrel was largely about its efficacy, not its wider logic. Professor J. Elder, lecturer in history at Otago University, told a meeting of Dunedin teachers in 1921 that ‘It is important to observe that impersonal things and abstractions had little interest for children at this stage. Constitutional history and political ideas had better be left for adolescents and adults’. Coad also disputed the teaching of constitutional history to primary school children on the grounds that it was beyond their capacity to understand. She wrote in 1924 that teachers who recognised the special interests and capacities of

their pupils knew that ‘young children cannot understand the development of certain institutions because they lack experience of details’. Opponents of constitutional history tended to instead favour the participatory and locally-based approaches to civics described in the previous section.

As I have said, children also received positive messages about governments and governance through a range of historical topics not designated as civics. Both the Journal and Our Nation’s Story, for instance, found a powerful civics lesson in the history of the Bay of Islands between the early nineteenth century and 1840, and in the period of early contact between Europeans and Maori sometimes referred to by writers of this period as ‘Old New Zealand.’ The nineteenth-century history of the trading settlement of Kororareka (present day Russell), was a particularly popular topic among the authors of textbooks. Kororareka in these decades, and sometimes New Zealand as a whole, was depicted by textbook writers as an object lesson in the dire consequences of ‘lawlessness’ in a society, and the comparative advantages of life in an ‘organised’ community. Our Nation’s Story informed Standard IV children that, during the early nineteenth century, ‘Kororareka was said to be the worst place in the Pacific, and its lawless inhabitants were always ready for any crimes’. Meanwhile, Standard III classes read in their volume of the series that in Kororareka, ‘there was no peace, no safety for white man or brown. Murder and robbery were affairs of every day. There was none to keep order, none to see justice done’.

In some articles, descriptions of the violent behaviour of the inhabitants of Kororareka were confined to the ‘vicious’ class of whites who used the town as a trading, whaling and sealing base. But in other accounts, Maori themselves were depicted as contributing to the general aura of violence and disorder that surrounded Old New Zealand. If the children of the present were to travel back and visit their country of only a hundred years ago, Our Nation’s Story told Standard V pupils, they would encounter a land very different, and far less pleasant, than their own: ‘New Zealand, during this period, we discover to be a No-Man’s-Land, a country without law and order, in which each lawless white or native does as he pleases’. ‘[W]e who live in the peaceful and happy New Zealand of to-day find it hard to imagine our country at

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43 Coad, “The Teaching of History,” 373.
the time when it was a lawless No-Man’s-Land’, *Our Nation’s Story*, Standard VI
claimed.\(^\text{47}\) Similarly, a 1925 *Journal* article described New Zealand in 1837 as a ‘land
almost untouched by the hand of the white man. Only a few whaling stations were
scattered around the coasts, and the Maori tribes were continually at war with one
another.’ By way of contrast – the same article claimed – by 1901 New Zealand was
‘one of the most prosperous of the Empire’s colonies, and had so grown in importance
that in a few short years she was elevated to the status of a Dominion’.\(^\text{48}\)

Contrasts between the ‘lawless’ state of Old New Zealand, and the well
organised New Zealand society of the present, were intended to illustrate to children a
general necessity for ‘good governance’ and the dire consequences that could flow from
its ‘absence’. But such accounts virtually conflated ‘good governance’ with British
forms of government. The tribal-based authority of Maori was not accorded an
equivalent status, or indeed, any recognition at all. These claims of Maori ‘lawlessness’
gained an added significance when juxtaposed in textbooks, as they often were, with
the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi and the British annexation of New Zealand.

Textbook accounts of the Treaty overwhelmingly argued that the British had
been driven by benevolent motives in their colonisation of New Zealand. These
included protecting Maori lands from falling prey to speculative land dealers, and
bringing the country’s ‘lawless’ inhabitants – white and Maori – under British rule. A
1914 *Journal* article, which had opened with a description of the violence of early
nineteenth-century Kororareka, concluded with the Treaty signing and the statement
that the Treaty had ended ‘the fierce old Maori time’ in New Zealand history. From
that point on, the article claimed, in an allusion to British constitutional history, the
Treaty ‘remained the foundation of Maori liberty and British power in our country, and
it was by it that New Zealand became a part of the British Empire’.\(^\text{49}\) In line with the
general policy of textbooks of depicting the actions of governments, past and present, in
a positive light, any criticisms of later breaches of the Treaty by New Zealand
governments that appeared in textbooks were invariably muted by claims that
governments had acted only with ‘good intentions’. The same 1914 *Journal* article
stated that ‘the signing of this Treaty threw upon the Government of New Zealand a

\(^{47}\) *Our Nation’s Story*, Standard VI, 39.


\(^{49}\) Education Department, “How New Zealand Became Part of the British Empire,” *The School Journal*, Part
II, June 1914, 71.
difficult task, and one in which it often failed'. But, despite the ‘blunders’ of past
governments, colonisation by the Crown, the article held, had been far preferable to the
‘alternative’. The ‘alternative’ to colonisation by the British government referred to by
the article’s author, was private colonisation by the New Zealand Company or similar:
‘no private company could have done nearly so well’.50 Another alternative: that Maori
might govern themselves, was not considered, by this or any other textbook writer.

Settler-colonial states have particularly strong reasons to insist upon the
legitimacy of their imported institutions of government, and the continuity of
constitutional ‘traditions’ between the ‘old’ land and the ‘new’. As the Australian
historian Paul Carter asks, ‘who are more liable to charges of unlawful usurpation and
constitutional illegitimacy than the founders of colonies?’51 In this section, my aim has
been to show how history education functioned, in various ways, to convey positive
ideas about governments and governance (or European forms of it) to primary school
pupils. By praising or muting criticism of the actions of British and New Zealand
governments – past and present – and by not offering Maori self-government as a
feasible alternative, such histories not only justified the original act of colonisation over
Maori, but also played a part in its continuance.

Educating citizens and the historical ‘time sense’
Some of the forms of history education described above – in particular constitutional
history – relied upon a sense of continuity between the past and present (or, more
accurately, viewed continuity as a more significant factor in history than change). Other
forms of history presented to school children tried to generate a greater sense of
historical movement. In this section, I unravel what educational experts meant when
they spoke of the ‘time sense’ or ‘historical sense’, and why they saw it as an important
aspect of their role in educating future citizens. Again, one of the most reliable ways of
gaining access to the ideas of modern educational experts is to examine some of the
criticisms that they levelled at their predecessors. Twentieth-century educationalists
often accused the devisers of past history schemes of having presented history as an
unconnected series of kings-and-battles. There were several elements to this charge: one
directed at the non-democratic and militaristic content of such histories, the other

50 Ibid. 71.
targeted at their failure to convey an appropriate sense of historical change and causality to pupils.

A reaction against kings-and-battles history might be explained solely as an outcome of the First World War. Certainly, the events of 1914-18 added force to educational critiques of military history. But expressions of opposition to kings-and-battles history pre-dated the war. For instance, the headmaster of the Auckland Normal School, Herbert Glanville Cousins, giving evidence to the 1912 Cohen Education Commission criticised some textbooks for ‘emphasiz[ing] the battle and ignor[ing] the life of the people’. For this reason, I situate the reaction of educationalists against kings-and-battles history in the New Education’s wider critique of ‘traditional’ history education. In place of kings-and-battles history, these educationalists recommended history schemes which would instead highlight more socially responsible themes such as ‘social progress’ and ‘development’. The preface to the Our Nation’s Story series, for instance, claimed that the series had placed less emphasis ‘on “the lives of kings and queens and battles long ago” and more on the social progress of the British people’. And a correspondent to National Education, teacher I. M. Kirk wrote in 1929 that it is ‘with great joy that we as teachers view the new movement in history teaching, from the old monotonous procession of kings, titles, battles, dates (in which it would appear that the fullest list took pride of place), to a well-ordered pageant of development with varied interest.’ She added, ‘while nothing in the old-fashioned list of dates is now desired, it is very important to develop a time sense in the pupil’.

A shift in the content of history curricula and textbooks away from military and royal history towards the history of ‘the people’ and social progress, was also accompanied by a shift in the sense of historical time conveyed by such histories: from that of an unconnected series of dates to that of a sequence of events, structured by the principle of ‘development’. The introduction of ‘time charts’ in to New Zealand primary school classrooms in the 1920s was indicative of this broad temporal shift. Time charts were posters, usually illustrated, which visually depicted linear sequences of events. While sometimes containing dates, these were usually less prominently displayed than illustrations of the events themselves; it was the order, not the precise

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53 See, for instance, Our Nation’s Story, Standard VI, v.
dates of events, that children were supposed to take away from such lessons. ‘Dates are landmarks’, the 1926 syllabus told primary teachers: ‘therefore they should not be regarded as separate facts, but as a means of tracing the course of events’. 55 The shift from dates as discrete events to linear sequences of events described here, it should be noted, forms a precondition for the forms of historical consciousness that historians recognise as distinctively ‘modern’: namely, the notion that the past can be explained through coherent purposeful narratives. 56 Before history could be seen to ‘develop’, in other words, it had first to be arranged into linear sequences.

Educational experts also attempted to convey a sense of historical development through the use of narrative devices within texts. The authors of the 1925 history report selected the idea of British ‘national development’ as the overarching theme of their suggested syllabus. 57 In doing so, they acknowledged that young children, due to the idea’s abstract nature and their own short life experience, would find it hard to grasp. ‘In the ordinary sense’, they wrote, ‘the idea of national development is difficult for most of the children in the primary department on account of their limited powers of imagining circumstances and conditions other than their own, but they can be impressed with the immense progress of human society’. 58 To draw children’s attention to the notion that history and human societies ‘progressed’, the authors of the report advised teachers to organise their schemes on British national development, around contrasts between the past and the present:

The position of the working-man, for example, in the eighteenth century…the absence of legislation for the protection of women and children in mine and factory…the treatment of prisoners, and the trade in slaves, when compared with the present, would make even primary children realize by comparison the advantages of to-day, and teach the great lesson of continuity of growth and development of human society. 59

55 Education Department, “Suggestions for the Teaching of History,” 51.
58 Ibid.
59 Ibid.
In history schemes designed to illustrate the principle of development by contrasting the past with the present, the past invariably appeared ‘primitive’, while the conditions of the present were just as inevitably ‘enlightened’. The lot of New Zealand primary school children could hardly seem anything but fortunate, for instance, when it was compared to the fate of child labourers in the mines of early industrial England. The same idea of ‘development’, based upon selective contrasts between the past and the present, structured the forms of history presented to primary school pupils during the early and interwar decades, including – as I show in the next section – the local history which appeared in textbooks. It was these lessons about the nature of historical time and change, I would suggest, that explain the significance of ‘time sense’ for citizenship education. The emphasis on continuity in some areas of the history curriculum, such as in constitutional history, lent inherited institutions and practices a sense of legitimacy. Areas of the history curriculum which stressed the ‘progressiveness’ of history pointed to the many privileges enjoyed by the present generations, an insight that educationalists hoped would make children more grateful towards their forebears. And just as crucially, progress in the past suggested the likely continuation of such ‘development’ in the future. Mr. Aschman, headmaster of the Christchurch Normal School, told a 1923 meeting of the NZEI that the central idea of history teaching should be to ‘bring the mind into contact with the living world to-day… They should get the child to realise its present circumstances and contrast these with those in which other people had lived in the past, thus engendering an admiration and a love for the achievements of to-day and a desire to hold onto them’.  

Local histories in textbooks

In this final section, I discuss the types of local histories which appeared in textbooks over the early and interwar period of the twentieth century, and show in them the influence of the elements of citizenship education I have previously described in this chapter. Local history, in its strictest sense, as defined by the history of a particular place or locality, was not a subject well catered for by textbooks intended for a national audience. The local histories which appeared in textbooks tended to be either district or

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provincial histories, and their subject was the ‘development’ of a district from time of the arrival of European settlers to the present day.\textsuperscript{61}

Local histories which appeared in textbooks invariably slotted the European settlement of the district they recounted into narratives of ‘development.’ They described the appearance of a district as it was before the arrival of European settlers, and contrasted it with its ‘pleasant’ and modern features in the present. They almost always expressed optimism about the future prospects of the districts they wrote about. In many regions, the authors of such articles claimed, the transformation of a district since the arrival of Europeans had been so absolute that it was now difficult for children to picture its former state. ‘Sixty years ago’, the 1917 \textit{School Journal} told children, ‘no railways ran up and down New Zealand. The silence of the bush hung over the hills that now echo back the thunders of the train, and lonely plains extended where now stand towns and villages with their busy and bustling workers’.\textsuperscript{62} ‘The boys and girls who live in New Zealand at the present day can scarcely form an idea of what this country was like a hundred years ago,’ another \textit{Journal} article claimed in the following year. ‘Then there were no big towns, no roads, no railways, no schools. In both the North Island and the South Island there was open land, but over the greater part of the country there were dense forests and slimy swamps, through which even the Maoris found great difficulty in forcing their way’.\textsuperscript{63}

Such histories not only told of past development, but they also contained prophecies of a district’s future progress. Thus, even provinces which could not easily be described as more ‘prosperous’ in the present than they had been in the past – most of New Zealand’s former gold-mining regions fell into this category – were still moulded into progressive narratives through assurances that their ‘golden time’ awaited them in the near future. A 1922 \textit{Journal} article on the history of Greymouth’s port, while noting that the region was not currently prospering to quite the same degree as other New Zealand districts, assured its readers that the labour and planning invested by the district’s ‘pioneers’ would surely soon bear dividends: ‘as the district becomes more closely settled and industries begin to make great strides forward, the port will still

\textsuperscript{61} The designers of the 1928 syllabus expected teachers to furnish the details of the history of their local area either from personal knowledge, or by consulting published local histories, if they existed. Some of the practicalities involved in sourcing information on local history, and the use of local history projects as an educational tool, are discussed in Chapter 3.

\textsuperscript{62} Education Department, “Told by a Railway Ticket,” \textit{The School Journal}, Part II, September 1917, 126.

\textsuperscript{63} Education Department, “James Caddell,” \textit{The School Journal}, Part II, April 1909, 42.
be needed, so that the efforts and foresight of those pioneers who planned the harbour will not have been in vain’.

Local and national governments emerged as close partners to the European settlers in these triumphalist accounts of colonisation: the efforts of governments and councils to ‘build up’ national and regional infrastructure and institutions were frequently praised by textbook writers. As Our Nation’s Story put it: ‘In a young country, the government must do for the people many things which in older lands are left to private enterprise’. For Our Nation’s Story, New Zealand’s ‘progress’ as a nation could be measured by the successive improvements made to public works and amenities:

the story of New Zealand’s development forms the main theme in the history of New Zealand from the days when it passed under the British Crown; and to us there is romance in the fact that even as we live, this history is still being made. When a new school is built, when a new railway is opened or a new road constructed to an outlying district – there we have another landmark in the history of our country.

The educational opportunities presently available to New Zealand children were all the more praiseworthy, claimed Our Nation’s Story, considering that they were offered in ‘a country which a few hundred years ago was a savage land whose white inhabitants numbered less than two thousand people! No wonder, when looking back over New Zealand’s story we think of it as one of the most romantic stories of the British people!

Local histories in textbooks, as I have said, focused upon describing and celebrating the trajectory of European settlement in a district. They paid little attention to Maori, except in those districts where Maori resistance posed an impediment to the otherwise ‘peaceful’ work of settlement. If not as obstacles to ‘development’, Maori were typically mentioned in such accounts in connection with a district’s ‘early’ past, specifically its ‘savage’ or ‘unimproved’ state as it was before Europeans encountered it. Thus, where Maori were mentioned in reference to an area’s ‘early’ history, it was primarily as a point of contrast with a district’s ‘modern’ features in the present – and as

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65 Our Nation’s Story, Standard VI, 51.
66 Ibid., 56.
67 Ibid., 57.
a measure against which the subsequent development of a district after its European settlement could be properly appreciated. Other articles did not mention the presence of Maori at all, and instead claimed that European settlers encountered a pristine landscape untouched by human hands. Either way, all such histories were unambiguous in their praise of the processes of colonisation and New Zealand’s ‘development’, and failed to register that the same processes of colonisation they celebrated were also those which alienated Maori from their traditional lands. Local histories in textbooks celebrated the ‘achievements’ of settlement, but obscured the acts of wilful deceit and the displacement of Maori from their land that had accompanied it.

So far in this chapter, I have described several contrasting meanings attached to the local under the New Education pedagogy. One was based upon the value of experience and direct observation of one’s surrounding district, the other upon the idea that children’s knowledge and responses to the local could be extended outwards to the national, imperial, or international level. The reason that educationalists felt that it might be beneficial for a child to learn about how their local Road Board operated, was not because of the intrinsic interest of a Road Board, but because they hoped that such a study might illuminate the workings of the national parliament in Wellington. The logic underpinning such an assumption was that that both institutions operated under the same principles. Local histories in textbooks followed much the same line of reasoning. Here, the histories of New Zealand’s districts were valued not so much for what they revealed about the particularities of an area’s past, but as smaller samples which illuminated greater themes and principles about British, and therefore, Pakeha history. J. L. Ewing, teacher at Karori West School in Wellington (and later educational historian) concluded his series of National Education articles on New Zealand’s history since the arrival of the first European settlers with the statement that: ‘It is a fascinating story. Few countries have witnessed such stirring events and made such rapid progress in so short a time.’ Yet, he went on ‘the importance of New Zealand’s history lies not so much in the record of its own progress, as in the fact that its development is part of a greater movement, the growth of the British Empire or the British Commonwealth of Nations’. In the syllabi of the interwar period, the ‘nation’ was British, and that which ‘developed’ was a Pakeha-centred New Zealand society.

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defined by the achievements of European settlement. Maori were not only marginal to such narratives, but sometimes formed the control against which the ‘progress’ of Pakeha society was measured. ‘In the story of New Zealand’, Our Nation’s Story claimed, ‘we are impressed by one outstanding fact’:

the history of New Zealand, from the time that our country passed under the British flag, is a romance of development. No greater contrast can be imagined between the wild and lawless country of 1840 and the peaceful prosperous land in which we live today. Old New Zealand was a No-Man's-Land; the New Zealand of the twentieth century is a nation, proudly taking its place among the dominions which form the great Commonwealth of British nations.69

All progressive histories carry with them notions of inevitability. They depict present day outcomes as the result of some historical, natural or providential force, over which individuals had little, if any, capacity for influence. Their tendency to diminish the role of individual agency in history, I would suggest, created certain problems in pedagogical schemes aimed at producing future adults who would exercise their individual agency as citizens. This failure of histories of ‘development’ to explain agency, might explain the significance of another theme in the New Education pedagogy: that of the Victorian ideology of ‘character’. This comprises the subject of Chapter Two.

69 Our Nation's Story, Standard VI, 92.
Chapter 2

**Heroes of the Classroom: School History and Character**

Miles Fairburn, in his study of the diaries of James Cox, an unskilled labourer who lived in New Zealand from the time of his emigration from England in 1880 and his death in a charitable home for destitute men in 1919, describes the notion of ‘self-help’ as central to Cox’s ideology throughout his life. Self-help was the measure against which Cox assessed his own conduct and judged that of others, in spite of the fact that his personal experience spectacularly failed to fulfil its predictions of success in life. Self-help was used by nineteenth-century English writers as a near synonym of ‘character’; both were titles of advice books by Samuel Smiles (1812-1904), the author generally credited with popularising the concepts in Victorian England. Each term referred to a version of selfhood that placed primacy on individual willpower and self-sacrifice. Both maintained that an individual who possessed certain traits and attributes would be virtually assured of success in life, regardless of disadvantage or personal misfortune. Smiles, and other authors of Victorian self-help literature, followed a common formula in their writing. They focused upon the lives of successful individuals from modest backgrounds, and purported to illustrate how their achievements could be explained by reference to their qualities of character alone. In fact, as American historian Judith Hilkey shows in her study of nineteenth-century self-help literature in the United States, many authors who wrote within this genre argued that early disadvantage and the obstacles encountered during life could be turned into ‘advantage’, as hardship was character-forming for individuals. ‘In my career’, Lord Roberts told an assembly of school cadets, in a speech reproduced by *The School Journal* in 1908, ‘I have known many men who began on the lowest rung of the ladder, but by means of their character they have been able to climb to the highest rung, and have won respect and honour throughout their careers.’ ‘A man lacking in character’ he added, ‘will [never] be able to get on in the world.’

In this chapter, I argue that the idea of ‘character’ in this nineteenth-century Victorian usage, describing a string of personal attributes, including will-power, honesty, courage, duty, self-reliance, work ethic, altruism, and more, provides an

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2 Ibid., 64.
important clue to understanding the place of history in school curricula under the New Education. While it remained the predominant ideal of individual conduct and morality presented to children via the educational medium of textbooks, the Victorian ideal of character was not the only notion of selfhood presented to New Zealand primary school children in this period. It was strongest in the first two decades of the century, but while important, somewhat diminished in power during the interwar period. During these interwar decades, competing and less prescriptive notions of selfhood emerged in connection to the increased use of activity-based pedagogies in primary school classrooms. This shift from normative to more flexible ideals conforms with cultural changes historians have observed in other countries over the early decades of the twentieth century. The American intellectual historian, Warren I. Susman, for instance, documents a broad cultural shift in the United States from a culture of ‘character’, based on self-sacrifice and the exercise of individual willpower, to a more permissive and flexible culture of ‘personality’, which emphasised self-realisation, expression and the ‘performance’ of self.⁵ He tentatively attributes this cultural shift to the change from a producer-oriented society to a mass consumer society. Evidence of these latter, more flexible notions of self in New Zealand educational materials, and specifically in the activity-based classroom methodologies favoured by educational experts of the interwar period, are the subject of Chapter Three.

The present chapter is concerned with describing the older Victorian ideal of ‘character’ and its promulgation through The School Journal and Our Nation’s Story. First I examine a range of biographical materials which appeared in these textbooks, as a way of illuminating the specific attributes of character presented to children, and the conditions under which writers maintained good ‘character’ emerged in past individuals. Next, I look at how these character ideals were applied to certain groups of individuals or entire episodes in New Zealand history. Last, I examine some of the general problems the ideology of character raised for modern, urban societies such as New Zealand’s in the twentieth century, and suggest some reasons for its gradual demise over the interwar period. I will also here consider its implications for cultural colonisation.

The pedagogy of character education

Most twentieth-century educationalists agreed that the shaping of children’s ‘characters’ was among the most important goals of modern education systems. ‘The moral purpose’, the 1904 syllabus told teachers, should ‘dominate the spirit of the whole school life, and the influence of the school and its teachers upon the pupils should be such as is calculated to be a real factor in the formation of good character’.\(^6\) Similarly, the 1928 syllabus instructed its readers that ‘Character-training should not be regarded...as a subject...but rather as the principal function the State calls upon the teacher to perform’.\(^7\) Among the time-tabled subjects, educational experts considered history and biography – as well as English literature – to be the subjects most suited to conveying ‘character’ lessons to children. The 1904 syllabus, for instance, told teachers that ‘it is best to enforce the principles of moral conduct by examples taken from history, biography, poetry, and fiction, and by anecdote, allegory, and fable’.\(^8\) Likewise, the 1919 syllabus instructed teachers that ‘Numerous opportunities may be taken for the giving of moral instruction during the lessons on history and civics’.\(^9\)

Educational experts perceived a range of school-based and extra-curricular activities to be ‘character-building’ for children. Jock Phillips, who has written about the role of ‘character’ in informing particular models of Pakeha masculinity, observes that many educational commentators around the turn of the twentieth century regarded team sport, especially rugby, as beneficial to boys’ character formation. Rugby created artificial conditions of adversity and the necessary tests under which character developed, while keeping male violence within acceptable societal bounds.\(^10\) Educationalists also recommended activities such as scouting as benefiting boys’ characters. Due to the scope of his study, Phillips’ interest in character lay primarily in its role in shaping ideals of masculinity. In connection with history education devised for co-educational primary schools, ‘character’, or at least its more generic features, was also used to promote certain ideals of femininity for girls. That said, the ideals of selfhood and expectations of future roles projected onto girls and boys in history lessons

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\(^6\) Education Department, “Regulations for Inspection and Examination of Schools,” *Supplement to the New Zealand Gazette* (21 January 1904), 294.

\(^7\) Education Department, *Syllabus of Instruction for Public Schools*, 63.

\(^8\) Education Department, “Regulations for Inspection and Examination of Schools,” 295.

\(^9\) Education Department, “Regulations for the Organization, Examination, and Inspection of Public Schools and the Syllabus of Instruction,” *New Zealand Gazette* (September 1919), 2897.

were at times different enough to warrant separate treatment. For that reason, at certain points in the chapter it has been necessary to differentiate those elements of character associated with boys and men, from those connected with girls and women.

The pedagogy of character formation through history and biography rested upon a concept of the past as a source of examples of behaviour for present generations to imitate, or avoid. Otago inspectors wrote in their 1924 report that ‘in the primary schools very little real history can be taught. It is difficult for young children to grasp fully the meaning of the great movements in our history, but if a teacher has succeeded in creating interest and has recognized that his main aim is to make his lessons “an inspiration to conduct,” he will have succeeded to a considerable extent’.11 Within the historical subjects, much of the weight of responsibility for character formation was placed on biography, and the perceived role of biography as a source of ‘character’ lessons provides an additional explanation for its prominence in early twentieth-century history curricula. In writing upon these pedagogical uses of the past as providing material for school pupils to imitate, educational experts typically stressed the malleability of young minds and the importance of early role models in shaping the ‘habits’, or patterns of behaviour, that formed the basis of Victorian character ideals. The ‘child of the primary school is essentially a hero-worshipper. Interest and knowledge come to him most surely through the study of the actions of real men and women’, wrote the authors of the 1925 history report.12 Educational experts maintained that, simply by reading about the characters and ideals of past heroes, children might, as if by a process of literary osmosis, come to absorb some of their better qualities.

Biographies aimed at building pupils’ ‘characters’ adopted two main strategies. First, they listed an individual’s traits of character and demonstrated how they had contributed to their ‘greatness’. Next, they explained the conditions under which a historical individual’s ‘character’ emerged in the first place. In articles written for the benefit of primary school children on the lives of ‘great men’, the authors of textbooks, like those of self-help literature, frequently found the explanation for an individual’s development of ‘character’ in the obstacles they had overcome in childhood. Captain James Cook, the English navigator who commanded three voyages to New Zealand and the Pacific between 1769 and his death in 1779, was among the most popular

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12 Education Department, The Teaching of History in Primary and Secondary Schools, 3.
subjects of biographical studies in the *Journal* from its earliest issues. Sketches about Cook frequently dwelt upon his childhood, stressing both his humble beginnings and the qualities of his character which had eventually enabled him to rise above his impoverished upbringing. The son of a poor labourer with a large family to feed, Cook had to go out to work from a young age, and did not enjoy the advantages of a formal education. It was amply clear from these descriptions that Cook did not achieve ‘greatness’ due to his privileged upbringing:

If we could peep back into the past years and see James Cook as a lad, what should we learn about him? Should we see him in school during the day and in a comfortable home at night with kind parents to help him to become a great man? No; when James Cook was not so old as some of you are in the Second Standard, he had to work hard on a farm all day for small wages. Yet, tired as he was at night, he tried to learn all he could from the few books he could get.\(^\text{13}\)

An alternative explanation found in textbooks for the ‘character’ of male historical figures was that it arose out of ‘Man’s’ struggle against nature. As one of the last remaining natural frontiers left to be ‘conquered’ by explorers, the topic of the exploration of the polar regions was a regular feature of textbook articles. The lives of the British Antarctic explorers Robert Falcon Scott and Ernest Shackleton enjoyed particularly close attention from New Zealand textbook writers, as the history of Antarctic exploration was both close to home, and for the decades of the 1910s, a tale still unfolding. One of the notable features about both polar expeditions in the context of their treatment as character-building texts, is that both failed to achieve their mission’s objectives. Scott’s party, as is well known, was narrowly beaten to the South Pole by the Norwegian explorer Amundsen, and the death of the entire British party followed, while Shackleton’s trans-Antarctic expedition similarly met failure. An important aspect of the ideology of ‘character’ which might be taken from biographies of the Antarctic explorers is that, although a person might fail in his or her eventual goal, their display of ‘good character’ itself defined their success as individuals.

\(^{13}\) Education Department, “How Captain Cook Came to New Zealand,” *The School Journal*, Part I, August 1916, 106.
Hilkey writes in the context of American success manuals that their authors offered ideals of conduct which were, in theory, achievable by anyone, as they suggested that the outward display of character was enough to constitute ‘success’ in life. Similarly, Fairburn, in his analysis of the internal ideology of his subject, James Cox, concluded that Cox was able to reconcile his belief in self-help with his own personal life predicament because the ideology operated on several levels simultaneously: one which was social and to do with outward success in life, and one moral, to do with self-control and mastery of the self. In the Journal’s biographies of Scott and Shackleton, the men’s display of self-control, and mastery of will, constituted a victory in itself, in spite of their failure to achieve their goals at the outset. Some men ‘have achieved greatness by sheer force of character, by battling against overwhelming odds, and by gaining a great and glorious victory when success seemed almost impossible’, the writers of the Journal stated in 1922. Of this ilk was Sir Ernest Shackleton: ‘He seemed fated always to be battling against tremendous difficulties, but they merely served to bring out the greatness of his character…He attempted much, and had many failures, but we have in his failures stories that should thrill in the heart of every boy and girl’.

The area of biographies of female historical figures that diverged most conspicuously from the male figures described above, lay in the conditions under which their ‘character’ emerged. While male characters were frequently depicted as growing up in poverty or experiencing early hardship, female characters almost always came from privileged upper middle-class backgrounds. Their greatest challenge also involved exercising willpower, but not in response to early obstacles or the struggle to subdue the wilderness. The challenge for female historical characters was instead one of self-denial and sacrifice: to withstand temptations and ‘superficial’ diversions, and to live simply and dutifully, devoting themselves to the care of the less fortunate. The biographies of female historical figures in school textbooks were populated by a sequence of nurses, social reformers, and members of the royal family. In addition to more gender-neutral traits of character such as willpower, courage and self-sacrifice, biographies of female

14 Hilkey, Character is Capital, 152.
15 Fairburn, Nearly Out of Heart and Hope, 237.
characters typically emphasised ‘feminine’ attributes such as kindness, caring for others, plain living, and the goal of serving others.

The life of the English nurse and hospital reformer, Florence Nightingale, exemplifies many of the attributes of behaviour celebrated in biographies of female characters. Even as a very little girl, the *Journal* claimed, Nightingale had displayed caring and nurturing qualities through nursing her dolls and injured animals. Then, as she grew a little older, she was able to care for the tenants of the cottages neighbouring her home. Her devotion to the sick and poor was all the more admirable, *Our Nation’s Story* told its young readers, as ‘she was wealthy and might easily have led an idle, care-free life of ease in her pleasant English home’. When the time came for her wealthy parents to present her at court in London, Florence shunned the frivolities that her parents’ lifestyle offered: ‘she did not like a life of gaiety and pleasure, so, instead of going out to parties, she visited the London hospitals and studied how sick people were nursed back to health and strength’, the *Journal* told children in 1910. In her later life, despite all that she had achieved, Nightingale shunned the trappings of fame: ‘All the honours showered upon Miss Nightingale were as nothing to her, her noble simplicity of character impelling her to do good for its own sake’.

Like their male counterparts, the character of ‘great women’ sometimes emerged somewhat later in life. Like Florence Nightingale, Elizabeth Fry nee Betsy Gurney – the English prison reformer – came from a comfortable background; unlike Nightingale she was not dutiful from birth. Instead she experienced a conversion after listening to the speech of a visiting Quaker preacher. So moved was she by his words that she promptly renounced her former life of parties and smart clothes, and her thoughts, according to the 1933 *Journal*, ‘suddenly all turned from fun and pleasure to duty and service.’ From then on, ‘She spent her time in helping the poor’. Then, after visiting a women’s prison and observing the appalling conditions in which the prisoners and their children lived, she decided to devote her life to bettering their condition. ‘At a time when a woman’s work outside the home was usually laughed at or frowned upon,’ the *Journal* reported, ‘she had shown what a woman could do for others’. Rather than

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17 *Our Nation’s Story*, Standard III, 163.
21 Ibid., 59.
developing character through early adversity, or through their struggle to ‘conquer’ their natural environment, the internal battleground in which girls and women tested their willpower was that of resisting the temptations and diversions of wealth and privilege, and in the decision to dedicate their lives to the care of the less fortunate.

One of the key elements of the Victorian ideology of character, evident in both male and female biographies, was that, while offering formulations of the qualities an individual would require to ‘succeed’ in life, it also placed limitations upon how that success itself could be understood. Biographies, while celebrating the display of character in individuals, also sought to constrain its interpretation by insisting that character must be teamed with self-sacrifice. Textbooks portrayed historical figures – male and female – as motivated by a range of goals: national honour, commitment to their ‘cause’, advancing scientific knowledge, helping others, or working for the sake of ‘future generations’. They were never, according to these writers, motivated by self-interest, pursuit of personal profit, or the prospect of fame. Those individuals who worked toward only selfish goals in life, and did not consider others, the Journal told children in 1912, did not possess true character, and would be sure to fail eventually: ‘Ability may bring anyone to the front, but not ability without character. The smart, unscrupulous man may last for a time, but in the end he must drop out’.22

The idea of sacrifice was, of course, closely associated with the valorisation of martyrdom in warfare, but was associated by the authors of textbooks with a range of people of peacetime occupations, including scientists, politicians, social reformers and more, all of whom were purportedly willing to ‘sacrifice’ either their health or their lives to their chosen cause. Of the Prime Minister William Ferguson Massey, who died while still in office in 1925, the Journal claimed, ‘he did not work for his own benefit; his labour was all for the good of his beloved country’. ‘He will be respected, the same article went on: ‘as the Prime Minister who loved New Zealand and the Empire so loyally that he spent his splendid strength and, at last, gave his life in their service’.23 Instead of falling in battle, these peacetime heroes instead lost their lives and health through a slower process of attrition: gradually wearing themselves away through toil for the sake of others. ‘There are many poems in praise of the soldier who lays down his life for the Empire in times of war’, the Journal reminded its readers in 1926, but ‘we

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have our own heroes of peace as well, who had laid down their lives for the sake of future generations’.24

The pioneers and character

As I have said, as well as associating character with particular individuals in the past, the authors of textbooks also ascribed these Victorian ideals to entire occupations or groups. One of the groups in New Zealand’s past to whom textbooks writers attributed virtues of character almost without exception, were the early European settlers of New Zealand, the so-called ‘pioneers’. Articles celebrating the achievements of the pioneers featured in The School Journal from its earliest issues. Depictions of the early European settlers invariably stressed both their strong work ethic and the numerous sacrifices they had made ‘for others’. Like the other ‘heroes’ celebrated in textbooks, it was assumed that the pioneers had laboured not to advance their own future prospects, but instead had selflessly dedicated their lives to their ‘cause’ of securing the material comfort and prosperity of future generations of New Zealanders. Speaking of the early settlers of Christchurch, a 1911 Journal article claimed: ‘These Pilgrims did not merely work for themselves, but for all who were to come after them. They made good roads, so that men could live far from town…They planned good schools, so that the children might be taught all that they ought to know, and to grow up useful men and women. They made laws to govern the country, just as England was governed at Home’.25 According to Our Nation’s Story, written almost twenty years later, it was so that ‘New Zealand might someday take her place among the nations’, that the pioneers ‘laboured and strove’.26 Hilliard has written of authors of local histories in the interwar years that they often ‘assumed pioneering…was a public service deliberately rendered. Local histories were built on the premise that the fruits of “civilisation” were conscious gifts by the pioneers, not mere by-products of efforts expended solely for their own or for their children’s gain’.27 The valorisation of the pioneers according to the precepts of Victorian character ideals was not, it seems, a phenomenon solely confined to histories devised for primary school pupils.

25 Education Department, “Christchurch Old and New,” The School Journal, Part II, April 1911, 44.
26 Our Nation’s Story, Standard VI, 38.
As with biographies, articles about the early European settlers of New Zealand attributed their ‘character’ to a number of different origins. Some articles claimed that pioneer ‘character’ could be explained by the careful selection of emigrants by the New Zealand Company. An article supplied to the *Journal* by the National Historical Committee in the lead-up to the 1940 centenary claimed that the Company had selected potential emigrants ‘very carefully regarding both their character and physique’. This group of pioneers had ‘character’ upon arrival. A more common explanation for pioneer character, however, was that it had been forged through the settlers’ interaction with the New Zealand environment, or more specifically, in the labour required to ‘subdue’ it. The authors of textbooks continually stressed the numerous struggles and hardships that the early European settlers had to overcome in order to make their homes in New Zealand. The lives of pioneers were hard, the *Journal* told children in 1911, but ‘they had plenty of grit and courage, or what you children call “pluck.” They would not be beaten. They worked hard early and late….They were true pioneers. They cleared the way for others who came after, and who are not always so grateful as they might be’.

In some articles, the ‘environmental obstacles’ encountered by settlers included Maori. In histories of New Zealand’s North Island districts, Maori were often depicted as just another of the impediments that the pioneers had to overcome in order to build a home in their new environment. A 1911 *Journal* article on the European settlement of Wanganui stated that: ‘These early settlers had a hard life of it, and the Maoris were so troublesome that soldiers were sent to defend the place. Some of the white people went away; but others bravely stood firm, and had their reward in seeing their little settlement grow into a wealthy and important town’. For those capable of withstanding the pressure, the presence of hostile Maori was, it could be said, ‘character-building’ for Pakeha settlers.

Other articles suppressed the existence of Maori altogether and instead focused their attention wholly on the character-forming challenges of the New Zealand environment. Articles on the ‘development’ of the South Island districts sometimes

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claimed that the settlers encountered a land completely untouched by human hands. Arriving in the region they called the Canterbury plains, the pioneers found a landscape, ‘all empty and silent…wild lands as Nature had made them’, the 1911 Journal claimed. However, should any children have concluded from this that the South Island’s pioneers were of less worthy stock merely because their settlements were freer of ‘Maori troubles’, Our Nation’s Story was quick to assure them that the settlers of Otago and Christchurch still had to endure numerous hardships: ‘Though the southern settlements were not troubled with disputes over the land and though they were not harassed by warfare with the Maoris, it must not be thought that the lives of their pioneers were lives of ease. Virgin ground had to be broken before the first crops could be planted; roads had to be made and bridges built; unknown country had to be explored and swift rivers forded. Rich and poor alike had to work hard’. Standard IV children read in the late 1920s that, ‘like the other pioneers of our country, the Canterbury settlers bore their hardships with courage and cheerfulness. Is not the example of those pioneers of our country one of which every New Zealander should be proud?’

**Maori and character**

The question of whether Maori of the past or present were considered by textbook authors to possess ‘character’ was more complex, largely because the same question could be answered differently within the same text. The response of textbook writers to the question of Maori character depended largely, I would suggest, upon the fictive logic of the narrative used to explain a particular episode in the past. For instance, while the unique challenges of bringing order to the New Zealand environment were commonly regarded as a factor in the shaping of Pakeha settlers’ characters, the same environment was not generally held to have had the same effect on Maori. This was probably because these authors more commonly regarded Maori part of the New Zealand environment, rather than active agents in it. In accounts of ‘Old New Zealand’, textbook writers depicted Maori as ‘savage’ or childlike – awaiting either the

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31 Education Department, “Christchurch Old and New,” 42.
32 *Our Nation’s Story*, Standard VI, 32.
33 *Our Nation’s Story*, Standard IV, 42.
Christianizing influence of the missionaries, or the ‘civilizing’ influence of British power.

One area of New Zealand’s past in which the authors of textbooks seemed to reach a universal agreement in the affirmative – that Maori did have character – was in relation to Maori conduct during some episodes of New Zealand’s nineteenth-century wars. The New Zealand Wars were a popular topic among textbook writers, partly – as will be discussed further in the next chapter – because they were associated with the quality of ‘romance’ that young children were most attracted to in history. Another of the intended effects of histories of the New Zealand Wars, as revealed in the educational literature, was to impress upon both Pakeha and Maori children a respect for the gallantry and chivalry of the Maori combatants in the wars. A number of educational experts expressed the opinion that instilling a respect for the ‘Maori race’ was, in fact, the main educational objective of teaching children about the ‘Maori’ wars. Under challenge by pacifist educationalists in the mid-1920s, Alexander K. Anderson, headmaster of Christchurch’s St Andrew’s College, wrote in *National Education* that the main purpose of teaching children about the New Zealand Wars was not to glorify the subject of war in pupils’ minds, but rather ‘to bring the children to realise the chivalry and bravery of the Maori race’.

Of all the episodes in the nineteenth-century wars, both *The School Journal* and *Our Nation’s Story* singled out Maori conduct at the 1864 Battle of Orakau in the Waikato for particular praise. The words of defiance attributed to Rewi Maniopoto of Ngati Maniopoto, in response to General Cameron’s invitation to surrender: ‘Ka whawhai tonu matou, Ake! Ake! Ake!’ (we will fight on forever) were repeated by textbook articles as an illustration of Maori courage and willingness to sacrifice their lives for the land. This was certainly the message that *Our Nation’s Story* wished children to take away from their lessons on Orakau. It instructed Standard V children to ‘Tell in your own words the bravery of the natives led by Rewi at Orakau’.

Praising Maori military prowess had its attendant risks for Pakeha society, and compliments in textbooks about Maori bravery in warfare were invariably accompanied by statements of present day Maori loyalty to British government and the Empire. A 1923 *Journal* article noted:

35 *Our Nation’s Story*, Standard V, 51.
Since peace was declared sixty years ago the brown men and the white men have lived together as brothers, and we have learned to realize what a fine race the Maoris are. Their loyalty to the Empire was never shown better than in the last Great War, when, side by side with our soldiers, they fought with the same courage as of old, and laid down their lives so that we who live in New Zealand to-day might enjoy the freedom associated with British rule.³⁶

In other words, the ‘warlike’ qualities of Maori had, from the end of the nineteenth-century wars, been reined in to fight on behalf of the British Empire, rather than against it. We ‘must never forget that the two races fought side by side as comrades in the greatest war in history,’ Our Nation’s Story reminded Standard V pupils: ‘The bond between the white New Zealander and the brown is a very strong one; and if, in days to come, our beloved country is ever in danger from a foreign foe, we cannot do better than remember the deathless words given to our history by brave old Rewi of the Maniopoto’.³⁷ These were, it might be noted, rather selective interpretations of Maori attitudes to participation in the Great War. While some tribes joined the war willingly, others resisted enlistment in the face of considerable government pressure, in some cases at risk of imprisonment.³⁸

Another variant of the educational discourse on Maori and character argued that Maori had once possessed character, but had since ‘lost’ it. Within the Native School system in the 1930s, the introduction of Maori history into the curriculum became associated with a project among some educational experts to ‘rebuild’ the characters of Maori children, by teaching them about the bravery of their own ancestors. In 1930, the year after history had first become a compulsory subject in the Native Schools, the Chief Inspector of Primary Schools, William W. Bird, advised Native School teachers to ‘emphasize the Maori and New Zealand history’ in designing schemes of work for their pupils.³⁹ Although some Native School inspectors, such as George M. Henderson and Douglas G. Ball, warned teachers not to undertake ‘any ambitious schemes of work’ in history for fear that the building of Maori children’s

³⁷ Our Nation’s Story, Standard V, 40.
³⁸ Belich, Paradise Reforged,196.
competence in English might be neglected, other Native School inspectors actively encouraged teachers in their districts to emphasise Maori history in their classroom schemes. There were, as Judith Simons and Linda Tuhiiwai-Smith, authors of a recent history of the Native Schools, point out, a range of motivations behind the teaching of Maori history to Maori pupils. These included the desire of Maori communities to preserve their own heritage, and the influence of current British thought in ‘Native Education’ policy. I would suggest that the belief that the ‘heroic’ past could serve pedagogical functions in the present, formed an additional motivation for the teaching of Maori history in the Native Schools.

The reality of the poverty experienced by Maori communities in this period is now uncontroversial. The writings of educationalists involved in the Native Schools reveal that many were aware of the living conditions in many Maori communities, and saw the amelioration of such conditions as part of the assimilative role of Native Schools. The Maori ‘problem’, when it entered into discussion in the educational literature of the 1930s, was not uncommonly interpreted as stemming from the collective loss of Maori character and self-confidence that resulted from a ‘clash’ of Maori and European cultures. The suggested remedy to this ‘loss of character’ was the reinvigoration of the values of character and self-help in Maori pupils through the teaching of Maori history. The argument that the teaching of Maori history could assist in rebuilding the racial pride and character of present day Maori pupils, was heard relatively frequently in arguments in support of teaching Maori history during the 1930s. The 1932-1933 annual report on Native School education stated, for instance, that ‘The new requirements in history are receiving satisfactory attention, the Maori child evincing a keen interest in the stories told him and retold and played by him. An effort is being made to arouse racial pride by the inclusion of a large number of Maori stories in the prescriptions for the year’. Similarly, in 1935, another Native School inspector wrote that it was necessary ‘to ensure that from the school there should

42 This has not always been the case. In the 1960s, controversy surrounding depictions of Maori poverty led the School Publications Branch to withdraw its booklet Washday at the Pa from publication at the request of the Maori Women’s Welfare League. See Barbara Brookes, “Nostalgia for ‘Innocent Homely Pleasures’: The 1964 New Zealand Controversy Over Washday at the Pa,” Gender and History 9, no. 2 (August 1997): 242-261.
radiate a healthy racial pride, stimulated by knowledge of, and research into, the past history and achievements of the Maori'. 44

In an article published in the Education Gazette of 1933, Kingsley G. Chapple, a teacher at Te Matai Native School in Te Puke, recommended that teachers in Native Schools should use Maori history to remind the children of the brave deeds of their ancestors. ‘Try to revive the old pride of race’, he wrote. ‘Dramatizing stories of Maori bravery will help to awaken in the children some of this feeling.’ By re-living the Battle of Orakau, he argued, the teacher could lead his or her pupils to realize that ‘the fight is not over; that there is an urgent call to the Maori to show in life those same qualities of bravery, spirit, and defiance that his ancestor showed in the face of death’. 45 The battle which Maori pupils were being called upon to join was not, as might be ironically inferred from the above passage, a call to take up arms against the European colonisers, but an inner struggle to ‘uplift’ themselves out of the disadvantaged position in which they found themselves by learning about the history of their ancestors.

Character and national well-being

The ideology of character was, as I have said previously, primarily concerned with the behaviour of individuals and with certain notions of self-hood. But most of its educational proponents believed that their character building work had wider implications for national well-being. The Journal’s annual Empire Day articles articulated most clearly this concept of a ‘national character’, consisting of the aggregate personal characteristics of individual citizens. Their basic line of reasoning ran as follows: if the worth of a nation could be calculated on the merits of its composite ‘units’, both the survival and future prosperity of the Empire depended upon the good characters of every single one of its members, school children not exempted. ‘The national character is the sum total of the characters of its members’, the 1920 Empire Day number of the Journal told its readers: ‘If one is weak the nation is weakened. Therefore it is our duty, in the interests of the Empire, to see that we build up only the good habits, and thus form a good character’. 46 Or, as another Empire Day

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45 Kingsley G. Chapple, “Character Training in the Native School,” Education Gazette, April 1933, 52.
article put it in 1927: ‘As the strength of a chain is determined by the strength of its links, so is the reputation of a nation judged by the character of its individual citizens’.47

If character had to be earned anew by each generation, the possibility that it could be ‘lost’ also presented itself, a lesson of which ‘History’ purported to offer several illustrations. ‘[W]e learn from history’, The School Journal told children in 1910, ‘that as soon as the people of a nation become selfish and lazy, and do not do what they know to be right, that nation loses its freedom, and is soon trodden on by other nations’.

The fall of the Roman Empire, the Journal claimed on several occasions, could be attributed to the development of ‘luxuriousness’ and laziness among its ruling population.49 A nation could not afford to be complacent about its ‘national character’: character required constant ‘building up’ through struggle and sacrifice, and all New Zealand’s children would have to do their share.

The ideology of character
James Cox, Fairburn writes, subscribed to a personal ideology which above all else emphasised the agency of individuals and their ability to determine their own lives. ‘He believed in the capacity of individuals to shape their destiny through the strength of their own efforts, in the ability of men like himself to master fortune, and in their capacity to free themselves from the structure constraining their life chances’.50 A variant of the same Victorian ideology, as I have shown in this chapter, was disseminated to the children who attended New Zealand primary schools during the first four decades of the twentieth century. In one sense, the ideology of character democratised success, as it held that ‘good character’ could be achieved by anyone in society, regardless of the circumstances of their birth. That said, this ideology was never particularly sympathetic towards those in society who failed to ‘rise’ above disadvantage, drawing attention away from the structural factors in society which influence an individual’s life chances. It was certainly not the natural ideology for a ‘fledgling’ welfare state, as New Zealand became after the election of its first Labour government in 1935; its fundamental mismatch with the vision of the welfare state may be part of the explanation for its gradual demise, at least after the mid-1930s.

50 Fairburn, Nearly out of Heart and Hope, 163.
The idea that character was often formed in early adversity, typically arising out of poverty, also clashed with the widely-held perception that New Zealand had avoided the extremes of poverty experienced in the Old World. In 1936, the Journal reproduced a copy of a speech on the life of the New Zealand-born physicist Ernest Rutherford that C. Coleridge Farr, Professor of Physics at Canterbury University College, gave to the pupils of Havelock North School. In the speech, the emphasis on early hardship characteristic of many biographies of male historical figures was muted into an assertion that Rutherford’s parents were ‘just New Zealand farmers’, and that he was thus no better off than any other New Zealand child:

He didn’t have any advantages that other New Zealand children could not get; indeed he didn’t have so many as the boy to-day can have if he likes to “put his back to it” and get them. His parents were just New Zealand farmers like the parents of many who are here today…And this man was once a boy, as you are here. He was at this school, and he was born near Brightwater, and he has shown you all that New Zealand boys can do something if they like to put their shoulders to the wheel.51

While the children who lived through the Depression of the late 1920s and early 1930s might conceivably have been described as having their ‘characters’ built through hardship, neither the Journal or Our Nation’s Story made direct reference to the Depression. There are several possible explanations for this. Firstly, the idea of present hardship was difficult to reconcile with the narratives of ‘national development’ which, as I showed in Chapter One, structured much of the history presented to school children in textbooks. Narratives of ‘development’ based on the assumption of a binary opposition between the ‘primitive’ past and the ‘comfortable’ present, could not easily sustain explanations of present hardship. A further reason may be growing support for the modern notion that children deserved a ‘happy’ childhood, sheltered from the concerns of the adult world: an approach which can be seen in the Journal’s reaction to the Second World War. In 1939, Director of Education, N. T. Lambourne anticipated what would appear to have been the Journal’s unofficial position on the war – that of avoiding reference to it wherever possible – when he wrote in the Education Gazette that ‘The teacher’s duty, as I see it, is to act as a buffer between the world of the child and

the warring world of the adult...Every person has the right to a happy childhood unspoiled by the quarrels of his elders, and it is part of the business of the school to provide it'.

The ideology of character, as I have elaborated it above, posed certain problems for modern urban societies. The authors of textbooks seldom missed an opportunity to remind modern children that their generation enjoyed levels of material comfort and prosperity that were unprecedented in human history. Unlike previous generations – including many older people still living – they had not witnessed a time before the introduction of modern conveniences such as electricity or public transport, and they had grown up largely accustomed to privileges such as free education. They were, many educational commentators feared, scarcely even aware of the many ‘sacrifices’ their forebears had made ‘on their behalf.’ Robert J. Pope, the headmaster of the Kaiwarra School near Wellington, who had spent his youth in the Otago district, wrote in a 1925 Journal article that ‘You children to-day have many advantages that we had not. Most of you take these as a matter of course, for you have never known anything different. Has it ever occurred to your mind that the splendid artificial light you enjoy in your homes, and that illumines your streets, is a thing for which to be thankful? I don’t suppose it has. But had you experienced the conditions of sixty years ago you would realize and appreciate your good fortune in this respect’. ‘There is always a tendency on the part of those who enjoy privileges to forget the sacrifice made by those who won them’, wrote Irvine-Smith, but teachers ‘can do much to remove such an expression from the atmosphere of our public life’.

During this chapter, I have drawn attention to some of the conditions in which ‘character’ was held to have emerged in earlier generations. Many of these conditions appeared to be missing from the lives of modern New Zealand school children. The pioneers, as it was sometimes pointed out, had not needed a modern education system to instil ‘character’ into them. The hard work involved in the ‘taming’ of the New Zealand bush and in the putting down of ‘Maori troubles’, had done that work for them. Modern New Zealand children, it was also claimed, had not experienced poverty. They did not have to ‘self-educate’ themselves. Aside from a few remote and

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52 N. T. Lambourne, “Message from the Director,” Education Gazette, October 1939, 198.
inaccessible regions, the task of making the world ‘known’ through ‘scientific exploration’ was almost complete. ‘Men of all nations, we honour them alike’, claimed Our Nation’s Story, ‘though they have left us little to conquer’.55

New Zealand educational experts formulated a number of solutions to the apparent problem of character posed by modern life. Some educational writing fell back upon generic expressions of the need for individuals to sublimate their own needs to those of their wider community. Another argument, put forward here by Our Nation’s Story, was that future generations might contribute to the ‘building’ of their country through ‘toil’ in the spiritual pursuits that the pioneers had neglected. The cultural nationalists of the post-Second World War decades might, as children, have read in their copies of Our Nation’s Story, for instance, that the essential work of the next generations of New Zealanders would be to build ‘a national literature, a national music and a national art, and above all we must develop that which we already possess in no small measure – a New Zealand national spirit’.56

But the main solution to the apparent problem of ‘character’ presented by modern conditions, I would suggest, lay in the pedagogy of character education itself. Descriptions of the ‘character’ residing in past individuals or groups, as I have shown, were not only presented to children to entertain them, or build their historical knowledge. Their primary educational function lay in the expectation that the past could serve directly pedagogical functions: that as it was described it would be ‘emulated’. Under the ideology of character, history itself formed a vital part of the transmission of ‘character’ between generations. The modern children who read about the many dangers and difficulties which beset the European pioneers of their country, and the courage with which they faced them, would afterwards, as Our Nation’s Story stated, ‘resolve to be a true descendant of these splendid pioneers’.57 In the apparent absence of the character forming stimuli of environment or early hardship, almost the entire weight of responsibility for building the characters of modern children appeared to rest upon the school system. Thus, educationalists’ anxieties about the conditions of ‘modern’ life and its potential consequences for the ‘characters’ of future generations,

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55 Our Nation’s Story, Standard IV, 198.
56 Our Nation’s Story, Standard VI, 65.
57 Our Nation’s Story, Standard IV, 11.
form an important part of the explanation for history’s prominence in early twentieth-century primary curricula.

As my chief intention in this chapter has been to unpack elements of the ideology of character itself, I have not supplied an exhaustive list of the past individuals or groups to whom textbook writers attributed ‘character’ virtues. As well as pioneers, groups as diverse as soldiers, missionaries, scientists, surveyors, and inventors were all depicted as providing character lessons for children. It is hardly surprising that the authors of educational materials written expressly for the purpose of transmitting ‘character’ to future generations, tended to be uncritical of their subjects. This habit of textbook authors to heap unreserved praise upon the characters of past individuals or groups, carried with it the assumption that the activities or pursuits they were engaged in were ‘noble’ ones: a tendency which had the effect of legitimising the broader historical processes which these individuals were participants in. In the case of many of the occupations celebrated in the Journal and Our Nation’s Story – explorers, pioneers, scientists, missionaries, and more – to praise the characters of individuals or entire groups, was to indirectly praise the enterprise in which they were implicated: that of colonisation. Thus, character forming texts often functioned to legitimate the processes of colonisation through directing unqualified praise towards its agents.

Not every commentator upon educational issues agreed that children equipped with the qualities of character that the pioneers had come to symbolise, would be best prepared to confront the problems of the modern world. The competitiveness required to tame the natural environment seemed, for educationalists with internationalist sympathies, to be at odds with their own goals of promoting a spirit of international cooperation. For those concerned with the continuing degradation of New Zealand’s natural environment, the early pioneers’ destructive environmental record provided a dangerous model of land use for future generations.58 National Education, editorialising on the topic of ‘Character and War’ in 1939, stated that although the qualities of the ‘sturdy pioneer’ were virtually equated with the idea of character in many older people’s minds, the continuing usefulness of the pioneering model of character to modern societies was less clear. In particular, it seemed doubtful whether those same qualities of character which the pioneers had required to compete successfully with

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58 As Ross writes, by the time of the 1940 Centennial many Pakeha felt that the settlers’ “chop it, burn it, plough it” attitude to the environment needed refining. See Ross, Going Bush, 159.
their environment and lay ‘the physical foundations of a tolerable civilization’ were the qualities best suited to negotiating the modern world. ‘The world is at war, human lives are by humans being taken every day in increasing numbers because the characters of to-day’s adults are unequal to the problem of successfully living together’.

Probably the main reason for the slow demise of ‘character’ in educational materials over the interwar period, was that it was being unsettled by newer notions of self-hood, with which its normative prescriptions for individual behaviour were fundamentally incompatible. Alternatives to the ideology of character, while they rose to greater prominence in the interwar period, had in fact always been present within the New Education pedagogy. The inspector for Southland summarised the ‘new’ educational spirit in 1900 as that which permitted the child to assert his ‘individuality…in those directions whither his natural bents and abilities lead him’.

These more flexible notions of self-hood: aimed at ‘self-realisation’ and expression gained an increased prominence through their association with the use of activity-based classroom methodologies in New Zealand primary schools from the 1920s. Their impact upon history education is the subject of the next chapter.

60 Minister of Education, “Education: Reports of Inspectors of Schools - Southland,” *AJHR*, E-1B, 1900, 42.
Chapter 3

**Boundaries of the Imagination: History in the Classroom**

In April 1921, school children from surrounding districts assembled on the Waikato site of the Battle of Orakau, in order to ‘relive’ the famous events of 1864. The site of the historic battle was located on the same farm where the historian James Cowan had spent his childhood, and the teacher in charge of the excursion, Spenceley Walker, enlisted that historian’s expertise for an understanding of ‘every detail’ of the battle.¹ A series of three newspaper photographs taken on the day of the re-enactment depict a group of children dressed as Maori warriors ‘celebrating the repulse of the whites’; boys acting the role of Rewi Maniopoto and his companions; and the ‘women of the garrison’. British troops do not make an appearance at all in these photos; perhaps ‘playing Maori’ offered more possibilities for dramatic action and ornate costumery than ‘playing British’ or ‘playing colonial’. *The School Journal’s* account of the battle re-enactment claimed that Orakau was every bit as ‘romantic’ as the historic battles celebrated in older countries, and certainly ‘would have been immortalized’ had it occurred in a ‘better-known’ part of the world.²

This chapter is about the practices of history teaching. It explores some of the methods used to teach history to primary school children during the early and interwar period of the twentieth century, and shows how the methods teachers adopted to teach the subject could potentially alter not only the educational goals of history lessons, but also their subject-matter and the broader messages about the past that could be derived from them. Much of the chapter describes the effects of teaching methodologies whose proponents typically listed goals such as self-expression, cultivation of imagination, and realisation of pupils’ individual talents among their educational aims. Most of the methods it describes thus fall under an opposing concept of selfhood to that outlined in Chapter Two of this thesis. The educational experts who promoted activity-based methods saw themselves as helping to form ‘well-rounded’ individuals and ‘complete citizens’, equally as well equipped for leisure as they would be for participation in the workforce or performance of the duties of citizenship. I begin by introducing the educational aims behind the assignment of history as a ‘reading subject’ from 1904. The rest of the chapter is dedicated to describing the impact of activity-based pedagogies upon history education in the period following the syllabus revisions of 1926 and 1928.

History as a ‘reading subject’

The 1904 syllabus designated history as a ‘reading subject’, for which the requirements could be met by use of a historical reader, provided that teachers supplemented textbook use with ‘oral lessons’. This replaced the provisions for ‘English History’ set down by the 1891 syllabus, which had required inspectors to test each pupil individually on ‘a list of about twenty-five persons and events and about a dozen dates’ to ascertain that they had been ‘thoroughly impressed’ on children’s memories.3 The change in syllabus requirements for history from memorisation to a reading subject had been anticipated in inspectors’ reports in the years leading up to the release of the new syllabus. Wellington inspectors wrote in their 1901 report that: ‘It is now generally admitted that the intelligent use of a historical reader is satisfactory for primary instruction in the subject, and that the old-time memory work is valueless’.4 ‘In most of our schools’, wrote the inspector for Grey a year later, ‘history is taught according to the syllabus – so many dates and so many events. I do not place much value on it except as a memory exercise, and much prefer teaching it by reading-lessons from some Historical reader’.5

The ‘reading’ of textbooks could have itself referred to a variety of classroom activities. The School Journal was primarily intended for use as a general reader that would also provide supplementary material for subjects such as history and civics. Teachers probably used historical articles in exercises aimed at improving children’s general comprehension and proficiency in the English language. Silent reading of textbooks was recommended on the basis that it strengthened pupils’ self-discipline, and encouraged them to develop ‘habits’ of reading for information or pleasure. Children might also have been asked to read their textbooks out loud, or listen to their teachers read from the text. Both practices were thought to enhance children’s clarity of speech and enunciation, topics inspectors frequently commented upon in their reports. Spoken exercises from history textbooks might have served a dual purpose of correcting trends in colonial children’s speech. As Joy Damousi observed in a recent talk on the teaching of elocution in Australian schools, early twentieth-century educationalists hoped

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3 Education Department, “The Education Act, 1877 – Inspection and Examination of Schools,” Supplement to the New Zealand Gazette (October 8 1891), 1128.
lessons in ‘correct’ pronunciation might lessen the influence of both a ‘colonial’ accent and Americanisms on Australian children’s speech.  

Given the emphasis placed by modern educationalists on the importance of experience, adaptation to local conditions, and also child ‘activity’ in educational work, it is not surprising that few of them found the teaching of history lessons entirely from textbooks satisfactory. Inspectors frequently criticised teachers in their districts for being too dependent upon textbooks. In 1912, for instance, inspectors for Auckland reminded teachers in their districts that: ‘As we have stated in former reports, history requires to be taught; to rely on the historical reading-book and omit oral teaching is to court disaster’. Similar complaints persisted into the 1920s and 30s. In their report of 1920, Auckland inspectors found the history lessons they observed in the rural schools of their district to be disappointing due to teachers’ over-reliance on textbooks. And in 1928, announcing the forthcoming publication of a new series of textbooks to accompany its new syllabus, the Education Department again warned teachers of ‘the importance of not slavishly following the text-book, which is intended to be the teacher’s servant not his master’.

There were a number of obstacles standing in the way of the release of New Zealand teachers from the ‘chains’ of textbooks, the most significant among them being the inadequacy of many teachers’ own knowledge of history. Inspectors, particularly prior to the interwar period, acknowledged that significant gaps existed in the historical knowledge of many teachers in their districts. South Canterbury inspectors, in welcoming the recent addition of history and civics to the compulsory subjects for a teachers’ certificate, wrote that it was ‘full time for its inclusion, as young teachers of late years have been entering the service who knew nothing of history beyond the few scraps they had retained from lessons read during their primary-school course’. Again,
Canterbury inspectors reported in 1920 that history was still poorly taught in many schools in their districts, an observation that they attributed to the fact that ‘very many of the teachers have little knowledge of the subject beyond what is found in the school text-book’.\textsuperscript{11}

Given the persistent criticisms of inspectors regarding the poor historical knowledge of many teachers in their districts, it may be assumed that textbooks such as *Our Nation’s Story* and *The School Journal* played an important role in compensating for gaps in teachers’ knowledge of history, in addition to providing reading resources for their classes. The role of textbooks in supplementing teacher knowledge takes on added significance in settler-colonial societies. Gibbons argues that, given the numbers of teachers in New Zealand schools who were likely to have been recent immigrants during the first half of the twentieth century, locally published textbooks such as *The School Journal* played an important role in the dissemination of knowledge about New Zealand and its local phenomena to non-native audiences.\textsuperscript{12} The ability to produce textual versions of ‘New Zealand’ and ‘the Maori’, replicate them in print, and distribute them to a national audience, as Gibbons further observes, was crucial to the set of colonising strategies which relied upon the appropriation of indigenous knowledge, since ‘Print allowed the knowledge-gathering efforts of a handful of Pakeha to be put at the service of the colonial society in general’.\textsuperscript{13} In the case of historical knowledge, a lack of knowledge of the ‘local’ past was likely to have been a problem not only confined to members of the teaching population recently arrived in New Zealand, but one common among ‘native-born’ teachers as well. In the assessment of some inspectors, teachers’ ignorance of the subject was not even confined to New Zealand history, but extended to the field of history as a whole. Nevertheless, Gibbons’ point stands: where teachers were not personally acquainted with the local past, they were likely to turn to locally produced textbooks to fill the gaps in their knowledge. For this reason, textbooks such as *The School Journal* and *Our Nation’s Story* were influential in shaping what both teachers and pupils ‘knew’ about local subjects, and thus performed important functions in cultural colonisation.

\textsuperscript{11} Minister of Education, “Abridged Reports of Inspectors of Schools – Canterbury,” *AJHR*, E-2, Appendix B, 1920, xvi.
\textsuperscript{12} Gibbons, “Cultural Colonization and National Identity,” 10.
\textsuperscript{13} Gibbons, “Cultural Colonization and National Identity,” 9.
1926-1928 syllabus revisions

By the time of the next substantial syllabus revisions, over the years 1926 and 1928, the range of classroom methodologies recommended by educational experts had diversified considerably. In advocating the new methods, these experts appeared confident that, provided history was taught along the ‘modern’ lines they recommended, the existing problems with engaging pupils’ interest in the subject would rapidly dissipate. Strong, in a 1931 piece in the *Education Gazette*, maintained that history was the ‘most difficult subject in the school curriculum to teach…if the teaching is of a formal character’. It was, on the other hand, ‘the easiest if the teacher understands the child’s mind and his pupils’ interests and selects his material accordingly’. The remainder of the chapter explores the effects of some of the changes to teaching practices introduced in these two syllabus revisions. I do not wish to overstate the extent to which activity-based methods replaced textbooks in New Zealand primary school classrooms during the interwar period. Inspectors’ reports continued to criticise the failure of some teachers to break free of the ‘bonds’ of textbooks throughout the 1920s and 30s. But inspectors’ reports also provide evidence that other teachers were responding to the new methods with ‘enthusiasm’.

Before moving on to this discussion, it is first necessary to account briefly for a principle of the New Education pedagogy which profoundly influenced the relationship of individual classroom subjects to one another. The principle of ‘correlation’ involved the combination of two or more classroom subjects within a single lesson. It was intended to break down disciplinary boundaries, correct the modern tendency towards specialisation, and lessen the demands of a crowded syllabus upon pupils and teachers. In the case of history, the teaching principle of ‘correlation’ led to the subject’s combination with a range of classroom subjects, including English, art, handwork and craft, and geography. Of these, the most enduring grouping turned out to be with geography, a combination that would be made more permanent with the merging of history, geography and civics into Social Studies in the 1940s, soon after this study ends.

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14 Strong, “Some New Year Thoughts by the Director,” *Education Gazette*, February 1931, 10.
History and English

One of the most popular subject ‘correlations’ in the curricula of the interwar period was that between history and English subjects, including story-telling, historical literature, drama, and composition. In the younger classes of primary schools, the integration of history and English often appeared in the form of mythology and highly fictionalised ‘stories from history’. For these younger pupils, educational experts valued ‘stories from history’ less for any factual historical information children might have retained from them, than as providing a ‘foundation’ upon which future, more systematic, lessons in history might be based. A correspondent to National Education wrote in 1921 that ‘the actual facts might well be left to a later period’ but all teachers could tell stories. ‘That the details of such lectures will probably be forgotten does not matter in the least’. Rather, it was the ‘background – the broad outlines and general impressions’ that mattered.15 The authors of the 1925 history report told teachers that, in the early stages of primary schools, ‘it is not history as it is generally understood which is to be presented to the pupils: rather is this the period for the laying of the foundation upon which the teaching of history will be built. The gateway through which the child will be led to history will be the story-teller and the story-book’.16 For older children, educational experts recommended the reading of ‘good’ historical literature as a way of supplementing their more formal studies with an element of historical ‘romance’, and as a way of elevating their literary tastes.

Educational experts frequently named creating a ‘love of history’ in pupils as among the main aims of history teaching at the primary level. The 1926 history syllabus declared that ‘If the subject is made so attractive that the pupil is constantly asking himself “What comes next?” and if, when his school days are over, he continues to read and study history, the teacher has achieved his purpose’,17 while the Canterbury inspectors wrote in 1929 that ‘One of the most important aims in the teaching of history should be to create in pupils a love for the subject, so that when they leave school they may read it for themselves’.18 The hope that children might learn to ‘love history’ as a result of their lessons in the subject might seem self-evident. Those educational experts

15 J [pseud.], letter to the editor, 337.
16 Education Department, The Teaching of History in Primary and Secondary Schools, 6.
17 Education Department, “Suggestions for the Teaching of History,” 50.
18 Education Department, “Extracts from Inspectors Reports: History,” Education Gazette, October 1929, 200.
who wrote upon the subject of history teaching were certainly well aware of their subject’s long-standing reputation as one of the most ‘dull’ on the curriculum, not only among the pupils. The goal of creating a love of history in pupils thus partly reflected a desire to change pupils’ attitudes towards an unpopular school subject. But its constant repetition in the educational literature, I would suggest, also reflected deeper anxieties among these educationalists about a frequently commented upon feature of modern life: the increased leisure time it afforded to citizens of all classes.

Educational experts saw the offering of solutions to the ‘problem’ of how both children and adults might put their leisure time to profitable use, as an important aspect of their role in educating citizens. ‘Here is a set of life conditions which have changed rapidly and radically. Much more leisure time is available for everyone. What is the man in the street and the woman in the home going to do with leisure?’, asked F. C. Brew, a contributor to National Education, in 1930. ‘The school’, he added, in ‘undertaking to prepare children for a complete life, must take notice of the fact that much less of the pupils’ energies will be engaged in work, more in the use of spare time...Methods of teaching must then respond to the new outlook, must be scientifically adjusted to the demand that children be prepared for complete living’.19 Kirk, writing on the value of expressive work in history schemes, stated that if teachers succeeded in making the subject ‘live and real to the child’, then the ‘foundations of a useful hobby will have been laid. The problem as set out by prominent educationalists of the day – the profitable spending of the leisure hour – will have been solved for your children’.20 The educational aim of developing ‘complete’ individuals out of primary school pupils thus, at least in part, expressed the desire of educationalists to form future citizens who would employ their more ample opportunities for leisure ‘usefully’.

During the 1920s and 1930s, history was also taught in combination with drama and imaginative composition work. Teachers in New Zealand primary schools during these decades might have encouraged their pupils to ‘become’ the historical characters they admired in a history play, or to travel back into the past in their imaginations to ‘relive’ a particular historical episode. The 1926 syllabus reported that: ‘In many schools history is now made more vivid and picturesque by the dramatization

of suitable scenes’. Inspectors’ reports suggest that the technique of dramatisation had caught on in at least some education districts by the mid-1920s. Taranaki inspectors wrote in 1924 that ‘By means of pictures, dramatization, &c, teachers are endeavouring to make [history and geography] subjects of real live interest to the pupils’. In the same year, Southland inspectors observed an improvement in history teaching in their district’s schools, owing to ‘an increasing use of pictures, dramatic work, and so on’. ‘An impression of past life cannot be given to pupils by means of the old dictated summary’, they added, ‘it can be given only by as real a reflection as possible of that past life’.

In recommending suitable historical content for correlating history and English, educational experts gravitated most strongly towards those aspects of the past they viewed as ‘romantic’ or ‘picturesque’. ‘A child mind’, wrote a correspondent to National Education in 1931, ‘wants incident, adventure, pageant and panorama’. The authors of the 1925 history report told teachers of Standard III classes that they must cater for their pupils’ stage of mental development by dealing only with those incidents of the past that were ‘picturesque and dramatic’. While Our Nation’s Story might have referred to the whole topic of New Zealand’s European ‘development’ as a ‘romance’, typically, educationalists devising such exercises in imaginative or dramatic work turned to events in the distant English past, or within New Zealand history, to Maori history and mythology or to the history of Maori-Pakeha contact.

In 1931, Auckland teacher Kathleen O’Stewart described for National Education readers how she had used dramatic work to teach her class about Maori history. ‘We dramatised the departure of the canoes from Hawaiki, the arrived [sic] at Ao-tea-roa, every-day life in the pa, and the incident from One Tree Hill history, where Kiwi Tamaki and his followers, while on a visit to another tribe, rose in the night and cruelly slaughtered their hosts.’ Her pupils responded with relish to all these activities, she reported, ‘the last-mentioned especially being carried out with a great zest’.

21 Education Department, “Suggestions for the Teaching of History,” 51.
25 Education Department, The Teaching of History in Primary and Secondary Schools, 6.
teachers who wished to include Maori mythology in their history plays, but were unsure of the material could, after 1934, consult a booklet of Maori ‘playets’ prepared by Janet McLeod, a lecturer at the Christchurch Training College.\textsuperscript{27} Its author hoped that the plays might deepen ‘appreciation & understanding of the literature & native genius of one of the most highly endowed of all primitive races’.\textsuperscript{28} The subjects of Maori history and ‘traditional’ lifestyles were also popular topics for less scripted imaginative excursions into the past, as part of oral or written composition work. J. L. Ewing suggested in a 1936 column that teachers set the following imaginative tasks for their pupils: ‘You have fallen asleep near an old kumara plantation. You wake up in 1700 A.D. at planting time. Describe the scene which you see’.\textsuperscript{29} Or, ‘You are standing on a hill near the Waikato River about the year 1600 A.D. watching the warriors of two enemy tribes coming towards each other. Describe how the battle begins’.\textsuperscript{30}

Authenticity of location was important in such imaginative reconstructions of New Zealand’s past. Educational experts advised teachers who planned to use dramatisations in their history lessons to, where possible, organise for such re-enactments to take place on the actual site of the historic event. On other occasions, a visit to an historic site formed the prompt for a child’s journey back to the past. ‘There are many New Zealand boys and girls’, Our Nation’s Story told Standard V pupils, ‘whose homes are near old battlegrounds where, many years ago, Maori and white man fought out their quarrels. Have you ever looked at such historic places and tried to imagine these fights?…If you have never thought of these things, try to picture them next time you visit the scene of one of these old-time fights’.\textsuperscript{31} Likewise, Our Nation’s Story for Standard IV asked pupils to find out

\begin{quote}
did a Maori pa once stand on one of the hills you can see from your home? If so, to what tribe did it belong? Was there once fought, on its steep slopes, a great battle between brown man and brown man? Did some great chief succeed in beating off the invaders; or did an even more skilful fighter lead the attacking party to victory
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{27} Janet McLeod, \textit{Little Plays from Maori Legend} (Christchurch: Caxton Club Press, 1934).
\textsuperscript{28} McLeod, \textit{Little Plays from Maori Legend}, foreword.
\textsuperscript{29} J. L. Ewing, “Classroom Supplement: New Zealand History in the Classroom,” \textit{National Education}, March 1936, 65.
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{31} \textit{Our Nation’s Story}, Standard V, 26.
and capture the pa amid the flames of burning whares and shrieks of the unfortunate victims who fell beneath the weapons of his fierce warriors?  

And, E. B. Pay, a Nelson teacher whose primary school class made a trip to inspect the site of the 1843 Wairau massacre, described how the visit had added reality and interest to their studies in local history. ‘As we stood on the hill at Tua Marina, we were back in imagination to that morning of June 17, 1843. We saw the Maoris waiting, nursing their grievance against the white men; the European settlers with their warrant for the arrest of the proud chief, Te Rauparaha…’

Under the New Education, the cultivation of imagination was valued as a pedagogical goal in itself, and served a range of functions under its schemes. Educational experts partly valued imagination as an element of the ‘time sense’ described in Chapter One, as it was only through imagination that children could truly ‘enter’ the past and begin to realise its fundamental difference from the present. Likewise, imagination was necessary to some models of patriotic education, as children’s capability to form ‘friendships’ with British ‘heroes’ from the past ultimately relied upon their ‘believing’ in the existence of those past individuals. In the context of settler-colonial countries such as New Zealand, the development of children’s imaginative powers had other important roles. Here, the cultivation of imagination coincided with the psychological needs of native-born settlers to achieve ‘indigeneity’ and a sense of belonging in their ‘new’ land.

For peoples who are indigenous to a place, the landscape is invested with historical associations and memory layers reflective of centuries of past human occupation. For Maori, land formed the foundation for whakapapa and connections with the mythological past. But for settlers newly arrived to a country, and their descendants, the unfamiliarity of their new environment could be deeply unsettling. Historian Tom Griffiths writes in the Australian context that many of the European settlers believed that they had encountered a country without a human past, ‘a

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32 Our Nation’s Story, Standard IV, 9.
34 See Vicki MacKnight’s masters thesis on the teaching of the social studies subjects in Victorian (Australia) schools in the 1930s and 1950s for an extended discussion on the role of imagination in developing primary pupils’ bonds with Empire and with ‘people of other countries’. Vicki MacKnight, “Imagining the World From the Classroom: Cultural Difference, Empire and Nationalism in Victorian Primary Schools in the 1930s and 1950s” (masters thesis, University of Melbourne, 2005), Chapter One.
landscape unable to tell a story, one apparently devoid of familiar human trace, and disturbingly free of the overlay of tradition.' Australia’s European settlers, Griffiths writes, tended to find what they took to be the ‘silence’ of the Australian landscape profoundly disquieting.35

Imaginative exercises which encouraged children to travel back in time to ‘relive’ aspects of the New Zealand past – especially where such re-enactments took place on the actual site of a past event – were indicative of a general need among settlers to ‘fill’ in historical spaces. They also expressed, I would suggest, a broader Pakeha desire to populate, or colonise, the New Zealand landscape with the kinds of literary and historical associations that Europeans commonly read into the landscapes of ‘older’ countries. These traces of the past already existed in the New Zealand landscape, educationalists argued, but they rested upon an ability to ‘read’ the landscape for the traces that were not immediately apparent to an outsider. This was a capacity which, if it did not stem from individual or inherited ‘memories’ of a place, had to rely upon the exercise of imagination.

History exercises based around the goal of colonising the New Zealand landscape with the associations of the past were sometimes, as in the context of the Australian settlers described by Griffiths, based on denials of prior indigenous presence. This was sometimes the case, as I show later in this chapter, in projects based on local history research. But in relation to the types of dramatic and imaginative work I have described above, such exercises almost always involved appeals to either an exclusively Maori past, or the shared past of Maori and Pakeha. Few educationalists of these decades denied that the European ‘pioneers’ had struggled admirably. But they seldom recommended that their lives of selfless toil would be picturesque subjects for re-enactment by primary school children. Therefore, exercises which used dramatic or imaginative work to teach children about the New Zealand past overwhelmingly tended to fall into the indigenising strategies whereby colonisers attempt to become ‘indigenous’ by incorporating aspects of indigenous culture into their settler culture.

In providing guidelines on how teachers could incorporate imaginative work into their history schemes, educationalists clearly regarded some experiments with identity as more permissible than others; few, it appears, would have allowed children’s

historical imaginations to roam completely unfettered. In this connection, the imaginative journeys that children were not encouraged to make could be just as revealing. One boundary of the imagination that children were seldom explicitly encouraged to cross was that of gender. A. J. Campbell, lecturer at the Training College, Christchurch, and contributor to *National Education’s* history supplements, instructed boys in 1931: ‘Imagine you saw a game of football being played in the street in the time of James I.’ Girls, on the other hand, were asked to picture and report back to the class upon ‘How Mrs Pepys prepared dinner for her husband’. In another suggested exercise, recommended by *Our Nation’s Story*, Standard III boys were told to ‘Imagine yourself as a sentinel…Tell the story of an attack on the pa’, while girls were asked to ‘tell the story of how your mother cooked food in the hangi’. Recommendations for imaginative work were not always gender specific, and in such instances girls might have pictured themselves as inhabiting historical identities traditionally coded as masculine. The breaking down of gender-based identity was, however, highly unlikely to have been the intended educational outcome of such exercises. Imagination, it is clear, had its boundaries, among them a reluctance to encourage girls to picture themselves in roles outside the confines of domesticity.

**History, art and handwork**

Those primary school pupils who returned to the past through their imaginations in classroom exercises that integrated the English subjects with history, might have lent an appearance of authenticity to such journeys by drawing, modelling or constructing historic ‘artefacts’ from the past as part of the grouping of history with lessons in handwork and art in the primary school curricula of the 1920s and 1930s. Educational experts perceived a range of pedagogical advantages from these combinations. One perceived benefit was the cultivation of certain ‘tastes’ and aesthetic sensibilities in children. By taking classes to visit a local gallery, or by ensuring that the classroom walls were decorated with suitable pictures, Irvine-Smith told the readers of her history column in 1929, ‘you are helping the future homes of your pupils to be similarly

36 Not to be confused with A. E. Campbell, educational historian and lecturer in education at Victoria University College.
38 *Our Nation’s Story*, Standard III, 29.
adorned’. Handwork lessons, educationalists hoped, would form an outlet for pupils’ creative powers, improve their manual dexterity, and form an appreciation of aesthetic beauty. As with reading, combinations of history and handwork were also recommended because they might form a productive leisure activity. As a 1937 *National Education* article put it, school handwork might ‘pave the way and create an interest in what may become a most enjoyable and delightful hobby for their leisure hours in after life’.40

As with dramatic and imaginative work, Maori history and culture formed a popular subject for combinations of history and handwork. The use of handwork to teach children about ‘old-time’ Maori was recommended as part of history prescriptions in both the 1926 and 1928 syllabi. Irvine-Smith was the most enthusiastic about the method among the authors of *National Education’s* supplements. In her 1929 column, she suggested that teachers plan a class project to model a Maori house out of wood. If kept as a permanent display in the classroom, she added, such a house could form a ‘convenient receptacle’ for future class projects about ‘the Maori’, which might have included the making of ‘dolls to illustrate native dress, models of Maori weapons, wearing apparatus, etc’.41 And in her 1932 column, Irvine-Smith outlined the following exercise: To make a Maori pah or fortified village showing a large wharepuni or meeting house, the marae or open space before it, small whares, patakas or food houses, a wharau or cooking house, a fighting stage, a double ring of palisades with openings not opposite each other. Materials: Oblong matchboxes, sticks, and paper figures’.42

Both the *Gazette* and *National Education* publicised some of the work of primary teachers who had put the handwork technique into practice in their classwork on Maori history and culture. As part of an exhibition to celebrate a ‘Maori Week’ in 1929, each class at the Auckland Normal School modelled some aspect of Auckland’s Maori history. ‘There thus appeared a whare runanga, complete with thatching, carving, and porch: a cardboard reproduction, made to scale, of Auckland in 1844; a pulp map of the Tamaki Isthmus, showing hill forts prior to 1840; a large model of a pa; and model

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40 “School Handwork By Students of Wellington Teachers’ Training College,” *National Education*, June 1937, 203.
41 Irvine-Smith, “History Teaching,” *National Education*, June 1929, 256.
ships of the period 1642-1927’, wrote the school’s head teacher, William S. Dale. Meanwhile, ‘The juniors busied themselves with making a morere, weaving mats, making dolls and dressing them to represent Maoris, as well as utilizing plasticine for representations of animal life’. 43 A request for pupils to bring in any Maori or Polynesian materials they had at home for an exhibition yielded, ‘a shower of mats, axes, taiahas, meres, greenstone ornaments, and ceremonial weapons’ 44: a result suggestive of the somewhat surprising conclusion that it was not uncommon for Pakeha families to have such items in their personal possession. Interestingly, Our Nation’s Story made the same assumption that Maori ‘materials’ would be relatively easy for primary school pupils to lay their hands on when it asked Standard III pupils to ‘Make a class collection of as many Maori articles as you can’. 45

To celebrate the finale of Maori Week, ‘ladies’ from Te Akarana Maori Association – a group of Maori and Pakeha with interests in Maori ethnology, of which William Dale was a member – visited the school to demonstrate to pupils the construction of a hangi. 46 A few years later, in 1931, three Maori women from the association also paid a visit to the Auckland school of Kathleen O. Stewart, the teacher who recounted in National Education her class’s efforts to dramatise Auckland’s Maori history. 47 While there, the women might have been invited to inspect a Maori pa that Stewart’s class had constructed out of clay as part of their studies on Auckland’s early history. ‘In the centre, the children placed the meeting-house, and dotted the whares round about…the roofs of the whares and the meeting-house were given the appearance of thatching, small wooden carvings (done by the boys) were set into clay either side of the doors, as they had seen the models at the Museum, and the whole was varnished.’ Meanwhile, the rest of the class busied themselves with modelling ‘tikis, weapons of war, and such-like’. 48

Part of the rationale behind combinations of handwork and Maori material culture lay in the hope that such lessons, when juxtaposed with studies of the material culture of other ‘past races’ might illustrate to young pupils in concrete ways the concept of ‘development’ and human ‘progress’ which framed the syllabi of the

44 Ibid.
45 Our Nation’s Story, Standard III, 29.
48 Ibid., 305.
interwar period, as described in Chapter One. Other motives behind such educational work appear to have been more concerned with goals of cultural appropriation. In such handwork projects designed around aspects of Maori material culture, claims to authenticity were generally rated more highly than the creative objectives of such exercises. The designers of schemes on ‘the Maori’ emphasised to teachers the importance of sourcing pictures of genuine Maori ‘artefacts’, or the items themselves, before embarking on such lessons. Children were also encouraged to collect images of ‘Maori objects’. ‘Into your book paste pictures of Maori carvings, houses and palisades’, Our Nation’s Story instructed its Standard III readers. De Berry suggested in his March 1934 National Education column that teachers of Standard II classes studying the syllabus topic ‘The Coming of the Maori Fleet’, might source pictures of Maori canoes. Even better, teachers could organise a class trip to a local museum, so that children could view the genuine articles for themselves. Before commencing lessons for junior classes on the topic ‘The clothing of the Maori’, Irvine-Smith recommended teachers collect as many pictures and actual examples of Maori apparel as possible. ‘Seeing is believing’, she added. But, in areas of the country where supplies of Maori clothing could not be obtained, ‘pupils could easily make their own’. For teachers who were unable to locate genuine Maori ‘artefacts’ upon which to base handwork lessons on ‘the Maori’, Irvine-Smith’s columns provided detailed instructions, often with diagrams, on how to ‘recreate’ an array of items from Maori culture – including weapons, tools, houses, clothing – all using materials that could easily be found in or around a primary school classroom. Irvine-Smith, as I have mentioned, was herself regarded as an expert on Maori, having lectured on the subject of Maori history and culture during her time at the Training College, Wellington. It is not clear from where she obtained her knowledge of Maori culture; her biographers provide no evidence to suggest that she derived it directly from Maori. Other Pakeha writers of the same period, such as Johannes Andersen, are known to have obtained

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49 Articles drawing attention to the similarities between ‘old-time Maori’ and the ancestors of the English, the ‘Ancient Britons’, for instance, were a regular feature of textbooks from early in the century, and the comparison formed a prescribed syllabus topic in the 1919, 1926, and 1928 syllabi.
50 Our Nation’s Story, Standard III, 29.
their knowledge of Maori almost entirely from second-hand published sources,” and in 1940 James Cowan criticised the present generations of scholars of the Maori race of conducting their research solely from ‘a seat in the Turnbull or the Hocken library…or whatever other well-stocked reference library may be convenient’. Irvine-Smith’s preferred haunt was the Turnbull. On the basis of the available evidence, it is not unreasonable to assume that Irvine-Smith derived her knowledge of ‘the Maori’ mainly from published sources. This was also the case for much of the information on Maori gathered in educational materials; the importance of the education system in furthering colonisation rested less upon its contribution of new ‘knowledge’ about Maori, than for its ability to communicate information that already existed to a far wider audience.

As well as stressing the need to maintain ‘authenticity’, educational experts also emphasised the importance that the ‘meanings’ of items from Maori culture be preserved alongside the physical objects. The 1926 syllabus instructed teachers that the ‘meaning of local relics will depend upon how far they are treated with reference to the history of which they are the records and indications’. Like historical landscapes, the physical artefacts of the past demanded interpretation. Teachers who took their classes on trips to local museums or visits to places of interest in their district’s local history, the 1926 syllabus went on, would ensure that ‘the child would learn to look with intelligence upon the material relics of the past history of his country – an ancient earthwork, a war-canoe, an early document, or some tribute to our fallen dead – and to regard them not merely with interest, but with reverence and understanding’.

On some occasions, such as the hangi demonstrations given by Maori women from Te Akarana Association, the devisers of primary school projects on ‘the Maori’ engaged Maori people as cultural advisors. But as I have already said, in most instances teachers could derive the required information for such projects from already available print sources, or from institutions such as museums. The educational literature of the early and interwar decades of the twentieth century imparts little sense of Maori culture.

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55 Irvine-Smith and Nellie Coad were both regulars at the Turnbull library in the interwar decades. Barrowman, *The Turnbull: a Library and its World*, 36.
56 Education Department, “Suggestions for the Teaching of History,” 51.
57 Ibid.
as a ‘living’ tradition, with ongoing significance to contemporary Maori. In fact, in some instances, modern Maori were represented as unreliable authorities on their own traditions. A 1922 article on Maori flax mat-making, which appeared in the \textit{Journal} as part of a photographic series on Maori material culture, while praising the artistic talents of ‘old-time’ Maori, noted with disapproval a tendency among modern Maori to weave bright colours into such items: ‘Maoris still make these things, but it is doubtful if they are as beautiful as those of old. Nowadays their love for bright colours leads them to put gaudily-dyed wool into their garments, and this is by no means an improvement’.\footnote{Education Department, “Maori Handicraft. Mat-Making,” \textit{N.Z. School Journal}, Part III, April 1923, 75.} Contemporary Maori culture, the article implied was, because of its contamination by European goods, less authentic than that of traditional Maori, and present day Maori were not necessarily better placed than Pakeha to ensure the preservation of Maori traditions.

Claims that the Maori past was now part of a shared ‘New Zealand’ heritage, whose guardianship and preservation were the responsibility of both Pakeha and Maori, or that Pakeha should be the gate-keepers of Maori ‘tradition’, often accompanied descriptions of exercises in Maori handicraft in the educational literature. William Dale, in outlining the goals of his school’s ‘Maori Week’, expressed a hope that it would ‘make vivid that short but splendid story of this our young and virile people’, and also that it would inspire pupils to continue to study Maori in their later life.\footnote{Dale, “Maori History Project,” 167.} The educationalists who recommended such schemes saw teaching primary school pupils about ‘traditional’ Maori material culture as a way of safekeeping the objects themselves, and – equally as important – their ‘meanings’, for the sake of posterity. But, while such schemes envisaged a place for Maori in their constructions of the New Zealand past, they also raised issues of cultural ownership and questions of who had the authority to speak on behalf of the Maori past. Some Maori people appear to have shared the enthusiasm of these Pakeha educationalists about the idea of a ‘shared’ history, or, at least realised the sentiment might be advantageous in pursuing ends of benefit to their own communities. For instance, Irvine-Smith included in a 1929 column an extract from a speech by Te Rangi Hiroa (Peter Buck), in which he told an assembly of the Feilding Agricultural High School that, ‘The history of the Maori is the heritage of the Pakeha as well as of the Maori. We are all New Zealanders now, and
this is our country’. Other Maori people, such as the Tuhoe elder John Rangihau whose words opened this thesis, were clearly less enthused by the idea of Pakeha custodianship over Maori culture.

Local history projects

A pedagogy which stressed the importance of children’s facility in local knowledge faced certain challenges in settler-colonial nations such as New Zealand, a deficit which, as I have previously indicated, was unlikely to be addressed by textbooks and curriculum materials written for a national market. One remedy for a lack of knowledge about the local past was to conduct one's own research. From 1928, primary school teachers and their pupils became local historians, as projects in local history were included in the official syllabus for the first time. ‘Every New Zealand child should know something of the history of his own town, district, and province, thus enriching his store of stirring detail and adding reality to the whole study of history’, the syllabus stated. ‘Most parts of the country are rich in historical incidents, and these both the teacher and pupil should take a pride in seeking out and recording’.

The addition of local history research to the primary school history syllabus from 1928 had been anticipated by the subject’s inclusion in the programmes of some teachers’ training colleges. During 1926, trainee teachers at the Auckland Training College specialised in local history projects. ‘Much admirable work was done in collecting and putting into readable form the early history of various parts of the Auckland province with which the students are familiar or acquainted’, the principal of the College reported. By 1934, similar research projects had been incorporated into the requirements for some advanced levels of teachers’ qualification. Candidates for a ‘C’ level teachers’ certificate in that year were required to submit a thesis on ‘the history of some locality in New Zealand’, incorporating ‘new historical matter…not previously published’.

Unsurprisingly, educational experts associated research projects – whether in local history or on other subjects – with a range of pedagogical benefits. References to

60 Te Rangi Hiroa (Peter Buck), Address to the Feilding Agricultural High School, quoted in Irvine-Smith, “History Teaching,” National Education, June 1929, 256.
61 Education Department, Syllabus of Instruction for Public Schools, 30.
63 Education Department, “History (For Class C Certificate),” Education Gazette, May 1934, 66.
‘project work’: classroom activities in which pupils themselves researched a particular topic and then presented their work, first entered the New Zealand educational literature from the United States in the 1920s. Educationalists who wrote in favour of project work credited it with developing pupils’ capacities for independent study, strengthening their powers of reasoning, and with enhancing skills in artistic, oral and written presentation. A related approach: the ‘regional survey’, also derived from the United States, also attracted the attention of New Zealand educational experts during the 1930s. Regional surveys were projects based specifically on descriptions of the local environment, combining subjects such as nature study, geography, and history. ‘A regional survey’ declared one New Zealand advocate of the approach in 1939, ‘is a record of direct observation of the local district: it is an antidote to bookishness’.64

The authors of *National Education’s* history columns supplied primary teachers with a range of practical suggestions on how to source information on the history of their local area and interpret it to children. One strategy was to take a class trip to visit a nearby site of historical interest. The notion of the class trip had been popularised in the early twentieth century as a way of bringing children into closer touch with nature and the school surroundings.65 What teachers might have considered to be an ‘historic site’ in their district was very much up to individual interpretation, and in planning such local history schemes teachers might have been confronted with the popular opinion that New Zealand ‘had no history’. ‘It is sometimes said that New Zealand suffers historically and culturally, when compared with the Homeland, because we have no historical buildings or places with historical or literary associations’, wrote de Berry in a 1933 history column. In rebuttal of such critics, de Berry suggested that there could be found in the vicinity of any school ‘abundant material’ around which lessons in local history could be based. To locate traces of the past in the local landscape, he claimed, teachers need look no further than such ‘memorials’ (his term) to pioneer achievement as: ‘the school itself’, ‘the church’, ‘the oldest shop’, ‘the road’, ‘the oldest buildings’.66

In another history column, published in 1934, de Berry recommended that Standard III classes be put to work compiling a time chart for their district, while pupils in the higher standards could make lists of ‘the oldest places in your town – the oldest shop –

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the oldest road – the oldest house’, and ‘the first people who came to your town…where they came from and what they did’. Under de Berry’s recommended schemes, once teachers and their pupils had learned how to interpret the signs of the past in their local landscape, almost any aspect of the built environment – even an ordinary road or bridge – might thus be ‘read’ by children as a ‘memorial’ to the vision and ideals of a district’s European pioneers. Thus, de Berry’s schemes for local history research fused two of the central objectives of school history lessons discussed in previous chapters: that of illustrating the principle of ‘national development’ through signs of a district’s material and technological ‘progress’, and memorialising the European pioneers.

Other, differing messages about an area’s past might have emerged in connection to local history projects assembled from oral testimonies. Irvine-Smith suggested in 1932 that pupils should: ‘Ask your grandparents or somebody else’s grandparents to tell you something about the early days of the district in which your school is situated, and then re-tell it to your classmates’. A. J. Graham, a teacher at Wellington’s Te Aro School who wrote history columns for National Education during 1935, told teachers of Standard IV classes that: ‘In most places, particularly in the country, it is quite easy to discover who were the first white settlers, and to discover many incidents connected with the early history of the district. Parents and other settlers are usually perfectly willing to talk upon this topic’. The European settlers were not the only subjects of efforts to assemble local histories from oral testimonies. In another of his history columns, published in 1934, de Berry suggested that pupils studying the syllabus topic ‘The coming of the Maori fleet’ might ‘Try to discover if there are any Maoris living near your school who can trace descent from those who came by the great canoes’.

The Education Gazette reported the efforts of a number of primary teachers whose classes had compiled local histories based on interviews with elderly people. The pupils of Nelson teacher E. B. Pay, whose class visited the site of the Wairau massacre, had also been studying the ‘development’ of their valley, by ‘talking to all the old people of our acquaintance, searching for old photos and articles of interest’. ‘We want

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70 de Berry, ‘The Teaching of History,’ National Education, March 1934, 70.
to make a book about it!’, she enthused.\textsuperscript{71} One of the best documented instances of a teacher’s efforts to incorporate oral testimony into local history lessons comes from the Native Schools system. In a 1938 \textit{Education Gazette} article, J. S. Isbister, head teacher of the Otoko Pa Native School near Wanganui, described how his class had become involved in documenting local Maori history. Confessing himself not previously a history enthusiast, Isbister wrote that he had in the past found great difficulty in teaching the syllabus topics of ‘Stories from Local History – Founding of the Town or District’ and ‘Tales of the Maoris; Local Maori Legends’, due to a lack of local sources. His attempts to motivate his pupils to gather information from their relatives had proved fruitless; textbooks were just as barren regarding ‘the local happenings of the past’. ‘The outlook was not bright for the history of 1938’, Isbister wrote; ‘the children knew no stories of local history; they could not gather any knowledge from their parents; textbooks conveyed nothing. What was I to do?’ His appeal was answered after meeting with a Maori elder, who agreed to work with him in an effort to ‘preserve for his children for all time an historical record of the doings of his own ancestors’.\textsuperscript{72} The two men were in agreement that the children of today were largely ignorant of ‘the wonderful experiences and acts of heroism of their own forefathers.’ Accordingly, Isbister arranged that the children should visit the pa to listen to the old man’s stories, delivered in both Maori and English, and that Isbister would afterwards meet with the elder alone in order to document his stories for the school records.\textsuperscript{73} ‘[R]esearch and record’, Isbister implored, ‘so that when the older Maoris die, these stories will not die with them, but will be preserved for generations yet to come’.\textsuperscript{74}

The growth in interest in local history documented by this thesis was not a phenomenon solely confined to the country’s primary schools. The interwar period, as Hilliard observes, witnessed an upsurge in popular interest in both local and New Zealand history, for which the approaching centenary of European settlement in 1940 only partly accounted.\textsuperscript{75} Hilliard identifies as a shared feature among both local histories and Maori ethnology in this period, ‘a commitment to collection, the accumulation of narratives and artefacts before their keepers died and their cultural

\textsuperscript{71} Pay, “February Freedom,” 11.
\textsuperscript{72} J. S. Isbister, “Native Schools’ Column: The Teacher’s Part in Recording Local History,” \textit{Education Gazette}, November 1938, 217.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{75} Hilliard, “Island Stories,” 18.
possessions vanished with them...Local historians employed the same language of disappearing knowledge as the Polynesian society; “early settlers” as well as “old-time” Maori were dying off. The desire to ‘preserve’ the pioneer past also emerges strongly in descriptions of local history work in primary schools.

In addition to their various pedagogical objectives, educational experts clearly regarded the collection of local pioneering memories by school children as amounting to a patriotic duty. In one part of their district, during 1927, Taranaki inspectors found students ‘intensely interested’ in local history. ‘They have in many cases pieced together a story that would be well worth preserving for future generations’. In 1929, Auckland inspectors wrote that while projects in local history had been attempted in a few of the district’s schools in the previous year – with one school having compiled a short history of the settlement of their district, complete with ‘old-time photographs’ – much history was still ‘being lost to our country which might easily be put into valuable form by the children of our schools’. De Berry suggested in a 1933 history column that, in covering the Standard IV syllabus topic of ‘the story of your own town and province’, pupils should work with their parents and friends to write a history of their school or nearest town. ‘There is no reason whatever why the schools should not write really good local histories. In fact, local sources could be drawn upon to give facts that unless caught and recorded now will soon be irrecoverably lost’. 

1940 Centennial Competition for schools

In 1938, the Education Department gave notice to all New Zealand teachers that a ‘Centennial Competition’ would be held in 1940 to judge the best regional surveys received from primary, Native, secondary and technical schools. By the time the competition closed, seventy schools’ entries had been received. During 1938 and 1939, W. B. Harris, a lecturer from the Christchurch Training College, contributed several articles on the subject of the regional survey competition to the Education Gazette. Afterwards, he collaborated with H. C. D. Somerset, an expert in adult rural education (but better known for his celebrated study of a small New Zealand rural community,

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76 Ibid., 21.
78 Education Department, “Extracts from Inspectors Reports: History,” Education Gazette, October 1929, 200.
in an article reflecting upon some of its results. In some areas of the country, they reported, schools which participated in the competition had been the first to document the local history of their region. The pupils of the Kairakau Primary School in the Chatham Islands, for instance, had collected stories about the Moriori, Maori, and Pakeha habitation of their islands, circulating them amongst their community for verification. In this way, Harris and Somerset wrote, the Kairakau School itself became ‘the centre of a community which had suddenly become history-conscious’. Unfortunately, the histories written by school children for the Centennial Competition are now difficult to locate. In some cases their disappearance might be put down less to accidents of evidence than to the impracticable nature of the materials they were assembled out of. The entry from Wellington Girls’ College, for instance, consisted of the past and probable future of the Wellington suburb of Thorndon carved out of hundreds of small pieces of soap.

One school’s entry to the Centennial Competition survives in the local history section of the National Library of New Zealand. *The Story of Hinakura*, by the pupils of Hinakura Primary School, documented the history of a small settlement in the Wairarapa district of the North Island. One of the winning entries in its category, *The Story of Hinakura* was subsequently published as a small booklet by A.H. and A. W. Reed. *Hinakura*, it appears, was compiled largely on the basis of oral testimonies. The foreword reveals the pupils’ chief informant as one A. Sutherland, who provided its young authors with ‘a long address about our district in the Maori times and when the first white settlers came’.

In devising a structure for their study, the pupils and teachers of Hinakura School most likely followed the guidelines for regional surveys that Harris set down in one of his articles on the competition. These recommended that classes begin such projects with a description of the physical environment, then cover Maori history and Maori use of the land, before moving on to ‘the white man, and the foundations of today’s settlement’. Accordingly, early chapters of *Hinakura* cover the Maori history of the district, and list a number of local sites of significance to Maori. There is little

81 Ibid.
83 W. B. Harris, “Centennial Competition for Schools,” 68.
sense of an enduring Maori presence beyond the district’s ‘early days’, and the remainder of the booklet is devoted to documenting the growth and main features of the European settlement. In this way, *The Story of Hinakura* reiterated the themes of ‘national development’ which structured the types of local history found in textbooks in the same period. The third chapter of the work relates the story of the area’s European settlers, chiefly consisting of the family history of the pupils’ informant, Mr. Sutherland, and some of the other ‘notable’ families of settlers who lived in the vicinity of the school during the ‘early days’. The activities of these families are discussed in considerable detail, right down to the pecuniary details of property transactions. Later chapters contain a description of the natural environment (accompanied by a sense of lament at the settlers’ destructive patterns of land use), the climate, primary industries, communications, important buildings, and finally, a description of local pastimes, including some intriguing insights into the class divisions of this small community: ‘On Sundays the [farm workers] wash their clothes in the morning and do as they please in the afternoon. Most of them have a sleep in the afternoon, while two play golf…The people who go to church are mostly the settlers. It is very rarely you see farm hands at the church…The citizens of Hinakura always go in to the Carterton show and another pastime is tennis, but that is played only by the farmers’.84

**Conclusion**

By way of concluding this chapter’s discussion, I will now briefly revisit and reflect upon the material covered. The first part of the chapter concentrated upon describing the various uses to which textbooks might have been put in primary school classrooms. As well as describing a range of possible reading, speaking and listening activities associated with textbooks, I also drew attention to the important role of textbooks in filling gaps in teachers’ knowledge of history: a function which had significant implications for the strategies of colonisation which relied upon re-circulating knowledge obtained from or about Maori. Next, I moved on to discuss some of the results of the combination of history with subjects such as drama, composition, art, handwork, and project work.

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Despite the stated goals behind activity-based classroom work, it is doubtful that many educational experts would have been willing to pursue aims such as self-expression or imagination to their full logical extent. When educational experts expressed their hope that children might learn to ‘love history’ as a result of their early lessons in the subject, for instance, they referred not only to a desire to improve the reputation of an unpopular school subject, but also spoke to educationalists’ widely held fears about how modern children and adults might put their extended leisure time to productive use. Few, it appears, would have permitted a child’s ‘individuality’ to assert itself entirely, as the Southland inspectors of schools had put it, ‘whither his natural bents and abilities lead him’. 85 Instead, as I have shown in the chapter’s discussion of the uses of drama and composition work in history lessons, educationalists clearly favoured some types of imaginative interaction over others. For instance, while exercises that required Pakeha children to inhabit Maori identities were relatively common in classroom guides, children were rarely encouraged to challenge the boundaries of prescribed gender roles in such imaginative work. Likewise, handwork exercises based on appropriations of Maori material culture prioritised preservation and authenticity over the expressive and creative objectives generally associated with craftwork under New Education pedagogy. The ways that educational experts directed educational aims such as expression or imagination, in other words, revealed the deeper cultural objectives embedded in such classroom exercises. The conclusion to the thesis as a whole that follows will discuss broader cultural objectives associated with history in New Zealand primary schools between 1900 and 1940.

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85 Minister of Education, “Education: Reports of Inspectors of Schools - Southland,” AJHR, E-1B, 1900, 42.
Conclusion

In 1973, local historian K. M. Stevens published the results of his life’s research into the history of his Northland district, Maungatapere. Born in 1892, and schooled in the early twentieth century, Stevens attributed his life-long passion for the history of his local district to an assignment set by his primary school teacher. ‘I have been collecting material for many years with the intention of writing a history of Maungatapere. When I was at school, Miss Udy, sole teacher at the time, asked our class to write a composition on the history of Maungatapere, and since that date, I have never lost an opportunity to learn about the early days of this district’.¹ On a pragmatic level, we might read this passage as an educational success story: of a primary school teacher who inspired one of her pupils with a ‘love of history’ and the motivation to go on to study and write it for himself. But, as I will argue in this conclusion, there are other, additional interpretations that we might take from this passage.

This thesis has examined the pedagogy and subject-matter of the history education presented to children who attended New Zealand primary schools between 1900 and 1940. In this conclusion, I briefly summarise the material covered by each chapter, draw out elements of the relationships between individual chapters, and reflect upon what this study might reveal of the broader ideology of Pakeha New Zealanders of these generations. In Chapter One, I introduced the group of modern education professionals who I have called ‘educational experts’ and the pedagogical movement they were associated with, the New Education. I went on explore how history education was shaped by the New Education’s aim of educating citizens. First, I showed how educationalists sought to mobilise both biography and local history towards their goal of fostering patriotism. After introducing the place of the ‘local’ in the New Education pedagogy, I then went on to argue that the overwhelming positivity of school history towards past and present governments and European forms of governance, served important colonising functions. Next, I described how the reaction of modern educationalists against ‘kings-and-dates’ history led to the re-orientation of the history syllabus around the goals of ‘social progress’ and ‘national development.’ This shift, I argued, was not only indicative of a change in the content of history lessons, but also reflected a pedagogical shift away from memorisation of individual dates to the prioritisation of sequences and the relational principle of development. In Chapter One, I showed how these elements of citizenship education were combined in the local histories presented to children in textbooks. These local histories described the

history of their local district in terms of an organising schema of British ‘national
development’ and praised the contributions of local and national governments and
settlers alike in ‘building up’ the infrastructure and institutions that provided the quality
of life of modern New Zealanders.

In Chapter Two, I described the importance of the Victorian ideology of
‘character’ in history textbooks, particularly in the first two decades of the twentieth
century. ‘Character’ described a notion of self-hood which emphasised self-sacrifice,
will-power, and the ability of individuals to control their own destinies. Its pedagogy
was centred on the notion that biography and history provided models of behaviour for
present generations to emulate. The European pioneers emerged as the prime example
of ‘character’ in New Zealand’s past, although the description was, in some
circumstances, applied to Maori. The idea of character also presented problems for
modern societies, as the conditions under which character emerged – in poverty or in
the struggle to subdue the environment – appeared to be missing from the lives of New
Zealand children. In the absence of these external stimuli, the weight of building
children’s character appeared to fall entirely on the modern education system.

By the interwar decades, the normative models of individual conduct associated
with Victorian ideals of character had come under challenge by the more flexible notion
of personality, and its associated educational aims of expression and self-realisation.
These educational ideals came through most strongly in association with the
introduction of activity-based methods of history teaching to New Zealand schools in
the 1920s. The emphasis of the New Education pedagogy on child activity, and the
principle of ‘correlation’, led to the combination of history with a range of other
classroom subjects in primary school classrooms of the interwar period. Sometimes,
activity-based classroom methodologies simply rehearsed the lessons of ‘character’ and
‘national development’ that children would already have encountered in textbooks.
This was evident, for instance, in many local history schemes, such as those set out by
L. F. de Berry, and in the local history that the pupils of Hinakura school wrote for the
1940 Centennial Competition. But, in other cases, the educational objectives that
emerged from activity-based methodologies could be entirely different from those
contained in textbooks.

The two related activities of ‘collection’ and ‘preservation’ emerged as an
important motivation for activity-based lessons in history not shared by history
textbooks. Educationalists’ writings on the use of handwork in teaching children about ‘traditional’ Maori culture, for instance, reveal that the preservation of Maori ‘items’ and their ‘meanings’ for the sake of the future heritage of both Pakeha and Maori New Zealanders, was a significant motivation behind such work. Likewise, the educational experts who recommended that schools undertake local history projects based on oral testimonies hoped to mobilise school children to preserve their local past before older people died. While sometimes these efforts focused solely upon the collection of old settlers’ memories, other schemes, such as J. S. Isbister’s, sought to preserve Maori memories.

One of the recurring themes of this study has been that of the ‘local’. The local, I have argued, formed a significant point of intersection between the pedagogical aims of the New Education and the settler problem of indigenisation. It was in their contrasting approaches to the ‘local’ that the accounts of the New Zealand past found in textbooks and those encountered in other, activity-based methods, differed most markedly. The idea of the ‘local’ was, as I have said, of central importance to the New Education pedagogy. Advocates of the New Education prioritised educational activities based on experience, participation and observation, over book learning. They criticised their predecessors as having designed schemes that were too abstract and remote from the realities of their pupils’ lives, and argued that children learned best if their lessons were drawn from their surroundings. This concept of the local, under the New Education pedagogy, coincided with the imperative of colonists to achieve ‘indigeneity’. These native-born settlers also desired to enhance their knowledge of and attachment to their surroundings, but their motivation lay not in pedagogical considerations, but by their psychological need to ‘belong’ in their new land by becoming ‘indigenous’.

The idea of the local, as I have said, also contained another, somewhat, paradoxical meaning within New Education schemes. While educationalists on the one hand emphasised the importance of a child’s detailed observation of the particular features of their surroundings, they also assumed that the lessons that children derived from locally-based lessons could be extended outwards to assist in children’s understanding of the world as a whole. This idea that the local could operate as a substitute for the universal came through most strongly in locally-based models of patriotic education, in civics lessons based upon studies of local forms of government,
and in the accounts of New Zealand’s local history which appeared in textbooks. In the latter case, the specific details of the local past were merged into the broader narrative of ‘national development’ which framed the syllabus revisions of the interwar period. In these local histories, the ‘local’ was only important insofar as it illuminated the universal ‘principles’ of development that were held to structure British, and therefore Pakeha, history as a whole.

By contrast, activity-based methods, and here I refer especially to dramatic and imaginative exercises and local histories written by school children and their teachers, focused their attention on the specifics of the local: the features of the local landscape and the contributions of individuals in a local area’s past. These activity-based schemes also performed indigenising functions, but did so through focusing on the particular details of a district’s past. Some practical history exercises, such as de Berry’s schemes for local history research, were concerned quite literally with colonising a district by identifying the past signs of Pakeha endeavour in an area. De Berry’s local history schemes envisaged a patriotic landscape, in which objects as common-place as roads and shops might be invested with significance as ‘memorials’ to a district’s early European ‘pioneers’. Such a landscape could be instructive. As a child passed by an old church, or crossed an old bridge, he or she might pause momentarily to quietly contemplate the pioneers who had constructed it. In so doing, such a child might have been reminded of the sacrifices and ideas of those pioneers, and resolve to emulate their example.

Other activity-based schemes colonised the New Zealand landscape in ways that were less external, and more to do with the interior realms of emotional and imaginative life. The 1921 ‘re-enactment’ of the Battle of Orakau, with which I opened Chapter Three, was one instance of this particular strategy of indigenisation. The educational experts who designed this type of imaginative exercise hoped to ‘populate’ the local landscape with the literary and historical associations believed lacking from the historical consciousness of the populations of ‘new’ lands such as New Zealand. Most of the educationalists who recommended such schemes regarded the Maori past or the shared history of Maori-Pakeha contact as the richest sources of ‘romance’ in New Zealand’s past.

The conclusions I have drawn here have implications for how educational historians, or historians who use educational sources to gain insights into a particular
period or aspect of culture, approach their task. These are: first, that to gain a full perspective of the educational objectives behind any particular educational exercise or approach to teaching history, it is first necessary to acquire an indepth knowledge of the prevailing pedagogical theories of the period. Next, the subject-matter and underlying educational or cultural objectives associated with history lessons could differ dramatically depending on the teaching methods used to deliver them. For this reason, it is important for researchers of educational subjects to consult a broad range of primary sources. As I have shown, the educational and cultural objectives associated with class-room based history work could at times be completely different from those of history lessons contained in textbooks.

In this study, I have also highlighted a number of conflicting objectives that emerged in primary school history curricula. These tensions became most evident following the syllabus revisions of 1926 and 1928, and in Our Nation's Story, written to accompany the 1928 syllabus. These syllabi represented the first attempt to incorporate activity-based teaching methodologies into a New Zealand primary curriculum, and a significant development on the ideas of the New Education as they had first appeared in the 1904 syllabus. The first division was between two opposing notions of selfhood. The children of the 1930s who had Our Nation's Story as their prescribed historical reader were presented with normative models of individual conduct to emulate in the forms of the European pioneers and a range of other past 'heroes'. But the same series also contained a range of other suggestions for activity-based exercises whose stated goals were self-expression and self-realisation. The tension was not confined to Our Nation's Story; rather, the textbook series reflected a contradiction that had been written into the syllabus revisions of the interwar period.

Another area where conflicting objectives emerged in relation to the syllabus revisions of the 1920s was their attempt to reconcile two opposing strategies of indigenisation. As Hilliard points out, Goldie’s two poles of indigenisation are, at heart, contradictory. In particular, Hilliard draws attention to the tensions existing within the works of historian James Cowan. Cowan wrote about the ‘frontier’ of relations between Maori and Pakeha during the nineteenth century. He based much of his writing on oral testimonies, ‘collected’ from both Maori and Pakeha informants. Cowan admired Maori and allocated them active roles in his histories. On occasion, as in his writings on the Waikato war, he wrote critically of the colonial enterprise and argued that the
consequences of Maori dispossession were ongoing in the present. But in other works, as Hilliard writes, Cowan glorified the European pioneers as much as other Pakeha writers of this period did.2

Unlike Cowan, textbooks and school curricula were never overtly critical of the actions of past individuals or governments, but they were nevertheless structured by the same tension that ran through Cowan’s work. A range of history exercises – including local history in textbooks, lessons on pioneer ‘character’, and many local history research projects – revolved around the claim that New Zealand history was about the ‘development’ of a Pakeha-centred nation. Such histories praised the ‘progress’ of European settlement, but failed to acknowledge its negative impacts upon Maori, and held the agents of Maori dispossession, the European ‘pioneers’ up as models for school children to emulate. Other history schemes, representative of the opposing indigenising strategy, attempted to incorporate the ‘romance’ of Maori history into Pakeha culture by collecting items of Maori material culture and salvaging stories of the Maori past. This appropriative strategy raised broader questions about the ownership of the Maori past and Maori culture. But, educational work based on appropriations from Maori history and culture did at least offer the potential for Maori participation and agency within their constructed narratives of New Zealand’s past and future, although the opportunity was by no means always taken up.

These tensions were partly, but not entirely, the result of the collaborative process involved in the production of the official syllabus. As in Cowan’s writing, the same conflict could emerge in the work of individual educationalists. Fanny Irvine-Smith, for instance, has been discussed so far mainly as a proponent of educational exercises based upon modelling items from Maori material culture. But she also suggested schemes for local history projects which called for pupils to collect and research the meanings of local street names, and in 1948 she published the results of her own efforts in this line of research. As Giselle Byrnes writes, the process whereby colonists imposed names on the land was integral to colonisation, as naming constructed ‘cultural spaces’ out of places, domesticated the land and celebrated the presence of settlers.3 Irvine-Smith’s history rehearsed these earlier processes of

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3 Byrnes, *Boundary Markers*, 77.
colonisation. Similarly, although I have discussed the work of de Berry mainly in relation to his attempts to memorialise the settler presence in the New Zealand landscape, he too wrote handwork schemes based on Maori culture, and he also suggested that students should seek out Maori informants in their local history research. The messages that New Zealand children of the interwar period received about the New Zealand past, whether it was through Our Nation’s Story, exercises based on the syllabus, or in schemes designed by individual educational experts, were likely to have been structured by the same contradiction.

Few people recall the earliest lessons they learnt about the past. Not many individuals, I would guess, could remember when they first developed a ‘time sense’, or when they learnt to recognise particular material objects as the physical remnants of the past. Paradoxically, it may be the results of these first history lessons – the sensations, the broad ‘impressions’, the ideas of temporality, the imaginative associations – that are among the most powerful in shaping our later attitudes to the past. It is precisely, I would suggest, their ability to shape the things that we ‘know’ about the past but scarcely recall learning, what we believe to be ‘natural’ and seldom think about consciously, that early history lessons are most significant. Their very power lies in their intangibility.

The history education devised for the generations of school children who attended New Zealand primary schools between 1900 and 1940 was designed with a range of intangible aims in mind. Not all had to do with the context of settler-colonialism. Some were concerned with addressing particular problems educationalists associated with modern life. Others were aimed at producing future adults who would behave in certain ways, or possess particular skills or attributes. But among the most powerful intangible effects of a primary school history education in these decades, which united a range of educational activities with otherwise diverse intentions, were the set of cultural beliefs and assumptions that contributed to the Pakeha project of colonisation. A primary school history education provided K. M. Stevens with a useful hobby and a life-long passion. But, even more importantly, it gave him the certainty that his own subject position: as resident of Maungatapere, a descendant of European settlers and a Pakeha New Zealander was legitimate. Indeed, undoubtedly, it would simply never have occurred to him to doubt the verity of such assumptions, or to question whether his local district’s history was his to write and define. Powerful
precisely because they were internalised and not consciously thought of or expressed, the assumptions of cultural colonisation formed a boundary of the imagination that few individual Pakeha people of these generations could have crossed, at least without a conscious and concerted effort to do so.
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