

My New Zealand Story: Cup Magic

Auckland/San Diego 1995

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Synopsis

Mike Lucas is wondering why he is being sent to live with his grandparents. There is a big secret that no one is telling him. He is beginning to wonder if his parents are getting divorced. At least it's fun living with his grandparents. He has made a new friend at school called Hone and his grandfather is teaching him to sail.

Finally Mike finds out the reason for the secrecy and why his parents have been so busy. They are both working with Team New Zealand for the 1995 America's Cup challenge. There is huge secrecy surrounding the team and its boat design because other syndicates have been known to send spies to steal the secrets from other teams. Then Mike receives exciting news. He, his brother Mike (who is also working for the campaign) and his parents are moving to San Diego for the duration of the Cup.

During these six exhilarating weeks Mike gets up close and personal with Black Magic and its crew. Excitement builds to fever pitch after Black Magic wins the Louis Vuitton cup. But will the tiny team from New Zealand with its limited money and resources be able to compete against the mighty Americans and bring home the Cup?

Text Type

Cup Magic is the latest title in the extremely popular My New Zealand Story series. Set in New Zealand and San Diego in 1995, the novel gives a fascinating insight into New Zealand's campaign to win the America's Cup. Told from Mike Lucas's perspective the reader learns his thoughts and feelings about being involved in the campaign. Though fictional, the story contains historically accurate details about the campaign, including the need for secrecy to avoid other teams stealing their secrets. The boat design, sail-making process and details of each of the races are also included, along with details of the "Lucky Red Socks" campaign and the incredible support that the team received from New Zealanders.

The novel will appeal to both boys and girls who are interested in New Zealand history.

Themes include using kiwi ingenuity, having self-belief, the importance of having support, loyalty, courage and determination.

Sharing the Novel

The novel has been divided up as follows: pp. 9–25, pp. 26–92, pp. 93–156 and pp. 157–224.

During the shared sessions encourage students to ask questions to clarify their understanding of words and ideas presented in the novel. Have them make predictions and inferences. Wherever possible make links between information in the novel and students' prior knowledge. Students should also be encouraged to identify themes and explain how they are developed in the novel.

Introducing the Novel

Have students study the front cover of the novel and read the blurb.

- What is the America's Cup?
- When and where is the story set?
- Who is the main character in the story?
- Why do you think everyone is wearing red socks?
- The novel is told in diary form. What do you expect from a novel written in this way?

Teacher reads The Historical Note on p. 209 and pp. 9–25 aloud. Students follow along in their books.

Comprehension Historical Note and pp. 9–25

- What was NZL-32's nickname? What year did it win the America's Cup?
- Who was the skipper of the boat? Who was the leader of the team?
- Why was the win so remarkable?
- What challenges did Team New Zealand face?
- What do we find out about Peter Blake in this chapter?
- Who is Leslie Egnot?
- What did the red sock campaign raise money for?
- What date is Mike's first diary entry made on?
- How old is Mike? Why has he started a new school?
- What are the rest of Mike's family all "mad, keen" on?
- Who does Ben sail for?
- What reason do Ben's parents give him for sending him to live with his grandparents? How does Ben feel about this? What does Ben think is really going on?

- In what ways is Mike's grandparents' house different from his own?
- Who rescues Mike from the bullies?
- What is significant about Waitangi day?
- How does Mike feel when Poppa offers to teach him to sail? What does Nana Betty say Mike has to be able to do before he is allowed to get in the boat?
- What does Poppa tell Mike about Peter Blake?
- What is the yacht called? Why does Mike enjoy working on it?

Discussion

- Have you ever moved to a new place and started a new school? What are the positive aspects of this? The negative?
- Have you ever been a victim of bullying? How did this make you feel? What do you think is the best way to deal with a bully?
- What do you think is going to happen in the story next?

Students read pp. 26–92 independently before the next shared session.

Comprehension pp. 26–92

- Who joins Poppa and Mike fishing?
- What interests do Mike and Hone share?
- What happens to the school bullies?
- What is special about Poppa's flags?
- Which flags does a boat need to hoist if they are in trouble?
- What does Mike learn about his family when his grandmother shows him the photo album?
- Why do you think Mike's dad is happy when he sees the work that has been done on the P-class? What does Mike's mum offer to make for him?
- Why does Mike's grandmother make him and Hone swim in their clothes?
- Why isn't Mike allowed to change Sea Sprite's name? What colour does he decide to paint it?
- How does Mike feel after he first sails his dinghy?
- What does Poppa Joe convince the Takapuna Boating Club to lend Hone?

- What kinds of things does Poppa teach the boys about sailing?
- Who wins the race at the Takapuna Boating Club? Why does this annoy Mike so much?
- What big secret does Nana reveal to Mike?
- What roles do Mike's parents have within Team New Zealand? Why is there such a need for secrecy?
- What is the most interesting thing about the America's Cup?
- What world record does Peter Blake break on 2nd April? Why is Peter Blake Mike's hero?
- What prizes do Mike and Hone receive? Who does Mike come second overall to?
- What is the significance of ANZAC Day?
- What news does the Royal New Zealand Yacht Squadron announce on May 6th?
- Who is leading the America's Cup challenge? What is the entry fee? Which companies are sponsoring the America's cup?
- Describe North's Loft. What does Mike's mother's job entail? Who is she working with?
- What is the name of the upwind sail?
- What material does Russell Coutts decide to use in the sails? What is the reason for this? Why is it so important to trim the inner edge of the sail in the right place?
- Why is it important to have a spare yacht when racing in the America's Cup?
- What security measures are in place at the boat yard?
- In what ways is Team New Zealand different to other teams?
- What is the first part of NZL-32 to be made?
- Why is Mike despondent after the rugby game? What does he attribute the success of the French to?
- What does Mike's dad discuss with the team at the meeting in Shortland Towers?
- What does Mike suggest the boat should be called?
- What is Team New Zealand's mission statement? In what way will winning the Cup benefit all New Zealanders?
- What is team New Zealand's vision statement?

Discussion

- What new experiences does Mike have while living with his grandparents?
- What qualities and characteristics does a hero possess?

- In what ways is the America's Cup a collaborative effort?
- What does Poppa mean when he says "Boys, it's not how you win that matters, but how you lose, that's what people notice and remember". Do you agree with him? Why/why not?
- What do we learn about Peter Blake in this section of the book? In what ways is the 1995 campaign different to previous campaigns?

Students read pp. 93–156 independently before the next shared session.

Comprehension pp. 93–156

- What happens when Mike and his dad arrive at the M & W boat yard? How does everyone react to this near disaster?
- Describe the reaction of the crowd when NZL-32 is revealed at the viaduct basin. Why are there scuba divers in the water? What part of the boat remains hidden?
- What is the name of NZL-32's sister boat?
- What does Ben's part-time job entail? How does Mike feel when Ben invites him along?
- Why is Mike surprised when he sees Team New Zealand's Headquarters?
- Why is everyone so nervous about trialling the boat in the water? Why does the boat sail in the dark? What is the first problem the boat encounters?
- Which boat does Team New Zealand use to trial against Black Magic?
- Why does Team New Zealand think it's good that the media is reporting that Black Magic is a "dog"? How does Mike perpetuate this rumour?
- What exciting question do Mike's parents ask him on the 2nd October? How does Mike feel about this proposition?
- How is Team New Zealand using subterfuge?
- What is Ben's role going to be in San Diego? How will he get there?
- What is significant about the note that the boy hands Peter Blake in the television commercial?
- What deal do Mike's grandparents and Hone's mum reach about Sea Sprite?
- What information does Mike discover about San Diego? What is his apartment like? What can he see from the window? What places would he like to visit?
- Who does Team New Zealand share its launch facilities with? What else do the teams share?

- Why is November 24th such a big deal in the U.S.A?
- What does Mike's dad mean when he says that the Black Magic boats are "our Trojan horse"?
- What problems did the Black Magic boats encounter on their journey to San Diego?
- What do the 'super computers' monitor?
- Why does Mike think the Japanese syndicate are polite?
- What disaster befalls the French team?
- How long is each race?
- What does Mike have to look out for when he is out on the chase boat?
- Why do the crew have to be so careful with the sails?
- Why are the trials between the two boats important?
- Who is Leslie Egnot skippering for?
- Why is Christmas such a low-key event for the members of Team New Zealand?
- What special present does Peter Blake's wife give him for Christmas?
- What is special about the boat Young America?
- What boat are the Women's Team sailing? Why is the America's Cup considered "a boy's game"?
- Why does Uncle Bob think that Team New Zealand has "a heck of a lot of experience"?
- Why do Team New Zealand members have to be careful who they talk to from other teams?
- Describe Mike's encounter with Dennis Conner.
- Why is there so much interest in the Women's Team?
- What awful thing happens to Young America on the 4th January?
- Describe the opening party for the America's Cup Regatta.
- What was surprising about the first race in the Citizen Cup?
- How many teams are competing in the America's Cup?
- Why is racing for the Louis Vuitton Cup so intense? How much does Black Magic beat Rioja de Espana by?

Discussion

- What lessons do you think Mike learns from his experience with Team New Zealand?

- There are many jobs that need to be completed by the crew during a yacht race. What are these and who are they performed by? What does Mike think the worst job would be?
- Why are Team New Zealand considered the underdog?

Students read pp. 157–207 independently before the next shared session.

Comprehension pp. 157–207

- How many men are on board Black Magic when it is racing?
- Who created the animated graphics which make watching the races on TV so exciting?
- How do supporters in New Zealand get their messages to Team New Zealand? What does the team receptionist do with all the messages?
- What is the name of the other New Zealand boat racing for the America's Cup? What happens to one of the sailors on this boat?
- Who is in the lead for the Louis Vuitton Cup at the end of Round One?
- Why does Black Magic get disqualified in the race against One Australia?
- What drama occurs at the start of the race on 4th February?
- Why is Mike so impressed with the Louis Vuitton party?
- How does Mike get all the inside information on the Women's Team?
- Why is it so unusual that Peter Blake sails on Black Magic?
- What disaster befalls One Australia in the race on Black Sunday? Who rescues the sailors?
- What is the big news on 26th March?
- Who does New Zealand race in the finals for the Louis Vuitton Cup? How many races do they need to win?
- Why is the race on the 4th of April do or die for the Women's Team? What deal did Dennis Conner make with Young America? Is this fair? Why/why not?
- What does Black Magic reveal to the public on the 9th of April?
- Which boat does Peter Blake intend to race in the America's Cup?
- Who wins the Louis Vuitton Cup? How many months of racing did it take to decide the challenger for the America's Cup?
- Why is it such a concern that Team New Zealand only has one set of sails?

- What campaign is launched to raise money to make a new set of sails?
- Which boat wins the Citizen Cup? Why is this win unpopular with many people?
- How successful is the red sock campaign?
- Who does Leslie Egnot and her team support in the race for the America's Cup?
- Who is odds-on favourite to win the Cup?
- Why does Mike think that Dennis Conner is changing the rules to suit himself?
- Why is it so amazing that Black Magic wins the opening race for the America's Cup?
- Why is the winning margin in the second race so impressive?
- Describe what happens when Black Magic wins the America's Cup 5–0. How does the crowd react? Why does someone hoist a broom onto Black Magic's mast? Why do Russell Coutts and Peter Blake get thrown in the water?
- How does Mike feel about his family being at the centre of this world event?
- How do people back in New Zealand react to the win? How do they celebrate?
- When will New Zealand defend the Cup?
- What does the captain of the plane do when he arrives back in New Zealand with Team New Zealand's crew?
- Why is Mike surprised by how big the Cup win is at home?

Discussion

- Why was the 1995 America's Cup win so important for New Zealand? Why did it raise New Zealand's international profile so much?
- What lessons can we learn from Team New Zealand? What factors contributed to its successful campaign?
- Identify an important theme or idea presented in the novel and explain how it is developed by the author.
- Why is being a part of the America's Cup campaign a once on a lifetime opportunity for Mike and his family?

Activities

Static Image – Design a poster advertising the “Lucky Red Socks” campaign.

Storyboard – Choose 10 important events that occur in Cup Magic. Design a storyboard that illustrates each of these events in the order that they occur. Under each picture write a brief description about what is happening.

Static Image – Design a poster advertising Cup Magic that is suitable for displaying in your school library. Combine verbal and visual features to convey your ideas.

Plot – Choose an important section of the story and retell it in your own words.

Review – Write a book review for Cup Magic. Include a brief plot summary. Explain the setting and the themes of the story. Include information about the main characters and explain what they learn from their experiences. Explain the historical significance of the events detailed in the story. Remember to include your personal opinion about the novel.

Theme – Choose an important idea or theme developed in the novel. Design a collage that uses images, words and symbols to portray this theme. Themes could include unity, the importance of teamwork, triumphing against the odds or the fight of the underdog.

Writing – Identify an important event in New Zealand history that could be included in the My Story series. Explain the importance of the event and the effects of it on the people of New Zealand. Justify your choice by explaining the significance of the event and why all New Zealanders should know about it.

Play – Choose an exciting event that occurs in the story and write a script for it. Include a list of characters and stage directions. Practise your play and present it to the class.

Letter – Write a letter to the author explaining why you enjoyed reading her book and what it taught you.

Notes written by Vicki Ladd