

Trainsurfer Teacher Resource Booklet



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GREETINGS

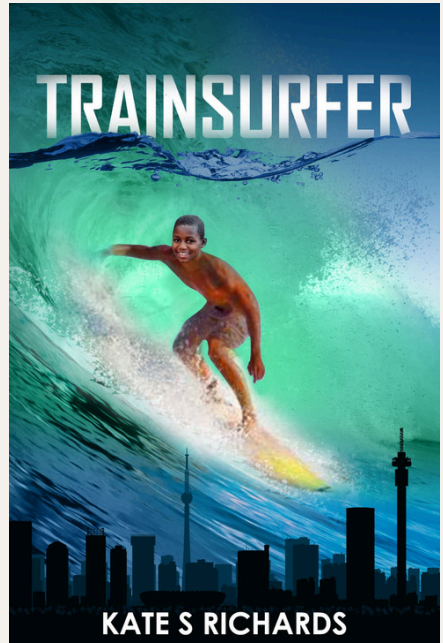
Kia ora from Kate

Kia ora, I'm Kate, author of *Trainsurfer*.

Trainsurfer is book one in a trilogy for teens called *The Adventures of Jabu & Friends*. It can be read and studied as a stand alone story.

It is often used as a novel study for classes ranging from Y7 to Y10 in New Zealand Aotearoa and is also included in a South African homeschool curriculum.

This teacher resource is designed with Y9/10 in mind, but can be adapted to younger or older children.



School librarians and teachers - please email me if you would like to order books for your school. I can post the books with an invoice. Thanks.

Kate S Richards

CHAPTER I

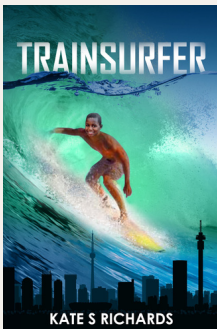
Why teach *Trainsurfer*?

Introduction

This resource booklet is designed for teachers of Year 9/10 students studying the novel, *Trainsurfer* by Kate S. Richards.

It connects the fictional story of apartheid-era South Africa with Aotearoa New Zealand's own history of protest during the 1981 Springbok Tour.

The resource supports cross-curricular learning in English, Social Studies, and History, and provides both creative and formal assessment opportunities.



Why Teach *Trainsurfer*?

- Brings the realities of apartheid to life – through Jabu's story, students see how apartheid affected people's lives on a personal level.
- Connects directly to Aotearoa New Zealand's Histories Curriculum strands and pairs with the Springbok Tour.
- Builds empathy and critical thinking – encourages students to reflect on privilege, fairness, and justice.
- Accessible yet deep – short chapters and fast-paced action with rich symbolism.
- Cross-curricular potential – English, History/Social Studies, Art/Music.
- Encourages discussion on sport and politics – raises essential questions about whether sport can ever be separate from politics.

CHAPTER 1

Background Context

Apartheid in South Africa

Apartheid was a system of institutionalised racial segregation enforced in South Africa from 1948 until the early 1990s.

South Africa under Apartheid:

- Racial segregation was legally enforced — Black South Africans were restricted in housing, education, transport, and rights.
- Pass laws required movement permits; police brutality was common.
- Resistance movements (e.g. ANC, student protests in Soweto 1976) were often met with violence.
- Internationally, apartheid was condemned; many countries boycotted South Africa.



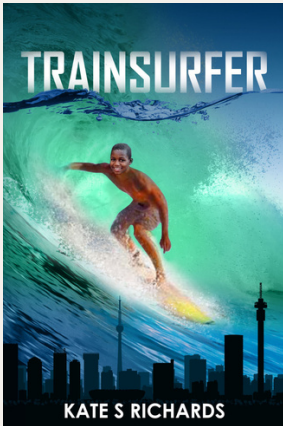
The 1981 Springbok Tour in New Zealand

The Springbok Tour divided New Zealand Aotearoa. Rugby was central to NZ identity, but many opposed sporting contact with South Africa while apartheid persisted.

- South African teams had excluded Māori players until the 1970s.
- By 1981, New Zealanders were divided: some demanded rugby ties be cut, others argued “politics and sport don’t mix.”
- Nationwide protests saw violent clashes with police, and the country was polarised. It was one of the most divisive moments in Aotearoa New Zealand history.
- The tour sparked a national conversation about race, ethics, and Aotearoa New Zealand’s role in the world, highlighting how global issues of justice could impact everyday life at home.

CHAPTER I

How *Trainsurfer* fits



- Studying both contexts (apartheid & Springbok Tours protests) side-by-side highlights how ordinary people resisted injustice in different but connected ways.
- Shows daily life for a boy in apartheid South Africa.
- Explores themes of survival, inequality, resilience, and injustice.
- Provides a fictional but realistic window into apartheid South Africa.
- Can be read alongside primary sources from NZ protests — to compare the lived experiences of resistance and oppression.

CHAPTER II

Suggested class activities

1. Dual Timeline (South Africa & Aotearoa New Zealand)

Build a dual timeline of events in *Trainsurfer* and the 1981 protests, highlighting connections between the two contexts. Use the example below to create a chart using evidence from *Trainsurfer* and historical sources to expand on the suggestions:

South Africa (Jabu, 1980s)	New Zealand (Springbok Tour, 1981)
Train surfing, homeless children resist arrest, survival on streets.	Youth protest rugby matches, clash with police, demand boycott of apartheid.
Apartheid laws restrict movement and education.	Protestors argue rugby is political “No normal sport in an abnormal society.”
Jabu experiences fear, injustice, resilience.	Protestors experience division, violence, courage.
Add more examples	Add more examples

Add extra examples from these bullet points:

- Major events in *Trainsurfer* (fictional)
- Historical events in apartheid South Africa.
- Major events in NZ (Springbok Tour protests).
- Discuss parallels: authority, resistance, courage.

CHAPTER II

Suggested class activities

2: Protest Roleplay

Students will roleplay as either New Zealand protestors during the 1981 Springbok Tour or South African students resisting apartheid. Both groups prepare chants, posters, and arguments to express their stand against injustice, then reflect on similarities and differences in their methods of resistance.

- Half class = NZ protestors in 1981.
- Half class = South African students resisting apartheid.
- Each side prepares chants, posters, arguments.
- Compare similarities/differences in methods of resistance.

3: Close Reading & Primary Sources

Students will analyse a passage from *Trainsurfer* alongside photos and newspaper reports from the 1981 Springbok Tour protests, then discuss how different texts and sources shape our understanding of injustice.

- Read a *Trainsurfer* passage showing police/power imbalance.
- Compare with photos/newspaper reports of the 1981 marches.
- Discuss: How do stories and sources shape our understanding of injustice?

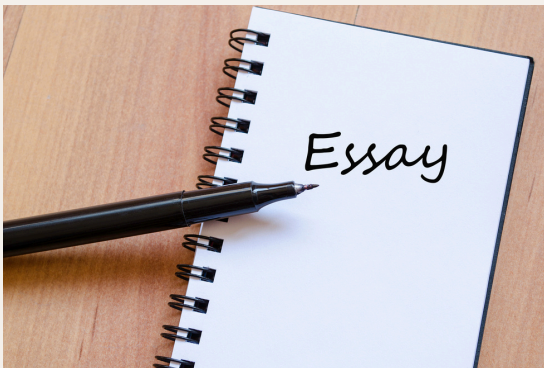
CHAPTER III

Assessment Tasks

Task 1: Formal Essay options

How does *Trainsurfer* help us understand life under apartheid, and how does this connect to the resistance shown in New Zealand during the Springbok Tour protests?

In *Trainsurfer*, young people start to notice the unfairness of apartheid in South Africa. During the 1981 Springbok Tour in New Zealand, many young people also stood up against apartheid by joining the protests. Compare how young people in both places showed courage in challenging injustice, and explain why this was important.



SUCCESS CRITERIA

Success Criteria for the Essay

By the end of my essay, I will have:

1. Introduction

Introduced *Trainsurfer* (title, author, context).

Stated what apartheid was in South Africa.

Briefly mentioned the Springbok Tour protests in NZ.

Given a clear statement of my argument (youth showing courage mattered in both places).

2. Body Paragraphs

Trainsurfer: Explained at least one example of how young people (e.g. Jabu, Billie) noticed or resisted apartheid.

Springbok Tour: Explained at least one example of how young people protested or resisted apartheid in NZ Aotearoa.

Comparison: Linked the two contexts (how both show courage, sacrifice, or standing up for what's right).

3. Evidence

Used specific examples from *Trainsurfer* (events, characters, quotes or paraphrase).

Used facts/examples about the Springbok Tour protests (e.g. marches, clashes, youth involvement).

4. Analysis

Explained why young people's actions were important in both contexts.

Showed understanding of how sport can be connected to politics and justice.

5. Conclusion

Summed up the key points.

Re-stated why it was important that young people stood up against apartheid in both South Africa and NZ.

Assessment tasks

Task 2: Creative Response

Options: Write a diary entry from Jabu's perspective OR a NZ teen protestor's perspective.

Success Criteria for the Diary entry (creative writing)

- Shows understanding of apartheid / Springbok Tour context.
- Communicates a strong perspective (voice of Jabu or NZ teen protestor).
- Uses creative techniques (imagery, emotion, or strong visuals).
- Is clear and convincing for the audience.



ASSESSMENT TASKS

Task 3: Group Presentation

Topic: Resistance through sport – apartheid South Africa and the Springbok Tour.

Format: Create a poster, slideshow, or short video linking apartheid and the Springbok Tour.

Instructions:

Divide into groups of 3–4.

Research and discuss how sport was connected to resistance against apartheid. Use examples from:

- *Trainsurfer* (e.g. Jabu's experiences at segregated beaches, the censorship of music, and young people starting to question apartheid).
- The 1981 Springbok Tour in New Zealand (e.g. protest marches, rugby ground invasions, the belief that "there is no rugby on a racist field").

Create a presentation (poster, slideshow, or short video) that shows:

- What apartheid was and how it affected young people.
- How sport became a way of resisting apartheid (both in South Africa and in New Zealand Aotearoa).
- Why youth voices and actions mattered in these protests.
- Any connections to today (e.g. how sport can still be political, or how young people can influence change).

Share your presentation with the class. Be ready to answer a couple of questions from your peers.

SUCCESS CRITERIA

Success Criteria for Group Presentation

Success Criteria (student-friendly):

- We explained what apartheid was in simple terms.
- We showed how *Trainsurfer* connects to apartheid and resistance.
- We linked this to the Springbok Tour protests in NZ.
- We gave examples of young people taking action.
- Our presentation was clear, creative, and worked well as a group.



TEACHER NOTES

Extension & Cross-Curricular Links

English

Symbolism:

- The Sea: Explore how the sea represents both danger and renewal – a place of testing, change, and freedom.
- Surfing: Explore how surfing symbolises Jabu’s movement from risk and desperation (train surfing) to freedom and hope (wave surfing).
- The Surfboard: Consider how the surfboard symbolises courage, and transformation and new beginnings. It’s Jabu’s bridge from fear to belonging.
- Friendship: Examine how Jabu and Kyle’s friendship shows conflict, and reconciliation in a divided society.
- Thematic Essays: Extend students into more complex essay work, e.g. “How does *Trainsurfer* show the cost of courage?” or “In what ways does the novel suggest that young people can be agents of change?”
- Character Growth: Trace Jabu’s journey from grief and displacement to belonging and purpose, linking it to the classic “coming-of-age” narrative.

History

- Apartheid South Africa: Investigate laws such as the Group Areas Act or “Whites Only” signs, relating them to Jabu’s experiences (e.g. at the beach).
- International Protest Movements: Connect the novel to global anti-apartheid actions – the 1981 Springbok Tour in Aotearoa New Zealand, sporting boycotts, or UN sanctions. Students can explore how everyday people shaped international pressure.

TEACHER NOTES

Extension & Cross-Curricular Links

Social Studies

- Human Rights: Link apartheid laws and resistance movements to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Which rights were denied under apartheid?
- Power and Authority: Examine how police and state authority are shown in the novel, and compare with how authority operates in democratic societies. Students could debate: when is resistance justified?

Art / Music

- Listen to South African freedom songs such as “Nkosi Sikelel’ iAfrika” (or international protest songs Billie may have listened to in *Trainsurfer*, like U2’s “Silver and Gold” and Eddy Grant’s “Gimme Hope Jo’anna”), or New Zealand protest music from the 1981 Tour such as Herbs’ “What’s Be Happen?”. Students analyse lyrics for themes of unity, justice, and resistance, linking these to Jabu’s search for freedom and voice in the novel.
- Poster-Making: Design posters for either 1980s South African resistance or 1981 Springbok Tour protests. Emphasise symbolism, colour, and slogans – linking back to protest art traditions worldwide.

Extension Projects

- Comparative Study: For more able students (Y11+), compare and contrast *Trainsurfer* with Anne Kayes’ *In Our Own Back Yard* which reflects on the Springbok Tour in NZ Aotearoa to explore youth perspectives on protest in two different contexts.
- Creative Response: Write or perform a modern protest poem or song inspired by the themes of *Trainsurfer* and the Springbok Tour, connecting past struggles to present-day issues.

TEACHER NOTES

Glossary Notes

Glossary Use in NCEA Context

Trainsurfer includes a comprehensive glossary of Afrikaans/Zulu terms to help comprehension and allows students to explore how language conveys culture, identity, and power.

Linking to the Aotearoa New Zealand Curriculum, this supports intercultural understanding and critical literacy skills. Teachers can encourage students to notice how untranslated words in the text reflect authenticity and deepen their grasp of apartheid.

- Pre-reading support: Teachers can introduce key Afrikaans and Zulu words before starting the novel. This helps lower the barrier for students who might otherwise stumble over unfamiliar terms.
- Language and power: Students can track how certain words signal authority, respect, or oppression (e.g. baas or sjambok) and discuss how language reflects the unequal power structures of apartheid.
- Identity and culture: Terms like ubaba (father/sir) or greetings in Zulu can open discussion on how language ties into identity and community, giving insight into Jabu's world.
- Critical literacy: Teachers can ask: Why do you think the author left these words untranslated? What effect does it have on the reader? This links to NZ Curriculum goals about intercultural understanding and how texts position readers.
- Cross-curricular links: In Social Studies or History, students could research how Afrikaans became the enforced language of schooling in apartheid SA (leading to the Soweto Uprising), making direct connections between glossary terms and real historical events.

CHAPTER IV

Conclusion

Trainsurfer offers teachers a powerful tool for engaging Year 7–10 students with issues of justice, courage, and identity across two historical contexts — apartheid South Africa and Aotearoa New Zealand during the 1981 Springbok Tour. By weaving fiction with real-world events, the novel invites students to empathise with those who resisted inequality and to recognise how young people can be agents of change.

Through reading, discussion, creative expression, and critical analysis, students gain insight into how sport, politics, and human rights intersect — both then and now. This resource aims to support teachers in fostering deep, connected learning that builds empathy, critical thinking, and social awareness, helping students see that history is not distant but alive in the choices we make today. It also links closely with key competencies in the New Zealand Curriculum, including participating and contributing, thinking critically, and relating to others through empathy and shared inquiry. Through exploring *Trainsurfer*, students come to see how stories can build understanding and inspire hope.

Chapter-by-Chapter Guide

A more detailed, chapter-by-chapter companion will follow in a second resource.