

## Toitoti 25 Bonus Activity: Tangiwai



### READ

[Tangiwai Disaster](#)

Words by Kyle Pomara, age 12

Pictures by Rowan Woudberg, age 13

[Whangaehu River](#)

Words by Anthony Whitmarsh, age 11

Pictures by Cathy Li, age 13



### LEARN

Kyle and Anthony have written movingly about a tragic event in Aotearoa New Zealand's history. What was the Tangiwai disaster? When did it happen? Conduct some research and make notes.



### CREATE

Choose one aspect of the Tangiwai disaster that interests you. Use your research and Kyle and Anthony's writing to inspire your own creative response to this historic event.



### ILLUSTRATE

Inspired by Rowan and Cathy's art, create a powerful image of your own to go with your writing.



### SHARE

Submit your own writing or artwork for publication in Toitoti and begin a conversation with other young New Zealanders through the arts.

Visit [www.toitoti.nz](http://www.toitoti.nz) for more bonus activities

# Tangiwai Disaster

I'm a young man from a poor family. I should be sleeping but I'm wide awake. I'm going to Auckland to take part in a national first aid competition and we are travelling by train. It's Christmas Eve, which has added to my excitement.

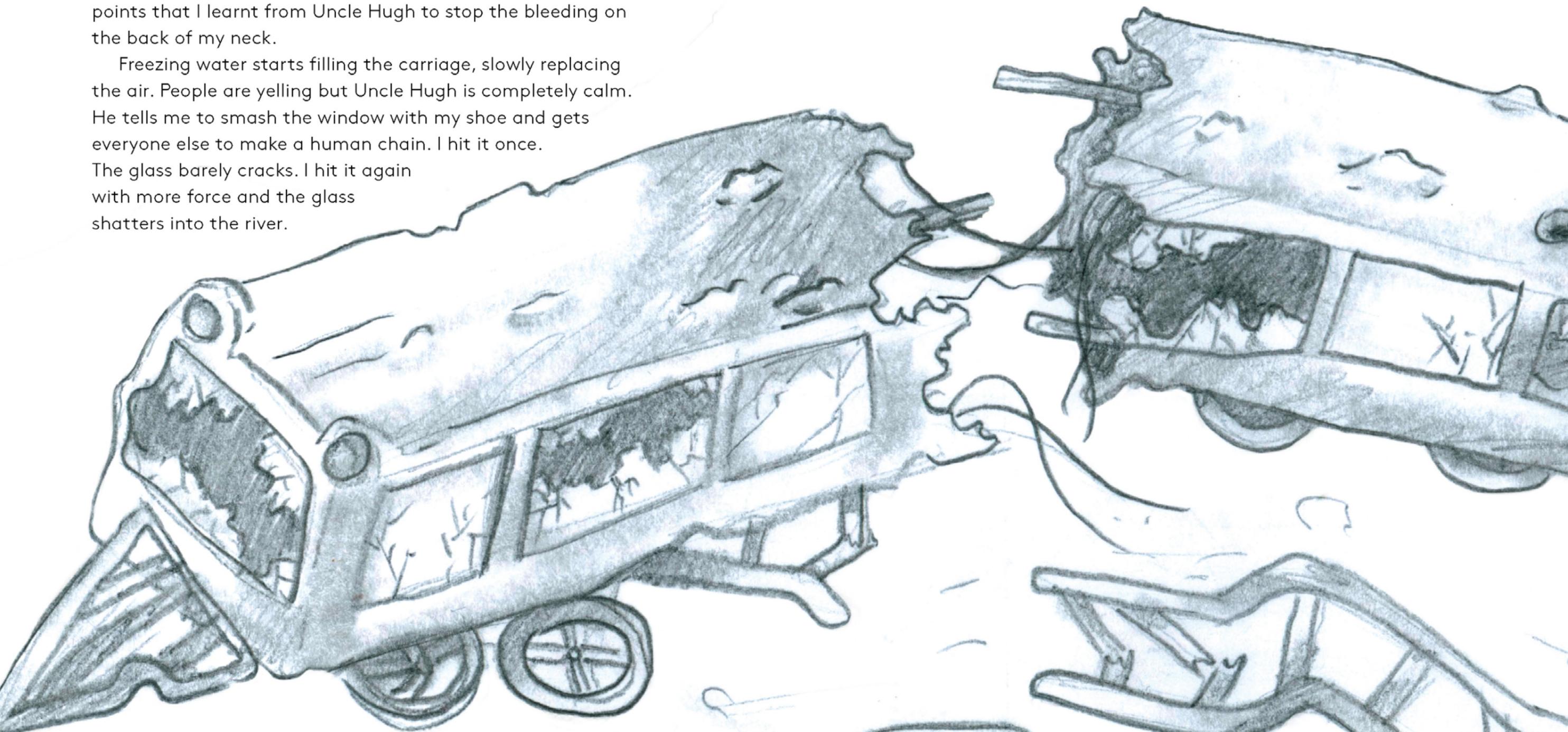
Suddenly the brakes slam. *Crash!* It sounds like dynamite exploding. My head smashes into a frame behind me. I hear metal grinding as everyone starts yelling. I cover the pressure points that I learnt from Uncle Hugh to stop the bleeding on the back of my neck.

Freezing water starts filling the carriage, slowly replacing the air. People are yelling but Uncle Hugh is completely calm. He tells me to smash the window with my shoe and gets everyone else to make a human chain. I hit it once. The glass barely cracks. I hit it again with more force and the glass shatters into the river.

A man that looks like a soldier comes to help us. I grab Howard, who is unconscious, and pull him out of the window. I turn around and see what is left of the bridge. This explains why the train fell. The carriages are caught in the river full of debris.

*It is December 29, 1953, five days after the crash. I wake up in a military hospital with Howard. Uncle Hugh was our hero. We'll always remember him.*

Words by Kyle Pomare, age 12  
Pictures by Rowan Woudberg, age 13





## Whangaehu River

Up and down, fast and slow  
The lonely river cries and rustles

Sick and lost, it sings and laughs  
It cries and yells, like a distant memory

Almost forgotten

Broken trees, rocks with scars  
Pebbles with bruises and rashes

This place has a past, a past it remembers  
A wreckage, death

It recalls its heroes, its survivors  
And the ones who were lost

And still the river sings  
Cries, laughs and yells



