Ngā Mahi a te Rēhia: Māori Games
by Ross Calman

Overview
“In early Māori society, games were played by everyone …”
This report describes eight traditional Māori games and lists several more. The report is clearly organised, with an introduction then separate sections that provide information about different types of game and their purposes. The text is an excellent introduction to this aspect of Māori culture, and the author suggests Internet links for further information. The fictional story, “Eggshell”, which follows the article, gives a modern-day example of children learning about a traditional Māori game.

As well as introducing readers to the games, this text can be used to help students understand and compare different cultures by exploring the role of games in the past and in the present.

Maori Games
In early Māori society, games were played by everyone – adults and children, men and women, boys and girls. For most children, there was no school. They learnt many things by spending time with their grandparents, uncles, and aunts; by imitating adults; and by playing games. The marae (marae) kāinga (village) would join in games played at social events, such as weddings, harvest festivals, Matariki celebrations … and even tangihanga (funerals).

The marae was one of the main venues for these games, which included mamau (wrestling) and pōteketeke (acrobatics). On long winter evenings and in wet weather, indoor activities such as waiata and haka, whai (string patterns), and kōrero pūrākau (storytelling) were popular. They usually took place in large communal houses. Sometimes a kāinga had a dedicated whare tapere (house of entertainment).

As well as providing entertainment for players and spectators, these games taught tribal traditions, the importance of rituals, and respect for nature. They also developed skills that were useful in warfare. Many of these games are still popular today.

Text characteristics from the year 6 reading standard
- some ideas and information that are conveyed indirectly and require students to infer by drawing on several related pieces of information in the text
- sentences that vary in length and in structure (for example, sentences that begin in different ways and different kinds of complex sentences with a number of subordinate clauses)
- some information that is irrelevant to the identified purpose for reading (that is, some competing information), which students need to identify and reject as they integrate pieces of information in order to answer questions

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**Possible curriculum contexts**

**SOCIAL SCIENCES (Social studies)**  
Level 3: Understand how cultural practices vary but reflect similar purposes.

**ENGLISH (Reading)**  
Level 3 – Structure: Show a developing understanding of text structures.

**ENGLISH (Writing)**  
Level 3 – Structure: Organise texts, using a range of appropriate structures.

**Text and language challenges**

**VOCABULARY:**
- The use of te reo Māori, including names of games, activities, places, and events
- The saying “He whare wānanga te whai” (Whai is a university)
- The Internet references and links.

**SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED:**
- Familiarity with a variety of games
- Knowledge of Māori culture and the way of life “in early Māori society”
- Knowledge of the text features of a report.

**TEXT FEATURES AND STRUCTURE:**
- A clear report structure that includes a generalised topic and specific examples, an introduction, headings, and a brief summary that lists other games
- The repeated comparisons between the past and the present, including the use of the phrase “in early Māori society”
- The connections made between the use of games for entertainment and for teaching traditions and skills, for example, skills needed in warfare
- The use of would + verb to describe past actions that were habitual or routine.

**Possible supporting strategies**

**Possible reading purposes**
- To learn about the role of games in Māori culture
- To compare the role of games in Māori and other cultures.

**Possible writing purposes**
- To research and write about one or more games, including the origins and purposes of the games
- To use the features of the text as a model for writing about a topic
- To research and write instructions or make a video to teach others one of the games in the text.

**Possible supporting strategies**

**Possible reading purposes**
- See Instructional focus – Reading for illustrations of some of these reading purposes.

**Possible writing purposes**
- See Instructional focus – Writing for illustrations of some of these writing purposes.

**Possible supporting strategies**

**Possible reading purposes**
- Spend time familiarising yourself with any Māori words or terms that are new to you. You could follow the links provided in the text to watch one or two of the games mentioned. Depending on the knowledge of your students, you may need to provide accurate support for pronunciation and meanings.
- Use copies of the illustrations or videos to preview some of the concepts and vocabulary for this text and help students make connections with their prior knowledge. The English Language Learning Progressions: Introduction, pages 39–46, has useful information about learning vocabulary.

**Possible writing purposes**
- Have students look at a selection of the illustrations in pairs or small groups. Ask them to describe what they can see and what they think it is used for. Compare answers as a whole group, making notes and highlighting (or feeding in) key vocabulary. Establish that the illustrations show equipment for traditional Māori games.
- Tell the students about a game you know and then ask questions that highlight the type of information you gave and how you structured your description. Ask students to prepare a brief overview of a game they know about – name, equipment, who plays it, the purpose of the game (not detailed instructions on how to play). Tell the students to interview two or three others to find out about their games. (See the 3-2-1 oral language strategy at ESOL Online – Oral language strategies.) In small groups, have the students describe and compare the games they’ve heard about. Lead a discussion of some of the similarities and differences between the games. After reading page 3, refer back to this discussion and the notes you have made. Compare the purposes given there to the purposes you have talked about.

**Possible supporting strategies**

**Possible reading purposes**
- Review the students’ knowledge of cultural concepts covered in the article, such as life on the marae, or the use of patterns to reflect tribal stories. Support students to make connections with their prior knowledge of Māori culture and traditions, and with their experiences of different games.
- You may wish to show the videos mentioned on page 9 as a way of introducing the topic. (The video quality is poor, but the content is excellent.)

**Possible writing purposes**
- Ask the students to share what they know about reading and writing a factual report. List the features they suggest on a chart and review them during or after reading. Show the students the title and headings in the article. Ask them what these tell them about the structure. Establish that the first section gives an introduction to the topic and the rest of the article gives specific examples. Tell them that, in various forms, this general to specific pattern is a common structure for non-fiction texts.
- If students need support with following the changes in tense, give them a graphic organiser with spaces for past, now, and always. Model reading a section of the text and adding the words and phrases that signal the time into the relevant sections. Ask the students to find examples of each and to write in the words or phrases the author uses to signal the time period. The examples will need to include phrases such as “in early Māori society” and “today”, as well as the relevant verb forms. Note that the present forms are used to describe and give definitions of the games or equipment (“A mīrere … is a pole …”). These descriptions are in the “always” section. When the author is emphasising what happens now, he also uses the present tense.

**Possible supporting strategies**

**Possible reading purposes**
- See Instructional focus – Reading for illustrations of some of these reading purposes.

**Possible writing purposes**
- See Instructional focus – Writing for illustrations of some of these writing purposes.

**Possible supporting strategies**

**Possible reading purposes**
- Familiarise students with the generalised topics discussed in the text and provide time for students to scan the illustrations for clues to possible reading purposes.

**Possible writing purposes**
- Work with students to identify the generalised topic and specific examples. Support students to make connections with their prior knowledge of Māori culture and traditions, and with their experiences of different games.

**Possible supporting strategies**

**Possible reading purposes**
- Make sure students can find the relevant sections of the text. Establish that the first part covers the origins and purposes of the games.

**Possible writing purposes**
- Ask the students to share what they know about writing a factual report. List the features they suggest on a chart and review them during or after reading. Show them the title and headings in the article. Ask them what these tell them about the structure. Establish that the first section gives an introduction to the topic and the rest of the article gives specific examples. Tell them that, in various forms, this general to specific pattern is a common structure for non-fiction texts.

**Possible supporting strategies**

**Possible reading purposes**
- Have students look at a selection of the illustrations in pairs or small groups. Ask them to describe what they can see and what they think it is used for. Compare answers as a whole group, making notes and highlighting (or feeding in) key vocabulary. Establish that the illustrations show equipment for traditional Māori games.

**Possible writing purposes**
- Tell the students about a game you know and then ask questions that highlight the type of information you gave and how you structured your description. Ask students to prepare a brief overview of a game they know about – name, equipment, who plays it, the purpose of the game (not detailed instructions on how to play). Tell the students to interview two or three others to find out about their games. (See the 3-2-1 oral language strategy at ESOL Online – Oral language strategies.) In small groups, have the students describe and compare the games they’ve heard about. Lead a discussion of some of the similarities and differences between the games. After reading page 3, refer back to this discussion and the notes you have made. Compare the purposes given there to the purposes you have talked about.

**Possible supporting strategies**

**Possible reading purposes**
- Review the students’ knowledge of cultural concepts covered in the article, such as life on the marae, or the use of patterns to reflect tribal stories. Support students to make connections with their prior knowledge of Māori culture and traditions, and with their experiences of different games.

**Possible writing purposes**
- You may wish to show the videos mentioned on page 9 as a way of introducing the topic. (The video quality is poor, but the content is excellent.)
### Instructional focus – Reading

**Social Sciences** (Social studies, level 3: Understand how cultural practices vary but reflect similar purposes.)

**English** (Level 3 – Structure: Show a developing understanding of text structures.)

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### Text excerpts from “Ngā Mahi a te Rēhia”

**The marae was one of the main venues for these games, which included mamau (wrestling) and pōteketeke (acrobatics).**

During the New Zealand Wars of the 1860s, men led by Titokowaru built a giant karetao at Tauranga-ika Pā (about midway between Hāwera and Whanganui). It stood 5 metres tall. From the safety of a trench below, the defenders of the pā could make the arms of the karetao perform haka moves.

**Whai**

Whai is a game of making patterns with a loop of string held between the player’s hands. Each pattern reflects tribal stories. There are so many different patterns, and so many stories associated with each pattern, that it is often said, “He whare wānanga te whai” (Whai is a university).

*The students make connections between their text and knowledge they have of playing this or similar games. They integrate in this extract with their knowledge that there were no electronic games in the early days. They then infer that string games are popular because one person or more can play them and they require no special equipment.*

*The students make connections between their experiences of places of entertainment, such as halls, gyms, and movie theatres, and a “dedicated whare tapere” to understand the purpose of such facilities.*

### Students (what they might do)

- **Make** a chart with the columns headed Game and Skills/learning.
- **Direct** the students to add to the chart as they read.
- **Prompt** the students to think about their own experiences as they read.
- **Prompt** the students to monitor their reading, drawing on and using their repertoire of reading strategies to adjust their reading and attend to important information. Use some or all of the following prompts to support students during, or after, reading the extract.
- **Direct** the students to think about their own experiences as they read.

*The students make connections between their own experiences of entertainment and those in the article. They locate information and evaluate the skills and learning that different games involve.*

- **How did bringing your own knowledge about this topic help you engage with the text?**
- **How did the structure of this text help you to understand it?**
- **How does knowing how to integrate information help you when writing factual recounts?**

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**Teacher (possible deliberate acts of teaching)**

- **PROMPT** the students to monitor their reading, drawing on and using their repertoire of reading strategies to adjust their reading and attend to important information. Use some or all of the following prompts to support students during, or after, reading the extract.
- **PROMPT** the students to think about their own experiences as they read.
- **MAKE** a chart with the columns headed Game and Skills/learning.
- **DIRECT** the students to add to the chart as they read.
- **ASK QUESTIONS** to elicit connections.
- **DIRECT** the students to add to the chart as they read.
- **ASSESS** how can these connections help you understand as you read?

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**METACOGNITION**

- How did bringing your own knowledge about this topic help you engage with the text?
- How did the structure of this text help you to understand it?
- How does knowing how to integrate information help you when writing factual recounts?
### Instructional focus – Writing

**Social Sciences** (Social studies, level 3: Understand how cultural practices vary but reflect similar purposes.)

**English** (Level 3 – Structure: Organise texts, using a range of appropriate structures.)

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**Text excerpts from “Ngā Mahi a te Rēhia”**

In early Māori society, games were played by everyone – adults and children, men and women, boys and girls. For most children, there was no school. As well as providing entertainment for players and spectators, these games taught tribal traditions, the importance of rituals, and respect for nature. They also developed skills that were useful in warfare. Many of these games are still popular today.

Manu tukutuku (kites)

In early Māori society, children sometimes flew kites for fun, but generally kite-flying was a serious business. Manu kāhu were capable of carrying a person. One story tells how Nukupewapewa, a Wairarapa chief, used a kite to lower a man into an enemy pā at night. The man opened a gate and let the attackers in.

During Matariki, kites were flown in memory of people who had died.

Nowadays, many people enjoy making traditional kites.

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### Examples of text characteristics

**INTRODUCTION**

In a report, the topic is usually stated at the beginning in a general way, and then developed through the report with specific details and examples. This sets the reader up to know what to expect and to activate their prior knowledge of the topic.

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### Coherence and Cohesion

Coherence (presenting information in a clear, logical order) and cohesion (the way the writer makes links between ideas, sentences, and paragraphs to create a text that “flows” for the reader) help make a report easy and interesting to read.

Cohesive devices (“One story tells how…”) link paragraphs and make the move from general to specific clear.

### Using Examples

Examples take a general idea (such as using kites for serious business) and show what it might be like in practice (the kite carried a man into an enemy pā). Examples help readers to visualise and understand important facts or ideas.

### Changes in Time and Tense

In writing about the past and the present, writers need to take care to use the correct tense.

Words like “Nowadays” help readers to understand the change from information about the past to the present day.

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**ASK QUESTIONS**

- What is your purpose for writing?
- What will your audience already know about the topic? What will they want to know?
- How will you structure your writing? What structure will best suit your topic, purpose, and audience?
- What writing processes will help you to achieve your writing goals?

**EXPLAIN**

- What kind of information will help orient your readers to the topic?
- How can your introduction engage your readers and make them want to keep reading?

You could use a table to model recording information about games and as a writing frame for students who need support with writing. Display the table with the notes for your game as you tell them about it. Model or co-write a description of your game (including an introduction and details). Analyse the structure of your writing, making notes on each section. Use the notes as a writing frame for the students. (See the DVD Making Language and Learning Work 3, Year 5 and 6 Social Studies Focus for an example of a teacher using a similar process.)

**TELL**

- What writing processes will help you to achieve your writing goals?
- How will you structure your writing? What structure will best suit your topic, purpose, and audience?

**PROMPT**

- What will your audience already know about the topic? What will they want to know?
- What is your purpose for writing?

**GIVE FEEDBACK**

- Using a written plan has helped you organise your writing. Now you’ve got a good plan, how are you going to flesh it out?
- What words will help your readers to identify the changes in time throughout your article?

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**METACOGNITION**

- What structure have you used to organise your information? How did reading this article help you?
- What was challenging about organising your information? What helped you?
- How did your own experiences help you to write about this topic? What examples or details could you use to help your audience better understand your experiences?

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