



## Overview

In this well-illustrated article, we learn about the origins, meanings, and construction of tīvaevae, the beautiful hand-sewn Cook Islands Māori bedspreads. The text provides opportunities for students to be exposed to and engage with the positive values that are associated with the concept of akano'anga Kūki'Āirani (Cook Islands culture). These are highlighted through the description of the time, hard work, and skill involved in making tīvaevae and the beauty of the finished product.

By drawing on knowledge of a Cook Islands Māori world view and values, you can support your students to express or gain insights into the layers of meaning in tīvaevae. You may want to explore the values and traditions of the Pasifika cultures represented

in your school and how they are expressed, for example, through the work of school culture clubs, Poly Fest, and other community activities. Many of these values can be transferred to the classroom as a way of positively supporting students' identities and traditions.

"Tīvaevae" provides an excellent starting point for a study of cultural practices such as storytelling through the use of designs and patterns. It is directly connected with the poem "My Mother's Coat" (on pages 36–37) through the tīvaevae design of the coat and the cultural values that are expressed in both items.

Texts related by theme

"Spitfires from Tonga" SJ 3.1.09 | "Willow Weavers" SJ 3.1.04 | "My Mother's Coat" SJ L3 April 2013

## Text characteristics from the year 5 reading standard

mixed text types (for example, a complex explanation may be included as part of a report)

a significant amount of vocabulary that is unfamiliar to the students (including academic and content-specific words and phrases), which is generally explained in the text by words or illustrations

illustrations, photographs, text boxes, diagrams, maps, charts, and graphs that clarify or extend the text and may require some interpretation

Making tīvaevae tā'ōre requires a lot of preparation by the ta'unga. First she decides on the pattern. Then she draws the pattern onto graph paper (or uses some other way to show where each piece of material should go). When she has done that, she sews a sample of the design to show the other women in the panga.

When the panga come together, they bring needles and strong cotton. The ta'unga calls out the colours in order for each row of the design. The women thread the coloured material on their cotton in that order. This is a time of concentration, so everyone is silent. When one row of the design is finished, another row of the tīvaevae is started. The women take home the pieces they have worked on and sew them together to make up their part of the larger design.

The panga meets regularly. When they meet, the ta'unga looks carefully at all the work. If she finds anything wrong with a part of the design, it has to be unpicked and sewn again.

**The Finished Tīvaevae**  
When a tīvaevae is complete, the ta'unga sews a border around the edge. Then the tīvaevae is packed away neatly until the time comes to display or present it.

If the tīvaevae is given as a gift, the person who receives it will only use it on special occasions. Sometimes they might give it away as a gift for someone else. Often a loved one is shrouded in a tīvaevae when they are buried.

Whatever the purpose of the tīvaevae, it will always be treasured. Tīvaevae hold a very special place in the hearts and lives of all Cook Islands people because their culture and values are sewn into every stitch.

**A Pasifika art form**  
Other island groups have traditions of making quilts similar to Cook Islands tīvaevae. In French Polynesia and Hawai'i, they are called tifaifai. Hawaiian tifaifai have a distinct style. They usually have wadding, making them look like duvets or quilts.

photos by Adrian Heke

abstract ideas, in greater numbers than in texts at earlier levels, accompanied by concrete examples in the text that help support the students' understanding

figurative and/or ambiguous language that the context helps students to understand

some ideas and information that are conveyed indirectly and require students to infer by drawing on several related pieces of information in the text

# 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.

## Possible reading purposes

- To learn about a special craft form from the Cook Islands
- To compare and contrast tivaevae with other, similar items made in other cultures
- To make connections with and share personal experiences of tivaevae or similar items.

See [Instructional focus – Reading](#) for illustrations of some of these reading purposes.

## Possible writing purposes

- To research and write about a similar practice from a different culture or a different practice from the same culture
- To compare and contrast two or more examples of domestic craft
- To tell a story or write a poem based on making or using a tivaevae.

See [Instructional focus – Writing](#) for illustrations of some of these writing purposes.

# Text and language challenges

## VOCABULARY:

- Possible unfamiliar words or phrases, including “bedspreads”, “haircutting ceremony”, “exhibitions”, “missionaries”, “designing”, “directing”, “signature”, “backing sheet”, “tacked”, “temporarily”, “tacking”, “embroidered”, “patchworks”, “inspired”, “concentration”, “unpicked”, “border”, “a loved one”, “shrouded”
- The words in Cook Islands Māori that are translated or explained in the text
- The expressions: “over time”, “made it their own”
- The use of language to describe the time, skill, and quality involved in the process, for example, “Tivaevae are beautiful bedspreads”, “(tivaevae) have a very detailed design”, “This person is especially skilled at designing the tivaevae”, “Making a tivaevae tā'ōrei requires a lot of preparation”
- The metaphor “their culture and values are sewn into every stitch”
- The repeated use of “However” to signal contrast
- The use of words that signal the stages in a procedure: “First”, “Then”, “When”.

## Possible supporting strategies

Familiarise yourself with the Cook Island Māori words and terms used, and how to pronounce them. Depending on the knowledge of your students, provide accurate support for pronunciation and meanings. You could use an online resource such as <http://www.tuatamai.co.nz/> or staff, students, parents, or other community members.

Before reading, use the images on pages 28–29 as prompts for students to explore the topic and the vocabulary. Have small groups of students write their ideas on a chart under two headings – What we can see, What we think the text will talk about. Give them a time frame to discuss and record their ideas, then have each group pass their chart on to the next group. Tell them to read and discuss the other groups’ ideas and add their own. Continue until each group has written on each chart. Review and display the charts. As you do, feed in key vocabulary for the text.

Before reading, preview selected words that you think will be unfamiliar to your students. Prepare a vocabulary list of key words in this text. For each word, include a simple definition in English and/or a picture, and a simple example sentence. If appropriate for your students (each of them will know some of the words), give them cut up and jumbled words and pictures/definitions and have them match them in small groups. Then give the students the list to check their answers.

*The English Language Learning Progressions: Introduction*, pages 39–46, has useful information about learning vocabulary

## SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED:

- Knowledge of the traditions and values of the Cook Islands, including special occasions such as the haircutting ceremony
- Familiarity with items that have special significance to the family, culture, community, or country
- Understanding or experience of the hard work, time, and co-operation required to achieve excellence in completing a group project
- Experience of sewing by hand, either direct or indirect
- Experience of designs and their meanings
- Familiarity with making objects by following a pattern, design, or instructions.

## Possible supporting strategies

You may wish to seek further information (for example, about similarities and differences between the culture and traditions of different Pacific Nations) from your local communities. The Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs can also provide useful guidance and contacts.

Review the students’ knowledge of the cultural traditions and values covered in the article. Ascertain their background knowledge, but ensure that students feel comfortable to share any knowledge they may have with the class.

See Digistore for the Tivaevae collection. This is a set of six images related to the making of tivaevae. Four of the images show different styles of tivaevae. The fifth image in the series shows two women making tivaevae and the final image depicts prominent Cook Islands women exhibiting their handiwork in Porirua”. (Digistore item number R81750). These images would be good to show and discuss first – to draw out the vocabulary and prior knowledge and to preview the text.

## TEXT FEATURES AND STRUCTURE:

- The structure of a report with an introduction that defines the topic
- The use of headings
- The inclusion of explanations of procedures within a report structure
- The map, text boxes and captioned photographs.

## Possible supporting strategies

If necessary, support the students to identify the structure of the text, skimming the article with them to notice its features. Prompt them to examine the photographs and their captions, as well as the text.

Demonstrate the use of the map to identify Cook Islands in relation to New Zealand and other Pacific nations. For students who will find this text challenging, you could use a jigsaw reading strategy to scaffold them into the text. Give students a graphic organiser to record information about each section.

# 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.)

## Text excerpts from “Tivaevae”

The idea of making these bedspreads was introduced to the Cook Islands in the early nineteenth century by French nuns from Tahiti and the wives of missionaries from England. Over time, the women of the Cook Islands took on the art and made it their own.

## Students (what they might do)

The students **integrate** related pieces of information in the text and **make connections** with what they know of early Europeans in the Pacific region to understand why and how the idea of making bedspreads came to the Cook Islands. They use their knowledge of language features to **infer** that “made it their own” implies that the art practised now is very different from the European originals.

## Teacher (possible deliberate acts of teaching)

**ASK QUESTIONS** to support the students to integrate information.

- What do you know about the reasons Europeans came to the Pacific in the nineteenth century?
- What are nuns and missionaries? How might nuns and missionaries’ wives have introduced the idea for these bedspreads?
- Why do you think making bedspreads became a special art form in the Cook Islands?

If necessary, unpack the last sentence to help students understand the meanings of the phrases “Over time” and “made it their own”.

**DIRECT** the students to share their connections with the group.

- Tell us about a time when you worked with a group to achieve a goal, for example, to help prepare for a school or family event.
- What connections can you make with this part of the text?
- How would it feel to be part of the pange?
- What happens in a group like this apart from the actual sewing?
- What are the attributes of an expert?
- Why would it be important to have an expert leading the pange?

**EXPLAIN** that asking questions as they read is a useful reading strategy.

- What questions do you have about the pange and the role of the ta’unga?
- What is the ta’unga responsible for?
- Did you find answers to your questions?

**DIRECT** the students to the word “signature”.

- What is a signature? Where would you usually find or need a signature?
- How does a ta’unga leave their “signature” on the work? What does this mean?

**DIRECT** the students to work in pairs.

- Write the heading, Tivaevae Patterns then brainstorm all the forms of design that they remind you of or that they are similar to.
- Share your ideas with the group.
- What can you infer about the “language” of patterns and designs?

**EXPLAIN** how we can reach new understandings about a topic when we integrate information from different texts and experiences.

**MODEL** this if necessary, making explicit your thinking about patterns in different media and/or cultures.

**GIVE FEEDBACK**

- The list of Cook Island Māori words you made with their translations was a good help for us. Thank you for sharing your knowledge and helping us pronounce the words correctly.
- The connections you’ve made with your grandmother’s treasured patchwork quilt helped you understand how special tivaevae are to Cook Islands Māori.

## The Pange

Up to eight women form a pange, or group, to make a tivaevae. Making a tivaevae can take a long time. However, it’s not all hard work. The women also use the time to share news and stories, sing, eat, and have fun.

The students **make connections** between the information in the text and their own experiences (direct or indirect) of working with others on a shared project. They use these connections to **infer** that everyone involved in making a tivaevae enjoys the process and gains a sense of belonging to a group and contributing to the shared task.

In every pange, there is a ta’unga, or expert. This person is especially skilled at designing the tivaevae, cutting the material, and directing the work. Each ta’unga is known for using particular designs and ways of combining colours. The design of the tivaevae is like their signature on the work.

They **ask and answer questions** to consider each aspect of the role of the ta’unga, comparing it with the role of, for example, a movie director, a sports coach, or a project leader. Students use their vocabulary knowledge to understand the way the word “signature” is used in this context.

## Tivaevae tā’ōrei

Tivaevae tā’ōrei are patchworks made from small square pieces of material of various colours. The pieces are sewn together to make patterns. Many of these patterns are inspired by animals or plants that are important to the people of the Cook Islands. For example, pakā’onu (turtle shell) is like the pattern on the back of a turtle.

Students **make connections** between the text and their knowledge of sewing, construction, or patchwork in some form to understand the process described. The students **integrate** information from the text, the photos, and other examples of patchwork they have seen to **evaluate** the designs and what they may represent. They **make connections** between the symbolism of designs for tivaevae and designs for whai (page 8 of this Journal) and other designs they know about, such as those in carvings and in taniko weaving. They **integrate** these pieces of information to understand that art and designs are like another language, telling stories visually rather than with words.

## METACOGNITION

- Show me a place in the text where you were puzzled. What strategies helped you to understand what was meant?
- Show me a place where a personal connection with the text helped you to understand it. What was your connection?

Reading standard: by the end of year 5

The Literacy Learning Progressions

Assessment Resource Banks

# 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.)

## Text excerpts from “Tivaevae”

Tivaevae are beautiful bedspreads from the Cook Islands. They are usually made as a gift for someone on a special occasion, such as a wedding, a birthday, or a haircutting ceremony. Some are made for a chief. Others are made for exhibitions.

Each tivaevae is different. However, the patterns and colours of a tivaevae show where it was made. For example, tivaevae from Atiu in the southern part of the Cook Islands have a very detailed design. They also use a lot of red and white.



Making a tivaevae tāōrei requires a lot of preparation by the ta'unga. First she decides on the pattern. Then she draws the pattern onto graph paper (or uses some other way to show where each piece of material should go). When she has done that, she sews a sample of the design to show the other women in the pange.

Whatever the purpose of the tivaevae, it will always be treasured. Tivaevae hold a very special place in the hearts and lives of all Cook Islands people because their culture and values are sewn into every stitch.

## Examples of text characteristics

### INTRODUCING THE TOPIC

*The introduction to a report usually tells the reader what the topic is in a general way, followed by a brief description. The introduction also indicates why the topic is important or interesting.*

### USING EXAMPLES

*Most topics have a general description, then many examples that differ from each other in some way. One way to show this is to use a general statement and then give one or more examples of variations or varieties.*

### CAPTIONED PHOTOS

*Adding a photo and writing a brief caption is another way of showing an example. Captioned photos illustrate a specific point in the main text.*

### EXPLAINING A PROCESS

*Writers explain a process by telling what is done or what happens, in order. An explanation often uses words like “first”, “next”, and “then” to show the sequence of events or actions in the process. The purpose is to make the process clear to readers.*

### ENDING A REPORT

*Reports may be concluded in many ways. One way is to bring the ideas covered in the report together in a few sentences that summarise the importance or special nature of the topic.*

## Teacher (possible deliberate acts of teaching)

**PROMPT** the students to consider the introduction in their writing.

- What is your topic? Why have you chosen this topic?
- What do you want your audience to learn about the topic?
- What kind of structure will best help you organise your writing?
- How will you show your readers why it's important right from the start?

Construct a writing frame for students who need support for planning and writing and show them how to use it to plan the broad outline. (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.)

**MODEL** your thinking to show how a writer can use examples to help readers understand a point.

- In this example, the writer made a general statement – “Each tivaevae is different”. Then she tells us that some things will be the same. Next, she gives an example to show what she means.

**PROMPT** the students to consider their use of examples.

- Review your writing so far. Where would an example make a point clearer?
- Where will an example make your writing more interesting?
- Do you have photos or illustrations you can use to show examples? Adding a short caption makes the connection with the text clear.

**EXPLAIN** the difference between writing an explanation and writing instructions.

- An explanation tells your readers how something works or is made.
- Instructions help your readers make or do something themselves.
- How are explanations and instructions similar and different?
- How can you make sure your readers know what your purpose is?
- Review your writing to ensure your readers can follow your explanation.

**DIRECT** the students to work with a partner to review the structure and sense of each other's writing and provide feedback.

- As you review your partner's writing, ask yourself some questions:
  - > Does the introduction say what the report is about and why it is important?
  - > Is the writing structured in a logical way? For example, are there subheadings that make sense for the topic?
  - > Are there details to support the main ideas in each section?
  - > Are there examples to help me understand the topic?
  - > Is there a final paragraph that summarises the report?
- Give your partner constructive feedback, explaining your reasons if necessary.
- Remember that we all have different writing styles – make sure you give feedback on the structure and cohesion using the criteria we developed.

It might not be appropriate to have a native English language speaker giving feedback to an English language learner who is at the lower levels of proficiency. The native speaker might not know how to give constructive feedback on language difficulties or how to suggest solutions.

### GIVE FEEDBACK

- The introduction is much clearer now: you've cut it down to give a short description of what it will be about.
- Adding this example has helped me understand why all ... are not the same.

## METACOGNITION

- Tell me why you chose this topic. What did you want your readers to learn? How well have you achieved your purpose?
- Show me where you've made changes as a result of feedback. How did the feedback help you meet your writing purpose?

 Writing standard: by the end of year 5

 The Literacy Learning Progressions