

# The Story of Rona

retold by Fran and Leon Hunia  
illustrated by Murray Grimsdale

## Overview

This text is a retelling of the dramatic Māori legend of Rona and gives an explanation for the markings that can be seen in the moon. There is an audio version on the Ready to Read CD *Readalong 2008*. You could listen to the audio for support with the pronunciation of the Māori vocabulary.

## Suggested purposes

This text supports the comprehension strategies of inferring, evaluating, analysing and synthesising, and identifying the author's purpose.

There are opportunities to compare ideas about the moon across the other texts in this miscellany.

## Text features

(This information is intended as a prompt for teachers rather than as a list of teaching points.)

- the strong narrative structure
- the direct address to the reader in the final paragraph that clarifies the purpose of the tale
- the clear paragraphing
- the strong characterisation of Rona and Marama through their actions and dramatic dialogue
- the personification of the moon (supported by the illustrations)
- the emotional impact when Rona is separated from her children
- the sense of action and drama
- the rich descriptive language, for example,
  - the verbs “begged”, “grabbed”, “swooped”, “tripped”
  - the adverbs, such as “brightly”, “Suddenly”, “tightly”
  - the adjectives, such as “angry”, “bumpy”
- the Māori words and phrases.

## Introducing the text

Tell the children you have a retelling of a Māori legend for them to read. Talk about how legends are traditional stories that try to explain why the world is as it is. Have the children share their knowledge of other legends, for example, *Māui and the Sun* (Purple) and what they might expect to find in a legend (a setting in the distant past, characters with special powers, or personification of objects). Record their ideas on a chart.

## During the reading

Read the title and the name of the authors. Discuss the meaning of “retold”, drawing out the idea that traditional tales and legends may be retold many times, resulting in many different versions. Find out what the children know (if anything) about the story of Rona.

Ask the children to read the text silently, pausing at various points for discussion or to clarify any difficulties. Encourage them to use sticky notes or write on notepads or individual whiteboards any words they are unsure of.

Page 2 – If necessary, support the children as they read the Māori words. Review the setting, the characters, and the situation so far. *Who is Rona? How do you know?*

Page 3 – Encourage the children to read on and find clues in the sentence to help them work out the meaning of “tahā”. If necessary, prompt them to cross-check with the illustration. You may need to clarify the meaning of “spring” in this context. (The children may recall this word from *A Good Idea*.) Discuss the plot complication on this page.

Page 4 – If necessary, support the children with decoding “sw-oop-ed”. *Was Marama right to be angry? What ideas are you building up about Rona and Marama?*

Page 5 – Ask the children to read the first paragraph. *How is Rona feeling? Why? Encourage the children to make connections to their own experiences of being separated/away from a parent or caregiver. I'm thinking about what sort of character Marama is and what he might do ...*

Have the children read the rest of the page. Encourage them to use the clues in the text to infer the meaning of “Kei hea koe?” *Is this what you expected to happen?*

Page 6 – If necessary, support the children with their decoding and understanding of the phrase “Titiro mai”. *What do you think about this ending? Is it what you expected? Refer to the introductory discussion and remind the children of the purpose of a legend. Reread the last paragraph to clarify the specific purpose of this story. You could refer to the photograph of the moon on page 17 to clarify the connections between the shadows and dark patches on the moon that we can see from earth.*

## After the reading

Listen to the children reread the text to a partner, observing their fluency and expressiveness, supporting them with the Māori words and phrases as necessary.

Revisit the introductory discussion. *What features of a legend did you find in this text?*

Review the narrative structure of the text. Identify the initial problem (no water), the complication (Marama going behind the clouds), the characters’ responses, and the resolution.

Find clues in the text that help build an understanding of the characters. Clues include the dialogue (what they say and how they say it, as indicated by the use of punctuation and the alternatives to “said”) and the dramatic actions (conveyed through the use of vivid verbs and adverbs).

Ask the children to consider whether there was any way this story could have had a happy ending  
and still have met the purpose of explaining why the moon has shadows.

Focus on the illustrations. Note the name of the illustrator on page 6. *How do the illustrations help our understanding of the story?*

Focus on the dramatic nature of the dialogue. Talk about the use of exclamations and insults, the imperative nature of Rona’s dialogue, and the use of alternatives to “said”.

Reread the Ready to Read version of *Māui and the Sun* (Purple) and draw a Venn diagram to identify similarities and differences.

Draw attention to the author’s use of paragraphs. Explain that each paragraph has a main idea. Ask the children to reread a page or two with more than one paragraph and to summarise the main idea of each paragraph.

### Suggestions for further tasks

Read legends from other cultures that explain the markings on the moon.

Have the children draw their own illustrations of the moon, using the illustrations in the text as a model.

Research the scientific reasons for the markings on the moon.

Write an alternative ending to the legend as a shared exercise.

Create a group painting or mixed media artwork about the story, incorporating Māori visual elements.