Te Hokowhitu-a-Tū: The Pioneer Māori Battalion
by Monty Soutar

Overview
This article tells the story of Māori and the First World War and of the huge contribution made by the pioneer Māori Battalion. The topic will be unfamiliar for many students, but the themed content in the surrounding items will provide support. Students are encouraged to think about the war and the way it impacted on the lives of individuals as well as different groups. The article also provides insight into the alternative perspectives of some iwi at the time. These perspectives are explored through two supplementary text boxes.

The concluding section provides a wider perspective on what the war meant for Māori, touching on the reality of the years afterwards. This also relates to the mention in the article of the discrimination that existed in war, as evidenced by the British high command’s attitude towards “native people fighting alongside Europeans”.

To learn more about the First World War, go to: www.nzhistory.net.nz/war/first-world-war


Text characteristics from the year 6 reading standard
- figuative and/or ambiguous language that the context helps the students to understand
- 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
- some ideas and information that are conveyed indirectly and require students to infer by drawing on several related pieces of information in the text
- abstract ideas, in greater numbers than in texts at earlier levels, accompanied by concrete examples in the text that help support the students’ understanding

Brave warriors
Seventeen Māori died on the slopes of Chunuk Bair. Eighty-nine more were wounded. After this battle, Māori soldiers became known as brave fighters. One Pakila officer wrote that “At Chunuk Bair you can’t hear them.” Yet the other troops at Gallipoli... 

War’s end
The day the war ended, Anzac Day, the Māori Pioneer Battalion... 

One soldier’s story
The Māori Pioneer Battalion suffered many casualties. Each soldier was an individual. One soldier, He-nare Mo-kena Ko-here (Nga-ti Porou)... 

Reading standard: by the end of year 6
- Texts related by theme
- Illustrations, photographs, text boxes, diagrams, maps, charts, and graphs that clarify or extend the text and may require some interpretation
- 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 groups make and implement rules and laws.
Level 3: Understand how early Polynesian and British migrants have continuing significance for tangata whenua.

ENGLISH (Reading)
Level 3 – Ideas: Show a developing understanding of ideas within, across, and beyond texts.

ENGLISH (Writing)
Level 3 – Ideas: Select, form, and communicate ideas on a range of topics.

Text and language challenges

VOCABULARY:
• The use of te reo Māori (usually translated), including a war cry, extracts from speeches, and haka
• The colloquial expressions: “weren’t bothered”, “joined up”, “do their bit”, “given more than enough”, “to see action”, “turned their backs”, “reduced to a shadow”
• The place names shown on the map on pages 2 and 3.

SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED:
• Some knowledge about New Zealand’s participation in the First World War
• Knowledge that Māori fought in a separate battalion
• Knowledge of the major protagonists and locations of the war
• Some understanding of the impact of colonisation and the New Zealand wars on Māori
• Understanding of the concept of equality between races
• Understanding of how discrimination can be shown or experienced.

TEXT FEATURES AND STRUCTURE:
• Factual report with explanations
• A range of verb forms, for example, “was”, “was beginning”, “had always been”, “had enlisted”
• Time and sequencing language, for example, “during the First World War”, “At the time”, “When war was declared on 5 August 1914”, “At first”
• Many passive verb forms – as is common in a formal explanation (for example, “was declared”, “was called”, “were replaced”, “wouldn’t be allowed”, “were given”, “were killed”, “were wounded”
• Text boxes organised around themes (“Rebels” and “Conscription and Māori”)
• Supportive sub-headings
• Use of photos and images from the relevant period
• Use of shorter rather than very long (or multi- clause) sentences.

Possible reading purposes
• To learn about the important contribution made by Māori in the First World War
• To understand the reasons why Māori chose to join or not join the army in the First World War
• To understand the impact of war for individuals and communities
• To prompt thinking about abstract concepts such as nationhood and equality.

Possible writing purposes
• To give a personal response to one or more aspects of the article
• To research and find out more about the First World War.

Possible supporting strategies

VOCABULARY:
• If the colloquial expressions are new to students, work through the literal meanings of the time.
• Identify words and terms that may be unfamiliar to the students, in particular, the military and war-related terms. Take opportunities while talking about the First World War to introduce new terms. Support students to make connections between their meanings in this context and the meanings they already know. Create a word wall about the First World War, adding words during reading, viewing, or discussing events of the time.

SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED:
• Build students’ prior knowledge carefully through exposure to a wide range of texts detailing the First World War and New Zealand’s involvement. They will also need support to understand the broader context of New Zealand’s history as a nation, including the conflict surrounding European settlement.
• Give students who share a language other than English the opportunity to discuss the topic in this language and perhaps share their ideas with the class. You may also need to explore New Zealand history in more detail for students who don’t have this knowledge.
• Provide visual and/or audio-visual material as prompts for exploring key concepts and vocabulary. You could give pairs of students images or video clips and ask them to prepare and present a description of their resource and their ideas about what it shows. The website Remembering WW1 – 100 Years On has many useful resources.

TEXT FEATURES AND STRUCTURE:
• Depending on the needs of your students, it may help to skim the text for an overall view of the content. Follow this by reading the text section by section over two or more sessions. A shared reading approach followed by paired or individual study will provide support as students encounter and digest new information.
• Students will need to understand the signals of time and sequence, including the verb forms. Ask questions to check their understanding and provide support if necessary.
• You could co-construct a timeline of key events, discussing and explaining the signals as you do so. Create a chart of language signalling time and sequence.
• If necessary, support students with understanding and identifying passive verb forms – their meaning, purpose, and structure. The text provides many models, so you could support students to use them, where appropriate, in their writing.
• Students who will find the text challenging, may benefit from extensive previewing before reading. You could use the headings and perhaps some of the images as prompts for predicting what will be in the text. To make the task more manageable, you could assign sections to pairs and then share ideas as a whole group, ensuring you elicit and record key ideas and vocabulary.

Possible supporting strategies

Spend time familiarising yourself with any unfamiliar Māori terms or expressions. Depending on the knowledge of your students, you may need to provide support for pronunciation and meanings.

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Sounds and Words

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Text excerpts from “Te Hokowhitu-a-Tū: The Pioneer Māori Battalion”

It’s often said that New Zealand “grew up” during the First World War. At the time, our country was a dominion, which meant that Britain still made some of our political decisions. Most Pākehā weren’t bothered by this. A few even thought of England as home. By 1918, this attitude was beginning to change. People were proud of what their small nation had done in the war. They were especially proud of their brave soldiers – soldiers who began using a new name for themselves in the trenches: Kiwis. It was a name that was to become part of our country’s new identity.

In no time at all, places like the East Coast and ... “... cause is their cause,” he said. “The British king is their king.” Apirana Ngata, the MP for Eastern Māori, was also pleased. He believed Māori would become more equal with Pākehā if they fought beside them.

Rebels
Not all Māori felt the same way about the war. Some iwi. Fifty years earlier, the British government had declared war on

The returning soldiers had also seen the world. They ... meant better jobs. Many soldiers were now well-connected. They had made strong friendships on the battlefield, and when they got home, these helped them in work and business. Some friendships were with Pākehā. This helped to form a better understanding between the two races.

Mostly, the hopes of Māori hadn’t been realised.
Writing standard: by the end of year 6

Instructional focus – Writing

Social Sciences (Social Studies, level 3: Understand how groups make and implement rules and laws.)

(Social Studies, level 3: Understand how early Polynesian and British migrants have continuing significance for tangata whenua.)

English (Level 3 – Ideas: Select, form, and communicate ideas on a range of topics.)

Text excerpts from “Te Hokowhitu-a-Tū: The Pioneer Māori Battalion”

But what about the 2500 Māori soldiers who fought during the First World War? How did the war change things for them? And why did they fight in the first place?

In February 1915, after training in Auckland, the soldiers were farewelled. “Haere e tama ma,” their whānau said. “Haere me te whakaaro ki te pupuri i te rongo toa a o tatou tupuna.” (“Farewell, young men. Go and uphold the name of our warrior ancestors. Fear God. And honour the King.”)

Then, in July 1915, the men were sent to Gallipoli. The British high command had always been uncomfortable with the idea of native people fighting alongside Europeans. So at first, the Māori soldiers were kept busy digging trenches and building supply depots.

Examples of text characteristics

SETTING THE SCENE
When writers want to explore one aspect of a broader topic, the introduction often sets the scene and shows what their focus will be.

USING QUESTIONS
When the author asks questions at the start of an article, they give the reader clues about what the text will be about. Questions help a reader to focus on the topic and make them curious to find answers.

USING TE REO MĀORI (OR OTHER LANGUAGES)
Writers who draw on their own language and culture when they write may use words and expressions that some readers will not understand. Adding a translation, or a glossary with translations is a good way for a writer to use their own language effectively, while at the same time supporting readers.

IMPLICATION
In order to get readers to infer, writers need to imply information. They give clues but don’t state the obvious.

ASK QUESTIONS
To help the students clarify their writing choices.
- What aspect of our topic are you writing about?
- What do you assume your readers will already know?
- How will you help them to understand the context of your writing?

MODEL
- In this article, the title tells us what the writer’s focus is, but he puts it into a broader context in the introduction. The last paragraph of the introduction focuses on his specific interest: the Māori soldiers who fought in the First World War.

PROMPT
The students to consider their audience.
- How are you helping your audience to understand the topic?
- Consider using questions to start readers thinking. These questions also help you focus as you plan, research, and write.

EXPLAIN
That writers use language in many different ways for many different purposes.
- A writer may choose to use words in a language some readers will not know, and he or she must decide how they will support their readers’ understanding.
- Think critically about the words and quotations you choose. What is your purpose? How will they help your audience understand your message? How will you support readers who do not know the language?
- If you’re using a translation or a glossary, check that your explanations relate exactly to the context – this may not be the same as a direct translation.

EXPLAIN
The difference between explicit and implicit.
- Good authors expect their readers to work some things out for themselves. You’ve probably heard this explained as “show not tell”. In this extract, the writer expects the reader to infer why the British high command didn’t like the idea of Māori fighting alongside Pākehā.

ASK QUESTIONS
- What do you want your readers to understand?
- How can you help them work something out for themselves? What clues can you give them?

GIVE FEEDBACK
- You managed to cut a very big topic back to some specific examples that will help your readers to understand …
- The way you’ve written your introduction helped me to see the big picture and the part of it that you’ll be focusing on.
- The words of your tupuna are very powerful here. Even without your translation, I could feel the force of his words.

Teacher (possible deliberate acts of teaching)

WHAT MODELS HELPED YOU WHEN YOU WERE WRITING? HOW DID YOU USE THEM?
- Show me where you made changes to imply meaning, rather than spell it out.

METACOGNITION
- What models helped you when you were writing? How did you use them?
- Show me where you made changes to imply meaning, rather than spell it out.

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ISBN 978 0 478 42227 6 (online)