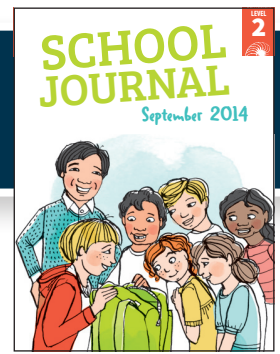


Pōhā: A Clever Way of Storing Food

by Dr Michael Stevens

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Year 4



Overview

“Pōhā: A Clever Way of Storing Food” explains the traditional Māori way for storing harvested tītī (muttonbirds). The practice of using pōhā to store the tītī has been passed on through generations and is still being used today.

This article:

- demonstrates how tradition influences the way people live their lives
- makes reference to customary rights and sustainability
- contains information that will be unfamiliar to most students and will require support before reading, particularly prior knowledge of harvesting (catching, killing, and preserving) food

- sequences the information under clear headings and includes supporting photographs, a glossary for some of the Māori vocabulary that has less support in the text, and additional information on tītī, rimurapa (bull kelp) and taonga
- links to social studies, science, and technology.

There is a PDF of the text and the audio version as an MP3 file at www.schooljournal.tki.org.nz

Texts related by theme “Tiakina a Tangaroa – Protect Our Seas” SJ L2 October 2011 | “Kūtai Fritters” SJ L2 August 2012

Text characteristics from the year 4 reading standard

the harvest season each April.
First, they pull layers of bark off big, old tōtara trees. They take only a small amount from each tree, and only every few years. That way, they don't hurt the tree. They cut the pieces of bark into strips. Then, at Christmas time, they cut harakeke and weave it into kete. In February, they gather rimurapa to make the kelp bags.

To get the rimurapa (also called bull kelp), Tiny and his family wait for sunny weather and a very low tide. They know some places where rimurapa grows on rocks along sandy beaches. One of these places is Kaka Point, near Balclutha. The family walk out into the sea and cut about a hundred pieces of kelp. They choose kelp that is the right size and shape to make bags.

some places where information and ideas are implicit and where students need to make inferences based on information that is easy to find because it is nearby in the text and there is little or no competing information

Catching the tītī

The muttonbirding harvest has two parts. The nanao is when muttonbirders catch the tītī chicks in the daytime by pulling the birds out of their burrows. The rama is when muttonbirders catch the tītī chicks on dark, stormy nights, when they come out of their burrows.

After the chicks have been killed, their feathers are plucked. Then they are gutted and coated with salt. Most muttonbirders pack the tītī into plastic buckets to take them back to the mainland. Each bucket holds about twenty tītī.

However, a few muttonbirding families still pack their tītī into pōhā. Tiny Metzger is a kaumātua from Bluff. He knows a lot about pōhā. His taua taught him how to make them when he was a boy. Tiny has taught his grandchildren how to make pōhā, too.



Getting ready to make pōhā

A pōhā is made out of three things: a kelp bag, a kete, and tōtara bark. Tiny and his family start preparing early so that these things are all ready by the start of the harvest season each April.

First, they pull layers of bark off big, old tōtara trees. They take only a small amount from each tree, and only every few years. That way, they don't hurt the tree. They cut the pieces of bark into strips. Then, at Christmas time, they cut harakeke and weave it into kete. In February, they gather rimurapa to make the kelp bags.

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a straightforward text structure, such as a structure that follows a recognisable and clear text form

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some compound and complex sentences, which may consist of two or three clause

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some words or phrases that are ambiguous or unfamiliar to the students, the meaning of which is supported by the context or clarified by photographs, illustrations, diagrams, and/or written explanations, including a glossary in this text

Reading Standard: by the end of year 4

Possible curriculum contexts

SOCIAL SCIENCES

Level 2 – Social Studies: Understand how cultural practices reflect and express people’s customs, traditions and values.

ENGLISH (Reading)

Level 2 – Purposes and audiences: Show some understanding of how texts are shaped for different purposes and audiences.

ENGLISH (Writing)

Level 2 – Purposes and audiences: Show some understanding of how to shape texts for different purposes and audiences.

Possible reading purposes

- To find out about traditional methods of catching and storing tītī
- To locate specific information to answer our questions about catching and storing tītī.

Possible writing purposes

- To explain how to catch or collect and use food (an animal, a bird, an insect, or a fish)
- To recount a family’s food gathering expedition.

Text and language challenges

VOCABULARY:

- Possibly unfamiliar words in te reo Māori, most of which have English explanations in the text and/or in the glossary, including “pōhā”, “rimurapa”, “tītī”, “tīpuna”, “nanao”, “rama”, “kaumātua”, “tāua”, “harakeke”, “tāhere”, “Taonga”, “wharekai”
- The Māori names
- Possible unfamiliar words and phrases, including “harvest”, “burrows”, “mainland”, “blades of rimurapa”, “flexible”, “airtight”, “industrial rubber”, “traditionally”, “inflatable”
- Some challenging vocabulary connected to muttonbirding and the use of rimurapa.

Possible supporting strategies

- Some of these suggestions may be more useful before reading but they can be used at any time in response to students’ needs.
- Familiarise yourself with any of the Māori vocabulary that is new to you. Depending on your students’ knowledge, provide support for the vocabulary. You could use the knowledge of local experts in your community to provide accurate pronunciation and support for meaning.
 - The words included in the glossary are bolded in the text. Have bilingual dictionaries available to confirm attempts to solve meanings.
 - Before reading, select words that may be unfamiliar to your students. Provide opportunities to clarify the meaning of these words while exploring the knowledge required to read the text. You may need to explain some of the more challenging vocabulary that is related to muttonbirding and is in the list of facts about rimurapa. Use concise definitions, images, video clips, and so on to support your students’ understanding of new vocabulary. See ESOL Online, Vocabulary, for examples of strategies to support students with vocabulary.
 - The English Language Learning Progressions: Introduction, pages 39–46, has useful information about learning vocabulary.

SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED:

- Knowledge of how we store food at home
- Some understanding of the ideas around hunting wildlife as a food source, including the need to preserve the catch and the importance of seasons
- Some understanding of the concept of “respect” in learning from our elders, traditional practices passed down through generations, and the protection of resources (tōtara trees, rimurapa, and tītī).

Possible supporting strategies

- Support students to share their prior knowledge of how food is stored at home and make connections to the traditional process used by the muttonbirders.
- Support them to make connections to the hunting, catching, and the preparation of tītī by getting them to tell any family stories, and share your own, of catching, preparing, and storing fish, birds, or animals (for example, catching, cleaning, and smoking fish, eels, or rabbits).
- Have students share their knowledge of the seasons and make connections to seasons they may be familiar with (for example, lambing, calving, white-baiting, and duck-shooting seasons) to help understand the significance of the timing of the pōhā preparation and the tītī harvest.
- The concept of “respect” could be the focus of a subsequent reading and discussion.

TEXT FEATURES AND STRUCTURE:

- An explanation with a simple introduction, and clearly sequenced information supported by precise headings.
- Two lists of background facts about “tītī” and “rimurapa” and a description of “taonga”
- A glossary
- Visual features – including a map of the area and photographs
- Numbers to signal stages of the process of making and using pōhā
- Several longer compound and complex sentences.

Possible supporting strategies

- Before reading, allow the students to share their knowledge of the purpose and structure of an explanation.
- Have them scan the text to allow them to familiarise themselves with the layout and the features of this text.
- Provide sticky notes before reading for students to note their questions and any ideas and vocabulary they are not sure of. At the end of the first reading, discuss the questions they still have.
- The process of making and using the pōhā is complex and involves three pages. If necessary, draw students attention to the use of italics to signal each step. Also remind them to use the photographs to help build a visual picture of the process.
- If necessary, help students to understand the connection between ideas in a longer sentence by identifying the clauses, phrases, linking words, and punctuation within it.
- For some students, this text may involve unfamiliar knowledge and contexts, a lot of new vocabulary, a range of challenging sentences, and a complex structure. For these students, you could use a shared reading approach and jigsaw reading to scaffold them into reading (as well as previewing the topic, vocabulary, and structure before reading).

Instructional focus – Reading

Social Sciences (Level 2 – Social Studies: Understand how cultural practices reflect and express people’s customs, traditions, and values.)

English (Level 2 – Purposes and audiences: Show some understanding of how texts are shaped for different purposes and audiences.)

First reading

- Skim the text for features that will support the students – noticing the sections with headings, lists of facts, words in bold, the glossary, and the photographs.
- Direct the students to read the title and page 24 and discuss the purpose of the explanation with a partner.
- Identify vocabulary and ideas that they are unsure of and have them use sticky notes to record their questions, which they can think about as they read and reflect at the end of the session. If necessary, model how to ask and use appropriate questions that will help them focus on specific information in the text.
- Explain that the list of facts about rimurapa is background information that adds to the explanation.
- Ask questions to help them reflect on the purpose for reading and the questions they still need clarification of. For example:
 - Look through the questions you had as you were reading and share the ones you are still unsure about.
 - Where did you find out how the muttonbirders know how to make pōhā? What did you find out?
 - How did the photographs help you clarify some of your questions about making the pōhā?

If the students struggle with this text:

- Chunk the first reading into shorter sections according to their needs.
- Prompt them to reread the heading to support their understanding of that section of text.
- Remind them to use the punctuation and the linking words to help follow the ideas in longer sentences.
- Draw their attention to the italics in the description of making pōhā to show the next step in the process.

Subsequent readings

The teacher:

Ask the students to turn to a partner and reread closely for specific information.

- Find the information on page 27 that describes what the people need to do to make the pōhā.
- Summarise your ideas and compare your summary with another pair.

The teacher:

Support the students to look for the information that will help to answer their questions. For example, some students might ask, “What is a harvest season?” Prompt them to use the structure of the text and also to make connections to their prior knowledge.

- Think back to your first reading. What parts of the text are most likely to help you with information?
- Think about other times people harvest. What are they doing?

Model a strategy to read for specific information. For example, show how you refer back to key words or questions you recorded before reading.

- As you reread the text, look out for the key word “harvest” and read the information in the sentence and the sentences around it.

The teacher:

Prompt the students to read the information about the “taonga” and share their ideas about why the pōhā is so special to the people?

- What did the text tell you about the people? (Who they are. How they know what to do.)
- What does the fact list tell us about who can harvest the rimurapa?

Have the students think about the tradition, how it’s been passed down and the need to protect the resource.

GIVE FEEDBACK

- When we were talking about respecting our grandparents, your description of what you do with your koro really helped us to know how much we can learn from our kaumātua.
- I saw many of you flicking back through the paragraph and using the glossary when you came to some Māori words you were unsure of. You had a lot of success because I heard you use some of those new words in your discussions.
- Your questions about some of the information in the text helped all of us to think and get a clearer understanding of catching and storing tītī. Asking and answering questions about what we are reading really helps us with the meaning.

METACOGNITION

- How much did you know about collecting or catching food before you read this article? How did your knowledge help you to understand this text?
- How did you work out why the family waited for sunny weather and a very low tide to get rimurapa?

The students:


- reread the text and use the sequence of photographs to find information
- discuss the clues with their partner and check back through the text to confirm
- find the action verbs to help them with their summary
- compare their summary with another pair to confirm their information.

The students:

- skim the text, looking for headings that might focus their search
- notice the word “harvest” on page 26 and make connections with the information in the sentence and an earlier sentence to infer the harvest is about the time when tītī are young
- on page 27, read the paragraph with the words “muttonbirding harvest” closely, connecting this information with earlier information to confirm their inferences
- at the end of the session, share their question with a partner and explain where in the text they found the answer or more information about their question.

The students:

- admire the display in the photograph and make connections to the way special things are treated in their homes to make inferences about why it’s special to the Māori people who live there
- locate the information in the text to support their inferences
- revisit the facts about rimurapa and with teacher support see how the tribe’s access to the kelp is protected so they can keep the tradition going.

 Reading standard: by the end of year 4

 The Literacy Learning Progressions

 Assessment Resource Banks

Instructional focus – Writing

Social Sciences (Level 2 – Social Studies: Understand how cultural practices reflect and express people’s customs, traditions and values.)

English (Level 2 – Purposes and audiences: Show some understanding of how to shape texts for different purposes and audiences.)

Text excerpts from
“Pōhā: A Clever Way
of Storing Food”

Examples of text
characteristics

Teacher
(possible deliberate acts of teaching)

MUTTONBIRDING

Although tītī fly all around the world, they only lay their eggs in the southern hemisphere. Some of these islands are near Rakiura (Stewart Island). Several Kāi Tahu families have houses on these islands. They visit them every year in April and May. These days, the family members travel to the islands by boat or sometimes by helicopter, but they have the same reason for making the journey as their tīpuna: they go there to harvest tītī chicks for food.

EXPLANATIONS

An explanation requires sequenced information that is both accurate and clearly written so the reader can understand how or why something happens.

Careful planning and checking facts leads to more authentic and accurate writing.

Ask questions to help the students plan for their writing.

- How has the writer described the steps in the article?
- What steps do you need to include to explain how something happens?
- Where can you check that the information you are planning to use is correct?
- What will the introduction need to include?

Model a simple flow chart to show the students how they can plan the sequence of their explanation.

Prompt them to check their ideas after they have planned their writing.

- Discuss the steps you are planning with your partner. Have you got all the steps?
- Share your ideas for the introduction and see if you have thought about what the reader needs to know at the beginning.
- Can you suggest something your partner could add to provide more detail?
- Is there information you need to check for accuracy? Who might know?

The harvested tītī chicks used to be cooked before they were packed into pōhā. These days, they are salted and put into big wooden barrels for four or five days. Then they are packed into the pōhā.

TENSE

Explanations are mainly in the present tense, which can be used to describe things that are always true or can describe habits and routines (that always happen this way).

Explain the use of tense in an explanation by using the adjacent excerpt.

- Notice the first sentence has the verbs “used” and “were”. The writer is telling us how it used to happen.
- Can you tell when the rest of the paragraph is happening? What words tell you?

Confirm that when we explain how something happens, we need to use the present tense.

An explanation uses mostly present tense.

- Revisit your writing to check you are using the present tense to explain how something happens.

A pōhā is made from three things: a kelp bag, a kete, and strips of tōtara bark. Tiny and his family start preparing early, so that these things are all ready by the start of the harvest season each April. First they pull layers of bark off big, old tōtara trees.

SEQUENCE

A sequence is made clearer for the reader when each stage or step is clearly identified with a lead sentence and the step includes enough detail to understand what happens.

The use of linking words provides the reader with an indication of the next event in the sequence.

Prompt the students to review the clarity of their writing. Revisit the text, asking students to look through selected sections and highlight all the words and phrases that show sequence. Begin, or add to, a word bank of sequencing language. Review examples of their use and support students to identify and use them with the correct structure and meaning. Support students to refer to the word bank and to use the language in their writing.

- How will the reader identify the next step in the sequence?
- How have you linked from the last step?
- What is the main idea of this step?
- How does the step show that?
- Read what you have written to your partner. Do they need any more detail?

GIVE FEEDBACK

- The information in your lead sentences helped make the following details easier to follow.
- I see you checked the information and changed it. It’s important that the information we include in factual writing is accurate.
- By correcting the verbs so they are all in the present tense, you’ve made it clear that this is how it always happens.

METACOGNITION

- How did your planning help your writing?
- What did you learn about your topic from writing your explanation?
- How did sharing and talking to your partner about their writing help your writing?

Writing standard: by the end of year 4

The Literacy Learning Progressions