



## Overview

This intense and dramatic “slice of life” story recounts the time when a mother had to take her sick child in secret to a tohunga. It is set after 1907, when the New Zealand government made it illegal for tohunga to practise rongoā Māori. “Tohunga” provides rich material for both Māori and non-Māori students to explore themes of cultural similarities and differences. This narrative:

- challenges students to ask questions, to make and justify inferences, and to evaluate the actions of others
- incorporates the use of te reo Māori without translation but with

words and expressions most students will understand

- provides opportunities to explore different attitudes to health and well-being and the right of one cultural group to impose rules on another
- gives students insight into the importance and use of traditional practices
- requires students to think critically about abstract ideas such as changing times and cultural practices.

**Texts related by theme** “Harakeke” SJ L3 Nov 2011 | “The Fisherman” SJ 3.2.08

## Text characteristics from the year 6 reading standard

It was miles to the old settlement. She had travelled this way many times. The native school children were along the way, and they passed by, Hana turned to look at them. What would Mā do if people were going? Where would she say they were going? But no one was there and they carried on. Beyond the settlement, the long gravel road eventually gave way to a grassy area after that came dense bush. Though it was overcast, the ground had grown hot. Hana and Te Ao took turns leading their

mother's cart was loaded with supplies, including the heavy tent Uncle Haki had brought back from the war. They needed it in case the river flooded and they were stranded overnight. Even though they were prepared for the worst, Mā was certain the dark clouds would clear. Hana had never known her mother to be wrong when it came to the weather. Mā had all kinds of ways of knowing. She would feel the early morning grass for dampness, observe the direction of the wind, and carefully watch the clouds and the sea.

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

It was early morning. Hana had been up all night. Hana watched from the doorway as Mā put a hand on Rāmahi's forehead.

“Get the hōiho,” she said to Te Ao. “We go soon.”

“Back to the doctor?” Te Ao asked. Hana's brother was always asking questions.

At the sound of the word, Rāmahi whimpered. “Kia kaha, son,” Mā reassured him. “There'll be no more doctors.”

Te Ao and Hana saddled Mā's horse, packed the second horse, and waited. They didn't have to wait long.

climbed over the reins in one hand. She motioned Hōri, the eldest, who was carrying the sick brother. Hōri was to stay to care for the little ones, ten animals and māra, and keep the burning. They would need hōiho and kai when they returned.

The older boy gently lifted and sat him in front of Mā. He slumped forward and wrapped around the animal's neck. “Come round, tell them we've stored,” Mā instructed as the hōiho. “We'll be back tonight.”

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

By mid-morning, they had begun the climb up to the ridge. Here they paused to rest. While they sat, Mā recited the landmarks spread before them in the form of a pātere. “Ka tau taku manu ki te tihi o Tarakoa ...,” she chanted. Some of the places were wāhi tapu, where blood had been shed or there were urupā. Others were hunting or fishing grounds. Then Mā told a story about the taniwha who sometimes lurked in the moana and the awa, pointing out where the water was discoloured or where there was a strong current.

“From maunga, to awa, to moana,” Mā concluded. She pointed but didn't need to say anything more. Hana and Te Ao knew these were the traditional boundaries of their hapū.

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

The sun was at its highest by the time they arrived. The whare was in a clearing alongside a well-kept māra and fruit trees. The old lady gave Hana the creeps, so she was relieved when Mā told them to wait outside. They watched as Mā entered the whare, the koha of kai on her back, her arms supporting Rāmahi. Hana sneaked a glimpse of the old lady peering suspiciously, but the tohunga's piercing green eyes were enough to make the girl turn quickly away.

Hana and Te Ao were hungry, so Hana unpacked the kete filled with kina and the crayfish and dried shark wrapped in old tobacco bags. Then they sat

sentences that vary in length and structure (for example, sentences that begin in different ways and different kinds of complex sentences with a number of subordinate clauses)

## Possible curriculum contexts

### SOCIAL SCIENCES (Social Studies)

Level 3 – Understand how cultural practices vary but reflect similar purposes.

### ENGLISH (Reading)

Level 3 – Purposes and audiences: Show a developing understanding of how texts are shaped for different purposes and audiences.

### ENGLISH (Writing)

Level 3 – Purposes and audiences: Show a developing understanding of how to shape texts for different purposes and audiences.

### Possible reading purposes

- To enjoy an interesting story about how a Māori family from the past deals with a challenging situation
- To understand different cultural practices around health and how people regard them
- To gain some understanding of the Māori world view
- To identify how a writer can “show, not tell” important information.

### Possible writing purposes

- To write a personal response to the story
- To compare the care of sick children now and in the past
- To recount a similar (true or fictional) story about getting help for a sick or injured person.



The New Zealand Curriculum

## Text and language challenges

### VOCABULARY

- Possible unfamiliar words or phrases, including “whimpered”, “reassured”, “emerged”, “motioned”, “tend”, “native school”, “recited”, “lurked”, “discoloured”, “boundaries”, “the creeps”, “glimpse”, “dried shark”, “old tobacco bags”, “sceptical”, “cursed”, “respectful”, “barrel”, “consulted”, “Tohunga Suppression Act”
- The extensive use of te reo Māori without translations
- The metaphor: “piercing green eyes”
- The idiom: “got the better of”
- The clause: “her ancient reo poetic but incomprehensible”.

### Possible supporting strategies

- Spend time familiarising yourself with any te reo words that are new to you. Depending on your students’ knowledge, provide support for pronunciation and meanings. Use the Māori Dictionary ([www.maoridictionary.co.nz](http://www.maoridictionary.co.nz)) or work with your school community or local iwi.
- Note that page 4 contains lots of use of te reo Māori. Some of this may be familiar to students, but if not, remind them to look for clues in the text to work out the meaning. The use of “pātere” (a chant) may be unfamiliar for some students. Prompt, or model to, them how they can integrate information from across the text to make sense of this page, even though they may not know the meaning of the te reo. Also, students could use the Māori Dictionary ([www.maoridictionary.co.nz](http://www.maoridictionary.co.nz)) for precise meanings.
- Before reading, pre-teach any words that you think will be unfamiliar to your students. Develop a glossary to encourage them to make connections to prior knowledge. You could provide cards for each vocabulary item and a simple example sentence. Give the cards to pairs of students and ask them to discuss what they think they mean. Then give them cards with simple definitions and ask them to match them to the vocabulary cards. When the pairs have finished, tell them to all walk around and look at other pairs’ ideas. Hand out a worksheet with the same content as the cards. Together confirm the correct answers and match them on the sheet. Follow up with another task, for example, cloze sentences. See ESOL Online, Vocabulary for more ideas.
- *The English Language Learning Progressions: Introduction*, pages 39–46, has useful information about learning vocabulary.

### SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED

- Some familiarity with Māori tikanga and beliefs, including hapū landmarks and boundaries, taniwha, kaimoana, tohunga and their use of rongoā, patupaiarehe, karakia, and respect for the environment
- Some understanding that the way of life in rural areas long ago was very different from now
- Familiarity with family life and the care of a sick child.

### Possible supporting strategies

- Provide opportunities for the students to share their knowledge of tikanga and of traditional healing using rongoā.
- You may decide to wait until after the first reading to examine the setting and to discuss why the family went to the tohunga secretly. This allows the students to ask questions of the text as they read, then search for answers and make inferences (based on the additional information) on subsequent readings.
- Seek out resources that may support the students to understand the role of tohunga and why the government wished to suppress them. Your local iwi would be a good starting place.

### TEXT FEATURES AND STRUCTURE

- Third person narrative, based on a true story
- Main events related in mostly chronological order, with some shifts in time and place
- Set in the past, probably some time after the First World War (the reference to “the heavy tent that Uncle Haki had brought back from the war” and the date in the author’s note support this inference)
- Rural setting
- The abrupt start, requiring readers to infer the time and place, the character’s relationships, and the reason for the events
- The limited use of dialogue, some of it in te reo Māori
- The implied need for secrecy
- The mention of native schools
- The evocative descriptions.

### Possible supporting strategies

- As the students start reading, support them to identify the setting and the characters. For some students, it may help to have them list characters and their relationships as they read.
- Set a purpose for reading, and encourage the students to discuss this purpose with a partner as they read.
- After reading, encourage the students to work together to clarify any misunderstandings, identifying where they were not sure what was happening and discuss possibilities together.
- Have the students identify the main events by working together to place them on a time line. Discuss other information surrounding these events and the way it occupies a different time frame. If appropriate, identify some of the associated verb forms and signal words. You could start a chart of time signals. You could reinforce this by using the time line and images from the story for the students to retell the main events.



Sounds and words

# Instructional focus – Reading

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

**English** (Level 3 – Purposes and audiences: Show a developing understanding of how texts are shaped for different purposes and audiences.)

## First reading

Ask questions to help the students make connections with the title before reading. *What do you know about tohunga? What were the tohunga's traditional roles? What do you think might be the problem in the story?*

Direct the students to read the story independently with the purpose of identifying the characters, the setting, and the main events.

Prompt them to focus on the author's note. *How does this information help you to understand the time and the events? Why do you think the government made it illegal to use rongōā? What impact do you think that had on Māori?*

### If the students struggle with this text

- Provide a story map graphic organiser. Model filling it in and support the students to complete it as they read, noting the names and relationships of the characters, the setting, and the main events. They may not be able to identify all these in the first reading, and should be encouraged to continue it (with support if necessary) through subsequent readings. You can provide differentiated support by having some students complete story maps with some parts filled in.
- Remind the students to use the context to make a "best guess" if they are not sure of the meanings of words in te reo (or in English). They can work with a partner to check their guesses after reading, using the context and asking for help if necessary. (Use this strategy when the students know the vocabulary around the unfamiliar items.)

## Subsequent readings

### The teacher

Ask questions to help the students find clues to the reason for the journey and the need for secrecy.

- How did you work out what was happening in the first page? What clues helped you? What knowledge helped you?
- What did you infer from Mā's statement: "There'll be no more doctors."?
- Why did Mā tell Hōri to say they'd gone to the store? What does this imply?
- What other clues on pages 2 and 3 told you that this was a secret trip?
- On your first reading, what questions did you have about the story?
- What is your response to the story at this point?

### The teacher

Invite the students with knowledge of tikanga to share what they understand from Mā's actions on page 4. If this is not possible, ask questions, then reread and discuss the section closely with the group.

- Why is Mā pointing out the boundaries of her hapū? Why would it be important?
- What do you know about wāhi tapu and the tikanga around such places?
- What can you infer about where the next stage of the journey will take them?

### The teacher

Prompt the students to notice the shift in mood at the end of the story.

- Why is Mā tense? How is the tension relieved?
- What do you think Pākehā bread was like in those days? Why does Rāmahi ask for it? What does this indicate to you about the similarities and differences between Māori and Pākehā cultures and traditions?
- In what way does this small request reflect the bigger changes that were affecting Māori at the time the story is set?
- Share your thoughts about the ending with a partner. Is it a satisfying ending? What new understandings (if any) did it give you about cultural practices?

### The students:

- reread to confirm their identification of the characters and the setting
- make connections between the events in the text and their knowledge about illness to infer that Rāmahi had already been seen by doctors and his condition had not improved, perhaps inferring that medical treatment in rural areas in the early twentieth century was probably not very good
- may infer that Rāmahi had a disease and that his mother believed the tohunga would be able to cure him
- make connections across the text – the author's note (from their first reading), Mā's words, and Hana's thoughts – to infer that if they were seen going to a tohunga, the tohunga could be imprisoned
- share and discuss their questions, inferences, and evaluation of the story so far.

### The students:

- make connections between the text and their own knowledge of tikanga to infer that Mā may be acknowledging the boundaries of her hapū before crossing into the land of another hapū (They infer the reason why this is important and share their ideas with the group.)
- make connections between the text and their own knowledge or experience of wāhi tapu, burial grounds, and taniwha to understand why the family takes care in continuing their journey.

### The students:

- visualise the way Mā must feel, and infer that she is worried because Rāmahi is no better
- identify that Mā's tone of voice and her words show her relief when Rāmahi walks into the kitchen
- evaluate the sudden change in Rāmahi's condition, and the ability of the tohunga to make him better, speculating on the different treatments he may have had from Pākehā doctors and the tohunga, and make inferences about the reasons one treatment worked when the other didn't
- make connections between the text and the kinds of bread they are familiar with to infer why Rāmahi asked for Pākehā bread. They go on to integrate ideas across the text and evaluate the changes for Māori since European settlement.

## GIVE FEEDBACK

- Using the author's note helped you to answer your questions about why the family had to keep their journey secret. I noticed that at first you skipped over it, but then you went back and read it carefully. Remember that fact boxes and authors' notes are an important addition to all kinds of texts because they provide background or factual information that can help you understand the story.
- You made good use of the story map to keep track of the characters and the plot. That's a useful reading strategy when a writer expects you to work things out for yourself.

## METACOGNITION

- This was a complex story. Show me a place where you had to think hard about what was happening. How did you work it out? What strategies did you use?
- What helped you to understand the relationships and the actions of the characters in this story?

 **Reading standard: by the end of year 6**

 **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 – Purposes and audiences: Show a developing understanding of how to shape texts for different purposes and audiences.)

## Text excerpts from “Tohunga”

“If anyone comes round, tell them we’ve gone to the store,” Mā instructed as they departed. “We’ll be back tonight.”

... The native school and the store were along the way, and as they passed by, Hana turned her face. What would Mā do if people noticed them? Where would she say they were going?

“They say she’s a patupaiarehe,” Te Ao said. “You can’t see her reflection in a mirror.” Hana was skeptical of the rumours – but still, she didn’t dare say anything for fear of being cursed.

“Hoihoi!” Mā commanded. Then the expression on her face and the tone of her voice suddenly changed. “Haere mai ki te kai, son.”

## Examples of text characteristics

### SHOW, DON’T TELL

*Writers can build suspense by showing how a character is feeling, rather than by explaining everything. The writer expects that readers will use their own knowledge to infer a meaning.*

### KNOWING YOUR AUDIENCE

*Writers expect their readers to understand references they make. To do this, they need to know the audience and have a fair idea of what they will know or be able to work out. It shows respect to your readers when you expect them to work out some things.*

### USING TE REO MĀORI (OR OTHER LANGUAGES)

*Writers use language in many different ways, for many different purposes. Writers who draw on their own (non-English) language and culture may use words and expressions that some readers will not understand. They help readers by making sure the context makes the meaning clear, or by adding a glossary.*

## Teacher

(possible deliberate acts of teaching)

Model “telling, not showing”.

- Imagine the author wrote this instead: “It was illegal for tohunga to use rongoā in those days. If people knew where we were going, we could be responsible for the tohunga being put in prison”.
- This “tells”, but it doesn’t “show” how Hana felt and what she was thinking.
- As you draft and review your work, think about places where you might have a bigger impact by being indirect and showing, rather than telling.

Explain what “knowing your audience” means as the students plan their writing.

- Imagine your work will be published and read by many people. Who would you want to read your work?
- Think like those readers. What do they already know about your topic or about the kinds of events?
- In this extract, the writer expects his readers to know (or work out) what patupaiarehe are – and to have some idea of the kinds of rumours about them. He tells us one rumour: that they don’t have a reflection. Even if you don’t know what a patupaiarehe is, this clue will help you work out that Te Ao thinks they are supernatural creatures.
- Understanding what your readers already know or can work out means you don’t have to spell out everything for them.

Ask questions to support any students who wish to use their home (non-English) language in their writing.

- What is your purpose for using words that some readers will not understand? How will doing this help achieve your purpose?
- If you use a language some readers won’t know, how will you support those readers?
- Check with a writing partner: do you need to add more support? Can you use more of your own language without losing your readers?

### GIVE FEEDBACK

- I can imagine what the character was thinking and feeling, even though you didn’t tell your readers explicitly what was going through his mind. Instead you described his expression and what he did.
- I wasn’t sure what you meant here, but when I read on, the context helped me work it out. You assumed your reader would be smart enough to figure it out.
- I knew a few words in this part of the story (where your characters are speaking in their own language) but not enough to work it out for myself. Adding the glossary helped me fully understand what they were saying, and that helped me understand how they felt.

### METACOGNITION

- How does considering your audience help you make choices as a writer? Show me an example and explain what you did.
- What helped you make decisions about the kind of language to use? How is the language different from other kinds of writing you’ve done?
- Tell me about your revision process: What do you do? Who or what helps you? How do you know when to stop?

 Writing standard: by the end of year 6

 The Literacy Learning Progressions