



MĀUI AT MAHITAHĪ

BY SUSAN WALLACE

(KĀTI MĀHAKI KI MAKAAWHIO, NGĀI TAHU)

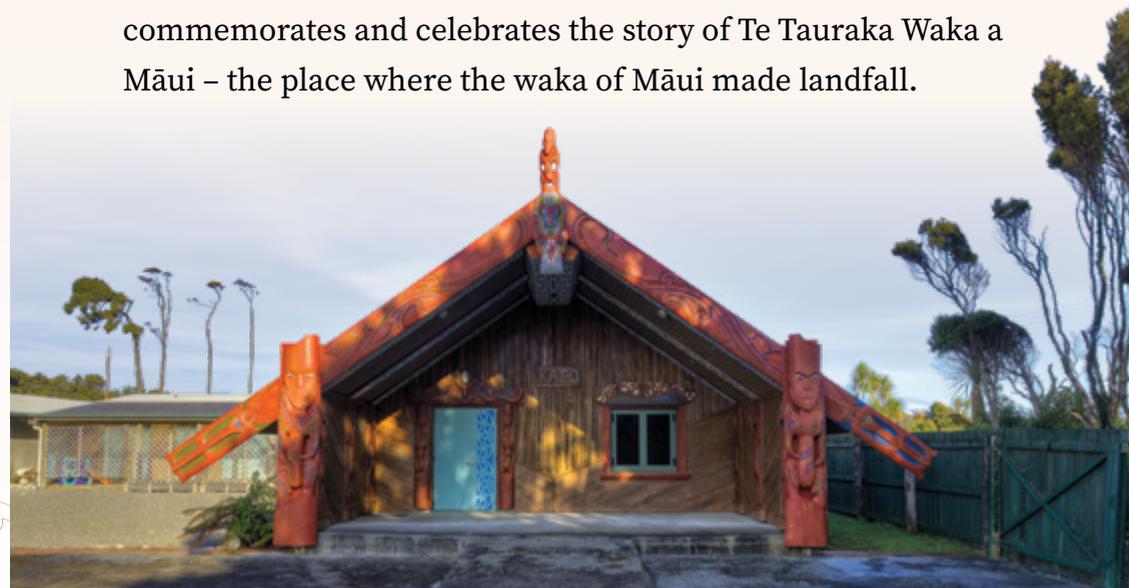
Do you know who Māui is? If you ask people this question, most will reply “Yes”. But then, if you ask them to tell you more about Māui, it’s likely that each person will describe him differently. They might say Māui is a demi-god, a hero, a trickster, a rascal, their tipuna, or “that guy The Rock played in Moana”.

For South Westland iwi Kāti Māhaki ki Makaawhio, Māui is a great Polynesian explorer who did many good things for his people. He sailed from Hawaiki across the vast oceans to the west coast of the South Island. While Māui and his crew were still a long way from shore, a young man on board the waka spotted something that looked like a mountain range. He called out excitedly that there was land ahead, but Māui did not believe him. Māui dismissed the sighting as “he tiritiri o te moana” (a mirage of the ocean). As the waka sailed closer, Maui was proven wrong. The “mirage” turned into snow-capped mountains – the Southern Alps in all their glory. In memory of Māui’s mistake, the mountain range was named Kā Tiritiri o te Moana.

When he was approaching Mahitahi, Māui met two taniwha – Makotipua and Makohorapekapeka. These two taniwha, who were giant sharks, guarded the bay and stopped anyone from entering. Māui fought them and used his famous toki (adze), Tīhei Mauriora, to defeat them. In doing so, he cleared the way not only for his crew but also for future migrations of people to land safely at Mahitahi.

After making their landfall at Mahitahi, Māui and his crew continued their journey around the bottom of the South Island. On the way, Māui named many places, including Piopiotahi, which he named after the pet bird that had accompanied him on his travels. Then, when he reached Kaikōura, he carried out one of his greatest feats – the fishing up of Te Ika-a-Māui.

Māui only stopped briefly at Mahitahi, but his landing there was the beginning of the ancient migration of Māori to South Westland. It’s the place where the first human contact with Aotearoa took place, so it seems right that Kāti Māhaki ki Makaawhio built their marae there. The name of the marae commemorates and celebrates the story of Te Tauraka Waka a Māui – the place where the waka of Māui made landfall.



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by Susan Wallace

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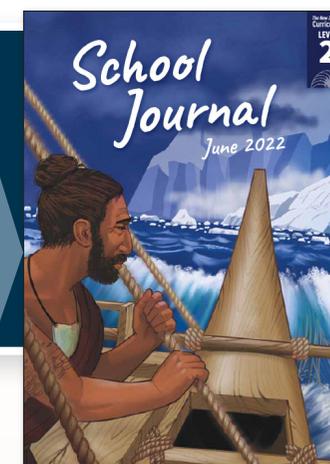
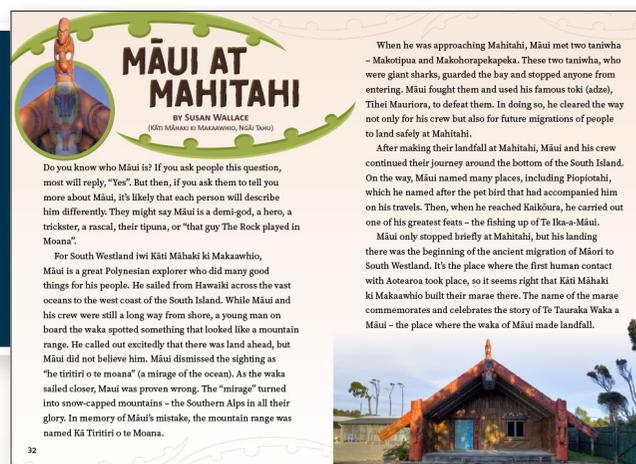
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www.education.govt.nz

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ISBN 978 1 77690 554 6 (online)
ISSN 2624 3636 (online)

Publishing Services: Lift Education E Tū
Editor: David Chadwick
Designer: Liz Tui Morris
Literacy Consultant: Melanie Winthrop
Consulting Editors: Ariana Tikao and Emeli Sione



SCHOOL JOURNAL LEVEL 2 JUNE 2022

Curriculum learning areas

English
Social Sciences

Reading year level

Year 4

Keywords

ancestors, Aotearoa New Zealand history, courage, discovery, exploration, Hawaiki, Kāti Māhaki ki Makaawhio, legend, Mahitahi, Māui, naming, Polynesia, taniwha, Te Tauraka Waka a Māui, traditional story, tūpuna