

Te Taonga Nui a Tāne

by Mihipo More (Ngātikahu ki Whangaroa)
and Terry Fitzgibbon

School Journal
Part 1 Number 1 2011
Noun frequency level: 9-10
Year 4



Overview

This first-person recount tells how a young boy goes with his grandfather on an arduous journey to find a fallen kauri tree deep in the Pukefī Kauri Forest. The reason for the journey is not made explicit until halfway through the recount, giving a sense of mystery. The timber from the tree will enable the grandfather to honour his own father's lifelong wish to build a new whareniui for their marae. In the recount, we see how the timber is harvested as well as the tikanga involved in the process.

The writers give a sense of immediacy through a dramatic introduction, by using the present tense, and through descriptive verbs. Clear photographs support readers who may be unfamiliar with camping out in a forest, although students who are unfamiliar with the New Zealand bush may require support to visualise the journey taken in the article.

The use of te reo is supported by a glossary.

Texts related
by theme

“Nanny’s Tokotoko” SJ 1.2.08 | “Haere Mai!” SJ 2.1.10 | “Hauhake Harakeke” SJ 2.3.05

Text characteristics from the year 4 reading standard

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

some abstract ideas that are clearly supported by concrete examples in the text or easily linked to the students' prior knowledge

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

In the late afternoon, I collect water from the nearby stream. Karani cooks wild pork and puha - my favourite kail

We pitch a sleeping shelter under the trees. Karani tells me about his father's kaupapa to rebuild our marae, which once stood proudly on a hill above Taupō Bay. My great-grandfather's lifelong wish is the reason that we are in this forest now - to harvest a fallen kauri for our new whareniui.

Karani snores off to sleep. We wake very early to the screeching call of a nearby kiwi. Later that morning, the helicopter returns and hovers above us. One by one, the huge slabs of kauri are hooked onto a long cable and then swung carefully out of the forest. I plant a kauri seedling in memory of the fallen tree. Then we pack up and begin the long tramp out of the forest.

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

other visual language features that support the ideas and information, for example, text boxes or maps

figurative language, such as metaphors, similes, or personification

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

Possible curriculum contexts

SOCIAL SCIENCES

LEVEL 2 – 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 the harvesting of an old kauri tree for a special purpose
- To identify the reasons for harvesting the tree and the customs that accompany the process
- To compare customs associated with building in different cultures.

Possible writing purposes

- To describe a time when they participated in a special project
- To describe customs or traditions they are familiar with
- To research and explain some different ways of sourcing building materials.

See [Instructional focus – Reading](#) for illustrations of some of these reading purposes.

See [Instructional focus – Writing](#) for illustrations of some of these writing purposes.

Text and language challenges

VOCABULARY:

- Use of onomatopoeia: “Thrum! Thrum! Thrum!”, “WHOOSH”
- Possible unfamiliar words and concepts, including “duck down low”, “blast of wind”, “blades”, “scramble”, “cockpit”, “forest ranger”, “circles” used as a verb, “clearing”, “loggers”, “tramp”, “ancient”, “slabs”, “puha”, “pitch”, “sleeping shelter”, “rebuild”, “proudly”, “lifelong wish”, “harvest”, “screeching”, “hovers”, “seedling”, “in memory of”, “gobbled”, “boulder-hop”, “trudge”, “wearily”, “restoring the mana”
- The use of figurative language: “the green korowai of the kauri” (metaphor), “stood proudly” (personification)
- The use of te reo, supported by a glossary.

Possible supporting strategies

- Use strategies, including support from students familiar with te reo and tikanga, to familiarise students with words and customs they may not know.
- Review the vocabulary used for the helicopter ride, the tramp, and the logging activity.
- Some concepts may require explanation, for example, “peel back the green korowai of the kauri”; the generational links between the narrator, his grandfather, and his great-grandfather; and the concept of “restoring the mana of our tūpuna”.
- *The English Language Learning Progressions: Introduction*, pages 39–46, has some useful information about learning vocabulary.
- ESOL Online has examples of strategies and approaches for focusing on vocabulary, at Pedagogy.

SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED:

- Familiarity with tramping
- Knowledge of tikanga Māori associated with nature, such as the use of karakia and the replacement of an old tree with a new one.

Possible supporting strategies

- Discuss the sights, sounds, and actions the students would expect from being in a helicopter and in the bush or forest. Students with tramping experience can support others to understand the experience.
- Remind students of school and community occasions when karakia have been used, for example, when gathering harakeke for weaving or before hui or meals.

TEXT FEATURES AND STRUCTURE:

- Recount told in the first person
- The use of sound (“Thrum! Thrum! Thrum!”) to start the article
- The gradual revelation of the purpose of the journey
- The use of the present tense for dramatic effect to narrate events from the past
- The sequence of events with time markers (“Then”, “for two hours”, “At last”, “In the late afternoon”, “Later that morning”, “When we stop”, “is now”)
- Clear photographs that show all stages of the journey
- Long and complex sentences with several clauses and phrases, for example, “I feel the blast of wind ... as I scramble into the cockpit with my karani and the forest ranger.”

Possible supporting strategies

- Review what students already know about the ways we can recount an experience orally and in writing. Support the students to identify the tenses we can use, particularly the use of the present tense to convey a sense of immediacy. Some students may need an explanation of how the present tense can be used to refer to the past.
- Some students may require support to identify the sequence of events, especially if the context is very unfamiliar to them.
- *Supporting English Language Learners in Primary Schools: A Guide for Teachers of Years 3 and 4* has a section on recounting. This offers guidance on language and activities that are suitable for learners at Foundation stage to Stage 3 of *The English Language Learning Progressions*.
- Break long sentences up into phrases and clauses, identifying who, what, where, when, and the relationships between each phrase or clause.

Instructional focus – Reading

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

Text excerpts from “Te Taonga Nui a Tāne”

Students (what they might do)

Teacher (possible deliberate acts of teaching)

The helicopter circles, and we land in a clearing deep in the bush. With two loggers who have also been flown in, we tramp for two hours down a rough track.

Students locate and **evaluate** information, and **make connections** with their own prior knowledge of going on an expedition, to make a **hypothesis** about the purpose of the journey.

They use the title, the photographs, and the word “loggers” as clues.

The loggers peel back the green korowai of the kauri. Then they use special tools to saw the log into even-sized slabs of timber.

Students use what they know about figurative language and cross-check with the photographs to **infer** that the authors use the metaphor “the green korowai” of the kauri to describe the cover of moss and ferns on the fallen tree.

The students **evaluate** new information to make further **hypotheses** about the purpose of the journey.

We pitch a sleeping shelter under the trees. Karani tells me about his father’s kaupapa to rebuild our marae, which once stood proudly on a hill above Taupō Bay. My great-grandfather’s lifelong wish is the reason that we are in this forest now – to harvest a fallen kauri for our new whareniui.

Students draw on their prior knowledge of camping or being in the bush to **visualise** the camp the narrator and his grandfather have made. They **ask and answer** questions to check that they understand the relationships.

Students can now check their **hypotheses** against the actual purpose of the journey.

My karani offers a karakia for the taonga given to us by Tāne Māhuta, as well as for the experience we’ve all shared.

Students **make connections** between the text and their own experiences of karakia to understand the importance of Karani’s actions.

They draw on the knowledge they have of Tāne Māhuta and karakia to **evaluate** the concept of giving thanks for the fallen tree.

ASK QUESTIONS to support students to make connections with the text and to find clues that will help them form hypotheses about it.

- What are some reasons why people might go into a forest?
- Why might loggers go into a forest?
- What clues from the title and the text so far help you to form a hypothesis about why the narrator and his grandfather are going into the forest with loggers?

Be prepared to offer a lot of support for students who are not familiar with this context. Make links to your pre-reading discussions exploring the background and vocabulary.

PROMPT students to notice the use of “the green korowai” of the kauri.

- Why would the authors use this description? Who usually wears a korowai? Why is it green? What are the authors implying?
- To help students make links to their prior knowledge, you could ask questions to prompt them to think about the notion of taonga. What kinds of things are treasured in your family and in other countries or cultures that you know about?

ASK QUESTIONS to support students to clarify their understanding.

- How had Karani prepared for the trip?
- What does “pitch” mean in this context? What would you usually associate with “pitch”? (a tent) You could ask students for other words that have more than one meaning. Emphasise that a reader looks at the whole context to understand a word. They need to recognise when a familiar meaning doesn’t make sense and find the correct meaning.
- What do you think happened to the old whareniui?
- What does “proudly” mean here? Is it an appropriate word to use for a whareniui?
- Was the real purpose of the journey what you expected?

If necessary, draw a simple family tree to show the generations (narrator, Karani, great-grandfather). Support students to clarify the relationships. Explain that the generation between the narrator and his karani would be the narrator’s mother or father.

PROMPT students to make connections to their knowledge of Māori tikanga and of other customs they may have in their families or communities.

- Why did Karani offer a karakia? What does it imply about his beliefs about nature and Tāne Māhuta’s guardianship of the forest?
- Why do you think the karakia was for the shared experience, as well as for the kauri tree?
- What special experiences of your own does this article remind you of?

GIVE FEEDBACK

- I noticed you changed your hypotheses as you read on. When you find new information, you often need to do this, especially when you’re not sure what will happen in a story.
- You asked good questions about the roles of the people in this story. That’s a great way to get more out of your reading.

METACOGNITION

ASK QUESTIONS to make the students’ strategies explicit for them.

- What information helped you to form and check your hypotheses as you read the article?
- What personal experiences and knowledge helped you to make connections with the article? How did they help you understand the text?
- Find a place in the text where you made an inference. What clues helped you?
- Some words in the article were used in ways that were new to you. How did you work these out?

Reading standard: by the end of year 4

The Literacy Learning Progressions

Assessment Resource Banks

Instructional focus – Writing

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

Text excerpts from “Te Taonga Nui a Tāne”

Thrup! Thrup! Thrup!
That’s the sound of the helicopter – and it’s coming closer. I can feel my heart beating fast.

At last we arrive at the edge of a steep cliff. Lying on the forest floor is an ancient kauri tree, covered with thick moss and ferns.

When we stop for a rest, Karani shows me a bunch of ripe miro berries. “These are good for sore throats and stomachs,” he says, “as long as the kākā and kererū haven’t gobbled them up first!”

My karani is happy because we have taken another important step towards restoring the mana of our tūpuna.

Examples of text characteristics

TEXT STRUCTURE

Recounts usually have an orientation that lets the reader know what to expect. When an author departs from the usual orientation (for example, by using an exciting introduction) the reader wonders what will happen next.

USE OF TENSE AND TIME MARKERS

Use of the present tense lets the audience feel they are there with the narrator watching events as they happen. Time markers (“At last”) help the audience to understand the sequence of events.

USE OF DIALOGUE

Sometimes a small piece of dialogue can reveal a lot about a character. For example, dialogue can indicate the range of a person’s knowledge without the author needing to give extensive details.

IMPLICATION

Before a reader can infer meaning, the writer needs to imply ideas. Students need to learn how to imply ideas in their writing if this fits their purpose.

Teacher

(possible deliberate acts of teaching)

ASK QUESTIONS to help the students think about the effect the opening lines can have on the audience.

- What kind of “first impression” do you want your writing to give?
- How do your first sentences give your audience clues to the kind of story or article they’re about to read?

EXPLAIN that recounts usually start with an orientation that gives the audience information such as when, where, what, and who.

- What drawbacks might there be to using an unfamiliar or unexpected opening? Would this support or confuse your audience?
- In your writing, try out some alternative opening lines and test their impact on a partner. Which opening lines work best for your purpose and audience?

EXPLAIN the use of time markers to help us follow a sequence of events.

Highlight examples of time markers in this text and discuss how they are used. Ask students to share examples from their own writing. Support students to use time markers appropriately in their writing, varying them when possible. Some students may need sentence starters to help them.

PROMPT students to focus on a small section of dialogue and how it is used to reveal more about a character.

- What are the authors showing us by including this single sentence?
- What does this sentence add to our overall picture of Karani as an older Māori man?
- Look through your own writing. Are there places where a well-chosen sentence or two spoken by a character can show your audience something important about that character?

EXPLAIN the difference between explicit and implicit.

- The words say “we have taken another important step”. I infer that this is not the first step and it won’t be the last. I can see that Karani is getting old, so I infer that the task of building the new whareni is one that the next generations will probably complete.
- The fact that he took his grandson with him to get the kauri supports this inference. This fits with what I understand about the importance to Māori of passing down traditions through generations. The authors didn’t say this explicitly, but the words they used helped me to understand the implicit meaning.
- Now look at your own writing and see if there are places where you can make changes to help your readers infer meaning and to make your writing more vibrant. Make them do some of the work too!

GIVE FEEDBACK to affirm students’ writing decisions and guide their learning.

- I see from your drafts that you tried some different openings, but you came back to the first one. As a reader, I now have a clear understanding of what the article will be about. It’s good to see how you’ve thought this through.
- Your use of time markers is great – they helped me follow the adventure, which you’ve described well.
- Thank you for adding the little piece of dialogue from your dad. It helped me to understand why camping was so important to him.
- When you give each other feedback, I notice that you thank each other. That shows respect for the serious effort you’re putting into your writing. Well done!

METACOGNITION

ASK QUESTIONS to help the students think more deeply about purpose and audience when they write.

- How often do you pause to check that your writing will meet the purpose you set yourself? What do you do if it seems to be going off course?
- If you’re writing for an audience that doesn’t share your knowledge of ..., how can you help them to understand the specialised information?
- What do you want your readers to infer here? How did you imply that?

Writing standard: by the end of year 4
The Literacy Learning Progressions