

E Kō, E Kō (Morning Chorus)

by Hirini Melbourne

illustration by Peter Campbell

Overview

This Māori song, with an English translation, encourages children to make connections to their experiences of hearing bird songs as the new day arrives. This poem is best used for shared reading. The birds illustrated around the poem are, anticlockwise from top left, grey warbler, stitchbird, tūi, saddleback, bellbird, and whitehead. There is an audio version on the Ready to Read CD *Readalong 2008*.

Suggested purposes

This text supports the comprehension strategies of making connections, visualising, and analysing and synthesising.

Text features

(This information is intended as a prompt for teachers rather than as a list of teaching points.)

- the free verse structure featuring one long sentence with run-on lines
- the formal, imperative language
- the reference to Tāne, god of the forests
- the repetition in the last two lines
- the use of macrons to denote long vowels
- the use of “red dawn” as a synonym for the sun
- the illustrations of native birds and sheet music, supporting the concept of the dawn chorus.

Introducing the text

Have you ever been awake very early in the morning? What happens when night turns into day? What can you hear? Introduce the term “dawn (or “morning”) chorus” and explain that you have a poem about this to share with them.

Explain that Hirini Melbourne wrote many songs and stories. Make connections to any that they are familiar with, for example, from *He Waiata mā te Katoa* (Songs for Everyone), *Kiwi Kidsongs 3, 4, and 7* and the *Noke* (Worm) poem card.

Reading and discussing the poem

If your children are unfamiliar with Māori, you may wish to listen to the audio version first, with the children following the text, or you could invite a speaker of Māori to read “E Kō, E Kō” to them. Follow this by reading “Morning Chorus”, modelling the formal, imperative tone of the text. Discuss the fact that the poem is actually one long sentence.

The children may notice that “Morning Chorus” is not an exact translation. Explain that languages can have many ways of saying the same thing.

If necessary, clarify some of the language of the poem, for example, the meaning of the phrase “garden/Of Tāne”. Make connections to the children’s awareness of Tāne from Māori legends.

Why is the dawn red? Link this to the idea of a red sky at sunrise.

Why has the author started both of the last lines with “So”? Draw out the idea that the repetition adds to the formal tone and that “So” is also used here to suggest a consequence – that the sun won’t rise until the birds sing.

Discuss the formal, imperative tone of the poem. Draw out the idea that it is like a command or a formal speech. Have the children practise reading it in an imperative tone.

Suggestions for further tasks

Have the children listen to and read along with the audio version on the CD *Readalong 2008*.

Listen to a recording of the morning chorus.

Find out more about the birds in the illustrations.

Read legends about Tāne Mahuta.

Use the resources *He Waiata mā te Katoa* and *Kiwi Kidsongs 3, 4, and 7*, which feature songs by Hirini Melbourne.