

## ***Maui and Other Māori Legends Teacher Notes***

***[By Anna Hartley, October 2016]***

### **Before Reading:**

1. Before reading the book, look at the cover image and title. Discuss what you think this book might be about.
2. Who do you think the readership of this book might be?
3. As a class, discuss and brainstorm what legends, myths and 'classic tales' might be. Think about the features they may share, what their purpose might be and which cultures might have them.
4. Discuss as a class what information you can glean from the book cover that helps you identify the content as Māori. For example, the title and the illustrations.
5. The blurb on the back cover of the book refers to these stories as 'beloved classics of our literature'. Discuss what this means? Do you think this is true? Why or why not? List five other tales, stories or books you think are New Zealand classics and justify your choices.
6. The blurb on the back cover of the book states that 'many of the legends feature the hero Maui'. Discuss and list anything you know about Maui. Discuss what you think the attributes of a hero may be. Think of any other characters from Māori myths and legends that you may know.

### **Close-reading/Comprehension Questions:**

#### **How Maui Found His Mother**

1. Why did Maui's mother 'cast him into the ocean' (p. 12)?
2. Which elements of nature helped Maui travel safely to the 'seaside kainga' (p. 15)? What does this tell us about the traditional view of nature?
3. Why did Tama take Maui home (p. 16)? What does this tell us about Tama as a character and about familial ties within whānau?
4. List some of the things that Tama taught Maui (p. 18)?
5. Why was Tama unable to take Maui to meet his mother (p. 26)? How does this work as a plot device in this tale?

### **How Maui Found His Father and the Magic Jawbone**

6. What means did Maui use to be able to follow his mother to find out where she went during the day (p. 38)? What does this tell us about Maui as a character?
7. What happened as Maui chanted the karakia (p. 43)? Why did he take this measure?
8. Why was Maui's father, Makea-tutara, sad after he chanted his karakia (p. 55)? What does this indicate to the reader about Maui's future?
9. How did Maui manage to retrieve the magic jawbone from his grandfather (pp. 56-57)? What does this tell us further about Maui as a character?
10. What does the last sentence of this tale say? What affect does it have on you as a reader (p. 60)?

### **The Fish of Maui**

11. Why were Maui's foster-brothers jealous of him (pp. 62-63)? How do these feelings affect their relationship with their foster-brother and how they all interact? Find examples from this tale.
12. Maui is referred to as 'Maui Nukarau (the trickster)' in this story (p. 64). List some examples of how Maui embodies this description of his character from this tale?
13. What do you think drove Maui on to paddle throughout the night (p. 68)?
14. What actions did Maui take to counteract his foster-brother's 'utu (revenge)' of giving him no bait (p. 70)?
15. What did Maui fish up (pp. 80-86)?

### **How Maui Slowed the Sun**

16. Why did Maui want to catch the sun (pp. 88-90)?
17. What was Maui's plan to catch the sun and what steps did he and his brothers prepare for the plan (pp. 92-97)?
18. Why did Maui and his brothers only travel at night (p. 97)?
19. What animal is Maui compared to as he waited to ambush the sun (p. 103)? What does this tell us about Maui's actions?
20. What effect did Maui and his brothers' actions have on the sun, its movements and its appearance, which according to the tale can still be seen today (p. 112)?

### **How Maui Found the Secret of Fire**

21. Why did Maui put out all the fires in the pa (p. 114)? What does this tell us about him as a character?
22. Who accompanied Maui on his journey to the volcano (p. 116)?
23. What reason did Maui's aunty give to him for taking care of the flame she

- gave to him (p. 123)?
24. List the ways and excuses Maui used to lose each flame he was given (pp.124-129)? Why did he do this and what further things does it tell us about his character?
  25. How did Maui create fire back in the pa (p. 134-138)? What does this tale tell us about the way Māori traditionally started fires?

### **How Maui Defied the Goddess of Death**

26. Which of the birds started laughing first at Maui and why (p. 145)?
27. How many underworlds and heavens did Maui pass through (pp. 154-155)? What does this tell us about the spiritual beliefs of early Māori?
28. What are the reasons Rehua gives Maui for being able to make Maui change his 'time, self and place' (p. 157)?

### **Battle of the Mountains**

29. What are the names of the seven mountains that circle Lake Taupo in the North Island of New Zealand (pp. 165-171)?
30. How did each of the mountains try to attack Tongariro (pp. 174-179)? What natural phenomena do you think their attacks represent?
31. Where did each mountain retreat to (pp. 180-183)?

### **Pania of the Reef**

32. What had always fascinated Pania (p. 186)?
33. What happened when the young chief placed the food on Pania and her baby (pp. 199-205)?
34. Where was the bronze statue of Pania made and where can you find it today (p. 205)?

### **Language and style:**

1. What do you think the genre of this book is? List the aspects that are indicative of this genre.
2. Choose your favourite tale from the book. What does this myth or legend explain?
3. Figurative language is used to convey ideas that might otherwise be difficult to express. Simile and metaphor are examples of figurative language. Examples of this are 'out and up it crept in a widening spiral, like a great carving in the air' (p. 71) and 'the tongue of a taiaha' (p. 18). Find two more examples of figurative language used by the author in the book.

4. What figure of speech is 'fiery flames' (p. 103) an example of? Create this figure of speech using five of the characters from the book and/or ten other letters of the alphabet.
5. The book contains a glossary (pp. 206-207). Discuss the purpose of a glossary is and how it aids the reader. Using the information in the book as inspiration, create an illustrated sentence for five of the words found in the glossary. What words and phrases found in the glossary and the collection are still used today in modern day Māori and/or incorporated into everyday New Zealand language, for example, kai and aroha?
6. Do you like the design and layout of the book? Why or why not? In pairs, choose one page you could redesign. Discuss the changes you would make. Think about colours, fonts, placement and layout.

### **Activities and Creative Responses:**

1. In pairs, take turns to read aloud your favourite tale from the collection to each other. Discuss why it is your favourite and how it makes you feel. Do you agree with your partner's choice? Why or why not?
2. After a close reading of the collection, choose your favourite tale to write your own comprehension questions about. Create a quiz based on your questions. Ask a classmate your quiz questions.
3. Choose your favourite tale from the collection to summarise. Present your summary in a poster, powerpoint, pamphlet or video format to your class.
4. Choose your favourite character from one of the tales to write a character study on. Think about the development of the character throughout the tale, and your how chosen character's attributes and actions affects those around them.
5. Choose one of the tales as inspiration for a poem. Choose a form of poetry, such as a rhyming ballad, a concrete or shape poem, a limerick, a haiku or a list poem.
6. Anthropomorphism is when gods, animals or things are depicted with human attributes and behaviours. Find five examples of this from the collection.
7. Examine the illustrations in the collection. Do you like the style? What colours are used? What kinds of lines and textures are used? Discuss Māori art motifs and symbols that have been used. Choose your favourite illustration to create your own artistic interpretation of, for example, a painting, drawing,

photograph, model, poem, etc. Or, design your own illustrations for the cover and/or one page of text.

8. Choose two illustrations from the book. Carefully study the character or characters and their expressions. What range of emotions is evident? How has Peter Gossage achieved these feelings in the illustrations? (Think about colour, size, composition, etc). Draw your own picture that expresses another emotion, such as sadness, happiness, anger or hope.
9. Read the author biography notes (p. 208). Find other books illustrated by Peter Gossage. Compare and contrast the illustrations. Are there many similarities or differences?
10. Choose one of the tales from the book, or research another Māori myth or legend. Re-tell your chosen story by writing, illustrating and binding a children's picture book. Use Māori art motifs and symbols in your book. Read your book to a younger year level in your school.
11. Based on this collection, research and present an inquiry into early Māori. You might consider how their lifestyle has been portrayed, such as clothing and body adornment, weapons, habitations, food sourcing and preparation, social hierarchy, protocols, spirituality and their relationship with nature and the world around them.
12. Discuss and create a comparison chart based on Māori myths and legends and other oral storytelling cultures. Look out for similarities and differences, for example, visiting the underworld, the role of the 'Trickster', etc.
13. In one of the tales Maui and his brothers cut and weave harakeke or flax (pp. 92-94). Research the Māori protocol for using flax. Present the protocol around the use of flax when weaving, in the format of an instructional pamphlet or storyboard.
14. On a map of New Zealand locate any of the geographical features and man made objects that are mentioned in the collection, for example, Mount Tongariro (p. 166) and the statue of Pania (p. 204).
15. Choose two animals and/or plants from the tales in the collection that are endemic to New Zealand. Research your chosen animals and/or plants to create an illustrated entry for a junior level encyclopaedia, for example, the piwakawaka and the kiwi (pp. 116-117). Or create a diorama of their natural habitats.
16. Maui is accompanied on his journey by many native New Zealand birds (pp. 116-117). Write a descriptive paragraph what it was like joining Maui on his quest to find fire from the point of view of one of the birds.

17. There are many characters in the collection. Get students to choose a character to describe using only three statements. As a class, try and guess which character has been described.
18. Using the drama convention of 'hot-seating', in pairs, choose one of the characters to embody, for example Maui and his mother. Get the class to ask questions about what it is like to be these characters, your relationship and how you feel about each other.
19. In groups, adapt a tale from the collection for a performance in your classroom, for example, when Maui as a rupe (wood pigeon) sang a chant of work to help the men dig (pp. 22-23). Devise a script, create scenery and props, choose music and make costumes. Act your adaptation out for your class. If you have access to a video camera, tape it.
20. Each of the Maui stories 'have been made into short films' (p. 208). Imagine you have been commissioned to turn another tale from the collection into a short film. Create a storyboard for your short film version of your chosen tale. In groups, imagine you are a television or film production company attempting to gain financial backing to create a show or movie of one of the tales in the collection. Write up and present your proposal to the class. Include information, such as your choice of title music and credits, presenter, show name and content, preferred channel and time slot, location, etc.
21. Look at the depiction of the ten underworlds and ten heavens from the collection (pp. 154-155). Choose one or more of these to research. Present your findings to the class.
22. Review the book for your favourite magazine or website. What do you like about the book? Why? What do you dislike about the book? Why? Consider the design, photographs, information and writing style. Also include your personal opinion of the book and the age group you think it is suitable for. Give it a rating, such as stars or a number out of ten.