

*Maori Lore. The Traditions of the Maori
People, with the Most Important of Their
Legends. Compiled for the Government of
New Zealand.*

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Publisher: *One More Voice*

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File Description

This file collects plot summaries and relevant keywords for selected stories in *Maori Lore. The Traditions of the Maori People, with the Most Important of Their Legends* (1904) by James Izett and various Māori coauthors/co-creators. Indu Ohri's students developed these materials for an introductory survey course on literature and the visual arts from Romanticism to the modern day during summer 2022 at Boston University.

As part of a class assignment, students created these materials about the folklore collections on the *One More Voice* (OMV) website. Each student read one folktale and devised a short plot summary of important events and characters and 3-5 keywords indicating the folktale's major concepts, themes, or Indigenous terms. In addition, some students contributed extra materials such as keyword definitions, long plot summaries, and an essay that contextualizes the folktale "How Kimyera Became King of Uganda" more fully in terms of social hierarchy.

These collections were frequently the first vehicles for sharing people of color's voices with western readers because colonial administrators would gather folklore from local coauthors/co-creators who they often failed to acknowledge. The materials are meant to guide a general scholarly audience of educators, graduate students, and college students who may be unfamiliar with these folktales as well as to enrich the public's knowledge about Indigenous folklore.

Cite (MLA):

Izett, James, ed. *Maori Lore. The Traditions of the Maori People, with the More Important of Their Legends. Compiled for the Government of New Zealand.* Translated by James Izett. Wellington, New Zealand: John Mackay, Government Printer, 1904.
<https://archive.org/details/maoriloretraditi00izetuoft/page/n7/mode/2up>.

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“The Legend of Rangi and Papa”

Plot Summary:

“The Legend of Rangi and Papa” is a story of the Sky Father and the Earth Mother. Together, they have many children. Their children would question what light is and are upset with living in darkness. This darkness is because Rangi and Papa embrace each other so tightly that no light could seep through them; their world is in darkness. Tane Mahuta, who was the God of the forest, comes up with the idea to divide his parents, Rangi and Papa. This divide means that the sky would be above them and the earth below their feet. They are separated when Tane Mahuta puts his head to the ground and kicks his father Rangi away. Light comes into the world. Humans prosper. However, Rangi continues to mourn Papa. His sighs go up to the sky, which creates mist, and her tears become dew.

Keywords: Rangi, Papa, Tangaroa, Tu-mata-uenga, ake. ake. ake!, and Tane-mahuta

Keyword Definitions

Rangi: Sky Father, embraced his wife Papa so tightly it stops the creation of the world and prevents any light from entering.

Papa: Sky Mother, embraces her husband Rangi so tightly it stops the creation of the world and prevents any light from entering.

Tangaroa: God of Sea and fertility.

Tu-mata-uenga: God of War, son of Rangi and Papa.

ake. ake. ake!: A phrase that means as long as it takes, which is now used in Māori protest.

Tane-mahuta: God of the forest, he separates Rangi and Papa,

“The Legend of Maui-tiki-tiki-o-Taranga”

Plot Summary:

Maui is a wise and gifted demigod in Māori mythology who is beloved for his many favors to the people. Maui experiences a miraculous birth and upbringing and is favored by his divine parents. He teaches humans practical skills, slows down the sun’s movement by tethering it with a fishing line, catches large fish from the sea to make islands, and discovers the secret of fire and steals it. After accomplishing various incredible feats, Maui embarks on a quest for human immortality and death. Still, he is about to succeed when he wakes the goddess Hine-Nui-te-pō, so Maui is split in two. Maui becomes the first to die, and all people are mortal.

Keywords: Maui, Heroes, Death, and Supernatural

Keyword Definitions: There are no definitions for this item.

“The Legend of Tawhaki”

Plot Summary:

Tawhaki, son of Hema and Uru-tonga, marries Hene-piri-piri. After fishing, Tawhaki is attacked by his brothers-in-law, but Hene tends to him. Tawhaki gets revenge by calling the gods to send a rainstorm on his perpetrators.

The Ponaturi, an amphibian race, slay Hema, and hold Uru-tonga captive. Tawhaki and his younger brother, Karihi, avenge Hema and save Uru-tonga by killing the Ponaturi with sunlight.

Tawhaki’s heroic actions reach Tango-tango, a beautiful maiden who lives in heaven, and she becomes infatuated with Tawhaki. The two marry, but Tango-tango has to return to heaven with their daughter.

Tawhaki restores his grandmother’s sight, and she directs him to heaven. In heaven, Tawhaki disguises himself as an old man and performs incantations to draw attention. He transforms back into Tawhaki in front of Tango-tango and the two live a happy life together. Tawhaki’s story ends when a crowd of supernatural monsters destroys him.

Keywords: Love, Revenge, Heaven, Family, and Marriage

Keyword Definitions: There are no definitions for this item.

“The Legend of Rata”

Plot Summary:

Wahieroa marries Kura and the two have a son, Rata. However, Wahieroa is slain by a goblin chief. In response, Rata sets off to avenge his father. Arriving at the Goblin’s abode, Rata meets the caretaker of the estate. The caretaker helps Rata plan his attack, which is successful. Soon, however, it is realized that Wahieroa’s bones are in fact in the possession of lizard-like creatures. Rata returns home to fashion a canoe; however, the canoe reverts to a tree each night. Ultimately, wood sprites take pity on Rata and create a canoe in which 140 warriors travel. Arriving at the monsters’ fortress, Rata encounters their priests, who are using Wahieroa’s bones in incantations. Rata slays them and retreats, but he is caught, and a battle ensues. Rata is able to win using an incantation he heard the priests reciting, illustrating the reward the brave receive in times of need.

Keywords: Vengeance, Incantations, and Warrior

Keyword Definitions: There are no definitions for this item.

“The Legend of Maui-naua, Subsequently called Rupe”

Plot Summary:

This folktale portrays the story of Maui, setting off in search of his beloved, Hina, whose body washed up onto shore and is found by two brothers, who become infatuated with her beauty. After taking her in, they develop a strong devotion to Hina, leaving her with the desire to marry both. Meanwhile, Maui searches through lands where people attempt to convince him of the folly in his task. He resorts to the help of Rehua and needs to travel to the skies. After meeting with the lord of kindness, he attains what he came for, finds Hina, and they are treated with what seem to be forms of cannibalism, which are questionable. Maui, subsequently known as Rupe, makes great sacrifices in search of his beloved. In their divine abode, Rupe unlearns functional fixedness, attaining knowledge of his world through terms of endearment and devotion.

The folktale is a piece that tells more than the story of a long-living myth: it conveys cultural-based theories of how the natural world came to be and exists as a continuum, with an intense need for higher power exhibited by multiple characters that is clearly motivated by a lack of a certain knowledge. A journal article I came across on JStor, Elsdon Best’s “Notes on Maori Mythology,” states “[t]he neolithic Maori has for centuries been groping his way in the subjective world in order to gain some knowledge of the mystery of life, of natural phenomena, of the origin of things” (9). The statement is later followed by “and overgrown by the weeds of ignorance and superstition, yet is it well to know that he has trod them” (9), both underpinning Maui’s determination to attain his destiny against all the odds and a feeling of self-satisfaction to be with Hina once again.

Keywords: Devotion, Turmoil, Sedulous, Sacrifice, and Revival

Keyword Definitions: There are no definitions for this item.

“The Legend of Kupe and Turi”

Plot Summary:

Hotu-rapa marries Kuramarotini, daughter of Toto. After killing Hotu-rapa in the waters of Hawa-iki out of jealousy, Kupe disappears into the sea with Kuramarotini for four years, eventually marrying her. After sailing back to Hawa-iki, they learn that Uenuku, a priest, has eaten Potikiroroa, Hoimatua's son. Turi, the chief, eats Uenuku's son, Hawepotiki, to get revenge. Toto, the father of Turi's wife, makes a special canoe for Turi to leave the island with his people. On Turi's voyage, Kupe directs Turi towards the east, but Turi and his brother-in-law, Tuau, do not follow directions, thinking Kupe is deceiving them. As the canoe fills with water, they land on an island they named Rangitahua and meet Porua, a chief on the island. Porua and Turi set sail and Porua's canoe gets lost. Turi makes his way to land, looking for the river Patea, which Kupe described to him. Turi establishes settlements there, plants crops, and gives birth to the Ngati-manui tribe.

Keywords: Revenge, Envy, Migration, Ritual, and Tradition

Keyword Definitions: There are no definitions for this item.

“The Legend of Tura”

Plot Summary:

Whiro, a deceitful and evil ruler, convinces his affectionate brother, Tura, to accompany him on a voyage as he struggles with his health. Prior to their departure, Whiro kills the son of his other brother, Hua. Whiro’s actions lead Tura to realize what his brother truly is: a monster. As the brothers grow apart, Tura asks Whiro to leave him and his family on an island. Whiro complies but abandons Tura. Initially lonely, Tura later finds the locals and becomes greatly infatuated with one named Tu-raki-hau. They marry and have a child, but do not follow cultural traditions, disappointing the locals. Tura and his wife go on to have more children, but their children largely ignore their father. Tura distances himself from his family. After many years, Tura’s first son discovers his father and takes the frail, sorrowful man to Hawaii, where he dies.

Keywords: Fairy Woman, The Ocean, Cultural Differences, and The Power of Love

Keyword Definitions:

Fairy Woman: Tu-raki-hau is a fairy woman. During the Victorian era, the fairy woman character type represented the injection of the supernatural into the story. Tura regards Tu-raki-hau as a higher being; she possesses inexplicable powers that intrigue him. The fairy woman character in a story usually seduces a male character using her beauty.

The Ocean: In Māori lore, the ocean is considered the basis of all life. The islands that populate the ocean are regarded as fish that swam to the ocean’s surface. The ocean serves as a catalyst for the plot’s progression and its vastness represents the ambiguity of life (Royal).

Cultural Differences: One instance of Tura and Tu-raki-hau addressing a cultural difference appears in the story. Tu-raki-hau's people believed that, upon birthing a child, the mother must die in sacrificial fashion. Tura hears of this tradition and becomes immensely fearful of losing his wife. He convinces Tu-raki-hau that she should live to see her seed grow. They have a child, but their decision to not abide by cultural norms pushes Tu-raki-hau away from her people.

Understanding cultural differences is important because it allows one to grow their ability to sympathize with and appreciate others.

Power of Love: This story encapsulates the force that is love. It is the primary motivator for Tura's character. The reader sees how easily Tura falls for Tu-raki-hau, putting power over him in her hands. Love prompts characters to leave the familiarity of their lives for exciting changes. Conversely, placing too much emphasis on love can result in despair. The reader sees how unreciprocated love forever alters Tura's life for the worse (Du Plessis).

“The Legend of Rua-tapu”

Plot Summary:

Rua-tapu seeks revenge on his father after being scolded and humiliated for using his older brother’s sacred comb. He lures his older brother and hundreds of other men onto a ship he has purposefully sabotaged in an incident referred to as Puru-unuhia. However, this deed is not enough for Rua-tapu, who feels the need to continue his destruction. Rua-tapu summons a tsunami, dubbed the Te Puru-unuk, upon the people of Hiku-rangi. However, Moakura-man, Rua-tapu’s sister, catches wind of the wave and drinks up all of its water, ultimately becoming a hero. An alternate ending to the story claims that Rua-tapu’s body bursts and becomes the Te Puru-unuk tsunami after the Puru-unuhia incident. Another ending paints Rua-tapu as the story’s hero, claiming that the people of Hiku-rangi are wicked and have cursed Rua-tapu. This version views the Puru-unuhia and Te Puru-unuk as justified actions against evil.

Percy S. Smith explains the migration of the Hiku-rangi people to New Zealand. His article states that instead of drowning on the boat, Kahutia-te-rangi left Hawaiki and moved to New Zealand, where he started a new lineage. Additionally, through ancient legends, it is implied that the characters Paikea and Kahutia-te-rangi in the legend are the same person; this notion is not covered in “The Legend of Rua-tapu.”

Keywords: Revenge, Family, Nature, Tsunami, and Alternative Stories

Keyword Definitions: There are no definitions for this item.

“The Legend of the Emigration of Manaia”

Plot Summary:

Manaia is the leader of his tribe. One day, when he is off fishing, his wife Rongotiki is assaulted. To get revenge on the Tupenu people who assaulted his wife, Manaia decides to attack them by surprise. He kills their leader with the help of his people. The other Tupenu people find out about this raid and decide to attack Manaia and his people, which forces them to flee from their homeland. Manaia and his people go on a long journey to find a new home and reach an island that seems habitable. However, they run into other people on this island who claim they were present first and are forced to move again. Manaia and his people continue their journey, reaching many different islands. Eventually, they reach an island, and slay the people who were there first so that Manaia and his people can finally settle there and call it home.

Keywords: Manaia, Rongotiki, Kaka-kaka-nui, Tupenu, and Tokomaru

Keyword Definitions: There are no definitions for this item.

“All about a Dog”

Plot Summary:

This folktale is about a war that develops between tribes and that is ignited by a single animal: a dog. The dog, Potaka-tawhiti, belongs to Houmai-tawhiti, but one day the Potaka goes missing. Houmai searched everywhere for his dog, only to find out that Toi-te-huatahi has eaten his dog. Potaka is barking through the stomach of Toi. Of course, this angers Houmai. Thus, they need a way to achieve vengeance; so, they decide to eat all of the luscious fruits from the trees in Toi's village. Then comes a series of retaliations that each of the tribes inflicts on each other to get revenge. Whakaturia gets captured by Toi's tribe and finds a way to escape his bindings. Eventually, both tribes agree to find peace and end their ongoing war. And what ignited this? Well, a dog...

Keywords: Loyalty, Dog, Pride, Cunning, and Determination

Keyword Definitions: There are no definitions for this item.

“The Legend of the Curse of Manaia”

Plot Summary:

This legend begins with the story of Chief Manaia and his wife. At a meeting of Manaia’s tribe, his wife, Kuiwai, undercooks the Chief’s meal, which sends him into a rage. Kuwait tells her daughter to notify her uncle, Ngatoro-i-rang, that Manaia cursed her. The journey is described as treacherous before the daughter reaches the village called Tuhoro.

The daughter meets with her uncle, the Great Tohunga, and after enacting a ceremony with the help of the Gods, they demand a battle between the two tribes, Tama te Kapu at Maketu and the Tribe of Manaia in Hawaiki. Ngatoro-i-rang makes a plan to have the village fake their deaths to convince the other tribe that their curse had worked, and then surprise them with their survival and attack them. Manaia was able to escape every battle between the tribes, and it is said that this is not the last of him.

Keywords: Ihumotomotokia, Tohunga, Pungawere, and Metaphorically Entombed

Keyword Definitions:

Ihumotomotokia: “Battle of the Bruised Noses.” The first battle that took place at the ovens.

Tohunga: An expert practitioner of any skill who guides people and protects them from spiritual forces.

Pungawere: A wind that travels to land when Ngatoro-i-rangi sails from New Zealand to Hawaiki to revenge the curse of Manaia (Tregear 375).

Metaphorically Entombed: Buried in a symbolic way and not in the literal sense.

“The Legend of Hatu-patu”

Plot Summary:

“The Legend of Hatu-patu” roots from the burning of *Te Arawa*. But it is also a story about betrayal, revival, and making amendments. Hatu-patu is the youngest of three sons who all enjoy bird hunting. When they complete their hunting, his older brothers, Hanui and Hanoa, save themselves the tenderest meat after hunting, leaving Hatu-patu the toughest parts of the bird. After catching Hatu-patu sneaking bird meat when they are not home, his brothers beat him until they assume he is dead. However, he is not. Instead, he meets a woman, Kurangaituku, who tries to possess him, but she dies when she falls into a hot spring. Ultimately, Hatu-patu returns home to face his brothers, and captures the leader, Raumati, for destroying the sacred *Te Awara*. The whole town rejoices as Hatu-patu takes vengeance for the burning of *Te Arawa* and receives the highest honor from his father.

Keywords: Hatu-Patu, *Te Awara*, Jealousy, Warriors, and Vengeance

Keyword Definitions: There are no definitions for this item.

“The Legend of Maru-tuaha”

Plot Summary:

Hotunui lives in Kawhia, New Zealand. He is happy and content with his life until he is falsely accused of stealing potatoes one day. After this incident, he decides to move, but not without deciding on a name for his unborn child, Maru-Tuaha. Eventually, Maru-Tuaha becomes old enough to set out on a journey to find his father, who has started a new family in Wakatiwai. Maru-Tuaha runs into his two stepcousins, Hopa, who he later marries, and Rotina. They lead the young chief to his father’s village, where he receives a very warm welcome. His father is proud and happy to see him. After staying for a bit, Hotunui tells Maru-Tuaha of the rude tribe that neighbors this village. They compose a plan and invite the tribe over for a feast of fish. When the other tribe is seated, they purposely cast the fishing net and trap all one thousand men. This event becomes known as “the feast of rotten wood” by Maru-Tuaha’s descendants, who quickly take possession of the neighboring lands and dwell there to this day.

Keywords: Tohunga, Vengeance, Fishing Nets, and Fellowship

Keyword Definitions:

Tohunga: In New Zealand culture, they are masters or experts in any skill or art.

Vengeance: Maru-Tuaha seeks to pay the neighboring village back for being rude and denying his father a fish. The entire entrapment plan is rooted in the impulse for revenge.

Fishing Nets: The nets required for the plan take from mid-winter to autumn to complete. The large net is rooted in the ground by wooden stakes and is then pulled up and dropped on the

unexpected visitors. Since they were coastal tribes, the art of netmaking was well-known and common among the Māori people.

Fellowship: The entire conflict starts when Hotunui is denied a fish. Taking such offense to that denial when he is willing to offer anything in return, such as payment or a favor, shows that sharing was expected of people. It was also a denial of respect, as Hotunui is the chieftain of the neighboring village.

“The Legend of Te Kahu rere-moa”

Plot Summary:

This story is about the beautiful daughter of Te Paka. She is said to be the most beautiful woman in the village of Wharekawa. Once she is ready to marry, many men come to her father looking to be given her hand in marriage. Among them, all the principal chiefs of Aotea come to Te Paka with glamorous gifts. In return, Kahu-rere-moa is given in marriage to the Aotea chief's son. Though this is such a good opportunity for Te Kahu rere-moa to obtain higher status in society, she does not want to marry this man. After having problems with her father, she decides to go on a journey to find her love, Takakopiri. After many days of journeying and many obstacles along the way, the young beauty reaches her destination and marries the man she desires and has a family with him.

Keywords: Arranged Marriage, Forbidden Love, Love at First Sight, Beauty, and Independence

Keyword Definitions: There are no definitions for this item.

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