

LEVELED BOOK • W

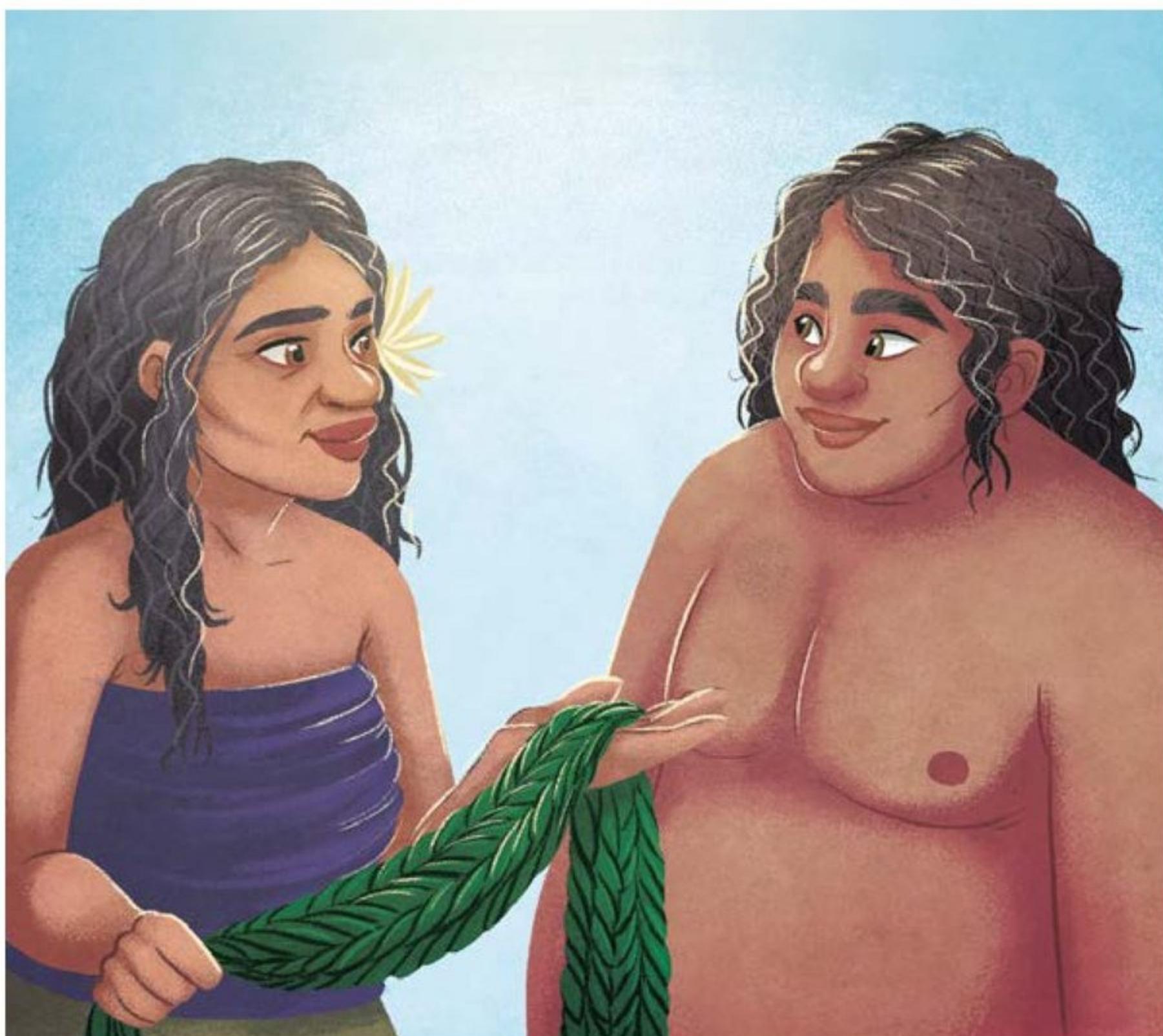
The Hero Maui

MULTI
LEVEL
T•W•Z

Written by Keith and Sarah Kortemartin
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Focus Question

What makes Maui a hero?

Words to Know

boon
cajoled
cunning
exploits
generation
immortal

mischief
mythical
Polynesian
simultaneously
taut
trickster

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Level W Leveled Book
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Correlation

LEVEL W	
Fountas & Pinnell	S
Reading Recovery	40
DRA	40

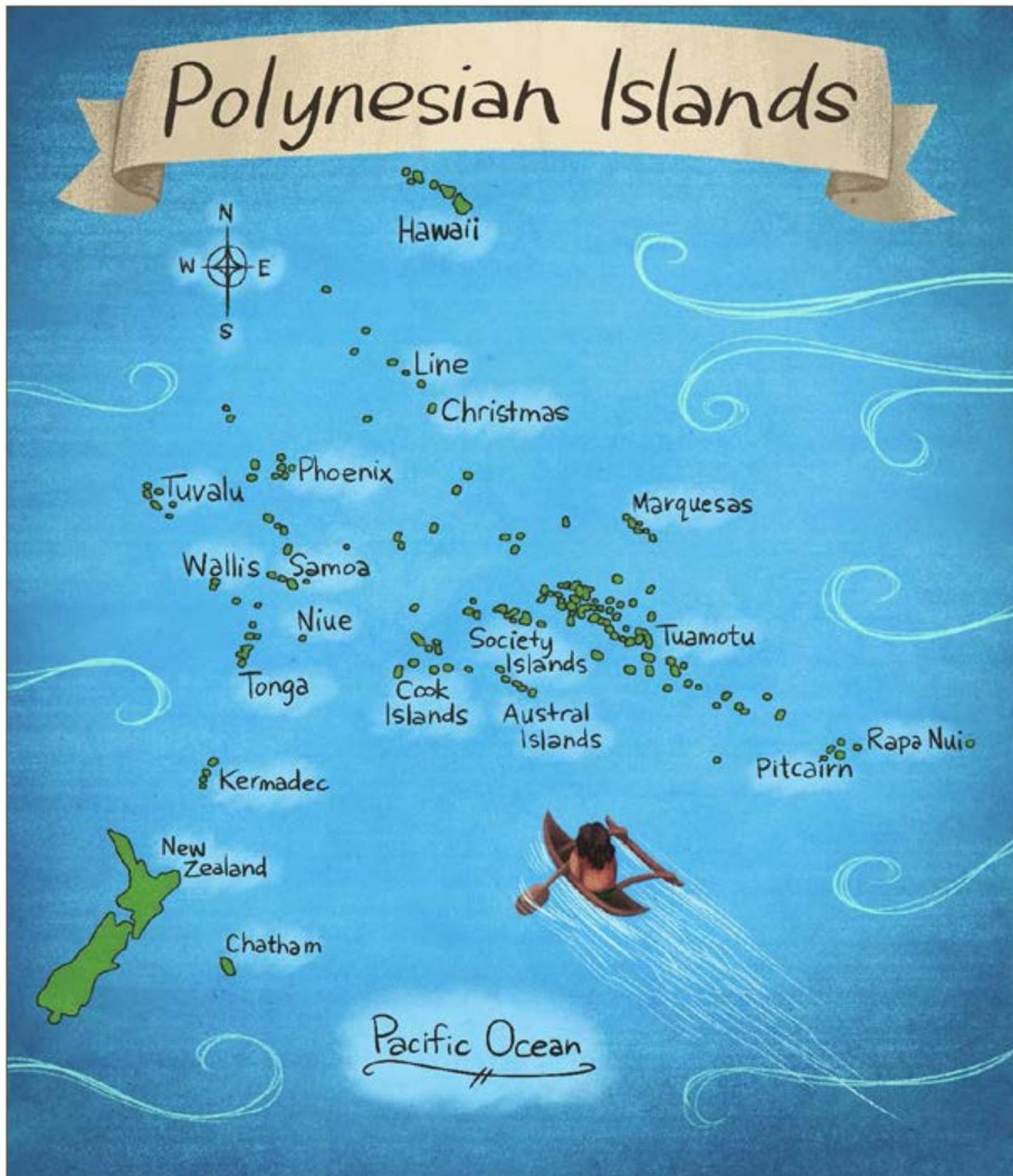


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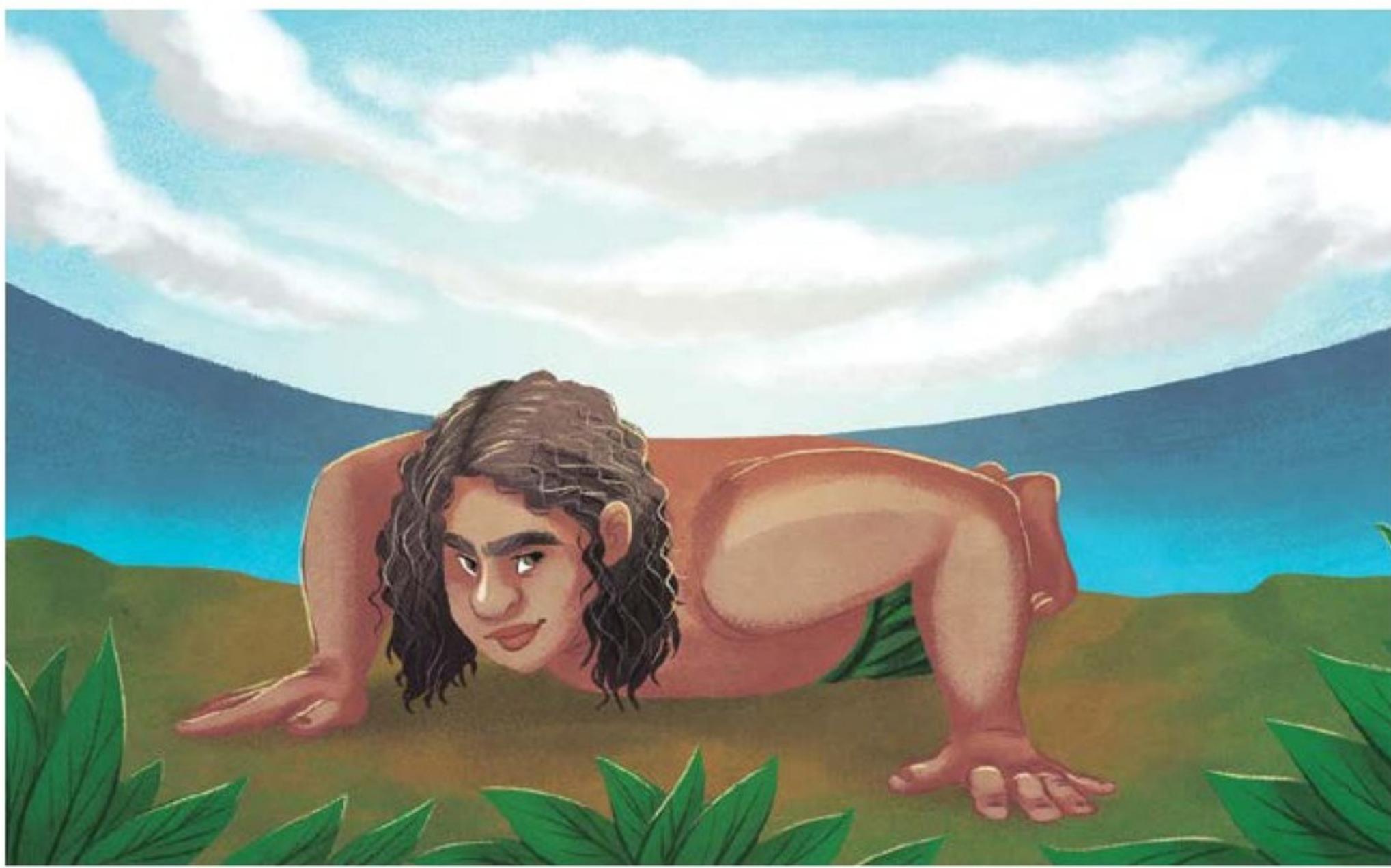
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Hero of the Pacific

The **Polynesian** peoples settled more than one thousand islands in the Pacific Ocean. Each island has its own traditions, but one of the **mythical** figures common to all of Polynesia is the **trickster** Maui. His heroic **exploits** have been told in different ways all across the Pacific.

Maui was a demigod, the son of a human woman and a god. Therefore, he was not **immortal**, but he did have supernatural powers of **cunning**, imagination, and strength. Here are a few of the stories that Polynesians have told about the hero Maui.



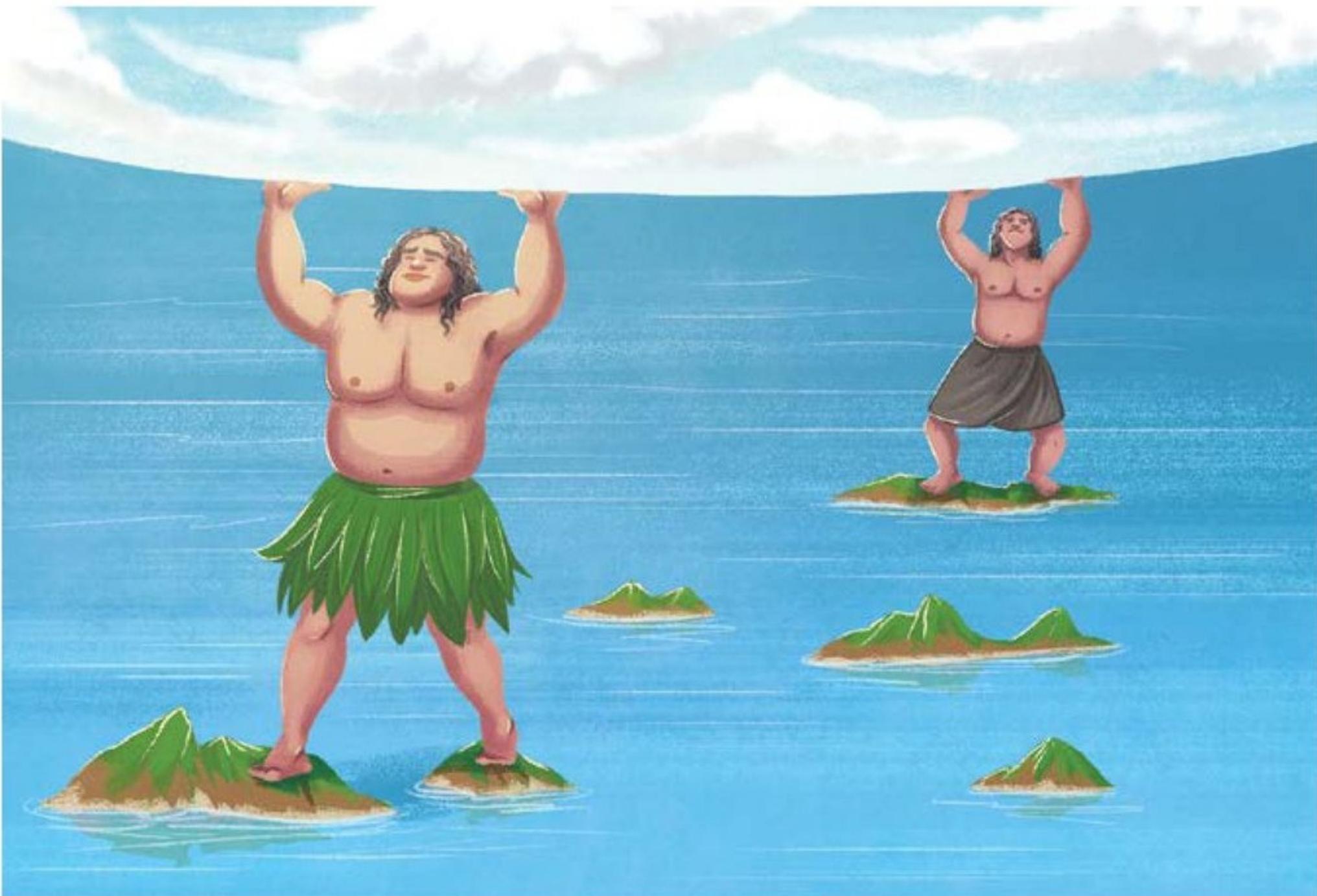


Maui Pushes Up the Sky

Long ago, the earth and the sky had not yet been separated. People were forced to crawl from place to place when they wanted to move around. It was very inconvenient and difficult for people to fish, farm, or visit one another.

Seeing this, Maui decided to raise the sky into the heavens so that humanity could move around freely. He went to the sky god, Ru, to request assistance with this task.

They agreed to travel far apart from one another and then, on a signal, push the sky up **simultaneously**. Maui crawled north and Ru crept south until they each came to a place where they could lie flat on the ground and brace their backs against the sky.



At Maui's signal, they both began to push. Their strength was enormous, and the sky began to move. Gradually, they pushed themselves into a crouching position; then, with great effort, they stood up with the sky resting on their shoulders.

Then Ru and Maui placed their hands under the sky, palms up. They stretched upward until they were taller than the tallest mountains. As they grew, the sky rose with them until it floated miles above the land.

Their achievement is still visible today as we look up at the perfect blue dome Ru and Maui created. People, plants, and animals can now grow and move freely on the earth because of their efforts.

Maui Snares the Sun

The lifting of the sky created an unexpected problem. Suddenly the Sun had enough space to run across it very quickly.

This caused great suffering for humankind, as the days became very short. Plants could not grow, fruits could not ripen, and the nights were long and bitterly cold.

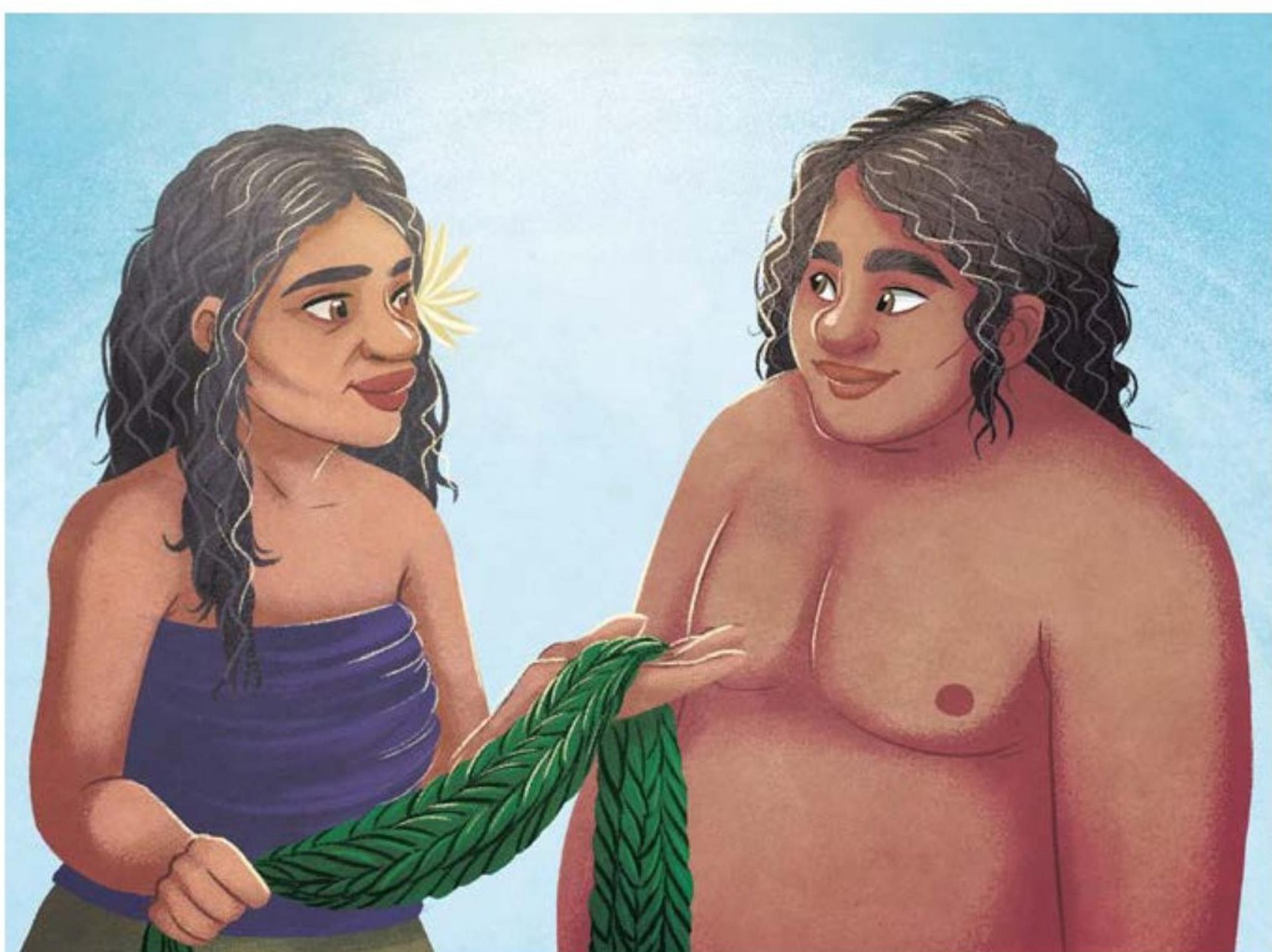
Maui's mother was particularly unhappy, for the Sun's speed interfered with her work. It was her task to make cloth and sew it into clothing and sleeping mats. She made her cloth by stripping bark from trees, pounding it into a pulp, and then spreading the pulp to dry in sheets. However, because the days were so short, she could not dry the sheets of wood pulp. Cloth was in short supply. People complained, and Maui's mother begged Maui to help her.



Maui promised to do what he could. He noticed that the Sun had sixteen legs, which allowed him to run very quickly. Maui reasoned that if he could snare those legs, he could halt the Sun's journey and bargain with him.

Maui's mother approved of this plan, and she gave him sixteen ropes made of strong vines. Then she instructed him to seek advice from his grandmother.

Maui's grandmother gave him a magic war axe and another strong rope made of twisted vines. She told Maui to hide underneath a tree at the top of a mountain.





"From there," she said, "you will be able to see the Sun as he comes up. When his first leg creeps over the horizon, throw your first rope, catch his leg, and fasten the rope to a tree. Do this as each of his legs comes up, and you will trap him."

Before dawn the next morning, Maui concealed himself under a tree at the top of a tall mountain. Before long, the Sun's first leg appeared on the horizon, and Maui threw his rope and caught it. He fastened the rope to the tree and waited for the second leg to appear.

The Sun soon realized what was happening and tried to flee. But Maui, using the ropes, dragged him back and threatened him with the war axe from his grandmother. The Sun was terrified and begged Maui to release him.



"I will do no such thing," Maui said, "until we reach an agreement." He described all the troubles the Sun's rapid progress across the sky had made for humankind: how the people could not cook, work, or pray because the days were so short.

The Sun, in fear, accepted everything Maui said, and soon they made a bargain. Maui was not hard-hearted, and he agreed to allow the Sun to travel quickly across the sky in winter. But in the summer, they agreed that the Sun would travel at a leisurely pace so that the days would be long and the people would be able to complete their work.

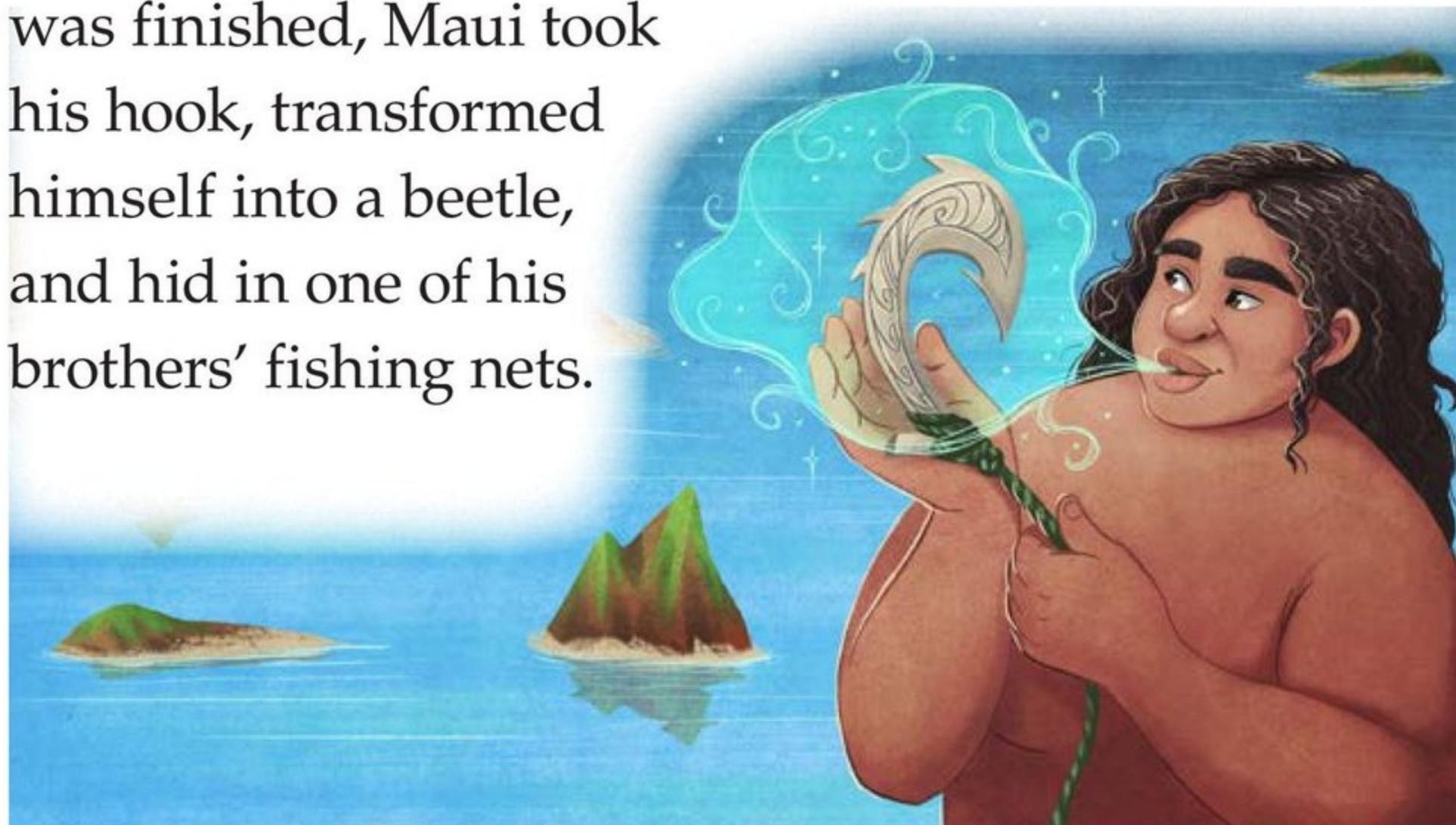
Thus Maui snared the Sun and created the seasons we have today.

Maui Pulls Up the Islands

Maui's strength and cunning were equaled only by his love of **mischief**. When he and his brothers went out fishing, for example, the brothers would often catch fish after much time and effort, only to discover that the fish wound up in Maui's net.

Eventually, Maui's brothers refused to take him fishing any longer. Maui realized that he would have to prove his worth as a fisherman if he were ever to fish with his brothers again. He decided to make a new fishing hook that could catch the greatest fish in the world.

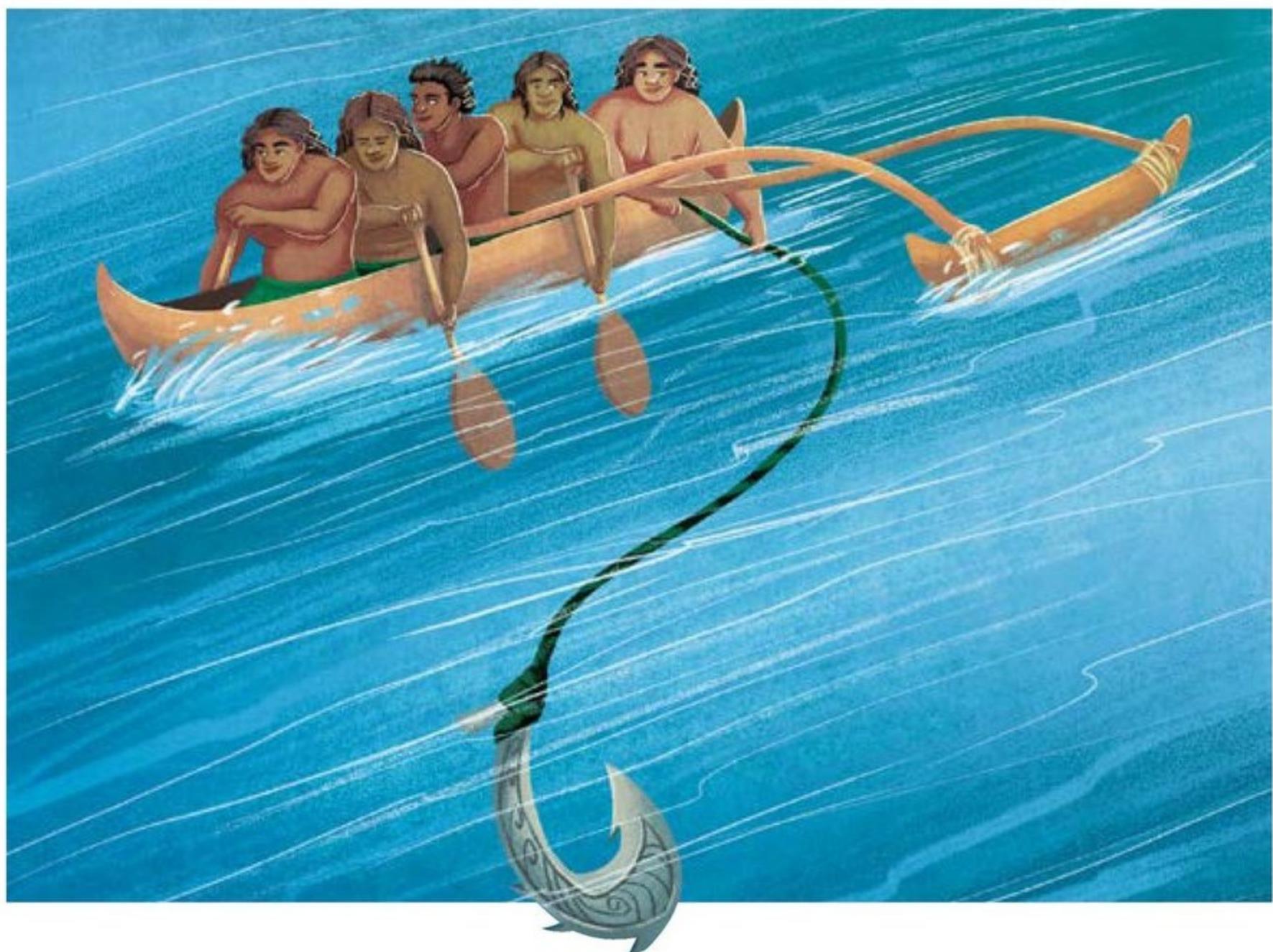
Maui labored for many days and made himself an enormous fishing hook from a sharp bone and a twisted vine. He also breathed some of his own magic power into it. When he was finished, Maui took his hook, transformed himself into a beetle, and hid in one of his brothers' fishing nets.

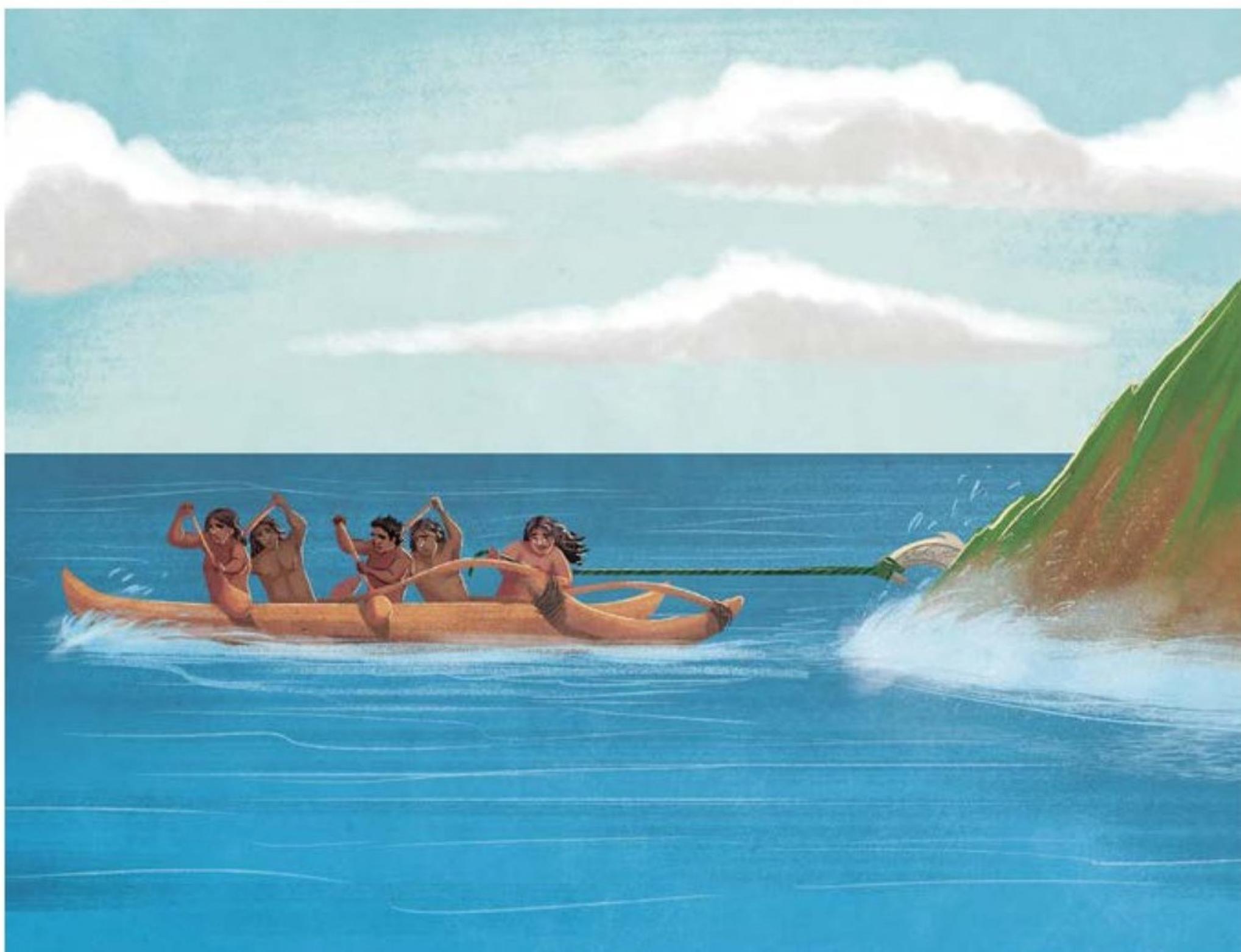


As soon as his brothers were far out to sea, Maui transformed into his proper shape and revealed himself to them. They were not pleased, but Maui **cajoled** them to stay out in the fishing grounds. “If you will take me to the deepest parts of the ocean,” Maui said, “I will show you the greatest fish in the sea.”

His brothers grumbled, but rather than endure Maui’s arguments, they decided to grant his request. They paddled far out to sea, and Maui cast out his magic hook and fishing line.

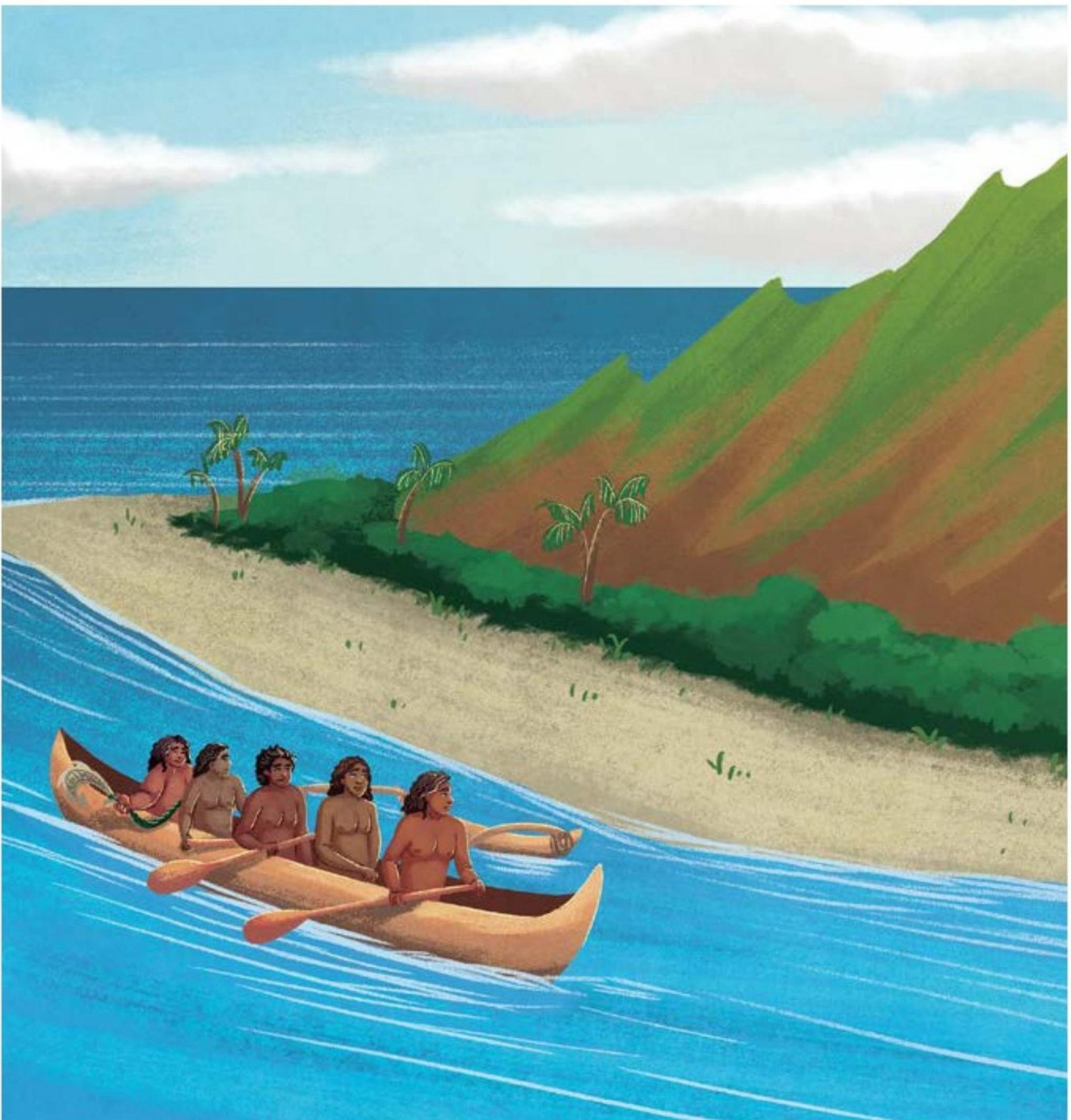
Suddenly there was an enormous pull on the fishing line. “Paddle!” Maui cried to his brothers. “Keep the line **taut!** We will bring in this great fish together.”





Maui's brothers paddled with all their might, for they were also eager to see what he had caught. It certainly was a heavy fish; as they drove their oars into the water, the brothers found that their united strength was scarcely enough to keep the canoe moving.

Finally they could hear something splashing up through the waves behind the canoe. One of Maui's brothers glanced back to see what they had caught—and then he screamed, horrified. He saw an enormous island surfacing behind them, caught fast on Maui's magic fishing hook. It looked like a monstrous fish about to devour them all.



Maui gave one final, enormous heave and cast the line free, settling the island into place. Suddenly, the brothers found that they were paddling in shallow water next to a beach. Exhausted, they rested on their oars and looked up in wonder at the island that Maui had raised out of the ocean.

That is how the hero Maui lifted the Pacific Islands out of the sea.

Maui Defeated

Maui gave humankind many gifts, including the gift of summer, the gift of the islands, and the gift of the sky. But there was one **boon** he was not able to grant humankind: the gift of immortality.

Maui believed that it was not right that people should die. He decided to attempt to steal the secret of immortality from Hine (HEE-nay), the goddess who kept the secret to immortal life in her heart. Maui knew that the only way to steal the secret was to steal Hine's heart.

Gathering his courage, Maui approached Hine while she was sleeping and dived into her open mouth. He found Hine's heart and nearly escaped with it—but Hine woke just as he was trying to come out of her mouth again. She caught Maui in her teeth and killed him.

Maui was not successful in giving humanity the gift of immortality, but humanity remembers him and honors him for the attempt. In this way, the hero Maui survives as the stories about him are passed down from **generation** to generation.

Glossary

boon (<i>n.</i>)	a request or favor (p. 15)
cajoled (<i>v.</i>)	persuaded another with flattery, gentle urging, or by making promises; coaxed (p. 12)
cunning (<i>n.</i>)	cleverness or deceit used to trick others (p. 4)
exploits (<i>n.</i>)	remarkable or heroic deeds (p. 4)
generation (<i>n.</i>)	all the people or other living things that are born and live at about the same time (p. 15)
immortal (<i>adj.</i>)	able to live forever; not subject to death (p. 4)
mischief (<i>n.</i>)	behavior that is troublesome or annoying (p. 11)
mythical (<i>adj.</i>)	of or relating to a myth or folktale; imaginary or idealized (p. 4)
Polynesian (<i>adj.</i>)	of or relating to people from ethnic groups native to many islands in the Pacific Ocean (p. 4)
simultaneously (<i>adv.</i>)	at the same time (p. 5)
taut (<i>adj.</i>)	stretched tight; without any slack (p. 12)
trickster (<i>n.</i>)	a clever, deceptive, or mischievous character who takes various forms in the mythology or folklore of many cultures (p. 4)

The Hero Maui

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Word Count: 1,430

Connections

Writing

Write an original myth about the demigod Maui that is true to his character and shows him using one or more of his special powers.

Social Studies

Choose a Polynesian island to research.

Locate the island on a map and create a report about its geography and culture.

Share your report with the class.



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