

# Nanny's Tokotoko

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## Overview

It's Tania's birthday, and her grandmother has decided Tania is ready to learn their whakapapa and the significance of her walking stick (tokotoko). This text explores the concept of coming of age and gives students opportunities to make connections to their own families and experiences.

This story has a relatively low reading age but is rich in ideas that encourage deep thinking, so it can be used with students across a broad range of reading levels.

There are also opportunities to link this story with other texts that explore relationships with elderly people, such as "Feleti's Birthday" (SJ 2.2.08).

## Suggested teaching purposes

- To support the students in developing the comprehension strategies of **inferring** and identifying the main idea.
- To engage the students in reading a story about growing up and the importance of family.

## Suggested learning goal

I am learning to look for clues in the text to help me infer the big ideas in this story.

## Success criteria

I will be successful when I have:

- looked for clues to help me infer why the tokotoko is important in this story
- used the story about the tokotoko to help me make connections to other ideas about taonga in this text
- made connections between the ideas to help me infer what the big ideas are – what the author thinks is important.

## Features of the text

*What features of this text support the teaching purpose?*

- The concept of growing up and coming of age, shown by what Nanny has to say about the tokotoko and Tania's reaction
- The ideas about taonga (whakapapa, personal relationships, memories, the tokotoko, the pounamu necklace, the knowledge of the special valley) and the importance of preserving and passing these on
- The concept and significance of whakapapa, including:
  - knowing who has come before
  - knowing your place within your family
  - accepting responsibility to pass on family history
  - the importance of oral history
- The significance of the tokotoko:
  - being a "talking stick" (as well as a walking stick), representing
  - family history
  - being a way of sharing history

- being a taonga or treasure
- linking to the significance of the tōtara trees
- The narration of the story from Tania’s point of view
- The warm relationship between the two main characters, which is conveyed in the text and illustrations
- The shared sense of loss
- The use of Māori and the supports provided in the text (“Moemoeā, e moko. Sweet dreams”; “In our tribe, the firstborn is called the mātāmua”) and the glossary.

## **Readability**

Noun frequency level: 7.5–8.5 years for guided reading

*What prior knowledge or experience might help my students to read this text?*

- Knowledge of Māori culture, including whakapapa (genealogies) and mihi
- Knowledge of their own family history
- Experience of family treasures being passed down
- Positive relationships with grandparents or an older person
- Experience in noticing word definitions within a text and in using a glossary.

*What text features might challenge my students and require a prompt or a brief explanation?*

- The Māori vocabulary, especially for students new to New Zealand, including “tokotoko”, “hongī”, “moko”, “tamariki”, “aroha”
- Particular words and phrases, including “knotted”, “nudging”, “shot out of bed”, “notch”, “represents”, “tamariki”, “pass on”, “tears welled up”, “worn smooth with aroha”.

## **Preparation for reading**

The day before doing the lesson below, have your students read “Family Treasures” (SJ 1.3.07). Ask them to think about their own experiences of people passing down treasured family items and to be ready to discuss them with the group.

## **A framework for the lesson**

*How will I help my students to achieve the learning goal?*

### **Before reading**

- Refer to the reading from the day before. Discuss the students’ concepts of what a treasure (or taonga) is. Draw out the idea of taonga being passed down through generations and that there is often a story that goes with them. Encourage the students to share their own experiences of family taonga. (Making connections)
- Tell the students you have a story for them to read about the importance of taonga. Alert them to the idea that taonga come in many different forms. For example, discuss why the author has included her own iwi affiliation, drawing out the idea that it’s important to her. (Making connections; inferring)
- Introduce the title. Briefly discuss what a tokotoko is, using the students’ prior knowledge and the illustrations on pages 2 and 3 as a support. While Nanny’s tokotoko is a “talking” stick, a tokotoko can also just be a walking stick. (Making connections)

- Share the learning goal and success criteria with the students.

## Reading and discussing the text

Refer to *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 5 to 8 for information about deliberate acts of teaching.*

As your students read through the text, support them with any unfamiliar vocabulary and concepts as necessary.

- Have the students read pages 2 and 3. “What are you noticing about the relationship between Nanny Peka and Tania?” Draw out the clues from the text, including the reading of a story, the hongī, and the phrase “Just like she always did”. (Inferring)
- “I wonder why Nanny calls it her ‘talking stick’.” (Forming hypotheses)
- Have the students think, pair, and share to compare the points of view in the story so far. “What is important to Tania right now? What is important to Nanny?” Ask them to provide evidence for their ideas. “How does this help us to start thinking about what the author feels is important?” (Inferring; forming hypotheses; identifying the main idea)
- Have the students read pages 4 and 5. Discuss the phrase “shot out of bed”. Prompt the students to make connections to their own feelings of expectation and anticipation before a birthday or special event. (Making connections; inferring)
- “Nanny seems to have a plan. I wonder where she’s taking Tania ...” (Forming hypotheses)
- Have the students read pages 6 and 7. You could use the information in the text to sketch the notches and marks on the whiteboard to help the students visualise how Tania’s whakapapa has been recorded. Note that the number of generations recorded on the tokotoko shows how old it is. Continue to support the students with the Māori vocabulary as necessary. Record the word “mātāmua” and its definition on the board as a support for reading pages 8 and 9. (Visualising; making connections)
- “Why has Nana taken Tania to this special place?” Refer to the learning goal and success criteria. “How are these criteria helping your thinking about the big ideas in this story?” (Inferring; identifying the main idea)
- Have the students read page 8. “What are you noticing about how Tania’s ideas about the tokotoko have changed since the beginning of the story? What do you think Nanny means when she says the tokotoko never shuts up?” Continue to draw out the idea that the notches represent family history, which is always visible and is added to with each generation. “Why are there three marks under Nanny’s notch?” (Inferring; forming hypotheses)
- Have the students read page 9 to find out what the author wants us to know about Tania’s family. “What can we infer from this page about Tania’s mum? What clues helped you?” (For example, Nanny standing very still, her sad look, and the use of the past-tense verbs “had” and “was”.) Discuss how the stick continues to record each generation so that even when people die, they are remembered on the tokotoko. (Inferring; identifying the main idea)
- Have the students read page 10. “I can see a clue here that seems to confirm our inferences about Tania’s mother ...” Check that the students understand the meaning of the term “pass on”. (Inferring)

- “What do you think Nanny is chanting and why? Why do you think she has chosen to tell Tania about the notches on the stick now?” Draw out Nanny’s feeling that Tania is old enough to understand and appreciate her responsibility. “Do you think Nanny is right about Tania? What clues are you using to infer this?” (Inferring)
- Remind the students of the learning goal and ask them to read to the end of the text. “What has made this a significant birthday for Tania?” Draw the students’ attention to the fact that this is the first time the birthday has been mentioned since the beginning of the text. “Why do you think that is?” Discuss the phrase “worn smooth with aroha”. “What does this tell us about the significance of the necklace?” (Inferring)
- “We’ve found out that the tokotoko is a taonga. What other ideas about taonga have we found in this text?” Record the students’ ideas, for example, the necklace, Tania’s whakapapa, the relationships between Nanny, Tania, and Tania’s mum, the special valley, and the tōtara trees. “If we think about all of these ideas, what can you infer about the big ideas in this text – what it is that the author thinks is most important?” (Making connections; inferring; identifying the main idea)

### **After reading**

- Discuss the ideas in the text about coming of age. Make connections to any experiences the students have had of growing up and assuming responsibilities (for example, being old enough to earn pocket money or catch the bus alone or their older siblings getting their drivers’ licences or being old enough to baby-sit). You could also make connections to ceremonies and traditions associated with particular birthdays or milestones, for example, hair-cutting (pakoti anga rouru – Cook Islands Māori, or hifi ulu – Niue) or bar mitzvah. “How does making connections to these experiences help you to understand Tania’s feelings in this text?” (Making connections)
- Have the students reread the text and use sticky notes to mark places where they had to infer. Ask them to discuss their examples with a partner. (Inferring)
- Have the students sketch their own whakapapa using notches and marks to support their understanding of the concept. (Making connections; visualising)
- Discuss what Tania might tell her children or grandchildren. (Forming hypotheses; inferring)
- Briefly discuss any words or phrases that the students found difficult and the strategies they used (or could have used) to work them out.
- Reflect with the students on how well they have met the learning goal and how the success criteria helped them. “How did thinking about the story of the tokotoko help you to think of other ideas about taonga in this text?” Note any teaching points for future sessions.

### **Links to further learning**

*What follow-up tasks will help my students to consolidate and/or extend their new learning?*

The students could:

- research other ways of recording family trees (Analysing and synthesising;

summarising)

- research their own family trees and share them (Making connections)
- write about a treasure in their family or something they have that they would want to pass on to later generations. (Making connections)