

Hingakākā

by Ben Brown

SJ 4.1.09

Overview

The year is approximately 1840. On a pā on the Waikato River, Whatutahi, a manu kōrero (storyteller), speaks passionately to a group of children about how his iwi won an important battle in the area. He is a powerful speaker, and his messages about the virtues of cunning, patience, and bravery come through loud and clear.

Whether these are the main ideas of the text, however, is uncertain. Particular descriptions of Whatutahi raise questions about his beliefs. The main idea may, in fact, be that we should always think critically about what we hear, especially from people who wield great power.

Note: This text will be best used to meet the needs of those students who already know and use a wide range of reading strategies but who need to deepen or strengthen these. It is a rich and complex text that will reward your students tremendously but requires considerable preparation and more than one session of exploration.

When deciding to use this text, teachers will need to be aware of and sensitive to their students' experiences of war. Some refugee students may have recent experiences of war that are traumatic and that need to be addressed outside the classroom.

This text has a high level of complexity for English language learners in terms of background knowledge, vocabulary, and structures (grammar).

Suggested reading purposes and teaching purpose

Based on the information I have about my students' learning needs, what would be appropriate reading and teaching purposes for the lesson?

- To read and enjoy a rich tale of cunning, patience, and bravery that has different layers to explore
- To explore a text in which the most obvious ideas may not be the main ideas
- To support the students in developing the comprehension strategies of visualising, analysing and synthesising, and **identifying the main idea**.

Suggested learning goal

We are learning to identify the main ideas in a text (in this text, of both the storyteller and the author).

Success criteria

To support our comprehension of the story, we will:

- identify and summarise the key events in the story

- ask questions and look for clues that suggest the storyteller's main ideas
- keep checking as we read to confirm the main ideas
- identify the impact of the techniques the storyteller uses to tell his story
- ask ourselves what the author's purpose could be and whether it reflects or differs from the storyteller's.

Features of the text

What are the potential supports of this text in relation to my students' learning needs and to the reading and teaching purposes?

- **Text form:** A narrative with direct speech and a strong personal voice.
- **Themes:**
 - The possible main message from the author that we should always think critically about what we hear, especially from people who wield great power
 - The idea that because chiefs are powerful, their decisions and actions affect many people, often negatively
 - The ideas that the old storyteller Whatutahi conveys, including those about the value of cunning, patience, bravery, and self-belief.
- **Structure and organisation:** The narrator who introduces the text, and the old narrator, Whatutahi ("our old storyteller warrior"), who recounts the story within the story.
- **Language choices:**
 - Sentence structure: complex sentences including use of en dashes that function like parentheses, for example, in the sentence beginning "We made men out of mānuka" (page 17)
 - The expressive verbs, for example, "thrust", "cast", "cleaving", "dispersing", "strike", "lured", "quivering", "embraced", "stamped", "bellowed"
 - The vivid descriptions, for example, "our old storyteller warrior with only one eye in his head" (page 15), "Whatutahi paused in the half-crouch of a fighter, his mere cleaving the line of the horizon upon which his single eye now burned" (page 16), "impossibly tall" (page 18)
 - The rhetorical strategies that Whatutahi uses to engage his listeners (and therefore the readers of the text) and convince them of his ideas, including: his use of "you" to refer to his audience directly; repetition; a yarn-like, old-fashioned manner of speech ("To you and I", "At such times"); proverbs and other metaphorical language ("See how we are gathered: feathers of the same cloak"); and drama and an emphatic tone, conveyed through use of italics, capitals, exclamation marks, and extra vowels.

- **Specific vocabulary:** The language of war, for example, “warrior”, “battle”, “mere pounamu”, “weapon”, “quarrels”, “enemy”, “moving south”, “confront”, “fighting chiefs”, “rally at our side”, “battlefield”, “fighter”, “high ground”, “encampments”, “counter”, “Drawn up”, “came to the field”, “force”, “outwitted”, “defeated”.

Readability

Noun frequency level: 9–10 years for guided reading

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

- The complexity of the action described, particularly who was on what side in the battle (top of page 16) and the sequence of events during it
- Whatutahi’s old-fashioned manner of speech, including his metaphorical language
- The varied and complex sentences, especially so for English language learners
- Particular words and concepts, including “quarrels”, “dealt”, “cast” (verb), “eagerly anticipating”, “We are drawn to one purpose”, “rally”, “half-crouch”, “cleaving”, “high ground”, “cunning”, “fearsome”, “encampments”, “dispersing”, “counter”, “lured”, “composed himself”, “quivering”, “Drawn up”, “outwitted”, “defeated”, “plumage”
- The many words in te reo, unfamiliar especially to students new to New Zealand, for example, “pā”, “manu kōrero”, “Te Hingakākā”, “Whatutahi”, “mere pounamu”, “hei utu”, “Auē”, “puku”, “Kaitōtehe”, “Ngāti Mahuta”, “Ngāti Toa”, “Raukawa”, “Maniapoto”, “Te Motu”, “huia”, “PATUAAAA!”, “Āe”, “IIAAHAHAAA!”, “tohunga”.

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

- **Topic/content knowledge:** Their knowledge of the historical period and the Māori wars
- **Literacy-related knowledge:** Their familiarity with rhetorical strategies to engage and convince an audience.

Preparation for reading

- The day before reading, introduce any vocabulary that your students are likely to find difficult (for English language learners, you might want to introduce the vocabulary earlier in order to look at it more closely prior to the lesson). You could, for instance, create a word web of the language of war (see Features of the Text). Ask what connects the words before brainstorming and clarifying meanings. The context is likely to help the students to predict meanings. They may also find words with similar meanings, for example, “warrior” and “fighter”, and related words, for example, “mere pounamu” and “weapon”. For other potential vocabulary challenges, see the lists under Readability. (Making connections; building vocabulary)

- Introduce a map of iwi in Aotearoa New Zealand. (You can find one by visiting www.library.auckland.ac.nz/subjects/maori/guides/iwi_map.htm) Explain that the text is set in the Waikato region and that it portrays a battle during the Māori wars. “Which iwi might be involved?” Texts such as *A History of New Zealand* by Keith Sinclair (Auckland: Penguin Books) will help to provide some background on the Māori wars. (Making connections)
- To set the mood for the text, watch a video of the All Blacks doing the “Kapa o Pango” haka. You can find performances on YouTube. Have the students come up with words to describe the moves, the emotions of the players, and how the performance affects them. They could fill out a chart like the one below. (Making connections)

The moves	The players’ emotions	My emotions
What is the reason for performing the haka?		

A framework for the lesson

How will I help my students to achieve the reading purpose and the learning goal?

Before reading

- Share the reading purpose with the students and briefly introduce the text.
- Briefly share responses to the viewing of the haka. Then reiterate that this text portrays a Māori battle in the Waikato region. Introduce the phrase “manu kōrero” (storyteller) and have the students share their knowledge or predictions about what this means. Clarify that the phrase doesn’t refer to a bird but that the ability to “sing” (be fluent and engaging) as an orator is relevant. Discuss the importance of oral storytelling in traditional Māori society and its continued relevance today. “What traits does a good orator have?” Students may make connections to orators in their own cultural backgrounds. (Making connections; building vocabulary)
- Share the learning goal and success criteria with the students.

During reading

Refer to Effective Literacy Practice in Years 5 to 8, pages 80–93, for information about deliberate acts of teaching.

- As you guide your students through this text, follow their lead in terms of what support they need. Stop as necessary to visualise passages, ask

questions, and discuss unfamiliar words and concepts, prompting the students to look for clues to word meanings in the surrounding text or images. As much as possible, however, try to keep the focus on identifying the main idea. (Encourage English language learners to ask themselves questions to support their comprehension.) (Visualising; asking questions; building vocabulary)

Page 15

- To help set the tone, read to the students down to “that is a different matter”. Then have the students read the text. Check that they understand who is speaking, particularly that “manu kōrero”, “old storyteller warrior”, and “Whatutahi” all refer to the same person. Also confirm who Whatutahi’s audience is. (Analysing and synthesising; making connections)
- Discuss what is going on and clarify, if necessary, the meaning of “he left an eye in exchange”. Notice the italics for “chiefs” and discuss what they indicate. “I wonder why a quarrel between chiefs is a different matter?” (Analysing and synthesising; inferring)
- Ask the students to continue reading to the end of the page. Support them with the metaphor “feathers of the same cloak” and with the possible meaning of “We are drawn to one purpose, as it is across the land.” “I wonder what purpose?” Notice “eagerly anticipating” and discuss what this suggests about the importance of the manu kōrero. (Inferring; making connections)
- “Who does Whatutahi mean when he says ‘you’?” Discuss the effect of this direct address on the audience (the children in the story and the students as readers), especially how it draws them in. Also discuss Whatutahi’s use of “we” – an attempt to align himself with the audience and convince them of what he is saying. Also notice the way he refers to himself as “mad” twice. “I wonder why he does this? Let’s think about that as we go on.” (Analysing and synthesising; identifying the main idea)
- “Remember we are learning how to identify the main idea. In the success criteria, it says we have to ask questions and look for clues. Has anyone got any questions or ideas that may lead us to the main idea?” (Asking questions; identifying the main idea)

Page 16

- Refer to the iwi map to help visualise who the opposing forces are. Establish that Ngāti Mahuta is the storyteller’s iwi and that, with Maniapoto, they are fighting Ngāti Toa and Raukawa. (Visualising)
- “I’m starting to have some thoughts about the main ideas of the manu kōrero.” Draw out the emphasis on cunning and patience in the second-to-last paragraph. “I also have some questions about the manu kōrero’s behaviour.” Think, pair, and share what is suggested by descriptions like “he tapped the side of his battered head” and “The old man rolled his fearsome eye”. (Identifying the main idea; inferring)

- You may need to support students to visualise “as if the sky with all its stars were laid upon the earth” (the illustration helps) and to understand “his mere cleaving the line of the horizon upon which his single eye now burned”. You could model (or get the students to model) the latter, and students may be able to make connections with “meat cleaver” to work out what “cleaving” means. You could also discuss the literal and metaphorical meanings of “high ground”. (Visualising; making connections; building vocabulary)

Page 17

- “Some words here signal an idea that the manu kōrero wants his audience to listen to – have you noticed them?” Draw attention to “There’s a lesson for you” and “Imagine that!” and the concepts they relate to (patience and cunning). Encourage the students to retell what is happening. “How are they trying to trick the enemy? Do you think the plan will work?” (Identifying the main idea; forming hypotheses)

Page 18

- Remind the students of their viewing of the haka. Then have them explore the images on page 18 and think, pair, and share their reactions to them. You could model reading the page with great expression. Attempt to convey the drama of the moment and the crazed demeanour of the manu kōrero, followed by his renewed composure at the end. (Visualising)
- Have the students briefly check their predictions. Discuss the storyteller’s behaviour. “What has happened to him?” Elicit how Whatutahi has been consumed by his memories – by the past (“he was there”). “How dramatic a performance is he giving? Imagine being there listening to him – what would the experience be like?” (Analysing and synthesising; visualising)
- Draw attention to the final sentence. “What does this suggest about ‘who’ Whatutahi has just been, if not the storyteller?” Draw out his near madness. “How does that make you feel about him and his ideas?” Discuss how getting a feeling for the manu kōrero as a character (rather than as the narrator of the story) opens room for us to think critically about him and his ideas. “Could the author be wanting us to think about something else beyond what Whatutahi has said?” Tell the students that there’s a sentence on this page that could express one of the author’s main ideas. However, don’t give them the sentence just yet (“lured to their deaths by old men telling stories in the night to bundles of sticks”). “Think about that – we’ll come back to it after reading.” (Identifying the main idea; identifying the author’s purpose and point of view; evaluating)

Page 20

- “Who is Whatutahi referring to in ‘he leaves gods to the tohunga’ and ‘this old man believes in his right arm and his mere!’?” Clarify that he’s talking about himself in the third person. “I wonder why he does that? What do you think of these statements?” (Analysing and synthesising; evaluating)
- Support the students with the meaning of “They were fish that follow the lure and do not see the hook” and “The enemy saw what was not there

and did not see what was.” Encourage them to visualise. “What was not there? What was?” (Visualising; analysing and synthesising)

- Also consider what Whatutahi means by “embraced”. Also notice the final sentence, particularly the word “bellowed”. “Where does this word leave you? How do you feel?” (Inferring; visualising)

After reading

- With the students, recap Whatutahi’s main messages, encouraging the students to support their thoughts with evidence. In particular, draw out Whatutahi’s ideas about the importance of cunning (or trickery), patience, and bravery (or self-belief). “What is your opinion of these traits? For instance, is patience a virtue? Is it OK to trick people in order to beat them? Why or why not?” (Identifying the main idea; evaluating)
- Briefly discuss the strategies Whatutahi used to engage and convince his audience, for example, his use of “you”, repetition, evocative language, and drama. Then review the evidence about Whatutahi as a person and come up with words to describe him. Consider what he says (for example, “this old man believes in his right arm and his mere!”) as well as how he behaves (for example, “The old man rolled his fearsome eye”). “Is Whatutahi someone you would respect or trust? Why or why not?” (Analysing and synthesising; evaluating)

- Pinpoint particular statements that Whatutahi makes:

“lured to their deaths by old men telling stories in the night to bundles of sticks” (page 18)

“They were fish that follow the lure and do not see the hook” (page 20).

“Who is Whatutahi talking about? Who did they trick?”

Ask the students to consider the possibility that there is some deeper meaning here. “Could the above sentences refer to someone other than the enemy – to something related to storytelling or speechmaking?” If the students don’t make the connection, suggest that the sentences might refer to the position of the audience in relation to a storyteller or speaker. Consider how “bundles of sticks” has connotations of being ignorant or unthinking. “Could the author be pointing us towards another idea or warning us of something?” (Identifying the main idea; analysing and synthesising)

- Briefly discuss how an author’s point of view is not necessarily the same as that of the main character – the storyteller in this case. Then, taking all the above into account, try to sum up what the author’s main idea might be, as compared with the ideas of Whatutahi as the main character in this story. Discuss how easy it is to be persuaded of ideas by skilful speakers, especially if they are in positions of power, which the manu kōrero is. Because of this, it is important to always think critically as a listener or reader. Depending on your students, you could link to the concept that history is usually told by the victors and is therefore never free from bias. (Identifying the main idea; identifying the author’s purpose and point of view)

- Review and discuss any remaining questions that the students have about the text. (Asking questions)
- With the students, review the learning goal and success criteria and reflect on how well the learning goal has been achieved. “How has differentiating between the storyteller and the author helped you to understand this text? What did you learn about finding the main ideas as you were reading this text? Explain your response.” Note any teaching points for future sessions.

Links to further learning

What follow-up tasks will help my students to consolidate their new learning?

The students could:

- reinforce their learning about identifying the main ideas in text during independent reading, explaining to a partner what the main ideas are and how they found them (Identifying the main idea)
- reread the text with a partner to explore and evaluate Whatutahi’s tale (Evaluating)
- compare the ideas about war in this text with those in “Boy Soldiers” (SJ 4.3.08 and Selections 2009) or in songs like Bob Dylan’s “Masters of War” (Making connections)
- debate the statement “History is told by the victors” (Making connections; evaluating)
- explore the power of persuasion by further examining the strategies Whatutahi uses to draw his audience in (Analysing and synthesising)
- identify an issue they feel strongly about and then write and perform a persuasive speech that presents the opposite viewpoint. Include the strategies of Whatutahi to engage and convince the audience (see the ideas in After reading). (Making connections)