

# The Sons of Ma'afu

A traditional story from Tonga, retold by Feana Tu'akoi

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Year 4



## Overview

In her retelling of a Tongan traditional story, Feana Tu'akoi describes how two brothers with a reputation for trouble try to redeem themselves by carrying out some perilous tasks. Despite their best efforts, the brothers fail to impress the other villagers. Instead, they are banished to live in the heavens, where they can still be seen.

Tongan students will relate to a traditional story from their culture. Some students may also be able to make connections to the importance of stars for navigation. A final section provides factual information about the constellations mentioned in the story.

This narrative:

- recounts a Tongan traditional story about the creation of important constellations
- provides opportunities to make connections to support inferences
- includes a number of lea faka-Tonga (Tongan) names and words
- has themes of respect and atoning for bad behaviour.

A PDF of the text and an audio version as an MP3 file are available at [www.schooljournal.tki.org.nz](http://www.schooljournal.tki.org.nz)

Texts related by theme "Te Ika a Māui" SJ L2 Aug 2011 | "Namu and Waeroa!" SJ L2 May 2012 | "Southern Lights" SJ 3.1.05 | "Why Is the Moon Upside Down?" Connected L3 2013

## Text characteristics from the year 4 reading standard

"You boys have no respect!" the people cried. "You're throwing spears at your father!"  
The brothers were shocked. "We weren't trying to hit him!" they said. "We were trying to land the spears as close as we could *without* hitting him!"  
"But what if you missed?" the people cried. "You could have killed our chief!"  
The boys hadn't thought of that. They were very sorry, but it was too late. The people decided they'd had enough.  
"Send them to get water from 'Ātavahea!" the people shouted.  
"That should teach them a lesson."

some abstract ideas that are clearly supported by concrete examples in the text or easily linked to the students' prior knowledge

"Send them to get water from 'Ātavahea. He knew that a fierce, giant duck lived in the waterhole at 'Ātavahea. The boys were sure to be badly injured or even killed.  
But a good leader listens to his people, and the boys deserved to be punished, so Ma'afu agreed.  
The next day, the boys took their coconut shells to 'Ātavahea. The sky was grey and heavy, and the wind was screaming. The boys were scared, but they carried on. They wanted to show their father that they were sorry."

some places where information and ideas are implicit and where students need to make inferences based on information that is easy to find because it is nearby in the text and there is little or no competing information

their coconut shells with water and...  
village, taking the duck with them.  
"This will show Ma'afu that we're sorry," they said, grinning to each other. "We can cook the duck in the 'umu. There'll be enough meat for the whole village."  
But the villagers weren't happy. "Look at them grinning!" they cried. "They're not even sorry. Send them to Muihātafa to get water from the bottom of the pool. That will teach them a lesson."

a straightforward text structure, such as a structure that follows a recognisable and clear text form

When they got to Muihātafa, everything looked...  
The air was still. There were no insects screeching and no birds singing. It was way too quiet. The boys were terrified.  
"Let's just fill our coconut shells from the edge of the waterhole," said Ma'afutoka. "The people will never know."  
Ma'afulele shook his head. "We have to show we're really sorry," he said. "We have to get water from the bottom of the pool."  
As soon as the boys dived into the waterhole, an enormous triggerfish rushed towards them, snapping its giant jaws. The boys fought as hard as they could, but they were running out of air. Just as they thought they might...  
...he thrust his arm through the fish's gills.

some compound and complex sentences, which may consist of two or three clauses

Reading standard: by the end of year 4

# Possible curriculum contexts

## SOCIAL SCIENCES

Level 2 – Understand how cultural practices reflect and express people’s customs, traditions, and values.

## ENGLISH (Reading)

Level 2 – Structure: Show some understanding of text structures.

– Ideas: Show some understanding of ideas within, across, and beyond texts.

## ENGLISH (Writing)

Level 2 – Structure: Organise texts, using a range of structures.

– Ideas: Select, form, and express ideas on a range of topics.

## Possible reading purposes

- To enjoy a myth set in Tonga
- To find out how a story is used to explain a natural phenomenon, such as the position of stars
- To make connections between the features of myths and legends\* from a range of cultures
- To explore the ideas of respect and community values.

## Possible writing purposes

- To research and write a similar story to explain a natural phenomenon
- To explore the idea of respect within a community
- To write/retell a traditional story from another culture.

\* The words “myth” and “legend” are often used interchangeably. A myth typically explains a natural event or phenomena and has symbolic significance. A legend usually enlarges the life of an actual person or god and tells of their brave deeds and superhuman powers. Both have deep meaning and importance in the cultures they come from.



# Text and language challenges

## VOCABULARY

- Possible unfamiliar words and concepts, including “fale”, “target practice”, “fierce”, “waterhole”, “injured”, “deserved”, “punished”, “battered”, “tore”, “overpowered”, “grinning”, “‘umu”, “vicious”, “triggerfish”, “screeching”, “terrified”, “drown”, “thrust”, “gills”, “heaved”, “plantation”, “Magellanic Clouds”, “Traditional navigators”
- The lea faka-Tonga (Tongan) names for people, places, and legendary creatures: “Ma’afu”, “Ma’afutoka”, “Ma’afulele”, “Ātavahea”, “Muihātafa”, “Humu”, “Toloa”
- The metaphor “the wind was screaming”
- The expressions: “made excuses”, “wouldn’t stand a chance”, “headed back”, “the people had spoken”.

## Possible supporting strategies

Some of these suggestions may be more useful before reading, but they can be used at any time in response to students’ needs.

- Spend time familiarising yourself with lea faka-Tonga (Tongan) words, using the audio support provided online if necessary. Play the [audio version](#) to the students during or after reading to reinforce pronunciation and help clarify meaning. You can also ask students, fono, or staff with Tongan connections to help with pronunciation.
- You may wish to discuss the use of the “inverted apostrophe” used to indicate the glottal stop. (A glottal stop is a consonant. It usually appears before a vowel or between two vowels. Many students will be familiar with this from the names of well-known people in the media, such as the All Black Ma’a Nonu.)
- Provide support for the words related to astronomy when students read the last section or when they discuss it afterwards.
- *The English Language Learning Progressions: Introduction*, pages 39–46, has useful information about learning vocabulary.
- See also [ESOL Online, Vocabulary](#), for examples of other strategies to support students with vocabulary.

## SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED

- Some knowledge of the people and lifestyles of Pasifika nations, especially Tonga
- Some knowledge of the role of a chief, including how they are given respect and power but need to accede to the wishes of their people (Note that a chiefly system no longer exists and Tonga is governed by a king and has a hierarchical system. Pasifika nations such as Sāmoa and Fiji still practise the chiefly system.)
- Familiarity with myths and legends, including the style of writing, the kinds of events they involve, and the purposes they often serve
- Some knowledge of the night sky and constellations, including the Milky Way and the Southern Cross
- Some knowledge of the traditional use of stars for navigation, especially for long voyages.

## Possible supporting strategies

- Use the illustrations to support discussion of the setting and confirm that the story is set in a mythical past in Tonga. Identify elements of the setting (such as the climate, clothing, water gathering, fantastical creatures) that will help students make connections and inferences as they read.
- Draw students’ attention to the related poem and article in this Journal, and provide supplementary materials to help them to identify the constellations mentioned. Discuss the use of stars for navigation and how important this was in the past – and in the present day.
- Students could talk about similar myths and legends from their own cultures, particularly those about constellations.

## TEXT FEATURES AND STRUCTURE

- The familiar structure of myths and legends
- A straightforward narrative, told in chronological order
- The repetition of key ideas, words, and phrases
- Some compound and complex sentences, consisting of two or three clauses
- A sidebar that gives factual information about the stars
- The use of action verbs, time sequence connectives, and cause-and-effect connectives.

## Possible supporting strategies

- Review what students know about myths and legends. List features they know and add to the list during and after reading. This will include the opening words “Long ago ...”, the tasks that main characters have to complete, fierce monsters, and a positive outcome that explains a phenomenon or demonstrates a human quality.
- A [text reconstruction](#) or [strip story](#) activity will help students to notice time connectives. Develop a class list of time connectives.
- For students who have difficulty using the correct verb, use [verb story](#) activities to orally retell the story.



# Instructional focus – Reading

**Social Sciences** (Level 2 – Understand how cultural practices reflect and express people’s customs, traditions, and values.)

**English** (Level 2 – Structure: Show some understanding of text structures; Ideas: Show some understanding of ideas within, across, and beyond texts.)

## First reading

- Provide a brief introduction to the story.
- Set the purpose for reading.
- Look through the story together. Tell the students to use the illustrations to make predictions about the setting and the characters.
- As the students read, prompt them to make connections with the style of the story and the events.
- Encourage the students to use their knowledge of myths and legends to understand the events. Discuss the ending. *Were you surprised by what happened to the brothers? What does this tell you about the kind of story this is? What connections could you make between the text and the stars you’ve seen at night?*

### If the students struggle with this text

- Refer to the “Text and language challenges” section on page 2 and identify relevant supporting strategies that your students may need.
- Remind the students of other myths and legends they have read – you may wish to read some to them before moving on to this story.
- Ask questions and use the illustrations to help students identify the setting. *When or where have you seen a setting like this? What country does it look like?*
- Prompt students to use their connections with other myths and legends to follow the events of the story. *In other myths and legends we’ve read, what did characters have to do to prove themselves? What do the characters in this story have to prove? How do they do that?*
- Identify specific places in the text where students may be confused, for example, when the people said they did not feel safe around the brothers. Tease out details in the text that will help them to infer meaning. *What happens in the end? Is this a good or a bad ending for the brothers? Why?*
- Support the students to understand the cultural values shown in the story by discussing their responses to the boys’ actions, the father’s responses, and the people’s demands.
- If students need further support to follow the story, make a sequence-of-events chart and help them to identify and note each key event.

## Subsequent readings

### The teacher

Ask questions to help students make connections and infer meaning.

- *Why were the people annoyed with the boys? Have you ever done something silly or dangerous that annoyed people?*
- *Why did the people want the boys to be punished and how did Ma’afu feel about this? Why did he have to agree?*

Invite students to share their connections and explain how they helped them understand the characters. They can do this in pairs or with the group. If you have students who are new to New Zealand, you could encourage them to discuss their ideas using their first language before sharing with the larger group.

### The teacher

Ask questions to help students think more deeply about the events in the story and about the father’s difficult position as both chief and father of the boys. Model how to integrate information across the text with your prior knowledge and understanding to make inferences. You could provide a chart like this to support the students.

Information from the text	My knowledge about ...	Inferences I can make

Alternatively, students can work through some of these questions in pairs, later sharing their responses with the group and discussing the evidence and connections they used to answer each question.

- *Why did the people feel unsafe after the brothers met the second test?*
- *What lesson did the brothers learn from the tests?*
- *What did the people want? What did Ma’afu want? What did his sons want?*
- *Was the outcome a good one for the brothers? For their father? For the community? Why?*
- *What does the story tell you about the values of the community?*

### The teacher

Support the students to identify and understand the outcome of the story.

- *Does this story give a good explanation of how these stars and constellations got their names? Why?*
- *What are some other names for stars or constellations? How do you think they got these names?*
- *What is the effect of the final section? Did you find it helpful? How?*

### The students:

- think about themselves and times they have done something that annoyed others, then make connections between their experiences and the story
- put themselves in the shoes of the boys, the people, and the father and use this to understand why the characters spoke and acted as they did and how people in authority (including parents, ministers, community leaders) sometimes have to make hard decisions.

### The students:

- draw on the connections they have made on the first reading as they think more deeply about the reasons for the characters’ actions
- consider the people’s feelings and infer how they would feel about living in the same town as young men who are strong enough to kill monsters
- with support, integrate information about everyone’s feelings with what they know about solving problems to infer that the brothers chose a solution that made everyone happy in the end
- with support, integrate information across the text and from their own understandings of behaviour to make inferences about the values of the community, for example, showing respect to the chief; the need for the chief to recognise the feelings of his people over his feelings for his children.

### The students:

- use what they know about myths and legends to understand that in these stories, humans (and a fish and duck) can turn into stars in the sky
- integrate information in the text with their knowledge about using stars for navigation to understand the importance of these stars to the people in the story
- make connections between the stars named in the story and the stars they are familiar with to infer that although the stars are the same, they have been given different names by people in other parts of the world.

### GIVE FEEDBACK

- *When you wanted to understand why the people were scared, you reread that part of the text and discussed the people’s attitude to the brothers. You inferred that the people were now scared of their power and strength. It’s a good idea to reread a passage if you’re not sure about something in the story.*
- *You were surprised by the ending at first, but then you compared it with the story about Māui and the Sun and the way that story explains the length of the day. Comparing a new story with a similar one that you already know can help you to understand the new one.*

## METACOGNITION

- What knowledge of your own helped you make connections with this text?
- I noticed you used a chart to work out the sequence of events, ending with the decision the brothers made to live in the sky. Tell me how this helped you. What parts were confusing without the chart?
- How did your knowledge of other myths and legends help you follow the events in this story?



Reading standard: by the end of year 4



The Literacy Learning Progressions



Assessment Resource Banks

# Instructional focus – Writing

**Social Sciences** (Level 2 – Understand how cultural practices reflect and express people’s customs, traditions, and values.)

**English** (Level 2 – Structure: Organise texts, using a range of structures; Ideas: Select, form, and express ideas on a range of topics.)

## Text excerpts from “The Sons of Ma’afu”

The boys were sure to be badly injured or even killed. But a good leader listens to his people [...] so Ma’afu agreed.

The next day, the boys took their coconut shells to ‘Ātavahea. [...] The boys were scared, but they carried on. They wanted to show their father that they were sorry.

Ma’afu [...] knew [...]. His boys wouldn’t stand a chance against it. But he had to listen to his people [...].

When they got to Muihātafa, ... The boys were terrified [...] “We have to show we’re really sorry.”

The sky was grey and heavy, and the wind was screaming. The boys were scared but they carried on.

The air was still. There were no insects screeching and no birds singing. It was way too quiet. The boys were terrified.

On clear nights, we can still see the two boys. They form two bright patches near the Milky Way that we call the Magellanic Clouds. We can also see the triggerfish (Humu) and the duck (Toloa). Humu is a dark patch known as the Coal Sack. We know Toloa as the Southern Cross. Traditional navigators used the Magellanic Clouds to find north, and they used the Southern Cross to find south.

## Examples of text characteristics

### REPETITION

*Traditional stories, such as myths and legends, often use repetitive structures to reinforce a message. These may be key events or actions or key words and phrases. Repetition makes the message very clear, and the story becomes more memorable to listeners or readers. It is also a result of the fact that such stories had their beginnings in oral storytelling.*

### ATMOSPHERE

*Writers create an atmosphere or mood by the careful use of words and sentence structures. Short sentences often build suspense. Dramatic adjectives and verbs add to the atmosphere.*

### FACT AND FICTION

*Sometimes a writer wants to provide factual information to support a fictional story. This usually requires a change of voice.*

## Teacher (possible deliberate acts of teaching)

Ask questions as the students prepare to write.

- What form will your story take?
- If you want to create or retell a myth or legend, how can you make sure your readers know the important messages or elements?

English language learners can be supported by completing a skills flow activity in which they listen to the story, order the main points, and then retell the story in their own words.

Use examples from this and other myths and legends to explain how and why repetition is used.

- What is the message you want your readers to understand?
- Which events or actions might you repeat?
- How will you write each version of the event or action? What will be the same and what might change each time it is repeated?

Read these two extracts aloud, using your voice to help build the sense of fear the boys felt.

- How does the writer show us that these parts are scary?
- Read through your own writing and find any places where you want readers to feel scared, happy, excited, or sad. Do the words you choose and the kinds of sentences you write help create the feelings you want readers to have?
- Share your writing with a partner and review some parts together to help create the atmosphere you want. What could you change? What verbs could help show the feelings you want your readers to have?

Examine the extract with the students.

- What changes do you notice here? Is this still part of the myth?
- How and why has the writer changed her style?

Prompt students to notice the change in the author’s voice from that of a storyteller to that of a person sharing information.

- In your own writing, think about the ways you communicate with your readers.
- If you’ve written a myth that explains an event or phenomenon, you might want to do what Feana Tu’akoi has done here and provide the “facts” behind your myth.
- Try doing this, then ask a partner to read it and give feedback. Make more changes if necessary.

### GIVE FEEDBACK

- I’m really pleased to see you’ve tried writing this last section in three different ways. Remember that all writers revise their work as they try out different ways of getting their meaning and message across. How will you decide which version is best?
- I wasn’t sure about the message in your myth, but now that you’ve added another trial for the heroine, it’s clear.

### METACOGNITION

- Why did you decide to write a myth about the moon? What features of myths helped you as you made further choices in your writing?
- What did you find hard and easy about your writing today? Is it easier to write about factual things or to make up stories? Why?
- You and your writing partner work well together. What tips can you give other writers about giving and receiving feedback on your writing?

Writing standard: by the end of year 4

The Literacy Learning Progressions