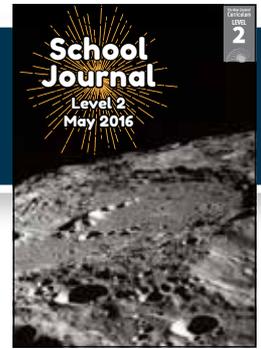


# Awarua: The Taniwha of Porirua

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## Overview

Rereroa the albatross teaches her friend Awarua, the taniwha, how to fly. In the process, Awarua creates some of the geographical features around the Porirua area, such as the flat top of Mana Island, which was caused when she crash-landed on top of the island, and the valley in Whitireia. The story explores the tuakana-teina relationship of an expert teaching a novice.

The text is adapted from a version on the [Mātauranga Māori website](#).

This story:

- includes features of traditional stories, such as anthropomorphic creatures, a task or a goal, and an explanation for the creation of natural phenomena

- builds character development through actions and dialogue
- explores a tuakana-teina relationship
- includes several te reo Māori words, some of which are included in a glossary
- uses contemporary photographs to link the text to real-life natural phenomena.

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 **“The Sons of Ma’afu”** SJ L2 Oct 2015 | **“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

“Did you see? Did you see?” Awarua wanted to try again immediately. Rereroa wasn't sure it was a good idea, but her friend kept pleading. Finally, Rereroa gave in.

“All right,” said Rereroa, “but this time, flap your wings hard right from the start. That way, you'll take off earlier and get over Whitireia.”

Awarua did as her friend suggested, and this time she got over the mountain easily. She closed her eyes and gave a huge whoop of joy. She was so excited she didn't see Mana Island in front of her. The taniwha ploughed into it with a mighty crash and slid right along the island, taking the top of it with her. She landed in the sea, unhurt and very, very proud.

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

“You are my good friend,” Rereroa said. “Will you teach me to fly?” Rereroa looked at her own wings. Then she looked at her friend's wings. “They are very small,” she thought. “It will be impossible to teach her to fly.”

But Rereroa didn't want to say that to Awarua. “I don't have time,” she said instead. “I have to keep flying and catching food to live! I couldn't stay in one place long enough to teach you.”

“I will feed you,” Awarua said quickly. “I have lots of fish stored in my pātaka.” So Rereroa reluctantly agreed to teach the taniwha to fly.

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

Awarua was a taniwha who lived in Porirua Harbour many hundreds of years ago. In those days, the harbour was very deep, and the hills around it were covered with trees.

Awarua would often swim out into Te Moana o Raukawa to find food, but she would always return to the harbour. It was her home.

Sometimes the taniwha would chat with Rereroa the albatross. Awarua loved to hear Rereroa talk about the things she saw across the ocean. The albatross

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

“My small wings are not strong enough,” Awarua said. “Albatross chicks are the same when they are learning to fly,” Rereroa replied. “You will need to keep training so that your wings get stronger.” Rereroa picked up two large stones. “Put these on your wings,” she said to Awarua. “Then raise your wings above your head until the tips touch.”

Awarua did what her friend asked, but it was very hard with the weight of the stones. After ten flaps, she was too tired to continue.

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.
- Understand how places influence people and people influence places.

## ENGLISH (Reading)

- Level 2 – Ideas: Show some understanding of ideas within, across, and beyond texts.
- Language features: Show some understanding of how language features are used for effect within and across texts.

## ENGLISH (Writing)

- Level 2 – Ideas: Select, form, and express ideas on a range of topics.

## Possible first reading purpose

- To find out how Awarua helped shape the land around Porirua Harbour.

## Possible subsequent reading purposes

- To understand how traditional stories are used as a way of explaining natural phenomena
- To identify the underlying theme of working together
- To realise the importance of persistence and/or training when achieving a goal
- To discuss how the author has used visual language to create images for the reader.

## Possible writing purposes

- To retell or write a traditional story that explains a natural phenomenon
- To use the story as a model for creating visual images, dialogue, and pace in your own writing
- To use dialogue to write about a time you have helped somebody achieve something.



The New Zealand Curriculum

# Text and language challenges

(Some of the suggestions for possible supporting strategies may be more useful before reading, but they can be used at any time in response to students' needs.)

## VOCABULARY

- Possibly unfamiliar words and phrases, including “astonishment”, “skimming”, “ploughed”, “pleading”, “trees softened her impact”, “whoop of joy”, “best shot”, “lift off”
- Te reo Māori vocabulary and names, including “kaimoana”, “maunga”, “pātaka”, “Te Moana o Raukawa”, “taniwha”, “Whitireia”, “Rereroa”, “Awarua”
- Adverbs: “politely”, “reluctantly”, “furiously”.

## Possible supporting strategies

- Use the [te reo Māori curriculum guidelines](#) to help with ideas for teaching the Māori vocabulary and concepts.
- Direct students to the glossary at the back of the book before and during reading.
- Familiarise yourself with the correct pronunciation of the te reo Māori vocabulary and names before reading. Consider using the following strategies to support students with their own pronunciation:
  - break down some of the words into their parts (“Awa-rua”, “kai-moana”)
  - remind students that the macron on “pātaka” indicates a long vowel
  - play the [audio version](#) to the students during or after reading to reinforce pronunciation and to clarify meaning.
- *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

- Familiarity with the role of legends and myths and how they are used to explain natural phenomena such as landforms
- Knowledge of what a taniwha is
- Understanding of the tuakana–teina relationship.

## Possible supporting strategies

- Prompt students to recall other myths and legends they have read and discuss their purposes and features.
- Discuss what students already know about taniwha. Draw their attention to other [myths and legends online](#) also written by Wiremu Grace.
- Discuss the importance of the tuakana–teina relationship in tikanga Māori. Some students may be able to share their knowledge. Encourage students to talk about how they help or take care of their younger siblings or cousins or how their older siblings or cousins help them.

## TEXT FEATURES AND STRUCTURE

- The use of dialogue to reveal characters and relationships
- Inclusion of photographs to support the visualisation of landscape formations mentioned in the text
- A structure that incorporates jumps in time and variations in pace (for example, some incidents are described in great detail while longer periods of time are covered in one sentence).

## Possible supporting strategies

- Explain to the students that the photographs are used to link the story to the real world.
- Reread the dialogue and ask the students to work out who is talking (when pronouns are used) and to explain how they know this.
- Draw the students' attention to the similarity between the shape of Mana Island in the illustration on page 24 and the photograph of the island on page 25.
- Point out the white triangles and explain that they signal the end of one scene and the start of another.
- Have the students work in pairs. Provide each pair with a timeline. Have them write the events on cards and place them on the timeline in the right sequence.



Sounds and Words

# Instructional focus – Reading

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

**English** Level 2 – Ideas: Show some understanding of ideas within, across, and beyond texts; Language features: Show some understanding of how language features are used for effect within and across texts.

## First reading

- Set the purpose for reading.
- You may need to remind the students that this is a traditional tale and it explains a natural phenomenon.
- Read the first page together and then flip through the pictures to set the scene. Based on this preview, have the students make a prediction about how Awarua helped to shape the land around Porirua Harbour.
- Allow the students to read on independently for enjoyment.
- After the first reading, ask students to discuss whether their predictions were confirmed.

### If the students struggle with this text

- Refer back to the possible supporting strategies under “Text and language challenges” on page 2.
- Play the audio version so the students can read along. Have them retell sections of the text to each other.
- Chunk the text and provide focused guiding questions for each section.
- Stop at the end of page 21 to discuss the characters and look for clues to predict how Awarua might shape the landscape. Students will need to infer some things about the character of Awarua from the dialogue and her actions. *Is it going to be hard or easy for the taniwha to fly? What clues tell you that? How does Awarua feel about learning to fly? How does Rereroa feel about teaching her?*

## Subsequent readings

How you approach subsequent readings will depend on your reading purpose.

### The teacher

Have the students retell the story orally in pairs. You could ask them to take turns to retell parts of the story. Listen in as they build the story together.

See *Supporting English Language Learning in Primary Schools (SELLIPS): Years 3 and 4*, pages 15–19, for teaching suggestions to scaffold language learning when recounting a narrative.

### The teacher

Ask the students to evaluate the way Rereroa helped Awarua.

- *Was Rereroa a good teacher? Find all the examples in the text that back up your opinion.*
- *How well do you think Awarua would have flown if Rereroa hadn’t helped her?*

### The teacher

Lead a discussion with the students about a time when they had to work hard to achieve a goal at home, at school, or in a sports team. You could model this by creating a chart to describe one of your own goals and listing the steps you took to achieve it, then comparing it with what Awarua did. For example:

Me – training for a 10 km walk	Awarua – learning how to fly

Have the students work in pairs to list what they did to achieve a goal and then compare it with Awarua’s actions so they identify her persistence.

- *What did you learn about persistence in achieving your goal?*
- *How was Awarua persistent in trying to achieve her goal?*

### The teacher:

Model how to use visualising as a strategy to gain a deeper understanding of a text.

For example: *The writer has said “slowly she gathered speed”. “Slowly she gathered speed” makes me think of a big aeroplane taking off, lumbering along the runway, but getting faster and faster.* Ask the students to describe, in pairs, what they see when reading the same sentence. You could suggest that they draw it. Then ask the students to choose their own passage from the story and, with a partner, describe what they see. Have the students find the words and phrases that helped them create the visual image.

### GIVE FEEDBACK

- *You compared the things Awarua and Rereroa said to each other to the kinds of things you and your little brother said when you were helping him learn to ride a bike. That was a good way of explaining the tuakana-teina relationship.*
- *You explained the similarities between “Awarua” and “The Sons of Ma’afu”, and that really helped to highlight the function of myths like these.*

### METACOGNITION

- How did you go about finding evidence to support your opinion of Rereroa as a teacher? What words or clues did you find?
- How was visualising helpful? How does it help you to think about the language the writer has used?

### The students:

- include the main events in their retelling of the story
- show an understanding of the two different characters.

### The students:

- locate examples in the text and evaluate Rereroa’s actions and advice to make inferences about how good Rereroa was as a teacher
- think critically about Awarua’s attempts to fly and make inferences about what would have happened if Rereroa hadn’t helped her.

### The students:

- locate the parts of the text that describe Awarua’s successful and unsuccessful attempts at learning how to fly and make inferences about her persistence as she follows Rereroa’s instructions
- evaluate Awarua’s attitude to learning and find examples in the text to justify their opinions
- make connections to their own experiences to draw conclusions about the importance of persistence and training to achieve a goal.

### The students:

- describe or draw a scene of Awarua taking flight
- choose another scene and describe or draw their visualisations
- identify particular words or phrases that help them to create a visual image in their minds.



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; Understand how places influence people and people influence places.

**English** Level 2 – Ideas: Select, form, and express ideas on a range of topics.

## Text excerpts from “Awarua: – The Taniwha of Porirua”

## Examples of text characteristics

## Teacher (possible deliberate acts of teaching)

Awarua took a deep breath and set off. Slowly she gathered speed until she was skimming across the top of the water. She heard Rereroa shouting in her ear. “Push down on your wings and fly!” Awarua knew she was nearing the other side of the harbour, so she raised her head and pushed all her energy into her wings. The next moment, she was in the air. But Whitireia was straight ahead of her. Flapping her wings furiously, Awarua tried to gain more height, but it was too late! With a huge thump, she smashed into the side of the maunga.

### DESCRIPTIVE LANGUAGE

*Writers choose specific words and phrases to convey images and to describe scenes and events vividly.*

Explain how writers choose language carefully to create an image for the reader. Prompt the students to identify descriptive language in the story and ask them to write their own passages using the examples as a model.

- Find sentences in the story that are descriptive. Which words has the author chosen? Why are they effective?
- Replace those words with other words. How do they change the meaning of the sentence?
- Write a sentence describing the way a person moved, then rewrite the sentence in different ways. Which do you prefer?

“You are my good friend, Rereroa,” said Awarua one day. “Will you teach me to fly?” Rereroa looked at her own wings. Then she looked her friend’s wings. “They are very small,” she thought. “It will be impossible to teach her to fly.” But Rereroa didn’t want to say that to Awarua. “I don’t have time,” she said instead. “I have to keep flying and catching food to live! I couldn’t stay in one place long enough to teach you.”

### DIALOGUE

*Dialogue can be used to show what a character is like and reveal the relationships between various characters.*

Pull out a section of dialogue and discuss what the author has done. The students could read the story as a piece of readers’ theatre to develop expression. Then ask them to write a paragraph about two characters.

- Instead of telling the reader what the character is like, how could you use dialogue to show what they are like?
- How could you show or imply how they feel about each other with dialogue?
- What would a good friend say to another friend?
- What would someone say to character they didn’t like?
- Where in your own writing could you use dialogue to show a relationship between characters?

Over the next few weeks, Awarua trained every day. Soon she was speeding across the surface of the water and lifting her weighted wings easily. At last, Rereroa said it was time for the taniwha to try her first take-off.

### PACE

*To make stories interesting and focus on important events, writers slow down some parts of the story and move quickly through other parts. They use different strategies to create pace. One strategy is to include a lot of detail when telling an important part of the story and summarising other parts in just a few words.*

Discuss how the writer has made decisions about where to provide lots of detail and where to describe events quickly.

- Where in the story does the writer make time pass quickly?
- Where do we get a lot of detail?
- Why do you think the writer included that detail?
- Choose a place in your story where you can slow down the pace by including more details.

### METACOGNITION

- Tell me about the words and phrases you used to describe the scene. Why did you choose those particular words? Did you think about other words you might have used? If you did, why did you decide they weren’t what you wanted?
- Do you think it’s easier or harder to show a character through dialogue? Why/why not? Can you use too much dialogue?

### GIVE FEEDBACK

- The dialogue you wrote is very convincing. The colloquial expressions show me they get on well. They are relaxed and friendly around each other.
- I like the words you chose to describe the horse galloping past. You picked out some good details. In my mind, I could hear the sound and see the muscles moving.



Writing standard: by the end of year 4

The Literacy Learning Progressions