

The Mysterious Stones of Tonga

by 'Ana Maui Taufe'ulungaki

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Overview

This TSM contains a wide range of information and suggestions for teachers to pick and choose from, depending on the needs of their students and their purpose for using the text. The materials provide multiple opportunities for revisiting the text several times.

In this article, Dr 'Ana Maui Taufe'ulungaki describes and discusses an unusual stone monument, Ha'amonga 'a Maui (the Burden of Maui), which stands near the village of Niutoua in Tonga. The monument is special because there are very few stone structures to be found anywhere in the Pacific. Traditional Pasifika cultures didn't usually build them. The article presents several theories about the origin and purpose for the Ha'amonga and looks at the evidence to support each theory. In doing so, the text explores Tongan history, including the arrival of the Lapita people and the age of Tonga's great maritime empire. This provides a rich background of history and culture for all students and allows young Tongan students to see their history and culture reflected.

This is a challenging text at the upper end of level 2, but there are a number of supports – the small sections of text are set out clearly with many supportive features, including photos, a map, diagrams, bulleted lists, repetition, definitions, and a glossary.

This article:

- provides an opportunity for students to consider different opinions and evidence and reach their own conclusions
- combines history and a mystery about an unusual topic
- includes words and phrases in the Tongan language with supportive illustrations, explanations, and a glossary
- is an excellent model for writing informational articles.

A PDF of the text and an audio version as an MP3 file are available at www.schooljournal.tki.org.nz

Texts related by theme | "The Wing of Maui's Moa" SJ 2.3.09 | "The Sons of Ma'afu" SJ L2 Oct 2015 | "Spitfires from Tonga" SJ 3.1.09

Text characteristics from the year 4 reading standard

WHEN WAS IT BUILT?

People have different ideas about when the Ha'amonga was built.

- Some say it was built about 800 years ago. At that time, Tonga ruled many Pacific islands. The Tongan people sailed between the islands on large **kalia**.
- Some say it was built just over 1,000 years ago. That was when

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

Ha'amonga to teach his children some important lessons.

King Tu'itātui had two sons and a daughter. The king said that the two upright stones stood for his sons. He wanted to show his sons that they should work together for the good of Tonga.

The **lintel** stone stood for his daughter. The other two stones hold up the lintel. In the same way, the king wanted his sons to support their sister. This was a way to show the importance of women in Tonga.

Fatafehi
(the king's daughter)

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

HOW DID THEY MAKE IT?

Tamale says the Ha'amonga was made like this:



People cut big blocks of stone from rocks on the coast.

Then hundreds of people dragged the stones to the

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

This stone **structure** is called the Ha'amonga 'a Maui (the Burden of Maui). It is also known as the trilithon ("tri" means three), and some people call it "the king's stone clock".

Many things about the Ha'amonga are a mystery. Nobody knows for sure when it was built, who built it, why it was built, or how it was built.




some words and phrases that are ambiguous or unfamiliar to the students, the meaning of which is supported by the context or clarified by illustrations, and/or written explanations

Reading standard: by the end of year 4


VOCABULARY

Possible supporting strategies

- Possibly unfamiliar words and phrases, including “Burden”, “trilithon”, “ruled”, “ancestors”, “the Polynesian people”, “burial tombs”, “platforms”, “gateway”, “oral history”, “oral historian”, “lintel stone”, “ramp”, “Stonehenge”, “World Heritage sites”
- A number of names and terms in lea faka-Tonga: “Niutōua”, “Ha’amonga ‘a Maui”, “kalia”, “‘Aho‘eitu”, “Lapita”, “King Tu‘itātui”, “Langi Heketā”, “‘Esi Makafa‘akinanga”, “Paepae ‘o Tele‘a”, “Tamale”, “Talaiha‘apepe”, “Fatafehi”, “Talaiha‘atama”, “King Taufa‘ahau Tupou IV”
- Use the audio version of the article to familiarise yourself and the students with the pronunciation of the words in lea faka-Tonga.
-  Add the audio file to a shared Google Drive folder so that it can be easily accessed by all students. You could link to it from a class wiki, website, or blog.
- Most words in lea faka-Tonga are proper names or are well-supported with translations in brackets, explanations, and the glossary. Remind the students of these text features and model the way you use them to read each unfamiliar word or phrase: in the original lea faka-Tonga version then in the English translation.
- If possible, invite Tongan students, staff, or community members to provide language support, for example, to teach the class a few simple greetings and phrases in lea faka-Tonga.
- Identify any other terms that may be unfamiliar to the students and use strategies such as making connections with similar words, using context and/or the illustrations or diagrams, using a dictionary, or searching the Internet to make their meanings clear.
- *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

Possible supporting strategies

- Some knowledge of the Pacific area in general and of the kingdom of Tonga
- Some understanding of the process of history and the time periods involved
- Awareness of technology changes over time
- An awareness of Tongan (or other Polynesian) culture
- Understanding of the concept of oral history
- Awareness of the existence of stone monuments, including Stonehenge
- An understanding that an object can be used to represent an idea (symbolism)
- Spend time building relevant background knowledge about Tonga before reading. This could include the use of:
 - articles, Internet resources, personal knowledge, or artefacts to build some understanding of the culture of Tonga, including that it is a kingdom ruled by a king
 - maps, to show students where Tonga is in relation to New Zealand and other Pacific countries.
-  Using Google Maps (satellite view), search for Tonga and save the location. Then zoom out to show the whole Earth, pointing out other Pacific countries and New Zealand. Switch to map view so that students can see where the countries are located on a traditional map layout.
- Explain that Tonga is a kingdom ruled by a king. It is the only Pasifika country that still has a monarchy similar to England’s.
- Initiate a brief discussion about history: what it is, how we know about the past, and how some technologies (for example, building and communication) have changed over time. Explore the idea that hundreds of years ago, people didn’t have the technology we take for granted today.
- Use an example from your own family to explain that oral history means the stories we hand down from one generation to the next. Prompt students to make their own connections, for example, with the stories (oral histories) that are shared and handed down through whakapapa and at family gatherings.
- Have images of other stone structures and monuments ready to display and remind students of structures in your area that were built for a symbolic reason, such as war memorials and statues.

TEXT FEATURES AND STRUCTURE

Possible supporting strategies

- An article that describes a significant stone structure in Tonga and explores its origins
- Headings that are questions to signpost the content of each section of the text
- The use of a bulleted list to clarify ideas
- The use of repetition to support understanding
- The use of captioned photographs, illustrations, maps, labelled diagrams, and a glossary
- Prompt prior knowledge about reading information texts. Remind students that the visual features and the headings will give them clues to the content.
- Skim the article with the students, prompting them to notice such text features as headings, images, lists, and the glossary.
- Prompt the students to use the heading questions to predict the information they will read in each section. Model how to use the other headings to ask questions about the possible content of those paragraphs.



Possible curriculum contexts

ENGLISH (Reading)

Level 2 – Ideas: Show some understanding of ideas within, across, and beyond texts.

– Structure: Show some understanding of text structures.

SOCIAL SCIENCES

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

ENGLISH (Writing)

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

Possible first reading purpose

- To find out about a mysterious structure in Tonga.

Possible subsequent reading purposes

- To explore some of the theories and traditional stories about the famous stone structure in Tonga
- To explore the structure and features of the text.

Possible writing purposes

- To write a description of the structure
- To explain why you think the stones are there
- To write a story about the king, his family, and the stones.



Instructional focus – Reading

English Level 2 – Ideas: Show some understanding of ideas within, across, and beyond texts.

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

First reading

- Share the purpose for reading.
- Project or enlarge the text so you can use a shared reading approach for the first reading. Read page 2 aloud, then invite students to suggest some possible answers to the four unknowns referred to in the last sentence (when it was built, who built it, why it was built, and how it was built). Discuss these before reading on, prompting the students to think about the evidence that would be necessary to support their suggestions.
- As you read each section with the students, prompt them to notice the connections between the four unknowns noted on page 2 and the information in each section.
- Monitor how they are using such text features as diagrams, maps, and illustrations to make meaning. Where necessary, remind or prompt them how to use these features.
- Check that the students understand the overall gist of the article, and record any confusions or questions they may have. These can be dealt with in subsequent readings.

If the students struggle with this text

- Take time to work through the article over two or more sessions.
- Use the shared reading approach as suggested, spending time on each page to ensure that students understand the text before moving on.
- Build or activate prior knowledge within each section, for example, reminding students that the map on page 2 shows the general Pacific area and the pull-out enlargement shows a close-up of the islands of Tonga.
- Encourage students to frame their own questions at the end of each page. These will help you identify exactly what kind of support you need to provide.
- Have the students complete a structured overview of the text, using the heading Ha’amonga ‘a Maui and four subheadings: When, Who, Why, and How. Individually or collaboratively, they search the text for key words or concepts to write underneath each subheading. They then add lines to connect the words or subtopics, showing their relationship to the central idea and to each other. Allow time for them to share their overviews with others.

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

The teacher

If possible, work with a group of six using a jigsaw approach. Ask the students to work in three pairs. Assign sections of the text to each pair of students:

1. When was it built? Who built it?
2. Why was it built? How did they build it?
3. King Taufa’ahau Tupou IV’s idea. The Importance of the Ha’amonga today.

Direct each pair to read their sections, then consider their responses. Tell them they will need to reread and use strategies to ensure that they understand the text and then evaluate each section.

- *Did the information answer the heading question?*
- *Was this a good explanation? Why do you think that?*

Allow time for this, then (the next day, if necessary) invite each pair to share their evaluation of the sections they read with the whole group.

The teacher

Initiate a discussion to compare and contrast the explanation for the stone structure on page 5 with that on page 7. Make a two-column chart and invite students to list the features of each explanation.

- *What are the main ideas of each explanation?*
- *What values are or were important in Tonga? What tells you that?*
- *Which explanation seems most likely to be true? Could they both be true? Explain your thinking.*

Depending on your students, you may need to model how you infer some of the values that are important in Tonga, using evidence in the text.

The students:

- identify the main ideas in their sections of the article
- use strategies to infer meaning where necessary and to visualise the uses of the stone structure
- discuss and agree on an evaluation of each section, using evidence in the text and drawing on their own prior knowledge (for example, about the work involved in creating large structures) to justify their evaluation.

The students:

- locate the main ideas in each explanation (page 5: to show the King’s power, to teach his children how to work together, to show the importance of women; page 7: to tell the time using marks in the stones and the sun’s rays, to help people keep track of the seasons, to know the best time to sail and when to plant and harvest crops)
- think critically about the relative merits of the explanations and form an opinion about which is most likely to be true – or why both could be true.

Subsequent readings (cont.)

The teacher

Reread page 8 then lead a discussion with the students about the ways cultures are kept alive today.

- *What are some ways we show that we remember and value our cultures?*
- *What do you know about the way cultures other than your own are remembered and valued?*

METACOGNITION

- *Which part of the article was easiest to follow? Why was that? Which part was hardest? What made it hard?*

The students:

- share examples from their own experiences, for example, of attending school, family, church, or community events, and suggest how these keep their culture alive
- make connections between the text, the shared examples, and their own experiences of other cultures, such as watching a game of kirikiti, visiting a marae, going to a cultural dance or music event, or attending a festival such as Diwali, the Chinese New Year celebrations, or 'Aho Fakamē (a day to celebrate children in Tongan culture).

GIVE FEEDBACK

- *It's great to see you using evidence from the text and your own ideas to form your own opinion about the stones.*



Reading standard: by the end of year 4



The Literacy Learning Progressions



Assessment Resource Banks

Instructional focus – Writing

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

Text excerpts from “The Mysterious Stones of Tonga”

Examples of text characteristics

Teacher (possible deliberate acts of teaching)

Page 2

Near the small village of Niutōua in Tonga, there are three large stones. ... Nobody knows for sure when it was built, who built it, why it was built, or how it was built.

Page 8

The Importance of the Ha’amonga today

The Ha’amonga ‘a Maui is very important to the people of Niutōua village.

TEXT STRUCTURES

Informational articles often have a simple structure that uses an introduction, sections that describe or explain specific aspects of the topic, and a concluding section.

Use a shared-writing approach to create a template for writing an informational article. Use “The Mysterious Stones of Tonga” as a model, prompting students to identify the main structural features.

- *What is the purpose of the first part of the text?* (Introduction to the topic)
- *What kinds of questions make good headings?* (When ..., What ..., Who ..., Why ..., How ...)
- *What is the purpose of the last part of the text?* (To summarise or conclude the article)

Make copies of the template that students can use as they plan and write their articles.

DIGITAL TOOLS You could create the template as a Google Doc and project it for the class to see. You can then share the template for students to use.

Page 5

Why was it built?

Some people think that the Ha’amonga was a gateway to King Tu’itātui’s house. Other people say it was built to show the king’s power.

DIFFERENT OPINIONS

Giving different opinions about a topic lets the reader think and use their own judgment.

Model analysing parts of the text that show different opinions, for example, within pages 3 and 4.

DIGITAL TOOLS You could project the PDF of the article and zoom in on each example as you discuss it.

The writer says people can’t agree about the Ha’amonga. She has used a bulleted list and repeated the word “Some” to do this. On page 4, she uses “some” again, and then “However” as another way of showing different opinions. These words signal to me that there is a lot of confusion and mystery.

- *If your topic contains a mystery or different opinions, how will you let your readers know this?*
- *Check your writing with a partner: have you made the various opinions clear? If not, how can you improve this?*

Connectives such as “however” link ideas between sentences and across longer stretches of text. Students need to be able to use these in their own writing as it increases in sophistication. Prompt students to notice other connectives and create a class list of the words, for example, “all the same”, “despite this”, “nevertheless”, “instead”, “besides”, “yet”, “even so”, “in that case”, and so on.

Page 6

How did they build it?

Tamale says the Ha’amonga was made like this:
People cut big blocks of stone from rocks on the coast.
Then hundreds of people dragged the stones ...

EXPLANATION

Writers sometimes add supports such as diagrams and step-by-step descriptions to help readers understand a process.

Direct the students to review places in their writing where they have (or could) use a step-by-step description and/or diagrams.

- *How can you make sure your readers can follow the process you are explaining?*
- *Would diagrams, bullet points, or numbered steps make it clearer?*
- *Check with a partner to make sure your explanation is easy to follow.*

DIGITAL TOOLS If using Google Docs, students could share their doc with a partner, and the partner could use the comments tool to ask questions, give feedback, and add suggestions.

METACOGNITION

- *How has the template helped you to plan your writing? What other tools help you when you are planning to write an informational article?*

GIVE FEEDBACK

- *The addition of diagrams with labels made this explanation a lot easier for me to understand. I can now visualise the process.*



Writing standard: by the end of year 4

The Literacy Learning Progressions