

For the Ancestors: One Woman's Malu

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The Learning Progression Frameworks describe significant signposts in reading and writing as students develop and apply their literacy knowledge and skills with increasing expertise from school entry to the end of year 10.

Overview

This TSM contains 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 material provides multiple opportunities for revisiting the text.

“For the Ancestors: One Woman's Malu” tells the story of Samoan-born New Zealander Matalena Leaupepe's journey towards getting a malu – a tattoo. It is a highly personal story that combines information about the process of getting the malu with Matalena's changing thoughts and feelings over many years.

The text allows students to engage thoughtfully with fa'aSāmoa (Samoan culture) and to think about its intersection with life in New Zealand today. Customary tatau are associated with maturity, role, and rank. Particularly for migrant communities, they can serve as a marker of identity and a link to their heritage.

This article:

- explains and illustrates fa'aSāmoa values about honour, responsibility, strength, leadership, and community
- explores the place of a traditional Samoan practice in a modern context and the way this has changed over time
- includes topics and themes that are outside many students' experience, yet is interesting and engaging enough to capture their interest
- conveys very personal thoughts and feelings about readiness, responsibility, and connection to ancestors and spirits
- has photographs and an illustration of tatau designs
- has a text box recounting a Samoan legend about tatau
- provides opportunities for students to make inferences, think critically, and integrate information across the text to identify key themes.

A PDF of the text is available at www.schooljournal.tki.org.nz

Texts related by theme “Moko” SJ L4 Nov 2019 | “Man and Sea” SJ L4 May 2016

Text characteristics Opportunities for strengthening students' reading behaviours

STRONG

The word “malu” means to shelter or protect. Add two macrons and you get “mālu” and a different meaning: soft, tender, compassionate. To protect and be soft is what makes a Samoan woman strong.

hurts. To share this pain, a person always has a partner called a soa.

abstract ideas, in greater numbers than in texts at earlier levels, accompanied by concrete examples in the text, requiring students to make links across the text and draw conclusions to gain understanding

Matalena had been hesitant to get her malu for another reason: she wasn't sure if she'd earned one. Had she done enough for her? “In fa'aSāmoa, we have a saying,” she explains. “O le ala i le pule o le tautua. The way to leadership is through service.” Slowly, Matalena came to understand what this meant and the ways she was serving her people already. “Service is a big part of life,” she says. “Samoan women serve in their families and in their jobs. It's the way we live.”

figurative and/or ambiguous language, requiring students to consider the context to gain meaning

INK

Malu are designed and done by a tufuga tā tatau, who is usually male. Traditional tufuga insert ink into a person's skin using an au – a tool made from wood, pig tusks, and turtleshell. These days, many tufuga use plastic or metal tools, although never electric ones. The tufuga also has a sausu. This is a kind of wooden mallet used to tap the au into the skin.

toso help prepare the equipment. Toso also give fofō (massages), but perhaps their most important job is stretching the skin to present to the tufuga. (“Toso” means: “to pull”.)

a significant amount of vocabulary that is unfamiliar to the students (including academic and content-specific words and phrases), which is generally explained in the text by words or illustrations, requiring students to make links across the text, integrate information, and use prior knowledge to gain understanding

A tufuga doesn't work alone. Two or three assistants called toso help prepare the equipment. Toso also give fofō (massages), but perhaps their most important job is stretching the skin to present to the tufuga. (“Toso” means “to pull”.)

Matalena clearly remembers the sound of the tufuga's work. “His tapping was a continuous drone,” she says, “wood on wood as his sausu hit the au like a hammer to a nail.”

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illustrations, photographs, text boxes, diagrams, maps, charts, and graphs that clarify or extend the text, requiring students to make connections across the text and combine information from various sources to gain understanding



Go to The Learning Progression Frameworks – Reading: “Making sense of text: vocabulary knowledge” and “Making sense of text: using knowledge of text structure and features” to find detailed illustrations showing you how students develop expertise and make progress in these aspects.

VOCABULARY

- The words in Samoan, most of which are translated or explained in the text
- Possibly unfamiliar words and phrases, including “examine”, “torso”, “drone”, “conjoined twins”, “decades”, “macrons”, “vividly”, “bewitched”
- Topic-specific vocabulary, including “tatau”, “malu”, “pe’a”, “inked”, “au”, “soa”, “tufuga tā tatau”, “sausau”, “toso”
- Abstract concepts, such as “tradition”, “role”, “peace and harmony”, “honour”, “strong”, “spiritual”, “ritual”, “The pain is part of the process”, “being humble and accepting the pain is partly how a malu or pe’a is earned”, “going through that experience with someone else ... bonds you to that person for the rest of your life”, “honour my ancestors and culture”, “Women don’t have malu, they wear malu”, “they wear them with pride because having one comes with responsibility”, “Had she done enough for her people to wear her culture on her legs every day?”, “Service”, “identity”
- Words for values and feelings, including “loved”, “regretted”, “worried”, “soft”, “tender”, “compassionate”, “strength”, “hurts”, “cheer”, “encouragement”, “peaceful”, “joyful”, “calming”, “humbled”, “accepting”, “bonds you”, “pain”, “joy”, “grief”, “celebration”, “trusted”, “hesitant”, “challenge”, “honour”, “appreciate”
- Words for roles, including “ali’i (high chief)”, “taupou”, “soa”, “tufuga tā tatau”, “toso”
- Markers of time, including “Growing up in Sāmoa”, “As a young child”, “When Matalena was ten”, “Soon after”, “every day”, “when she was twenty-one”, “another two decades”, “Over the years”, “These days”, “By the time they reached Sāmoa”, “One day soon”, “By the late twentieth century”
- A Samoan proverb: “The way to leadership is through service”
- Some figurative language, including “like a hammer to a nail”, “life is a journey”


Possible supporting strategies

- Identify words or phrases that may be unfamiliar. Remind the students of strategies for working out unfamiliar vocabulary, such as looking at the context and thinking about the surrounding information, finding root words, using knowledge of word patterns and prefixes or suffixes, and making connections to prior knowledge.
- Provide support for the pronunciation and meanings of Samoan words. You could use other staff, students, parents, community members if appropriate, or an online resource such as <https://pasifika.tki.org.nz/Pasifika-languages/Gagana-Samoa>.
- Point out that each Samoan word is accompanied by an English translation, either in brackets or in the surrounding text. You could construct a Samoan word list with the students, encouraging them to use these words in subsequent discussion.
- Discuss the paragraph about the macrons, prompting the students to make connections to its use in te reo Māori.
- Tell the students that there are a number of abstract concepts in this text, including those to do with thoughts, feelings, and the spirit. Select one to discuss and explain. Reassure the students that there will be opportunities to discuss these concepts to clarify their meaning. It may help to record them on a chart for revisiting after the reading.
- Abstract concepts and words for values and feelings can be difficult for some English language learners. As an after-reading activity, students could make a concept cube, focusing on the feelings, values, and concepts in the text. See the last page of this TSM for an example.
- *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 and awareness of fa'aSāmoa (Samoan culture), particularly traditions around tattooing and beliefs
- Some understanding about the abstract concepts in the article, including ideas about strength, honour, culture, and identity
- Familiarity with holistic models of health and well-being, such as Te Whare Tapa Whā and Fonofale
- Awareness that people can have personal thoughts and beliefs about the spiritual world
- Familiarity with and personal thoughts and beliefs about the art of tattooing

Possible supporting strategies

- Check that the students can identify Sāmoa on the map and have some understanding of its special relationship with New Zealand.  Use Google Maps to help.
- Prompt the students to share what they know of Samoan cultural beliefs and values.
- For a brief introduction to fa'aSāmoa, see this [blog](#) from Fa'atili Iosua Esera.
- Discuss the title and what it might mean. Explain, if necessary, that “malu” means a specific type of tattoo.
- If possible, invite a Samoan community member to share his or her tatau and explain what it means to them. The students could prepare questions and use this as the subject of a written response.
- Invite the students to share their thoughts and feelings about tattoos. During the reading, students may wonder at Matalena's perception that having dots and lines on her legs might look weird to people. You may need to explain that while attitudes to tattoos are still mixed, tattoos are, in general, much more accepted than they were in the past. Accept all opinions, as in some cultures tattoos are highly valued and accepted, while in others they may be culturally unacceptable.
- You will already be familiar with Te Whare Tapa Whā concept of health and well-being and may have taught this to your students. Fonofale is a Samoan model. Like Te Whare Tapa Whā, it regards spiritual health as one of the four dimensions of well-being. Together, you could sketch a fale. (You can find an image of the Fonofale model at [Mycare](#).) Label the four pou with examples of the things that keep people well spiritually, physically, and mentally, as well as the other things that affect health and well-being (such as age and gender).
- To support your own engagement with this text, see [Tapasa: Cultural competencies framework for teachers of Pacific learners](#).

TEXT FEATURES AND STRUCTURE

- A non-fiction article that includes photographs, a text box, and drawings
- An introduction followed by thematically related sections under subheadings
- A combination of direct and indirect quotes
- The explanation of a procedure within a report structure
- The inclusion of a legend in a sidebar

Possible supporting strategies

- Discuss what to expect in a non-fiction article, for example, subheadings, factual information, and photographs of real people and events.
- Skim the article with the students to see how it is structured and to clarify what a malu is.
- Have the students work with a partner to locate direct speech and identify the speaker. Clarify that the writer has interviewed Matalena for this article, so even when the words are not directly from her, the writer is telling her story.
- Draw attention to the legend in the article, and ask the students to keep in mind its purpose as they read the rest of the article.



Sounds and Words

Possible curriculum contexts

 The Literacy Learning Progressions: Meeting the Reading and Writing Demands of the Curriculum describe the literacy knowledge, skills, and attitudes that students need to draw on to meet the demands of the curriculum.

ENGLISH (Reading)

Level 3 – Purpose and audiences: Show a developing understanding of how texts are shaped for different purposes and audiences.

ENGLISH (Writing)

Level 3 – Purpose and audiences: Show a developing understanding of how to shape texts for different purposes and audiences.

SOCIAL SCIENCES (Social Studies)

Level 3 – Understand how cultural practices vary but reflect similar purposes.

THE ARTS: (Visual Arts)

Level 3 – Understanding the visual arts in context: Investigate the purpose of objects and images from past and present cultures and identify the contexts in which they were or are made, viewed, and valued.

HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Level 3 – Personal health and physical development: Identify factors that affect personal, physical, social, and emotional growth and develop skills to manage changes.

Possible first reading purpose

- Find out about a Samoan woman's experience of being tattooed.

Possible subsequent reading purposes

- Identify some of Sāmoa's tattooing practices and cultural traditions
- Hypothesise why the writer wrote the article.


Possible writing purposes

- Describe a cultural tradition of your family, whānau, or community
- Recount a special cultural event that you were part of
- Research and explain the importance of tattooing in various cultures.



Instructional focus – Reading

English Level 3 – Purposes and audiences: Show a developing understanding of how texts are shaped for different purposes and audiences.

 Go to The Learning Progression Frameworks – Reading: “Reading to organise ideas and information for learning”, “Acquiring and using information and ideas in informational texts”, and “Making sense of text: reading critically” to find detailed illustrations showing how students develop expertise and make progress in these aspects.


First reading

- Share the purpose for reading.
- Remind the students of strategies that are particularly useful on a first reading, such as rereading to look for clues, asking questions, making connections with their prior knowledge, and/or reading on to see if the meaning becomes clearer.
- Read the title and share-read the introduction. Invite the students to discuss their responses with a partner. *What do you think the title means? What clues do you get from the introduction? How does this help set the scene for you? Check that everybody knows what a malu is and that they understand it's a tradition that is part of fa'aSāmoa (and not just a “pretty picture”).*
- Before they start reading, prompt the students to ask questions of the text and write them down in the left-hand column of a table like the one below.

Our questions	What we found out

- When they have finished reading, have them fill in the right-hand column. Discuss whether the students found all the answers to their questions and whether any new questions have arisen.

If the students require more scaffolding

- Invite the students to compare Matalena's life in Sāmoa with her new life in New Zealand. *She was about the age you are now. How do you suppose that transition felt to her?*
- Recent migrants could share how they felt moving to New Zealand and share some of the things that they found different.
- Help the students get a sense of the time frame by identifying the markers of time and sketching a timeline.
-  They could do this in Google Drawings. In a subsequent reading, they could annotate the timeline with Matalena's changing thoughts and feelings about getting a malu.
- Prompt the students to look closely at the labelled drawings and the photographs to predict what might be involved in designing and making a tatau. Have them read the section headed “Ink” to check whether their predictions were correct.
- Prompt the students to make connections between Matalena's experience and experiences they've had of doing something difficult but meaningful, for example, learning a new skill for a cultural performance or for a sport.
- Read the legend on page 17, then ask the students how it relates to Matalena's story. *Why do you think the writer included a legend in a report about recent events? How does the legend relate to Matalena's story?*
- Focus on the saying, “O le ala i le pule o le tautua. The way to leadership is through service.” Discuss what the saying means and what it tells the reader about Samoan values and beliefs (fa'aSāmoa).

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

Where possible, have the students work in pairs to discuss the questions and prompts in this section.

The teacher

Clarify that this is not a procedural text but is an explanation of the process of getting a malu, the roles played by different people, and what it all means. We learn about the experience from Matalena's perspective, rather than from the point of view of the tufuga tā tatau.

- *Why do you think this is?*
- *What has the writer been able to include in her explanation that she would not have included in a set of instructions?*

If you haven't already done so, briefly introduce the Fonofale model, explaining that it is a way of thinking about various aspects of our lives and how they are connected. *A fale is a traditional Samoan house. You can see that family and culture are very important to Samoan people. The family is the foundation for life, and cultural values and beliefs shelter the family. They are connected by the four posts (or pou).*

Have the students find the words and phrases in the text that refer to:

- Cultural values and beliefs
- Family connections
- Spirituality feelings
- Mental health – thoughts and emotions
- Other parts of life.

The students:

- make inferences about the writer's decision making
- identify words and phrases that relate to dimensions of Matalena's personal and cultural identity as she journeyed towards getting her malu
- explore the meaning of abstract concepts related to cultural values and beliefs and express them in their own words, using the Fonofale model of well-being as a template
- make connections between the things that are important to Matalena and the values, beliefs, and practices that are significant parts of their own or other people's sense of identity
- think critically about cultural values and beliefs and why they are important.

Give pairs of students different-coloured highlighters that they can use to highlight words and phrases related to these topics. Have them sketch a diagram of the Fonofale model and annotate it with the relevant words and phrases. Discuss what the terms mean, then have the students explain them in their own words.

Share and compare the completed diagrams. Use them to prompt discussion about values, beliefs, and ideas, making connections with concepts about culture and identity. (Be selective so the students don't feel overwhelmed – focus on those concepts that engage their interest.)

The teacher

Direct the students to reread the title and discuss its meaning.

- *Is the title a good one? What did the writer mean by it?*
- *What was the writer's purpose in telling Matalena's story? What did she want us to think or feel?*
- *Why do you think the legend was included in the story?*
- *Did it support or add to your understanding of the importance of a malu to Matalena?*

METACOGNITION

- *What experiences that Matalena described helped you to understand what drove her to get her malu, even though it hurt so much?*
- *What was your opinion of tattoos before reading this article? Have your thoughts changed? If so, how have they changed?*

The students:

- evaluate whether the title works well in expressing the writer's message, justifying their responses with examples from the text
- identify the writer's message and discuss whether they agree with it
- evaluate the purpose and usefulness of the legend in the article.

GIVE FEEDBACK

- *You made lots of connections to the way people you know express their culture. Making those sorts of connections is a good way of drawing comparisons with your own experiences and being able to better understand how the person in the text is feeling.*



The Literacy Learning Progressions




Assessment Resource Banks

Instructional focus – Writing

English Level 3 – Purpose and audiences: Show a developing understanding of how to shape texts for different purposes.

Social Sciences (Social Studies) Level 3 – Understand how cultural practices vary but reflect similar purposes.

Health and Physical Education Level 3 – Personal health and physical development – Identify factors that affect personal, physical, social, and emotional growth and develop skills to manage changes.

 Go to The Learning Progression Frameworks – Writing: “Creating texts to communicate current knowledge and understanding”, “Writing meaningful text: using knowledge of text structure and features”, and “Using writing to think and organise for learning” to find detailed illustrations showing you how students develop expertise and make progress in these aspects.

Text excerpts from “For the Ancestors: One Woman’s Malu”

Examples of text characteristics


Teacher (possible deliberate acts of teaching)

Page 11

Growing up in Sāmoa, Matalena Leaupepe saw tatau everywhere. Men often had pe’a, the Samoan tattoo that covers the torso and thighs. Matalena’s dad was the ali’i (high chief) of their village. He had a pe’a. Her grandmother and great aunts wore malu. As a young child, Matalena loved to sit and examine the stars inked around their knees.

INTRODUCING THE TOPIC

The introduction to a report usually tells the reader about the topic in a brief, general way. The introduction also indicates why the topic is important or interesting.

Tell the students that you want them to write a report on an event or process they took part in.  Google Docs allow for easy editing throughout the activity. Prompt the students to think about how they will introduce their topic. Ask them to discuss the following questions with a partner.

- *What makes this topic interesting? How will you show your audience that this topic is interesting and important?*
- *What does your audience need to know to “set the scene” for learning about the topic?*
- *What is your purpose? What do you want your audience to think, feel, and know after reading your report?*

Have the students explain the purpose of their writing and plan the structure. Construct a writing frame for students who need support for planning and writing and show them how to use it to plan the broad outline. (See the DVD *Making Language and Learning Work 3*, Year 5 and 6 Social Studies Focus for an example of a teacher using a similar process.)

Co-construct a proofreading checklist. This is a useful tool for students to self-check that they have included all features of the style of writing. Checklists are particularly helpful for English language learners who may not be familiar with the way reports are written in English. Also, provide writing models or sentence starters that they can refer to when writing.

Page 13

Malu are designed and made by a tufuga tā tatau, who is usually male. Traditional tufuga insert ink into the skin using an au – a tool made from wood, pig tusks, and turtleshell.

EXPLANATION

Informational texts often include explanations. An explanation tells why or how a process or phenomenon happens.

Review the difference between a set of instructions that are intended to help a reader perform a process themselves and an explanation, which is a description of the process and its purpose. Prompt the students to identify a place in their writing where an explanation would be useful.

Have the students identify key words and think about how they will explain them. Remind them to consider including a photograph or diagram to support their explanation. When they have finished, ask them to check their explanation with a partner to see if their partner can follow it. Students may also use the co-written checklists.

Page 16

One day soon, Matalena hopes New Zealand will be more like Sāmoa and she'll see tatau everywhere. "And I hope people will appreciate their beauty and understand their significance."

ENDING A REPORT

Reports may be concluded in many ways. One way is to briefly restate the main ideas covered in the report in a way that summarises the importance or special nature of the topic. A conclusion rounds a report off. It is not the place to introduce new ideas.

Prompt the students to think back to their purpose for writing their report.

- How can you summarise the main ideas in your report in three or four sentences?
- How can you round off your report in a way that makes the reader keep thinking?
- What did you say in your introduction? Is there a way of connecting your introduction to the conclusion?

Have them write a conclusion and share it with a partner for feedback.

- Does it cover all the main ideas?
- Is there anything missing that's important?
- Does it include any new information?
- Does it have a satisfying final sentence?

They should then use the feedback to fine-tune their conclusion if necessary.

GIVE FEEDBACK

- There were a lot of words that were new to me in your report. You could think about adding an explanation, a glossary, or a diagram to help readers understand those special topic words.
- I noticed that you introduced a whole new idea in your conclusion. It was interesting and important, so it should have had its own paragraph.

METACOGNITION

- What did you want your readers to learn about your culture? Do you feel satisfied that you achieved your purpose? What might you add or change to make it even better?
- How did you and your partner help each other to improve your reports?

 The Literacy Learning Progressions

Concept Cubes

Provide each student with a pattern to make a three-dimensional cube. See the [ReadWriteThink](#) website for a pattern.

Give each student one vocabulary word. Focus on words for feelings, values, or abstract concepts.

Before the students fold the cube, ask them to:

- write their word in one square
- write a synonym (word or phrase) in another square
- write an antonym (word or phrase) in another square
- write a category the word belongs in
- write or draw the essential characteristics of the concept of this word
- use the word in a sentence.

Then have them cut, fold, and tape the cube.

The students roll the cube and read what comes up on the top. Each student must then explain to a buddy the relationship of that word or phrase to the original word.

After the students know their own cube without any errors, they and their buddy exchange cubes.