

# *Kapa Haka*



by Lisa Rangiaho  
and Kahurangi Rangiaho-Katipa  
illustrated by Adele Jackson

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**kapa haka** (**kah**-pah **hah**-kah): Māori cultural group  
**Whaea Mere** (fire **meh**-reh, *roll the r slightly*): Aunt Mere  
**Kahu** (**kah**-hoo)  
**Mōrena, tamariki mā** (moh-**re**-nah, **tah**-mah-ree-kee mah –  
*roll the r slightly*): Good morning, children  
**karakia** (kah-ra-**kee**-ah – *roll the r slightly*): prayer  
**waiata** (**why**-ah-tah): song  
**anō** (ah-**naw**): again  
**e tū** (eh too): stand up  
**Marama** (**mah**-rah-mah – *roll the r slightly*)  
**pounamu** (**poe**-nah-moo): greenstone  
**piupiu** (**pew**-pew): cultural garment

For more support with pronunciation, go to [www.readytoread.tki.org.nz](http://www.readytoread.tki.org.nz)  
to hear an audio version of the text.

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The bell rang, and I walked over to the school hall with my friends. This was my first time going to kapa haka. Whaea Mere was waiting for us, and I could feel butterflies in my tummy. I saw my sister, Kahu, getting the guitar out of the cupboard.



“Mōrena, tamariki mā,” said Whaea Mere.

“We’ll start with a karakia.”

Some of the other children knew the prayer, but I just listened.

“In a few weeks, we’re going to have the school prize-giving. We’ll be singing in front of the children and the parents,” Whaea Mere told us.

I’d been to a prize-giving, but I’d never performed at one.



“We are going to sing a waiata about our school and the special places around us,” explained Whaea Mere. “We’re going to practise the words.”

The butterflies in my tummy started moving faster. Would she ask me to say the words by myself? Would I know how to say them?

“I’ll say a line, and you say it after me,” Whaea Mere said.

“Phew,” I thought. The butterflies went away.

“Anō,” said Whaea Mere. We said the words over and over again.

“Now it’s time to sing,” said Whaea Mere. “E tū.” Oh no. The butterflies were back.

I looked at my friends. They didn’t seem worried. Whaea Mere sang each line, and then we copied her. I kept making mistakes. I could feel my face getting hotter and hotter.

“Don’t worry about it, Marama,” whispered Kahu. “It was the same for me when I started.”

I wondered if I would *ever* remember all the words.



Every week, we practised.  
Kahu helped me practise the waiata at home too.  
She showed me a photo of her first performance.  
She was wearing a beautiful pounamu.  
“This was our Nan’s,” said Kahu.



At last, it was the day of the prize-giving.  
The butterflies came back, just like  
my first time at kapa haka.  
Mum came to school to help us get ready.  
“I know your Nan would have wanted you  
to wear this today,” Mum said softly.  
I gave her a big hug. Then I got in line to walk on stage.  
I loved the swish-swish sound my piupiu made  
when I moved.

Kahu sang the first line of the waiata, and we joined in. I remembered all the words! The butterflies had gone. I looked up, and I could see Mum smiling at me.

Now I'm always the first one in the hall for kapa haka practice. I still get butterflies, but now I know it will be all right.





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