

### Week 3: Lesson 1 – Maori Myths



#### Success Criteria

Students will gain a basic understanding of two Maori myths – that of Maui slowing the Sun and Kupe discovering in what is present-day New Zealand.

#### Lesson 1: Maui and the Sun – a ‘How the World Works’ Myth

Myths are a way of explaining events and how the universe works. Some people may look at Maori myths and view them as silly because they are clearly not true. For instance, the story of Maui slowing the Sun’s movements by tying a rope to it, clearly could not have happened. In real life, such a feat would be impossible. However, every culture has stories that are told to explain how the world works. Maori culture is no different. These stories are not to be taken literally – that is, at their face value. No Maori today would think that Maui tied a rope to the Sun any more than someone would believe in the Easter Bunny. It’s a story told to explain mysteries.

However, there is another type of story that involves myths, and they are used to explain real events. One of them is the tale of Kupe. Many Maori believe that he was an early explorer and leader who discovered what is now New Zealand and he was responsible for getting a group of Pacific Islanders to migrate to this new land in about 1250 to 1300. These stories of real events were not handed down

in books as Maori had no books or written language, so they were handed down as stories that were passed on from generation to generation. This was a way to get people to remember the story. Of course, each storyteller is different and might add their own details, and many parts of the story are sensational and clearly untrue, but the core of the story remains the same – Kupe discovered New Zealand and brought forth a mass migration. Most Maori would not believe that Kupe chased an octopus, and that is how he discovered New Zealand, but they WOULD believe that he discovered New Zealand – and that is the key part of the story that gets passed on from one generation to the next.

**Task 1: Watch the clip on how Maui slowed the Sun.**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jbM3PwcGi0g>

**Write a summary of key dot-points of main events in the story. Write the full question into your Red Book.**

1. Why did Maui want to slow the Sun?
2. Who helped him in his quest to slow it down?
3. What were the ropes made of?
4. How did they give the ropes power?
5. How were they able to get close to the Sun?
6. Where did the Sun live?
7. What did Maui use to hit the Sun and weaken it?
8. According to the story, if you look closely at the Sun, what will you see? (Note: No one should ever look directly at the Sun – it could burn your retina and cause you to go blind!).

### **Week 3, Lesson 2: How Kupe Discovered New Zealand**

**Watch the video clip on Kupe.**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6eCuaOXi67g>

**A.** Write down in one or two sentences – the core story of Kupe. Who was he, where did he come from, and what did he do?

**B.** The story of Kupe was not told as a cartoon or a reenactment using actors, but as a man sitting around a campfire. Why do you think this was the way that was chosen to tell the story?

**Task 2:** The story of Kupe has great significance to Maori people today. Just last year, a huge celebration took place, and a statue of Kupe was revealed to the public. Watch the clip on this event:

The legend of Kupe continues; commemorative centre opens in the Hokianga

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ccqp9w7T-Ys>

**C. What do the people interviewed for this story say is so important about Kupe?**

**Task 3:** Read: <https://teara.govt.nz/en/first-peoples-in-maori-tradition/page-6>

**D.** According to the story, who named New Zealand ‘Ao-tea-roa’ (‘long white cloud?’ (Hint – it wasn’t Kupe).

**E.** In the reading, it describes different stories of how Kupe discovered what is now New Zealand. How do you think these different stories formed?

**F.** What happened to Kupe’s son?

**Week 3, Lesson 3: Current Event – Is Mātauranga Māori Real Science?**

‘Mātauranga Māori’ means ‘Māori knowledge’ and refers to the body of knowledge that has been created by Maori people prior to contact by Europeans. It includes which plants are good for medicine, wayfinding at sea using the stars and other tools – you could view it as collective Maori wisdom passed down over generations. Recently a controversy developed over how we should view Maori knowledge. Some lecturers at Auckland University view much of their knowledge as myth and superstition, and certainly not the equivalent of Western Science. **Read the article below and write an editorial (two paragraphs where you give your position). Should ‘Mātauranga Māori’ be looked down upon when compared to Western science? Use the TEXAS method.**

**Read the article:** ‘Mātauranga Māori in science: Students reply to university academics’ controversial letter,’ *New Zealand Herald*, July 30, 2021.

<https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/matauranga-maori-in-science-students-reply-to-university-academics-controversial-letter/IYKNOZCQPZMLJWFP6VCXJUHROE/>

