

# TAKETAKERAU THE MILLENNIUM TREE

## BEHIND THE SCENES – Marnie Anstis

### Overview

*The book uses a story format to introduce factual information.*

A child listens to Koro, and (blue-eyed) Grandma.  
The child could be either a boy or a girl, either Maori or Pakeha, or a blend...

These three characters are symbolic of the intermingling of our people.

The book gives a broad over-view of New Zealand's history, and world history...

Like looking down from on a star, this 'global overview' of the progression of civilisation around the world over the last 2000 years covers:

- Communication – from bark paper to pop music
- Government – from gladiators to Social Security
- Technology – from the wheelbarrow to spacecraft

Specific events are placed within a broad context – not intensely studied in isolation.

The neutral tone of the writing allows the reader to form their own opinion.

Koro's formal 'voice' is written in a manner appropriate for the telling of a (modern) legend.

### **Taketakerau**

The meaning of the name *Taketakerau* is '**old strong trunk to support many leaves**'.

It is symbolic in this story of '**a strong society can support many people**'.

The story recognises that today, as in the past, society needs to be strong and stable in order to support the peaceful intermingling of different ethnic groups.

The study of this book could be set at –

## A **Local Level** for Junior Classes

Some ideas...

**Imagine what it was like in this land when the only inhabitants were birds** (limited animals: bats/reptiles/frogs, and insects)

**Imagine the sounds/noise, and the *lack* of many noises we hear these days**

**Study New Zealand's specific flora (native)  
introduced flora and fauna (including pasture and farmed animals)**

**Study the life-cycle of trees/plants in the bush (or any forest) from germination to decay to germination**

**Study the layers of the bush from the forest floor to the canopy - and the purpose of each layer**

**Study the puriri tree (*vitex lucens*)**

**Wikipedia:**

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Puriri>

**National Geographic:**

<http://www.nzgeographic.co.nz/new-zealand-geographic-education/resources-for-students/puriri-trees-puriri-moths>

**Study insects**

**Puriri Moth**

[http://nzacfactsheets.landcareresearch.co.nz/factsheet/OrganismProfile/Puriri\\_moth\\_-\\_Aenetus\\_virescens.html](http://nzacfactsheets.landcareresearch.co.nz/factsheet/OrganismProfile/Puriri_moth_-_Aenetus_virescens.html)

*Life Stages and Annual Cycle* on this link

**Video: Giant weta**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eg9qVkQgHrE>

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c\\_n0mbpX4KE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c_n0mbpX4KE)

**Video: The slurp of the Giant Snail, ngata, puturangi, of the species *Powelliphanta***

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5xNxQfVNVR8&feature=share>

The study of this book could be set at –

## **A National Level for Intermediate Classes**

Some ideas...

### **Study of Nature / Geology**

What makes New Zealand (physically) different from other places?

- volcanic
- climate
- soils
- isolation

**Study the changes that happened to flora/fauna when humans arrived on these islands**

**Study how the Maori lived – food**

- clothing
- shelter
- utensils
- social (communities, communication)

**Study the colonisation and subsequent development of the nation**

**Why did people of Europe (and elsewhere) want to come to New Zealand about 200 years ago?**

**How did they travel here?**

**How long did that take?**

**Why do people want to travel to New Zealand these days?**

NB: Over 2.8 million tourists visited NZ in the last 12 months.

**How long does it take to travel here now?**

**Why does New Zealand export and trade goods around the world?**

The study of this book could be set at –

## **An International Level for Senior Classes**

Some ideas...

### **Using the two storylines, study the following ideas:-**

- the isolation of these lonely islands  
NB: New Zealand was one of the last major landmasses to be discovered and settled by humans.
- many events were inevitable
- the origins, and the links, between our two main cultures  
*'We don't know who we are, or where we are going,  
until we know where we have come from'*
- *'No man is an island'*  
events/inventions that happened on the far side of the world, can have good/bad repercussions which can spread across many centuries, cultures, and countries.  
E.g. gunpowder, Magna Carta, the printing press, engineering skills, mechanisation, electricity...

## **Drama and Conflict**

The layout allows the elements of drama and conflict to be experienced in any way that an individual chooses, depending on their interpretation / interaction between the two narrations.

A quote off the web from 'Strong Writing Tips' - *"Strong internal conflict can make a good story great."*

Some examples:

- \* Page 7: an isolated land of birds, compared to the bustling busy city of Rome.
- \* Page 27: Polynesians widely explored the oceans, compared to...  
Page 33: Sailors in Europe thought they would sail off the edge
- \* Page 29: Polynesians built with timber/vegetation, compared to European cathedrals built of stone.
- \* The 'sounds' heard in New Zealand on Page 11, compared to today's 'sounds' at the beginning of Page 61, and the 'sounds' of Auckland on Page 67.

## Language and Comprehension

### Technical aspects within the writing-style

- \* Trees with the pale trunk are not referred to as ‘puriri’ until after the species was named by the Maori people.
  - \* Taketakerau is not referred to in the story by that name, until after it had been discovered and named.
  - \* Maori are not referred to as Maori until after Europeans had landed – as was the case. Until then, Maori had no need to distinguish themselves from anyone else.
  - \* These lands are not called Aotearoa until after the Maori landed.
  - \* Aotearoa is not called New Zealand in the story until the period of time when it had been formally named.
  - \* The ‘*huge lime-green ghost moths*’ are referred to later on as ‘*huge lime-green puriri moths*’.
- (For ease of reading, the birds have been named right from the start of the story.)
- \* *..the sound of the rushing river* at the start of the book, is the *Waioeka River* at the end of the story.
  - \* The ‘*bush-cloaked, misty\* hills to the south*’ on Page 11, is the ‘*...great Urewera National Park*’ Page 59  
(\*an acknowledgement to the Children of the Mist).

**Historical Dates** can sometimes be confusing with how they are presented.

Dates are listed as in this example:-

The **1300’s (e.g. 1357)**

then: **the 14<sup>th</sup> century**

followed by: **the 1400’s (e.g. 1436)**

(An exception is the reference to 20<sup>th</sup> century)

**A ‘hands-on’ example of how the passing of time can be demonstrated:**

**The Roman city of Pompeii** was buried from a volcanic eruption in the year 79 AD; mentioned on Page 11. On page 43, the city was re-discovered.

It had been buried and forgotten for **16 centuries**.

To help understand how long that was, turn and count the pages ... there happens to be **16!**

For this particular exercise, each page is worth 100 years.

**Poetic Repetition** of words and phrases

within one narration, as well as between the two narrations.

- \* **Pages: 5, 69**     *Silent night*
- \* **Page 5**             *Snuggled in his mother's arms = nestled under the canopy*  
*A bright, bright star beamed down a shaft of light = shafts of sunlight beamed through...*
- \* **Pages: 7, 65**        *...(people) can go shopping*
- \* **Page 7**             *...some children went to school*
- \* **Page 65**            *"But children still have to go to school!"*
- \* **Pages: 9, 67**        *Sealed roads and traffic problems*
- \* **Page 9**             *Apartment blocks 4 stories high*
- \* **Page 67**            *Office blocks soar over 40 stories high*
- \* **Pages: 11, 59**      *The roar of the sea (blue Pacific Ocean) is still carried on the northerly wind that rustles (ruffles) its leaves.*
- \* **Pages: 29, 47, 67** *Adapted to their new environment using materials and resources **from** their new environment*
- \* **Pages: 9, 49**        *...trees that towered over lush ferns and shrubs and vines*
- \* **Pages: 55, 63**      *A national grief that united **all** New Zealanders*
- \* **Pages: 7, 65**        *They wrote/write about history, politics, philosophy, and science.....*
- \* **Pages: 35, 55, 65** *Such widespread distribution of knowledge/music had never ever happened before.*
- \* **Pages: 35, 65**      *In this period, civilisation changed immeasurably....*
- \* **Pages: 37, 57**      *...dark/mysterious shadowy grottos*
- \* **Pages: 59, 63**      *...people throughout the world were able to watch ... as it was actually happening.*
- \* **Page 7**             *Rome was the largest city in the world (about a million people).*
- \* **Page 67**            *Auckland is the largest city in New Zealand (about a million people).*
- \* **Page 5**             *...the wind moaned softly...*
- \* **Page 69**            *They heard the soft evening wind moan around the cottage...*
- \* **Page 55**            *"Maori and Pakeha" is repeated in each narration.*

## Art / Illustrations

As well as the notes at the back of the book, the artist **Patricia Howitt** has written comprehensive notes to her illustrations on her website [www.taketakerau.com](http://www.taketakerau.com)

Some concepts:-

- \* The owl and lizard can be symbolic to Maori, of *tapu*, *guardianship*, *forewarning*, *grief*, and *awareness*, and they are both featured in every painting where Taketakerau has been bestowed with *tapu*.  
When the *tapu* is lifted from the tree, the owl and lizard disappear from the paintings too.
- \* The paintings on Page 16 (daytime) and page 20 (nocturnal) are set in the same scene.
- \* The shining cuckoo (pipwharau) is a migratory bird which arrives in New Zealand every springtime – symbolic not only of the new season, but also, in the painting **Fallen Giants** on page 22, symbolic of the new life-cycle depicted in this scene within the forest.
- \* There is a cat depicted in **Washday** on page 48. What repercussions could there be from this introduced pet?

Pages 12 & 13: **Red Skies** [The Eruption of Taupo](#)

The scene of the main painting is looking towards the south, and the ash cloud is drifting to the east - as is what happened.

The pen & ink sketch on the opposite page also has the ash cloud drifting east ... as that scene of New Zealand is looking northwards.

**Analysis of Construction** for the illustration **Marauders**, on page 40

- \* If the line of the taiaha is extended, it passes right between the eyes of the leader of the opposing warriors.
- \* If the lines are extended on each of the other three pouwhenua / tewhatewha, they all converge at a point that is directly above the enemy.
- \* The kotiate is placed exactly in the centre of the painting.

The line-art drawings by **Kelly Spencer** include both whimsical and authentic depictions.

Some concepts:-

Rome's skyline on Page 7 is a collection of famous buildings that existed in Rome 2000 years ago.

Auckland's skyline on Page 67 is an eclectic collection of the city's present modern, distinctive architecture.

The size of the actual Mona Lisa painting is 770 mm x 530 mm.

Kelly's sketch on Page 35 is more-or-less in perspective.

The ghosts on Page 49 are the same 'style' as the Halloween Ghost on Page 9.

The sketch on Page 65 symbolically depicts the 'Tree of Knowledge' as the inner-workings of the human brain.

## **Behind The Scenes**

a)

Nestled in the fork of two rivers near where they flow as one into the ocean, the township of Opotiki is backed by rolling green hills of rich volcanic soils – ideal for pastoral farming and kiwifruit orchards – and just what puriri trees like too!

Puriri (*Vitex lucens*) is a handsome evergreen tree, native to New Zealand. It thrives in a mild climate and grows in the northern half of the North Island in areas where their lush leaves are less likely to be frosted.

The trees are long-living, and their rounded, fresh green crowns are easy to spot along the retained fringes of bush within the Opotiki region, in the eastern Bay of Plenty.

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b)

Near where I live, there's a tract of native bush.

Within this native bush, there's a spectacular grove of puriri trees.

Within this grove of puriri trees, and under their canopy, is a large, open, shaded area.

Within this large, open, shaded area is a place where I like to be...

This place - this space amongst the trees - has an aura of serenity.

It is quiet; ethereal.

It reminds me of a cathedral.

I could be standing in the transept.

The surrounding grey puriri trunks are the pillars. The leafy canopy that soars overhead is a green celestial dome.

Even when the sun shines, the rays that filter through the branches are dim.

For aeons, fallen puriri leaves have laid a thick, dry, brown carpet across the ground - a barrier to the survival of any seedling.

But as I walk across this forest floor, the silence of the sanctuary is broken.

*Crunch, crunch, crunch...*

*Marnie*

[www.themillenniumtree.com](http://www.themillenniumtree.com) for more about the author, the artists and the tree.

Check out **Taketakerau: The Millennium Tree on Facebook**

[www.facebook.com/themillenniumtree](https://www.facebook.com/themillenniumtree)

for photos, news, and related topics.