

Proverb / Whakataukī

Kua tū te haka a Tānerore.

The dancing of Tānerore has begun.

Tānerore is said to be the originator of dance. His parents were the sun, Tama-nui-te-rā, and summer, Hine-Raumati. This proverb is said to describe the shimmering heat in summer – analogous with the hand actions of Tānerore doing the haka.

Cultural knowledge / Tikanga

The word *marama* means both ‘moon’ and ‘month’ due to the fact that Māori operated on a lunar calendar (maramataka).

Summer/Raumati

Hine-Raumati was the summer maid whose child Tānerore reportedly created the haka – where the hand actions (wiri) quivered like the shimmering heat of summer (December – February in the traditional Māori calendar).

However, attitudes to summer were not always positive in traditional times due to the heat exhaustion and loss of weight associated with that time of the year. For example, there were expressions such as:

- *Rehua whakaruhi tangata* (Rehua the weakener), which highlighted the exhaustion caused by the heat of summer. (Rehua is the brightest star in the Scorpius constellation, and is associated with summer.)
- *Rehua pona nui* (Rehua of the big joints), which referred to people losing weight in summer, and its association with people’s joints looking bigger.
- *Te rā o te waru* (the days of the eighth month in the traditional lunar calendar), which referred to the height of summer in January, when kai could be scarce before the crops were harvested.

Autumn/Ngahuru

The word for autumn (ngahuru) originates from an associated but less common meaning, e.g., number 10. It refers to:

- the 10th month of the traditional Māori calendar (approximately March/Poutū-te-rangi)
- harvest time.

Some Māori calendars recorded only 10 months because the two months after the harvest and before planting resumed were deemed unimportant.

There is a saying that emphasises the abundance of kai at harvest-time:

Ngahuru – kura kai, kura tangata.

(Harvest time – wealth of food, the wealth of people.)

Winter/Takurua

Winter (June to August) was associated with the star Sirius or Takurua. A saying associated with this time of the year is:

Takurua hūpē nui.

(Winter, when your nose runs.)

NB: Other common words for winter are hōtoke and makariri.

Most schools and many New Zealanders celebrate the appearance of the cluster of stars referred to as Matariki. This constellation, which appears during winter, has commonly been known as the Seven Sisters – similar to other cultures, e.g., Subaru (Japanese) and Pleiades (Greek).

The appearance of the stars (early/mid-June) marks the beginning of the Māori New Year. This is a time to:

- look back at the past, remembering those who have departed
- appreciate loved ones
- be grateful for and celebrate the sufficiency of provisions (by singing, dancing, flying kites, playing games and eating)

- plan for the future, celebrating new life.

There are various stories about Matariki among Māori but it was generally accepted that this constellation comprised seven stars – with one being invisible to the naked eye. However, recently Dr Rangi Mātāmua, a Māori academic, has disputed this number, claiming that there are nine stars.

Spring/Kōanga

In the traditional Māori calendar, spring occurred between September and November. It was a time for digging the soil and planting, using an implement called a *kō* – hence the derivation of the Māori word for spring – *kōanga*.

There is a saying (an insult) that alludes to people who do not help with the planting in spring, but benefit from the fruits of other people's labour at harvest time in autumn:

Takē kōanga, whakapiri ngahuru.

(Absent at planting time, close by at harvest.)

Pre-reading / I mua atu

Before reading the story, talk with students

to discover:

- their previous experiences in relation to the picture on the front cover and the storyline.
- their prior knowledge of relevant vocabulary, language structures, and Māori concepts.