

# At the Marae

by Marion Rego  
pictures by Phillip Paea

## Overview

In this personal experience recount, a Pākehā girl describes her first visit to a marae.

## Suggested purposes

You could use this text as an opportunity for children to share their experiences of marae or as preparation for a marae visit. It can be a useful starter for discussing the children's experiences of unfamiliar situations. This text is well-suited to reciprocal reading and is also a useful model for writing personal recounts. It supports the comprehension strategies of making connections, identifying main ideas, inferring, and identifying point of view.

## Text features

(Focus on only one or two per session.)

- the feelings expressed by the narrator
- the informal, conversational style
- the selective “diary-like” nature of the recount
- the change to the present tense on the last page
- the Māori words
- the subject-specific vocabulary
- the extra information included in the illustrations
- the lively verbs
- the irregular past-tense verbs – “felt”, “sang”, “slept”, “thought”, “took”
- the “es” plurals for “mattresses” and “speeches”
- the “ight” rime in “light”, “night”, and “right”.

## Possible challenges

- unfamiliarity with marae protocols
- the pronunciation of the Māori words
- the meanings of the subject-specific vocabulary.

## Introducing the text

If you wish to refresh your background knowledge, the *School Journal* articles “Not Just a House” (Part 1 Number 2, 2001) or “Te Papa Tongarewa” (Part 2 Number 1, 2001) are useful references.

Find out what the children already know about visiting marae. You could use the opened-out cover and the illustrations in the text to feed in or draw out information.

Provide support for any of the Māori words that may be unfamiliar in their written form by writing them on the whiteboard and including them in the discussion.

## During the reading

Read the title and the names of the author and the illustrator.

Depending on the children's background experience, it may be better to share-read this text the first time. Otherwise, ask the children to read the text silently, pausing at various points for discussion or to clarify any difficulties. You may need to support the children with the pronunciation of the Māori words.

Pages 2 and 3 – Briefly review the protocols of welcoming visitors onto the marae and the obligations for speeches and waiata. Draw out the idea that the speeches will be in Māori. *Why is everyone sitting outside? What will happen next?*

Pages 4 and 5 – *Is this what you thought would happen next?* Draw out the idea that the narrator is focusing on just some aspects of her visit.

Briefly share the children's experience of hāngi food before reading pages 6 and 7.

Page 6 – If necessary, read the Māori text together and talk about what it means.

Page 7 – *How does the writer want you to read this page?* The writer has used "and" rather than commas to emphasise how much food there was. Compare the information on this page with the children's experiences or expectations of a hāngi.

Pages 8 and 9 – *Why do you think the singing made the girl feel sad? Has singing ever made you feel happy or sad?*

Pages 10 and 11 – *Do you think you would have been able to get to sleep?*

Page 12 – If necessary, explain what an elder is. You may need to talk about the concept of saying prayers.

Pages 15 and 16 – *What had the girl been worried about? Note the change of tense on page 16. How did the girl's feelings change? Why?*

## After the reading

(Choose only one or two per session.)

Listen to the children reread the text, noting how they manage the challenges of the vocabulary and their use of expression. Note whether they need practice with their pronunciation of the Māori words.

Examine the Māori words and subject-specific vocabulary. If necessary, practise the correct pronunciation. Create a glossary together.

Review marae protocols, drawing on information from the text and the illustrations and the children's experiences. Encourage inferential thinking – *Where did the food for the hāngi come from? What jobs might the children have done?*

Focus on the architectural features of the marae as shown in the illustrations, for example, the shape and structure of the whareniui, the carvings, and the tukutuku panels.

Have the children think, pair, and share about what made the visit special for the narrator.

Focus on the narrator's point of view as expressed on pages 3, 4, 7, 9, 15, and 16 and her conversational style. Talk about how this is similar to diary writing.

Talk about what the recount *doesn't* tell the reader. For example, there is a big jump in time from the pōwhiri to the hāngi. Draw out the idea that recounts are more interesting to the reader when the writer selects parts of an experience to write about rather than writing about every detail.

Identify the verbs used in the text and talk about how they add life and interest, especially on page 4, where the steam "poured out".

Focus on the irregular past-tense verbs. Talk about how some verbs can't have "ed" added to them and that the children need to use their knowledge of spoken English to help them when they're reading. *Does "sleaped" sound right?* For ESOL children, try to use these verbs often in subsequent conversations.

List the "ight" words from page 12. Show the children how they can draw on their knowledge of the "ight" rime by having them spell words such as "bright" or "lightning".

Talk about the spelling rule of adding "es" for plurals of words that end in "s" or "ch".

## Suggestions for further tasks

Read the *School Journal* articles "Not Just a House" (Part 1 Number 2, 2001) or "Te Papa Tongarewa" (Part 2 Number 1, 2001) to the children.

Organise a visit to your local marae.

Construct a flow chart to show the sequence of events at the marae.

Invite a Māori elder into the classroom to talk about marae protocol and/or the significance of the carvings and tukutuku panels.

Help the children to write a simple mihi. They could present these to their reading group or record them on audiotape to use at the listening post.

Use the illustration on page 8 as motivation for art work.

Have the children write a "thank you" note to a friend who has invited them somewhere special. Make sure that they tell the friend what they liked about the experience.