

Whai (String Games)

by Kiwa Hammond
illustrated by Adele Jackson

This text is levelled at Green 3.



Overview

Whai (String Games) features Mahi and her Aunty, whom readers will have met before, and introduces Mahi's cousin Hani. In this heart-warming story, Mahi teaches Hani how to make shapes with a piece of string. Hani struggles at first, but with Mahi's patient teaching and his perseverance, he is eventually successful. This story gives an insight into a traditional game common to many cultures and demonstrates the concept of tuakana-teina (an older sibling or cousin helping a younger one). Although this text has particular relevance to Māori students, many students will identify with Mahi helping her younger cousin.

Whai (String Games) supports the development of a self-extending reading process. It requires students to "use a range of sources of information in the text, along with their prior knowledge, to make sense of the texts they read", to monitor their reading, and "use strategies such as asking questions and making inferences to help them think more deeply about the ideas in the text" (*The Literacy Learning Progressions*, page 12).

There is an audio version of the text as an MP3 file at www.readytoread.tki.org.nz

Cross-curriculum links

Health and Physical Education (level 1, Relationships): Explore and share ideas about relationships with other people.

Related texts

Stories about Mahi and Aunty: *Getting Ready for the Visitors* (Red 3); *Waiting for Rēwana Bread* (Blue 3)

Texts about family relationships and helping others: "Nanny" (poem card); *Grandpa's Birthday* (Blue 1), *Helping at the Marae* (Blue 2); *Waiting for Rēwana Bread* (Blue 3); *My Brother* (Green 1); *Mum's New Job* (Green 2)

Texts featuring Māori cultural practices: *Nanny* (poem card), *Matariki Breakfast* (shared); *A Special Visit to Koro and Nanny* (Orange 1)

Stories about learning a new skill: *The Hole in the King's Sock* (shared); *Waiting for Rēwana Bread* (Blue 3)

Text characteristics

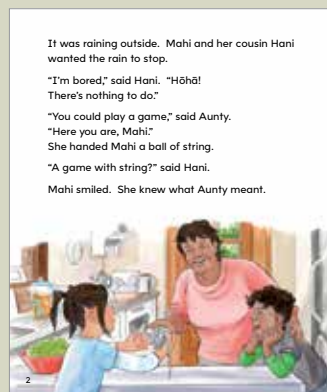
Whai - String Games has the following text characteristics that help develop the reading behaviours expected of students reading at Green.

A mix of a familiar setting (at home) and a context (playing string games) that may be unfamiliar to some students

Most content explicitly stated but also some implicit content that provides opportunities for students to make predictions and inferences and identify main ideas

Illustrations that support and extend the meaning but may not exactly match the words

Compound words ("another", "herself", "nothing", "outside"); words with "er" inflected endings ("teacher", "learner"); and words with silent letters ("scissors", "knew", "thumbs") that provide opportunities for students to build and apply their knowledge of letters, sounds, and words



A range of punctuation, including speech marks, commas, question marks, and exclamation marks to support phrasing and meaning

A wide variety of verbs, including some that are irregular in their past-tense form ("gave", "held", "knew", "meant")

Dialogue between easily identified speakers

Mostly familiar vocabulary, including many high-frequency words, but also some new words and phrases, some in te reo Māori (for example, "raining", "cousin", "Hani", "bored", "Hōhā", "handed", "ball of string", "scissors", "pieces", "just right", "loop", "Titiro mai", "fingers", "Step by step", "pattern", "thumbs", "moved", "held", "cup and saucer", "whai pattern", "spaghetti", "quick learner", "morning tea") that are strongly supported by the context, the sentence structure, and/or the illustrations

Sentences that run over more than one line but do not split phrases and several lines of text on every page

Reading standard: After one year at school

The Literacy Learning Progressions

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Suggested reading purpose

(What can the students expect to find out or think about as a result of reading this text?)

We are reading this story to find out what happens when Mahi and Hani play string games.

Possible learning goals

(What opportunities does this text provide for students to learn more about how to “read, respond to, and think critically” about texts?)

The behaviours listed below link to *The Literacy Learning Progressions*. **Select from and adapt** them according to your students’ strengths, needs, and experiences – their culture, language, and identity (*Reading and Writing Standards for years 1–8*, Knowledge of the learner, page 6).

This text provides opportunities for students, over several readings, to:

- **make connections** between their own experiences and information in the story to **make predictions and inferences**
- **ask questions** about the story and think about possible answers
- identify the events in the story (**summarise**)
- **identify and discuss the main idea** (or author’s message)
- **make meaning** by searching for and using multiple sources of information rather than one source
- **monitor** their reading and self-correct where necessary, for example, by rerunning text or checking further sources of information.

Introducing the story

- A short video on the importance of introducing the text is available at: <https://vimeo.com/142446572>
- Before introducing this book to students, you can familiarise yourself with the pronunciation of any Māori words and phrases that are new to you by listening to the audio version.
- Use your knowledge of your students to ensure that the introduction to the story activates their prior knowledge and supports them for a successful first reading. A few days before reading this book, add the previous stories about Mahi to the students’ browsing boxes for them to reread and enjoy.
- Students will enjoy this story more on the first reading if they have some experience of string games. Instructions for making the cup and saucer pattern that features in *Whai (String Games)* can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0AtT-pioprk>

(You can choose whether to tell the students that this is the pattern that Mahi makes or leave this for them to discover for themselves.) Have an actual cup and saucer handy in case the students don’t know what a “saucer” is. Discuss what it’s like to learn new things and how hard it can be at first.

For English language learners in particular (who may well be familiar with string games as part of their own culture), this activity would provide a natural opportunity to introduce and reinforce much of the interest vocabulary of the book. You can find useful guidance about supporting English language learners at <http://esolonline.tki.org.nz/ESOL-Online/Teacher-needs/Pedagogy/ESOL-teaching-strategies/Reading>

- Read the book title. If necessary, explain that “Whai” is the Māori word for string games. Expect the students to recognise Mahi on the front cover and to infer that she is about to start a string game. Tell them Hani’s name and explain that the story includes other Māori words too, some of which they are likely to know already.
- Use the title page illustration as an opportunity to recall (from the cover illustration) what Mahi needs to do to get the string game started (and to introduce the concept of making a “loop”).
- Discuss the illustrations on pages 2 and 3, making connections to the students’ experiences of having to stay inside on a wet day and feeling bored. If necessary, feed in the word “hōhā”. Prompt them to notice that Mahi seems to be the one in charge of the activity (Aunty is giving her the string and Mahi is doing the cutting) and that Hani is younger.
- Browse through the illustrations on pages 4–5 and explore what the children are doing in more detail (for example, making loops, putting their fingers under the string, making patterns). Prompt the students to notice Hani’s expression on page 5. *Do you think he is finding this easy?* Encourage the students to make connections to their own experiences of learning a new skill and draw out the idea of needing lots of practice.
- Share the purpose for reading and ask the students to share a question they have or a prediction about what they think might happen. You could record these to refer back to. If the students need support for asking questions, you could model your thinking, for example, *I wonder what pattern Mahi and Hani are making?*
- Remind them of the purpose for reading and to think about their own particular question or prediction as they read.

 Sounds and words

 The Literacy Learning Progressions

Monitoring the reading

- Observe closely as the students read the story quietly to themselves. Note their confidence and perseverance, their attempts to solve unknown words, and any instances of self-monitoring, cross-checking, and self-correction. Provide support to individual students as necessary, reserving deeper discussion until after the first reading. For example, on page 2:
 - you may need to remind students of the word “Hōhā”
 - for English language learners, you may need to explain the sentence “She knew what Aunty meant.”
- If students are making errors without noticing, wait till the end of the sentence or page before intervening unless they have stopped reading. Waiting gives them the opportunity to notice and fix it themselves. Use appropriate prompts to draw their attention to the error, for example:

| Text in book | Student reads | Teacher prompt |
|---|--|--|
| “Mine looks like spaghetti,” laughed Hani. | “Mine looks like ... (no attempt, student looks at teacher) | <i>What can you see in the word that will help you?</i> Prompt the student to also check the picture. <i>What does Hani’s pattern look like?</i> If necessary, articulate the first syllable: <i>It looks like spa ...</i> |
| “Mine looks like spaghetti,” laughed Hani. | “Mine looks like spaghetti,” looked Hani. | <i>Does that sound right and look right?</i> If necessary: <i>Look at Hani’s face in the picture. What’s he doing? Now read that again.</i> |
| “Look at all those cups and saucers!” said Aunty. | “Look at all our cups and saucers!” | Prompt the student to self-monitor. <i>You said _____. Can you find your mistake and fix it?</i> |

- Other prompts that you could use include: *Are you sure?; Think about what would make sense; Does that look right and sound right?; You said ... Can we say it that way?; Were you right?; Look for something you know in that word; What else could you check?; What can you see that will help you?; Say the first part, then the next part; Try that again.*
 - Remember to base these prompts on what you know about the students’ prior knowledge. For example, asking an English language learner if a word or sentence sounds right may not be useful if they are not familiar enough with English phonemes and vocabulary or syntax. In this case, an explanation and further examples would be more effective.
 - Reinforce the students’ attempts to problem-solve, whether they are successful or not, for example: *After you read “string” in that sentence, I noticed you reread it and changed it to “scissors”. That was great checking and fixing.*
- For further suggestions about ways to support students to self-monitor (to cross-check, confirm, and self-correct), see *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 1–4*, page 130.

Discussing and rereading the story

- You can reread this story several times, focusing on different aspects and providing opportunities for the students to build comprehension and fluency. Many of the discussion points listed here also lead naturally into “After-reading” activities.
- Encourage the students to share their responses to the story. Remind them of their purpose for reading and refer back to the questions they asked or the predictions they made.
- Have the students summarise what happened in the story, then move onto a deeper focus on the characters (what they did and how they felt). *What did Mahi do? How do you think Hani felt when he was first learning to make whai?* Discuss the tuakana–teina relationship. Encourage them to make connections to their own experiences of helping younger family members or younger students at school, or of being helped themselves.
- Encourage the students to think critically (using evidence in the text) and make connections to their own experiences:
 - Why didn’t Aunty help Hani?*
 - What does this story tell us about what it means to be a good teacher? About learning new things?*
 - How could we use these ideas in our classroom?*
- Have the students reread the text, stopping to discuss points of interest. You can revisit the story over several sessions, exploring such features as:
 - the feelings of the characters. Have the students identify clues in the text (including dialogue) and illustrations. Together generate and record a list of words that describe how the characters are feeling at different points in the story (for example, bored, puzzled, annoyed, frustrated, patient, pleased, delighted, successful, happy). (Also see After reading.)
 - the dialogue, particularly between Mahi and Hani. Encourage the students to read the dialogue in a way that reflects the characters’ actions and feelings, for example, Hani’s questions and Mahi’s encouragement. Explore the impact of the alternatives to “said” (“asked”, “laughed”, “smiled”).
 - any questions the students have about the string games. (Note that the instructions in the book will only get them to the stage shown on page 7 and not to the final “cup and saucer”.)

- the sentence on page 5 that starts with the phrase “Step by step”. Support the students to clarify what this means and to identify the first two “steps” described in the first paragraph.
- the words in te reo Māori. If necessary, clarify their meanings and pronunciation.
- how the students worked out (or tried to work out) unfamiliar words or phrases, for example, by thinking about what made sense, looking for the biggest known part of a word (especially when solving compound words), noticing inflected endings, reading on to the next word, or rereading.
- some of the unusual aspects of words that appear in this text. Remind the students of the need to think about the meaning and what sounds right as they are reading. Enjoy exploring some examples, such as:
 - the verbs that are irregular in their past-tense form (“gave”, “held”, “knew”, “made”, “meant”). Find and read the sentences that include these examples. Explain that some words in English can’t have “ed” added.
 - words with silent letters. Identify them in the text and list other examples: “sciissors” (science, scene); “thumbs” (climb, lamb, comb); “knew” (know, knee, knot). You could start a “discoveries” chart and encourage the students to add other examples as they find them in their wider reading and writing.
 - the word “teacher” and other words with “er” endings. Identify the root words and explore how adding “er” changes the word from a verb (something you do) to a noun (a person or object). Experiment with some other examples (singer, dancer, player).
- Ask the students to reread the story with a partner. They could read each other alternate pages. Listen in, noting their ability to self-monitor and to use punctuation to support phrasing and expression. You could also use this time to do a quick running record with a student to provide more information on an aspect you have noticed.
- The students can build their comprehension and fluency by rereading the story while listening to the audio version. Audio versions also provide English language learners with good models of pronunciation, intonation, and expression.
- Reread other stories about Mahi, and stories with similar themes (see Related texts).
- Use an adaptation of a Say It activity (described below) for students to explore ideas and use new vocabulary that they have met in the story. While this activity is particularly supportive for English language learners, it is useful for all students. <http://esolonline.tki.org.nz/ESOL-Online/Planning-for-my-students-needs/Resources-for-planning/ESOL-teaching-strategies/Oral-Language/Speaking-strategies/Say-It>

Write “Say It” prompts on cards for the students to respond to. Suggestions for the cards include:

- You are Mahi. Tell us how you felt when you were showing Hani how to play string games.
- You are Hani. Tell us how you felt when you found the string game difficult.
- You are Aunty. Tell us how you felt when you saw Mahi and Hani playing string games.
- The students could create thought bubbles for the characters on page 3, 5, or 8.
- Provide students with string and scissors to copy the steps shown in the story. If possible, teach the students how to complete the pattern. You could take photos of students showing the steps of making a cup and saucer. Have the students write captions for one or two photos, describing what they are doing. (You could use the photos as the basis for creating a complete set of instructions during shared writing.)
- Ask the students to choose one or two words from the list of adjectives created when discussing the story and to draw and write about a time when they felt that way.

After reading: practice and reinforcement

After-reading tasks should arise from your monitoring of the students’ needs during the lesson and provide purposeful practice and reinforcement. Where possible, make links to other reading texts, including texts generated from language experience and shared writing, and to the wider literacy programme (oral language, writing, handwriting, alphabet and word games and activities) and other curriculum areas.

Select from and adapt these suggestions, according to the needs of your students.