

Focus on te Tiriti o Waitangi

My meaning, your meaning

Te Tiriti o Waitangi | The Treaty of Waitangi was written in two languages: te reo Māori and te reo Ingarihi. The point of having two versions was to make sure everyone – Māori and Pākehā – understood what was in te Tiriti. That way, if they signed it, they would know exactly what they were agreeing to.

That seemed like a good idea at the time but the problem was that some words had somewhat different meanings in the two languages. That has caused some disagreement ever since.

Think about this example of a disagreement that could happen to you.

What is the most precious thing you own, such as a musical instrument, an item of sports gear or a special toy? It is a treasure you love and look after really well.

Imagine a cousin comes to stay. You like your cousin and agree to share this treasure with them.

But your cousin uses your treasure in a way that is very different from the way you care for it. Your cousin is rough and damages the treasure. It will be very hard to fix or could be broken forever.

You are angry. Your cousin says, "But you said I could share it!" They think that you have given the thing to them or that they can take it away from you without asking.

You tell one of your parents or a carer about what has happened. You hope they will be on your side and punish your cousin.

Talk with someone in your whānau or class about these questions:

1. Who was right: you or your cousin? Why?
2. Do you think your cousin was deliberately careless with your treasure? Or did they misunderstand what it meant to you?
3. Do you think your parent or carer will take your side as you hope? Why or why not?
4. Will you trust your cousin again after this disagreement? Why or why not?
5. How could you stop a disagreement like this from happening again?

Time for a poem

Te Tiriti

It was 180 years ago
when some new arrivals from a f a r
drew up a treaty
in their own language,
then in te reo Māori.

It was 180 years ago
when some Māori
and these new arrivals
signed te Tiriti.

It was 180 years ago
in Waitangi,
where these Pākehā
promised to uphold
their agreements.

180 years have now passed
like a dull headache.
Many Māori are not pleased.
Some Pākehā are still not interested.
Was te Tiriti really a treaty?

Vaughan Rapatahana

Poem reflection

Warm-up (discuss in class)

1. Look at the title. What is the language here? Who knows what *Tiriti* means? Who can pronounce *Tiriti* correctly? What do you think this poem might be about?

Vocabulary (pair work)

2. For each term in the table, circle the description that is closest in meaning.

arrivals	(a) people leaving a place	(b) people coming to a place	(c) people who are new and exciting
treaty	(a) a special meal	(b) a plea or wish for something	(c) an agreement between two or more groups to behave in particular ways in the future
Pākehā	(a) a New Zealander of European origin	(b) a type of native plant	(c) an alien being
uphold	(a) to lift up something so everyone can see it	(b) to support and maintain an agreement	(c) to pray
te reo	(a) the right way	(b) a type of bird	(c) language

First reading

The teacher reads the poem first, with expression, while you listen and note the repeated words. Then you and/or some other students read the poem out loud.

Language and usage (pair work)

3. Do you see any examples of rhyme in this poem? Do you think that a poem should have rhyme? Why or why not?

4. Look at the number of lines in each verse or stanza. Is the number the same for all verses? If they are not, why do you think this is?

5. What words are repeated? List them. What is the effect of this repetition?

6. Why are the words “from a f a r” written like this?

7. Why does the line “then in te reo Māori” not appear directly underneath the other lines in that stanza?

8. Find the example of a simile in this poem. Why is the poet making this comparison?

Understanding and evaluation (group work)

9. Who do you think wrote te Tiriti and in what language?

10. Why do you think only “some Māori” signed te Tiriti?

11. What did “these Pākehā” promise to do?

12. Why do you think “many Māori” are not pleased today?

13. What is the poet trying to say in the final line?

14. Did you like this poem? Why or why not? Did you understand the poem? Share your response with your class.

Follow-up

15. Work on your own or with a partner. Research Te Tiriti o Waitangi | The Treaty of Waitangi of 1840. Then write your own poem with the title “Te Tiriti”. Feel free to include your own opinion about te Tiriti. Also try to include a simile. Be ready to read your poem to your class.

Answers to poem reflection

1. The language in the title is Māori. *Tiriti* means "Treaty".
2. *arrivals* (b); *treaty* (c); *Pākehā* (a); *uphold* (b); *te reo* (c)
3. The poem has no rhyme. Poetry does not have to rhyme at all!
4. The number of lines is similar but not exactly the same in all verses. From the first to the last verse, the number of lines is four (although it seems like five – see answer to question 7 below), four, five, five. The effect is to slow down our reading and our listening to the poem, which reflects the slow passage of time and the complications involved in making the principles agreed in te Tiriti happen.
5. Repetitions are "180 years", "te Tiriti", "Māori" and "Pākehā". The repetition of "180 years" emphasises how long it has been since te Tiriti was signed and how important te Tiriti has always been and continues to be. The other three repetitions are central elements in the entire poem and repeating them emphasises their significance.
6. The word is stretched out to emphasise that the visitors came from a long way away.
7. This line is actually part of the previous line "in their own language,". By starting it on a separate line and further across the page, the poet is visually reinforcing what the words are stating: that the Māori were not originally involved in organising te Tiriti and the version in te reo Māori came later.
8. The simile is "180 years have now passed like a dull headache". The poet is making this comparison because the many years that have passed while Pākehā still have not upheld te Tiriti cause discomfort, are always nagging away and – so far at least – seem to have no "cure" or solution.
9. The new arrivals to Aotearoa New Zealand – who came from Great Britain (now more often called the United Kingdom) – wrote te Tiriti. They wrote it in their language, which was English.
10. Several Māori leaders and iwi did not agree with te Tiriti and refused to sign it. Others never had the chance to consider it because no one consulted them when te Tiriti was being taken around the country to be signed.
11. The Pākehā organisers of te Tiriti promised to keep to its terms. However, from the beginning Pākehā and Māori differed in their understanding of those terms because some of the words in the English version of te Tiriti had a different meaning from the words used in the version in te reo Māori.
12. Many Māori are not pleased because they believe that Pākehā have not followed through on the agreement that they organised and signed. Over the years since 1840, they have ignored te Tiriti when it suited them, which has at the same time harmed or disadvantaged Māori. (The teacher or a whānau member may wish to expand on this key idea further.)
13. The poet is questioning whether te Tiriti has any real meaning as an agreement between the two groups that signed it – and their descendants. As well as differing from Pākehā in their understanding of what they agreed to, Māori are dissatisfied that many Pākehā have not behaved as if te Tiriti, which Māori signed in good faith, is actually a treaty.
14. Individual choice.
15. Students should include some of what they find out about te Tiriti in their poem.