

Ranginui and Papatuanuku: The Creators of the Universe

The Maori people of New Zealand have their own creation myths. We have given you one of the best known stories below.

Nothingness

At the beginning of time there was just emptiness. There was no light and no darkness. Nothing existed. The Maori called this *Te Kore* (the Nothingness).

The Gods Arrive

Into this 'nothingness' two gods appeared. They were Ranginui, the god of the sky, and Papatuanuku, the goddess of the earth. When they appeared so did the sky and the earth. They embraced so closely that the earth and the sky were joined together.

They also had six children. They were:

- Tane (god of the forests)
- Tangaroa (god of the sea)
- Tu (god of war)
- Rongo (god of crops)
- Haumia (god of wild plants)
- Tawhiri (god of weather)

Ranginui and Papatuanuku held each other so closely that there was no space between the earth and the sky and their children had no room to move about. They could only crawl about or just lay on their sides.



The Earth and Sky Separate

In one moment Papatuanuka raised her arm and the children saw a brief glimpse of sunlight. Once they saw it they wanted more. They began to think of ways of creating more light.

Tane wanted to separate his parents to allow the light to come through. All of the children agreed, except for Tawhiri, the god of weather. He was very close to his father, the sky god.

Each child struggled to pull the earth and the sky apart but their embrace was too strong.

Tu, the god of war, then decided that the only way to pull his parents apart was to cut off the arms of Ranginui's arms. Once this was done then Tane heaved and his parents were split apart. He then propped up his father in the sky with wooden poles.

The earth and sky were now separated forever. The grief-stricken Ranginui and Papatuanuku cried tears that fell as rain from the sky and mist from the earth.

The world had been created.

The Gods Fight

Tane's success at creating the sky and the earth led to his brothers and sisters becoming jealous of him. Tawhiri blew down Tane's forests and forced the fish that had lived in the forests to flee into the oceans.

Now Tangaroa, the god of the sea, was angry and from that moment Tane and Tangaroa fought against each other.

Tane supplied wood so that people could make canoes and tame the oceans. Tangaroa created storms to sink the canoes and tidal waves to destroy the forests.

Man is Created

It was Tu, the god of war, who created the first man. Tu used red ochre to model a man and he breathed life into it. This man was called Tiki. Tiki then made a woman called Hina-One and they had a daughter called Tiaki. Everybody is descended from Tiaki.



The Maori Creation of the World Activity

Now that you've finished reading one of the creation stories of the Maori answer the following questions about the story.

Who was the Maori god of the earth?

It is _____

Who was the Maori god of the sky?

It is _____

They had six children. *Put them in alphabetical order below and also write down what they were the gods of.*

_____ god of _____

_____ god of _____

_____ god of _____

_____ god of _____

_____ god of _____

_____ god of _____

Why do you think that Tawhiri, the god of weather, was very close to his father, the sky god?

Because _____

Which two gods did Tane, the god of the forests, have to struggle with?

It was _____ and _____

What was the name of the first man and the first woman?

The first man was _____ and the first woman was _____

How would you separate Ranginui and Papatuanuku Activity

Do you remember how the children of Ranginui and Papatuanuku tried to separate their parents? They tried pulling them away from each other but that didn't work. In the end they had to cut the arms off Ranginui. Before Tane, the god of war, did that all of the children tried to get their parents to separate.

Your teacher has put you into small groups. In your groups come up with different ways to get Ranginui and Papatuanuku to split from each other. At the end you will have to present this to the rest of your class as a small drama.

Things to remember:

If one of you is playing Tu, then you have to argue for cutting off the arms of Ranginui. What do the rest of the group think of this argument?

If one of you is playing Tawhiri, then you are opposed to separating Ranginui and Papatuanuku anyway. How can you convince the others that this is the right thing to do?

Can you think of other ways of separating them? *(Don't forget that just pulling them apart doesn't work)*

Comparing Creation Stories

People all over the world have their own creation stories. Below we have given you extracts from the Bible. These tell the Jewish and Christian creation story.

Read through these extracts and then read the Maori creation story again. Whilst you are reading them think about the differences and similarities between them.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.

And God said, "Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water." So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so. God called the vault "sky." And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day.

Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being... the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

Comparing Creation Stories Activity

There are lots of differences between these two creation myths. In the boxes below write down what you think **the three most important differences** are.

1

2

3

Now that you have noted down what you think the most important differences are do the same with what you think **the three most important similarities** between the two creation stories are.

1

2

3