

Māui and the Sun



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Māori myths are set in the past and have magical elements. They contain Māori beliefs about the creation of the universe and the origins of gods and of men. Natural events, the weather, the stars and the moon, the fish, and the birds are all found in Māori myths.





A long long time ago when Aotearoa was still young, there lived a clever demigod named Māui. Every night, around the fire, Māui's brothers would complain about the sunlight. There were never enough hours to do their chores, to hunt and fish.

Māui knew he could solve their problem.

“I, Māui, can tame the sun!”

His brothers laughed at his announcement.

“You cannot catch the sun Māui, he is too powerful. The heat and flames would burn you to death!”



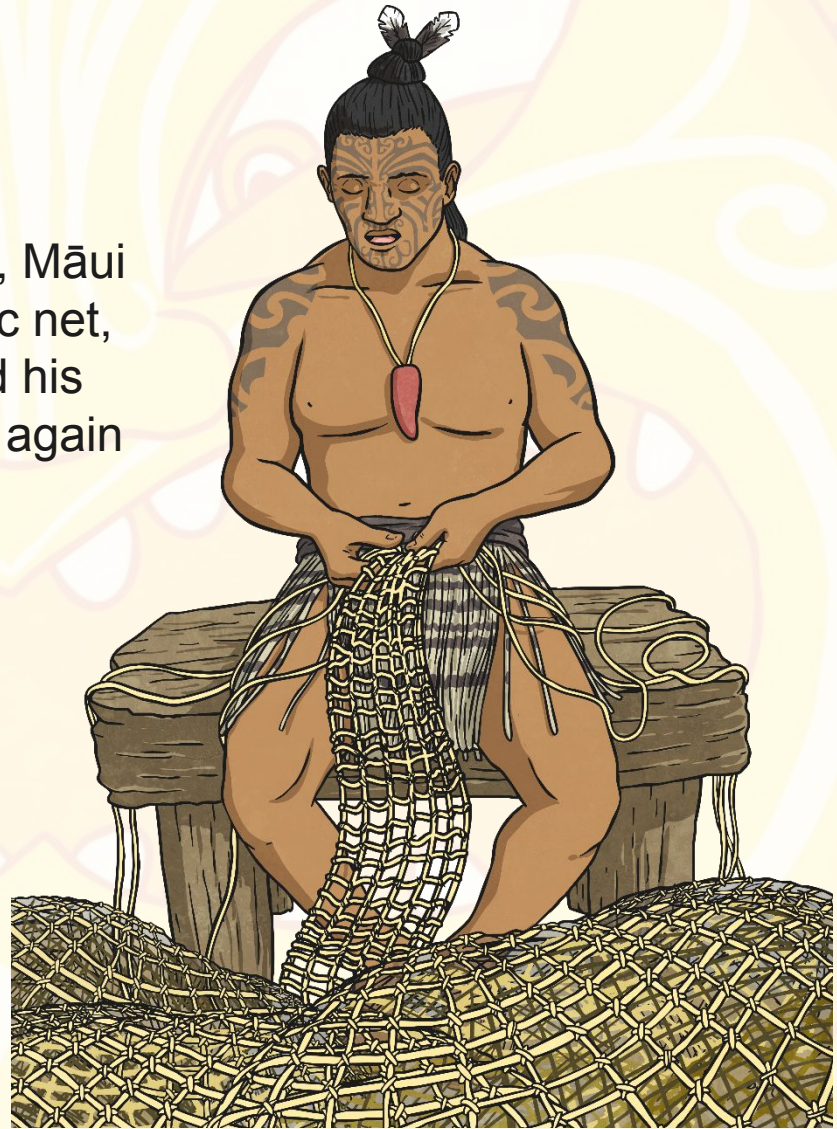
But Māui replied with authority, “You have seen me fish up our land, nothing is impossible. I will use the jaw bone of my ancestor, Muri-ranga-whenua, and with your help, we will slow the sun.”

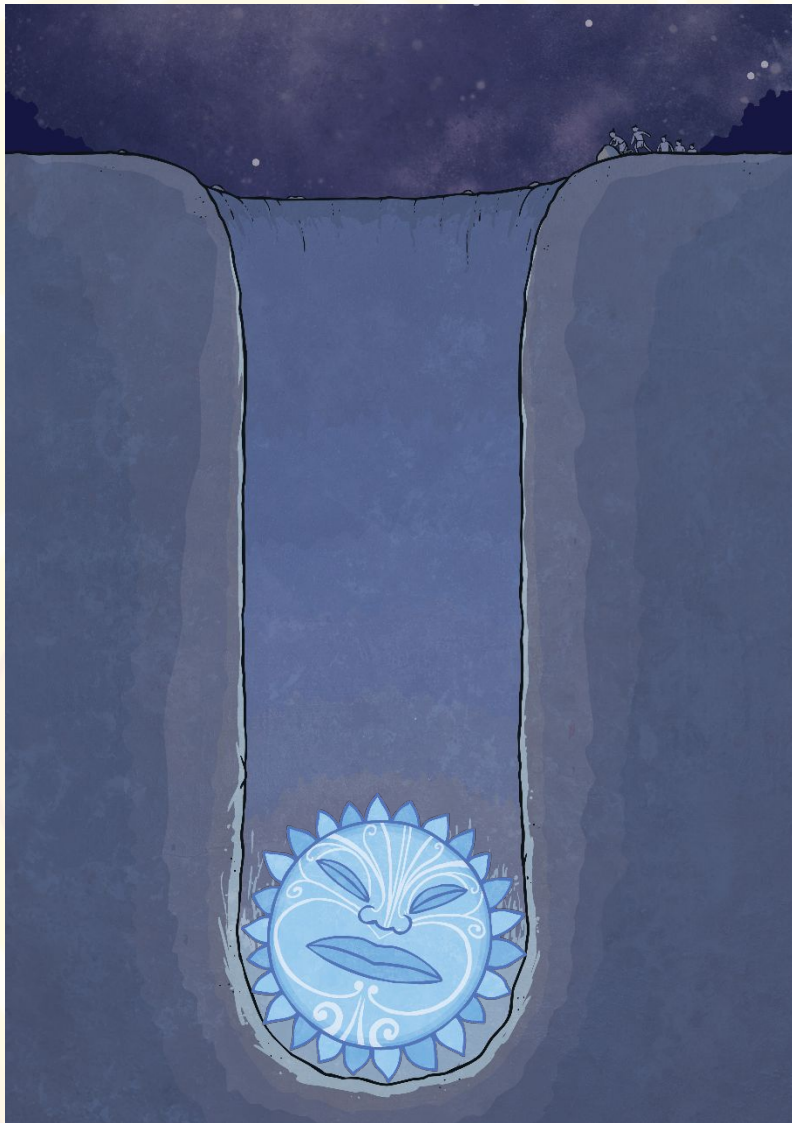




Māui instructed his brothers and the people of his whanau to collect as much harakeke as possible. Once the pile was big enough, Māui taught them how to weave ropes.

When they finally had enough ropes, Māui tied them together to make a gigantic net, big enough to catch the sun. He said his magical karakia over them, knowing again they would hold the strength of a thousand men.





Māui and his brothers began travelling to the east where the sun first rises. Finally Māui and his brothers arrived at a huge, deep pit.

Inside Tamanuiterā, the sun, was sleeping. Māui and his brothers hid in caves and behind trees, silently waiting for the sun to awaken.

It wasn't long before they felt the warmth of the sun and saw the first glint of light. One of the brothers whispered with fear, "Why are we doing this? We'll be burnt alive!" But before his questions could be answered, he heard Māui call.



“Pull on the ropes, pull as hard as you can!” yelled Māui. The brothers were scared but they pulled with all their might so the sun could not escape.





Tamanuiterā was furious. He began struggling, throwing fire and roaring at the brothers. Māui started chanting his magical karakia, asking his ancestors for their strength.



Māui knew he had to do something more, so he jumped at the sun, attacking it with his magical jaw bone. The magic hit the sun like a bolt of lightning. “What are you doing? Why are you hurting me?” shouted the sun.



“You fly too quickly across the sky”, answered Māui “we never have enough time in the day to do all of our work.” Tamanuiterā struggled to get free but Māui again showed him the power of the jaw bone.



“If we release you, will you promise to fly slowly across the sky and give us more daylight?” Māui asked Tamanuiterā. Tamanuiterā finally gave up. He knew he was defeated.



The brothers let go of their ropes and the sun rose slowly up into the sky. The brothers all smiled at Māui with pride. They knew he had proved them wrong again.





From that day on, Tamanuiterā flew slowly across the sky, giving man time to do all their chores. Māui was forever known as the man who could tame the sun.

Māori translations

Aotearoa = New Zealand

Harakeke = flax

Karakia = prayer

Whanau = family





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