

TEACHER'S RESOURCE KIT WEAVING EARTH AND SKY

BY ROBERT SULLIVAN
ILLUSTRATED BY GAVIN BISHOP

WEAVING EARTH AND SKY: MYTHS & LEGENDS OF AOTEAROA retells the classic Māori myths and legends, which range from creation to Māui to Kupe's arrival in Aotearoa.

Robert Sullivan has rewritten them in a modern, direct, accessible and powerful way.

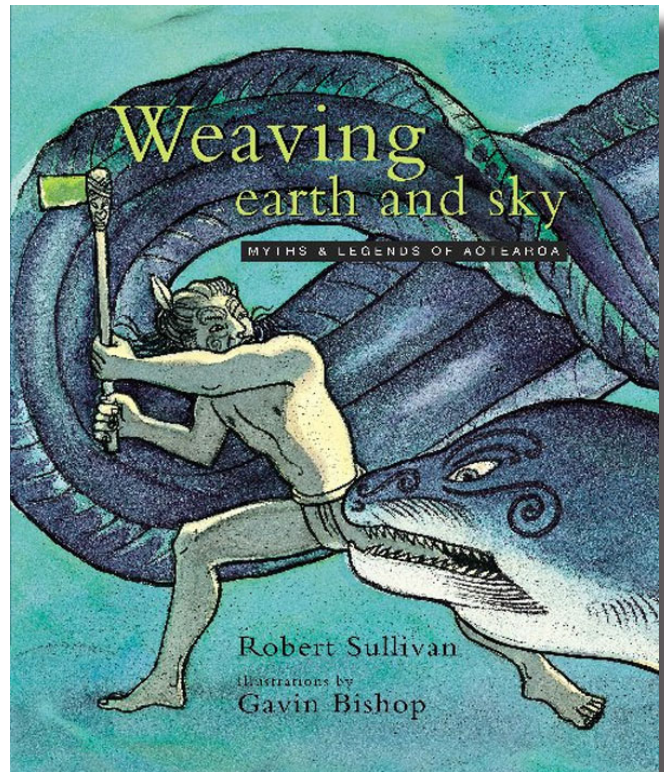
Gavin Bishop's strong graphic technique and stunning colours help the reader visualise the world of gods, demi-gods and mythic adventure.

Together, they have turned these stories, that many readers know well, into dramatic pieces that we see and hear afresh.

WEAVING EARTH AND SKY won the 'Non-Fiction Award' and the 'Book of the Year Award' at the 2003 NZ Post Children's Book Awards.

Robert Sullivan is a member of the hapū Ngāti Manu, and the iwi Ngā Puhī Nui Tonu of Northland. He is also of Kāi Tahu and Galway Irish decent and is an award-winning poet.

Gavin Bishop is of Ngāti Pūkeko and Ngāti Mahuta descent. He has written and illustrated many children's books, and is the recipient of numerous awards, both in New Zealand and overseas.



Classroom activities for children age 8-12 including:

- * **Mythology & Legend**
 - Creation Myths
 - Nature Myths
 - Hero Myths
- * **Illustration & art**
- * **Culture**
- * **Character Study**
- * **Dramatisation**
- * **Discussion topics**



WEAVING EARTH AND SKY is published by Random House New Zealand Ltd
Private Bag 102950, North Shore Mail Centre, Auckland,
tel: 09 444 7197, fax: 09 444 7524
Email: customerservice@randomhouse.co.nz

READER'S NOTES

INTRODUCING THE BOOK

Who are earth and sky in Māori mythology?

Who is on the cover?

What do you think the title might mean?

What is the difference between a myth and legend?

Acknowledgements: Find out how Sir George Grey collected Māori myths in 1885. What did Wiremu Maihi Te Rangikaheke do?

Preface: How is 'reading different from telling'? (p9). These stories are best read aloud. How does it bring a story alive?

1. The Creation Voyages

In the beginning:

It's hard to imagine 'nothingness' and 'emptiness'. How does Bishop show it?

What images of time and silence does Sullivan use? (p.11)

Write a short poem (such as a haiku) about this pre-creation time. Illustrate the border of the poem.

Sullivan says 'scientists don't use the word "mystery"'. (p.12). Do you agree? Are there things that scientists don't know ?

Comprehension

Why were the boy-gods so angry?

Why wasn't Tāwhirimātea angry at first?

Outline their secret plan (p.16).

Why did Tāwhirimātea 'blow a fuse'? (p.20)

What foods did the gods bring? (p.24-28)

Why is Tūmatauenga said to be 'complicated'? (p.25)
List his good and bad qualities.

Art

Look at Bishop's illustrations on p.14-15 and 18-19. How has he shown the gods here? What symbols has he used? (shading, lines, space)

Paint a picture of the separation of Rangi and Papa, using only simple shapes and shading.

Try to create the effect on page 22, maybe using leaf prints.

Deeper Thinking

Why does Sullivan write the gods are just 'doing their jobs'? (p.16)

What are three functions of the gods in mythology? (p.28)

Is there a message in this creation myth? (see also p.41)

What scientific theory explains the arrival of fish and reptiles?

2. Tāne and Hine Titama

Why was Tāne lonely? Where might he have got the idea of finding a woman?

How is this story like the story of Adam and Eve in the Bible's book of Genesis?

Why did Hine Titama become the woman of death? This myth explains how death came into the world. Research other cultures and find a myth that explains death.

Art

The lines in a picture create patterns, textures and a sense of movement. Bishop makes bold use of line, e.g. pages 26, 34, 62. What kind of lines can you see; and why are they used?

Use a soft pencil to create a drawing with interesting lines. Vary the thickness of lines and show movement. The theme might be the underworld, or a carving.

3. Māui Stories

Why is the voice now in first person? ('I was born...') How can this help the reader or storyteller identify with the character and the action?

Rewrite the first paragraph in third person ('Māui was born...'). Which version reads better?

Māui is the trickster. The trickster character appears in other cultures. Research the folk-characters Anansi (Africa) and Coyote (North America). Are they like Māui in some ways?

Draw a comic strip of the birth of Māui. (Read the comic book *Māui, Legend of the Outcast*). Use frames, speech bubbles, and capital letters for dialogue and sound effects.

Character Study: Māui

What kind of person is Māui? Consider his sense of humour and curiosity (p.36, 37)

Why does Sullivan give him modern words like 'yo', 'bro', 'huh'?

Make a list of Māui's tricks. (p.42, 43)

Why are his brothers jealous? (Compare this with the Bible story of Joseph – he also had problems with brothers and dreams).

What did Māui see as his destiny (purpose)? (p.52, 53, 76)

Find examples from the Māui stories that show how he improved life for his people. (e.g. p.74, 77)

What caused him to become over-confident?

How did Maui plan to conquer death? Has any mythical hero ever overcome death?

4. Tāwhaki

How did he get revenge? (p.83-85)

How did they trick the Ponaturi?

What mistake did Tāwhaki make with the baby? (p.85) Was his wife testing him?

How is this story like Jack and the Beanstalk?

What natural events does the story explain? (p.93)

This is a 'quest' story – the hero goes on a journey to prove something. What other quest legends do you know?

Write a quest story where the hero must overcome difficulties.

5. Rata

Draw a family tree for the characters in this story.

What mistake did Rata make?

Sketch your own picture of a forest sprite (hakuturi).

Make a kite using the model on page 104.

Dramatise this story as a mime.

6. Kupe's Voyage

Research the story of Kupe. Is he a real person or a legend (or a bit of both)?

Mapping

Where was Hawaiki located?

How did early sea explorers navigate? (p.113)

Plot Kupe's journey on a map of New Zealand. Locate The Brothers, Ward Island and Soames Island. (p.112)

Science

Find out about the octopus (wheke). Label a diagram that shows the diet, habitat and special features of the octopus.

This octopus (p.109) was probably a giant squid. Where in New Zealand have giant squid been found? Why are they rarely seen?

What kind of whale is on page 119?

Legends

This tale is more of a legend than a myth. Legends have some basis in fact. Real events and people and real animals are exaggerated. Legendary monsters are usually based on real creatures. Draw one of these legendary monsters: dragon, kraken, taniwha, yeti, Loch Ness. Write a monster legend for your own home town.

ILLUSTRATIONS

How does Bishop make it look like things are moving/alive in his illustrations? How does he show light? (p.50, 70)

Experiment with dye on wet paper. Try running the colours together, using splatter effects and flowing lines to create a seascape in motion.

Design a poster of the karakia on page 56. Illustrate the border with symbols from the story.

How does Bishop make an angry sun? Use bright pastels to draw an angry human face using Bishop's

visual ideas.

On page 66 Bishop sketches feet with simple lines. Practise drawing your own foot with a few lines.

What colour effects does he use on page 70?

Read the story of Rata on pages 95-97 (without looking at the picture on page 98). How would you illustrate this part of the story? Draw a sketch of the scene. When finished, look at Bishop's picture on pages 98-99. What has he chosen to include?

CULTURE

Early Māori didn't write stories down.

* How were they passed on?

* Why did the stories change from tribe to tribe? (p.9)

* What does tihei mauriora mean? (p.33)

* Why was Maui's father's blessing so important? (p.45)

* What is the significance of karakia? (p.65)

* What customs are important in the story of Rata? (p.96)

* What was the role of women in these stories? Consider Apakura p.100, Hinepiripiri p.81, Tangotango p.85, Hine Titama p.33. Do they suffer more than the male characters? Research some heroines of Greek myth.

MYTHOLOGY

What is a myth?

For each statement, discuss whether you agree or disagree:

- * A myth is not factual.
- * A myth is partly supernatural.
- * A myth is a fairy tale.
- * A myth is an adventure based on historical events.
- * A myth explains how things began.

Features of myth – from the Greek 'mythos' meaning 'to tell a story':

- * Explains the origins of the universe/world
- * Explains natural events – fire, seasons, animals, death
- * Characters are heroes, gods
- * Events often supernatural, with mythical creatures
- * Have messages about how people should behave.

Find examples of each feature in *Weaving Earth and Sky*.

1. Creation Myths

NB: It's vital to respect students' beliefs in this discussion.

Each culture has a creation myth to answer questions about life.

Discuss these questions:

- * Where did the world come from?
- * Where did humans come from?
- * Why are we here?

Read a creation story from another culture.

Write your own imaginary creation myth, including a description of nature and gods. Present your myth using storytelling, art, drama or dance.

2. Nature Myths

Nature myths explain natural events such as seasons, fire, death.

a. What natural events are explained by the gods' myth in *Weaving Earth and Sky*? (p.20, 21, 28).

Research the scientific explanation of how the New Zealand mountains were formed.

d. Māui and Tunaroa: What benefits come from Tunaroa?

e. Māui and Fire: Fire myths follow a pattern: a clever

b. Māui Lands the North Island: What is the origin of the mountains in the myth?

c. Māui Slows the Sun: Retell this myth from the sun's point of view.

hero steals fire – fire is useful, but it brings evil with it.

Find some fire myths from other countries.

Plot a timeline of the Māui story. Does it fit the pattern?

3. Hero Myths

Most myths have a 'super' hero with an unusual life:

- * What special skills does Māui have?
- * What difficult tasks does he perform?
- * What gifts does he bring?
- * What is his weakness?

* Research mythical heroes such as Perseus, Jason, Beowulf, Athena, and Helen to see if their deeds were like Māui's.

* Māui died 'trying to make a difference'. Who are the modern day heroes who make a difference in our world?