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MATARIKI - What might we teach?

Māori have their own New Year, which is marked by the rise of Matariki (the group of stars also known as the Pleiades star cluster or The Seven Sisters) and the sighting of the next new moon. Like Chinese New Year and the Christian festival of Easter, its exact timing varies from year to year, but it usually occurs during the middle of winter. Traditionally, Matariki was used to determine the coming season's crop. A warmer season, and therefore a more productive crop yield, as indicated by how bright the stars were.

Different stories are told by different iwi; Many iwi speak of the Matariki stars as a mother and her daughters. The mother is Matariki, and her daughters are Tupu-ā-nuku, Tupu-ā-rangi, Waipunarangi, Waitī, Waitā, and Ururangi.(and sometimes told with two more Hiwa-i-te-rangi and Pōhutukawa) [Find out more about the names of the stars – the six sisters](#)

For some iwi, Matariki is connected to the creation story of Ranginui and Papatūānuku. One Matariki story is about when Tāwhirimātea, god of the wind discovered that his parents Ranginui, Sky father, and Papatūānuku, Earth mother, had been separated. He tore out his eyes in anger and threw them into the sky – the stars are his seven eyes. However, in other [west coast areas](#), this time of year is called Puanga and is celebrated with different associated stories.

StoryWays Literacy, have several stories and non-fiction for telling within our existing collection, that carry content to teach about and explore themes of journeys, cycles and season, wisdom and guardianship, and make a tangible connection with Matariki. In particular, our Pacific voyaging story, **Wayfinder**. Tohunga kōkōrangi - Wayfinders/expert astronomers, used stars and star clusters such as Matariki to help them navigate great distances across the Pacific. Today, there is a revival of these traditional navigation skills. Crews have sailed double-hulled waka from as far as Rarotonga to Aotearoa New Zealand, guided only by traditional methods.

Also, **Whekuwheku**, **Two Friends Drip and Drop**, and **Just a Drop**, offer nonfiction tellings to link with learning the life lesson of Waipunarangi (Matariki's daughter who is taught about the water cycle/ cycle of kindness)

Telling Life Lessons is one way to introduce Matariki.

Simplify it further for younger learners, or elaborate for older ones.



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Life Lessons

Once upon a time, there was a mother with six daughters. She wanted nothing more than for her daughters to grow up wise and good. Each year she took them on the long journey to visit their grandmother. "Come along," she would command, "this is the time of year when your grandmother needs lots of help."

To begin with, the daughters were reluctant. "must we make the same journey every year?" complained one. "Same place, same time, same things to do," agreed another. But their mother would pull them along. "There are too many of you, I can't teach you everything in life. Your Grandmother taught me, and now she teaches you. Every year you learn new things that will help you to look after yourself, and each other, and our precious place where we live.

During the time they spend with their Grandmother each is taught a different but equally important lesson.

One learns to plant and grow. Soon, she can grow food and knows which plants make medicine. Her wisdom is to make sure there is enough for everyone. This is the lesson she gifts forward to others.

Another learns to sing. Her voice becomes sweet and melodious. She sings to the great forests, the birds and lizards. Her wisdom is to fill the world with the joy of song and to nurture life in the forest. This is the lesson she gifts forward to others.

A third daughter is taken to the waters of the sea, and rivers, and lakes. Her grandmother teaches her to watch carefully as the water falls from the sky, flows and freshens the land, quenches their thirst, and returns to the sky. Her wisdom is that in the same way if she shares kindness it too will be returned to her. This is the lesson she gifts forward to others.

Two more daughters are twins. They learn that even our smallest creatures work together. They see how bees pollinate the flowers so that plants can grow. Their wisdom is to support each other and to work together. This is the lesson she gifts forward to others.



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The last daughter is always rushing around and excited. How is the Grandmother to teach this one? She rushes to be first for supper and then first to sit on her Grandmother's lap! But, in this warm embrace, Grandmother tells her a story, a life lessons story, so that she too has the wisdom of her sisters. These are the stories she gifts forward to others.

The daughters return home with their mother, taking with them the life lessons. "Will we return again next year," they ask. "For sure," replies their mother.

By the coming of the next winter, there were two new sisters. There Grandmother's life had been long and bright but she could not live forever. And so she taught these two new daughters her last life lessons. To one she explained death, and how to remember her. To the other, she taught how to wish upon the stars, that all their dreams and desires may come true.

This is the wisdom and these are the lessons the sisters' gift forward to us.

Life Lessons

(This version is told with the maori names, and with suggestions for using more te reo words/phrases as first suggestions.)

Once upon a time, there was a mother with six daughters. Matariki was her name. She wanted nothing more than for her daughters to grow up wise and good. Each year she took them on the long journey to visit Papatūānuku. "Come along," she would command, "this is the time of year when our whānau needs lots of help."

To begin with, the daughters were reluctant. "must we make the same journey every year?" complained one. "Same place, same time, same things to do," agreed another. But their mother would pull them along. "There are too many of you, I can't teach you everything in life. Papatūānuku taught me, and now she teaches you. Every year you learn new things that will help you to look after yourself, and each other, and our precious place where we live.

During the time they spend with Papatūānuku each is taught a different but equally important lesson.



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One learns to plant and grow. Tupu-ā-nuku was her name. Soon, she can grow food (kai) and knows which plants make medicine (rongoā). Her wisdom is to make sure there is enough for everyone. This is the lesson she gifts forward to others.

Another learns to sing. Tupu-ā-rangi was her name. Her voice becomes sweet and melodious. She sings to the great forests (te wao nui), the birds (manu) and lizards (mokomoko). Her wisdom is to fill the world with the joy of song and to nurture life in the forest. This is the lesson she gifts forward to others.

A third daughter is taken to the waters (te awa) of the sea, and rivers, and lakes. Waipunarangi is her name. Papatūānuku teaches her to watch carefully as the water falls from the sky, flows and freshens the land, quenches their thirst, and returns to the sky. Her wisdom is that in the same way if she shares kindness it too will be returned to her. This is the lesson she gifts forward to others.

Two more daughters are twins. Waitī and Waitā were their names. They learn that even our smallest creatures work together. They see how bees pollinate the flowers so that plants can grow. Their wisdom is to support each other and to work together. This is the lesson she gifts forward to others.

The last daughter is always rushing around and excited. Ururangi was her name. How is Papatūānuku to teach this one? She rushes to be first for supper and then first to sit on her grandmother's lap! But, in this warm embrace (awhi), Papatūānuku tells her a story, a life lessons story, so that she too has the wisdom of her sisters. These are the stories she gifts forward to others.

The daughters return home with their mother, taking with them the life lessons. "Will we return again next year," they ask. "For sure," replies their mother.

By the coming of the next winter (takurua), there were two new sisters. Pōhutukawa and Hiwa-i-te-rangi were their names. Papatūānuku's life had been long and bright but she could not live forever. And so she taught these two new daughters her last life lessons. To one she explained death, and how to remember her. To the other, she taught how to wish upon the stars, that all their dreams and desires may come true.

StoryWays LITERACY

TALK - EXPLORE - CREATE



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This is the wisdom and these are the lessons the sisters' gift forward to us.