

# STORIES WITH MEANINGS

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Far from being stories made up just to entertain children, myths and legends have special messages in them. Often these stories give us important information about a place. They help us to keep safe or when to know to do a job. Children's stories, or at least good ones, last forever so what better way to pass on important information

This resource has explanations for myths, legends and stories spread throughout but here are the messages behind a few well known ones.

## Be careful at Castlepoint. Te Wheke o Maturangi might pull you off the reef

*Kia tūpato means be careful. What a very good saying for the reef at Castlepoint.*

Te wheke o Maturangi was a female octopus, the pet of a chief from Hawaiki called Maturangi. Maturangi was also the enemy of Kupe. After the octopus kept stealing fish out of Kupe's nets he wanted to kill the fish. But the octopus was smart and so took off. Kupe, his family and some friends chased the octopus across the Pacific Ocean finding many new places along the way. Kupe found the octopus in the cave underneath where the lighthouse now is at Castlepoint. Before Kupe could get to the octopus she swam away. He didn't kill her until they met at Totaranui which is now called Queen Charlotte sound in the South Island.

The story of Kupe and the octopus is known all around the Pacific Ocean. Everywhere that the octopus is remembered there is a piece of dangerous water. In the case of Castlepoint there is the reef and cave both of which are well known as places that people get injured or even die.

Even though Kupe lived around eight hundred years ago the octopus is still at Castlepoint. Well sort of. The waves that smash onto the reef are the arms of the octopus and if you are not careful she will drag you under the reef. Sadly many people have either slipped over or been pulled into the water, some have been lucky to live.



## Haunuianaia left a map

Here's a short version of the story of Haunuianaia. The brilliant thing about this is that Haunuianaia lived hundreds of years ago but his story and the places he named are all known today. He even left a map of the Ruamahanga River valley for those that followed him.

Haunuianaia, or Haunui, lived at Te Matau A Maui with his wife Wairaka.

When Wairaka ran away with two men called Kiwi and Weka, Haunui chased them across the North Island. He named lots of places as he pursued them.

When he caught up with Wairaka at Pukerua Bay north of Porirua he turned her into a rock and the two men into flightless birds. He then decided to have a look at the other side of the island before going home.

He climbed up a mountain range and when he got to the top needed a rest so he called that mountain Remutaka 'to sit down'.

Below him was a valley. At the northern end was a mountain that looked like 'it was holding up the sky' so he called it Rangitumau.

At the southern end of the valley was a lake. As he looked the reflection of the sun on the lake made his eyes water. He thought "ka rarapa ngā kanohi ko Wairarapa", or his eyes sparkled.

After his rest he started walking towards Rangitumau. He went down into the valley. He came to a river with a 'house made of nikau' palm beside it so he called this Tauwharenikau.

He stopped at the next river he came to. As he looked into it he thought about everything that had happened with his wife. He even saw her face in the water so he called that river Wai o hine o Wairaka which means 'water for his woman'.

The next river he came to looked like it didn't know what it was doing so he called it Waiawangawanga 'uncertain or troubled river'.

A little further north he came to a river that he put his pou walking stick into to see how deep the water was. He called this river Waipoua.

The last river that Haunui came to there was a bird snare beside it in the fork of a tree so he called the river 'twin forks' or Ruamahanga.

After this Haunui wanted to get home quicker so he called up his giant eagle Rongomai for a ride.



## Look out for the cliffs at Kourarau, Gladstone, you might meet the taniwha

Have you seen the cliffs at Kourarau on the Maungarake hills at Gladstone? Well if you haven't you wouldn't want to fall down them.

Today the land is mostly pasture and housing on the Tupurupu-ru-Te Wharau Road but imagine the same place covered in forest. If you had climbed up the steep hills through tall trees and thick shrubs but didn't know the area well you might fall straight off a cliff and do yourself a terrible injury.

But if you were lucky someone would have told you the story of the giant lizard like taniwha Ngarara Huarau. Ngarara Huarau who lived in a cave at Kourarau on those hills (you can see the cave today), but sometimes walked down into the valley where he would take people from the villages. That is until a man called Tupurupuru killed the mighty taniwha.

Whether there really was a gigantic lizard that lived at Kourarau or not you wouldn't want to fall down those cliffs. Isn't Ngarara Huarau a clever story that has warned people to be careful for centuries?



# Double Bridges, beware of the taniwha in the caves

Double Bridges, the popular swimming hole north of Masterton has two taniwha. They live in the caves at the bottom of the limestone cliff where the Ruamahanga River changes from east to south.

The old story saw kaumatua keeping the two taniwha away from children bathing upstream from the caves that were the homes of the taniwha. If anyone got to close the taniwha would pounce on the person and take them back to the cave... and then?

Even now on a hot summers day when the river gently flows into the deep hole you will find plenty of people enjoying themselves in the refreshing water. You can look into the small caves and you aren't likely to find the taniwha.

But after rain in the Tararua Mountains the river floods, the water goes brown, gets very strong and the caves can't be seen underneath the tonnes of water smashing into the cliff. This is when you will find the taniwha prowling in the water, waiting for someone to come near them so they can drag the person in to their caves. Even days after the flood has stopped and the river has started to go down the water is still too strong to swim in.

Once you are pushed into the caves during a flood the current you could be held under the water until you drown – this is the taniwha so it is wisest to stay not get in the water when it is flooded.

**ISN'T A TANIWHA STORY  
A SMART WAY OF TEACHING  
WATER SAFETY?**