

**Early Peoples Activity Sheet:**  
**The Maori**

**The Polynesian expansion across the Pacific (c.700-1756)**

**Origin and spread of Polynesians in the Pacific:**

- 1. When do scholars believe the Maori first arrived in New Zealand?**  
A.D. 1200.
- 2. Where did the Maori migrate from?**  
The Maori migrated from islands in what is now central Polynesia in the Pacific Ocean.
- 3. What does Aotearoa mean?**  
Aotearoa is what the Maori called New Zealand, which means the long white cloud.
- 4. What religious beliefs and customs did the Maori share with other Polynesian culture?**  
Mana was a belief shared with other Polynesian peoples. Mana was a supernatural force connected to gods, spirits, powerful individuals, and special objects. The Maori also adhered to Tapu, which prohibited certain actions and activities.
- 5. Where does the name Maori originate from?**  
The Maori began calling themselves the tangata maori in the early 1800's when the white settlers began arriving from Europe. The term means ordinary person.
- 6. How did Polynesians travel hundreds of kilometres across the Pacific Ocean?**  
Polynesians travelled hundreds of miles across the Pacific Ocean, from island to island, in large double canoes propelled by paddles and sails.
- 7. How long ago did Polynesian voyagers reach the Society Islands?**  
About 2,000 years ago.
- 8. What types of supplies did they pack and what was the purpose of their voyage?**  
Polynesian canoes carried plants, animals, stone tools, and supplies to make a new life in new lands discovered.
- 9. How did the Polynesians make the double canoes used in long voyages?**  
To make their double canoes, the Polynesians set two canoe hulls side-by-side. Then they connected the two hulls with wooden crossbeams roped to the canoes. A wooden platform was placed on top of the crossbeams. A double canoe would be 18 metres or long in length and was more stable in rough waters than a single canoe.
- 10. How did the Polynesians navigate their way across the ocean?**  
The Polynesian voyagers relied on observing the sun, moon, and stars to guide their boats. They also carefully noted the movement of the ocean waves and currents, as well as the paths of birds flying overhead.

**11. Name the different types of canoes that the Polynesians used?**

Polynesians had simple canoes that were used to ferry people and goods on lakes and rivers. They had fishing canoes, which were more highly decorated with wood carvings on the front and back. The most impressive of all were the war canoes which had richly detailed carvings on the front, back and sides.

**12. According to Maori tradition, who was the first Polynesian man to travel by canoe to New Zealand?**

Maori tradition says Kupe was the first Polynesian man to travel to New Zealand by canoe.

**13. What has the remains of Pacific rat found in New Zealand told archaeologists about the settlement of New Zealand by Polynesians?**

Analysis of rat DNA supports the idea that New Zealand was settled as a result of several different canoe voyages. These canoes may have come from different Pacific islands at different times.

**14. According to legend, why did the first group of Polynesians settle in New Zealand?**

War had broken out on Hawaiki. Some Polynesians decided to leave their homeland and sail to the island they had learned about from Kupe.

**15. On which island did the first settlers settle?**

More than 40 tribes, or iwi, arrived in New Zealand. Most settled on the North Island. Some settled in the northern part of the South Island.

**Polynesian way of life: Social, cultural, economic and political features:**

**16. What was taonga?**

The taonga could be a skill or an object. For example, it could be the skill of canoe carving, or it could be a weapon, necklace or hair comb.

**17. What is an iwi?**

An iwi included several clans, or hapu. Each clan might include several large or extended families, known as whanau.

**18. Who was at the head of each iwi?**

The head of each iwi was an ariki, paramount chief. The ariki held the highest rank in Maori society.

**19. How was the title of each ariki passed on?**

The title of ariki normally passed from the paramount chief to his first-born son. If the first child was a girl, she might grow up to hold a position of great honour but girls rarely held the title of ariki.

**20. What was the role of the ariki?**

The ariki could declare war or make peace. He conducted negotiations with other tribes. He settled disputes between rival clans. He had authority over the iwi's land and all the activities that took place on it. His household claimed a share of whatever the iwi's farmers, hunters and fishers produced.

**21. Who had the most say over how people lived their daily lives?**

Hapu leaders had more say than the ariki over how people lived their daily lives. This was because the hapu commanded the fighters who defended the clan and its lands. The chief was also responsible for making sure the hapu stored enough food to get through the difficult times.

**Warfare:**

**22. How did Maori fortify their villages?**

Typically the village was protected by a complex system of fences, watchtowers, ditches, and earthen barriers.

**23. Why were wars fought amongst Maori clans?**

Wars between clans were rarely fought for land or conquest. More often, they were fought as revenge for some harm or insult committed by members of one clan against another.

**24. When was the season for war?**

Most wars were fought between November and April, during the New Zealand summer. The season for war began after the main planting was finished.

**25. What advantages did this time of year have for battle?**

War parties could travel farther during the long days of summer because fish and wild animals were plentiful during that season, the warriors had a ready supply of food while on the move.

**26. How many fighters would a hapu have?**

Normally, each hapu had about 70 fighters. If an enemy appeared to be much stronger, the rangarita (clan leader) might appeal for help.

**27. What coded message was used to recruit the help of other clans for battles?**

The chief might send a gift, such as a burnt cloak, as a kind of coded message to the rangatira of a friendly clan. If the clan leader accepted the gift, its fighters would join the war party.

**28. What was the chief Maori battle tactic?**

A surprise attack was the chief Maori battle tactic.

**29. How long did battles generally take?**

Many battles were quick. But an attack on a fortified village, or pa, might take much longer.

**30. What would become of the losing side in a battle?**

Women and children from the losing side might be taken back to the victor's home village as slaves. The warriors of the losing side would be killed and perhaps eaten.

**31. What type of weapon did the Maoris fight with prior to European arrival?**

Before Europeans came, Maori fought mainly with clubs made from wood, or occasionally, whalebone.

**32. What was the short club used for in battle?**

The short club was used when the long club failed and the enemy came closer. They were made of stone, wood or whalebone.

**33. What was the kotaha and what was it used for?**

The kotaha was a type of weapon used by the Maori. It was a kind of slingshot used to shoot darts or fiery objects at the enemy.

**34. What happened in 1843 between Chief Te Rauparaha and British colonists?**

Settlers claimed that they bought land on the Wairau Plains from Te Rauparaha and another chief. The chiefs denied having sold the land and interfered with the settlers' attempts to survey the land. A skirmish broke out and 22 colonists and 4 Maori were killed. The Maori fighters were found innocent of wrongdoing by an investigation into the incident.

**Roles in society:**

**35. In what ways were men and women equals?**

Maori girls were taught how to defend themselves if their village was attacked. Women fought alongside men to defend their homes. In a few tribes, women commanded bands of warriors. Women wrote songs and chants (haka) and performed these alongside men.

**36. What was the primary role of women?**

Women were expected to produce children. If a woman did not have a child, her husband might divorce her, or he might take an additional wife to bear his children.

**37. What tasks did men perform?**

Men did most of the outside work that demanded physical strength, such as, cutting down trees and preparing land for planting crops. They also dug up fern roots for food, fished, trapped birds and small animals, made ropes and nets, carved wood and made canoes.

**38. What tasks did women perform?**

Women did common household tasks such as carrying water, gathering firewood, and collecting berries. They also carried roots back to the village, collected shellfish along the shore, cooked and preserved foods for storage, wove cloaks, mats, and baskets.

**39. Who was a tohunga?**

Tohunga, which means experts, were people with special skills. There were different kinds of tohunga. For example, priests, healers, canoe builders, tattooists and midwives, were considered tahunga.

**40. Who was allowed to carve wood?**

Only men were allowed to take part in woodcarving as it was considered a sacred activity. Women were not even allowed to enter a place where wood was being carved.

**41. What type of wood was used for many of the Maori's carvings?**

The wood of the kauri and totara trees was used for many of the Maori's carvings.

**42. What type of tools were used for carving?**

The Maori did not have metal tools. Carving tools were fashioned from stone, a form of jade called nephrite.

**43. Look at the pendant on page 21. What was the pendant used for and what was it made from?**

The pendant is a large hei tiki or breast pendant made from jade. Some hei tiki were prized personal ornaments that were passed down for many generations. Maori believed that the ornaments might help women become pregnant.

**44. How were slaves treated?**

Slaves were regarded as property. Often they became part of the rangatira's household. In theory, the chief had complete power over them. The clan leader could decide whether the slave lived or died.

**45. What tasks did slaves perform?**

Slaves were allowed to do anything that was noa, which means ordinary or commonplace, such as many routine household tasks usually conducted by women. Slaves were allowed to paddle canoes and assist when the rangatira went to war.

**46. Why did slavery increase after European contact?**

Traditional Maori weapons and tactics emphasised hand-to-hand combat. This did not make it easy to control large numbers of captives. But muskets brought to New Zealand by the Europeans, made the taking of prisoners much less difficult.

**Society, culture and beliefs:**

**47. How were disputes resolved in Maori society?**

Disputes were resolved by applying two basic ideas: utu and muru. Utu was balance. Muru was taking some else's property as payment for a wrongdoing.

**48. What pattern shaped the Maori view of life?**

The Maori view of life was shaped by the daily pattern of sunrise and sunset. They believed that each night the sun died, only to be reborn the following day.

**49. Why would the heads of dead chiefs be preserved?**

Maori believed that a person's head contained much of his or her mana, or power. When a chief died, his head might be cut off and preserved. In that way, the clan and family could continue to share the chief's mana.

**50. How did the Maori believe the world began?**

Maori believed that the world began as Te Kore (nothingness) but was filled with possibilities. It was mauri that gave things a life force which came from the actions of the gods.

**51. How did the Maori turn things that were tapu (set apart or godly) into things that were noa (commonplace)?**

Maori, for example, would use a ritual to make a newly built house, which was tapu, into a

safe place for people of lower rank to follow. The ritual involved a woman of high rank entering the house.

**52. Who were Ranginui and Papatuanuku?**

Ranginui and Papatuanuku were the world's two parents. Ranginui was the sky father. Papatuanuku is the earth mother. From her, all things are born.

**53. Who was Tane and what was his contribution to Earth?**

Tane was the forest god. He was the god that managed to break the darkness that was created by the embrace of Ranginui and Papatuanuku, his mother and father. In order for the light of life to enter the world, now created by the separation of Ranginui and Papatuanuku, Tane planted wooden posts in the ground, so the sky would remain above the earth. It is also said that Tane made the first woman out of clay. He was regarded as the father of humanity.

**54. What was the powhiri ritual?**

The powhiri was a ceremony of welcome. Each tribe and clan had different customs for the powhiri but each would start with a challenge.

**55. What is the hongi?**

The hongi is a traditional Maori greeting. Where one Maori gently pressed his or her nose against another's.

**56. What was the tangihanga?**

The tangihanga was a funeral. Funerals lasted for at least three days and included fasting during the day and having feasts at night.

**57. What religious and cultural beliefs were connected with Maori art?**

Maori believed that carvings of chiefs and warriors summoned up the power of the ancestors. Other artefacts were considered taonga, treasures that held the mana of those who had possessed them.

**58. How do historians and archaeologists know about Maori's earliest carvings?**

Maori believed the carvings might be dangerous if they fell into enemy hands. Maori kept these carvings safe by hiding them in swamps. The oldest date to 700-900 years old.

**Ta moko:**

**59. What was ta moko?**

Ta moko is tattooing. Tattooing was a form of art that used the face and body as a canvas.

**60. How were moko colours created?**

The colours, mainly black mixed with different amounts of blue or green, were created by mixing soot with fish oil or animal oil and water.

**61. What type of patterns were used in ta moko?**

Spiral and leaflike patterns were common in ta moko design. A full-face moko was intended to make a warrior look terrifying to an enemy fighter. Particular designs would convey a wearer's rank in the hapu.

**62. On a woman, what did having moko around the lips and chin mean?**

For a woman, moko around the lips and chin meant that she was old enough to have her words respected by the adult community.

**63. Look at the artefact on page 35. What was this used for?**

The artefact on page 35 is a carved wooden feeding funnel that was used to prevent food from touching a chief's lips while he was being tattooed. Maori believed that any contact with food before the moko had healed would destroy their spiritual power.

**Village life:**

**64. What was the marae and what role did it play in village life?**

The marae was the heart of the Maori village life. It was an area where weddings, funerals, and other community events, were held. It was a place where people could gather in the sunshine to eat, play and chat.

**65. What did the carvings in the meeting house represent and what cultural significance did it play?**

The carved meeting house was not merely a wooden building. It was a tribute to former chiefs and their ancestors. Their images decorated the support poles. They treated the meeting house as if it was alive.

**66. Who arranged marriages in Maori culture?**

Marriages between young people were arranged by family elders. Among clan leaders and others of high rank, marriages might be arranged even before children were able to walk. Arranged marriages were designed to strengthen ties between one family or clan and another.

**67. What rituals were involved in childbirth?**

Women gave birth in temporary shelters that were destroyed after the baby was born. Special songs were sung during and after the birth, which described the great deeds the baby's ancestors had achieved.

**68. Name the two kinds of settlements Maori lived in and what the differences were?**

- i) Pa: a fortified village designed to provide a strong defence against enemy attack.
- ii) Kainga: a non-fortified settlement

**69. How was food cooked?**

Food was prepared and cooked in an earth-oven. An earth-oven consisted of a pit dug into the earth where a fire was built. The food was steamed until done.

**70. Describe the styles of houses lived in by Maori?**

Early houses were round or oval but rectangular houses started to appear around the 1300's. Houses were usually small, approximately 3 metres long and 2 metres across. Each house had a porch, doorway and window.

**71. What did the Maori do with their houses to protect them from the cold?**

Houses had a sunken floor which they covered with woven floor mats. They piled earth up against the outside.

**72. What type of clothing did Maori men and women wear?**

Both men and women wore a kilt or loincloth around the waist and a rain cape around the shoulders. When walking on rough or cold ground, they might wear sandals woven from flax or the leaves of the cabbage tree.

**73. What did the cloak worn by a Maori say about their position in society?**

A person's cloak reflected his or her standing in Maori society. Ordinary cloaks were made from flax. Fancier cloaks might have coloured borders. More elegant cloaks were made from skin and hair of dogs.

**74. What types of food did the Maori eat?**

Moa, seals, kumera, eels, birds, dogs, shellfish, shark and skate. Wild plants, fruits and berries, fern root.

**75. What happened to the Moa bird?**

The Moa bird was a plentiful source of food for Maori. They became extinct probably because of excessive hunting and the destruction of their lowland forest habitat by early Maori settlers.

**76. Who were the primary teachers of children?**

Grandparents and parents were the primary teachers of children.

**77. Which children were given advanced education?**

Children who showed skill in a particular area, for example, healing or tattooing, would be trained as an expert, or tahunga. They were trained by working alongside someone who was already a tohunga. Students with good minds and excellent memories attended a special school run by priests.

**78. Name popular games played by Maori children?**

Maori children played with kites and toy boats. A favourite toy was the poi ball, which was made from woven flax, stuffed and attached to a cord.

**79. What type of sports and games did adults play?**

Adults competed in wrestling, flying kites, throwing darts and spinning tops.

**80. What did Maori use kites for?**

Other than for fun, kites were used to signal other villages, for example, to send a message that someone had died. Kites were also used as a way to find out whether the gods favoured a particular course of action.

**81. What is the haka?**

The haka is a form of music and dance performed by Maori.



**82. What is often considered the most impressive type of haka?**

The war chant was the most impressive type of haka. It called on the god of war, Tu, and warned enemy fighters how the attackers were going to destroy them.

**83. When did Maori's play music?**

Maori music was played during ceremonies or powhiri. They played music to soothe people suffering from illness and to ease the pain of getting a moko.

**84. What type of interests did they play and what were they made from?**

Maori's made flutes from shells, wood, bird bones and even human bones. Trumpets were made from shells.

**Life after European contact:**

**85. List the changes to traditional Maori life as a result of European contact?**

- Traditional religious beliefs faded under the influence of Christian missionaries
- Maori left villages to work on European whaling ships
- Diet changed with the introduction of pigs and white potatoes
- Muskets replaced clubs and spears as weapons of choice in warfare
- Impact of the Haka could not strike the same fear into the hearts of enemies who had guns

**86. What was the Treaty of Waitangi?**

The Treaty of Waitangi was a treaty between the British and Maori. This treaty meant that New Zealand would be subject to British rule and law, and individuals or private companies would be unable to purchase land without the permission of the British government.

**87. What problems did the treaty create?**

Maori chiefs and British governors understood the treaty in different ways. Maori thought they still had some power over their lands. The British, on the other hand, thought they had become the sole rulers of New Zealand. This resulted in open warfare, which the Maori lost.