



MATARIKI

Teacher Resource Pack

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About Matariki

PIIRI – JUNE

Matariki is the Māori name for the constellation of stars that are often known in other cultures as the Pleiades or the Seven Sisters. Matariki may be translated as mata riki – tiny eyes, or as mata Ariki – eyes of God. These eyes are thought to watch over the land and its people.

Matariki, this small but distinctive star cluster, is visible from Aotearoa (New Zealand) dropping below the horizon in April and reappearing in June. The rise of the star cluster in June heralds the beginning of the New Year according to the Māori lunar calendar, and indicates a change in season (into the colder winter months) and is a time for seasonal celebration.

There are many Māori beliefs regarding Matariki in relation to its cultural significance. Some iwi believe Matariki is a mother surrounded by her six daughters. Matariki was used as a navigational star, and as a herald of what the new year might have in store as its physical appearance when it arose was thought to signify whether or not the following year would be prosperous.

The yearly reappearance of Matariki signifies a time to prepare, to share ideas, to remember the past and celebrate the future. Matariki can be a time of change, and growth. During Matariki we acknowledge what we have and what we have to give. Matariki celebrates the diversity of life. It's a celebration of culture, language, spirit and people, of our past, present and looking to the future.

Traditionally by the time of the ascension of Matariki, food crops had been harvested and the storehouses would be well stocked. Hākari or feasts were common. Other food gathering activities would cease and communities would be able to participate in celebrations with a focus on activities related to learning and the arts, with weaving, singing and performing, and the learning of whakapapa being some examples. Nowadays Matariki has become a time to celebrate the revitalisation and resurgence of Te Reo Māori and other traditional Māori knowledge.

Matariki was also an important time to mourn and remember those who had passed away.

Matariki (M45) is associated with the star system Pleiades; the Pleiades are about 450 light years away and were formed approximately 100 million years ago. There are a total of 500 stars in total in the cluster, but is dominated by young hot blue stars, up to 14 of which can be seen with the naked eye. Matariki is the heliacal rising of the 'Seven Sisters', a star cluster seen in late May, early June.

Matariki has a special significance for many cultures

The Japanese call these Seven Sisters 'Subaru' - if you look at the logo of the company Subaru, you'll see a stylised symbol of the Seven Sisters, as ancient mythology meets modern industry.

Some Native Americans believed that all tribes in North America came from the Pleiades. They believe they are descendents of the star system and had been given a task by the Pleadians to keep the Earth safe.

A Native American legend tells of seven maidens who were being pursued by a ferocious bear. Kneeling to pray for help, they called on the Indian gods, who raised the ground where they were located high into the air. Angered, the bear clawed at the earth in a vain attempt to reach them. After leaving huge claw marks in the unyielding earth, the bear gave up and retreated. The maidens were turned into stars and placed in the sky forever out of harm's way.

In Māori cosmology, Matariki is spoken of as the offspring of Raro (the earth or the underworld) and Raumati (the summer), with the expressions Paki o Matariki (fine weather of Matariki), Paki o Ruhi (fine weather of Ruhi), Paki o Hewa (fine weather of Hewa) and Paki o Rangi (fine weather of Rangi) used to denote fine weather stages. This celestial configuration announces the changing of the seasons, the coming of the cold and indicates an ideal time to plant.

Each year, many communities come together to remember those who have passed, and to celebrate those who are to come.

Some will plant seeds for the future others will rest issues from the past.

There will be evening rituals and dawn ceremonies. Matariki is a special time as it is a celestial event that unites Maori, as well as uniting other peoples and cultures throughout both the Pacific and around the world.

To find out more about other Cultures beliefs or stories about Matariki we have included the names the constellation is known by in other Pacific Cultures to help you in your searching.

Pacific names for Matariki

Matariki	Māori, Mangaian (Cook Islands) Mangarevan (Gambier Is – French Polynesia)
Matali'i	Samoa
Makali'i	Hawaiian
Mataliki	Tongan
Mataiki	Marquesan

The following pages contain some possible examples of related curriculum achievement objectives and learning experiences based or themed around Matariki.

Related curriculum AOs and possible learning experiences

Level	Achievement Objective	Possible Learning Experiences
1	<p>VISUAL ARTS Share the ideas, feelings and stories communicated by their own and others objects and images.</p> <p>ENGLISH Speaking, Writing and presenting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draw or paint a visual representation of Matariki that shows what the appearance of this constellation represents to both Māori and/or other cultures • Listen to a story about Matariki and then write a sentence to explain their understanding of what it is.
2	<p>VISUAL ARTS Share the ideas, feelings and stories communicated by their own and others objects and images.</p> <p>ENGLISH Speaking, Writing and presenting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draw, paint or construct a visual representation of Matariki that shows what the appearance of this constellation represents to both Maori and other cultures. • Listen to a story or piece of music about Matariki and then write a paragraph to explain their understanding of what it is or express feelings experience whilst listening.
3	<p>VISUAL ARTS Share the ideas, feelings and stories communicated by their own and others objects and images.</p> <p>DANCE Prepare and share dance movements individually and in pairs or groups.</p> <p>ENGLISH Speaking, Writing and presenting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a visual representation of what seasonal changes are occurring as Matariki rises. • Learn a Waiata about Matariki that has actions and then perform as an individual, pair or group. • Create a dance to represent the rising of Matariki • Write a simple poem (acrostic, alliteration, haiku) about the appearance of Matariki in the sky and what this meant for Maori. • Write a list of things that people could do to celebrate the appearance of Matariki • Write a reminder list of seasonal jobs that need to be completed by this time of year.

Level	Achievement Objective	Possible Learning Experiences
3	<p>SCIENCE - Planet Earth Investigate the components of our solar system, developing an appreciation of the distances between them.</p> <p>SOCIAL STUDIES Understand how cultural practices vary but reflect similar purposes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Map the position of key constellations including Matariki and include a key which gives information about the distances between the constellations or create an appropriate scale and position the constellations accurately. • Create a lifecycle for a star that identifies the characteristics that a star has at each phase of its life. • Draw a Venn diagram that shows the similarities and difference between celebrations that occur around the appearance of Matariki or Pleiades. • Compare international stories or traditions about the appearance of Matariki or Pleiades constellation.
4	<p>VISUAL ARTS Share the ideas, feelings and stories communicated by their own and others objects and images.</p> <p>ENGLISH Speaking, Writing and presenting</p> <p>SCIENCE - Living World Explain how living things are suited to their particular habitat and how they respond to environmental changes, both natural and human-induced.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a painting, print or sculpture that shows what the appearance of this constellation represents to both Maori and other cultures • Write a fictional diary entry that reveals personal experience of Matariki celebrations or activities. • Write a fictional newspaper article about, or create an advertisement for a Matariki event (this could be based in the past or present). • Investigate an indigenous plant or animal that was used as a food source and record how the seasons affected its supply and how it was gathered / harvested.

Level	Achievement Objective	Possible Learning Experiences
4	<p>SOCIAL STUDIES Understand how people pass on and sustain culture and heritage for different reasons and that this has consequences for people.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compare and contrast cultural practices that occur around the appearance of Matariki. E.g Completion of Food gathering / celebrations/ wānanga
5	<p>ARTS - Music Prepare, rehearse and present performances of music, using a range of performance skills and techniques.</p> <p>ENGLISH - Speaking, Writing and presenting Show an understanding of how to shape texts for different audiences and purposes.</p> <p>SOCIAL SCIENCES Understand how cultural interactions impacts on cultures and societies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write and present a musical piece which represent the change of season and rise of the constellation of Matariki. • Write a speech on or debate why it is necessary to recognise the importance of Matariki traditions and practices. • Develop a picture book or children's story which illustrates some of the traditions and practices around Matariki. • Investigate whether non-Maori cultures have adopted traditions and practices surrounding Matariki and describe how this has been of benefit. • Discuss the impacts of applying a European or northern hemisphere calendar on the traditional planting and harvesting / seasonal patterns on the Maori society.

Level	Achievement Objective	Possible Learning Experiences
6	<p>ENGLISH Show a developed understanding of ideas within, across and beyond texts.</p> <p>ARTS Choreograph solo and group dance works, using choreographic processes, devices, structures and technologies to communicate choreographic intentions.</p> <p>SOCIAL SCIENCES Understand that natural and cultural environments have particular characteristics and how environments are shaped by processes that create spatial patterns.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect a range of Whakataukī around the subject of Matariki and give an explanation of what this means. • Write and illustrate a children's picture book using a traditional Maori myth or legend around star lore or navigation as the story basis. • Select traditional Kapahaka or combine Kapahaka with modern dance forms to retell a Matariki based story through dance. • Create a map that spatially identifies which Pacific cultures have used the "Matariki*" constellation as a basis for their own myths, legends or traditional practices. (*The constellation may be referred to by a different name) Determine whether any of these traditional practices have influenced settlement and migration patterns.

Level	Achievement Objective	Possible Learning Experiences
7	<p>ENGLISH Organise texts using a range of appropriate coherent and effective structures.</p> <p>ARTS - Explore how drama reflects our cultural diversity.</p> <p>SCIENCE Explain the nature and lifecycles of different types of stars in terms of energy changes and time</p> <p>SOCIAL SCIENCES Understand how people's perceptions of and interactions with natural and cultural environments differ and have changed over time.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write a report on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Star lore and navigation - Traditional Matariki pastimes such as weaving. • Create a role play, tableau or play that highlights the different cultural interpretation of the appearance of Matariki OR • Reveals different cultural practices relating to either navigation / planting and harvesting practices. • Research the constellation of Matariki and identify its current status in terms of star life cycles (include such information as star ages, distances from Earth and other constellations etc) • Explore how celebrations associated with Matariki in New Zealand have experienced changing levels of interest/popularity over time, giving reasons for possible trends.

Level	Achievement Objective	Possible Learning Experiences
8	<p>ENGLISH Select, develop, and communicate sustained and insightful ideas on arrange of topics.</p> <p>ARTS Research critically evaluate and refine ideas to create original drama work.</p> <p>SOCIAL SCIENCES Understand how people's perceptions of and interactions with natural and cultural environments differ and have changed over time.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Script and perform a short film that communicates the growth and development of Matariki celebrations over time. • Script and perform a play that communicates the growth and development of Matariki celebrations over time. • Explore how celebrations associated with Matariki in New Zealand have experienced changing levels of interest/popularity over time. Give consideration to whether trends are a result of social or political forces.

Local places to visit for inspiration and information

CHRISTCHURCH CITY LIBRARIES

christchurchcitylibraries.com

Check out our online digital resources about [Matariki](#) and the Matariki night sky and see our [events calendar](#) for library-based Matariki events near you.

With 20 libraries in our city-wide network you won't have far to go to visit your local community library to get more information and resources about Matariki.

NGĀ HAU E WHĀ NATIONAL MARAE

250 Pages Road, PO Box 15009
Christchurch, New Zealand.
03 388 7685

Come down to Ngā Hau e Whā National Marae from June and participate in the extensive programme of events scheduled to celebrate Matariki.

Free Entry for whānau based Community Evening Sessions.

Web Resources

At [Christchurch City Libraries](#) we are proud to support Matariki and we have a substantial amount of interesting online resources that you will enjoy exploring.

[Matariki, the indigenous New Year](#), is one of the most significant celebrations in the Maori calendar. This article explores the origins and significance of the event.

In addition to this article we have a comprehensive selection of Matariki information in our online [reference resources](#) section and additional articles and resources can also be found regarding [science and astronomy](#).

Links

Our internet gateway contains links to more fabulous [Matariki](#) resources.

These include websites for [Tai Tokerau Tourism](#) highlighting events that will be occurring in the north this year, the National [Auahikore](#) site with great overviews of what Matariki is about and why it is celebrated.

[Te Papa](#) also has an extensive and comprehensive array of Matariki resources this year focusing on food gathering, traditional gardening tools, kai, weaving, traditional instruments the moon months, poi and rongoa. Te Kete Ipurangi has a large range of [bilingual resources including articles, websites and interactives](#). Te Taura Whiri I te reo has compiled a [Matariki booklet](#) and also has a site with [proverbs](#) relating to Matariki.

Te Ara has a great range of information including [articles, video clips](#) and pictures looking at traditional and modern celebrations as well as kai. The [Astronomy New Zealand](#) site contains lots of interesting information. Learn more about [Matariki](#) on their website, check out the star charts, and find out about [Stonehenge Aotearoa](#). Matariki and Pleiades are even featured on [Wikipedia](#) – great general interest article mentioning many different cultural perspectives.

Web Resources

The Kōrero Māori site has some good Matariki information in the form of [bilingual backgrounders](#), crosswords, word finds, activity ideas and teacher resources for immersion settings. The New Zealand History on-line site have some wonderful Matariki [Social Studies](#) resources.

Assorted Matariki links from other cultures

One [Polynesian version](#) of the story of matariki can be found on the University of Arkansas Centre for Space and Planetary Sciences site.

The Newsfinder site offers an informative article on Pleiades mythology according to the [Greek tradition](#). The Astronomy in Japan webpage has an interesting article on the [Japanese perspectives](#) regarding Matariki.

Wikipedia also has an interesting article that provides introductory information that could be used as starting point for investigating the [traditions of other cultures as recorded in folklore and literature](#).

First nation peoples Pleiades/Matariki myth/legends. Pacific– Hawai’i

First nation peoples from Canada and America also have strong traditions regarding Matariki.

The American Indians: First People of America, Canada and Turtle Island site offers many different stories related to Matariki from different First Nation perspectives. [Navajo](#), [Onondaga](#), [Kiowa](#), [Es-kimo](#), [Sia](#), [Chumash](#) the [Tachi Yokut](#) and the [Cherokee](#) all have different stories that describe their traditional views on the origins and the creation of the Pleiades star cluster.