

When Māori first settled Aotearoa around 800 years ago, they found themselves in a much colder climate. They were in need of warm garments. Early Māori discovered harakeke (flax) which had a strong inner fibre which could be twined together to form the foundation materials for cloaks. They used some of the same weaving methods that they originally used to make fishing nets and traps back in the tropical islands of Polynesia. The new country offered new plants, animal skins and feathers that could be woven into the warm cloaks. Some cloaks were woven to be waterproof (pākē) but others were made to be magnificent to be worn by chiefs.



When Europeans arrived there was a rapid change to the weaving of cloaks. Māori weavers began experimenting with European materials, like coloured wool, goat hair and exotic feathers. As these new materials and practices of weaving spread, many techniques traditionally used by Māori disappeared. By the end of the 1800's most Māori had abandoned cloaks in favour of European clothing. The weaving of a cloak took a great deal of time and in a rapidly changing Aotearoa New Zealand, it was time that could be better spent doing other tasks.

It would not be until the 1950's that Māori began to dedicate themselves to the revival of cloak making. Modern cloak makers blended traditional techniques and the latest materials to revive this lost art. Their efforts result in highly valued cloaks that weave the past and the present, being a taonga or treasure for those able to wear one.

*Adapting to new environments*

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**Questions (look in the text for highlight clues!)**

- 1) What did Māori bring from Polynesia?
  - a) The plants to make cloaks.
  - b) Weaving techniques.
  - c) Animal skins.
- 2) What was the main reason that Māori made cloaks when they arrived in NZ?
- 3) What were two (2) traditional materials used to make cloaks?
  - 1)
  - 2)
- 4) What were two (2) new materials introduced to cloaks after the arrival of Europeans?
  - 1)
  - 2)
- 5) What was the most important discovery that made the weaving of cloaks possible?
- 6) Why did cloak-making almost disappear?
- 7) What does the word blended mean in the second to last sentence of the story?

### Word Salad

*Find the meaning of these words and put each of these words into a sentence.*

- 1) revival
- 2) exotic
- 3) dedicate

### Joining Words (Conjunctions)

*For each sentence find the word that joins two sentences or ideas together.*

- 1) The cloak was long but it was quite thin.
- 2) The flax weaving was finished so it could be presented to the queen.
- 3) The cloak was colourful and full of meaning.

*One group that has embraced the cloak as a modern representation of strength, honour and treasure is the New Zealand Olympic Team. Each Olympic Games the cloak is presented to the flag bearer of the team. It is then handed on to the athlete given the honour of being flag bearer at the next games.*

