

One of the precious trading items in New Zealand in the late 1800's was the resin produced by kauri trees, that could only be found here. It was Auckland's main export until 1900 and sustained much of the growth of the city. The gum was found mainly by digging deeply into the ground where the resin from the trees had fallen, hardened and been buried. Both Māori and pākehā dug on the gum fields north of Auckland, hoping to make their fortune. These 'Diggers' would probe the ground with long sharpened rods in search of the gum, digging wide trenches in the ground. The term "diggers," which was used to describe New Zealand troops in the Great War, came from the gumfields of the North.



Māori traditionally used kauri gum as chewing gum, a fire-starter, as a torch or even as a pigment when inking a moko. Māori also used the gum for decorative reasons such as jewellery. As early as the 1830's and 1840's pākehā traders were buying the gum from local Māori by the tonne, mostly with cash but also in goods at times.

Traders from overseas had discovered a new use for the gum. Export markets opened as far away as England and America who wanted kauri gum to be made into a varnish, a clear protective coating on wooden products. By the 1890's, 70% of all varnishes made in England used kauri gum as its main ingredient. Another use developed after 1900 when it was used in the manufacture of a floor covering called linoleum.



Questions (look in the text for highlight clues!)

- 1) What did the diggers use sharpened rods for?
 - a) Digging up the kauri gum.
 - b) Finding where the kauri gum was.
 - c) To fight in the Great War.
- 2) What was a positive effect for Auckland of the trade in kauri gum?
- 3) What are two (2) traditional Māori uses of kauri gum?
 - 1)
 - 2)
- 4) Where can kauri gum be dug from the ground?
 - a) All over New Zealand.
 - b) In England and America.
 - c) In the area north of Auckland.
- 5) In what decade did Māori first trade kauri gum?
- 6) Why did countries such as England and America want kauri gum?
- 7) What was one use of kauri gum that both Māori and pākehā embraced?
- 8) Briefly explain the connection between the kauri gum diggers and the New Zealand soldiers fighting in the Great War.

Word Salad

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

- 1) trench
- 2) pigment
- 3) ingredient

Naming Words (Pronouns)

For each sentence find the word that is used in place of a person.

- 1) I ran all the way home with the gum.
- 2) The fingers on my hand were numb.
- 3) The sunlight shone through her kauri gum find.

Local economies and trade

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