

The Moriori people lived by one law created by chief Nukunuku on their island of Rēkohu, known today as Chatham Island.

Life was hard for the Moriori. Their new island home offered few resources and was **battered** by heavy seas and fierce winds. Nukunuku realised that if the Moriori were to survive, they would need to live in balance with nature. After seeing two tribes fight, Nukunuku proclaimed that all fighting must end, weapons should be burned and Moriori must work together. He cursed anyone that did not follow his law, threatening that their guts would rot in their body. The people



listened and for 600 years there was peace on Rēkohu. The Moriori lived in harmony with nature. They made sure to only kill male seals, became impressive fishermen and caught birds on offshore islands. They left the few trees standing on the island, carving many of their spiritual beliefs onto the trunks of these living trees. Moriori even controlled their population through strict relationship controls so that they would not overuse the land. The population is said to have never gotten bigger than 2000.

The Moriori still followed Nukunuku's law even in the face of violence against them. In 1835 when their island home was invaded, Moriori chose not to fight back in keeping with their peaceful nature. By 1870 there were only 100 Moriori surviving.

Questions (look in the text for highlight clues!)

- 1) What is another name for Rēkohu?
- 2) How long did Nukunuku's law stand for?
- 3) What prompted Nukunuku to make his law?
- 4) How did Moriori control population growth?
 - a) Killed only male babies.
 - b) They sent people to offshore islands.
 - c) Had arranged relationships.
- 5) What were three ways that Moriori could be seen as 'living in harmony with nature'?
- 6) Why do you think the Moriori only killed male seals?
- 7) Do you think the Moriori were strong or weak when they were almost wiped out in 1835?

Adapting to new environments

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New Words (look in the text for highlight clues!)

What do you think the word **battered** means in the story? Does it mean:

- a) What you do with a fish.
- b) It was old and worn down.
- c) It suffered repeated hits.

Joining Words (Conjunctions)

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

- 1) Moriori ate seals and they ate fish.
- 2) The winds were strong but the waves caused great damage.
- 3) Nukunuku saw the problem so he created a law.

