

# NGA TANIWHA

Reading

Name

Taniwha are revered powerful creatures from traditional Māori stories. They live in deep pools, rivers, dark caves and the ocean. The waters in which they live can be dangerous and even considered deadly because of currents or unseen dangers, or they may be deemed special, magical and representative of good fortune.



Māori tribes have their own traditional stories and different attitudes towards Taniwha. Some tribes view Taniwha as kaitiaki. They believe that Taniwha are forces for good, and that they protect people and their land. Others are depicted as frightening and dangerous. In some stories, taniwha have taken human beings hostage.

When respected by humans, taniwha seem to respect and protect humans in return. In the stories, they can communicate with humans via tohunga, passing on warnings about approaching enemies or other important messages. They sometimes assume protective responsibilities for whole families and receive gifts as thanks. The first kūmara and taro of the season are common gifts.

As a result of their kaitiaki, the term 'taniwha' has been adopted as another word for 'chief' in some Māori cultures. Some taniwha have close associations with certain tribes or regions of New Zealand.

However, taniwha can also make fierce enemies. It's not just people they can feel protective towards. They view the ocean as a sacred place and punish anyone who disrespects it. Taniwha that have strong ties to particular tribes can be dangerous to people belonging to others. There are many stories that describe battles between taniwha and Māori warriors after a taniwha has killed a human. In one taniwha story, one of these battles ends with the stomach of the taniwha being sliced open to reveal several people, weapons, darts, ornaments and korowai, all intact inside.

In some taniwha stories, people turn into Taniwha when they die. This often happens to the tohunga who act as a go-between for the Taniwha and the tribes. In some stories, taniwha marry humans.

## What do taniwha look like?

Taniwha are normally reptilian and look something like geckos or tuatara, with spines running down their backs. Some have wings and resemble dragons.

Sea and freshwater taniwha have bodies that are similar to those of sharks and whales.

They're normally shown as looking more like fish, with very long, powerful tails.

However, taniwha can be depicted in lots of different ways. There are versions of taniwha that look like octopi and logs floating on the surface of the water, similar to crocodiles.

It's been thought that some of the taniwha pūrākau come from saltwater crocodiles that, during certain periods, may have been able to make it across the ocean from mainland Australia.

However, New Zealand winters are too cold for saltwater crocodiles to endure and so, while they may have inspired some of the early pūrākau, it's unlikely they were able to survive for long.

Taniwha are very large and strong. Some can tunnel through the Earth and according to pūrākau, their bodies and behaviour have affected much of the New Zealand landscape. In some pūrākau, taniwha can even change their bodies' form.

## Where do taniwha live?

Taniwha live in watery environments and caves. These range from deep pools to rivers, in and around caves surrounded by oceans to lakes

## Can you make up a tune for this waiata, and draw a picture to go with it?

*One day I met a taniwha,  
Swimming in the Waikato  
He whispered in my taringa,  
Ehoa come along, let's go!  
Oh yes you really ought to  
see what's beneath the water  
I said oh no, no, no,  
I really have to go,  
My koro waits for me,  
Beside that kōwhai tree,  
So thank you taniwha  
Right now it's haere ra.*



# Research

By

On the internet look up and explain what these are:

*Taniwha hikuroa*

*Matawai Taniwha*

*Niho Taniwha*

*Unuhanga Taniwha*

*Mangō taniwha*

*Here-taniwha*

*Ka maunu te taniwha i tōna rua*

**WORD STUDY**

By

Find words in the story that mean:

Answer

<i>Honoured and respected (7 letters)</i>	Revered
<i>Thought about carefully (10)</i>	Considered
<i>Regarded as (6)</i>	deemed
<i>Described as (8)</i>	depicted
<i>Prisoner (7)</i>	hostage
<i>Tribal priest or magician tribe (7)</i>	tohunga
<i>Take on a role (6)</i>	assume
<i>Protector or guardian (8)</i>	kaitiaki
<i>Show or display (6)</i>	reveal
<i>Connected with religion (6)</i>	sacred
<i>Cloak (7)</i>	korowai
<i>Cold blooded egg laying animal type (9)</i>	reptilian
<i>Complete (6)</i>	intact
<i>More than one octopus (6)</i>	octopi
<i>Story, myth or legend (7)</i>	pūrākau
<i>Remain in existence (6)</i>	endure
<i>Different types (8)</i>	versions
<i>Around the outside (10)</i>	surrounded
<i>Places to live (12)</i>	environments
<i>Stay alive (7)</i>	survive

**‘Waikato taniwha rau, he piko he taniwha, he piko he taniwha’.**

(Waikato of a hundred taniwha, on every bend a taniwha). This saying attributes the power and prestige of the Waikato tribes to that of the river.



**WORD FIND: PLACES ON THE WAIKATO RIVER**



17 places to find. (Some places have two names.)	9
1	10
2	11
3	12
4	13
5	14
6	15
7	16
8	17

