

Find the right part of the supplement, and read it while you are listening to the CD.

## 1: Useful plants

Imagine living in a place with no shops and no contacts with the outside world. You have to grow your own food and look in your natural environment for things to use to make houses, boats, household utensils, tools and clothes.

New Zealand's Māori ancestors came from islands in the Pacific. They knew how to use tropical plants for everything they needed, much as some Pacific Islanders do today. They used the trunks of coconut palms to construct buildings. They used coconut shells to make bowls and jewellery. They used coconut leaves to thatch roofs, and to make woven baskets and mats. The coconut flesh and milk were used as food and drink. They also used the leaves of the pandanus vine to thatch roofs and make woven baskets and mats. They knew that pandanus is much better than coconut for roofs because it lasts longer.

They used the bark of the paper mulberry tree to make a soft cloth which they decorated with Island designs. The Cook Island chiefs in the old photograph in your workbook are dressed in tapa cloth. Tapa cloth is also used to make mats. You may have seen some in New Zealand. Tapa cloth is still made the same way as it was in the Pacific more than 1000 years ago.

## 2: Hurrah for harakeke

It was not long before each pā had its own pā harakeke (flax plantation). Māori people, especially the women, spent a lot of time gathering and working with harakeke. Weavers used long strips of flax leaves to make things like containers, mats and kete. Muka (fibre) was stripped from the flax leaves using mākoī (the cutting edge of a mussel shell). It was used for things like string and rope. Māori had no metals which meant no nails or screws. Waka (canoes), whare (houses) and all sorts of tools had to be tied together with cords made from flax fibre.

## 3: A treasured resource

Māui and the Sun God

Sometimes there just don't seem to be enough hours of sunlight to do everything you want to. Māui and his brothers had this problem – that is, until Māui had a brilliant idea. He asked the women of the tribe to cut a huge pile of harakeke. With his brothers' help he plaited the harakeke into long ropes. And he made a gigantic net to catch and hold the sun. When the sun rose out of its cave in the early morning, Māui and his brothers captured the sun in their net made of harakeke. The raging sun could not escape. The net was too strong. Māui wouldn't let the sun go until it promised to move slowly across the sky, giving many more hours of sunlight than it used to do.

Māori valued harakeke because it was an important resource. Prayers were specially performed before cutting took place to give the plant special significance. Māori weavers were very skilful. The beautiful things they made often became taonga (treasures) that were highly valued by their tribes and passed down from generation to generation. The style of cloak showed a person's rank.

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Cloaks for a person of high rank were woven very evenly from special threads of muka and were decorated with borders of fine tāniko. You can see one in the photograph of a rangatira in your workbook. The weavers used traditional tāniko patterns that had been passed down from their ancestors.

The finely woven cloaks had special significance because they belonged to important people. Such a cloak had to be carefully looked after. If it was damaged, the mana of the owner and the weaver would be damaged. Some cloaks became such treasures that they were given a personal name and they were believed to have special powers. For example if the cloak was thrown over a condemned man it could save his life.

#### **4: Trading flax**

In the nineteenth century Europeans brought new materials to New Zealand. The Māori people began to wear European-style clothing made from wool and cotton, and leather boots and shoes. Woollen blankets replaced cloaks. People found them warmer than woven flax. And they were ready-made. It could take months to make an elaborate cloak. Harakeke was suddenly not so important to Māori people.

#### **5: The flax industry**

By 1906 there were 240 flax mills throughout the country. The fibre exported from these mills brought in over half a million pounds a year. This was a lot of money in those days. The flax mills meant jobs for people who lived nearby. The workers in the mills were called flaxies. People were needed to gather the flax, to work machines, to wash the fibre and lay it out to dry and bleach in the sun and to bundle it into bales for exporting.

#### **6: Falling markets**

This graph shows how much flax was exported from 1860 to 1960. It shows how flax exports went up or down over the years. Follow the graph as it is explained to you.

In the 1860s, there was very little flax exported. That was before the flax stripping machine was used. You'll notice that the graph starts to go up when it gets near 1870. That's when the new machines made a difference. Lots of fibre could be produced quickly. The fibre was needed overseas and good prices were paid for it. In 1870, 5000 tonnes were exported.

Flax exports continued doing well until the 1880s when there was a depression and many mills had to close down. A depression is a time when not much buying and selling happens and there is a lot of poverty and unemployment. In 1890 you'll see a high peak on the graph. This was because in other countries, there was a shortage of fibres to make ropes. So they needed more flax fibre from New Zealand. In that year over 20,000 tonnes were exported.

From that peak, the graph drops right down. People didn't want flax because sailing ships, which used a lot of rope, were being replaced by steam ships, which used very little. So, flax exports dropped.

The highest peak on the graph is in 1916 during World War One when there was a big demand for flax fibre. Over 30,000 tonnes of flax were exported. Exports came down after the First World War because less flax fibre was needed. Then the plants were struck by the yellow leaf disease. It destroyed large areas of flax plants. See how far the graph drops down at around 1920.

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There was now a shortage of flax plants. In order to get more flax, the flaxies changed their cutting methods. Instead of taking the whole plant they took only the outer leaves as the Māori had always done. This helped for a while. You'll see that the graph starts to go up again. In 1926, about 20,000 tonnes of flax fibre were exported. But, continuous cutting meant the plants were not producing so many flax leaves. Then there was the Great Depression in the 1930s, and many mills closed down. See how the graph drops right down, so that by 1940 no flax was being exported. From then on most of the flax fibre was used in New Zealand – it was not exported.

Since the last World War, all New Zealand's flax fibre has been used in New Zealand. The fibre was made into twine, woolpacks, underfelt, floor coverings, plasterboard and upholstery. The last mill where a flax stripper machine was used was in Foxton. It stopped in 1985 when the building it was in burnt down. Today most of the fibres used to replace flax fibre are synthetic. They are made from chemicals or artificial substances rather than from natural ones like flax.