

This Land

The Fall of Tāne

Book Two

By Mark Abnett

Art by P.R. Dedelis

- Reading • Writing • Thinking Skills
- Social Studies • Art



Synopsis Book Two

Our journey continues within the future reborn world of Aotearoa New Zealand on the new continent of Te Riu-a-Māui. 52 years have passed since the breaking of the moon and the Death of Technology. The gods have been silent for generations. But now they have returned. And they are not happy with what they have found.

Tāne, god of the forest and birds, has, with the aid of Hell'na and her companions, discovered the resting place of Māui, who fell at the entrance to the Underworld, defending the Earth from the god Whiro, lord of darkness. Tāne and Hell'na dive down to the realm of Hine-nui-te-pō, the goddess of death, where Māui's body lies.

Māui bears a resemblance to a friend of Hell'na's called Luke, and Tāne confirms that Luke is a 'tulpa', a copy of Māui created by thought itself. Luke's friendship with Hell'na is the reason why Tāne was drawn to her and how she can understand his god speak.

Māui's magical jawbone lies beside his body, but is unable to be moved by Tāne as it awaits its master.

They decide to travel to the last place where Hell'na saw Luke – the Lake of Glass, Rotokārahe. Returning from the entrance of the Underworld to the shore of Lake Taupō, Hell'na and Tāne discover that their companions have been captured by Shepherd and her mercenary crew who have been hired by Hell'na's Auntie Ngaire, Commissioner of Hell'na's Pāhunu tribe.

They are drawn into battle and Hell'na forges armour from the precious mana steel which she carried hidden in her jacket on their journey. Both sides are evenly matched until Tāne boosts Hell'na's power, causing her armour to explode and send their enemies running.

Unfortunately, Hell'na team are not unscathed. Beach's sand body has been damaged in the explosion, causing half his body to turn to glass. Mere's hands have been crushed and he is unconscious.

Tāne commands Beach to send his sand clones to all corners of Te Riu-a-Māui, enlisting the aid of all those willing to fight, and calling them to meet at the Lake of Glass for the forthcoming battle with Whiro. Tāne knows that Whiro would not be able to resist a gathering that would likely cause conflict, and the trap is set.

As they journey to the Lake of Glass they are ambushed and Hell'na tries to stop with her hand a bullet made of mana steel and greenstone, meant for Tāne. She stops the steel but the greenstone bullet destroys Hell'na's hand, causing her to go into shock and pass out. As Hell'na whirls into the vortex of unconsciousness, she hears the voice of Whiro in the darkness, who sows seeds of doubt in her mind about Tāne's motives.

Hell'na is pulled back to consciousness by the spirits of Tāne and his brother gods and discovers her own brother, Dre, has reunited the Free People's Army of Te Riu-A-Māui and joined up with Tāne and her companions. It is revealed that Hell'na's smashed hand was a prosthetic as she had lost her real hand long ago.



Upon arriving at the Lake of Glass, Tāne tells Hell'na, Tūi, Mere, Beach and Pania that their hononga (bond) is the key to defeating Whiro. They meet the leaders of the forces of the White Tomb and Pāhunu tribes in the centre of the lake, where Hell'na discovers that it was her Auntie Ngaire who was responsible for arranging for Hell'na's childhood friend Chase to be given to the White Tomb in exchange for peace between the tribes. The Vox Populi (Voice of the People) for the White Tomb survived his confrontation with the Taniwha and is also there, supporting Whiro as he was the only god who helped them after the Fever arrived and changed the people and landscape forever.

Tāne points out that Whiro is actually keeping them divided, feeding off the conflict and anger that keep people apart when they could be stronger together. Tāne calls for Whiro to show himself and he forms from the energy of all of those opposed to Tāne. Surrounded now by enemy forces, Dre sounds a cry to battle with a pūtātara (shell trumpet) and a fantail appears, carrying Maui's magic jawbone weapon.

The fantail drops the bone weapon which causes a massive explosion, breaking the landscape of the Lake of Glass and both sides engage in battle. During the battle, Tāne signals to Pania and she is reminded of the deal they made whilst Hell'na lay unconscious days earlier. Pania strikes down Tāne, releasing his godly energy, bestowing it upon Hell'na and her friends and causing them to evolve into powerful kaitiaki (guardians). Tāne's tā moko (facial tattoo) now becomes fully formed, signalling the end of his journey, and he dissipates as Whiro looks on in confusion. He cannot understand that Tāne would sacrifice himself for others to live.

The newly evolved kaitiaki work together to trap Whiro beneath the Lake of Glass and as they do so, the anger of his followers lifts like a mist over their vision.

Hell'na and her companions are left with a small portion of the energy bestowed onto them and each uses it in different ways. Hell'na frees her whānau (family), who were trapped in glass when Tāne first fell to Earth.

As everyone is freed, they are watched over by a fantail ... which transforms into Māui, who walks away, laughing, to find his next adventure.

About the Creators

Born and raised in New Zealand, **Mark Abnett** is now based in Scotland. He won the Netflix-owned Millarworld Talent Contest in 2016 with his Hit-Girl story *Mindy's ABCs*, published by Image Comics in America. He is passionate about storytelling that can help bring the heritage and history of Aotearoa to life through the highly visual medium of comics.

His artistic team consists of artist P.R. Dedelis from Poland; colourist Liezl Buenaventura from the Philippines; British letterers Rob Jones and Hassan Otsmane-Elhaou; Māori communications and engagement practitioner Verona-Meiana Putaranui; designers Hekiera Mareroa, Seb Wikaraka Peni and Te Haunui Tuna, and translator and cultural practitioner Trent Brown-Marsh

Writing and Illustration Style

This Land: The Fall of Tāne is a graphic novel, which means that the narrative is told primarily through art presented in a sequential format. Graphic novels are incredibly popular with students, including reluctant readers, and provide a means for engaging students with an extended text.

Graphic novels are a powerful tool that can be used to enhance student engagement, increase visual literacy, comprehension and language skills, and build reader confidence. The graphic novel format allows complicated plots and content to be presented in a way that is accessible and appealing to students.

This Land: The Fall of Tāne is the second graphic novel set on the futuristic continent of Te-Riu-a-Māui and follows on from ***This Land: The Search for Māui***. Although it is a sequel, ***This Land: The Fall of Tāne*** may also be read as a stand-alone graphic novel as it contains a significant recap of characters and previous events. Students are able to draw on their prior geographical and cultural knowledge of Aotearoa New Zealand, Māori atua (gods) and legendary figures, pandemics, superheroes and comic book conventions to access the text. Themes include the fight for survival, power and conflicting interests, transformation and the importance of whānau and kaitiakitanga.

Text is presented as speech bubbles with a sprinkling of te reo Māori, which is supported by short in-panel glossaries. Onomatopoeia is used in comic book style. Generous end matter includes an explanation of the kaitiaki (or guardians) that Hell'na and her friends evolve into, the significance of tā moko and the traditional background of the contemporary symbols used in the artwork. Intended for readers aged 10+ years.



Shared Learning and Discussion Points

Look at the front cover and ask the students:

- What do you think this graphic novel will be about?
- How might Tāne 'fall'? What does this mean?
- Who are the main characters?
- Will some characters be heroes and some be villains? Why do you think that?

Read the blurb and ask:

- What do the words 'supernatural', 'mercenaries', 'underworld' and 'sacrifice' mean?
- What might Tāne's 'ultimate sacrifice' be?
- Who do you think the character on the back cover might be? Why might he want to 'take down Tāne'?

Before reading, discuss features of graphic novels, such as sequential art, panels, splash pages, speech and thought bubbles, captions, onomatopoeia (sound words), the use of symbolism and techniques used to show movement or the passage of time.

Comprehension questions

- What role does the pīwakawaka play? (pp.4–11) As a native bird of Aotearoa New Zealand, what is the pīwakawaka's relationship to Tāne?
- Why do you think it was Moa who sacrificed his life to fight off the taniwha? (p.9)
- What do you think the symbols on the right side of the map may represent? (p.12)
- How is the reader shown what happened at the Battle of the North? (p.13) Why do you think this technique was used?
- Why was a double splash page with captions used to show the end of the war? (pp.14–15) What does this tell you about the importance of this event to the narrative?
- Why is the colourisation different on pp.19–21? What does this show?
- Who is Hine-nui-te-pō? (p.19) Who is Whiro? How has Whiro become more powerful than ever? (pp.20–21)
- What caused Tūi to shrink? (p.23) What does she hope to do with her share of the mana steel?
- Why can neither Tāne or Hell'na lift Māui's mystical jawbone? (p.25)
- Who appears from Lake Taupō to help Hell'na's band? (p.27)
- How is Hell'na transformed when she goes into battle? What is her armour made of? (pp.28–29)
- What is a 'psychic'? (p.30)
- How has perspective been used to add drama to the battle scene? (pp.30–31)
- What special power does Hell'na unleash on Kiriana and her gang? (pp.32–33) Where does this power come from? (p.34)
- What has happened to Beach? (p.34)
- What is 'destiny'? How does Tāne know that Whiro will reveal himself? (p.35)
- What has happened to Hell'na's hand? (pp.38–39)
- What do the white symbols on p.39 represent? Who wants to talk to Hell'na?
- What creatures does Whiro appear as? (pp.40–41) Why does he suggest that Hell'na should be fearful of Tāne?
- Who are the figures that appear before Hell'na on pp.48–49?
- Why is the hononga (bond) between Hell'na's band important in their quest to defeat Whiro? (p.53)
- What shocking discovery does Hell'na make on pp.56–57?
- Who uses the negative energy from all those opposed to Tāne to manifest himself? (p.58)
- How does the frame between the two images on p.58 help to clearly show the two sides of the conflict?
- Why does Hell'na's brother, Dre, blow on the shell trumpet? (p.58)



teacher toolkit

 SCHOLASTIC

- When the pīwakawaka flies in carrying Māui’s bone weapon made from the magic jawbone (p.59), who does the pīwakawaka represent? How do you know this?
- How is onomatopoeia used to show that the glass lake has been broken by Māui’s hook? (p.59)
- In the great battle scene on pp.60–61, Commissioner Ngaire’s and Hell’na’s stationary positions contrast with the dynamic movements around them. What effect does this have?
- What does Hell’na mean when she says ‘the gods have been manipulating us since before the fever’? (p.62) Who is standing behind Commissioner Ngaire?
- Why does Pania strike down Tāne? (p.64) What is the significance of the appearance of Tāne’s tā moko? What happens to Tāne’s power?
- Why can Whiro not understand Tāne’s sacrifice? (p.65)
- How do the illustrations show that Hell’na and her band have been transformed into something greater than they were before
– into kaitiaki? (p.66)
- What does Hell’na do when she harnesses the power of unity? (p.67)
- How do Whiro’s followers describe the aftermath of Whiro being banished underneath the glass lake? (pp.70–71)
- How did Hell’na use Tāne’s gift of power? (p.73)
- What does Hell’na want for her people? (p.74)
- What is indicated by the captions ‘The End...’ and ‘Or is it?’ (p.74)

Activities

ACTIVITY 1: INTO THE UNKNOWN

Will the adventure continue? If so, what might happen next? Expand your predictions into a comic strip, including speech bubbles and captions, or write a story about possible future events.

ACTIVITY 2: EXPLORE YOUR STYLE

Using the artists’ character interpretations on pp.84–86 as a springboard, create your own artistic interpretation of your favourite character from *This Land: The Fall of Tāne*.

ACTIVITY 3: POWER UP!

Reread p. 76, The Guardians. Imagine that you could power up into a guardian, or kaitiaki. Research to find out more about the Māori gods. Which god would you like to receive powers from? What would the powers be? Would they be represented by a symbol, like Hell’na; an aspect of your physical being, like Beach, Mere and Pania; or would you transform into a different being, like Tūi? What would you look like? What could you do? Draw yourself in your evolved form and write a paragraph describing your gifts, appearance and new abilities.

ACTIVITY 4: YOUR ANIMAL SELF

Māui sometimes took the form of a pīwakawaka in *The Search for Māui* and *The Fall of Tāne* to watch over people. Now it’s your turn. If you could take the form of any animal, bird or insect that is native to Aotearoa New Zealand, which would you choose and why? Research your chosen native creature and present your findings as Google Slides, including photos. Where does your creature live? What does it eat? How big is it? Does it have special features that help it survive? Include interesting facts about your creature.

ACTIVITY 5: PICK A ROLE

Turn to pp.82–83 and check out all the different roles of the people who worked on the *This Land* project. Which role most interests you and why? Research to find out more about this role or job and write a short paragraph describing what it involves and the training and/or skills needed to do this job.

Written by Frances McBeath



teacher toolkit

 SCHOLASTIC