

FOR THE TEACHER

Conrad Cooper needs a favour. He's just found out about Tāne Mahuta, the god of the forest, and he seems the perfect guy to solve Conrad's family problems. After all, the more high-profile gods probably have huge waiting lists, right? In return, Conrad will do anything, no matter how much trouble it causes. But will a Māori god listen to the prayers of a Pākehā boy? And does Tāne really exist?

Set in 1978 against the Bastion Point occupation, *Conrad Cooper's Last Stand* is a surprising novel from award-winning author Leonie Agnew.

INTRODUCTORY EXERCISES

Introduce the Māori creation story.

Create mood boards for the occupation and eviction of Bastion Point. Then form newspaper groups and turn these into newspaper articles from 1978.

CLOSE READING

Chapter One

Why did Conrad think Tāne's muscles would look huge?

Who is the god mother with eight arms?

Why does the teacher decide to do art?

What is a myth?

Why did Conrad choose Tāne as a god? (Compare this answer to students' answers at the end of the novel. Has their answer changed?)

Why hadn't Conrad heard of Tāne before?

Chapter Two

Why does he think Mrs O'Leary lived on an island?

Why does he think Tāne might know Mrs O'Leary?

Look at the phrase where Mrs O'Leary stares at the sky on p12. Is she really checking for rain?

Why can't he tell Mrs O'Leary what's going on at home?

Why does Mrs O'Leary want to lend him a book?

Why do you think the chapter ends with Mrs O'Leary staring at Conrad's house and backyard?

Chapter Three

Why isn't Jasper happy?

Why does Gaz spend his time on Bastion Point?

Why might Jasper grow his hair?

Which famous author is mentioned in this chapter?

What does Gaz add to Conrad's star chart?

Why can Conrad call Gaz by two names?

Chapter Four

Why does the lunchbox smell?

Why does Conrad think the authors of the picture book might know Tāne?

Give an example of a time when Jasper wanted Conrad around. Do you think they are real friends? What makes a real friend?

What does Conrad want to do when he grows up?

Why does Conrad give Jasper his chocolate chippies?

Do you think Jasper is taking advantage of Conrad? Why?

ORAL LANGUAGE/CRITICAL THINKING

Discuss Conrad's knowledge of Te Reo in 1978. Is it different to your knowledge today? Why is this?

Discuss the different perspectives that characters have on the occupation of Bastion Point and why: Conrad, his teacher, his mother, Gaz, Mr Kelly and Jasper. (Try 'hot seating' the characters for drama.)

Conrad decides to finally talk about his problems at home, even though his mother wouldn't like it. If you were having problems at home, discuss which people you could trust and why.

Conrad says all the 'good stuff' from his British heritage, like mythological giants, dragons and faeries, come from overseas. He says there's 'nothing here in New Zealand for the Pākehā kids', unless they can share in Māori culture. Is he right?

Did Tāne come to Conrad's rescue? Discuss.

WRITTEN LANGUAGE

Persuasive: Imagine you are Conrad and write a persuasive piece on either: why the pōhutukawa should not be cut down, or why the Bastion Point occupation was a good idea.

Recount: Write a creative recount on a day in Conrad's life or Jasper's.

Information report: Imagine the police report on Bastion Point – brainstorm and write. Would it differ to the book's account?

Narrative: Retell a chapter from Tāne Mahuta's point of view.

Poetry: Read the eviction scene and then write a poem based on the event using the senses.