



Superheroes!

Māui and the Māori Atua

Hītōria *History*

Māori mythology has many Atua (Gods) and Demi-Gods. We like to call them superheroes! Here are just a few:

Ranginui (Sky Father) and **Papatūānuku** (Earth Mother): At the beginning of time, the Sky and Earth were in love, and clung to each other so tightly that their many sons (all atua) had no room to move in the darkness between them. Their separation was the beginning of *te ao mārama* (the world of light.)

Tāne-Mahuta: atua of the forest, birds and insects. He is the son who separated his parents, Ranginui and Papatūānuku. He is also said to have made the world's first woman, Hineahuone, from the sacred red earth at Kurawaka, and to have fetched Ngā Kete o te Wānanga (the three baskets of knowledge) from the heavens.

Tāwhirimātea: atua of the wind and weather. After his brothers chose to separate his parents, he stayed with his father in the sky, but is so angry with them, he is always fighting.

Tangaroa: atua of the sea. He became an enemy of his brother Tāne-Mahuta, which is why the sea always tries to erode the land.

Tūmatauenga: atua of war. One scary dude!

Rūaumoko: atua of earthquakes and tā moko. Just a baby when the Earth Mother was separated from the Sky Father and turned over, he is trapped under his mum. His brothers sent down fire through cracks in the earth to keep him warm. His movements cause earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and hot springs. It's great to keep fit, kid, but don't you think you're going a little far?!

Rongo-mā-tāne: atua of cultivated food like the kūmara, and of peace

Haumia-tiketike: atua of uncultivated food like fernroot

Māui: the ultimate trickster hero, famous throughout the Pacific! He may be little, but his feats include fishing up the North Island (Te Ika-a-Māui or 'Maui's Fish') with a hook made from his grandmother's jawbone, and slowing the Sun. He is an explorer and a shape-shifter who can turn into animals such as birds. He died trying to trick the goddess of death, Hine-nui-te-pō, into letting humans live forever by crawling inside her while she was asleep... but she woke up when Pīwakawaka (Fantail) laughed, and crushed him between her thighs. Ouch.

Tāwhaki: Unlike Māui, he is tall and handsome. His grandmother is Whaitiri, the atua of thunder and a cannibal. Maybe that's why he can make lightning flash from his armpits! His most famous exploit is climbing far up a vine into the skies to find his wife and daughter. Kind of like Jack and the Beanstalk, but way cooler!