

# Reading Comprehension — The Power of the Haka

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## The Power of the Haka

Before a big rugby match, the players of New Zealand's All Blacks line up and do something extraordinary. They stamp their feet, slap their thighs, widen their eyes and chant together with tremendous force. This is the haka — and it is far more than a way to frighten opponents.

The haka is a traditional Māori posture dance, performed with the whole body and voice. There are many different haka, and they have been part of Māori culture for hundreds of years. Some are fierce challenges; others welcome guests, mark special occasions, or honour people who have died.

Every movement and word in a haka carries meaning. The stamping feet, the slapping, the wide eyes and outstretched tongue all express strength, emotion and unity. A haka is performed as a group, with everyone moving and chanting as one, which gives it its great power.

Today, the haka is known around the world, especially through the All Blacks. But it remains a treasured part of Māori culture, performed at weddings, funerals and welcomes, not only at sports matches.

Because the haka is so meaningful, it is important to learn about it with respect, understanding that it is part of a living culture and not simply a performance to copy.

## Questions

1. What do the All Blacks do before a big match? (1 mark)
2. What kind of dance is the haka? (1 mark)
3. Name two occasions when a haka might be performed. (2 marks)
4. Find and copy a word in paragraph 3 meaning "being joined together as one." (1 mark)
5. Why is the haka described as "far more than a way to frighten opponents"? (2 marks)
6. What gives the haka its "great power"? (2 marks)
7. Why should we learn about the haka with respect? (2 marks)
8. Summarise what the haka is and why it matters to Māori. (3 marks)

## Answer Key / Mark Scheme

1. They perform the haka (stamping, chanting and gestures).
2. A traditional Māori posture dance.
3. Any two: challenges, welcoming guests, special occasions, honouring those who have died, weddings, funerals.
4. "unity."

- 5.** Because it carries deep meaning and is performed for many reasons, not just before sport.
- 6.** It is performed as a group, with everyone moving and chanting as one.
- 7.** Because it is meaningful and part of a living culture, not just a performance to copy.
- 8.** The haka is a traditional Māori posture dance using the whole body and voice; it expresses strength, emotion and unity, and is performed at challenges, welcomes, weddings and funerals — a treasured living part of Māori culture.