

Reading Comprehension — Waitangi Day

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Waitangi Day

Every year on the sixth of February, New Zealand marks its national day: Waitangi Day. It remembers an event that took place on that date in 1840, at a place called Waitangi, in the north of the country.

On that day, leaders of the British Crown and many Māori chiefs signed an agreement called the Treaty of Waitangi. It is often described as the founding document of modern New Zealand — the moment two peoples agreed, at least in principle, to share these islands and live under one set of laws.

But the story is not a simple one. The Treaty was written in two languages, English and te reo Māori, and the two versions did not say exactly the same thing. Over the years that followed, there were many disagreements — especially about land and who held authority. For some Māori, promises made in the Treaty were broken.

This is why Waitangi Day means different things to different people. For many, it is a proud national celebration, with ceremonies, music and gatherings. For others, especially some Māori, it is also a time to remember injustices and to call for those promises to be honoured.

Today, New Zealand sees the Treaty as a living partnership between Māori and the Crown. Waitangi Day is a chance to celebrate the country, to reflect on its history honestly, and to think about how its two peoples can keep moving forward together.

Questions

1. On what date is Waitangi Day held? (1 mark)
2. In what year was the Treaty of Waitangi signed? (1 mark)
3. Who signed the Treaty? (2 marks)
4. Find and copy a word in paragraph 2 meaning "a basic, original, or starting" document. (1 mark)
5. Why does the text say "the story is not a simple one"? (2 marks)
6. Why does Waitangi Day mean different things to different people? (2 marks)
7. How does New Zealand see the Treaty today? (1 mark)
8. The writer says the day is a chance to "reflect on its history honestly." Why might that matter? (2 marks)
9. Summarise what Waitangi Day remembers and why people view it differently. (3 marks)

Answer Key / Mark Scheme

1. The sixth of February.

2. 1840.

3. Leaders of the British Crown and many Māori chiefs.

4. "founding."

5. The Treaty was written in two languages that did not say the same thing, leading to disagreements and broken promises.

6. For many it is a proud celebration; for others, especially some Māori, it is a time to remember injustices and broken promises.

7. As a living partnership between Māori and the Crown.

8. Because facing the past honestly — including mistakes — helps people understand each other and move forward fairly.

9. It remembers the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840. People view it differently because the two versions differed and some promises were broken — so it is both a celebration and, for some, a reminder of injustice.