

This Land, Book One: The Search for Māui

AUTHOR

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ART BY

P.R. DEDELIS



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RECOMMENDED FOR: Lower to Mid Secondary
(Violence)

SYNOPSIS

An ancient god has fallen from the sky. A promise has been made and a bargain struck. The Earth shook and twisted. New lands arose and the old were destroyed. From the ashes, a new continent was born in the Pacific Ocean—Te Riu-a-Māui. The world released a fever which was to change humankind forever. It is a world where new tribes have been created, with abilities beyond their understanding. Hell'na, daughter of Axeland, must lead a group of mercenaries against her own people to clear her name and bring her whānau back from the edge of death.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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.

ABOUT THE ARTISTIC TEAM

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.

STUDY NOTES

BEFORE READING

- Look at the front cover and ask:
 - What do you think this graphic novel will be about?
 - Who are the main characters?
 - Will some characters be heroes and some be villains? Why do you think that?
- After reading the blurb and ask the following questions:
 - What do the words 'continent', 'taniwha', 'chaos' and 'misfits' mean?
 - What special abilities might the characters have?
 - Who do you think the character on the back cover might be? Why might he be looking for Māui?
- As a class, discuss the features of graphic novels, such as sequential art, panels, splash pages, speech and thought bubbles, captions, onomatopoeia, the use of symbolism and techniques used to show movement or the passage of time.

AFTER READING

Comprehension

- What do you notice about place names on the map? Why do you think people sometimes use names from places they have known in other locations or times when naming new places? (p 4)
- When and where does the story open? Which graphic novel feature tells you this? (p 5)
- What does Hell'na's clothing tell the reader about her? What is being depicted in the burst of flames? How do you think flames may be significant to Hell'na? Why do you think the creators used a double splash page at this point of the story? (pp 6–7)
- What is being conveyed by the three top panels labelled 'Death'? (p 8)
- What colour is the sky behind the newsreader and what does this mean? What brings 'Hope' to civilisation? What are people using to try and reach their goal? How is international cooperation shown? (pp 8–9)
- Why is a ballot needed for the Avalon Space Settlement? What is conveyed by the label 'Fear'? Why is there conflict in the streets? (p 9)
- What has caused the 'Rebellion'? What outcome does it have? (pp 10–11)
- What is an 'ulterior motive'? Why might Hell'na's Auntie Ngaire want to keep her out of Axeland? (p 12)
- Who has been harmed by the arrival of the god? Why have the creators associated the colour green with this god? Who might he be? Why does Hell'na attack the god and what does she draw on to create her weapon? (pp 13–17)
- How does the fact page on the Pāhunu tribe and the map help you better understand the first section of the text? What have you learnt about Hell'na and her people that you didn't know before? (pp 18–19)
- Which city in Aotearoa New Zealand is Axeland reminiscent of? What information in the text tells you this? Why do you think Hell'na is the only person who can understand the god? (pp 20–21)
- Predict what you think Hell'na's 'proper use' might be. (p 23)
- In which direction should pp 24–25 be read? How do you know?
- Why have the creators used a different font for some of the speech bubbles? How do the characters' expressions convey meaning? (p 26)
- What kind of a person is Dre? Who is he to Hell'na? (pp 27–29)
- How do you know Hell'na is remembering what Tāne said to her? (p 29)
- What does the symbol on the back of Hell'na's coat represent? (p 31)
- Why is Hell'na interviewing people? Why does she say 'I'm doomed'? (p 32)
- Why has Tāne not touched food or gone to the bathroom while being locked up? (p 33)
- Who is the character being held in Axeland Central Station Holding Block B? Predict his significance to the story. (p 35)
- How do pp 36–41 help you learn about Hell'na's crew? Who is your favourite character and why?
- What went whooshing through the air? What happened to Beach? (pp 38–39)
- Why do you think Tāne wants to go to the Underworld? (p 41)
- What did Tāne use to create a bridge across the Bombay Gorge? (p 45)
- Who or what does Commissioner Ngaire want to be delivered? (p 46)
- What are 'mercenaries'? Why do you think they have been hired? (p 47)
- What is the significance of Day 12: Waitomo Caves, The Whitetomb being the largest panel on the spread? (pp 48–49)
- How is water able to run up, down and around the caves of Whitetomb? How have the people of Whitetomb evolved? (p 50)
- Why would it be necessary to 'protect and defend' the lost knowledge from the time before the machines died? (p 52)
- What is 'honour'? Why might Rana and Hell'na have different views of what is honourable? (p 53)
- What does Hell'na want to achieve by going to Whitetomb? Predict whether or not she will be successful and what you think will happen next. (p 53)
- Where is the light coming from in New Aranui? What do you notice about the buildings in the city? How would the multicultural background of the people be a strength of Whitetomb society? (pp 54–55)
- Who is the Vox Populi thinking of as a replacement for Princess Chase? Why? (p 58)
- With Tāne's strength, what does Moa transform into? (pp 62–63)

- How does the use of onomatopoeia (sound words) add to the excitement of the battle between the taniwha and Moa? (pp 61–67)
- What is Pania suggesting they do? Why? (p 70)
- What is the meaning of ‘stygian’ and ‘insatiable’? (p 75) According to Tāne, who is wanting to take over the world? (p 76)
- What are Tāne and Hell’na looking for in Lake Tāupo? (pp 81–82)
- Who is on the ground? Who is Luke? What is meant by ‘They who do not seek will not find’? (p 84)

Activities

- Create a backstory for Hell’na, explaining her life leading up to where *This Land, Book One* begins. Present the backstory as a comic strip. Consider the following:
 - Where did Hell’na grow up?
 - Who were her parents?
 - Who were her friends?
 - What helped Hell’na become a leader and a strong character?
 - How did she develop her powers?
- Research Waitomo Caves, the inspiration for Whitetomb.
 - How were the caves formed?
 - How old are they?
 - When were they discovered?
 - What is the meaning of ‘Waitomo’?
 - What is their significance to Māori? Which animal famously lives inside the Waitomo Caves?

Present your findings as Google Slides, including photos and a map.

- Create a character who might appear in *This Land, Book Two*. Draw your character and include a title (their name), three personality traits and at least one power. Write a caption explaining who your character is and what motivates them.
- Choose one double-page spread and expand the story into written form. Include a description of the setting and describe the action taking place. Expand the speech bubbles into dialogue.
- Take a sneak peek at the cover of *This Land, Book Two* on p 85 and the teaser on the last page. Predict what you think is going to happen in Book Two. Either draw your predictions as a comic strip, including speech bubbles and captions, or write them.