

## Write a Mo‘olelo

### **Overview:**

During this activity, students categorize traditional stories by theme and write their own mo‘olelo in a traditional style.

### **Objectives:**

The student will:

- work as part of a group to create a classroom mo‘olelo;
- demonstrate skills in sentence and paragraph structure by following the basic steps in the writing process;
- learn how to write a mo‘olelo in a traditional style; and
- categorize traditional stories by theme.



Artwork by Herb Kawainui Kane

### **Materials:**

- Butcher paper or chalkboard
- Student Information Sheet: “Stories”
- Student Worksheets: “Mo‘olelo Fastwrite” and “Write a Mo‘olelo”

### **Activity Procedure:**

1. Distribute copies of the Student Information Sheet: “Stories.” Ask students to break into groups, then pick their favorite story.
2. Lead a group activity during which students categorize their favorite stories into themes. Write these themes on butcher paper or the chalkboard. Sample themes include:  

Pele’s anger; Pele’s travels; Pele’s lava formations; Pele’s family.
3. Explain that a mo‘olelo is a traditional story or description of people, events, or places. Mo‘olelo are traditionally oral, but during this activity students will write a mo‘olelo. Help the class write a mo‘olelo about their island.
4. After the classroom mo‘olelo is complete, distribute the Student Worksheet: “Mo‘olelo Fastwrite” and give students three minutes to jot down ideas for a mo‘olelo about a local volcanic feature.
5. Distribute the Student Worksheet: “Write a Mo‘olelo.” Ask students to complete the worksheet, and then tell their mo‘olelo to a partner.

### **Answers to Student Worksheet:**

Answers will vary

## Stories from Moloka‘i

### *Moloka‘i Pule O‘o*

In ancient Hawai‘i, Moloka‘i was looked upon with greed and envy by chiefs of other islands because of its wealth. Moloka‘i’s wealth was measured by its abundant food production on land and in its surrounding sea.

In the 12th century, there was a powerful chief on Maui named Kaikololani. He gathered an immense war fleet and crossed the Pailolo channel to conquer Moloka‘i.

“‘A‘ohe moana o lalo, ‘o ke kumu lā‘au koa wale nō” meaning, “There is no ocean below, there are only logs of koa” was the poetic reference to the size of the war fleet.

Landing at Ka‘amola on the east, Kaikololani and his men proceeded to slaughter everyone in their path. When he considered himself victorious, he paused and began to verbally taunt the people. It was then that a runner was dispatched to Ke‘ie‘ie, the school of great kahunas at Mahana in west Moloka‘i. He told of the carnage and in turn the kahuna sped to the battlefield.

Standing on a sandbar at Puhi‘ula in full view of Kaikololani and his warriors, the kahuna began to pray. Kaikololani mocked them and then gave the order to kill all who opposed him. But he witnessed with horror, his warriors collapsing and dying—one by one. He alone survived while his army lay dead at his feet.

He was allowed to return to Maui where he told of the terrible death of his men and the powerful prayers of Moloka‘i’s kahuna. Upon hearing his tale, the people of Maui exclaimed with fear and awe, “Auē! Moloka‘i pule o‘o!” which means “Oh! Moloka‘i of ripening prayers!”

### *Pele Escapes to Moloka‘i*

After mistakenly destroying her sisters Namakaokaha‘i’s lehua forest by fire in their homeland of Kuaihelani, Pele escaped to the distant shores of Hawai‘i with her uncle Lonomakua, her brother Kamohoali‘i and other siblings and family members. They first landed upon the shores of Ni‘ihau and rested there for a brief time. From Ni‘ihau, she espied Kaua‘i and set forth to that island. She found Kīlauea and dug a pit and lit her fires and entered therein with her family.

Namakaokaha‘i pursued her to Ni‘ihau and saw the red reflection of Pele’s fires on the clouds above Kīlauea. Pele escaped to Moanalua on O‘ahu and made a home for her family there. Again Namakaokaha‘i found her and again she escaped and made her way to Moloka‘i, landing on the shores of Kahalelani at Ka‘ehu point. From there, they crossed the plains of Ho‘olehua and settled above the western end of the Pāne‘ene‘e cliffs.

One day, Pele gazed at Kalaupapa in the district of Mānaluā and decided that it would be a good place for her family to settle. They traveled from Pālā‘auka down the steep cliffs to Kumu‘ula at its base. Pele went on to Pu‘u ‘Uao and prepared her fiery pit for her family.

Rage filled Namakaokaha‘i as she beheld the red clouds above Pu‘u ‘Uao, a reflection of the fires of Pele, a testament that Pele was alive. In anger, her powerful waters rushed into the crater. With that encounter, Pele barely escaped death. Brackish water remains in the crater of Pu‘u ‘Uao until this day and the top of Pāne‘ene‘e in Ho‘olehua where Pele and her family first settled on Moloka‘i is called Pu‘ukapele.

*Note: These stories were told by a native speaker on Moloka‘i.*

## Other Island Stories

### *Hi'iaka, Pele's Sister*

Pele asked her sister, Hi'iaka, to travel to Kaua'i to bring back a man, Lohiau, whom Pele wanted. Hi'iaka said yes but asked Pele to protect her treasured 'ōhi'a lehua forest in Puna while she was gone. Pele agreed but told Hi'iaka to be back within a moon. Hi'iaka took longer to return, because of many difficult adventures. Pele became angry at Hi'iaka for being late. When Hi'iaka got to O'ahu on her way home, she saw that her forest in Puna was destroyed by Pele.

### *Hi'iaka's Revenge*

Hi'iaka was very angry at Pele for having destroyed her 'ōhi'a lehua forest in Puna. She brought Lohiau, the man Pele wanted for herself, up to the top of Kīlauea and married him in full view of Pele. Pele became so angry that she killed Lohiau and threw his body into her crater. Hi'iaka began to dig furiously to recover the body and bring Lohiau back to life. Down and down she dug, throwing out rocks and making a large crater that still exists today. Eventually she found the body, and Lohiau came back to life.

### *A Choice Between Two Rivals*

In 1790, two rivals, Keōuakū'ahu'ula and Kamehameha, were fighting for control of the island of Hawai'i. While in Hilo, Keōuakū'ahu'ula heard that Kamehameha was in Ka'ū, Keōuakū'ahu'ula's home. Keōuakū'ahu'ula gathered an army together, and marched toward Ka'ū, over the top of Kīlauea, which was erupting. One large explosion killed many of his warriors. This was taken by the people as a sign that Pele had made her choice between the two rivals. Soon thereafter, Kamehameha was able to take over the island with the support of most of its people.

### *Stingy Kamaka*

There is a place in the mountains at Kōke'e that once had a wonderful garden full of taro, sweet potatoes, bananas, and sugar cane; everything grew in abundance. Today, plants will not grow there. Why? The garden used to belong to selfish Kamaka. Kamaka made sure his family had enough to eat, but he would not share his food with others so the rest of the plants rotted where they grew.

Hungry, tired travelers often saw the garden and asked Kamaka for food, but with a mean look, he would say, "Go away, there is not enough food, only enough for ourselves." Most Hawaiians give thanks and share when they have extra food, for they believe food is a gift of the land. Kamaka was different and became well known for his stinginess. Soon he was called, "Stingy Kamaka."

One afternoon a tall traveler came upon the garden of Kamaka. He was a giant from another mountain who had gotten lost in the morning mist. He had wandered in the forest for many hours and when he saw the garden full of food he rejoiced and called to the owner of the garden. "E ia nei (hello), is anyone there?" Kamaka came out of his house and said, "go away we have nothing for beggars," then went back into his house and shut the door. The giant could not believe his ears. He tried to sleep near the edge of the forest that night, but it was cold and damp. The next clear and sunny day the giant found his way home, but he was angry when he thought of what Kamaka had done. That night he went back to the garden of Kamaka and uprooted all of the best plants. Every night the giant went back to make sure no plants would grow in the garden again. Even today this piece of land remains barren.

## Other Island Stories

### *Kumuhea*

Many know the story of Pu‘u ‘enuhe or Caterpillar Hill in the district of Ka‘ū on the island of Hawai‘i. Kumuhea was a man who lived on Moloka‘i for a while before moving to Ka‘ū. When he went to the district of Ka‘ū he saw a beautiful woman he wanted for his wife. Because Kumuhea had good land in the mountains on which he grew sweet potatoes, the girl’s father thought Kumuhea would be a good provider. He consented to the marriage of Kumuhea and his daughter.

Kumuhea took his wife to his mountain home and fed her sweet potato leaves, his favorite food. However, she became ill eating only sweet potato leaves and asked for her father. Kumuhea refused because he feared the family would discover he had another body form, or kinolau, that of a giant caterpillar. All day in his giant caterpillar form, he ate the green leaves in his sweet potato field. At night, he brought the leaves home for his wife to eat. His young wife was startled to see her husband in his other form one day, but was too weak to run down the hill to her family.

Because her father had not heard from his daughter, he decided to visit her. When he got to his son-in-law’s farm, he saw Kumuhea in his caterpillar form eating the green leaves of the sweet potato. He found his sick daughter and carried her to his house. The girl’s family was afraid that she would die. They prayed to the father of Kumuhea, the god Kū. Kū took away his son’s power to turn into a man. Kumuhea became angry and ate, then destroyed the sweet potato crops of other farmers. These farmers killed Kumuhea and cut him up into many pieces so he could not come back. After that, once each year, Kumuhea returned in the form of many small caterpillars to eat all of the green leaves of the plants. Today, when the people of Ka‘ū plant sweet potato, they invite Kumuhea to come and eat, but ask that he does not take all of the leaves.

### *The Breadfruit Tree*

The god Kū took the form of a man and married a woman from Hawai‘i. He became a farmer and had a family with this woman. He was very happy with her. One year, the land dried up and no plants would grow because not enough rain fell. The children of Kū asked their father for food and their mother cried because she knew there was none to give. Kū told her he had to go on a long journey to get food for his family. His wife asked him when would he return, but he would not reply. She asked him not to go at first, but when the children cried because their stomachs were empty, she knew he must. That night he said good-bye to his family and went outside. As his wife watched, Kū stood on his hands and made his head touch the ground. Slowly his whole body sank into the ground. His wife cried many tears over the spot as she waited to see what would happen. Her tears watered the ground and a small plant grew from the spot. The plant grew into a great tree that bore beautiful fruit. The mother told her children that the fruit was a gift from their father. They picked the fruit and cooked it in the imu; it tasted good, and they were no longer hungry. When young sprouts grew, the family gave them to other families to plant for food. However, only the family of Kū could pick the fruit from the tree. This is how the breadfruit tree came to Hawai‘i.

## Stories from Around the World

### *Italy and Ancient Rome*

The word *volcano* comes from a small volcanic island called Vulcano in the Mediterranean Sea near southern Italy. Vulcano is named for Vulcan, the Roman god of fire and the blacksmith of the other ancient Roman gods. The Romans believed that the island was the chimney of Vulcan's forge located deep within the earth. The eruptions of lava and ash from the island were believed to occur whenever Vulcan was pounding out thunderbolts for Jupiter, the king of gods, and weapons for Mars, the god of war.

### *Wyoming, U.S.A.*

Devils Tower is a large spire of stone that stands over 1000 feet tall above the plains of eastern Wyoming. It is made up of many vertical columns of rock that give it a distinctive grooved appearance. Many geologists believe that Devils Tower is the solidified core of an ancient volcano. The site is sacred to many Native Americans and several tribes have legends that describe the creation of the tower. The Cheyenne people believe that Devils Tower was created when a band of warriors battled against a giant bear to save a member of their tribe. During the battle, the Cheyenne became scared and prayed to their Great Spirit to save them. They climbed onto a large rock to escape the bear and the rock then rose out of the ground until it reached a great height. As the bear leapt up to attack the warriors, its claws scratched the rock and created the large grooves that are visible on Devils Tower today.

### *California, U.S.A.*

California's Mt. Shasta is one of several volcanoes in a long chain that make up the Cascade Range of the northwestern United States. Although Mt. Shasta is not active today, the Modoc Indians have lived near the volcano for a long time and have seen it erupt. The Modoc believe that the Chief of the Sky Spirits once came down to earth and dwelled with his family in a giant lodge, which was Mt. Shasta. The eruptions from Mt. Shasta were believed to be the smoke and sparks from the Sky Spirit's fires, escaping through a hole in the top of their lodge.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Mo‘olelo Fastwrite

**Directions:** A mo‘olelo is a cultural story or description of people, events or places. Mo‘olelo are traditionally oral, but for this activity you will produce a written mo‘olelo. In the space below, write ideas for a mo‘olelo about a local geologic feature.

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Write a Mo'olelo**

**Directions:** Write a mo'olelo in a style similar to the traditional stories you read. Pick a feature from your geographic area and describe how it was formed.

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Author: \_\_\_\_\_

Characters: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Setting: \_\_\_\_\_

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Story: \_\_\_\_\_

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