I am the daughter of the great Neiterkob, the father of the Maasai tribe in Africa. You might think that this makes me special, but my father believes that I should live just like the rest of the tribe. Thus, he sends me to look after our tribe’s cattle with the other daughters and sons. These cattle are sacred, because they are actually a divine gift from the sky god, Enkai. Our tribe makes a living by caring for the cattle, feeding them, and protecting them.

Whenever we eat the meat of a cow or drink its milk, we become one with our god. When we have rituals or community celebrations, I have to bring the cattle, because their presence is essential. My job is important, so I work hard to do it well, even though the cattle can sometimes be troublesome.

Our relationship with Enkai is essential to the tribe. Enkai is neither male nor female. The sky god is powerful, but can change from nurturing to vengeful depending on our behavior. Sometimes Enkai is Enkai Narok, the Black God, happy with us and blanketing the sky with dark clouds that pour out rain to nourish the plains. When angry, though, Enkai becomes Enkai Nonyokie—the Red God. In these times, the sun grows incredibly hot until the earth dries up and becomes barren. Because of this, we work to keep Enkai happy.

My life must sound so different from yours. Perhaps I should tell you another story to explain why we Maasai live this way.
In the very beginning of the world, Enkai was the only god: the guardian of rain, fertility, sun, and love. With that love, Enkai birthed three sons who became the fathers of the three tribes. Enkai gave each tribe a gift to help them succeed in their new home. Upon the father of the Kikuyu, Enkai bestowed a hoe to cultivate the plains. To the father of the Kamba, Enkai gifted a bow and arrow so his people could hunt wild animals in the forests and plains. To my father, Neiterkob, the father of the Maasai, Enkai gave a stick. Enkai told my father to use this to herd cattle. Do you know what that means? Not only is my father the father of our whole tribe, but my grandparent is a sky god. If only I had inherited Enkai’s ability to control the weather!

Things would have remained peaceful this way, all of us tending to our cattle and living together with Enkai, if it hadn’t been for the volcano. You see, soon after I was born, a massive volcano erupted right in the middle of the cattle plains. My father tells me that the eruption was so violent that it broke the earth away from the sky and flung Enkai and all of the cattle high up into the heavens. Imagine that! Cows flying through the air! Every time my father tells this story, part of me wants to laugh a little.

But for our people, the Maasai, there wasn’t anything funny about what happened. As the ruler of the sky, Enkai could live well enough up there, but the cattle could not survive in dusty volcanic clouds. The cows became parched and hungry up there. They had no solid earth for roaming and no grass for grazing. Enkai had to do something or risk losing his sacred herd.

Enkai called down to Neiterkob, my father, and said, “Blessed father of the Maasai! My cattle are dying here in the clouds. There is nothing I can do to help them in the
sky. I am going to send them down to you so that you can keep them safe and sacred.”

Neiterkob was confused at first. It was one thing for an eruption to send cows flying up into the sky, but it was another problem entirely to get them down to earth again. The wise god knew how to solve the problem. Enkai grew a giant fig tree out on the plains. The tree grew rapidly, and its branches grew so high that they reached up into the heavens. One by one, Enkai sent the cattle walking down branches of the fig tree, all the way down to the roots at the ground. My father and our people accepted the cattle and began to herd them with the sticks that Enkai had given us. Now, the rest of the tribe calls my father the “Beginner of the Earth” because he mediates between Enkai and our tribe, just as he did when the cattle returned from the sky.

When I was little I used to climb in the giant fig tree with the other children, but it was so tall that I couldn’t reach very high. Now that I’m older, I can climb much farther, but I will never find out if I could have climbed to heaven. You see, the tree is gone now. Neighboring hunters from the Kamba were jealous of Neiterkob’s special relationship with Enkai and the gift of our cattle. Out of vengeance, they hewed the fig tree into little pieces. It was heartbreaking to lose this strong bond with the sky god, but as long as we still have our cattle, we can still feel the joy of being connected to Enkai.

Now Enkai lives at the top of Mount Kenya, and we Maasai still live below, herding cattle down in the plains. It’s not a bad life, especially when Enkai is the Black God, providing for us. And when the cattle or other children cause problems, I just warn them that they never know when I might suddenly develop my godly powers.
1.05 Reading 2
"The Māori: Genealogies and Origins in New Zealand"

Directions: As you re-read this myth, highlight the similarities (blue) and differences (yellow) between this myth and "The Beginnings of the Maasai". This will help you earn your evidence requirement for the 1.05 HOT Task.

At the beginning of time, the Sky Father and Earth Mother were locked in a tight embrace that bound Earth and Sky together, leaving no space in between. Sky was not separate from Earth or Sea. Rangi, the Sky Father, held his beloved, Papa, and together they bore many sons who were not human, but rather elements of nature. These sons loved their parents, but Rangi and Papa's embrace was so tight that they had no space to move or to lead their lives. They lay in the darkness, constricted and unhappy.

Tū, the first son, decided that he and his brothers must act. “We should kill our parents,” he suggested, for he was the god of war. “It will be difficult, but it is the only way we can truly be free!” The others began to assent to this plan, but Tāne, the god of forests and birds, stopped them. “We cannot do this,” he said. “Rangi and Papa are our parents. They have created us, made us who we are. Let us pry them apart, let them live, but make ourselves free. The Sky Father will watch us from above, while the Earth Mother nourishes us from below.”

Though Tū was not satisfied, the others liked this plan of action, and proceeded to try with all of their might to separate their parents. Rongo, the god of cultivated food and the harvest, pushed with all his might but could not
budge his parents even an inch. Their love was strong, and such bonds are extremely difficult to break. His brothers Tangora, the god of the sea, and Haumia, the god of wild and uncultivated foods, joined him and offered their own strength. Together the three heaved with all of their might, straining the sinews of their arms until they collapsed in a heap, totally exhausted. Then Tū tried with all his might, using all of his ferocious strength until he fell to the ground with his brothers.

“It is impossible!” cried Tū. “We should kill them. There is no other way to be free.”

“Not yet, brother,” said Tāne. “Let me try.” The god of forests and birds wedged himself between Rangi and Papa, his back to Papa and his feet against Rangi. Using his legs, he began to move the way trees grow in the forest. Slowly but surely, he pushed his legs upward until his parents were wrenched apart. Papa fell and became the Earth, while Rangi rose up to become the sky above. Light flooded into the world that had been created between Rangi and Papa. The brothers rejoiced, and were amazed to find that in the dark, they had birthed many children—the first humans! These offspring fell to Papa, and were warmly received by the earth, their new home. Tāne, wanting to honor his father above, adorned Rangi with stars.

However, one brother was enraged at the separation. Tawhiri, the god of weather and storms, was furious. He saw how terribly sad Papa and Rangi were to be torn apart. He saw the tears of rain that fell from Rangi. Tawhiri raged, and sent hurricanes and sea swells to fight against his brothers. Tāne was driven to hide in his forests, which Tawhiri destroyed with horrible floods. Tangora was thrown into
the sea, where he was attacked by the wind and lightning. Rongo and Haumia took refuge in the earth, shielding themselves in Papa’s embrace. As a result, Rongo became the god of agriculture and Haumia became the god of wild plants. Caring for the earth, these brothers remained hidden in Papa’s arms.

The only brother to stand up to Tawhiri was Tū, the fearsome god of war. They battled against each other for days, causing all of the humans to hide in fear. These wars escalated: Tawhiri violently attacked Tū with all of his might, but Tū was able to stand firm against the wind and water. Then Tū became angry and unleashed his own attack, defeating Tawhiri, who escaped to his father in the sky.

In subduing Tawhiri, Tū created peace in the heavens and the earth. Stopping to think, he considered the actions that had led to this war, and became angry at his brothers for fleeing into hiding when Tawhiri attacked. In his anger, Tū chopped down the forests to find Tāne and threw him into a basket. Next, Tū searched out Haumia and Rongo by digging into the soft earth, and put them in the basket as well. At last, Tū made nets to capture Tangora’s fish, and lured Tangora into the basket. In a rage, Tū opened his mouth and ate his brothers to punish them for their cowardice. Tū’s descendants became the Māori, the humans who are able to master anything that they decide to conquer: the forest, the sea, the food, and the earth. Only Tawhiri escapes Tū’s wrath, and still today the Māori battle against the hurricanes he sends from above.

Even now, Papa and Rangi continue to express their love for one another. When the mist rises from the earth, it moves to Rangi as a measure of Papa’s affection. When dew falls to coat the ground, it is Rangi’s tears for his wife.