

**Dearest Hone,  
E te rangatira**

So, dear friend, there you lie in your snug waka ready for your journey to join your tipuna. I can't see you but I'm sure you are spic and span ready for the big occasion. I know your loved ones will be ready with open arms and many tears of welcome. How happy they will be to have you with them once again.

I only met you four or five times in the latter stages of your life journey, but through your work, I feel I know you intimately. Also, for such a long time you lived in the bosom of my Kaitahu people, giving us some small claim to you. You, and Ralph Hotere, chose to live in Te Waipounamu, in the very heart of Kaitahu, Katimamoe, and Waitaha and we are so proud that both of you made that choice. You have brought great mana to us and are now surely tangata whenua.

I have been teaching your work for well on 32 years now and it has been a privilege and a great honour to do so. And it is your work that I will remember most of all. Your wonderful poetry which is so full of passion: for life, for women, for Maori, for the environment, for your children and your mokopuna. Your voice may have stilled in this world but we will always hear it in your work, and what a voice, so gentle yet adamant, so sensual, naughty sometimes, so wickedly irreverent, so heartfelt and sincere, clever too, and wise.

Your poetry has touched the hearts of many people and I can't begin to count the number of times I have cried in front of a class when reading your words. I remember in one class, we were reading 'No Ordinary Sun', when a young man declared with amazement that for the first time in his life he understood a poem. He was deeply moved and I believe he was turned on to poetry for ever more because of the deep and profound power of your words.

So, you see e hoa, your life and your work are gifts that we will treasure forever.

We must allow you to go now, to your tipuna, to Hawaiki nui, Hawaiki roa, Hawaiki pamamao, to that quiet and peaceful place where there is no pain, no old age, no conflict, only sweet music and the deep aroha of all those from whom we borrowed you for such a short time.

**Reina Whaitiri**

Hawai'i