Whale rider – plot summaries

**1st plot summary-THE STORY...(aspects of book and movie)**

Kahutia was a girl who was meant to be a boy. She is the first child of her generation in the chief's family, and her birth breaks a long line of chiefs, stretching back to Paikea himself. Further than that, when she was born her mother died, and her father was not willing to just put things behind him, marry again, and produce another child (preferably a son) any time soon. In the movie, this is more tragic, more poignant. The movie is about a girl called Paikea, and over the opening scene, you hear her words: "There was no gladness when I was born. My twin brother died, taking our mother with him." This is the kind of life Kahu/Paikea leads… growing up with the knowledge that she was meant to be a boy, that she was meant to grow up to be chief of the tribe.

It is important to know here that the place of women in Maori society is much regulated by tradition. Women may not speak on a marae, they may not set foot on a waka (traditionally a war canoe), they may not learn to wield the taiaha (spear). They cannot see a tekoteko panel or a canoe being carved. They cannot take part in the schooling of future chiefs. It is the women who do the cooking, who do the karanga(welcome) for visitors to the marae. Women do **not** wear trousers on a marae. The women sing the waiata (songs) at the close of each speech, the men do the haka (war dance). A woman cannot be chief. Paikea/Kahutia challenges that.

She cannot see why she shouldn't be permitted to learn at the school the elders (including her great grandfather/grandfather, Koro or Paka) set up for the boys of her generation. A kura (school) to instruct the youngsters of the tribe in the way of the ancient ones. And youngsters means males. In the movie Nanny Flowers (her grandmother/great-grandmother) refuses to let the first lesson start until Paikea is there. Paikea does the karanga for the manuhiri (visitors) while Nanny Flowers does the Karanga for the tangatawhenua (hosts). Koro relents and suggests that Paikea can stay, but only if she sits at the back. She leaves, and learns the chant by listening through the windows, learns the taiaha from her uncle. She bests one of the boys at the taiaha, on the marae grounds. Koro is angry, yells at her for breaking tapu (sacredness). She can do no good as far as he is concerned: because she is a girl. Were she a boy, she would be the one. But she isn't. In the book this whole exchange is present, and yet not as obvious.

The final test asked of the boys is one of endurance. Koro takes them out on a boat on the harbour, and explains how he was taught. The chief took a carved stone and threw it overboard. Whoever could return it would be the next chief. In the book, it is a stone, in the movie it is Koro's whaletooth pendant, the symbol of his chieftainship. All the boys fail to retrieve it and it settles on the ocean floor. Later Paikea/Kahutia is out in the same spot with her uncle. She dives down, is gone for ages, and returns with the whaletooth/stone - and a crayfish for Koro. It is not until much later, at the end of the book/movie that Koro is given the stone/pendant.

After the boys fail to return with the taonga (treasure = pendant/stone) Koro withdraws into himself. Paikea/Kahutia is sent away - she has disappointed Koro. Nevertheless she is still proud of her heritage, her family, and she writes a speech which she delivers partially in Maori. She leads the Maori Culture Group, and Koro is her special guest at the end of year concert. The audience is told that she won the school prize and the district prize for her speech. The power in this part of the film is awesome. Dressed in the Culture Group 'costume', holding a small cup, her lips blackened traditionally, unruly hair partially tamed by a headband, she gives her speech. Dedicated to her Koro, who was not there, the empty chair in the front row. "I come from a long line of Maori chiefs, stretching back to Paikea. I broke that line, and it is nobody's fault it was broken" she says.

Meanwhile, down on the beach, the whales that Kahutia/Paikea called because her Koro was calling them and they were not answering him, are stranded and dying. Kahutia/Paikea is not allowed to help, not allowed to watch. They're trying to protect her. One by one, the whales give up - if they can only get the king whale out, it will be fine, the others will follow. But it is not to be. "He wants to die." Koro says. Paikea has other ideas… going down to the beach as the others leave, she greets the whale with a hongi. She climbs onto his back, she pats him, she talks to him, and she asks him to move. He moves... when the people leaving the beach turn around Paikea is not in sight, the big whale is not in sight, the rest of the whales are not in sight. Nanny Flowers gives Koro the stone/pendant. He looks at her. "Which one? Which one?" "Do you need to ask that?" It was Paikea/Kahutia, of course. And she is out at sea on the back of a whale, and no one thinks to see her back.

Later her body is washed up on the beach. She lives, but is in a coma. In hospital, Koro waits at her bed, he is ready for her to be his successor. She wakes.The movie closes with a scene that you have to understand Maori customs to understand completely. Paikea and Koro are on a waka, a war canoe - the one Paikea's father Porourangi never finished carving, the one she went to when she needed to think. She calls the chant for the paddlers to follow, to keep time to. And the paddlers of that waka? Male and female, together… keeping the community strong.

2nd plot summary –

The film's plot follows the story of Paikea Apirana ("Pai") [In the book, her name is Kahu, short for Kahutia Te Rangi].The leader should be the first-born grandson – a direct [patrilineal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patrilineal) descendant of [Paikea](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paikea), aka Kahutia Te Rangi in the book, the Whale Rider – he who rode on top of a whale from Hawaiki. However, Pai is female and technically cannot inherit the leadership. While he does later form an affectionate bond with his granddaughter, carrying her to school every day on his bicycle, he also condemns her and blames her for conflicts happening within the tribe. At one point Paikea decides to leave with her father because her grandfather is mistreating her. However she finds that she cannot bear to leave the sea as the whale seems to be calling her back, she tells her father to turn the car back and returns home. Pai's father refuses to assume traditional leadership; instead he moves to Germany to pursue a career as an artist. Pai herself is interested in the leadership, learning traditional songs and dances, but is given little encouragement by her grandfather. Pai feels that she can become the leader, although there's no precedent for a woman to do so, and is determined to succeed.

Koro leads a cultural school for the village boys, hoping to find a new leader. He teaches the boys to use a [taiaha](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taiaha) ([fighting stick](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fighting_stick)). This is traditionally reserved for males. However, Nanny tells Pai that her second son, Pai's uncle, had won a taiaha tournament in his youth while he was still slim, so Pai secretly learns from him. She also secretly follows Koro's lessons. One of the students, Hemi, is also sympathetic towards her, but Koro is enraged when he finds out, particularly when she wins her taiaha fight against Hemi. Koro's relationship with Pai erodes further when none of the boys succeed at the traditional task of recovering the rei puta (whale tooth) that he threw into the ocean – this mission would prove one of them worthy of becoming leader. With the loss of the rei puta, Koro in despair calls out the Ancient ones, the whales. In an attempt to help, Pai from the beach also calls out to them and they hear her call.

Pai, in an attempt to bridge the rift that has formed, invites Koro to be her guest of honour at a concert of Māori chants that her school is putting on. Unknown to all, she had won an inter-school speech contest with a touching dedication to Koro and the traditions of the village. However, Koro was late, and as he was walking to the school, he notices that numerous [right whales](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Right_whale) are beached near Pai's home. The entire village attempts to coax and drag them back into the water, but all efforts prove unsuccessful; even a tractor does not help. Koro sees it as a sign of his failure and despairs further. He admonishes Pai against touching the largest whale because "she has done enough damage" with her presumption. Also, the largest whale traditionally belongs to the legendary Paikea. When Pai's grandfather, Koro, walks away from the scene, she climbs onto the back of the largest whale at the location and coaxes it to re-enter the ocean. The whale leads the entire pod back into the sea; Pai submerges completely underwater, and the spectators had wondered if she'd drowned, but were relieved when she came back above sea level. When she goes out to sea, Nanny shows Koro the whale tooth which Pai had previously recovered. When Pai is found and brought to the hospital, Koro declares her the leader and asks her forgiveness. The film ends with Pai's father, grandparents, and uncle coming together to celebrate her status as the new leader, as the finished [waka](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Waka_(canoe)) is hauled into the sea for its maiden voyage.

3rd plot summary

The movie, which takes place in the present day in New Zealand, begins with the birth of twins. The boy and the mother die. The girl, Pai ([Keisha Castle-Hughes](http://www.rogerebert.com/cast-and-crew/keisha-castle-hughes)) survives. Her father, Porourangi ([Cliff Curtis](http://www.rogerebert.com/cast-and-crew/cliff-curtis)), an artist, leaves New Zealand, and the little girl is raised and much loved by her grandparents Koro and Nanny Flowers. Koro is the chief of these people. Porourangi would be next in line but has no interest in returning home. Pai believes that she could serve as the chief, but her grandfather, despite his love, fiercely opposes this idea. He causes Pai much hurt by doubting her, questioning her achievements, insisting in the face of everything she achieves that she is only a girl. There are moments when Pai is lost in discouragement and despair, and when her father comes for a visit she almost leaves with him. But, no, her people need her--whether or not her grandfather realizes it.Pai is played by Keisha Castle-Hughes, a newcomer of whom it can only be said: This is a movie star. She glows. She stands up to her grandfather in painful scenes, she finds dignity, and yet the next second she's running around the village like the kid she is. The other roles are also strongly cast, especially [Rawiri Paratene](http://www.rogerebert.com/cast-and-crew/rawiri-paratene) and [Vicky Haughton](http://www.rogerebert.com/cast-and-crew/vicky-haughton) as the grandparents.

One day Koro summons all of the young teenage boys of the village to a series of compulsory lessons on how to be a Maori, and the leader of Maoris. There's an amusing sequence where they practice looking ferocious to scare their enemies. Pai, of course, is banned from these classes, but she eavesdrops and enlists a wayward uncle to reveal some of the secrets of the males. And then--well, the movie does not end as we expect. It does not march obediently to standard plot requirements but develops an unexpected crisis and an unexpected solution. There is a scene set at a school ceremony, where Pai has composed a work in honor of her people and asked her grandfather to attend. Despite his anger, he will come, won't he? The movie seems headed for the ancient cliche of the auditorium door which opens at the last moment to reveal the person that the child onstage desperately hopes to see--but no, that's not what happens.

It isn't that Koro comes or that he doesn't come, but that something else altogether happens. Something in a larger and more significant scale, that brings together all of the themes of the film into a magnificent final sequence. It's not just an uplifting ending, but a transcendent one, inspired and inspiring, and we realize how special this movie really is. So many films by and about teenagers are mired in vulgarity and stupidity; this one, like its heroine, dares to dream.

**Powerful scenes**

**Paikea’s speech** –What made it so powerful? (The topic– her respect for her Koro despite his resistance to her).Children might comment on the tension as to whether or not her Koro would attend. How was the tension created? (Film cut between shots of Paikea, the empty chair, and Koro out of his bed and looking at his suit laid out, cut back to the speech etc.) Children might like to draw the storyboard of that section up to where he finds the whale.

**Paikea and her father in the waka** – both of them have failed Koro. This brings up the idea of expectations and not

meeting them. Can students say where their sympathies lay, and why? Students may wish to write about that aspect of the film, or perhaps about situations they know of from their own experience.

**Koro with Pai in hospital -** at the end of the film when Pai is in hospital how do they know Koro has changed his

attitude towards her? (He has put his whale tooth round her neck and addresses Pai as ‘Wise Leader’)

**The scenes with Hemi -** at the performance when his dad comes – then goes off so soon with his mates. Later during the taiaha lesson, and when he and Paikea fight. Then he is excluded from the boat. “Not you, Hemi.” Encourage students to discuss what was happening in these scenes. How would Hemi feel? Which of Hemi’s actions made Koro ‘fail’ him? Did they feel it was fair?

**The Whale Tooth** - when Koro realises who has retrieved his whale tooth. The look on Koro’s face shows he has accepted that he was wrong. Students could identify some of the situations where he ignored signs of Pai’s ability and aptitude to lead.

**Pai calling to the whales** (the ancient ones) Koro grieves after the incident of the whale tooth. Pai’s ‘voice-over’ says he was calling to the ancient ones but they weren’t hearing. So Paikea tries - stands in the waka – the yellow blanket. Ask if that image made the viewers think of anything else. (It looked rather like a flax cloak.) Discuss other times Pai was in the waka and the blanket appeared. It was wrapped round her on previous occasions by her father and by her Nanny Flowers (giving her comfort, warmth – and chiefhood?)

**The scenes with the beached whales** - What feelings were present? Was it just concern for the whales? Or was

it for the people, too? When the community walk away together, Paikea comes from behind them and walks alone back towards the big whale. What did that image make you think about Paikea? (alone, small, determined, independent?)

**The final scene with the waka -** explore what made it appealing to students. When did they realise that Pai was

in the waka too? (The shot of her with her Koro started in close, as if they were on the beach watching the waka depart.)

**Leadership-** Nanny Flowers says of Koro, “He has a lot of rules he has to live by.” Paikea says later “He is the boss.” Why does Pai support Koro even though he is so harsh to her? (She understands some of his concerns about being a leader?) Students could trace elements of Pai’s leadership – eg her comments about smoking and health, fixing the rope,

learning about her culture, participating in the life of the community Why did Koro so desperately want a leader to follow him? What do the students think were the problems that faced him? How did viewers become aware of these? What

scenes gave them these ideas?

**Expectations and disappointments-**What are students views on Koro and his expectations? Why isn’t he proud of the achievements of Porourangi? Why wouldn’t he be pleased with Pai for starting the engine? Should he have excluded her from the wanaga/lessons? Other characters have disappointments too, eg Hemi

**Working together-**The community scenes on the marae, working together to help the whales, paddling in unison in the waka at the end.How does Pai’s speech change the idea of a leader from Koro’s “chosen one”? eg “knowledge given to all so we can have lots of leaders”

**Feelings of achievement-**Discuss the scene where Rawiri took up the taiaha again. How does this change carry on for Rawiri? (He later has a leadership role in helping with the whales “They’ll do it for you”, says Koro.) Paikea’s speech was a personal achievement. Students could be encouraged to discuss the sort of achievements that have made them feel good about themselves. They might write a speech introducing themselves and someone they respect.

**The whale** – What images of the whale did the viewers notice? Sometimes linked to the marae by shots of the tekoteko. The island was like a whale – its shape and its grey, striated cliffs. Could the students tell when the film was going to show the whales under the sea? (The music cued us to the undersea shots.)

**The rope** – Koro uses it to teach Pai about their history, but … How does Koro interpret this broken rope? And what Pai does after that? Later a rope does not hold the whale. Is that a bad omen?

**Koro’s staff** – of authority (bangs it on the floor when the school concert is disrupted) of leadership - on the marae as a sign of his chiefly position, as a walking stick when he is cast low. And what happened to it at the end? How did students ‘read’ that image of the carved stick drifting in the sea by the whale?

**The waka** – Unfinished at the start. What do students think it would signify for Koro? (Porourangi’s failure?) What

events occur in the waka during the film? (Paikea comes to it when she is sad, her family support her there. She

leads from there.) By the end of the film what is the role of the waka, and what event occurs there? (Koro acknowledges Pai with love and respect.) How did the viewers feel about the waka in those last scenes?

**The bicycle** -Paikea getting a dub, closeness of Paikea to her Koro, the ‘final’ ride before going with her father, when Koro does not give her a ride, eventually Pai overtaking the bus.

**Humour** - The women getting caught smoking. The golf trophy – for Rawiri’s skill with the taiaha- Opening Titles – Music – Whale sounds -Images of the Whales

Background information to help with movie

The Maori now number about 650,000 people, 15% of the population of New Zealand. They migrated approximately 1000 years ago from Hawaiiki, an unknown Polynesian island east of New Zealand. It is possible that Hawaiiki was one of the Hawaiian islands. The Maori were the first human beings to live in New Zealand and brought with them a highly evolved Stone Age culture. By the time the Europeans arrived in the late 1700s, the Maori were well-established. Like most other indigenous cultures, Maori tribes were no match for the diseases and gun-based military prowess of the Europeans. In 1840, British rule over the Maori was formalized in the Treaty of Waitangi, which granted British citizenship and land rights to the indigenous people of New Zealand, although most of the country was confiscated for European settlers.

According to myth, Paikea was the founder of the Maori people. His father was a Chief in Hawaiiki with many wives and numerous children. Rua-Tapu was the son of the Chief and a slave woman, while Paikea and the Chief's other sons were born to women from aristocratic families. When Rua-Tapu tried to use a sacred comb belonging to one of his high-born brothers, he was humiliated by the Chief who made it clear that Rua-Tapu was of a lower caste than his siblings. In revenge, Rua-Tapu decided to kill all of his half-brothers, including Paikea. He invited them, 70 in some versions and 140 in others, for a trip in a beautiful ocean-going canoe that he had built. However, this canoe was designed to have a hole that Rua-Tapu kept sealed with the heel of his foot. When the canoe was far out to sea, he moved his foot and all aboard drowned except for Rua-Tapu and Paikea, the latter being saved by a whale who took him to New Zealand. Paikea became the ruler of the people who lived on the islands. Maori consciousness is shaped by reverence for ancestors and the past. Before Europeans arrived, the Maori language was not written. Individual genealogy was remembered through the he rakau wakapapa-paranga, a board with a notch for each name and a blank space to denote when a male line of descent died out. Maori children were taught about their ancestors by memorizing the names of the person represented by each notch. In modern times, the interior rooms of Maori meeting houses are places sacred to the ancestors. Traditional myths and information about navigation are carved into the walls.

Maori culture was male-dominated, with women generally serving in subordinate roles. One traditional function of Maori women was the "karanga," an exchange of calls that forms part of the Maori welcoming ceremony. As a visiting group moves into the formal meeting area, they are welcomed by a call from a woman of the household or village. The visitors respond and the calls go back and forth as the newcomers enter the location where the meeting is to occur.

Click here for a still picture of two women calling a karanga. This link will take you to a video of the scene from the movie in which a karanga is called and answered as students are welcomed to the opening of their new school. The karanga occurs in the first 60 seconds of the segment.

The Maori were fierce warriors and would, at times, dine on their conquered enemies. Many Maori carvings show fierce faces with stuck out tongues. Maori tattoos are famous for their intricate designs, size, and beauty. Called "Ta moko,", they consist of important symbols that help individuals express their unique identities. In the 1700s, when Europeans first arrived in New Zealand, it was common for Maori to have tattoos covering their entire face. This custom died out by the end of the 1800s, although Maori continued tattooing other parts of their bodies. The Ta moko was predominately for males and among traditional Maori it was rare that a woman would have tattoos. In recent years, tattooing has become common for both men and women. The traditional Maori greeting is to press noses. This is called "hongi," a gesture that is the social equivalent of a handshake or a kiss on both cheeks.

Discussion Questions with answers to refer to:

As in many cultures, the value of ancestors and a reverence for the past shape Maori consciousness. The characters struggle with several issues faced by indigenous people all over the globe as they seek to integrate what remains of their traditional ways into modern society. This conflict can be seen in Native American cultures today and is often the source of individual as well as tribal difficulties. Identify some of the scenes in which this struggle is shown.

Suggested Response: These scenes include those that show Maori families as dysfunctional or Maori people abusing alcohol. For example, according to tradition, Paikea's father should stay in the village and assume the role of Chief. However, he wants to be an artist and this causes conflict which he resolves by moving to Germany. Paikea's uncle, Rawiri, is a nurturing man and a leader in the community just by the force of his personality. He is also skilled in the art of fighting with war sticks, which in the movie is a symbol for being able to be a Maori chief. (Note that Koro deems the boy Hemi to be unsuitable for leadership because Paikea, a mere girl, bests him in a contest using war sticks.) However, no matter how many leadership qualities Rawiri may possess, he can never be chief because he is a second-born son. As a result, Rawiri becomes overweight and escapes into alcohol or other drugs. Another example of family dysfunction is Hemi's father. He can spare only a few minutes to watch his son at the ceremony and is then off with his friends. He fails to be a strong presence in the life of his child.

How would you describe Paikea? Suggested Response: Pai is intelligent, patient, and fun. She respects and loves both her grandfather and Maori tribal traditions. She never lets her anger get the best of her. When Koro is cruel and refuses to respect her as a human being to be evaluated based on her character and abilities, she forgives him for his intransigence. However, Pai is strong. She persists and fights for what she wants.

How do the women in the film deal with the sexism of their tribe? Suggested Response: The women let the men think that the men are the bosses. The women carry on with their lives accepting the men, yet criticizing the men's thinking. This can be seen when the women play cards and joke about the men. Pai's grandmother can be highly critical of Koro, yet she tolerates him using humor. She sympathizes with the difficulty of her husband's life, telling her granddaughter, "He's got a lot of rules to live by."

There are several symbolic meanings in the scene that starts with Koro unsuccessfully trying to use a rope to start an engine. The rope breaks and Koro leaves to find another. Pai ties the rope together and then easily starts the engine. When Koro returns he admonishes his granddaughter, telling her that what she has done is dangerous and that she should never do it again. Some of the symbolic meanings in the scene are stated by Koro while others can be recognized by the viewer. Describe the symbols shown by this scene. Suggested Response: The symbolic meaning stated by Koro is that each strand of the rope represents an ancestor with the rope being the tribe. He notes that when all of the threads are woven together they make a strong rope. Then the rope breaks as Koro tries to start the engine. This symbolizes his inability to lead the tribe. Another symbolic action in the scene occurs when Pai ties the rope and uses it to make the engine start. This is a symbol for her ability to lead the tribe in a way that Koro cannot. Koro's reaction to what Pai had done is yet another symbol. He tells her that what she did was dangerous. This shows that he thinks Pai's leadership would be dangerous to the tribe, despite the fact that she can do what he cannot. This symbol can also be seen as representing his inability to see the strengths of Pai's character and to foresee the best path for the tribe to take in the future.

Why does Porourangi, Koro's first born son and Pai's father, leave home and live in faraway Germany? Suggested Response: There are several possible reasons. Germany is very far away from the life of the tribe, in terms of both distance and culture. Pai's father can be his own person in Germany, away from the restraints of his father, the tribe, and Maori culture. Like many indigenous people, Porourangi is torn between two civilizations. His response to the strong ties that he feels to Maori culture and the pressure to be chief is to make a clean break. He needs to get far away to fully develop as an individual and as an artist. If Porourangi had tried to stay in New Zealand, he would have had to constantly face Koro's disapproval. For example, Koro calls Porourangi's art "souvenirs." The old man blames Porourangi for not producing a son and heir to the chieftainship. Porourangi later tells his daughter that the old man is looking for something that no longer exists. When he tells Pai that he cannot be what Koro wants, Pai says, "Me neither." Two other reasons are worth mentioning. Pai's father needed to distance himself from the place where he lived with his wife and where he lost both his wife and his son. Living in the village or even in New Zealand would have reminded him of this loss. In addition, the screenwriter needed to make Porourangi's rejection of the role of chief to be emphatic and permanent in order to make Pai's rise to the position believable. Thus, sending Porourangi to Germany advances the plot.

Pai learns how to use the war sticks, the Taiaha, from Uncle Rawiri. Using this knowledge, she defeats Hemi, a boy trained by Koro himself. What is revealed about Pai and her uncle in this episode? Suggested Response: Pai's defeat of Hemi is a symbol that she is the leader for whom Koro is searching. Viewers also learn that Uncle Rawiri was once a champion with this traditional Maori way of fighting, although now he appears to be lazy, fat, and a user of drugs and alcohol. His mother says that this stems from the fact that he is a second born son and therefor, according to Maori tradition, he can never become chief.

Hemi's father comes to see his son for a brief part of the ceremony at the school and then leaves with his friends. What does this suggest about the tribe's problems? Suggested Response: The tribe and the Maori families are breaking apart because the men are leaving. Paikea's father, Porourangi, is the most important example of this. Hemi's father is another.

Pai makes an important point that clearly establishes theme in the speech she delivers in honor of her grandfather:

I broke the line back to the ancient ones. It wasn't anybody's fault, it just happened. But we can learn. And if knowledge is given to everyone, we can have lots of leaders. And soon everyone will be strong, not just the ones that have been chosen. Because sometimes, even if you're the leader and you need to be strong, you can get tired like our ancestor Paikea when he was lost at sea and he couldn't find the land and he probably wanted to die. But he knew the ancient ones were there for him so he called out to them to lift him up and give him strength.

What idea in this speech offers the solution to the problem faced by both Koro and the Maori as a whole? Suggested Response: Pai argues on behalf of egalitarian leadership, asserting that anyone with knowledge can be of value to the tribe and that strength can be found in having several types of leaders rather than one. She clearly asserts that tradition can hinder progress.

A rope is seen in the episode in which the villagers try to help the beached whales return to the sea. This is an echo of the earlier symbol of the rope. What idea is conveyed by this scene? Suggested Response: The villagers desperately try to help the whales, pulling together as implied by the tribal custom, becoming the living image of the strands that make up the rope of a united village. Despite their joint efforts, the rope breaks and they walk away exhausted. However, when Paikea climbs atop the whale it responds to her and leads the other whales back to the sea. The symbol is that even with everyone in the tribe pulling together, the purpose cannot be accomplished without the proper leader. At this point, even Koro understands that a leader may emerge, not from tradition, but in the form of a young girl who has the character, skill and desire to be chief.

Uncle Rawiri is an interesting character and in many ways a foil for Paikea. Describe the attributes of this character, how they relate to the themes of the film, and how Uncle Rawiri is a foil for his niece. Suggested Response: Paikea's uncle, skilled in the art of fighting with war sticks, is not considered fit for the role of Chief because he is the second son. However, he is a nurturing man and a leader in the community just by force of his winning personality. This is clearly shown in the scene in which he rallies the tribe to try to save the whales. There is no reason he should not be chief. In this, he is like Paikea who cannot be a chief simply because of her birth: she is a woman. Her leadership qualities, knowledge of Maori culture, and skill with the Taiaha cannot gain for her what they would had she been a first born son. However, unlike Paikea, Uncle Rawiri accepts his fate, becoming overweight and escaping into alcohol and drugs. This highlights Paikea's decision to struggle against the fate that would have been hers had she not become Chief.

In this story, the Taiaha, the ability to fight with war sticks is a symbol. What does it symbolize? Suggested Response: There are several possible ways to express this. They include: leadership, unity with the Maori culture, and knowledge of that culture.