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Worksheet 1: Background Information

New Zealand and the Maori

The Maori are an indigenous people who *migrated* from the Pacific Islands to New Zealand almost 2000 years ago. They made their journeys in canoes or *waka* and used the stars to navigate. After a difficult journey, the Maori discovered New Zealand and settled on the fertile land. *Ancestry* is very important to the Maori. Their *traditions* have been handed down to each *generation* through stories and art.

The Legend of Paikea

The first Paikea was a man who came to New Zealand 2000 years ago. On the way, his *waka* sank. He survived by riding on the back of a whale. His descendants settled in a small coastal village called Whangara on the east coast of New Zealand.



A Modern Paikea

In modern day New Zealand, a young girl named Paikea tries to make Koro, her grandfather, realise that she is the next leader. Koro refuses to believe this because traditionally the chief has always been the previous chief's firstborn son. Despite clear signs that she is the chosen leader, Pai has to save a pod of whales and endanger her life before Koro realises the truth.

Useful Maori Words

waka - canoe tapu - sacred rangatiratanga - chief
 marae - sacred place used for meetings and worship

Characters in *Whale Rider*

Koro is Pai's grandfather. A chief of his people, he follows a traditional way of thinking. He wants a grandson to be chief after him.



Nanny Flowers is Pai's grandmother. She loves her husband, but sometimes finds him annoying and old-fashioned.

Porourangi is Pai's father. His wife died in childbirth. Since then he has lived in Germany, where he is a successful artist.



Rawiri is Pai's uncle. He helps look after Pai.



Paikea (Pai) lives with her grandparents. She is a brave and clever child, who wants to be a chief like her grandfather. Unfortunately, her grandfather believes only males can be chief.

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Worksheet 2: Exercises While Watching

2.1 Pai's Background 00:00–30:00

Exercise A: Students answer the questions.

1. Who does Pai live with?
2. Does Porourangi leave Koro?
3. Does Koro want a grandson or granddaughter?

Exercise B: Write these events on the board. Students put them in order.

1. Porourangi's wife and the baby boy die.
2. Porourangi returns home after 12 years.
3. Porourangi has twins, a boy and a girl.
4. Porourangi names the girl Paikea after the ancestor who rode the whale.
5. Pai lives with her grandparents, Koro and Nanny Flowers.
6. Porourangi is angry with Koro, and leaves.

Exercise C: Students answer these questions. You might like to have them discuss these in groups, or answer in their own language.

1. Why does Pai live with her grandparents?
2. Why does Porourangi leave the hospital?
3. Does Koro like Pai?

2.2 School 30:00–1:10:00

Exercise A: Are these statements true or false?

1. Koro teaches all the firstborn boys in the community.
2. Koro teaches the ancient traditions of the tribe.
3. Pai is allowed to join Koro's school.

Exercise B: Rewrite this summary so that it is true.

Koro thinks that Pai is good luck for his tribe. He gives all the firstborn girls in the village training. He teaches them mathematics and English. He wants to find the future leader of the tribe.

Exercise C: Students answer these questions. You might like to have them discuss these in groups, or answer in their own language.

1. Why does Koro throw the whale bone into the water?
2. Who finds the whale bone that Koro threw into the water?

2.3 Saving the Whales 1:10:00–1:32:00

Exercise A: Students answer the questions.

1. Does Koro discover dead fish on the beach?
2. Does the community save the whales?

Exercise B: Students choose the correct answer.

1. The community tries to save the big whale by
 - a. using a helicopter
 - b. using a tractor
 - c. using a truck
 - d. using a tank

2. Nanny Flowers is crying because
 - a. she is cold
 - b. she is happy the whales lived
 - c. Pai is missing in the ocean
 - d. Koro doesn't love her anymore

Exercise C: Students answer these questions. You might like to have them discuss these in groups, or answer in their own language.

1. When does Koro realise that Pai is Paikea, the 'Whale Rider'?
2. Is Pai afraid to die?

2.4 End 1:32:00–1:38:30

Exercise A: Students answer the questions.

1. Does Pai die?
2. In the canoe, is Pai leading the chant?
3. Are the people in the canoe angry?
4. Is Koro happy that Pai is with him?

Whale Rider Plot Summary

In a small New Zealand coastal village, a Maori tribe claim descent from Paikea, the Whale Rider. In every generation for more than 1000 years, a boy has been born to become the next Chief.

The Chief's eldest son, Porourangi, has twins - a boy and a girl. But the boy and his mother die in childbirth. The surviving girl is named Paikea (Pai). Porourangi leaves his family and Pai to be raised by her grandparents, Koro and Flowers. Koro is the Chief and loves Pai but refuses to accept her as his successor, because she is a girl.

When Porourangi returns home after 12 years, he is a famous international artist living in Germany. Koro hopes that Porourangi will marry a local woman and become Chief. However, Porourangi is going to have a family in Germany, and wants to live there. Koro is angry. He suggests that Pai go to Germany with Porourangi. She starts the journey but quickly returns because her grandfather needs her.

Flowers tries to convince Koro to accept Pai as his successor. Koro is convinced that Pai is bad luck for his tribe, so he gives all the firstborn boys in the village training. He is certain that through a difficult process of teaching ancient chants, tribal tradition and warrior skills, the future leader of their tribe will be revealed to him. He ignores Pai even though she is talented.

Meanwhile, deep in the ocean, a massive pod of whales is attracted to Pai who is naturally skilled in the ancient traditions. When the whales become stranded on the beach, Koro is sure it means that his tribe will end. Pai realises she must save the whales, even if she has to die.

When Pai saves the Whales, Koro realises that Pai has always been his successor and that his prejudice was wrong. Pai is accepted as a future leader of the Whangara people.