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The Whale Rider



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Synopsis

Eight-year-old Kahu, a member of the Maori tribe of Whangara, New Zealand, fights to prove her love, her leadership, and her destiny. Her people claim descent from Kahutia Te Rangi, the legendary "whale rider." In every generation since Kahutia, a male heir has inherited the title of chief. But now there is no male heir, and the aging chief is desperate to find a successor. Kahu is his only great-grandchild--and Maori tradition has no use for a girl. But when hundreds of whales beach themselves and threaten the future of the Maori tribe, it is Kahu who saves the tribe when she reveals that she has the whale rider’s ancient gift of communicating with whales. Now available in simultaneous hardcover and paperback editions. Feature film in theaters in June 2003!

Book Information

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Age Range: 10 and up

Grade Level: 4 - 8

Customer Reviews

Grade 5-8-A poetic blend of reality and myth provides a riveting tale of adventure and passion. An ancient whale ridden by a mystical man rises from the sea, the rider throwing spears that blossom like seeds into gifts of nature. One last spear "-flew across a thousand years. When it hit the earth, it did not change but waited for another hundred and fifty years to pass until it was needed." It sprouts when Kahu, a girl child, is born to the eldest grandson of the chief of the Maori in Whangara, New Zealand. Koro Apirana is disgusted; he needs a male child to continue the line of descent in the tribe. The years that follow further harden his heart toward his great-granddaughter in spite of the

bottomless love and respect she showers upon him. The child’s great-grandmother, the irreverent Nanny Flowers, proves to be the strength of this family; she nurtures the girl whom she knows holds the key to the future. The complex mixture of archetypal characters and cultural troubles make this novel appropriate for mature readers. Overt and sometimes violent racism is encountered and the tragic and bloody death of hundreds of beached whales may disturb younger readers. This story, originally published in New Zealand in 1987, is the basis of the recently released film by the same name. It’s a tale rich in intense drama and sociological and cultural information. A Maori glossary is appended.Susan Oliver, Tampa-Hillsborough Public Library System, FLCopyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Library Binding edition.

Gr. 7-12. Kahu is a girl, born into a contemporary Maori family that traces its lineage to the magnificent Whale Rider, a fabled ancestor who traveled the seas astride an ancient whale. From an early age, Kahu possesses a chief’s mystical aptitude, but her grandfather believes that chiefs must be male, and Kahu’s talents are overlooked. Rawiri, Kahu’s young adult uncle, narrates this novel, which is part creation myth, part girl-power adventure, and part religious meditation. Chapters alternate between Rawiri’s telling of Kahu’s story and scenes of the ancient whale. The two stories come together in powerful events that, as Rawiri says, have "all the cataclysmic power and grandeur of a Second Coming." With such esoteric material and many wandering plot threads, the story may prove difficult for some readers. But Ihimaera, best known for his adult books, combines breathtaking, poetic imagery, hilarious family dialogue, and scenes that beautifully juxtapose contemporary and ancient culture. A haunting story that is sure to receive additional interest from this summer’s film adaptation. Gillian EngbergCopyright Ã Â© American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to the Library Binding edition.

The Whangara people, a Maori tribe in New Zealand, is traditionally guided by a man. Nevertheless, this tradition is threatened when Koro’s first-born great grandchild, Kahu, is a girl. Koro, leader of the tribe, is crushed by this fact, and repudiates the devoted love of Kahu and refuses to see the signs that shows she is the one.I watched the film adaptation when it came out in 2002, and I loved it. I even own the soundtrack of the film by Lisa Gerrard, which I listen now and then. After 15 years since the movie came out, I decided to read the book. I had had my doubts beforehand because some reviewers claimed that this was one of those cases where the film was better than the book, but I can honestly say that the book is worth reading. The film is visually and musically spellbinding, but the book provides the necessary background to fully appreciate the myth and legend behind

it.Rawiri, the uncle, is the narrator of the story, to the point that the book seems to be about both Kahu (Paikea in the film) and Rawiri himself. Kahu's dad plays a secondary role in the book, while in the film he is an important character. There is even a chapter about Rawiri in Australia and Papua New Guinea, which was very intesting, but made me wonder why the book had taken that direction and why the story of Kahu had taken a sudden break.I would say the book is split in three parts. The slow beginning, where we read about Kahu's birth and her grandfather's reluctance to see "the signs". The interesting middle part, where we read about Maori people in Australia and Rawiri in Papua New Guinea. Finally, the passionate last chapters, where Kahu shows why she is "the one".This is my second book by Witi Ihimaera, and it will not be my last one.

This is a beautifully written tale of a young girl destined to save her Maori community from disintegration; told from the point of view of her cousin who gradually comes to understand how special she really is, it is both a cautionary tale of gender bias in traditional communities and a story about the conflict between tradition and modernity. Teens will enjoy it, although it will often send them to the dictionary and to the book's helpful glossary. This is that rare book which can be enjoyed by adults and young people as well--but is especially wonderful as a gift for a girl since girl heroes are so rare. It is the sort of story which can also be read TO children. A must for anyone who loved Niki Caro's movie, but also for readers who like to learn about aboriginal communities. While "The Whale Rider" is fiction, it is suffused with Maori legend and lore. Strong female characters also include Paikea's grandmother. At the end, the writer thoughtfully includes the Maori legend in its original form.

Many people have seen the beautiful movie Whale Rider, but like most of them, I hadn't had a chance to read Witi Ihimaera's stunning book. I've loved Ihimaera's writing for decades now, and the smooth, lyrical story telling of his young adult novel is more proof of his mastery. Starting with the ancestor tale of an East Coast iwi, then moving forward to modern day members of the same group which is disintegrating in post-colonial New Zealand, the novel takes the voice of the Uncle, not Pai, and this unexpected perspective gives the author a lot of room to explore and evoke. I recommend this book highly to anyone wanting to read a moving novel, or to learn about Maori culture, but also to anyone interested in post-colonial indigenous writing. The underlying themes are universal and both distressing and uplifting. The book is also a lengthy exploration of changing gender roles, and questioning the roles of women in an indigenous culture is really important but often difficult. Ihimaera doesn't shy away from big questions, and it is a gift to all of us. On top of all of that, it's just

a really beautiful novel, and one I'll reread often.

I thought this book explored themes of the endurance of culture and adaptation for modern times with great sensitivity and gentleness. It allows the reader space to have a conversation, or to think, about gender equality, about culture and tradition and the demands of contemporary society and European dominated traditions, without pronounced judgement. This book is a great one for teachers who want to explore post-colonial themes and ideas but engage in current dialogue about the adaptation of culture and survival of traditional societies in an ever-changing world.

My Grandpa suggested I read this book when he visited me from Arizona. He had a special interest in the Maori tribe and their ancestors, unfortunately he passed away during his visit. I thoroughly enjoyed reading The Whale Rider. Learning about the Maori tribe and the history about their culture- mystical and magical..! I also loved learning a few new words in this special language. "Haumi e, hui e, taiki e . Let it be done..." - being my favorite phrase.

Throughout the history of humankind there have been self centered beliefs that coexist with a sense of connectedness with the rest of the earth. While indigenous tribes held discriminatory beliefs, many, like the Maori tribe, lived in greater harmony with nature, if not with one another. This eloquent writer beautifully delineated this contradiction of beliefs. I highly recommend this novel.

Bummer . . .I know this book, have taught it several times to college students. I wanted the voice and pronunciations of names and places so students could hear them correctly. Sadly, that didn't happen.If you buy it, be very careful when removing it from it's container. Very careful, or it will crack.

I read this for my senior seminar project. The beauty of this novel is that it is short and aesthetically wonderful. The length limits the dimension added to the characters but I love it, regardless.

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