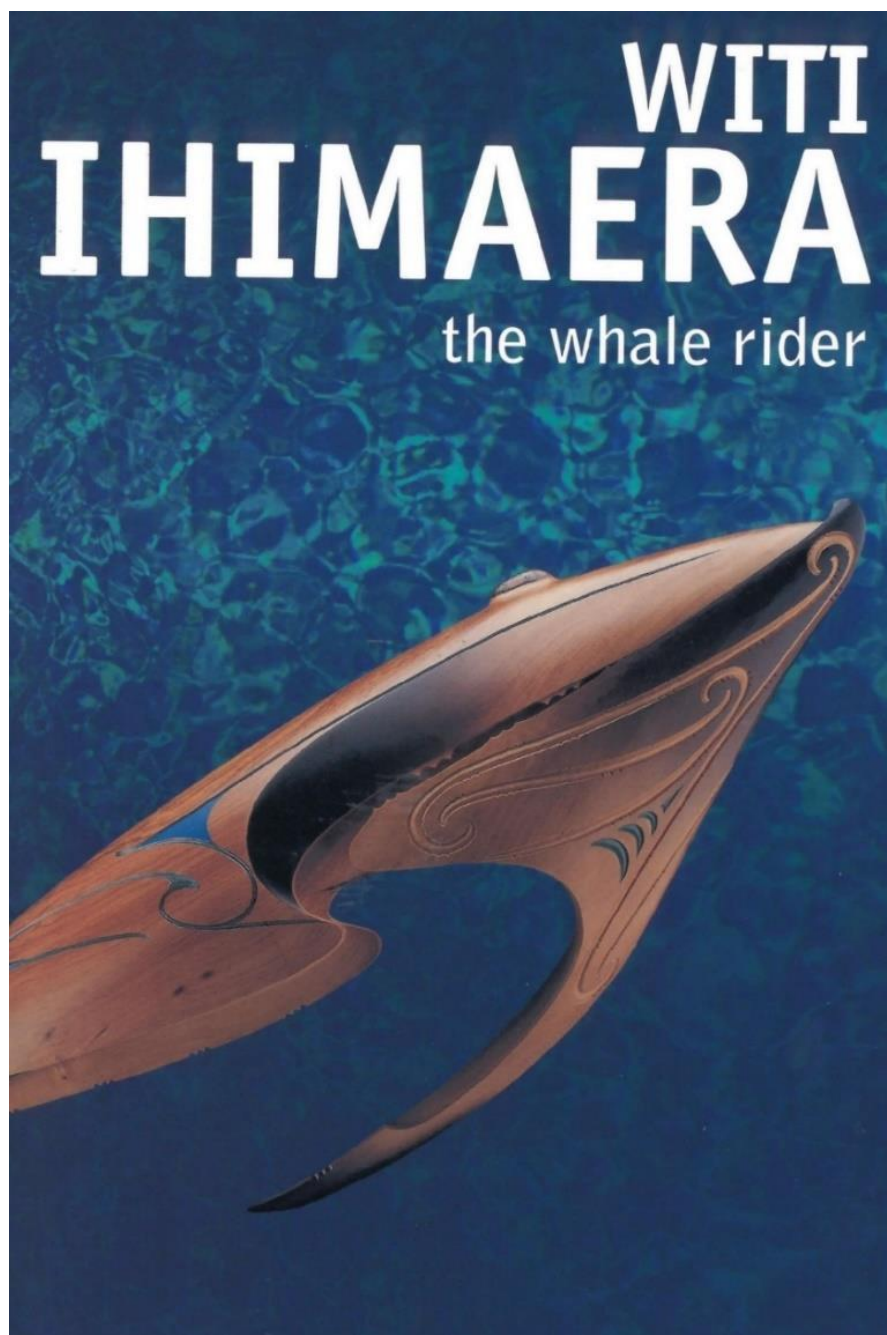


The Whale Rider

Study Guide



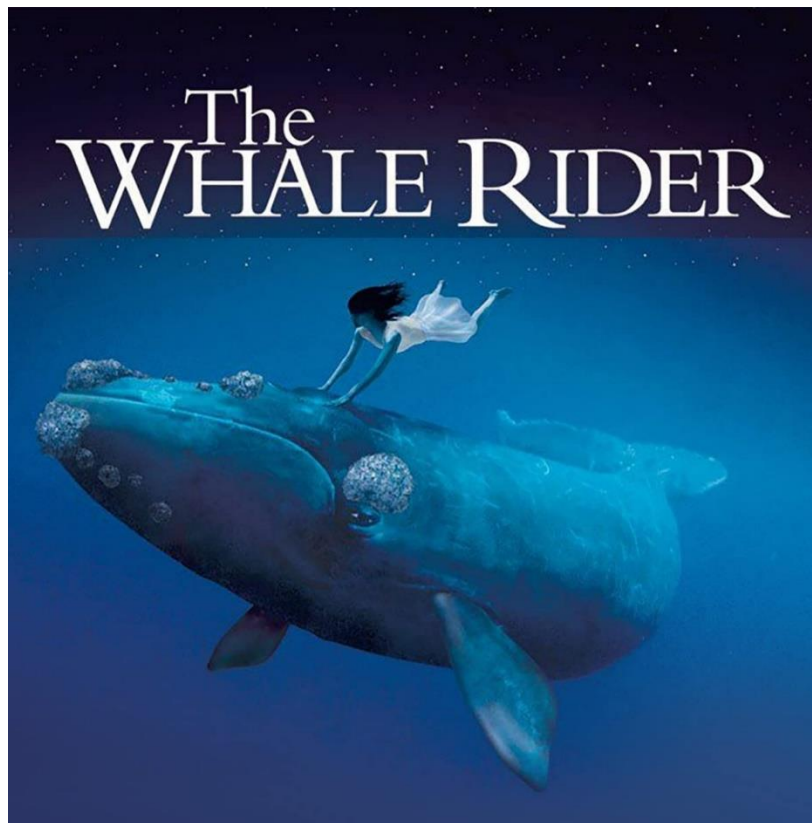
Contents

Content	Page
What do we need to know before reading?	6
Why do the sub-plots exist?	6
Why is this a novella of magical realism?	7
What does Witi Ihimaera say?	7
The Writer's Purpose	7
Environmental Concerns and Whaling	8
Land Disputes	8
Ihimaera's observation of people and society	8
Characters (and their development)	9
Five Themes (Brief)	10
The Natural World	10
Language and Communication	11
Identity	12
Equality	13
Māori Motifs	14
Language and Structure	14
Thematic Context	16
General Context	18
The Natural World and Whaling	18
Mankind's Connection with Nature	18
Language and Communication: Māori phrases	21
Identity	22
Equality	22
Tradition	25
Māori mythology	27
Five Key Quotations	29
Exam Board Quotations – Characters	30
Koro	30
Rawiri	31
Nani	31
Rehua (Porourangi's first wife)	32
Porourangi	32
Kahu	33
The Whales	34

Exam Board Quotations – Thematic	36
Māori Culture	37
Māori Legend/ Kahutia Te Rangi (later called Paikea)	37
The Natural World	38
Language, Communication and Relationships	38
Love and Communication	38
Identity (Preservation)	38
Individual identity vs Māori history and identity	38
Motif: Māori phrases	39
Tradition	39
Identity	39
Equality, Leadership, and Femininity	39
Past Exam Questions	42
Exam Board Suggested Guidance (from past questions)	44
The theme of success	44
The relationship between Koro and Kahu	45
Marriage	46
The significance of the bull whale and his herd	48
Hopes and fears for the future	49
The relationship between Kahu and Nanny (Nani) Flowers	51
The relationship between Kahu and her uncle, Rawiri	52
The importance of courage	54
Koro Apirana is a successful tribal leader?	56
The importance of family	58
The significance of the names of people and places	60
Koro is a dislikeable character in the novel?	61
The importance of locations	62
In what ways is Kahu significant	64
The importance of fear	65
Explore Kahu's relationship with the natural world	67
Explore one character who, in your opinion, has great power?	68
In what ways is change important?	70
In what ways is Kahu's father, Porourangi, important	71
Discuss the significance of Māori culture and traditions	73
Koro Apirana is a cruel and heartless character?	75
Explore the significance of the legend of the whale	76
Discuss the importance of leadership	78
In what ways is Nanny (Nani) Flowers important	79
The whales are very important characters in this novel.	81
Explore the theme of love	83
Explore the relationship between Kahu and the whales	84
Discuss the importance of different kinds of learning	86
Explore the relationship between Koro Apirana and Nanny Flowers	87
Discuss the significance of the natural world	89
Explore the relationship between Koro Apirana and Kahu	87
Discuss the significance of travelling	91
Explore the character of Kahu	92
This novel is not only about the survival of some whales?	93

This novel is all about identity?	95
Explore the character of Rawiri	96
The Essay Structure	99
The Mark Scheme	100
Past Questions and Exemplars	101
Level 5 Exemplar: Discuss the importance of different kinds of learning	103
Level 5 Exemplar: Examine the relationship between Kahu and her uncle, Rawiri	108
Level 5 Exemplar: Discuss the relationship between Kahu and Nanny (Nani) Flowers	113
Level 4 Exemplar: Discuss the importance of courage	119
Level 4 Exemplar: Explore the theme of love	123
Level 3 Exemplar: 'The whales are very important characters in this novel'. How far do you agree with this view?	126
Level 3 Exemplar: Explore the relationship between Kahu and the whales	129

What do we need to know before reading?



What do we need to know before reading?

- Koro is the grandfather of Kahu Paikea. He is the traditional Chief and elder of the community.
- Nani Flowers is the wife of Koro Apirana and great-grandmother of Kahu Paikea.
- Kahu Paikea Apirana, a twelve-year-old Māori girl.
- Only males are allowed to ascend to chieftdom in a Māori tribe in New Zealand.
- This ancient custom is upset when the child selected to be the next chief dies at birth.
- However, his twin sister survives (Kahu Paikea Apirana).
- Rawiri and Jeff are living in New Zealand together and go to Papua New Guinea.

Family Tree and Characters

- Ancestor: The Whale Rider; Kahutia Te Rangi
- Koro Apirana + Nani Flowers
- Unmentioned children of Koro and Nani
- Porourangi (wife is Rehua) + Uncle Rawiri
- Child: Kahu “my great-grandchild” p34

Who is narrating the story?

- Rawiri
- Rawiri is the primary narrator of the story. He is the grandson of Koro and thus the uncle of Kahu. In the time of the story, he is in his early twenties. A young man who lives in the present but maintains a deep connection to his past heritage
- Multi-voice narrative
- Reiterating the importance of the past and the first initial ancestral story. The interpolated narrative voice of the whales illustrate their vast existence beyond the environmental attacks that have befallen them.

Why do the sub-plots exist?

- Main plot: Kahu’s accession delivered through the narration of Uncle Rawiri.
- Rawiri’s narration provides neutrality and displays his warmth for Kahu against the aggression of patriarchy (via Koro Apirana).
- Each sub-plot adds a layer of complication and presents the complexity of retaining Māori culture and the tension between the natural world and a modernity which glorifies violence against nature.

Why is this a novella of magical realism?

Key term: Magical Realism - a style of literary fiction and art. It paints a realistic view of the world while also adding magical elements, often blurring the lines between fantasy and reality.

We have Muriwari changing gender, Kahutia Te Rangi communicating with the bull whale, Kahu's later communication with the whales, the interpolated narrative from the whales themselves. These elements all add to the magical realism of the story.

What does Witi Ihimaera say?



Witi Ihimaera was inspired to write the book in 1985 while living in an apartment in New York overlooking the Hudson River.

'I heard helicopters whirling around and the ships in the river using all their sirens - a whale had come up the Hudson River and was spouting,' Ihimaera recalls. 'It made me think of my home town, Whangara and the whale mythology of that area.'

Ihimaera had taken his daughters to a number of action movies. They asked him why in all of those movies the boy was the hero and the girl was always the one who was helpless. 'So I decided to write a novel in which the girl is the hero and I finished *The Whale Rider* in three weeks.'

Witi Ihimaera the first Māori writer to public a novel.

Writer's Purpose

Transcending restrictive tradition

- To highlight the importance of persevering our environment
- To highlight the importance equality, community, and relationships
- Addressing the challenge of a layered identity: possible conflict between aspects of oneself; traditional within modernity
- A testimony of Māori culture and resilience
- Ihimaera's possibly presenting mankind's disconnect with nature and offering Māori culture as a solution.
- Ihimaera is possibly writing to re-connect with his own culture as a man of modernity (evidenced in the plotline of Rawiri and Sydney).

Environmental Concerns and Whaling

The Whale Rider was published in 1987 during a decade of increased concern about the state of the environment. Nuclear technology was a particular cause for concern, especially following the Chernobyl nuclear disaster (1987).

In 1987 Greenpeace (environmental organisation) campaigned against nuclear weapons and power. Greenpeace's ship 'Rainbow Warrior' sunk in Auckland harbour, the largest city in New Zealand (1985). It was purposely sunk by the French secret service because of Greenpeace's anti-nuclear activism around French nuclear sites in the South Pacific.

Whales were also a key focus for environmentalists in the 1980s. In 1986 an international ban on commercial whaling was imposed. The Whale Rider was published a year after in 1987.

Land Disputes

Māori Customary Land is land that has no legal document saying who owns it. It is held according to tikanga Māori (Māori customary values and practices). Before the arrival of colonial settlers, all land in New Zealand was held as customary land.

The early Native Land Court (1865) brought a European legal system to New Zealand and attempted to define the boundaries of Māori land and convert it from communally held land to land with specific owners. At this time, a lot of Māori land was simply taken from the Māori people and given to 'legal' European owners. Only a small number of customary land blocks remain in New Zealand, and they total less than 700 hectares.

Thinking Points: What is problematic about the Native Land Court of 1865? Why does Porourangi leave Kahu and his family to go to the "South Island" to help the "land dispute".

Ihimaera's observation of people and society

Rawiri's experience of travelling abroad as a means of exploring Māori identity. Difficulties of coming to terms with the modern world. Leap from 'the lion cloth to the three-piece suit'.

The transition between childhood and adulthood. Rawiri's travelling allowed him experience what it feels like to be different; 'I grew into an understanding of myself as a Māori' he says.

Marginalisation: Rawiri's experiences further allow us to understand that superficial visual differences are a basis for racist opinions. Jeff's mother notes that Jeff always brings home 'dogs and strays' and that Rawiri is 'too dark'. Rawiri has a better relationship with Tom (Jeff's father who is partially blind).

Characters

(and their development)

For every character, plot how they have changed and developed across the novella.
What challenges do they face and overcome?

Revision Exercise:

- 1. What is the purpose of these characters?**
- 2. Have at least 3 points for each character.**

Characters: Kahu, Uncle Rawiri, Jeff (and his parents), The bull whale/ the whales, Muriwari, Kahutia Te Rangi, Koro, Nani Flowers, Porourangi

Character: Uncle Rawiri.

Rawiri's purpose: The readers' trust towards Kahu builds alongside Rawiri's growing care, he has a more objective portrayal of Kahu's development and centrality for her community. Rawiri also links between modernity and the Māori; again, creating understanding for the reader.

Firstly, apathetic towards Kahu.

Begins to warm to her seeing her development, and Koro's rejection.

Towards the end of the novella is ready to sacrifice his life to save her.

Character: Kahu

Kahu's purpose: embodiment of the importance of the future, children's voices and female leadership

At the start of novella: symbol of child's need for familial love and community.

As the novella progress: a figure of reconciliation between nature, repairing the 'oneness'

Towards the end of the novella: symbol of bravery and martyrdom

Character: The Bull Whale/ The Whales

Purpose: Symbolism of power struggle between capitalism (nuclear testing; profit from destroying the ocean), interpolated narrative; helps to illustrate their omnipresent timeless aspect- they will withstand attempts of destruction.

Exposition: sacred establishment of the Māori legend

As the novella progresses: nuclear testing and discarding of sanctity of nature. Further discarded and grotesque violence

Finally: healing comes through unity with Kahu

Jeff (and his parents)

Jeff's purpose: Jeff and his family contributes heavily to our understanding as readers of the prejudice faced by the Māori and contributes to Rawiri's understanding of his place in society and how he is viewed.

At the start of the novella: Jeff offers a kind perspective of the Māori (in his friendship with Rawiri). Their friendship represents the youthfulness and openness younger Māori have with the world.

As the novella progresses: Jeff contrasts heavily with his parents older pessimistic and nationalistic view of the Māori. Jeff's mother marginalises and is offensive and derogatory towards Rawiri.

However, Jeff's father Tom (who is blind) is more open-minded and illustrates metaphorically the futility of racism based on skin-colour.

Five Themes (Brief)

I. The Natural World

The sound of the sea provides a familial link between Whangara, the tribe and the sea. Healing the relationship between humanity and the natural world. Interlinking themes: The Whales (Survival of the Whales), Man's Relationship with the Natural World, Locations, Hope

Nature, The Sound of the Sea

The Whale Rider was published in 1987, during a time when the testing of nuclear arms and nuclear test sites were a matter of public concern.

How does the presentation of nature develop across the novel? Or become more apparent?

Nature is consistently presented as sacred- the fear of the destruction nature (AO4 nuclear).

Fear for the loss of heritage being honoured: the language class.

Fear of presenting Māori authenticity. Contrasting against contemporary culture.

The Natural World Quotations

"contamination" and "the effects of the undersea radiation"

In the novel, the herd of whales are mourning the death of some calves that are killed as a result of a nuclear test at Moruroa.

"hairline fractures indicating serious damage"

"flash of bright light" relevance of context (1987 nuclear testing).

"streaks of blue lightning came shooting out of the sea like missiles" p90

"The rain was like spears.." p100

"suddenly shards of ice began to cascade like spears around the herd" p78

"The whale is still alive....working on the whale...triumphant....the men are laughing as they wrench the jaw from the butchered whale" p80

"Blood, laughing, pain, victory, blood." p80

'Man might carve his identification mark on the earth but, once he ceases to be vigilant, Nature will take back what man had once achieved to please his vanity'. (Rawiri at the coffee plantation in Papua New Guinea).

2. Language and Communication

Language is a part of preserving and forming identity. Communication to build and repair relationships (e.g., Kahu and Koro). Communication between Kahu and the natural world. Interlinking themes: Fear, Identity, Relationships, Names – People and Places, Māori Culture and Traditions, Family

How does the presentation of love develop across the novel?/ Become more apparent?

Koro at first is described as “wanting nothing to do with her” over time love progress, particularly as Kahu shows a relentlessness towards Koro and her involvement in Māori culture.

The narrator Rawiri encourages the reader’s warmth as we see his protect familial love developing for Kahu.

Kahu’s deep love for nature and whales; reiterating the oneness that man should have with nature.

Strength in familial love; particularly important as Kahu primary caregivers are dead or absent.

Language, Communication and Relationships

“Tell the old paka to keep warm. I want him to come back to me in one piece.” Nani Flowers, unity and connection in familial relationships, p9

“old paka” (p11). Insulting yet endearing.

“I won’t have anything to do with her” p12 Koro Apirana re Kahu

“I’m really going to divorce him” (sarcasm)

“Yeah, yeah, yeah” repetition, monosyllabic: dismissive

“You have become her guardians.” theme of responsibility and protection

“He’ll come around’. The trouble was, though, that he never did.” p27 Nani/ Narrator

“I blame myself for this. It’s all my fault.” Koro p117

“You’re right, dear. I’ve been no good.” p118 Koro

“His face was fill with understanding.” p118

“...this time he was genuinely relieved to see her” p87 Rawiri our narrator noticing Koro’s change towards Nani after the violence towards the whales.

Love and Communication

“Your birth cord is here....You will never be lost to us.” p22 (Nani to Kahu)

“...the old paka. Hungry for his love...” / “divorce”

“...she flung herself into his arms...”

“...crying ‘Oh Paka. You home now, you Paka....” Kahu to Koro

3. Identity

Preservation of identity: Māori culture and the choice to live a Westernised non-Māori life. Individual identity vs Tribal history and identity. Interlinking themes: Names – People and Places, Power, Identity.

How does the idea of tradition develop across the novel? Or become more apparent?

Develops the closeness of the family (opportunity for unity), and conversely creates tension.

Symbolic of the older generation's responsibility and the importance of respect.

Tradition existing for the protection of nature and 'Aotearoa' (Maori's New Zealand). Later anglicized by Cook, 1769.

Identity (preservation).

Individual identity vs Māori history and identity.

'Sparkling like a galaxy was a net of radioactive death'

"hiding the way they lived was one way maintaining the respect..." p49

Aotearoa, 'land of the long white cloud', which is what the Maoris' call New Zealand.

Motif: Māori phrases

"Kohanga Reo" (Māori language school)

"belittling Kahutia Te Rangi's prestige" (giving a girl his name).

"This whale...its singing karanga mai" p90 - formal call, ceremonial call, welcome call, call - a ceremonial call of welcome to visitors onto a marae

"Karanga mai" repetition p101 Kahu calling to the whale.

"The establishment of Kohanga Reo, or language nests, where young children could learn the Māori language" – p30
metaphorical 'nest' of nurturing, fear of losing heritage language.

"Hui e, haumi e, taiki e. Let it be done." p115

"No wai te he? He shouted. 'Where lies the blame?'" p89 Koro

"in the loose soil. As she placed the birth cord in, she said a prayer." religious imagery, cyclical representation

"fermented corn...Maori food..." p27 Nani

"....Kahutia Te Rangi on his whale...I heard a whale sounding...Let it be done."

Tradition

"I won't have anything to do with her" p12 Koro Apirana re Kahu

"belittling Kahutia Te Rangi's prestige" p14 (giving a girl his name).

"Your birth cord is here....You will never be lost to us." p22 (Nani to Kahu)

4. Equality

Kahu's right to leadership. Questioning of women in power. Conflict between perceived importance of male lineage and right of women. Tradition vs modernity. Interlinking themes: Courage, Māori Culture and Traditions, Legends (of The Whale Rider), Leadership, Hope

How does the idea of gender develop across the novel? Or become more apparent?

Resistance to the allowance of women into tribal leadership.

Stubbornness re change and perspective of disrespect. Koro's fear of tradition being lost due to change brought by the inclusion of women.

Realisation later comes in the narrative; acceptance of leadership coming from any gender; moving beyond the domestic sphere.

How does the idea of hope develop across the novel? Or become more apparent?

The novella centers around the hope towards breaking gender expectations and limiting norms.

Hope to restore man's connection and 'oneness' with nature, not only for the environment but Māori spiritually.

Koro Apirana's hope to retain culture. Nani Flowers hope in Kahu.

Aligning Kahu Paikea to Kahutia Te Rangi in the narrative perhaps even suggests Rawiri reflection and hope in her.

Equality, Leadership, Femininity

"first-born child would be linked to her father's people..." re Rehua (Kahu's mother)

"You'll fix him up, the old paka, when you get older." p42

'Girls can do anything these days'; Nani Flowers - she hopes that he sees the error of his ways and eventually makes Koro accept Kahu

"disgusted...She has broken the male line of descent in our tribe..." p10 Koro

"I will have nothing to do with her" p10 Koro

"Kahutia Te Rangi, a man's name...ancestor of our village" p10

"Koro Apriana felt that naming a girl child after the founder of our tribe was belittling Kahutia Te Rangi's prestige." p14

"asking the gods to give her the right and open the way for her to take charge" metaphor p15

"Now I shall make myself a man" Italicised declarative (Muriwai)

"first-born child would be linked to her father's people" Metaphor p16 honour her husband by choosing a name from his people.

"He wouldn't trample on my Muriwai blood as much as you have" p118 (Nani re Waari, teasing Koro)

"Your Muriwai blood," Koro Apriana said. 'Always too strong for me.' p120

"proud that Muriwai's blood flows in my veins" Nani

"asking the gods to give her the right" narrator

"man assumed a cloak of arrogance and set himself up above the Gods" Koro to the meeting house p93

"the spear, soaring in the sky, came to rest in the earth where the afterbirth of a female child would be placed." p114

"sacred ancestor...I am Kahu...Ko Kahutia Te Rangi" p101

"I am not afraid to die," she whispered to herself" p107 (martyrdom - the suffering of death on account of adherence to a cause and especially to one's religious faith)

"You know what the natives are like, always drinking" p51 Jeff's mother demonstrating prejudice re Jeff going to Papua New Guinea.

"...eaten up by all them cannibals" p52 Nani Flowers re Rawiri going to Papua New Guinea; prejudice against another marginalised group

"I was still too dark" - p53

"They weren't embarrassed, but hiding the way they lived was one way of maintaining the respect..." p49 (Rawiri describing his cousins re their personal renaming in Australia)

5. Māori Motifs

A motif is a reoccurring idea, image or symbol in a text.

Māori phrase: ‘hui e, haumi e, taiki e’ – join everything together, bind it together, let it be done’ – **reminder of broken relationships** (nature and family)

Image of spears – Paikea’s spears, Rawiri observes spear-like rain, during the whale-hunt harpoons are used. Emphasising the loss of ‘oness’ with the natural marine world.

Koro’s and Nani’s **dismissive language**. Koro’s phrase: ‘Te mea te mea’ meaning ‘yeah, yeah’. Although mid-way through the novel Koro announces that waomen have no power, Nani uses his phrase against him inverting the motif and shifting the power.

Language and Structure

Similes – consistent and significant image of the spear.

Tense – Rawiri’s narrative is written in the past tense. Ihimaera switches to present tense; emphasising the immediacy of the horror Rawiri feels at certain points e.g., ‘The whale is still alive...The men are laughing as they wrench the jaw from the butchered whale.’ (Present tense used when a group of men are captured on camera cutting the jaw off a still-living whale with a chainsaw).

Suspense

The beginning establishes immediately Kahu will be a significant person in the lives of her tribe, but we are not told how or why: ‘it was Kahu’s intervention which perhaps saved us all’.

Italicised sections are used to highlight the inclusion of the whales’ story, possibly linking the work to magic realism and the legend of Kahutia Te Rangi, founder of Whangara and the original Polynesian whale rider.

Note: magic realism is a literary genre that combines realistic plot with supernatural elements.

Context, Quotations and Examiner Comments



Thematic Context

AO4 (context) is worth 50% of the marks.

Half of the marks for this question will come from blending context into your essay points. It is vital you revise the context of the novel. Continue to use discourse markers to connect your context to the writer's purpose.

- “Ihimaera may want to convey....”
- “Ihimaera may be reiterating/ establishing...”
- “Ihimaera seeks to illustrate...”

Please see the mark scheme below:

Level	Mark	AO1 Demonstrate a close knowledge and understanding of texts, maintaining a critical style and presenting an informed personal engagement AO4 Show understanding of the relationships between texts and the contexts in which they were written
	0	No rewardable material.
Level 1	1–8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited knowledge and understanding of the text. The response is simple with little evidence of personal engagement or critical style. There is little comment on the relationship between text and context. Limited use of relevant examples in support.
Level 2	9–16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some knowledge and understanding of the text. The response may be largely narrative with some evidence of personal engagement or critical style. There is some comment on the relationship between text and context. Some use of relevant examples in support.
Level 3	17–24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sound knowledge and understanding of the text. The response shows relevant personal engagement and an appropriate critical style. There is relevant comment on the relationship between text and context. Use of clearly relevant examples in support.
Level 4	25–32	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thorough knowledge and understanding of the text. The response shows thorough personal engagement and a sustained critical style. There is a detailed awareness of the relationship between text and contexts. Use of fully relevant examples in support.
Level 5	33–40	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assured knowledge and understanding of the text. The response shows assured personal engagement and a perceptive critical style. Understanding of the relationship between text and context is integrated convincingly into the response. Discriminating use of relevant examples in support.

General Context

- through his novel, Ihimaera explores Māori culture, traditions and legends. The traditional male-dominated leadership of the Māori tribe and expected gender roles are challenged.
- the novel's structure in four sections, Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter, supports the cyclical journey of life
- the legend of Paikea (Kahutia Te Rangi) and Koro's desire and obsession for a patrilineal descendant determine Koro's treatment of Kahu and the reactions of his wife
- Māori beliefs and customs are central to this novel: the legend of Kahutia Te Rangi (Paikea) and the survival of the whales will ensure that humans and the natural world can live in harmony. Worldwide concern led to an international ban on whaling in 1986

The Natural World and Whaling

- The Whale Rider was published during a time when the testing of nuclear arms was prevalent and nuclear test sites were very much a concern. In the novel, the whale herd mourns the death of some calves following nuclear testing at Moruroa.

Environmentalists were also concerned about whaling and in 1986 an international ban on commercial whaling was imposed

- in 1946, New Zealand became a founding member of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) that monitors the world's whale population and advocates whale conservation
- the contamination of the oceans from nuclear testing and the melting of the ice cap, because of global warming, has resulted in damage to the natural world and has had an adverse effect on whales

The beaching of the whales in the novel is possibly a direct result of human activity.

Mankind's Connection with Nature

The natural settings and the relationship between nature and man are central to the novel, for example, the legend of the ancestral whale rider, Kahutia Te Rangi or Paikea. This connection also links with Kahu and her own identity.

Customs and traditions are rooted in the preservation and survival of nature. The legend of the ancestral whale rider, Kahutia Te Rangi or Paikea, is echoed in Kahu's story.

Mankind's Connection with Nature

- natural settings and the relationship between nature and man are central to the novel. For example, the legend of the ancestral whale rider, Kahutia Te Rangi or Paikea, is replicated with Kahu

The bull whale changes the herd's route to New Zealand after some of their calves were killed by a nuclear test near the island of Moruroa

Project Jonah was established in 1974 in New Zealand to protect and conserve marine mammals.

Friends of the Earth was established in America in 1969 and is an international network of seventy-four countries dedicated to environmental concerns

- The Whale Rider was published in 1987, during a time when the testing of nuclear arms was prevalent and nuclear test sites were very much a concern. In the novel, the whale herd mourns the death of some calves following nuclear testing at Moruroa. In 1985, the Greenpeace ship, Rainbow Warrior, protesting about nuclear testing, was sunk in Auckland harbour

Mankind's Connection with Nature

- the natural settings and the relationship between nature and man are central to the novel. Kahu is bound to nature and is able to communicate spiritually with the creatures of the sea

- conservationists, such as Greenpeace, Project Jonah and Friends of the Earth, work tirelessly to protect and preserve marine life. The whale herd is faced with the devastating effects of nuclear testing.

The novel was published in 1987, not long after Greenpeace had headed protests in 1986 following nuclear testing, carried out by the French at Moruroa, and the Chernobyl nuclear disaster.

- whaling was a part of New Zealand's culture and identity. The first European settlers established whaling stations and in 1839 there were approximately 200 whaling ships.

Whaling declined when the number of whales dropped dramatically in 1946, New Zealand became a founding member of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) that monitors the world's whale population and advocates whale Conservation

- the whale herd is faced with the devastating effects of nuclear testing. The novel was published in 1987, not long after Greenpeace had headed protests in 1986 following nuclear testing carried out by the French at Moruroa, and the Chernobyl nuclear disaster.

Mankind's Connection with Nature

- The Whale Rider was published in 1987 during a time of increased fears about the environment and the effects of nuclear technology. Environmentalists were also voicing their fears about whaling and, in 1986, an international ban on commercial whaling was imposed

- fears for the survival of nature are explored, such as the 'contamination' of the seas and 'the effects of the undersea radiation' as a result of nuclear testing

The survival of nature is described against all odds, such as the 'contamination' of the seas and 'the effects of the undersea radiation' as a result of nuclear testing

- the novel is structured in four sections: Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter. The seasons represent the journeys made and lessons learned and echo the cyclical nature of the novel

- the whale herd is faced with the devastating effects of nuclear testing. Greenpeace headed protests in 1986 following nuclear testing carried out by the French at Moruroa and to highlight the effects of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster.

- New Zealand has experienced cultural change. Whaling has been a part of the country's culture and identity. The first European settlers established whaling stations and in 1839 there were approximately 200 whale ships. Whaling declined when the number of whales dropped dramatically.

Mankind's Connection with Nature

In 1946, New Zealand became a founding member of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) that monitors the world's whale population and advocates whale Conservation

- The Whale Rider was published in 1987, during a time when the testing of nuclear weapons and nuclear test sites were very much in the news.

In 1985, the Greenpeace ship, Rainbow Warrior, was sunk in Auckland harbour. In the novel, the herd of whales is mourning the death of some calves, which are killed as a result of a nuclear test at Moruroa

- when the whales beach themselves, conservationists and environmental groups come to help with the rescue attempts: 'Greenpeace, Project Jonah and Friends of the Earth'. Greenpeace is a non-political environmental organization established in 1971 with offices all over the world. Its head office is in Amsterdam.

- Rawiri's experiences in Papua New Guinea make him realise his love for nature. At the coffee plantation, he realises the power of nature and how it can defeat human exploitation: 'Man might carve his identification mark on the earth but, once he ceases to be vigilant, Nature will take back what man had once achieved to please his vanity'.

Mankind's Connection with Nature

- Ihimaera published the novel in 1987, a time when there were increased concerns about the environment and the effect nuclear technology was having upon the natural world.
- The Whale Rider was published in 1987, when there was much concern about nuclear testing.
- whaling was a part of New Zealand's culture and identity. The first European settlers established whaling stations and in 1839 there were approximately 200 whale ships. Whaling declined when the number of whales dropped dramatically
- the whale herd is faced with the devastating effects of nuclear testing. The novel was published in 1987, not long after Greenpeace had headed protests in 1986 following nuclear testing carried out by the French at Moruroa and the Chernobyl nuclear disaster.

Language and Communication: Māori phrases

- the Māori phrase Hui e, haumi e, taiki e is central to the novel and characters' fears and hopes for the future. 'Join everything together, bind it together, let it be done' reminds the reader of the broken relationship between humanity and nature. Characters and readers are reminded of the importance of 'oneness'
- the novel refers to Aotearoa, 'land of the long white cloud', which is what the Maoris call New Zealand. The Maoris have inhabited Aotearoa since 1300 AD, long before the islands were sighted by a Dutch explorer, Abel Tasman, in the 1640s and he renamed them Nova Zeelandia. The British explorer, James Cook, anglicised the name to New Zealand in 1769
- the preservation of the Māori language is essential to the tribe and the repeated Māori phrase, 'hui e, haumi e, taiki e' (join everything together, bind it together, let it be done) is central to the desire of bringing the natural world and humans together again.

Koro is determined to teach future generations Māori language and culture; Koro is the leader of the Whangara Māori community and he desires to find a suitable successor (informing his belief that the successor should be male)

- the use of the Māori language is significant in preserving the identity of the tribe against the threats of modern communication and technology. Koro is determined to teach future generations the Māori language and culture and he is hesitant to embrace new technologies.

Language and Communication: Māori phrases

- Porourangi is named after a great ancestor. The ancestor had united and led the descent lines of all the people of Te Tai Rawhiti in the Ngati Porou confederation and the ancestor's younger brother, Tahu Potiki, founded the Southern Island's Kai Tahu confederation

Nanny's real name is Putiputi, which means 'flowers' in the Māori language.

Identity

- Rawiri's experiences of travelling to Australia and Papua New Guinea serve as a way to explore Māori identity outside New Zealand. Rawiri's experiences abroad also provide contrasts between the modern Westernised world and his traditional Māori identity
- through Rawiri's travels, he learns what it is like to be different and the racism that exists. The mother of his friend, Jeff, considers Rawiri 'too dark' and likens him to 'dogs and strays'
- Rawiri's experiences of travelling to Australia and Papua New Guinea serve as a way to explore Māori identity outside New Zealand and highlight the importance of family.

Identity

- in one of Porourangi's letters to Rawiri, he tells him about his trip to Raukawa with Koro to see how the Maoris there were preparing the youth for the future.

Porourangi is impressed with what he sees, but Koro is concerned. Porourangi is worried about the future and wants to prepare his people for 'new challenges and the new technology'.

- Kahu loves Māori food, culture and language. Nanny Flowers calls her a 'throwback', suggesting that she has characteristics of her ancestors
- Rawiri experiences racism typical of the time when he is in Papua New Guinea and observes Jeff's family's poor treatment of a labourer. It makes him even closer to his Māori heritage

Equality

- the success of preserving Māori customs and traditions is central to the novel and is what Koro is desperate to achieve. When Koro learns that he has a grand-daughter, he is disappointed and initially 'won't have anything to do with her'

Equality

- Kahu finds herself trapped by gender roles and it is only her successful relationship with the whales that persuades Koro that she is a worthy leader
- the male-dominated society is challenged by the strong female characters of Nanny Flowers and Kahu. The legend of Kahutia Te Rangi, or Paikea, and Koro's desire and obsession for a patrilineal descendant determine Koro's treatment of Kahu and the reactions of his wife
- Ihimaera published the novel in 1987 and was inspired to write it after his two young daughters complained that the heroic characters in the books that they had read were all male. The daughters wanted a story with a heroic female character

Equality

- Koro is the head of the male-dominated Māori society and guardian of Māori customs.
- this tension relates to the legend of Paikea (Kahutia Te Rangi). Koro's desire and obsession for a patrilineal descendant determine his treatment of Kahu and the reactions of his wife.

Koro hopes that Porourangi, now re-married to Ana, will 'have a son next time'. However, Koro comes to understand that salvation can be embodied in female form and that his bloodline and ancestry must disregard assumptions about male superiority

- strong-willed women such as Nanny Flowers live in a patriarchal society. The role of women and their place in Māori society are challenged by Nanny and Kahu: tradition dictates that a boy should be the leader of the tribe

Equality

- Māori genealogy and legendary women are explored through Nanny Flower's ancestry. Strong women in Nanny's lineage include Mihi, who asserted her seniority over a chief, and Muriwai, who took the place of a man to save some of her tribe from drowning.
- as narrator, Rawiri is sympathetic to the female Kahu and comments 'it was Kahu's intervention which perhaps saved us all', demonstrating Kahu's value, even though female, to Māori society
- Kahu and Nanny Flowers both challenge social conventions. They are both strong-willed women living in a misogynistic society.
- the novel was published in 1987 and was written by Ihimaera for his two daughters who wanted a story with a female who was strong, courageous and heroic

Equality

- Kahu and Nanny Flowers both show courage when they challenge social conventions. They are both strong-willed women living in a misogynistic society

- when Koro learns that he has a great-granddaughter, he is disappointed and will not have anything to do with her. He cannot 'reconcile his traditional beliefs about Māori leadership and rights with Kahu's birth'; however, once Kahu proves her courage and leadership skills, Koro realises that he has been mistaken

- when Koro learns that he has a granddaughter, he is disappointed and will not have anything to do with her. He cannot 'reconcile his traditional beliefs about Māori leadership and rights with Kahu's birth'. Koro is the head of the male dominated Māori society and guardian of Māori customs, language and beliefs.

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Koro comes to understand that salvation can be embodied in female form and that his bloodline and ancestry must disregard assumptions about male superiority.

- Kahu and Nanny Flowers both challenge social conventions. They are both strong-willed women living in a misogynistic society.

Equality

- Koro is head of the male-dominated Māori society. He is guardian of Māori customs, language and beliefs and is a part of a wider movement to support Māori heritage and land rites. Koro comes to understand that salvation can be embodied in female form and that his bloodline and ancestry must disregard assumptions about male superiority.

Koro hopes that Porourangi will 'have a son next time' so that there is a male heir to lead the tribe in the future

- the role of powerful women such as Kahu and Nanny Flowers, and how they survive in a misogynistic society, is explored; this tradition dictates that a boy should be the leader of the tribe

Equality

- Koro comes to understand that salvation can be embodied in female form and that his bloodline and ancestry must disregard assumptions about male superiority

The narrator, Rawiri, is sympathetic to the female Kahu and comments 'it was Kahu's intervention which perhaps saved us all': it demonstrates Kahu's value, even though she is female, to Māori society

Kahu and Nanny Flowers both challenge social conventions. They are both strong-willed women living in a misogynistic society.

- strong-willed women such as Nanny Flowers survive in a patriarchal society. The role of women and their place in Māori society are challenged by Nanny and Kahu; tradition dictates that a boy should be the leader of the tribe
- Koro's stubborn affections are guided by Māori traditions and culture; his desire for a male heir to succeed him leads him to ignore Kahu's qualities and her love for him
- Kahu finds herself trapped by gender roles and it is only her relationship with the whales that persuades Koro that she is a worthy leader.
- the male-dominated society is challenged by the strong female characters of Nanny Flowers and Kahu

The role of women is restricted in Māori society; tradition dictates that a boy should be the leader of the tribe

Strong-willed women such as Kahu and Nanny Flowers strive to survive in a misogynistic society.

The traditional role of women and their place in Māori society dictate that a boy should be the leader of the tribe

- the male-dominated society is challenged by the strong female characters of Nanny Flowers and Kahu

Tradition

There are contrasts and struggles between traditional values and modernity and these affect characters and their survival in an everchanging world

Koro Apirana teaches Māori culture, tradition and history and desires to find a suitable successor

- Māori customs and traditions are central to the novel. Koro believes that only a select few can speak with the whales

Tradition

- Māori customs and traditions are central to the novel and are what Koro is desperate to preserve. The burying of Kahu's afterbirth is one custom that creates tension between Koro and Nanny
- the role of women is restricted in Māori society; tradition dictates that a boy should be the leader of the tribe
- it is Māori tradition to bury the birth cord of a newborn child
- at times, Koro's determination to preserve Māori customs and traditions causes friction and he appears to be a dislikeable person. The burying of Kahu's afterbirth is one custom that creates tension between Koro and Nanny
- the Māori traditions, language and culture are central to the novel. Nanny Flowers is important as she maintains traditions. She is involved with the burying of Kahu's birth cord in the marae and is able to influence her traditionalist husband to accept a female, Kahu, as a future leader
- Māori customs and traditions are central to the novel and are what Koro is desperate to preserve. The burying of Kahu's afterbirth is one custom that creates tension between Koro and Nanny

Kahu is named after the tribal great ancestor Kahutia Te Rangi, who is later given another name, Paikea

- Koro's fears are guided by Māori traditions and culture; his desire for a male heir to succeed him leads him to ignore Kahu's qualities and her love for him.
- Māori traditions, language and culture are central to the novel. Nanny Flowers is important as she maintains traditions. She is involved with the burying of Kahu's afterbirth in the marae and is able to influence her traditionalist husband to accept a female, Kahu, as a future leader.
- family members in the novel have inherited names from great ancestors, such as Kahu's being named after the legend of Paikea and Porourangi who is in turn named after an ancestor who had united and led the descent lines of all the people of Te Tai Rawhiti in the Ngati Porou confederation

Tradition

- Whangara is a small Māori community in the northeast of New Zealand's North Island. In 1961 the original Whangara Kapa Haka Group was formed and, since then, the Whangara elders have supported the group in keeping their customs and traditions alive.

Kahu is determined to be identified as worthy in her great grandfather's eyes. Kahu values the importance of Māori language and cultural identity (evident through her reciting her Whakapapa - her Māori genealogy, a line of descent from ancestors down to the present day).

Māori mythology

- Māori have a number of legends that explain aspects of their past. These legends are passed down from generation to generation by tribal leaders or priests, such as Koro. Kahu was banished from these classes, as Māori culture dictated that females were unworthy of leading the tribe

These legends

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the novel is in the magical realism genre: a style of art or literature that depicts fantastic or mythological subjects in a realistic manner.

- the novel is in the Magical Realism genre: a style of art or literature that depicts fantastic or mythological subjects in a realistic manner.
- Kahutia Te Rangi, or Paikea, is a Polynesian god and, in Māori mythology, is the successful and revered founder of the Ngati Porou tribe in Whangara
- Paikea is one of the Ancients, a group of Polynesians who were ancestors of the Māori and who settled in New Zealand, or Aotearoa as it was known, long before European settlers
- the legend of Kahutia Te Rangi, or Paikea, is very symbolic for the Māori tribe led by Koro. The bull whale has an ancient Māori tattoo that is also very symbolic for the tribe. Kahu is destined to become the chief of the tribe owing to her special skills and her links with the whales and Kahutia Te Rangi
- Kahutia Te Rangi is a Polynesian god and, in Māori mythology, is the founder of the Ngati Porou tribe in Whangara
- Kahutia Te Rangi is the courageous ancestral whale rider who began the Whangara tribe. The legend of the whale rider is central to Māori customs and belief

Māori mythology

- Paikea is a Polynesian god and, in Māori mythology, the founder of the Ngati Porou tribe in Whangara. Other references to Māori traditions, language and culture feature throughout the novel, such as the tradition of burying the birth cord and Nanny Flowers' involvement with this demonstrate her determination and power
- Paikea is the Polynesian god of sea monsters. The name is also used to refer to the mythical person who began the Ngati Porou tribe in Whangara on the East Coast of Aotearoa.
- Paikea is the founder of the Ngati Porou tribe in Whangara
- the great ancestor, Porourangi, united the people of Te Tai Rawhiti, which is now known as the Ngati Porou confederation
- the legend of Paikea (Kahutia Te Rangi) is grounded in cultural heritage. Paikea is the Polynesian god of sea monsters. The name is also used to refer to the mythical person who began the Ngati Porou tribe in Whangara on the East Coast of Aotearoa.
- the legend of Kahutia Te Rangi or Paikea is very symbolic to the Māori tribe led by Koro. The bull whale has an ancient Māori tattoo that is very symbolic to the tribe. Kahu is destined to become the chief of the tribe owing to her special skills and her links with the whales and Paikea
- the legend of Paikea is central to the plot. Paikea is the Polynesian god of sea monsters. The name is also used to refer to the mythical person who began the Ngati Porou tribe in Whangara on the East Coast of Aotearoa
- Māori legend has it that Paikea came from Hawaiki to Whangara, riding on the back of a taniwha, a water monster. He had escaped drowning when his whaka capsized

Māori mythology

- Maoris believe in the 'life-giving forces in the form of spears' that were brought from the House of Learning to the island by Kahutia Te Rangi. It is believed that these spears 'gave instructions on how man might talk with beasts' and 'taught oneness', how mankind and nature can live in harmony.
 - the legend of Paikea (Kahutia Te Rangi) and Koro's desire and obsession for a male descendant determine Koro's treatment of Kahu and the reactions of his wife. However, Koro comes to understand that salvation can be embodied in female form and that his bloodline and ancestry must disregard assumptions about male superiority.
- Māori legend has it that Paikea came from Hawaiki to Whangara, riding on the back of a water monster or taniwha. He had escaped drowning when his canoe or waka capsized

Māori mythology

- the legend of Paikea (Kahutia Te Rangi) and Koro's desire and obsession for a patrilineal descendant determine Koro's treatment of Kahu and the reactions of his wife

Māori legend has it that Paikea came from Hawaiki to Whangara, riding on the back of a water monster or 'taniwha'. He had escaped drowning when his canoe or 'waka' capsized

- Māori customs, legends and traditions are central to the novel, such as the legend of Kahutia Te Rangi, the original whale rider and Kahu being symbolic of the last spear of Paikea.

Five Key Quotations

'Man might carve his identification mark on the earth but, once he ceases to be vigilant, Nature will take back what man had once achieved to please his vanity'

'Man might carve his identification mark on the earth'
'Nature will take back what man had once achieved to please his vanity'

'Sparkling like a galaxy was a net of radioactive death'

'We tried to bolster her courage by clapping loudly'

'Hui e, haumi e, taiki e (Join everything together, bind it together, let it be done)'

'When it dies, we die, I die'

Exam Board Quotations

Characters

Koro

'won't have anything to do with her' - Koro reaction to Kahu's birth

'Super Māori' - what the family and the community fondly call Koro

'Boy or girl, it doesn't matter ... I love you' - Koro understands his mistake

'deaf, dumb, blind and stubborn' - Nani to Koro when he begins to see Kahu's worth as she retrieves the stone (when the other boys have failed)

'old Waari over the hill' - Koro jokingly suggests Nani should divorce him

'When it dies, we die, I die' - Koro fears for the future and loss of unity with nature

'we live also' - Koro's hopes for the future

'partnership' - Koro fears that the 'partnership' between humans and the natural world ended when commercial hunters began killing the whales

cannot 'reconcile his traditional beliefs about Māori leadership and rights with Kahu's birth' - when Koro learns that he has a great-granddaughter, he is disappointed and will not have anything to do with her

'have a son next time' - Koro hopes that Porourangi will have a male heir

'sacred knowledge' - Koro as a tribal leader and a guardian

'It is a reminder of the oneness which the world once had' - Koro displays wisdom and has a close affinity with the whales

'Something's going on' - He has an instinctive awareness of portents

'the Gods to forgive him' - At the end of the novel, when he goes to Kahu's bedside at the hospital

'The old man cradled Kahu in his arms, partly because of emotion and partly because he didn't want those big ears out there to hear their big chief crying' - When Kahu regains consciousness, he tells her that he loves her.

'bald man with no teeth' - Koro's physicality presents him to be a figure of fun

'Them's the rules' - Koro will not allow women to attend the Māori lessons

'old Paka' - Koro's nickname by members of his family.

'jumped into the rowboat and made out to sea' - Koro is angry that the baby is a girl and leaves; little affection is demonstrated by him

'I blame myself for this. It's all my fault' - When Kahu is returned to her people and recovering in hospital, Koro admits that he has been wrong

'heavily on his mind' - Koro struggles with the idea of modernisation

'Yeah, yeah, yeah' - Koro initially rejects Kahu and is berated by Nanny Flowers for it. He has no answer to Nanny Flowers

“Go away,” Koro Apirana would thunder' - he will not allow Kahu to attend any tribal meetings or Kohanga Reo

Rawiri

'Man might carve his identification mark on the earth but, once he ceases to be vigilant, Nature will take back what man had once achieved to please his vanity' - Rawiri sees the destruction of the land, but is hopeful when he realises that the power of nature can defeat human exploitation

'I doubt it could ever be tamed of its temperatures ... but we tried' and 'Nature will take back what man had once achieved' - Rawiri contemplates the natural world is normally victorious

'helpful partnership' - Koro Apirana and Rawiri recall former times between humans and the natural world
'battle' - Rawiri describes the relationship with nature

'tried to bolster her courage by clapping loudly' - Rawiri and Nani. Kahu invites her family to a school ceremony but is upset when Koro does not attend.

'it was Kahu's intervention which perhaps saved us all' - as narrator, Rawiri is sympathetic to the Kahu, demonstrating Kahu's value, even though she is a girl, to Māori society

'too dark' - Jeff's mother demonstrating racism towards Rawiri

'dogs and strays' - Jeff's mother likens Rawiri to animals. Through Rawiri's travels, he learns what it is like to be different and the racism that exists.

'lump in his throat' - Rawiri's reaction seeing Kahu upon his return to Whangara

'a sparkle and infectious giggle' - Rawiri describing Kahu

'hadn't realised how much' - Rawiri admits he missed Kahu

'inside and outside. She had no guile. She had no envy. She had no jealousy' - Rawiri is surprised by Kahu's kindness. Kahu surprises Rawiri by showing him his motorbike, which she has lovingly cleaned every week during his absence.

his 'heart was aching for her' - During Kahu's break-up ceremony she recites Koro's whakapapa (genealogy/ line of ancestors), but Rawiri feels empathy as Koro does not turn up

'to do a haka of support for her' - Rawiri feels proud of Kahu at her break-up ceremony

'grew into an understanding' - Whilst travelling for two years (Sydney and Papua New Guinea), Rawiri experiences racism and he becomes homesick for Whangara

'felt so proud of her, so proud, and so sad that Koro Apirana was not there to hear how much she loved him' - Rawiri goes to Kahu's presentation

Nani

'But this time ... I'm really going to divorce him' Nani often threatens divorce, as part of their banter

'We don't argue ... He argues, and I win' Despite their banter, they are very close. She is very influential over her husband, Koro, and her family

'old paka' - Nanny's name for Koro

'you old paka', 'which was the affectionate name she always called our Koro' - Although they frequently banter, she adores her husband, Koro, and tries to teach him the errors of his ways

'Muriwai blood' - Koro attributes this to Nani's strength

'Girls can do anything these days' - Nani to Koro

'isn't any chief. I'm his chief' - Nanny is a descendant from a line of powerful Māori women such as Muriwai and Mihi Kotukutuku, who both had seniority over men.

'flowers' - Nani's real name is Putiputi, which means 'flowers'

'the stone in Nanny Flowers' hand' - Kahu retrieves the 'carved stone'

Rehua (Porourangi's first wife)

'to honour her husband by choosing a name from his people, not hers', - naming her daughter Kahutia Te Rangi or Kahu

'Rehua's folks' - Kahu continues living with her mother's side. It is not until she is six years old that she returns to Whangara to live with her father and his second wife, Ana.

'oneness' - The family is split and this is broken.

Porourangi

'lovely woman' - Rawiri comments on Porourangi's second wife, Ana.

'looked like they were in love' - Rawiri comments on Porourangi, who also has a second child (Putiputi).

'new challenges and the new technology' - Porourangi is worried about the future and wants to prepare his people

'organising its youth' - Porourangi goes with his grandfather, Koro, to Raukawa to see another tribe and learn

'an old whale stranded in an alien present' - Porourangi's description of Koro. Porourangi recognises that they must change and adapt in order to survive

'Porourangi gave the orders' - Porourangi takes a greater role in tribal matters as the story progresses. He accompanies Koro to the Southern island to settle a land dispute and is central to organising the desperate attempt to rescue the whales

'cultural practice' - during this Porourangi looks up at their ancestor, Paikea to note he misses Kahu, his daughter

'break up ceremony' - Porourangi, Rawiri and Nani attend Kahu's end of school term ceremony.

Porourangi knows that Koro will not be attending, but does not have the heart to tell his daughter.

'very lonely' - Porourangi returns to Whangara with Kahu and his new partner, Ana when Kahu is two.

'good letter writer' - Porourangi keeps Rawiri informed of the news from home. Porourangi informs Rawiri the six-year-old Kahu is returning to Whangara to live with him and Ana.

'the problems he felt were facing the Māori people' - in his letters, Porourangi expresses his concerns

'were hoping that the child would be a son' - in another letter, he informs Rawiri that he and Ana are expecting a child. The family and Koro wanted a son, but they have a daughter who they name Putiputi

Kahu

'break-up ceremony' - Kahu achieves praise for this performance

'East coast primary schools contest' - Kahu wins this for reciting the family's **whakapapa** entirely in the Māori language

'screwing up her courage, she started to kick the whale as if it was a horse' - The sacred bull whale that Kahu saves believes Kahu to be Kahutia Te Rangi because of her courage

'language nests': "Go away," Koro Apirana would thunder' - Koro will not allow Kahu to attend his Māori school

'sobbing her heart out' - Kahu would go to Nanny (Nani) Flowers when she wasn't allowed to attend the Māori language school

'steadfast' - Koro has steadfast opposition against Kahu being named after Kahutia Te Rangi

'belittling Kahutia Te Rangi's prestige' - Koro believes that naming a girl after the ancestor would be 'belittling'.

"A girl," Koro Apirana said, disgusted. "I will have nothing to do with her. She has broken the male line of descent" - Koro rejects Kahu

'best grandchild in the whole wide world' - It is only when Kahu's life is threatened that Koro tells Kahu that he loves her

'asked the Gods to forgive him' - Kahu's family keeps vigil by her bedside. Koro is so afraid that she will die

'boys' secretly bury Kahu's birth cord in 'a space in front of the meeting house' - Nani Flowers does this secretly

'spear flying through the air' - At the birth cord burial, Rawiri believes that he sees a spear landing nearby

'a small spear...at the spot where Kahu's birth cord had been placed' - Rawiri's observation in the marae immediately creates an affinity between Kahu and nature

'in sight of Kahutia Te Rangi' - Nani, Rawiri and the boys bury the birth cord so that Kahu is always protected

'Go away' - Koro continually rejects Kahu's longing for his love and acceptance

'We tried to bolster her courage by clapping loudly' - Nani and Rawiri supporting Kahu when Koro is not there.

'tears were again tracking down her face' - When Rawiri takes her to the cinema, they watch a film about a whale being hunted.

'she was so frightened. She was making a mewing sound in her throat. She seemed immobilised by terror' - Kahu overhears Koro telling the boys at the Kohanga Reo about his memories of whaling

'Nanny and me are hoeing the vegetable garden' - Even at the age of seven, Kahu enjoys gardening and growing vegetables with Nanny

'Kahu seemed to say, "Down here?" and the dolphins made a nodding motion' - Through magical realism, Kahu retrieves the stone that Koro threw into the depths of the sea that others could not reclaim

'seemed to be talking to her' - Kahu dives to retrieve the stone and in doing so is helped by the dolphins 'up on the bluff' - when two hundred whales die on the beach, Rawiri finds Kahu here

'She was making that mewing sound and then cocking her head to listen for a reply' - Kahu on the cliff when two hundred whales die on the beach

Kahu

'can't you hear them? I've been listening to them for ages ... the whales are still singing' - The bull whale brings Kahu back to lead her people successfully into the future. The novel ends with Kahu asking Koro why he can't hear the singing.

'throwback' - Kahu is a 'throwback', someone demonstrating characteristics of their ancestors of a previous age.

'was the sort that dropped off the edge of the table, like breadcrumbs after everybody else has had a big feed' - Rawiri describing Koro's love for Kahu (or lack thereof)

'people of Te Tai Rawiri' - Kahu is brought up by her late mother's family as her identity can only be secured at Whangara

'it was Kahu's intervention which perhaps saved us all' - As narrator, Rawiri is able to see Kahu's value

The Whales

'nuzzle their loved ones' - two hundred whales die when they come back to the shore to the beached whales

'When it dies, we die' - The whales are significant because they symbolise the survival of Māori culture and traditions

'handsome and virile' - the bull whale is anthropomorphised

'even in his lumbering years of age the whale would remember his adolescence' - the bull whale displaying nostalgia

'master' - The bull whale remembers when he was orphaned to Paikea

'their leader was turning his thoughts to the dangerous islands to the south-west' - the female whales are afraid the herd leader will lead them into danger

'dangerous islands' - Because the bull whale's mind is clouded by feelings of nostalgia, he leads the herd closer to the 'dangerous islands' of New Zealand where two hundred of them deliberately beach themselves.

'Four hundred leagues from Easter Island' - 'Summer'. The bull whale continues to recall memories of the time his master was the whale rider, Paikea

'Home of the Ancients' - 'Autumn', the area in Hawaiki was once a safe haven for the whales but the bull whale, concerned about radiation, leads the herd further south

'Sparkling like a galaxy was a net of radioactive death' - While the herd of whales rest in Hawaiki before travelling to Whangara, they manage to avoid a nuclear test

'flash of bright light' - a nuclear test kills seven young calves when they are feeding

The Whales

'is like seeing the end of the world' - The news reporter of Whangara are afraid when two hundred whales beach themselves.

'When it dies, we die. I die' - Following the loss of the herd, another large group of whales emerge and become beached, including the bull whale that has symbolic markings on it. Koro is fearful that if the bull whale dies it will signify the end of the tribe.

'whale sounding' - Rawiri hears a whale burying the birth cord, spiritually linking Kahu with the legend of the whale rider

'sacred whale' asks 'Do you wish to live?' - Koro and the tribe believes that their destiny depends on its ability to save this spiritual whale.

'old mother whale' - the ancient bull whale's mate, persuades him to return Kahu to the surface and back to Whangara. The bull whale is representative of Koro Apirana and his traditional attitudes; the mother whale represents Nanny Flowers

Exam Board Quotations

Thematic

Māori Culture

'Hui e, haumi e, taiki e (Join everything together, bind it together, let it be done)' - reminds the reader of the broken relationship between humanity and nature.

'**oneness**' - Characters and readers are reminded of the importance of unity. Kahu is eager to show her love to her grandfather and demonstrates a 'oneness' with her Māori heritage.

'**Kohanga Reo, or language nests**' - established by Koro

Aotearoa, '**land of the long white cloud**' - what the Maoris call New Zealand. The Maoris have inhabited Aotearoa since 1300 AD. The British explorer, James Cook, anglicised the name to New Zealand in 1769

'**ancestor of our village**' - Rawiri explains Kahutia Te Rangi is not only a man's name, but it is the name of the ancestor

'**the place washed by the eastern tide**' - Te Tai Rawhiti and the area where Kahutia Te Rangi first came ashore.

'**The Place of the Gods**' - beyond the horizon of Te Tai Rawhiti is the Hawaiki, the ancestral homeland of Polynesia.

'**Home of the Ancients**' - description of the sea trench at Hawaiki

'**Tawhiti Point, the Waiapu River, and Tihirau Mai Tawhiti**' - locations are significant to both culture and traditions as they are named after Paikea's homeland

'**water flowing to the sea**' - the meaning of the traditional Māori name, Reremoana. Rawiri's cousin later changes her name to Lola L'Amour

'**fame, fortune, power and success**' - Reremoana changes her name to seek this.

Māori Culture

'**mountains were like a stairway to heaven**' - the opening chapter describes the idyllic legendary mythical setting and creatures used to live in harmony with nature. The mythical location focuses on the arrival of a whale carrying its rider

'**language nests**' - cultural classes or Kohanga Reo held at the meeting house

'**people of the East Coast**' - Rawiri explains their genealogy to the reader, they were originally from Te Tai Rawhiti

Māori Culture

'in the Tuamotu Archipelago' - a nuclear test kills seven young calves when they are feeding here

'life-giving forces in the form of spears' - Maoris believe in spears that were brought from the House of Learning to the island by Kahutia Te Rangi.

'gave instructions on how man might talk with beasts' and 'taught oneness' - It is believed that these spears explained how mankind and nature can live in harmony.

'Hui e, haumi e, taiki e' ('join everyone together, bind it together, let it be done') - The use of the repeated motif, the Māori phrase reinforces the importance of repairing the relationship between man and nature

'first of the Ancients and ancestors had come from the east' - Rawiri's narrative provides additional information about the history of the tribe

Māori Legend/ Kahutia Te Rangi (later called Paikea)

'Waiting. Waiting for the seeing. Waiting for the gifting. Waiting for the blessing to come' - Nature in Whangara waiting for Kahutia Te Rangi, later called Paikea

'long and arduous' - Kahutia Te Rangi's journey

'taniwha' - Māori legend has it that Paikea came from Hawaiki to Whangara, riding on the back of a water monster or 'taniwha'

'waka' - Paikea's canoe which capsized, before he rode on the taniwha from Hawaiki to Whangara

'Let this be the one to flower when the people are troubled and it is most needed' - Paikea has life forces (mauri) in the form of wooden spears that he gives to the forests and seas. Paikea's final spear will not leave his hand, so he buries it for use in the future

'last journey' - in the legend, the bull whale swam with Kahutia Te Rangi and the whale remains obsessed with his memories. He returns to New Zealand to make his 'last journey'. When he deliberately beaches himself at Whangara, he is saved by Kahu who persuades him to swim back to sea.

Key words

virile (adjective)

having strength and energy (typically used of a man).

having or characterised by strength and energy.

portent

(noun) a sign or warning (like an omen) that a momentous or calamitous event is likely to happen.

marae

Māori meeting ground. A marae is a fenced-in complex of carved buildings and grounds that belongs to a particular iwi (tribe).

bluff

(noun) a steep cliff, bank

The Natural World

“contamination” and “the effects of the undersea radiation”

In the novel, the herd of whales are mourning the death of some calves that are killed as a result of a nuclear test at Moruroa.

“hairline fractures indicating serious damage”

“flash of bright light” relevance of context (1987 nuclear testing).

“streaks of blue lightning came shooting out of the sea like missiles” p90

“The rain was like spears..” p100

“suddenly shards of ice began to cascade like spears around the herd” p78

“The whale is still alive....working on the whale...triumphant....the men are laughing as they wrench the jaw from the butchered whale” p80

“Blood, laughing, pain, victory, blood.” p80

“Man might carve his identification mark on the earth but, once he ceases to be vigilant, Nature will take back what man had

once achieved to please his vanity”. (Rawiri at the coffee plantation in Papua New Guinea).

Language, Communication and Relationships

“Tell the old paka to keep warm. I want him to come back to me in one piece.” Nani Flowers, unity and connection in familial relationships, p9

“old paka” (p11). Insulting yet endearing.

“I won’t have anything to do with her” p12 Koro Apirana re Kahu

“I’m really going to divorce him” (sarcasm)

“Yeah, yeah, yeah” repetition, monosyllabic: dismissive (Koro to Nani)

“You have become her guardians.” theme of responsibility and protection

“He’ll come around’. The trouble was, though, that he never did.” p27 Nani/ Narrator

“I blame myself for this. It’s all my fault.” Koro p117

“You’re right, dear. I’ve been no good.” p118 Koro

“His face was full with understanding.” p118

“...this time he was genuinely relieved to see her” p87 Rawiri our narrator noticing Koro’s change towards Nani after the violence towards the whales.

Love and Communication

“Your birth cord is here....You will never be lost to us.” p22 (Nani to Kahu)

“....the old paka. Hungry for his love...” / “divorce”

“....she flung herself into his arms...”

“...crying ‘Oh Paka. You home now, you Paka....” Kahu to Koro

Identity (Preservation)

Individual identity vs Māori history and identity

“Sparkling like a galaxy was a net of radioactive death”

“hiding the way they lived was one way maintaining the respect...” p49

Aotearoa, “land of the long white cloud”, which is what the Maoris’ call New Zealand.

Motif: Māori phrases

“Kohanga Reo” (Māori language school)

“belittling Kahutia Te Rangi’s prestige” (giving a girl his name).

“This whale...its singing karanga mai” p90 - formal call, ceremonial call, welcome call, call - a ceremonial call of welcome to visitors onto a marae

“Karanga mai” repetition p101 Kahu calling to the whale.

“The establishment of Kohanga Reo, or language nests, where young children could learn the Māori language” – p30 metaphorical ‘nest’ of nurturing, fear of losing heritage language.

“Hui e, haumi e, taiki e. Let it be done.” p115

“No wai te he? He shouted. ‘Where lies the blame?’” p89 Koro

“in the loose soil. As she placed the birth cord in, she said a prayer.” religious imagery, cyclical representation

“fermented corn...Maori food...” p27 Nani

“....Kahutia Te Rangi on his whale...I heard a whale sounding...Let it be done.”

Tradition

“I won’t have anything to do with her” p12 Koro Apirana re Kahu

“belittling Kahutia Te Rangi’s prestige” p14 (giving a girl his name).

“Your birth cord is here....You will never be lost to us.” p22 (Nani to Kahu)

Identity

“You know what the natives are like, always drinking” p51 Jeff’s mother demonstrating prejudice re Jeff going to Papua New Guinea.

“...eaten up by all them cannibals” p52 Nani Flowers re Rawiri going to Papua New Guinea; prejudice against another marginalised group

“I was still too dark” – p53

“They weren’t embarrassed, but hiding the way they lived was one way of maintaining the respect...” p49 (Rawiri describing his cousins re their personal renaming in Australia)

Equality, Leadership, and Femininity

“first-born child would be linked to her father’s people...” re Rehua (Kahu’s mother)

“You’ll fix him up, the old paka, when you get older.” p42

“Girls can do anything these days” Nani Flowers - she hopes that he sees the error of his ways and eventually makes Koro accept Kahu

“disgusted...She has broken the male line of descent in our tribe...” p10 Koro

“I will have nothing to do with her” p10 Koro

“Kahutia Te Rangi, a man’s name...ancestor of our village” p10

“Koro Apirana felt that naming a girl child after the founder of our tribe was belittling Kahutia Te Rangi’s prestige.” p14

Equality, Leadership, and Femininity

“asking the gods to give her the right and open the way for her to take charge” metaphor p15

“*Now I shall make myself a man*” Italicised declarative (Muraiwai)

“first-born child would be linked to her father’s people” Metaphor p16 honour her husband by choosing a name from his people.

“He wouldn’t trample on my Muriwai blood as much as you have” p118 (Nani re Waari, teasing Koro)

“Your Muriwari blood,’ Koro Apriana said. ‘Always too strong for me.’” p120

“proud that Muriwari’s blood flows in my veins” Nani

“asking the gods to give her the right” Narrator Rawiri re Kahu

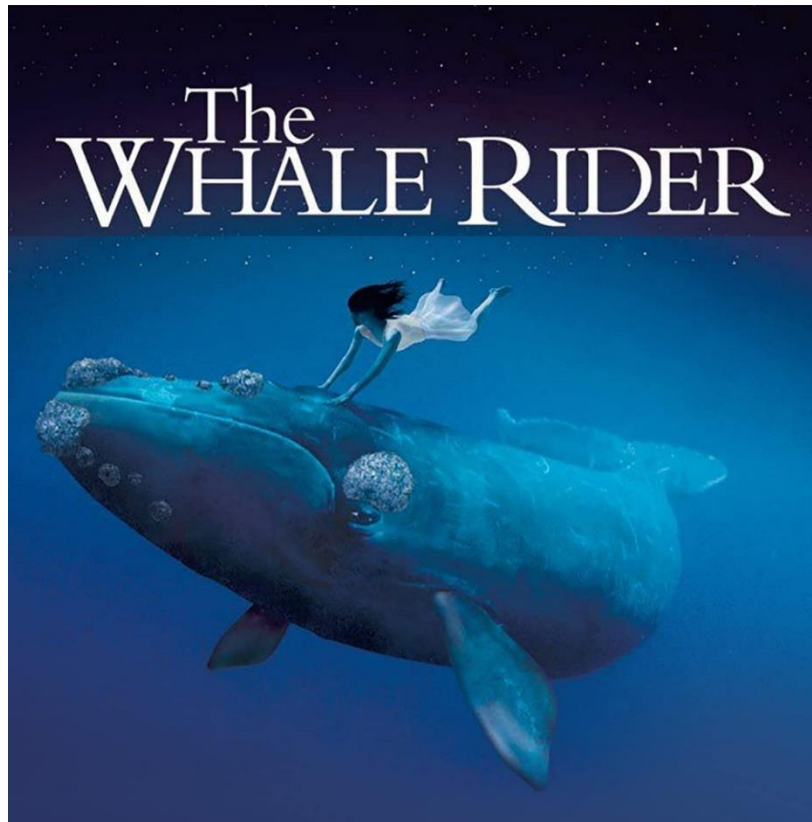
“man assumed a cloak of arrogance and set himself up above the Gods” Koro to the meeting house p93

“the spear, soaring in the sky, came to rest in the earth where the afterbirth of a female child would be placed.” p114

“sacred ancestor...I am Kahu...Ko Kahutia Te Rangi” p101

“I am not afraid to die,’ she whispered to herself” p107 (martyrdom - the suffering of death on account of adherence to a cause and especially to one's religious faith)

Past Exam Questions and Exam Board Suggested Guidance



Question	Paper Year	Page
Discuss the theme of success in The Whale Rider.	January 2023	44
In what ways is the relationship between Koro and Kahu important in the novel?	January 2023	45
'But this time ... I'm really going to divorce him.' (Nanny/Nani Flowers). How is marriage presented in the novel?	January 2023 Paper IR	46
Discuss the significance of the bull whale and his herd in The Whale Rider.	January 2023 Paper IR	48
In what ways are hopes and fears for the future significant in the novel?	June 2022	49
Discuss the relationship between Kahu and Nanny (Nani) Flowers in The Whale Rider.	June 2022	51
Examine the relationship between Kahu and her uncle, Rawiri .	June 2022 Paper IR	52
Discuss the importance of courage in The Whale Rider.	June 2022 Paper IR	54
' Koro Apirana is a successful tribal leader. ' How far do you agree with this statement?	January 2022	56
Discuss the importance of family in The Whale Rider.	January 2022	58
Explore the significance of the names of people and places in The Whale Rider.	January 2022 Paper IR	60
' Koro is a dislikeable character in the novel. ' How far do you agree with this view of Koro?	January 2022 Paper IR	61
Discuss the importance of locations in The Whale Rider.	November 2021	62
In what ways is Kahu significant in the novel?	November 2021	64
Discuss the importance of fear in The Whale Rider.	June 2021	65
'Kahu seemed to say, "Down here?" and the dolphins made a nodding motion.' Explore Kahu's relationship with the natural world in the novel.	June 2021	67
Explore one character who , in your opinion, has great power in The Whale Rider.	November 2020	68
In what ways is change important in the novel?	November 2020	70
In what ways is Kahu's father, Porourangi, important in the novel?	November 2020 Paper IR	71
Discuss the significance of Māori culture and traditions in The Whale Rider.	November 2020 Paper IR	73

'Koro Apirana is a cruel and heartless character in The Whale Rider.' How far do you agree with this view?	January 2020	75
Explore the significance of the legend of the whale rider in the novel.	January 2020	76
Discuss the importance of leadership in The Whale Rider.	January 2020 Paper IR	78
In what ways is Nanny (Nani) Flowers important in the novel?	January 2020 Paper IR	79
'The whales are very important characters in this novel.' How far do you agree with this view?	June 2019	81
Explore the theme of love in The Whale Rider.	June 2019	83
Explore the relationship between Kahu and the whales .	June 2019 Paper IR	84
Discuss the importance of different kinds of learning in The Whale Rider.	June 2019 Paper IR	86
Explore the relationship between Koro Apirana and Nanny Flowers in this novel.	January 2019	87
Discuss the significance of the natural world in The Whale Rider.	January 2019	89
Explore the relationship between Koro Apirana and Kahu in the novel.	January 2019 Paper IR	90
Discuss the significance of travelling in The Whale Rider.	January 2019 Paper IR	91
Explore the character of Kahu in this novel.	June 2018	92
'This novel is not only about the survival of some whales.' How important is the theme of survival in The Whale Rider?	June 2018	93
'This novel is all about identity.' How far do you agree with this view?	June 2018 Paper IR	95
Explore the character of Rawiri in The Whale Rider.	June 2018 Paper IR	96

Exam Board

Suggested Guidance (from past questions)

January 2023

8 Discuss the theme of success in *The Whale Rider*.

(AO4)

- Kahutia Te Rangi, or Paikea, is a Polynesian god and, in Māori mythology, is the successful and revered founder of the Ngati Porou tribe in Whangara
- the success of preserving Māori customs and traditions is central to the novel and is what Koro is desperate to achieve. When Koro learns that he has a granddaughter, he is disappointed and initially [‘won’t have anything to do with her’](#)
- Kahu finds herself trapped by gender roles and it is only her successful relationship with the whales that persuades Koro that she is a worthy leader
- conservationists, such as Greenpeace, Project Jonah and Friends of the Earth, work tirelessly to protect and preserve marine life. The whale herd is faced with the devastating effects of nuclear testing. The novel was published in 1987, not long after Greenpeace had headed protests in 1986 following nuclear testing, carried out by the French at Moruroa, and the Chernobyl nuclear disaster.

(AO1)

- success is demonstrated throughout the novel in various ways, both physically and emotionally
- the coming of Kahutia Te Rangi, later called Paikea, is successful when he settles on the land at Whangara. Nature has been [‘Waiting. Waiting for the seeing. Waiting for the gifting. Waiting for the blessing to come’](#). The journey has been [‘long and arduous’](#), but his arrival brings joy to the land
- Koro has achieved the position of tribal leader in Whangara, but is unsuccessful in his quest to find a male successor for the future generations. He successfully establishes the Kohanga Reo, or language nest, for the younger children and a language school for the adults, but Kahu is unsuccessful in her attempts to join Koro’s classes because they are for boys only. Koro is fondly referred to as [‘Super Māori’](#) by his family and the community
- Kahu achieves praise when she gives her [‘break-up ceremony’](#) speech. She is successful when she wins the [‘East coast primary schools contest’](#) for reciting the family’s whakapapa entirely in the Māori language. Despite her achievement, her grandfather, Koro, refuses to attend the ceremony

- Kahu is successful in retrieving the stone that Koro has thrown to the bottom of the seabed when the boys have failed. Her achievement is significant as it proves her worthy of being a future tribal leader
- despite some initial success by the tribe, and other organisations, in their attempts to return the beached whales to water, two hundred whales die when they come back to the shore to [‘nuzzle their loved ones’](#)
- it can be argued that the greatest success is when Kahu decides to ride the bull whale to ensure his survival. When Kahu climbs on the whale, he and the remaining herd return to the sea. This, according to Māori beliefs, saves the Māori tribe. Koro has feared that if the bull whale dies, the tribe will die
- at the end of the novel, Kahu successfully gains acceptance and love from Koro, who admits that he has made a mistake in rejecting Kahu, and tells her: [‘Boy or girl, it doesn’t matter ... I love you’](#).

January 2023

9 In what ways is the relationship between Koro and Kahu important in the novel?

(AO4)

- Māori customs and traditions are central to the novel and are what Koro is desperate to preserve. The burying of Kahu’s afterbirth is one custom that creates tension between Koro and Nanny
- the male-dominated society is challenged by the strong female characters of Nanny Flowers and Kahu. The legend of Kahutia Te Rangi, or Paikea, and Koro’s desire and obsession for a patrilineal descendant determine Koro’s treatment of Kahu and the reactions of his wife
- the legend of Kahutia Te Rangi, or Paikea, is very symbolic for the Māori tribe led by Koro. The bull whale has an ancient Māori tattoo that is also very symbolic for the tribe. Kahu is destined to become the chief of the tribe owing to her special skills and her links with the whales and Kahutia Te Rangi
- Ihimaera published the novel in 1987 and was inspired to write it after his two young daughters complained that the heroic characters in the books that they had read were all male. The daughters wanted a story with a heroic female character

(AO1)

- the relationship between Koro and Kahu is significant throughout the novel: the

story charts Koro's change and eventual acceptance of a female heir as tribal leader. Koro initially rejects Kahu, his great granddaughter, as he is disappointed about the birth of a girl rather than a boy

- Koro is upset that his great granddaughter is named Kahutia Te Rangi (Kahu), as he believes this should be a male heir's name. His wife, Nanny (Nani) Flowers, approves the name, despite knowing this will make him angry. Koro refuses to take part in the custom of burying Kahu's afterbirth, so Nanny Flowers arranges this herself with the help of Kahu's uncle, Rawiri
- despite Kahu's idolisation and adoration of Koro, he still rejects her. Kahu does everything in her power to learn her tribal history, customs and language in order to make her grandfather proud of her. Kahu secretly listens to her grandfather teaching the boys
- Nanny attempts to make her husband appreciate Kahu, but Koro stubbornly refuses to attend Kahu's end-of-school ceremony and her talk about him. Kahu has learned the family's whakapaka and recites it in Māori language, hoping to make her great grandfather proud of her
- Kahu retrieves the stone, a challenge Koro had set for the tribe's boys. Wisely, Nanny keeps the stone until she can use it in Kahu's favour. When Kahu climbs onto the bull whale's back, Nanny gives the stone to Koro to prove Kahu's worthy place as tribal leader, despite being female
- it is not until Kahu regains consciousness in the hospital that Koro tells his granddaughter that he loves her. Koro admits that he has been wrong about his treatment of Kahu and he realises that his granddaughter is precious, ['Boy or girl, it doesn't matter'](#).

January 2023 Paper 1R
8 'But this time ... I'm really going to divorce him.' (Nanny/Nani Flowers)
How is marriage presented in the novel?

(AO4)

- Māori customs and traditions are central to the novel. The burying of the afterbirth is one such custom that creates some tension in Koro's and Nanny's marriage
- this tension relates to the legend of Paikea (Kahutia Te Rangi). Koro's desire and obsession for a patrilineal descendant determine his treatment of Kahu and the reactions of his wife.

Koro hopes that Porourangi, now re-married to Ana, will 'have a son next time'. However, Koro comes to understand that salvation can be embodied in female form and that his bloodline and ancestry must disregard assumptions about male superiority

- Koro is the head of the male-dominated Māori society and guardian of Māori customs.

(AOI)

- the marriages portrayed in the novel are: Nanny (Nani) Flowers to Koro Apirana; Porourangi to Rehua and, later, Porourangi to Ana
- Nanny Flowers and Koro Apirana have been married for many years, but their relationship is full of arguments and disagreements. Nanny often threatens divorce: 'But this time ... I'm really going to divorce him'; however, they love each other dearly and know each other's strengths and weaknesses. Despite their banter, they are very close: 'We don't argue ... He argues, and I win'
- Nanny often insults Koro by calling him an 'old paka' and he blames Nanny's 'Muriwai blood' for her strength of character
- the relationship between Koro and Nanny is tested with the birth of Kahu. Koro rejects Kahu as she is female and cannot be his successor as tribal chief
- Koro is upset that his great-granddaughter is named Kahutia Te Rangi (Kahu), because he feels that it is the rightful name of a male successor. Nanny Flowers approves the name, despite knowing this will make him angry. Koro refuses to take part in the custom of burying Kahu's afterbirth, so Nanny Flowers arranges this herself with the help of Rawiri
- Nanny uses female wiles and threats in order to make her stubborn husband accept Kahu: she keeps the stone that Kahu retrieves, even though the boys have failed, and only gives it to Koro at an appropriate time to convince him finally of Kahu's worth when she rides the bull whale. Nanny tells Koro that he is: 'deaf, dumb, blind and stubborn'
- the couple continue their bickering and banter throughout the novel even when Kahu is in hospital. Koro jokingly suggests that Nanny should divorce him and marry 'old Waari over the hill'. Nanny, a source of humour in the novel, simply agrees with him
- at the start of the novel, Porourangi is married to Rehua. Rehua, like Nanny, is also of Muriwai blood and is said to have a strong character. The novel begins with Porourangi telephoning Nanny to tell her of their daughter's difficult birth. Rehua does not recover, but before her death she wants 'to honour her husband by choosing a name from his people, not hers', showing her love and devotion to Porourangi. Their daughter is named Kahutia Te Rangi or Kahu
- Porourangi and Rehua appear to be devoted to each other, as he stays by her hospital bedside. Rehua asks for Kahu's birth cord to be buried in Whangara's marae, which is in honour of Porourangi and his tribe. Rehua dies when Kahu is just three months old and her body is brought to Whangara to be buried, demonstrating Rehua's respected position in the tribe
- two years later, Porourangi meets Ana. Rawiri comments that she is a 'lovely woman' and it 'looked like they were in love'. When Kahu is five, Porourangi and Ana get married. Their wedding is a small affair and Kahu is their flower girl. Ana suggests that it is time for Kahu, who has been living with her dead mother's family, to return home

to Whangara and, soon after, Kahu becomes a sister to Putiputi. Porourangi's and Ana's marriage appears to be happy and content and Ana is keen to treat Kahu as her own child.

January 2023 Paper 1R

9 Discuss the significance of the bull whale and his herd in *The Whale Rider*.

(AO4)

- Kahutia Te Rangi is a Polynesian god and, in Māori mythology, is the founder of the Ngati Porou tribe in Whangara
- whaling was a part of New Zealand's culture and identity. The first European settlers established whaling stations and in 1839 there were approximately 200 whaling ships.

Whaling declined when the number of whales dropped dramatically in 1946, New Zealand became a founding member of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) that monitors the world's whale population and advocates whale Conservation

- the whale herd is faced with the devastating effects of nuclear testing. The novel was published in 1987, not long after Greenpeace had headed protests in 1986 following nuclear testing carried out by the French at Moruroa, and the Chernobyl nuclear disaster.

(AO1)

- the bull whale and his herd are significant because they feature at the beginning of each section of the novel. The novel begins with the herd of whales off the coast of Patagonia in South America. The whales are significant because they symbolise the survival of Māori culture and traditions: 'When it dies, we die'

- the whales are anthropomorphised. The bull whale is described as 'handsome and virile' and very nostalgic: 'even in his lumbering years of age the whale would remember his adolescence'

virile
adjective
having strength and energy (typically used of a man).
having or characterised by strength and energy.

- in Spring, the first part of the novel, the bull whale leads the herd away from human predators. The bull whale reminisces about the times when humans and animals were able to communicate peacefully with each other. He remembers when he was orphaned and how he became friendly with a human, his 'master'

- although the female whales care for and love the bull whale, they are afraid that he will lead them into danger: 'their leader was turning his thoughts to the dangerous islands to the south-west'. This is significant as it highlights contextual concerns of the time
- the second part of the novel, Summer, returns to the whales who are now 'Four hundred leagues from Easter Island'. The bull whale continues to recall memories of the time his master was the whale rider, Paikea. This is significant because it provides the backstory of Kahutia Te Rangi, or Paikea
- the Autumn section begins with the whales arriving at the 'Home of the Ancients' in Hawaiki. The whales are mourning the deaths of some calves that have died as a result of nuclear testing. The area was once a safe haven for the whales but the bull whale, concerned about radiation, leads the herd further south
- in the final section, Winter, the whales arrive in Antarctica. A collapsing shelf of ice puts them in danger. Because the bull whale's mind is clouded by feelings of nostalgia, he leads the herd closer to the 'dangerous islands' of New Zealand where two hundred of them deliberately beach themselves. Despite Rawiri's and others' attempts to save them, the beached whales refuse to swim back to sea and they all die
- it is significant that Kahu persuades the bull whale to return to the sea because of the belief in the link between the whales and the survival of Māori culture. The bull whale beaches himself near Whangara and, when Kahu introduces herself to him, he believes she is his master, Paikea, and allows her to climb on his back
- the bull whale is representative of Koro Apirana and his traditional attitudes; the 'old mother whale' represents Nanny (Nani) Flowers, who is able to make her husband reconsider his views about Kahu. In the epilogue, the mother whale persuades the bull whale to return Kahu to the surface and back to Whangara.

June 2022

6 In what ways are hopes and fears for the future significant in the novel?

Examiner's Comments:

Most responses to this question were very successful and often gained marks in Levels 4 and 5, which is similar to previous series.

Hopes and fears for the future were often explored through Koro's fears for the future of the tribe and how Kahu offered the tribe hope for survival in the future.

(AO4)

- The Whale Rider was published in 1987 during a time of increased fears about the environment and the effects of nuclear technology. Environmentalists were also voicing their fears about whaling and, in 1986, an international ban on commercial whaling was imposed

- fears for the survival of nature are explored, such as the 'contamination' of the seas and 'the effects of the undersea radiation' as a result of nuclear testing
- the Māori phrase [Hui e, haumi e, taiki e](#) is central to the novel and characters' fears and hopes for the future. '[Join everything together, bind it together, let it be done](#)' reminds the reader of the broken relationship between humanity and nature. Characters and readers are reminded of the importance of '[oneness](#)'
- Koro's fears are guided by Māori traditions and culture; his desire for a male heir to succeed him leads him to ignore Kahu's qualities and her love for him.

(AOI)

- hopes and fears for the future are significant in the novel. Koro fears for the future survival of Māori traditions and culture, particularly without a male heir for future generations in an ever-changing modern society.

Kahu desperately hopes for Koro's acceptance and fears for the whales. There is fear for the future survival of the whales and the hopes that the herd survives the beaching.

Nanny (Nani) Flowers fears her husband's outdated attitudes, especially towards Kahu and hopes that her husband can change. Koro and his grandson, Rawiri, express their hopes and fears for the partnership between humans and the natural world

- Koro is afraid that the younger generation will not learn about Māori cultures and traditions, so he establishes a Māori language class, or Kohanga Reo, to teach the boys
- Kahu is desperate for her great-grandfather's acceptance and love and hopes that she can prove her worthiness to him. She is desperate to be allowed into the language class, but Koro forbids it. Kahu is eager to show her love to her grandfather and demonstrates a '[oneness](#)' with her Māori heritage. Kahu gives a speech in Māori, as a presentation at the school break-up ceremony, reciting Koro's genealogy or whakapapa
- Koro is afraid that the possible beaching of the bull whale would suggest that their ancestor, Kahutia Te Rangi, wants to die. Fears for the future are conveyed by Koro who explains '[When it dies, we die, I die](#)', but hopefully, if it lives '[we live also](#)'
- Nanny Flowers fears her husband's views are outdated and makes comparisons between Koro's treatment of Kahu and racism, suggesting that his treatment of Kahu is unacceptable despite traditional thinking. She tells Koro, '[Girls can do anything these days](#)'; she hopes that he sees the error of his ways and eventually makes Koro accept Kahu

- Koro fears that the 'partnership' between humans and the natural world ended when commercial hunters began killing the whales and he worries about a future life without 'oneness'. Koro and Rawiri recall former times when the natural world was at 'oneness' with humans, a time of 'helpful partnership'
- on his visit to Papua New Guinea, Rawiri sees the destruction of the land, but is hopeful when he realises that the power of nature can defeat human exploitation: 'Man might carve his identification mark on the earth but, once he ceases to be vigilant, Nature will take back what man had once achieved to please his vanity'.

January 2023 Paper 1R

7 Discuss the relationship between Kahu and Nanny (Nani) Flowers in The Whale Rider.

Examiner's Comments:

Many answers successfully explored this relationship within a patriarchal society, with some thoughtful responses exploring Nanny (Nani) Flowers' humorous tone and interactions with her husband, Koro.

Many answers explored the useful example of the planting of the birth chord and Nanny trying to convince her husband, Koro, to change and accept Kahu. The close bond between Nanny and Kahu was understood by all candidates.

(AO4)

- strong-willed women such as Nanny Flowers live in a patriarchal society. The role of women and their place in Māori society are challenged by Nanny and Kahu: tradition dictates that a boy should be the leader of the tribe

- Māori genealogy and legendary women are explored through Nanny Flower's ancestry. Strong women in Nanny's lineage include Mihi, who asserted her seniority over a chief, and Muriwai, who took the place of a man to save some of her tribe from drowning.

Nanny's real name is Putiputi, which means 'flowers' in the Māori language. Kahu is named after the tribal great ancestor Kahutia Te Rangi, who is later given another name, Paikea

- Māori traditions, language and culture are central to the novel. Nanny Flowers is important as she maintains traditions. She is involved with the burying of Kahu's afterbirth in the marae and is able to influence her traditionalist husband to accept a female, Kahu, as a future leader.

(AO1)

- there is a strong and loving relationship between Kahu and Nanny (Nani) Flowers. Kahu is the protagonist in the novel and is the great-granddaughter of the tribal chief, Koro Apirana, who rejects her
- Nanny is Kahu's great-grandmother and Koro's wife. Nanny spends much of her time trying to persuade her husband to accept Kahu. Nanny is protective of her and often argues with Koro about how he treats and rejects Kahu
- Nanny's love for Kahu is demonstrated when she follows tradition by burying Kahu's afterbirth in Whangara's marae when Koro refuses to do it himself. Nanny has kept tradition and, when Rawiri thinks he sees a spear land nearby, it is possibly an omen that Kahu has been recognised as a worthy leader by Paikea
- it is Nanny who allows Porourangi, Kahu's father, to name his daughter after Kahutia Te Rangi, the original name of the whale rider, Paikea. When Kahu visits Whangara, Nanny looks after her and a close bond is formed between them
- Nanny is very supportive of Kahu. Kahu invites her family to a school ceremony but is upset when Koro does not attend. Rawiri says they ['tried to bolster her \[Kahu's\] courage by clapping loudly'](#)
- she compares Koro's treatment of Kahu with racism and suggests that it is unacceptable: ['Girls can do anything these days'](#). Nanny eventually makes Koro accept Kahu
- Nanny and Rawiri witness Kahu retrieving the stone from the seabed. Nanny wisely advises Rawiri that they should keep this to themselves for the time being. However, when the whales are stranded on the beach and Kahu climbs on the whale's back, Nanny gives the stone to Koro who then realises that Kahu is his true successor
- at the end of the novel, Nanny's bond with Kahu is evident. Nanny collapses with shock when Kahu is taken out to sea by the whale. Nanny spends five days recovering in hospital and cries with relief when she discovers that Kahu has survived.

June 2022 - Paper 1R

6 Examine the relationship between Kahu and her uncle, Rawiri.

Examiner's Comments:

Most were very successful and demonstrated a thorough knowledge and understanding of the novel. The majority considered how Rawiri helped Nanny to bury Kahu's birth cord, thus

establishing an immediate bond with his niece.

Some discussed events when Rawiri went travelling, but more successful responses included smaller details, such as Kahu looking after Rawiri's motorbike. Overall, the question performed as intended.

(AO4)

- as narrator, Rawiri is sympathetic to the female Kahu and comments 'it was Kahu's intervention which perhaps saved us all', demonstrating Kahu's value, even though female, to Māori society
- Māori customs and traditions are central to the novel. The burying of Kahu's afterbirth is one custom that creates tension between Koro and Nanny
- Rawiri's experiences of travelling to Australia and Papua New Guinea serve as a way to explore Māori identity outside New Zealand. Rawiri's experiences abroad also provide contrasts between the modern Westernised world and his traditional Māori identity
- through Rawiri's travels, he learns what it is like to be different and the racism that exists. The mother of his friend, Jeff, considers Rawiri 'too dark' and likens him to 'dogs and strays'
- Kahu and Nanny Flowers both challenge social conventions. They are both strong-willed women living in a misogynistic society.

(AO1)

- Kahu and Rawiri have a close, loving relationship. Rawiri is Kahu's uncle and the narrator of the story. He is sixteen years old at the beginning of the novel
- a close relationship is established when Rawiri is appointed one of Kahu's guardians by Nanny (Nani) Flowers and helps Nanny put Kahu's afterbirth in the grounds of the marae (the Māori tribe's sacred meeting area). As they are leaving the area, Rawiri thinks that he sees an item like a spear land in the marae
- a bond between Kahu and her uncle is formed. Rawiri takes the two-year-old Kahu to the cinema to see a film about whales. On their way home, they spot some orcas in the sea and Rawiri is amazed when Kahu calls out and warns them to swim away
- when Kahu is three years old, Rawiri takes her sheep-shearing and she becomes a mascot for him and the other boys
- when Kahu is four, Rawiri sees silver shapes leaping in the ocean near her the day after she is upset when she hears Koro describe killing the whales. In the same year, Rawiri travels to Australia and later to Papua New Guinea. He becomes homesick and realises that he must return home. Before Rawiri's departure, he receives a letter from Kahu begging him not to forget her and

telling him about her Māori culture group at school. Kahu says they 'are all lonesome' for him

- on Rawiri's return to Whangara, he gets a ['lump in his throat'](#) when he sees Kahu returning from school. Rawiri describes Kahu, now seven, as a ['long legged beauty with a sparkle and infectious giggle'](#) and admits to himself that he ['hadn't realised how much'](#) he has missed her
- Kahu surprises Rawiri by showing him his motorbike, which she has lovingly cleaned every week during his absence. Rawiri is so touched by this that he cries. Later, when Rawiri is talking to Nanny, they agree that Kahu is beautiful both ['inside and outside. She had no guile. She had no envy. She had no jealousy'](#)
- when Rawiri and Nanny attend Kahu's break-up ceremony and hear her recite Koro's whakapapa or line of ancestors, Rawiri says [his 'heart was aching for her'](#) because of Koro's absence, but at the end he feels so proud of her and leaps to his feet ['to do a haka of support for her'](#)
- Rawiri, together with Nanny, witnesses Kahu diving and retrieving the stone that Koro has thrown into the ocean to set the boys a test. They agree to keep this a secret from Koro, who still rejects Kahu
- at the end of the novel, the love shown by Rawiri for Kahu is evident when he risks his life to save her. When Kahu swims out to climb on to the bull whale, Rawiri tries to stop her, but is left in despair when a wave sweeps him away.

June 2022 - Paper 1R

7 Discuss the importance of courage in *The Whale Rider*.

(AO4)

- the novel was published in 1987 and was written by Ihimaera for his two daughters who wanted a story with a female who was strong, courageous and heroic
- Kahu and Nanny Flowers both show courage when they challenge social conventions. They are both strong-willed women living in a misogynistic society
- Kahutia Te Rangi is the courageous ancestral whale rider who began the Whangara tribe. The legend of the whale rider is central to Māori customs and belief
- when Koro learns that he has a great-granddaughter, he is disappointed and will not have anything to do with her. He cannot ['reconcile his](#)

[traditional beliefs about Māori leadership and rights with Kahu's birth](#);

however, once Kahu proves her courage and leadership skills, Koro realises that he has been mistaken

- Rawiri's experiences of travelling to Australia and Papua New Guinea serve as a way to explore Māori identity outside New Zealand and highlight the importance of family.

(AOI)

- the importance of courage is demonstrated throughout the novel. Nanny (Nani) Flowers and Kahu show courage when they challenge the male dominated Māori society; Kahu demonstrates courage when she recites the whakapapa, later when she dives for the stone and when she rides the bull whale; Rawiri is courageous when he decides to travel abroad; some may consider the ancient whale rider, Kahutia Te Rangi, or Paikea, to be courageous

- Nanny and Kahu demonstrate that they are brave, independent female characters. Nanny has the courage to challenge the ways of her husband, Koro, and is not afraid of him.

Nanny's lineage has links to Muriwai, an independent woman who demonstrated strength and courage. Both Nanny and Kahu show that they can do whatever a man can. Similarly, the mother whale is wise and brave as she is the only one to challenge the bull whale's decisions

- Kahu demonstrates courage when she recites the [whakapapa](#) in the Māori language at her school break-up ceremony. Rawiri, concerned about Kahu's vulnerability, tries ['to bolster her courage by clapping loudly'](#)

- Kahu demonstrates courage when she dives to the seabed to retrieve the stone that Koro has thrown there. Koro's challenge for the boys is meant to test their courage and to see if there is a worthy leader, but none are successful.

When Kahu dives into the sea, she is not frightened by the dolphins or other sea creatures with whom she appears to communicate. Nanny and Rawiri remain incredulous when Kahu resurfaces with the stone. This is important as it demonstrates Kahu is a worthy leader

- when Kahu saves the whales and rides on the back of the bull whale, she weeps out of fear and loneliness. Kahu misses her family and cries for her people. She shows immense courage when ignoring others' protestations, knowing that if the bull whale dies, the tribe will die. Her great-grandfather has said ['When it dies, we die, I die'](#) and Kahu is not prepared to let this happen. It can be argued that Kahu's courage is the most important as it saves the Māori people

- Rawiri can be considered courageous when he decides to travel to Australia and Papua New Guinea and is away from home for four years, Rawiri experiences racism from the family of his friend, Jeff, and is distressed after his cousin, Bernard, is accidentally killed when he is run over by Jeff.

Rawiri is courageous when he stays with his dying cousin whilst Jeff and his parents flee the scene in fear of reprisal from the man's tribe

Kahutia Te Rangi, or Paikea, the ancient whale rider, was courageous for riding the ancestral bull whale to New Zealand and planting the spears that secured the future of the Māori people. The sacred bull whale that Kahu saves believes Kahu to be Kahutia Te Rangi because of her courage: [‘screwing up her courage, she started to kick the whale as if it was a horse’](#).

January 2022

6 ‘Koro Apirana is a successful tribal leader.’
How far do you agree with this statement?

Examiner's Comments:

The responses to this novel were mostly very successful with some gaining full marks. Candidates tended to agree that Koro is a successful leader, but with faults.

On the whole, the character of Koro was fully evaluated when exploring the positive and negative aspects of his leadership. Candidates included various examples and included some finer details from the novel, demonstrating assured understanding.

(AO4)

- when Koro learns that he has a granddaughter, he is disappointed and ‘won’t have anything to do with her’. He cannot [‘reconcile his traditional beliefs about Māori leadership and rights with Kahu’s birth’](#).

Koro is the head of the male-dominated Māori society and guardian of Māori customs, language and beliefs. Koro hopes that Porourangi will [‘have a son next time’](#)

- Māori customs and traditions are central to the novel and are what Koro is desperate to preserve. The burying of Kahu’s afterbirth is one custom that creates tension between Koro and Nanny

- the legend of Paikea (Kahutia Te Rangi) and Koro’s desire and obsession for a patrilineal descendant determine Koro’s treatment of Kahu and the reactions of his

wife.

Koro comes to understand that salvation can be embodied in female form and that his bloodline and ancestry must disregard assumptions about male superiority.

(AOI)

- candidates may agree or disagree with the statement that Koro is a successful tribal Leader

- reasons for considering Koro a successful tribal leader include: as chief, he is determined to keep Māori culture and traditions alive; he is important and greatly respected; he holds tribal meetings and helps establish [‘Kohanga Reo, or language nests’](#) and is dedicated

- he is a successful tribal leader because he has knowledge of the fishing grounds and has a close affinity with the whales; he is a guardian of [‘sacred knowledge’](#) and displays genuine wisdom: [‘It is a reminder of the oneness which the world once had’](#)

- Koro is a successful tribal leader because his instincts are often correct. He has an instinctive awareness of portents: [‘Something’s going on’](#)

portent

(noun) a sign or warning (like an omen) that a momentous or calamitous event is likely to happen.

- Koro demonstrates that he is a successful leader when he finally learns to overcome his prejudices and accept that he has been wrong. At the end of the novel, when he goes to Kahu’s bedside at the hospital, he asks [‘the Gods to forgive him’](#). When Kahu regains consciousness, he tells her that he loves her. Kahu is overjoyed: [‘The old man cradled Kahu in his arms, partly because of emotion and partly because he didn’t want those big ears out there to hear their big chief crying’](#)

- Koro could be considered an unsuccessful leader because he is not open to change and, to some, appears to be a figure of fun: a [‘bald man with no teeth’](#). In one of Porourangi’s letters to Rawiri, he tells him about his trip to Raukawa with Koro to see how the Maoris there were preparing the youth for the future. Porourangi is impressed with what he sees, but Koro is concerned. Porourangi is worried about the future and wants to prepare his people for [‘new challenges and the new technology’](#), whereas Koro is more reluctant to accept change

- Koro demonstrates weaknesses. He is preoccupied in securing a male heir for Kahu’s generation and sets a challenge for the boys of the tribe to recover a stone that he has thrown to the bottom of the sea. When none of them succeed, he shuts himself away and weeps as he believes the tribe will end without a male successor

- Koro is an unsuccessful leader because he is sexist and fails to notice Kahu’s clear ability to be a natural tribal leader in the future. He will not allow Kahu to attend his [‘language nests’](#): [“‘Go away,’ Koro Apirana would thunder’](#) and Kahu would go to Nanny (Nani) Flowers [‘sobbing her heart out’](#). Koro will not allow women to attend the lessons as he insists [‘Them’s the rules’](#)

- Koro is an unsuccessful leader as he appears to use his position to treat others harshly. He is nicknamed the 'old Paka' by members of his family.

January 2022

7 Discuss the importance of family in *The Whale Rider*.

Examiner's Comments:

Candidates considered the influence of family on Kahu and her close relationship with them. Some explored her relationship with Koro and Nani and others considered Rawiri, Porourangi, and Rehua's family.

There was recognition that Kahu risked her life at the end of the novel to save not only the family of whales, but her family and tribe too.

(AO4)

- family members in the novel have inherited names from great ancestors, such as Kahu's being named after the legend of Paikea and Porourangi who is in turn named after an ancestor who had united and led the descent lines of all the people of Te Tai Rawhiti in the Ngati Porou confederation
- when Koro learns that he has a granddaughter, he is disappointed and will not have anything to do with her. He cannot 'reconcile his traditional beliefs about Māori leadership and rights with Kahu's birth'
- Rawiri's experiences of travelling to Australia and Papua New Guinea serve as a way to explore Māori identity outside New Zealand and highlight the importance of family
- Kahu and Nanny Flowers both challenge social conventions. They are both strong-willed women living in a misogynistic society.

(AO1)

- the importance of family is demonstrated throughout the novel, not only through Koro and his extended family who, at first, appear to be fragmented, but also by the family of whales who are united as a herd
- Koro and Nanny (Nani) Flowers have two grandsons, Porourangi and his younger brother, Rawiri. At the beginning of the novel, the family is widely dispersed, but at the end of the novel the family unites and closer bonds are formed
- Porourangi, who will be tribal leader for his generation, is married to Rehua and is Kahu's father. When he tells Nanny Flowers about the birth of his first child, Kahu, Nanny is thrilled about the news, but Koro is angry that the baby is a girl and 'jumped into the rowboat and made out to sea' because he is so disappointed. This

demonstrates that Koro does not see the value of female children, especially in his family, and how little affection is demonstrated by him

- Rehua dies when Kahu is three months old. Porourangi brings his wife's body to Whangara to be buried and Rehua's mother takes Kahu to live with her.

Porourangi remarries and brings his new wife to live in Whangara. Kahu continues living with '[Rehua's folks](#)' and it is not until she is six years old that she returns to Whangara to live with her father and Ana. The family is split and appears to lack '[oneness](#)'. The birth of Porourangi's second daughter brings Koro further disappointment

- Nanny Flowers is central in trying to keep her family together and to get her husband, Koro, to accept Kahu. Nanny appoints Rawiri as one of Kahu's guardians and gets him to help her bury Kahu's afterbirth in the grounds of the marae, the Māori tribe's sacred meeting area

- the family is divided when Koro fails to attend Kahu's end of school term 'break up ceremony' with Nanny, Porourangi and Rawiri. Porourangi knows that Koro will not be attending, but does not have the heart to tell his daughter

- after Kahu rides the bull whale and when there is a fear that she could die, Koro realises that she is a natural leader. He realises his mistakes and declares his love for his granddaughter. At the end of the novel, the family are together and there is 'oneness'

- the whales, in contrast to Koro and his family, appear to share a '[oneness](#)'. The whales are anthropomorphised. The bull whale is described as being '[handsome and virile](#)' and very nostalgic. Like Koro, the bull whale feels responsible for preserving his lineage and leads the herd away from human predators. The female whales care for and love the bull whale

- the whales mourn the deaths of some calves that have died as a result of nuclear testing. On their journey, they encounter further dangers, but the bull whale still leads them to the '[dangerous islands](#)' of New Zealand where two hundred of them deliberately beach themselves. Despite Rawiri's and others' attempts to save them, they all die

- the bull whale beaches himself near Whangara. When Kahu introduces herself to the bull whale, he believes she is his master, Paikea, and allows her to climb on his back. Kahu persuades the bull whale to return to the sea to re-join his herd

- at the end of the novel, the importance of family togetherness is preserved and treasured by Koro and the bull whale returns to his family.

(AO4)

- the novel refers to Aotearoa, '[land of the long white cloud](#)', which is what the Maoris call New Zealand. The Maoris have inhabited Aotearoa since 1300 AD, long before the islands were sighted by a Dutch explorer, Abel Tasman, in the 1640s and he renamed them Nova Zeelandia. The British explorer, James Cook, anglicised the name to New Zealand in 1769
- Paikea is the Polynesian god of sea monsters
- the great ancestor, Porourangi, united the people of Te Tai Rawhiti, which is now known as the Ngati Porou confederation

Māori customs and traditions are central to the novel and are what Koro is desperate to preserve. The marae is the name given to the meeting area of a Māori settlement and is traditionally the place where the afterbirth of a new born child is buried

- *The Whale Rider* was published in 1987, during a time when the testing of nuclear arms and nuclear test sites were a matter of public concern. In 1985, the Greenpeace ship, *Rainbow Warrior*, protesting against nuclear testing, was sunk in Auckland harbour.

In the novel, the herd of whales is mourning the death of some calves that are killed as a result of a nuclear test at Moruroa.

(AO1)

- names of people and places are significant in the novel. Characters are often named after great ancestors and their names and those of places hold cultural and historical significance
- Kahu is named after Kahutia Te Rangi, despite her grandfather Koro's '[steadfast](#)' opposition. Rawiri explains that he could understand Koro's argument because the name is not only a man's name, but it is the name of the '[ancestor of our village](#)'. Koro believes that naming a girl after the ancestor would be '[belittling Kahutia Te Rangi's prestige](#)'; however, Kahu's mother, Rehua, chose the name to honour her husband and his people
- Te Tai Rawhiti is the area where Kahutia Te Rangi first came ashore. The name means '[the place washed by the eastern tide](#)' and from here, beyond the horizon, is Hawaiki, or '[The Place of the Gods](#)', which is the ancestral homeland of Polynesia.

The sea trench at Hawaiki is where the herd of whales rest before they travel to Whangara. It is while they are at the sea trench, that the whales manage to avoid a nuclear test: '[Sparkling like a galaxy was a net of radioactive death](#)'

- when Kahutia Te Rangi first landed on the island he was given another name, Paikea, in commemoration of his voyage. The landscape reminded Paikea of his birthplace, Hawaiki, and so he named the place Whangara Mai Tawhiti, which is more simply known as Whangara
- other places in the area are significant to both culture and traditions as they are named after Paikea's homeland: [‘Tawhiti Point, the Waiapu River, and Tihirau Mai Tawhiti’](#)
- Porourangi is a significant name because four generations after Paikea, a great ancestor named Porourangi led the Māori people. In honour of this great leader, Kahu's father is named after him
- when Rawiri is in Australia, he meets a cousin who has changed her traditional Māori name, Reremoana ([‘water flowing to the sea’](#)), to Lola L'Amour in an endeavour to change herself and her way of life. She has changed her name in order to seek [‘fame, fortune, power and success’](#), perhaps suggesting that she felt her Māori name and culture were restrictive.

January 2022 - Paper 1R
 7 ‘Koro is a dislikeable character in the novel.’
 How far do you agree with this view of Koro?

Examiner's Comments:

Comments included: how Koro is stubborn and is ‘stuck in the past’; his distaste for Kahu leading to the reader disliking him because of his treatment of her; his lack of love and affection for females; his unacceptance of new ideas and how, despite being dislikeable, he is respected. The responses were a pleasure to read.

(AO4)

- at times, Koro's determination to preserve Māori customs and traditions causes friction and he appears to be a dislikeable person. The burying of Kahu's afterbirth is one custom that creates tension between Koro and Nanny
- Koro is head of the male-dominated Māori society and guardian of Māori customs, language and beliefs. Koro hopes that Porourangi will [‘have a son next time’](#) so that there is a male heir to lead the tribe in the future
- the legend of Paikea (Kahutia Te Rangi) and Koro's desire and obsession for a male descendant determine Koro's treatment of Kahu and the reactions of his wife. However, Koro comes to understand that salvation can be embodied in female form and that his bloodline and ancestry must disregard assumptions about male superiority.

(AO1)

- candidates may agree or disagree with the premise that Koro is a dislikeable character in the novel. Some candidates may consider that his treatment of Kahu makes him dislikeable, whereas some may have a more sympathetic view of the character
- Koro could be considered dislikeable because he rejects Kahu. When Kahu is born, Koro reacts negatively: “A girl,” Koro Apirana said, disgusted. “I will have nothing to do with her. She has broken the male line of descent”. As Kahu grows up, she demonstrates her love for Koro, but he will not allow her access to his language school and shows greater rejection when he fails to attend Kahu’s break-up ceremony
- Koro is dislikeable because he is selfish and does not appear to show affection towards Nanny (Nani) Flowers. The couple are always arguing and Nanny frequently threatens to divorce him: ‘But this time ... I’m really going to divorce him’
- Koro’s stubbornness makes him dislikeable. Koro will not entertain the idea of a female leader and excludes females from any traditional male roles: ‘Them’s the rules’
- however, Koro could be considered likeable because he is determined that his Māori tribe, culture, language and customs survive the rapid modernisation of the country. Koro is keen to preserve traditions and is concerned about the advancement of modern technology when he goes to a conference at Raukawa country with Porourangi
- Koro’s loving nature is demonstrated at the end of the novel, showing that he is not as dislikeable as he first appeared. When Kahu is returned to her people and recovering in hospital, Koro admits that he has been wrong and tells Nanny: ‘I blame myself for this. It’s all my fault’. It is only when Kahu’s life is threatened that Koro tells Kahu that he loves her and that she is the ‘best grandchild in the whole wide world’.

November 2021

6 Discuss the importance of locations in *The Whale Rider*.

(AO4)

- Māori customs and traditions are central to the novel and are what Koro is desperate to preserve. The burying of Kahu’s afterbirth is one custom that creates tension between Koro and Nanny
- the legend of Paikea (Kahutia Te Rangi) is grounded in cultural heritage. Paikea is the Polynesian god of sea monsters. The name is also used to refer to the mythical person who

began the Ngati Porou tribe in Whangara on the East Coast of Aotearoa.

Māori legend has it that Paikea came from Hawaiki to Whangara, riding on the back of a water monster or taniwha. He had escaped drowning when his canoe or waka capsized

- The Whale Rider was published in 1987, during a time when the testing of nuclear arms was prevalent and nuclear test sites were very much a concern. In the novel, the whale herd mourns the death of some calves following nuclear testing at Moruroa
- Whangara is a small Māori community in the northeast of New Zealand's North Island. In 1961 the original Whangara Kapa Haka Group was formed and, since then, the Whangara elders have supported the group in keeping their customs and traditions alive.

(AOI)

- different locations are important in the novel. Some are sacred to the Māori tribe and others are important for both man and whales who learn from their journeys back home to Whangara
- the opening chapter describes the idyllic legendary setting where [‘mountains were like a stairway to heaven’](#) and creatures used to live in harmony with nature. The mythical location focuses on the arrival of a whale carrying its rider and the elements celebrating his arrival
- the setting of The Valdes Peninsula, Patagonia, is significant because it is where the whales have their nursery. The whales have travelled from their Antarctic feeding area, but the bull whale's nostalgia drives him and the herd to travel to the [‘dangerous islands to the southwest’](#)
- Whangara is possibly the most important location in the novel; it is where the central characters live and is the ancestral home of the whale rider. It is near Whangara that the whales beach themselves at Wainui
- the meeting house is important, especially for Koro, who holds his cultural classes there, the Kohanga Reo, or [‘language nests’](#). Nanny (Nani) Flowers and her [‘boys’ secretly bury Kahu’s birth cord in ‘a space in front of the meeting house’](#). At this moment, Rawiri believes that he sees a [‘spear flying through the air’](#) and landing nearby
- Rawiri explains their genealogy to the reader, detailing how they were originally from Te Tai Rawhiti (translating as [‘people of the East Coast’](#)) and, beyond that, the ancestral home of Hawaiki
- the sea trench at Hawaiki is described as [‘The Place of the Gods’](#) and the [‘Home of the Ancients’](#). On their journey, the whales experience the loss of some of the herd when the [‘flash of bright light’](#) of a nuclear test kills seven young calves when they are feeding [‘in the Tuamotu Archipelago’](#)
- Sydney and Papua New Guinea are important locations for Rawiri. Whilst travelling for two years, Rawiri experiences racism and he becomes homesick for Whangara. It is during his travels that he [‘grew into an understanding of’ himself](#) and his destiny
- Kahu's school is an important setting as it is where she gives her cultural talk, which Koro does not attend

- the hospital is an important location in the final chapter, as it is here that Koro accepts that he has been wrong and finally accepts Kahu as his successor for her generation.

November 2021

7 In what ways is Kahu significant in the novel?

Examiner's Comments:

Most opted to answer Question 7, the ways in which Kahu is significant in the novel, and demonstrated an assured understanding of the novel by including references to specific small details when covering a wide variety of points, including gender, equality, hope and survival.

(AO4)

- the role of women is restricted in Māori society: tradition dictates that a boy should be the leader of the tribe
- Koro is determined to teach future generations the Māori language and culture; Koro is the leader of the Whangara Māori community. He teaches about Māori culture, tradition and history and desires to find a suitable heir as he believes the successor should be male
- it is Māori tradition to bury the birth cord of a newborn child
- natural settings and the relationship between nature and man are central to the novel. For example, the legend of the ancestral whale rider, Kahutia Te Rangi or Paikea, is replicated with Kahu
- Māori have a number of legends that explain aspects of their past. These legends are passed down from generation to generation by tribal leaders or priests, such as Koro. Kahu was banished from these classes, as Māori culture dictated that females were unworthy of leading the tribe
- the novel is in the Magical Realism genre: a style of art or literature that depicts fantastic or mythological subjects in a realistic manner.

(AO1)

- Kahu is significant because she is the protagonist of the novel and is named after the founder of Whangara, Kahutia Te Rangi; she is the great-granddaughter of the tribal chief, Koro Apirana, and longs for his love and acceptance, but he always tells her 'Go away'
- Kahu's mother, Rehua, died when she was three months old and she has been

brought up by Rehua's family; when Kahu is eight years old, her father, Porourangi, takes her back to the tribe

- Nanny (Nani) Flowers, Koro's wife, loves and takes care of Kahu; it is Nanny Flowers who conducts the tradition of burying the birth cord when Kahu is born. Koro, her husband and tribal leader, refuses to take part

- Kahu excels when she learns Māori language, culture and traditions and invites her family to a ceremony at her school. She is upset when Koro does not attend and Nanny states: ['We tried to bolster her courage by clapping loudly'](#)

- Kahu demonstrates special powers when she communicates with the dolphins and other sea creatures; she retrieves the stone that Koro threw into the depths of the sea that the boys could not reclaim, proving her worthiness of being the tribal leader for her generation

- when the bull whale strands itself on the beach, it is Kahu that encourages it to return to the sea. Kahu becomes the whale rider for her generation. The bull whale returns Kahu to land to lead her people successfully into the future and, at the hospital, Koro realises his mistakes and embraces his great-granddaughter's rightful place as a future tribal leader.

June 2021

6 Discuss the importance of fear in *The Whale Rider*.

(AO4)

- when the whales beach themselves, conservationists and environmental groups come to help with the rescue attempts: 'Greenpeace, Project Jonah and Friends of the Earth'. Greenpeace is a non-political environmental organization established in 1971 with offices all over the world. Its head office is in Amsterdam.

Project Jonah was established in 1974 in New Zealand to protect and conserve marine mammals.

Friends of the Earth was established in America in 1969 and is an international network of seventy-four countries dedicated to environmental concerns

- The Whale Rider was published in 1987, during a time when the testing of nuclear arms was prevalent and nuclear test sites were very much a concern. In the novel, the whale herd mourns the death of some calves following nuclear testing at Moruroa. In 1985, the Greenpeace ship, Rainbow Warrior, protesting about nuclear testing, was sunk in Auckland harbour

- Whangara is a small Māori community in the northeast of New Zealand's North Island. In 1961, the Whangara Kapa Haka Group was formed; the elders support the group in keeping customs and traditions alive.

(AO1)

- fear is an important theme in the novel: the bull whale fears mankind; Koro fears for the survival of the tribe; Nanny (Nani) Flowers fears that her husband, Koro, is too obsessed and old-fashioned in his thinking; Kahu fears rejection by her great-grandfather, Koro; the people of Whangara fear for the whales when they are beached; Kahu's family fear she is lost when she is taken by the whale
- the bull whale fears the whales' biggest predator: mankind. He fears the loss of the herd through Man's destruction of the planet. He leads the herd through the frozen waters of Antarctica and the collapsing ice-shelves
- Koro is afraid that, without a male heir for Kahu's generation, the Māori tribe in Whangara will not survive. He fears that Māori customs and traditions are being lost and is determined to teach others the Māori language. When Koro sets a challenge for the boys to retrieve a stone from the seabed, none of the boys is able to do so
- Nanny Flowers fears that her husband is small-minded and needs to accept Kahu
- Kahu fears rejection by her great-grandfather. Koro will not accept Kahu as a tribal leader and Kahu's love for him is unrequited. She fears that her great-grandfather will not attend the school ceremony when the reserved seat for Koro remains empty; his absence reduces her to tears
- the people of Whangara are afraid when two hundred whales beach themselves. The news reporter says that it ['is like seeing the end of the world'](#). Despite people's efforts, the entire herd perishes.

Following the loss of the herd, another large group of whales emerge and become beached, including the bull whale that has symbolic markings on it. Koro is fearful that if the bull whale dies it will signify the end of the tribe: ['When it dies, we die. I die'](#)

- Nanny, Koro and the family fear for Kahu's life when she rides the bull whale and is taken out to sea. Nanny collapses in fear and shock. Kahu is returned to her people and is found unconscious on the beach. She is taken to hospital and her anxious family keeps vigil by her bedside. Koro is so afraid that she will die that he ['asked the Gods to forgive him'](#).

June 2021

7 'Kahu seemed to say, "Down here?" and the dolphins made a nodding motion.'
Explore Kahu's relationship with the natural world in the novel.

(AO4)

- the natural settings and the relationship between nature and man are central to the novel. Kahu is bound to nature and is able to communicate spiritually with the creatures of the sea
- the contamination of the oceans from nuclear testing and the melting of the ice cap, because of global warming, has resulted in damage to the natural world and has had an adverse effect on whales
- the novel is structured in four sections: Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter. The seasons represent the journeys made and the lessons learned, and echo the cyclical nature of the novel
- Māori customs, traditions and legends are central to the novel. Customs and traditions are rooted in the preservation and survival of nature. The legend of the ancestral whale rider, Kahutia Te Rangi or Paikea, is echoed in Kahu's story.

(AO1)

- Kahu's relationship with the natural world, including dolphins, is important in the novel. Kahu is named after the founder of Whangara, Kahutia Te Rangi, the whale rider; she is the great-granddaughter of the tribal chief, Koro Apirana, and longs for his love and acceptance. However, he always tells her 'Go away' as he does not consider a female to be a worthy future leader of the tribe.

It is only when Kahu proves her relationship with the whales and nature that Koro realises his mistake and accepts her

- Nanny (Nani) Flowers, Koro's wife, loves and takes care of her great granddaughter, Kahu; it is Nanny Flowers who conducts the tradition of burying the birth cord when Kahu is born, which immediately creates an affinity between Kahu and nature. Rawiri observes what appears to be 'a small spear' land 'at the spot where Kahu's birth cord had been placed' in the marae

marae

Māori meeting ground. A marae is a fenced-in complex of carved buildings and grounds that belongs to a particular iwi (tribe).

- Kahu demonstrates empathy for the whales. When Rawiri takes her to the cinema, they watch a film about a whale being hunted. When the whale is captured and fatally wounded, Kahu is distraught and she cannot be pacified: 'tears were again tracking down her face'
- when Kahu overhears Koro telling the boys at the Kohanga Reo about his memories of whaling, Kahu is visibly distressed. Rawiri tries to comfort her, but 'she was so frightened. She was making a mewling sound in her throat. She

seemed immobilised by terror'

- even at the age of seven, Kahu enjoys gardening and growing vegetables with Nanny: 'Nanny and me are hoeing the vegetable garden'
 - Kahu demonstrates special powers, with the natural ability to communicate with the dolphins and other sea creatures; she retrieves the stone that Koro threw into the depths of the sea that others could not reclaim: 'Kahu seemed to say, "Down here?" and the dolphins made a nodding motion'
 - when two hundred whales die on the beach, Rawiri finds Kahu 'up on the bluff' calling out to sea: 'She was making that mewling sound and then cocking her head to listen for a reply'
- bluff (noun) a steep cliff, bank
- when the bull whale strands itself on the beach, it is Kahu who encourages it to return to the sea. The bull whale brings Kahu back to lead her people successfully into the future. The novel ends with Kahu asking Koro: 'can't you hear them? I've been listening to them for ages ... the whales are still singing'.

November 2020

8 Explore one character who, in your opinion, has great power in *The Whale Rider*.

Examiner's Comments:

Candidates may consider any one character who, in their opinion, has great power in the novel. Most candidates will consider Koro, Nanny (Nani) Flowers, Kahu or even the bull whale.

Candidates are not expected to compare characters, but, should they wish to draw comparisons, valid points should be rewarded

(AO4)

- Koro is head of the male-dominated Māori society. He is guardian of Māori customs, language and beliefs and is a part of a wider movement to support Māori heritage and land rites. Koro comes to understand that salvation can be embodied in female form and that his bloodline and ancestry must disregard assumptions about male superiority
- the role of powerful women such as Kahu and Nanny Flowers, and how they survive in a misogynistic society, is explored; this tradition dictates that a boy should be the leader of the tribe
- Paikea is a Polynesian god and, in Māori mythology, the founder of the Ngati Porou tribe in Whangara. Other references to Māori traditions, language and culture feature throughout

the novel, such as the tradition of burying the birth cord and Nanny Flowers' involvement with this demonstrate her determination and power

- the whale herd is faced with the devastating effects of nuclear testing. Greenpeace headed protests in 1986 following nuclear testing carried out by the French at Moruroa and to highlight the effects of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster.

(AOI)

- Koro could be considered to have great power because he asserts himself as tribal chief. He has strong views about Kahu and is determined to find a male heir.

Koro holds tribal meetings, is a guardian for Māori culture and traditions and helps to establish a Māori language class, or Kohanga Reo. He appears to be popular with his students and he displays the wisdom of '[sacred knowledge](#)' and '[oneness](#)'. Koro has much knowledge about ancestry, legend, fishing, and has an affinity with the whales

- Nanny Flowers could be considered to have great power because she is very influential over her husband, Koro, and her family. Nanny often argues with Koro but gets her way: '[He argues, and I win](#)' and she says that Koro '[isn't any chief. I'm his chief](#)'. Nanny is a descendant from a line of powerful Māori women such as Muriwai and Mihi Kotukutuku, who both had seniority over men.

Nanny demonstrates wisdom, such as when she advises Rawiri to keep it a secret that Kahu retrieved the stone, as she will use this knowledge when she needs it to make Koro accept Kahu

- Kahu could be considered to have great power because she is the protagonist of the novel and is named after the founder of Whangara, Kahutia Te Rangi or the whale rider, Paikea. Kahu demonstrates her special powers when she communicates with the dolphins, whales and other sea creatures.

When Kahu retrieves the stone that others could not, she demonstrates that she has the power to become tribal chief. It is Kahu who encourages the bull whale and the herd back to sea and, when Kahu becomes the whale rider and is returned to the beach, it is symbolic of her leadership and the preservation of the tribe in the future

- the bull whale could be considered to have great power because events in the novel focus on the whales' journey and the bull whale's leadership. The bull whale is very nostalgic and recalls memories of when his master became the whale rider, Paikea.

In the first part of the novel, Spring, the bull whale leads the other whales to safety and away from predators. The whales are symbolic of Whangara's, and the Māori tribe's, survival.

Examiner's Comments:

Most candidates displayed a sound to thorough knowledge and understanding of the novel. The small number of responses make comparison difficult, but questions worked as intended and gave candidates an opportunity to write about the novel with confidence.

Change is important in the novel. It is illustrated in Koro's attitude towards Kahu; the fear of change in culture and tradition and their rules; Rawiri's change of decision; the changing experiences for the whales and the implications of environmental issues. Accept any other valid points

(AO4)

- New Zealand has experienced cultural change. Whaling has been a part of the country's culture and identity. The first European settlers established whaling stations and in 1839 there were approximately 200 whale ships. Whaling declined when the number of whales dropped dramatically.

In 1946, New Zealand became a founding member of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) that monitors the world's whale population and advocates whale Conservation

- The Whale Rider was published in 1987, during a time when the testing of nuclear weapons and nuclear test sites were very much in the news.

In 1985, the Greenpeace ship, Rainbow Warrior, was sunk in Auckland harbour. In the novel, the herd of whales is mourning the death of some calves, which are killed as a result of a nuclear test at Moruroa

- the use of the Māori language is significant in preserving the identity of the tribe against the threats of modern communication and technology. Koro is determined to teach future generations the Māori language and culture and he is hesitant to embrace new technologies.

(AO1)

- Koro's attitude towards Kahu changes at the end of the novel when she proves herself a worthy tribal leader by saving the tribe when she rides the whale. Prior to this, Koro dismisses Kahu and is desperate to find a male heir in Kahu's generation.

Koro is devastated that he only has great-granddaughters and tribal tradition means that only males can succeed him. Despite

Nanny (Nani) Flowers' attempts to get the 'old paka' to change his ways and accept Kahu, it is not until Kahu is returned to them that he realises her affinity with the whales and Māori customs and traditions.

Koro comes to understand that salvation can be embodied in female form and that his bloodline and ancestry must disregard assumptions about male superiority

- Koro fears that traditional Māori customs and traditions are being lost and is resistant to change. He helps establish the language school, Kohanga Reo, but his traditionalist ideas will not allow him to accept females in the class. Koro claims that now only a select few can talk to animals whereas in the past everyone could.

Koro believes that in response to mankind's ignorance, nature has become hostile and that mankind must change so that they can be at ['oneness'](#).

Koro adheres strictly to cultural rules and is unwilling to bend. Nanny encourages him to believe that rules should be broken for the greater good, but her ideas are ignored

- Koro, in his seventies, remains a traditionalist. He must abandon his misogynistic views and be accepting of change and modernisation.

Porourangi goes with his grandfather, Koro, to Raukawa to see another tribe and learn how they are ['organising its youth'](#) to be accepting of ['new challenges and the new technology'](#).

Koro struggles with the idea of modernisation, which weighs ['heavily on his mind'](#), and Porourangi describes him as ['an old whale stranded in an alien present'](#). Porourangi recognises that they must change and adapt in order to survive

• Rawiri has a change of heart when he travels to Australia and Papua New Guinea. Rawiri, who has struggled with his identity, has opportunities to work abroad, but his emotions change when he observes racist events and he decides to return home to Whangara

- environmental changes put the survival of the whales in peril. On their journey, the whales encounter the effects of nuclear testing and global warming. Many young whales die as a result of the nuclear testing and the whales narrowly miss annihilation when an ice shelf collapses.

November 2020 - Paper 1R

8 In what ways is Kahu's father, Porourangi, important in the novel?

(AO4)

• Porourangi is named after a great ancestor. The ancestor had united and led the descent lines of all the people of Te Tai Rawhiti in the Ngati Porou confederation and the ancestor's younger brother, Tahu Potiki, founded the Southern Island's Kai Tahu confederation

- when Koro learns that he has a granddaughter, he is disappointed and will not have anything to do with her. He cannot ['reconcile his traditional beliefs about Māori leadership and rights with Kahu's birth'](#). Koro is the head of the male dominated Māori society and guardian of Māori customs, language and beliefs.

Koro hopes that Porourangi will [‘have a son next time’](#)

- in one of Porourangi’s letters to Rawiri, he tells him about his trip to Raukawa with Koro to see how the Maoris there were preparing the youth for the future.

Porourangi is impressed with what he sees, but Koro is concerned. Porourangi is worried about the future and wants to prepare his people for [‘new challenges and the new technology’](#).

(AOI)

- Porourangi is important in the novel. He will be tribal leader for his generation after Koro’s death. He is married to Rehua and is Kahu’s father and Koro’s eldest grandson. His brother, Rawiri, narrates the story.

The story opens with

Porourangi telephoning his grandmother, Nanny (Nani) Flowers, to tell her about the difficult birth of his first child, Kahu. Nanny is delighted about the announcement of a new grandchild, but Koro is angry that the baby is a girl and [‘jumped into the rowboat and made out to sea’](#)

- when Porourangi telephones to say that Rehua wants to name their child Kahu, Nanny approves of it, but Koro is angered. Nanny tells Koro that Porourangi fears that Rehua may die following Kahu’s difficult birth.

Rehua wishes to honour her

husband by [‘choosing a name from his people’](#). Porourangi also conveys Rehua’s request that Kahu’s birth cord is buried ‘in the earth on the marea’

- Rehua dies when Kahu is three months old. Porourangi brings her body to Whangara to be buried and Rehua’s mother takes Kahu to live with her
- Porourangi brings Kahu to Whangara for a holiday. During a [‘cultural practice’](#) at the meeting house, he looks up at their ancestor, Paikea, and tells his grandfather that he is feeling [‘very lonely’](#) for his daughter. When Kahu is two, Porourangi returns to Whangara with Kahu and his new partner, Ana
- when Rawiri is living in Australia, Porourangi telephones him to tell him that he is getting married to Ana and that Kahu will be flower girl. He tells his brother that, now she is five years old, Kahu has started school, but she still lives with [‘Rehua’s folks’](#). Porourangi makes Rawiri feel homesick when he thinks about his family
- Porourangi is a [‘good letter writer’](#). He keeps Rawiri informed of the news from home and tells him how Koro is still looking for a boy to be [‘the one’](#) to lead Kahu’s generation. Porourangi informs Rawiri the six-year-old Kahu is returning to Whangara to live with him and Ana.

In his letters, Porourangi expresses his

concerns about [‘the problems he felt were facing the Māori people’](#). In another letter, he informs Rawiri that he and Ana are expecting a child and the whole family [‘were hoping that the child would be a son’](#), but they have a daughter who

they name Putiputi

- Porourangi attends Kahu's end of school term ['break up ceremony'](#) with Nanny and Rawiri. Porourangi knows that Koro will not be attending, but does not have the heart to tell his daughter
- Porourangi takes a greater role in tribal matters as the story progresses. He accompanies Koro to the Southern island to settle a land dispute and is central to organising the desperate attempt to rescue the whales: ['Porourangi gave the orders'](#).

November 2020 - Paper 1R

9 Discuss the significance of Māori culture and traditions in *The Whale Rider*.

Examiner's Comments:

There was just one Question 9 response for this novel and it gained full marks. The response was assured and perceptive, covering a wide range of examples and included a very thoughtful and sensitive commentary.

(AO4)

- the legend of Paikea is central to the plot. Paikea is the Polynesian god of sea monsters. The name is also used to refer to the mythical person who began the Ngati Porou tribe in Whangara on the East Coast of Aotearoa
- Māori legend has it that Paikea came from Hawaiki to Whangara, riding on the back of a taniwha, a water monster. He had escaped drowning when his whaka capsized
- Maoris believe in the ['life-giving forces in the form of spears'](#) that were brought from the House of Learning to the island by Kahutia Te Rangi. It is believed that these spears ['gave instructions on how man might talk with beasts'](#) and ['taught oneness'](#), how mankind and nature can live in harmony.

Whangara is a small Māori community in the northeast of New Zealand's North Island. In 1961 the original Whangara Kapa Haka Group was formed and, since then, the Whangara elders have supported the group in keeping their customs and traditions alive

- the novel is in the 'Magical Realism' genre: a style of art or literature that depicts fantastic or mythological subjects in a realistic manner.

(AO1)

- Māori culture and traditions are important throughout the novel and are central to the plot. Koro Apirana is desperate to secure Māori traditions and culture for future generations through the male line

- the Whangara tribe is traditionally led by a male. When Koro's first-born greatgrandchild, Kahu, is born, Koro is devastated and refuses to have anything to do with her

- Koro is angered when the baby girl is named Kahu after the whale rider, Paikea or Kahutia Te Rangi. Koro will not take part in the tradition of burying Kahu's birth cord in the earth on the marae or meeting area.

Nanny (Nani), Rawiri and [‘the boys’](#) place the birth cord [‘in sight of Kahutia Te Rangi’](#) so that Kahu is always protected. The exact place is kept a secret and those who help become Kahu's guardians. At the same time, Rawiri believes that he [‘saw something flying through the air. It looked like a small spear’](#) and heard a whale sounding [‘Hui e, haumi e, taiki e’](#) ([‘join everyone together, bind it together, let it be done’](#))

- Koro teaches the boys about tribal traditions and history and establishes language nests, Kohanga Reo. Māori legends are passed down from generation to generation.

The tribe believes in the legend of their ancestor, Paikea, who escaped drowning by riding on the back of a whale to safety. It is believed that if the spiritually tattooed or marked bull whale should die, then the tribe will die along with it: [‘When it dies, we die. I die’](#)

- Māori terms are used throughout the novel and are an essential part of Kahu's development and appreciation of her culture; Kahu wins a prize for reciting the whakapapa, the ancestral line. The use of the repeated motif, the Māori phrase, [‘hui e, haumi e, taiki e’](#), reinforces the importance of repairing the relationship between man and nature

- in his quest to find a male heir for Kahu's generation, Koro sets a challenge for the boys to recover a stone that he has thrown to the bottom of the sea. When none of them succeed, he shuts himself away and weeps.

Later, Kahu dives to retrieve the stone and in doing so is helped by the dolphins that [‘seemed to be talking to her’](#). Kahu's ability to communicate with the sea creatures proves her worthiness to be a leader

- Rawiri's narrative provides additional information about the history of the tribe and how the [‘first of the Ancients and ancestors had come from the east’](#) and how others came to settle in Aotearoa.

January 2020
8 'Koro Apirana is a cruel and heartless character in The Whale Rider.'
How far do you agree with this view?

Examiner's Comments:

There were a very small number of responses for this novel these candidates tend to engage fully with this novel and responses are always a pleasure to read.

(AO4)

- Koro is the head of the male-dominated Māori society. He is the guardian of Māori customs, language and beliefs and is a part of a wider movement to support Māori heritage and land rites
- he comes to understand that salvation can be embodied in female form and that his bloodline and ancestry must disregard assumptions about male superiority
- Māori customs and traditions are central to the novel and are what Koro is desperate to preserve. The burying of Kahu's afterbirth is one custom that creates tension between Koro and Nanny
- the legend of Paikea (Kahutia Te Rangi) and Koro's desire and obsession for a patrilineal descendant determine Koro's treatment of Kahu and the reactions of his wife.

(AO1)

- candidates may agree or disagree with the statement. Koro Apirana could be seen as being cruel and heartless, particularly towards his great-granddaughter, Kahu, but he also demonstrates love and affection towards his wife, Nanny (Nani) Flowers, and to Kahu at the end of the novel.

It could be argued that his position as the tribal leader dictates much of his seemingly harsh treatment of others. He is nicknamed '[The old Paka](#)' by several members of his family

- Koro is disappointed that his grandson, Porourangi, has daughters rather than sons. Koro makes his disappointment known and shows anger when Porourangi and Nanny Flowers name Kahu after the whale rider, Paikea.

Koro refuses to bury Kahu's afterbirth, leaving it for Nanny Flowers and '[the boys](#)' to do

- Koro initially rejects Kahu and is berated by Nanny Flowers for it. He has no answer to Nanny Flowers ('[Yeah, yeah, yeah](#)'), who always appears to be on the point of divorcing him. Their banter makes it seem as though the couple are unhappy, but there is a deep love and bond between them

- as chief, Koro is an important tribal leader. He holds tribal meetings and helps establish [‘Kohanga Reo, or language nests’](#), but he will not allow Kahu to attend: [“‘Go away,’ Koro Apirana would thunder’](#) and Kahu would go to Nanny Flowers [‘sobbing her heart out’](#). Koro will not allow women to attend the lessons: [‘Them’s the rules’](#)

- Koro remains steadfast in his [‘opposition’](#) to Kahu, despite her adoration for him; he does not show any affection in return. He appears to be cruel and heartless towards Kahu and rejects her attempts to make him proud. He fails to attend the presentation that Kahu gives at school in celebration of her great-grandfather and her Māori heritage

- Koro demonstrates his love when he and Nanny Flowers visit Kahu in hospital. Koro admits that he has been wrong and asks [‘the Gods to forgive him’](#). When Kahu regains consciousness, he tells her that he loves her. Kahu is overjoyed: [‘The old man cradled Kahu in his arms, partly because of emotion and partly because he didn’t want those big ears out there to hear their big chief crying’](#).

January 2020

9 Explore the significance of the legend of the whale rider in the novel.

Examiner's Comments:

One candidate who responded to Question 9 (the significance of the legend of the whale rider) provided a very interesting and sustained response to the question. The candidate demonstrated a thorough understanding of the novel and some very good points were made about narrative and structure (omniscient narrative, parallel plots, magical concepts or realism), even though AO2 is not assessed in this part of the paper.

Some ideas were repeated and it was surprising to see that the candidate had not considered the whales at all in the response; however, many valid points were made, such as Koro being blind to the similarities between Kahu and the legendary whale rider and how it could be argued that the whale rider made Kahu (when he planted the spear) and gave her a destiny. The sustained and thoughtful response gained a mark at the top of Level 4.

(AO4)

- Paikea is the Polynesian god of sea monsters. The name is also used to refer to the mythical person who began the Ngati Porou tribe in Whangara on the East Coast of Aotearoa.

Māori legend has it that Paikea came from Hawaiki to Whangara, riding on the back of a water monster or [‘taniwha’](#). He had escaped drowning when his canoe or [‘waka’](#) capsized

- Whangara is a small Māori community in the northeast of New Zealand’s North Island. In 1961 the original Whangara Kapa Haka Group was formed and, since then,

the Whangara elders have supported the group in keeping their customs and traditions alive

- Maoris have a number of legends that explain aspects of their past. These legends are passed down from generation to generation by tribal leaders or priests
- the novel is in the magical realism genre: a style of art or literature that depicts fantastic or mythological subjects in a realistic manner.

(AOI)

- the legend of Kahutia Te Rangi or Paikea, the whale rider, is central to the novel. The Whangara tribe is proud of its traditions and history. As Chief, Koro Apirana teaches the tribe about their past.

The tribe believes that they are descendants of Paikea who escaped drowning by riding to dry land on the back of a whale. The Whangara tribe is concerned about their future without a male leader, believing that, without a male heir, the tribe will cease to exist

- the novel is in three parts. The prologue tells the story of the whale rider that took place thousands of years ago and before humans inhabited the earth. The story continues with Man's arrival in 'canoes from the east' and Paikea's arrival on a whale. Paikea has life forces (mauri) in the form of wooden spears that he gives to the forests and seas. Paikea's final spear will not leave his hand, so he buries it for use in the future: ['Let this be the one to flower when the people are troubled and it is most needed'](#)

- when Nanny Flowers and ['the boys'](#) bury Kahu's afterbirth, Rawiri looks back on the spot as the moon comes out and illuminates the 'carved figure of Kahutia Te Rangi on his whale'. Rawiri believes that he sees ['a small spear'](#) land nearby. Simultaneously, he hears a ['whale sounding'](#), spiritually linking Kahu with the legend of the whale rider

- the tribe faces a crisis when over two hundred whales beach themselves at Whangara. The tribe battle to save the whales, but gradually all the whales die

- the beaching of the whales is followed by the arrival of a sacred or spiritual, tattooed whale which forces itself onto the beach. The tribe believes that their destiny depends on its ability to save this spiritual whale. Koro believes that the ['sacred whale'](#) asks ['Do you wish to live?'](#) and Koro fears that if they should fail, the tribe will die: ['When it dies, we die. I die'](#). The men of the tribe struggle to return the whale to the sea and the women join in with the rescue attempt, but they only partially succeed because the whale seems to be willing itself to die

- Kahu swims out to the whale, boards its back and encourages it to swim back out to sea

- the whale, Kahu and the tribe all understand that Kahu is the chosen one, the one to lead the tribe successfully into the future. Even Koro is repentant and accepts Kahu.

January 2020 - Paper 1R
8 Discuss the importance of leadership in *The Whale Rider*.

(AO4)

- Paikea is one of the Ancients, a group of Polynesians who were ancestors of the Māori and who settled in New Zealand, or Aotearoa as it was known, long before European settlers
- Witi Ihimaera published the novel in 1987 during a time of increased concerns about the environment
- through his novel, Ihimaera explores Māori culture, traditions and legends. The traditional male-dominated leadership of the Māori tribe and expected gender roles are challenged.

(AO1)

- leadership is important throughout the novel. Candidates may consider Koro Apirana's leadership of the Māori tribe; the whale rider Kahutia Te Rangi's leadership and the leadership of the bull whale.

Although the leadership of the tribe has been traditionally male, candidates may also consider Nanny (Nani) Flowers' indirect leadership, through Koro, and Kahu's leadership when leading the whales to safety; candidates may explore one example in detail

- Koro Apirana is chief of the tribe and Kahu's great-grandfather. He is desperate for a male heir to lead the tribe in the future, and his stubborn ways and traditional views make him reject Kahu. He is disappointed that his grandson, Porourangi, has only daughters and is angry when his wife, Nanny Flowers, and Porourangi name Kahu after the whale rider, Paikea.

Koro is worried about the future of the tribe and is desperate to teach the boys of the tribe Māori culture, traditions and language

- Nanny Flowers demonstrates a veiled form of leadership as she makes decisions and influences Koro. She is descended from a line of strong Māori women. Her real name is Putiputi, which means 'flowers'. She allows Porourangi to name his daughter after the whale rider, makes the arrangements to bury Kahu's afterbirth and is influential in making her husband, Koro, see the errors of his ways and accept Kahu as a worthy female leader

- the legend of Kahutia Te Rangi (Paikea) is central to the novel. The original whale rider, Paikea, is one of the Ancients. Paikea is the original founder of Whangara and has led others to the island

- in the legend, the bull whale swam with Kahutia Te Rangi and the whale remains obsessed with his memories. He returns to New Zealand to make his [‘last journey’](#). The bull whale leads the pod to the island and to their possible death. When he deliberately beaches himself at Whangara, he is saved by Kahu who persuades him to swim back to sea

- Kahu demonstrates leadership qualities when she retrieves the stone from the bottom of the seabed, something that the boys in the tribe could not do.

Kahu is a [‘throwback’](#), someone demonstrating characteristics of their ancestors of a previous age. She is able to communicate with the whales and when she climbs on the bull whale’s back, she is able to lead it and the other whales to safety.

January 2020 - Paper 1R
9 In what ways is Nanny (Nani) Flowers important in the novel?

(AO4)

- strong-willed women such as Nanny Flowers survive in a patriarchal society. The role of women and their place in Māori society are challenged by Nanny and Kahu; tradition dictates that a boy should be the leader of the tribe

- the Māori traditions, language and culture are central to the novel. Nanny Flowers is important as she maintains traditions. She is involved with the burying of Kahu’s birth cord in the marae and is able to influence her traditionalist husband to accept a female, Kahu, as a future leader

- Māori genealogy and legendary women are explored through Nanny Flower’s ancestry.

Strong women in Nanny’s lineage include Mihi, who asserted her seniority over a chief, and Muriwai, who took the place of a man to save some of her tribe from drowning.

(AO1)

- Nanny (Nani) Flowers is important throughout the novel. She has a prominent position in the Māori tribe as she is Koro Apirana’s wife. Nanny is Kahu’s great

grandmother; her real name is Putiputi, which means 'flowers' in the Māori language

- Nanny Flowers is important in the novel as she often argues with Koro about how he treats and rejects Kahu; Nanny brings some humour to the novel, particularly when she calls her husband a '[paka](#)'. She shows her power over Koro when she says that they do not actually argue but '[He argues, and I win](#)'
- Nanny Flowers is important as she is the one who follows tradition by burying Kahu's afterbirth in the marae in Whangara when Koro refuses to do it himself.

Nanny has kept tradition and, when Rawiri thinks he sees a spear land nearby, it is possibly an omen that Kahu has been recognised as a worthy leader by Paikea

- Nanny is a descendant of a line of strong Māori women such as Muriwai and Mihi Kotukutuku, who both exerted seniority over men; Nanny Flowers is a powerful force in the tribe because she has influence over Koro; she says that Koro '[isn't any chief. I'm his chief](#)'
- it is Nanny Flowers who allows Porourangi, Kahu's father, to name his daughter after the whale rider, Paikea. When Kahu visits Whangara, it is Nanny Flowers who looks after her and a close bond is formed between them
- Nanny Flowers is important as she makes Koro accept Kahu and see the error of his ways; she makes comparisons between Koro's treatment of Kahu and racism, suggesting that his treatment of Kahu is unacceptable despite traditional thinking. She tells Koro, '[Girls can do anything these days](#)'
- Nanny Flowers and Rawiri witness Kahu retrieving the stone from the seabed and Nanny advises Rawiri that they should keep this to themselves for the time being.

When the whales are stranded on the beach and Kahu climbs on the whale's back, Nanny Flowers gives the stone to Koro, who then realises that Kahu is his true successor.

June 2019
8 'The whales are very important characters in this novel.'
How far do you agree with this view?

Examiner's Comments:

Although there are not many centres choosing this novel, numbers are gradually increasing. Most responses are a joy to read and it is clear students enjoy studying this novel.

The vast majority of responses for this novel were marked in Level 3 or above. Although this novel tends to lend itself naturally to context, it was surprising to find a lack of explicit contextual points in the responses.

Examiner comments include:

"This has been my favourite text of the paper due to the high-quality responses it received. A superb text, which allows candidates to engage with it at explanatory and at exploratory/evaluative levels."

"Most candidates who answered this question focused on the characters clearly, although weaker responses were more narrative than exploratory. Quotations were generally well used. Context was less utilised than other novel texts."

(AO4)

- Paikea is a Polynesian god and, in Māori mythology, is the founder of the Ngati Porou tribe in Whangara
- whaling was a part of New Zealand's culture and identity. The first European settlers established whaling stations and in 1839 there were approximately 200 whale ships. Whaling declined when the number of whales dropped dramatically
- in 1946, New Zealand became a founding member of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) that monitors the world's whale population and advocates whale conservation
- the whale herd is faced with the devastating effects of nuclear testing. The novel was published in 1987, not long after Greenpeace had headed protests in 1986 following nuclear testing carried out by the French at Moruroa and the Chernobyl nuclear disaster.

(AO1)

- the whales can be considered very important characters in the novel as events focus on their journey and how the bull whale leads the others. The beginning of each section of the novel focuses on the whales. The novel begins with the herd of whales off the coast of Patagonia in South America
- the whales are anthropomorphised. The bull whale is described as being 'handsome and virile' and very nostalgic: 'even in his lumbering years of age the whale would remember his adolescence'

- in Spring, the first part of the novel, the bull whale leads the herd away from human predators. The bull whale reminisces about the times when humans and animals were able to communicate peacefully with each other. He remembers when he was orphaned and how he became friendly with a human, his [‘master’](#)
- although the female whales care for and love the bull whale, they are afraid that he will lead them into danger: [‘their leader was turning his thoughts to the dangerous islands to the south-west’](#)
- the second part of the novel, Summer, returns to the whales who are now [‘Four hundred leagues from Easter Island’](#). The bull whale continues to recall memories of the time his master was the whale rider, Paikea
- the Autumn section begins with the whales arriving at the [‘Home of the Ancients’](#) in Hawaiki. The whales are mourning the deaths of some calves that have died as a result of nuclear testing. The area was once a safe haven for the whales but the bull whale, concerned about radiation, leads the herd further south
- in the final section, Winter, the whales arrive in Antarctica. A collapsing shelf of ice puts them in danger. Because the bull whale’s mind is clouded by feelings of nostalgia, he leads the herd closer to the [‘dangerous islands’](#) of New Zealand where two hundred of them deliberately beach themselves. Despite Rawiri’s and others’ attempts to save them, the beached whales refuse to swim back to sea and they all die
- the bull whale beaches himself near Whangara. When Kahu introduces herself to the bull whale, he believes she is his master, Paikea, and allows her to climb on his back. Kahu persuades the bull whale to return to the sea
- in the epilogue, the [‘old mother whale’](#), the ancient bull whale’s mate, persuades him to return Kahu to the surface and back to Whangara. The bull whale is representative of Koro Apirana and his traditional attitudes; the mother whale represents Nanny Flowers
- some candidates may argue that the whales are not ‘real’ characters. All valid points must be awarded.

Examiner's Comments:

Again, there was comment about the lack of explicit contextual points but the candidates clearly understood the novel.

Examiner comments include:

"Most responses for this question focused on the relationship between Kahu and Koro, with few questions focusing on wide-ranging points such as Nanny (Nani) Flowers and her links with love."

"There were varying degrees in success in integrating context."

"The responses were detailed and focused, clearly exemplifying the importance of love throughout the novel."

(AO4)

- Koro's stubborn affections are guided by Māori traditions and culture; his desire for a male heir to succeed him leads him to ignore Kahu's qualities and her love for him
- Kahu loves Māori food, culture and language. Nanny Flowers calls her a 'throwback', suggesting that she has characteristics of her ancestors
- Rawiri's experiences in Papua New Guinea make him realise his love for nature. At the coffee plantation, he realises the power of nature and how it can defeat human exploitation: 'Man might carve his identification mark on the earth but, once he ceases to be vigilant, Nature will take back what man had once achieved to please his vanity'.

(AO1)

- love is a significant theme in the novel as it binds the main characters together. Love may be explored through the relationships between characters, love for the natural world or the love of Māori tradition and culture
- Kahu shows her love for Koro by learning about her Māori culture and traditions. Kahu is devoted to Koro, but her love for him is not fully reciprocated. Rawiri says that Koro's love for Kahu 'was the sort that dropped off the edge of the table, like breadcrumbs after everybody else has had a big feed'. Kahu is so desperate to show her love to her grandfather that she gives a speech in Māori, as a presentation at the school break-up ceremony, reciting his genealogy or whakapapa.

Throughout much of the novel, Kahu tries to win

her grandfather's affection. It is at the end of the novel that Koro realises his mistake of rejecting Kahu: 'He began to say a prayer, and he asked the Gods to forgive him ... I love you'

- Koro loves his people and Māori culture. He is desperate for a male heir and his stubborn attitudes towards Kahu and Nanny Flowers make him appear as if he does not love them

- Nanny Flowers loves her family. Although they frequently banter, she adores her husband, Koro, and tries to teach him the errors of his ways. Nanny calls Koro 'you old paka', 'which was the affectionate name she always called our Koro'.

Nanny is more like a mother to her granddaughter, Kahu, and she has a close relationship with her son, Rawiri

- Rawiri loves his people and returns home to New Zealand as he misses his community and culture. Rawiri demonstrates his love for Kahu by taking care of her.

When Kahu was two years old, Rawiri took her to see a film about whales and on the way back home they spotted some orcas, which had a continuing profound effect on her.

When Rawiri goes to Kahu's presentation he says that he 'felt so proud of her, so proud, and so sad that Koro Apirana was not there to hear how much she loved him'

- the bull whale is blinded by his love for his long-departed master, Paikea. His feelings of nostalgia lead the whale herd into danger.

June 2019 - Paper 1R

8 Explore the relationship between Kahu and the whales.

(AO4)

- Māori customs and traditions are central to the novel. Koro believes that only a select few can speak with the whales

- the legend of Kahutia Te Rangi or Paikea is very symbolic to the Māori tribe led by Koro. The bull whale has an ancient Māori tattoo that is very symbolic to the tribe. Kahu is destined to become the chief of the tribe owing to her special skills and her links with the whales and Paikea

- Kahu finds herself trapped by gender roles and it is only her relationship with the whales that persuades Koro that she is a worthy leader.

(AO1)

- Kahu is the protagonist of the novel and her relationship with the whales is essential to the plot. She is able to communicate with them and a symbiotic relationship is developed, just like that of Kahu's legendary predecessor, Kahutia Te Rangi or Paikea. Paikea, the original whale rider, cast spears at the islands to give life.

One of the spears is cast a thousand years into the future and symbolically lands around the time Kahu is born. When Kahu's 'birth cord' is buried, Rawiri believes that he 'saw something flying through the air. It looked like a small spear'

- the whales, led by the bull whale, are driven by the legend of the whale rider. The bull whale often reminisces about the time he spent with the whale rider and wants to return to when humans and animals lived in harmony

- when Koro throws the 'carved stone' into the sea as a challenge for the boys, they are unable to retrieve it. Kahu communicates with the dolphins and sea creatures and, with their help, manages to retrieve the stone

- a herd of whales beach themselves and will die if they are not returned to the sea. Despite Rawiri's and others' best efforts, the herd of whales perish. Koro fears that this is a bad omen for them and that the tribe will also be destined to perish without a male heir to lead them

- the following evening, a large group of whales appears, led by the bull whale that bears an ancient, sacred Māori tattoo. The bull whale strands itself on the beach and unless it is saved, like the others the night before, it will die. The bull whale stubbornly resists help until Kahu climbs upon its back and begins communicating with it

- Kahu agrees to go with the herd of whales in order to save her tribe. The mother whale persuades her husband, the bull whale, that Kahu is not Paikea and persuades him to return her to the coast

- it is because of Kahu's relationship with the whales that her grandfather becomes repentant of his former rejection of her. Koro believes that Kahu's actions, saving the bull whale, have secured the future of the tribe

- the story ends with Kahu safe, closer to her grandfather and hearing the singing of the whales.

June 2019 - Paper 1R
9 Discuss the importance of different kinds of learning in *The Whale Rider*.

Examiner's Comments:

The small number of responses were seen for Ihimaera's *The Whale Rider* and Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, but those that did attempt these questions were mostly very successful when applying both AO3 (knowledge and understanding of the text) and AO4 (context).

There were some very perceptive and skilful responses with a range of quotations.

(AO4)

- The *Whale Rider* was published in 1987 during a time of increased concern about the environment and the effects of nuclear technology.

Environmentalists were also concerned about whaling and in 1986 an international ban on commercial whaling was imposed

- cultural beliefs, customs and the Māori language are central to the novel and Kahu's education
- the Māori phrase '[Hui e, haumi e, taiki e](#)' is central to the novel and characters' education. '[Join everything together, bind it together, let it be done](#)' reminds the reader of the broken relationship between humanity and nature. Together, both characters and readers learn about, and are reminded of, the importance of '[oneness](#)'.

(AO1)

- different kinds of learning are very important throughout the novel: Kahu is desperate to learn about her Māori heritage; Koro learns that he must change; Rawiri learns that his Māori culture and home are more important to him than the lure of the big cities and the whales learn of Man's destruction of the planet. Some candidates may consider how the reader learns about Māori traditions and culture

- Kahu's education is both academic and spiritual. She is desperate to learn all about her cultural heritage and desires to speak the Māori language fluently. Her grandfather, Koro, is reluctant to teach her, so in desperation she listens from outside the hut where Koro teaches the boys. She is successful at school and when she prepares a cultural presentation she hopes to make Koro proud of her, but he fails to attend

- Koro teaches the tribe's boys cultural identity, customs and language. In a test that he devises to find their strength, endurance and ability, he drops a '[carved](#)

[stone](#)' into the sea for one of them to retrieve. None succeed, but later Kahu finds it and places [‘the stone in Nanny Flowers’ hand](#)'. Koro dismisses Kahu throughout the novel because she is female and he desires a male heir. At the end of the novel, when Kahu saves the whales, Koro learns that he has been foolish and his heir has been there the whole time

- Rawiri travels to Australia and Papua New Guinea. During his travels he is shocked to learn about racial prejudice and yearns to return home to Whangara
- the whales are forced to learn about the changes to their environment owing to the adverse effects of Man. Nuclear testing results in the death of some infant whales and radioactive waters mean that they must change course. Their journey is further hindered when ice collapses and puts their lives in danger.

January 2019

8 Explore the relationship between Koro Apirana and Nanny Flowers in this novel.

Examiner's Comments:

The very small number of candidates who responded to Ihimaera's *The Whale Rider* were mostly very successful when applying both AO3 (knowledge and understanding of the text) and AO4 (context). The answers produced for these novels often resulted in some very perceptive and skilful responses supported with a range of quotations.

(AO4)

- Māori customs and traditions are central to the novel. The burying of the afterbirth is one such custom that creates some tension between Koro and Nanny
- the male-dominated society is challenged by the strong female characters of Nanny Flowers and Kahu
- the legend of Paikea (Kahutia Te Rangi) and Koro's desire for and obsession with a patrilineal descendant determine Koro's treatment of Kahu and the reactions of his wife
- Whangara is a small Māori community in the northeast of New Zealand's North Island. In 1961 the original Whangara Kapa Haka Group was formed and, since then, the Whangara elders have supported the group in keeping their customs and traditions alive.

(AO1)

- Koro Apirana is married to Nanny Flowers. Their relationship appears to be one full of arguments and disagreements, but they love each other dearly and know of each other's strengths and weaknesses. Nanny often insults Koro by calling him an 'old paka' and he blames Nanny's ['Muriwai blood'](#) for her strength of character
- the relationship between Koro and Nanny is tested with the birth of Kahu. Koro rejects Kahu as she is female and cannot be his successor as tribal chief
- Koro is upset that his granddaughter is named Kahutia Te Rangi (Kahu), but Nanny Flowers approves the name, despite knowing this will make him angry, because he feels that it is the rightful name of a male successor. Koro refuses to take part in the custom of burying Kahu's afterbirth, so Nanny Flowers arranges this herself with the help of Rawiri
- Nanny uses female wiles and threats in order to make her stubborn husband accept Kahu. Nanny tells him that he is: ['deaf, dumb, blind and stubborn'](#). She regularly threatens him with divorce and violence in order to get her own way, but, despite their banter, they are very close: ['We don't argue ... He argues, and I win'](#)
- despite Kahu's idolisation and adoration of Koro, he still rejects her. Nanny attempts to make her husband appreciate Kahu, but Koro stubbornly refuses to attend Kahu's end-of-school ceremony and her talk about him
- Nanny keeps secrets from Koro. She does not tell him about Kahu retrieving the stone, a challenge he had set for the tribe's boys. Nanny keeps the stone until she can use it in Kahu's favour. Nanny gives the stone to Koro when Kahu climbs onto the bull whale's Back
- the couple continue their bickering and banter throughout the novel until the end when Kahu is in hospital. Koro jokingly suggests that Nanny should divorce him and marry ['old Waari over the hill'](#). Nanny, a source of humour in the novel, simply agrees with him
- when Nanny Flowers is telling Koro off, Kahu regains consciousness and Koro tells his granddaughter that he loves her. It is at the hospital that Koro admits that he has been wrong about his treatment of Kahu. The warmth and depth of affection between Koro and Nanny are clearly evident.

(AO4)

- The *Whale Rider* was published in 1987, during a time when the testing of nuclear arms and nuclear test sites were very much in the media. In 1985, the Greenpeace ship, *Rainbow Warrior*, protesting against nuclear testing, was sunk in Auckland harbour. In the novel, the herd of whales is mourning the death of some calves, who are killed as a result of a nuclear test at Moruroa
- Māori beliefs and customs are central to this novel: the legend of Kahutia Te Rangi (Paiake) and the survival of the whales will ensure that humans and the natural world can live in harmony. Worldwide concern led to an international ban on whaling in 1986
- the novel is structured in four sections: Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter. The seasons represent the journeys made and lessons learned and echo the cyclical nature of the novel
- the preservation of the Māori language is essential to the tribe and the repeated Māori phrase, '[hui e, haumi e, taiki e](#)' ([join everything together, bind it together, let it be done](#)) is central to the desire of bringing the natural world and humans together again.

(AO1)

- the relationship between the humans and the natural world is a central theme of the novel. The whales believe that humans are the 'greatest threat of all', but it has not always been that way
- Koro Apirana and Rawiri recall former times when the natural world was at '[oneness](#)' with humans and there was a '[helpful partnership](#)'
- Koro believes that the '[partnership](#)' between humans and the natural world ended when humans began killing the whales
- Rawiri experiences the struggle between humans and the natural world when he visits Papua New Guinea. He describes the relationship with nature as a '[battle](#)' and his experience on the coffee plantation shows him that the natural world is normally victorious in the battle: '[I doubt it could ever be tamed of its temperatures ... but we tried](#)', '[Nature will take back what man had once achieved](#)'
- Kahu has an affinity with the natural world. She converses with the dolphins, orcas and whales and gets very upset about the killing of whales. Rawiri took Kahu, at the age of two, to see a film about whale-hunting, which distressed her greatly. On their way home, they spotted some orcas and Kahu warned them to swim away
- Kahu, Rawiri and other characters have a strong bond with the sea: Kahu is at

'[oneness](#)'; Rawiri hears the sea when listening to Nanny Flowers and again when he listens to the sea in a shell when he is in Papua New Guinea. The sea provides a bond to their homeland, tribe and culture. Rawiri also sees a vision of a whale in the cloud formation, which makes him realise that he must return home to Whangara.

January 2019 - Paper 1R

8 Explore the relationship between Koro Apirana and Kahu in the novel.

(AO4)

- Māori customs and traditions are central to the novel and are what Koro is desperate to preserve. The burying of Kahu's afterbirth is one custom that creates tension between Koro and Nanny
- the male-dominated society is challenged by the strong female characters of Nanny Flowers and Kahu
- the legend of Paikea (Kahutia Te Rangi) and Koro's desire and obsession for a patrilineal descendant determine Koro's treatment of Kahu and the reactions of his wife
- Ihimaera published the novel in 1987, a time when there were increased concerns about the environment and the effect nuclear technology was having upon the natural world. The beaching of the whales in the novel is possibly a direct result of human activity.

(AO1)

- Koro Apirana's relationship with Kahu, his granddaughter, is one of rejection and disappointment, as Koro wanted a grandson to become a future chief of the tribe. Koro rejects Kahu as she is female and cannot be his successor as tribal chief
- Koro is upset that his granddaughter is named Kahutia Te Rangi (Kahu). His wife, Nanny Flowers, approves the name, despite knowing this will make him angry. Koro believes this should be a male heir's name. Koro refuses to take part in the custom of burying Kahu's afterbirth, so Nanny Flowers arranges this herself with the help of Kahu's uncle, Rawiri
- despite Kahu's idolisation and adoration of Koro, he still rejects her. Kahu does everything in her power to learn her tribal history, customs and language in order to make her grandfather proud of her. Kahu secretly listens to her grandfather teaching the boys
- Nanny attempts to make her husband appreciate Kahu, but Koro stubbornly

refuses to attend Kahu's end-of-school ceremony and her talk about him

- Kahu retrieves the stone, a challenge Koro had set for the tribe's boys. Wisely, Nanny keeps the stone until she can use it in Kahu's favour. Nanny gives the stone to Koro when Kahu climbs onto the bull whale's back

- it is not until Kahu regains consciousness that Koro tells his granddaughter that he loves her. It is at the hospital that Koro admits that he has been wrong about his treatment of Kahu and he realises that his granddaughter is a natural leader, despite being a female.

January 2019

9 Discuss the significance of travelling in *The Whale Rider*.

(AO4)

- *The Whale Rider* was published in 1987, when there was much concern about nuclear testing. The bull whale changes the herd's route to New Zealand after some of their calves were killed by a nuclear test near the island of Moruroa

- Rawiri experiences racism typical of the time when he is in Papua New Guinea and observes Jeff's family's poor treatment of a labourer. It makes him even closer to his Māori heritage

- the novel's structure in four sections, Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter, supports the cyclical journey of life

- Māori customs, legends and traditions are central to the novel, such as the legend of Kahutia Te Rangi, the original whale rider and Kahu being symbolic of the last spear of Paikea.

(AO1)

- travelling is significant throughout the novel. Candidates may consider one or two examples in greater detail: the journeys that the whales make, both present and past; the journey Rawiri makes to Australia and Papua New Guinea; Kahu's journeys to Whangara and when she rides the bull whale

- the novel begins with a herd of whales heading for New Zealand. The bull whale recalls happy memories of a human he befriended, who became the whale rider, Paikea. The bull whale decides which way the herd will travel. The females in the herd are concerned when it is decided that they should travel via Antarctica, which will take them too close to the 'dangerous islands' of New Zealand

- when Kahu is born, she is sent to live with her mother's family and travels back to see her father in Whangara every summer. She moves to Whangara permanently when she is six years old

•Rawiri travels to Australia and makes friends with Jeff. Jeff persuades Rawiri to go to his parents' coffee plantation in Papua New Guinea. It is at the plantation that Rawiri is shocked by their treatment of one of the native workers who has been involved in an accident. Rawiri has a vision of a whale and knows that he must return home

When Kahu climbs onto the back of the bull whale, she persuades him to return with the herd to the sea. Fearing she will die, her family is horrified when she is taken out to sea with the whales. The old mother whale tells the whales that they must return Kahu to land and Kahu is found in a comatose state floating in the ocean near land.

June 2018

8 Explore the character of Kahu in this novel.

Examiner's Comments:

Most candidates considered Kahu's relationship with Koro and Nanny Flowers and how she wanted to embrace her culture and traditions despite Koro's rejection.

It was surprising that some candidates did not consider Kahu's relationship with the whales or the events at the end of the novel in much detail.

(AO4)

The role of women is restricted in Māori society; tradition dictates that a boy should be the leader of the tribe

Koro is determined to teach future generations Māori language and culture; Koro is the leader of the Whangara Māori community and he desires to find a suitable successor

It is traditional to bury the birth cord in Māori society

The natural settings and the relationship between nature and man are central to the novel, for example, the legend of the ancestral whale rider, Kahutia Te Rangi or Paikea.

(AO1)

Kahu is the protagonist in the novel and is named after the founder of Whangara, Kahutia Te Rangi; she is the great-granddaughter of the tribal chief, Koro Apirana, and longs for his love and acceptance, but he always tells her 'Go away'

Kahu's mother, Rehua, died when she was three months old and Kahu is brought up by Rehua's family; when Kahu is eight years old, her father, Porourangi, takes her back to his tribe

Nanny Flowers, Koro's wife, loves and takes care of Kahu; it is Nanny Flowers who conducts the tradition of burying the birth cord when Kahu is born

Kahu teaches Māori language, culture and traditions and invites her family to a ceremony but is upset when Koro does not attend: [‘We tried to bolster her courage by clapping loudly’](#)

Kahu demonstrates special powers when she communicates with the dolphins and other sea creatures; she retrieves the stone that Koro threw into the depths of the sea that others could not reclaim

When the bull whale strands itself on the beach, it is Kahu that encourages it to return to the sea. The bull whale returns Kahu to land where she will eventually lead her people successfully in the future.

June 2018

9 ‘This novel is not only about the survival of some whales.’
How important is the theme of survival in *The Whale Rider*?

Examiner's Comments:

Those candidates answering this question well and explored how Koro was determined for the tribe and Māori culture to survive and the lengths he went to in order to secure this. Some considered how Rawiri overcame feelings of prejudice and appreciated the importance of the survival of his heritage.

Other candidates considered the survival of nature against all odds. Those exploring ‘nature’ were able to comment on contextual points in relation to nuclear testing and the destruction of the sea bed. Most candidates considered how Koro taught the boys and how Kahu secretly listened to him.

(AO4)

The narrator, Rawiri, is sympathetic to the female Kahu and comments ‘it was Kahu’s intervention which perhaps saved us all’: it demonstrates Kahu’s value, even though she is female, to Māori society

The survival of nature is described against all odds, such as the

The 'contamination' of the seas and 'the effects of the undersea radiation' as a result of nuclear testing

There are contrasts and struggles between traditional values and modernity and these affect characters and their survival in an everchanging world

Strong-willed women such as Kahu and Nanny Flowers strive to survive in a misogynistic society.

(AOI)

Survival is an important theme at many levels and the novel is 'not only about the survival of some whales' but also, for example: the survival of Māori tradition and culture; the survival of legends; the survival of individuals overcoming prejudice, such as Kahu and her uncle, Rawiri

Throughout the novel, Koro is desperate to ensure the survival of Māori traditions and culture through finding a suitable successor

The survival of the bull whale and remaining whales, the fulfilment of the legend of Paikea in the way Kahu is returned to her people, keep alive ancestral beliefs

Kahu must survive discrimination and overcome the gender-prejudiced views of Koro in order to prove herself capable of being a leader of the Māori tribe

Rawiri must overcome racial prejudice when he travels. In Australia, Rawiri meets Jeff and they travel to Papua New Guinea where Jeff's family have a plantation. It is here that Rawiri experiences racism; he realises that he needs to return home and his loyalty for the tribe survives.

June 2018 - Paper 1R
8 'This novel is all about identity.' How far do you agree with this view?

Examiner's Comments:

Candidates tended to focus on the importance of identity to the Māori people and how Kahu is instrumental in securing this identity of her people for the next generation. The nature of the novel lends itself readily to contextual points and often this was successfully embedded into responses.

(AO4)

The traditional role of women and their place in Māori society dictate that a boy should be the leader of the tribe

Koro Apirana teaches Māori culture, tradition and history and desires to find a suitable successor

Kahu is determined to be identified as worthy in her great grandfather's eyes. Kahu values the importance of Māori language and cultural identity

The natural settings, together with the relationship between nature and man and the legend of the ancestral whale rider, Kahutia Te Rangi or Paieka, link with Kahu and her own identity.

(AO1)

Identity is an important theme in the novel. The Māori tribe want to retain their identity while still being a part of modern society

Rawiri is keen that Nanny Flowers does not find out about his lifestyle in Australia, fearing that she would feel he showed no respect for his ancestors and tribe

Identity and belonging are important. Kahu is brought up by her late mother's family as her identity as part of the ['people of Te Tai Rawiri'](#) can only be secured at Whangara

Kahu is named after Paieka so that her identity is linked and joined with the tribe

The Māori language is a vital element of Kahu's identity and relationship with her great-grandfather and tribal chief, Koro Apinara.

Koro teaches the young men of the tribe the importance of their identity by teaching them Māori language and customs, as he is in search of a male successor.

At first, Koro rejects Kahu as his successor because she is female, but he eventually realises that she is an important and natural part of Māori identity and culture

Kahu has an innate link with the whales, which identifies her as their saviour. The bull whale allows Kahu to climb on to his back when Kahu introduces herself to him as '[Kahutia Te Rangi](#)' or Paikea and orders the whale to leave the beach so that the tribe can survive. Her actions prove her identity as a worthy member of the Māori tribe.

June 2018 - Paper 1R
9 Explore the character of Rawiri in *The Whale Rider*.

(AO4)

As narrator, Rawiri is sympathetic to the female Kahu and comments '[it was Kahu's intervention which perhaps saved us all](#)', demonstrating Kahu's value, even though female, to Māori society

Rawiri's experiences of travelling to Australia and Papua New Guinea serve as a way to explore Māori identity outside of New Zealand. Rawiri's experiences abroad also provide contrasts between the modern Westernised world and his traditional Māori identity

Through Rawiri's travels, he learns what it is like to be different and the implicit racism that exists. Jeff's mother considers Rawiri '[too dark](#)' and likens him to '[dogs and strays](#)'

Kahu and Nanny Flowers both challenge social conventions. They are both strong-willed women living in a misogynistic society.

(AO1)

Rawiri is Kahu's uncle. He is sixteen years old at the beginning of the novel. He is important in the novel as he narrates most of the events

He is appointed one of Kahu's guardians by Nanny Flowers and

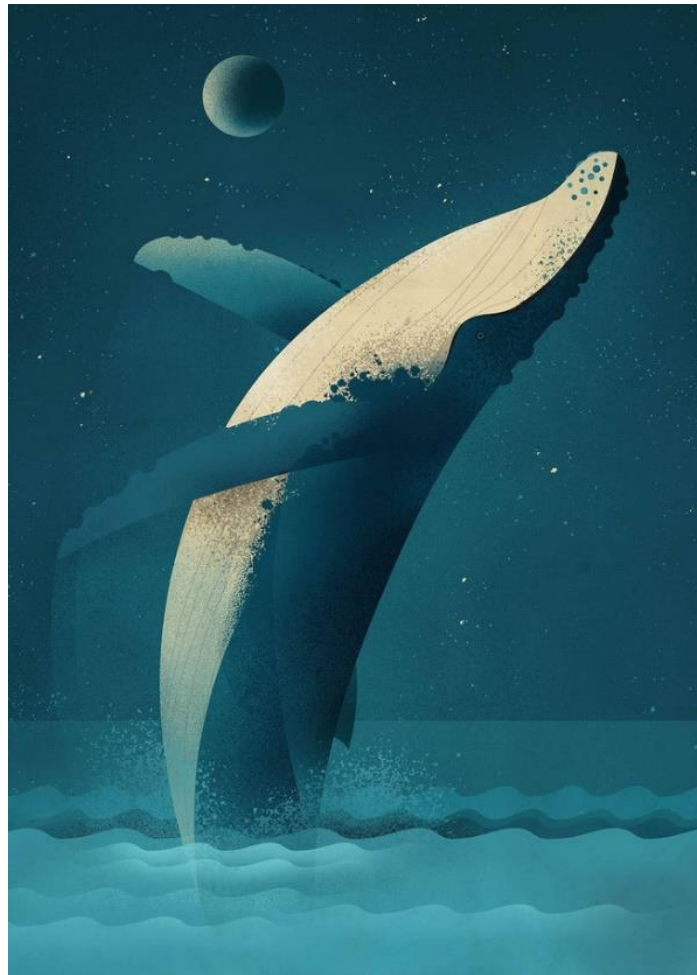
helps Nanny Flowers put Kahu's afterbirth in the grounds of the marae (the Māori tribe's sacred meeting area). As they are leaving the area, Rawiri thinks that he sees an item like a spear land in the marae

Rawiri takes Kahu when she is just two years old to the cinema to see a film about whales. On their way home, they spot some orcas in the sea and Rawiri is amazed when Kahu calls out and warns them to swim away

When Kahu is four years old, Rawiri travels to Australia and later to Papua New Guinea, where he is involved in helping a native plantation worker who has been involved in an accident. It is at this time that he sees a vision of a whale in the clouds and realises that he must return home

Rawiri, together with Nanny Flowers, witnesses Kahu diving and retrieving the stone that Koro threw into the ocean to set the boys a test. They agree to keep this a secret from Koro, who still rejects Kahu.

Essay Exemplars



The Essay Structure

Introduction: Your argument.

Immediately you must prove your essay will be convincing, have a central perceptive argument (criticality).
Mention the form of the text here too (e.g., novel)

WHAT: What are we learning about 'character x/theme x' here? Are there alternative interpretations to challenge traditional views? Please mention the form of the text here- and why it is used?

HOW: How do we know this from the text? How does the writer show us this through character development/key pivotal plot points/the speaker/form of the poem/novel/novella?

WHY: Why does 'author name' show us this? What are they suggesting about society/their society at the time.

Main body paragraphs (4 -5 of these)

Address: the opening, as the novella progresses, towards the end of the novella.

POINT: Begin with a sentence that answers the question – address the focus.

EVIDENCE: Support your idea with 1 or 2 relevant quote(s)/reference(s)

TECHNIQUE: Identify the methods

EXPLANATION: Explore key words.

Analyse relevant connotations of the quote AND link back to the focus of the task. Prove your statement.

Extend your responses by including two layered meanings/explore alternatives

REFER BACK TO CONTEXT: Link your ideas to key context, the author's purpose, and wider societal ideas.

Conclusion

Your conclusion is a beautiful, stylistic reminder of how you have proved your thesis.
Include an embedded quote at the end.

WHAT: What did we learn about 'character x/theme x' here? What interpretations did you explore and decide on?

HOW: How did we learn this from the text? Which character development/key pivotal plot points/the speaker/form of the poem helped to support your argument?

WHY: Why does 'author name' show us this? What are they suggesting about society/their society. What are they writing to bring awareness to? What are they wanting to change?

- Finish with a small quote: 'Author name' ultimately wants to convey "embedded quote"

The Exam

Each question is worth 40 marks. You must consider the context of the novel in your answer. In the exam you will have 45 minutes to write your essay. You must write about language, form, structure and context.

The Mark Scheme

Level	Mark	AO1 Demonstrate a close knowledge and understanding of texts, maintaining a critical style and presenting an informed personal engagement AO4 Show understanding of the relationships between texts and the contexts in which they were written
	0	No rewardable material.
Level 1	1–8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited knowledge and understanding of the text. The response is simple with little evidence of personal engagement or critical style. There is little comment on the relationship between text and context. Limited use of relevant examples in support.
Level 2	9–16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some knowledge and understanding of the text. The response may be largely narrative with some evidence of personal engagement or critical style. There is some comment on the relationship between text and context. Some use of relevant examples in support.
Level 3	17–24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sound knowledge and understanding of the text. The response shows relevant personal engagement and an appropriate critical style. There is relevant comment on the relationship between text and context. Use of clearly relevant examples in support.
Level 4	25–32	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thorough knowledge and understanding of the text. The response shows thorough personal engagement and a sustained critical style. There is a detailed awareness of the relationship between text and contexts. Use of fully relevant examples in support.
Level 5	33–40	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assured knowledge and understanding of the text. The response shows assured personal engagement and a perceptive critical style. Understanding of the relationship between text and context is integrated convincingly into the response. Discriminating use of relevant examples in support.

Practice Exam-Style Questions. Each question is worth 40 marks.

'I'll be like Muriwari if I have to. Kahu, also, if she has to be.' What is the significance of Muriwari's story to Kahu's role in the tribe?

How does Ihimaera present the sea in *The Whale Rider*?

Why does Ihimaera choose to tell Kahu's story from Rawiri's point of view?

How does the relationship between Koro Apianara and Kahu represent the different attitudes between generations?

How is the theme of environmentalism explored in The Whale Rider?



Past Questions and Exemplars

*Paper 1R denotes papers taken in international schools.

Past Papers, Mark Schemes and Examiner Reports:

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-international-gcse/international-gcse-english-literature-2016/coursematerials.html#%2FfilterQuery=category:Pearson-UK:Category%2FExam-materials>

- 40 marks
- AO1 Demonstrate a close knowledge and understanding of texts, maintaining a critical style and presenting an informed personal engagement
- AO4 Show understanding of the relationships between texts and the contexts in which they were written

January 2023 8 Discuss the theme of success in The Whale Rider. OR 9 In what ways is the relationship between Koro and Kahu important in the novel?	January 2023 Paper 1R 8 'But this time ... I'm really going to divorce him.' (Nanny/Nani Flowers). How is marriage presented in the novel? OR 9 Discuss the significance of the bull whale and his herd in The Whale Rider.
June 2022 6 In what ways are hopes and fears for the future significant in the novel? OR 7 Discuss the relationship between Kahu and Nanny (Nani) Flowers in The Whale Rider.	Paper 1R 6 Examine the relationship between Kahu and her uncle, Rawiri. OR 7 Discuss the importance of courage in The Whale Rider.

<p>January 2022</p> <p>6 'Koro Apirana is a successful tribal leader.' How far do you agree with this statement?</p> <p>OR</p> <p>7 Discuss the importance of family in The Whale Rider.</p>	<p>Paper 1R</p> <p>6 Explore the significance of the names of people and places in The Whale Rider. OR</p> <p>7 'Koro is a dislikeable character in the novel.' How far do you agree with this view of Koro?</p>
<p>November 2021</p> <p>6 Discuss the importance of locations in The Whale Rider. OR</p> <p>7 In what ways is Kahu significant in the novel?</p>	<p>June 2021</p> <p>6 Discuss the importance of fear in The Whale Rider. OR</p> <p>7 'Kahu seemed to say, "Down here?" and the dolphins made a nodding motion.' Explore Kahu's relationship with the natural world in the novel.</p>
<p>November 2020</p> <p>8 Explore one character who, in your opinion, has great power in The Whale Rider. OR</p> <p>9 In what ways is change important in the novel?</p>	<p>Paper 1R</p> <p>8 In what ways is Kahu's father, Porourangi, important in the novel? OR</p> <p>9 Discuss the significance of Māori culture and traditions in The Whale Rider.</p>
<p>January 2020</p> <p>8 'Koro Apirana is a cruel and heartless character in The Whale Rider.' How far do you agree with this view?</p> <p>OR</p> <p>9 Explore the significance of the legend of the whale rider in the novel.</p>	<p>Paper 1R</p> <p>8 Discuss the importance of leadership in The Whale Rider. OR</p> <p>9 In what ways is Nanny (Nani) Flowers important in the novel?</p>
<p>June 2019</p> <p>8 'The whales are very important characters in this novel.' How far do you agree with this view?</p> <p>OR</p> <p>9 Explore the theme of love in The Whale Rider.</p>	<p>Paper 1R</p> <p>8 Explore the relationship between Kahu and the whales. OR</p> <p>9 Discuss the importance of different kinds of learning in The Whale Rider.</p>
<p>January 2019</p> <p>8 Explore the relationship between Koro Apirana and Nanny Flowers in this novel. OR</p> <p>9 Discuss the significance of the natural world in The Whale Rider.</p>	<p>Paper 1R</p> <p>8 Explore the relationship between Koro Apirana and Kahu in the novel. OR</p> <p>9 Discuss the significance of travelling in The Whale Rider.</p>
<p>June 2018</p> <p>8 Explore the character of Kahu in this novel. OR</p> <p>9 'This novel is not only about the survival of some whales.' How important is the theme of survival in The Whale Rider?</p>	<p>Paper 1R</p> <p>8 'This novel is all about identity.' How far do you agree with this view?</p> <p>OR</p> <p>9 Explore the character of Rawiri in The Whale Rider.</p>

Example Answers and Examiner Comments

Level 5 Exemplars

Discuss the importance of different kinds of learning in *The Whale Rider*.

You must consider the context of the novel in your answer.

(Total for Question = 40 marks)

In the novel *Whale Rider* ^{by Witi Ihimaera.} the importance of learning is explored throughout in Rawiri's trip to Papua New Guinea as well as at home in Whangara.

A ~~blank~~ An obvious example of learning in the novel is that of Koro Apirana as he learns the importance of cultural liberation. The introduction ^{of} Koro to the reader doesn't portray him in a modern forward thinking light as 'she has broken the male line of descent in our tribe' showing to the reader a deep rooted misogynistic aspect of ^{Koro Apirana's} his character. This is fairly common in the Maori culture where gender roles have been defined in such a way through generations. The ~~imagery~~ ^{imagery} of 'broken' strikes a chord with the reader as this cannot be a ~~trade~~ ~~bad~~ ~~tradey~~ ~~badgedy~~ which cannot be altered or fixed. Furthermore as the reader moves through the book they see

Koro testing 'three boys from the noble blood lines when he wished to pass his mantle of knowledge' which further hyperbolises the misogynistic traits of Koro with through Imeacas use of 'boys' who Koro only wishes to pass the knowledge of the ages to. ^{as it has been instilled in his conscious that only he can lead} Additionally at the time of testing for the prospective chief tests the list of attributes required 'remembering long lines of genealogy: tests of dexterity, wisdom, physical and ~~plus~~ psychological strength' all of which the reader knows Kahu bestows due to the events of previous chapters which are still unknown to Koro. ^{such as retrieval of the 'coronet' from} Alternatively this inability for Koro to learn and alter the age old rules and form a new modern liberal culture portrays Koro as a tragic hero with his fatal flaw being his inability to alter the culture so it can thrive in a globalised globalising, mechanising modern era. Therefore the importance of learning can be seen through the character and teachings of Koro Apirana ^{to the next generation of leaders}.

Furthermore the importance of learning has been portrayed through the development of Kahu and her relationships with those around her. The opening of the book the reader ^{is aware} sees 'the love which Kahu received from Koro

was ~~that~~ the sob that dropped of the edge of the table like breadcrumbs' conveying Koro's disdain for Kahu being matched with Kahu's unrequited love from him as she battles to gain approval ^{while being defined by her gender}. The use of the metaphor of 'breadcrumbs' shows Koro's blatant disregard for Kahu like she is simply an animal who needs to be fed. Continuously we see Kahu displaying her ~~love~~ ^{no} love with ~~no~~ return however at the cultural show we see Kahu emotionally willing her voiced sounded drained and defeated. ~~st~~ 'It's not Paka's fault Nani' she said 'that I'm a girl' and this is the first time ^{as a reader} we see Kahu being emotionally broken by Koro's actions as the enthusiastic, joyous child becomes 'drained and defeated' by the ignorance of her grandfather. Finally Kahu learns the way to ^{claim her grandfather's} ~~reclaim~~ ^{captured} her love is through ultimate sacrifice so she can learn to ~~be~~ ^{be} carefully taught so she could claim her place for her people in the world ^{'the whale herd sing'} displaying to the reader that Kahu will learn of her lineage and responsibilities through the ancient whales thus her rights to chieftancy shall ~~not~~ ^{as her connection to Paka and the whales is undeniable} longer be questioned in the Maori paradigm. From a feminist perspective this would be seen as a massive triumph.

and movement forward for women's rights ^{in the Asian culture}
Therefore the learning of Kahu's self worth and lineage conveys the immense importance of learning in Witi Ihimaera's *Whale Rider*.

Finally the exploits and injections of Rawiri play a key role in conveying the significance of learning ^{in *Whale Rider*} Rawiri part way through the novel decides to leave Whangara in order to explore the world ~~down~~. During his time in Australia he stumbles across some people who used to live in Whangara saying 'no matter what changes they made to themselves or their lives, a cow is a cow' which ~~is~~ is an example of Rawiri learning of the albertation which people undergo when starting a ^{allowing Rawiri to undergo a} new ^{as a} ^{metaphorical} 'No matter what changes they made' brings ^{coming of age} in the topic of hybridity with a modernising world and the intermingling of cultures new subsection form which combine the new and the old to allow a culture to thrive ^{as his loyalties are not confirmed to either} Furthermore Rawiri learns of issues concerning nationalism and racism on his trips to Papua New Guinea as Jeff's mother screams 'just leave him it's just a native' which results in Rawiri learning ~~becoming~~ that racism is not just the domain

of ceaziest by but also the common ^{the use of the noun 'native' shows an immense divide between the western man and natives} multiculturally at the time this novel was written there was a massive push for a single national identity in Papua New Guinea a country which wasn't unified in language or culture only borders which caused Witi Ihimaera to draw parallels between Papua New Guinea and New Zealand and has communicated this through the character of Ruru. Additionally Ruru is used to foreshadow future events and to pass on knowledge which he holds after the events to the reader. such as 'she was moving closer to the right place at the right time with the right understand to accomplish the task which she had been assigned' ^{thus} conveying to the reader that a lesson shall be learnt and this shall alter the course of the story. ^{much like his trip altered him.} Therefore Ruru's exhibits teach him aspects about the wider world whilst he also gives philosophical interjections from the present to imply changes in teachings and ways of the Maori people.

Therefore Ihimaera has displayed many different types of learning through the use of characters and repeated themes.

This is a detailed response that is both assured and perceptive. The importance of learning is explored through: Koro appreciating the need for 'cultural iteration'; Koro testing the boys; having to adapt to 'new modern liberal culture'; the development of Kahu; Rawiri and much more. Many examples of learning are provided and contextual points are made throughout the essay. This is an in-depth and sophisticated response.

Level 5
40 marks

Q6. Examine the relationship between Kahu and her uncle, Rawiri.

A full mark response is included as an exemplar for this question.

Witi Ihimaera's 1987 post-colonial novel "The Whale Rider" tells the story of a young girl named Kahu and her destiny to save her iwi (tribe) and an ancient pod of whale to whom her destiny is tied to. Set in Whangara, in Aotearoa, Kahu must face challenges from her family ^{and} the nature around her in preserving her Maori culture. Throughout the novel, themes of tradition vs. modernity, identity, nature, fear, colonialism and love appear, with close connections and ties between the members of Kahu's family. With many elements of magical realism and based on ^{the} real struggles Maoris face, Ihimaera creates a sense of unity between ~~the~~ most characters. Perhaps, One of the most vital bonds in the novel is between Kahu and the narrator, her uncle Rawiri.

Kahu and Rawiri might have one of the closest relationships in the novel. Significantly, Rawiri is seen as Kahu's guardian throughout the novel.

The event that ties Rawiri to Kahu is the burial of her birth cord. Without the support of Koro Apirana, the chief and Kahu's great grandfather, Nani Flowers' recruitment of Rawiri in burying Kahu's birth cord ^{under the "marae"} establishes him as her protector and guardian, bound by the destiny ~~to~~ put in place by their mythological ancestor Paikea, with whom Kahu shares a name, despite her being a girl in a ~~ma~~ patrilineal society common in many Polynesian cultures. Rawiri's ability to almost see the spear that would symbolise Kahu and hear the whales saying "taiki e" 'let it be done', shows that he has a connection to his culture that extends from the present into the past and an ~~extra~~ understanding that would influence and nurture Kahu.

Perhaps because he is her guardian, Rawiri would often wait anxiously for Kahu to come home, ditching his dates to spend time with her and even taking her to the movies, where Kahu would cry when she sees whales being killed. Whaling was a very common practice in the past, ~~the~~ leading to the near extinction of whales, which are praised in cultures like Maori. Ihimaera was inspired to ~~right~~ write "The Whale Rider" by the 1986 Chernobyl disaster and the sinking of the Greenpeace ship, both with disastrous environmental concerns. He often writes about controversial topics such as sexism in

"The Whale Rider" and the LGBTQ+ community in his roman-a-clef "The Nights in the Garden of Spain", based on his own experiences. Kahu's reaction to the whales and imitating whale songs as a baby were all witnessed by Rawiri first, giving him an insight and responsibility over her.

Rawiri's migration to Australia and Papua New Guinea, was symbolic of the identity loss and migration of many young Maoris today, however his family took it the hardest. Kahu would often write many letters to Rawiri, telling him how she misses him. This is the perfect example of the unity ~~between~~ and "kohitanga" between them. Rawiri's effect as the narrator also tells us about the bond shared between them as she "tugs at his heart."

Kahu's role as the Whale Rider is seen firsthand by Rawiri, and this plays an effect in ^{cementing} ~~crystallizing~~ their relationship. To prove that Kahu can be chief, she would dive down to retrieve the Korō carved stone, in the process, seeking the help of dolphins. This is experienced by Rawiri, but also lets him know of her commitment to the culture. ~~For~~ Rawiri's fear for Kahu's life is seen when the ancient whales beach in Whangara in a suicidal attempt to find peace, as Kahu sacrifices herself to become the Whale Rider, Rawiri is distressed

and yelling at her to come back. The desperation of Rawiri to get his niece back shows his inability to accept her going, despite being one of the only people to know of ~~the~~ her power, and maybe purpose.

Rawiri is also ~~be~~ seen as the person Kahu admires and trusts. Often coming to comfort Kahu after fighting with her "Paka", his love and tenderness toward her is prominent throughout. Similarly, Kahu poking fun at Rawiri, urging him to not wear his leather jacket to her performance hints at the playful and lighthearted nature of their relationship. Together, Rawiri and Kahu's relationship is the perfect mix of admiration, trust and fun. ~~For~~ His time spent away only exaggerates his role as her guardian, chosen by destiny.

The confidence and maturity of this response is clear throughout. The candidate explores the relationship between Kahu and Rawiri from the moment she is born through to the end of the novel. A range of examples have been included, such as: their close relationship, the burial of Kahu's birth cord, Rawiri sighting the spear, Rawiri being Kahu's guardian and 'ditching his dates to spend time with her', Kahu writing letters, the retrieval of the stone and more. The conclusion impressively sums-up their relationship as being 'the perfect mix of admiration, trust and fun'. Contextual points are embedded throughout the response and, even though other points could have been included, the attention to small details secures full marks.

As exemplified in this response, try to refer to a range of examples from throughout the novel, not just one area.

Level 5, 40 marks

Q7. Discuss the relationship between Kahu and Nanny (Nani) Flowers in *The Whale Rider*.

The following is a Level 5 exemplar.

In the *Whale Rider*, Kahu and Nani Flowers are presented as strong, intelligent women in the face of a culture that devalues their worth, due to patriarchal values, in the misogynistic nature of the tribe.

Ihimaera presents the relationship between Kahu and Nani Flowers as a caring one in which they have a deep connection. At the news of Kahu's birth Nani's "lips were quivering with emotion" as "tears started rolling down the old lady's face" and ^{this} ~~shows~~ highlights the connection between the women in the tribe, Nani and Renua (Kahu's mother) and they have to support each other in a patriarchal structure. The verb 'quivering' suggests that ~~she~~ Nani was ~~quite~~ happy to hear Kahu's birth, unlike Koro was discontent with Kahu's gender, and Ihimaera presents this to challenge patriarchal views.

Ihimaera further displays their relationship

as close as Ihimaera presents Nani as a motherly figure as Nani Flowers "was out on the verandah, with Kahu in her arms, rocking back and forth, back and forth" and the repetition suggests that just how a mother brings comfort to a baby, Nani Flowers is also in the same position and this reveals her stout-hearted nature.

Nani Flowers is presented as obstinate as she overrules Koro Apirana (Nani's husband) and antagonises male authority for Kahu as she mentions that Kahu "has the right to have her birth cord placed in this site" and this portrays Nani Flower's dominance over Koro as in Maori culture, papatūānuku (Earth Mother) provides identity and unity to all people and they have a spiritual connection with her and this connection is shown through when a baby is born, the whenua is buried in a sacred site and this is significant as Nani Flowers thinks that is important that the tradition is still carried despite the baby's gender, and that "rules have to be broken!"

During Kahu's school ceremony, Kahu was giving a performance on Maori language and culture and during it someone said that Kahu was a 'cracker' and Nani Flowers's heart wrenched for Kahu and Kahu had a seat reserved for Koro and the narrator (Rauiri) describes it "like a gap" missing in "a row of teeth" which symbolises Koro's absence in Kahu's life and Kahu was very saddened by this.

Ihimaera presents Nani as a "guardian" to Kahu which creates a stronger bond within their relationship. In the novel, Koro Apirana set a task for the boys to "retrieve the stone" and "despite valiant attempts" they could not do and Kahu is the one who retrieves the stone; and Nani Flowers tells Rauiri "Not a word. Not a word about the stone or our Kahu" and the pronoun "our" suggests how valued Kahu is to the characters in the novel, and Nani Flowers does this because she feels that Koro "is not ready" for it. But then later on in the ~~novel~~ novel, Koro finds out and "The old man understood. He raised his arms as if to claw down the sky upon him" and this suggests that ~~that~~ Koro feels a sense of regret and "old man" is reductive as he is a respected and powerful figure in the novel which is ~~is~~ similar to Nani's way of calling Koro as "old pakea"; and this is quite destructive.

Thimmaera present Nani Flowers and Kahu as determined women and the Kahu retrieving the Stone proves Koro's views as wrong as to Kahu.

has proved herself to be the saviour of the tribe, and thus she proves against the misogynistic nature of the tribe. In Maori culture, there have been different attitudes towards women and girls and Thimmaera wrote this novel to suggest that the society need to modernise their ideas about women and girls inheriting Maori culture because she is the saviour that can achieve harmony with nature again. Nani Flowers realises Kahu's affinity with the whale and she mentions that "She is Kahutia Te Rangi - She is Paukea - She is the Whale Rider", thisicolon reveals that Kahu is the Whale Rider.

Thimmaera presents Nani Flowers and idolatrous and Kahu as infatuated as Nani Flower always comforts Kahu as "Nani went to Kahu's bedroom and ~~to see~~ Rauri saw "her comforting" Kahu and this illustrates the love that Nani has for Kahu despite her husband's dislike of Kahu of who ~~repeatedly~~ ^{repeatedly} says "Go away" and here Nani Flowers is presented as a female who values girls and their rights and her nurturing nature is revealed and Thimmaera wrote this novel for his daughter to show that girls are valued in Maori culture.

Towards the end of the novel, Kahu goes to save the whale and then she is in "hospital" and Nani Flowers had also collapsed and is also in hospital and she suddenly asks "Where's Kahu? Where is my Kahu?". The possessive pronoun once again establishes Kahu's importance in the tribe and the questions create a sense of panic and this demonstrates how compassionate and adoring Nani is towards Kahu. This is also the scene where Koro ~~finds out~~ tells Kahu that she is "the best grandchild in the whole wide world. It doesn't matter if it's a boy or a girl," and the ~~high~~ hyperbolic alliteration draws attention to importance of Kahu and no can be better than Kahu and now Koro has overcome the patriarchal views and this is his realisation that Kahu is the saviour of the tribe which is what Nani constantly tries proving throughout the novel as ~~she~~ earlier ~~at~~ on ~~the~~ Nani questions ~~that~~ Koro and asks "What's wrong with Kahu?" and Nani Flowers is always beside Kahu's side ~~and she~~ as she is presented as reverent and admiring towards Kahu.

Ihimaera presents the relationship between Kahu and Nani Flowers as very close and reveals the deep connection with them as they are the women who have overcome patriarchal views of society and help each other and support each other to prove this

and women can achieve anything and Nani Flowers had a strong belief in Kahu that she could be the leader of the tribe and proved to ~~be~~ Koro that ~~they~~ women are capable of different abilities and they are not feeble as how they are presented in the patriarchal society.

This is an assured response that explores several points about the relationship between Nanny (Nani) and Kahu. The candidate immediately identifies that both are strong women and share a caring relationship. There is an instant bond and connection between Nanny and Kahu and Nanny is a motherly figure. Other points include: Nanny being obstinate and over-ruling Koro and burying Kahu's birth cord in the marae; the school ceremony; the retrieval of the stone; Nanny being 'idolatrous and Kahu as infatuated' and more. There are some unnecessary language points and some ideas could have been developed further; however, this is clearly an assured response.

Level 5, 36 marks

Level 4 Exemplars

Q7. Discuss the importance of courage in *The Whale Rider*.

Like Q6, the majority of responses to this question were very successful.

The following is a Level 4 exemplar.

The novel "The Whale Rider" by Witi Ihimaera, published in 1987, follows the journey of a young girl, Kahu, who ~~attempts~~ ^{attempts} to redeem the Maori values after the effects of modernity and colonisation. The theme of courage is central to the storyline of the novel and the development of the characters.

In the beginning of the novel, Koro Apirana is seen storming out to sea after ^{hearing} news of ~~his~~ ~~the~~ ^(Kahu) the gender of his new grandchild. ~~As a leader~~ ^{As a leader} of the Whangara tribe, Koro Apirana holds extremely biased views about the treatment and equality of the genders. The Maori ^{society} ~~culture~~ is one that comes with embedded ~~patriarchal~~ patriarchal dominance and the rights of women are still presently overlooked.

Koro Apirana's wife, Nanni Flowers, despite being a female in a misogynistic society, finds the

courage within herself to chase Koro back to shore, and express her feelings of disappointment in his actions. Courage is crucial in exploring the changing views of the Maori society and expressing evolution in the views about gender roles throughout the novel. ~~Koro~~ Koro Apirana, being the leader of the tribe expressed that he wanted "nothing to do with her" as "she has broken the male line of descent in our tribe" after hearing news of Kahu's birth. Even with hearing Koro Apirana's ~~has~~ prejudice against women, Nanni Flowers fights to express herself and her gender as equally ~~not~~ capable and important.

In the middle of the novel, Rawiri is seen leaving the ancestral land to venture to Australia. The connection between ~~the~~ Man and nature is crucial to the survival of the Whangara tribe throughout the novel as they believed their ancestor, ~~ventured~~ Pakea, ventured to their homeland, riding the back of a whale. Rawiri shows a great deal of courage when he decides to leave the sacred land of his tribe and venture to a more modern, colonised ~~area~~ country in hopes ~~to~~ of a more exciting life. Whilst he's there, he meets a friend who invites him to live in Papua New Guinea where

he experiences racism and is described as "too dark" as well as being compared to animals. Shortly after, Rawiri returns to the land of his roots to deepen his connection with nature and earn the respect of the fellow members of his tribe. Courage is what drove ~~to~~ Rawiri to experiment with the direction of his life but also binded him with his ancestral land and forced him to realise that the connection his people had with nature was sacred and vital.

During the novel, Kahu is seen retrieving a stone from the depths of the ocean that symbolised courage, strength and the characteristics of a leader.

After several failed attempts from the boys to ~~retrieve~~ retrieve the object, Kahu ^{displays} ~~expresses~~ the courageous side to her and successfully collects it. Koro

Apirana had previously stated that he felt that "naming a girl child after the founder of the tribe was belittling Kahutia Te Rangī's prestige" however, it is Kahu's courage that proves to Koro Apirana that she is more than worthy of leading in a ~~to~~ predominantly male ruled society.

The many rights of women that have currently been taken away ^{by male figures} are challenged by Kahu's courage and success.

Courage is important to the development of the character's throughout the novel and simultaneously deepen the connection between members of the tribe to the ancestral land. Several rights to land have been removed by colonisers presently therefore, courage is vital to the novel.

In this response, the candidate explores courage through a range of examples. The candidate begins with some contextual comment and goes on to explore the patriarchal and misogynistic society and how this is taken to extremes by Koro. The candidate suggests that Nanny (Nani) Flowers shows courage when she chases after Koro when they learn they have a great-granddaughter. Rawiri shows courage when he decides to travel abroad and Kahu shows courage when she retrieves the stone set by Koro as a test for the boys. Some thoughtful comment is made about the way courage helps to develop the characters and deepens their connections with their Māori heritage. There is some context, although more contextual points could have been included. A thorough understanding of the novel is demonstrated in this sustained response.

Examples can be specific episodes or events within a novel. Examples do not have to be quotations, especially as this is a close book examination.

Level 4, 30 marks

Explore the theme of love in *The Whale Rider*.

You must consider the context of the novel in your answer.

(Total for Question = 40 marks)

In the novel 'Whale Rider', the theme of love is explored in numerous different ways including the relationship between Nanny Flowers and Kahu, Koro Apirana's relationship with Kahu, Koro and Nanny Flowers and finally, Kahu's power of love towards her tribe and Maori culture.

Firstly, Nanny Flowers and Kahu share one of the strongest relationships presented in the ~~play~~ novel as Nanny has unconditional love for Kahu. "no matter where you may go, you will always return". Nanny Flowers is talking to Kahu when burying her birthright at the beginning. She is describing how Kahu will always have a place in Nanny's heart even if she decides to fulfill her later life. This portrays Nanny Flowers' supportive and compassionate side to her as we see later on in the novel, Kahu is seen dangerously out at sea and it is too much for Nanny to handle. "tears were streaming down her face". This emphasises Nanny's love and care

for Kahu.

In addition, Kahu and Koro Apirana's relationship is explored through the novel as a lot more one-sided on Kahu's part. In the Maori culture, it is traditional to have a male leader and Koro has never been accepting of Kahu's leadership skills and traits. However, all she ever wanted was to be accepted by him and she will always love him unconditionally. "it's not paka's fault, that i'm a girl", Kahu is showing that she still has love for him and just wants his blessing. These two characters are very juxtaposing in the novel as Koro says, "She is of no use to me". This contrast of love is later reconciled as Koro realises just how strong Kahu is and how unfair he was being. "I love you" is a quote taken from Koro at the end which links perfectly to the theme of love.

Also, Koro Apirana's and Nanny flowers marriage is explored throughout the novel as Nanny A had tended to feel as if she wasn't loved anymore by Koro and his love for the Maori tribe and his negative ideologies of women had taken over. "I'm really going to divorce him". Nanny had finally had enough when Koro was refusing to

This is a structured response that considers the love shared between Nanny (Nani) Flowers and Kahu, Kahu and Koro, Koro and Nanny, Kahu's love for the Maori tribe and Nanny's love for Maori culture. Points are valid and a wide range of well-remembered quotations have been included. Contextual points are made, but often these are very brief. This is a sustained and thoughtful response.

Level 4

30 marks

Level 3 Exemplars

'The whales are very important characters in this novel.'

How far do you agree with this view?

You must consider the context of the novel in your answer.

(Total for Question = 40 marks)

In ~~the~~ *The Whale Rider* by Witi Ihimaera the whales are very important characters to a certain extent. This essay will explore how important they are.

As characters, the whales are very important to a certain ~~end~~ extent, especially the bull whale. Without him, the ancestor of Kahu's tribe Kaikea would not have come with the spears of blessing for land and sea. As a result of this the whale are seen by the Maoris of Whangara as a source of blessing. If the whales die the tribe will be doomed; it will lose that connection to the past that the whales symbolize, as Koro Apirana the ^{chief} states when the Bull whale ~~can~~ comes to be die on Whangara Beach.

Furthermore,

^ The thread of the whale herd's story throughout the novel ^{furthur develops} ~~enhances~~ the theme of ^{helps to develop} ~~the~~ theme of

Man's
relationship with nature. The Bull
whale's close bond with the tribe's ancestor Paikea
symbolizes this theme that is very major in the
Maori's worldview. The separation of the Bull
whale from Paikea shows that man and nature are
out of touch and ~~that~~ the Bull whale's longing
for reunion with Paikea stresses the need for
man to reunite with nature and until ^{that happens} then all
will go downhill. Towards the end of the novel,
when Kahu climbs on the Bull whale's back ^{when he is} and
commands him to return to the sea and live, an
symbolic act which is symbolic of Man's reunion
with nature. Without the whales this important
aspect could not be explored much in depth.

Another way the whales are important is in
the link between Koro Apirana, ~~and~~ his wife Nani
Flowers, ^{and their tribe} and the Bull whale and his wife the old
Mother whale. ^{and their whale herd.} Koro Apirana and the Bull whale
are 'stranded in the present,' looking ever looking
back, ground into tradition. In the same way, Nani
Flowers and the Mother whale coax their husbands
to embrace new ways ways and ideas; for Koro the
allowance for a female to succeed him, and for
the Bull whale, that he should, instead of mourning
the ~~so~~ past move forward into the future. However,
*beaching himself

the Bull whale and his wife are only illustrative of their ~~own~~ human counterparts, as their ^{stories} ~~story~~ ^{are} mostly separate, but at the end of the novel the ~~se~~ whales' story and the humans' story converge and link them together, as Kahu hears the whales through a 'backwash of time'

Therefore, in conclusion, the whale characters ~~have~~ are very ~~also~~ important, especially in symbolic roles, ~~to~~ in relation to certain themes. However, as characters that we can relate to, they are only really illustrative of the Maori tribe and its chieftain chieftain Koro Apirana and his wife.

After a tentative start ('to a certain extent') the response improves, particularly with the points about man's relationship with nature and references to Maori culture. There are contextual points, such as the comments about the whales being grounded in tradition and the reference to Maori views. The response is not sustained and more coverage of the novel would have benefited this response.

Level 3
24 marks

Explore the relationship between Kahu and the whales.

You must consider the context of the novel in your answer.

(Total for Question = 40 marks)

Ihimaera shows the relationship between Kahu and the whales as a strong and powerful connection. Ihimaera wrote this novel at a time of change in the 1980s where the Moari language was coming back into the world. He wrote this novel for his two daughters because he wanted a female tribal leader instead of a male leader.

Kahu is presented as the "Whale Rider" in this novel. She is shown to be the lover for all of these whales. Despite this all, Koro Apirana, her grandfather did not believe in this, he thought that Kahu was a disgrace to the Whangara tribe. However Kahu finally shows him that she is the "whale rider" by riding the whales when they beached themselves. This is when Koro Apirana said "She is the Whale Rider".

~~One~~ One part of the novel, Rawiri took Kahu to the cinema to watch a movie on whales. During the

movie, whales were killed and this is where Kahurangi made "mewing sounds" with her throat to show that she is the "Whale Rider." Kahurangi also shouted "Paka no" to show that she really cares about the whales because people were killing them. ~~the~~ ^{"mewing sounds"} suggests that Kahurangi was made to be the whale rider as she copied the sounds of the whales, this creates a relationship between Kahurangi and the whales. This is where Ihimaera wanted to have a female tribal leader instead of a male tribal leader, to break the Maori tradition and start a new one.

When Rehua named Kahurangi after their ancestor Koro Ipirana was disgusted. "Kahurangi Te Rangi a man's name," this suggests that Kahurangi was named after the ancestor of the Whangara tribe was because Rehua knew that Kahurangi was going to be the "Whale Rider." When Kahurangi Te Rangi threw the spear 1000 years into the future, "let this spear be planted into future where it is best needed". This could show that the spear could be Kahurangi. This was where there was a time of change in the Maori culture.

This is a sound response exploring the relationship between Kahu and the whales. The response begins with some contextual comment and goes on to consider how Kahu becomes the 'Whale Rider', the episode when Rawiri takes Kahu to the cinema and Kahutia Te Rangi throwing the spear, which 'could be Kahu'. There are some implicit contextual points with reference to Maori culture, but there is little development of ideas.

Level 3
21 marks

