**Whale Rider reading notes**

**PROLOGUE**

**Ch. 1.** p.2 Nature depicted before people.

- Lists of animals with Maori names… tuatara, moa, kia, weka, huhu etc.   
- List of fish… hapuku, manga, kahawai, tamure, moki, warehou etc.  
+ ‘the filligree of fairy laughter like a sparkling glissando’ => mythic dimension

p.3 ‘Waiting’. ‘the dark bellies of canoes’ + ‘a spume on the horizon’ linking mankind / whales as visitors to Aotearoa from the first.

p. 4 ‘a swirling tattoo on the forehead’ + the whale rider + ‘the land long sought and now found’ creates the motifs of both myth bridging into reality together with destiny.

Tangata = Man. Karanga Mai = Call me. The one spear ‘to flower when the people are troubled.’

**I. SPRING: FORCE OF DESTINY**

**Ch 2**. p.8/9 Whale and master/flute. Songs and females. Flute becomes siren call.

**Ch3**. p.11 Paka. First person narration of Rawiri with retrospection and foreshadowing: ‘Kahu… perhaps saved us all.’ Rejection by Koro Apirana because she had ‘broken the male line’. Presence of Nani Flowers and sense of older world and how she ‘disliked telephones’. Porourangi and Rehua also introduced.

p.12 Tradition of patriarchy. 8 years ago. Yet notable is the spirit of Nani: ‘He isn’t my chief. I’m his chief.’ Note her ancestry to old Muriwai.

**Ch. 4**. P.14 Kahu – named for Kahutia Te Rangi: (1) Male name (2) Principal ancestor of village (3) The mythic whale rider (4) Also known as Pakea.

p.15 Nani’s past from Muriwai and out of the legend of the coming to Aotearoa.

p.16 Rehua’s decision to name baby with approval from Porou – generosity of spirit together with symbolism of the burial of the birth cord => creates landing of spear and greater destiny. Also first refs to Rawiri’s bike and his unconventional lifestyle (teenager at this time).

p.17 Death of Rehua, and Nani’s reaction, ‘the sea hissed and surged through her words’ / ‘secret… you have become her guardians’. Three signs: (1) the moon on figure of Kahutia Te Rangi (2) the sight of a small spear? (3) ‘a whale sounding’ out to sea.

**II. SUMMER: HALCYON’S FLIGHT**

**Ch.5.** *Use of italics for third person narration of whales.* Past Easter Island (<-> myth). Nb – ‘greatest threat… man’ while sanctity of whales emphasised through ‘underwater cathedrals’… ‘a huge cathedral’ used for hiding VS past memories of the whale rider as ‘a golden master’

p.21 diving of the bull whale whereby ‘he had almost killed the one other creature he loved’ (foreshadowing of novel’s climax)

**Ch.6.**  p.22 3 months pass – Rehua’s death and funeral in village. Kahu, ‘a small face like a dolphin’, leaves with mother’s family but the birth cord remains. Te Tai Rawhiti, the people of the East Coast, washed by the eastern tide. Journey of the ancestor from Haiwiki.

p.23 Carving of Kahutia Te Rangi on the meeting house (marai). Note how the spears recall the ancestors’ ‘close communion with the world’ and ‘how man might talk with creatures of the sea’ to create ‘Oneness’. Name of Paikea also used after Whangara chosen as destination after birthplace in Hawaiki.

p.24 ‘Four generations’ / then Porourangi ‘many centuries later’. Rawiri’s memories of ‘8 years ago’, passing from a 16 year old to a 24 year old, referring to his pride of ‘once a bikie’ yet also ‘a little tug at my motorbike jacket’ and how Kahu changes his path.

p.25 Porourangi leaves to ‘work in the city’. Meanwhile, it was ‘surprising how closely… Kahu and Koro resembled each other’.

p. 26/7 Koro’s search for ‘such a boy-child’ commences, despite early evidence of Kahu ‘adored the Maori food’ and the incident of Kahu biting Koro’s toe during his instruction. Rawiri’s retrospection: ‘now I understand why…’

**Ch. 7.** p.29 Kahu now a 2 year old. Porourangi with new g/f Ana. p.29 Further affection ‘Oh, Paka!’

p.30 Koro ‘a good fighter for the Maori people’ – ‘Super Maori’ nickname. Kohanga Reo – language nests – created yet Kahu still sneaks in ‘like a sea urchin’. Reference to communication with whales.

p.31 Refs to Lords/Gods – the release of whales from lakes to oceans, of how whales became helpers of men lost at sea, the loss of ‘interlock’ and the whale ‘transformed to an island.’

p.32 Koro tells of offerings to ‘honour Tangaroa’ vs. the slaughter of whaling

p.33 Meanwhile, Rawiri takes Kahu to cinema as she reacts tearfully to ‘the final tragedy of the movie… the whale dying in its blood’. Before, p.35, the episode of the orca, with a supernatural edge to R’s account, the orcas ‘uncanny and disturbing as a dream.’ Kahu, ‘making eerie sounds in her throat’. Final words, the call and response of ‘Hui e, haumi e, taiki e – Let it be done’ (x 3), bring the force of destiny to the fore and an incantation for Kahu’s role as leader of the tribe.

**Ch. 8.** p. 36 Nani’s defiance of ‘your blood can’t beat my Muriwai blood’ vs. Koro’s discovery of 3 sons from ‘royal bloodlines’. Kahu collects love like ‘breadcrumbs’ dropped from the table.

p.37 Rawiri’s trip to shear sheep gives Kahu further experience while Nani mocks the male group with her reference to ‘There go the Klu Klux Klan’.

p.38 Koro’s speech on fishing. ‘(No) greedy advantage of Tangaroa… retribution.’ p.39 refers to the past when ‘banks / rocks… names and legends assigned them’. Vs. ‘too many snorkelling gear… commercial licences etc’ => the exploitation of Nature. Sound ‘like a great door opening’ refers again to the great whale breaching out to sea. ‘Listen how empty our sea has become’. Pathetic fallacy of the rainstorm. p.40 Koro’s recollections of whaling ‘skin like silk… like a god’ but then ‘harpoons… the thrill like when you do a haka’ – Kahu’s grief sees her expelled and censured by Koro. P.41 ‘The sea thundered ominously. The rain fell like spears.” – P. fallacy and symbolism.

p.42 Nani’s reaction – ‘as soon as I get my divorce’ – irony of repetition here. The sea/surf “hiss and roar. Ebb and flow.” Kahu by shore, listening to a voice ‘like a seagull’. Rawiri ‘saw three silver shapes’ of dolphins => further reference to girl’s animal whispering powers.

**III. AUTUMN: SOUNDING OF WHALE.**

**Ch. 9.** p.44/45 Address of Kahutia ‘And now you are a carved figurehead.’ Ref to earthquake = nuclear testing undertaken by French in Moruroa from 1966 – 1996. ‘the ancient whale deviated from his usual primeval route’… towards ‘the Antarctic… away from the poisoned water.’

**Ch. 10.** Kahu now 4 years old. P.47 Rawiri heads to Australia, described as ‘big, bold, brassy, bawdy, beautiful’. Meeting up with friend Kingi. P.48 Refs to Henare, now wearing ‘a dress’ and Reremoana now known as ‘Lola L’Amour’ – freedoms of gender / sexuality unlike traditional Maori society.

p.49 Lives turned upside down ‘like Sydney Bridge’s reflection’. Rawiri becomes bricklayer and plays rugby league. Kingi accuses him of living the ‘hedonistic life of the lotus eater’ as symbolised by the poster of actress surfing with a can of beer.

p.50 Porou marrying Ana. While Koro/Nani getting divorced ‘tomorrow’ (irony). P.51 Friend Jeff invites Rawiri to travel onwards to Papua New Guinea.

**Ch. 11.** Rawiri two years in PNG. Racism – ‘I was still too dark’ p.53 Clara / Tom (Parkinson’s Disease). P.54 Sweeping changes occurring in PNG. p.55 Rawiri’s reflections on ‘understanding of myself as a Maori’ and realization that ‘Kahu had always been the right person.’

Letter from Porou tells of Koro’s search to find a young boy ‘to pull the sword out of the stone’. Meanwhile, Kahu comes to Whangara – prolepsis to her a six year old. P.56 Porou’s fears of how new technology may dislodge Maori identity. Koro like ‘an old whale stranded in an alien present’ (analogy <-> bull whale) with ‘a role in the tides of the future’. Kawiri picks up a ‘shining silver shell from the reef’ (foreshadowing Kahu’s recovery of the necklace).

p.57 Call of Maori towards home. Hoki mai. Meanwhile, three tragic events: (1) Clara’s casual racism at party (2) tragic road accident killing native Bernard (nb. More degrees than Clara has chins) (3) appearance of a cloud shaped like a whale => Let it be done (destiny).

**Ch. 12.** p.62 Kahu’s progress. Leader of culture group. P.63 Nani’s ref to discrimination / changing times. Bible ref to return of the prodigal son (Rawiri). P.64 Search continues for one who can pull the sword from the stone (Arthurian myth), also ironic popular ref to search for ‘Rocky of Whangara’ by Nani. p.64 Extra eg of Mihi (alongside Muriwai).

p.66 Prize-giving and ironic refs to motorbikes. P.67 empty seat of Koro, ‘like a gap in a row of teeth’. P.68 Kahu’s ability to speak in her own tongue, Maori. P.69 No Koro, but Rawiri and friends perform a ‘haka of support’. Kahu’s words ‘It’s not Paka’s fault… I’m a girl.’

**Ch.13.** p.70 Carved stone p.71 Kahu dives “a small stingray flapping’ in her white dress. P.72 Dolphins ‘seemed to be talking to her’ – they rise together as dolphins disappear ‘like silver dreams’. P.73 Nani’s reaction to Kahu’s feat of recovery: ‘Not a word… he’s not ready yet’ – Let it be done.

**IIII WINTER: WHALE SONG, WHALE RIDER**

**Ch. 14.** p.76 Whale rider / separation from whale at Whangara. P.77 Antarctica and description of ‘cathedral… organ… holy procession’ – semantic field of sanctity. P.78 ‘Suddenly shards of ice began to descend like spears around the herd’… the bull whale ‘totally ensnared in dreams of the golden rider’ yet ‘Death was waiting’ => foreshadowing of the stranding.

**Ch. 15.** Great herd of whales reported in Gisborne Herald. Helicopter pilot describes ‘like the end of the world’. P.80 Chainsaw severs whale’s lower jaw – abuse of Nature. Koro / Porou in S. Island. Rawiri rouses the ‘Boys’ to defend Nature, ‘flying like spears to save the whales’. P.81 ‘old European lady who had sat down on a whale’ to save it from destruction / pillage. P.82/83 Spirit of another old woman with a pink slipper.

P.83 Talking to whales. Presence of organizations such as Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth. P.84 Despite the community effort, the whales return to beach themselves. P.85 Singing of ‘Onward, Christian Soldiers’ yet ‘whales did not wish to be separated’ and cling together.

P.85/86 Kahu found ‘up on the bluff calling out to sea.’ ‘The moon was drenching the sky with loneliness’ while ‘muted thunder boomed like a door opening far away’. Destiny awaits.

**Ch. 16.** p.87 ‘No TV cameras… like a dream’ for episode with ancient bull whale, akin to a ‘Second Coming’ => messianic symbolism of these chapters. P.87 Koro and Nani together. P.88 Koro’s witnessing of whales – ‘No wai te he?’ – ‘Who is to blame?’ = a sign.

p.90 Kahu, as if ‘a giant door opening a thousand years ago’… the whale ‘with the sacred sign of the swirling tattoo’ => borderland between reality and myth. P.91 Koro’s rejection repeated. P.92 More lightning and thunder as pathetic fallacy. P.93 ‘Kahu’s face, like a small dolphin’. P.93 ‘A wedge… the scientific and the fantastic’. P.94 The whale, referred to as the ‘birth cord’ joining past, reality and fantasy – symbolic of oneness – dramatic irony given the presence of Kahu’s actual birth cord at marai. p.95/96 Courage of Kawiri to tie the rope to the bull whale’s fluke – faith. P. 98 Yet ‘the ropes snapped’ while women join to push whales with their shoulders (community unified), yet still not enough to sway leader. P.99 ‘Our ancestor wants to die’. ‘There is no place for it here in this world’.

**Ch.17.** p.100 ‘If the whale lives, we live’ => motivating factor for Kahu is love / self-sacrifice. P. 101 Kahu’s high treble voice… singing to the whale… Karanga Mai – ‘Call Me’. P.102 Ref to Jonah’s and Rawiri’s new found courage. P.103 ‘like a white ribbon’ – symbolism of colour for Kahu. P.104 ‘She wept’ x 7 – messianic associations with Jesus (‘Jesus wept’) plus her willingness to self-sacrifice for the wider community – ‘she didn’t know what dying was like’ – ‘Let the people live,’ she ordered. ‘Ko Paikea’ – identification with ancestor/myth.

**Ch. 18.** ‘She was the whale rider’ – confirmation, water ‘streaming like silk’, the whale opening ‘a small breathing chamber’. Suddenly, ‘the moon came out’ -> symbolism. Let it be done <-> destiny.

p.107 Carved stone – which of the ‘boys’? – Koro’s blind spot and final grief / realization raising hands as if ‘to claw down the sky upon him’.

**EPILOGUE: THE GIRL FROM THE SEA.**

**Ch. 19.** P.110 Whales speak together in Maori. P.111 Visiting posts of whales listed. P.112 Vivid description of the sea. P.113 ‘A descendant of your lord?’ Female corrects old bull whale. P.114 ‘This is the last spear, the one which was to flower in the future.’ P.114 Prophecy of afterbirth. P.115 Fates inextricably linked.

**Ch. 20.** P.116 Nani in hospital. P.116 Three days ‘in a nest of dark lustrous kelp’, guarded by dolphins. Now in a coma <-> Christ rising from the dead again. P.118 Koro’s reflection ‘I should have known… ever since the toe’ p.118 Symbolism of sunlight and billowing curtains – resurrected with ‘You two…’ – creating humour to reconnect to reality. Meanwhile, Whale herd are conscious / anthropomorphic in their appreciation with spray ‘like silver fountains in the moonlight’

**Ch. 21.** P.120 ‘The old mother whale and the bull whale arguing…’ <-> Koro/Nani. P.121 The whales breaching and releasing Kahu – ‘Return to kingdom of Tane and fulfil your destiny’. The whales are ‘still singing’.