

Overview:

Whale Rider is a 2002 movie that follows Paikea “Pai” Apirana, a 12-year old Māori girl in New Zealand who aspires to become the chief of her tribe. However, her grandfather (Koro) is very traditional and believes that this role can only be held by a man. Pai’s twin brother, who died at birth, was supposed to fill that role. Koro at first rejects his granddaughter because of the loss of his grandson, but they eventually develop a close, but strained, bond. The movie primarily focuses on the relationship between Pai and Koro and the conflict that arises between them as Pai attempts to learn skills that are traditionally reserved for boys in their village.

The discussion guide in this lesson plan provides questions that highlight the relationship between tradition, values and identity portrayed in *Whale Rider*. After viewing the movie, participants will discuss these questions and reflect on how they see some of the themes play out in their own lives.

Objectives:

As a result of this activity, participants will be able to:

1. Discuss the relationship between traditions, values, and identity.
2. Recognize how traditions, values, and beliefs change across generations.
3. Reflect on how traditions, values, and beliefs have changed within their own families.

Time:

3 hours

Group Size:

Entire group

Materials:

Access to the movie *Whale Rider* (available through Amazon Prime), *Whale Rider Discussion Guide* (in [Downloads](#)).

Intercultural Development Continuum Stages:

- Denial
- Minimization
- Acceptance

AAC&U Intercultural Knowledge and Competence Goals:

Cultural Self-Awareness:

- To articulate insights into own cultural rules and biases (e.g., seeking complexity; aware of how their experiences have shaped these rules, and how to recognize and respond to cultural biases, resulting in a shift in self-description).

Knowledge of Cultural Worldview Frameworks:

- To demonstrate sophisticated understanding of the complexity of elements important to members of another culture in relation to its history, values, politics, communication styles, economy, or beliefs & practices.

Discussion Guide:

- What are some of the traditional Māori beliefs and values that you see portrayed in this movie? How has modern Western society affected some of those traditions, beliefs, and values?
- Why was Koro so upset about having a granddaughter? Why was his grandson's death such a great loss, culturally speaking?
- What are the gender roles portrayed in this movie? What is expected of boys/men? What is expected of girls/women?
- What does Koro value as an elder in this community? Why is it so important to him to uphold the traditional values of his community? How do his values affect his sense of identity?
- What are Pai's father's (Porourangi) values? How are they different from Koro's? How are they similar? How does Porourangi subvert the traditional gender roles? How do his values affect his sense of identity?
- What are Pai's values? How are they different from Koro's? How are they similar? How does Pai subvert the traditional gender roles? How do Pai's values affect her sense of identity?

Personal Reflection:

In this movie, we can see how traditions, values, and beliefs change across generations. Think about how this has occurred within your own family:

- What traditions are important to your grandparents? Your parents? What about you?
- How have those traditions changed across the generations in your family (if at all)?
- What are some of your grandparents most important values and beliefs? What about your parents?
- How do your values and beliefs differ from your grandparents and parents? How are they similar?
- What do you think has influenced the changes that you've seen in the traditions, values, and beliefs within your family?

Related Tools:

Tools to use in conjunction with this lesson plan:

- [Self-Awareness and Core Cultural Values](#)