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The Whale Rider



Synopsis

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

Book Information

Paperback: 152 pages

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Product Dimensions: 8 x 6.6 x 0.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 6.4 ounces

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (85 customer reviews)

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Age Range: 10 and up

Grade Level: 4 - 8

Customer Reviews

"Whale Rider" is best known as the hit indie movie, winner of the Audience Award in the 2003 Sundance Film Festival. But the basis for that film was Witi Ihimaera's magical, lore-laden novel "Whale Rider," a bittersweet story about a Maori girl and her mysterious destiny. The first great-grandchild of the Maori chief Koro Apirana is born... but a girl called Kahu, not the hoped-for boy, and soon her mother dies. Koro is upset, since only a male can carry on the line. He hopes for a destined chosen one to restore the Maori people, but his hopes are growing more and more futile. He starts teaching young boys about the old traditions, looking for the one who can "pull the sword

from the stone."Meanwhile, Kahu grows up into an inquisitive and sweet-natured eight-year-old. She loves her grandfather, but his bitterness over her not having been a boy has never really worn off. But one day, whales are found beaching themselves near the town where Kahu lives, and she hears their song. Searching for his old friend, master and rider, the oldest whale will find Kahu. Few novels have the earnest simplicity that "Whale Rider" does. Ihimaera tackles subjects like tradition, sexism, faith, and of course the Maori culture. Not a lot of books and movies handle the Maori, who are the native people of New Zealand, and Ihimaera does an excellent job of conveying the creation myths, a handful of traditions, and the danger to it now (illustrated by Rawiri's journeys to Australia and Papua New Guinea). Since the story is told through Kahu's biker uncle Rawiri, it takes us awhile to get to know Kahu. Similarly, the book is rather ordinary near the beginning, and the writing is too simple.

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