# Whale Rider: Change Of Koro’s Attitude Towards Pai

The task given to the students of year 9 is to write an analytical essay that discusses how a film produces meaning for a school-based magazine. We are expected to demonstrate our understanding of: the film and how film techniques create meaning and essay structures. With reference to the film Whale Rider, we are to write an analytical essay on the following question: How does Koro’s attitude towards Pai change throughout the film? I will discuss how this is represented through cinematic techniques. In creating my response, I will make reference to: lighting, motif and shot selection.

The film ‘Whale Rider’ directed my Nikki Caro was released in Australia on the 8th of May 2003. In Maori traditions, for more than 1000 years, a male heir born to a chief succeeds to the title. When the chief’s eldest son, Porourangi discovers that he is gaining twins – a boy and a girl, the Maori traditions are at risk of finding a new chief when after severe complications with the birth the young girls’ Mother and Twin brother are shown passed away. While passing, the mother’s last word said was ‘Paikea’ and thus the young girl was named Paikea after the significant Maori legend Paikea, who rode on top of a whale. However, in Maori traditions it is claimed as forbidden to name a child after the legend. Due to this, Koro, her grandfather condemns and blames her for conflicts happening with the Maori tribe. Throughout the duration of the film, Koro’s attitude towards Pai changes throughout the film through the use of cinematic techniques lighting, motif and shot selection.

The Film ‘Whale ‘Rider’ uses cinematic techniques such as motif as an element to symbolise significance. A significant event in the film is the scene when Koro is discussing family linage with Paikea while fixing the motor engine with a rope that he expresses to Paikea represents weaved together threads of the whale rider, Paikea so that their line remains strong. Each one of the threads represents one of her ancestors all joined together and strong going back to the whale. While exclaiming this to her, Koro her grandfather breaks the rope which signifies a broken bond and no one suitable for a leadership position in the Maori tribe. While he goes to get another rope, Paikea ties the broken parts of the rope and wraps it around the engine, fixing the motor engine of their boat. Paikea fixing the rope signifies her Challenging Maori tradition as a girl and breaks gender stereotypes while bringing new life into the Maori culture.

The Film ‘Whale Rider’ uses cinematic techniques such as camera angles as an element to emphasise emotion and reactions to circumstances and conflict. The beginning of the film ‘Whale Rider’ introduces the characters in a close-up camera shot. A close-up camera shot allows the audience to focus on a character’s feelings or thoughts. Showing the subject in more detail with little to no background. In this circumstance, the scene is of Paikea’s mother in an immense amount of pain during labour. We clearly see her tears indicative of her upset and despair. The camera angles used throughout the film all represent a characteristic and have meaning. For instance, a high angle shot is when the camera is above the person looking down, this causes the subjects to appear weak and powerless. An example in the film when there was a high shot being used was when the whales beached themselves and the Maori tribe were using a long, thick rope to bring them back into the sea. They seemed weak and small as they were unable to save the whales. Another camera shot used in the film is a low shot, the camera is below the person that it is filming and It makes the subject look powerful, large and important.

An example when a low camera angle shot was used in the film was when Paikea was making a speech about how she comes from a long line of chief stretching all the way back to Hawaiki, the ones that first heard the whales crying and sent a man, Paikea. She also exclaims how she is the most resent descendent however she wasn’t the leader her grandfather was expecting and by being born she broke the line back to the ancient ones. As she is making the speech, her eyes are filled with water, tears dripping down her face in grief. The film directors ensured that they used a camera shot that would gain sympathy from the audience by the use of emotion in the scenes.