The Whale Rider

Whole-Novel Discussion and Activities

BURNING ISSUES

1. Are tradition and progress opposites? How does *The Whale Rider* help you think about this question?
2. Do you believe that some people, like Kahu, have a strong psychic connection with animals? Why or why not?
3. How universal are the themes of this novel? Talk about whether or not the big ideas apply mainly to Maori culture.
4. How do characters in this novel fight against sexism and racism? Could their strategies help other people fight these problems?
5. Witi Ihimaera says he was inspired to write this novel when one of his daughters asked why boys are always the heroes in movies. Does his story create a believable girl hero? Why or why not?
6. Why do you think the author included words and phrases from the Maori language? Was this technique effective for you?
7. If you have seen the movie, talk about how the filmmakers changed the story. What were the most important changes? Do you think the story was more effective in the book or film?

CHOICES ACTIVITIES

1. **Setting Writing to a Faraway Friend.** Imagine that you are Kahu and you want to send a Postcard to a friend in another country. Choose an image for the front of your postcard. What scene from her home town might Kahu send? Use a photo from a magazine, or draw your own picture. Then, write a short note, including descriptions of the image and of an exciting event that happened in Whangara.

2. **Plot Creating a Radio Play.** Choose an exciting scene from *The Whale Rider* and re-create it as a radio play. In addition to dialogue between characters, you can use music and sound effects to bring the events to life. After writing your script, rehearse the scene with a team of actors. If possible, record your drama and play it back for an audience.