

Introduction: *Whale Rider* – A Story of Dualities

Whale Rider is a story involving many dualities—a story in which different forms of *twins, doubles, pairs, parallels*, and even *polar opposites* play an important role. Consider how the following types of dualities (i.e., pairs, parallels, and opposites) play a meaningful role in *Whale Rider*:

Foil Characters – A *foil character* is a person whose traits and qualities contrast meaningfully with those of another character. Two major characters can be foils for one another. However, writers often use a minor character as a foil to emphasize the significant traits of a main character. Which characters does the movie ask us to juxtapose, and which important similarities and differences should we recognize between the characters?

Motifs – A *motif* is the patterned repetition of an image, word, action, detail, or idea that points to some sort of meaning. (Any detail that *appears at least two times* can be called a motif.) Is there a pair of related images, a pair of parallel events, a pair of relationships, or even a pair of symbols in the movie that seem related—either through similarity or through contrast? If so, what can we learn by understanding the presence of this pair in the movie?

Writing Prompt: A Significant Pair or Set of Parallels

What is one significant duality (i.e., one pair or set of “doubles”) in *Whale Rider*, and how does this duality contribute to the story’s impact and illuminate the story’s meaning?

Step 1: Choose a pair of *foil characters, related images, parallel events, significant relationships, or related symbols* from *Whale Rider*, and answer these questions: What important role does each play in the story, and what are their significant similarities and differences?

Step 2: Then, in a well-organized 4-paragraph essay, discuss the significant similarities and/or differences between these two elements of the movie, and explain how an understanding of these details helps illuminate the story’s meaning.

Listed below are some examples of twins, doubles, pairs, parallels, and even polar opposites that appear in the film. Consider: Are there any other pairs, doubles, parallels, or polar opposites that are notable parts of the story?

- Koro and Pai
- The two ropes that break (under Koro’s control)
- Porourangi and Rawiri
- Shilo (Rawiri’s girlfriend) and Ms. Parker (Pai’s teacher)
- Pai and Hemi
- Pai and Rawiri
- Koro and Nanny
- Two Fathers: Porourangi and Hemi’s father
- The twin brothers who are part of Koro’s school and Rawiri’s two friends
- Koro’s community or tribe and the pod of whales
- Smoking and drinking
- Maori traditions—*maintaining* these traditions vs. *leaving these traditions behind*
- What is *old or traditional* vs. What is *new or modern*