Personal Response Essay

Tittle: Whale Rider   
Director: Nicki Caro  
Text Type: Film (Drama based on the novel, written by Witi Ihimaera)

Paikea’s great grandfather, Koro Apirana, was an interesting character in the film Whale Rider. I came to find that his attitude towards his granddaughter Paikea was stubborn and old fashioned. Koro Apirana believed that Paikea was not to be a leader because of his old fashioned and sexist thoughts. This is shown when he says: “A girl; I will have nothing to do with her”.

At the beginning of the film, I felt frustrated and very angry at Koro Apirana’s, very harsh and historic values and ideas towards gender. As the film progressed, Koro Apirana started to change and modernise his opinions about Paikea and her becoming a leader. Towards the end of the film I came to understand why he was so stubborn, and I had developed a certain level of respect for Koro Apirana. I understood him better as he was taught and raised in a traditional Maori culture. If I was in Koro Apirana position, I would find it easier to remove myself from the situation and calm down and gather my composure somewhere else.

Koro Apirana has made me think about how the ideas and opinions of society have changed over the decades. He has made me grateful that these types of views have been revised and the view towards men and woman has changed. Paikea’s thoughts and ideas will have to be specifically thought out, and also Paikea will have to find her own way to achieve her goals (e.g. learning the Taiaha) because asking Koro Apirana, would result in rejection.

I found Whale Rider a very in-depth and meaningful film as it also revealed aspects of Maori culture and history around the community of Whangara. One valuable lesson that I was taught in this film was, Maori tribes are very serious about protecting their heritage and traditional culture as can be seen through the learning of the Taiha and the Patu.

I have my doubts about this. On one hand learning a language or Taiha can have a positive effect on your life and relations towards your life and relations towards your tribe. But also future generations may not want to learn the traditional language or other cultural aspects of being Maori. I can understand why someone as traditional as Koro Apirana might feel the way he feels, however I would also like to see Paikea achieve her purpose without being denied by Koro Apirana.

Words: 401

Written by Samuel Teteina   
Year 11EG

**POT LEGALIZATION Taine Aupouri – Year 11**

California will be voting on legalizing Marijuana. This new law is call Proposition 19. Many people in California are supporting this drug to be legalized and it is surprising where the support is coming from. It seems that most of the people and organisations that want this drug legalized are doing it for financial reasons.

Some law enforcement agencies are hoping for this law to be approved. This is because the agencies will be saving millions of dollars. For example, these agencies wouldn’t need to employ as many officers and would save $8.7 billion in revenue per year. I thought this was interesting because it made me wonder if the police have thought about the generations ahead. The senators and governors are also supporting this drug to be legalized because they will be making money in taxes through sales in stores. The text challenged my beliefs about politicians making right decisions for our society. It seems to be that they are only thinking about the income. Similarly, the New Zealand Government sold the Mighty River Power for financial gain.

Surprisingly, Civil Rights groups are also supporting this legalization of cannabis simply because of the arresting of ‘blacks’, which have been double, triple and even quadruple the rates of ‘white’ arrests. I can understand this because ‘blacks’ get caught selling drugs in the ghettos, and on the streets, where the ‘whites’ are more wiser and secretive about dealing with drugs, they sell drugs by shipment and dealings are done privately, even sometimes they could have ‘insiders’ helping them. Recently for example, policemen or governors have been aiding them with their dealings. I believe that New Zealand is a racist country. I hear many racist remarks on TV and Radio and also in my everyday life. A ‘Breakfast’ show host verbalized a racist comment on Television One, many viewers expressed concern with this comment and under human rights law he was asked to resign.

Polling people in California about legalizing marijuana doesn’t give fair results. I think this because the younger population outnumber the older population by far. California has many opportunities for the young generation, including jobs, great weather, sunny beaches and a great night life. The life style is fun and adventurous. Similarly, New Zealand has great outdoor lifestyles which attract many young people such as golden beaches, beautiful weather, and great for surfing, swimming and lots of fun.

In conclusion, I don’t think we should legalize marijuana as it causes serious health effects, which can lead on to harder substance abuse and increases violence and crime within New Zealand and world-wide.

By Taine Aupouri

Title: Little-Known MP who electrified gay debate.

Author: Audrey Young

Text Type: Magazine Article

Date: March 16 2013

The article “Little-Known MP who electrified gay debate” is about the thoughts of Chris Auchinvole of what he thinks about this scenario and the possible outcomes and consequences that could come from it.

When I read this text, I felt surprised. I felt this because I was surprised at how someone could have such a strong belief of something that really didn’t have any effect on him. For example Chris Auchinvole, is a married MP, how does he relate to the scenario of people wanting to legalise gay marriages. This has no affect what so ever to him, he is not the one being involved, so why is it his place to have a say in it? I feel that he is being unfair towards people that this does involve. People have different views towards things. This involves people that have different feelings towards their own gender (Homosexual). This situation does not involve him so why get involved. I can appreciate that he feels very strong about his views that gay marriage should not be a legalised, but that doesn’t mean he has to go running his mouth over national television that he is in strong disagreement with it.

An interesting idea that this text made me think about was, how when he went to a private boarding school over in England there were people that committed suicide because they were scared of people judging them about being homosexual. The author seemed to be suggesting that maybe the reason Chris Auchinvole is in such a strong disagreement about gay marriages being legalised, is that he could possibly see an outcome of a gay marriage taking place and the two men of the marriage being bullied verbally about being homosexual and in therefore committing suicide. A pretty devastating point I think that is. This shows us that maybe gay marriage could come at high emotional cost and effect on some people. Meaning that the consequences from it could be quite devastating. I feel that it won’t come to this though; people that will commit to a gay marriage will feel very strongly of their choice and obviously want to make a life in a different way. I think this is a fair issue, because yes some people do have different views about love towards other genders and would rather have it that way, so you can’t argue with that. I feel that if it works for them then let it be. I believe that if I had a friend or family member that turned gay and wanted a gay marriage I would support them and go along with it.

Overall this text has been very interesting on how gay marriages may affect some people, but also how strongly it means to some people and how it is a possibility of happening. I feel that it is a fair situation and can make people that feel that way inclined about marriage happy that won’t be judged about being homosexual and that it can be treated just as a normal marriage would be. Because in this world everyone is equal, no matter whether there tall or short, black or white or Homosexual or not!

By Fraser Eddowes

Title: Avatar Hayden Jeune

Director: James Cameron

Text Type: Movie

Date: 17/03/13

This film was about a paraplegic ex-marine, Jake Sulley, who travelled to a faraway planet called Pandora, with the RDA (an American Military organisation dedicated to the exploration of faraway planets) to help them move one of the indigenous tribes off their home tree, in order to access a rich deposit of the rare mineral Unobtainium, worth hundreds of millions of dollars per kilogram. Jake is part of the Avatar program, a program that mixes the DNA of the indigenous people, the Na’vi, a species of large, blue humanoid, with human DNA, in order to create avatars, so humans can interact with the natives. While in his avatar body, Jake becomes indebted to a native female, Neytiri, who takes him to her home village, after a sign from Eywa, the Na’vi equivalent of Mother Nature. Jake soon falls in love with Neytiri and forgets about moving the Na’vi away from their home tree. Soon the RDA give up hope of ‘diplomatic negotiations’’ to move the Na’vi and they attack the Na’vi. After a dramatic series of battles, the RDA are defeated, and “sent back to their dying planet”, Earth.

When I watched this movie, I felt saddened that human nature allows our greed and want for wealth, to outweigh all moral conscience. I felt this because the whole reason that the humans had set up a multi-billion dollar project to go to Pandora, was to exploit the Na’vi’s resources for financial gain with absolutely no regard for their culture or beliefs. For example, when Jake is trying to convince the Colonel that he can talk the Na’vi off the tree that the entire village lives in, so it can be destroyed to get the Unobtainium it conceals, he is given a completely unrealistic timeframe to do so in and then the Colonel goes back on his word and sends the bombers in anyway. I feel that this aspect of human nature is appalling. The storyline of this movie closely represents many events in human history, one of which that continues today, is the exploitation of the native villagers of the Amazon. The native villagers of the Amazon are being exploited by western capitalists and forced out of their villages so that expensive exotic timbers and rare minerals such as gold can be extracted and sold for financial gain. I believe the director of this film wrote this film with these similarities purposefully, as there are many other similarities, such as the Na’vi’s deep respect for nature, self-sufficiency and war paints.

An interesting idea that this movie made me think about was that even if something seems impossible to overcome, there is always a way. The director seemed to be suggesting that all we need is a great leader and we could overcome similar problems that we have today, such as those in the Amazon, even though it seems impossible or very hard. We see this in the movie, when the RDA destroy Home tree and the Na’vi retreat. At this point in the movie all seems lost, the RDA are preparing for a nuclear strike on the Na’vi and Jake has become an outcast with the Na’vi people for lying to them. In order to overcome this seemingly impossible problem, Jake bonds with, and is able to ride a Toruk, the apex predator on Pandora. As he is only the sixth person ever to accomplish this great feat, he instantly wins the respect of the Na’vi and convinces them they need to fight back. Even then it still seemed impossible to overcome the RDA, so Jake rides his Toruk to the other clans of Pandora, wins their respect and rallies them to help fight the RDA. In the end, the Na’vi beat the RDA showing that even though it seemed impossible, it wasn’t. I thought this is interesting because if everybody in real life thought like this, it is possible that the world would be a different place because there would be more people doing something about the fact that we are running out of fossil fuels, and are ruining our environment, but instead most people are contempt, living the rest of their lives comfortably, and leaving their problems the next generation.

Overall, this movie is very thought provoking as it suggests human nature could be perceived as flawed, with our priorities all wrong. An example of this is the exploitation of the Indigenous people for monetary gain by the RDA and that most humans won’t fight for a cause unless it is absolutely necessary or has our greed pushing it. The director has done a very good job with this film as he manages to put many thoughts and questions into your head while maintaining a good storyline and an entertaining movie.

*NCEA English L1*

*Personal Response to Novel*

The Hunger Games is a dystopian / science fiction novel and the first in a series by Suzanne Collins. This stimulating and thought-provoking novel got me thinking about the nature of relationships, especially the abuse of power, providing support and trust.

Sixteen-year-old Katniss Everdeen lives with her mother and sister in District 12, the poorest of 12 districts ruled by the wealthy Capitol. The Capitol holds a televised event called The Hunger Games, once a year. Each district must draw the names of a boy and a girl between the ages of 12 and 18. These contestants become known as ‘tributes’ on the show. They are forced to kill each other in a massive arena created by the Capitol Gamemakers. There can only be one survivor who returns home to wealth and fame.

The relationship between the capitol and the people of Panem is all about who has the power. It is appalling that the dictator of the Capitol look for extreme ‘entertainment’, which includes watching others suffering from brutality and dying gruesome deaths. This seems to be over the top that people are forced to fight each other to amuse a crowd. Or, is it? Just when I thought my world is nothing like the world Katniss comes from, when I take a good look at our things, I think maybe there are some disturbing similarities. There is abuse of power in the form of bullying which exists on the street, at school, in society, and in the world of technology. Gang-ups on individuals, bullying in the playground, lack of freedom of choice in your own education, crowds watching and videoing fights (teenagers) and then texting it to others, facebook intimidation. I don’t really understand why people abuse power.

Katniss’ mother suffered a mental breakdown as a result of the death of her husband in a mining accident years earlier. Although the mother eventually improves, she is never the same nor does she step up to her role of parent or provider. *“I protect Prim in every way I can...”*Katniss provides for the family by hunting with her friend Gale in the forbidden woods nearby. I can relate to the anguish that Katniss feels, and the helplessness because there is no support from the authorities. I have a close family relative whose mental state of wellbeing requires support from family and friends. People suffering from depression or other types of mental illness like schizophrenia really do need the support of mentally healthy people and definitely from the state (the government). One difference between our society and the one Katniss lives in is that we do have some awareness that this type of illness exists, and there is some help around. People in District 12 did not know much at all about mental illness, and how to help. Personal experience tells me that there is still room for improvement in supporting people like my uncle. Ignorance and the hard line of ‘they’re just nuts, lock them up’ are common views in the community. The tv ads are one good way of raising awareness, and they give the message that is normal that people can be unwell.

Trust is a big thing for teenagers. You feel safe and protected when trust is there. We need to know that we are valued, and that we can trust there is someone we can go to when things are spiralling downhill (little problems, as well as the big ones). When the chips were down, Rue and Katniss team up as allies against the gamemakers. Katniss and Rue value each other and in this brief time together, you can see that they share special parts of themselves with the other. They were safe. Trust counts. Friends are friends because you can trust them. The capitol should have been providing a society where its people felt safe. This brings me to the point of counsellors. All schools need quality counselling, as another avenue for teenagers to share troubles or hang-ups, big or small. Who can you trust? Schools, and the government?

Reading this novel makes me think about what counts in life. I have a better grip on some of the issues around me, and what is important in life. This makes me appreciate more, the values I have been brought up with.

Words 725