

BRITFILMS

BRITISH SCHOOL FILM FESTIVAL

#11 - 2017/2018

Study Guide

MAHANA

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German certification	minimum age 12 recommended for 14 years and older
Language	English with German subtitles
Country, Year	New Zealand 2016
Running time	102 min.
Directed by	Lee Tamahori
Starring	Temuera Morrison (Tamihana Mahana), Akuhata Keefe (Simeon Mahana), Nancy Brunning (Ramona Mahana), Jim Moriarty (Rupeni Poata), Regan Taylor (Joshua Mahana) and others

What MAHANA is about

His grandfather permanently nags 14-year-old Simeon, complaining about his long hair and harassing him every chance he gets. Tamihana Mahana is the head of the Maori family and an old-school patriarch. If someone opposes him, they can expect to be disowned. Following another conflict between Simeon and Tamihana, Simeon's parents meet that very fate. While Simeon and his parents stay in a house belonging to Simeon's grandmother, they try to settle into their new life, but money is scarce. The prize money from a local sheep shearing contest could come in very handy. While taking responsibility and submitting his family's name to the competition, Simeon discovers a well-kept secret that once ignited an enduring feud between the Mahana and the Poata families and makes Simeon see his grandfather in a whole new light.

By adapting Witi Ihimaera's („Whale Rider“) book for the big screen, director Lee Tamahori once again delves deep into the Maori culture of his native country New Zealand, 22 years after directing „Once Were Warriors“. Using the early 1960s as a backdrop, he shows ancient Maori rituals and how they are being influenced by modern Christian influences. In addition, Tamahori deals with the discrimination and harassment that Maori people face as a daily part of their lives. The conflict of two opposing views is also told in the story of Simeon and his grandfather. Tamihana is representative of an old and obsolete way of life. He accepts no opposing views and lacks the courage to admit responsibility for his own mistakes. In contrast, Simeon represents a new generation that has its own views and prefer to make sense of the world through movie quotes, ignoring their tradition.

The following work sheets deal with

- The depiction of Maori culture in MAHANA
- The influence of other religions on Maori culture and their daily life
- Problems that Maori people face in their social environment
- The relationship between Tamihana and Simeon, who represent different generations
- The meaning of movie quotes being used in the film

Publishing information

Publisher:
AG Kino – Gilde deutscher Filmkunsttheater
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Photo credits: Prokino

(All the stills are from the DVD of MAHANA, published in Germany by Prokino. They serve as image quotations, to enable study of the film's content, and not as illustrations.)

Maori culture and rituals in MAHANA

Find out what the following four words mean. Attribute them to the pictures below and write a brief explanation.

<i>haka</i>	<i>wharenui</i>
<i>hongis</i>	<i>moko kauae</i>



Description: _____



Description: _____



Description: _____



Description: _____

Recapitulate together: By examining the cinematic presentation of Maori culture, what do you learn about their life, their way of interacting with each other and their relationship with nature?

How the Maori life is examined further

Maori culture isn't the only important element in MAHANA. Examine the following images and explain the importance of Christian symbols and rituals.



1



2

Discuss in class: Why does director Lee Tamahori contrast Maori rituals and Christian symbolism? What statement is he making about the Maori's situation in New Zealand? In this context, remember the scene in court, where Simeon criticizes the judge, saying: „If no one can speak Maori here, how can we Maori possibly defend ourselves?“

Grandfather and grandson

Simeon and his grandfather Tamihana keep fighting and colliding. They share a certain stubbornness and are divided by their opposing world views. Compare the appearance of both characters and the issues that are important to them.

Tamihana	↔	Simeon

Worldly wisdom from the big screen

There are several scenes in which the characters talk about films or visit the cinema. Two film quotes are used in MAHANA.

Never apologize. It's a sign of weakness.

Simeons teacher quoting John Wayne from RED RIVER

Explain the meaning of this quote in regards to the film. (Not just from Simeon's point of view)

Sometimes you gotta fall down to know where you stand.

Simeon quoting James Stewart

What experience does Simeon refer to when quoting James Stewart?

Is there a quote from any film that is a maxim for you? If so, which one? And why?
