
Bless Me, Ultima, and Whale Rider: the Concept of Destiny

Destiny

Everyone has a destiny. To find one's destiny is the purpose of his or her life, though some people have troubles finding their true destiny. In *Bless Me, Ultima* by Rudolfo Anaya, Antonio ponders his destiny and has doubts about his family's decisions. In *Whale Rider* by Witi Ihimaera, Paikea's destiny is predetermined and held back by traditions and her grandfather. Several factors contribute to these characters' destiny, such as their births, mentors, and identities.

Both the births in *Bless Me, Ultima* and *Whale Rider* contain conflict within their families about their children's destinies. As the Lunas are exact opposites of Marez, it's obvious that conflicts are evident. "Why two people as opposite as my father and my mother [are] together I do not know. Their blood and their ways [have] been keeping them at odds, and yet for all this, we [are] happy," Antonio says (BMU 29). He can only side with one side of the family, according to both Lunas and Marez. Antonio begins to question and seek his true destiny, one that has not been decided for him. On the other hand, Paikea's destiny is a predetermination by her grandfather, Koro. She is rejected by Koro who sticks with traditional rules about a woman not being able to lead a Maori tribe. Specifically, during the birth of Paikea, her twin brother died. Koro was enraged by this because without a firstborn son, there would be no leader according to Maori traditions. While Antonio's family controls his destiny to choose which side of the family he'd end up in, Paikea's family authorizes her destiny due to strict traditional rules.

While Antonio has a warm and kind mentor, Paikea has a cold and rejecting teacher. Antonio has an accepting spiritual guidance who doesn't control Antonio's destiny, but rather leads and gives him tips along the way. Ultima, his guide, believes that while she can help Antonio in his destiny, she can't truly reveal his destiny to him. For example, "Ultima says a man's destiny must unfold itself like a flower, with only the sun and earth and water making it blossom, and no one else meddling in it--" (BMU 223). On the contrary, Paikea has an abstaining mentor living in denial. Koro sticks to tradition and believes Paikea cannot be the leader of the tribe simply because she is not a male. He doesn't directly guide Paikea's destiny like Ultima, but he does indirectly guide her. Because Koro doesn't teach Paikea, it makes her curious and gives her more of a reason to learn more about the Maori tradition. Koro doesn't accept Paikea's destiny because he believes a woman cannot be a leader of the tribe, thus he tries to change her destiny. Mentors and teachers play an important role in these character's destinies even though their mentors are exact opposites.

Although Antonio is doubtful in his identity as a priest, Paikea is firm in her future as the leader of the Maori tribe. Antonio believes he should be a priest, but after getting exposure to so many contradictions, he can't believe in himself anymore. The golden carp, Ultima's magical healing powers, and God not answering to him all contributed to his identity in doubt. However, the more Antonio is shown with questions, the closer he gets to his destiny. He believes that instead of becoming a priest under the Catholic Church, he should just bring everything together and create a new religion. As opposed to Paikea, she is on firm grounds that she is meant to be leader of the Maori tribe. Paikea says, "Only problem is, you can't just decide who those people

are just because you want them to be, eh?" (WR). Paikea is rejected by Koro because he refuses to believe that she is fit to be the leader. This directly affects and slows down Paikea's advance to her destiny. Both Antonio and Paikea have destinies that were meddled with, however they both find their answer in the end.

Although everyone has a destiny, not everyone has an easy time getting it. In *Bless Me, Ultima* and *Whale Rider*, the characters face several problems that restrict them from identifying their destinies. Even the moment they were born, they were on a journey of seeking their true destiny. Families in both stories make it tough for the characters to obtain their destinies by forcing or denying them. Both characters have mentors that guide them. Even though both mentors are different from each other, they lead the characters in the same direction. Lastly, their identities were clouded with their own internal misconceptions, but in the end, they both discovered their destinies. Though both have gone through different problems and obstacles, they manage to find their true destiny.

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