



Film Study Guide
RAIN OF THE CHILDREN

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TE TUMU WHAKAATA TAONGA

Rain of the Children

The following are activities based on the achievement objectives presented in the Ministry of Education document, 'English in the New Zealand Curriculum'. They may provide a starting point for teachers wishing to design a unit based on the film.



WRITTEN LANGUAGE

WRITING — POETIC

1. As Puhi, write a series of **diary entries** from various stages of your life.
2. As Puhi, write **three diary entries**, one about each of your relationships with your three husbands — Whatu, Kahukura and Clarkie.
3. Choose the style you prefer, then write either an **encyclopedia entry** or a **story** or a **newspaper article** based on Puhi's first journey up Maungapohatu.
4. As a class, brainstorm a vocabulary list suggested by the film, or vocabulary lists that relate to Puhi or Niki's views of the world. Write a **poem** using of set of the words as your base.
5. Write a **letter** from Puhi to Niki, to be read after her death.
6. Write a **children's story** with a positive ending, suggested by events in the film.
7. Write a **children's story** based on the “pumpkin” incident.
8. As Rua, write a **sermon** based on the “pumpkin” incident.
9. Write an **adult picture book** suggested by events in the film.
10. Stop the film at a certain point. Write your own **ending** to Puhi's “story”.



11. Write 5 **statements** that you think some of the people in this film might say. Read each aloud to the class — see how well you've represented them by seeing if the class can guess who is speaking.
12. Imagine that Puhi had grown up in more modern times. Write her **problem page letter** and the "expert's" reply. How have times changed?
13. Write a **short story** based on events in the film.
14. Rewrite your favourite scene from the film as a piece of **prose**.
15. **Interior Monologue:** Choose one scene from the film. Write an interior monologue showing what a character might have been thinking at that time.
16. Imagine that this film was a book. Write the **blurb** for it.

WRITING — EXPRESSIVE

1. If you were going to lengthen the film, what would you add, and why? If you were going to shorten the film, what would you delete, and why?
2. How did the film make you feel? Why? Were there parts that aroused particular emotions in you? Why?
3. Before watching the film, brainstorm what you think it will be about, based on the title. After viewing, explain what you think is the relevance of the title. What does sound add to the title shot?
4. What is the difference between fact and opinion? Make a two column chart and list examples of each from the film. Does the film largely present you with fact or opinion (an objective or subjective view) or a mixture? Explain.
5. How do you think the locals acting in this film helped to make it "complete"; integrated?
6. Vincent Ward largely lets the relatives in this film speak for themselves. What other angles might he have taken?
7. Why do you think Vincent Ward made this film?
8. What other questions would you like to ask Vincent Ward about both the events depicted in this film, and the making of it?
9. Make a list of things you learned from watching this film.
10. Are there any other questions you would have put to the interviewees?



11. What do you think about the way Tuhoe have been treated?
12. What have you learned about documentary making by watching this film?
13. **Listen** only to a sequence from the film, then watch and listen to the same sequence. Comment on what the visuals add.
14. Do you think New Zealanders should see this film? Why?
15. If there was a statue of Puhi near her home, what do you think the plaque would say?
16. Write a piece comparing your own life with Puhi's.
17. Puhi lived through some powerful tragedies. Explain what they were and their effect on her.
18. Why do stories need to be handed down through the generations?
19. Explain what is meant, with reference to Niki, by the statement, 'his quiet achievement set her free'.
20. Use the following words as starters to write about aspects of spirituality in the film — patupaiarehe, horse, birds, mountain, dynamite, body tree, curse, kehua.
21. Using one of the following words as a starter, comment on a sequence from the film that you found particularly atmospheric or moving or uplifting — shoes, barber, ice-block, axe, horse, death, birth, doll, pumpkin, narrator, mountain, shot.
22. Explain what you think is meant by the Tuhoe expression, 'matemate a one' (a love so great that it goes beyond death), and how it relates to Puhi.
23. Explain how Vincent Ward takes his audience from his introduction into Puhi's life — 'so now I have to conjure you up'.
24. Comment on Vincent Ward's use of **colour** in the film.
25. What does Vincent Ward's **narration** add to this film? What is the effect of the narrator addressing Puhi directly at the beginning and end of the film?
26. What taonga did Puhi give Vincent? What taonga has Vincent Ward given Puhi? What taonga has Vincent given New Zealand?
27. Answer in your own words the questions that Vincent Ward poses at the beginning of the film.
 - Why did locals call her "the burdened one"?
 - Why did some people say she was cursed?
 - Why was there scant sign of her other children?



WRITING — TRANSACTIONAL

1. Possible Essay Topics

- This film is riveting, seamless masterpiece. Discuss.
- Explain how this film is a taonga.
- Discuss the way Vincent Ward has combined his film making brilliance with his personal vision to make a special film.
- Explain the effect of the mix of drama, documentary and personal narrative in this film.
- Discuss the way the film is structured, both to move Puhi's story forward, and to take the audience with her.
- Discuss how the organisation of material added to the effectiveness of this film.
- Discuss the way two or more sequences proved effective in this film.
- Discuss two or more ways in which this film effectively presented its information and ideas.
- In what ways are documentaries “constructed realities”?
- In what ways is this film a journey?
- Explain why New Zealanders should see this film.

Other of Vincent Ward's films have been commended for the emotive power of their striking and poetic visual imagery and strong spiritual strand. How does *Rain of the Children* follow in this tradition and how does it refer visually to his other films?

- One of Vincent Ward's characters in *Vigil* (Birdie) says, 'what you see depends on who you are'. Discuss how this statement relates to *Rain of the Children*.

- As a class, brainstorm what you think are the best things about this film, then write an **essay** about the film's effectiveness.

Scaffold the process, possibly by —

- brainstorming ideas.
- giving topic sentences.
- having students decide on supporting examples and/or quotes in pairs or groups.

Example

IDEAS / EFFECTIVENESS	TOPIC SENTENCES	EXAMPLES (FOR QUOTES)
Visual effects	This film's impact depends to a large extent on its visual effects...	The Maungapohatu sequence...
Suspense	Additionally suspense, an unusual characteristic in a documentary, adds...	For example, after Puhi gives birth in the bush...
Relevance	The fact that this film is about us...	The use of historical footage, for example...
Variety	Finally, because of the variety of sources used in the making of this documentary...	The use of...

- Write the **article** that might have appeared in a local newspaper at the time of the 1916 episode.
- Write a **letter** to Vincent Ward in response to his film.
- In pairs, **summarise** episodes in Puhi's life to be included in a **leaflet** about the film.
- After studying the language of reviews, write a **review** of the film. You may like to focus on some of the following questions,

- What sort of film is it?
- Does it tell an important or entertaining story?
- How is it structured and constructed?
- How is audience interest maintained?
- Is the choice of beginning and ending important?
- What is your recommendation?

- Transcribe** part of one of the interviews. **Rewrite** it in the third person. Write a **precis** of it.
- Write a leaflet for trainee film makers about how to make a successful documentary using this film as an example (for example, film shots, shot composition, narration / voice-over, non-obtrusive interviewing techniques, effective soundtrack including background effects, emotive themes, informative stills, still manipulation, dramatisation, effective editing, all of which contribute both information and atmosphere).





9. In pairs, interview (and record) each other about a memorable event in your pasts, then script it as a dramatisation for part of a documentary.
10. Write a **letter to the editor** giving your opinion about either the 1916 or 2007 Tuhoe police raids.
11. Write an **obituary** for Puhi.
12. Write a section for an **anthropology textbook** explaining how cultures can account differently for the same event, such as the sickness and death that decimated Tuhoe.
13. Using information from the film or research, write an entry for a **book** on notable New Zealanders about Rua Kenana or Vincent Ward.
14. Cut out a **newspaper article** that you think has potential as a topic for a documentary. Make up any additional information you need. Write a brief **outline** of that documentary.
15. Write an entry for a **history book or encyclopaedia** using information you learned from the film.
16. Write an **article**, including some visual material, about the historical, geographical or social (or a mixture of all three) background to this film.
17. Individually, in pairs or in groups, write (or design a diagram) a **character study** of Puhi. Start by brainstorming a list of words to describe her. Use a dictionary or thesaurus to enlarge your list. Choose what you see as the best words. Find examples from the film to back up your chosen words. Alternatively, in groups, on a large sheet of paper draw around a group member to create an outline of a Puhi. Inside the body,

brainstorm and write down all the words you can think of to describe her personality. Inside and around the head area, brainstorm and write down all the words you can think of to describe her feelings. Outside the body, brainstorm and write down all the external influences on her. Pin your sheet to the wall for others to read and comment on.

18. **Research / Personal Reading:** Research one of the following topics (all related to the film). Try using the KWL format. Eg:

What I KNOW	What I WANT to know	What I LEARNED

Possible Topics

Vincent Ward; any of the cast or production team involved in this film; Wayward Films; Te M_ngai Paho; NZ On Air; New Zealand Film Commission; documentaries; Tuhoe, New Zealand film; *In Spring One Plants Alone* (1981); Urewera Ranges, Maungapohatu; Rua Kenana; the 1916 police raids; the 2007 police raids; schizophrenia; autism; m_kutu; karanga; kehua; Ringatu; Israelites; hahu; whangai; tomo marriage; role of a puhi; Judith Binney (*Mihaia: The Prophet Rua Kenana and his Community at Maungapohatu*); death rituals; bones; patupaiarehe; Tohunga; Paul Moon; *Edge of the Earth : stories and images from the antipodes*, Vincent Ward, Heinmann Read NZ 1990; *Vincent Ward : the emergence of an*

aesthetic, Lynette Read 2004; New Zealand Film Archive; influenza epidemics; tuberculosis; whooping cough; “scorched earth policy”; 1904 floods; dynamite; Maori and World War One; sly-grogging.



ORAL LANGUAGE

SPEAKING / LISTENING

— INTERPERSONAL / USING TEXT

1. **Listen** to parts of the film again. The soundtrack (incl **score**) helps to build atmosphere. How?
2. **Oral History:** Record / transcribe / present the story of an older person / someone of interest / a friend, for the class.
3. In groups, **brainstorm** the purposes of documentaries (eg to discuss, explain, inform, persuade etc), write a group definition then together, a class definition.
4. **Construct a reality:** In groups, on a sheet divided in two, brainstorm how a documentary maker could present your town or city or school in a positive or negative light. Together, write two different, **persuasive commentaries** (voice-overs) for part of those alternative documentaries.
5. Write a series of **action cards** describing things that people did in the film. In pairs swap cards. Call out an action to your partner, who will tell you when that incident occurred and why that action was important or significant.
6. **Clines** — Give students two “extreme” words, one of which relates to the film. Students then (possibly with the help of each other, a dictionary or a thesaurus) fill in the middle with words that fit on a continuum between these poles, being prepared to justify their choices.

Sample Words:

interesting —————→ dull
informative —————→ facile
skilful —————→ inept

7. **Continuum:** As your teacher calls out the following statements, physically place yourself on a continuum, from strongly disagree, through neutral, to strongly agree. For each statement, pair up with someone who disagrees with your stand. Discuss your viewpoint with that person.
 - The use of narration improves this film.
 - I learned things from this film.
 - This film has messages for us.
 - Even ordinary people can be heroic.
 - Puhi was responsible for what happened to her.
8. **Circle Talk** — Students form two circles with equal numbers. One stands inside the other, facing outward. Those in the outer circle face the middle. Students talk to each other on various topics for a preset time, before one circle moves clockwise, so that all students experience a series of partners with whom to share their thoughts. Topics might include,
 - My favourite part of the film was
 - My least favourite part of the film
 - I thought the interviewee was
 - The things I learned were
 - The ending was
 - I would like to know more about
 - I would change
9. Use a series of **photos** with captions (to be used as voice-over) to tell something about yourself, a family member; character from the film or fictional character.
10. **Discussion** — What is a documentary? In groups, brainstorm the purposes of documentary (eg to discuss, explain, inform, persuade etc), write a definition then present it to the class. Construct a final definition as a class.
11. In groups, **script** and **video** an interview with each group member on the same theme (for example, talking about your experiences at primary school, or your first year at secondary school).
12. **Sequencing exercise** — in pairs, students arrange quotes (on strips of paper) in correct chronological order while talking each other back through the events in the film.
13. In groups, after discussion, come to a consensus and try to assign as many of the following adjectives as you can to one or more people in the film. Justify your choices to another group.



Adjective List

hardworking	stubborn	long-suffering
strong	weak	hurt
creative	lively	introverted
quiet	interesting	likeable
strict	unyielding	judgemental
spiritual	loving	dutiful
rebellious	visionary	happy
thoughtful	intelligent	unforgiving
forgiving	optimistic	pessimistic
traditional	fun-loving	extroverted
sad	angry	helpful
kind	supportive	wise
cheeky	wild	loyal
disturbed	evil	obsessive
generous	meek	frightened
brave	cowardly	selfish
unthinking	calculating	heroic
steadfast	committed	moral
amoral	thoughtless	ignorant
demented		

14. In pairs, write out **quiz cards** using the 5 w's + h (who, when, why, what, where and how) then quiz another couple. Eg
 - **Who** is the most interesting / most heroic / most irresponsible person in this film?
 - **When** did the moment that has the most audience impact in this film occur?
 - **What** drives the actions of Puhi / Rua / Vincent Ward?
 - **Where** is the film set?
 - **How** does Vincent Ward create atmosphere in a particular scene / sequence?
15. Write down **quotes** from the film on separate cards. Swap them with someone else and practise identifying the person who said it, what was happening at the time, and what happened before and after the words were uttered.
16. **Jeopardy** —ww Teacher gives an answer, then students (*individually or in pairs or groups*) write the question, trying to make it as thoughtful as possible.
 - *Answers might include such things as documentary, Vincent Ward, Maungapohatu, prophet etc.*
17. **Picture Dictation** — Have students draw in a series of frames as the teacher reads about some aspect of the film for example, a summary of important events in Puhi's life. Students then attempt to "read" their picture summary to a partner.
18. **Panel** — Have students write "viewer" questions for participants in the film. Decide on a show host and a panel. Hold a panel discussion based on the questions.



19. **Collocation Exercise** — Have students **group** words (each written on a slip of paper), then justify their groupings.

Sample Words:

director	producer	editor
writer	fear	New Zealand
atonement	mystery	lighting
sound	setting	tone
rural	Tuhoe	Ureweras
love	obsessed	loving
traumatised	cursed	

20. **Response Grid** — Group students. Give each group member a colour. Call out a grid reference and a colour, eg “blue B2”. Student responds to their group according to the grid question.

Example:

	1	2	3
A	Sound effect, why were you used?	Rena Owen, why did you accept this role?	Shocking scene, what are you about?
B	Film shot, why were you used?	Vincent Ward, why did you make this film?	Opening, what do you teach the viewer?
C	Atmosphere, explain yourself.	Minor character, why are you relevant?	Closing sequence, why are you effective?
D	Setting, explain your relevance.	“Rain of the Children”, why are you the title?	Why are you a scene that could have been left out?

VISUAL LANGUAGE PRESENTING

1. Design a **poster** advertising the film.
2. Design visuals to accompany the **title** (or letters in the title).
3. Design a **collage** based on ideas in this film.
4. Design a **static image** based on one of the following words — love, curse, demons, atonement, redemption, persecution.
5. Design a **static image** using only two or three colours, any number of shapes or symbols, and one of the following quotes to highlight an important idea in the film. On the back, write why you have chosen the quote, colours and shapes that you have, and explain what and why you would have included in your image had you been given greater choice.
 - ‘Our people needed a reason’.
 - ‘I want an answer’.
 - ‘The curses they like silent bullets’.
 - ‘Just for a little moment I happy’.
 - ‘She cared for him more than she cared for herself’.
 - ‘Puhi believed that the dead walked with the living’.
 - ‘reunited with all your lost children’.
 - ‘if you heal the land people will heal’.
 - ‘the burdened one’.
 - ‘you were chopping the wood against the grain’.
 - ‘I would like to think that finally, Puhi, you were reunited with all your lost children’.
 - ‘It must be his spiritual guardian coming to say goodbye to him’.

- ‘in death mother and child were set free, free to return to their mountain’.
 - ‘Return to your mountain to be cleansed by the god of the winds’.
 - ‘I feel I’ve given her the honour and respect and visibility she deserves I always feel she will be with me with the gift of knowledge and love and kindness’ (Vincent Ward, *Rain of the Children* Production Notes).
6. **Storyboard** a promotional preview for the film.
 7. Make a plot summary in **graph** or **diagram** form.
 8. ‘In his most personal film ever, Vincent Ward unravels a mystery that has haunted him for 30 years’ (*Rain of the Children* Production Notes). Design a detailed **flow diagram** that shows the unravelling of that mystery.
 9. Design a **symbol** for some of the main characters. Be prepared to explain them.



VIEWING (AND CLOSE READING)

1. **Reading Film:** Answer these questions individually, or use a jigsaw group format (ie in groups, take one of the following topics and associated questions then re-view the film, taking notes and discussing your findings. Re-group so that each new group member has different expertise. Teach your new group about your topic.) Find evidence from the film to back up what you say.
 - **Structure** — How is this film structured (eg chronologically? revolving around an issue / person / event?)? Is a narrator used? What is the nature and effect of that commentary? Is there a climax? Is use made of dramatic reconstruction / stills / historical footage? When and why? Are the opening and closing sequences important? How is the documentary paced?
 - **Audience** — Who do you think is the target audience? What effect do you think the documentary maker would like to have on the audience?
 - **Film Technique** — What types of shot are commonly used, and why? Does colour and contrast play a role in emphasising the content / theme of the film? How important is sound (eg background noise, music) in adding to the emotional impact of the film?
 - **Style** — What is the tone of the film? What do you think is the purpose of the film (ie what values do you think the film shows or reinforces or criticises / challenges, and why)? Is this a balanced documentary?

2. Watch and **storyboard** a sequence from the film. Re-design and storyboard a sequence from the film using a different approach.
3. **Storyboard Discussion** — in groups, storyboard a section of the film, then discuss what you think your work shows about film making and the effect the film maker wanted to achieve in your chosen sequence.
4. Re-view the **opening sequence**. How do the shots help to reinforce the theme/s and the setting of the film eg the shots of Vincent Ward / reflections through the car windscreen, shots of the natural landscape?
5. Comment on the **shot composition** of the interview sequences.
6. Comment on the effect of the use of **close-ups** eg of hands, faces, axe.
7. Choose a shot and freeze it. Explain **what** and **how** information is conveyed.
8. **Actions Speak Louder than Words** — In this film we learn about characters, events and ideas not only through what a character or the narrator says but through what they do, their actions. In groups brainstorm some of the important actions / events in the film. Illustrate, label and explain them in a chart, like the one on the right.



IMPORTANT ACTION/EVENT	EXPLANATION
Eg. ILLUSTRATION Puhi gives birth in the bush.	This is important because it shows
Eg. ILLUSTRATION Police raid the settlement.	This is important because it shows

9. In groups, complete the following 3 Level Guide.

Level 1 : Reading On The Lines

Tick the statements which focus on what the film maker shows in this film. When you've made your decisions, discuss your reasons with your group.

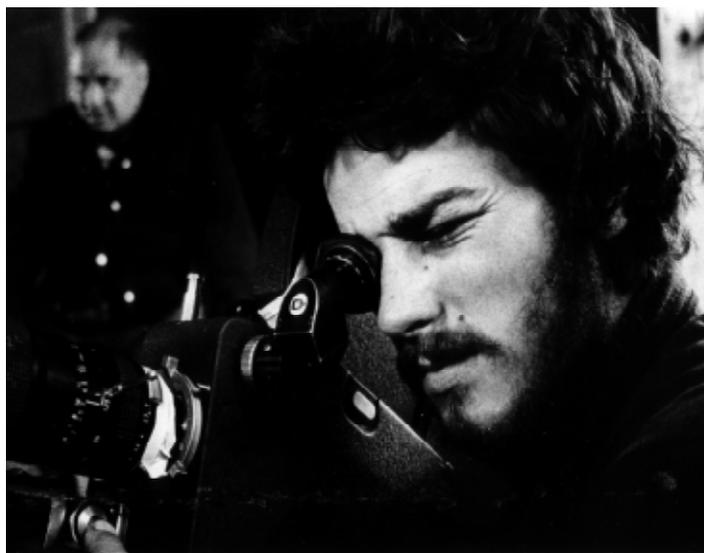
- a Tuhoe faced challenges.
- b Puhi loved Niki.
- c Puhi was in charge of her own life.
- d Puhi loved Vincent.
- e Puhi was cursed.

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Vincent Ward



Level 2 : Reading Between The Lines

Tick statements which you think show what the film maker meant in this film. Discuss your choices with your group and be prepared to justify them.

- a People's belief systems play a vital part in their lives.
- b Puhi was successful in overcoming life's obstacles.
- c You can never go back.
- d Some people's stories are neglected in official histories.
- e Even ordinary lives can be extraordinary.

Level 3 : Reading Beyond The Lines

Tick the statements which you think the film maker would support. Be ready to give your reasons when you discuss your choices.

- a Bravery comes in many forms.
- b This film is a journey in many different ways.
- c Racism is a devastating thing.
- d History has nothing to teach us.
- e The appearance is not always the reality.

From the level 3 section, have students put the chosen statements in a chart, like the one below. Fill in the right hand side with evidence from the film.

EVIDENCE (quote or explanation)	STATEMENT
At a glance, Puhi might have appeared as ...	1. Even ordinary lives can be extraordinary.