

**Intended for Grades:** 6-8 **Estimated Time:** 30-45 min.

**Lesson Title: CONNECTING WITH MANA**

**Lesson Purpose:**

- \* Deepen understand of *mana*, or spiritual energy
- \* Help participants recognize and appreciate *mana* in people, things, and places
- \* Experience a breathing technique that can help balance personal energy

**Materials & Preparation:**

- *Land and Love* story
- Definitions of *mana*
- Paper & writing tools for students
- Ability to show video entitled *Mana* - find link at:  
[https://youtu.be/nX9AlwVYNbM?si=mOMtkYkutOF1\\_FZX](https://youtu.be/nX9AlwVYNbM?si=mOMtkYkutOF1_FZX)
- Equipment to share video

**Background Information:**

In times past, the people of Hawai'i had some specific beliefs about *Mana*, or spiritual energy. Some believed *Mana* was something most powerful in gods and the *ali'i*, or leaders. *Mana* was a part of the people's lives and every day practices. From gardening to greeting another, the people called on an understanding of life force and personal energy, or the *Mana* of everything around them.

In today's world, the term *Mana* is used by many, from those who write about Hawaiian culture, in business names, to others making video games about energy. Learning about *Mana* can help Hawai'i's students understand their own personal spiritual power and the interconnected energy of people and place.

**Steps:**

1. Ask the group to stand and, with you leading a slow pace, take three deep breaths together. Use the cues *Hanu* for inhaling, and *Ha* for exhaling.

***Hanu:*** To breathe, smell, sniff, inhale; ***Ha:*** to breathe, exhale; to breathe upon  
*(Hawaiian Dictionary)*

2. Share that in many cultures, including Hawaiian culture, the breath is one way to balance and empower your self, or to increase *mana*.

3. Invite students to share what they know about *Mana* (*What is it? Who has it? What does it look like or feel like? Etc.*)

4. Share and discuss different understandings about *Mana* (see brief definitions below). Small groups can read and talk story about one of the four quotes. Invite groups to briefly discuss and summarize main points.

**Story Option:**

- Read the attached story entitled: *Land and Love* in the most appropriate way for your group. Ask students to think about ways that *mana* is demonstrated in this story.

Debrief by talking about the *mana* of each character and place, and why this elder did what he did. (*What is his kuleana? How does that kuleana relate to everyone?*)

**Video Option:**

- Watch the video entitled *Mana* (under 6 min.). Ask students to remember one or more points shared by those in the video. Explain that some of the people in the video are cultural practitioners and kupuna from Hawai'i Island (Hilo and Kohala).
- Debrief the video by asking students to share one thing they learned. Be sure to discuss what Uncle Earl Veloria shared about the *Mana* of groups.
- Relate these ideas to the *mana* of their school. Talk story about ways that connecting energies together while learning and playing can benefit each person and the school as a whole.
- Invite partners or small groups to create an individual or group poster that defines *Mana* and identifies things, places and people that have great *Mana*. Encourage use of words and pictures. Model the process by creating a few examples. Ask students to be able to explain why they picked these representations.
- Provide purpose to doing quality work by sharing that when they are done, the group will pick some posters to put up around campus. (Winning posters can also be scanned to post on the school website.)
- End the class by doing the "*Hanu ~ Hā*" Three Breaths Exercise once more.

**Reflection Questions:**

- How do you define *mana*? Why is it important to understand?
- How do you think the *mana* of an individual can impact other people and places?
- What are ways you can enhance your own *Mana*?

**Resources:**

<http://ainaaloha.wordpress.com/who-are-native-hawaiians/>



## DEFINING MANA



- Supernatural or divine power; miraculous power; a powerful nation, authority
- To have mana, power, authority; authorization, privilege
- *Mana makua*: parental authority; *Leo mana*: Voice of authority that is obeyed.
- *Mana kia 'i*: Guardian power

Hawaiian Dictionary by Mary Kawena Puku'i

Found on line at: <http://ulukau.org/>

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"We define ourselves by our relationships with each other, our ancestors and our land. Without these bonds of interconnectedness, we are incomplete.

Being Hawaiian involves nurturing and honoring these ties. In the Hawaiian society, one is expected to know and understand what it means to be a contributing member of the community. Everyone has a kuleana, responsibility, to use his or her talents to the benefit of the entire 'ohana (literally, family). By fulfilling our duties to the 'ohana and recognizing the accomplishments of others, Hawaiians increase their mana or spirituality."

<http://ainaaloha.wordpress.com/who-are-native-hawaiians/>

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## Land and Love

By Steven Swerdfeger

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"The spirit of these Islands comes from the people.  
People who are unselfish and radiate joy,  
they are full of the spirit of Hawai'i."

-Monsignor Charles Kekumano

Kalā loved the beach. He loved the warm sand, the flowing palms, and the sound of the waves breaking on the shore. He felt at home by the ocean, playing in the sand and in the waves for timeless hours, as ancient volcanoes held him in the shadows of their majesty.

When the boy turned eight years old, his mother decided that he was old enough to play on the beach by himself. She knew it was summer and it would be impossible to keep him away.

Having found a favorite place to play in the tide pools, Kalā would go there early every morning. Soon he began to notice more details about this secluded area. He scampered among the large lava rocks. The more he played, the more he loved his special place in his world, and the better he understood it.

One day Kalā heard several bulldozers laboring noisily a little over half a mile south of his play area. He knew that the workers would be building a hotel. He resented this intrusion into his special place.

After the construction began, an old man with a parched face full of countless wrinkles would walk by Kalā every morning on his way to watch the workers, and then again every afternoon on his way home. He had a kind smile and eyes that seemed to see and notice everything. The boy felt especially good whenever he walked by. They had never spoken, for the old man had never stopped, but simply nodded as he passed.

One day Kalā was so busy sculpting sand that he didn't notice the old man approaching. Suddenly a shadow stood over him.

The boy looked up. "Hello," said the lad. My name is Kalā."

"Yes, I know. I know your mother. They call me Ulananui."

"Why do you go to watch the workers every day?" asked the boy.

"I go to protect the land," said the old man. "Do you love the land?"

"Yes," said the boy.

"And the sky?"

"Yes."

"And the trees?"

"Yes."

"And the great waves?"

"Yes"

"And they love you, as well. Always remember that."

That evening Kalā told his mother about his conversation with the old man.

"Oh yes. That's the kind and gentle Ulananui."

"I like him," said Kalā.

"Yes he is one of the ancient ones, one of the wise ones," his mother explained.

After that, Kalā was always careful to watch for the old man.

Months passed. School started again. Kalā's hours at his secret place became more precious. One day, as the boy was again sculpting the sand, the old man suddenly appeared and announced, "The hotel will soon be open."

"Yes," said Kalā. "People will come."

"Do you know why the people will come?"

"For the waves and the sand?"

"Yes," replied the old man, "but also for the love. The real secret of life, my son, is love, and the people will come because they will feel the love in our waves and in our sand and our trees and our skies. They may not understand why they feel better after they come, but they will participate in that special love."

"Is it because we have loved the waves, the sand, the trees and the sky?"

"Yes. We are the stewards of this place," said the old man. "The elements here need our companionship and our love and we need the love we receive from them. These forces of nature run deeply in our souls."

"I understand," said Kalā, "but will *they* understand?"

"It is enough, my son, that they come for this love. We are the love that they seek just as we are this land and this sky."

From that moment, all of life looked suddenly larger, brighter, and more clear to Kalā. He now saw in this special place and in the world beyond it, a subtle radiance. It was a stream of light that would transcend all obstacles.