

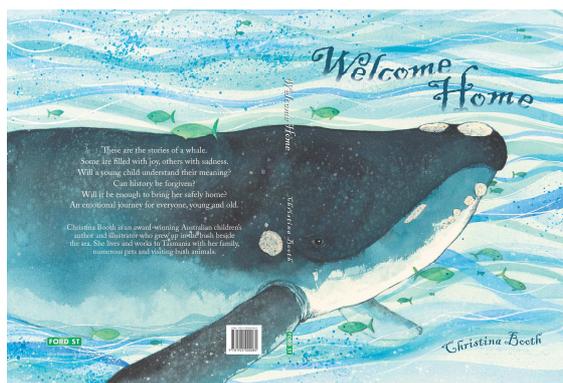
Welcome Home

by

Christina Booth

Ford Street Publishing

Teacher's Notes



About the Story

A young boy hears the stories of a whale as she swims up the river towards him. Over a number of days the stories become louder and he hears tales that are full of joy and also stories that are sad. He is the only person who can hear it; his grandmother suggests he is dreaming.

Each day the whale makes her way closer to the harbour and the boy learns of the history of whaling and why the whales left and didn't return. Now she has returned after many generations and is wondering if it is safe.

Is it enough for one young boy to say sorry? She turns and swims away. Is she gone forever?

Then as the sun rises, other people can see her and gather on the shore to watch. He can hear her voice again but this time she isn't speaking to him. There are now two whales in the river, a mother and her newborn calf.

'Welcome home,' says the boy.

'Welcome home,' whispers the mountain.

A story of hope and forgiveness.

About the Author/Illustrator

Tasmanian author/illustrator Christina Booth has been drawing and writing for as long as she can remember. Christina grew up on Tasmania's east coast surrounded by state reserves,

sand dunes and beaches. This fostered a deep appreciation of the unique textures and colours, native flora and fauna that can only be found in this part of the world. As an artist, Christina tells stories visually and as an author combines her illustrations with words to fill the senses, inspired by her surroundings. Christina is passionate about art being accessible to all. As an author/illustrator she believes that a most wonderful way for children to learn about the world is through quality picture books and inspiring stories that make us think and challenge us to take the next step forward. Through her love of books and art, Christina enjoys sharing her enthusiasm with children and adults alike. Welcome Home is Christina's 15th children's book, her fourth as author.

Story Inspiration

'The story of Welcome Home was inspired by a news report of a southern right whale that swam into Hobart's Derwent River (Tasmania, Australia) and gave birth to a calf. This was the first known birth in the river in over one hundred and ninety years.

After some research I learnt that the river had been a whaling nursery. In the winter months, when the whales migrated up to the eastern coasts of Australia and New Zealand from Antarctica the river had literally 'boiled' with whales. According to journals written at the time of early European settlement, you had to keep your smaller boats close to the shore or you would have been tipped out by a whale.

I discovered that once Europeans had arrived the whaling industry caused the southern right whale (amongst others) to be brought to near extinction within a few years of settlement. They are still classified as endangered to this day.

I began to wonder why it had taken so long for a whale to return. Southern right whales can only have a calf once every three years. Why did she choose to return to the river after so many generations had not? I imagined whales telling their children stories in the way humans do, passing them down through the generations, telling them that this area was not a safe place to go and not to trust humans.

I first wrote the story with the whale singing its tale, however, I soon discovered that right whales are one of the few species of whale that don't sing. I rewrote the story with the whale telling her story as she swam into the river.

I like my stories to end with hope, especially when there are difficult and sad parts to deal with. It is my hope that these whales will return and learn to trust us again. That we can understand that saying sorry for something we didn't choose to do is a part of healing the past and recognising our part in making it better for the future.

About the Illustrations

Christina Booth studied a fine arts degree at the Tasmanian Institute of Technology (now Utas) and also trained as a K-12 art educator with a Diploma of Teaching (now a Master of Education). She enjoys working in a wide range of mediums, which are chosen according to the style and feel of the book she is illustrating.

Christina chose to work on a rough cotton paper with watercolour paint, gouache, graphite and ink pencil and chinagraph pencil. This combination of media was chosen to help establish a feel of wind, water and beach. The chinagraph pencil acts as a resist and when combined with an off white coloured gouache helped to create an almost three-dimensional effect for the callosities on the whales.

Working on an angled board allowed the watercolour paint to run and bleed when painting the whales. Blotting paper and tissue was used to control and remove colour as it ran towards the whale's stomach. Working on a flat surface to create the water lines introduced a flatter background to contrast with the heavier bodies of the whale.

Christina enjoys working with texture and wanted to introduce some more traditional style images and combine them with the simple areas of flatter colour and texture and abstract shapes such as on the mountain on the last page and the end papers. A water spray was used to add texture to a number of surfaces including the water and the whales. Other coloured sprays were added to create highlights, texture and contrast.

Right whales are black but Christina prefers to avoid black in her illustrations. This is because it does not allow light to be reflected and can strip away the depth and strength of the colours around it. A colour called Payne's grey was chosen for the whale as it is made of deep blue tones.

The colours change as the story becomes darker, revealing the horrors of the past and the fears of the whale.

Study Notes for Teachers

Discussion/research points themes:

whaling; conservation; endangered species, extinction, environment; history; story-telling

Welcome Home is the perfect book for introducing the topic of whaling. It tells of the history of whaling in a safe way for children and can open up the opportunity to discuss how whaling affects us now as a result of the past and also what effects current whaling might have on our future.

Discussion/research points:

- **Why did people hunt whales in the past?**
- **What effects on whales did hunting have?**
- **Why were so many whales killed in early settlement times?**
- **What parts of the whales were used?**

- **What products were made from the whales?**
- **Why don't we need whales to make these items anymore?**
- **Do you think whaling in the past was necessary? Why?**
- **Why do people hunt whales today?**
- **Do you think it is necessary? Why?**
- **What types of whales were hunted and where?**
- **What do you think about the naming of the right whale? Can you think of a better name for them?**
- **Why have whales now been protected?**
- **What types of whaling are used, both now and in the past?**
- **Many sailors were lost at sea or killed by whales during hunting. Find out how dangerous hunting was and why.**
- **What types of ships/boats were used to hunt whales?**
- **What is the difference between a modern day harpoon and an old fashioned harpoon?**
- **Some people eat whale, could you?**
- **Some cultures traditionally hunt whales without endangering them; do you think this is all right or not? Why?**
- **There is no history of Australian Aboriginal people hunting whales. Do some research and see if you can find stories or reasons for this.**

The environment and conservation are both subjects that arise from the story in *Welcome Home*. As students become aware of how their actions can impact the environment and what level of 'footprint' they leave behind they can learn to critically and constructively discuss and consider the influence they have on their world.

Discussion/research points:

- **What does conservation mean?**
- **Why is it important?**
- **Do you know of any groups or organisations that are involved with conservation, in your local area and other parts of Australia/New Zealand and overseas? Look them up.**

- **What can you do at home and in your home area to help with conservation of animals, plants and habitats?**
- **How important is it to conserve our natural environments? Why is it important?**
- **Consider things you do now that you could change at home and at school to help preserve the environment. List them and share them with your class and family.**

There are many endangered species and studying why they are endangered and understanding about that species will help in saving them from extinction. *Welcome Home* focuses on the hope that the southern right whale might be able to gradually return to safe numbers again with our protection. This is a good introduction to students for discussion about what we can do to help different animals to survive against the odds.

Discussion/research points:

- **What is the difference between extinct, endangered, threatened and protected? Can you find animals that fit into each of these categories?**
- **Why are animals put into these categories?**
- **Who decides what category an animal is placed into?**
- **Why do you think the southern right whale is classified as endangered after so many years of having being protected?**
- **Are there any animals in your area/community that fit into these categories?**
- **Find out about World Threatened Species Day. What date is it on? Find out why that date was chosen.**
- **What things could you do as a class, school or community to recognise World Threatened Species Day?**
- **Discuss what happens when an animal becomes extinct. Is it just the end for that animal or does it have other consequences?**

Welcome Home focuses on the history of whaling rather than the modern day controversies that are often associated along with horrific images. Using history to tell the story is a safe way to introduce such a topic to students without the strongly emotive and graphic picture of current debates and still discuss the issue of the past, today and our future.

Discussion/research points:

- **What part does history play in our knowledge of whaling?**

- Things were very different in the past. How can we learn from history if things are so different now?
- What events in history have helped humans learn from their mistakes in a positive way?
- It is easy to judge people of the past. Do you think this is fair? Do you think they should have done things differently? Why/why not?
- Consider how things from now might look to people in the future. What do you think they will say about what we do today? What issues do you think they might judge?

Story telling is an age-old educational tool. Even before books, stories were told to pass down family and social stories, to teach morals and rules and to help understand the world and how it worked. *Welcome Home* uses story to both introduce the topics discussed above but also to show that story is still an essential tool in our lives. Both the protagonists rely on story to understand the world around them and to communicate with each other.

Discussion/research points:

- Why is story telling important?
- Do you prefer to learn through stories or through gathering your own information? Why?
- In the story *Welcome Home*, the whale is telling a story to the boy. Why do you think she chose a boy and not an adult?
- How do you think the whale knew what had happened in the river in the past?
- What type of story do you think the whale will tell her calf?
- Do you think the story made it easier or harder for the boy to understand what he had to do?
- If you were the boy, what would you have done?
- Why do you think the author chose to tell this story using another story?
- Think about another story you have read that taught you something new and important.

Classroom activities:

Creative writing:

- Research an animal that is endangered and write a story from the animal's perspective to let the world know how it might feel.

- Write a poem about how you feel when an animal is in danger and needs help.
- Write a song/rap that talks about saving an animal or environment that you are interested in.
- Write an acrostic or haiku poem using the name of your favourite animal
- Write a blog about your community and what can be done/is being done to help local wildlife and flora.
- Write a letter of support to an organisation that works in the area of conservation.
- Create a newspaper article reporting about a whaling disaster story from the past. Write it as if you are an eyewitness to the event.
- Write a journal entry from the perspective of a whaler during early settlement.
- Write a paragraph from the whale's perspective while being hunted.

Art:

- Using wax or oil-based crayons as a resist, draw sea creatures onto cartridge paper and then wash over using food dye or strong coloured transparent paints. Allow the colours to run into each other using wet on wet techniques.
- *(whole class/group project)* Draw a large scale image of a whale and fill it with collage images of sea creatures, ships, whaling images, other whales etc. Collect images from the internet, magazines, newspapers and use your own drawings to fill the whale.
- Design a mural that shows the size of a whale compared to everyday objects such as a house, car, bus, people etc.
- Using large chinks, draw a full sized whale outside. Decorate it with fish and wave patterns. Don't forget to measure it. Take photos of your work before it is blown or rained away. Maybe you could lie next to it and see how big it is compared to you.
- Using a computer, enhance an image of a whale using your own drawings, textures and colours.
- Design a CD, magazine, or book cover about whales.
- Select a part of the story from *Welcome Home* and design your own illustration to work with the text. Or you could illustrate your own poem or story.
- Draw a whale onto a large piece of paper. Draw soft swirly lines over the picture breaking it up into smaller sections. Select one colour and then colour each section in using different variations of that colour (i.e. light blue, dark blue, green blue, dusty blue etc). Focus similar colours onto the whale and other colours in the spaces around the whale so you can still see what you have drawn. You could also collect coloured paper from magazines and collage the whale image using similar colours.

- **Paint (using water colour paint) an image onto strong drawing or watercolour paper. Experiment using spray bottles with water and colour to add texture to the painting while it is wet. Do this while it is lying flat and try not to let too much water land on the paper or it will flood. Experiment using other items sprinkled onto the artwork, allowing it to dry before removing such as rock salt, raw rice, sugar etc.**
- **Using PVA glue, draw an image onto a firm piece of card, sprinkle generously with clean sand. Allow it to dry for a few days and then shake off excess sand.**

Take a piece of cartridge paper and lay carefully over the top of your sand art. Experiment with different media such as crayons, graphite or grey lead pencils, coloured pencils, watercolour pencils etc, and make a rubbing print of the image. Work into the image using water, other paint and pencils to create a textured, colourful artwork.

Science/SOSE:

- **Research what modern day factors are endangering the southern right whale. Create a poster explaining your findings.**
- **Japan is a country that is still whaling saying it is for research purposes. What sort of research are they doing and what are the benefits they believe they are gaining from it? Write a report explaining your factual findings and then discuss your thoughts about it.**
- **Research the use of whale oil in history. What products were made using whale by products such as oil, baleen, blubber and bone. What are these products made of today? When were these alternatives developed/invented? Make a poster or power point presentation to teach others about your findings.**
- **When did whales become protected? Research the plight of each major species of whale and draw a timeline showing when they were protected. Include in your timeline the dates when hunting ceased in different areas of your country or state.**
- **Hold a class debate on the topic of whaling. You could discuss modern whaling practices or you could have one team from the past and one team from the future.**
- **Consider why sailors went to sea as whalers. What circumstances would make someone do such a dangerous job? How might they feel seeing friends lost and killed at sea? How might they have felt about killing a whale? Write a letter to a family member about your thoughts as a whaler.**
- **Design and create an advertisement about supporting/fighting the ceasing of whaling in the 1900's. Use modern techniques and technology to present a time from the past.**
- ***Welcome Home* talks about whaling ships being used to transport convicts. What can you find out about this practice? Why did the ship owners agree to sail to the other side of the world to do this? What other information about whaling during early Australian and New Zealand settlement can you discover?**

- Some cultures eat whale. Can you find a recipe for whale meat or blubber?
- Design a poster that shows the different blowhole patterns of different species of whales. Use this to help people identify what type of whale they might see on the coast.

Resource links:

(These links were current and available at the time of publication, 2013.)

Whales and whaling, general information including history

- Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment
<http://www.dpiw.tas.gov.au/inter.nsf/WebPages/BHAN-54F8P9>
- Department of Conservation Te Papa Atawhai
<http://www.doc.govt.nz/conservation/historic/historic-heritage-topics/sealing-and-whaling/>
- Australian Whale Conservation Society <http://www.awcs.org.au/>
- Te Ara, The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/whaling>
- Parks and Wildlife Service Tasmania <http://www.parks.tas.gov.au/index.aspx?base=1809>
- University of Tasmania
http://www.utas.edu.au/library/companion_to_tasmanian_history/W/Whaling.htm
- Kiwi Kids Care for Whales <http://www.careforwhales.co.nz/Whales/resources/>
- NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service, Office of Protected Resources
http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/pdfs/education/kids_times_whale_right.pdf
- New Zealand History Online
<http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/culture/pre-1840-contact/sealers-and-whalers>
- Sea Shepherd Conservation Society <http://www.seashepherd.org/whales/>
- Greenpeace <http://www.greenpeace.org/australia/en/>
- Project Jonah New Zealand
<http://www.projectjonah.org.nz/shop/Educational+Resources/The+World+of+Whales+Resource+Kit.html>
- Australian government Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities.
<http://www.environment.gov.au/coasts/species/cetaceans/education/index.html>
- ABC News report on whale calving in the Derwent River, 2010
<http://www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2010/08/19/2987564.htm>

- **The Mercury Tasmania, newspaper report of whale calving in the Derwent River, 2010**
http://www.themercury.com.au/article/2010/08/20/167061_tasmania-news.html

sounds

- <http://www.great-white-shark.com/rightwhaletrump.au>
- **Kiwi Kids Care For Whales** <http://www.careforwhales.co.nz/Whales/our-videos/>

video

- **ARKIVE** <http://www.arkive.org/southern-right-whale/eubalaena-australis/video-09f.html>
- **ABC News report on whaling exhibition, Runnymede, Hobart, Tasmania, Australia**
<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-05-30/whaling-exhibit-captures-changing-times/4722430>
- **ABC News report on whale calving in the Derwent River, 2010**
<http://www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2010/08/19/2987564.htm>
- **Kiwi Kids Care For Whales** <http://www.careforwhales.co.nz/Whales/our-videos/>
- **One News, New Zealand**
<http://tvnz.co.nz/national-news/southern-right-whale-returning-nz-waters-video-5396159>
- **The Telegraph UK**
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/australiaandthepacific/australia/9407401/W-hale-and-its-calf-spotted-in-Sydney-Harbour.html>

If you liked *Welcome Home*, write and tell Christina Booth why. Or if someone in your class comes up with a question about the book that no one can answer, write and ask about it!

Don't forget to include a stamped, self-addressed envelope for your reply if you use snail mail. You can send your letter to the following address:

Christina Booth c/- Ford St Publishing Pty Ltd, 2 Ford Street, Clifton Hill, VIC 3068, Australia.

Or you can send a message via Ford St Publishing info@fordstreetpublishing.com or via Christina's website (see below).

For information about Christina's other books, school visits and more whaling information, visit her website: www.christinabooth.com