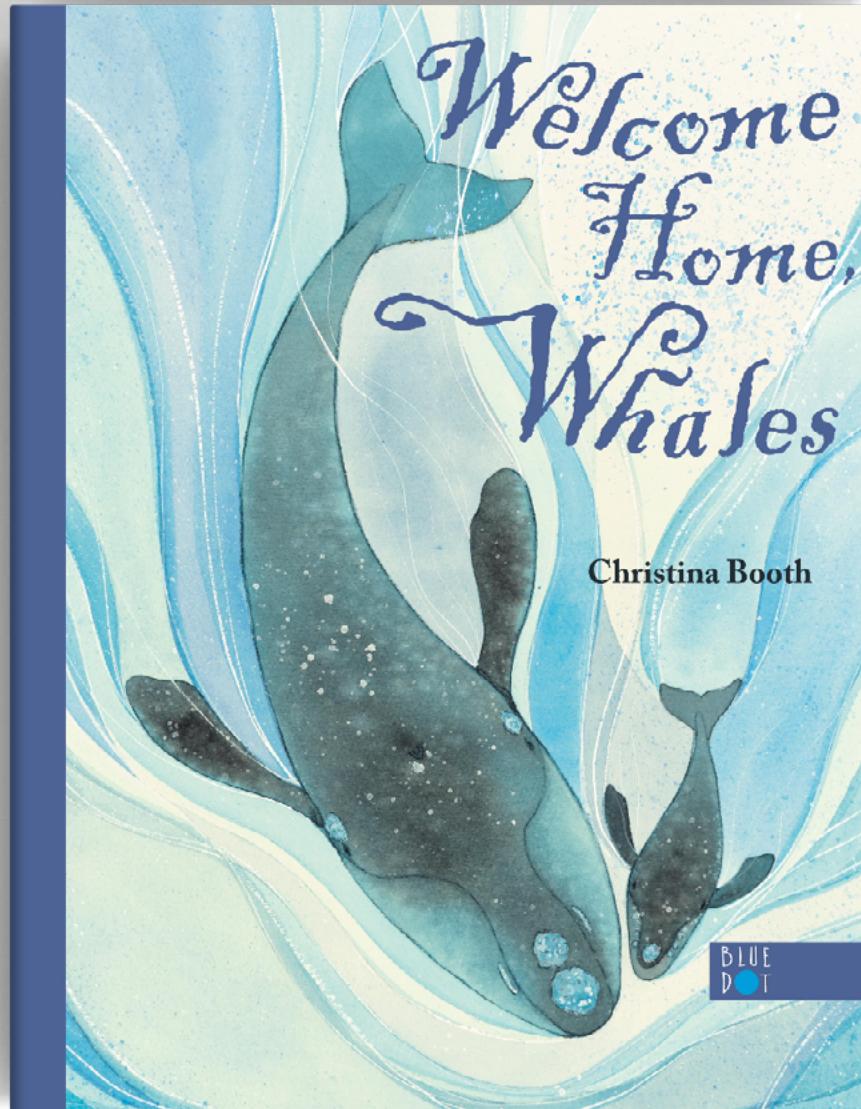


Grades K–5



Your Teacher's Guide

from Blue Dot Kids Press



**Winner of the Wilderness Society Environment Award
for Children's Literature**

Welcome Home, Whales, written and illustrated by Christina Booth
Published April 2021 | ISBN 9781733121286 | Ages 4–9



Contents

Before Reading



During Reading



After Reading



Research



Collage Art Project



Thank-You Cards



Community Science

Before Reading

Establish background knowledge.

- What do the title and cover illustrations tell you about the book? Where do you think the story takes place? Who will be in the story? What might happen in the story?
- What do you know about whales? What do they look like? Where do they live? What is their personality? What kinds of things do they do?
- What do you know about the interactions between whales and humans? How have those relationships changed or stayed the same?

During Reading

As you read, think about the elements of the story.

- Setting: Where and when is the story taking place?
- Point of view: Who is telling the story?
- Cause-and-effect relationships: What is happening and why?
- Characters: Who is in the story? How are they related? What are their traits—their characteristics; their motivations; and their feelings?
- Pause occasionally and wonder, *What will happen next?*
- How do character actions contribute to the sequence of events?
- What is your point of view? How would you respond if a whale—or other creature in nature—were trying to communicate with you?
- How does the author, Christina Booth, use direct language and indirect language to share information? Does she always explain what she means?
- What are some examples of when the text asks you to guess at what is being said?
- How do the illustrations contribute to the meaning and information expressed by the words?
- How do the illustrations create mood, emphasize aspects of a character, and show the setting?
- Were you surprised by what happens at the end of the story? What clues did the author put in the story that could have led you to expect this?
- What are the themes of the book? How are the themes developed?
- What is the author's purpose for writing this book?
- What new information are you learning as you read?



After Reading

Discussion

Check for understanding.

- Who is the “she” in the story?
- In the beginning of the story, is the child dreaming or awake?
- What does the child hear?
- Why doesn’t the child’s mom, dad, and grandma believe the narrator?
- What brings the whale joy?
- What makes the whale sad?
- How does the whale’s story make the child feel? How does the child react?
- Why does the child stay by the water, listening to the stories, even though they want to run away and stop listening?
- Why does the child say, “Sorry”?
- Why did the whales not feel safe? Who or what was scaring them? Why?
- Why do other people join the child by the water?
- What has changed at the end of the story from the beginning of the story?
- Why does the child say, “Welcome home”?
- Why does the mountain say, “Welcome home”?
- What facts have you learned about whales and about human treatment of whales?



Consider point of view.

All stories are told from a *point of view*. They have a narrator. Some have a first-person point of view—the narrator is known as “I.” For example, “I read the book.” Some have a third-person point of view—the narrator may be known as they, she, or he or another pronoun like those. For example, “They read the book.” Some stories feel like a friend is telling it to you. Other stories feel more like a textbook.

- Who is telling this story? How can you tell?
- Is anyone else in Welcome Home, Whales also telling a story?
- Does this story feel like a friend is talking to you or like you are reading a textbook? Is your answer different for different parts of the book?

Consider language.

Word choice affects meaning on many levels. What do the following phrases from the story mean? What tone and mood do you feel when you read them?

- “echoing off the mountain like a whisper”
- “the moon danced on the waves”
- “it tugs at my heart” and “twists around my heart”
- “the breath of the wind”
- “the night-sky water”

Consider message and theme.

The environment and conservation are both important in *Welcome Home, Whales*. Discuss this in relation to whaling, which has impacted nature both in the story and in real life. (The page of facts at the end of the book can help with some of this conversation.)

- Why did people hunt whales in the past?
- What effects on whales did hunting have?
- 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 or why not?
- Why do people hunt whales today?
- Some cultures have a tradition of hunting whales without endangering them. Do you think this is all right or not? Explain.
- 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 is the difference between extinct, endangered, threatened, and protected animals?
- What does conservation mean?
- Why is conservation important?

Research

1. **Be a whale journalist:** Find out what things are endangering North Atlantic, North Pacific, and Southern right whales today.
2. **Be an ocean guide:** Draw different types of whales and label each of their unique parts and where they live. Help people who are looking out into the ocean know what type of whale they are seeing!

3. **Be a conservationist:** What things can you do to protect whales and our natural environment? Even if you don't live near where whales live, can you help them? Note: The page of actions at the back of *Welcome Home, Whales* offers five great ideas from the organization Defenders of Wildlife; the rest of this guide shares a few more.

Collage Art Project

Draw a large-scale outline of a right whale—maybe it will take up one whole wall of your classroom! Then, working together, fill it with images of sea creatures the whale lives with or eats, ships or other whaling images, places where right whales live, etc. Collect images from the internet or magazines and draw your own.

Thank-You Cards

In *Welcome Home, Whales*, the child is sorry about human behavior that has hurt the whales. In this writing activity, be thankful for human behavior that helps whales! Research an organization that works in whale conservation. Write them a thank-you email, postcard, or greeting card and send it.



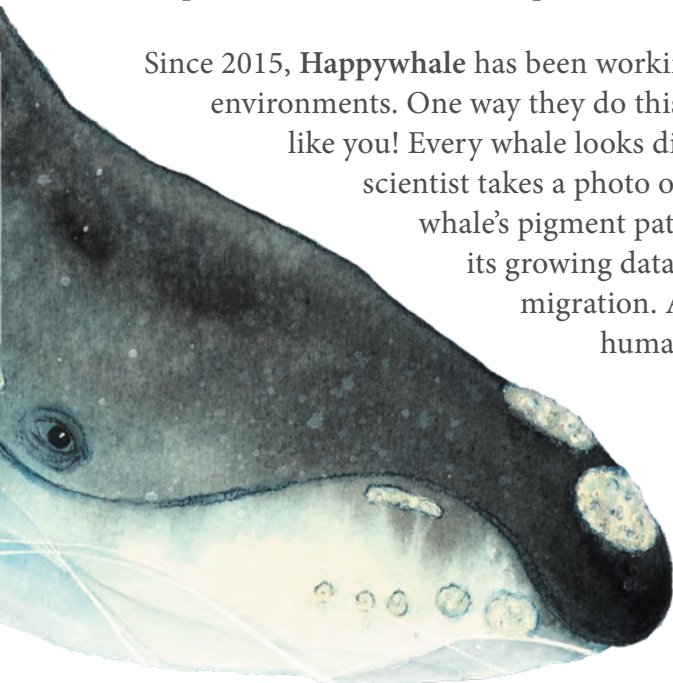
Community Science

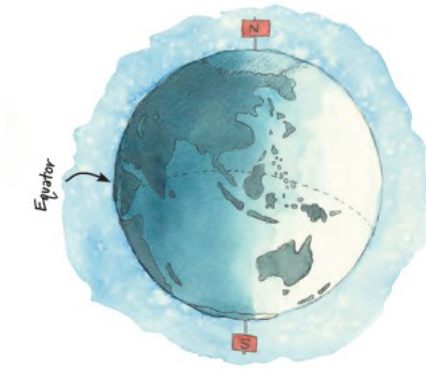
Community science, also called **citizen science**, happens when people study the world around them and send the data they collect to scientists. A community scientist is anyone—young or old, who has attended a lot of school or who hasn't, from a city or a small town—who collects data for research projects and helps to answer real scientific questions.

Since 2015, **Happywhale** has been working to increase global understanding of and caring for marine environments. One way they do this is by collecting photos of whales taken by . . . people just like you! Every whale looks different from every other whale. So, when a community scientist takes a photo of a whale they see, Happywhale can match things like that whale's pigment patterns, distinctive scars, or the shape of their fin and flukes to its growing database of whales. This allows us to track each whale's travel and migration. And that helps us better understand whales and the effects humans and our conservation efforts are having.

For more information, including how to become a Happywhale community scientist, check out the Happywhale website, <https://happywhale.com>.

They also have a free app; search your app store for *Polar Collective: Citizen Sciences*.





Blue Dot Kids Press inspires curiosity with beautifully crafted stories that connect us to each other and the planet we share. Written and illustrated by impassioned **storytellers and artists from around the world**, our books engage young readers' innate sense of **wonder and empathy**, connecting them to our global community and **the pale blue dot we call home**.

As an **independent, mission-driven**, children's publisher based in San Francisco, California, and Wellington, New Zealand, our **passion for nature and its stewardship** are evident in every book we publish—as well as in our business practices.

Proudly distributed by Consortium Book Sales and Distribution, an Ingram brand.

Visit us at bluedotkidspress.com for more information and resources.