

# Migaloo

## The White Whale

MARK WILSON

Teachers Notes by Robyn Sheahan-Bright

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Children's Books

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## Introduction

*It was the wonderful sound of the whales' song calling him home.'*

Migaloo, a rare white humpback whale, is born in the tropical waters off the coast of Australia. He and his mother join the pod which travels to Antarctica on their very long annual migration. They follow the haunting whale song to find their destination. But when they arrive and begin feeding on krill, the young Migaloo is separated from the group of whales. Luckily the whale song draws him back again ... to his home with his pod.

This book is a tribute to these majestic, magnificent mammals, in a simple narrative about the birth of Migaloo, a renowned white humpback whale.

It is a classic tale of a journey and of a homecoming told in spare and stately language, and illustrated in Mark Wilson's distinctive style in gloriously resonant paintings, which are hauntingly mesmeric.

Migaloo is an 'icon' of the deep, blue sea.

## Themes

Several themes are covered in this book which might be related to: **'Australian Curriculum'** <<http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/humanities-and-social-sciences/history/Curriculum/F-10?y=3&y=4&y=5&y=6&s=HKU&s=HS&layout=1>>

These include:

- **White Humpback Whales**

**Activity:** In 1991, Migaloo was the first all-white humpback whale sighted off the waters of Byron Bay, NSW, at Australia's most easterly point. Migaloo means 'white fella'. He was named by Aboriginal elders. The website <<http://migaloo.com.au/>> invites researchers and interested people to report further sightings. For general information about humpback whales see 'Humpback Whale' <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humpback\\_whale](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humpback_whale)> Research Migaloo's first sighting and subsequent life.

**Activity:** Read about the humpback whale and examine the sketch detailing the parts of the whale at: 'Humpback whale' <<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/animals/humpbackwhale.htm>> and 'Humpback Whale Megaptera novaeangliae' <[www.enchantedlearning.com/subjects/whales/species/Humpbackwhale.shtml](http://www.enchantedlearning.com/subjects/whales/species/Humpbackwhale.shtml)>

**Activity:** Migaloo's annual migration (like that of many other whales) is extraordinary. He travels 12,000 km from Antarctica via the east coast of Australia to the Great Barrier Reef off the Queensland coast each year. (The afterword contains an image drawn by Mark Wilson of a whale at Heron Island in 2007.) Research this migration pattern and how and why whales travel so far each year. Use resources such as: 'Whale Migration' <<http://www.wildaboutwhales.com.au/whale-facts/about-whales/whale-migration>> or 'The Neverending Journey' <<https://www.oceania.org.au/education/migration/title.html>>

**Discussion Point:** The 'whale song' of the humpback whale is said to be very special. Students can listen and watch at 'Whale Song Oceania iWhales' <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WabT1L-nN-E>> or 'Migaloo the White Whale Speaks Oceania iWhales' <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=grRuwlcE9LU>> Have fun trying to make your own whale song (noises)!

**Activity:** The first phase of a long-term study of humpback whales in Hervey Bay – 1992 to 2005 – has been the major work of *The Oceania Project*. <<http://www.oceania.org.au/>> Read and research their work further; their website is an excellent resource for student research.

**Activity:** One of *The Oceania Project's* activities is 'The Humpback Icon Project' <<http://www.oceania.org.au/iwhales/portal/home.php?cat=289>> Sixty-seven Australian communities, like Hervey Bay, are participating in the Humpback Icon Project. Each of these communities has adopted an individual humpback whale from *The Oceania Project's* Fluke catalogue. Students might like to 'adopt a whale' and participate in some of the activities suggested by this program.

**Activity:** You may also be able to take students on a whale-watching excursion. See 'Australian Whalewatching' <<http://www.australianwhalewatching.com.au/>> for ideas.

- **Conservation and the Environment**

**Discussion Point:** In the past humpback whales have been nearly hunted to extinction but the IWC reports some recent recovery in numbers in the waters off Australia.

'Status of Whales' International Whaling Commission <<https://iwc.int/status>> Research this topic further.

**Discussion Point:** All whales, dolphins and porpoises in Australian waters

are now protected species. How do governments enforce such regulations? What role do not-for-profit organisations such as Sea Shepherd <<http://www.seashepherd.org.au/>> or the International Fund for Animal Welfare <<http://www.ifaw.org/australia/our-work/defending-whales>> play in this campaign?

**Activity:** Recreational activities such as whale watching can also affect the safety of sea creatures. Wilson reports that Migaloo was followed by people in a variety of seacraft until ‘one day a trimaran accidentally ran over him’ and that now the government has passed legislation to stop boats going too close to him.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority also issues warnings about traffic near whales, such as: ‘Have a whale of a time on the water — remember to look out for those below’ 11/5/2015 <<http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/media-room/latest-news/animals/2015/have-a-whale-of-a-time-on-the-water-remember-to-look-out-for-those-below>>

[See also **Bibliography** for other references.]

## Curriculum Topics

This picture book touches on the themes above and might be used in conjunction with curriculum topics (for primary or secondary school students) in the following areas:

- **Study of History, Society and Environment**

This book can be used in studies of history, society or environmental issues relevant to ocean conservation.

**Activity:** What are the major threats to the health of our oceans?

**Activity:** Debate the issue of Climate Change; for and against.

**Discussion Point:** Research the history of environmental activism and how the ocean has been or has not been protected by particular campaigns. Research for example, the ‘Antarctic Treaty’ *Australian Antarctic Division* <<http://classroom.antarctica.gov.au/international/antarctic-treaty>> Also research Greenpeace’s campaigns about the health of the ocean at ‘Oceans’ <[http://www.greenpeace.org/australia/en/what-we-do/oceans/?\\_ga=1.39894626.1375172874.1431842199](http://www.greenpeace.org/australia/en/what-we-do/oceans/?_ga=1.39894626.1375172874.1431842199)>

**Discussion Point:** Discuss the **key values** conveyed in this text.

- **Science**

**Activity:** On 8 June each year, World Oceans Day <<http://www.worldoceansday.org/>> is celebrated. Research and involve your students in activities relating to oceanic studies.

**Discussion Point:** The biology of many sea creatures might be studied, e.g. Adélie penguins and seals each appear as images in this book.

**Activity:** Study the ecosystems of the Antarctic and Southern Ocean regions. See for example, 'About Antarctica' *Australian Antarctic Division* <<http://www.antarctica.gov.au/about-antarctica>>

**Activity:** Sharks appear in a dramatic scene in this book. Research not only whales but also the sharks which live in this ecosystem.

- **English Language and Literacy**

The text of this book might be studied in relation to the following aspects:

**Question:** This story is told in **third person omniscient** as a **past tense account** of events. Re-write a section as if Migaloo was telling his own story. How would that work as a narrative?

**Activity:** Write an expository story as a newspaper article based on the facts revealed in this text. See '**Expository Writing**'. <[http://web.gccaz.edu/~mdinchak/ENG101/expository\\_writing.htm](http://web.gccaz.edu/~mdinchak/ENG101/expository_writing.htm)>

**Activity:** Test your students' comprehension by asking them questions about the written text. [See also **Blackline Master 2**.]

**Activity:** Encourage students to write an acrostic poem using the letters in 'humpback whale'. [See **Bibliography**.]

## Visual Literacy

The visual text of a book combines with the written text to tell the story using the various parts of the book's design and illustrations, as explored below:

**Activity:** The **cover** of a book is an important part of its message. Look at the front cover of *Migaloo: The White Whale*, which depicts Migaloo 'breaching' the water's surface. What impression does this image give to the reader?

**Discussion Point:** The **endpapers** 'were created with the help of the Yea MARC schools and the children of the 2014 Writers Camp at the Rubicon Outdoor Centre, Victoria.' Their names are as follows:

**Taggerty** – Lochlan Phelps

**Merrijig** – Holly Anketell, Bradyn Tremmel

**Jamieson** – Angela Polkinghorne, Breanna Hall, Mitchell Russell

**Tallarook** – Aidan Maude, Krista Blyth, Isabella Warrior, Ryan Mclean, Jess Blyth

**Strathbogie** – Charlie Russell, Jacob Chapman

**Highlands** – Jessica Bennett, Stohm Gabrielle, Jessica Bennett, Lucia Clarke

**Flowerdale** – Averyll Robertson-Dixon, Trinity Tebbutt, Kayla Sweeney, Ryder Primrose, Codie McDonald

**Buxton** – Paddy Birtchnell, Reuben Sims, Teake Schroder

**Marysville** – Jayden Arnett, Riley Thomas, Matthew Thompson, Georgie O'Toole, Hannah Cain, Jackson Harris, Levi Murphy, Micci Soriano, Jacob Vulfs

'To the wonderful students from the 2014 Yea MARC Primary Schools in Victoria who produced the drawings for the Migaloo endpapers. Many, many thanks, from Mark Wilson.'

Mark Wilson has also thanked their teachers on the imprint page of this book.

**Activity:** Invite students to draw, paint, or collage their own responses to this book (just as these students did in the endpapers) and create a classroom mural using all the images. [See **also Creative Arts 1.** below.]

**Discussion Point:** The **title page** depicts Migaloo underwater – a different view to that on the cover. Discuss the impression each painting in the book gives you.

**Discussion Point:** The **format** of the book is portrait in shape, and the **layout of the storyboard** contains some double-page spreads and some single pages.

Sketches and framed images are inset throughout. How does the format and design of the book influence your reading of it?

**Activity:** The **medium or style** employed is described in Mark Wilson's note on **Illustration Technique** in his **Author's Notes** below.] These images are haunting and evocative ocean landscape paintings.

**Activity:** Examine the images; compare them to the text and discuss their emotional power.

**Question:** The **colours** generally used in this book comprise the deep blues and greens of the ocean. How does colour affect your interpretation of this work?

**Activity:** Create a graphic novel/comic version of a scene in this book. [See **Bibliography**.] [See also **Blackline Master 4**.]

**Activity:** Students might be encouraged to use critical literacy skills to unearth further meaning in this text. Encourage them to look closely at the images, to explain what they see, and then what the text says, and how the two texts add meaning to each other.

- **Creative Arts**

There are many creative activities suggested by this text:

1. Students might **paint their own image of the whales in their pod**. They can then display them as a classroom mural exhibition created in response to this text.
2. **Create a whale mobile**. Use a picture of a humpback whale and colour in a few; then see instructions at: 'Whale Mobile' *Enchanted Learning* <<http://www.enchantedlearning.com/crafts/Whalemobile.shtml>>
3. After you have completed **Blackline Master 2 Migaloo Quiz** below, make up your own quiz from resources such as 'Facts About Whales' on *Whale-World* <<http://www.whale-world.com/>> Test your classmates with the answers.
4. **Design your own poster and slogan** for a campaign about saving whales.
5. **Create a Book Trailer** to promote this book. [See **Bibliography** for relevant resources.]

- **Learning Technologies**

**Activity:** The topic of humpback whales might be researched, not only in libraries, but on the internet where there is a wealth of information.  
[See **Bibliography**.]

- **Mathematics**

**Activity:** Statistics relating to the decline of whale populations might be studied.

**Activity:** Compare these statistics to similar figures regarding other marine life.

## **Further Topics for Discussion and Research**

- Research the work of Mark Wilson. Compare his other books with this one.
- Students might research this book in comparison to reading fiction and non-fiction books such as those listed in the **Bibliography**.
- Investigate any other topic not covered in these notes which you consider to be suggested by this text.

## **Conclusion**

This book is both a powerful statement about the uniqueness of the humpback whale, and a visual feast. It is bound to enthrall and inspire children to read further about whales and their history; the threats to their survival; and their special role in the oceanic ecosystem.

*Migaloo: The White Whale* is also a classic tale based on the familiar tropes of birth, growth, and survival. It is about leaving and homecoming; loss and renewal.

## **Author's Notes**

Whales are an integral part of complex ecosystems that are becoming more and more fragile because of human activities. Without whales, these ecosystems may cease to exist. Migaloo, the all-white humpback whale,

has helped shine a spotlight on the plight of not only humpback whales, but all creatures that live in these ecosystems.

It is simple – sea creatures need our help now more than ever! If we don't act now, many species that we take for granted will be lost. The humpback whale is just one species that many dedicated people have worked to save from extinction. We need to have the same drive and conviction to save other endangered species – forcing governments to legislate for the protection of animals on the verge of extinction. If we can do this, the numbers of many endangered species may increase to sustainable levels.

The special legislation that protects Migaloo (see the afterword of the picture book) is unique in the world of conservation, just as Migaloo is unique, as the only all-white humpback whale on the planet. I have told Migaloo's story in the hope it inspires people to see what can be done if we all work together. This is the only way we can preserve the wonderful and unique wildlife we share our planet with.

## **Illustration Technique**

I use a lot of photos for each illustration, not just photos of Migaloo, of which there are many, but my own photos of different humpback whales. I observe them as much as possible in their natural environment. I watch films of humpback whales to study how they breach, swim and dive; how they look from different angles, how they care for their young and how they eat – and survive.

I sketch from these photos and films, never directly copying, but using them to make sure that all the detail in the illustrations are as realistic as possible. I draw different angles, sometimes a long shot, then perhaps a view from above, then a close-up, then a wide shot so the whale is small in the overall picture (such as the image of Migaloo all alone on pages 28–29). Many people do this for variety when making documentaries or movies to keep the viewer engaged. I approach picture books the same way.

Some illustrations are done in an ink wash or just grey lead pencil on paper. If the drawing looks okay, I often put it in the book as it is (such as the dolphinfish on page 4, the big drawing of mother and Migaloo on pages 6–7 and the inset drawing under the afterword on page 32). I will sometimes add some oil pastel as well (the orca and background painting on page 13).

The endpapers are lots of drawings in lead and coloured pencil by students in the Yea MARC area (see teachers notes under **Visual Literacy** above for details).

Many of the illustrations for *Migaloo* were done in Matisse Acrylic paint on card (cover, title page and pages 4–5) or primed canvas (page 30 and the inset on page 31). Firstly, I draw these pictures using a pencil. I then make the drawing darker with a permanent marker that will still show through the wet paint and not ‘bleed’ (become blurry). Then it is time to literally start splashing paint around! I have a tub of clear water and another tub of watery blue paint. I add a little yellow, and then I dip a big brush or rag into the water and paint and flick it onto the canvas (an example is the background canvas behind ‘About Migaloo’). I don’t use paint brushes for detail, though. I dip a pencil into paint and ‘draw’ with the paint on it.

It produces a softer image, believe it or not, which I like (see Migaloo and mother diving together on page 24). These acrylic paintings are finished in Derwent watercolour pencil or oil pastel here and there. Messy, but a lot of fun!

## About the Author/Illustrator

**Mark Wilson** is a multiple award-winning author/illustrator with 17 books in print worldwide. Mark has a passion for Australian history and the environment, particularly endangered species, exploring these themes through his picture books and workshops.

Mark was born in Brunswick, Victoria. He took to drawing from a very early age, and also loved comics. He went on to spend most of his teenage years performing as a singer and drummer in a rock band. He studied mural design and painting at the Canberra Institute of Technology (now Monash, Caulfield Campus). He also did national service with Training Command, followed by a Diploma of Education. In the early seventies, he became a designer and illustrator for *The Education Magazine* and *Pursuit Magazine*, and also started illustrating for various publishers including Penguin, Rigby, Brooks Waterloo and Houghton Mifflin in the USA.

Mark’s books include *The Last Tree* (2007 Whitley Award for Children’s Literature) which deals with the effect deforestation has on the creatures that inhabit our forests, and *Journey of the Sea Turtle* (2011 Whitley Award) which highlights the fragile existence of sea turtles. Other award-winning books include *My Mother’s Eyes – the Story of a Boy Soldier*, published by Hachette Australia in 2009; *Angel of Kokoda*, 2010, which was shortlisted in the 3rd C.J. Picture Book Awards International and also won a 2011 CBCA Award;

the *Ben and Gracie's Art Adventure* series, *Inside the World of Tom Roberts* (shortlisted in the 2013 Aurealis Awards) and *A Day to Remember: The Story of the Anzacs* with Jackie French (shortlisted in the 2013 CBCA Awards). *The Afghanistan Pup* (2014) was a 2015 CBCA Eva Pownall Notable Children's Book. It is the fourth book in his 'Children in War Quartet'. *Digger, the Dog Who Went to War* (2015) is Mark's latest picture book.

In 2011, Mark was presented with the Dromkeen Medal for Services to Children's Literature. Mark hopes his books not only encourage students to study their own family history and Australian native species, but to have confidence in their own drawing and writing.

For more information about Mark visit: <<http://www.markwilson.com.au/>>

## **Blackline Masters**

### **BM 1 IMAGE OF MIGALOO**

Create an oceanic scene as background to this sketch of MIGALOO.  
[You might enlarge this page to A3 to give students more space to work on.]





Mark Wilson

## BM 2 MIGALOO QUIZ

These questions can each be answered by reading or interpreting the text of this picture book.

1. Where is Migaloo born?
2. Who were the 'strange creatures' which Migaloo and his mother encounter?
3. Why is Migaloo's white skin a danger to him?
4. What danger does the first change in the whale song indicate?
5. When the whales 'enter a new world' what creature is depicted in the central box on page 22?
6. What message does the second change in the whale song give to the whales?
7. What happens to Migaloo after they find the krill?
8. How does he find the pod again?
9. How long is Migaloo?
10. In what year was Migaloo first sighted?
11. How does Migaloo eat?
12. What does he weigh?
13. What is krill?
14. Who begins a whale song in each group of whales?
15. How far can a whale song sound carry?

**Answers:** 1. In shallow waters off a north Australian beach. 2. Human beings in boats. 3. It 'would make it easy for predators to see him through the clear blue water'. 4. Sharks. 5. Adélie Penguins. 6. That there is 'krill' (food) below. 7. He gets lost. 8. He hears the whale song. 9. Thirteen (13) metres long. 10. 1991. 11. Baleen plates (not teeth) to trap krill in his mouth. 12. Thirty (30) tonnes. 13. Small shrimp-like animals and small fish. 14. It is invented by a dominant whale in a group, and the others copy it. 15. For many kilometres.

### BM 3 MAP OF WHALE MIGRATION

Invite students to draw the paths followed by whales on this map of the oceans around Australia.

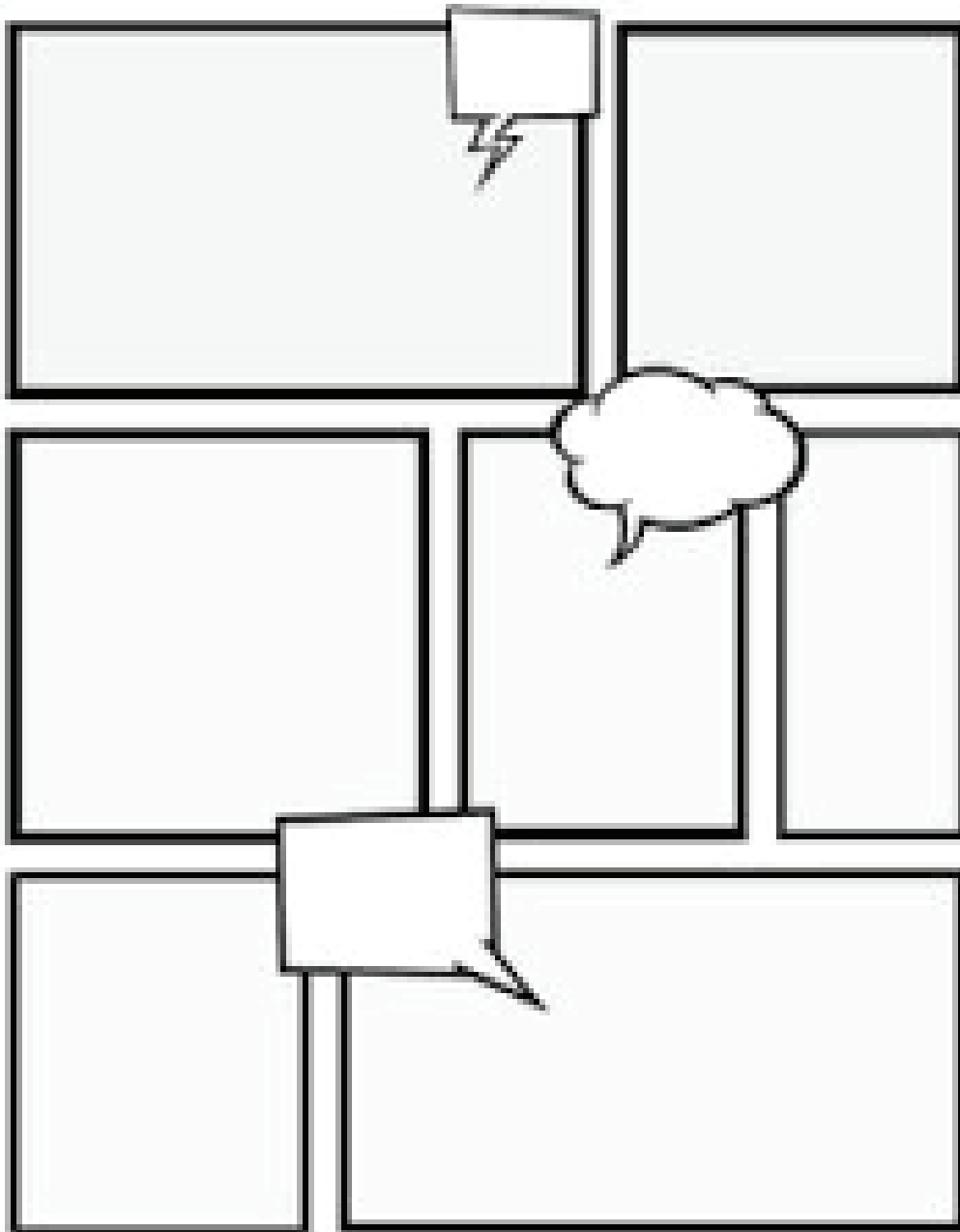
Enlarge it to A3 size and decorate the map using collaged images relevant to the oceanic theme.



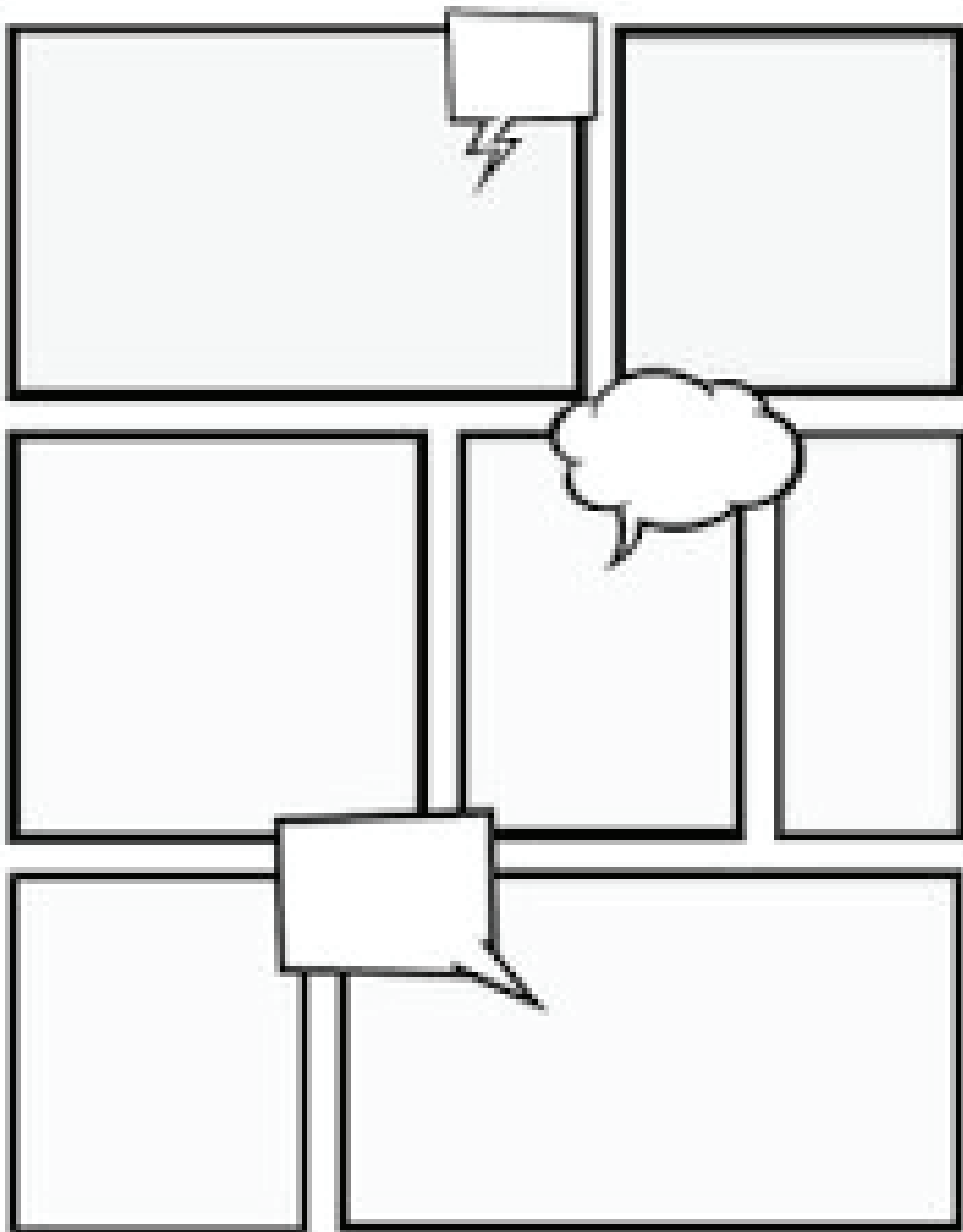


## BM 4 GRAPHIC STORYTELLING

Create a graphic novel/comic interpretation of one of the scenes in this book. Use the layout below as the storyboard for your comic. Enlarge on a photocopier to give you more space.



Comic Book Template viewed at: <http://www.pinterest.com/pin/365706432212821426/>



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‘Have a whale of a time on the water — remember to look out for those below’ 11/5/2015 Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority <<http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/media-room/latest-news/animals/2015/have-a-whale-of-a-time-on-the-water-remember-to-look-out-for-those-below>>

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Humpback Whale Icons <<http://www.oceania.org.au/iwhales/portal/home.php?cat=289>>

‘Humpback Whale *Megaptera novaeangliae*’

<<http://www.enchantedlearning.com/subjects/whales/species/Humpbackwhale.shtml>>

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‘The Neverending Journey’ <<https://www.oceania.org.au/education/migration/title.html>>

The Ocean Project <<http://theoceanproject.org/>>

The Oceania Project <<http://oceania.org.au/>>

‘Oceans’ *Greenpeace Australia* <[http://www.greenpeace.org/australia/en/what-we-do/oceans/?\\_ga=1.39894626.1375172874.1431842199](http://www.greenpeace.org/australia/en/what-we-do/oceans/?_ga=1.39894626.1375172874.1431842199)>

Project Jonah New Zealand <<http://www.projectjonah.org.nz/>>

Save the Whales <<http://www.savethewhales.org/>>

‘Saving Whales’ *Greenpeace Australia Pacific*

<<http://www.greenpeace.org/australia/en/what-we-do/oceans/Whales/>>

‘Sea Shepherd’ <<http://www.seashepherd.org.au/>>

‘Status of Whales’ International Whaling Commission <<https://iwc.int/status>>

‘Types of Whale: Whale Species in Antarctica’ <[http://www.coolantarctica.com/Antarctica%20fact%20file/wildlife/whales/whales\\_species.php](http://www.coolantarctica.com/Antarctica%20fact%20file/wildlife/whales/whales_species.php)>

‘Whale Migration’

<<http://www.wildaboutwhales.com.au/whale-facts/about-whales/whale-migration>>

‘Whale Song Oceania iWhales’ <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WabTIL-nN-E>>

‘Whales and Dolphins’ Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority

<<http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/about-the-reef/animals/whales-and-dolphins>>

World, Environment Day <<http://www.unep.org/wed/>>

World Oceans Day <<http://www.worldoceansday.org/>>

(WWF Global) World Wide Fund for Nature <[http://wwf.panda.org/who\\_we\\_are/](http://wwf.panda.org/who_we_are/)>

## Websites – Teaching Resources

‘Book Trailers – Resources: Ipswich District Teacher Librarian Network’  
<<http://learningplace.com.au/deliver/content.asp?pid=41987>>

‘Book Trailers’ *Insideadog* <<http://www.insideadog.com.au/teachers/book-trailers>>

‘Book Trailers for Readers’ by Michelle Harclerode  
<<http://www.booktrailersforreaders>>

‘Expository Writing’ <[http://web.gccaz.edu/~mdinchak/ENG101/expository\\_writing.htm](http://web.gccaz.edu/~mdinchak/ENG101/expository_writing.htm)>

‘Student Poems’ *Save the Whales*  
<[http://www.savethewhales.org/inspirations\\_poems.html](http://www.savethewhales.org/inspirations_poems.html)>

‘Whale Mobile’ *Enchanted Learning* <<http://www.enchantedlearning.com/crafts/Whalemobile.shtml>>

‘What is an Acrostic Poem?’ *Young Writers* <<https://www.youngwriters.co.uk/types-acrostic>>

## About the Author of the Notes

**Dr Robyn Sheahan-Bright** operates justified text writing and publishing consultancy services, and is widely published on children’s literature, publishing history and Australian fiction. In 2011 she was the recipient of the CBCA (Qld branch) Dame Annabelle Rankin Award for Distinguished Services to Children’s Literature in Queensland, and in 2012 the CBCA Nan Chauncy Award for Distinguished Services to Children’s Literature in Australia, and in 2014, the QWC’s Johnno Award.