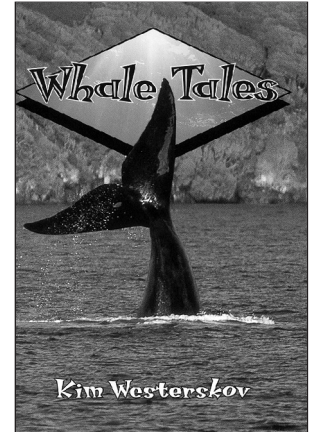


Whale Tales

by Kim Westerskov



Book Summary

Naturalist and photographer Kim Westerskov is passionate about whales. In this personal account, he shares his thoughts and feelings as he describes some very special encounters with these animals.

Features of the Book

- The play on words in the title – tales/tails
- Captions that give extra information
- First person point of view
- The photographic sequence
- Fact summary on the last page
- The special note on page 32
- The combination of fact, feelings, and explanations
- Specialised vocabulary – *spy hopping*, *bowriding*,
- The use of simile – *like I was being hit by a small truck*; *like a cat plays with a mouse*

Purpose

Whale Tales can be used to introduce and reinforce the following skills:

- S** drawing on students' prior knowledge;
- S** discussing the use of captions;
- S** identifying the author's feelings;
- S** distinguishing between fact and opinion;
- S** using electronic media to research a topic;
- S** locating and recording key ideas;
- S** recording events in sequence.

The Guided Reading Lesson

- S** Drawing on students' prior knowledge
- S** Discussing the use of captions
- S** Identifying the author's feelings

Introducing the text

Look at the cover of the book together and discuss the title.

- *Can you tell from the cover what kind of writing you'll find inside the book?*
- *What do you notice about the title and how it fits with the photograph?*
- *Do you think this has been done on purpose?*

Discuss what the students know about whales, such as kinds of whale, their life cycles, their habitat, the history of whaling, and environmental issues. Activating the students' prior knowledge through this discussion will make the reading of the text more meaningful and enjoyable. It also gives you the opportunity to familiarise the students with some of the vocabulary that they will meet.

Create a fact chart with the students, beginning with the word "whales" in the centre. Write the information provided by the students around the heading as captions. As they read the book, they can add to the chart and also check their original suggestions against the text.

Look at the chapter headings on pages 3, 10, 17, 22, and 26.

- *Does this help you to work out what kind of book this will be?*
- *Are these the types of headings you would expect to see in an information book on whales?*

Reading and discussing the text

Ask the students to read pages 3 and 4.

- *Can you identify the two main sorts of text featured in this book?*
- *What do you notice about the writing in the box at the bottom of page four?*
- *How is it different from the rest of the text on pages three and four?*
- *How many facts can you find in the box?*

Ask the students to read up to page 9 independently.

- *As you read, make a note of the language the author uses to describe his feelings. What can you tell about the author's attitude to these animals? (he respects them; he is fascinated by them; he doesn't want to disturb them if he can help it)*

Look at the first page of chapter 2 together. Point out the photograph and discuss the idea of a caption. Explain that captions usually give the reader extra information that is specific to the photograph or illustration.

- *Read the rest of chapter two to yourselves. Be ready to talk about some of the words that the author uses to describe his adventure with killer whales.*

Discuss the purpose-setting statement. Encourage every student to contribute. Examples of the author's reactions to his experiences with orca could include:

- *If one of these whales wanted to hurt me, I couldn't do much to stop it.*
- *I felt very small and very alone.*
- *I don't get scared in the sea very often, but now I was scared.*
- *I realised how frightened I was. I was shaking.*

The students can now read the rest of the book independently. Ask them to look out for the two kinds of writing in the story and to think about the way the book has been designed.

- *How have the photographs been laid out to give the feeling of movement?*

Look together at the fact summary on page 32 and discuss the note.

- *Why do you think a note like this is needed at the end of the book?*

Revisiting the Text

The suggested activities below can be used immediately after the guided reading lesson if appropriate or could be taken as a mini-lesson at a later time.

S Distinguishing between fact and opinion

Choose a chapter and reread it together. Look again at the way that the author has combined facts about whales with statements about how he feels during his encounters. Write the headings Facts and Opinions on the board. Work through the chapter together, listing each of the author's statements under the appropriate heading. Ask the students to justify their decisions.

S Using electronic media to research a topic

The students could choose one of the whales in the book and carry out further research on their habitats, their life cycle, or any environmental issues. Suggest that they use the Internet to research the topics of whales, dolphins, or endangered species. They could try the following address to begin with:

<http://whales.magna.com.au/home.html>

The students should be prepared to present further information to the rest of the group, explaining how they did the research.

Note that it is important that you preview any website before allowing the students access.

S Locating and recording key ideas

The students could complete a retrieval chart of the key ideas from a chapter of their choice.

S Recording events in sequence

Ask the students to reread chapter 5, "Cuddled by a Whale". This chapter discusses the author's underwater encounter with a humpback whale and her calf. The author recounts the events in a specific sequence, using words such as "then" and "next". The students can use the blackline master on page 75 to create a time line for the chapter, focusing on the main events and placing them in the correct order.