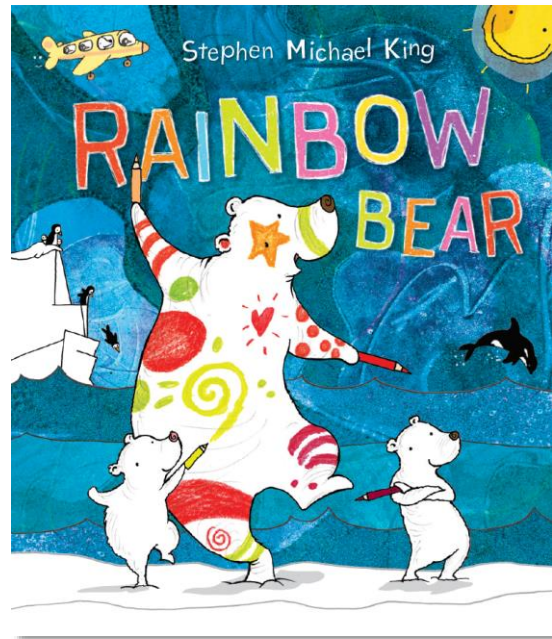


# Rainbow Bear

Author and Illustrator  
Stephen Michael  
King



## Synopsis

When Bear visits the city, he returns home with gifts of beautifully bright colour art materials for his family. In the land of ice and snow where they live, the rainbow colours are particularly appealing, and his partner and cubs delight in the gifts he has given. But it seems to Bear that his trip to the city has changed him in a strange and unexpected fashion, for every morning he wakes up covered with a different selection of rainbow hued designs instead of the white fur he expects. After each day of frolicking on the ice and swimming in the deep blue ocean he returns to normal by bedtime, but the mysterious change continues to greet him at dawn. Bear, however, finally notices something that provides a vital clue to the mystery...a set of small paw prints in the snow near where he slept. How Bear deals with finding out that he has been acting as an unwitting canvas for his family's artistic endeavours is both endearing and full of gentle humour, and at the end the resolution that next time, he will take them all with him to visit the city, provides a satisfying conclusion to this story filled with compassion, creativity, and fun.

## About the Author/Illustrator

Award-winning author and illustrator Stephen Michael King has illustrated more than fifteen books for Scholastic. His first picture book, *The Man Who Loved Boxes*, skyrocketed to popularity, winning the Family Award for Children's Books in 1996. It was also shortlisted in the Crichton Award for Children's Book Illustration and has been sold around the world. Stephen describes drawing as something that he simply can't live without. He works mainly with watercolours and ink. He works fast so that his ideas stay fresh and his brush and linework fluid.

Stephen's recent titles include *You, You Too*, *The Magnificent Tree* (written by Nick Bland), *Leaf*, *Prudence Wants a Pet* and *Snail and Turtle are Friends*. Stephen's books have been regularly shortlisted and received international recognition. He was awarded the CBCA Honour Book for

*Mutt Dog* and *Leaf*. *Leaf* was also selected by the International Youth Library for the White Raven list.

### Themes

Love; travel; family; art; animals; arctic environments; and humour.

### Writing Style

Written in the third person, the narrative follows Bear's point of view throughout. The language used is clear and direct, and the sentence length is short enough to be easily followed by a very young readership, yet complex enough to maintain interest and introduce the concepts and ideas that power the plot. King makes good use of repetitive refrains in his descriptions of the environment, and of Bear's behaviour. The descriptive passages and phrases are deceptive in their simplicity, with poetic overtones imbuing the text with a lyrical quality that creates a mood of peace and wonder within the world where Bear and his family dwell.

### Illustration Style

King has created the artwork in *Rainbow Bear* using pencil, watercolour, ink, and digital compilation. The colours are bright, and the rainbow hues of the paints wielded by the young bears contrast with the stark whites of the polar environment and the deep blues of the ocean. There is a wealth of fine detail within the end pieces that show a multitude of small figures and busy cityscapes in warmer earthy tones, while the broad expanse of Bear's snow-covered home lands are depicted as rich with life yet vast and uncluttered.

## TEACHER NOTES

- 1) Before reading the story, as a class discuss the cover and title of the book. Some things to include in your discussion are:
  - What type of bear do you think the one on the cover is?
  - Where does this type of bear live?
  - What are the bears on the cover doing?
  - Why do you think the book might be called *Rainbow Bear*?
  - Where are the bears standing?
  - What do you think might happen in the story? Why do you think this?
- 2) Design a *Rainbow Bear* of your own. On white paper or card, draw an outline of a large bear. Cut your bear out, and then decorate its fur with rainbow patterns, shapes, and lines. Use your *Rainbow Bears* to create a classroom wall display.
- 3) What other animals can you see depicted in the book? Create a collage of a polar environment, using different shades of blue paper for the ocean and the sky, and different tones and textures

of near-whites for the ice and snow. Include at least one animal that lives in polar environments in your scene.

- 4) Where do polar bears live? Research them online or in the library, and create a poster to showcase several interesting facts that you have found out about them. Some things to include in your research might be:
  - Where do Polar Bears live?
  - What do Polar Bears eat?
  - How do Polar Bears hunt?
  - How big is a Polar Bear?
  - What weather is a Polar Bear's favourite?
  - How far can a Polar Bear swim?
  - How thick is a Polar Bear's fur?
  - How many cubs does a Polar Bear usually have at the one time?
  - What do Polar Bears do in summer?
- 5) How do you think that Bear felt when he would wake each morning covered in rainbow designs? Imagine that you are Bear waking up covered in different colours each day, and think of at least three different words that could describe how you might feel. As a class share all the words that you have thought of with each other and make a class list of words. Individually choose one of the words from the class list, write it on the bottom of an A4 piece of paper, and illustrate above it what that word means to you. Use your illustrated words to create a class display about Bear's feelings.
- 6) Look carefully at the end pages of the book. What is happening in the busy city scenes? Find one part of the scene that interests you, and use it as inspiration to help you write a short story.
- 7) When Bear slides across the ice on his stomach, the colours on his fur smear and spread across the ice colouring his world. Create an ice-colour painting of your own. Mix one part of acrylic or poster paint with one part of water, and then freeze it in an ice-cube tray. Make several trays with different colours. Once frozen, remove the paint cubes from the tray, and one at a time use them to create a smeary coloured ice-painting on a piece of white paper or card. You can use gloves or tongs to protect your hands while you hold the paint-ice cubes, or you can place your sheet of paper in a baking tray, place your coloured ice on the paper, and move it around by tilting the tray. If it is summer you will want to paint quickly, but if it is winter you might have to be patient and wait a while for your paint-cubes to start to melt.
- 8) At the end of the story Bear and his family sit around while Bear tells stories about the far-off places he has visited. What sort of stories do you think he might tell about where you live? Write or tell a story an imaginary visitor might share about your place when they return to their far away home.
- 9) How does Bear find out what has been going on - what gives his cubs away? Create an artwork featuring paw prints in the snow. You might want to make stamps from a kitchen sponge or

potato carving, or you can design a paw-print border using a drawing program on a computer or tablet.

- 10) Look carefully at the double-page picture of Bear sleeping alone on the ice. What colours has the artist used to create this image? Create an artwork of your own, that shows a natural environment and uses mostly many different shades of the one colour. Think about different natural environments and what colours they have in them at different times of day or night before you start.
- 11) When Bear returned home, he felt that it was *great to be back in the land of ice and snow*. If you went on a trip away, how might you describe your home? Using the template: *The land of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_*. Fill in the blanks with words that you feel describe your home area well. They might be words that describe the natural environment, or manmade features, or even the weather! Draw a picture that you feel represents your home area, and caption it with your completed phrase.
- 12) Create a *Rainbow Bear* word search using at least ten words that you can find in the story.
- 13) Make rainbow snowflakes. Fold squares of coloured paper in half one way, then in half the other way, and then again to make triangular shapes. Snip small pieces out of the edges of your folded triangles, and then unfold them to reveal a coloured snowflake shape. Stick your completed snowflakes to the classroom window to make a rainbow snowflake design. (If you use cellophane or tissue paper, then your finished snowflakes will be translucent, and glow like a stained-glass window when the sun hits them.)