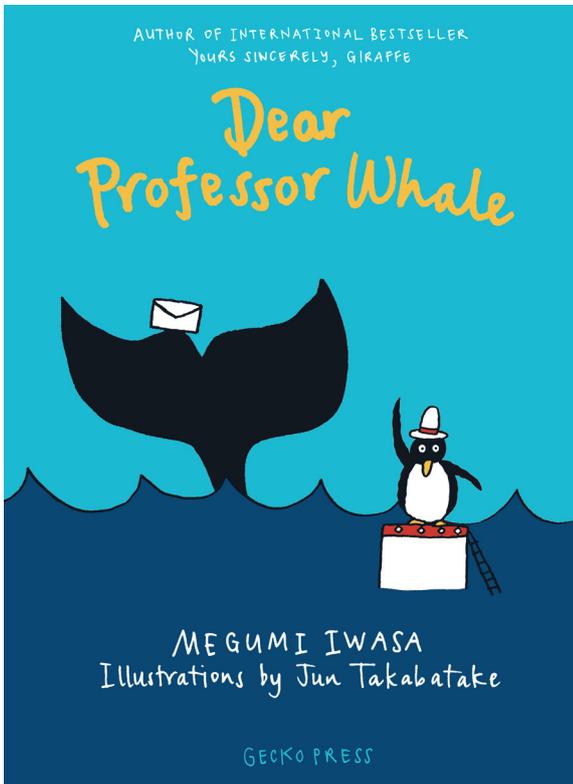


Teaching Notes



Dear Professor Whale

By Megumi Iwasa,
Illustrated by Jun Takabatake

Professor Whale is the only whale left at Whale Point. He thinks often of the old days when his friends were all around and they competed at the Whale Point Olympics. One day, he gets a letter from Wally. The young whale has heard about the great big enormous whale who won gold for his spectacular spouting. That gets the Professor thinking. What if there could be a new Olympics, with the sea full of whales again?

In this charming follow-up to the international bestseller, another correspondence flourishes across the horizons. The letters bring penguins, whales and seals together at the Whale Point Olympics, with friendship and humour winners on the day.

The Author

Megumi Iwasa studied graphic design at Tama Art University in Tokyo. After graduating, she worked there until 1986. She lives in Tokyo, Japan.

The Illustrator

Jun Takabatake is one of Japan's best-loved children's illustrators. His illustrations have been exhibited throughout the world, and he has won many international awards, including the Graphics Prize (Bologna Children's Book Fair), a Japan Picture Book Award and the Kodansha Award for Picture Books.

Themes

Dear Professor Whale explores themes of community, participation, and friendship. The book is a celebration of Professor Whale's life, achievements, and friendships by showing him connecting with friends from his past – as well as new ones! We see that no-one is really past their prime, everyone has value in a community, and there is great joy to be had by re-connecting with those from our past. Furthermore, the story highlights the need to protect our precious marine life.

Activities

Level One – Text (Before and While Reading)

1. Before you read the book, look at the cover (front and back) of the book. What can you tell about the story from the title, font, illustrations, and blurb? Think about the colours and style of illustrations and what they might tell you about what sort of story this is.
2. Either on your own or in pairs find the definition of the following words that appear in the story and then use them in a new sentence: Dozing (p. 8), distinguished (p. 16), efficient (p. 24), venues (p. 52).
3. Synonyms are words that means exactly or nearly the same as another word. For example, shut is a synonym for closed. Whales are very large animals and there are many synonyms for large or big in Dear Professor Whale, including ‘humungous’ (p. 91). As you read the book look for other synonyms for large and big.

Level Two – Responding to the Text and Reading Between the Lines (While Reading)

1. On page 8 we read, “Today, the ocean was a dazzling ultramarine.” How does this sentence make you feel about what sort of day it is? Do you know what shade of blue is ultramarine? As you read the book, pay attention to colours (especially different shades of blue) and descriptions of the sea and think about whether these descriptions reflect how Professor Whale is feeling or what is happening.
2. “Pelican handled airmail deliveries while Seal handled sea mail deliveries” (p. 12). Nowadays people use email much more than airmail or sea mail. Do you know the difference between airmail and sea mail? If you take a letter or parcel to the post office to send overseas you might be asked if you want to send it by air or sea. Which is faster, and which is cheaper? Do you know why? Discuss as a class.
3. The whales gather for the Whale Point Class Reunion (p. 40). Have you ever been to a reunion? What was it for and what was it like? Were there special activities or events? Surprise guests? How far did people travel to get there? Discuss in small groups of 3-4.

Level Three – Creating Based on the Text

1. Penguin and Giraffe are pen pals (p. 15). Do you have a pen pal? If so, where do they live? How often do you write to each other? Discuss in pairs. Next, pretend to each be one of the characters in the book and write a letter as that character to the other character about one of the events in the book. You might want to re-read some of the letters in the book for ideas and inspiration. Decorate an envelope to send your letter in and make sure to include the address and stamp!

2. As a class, create a large version of the map on the contents page to put on your classroom wall or board. Next, in pairs, choose one of the animals in the story and find two facts about that animal. Then, create a cut-out illustration of the animal, which includes the facts, and stick these on the map.

3. Olympic Activities. Choose one of the following to do either on your own, in pairs, or small groups:

A) Create a poster showing the history of the Olympics. Think about the following: Why is it called the Olympics and where did it originally take place? When did the modern-day Olympics begin? What are some key events from the Olympics during the past century? What is the usual format?

B) Devise a short performance for an Olympics opening or closing ceremony. This could be a song, dance, or skit. It could be a gymnastics or athletics display. It could be a parade. Share for your class. Maybe you could even present on your school's sports day!

C) On page 74 we see Professor Penguin carrying a flag. Create your own team flag for one of the teams in the book on A4 paper. Make sure it is eye-catching and includes a symbol representing that particular team.

Level Four – Beyond the Text

1. Detective Gordon gives Gertrude and Sune paper, scissors, and glue so that they can make their own police hats (p. 20). Police officers often wear hats as part of their uniform. However, police uniforms can vary quite a lot in different countries. In pairs, use the Internet or library to research police uniforms in five different countries (not including your own). What are some of the similarities and differences? Do most uniforms have the same colour? Do some uniforms make the police appear friendlier and more approachable than others? What is the most unusual uniform?

2. “If you simply drive your danger away, it becomes someone else’s danger” (p. 55) is an example of an aphorism. An aphorism is an observation or statement that contains a general truth. In groups of 3-4, discuss the best aphorisms you have learned from a parent, other caregiver, or friend. Choose your favourite new aphorism (it could be one from the book). Next, write it on a card or small poster that you can display in your classroom, bedroom, or somewhere else you will see it regularly. Make sure the card is eye-catching and use colours that make you feel positive.

3. When the police set off to investigate, “The two talented sniffers went first” (p.59). As a class or in small groups, go outside and find somewhere you can sit quietly for five minutes. Close your eyes and see how many different smells you can detect. You might not be able to name all the smells, but you might be able to use another word or phrase to describe it. Aim to detect 4-5 different smells. The more unusual and unexpected the better!

