



Walker Books Classroom Ideas



PEARLY AND PIG AND THE ISLAND OF SECRETS

Sue Whiting
Rebecca Crane
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*Notes may be downloaded and printed for regular classroom use only.

Walker Books Australia Ph +61 2 9517 9577
Locked Bag 22 Fax +61 2 9517 9997
Newtown, N.S.W., 2042

For enquiries please contact:
educationwba@walkerbooks.com.au

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OUTLINE:

Pearly Woe is a worrier. On remote Mammút Island off the coast of Iceland, Pearly's worrying is put to the ultimate test when she and Pig are winched from a helicopter onto the island to compete a five-day survival challenge – alone. But they are not alone. And that is not the only surprise in store for Pearly and Pig as Mammút Island reveals its many secrets. An island adventure! What could go wrong? Everything. Of course!

Pearly and Pig and the Island of Secrets is set on a fictitious remote island off the north coast of Iceland. The story is full of action, mystery, adventure, cliff-hanger chapter endings, animal antics, humour and a touch of fantasy – as well as secrets, volcanoes, puffins and woolly mammoths. It explores themes of dealing with anxiety, true courage, self-belief, trusting one's abilities and friendship.

“Pearly Woe is not your average 10-year-old. She can speak 27 languages, talk to and understand most animals and, in this tale, travels to Antarctica ... readers will be swept away with the pace and the blend of fantasy and realism. While Pearly's character and situation are unique, author Sue Whiting has woven into her protagonist's character an increasingly common condition children are facing these days: anxiety. Throughout the story, Pearly constantly worries and doubts herself, and this is the battle she fights most against ... Let's hope there are more adventures to come with Pearly and Pig, as they really are a remarkable pair.” - *Books+Publishing*

HOW TO USE THESE NOTES:

This story is recommended as a **CLASS READ ALOUD** text for grades 3–5, as well as for guided or independent reading or good readers 8+.

These notes are for:
primary (year 3 - 5)

Ages:
8 - 11

Key learning areas:
English

Themes/Ideas:

- Adventure / Courage and Bravery
- Family / Teamwork / Friendship
- Dealing with Anxiety / Resilience
- Self-belief / Independence



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THE OPENING

The opening scenes are often called the **orientation**, where readers are introduced to the characters and the setting, and the story problem is set up.

- Where is Pearly in the opening chapter and what is she doing? Why is she doing this?
- What is the goal or purpose of the five-day survival challenge? How does Pearly feel about it?
- Of course, things don't go to plan. Something is not right. What is it? How does this change things for Pearly and Pig and kick off the story?
- Did you find the opening chapter exciting? Did it grab your interest and raise questions you wanted to find the answers to? What did you want to know most?

THE STRUGGLE / PLOT

It is the author's job to create trouble for their characters – to make it difficult for the characters to achieve their goals, to struggle. This struggle or troublemaking is often the part of the story called the **complication** and it makes up the bulk of the **plot**.

- What trouble did Sue Whiting create to make it difficult for Pearly to achieve her goal/s and to struggle? As you read each chapter make a list of the obstacles that made Pearly struggle.
- How did Pearly overcome her struggles/obstacles? Choose three obstacles and then describe what Pearly did to overcome each one. Can you think of a different way Pearly could have overcome these obstacles? How would that change the plot?
- The moments where the reader is worried or afraid for the characters are what create tension in a story and what keeps readers turning the pages. Did you ever worry for Pearly? Can you pinpoint some moments when you were worried about what was going to happen next?

THE ENDING

The final chapters of the story where the main character solves the problem or achieves their goal is often called the **resolution**.

- Pearly and Pig are on the island to complete a five-day survival challenge. Did they achieve this goal? How? Was it difficult or easy? Did they achieve more than this?
- Amma and Pearly's dad have very different views on how Pearly handled the challenge. Read chapter 33 and list their differences. Who do you agree with and why?
- On page 213, it says that "Amma's words fizzed through Pearly like lemonade on a sunshiny day." What made Pearly feel like this and why?
- What do you think about the fate of Edgar Ermington and the EWP? What do you think about the possibility of Dr Maud heading up a research facility? Has she been let off too easily? Or do you think this is a good outcome?
- Mammút Island is an "island of secrets". What were some of the "secrets" Pearly uncovered in this story? Did Pearly keep some secrets too?
- Has Pearly made a human friend? What has she learnt about being a friend and about herself through meeting Caspar?





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CHARACTERS

Pearly Woe

- Pearly is the main character in this story. What do you know about her? Can you identify some of her traits? Would you like to meet Pearly? Why? Why not?
- Pearly is an expert worrier. She often imagines the worst and her worries are often exaggerated. Find examples of where Pearly worries are exaggerated. (Hint: page 56 is a good place to start.) Have you ever felt like this? What worries you? If Pearly entered your classroom, what might she worry about? Feel free to exaggerate.
- Did Pearly grow as a character during the story? What did Pearly discover about herself? (Think about the challenge and also about her relationship with Caspar.)
- Pearly is a HYPERPOLOGLOT. (Isn't that a great word!) It means she can speak many languages – twenty-seven in fact, including some animal languages. Do you think all hyperpolyglots can speak animal languages? Is this aspect realistic or fantasy? How did being able to speak other languages help her on this adventure?
- On page 45 it says: "She could speak twenty seven languages. She could communicate with many animals, but it seemed she had no idea what to say to this boy. Somehow, she had missed out on learning how to speak Boy." What does this mean? Why is she finding it difficult to communicate with Caspar? How does she overcome this?

Secondary Characters

- There are many secondary characters in this novel. Make a chart that lists the character name, then notes at least one personality trait and one physical appearance trait. Do you have a favourite? Can you identify the goodies and baddies?

(Here is a list to help you: Pig, Amma, Angel, Ricky, Dr Maud, Caspar, Anouk, the puffin, Edgar Ermington.)

- This is the first time we get to meet Amma – Pearly's Icelandic grandmother. What do we learn about her? Do you think Pearly has inherited any of her traits? Why/why not?
- This is also the first adventure where Pearly spends time with a human child – Caspar. At times, Pearly is confused and annoyed by Caspar. Create a character profile for Caspar. How do you think Caspar felt about Pearly? Pretend you are Caspar. Write a description of Pearly from Caspar's point of view.

SETTING

The **setting** is the place where the story takes place. Pearly and Pig and the Island of Secrets is set on Mammút Island, a fictitious island off the coast of Iceland. It is uninhabited, desolate and very remote.

- Mammút Island is an imagined island off the coast of Iceland. One of Pearly's challenge tasks is to draw a map of the island. Use information from the book to draw a map of Mammút Island, marking in the important landmarks. Pages, 4, 11, 40 and chapter 14 should give you lots of useful information.
- What do you discover about remote Mammút Island during the story? Can you find pictures of real places that might resemble this imagined place?
- The back cover blurb states: An island adventure. What could go wrong? Everything, of course! Before reading the book, make a list of all the things that could go wrong on an island? What "trouble" could the island setting create for Pearly and Pig? After reading the book, make another list of all the things that did go wrong. Were the lists similar?



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THEMES

Decision Making

- Pearly must make lots of decisions by herself in this book. What are some of the decisions she had to make?
- Do you think she made good decisions? Would you have made different decisions? Have you ever had to make a difficult decision? How did it make you feel?

Anxiety / Worrying / Fears

Pearly Woe is a worrier, but in *Pearly and Pig and the Island of Secrets*, Pearly is trying to focus on the good things, the positives in situations.

- Do you think this strategy is helpful? Why/why not?
- Have you ever tried it?

Have a read of Pearly's "positives" on page 1 and page 13. Can you think of some other "positives" of being alone on an island off Iceland? List some positives for other situations, like:

- Getting on the wrong train.
- Sleeping through your alarm.
- Being stuck in a lift.

Courage

"I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear." - Nelson Mandela

"Choose the great adventure of being brave and afraid at the exact same time" – Brené Brown

"Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear, not absence of fear." - Mark Twain

- Discuss these quotes about courage and fear. Do you agree with them? Which quote do you relate to the most? Why?
- Can you be brave and afraid at the same time? Can you think of a time when you have been brave and afraid at the same time?
- Do you think Pearly is courageous? Why?
- Do you think Pearly can ever become an Adventurologist or will her worries stop her?

Friendship

- Pearly has never had a human child friend before, so when she meets Caspar she is well and truly out of her comfort zone. Discuss Pearly's interactions with Caspar.
- Does she find communicating and doing things with him easy or difficult? Why?
- What things does she find annoying or baffling? Can you relate to this?
- How does this change over time?
- How is being friends with Caspar the same/ different to being friends with Pig?

SPRINGBOARDS FOR WRITING

- Pearly is meant to keep a Challenge Journal. Read the journal entries of page 35, 63 and 106 and then write your own journal entry about Day 4 – when the volcano erupts.
- Pearly has been set several challenge tasks. One of the tasks is to: "Find something wondrous – one special thing that takes your breath away, something you never expected to find." What things did Pearly find wondrous? (Hint: have a look at pages, 42, 88, 97, 98 and 119.) What thing/s did you find wondrous on Mammút Island? What made them wondrous for you? What things do you find wondrous where you live? In the world generally? Choose one wondrous thing to research and then write about it, explaining what made it wondrous for you.
- Pearly meets a Dutch boy, Caspar, in this book. Caspar loves graphic novels and comic strips. Choose an interesting chapter from the book and create a comic strip sequence of it, showing the action.
- Caspar likes to make fun of Pig and uses lots of pig puns. Collect Caspar's puns and make a PIG PUN book, adding a few of your own.
- Research one of the following topics and present your information to the class in an interesting way: Iceland, woolly mammoths, the Arctic, climate change, survival skills, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, puffins ...



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SPRINGBOARDS FOR WRITING

Using *The Island of Secrets* as a **mentor text** for **writing vivid description using sensory information and imagery**.

Pearly and Pig must trek around Mammút Island. Search the text for examples of how Sue Whiting describes the island. (Check out pages 4, 42, 43, 94, 95 to start with.) Note that the description is written from Pearly's point of view – her thoughts, feelings and observations – and shows how she interacts with the desolate island during her survival challenge.

- Which descriptions did you enjoy the most? Why? Were you able to visualise the island? Could you imagine what it was like? What helped you to be able to visualise the island?
- From these descriptions collect words and phrases that used sensory information. Also, collect any similes, metaphors or interesting descriptions. Create a table like the one below.

SEE	HEAR	SMELL	FEEL
IMAGERY / INTERESTING DESCRIPTIONS			

- View images/videos of Icelandic islands and add to your word and phrase collection. Share and build your word and phrase bank.
- View the images again and imagine what it might be like to spend five days alone on an island like that. How would you feel? What would you see, hear, smell? What might happen?
- Write about your first day or night on the island. Try to make your descriptions interesting and vivid – remember you are painting a picture with your words – and try also to use some of your collected words and phrases. It might also be helpful if you give yourself a reason for being on the island. Are you looking for something or are you in hiding? Are you on holidays? Are you on a survival challenge too?

What Happens Next?

Choose the first sentence of any chapter, and then continue on with your own story.

E.g., #1, Chapter 7, page 48: Pearly tumbled head over heels.

What could happen next? It doesn't have to match what happens in the book. Wah-Wah doesn't even need to be a monkey. Just let your imagination go wild and see what happens.

E.g., #2, Chapter 20, page 128: Massive earthquake this morning.

E.g., #3, Chapter 24, page 153 It seemed to take forever before they heard noises at the cave mouth.

This could also be done as a small group activity, where each person in the group supplies one sentence. Remember though that each sentence must flow on from the sentence before it!



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Animal Characters

Create your own animal character.

- Pig and the puffin are the two animal characters in this book. What do you know about them? What features/traits do they have?
- Choose an animal and study it. Watch videos, view pictures, read books. Draw your animal and get to know it.
- Take note of your animal's distinguishing features – its physical appearance, behaviour, habits, movements, habitat, noises, food etc.
- Using these features, try to think what sort of personality your animal would have. What would it do? What would it say? Would it be helpful and supportive like Pig?
- Interview your animal to get to know how it thinks and feels.
- Give your animal a name and draw and write about it. Perhaps you could pop your animal character into one of the scenes in *The Lost City of Mu Savan* and see what happens.

The Adventurologists' Guide

- Do you think you have what it takes to be an Adventurologist? How is the Guild's approach to adventuring unique? What adventure would you like to go on?
- List the traits you possess (real or imagined) that would make you a great Adventurologist, then write a letter to Grandpa Woe convincing him to allow you to join the training program.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sue Whiting is an award-winning children's and YA author and editor, and former teacher, who has worked in publishing for twenty+ years. Sue was senior commissioning editor and publishing manager for Walker Books Australia for many years before leaving in 2016 to concentrate on her writing. Sue has written numerous books for a variety of age groups, from picture books through to YA, including the bestselling *Missing*, the acclaimed *The Book of Chance* and several CBCA Notable Books. As a storyteller and schools' performer, Sue has informed, inspired and entertained thousands of kids across the country. Sue is passionate about the power of story and is an advocate for reading and writing for pleasure.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Rebecca Crane is an author, illustrator and visual development artist, specialising in dynamic character designs for books and animation. She studied Illustration at Edinburgh University and completed her MA in Character Animation at Central Saint Martins in London and has since worked with some great animation studios and publishing houses and have been fortunate to illustrate stories that have been translated into a number of languages. When she's not drawing, writing, painting and planning, she is likely to be found in a bookshop or antique market trawling the shelves for curious little treasures and black and white photos. She travels a lot and has currently made her home in the UK.