



# Walker Books Classroom Ideas



## Pearly and Pig and the Great Hairy Beast

By Sue Whiting  
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\*Notes may be downloaded and printed for regular classroom use only.

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## Outline:

Pearly Woe is a worrier. She worries about everything, especially that she'll never be brave enough to become a member of the top-secret group of stealth adventurers – The Adventurologists' Guild. Pearly also has a special talent – she can talk to animals. Her favourite animal to talk to is her pet pig, called Pig. But with her parents missing, Pig pig-napped and Pearly a stowaway on an icebreaker heading for Antarctica, Pearly's worries just got REAL.

## Author/Illustrator Information:

Sue Whiting is a children's and young adult author and editor who lives and works in a small coastal village south of Sydney. She has written numerous books in a variety of genres: fiction and nonfiction, picture books through to YA, including the best-selling *The Firefighters* and *Missing*, the award-winning *A Swim in the Sea* and the CBCA Notable Books, *Get a Grip Cooper Jones*, *Platypus* and *Beware the Deep Dark Forest*. Sue was Publishing Manager and Senior Commissioning Editor at Walker Books Australia for many years, before leaving in 2016 to concentrate on her writing and to work from her home as a freelance editor, writing coach and mentor. A former primary school teacher with a special interest in literacy education and children's literature, Sue is a highly experienced speaker who loves sharing her passion for story and storytelling, reading and writing with people of all ages. Join her on her adventures in story at <https://suewhiting.com>.

## How to Use These Notes:

This story works on many levels. The suggested activities are therefore for a wide age and ability range. Please select accordingly.

### These notes are for:

- Primary years 3-5
- Ages 8-11

### Key Learning Areas:

- English

### Example of:

- Fiction

### Themes/Ideas:

- Adventure
- Family
- Courage and Bravery
- Teamwork
- Dealing with Anxiety



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## Before Reading

Before reading *Pearly and Pig and the Great Hairy Beast*, view the cover and title of the book. Identify the following:

- The title of the book
- The author
- The publisher
- The blurb.

Based on the cover, what do you think this story is about? How do you think it will begin/end? Revisit your answer after reading the story to see if your predictions were correct.

Discuss the title of the book. Do you think this is a good title? Why or why not? If you were asked to choose an alternative title for the book, what would it be? Remember, a good title should capture the audience's attention and give them some idea of what the book is about.

## Exploring the Text

### Narrative structure and plot:

#### **Orientation:**

What happens to Pearly to kick off the story? What does this mean for Pearly? What is her goal? How does she feel about it? Did you find the opening chapter exciting? Did it grab your interest and raise questions you wanted to find the answers to?

In the opening scenes (the orientation) what do you discover about Pearly, her family and Pig, her life, her home, her interests, abilities and fears? Was there anything different or interesting about Pearly and her life compared to you and your life? Was there anything in the orientation scenes that hinted that this was not a realistic story?

#### **Complications:**

It is the author's job to create trouble for their characters – to make it difficult for the characters to achieve their goals. What trouble (complications) did Sue Whiting create to make it difficult for Pearly to achieve her goal/s? Did her goals change through the course of the story? Can you identify the climax of the story, the moment of highest tension, the make-or-break moment that led to the resolution?

Towards the end of the novel, Pearly has to make a big decision: to protect the Great Hairy Beast or try to save her parents. Consider the pros and cons of each possibility. Do you think she made the right decision? Why? Have a class debate.

#### Resolution:

How does the story conclude (resolution)? Does Pearly achieve her goals? Solve her problems? How did she do this? Did you find the ending satisfying?

#### **Setting and World-building:**

Consider the world Sue Whiting has created in *Pearly and Pig and the Great Hairy Beast*. Can you describe it? How is it different to the world you live in? Which elements of the world seem realistic, and which seems fantastical?

Much of the novel is set on an ice breaker ship headed for Antarctica and in Antarctica itself. Research more about both ice breaker ships and living in Antarctica (a good place to start would be <https://www.antarctica.gov.au/about-antarctica/>). Did you learn anything about life in Antarctica, from the book or through your research, that surprised you?

Use your research to write a) a descriptive paragraph of Antarctica and b) an information report on Antarctica. How do these two pieces of writing differ? How are they the same?

#### Character:

#### **Pearly and her worries:**

"Why did she always do this? Why did she let her worries get in the way of clear thinking? How could she ever be an Adventurologist if she went to pieces at every obstacle?" (page 33\*). Pearly worries about a lot of things, which affects her decision-making and her day-to-day life in both positive and negative ways. How does Pearly cope with her worries, and how does she face and overcome the things she is worried about? Have a class discussion about anxiety, and think of some strategies you could use if you're feeling worried like Pearly.

In small groups, explain how Pearly demonstrates the following character traits in the novel:

- Resourcefulness
- Resilience
- Compassion



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*"We all worry, Pearly. It's normal. But to act when you are shaking in your boots and thinking the worst, well, that takes courage, enormous courage. And from what I've heard, that's what you did. You never gave up."* (page 209). How would you define courage? Do you think you need to be scared of something to be courageous? Why or why not? How does Pearly show courage in the novel?

How was Pearly changed as a character through the events of the story? Do you think she will approach her worries differently from now on?

## Pearly's talent for languages:

Pearly is a hyperpolyglot. (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? Can you list some of the human and animal languages she can speak?

Can you speak more than one language? What's another language (or languages!) you'd be interested in learning and why?

Choose one of the foreign languages Pearly speaks and find all the phrases that appear in the novel (for example, all the Italian, Icelandic or German phrases), and make a mini-dictionary with their meanings. You can look up translations if you're unsure, and be sure to add any other phrases you think would be useful for an adventure in that country.

Alternatively, you could collect some of Pig's piggy phrases and make a mini-dictionary of Pig's language. (Eg. OINKY OINKY NO NO!) Perhaps you could make up some more piggy phrases and give them meaning.

Have you ever wanted to be able to talk to or communicate with animals? If you could choose any animal to be able to communicate with, what would it be? Why? What would you like to say?

Imagine being able to eavesdrop on animals. Look at photos of animals online and imagine what they might be saying. You could develop a short script of their conversations.

## Pearly as an Adventurologist-in-Training:

What traits do you think are important for an Adventurologist to have? Do you think Pearly will be a good Adventurologist one day? Why or why not? Would you like to be an Adventurologist yourself?

Do you think Pearly did the right thing by answering the phone, even though she wasn't a member of the Guild? How might the story have been different if Pearly chose not to answer the phone? Discuss times when it might be okay to break the rules.

## **Miss Emmaline Woods:**

*"Pearly wasn't sure what to make of this woman. Was Ms Emmaline Woods some sort of movie star? Is that why she was famous? Her teeth certainly looked like movie star teeth. And the shiny perfect blonde waves... her voice was light, but Pearly was sure she could hear a tiny hint of threat hidden in its twang."* (page 24). Pearly has a sneaking suspicion there's something awry with Emmaline Woods soon as she meets her. What clues can you find from Pearly's early introduction with Ms Woods that indicate the sort of person she proves herself to be? How important are first impressions? Write a paragraph about a time your first impression of someone was either very right, or very wrong.

## **Pig:**

Can you think of five words that best describe Pig? How important is Pig to Pearly (and to the story)? How would the story be different without Pig? Would Pearly have been able to achieve her goals without him? Do you consider Pig as Pearly's pet or her friend? Would Pig make a good Adventurologist? Why? Why not?

## **Themes**

What are the themes in this novel? As a class or in small groups identify and list the themes. Individually write a statement of belief about each theme.

Family is an important theme in the novel. How have her parents and grandparents influenced Pearly's sense of identity? Be sure to consider both the potential positive and negative impacts of their roles as Adventurologists on how Pearly sees herself. How do you think your family have influenced who you are as a person?



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## Other

Keep a “Vocab Journal” while reading the novel. Make a note of any words you come across that are unfamiliar and look up their meaning. Also keep track of any words or phrases that you particularly like and write a note next to each explaining why you like that word/phrase.

Find other books by Sue Whiting at your library, and compare them to *Pearly and Pig and the Great Hairy Beast*. How are they similar or different?

### Creative Responses to the Text:

Design your own cover for the book with new imagery and a new tagline that will persuade and interest people in reading the book. Choose a scene in the novel and rewrite it from the perspective of another character. Focus particularly on the character’s attitudes and feelings, rather than simply recounting events. How might another character see and experience events differently to Pearly?

Write a short story about you and your pet (or a pet you wish you had) on an adventure together, in the style of *Pearly and Pig and the Great Hairy Beast*. You can set your story anywhere in the world, and make it as action-packed as possible.

Choose one of the extracts from the Rules and Guidelines for Young Adventurologists (the RAG) at the end of the novel, and design it as a poster or brochure.

Imagine that a movie was being made of *Pearly and Pig and the Great Hairy Beast*. In small groups, create a soundtrack to accompany some of the key scenes, thinking particularly about the mood you want to convey. You could either make a compilation of existing songs or compose your own musical pieces. Present your soundtrack to the class, explaining why you have chosen the pieces you have. Also choose your ideal cast for the movie and create a movie poster.

*\*Please check page numbers against a final copy of the book.*



Read more of Pearly's adventures in *Pearly and Pig and the Lost City of Mu Savan!*

## Other Titles by Sue Whiting:



**The Book of Chance**  
Sue Whiting  
9781760651367 PB  
**Teacher Notes available**



**Missing**  
Sue Whiting  
9781760650032 PB  
**Classroom Ideas available**



**The Echidna Near My Place**  
Sue Whiting  
Cate James  
9781760652401 HB  
**Classroom Ideas available**



**Beware the Deep Dark Forest**  
Sue Whiting  
Annie White  
9781760654528 PB  
9781742032344 HB  
**Classroom Ideas available**