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# Teachers' Notes

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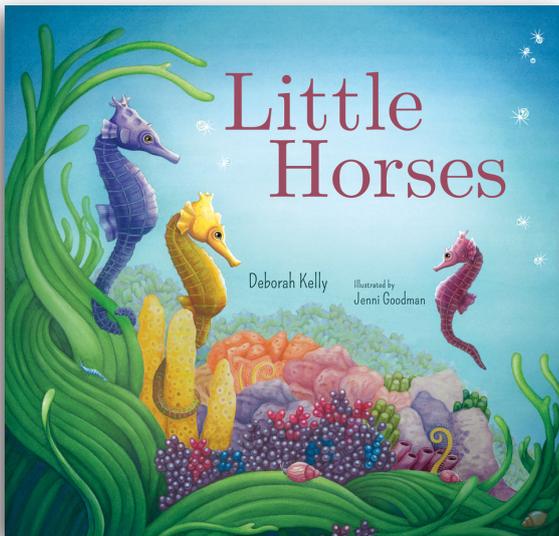
## LITTLE HORSES

Deborah Kelly / Jenni Goodman

**ISBN:** 9781761111310

**Recommended retail:** \$24.99

**Reading level:** 5 to 8



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## BOOK SUMMARY

Beneath the waters of a calm bay, seahorses hide from predators, feed on shrimp and raise their young. But when a storm destroys their habitat, they are left without food and nowhere to hide. Until, a Marine Biologist comes up with a clever invention to provide them with shelter and food while the natural environment recovers.

An Australian conservation success story about seahorses, inspired by true events. Lyrical in style and featuring information pages about seahorses and the Seahorse Hotels Project.

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## THEMES

The natural world ▪ Conservation ▪ Creative problem solving ▪  
Making a difference ▪ Building a new future ▪ Hope ▪

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**Deborah Kelly is available for author talks and workshops.  
Contact Wombat Books for more information.**

*Little Horses Teachers' Notes can be used in schools (independent learning, small groups, and whole classes); at home with caregivers; and as part of mental health support programs facilitated by counsellors, psychologists, children's charities, etc.*



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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Deborah Kelly is an award-winning, internationally published author of picture books, junior fiction, and middle grade. Three of her titles are CBCA notable books. In 2020 her middle grade novel *The Thing about Oliver* (Wombat Books) was shortlisted in the younger readers category of the CBCA awards, shortlisted for Speech Pathology Australia's Book of the Year, and won the Australian Association of Family Therapists Book of the Year award in the younger readers category. Her picture book *Me and You* (Penguin) won Speech Pathology Australia's Book of the Year award (3–5-year-olds) in 2017. Many of Deb's books are included in Premier's Reading Challenge lists around Australia. Deb visits schools, libraries, and festival events (including Newcastle Writers' Festival and Sydney Writers'

Festival) to share her books with children. She is a Role Model for *Books in Homes* and reviews children's books for *Reading Time* magazine.

### AUTHOR NOTES

Years ago, I studied Marine Biology in Queensland and spent a lot of time SCUBA diving on the Great Barrier Reef where I developed a love of and fascination for sea creatures. Being unique and quirky creatures, seahorses have always captured my imagination. When I read about the seahorse hotels project, I thought it was a story that children would enjoy not only because it's a story about the natural world, but it is a conservation success story- one that is much needed in the current climate of negative news about the state of our environment. It also shows children the value of thinking outside of the square to solve problems, and that one person can indeed make an enormous difference. I contacted David who was very enthusiastic about my idea of writing a story about white's seahorse and the seahorse hotels project and happy to answer any questions I had. I wrote the story in a lyrical style, to appeal to younger children but have included fact pages about seahorses and the seahorse hotels project to provide more information to older readers. It has been wonderful to combine my love of books and literacy with my passion for the natural world and its conservation, through this book. I am grateful to be able to help support David's important work and to contribute to awareness of seahorse conservation.

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## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

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Jenni first dove into the wonderful world of children's book illustration in 2018, when she was honoured with the opportunity to illustrate a series of board books based on the Australian classic, *Storm Boy*. She now has eight books to her name, a highlight being the opportunity to champion koala conservation through the 2020 release of *Have You Seen A Tree For Me?* Most recently, she has teamed up with her older brother to create the sweet and playful picture book *Snuffy* which was Shortlisted for the 2022 Speech Pathology Australia Book of the Year.

Jenni uses different mediums to create her artworks including watercolour paints and pencils, both coloured and graphite, as well as digital media. She loves capturing the beauty of nature and expressive characters in her illustrations.

### ILLUSTRATOR NOTES

Illustrating *Little Horses* was an absolute delight. Creating a picture book like this is a huge project, and all up I worked on it for around nine months. It's a lot of work, but it's a lot of fun too!

The first thing I did when I started this project was take my family on a trip to SeaLife Sydney Aquarium. We watched the White's Seahorses and I took lots of photographs of them in different positions and from different angles. I read all the seahorse information plaques they had there and loved seeing Seahorse Breeding Program section where they had lots of baby seahorses. I also photographed other fish that I knew lived in the area where the story is set (Port Stephens to Sydney).

As it happens, I live at the beach about halfway between Sydney and Port Stephens, so I knew that the species of plants and animals where I live would be accurate to include in the book. I collected samples of seaweed, sponges and shells that I found washed up on my local beach and used them for my reference when making the pictures. My family and I often go diving at our local headland. The next time I went I carefully watched the way the seagrass moved, and observed the colours and the types of plants, fish and sea creatures I could see.

It was important to me to be as accurate as I could by only including sea creatures that actually live in the area where the book is set. I checked various websites for local fish, crabs and sea creatures to use in my illustrations.

Making the artworks takes many steps, and I usually had about four artworks on the go at any time.



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This is the way I made the artworks:

- 1. Research and character design** – I studied what the White's Seahorse looked like, what colours they can be, what other creatures to include in the book and the design of my characters. I also determined that soft watercolours and coloured pencil artworks would suit the style of the book and that I wanted it to have bright colours.
- 2. Design the page** – Next I divided up the manuscript to fit a 32 page book. I looked at where the words would go and what emotions/actions I wanted to include on each page. I did this on my iPad.
- 3. Print these out** – Once my page designs were finished, I printed them out on large paper – each double page artwork is around 62cm x 32cm.



- 4. Trace onto my special watercolour paper using a lightbox** – I used a mechanical pencil to trace my illustration designs onto special watercolour paper. I have a lightbox at home and this really helps!
- 5. Stretch my paper** – Have you ever done a painting only to have it wrecked when the paper becomes all wrinkly from the wet paint? I stop this from happening by soaking my special paper in bath, or by running under the shower. Once it's completely wet, I smooth it out on a board and tape it down with gum tape. That way it won't wrinkle up when I put the paint on.
- 6. Apply Masking fluid** – Masking fluid is a substance that can be painted onto dry watercolour paper so that the area beneath stays white and doesn't get touched by the paint. I often use this though it can be tricky to do!
- 7. Paint** – I used watercolour paints on every page of this book – lots of blue for the ocean. Most pages required multiple coats and lots of drying time in between. When it's finished and dry, I remove the masking fluid.
- 8. Colouring in** – This is my absolute favourite part! I

LOVE colouring in and I get a lot of joy seeing the illustrations all come together. This book was extra special to colour in with all the beautifully bright corals, fish and sea creatures!

Making Little Horses was very special. I loved the beautiful subject matter, and as someone who lives at the beach, ocean protection and conservation are very close to my heart. I love Deb's stunning writing and I am proud to have been part of creating this special book.

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## REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

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Environmental conservation and activism is a more important topic than ever as we try to preserve our planet and nature for future generations. Children already appreciate the beauty of the natural world and are drawn to care for and protect it. School children are usually quite conscious of the dangers that threaten different habitats and species causing them distress- the term eco-anxiety has been coined to describe this. Rather than a call to action, Little Horses is a conservation success story that reminds children that sometimes problems need creative solutions- thinking outside of the square. It also reminds them that the actions of one person can make an enormous difference to others.

## KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

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Curriculum Areas and Key Learning Outcomes.

### FOUNDATION

English, Visual Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

ACELT1575	ACELT1578	ACELA1434	ACELA1435
ACELT1577	ACELA1430	ACELA1786	ACELY1646
ACELT1783			
ACSSU002	ACSSU003	ACSSU004	ACSHE013
ACSIS233	ACSIS012		
ACHASSI005			

### YEAR ONE

English, Visual Arts, Humanities and Social Science

ACELT1581	ACELT1582	ACELT1583	ACELY1656
ACELY1660	ACELT1586	ACELT1584	ACELY1658
ACSSU017	ACSSU018	ACSSU019	ACSSU211
ACSHE021	ACSHE022	ACSIS025	ACSIS213
ACSIS029	ACHASSI022	ACHASSI025	ACHASSI026
ACHASSI018	ACHASSI019	ACHASSI024	ACHASSI025

### YEAR TWO

English, Visual Arts, Humanities and Social Science

ACELT1589	ACELT1591	ACELY1665	ACELY1789
ACELA1462	ACELY1668	ACELY1670	ACSSU030
ACSSU031	ACSSU032	ACSHE034	ACSHE035
ACSIS037	ACSIS038	ACSIS041	ACSIS042
ACHASSI034	ACHASSI038	ACHASSI041	ACHASSI042

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## TEACHING POINTS AND ACTIVITIES

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This book may be used in whole class, small group or independent learning activities in schools.

Please note, the following suggestions and activities are suited to a variety of year levels spanning Foundation to Year 6 primary aged children. Some activities may be applicable to early secondary school students, as well.

## KNOWLEDGE AND LITERAL UNDERSTANDING

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### PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. Show the cover to the class and ask the students what they think the book might be about.
2. Read the back cover blurb. Does this give them more of an idea of what the book could be about?
3. Ask the students where they think the story might be set.
4. Ask the students what sorts of creatures we might see in the book.

### AFTER-READING QUESTIONS

1. Where did the seahorses live at the beginning of the story?
2. What do seahorses need to survive? Food, something to hold onto, places to hide from predators? What do seahorses eat?
3. What happened to the seahorses' home?
4. The storm passed, and the sea was calm again. Were the seahorses safe?
5. What did the scuba divers put on the sea floor?
6. The metal box is called a seahorse hotel. Do you think the seahorses will live in the hotel forever?
7. How did the seahorse hotel help the seahorses?
8. How would you describe a seahorse to someone who has never seen one before?
9. There are lots of interesting facts in the book- can you remember one to share with the class?

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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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### THE NATURAL WORLD

- What do you know about corals, sea grass, and sea sponge? Have you ever seen reefs before?
- Australia has the Great Barrier Reef. Look up the Great Barrier Reef and discuss how it can be home to various species of sea creatures.
- Tropical storms can harm coral reefs like the Great Barrier Reef. It can take ten years for a reef to recover from a bad storm, and things like climate change make storms happen more often. Have you heard of climate change before? What does it mean?
- After the storm had passed, what problems did the seahorses face?
- Without a home to go to what might have happened to the seahorses if they didn't get a new one?

### CONSERVATION

- What is a habitat and why are they important?
- What kinds of things does a habitat provide?
- What is an ecosystem?
- What does endangered mean?
- Do you know of any other species that are endangered?
- Why is it important to protect animal species?

### CREATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING

- Have you ever come up with a creative way to solve a problem?
- Have you ever had a problem that you couldn't solve? What did you do?
- If your first or second attempt at solving a problem doesn't work, what steps should you take? Is it worth trying again?
- What are some ways you can support other people through solving a problem?

### MAKING A DIFFERENCE

- What is a marine scientist?
- Why do you think David named his invention a seahorse hotel?
- What do you think might have happened to the seahorses if David hadn't created seahorse hotels?
- What are some other jobs that can help take care of animals or the environment? Discuss as a class and brainstorm some ideas.
- What are some other things that could harm the animals in our oceans, like the seahorses?
- How can we make a change to protect the animals from those threats?

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## HOPE

- Even though there are endangered species, climate change, and natural disasters there is still hope. Researchers, conservationists, and scientists are all working hard to protect the planet. Have you heard of other ways adults, or kids, are helping the planet?
- Why was David's seahorse hotel such a good idea? Talk about how he came up with the idea and why it might have worked.
- Look at some of these other interesting inventions to help the planet.
  - [Magnetic Liquid to trap plastic in the ocean](#)
  - [Vertical forests article](#) and [video](#)
  - [Recycled plastic waste makes bricks for houses](#)
  - [Caterpillars that can eat plastic](#)
  - [Transparent solar panels](#)
  - [Australian scientists build device that consumes carbon dioxide and generates electricity](#) and [video](#)
- What was your favourite invention? How might these inventions help the planet?
- One of the inventions, the magnetic liquid to trap plastic in the ocean, was made by an 18-year-old from Ireland. He entered it into a science competition because he was inspired to help the planet, just like David was inspired to help the seahorses. How does it make you feel to hear about such a young person making an important discovery like this? Would you like to also make an invention like Fionn?
- [Here are five ways you can do to protect the ocean.](#) What are some of the ones you'll do in the future?

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## ACTIVITIES

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### DIORAMA

Class diorama- create a seahorse habitat with all the things a seahorse needs to survive including something to hold onto, a place to hide from predators and a ready supply of food.

### ENDANGERED SPECIES

Individual or class project- research an endangered species of plant, bird, or animal. Find out what it needs to survive, what threats there are to its survival and how humans could help to protect it.

Create a brochure or poster teaching other people about this endangered species and the things you've learned.

### OTHER ACTIVITY IDEAS

Some other activity ideas include making a [terrarium](#) to observe the greenhouse effect or to [build a native bee hotel](#) in your backyard.

### CLIMATE CHANGE

Some of the causes for climate change are the burning of fossil fuels (like oil and gas used for energy), and deforestation (cutting down rainforests to use the wood, make palm oil, or use the land for other things). Have a look at ways that you can help save the planet and prevent climate change [here](#) and [here](#). Discuss what things you might be able to do at school or at home.

At school, as a class, brainstorm what plans of action you could have. Can you make posters to encourage not wasting water? Or better recycling? Could you fundraise to plant more trees at your school?

At home, sit with your parents or caregiver and talk to them about what things you might be able to do as a family. Could you together go on a 'vampire hunt' for appliances wasting electricity? Could you plant anything to help native birds and bees in your local environment? Could you do better at recycling or even composting?