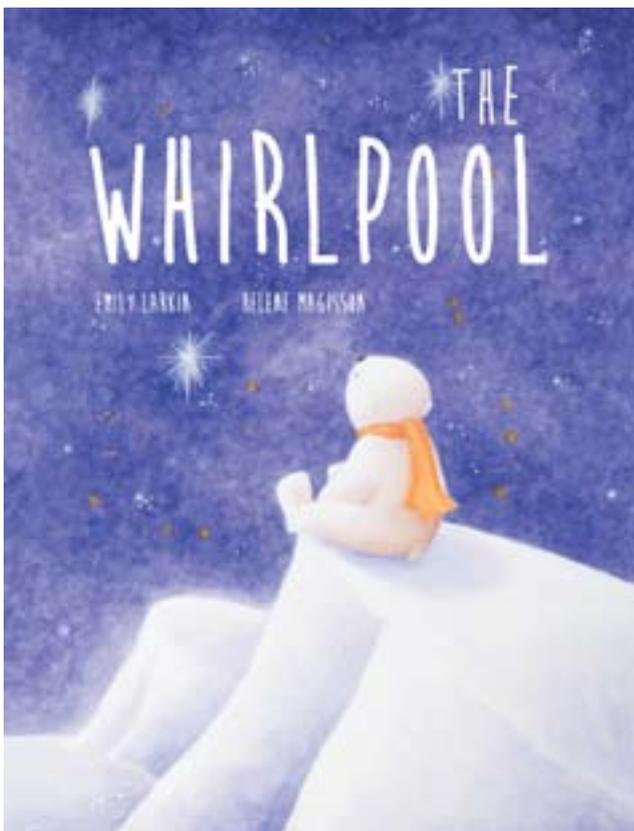




**Wombat Books**  
Stories you'll want to share

## Teacher's Notes



### The Whirlpool

Emily Larkin / Helene Magisson

ISBN: 978-1925563047

Recommended retail: \$24.99

Reading level: Ages 5+ Picture Book

### Book Summary

A polar bear cub sees life as an adventure – but soon discovers there are times when he feels sad and lonely. He learns that his emotions are subject to change, and good times follow the bad.

The Whirlpool encourages readers to accept that it is normal to experience a range of emotions and an individual's mood influences how they see the world.

Wombat Books, PO Box 1519, Capalaba BC Qld 4157 [www.wombatbooks.com.au](http://www.wombatbooks.com.au)

07-32451938 [info@wombatbooks.com.au](mailto:info@wombatbooks.com.au)

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### Reasons For Studying This Book

*The Whirlpool* is an enchanting story about a polar bear cub who must navigate the highs and lows of life. The narrative is suitable for ages 5+, as primary-school readers may enjoy the beautiful illustrations and simple story, while older readers may interpret the symbolic imagery and language, discussing the importance of emotional wellbeing and good mental health.

The Whirlpool can be used to support several Key Learning Areas across the Australian Curriculum including English, Visual Arts, Drama, and Social and Community Studies (for high-school students).

Themes incorporated in *The Whirlpool* include how perspective is coloured by emotion, and how individuals can find positive ways to manage their mental health.

### Themes

#### Perspective

The power of perspective is an important theme in *The Whirlpool*, as the way the polar bear cub interprets his world is coloured by his emotions. When the cub is happy and confident, warm colours such as pinks and oranges are used, and when he is sad the illustrations use colder shades of blue, grey and black.

#### Emotional Wellbeing And Mental Health

Individuals who are feeling sad, anxious, or depressed may find comfort by spending time in nature, doing something they enjoy, or seeking the company of family. The polar bear cub provides an example how one can experience sadness and loneliness, as well as joy and hope.

## About the Author



Emily Larkin is a Queensland author who writes fiction for children, teens, and adults. She is undertaking a Doctor of Creative Arts and spends her free time analysing books and movies with family and friends, and having long conversations with her characters.

Emily loves all kinds of animals, and watching the sky paint itself in different colours. *The Whirlpool* is Emily's first picture book. To read Emily's fiction and blog, visit [www.ehlarkin.com](http://www.ehlarkin.com).

## About the Illustrator



Helene Magisson started her artistic career as a painting restorer in Paris, where she was also trained in the art of medieval illumination.

She has been living in different countries, including Africa, France and India, and finally settled down in Australia. She ended up understanding that the easiest way to reach people's mind is with her pencils and brushes.

She has illustrated several books including *The Velveteen Rabbit* by Margery Williams Bianco. *The Whirlpool* is her first book with Wombat Books. Helene is an award winning illustrator (first prize CYA conference 2013).

## Key Curriculum Areas

### CURRICULUM AREAS AND KEY LEARNING OUTCOMES

#### Foundation (Kindergarten/Prep)

##### English

ACELT1575	ACELA1429	ACELA1434	ACELY1653
ACELT1577	ACELA1430	ACELA1786	
ACELT1783	ACELA1432	ACELY1651	
ACELT1578	ACELA1435	ACELY1652	

#### Year One

##### English

ACELA1444	ACELA1451	ACELT1582	ACELY1656
ACELA1787	ACELA1452	ACELT1584	ACELY1788
ACELA1447	ACELA1458	ACELT1586	ACELY1660
ACELA1449	ACELT1581	ACELT1832	

#### Year Two

##### English

ACELA1461	ACELT1833
ACELA1462	ACELY1665
ACELA1463	
ACELT1591	

## Questions and Reflections

Have the teacher read the book out in class, making sure everyone can see the illustrations. Alternatively, students can take turns at reading each page aloud.

### For Young Readers:

1. What makes you feel happy?
2. What can you do to feel better if you're feeling sad?
3. What does the polar bear cub enjoy doing? (Drawing, performing on stage, travelling, etc.)
4. What colours are used in the picture book? Do you think they mean something?
5. Do the colours change throughout the story? Why?
6. What do you think the stars represent for the polar bear?

### For Older Readers:

1. How does the colour scheme change throughout *The Whirlpool*? What role does colour play in the story?
2. Why is *The Whirlpool* told in second-person? What effect does this have?
3. What does the polar bear draw on for comfort?
4. What is used to foreshadow the polar bear's sadness?
5. What do the stars represent?
6. How is your sense of time affected by emotions? What does someone mean if they say they're having a "long day"?
7. How can individuals manage their emotions? What can someone do to feel better if they are feeling sad, lonely, anxious, or depressed?
8. What happens to the cat in the photographs throughout the course of the narrative? Give a possible reason for its transformations.

## Classroom Activities

### For Young Readers:

- Draw a picture of a polar bear. What kind of house does he live in? What does he enjoy doing? Write a sentence to go with your picture.
- What kind of animal do you think you are most like? Draw a picture of an animal in a paper mirror (see Template 1).
- Colour in the bear's scarf (Template 2). What colour is your bear's scarf? Yellow, blue, or pink? Why did you choose these colours?

### For older readers:

#### English

- Find a song that includes instances of second person, and discuss why this point of view is used. Try writing a paragraph in second person about feeling happy, sad, confused, or lonely.
- Discuss the symbolism of an object or colour in the picture book. Write down where else this symbol/colour is used in literature, movies, lyrics, etc.
- Discuss the meaning of 'personification' and why a polar bear may have been chosen as the protagonist of *The Whirlpool*.

#### Visual Arts

- Using *The Whirlpool* as an exemplar, discuss the effect of colour and shade.
- Play with 'mirror images'. Draw or paint a picture of a tree, and then create alternative versions of it using Photoshop or another program, to represent different emotions by changing the colour scheme and light and shadow. For example, one image may depict a robust and green tree, leaves shining under the sun, while its 'mirror image' may reveal a dark skyline, muted olive leaves, and a trunk in shadow.

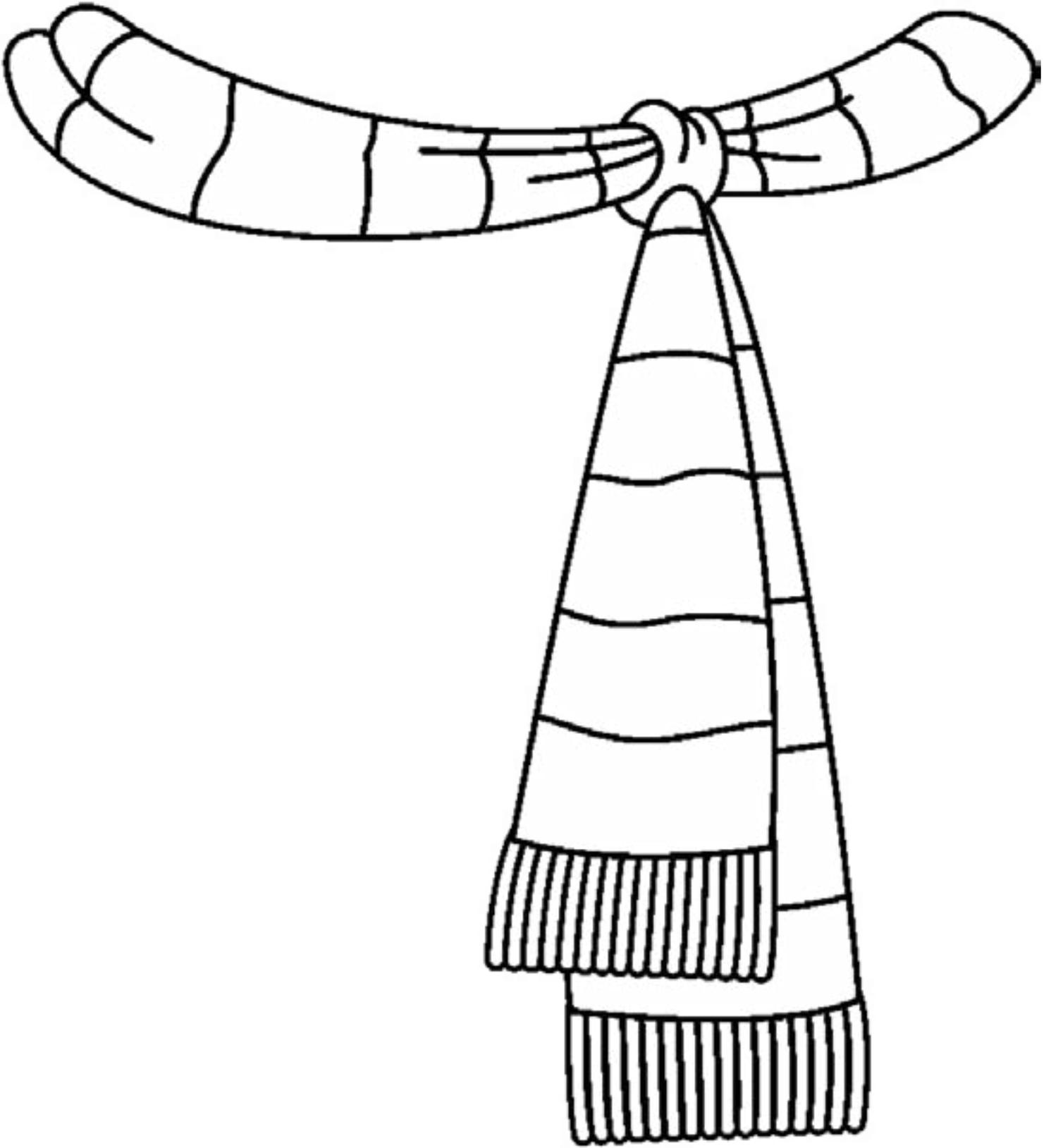
#### Drama

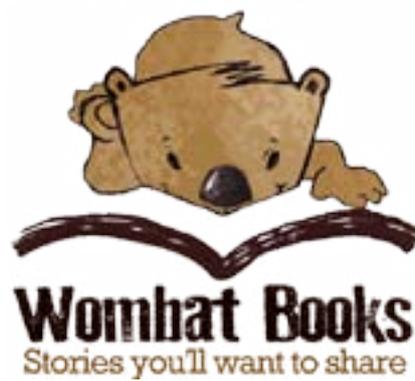
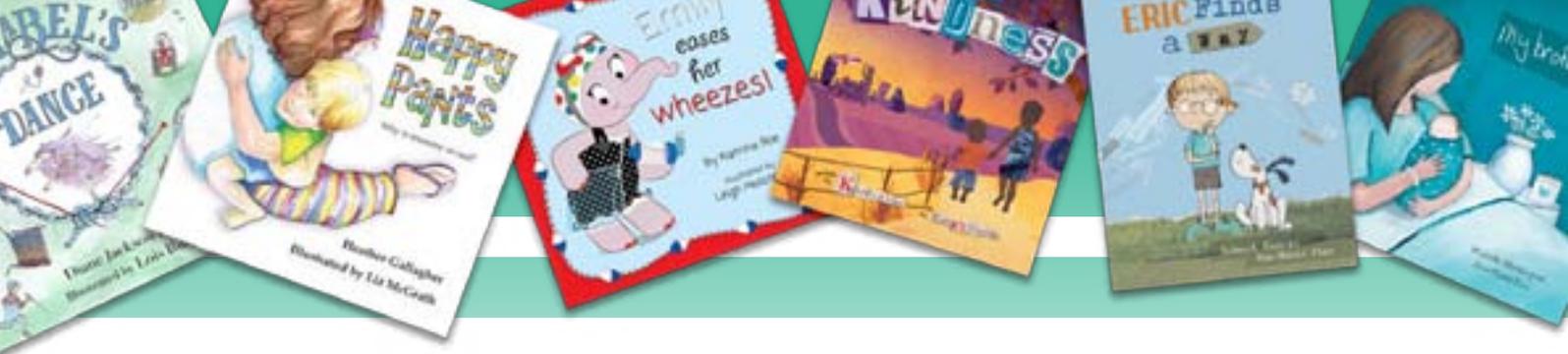
- Hand out items of clothing including hats, scarfs and gloves in yellow, pink, blue, and black. Decide as a class what emotion each colour represents, and then perform a 3-5 minute skit in small groups, where individuals must personify the emotion of the colour they have been given. For example, if one group member is given yellow, and another blue, then the class may watch an interplay between two people taking on the respective roles of 'hope' and 'sadness'.

## Social and Community Studies

- Discuss what helps you feel calm or happy when you're feeling sad or stressed.
- Discuss the symbolism present in *The Whirlpool*. Which images communicate vulnerability? What is the effect of colour and shade in this illustrated book?







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