

# Charlie's Whale

AUTHOR

**LIBBY GLEESON**

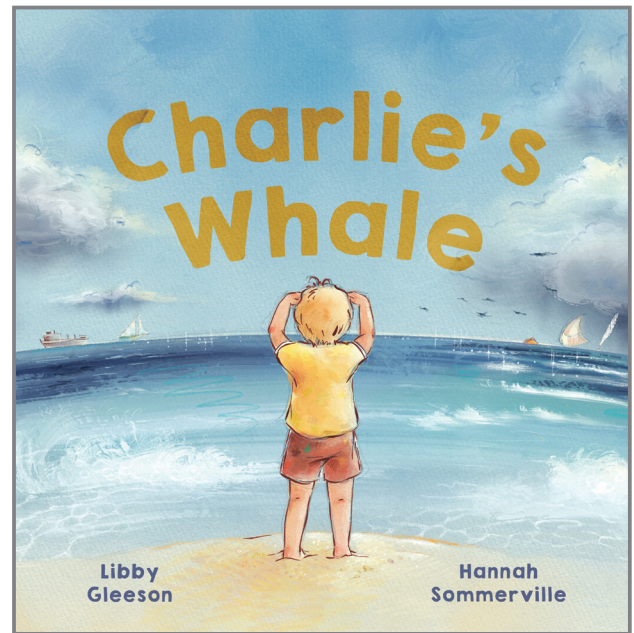
ILLUSTRATOR

**HANNAH SOMMERVILLE**

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Lower Primary



## SYNOPSIS

Charlie loves whales. Minke whales, orcas, beluga whales and humpbacks, sperm whales and right whales, and especially the great blue whale.

Young readers will delight in this story of Charlie's obsession with these majestic giants of the sea, written by one of Australia's most loved and awarded writers for children, Libby Gleeson, and accompanied by gorgeous illustrations by brilliant young artist, Hannah Somerville.

*Charlie loved the sea.*

*He loved the seashells and seahorses, the sharks and the stingrays, the crabs and the crayfish.*

*He loved the gentle waves that crept up onto the sand and tickled his toes.*

*He loved the huge wild waves that crashed onto the sand and made the beach tremble.*

*But most of all he loved the whales*

This is an elegant and 'classic' picture book text about a little boy who just wants to see a real whale.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Libby Gleeson AM has published over 30 popular, highly acclaimed books for children and teenagers. Libby has been a teacher and lecturer and contributes regularly to national conferences. She chaired the Australian Society of Authors from 1999–2001. Her books have been shortlisted numerous times for the Children's Book Council of Australia Awards and Libby has won five times with *Hannah Plus One* (Fiction for Young Readers Book of the Year 1997), *An Ordinary Day* (Picture Book of the Year 2002), *Amy and Louis* (Early Childhood Book of the Year 2007), *Go to Sleep, Jessie!* (Early Childhood Book of the Year 2015) and *The Cleo Stories Part 1: The Necklace and the Present* (Fiction for Young Readers Book of the Year 2015). In 2013 *Red* won the Prime Minister's Literary Award and in 2015 she received the CBCA Nan Chauncy Award.

Libby received the prestigious CBCA NSW Lady Cutler Award for Services to Children's Literature in 1997. In 2007 she was appointed a member of the Order of Australia and she won the 2011 Dromkeen Medal, awarded for contributions to children's literature. Libby was also recently nominated by IBBY Australia for the Hans Christian Andersen Award (Writing) 2020.

Visit her website: <http://www.libbygleeson.com.au/>.

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Hannah Sommerville is a bestselling picture book illustrator who creates enchanting watercolour, gouache and digital illustrations in her home on the South Coast of NSW. Hannah earned a Bachelor of Creative Arts (Visual Arts and Graphic Design) at the University of Wollongong in 2006.

Hannah began illustrating in 2010 after the arrival of her young children from whom she draws inspiration. She is a storyteller who enjoys creating picture books that capture the imagination, tenderness and playfulness that surround children and family life. Her picture book *Digby & Claude*, written by Emma Allen, was selected for the CBCA 2019 Notables list. *Anisa's Alphabet*, written by Mike Dumbleton, was selected for the CBCA 2021 Notables list.

Visit her website: <https://www.hannahsommerville.com/>.

## STUDY NOTES

### HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES (HASS)

- The book contains a list of various whales. Research and discover how many species of whales there are, and the similarities and differences between these whales. Create a 'project book' like Charlie's and take note of anything you discover about whales.
  - Which whales are found in Australian waters?
  - Which whales are endangered?
- Read some First Nations stories about whales and discover Aboriginal Australian beliefs about whales.
- Children (and adults!) often have favourite hobbies or pastimes. Sometimes children are obsessed with reading about dinosaurs, with collecting things such as toys, shells or marbles, with playing a particular sport or a musical instrument, with caring for pets...or watching whales, like Charlie! Discuss with students what some of their favourite things are.
- Research Australian marine life and how sea creatures co-habit in our oceans and on our beaches and even in an aquarium such as the one Charlie visits with his family.
- What other sea creatures or aspects of the beach or ocean appear in this book?
  - Look through the pages and find the following:
    - seahorses
    - crabs
    - stingrays
    - crayfish
    - seashells
    - boats
    - turtles
    - octopuses
    - seagulls
    - surfboards
    - beach umbrellas.
- Many of the images in this book are suggestive of the imagination. The sky, for example, has swimming whales in several frames. Young children have the capacity to imagine many possibilities. Charlie's bedroom is a tribute to the imagination with a whale-themed nightlight and whale toys. Discuss the imagination with students and encourage them to create imaginative responses to this text in any medium they prefer, whether it be writing, illustration or model making.

### ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

- Read the text and identify any literary devices employed, for example, personification: 'He loved the gentle waves that crept up onto the sand and tickled his toes.' and 'He loved the huge wild waves that crashed onto the sand and made the beach tremble.'

### Whale Quiz

- When whales leap out of the water what is that movement called? (Breaching)
- What word is used to describe a whale raising its tail out of the water? (Flipping)
- Which whale has the largest flippers? (Humpback whale)
- What is a group of whales called? (A pod)
- What do we call the lobes at the end of a whale's tail? (Flukes)
- What products do humans hunt whales for? (Blubber [for oil, soap and paint] and baleen, a hard tissue inside the Humpback's mouth [for making fishing rods, umbrella frames, tools, toys and piano keys])
- What are the fierce orcas sometimes known as? (Killer whales)
- Which whale is the largest animal to have ever lived on earth? (Blue whale)
- What is a scientific name for whales? (Cetaceans)
- How many species of whale are there? (Around ninety)
- What two main types of whales are there? (Baleen whales and toothed whales)
- The narwhal's name is derived from an Old Norse word meaning what? ('Corpse whale', because its skin colour resembles that of a drowned sailor)

### VISUAL LITERACY

- The cover of a book is an important part of its message. Here we see the little boy from behind gazing out to sea, and there are a number of ships, boats and sails on the horizon. On the back cover is a view of the boy swimming with a giant whale. What do these two images suggest to you about the story's content?
- The front endpapers depict sketches of whales frolicking in the ocean, and then on the back endpapers are fully painted images of the same creatures. The halftitle page depicts Charlie clutching a plush toy whale. This image is also symbolic of his love of whales. The title page repeats the image on the cover. Discuss the way each of the book's preliminary parts are designed to build meaning before we read the text.
- Examine the images and discuss what they suggest about the characters within this family—the three boys (Max, Jack and Charlie) and their mother.
- Perspective in these images is used evocatively. In some frames the action is viewed from above. These aerial views give us an insight into what is happening not only to the central characters in the foreground but also in the periphery. For example, the shadow of a whale is viewed in the water in one frame, although Charlie can't see it. What else does such an aerial view reveal to the reader?
- Employ critical literacy skills to examine this book more closely. Illustrators often include details or sub-text in images which are not commented on in the written text. For example, within two early frames in this book the whale's tail appears, and in another one, the shadow of the whale is viewed underwater. Can you spot them? Can you find these other items?
  - Charlie's bedroom contains several whale-themed things. Can you identify them?
  - Charlie has a range of sea toys. Can you identify them?
  - Charlie's brothers, Max and Jack, play with different things in these pictures. What are they?
- Charlie sings sea songs to his sea toys. Can you think of any sea songs?