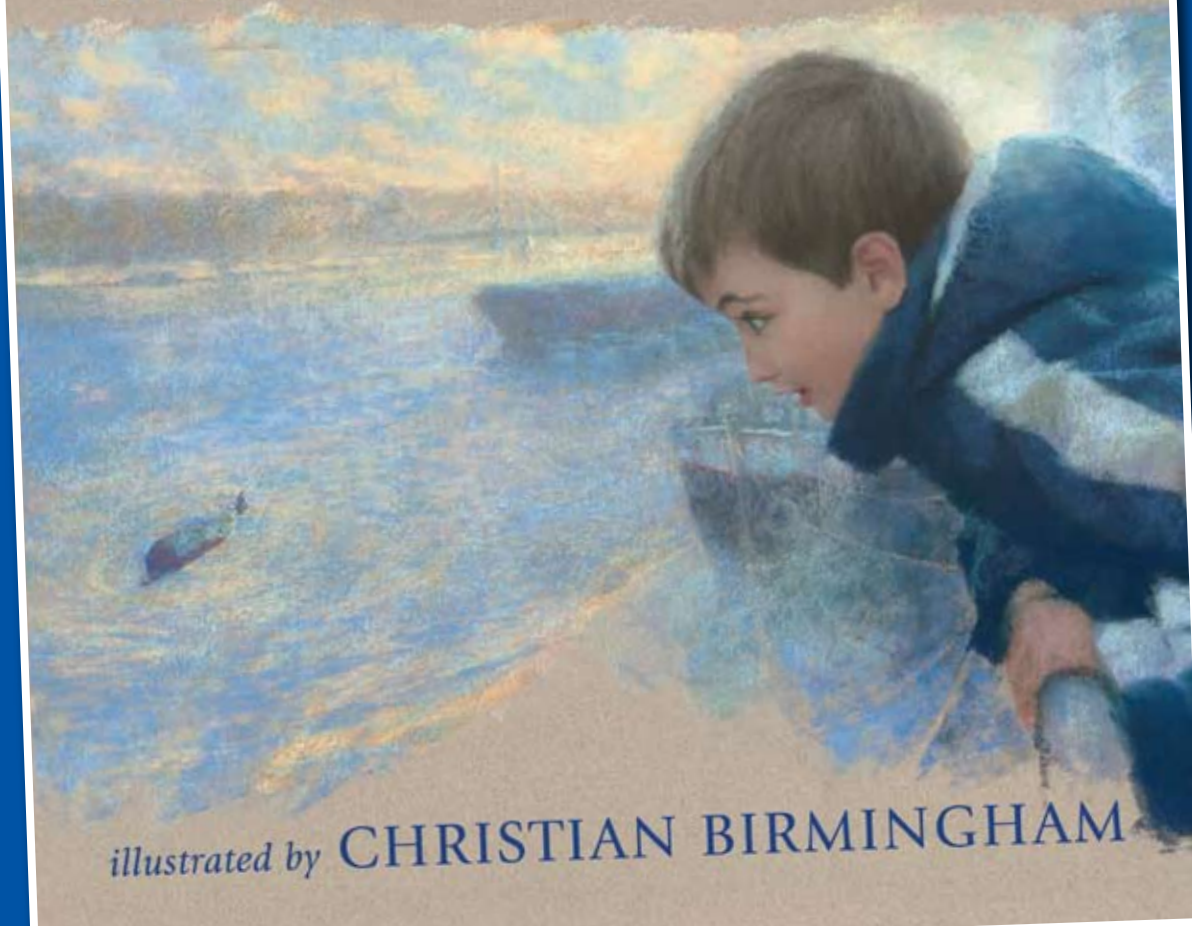


SCHOLASTIC

Book
Talk

AGES 8+

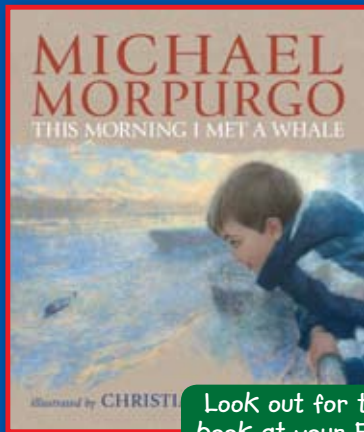
MICHAEL
MORPURGO
THIS MORNING I MET A WHALE



illustrated by CHRISTIAN BIRMINGHAM

Illustrations © Christian Birmingham

9789999939081 1



Look out for this book at your Fair!

AGES 8+

Price	£4.99 / €6.40
Case	Read On
Author	Michael Morpurgo
Illustrator	Christian Birmingham
Publisher	Walker Books

Using this book in your classroom

Themes

This story has a strong theme of **respect for the environment**, and reflects on the **relationship between people and animals**.

Summary

Michael often goes bird watching down by the River Thames in London. It's peaceful down there at sunrise, and Michael almost has the river to himself. One morning, however, he is amazed to see a whale swimming towards him. He thinks he's dreaming, but the whale is real – and it needs Michael's help.

Boy and whale share a moment of intense communication. The whale shows Michael scenes of the damage that humans are doing to the environment, and makes Michael promise to spread the message that the damage has to stop. When Michael goes to school that morning, he writes a story about the whale – the best one he has ever written. His teacher and class think that it's a made-up story, but Michael knows it's true. And soon everyone else knows it too, as the news breaks that a whale really has made its way down the Thames.

The whale draws huge crowds, but Michael manages to get to the front, and with his teacher and mother's help, he even joins the rescue team as they try to guide the whale back to safe waters. Unfortunately, the dangerous journey down the shallow river is too much for the whale and it dies before it can reach the safety of the open sea. But Michael has made a promise to the whale – he will spend his whole life trying to spread the message of care for the environment.

Did you know?

- Michael Morpurgo has written more than one hundred books.
- As well as writing for children, Michael runs the charity Farms for City Children (FCC), together with his wife Clare.

The Story Session

1. Introducing the story

Ask the children how they would feel if they suddenly saw a whale swimming in a river in the heart of a big city. Would they believe it was true? Would they want to find out more about the whale and how it came to be there? Read the blurb, and tell the children that the idea for this story came from a true incident in January 2006 when a northern bottle-nosed whale was spotted in the Thames in the centre of London.

2. Reading the story

- If time allows, read from the start of the book to the end of Michael's story on page 43. If you are short of time, you could stop at the bottom of page 34 ("... and that's why I have come.") Ask: "Why do you think the whale has come down the river? Why is he looking for a child to tell his story to, rather than an adult? What do you think he wants Michael to do for him?"
- Ask the children how they would feel if they were Michael. Would they want to help the whale? Would they tell other people about what had happened?
- If you have time, you could read the rest of the book to the children in a further session – or encourage them to read it individually or in reading groups. After reading the story, talk about why Michael Morpurgo decided to write a story based on the true incident of the whale in the Thames. What message do they think the author wants to give us in this book? Do they think this is an effective way of encouraging us to look after the environment?

3. Follow-up

- What do the children think Michael could do to keep his promise to the whale, to help people stop damaging the environment? Together, make a list of ideas. Which of these ideas could the children do themselves? Try to find one or two positive things that you can do as a class to help the environment.
- Encourage the children to use books and websites to research ways of helping to preserve the environment. Several environmental charities have useful websites, for example WWF (www.wwf.org.uk) or Friends of the Earth (www.foe.co.uk/learning).
- Children may be interested to find out about the true story of the northern bottle-nosed whale that ended up in the Thames in January 2006. The website www.thameswhale.info is a good place to start. They could compare the true events with the story as presented in this book.

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