

# Dear Greenpeace

SECTION

1

## About the book

*Dear Greenpeace* is a delightful story featuring an imaginative girl called Emily who finds a whale in her garden pond. Worried that he might be unhappy, she writes to Greenpeace for advice. Greenpeace tries to be helpful, but informs her that whales do not live in garden ponds, as they prefer salt water. Emily tries adding salt to the water in the pond and, with determination, continues to write further letters asking questions about the whale she is becoming increasingly fond of.

The author uses a definite format, with consistent variation of language to determine who is writing and receiving the letters, and the purpose behind them. There is a marked contrast between the caring informal letters from Emily about her whale, known to her as Arthur, and the formal factual responses of Greenpeace. As the book progresses, Emily is saddened by the disappearance of Arthur and receives a sympathetic response from Greenpeace. However, the story draws to a satisfactory conclusion when Emily finds Arthur at the seaside where he lets her stroke his head and she shares her sandwich with him.

Although set in the familiar surroundings of Emily's home, *Dear Greenpeace*, is an example of a fantasy story with a strong ecological message. Children will sympathise with Emily over her dilemma and her desire to make her whale happy. Their understanding of the main character, particularly the strength of her imagination and determination, can be developed through drama and role play. As they take part, their own appreciation of the differences between reality and fantasy will be enhanced.

Shared reading of the text provides excellent opportunities for teaching and applying Key Stage 1 word level skills, and for developing children's understanding of sentence construction

and punctuation. The book is an ideal starting point to motivate children into their own research relating to environmental issues, and endangered species in particular.

## About the author

Simon James grew up in Bristol and Exeter and spent much of his childhood drawing and writing stories which he made into little books. He was fascinated by his father's books on cartoonists and tried to copy some of them. He was also interested in ecological issues from a young age and spent his time climbing trees and trying to save worms from puddles.

Simon studied graphic design and art history at college and this helped him to understand the techniques used in creating picture books. His first book, published in 1989, was *The Day Jake Vacuumed*, and this was followed by soon after by two more books about Jake.

Many of Simon's childhood interests in the world around him are apparent in his books. *My Friend Whale* was the first book concerning a child's relationship with the natural world, and this was followed by *Sally and the Limpet*, *The Wild Woods* and *The Birdwatchers*. Simon is also well known for his *Baby Brains* series.



### Facts and figures

Simon James is one of the country's leading author/illustrators. His books have won several awards:

- *Leon and Bob* won the Smarties Book Prize Silver Award and was the *New York Times*' Best Illustrated Book of the Year
- *Days Like This*, a collection of small poems, was shortlisted for the Kate Greenaway Medal
- *Baby Brains* was the overall winner of the Red House Children's Book Award in 2005, voted for by 25,000 children, and has been translated into 15 languages.

PAGE  
3