

and history interesting. It is hardest to envision an audience for *The Man Who Made Parks*. An unconventional subject for children's literature, the details and influences of Olmsted's life do not seem compelling or relevant. The use of the storytelling technique and the many beautiful illustrations cannot overcome this basic shortcoming and the work will remain a specialized piece for a limited audience.

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From Sea to Sea: Explorations Deep and Shallow

Kotik — The Baby Seal. Angele Delaunois. Photography, Fred Breummer. Trans. Mary Shelton. Orca, 1995. 48 pp. \$9.95. ISBN 1-55143-050-9. *Nanook and Naoya the Polar Bear Cubs*. Angele Delaunois. Photography Fred Breummer. Trans. Mary Shelton. Orca, 1995. 48 pp. \$9.95. ISBN 1-55143-048-7. *See, Make and Do at the Seashore*. Pamela Hickman. Illus. Twila Robar-DeCoste. Formac, 1996. 64 pp. \$12.95. ISBN 0-88780-356-3. *Oceans — Looking at Beaches and Coral Reefs, Tides and Currents, Sea Mammals and Fish, Seaweeds and other Ocean Wonders*. Adrienne Mason. Illus. Elizabeth Gatt. Photography David Denning. Kids Can, 1995. 80 pp. \$16.95. ISBN 1-55074-147-0. *Welcome to the World of Whales*. Diane Swanson. Photography First Light. Whitecap Books, 1996. 28 pp. \$6.95. ISBN 1-55110-490-3. *The Ocean's Garden*. Daniel Porter. Illus. Daniel Porter. ESP Press, 1997. 28 pp. \$9.75. ISBN 0-9681156-1-6.

Few things stir our wonder and curiosity like the ocean. These six books seek to illuminate different facets of the ocean, its shorelines and its denizens. All attempt, with varying degrees of success, to convey the vast wealth of life it sustains, and the complexity of its ecosystems.

Nanook and Naoya the Polar Bear Cubs and *Kotik — the Baby Seal*, both by Angele Delaunois, are stories of survival in the Arctic. The stunning photography by Fred Breummer alone makes these books worth purchasing. With an artist's eye, Breummer juxtaposes the vastness of the Arctic landscape with heartbreakingly intimate moments in the lives of these animals. In one picture, a mother polar bear sits upright in an almost human posture, eyes half-closed, serenely nursing her two cubs. In another, a newborn seal, balanced precariously on the edge of an ice floe, rubs noses with his mother, bobbing up from the water before him. All on their own, Breummer's photographs tell an eloquent story.

There is a lot of text, making these books more appropriate for children in Grade Five and up. Younger children, however, will love the pictures and would no doubt enjoy an abbreviated reading of the stories.

Some words are italicized, indicating that they appear in the brief glossary at the end of the book. Such use of italics within the text is distracting and interrupts the flow of the story. As well, the choice of italicized words seems, at times, to be

rather arbitrary. For example, Delauniois italicizes and defines the colloquial phrase "small fry" but not "crustaceans" or "plankton." Similarly, she italicises fairly familiar and self-explanatory words like "snout," "treeline," and "nurseries," but not words like "teat," "undulates," and "voracious." In *Nanook and Naoya*, Delauniois uses a metaphor, describing adult polar bears as "mastodons." The word is italicized but an incorrect definition is provided in the glossary. Instead of defining it as an elephant-like prehistoric animal, Delauniois tries to explicate the awkward metaphor, defining mastodon as "an enormous person, animal or object" — an error in judgement that is hardly appropriate in a book meant to educate its readers about nature and wildlife.

Both *Kotik* and *Nanook and Naoya* would have benefited greatly from tighter editing. Delauniois is clearly awed by the beauty and drama of the Arctic. However, in her enthusiasm to convey the poignancy of the haunting images of the north, her text tends to be wordy and overly decorative — hardly necessary in light of Breunner's photographs. An overuse of metaphors may also create some confusion for young readers.

On a positive note, the stories of birth and survival in the Arctic waters are compelling and Delauniois provides many fascinating bits of trivia about the animals. Also to her credit, she does not gloss over the harsher realities of animal survival, describing in detail the polar bear's successful kill of a mother seal and her pup in *Nanook and Naoya*, and the sad plight of an orphaned seal pup in *Kotik*.

With *See, Make and Do at the Seashore*, Pamela Hickman has produced a readable and useful guide for exploring ocean shorelines and shallows. Twila RobardCoste's illustrations are plentiful and are carefully detailed and labelled, making them a good reference for identifying a variety of animal and plant life. The text, while not always exciting, is concise and informative. The book's best feature is its activities and crafts. These are presented in sidebars throughout the book. These activities are, for the most part, educational and entertaining, such as the recipe for a dessert made out of seaweed (pp. 36-7). The book also includes a number of conservation tips and projects. Information on various subjects is easily located with the help of a good index, and bold headlines run across every double-page spread. More care should have been taken with the layout, however, as a number of the headlines bleed into the centre crease, making them difficult to read.

The book also contains a list of national, provincial, and state parks on the East Coast, as well as the tourism information numbers for Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Nova Scotia. It does not, however, include the numbers for Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, or Rhode Island, although these states and their parks are listed on the same page. A list of suggested Field Guides is also provided. All in all, this is a good book to toss in a knapsack when heading out to the cottage.

Geared toward children ages eight to twelve, *Oceans*, by Adrienne Mason is an excellent resource or supplementary text for the classroom and home-schoolers alike. A wide range of ocean subjects are covered, each section sporting an intriguing headline such as "Something Fishy," "A Star's Life," "Seaweeds: Underwater Forests," and "JAWS!" Text is tight and informative and manages to be "kid-friendly" and colloquial without being condescending. Information is made accessible through the use of comparisons and identifiable reference-points from the

child's everyday world. For example, on page eight we learn that if all the salt in the ocean were spread evenly across the land, it would be deep enough to bury a 40-story building! This riveting image helps the child to grasp just what is meant by "35 parts of salt for every 1000 parts of water": the average salinity of the earth's oceans.

The book is aesthetically pleasing and reader-friendly, laid out in a glossy, magazine-type format with photographs, illustrations, diagrams and sidebars. Information is presented in a variety of formats, further increasing the entertainment factor: Q & A pages, diagrams, puzzle-games, interviews, art projects and a large number of simple yet highly illuminating experiments make for a hands-on approach that stimulates both the curiosity and the imagination.

Welcome to the World of Whales by Diane Swanson is another excellent book for budding marine biologists. Brevity (*Whales* is only 28 pages long) and concise sentences make this book accessible to young readers without precluding the interest of older readers. In fact, anyone with even a passing interest in whales will enjoy flipping through this slim but information-packed volume. The layout and design are glossy and professional. Every chapter is accompanied by a sidebar, printed in boldface type, about a related topic. As well, every photograph is accompanied by an explanatory caption. Swanson also includes fascinating tidbits of whale trivia, such as the fact that baby grey whales gain more than a pound an *hour* during their first year of life, and that the tongue of a blue whale can weigh as much as an elephant. Like Mason's *Oceans*, Swanson's book is a great example of how to present scientific information in a way that is entertaining, visually stimulating, and easily absorbed by young readers.

The Ocean's Garden written and illustrated by Daniel Porter, is a fictional story about three whales and their confrontation with a giant squid. The illustrations, including the art for the cover, are simple drawings done in pencil crayon. At first glance, this gives the book an amateurish quality — an impression which the text itself does nothing to dispel. Sentences are awkward and wordy. For example: "Chester was really glad to do it because it let him go back to his morning nap and not be bothered any more by those frisky whales." As well, Porter falls into the pitfall of *telling* instead of *showing*, and the text rambles on for eight pages before there is any dialogue.

Perhaps the most serious flaw, however, is that Porter fails to set up parameters of believability. As someone once pointed out, an audience will readily believe that a chipmunk can talk, but not that it will talk in a deep, husky voice. Anthropomorphic or not, animals must retain certain essential qualities and behaviours or risk puncturing that fragile bubble of suspended disbelief. For instance, on the second page, Porter describes Nancy the Narwhal and catalogues the uses of the Narwhal's unique spiralled horn:

This long tusk had many uses. Nancy used the tusk for digging clams out of the sand. It could also be a weapon. Sometimes she used its special powers to help out others who were in danger.

And, *pop*, there goes our bubble of suspended disbelief. Up until that last sentence, we were interested in the uses for a Narwhal's horn. But, by cataloguing the bla-

tantly fantastic side-by-side with scientific facts, Porter simultaneously sabotages our ability to accept the fantastic *and* lessens the credibility of the scientific facts when they do occur. The factual and the fantastic are jumbled together indiscriminately, negating the book's educational potential. The reader does not know whether or not to believe that different breeds of whales actually interact together (if true, this would be a very interesting and educational bit of information), or if pods of whales actually do destroy kelp beds.

And finally, there is the clichéd ending. Apparently Sam, the Giant Squid with homicidal tendencies is just misunderstood, upset that his ocean garden was razed in the past by whales. Nancy the Narwhal saves the day by transforming Sam into a laughing squid with a touch of her horn. Everyone immediately becomes friends and the whales tritely assure Sam that things have changed and that they now know "that it is important to keep the garden healthy and clean." Thus conflict is resolved with the wave of a wand, I mean horn. This is one deep-sea story that could use a little more depth.

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Seasons of Passage

Morning on the Lake. Jan Bourdeau Waboose. Illus. Karen Reczuch. Kids Can, 1997. Unpag. \$15.95 cloth. ISBN 1-55074-373-2. *A Winter's Tale.* Ian Wallace. Illus. author. Douglas and McIntyre/Groundwood, 1997. Unpag. \$15.95 cloth. ISBN 0-88899-286-6.

Led on journeys by a grandfather and a father, the main characters in *Morning on the Lake* and *A Winter's Tale* experience a close communion with the natural world.

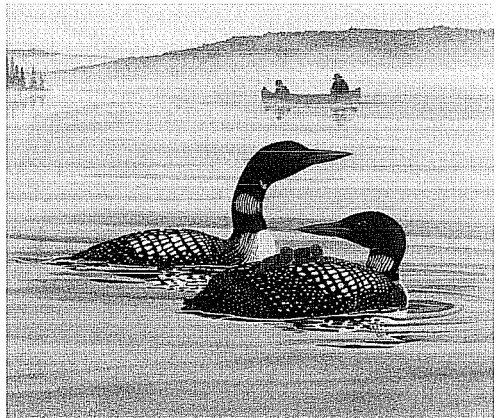


Illustration from Morning on the Lake