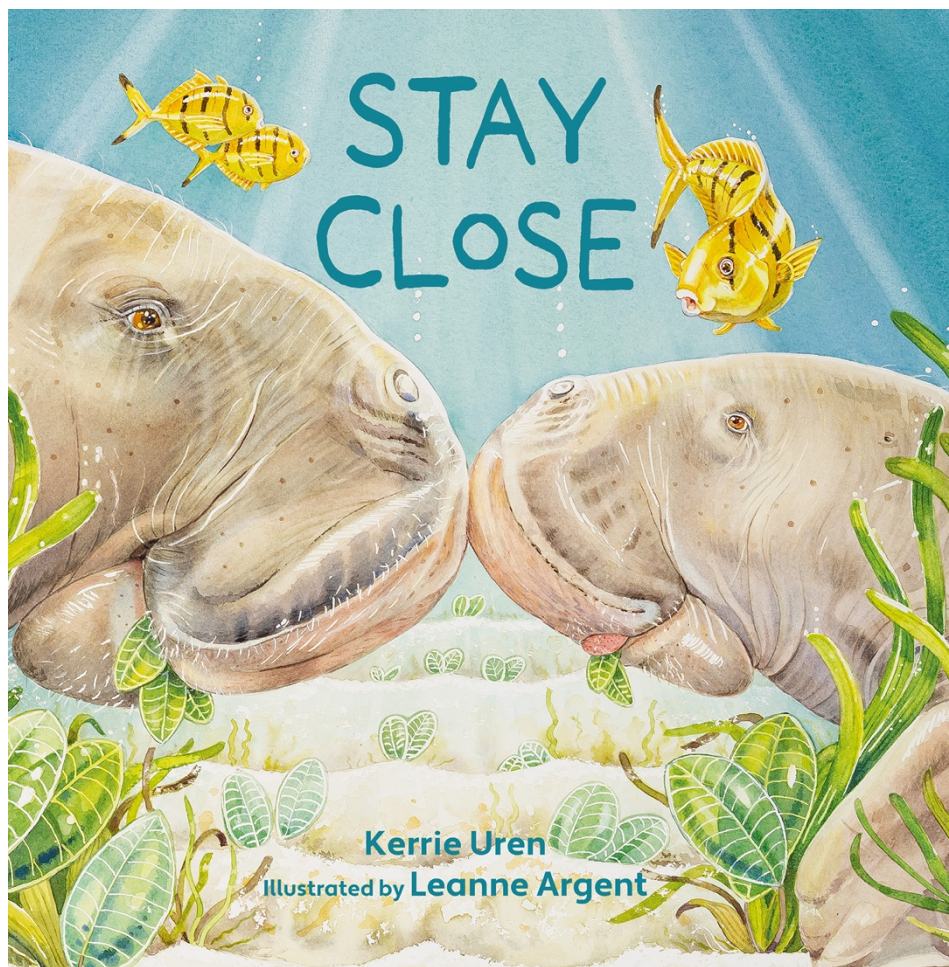


Stay Close Teaching Notes

Author: Kerrie Uren

Illustrator: Leanne Argent



SYNOPSIS

A secluded bay was once home to herds of dugongs, but now only Roly and his mum remain. Pollution is killing the sea grass, and the herd has moved on. Hungry from lack of food, Mum tells Roly that soon, when he is old enough, they too will leave the bay. Mum knows a place where the water is clean and sea grass meadows are lush and green.

But the journey is fraught with danger. For Roly to survive, he must Stay Close.

THEMES

Stay Close has an environmental theme that explores degradation of food sources in the ocean, pollution and the impact humans have on dugongs and other marine life.

In the Classroom

Before Reading:

Discuss what is seen on the cover:

- Introduce the book by looking at the cover:
 - What can children see?
 - Do children know what these animals are called?
 - What do you think the animals are doing?
 - What is their relationship?
 - Where do you think they live?
- Dugongs are quite shy and hard to spot. Has anyone ever seen a dugong?
- What do you think the story is about?
 - Why do children think this?

Additional cover discussion:

- Do any children share the same letters from the title in their name?
- What colours can be seen on the cover?
- Can you count the animals on the cover?

During Reading:

Questions to ask children during the story:

- Why is the murky water causing the sea grass to die? (Sea grass needs light to survive)
- What sort of pollution do you see?
- Why do you think the water is polluted?

After Reading:

Discussion about what children have learned from the book:

- Discussion on the differences between dugongs and manatees and the fact that they are more closely related to elephants than whales and dolphins.
- In which part of the world are dugongs and their cousins the manatee found?

Discuss the impact that discarded fishing nets and plastic bags can have on dugongs and other marine animals.

- What can we do to stop pollution getting onto the ocean?

Discuss boatstrike, which affects not only dugongs but turtles as well. 'Go Slow for Those Below' areas have been introduced to some places in Australia.

Classroom Activities:

Pollution Awareness Poster: Children can create a poster that highlights the impact pollution has on the ocean and marine life. It could include what type of pollution they have seen in the ocean, beaches or surrounding areas, and what can be done to help reduce this pollution.

- Alternatively, these posters could be about a waterway, river or creek. For children who live in the city it could be about a park or the city streets where they live.

Pollution Themed Waterplay: Create a water tray with sea animals. Add objects to the water tray. Children use nets to retrieve the "pollutants". Children can then compare sizes of objects, count objects retrieved, sort objects, and look at objects that float/sink.

Author Motivation

With a love of the ocean and a passion for animals, Kerrie feels very lucky to live on the doorstep of the Moreton Bay Marine Park in Brisbane. The marine park is the only place in the world where dugongs live so close to a major city.

Working as a Teacher Aide for many years, Kerrie knows that picture books are not only a joy to read but an important learning tool. She hopes Stay Close will touch the readers heart and help them understand the importance of keeping our oceans clean and healthy.

Illustrator, Leanne Argent, has created stunning seascape spreads that illustrate the beauty of the ocean and the animals that call it home.

About the Author:

Working as a Teacher Aide, often reading with students and seeing the joy books brought to the children, Kerrie Uren knew she wanted to write a book of her own for children to enjoy. Kerrie knows the importance of keeping our oceans healthy to ensure the survival of the animals that call it home, and she believes picture books are not only a joy for the reader but a valuable learning tool. With a love of the ocean and a passion for animals, Kerrie feels very lucky to live on the doorstep of Moreton Bay in Queensland, Australia, where wildlife abounds.

About the Illustrator:

Leanne Argent is an illustrator and artist based in South Australia. Leanne realised her passion for illustration when she created a children's book while at high school. The support, encouragement and excitement that followed has led to Leanne illustrating over 50 children's books, mostly in watercolour. Her love for people and the environment are displayed beautifully within her illustrations.