

# THE WALRUS AND THE CARIBOU



EDUCATOR'S  
RESOURCE



BY **MAIKA HARPER**  
ILLUSTRATED BY **MARCUS CUTLER**

# THE WALRUS AND THE CARIBOU

## ABOUT THE BOOK

When the earth was new, words had the power to breathe life into the world. But when creating animals from breath, sometimes one does not get everything right on the first try! Based on a traditional Inuit story passed forward orally for generations across Nunavut, this book shares with young readers the origin of the caribou and the walrus—and tells of how very different these animals looked when they were first conceived.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Maika Harper is an Inuit Canadian actress and model born and raised in the Arctic. She briefly studied classical theatre in the BFA program at the University of Windsor before starring in APTN's hit dramatic comedy *Mohawk Girls* as Anna. She has also made appearances on *Kim's Convenience*, and most recently on *Burden of Truth*. In her spare time, she advocates for mental health awareness and mentors youth in Canada with Youth Fusion.

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Marcus Cutler is a children's illustrator whose work has appeared in over 100 client projects including magazines, educational books, mobile apps, and more. He lives in Ontario, Canada, with his wife and two daughters.

## PRE-READING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Before reading the book out loud to the class, show them the cover and ask: Do you recognize these animals? What is different about the way they look? Who do you think the woman on the cover is?
- Go to the book information page and read out loud the note from the publisher. Then ask: Do you know what a book publisher does? Why do you think the publisher put that note at the beginning of this story?

## DURING AND POST-READING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The following questions and discussion points can be used during and after reading *The Walrus and the Caribou*. Provide students with the chance to voice their own opinions, share their experiences, ask questions, or point out anything else they may notice about the book.



- Have you heard or read any other versions of this story before now? If so, did they have anything in common with this version? How were they different from this version? Have you heard or read other stories that remind you of this one, because they were about animals or about the interactions between humans and animals?
- In the introduction, the author says that the story “focuses on the power of willing intentions into creation.” What does she mean? Why could it be powerful to create something new? Do you know any other creation stories? Do they have a woman as the creator or a man?
- Are there storytellers in your family or community? Who are they? Do you enjoy hearing traditional stories from them, stories that have been passed down through generations? Where is your favourite place to be when you listen to stories?
- Talk about how the illustrator conveys the emotions of the characters with his pictures. Do the hunters look upset? How do the animals look—mad, confused, pleased? How is reading a story with pictures different from listening to a story and letting your imagination create the scenes? Which do you like better?
- Who are the main characters in this story? How does the illustrator give clues to each character’s personality with his pictures? How would you describe the illustrator’s style? Are the pictures funny or serious? Are they realistic pictures or are they more imaginative? Is there anything about his style that would help you recognize his art if you saw it in another book?
- One way the walrus and caribou are different is that one has tusks and one has antlers. What are some other differences between these two animals?
- Why does Guk decide to trade different parts of the animals’ bodies? Do you think her choice solved the problem of the upset hunters? Can you think of some animals that cause problems for humans in our modern world? Can you suggest a solution like Guk’s that would solve the problems?
- Think back to the time when this story was first told. Do you think it was created just to entertain the listeners, or was the storyteller trying to answer a question? Do you think the question might have been: Why does the walrus have such long tusks? Or, why are caribou afraid of humans?

## EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

### LANGUAGE ARTS AND ART

#### INTENTIONS

The last part of the story says, “If your intentions had the power of creation, what animal would you make? Would it have feathers? Or a big furry tail? Imagine the possibilities!” Describe the animal your imagination would come up with. After you’ve written the description, draw a picture of your imaginary animal.

## ORIGIN STORY

Choose something and write an original story about how it was created. It could be an animal, or it could be anything else: a plant, a mountain, a lake, a constellation. Then draw the picture that you'd like to be on the cover of your book.

## POINT OF VIEW

Write a story from the point of view of one of the humans in the story about how they were chased by a caribou, or had their kayak overturned by a walrus. It could be funny, scary, sad, or dramatic. Then illustrate one page of the story, comic-book style.

## THE BIG SWITCH

Pick two different animals and write a story similar to this one about how they were created, what they looked like, the problems that might have come up, and how the problem was solved by trading parts of their body. Draw a picture of their original forms, and then draw a picture of them after the switch.

