

Dugong Magic

by Deborah Kelly and illustrated by Lisa Stewart

Have you ever wondered what it is like to swim with a dugong?

In this serenely illustrated picture book written by Deborah Kelly and illustrated by Lisa Stewart, you will dive under the water and swim along with a mother and her calf, exploring their underwater world.

But not everything can remain calm under the ocean, especially if humans continue to act in the way we do.

Rubbish clogs up the water, leaving little sunlight to help the seagrass grow.

Fast boats rush and roar catching their tails and fishing nets snare their limbs. It's sad, it's lonely and it seems like life as we know it is not so good.

This picture book will really hit a nerve – there was no dancing around the topic in this book. The obvious was laid out for children and their adults to see. The reader will see that without making a change, these creatures are not going to do well in the current or future climate.

But luckily, there is hope and this is explored through a series of rhetorical questions that the reader can think about and answer themselves.

The sense of magic and past storytelling is also interwoven in the final page, reminding us of the myths and legends told by seafarers and the links Australian and Torres Strait Islanders have with the Dugongs.

As you finish this book, the sadness will ease but the thought will linger on – what can we do? Dugong Magic will really make you think about the actions you take each and every day.

The final page is adorned with facts about Dugongs, telling the readers where they live, how they communicate and how they are a part of Australian and Torres Strait Islander culture.

This book can be used far and wide in the classroom setting to discuss:

- Sustainability
 - – Look at your school’s excessive use of plastic – have a plastic free challenge at school! Have a waste audit! Look for alternatives.

- Our use of oceans
 - – how do we use it and how can we change our ways to care more for those who need it more than us?
 - Who needs the oceans to survive?
 - How have we changed oceans and is this for better or for worse all of the time?

- Dugongs life cycle
 - – relationship between the mother and calf.
 - How the babies are born and cared for
 - Where they live at different times of their lives.

- Plant life in the ocean.
 - – Case study on seagrass, where it is and how it grows