



## Pearl of the Sea

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The Otto Foundation Children's Book Award  
Chapter Book Winner

Pearl has always felt more comfortable in the sea than surrounded by the people in her sleepy South African town who always seem to let her down. But when a new friend from below the surface is taken by poachers, Pearl may need a little help after all.

Since her mother left, Pearl has spent more and more time in the ocean, fishing to help her father pay the bills. But when she gets mixed up with a group of illegal abalone poachers and starts diving near a restricted wreck, Pearl meets an ancient sea monster named Otto - who isn't quite as monstrous as she thought. When Otto's enemies come back to finish what they started, Pearl is the only one who can save him, but only if she has the courage to let go of her past and open up to others - including the girl from class she has a crush on.

With her one-eyed pup sidekick and a whole lot of nerve, Pearl may just be able to save Otto and finally tell the truth to her father... and, more importantly, to herself. With vibrant full-colour illustrations, Pearl of the Sea is a South African adventure story exploring how we are both bound to and freed by nature, seen through the eyes of a tough teen-aged heroine determined to live life by her own rules.

- Catalyst Press

## Teaching notes

These notes have been written by the Otto Foundation to provide teachers and caregivers with ideas to develop text comprehension and support literacy skills. They encourage deep reading of the text and illustrations, which may happen over a series of reading sessions, not just one sitting.

These notes have been written with Grade 4, 5, 6 and 7 readers in mind, but teachers and caregivers will need to adapt them to the age and experience of their readers.

## Themes

- Bravery/Courage
- Family/Parents
- Community
- Determination
- Taking a stand
- Friendship

## Before reading the story

- Open the discussion by allowing the children to share their initial responses to the front cover of the book. Encourage the children to discuss what they see and their responses to it.
  - *What do you notice about the cover illustration?*
  - *What does the cover illustration make you think about?*
  - *How does the cover illustration make you feel?*
  - *What do you like most about the cover illustration?*
- Explain that the title of the book is **Pearl of the Sea**. Ask the children to talk to each other to share their thoughts about the book title.
  - *What is a pearl?*
  - *Who is Pearl?*
  - *Can you think of a double meaning for this title?*
  - *What do you think you might know about Pearl?*
- Ask the children what they think this story might be about. Encourage them to explore their ideas around what the book could be about based on the cover illustration.
  - *What happens to Pearl in this book?*
  - *Who does Pearl meet during the story?*
  - *What do you notice about how Pearl is standing?*
- Read the back cover blurb to the children. Explore how they might change their ideas about the story now that they have more information.
  - *How does reading the blurb change what you thought might happen in the story?*

## Reading aloud discussion points

- Read pages 1 - 7 to the children and ask them to share their initial responses.
  - *Where was Pearl?*
  - *What was Pearl doing?*
  - *What sea creatures did Pearl come across underwater?*
  - **DANGER KEEP OUT** *Why do you think the danger sign was there?*
  - *What did Pearl collect from behind the fence?*
  - *What did you notice about the spear on page 7 and what made you think this?*
- Explore pages 8 - 11 with your children. Explain new vocabulary and phrases to them while reading the story and check their understanding of uncommon words.
  - *What was the name of Pearl's dog and what do you notice about his eye?*
  - The poachers described Moby as a "**pavement special**". *What does this phrase mean?*
  - *What is **abalone**?*
  - *How are poachers different from fishermen?*
- Be mindful that pages 12 – 15 cover socio-economic challenges. Ask your children to explore the signage and text shared in Pearl's environment.
  - **In debt? Need cash? Final notice.** *What do these signs imply?*

- Can you relate to Pearl getting ready for school and having chores and responsibilities at home?
- Discuss pages 16 - 18 by exploring Pearl's arrival at school.
  - What do you think of Pearl's teacher?
  - Who do you think Pearl could be friends with in her class?
  - Why do you think Pearl feels safest when she is alone in the water?
- Read pages 19 – 23 with your children.
  - Are there any characters who seem familiar in the story?
  - Do you think the deal Pearl made with the poachers was a good idea? Why or why not?
  - What would you have done if you were in Pearl's position?
- Pearl goes back to the ocean from pages 24 – 32.
  - Do you think Pearl should have gone back behind the **DANGER KEEP OUT** sign?
  - What did Pearl use to get through the underwater fence?
  - What do you notice at the bottom of the ship on page 27?
  - What do you think made Pearl curious about the spear?
  - How did you feel when the sea monster's eye opened?
  - What took you by surprise in this part of the story?
- From page 33 – 35 Pearl arrives home and has an argument with her dad.
  - Do you think Pearl and her dad were being fair with one another? Why or why not?
  - **Gasp!** What do you think upset Pearl most about what her dad said?
- Pearl meets someone new on pages 36 – 38.
  - The old sailor asks Pearl: "**Looking for something?**" Why did Pearl lie to the old sailor?
  - What did you notice about the old sailor? Why do you think his legs might hurt?
  - Look closely at the illustration on page 38. What do you think the old sailor's name could be?
- Pearl is frustrated on page 39
  - Pearl says: "**Ag nee!**". What language is this expression from and what does it mean?
- There is a school visit to the West Coast Marine Museum from pages 40 – 43. Take time to unpack unfamiliar vocabulary with your children.
  - What would you expect to see at a Marine Museum?
  - What is an **ammonite**?
  - Where has Pearl seen an **ammonite** before?
  - What does it mean for something to be **extinct**?
  - What other **extinct** creatures can you name?
  - What idea did Pearl have about earning extra money for her family?
- From pages 42 – 51 Pearl goes back underwater to visit the sea monster.
  - Do you think what Pearl is doing is a good idea? Why or why not?

- What does **lure** mean?
  - How does Pearl **lure** the sea monster out?
  - Is the sea monster what you expected?
  - How would you have felt if you were Pearl and you saw the sea monster was injured?
  - Do you think Pearl did the right thing in trying to remove the spear from the sea monster? Why or why not?
  - Look closely at the expression on Pearl's face at the end of page 51. How do you think Pearl was feeling?
- Pearl gets back to her boat and narrowly escapes being caught by the police on pages 52 – 55.
    - What did Pearl find to make some extra money?
    - The words **wee-ooo-wee-ooo** mean trouble: Who was coming for Pearl? What other vehicles usually make this sound?
    - Why is what Pearl was doing wrong?
    - Do you want Pearl to escape or be caught at this point of the story? Why?
- Pearl meets the sea monster again on pages 56 – 59. Look carefully at the illustration on page 56.
    - How do you think Pearl feels as the sea monster appears?
    - How did the sea monster communicate with Pearl?
    - Unpack the illustrations on pages 58 – 59 carefully. What is happening in these frames?
- Read pages 60 – 63 with your children.
    - Why did Pearl feel she had to sneak out of the house?
    - What do you think her dad would say if he caught her sneaking out?
    - How do you think Pearl's dog Moby feels about her sneaking out?
- Pearl goes back to visit Rusty the old sailor from pages 64 – 66.
    - Where did Pearl find the coin she wants to sell to Rusty?
    - Do you think Rusty could be a friend to Pearl? Why or why not?
    - Pearl steals something that Rusty needs when she is visiting him. What does Pearl steal?
    - Why is it dangerous for Pearl to take the sleeping tablets from Rusty?
- Read pages 67 – 69 with your children.
    - What lie did Pearl tell Naomi?
    - Why did Pearl lie to Naomi?
    - Look closely at what Pearl is doing on page 69 and the word **crunch**. Why do you think Pearl mixed the sleeping tablets with the fish heads?
    - How do you think Moby felt about what Pearl is doing?
- Pearl goes back to see the sea monster from pages 70 – 76.
    - Why do you think Pearl has gone back to see the sea monster?
    - What happens when the sea monster tried to eat the fish heads?
    - Why did the sea monster start to fall asleep?
    - What happened when Pearl removed the spears from the sea monster?

- Pearl says: **“Okay, you should be back to your, um ... tentacles in no time.”** What is a tentacle? What kind of animal has tentacles?
  - How do you think the sea monster will be feeling after it has had a nap?
- Read pages 77 – 79 with your class.
    - Why do you think Pearl asked her dad if he was alright?
    - Pearl’s dad says: **“I don’t want your dirty money”**. What is **dirty money**?
    - What did Pearl do to get **dirty money**?
    - Pearl is annoyed when her dad tells her she should be **“...chasing boys”**. Why would Pearl be annoyed by her dad saying this?
- Pearl returns to the sea monster’s cave from pages 80 – 89.
    - How did the sea monster look different than before?
    - What has changed about the relationship between Pearl and the sea monster?
    - What did the sea monster do that is very helpful to Pearl?
    - The sea monster got a fright when it heard the sound of a larger boat. Why do you think the sea monster was afraid?
    - What did Pearl do to understand the sea monster better?
    - How was the sea monster’s story different from what you might have expected?
- On pages 90 – 93 the sea monster takes a bracelet from Pearl.
    - Why was the bracelet so important to Pearl?
    - Do you think **Otto** is a good name for the sea monster?
    - If you were Pearl what would you have named the sea monster?
- Pearl returns home with a good **haul** of fish on pages 94 – 95. Take time to unpack unfamiliar vocabulary with your children.
    - What does **haul** mean?
    - Why did the poachers want to keep a special eye on Pearl?
    - What is a **harpoon**?
    - Where else have you seen a **harpoon** in the story so far?
    - What do you think Rusty might want a **harpoon** for?
- Explore the illustrations on pages 96 – 103 and ask your children to tell the story of what happens over these pages.
    - Is there anything that took you by surprise?
    - What illustrations would you have liked more of?
    - Which details helped you to ‘see’ what was happening in the story best?
- Read pages 104 – 109 with your children. Take time to unpack unfamiliar vocabulary with your children.
    - How did the poachers know where to find Otto?
    - What was different about Otto when he met the poachers?
    - Why was the poacher surprised when he saw Otto?
    - A poacher shouted: **“Stop gawking”**. What does **gawking** mean?
- Be mindful that pages 110 – 114 explore themes of parental abandonment. Take time to unpack unfamiliar phrases with your children.
    - Do you think Pearl’s dad was being fair about moving to the city?

- Pearl's mom left because she was in a **difficult place**. What does it mean if someone is in a **difficult place**?
  - What kind of difficulties do adults sometimes experience?
  - How can we help friends who might be in a **difficult place**?
  - Pearl went to visit Otto, but he was gone. Where had Otto gone?
  - Is Pearl correct in thinking that everyone leaves her?
  - Who are other characters in the story who have been there for Pearl?
- On pages 115 -117 Naomi tries to comfort Pearl.
    - If you were Pearl would you trust Naomi? Why or why not?
    - Why did Naomi say Pearl is in a **shell**?
    - What does it mean to be in a **shell**?
- Naomi gives Pearl a book called **Monsters of the Deep** and Pearl noticed something interesting about the book on page 118.
    - What did Pearl notice in the book?
    - What role do you think Rusty has played in Otto's life?
    - Do you think Rusty would be trustworthy? Why or why not?
- Read pages 120 – 129 with your children.
    - How do you feel about Pearl's dad joining the adventure?
    - What do you think Pearl wanted to tell her dad about her and boys?
    - Which details in the illustrations help you to see what was happening to Otto best?
    - Pearl was very brave in trying to save Otto. What other characters in stories do you know of who have been brave?
- On pages 130 – 133 Rusty blames Otto for him being in a wheelchair.
    - What happened between Rusty and Otto in the past?
    - Do you think it is right for Rusty to blame Otto for what happened to him?
- Look at the illustrations from pages 134 – 140 carefully. Encourage your children to discuss and unpack this dramatic part of the story.
    - What do you notice about Otto's expressions?
    - How have the illustrations changed to show the mood of the story?
    - What did Pearl do to try to communicate with Otto?
- From pages 141 – 145 Rusty went overboard and was rescued.
    - Do you think Rusty deserved to be saved?
    - Was it Pearl or Otto who saved Rusty?
    - What was Rusty's reaction to seeing Otto?
- Read pages 146 – 147 with your children.
    - What do you think the people on the shore saw?
    - Why do you think Moby jumped up to knock the camera out of the photographer's hand?
- Look at the illustrations on pages 148 – 151 with your children.
    - How did Otto feel about Pearl telling him that it is unsafe for him to stay there?

- How can you tell how Otto is feeling?
- How do you feel looking at the ocean without Otto there?
- On pages 152 – 153 Pearl and the smugglers get back to shore. Rusty says: **“I can’t believe he saved me, after what I did”**.
  - What did Rusty do to Otto?
  - Why do you think Otto decided to save Rusty?
  - What is a **muff**?
  - Why was Pearl so pleased that Moby ruined the photographer's photo?
- From pages 154 – 155 we learn a lot has changed in Pearl's fishing village.
  - Why are things different in the fishing village now?
  - Can you name any other famous land or sea monsters you have heard of?
  - How do we know that Pearl will be staying in the fishing village and not moving to the city?
- Read pages 156 – 160 with your children.
  - Rusty sold Pearl's coin as an **antique**. What does it mean for something to be **antique**?
  - Where will Pearl go to find more coins?
  - Why do you think Pearl felt it was time to let the bracelet from her mom go?
  - Where do you think Pearl will take Naomi diving?
  - If you were Pearl, would you introduce Naomi to Otto?

## Topics for discussion after reading the story

- Explore with your children:
  - What did you like most about this story?
  - If you were writing this story, what would happen next in the story?
  - What did you notice that was special about the way illustrations were used in this book?
  - What is something you have learnt from reading this story?
  - Has anything that happened in this book ever happened to you?
  - What would you tell your friends about this book?
  - What graphic novel do you want to read next?

## Activity ideas for after reading the story

- Pages 96 – 103 are all illustrations. Ask your children to write captions for them, describing what was happening in the story.
- Ask your children to develop ideas for their own graphic novel in small groups.
  - Who are the characters? What is the setting? What is the plot?
  - Draw an illustration of a main event from your story
- Explore other graphic novels with your children to promote more reading of this genre and ask them which other graphic novels they have read and enjoyed. Create a display of graphic novels the children would recommend to other readers.

## CAPS skills covered in teaching notes

### Listening and speaking

#### Grade 4

- Predict what a text could be about
- Identify characters
- Name characters correctly
- Listen for main message and specific details
- Describe events
- Identify specific details
- Discuss main ideas and specific details
- Express feelings in relation to events
- Express thoughts and feelings about a story/characters/setting or theme of a text
- Relate to own life experiences
- Answer oral questions based on the text
- Participate in group discussions
- Take turns to speak
- Share ideas, opinions and participate in the discussion
- Ask relevant questions
- Keep to the topic
- Maintain discussions
- Respond to others' ideas with empathy and respect

### Reading and viewing

#### Grade 4

- Pre reading: Make predictions for the title and cover of the text
- Predict from title and discuss related themes/content
- Make predictions
- Identify and explain central events
- Identify and comment on the plot, setting and characters
- Discuss characters
- Give reasons for the actions of characters
- Give and explain own feelings about the text
- Express emotional response to text read
- Identify and discuss values in the text
- Use reading strategies: Make predictions and use contextual cues
- Use contextual cues to make meaning
- Discuss message/moral of the story
- Reflect on text read
- Infer meaning of unfamiliar words and images
- Use reading comprehension strategies: Visualisation and making connections
- Determine the impact of visual techniques
- Discuss new vocabulary from the text
- Understand vocabulary

### Listening and speaking

#### Grade 5

- Make predictions
- Describe events
- Identify and explain cause and effect
- Comment on social, moral and cultural values
- Ask critical questions
- Express and justify own opinion with reasons
- Use information from the text in response to questions
- Identify main ideas and specific details
- Identify central idea, plot, setting and characters
- Relate text content to own life
- Discuss and give own opinion
- Express thoughts and feelings about the storyline
- Participate in group discussions
- Ask relevant questions
- Justify own opinion
- Maintain discussion
- Take turns to speak
- Respond to others' ideas with empathy and respect

### Reading and viewing

#### Grade 5

- Pre reading: Predict from title and pictures and discuss related themes/content
- Comment on choice of pictures in text
- Share ideas and offers opinion using speculation
- Use reading strategies: Contextual clues and prior knowledge
- Discuss characters
- Give reason for actions of characters
- Discuss the central idea, plot, characters and setting
- Discuss cause and effect in the story
- Identify and discuss feelings expressed in text
- Express own feelings and opinion
- Identify and explain how central events and characters relate to own life
- Infer the meaning of unfamiliar words and images
- Discuss new vocabulary from text

## Listening and speaking

### Grade 6

- Predict what will happen in a story
- Discuss main ideas and specific details
- Identify themes
- Discuss characters
- Discuss plot, conflict and setting
- Discuss messages in text
- Discuss responses to text
- Discuss social, moral and cultural values in text
- Relate ideas to own life experiences
- Ask relevant questions and respond appropriately
- Stay on topic
- Explain logically
- Interact positively during group discussions
- Respond to others' ideas with empathy and respect

## Reading and viewing

### Grade 6

- Pre reading: Make predictions based on title and/or graphics and related themes/content
- Make predictions about the text
- Ask questions about the text
- Make inferences about the text
- Visualise parts of the text
- Identify and explain the central idea
- Interpret and discuss the text
- Discuss plot, theme, setting and characters
- Discuss suspense and twist
- Critically discusses cultural and social values in the text
- Relate events and characters to own life
- Show understanding of the text and relationship to own life
- Identify and discuss feelings expressed in text
- Express emotional response to texts read
- Identify different perspectives
- Give own perspective based on evidence in the text
- Infer meaning of unfamiliar words and images
- Invent or describe preferred results or endings

## Listening and speaking

### Grade 7

- Make predictions from cover page and blurb
- Confirm predictions
- Identify main and supporting ideas
- Make inferences
- Share ideas and experiences to show understanding of concepts
- Share ideas and opinions
- Identify characters
- Identify main and supporting ideas
- Use appropriate language
- Answer questions

## Reading and viewing

### Grade 7

- Make predictions
- Make connections
- Identify key features of a text such as characters, plot, setting, conflict, theme and message
- Discuss main ideas and themes
- Discuss fact or opinion in text
- Infer meaning of unfamiliar words
- Infer meaning and conclusions
- Visualise parts of the text
- Identify formal/informal language in the text
- Answer questions based on text