

## These notes are for:

- Years 5, 6, 7 & 8
- Middle Years

## Key Learning Areas:

- English
- HSIE/SOSE
- Music & Creative Arts

## Example of:

- Junior Fiction
- Historical Fiction

## Experience of:

- Cultures and Other Lands
- Heritage and Identity
- Beliefs and Myths

## Values addressed:

- Understanding, tolerance & inclusion
- Honesty & Trustworthiness
- Care & Compassion

## Themes:

- Friendship
- Destiny
- Bullying
- Survival

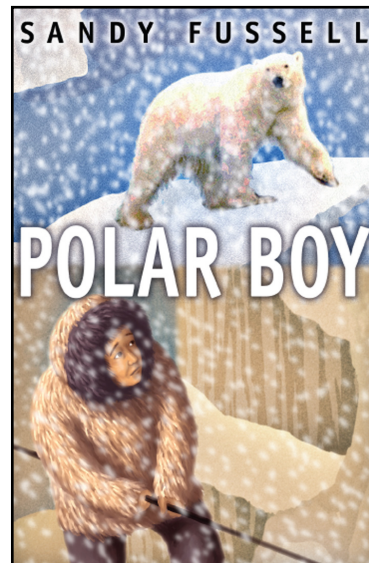
\*Notes may be downloaded and printed for regular classroom use only.

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## Polar Boy - Overview



### Polar Boy

By: Sandy Fussell  
 ISBN: 9781921150388  
 ARRP: \$14.95  
 NZRRP: \$16.99  
 No. of Pages: 208  
 August 2008

## Outline:

Set in a 13th century polar community, a young boy's destiny transforms him from a frightened child into a courageous hero.

Iluak, a Thule (too-lee) boy, has been told by his grandmother that it is his fate to save his people from a bear. But the mere thought of a polar bear makes Iluak's stomach churn and he lives in fear of this destined encounter. When Iluak summons the courage to rescue a Northman (Viking) child from a polar bear he realises there is a far greater challenge involved in the prophecy – two very different cultures are about to collide head-on.

**Polar Boy** is a brilliantly researched & evocative tale of a fascinating time rarely written about in popular culture.

## Author Information:

**Sandy Fussell** lives south of Sydney with her husband and two sons. She studied mathematics at university, is intensely interested in history and now works in IT. From the moment she could read, Sandy loved books and always wanted to be a writer. In school, she wrote what she refers to as "booklets" and "terrible plays that the teacher made the class perform". After school, Sandy forgot about writing for a long time and started a family. She came back to writing after one of her children stopped reading and she suggested that they write a book together.

Sandy's first children's novel *Samurai Kids Book 1: White Crane* was released in March 2008, *Polar Boy* is her second novel.

## How to use these notes:

These notes were prepared by Sandy Fussell and Sue Whiting. This story works on many levels. The suggested activities are therefore for a wide age and ability range. Please select accordingly.

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**Sandy Fussell on writing *Polar Boy*:**

"I read an account of a discussion between the Danish polar explorer Knud Rasmussen and Aua, a shaman of the arctic Igulik people. Rasmussen asked why the Igulik followed certain customs and each time the shaman's answer was 'because we are always afraid'. He showed Rasmussen examples of how his peoples' harsh, bleak life was ruled by continual fear – starvation, the ice, the beasts of the land and sea and the dead souls of men and animals. I felt a great sadness for their struggle but at the same time, enormous admiration for their spirit.

I wanted to write about their fears and triumphs. I just knew there was a great story there, if I could find it. Because I love history, I went back 650 years. I discovered life was the same even then for the people of the High Arctic – except for one thing – the Vikings were coming.

I had my story."

**Classroom activities for *Polar Boy*:****English:**

- The opening page says that Iluak is afraid of "whiter things"? What was Iluak afraid of? List. Why do you think he was afraid of these things? If you were Iluak would you be afraid of them? What are you afraid of? Why? Do you think everyone has fears? Discuss. How can you overcome your fears?
- Iluak believes himself to be a coward. Do you agree? Gather evidence from the book to support your position.
- What is a prophecy? What is Nana's prophecy? Why do the villagers believe Nana? What is her role in the village? What is a shaman? Do you think Tuaq will make a good shaman? Why/why not?
- Iluak and Tuaq don't get on at the beginning of the story. Why do you think this is so? How and why does their relationship change?
- Read chapter 10. Discuss how this scene about the killing of whales made you feel. Research whaling – its history and its place today. What is your opinion about whaling today. Should it be allowed? Why/why not? Should modern day Inuit peoples be allowed to hunt whales using traditional methods?
- Read pp 26-29 where igloo building is described. What are the steps involved? Write a procedure for igloo building.
- Iluak and Miki play Ice-spy (I Spy). Play this word game, being careful to only spy things you would see in the High Arctic.
- An onomatopoeia is a word which describes a sound. There are many of these in *Polar Boy* e.g. Kerplunk, tunk, phlock, cra-ack, glp, scritch-scratch. Make a list of onomatopoeias and what they are describing.

**HSIE/SOSE:**

- In the High Arctic, above the tree line, there is no wood, no metal and few plants. Many of our every day items are made from these things. What did the 14th century Thule (Too-lee) people use for – clothing, sewing needles and thread, housing, saucepans, boats, travel, furniture, lighting?
- Research the animals and birds that appear in *Polar Boy* – whale, seal, arctic hare, arctic fox, wolf, lemming, snowy owl, polar bear. Write an information report about one of them.
- The Viking and Thule (Toolee) Inuit people were physically very different. Make a list of any differences and similarities e.g. hair colour, eye colour, height, complexion. (Note: Iluak looks like a Too-lee boy and Finn looks like a Viking boy.)
- Research the phenomenon known as 'the northern lights'.
- There are many polar bear facts in *Polar Boy*. List five from the book or your own research.

**Music:**

- Inuit women practised a special type of singing called throat-singing. Write a short exposition explaining what this is. Listen to a sound clip on the internet.

**Creative Arts**

- Inuit children, like Miki, played cats cradle string games using string made from caribou skin. Today the game is still played using wool or cotton. Attempt some cats cradle string games (examples can be found at <http://www.alyson.org/figures/main.htm>)