



Inquire to Learn!

There are many ways in which *The Woman Who Was Swallowed by a Whale/Niue: Rock of Polynesia* can be used as a base for Inquiry Learning. This is just one suggestion.

Session 1

Using the Big Book, share-read *The Woman Who Was Swallowed by a Whale*, stopping at natural points for discussion. Draw on the students' prior knowledge of hiapo (tapa) and similar cloth from the Pacific, whales, and barnacles.

Possible Starter Questions for Discussion

Hiapo Bark Cloth: *What is hiapo?* Discuss that hiapo is Niuean bark cloth or tapa cloth. Hiapo was traditionally made by pounding the inner bark of the paper mulberry tree. The cloth was decorated with patterns of fine lines, including spirals, circles, squares, and triangles, as well as leaves and human figures. Hiapo, like other tapa cloth, was used for clothing, bedding, and wall hangings. Niuean hiapo stopped being produced in the late 1800s.

Whales: *Are there whales in the waters around Niue?* Tell the students that from July to October each year, humpback whales migrate to the waters around Niue to give birth to and nurse their calves. During this time, whales are frequently heard singing (only the males sing) and slapping their fins against the water. The whales come very close to the shore in Niue because the water surrounding it is very deep.

Barnacles: *What is a barnacle?* A barnacle is a creature which lives in seawater and attaches itself permanently to a hard surface such as a pier, boat, rock, or another animal such as a turtle or a whale. Barnacles are very difficult to remove.

Text and Illustration Based Inquiry Questions

Cover: Look at the cover and read the title. Ask, *Do you think a woman could really be swallowed by a whale? Why/why not?* Based on the cover illustration, ask the students to predict what may happen in this story from Niue. Look at the shells in the woman's waistband and the cameo illustration on the title page and tell the students that these are sharpened shells that are used to scratch designs into hiapo prior to painting.

PP. 2–3: Revisit the text and share with the students that Tale is a shortened name for Mataginifale, who is said to have lived in the village of Avatele. Tell the students that making hiapo, like other Pacific barkcloth, was traditionally a women's art form.

PP. 4–5: Revisit the text and note the word *torrent*. Share with the students that *torrent* is used on P. 4 to refer to a strong and fast-moving stream of water. The word *torrent* can also mean an overwhelming outpouring of something, usually words. Tale's speech on P. 5 and P. 6 could also be described as a torrent.

PP. 6–7: Review the text and ask, *Do you think Tale should accept the whale's apology? Why/why not?* Review the word *coral* and define it as a tiny soft-bodied animal that lives inside a stony skeleton as part of a large colony. In warm seas, coral can form large reefs. *Does the whale threaten Tale or warn her?* What is the difference?

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Teacher's Notes continued

PP. 8–9: Review the opening sentence and ask the students for a definition of *foolish*. If necessary, tell the students that *foolish* means lacking good sense or judgement; unwise. Ask, *Why was it foolish for Tale to throw something at the whale? Why did “the old whale shake his giant head at Tale?”* Share with the students that the whale shaking his head, plus his ability to speak, is an example of anthropomorphism, which is the literary technique of giving human characteristics, emotions, and behaviours to animals or other non-human things. As a class, brainstorm examples of anthropomorphism from books e.g. *Winnie the Pooh*, *Charlotte’s Web*, *The Cat in the Hat*, *How Water Came to Be* (StoryWorld 3, Set B), *How Kiwi Lost His Wings* (StoryWorld 3, Set A), *The Laughing Rabbit* (StoryWorld 3, Set A), *Anansi and the Pot of Wisdom* (StoryWorld 3, Set A), *The Elephant’s Nose* (StoryWorld 3, Set A).

PP. 10–11: Review the text and illustration and ask, *How has the illustrator shown that Tale is inside the whale’s belly?* (With the use of the red background, stomach fluids, and “goo” covering Tale). Ask, *How is it that Tale did not get chewed up by the whale?* Share with the students that the whale is a humpback, which is a type of baleen whale. Baleen whales do not have teeth. Instead, they have fringed overlapping plates that hang down from their upper jaw. Humpback whales eat small fish, krill, and plankton. To feed, they suck in large amounts of water and filter out the sea creatures as food.

PP. 12–13: Review the text and illustration and ask, *How does the illustration support the meaning of the text?* (It shows multiple views of the whale tossing and rolling in the ocean.) *Why is the whale doing this?* (To try and get Tale to stop scraping and scratching at his belly.) Look at the song and point out the rhyming words: *whale/tail, scratch/match*. Tell the students that rhyming couplets are a traditional rhyme scheme for simple songs and nursery rhymes. Each couplet (two lines) contains one idea. Rhyming couplets create a kind of beat, or rhythm.

PP. 14–15: Review the text and ask, *What was Tale hoping would happen?* (That to get her to stop scratching and scraping, the whale would open his mouth and she would be able to swim out.) *What did happen?* (The whale dived down deep and then swam straight up again to upset Tale’s balance and stop her scratching and scraping.) Ask, *When you look at this illustration treatment, what does it remind you of?* (A comic book or graphic novel.) *Why has the illustration been designed in this way?* (To show the reader the action and its consequence at the same time.) *How do you think Tale is feeling?* (Scared that she may never get out of the whale’s belly and physically sick from being thrown about.)

PP. 16–17: Review the text and ask the students to point out two examples of alliteration: *tossing and turning, scratching and scraping*. If necessary, remind the students that alliteration is the repetition of the same sound or letter at the beginning of closely connected words. Ask, *Why did Tale scratch pictures into the whale’s belly and sing a song as she worked.* (To keep her attention and focus on the work of trying to get out of the whale and to keep her spirits up.)

PP. 18–19: Revisit the text and illustration and ask the students what it is called when a whale gets stranded on land (beached). Tell the students that scientists believe that strandings of single whales are often the result of illness, old age, or injury. Share with the students that the distance between Niue and Tonga is 604 kilometres.

PP. 20–21: Review the text and illustration and ask, *How do you think Tale is feeling?* (hopeful, determined, excited)

PP. 22–23: Review the text and illustration and discuss how *the sunlight* could be seen as a metaphor for the safety and life-affirming characteristics of belonging to a community. Ask, *How do you think Tale is feeling when she is helped by the chief?* (relieved, welcomed, grateful)

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Teacher's Notes continued

P. 24: Revisit the text and ask, *How did Tale show bravery?* (She didn't give up with her plan of how to get out of the whale, despite the fact that she must have felt scared and overwhelmed.)

Further Discussion and Inquiry Extension

Have a class discussion on whether or not the students think *The Woman Who Was Swallowed by a Whale* is based on a true story or not. Some students may be familiar with other stories of people being swallowed by a whale e.g. Geppetto, Jiminy Cricket, and Pinocchio in *Pinocchio*, and the "Jonah and the Whale" story from the *Bible*.

As a class, do an animal study on humpback whales. How big are they? What are they known for? Why do humpback whales migrate? What else can you learn about humpback whales?

Invite the students to write their own stories about being swallowed by a whale. What happened and how did it happen? Did they get out? How?

Share-read other folk tales from Niue such as *The Tokamotu* (Tuapa), *Mataginifale and the Turtle* (Avatele), *The Pigeon and the Ant* (Hakupu), *Pepe and Kufani* (Liku). These stories can be found at www.learnniue.co.nz

Invite the students to retell the story of *The Woman Who Was Swallowed by a Whale* through their own hiapo design. Hiapo, unlike other barkcloth arts, sometimes included images of people and contemporary events. Scan or photograph the visual art and email to info@cleanslatepress.com with the artist's name, age, and school. The best artworks will be posted on the Clean Slate Press Facebook page and the artist will receive a prize.

Share-read other folk tales and legends about whales e.g. *Paikea, the Whale Rider*; *How the Whale Got His Throat*; *How Rabbit Fooled the Whale and the Elephant*; *King Sulemani and the Hungry Whale*.

Session 2

Using the Big Book, share-read *Niue: Rock of Polynesia*, stopping at natural points for discussion. Draw on the students' prior knowledge of Niue and Niuean culture; coral islands and reefs; caves and rock formations; citizenship; flags; Reserves and National Parks; art, literature, and crafts.

Possible Starter Questions for Discussion and Inquiry

Niuean Greeting: *Does anyone know how to greet someone in Niuean? It is fakaalofa atu.*

Cover and Contents Page: Look at the cover of *Niue: Rock of Polynesia* and ask, *Why do you think Niue is sometimes called the "Rock of Polynesia"? What can you tell about Niue by looking at this photo?*

Location of Niue/Geography: Look at the map on P. 1 of *Niue: Rock of Polynesia* and note the location of Niue in relation to New Zealand. Direct the students' attention to the first two sentences and then refer to a map of Polynesia and note the location of Niue, Samoa, Tonga, and the Cook Islands. Tell the students that all flights to Niue depart from Auckland airport and the trip takes around three hours and twenty-five minutes. Ensure that the students understand that all international travellers to Niue must first travel to Auckland, New Zealand, to get to Niue. Ask, *What kind of relationship do you think the people of Niue have with New Zealand?* If any of the students come from Niue or have visited it, invite them to share their experiences.

Coral Islands and Reefs: Ask, *What is coral?* Explain to the students that coral is a hard stony substance made up of small living creatures and the skeletons of dead creatures. Revisit the bodycopy and



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caption on P. 1 of *Niue: Rock of Polynesia* and explain that a coral island is a type of island formed from coral and a coral reef is a ridge of rock formed in the sea by coral.

Caves and Rock Formations: Revisit the photo essay “A Coastline of Caves” on PP. 2–3 of *Niue: Rock of Polynesia* and ask, *What is erosion?* If necessary, share with the students that erosion is the process of being worn away by water or wind. Ask, *What do you think is the main cause of erosion on Niue?* Discuss that the movement of the sea around Niue is constantly wearing away, or eroding, its soft limestone cliffs, creating caves, arches, and chasms (deep, narrow openings in the ground).

Citizenship: Reread the caption on P. 4 of *Niue: Rock of Polynesia* about the people of Niue being New Zealand citizens and ask, *What is a citizen?* Share with the students that a citizen is a person who is a member of a particular country and is allowed to enjoy the legal rights and privileges of that country, such as to hold a NZ passport, receive publicly funded healthcare, vote in NZ elections, and be eligible for educational benefits such as subsidized fees and scholarships.

Flags: Reread the caption on P. 4 of *Niue: Rock of Polynesia* about the Niuean flag and ask, *Why do nations/countries have flags? What does the Niuean flag tell us about Niue?* Discuss that flags are national symbols and provide a country with a way of displaying itself to the rest of the world. Each colour, symbol, coat of arms, or emblem used in a flag has a specific meaning. Niue’s flag tells the world about its relationship with New Zealand and its historical relationship with the United Kingdom. It also describes where Niue is geographically placed.

Reserves and National Parks: Reread the caption on P. 4 of *Niue: Rock of Polynesia* about the Huvalu Conservation Area and ask, *What is a reserve?* If necessary, share with the students that a reserve is an area of land or water that has been set aside to protect the plants and animals that live there. Share with the students that the

Huvalu Conservation Area covers 20 percent of the total land area of Niue. Ask, *Why is it important that governments protect areas of land or water as reserves or national parks?* (So that plants and animals are able to live in their natural environment and to preserve these ecosystems for the enjoyment of future generations.)

Art, Literature, and Crafts: Revisit the caption on P. 5 of *Niue: Rock of Polynesia* about crafts and PP. 6–7 and point out to the students that traditional crafts, such as hiapo, are often an influence on contemporary art, as is the case with the work of John Pule. Ask, *Should art and literature stay the same over time or should it grow and change? Why?* Reread the report on Hikulagi Sculpture Park on P. 8 and ask, *How can art make people think more about pollution and climate change? Can anyone make art? Why/why not?*

Further Discussion and Inquiry Extension

Challenge the students to research and find out about caves and rock formations in New Zealand or Australia. Using PP. 2–3 of *Niue: Rock of Polynesia* as a model, ask them to present their findings as a photo essay.

Invite the students to research flags from a range of countries. What do the colours and symbols on the flags stand for? How many flags can they identify?

Invite the students to pick one Niuean village and learn more about it. What is it called? Where is it located? How many people live in the village? Is it known for anything in particular? Are any interesting sites close by?

Using PP. 6–7 of *Niue: Rock of Polynesia* as a model, invite the students to write a biography of a family member. Questions to consider are: Who are they? Where were they born and where did they grow up? Where do they live now? Who do they live with? What work do they do? What interests do they have?



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Teacher's Notes continued

Learn about the arts and crafts of Niue, such as weaving, carving, and the making of vaka (canoes). It may be possible to arrange a demonstration or lesson on Niuean arts and crafts from members of your local Niuean community.

Learn about traditional Niuean “Coming of Age” ceremonies – haircutting for boys and ear piercing for girls.

Using P. 8 of *Niue: Rock of Polynesia* as a springboard, invite the students to collect inorganic waste and other interesting objects and create a class or school sculpture. Ask the students to think about what the sculpture means or stands for and give their artwork a name. Send a photo of the artwork and information on who made it and what it stands for to info@cleanslatepress.com. The best artworks will be posted on the Clean Slate Press Facebook page and the artist or class will receive a prize.

If the students are unfamiliar with Niuean foods such as taro, tapioca or cassava, and yams it may be possible to bring in samples or visit a fruit and vegetable market.