Welcome Home, Bear

A Book of Animal Habitats, by Il Sung Na

About this book

Welcome Home, Bear: A Book of Animal Habitats transports young readers to the tops of the forest canopy where birds reside and to the dusty tunnels of moles. We journey to cliffs, oceans, polar regions, deserts, rain forests, and African rivers. Na’s digitally manipulated textures are comforting and unique, allowing young readers to feel kinship as well as a sense of wonder and adventure. Like many young children, Bear sees the birds and another bear and camels and octopuses and yearns to live as they do. The reality of mud and ice and heights and depths helps Bear understand the blessings of home. Na has created a stunning introduction to habitats with artwork that all ages will adore. The minimal text is perfect for the youngest scholars. This book will also provoke discussions about what makes a house a home.

About this author

Originally from South Korea, Il Sung Na studied illustration at Kingston University in London. He went on to complete his MFA in Illustration Practice at MICA (Maryland Institute College of Art). Na has been writing and illustrating since 2006.

More from Il Sung Na

A Book of Sleep
The Thingamabob
Snow Rabbit, Snow Rabbit
Hide & Seek
A Book of Babies
The Opposite Zoo
Begin with a discussion of where children might like to live. Collect ideas and then ask the class to create a list of things they would need to bring with them or things that would need to be in place for living there to work well. Ask questions about food, temperature, housing, safety, friends, activities, and more: Is this new place warm or cold? What will you eat?

When the discussion is done, summarize the findings in terms of attributes. The book uses high, stuffy, steep, deep, cold, hot, rainy, and muddy. Use these, but feel free to add other sorting criteria as well, depending on the class discussion.

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Before you read

- When working with young children on a new book, it is important to deal with concepts of print. Begin with a close examination of the book. Ask for predictions before even opening it. Explain that good readers make predictions and ask questions right from the start. What does “Welcome Home, Bear” mean? What other animals might be in this book? Who has questions about what the phrase “Animal Habitats” means? Ask for class responses to the silhouette on the top of the back cover. Does anyone need to change a prediction or add to it? Explore the endpapers. Ask for predictions about what Bear is doing on the rock on the dedication page.

- Names can be hard for young readers to pronounce. Use Il Sung Na’s name as an example to review an important reading strategy. That strategy states that when reading an unfamiliar name, it can be hard only once. Until someone provides the correct pronunciation, keep reading the name the same way each time. This is also a good time to explore with children cultural information about Korean names. Korean people do not have middle names. Il Sung (IHL SONG) is the author’s first name, and Na (NAH) is his last name.

- Another variation is to show pictures of things like a duck in a desert, a snake in snow, an elephant in a forest with some deer, a Chihuahua in a rain forest, a zebra in the mountains, etc. Ask children to identify the problem and explain what is wrong. Check for group consensus. After listening to the explanations, share several pictures of these animals in their correct habitat.

- A black bear does not belong in the desert or at the North Pole. Young children need practice differentiating between things that belong and things that do not go together. Before reading, play a matching game. Put together a collection of pictures of various animals and a variety of habitats (pictures of deserts, meadows, plains, grassy fields, jungles, rivers, oceans, etc.). Have children match the pictures of the animals with the habitat that looks most like where the animal might live. When collecting the pictures, look for ones that have animals that can be cut out of the habitat, which will allow children access to more visual clues when matching. You could even make puzzles with two or more pieces. After the children have matched animals with habitats, show the correct pairings.

- For older children, add elements to the matching: types of animal food, other plants, and other animals also found in the same habitats. Add a social studies component by including the types of housing found in deserts, cold climates, rain forests, and more. Have children explain why houses may be on stilts or made from mud. Have children compare and contrast the habitats. How are a meadow and a river the same, and how are they different? How is a grass shack like an underground burrow? How are they different?
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Activities and discussion questions

• If you have access to costumes or a dress-up box, show pictures of the places Il Sung Na depicts and have the children dress for that place. Ask questions about how things like dust, snow, mud, or rain would influence clothing choices.

• Each of the different habitats shows just one other animal (except for the North Pole illustration). Using the chart below (or one of your own), have children predict what other animals might live with the bird, camel, goat, mole, octopuses, orangutan, polar bear, or puffins.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Animal</th>
<th>Lives With</th>
<th>Same Attributes</th>
<th>Checked a Resource to Verify</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bear</td>
<td>Raccoons</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Class bear book, website, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bird</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Camel</td>
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<td>Goat</td>
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<td>Mole</td>
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<td>Octopus</td>
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<tr>
<td>Orangutan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Polar Bear</td>
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<td>Hippo</td>
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• The octopus page shows the bear with his face darker than the rest of him. There are black curlicues near the octopus’s tentacle, and there are blue lines coming from the coral to the smaller octopus. The text says: “who was surprised to see him!” Have the children explain what happened. Make sure children use the illustration details to explain their answers. Ask: “What are the black curlicues? What do these blue lines mean? Why do they go from here to here? Are there two octopuses or just one?” After collecting answers and coming to a consensus, show a video of an octopus shooting ink (and changing colors). National Geographic has some good videos, but they have ads. YouTube has many fine ones, but be sure to preview them first.

• The page with the polar bear and puffins is especially useful for young children because it shows two bears. One makes the snow and ice its home. The other cannot live in that habitat. Why?

• Na’s artwork is so gorgeous that children deserve a chance to get a feel for how it is made. Trace the shape of a bear or any of the animals or plants. Then provide children with a variety of tools, such as old magazines and pictures to cut and paste onto the bear outline. Provide crayons, colored pencils, or markers to fill in the shapes. After children have created an illustration of their own, explore what the art might look like if the habitat is dry and dusty. What colors would change? What would happen if it were wet and muddy?
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Instructions: Use this template with headings of your choice. Use additional sorting attributes such as hard or soft. Or change the headings to physical descriptions of the animals: color, size, body covering, etc.

Use the answers to form math activities. Do more animals like it wet or dry? How many more?

Compare and contrast the environments and attributes of the animals.

Name

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Animal</th>
<th>Where It Lives</th>
<th>Hot or Cold</th>
<th>Wet or Dry</th>
<th>High or Low</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bear</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Bird</td>
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<td>Octopus</td>
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Add your own!
When the sky grows dark and the moon glows bright, everyone goes to sleep . . . except for the watchful owl!
Il Sung Na Bookmarks

Read them all!
A Book of Babies
A Book of Sleep
Hide & Seek
The Opposite Zoo
Snow Rabbit, Spring Rabbit
The Thingamabob
Welcome Home, Bear

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LIBRARIANS: Reproduce this sheet for your young readers.
The Opposite Zoo

Draw a line between each pair of opposites featured in The Opposite Zoo by Il Sung Na.

- closed
- awake
- tall
- slow
- noisy
- asleep
- fast
- open
- short
- quiet

LIBRARIANS: Reproduce this sheet for your young readers.
Print and cut out this mini poster to bring the world of Il Sung Na into your library!