

## Teacher's notes

Title: Pilgrim

Author/Illustrator: Jo Oliver

### Synopsis

Pilgrim is a story of a boy's first fishing trip on the sea with his father in their boat Pilgrim. They pass local landmarks as they travel along a coastal inlet and out to sea where they are surprised by a pod of dolphins that swim past the boat.

Pilgrim is a story that can be understood at different levels by ages from preschool to adulthood. At its simplest, it tells the journey of a boy in a boat who embarks on a new experience and overcomes his fears. His relationship of trust with his father supports him in this process and together they share the power and beauty of the natural environment.

The motifs below the illustrations and place names in the book lend another level to Pilgrim, the legacy of freedom and safety we enjoy as a result of sacrifices made by Australians in war.

Pilgrim is also about a spiritual journey, the way in which places become sacred through experiences and the idea of coming safely home.

### Illustration Medium

Pilgrim is illustrated with linocuts. The process involves transferring a sketch in reverse onto linoleum. All white and coloured space is cut away by hand leaving raised lines and shapes that are inked with a roller and manually printed. The image is then hand-coloured in watercolour. The resultant artwork combines the boldness of linocut with the delicacy and luminosity of watercolour.

The base of each page also contains a smaller linocut illustration which adds subtext to the main storyline.

### Author/ Illustrator Background

Jo has worked as a children's librarian for many years and feels privileged to have shared hundreds of books with children. She lives on the outskirts of Sydney with her husband and three boys. Pilgrim is based on a real boat and their experiences on the south coast of NSW.

Jo was awarded the biannual Australian Library and Information Association Marjorie Cotton Award in 2004 for recognition of outstanding contribution to children and youth library services.

Jo writes and envisages images at the same time. She enjoys the unexpected printmaking and has a particular love for the strength and simplicity of linocuts.

### Educational Applicability

Pilgrim supports themes of relationships, environment, war and spirituality.

The text can be used with preschool and infants children to complement units on families and the sea or celebrate Father's Day or environment days.

Primary aged children can also reflect on the sacrifices made by Australians in war and their legacy of peace in units on Australian history and identity.

The idea of journey, trust and sacredness of place in Pilgrim can be used to enhance discussions of spirituality.

### Background information.

**Alamein** An Egyptian coastal village where Australians joined Allies in two battles which marked a turning point in World War II. Australian places were named by returned soldiers.

**ANZAC (Australian and New Zealand Army Corps)'Ode of Remembrance'** Spoken by all those who attend Australia's national ANZAC Day Services on 25<sup>th</sup> April, the date of the Gallipoli landing in World War I, to remember all those who served in wartime.

**Birdlife** Birds native to coastal Australia; seagull, cormorant, pelican, egret, sea-eagle

**Boats** Wooden boat building was a small but thriving industry in coastal Australia in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Native spotted gum was a commonly used timber, prized for its ability to bend to the boat's shape. Rowing boats were used at the dawn landing at Gallipoli.

**Dolphins** Bottle-nosed dolphins are common along coastal Australia. Their curiosity will bring them around boats and the shape of their mouths looks like a permanent grin. Dolphins have never been hunted in Australia.

**Lone Pine** Named after the site of a battle between ANZAC and Turkish soldiers at Gallipoli in World War I. Over 2,000 Anzacs were killed and seven Victoria Crosses were awarded. Seeds from the pine were brought back and planted in Australia.

**Slouch hat** A distinctive hat worn by Australian soldiers. The side of the brim is pinned up by a rising sun badge.

**Victoria Cross** This medal is the British Commonwealth's highest award for bravery.

**World War I** 61,919 Australians died and 1555,000 were wounded

**World War II** 39,366 Australians died and 66,553 were wounded

#### Discussion Questions

1. How did the boy feel at the beginning and the end of the story? What made the difference?
2. How many birds and animals can you find in the book? What are their names? Have you ever seen any of them?
3. Do we know if they caught any fish? What things happened instead?
4. Look at the little images on each page. What do you think each of them adds to the story?
5. When have you felt scared? When do you feel safe? Who helps you feel safe and happy?
6. Places become sacred to us when special things happen there. What places are sacred to you, to Australians and why?

#### Art, craft & design

The illustrations for Pilgrim are linocuts. This process requires the artist to simplify what they see. Try squinting up your eyes to reduce the detail in your vision. How might this help you make a picture?

- Printmaking forms could be explored including potato printing, foam or linocut and collograph. Prints can be made using water-based ink without a press.
- Relief printing uses negative space. Drawing exercises where children are encouraged to draw the shape of spaces between objects can help develop observation skills and right brain drawing.
- Watercolour, wax resist and washes can be used to make artwork based on the sea and its creatures.
- Paper can be folded to make boats, birds and dolphins.
- Children could make cards for people who make them feel safe and loved.