

A Reading and Discussion Guide

Whale Port

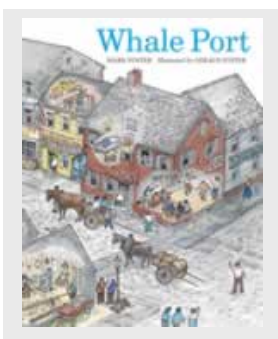
by Mark Foster & Gerald Foster

Houghton Mifflin

Prepared by Wendy Garland
Millis, Massachusetts



SUMMARY



Based on the history of several New England coastal towns, *Whale Port* explores whaling's role in American history and in developing communities from 1683 to the present. The fictional town of Tuckanucket and its residents illustrate the evolution of whaling ports. In addition to the text, pen and watercolor illustrations, cutaways, cross sections, and detailed captions present life in a community built to support the whaling industry.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Look at the illustrations of Tuckanucket through the years. What are some of the changes that you see? What do you see that has stayed the same?
2. Whaling ports brought many jobs to the community. What kind of job would you like? What would your least favorite job be?
3. Whales have been an important part of people's lives for many years. They help to make many useful and needed items. Today, however, many species are endangered. Why is this? What can we do to help these mammals?

ACTIVITIES

1. Draw a picture of what your community may have looked like in the 17th or 18th centuries. How did people travel? What did their homes look like? What does your community look like now? What will it look like in the future?
2. On page 27 it says, "Wherever the people of Tuckanucket looked, they found something made from a whale." Think about your environment and how many things are made from plastic, for example. Can you list them?
3. Perform the following experiment with young readers to help them understand how blubber protects whales from cold water temperatures.

- To make a blubber-insulated glove, gather a pair of rubber gloves and a latex surgical glove.
- Fill a zippered, quart-size freezer bag with shortening, seal the bag, and cut off a lower corner.
- Use this to squeeze shortening into each finger of one rubber glove.
- Next, put on a latex surgical glove and slip it into the shortening-filled glove (the shortening will ooze between the gloves).
- Add more shortening so the entire hand is insulated with "blubber."
- Then fill a container with icy water.
- Have children take turns putting the blubber-insulated glove on one hand and a plain rubber glove on the other, and then submerging both hands in the icy water.
- Have them remove each hand when the temperature becomes too uncomfortable.
- Record the length of time each hand was held in the water.
- Afterward, compute the average time in water for both the insulated and the uninsulated hands. Have children compare and discuss the results. Did the blubber keep them warmer?

BIOGRAPHICAL/BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Gerald and Mark Foster are father and son. Gerald Foster is an artist, author, and architect. Mark Foster is a museum exhibit designer. Mark has always been fascinated with whales and whaling. He remembers his father taking him to the New Bedford Whaling Museum and to the Nantucket Whaling Museum as a child. After college he became interested in Nantucket, one of America's most important whaling ports, and whaling. Mark would tell his father, Gerry, all about whaling and got him hooked.

Father and son shared a love of history and wanted to create a whaling book, but one that would be different from the others. They decided to create a book about a whaling port. They decided to create an imaginary port based on their research of real ports including those of Nantucket, Edgartown, New Bedford, Fairhaven, New London, Sag Harbor, Provincetown, and other towns of Cape Cod and Long Island. Inspired by the visual books of David Macaulay and *A Street Through Time*, illustrated by Steve Noon, they decided to create their own children's book about whaling that showed how a whaling port grew over time. This is their first children's book.

For more information about the book and its authors, visit: <http://www.fosterartandbooks.com/>

OTHER INFORMATION

An extensive bibliography of related books and materials can be found on the authors' website: <http://www.fosterartandbooks.com/whaleport/bibliography.html>

