

THE JOURNEY HOME

Based on the book *The Journey Home* by Frann Preston-Gannon



GUIDE FOR PARENTS

The activities in this pack can be used with the book *The Journey Home* by Frann Preston-Gannon. It's a lovely book that opens up opportunities for lots of thinking and discussion with children. You can still do the activities even if you don't have – or can't get hold of – a copy of the book.

Take what you like from the activities – your child might have their own idea of how they want things to turn out, or may wish to stay in one place for longer or discover more about different animals we meet along the way. You might have your own ideas too. There are no wrong or right ways to approach this – do whatever suits you and your child and the time you have available.

1. A DISAPPEARING WORLD

RESOURCES

- If you have it, the book. If not, don't worry – skip any bits that refer to the text – it will still make sense.
- A device for showing the video clips, if possible.

Our story starts with a polar bear in a pickle. Why not begin by asking your child what they already know about polar bears and where they live?



ACTIVITIES

1. Take a look at the picture of the seal below. With your child, see if you can lie like the seal with your upper body and lower body lifted off the floor. Harder than it looks? Discuss with your child where you would have to be strong to be able to hold this position for a long time. A seal has a lot of muscle around its middle! In humans, our biggest muscles are in our bottom – our 'glutes' – why might that be? Can your child move like a seal on land? How does a seal move using its flippers as arms or legs? It's very hard work and slow!



1. A DISAPPEARING WORLD continued

- 2.** Now look at the image of the polar bear. Can we do what he is doing? Where is he strong? Can we move like a polar bear? Polar bears are good at running and jumping because they have strong legs – especially hind legs. So who would be fastest on land – the polar bear or the seal?



- 3.** Now show your child **this clip** of a seal swimming in the water. Look how graceful he is. Who would be faster in water – the seal or the polar bear? Polar bears are good at swimming and can dive a long way, but they're not as fast or nimble as seals are. **Watch this** if your child would like to see a polar bear swimming.

- 4.** Discuss these questions with your child. What do polar bears eat? Is it easier to catch their food on the land or in the water? Now you can either read the first page of the book, or if you don't have it, show your child this image (right) and talk about why it might be a problem for the polar bear if the ice is disappearing from the Arctic. We're going to start a story about this polar bear – let's call him Nanook, the Inuit word for polar bear.





Narration:

Nanook sat on his small piece of ice and looked around him. Everywhere the ice seemed to be melting. There were no seals to be seen and the land seemed to be getting smaller. He muttered to himself.

“I used to run for miles around here. There were hundreds of seals on the ice. Now there’s nothing but water and it’s so hard to find food. I miss my old life. I think I might have to find somewhere else to live. But where shall I go? It’s very sad.”

5. Ask your child to make a list of the things that Nanook needs in a home. What kind of place would be a good place for him to be?

2. THREE CHOICES

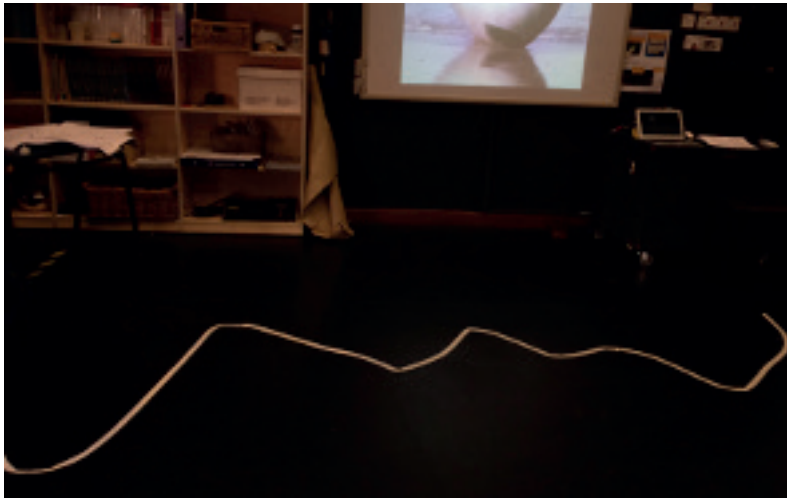
RESOURCES

- A way of marking out a coastline – I use masking tape to make a jagged coastline on the floor, but you could easily use scarves or string or draw it with chalk outside if the weather is good enough.
- Scrap paper (you can use the backs of old letters or envelopes if you like – it’s just for labelling) and pens.
- If you want to do the magnet activity, you’ll need magnets (a fridge magnet will do).



ACTIVITIES

1. Mark out the coastline on the floor so its shape looks something like that shown on the next page. Now write on one piece of paper the words ‘The Sea’ and on another piece of paper the words ‘The Land’.

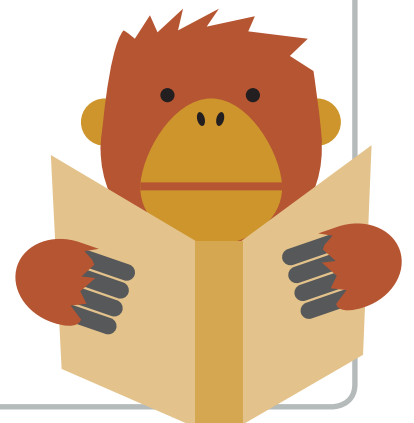


Looking at your map now, ask your child to write the words 'The Town' on a piece of paper and talk about where the people might live. They probably make their money from fishing so it's likely to be on the coast. Place the paper there. What other settlements might there be on the coastline? Villages? Factories? Groups of scientists? Inuit people? Invite your child to label up the coastline by writing out these titles and placing them on the coastline. Now, far away from the coastline on another piece of paper, can they write The North Pole and put that on the map?

Narration:

With his own land melted away, Nanook decided to see if there might be any food on the mainland. One night, when it was dark and quiet, he crept into the town. The place smelled strange. There was no ice beneath his feet – just gritty stuff that prickled his paws. But there was one interesting smell coming from the back of one building. Nanook wandered around there. He could definitely smell fish. Yum yum. Not quite seal, but never mind. He sniffed and sniffed but the smell seemed to be inside something. He pushed and shoved to try to open it and get the fish out, but then...

A loud clattering noise woke the people up. A bin lid smashing to the ground. They got out of their beds and turned on their lights to see what the commotion was. And rubbing their eyes, peering into the darkness, they saw under a streetlight a polar bear. Surrounded by rubbish, sitting in the street, as bold as brass, eating rubbish from the bin. They picked up their weapons and went onto their porches...



Narration (continued):

Nanook gobbled down the half eaten pizzas, the fish heads and bones and even accidentally, a few bits of plastic packaging. It all tasted horrible but it was food. He sat and ate, feeling miserable, and then he heard noises. Doors banging, footsteps... men coming towards him – with guns! He had heard of these things before from other bears but had never seen one with his own eyes before.

2. Can your child take on the role of Nanook and you the role of the men? Let your child explain his (Nanook's) predicament to the men. You can play this in one of two ways depending on your child's nature – you can be kind and considerate and gentle (if you think they might get upset) and explain that the polar bear must go far away from here – the people won't allow such a dangerous creature to live close to them. Or if you think your child would enjoy a bit of an argument, you can be more challenging and order the polar bear off the land, accusing him of being a vicious killer who is not welcome! Play it however you like, but the outcome is that Nanook has to leave.

Discuss this outcome with your child. Why can't men and polar bears live side by side in peace? Talk about nature and instinct and the fact that animals can't be reasoned with – they'll act according to their instincts and experiences (and they don't understand our language).

3. Your child might want to do some writing here – maybe a diary entry for Nanook, or for a child living in the town, describing what happened and how sorry they feel for the bear.
4. Look again at your floor map (this can be a place where your child might choose to play for a while – they could add their toys to the map or pictures of animals they think might live there – follow their lead here, but when you're both ready to look at the next option, point to the North Pole and tell your child that's where Nanook is going next).



Narration:

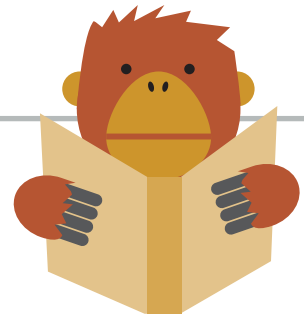
Sadly Nanook left the town and all the street lights behind him and wandered off into the darkness. The ground turned once more to snow and eased his aching paws. The night sky lit his way with its spectacular aurora. Onwards he trudged through the night and all the next day and all the next night and day until he was as far away from human beings as possible. He looked around. There was nothing but snow and ice, ice and snow. He felt very happy indeed. Here was a place he could run and jump for miles. No-one would threaten him here. He settled down for a good, long sleep and when he awoke he was hungry. But where was his food? He was so far from the shore that there were no seals. What on earth was he going to eat?

5. Two bits of research can be done [here](#). The story mentions the Aurora – what is it and how is it formed? This is a full explanation for children, but it is quite advanced.

There's a simpler explanation [here](#). You might still want to watch the beginning of the other one to discover how beautiful auroras are and so that your child can understand what Nanook could see.

6. If your child seemed interested by the science and would like to know more about magnetic fields, there is some more information [here](#). And if you have your own magnets at home (even just a fridge magnet) you can try some of the activities in that clip.
7. If not, then we can go back to Nanook and his problem. What can he eat? Ask your child to think about what other creatures might live up in the far Arctic north and how easy it would be for the polar bear to catch them. He could hunt the arctic hare (below) or the arctic fox (below) but how easy would they be to catch? Or to see?





Narration:

Nanook tried to find food but it was so difficult. As the days passed, he grew thinner and thinner and so he decided he must try something else. He lumbered back across the snow to the mainland, taking care to creep slowly past the town without being noticed. Or so he thought. One person noticed him. A small child called Alasie. Her name in the Innu language means ‘to be honest and noble’ – and she was. She knew she couldn’t save the polar bear or keep him, but as she saw him slink past the village, a shadow of his former self, she decided she must do something. She put on her warm clothes and her snow boots and crept outside, down to the harbour and into the rowing boat that belonged to her family. She kept her eye on the bear as he lumbered along the edge of the coast, keeping his head low as he passed buildings and warehouses until he came to some open land. She watched as he swam back to his small iceberg – the one he had left all those days ago.

Alasie did not dare approach the bear. She was a sensible child and knew better than to approach a desperate and hungry wild predator, but once she saw he was on his iceberg, she rowed to the shore opposite and pushed the boat, as hard as she could, out to sea, towards the bear. And then, not knowing if her plan would work or not, she headed home – it wouldn’t do for her parents to notice she was missing.

Nanook sat feeling despondent on his ice. Even that seemed smaller than it had been a few days ago. He had no idea what to do and then suddenly



he saw a boat coming towards him. He stood, warily. If there were men in that boat there might also be guns. But as the boat gently knocked against the iceberg, he saw it was empty. What else could he do but get into it? And that’s how Nanook set off on his great adventure.

3. THE PANDA

RESOURCES

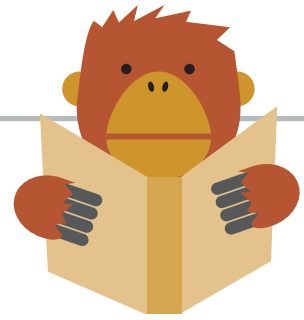
- Map of the world – you can use the one here if you don't have a map or globe to hand.
- Pens and paper.
- The book if you have it (no problem if you don't – just skip the bit that refers to the text).



ACTIVITIES

1. As you read the narration, you can show your child Nanook's long journey – see the dotted line on the map below. If you have your own map or Atlas at home you can take a closer look at all the places he has passed along the way.





Narration:

Nanook let the ocean currents carry him through the broken ice along the Arctic circle. Every now and then the boat would get stuck and he would spend a little time hunting for seals. He found some in Russia but then he got chased by sailors from a Russian ship and only got away when they slipped on the ice. He jumped back into his boat and sailed on for many, many days. He spent the nights lying on the bottom of the boat looking up at the stars in the sky and the days using his large paws as paddles to push the boat along. Then one day a wind sprang up and pushed his little boat to shore.

If you have the book you can read to the part where the bear sees the panda on the dockside. If not, it doesn't matter, you can pick up from here.

2. The boat has landed on the dockside of a very big city in China. What might the skyline of a big city look like? Can your child draw a city skyline on a piece of paper or make one from putting different objects together?
3. How might the sounds of a city differ from those in the Arctic – can your child make the sounds? They could use their voices or use objects you have around the house (like crackly paper, pans and spoons, sink taps) to create 'found sound' – or if they have a musical instrument or percussion at home, they could use that. Create three soundscapes (think of a landscape but with sound).
 - The sounds of the ice world.
 - The sounds of the water world.
 - The sounds of the city.



Narration:

Nanook felt afraid. There were people everywhere. And ships. Big ships. His little boat felt very vulnerable and he decided he should just turn around and paddle his boat out of that harbour as fast as he could. But just as he was about to leave, he noticed another bear sitting on a jetty. Not a white bear like him, but a big, black and white bear. The bear waved and introduced himself.

3. THE PANDA continued

Narration continued:

“I am Xiongmao. But you can call me Mo. Most people do.”

“I am Nanook. You can call me Nanook – no-one has ever called me anything else. In fact the only other person who ever used my name was my mother.”

“I’m tired of people using my name,” sighed Mo. “So many people...”

As it was clear that Mo had no home to go to either, she clambered into the boat and as the two bears headed out to sea, she told her story to her new friend.

4. Look at the image below. Ask your child to adopt the position of the panda in the photo.



What words would we use to describe the panda’s mood in this image?

Speak as the panda and let your child listen to the words you say. Ask them to carry on being the panda while they listen, and to change the mood and position if they think they should.

“Click, click, click. That’s what I hear, all day long. Cameras clicking. Sometimes the people even have their backs turned on me. And if

3. THE PANDA continued

they're not clicking, they're shouting. Mo! Mo! Fat Mo. Slow Mo. Boring Mo. I hate the daytimes. I hate the night times. It's not nice in there where they put me to sleep. I miss the forest so much."

5. Now show your child the image of this panda.



Talk about the picture – what is in the bowls? Where might the panda have got her water from in the wild? What's through the dark doorway? Your child could either draw the inside of that space or write a description of it – perhaps from the panda's point of view.

How does your child think the panda is feeling? Can they speak her thoughts? They could write this down if they like.

6. Now look at the panda in her natural habitat. What does your child think should happen to the panda. Let's talk to the zoo keeper! Say to your child: "I'll be the zoo keeper and you can tell me what you think needs to happen", and let your child tell you what they think.



Chances are your child has told the zoo keeper to either make the zoo better or to let the panda go back into the wild. At which point explain the problem – there's a little script here but you can improvise!

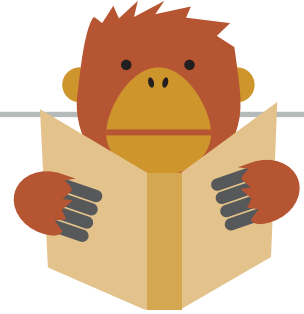
Zoo Keeper: I would love Mo to go back into the wild. She eats so much food I barely make any money at all! But where would she go? Her forest is now a housing estate – all the panda habitat has been eaten up by the city. There is nowhere for her to go. At least here she's safe and fed!

3. THE PANDA continued

7. Let your child question the zoo keeper and find out more information. You can find out all about the giant panda and watch a video [here](#).
8. It might not be so easy to look after a panda! It might not be so easy to share a small boat with them! Can your child think of some problems the panda might be causing in the boat after watching that video? Could they write a little story about Nanook and Mo in the boat together?

Narration:

Nanook had not rowed for more than a couple of days, when he realized that his new friend was likely to eat the boat itself if they didn't land soon. He had only slept for ten minutes and the oars had gone. Seeing land ahead with lots of trees, he decided they needed to stop and refuel. He did not know where he was, but the land he could see was part of the country of Indonesia and there, waiting for them, was another animal who needed a place to go.



4. THE ORANGUTAN

RESOURCES

- The book if you have it.
- The map (see below).
- Ten household products from your cupboards and bathrooms – things like jars of food, shampoo, body lotions, detergents etc – a random selection of things which have ingredients lists on them.



ACTIVITIES

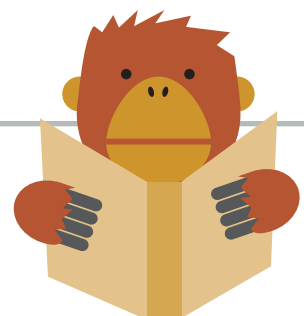
1. Look at the map (you may have a more detailed one at home where you can look closer). Using a pen and ruler, draw the equator across the map – you can look this up or you may already know, but talk with your child about what the equator is and why it's hotter there (it is the part of the Earth tilted closest to the sun).



2. How might Nanook be feeling in this heat? Polar bears are designed for cold climates. They have 10cm of blubber under their skin and another 15cm of thick fur to keep them warm. How can Nanook cope with the heat of the tropics? Can your child come up with some ideas for keeping him cool?

Narration:

As the boat came closer to the beach, Nanook and Mo were surprised to hear the sound of machines in what looked like such a tranquil place.



Narration continued:

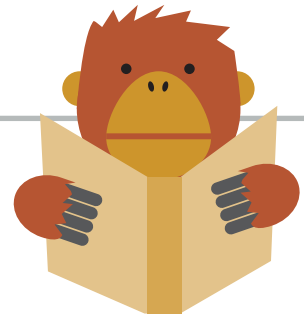
There was a small river running into the sea, so they rowed the boat up there beyond the trees. And that's where they met Mawas.



3. Share **this poem** with your child. Could they write their own poem about the shrinking ice for Nanook or the loss of forests for Mo?
4. Gather together items from around your household and show your child how to check the ingredients on a bottle or jar. How many of them contain palm oil? Do some have a label of 'sustainable palm oil'? Why is this important? Chester Zoo have led the way on sustainable palm oil development. You can see one of their **videos here**.
5. Explain to your child these facts:
 - a. Humans need edible oils in their food to stay healthy.
 - b. Most of these edible oils come from plants. Some examples are almond oil, palm oil, coconut oil, olive oil etc.
 - c. Of all of these, palm oil has the best 'yield per acre' – that means you can get much more oil out of fewer trees. So, while irresponsible palm oil plantations still cause terrible deforestation, properly managed plantations mean LESS deforestation. We don't necessarily need to stop using palm oil, we just need to make sure it comes from a 'good source' – somewhere forests or animals haven't been harmed to produce it. It's why we should look for 'sustainable palm oil' on our products.
 - d. Some shops will only sell sustainable palm oil products (like Iceland) and some companies like Kelloggs and Nestle no longer make products with non-sustainable palm oil. If your child is interested, you could research online for more companies that are committed to ending deforestation.

4. THE ORANGUTAN continued

- e. In 2019 Chester became the world's first city to become a 'sustainable palm oil city' – no shops, bars, restaurants or hotels sell or use any products that contain unsustainable palm oil.
- f. Sustainable palm oil also helps people – it ensures they are paid properly if they work on a plantation and if they live close to one, it protects their rights so they don't get affected by pollution from burning or have their homes taken away.



Narration:

"You can come with us," offered Nanook, when he saw the predicament the orangutan was in. "Can't he, Mo?"

But Mo had clambered out of the boat and was busy munching on all the fallen twigs, branches and leaves that were on the ground.

"HMMMMMMMMmeweremmmm," said Mo.

"She's been hungry," said Nanook, "and to be honest, I'm exhausted – this heat is very tiring. I'm so hot all the time and all my fur is falling out."

Mawas helped the bears to load lots of vegetation into the boat. Mo could eat it and they could use it to make some shade for Nanook. They collected any bananas and fruits that had fallen when the trees had been cut down for Mawas and when they were ready, the animals set off on their journey to find a new home once more.

- 6. Your child might like to make a boat den here with a sheltered roof for Nanook – they could do this inside or outside if you have the space, using whatever is available to them. Let them play in here when they like and watch to see if they are acting out the story or inventing their own versions.

5. THE ELEPHANT

RESOURCES

- Pens and paper and toilet roll or kitchen roll tubes.
- The book if you have it.

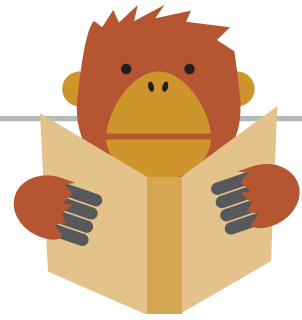


ACTIVITIES

1. Take a look at the map and the route that the little boat has taken and talk to your child about the continent of Africa – what do they know about Africa already? What kinds of animals do they think live there? Which one do they think the bears and orangutan might meet next?



2. If you have the book read the next part of the story, where they meet the elephant and he joins them in the boat. If not, start with the narration below. If you like, you can do this in the boat den your child may have built in the last chapter.



Narration:

The three animals part rowed and part drifted all the way across the Indian Ocean. It was a very long way, but at some points they came across beautiful tropical islands where Mo and Mawas could gather food and where Nanook could find lots of fish to eat. It was still too hot for Nanook. He had to dive down into the ocean to help himself to cool down and his fur was now much thinner. He was much thinner too – he didn't need all that blubber in this heat!

One day they landed on the shore of a huge land – a continent in fact. They didn't know it, but they had travelled all the way from Asia to Africa and there were some creatures here that none of them had seen before. A creature with a stupendously long neck eating leaves high up in the trees.

"That would be handy," sighed Mo, feeling hungry. Again.

Mawas rubbed his eyes.

"I think I'm seeing things!" he exclaimed.

"What?" asked Nanook, peering in the direction Mawas was staring in.

"That rock! It moved!"

The rock did indeed move. First it shuffled to the left and then to the right, then it made a noise, like a huff and puff and the rock stood up!

The rock had very large ears. It had a very long nose. And.

"My, my! What big teeth it's got!" said Nanook, impressed.

The rock spoke.

"These are not teeth, they are tusks. And I am not a rock. I am an elephant!"

"A Nellywhat?" said Mo.

"An E-L-E-PH-A-N-T! And my name is Tembo," said the large creature.

"Oh!" said the bears, feeling none the wiser.

"We have elephants where I live too," said Mawas. "But they don't have ears like yours! They're huge!"

"All the better to hear you with," said the elephant wryly and sat down looking at the animals with his soft, friendly eyes.

"So what's your story?" he asked.

Narration (continued):

The three friends told him of their tale and he nodded wisely.

“We elephants too are in trouble. People hunt us for our tusks – they kill us to take them away to sell. Ivory is very sought after by humans apparently. Everything seems to be very sought after by humans.”

Nanook thought of the people in the town who wouldn't share their food and brought out their guns. Mo thought of the people who built their huge skyscrapers and roads on her ancient forest. Mawas thought of the bulldozers and diggers and the people who set fire to the forest. They sat in silence for a while and thought that perhaps people were best avoided. Nanook had an idea.

“We're going to find somewhere to live where there are no people. Would you like to come with us, Tembo?”

And so the four friends – Nanook, Mo, Mawas and Tembo – set off to find their home.

3. If your child likes craft activities, they might like to make these out of toilet roll tubes – see if they can think of a way to add tusks. You don't need to have googly eyes – a pen will do.



4. If they'd like to find out more about elephants in Africa and the work that is being done to protect them, [this video](#) from BBC Newsround might be useful.
5. The four animals don't seem to have a very good impression of human beings do they? Talk with your child about how animals might see humans. Perhaps they could write a letter from the animals to the human beings that starts with: 'Dear Human Beings...' What might Nanook, Mo, Mawas and Tembo want to say to the

human world? Remind your child how to lay out a letter before they write. Alternatively they could make a short video from the animals to human beings – they could even dress up as one of the characters in our story for the film.

6. If your child would like to immerse themselves in African wildlife for a while, you could watch **The Lion King** with them and explore/ explain what the film means by the 'Circle of Life'. You can also learn about Food Chains [here](#).
7. We've talked a little in this story about the diets of our animals. Now might be a good time to introduce the terms 'carnivore' (meat eater), 'herbivore' (plant eater) and 'omnivore' (eats both!). You could make a sorting task for them by writing these animal names on pieces of paper or card and asking your child to sort them in piles.
 - a. Elephants (herbivore)
 - b. Pandas (herbivore)
 - c. Orangutans (omnivore)
 - d. Polar bears (carnivore)
 - e. Seals (carnivore)
 - f. Human beings (omnivore though some choose to be herbivore)
 - g. Sharks (carnivore)
 - h. Owls (carnivore)
 - i. Pigs (omnivore)
 - j. Hedgehogs (omnivore)
 - k. Iguana (herbivore)
 - l. Sheep (herbivore)

6. THE DODO AND THE ISLAND

RESOURCES

- The book if you have it.
- Material to make the outline of an island. You can do this on paper if you prefer, but you could also use masking tape to make the outline of an island on the floor, or scarves or string.
- A glass bottle or jar if you have one.

Narration:

The animals rowed the boat back into the Indian ocean and turned south. After a while, the weather felt cooler – not too cold and not too hot – just temperate. Nanook and Mo liked the cooler temperature and Mawas and Tembo didn't mind it at all, so they decided this might be a good place to find somewhere to live. There was water all around them, and the closer to the coast they went, the more human beings they saw. Then one day, they saw a lovely island in the middle of the ocean. It had lots of trees on it and a beautiful beach and as the animals explored it, they found there was a lovely, cold waterfall and lake for Nanook to bathe in. It was perfect. Until someone interrupted them.

“Ahem!”

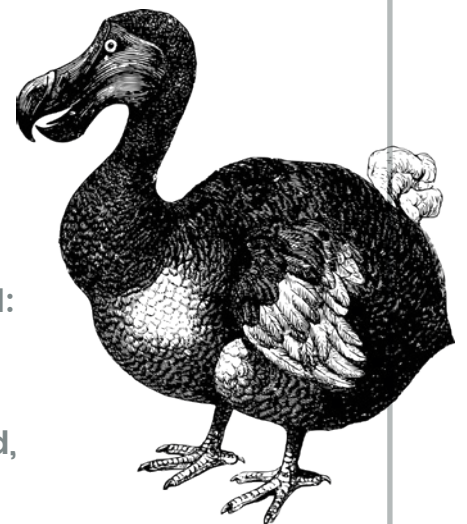
The animals turned around to see what was behind them making such a noise. They were surprised to see a large, comical-looking bird staring at them and looking a little cross. It tapped its large feet on the floor and said:

“Who are you? What are you doing here?”

The four animals explained their story and as he listened, the bird looked less cross. In fact he looked sad.

“This is my story too. I was the last of my kind – humans think we're extinct, we Dodos. But I sailed away on a log, away from Mauritius, my beautiful home and I've been here ever since. I'm waiting for the day I am safe to go home.”

“We're waiting for the day we're safe to go home too!” said the animals.





ACTIVITIES

1. You can now read the rest of the book if you have it, to your child, or read it all the way through again from the beginning. The book ends with the message that the animals can go home when humans stop doing the things that are harming them. But many humans are trying hard to protect animals. It might be worth sharing some of these 'good news' stories with your child. We don't want them to feel hopeless about the situation. Here are some suggested videos they could watch with information texts they could read.
 - a. Good news for pandas.
 - b. WWF projects to protect orangutans and a lovely video of them in their natural habitat.
 - c. And if conservation starts at home, there are lots of ideas here from the Woodland Trust about how we can take care of our animal habitats here in the UK.
2. In the narration above, the word 'temperate' was used. What is a temperate climate? As your child moves further up school they'll learn more about climate biomes, but there are some useful clips here on BBC bitesize if you want to share some with your child.
3. Remember the Dear Humans letter/video we made earlier? What if the animals got a reply? A message in a bottle? Could your child write a reply to the animals and put it in a jar or bottle ready to sail to an island?