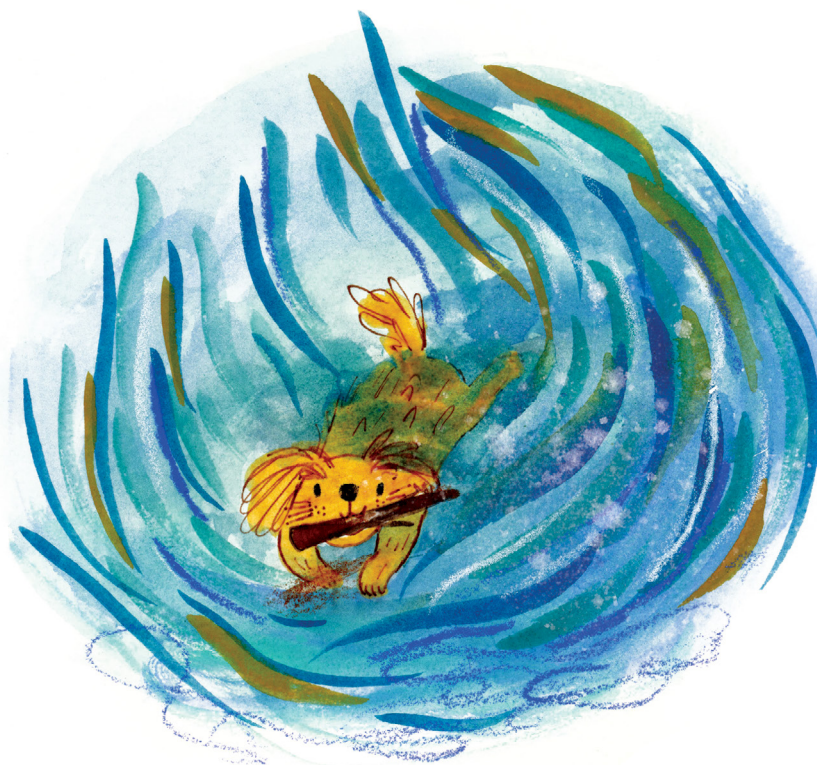


HERE COME THE COUSINS

Written by Maggie Hutchings &
Illustrated by Sarah Zweck



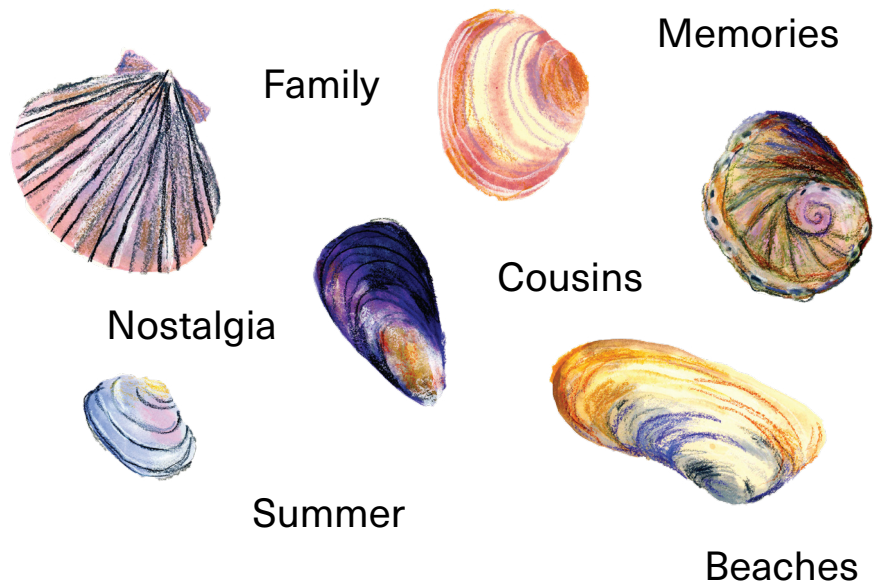
Teachers' notes prepared by Christina Wheeler

Synopsis

When all the cousins reunite for summer at Pop's house, the fun is set to begin. Whether duck-diving in the sea, jumping from the rocks or revelling in old family stories, this is a time to savour. And although cautioned to play safely and slather on the sunscreen, Pop's photos reveal the mischief the children's parents used to get up to when they were young.

In a blissful celebration of family and togetherness, *Here Come the Cousins* is a timeless story about favourite rituals, endless summer days and the joy of making memories.

Themes



Writing style

Here Come the Cousins is a homage to childhood, cousins and fun family times. Written in first person, present tense, it shares the pure joy of carefree summers spent frolicking by the sea, endless days playing with cousins and wonderful moments reminiscing about the past. Bold and colourful illustrations convey nostalgic family rituals, shared memories and the mischief to be had when cousins unite. Spirited and told with utter playfulness, it allows readers to make connections between the story's themes and their own special times spent with family. Moreover, it shares a child's world view of family and the unique bonds that form between cousins. Suited to early childhood through to middle readers, this is an engaging text that is as joyful as it is mischievous.

Author motivation

I grew up without any siblings, so my cousins were especially important to me. I was the shy one – not the smallest perhaps, but almost! In the school holidays and on weekends, we often spent time together. Summers seemed to last for ever, and sleepovers, picnics and seaside trips were the best. Our parents were full of funny stories and of course there were the photos! I still treasure them.

Here Come the Cousins was inspired by memories of summers past, but also by current sunny beachy adventures with my grandkids. I hope the joy of childhood and the warmth of family shines through in this book. There is something special about cousins: they are family and friends all at once!

I'm still holidaying with my cousins, despite living on opposite sides of the world. And between visits, I still count down the days!

Illustrator motivation

To bring Maggie's words to life, I wanted my illustrations to convey as much feeling as possible. As a mum to kids who love to holiday with their cousins I have plenty to draw on, combined with my own summer adventures as a child. I used several family photographs as visual references; for example, Pop's home is based on a stone cottage in the Yorke peninsula. Facial expressions and body language are also key, and this is particularly important on the cover where I wanted to express 'exuberance'! We all know how fun it is to have a noisy, splashy swim at the beach.

Here Come the Cousins is a joyful book, full of emotion, so I used lots of bright colours and played with pattern. I explored each character, creating outfits and colour schemes that would give them a strong identity. I also wanted to convey the impact of light and dark with dappled shadows. Take the scene where the kids are reading in the hammock under a tree: would it have been as effective without a clear sense of dappled light?

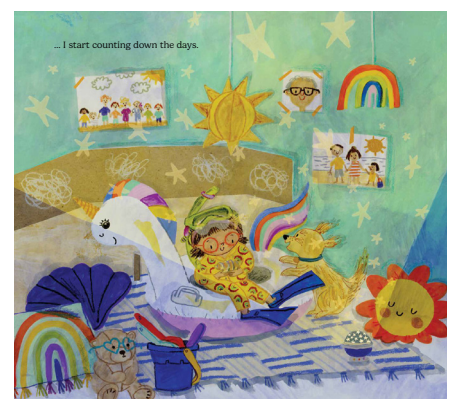
I worked by hand, surrounded by pots of paints and colouring pencils, and I found this really helped me be expressive. Life isn't perfect and nor should art be. Loose lines and unintended (but welcomed) marks all contribute to creating energy.

Study notes

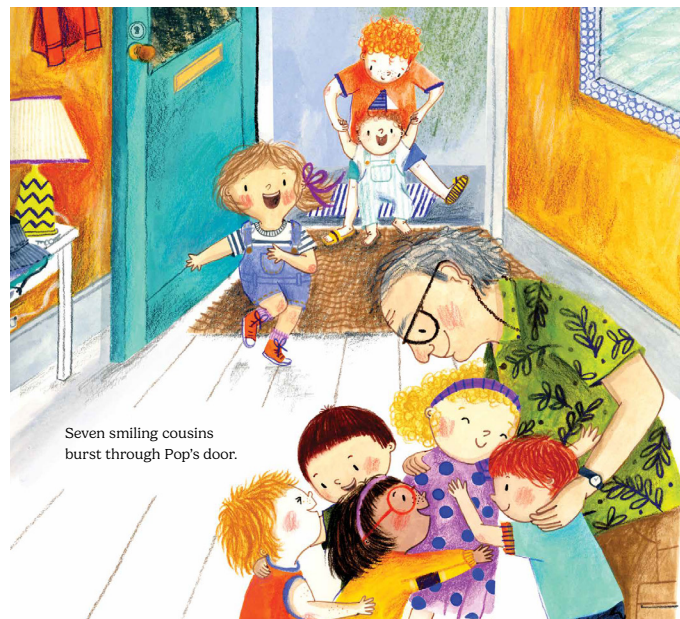
- Before reading *Here Come the Cousins*, examine the front and back covers, endpapers and blurb. Make predictions about the story. Discuss the use of colour to create a playful and upbeat mood.



- Why is the little girl so excited about her cousins coming? How do the illustrations throughout the text convey her excitement?
- Once finished reading *Here Come the Cousins*, compare the first image with the last. In the role of this character, write a series of journal entries that capture this special time with your cousins.



- How do you think Pop feels when his children and grandchildren all come together for the summer? How do the illustrations throughout the book show this?



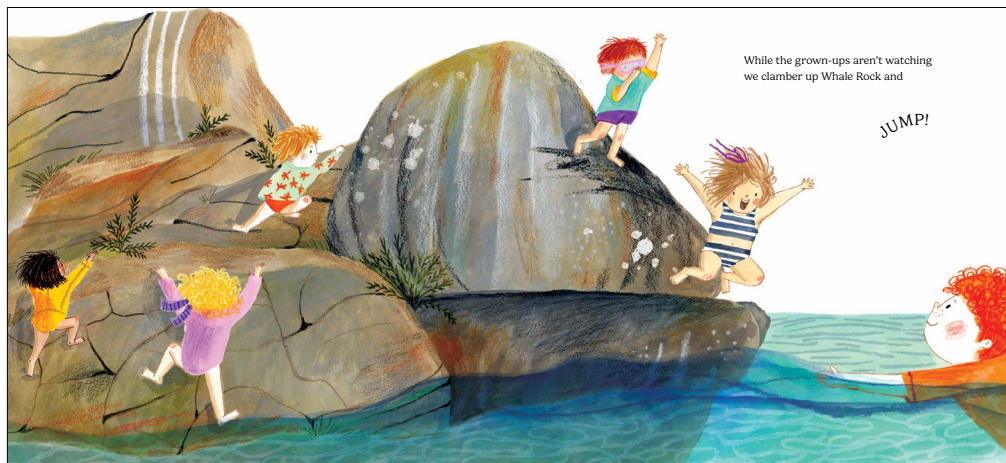
- Using the illustrations throughout the text, piece together which children belong to which parents. Use evidence from the text to support your thinking.
- How does the body language in the page opening below share how the little girl feels about still being the shortest cousin? Is this a big problem for her, or a mere annoyance? Give reasons to support your thinking.



- Using the following page opening, complete speech and thought bubbles to share your ideas about the various family members in this scene (see enlarged version in the Appendix below).



- Why do the cousins wait until the adults aren't watching before they 'clamber up Whale Rock and jump'? After finishing *Here Come the Cousins*, return to this page. Do you think the cousins know that their parents and Pop used to do the exact same thing? Discuss. What mischief do you and your cousins get up to when the adults aren't watching? Share with a friend.



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- With reference to the page opening below, discuss why the nights are described as 'stories and starlight'. Why, even though they've heard these stories before, do the children still like hearing 'tales of other summers'? What stories of your parents' have you heard several times? Why is this comforting?



- Why are the cousins so keen to see Pop's pictures? Why does the text say, 'like a magic door the old album opens'? Knowing the cousins have seen these pictures before, how do you think differently about the way they play at the beach?



- Why do the cousins love looking through Pop's photo albums so much? Do you ever look through old photos at your grandparents'? If so, describe some of your favourite photos of your parents as children. Why do you think the parents in *Here Come the Cousins* warn their children against things they themselves did as children? Do your parents do this too? Why do you think they do this? Discuss.



- How will sharing your childhood with your children and grandchildren be different from the image above? How will you ensure they have access to family memories?
- Ask your parents to share some of their favourite childhood photos and memories with you. How does it help you to better understand your parents hearing about their childhood? How is theirs similar and different from your childhood? Share in a reflection.
- Bring in photos of your favourite family gathering or holiday. Use these to create an annotated photo journal of your time together.
- Which is your favourite page opening in *Here Come the Cousins*? Why? Share in a reflection. Discuss the importance of 'reading pictures' as well as the written text to fully understand picture books.

- When their time together comes to an end, why might the sky start to turn grey? How does the rain reflect the cousins' feelings? How are the images below different from the sequences at the start of the text when the cousins arrive?



- Use Talking Strips to tell your friend about this story.

First...	Next...	After that...	Finally...

- In the role of the little girl, write a letter or email to your cousins a few months after this story is set.
- Imagine that one of your cousins is unable to attend this family holiday. Write a postcard to them to share your experiences (see the template in the Appendix below).
- How do the colours of the artwork in *Here Come the Cousins* reflect the themes of the story?
- How important is the concept of play in *Here Come the Cousins*?
- What books do you like to read at your grandparent's house? How are these different from the books in your own home?
- What do you 'count down the days all year' for? Why is waiting a good thing? Discuss the virtues of anticipation.
- Discuss the body language and facial expressions throughout *Here Come the Cousins*. How do these visual cues help add meaning to the story?
- What rituals do the cousins enjoy when they get together? What are some of your favourite family rituals? How do you spend time with your cousins or special family friends? What kinds of games do you play? What other activities do you like to do together? Share in a reflection.
- Write a recount of a holiday or special event that you have shared with extended family members. Time permitting, illustrate parts of this recount.
- In the role of one of the cousins, complete a weekly diary sharing your experiences in *Here Come the Cousins*.
- What special things do you do at your grandparents' house that you don't do elsewhere? Share in a reflection.
- With a partner, plan, write and illustrate a book about the cousins going to visit their grandmother in the mountains during Winter.
- Discuss the use of figurative language in *Here Come the Cousins*, including imagery, similes, alliteration, personification and repetition. How does this help readers better connect with the story? Examples include:
 - Seven smiling cousins
 - We ... wriggle into our swimmers
 - Our days are sandy and sunny
 - Cousins speckled with sea salt!/ Cousins striped with zebra zinc!/ Cousins duck-diving deeper than we should!
 - Salty hair flying, feet burning
 - Our afternoons are shady and snoozy
 - Cousins curled like kittens .../ Cousins deep in dusty books from Pop's shelves/ Cousins swapping secrets
 - The sea calls us
 - Like a magic door the old album opens



To:

From:

Address: