

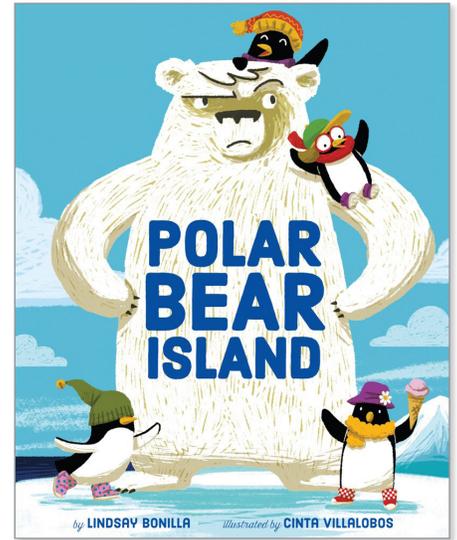
LET'S DISCUSS . . .

STERLING
CHILDREN'S
BOOKS

POLAR BEAR ISLAND

This discussion guide is designed for parents, teachers, librarians, and booksellers to explore the story's ideas, themes, and meaning with young readers.

Let's explore the themes of POLAR BEAR ISLAND!



Immigration

- What does it mean to be an immigrant?
- Kirby arrives at Polar Bear Island by sea. What are some of the ways both today and throughout history that people have immigrated to this country?
- Do you know any immigrants? Where are they from?
- What are some reasons that people immigrate?
- What do you think would be the hardest part of leaving your home country and moving to another?
- How would this story be different if Kirby had arrived on Polar Bear Island and started forcing all of the polar bears to wear Flipper Slippers? Would you still sympathize with the character if that were the case?

Attitudes Toward Others

- At the beginning of the book, Parker is painting a sign that says “No OTHERS Allowed.” Why do you think Parker doesn’t want others on his island?
- Do you think Parker has ever left Polar Bear Island? Do you think he has ever met anyone not from the island prior to Kirby’s arrival?
- At first, Parker agrees to let Kirby stay on the island, but he doesn’t really want her there. By the end, he is genuinely happy to have her and her family members on Polar Bear Island. Parker moves from tolerance of Kirby and the penguins to acceptance. What is the difference between tolerance and acceptance?
- Have you ever felt like you weren’t welcome somewhere? Why did you feel that way? What did it feel like?

Government

- Parker is the mayor of Polar Bear Island. How do you think he got that position? Do you think the other bears elected him? Or do you think he took the power for himself?
- As the mayor, do you think Parker has the right to say that the penguins must leave? Why or why not?

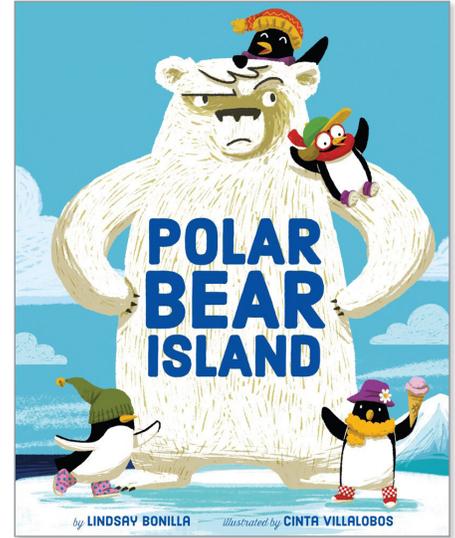
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EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Culture

Polar Bear Island has its own culture before Kirby arrives. What is culture?

We express our culture in a variety of ways. For each category below, give an example from your own culture. Then choose another country and research examples from that culture.

1. Food
2. Clothing
3. Language
4. Religion
5. Music
6. Sports
7. Meal Times
8. Holiday Traditions

Immigrant Innovation

When Kirby comes to Polar Bear Island, she brings her unique creation of Flipper Slippers. Her family members bring their gifts of snow cones, snow chutes, and sled beds. The bears love these ideas and they become part of the culture on Polar Bear Island.

All throughout history, immigrants have brought and shared their ideas in their new home countries. In fact, some of your favorite foods, holiday traditions, and technologies came here by way of immigrants.

Many things that are part of our culture today have origins in other countries. Can you guess which place the following originally came from?

1. Pizza
2. Christmas Tree
3. Yoga
4. Double Dutch jump rope game
5. Tacos
6. Zumba dance
7. Carving jack-o-lanterns
8. Watermelon

What are some other contributions immigrants have made to our society?