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## Move That Mountain

Written by Kate and Jol Temple, illustrated by Terri Rose Baynton

- Before reading the story, as a class look closely at the cover and title, and discuss what you can learn from them. Some things to include in your discussion could be:
  - What does the picture on the cover show?
  - What do you think might happen in this story?
  - Why do you think this?
  - What does it mean when people say that someone “can move mountains”?
  - Can you see a mountain on the cover illustration?
  - What mountain do you think the title might be referring to?
- After reading the book in both directions, as a class discuss what has happened in the story. Include in your discussion both your understanding of the book as read front to back, the book as read back to front, and the two taken together.
- While reading the story, as a class discuss what you can see happening in both versions (forward and backward) of the book. Some things to include in your discussion might be:
  - What is the problem that the puffins are facing?
  - Why do they need to move the whale?
  - What is the mountain that the title refers to?
  - What could make a difference to the puffins' efforts if they try later rather than right now?
  - Why might it be possible to move the whale later when it isn't possible now?
  - What do you think happened at the end?
- How do you think the puffins feel at the very end (beginning!) of the story? Draw a picture showing the puffins after the whale has swum away that shares how they all feel about life right now.
- What can people do when they find whales stranded on the beach? Research online the different techniques that groups of people have used to help stranded whales over the years.
- Can you think of a three-sentence story that has the opposite meaning if you say the sentences from last to first? Can you make one up as a class or in groups? As a class discuss how the authors have cleverly arranged the different statements so that it reverses the entire meaning of the story. Look carefully at each page and talk about what the sentence or phrase on the page is actually saying, and how the other sentences in the story affect its meaning.
- What do you think the whale's opinion of the whole situation is? Why do you think this? Write a brief description of the events that take place in both stories from the point of view of the whale.
- How do you think the puffins are feeling in the forward story, and how do you think the puffins are feeling in the backward story? How much of a difference does it make when people bring a positive and encouraging attitude to a group task? Individually, or in pairs,



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create a two-panel motivational comic showing someone encouraging others to keep trying.

- What sort of things can make a difference to you when you are finding something difficult? As a class discuss what we can do or say to help people keep trying even though they are finding something hard. In small groups create a motivational poster filled with some of the encouraging statements that you talked about in your discussion. Place your posters around the school for all students to see and learn from.
- Make a plasticine or play dough model of a puffin or a whale.
- Try to move mountains yourself. Tie a rope to a very heavy object and have one class member try to move it by pulling on the rope from a safe distance away. Then try having two people pulling, then three etc. adding class members until you succeed in moving it. Be very careful to make sure that the object will not keep moving and hurt anyone when you stop pulling on the rope!! Afterward, as a class discuss how it felt to move something so large and heavy when everyone was working together. What was the difference when everyone was working together compared to people all trying on their own? Write a reflective piece about the experience, sharing what you did, how you felt, and what you learned from the experience.
- Create an ocean- or seashore-themed artwork inspired by the artwork in the book. Before starting your artwork look carefully at how the artist has used color, shape, and white space to create the scenes in the book. Sketch out your design lightly using pencil, before adding color and drawing lines in more firmly. You might want to include puffins, penguins, or whales in your artwork, or you could even fill it with bright tropical fish and coral reefs.

## Notes for the Teacher

**Synopsis:** On a lonely beach far from help a whale lies stranded. A small colony of puffins have tried to help it return to the ocean, but this mountain is too large for them to move, and they have given in to despair, berating themselves for thinking that if they all worked together they could save the whale. But despair should never be given in to, and on the last page the reader is instructed to change the way they view the situation and to read the story in reverse. Read this way, the story changes drastically, and is instead an inspiring tale of hope as the puffins encourage each other to work as a team, cheering themselves on with the litany that they can move this mountain, – it is not too big, – until eventually the whale is once again swimming freely in the deep ocean. A clever exploration of how changing the way one views a situation can change the situation itself, this story of a beached whale and the helpful puffins is sure to both excite and delight.

**Key Themes:** Nature; marine life; viewpoint and perspective; whales; teamwork; positive thinking; the nature of despair.

**Writing Style:** Written throughout in the first person from the point of view of an unnamed puffin, *Move that Mountain* has been carefully crafted to tell two distinct and contradictory stories



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depending on whether it is read front-to-back or back-to-front. Phrases are situated one to a page and are short and clear. For each line to play two contrasting roles, one in each story, Kate and Jol Temple have written them to be unambiguous in themselves, with the order in which they are read providing the shift in meaning. A series of negative assertions precede a statement such as "It's madness to think" and "please never say," which is then followed in turn by a series of positive assertions. This creates a story which, when read from start to finish, asserts that something can't be done, but when read in reverse, asserts that it can be done and don't think of saying otherwise.

**Illustration Style:** Created using watercolors, Baynton's illustrations utilize a palette of marine blues and grays for the ocean and scenery. The figures of the puffins and the whale are depicted in crisp black and white with red, orange, and yellow on the puffins' beaks. Figures are realistic with no anthropomorphic tendencies, and emotive content is conveyed through body language. Baynton makes excellent use of strips of white space within her coloration of the seaside, ocean-scape, and the whale, creating the illusion of movement and conveying the wildness of the ocean. The illustrations consist of full-page spreads throughout, and visual variety is created through shifts in perspective reflecting the shifting perspective of the textual narrative. The visual narratives faithfully parallel the action described in the textual narratives while adding detail and displaying for the reader what the mountain is, who is trying to move it, and why.

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