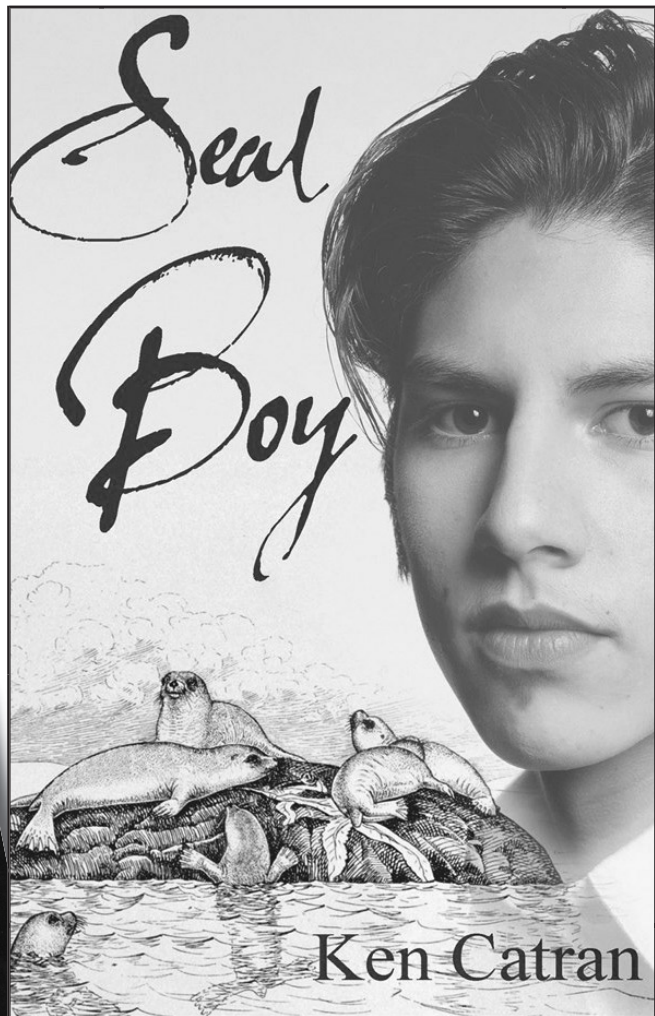


# Teachers' Resource Kit

## Seal Boy

the brilliant new novel  
from New Zealand's most respected  
children's novelist

**KEN CATRAN**



### INCLUDING

- Chapter-by-chapter Comprehension Questions
- Discussion Points
- Creative and Critical Writing Responses
- Visual Response Activities
- Drama Ideas
- Word Games
- Topics for further Research



Seal Boy is published by **Random House New Zealand Ltd**,  
Private Bag 102950, North Shore Mail Centre, Auckland, tel: 09 444 7197, fax: 09 444 7524  
Email: [customerservice@randomhouse.co.nz](mailto:customerservice@randomhouse.co.nz)

# Comprehension Questions

## Chapter One

1. How has Emmet's family earned its money?
2. What gives Emmet the chance to slip away from his grandfather's carriage?

## Chapter Two

1. What encourages Emmet to fight back when he is mugged?
2. Why doesn't Emmet leave the alleyway after the street gang has gone?
3. What are Emmet's three mistakes in the second half of this chapter?

## Chapter Three

1. How has Emmet ended up on board a ship?

## Chapter Four

1. What does Yetta think Emmet has got rid of through his sea sickness?

## Chapter Five

1. How does Emmet earn respect on the boat at last?
2. What changes does Emmet notice in himself now?
3. Find out what a cauliflower ear is!

## Chapter Six

1. Why does Captain Bracegirdle accept a strange man on board as harpooner?
2. What does blackbirding mean? Can you think of other terms for it?

## Chapter Seven

1. What are some of the hazards boat crews can experience once a whale has been harpooned?
2. What is the 'flurry' in whaling terms?

## Chapter Eight

1. What makes Emmet's experiences in this chapter feel like his greatest achievements? What do they outshine?
2. What does a cooper do?

## Chapter Nine

1. What does Patu tell Emmet about his own past?
2. What are the differences between the Canadian First Nations Peoples' form of whaling, and the whaling done on board ships like the *Absalom*, according to Patu?

## Chapter Ten

1. What makes Emmet manage to eat raw onions at the start of this chapter?
2. What makes Emmet want to do Captain Bracegirdle a good turn?
3. What rough kindness does the Captain do in response?

## Chapter Eleven

1. What is the explanation for the hurry and unrest in Kororareka?

## Chapter Twelve

1. Why has the war party attacked Kororareka?
2. Why does Emmet have cause to be afraid despite finding himself rescued from Kororareka?

## Chapter Thirteen

1. Explain how the *Betsy Bright* differs from *Absalom*.

## Chapter Fourteen

1. How is Emmet treated differently from Hiram Wilke, the other passenger who took refuge at Kororareka?
2. What makes Emmet run for the Maori camp?
3. What does Emmet discover the barrel of salt is for?

## Chapter Fifteen

1. What advantages would Hiram Wilke gain if he revealed Emmet's refuge in this chapter?

## Chapters Sixteen and Seventeen

1. What gestures give Emmet hope and what helps prevent him from feeling too isolated and frightened during this part of his narrative?

## Chapter Eighteen

1. What happens to the *Philomena's* stores in this chapter?
2. Why does Abraham Shallcross ignore the young seaman's reports of seals on the small island?
3. How can Hans tell there are seals on shore before he sees any?
4. Why is Hans surprised that only matches are missing from his pockets once he gets back on board his ship?
5. Why doesn't Maluu kill any seals for food?

## Chapter Nineteen

1. Why is Emmet now so contented on his seal island?
2. Why has Ajax been left on the shore?

## Chapter Twenty

1. Why doesn't Emmet leave the island even with a kinder ship's Captain?

## Chapter Twenty One

1. Why does the word 'home' sound cold to Emmet now?
2. What will Emmet try to explain to his grandfather when they're reunited?

## Discussion Points

*In Chapter Fifteen, Emmet realises that luxuries he took for granted in his old life have a great cost in the wider scheme of the world's resources. What might there be in our own lives that we use, that might have a serious cost to the environment?*

*Is it sometimes right to commit actions which actually hurt or harm other people, as Emmet does on the island at times?*

*Do you think this novel would be a good one for a screen-writer to turn into a film or a TV series?*

*What do you think of the title of the novel? Are there other possible titles you could choose for this book?*

*Think of a list of ten questions you would like to ask the author about this novel.*



## Creative & Critical Writing Responses

1. Reread pages 58 and 61, and note the vivid comparisons the author uses. Write 3-4 similes in this style, using the new knowledge you've gained (e.g. about shipping, whales and seals) from reading this novel.
2. Ken Catran makes vivid use of the sense of smell to help recreate his historical settings. Describe your house, your school, or some other scene, using the sense of smell to make it as real and alive as possible for your reader.
3. Imagine that Emmet has a pen and notebook in his pocket when he is left ashore on the small island, and that he decides to keep a diary of his adventures. Write two or three entries in this journal, using Emmet's point of view.
4. Write 1-2 pages about the most challenging outdoors adventure you have ever undertaken.
5. Write your own imaginative story about being stranded or lost somewhere, in an unfamiliar setting.
6. Write a sea shanty based on the adventures of Emmet J. Tyler.
7. Write a description of Emmet from the point of view of one of the seals he befriends.
8. Write your own blurb for the back cover.
9. Write a review of the book for your favourite magazine or newspaper.

## Research

- Find out more about the history of sealing and whaling in the South Pacific.
- Find out whether any countries still hunt seals and whales.
- Find out about one or two fables or myths about whales and seals. What culture do these tales come from?
- Find out ten interesting facts about seals and whales.

## Drama

1. In pairs, write a scene where Emmet is reunited with his grandfather. Perform this scene for the class.
2. In pairs, write a scene where Emmet has to have a posh dinner with his Aunt Eglantine shortly after his return to his old home. (How might Emmet behave, what might he have forgotten about formal occasions, and what new ideas might he have that would shock his aunt?) Perform your script for the class.
3. In groups of 2-5, choose a scene from the novel and decide how to act it out as a mime or charade. Perform it in front of the rest of the class, who have to guess what is happening in the scene.
4. Write a scene where one of the sailors who Emmet has tricked is trying to convince his mates back on land, over a pint of beer, that he was fooled by a boy who was part seal, part human.

## Debate Topics

Divide into positive and affirmative teams to debate the following subjects:

1. Animals and humans should have equal rights.
2. It's too late to save the planet from environmental destruction.
3. Progress and change are always better than the way things were done in the past.
4. If we love animals, we shouldn't eat meat.
5. Seals are more intelligent than hunters.

## Visual Responses

1. Design a Victorian handbill or wanted poster, asking for news of Emmet J. Tyler, based on the description in Chapter Ten, page 7.
2. Design a map to show the route of Emmet's whole journey. Or, design a map of the island where he spends his time with the seal family.
3. Imagine that Ken Catran's publisher wants to have a new cover for this novel. Design the cover that you would choose for the book.
4. Design a poster advertising this book for bookshops to use in their windows.

## Word Game

When Emmet first meets up with the British marines, he still finds it difficult to talk - and write - properly after all his time on the island without human company. The words below are some of those he has tried to use, but he's got them all muddled.

Can you unscramble the following words for him?

When you have worked out what they are, use them for the answers to the clues in a crossword of your own design. (All of this vocabulary is taken from the novel.)

ssehnia  
prepci-aet  
vaaj  
tilee

eeerbhcs  
ssreog  
thasyrw  
"sfocle

lassdwin  
blubesrdlna  
mukoa  
tigspo