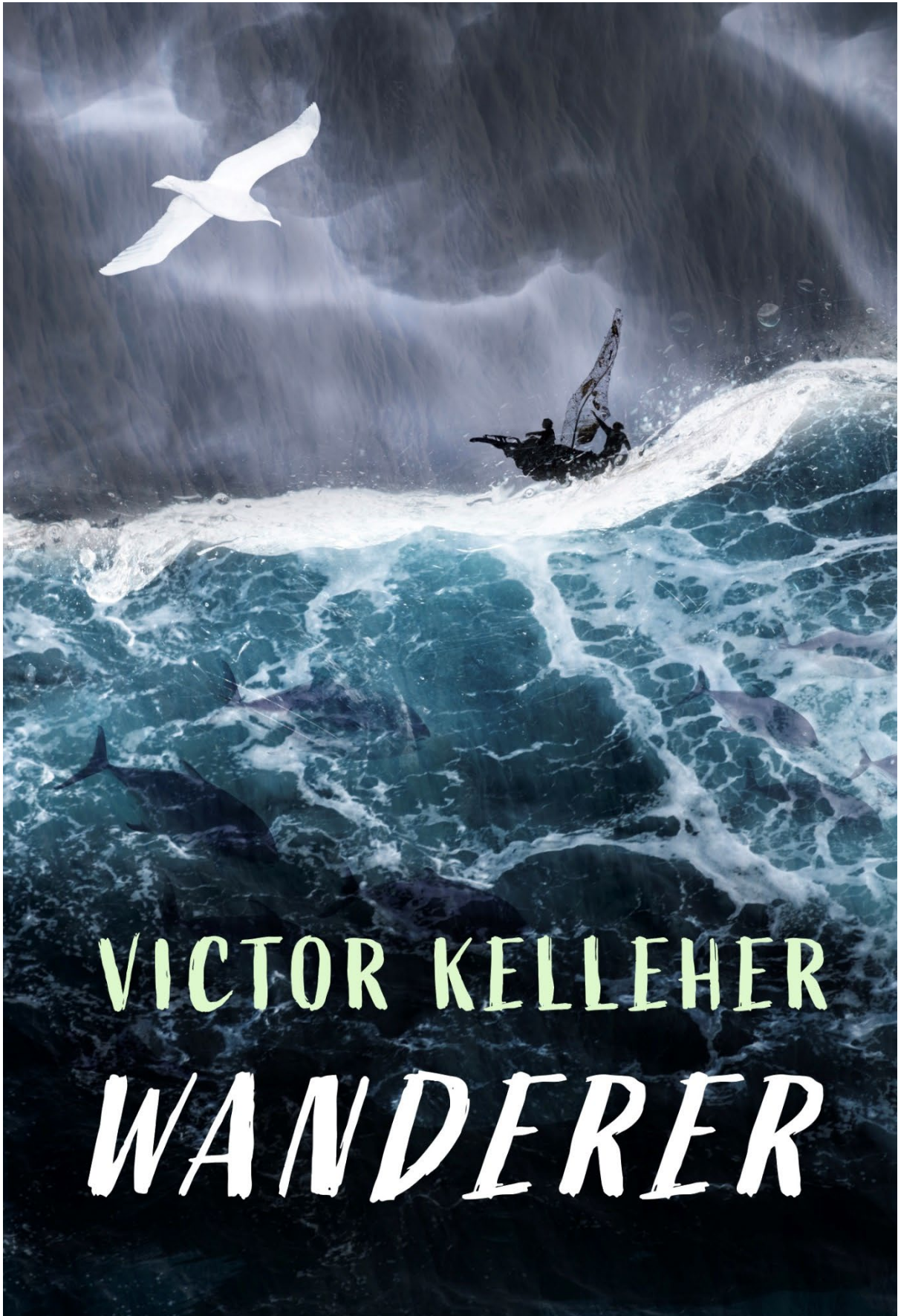


Teachers' Notes



Wanderer

By Victor Kelleher

Cover and internal illustrations by Lorena Carrington

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About the book:

In a dangerous world where predators roam both land and sea, an orphaned young boatman, Dane, wanders alone. Faced with the terrors of the water and the ever-present threat of a warrior group called the Clan, he struggles to survive.

Along with his precious kayak, Dane has one other treasure: a much-loved book given to him by his mother, which is a source of comfort in the hardest of times.

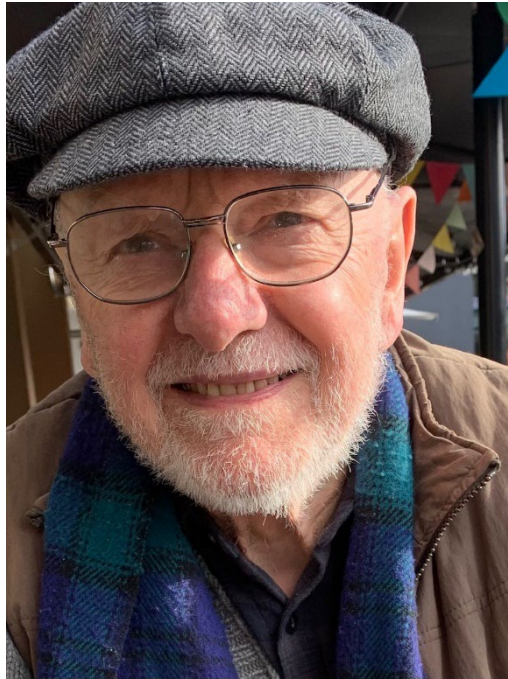
When he encounters Garth, a book-loving old boat builder, and his amazing granddaughter Lana, everything changes, as he and Lana are pitched into a perilous quest that challenges all they hold dear.

The first middle-grade novel in many years, by one of Australia's greatest storytellers, *Wanderer* is an exciting adventure set in a brilliantly-imagined world. It is also a lyrical love song to the power of books and stories.



About the author:

With many novels to his credit, Victor Kelleher has written successfully for both adults and for young people. Formerly an associate professor of English, he has long since devoted himself full-time to fiction. He is a past winner of the Children's Book Council of Australia's Book of the Year Award, has twice received the CBCA Honour Award, and has either won or been short-listed for many other such prizes, including the Science Fiction Achievement Award and a short-listing for the Carnegie Medal. *Wanderer*, like much of his fiction, reflects his deep concern for the natural world. He currently lives in Tasmania with his artist wife.



Something from the author:

I wrote *Wanderer* while living in the Channel Country of southern Tasmania. It grew out of the waterways and landscape I looked onto every day, and more or less demanded to be written. So like all my fantasies, it is grounded in a real place. Only the time has shifted, from the present to a not-too-distant future, when the world is learning to heal itself again.

The notion of healing runs right through the book, from the main character, Dane, who has been mentally wounded by the manner of his mother's death and his own feelings of guilt; right through to the animal kingdom, which has turned against humanity after millennia of ill-treatment and neglect. Then, too, there are the abandoned children who, for me, symbolise the plight of poor kids everywhere.

The stories told by Lana, and the books she and Dane are trying to rescue, can also be seen as a part of this healing process – though they clearly symbolize much more. Again, for me, the image of the lost kids sitting around the campfire listening to Lana tell her tale is central to so much of what I was trying to convey. Stories can heal us, as First Nation people throughout the world have known for many, many centuries.

In this respect, let me confess something here. I hadn't written a novel for some years and telling Lana and Dane's story helped restore my writerly self. It reminded me of a part of myself that had been missing. Does that make sense? I hope so, because it's the simplest truth I took away from this act of authorship.

But that's enough about healing. Readers can further explore that theme for themselves.

Just a final word about one of the many other issues raised by the novel, and that's the thorny problem of violence. In and of itself, violence is a nasty thing. On the other hand, it's something we're all capable of. Why does, say, Lana show restraint at critical moments,

while her father, Karl, gives free rein to his basest passions? What constrains her? Or Dane come to that? Or to look at it in another light, why do the people of Skull veer one way, and the people of Elysia another?

Much greater writers than myself have tackled this problem, and it even arises in many fairy tales. So it would have been foolish of me to pretend that *Wanderer* supplies all the answers. It doesn't. But at the heart of my young characters' quest, there are, I hope, some clues as to how and why we become who we are.

Happy reading!

About the illustrator

Lorena Carrington is a photographic artist and book illustrator based in regional Victoria. She is published in Australia with Serenity Press, and internationally with Kane Miller (US) and Wydawnictwo Tadam (Poland). She has also been commissioned for covers by publishers such as Swan River Press (Ireland), Eagle Books, and the Australian Fairy Tale Society. Lorena exhibits her work in galleries around the country. She presents at literary and arts festivals around Australia, and visits schools and libraries to give talks and hold workshops on illustration, books and story. She is the recipient of the 2020 Australian Fairy Tale Society award, for her 'outstanding contribution to the field of Australian Fairy Tales.'



Something from the illustrator

When creating a cover illustration, an illustrator must think about several things. First, of course, we read the story. We take notes, on the important things that happen, and what we need to reveal on the cover. We mustn't give away any spoilers, but we need to hint to the future reader what they might expect to find in the book. Is it an adventure story or a romance; a thriller or a cosy mystery? Or a combination of those things! The illustration we create will often mean a book will be picked up or left on the shelf so it's very important that we A: entice the reader, B: tell them something of the truth about what they'll find beyond the cover and C: make them want to open the book and discover more...

Here are some things I included in the cover of Wanderer that hint at the story inside:

- The boat on the ocean, which is a very important part of the book.
- The white albatross flying overhead.
- On the back cover, the blurb is contained within the outline of an old book.
- Less obviously, you might spot the fish lurking in the water, or the fact that the boat is cobbled together with sticks and dried leaves.



You may notice that the motifs of the albatross and books are carried over into the internal pages of the book. I felt bird was important to include. It might feel like a hovering threat at the start of the book, and add to the sense of danger, but that meaning will change as you read further.

Most illustrators make their work in the way you'd expect: with a pen and pencil, or paint, or even collage. I've always been a photographer, so over time I've developed an illustration method that works for me: photographic montage. Everything you see in the illustrations (both for the cover, and the internal motifs) are photographs. I collect them all together, then layer them together on the computer. The boat is made from sticks and dried leaves, and the ocean is made from a combination of the actual sea and water being splashed around in a fish tank. The storm clouds are real clouds, but the rain is actually ripples on water, with the image turned sideways. I spend a lot of time looking at random objects, wondering what I can turn them into. Inspiration and materials for creative work really are everywhere.



Activities

Post-reading discussion questions

How do you think the epigraph (the extract from the poem 'Mouse' by Robert Burns, at the beginning of the book) relates to the themes in *Wanderer*?

The characters in *Wanderer* often refer to a time way back in the past, calling it 'the Golden Years,' and many have a theory about why the world changed after that. What do you think happened to turn the world into what they are living in now?

Stories and knowledge contained in books that have survived are very important to Dane and his friends. But the Clan hates books. Why do you think that is?

Comrade, the wounded albatross Dane and Lana rescue, forms a real connection with the young people, and is a sign of the healing that the author mentions in his note. What other examples can you find of this world beginning to heal?

Think about some of the questions raised by the author in his note, about the very different ways in which different people react, for example Lana, Karl and Dane. Why do you think that is?

Classroom research activities

Orcas (also known as 'killer whales') are prominent throughout the book. What can you find out about them and their relationship with humans over time?

There are several great classic stories mentioned in *Wanderer*, including *Macbeth*, *Moby Dick*, *The Pied Piper*, *Hansel and Gretel*, *The Hobbit*, and *Lord of the Flies*. Choose one of them and research when and how it was written, and by who.

There's a lot about boats in the novel, from Dane's kayak to the Clan's war canoes to the wrecked and rusting ships from the Golden Years. Look up information about one of these types of boats and how similar ones might be used today.

Classroom creative activities:

Creative writing

At the end of the novel, Dane has become 'the Book-Gatherer' and is about to set off to find as many books as possible to bring them back for the library. Write a short story about the first book or books he finds, and how he gets it/them.

Lana stays behind in Elysia to live with and help the community. Write a story from her point of view, after Dane has left.

The children have created the Book-Gatherer's song, which they sing to Dane when he leaves. It ends with 'Sail away, sail away.' What's the rest of it? Write the song as you imagine it.

Write a page of the book Dane's mother gave him. You can illustrate it too.

Art activities

Design your own book cover:

What is the last book you read? How would you design the cover? Think about the overarching themes, the characters, the intended audience, the parts of the plot you want to reveal on the cover. Can you hint at any spoilers or twists without actually revealing them? Think about what colour does to the feel of a cover. Could you use the same image but use colour to make it look like a mystery, a romance, or a horror story?

Think about these questions, make some notes, then design a cover for your book. You can use any method you like - paint, pencil, collage, etc - but make sure you think about how it will work.

Make your own montage illustration:

Collect seven things. Either inside the classroom, or from outside. They could be anything: pen, leaf, muesli bar wrapper, twig, pencil sharpener, interesting bit of gravel, feather...

Put them on a piece of paper in front of you. Move them around. Can you make the following three things with them?

A face: front on - or for more of a challenge, in profile.

A bird: either a real one or something more mythical...

A boat: it can be a tiny dinghy or a luxury yacht!



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