

# Mika

goes to  
whale school



Nina Gutmann

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About the author and illustrator:

Nina Gutmann, BA

Studied pedagogy in Graz. Has been working in children's education and care as well as in child and youth welfare since 2011. Head of the childcare facility at Graz University of Technology "nanoversity".

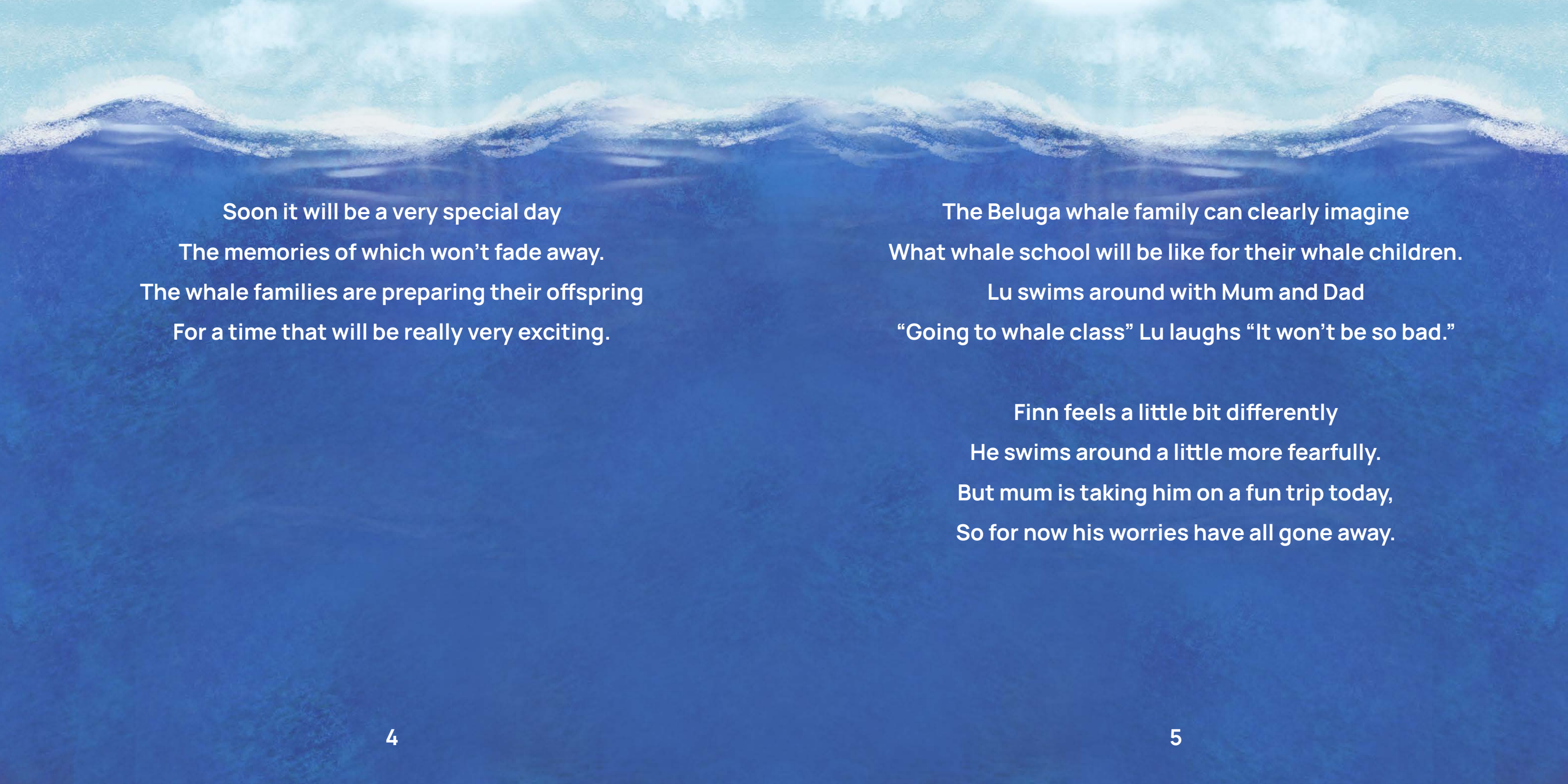


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Soon it will be a very special day  
The memories of which won't fade away.  
The whale families are preparing their offspring  
For a time that will be really very exciting.

The Beluga whale family can clearly imagine  
What whale school will be like for their whale children.  
Lu swims around with Mum and Dad  
“Going to whale class” Lu laughs “It won't be so bad.”

Finn feels a little bit differently  
He swims around a little more fearfully.  
But mum is taking him on a fun trip today,  
So for now his worries have all gone away.



And the child we will go to school with each day:

Mika is a Blue Whale, as you can see from far away.

she lives with Mummy and Mama deep under the sea  
He

And loves being at home with his  
her whale family.

At kindergarten Mika already had great fun,

But there are new experiences soon to come.





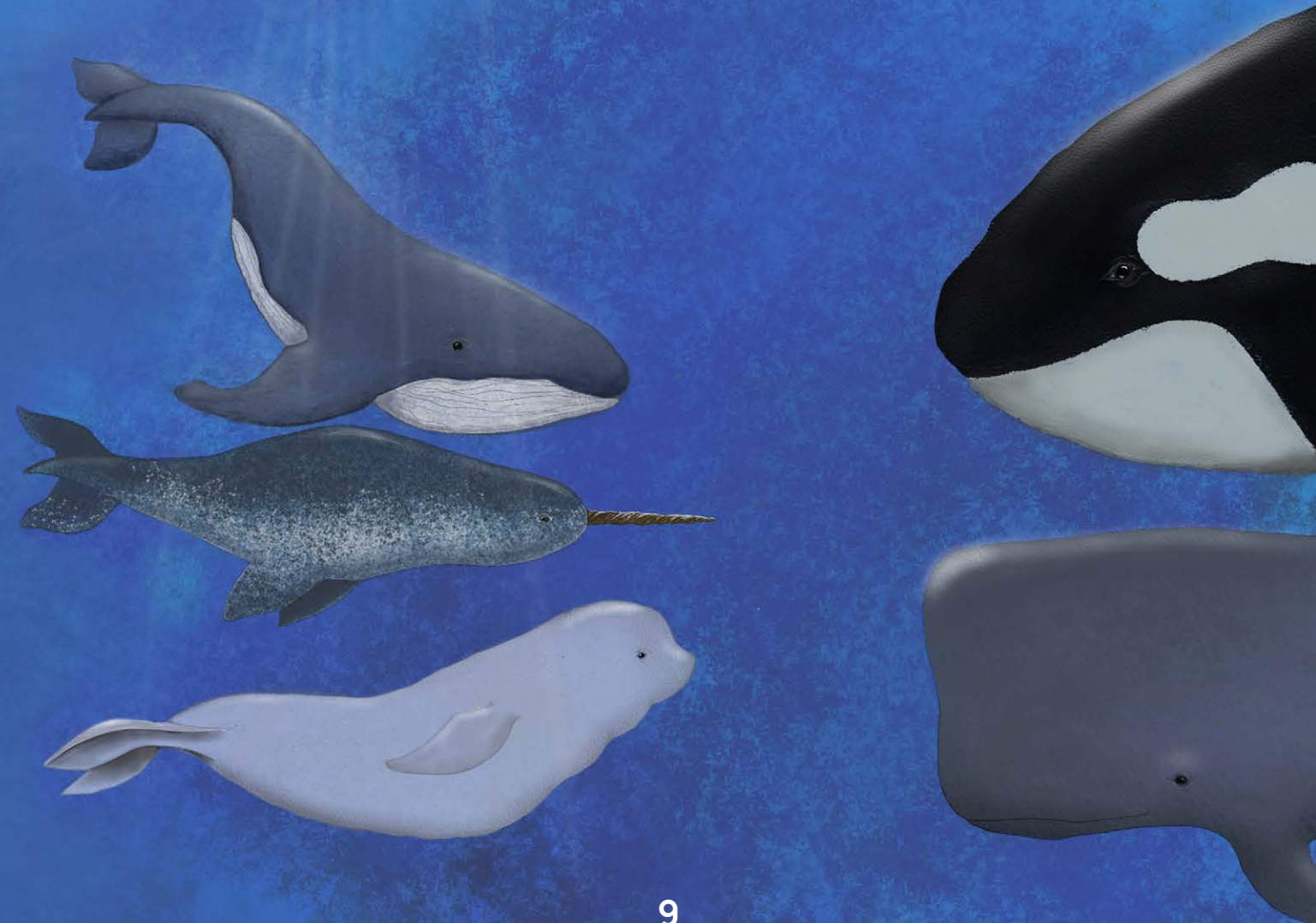
## Settling in, Separation, Orientation

On Monday whale school starts, it has come so soon.

Mika is nervous to leave Mummy and Mama,  
but will see them this afternoon.

Meanwhile **he** **she** is not all on **her** **his** own,  
With Lu, Finn, Ms Moon, Mr Small - Mika isn't alone.

Who does Mika ask if there is something  
**she** doesn't know yet?  
**he**





## Community, Friendship, Teamwork

On Tuesday Mika starts making friends with Lu  
And together they figure out just what to do.





But making new friends?  
How do you do that?  
Do you just ask?  
But how, and more importantly, what?  
Maybe just give them a gentle nudge?  
Be careful not to be too rough.  
Mika doesn't know "Will it be enough?"

What could Mika do to make friends?



Empathy, Taking responsibility  
for each other, Cohesion

On Wednesday Mika forgets his/her snack for teatime.

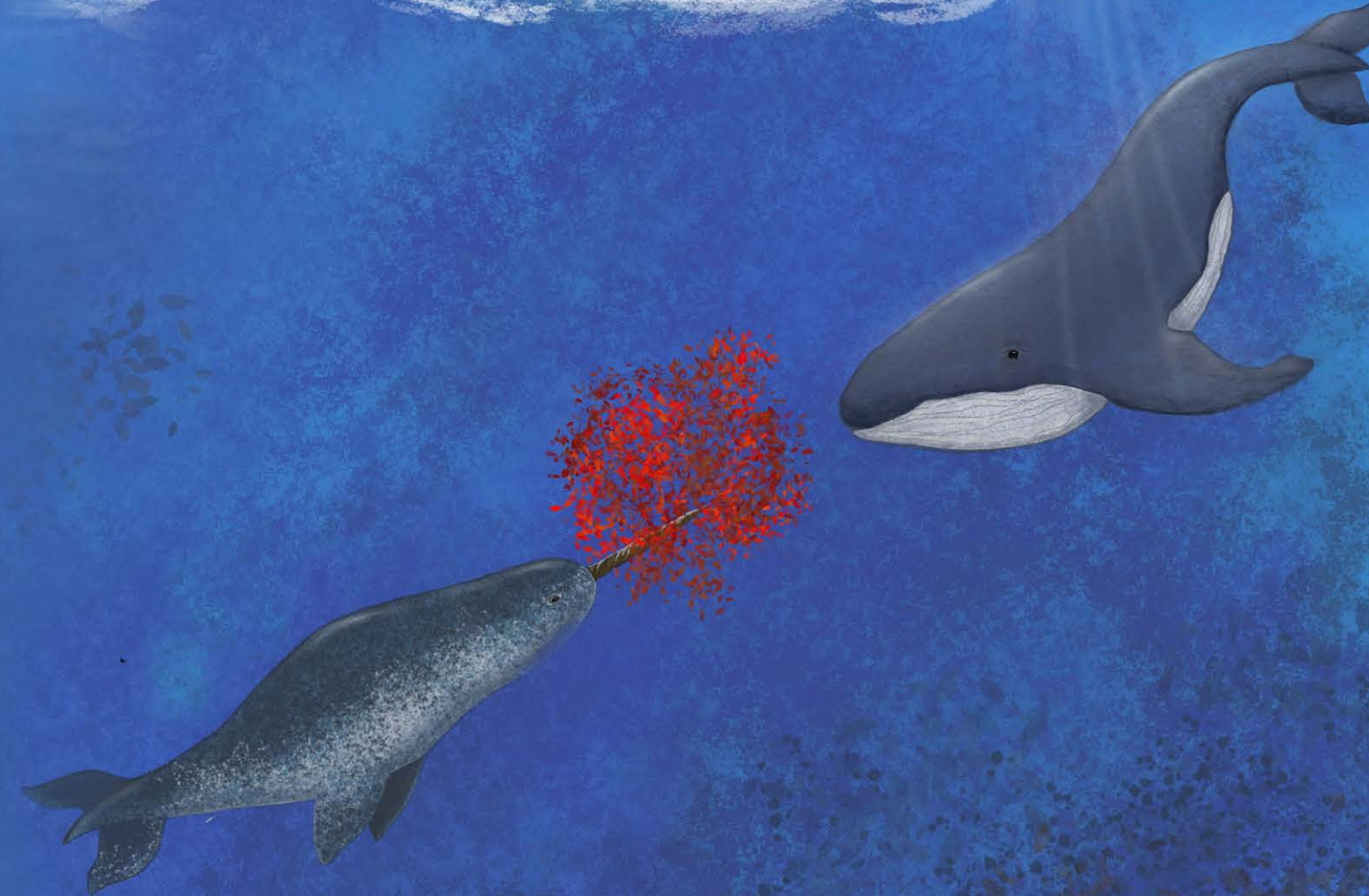
“No problem,” says Finn, “you can share mine!”

“Thank you Finn.” says Mika much cheered.

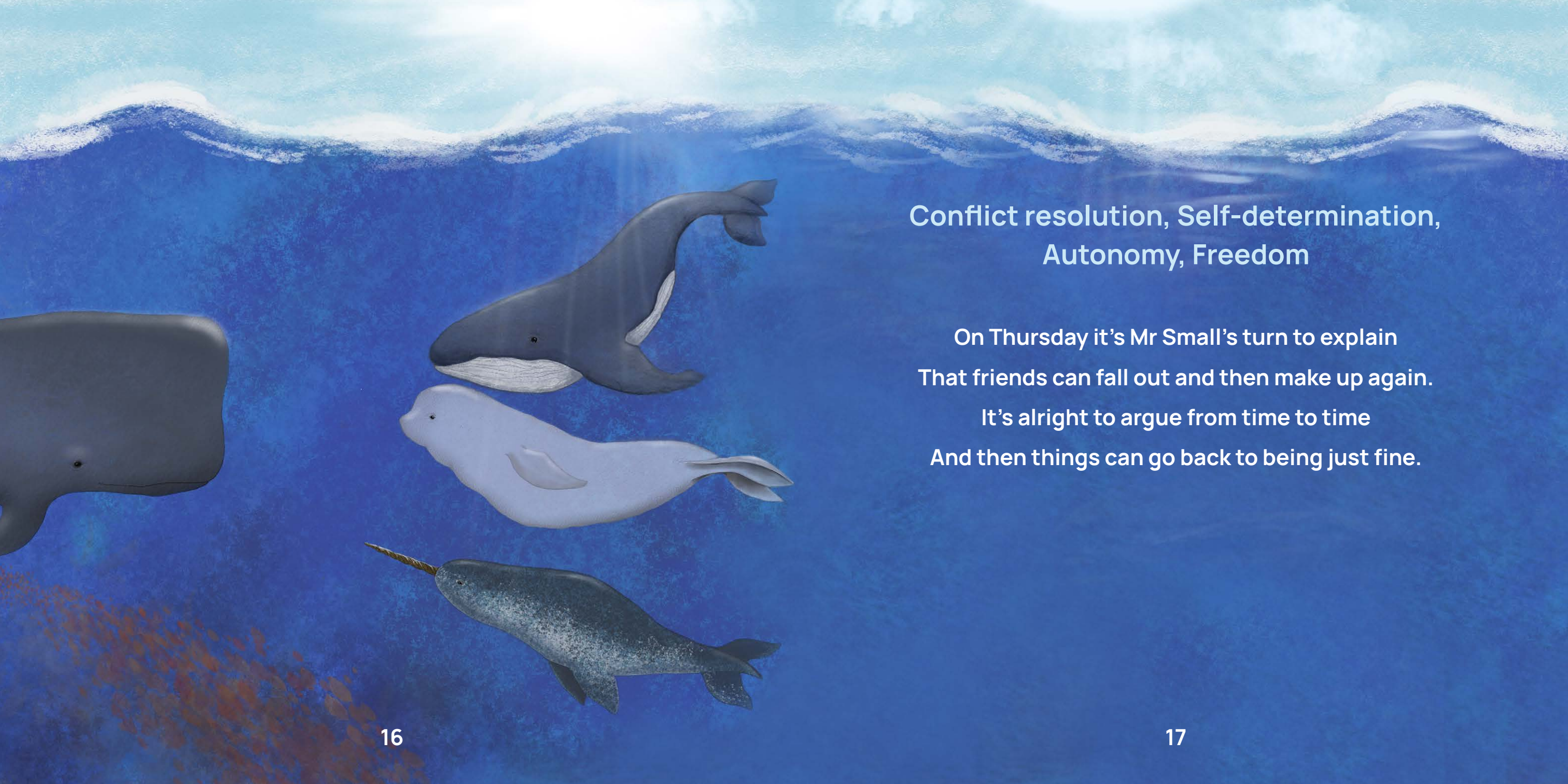
Making friends is not as hard as I feared.

“Certainly Mika, of course I’d help you.

And the other way round, you’d help me too.”







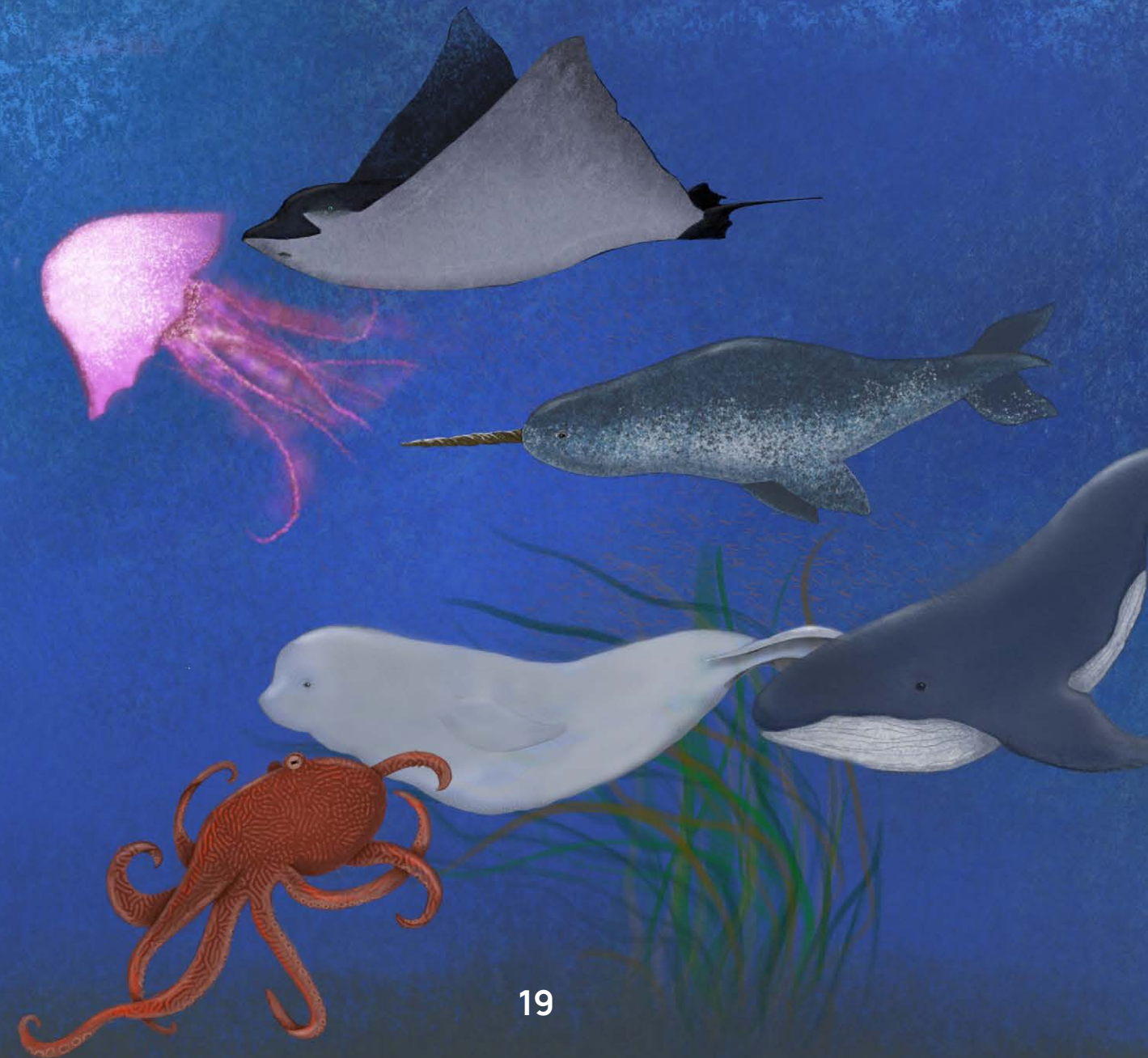
Conflict resolution, Self-determination,  
Autonomy, Freedom

On Thursday it's Mr Small's turn to explain  
That friends can fall out and then make up again.

It's alright to argue from time to time  
And then things can go back to being just fine.



But sometimes that's easier said than done.  
After arguing how can we go back to having fun?  
Calm words and calm tones help me and help you  
To understand the other person's point of view.  
So try to stay calm, don't fall into a rage  
And remember saying sorry can take some courage.  
But once an argument is settled,  
You'll find that it was definitely worth the effort.







If you want to do something don't make others guess,  
Let them know what you like by saying "Yes".  
But what others want doesn't have to be right for you.  
If you don't like something just say "No thank you".

When should Mika say no?



Responsibility for yourself  
and for your own body, Participation

On Friday Mika learns how to look after yourself best.  
For example when you feel tired it's good to have a rest.

Drink there when you're thirsty,  
when you're hungry eat here.

Listen to your body, there's so much to hear.  
And if there's something that Mika doesn't understand  
Then Ms Moon and Mr Small are always on hand.

What could Mika do if  
he she has a stomach ache?





## Attention, Respect, Equality

On Saturday, Mika and Mummy are alone,  
Because Mama has to work so she isn't at home.  
Mika's family do something new together each day,  
And **he** **she** learns really such a lot in this way.

What could Mika do with Mummy and Mama?





## Inclusivity, Open-mindedness, Receptiveness

On Sunday Mummy, Mama and Mika lie in bed late.

But Mika's thoughts are already at the school gate.

She thinks about new friends, about Lu and Finn,  
He He found them in no time, what a great way to begin.  
She

When Mika needs them they're always helpful.

Things are already feeling wonderful.

Mika also thinks about Ms Moon and Mr Small.

"So school is going to be great after all!"

What else might Mika learn at school?









## Overview: Values and main areas of emphasis

Settling in, Separation, Orientation	8-9
Community, Friendship, Teamwork	10-13
Empathy, Taking responsibility for each other, Cohesion	14-16
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Inclusivity, Open-mindedness, Receptiveness	26-27

## Additional information:

### The weekdays

Time structures provide security and direction. Even at a very young age, children align themselves to rituals such as eating and sleeping times, morning circles, „garden time“, weekends and much more. Here, too, the weekdays from Monday to Sunday provide the temporal structures that help children locate themselves within the story and thus introduce them to the weekdays in a playful way.

### Values

In our daily encounters we live and experience a wide variety of values. A common understanding of values is the basis of a functioning society. But what values do I set for my child? What values do I give my child on his or her path through life? Values around community, friendship, empathy, open-mindedness, self-determination, freedom, autonomy, respect, deference and equality play an important role even in early childhood and shape the value systems of children from the very beginning. In “Mika goes to Whale School“ different values and areas of emphasis run page by page through the story and help children to align themselves to them.



## The school entry phase

Looking forward to school is often already a big topic at kindergarden age. It is not uncommon for children to be diligently prepared for „reading, writing and arithmetic“. But the school entry phase demands many other skills from children. They often face challenges that they had not come across or even imagined before. How do I find my way in my new environment? Who do I turn to when I need help? How do I find new friends? How do I deal with the pain of separation? Whom should I be guided by? Mika feels the same way. Day after day, Mika faces important questions and obstacles and demonstrates potential solutions.

## Independent thinking & problem solving

Through short, story-based questions, children can get involved themselves. This gives us the opportunity to immerse ourselves in the child's world of thought world and to see what they think about the story. This gives the children the opportunity to find their own solutions and to give Mika tips' that can be applied to their own everyday life.

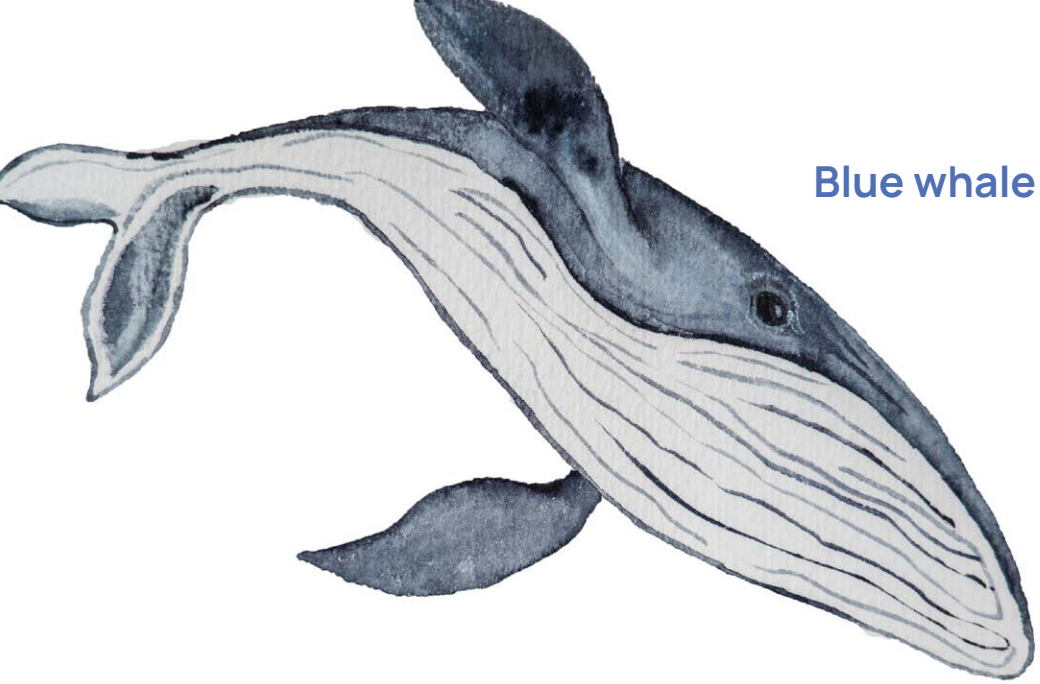
## Diversity

Inclusivity, open-mindedness, and receptiveness are of particular importance here. Mika's parents are Mummy and Mama. However, the same-sex partnership is in no way placed in the foreground of the story. Rather, it is introduced into the story with the same lack of emphasis as would be the case with a parent couple consisting of a mum and a dad. And after all, that is what it is - completely normal.

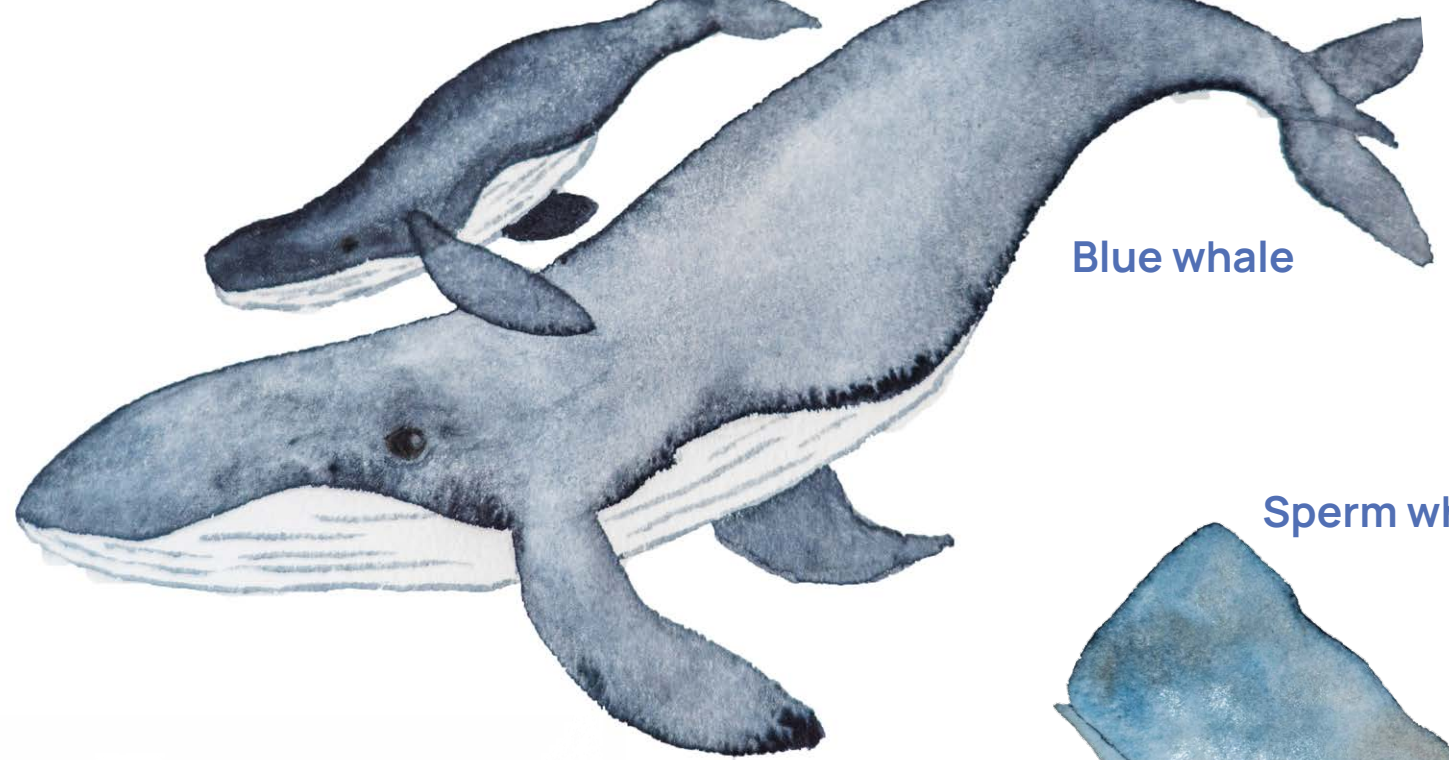
## Gender identity

Does it matter whether Mika is a whale boy or a whale girl? While reading this book, children can decide for themselves which gender Mika should be. Gender is not necessarily fixed. It can change over the course of a lifetime and is fluid within and outside of our established boundaries. This book allows one to identify with many variants of gender identity and thus also encourages „non-determination“, and ideally also enables playing with the gender of the protagonists. The playful presentation of personal pronouns invites us to think of gender in another way.

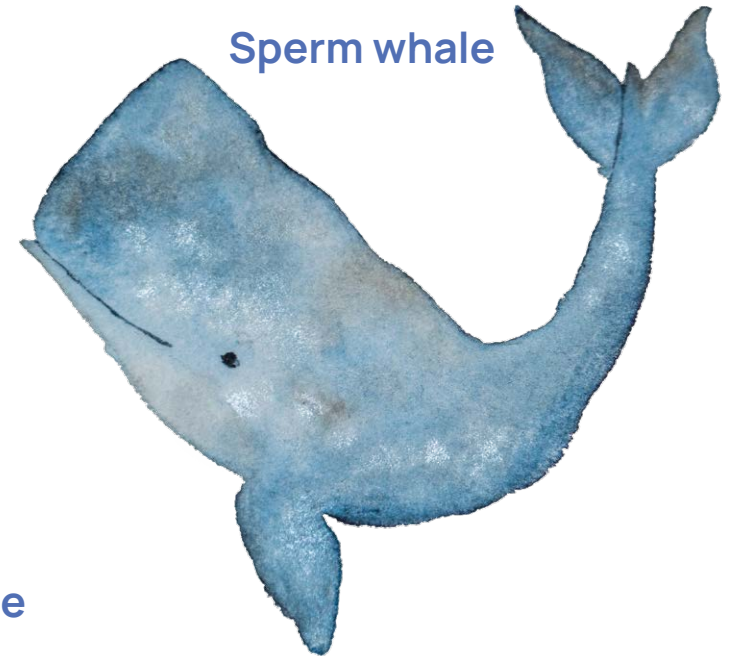




Blue whale



Blue whale



Sperm whale



Narwhale

Orca



Beluga whale







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We accompany Mika, the whale child, throughout the first week of school. Feeling both shy and excited, Mika experiences the first seven days of school and faces new challenges every day. At the beginning it takes some effort to get over being separated from Mummy and Mama, but by the end of the week Mika is already wrapped up in thoughts of school and new friendships.

A brief accompanying text in the appendix provides readers, especially parents and teachers, with background information and further suggestions.

This book is one of a total of 6 children's books published by the Verlag der Technischen Universität Graz. The series focuses particularly on those values that form the foundation of the educational care of children at Graz University of Technology: open-mindedness, inclusivity, and respect for our fellow human beings, for animals and for nature, as well as for technology and natural sciences.

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