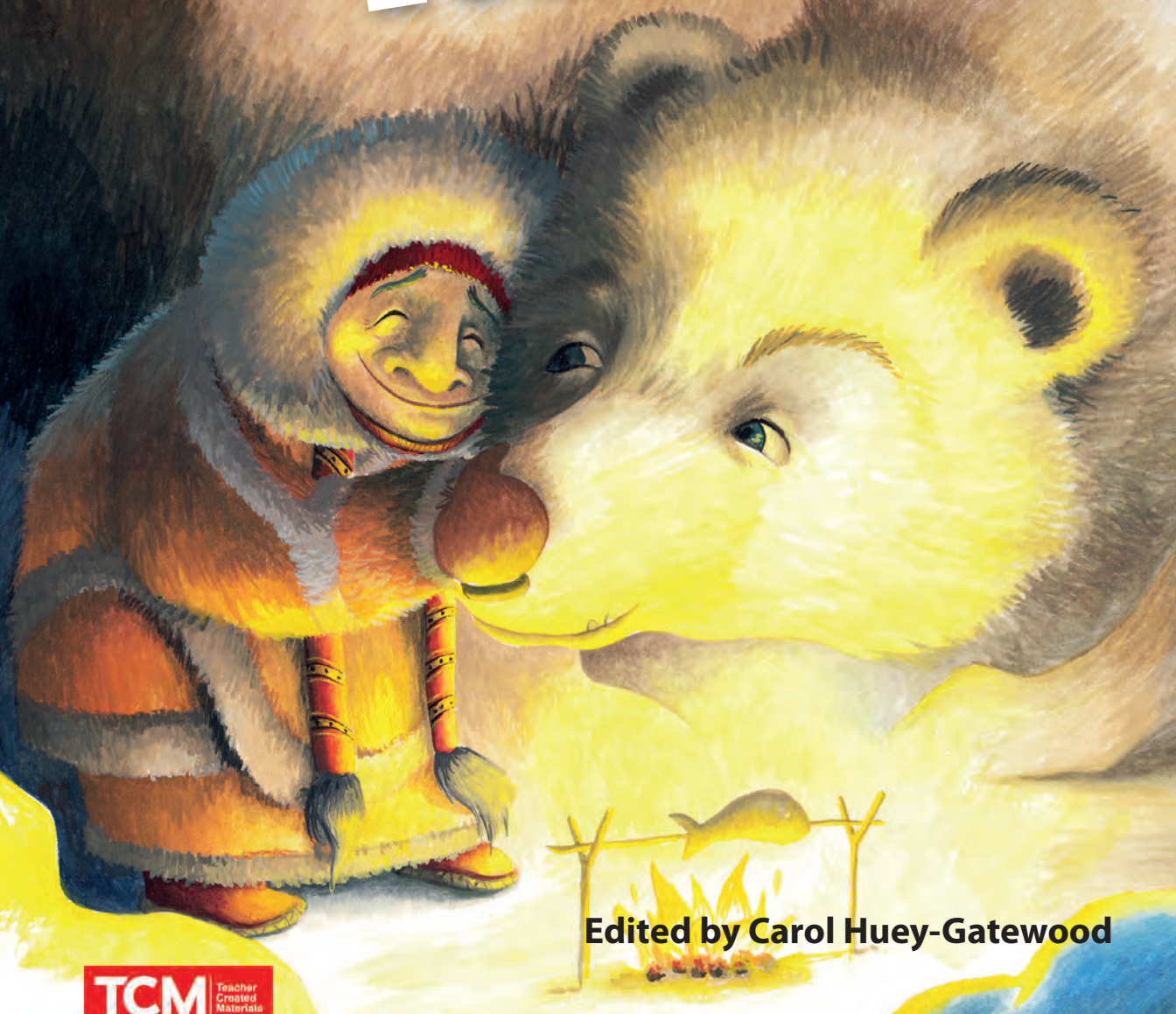


Around the World Tales



Edited by Carol Huey-Gatewood

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For Review Only

The Polar Bear Son

In an Inuit village on the edge of the Arctic Circle, there lived an old woman. She had no family, so the people of the village looked after her. They caught fish for her and shared their meals with her. Despite their kindness, the old woman was lonely and wished for a family of her own.

One day, the old woman was walking along the icy seashore, when she saw a tiny polar bear cub. When no mother came to claim it, the old woman scooped him up in her arms. “Poor little thing,” she said. “You will be my son,” she whispered, smiling at the little bear. She called him Nanuk.





She took the bear cub back to her igloo. Over the coming weeks, a strong bond grew between the old woman and her polar bear son. The children of the village all loved Nanuk, too. Every day, they came to visit the old woman, and they played with Nanuk in the snow. Her igloo echoed with their laughter.



As Nanuk and the children grew older, they taught him how to fish and hunt for seals. Nanuk turned into the smartest and strongest hunter. Every day, he would go out to hunt, and then he

would return home with armfuls of salmon for the old woman.

She was happy to repay the kindness of her neighbors and would hand them fresh fish, saying, "My Nanuk is the best fisherman in the village!"

But the men of the village soon grew jealous of Nanuk. "He's making us look bad," they grumbled. "There is no room for another hunter in this village." And so, the men decided to get rid of Nanuk.

When the children heard what their fathers were planning, they ran to the old woman and told her.



The old woman set off to visit every igloo in the village, where she begged the men to leave her son alone. “If you harm him, you will break my heart,” she cried. But the men were too proud and stubborn.

With a heavy heart, the old woman returned home. “You must leave here, Nanuk. The men don’t want you here, and your life is in danger. You must go and never return.”

The old woman and Nanuk hugged each other tightly. With tears in his eyes, Nanuk left his igloo home. Just as she had said, the old woman’s heart felt like it had broken.




The old woman missed her son. She soon became thin and pale with sorrow.

The children also missed their lost friend, and the village became an unhappy place. The men began to feel deeply ashamed of their actions.

One day, when the old woman’s heart ached with sadness, she decided to set out to find Nanuk. She left at dawn and walked all day across the icy plains. As she walked, she called out Nanuk’s name. After hours of searching, she saw her polar bear son running toward her. He had grown big and strong in the time he had been gone, and his white fur shimmered in the northern light.

“Nanuk!” the old woman cried, and she wrapped her arms around him.

Nanuk could see how tired and hungry his mother looked, so he caught some fish for her to eat and carved a snow den with his paws to keep her warm. They stayed together for a day and a night, then Nanuk carried his mother home.

When the villagers saw Nanuk and realized how far the old woman must have traveled to be with him, they bowed their heads with shame. From then on, Nanuk visited his mother every day, and the whole village welcomed him. They had learned that the love between a mother and her child should always be treated with respect. 



Maui Goes Fishing

Mai's four older brothers never let him join in their fun. One morning, they all rose with the sun to go deep-sea fishing in their special canoe.

"Please let me come with you," begged Maui, but his older brothers just laughed at him and teased him. "One day, little boy, but not today. There isn't enough room in our canoe for you as well as all the fish we're planning to bring home with us!"



Maui had a secret. He had magic powers that his family didn't know about. While his brothers got their fishing gear ready, he came up with a plan to use his magic. When he was a baby, he had been given an enchanted jawbone by the ocean spirits. He hid it in a secret box.

He took out the jawbone from his secret box and used it to make a fishing hook. Then, he braided some flax into a fishing line, and he climbed into a basket at the bottom of their canoe.

When at last the four brothers were ready to set out, they grumbled about how much heavier the canoe felt.

While they were far out at sea fishing, one of the brothers grabbed the basket to put a fish in—and uncovered Maui. “Little squirt!” he said. “You tricked us! We’re taking you back to shore right now!”



Book Club Questions

1. In which tales do the settings affect the actions and outcomes of the characters? Which tales could take place anywhere and still have the same outcomes?
2. What role does jealousy play in “The Polar Bear Son”? How does a mother’s love overcome jealousy and redeem the village?
3. Compare “Maui Goes Fishing” and “How The Milky Way Came to Be.” How are the tales alike and different?
4. Contrast the heroes in “Why Whales Swim in the Sea” and “The Shark God.” How do they solve the problems facing them?
5. In “Smell of Soup, Sound of Money,” how is the innkeeper’s ingenious plan foiled?
6. What do the main characters in “Smell of Soup, Sound of Money” and “The Mouse Merchant” have in common?