

OCEAN COMMOTION: CAUGHT IN THE CURRENTS

By Janeen Mason

www.JaneenMason.com

visit@JaneenMason.com

©Janeen Mason, 2012

Adapted for **READER'S THEATRE** by the author, from her children's book of the same title published by Pelican Publishing Company
ISBN 9781589808621

GENRE: Juvenile Literature

LOCATION: North Pacific Ocean, South Pacific Ocean, Arctic Ocean, North Atlantic Ocean

THEME: Ocean Discovery, Environmental Sciences, History, Geography, Literature, and Performance.

GRADES: 2 - 5

LENGTH: 20 minutes

ROLES:

NARRATORS: 1,2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7

TEACHER: 1

JANEEN MASON (on the day of her visit): 1

Note to Teachers:

Of all that I do, speaking to students is my favorite thing! I am looking forward to meeting you and your children.

To insure a day the kids will remember please rehearse this reader's theatre manuscript with them. On the day of my visit, seven students you have pre-selected will perform for their entire class. I roll out a hand painted map of the world that measures 12' x 18' and I'll be on that map while your narrators are reading. Wherever you see my name appear below please make sure they know to expect a break in the reading so I can make a particular point during my visit.

- Janeen Mason

READERS LINE UP IN SEATS FACING THE AUDIENCE

TEACHER:

This story is based on fact. On January 10, 1992, a container ship left China bound for the United States.

NARRATOR 1:

Lightening flashed, thunder crashed, and the wind howled through the rigging. High above deck a cargo container broke loose and tumbled into the sea. The ship plowed on in the night.

JANEEN MASON:

Walks to the spot on the giant map where the container tumbled into the ocean.

NARRATOR 2:

The storm washed away, and the sun came up on quiet rolling waves in the wide Pacific Ocean.

A single rubber duck popped to the surface.

The crumpled container tilted to one side, and a giant bubble escaped as it sank.

JANEEN MASON:

Pulls out a single duck.

NARRATOR 3:

Nearly twenty-nine thousand bathtub toys shot out of the deep. They bobbed and bounced and bumped together.

The armada of ducks righted, turned in the current, and sailed into history.

JANEEN MASON:

Currents in the North Pacific turn in a clockwise direction.

NARRATOR 4:

Two spy-hopping humpback whales were the only witnesses at that lonely spot in the shipping lanes near the International Date Line north of the Equator.

TEACHER:

Humpback whales are as big as train cars; they are curious creatures and can be very quiet when they want. Sailors report humpbacks slowly emerging from the water until their eyes are above the water's surface. The whales "spy" in this manner, and quietly sink again into the depths when they're satisfied. It happens so silently you might not even know...

JANEEN MASON:

Everyone in the cast practices spy-hopping with their manuscripts.

NARRATOR 5:

The ducks drifted through all of that spring and most of the summer. When the current turned to the east, a few hundred near the outside edge of the flotilla peeled off in eddies that pushed them back toward the Aleutian Islands of Alaska.

"Look, Dad!" John Dunning shouted. "Where do you think these came from?" He plucked six ducks from the wrack line along shore.

His father, a newspaper reporter, scratched his head and said, "Can't imagine they've traveled far. Probably fell off a ferry, John." When they got home, he wrote about the ducks in his column.

JANEEN MASON:

Places a stationary duck on the Aleutian Islands and explains how currents and eddies diverted some of the ducks from the main fleet.

NARRATOR 6:

What was left of the wayward yellow navy sailed by Dutch Harbor, Alaska, into the Bering Sea.

Aboard a fishing trawler the captain's daughter pointed. "Look, Dad! The ducks we read about in the paper!"

"No, no," said the captain, "rubber ducks could never make it this far down the island chain."

Together they watched the ducks journey on

JANEEN MASON:

Places a stationary duck on Dutch Harbor, and the Bering Sea.

NARRATOR 7:

The currents pushed them through the straits into the Arctic Ocean. Frigid freshwater from melted snow floated on the surface and squeezed them into the ice floes. The drift forced them endlessly toward the east and the Atlantic Ocean.

JANEEN MASON:

Moves across the Arctic Circle with the freezing ducks.

NARRATOR 1:

Meanwhile, way to the south, the thousands of ducks in the main fleet stayed their course. They turned again with the North Pacific gyre and swept farther south.

A bald eagle snatched one up with her sharp talons and delivered it to her fledgling, in a nest high above ground on Vancouver Island.

JANEEN MASON:

Places a stationary duck on Vancouver Island.

NARRATOR 2:

Magazines, newspapers, and television stations around the world told the story of the ducks. Beachcombers far and wide were on the lookout. They collected the toys that drifted onto coastlines and reported the finds to a scientist in Seattle. He kept track of the locations where the ducks came ashore.

JANEEN MASON:

Explains Dr. Curtis Ebbesmeyer and his "Beachcomber" newsletter.

NARRATOR 3:

As the months turned into years, the ducks floated on.

The current turned to the west, riding the northern edge of the equator. It was three years since the ducks fell into the ocean. Just before they completed their first circuit of the North Pacific, thousands were caught in a powerful eddy that split the convoy. Half sailed over the horizon and into the South Pacific.

JANEEN MASON:

Shows where the current separated carrying half the convoy over the equator and explains how the South Pacific gyre moves counter-clockwise. She places a stationary duck at the spot where they originally entered the water.

NARRATOR 4:

Not much is known about the ducks that landed in the islands of Fiji, Tonga, or Tahiti.

JANEEN MASON:

Places stationary ducks on Fiji, Tonga and Tahiti, points out the route taken in the N. Pacific by the rest of the known fleet.

NARRATOR 5:

John Dunning kept a scrapbook filled with articles about duck sightings. No one knew if it was possible for the toys to float 15,000 miles around the entire North Pacific and back again, but he was sure that, if there were still ducks caught in the currents, they would return someday.

Every summer John and his father went to the same beach to search, but the ducks did not return until the third year. “Dad!” John shouted, “They’re back!” He plucked two ducks from the wrack. As soon as he got home, he wrote to the scientist in Seattle.

JANEEN MASON:

Moves off of the map.

-----P A U S E -----

NARRATOR 6:

Sixteen years later, the trail of the rubber ducks was gone. Reporters and scientists alike gave up hope of ever finding more.

John, all grown up, became an oceanographer. On a vacation in Halifax, Nova Scotia, his daughter pointed to the wheelhouse of a ship, “Daddy,” she whispered, “he’s got old ducks just like yours.”

NARRATOR 7:

Bleached and battered by their Arctic crossing, seven worn out bathtub toys rested on the sill.

“Hey Captain!” John called. “Where’d those ducks come from?
 “We found them drifting down the straits of Newfoundland. But where they came from? That is a mystery,” he said. “This mighty ocean keeps a lot of secrets caught in her currents.

TEACHER (in rehearsal) JANEEN MASON (on day of her visit):

Dear Reader, These little yellow plastic ducks are so much more than toys. While doing the research for this book, I discovered that plastic in the ocean never goes away; it just breaks down into smaller and smaller particles.

In rapid succession narrators will read the following lines:

NARRATOR 1: “Marine animals mistake plastic for food.”

NARRATOR 2: “Bottle caps look like crabs; plastic bags drift like jellyfish.”

NARRATOR 3: “But plastic can kill because it cannot be digested.”

NARRATOR 4: “It’s important to keep plastic out of our oceans so plankton, the tiny creatures at the bottom of our food chain stay healthy.”

NARRATOR 5: “Our oceans are alive and powerful and worthy of our awe.”

NARRATOR 6: “We have not discovered all of her secrets, but this much we know for sure: the ocean needs our help.”

NARRATOR 7: “WE can make a difference.”

NARRATOR 1: “We can reuse, recycle, and reduce,”

NARRATOR 2: “Drink filtered water”

NARRATOR 3: “Plant a garden”

NARRATOR 4: “Organize a neighborhood or beach cleanup”

NARRATOR 5: “Turn off lights to save electricity”

NARRATOR 6: “Turn off an engine instead of letting it idle”

NARRATOR 7: “Drive a fuel-efficient car”

NARRATOR 1: “And more.”

NARRATOR 2: “Maybe you’ll grow up to invent something better than plastic that won’t harm the environment.”

NARRATOR 3: “Maybe your friend will create a better way to secure containers onboard cargo ships so they can’t fall overboard.”

NARRATOR 4: “In a bad year, 10,000 containers, filled with everything from hockey gloves to computer parts, go missing.”

NARRATOR 5: “Maybe your class can find a way to clean up the plastic and trash that is floating halfway between Hawaii and Los Angeles, trapped in a huge convergence zone called the “garbage patch”.

NARRATOR 6: “We can put our heads and our heart together.

TEACHER (in rehearsals) JANEEN MASON (on the day of her visit): “Finally, when the scientist from Seattle thought he would never hear about another one of these ducks finding land, they started washing ashore again. “

NARRATOR 7: “This time the reports came from Maine, Nova Scotia, and the coast of Scotland.”

NARRATOR 1: “After eighteen years at sea, they had traveled over seventeen thousand miles and crossed the Arctic Ocean.”

NARRATOR 2: “Like a message in a bottle, they sailed into history and proved that the currents of our oceans are all connected.”

NARRATOR 3: “Why is this important?”

NARRATOR 4: “Here is what Ranger Matt Johnson from Biscayne National Park says:”

NARRATOR 5: “Take two breaths”

TEACHER (in rehearsals) JANEEN MASON (on the day of her visit):
Directs everyone take one breath and let it out. When they take the second breath and let it out he continues:

NARRATOR 6: “For the second breath you have the ocean to thank.”

TEACHER (in rehearsals) JANEEN MASON (on the day of her visit):
Raises her arms in a dramatic gesture reminding everyone to say all together: “THANK YOU, OCEAN!”

NARRATOR 7: “Plankton and algae are doing the heavy lifting for the whole planet. As they photosynthesize, they turn the energy of the sun into food, giving off oxygen and absorbing carbon dioxide.”

TEACHER (in rehearsals) JANEEN MASON (on the day of her visit):
If plastic is hurting the plankton on the other side of the world, that affects us all. These ducks have proven that.

EVERYONE:
“THANK YOU DUCKS!”

- END -