

Whale Snow Reader's Theater

This script has parts for 20 readers. Fifteen of these parts are for narrators. You can increase or decrease parts by combining or splitting the narrators' lines.

*It is recommended that you prepare students by reading the book, *Whale Snow*. Show students where Barrow, Alaska is, on a map of Alaska. Explore Debby's website to learn more about the Arctic and the Iñupiat. Talk about the importance of community celebrations and about the ways in which different cultures celebrate.*

This is also a good opportunity to talk about the values of sharing and cooperation. Ask students to talk about how these values are demonstrated in this story.

Pronunciation Guide for the Inupiaq words in *Whale Snow*:

Amiqqaq	(Ah-mik-kahk)	The boy's name
Aaka	(Ah-ka)	Grandmother
Aapa	(Ah-pa)	Grandfather
Ii	(ee)	Yes
Aarigaa!	(ah-dee-gah)	Wow! Wonderful!
Aåvilai	(aga-ve-lie)	A whale has been caught!
Unaalik	(oon-ah-lik)	Cooked whale meat & blubber
Amii?	(Ah-mee)	Right?

For good tips on doing readers theater with young people, see *Aaron Shepard's website*:
<http://www.aaronshep.com/rt/index.html>

Whale Snow

NARRATOR 1: Up in northern Alaska, on the coast of the Arctic Ocean, it's springtime and the snow is falling.

NARRATOR 2: The snow falls in big flakes, fat as eider down. The snow falls soft and slow like shreds of cotton grass floating down from the sky. Amiqqaq leans up against the window watching the snow fall, wishing he were out on the ocean ice, out in the big white tent with his Papa. Out with the whalers.

[Amiqqaq leans his head on his hand and pretends to look out a window.]

NARRATOR 3: Amiqqaq's grandma stands by the hot stove frying Eskimo donuts. *[Aaka moves her hands, like she is making donuts— stretching out the dough and shaping it into donuts]* The hot donuts made the window steamy, made the house smell sweet. Amiqqaq presses his nose against the window. *[Amiqqaq pretends to press his nose against the window]* The cold glass feels good. Outside, snowflakes big as birds whirl and swirl in the wind.

AMIQQAQ: Look, Aaka. Fat snow!

AAKA: Hmmm. Must be whale snow.

AMIQQAQ: Whale snow?

AAKA: *[Aaka nods her head.]* Iii, whale snow. Whale snow comes when a whale has given itself to the People.

AMIQQAQ: Which people? Which people has the whale given itself to, Aaka?

AAKA: You'll see. Soon, you will see.

NARRATOR 4: Soon they heard the roar of Papa's skidoo. Papa raced into the house brushing fat snowflakes from his parka.

PAPA: *[Brushing snow from his parka, excited]* I have brought the Amiqqaq whaling flag!

AAKA: *[Excited]* Arigaa!

AMIQQAQ: Are we going to hang the flag?

PAPA: Ii, of course! We will hang the flag to let everyone know that it's time to celebrate. But first, I must go back out onto the ice to help the whalers prepare the whale. A whaling captain can't be lazy. *[Papa tousles Amiqqaq's hair.]*

AMIQQAQ: *[stands up tall, trying to make himself look bigger]* Can I go, Papa, please? Can I go help? I'm not lazy!

[Papa smiles at Aaka knowingly]

AAKA: The last time the Amiqqaq crew was given a whale was the year you were born. That's why we named you Amiqqaq.

PAPA: *[Nodding his head and smiling]* Hurry up, Amiqqaq! Get dressed. Let's go see the Amiqqaq whale.

NARRATOR 5: Outside the wind blew hard, pushing against Amiqqaq's back like a heavy hand.

AMIQQAQ: Strong wind, Papa!

PAPA: Ii *[nods head]* This is a whale wind. Every whale has its own weather. The Amiqqaq whale came to us in windy weather. This is a whale wind.

AMIQQAQ: But where is the Amiqqaq whale?

PAPA: *[Looks at Amiqqaq and smiles]* You'll see.

NARRATOR 6: Papa's skidoo raced out onto the frozen ocean, out into the strong wind. Out past massive chunks of blue-green ice, bigger than skidoos, huge as houses.

NARRATOR 7: Soon, they saw the Amiqqaq whale. It lay on the snow-covered ice like an enormous black mountain. Beside it, Papa's big white tent flapped in the wind, looking small as a playhouse. Many, many people crowded around the Amiqqaq whale smiling and hugging and crying tears of joy.

NARRATOR 8: Amiqqaq's Momma came out from the billowing white tent holding steaming mugs of hot coffee. *[Momma offers people pretend cups of coffee]*
Amiqqaq's Papa lifted him up to the very top of the enormous whale. *[Pappa "lifts" Amiqqaq up onto a stool.]* Everyone cheered.

EVERYONE CHEERS: Aarigaa! Aåvilai !

NARRATOR 9: Amiqqaq's Momma held out her arms and lifted him down. *[Momma "lifts" Amiqqaq down from the stool]*

AMIQQAQ: Momma, I feel happy inside! Inside is like a giant smile! Bigger than a house. Wider than a whole village!

MOMMA: *[Smiling and nodding at Amiqqaq]* Ii, Amiqqaq. You feel whale happiness.

AMIQQAQ: Whale happiness?

MOMMA: Yes, Amiqqaq. Whale happiness. When the spirit-of-the-whale gives itself to the People, it brings great happiness. This is whale happiness.

NARRATOR 10:Amiqqaq looked up at the great big whale. *[Amiqqaq looks up at the whale.]*

AMIQQAQ: I can see the spirit-of-the-whale, Momma!

MOMMA: *[Smiling gently.]* No, Amiqqaq. That is not the spirit-of-the-whale. That is only the parka the spirit-of-the-whale wears.

AMIQQAQ: But where is the spirit-of-the-whale, Momma?

MOMMA: You'll see. You'll see soon.

NARRATOR 11: Back at home, Amiqqaq's house was soon steamy with smells that made his mouth water. Amiqqaq's Momma and Aaka made unaalik, cooking fat chunks of whale meat and maktak in big pots of boiling water. His uncles carried big boxes of food in and out.

NARRATOR 12: Everyone in the whole village came to eat at Amiqqaq's house. People filed in and out of the door all day long.

NARRATOR 13: His aunties ladled spoons of sweet cooked fruit into many, many cups. They dished out big plates full of steaming unaalik. They gave people Eskimo donuts and cooked fruit and plates piled high with unaalik.

[AUNTIES hand out food and EVERYONE eats]

NARRATOR 14: Amiqqaq sat on the floor by his aapa. Aapa cut small chunks of unaalik for Amiqqaq to eat. Unaalik made his belly warm. The warmth tingled in his toes, making him smile. Everybody smiled and laughed. Amiqqaq's house was packed with happiness.

AMIQQAQ: *[Stage whisper]* Aapa! I know where the spirit-of-the-whale is! Amiqqaq's aapa leaned down close to Amiqqaq.

AAPA: *[leaning close to Amiqqaq like they are sharing a secret]* Tell me, Amiqqaq, where is the spirit-of-the-whale?

AMIQQAQ: The spirit-of-the-whale is in the fat snow and strong wind, Aapa. The spirit-of-the-whale is right here in my house, making people smile and laugh. Together.

AAPA: [*Nods his head*] Ii, Amiqqaq.

AMIQQAQ: But where does the spirit-of-the-whale go after, Aapa?

AAPA: After?

AMIQQAQ: After the people leave.

AAPA: Ah! The spirit-of-the-whale goes back to the sea, as you will someday see. It goes back to the sea.

AMIQQAQ: But we will still have whale happiness, Aapa, amii?"

AAPA: Yes, Amiqqaq. We will still have happiness. Whale happiness is the gift the whale leaves.

NARRATOR 15:Tavra. The end!