

The Boy and the Harp Seal



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In a small town where snowflakes danced like tiny stars, lived a boy named Leo. He had warm light-brown skin and short curly black hair that bounced when he ran. His bright blue parka with orange trim kept him cozy, and his red knit hat with a pom-pom sat snug on his head. Leo loved learning about animals, especially the ones that lived far away in the frozen Arctic.



Every day after school, Leo hurried to the library. He pulled out big books about harp seals and traced their pictures with his grey-mittened finger. He learned that harp seals live on thick ice and swim in cold, clean water. Their world was white and blue and sparkling. Leo's dark brown eyes grew wide with wonder. 'I want to see them one day,' he whispered.



One morning, Leo's teacher, Mrs. Lind, wore a silver seal pin on her teal cardigan. She smiled with kind green eyes behind her round glasses. 'Today we will learn about Arctic habitats,' she said. Leo raised his hand so fast it wiggled. 'Harp seals need cold ice and clean water to live!' he said, his gap-toothed smile beaming. Mrs. Lind nodded. 'Exactly, Leo.'



After school, Leo had an idea. 'I will build a model of the harp seals' icy home!' he told his mom. He gathered a big cardboard box, cotton balls for snow, blue paper for water, and tiny toy fish. He worked at the kitchen table, his red pom-pom hat bobbing as he snipped and glued. This was going to be the best habitat model ever.



First, Leo painted the box blue and white. He made a shiny ice shelf from foil and added cotton snow on top. 'Harp seals need thick ice to rest and have their pups,' he said, remembering Mrs. Lind's lesson. He placed small rocks around the edge for the icy shore. The model was starting to look like the Arctic.



Next, Leo poured blue water into a shallow dish and set it inside the box. He added a few drops of clear oil to make it sparkle like clean sea water. 'Clean water is important,' he said. 'Seals swim and hunt fish here.' He glued tiny silver fish onto the water. They looked like they were swimming.



Leo wanted seals in his model. He cut out two seal shapes from cardboard. One was small and white for a pup. He painted it fluffy white and gave it big dark eyes and a black nose. 'I will call you Pip,' he said. The other was large and grey with a dark harp-shaped marking on its back. 'And you are Nuka, the mother seal.'



Leo painted Nuka's face black and added long whiskers. He painted Pip's flippers short and round. 'Pip, you need cold ice to grow big and strong,' Leo said. 'Nuka, you need thick ice to rest and clean water to swim.' He placed the seals on the ice shelf and in the water. The model was almost done.



But something was missing. Leo looked at his model. The ice was there, the water was there, the fish were there, and the seals were there. Then he realized: 'A habitat must have everything an animal needs.' He added a small label that said 'Clean Water' and another that said 'Cold Ice.' He also added a tiny sun and clouds. Now it felt like a real Arctic home.



Leo's friends came over to see the model. 'Wow!' said Maya, her eyes wide. 'What is it?' Leo explained how harp seals need cold ice to rest and clean water to swim and find food. 'Without these, they cannot live,' he said. His friends listened carefully. They had never seen anything like it.



Mrs. Lind came to see the model too. She wore her silver seal pin and smiled. 'You have shown how animals depend on suitable habitats,' she said. 'This is a wonderful way to learn.' Leo felt proud. He showed his friends how Pip the pup needs the ice to grow and Nuka the mother needs the clean water to hunt.



Then Leo had another idea. 'Let's make a game!' he said. 'We can be harp seals and find the right habitat.' His friends pretended to swim in the blue water and rest on the cotton snow. They laughed and learned together. Leo's gap-toothed smile was as bright as the sun.



Mrs. Lind asked Leo to present his model to the class. Leo stood proudly in his blue parka. He told everyone how harp seals live in the Arctic and need cold ice and clean water. 'Animals depend on suitable habitats,' he said. 'And we can help by keeping nature clean.' The class clapped. His red pom-pom hat bobbed as he bowed.



After the presentation, Leo's friends wanted to build their own models. They made habitats for other animals: a forest for squirrels, a pond for frogs. Leo helped them, sharing his paint and cardboard. He felt happy that his model had taught them something important. Mrs. Lind watched with a proud smile.



That night, Leo looked out his window at the stars. He thought about Pip and Nuka, the harp seals in his model. He knew that real seals were far away in the Arctic, swimming in cold, clean water. 'I will help take care of nature,' he promised. His heart felt warm, even in the winter chill.



In the morning, Leo's model sat on a table in the classroom. His friends gathered around, pointing at the seals and the ice. 'This is the best model ever,' said Maya. Leo smiled his gap-toothed smile. He knew that learning about animals and their habitats was important, and sharing that knowledge was even better.