

Seashells: More Than a Home

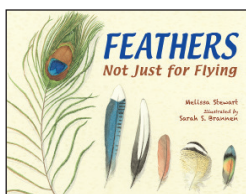
A TEACHERS' GUIDE

Developed by Melissa Stewart

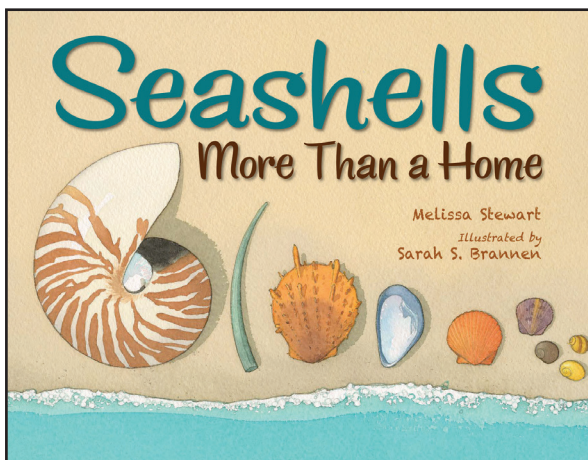
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Also by Melissa Stewart
and Sarah S. Brannen
Feathers: Not Just for Flying



★ "... focused and thorough ..."
—Publishers Weekly,
starred review



Melissa Stewart
Illustrated by Sarah S. Brannen
978-1-58089-810-2 HC
e-book editions available

About the Book

Seashells are more than a protective covering for clams, scallops, sea snails, and other ocean mollusks. They can also glide like butterflies, hold steady like anchors, pry like crowbars, or even send out warnings like lighthouses. *Seashells: More Than a Home* introduces budding naturalists to thirteen amazing mollusks, from the clever clusterwink to the secretive thorny oyster, and describes the surprising ways their shells help them survive.

Teaching Tips

- *Seashells: More Than a Home* utilizes a dual-layered text to appeal to readers from a wide range of ages and grade levels. Throughout this guide you'll find activities to use with younger children (kindergarten to grade 2) as well as older readers (grades 3 to 5).
- The two levels of text in the book also make it ideal for Reading Buddy programs. For more information, please see Melissa Stewart's article at www.melissa-stewart.com/pdf/scirdbuddies.pdf.

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Before You Read

Grades K–2

After setting up a collection of seashells in your classroom science center, divide the class into small groups and provide each group with time to examine the shells. Then invite the groups to gather in the classroom meeting area. Read the following questions aloud, one at a time, and give the groups time to discuss each one:

- What is a seashell?
- Why do you think some sea creatures have shells?
- Can you think of ways a shell could help an animal survive?
- Can you think of ways a shell could make it harder for an animal to survive?

As each group shares, record the children's ideas on chart paper.

Next, introduce *Seashells: More Than a Home* by reading the title and the names of the author and illustrator. Ask your class to explain the role of the author and illustrator in creating a book. Invite students to look at the book's front and back covers. What do they think the book will be about? Now show the children the book's endpapers and title page. Do they have any new ideas? Be sure to add their responses to the chart paper.

Grades 3–5

After setting up a collection of seashells in your classroom science center, divide the class into small groups and provide each group with time to examine the shells. Then encourage each group to discuss the following questions:

- What is a seashell?
- Why do you think some sea creatures have shells?
- Can you think of ways a shell could help an animal survive?
- Can you think of ways a shell could make it harder for an animal to survive?

When the groups seem ready, invite the children to gather in the classroom meeting area. As each group shares, record the children's ideas on chart paper.

Next, introduce *Seashells: More Than a Home* by reading the title and the names of the author and illustrator. After showing your class the full cover, front and back, encourage students to predict the main idea of the book. Now show the children the book's endpapers and title page. Do they have any new ideas? Be sure to add their responses to the chart paper.



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As You Read

All Grades

Work with your students to create a data table that lists the name of each mollusk, the surprising function of its shell, and the familiar object each is compared to. To make this process more interactive for younger students, you may wish to write the mollusk names on index cards in advance and print out images of the objects in the third column. Then you can invite students to add the index cards and photos to the chart. Your final data table may look like this:



How Shells Help Mollusks Survive

Mollusk Name	Surprising Shell Function	Like a . . .
Nautilus	Lets water in and out so it can rise and sink	Submarine
Turritella	Prevents movement	Anchor
Lightning whelk	Pries open clams to get food	Crowbar
Angelwing clam	Drills down to stay safe	Drill bit
Scallop	Moves away from predators	Butterfly
Chiton	Curls up to protect soft body	Armadillo
Heart cockle	Lets in light, guarantees food	Window
Abalone	Gets rid of waste	Boat smokestack
Thorny oyster	Provides home for small creatures, which hide it	Disguise
Flat periwinkle	Keeps it safe by making it hard to spot	Camouflage clothing
Mussel	Opens to let food in, snaps shut to keep itself safe	Mouth, eyelids
Clusterwink snail	Flashes light to warn other creatures to stay away	Lighthouse signal
Tulip snail	Breaks open shells of prey	Crashing waves

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After You Read

Grades K–2

Divide the class into six small groups. Give Teams 1 and 2 an index card with the words “lightning whelk,” “heart cockle,” and “tulip snail” written on it. Give Teams 3 and 4 an index card with the words “chiton” and “mussel” written on it. Give Teams 5 and 6 an index card with the words “angelwing clam,” “scallop,” and “nautilus” written on it.

Invite each group to use the information in the data table and *Seashells: More Than a Home* to determine how the mollusks on their card use their shells in a similar way to help them survive. Then pass out drawing paper and encourage each child to use words and pictures to record the group’s ideas.

After volunteers from each team have shared their drawings with the class, guide your students in determining the main idea of *Seashells: More Than a Home*.

Grades 3–5

After dividing the class into small groups, give each team an enlarged photocopy of the first column of the data table and provide time for one teammate to cut apart the mollusk names. Then encourage students to use the data table and *Seashells: More Than a Home* to sort the mollusks into categories based on how they use their shells to survive.

Next, give each group six index cards and invite them to write one of the categories they’ve identified on each card. Remind students that they don’t have to use all six cards.

When the teams seem ready, invite one group of students to tape their category cards to the wall. Then invite the other teams to tape any cards with additional categories to the wall. Discuss the categories together. Can any of them be combined?

As the discussion winds down, assign each group one category and ask the teammates to choose a representative who will tape the relevant mollusk names under the category card on the wall. After all the representatives have had a turn, point out any conflicting categorizations and then invite students to respectfully discuss these disagreements.

To facilitate the conversation and promote full-class engagement, help students stay focused on the topic. Restate any unclear comments or ideas, and encourage students to give one another the time they need to formulate and express their ideas and rationale.

When the class comes to a consensus, work with your students to develop a main idea statement for *Seashells: More Than a Home* and record it on chart paper. Then invite the groups to work together to record three details that support the class’s main idea statement.

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Additional Activities

Grades K–2

- Invite student volunteers to choose one of the mollusks described in *Seashells: More Than a Home* and act out how its shell helps it survive. Encourage the rest of the class to guess which mollusk the volunteers selected.
- Encourage a few student volunteers to describe and act out what it feels like to be an animal with a shell. Consider recording the children with the video setting on a digital camera or mobile phone. These recordings can be replayed later on your classroom interactive whiteboard.
- After giving each child a large piece of drawing paper, show students how to fold the paper in half (hamburger style). Invite each child to select a mollusk from the first column of the data table, draw it on the left-hand side of the paper, and

draw the corresponding comparison object on the right-hand side of the paper. Coordinate with other teachers in your building so that small groups of your students can visit other classrooms to share and explain their drawings to other students.

Grades 3–5

- Encourage students to select one of the mollusks described in *Seashells: More Than a Home* and write and illustrate a haiku poem that includes its comparison object. Here are two examples:

*Hard-shelled nautilus
pumps water into its shell.
Submarine-like dive.*

*Hungry lightning whelk
pries open a doomed soft clam,
just like a crowbar.*



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- Invite students to read another book about shells or mollusks and use the Nonfiction Smackdown worksheet on Melissa Stewart's website https://www.melissa-stewart.com/img2018/pdfs/Nonfiction_Smackdown.pdf to compare the two books.
- Divide the class into small groups and encourage the teams to think carefully about the craft moves Melissa Stewart used as she wrote *Seashells: More Than a Home*. The following questions can guide discussion:
 - Does this book have a narrative or expository writing style? Explain your rationale.
 - What is the book's nonfiction text structure?
 - How do you think the book would have been different if the author had chosen a problem/solution text structure?
 - Why do you think the author and illustrator included so many text features in this book?
 - How would you describe the voice of the book?
 - Does that voice seem to match the style of Sarah S. Brannen's illustrations? Explain your rationale.
 - Why do you think the author included similes throughout the book?
 - How did the author create a satisfying ending for the book? How does the illustrator's artwork at the end connect back to the beginning of the book?
 - Can you think of a different way to end the book?

Additional Activities

- Encourage students to look carefully at the artwork throughout *Seashells: More Than a Home*. As a class, list all the questions the book's illustrator, Sarah S. Brannen, had to ask herself and then research to make the art accurate.

Possible questions include: What does each mollusk look like? Where does it spend most of its time—close to shore, on the seafloor, in the open ocean? What does it eat? What are its predators? What time of day is it? What time of year is it?

Using their list of questions, students can do some research and then create a mural that depicts a local water-dwelling animal in its natural habitat.

All Grades

To help your class understand the process that nonfiction authors go through when they review the accuracy of sketches created by an illustrator, invite students to choose one of the mollusks described in *Seashells: More Than a Home* and research its predators. After students have written a short explanation of how the predators hunt, ask students in another class at the same grade level to illustrate the text. Like professional authors and illustrators, they shouldn't meet or speak to one another.

When the drawings are done, the writer reviews the artist's work. Did the artist make any factual errors? If so, how can the writer explain the problems clearly and politely in writing?

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About the Author

Melissa Stewart is the award-winning author of more than 180 books for children, including *Feathers: Not Just for Flying* and *No Monkeys, No Chocolate*. She holds degrees in biology and science journalism and serves on the board of advisors for the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators. Visit her online at www.melissa-stewart.com.



About the Illustrator

Sarah S. Brannen is the author and illustrator of *Madame Martine* and *Uncle Bobby's Wedding*; she is the illustrator of *Feathers: Not Just for Flying*; *Digging for Troy: From Homer to Hisarlik*; and *At Home in Her Tomb: Lady Dai and the Ancient Chinese Treasures of Mawangdui*. She lives in Massachusetts. Visit her online at www.sarahbrannen.com.

Related Reading

Arthur, Alex. *Shell*. New York: Dorling Kindersley, 2013.

"How Do Seashells Form?" *Highlights for Children*. April 2013, p. 24.

Zoehfeld, Kathleen Weidner. *What Lives in a Shell?* New York: HarperCollins, 2015.

