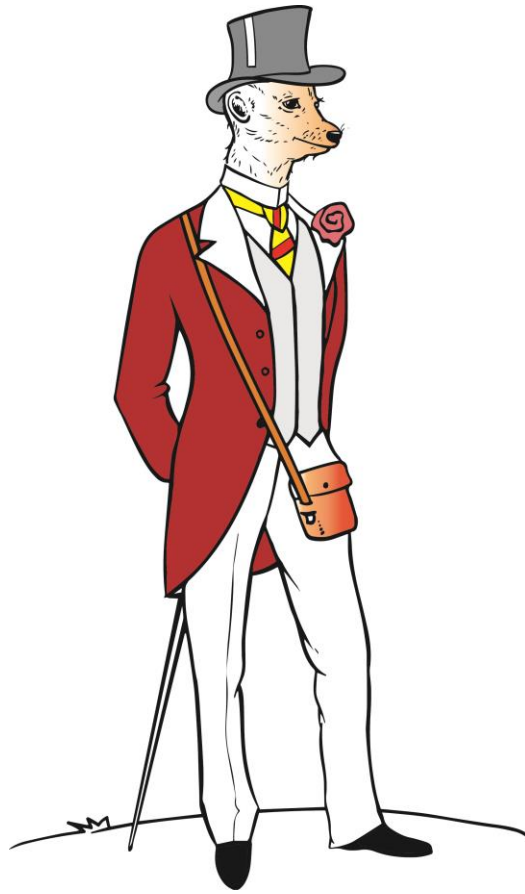


Mr. Meerkat's

Poetry for Children



Teacher's Companion

Stage 2: Grades 3 and 4

By
Leonard Reynolds

Treasure on the Reef

Everyone's quiet on the reef today
The sea is filled with danger
For Nasty Shark is lurking near
He's seeking hidden treasure

Mrs. Crab is down her hole
She's not been out all day
And Captain Larry is in his cave
He's really not that brave

Even Rocky can sense there's trouble
He's on the sand below
And Goldie Star is on alert
To watch for Nasty's shadow

Now no one has seen or heard from Maurie
And the fish are wondering why
He's acting strange the fish all say
He's never usually shy

Mrs. Crab's been on the phone
To some big prawn called Clinton
It's Maurie who's the one she's told
That has that treasure hidden

So Captain Larry wants to know
Just what old Maurie thinking
He'll have to move that treasure soon
While Nasty isn't lurking

In the dark of night while no one knows
The Captain and the Eel
Cast that treasure chest afar
There'll be no gold to steal

With Nasty gone his plan in ruin
The reef is now ideal
And Maurie's sad but also glad
He wasn't Nasty's meal

Explanatory Notes

Subject:	A mystery on the coral reef
Theme/s:	Food webs and species-specific defence mechanisms Community
Mood:	Humorous, fun, satirical
Persona:	Omnipresent narrator
Description:	8 quatrains with a regular rhyme pattern
Style:	Accentual verse, narrative, light verse
Rhyme:	ABCB, ABCC, ABCB, ABCB, ABCB, ABCB, ABCB, ABCB
Rhythm:	The iambic meter and rhyme establish a nursery-rhyme-like rhythm
Features:	Satire, rhyme, descriptive language, anthropomorphism, puns

Lesson Objectives

Key language focus: Vocabulary building

Culminating activity: A group drama activity

This is the second poem in a series. Read “My sea garden friends” first to introduce the characters in this poem. This lesson involves a rich-task about democracy and community. Through a drama activity, students will work as a group to explore democratic decision-making and the ethical issues raised by the poem and by the democratic process.

Students will meet the following ACARA content descriptors for English – Year Three:

- Identify roles and collaborative patterns in group work
- Explore texts that highlight issues and problems in making moral decisions and discuss these with others
- Innovate on texts read by revising an ending
- Speculate about what other characters might think or feel
- Participate in collaborative discussions

Students will meet the following ACARA content descriptors for HASS (Civics and Citizenship) – Year Three:

- Make a decision by allowing everyone to have a say and a vote
- Reflect on how it feels to be included/excluded from decision making

Students will meet the following ACARA content descriptors for Drama – Year Three/Four:

- Explore and experience a range of roles and situations
- Make improvisations that explore issues and ideas using empathy

Students will meet the following ACARA content descriptors for HPE – Year Three/Four:

- Talk about how overcoming adversity can unite a group of diverse people

Cross-Curriculum Links (ACARA)

- Science
 - Biological sciences
 - [Living things can be grouped on the basis of observable features and can be distinguished from non-living things](#)
 - Examine the difference characteristics of reef creatures
 - Do a study of reef life, for example through [the GBRMPA Year 3 ACARA-aligned unit “Exploring the reef”](#)
 - Use and influence of science
 - [Science knowledge helps people to understand the effect of their actions](#)
 - Discuss ocean pollution and what makes a material a pollutant

General Capabilities and Cross-Curriculum Priorities (ACARA)

- [Literacy](#)
 - Interpret literal information and make inferences to expand topic knowledge using comprehension strategies
 - Use pair, group and class discussions about learning area topics as learning tools to explore and represent ideas and relationships and test possibilities
 - Use growing subject-specific vocabulary to read, discuss and write about learning area topics
- [Critical and creative thinking](#)
 - Expand on known ideas to create new and imaginative combinations
 - Explore situations using creative thinking strategies to propose a range of alternatives
- [Personal and social capability](#)
 - Describe characteristics of cooperative behaviour and identify evidence of this in group activities
 - Contribute to and predict the consequences of group decisions in a range of situations
- [Ethical understanding](#)
 - Discuss actions taken in a range of contexts that include an ethical dimension
 - Examine the links between emotions, dispositions and intended and unintended consequences of actions on others
 - Describe different points of view associated with an ethical dilemma and give possible reasons for these differences
- [Intercultural understanding](#)
 - Imagine and describe the feelings of others in a range of contexts
- [Sustainability](#)
 - The biosphere is a dynamic system providing conditions that sustain life
 - All life forms, including human life, are connected through ecosystems on which they depend for their wellbeing

Extension Activities:

- As a science lesson, study the characteristics of living things such as growing, moving, feeding, protecting themselves, reproducing etc. Look at the relationships between different living things in a food web. Discuss how prey use different defence mechanisms to evade predators. Look at how the different reef creatures use different methods to protect themselves from the shark in the poem. Research the real defence mechanisms used by these creatures and assess how accurately the poem represents the animals.
- Study [ocean pollution, such as the Great Pacific Garbage Patch](#). Discuss what makes a material a pollutant and whether treasure, sunken ships etc count as pollutants. What about sunken ships that become reefs where sea creatures live? Consider whether throwing the treasure away constituted littering, even though it was technically litter before Morrie picked it up. Use the poem as an allegory to look at responsible behaviour with regard to litter, e.g. you touched it, you bin it. Discuss the effect that the treasure/litter had on the reef community and how this can be compared to the more serious effects of ocean pollution in real life.
- Look at the concept of materialism. Discuss whether Morrie was motivated by materialism, and whether throwing away the treasure was the right choice. Consider other ways the treasure could have been used to benefit the community while still getting rid of Nasty Shark.

Differentiation Options:

- Rather than have students work in groups of 6 or 7, each group representing an entire reef community, have students work in small groups of 3 or 4, each representing a different character. In these small groups, students can plan their characters' contributions to the community meeting. The Community Meeting can then take place on a whole-class scale, moderated by the teacher. This allows students to discuss the issues and consider different viewpoints without having to work independently or self-manage a drama activity.
- The drama activity can also be completed without incorporating the Civics and Citizenship element, focusing solely on re-writing the ending of the poem and brainstorming different ways to solve the problem of the shark.

Discussion Points

Pre-reading

- This poem is called "Treasure on the reef". What do you think it could be about?

During reading

- Stanza 1
 - o What is happening on the reef?
 - o What is the mood like?
 - o Why is the shark's name a pun?
 - o How is the shark characterised through calling it "Nasty"?
 - o Sharks eat a lot of the other reef creatures. What do we call an animal that eats other animals? Predator
 - o What are the animals it eats? Prey
 - o Is this what you expected the poem to be about?
 - o Why or why not?
 - o What do you think might happen now?
- Stanza 2
 - o Why might Mrs. Crab stay in her hole?
 - o What type of animal is Captain Larry?
 - o Why are Mrs. Crab and Captain Larry hiding?
 - o What is Captain Larry like when faced with danger according to the poem?
- Stanza 3
 - o What type of animal is Stingy?
 - o Why doesn't Stingy go into a hole or cave?
 - o How does Stingy protect himself from the shark?
 - o Do you think the shark would eat a sting ray?
 - o What is the starfish doing to be safe?
 - o Do you think a shark would eat a starfish?
- Stanza 4
 - o What type of animal is Morrie?
 - o What type of eel might he be?
 - o What is odd about Morrie's behaviour, according to the fish?
 - o Why do you think he is hiding?
- Stanza 5
 - o What did Mrs. Crab learn?
 - o Who told her?
 - o How do you think he knew?
 - o What does the description of Clinton tell us about him? Hint: Big could be a homophonic pun.
 - o Do you think Morrie has the treasure? Why or why not?
- Stanza 6
 - o What does it mean that "Captain Larry wants to know/just what old Morrie's thinking"?
 - o What does Captain Larry think of Morrie keeping the treasure?

- What do you think Captain Larry thinks of Morrie?
- Where do you think Morrie got the treasure?
- Why do you think he was keeping it?
- What might he be planning to do with it?
- What might he do with it to keep it away from Nasty?
- How else could he get Nasty to go away?
- Morrie's actions put all of the other reef creatures in danger. Is this fair?
- Do you think it is fair for Morrie to keep the treasure even though it is having a negative effect on the rest of the reef community?
- Stanza 7
 - Who helps Morrie get rid of the treasure?
 - What does this tell us about Captain Larry?
 - At the beginning of the poem, it said Captain Larry was "not that brave". Is that true?
 - What does "cast... afar" mean? What do they do with the treasure?
 - Do you think Nasty will go away now? Why or why not?
- Stanza 8
 - How does the story end?
 - Why is Morrie sad?
 - Why is he glad?
 - Do you think Morrie made the right choice? Why?
 - What would you have done if you were Morrie?

Post-reading

- How did the shark on the reef affect the reef creatures?
- How did the shark affect the reef community?
- How did the reef community work together when it was threatened?
- Do you think this was a good example of a community working together to overcome a problem? Why or why not?
- Does this happen in real ecosystems? Do animals really work together? In what ways?
- What do you think the other creatures on the reef would have done if Morrie had insisted on keeping the treasure?
- This story is also an example of a narrative. How does it follow narrative structure?

Prior to beginning the activities:

- Brainstorm what makes a community
- Discuss:
 - How do the reef creatures behave like a community?
 - Morrie's actions put the whole community at risk. Is this fair?
 - Is Morrie's wealth or the community's safety more important? Why?
 - What is more important to Morrie?

If students are unfamiliar with the concept of voting, you may also like to review the concept and have an example class vote.

Activities

Democratic decision-making

A democratic decision is a decision where everyone gets a say and everyone's opinion is equally important. Democratic decisions are fair but that doesn't mean everyone agrees.

In small groups, a democratic decision might be one where everyone discusses the problem until they agree. But in big groups, like a class or a country, people might never agree, so they have a vote instead. In a vote, there are a certain number of choices and everyone votes for (chooses) one. The choice that gets the most votes (the majority) wins and it is too bad for everyone else. Some people don't get what they want in a vote, but when you agree to vote you are also agreeing to accept the decision even if you don't like it, because it is what the majority wants.

18. What is a democratic decision?

19. What is a vote?

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21. What is a majority?

22. Why are democratic decisions fair even if you don't get what you want?

Discussion Points

Imagine that the reef creatures have a meeting about Nasty Shark. They want to know why he is hanging around. They find out that Morrie has the treasure. They have a vote on whether they should get rid of the treasure or not. Everyone except Morrie votes to get rid of the treasure.

1. How would Morrie feel about losing the vote?
2. Does Morrie have to listen to the vote and get rid of the treasure?
3. If the treasure belonged to the whole reef community equally, not just Morrie, would voting be more fair?
4. Do you think Morrie should do what the vote says even though he loses his treasure?
5. Is the decision fair for Morrie? Why or why not?
6. What could be done to make the decision fairer for Morrie?
7. What are arguments for and against listening to the others?
8. What do you think might be some pros and cons of making decisions by vote?

Group Drama

Having the treasure on the reef caused problems for the whole community. In the poem, all of the reef creatures work together to find the treasure and then to help Morrie get rid of it.

For this drama activity, you are going to imagine a different ending for the poem. You will perform different roles at the Reef Community Meeting using the character cards. At the meeting, the reef creatures need to work together to come up with a solution to the problem of Nasty Shark and Morrie's treasure. Think carefully about:

- How Morrie behaves when the truth is revealed and they want to get rid of the treasure
- How the rest of the community treats Morrie when they find out the truth
- Other creative ways to solve the problem
- How the strengths of the different reef creatures will be used in solving the problem, e.g. Goldie Star could distract Nasty Shark with her dazzling looks

<p style="text-align: center;">Captain Larry Lobster</p> <p><u>Role:</u> Community leader. <u>At the meeting,</u> he is in charge. <u>Personality:</u> Bossy. Brave when put to the test. Willing to help others out. A doer.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Morrie Eel</p> <p><u>Role:</u> The cool kid. <u>At the meeting,</u> he is very quiet but when the truth comes out he doesn't want to get rid of the treasure <u>Personality:</u> Wants everyone to like him.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Mrs. Crab</p> <p><u>Role:</u> The local gossip – she knows everything but it's not always true! <u>At the meeting,</u> she reveals why Nasty is lurking. <u>Personality:</u> Very clean and tidy, is always on the phone, worries about what people think.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Stingy Ray</p> <p><u>Role:</u> The story teller. <u>At the meeting,</u> he talks about important people he's met and tells unbelievable stories about adventures he's had <u>Personality:</u> Travels a lot. Tells stories that make him sound brave and important, but isn't very brave in real life.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Goldie Star</p> <p><u>Role:</u> To think about herself. <u>At the meeting,</u> she only worries about how things affect her. <u>Personality:</u> A bit of a drama queen. Thinks everything is about her. Vain. Silly.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">School of fish</p> <p><u>Role:</u> The brains of the operation. <u>At the meeting,</u> they come up with smart solutions and point out problems <u>Personality:</u> They always agree with each other. Very smart. Young.</p>

Group Work Review

1. What worked well in the group activity?
2. What caused problems?
3. How did working in groups help to strengthen the class community?
4. How did working with other students with different strengths help you come up with better solutions and more creative ideas?
5. What was the most creative solution to the problem?