
LITERATURE CONNECTIONS FOR THE SANDY BEACH

Note on grade levels: A range of grade levels is usually given, to reflect both interest level and reading level. Most books can be enjoyed by a wide age range, although younger children must be read to while older children can read alone.

Shell

by Alex Arthur

Knopf, 1989. (Eyewitness Book)

All ages.

As is true of other Eyewitness books, the photographs are truly amazing: clear and close-up, all the details of structure are clearly shown, including interior views if those are what is notable about the particular shell. Shelled creatures shown range from tiny snails to large lobsters and turtles; objects made from shells, ways in which shell shapes and patterns aid in camouflage, and fossil shells are all presented. The text consists mainly of one-paragraph captions explaining the photographs, and the extremely small typeface as well as the vocabulary appear intended for adult reading. However, children will find their curiosity stimulated by the photographs, and teachers can easily explain the meaning of the captions.

One section, "Settlers on the sands," specifically discusses animals found on sandy shores, but other sections concern animals from many habitats, including sandy beaches.

Sand Dunes

by Jan Gumprecht Bannan

Carolrhoda, 1989.

Grades: 2-5.

What are sand dunes? Where are they found? Where does all the sand come from? What is sand? And can anything grow on it? All these questions, and more, are discussed in this very clearly written book, illustrated with many well-chosen color photographs. Many observations children have made about sand and sand dunes -- different shapes of dunes, patterns in the sand -- are here explained in terms of wind, water, and weather. Diagrams and drawings

are included to help explain the text. A glossary is included, and there is an index.

A Woman Who Cared

by Patsy Becvar

Nystrom, 1992.

Grades: 1-3

As a young girl and her father watch people working to clean up an oil spill on a beach, the girl tells the story of Rachel Carson and her work to save the environment. This is a very simply worded introduction, packaged as a “kit” which includes an audiocassette, a 7” X 10” book, a large 14” X 20” book which can be clearly seen and read even by a very large group, and a teacher’s guide. This is sure to create good classroom discussion of ways to protect our beaches and other vulnerable areas.

Why the Tides Ebb and Flow

by Joan Chase Bowden

Houghton Mifflin, 1979.

Grades: K-3.

This is a folktale of irresistible charm, whose flowing language, humorous situations, and repeated rhymes will make it a favorite classroom read-aloud. A very stubborn old woman has been promised a rock to shelter her from the weather, and she chooses the very rock that none of the Sky Spirits want to give her: the rock that plugs the hole in the bottom of the sea. Her humorous persistence finally wins her all she wants and more. This will be enjoyed by children of all ages.

Ocean Life

by David Cook

Crown, 1985

Grades: 3-5.

A very simple overview of some animals living in the sea. The sections dealing with fur seals, sealing, marine turtles and pollution are the most relevant to the study of the sandy beach. The focus is on environmental dangers facing these animals and attempts at conservation. Illustrated with color as well as black and white drawings, including a small series of drawings showing the egg-laying and hatching behaviors of turtles.

The Wonderful World of Seals and Whales

by Sandra Lee Crow

National Geographic Society, 1984.

Grades: 2-5.

As with other books in this series, the photographs -- many, clear, colorful, and well-chosen -- are the real focus. Children will want to discuss the marine mammal behaviors shown here: parenting and play, feeding, social activities. The text is written very simply, using a large typeface which is easy for

primary-grade readers. The first half of the book is devoted entirely to seals and sea lions, and describes in words and endearing photographs how they depend on beaches for resting and pupping.

The Magic of Sea Shells

by Fredlee

Windward Publishing Co., 1976, 1985.

Grades: 2-4.

A handbook showing large color photographs of shells, identified by common and scientific name, with size indicated for each, is enclosed by a stilted, awkward little tale about children on vacation who are told about shells by another child who is native to the islands where the shells are found. The information for which the tale is a clumsy vehicle is good; a teacher may want to “retell” the story. The shells are interesting and quite beautiful, and include many commonly seen examples which children will happily recognize.

The Seal Mother

Mordecai Gerstein

Dial, 1986

Grades: K-3.

Many Scottish folktales tell of the selkies, seals who can remove their skins and appear to be people, and there are many tales of fisherfolk who fall in love with selkies. Gerstein has woven this legend into an original tale of a selkie mother, whose human son helps her return to her sea home. This is a beautifully illustrated fairy tale, and will be a good read-aloud. There are points of discussion here too -- children may want to talk about what the selkie mother means when she says of seals, “They are the animals most like humans.”

Elephant Seals

by Sylvia A Johnson

Lerner, 1989

Grades: 3-6.

Describes the behaviors of the elephant seals who yearly come to Año Nuevo to mate and bear their young, but although this simply and clearly worded account is fascinating, what will truly hold the attention of the young reader (or listener) are the physical characteristics of these enormous mammals. An initial photograph clearly showing the huge proboscis of the male immediately catches the reader’s attention; many color photographs throughout amply document the lives of the elephant seals, who are shown lying in groups on the beach, parenting, playing, molting, courting, and just living. The vocabulary may be challenging for most 2nd graders to read themselves, but this is easily understood when used as a read-aloud.

There is a glossary of unfamiliar terms and an index.

Where the Waves Break: Life at the Edge of the Sea

by Anna Malnig
Carolrhoda, 1984.

Grades: 1-5.

This series is known for its excellent photographs; this book is no exception. Close-up and detailed views of tide pool and sandy beach animals are fascinating: we see a moon snail eating a sand dollar, the suction cups at the ends of a sea star's feet, the feathery arms of a brittle star, and much more. The reader is also shown many different kinds of sponges, of urchins, of sea stars until a real sense of the tide pool's profusion of life forms is apparent. The text is simple and explanatory, easily understood by young children. Two pages at the end introduce and briefly explain the concept of scientific classification. A great way to prepare children for a field trip to the sandy beach!

Origami Sea Life

by John Montroll and Robert J. Lang
Dover, 1990 (2nd ed.)

Adult.

Detailed step-by-step instructions are given for making origami figures of many different forms of sea life, with their difficulty level indicated from "simple" to "very complex." Several of the animals live at or visit the sandy beach. Only two figures are considered simple: a tadpole, and a tadpole with legs. Teachers who enjoy paper-folding or would like to learn can use these figures very effectively in storytelling and presenting information to children: most children would be extremely attentive if someone were showing them an origami fiddler crab, or giant clam, or walrus, or the very complex and impressive blackdevil angler! But any who are intending to do these figures in front of a class had better practice, practice, practice -- they aren't easy.

Brown Pelican at the Pond

by Edward O'Reilly
Manzanita Press, 1979.

Grades: K-2.

Written by a child, this very simple story tells of a boy and his friends, who on a visit to a pond, find an injured pelican, take it to a vet, then nurse it back to health. The boy then returns it to the pond "because he belonged with other pelicans. "This is sure to be the beginning of a great classroom discussion.

Seashores

by Joyce Pope
Troll, 1990

Grades: 2-5.

Discusses the many kinds of plants and animals who live in varying seashore zones. Rocky shores and tidepools are discussed, as well as life on sandy beaches. For each zone, there is a drawing depicting the habitat and some

typical plants and animals, each labeled, many of which will inspire children to make their own drawings of those creatures they consider most interesting. The text may be somewhat challenging for 2nd grade readers, but a good reader can manage with some assistance, and the language is clear and easily understood. There is a short glossary and an index.

Prince William

by Gloria Rand

Holt, 1992.

Grades: 1-3.

Denny rescues a baby seal which has been caught in an oil spill in Prince William Sound, Alaska. She takes the seal -- named Prince William -- to an emergency animal rescue facility, where he, with hundreds of other animals, is cleaned of oil and cared for. Denny follows his progress for weeks, until Prince William is ready to return to the sea. The reader can see, in both text and colorful illustrations, the impact of oil spills on all the life of a region, and the effort involved in repairing that part of the damage which can be repaired. An author's note at the end tells of the Alaskan schoolchildren whose volunteer efforts helped save the life of

Sea Animals

by Angela Royston

Aladdin Books, 1992.

Grades: Preschool-1.

A first look at eight popular sea animals: dolphin, bullhead shark, sea horse, clownfish, seagull, crab, sea lion, and sea star. The last four regularly visit the sandy beach. Each animal, shown in a detailed close-up color photograph spread over two pages, is described in a paragraph of large type, simply worded text. On each page, small inserts show close-ups of interesting parts of the animal, such as the pincer of the crab, the mouth and tube feet of the sea star, the nostrils, gills, and tail of the bullhead shark.

Seashore

by Steve Parker

Knopf, 1989.

All Ages.

As is generally the case in the Eyewitness series, the photographs are the main focus of this book: many, clear, amazingly close-up in some cases, amazingly detailed in all. The author seems fascinated by the enormous variety of living conditions created by the many variable factors of waves, currents, tides, climate, and types of rock or sand, and the adaptations plants and animals have made to these habitats. Although much of the book is devoted to plants and animals living in rocky habitats, there is also a good representation of sandy beach inhabitants: marine turtles, seals, clams, and others. Each page contains many photographs of different sizes, each explained in a paragraph of very small typeface; each topic is introduced by a few paragraphs of well-

written text, apparently meant for adult readers. However, the pictures are so intriguing that children will want to know about them, and the text could easily be interpreted by a teacher.

Sukey and the Mermaid

by Robert San Souci

Four Winds Press, 1992.

Grades: 1-4.

Based on an African-American folktale from South Carolina, this is the story of Sukey, befriended by Mama Jo the mermaid, and sheltered from her stepfather's ill-treatment in Mama Jo's sea home. Since it is a kind of Cinderella story, Sukey's trials have a happy ending, which will be very satisfying to young listeners. Much of the story takes place along the sandy beach that fringes Sukey's home. Illustrated in beautifully executed, colorful scratchboard by Brian Pinkney, the book shows the life of an island-dwelling culture for whom the sea was an ever-present and important environment. This is a good classroom read-aloud.

Elephant Seal Island

by Evelyn Shaw

Harper & Row, 1978.

Grades: 1-2.

This "I Can Read" book describes the life of a male elephant seal on the beach at Año Nuevo Island, from birth to early adulthood, in the context of a description of the annual visits of the elephant seals to the island. Basil is born weighing 50 pounds, and gains ten pounds each day -- it might be interesting for young readers to compare their own weights with that of an elephant seal pup! This would be a good companion book to Sylvia Johnson's "Elephant Seals" .

Rocks and Minerals

by R.F. Symes

Knopf, 1988.

All Ages.

What rocks are, how they are formed, kinds and uses of rocks all are discussed here. The section "Rocks on the seashore" is perhaps most pertinent to this list, and, like the other topics in this book, is given a double-page spread full of excellent photographs of an impressive number of rocks of many kinds, with adult-oriented captions in tiny print. Children will enjoy spotting rocks and minerals they remember having seen on beaches or during their classroom study of sand. Included are "shelly pebbles", broken shells smoothed by wave action, and assorted bits of smoothed glass. Sand is also shown, which may be a bit of a surprise to a child who has never previously thought of sand as being very small rocks.

Seashore Surprises

by Rose Wyler

Julian Messner, 1991.

Grades: 2-4.

This very simply written description of the seashore contains explanations of how sand and pebbles are formed, what makes waves, how much salt is in the sea, and describes various plants and animals to be found at low tide. Each topic includes a suggestion for a simple activity, such as evaporating sea water to make salt, or jumping on sand to make the clams start squirting, or pouring sea water over barnacles to make them open their shells and wave their feet. A good accompaniment to a field trip.