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# LITERATURE CONNECTIONS FOR THE KELP FOREST

**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.**

*Cole, Joanna. The Magic School Bus on the Ocean Floor. Scholastic, 1992. Gr. 3-5.*

In this addition to a very popular series, Ms Frizzle's class goes on an exuberant and fantastic field trip to the bottom of the sea. As in the other Magic Schoolbus books, factual information is interwoven with a fast-moving, zany adventure tale, using different typefaces, hand printing, and many, many comical illustrations to draw and keep the attention of the reader. The many examples of students' reports shown may inspire children reading this to create their own informational and nicely illustrated reports; facts depicted in this manner range from "What is Plankton?" to "Why Plants Cannot Grow On the Deep Ocean Floor." There are even a few safety tips included.

*Downer, Ann. Don't Blink Now!: Capturing the Hidden World of Sea Creatures. (A New England Aquarium Book). Watts, 1991. Gr. 3-6.*

Photographs are the focus of this book: we see close-ups of animals that live on the ocean floor, as they eat and are eaten, capture their dinners or hide from predators. Many photographs invite close examination: the cockleshell catapulting itself with its muscular foot, two sea stars apparently struggling over some food, a cuttlefish changing color. There is a certain amount of anthropomorphism in the text, which may be a starting point for a class discussion. The text is easily read and understood.

*Halton, Cheryl M. Those Amazing Eels. Dillon Press, 1990. Gr. 3-6.*

Illustrated with many well-chosen and well-reproduced color photographs, this contains a great deal of information in its 94 pages of text. From the long-unknown facts of the life cycle of the eel, to discussions of biological

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phenomena associated with some kinds of eels, the authors intersperse good information with bits of history and folklore regarding eels. The economic importance of the eel both in historic times and today is also discussed. Appendices give detailed instructions and diagrams for building an eel pot; several eel recipes; and a list of eel families. There is a good glossary.

*Holling, Holling Clancy. Pagoo. Houghton Mifflin, 1957. Gr. 1-5.*

Younger children can enjoy this as a read-aloud chapter book, a section each day; older children can read it themselves. This is a modern classic; the story of the life of a hermit crab, from the time of hatching until the cycle is completed when Pagoo's children hatch in turn. Descriptions of the abundant life of the oceans are illustrated with many exquisitely detailed pencil drawings in every margin, and there are many full-page colored illustrations as well. The writing is so full of sensory detail -- taste, texture, color, light quality -- as to bring the world of the hermit crab into vivid reality in the mind of the reader (or the listener). And there is drama as well, in Pagoo's many escapes from animals of all sizes who view him as food, just as he views smaller animals as food; in Pagoo's searches for a new shell to fit his growing body; in his skirmish with the danger of fresh rain water. Most of the tidepool animals described also are found at the bottom of the kelp forest. As memorable and exciting as a good novel -- but this is real.

*Ling, Mary. Amazing Fish. (Eyewitness Juniors). Knopf, 1991. Gr. 1-6.*

On each double-page spread, a large photograph focuses the attention of the reader on the topic presented in those two pages, while smaller photographs, drawings, and diagrams elaborate on the topic both pictorially and in their one-sentence to one-paragraph captions. The text is simple enough for children with limited proficiency in English, and informative enough to keep the interest of better readers as well. The shapes of fish and their colors, fish with unusual and different shapes and colors, and the ways in which shapes and colors constitute adaptations to special underwater environments are all introduced here. Many of these brief overviews (what else can be expected in two pages each?) can be used to introduce topics for class discussion.

*Martin, James. Tentacles: The Amazing World of Octopus, Squid, and Their Relatives. Crown, 1993. Gr. 3-6.*

This account of the cephalopods -- octopus, squid, nautilus, and cuttlefish -- begins with the exciting account of a giant squid which, in 1872, dragged a ship below the surface of the sea, killing all on board. And throughout, the text combines exciting writing with factual information, describing hidden octopus watching scuba divers, squid moving "like living missiles," the vampire squid whose appearance resembles Dracula's cape, the cuttlefish as quick-change artist. Many excellent close-up color photographs combine with the well-written text to produce a book irresistible to young readers. There is a brief glossary, but some terms may need additional explanation. Sections of this would make a good read-aloud.

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*New England Aquarium. Do Fishes Get Thirsty?: Questions Answered by Dr. Les Kaufman and the Staff of the New England Aquarium. Watts, 1991. Gr. 4-7.*

Twenty-four frequently asked questions about fish and fishy matters are here answered, illustrated with color photographs and drawings. Most answers are about one page in length; some as short as a paragraph. Questions range from the basic "What is a Fish?" to "What Can Aquariums Do to Protect Endangered Animals?" The text is informative if not exciting, and the book includes a good glossary of unfamiliar terms, a bibliography for adult readers, a list of suggested readings suitable for children, and a useful index.

*Parker, Steve. Fish. (An Eyewitness Book). Knopf, 1990. All ages.*

As with the other Eyewitness books, the color photographs are the focus of reader interest here: close-up, in color, showing amazing detail, they are guaranteed to fascinate a young reader and compel further study. Each double-page spread covers one topic, and most are centered around one large photograph, with smaller photographs, diagrams, and drawings which elaborate on the central concept arranged on the two pages. Kelp forest animals such as eels and octopus are included. Each topic is introduced by one paragraph of general text; each picture is accompanied by a lengthy caption, typically a paragraph, in small-size text, using language and concepts on an adult reading level.

*Porter, Keith. Life In the Water. (The Animal Kingdom). Schoolhouse Press, 1986. Gr. 4-6.*

This is an overview of animal life in the water, from the very simplest (amoeba, plankton) to bony fish, and from coastal habitats to deep-sea animals. There is nothing on marine mammals, although the word "whale" does occur in two different contexts. Some interesting color photographs will capture the attention of young readers. Less interestingly written and attractively formatted than other books on this list, this is still a useful introduction to the great variety of habitats and animals to be found on our water planet.

*Sabin, Louis. Fish. Troll Associates, 1985. Gr. 2-4.*

Very simply written and illustrated with color drawings, this is suitable for children who need a very basic introduction written in clear everyday terms. The physical structure of different kinds of fish is explained, as is the ways in which fish find their food, sense their surroundings, protect themselves, and reproduce. Kelp forests, although not specifically discussed, are portrayed in several illustrations together with their animal inhabitants.

*Sea Otters. (Zoobooks). Wildlife Education, Ltd., 1993. Gr. 3-6.*

Starting with the premise that "otters are truly irresistible," the authors proceed to prove that point with many large photographs of otter faces above the water. Fortunately, the many drawings, though less irresistible, are more informative, illustrating otter muscles (some children will think this is "gross",

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since it shows a skinless otter, swimming, colored bright red-orange), otter skeleton, otter paws, and other very interesting facts of otter anatomy, physiology, and habits, all discussed in simply-worded and easily understood text. At the end is a section of "Otter Activities", including word games, a few math questions, and a suggestion that the reader write political representatives to protect otters and other animals. Many children will enjoy thinking of other activities, such as puns and riddles, after looking at these. Useful in a classroom.

*Wu, Norbert. Beneath the Waves: Exploring the Hidden World of the Kelp Forest. Chronicle Books, 1992. Gr. 3-6.*

The reader here accompanies the photographer on a scuba adventure through a kelp forest. The photographs are brilliantly colored and evocative, showing the great variety of animal and plant life in this habitat. Teachers will appreciate a general map near the beginning showing the locations of kelp forests in the world. In addition to the well-written, simply worded text, there are sidebars containing factual information on a variety of topics such as jellyfish, sea stars, scuba diving, and more. There is a good glossary.

*Wu, Norbert. Life in the Oceans. Little, Brown, 1991. Gr. 4-8.*

Beautiful underwater photographs are the focus of this book, which explores a variety of ocean habitats. The section on the kelp forest contains large, attractive photographs of kelp as well as of the animals who live among it; there is also a discussion of the seasonal changes in kelp forests and the function of the sea otter in kelp forest ecology. The writing style is simple, but informative and personal, as though the author were chatting with his readers. A good book for browsing, and for creating interest in a young reader.