
LOUIS THE FISH

Author: Arthur Yorinks

Illustrator: Richard Egielski

Publisher: Farrar, Straus & Giroux

THEME:

Pretending to be someone else can be exciting and can also be a way of discovering how wonderful it is to be yourself.

PROGRAM SUMMARY:

The feature book is a whale of a tale about a butcher who yearns to be a fish and turns into a salmon. It inspires LeVar to go on an exploration of marine life, tide pools, and dolphins. He visits the New England Aquarium in Boston, and viewers become acquainted with trained dolphins Dixie and Dolly at the Aqua Circus of Cape Cod in Massachusetts.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION:

At the end of the story, Louis was happy being a fish. Ask students if they think he will want to stay a fish forever and why. What about his old life might he miss as a fish?

Invite students who have gone fishing to share their fish stories. What is the biggest fish they ever caught? What is the most exciting thing that ever happened to them while fishing? What tips do they have for people who want to go fishing for the first time?

Ask students to imagine if the situation in *Louis the Fish* were reversed—what would the story be like if a fish in a tank wanted to be human?

The animated sequence in the program, in which the girl visits a library, suggests that books create pictures in our minds and are capable of taking us places. Discuss with students why people read books. Ask students what they like about reading.

CURRICULUM EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Set up an underwater museum in the classroom. Organize the students into the following activities:

- Have small groups make dioramas of underwater life. Obtain large boxes (about the size that reams of copy paper or other school supplies come in) that are big enough for 3-4 children to work on one diorama. Have them paint watercolor backgrounds on white construction paper and glue them to the sides and top of the inside of the box. Using books that have colored photographs or accurately colored drawings of ocean life as references, have them draw a variety of underwater animals. Encourage them to think

about the size relationships of the animals as they draw. (They might wish to draw a school of fish as one unit.) When they draw, they will need to make the front and back of the animal the same. Supply heavy-duty thread for them to suspend the animals from the top of the inside of the box, so that they appear to be swimming. Have them consult their resources to see what type of plant life is in the ocean and add that to the scene. After the other work is done, the students will be ready to do the ocean floor. Sand, shells, rocks, and clay models of ocean animals might be used here. Display the dioramas as part of the museum.

- Divide the class into research groups to find information about ocean animals. The resources that the students used while making the dioramas might spark an interest in knowing more about a particular kind of animal. Direct the students to set up an informational station or display that people visiting a museum might be interested in seeing. Possible items for such a display include: a poster of the animal with all the parts labeled (e.g., the program gave a great deal of information about the bodies of dolphins); models (either something students have at home or made from clay or clay dough and painted); fact sheets; comparison charts (sizes of different whales, for example); an audiotape of sounds (e.g., whales or dolphins); books containing photographs of the animal; pictures drawn by students, and the like. Large pieces of cardboard taped together in three pieces will sit on a desk or table top and work well as a display board. Place the stations in different locations in the classroom museum.
- Obtain some appropriate music (e.g., Debussy's *La Mer* or Handel's *Water Music*) and invite other classes to tour the museum. Station members of the class at various locations in the classroom to offer explanations and direct the attention of visitors to different pieces of information.

LeVar referred to a "school of fish" in the program. With the assistance of the library media specialist, locate other animal group names (e.g., pride of lions, gam of whales, swarm of bees, army of ants, a troop of monkeys, etc.). Have students make a chart of these animal group names and keep it in the classroom for reference.

In the program, the fish in the tank and LeVar used several puns and plays on words related to fish, such as "I'm hooked," "on a scale of 1 to 10," "fishing for bookworms," "flounder through life," etc. They also used similes and metaphors, e.g., "happy as a clam," "whale of a good time," "fishing for a compliment," "makes my head swim," and others. Discuss the humor in the puns and the meanings of the other expressions. Make a list of these expressions and have students listen for other examples that could be added to the list (e.g., "something's fishy," "the vehicle fishtailed," "trying to fish something out," etc.)

LeVar poses the question to children in the program, "If you could be any animal in the world, what would it be and why?" Ask the class the same question and have them make a picture and complete the sentence frame, "If I could be an animal, I would be _____ because _____." Display their pictures on a bulletin board.

If a nearby zoo has an aquarium, plan a field trip so the class can see the animals they researched.

RELATED THEMES:

habitats
fresh water animals

RELATED READING RAINBOW PROGRAMS:

Program #61 — Dive To The Coral Reefs
Program #67 — Jack, The Seal And The Sea
Program #56 — Humphrey The Lost Whale: A True Story
Program #88 — Seashore Surprises

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Born on Long Island, New York, Arthur Yorinks' early training was in piano with plans to become a musician. As an adult, he spent 10 years writing and performing with the American Mime Theatre. He has also written for the opera, ballet, and film. He considers himself an avid reader who is influenced by the style and techniques of other writers. Arthur and author/illustrator Maurice Sendak have collaborated on a children's theater project, but it was picture books that brought all of his interests together. He spent two years writing *Louis the Fish*.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR:

A native of Queens, New York, Richard Egielski's love for making pictures started very young, when he was inspired by an artist on television. Old movies from his childhood continue to influence his work. He and Arthur Yorinks met on an elevator at the Parsons School of Design and have since collaborated on several books, including the Caldecott Award winning *Hey, Al*. Primarily an artist, Richard has now turned to writing *and* illustrating—a logical step for an artist who has many ideas for picture books.

BOOKS REVIEWED BY CHILDREN:

WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE
by Maurice Sendak (HarperCollins)

A FISH HATCHES
by Joanna Cole and Jerome Wexler (Morrow)

ONE MONDAY MORNING
by Uri Shulevitz (Scribner's)

SUPPLEMENTARY BOOKLIST:

MY VISIT TO THE AQUARIUM
by Alike (HarperCollins)

THE AQUARIUM BOOK
by George Ancona (Clarion)

BIG AL
by Andrew Clements, illus. by Yoshi (Picture Book Studio)

DON'T TEASE THE GUPPIES
by Pat Lowery Collins, illus. by Marilyn Hafner (Putnam)

DOLPHINS: DOLPHIN MAGIC FOR KIDS
by Patricia Corrigan, photos by Flip Nicklin (Gareth Stevens)

THE GIRL WHO DANCED WITH DOLPHINS by Frank DeSaix, illus. by Debbie Durland DeSaix (Farrar, Straus & Giroux)

DO FISHES GET THIRSTY?
by Les Kaufman (New England Aquarium)

AMAZING FISH
by Mary Ling, photos by Jerry Young (Knopf)

SWIMMY
by Leo Lionni (Pantheon)

THE UNDERWATER ALPHABET
by Jerry Pallotta, illus. by Edgar Steward (Charlesbridge)

DOLPHIN'S FIRST DAY: THE STORY OF A BOTTLENOSE DOLPHIN
by Kathleen Weidner Zoehfeld, illus. by Steven James Petruccio (Soundprints)

