

Yvonne Palka

May I Borrow Your House? Hermit Crabs

Goals

- Explore an example of adaptability in nature
- Expand vocabulary
- Encourage imagination
- Consider the world beyond your horizons

Basis

This time start by showing students a variety of shell shapes and sizes, preferably by passing around real examples for them to feel and hold, or by showing a variety of pictures. Ask if anyone knows how snails move about or where they live. Then change the subject slightly, by asking students if they can think of animals who take advantage of or depend on others' homes. Their answers are likely to include dogs and cats, but encourage them to think of other creatures, even spiders. Follow with a story about a hermit crab, either a picture book or a science story. Suggestions include:

Pagoo, by Holling

Hermit Crab's Home: Safe in a Shell, by Halfman

A House for Hermit Crab, by Carle

Herman, the Hermit Crab, by Shimberg

Hermit Crabs, by Johnson

Guide discussion toward why the shells are useful to the crabs, why they're called "hermit" crabs, and how crabs search for food in water. Help students make the connection between crabs and other crustaceans like lobster and crayfish.

Depending on how formal the lesson is, students can be asked to learn new vocabulary, such as *hermit*, *crustacean*, *portable*, *adapt*, etc. Depending on availability of shells, the lesson can involve geography, other oceans, and climate factors.

Crafts/Activities

If the setting is a classroom, consider having the students adopt a pet hermit crab.

Build a diorama. Students can work in small groups of two or three, and add the anemones and starfish from an earlier lesson. Rocks, dark green yarn for kelp, and large pasta shells (painted, tiny pompons



with googly eyes and pipe-cleaner pincers) can fill a shoebox diorama. Use construction paper to add depth to the “sides” of the tide pool.

