CRUSTY THE FIDDLER CRAB

Ages 4-12

Learning Objectives

- Students will be able to:
  - Identify some mangrove animals and learn about moulting
  - Enjoy the story.

Summary: Story of a fictional Fiddler Crab's adventure.

Subject Areas: Language arts, Art, Science.

Time: 30-60 minutes

Materials:

- Story Handout
- Illustration of Fiddler Crab on page 2

Procedure:

1. Preparation: Ask students to sketch a Fiddler Crab (or show them an illustration of a fiddler crab from page 2).
2. Read the story.
3. Have students illustrate the story

Before the Lesson: (Begin by explaining that the students will be involved in an adventure. Introduce the main character of this adventure by displaying a picture of a fiddler crab, and tell the students that the main character of the story is a fiddler crab called Crusty. Ask the students, "Can you guess where this story will take place?" [Answer: The mangroves and seashore.]

Students could also role-play how crabs move, simulating how and what parts are used to feed and protect themselves. They could also "become" molting crabs, escaping their too-small outer covering.

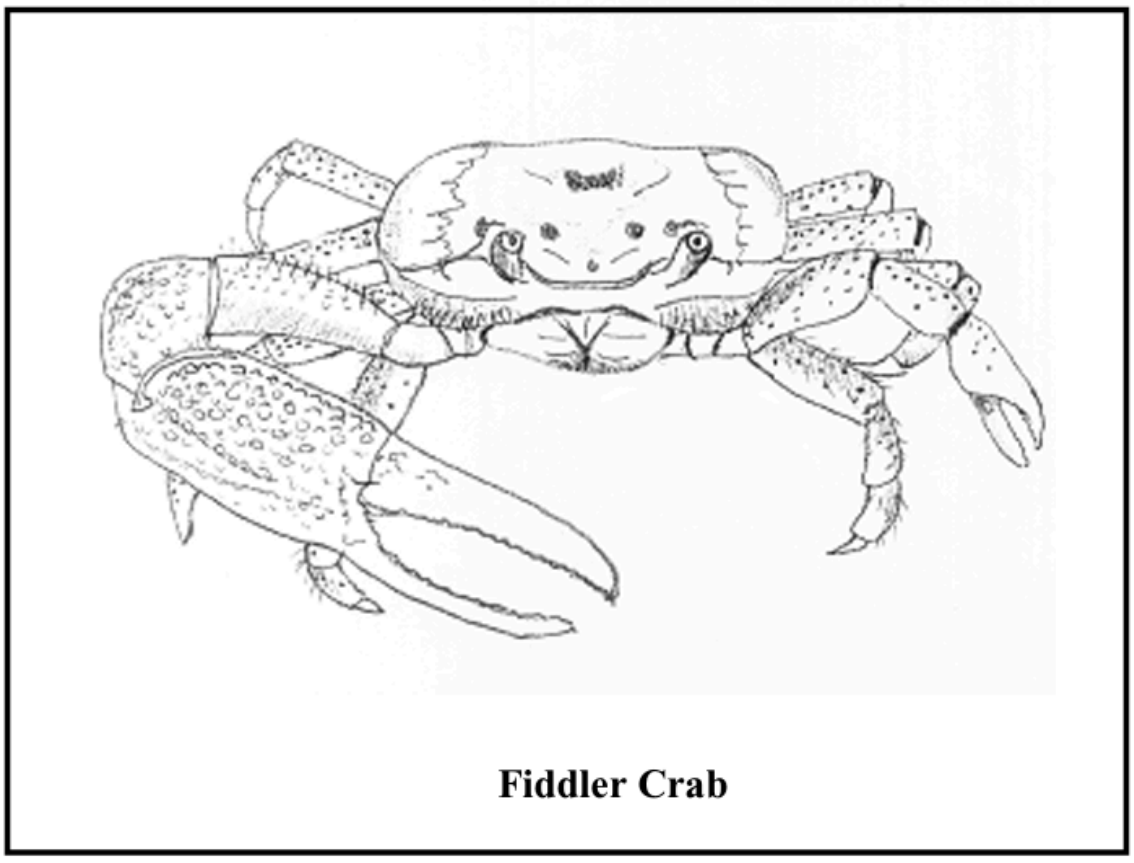
Have students assume various roles: Crusty, the gull, the waves, etc. When you reach the sounds, have the students give the sound effects and also role-play where called for—pinching, scrambling sideways, tumbling, shedding shell of crab; screeching and flapping of gull; whoosh and thundering of ocean waves.

Discussion/Reflection: What sort of animals molt? [Those with external skeletons.] What is the difference between the way crabs grow bigger and the way you grow bigger?

Extension: After the story, have students label on the drawing the various parts of a fiddler crab. Ask students what other adventures Crusty might have

References

- Mangrove Action Project, Marvellous Mangroves - A Wetlands Education Resource Book for the West Indies



Fiddler Crab

See story on following pages

Story - The Adventures of Crusty

CRUSTY IS A FIDDLER CRAB who lives in a burrow in the mangroves on the edge of the ocean. Can you guess why his name is Crusty? [He has a hard, crusty outer covering.] Crusty also has a pair of large pincers, one much bigger than the other. How do the pincers of a crab work? [The powerful pincers open and close like a pair of pliers, and are often used for gripping and crunching.]

Crusty awoke one morning to the cries of a gull overhead: "SCREEETCH, SCREEETCH." He stuck his eyes out from underneath his favourite mangrove root. Crusty's eyes, like those of all fiddler crabs, are on stalks and move like a computer-game joystick so he can see all around. Crusty waved his big claw around, but the gull was too busy to notice him. Crusty watched the gull drop a clam from the sky onto the rocky beach nearby. The gull cried out louder "SCREEETCH, SCREEETCH!" The clam was now out of the seagull's reach.

Moving sideways, Crusty scrambled out of the shelter of the mangroves and along the sandy beach towards the clam. He was curious to see what had happened to it. Crusty seldom went far from his mangrove home, where all his crab cousins lived. Before he reached the clam, he found himself travelling over a pile of dead seaweed. Feeling hungry, he cut up the tasty seaweed with his pincers and moved it to the six pairs of movable mouth parts on the underside of his shell. Crusty sat enjoying a most delicious breakfast.

As Crusty munched, he noticed a rumble and began to feel vibrations on the sand. The waves came closer and closer. He had not paid much attention to how far down the beach he had travelled, and now, as the tide came in . . . WHOOSH!

A large wave rolled in and picked up Crusty. It tumbled him over and over in the foamy water and then dropped him far down the shore, past the sand and in the rocks where the clam had fallen. As Crusty picked himself up to begin his walk back up the beach, he discovered that one of his walking legs was missing. Do you know how many walking legs a crab has? [Eight.] Crusty was not worried because he could still walk, and he knew he would eventually grow another leg.

When a crab's tough outer covering becomes too small, the back splits open. The back end of the crab's body pops out first. Then the crab pulls and tugs each of its walking legs and pincers out of the old covering like a person taking off a coat and gloves. The crab still has a covering on its body, but its new covering is soft. The crab pumps it full of water to enlarge it so the crab can continue to grow. The soft carapace absorbs chemicals from the sea and gets hard in a couple of days. The shedding of the covering is called molting. Can you name other animals that moult their outer covering? [Grasshoppers, cockroaches, some other insects, and snakes.] Crusty knew that with each molt to follow, he would grow some more of the new leg to replace the one he lost when the big wave hit. Eventually, he would have a complete new walking leg.

Crusty wondered where the big wave had dumped him. Looking up, he realized he was at the bottom of a deep pool. He saw the steep sides lined with shiny green and brown seaweed—alive, not like the dead seaweed he had just eaten. Can you guess where Crusty had landed on the beach? [A tidepool.] Crusty had never ventured this far from home. When he saw two large eyes staring at him, he knew why! The eyes belonged to a creature with a big head and bigger mouth, and it was swim ming up fast and very fiercely. Can you guess what creature was eyeing Crusty? [A large eel.]

Crusty crawled up and out of the tidepool and scurried sideways up the beach as fast as his little legs could carry him. Finally he was greeted by his crab cousins, waving their pincers from their burrows under the mangrove trees. He was home at last.