

Horsing Around

With Terry the Seahorse



Horsing Around

Senugi Jayasundara

Auther's other pubications

- Shadow Beneath Haunted Terror

Mahamaya Girl s' College Kandy

Grade 9F

10.05.2026

ISBN 978-624-211-142-1



Foreword

In an increasingly complex global future, the "Hemamala Upahara" book project, led by Mahamaya Girls' College, stands as a turning point in girls' education. Over a decade, it has successfully nurtured thousands of children to become young authors.

This year, by collaborating with other schools, we aimed to provide students with a wealth of new experiences. The goal was to develop multi-faceted skills, including communication, values, and creative growth. As a result, children have written books that pay tribute to Princess Hemamala, who brought the Sacred Tooth Relic—the supreme symbol of the Buddhist world—to the Hill Country (Kandy).

I extend my gratitude to everyone involved, including the students who contributed their creativity and the teachers who guided them.

Shashikala Senadhira

Principal

Mahamaya Girls' College

Congratulatory Message

It is a great honor for me, as the Governor of the Central Province, to send a congratulatory message for the launch of the books created through the Hemamala Tribute Book Creation Project initiated by Mahamaya Girls' College, Kandy.

Education is the fundamental foundation for the progress of society, and it is further strengthened through books and literary creations. It is clearly commendable that students' talents, creativity, and intellectual abilities are emerging through projects such as this.

I believe that this book creation project will provide valuable knowledge and a precious literary contribution not only to the students but to the entire society. Furthermore, I hope that through such efforts, future writers who will bring pride to Sri Lanka will emerge.

I extend my heartfelt appreciation and blessings to the Principal, the academic staff, the students, and everyone involved who dedicated themselves to this successful endeavor. I wish this project and the book launch ceremony great success.

Sarath B.S. Abeykoon

Governor, Central Province

Emeritus Professor, University of Peradeniya

2026-05-10

Congratulatory Message

I highly appreciate the noble and outstanding effort of the Principal and the academic staff of Mahamaya Girls' College, Kandy, the student daughters, the students of other participating schools, and everyone who dedicated themselves to plan and implement this book publication project. The project was organized under the leadership of Mahamaya Girls' College, Kandy, with the participation of other schools in the Kandy Zone, with the aim of encouraging children toward book creation within the current school system, as a tribute to Hemamala Kumariya who brought the Sacred Tooth Relic to Sri Lanka.

For several decades, Sri Lanka has been committed to providing free, compulsory, quality, and equitable education to all children, thereby producing a future generation of intelligent and skilled citizens. In such a context, this book creation program for school children helps develop creative ability, critical thinking, and other positive qualities for a balanced and well-rounded personality, and contributes to building a future knowledge-based society.

May all activities of the Hemamala Tribute Book Creation Project be successful through the blessings of the Sacred Tooth Relic.

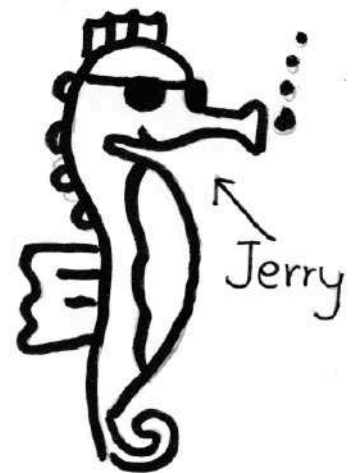
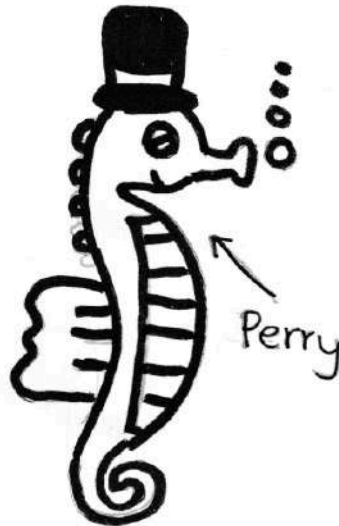
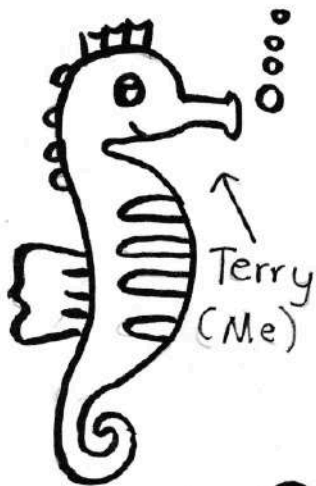
Pradeep Nilanga Dela

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Meet the characters...



Darren

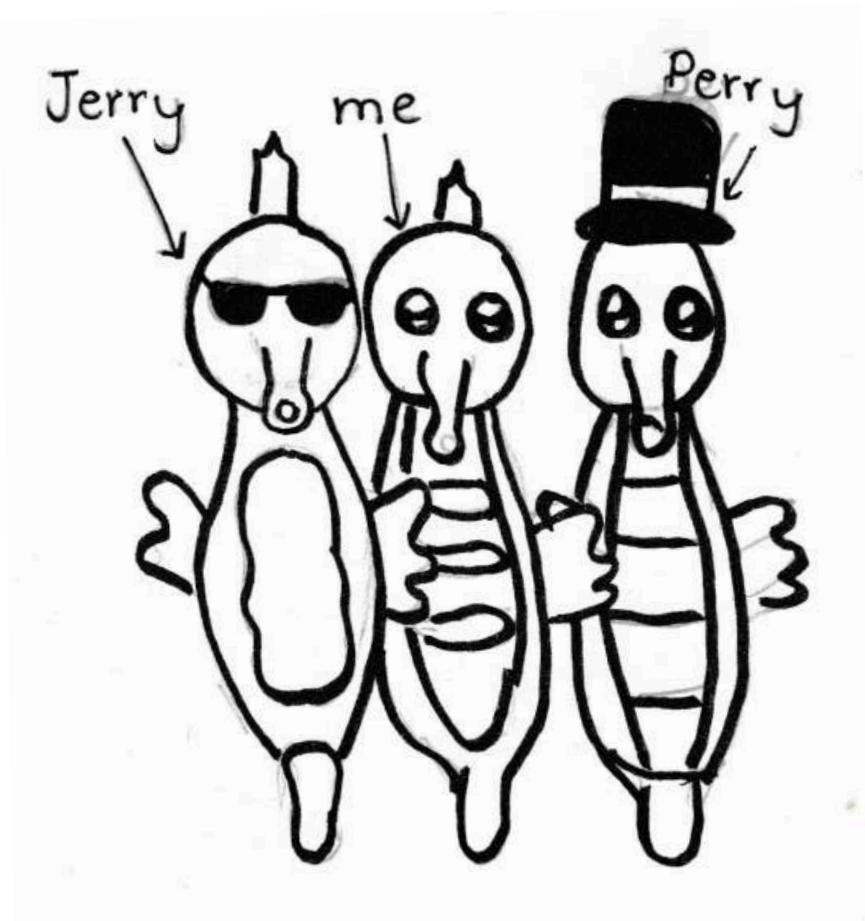
Mrs. Squidenne

Hi everyone ! I am Terry the Dwarf horse. And I'm not a horse, I'm a fish of course.

I had 2000 siblings. I know that's a lot. But after we were born we were living separately. I don't even know if all of my Siblings are still living.

Me and two of my siblings decided to stay together. Their names are Jerry and Perry. After we were born our parents did not care about us at all. So we were on our own.

OK.. OK.. I'm Not trying to write a sad story. But that is just the seahorse way.. So I'll skip the sad part.

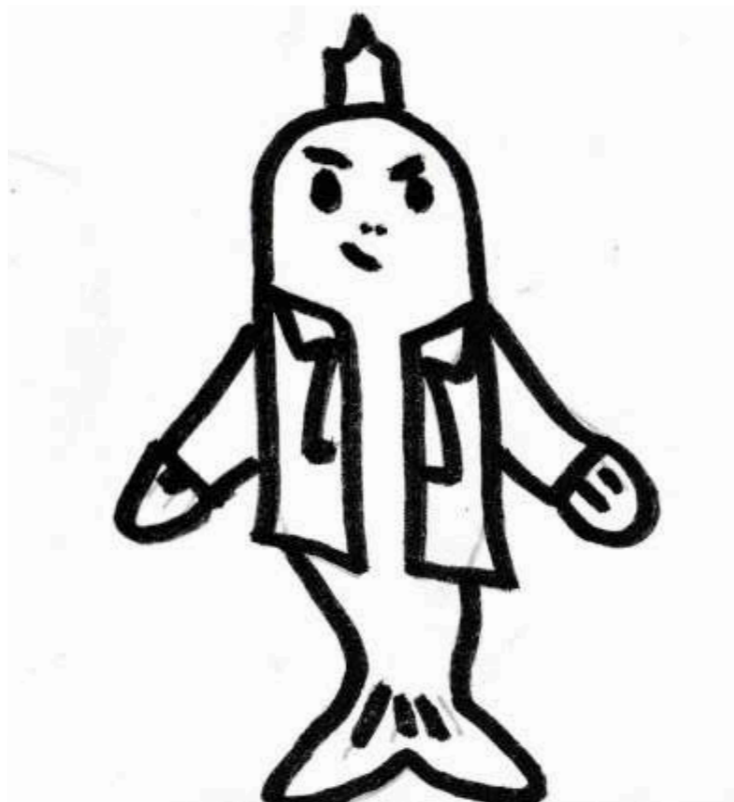


Me and my other two brothers are all one year old. I know that sounds like we are still little babies, but we are actually 16 years old if we consider in human years. So we are practically teenagers.

Let me tell you a story....

One time a fish challenged us to a race, and we are NOT fast swimmers.... of course we lost. Now that stupid fish and his friends always makes fun of us.

That stupid fish is one of our classmates, and he's the biggest bully in our school. He thinks that he's so cool and everyone loves him, but everyone actually hates him. and that's pretty funny. OH... I didn't tell his name didn't I ? his name is Darren but everyone calls him Sir DUMBALOT. He always wears the same black leather jacket to school and I don't think he ever cleans it. I guess that's why he always STINKS.

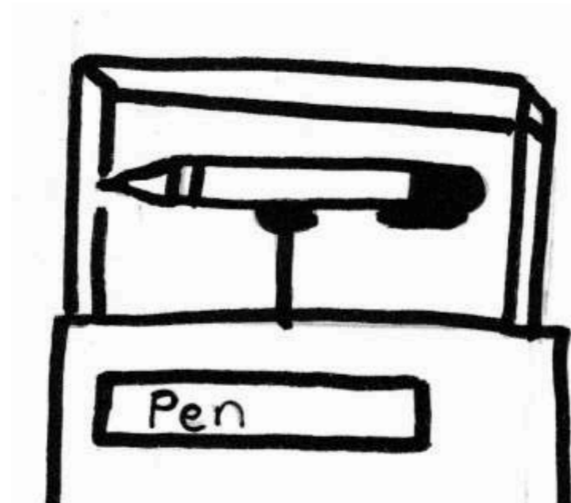


Now enough about that jerk, why don't I tell you more about my school.

My school's name is Sea Creatures High. There are a bunch of different sea creatures that go to that school. Like starfish, jellyfish, normal fish, and even crabs.



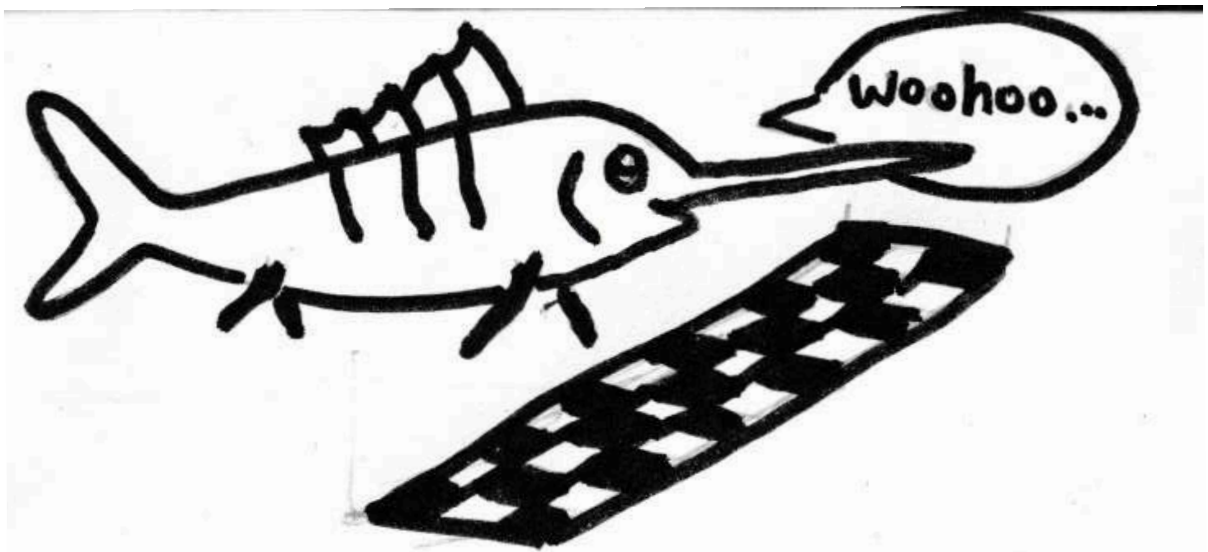
Unlike humans, we don't have those things called books, pens, pencils or whatever you call them. We don't need them and of course we can't use them, DUH...We're fish we don't have hands, we have fins, we can't write using fins, believe me I have tried. For one thing, Normal pens are too big for us. So in our world we have like small pens for display, and I tried holding them, and that was impossible. So they are technically useless. I could hold them with my tail but it was still very hard write with them.



So what we do in our school is not as same as what you do in human school. They teach us how to catch prey and how not to be prey. We do all things physically. And not write all things on books like humans. What we do is, we'd race each other and fight each other for prey. And that's kind of fun if you ask me.

Speaking of racing, us seahorses are always the last. And that's pretty embarrassing. Our teacher, Mrs. Squidenne (she's a squid), says that Dwarf seahorses are one of the slowest swimmers in the ocean, and they only have about a top speed of 5 feet per hour.

You know who always wins? It's Sally the sailfish. She's always the first. Sailfish are a kind of a long fish with long pointy lips.



At least Sally doesn't rub it in our face after she wins, unlike Sir Dumbalot (Darren)

I think you know that I hate Darren a lot from the way I speak. Well it's not my fault that he's a jerk.

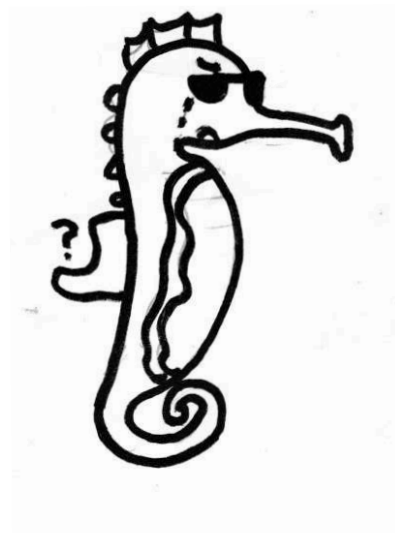
Why don't I tell you about my brothers. My brothers are technically my best friends. We live in a seagrass bed to avoid getting swept

away by large water currents. I know it's funny, we are small and always get swept away by water. Our rooms are made of seagrass, our kitchen is made of seagrass, and can you guess what our living room is made of ? **It's also made of seagrass.**

What about our bathroom? Can you guess what it's made of? If you guessed seagrass, you're... **WRONG !** Us seahorses doesn't have a stomach. So what we eat digest rapidly, so we just go anywhere we like. That sound pretty gross right? But not for us...

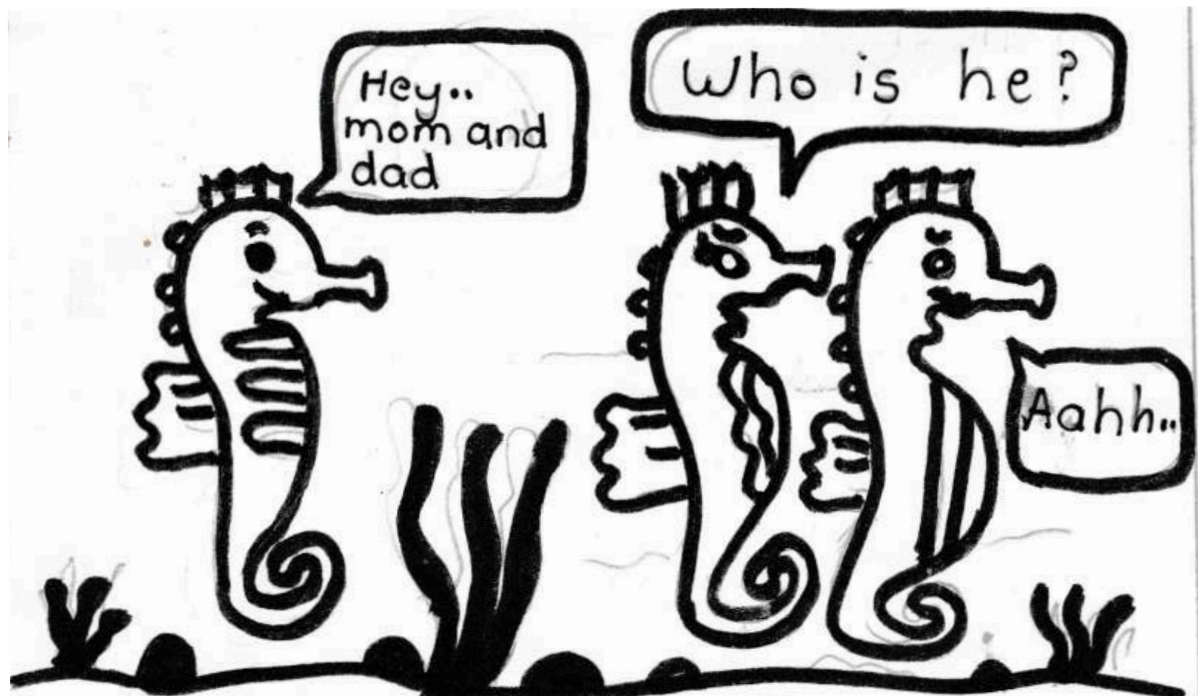
My brothers and I always fight. I don't think I have ever met siblings that never fight. Maybe it's some kind of an ancient tradition.

One time we all fought for the last piece of brine shrimp, and Perry got so mad that he broke one of Jerry's fins. It took Perry almost 4 weeks to grow it back. Do you think it's normal of Perry to break others fins? Or does he have some kind of a mental problem, cause that wasn't the only time he's broken someones fins. Because when we were little, Perry broke one of my fins, just be cause I called him stupid. Isn't that **STUPID?**



I guess that's what happens when you don't live with parents. I mean it's kind of great when you don't live with parents because you can break all the rules you want, no curfew at night, not getting grounded, no one bugging you, only freedom. I kind of feel bad for

the other sea creatures living with their parents. Because they are missing out on a lot of fun. I do see my parents sometimes when I'm strolling through the ocean. But they don't recognise me cause, when I approach them, they think I'm a threat and just swim away. That's pretty funny and kind of sad too. But I'm used to it and I don't care either.



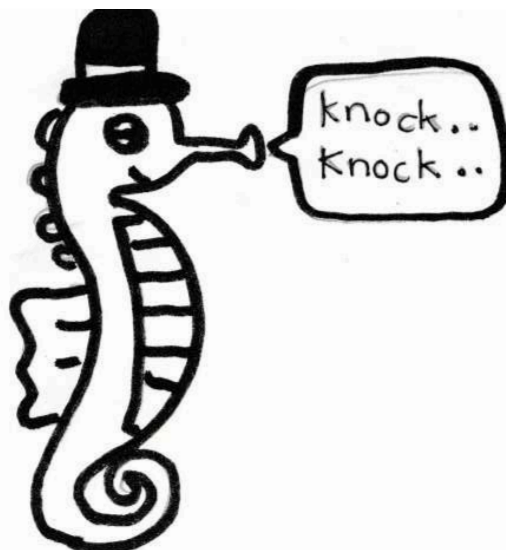
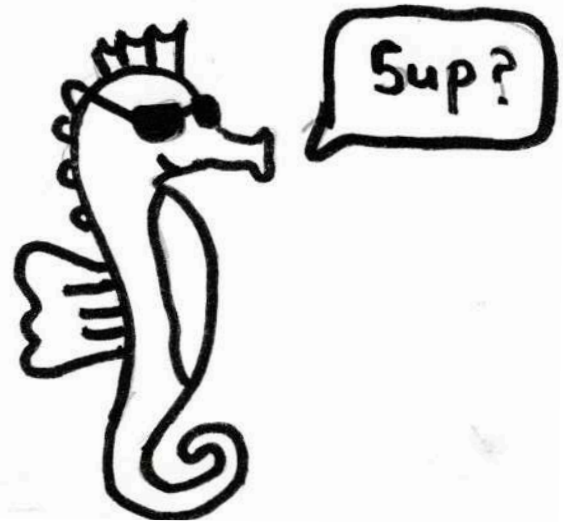
Speaking of my parents, after we were born, we should swim away from them ASAP, or we could mistakenly be eaten by them. I don't know what happened to my other siblings, but I'm glad I go to stay with Perry and Jerry. Because as much as I hate them I love them too.

Let me introduce you to my siblings

This is Jerry. He's the smart one. He know all the strategies of catching prey an escaping from being prey. He's the one helping us with our homework and the top smartest student in our class (and the slowest). You must be thinking all smart students are boring and lame and all they do is just sit around and do things that smart ones like to do. Well if you thought that you're...

WRONG! that's just a stereo type. Jerry know how to have fun. That guy really sleep period he's hyperactive, all he do is play with us,eat and sing songs and dance. That's technically his life pattern. I don't know how he got that smart by doing practically nothing. I guess he got lucky.

Like I said before,my other brother is Perry. He's the funny one. All he do is joke around all day. If I'm being honest, he's actually pretty funny. All our classmates love him too... He has a joke for every situation. I don't know how he come up with this stuff.



He's pretty good at arts and crafts too. One time he made an exact replica of me using sea corals. It looked exactly like me.



And one time he won the best joke award at our schools talent show. You'll never guess what the price was... It was a big bucket of the winners favourite food. The winner had to choose the food. And Perry chose a big bucket of brine shrimp and ghost shrimp.

As his brother me and Jerry got a chance to order our own bucket of our favourite food because we helped him achieve this moment. I think you can guess our favourite food now... That's right, me and Jerry ordered another two buckets of brine shrimp and ghost shrimp. That was the best night of my life. Although we fight a lot I guess I'm so lucky to have such amazing brothers. (p.s. I do not enjoy saying that.)



You must be wondering what am I good at. I'm good at singing and dancing. So I'm the aesthetic guy. I'm in my school's choir and the dancing troop. I know you all are going say dancing is for girls, but that's not true. Boys can dance too you know... Well... there's only two boys in the dancing troop including me. I guess that mean it could be through though... Never mind I still don't believe it. Besides I'm the best dancer there. The coach puts me in charge when he's busy. So I get the chance to boss around the others. And while I'm at it, I always make others do the most stupid looking dance moves you can think of.

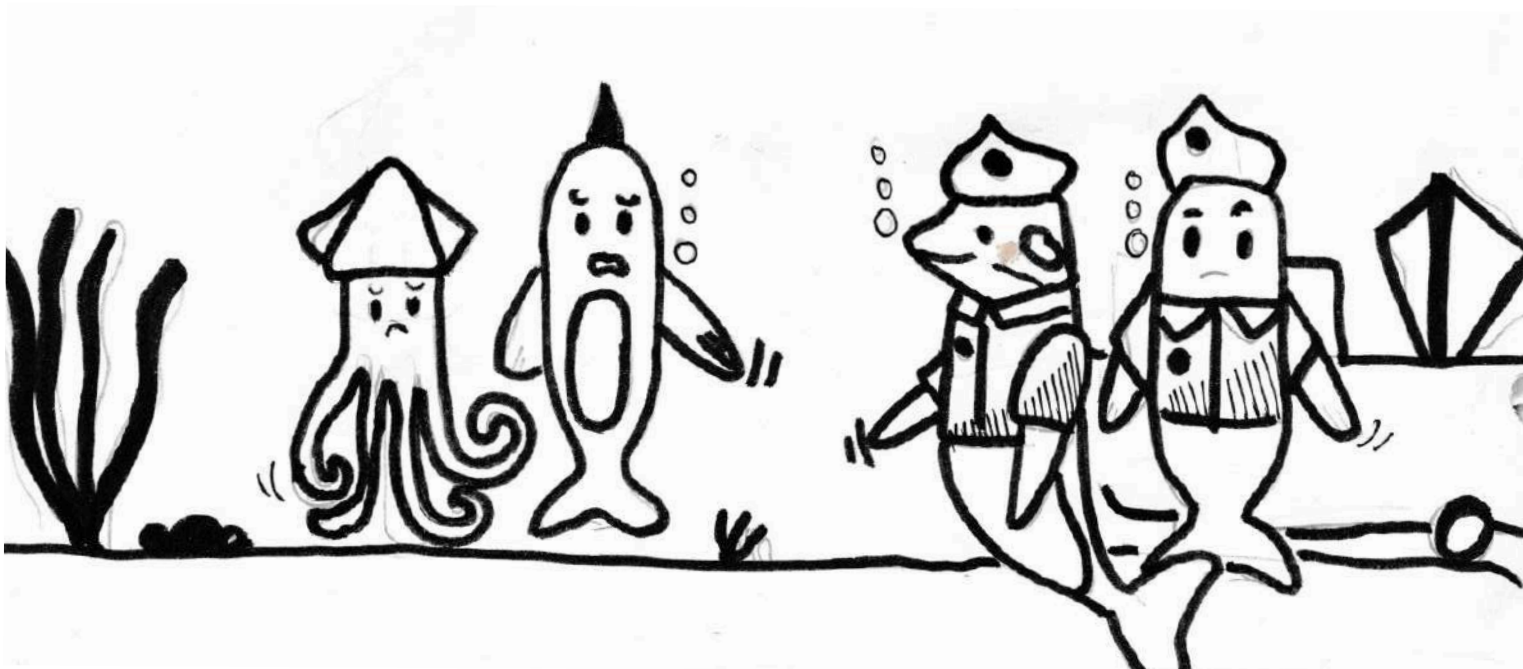


And while they try to do those stupid dance moves, I can sit back and just laugh. You must be thinking that the others must hate me. Well... no they love me. I even give every each one a chance to take turns and watch how stupid they look. So they also can have a great laugh. They all vote me as the leader when the dancing coach is on a break.

And I was also lucky enough to win first place in dancing competitions held our school's talent show. And I didn't get a big bucket full of food, I only got a trophy made of corals. That's pretty disappointing. I was really hoping that I would get some shrimp.

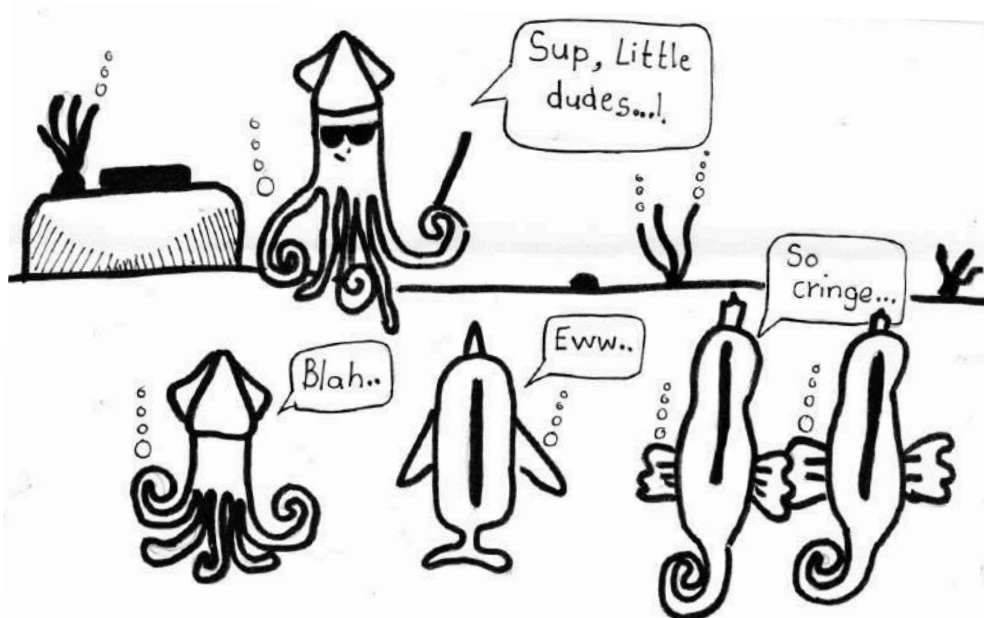


Although we are not good at running races. We are pretty good at hide and seek. Because of our ability to camouflage of course. Us seahorses have the ability to change our colours to match our surroundings. So it pretty much make us masters in hide and seek. One time at camp, when we were playing hide and seek, me and my brothers were hiding together and the others couldn't find us because we were hiding so well. We actually fell asleep cause we were super bored. And by the time we woke up the teachers had called the cops because they couldn't find us.



The sad part is that they were going to give a prize to the last one to stay without getting caught. And they had already given it to the one caught before us. And it was Sir Dumbalot. And he kept rubbing it in our face. Maybe having the ability to camouflage is not that good... Maybe if we'd paid more attention we could have won. I don't know maybe we were never lucky enough to win.

Here in our world we don't use money to pay others. Except we use food. Of course we have to get them the food that they actually eat. So it differ from creature to creature. When we go to school each child must bring food to their teachers. So the food the children bring daily is the teachers salary. So the most students that come to the class, the more food the teacher get. That's why all the teachers are trying to act cool in our school. They are trying to win the students heart so they will bring them more food. That's just plain evil.



Our teachers told us that the found of a school went from door to door to collect food to build our school. OH... I didn't tell you before... There's even a big banner in our village stating what each creature's favourite food is. let me show you the Banner...

What We Eat...

Squids - small fish, crabs, shrimp

Octopus - small fish, clams,
mussels, snails

Sea horse - green algae, shrimp

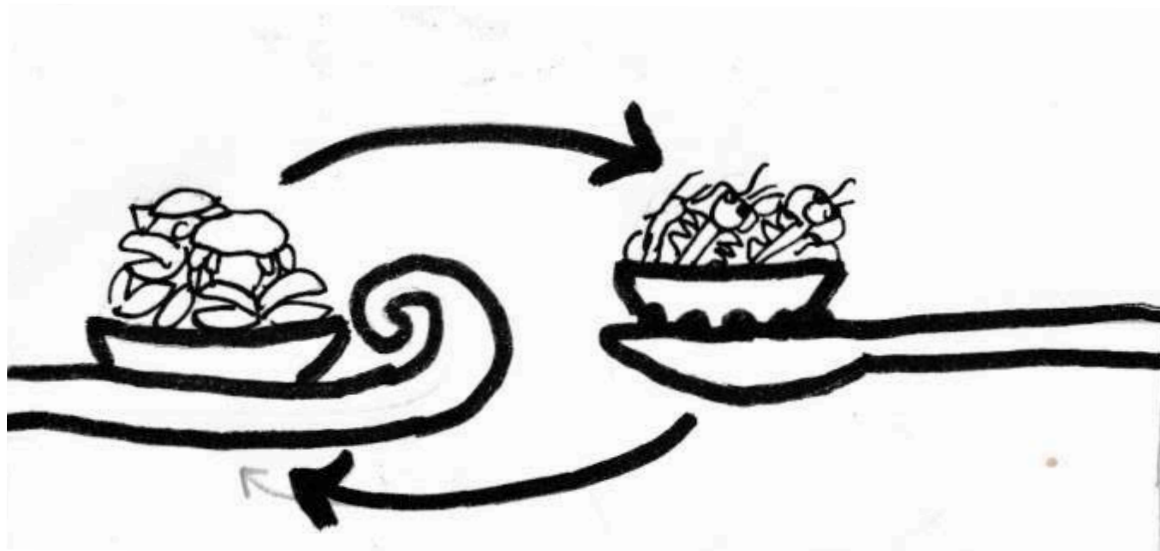
crabs - algae, clams, snails

Fish - algae, plankton, snails,
worms, clams, shrimp

(Notice ÷ what fish eat can differ
from species)

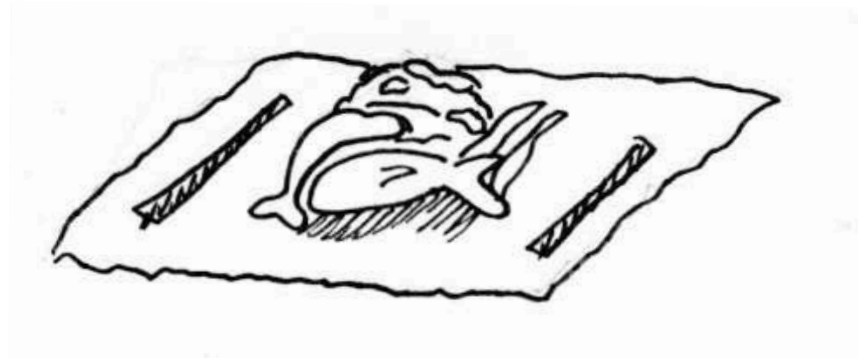


So when we try to buy something, we have to give the store owner their favourite food. I guess that's easier than earning money and spending them. plus we don't have to buy food we just collect them from around us ourselves. there are some places we can get food by giving Food. So it works by us giving the food the store owner likes and they give us the food we like. So it works just like money.



In some places, they sell fancy food. And they cost way... more than normal food. and they only give a small portion of food, even though we pay a lot. The food are like kept on a seaweed and decorated with some algae.

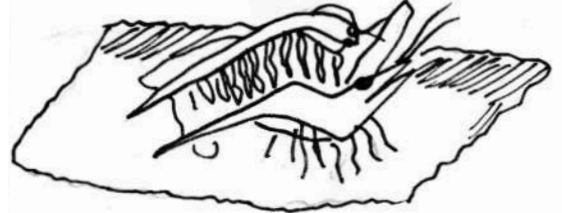
You must be thinking that the food must be delicious since it's so expensive.



And I only have one word for that... BLAH...Those fancy foods are the most disgusting thing that I've put in my mouth ever. It tastes like expired food. I almost threw up eating that.

Someone could literally get food poisoning eating that junk.. I've only gone once to a fancy restaurant once and that was the worst night of my life. I can still taste that sourness and bitterness mixed with the sweetness and spiciness. You could literally test all four flavours in that one dish. And I can say, Bitterness and spiciness does not match together. The food was only one bite. Well it makes sense it's only one bite. No one could ever eat a whole plate of that.

Like I said before, I've only gone to fancy restaurant once and it was with my brothers. we each ordered a plate of brine shrimp and ghost shrimp mixed salad. and they literally gave us a piece of brine shrimp and ghost shrimp and small piece of seaweed. YEAH, THAT'S LL THEY GAVE...



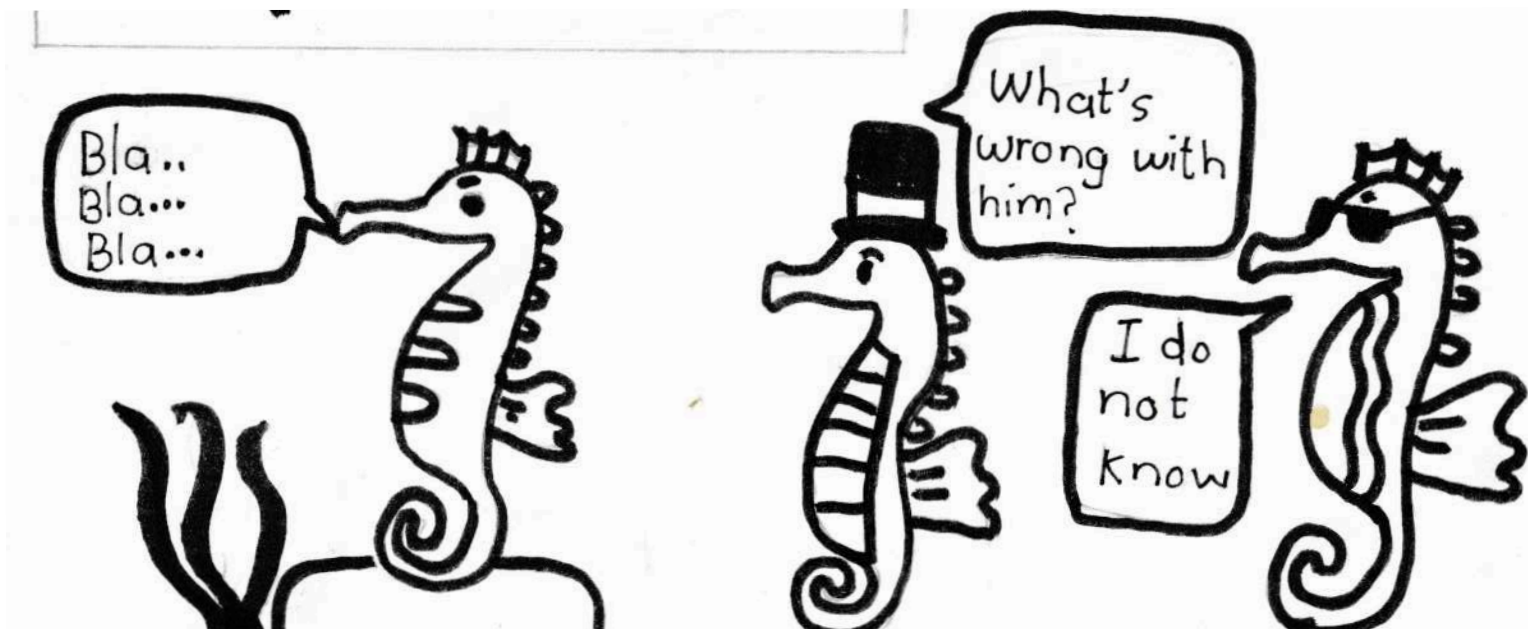
I don't know why others even go to fancy restaurants. we only went there because all over classmates kept talking about the how the food was so good. I guess they were just trying to make jealous the ones that haven't gone there before.. and I can say that it worked. Of course, we are also going to try and make others jealous. I know, I know, it's mean to put others through that torturous food. But we sound so cool and rich when we say we've been to a fancy restaurant. The sad part is that we are actually not rich. We are just some teenagers living alone without any parents.

All our other classmates that do go to fancy restaurants regularly, they are not rich either, their parents are. So if you consider like that,

we are more rich than other classmates. they just uses their parents salary to be rich.

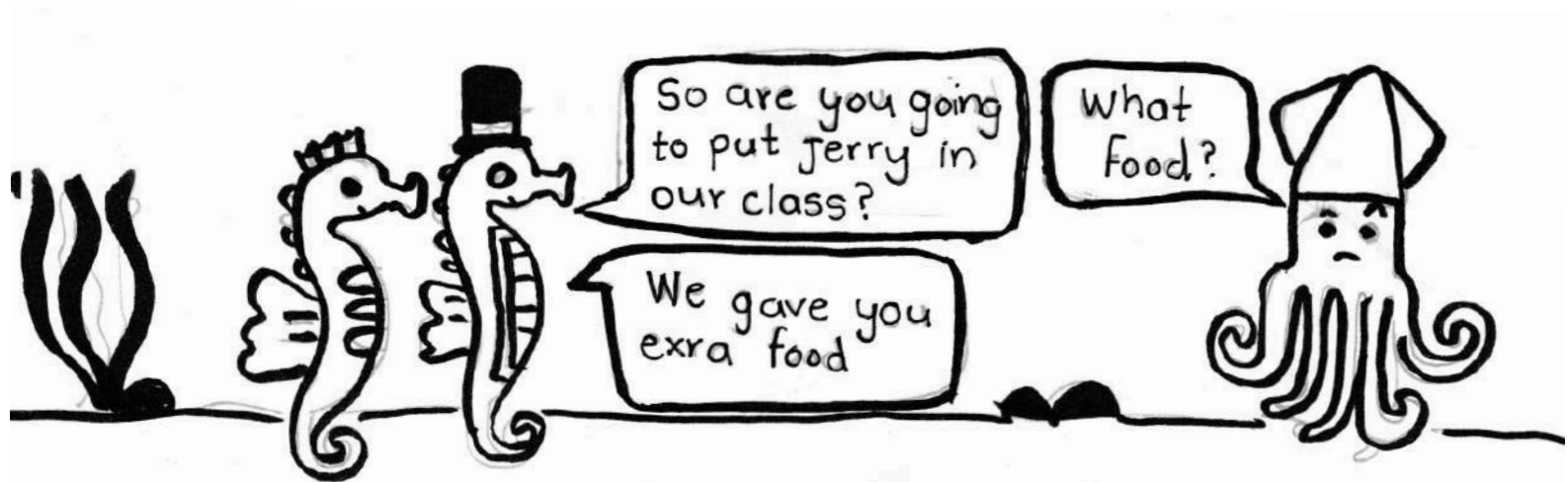
The fact that we have to go hunting every evening to collect food to give to our teachers, and all the other ones in our class just have to sit back and relax while their parents do the hunting for them is kind of unfair if you ask me. I mean there should be a rule or something that the children must hunt on their own to pay the teachers.

You know what, I don't care now that the others get to sit back. they are just going to have a large belly and going to be out of shape when they grow up, While I'll have huge muscles and a six pack. Ha... ha... ha...



So I just found out that Jerry is going to have to skip grades and have to go to a higher grade than us. Of course none of us like that idea, not even Jerry. but the teacher says that it's for Jerry's own

good. I don't see any good in this. We tried everything we could do stop Jerry from skipping grade. We even tried offering the teacher extra food. and the teacher literally tricked us. She took the food we gave and said that she will put Jerry back in our class later. But when we asked about it the next day, she said that she didn't remember taking food from us and accused us of lying.



So our effort of hunting extra food just went down the drain. and we were down to our last ditch effort. and that was...

BEGGING... Yup begging... all three of us and all of our classmates joined us to beg the teacher. Well all except Sir dumbalot. you see, he's jealous of our brother because Jerry is the smartest in our class and so dumb a lot is the second smartest. And Jerry going to a different class means that Sir download gets the chance to be the smartest in our class.

Sir Dumbalot is not as close to how smart Jerry is. He's smart because all the others are dumb. No offence. Jerry is smarter than most teachers. Most of the time the teachers asks Jerry for advice. When the teacher teaches something wrong Jerry is the one that shows the correct thing. And even if a teacher has a doubt about something they asks Jerry. And now that Jerry is gone, I think Sir Dumbalot has to do what Jerry did...

So today's the first day of class without Jerry. And it was already a mess. it did not go good. Since Jerry's is the one who helps others with their homework, None of our other classmates had done their homework. Only me and Perry had done it. That's just because Jerry helped us the night before. Sir download hadn't even done it either. Because he usually copies it from Jerry. Normally, the others doesn't copy from Jerry, they just asked things that they don't understand. And Jerry teaches them. The teacher said that she won't punish anyone this time because everyone usally does their homework. But she said that if anyone dosen't do their homework again, she will definitely punish them. And that she's going to let the others off the hook only this time. And to be honest, Mrs. Squidenne gets pretty scary when she get mad.

So like I said before, now that Jerry's gone, Sir Dumbalot have to answer the teacher's questions and show the correct thing when the teacher has a doubt. And it happened today. The teacher asked Sir Dumbalot AKA, Darren to answer a question. And he totally got embarrassed infront of everyone. He acted like he knew the answer but in the end he just tried to avoid the question. And almost everyone in the class laughed. Even the teacher laughed. I know it's kind of mean, but everyone hates him and he totally deserved it.



Not only Mrs. Squidenne, every teacher asked questions from Darren. And he didn't knew answers to any of them. He got embarrassed in front of every teacher. All the teachers were so confused because Darren scores so well in tests.

Then the teachers did some digging and found out that Sir Dumbalot had been cheating all this time. He had attached some kind of gadget to his jacket to make him swim fast and win races. And that same gadget helped him to score well in tests. Nobody knew it because they thought he was actually smart. I guess that's why he couldn't answer the questions the teacher asked. None of the teachers asked answers from him before because they usually asked Jerry. I guess he wasn't that smart after all. Of course the school punished him for using gadgets to cheat in school. He got suspended for a week. You may be saying that a week is not enough. But in seahorse years that's a long time.

It was all good news for all the others in the class. It's going to be a whole week without Darren. Well, let's hope in the end of this week Sir Dumbalot is going to put down this whole mean phase. I guess we'll just have to hope for the best.

Well, finding out Darren was a fraud solved one problem. But we still have the problem of Jerry still being in a different class. Now without ANY smart one's in the class, the whole class is a mess. Now there's no one to answer the teacher's doubts or to correct the teacher when she do something wrong. Because of that, most of the time we're learning something wrong. And without Jerry, the whole class is becoming more dumb. I think now that the even teachers are thinking it's better with Jerry in the class.

Jerry said he always gets bullied in his new class because he's the smartest in that class too.. all the students in his class are older than him. And they said that jerry's a show off and is trying to get all teachers attention. Jerry usually dosen't try to show off, he just sit and mind his own business. I think that all his classmates are just jealous of him. And jerry dosen't hold back when he get bullied, yesterday he got called to the head fish's office because got caught fighting with a crab. Jerry said that the crab made fun of him. And I didn't said before, Jerry has major anger issues. And when I say major I mean MAJOR..... he never holds back when he get angry. Luckilly, Jerry didn't get hurt by this fight. But the crab got one of his claws broken. The head fish didn't punish Jerry because Jerry dosen't usually misbehave and it was the teachers fault in the first place to put Jerry in a different class. The students in our class never bullies Jerry, that's why he's never faught with anyone in our class. If anyone had faught with Jerry, I bet he'd break their fins or claws too...

It's been 2 weeks since Sir Dumbalot got suspended. And he came to school today after his suspension. And I can say that he had turned a leaf. He appologized to everyone in our for being mean to them. Which was a suprise. And he even went to the teacher and asked her to bring jerry back to our class. And she said she was already on it. And right as she said that Jerry walked into the class with all his stuff. We all confused... the teacher said that, the class is better with Jerry in it. (and the teacher said that Jerry is getting bad impressions from being with older students and she thinks it's better if Jerry hangs out with one's that's his own age) We were all happy to have Jerry back. All the student's in our class cheered loudly. Even the teacher. It was funny to watch the teacher letting out her inner child. Most importantly, Darren apologized to Jerry and confessed that he was jealous of him. And that's why he was mean to him.



And at last, me, Jerry, Perry and Darren became Best friends. He's actually pretty cool. He wasn't annoying like before.

Anyway... I told you about me, my brothers and my school. The biggest bully in the school actually had the kindest heart. And a bit interesting facts about sea horses..

Always be kind and everyone will love you...

And with that advice I'm going to end my story...

Some interesting facts about seahorses...

1. Seahorses are terrible swimmers

... but they are great predators! They have to ambush their prey using their long snouts to rapidly slurp in water and food, allowing them to catch their prey.

Seahorses eat any live animal that's small enough to fit through their jaws.

2. They eat by suction

Seahorse suck their food through their snouts similar to a vacuum cleaner when they are eating. If the prey is large, their snouts expand as they are not able to chew and have to disintegrate food whilst they eat.

3. Seahorses don't have stomachs

As seahorses do not have stomachs, they have to follow a strict diet including tiny fish and planktonic copepods. Despite their small size, they consume around 3000 crustaceans a day including brine and shrimp.

4. There are over 40 different species of Seahorses

There are 46 different recognised species of seahorses - it can be hard to differentiate the difference between some of them due to their similar appearance and camouflage behaviours.

5. Their tails have a useful tool

Seahorses use their tails to help them hold onto objects, this makes eating food easier and prevents them from being pushed around by the current.

Their tails also act as protection against predators, seahorses tuck their heads close to their bodies to defend themselves.

6. Camouflage is their best friend

Typically seahorses are a variety of different colours including yellow, brown, red, or, orange with white lines across their body that help them blend into their reef habitats.

Seahorses are often considered to be masters of camouflage, their distinct colouration helps them avoid predators including crabs, but it also helps them to be predators too. They typically feed on small crustaceans including amphipods or other invertebrates.

7. Seahorses are fish

Much to the surprise of many, seahorses are actually fish! Their name was derived due to the similarity of their head to a horse's head but also from their Latin name, "Hippocampus" which translates to "horse animal".

Similar to most fish, seahorses have a swim bladder, which helps them float due to its balloon-like nature and they breathe through their gills.

8. Humans are their biggest threat

Numbers of seahorses have drastically declined due to non-selective fishing and intense targeted fishing.

Other major threats include habitat loss, climate change and bycatch!

Several conservation groups including The Seahorse Trust and Project Seahorse are working together to protect the species, but there is a lot we can also be doing at home! Including more recycling and reducing our usage of single-use plastic.

Afterword

With the approval of the Ministry of Education, this research-based project has empowered thousands of student authors for over ten years. Educationists recognize it as a program that significantly enhances the quality of school education.

In alignment with modern educational reforms, encouraging students to author a research work is a milestone in this journey. In this digital age of "Smart" technology, the modern school must demonstrate through research that books and technology should be used together. This is because the unique joy a child receives from a book cannot be replaced by anything else.

To prevent children from drifting away from books—which remain our primary educational tool and storehouse of human knowledge—Mahamaya Girls' College has spearheaded the "Hemamala Upahara" project for many years. Its primary objectives are to foster academic discipline, promote values, and pay tribute to Princess Hemamala, who fulfilled a historic mission to empower women.

We express our gratitude to the Principal, teachers, parents, alumni of Mahamaya Girls' College, representatives of other schools, the Diyawadana Nilame, and the staff of the Sri Dalada Maligawa (Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic) for their support.

Seneviratne Mahalekam

(Project Creator)

