

THE PARENT-CHILD BOOK CLUB

CONNECTING WITH YOUR KIDS THROUGH READING

A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO ORGANIZING AND
CONDUCTING YOUR FAMILY BOOK CLUB

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A House for Hermit Crab

Story and illustrations by Eric Carle, Simon and Schuster Books for Young Readers, an Imprint of Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing Division, 1987. Recommended ages: 4-9.

Book Description:

This is a wonderful book to read with children because it deals with the type of growth and change that children go through on a daily basis. In the story, a hermit crab who gets too big for his old shell realizes that it is time to move to a bigger house. He is scared at first, but through the help of sea friends, he becomes comfortable and happy in his new home. When he continues to grow, and realizes that he needs a new home again, he feels ready and prepared to face the change head on.

Eric Carle wrote this book when he was planning to move from one house to another larger house. He said that he also had young children in mind, and wanted to write about all the changes and emotions that they go through. Eric Carle uses magnificent water color collages for the illustrations.

Recommended Websites:

Visit www.hermit-crabs.com for excellent information about keeping a hermit crab as a pet.

The Atlanta Aquarium, which boasts being the world's largest aquarium, offers an excellent website at

www.georgiaaquarium.org. See examples of sea life mentioned in the book.

Recommended Field Trip and Enrichment Activities:

Visit an aquarium to see examples of the sea life in the story. You also can visit a local pet shop which might sell hermit crabs. Of course the best place to visit is a local beach where you could see hermit crabs in their natural habitat.

Suggested Snack:

Although Eric Carle doesn't mention any foods in this book, you can have a "beach picnic" with your book club. Set out a beach or picnic blanket and serve foods you might eat at a beach party. For example, serve lemonade from a cooler, small sandwiches, fruit, and chips. You can buy inexpensive beach toys, beach balls, and beach-themed paper goods to use for props.

Suggested Word Game:

Play a word guessing game. Pick a word associated with the story, such as hermit, crab, shell, house, or ocean. On a piece of paper, write a line for each letter of the word you are thinking of. Players guess letters until they have figured out the word.

Suggested Project:

Make an ocean bottle so you can always think about hermit crab's ocean home.

➤ ***Materials:***

- A medium-sized water bottle with a cap
- Blue or green food coloring
- Sand (if available)

- Small shells or rocks
- Small sea life figures (if available)
- Canola or vegetable oil
- Masking tape or packing tape

➤ **Instructions:**

- Remove the outside plastic paper from the water bottle
- Fill the bottle $\frac{3}{4}$ with water
- Fill the bottle $\frac{1}{4}$ with oil (vegetable or canola oil work well)
- Add one or two drops of food coloring
- Add the extras, such as sand, shells or rocks, and small figures
- Replace the cap and tape shut
- When you shake the bottle the water and oil will stay separated and it will look like rolling waves in the ocean, with the sand and sea life floating by.

Discussion Questions for Four- to Six-Year-Olds

1. How did you feel when you made a change in your life, such as starting pre-school, going to a new class, going to kindergarten, or moving to a new home?
2. All the sea creatures helped hermit crab decorate his new shell. Have you ever helped a friend? Tell the group about that experience and how it made you feel.
3. How did hermit crab feel at the beginning of the book and at the end of the book? Why did his feelings change after one year?

*A House for Hermit Crab****Discussion Questions Booklet for Six- to Nine-Year-Olds***

Name: _____

1. Hermit crab had to change shells when he got too big for his old shell. Have you ever made a big change in your life, such as changing schools or moving to a new town? How did you feel making this change? What were some things you did to make the change easier?
2. Hermit crab was happy that the smaller hermit crab was going to take over his new shell but he was sad that he was going to miss his old friends. Have you ever had to leave a friend or did one of your friends ever move away? What did you do to remain friends?
3. Hermit crab decorated his new shell so it wouldn't look so plain. How do you decorate your room or another space so it feels like your own?
4. Why were the sea creatures willing to help hermit crab decorate and protect his shell? Have you ever helped someone to feel happier or safer? Describe that situation.
5. When hermit crab first changed to a new shell he seemed scared. How did hermit crab feel at the end of the book when he had to change shells again one year later?

Notes to Discussion Questions for Four- to Six-Year-Olds:

Question 1 starts a discussion about making changes in life and the feelings associated with these changes (such as excitement, nervousness, feeling overwhelmed, feeling scared).

Question 2 encourages the children to share stories about how they were good friends and acted kindly to others.

Question 3 elicits discussion about how someone can feel scared and overwhelmed when doing something new for the first time, but then can act with more confidence and assurance when they do the same thing at a later point.

Notes to Discussion Questions Booklet for Six- to Nine-Year-Olds:

Question 1 starts a discussion about making changes in life and the feelings associated with these changes (such as excitement, nervousness, feeling overwhelmed, feeling scared).

Question 2 facilitates a discussion about the value of friendship and the different ways friends can stay in touch if one friend moves away.

Question 3 opens a discussion about personal taste and all the choices people make to personalize their own space. Adults should contribute to this discussion, too, regarding their own stylistic interests.

Question 4 discusses the value of helping a friend and how important it can be to volunteer to help someone in need.

Question 5 sparks discussion about how someone can feel scared and overwhelmed when doing something new for the first time, but then can act with more confidence and assurance when they do the same thing at a later point.