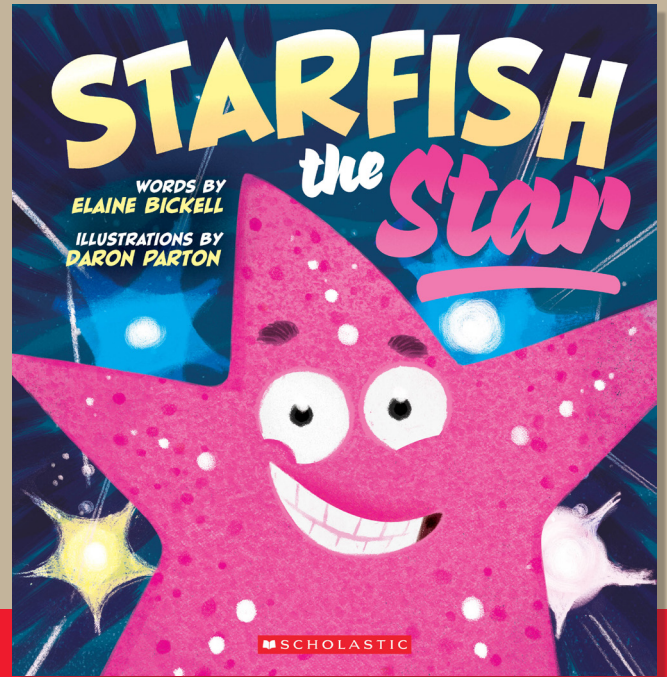


# Starfish the Star

By Elaine Bickell

Illustrated by Daron Parton



• Reading • Writing • Thinking Skills •

## Synopsis

Starfish lives in a tank with Seahorse, Jellyfish, Clownfish and Ray. He longs for fame and makes sure to always push his aquarium companions to the back of the tank so he can be the star of the show. The flashing of cameras and all this attention eventually goes to his head. He becomes selfish and proud, boasting that he alone attracts the spectators. He doesn't hear the crowd asking where all the other sea creatures are and that it was boring just seeing one starfish plastered to the front of the aquarium.

Then, one day, a crack in the tank threatens all the occupants. Only Starfish can stop the water rushing out. But it means he has to go to the far, dark recesses of the tank. At first, Starfish is unwilling to forego stardom, but finally concedes and sticks himself along the crack, blocking up the leak. The sea creatures tell him he is a hero and a genuine star. The spectators think so too, and he becomes famous. Starfish realises then that it is the things that you do, that make you a star.

## About the Author

**Elaine Bickell** lives in central Wellington with her partner, three children and dog named Molly. She was born and grew up in the UK. Her love of books led to her studying English Literature at Bristol University. After moving to New Zealand in 2005 she worked in advertising. Elaine also loves football, walking, world music, art, camping, cooking, and boogie boarding! Her first book with Scholastic, *The Little Ghost Who Lost Her Boo!* was the recipient of the 2018 Storylines Joy Cowley Award and a 2020 Storylines Notable Book Award. It has also been published in the United States.

## About the Illustrator

**Daron Parton** is an award-winning illustrator who was born in the UK, married a Kiwi and moved to New Zealand in 1995. He now lives with his wife and family in Matamata. He has been working as an illustrator since 1990 and is also an illustration tutor at Auckland University of Technology. Daron's books include the popular Scholastic Australia titles, *Stupid Carrots* and *Bedtime is Boring*.



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# Writing Style

A hilarious picture book that shows children that while it's fun to be the centre of attention, sometimes it's better to stay out of the limelight and help others. Written in rhyme (a-a, b-b) in 2- to 6-line stanzas per page. The author has used a mix of description, dialogue and narration to tell the story in past tense, third-person point of view. The sentences range from 9–12 words in length to keep a regular rhythm going in the story, which makes it a great read aloud for 3- to 7-year-old children. The main character is Starfish, with a supporting cast of Seahorse, Jellyfish, Clownfish and Ray, and the setting is in an aquarium, mostly likely at a marine world. In the last sentence, the author makes her message clear when she says, '*And he had learnt it's not the shape that you are, but the things that you DO, that make you a STAR.*'

## Shared Learning and Discussion Points

During the shared sessions, encourage students to ask questions to clarify their understanding of characters and events. Have them make predictions, inferences and relate to their own experiences, if appropriate. Read the passages aloud and or students read alongside or by themselves.

### ASK YOUR STUDENTS:

Look at the cover and read the blurb.

- Where is this story set? How can you tell?
- Who is the main character in the story?
- What do you think this story is about? Why do you think that?
- What do you already know about the marine creatures that may live in aquariums?

### Comprehension questions

- In the first paragraph the author introduces the main character, secondary characters and the setting. Name them and where is it set. p.3
- What does the author mean by 'craving the looks of people'? p.4
- What does 'he would crow' mean? p.5
- Why did Starfish want the others to stay at the back of the aquarium? Was that kind? p.7
- What is an 'ego' and how can it grow bigger? p.8
- How does what Starfish feels differ to how people feel about him? pp.8-9
- Why do the people think Starfish is dead and boring? pp.8-9
- What do the people want to see? Which one would be your favourite? pp.10-11
- Predict what you think is going to happen to the aquarium. pp.12-13
- What does 'submersed' mean? P12
- How does Jellyfish 'show' he is scared? Why does he think they are doomed? pp.14-15
- How does Ray show he is a leader and a problem-solver? p.15
- Why is Starfish having a panic attack? p.16
- What do Ray and Jellyfish want Starfish to do? p.17
- Where is the crack in the aquarium? p.18
- Why is Starfish's act a selfless thing to do, and what does it say about him? p.20
- What do 'viral sensation' and 'global fan adoration' mean? p.22
- What type of photographs did people take with Starfish? p.23
- Why was the tank 'never the same'? p.24
- What lesson did Starfish learn? p.24



# ACTIVITIES

## ACTIVITY 1: RHYME TIME!

Prepare cards with rhyming words from the end of sentences in the story. For example: display/ray, bizarre/star, mind/kind, glass/ passed, sea/me, etc. Choose simpler rhyming words for younger students and include the less obvious rhyming words for older students. In groups, have students sort the cards into collections of rhyming words. Ask the students to discuss the meanings of less familiar words, such as 'bizarre', 'submersed', 'proud', 'grunt', etc.

Read the book a second time. Students can check that they have the right rhyme pairings as they listen to the story. Afterwards, discuss the rhyming words and why some rhyming words have different ways of spelling the same sound.

In pairs, the students can brainstorm other words that rhyme with those words. The words could also be used for spelling lists or for inspiration for their own rhyming poems.

## ACTIVITY 2: STARFISH THE STAR – PLAY

After you've read the story aloud a few times, assign students to different roles, including a narrator, Starfish, Jellyfish, Seahorse, Clownfish, Ray and a group of spectators. With a copy of the book on hand, encourage the characters to talk and act in ways that retell the story in dramatic form.

For older students, they could write it as a Readers' Theatre Play. For example, on page 4:

Starfish:            [*Steps forward.*] I've made up my mind, I'm really a star of the famous kind.

Narrator:           He spent all his days stuck to the glass, craving the looks of people who passed.

Spectators:        [*Taking photographs of starfish.*] Isn't he wonderful? Let me take his photo! Oooh! Aah!

The students could practise their parts, make costumes and perform the play for another class or for the school assembly.

## ACTIVITY 3: 'REAL' STARS

Ask what would have happened if Starfish couldn't be unselfish, and continued sticking to the front of the aquarium? What could the other creatures have done to save themselves? Students brainstorm solutions to help fix the crack, then rewrite the story using their solution. What would the message in the story be then? Encourage the students to finish with what Starfish would have learnt if he hadn't 'stepped up'.

Written by Maria Gill



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