

BYU Young Company Fall 2015

Water Sings Blue

Teacher Resource Guide



By Spencer Duncan, dramaturg

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4thwalldramaturgy.byu.edu/category/water-sings-blue

Contents

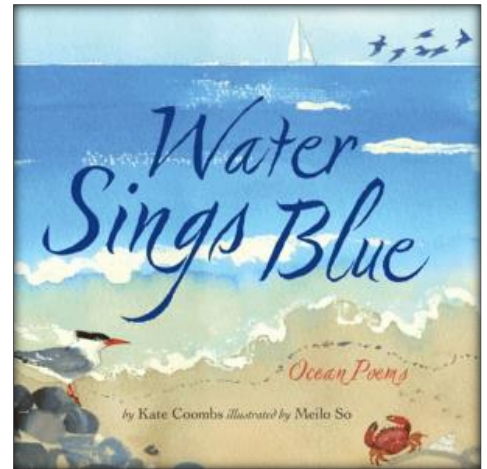
Push Away from the Shore: Get to Know the Show	3
<i>Water Sings Blue</i> the Book	3
<i>Water Sings Blue</i> the Show.....	3
Using This Resource Packet	3
Theatre Etiquette	4
Character List	4
Two Friends, One Show: A Handout for Students	5
What is Devised Theatre? (Or how this play was born).....	6
LET'S GO DIVING: AN ACTIVITY IN RESEARCH.....	7
CREATE A CHARACTER: AN ACTIVITY IN IMAGINATION.....	8
RADIO TRAVEL ADS: AN ACTIVITY IN COMMUNICATION	9
An Interview with Kate Coombs	10
Create a Character Handout	11
Radio Travel Ad Photos	12
Image Credits	15
Works Consulted.....	15

Push Away from the Shore: Get to Know the Show

Water Sings Blue the Book

Water Sings Blue is a collection of ocean poems written by Kate Coombs and illustrated by Meilo So. It has won many honors and awards:

- 2013 Lee Bennett Hopkins Poetry Award
- 2013 National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Notable Book
- American Library Association 2013 Notable Children's Books
- Kirkus's Best Books of the Year—Children's Books, 2012
- Wall Street Journal, Meghan Cox Gurdon's 12 Favorite Picture Books and Chapter Books of 2012
- Cybils Finalist for Poetry 2012



Water Sings Blue the Show

Our production (is):

- Adapted and directed by Teresa Dayley Love
- Chronicles a day at the beach.
- Set in a not too distant time period reminiscent of the 1950's and early 1960's.
- Highly interactive. Audience members should play along. Some of your students will volunteer to be characters in our show. The actors will help them know what to do.
- A visual comedy. This means: 1) we hope you enjoy yourselves, 2) the only spoken dialogue is Coombs' poetry, 3) the rest of the story is told with the actors' bodies and sound.



Using This Resource Packet

This packet includes supplemental information, lesson activities, and handouts to enhance students' viewing experience. The suggested lesson activities have been designed with the aim of being easily executed without necessitating extensive preparation, time, or materials. Each lesson activity is adaptable to 2nd, 3rd, and 4th grades. Correlating Utah state core standards for each grade are included with the adaptations.

Theatre Etiquette

Just like the performers, the audience also has an important role to play. Because some of the students may not have attended a play before, below are expectations to help them prepare for *Water Sings Blue*.

- ✓ Remember to use the restroom before the show.
- ✓ No photography, please, and be sure turn off your cellphones.
- ✓ Before the play starts, quietly follow the actors' instructions when they are seating you.
- ✓ Remember to sit flat on the floor with your legs crossed. This allows everyone to see the actors better and prevents limbs from falling asleep during the show.
- ✓ During the show, follow the actors' instructions when you are asked to participate.
- ✓ Don't speak with your neighbors during the show. We want everyone to be able to hear the actors.
- ✓ Please enjoy the show and laugh when you think it's funny.
- ✓ You can clap at the end of the play. This is how you show the actors you enjoyed their performance.



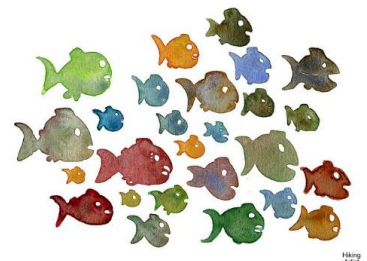
Special Note: At times, actors may ask you to play along. You do not have to, if you do not feel comfortable. However, we invite you to take the opportunity. It can be a lot of fun!

Character List

Because *Water Sings Blue* is a visual comedy (i.e. the only verbal communication is the recitation of the poems), it may be helpful for you and your students to know who the characters are.

- A Family: Father, Mother, Teenage Daughter, Sibling (played by an audience member), and Baby (played by a puppet)
- Two Elderly Sisters
- A Teenage Boy (played by an actor) and his Friend (played by an audience member)
- A Marine Biologist (played by an audience member) and his/her Research Assistant (played by an actor)
- A Lifeguard (played by our stage manager) *Remember, listen to the lifeguard!*

Lots and lots of sea life (played by everyone, including the audience)



Two Friends, One Show: A Handout for Students



Meet Kate, the author

Kate Coombs grew up near Los Angeles, California and spent a lot of time at the beach. She now lives in Utah. Kate started to write in elementary school. She would write poems, plays, and stories. As she got older, she thought she might be a musician or an artist when she grew up, but she realized she loved books so much that she ended up studying English at university! She's taught every grade from kindergarten to college, and now works for a company which makes state history textbooks. As an author, she has written *The Tooth Fairy Wars*, *Hans My Hedgehog*, *The Secret Keeper*, *The Runaway Princess*, *The Runaway Dragon*, *Goodnight Mr. Darcy* (a Jane Austen take on *Goodnight Moon*), and of course *Water Sings Blue*!



Meet Teresa, the director & adapter

Teresa Dayley Love studied Theatre and Cinematic Arts at Brigham Young University. For a long time, she, like Kate, lived in the Los Angeles area. In fact, they went to the same church! While in LA, she founded two theatre in education companies that worked with kids. One of them performed for over four million people! She lives in Utah with her husband, Matthew, who is an elementary school teacher and circus artist. Teresa has written over fifty produced plays, and has written/taught/developed curriculum for All the Arts for All the Kids, the Children's Museum of Los Angeles, the Provo Integrated Arts Project, and the Utah State Office of Education.

Questions to Think About

1. Both Kate and Teresa are creators. Anyone can create. If you could create anything, what would it be?
2. Kate and Teresa are also friends who were able to help each other create. Think about what you'd like to create. Now think about your friends. Would they like to help? How could they help?

What is Devised Theatre? (Or how this play was born)

In traditional theatre, the script is written by a playwright. A director then takes this play and tells actors what to do and where to go on the stage. Our production of *Water Sings Blue* is different. It is devised theatre.

In devised theatre, there is no pre-written script. Instead, a group of people (the actors, director, dramaturg, etc.) collaborate together to create a show. They may base their show off of any number of things: news events, a theme, a topic, a political cause, or in the case of *Water Sings Blue*, a written text that is not a play.

To create the show you and your students will see, Teresa Dayley Love, our director, asked her friend Kate Coombs and her publishers if she could turn *Water Sings Blue* into a play for families and children. Kate and the publishers said yes, and Teresa sat down to pick what poems in the book she thought could make a good show. If you read *Water Sings Blue*, you'll find there are more poems than in the show.

Teresa decided she wanted the show to be about a day at the beach. She wanted the show to feel like the happy, free childhood American kids had during the 1950's and early 1960's. She also wanted the acting to be in the style of the famous French comedian and film director, Jacques Tati. The show would be silent, except for Kate's poems, some jazz music, and a couple sounds. And it would invite children from the audience to play along.

The more Teresa thought about the poems, the more she imagined different things that happen at the beach. She began to see in her imagination characters she wanted in the show. Some of these characters would be played by audience members. Some would be played by actors. When it came time to cast the actors, some characters had to be replaced with characters that fit the actors better.

As she and the actors rehearsed, Teresa helped them use their imaginations like she did. They studied marine life, the 1950's and 1960's, memorized the poems, took field trips, and decided what characters connected to which poems. They often played pretend, discovering how the characters interacted with each other and the world around them. But while playing, they always had to make sure what they were creating would be understood by whomever was watching. They needed good communication skills.

Once they had played, researched, and imagined enough, the actors and Teresa knew which poems would be in the show and when they would say them. They knew what each character would do and when they would do it. At this point, nothing would change. Each time the actors would act, they would consistently do and say the exact same things each time they performed. The story had been discovered. A play was born.



Instruction for Teachers

Sometimes, in our busy world, we forget that play is an essential part of human development. Imagination, research, and collaborative work have not only created new artistic work, but scientific achievement, promising business ventures, improved teaching practices, and better governmental policy. You may wish to read the above article to your students, and remind them that as they get older, it is okay to play and be creative. These abilities are closely tied to 21st century learning skills. The following optional lesson activities will help students practice these important skills, while learning Utah state core material.

LET'S GO DIVING: AN ACTIVITY IN RESEARCH

Builds 21st Century Learning Skills

- Critical Thinking

Play Contextualization: A large focus of *Water Sings Blue* is marine life. To prepare for the show, the actors researched information about the marine life in Kate Coombs' poems, then practiced physically 'becoming' the animals.

Materials:

- Internet connection to ocean documentary clips such as video previews from BBC Earth's *The Blue Planet*:
 - <http://www.bbcearth.com/shows/the-blue-planet>
- A way to show internet videos to the entire class.

Basic Instruction:

1. Provided are links to 2-4 minute clips from episodes from BBC's *Life* series. You will want to pick the video content appropriate for your class, and may need to explain the footage as it plays.
2. Show two or three clips to your class. As students watch, have them observe the marine animals, paying attention to details. "How do the animals move?" "What do they eat?" "Where do they live in the ocean?" "What do they look like?"
3. For continued instruction, see grade adaptations.

2nd Grade Core

Standards

Connecting ideas with reasons (evidence). (*Utah Science - 2nd Grade Standard 1 Objective 2 c.*)

1. As they watch, have students draw or write about what they observe.
2. Ask them, "If they could be any of the animals they just watched, which one would they be?"
3. Ask them the reasons behind why they chose this idea.
4. Give them time to pretend to be the animals they chose to be. Make sure they are acting in accordance with the actual behavior of the animal.

3rd Grade Core

Standards

Identify characteristics of living things (i.e., growth, movement, reproduction). (*Utah Science - 3rd Grade Standard 2 Objective 1 a.*)

1. As they watch, have students write what they observe. "What makes this creature a living creature?"
2. Are there similarities between what makes them a living creature and what makes these marine animals living?
3. Have them practice moving as one of the animals.
4. What do they think would happen if this creature did not have adequate food or living space? Have them change their movement to reflect what would happen to the animal if this happened.
5. Have them record the differences in their movement once their habitat was altered.

4th Grade Core

Standards

Explain how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text.

(*Reading: Informational Text Standard 8*)

1. As they watch, have students write what they observe, in regards to the questions in Basic Instructions, step 2.
2. Allow them time to physically explore behaving like some of the animals they watched.
3. Have them reflect on how it felt to be the animal. Were there differences in being the animal and watching it?
4. Have them write down which animal out of the ones presented they would be, and list several reasons why they would be that animal.
5. Have students trade their writings with a partner. The partner must circle the reasons the author of the paper put as to why they chose the animal they did.

CREATE A CHARACTER: AN ACTIVITY IN IMAGINATION

Builds 21st Century Learning Skills

- Creativity

Play Contextualization: The actors in *Water Sings Blue* had to invent characters to portray on stage. Authors have to do the same thing when they write.

Materials: “Create A Character” handouts for each students. Third graders will need two forms per student.

Basic Instruction:

1. Have each student fill out a character form (found on page 11)
2. Follow the appropriate grade adaptation.

2nd Grade Core Standards

Acknowledge differences in the points of view of characters, including by speaking in a different voice for each character when reading dialogue aloud. (*Utah English Language Arts Grade 2, Reading: Literature Standard 6*)

Second Grade Adaptation: Have the students get into small groups and share with each other about their characters. Ask them:

- “What differences exist between your character and the other characters?”
- “How does each character feel about the beach?”
- “Are there things characters agree on?”

Have each group decide something their characters could do at the beach together. Then, have each group share that something with the class.

3rd Grade Core Standards

Distinguish their own point of view from that of the narrator or those of the characters. (*Utah English Language Arts Grade 3, Reading: Literature Standard 6*)

Third Grade Adaptation: Have the students fill out two character handouts: one for their imaginary character and one for themselves. What differences exist? Are there any similarities? What could they and their characters do together at the beach? Have them share with a group.

4th Grade Core Standards

Orient the reader by establishing a situation and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally. (*Utah English Language Arts Grade 4, Writing Standard 3a.*)

Fourth Grade Adaptation: Based on their character handouts, have students get into small groups. Have each group come up with the following story: “The Day Our Characters Went to the Beach.” Each story needs a beginning, middle, and end. Have each group present their stories with the class.

RADIO TRAVEL ADS: AN ACTIVITY IN COMMUNICATION

Builds 21st Century Learning Skills

- Communication
- Collaboration

Play Contextualization: While the actors in *Water Sings Blue* had to communicate without words, they also had to become very good at communicating things with poetry. Communicating visual imagery is a foundation for effective writing and reading of poetry.

Materials:

- Colored copies of the photos starting on page 12. Photos should be cut out individually. There should be one photo for each group.
- Drawing or writing utensils and paper.

Basic Instruction:

1. Split the class into groups of about five. Give each group a photo, but tell them to keep it a secret.
2. Explain that each group is an advertising company for a destination. However, the advertising company could only afford a radio ad. Each company will need to sell their beach getaway (shown on each photo) using only their voices and sounds.
3. But there's a trick! The rest of the class will be listeners of the ad. They will only buy tickets to a beach if it is described accurately. To check for accuracy, each listener will draw what s/he hears being described. At the end of the activity, all the drawings will be analyzed. The class will vote for the advertising team that did the best job.
4. Give each group some time to analyze the photo and brainstorm their ads.
5. Have each group present, while keeping their photo secret.

2nd Grade Core Standards

Recount or describe key ideas or details from a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media. (*English Language Arts Grade 2, Speaking and Listening Standard 2*)

No adaptation required.

3rd Grade Core Standards

Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking clearly at an understandable pace. (*English Language Arts Grade 3, Speaking and Listening Standard 4*)

No adaptation required. Make sure students speak clearly.

4th Grade Core Standards

Paraphrase portions of a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally. (*English Language Arts Grade 4, Speaking and Listening Standard 2*)

Fourth Grade Adaptation: At the bottom of each drawing, listeners must paraphrase in one sentence what the ad they heard said.

An Interview with Kate Coombs

This interview was conducted by dramaturg Spencer Duncan on 7 August, 2015.

Spencer Duncan: Why did you write *Water Sings Blue*?

Kate Coombs: Poetry collections are usually built on themes, and it wasn't hard for me to choose the ocean. I grew up near the ocean and have always been in love with it. Besides, the ocean has some of the most unusual animals on our planet.

SD: Why do you feel poetry is important?

KC: Some people think of poetry as being removed from everyday life, but they are forgetting about songs, which weave through our lives constantly. Song lyrics are poems, of course. The great thing about a poem is that it points to something beautiful or important and says, "Look!" It encapsulates wonder. It's small, like a text, but much better written.

SD: How did *Water Sings Blue* become a play?

KC: I knew Teresa Love back in Los Angeles and admired her work. Both of us ended up in Utah, where she emailed me one day and said, "I've been reading *Water Sings Blue* and I think it would make a good play." I said yes immediately, knowing she would do something creative and fun as she turned the poems into another art form.

SD: What's one of your favorite sea creatures?

KC: Jellyfish. Go to the aquarium and watch the moon jellies to see what I mean. They float through the ocean in such an eerie, unearthly way, like a gelatinous ballet. Hmm, sounds like a new poem! Anyway, there's a reason I have, not one, but three jellyfish poems in *Water Sings Blue*.

SD: Things you like to do at the beach?

KC: Now that I'm older I like to walk along the damp sand, watching and listening to the waves and looking for seashells, but when I was a kid my brother and sister and I used to go boogie boarding. It's a simpler form of surfing where you lie on your stomach on a short foam board and ride the waves. The ocean tumbles you around every so often, but that's part of the adventure. We also used to build sandcastles and put these weird little creatures called sand crabs in them to be the king and queen.

SD: You have other books. Anything you're working on currently?

KC: I have a new book of poems called *Monster School* coming out next spring, and I just finished writing a collection about really weird bugs. Right now I'm mostly working on a mystery for teens with a dose of magic—it takes place in our day and is loosely based on a less well-known fairy tale from the Brothers Grimm.

SD: Any tips for aspiring authors?

KC: Read a lot. Write a lot. Go easy on the adjectives, instead focusing on strong, clean nouns and verbs. Write with specific details. Don't use your first idea when you brainstorm: keep going till you come up with something fresh and even a little strange. Read a lot, write a lot. And oh yeah, read a lot!

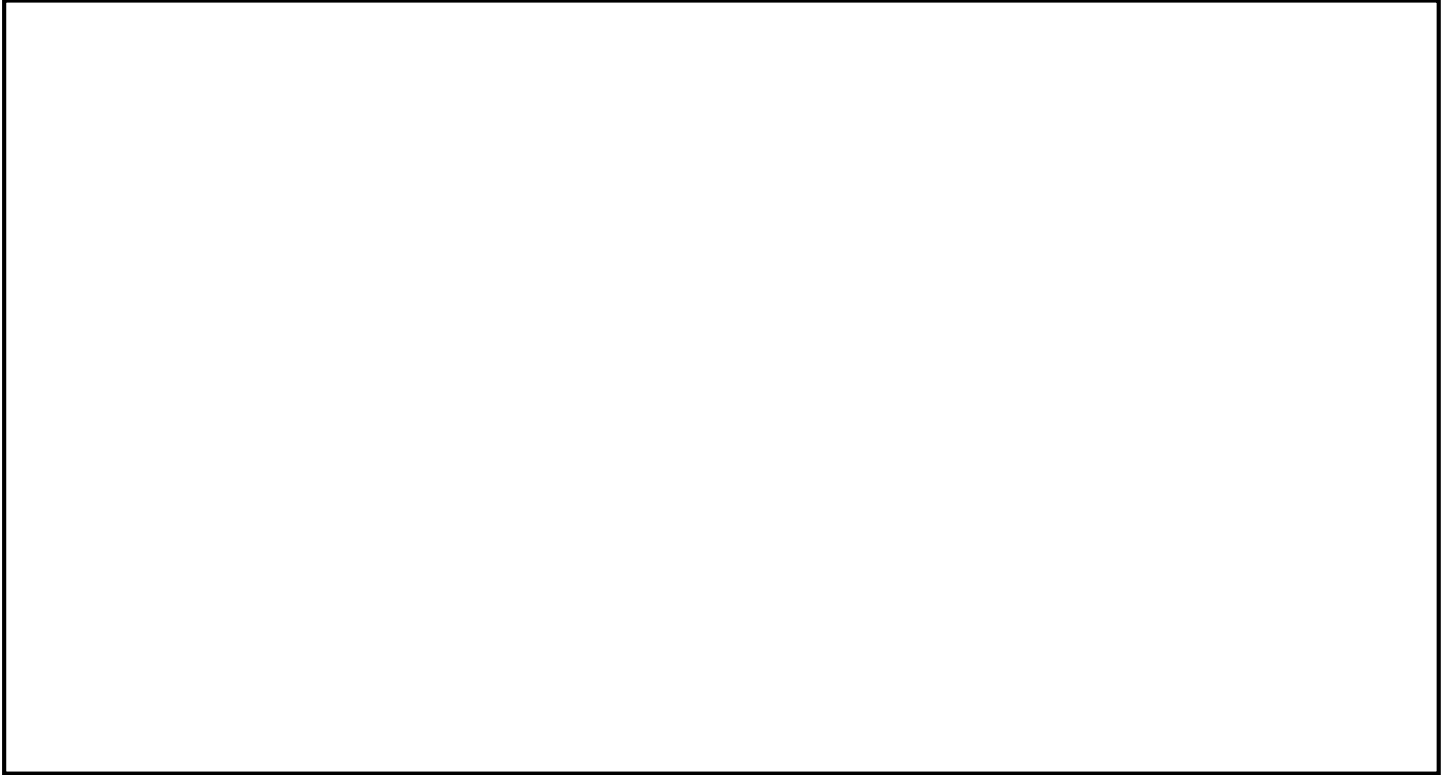
Teacher Tip: Kate's website, katecoombs.com contains additional lesson plans, writing tips for children, and much more. Check it out!

Create a Character Handout

Is my character a man, woman, boy, or girl?

How old is my character?

What does my character look like? Draw them.

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for a student to draw their character.

What's my character's name?

What does my character like to do for fun?

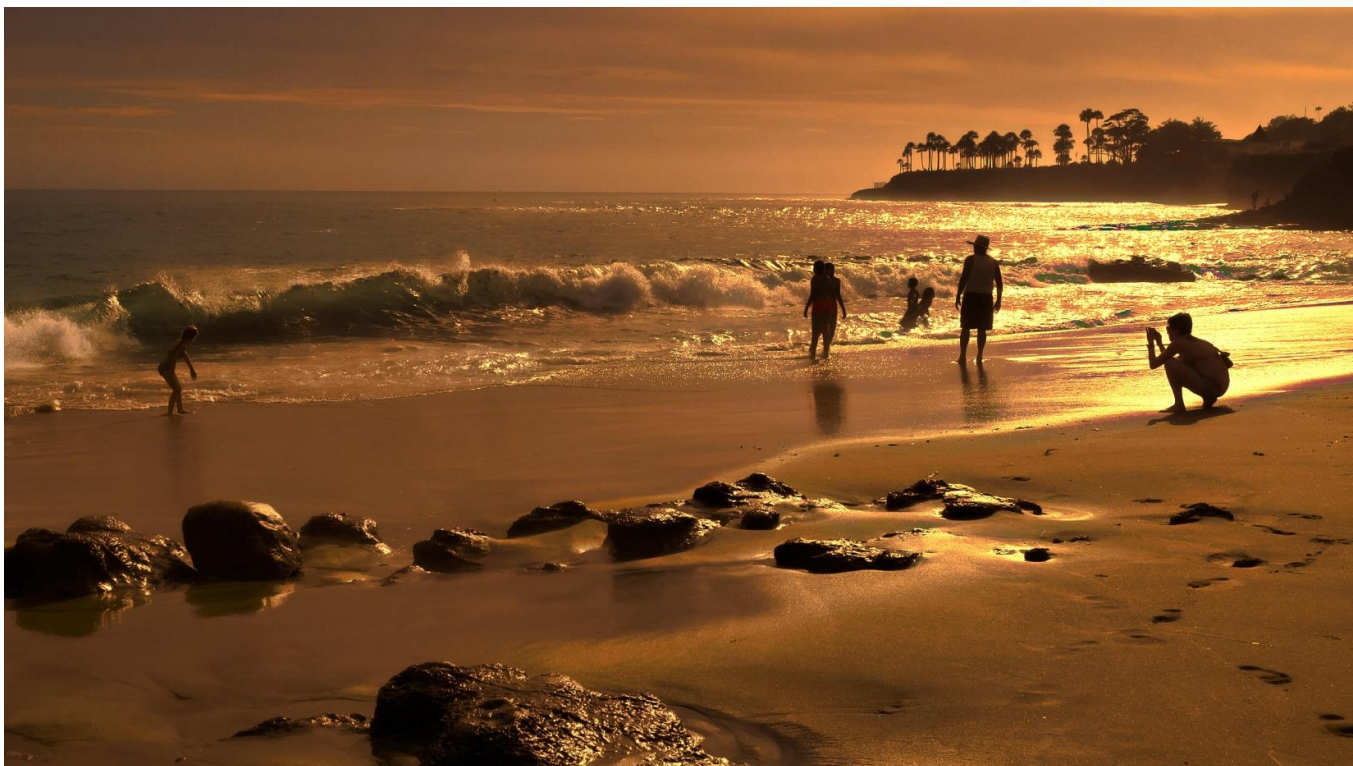
How does my character feel about the beach?

What would my character do at the beach?

What is my character's favorite food?

Radio Travel Ad Photos





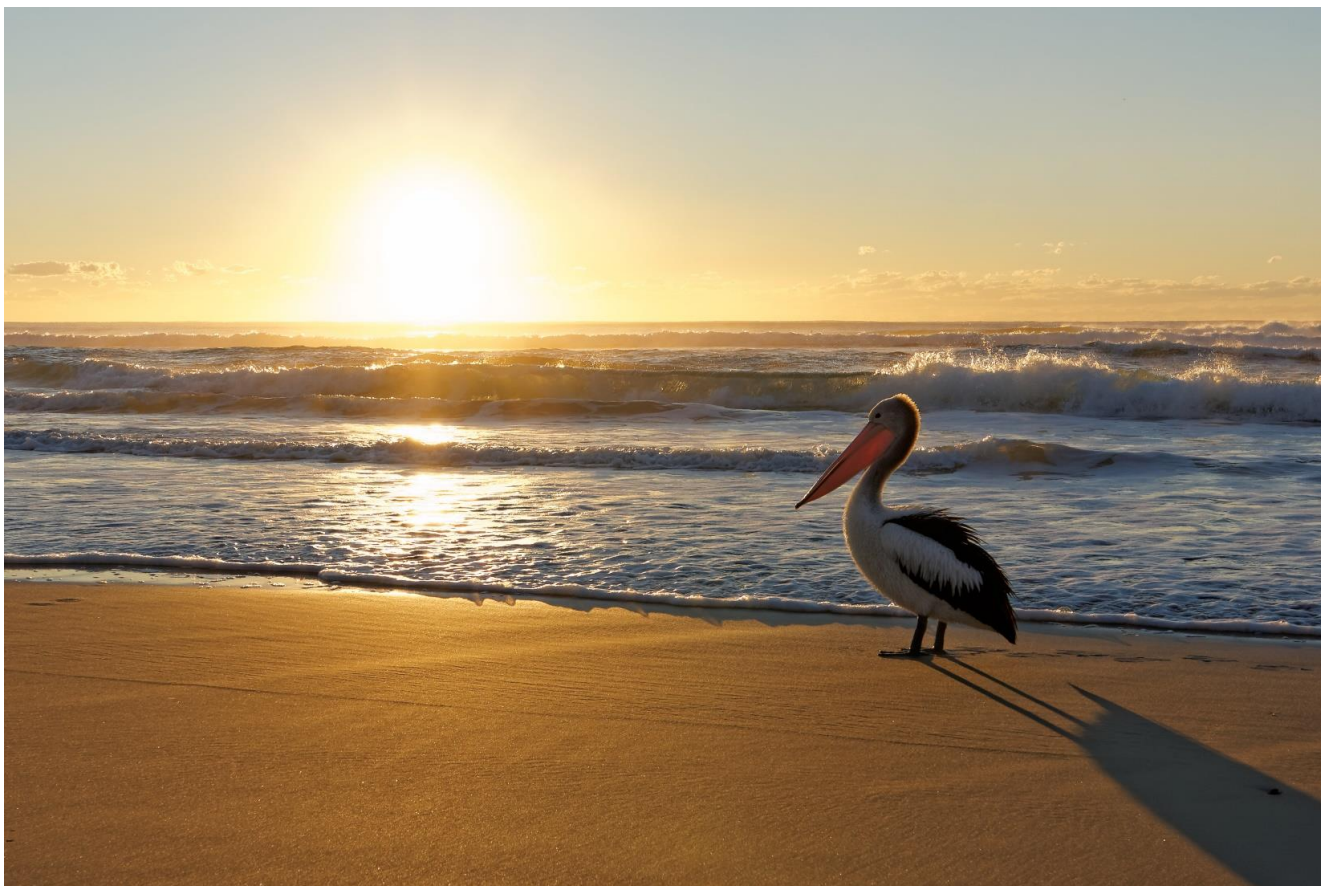


Image Credits

Starfish Word Clipart.

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