

The Ugliest Creature

1

Marcella gasped in horror. “What a disgusting creature!” she thought. “I’ve never seen anything so ugly. Its head is too big for its body. Its warty brown skin is hideous!” The creature Marcella was looking at was a monkfish. It had a huge head and a mouth filled with monstrous razor-sharp teeth. For many years, people didn’t want to eat monkfish. They thought its taste matched its appearance. They thought it wouldn’t taste good.

2

Marcella shuddered when she saw what was in the next exhibit. “This animal is hideous, too,” Marcella thought. “It’s even more repulsive than the monkfish! What on earth is coming out of its nose?” Marcella was looking at a star-nosed mole. Star-nosed moles have 22 appendages that ring its snout. The appendages are long and fleshy. They look like thick, pink noodles. The appendages are like very sensitive fingers. Without them, the mole would not be able to find its way around or find its prey.

3

“This one is the most repulsive of all!” Marcella thought. “What a foul and horrid creature. It’s nothing more than a blob!” The creature’s name matched its appearance, for the sign in front of the exhibit said it was a blobfish. Blobfish live at the bottom of the ocean. Their flesh is like a mass of Jell-O®. They float above the sea floor and eat what passes by them.

4

Marcella looked down at her arms. Looking at all the ugly creatures had made Marcella feel extremely uncomfortable and unsettled. Due to her feelings, Marcella’s arms were now covered in bright blue and black rings. “No one has better looking arms than I have,” she thought, “especially when I’m feeling unsettled. Not a creature in this world would call them hideous, revolting, or repulsive. They must be the envy of the animal world.”

5

As Marcella moved through the water, she thought, “Eight is the perfect number of arms to have. And if one gets bitten off, it just grows back! Oh, I’m so fortunate to be a beautiful blue-ringed octopus!”

Your Name: _____ Partner: _____

The Ugliest Creature (cont.)

First

Silently read "The Ugliest Creature." You might see words you do not know and read parts you do not understand. Keep reading! Try to find out what the story is mainly about.

Then

Sum up the story. Write the main actions and most important information. If someone reads your summary, that person should know it is this story you are writing about.

**After
That**

Read the story again. Use a pencil to circle or mark words you don't know. Note places that confuse you. Underline the main action or idea of each paragraph.

Next

Meet with your partner. Find all the words in the story that Marcella uses to describe how things look. Together, decide which words are positive and which words are negative.

Positive Words	Negative Words

Choose one word from each list. Explain how the story helped you decide if the word was positive or negative.

	Chosen Word	How the Story Helps
positive		
negative		

Your Name: _____

The Ugliest Creature (cont.)

Now

Answer the story questions below.

1. What happens if Marcella loses one of her arms? _____

2. Why didn't people want to eat monkfish? _____

What is it about the monkfish that people might find ugly? Use at least one phrase from the story in your answer.

3. In the box, draw a very rough sketch of what you think a star-nosed mole's nose might look like. On the lines, quote some phrases from the passage that helped you know what to draw.



You are told that, "the appendages are like very sensitive fingers." How does this comparison help you understand how the mole finds its way around?

4. What does the author say the blobfish's flesh is like? _____

Would it have been harder to make a mental picture of the blobfish if you didn't know what Jell-O® is? Explain why.

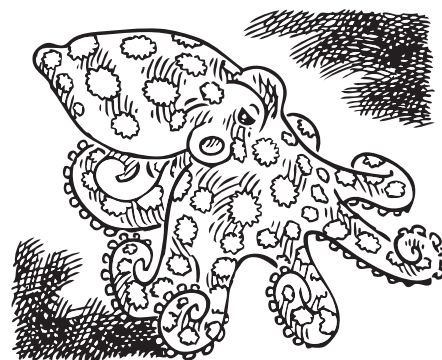
Your Name: _____

The Ugliest Creature (cont.)

Then

Reread the entire story one last time.

5. Describe when and how you learn exactly what Marcella is.



6. Why do you think the author made the reader wait to find out more about Marcella?

7. A story can use **foreshadowing** to hint at what is to come. The author provides foreshadowing in paragraph 4. How did the author give clues about what you were going to find out about Marcella?

**Learn
More**

Find pictures of the monkfish, star-nosed mole, blobfish, and blue-ringed octopus. Take a class vote. Which animal has the most interesting or unique appearance? Mark your votes on a tally chart.

monkfish	
mole	
blobfish	II
octopus	III

Another Idea!

How do you think one of these animals would feel about Marcella? Write a paragraph or two from the point of view of a monkfish, blobfish, or star-nosed mole.

“Wriggling for Bones” (pages 8–11)

Summary: A scientist asks his son to go into a cave to look at some bones. The bones are very hard to get to. The bones turn out to be old and special.

Vocabulary: *jagged* = “rough and sharp”; *narrow* = “thin”; *chamber* = “small room or space”; *spelunker* = “cave explorer”

1. He saw photos of them.
2. One had to squeeze through an opening that was only seven and one-half inches wide, and Dr. Berger was too big.
3. Yes, because when Matt came out, he said was, “Daddy, it’s wonderful!”
4. Student drawings should feature spikes or triangles. Explanations should include words like *steep*, *jagged*, and *sharp*.
5. The first three paragraphs focus mainly on Matt’s task, while the last two paragraphs are mostly about the bones.
6. The author wanted to get the reader caught up in what Matt had to do. Matt’s task is more exciting than details about the bones.

“The Ugliest Creature” (pages 12–15)

Summary: Marcella describes three creatures she believes are ugly: the monkfish, the star-nosed mole, and the blobfish. Marcella thinks she is much better looking, especially because of her arms. At the end, you find out Marcella is an octopus!

Positive Words: fortunate, beautiful

Negative Words: ugly, disgusting, hideous, repulsive, foul, horrid, revolting

1. It grows back.
2. They thought it wouldn’t taste good because of the way it looks (head too big for its body; brown, warty skin; mouth filled with razor-sharp teeth; etc.).
3. “22 appendages ring its snout,” “long and fleshy,” “thick, pink noodles”
4. The author says that their flesh is like a mass of Jell-O.
5. In the last paragraph, Marcella says she is a blue-ringed octopus.
6. The author wanted the reader to be surprised.
7. The author wrote about Marcella’s arms with the rings on them and that they were the envy of the animal world.

“Missing!” (pages 16–19)

Summary: A tourist is believed to be lost. Lots of people look for her. She wasn’t lost, she had just changed her clothes. She even looked for herself!

Drawing: The hill without trees should be circled (“barren, treeless hillsides”).

Vocabulary: People must flee their homes because “hot lava streams out, and ash is spewed into the air.” Most likely, if one flees, one is running away or trying to escape.

1. He had counted wrong. He thought there was one more person on the bus.
2. The word *combed* is used as a verb because it describes an action.
3. They were looking carefully.
4. Yes. Iceland has “roaring” rivers and “thundering” waterfalls. Both adjectives are loud; it takes a lot of water to make a river roar and a waterfall thunder.
5. The “2” should be circled. Paragraph 2 is filled with facts about Iceland. It isn’t about the missing woman.

“The Sky Is Falling!” (pages 20–23)

Summary of paragraphs 1–5: Chicken runs to Turkey to tell him that the sky is falling. They run to tell Moose. Then they all run to Skunk, and then they all run to Squirrel to tell him the bad news.

Vocabulary: *humorous*—“funny”; *dismal*—“not good, dire”

1. Chicken Small, Turkey Burger, and Goose Moose told her.
2. No, they all went looking for a solution.
3. *True:* The sky on the stage is falling; *False:* The real sky isn’t falling.
4. Students should choose Drawing B because its cartoonish style fits the tone and content of the story better. Drawing A is too realistically drawn for the story.
5. You find out that the sky is scenery for a stage show. Pearl Squirrel doesn’t get upset like the other animals. His solution is to paint a new sky and staple it.
6. Pearl Squirrel’s “eyes twinkled, and his mouth began to curl up at the corners.” This helps you know that Pearl Squirrel is cheerful, happy, and about to smile.
7. The “7” should be circled.

“Stay Away from My Toys!” (pages 24–27)

Summary: Robert Louis Stevenson is a famous children’s author who wrote poems and also a book called *Treasure Island*. He knew how hard it was to share his toys.

Vocabulary: *meddle* = “to mess with, to touch or handle without permission”

1. *Facts:* born in Scotland in 1850 (2), missed a lot of school due to illness (2), had trouble fitting in (2), other children thought that he looked strange (2).
2. The author says that the book has a “one-legged seaman with a parrot on his shoulder. It also has pirates and a treasure map marked with an X.”
4. adulthood; Stevenson writes about when he is “grown to man’s estate.”
5. The author says we are told it is good to share but it is hard to do so.
6. No, it was only about sharing; yes, it goes back to the topic of sharing.
7. *rhyming words:* estate, great; boys, toys

“Purr for the Perfect Pet” (pages 28–31)

Summary: Brian wants a pet and asks his father for specific ones. His father refuses every time and gives reasons. They agree on a cat they read about in a notice.

Vocabulary: *yearned* = “wanted, longed for”; *detest* = “hate”; *available* = “able to be obtained or picked up”; *dumbfounded* = “astonished, too shocked to speak”

1. He couldn’t pet a fish, and it couldn’t sit on his lap.
2. *first:* dog; *second:* hamster; *third:* canary
3. He liked the way they chirped. “Birds should not be kept in cages,” or, “They should be allowed to soar through the air.”
5. chipmunk, squirrel
6. Brian goes to get a cat, but it is not a house cat. It is a cheetah!
7. Students will most likely say they thought of a house cat, because house pets are usually small, domestic animals. The author most likely wants readers to be surprised, because they were not expecting someone to have a cheetah for a house pet and they might not have known that cheetahs make a chirping sound.

“Boom!” (pages 32–35)

Summary: In 1916, an explosion happens in a tunnel, filling it with smoke and gas. A man named Garrett Morgan used a new invention called a safety hood to save lives.

Vocabulary: *vented* = “flowed, entered into”; *ignited* = “lit or started”; *pleaded* = “begged or asked”; *emerged* = “came out or into view”

1. Gas came in from under the lake bed and ignited, causing an explosion.
2. Smoke rises; tubes near the ground bring up the cleaner air below the smoke.
3. He came as fast as he could. He did not waste time changing his clothes.
4. The dialogue should show that both understand the urgency of the situation.
7. They trusted the hoods after they saw them being used by Morgan.