

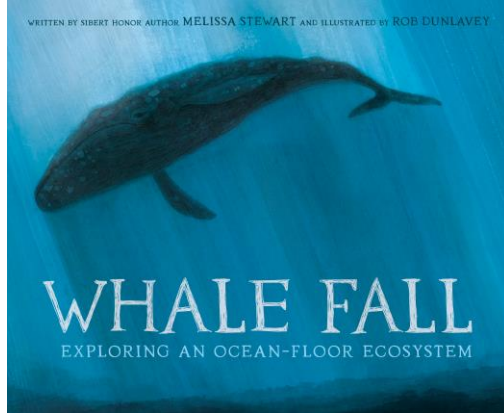


Whale Fall: Exploring an Ocean-floor Ecosystem

By Melissa Stewart

Illustrated by Rob Dunlavey

About the Book

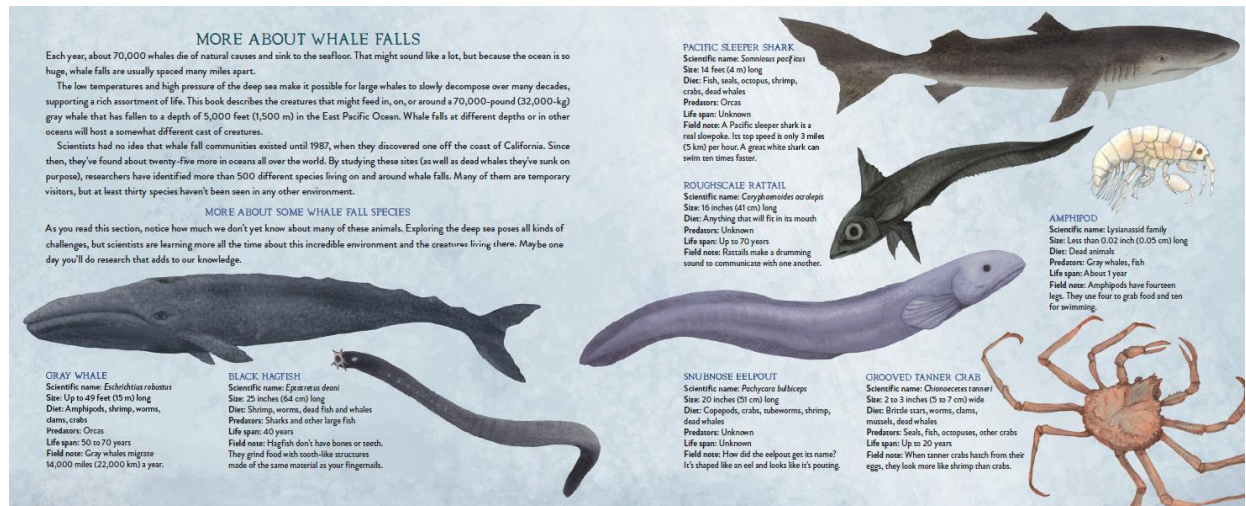


Gorgeous painterly art and gentle, lyrical prose combine to bring a little-known, deep-sea ecosystem to life for young readers. Meet the fascinating community of creatures, from amphipods and zombie worms to squat lobsters and sea pigs, that depend on a decaying whale for shelter and sustenance for up to 50 years.

“In intriguing and effective look at an unfamiliar world, well suited for reading aloud.” –*Kirkus Reviews*

Read Aloud Tip

After reading the main text, share the More about Whale Falls section in the backmatter. It provides helpful background information that will allow children to gain a deeper understanding of whale fall communities.



Before You Read

- Invite children to look at the front cover and share what they think the book will be about. Next, show the back cover and ask if they have any new ideas?
- Assign each child one of the creatures mentioned in the book.



Meanwhile, Oregon hair crabs scarf up scraps that have fallen beneath the bones.
Tiny hooded shrimp and pink sea pigs sift through the sediment, hunting for tasty tidbits. These small scavengers make a hearty meal for a blob sculpin.

After You Read

- As you take a finger walk through the book, work with students to answer the following questions on chart paper.
 - Which animals eat parts of the whale? (hagfish, sleeper sharks, roughscale rattails, snubnose eelpouts, grooved tanner crabs, amphipods, Oregon hair crabs, hooded shrimp, sea pigs, zombie worms, Oceanospiralles bacteria, brittle stars, sea cucumbers, Deltaproteobacteria)
 - Which animals feed on creatures that eat parts of the whale? (deep-sea octopus, blob sculpin, squat lobsters)
 - Which creatures feed on gases given off by Deltaproteobacteria (deep-sea microbes)
 - Which animals eat deep-sea microbes? (snails, limpets, scale worms)
 - Which animals have tiny creatures living inside them? (zombie worms, mussels, clams, tubeworms) How do the tiny creatures help them? (by making food)
- Invite each child to draw a picture that shows how their assigned creature depends on the whale fall. Allow time for children to explain their pictures to the rest of the group.
- After giving each child a sticky note, read through the creature names you listed on chart paper, and encourage each child to write the name they think is the most fun. After collecting the sticky notes, work with the children to create a whole-group bar graph. Which name does the group think is the most fun? Do the children notice any trends in their choices?