THE RAINBOW FISH

Mermaid Theatre
of Nova Scotia

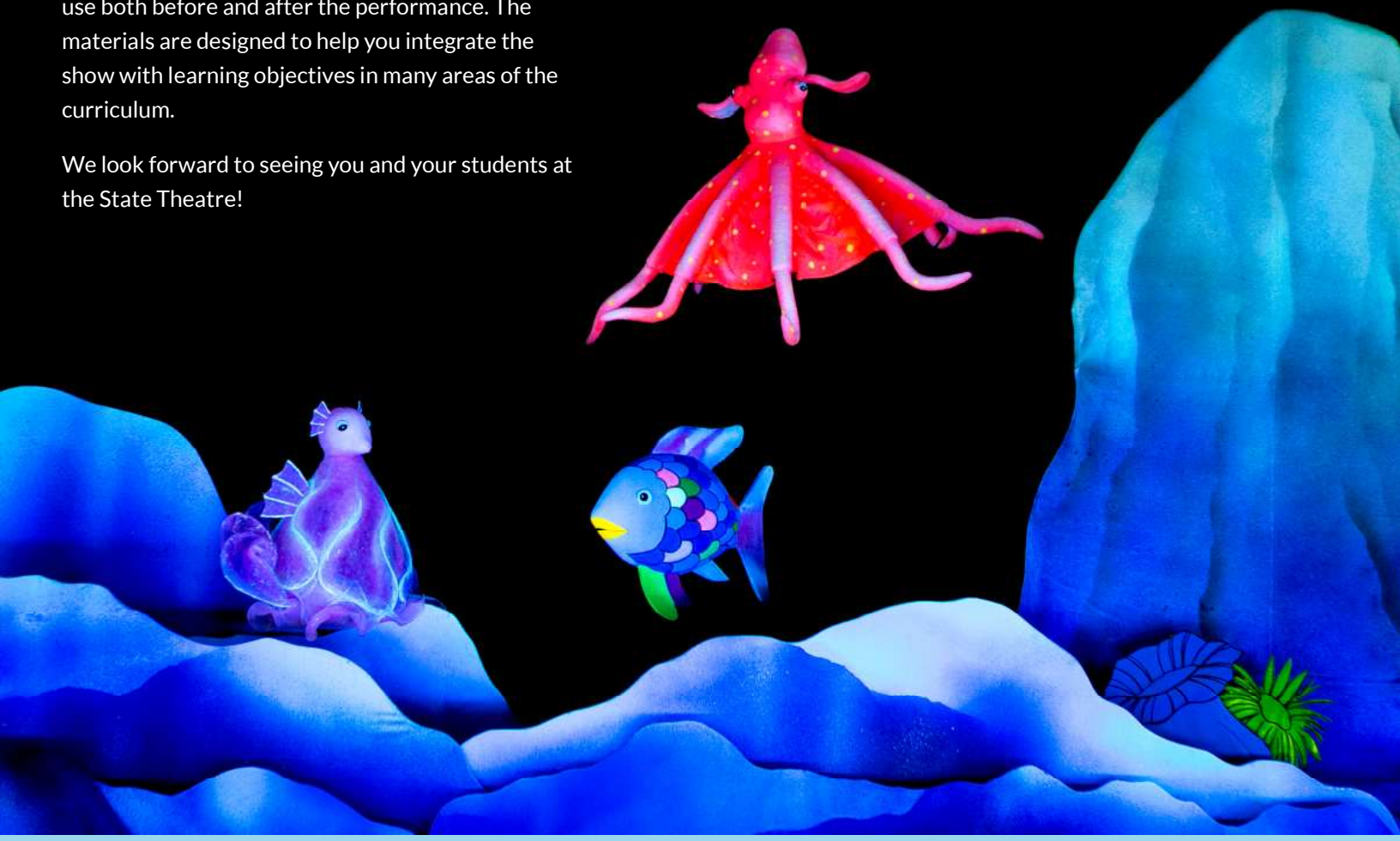
STATE THEATRE NEW JERSEY

KEYNOTES

WELCOME!

State Theatre New Jersey welcomes you to the school-day performance of *The Rainbow Fish*, a delightful stage adaptation of three stories from the beloved children's book series by Marcus Pfister. These *Keynotes* provide information, discussion topics, activities, and resources to use both before and after the performance. The materials are designed to help you integrate the show with learning objectives in many areas of the curriculum.

We look forward to seeing you and your students at the State Theatre!



CONTENTS

Welcome! 2
About the Show 3
Meet the Marcus Pfister 4
Do & Discuss 5
Rainbow Fish Group Art Project 6
Handprint Octopus 7
The Name Game 8
Opposites Worksheet 9
What Do I Do At the Show? 10
Additional Resources 11

STATE THEATRE NEW JERSEY

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State Theatre New Jersey—creating extraordinary experiences through the power of live performance.

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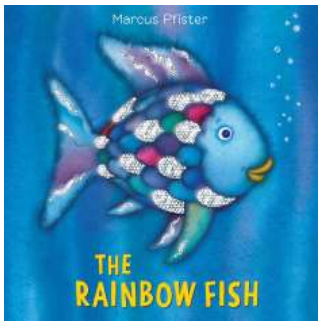
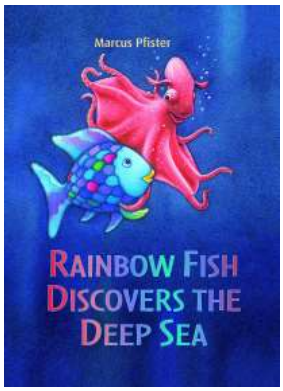
ABOUT THE SHOW

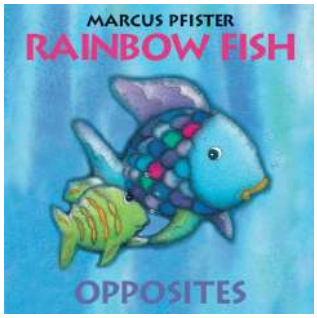
THE STORIES



The Rainbow Fish tells the story of the most beautiful fish in the sea, whose scales shimmer in all the colors of the rainbow. He is admired by all the underwater creatures, who invite him to come play with them. But he is not interested in joining them. One day, a small blue fish asks for one of his scales, but the Rainbow Fish refuses to share. When he is ostracized by all the other fish, his scales begin to mean less to him with no one to admire them. Taking the advice of a clever octopus, the Rainbow Fish gives all his scales away, one by one, until he is left with only one. The more he shares, the happier he becomes. Surrounded by many fish, each with one iridescent scale, the Rainbow Fish now no longer looked different, and he at last feels at home among the other fish.



In ***Rainbow Fish Discovers the Deep Sea***, Rainbow Fish's glittering scale falls off and sinks down into the deep sea, He overcomes his fear and finds the courage to go looking for the scale in the great unknown. He discovers a whole new world, filled with wonderful sights and friendly creatures of all shapes, sizes, and colors, who are eager to get to know him.



Opposites uses striking images from Rainbow Fish's underwater wonderland to introduce the concept of opposites, such as up/down, in/out, over/under, big/little, long/short. As a fitting finale, and story ends with the most satisfying opposite of all—give and take—as Rainbow Fish shares one of his glittering scales with a friend.

THE PRODUCTION

Mermaid Theatre of Nova Scotia's creative, visually striking production makes it seem as if the pages of the storybooks have come to life right on the stage! To accomplish this, they used a variety of the theater techniques; keep an eye out for them during the show.

PUPPETRY

The show employs a variety of puppetry styles—including rod, full-body, and hand puppets—to tell the three stories. Amazingly, all of the puppets and scenic elements are manipulated by just three puppeteers. The puppeteers are dressed completely in black, including a black covering over their faces that makes them look like puppet ninjas!

BLACK LIGHT

Part of the visual magic of this production comes from the use of black light, which allows only certain elements onstage to be seen by the audience. The puppets and scenery are painted with fluorescent paint, which glows in the dark under ultraviolet light (also called black light). Under black light, anything black becomes invisible. During the show, the puppeteers will be on stage as they work with the puppets. They wear black clothing and black masks and perform in front of a black wall. This makes them almost invisible to the audience and allows them to execute all kinds of visual illusions with the puppets; they can make them seem to float, swim, disappear, shrink, grow, and more.

NARRATION & MUSIC

Along with the visual storytelling, the show employs pre-recorded narration (by Laura Benanti and Linda Wonneberger) of the text of the stories, as well as a pre-recorded musical score by Steven Naylor created especially for this production.

MEET MARCUS PFISTER

Marcus Pfister was born July 30, 1960, in Bern, Switzerland. After attending the Bern School of Art, he became a graphic designer, first at a publicity agency, and then as a freelance artist. He published his first picture book, *The Sleepy Owl*, in 1986. He dedicated himself exclusively to children's books, with 49 books currently to his credit. Published in 1992, *The Rainbow Fish* spawned a series of books recounting the adventures of this colorful character. Since then, the *Rainbow Fish* books have been translated from the original German into more than 50 languages and have sold 30 million copies worldwide.

Marcus talks about his development as a children's book author and illustrator. "I started to write stories before I had kids, but when I had my own kids, the stories and their content started changing," he says. "Before, I always cared about the characters and illustrations and then about the story, but when I had my kids, the story became more important. The kids came home and told me stories about their day and their little problems and these are the kind of stories you read in the *Rainbow Fish* books."

CREATING THE ILLUSTRATIONS

Marcus Pfister's books are known for their vibrant illustrations. Most of the time, he works in watercolor. Like most illustrators, he starts by making rough sketches. Then he stretches a the watercolor paper over a wooden board so it won't shrink as the watercolor dries. From there, he copies the rough sketches onto the paper in pencil. Now the surface is ready for painting. For his backgrounds and blended contours he uses wet paint on wet paper to create a softer effect. For the finer details, he first lets the painting dry, then paints the final picture, layer by layer. When the illustration is complete he cuts the paper from the wooden board.

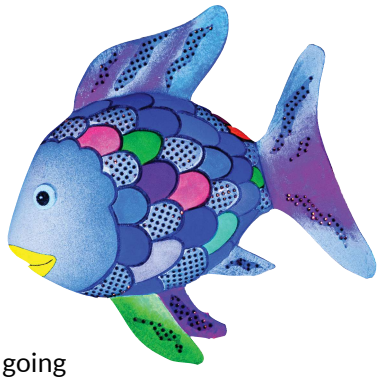
With the *Rainbow Fish* books, Marcus wanted to find a way to make Rainbow Fish stand out from the other fish. If colorful scales were the only thing special about Rainbow Fish, then all of the other fish would have to be made to look very drab. So he looked for something that would clearly set Rainbow Fish apart from the other fish in the sea—a feature that underlined how special his glittering scales were. That's when he remembered a technique he worked with when he was a graphic artist, called hot foil stamping. This process is done as the final step of an illustration. Marcus traces one part of the picture with a black marker and covers it with a transparent film. This part of the picture is then stamped with the holographic foil after the pages are printed and before they are bound together.

DO & DISCUSS

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

THE RAINBOW FISH

- How was Rainbow Fish different from the other fish?
- What did Rainbow Fish do when the blue fish asked him to give him one of his scales? Do you think he did the right thing? How did it make the other fish feel?
- Was it selfish for the other fish to ask Rainbow Fish to share all of his shiny scales?
- Octopus told Rainbow Fish that having friends is more important than being beautiful. Do you agree? Why?
- Did you ever have something that someone else wanted? What was it? Did you share it? Why or why not? If you were forced to share it, how did it make you feel? Happier? Sadder? Angry?
- Who are some of your friends? What do you like to do together?
- What does it mean to be a good friend?
- Everybody is different and special in some way. What would you say is most special about you?



RAINBOW FISH DISCOVERS THE DEEP SEA

- How did Rainbow Fish and Octopus feel about going down into the deep, dark ocean?
- When Rainbow Fish went down into the deep sea to find the scale he dropped, what did he see and whom did he meet? Was the deep sea at all like Octopus said it would be?
- Rainbow Fish saw a lot of animals in the deep sea that were different from any of the animals he'd ever seen before. How did he feel when he saw these new creatures? Scared? Surprised? Curious?
- How did the deep sea animals treat Rainbow Fish?
- Did you ever do something you were afraid to do? What was it? How did you feel after you did it? Were you less scared?

AFTER THE PERFORMANCE

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

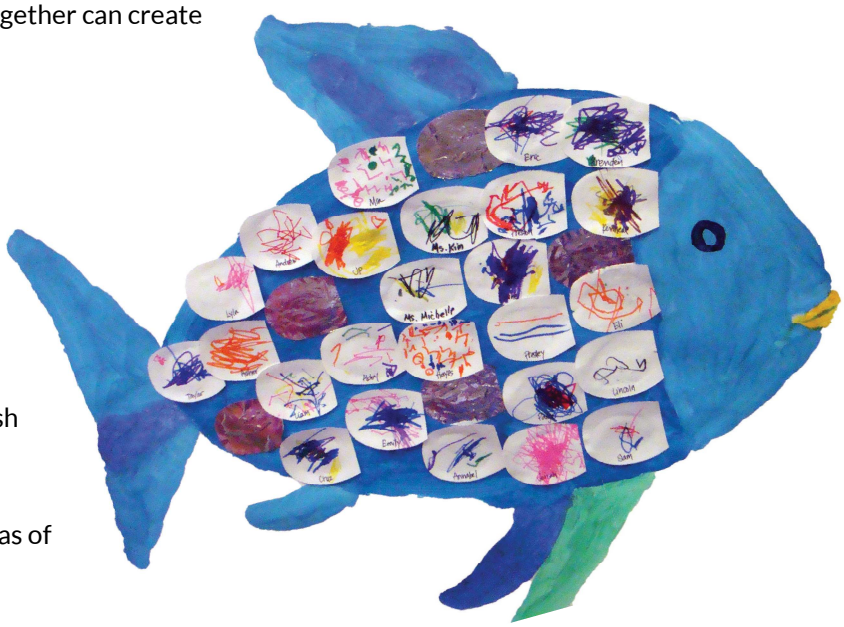
- Did you like the show? Why?
- What were some things you noticed during the show?
- What were some things that surprised you about the show?
- How was seeing the stories in the show different from reading the stories in books? How was it the same?

POST-PERFORMANCE ACTIVITIES:

- Have students share their favorite moments from the performance and draw pictures of these scenes.
- Gather together students' artwork, comments, and other responses to the performance and share them with the State Theatre. We'd love to see them! You can also send any questions your students have for us or for Mermaid Theatre, and we'll do our best to answer them. education@stnj.org

RAINBOW FISH GROUP ART PROJECT

This activity will help students understand how everyone is different, that everyone is special, and that different people working together can create something beautiful.

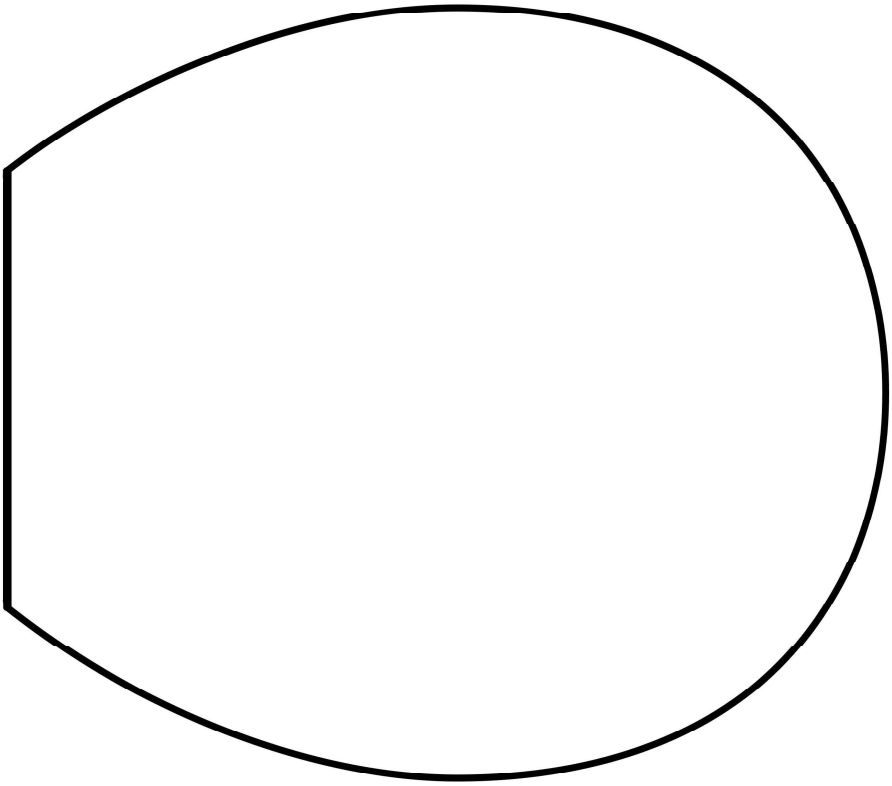


MATERIALS

- *The Rainbow Fish* book
- paper fish scale for each student (template below)
- craft materials for decorating the scales, such as markers, crayons, glitter, foil paper, sequins, construction paper, felt, and glue
- a large sheet of butcher paper with the outline of a fish

LESSON PLAN

1. Read *The Rainbow Fish* to the class, discussing the ideas of difference, uniqueness, and sharing.
2. Give each student a paper fish scale.
3. Have each student decorate their scale with information about themselves using pictures and/or words. (You can even have students bring in pictures of themselves, family and friends, special places, etc. to use to decorate their scales.)
4. Paste everyone's scales on the large fish. Display the decorated fish throughout the year to reinforce with your students the idea that they are a community with lots of wonderful differences.



HANDPRINT OCTOPUS

This fun craft project is a creative way for students to practice their color-matching skills.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- card stock paper (a large sheet of light blue for the background, varied colors for the 'coral reef,' and smaller sheets of white for the 'octopuses'
- bubble wrap
- paint in various colors
- glue
- scissors
- googly eyes
- multicolored donut-shaped cereal, such as Froot Loops

DIRECTIONS:

To make the background, start by painting the bubble wrap in a darker shade of blue. While it is still wet, take the painted bubble wrap and press it onto a light blue piece of card stock. To make the coral, cut out shapes in different colors. Glue them to the bottom of the background once it's dry.

To make the octopuses, give each student a sheet of white card stock. Have them pick a paint color and make a handprint on the paper. Let the paint dry before cutting around the edges of the handprint to create an octopus shape. Have students glue googly eyes onto the palm part of the handprint.

Have each student pick out about a dozen Fruit Loops, matching the color of the cereal to the color of their octopus. Have them glue the cereal onto the 'tentacles.' Glue the octopuses onto the background.

THE NAME GAME

Have students sit in a circle. Pass out the Rainbow Fish name tags with the children's names printed on them. Read each name aloud so everyone can hear how to pronounce the name and to help students make an association between the name and the child.

Once all the name tags are passed out, ask students to find a friend who has a name that begins with the same first letter as their name. Then ask them to find a friend who has the same last letter as their name, a friend who has a letter that is also in their name, or a friend who has the same number of letters as they have in their own name.

Give the students a minute to find out something about their partner that they didn't know before (for example, their middle name; their favorite color, food, storybook, song, or animal; their birthday; or where they would like to go on vacation).

Gather back into a circle and ask students to name some of the new friends they have made and to tell what they have learned about their new friends.

Hello!

My Name Is

Hello!

My Name Is

Hello!

My Name Is

Hello!

My Name Is

Hello!

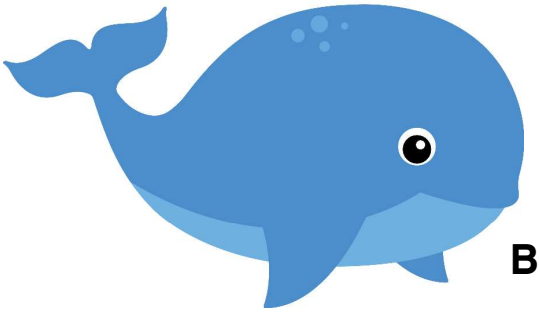
My Name Is

Hello!

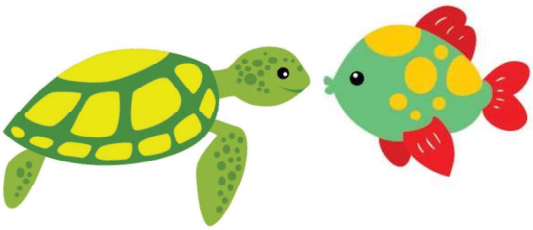
My Name Is

OPPOSITES WORKSHEET

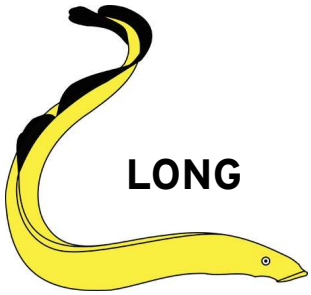
Draw a line from each picture to its opposite.



BIG



TOGETHER

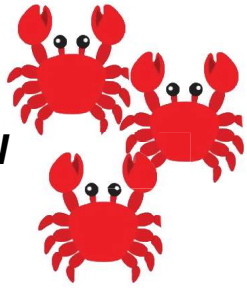


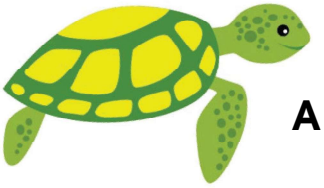
LONG

CLOSED

OPEN

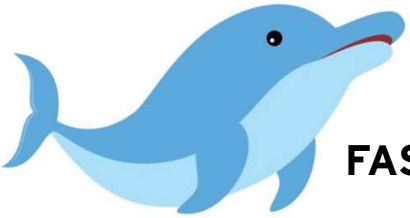
FEW





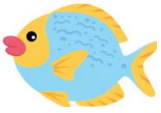
ALONE

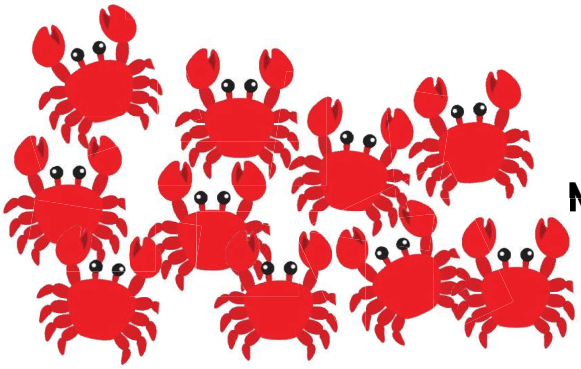
LITTLE



FAST

SHORT





MANY

SLOW

WHAT DO I DO AT THE SHOW?

Going to see a play at a theater is not the same as watching TV. When you are sitting in audience at the State Theatre, the actors will be able to hear and see everything that goes on in the audience. Use the key to find out what your job is at the performance.

PERFORMANCE

AUDIENCE

WATCH

LISTEN

CLAP

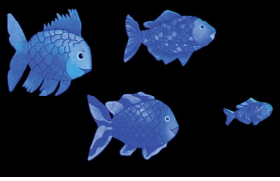
When I go to a **, I am part of the** **. I have a very important job. I have to** **and** **carefully.**

If I talk or move around, the performers and the

will have a hard time paying attention to the **.**

When the **is over, it's okay for me to** **.**

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



BOOKS WITH SIMILAR THEMES

The Bear Who Shared, by Catherine Rayner. Dial Books, 2011. Though he is so much bigger and stronger than the mouse and raccoon, Norris the bear decides to share, making two new friends in the process. Grades Pre-K-K.

Black? White! Day? Night!: A Book of Opposites, by Laura Vaccaro Seeger. Roaring Brook Press, 2016. This lift-the-flap book allows children to make predictions about each word's opposite. Grades Pre-K-2.

Different is Awesome, by Ryan Haack. Mascot Books, 2015. A little boy, born with one hand, shows the other children that we're all different in one way or another, but that differences make us special and unique. Grades 1-2.

I'm the Biggest Thing in the Ocean!, by Kevin Sherry. Dial Books, 2010. A giant squid goes around bragging about how he's the biggest creature in the ocean...until he comes face to face with a hungry whale. Grades Pre-K-2.

Jonathan and Martha, by Petr Horacek. Phaidon Press, 2012. Two lonely worms meet and get tangled together while fighting over a pear, until they learn to share. Grades Pre-K-1.

Little Black Fish, by Samad Behrangi, illustrated by Farshid Mesghali. Tiny Owl Publishing, 2016. An Iranian children's story about a brave little fish who leaves the pool and swims all the way to the sea, where he encounters wonders, danger, and beauty. Grades K-3.

Little Quack's New Friend, by Lauren Thompson, illustrated by Derek Anderson. Mascot Books , 2015. Approached by a friendly little frog, a group of ducklings discover that we don't all have to be the same to have fun together. Grades 1-2.

Swimmy, by Leo Lionni. Dragonfly Books, 2017. A clever little fish uses shows the other fish the power of ingenuity and teamwork. Grades Pre-K-2.

Whoever You Are (Reading Rainbow Books), by Mem Fox. HMH Books for Young Readers, 2006. This picture book celebrates the world's diverse cultures—both our similarities and our differences. Grades Pre-K-2.

WEBSITES

Academy Award-winning actor Ernest Borgnine reads *The Rainbow Fish*.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=r9mryuEKkKc

Marcus Pfister
www.marcuspfister.ch

Mermaid Theatre of Nova Scotia
www.mermaidtheatre.ns.ca

The Puppetry Home Page
www.sagecraft.com/puppetry

The Rainbow Fish website
https://rainbowfish.us

STATE THEATRE NEW JERSEY

EDUCATION & OUTREACH SUPPORTERS

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