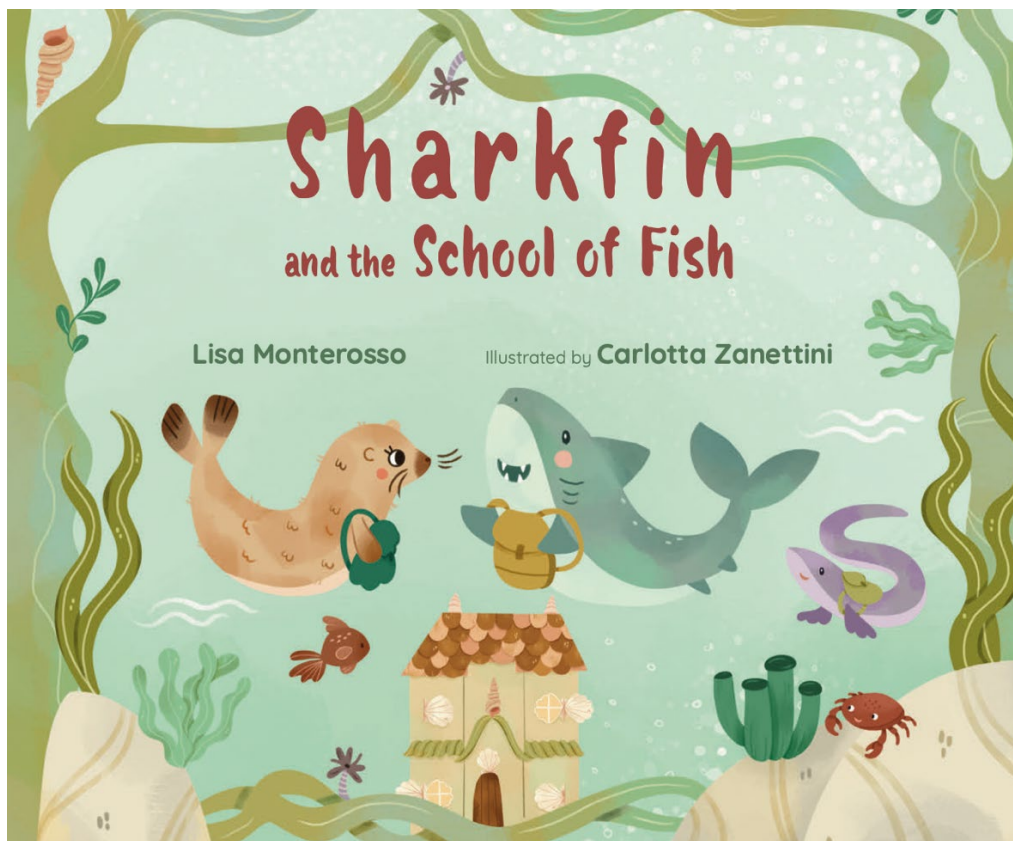


# Sharkfin and the School of Fish

## Teaching Notes

Author: Lisa Monterosso

Illustrator: Carlotta Zanettini



### Synopsis

Sharkfin's starting school, but all the other fish seem afraid of him. When he gives them gifts, they swim away. When he does tricks, he fumbles, and they laugh at him. But with some words from his parents and a chance to reach out to a new friend, Sharkfin might just learn that friends should love him for who he is and not what he brings them.

## Themes

### Belonging

Sharkfin does not feel a sense of belonging at his school, but it's important to feel seen and heard.

### Acceptance

Sharkfin experiences uncomfortable feelings like loneliness and sadness, but he must face and accept these feelings rather than hide from them.

### Diversity

The text shows children that our differences are something to embrace, not fear.

### Friendship

Sharkfin learns that his true friends like him for who he is. He befriends Millie by being himself and does not need to become someone he is not to try to impress her.

## In the classroom

### Reading Group Questions

*Note: The questions are to encourage discussion. The amount of detail in the answers will depend on the Year Level. Perhaps Receptions may answer with a simple declaration, Years 1-2 may respond with a sentence using the word 'because' to support their statement, and Years 3-4 may write a paragraph with supporting evidence from the text.*

#### Before Reading

- What do you think this book will be about?
- Look at the front cover. What does this tell you about the story?

#### During Reading

- What are some feelings Sharkfin has about his first day of school? Do you think he is excited? Nervous? Give examples.
- Have you ever felt worried about something? What are some things you can do to feel less worried?
- How do you think Sharkfin felt when he realised he was the only shark at his school? Do you think he would have felt lonely? Would he have felt less alone if there was another shark at his school?
- When Sharkfin cries, the other sea creatures don't notice. If you noticed someone crying in the schoolyard, what are some things you could do to help them?

- How many people are in Sharkfin's family? (Depending on whether his uncle is included, this could be 3 or 4).
- Sharkfin watches his classmates play a sport. What sport do you think they are playing?
- There are many sea creatures that appear in the text. Which one is your favourite? Why?

### After Reading

- What did you like or dislike about this story?
- Does Sharkfin make a good friend? Is there anything else he could have done to make friends? What examples can you give of this?
- If you were trying to be a good friend to someone, what are some things you would do?
- Imagine what Sharkfin's first day might have been like if the other sea creatures hadn't run away from him. Could they have been friends with Sharkfin? Why?
- Who is your favourite character and why?

### Activities

- At the start of the book, Sharkfin doesn't know what his new school will be like. What would your perfect school look like? Draw your idea of a perfect school.
- How many fish appear in the story? How many sea shells can you count?
- At the end of the text, Sharkfin watches his classmates play sport. Create your own water sport.
- Students can go into friendship groups and re-enact the text to their class. If students are shy, they can read the text instead, with each student reading the part of a different character (e.g. Sharkfin, Millie, parents, narrator).

### About the author:

Lisa Monterosso grew up in South Australia and has written stories since her childhood, inspired by the picture books her parents and grandparents read to her. She later completed a Diploma of Arts and participated in various writing groups, finding fulfilment through both her writing and through encouraging others to pursue their own creative goals. When she isn't writing, she can be found reading, drinking coffee or spending time with her husband, family and friends.

### About the Illustrator:

Carlotta Zanettini is a children's book illustrator and creator. Her works are inspired by nature, magic, and the little things that happen in our everyday lives. Carlotta was born and lives in the windy city of Trieste in northeast Italy.