

# Adaa's Story

by Rachel J.E. Sprague

## Teacher's Guide

### Adaa's Story

The Remarkable Life  
of a Rescued Sea Otter



**Summary:** *Adaa's Story—The Remarkable Life of a Rescued Sea Otter* by Rachel J.E. Sprague tells the story of a four-month-old sea otter pup who was found lost and alone in Port Heiden, Alaska, in January of 2000. He was rescued by a wildlife response team and eventually found a home at the Seattle Aquarium. There he became a beloved ambassador for sea otter awareness and conservation.

**Objectives:** This book is a delightful way to tell the story of Adaa and to introduce children to sea otters. Important facts are woven into the story, with additional fact pages found at the end of the book. In addition, it can be used as a launching pad for teaching

children responsible wildlife rescue and response practices.

**Teaching Activities:** Supplement learning with these fun classroom or at-home activities designed to be adapted for use for PreK through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade to promote the following:

- social-emotional development
- scientific exploration
- physical activity
- student engagement
- artistic expression
- creativity and critical thinking

➤ FREE activity worksheets are available at <https://fathompublishing.com/kids&teens/adaa>

- crossword puzzle
- word search
- comprehension questions
- creative writing
- how to draw an otter
- what to do if you find an otter

## Art Activities

### Let's Draw a Sea Otter

(printable worksheet available on our website)

Students can follow Rachel J.E. Sprague's simple ten-step guide to learn how to draw a sea otter.



### Drawing Adaa

Have students draw and color a picture of Adaa. You can let them look at pictures from the book to use as reference. Here are some ideas to inspire their creativity:

- Adaa as a baby being rescued
- Adaa meeting new friends at the Aquarium
- Adaa floating with food on his belly
- Adaa swimming underwater
- Adaa helping Mishka
- Children watching Adaa at the aquarium

## Science Discussions & Activities

### The Densest Fur of any Animal

**Activity:** Have students feel their own hair. Have a few describe what their hair feels like. Does your hair keep your head warm when it is cold outside? Do you still need to wear a hat to keep your head warm?

**Key Question:** Do you know how many hairs you have on your head?

**Answer:** Most humans have around 100,000-150,000 hairs on their entire head.

#### **Facts about sea otter fur:**

- Sea otters have between 500,000 and 1,000,000 hairs per **square inch** of skin. That means in one square inch, sea otters have 5-10 times as many hairs as you have on your whole head!
- Sea otters rely on their dense fur to keep them warm in the cold pacific waters because they do not have a layer of blubber like other marine mammals do. Blubber is a thick layer of fat that keeps marine mammals warm.
- Sea otter fur has two layers: a thick outer coat with long hairs and an even denser under coat with shorter hairs.
- Sea otter hair is covered in tiny barbs that can only be seen with a microscope. These barbs cause their hair to cling together, so the undercoat stays almost completely dry.
- Otters spend hours every day grooming and conditioning their fur. This traps air and heat next to their skin.
  - They rub their fur with their paws to fluff it up.
  - They comb their fur with their claws and teeth to clean out dirt.
  - They even blow on their fur to trap air inside it.
  - Every time they dive underwater for food, they groom themselves as soon as they come to the surface, even while they are eating!
- Baby sea otters have even denser fur. Their fur traps so much air that they can't sink or dive underwater even if they tried. They can only float. They have to wait for adult fur to grow before they can swim underwater.
- Interesting website for more facts: <https://floofmania.com/sea-otter-fur/>

### Expert Divers

**Activity:** Talk about who likes to swim. Who likes to dive? How long can you hold your breath? Encourage everyone to try holding their breath for a count of 10. Then compare that to how long sea otters can hold their breath.

#### **Sea Otter Diving Facts:**

- Sea otters dive underwater to get food.
- Sea otters can hold their breath for more than 5 minutes. They have a lung capacity 2.5 times greater than similar-sized land mammals.
- Sea otters have been known to dive as deep as 300 feet.
- With their streamlined bodies and powerful tails and hind flippers they can reach speeds over 5 miles per hour underwater.

## Physical Activities

### Sea Otter Raft Relay - played like red light/green light

**Set up:** Mark a starting line on one end of the play area and another line at the other end of the play area. Divide children into two or more teams and have them stand by one line.

**Raft Teams:** Explain that sea otters float together in groups called rafts. They often hold paws so they stay together. Each team is going to be a raft of sea otters. Have the teams link their elbows together.

**Play:** The goal is to be the first raft to “swim” from one line to the other line. Played like red light/green light, but the caller says “swim” and “float.” Whenever the caller says “swim” the rafts begin moving to the next line all together. When the caller says “float” the rafts hold still. If a raft loses one of the team members they need to stop and reconnect.

### Tool Time

**Discussion:** Sea otters regularly use “tools” to help them crack open the hard shells of crabs, clams and other shellfish to get to the food inside. They will often hold a rock on their belly while floating on their back in the water, and hit the shell against the rock until it cracks open.

**Fun Fact:** Not only do sea otters use rocks as tools, but they often carry a special rock around in their armpits... like a built-in pocket!

**Activity:** Provide a selection of items that could be used as tools and let the students try to open hard shelled nuts like walnuts. (You might want to take this activity outside.)

## Student Engagement Activities

### ➤ **Turn and Talk to a Friend**

Share with each other some facts that you learned about sea otters.

What was your favorite part of the story?

If you were a character in the story, who would you want to be, and why?

### ➤ **What Should You Do?** — *(printable worksheet available on our website)*

- Discuss what students should do if they ever encounter a stranded or hurt marine mammal (or any kind of wild animal).
- Talk about what they should NOT do.

### ➤ **Interview with Adaa**

Prepare a skit with a partner. One of you is Adaa. The other is a news reporter interviewing Adaa. Use your imagination!

### ➤ **Sea Otter Awareness Week**

The last full week of September every year is sea otter awareness week. Celebrate sea otters!

## Social-Emotional Activities

### Emotional Expressions/Discussion

Help the children practice emotional expression and empathy with this activity. Call out a situation from the book, or one of the situations below that might happen to a sea otter in the wild, and encourage students to make an emotional face to demonstrate how they think the sea otter would feel.

**Option:** *you can also discuss the situations and imagine what the sea otter might think, say or feel.*

➤ **Suggested situations:**

- You are a sea otter floating on your back with a raft of other sea otters.
- You are trying to crack open a big clamshell with a rock, but it is hard to crack.
- You see a boat with people coming close to where you are floating in the water.
- You are a baby sea otter and your mother wrapped you in kelp while she dives for food.
- You see a dangerous pod of orcas in the distance.
- It's a beautiful day on the ocean and you are munching on a delicious sea urchin.
- You are diving and playing with your sea otter friends.

## Helpful Websites

- **National Park Service** — <https://www.nps.gov/places/sea-otter.htm>
- **Seattle Aquarium** — <https://www.seattleaquarium.org/animals/sea-otters>
- **National Geographic Kids** — <https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/animals/mammals/facts/sea-otter>
- **Active Wild** — <https://www.activewild.com/sea-otter-facts/>
- **Sea Otter Web Cams** —
  - <https://www.seattleaquarium.org/live-cams>
  - <https://www.montereybayaquarium.org/animals/live-cams/sea-otter-cam>
  - <https://aquarium.org/otter-cam/>
  - <https://www.vanaqua.org/explore/animals/sea-otters/#OtterCam>

Teacher's Guide written by Wendy Kenny