

Sharky Marky and the Scavenger Hunt: An Alphabetic Adventure

Lance Olsen

Thomas Perry, Illustrator

Olsen Images

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Fun, rhyming text teaches the alphabet in an imaginative way, accompanied by stellar illustrations of adorable sea creatures.

One car-driving shark and his group of adorable undersea friends are up to new tricks in another playful installment in the Sharky Marky series, *Sharky Marky and the Scavenger Hunt (An Alphabetical Adventure)*. This time author Lance Olsen and illustrator Thomas Perry send the whimsical cast on a race to find the most treasures in the sand. Despite some minor inconsistencies in content, the wonderfully illustrated picture book teaches the alphabet while showing that bad guys often come in last.

A scavenger hunt is a clever plot line to introduce a list of objects and connect them to the alphabet. For instance, at the start of the hunt, Sharky Marky and his friends all get a list of objects to find, from algae to zippers. But there are more lessons in the narrative than just the ABCs.

As in other books in the Sharky Marky series, there is a strong emphasis on exemplifying good character. For example, as the sea creatures race around the sand in hot pursuit, Octo Eddy is up to mean tricks, using his eight arms to take all the hammers and then squirting ink into Marky's face when he's behind the wheel.

Meanwhile, Marky doesn't forget his good manners in the competition. He stops racing to make sure Diego Dolphin, who is tangled up in a kite, is alright. He also takes time out of his treasure hunt to give a necklace to Sally Sea Lion. Nevertheless, at the end of the scavenger hunt, it's Sharky Marky who's won, even though he took the time to be nice to others along the way.

The rhyming text is a pleasure to read out loud, teaches the alphabet in an imaginative way, and underscores the value of good character. There's also a glossary at the end to help define what may be new vocabulary words for young readers.

Yet there are some inconsistencies. In a visual comic touch, animals that don't breathe underwater such as ducks and beavers are drawn wearing glass helmets. Yet, the effect is uneven as some mammals like walruses are not. And while the alphabetical scavenger hunt seems to be only listing items usually found under the sea, suddenly there are objects such as kites and mirrors. Finally, on the "O" page, oysters are pictured as the hunted object although the word "oar" is bolded as well.

The overall narrative and stellar illustrations make *Sharky Marky and the Scavenger Hunt* a welcome addition to the salty series.

AMANDA MCCORQUODALE (September 17, 2015)

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