



Somewhere in the Ocean

Jennifer Ward

T. J. Marsh

Kenneth J. Spengler, Illustrator

Rising Moon (Feb 25, 2000)

\$15.95 (32pp)

978-0-87358-748-8

A lyrical counting book written to the tune of “Over in the Meadow” gives a lively introduction to marine life and basic counting skills. The rhythm never falters as one little manatee calf nibbles sea lettuce at the mother’s direction, a raft of five obedient sea otters munch prickly urchins and ten octopus babies practice their inky squirts in their coral den.

Spengler’s vibrant, appealing illustrations in gouache on watercolor paper completely fill the pages, realistically portraying the animals and their watery environment. On the endpapers bright yellow and gold continents swim in azure blue seas letting the reader know that the creatures in the book come from all the world’s oceans. Spengler also illustrated Ward and Marsh’s *Way Out in the Desert* (1998), a title that uses the same traditional tune to introduce desert animals and their environment.

Somewhere in the Ocean offers readers more than practice with beginning counting skills. Readers seeking additional information can turn to the five pages of “Fun Facts” at the conclusion of the book for specifics about the flora and fauna mentioned in the rhyme. The book also includes the musical score with the lyrics for those interested in carrying the tune to its melodic conclusion.

In the classroom or library, this book for ages three to seven will be enjoyed as a read-aloud at story time or as a sing-a-long during a unit on the sea. The active verse and varied verbs (jellyfish “zap” and clown fish “nestle”) encourage movement and imitation in the preschool classroom. The cozy relationship between mothers and babies make the title appealing for bedtime reading and the hidden numbers will challenge individual readers who can pore over the pages at their leisure.

JANIS ANSELL (March / April 2000)

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