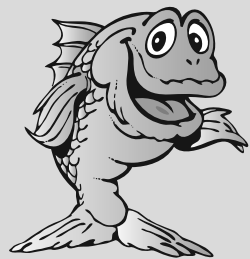


Make a
SPLASH

READ!



Molly Minnow's Message

MOLLY MINNOW by Thomas M. Tufts

Molly Minnow hatched out
upon a coral reef,
a wonderland of colors
and shapes beyond belief.

There were stingrays - swimming
triangles,
and boxfish just like squares.
The shells were perfect circles,
crab rectangles everywhere.

Molly gazed at her new world,
remaining very still,
for a newborn minnow first must learn
the ocean's basic skills.

Her family swam up to her,
and told her of the rule:
"Before a minnow swims like us,
she must go to school."

Her mother introduced her
to the teacher, Toothy Tim,
schoolmaster of the seven seas,
who would teach her how to swim.

The class was called to order.
"My lessons will begin;
please notice on each side of you
a long pectoral fin.

The fin provides you motion.
First, you pull it in.
Next, you thrust it quickly out,
Then do it once again.

To swim even faster
wiggle your long tail.
Swiftly, swiftly, side to side,
this motion we call 'flail.'

On top you have a dorsal fin

To keep you swimming straight.
Now, let's give them all a try.
That's it! You're doing great."

As Molly told her teacher Tim
that swimming was her love,
a giant hunk of pointed steel
came plunging from above.

"Look out!" Molly bubbled out.
There was no time to think;
for a sailboat's heavy anchor
slammed the coral with a 'clink!'

Molly saved her minnow friends
who were filled with disbelief,
for the massive two-pronged anchor
was tearing up their reef.

"Stop!" The little minnows mouthed
as the anchor ate a snack
of a thousand years of coral growth
and continued its attack.

Molly told the others,
"We all can only wish
that out of ocean's darkness
will swim our friend, Saw--fish."

As her words were floating bubbles,
a sawfish swam on by.
"Help us!" cried the minnows.
"OK," was his reply.

"You see, that ugly anchor
is ripping up our reef.
Please, oh please, just saw the rope
with your very sharpened teeth."

The sawfish briskly went to work.
He frayed the anchor line
back and forth and forth and back.

He sliced the sailboat's twine.

In twenty strokes he did it.
He cut it from the boat.
And on its raveled, stringy end,
the teacher fixed a note.

"We're sorry about your anchor,
but it hurt our coral friend.
What took a thousand years to grow,
You brought quickly to its end.

Please don't ever anchor here
or on any coral reef;
all you'll cause is sadness
and fill our lives with grief.

Find a mooring buoy
or tie up to a dock.
Don't ever let your anchor's teeth
bite ocean's living rock."

The Captain read the teacher's note
and decided he was right.
He raised his sails at sundown,
and cruised into the night.

Molly Minnow saved her home.
For this they crowned her Queen!
She ruled the ocean floor with care,
no fish had ever seen.

The minnows all were joyful,
as the coral grew and grew.
They lived happily ever after,
and hope that you do, too!

*Veteran Florida teacher and author
Tom Tufts teaches language arts in
middle school and works nationally
as an educational consultant.
(ttufts19@hotmail.com).*

The author of the poem, Molly
Minnow, uses sea creatures to make
his point about conservation.

Read the poem.

- Who's the main character?
- Who are the supporting characters?
- What's the setting?
- What happens, first, second, third?
- What's the message?

Choose an issue in the news. Write a
poem that comments on the issue.

Visit Your Library!

Find books of poetry and
read more poems about
water-related topics.



Summer Reading at Your Public Library