

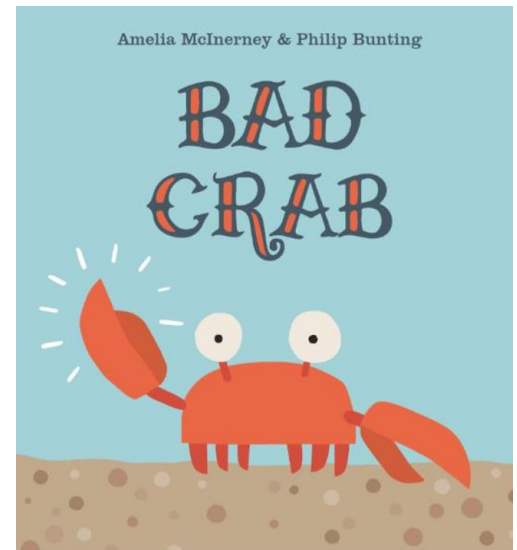
Bad Crab

Author

Amelia McInerney

Illustrator

Phillip Bunting



Synopsis

What goes around comes around in this delightfully minimalistic story of a Bad Crab who nips at his friends with little consideration as to how they might feel. At least, he keeps nipping at them until he sees them all poised to take revenge in the form of a big rock teetering on a ledge above him. The rock seems to be just waiting for the irate sea creatures to push it off, and Bad Crab hunkers down to wait for this too. The others, however, are clearly more perceptive than Bad Crab, because when they see him covering his eyes and crouching fearfully on the sea-bottom they relent, and choose not to take revenge. Bad Crab's story, though, has more to offer, and through the course of the book he and his friends also have to deal with an equally nippy lobster as well as a hungry shark. The rock finally comes in handy as his friends care for and protect him, and both the shark and the lobster learn that sometimes harming others can bring a very negative result to oneself.

About the Author

Amelia McInerney grew up in Melbourne, but now lives just outside Sydney in the Blue Mountains. She spends her days writing kids' books, staring out the window thinking up stories for kids' books, and occasionally just plain staring out the window. When she's not writing, thinking or staring, Amelia likes to help people and also cover them with gel, which makes her other job (doing ultrasounds) perfect for her. She likes yoga and snorkelling, but not at the same time because that's really hard. Amelia has three kids, two hermit crabs and a husband.

About the Illustrator

Phillip Bunting is a designer, illustrator and creative director. During 10 years in the creative industries, he has seen his work published around the globe; and designed more magazines, websites, identities, books and apps than he could poke a stick at.

Themes

Friendship, revenge, marine life, caring, natural consequences, compassion, remorse

Writing and Illustration Styles

McInerney's text is profoundly minimalistic in nature, consisting entirely of a series of pained utterances on the part of the marine creatures who inhabit the story. In contrast, Bunting's illustrations contain a wealth of emotive and narrative detail, and the visual narrative carries the majority of the story-telling load. Bunting's artwork is deceptively simple in form, varying from a third of a page frame size, through half and single pages to double page spreads, with each frame or spread being a chronologically ordered scene in the ongoing tale. The intermittent cries of *Ow* punctuate the action, while the expressive faces of the various participants convey the reactions, responses, and intentions of the other actors in the story. Bunting's artwork is rendered with a soft blue background, neutral foreground, and brightly hued and gray and white figures contrasting with the marine environment. Each scene is faithfully rendered to fill the available space, with minimal use of white space. Figures are rounded and rely on contrasting tones rather than graduated shading to give them depth and three dimensionality. Perfectly suited to inspiring adult-child conversations about emotions, reactions, and how to interact with others, *Bad Crab* is a story that can be enjoyed independently by the youngest of readers, or inspire important conversations about life-decisions between the small children enjoying the story and the adults in their life who are sharing it with them.

TEACHER NOTES

- 1) Before reading the story, as a class discuss the cover and title. Some things to include in your discussion are:
 - What is the picture on the front of this book showing?
 - What is the title of the story?
 - What do you think the title is referring to?
 - Where do you think this story might be set?
 - What do you think could happen in this story?
 - What can crabs do that might get them called 'bad'?
- 2) Look at the picture of the crab on the inside of the cover. How can we tell that it is a crab? How has the artist created this picture? Create a marine creature picture-stencil and silhouette of your own.
 - Carefully draw the outline of a sea-creature on a piece of A4 paper. You can use the illustrations in the story for inspiration, or you can choose a different creature instead.
 - If you are finding it too challenging, you can find a picture in the story you like and carefully trace over it to create your outline picture.
 - Once you have drawn your outline, cut it out, leaving a creature-shaped hole in your paper.
 - Place your paper on top of a larger piece of paper or card, and holding it firmly in place use a wide brush or a roller to paint over the cut-out part of your paper.
 - Once you have painted it, lift one edge and carefully peel your stencil off the card.
 - Place your stencil on a blank part of your card and paint over it again.
 - Add other details to make an underwater artwork, or use everyone's stencils to make a sea-life silhouette wall display.
- 3) As a class, read the story, looking carefully at each picture and discussing what you see in every frame. Some things to include in your discussion of each frame are:
 - What creatures are in this scene?
 - What are they doing?
 - What do you think they are feeling, and why?
 - How are they reacting to the other characters?

- What do you think might happen next?
- 4) What are all the different sea-animals who appear in the story?
 - 5) Which character is your favourite, and why?
 - 6) Can we tell what the different creatures are feeling throughout the story, and if so, how?
 - 7) Look carefully at how the artist has drawn the eyes of the different creatures in the story.
 - How do the eyes change in shape from one scene to the next?
 - What is the effect of these changes - how do the different eyes make us feel about what is happening in each scene?
 - Draw a very simple picture of a person or animal with eyes like those found on one of the animals in the story.
 - Reread the story again, looking at how Bad Crab's eyes are drawn in each scene.
 - Draw several versions of your creature, and experiment with altering their expression or sharing different emotions by changing how you draw their eyes.
 - Hint: You can draw one creature without eyes, and photocopy or trace it several times before you start experimenting with drawing different eyes.
 - 8) What do you think might happen next to Bad Crab and his friends? Draw a picture that shows what you think they might do the day after the story ends.
 - 9) There is only one word used in this story - how important do you think it is? As a class discuss how much harder it would be to tell what is happening if it weren't for the occasional 'ow' that the different animals utter.
 - 10) Visit an aquarium or a zoo with a marine area. How many of the creatures from the story do you see at the aquarium? What are the different creatures doing? What is their environment like? After returning to class, write an illustrated recount of your visit.
 - 11) An acrostic is a poem where each line starts with a different letter of the title word or phrase. Create a Bad Crab acrostic poem that shares something about Bad Crab.
 - 12) Research online or in the library, and find out three facts about crabs. Choose one of your facts, and draw a picture to illustrate it. Caption your picture with your fact.
 - 13) Create a three to six panel illustrated story of your own, which contains only one word of dialogue. Your story can be simple, but try to make sure that your illustrations portray a visual narrative with a setting, complication, and resolution.
 - 14) Make a yarn octopus. Cut yarn into several 20 to 30cm long pieces. Fold your yarn pieces in half, and tie a shorter piece of yarn around the folded hank about 3cm from the fold to make the head. Divide the loose ends of yarn into eight sections, and plait each section to make the octopus's legs. Tie off the end of each plait, or put a small rubber band around it. Glue two small googly eyes to the head, and your octopus is finished! You can hang your octopus from a curtain rail, pin it to the wall, or make several more and use them to make a mobile. If you want you can also experiment with wrapping yarn around a small ball to make the head larger and rounder.

- 15) Make a collage showing an underwater scene using pieces of coloured paper, glitter, cellophane, pieces of yarn, sand, and straws. You can choose to make your underwater scene show the ocean, or you can set it in a lake, pond, or river instead.