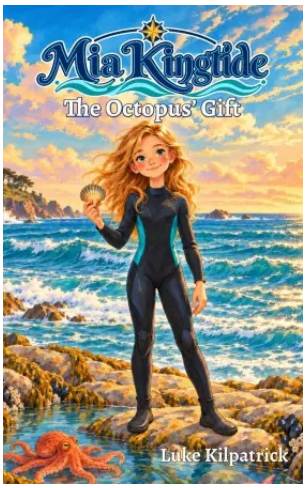
The Octopus' Gift

A teacher's and reader's guide



BOOK 1 | MIA KINGTIDE OCEAN ADVENTURES

Suggested teaching focus: ages 6-9, grades 1-3, with read-aloud support. Extend for older independent readers. These are guide recommendations, not a measured reading level.

Big question: How can listening, kindness and curiosity help us care for the ocean?

An ordinary act of kindness at an Asilomar tide pool changes Mia's life. A magical shell opens a world of animal voices, new friendships and responsibilities. This guide helps children enjoy the fantasy while asking careful questions about the living ocean.

Inside: A flexible reading plan; chapter connections; vocabulary; 22 discussion questions; four classroom projects; six writing prompts; teacher response notes; two reproducible student sheets; assessment and further reading.

Find it quickly: Teaching plan 2 | Chapter map 3 | Word bank 4 | Discussion 5-7 | Projects 8-11 | Writing 12 | Teacher notes 13 | Student sheets 14-15 | Curriculum and sources 16.

Prepared for classrooms, libraries, book clubs and families. Discussion pages contain spoilers. Read the relevant chapters before using them.

Based on the novel by Luke Kilpatrick. Guide structure adapted from the reader's guide included in Book 4, The Vanishing Sanctuary.

Teaching the youngest readers

Start with a shared experience

Read aloud in short sessions, stopping at a meaningful choice or discovery rather than racing to finish a chapter. Let children respond by talking, drawing, pointing, dictating or writing. A six-year-old listening to a chapter and a nine-year-old reading independently need different support.

Learning goals

- Retell a scene in order and name a choice that changes what happens.
- Describe a character's feelings using something the character says or does.
- Identify a habitat and explain one connection between living things.
- Distinguish a real animal or place from a magical event.
- Propose one practical, adult-supported way to care for the environment.

A flexible six-meeting sequence

1. Chapters 1-3: kindness and the shell. Predict what the gift might change; start a real/magical chart.

2. Chapters 4-6: friends and habitats. Draw each ally; try the paper kelp-forest model on page 9.

3. Chapters 7-9: journeys and balance. Trace the salmon's freshwater/ocean connection and discuss Ryan's choices.

4. Chapters 10-11: caring and noticing. Sort clean classroom litter cards; observe an animal photograph.

5. Chapters 12-14: sharing discoveries. Compare what Mia learns on the boat and at the aquarium.

6. After reading: make an ocean-helper exhibition. Share a model, story or poster and explain one thing learned.

Allow 15-25 minutes for discussion after reading. Projects take an additional 25-45 minutes. Reading the complete book may require many more sessions.

Prepare: A copy of the novel, paper, pencils, crayons, animal photographs and an optional map of coastal California. No animal handling or water activity is needed.

Teach the boundary: Mia's underwater breathing and animal conversations are magic. Do not turn the pool chapter into a breath-holding challenge. Children can help by observing, learning and asking a trusted adult; wildlife rescue belongs to trained responders.

Follow Mia's first adventure

Chapter connections

Use chapter numbers rather than page numbers, which differ between editions. Each row suggests a stopping point, not an assignment to finish in one sitting.

1. The Octopus' Gift

Mia stands up for a frightened octopus and receives the shell. Track: problem, choice, result. Ask what kindness looks like before any reward is promised.

2-3. A Connection to the Ocean; Pool Time

Sunny speaks to Mia and the shell's powers emerge. Sort observations from guesses about what the shell can do. Notice Luke's emphasis on responsibility.

4-5. Friends Beneath the Waves; The Mysterious Whale Song

Flip, Luna and Marlow become allies. An obstructed intake and an entangled whale create different problems. Name each helper's contribution; discuss how a child would seek expert help in real life.

6-7. The Kelp Forest Rescue; Delta Dreaming

Mia sees an urchin barren and learns about restoration; the family travels on Pegasus in the Delta. Compare the needs of kelp-forest animals and migrating salmon.

8-9. Balancing the Bully; The Sunflower Star Comeback

School relationships and ecological connections develop side by side. Compare these themes without treating a child as an unwanted animal or assuming ecosystems have one simple fix.

10-11. Cleaning Up After a King Tide; Sand Dollar Secrets

A beach cleanup leads to questions about waste; living sand dollars invite close observation. Separate human-made litter from natural beach material.

12-14. Aboard the Little Mermaid; Turning Eleven, Ocean Style; Voices of the Aquarium

Mia shares the ocean with friends, considers seafood choices and reflects on becoming a guardian. Ask how her understanding of the shell changes from the first chapter to the last.

Teacher check-in: At each stop, invite one child to retell, another to ask a question, and another to point to a detail in the book. Rotate roles so confident speakers do not answer every question.

Words for an ocean explorer

Say it, sketch it, use it

Tide pool: A pocket of seawater left among rocks as the tide falls. Sketch where an animal might shelter.

Habitat: The place where an organism lives and finds what it needs. Name food, space and shelter in a pictured habitat.

Kelp: A large brown alga. In this book, kelp creates underwater habitat; it is not a tree with roots.

Urchin: A spiny marine animal that can graze on kelp. It is a living part of the ecosystem, not a villain.

Predator / prey: An animal that eats another animal / an animal eaten by another. A creature can be both in different relationships.

Food web: A model of connected feeding relationships. It shows more than one path through a community.

Migration: A journey animals make between places, often seasonally. Connect this word to salmon or whales.

Debris: Scattered material. Marine debris usually means human-made waste in the ocean or along shores.

Observe / infer: Notice something directly / suggest what it may mean. "I see a line" differs from "I think it is fishing line."

Conservation: Caring for living things and the places they need.

Responsibility: Taking care with a choice and its effects on others.

Evidence: A detail that helps explain an answer. In reading, it may be an action, picture or sentence.

Real ocean, imagined powers

The novel combines real species and places with invented events. Its restoration scenes are not instructions to release animals or remove urchins. Real restoration requires experts, monitoring and permission; results are not guaranteed or immediate. Purple sea urchins belong on this coast. Large numbers can overgraze kelp, but an animal's identity is not the same as the harm caused by a particular situation. [R1-R2]

Practice: Read three statements: "Mia receives a magical shell"; "urchins eat kelp"; "I think the octopus trusts her." Label them fantasy, a science claim to check, and an interpretation. Explain what kind of evidence each needs.

Discussion: kindness and connection

Questions 1-8

1. What does Mia notice about the octopus in Chapter 1?

Describe one detail that shows why she thinks it needs help. Draw the scene before and after her choice.

2. Why is her kindness important even before she receives the shell?

Would the choice still matter if the octopus never returned? Tell a partner why.

3. What changes when Sunny speaks in Chapter 2?

Tell what Mia knows for sure and what she still wonders. Use "She notices..." and "She wonders..."

4. What advice does Sunny give Mia about listening?

Name a way to listen carefully to a person. How might someone learn about an animal without hearing words?

5. Why does Luke talk about responsibility in Chapter 3?

Choose one possible use of a power and explain how it could help or cause a problem.

6. What makes Flip, Luna and Marlow different in Chapter 4?

Choose two allies. Compare a story action or personality trait, then identify their real species.

7. How does teamwork help with the blocked intake?

Retell the problem and explain how more than one character helps. What could a child safely do if they noticed a similar problem?

8. How do Mia and Luke respond to the whale's trouble in Chapter 5?

Name a feeling and a story detail that supports it. Then separate the fictional rescue from real life: a child should alert an adult who contacts trained responders, not approach an entangled whale. [R3]

Talk support: "I think ___ feels ___ because ___." "I agree with ___ and I noticed ___." "I see it differently because ___."

Teacher move: Accept different interpretations when children can connect them to the story. Do not require personal disclosures about frightening experiences or bullying.

Discussion: a connected coast

Questions 9-16

9. What surprises Mia at Flintstones in Chapter 6?

Compare the kelp forest she expects with the place she sees. Draw two labeled pictures.

10. How might changing one part of a food web affect another?

Use kelp and urchins to explain a connection. What else would a scientist need to know before predicting what happens?

11. What does the Delta journey add to Mia's understanding of the ocean?

In Chapter 7, follow the connection between rivers, salmon and the sea. Why might caring for a river matter to the coast?

12. What choices do Mia and Jessica make when Ryan is unkind?

In Chapter 8, distinguish the hurtful behavior from the person. What could a trusted adult or bystander do to help?

13. Why are sunflower stars important to the story's restoration effort?

Use Chapters 6 and 9. What would scientists need to watch over time to learn whether habitat is recovering?

14. In Chapter 10, what belongs on the beach and what is human-made litter?

Explain why seaweed and driftwood are not automatically rubbish. How could a class reduce waste before it reaches a beach?

15. How does Chapter 11 change Mia's view of a sand dollar?

Compare an animal living in the sea with a white empty test found on a beach. What question would you ask an aquarium educator?

16. What can Mia's friends notice from the Little Mermaid in Chapter 12?

Choose a detail they can see and a question they cannot answer just by looking. How does sharing an experience change their interest?

Pause and check: Ask each learner to choose one answer to improve with a specific story detail. Younger learners may point to an illustration or dictate while an adult writes.

Discussion: becoming a guardian

Questions 17-22

17. What new questions come up at Mia's birthday meal?

Use Chapter 13. Why might someone ask where a food comes from and how it was caught or grown, rather than only asking its name?

18. How does the aquarium visit build on Mia's earlier adventures?

In Chapter 14, connect one exhibit or conversation to something she experienced before.

19. Has Mia changed since the first tide-pool scene?

Choose one early and one late moment. Explain what she understands now about her gift.

20. Which helper would you thank, and for what?

Choose a human or animal character. Tell exactly how that character contributes rather than simply calling them "good."

21. What could you do for the ocean without magic?

Choose a small action at home or school, name an adult who can help, and explain how you would know it made a difference.

22. What question would you still like to investigate?

Name a book scene that sparked it. Choose a useful source or person who might help you find an answer.

A closing conversation

Return to the big question: How can listening, kindness and curiosity help us care for the ocean? Invite a drawing plus one spoken sentence. Display responses beside the first-day predictions so children can see how their thinking developed.

Optional stretch: Compare two kinds of helping: solving an immediate problem and preventing a future one. Which examples appear in the book? Which is possible for your group this week?

Reflection, not a promise: Children need not pledge to save the whole ocean. Let them choose an achievable action, change their minds after learning, and share responsibility with adults.

Project 1: A kindness story map

Character choices and cause and effect

Book connection: Chapters 1-3. **Time:** 30-35 minutes. **Materials:** Folded paper, crayons, book, optional scene cards. **Outcome:** Retell a sequence and explain how one choice changes it.

Prepare: Fold paper into four boxes. Label them "A problem," "A choice," "What happens next" and "A new responsibility." Read the relevant passages aloud again.

1. Children draw the octopus's situation in box one. Invite a label or dictated sentence describing something actually in the text.

2. In box two, show Mia's choice. Ask: Is she helping because she expects a gift, or does the gift come later?

3. In box three, show the shell arriving. Use a colored star to mark the fantasy element.

4. In box four, show Sunny's advice or Luke's conversation about responsibility. Add a speech bubble that paraphrases the idea rather than inventing a quotation.

5. Partners retell their maps using "first," "because," "then" and "now." Each partner asks one clarifying question.

6. On the back, draw a safe, everyday act of care that does not require a reward or magic.

Teacher prompts: "What changed because of that choice?" "Which part did the author imagine?" "How can we tell the order?"

Evidence of learning: The four events are in a sensible order; the child connects a choice to a result; the magical element is identified. Do not score drawing skill.

Support: Provide picture choices or have the teacher scribe. Children can retell with puppets instead of filling every box.

Stretch: Make a second map showing how the story might change if Mia walked away. Label it an imagined alternative, not the book's ending.

Exit question: "What makes a choice kind?" Accept an example before expecting an abstract definition.

Project 2: Build a paper kelp forest

A model of relationships

Book connection: Chapters 6 and 9. **Time:** 40 minutes. **Materials:** Paper cards, yarn or drawn arrows, crayons, tape. **Outcome:** Explain two connections and one limitation of a model.

Prepare: Make cards for sunlight, kelp, sea urchin, sunflower star, sea otter and a fish using kelp as shelter. Use an aquarium source to check feeding relationships. [R1-R2]

1. Arrange the kelp and animals on a sheet. Ask what each organism needs and where it might live.

2. Draw arrows from food to the animal that eats it: kelp to urchin; urchin to sunflower star or sea otter. Explain that the arrow means food energy moves in that direction.

3. Use a different mark, such as a dotted line, to show a shelter relationship between kelp and a fish. Not every relationship means "eats."

4. Give groups a scenario: fewer predators, warmer water, or less kelp. Ask them to predict one possible effect and point to the connection supporting it.

5. Change one card and retell the prediction. Children should say "might" rather than claim the model proves what will happen.

6. Add a sticky note: "Our model leaves out ___." Examples include other species, weather, disease, time and differences between places.

Teacher note: Kelp loss has several interacting causes. Avoid presenting every urchin as harmful or every restoration project as a guaranteed success. The book's restoration scenes are fictionalized. This is a paper model, not a release or removal activity.

Evidence of learning: Each child explains a food link, a habitat link and a missing feature. Listen for the difference between a relationship and a simple list of animals.

Support: Start with three cards and oral explanation. **Stretch:** Add a second predator and discuss why a food web offers more than one possible connection.

Exit question: "If kelp disappears, which connections in our model change?"

Project 3: Stop litter before the shore

Sort, count and prevent

Book connection: Chapter 10. **Time:** 35-45 minutes, plus a later check-in. **Materials:** Clean picture cards of waste and natural beach items, tally sheet, pencils. **Outcome:** Use a count to choose a practical waste-reduction action.

Prepare: Use pictures or clean classroom packaging only. Include bottle, wrapper, fishing line, seaweed, shell and driftwood cards. No beach visit is necessary.

1. Sort cards into human-made waste, natural material, and "not sure yet." Explain that natural beach material can be habitat or food and should not automatically be removed.

2. Count the human-made items by type. Draw one mark per item, then check totals with a partner.

3. Make a picture graph. Ask which category has more, fewer or the same number. These are classroom sample counts, not evidence about the whole ocean.

4. Choose one preventable item, such as a single-use wrapper. Brainstorm a realistic change that families can choose without being required to buy anything.

5. Design a small sign: the problem, one suggested action, and who can help. Use accurate words rather than promising that one action fixes all pollution.

6. After a week, discuss whether the class tried the idea. What was easy? What got in the way? What should change?

Teacher note: If your school separately arranges a cleanup, follow its supervision plan. Children should point out sharp, unknown or tangled items to an adult rather than handle them. The classroom lesson can be completed entirely with pictures.

Evidence of learning: Accurate sorting and counting; a graph that matches the tally; an action linked to the identified waste.

Support: Count together to ten and use large picture symbols. **Stretch:** Compare two teacher-created sample sets and explain why equal sampling conditions matter.

Exit question: "How is preventing litter different from picking it up?"

Project 4: A marine ally fact-and-fiction card

Research meets imagination

Book connection: Chapters 4, 11 and 14. **Time:** 40 minutes or two short sessions. **Materials:** Teacher-selected animal source, paper, crayons. **Outcome:** Combine two checked facts with a clearly labeled imagined character.

1. Choose one real animal from the book: harbor seal, sea lion, sea otter, octopus or sand dollar. The teacher supplies an age-appropriate photograph and a short factual passage.

2. Find two facts: where it lives and something about its body, food or behavior. Record the source title; an adult can help write it.

3. Draw a realistic animal on the left of the card. Label features visible in the source rather than adding human arms or legs.

4. On the right, invent a name and personality for a story ally. Mark this side "Our imagination." Give it a problem or goal connected to its habitat.

5. Tell or write a three-sentence scene in which the ally helps Mia. Underline the two facts used. Circle the magical part, such as talking to Mia.

6. Share the card with a partner. The partner identifies one fact, one invented detail, and one question they would like to check.

Teacher prompts: "How do you know?" "Can we see that in the picture, or did we read it?" "Does giving an animal a human voice tell us its real thoughts?"

Evidence of learning: Two facts trace to a source, the animal's habitat is plausible, and invention is visibly separated from fact. A student may revise a fact after checking it.

Support: Offer two animals and read the passages aloud. Accept dictation or an audio retelling.

Stretch: Compare the chosen ally with a second species, such as harbor seal versus sea lion. Require a checked difference, not only a size guess.

Exhibit label: "Inspired by Mia Kingtide. Animal facts checked with ___. Character and dialogue imagined by ___."

Six ways to write with Mia

Choose one; revise it with a partner

1. Thank-you from the tide pool

After Chapter 1, write or dictate a note from the octopus. Include a detail from the rescue and a feeling. Label the animal's speaking voice as imagined.

2. Sunny's surprise

Retell the first conversation from Sunny's point of view. What might he notice about Mia? Use a beginning, a surprising moment and an ending.

3. A new helper joins the team

Use the fact-and-fiction card from Project 4. Write a scene with a clear problem, one helpful action and a result. Include two checked animal details.

4. A different recess

After Chapter 8, imagine a respectful conversation between classmates. Show a boundary, an apology or an adult helping. Nobody has to describe a personal experience.

5. News from the beach

Write a short report on the cleanup in Chapter 10: who helped, what they did and why it mattered. Keep this report about the fictional event; do not invent real cleanup totals.

6. My ocean question

Write "I used to think... Now I wonder... I could find out by..." Add a drawing, a question mark and the name of a useful source or helper.

A child-friendly revision routine

- Tell your idea aloud first. Does your partner understand it?
- Add one detail from the book or your factual source.
- Check whether the reader can tell what is real and what is imagined.
- Choose a clearer word or add a label. Read it again.

For emerging writers: One labeled drawing and one dictated sentence can demonstrate the same thinking as a longer paragraph. Do not make handwriting the main test of comprehension.

For independent writers: Aim for one or two paragraphs, with a cause-and-effect connection and a sentence explaining your choice of detail.

Sharing: Invite, rather than require, public reading. A partner or teacher may read a child's words with permission.

Teacher response notes

Look for reasoning, not identical answers

These are discussion supports, not a single-answer key. Use the numbered questions on pages 5-7 and return to the relevant chapter when an answer is uncertain.

1-2 | Kindness before reward: Mia responds to the octopus's distress before knowing about a gift. Children may identify courage, empathy or fairness. Ask for the action supporting the word.

3-5 | New powers and responsibility: Sunny's conversation changes Mia's understanding; Luke introduces responsibility. Distinguish a narrator's description from a prediction about powers the book has not yet revealed.

6-8 | Different helpers: Flip is a harbor seal, Luna a sea lion and Marlow a sea otter. Accept several descriptions of their personalities if grounded in a scene. The whale rescue is a fictional event, not a model for children to imitate.

9-10 | Ecological connections: Mia expects kelp and finds an urchin-dominated area. A model can suggest links among kelp, grazers and predators, but does not capture all environmental influences. [R1-R2]

11 | Freshwater and ocean: The salmon discussion links rivers and sea. Children need not memorize a migration route to explain that habitats can be connected.

12 | School choices: Focus on specific behavior, respectful boundaries and adult support. Do not suggest a child must tolerate bullying or is responsible for changing another child's conduct.

13-14 | Restoration and litter: Look for monitoring over time and prevention as well as cleanup. Urchins are not rubbish; seaweed and driftwood are natural material. Do not combine the restoration and litter lessons into "remove everything unwanted."

15-16 | Looking closely: Living sand dollars are animals. A boat or aquarium view can spark a question but cannot establish every cause or behavior by itself.

17-18 | Sharing knowledge: Seafood choices and exhibits prompt inquiry. Do not assume "local" alone guarantees sustainability or treat a fictional menu as current seafood advice.

19-22 | Growth and agency: Strong answers compare scenes, credit other helpers, choose achievable actions and name a way to investigate. A thoughtful unanswered question is a successful outcome.

Assessment snapshot: Record one strength and one next step for each learner: retelling, story evidence, science/fantasy distinction, or a practical connection.

My ocean evidence page

Student sheet | Copy for classroom use

Name: _____ Date: _____

Book chapter or scene: _____

1. I noticed this detail in the story or picture:

2. Draw the detail. Add two labels.

3. I think this means... because...

4. Is this a real-world detail, a magical event, or something I still need to check? Explain or tell an adult.

5. My question is... I could ask or read...

Adult or partner may scribe. A drawing, pointing and spoken explanation are welcome.

My small ocean-helping plan

Student sheet | Copy for classroom use

Name: _____ Partner: _____

A problem we noticed in the book or our classroom:

Our safe, small action:

An adult who can help, and materials we already have:

Draw what the action will look like.

How will we check what happened?

After trying it: What worked? What would we change?

Teacher check: The learner can explain a problem, connect an action to it, and reflect on a result. Rate each as "with help," "mostly independently" or "independently with a clear detail." Do not grade family spending, access to the coast, or the size of the environmental outcome.

Curriculum, extensions and sources

Connect the learning

Literacy: Retell events; infer feelings from actions; compare characters; ask and answer questions; distinguish a story retelling from an invented continuation.

Science: Observe organisms, compare habitats and model relationships. Treat the novel as a source of questions, not as a scientific reference.

Mathematics: Sort, tally, graph and compare small quantities in Project 3. **Art and speaking:** Label a model, illustrate an idea and explain a choice to a partner.

These are curriculum-planning suggestions, not a claim of formal standards certification. Select local learning standards appropriate to your class.

Extensions: Hold a classroom animal-fact gallery; invite an aquarium educator to answer prewritten questions; compare a local habitat with a kelp forest; revisit one first-day prediction after the final chapter. A coastal trip is optional, never required.

Further reading for teachers

Primary text: Luke Kilpatrick, The Octopus' Gift, attached print proof ISBN 9798992482867. Chapter numbers are used because pagination varies. This guide follows Book 4's discussion/project/writing/framework structure, with new younger-reader material.

R1. Monterey Bay Aquarium, "Purple sea urchin." Feeding relationships and species background. https://www.montereybayaquarium.org/animals/animals-the-ocean/animals-a-to-z/purple-sea-urchin

R2. Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, "Iconic Kelp Forests." Context for kelp loss and restoration. https://montereybay.noaa.gov/science/characterization/kelp-forests.html

R3. NOAA Fisheries, "Marine Life in Distress." Adult reference for reporting wildlife concerns. https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/topic/marine-life-distress

R4. The Marine Mammal Center, "Safe Wildlife Viewing." Practical viewing guidance. https://www.marinemammalcenter.org/animal-care/patient-journey/rescue/safe-wildlife-viewing

Sources checked November 11, 2026. Adults should preview links and check current guidance before a visit or activity. No organization listed is represented as endorsing this guide.

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