

SAM, THE THORNY SEAHORSE  
by Marilyn Alexander

(Note: seahorse voice should be spoken with little jaw movement and with pursed lips since the seahorse has no jaw but only a snout. Already-made seahorse puppets with mouths that do not move are available online.)

Sam: Hi there, kids! I'm a thorny seahorse, and I live in the Red Sea.

Interviewer: Red Sea!? Why, we're learning about Moses and the Red Sea in Bible club today!

Sam: You are! Did you know that the Red Sea is one of the finest places in the world for deep sea diving?

Interviewer: No. Tell me more.

Sam: Well, there are over 1000 species of sea creatures in the Red Sea. [proudly] I'm one of them.

Interviewer: So you are! [pause] I know we just met you, and so it might not be polite to ask you such a personal question. But . . . well . . . um . . . why do you talk so funny? Can't you [with facial gestures] ENUNCIATE better?

Sam: That would be pretty tough to do.

Interviewer: Why?

Sam: Take a look at my mouth. Even though my head looks like I'm a horse, I don't have teeth or a large jaw like most fish, but I have a snout. We thorny seahorses have longer snouts than other seahorses. Also, we thornies have a pretty black ring around our snouts. See?

Interviewer: That is pretty, Sam. How can you eat without using a jaw?

Sam: I just [make slurping sound] slurp in my food. Wouldn't you like to do that, kids? [slurping sound] And my mom doesn't have to tell me to eat quietly or to chew because I just slurp in whole teeny-tiny shrimp, plankton, or fish larvae—up to 3,000 a day. That's 360 an hour. I usually get 'em as they swim past me.

Interviewer: Wow! That's a bunch. You must eat fast at mealtimes to eat that much.

Sam: Actually, mealtime is all day long. I eat 12 hours a day. How would you like to do that, kids? No time to play. But that's okay with me because that's how my Creator made me. Say, how do you like my coronet?

Interviewer: Your coronet? My husband plays the cornet [pretend to play with gestures "ta-ta-da-ta-ta-da-ta-tah"], but I don't see yours unless that's another name for your snout.

Sam: No, not cornet; coronet—my crown.

Interviewer: Oh, you mean your crown, your coronet.

Sam: Yes. Thorny seahorses have five points on theirs and a spine in front of it. Did you know that our coronets are kind of like human thumbprints? They identify us exactly.

Interviewer: Interesting! [slight pause] I may sound rude again, but your eyes are kind of bothering me. One is looking one way and the other is looking another way.

Sam: Isn't that a marvelous design? I can look two ways at one time. Indeed, I need to find lots of food, you know.

Interviewer: Yes.

Sam: And I need to watch out for my enemies. But if I see an enemy, I can just change colors to hide in my environment.

Interviewer: Like a chameleon?

Sam: Sure enough!

Interviewer: Another thing I've noticed is that you swim upright. How do you do that?

Sam: See these fins on my sides.

Interviewer: Yes, and I learned they are called pectoral fins.

Sam: That's right. They control my steering. My small back fin—

Interviewer: I learned what that's called, too. It's your dorsal fin.

Sam: You're so smart. These fins wave rapidly to move me through the water. My dorsal fin beats 20-30 times per second.

Interviewer: Do you mean that when I count "one," you have beat your dorsal fin back and forth 20 to 30 times?!

Sam: Absolutely! That fin beats so fast that you can't even see it! I look as if I'm gliding up and down in the water. But I still don't swim very fast with all this armor on; so water currents help me get places too.

Interviewer: What happens if a really strong water current comes along?

Sam: Oh, I just curl my tail around the sea grasses or coral branches at the bottom of the Red Sea and hold on for dear life! In fact, I usually just stay in one place all day. The Lord prepared me for every situation.

Interviewer: What else would you like to tell us, Sam?

Sam: I have a wife, only one wife. We stay together all our lives, just as God says humans are supposed to do.

Interviewer: Good for you, Sam!

Sam: Thank you. But one thing that is different about us seahorses is that *I*, the daddy, have the babies.

Interviewer: Huh? What did you say?

Sam: I said we *male* seahorses have the babies.

Interviewer: How does that happen?

Sam: Mrs. Seahorse deposits 200-600 eggs into this pouch on my tummy, where I keep them for 2-3 weeks. Then *I* give birth.

Interviewer: How interesting!

Sam: Yes, ma'am. My babies are about one centimeter long when they are born, but they start taking care of themselves as soon as they are born.

Interviewer: Do they do a good job of it?

Sam: Well, they do their best, but without a hard armor like mine, they look pretty tempting for other sea creatures to eat.

Interviewer: So a lot of them get eaten up before they are adults?

Sam: Yes. Only about two out of a thousand of us become adults. If we do survive, we live about four years.

Interviewer: You are certainly an amazing fish, Sam Seahorse. Christ, the Creator, made you very unique.

Sam: Yes, He did. In fact, listen to this: [Interviewer counts on fingers as Sam mentions each thing.] I have the head of a horse, the snout of an armadillo, spines of a puffer fish, the pouch of a kangaroo, eyes of a lizard, the wrap-around tail of a monkey, the armor-plated body of Stegosaurus, and the chameleon's ability to change colors.

Interviewer: Wow! You are like eight big animals all in one little fish! What a creation!

Sam: What a Creator!