

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# A Horse Is a Horse Unless It's a Seahorse

by Kelly Hashway

Seahorses get their names because of their profiles. From the side view, a seahorse resembles a horse. Of course, a seahorse really isn't much like a horse at all. Maybe that's because it's a fish. But oddly enough, this type of fish is a poor swimmer.

Unlike other fish, seahorses swim vertically, or upright. While they use fins to move through the water, they aren't able to maneuver as well as fish that swim horizontally. Seahorses use their dorsal fins on their backs. But there is a big difference between the dorsal fin on a seahorse and the dorsal fin on a shark. Seahorses flutter their dorsal fin, sometimes up to 35 times per second. They also use small fins behind their eyes called pectoral fins to steer. They don't have a caudal fin, which is the tail fin you see on other types of fish. This is why you typically find seahorses resting with their tails wrapped around coral and sea grass. If seahorses are caught in rough water, they can actually die of exhaustion since they aren't good swimmers.

Seahorses share many characteristics with other animals. Their eyes can move independently of each other, like a chameleon's. Also like a chameleon, seahorses can change color. They can use this color changing ability to blend into their surroundings and escape predators. They can range in color, spanning white, red, yellow, black, brown, and gray.

Male seahorses have pouches like kangaroos, where they carry their young. Like armadillos, seahorses have long snouts, which suck up food. They are big eaters, grazing continuously throughout the day on plankton, crustaceans, and shrimp. Seahorses are even like stegosaurus in that they have bone plates covering their bodies. These bone plates are arranged like rings. This acts like a suit of armor to protect the seahorse from predators, but it also limits the seahorse's flexibility.

These amazing creatures can be found all around the world. And while they share features with many different animals, the seahorse is definitely a creature all its own.



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1. Where is a seahorse's pectoral fin located?
- a. on it's back
  - b. on its tail
  - c. on its nose
  - d. behind its eyes

2. How does a seahorse's ability to change color help it survive?
- 
- 

3. Name three things seahorses eat.
- 

4. Reread the following sentence from the passage and choose the best definition for the underlined word.

*While they use fins to move through the water, they aren't able to maneuver as well as fish that swim horizontally.*

The underlined word means...

- a. bump into objects
  - b. feel water currents
  - c. wiggle its tail
  - d. perform a quick or skillful move
5. What type of passage is this?
- a. science fiction
  - b. realistic fiction
  - c. non-fiction
  - d. fantasy

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## Vocabulary Activity



Fill in the missing letters to create a vocabulary word from the article. Then write the full word on the line. Be sure you spell each word correctly.

1. \_\_\_ \_\_\_ o f i \_\_\_ \_\_\_ s

**hint:** side views

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_ d \_\_\_ l \_\_\_

**hint:** strangely

\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_ o r \_\_\_ \_\_\_ o n t \_\_\_ \_\_\_ l y

**hint:** left-to-right

\_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_ h a \_\_\_ \_\_\_ c t e \_\_\_ i \_\_\_ t \_\_\_ c s

**hint:** traits; properties

\_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_ \_\_\_ a \_\_\_ \_\_\_ l e o \_\_\_

**hint:** species of lizard that can change color

\_\_\_\_\_

6. \_\_\_ r a \_\_\_ i \_\_\_ g

**hint:** eating continually throughout the day

\_\_\_\_\_

7. \_\_\_ l e \_\_\_ i \_\_\_ i l \_\_\_ \_\_\_ y

**hint:** ability to move and bend

\_\_\_\_\_



## ANSWER KEY

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1. Where is a seahorse's pectoral fin located? **d**
- a. on it's back
  - b. on its tail
  - c. on its nose
  - d. **behind its eyes**

2. How does a seahorse's ability to change color help it survive?

**It can blend into its surroundings so predators cannot see it.**

3. Name three things seahorses eat.

**plankton, crustaceans, and shrimp**

4. Reread the following sentence from the passage and choose the best definition for the underlined word.

*While they use fins to move through the water, they aren't able to maneuver as well as fish that swim horizontally.*

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## Vocabulary Activity

Fill in the missing letters to create a vocabulary word from the article. Then write the full word on the line. Be sure you spell each word correctly.



1. p r o f i l e s profiles  
hint: side views
2. o d d l y oddly  
hint: strangely
3. h o r i z o n t a l l y horizontally  
hint: left-to-right
4. c h a r a c t e r i s t i c s characteristics  
hint: traits; properties
5. c h a m e l e o n chameleon  
hint: species of lizard that can change color
6. g r a z i n g grazing  
hint: eating continually throughout the day
7. f l e x i b i l i t y flexibility  
hint: ability to move and bend