



Make-a-Mollusk

Background Information

In this activity, you will use your creative skills to invent a new species of mollusk! Mollusks are a very diverse group of animals, with more than 79,000 different species worldwide, 380 of which can be found in SW Florida. Many people know them as the animals that make sea shells, but some have little to no shell at all. So while snails and clams are mollusks, so are octopuses and squid!

There are eight classes of mollusks. The three most common classes are: **gastropods** (snails and slugs, which can live in saltwater, freshwater, or on land); **bivalves** (clams, oysters, mussels, and scallops, which have two parts to their shell); and **cephalopods** (octopuses, squids, cuttles, and nautiluses). Nautiluses have external shells, but most cephalopods do not. **Polyplacophorans** are chitons. Chitons' shells are split into eight strong plates that cover their body. **Scaphopods** are tusk shells, and look like elephant tusks! **Monoplacophorans** are limpet-like animals that live in the deep sea. The remaining two classes, the **caudofoveates** and **solenogasters**, are wormlike animals that live on corals or sediment in the deep sea.

Mollusks are important sources of food for many organisms... including other mollusks! Many mollusks filter the water they live in by eating microorganisms. Some eat algae, helping to keep algal blooms in check and overgrowth on corals to a minimum.

Some of the body parts that many mollusks share are:

- Shell: a hard body part grown by a mollusk to protect its soft body parts
- Siphon: a tubular body part that serves as a nose, allowing a mollusk to smell and breathe
- Proboscis: a tubular body part that contains the mollusk's radula and mouth
- Radula: a body part similar to a tongue, with teeth used for scraping off food

Instructions

1. Materials: paper, markers/colored pencils/crayons
2. On the flowchart on the next page, begin at the "Start" by deciding whether you want your mollusk to have a shell or not.
3. At each step in the chart, decide which features you want your mollusk to have, then add them to your drawing.
4. When you reach the end, name your mollusk!

Share a photo of your drawing and tag us at @shellmuseum using #makeamollusk and compare it with our photos of real life mollusks!

