The Snail and the Whale
by Julia Donaldson

A tiny snail and a great big gray-blue humpback whale demonstrate that friendships come in all shapes and sizes.

Before:
Introduce the book and tell the children a little bit about it. Follow that with a comment or question that is related to the story such as, Have you ever been to the sea? Encourage a discussion so the children can comment, ask questions, and express their feelings. Set the stage for listening by asking an “I wonder” statement based on the cover illustration.
• I wonder if the whale knows there is a snail on his tail?

During:
Encourage the children to comment on the illustrations, ask questions, and predict what will happen next in the story. Children gain confidence and a sense of achievement through being able to correctly predict how a story will end. Point out “rare words” (e.g., those words that are not commonly used in every day conversation) and help the children relate the meaning in a way that makes sense to them.

Rare Words in The Snail and the Whale
• soot: black dust given off by fire
• flock: a group of animals
• slithered: to move along a slippery surface or make something slide
• gazed: to look for a long time with unwavering attention
• wiggle: make small movements
• silvery: like silver, especially in color
• tide: the rise and fall of the ocean
• immensely: to a huge degree
• coral: a deep pinkish orange marine organism
• enormous: huge or gigantic
• icebergs: a mass of floating ice
• fiery: glowing hot
• golden: colored like gold
• arched: curved
• frolicked: to play and move cheerfully
• caves: a large hollowed-out place in the ground or in a rock
• feathery: similar to a feather in lightness and softness
• hideous: horrible to see
• vast: very great in size or amount
• zigzag: a line going at an angle one way and turning sharply another way
• amazed: to be filled with wonder
• earsplitting: very loud
• shimmering: to shine softly with a wavering light
• frail: weak and easy to break
• tale: a story that is untrue
• enormous: huge
After:
Discuss the story. Ask questions…
• Where did the sea snail want to go?
• What animal asked the sea snail to go sailing?
• On what part of the whale’s body did the sea snail sit?
• How big do you think an iceberg is? Bigger than a bus?
• What is another name for a fiery mountain?
• What are some other animals that live in the sea?
• What makes a thunderstorm scary?
• What happened when the whale swam too close to the shore?
• Did this book have a happy ending?
• Did the other snails want to go sailing after they heard about the trip?

Feed the Whale
Cut a whale shape from poster board and glue it to a box. Cut a hole for the mouth. Encourage the children to toss bean bags, tennis balls or quarters into the whale’s mouth.