

## Craft Me an Ecosystem [MS]

**Grades:** K-2

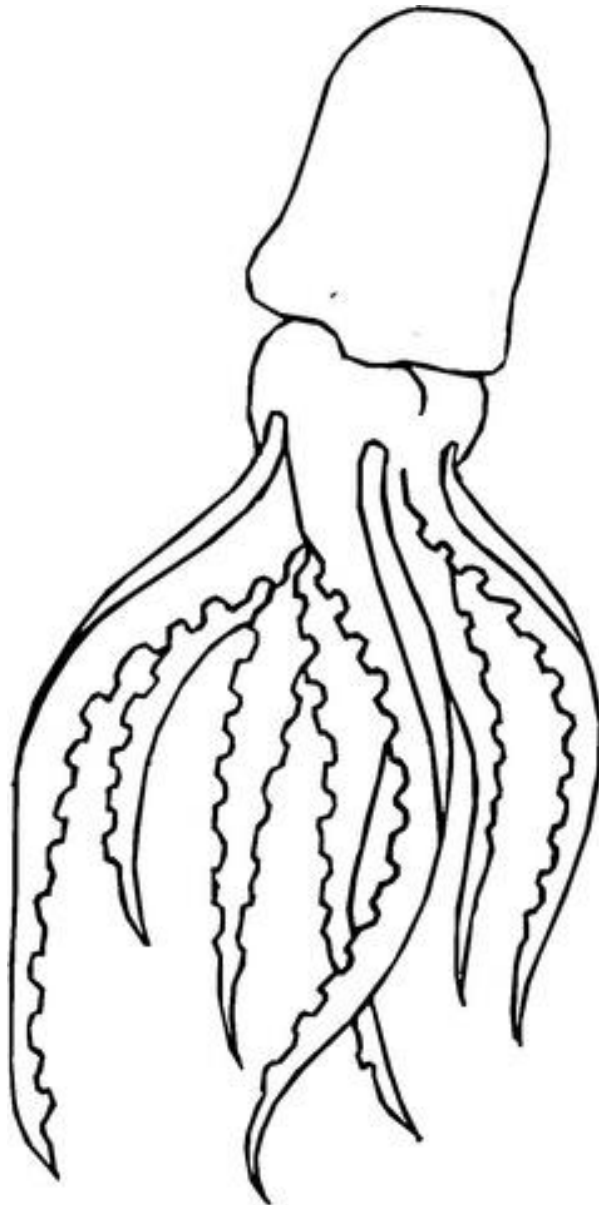
**Time:** 45 minutes to 1 hour

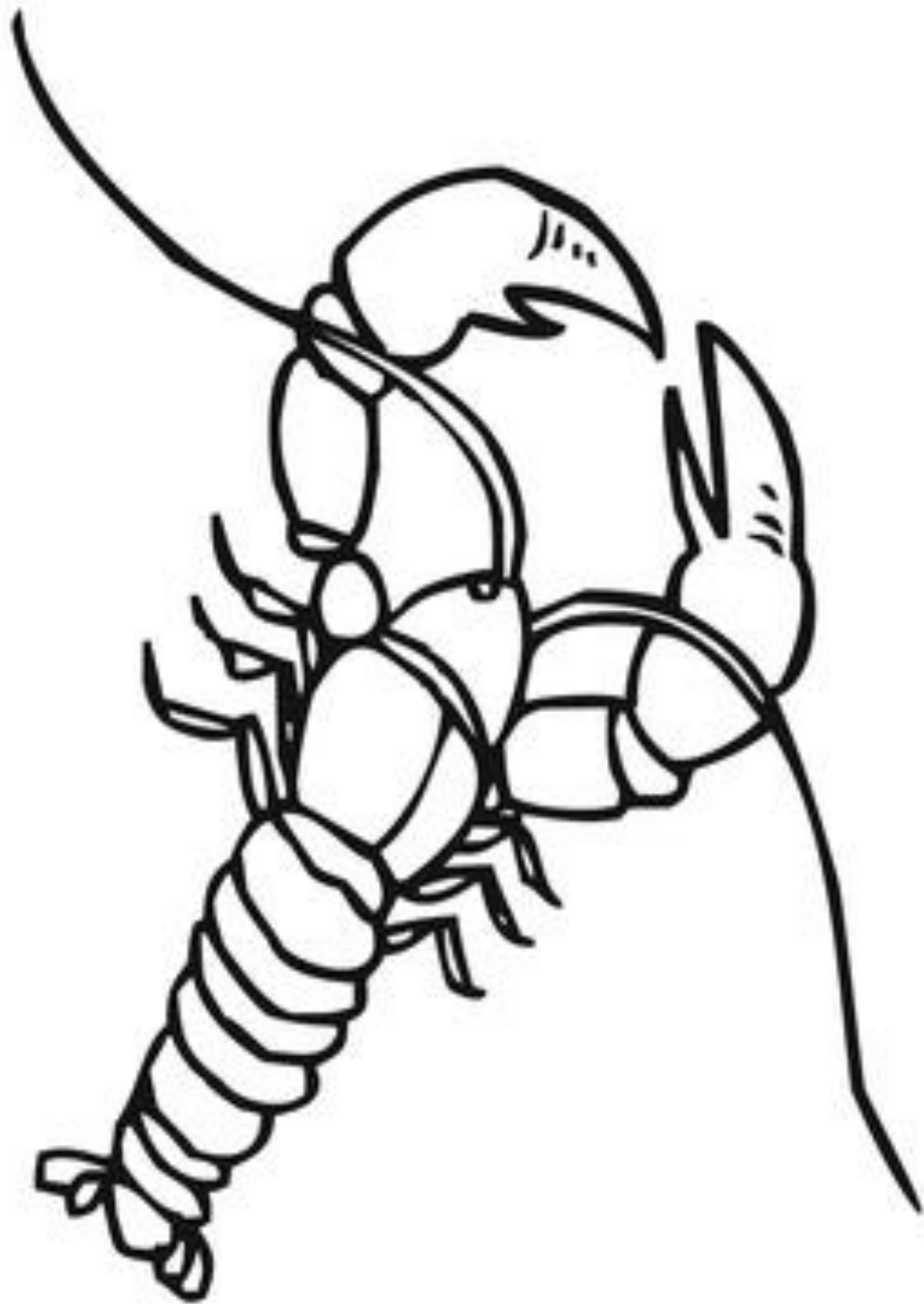
**Goals:** To use art to understand the differences between aquatic ecosystems.

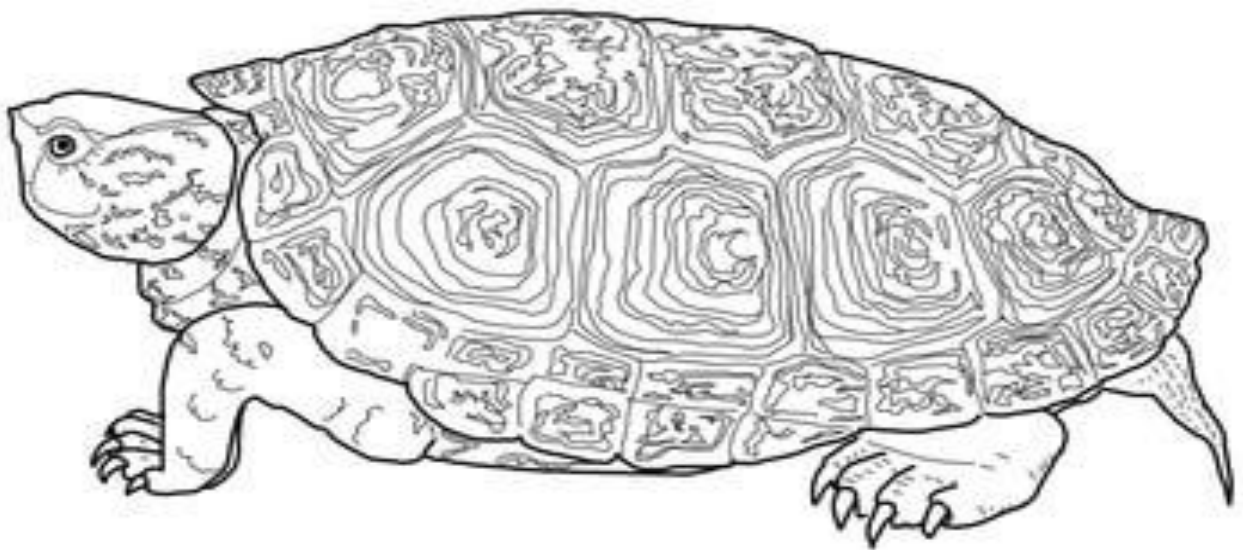
**Objectives:**

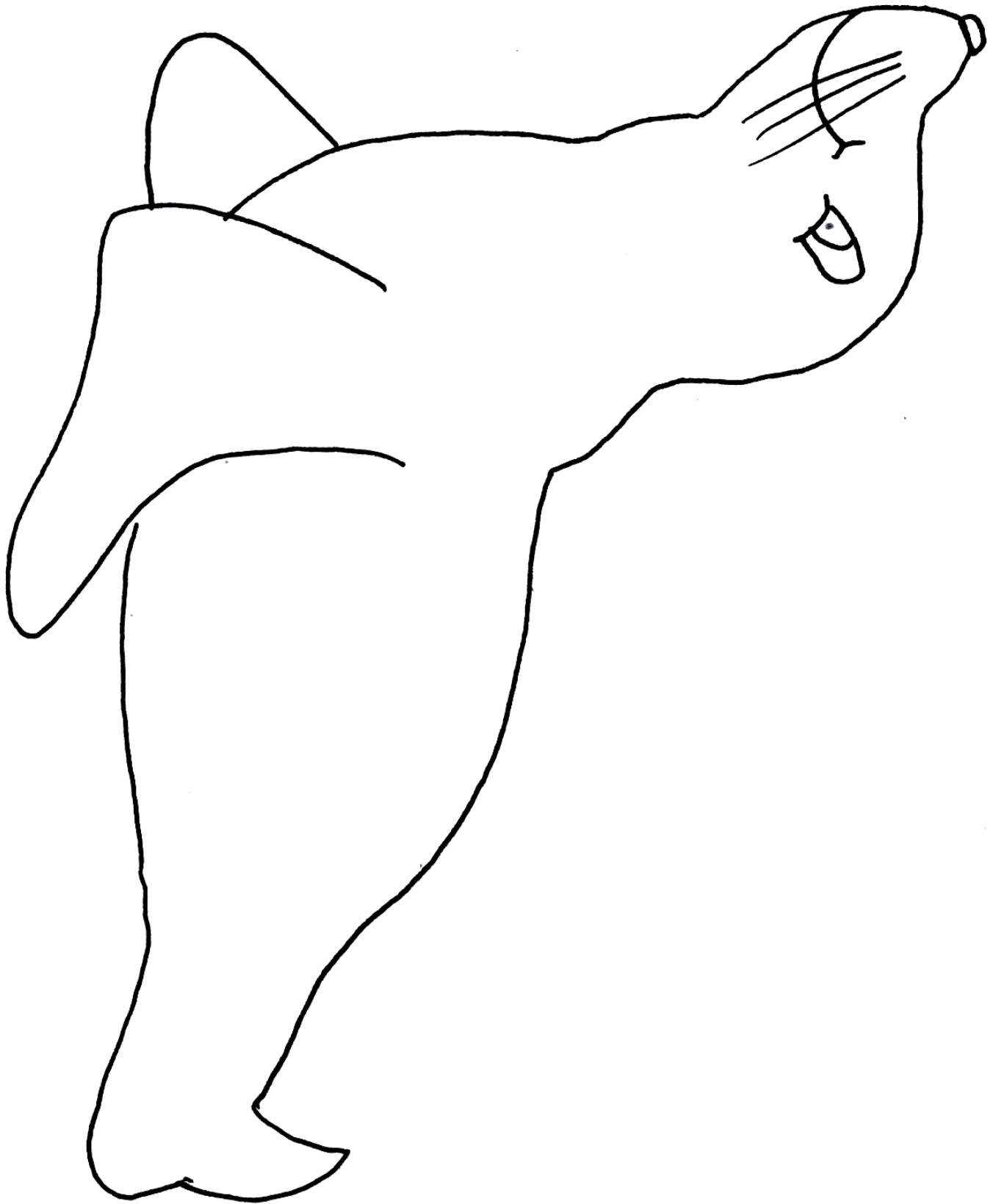
Students will be able to: describe freshwater and saltwater ecosystems; identify different organisms that live in these ecosystems; and craft several examples of these species.

**Directions:** Color the following animals for each habitat: Squid (ocean), Crayfish (freshwater), Diamondback terrapin (estuary), seal (ocean).









**Key Words:**

Ecosystem  
Freshwater  
Brackish water

Habitat  
Saltwater  
Survival

Organism  
Estuary

**Background Information:**

\*Adapted from Kids Do Ecology\*

Lakes, ponds, rivers and streams all make up freshwater ecosystems. Freshwater simply means there is no salt dissolved in the water. Organisms, such as crayfish, that live in these habitats have body systems that are regulated for survival in a non-salt environment. Plants grow both in the water and alongside the banks of these habitats and provide necessary oxygen for animals through the process of photosynthesis.

Before a river flows into the ocean, it often will pass through a body of water known as the estuary. An estuary is an ecosystem that is influenced by both freshwater and saltwater and is referred to as brackish water. They are extremely unique habitats as they provide a nursery for a variety of juvenile species such as clams, crabs, and bass. They are important habitats because they reduce the risk of coastal flooding, provide a buffer for coastal storms, and clean our waters through nutrient uptake by aquatic plants.

Oceans are completely saltwater ecosystems and provide habitat for an enormous amount of wildlife. Plant life is limited to coastal areas seaweeds and kelp and mid-ocean floating mats of seaweed species. These plants provide adequate shelter and food supply for many juvenile species of fish such as tuna and sunfish. The ocean is extremely vast and stretches between continents but can still be polluted when it comes in contact with rivers and estuaries.