



Animal Sidekicks

The Woolly Bat and the Pitcher Plant



Pitcher plants originally evolved to trap, kill and digest unsuspecting animals. They're a type of carnivorous (meat eating) plant that attracts prey with a sweet scent and then drowns it in digestive fluids. But this particular species has evolved a more peaceful strategy – and it's all to do with a sleepy bat.



Time for a Snooze

Most pitcher plants hope to use the promise of sweet nectar to lure in their prey, but this one uses a good night's sleep. This plant offers a comfortable roost, just the right size for its bat friend to nap comfortably.





Bed and Breakfast

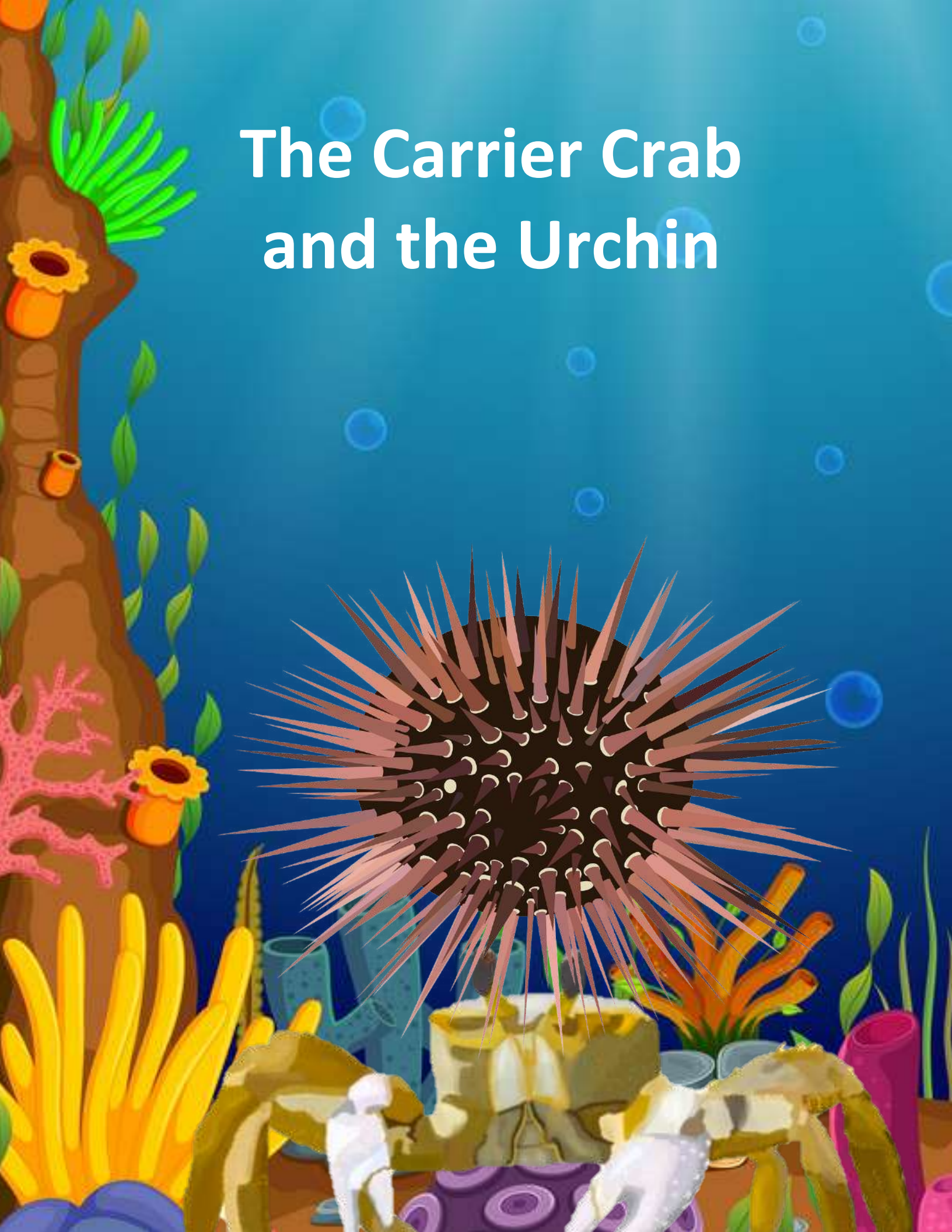


The bat poos in its sleepy (yes, really!) and its droppings fall into the plant's digestive fluids.

This might seem like a bad meal, but it gives the pitcher plant the essential nutrients it needs to grow. Bed for the bat, breakfast for the plant.



The Carrier Crab and the Urchin



Have you got a hat you really love? One you want to wear everywhere? Well, for the carrier crab the hat of choice is a sea urchin. It is the carrier crab's only defence against the dangers of the deep.

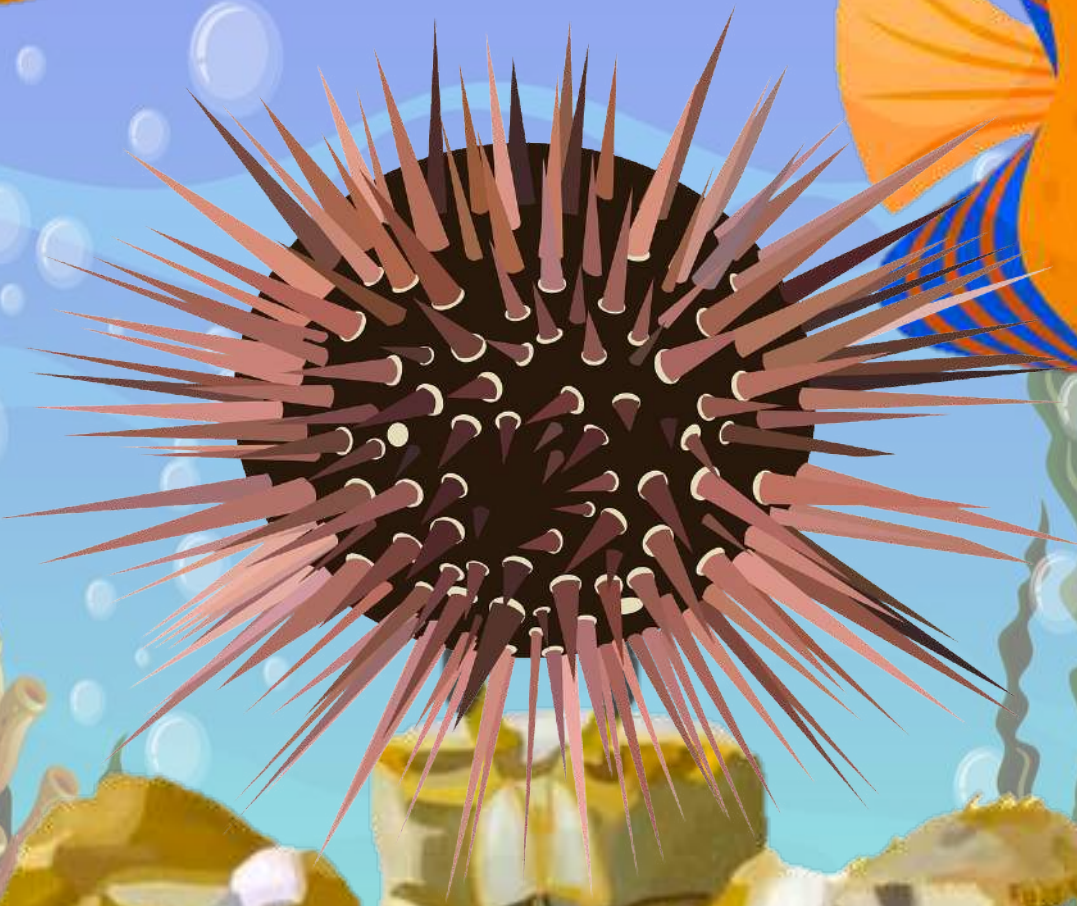


By carrying around a spiny, venomous animal above its head, the crab guarantees predators won't try to attack it. But the crab may not be the only one who benefits from this unusual arrangement: the urchin uses the crab as a form of transport, riding it like a horse.





Predators see the
spines and decide
not to bother
attacking the crab.





Carrier crabs stand on their front four legs and carry with the back four. (The crab equivalent of a handstand)

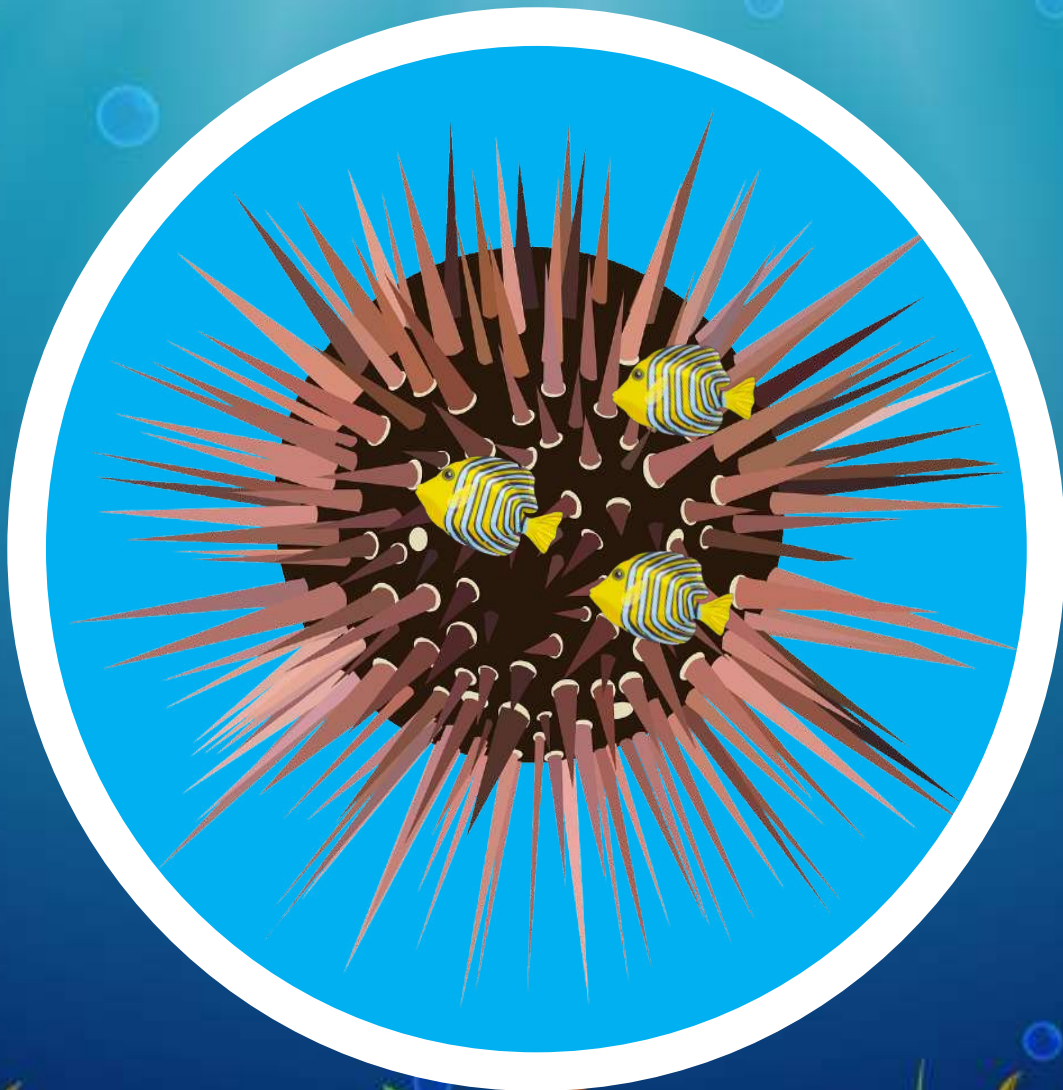


The sea is full of floating food for the urchin to eat as it's carried around.



Safe Travels

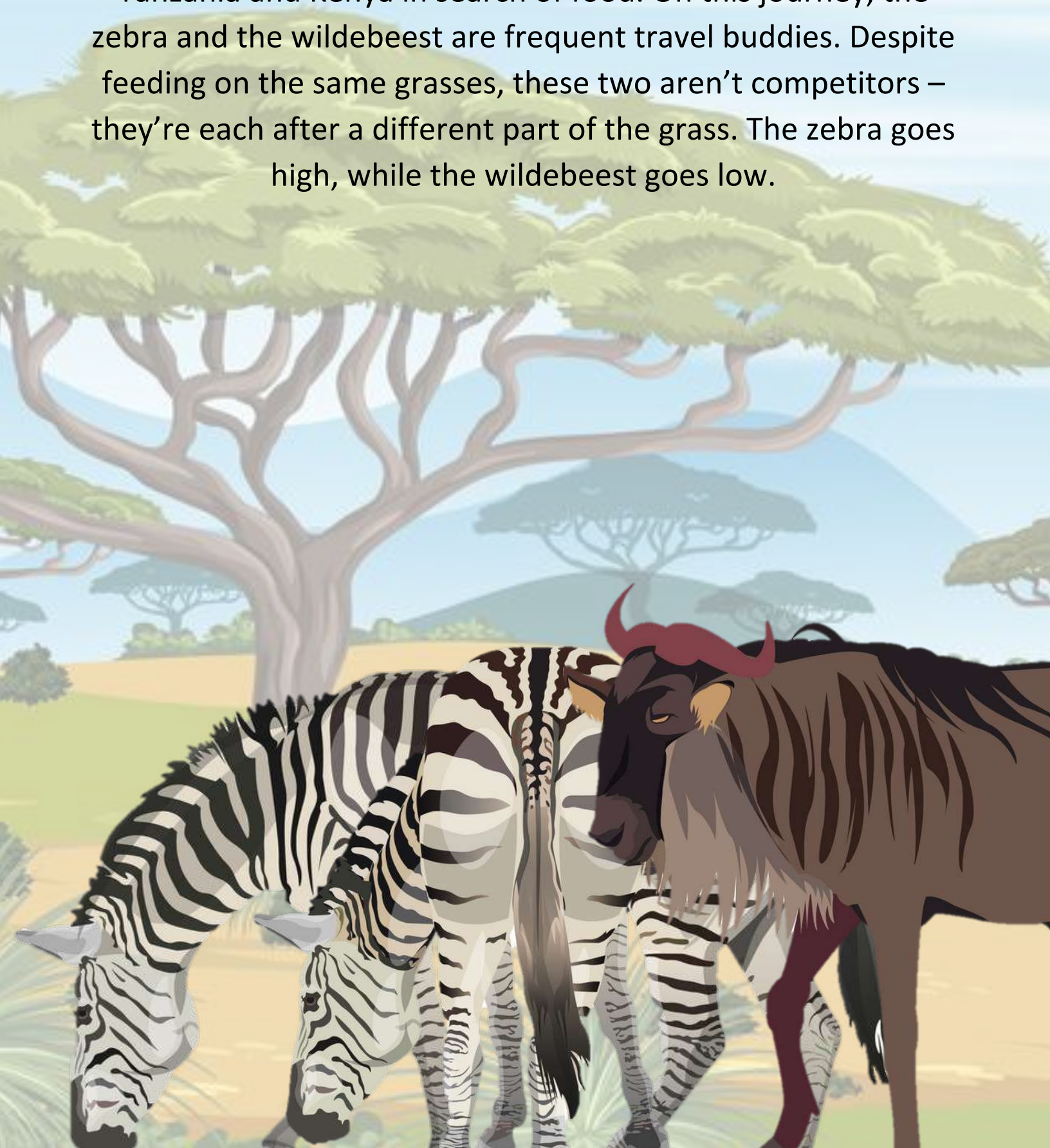
On occasion, little fish have been witnessed swimming in and around the spines of an urchin as it's carried by a crab. These fish have lucked out – they get all the protection of the urchin's spines, without having to carry the urchin.



The Zebra and the Wildebeest



Every year, over a million wildebeest and hundreds of thousands of zebras travel between the African countries, Tanzania and Kenya in search of food. On this journey, the zebra and the wildebeest are frequent travel buddies. Despite feeding on the same grasses, these two aren't competitors – they're each after a different part of the grass. The zebra goes high, while the wildebeest goes low.





The zebra mows
down the tall parts
of the grass ...





... and the
wildebeest eats
what's left.





THINK

DIGITAL ACADEMY