Flotsam
by David Wiesner

Teacher's Guide
Written By Mary Kay Wheeler

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Synopsis

The book opens with a picture of a big crab and an even bigger blue eye behind it. A beach bag and microscope are sitting on a towel along with a beach bag, shovels, and a man and woman sitting on beach chairs reading. The boy holds a magnifying glass in his hands and is closely examining the crab, which doesn't look very happy. The boy walks along the beach and continues his observation of the crab. Suddenly, a huge wave crashes over the boy and he is tossed around by the wave.

When he recovers he is sitting on the sand with an old-fashioned camera sitting in front of him. The boy picks the camera up and sees the name, "Melville underwater camera." The boy looks over the beach area to see if anyone has lost the camera. He brings the camera to his parents and they inspect it with him. The boy and his parents bring the camera to the lifeguard sitting in his chair, and inquire whether or not someone has asked about the camera. The lifeguard motions that he doesn't know anything about it, so the boy brings the camera back to his beach towel and begins to look inside. There he finds a roll of film. Intrigued, the boy pulls out the film and runs to a one-hour photo shop. The boy turns in the film and impatiently waits outside the photo shop.

Once the film is developed, he runs back to the beach and looks at the pictures. He is astonished by what he sees. The photos are of a magical world under the sea. Real fish are swimming with mechanical ones. An octopus family is sitting in a living room as the mother octo-

pus reads to her offspring, as other fish sit on the couch listening to the story. A puffer fish has turned into a hot air balloon ride, and the fish passengers are enjoying the view. Sea turtles are swimming with little sea shell villages on their backs, while sea creatures walk along the streets of the villages. Green sea creatures with globes on their heads are at work as sea horses stand on watch. Gigantic star fish are walking and stretching in the sun as whales swim underneath them.
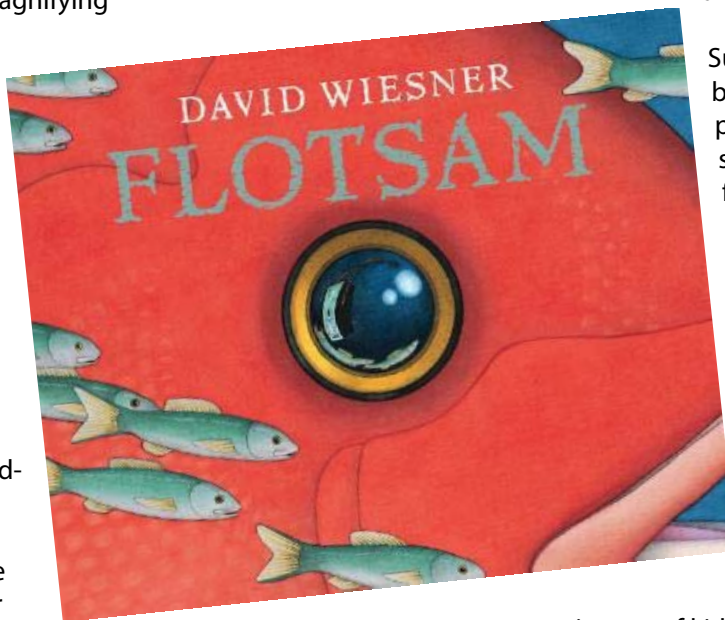
Suddenly, a picture of a girl is before him. She is holding a picture in her hand. The boy is surprised by what he sees; in fact, he can't believe his eyes. He gets his magnifying glass for a closer look. An Asian girl is holding a picture of a boy holding a picture of a girl, holding a picture of a boy holding picture of a girl, and so on. The pictures go on and on. The boy spies his microscope and decides to get an even closer look. He can see even more kids holding pictures of kids. As the pictures go on, the boy sees children from other countries, and the pictures go back in time. The clothes the kids are wearing and their haircuts are outdated. The boy can see all the way back to the first picture taken in the series, which appears to be a boy at the beach around the turn of the century.

The boy sits on the beach for a long time looking at the pictures. His parents approach him and motion to him that it is time to go home. The boy puts the camera on his pail. He holds the latest picture up to his face, and we see him taking his picture holding the picture of the oriental girl. Another wave crashes up behind him and the pictures are spread over the sand. The boy takes the camera and tosses it into the ocean.

There, the camera floats along into the night until a squid picks it up and takes it for a ride. Another fish

picks it up and the strap of the camera is floating outside its mouth. A whale spies the camera floating, and yellow sea horses take the camera down to the magical underwater world where lanterns line the streets and mermaids swim with other fish, as they wave to one another.

Suddenly, a seagull snaps up the camera and flies away with it. Porpoises get hold of it and swim with it through another night. The sea tosses it about, and the camera lands on a chunk of ice where penguins stand looking at it. The camera continues its journey into a warmer climate, and washes up on a beach studded with palm trees, where a young girl is reaching for the camera.

Timeline of Photography

400-500 B.C.	Chinese and Greek philosophers describe the basic principles of optics and the camera.
1664-1666	Isaac Newton discovers that white light is composed of different colors.
1727	Johann Heinrich Schulze discovers that silver nitrate darkens upon exposure to light.
1814	Joseph Nicéphore Niépce achieves first photographic image with camera obscura; however, the image requires eight hours of light exposure and later fades.
1837	Daguerre's first daguerreotype—the first image that was fixed and did not fade and needed less than thirty minutes of light exposure.
1840	First U.S. patent in photography is issued to Alexander Wolcott for his camera.
1841	William Henry Talbot patents the Calotype process—the first negative-positive process making possible the first multiple copies.
1843	First advertisement with a photograph is made in Philadelphia.
1851	Frederick Scott Archer invents the Collodion process: images require only two or three seconds of light exposure.
1859	The Sutton panoramic camera is patented.
1861	Oliver Wendell Holmes invents stereoscope viewer.
1865	Photographs and photographic negatives are added to protected works under copyright.
1871	Richard Leach Maddox invents the gelatin dry plate silver bromide process, so negatives no longer have to be developed immediately.
1884	George Eastman invents flexible, paper-based photographic film.
1888	Eastman patents Kodak roll-film camera.
1893	Eastman markets Kodachrome film.
1941	Eastman Kodak introduces Kodacolor negative film.
1942	Chester Carlson receives patent for electric photography (xerography).
1948	Edwin Land markets the Polaroid camera.
1954	Eastman Kodak introduces high speed Tri-X film.
1960	EG&G develops extreme depth underwater camera for U.S. Navy.
1963	Polaroid introduces instant color film.
1968	Photograph of the Earth from the moon.
1973	Polaroid introduces one-step instant photography with the SX-70 camera.
1978	Konica introduces first point-and-shoot, autofocus camera.
1984	Canon demonstrates first digital electronic still camera.
1985	Pixar introduces a digital imaging processor.
1990	Eastman Kodak announces Photo CD as a digital image storage medium.

Author Sketch

Born in 1956, David Wiesner grew up in Bridgewater, New Jersey, and drawing at an early age, recreating his world through the prism of his imagination—for instance, turning his neighborhood into a faraway planet or a prehistoric jungle. Inspired by *Mad Magazine* and *Action Comics*, he was making his own silent films by high school. As a boy, he studied art history, and then, inspired by the works of the masters, created his own wordless comic books with names like *Slop the Wonder Pig*.

In college at the famous Rhode Island School of Design,

Wiesner was heavily influenced by artists Tom Sgouros and David Macaulay; whose training helped shape him into an award-winning picture-book author. After graduating from RISD with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in illustration, Wiesner pursued illustration full-time. He has illustrated more than two dozen children's books, many of which he authored; his books *Tuesday* (1992), *The Three Pigs* (2002), and *Flotsam* (2007) all won the Caldecott Medal, and *Sector 7* (1999) won a Caldecott honor award. An exhibit of his original artwork, "Seeing the Story," toured the United States in 2000 and 2001. His paintings have been displayed in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the Art Institute of Chicago. Wiesner and his wife, surgeon Kim Kahng, live in the Philadelphia area with their two children, Kevin and Jaime.

Critic's Corner

A celebrated illustrator and "wordless storyteller," David Wiesner is a *New York Times* bestseller who has won many awards for his books, including the Prix Sorcières (the French equivalent of the Caldecott Medal), an IBBY Honor Book nomination, and three Caldecott Medals, including one for *Flotsam*. *Flotsam* won high praise from critics for its clever, whimsical story of a day at the beach with unexpectedly far-reaching ramifications. The book received many rave reviews. *Publishers Weekly* noted that "new details swim into focus with every rereading of this immensely satisfying excursion," and *Kirkus Reviews* called it "a wordless invitation … not to be resisted." *Booklist* noted that *Flotsam* "finds wild magic in quiet, everyday settings," and concluded, "this visual wonder invites us to rethink how and what we see, out in the world and in our mind's eye."

Selected Other Works by David Wiesner

As author/illustrator
Loathsome Dragon (co-authored with Kim Kahng) (1987)
Free Fall (1988)
Hurricane (1990)
Tuesday (1991)
June 29, 1999 (1992)
Sector 7 (1999)
The Three Pigs (2001)
Flotsam (2006)

As illustrator
Ugly Princess, by Nancy Luenn (1981)
One Bad Thing about Birthdays, by David R. Collins (1981)
Man from the Sky, by Avi (1981)
Boy who Spoke Chimp, by Jane Yolen (1981)
Owly, by Mike Thaler (1982)
Neptune Rising: Songs and Tales of the Undersea Folk, by Jane Yolen (1982)
Miranty and the Alchemist, by Vera Chapman (1983)
Dark Green Tunnel, by Allan W. Eckert (1984)
Wand: the Return to Mesmeria, by Allan W. Eckert (1985)
E.T., the Storybook of the Green Planet, by William Kotzwinkle; based on the story by Steven Spielberg (1985)
Kite Flier, by Dennis Haseley (1986)
Firebrat, by Nancy Willard (1988)
Rainbow People, by Laurence Yep (1989)
The Sorcerer's Apprentice, by Marianna Mayer (1989)
Tongues of Jade, by Laurence Yep (1991)
Night of the Gargoyles, by Eve Bunting (1994)
Honest Andrew, by Gloria Skurzynski (1980)

Bibliography

"History of photography," http://inventors.about.com/library/inventors/blphotography.htm
"David Wiesner: The Art of Visual Storytelling," http://www.houghtonmifflinbooks.com/authors/wiesner/home.html
"David Wiesner," http://wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Wiesner
"The Library of Congress National Book Festival," http://www.loc.gov/bookfest/2002/wiesner.html
"Wordless Picture Books," http://www.library.uiuc.edu/edx/wordless.htm
"Find Me an Author" fantasy page, http://www.findmeanauthor.com/fantasy_fiction_genre.htm

The Importance of Setting

Setting is integral to David Wiesner's *Flotsam*. The entire story hinges on the oceanside location, and, indeed, there would be no story without the setting by the sea. The fact of the boy's presence on the beach, his discovery of the camera that's been washed up, the contents of the camera with its pictures of fantastic underwater worlds, and the ongoing action in the story as the next child finds the camera and photos, all involve the ocean. Even the book's title refers to its setting: one definition of *flotsam* is "items washed ashore."

Literary Terms and Applications

For a better understanding of David Wiesner's style, present the following terms and applications to *Flotsam*:

Fantasy: a literary genre that depends on magic or make-believe for key story elements. Fantasy is often characterized by a departure from the accepted rules by which individuals perceive the world around them; it represents that which is impossible (unexplained) and outside the parameters of our known reality..

Symbol: a concrete object that represents a complex or abstract idea or relationship and implies more than its literal meaning. The Melville underwater camera that ushers the protaganist into a fantastic world is both the catalyst for the story and a symbol of the spirit of curiosity and inventiveness, the enduring nature of childhood from generation to generation, and the connectedness of all life.

Universality: a quality or theme that applies to all people at all times. The pictures of different children from different cultures and eras, and the evidence that they all responded with openness, curiosity, and a sense of community to the discovery of the camera, testifies to the universality of human inventiveness and curiosity, and of the wonder of childhood.

Goals and Objectives

General Objectives

1. To enjoy a fantastic journey
2. To analyze the book's title
3. To assess the main character's personality
4. To comment on human reactions to the impossible
5. To find examples of whimsy
6. To evaluate relations between character and reader

Specific Objectives

1. To find magic in everyday life
2. To use the imagination
3. To determine analyze the book's humor and emotion
4. To distinguish the intermingling of real and fictional events and characters
5. To appreciate the picture book as art
6. To evaluate the wordless picture book as literature

Cross-Curricular Sources

DVD and Video

Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea, Disney, 1954
The Little Mermaid, Disney, 1989

Literature

Mitsumasa Anna, *Dr. Ann's Magical Midnight Circus*
Ralph Cosentino, *The Marvelous Misadventures of Fun-Boy*
Roy Doty, *The Family Handyman: Wordless Workshop*
Monique Felix, *The Little Mouse Trapped in a Book*
Monique Felix, *The Wind*
John Goodall, *Paddy Underwater*

Themes and Motifs

A study of the central issues and situations on David Wiesner's *Flotsam* should include these aspects:

Themes
• imagination
• adventure
• interest
• ingenuity
• inventiveness
• history

Motifs
• using the imagination
• believing in an imaginary place
• stepping out of one's own environment
• thinking outside the norm
• allowing the pictures to tell a story
• seeing back in time

Comprehension Study

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important and you should be ready to defend your answers with quotations.

Character

1. Was the boy intelligent? Explain your thoughts.
   (The boy showed intelligence because he examined all the creatures and objects that came his way. He carried his telescope to the beach showing that he had an active mind and wanted to learn about everything he encountered at the beach.)

Style

2. Illustrations drive the story. How does the author use illustrations to depict humor and the nature of the character?
   (There are many examples of humor in the story, from facial expressions to situations; humor is present especially in the whimsical, fantastic settings of the underwater pictures, which include shell villages,

martians, and mermen.)

Character Development

3. How does the boy's character develop?
   (At first the boy is just playing with a crab on the beach. He displays intelligence and curiosity in getting the film developed and analyzing the results. By continuing the chain of photos and throwing the camera back in the see, he shows inventiveness, as well as respect for those who came before him.)

Conflict

4. Explain the conflict between the real world and the magical one under the sea.
   (The story requires a willing suspension of disbelief to appreciate its magical elements. As with all good fantasy, it incorporates realistic details—such as the existence of underwater photography—with elements that are clearly make-believe..)

Motivation

5. Explain the boy's motivation for developing the film.
   (He is intelligent and curious.)

Author Method

6. How is the boy's character revealed?
   (The boy's character is revealed through his actions. His attempts to find the camera's owner show honesty and concern for others; his use of the microscope and efforts to get the film developed show he is intelligent and curious. His continuation of the photo chain reveals playfulness and a sense of community.)

Image

7. List and discuss the various images in the book.

Across the Curriculum

Drama/Performance

1. Debate whether or not *Flotsam* should be mandatory reading in your grade level.

History/Social Studies

1. What is the history of photography? Write a paper about it.
2. What other artists use pictures to tell stories? When was the first picture book written?

Art

1. Make a picture book of your own that has an adven-

turous story.
2. Make a model of the underwater village and its inhabitants.
3. Draw a cartoon without words that tells a funny story.

Cinema/Film

1. Find an early cartoon—one that has no words, just action—and show it to the class.
2. Make a movie using only body language and movement to tell the story.

Journalism

1. Write a newspaper article about the civilization of fish living under the sea.
2. Learn more about cameras. Write a story about the beginning of the cameras and photography.
3. Make an advertisement for a magical trip under the sea.

Literature

1. Write an essay in which you find humor in *Flotsam*. What sort of humor appears in the novel? What generates the humor?

Composition

1. Write an essay on the value of picture books.
2. Write a diary about a magical trip under the sea.

Science

1. Research life underwater. Do fish live in groups? If so, what fish do and what fish live and travel alone?
2. What is the science behind cameras? What is the process in developing the film?
3. Is there a time when people will be living under the sea? Is there research into the possibility of this happening?

Education

1. What can be learned from picture books?
2. Who would picture books help the most in learning?

Alternate Assessment

1. Discuss what you learned from *Flotsam*.
2. Make a list of all the unusual occurrences and scenes the author put in his story.
3. Peruse another book by Wiesner and compare and contrast it to *Flotsam*.

Vocabulary Test

Circle the definition that best matches how the word is used in the novel.

_____ 1. flotsam
A. flower
B. animal
C. food
D. wreckage

_____ 2. crustacean
A. Dry skin
B. crab
C. food
D. language

_____ 3. astonish
A. surprise
B. scare
C. scold
D. help

_____ 4. photograph
A. device
B. musical instrument
C. image
D. signature

_____ 5. scene
A. landscape
B. argument
C. atmosphere
D. story

_____ 6. journey
A. rock band
B. work
C. study
D. voyage

_____ 7. fantastic
A. machine
B. incredible
C. admirer
D. drink

_____ 8. whimsical
A. without thought
B. ice cream bar
C. fanciful
D. musical

_____ 9. magical
A. enchanting
B. trick
C. melody
D. song

_____ 10. microscope
A. a bug
B. optical instrument
C. tiny image
D. doctors device

_____ 11. civilization
A. awareness
B. kindness
C. behavior
D. society

_____ 12. mechanical
A. works on cars
B. tool
C. motorized
D. talented

_____ 13. illustration
A. picture
B. illegal
C. length of time
D. demonstration

_____ 14. submerge
A. boat
B. go underwater
C. sandwich
D. bring together

_____ 15. examine
A. leave
B. say loudly
C. toss away
D. inspect

_____16. curious
A. boring
B. normal
C. interested
D. cabinet

Comprehension Test A

Part I: Character Identification (30 points)

Name the character (s) who fit (s) these descriptions.

_____ 1. First sea creature seen in the book

_____ 2. Makes objects easier to see

_____ 3. Sit reading in their chairs

_____ 4. Where film is developed

_____ 5. Take pictures under water

_____ 6. Swim alongside real fish

_____ 7. Is reading to her family

_____ 8. Takes fish on a hot air balloon ride

_____ 9. Have snail shells on their backs

_____ 10. Stand like centurions around a spaceship

_____ 11. Develops pictures of kids from the past

_____ 12. Squid helps carry it away

_____ 13. Author of the book

_____ 14. Found in the camera

_____ 15. Sea horses are guarding it

Part II: Fact or Opinion (20 points)

Mark the following statements either T for true, F for false or O for Opinion

_____ 1. The boy should have left the camera where he found it.

_____ 2. The last person to find the camera is a girl.

_____ 3. A walrus stares at the camera when it lands on the ice.

_____ 4. The boy takes the camera to an overnight developing store.

_____ 5. The boy should have kept the camera.

_____ 6. The boy brings a magnifying glass to the beach.

_____ 7. The real fish swim with mechanical fish.

_____ 8. The boy takes the camera to the lifeguard first.

_____ 9. The boy takes a picture of his parents.

_____ 10. A wave crashes over the boy and tosses him around.

Part III: Motivation (20 points)

Briefly explain the character's motivation for each action.

1. Why does the boy bring the camera to the one-hour developing shop?

_____

_____

2. Why does the boy take the camera to his parents?

_____

_____

3. Why does the boy use his microscope?

_____

_____

4. Why does the boy throw the camera back into the sea?

_____

_____

5. Why does the boy bring his microscope to the beach?

_____

_____

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Chose two and answer in complete sentences.
1. What is the significance of the book's title?
2. Is the story more interesting without words than it would have been with them? Why or why not?
3. What is significant about the other kids' clothing?

Comprehension Test B

Part I: Identification (30 points)
Identify the person, place, action, or thing that matches the description.

_____ 1. Finds a camera on the beach
_____ 2. Sand toys, water, waves, sun and fun
_____ 3. Tosses the boy around a one-hour photo shop
_____ 4. Develops film
_____ 5. Have green, lush mountains on their backs
_____ 6. Men in blue with round helmets gear
_____ 7. Has a picture of a girl holding a picture of a boy, holding a picture of a girl
and so on.
_____ 8. Helps make things larger
_____ 9. Found in the camera
_____ 10. Discovers a whole new world under the sea
_____ 11. Changes as the pictures go back in time
_____ 12. Helps the boy see all the way back to the first picture taken
_____ 13. Picks the camera out of the ocean and flies it away
_____ 14. Penguins find the camera on it
_____ 15. The camera is washed up on it

Part II: Short Answers (20 points)

Answer the following questions.
1. Who is the first person the boy sees on the roll of film? _____
2. Who does the boy bring the camera to first? _____
3. What changes in the pictures? _____
4. Why does the boy take his own picture? _____
5. What is the name of the camera? _____
6. How long does the film take to develop? _____
7. What is the first picture of on the roll of film? _____
8. Where does the camera end up? _____
9. What are the mermaids riding on under the sea? _____
10. What is the first thing the boy is holding in his hand at the beach? _____

Part III: Fill-in (30 points)

Fill in the words that complete each statement.
_____ 1. (**Blue, Red**) mechanical fish are swimming with real fish.
_____ 2. The boy's (**parents, sister**) take him to the lifeguard.
_____ 3. The film is developed at the (**one-hour, overnight**) shop.
_____ 4. The last person to reach for the camera is a (**grownup, young girl**).
_____ 5. He holds a (**snail, crab**) under his magnifying glass.

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.
1. Which part of the book is better, the story or the pictures? Why?
2. Why does the boy throw the camera back into the sea?
3. Why do the boy's parents take him to the lifeguard?

Answer Key

Vocabulary Test

1. D	5. A	9. A	13. A
2. B	6. D	10. B	14. B
3. A	7. B	11. D	15. D
4. C	8. C	12. C	16. C

Comprehension Test A

Part I: Character Identification (30 points)

1. Crab	9. Sea turtles
2. Microscope	10. Sea horses
3. Boy's parents	11. The boy
4. One hour photo	12. The camera
5. Melville underwater camera	13. David Wiesner
6. Mechanical fish	14. Roll of film
7. Octopus mom	15. Space ship
8. Puffer fish	

Part II: Fact or Opinion (20 points)

1. O	6. T
2. T	7. T
3. F	8. F
4. F	9. F
5. O	10. T

Part III: Motivation (20 points)

1. The boy is anxious to see what is on the film.
2. He wants their advice on how to find the owner, if possible.
3. The boy is astonished by what he sees on the photos, and wants to get a closer look.
4. The boy wants to keep the chain of pictures going.
5. He is curious about nature and is eager to learn and explore, and he has a scientific frame of mind.

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

Comprehension Test B

Part I: Identification (30 points)

1. The boy
2. The beach
3. A wave
4. One-hour photo shop
5. Starfish
6. Undersea martians
7. The camera
8. Magnifying glass
9. Roll of film
10. The boy
11. The kids' clothes
12. Microscope
13. A seagull
14. A patch of ice

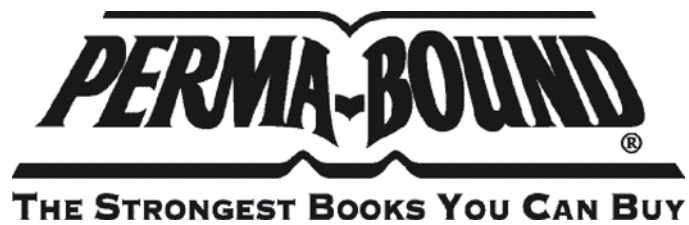15. A tropical beach

Part II: Short Answers (20 points)
1. An Asian girl
2. His parents
3. The clothing
4. To keep the pictures and the camera going
5. Melville underwater camera
6. One hour
7. He sees real fish swimming with mechanical fish
8. On a tropical beach
9. Red squid
10. A crab

Part III: Fill-In (30 points)
1. Red
2. Parents
3. One hour
4. Young girl
5. Crab

Part IV: Essay (30 points)
Answers will vary.

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