AMERICAN MUSEUM of NATURAL HISTORY

LeFrak Class of the Month Essay Contest

GRADE: 5

Life at the Limits:
Stories of Amazing Species

Student Entry Sheet - Page 1

First Name: Solveig **Last Initial:** S

You have learned about animals by reading the article, "Who Wants a Spiny Snack?" and by exploring the *Life at the Limits* exhibition.

Now you will write a book to teach your friends about these animals.

Your book will include three animals. The first animal will be the spiny pufferfish. The other two animals will be from the *Life at the Limits* exhibition.

For each animal, name one body part that helps this animal. Then explain in your own words how this body part works. Include a drawing of each animal and label the body part that you have described.

Every single animal on earth has an adaptation. Some are widely known, like how the Chamelion camoflages, or how fish have gills. But some, not everyone knows about. Even though most people know about the spiny puffer, how does it puff up, they want to know. A lot of people know about sharks, but what about the Cookiecutter Shark and it's razor sharp teeth? What about the Harpy eagle and it's talons? Some animals have really amazing adaptations; body parts or behaviors that help them survive. People should about these animals.

The spiny puffer is an interesting animal. For example, as it is swimming along in the ocean, it looks like any normal fish. Then, a shark swims up to it and prepares to eat the fish for dinner.

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However, the Spiny Pufferfish's expanding stomach allows it to suck in water, which makes it look like a big balloon with spikes. The pufferfish's spikes are laid against it's body while it is just swimming. But then stick out in all directions when it puffs up, making it inedible! The pufferfish also has a flexible spine, which helps it take on a round shape when it puffs up. Predators are alarmed by the pufferfish's sudden reactions, making the puffer safe!

It may sound like it, but the Cookiecutter Shark is not an actual cookiecutter. It does have razor sharp teeth like the sharp side of a cookiecutter, though. The shark has 25 to 32 rows of those deadly teeth. The use; the shark bites it's prey and lets it bleed and swim away. The animal will become weakened by the loss of blood, and then the shark will track it down to eat it. The shark also has a very sharp sense of smell, to accomplish this. Very few other animals have razor sharp teeth like the cookiecutter shark. It is another one of those amazing animals, with amazing adaptations.

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The Harpy eagle takes flight, soaring over the treetops. It spots a small, unsuspecting monkey sitting in a tree. It uses it's massive talons (claws) to snatch it up to it's nest and eat it for lunch. It's talons are about as long as a grizzly bear's claws, so consuming meals is no hard job for the Harpy eagle. The Harpy eagle needs it's talons to grab it's prey from trees, and to eat the poor small animal. The Harpy eagle also uses it's speed to secretly swoop down and attack it's prey, this is another adaptation. The Harpy eagle's claws are amazing, but deadly to smaller animals.

Thus, all animals have adaptations of some sort, and some adaptations stand out more than others. The pufferfish's spikes, the cookiecutter shark's teeth, and the Harpy eagle's talons. All animals have adaptations to help increase their chance of survival, but some are more noticeable than others.

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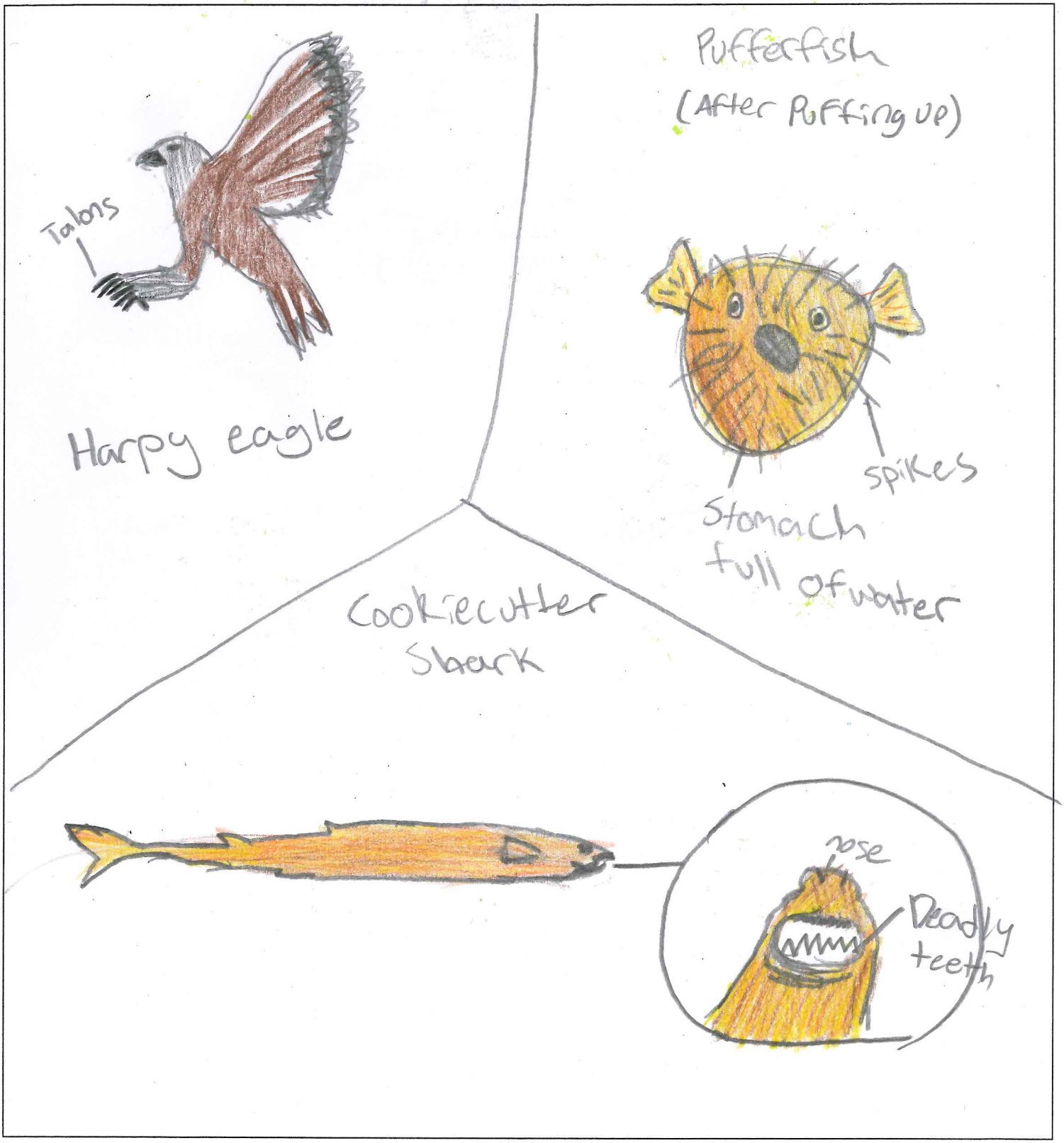
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