

The Spider® Companion

Hi, *Spider* Reader!

We're so glad you're here!

This January/February issue of *Spider* is full of mighty ideas, big splashes, and stories that show how power can look different from what we expect. Together, we'll explore one big question:

What makes something powerful?

In this guide, you'll dive into the power of water as you read, imagine, build, test, and create. Sometimes water is loud and fast. Sometimes it's quiet and calm. Sometimes it surprises you!

You'll find fun activities that connect to these selections from the magazine:

• Sapphire's Fish

Tell the story through the fish's eyes by creating a fun, expressive comic.

• Fold and Float

Test different kinds of paper to see which boat stays afloat the longest.

• Surf's Up!

Make your own wave bottle and explore how waves move.

• Red Canoe

Draw or write about a special moment you've had by the water.

• Plus: Polly's Plunder

Join Captain Polly on a pirate quest to spot all the treasures that start with the letter 'P'!

Want to make a splash of your own? Design something that floats and enter this issue's contest. Your creation could be featured in a future *Spider* magazine! Find the rules on page 47.

We love hearing from you! Write to us at spider@cricketmedia.com and tell us which activity made the biggest splash for you.

Happy exploring—and may your discoveries be powerful in their own way!

Your Spider Companions





Sapphire's Fish



In "Sapphire's Fish" by Sharon G. Forman (page 8), a storm's powerful water sweeps a tiny silver fish far from home. Sapphire finds it in her muddy yard—and tries to help.

A FISH SPEAKS OUT!

Create a comic from the fish's point of view.

Imagine you're the little silver fish. One moment you're in the river . . . and the next you're somewhere new! How does the world look through your eyes? Draw a **three- or four-panel comic** showing what the fish thinks or feels during the story.

You might show:

- getting swept away in the storm
- landing in the muddy yard
- riding in the paper boat
- splashing back into the river

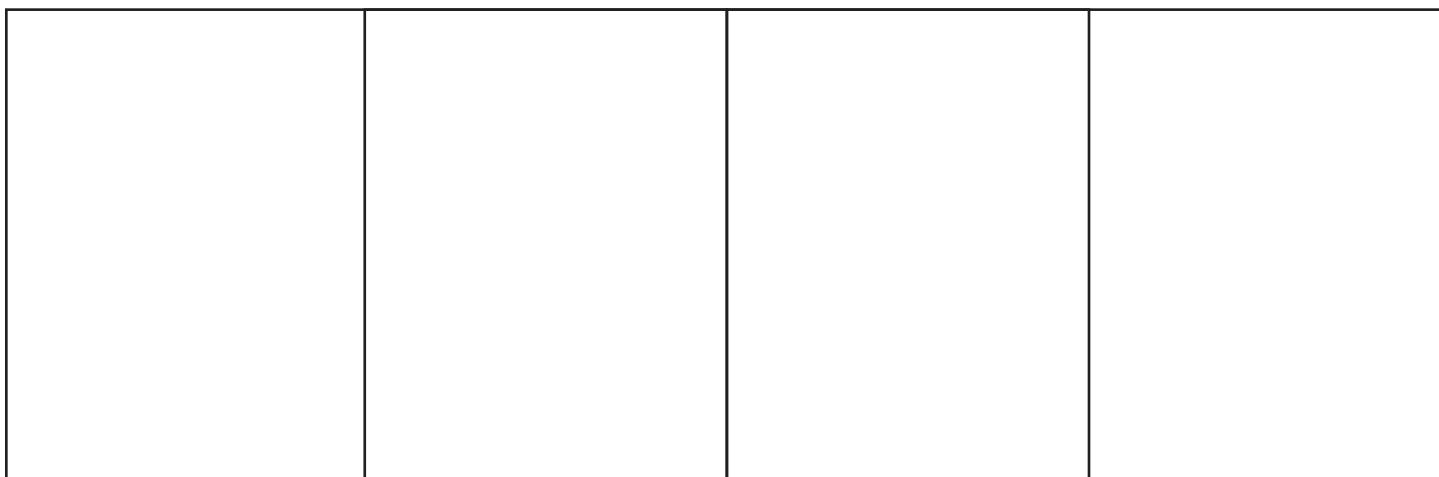


Speech bubble ideas:

- "Whoa! Where am I?"
- "This boat is bumpy!"
- "That kid seems nice . . . but I miss my river!"

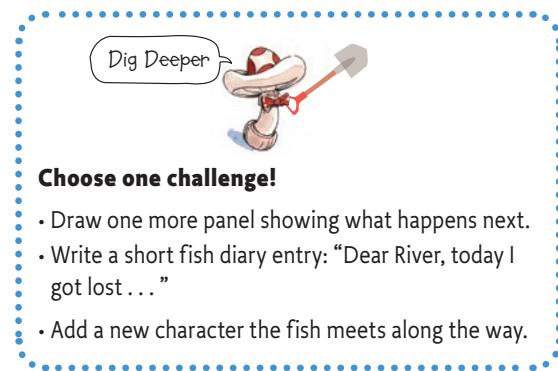
Fun challenge:

Add silly extras—tiny sunglasses, a backpack, or a fishy joke like "I'm floundering!"



Talk About It!

- What might the fish feel during the storm?
- How do things change once Sapphire helps?
- Does seeing the story from the fish's point of view change how you think about Sapphire?



Choose one challenge!

- Draw one more panel showing what happens next.
- Write a short fish diary entry: "Dear River, today I got lost . . ."
- Add a new character the fish meets along the way.



FOLD AND FLOAT

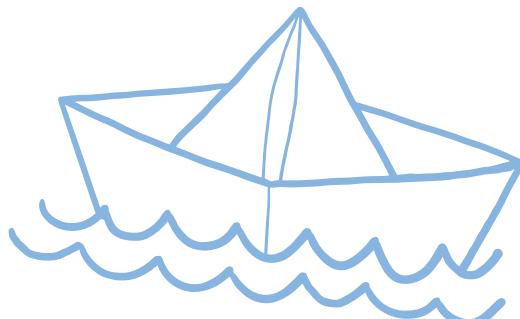
In "Fold and Float" by Marina Fisher (page 14), you learn how to fold a paper boat. Now it's time to see what water can do! Some paper stays strong. Some gets soggy fast. Let's find out which boats float the longest.

TAKE THE BOAT FLOAT CHALLENGE!

Follow the folding steps in the magazine, but try different kinds of paper to see which paper boat floats the longest.

Try:

- glossy photo paper
- construction paper
- newspaper
- plain printer paper
- printer paper colored with a crayon on both sides
- your own choice of paper



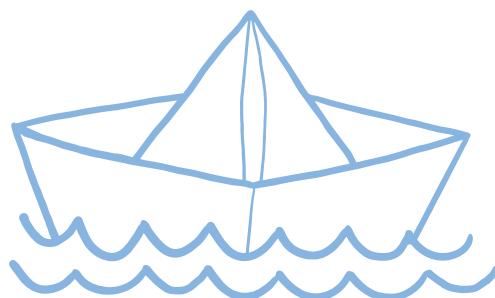
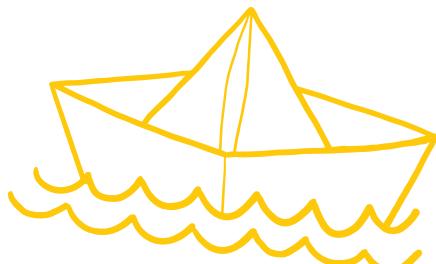
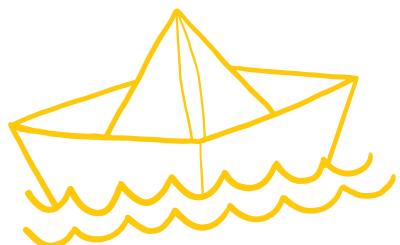
TEST YOUR BOATS

1. Fill a large bowl, bucket, or bathtub with water.
2. Gently place each boat on the water. Give each boat a small push.
3. Watch what happens over time. Does the boat stay tall and sturdy? Does it get soggy? When does it sink?

Cheer them on! Which boat is the champion?

Choose one way to measure your results:

- **Sinking Order:** Which boat sank first? Which lasted longest?
- **Float Time:** Use a timer to see how long each boat stays afloat. (Just check it every few minutes—no need to watch the whole time!)



Fill in the chart.

When you're done, look at your results.

Which paper floated the longest? Why do you think it worked so well?

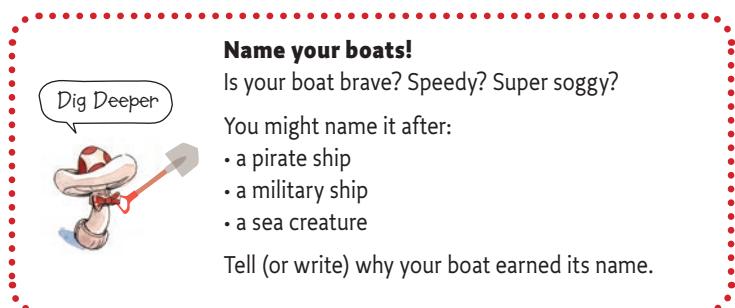
BOAT FLOAT CHALLENGE CHART

Paper type	Sank (1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th ...)	Time Afloat (optional)	Notes (Did it float? Sink? Tip over?)
glossy photo paper			
construction paper			
newspaper			
plain printer paper			
crayon-coated printer paper			
your choice			



Talk About It!

- Which paper floated the longest? Why do you think it worked?
- How did the water change the boats over time?
- What would you try differently next time?





SURF'S UP!

In "Surf's Up!" by Beth Collins (page 22), you learn how waves are made and how surfers ride them. Now you can make your own waves and watch what happens when water moves fast—or slow.

MAKE YOUR OWN WAVE BOTTLE

Let's make a mini ocean you can hold in your hands!

What You'll Need

- an empty, clear plastic bottle (a 16-ounce water bottle works well)
- water
- vegetable or olive oil
- blue food coloring
- tape or glue
- optional: tiny waterproof toys, beads, or shells

What to Do

1. Fill the bottle two-thirds full of water.
2. Add 2 or 3 drops of blue food coloring.
3. Fill the rest of the bottle with oil, leaving a little empty space at the top.
4. Add tiny toys, beads, or shells if you'd like.
5. Screw the lid on tightly and wrap tape around it.
6. Tilt the bottle side to side. Watch the waves roll!
7. Shake it! Then let it rest. What changes?



Talk About It!

- Would you rather surf a tiny wave or a giant one? Why?
- How does the ocean floor help shape a wave?
- How is your wave bottle like real ocean waves?



Dig Deeper



Write a short surf story!

Maybe your characters:

- find the perfect wave
- laugh after getting splashed
- help a new surfer learn

Flip back to the surfer slang on pages 22–25 and sprinkle in a few fun words like *gnarly*, *shred*, *barney*, or *mushburger*.

Cowabunga!



Red Canoe

In “Red Canoe” by Leslie Davidson (page 26), a child and her grandpa paddle across a quiet lake at night. The water is calm and glowing, showing that gentleness has power too.

A Special Moment by the Water

Think about a time you were near water. Maybe you splashed in a puddle, visited a lake, walked in the rain, or played with a hose in your backyard.

Choose how to share your memory:

- Draw a picture of your special moment.
- Write a few sentences about what happened.
- Tell a grown-up the story while they jot down your words.

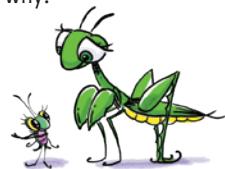
How would you describe the water during that special moment?

Was it calm? Loud? Cold? Sparkly? Surprising?



Talk About It!

- How does the water in the poem make the canoe ride feel special?
- What words help you picture the lake at night?
- Who would you want to ride in a canoe with, and why?



Write your own poem about water!

Choose action words and describe what you see, hear, smell, feel, or taste.

Your poem could sound peaceful, exciting, mysterious, or wild—just like water itself.



polly's plunder

art by Michael Chesworth

Captain Polly and her crew pilfered a plethora of plunder beginning with the letter P. How many can you find? Color anything that starts with a P.





ANSWER KEY

Answers to Polly's Plunder

plume, patch, porthole, pom-pom, puffin, perch, pipe, paintbrush, parasol, pantaloons, pirates, paddle, padlock, pail, penguin, pigeon, plank, polka dots, pennant, package, paint, parakeet, pufferfish, parrot

For Parents, Educators, and Grown-Ups

Thank you for exploring this issue with your young learner! This companion guide invites children to explore the Big Question: **What makes something powerful?**

Through stories and hands-on activities, children discover how water can be powerful in many ways—strong, gentle, surprising, and calm. They'll draw, build, test, imagine, and talk as they connect reading to real experiences.

Use the **Talk About It!** prompts to spark conversation, and let children choose how they want to respond—through drawing, writing, or sharing ideas aloud. Move at your own pace and follow your child's curiosity.

This guide is designed for flexible use at home, in classrooms, or for independent exploration. We hope it leads to joyful, shared moments of discovery.

Questions or feedback? We'd love to hear from you at spider@cricketmedia.com.

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STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

ACTIVITY	KEY SKILLS/FOCUS	ALIGNED STANDARDS
Sapphire's Fish	Point of view, narrative sequencing, visual storytelling, expressive writing or drawing, empathy and perspective-taking	CCSS.ELA.RL.2.3–3.3; W.2.3–3.3; SL.2.1–3.1; NGSS ESS2.C; Science Practices: Asking Questions & Constructing Explanations
Fold and Float	Scientific observation, testing variables (different papers), prediction, data recording	CCSS.ELA.SL.2.4–3.4; W.2.8–3.8; NGSS PS1.A (properties of materials); Science Practices: Planning and Carrying Out Investigations
Surf's Up!	Understanding cause-and-effect in nature, modeling wave behavior, creative storytelling, vocabulary use	CCSS.ELA.RI.2.1–3.1; W.2.3–3.3; SL.2.4–3.4; NGSS ESS2.A (earth processes); Science Practices: Developing and Using Models
Red Canoe	Personal narrative writing, drawing to communicate ideas, identifying sensory details, poetry appreciation	CCSS.ELA.RL.2.4–3.4; W.2.3–3.3; SL.2.1–3.1; NGSS ESS2.C (water in the environment)