

Dear Reader,

*Water Sings Blue* started when I wrote a poem about a jellyfish. I was thinking about how jellyfish look like those glass cake dishes—you know, the ones with a glass dome on top that has a kind of ruffled edge? Anyway, I turned that into a poem. And then I decided I'd like to write more poems about ocean animals, and the ocean itself, and the beach.

Have you ever been to the beach? It's different from anywhere else. First of all, the air smells like salt and a little bit like dead fish or at least dead kelp. We used to find long ropes of yellow kelp that had washed up on the beach when I was a kid. The kelp has these little knot-looking things that are full of air and help the kelp float.

There are lots of seagulls on the beach, and they're always hungry, hoping to get some of your picnic. They have a sort of rough squawk, so when a whole flock of them starts yelling, it's pretty noisy!

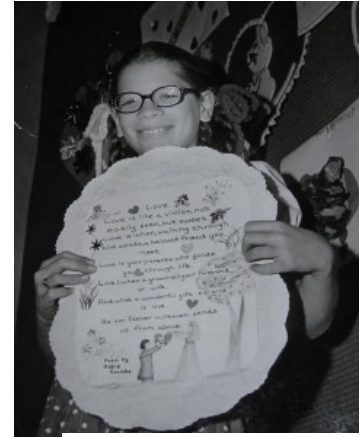
I like the pelicans better. They waddle on land, but they fly gracefully.

The sand is hot and dry up away from the water, with little prickly twigs that poke your feet if you forget to wear flip-flops. When you get closer to the water, you go down a little hill, and the sand gets damper. Right by the water, the sand is firm and slightly wet. When you walk, your feet don't sink in. Instead they make shimmering footprints that disappear almost instantly.

Most little kids play a game where they chase the waves as the waves recede and then run back screeching when the waves return and follow them up the beach, splashing at their heels. Of course, it's always a good idea to build a sandcastle. These weird little sand crabs that look like big bugs or very small lobsters live just under the damp sand. You

can catch them if you dig fast and have them live in your sandcastle for a little bit. They make very ugly kings and queens and princesses!

At first the water feels really cold, but if you stay in for a while you get used to it. My sisters and brothers and I used to ride boogie boards out into the water. It's like surfing, only easier because you lie on your stomach on a short Styrofoam board and don't have to stand up. If you swim out past the wave line, you can lie on your board, feeling the sun on your back and the cool water around your legs. You try not to think about sharks. And your shoulders get sunburned.



I entered a local Valentine's Day contest with a poem I wrote and illustrated. I won!

That's when you go back in to sit on your towel and eat a sandwich.

There isn't necessarily sand in your sandwich, but there's sand just about everywhere else. Then you watch the water. You listen to it, too. The waves roll in over and over, always the same yet a little different every time. They look like green glass when they arch up high on sunny days, and then they crash down, turning into white foam that slips up the sand.

So that's the beach.

When I decided to write a book of ocean poems, I thought of a bunch of sea creatures and made a list. Then I looked on the Internet and in books to find out about even more sea creatures. I also included things like sand and the ocean itself, wondering what they would say if they could speak. I ended up writing about 80 poems! Some were better than others, of course, but I had a lot of fun thinking about and writing each one.

Remember how I told you about that jellyfish poem? I ended up writing two more. I used to go down to the Long Beach Aquarium and watch the moon jellyfish. They're very beautiful in a strange way. Like white balloons. Like breaths of air when it's very cold. Like glass cake dishes, the ruffled kind.

Your friend,

[Kate Coombs](#)