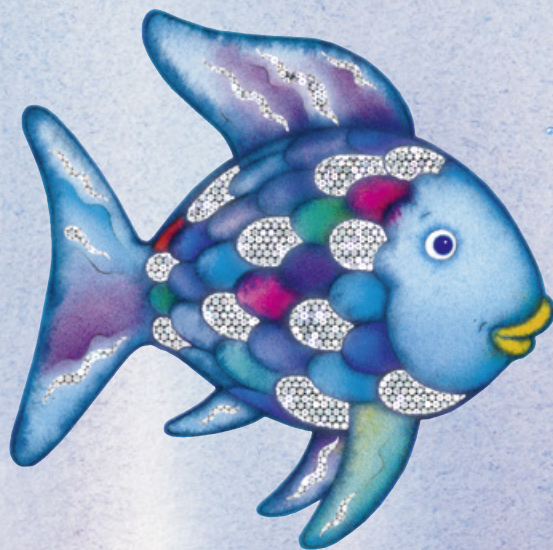


# THE RAINBOW FISH

Teacher  
Costume





# 1 | PAPER RAINBOW FISH COSTUME

TO MAKE AT SCHOOL

\*This costume requires materials most teachers would have on hand in their classroom and would be able to work on at school. Please refer to the photos with option #2 for help, as the steps are essentially the same.\*



## MATERIALS NEEDED:



- Bulletin Board paper - aqua blue
- Cardstock (less likely to tear) or construction paper:  
aqua blue, royal blue, green, pink, purple, gray - at least  
ten 8x10 sheets of each color
- One sheet of white cardstock/construction paper
- Silver glitter
- Elmer's glue
- Scissors
- Hot glue gun and one bag of glue sticks
- Roll of Velcro tape or sticky-back Velcro squares - you will  
need 6 pairs to hold the sides of the costume together, in  
addition to however many students in your class, as these  
will also be used to attach the removable silver scales
- Measuring tape
- A piece of white chalk
- A black Sharpie
- Crayons or paint - purple and silver glitter



## DIRECTIONS:

- ★ To begin, fold the blue bulletin board paper in half. To get a general idea of how wide the costume needs to be, hold it up and measure to the ends of your shoulders. We cut ours to between 24-25 inches for an average-sized female teacher. You do want it to be wide enough so that the sides can come together, and so that you allow it to have a rounded shape, rather than be fitted to your body.
- ★ When you have decided how wide it needs to be, measure it out on a flat surface and use chalk to mark off the width. Fold the outside edge of the felt over to that line to create a straight edge to trace the entire length of the paper. Then cut down your chalk line. This is the basis for your Rainbow Fish costume!
- ★ Now, you will adjust the paper so that the side that will be the front of the fish ends up shorter than the back. We left the back between 11-12 inches longer than the front. The part that hangs down lower in the back will later become your tail.
- ★ Make a new crease along the folded edge of the paper, and make sure that the edges are evenly lined up.
- ★ Next, you will measure and create the hole for your head. Ensure you are working along the folded edge of the paper, and measure halfway across – mark with chalk a few inches directly down. Draw or trace a semicircle, checking with your chalk line to keep it centered. Then, cut along the chalk line you just drew/traced.
- 🐟 **Tip:** To make an even hole, you can find something to trace – we used a paper plate with an 8-inch diameter.
- ★ Now that you have your head hole cut out, you will draw the rest of the lines to create the final shape of the fish. We slightly tapered ours to make it not as wide at the shoulders, but to keep the round shape at the bottom. To do this, draw a slightly angles line from where you want the end of the shoulder to be down to near under your arm. The end measurement of the shoulder of our costume was between 4-5 inches.
- ★ Next, you will work with the shape at the bottom of the costume by using your chalk to sketch the lines you will cut. You will want to slightly round the bottom edges of the front. Then, draw your tail shape on the bottom layer (which will become the back of the costume). Cut along these lines, and you will start to see some semblance of a fish!



- ★★ **Extra Step:** Use an extra piece of bulletin-board paper to trace the shape of your tail, cut it out and glue the white sides together. This will make your tail blue when looking at it from both the front and back.



- ★ Onto the most time-consuming part of the project – the scales!  
For the scale shape – just make a wide U-shaped line and connect across the top. Ours measured 4.5 inches across and 6.5 inches long down to the lowest point on the curve. How many of each scale you make will vary – we used the most aqua blue and the rest were fairly evenly distributed. The silver (gray paper) scales will be removable, so that you can role play the story with your class. So, you will need as many silver scales as student in your class, plus at least one extra (as the Rainbow Fish has one silver scale left at the end of the story!). Don't worry thinking about where all of those scales are going to fit on the costume within reach – we will tackle that issue soon!

- ★★ **Extra step:** For all your gray scales, you will need to brush on a thin layer of Elmer's glue and sprinkle the silver glitter over the entire fin to achieve a shiny silver look. Allow them to completely dry before trying to work with them further. (And yes, you will find glitter everywhere for the rest of eternity.)

- ★ After having the scales cut, you are ready for the fins and crayons/paint!  
Use one of the scales to judge how large the fins need to be, as they will serve as pockets for the extra silver scales that you could not fit onto the costume! We just placed the scale on a piece of blue cardstock and drew a fin shape around it that kind of fanned out and was a little longer on one side (bottom). You will need four of these fins – after cutting them out, decide which side will be the top of the fin and use the hot glue gun to glue along the other three sides. Don't forget to leave the top unglued, and double check that the scale still fits into the fin/pocket. Repeat for the other side – remember, this side should be a mirror image of the other. (If your fins have more of a symmetric shape, this will not matter, as they will look the same regardless.)

- ★ Once glued, the fins are ready for paint (or crayons)! We did three wide purple strokes per fin, per side, then added the silver glitter paint over that. Whatever you decide, don't forget to repeat the same process on the other fin, and on the backs of the fins.
- ★ While you have the paint (or crayons) out, use the same effect on the tail to your liking. Don't forget to paint/color both sides!
- ★ After the paint has dried, or you have finished coloring, you are ready to put it all together! To attach the scales, start along the bottom edge of the costume and lay them out so that you can see minimal blue paper along the edges. We did end up using a few scales along the curve that mostly got covered by the row above them. Try to make the colors random - spacing is totally up to you! We did a slight overlap when laying them side by side to try and maximize use of the scales. If you want to overlap them more, make sure to cut extra scales of each color! When you have it laid out to your liking, use the hot glue gun to attach to the blue paper.
- ! **Important:** Put the glue along the flat edge (top) of each scale and then down the sides only - you will need the bottom of the scale to be unattached so that later you can slide the silver scales underneath, so they blend in. **Important!** Do not permanently glue any silver scales!
- ★ As you work your way up toward the shoulders, you may have to angle the scales to better fill the space, as you did along the bottom of the curve.
- 🐟 **Tip:** Another option would be to trim the scales to make them fit.
- ★ Repeat gluing the rows of scales on the back of the costume, by following the same steps as the front.
- ★ Attach the fins to the inside of the costume using a decent amount of hot glue. Remember, these are essentially pockets that you will need to access, so don't glue them up too high. Repeat with the other side of the costume, making sure you have the fin mirror-image to the one on the other side, and that they are even with each other.
- 🐟 **Tip:** You can slide the costume over your head to judge where you would like the pockets to be. Ours ended up between the second and third row of scales, from the bottom of the costume.

★ Velcro! You will add three Velcro squares to the inside of each side of the costume to close the side of the costume". We bought the sticky-back Velcro, but also add a dot of hot glue on each side to ensure it would stick better. Space the Velcro as follows: one right above where you glued the fin, one right below and one on the edge of the actual fin itself. Double check placement of the other half of the Velcro square so that when they come together, the costume will not be lopsided. Repeat these steps for the other side of the costume, as well. (You will still want to pull the Velcro apart gingerly when putting on/taking off the costume, so that it doesn't become unglued.)  
**Option:** You can also use a long strip of Velcro for each side, instead.

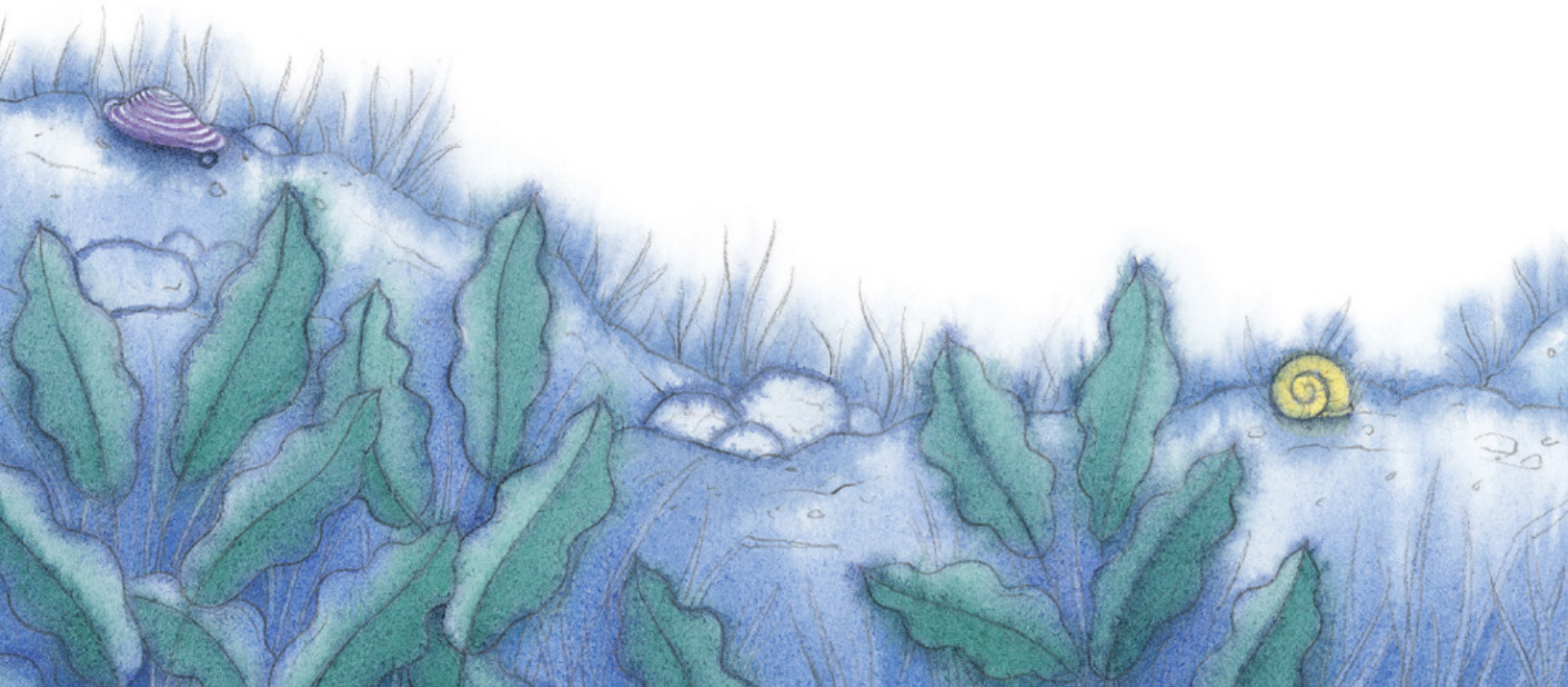
★ While you are working with the Velcro, you are going to add a Velcro square to the back of each silver scale. When attaching the silver scales to the costume, lift the bottoms of the other scales and make sure that the Velcro square will not be seen when you remove the silver scale during role play. Place the silver scales randomly across the front and back of the costume, and any extras will go into the fin pockets.

🐟 **Tip:** We used the rougher side on the actual scale, so that when role-playing, the scales will more likely stick to the kids' clothing.

★ Finally, the headpiece. This is quite simple - cut an extra piece of the blue cardstock or construction paper into a 2-3-inch-wide band that will fit around your head. Glue (or tape or staple) to hold shape and size. Draw two circles with a 3-inch diameter or find some-thing to trace that has a similar size, then cut them out. Using a navy blue or black marker or crayon, draw and color large circles in the centers of each white circle. Determine how far apart you want the eyes to be - if there is someone else around to help you, have them mark each spot on the headband for you. Use the glue to attach the styrofoam eyes to the headband.

🐟 **Tip:** We found a piece of light blue tissue paper in our scraps, folded it like an accordion, and used a piece of blue paper to secure it to the inside of the headband, so that it would resemble the top fin of the Rainbow Fish.

- ★ Try on the Rainbow Fish and become the envy of early elementary teachers everywhere! Remember when you role play, the silver scales are removable and to be handed to the other “fish”, one at a time. Leave one on your costume, and then rely on the extra silver scales you carry in your fins/pockets to hand to your students.





## **REMEMBER WHEN YOU ROLE PLAY,**

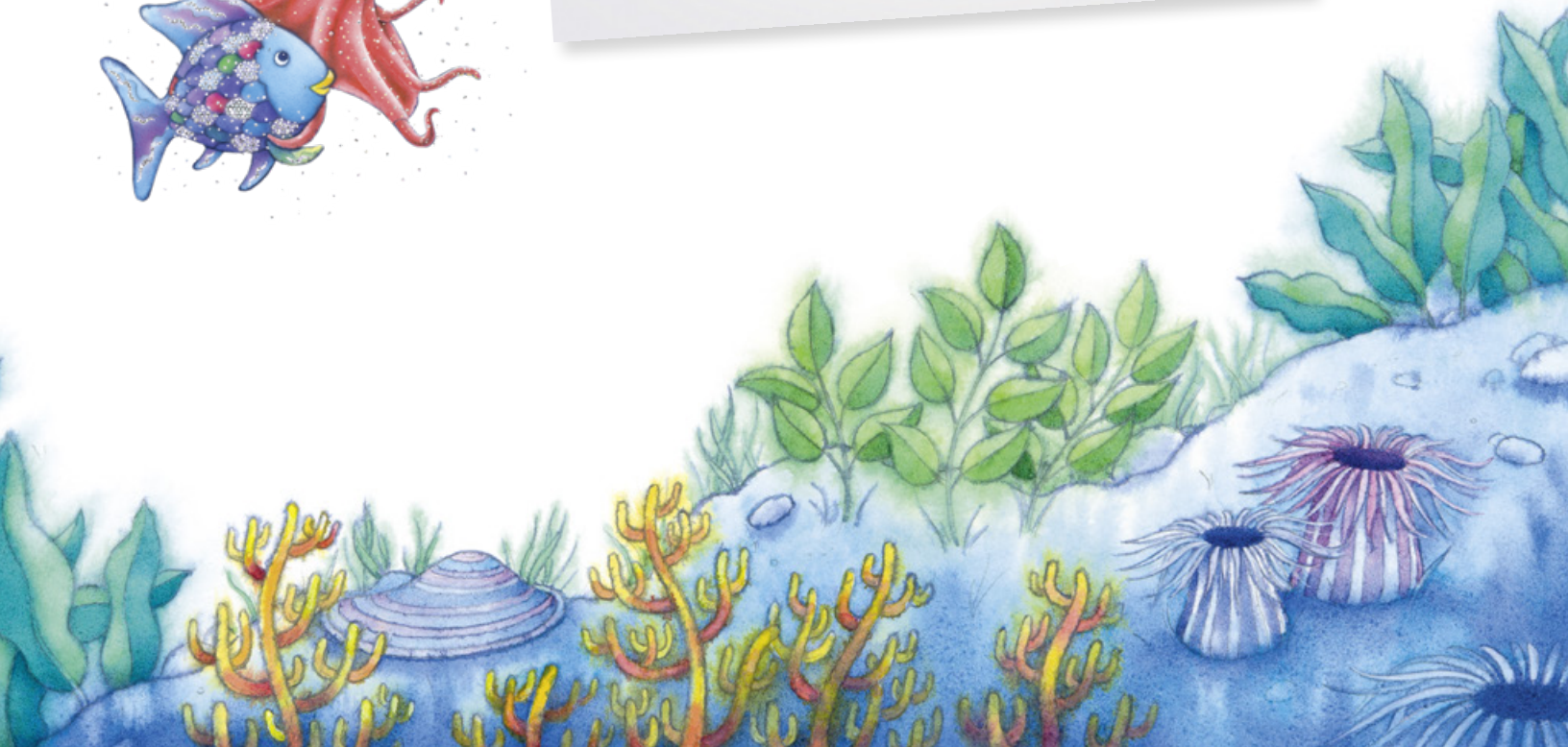
the silver scales are removable  
and to be handed to the other “fish”  
one at a time.



## 2 | NO-SEW RAINBOW FISH COSTUME

TO MAKE AT HOME

\*This costume requires the teacher buy materials on their own and requires a bit of time, though it does not require sewing. For a simpler version to create at school (or for an entire “school” of fish), please see option #1!\*





## MATERIALS NEEDED:



• Fabric: We used 84 inch wide felt and standard-sized satin, as well as a sparkly silver fabric in these amounts:

1 yard of aqua blue felt (84 inch wide)

½ yard of royal blue satin      ¼ yard of green satin

½ yard of aqua blue satin      ¼ yard of purple satin

¼ yard of pink satin      ½ yard of sparkly silver fabric

\*You can use all felt for this project, as it is easier to work with, or any other fabric of your choosing! \*

• Aqua blue plain bandana OR you can use a leftover piece of felt (for headband)

• Good fabric scissors

• Hot glue gun and one bag of glue sticks. We used fabric glue sticks to allow more flexibility, but regular glue sticks would work, as well.

• Roll of Velcro tape or sticky-back Velcro squares - you will need 6 pairs to hold the sides of the costume together, in addition to however many students in your class, as these will also be used to attach the removable silver scales

• 1 styrofoam ball, 3-inch diameter OR

2 styrofoam ball halves, 3-inch diameter

• Measuring tape

• A piece of white chalk

• A navy blue or black Sharpie



## DIRECTIONS:

### Optional:

- ★ Fabric spray paint – we used purple and silver glitter to spray the tail and fins. Any type of fabric paint or even fabric markers would also work fine.
- ★ Interfacing – we ironed the satin onto interfacing to make it thicker, easier to cut, and so that the edges wouldn't fray. You can also purchase an anti-fray spray and treat the fabric before use.



- ★ To begin, fold the blue felt in half. To get a general idea of how wide the costume needs to be, hold it up and measure to the ends of your shoulders.

We cut ours to between 24-25 inches for an average-sized female teacher. You do want it to be wide enough so that the sides can come together, and so that you allow it to have a rounded shape, rather than be fitted to your body.



- ★ When you have decided how wide it needs to be, measure it out on a flat surface and use chalk to mark off the width.





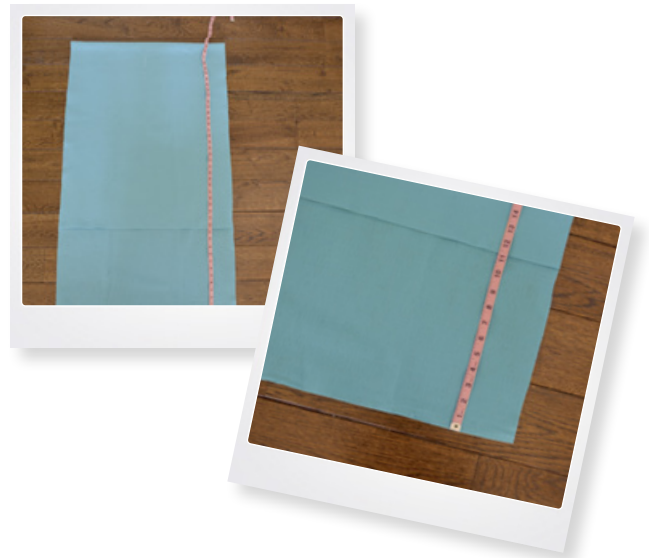
- ★ Fold the outside edge of the felt over to that line to create a straight edge to trace the entire length of the fabric. Then cut down your chalk line.

This is the basis for your Rainbow Fish costume!



- ★ Now, you will adjust the felt so that the side that will be the front of the fish ends up shorter than the back. We left the back between 11-12 inches longer than the front.


The part that hangs down lower in the back will later become your tail.



- ★ Make a new crease along the folded edge of the felt, and make sure that the edges are evenly lined up.

- ★ Next, you will measure and create the hole for your head. Ensure you are working along the folded edge of the felt, and measure half-way across - mark with chalk a few inches directly down.



 **Tip:** To make an even hole, you can find something to trace - we used a paper plate with an 8-inch diameter.

Draw or trace a semicircle, checking with your chalk line to keep it centered.

Then, cut along the chalk line you just drew/traced.



★ Now that you have your head hole cut out, you will draw the rest of the lines to create the final shape of the fish. We slightly tapered ours to make it not as wide at the shoulders, but to keep the round shape at the bottom. To do this, draw a slightly angles line from where you want the end of the shoulder to be down to near under your arm. The end measurement of our shoulder was between 4-5 inches.





- ★ Next, you will work with the shape at the bottom of the costume by using your chalk to sketch the lines you will cut. You will want to slightly round the bottom edges of the front. Then, draw your tail shape on the bottom layer (which will become the back of the costume).

Cut along these lines, and you will start to see some semblance of a fish!



- ★ Onto the most time-consuming part of the project - the scales! As mentioned, we ironed all our satin and the silver fabric onto interfacing before starting to make it less floppy, easier to cut and less likely to fray along the edges.

For the scale shape - just make a wide U-shaped line and connect across the top. Ours measured 4.5 inches across and 6.5 inches long down to the lowest point on the curve. How many of each scale you make will vary - we used the most aqua blue (26) and the rest were fairly evenly distributed (15 royal blue, 14 purple, 13 green, 12 pink). The silver scales will be removable, so that you can role play the story with your class.  
... (continued on next page)



... (continued)

So, you will need as many silver scales as students in your class, plus at least one extra (as the Rainbow Fish has one silver scale left at the end of the story!). Don't worry thinking about where all of those scales are going to fit on the costume within reach - we will tackle that issue next!



- ★ After cutting the scales out, you are ready for the fins and paint! Use one of the scales to judge how large the fins need to be, as they will serve as pockets for the extra silver scales that you could not fit onto the costume! We just placed the scale on the blue felt and drew a fin shape around it that kind of fanned out and was a little longer on one side (bottom). You will need four of these fins.

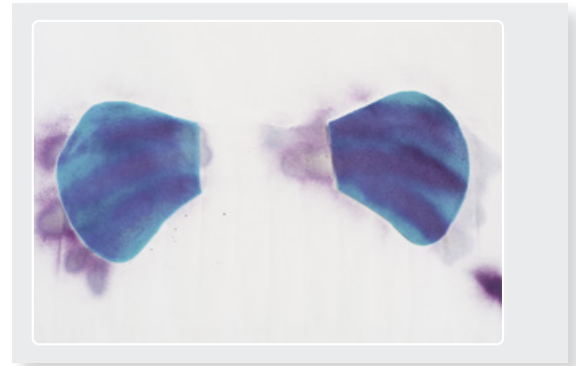


- ★ After cutting them out, decide which side will be the top of the fin and use the hot glue gun to glue along the other three sides. Don't forget to leave the top unglued, and double check that the scale still fits into the fin/pocket. Repeat for the other side - remember, this side should be a mirror image of the other. (If your fins have more of a symmetric shape, this will not matter, as they will look the same regardless.)





★ Once glued, the fins are ready for paint! We used quick-dry fabric spray paint, so that we could continue working with them shortly after painting, but any fabric paint would be fine. We did three wide purple strokes per fin, per side, then added the silver glitter spray paint over that. Whatever you decide, don't forget to repeat the same process on the other fin, and also on the backs of the fins.



★ While you have the paint out, use the same effect on the tail to your liking. Don't forget to paint both sides!

★ After the paint has dried, you are ready to put it all together! To attach the scales, start along the bottom edge of the costume and lay them out so that you can see minimal blue felt.



We did end up using a few scales along the curve that mostly got covered by the row above them. Try to make the colors random – spacing is totally up to you! We did a slight overlap when laying them side by side to try and maximize use of the scales. If you want to overlap them more, make sure to cut extra scales of each color! When you have it laid out to your liking, use the hot glue gun to attach to the blue felt.

**! Do not permanently glue any silver scales!**

**Important:**

Put the glue along the flat edge (top) of each scale and then down the sides only – you will need the bottom of the scale to be unattached so that later you can slide the silver scales underneath, so they blend in.

★ As you work your way up toward the shoulders, you may have to angle the scales to better fill the space, as you did along the bottom of the curve. Another option would be to trim the scales to make them fit.

★ Repeat gluing the rows of scales on the back of the costume, by following the same steps as the front.

★ Attach the fins to the inside of the costume using a decent amount of hot glue.

Remember, these are essentially pockets that you will need to access, so don't glue them up too high. You can slide the costume over your head to judge where you would like them to be. Ours ended up between the second and third row of scales, from the bottom of the costume. Repeat with the other side of the costume, making sure you have the fin mirror-image to the one on the other side, and that they are even with each other.

★ Velcro! You will add three Velcro squares to the inside of each side of the costume to close the side of the costume. We bought the sticky-back Velcro, but also add a dot of hot glue on each side to ensure it would stick better. Space the Velcro as follows: one right above where you glued the fin, one right below and one on the edge of the actual fin itself.

Double check placement of the other half of the Velcro square so that when they come together, the costume will not be lopsided. Repeat these steps for the other side of the costume, as well. (You will still want to pull the Velcro apart gingerly when putting on/ taking off the costume, so that it doesn't become unglued.) **Option:** You can also use a long strip of Velcro for each side, instead.



- ★ While you are working with the Velcro, you are going to add a Velcro square to the back of each silver scale.

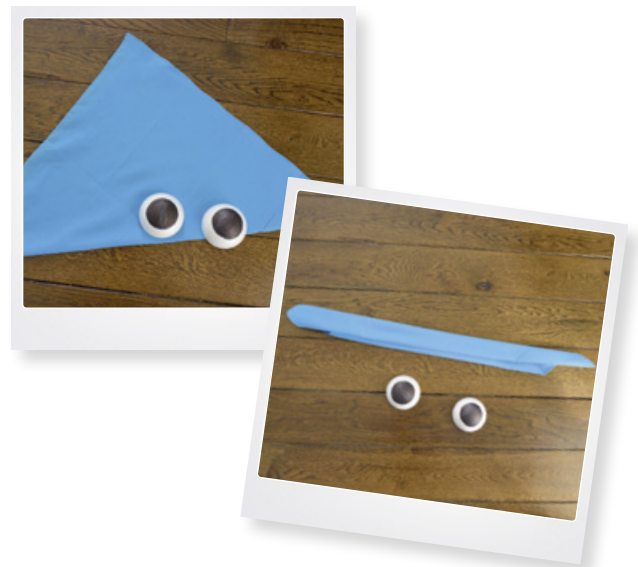


- 🐟 **Tip:** We used the rougher side on the actual scale, so that when role-playing, the scales will more likely stick to the kids' clothing. When attaching the silver scales to the costume, lift the bottoms of the other scales and make sure that the Velcro square will not be seen when you remove the silver scale during role play.



Place the silver scales randomly across the front and back of the costume, and any extras will go into the fin pockets.

- ★ Finally, the headpiece. This is quite simple – we bought an aqua blue ready-made bandana, but you can also cut an extra piece of the blue felt in a 2-3-inch-wide band. If using a bandana, fold into a triangle, then fold it up, keeping a 2-3-inch width.





🐟 **Tip:** Add a line of hot glue, so that you don't have to worry about it unrolling. If you have a full styrofoam ball, you will need to cut it in half. We found 3-inch diameter styrofoam balls halved already, so it was a little less messy! Using a navy blue or black Sharpie (or paint), draw and color large circles in the centers of each styrofoam half. Tie the headband around your head to determine how far apart you want the eyes to be – if there is someone else around to help you, have them mark each spot on the bandana/felt for you. Use the hot glue gun to attach the styrofoam eyes to the headband.

🐟 **Tip:** We found a piece of light blue tulle in our fabric scraps, folded it like an accordion, and used a piece of blue felt to secure it to the inside of the headband, so that it would resemble the top fin of the Rainbow Fish.

★ Try on the Rainbow Fish and become the envy of early elementary teachers everywhere! Remember when you role play, the silver scales are removable and to be handed to the other “fish”, one at a time. Leave one on your costume, and then rely on the extra silver scales you carry in your fins/pockets to hand to your students.



# MODIFICATIONS:

## Simple version:

You can adapt either costume to be something worn on the front only, saving time and supplies. Use the same shape (you decide if you want a tail on the front) and follow the same procedure - but just don't make the back! Punch holes on either side of the neck and tie a ribbon to be worn around your neck.

 **Tip:** You may want to use wide ribbon, as the costume gets heavy once the scales are attached.

## Student version:

Use the simple version listed above to cut out one fish shape per student in your class. They can either color them, decorate them, or glue scales of one color per student (slightly older kids can cut their own, otherwise, you can cut them ahead of time). Give each student the fuzzy side of a Velcro square to stick on their own fish. When you role play, you can pass them the silver scales from your costume and they can stick it onto their own fish...just like in the story! You can even make a student-sized Rainbow Fish, and have students take turns role playing!



The Rainbow Fish, text and illustrations copyright © 1992 by Marcus Pfister. Published by NorthSouth Books, Inc.  
Costume design and instructions copyright © 2022 by Christine White.

## I HAVE MY VERY OWN WEBSITE!

With lots of background stories, games and crafts.

[www.rainbowfish.us](http://www.rainbowfish.us)

